

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Constitution and Working Procedures

1. Definition and Overall Purpose of the New Forest Consultative Panel

- 1.1 The New Forest Consultative Panel is a discussion forum for voluntary and statutory organisations within the New Forest National Park. These represent local communities, recreational and environmental groups, land managers and local authorities, all with an interest in the protection and conservation of the New Forest.
- 1.2 The overall purpose of the Panel is to:
- help ensure the conservation of the special qualities of the New Forest National Park and its environs;
 - promote the understanding and enjoyment of these qualities; and
 - have regard for people's diverse needs and uses.

2. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of the Panel are:

- 2.1 To meet regularly to debate, in public, matters which concern the conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest National Park.
- 2.2 To invite and listen to presentations and papers on issues which affect the conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the area.
- 2.3 To act as a sounding board and key consultative body for the National Park Authority and the statutory bodies with responsibilities covering the National Park and surrounding areas.
- 2.4 To take a proactive approach when considered necessary by the Panel, in order to bring to the attention of the statutory bodies issues which the Panel consider are of particular concern or urgency.
- 2.5 To promote and maintain good two-way communication with its member organisations and the wider community.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership is open to organisations and groups with a clear involvement in the New Forest National Park, which can demonstrate that they meet all the following criteria:

- a) An organisation which has a genuine interest in contributing to the overall purpose of the Panel and working within its Terms of Reference;
- b) A recognised self-sustaining organisation with regular meetings and an active membership;
- c) An organisation with interests which cannot adequately be represented by an existing Panel member organisation;
- d) An organisation which falls within one of the categories below:
 - Local authorities, including County, District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils with any land within the Panel's remit area;
 - Other statutory bodies, including the National Park Authority (NPA), with a significant interest or role in conservation, land management, recreation or other areas of work relevant to the overall purpose of the Panel;
 - Local groups and voluntary organisations with a significant interest or role in conservation, land management, recreation or other matters relevant to the overall purpose of the Panel;
 - An organisation from sectors not included above (such as business or education) which can demonstrate a particular interest in the conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the National Park, and whose views cannot adequately be represented through at least one of the existing member organisations.

3.2 New applications for membership of the Panel should be submitted in writing to the Chairman and will be dealt with as they arise using the above criteria. Applicants will be expected to show how their organisation meets the membership criteria, and undertake to follow the procedures within the Constitution. The National Park Authority will be advised of and asked to endorse the Panel's views on applications for membership.

3.3 The range of member organisations should be such that an overall balance is maintained between all the various New Forest interests. The Panel may therefore specifically invite membership applications from groups with particular interests (such as young people) where these are currently under-represented.

- 3.4 Each member organisation should nominate one official representative to attend Panel meetings. Member organisations with similar interests may be asked to consider joint membership.
- 3.5 The Panel reserves the right to introduce more stringent criteria for assessing membership applicants in the future, should the number of applications increase substantially. This may include a stricter requirement for joint representation of similar interests.
- 3.6 A review of the Panel membership will take place at regular intervals to ensure member organisations continue to meet the criteria given above.

4. Meetings of the Panel

- 4.1 Ordinary meetings will be held quarterly on the evening of the first Thursday of that month, unless this is altered by agreement of the Chairman.
- 4.2 Ordinary meetings will be held at the Lyndhurst Community Centre or at such other venues as may be agreed by the Panel and Chairman.
- 4.3 Special meetings to address specific issues may be arranged as necessary by the agreement of the Chairman.
- 4.4 All meetings will be held in public, with the public and press attending as observers only. There will be no public participation.
- 4.5 An agenda, papers for discussion or information and the minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated to all members prior to each meeting. Agreed papers or other items received after the circulation date will be distributed at the meeting.
- 4.6 Agenda, minutes and papers may be inspected by the public and press, following distribution to members of the Panel.
- 4.7 Agenda, minutes and papers will be available on the website 1 week prior to the meeting.

5. The Role of Representatives

- 5.1 The nominated representative of each member organisation will be responsible for gaining the views of their organisation on agenda items prior to the meeting, speaking on behalf of the organisation as necessary at the meeting, and reporting back the content of the meeting and views of the Panel to their organisation.
- 5.2 Changes to the nominated representative (either long or short term) should be notified to the Secretariat two weeks prior to the meeting, or in the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as illness, at the earliest opportunity.

Permanent changes to the nominated representative should be notified in writing.

- 5.3 An individual should not represent more than one Panel organisation unless those organisations have formally agreed to nominate a joint representative.
- 5.4 Attendance at Panel meetings is voluntary. However, if a representative fails to attend for 3 consecutive meetings without explanation, a formal letter may be sent to the representative asking if they still wish to attend meetings. If further absences occur, a letter will be sent to the organisations concerned asking if they wish to nominate another representative or cease membership of the Panel.
- 5.5 Individual representatives shall not express views as a Panel member to the public media (including newspapers, magazines, leaflets, radio, television, or through social media), or to official bodies, either in writing or verbally. Any Panel views should be agreed by members and issued through the Chairman.

6. Election of Chairman

- 6.1 The Chairman will be elected on an annual basis at the meeting in March of each year. Re-election of the current Chairman will take place if there are no other nominations. In the case of contested elections a secret ballot will take place, with one vote cast by each Panel member present or their nominated deputy.
- 6.2 In the event that the Chairman is unable to attend a particular meeting the Chairman's role will be undertaken by the Deputy Surveyor of the Forestry Commission.

