

CONSULTATIVE PANEL MEETING – 6 December 2024

CHAIR'S REPORT

Report by: Brian Tarnoff, Chair, New Forest Consultative Panel

1 Chair's Notes on the Previous Meeting 5th December 2024

1.1 Hampshire Countryside Access Plan

Abby Sullivan presented on The Countryside Access Plan (CAP) includes the statutorily required Rights of Way improvement Plan (ROWIP) which is designed to set out how the authority can manage the Rights of Way network to enhance it to meet the public's current and future needs.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/countryside/accessplan>

The Q&A included points / questions made by Panel members:

- Will there be liaising with NFDC / NFNPA in reference to their upcoming revised local plans
 - Not as yet, but the resulting CAP should be factored into those plans.
- Is the plan incorporating FE backed cycle network proposals
 - Team aware of proposals, but CAP is at a more strategic level for the whole authority. (Chair notes: CAP is somewhat outside the remit of the Crown Lands which are Section 52 under the CROW Act, so the Plan applies more to promoting alternative access outside the Forest, or access to, but not on the Crown Lands).
- Increasing access increases pressure, will the plan offset this through mitigation and/or habitat creation?
 - In most cases we are not adding new access. The ROW network already exists, and is typically only added to if historic routes, or long term usage may be proved. New routes may be added along with development to replace lost routes.
- Follow up suggestion about creating country parks as an alternative access area (as is done in the Netherlands to protect sensitive habitat)
 - The team does liaise with the Bird Aware Solent team to help positive outcomes for nature.
- How is this plan engaging with the two National Parks in Hampshire?
 - It is a goal or outcome of the plan, rather than a part of the high level strategic view itself. The previous plan divided the county into 7 landscape areas, the current effort recognizes the need for different approaches, but

still recognizing the unique issues of the National Parks. There is scope for including more detail as this moves forward.

- A panel members noted examples of efforts to address alternative access and mitigation: Test Valley Borough Council have a site in Sherfield English as part of a nitrate mitigation scheme that may be available for public access, and Roke Manor quarry is due to be a Nature Reserve, but without public access (Chair notes: Roke Manor was meant to be restored for Jan 2024, but has been given an extension by HCC to deliver by Jan 2028).
- Chair asked for clarification: While the legal obligations for a CAP is somewhat outside the remit of the Crown Lands which are Section 52 under the CROW Act, so the Plan applies more to promoting alternative access outside the Forest, or access to, but not on the Crown Lands. That said, the team are happy to extend the scope to include consideration of relevant initiatives.

1.2 Go New Forest

Nicola Carass, Go New Forest, Business and Membership Manager, gave a short presentation on their hub for promoting the Forest as a destination. Go New Forest site for tourism promoters and partners: <https://gonewforest.com/about-us/> Visit The New Forest (tourist portal) site: <https://www.thenewforest.co.uk/> Their website in 2024 received 4.8 million page views across 1.1 million users, having more internet and social media impact for the New Forest than the combined work of the Park Authority, Council and Forestry. Clearly this makes them a useful point of contact with visitors to give messages about positive behaviour within the New Forest.

Despite the Chair requesting Q&A questions, not merely attacks on tourism, the Q&A led with that but included this and other points / questions made by Panel members:

- Appalled by concept of encouraging visitors, it should be Forest first.
 - Those sentiments have been echoed, acutely aware that in promoting visitor experience it is being done in partnership with those who can advise where visitors should/shouldn't be. Open to more specific comment/complaint.
- What does your website tell visitors they should / shouldn't do (not in presentation, would go a long way).
 - Work with Forestry England to promote the New Forest Code (for example), including not feeding / touching ponies etc. Given the reach their internet and social media has, they feel the responsibility for giving these crucial messages.
 - Trying to make sure that visitors understand what commoning is, etc. before they arrive here. (figures for sharing code @46 10ish)

- Comment on previous management of GoNewForest, not always popular, but aiming for “high quality visitor experience where lower numbers could have good economic impact on the community in hotels and businesses, but less impact on the Forest, as opposed to rack’em/stack’em in campsites”
 - That is still part of the mission. (most of their self-catering members are not selling through website businesses that don’t pay tax put money into our communities)
- Praise for Nicola’s level of engagement in the short time she’s been in post, including taking the negative comments, and acknowledging history where tourism has seemingly trumped conservation. Hopeful about constructive and collaborative way forward.
 - Further engagement through the Panel, and with Panel member organizations was welcomed.

