

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 247th Meeting, held in the Forest Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall, Highwood Road, Brockenhurst on THURSDAY, 3 September 2015

Those present: Bruce Rothnie (In the Chair)
David Stone (Panel Support Officer)
Vicki Gibbon (Panel Secretariat)
Rachael Bowen (Panel Secretariat)

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

11. Apologies for absence

11.1 Apologies were received from:

Christine Ames – NFTA
Linda Palmer – Whiteparish Parish Council
Kate Crisell – Totton Parish Council
Jacqui Hartas – Hale Parish Council
David Horne – Environment Agency
Ted Fleat – Sway Parish Council
Mark Carter – Institute of Chartered Foresters
Nick Clark – Newforce
James Young – Commoners Defence Association
Mark Rolle – Lyndhurst Parish Council

11.2 The following substitutions were received:

Bruce Rothnie substituted for Clive Chatters (Chairman)
Steve Avery substituted for Alison Barnes on behalf of the National Park Authority
John Clarke substituted for Stewart Hall on behalf of Woodgreen Parish Council

12. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2015

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

Mike Moriarty of Copythorne Parish Council felt that the issues he raised at the previous meeting had been consolidated and had not been fully depicted in the minutes. He accordingly requested that the following be substituted for the record of this minute.

8.3 Flooding - three issues raised

- 1. Suggestion that the Environment Agency be invited to the Consultative Panel to give us an update on the sea, river and surface water drainage that causes problems in the National Park. What efforts are being made to reduce the risk.*
- 2. A revised flood map was produced this year 2015 which has used a 'broad brush approach' to identify areas prone to flooding. I understand that this is a precautionary measure lest they were sued by a landowner being flooded, but not registered to be in a flood area. This has resulted in large increases in insurance premiums for those affected.*

3. *My understanding is that a flood risk assessment had been carried out on the Copperfields site which was not made available to Copythorne Parish Council's lead on flooding until he submitted a Freedom of Information request.*

13. Matters arising

- 13.1 Gerald Lewis (Sopley Parish Council), referred to Fast Broadband Access in the New Forest which was covered at the March Consultative Panel meeting.

Mr Lewis advised the Panel that Sopley had now been declared live for Superfast Broadband however very few properties were able to use the new system. He requested that BT and Hampshire County Council be asked to attend a future meeting to give a more detailed overview on this situation.

In response Edward Heron (New Forest District Council) advised that not all properties would be able to get superfast broadband and that BT were currently working with alternative technology to try to resolve some of these issues. He would ask BT to attend a future meeting to explain this further.

14. National Park Authority (NPA) update

- 14.1 Steve Avery updated the Panel on the progress of the New Forest Management Plan, which had now been formally agreed by National Park Authority Members and was currently going through ratification by Partner Organisations. This process should be completed by the end of the month.
- 14.2 The National Park Authority had recently hosted a VIP visit from Sonia Phippard, the Director General for the Policy and Delivery Group at Defra. Ms Phippard spent a day with Officers in the Forest seeing how the National Park worked with its partner organisations to protect habitats, support local communities and how it ensured visitors enjoyed its beautiful landscapes. Following on from this, the NPA then hosted two local MP's, Desmond Swayne and Dr Julian Lewis who were particularly keen on supporting the anti-litter campaign which the NPA was currently running.
- 14.3 Mr Avery advised the Panel that the Walking Festival would commence on 17 October and run until 1 November, more details of which could be found on the Authority's website.
- 14.4 The Panel was advised that the National Park Authority would be considering the issue of fungi picking at the next full Authority meeting which would take place on 24 September.

15. Forestry Commission Update

- 15.1 There were no further updates on this occasion.

16. Wetland Restoration

- 16.1 PowerPoint presentations were given by various organisations as set out below; these can be found on the website.

16.2 Peter Greenslade – Natural England

Mr Greenslade advised the Panel that Natural England's purpose was to be an advisor to the Government on the Natural Environment. As a statutory body, Natural England's duty was to ensure sites are maintained and restored. By restoring these sites, it supported the qualifying natural habitats on which the local species rely.

Mr Greenslade commented that the Verderers HLS agreement was negotiated in 2010 to address a number of issues, these included degraded habitats, in particular wetlands, to control invasive species and to encourage the grazing of livestock on the open forest. Natural England acted as advisers to the Verderers who manage the scheme and sub-contract to the Forestry Commission for specific restoration tasks.

16.3 Andy Page – Forestry Commission

Mr Page, as the Head of Wildlife Management at the Forestry Commission's offices in Lyndhurst, delivered a presentation that provided some background to his current role and previous roles within the Commission.