7. Secretariat

- 7.1 The Panel will be supported by a secretariat supplied by the New Forest National Park Authority.
- 7.2 The secretariat will arrange all matters related to Panel meetings, provide a point of contact for members and produce and circulate minutes and other information. The secretariat will also contribute administrative and procedural advice at meetings as required.

8. Reports and items to be included on the Agenda

- 8.1 The Chairman, NPA Chief Executive and Deputy Surveyor of the Forestry Commission will meet once per year in October / November to discuss agenda items for the forthcoming year.
- 8.2 Any Panel member organisation can request that an item be included on the Agenda, or can submit a report for a forthcoming meeting. Agenda items should only concern issues which are relevant to the overall purpose of the Panel. The

Chairman will make the final decision on which items will go forward, taking into account urgency, relevance and limits on meeting time.

- 8.3 Other organisations or individuals may be invited to submit papers, make presentations or advise on specific topics, at the discretion of the Chairman and Panel.
- 8.4 All main agenda items and a summary of any papers should be agreed with the Chairman prior to the meeting, and confirmed (with full papers and other items for circulation) to the secretariat 14 days before the meeting. Items which have not been agreed in advance, will not be heard as part of the main agenda unless these are considered by the Chairman to have a high level or urgency. Any presentations or papers to be read should be time limited, and the amount of time needed indicated to the Chairman prior to the meeting. Papers should be emailed to the secretariat in advance of the meeting for distribution and inclusion on the website if appropriate and should be confined to no more than two sides of A4.
- 8.4 Members may bring information leaflets or papers to the meeting, with prior notification, as long as these are appropriate to the purposes of the Panel. Such items will be available at the end of the meeting for those interested.
- 8.5 If a Member wishes to bring an item of urgent business to the Panel they must advise the Secretariat by 5pm the previous working day to the meeting.

9. Procedures at Meetings

- 9.1 The normal order of business will be as shown below. Items of business may be altered at the discretion of the Chairman, or by the agreement of the Panel, taken as a motion moved and seconded.
- a) Introduction by the Chairman.
 - b) Health and Safety advisory.
 - c) Apologies, substitutions and welcomes.
 - d) Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.
 - e) Matters arising from the previous meeting (except any issues which in the judgement of the Chairman warrant discussion as a main agenda item), including responses from the statutory bodies.
 - f) Items specified in the agenda.
 - g) Any other urgent business, to be taken at the discretion of the Chairman.
 - i) Forthcoming meetings.
- 9.2 The rules of debate will be as follows.

- a) Meetings will be conducted with respect for the Chairman, staff and members of the Panel. No member shall use offensive expressions or employ personal criticism of other individuals during any statement or question.
- b) Members should identify themselves and their organisation prior to speaking. They should speak only on behalf of the organisation they represent and should not express their personal views.
- c) Discussion and questions will be confined to items included on the agenda.
- d) All debate should be addressed through the Chairman, who will indicate the order in which speakers will be heard, and who will endeavour to ensure that all interests are given an equal opportunity to express their views.
- e) The Chairman may rule on the suitability, relevance or tone of any debate or question.
- f) If any Panel member, or member of the public or press, disregards the ruling of the Chairman, the Chairman or any other member may move that they should not be heard further. If seconded, a vote will be taken without discussion. In the event of further disruption the Chairman may move that the person named should leave the meeting, or that the meeting should be adjourned for an appropriate period. This motion shall be determined without seconding or discussion.

9.3 Decision-making

- a) Normally the views of the Panel will be expressed by consensus, following open debate of the issue. The consensus view will be summarised by the Chairman, agreed by the Panel and minuted.
- b) The Panel will, however, have the power to vote on an issue if there is an overall agreement that this is appropriate. Representatives of the statutory bodies will not cast a vote in this instance. A proposal must be moved and seconded prior to voting. The Chairman will accept one amendment to the proposal at any one time, this amendment to be agreed or not, before another is accepted.
- c) Any matter on which the Panel decides an overall view, through consensus or vote, shall not be proposed for further debate for a period of six months. This includes matters on which the Panel concludes that no overall consensus can be reached. In exceptional cases, where new information or circumstances indicate an over-riding reason for further discussion, this should only take place with the approval of the majority of Panel members present.

10. Distribution of the Panel Constitution

- 10.1 The Consultative Panel Constitution and Working Procedures will be distributed to all nominated representatives of Panel member organisations, to the clerks and secretaries of each member organisation and to members of the National Park Authority.
- 10.2 The document will also be available to other organisations and the public on request, or by inspection at the offices of the New Forest National Park Authority and also on the website.

11. Interpretation and Amendments to the Panel Constitution

- 11.1 The final interpretation of the Panel Constitution and Working Procedures will rest with the Chairman, whose decision will be final.
- 11.2 Any amendments to the Constitution and Working Procedures, which may be necessary from time to time, will be agreed by the Panel and the Chairman, and endorsed by the New Forest National Park Authority.
- 11.3 The Panel Constitution and Working Procedures will be fully reviewed every five years, or more frequently if required.