1.3 Forestry England

Craig Harrison represented FE. The Q&A included points / questions made by Panel members:

- Clarification requested about “no go areas of the Forest”
 - In reference to cycling, there’s a permitted network of 100+miles (170km per the HLS website)
 - There are sensitive areas which want protection from any recreational pressure, and a balance must be struck between responsible enjoyment while protecting the special values of the place.
- Supplementary query “how do we find out where they are”
 - A combination of where access points are, signage, and available information about the network (available online in various formats, etc.)
- Richard Taylor as chair of the Cycle Working Group further explained proposals
 - Goal to better manage cycling on the Forest
 - Make it sustainable on a long term basis
 - Move forward from unhelpful divisive arguments from past
 - Surveys of cyclists showed their dissatisfaction with navigating the existing network, and how disconnected it is in several places
- Previous opportunities to improve the network have been hampered by some cyclists disregarding the network, lack of policing, casting doubt on the efficacy, and leading to Verderers withholding permission. Until an enforcement element that addresses those who are flagrantly, knowingly disregarding the network, can be implemented, progress will be limited.
- 3 Proposed Routes ending at Fritham are through tranquil areas that need to be protected. Report of cyclists off paths causing ruts, damaging ground nesting bird nests, and reacting aggressively.

- Given recent high rate of rain in Brockenhurst (33mm in 6 hours beating previous high – since 2016 – 40mm in 12 hours), and Met Office predicting extreme drought in Southern England. Do you have plans to deal with both extremes. There is also government funding for natural flooding defence schemes, some of which has been missed out on.
 - This is an issue for all of us. While wetland restorations have focussed on biodiversity, they also improved the hydrology of the Forest restoring natural processes.
 - We've noticed this during recent Summer droughts. More to be reckoned.
- A query arose around Operation Mountie statistics quoted in the presentation, around what the boundary is of "the local area" home to a staggering 95% of those caught speeding. However, this conflated two separate statements:
 - the majority of speeders caught were on their daily commute, 95%, the rest, 5% were visitors.
 - 2/3rds, 66%, were from within New Forest District Council boundaries.
- An old beech had been felled, which still had conservation value, potentially for a new track. It should have been retained, or if for safety topped off at 4 foot, left standing as a monolith for its conservation value. If the track was for recreation, then the Sandford principle had not been followed. Disappointingly poor management, given other improvements in Forestry practice (would have expected this back in the 1980s). Would like to see better decisions in future.
 - Acknowledged criteria which Forestry try to follow, and aimed to check instance noted.

1.4 National Park Authority

Steve Avery presented without slides. The Q&A included points / questions made by Panel members:

- Several concerns about Keyhaven Biodiversity Net Gain mitigation – Will there be access, will there be ragwort control, will areas be credited/managed in a piecemeal/patchwork fashion, what controls do either NFNPA/NFDC have once agreements have been signed, can credits be ringfenced for local business/developers to benefit our community.
 - The site will be managed by Hampshire IOW Wildlife Trust
 - Before taking it on, the Trust wanted to be assured that there was a local market, i.e. NFDC/National Park for the credits, which is within current housing allocation, let alone future local allocation.
 - It doesn't interfere with existing Rights of Way, and there may be scope within the 30 years of the agreement for additional access.

- The way the agreements are implemented for a scheme “happen all at once” rather than in any patchwork fashion, the whole site becomes managed, not just the bits standing in for used credits.
 - Steve happy to share legal agreements, but they primarily describe the process of buying into the credits.
 - There are tight policies in place to guide the change of use of the redundant farm buildings.
 - A number of community based developments are coming forward and to some extent they get “first dibs” at using the scheme.
- Question about New Forest Show “Behind the Scenes” campaign, stories and photos of various forest champions and roles:
[Behind the Scenes - New Forest National Park Authority](#)

1.5 NFDC

Derek Tipp discussed car parking strategy, call for sites for the Local Plan review, Community Infrastructure Levy funding bids, Biodiversity Net Gain and Nitrate Mitigation, partially echoing Steve’s points about Aubrey’s Farm, Keyhaven.

The Q&A included points / questions made by Panel members:

- Do you have examples of where Community Infrastructure Levy funding has been successful in recent years?
 - Village Halls, extensions, solar panels for community use, external lighting for car parks safety.

1.6 Verderers

Graham Ferris, an elected Verderer, had stepped down after the September meeting. The Verderers had not yet chosen new representation to the Panel, and other outside organizations. The Chair did point out in correspondence to the Official Verderer, that this entirely predictable instance might have been avoided with a temporary appointment from the remaining Verderers.

1.7 AOB

Chair noted the January New Forest Volunteer Fair.

Steve Avery reminded the panel of the “Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings” Government Consultation which has now closed ([19 December 2024](#), this link had been available to Panel members in the previous report). Steve summarized the response of the NFNPA as Support Hybrid Meetings, but only if there is no other way, i.e. under extenuating circumstances (as opposed to personal travel preferences).

One panel member wanted to acknowledge the first time in over 50 years that women had been newly elected Verderers. Alison Tilbury and Kay Harrison were the first newly elected women Verderers since Dionis Macnair was elected in 1973 (consistently re-elected, serving until 2020).