The presentation also demonstrated how the Forestry Commission felt wetland restoration works were necessary and that they were being completed by the appropriate experts.

16.4 Dominic May – Official Verderer

Dominic May commented that he had seen a huge benefit on the Forest in the last 20 years following the wetland restoration initiative. The Verderers were supportive of the schemes and found that it had encouraged the re-establishment of flood plains, reduced flood risks, improve landscape amenity and had improved grazing for livestock, returning it to favourable condition.

16.5 Steve Avery – New Forest National Park Authority

Steve Avery advised Panel members that the Forestry Commission had only recently needed to apply for planning permission for wetland restoration projects, prior to June 2006 the FC benefitted from 'crown immunity' from the planning system.

It was explained that wetland restoration schemes normally only required planning permission if they exceed a linear length of 1000m, with smaller schemes considered on a case by case basis. All applications are formally screened under EIA and Habitat regulations and any planning applications received are reported to the planning committee for a decision.

16.6 Robert Clarke – Burley Parish Council

Robert Clarke gave an overview of the area and land uses surrounding the site at Haverslade. He detailed the potential impacts any work could have including increased flood risk, contamination and the environmental effects, and found it difficult to believe the benefits outweighed the potential damage. Mr Clarke described how most local villagers were keen for an environmental impact assessment to be carried out to detail any potential risks, however this had not happened, and work had started on the site. Mr Clarke further added that this type of major land engineering schemes required the appropriate experts to consider and stated that many unanswered questions remained and requested that a forum established to discuss the outstanding questions. Mr Clarke handed over to John Shepherd for a more detailed presentation.

16.7 Professor John Shepherd

Professor Shepherd commented that following his investigation he felt that the HLS wetland restoration projects were major and potentially damaging interventions, he believed that the appropriate environmental assessments had not been carried out. He requested that all projects should be suspended until proper surveys and assessments had been carried out and that increased monitoring of their effects had been established.

Professor Shepherd also showed the Panel a variety of slides with before and after photos of various restoration projects and outlined various concerns with regard to the lack of public involvement on specific projects (*these can be found on the Panel website*).

- 16.8 Panel Members were then given the opportunity to express their views. It was felt that more monitoring needed to be carried out to ensure the schemes were working and were not unsightly whilst works were being carried out. It was also commented that more communication would be required to ensure Parish Councils and local organisations were made aware of any schemes which were taking place.

17. Fungi Picking in the New Forest

- 17.1 Bruce Rothnie read out a statement produced by the Forestry Commission with regard to fungi picking in the Forest a copy of which can be found on the website.

- 17.2 Following Mr Rothnie's statement, Ms Tubbs (New Forest Association) commented that the New Forest Association supported the Forestry Commission's effort to disrupt commercial picking but felt that a complete ban on collection should exist in the New Forest.

In response Mr Rothnie advised that a certain amount of foraging was good for the Forest and for educational purposes and that the Forestry Commission would give licenses to these groups.

18. Panel Savings and Efficiencies

- 18.1 David Stone made a presentation setting out potential Panel savings and efficiencies in agenda setting. Following brief discussion, and in order to allow full debate around the issues, the Panel agreed to consider these at its next meeting. (The slides presented are available on the Consultative Panel website).

19. Panel Agenda Settings

- 19.1 No items were advised

20. Any Other Business

- 20.1 Hampshire Women's Institute request to discuss management of ragwort in the Forest to be deferred to the next meeting.

- 20.2 Trevor Johnson from Hythe and Dibden Parish Council raised the issue of dog fouling. Mr Johnson suggested a survey be completed to identify the worst sites and then review the management of these sites. Bruce Rothnie responded saying that the FC and the NPA were continually considering how to tackle this problem including campaigns and working closely with NFDOG.
- 20.3 Mr Johnson also raised the issue of parked cars blocking gateways to inclosures and in some cases FC staff telling people that it was ok to park there. Bruce Rothnie said the advice by FC staff should be consistent and that it was not the general approach that would normally be taken in these circumstances.
- 20.4 Sue Bennison (Bramshaw Parish Council) was aware of an increased amount of logs/stumps being placed on grass verges, possibly to define the verge and discourage car parking. Bruce Rothnie asked to be informed of any sightings as this was not permitted on Special Areas of Conservation.

21. Date of the next meeting

- 21.1 The Panel noted that the next Consultative Panel meeting would be held at **19.30 on Thursday 5 November 2015** in the **Forest Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall**.

The meeting closed at 21.45 hrs.