

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2025 AT 10.00 AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON SO41 9ZG

#### **Present:**

##### *Members*

Victoria Mander (Acting Chair)	
John Adams (did not take part in votes)	Joe Reilly
Gordon Bailey (left at 12pm)	Ann Sevier
Zoe Clewer (left at 12pm)	Brice Stratford
Mary Davies	Michael Thierry
David Harrison	Derek Tipp
Patrick Heneghan	Steve Trow
Caroline Rackham	

##### *Officers*

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive
Steve Avery	Executive Director Strategy & Planning
Nigel Stone	Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)
Paul Walton	Head of Environment & Rural Economy
David Stone	Deputy Monitoring Officer
David Illsley	Policy & Conservation Manager
Vicki Gibbon	Member Services Administrator

#### **131. Apologies for Absence**

131.1 Apologies for absence were received from David Bence, Richard Clewer, Barry Dunning, Mel Kendal, George Meyrick and Gavin Parker.

#### **132. Declarations of Interest**

132.1 There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

#### **133. Chair's Announcements**

133.1 The Chair welcomed John Adams as new member to the Authority and gave her thanks to Rosalind Alderman, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer who recently left the Authority.

#### **134. Minutes**

134.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 were approved as a true record.

**Resolved, that** the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 be approved as a true record.

*Voting: Unanimous*

**135. Public Question Time**

- 135.1 Brian Tarnoff made a presentment to the Authority on the Recreation Management Strategy Spatial Plan, a copy of which can be obtained via Corporate Services.

**136. Chief Executive's Report (AM 699/25)**

- 136.1 The Chief Executive presented her report which covered the period since the last Authority meeting on 17 October 2024 and which had been formatted to accord with the NPA purposes and duty and which had been delivered within the Re:New Forest themes from the Business Plan. Ms Barnes gave a detailed presentation using PowerPoint giving a thorough overview of the Authority's work over the last quarter under each of the purposes.
- 136.2 Of particular note Ms Barnes highlighted the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UK National Parks and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New Forest National Park. Focusing on the National Parks purposes she advised members of the revised National Planning Policy Framework, the Devolution White Paper which sets out plans to change the structure of local government and an extension of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme under the Protect purpose. Under the Enjoy purpose Ms Barnes commented on Education and Youth, the recent walking festival and volunteering. Under the Prosper purpose, green skills and careers were highlighted along with the Brilliance in Business awards. Under the Excellence purpose Ms Barnes advised of the recent Partnership leaders panel visit which was joined by Southern Water and the Business South annual conference.

Following discussion, members noted the report. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available on the website.

**137 Oral Report from Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 4 November 2024**

- 137.1 Mary Davies reported on the issues which had been discussed at the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 4 November 2024 which included, a joint presentation by Craig Harrison (Deputy Surveyor, Forestry England) and Paul Walton (Head of Environment & Rural Economy, NFNPA) on joint working in terms of the national Accord between Forestry England and National Parks England which had been signed in 2018. Other reports considered by the Committee were the half year progress report on the 2024/25 Work Programme and the half year budgetary control report, the Authority's Corporate Risk Register, Water Quality and Recreation in the New Forest National Park and Net Zero with Nature – establishing a robust and consistent evidence base.

- 137.2 Members noted the above report

**138. Update to Indemnification of Members and Officers (AM 700/24)**

- 138.1 Nigel Stone gave a brief overview of the report advising members that in 2006 the Authority resolved to indemnify its members and officers, and authorised the Chief Executive to maintain adequate insurance in that regard, in respect of potential liability for acts or omissions of members or officers. He explained that it was now

appropriate for the Authority to review and update that indemnity. The report had previously been approved by the Standards Committee and he asked that it was now approved by the Authority.

138.2 Following brief discussion, members approved the recommendations as detailed below.

**Resolved,** that the Authority

- (i) grants an indemnity to members and employees of the Authority, and Independent Persons appointed by it pursuant to the Localism Act 2011, on the terms set out in Annex 1 of the report; and
- (ii) authorise the Chief Executive to ensure that the Authority's insurance arrangements make adequate provision to cover the Authority's liability under the Indemnity.

*Voting: Unanimous*

### **139. Draft Financial Report 2023/24 (Update) (AM 701/25)**

139.1 Nigel Stone presented an updated draft Financial Report 2023/24, including the Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Policies, Letter of Management Representation and an updated Ernst & Young LLP Audit Report.

139.2 He said that the report provided a brief update on the audit and accounts reports brought to the Authority meeting in October 2024. All minor outstanding audit matters had been resolved and the Financial Report and Audit Report had been updated accordingly. However a more significant change was also required to these documents in relation to pensions. He said that during the completion of the pension fund audit, it was discovered that an error had been made by the Actuary and it would have a material impact on the pension figures in the NPA's 2023/24 Financial Report.