2 Updates

2.1 Verderer

Anthony Pasmore is the longest serving Elected Verderer, and has been chosen to represent the Verderers on the Panel. In the unlikely instance that any Panel members don't know him, he quite literally wrote the book on the Verderers (Verderers of the New Forest: A History of the Forest, 1877-1977). This is among other volumes of local history and memoir. He is a leading light within the New Forest History and Archaeology Group and its precursors.

His regular "New Forest Notes" feature in the Lymington Times / New Milton Advertiser is [archived here](#) on the NFHAG website. I particularly recommend his latest Feb 2025 article which marks the sesquicentennial of the [1875 Great New Forest Enquiry](#). It's worth reflecting on this key moment in the progress of the 1877 New Forest Act, the legislation, without which, the Forest would not exist as we know it.

2.2 Election for Chair

Just a reminder to members that our March Meeting will begin with elections for Panel Chair. While I am standing for the role again, my candidacy statement will be distributed with any other nominees (I'll not use this report as my soapbox). I would like to beg any other nominees to make sure they are present at the March meeting, as the role is filled immediately in that meeting by the elected Chair. Last year one candidate was not present, and had they been successful, the meeting would either have been without a Chair, or one of the Statutory members would have been imposed upon to shoulder the role. Our present world is full of constitutional crises, no need to add to them, however humble ours would be.

3 Statutory Member Updates and Current Presentations for March Meeting

3.1 National Park Authority – Steve Avery

Steve has sent through copious notes to update Panel members:

A lot happened in the last week before Christmas with a barrage of Government announcements/publications that included:

1. An updated [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). There are understandable concerns about the marked increase in the Government's published housing need figures for the New Forest district (including the National Park) which at 1,500 new homes a year equates to a 100% increase on previous figures. However, it is important to remember that these housing need figures represent an unconstrained assessment of the number of homes needed and takes no account of the many designations that apply in the New Forest district - National Park, National Landscape, Green Belt, SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar to name a few. It is also worth mentioning that the updated NPPF reiterates the national planning policy position that development within National Parks should be limited (para 189), with major development only supported in exceptional circumstances (para 190). Development within the setting of a National Park should also "be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas" (para 189). For plan making and decision-taking, the updated NPPF retains 'footnote 7' to para 11 which is clear in saying that the presumption in favour of sustainable development and meeting "objectively assessed needs for housing" does not apply to protected areas where there is a "strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area."
2. Two 'planning reform working papers' – (i) [Planning Committees](#) (updated in February) which invited views on models for a national scheme of delegation for determining planning applications to 'support better decision making in the planning system' and (ii) [Development and Nature Recovery](#) (also updated in February) which is aimed at streamlining development processes and the discharging of environmental obligations to 'unlock economic benefits'. There was initially no time limit for responding to either of these working papers but latterly we were told that all responses had to be submitted by 21 February. Copies of our responses to both working papers are attached.
3. Defra's long awaited [guidance](#) on applying the strengthened statutory duty (to seek to further National Park purposes) introduced by s.245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act in Oct 2023 – importantly this guidance is clear in saying that the new duty applies to the preparation of local plans and making decisions on planning applications, which is helpful in the context of the updated NPPF. We are awaiting the outcome of our judicial review against an Inspector's decision to allow an appeal which we say failed to apply the new duty.
4. [English Devolution White Paper](#) – the Executive Summary starts by saying "England is one of the most centralised countries in the developed world. Devolution across England is fundamental to achieving the change the public

expect and deserve: growth, more joined-up delivery of public services, and politics being done with communities, not to them.” A lot has happened since then with the local council leaders from Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, and Southampton City Council having written to government to express their interest in taking forward devolution within Hampshire & the IoW through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority, with the first election for a Mayor taking place in May 2026. This is now the subject of an [open consultation](#) until 13 April 2025. We are looking closely at how National Parks do (or don't) fit into this new local government framework for local government.

In other news:

1. We have commenced our [Local Plan Review](#) which David Illsley will talk to at the meeting.
2. We are still waiting to hear from Government on our Defra grant for 25/26. The ongoing uncertainty is not really helpful for our forward planning work and agreeing a budget for 25/26. Other National Parks are having to make significant cuts, the [Peak District NPA](#) being one.
3. Very successful [Volunteer Fair](#) held in January.
4. The [Awakening Festival](#) will run through March.
5. Our search for a new office/base continues with the lease on the Town Hall expiring in November 2026.
6. We expect to start building works later this year in delivering two new affordable homes in Burley (as we did in Bransgore nearly 10 years ago).
7. We now have a date for the Vernon Dene judicial review hearing in the High Court (8 and 9 April).
8. This is the 20th anniversary year of National Park designation for the New Forest.
9. A number of recreation themed plans/proposals are coming forward (off road cycle network, car parking charges etc) and I expect these will also be covered at the meeting.

