

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 246th Meeting, held in the Forest Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall, Highwood Road, Brockenhurst on THURSDAY, 2 July 2015

Those present: Clive Chatters (In the Chair)
David Stone (Panel Support Officer)
Jo Murphy (Panel Secretariat)
Frances Connolly (Panel Secretariat)

Members as shown on the Official List, with the exception of those listed below for whom apologies were received.

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

Frank Weller – Ramblers' Association
Peter Turner – Breamore Parish Council
Peter Greenslade – Natural England
Dionis MacNair – Verderers of the New Forest
Richard Bastow – Highways, Hampshire County Council
Bransgore Parish Council

1.2 The following substitutions were received:

Steve Avery substituted for Alison Barnes on behalf of the National Park Authority
Peter Dowling substituted for David Whitehead on behalf of Hyde Parish Council

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2015

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Robert Clarke (Burley Parish Council) referred to the proposed presentation on Wetland Restoration projects (minute item 8.1) and queried whether there would be an opportunity to question the speaker(s). He also intimated that he wished to contribute to the discussion and show photographs of some local works. The Chairman advised that he was happy to accommodate this request and advised the Panel that the relevant statutory bodies were preparing a joint presentation for the meeting in September.

3.2 Bruce Rothnie (Forestry Commission) informed the Panel that he would provide an update on how the fungus season would be addressed when they met in September (Minute item 3.1).

3.3 The Chairman explained that he had written to Wiltshire Council and had extended an invitation for them to participate in the work of the Panel. He thanked Leo Randall for his help with this matter and in identifying a possible representative.

3.4 The Chairman also advised that the Panel would be briefed on planning enforcement by Steve Avery (National Park Authority) and that this would be included as a future agenda item.

Action:

September agenda items: Wetland restoration update and fungus season update
Future agenda item: Planning enforcement briefing

4. National Park Authority (NPA) update

4.1 Steve Avery informed the Panel that he was substituting for Alison Barnes who had unfortunately been away from work following an accident but that it was anticipated that she would return to work on Monday 13 July.

4.2 He explained that there had been a number of changes to the NPA's Membership and that two long standing members, Maureen Holding and Clive Maton were no longer Members, but that the NPA had welcomed two new Parish Members, Harry Oram (SW Quadrant) and George Bisson (SE Quadrant). He also confirmed that Gordon Bailey had replaced Ian Hibberd as Test Valley Borough Council's representative. He reminded the Panel that the Annual Authority would take place on 16 July 2015 and that various appointments and membership of Committees would be determined at this meeting.

4.3 Mr Avery reminded the Panel that under the coalition Government there had been a proposal for direct elections to appoint national park members; however he explained that a parliamentary question had raised the issue and that the current Government had confirmed that they believed local communities were already represented and that there were no plans for direct elections. The exact wording of the question and answer is below:

Hansard (HoL, 29.06.15 HL670)

Written question - National Parks Authorities

Q: Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark - *To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to hold elections for the membership of National Park Authorities?*

A: Answered by Lord Gardiner of Kimble – *“Following careful consideration of proposals developed by the coalition Government to introduce elections to national park and the Broads authorities, the Government does not intend to bring forward the legislation necessary to enable elections to be held. Local communities are already well represented on the boards of the authorities”.*

4.4 Mr Avery updated the Panel on the final draft of the Management Plan. He confirmed that the second consultation had closed on 22 June and that 30 responses had been received from the 300 notifications sent out, these had included several endorsements and some very positive feedback. He indicated that the final version would be considered by Members at the Annual Authority meeting.

4.5 Mr Avery advised Members that the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) had recently issued a press release, both locally and nationally, about the funding of National Parks and that Panel Members may see the details in the press. He explained that the views expressed were those of the CNP and that the NPA had not inputted into the press release.

4.6 Mr Avery informed the Panel that the NPA had recruited two new seasonal campsite rangers in partnership with the Camping in the Forest and also a wildlife ranger which was funded from developer contributions to mitigate the effect of housing in the NFDC area.

In response to questions Mr Avery advised that the seasonal rangers would be based at the four main campsites and that it was difficult for them to target the temporary campsites that operate under the 28 day days rule as the NPA was not routinely made aware of these sites.

5. Deployment of Forestry Commission (FC) resources

- 5.1 Bruce Rothnie reminded the Panel that at the previous meeting they had worked in groups to respond to three questions he had posed about FC resources. He explained that he had analysed the responses and reported that the panel generally had a good understanding of the areas for which the FC had responsibility. He explained that the FC cost of managing the New Forest to the Country was approximately 10p per taxpayer per year and that it was a constant challenge to prioritise expenditure to meet objectives and the expectations of local communities with the limited resources available.
- 5.2 The presentation slides which include the questions posed and a summary of the responses can be found in the meeting section of the NPA's website and by following this link:
http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/365/new_forest_consultative_panel
- 5.3 In response to questions from the floor Mr Rothnie explained that he had responsibility for the southern region which includes the western part of South Downs National Park but the area of Forestry Commission woodlands there was a relatively small proportion of the Park when compared to the New Forest. Mr Rothnie explained that there were greater opportunities for generating income outside the New Forest through car park charges, forest cabin developments and sand/gravel extraction.