139.3 The full changes required to the Financial Report were quite extensive, but did not make any difference to the overall financial outturn or position.

139.4 Following the agreed changes, the NPA's Auditors, Ernst & Young LLP, had issued an updated Audit Report which was attached to the submitted report. He concluded by saying that the Authority and Auditors had up until the end of February 2025 to finalise if required, the Financial Report, Annual Governance Statement and the Letter of Management Representation would then be officially signed by the Chair and Senior Officers

**Resolved:**

1. That amendments to the Financial Report 2023/24 as set out in the submitted be approved, subject to any further minor changes required, for which delegation is given for

these to be mutually agreed by the Chief Finance Officer, Chief Executive and Chair of the Authority.

2. That the updated Audit Report, attached as Annex 1, be noted.

*Voting: Unanimous*

**140. New Forest Local Plan Review – Regulation 18 ‘Direction of Travel’ Consultation (AM 702/25)**

140.1 David Illsley began his presentation by advising members that throughout recent reforms of the planning system the Government had continued to reaffirm the primacy of the development plan in decision-making and the benefits of having an up-to-date plan in place. At the Authority meeting in March 2024 members resolved that work should commence on a partial review of the adopted National Park Local Plan. This review would be an opportunity to respond to the changes which have occurred since the current Local Plan was adopted in 2019.

140.2 Mr Illsley advised members of the timetable and next steps for this process and said that part of the consultation on the strategic ‘Direction of Travel’ document would be a series of public drop-in sessions across the National Park; and a wide range of statutory and local consultees would also be notified at the start of the consultation. He then asked members to approve the strategic Local Plan ‘Direction of Travel’ document for public consultation commencing in early February 2025 and reassured members that they would be actively engaged in the Local Plan review process and kept informed of further revisions to national policy which may influence the review.

**Resolved, that**

Members endorse the strategic ‘New Forest National Park Local Plan Review – Direction of Travel’ documents for the purposes of public consultation.

*Voting: Unanimous*

**141. Adoption of the Revised Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement (AM 703/24)**

141.1 David Illsley began his report by reminding members that the first Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement was formally adopted in June 2013. He explained the parish council was keen to update their VDS to ensure it is still afforded weight in planning decision making; as well as responding to current design related issues in the parish.

Members resolved to endorse the recommendations as detailed below.

141.2 Sue Robinson, Chair of Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council’s Planning Committee was invited to speak to the Authority. She explained what had changed since the last VDS was implemented and thanked Mr Illsley and his colleagues for their help and fantastic support in revising the document and taking it through the recent public consultation.

**Resolved that:** members

- (i) formally adopt the revised Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement and bring it into immediate effect from 23 January 2025 as material consideration in planning decision making, and
- (ii) delegate authority to the Executive Director (Strategy & Planning) to make any final, minor amendments to the design and formatting of the SPD prior to publication.

Voting: Unanimous

**142. Responding to the Climate and Nature Emergency – Net Zero with Nature (AM 704/25)**

142.1 Paul Walton advised that his report was an opportunity to look back over the last five years since the Authority reaffirmed its commitment to playing a part in addressing the climate and nature emergencies by declaring its ambition for the New Forest National Park and surrounding areas to be 'net zero by nature' by 2050.

142.2 Mr Walton ran through some of the highlights and asked members to note the report.

**143. Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer (AM 705/25)**

143.1 Nigel Stone informed members that since Rosalind Alderman had left the Authority as Solicitor and Monitoring Officer and whilst recruitment was underway it was necessary for the Authority to appoint an Interim Monitoring Officer for a maximum of six months or until a formal appointment was made. Paul Walton was proposed as Interim Monitoring Officer and members fully endorsed this proposal.

**Resolved, that**

Members formally appoint Paul Walton as Interim Monitoring Officer of the Authority, with effect from 24 January 2025 and for up to a maximum of six months or until a permanent appointment was made.

Voting: Unanimous

**144. Minor Amendments to Authority Documents (AM 706/25)**

144.1 Nigel Stone informed members that, prior Rosalind Alderman leaving the Authority, she had reviewed some of the Authority's key documents and had made some minor amendments, these had been considered and agreed with the Standards Committee and therefore he asked the Authority to adopt the proposed revised Standing Orders and Member Complaints Process.

**Resolved that**

The Authority adopt the revised Standing Orders and Member Complaints Process (Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations) with immediate effect.

Voting: Unanimous

**145. Date of next meeting**

145.1 Thursday 27 March 2025 at 10.00am – Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall, Lymington.

**PART II ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPTED INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED**

None.

The meeting closed at 12:20pm.

Signed: ..... Date: ..... (Chair)