Chair notes: the New Forest National Park responses to the two planning reform papers will be available to Panel (either by email, or posted with other Panel papers to the meeting page).

3.2 Forestry England – Craig Harrison

Craig will discuss future plans and proposals for the Forest Car Parks as well as his usual updates on FE works.

3.3 NFDC – Derek Tipp

Derek will speak about the local government re-organisation and devolution and also say something about the progress of the NFDC Local Plan.

3.4 Direction of Travel Local Plan Consultation – David Illsley, Planning Policy Manager, New Forest National Park

David will introduce the consultation (details, including drop-in sessions 4.1 below), and take questions.

4 Other Pertinent Information

4.1 New Forest National Park Local Plan Review – Direction of Travel Local Plan Consultation

The National Park Authority has started work on a review of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019). The Local Plan sets out the local planning policy framework for the National Park area (New Forest District Council are at a similar stage in their review of the local plan for the District outside the National Park) and guides decisions on planning applications submitted within the National Park. The revised Local Plan will look forward to 2043 and is a key way through which the two statutory National Park purposes and related socio-economic duty are delivered.

This is the first stage in the Local Plan Review, a consultation based on the Direction of Travel document. This sets out the areas considered to be 'in scope' for review, as well as those areas of the adopted Local Plan that NFNPA consider remain consistent with the latest national planning policy.

As part of the initial work on the review of the Local Plan, the Authority is also inviting local communities, landowners and developers to put forward sites they wish to be considered for residential, employment, Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople and other uses (including environmental mitigation) within the National Park. Submitted sites will be assessed and the results will form part of the evidence base for the next stage in updating the New Forest National Park Local Plan.

Drop-in sessions about the consultation will be available as follows:

- Bramshaw Village Hall, SO43 7JE. Monday 24 February, 2pm – 7pm
- Hyde Memorial Hall, SP6 2HU. Tuesday 25 February, 1.30pm – 6.30pm
- Brockenhurst Village Hall, SO42 7RY. Monday 3 March, 2pm – 7pm
- Lyndhurst Community Centre, SO43 7NY. Friday 7 March, 2pm – 7pm

Consultation runs from Tuesday 4 February – Tuesday 18 March 2025

[New Forest National Park Local Plan Review 2025 Webpage](#)

[Direction of Travel Local Plan Document](#)

[Local Plan Review Response Form](#)

[Call For Sites](#)

4.2 New Forest District Council Local Plan Review – Issues and Scope Consultation

In precisely the same mode, but with slightly different wording, NFDC are engaged in a similar exercise. Keeping in mind the fact that within the Park constraints will more palpably limit development, pressure in the District, and its impact within the Park, should keep this of equal concern regardless which side of the park boundary you may be.

Drop-in sessions about the consultation will be available as follows:

- Avonway Community Centre, SP6 1JF. Wednesday 26 February, 2pm to 7pm
- Lymington Community Centre, SO41 9BQ. Thursday 27 February, 2pm to 7pm
- St Andrew's Church(Dibden Parish Hall), SO45 4PT. Friday 28 February, 2pm to 7pm
- New Milton Memorial Centre, BH25 6DE. Mon 3 March, 2pm to 7pm
- West Totton Centre, SO40 8WU. Tue 04 March, 2pm to 7pm
- Lloyd Recreation Hub, SO40 4XB. Wed 05 March, 2pm to 7pm
- Greyfriars Community Centre, BH24 1DW. Fri 07 March, 2pm to 7pm

Consultation runs from Monday 17 February – Friday 4 April 2025

<https://www.newforest.gov.uk/localplan>

[NFDC Issues and Scope Consultation Document](#)

4.3 Hampshire and the Solent Devolution

This consultation seeks views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas in Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, and Southampton City Council (referred to as Hampshire and the Solent in this consultation).

Consultation runs from Monday 17 February to Sunday 13 April 2025.

[Hampshire and the Solent devolution consultation](#)

4.4 Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a system of plans identifying valuable areas for habitat, opportunities for improvements, and local priorities. The strategy will be an input into local plans, guide the new biodiversity net gain scheme for development, shape

funding for Environmental Land Management, and add to the evidence base for local planning authorities.

The current timeframe for Hampshire's LNRS will likely have its statutory consultation period beginning of May to mid-June 2025. Prior to this there will be consultation with the supporting authorities (which includes the NFNPA) to confirm the supporting authorities are happy for the draft Strategy to go to public consultation.

Laura McCulloch from HCC will brief the panel with progress at our June meeting and I will include any further detail closer to that time.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/nature-recovery-hampshire/hampshire-strategy>

A concise overview of the Strategy, its aims and timescales:

[Decision Day Report - January 2025 Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)