6. Review of the NPA Local Plan

- 6.1 Steve Avery explained that the Local Plan had been adopted in 2010 and that Government advice was that it should be reviewed at five year intervals. He explained that the final draft of the Management Plan was being considered at the Annual Authority Meeting later this month and that work would start in earnest on the Local Plan from September. He said that NFDC were also undertaking a review of their Plan and that there were common issues. He stated that the Local Plan remains the starting point for determining planning applications and is also the main vehicle that delivers the National Park's two purposes.
- 6.2 Mr Avery reminded the Panel that National Parks still benefit from the highest level of protection in Government Policy but housing needs for the area as a whole need to be assessed objectively. He commented that the current plan allowed for 11 new houses per year but that the current figure for completions was nearer 25 to 30 per year, compared to the NFDC district which was running at 300 plus per year.
- 6.3 The initial stage would be evidence gathering which would start in September followed by consideration of the issues for inclusion in the Plan he said. The Chairman urged organisations to engage with the process and advised that the earlier comments were received the more time there was to consider them for inclusion.

- 6.4 In response to questions Mr Avery reassured the Panel that National Parks did have the highest level of protection from development and that the Planning Inspectorate was paying heed to this. He said that housing need was assessed using a complex system that took into account many variables such as tenure, age profiles, size etc. and that previously the NPA and NFDC had commissioned an independent review which covered the whole district.
- 6.5 A number of Panel Members expressed the view that the New Forest was already at capacity and that new developments should be resisted. Mr Avery said that any growth needed to be organic and that it may be that only affordable exception sites would be agreed.

7. Building Design Awards

- 7.1 Steve Avery introduced the new Building Design Award scheme and explained that its purpose was to recognise and celebrate good design in the hope that it would act as an exemplar to others to emulate good design.
- 7.2 The Panel were advised that they could nominate an existing building or extension that had been completed in the previous three years. The closing date for nominations was the end of September, he said. More details and the nomination procedure can be found on the NPA's website and by following this link:
http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/info/20043/building_design/359/building_design_awards

8. Panel agenda setting

8.1 Cycling in the New Forest

Some Panel members said there was insufficient communication about cycling events which sometimes clashed with other activities in the Forest and commented on breaches of the Highway Code/traffic regulations and poorly equipped bicycles. Steve Avery advised that in January 2015, the Authority had agreed that the Charter would be reviewed after 12 months at which time the Authority would consider a report on the effectiveness of the Charter in controlling cycling events. He also said that residents could leave feedback on each cycling event through the Safety Advisory Group's website and undertook to include a link in the minutes of the current meeting. *Please see link below:*
http://forms.newforest.gov.uk/event_register

Note – feedback is possible for 28 days after each event. This event register also has details of future events notified to the Safety Advisory Group.

- 8.2 Steve Avery added that if the Charter was found not to be working, the Authority would look at the potential for further controls, however, indications were that recent events had been better run and marshalled.
- 8.3 *Flooding*

Mike Moriarty (Copythorne Parish Council) requested that the Environment Agency be invited to report to the Panel on flooding in the National Park and clarify which properties were subject to flooding. He mentioned that a 2010 Flood Plan had been

released by the National Park Authority under Freedom of Information which required a flood risk assessment to be undertaken on properties for the entire area of Copythorne and many residents were having difficulty with this. The Chairman advised that he would take this matter up with the Environment Agency and request that the Panel be afforded an opportunity to engage and influence any consultations on flooding in the New Forest.

Update: The Chairman has contacted David Horne of the Environment Agency in order to take this matter forward.

8.4 *SUSTRANS Salisbury to New Forest cycle route*

Members remarked on the SUSTRANS Salisbury to New Forest cycle route and queried whether the increase in cycling would have an impact on the Quiet Lanes initiative and the potential for increased cycle routes through villages. In response, Steve Avery advised that the initiative was in respect of family cycling and consultations on directional signs linked to the cycle routes had now closed. He advised that the route would be confined to Wiltshire areas as Hampshire County Council had not supported the proposal for directional signs.

9. Any other business

9.1 *Forestry Commission's Panel Tour*

Members expressed their appreciation to the Forestry Commission regarding the recent Panel tour which had been both interesting and informative. The tour also presented an opportunity for interaction between Panel members and with the Forestry Commission officers present regarding the sites and projects visited and generally on Forest issues.

9.2 *Impact from bridge repairs in Brockenhurst*

Rob Dewing (New Forest Business Partnership) advised that with the road closures resulting from the back to back bridge repairs on the entrances to Brockenhurst was having a major impact on high street businesses in the village. He queried the necessity for the work and whether repairs to the second bridge could be deferred until after the main tourism season.

9.3 Although there was no representative from Hampshire Highways present at the meeting, the Chairman referred to an e-mail received from Andy Harding (Assistant Highway Manager) responding to the concerns. The e-mail advised that the second bridge repairs would be deferred until 1 September 2015 and detailed the repairs which necessitated the closure.

9.4 *Advertising placards or bills on Crown Land*

Graham Baker (New Forest Association) queried the Forestry Commission's policy on the placing of advertising placards or bills on Crown land and drew attention to a number of advertising placards on the road verge at Sway and Brockenhurst. Bruce Rothnie advised that such applications were unlikely to be approved. He undertook to look into this particular matter and if necessary have the placards removed.

9.5 *Panel cost review*

In response to a query, the Chairman advised that the report on Panel efficiency savings had been deferred for discussion with Alison Barnes (Chief Executive, New Forest NPA) on her return to the office. An item would accordingly be included in the agenda of the next Panel meeting.

Action:

September agenda items: Panel cost review

10. Date of the next meeting

10.1 The Panel noted that the next Consultative Panel meeting would be held at **19.30 on Thursday 3 September 2015** in the **Forest Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall**.

The meeting closed at 21.05 hrs.