

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 212th Meeting, held in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, on THURSDAY, 10th July 2008

Those present: Tim Greenwood (Chairman)
Rosalind Alderman/Helen Matthews (Panel Clerk/Secretary)
Members as shown on the Official List, with the exception of those listed
below for whom apologies were received.

ITEM 1 **APOLOGIES**

1. APOLOGIES

Veronica Johnstone (Burley Parish Council)
Tony Barnett (Caravan Club)
Mike Chilcott (CPRE)
Lord Montagu (English Heritage)
Ian Mason-Smith (Hampshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services)
Bob Morris (Landford Parish Council)
Barry Olorenshaw (New Forest Business Partnership)
Mike Womersley (Redlynch Parish Council)
Nigel Clarke (Ringwood Town Council)
Caroline Morrison (Salisbury District Council)
Jacquie Shaw (Totton & Eling Town Council)
Tony Gentle (Test Valley Borough Council)
Stewart Hall (Woodgreen Parish Council)

SUBSTITUTIONS

John Korbey, Brockenhurst Parish Council
Ian Bradwell, National Trust
John Thackray, Ramblers' Association

SPECIAL NOTE

The Chairman welcomed the following new Panel representatives:

Richard Frampton for Bransgore Parish Council
Jo Russell for Denny Lodge Parish Council
Roly Errington for Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley Parish Council

ITEM 2 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** (1 May 2008)

- 2.1 Jenni Tubbs requested that her name be added to the list of apologies. Subject to this amendment being made, the minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 3
MATTERS ARISING

a) Forestry Commission Tour (Min. 4.1)

3.1 Mike Seddon (Deputy Surveyor, Forestry Commission) announced that the Forestry Commission Tour, to which Panel members had been invited, would be held on Thursday 11 September rather than Tuesday 9 September as previously announced. He apologised for this change, which was unavoidable.

b) National Park Authority – Planning Enforcement Processes (Min. 5)

3.2 Mary Lewis (New Forest Access For All) said she had requested at the previous meeting that the plans in respect of any planning applications for business premises should be sent to New Forest Access For All as a consultee on disability issues, and asked that the National Park Authority's Head of Development Control, Steve Avery, contact her.

Note: Steve Avery has subsequently contacted Mary Lewis.

c) Any Other Business (Item raised by New Forest Tourism Association) (Min. 8.1)

3.3 Christine Ames (New Forest Tourism Association) thanked the Forestry Commission for its reply on the issue of car park repairs and asked for an assurance that all car parks would be open for Easter 2009. Mike Seddon responded that unfortunately he was unable to give such an assurance as car parks were periodically closed for maintenance and other closures were necessary periodically to protect the nesting sites of ground nesting birds.

d) Any Other Business (Item raised by Fawley Parish Council) (Min. 8.2)

3.4 Eddie Holtham (Fawley Parish Council) again raised concerns over maintenance and repairs to certain laybys and said it was 12 months since he had originally brought up this issue.

Note: The Forestry Commission subsequently contacted Eddie Holtham. The areas in question are gateway bellmouths rather than laybys (but are being used for parking), and are the responsibility of Hampshire County Council. "Keep clear" notices have been posted by the Forestry Commission at the sites. The issue will be monitored and the Forestry Commission will liaise with HCC if the situation worsened. The bellmouths will be reduced by the Forestry Commission, to prevent further verge erosion, when the next round of car free area maintenance is undertaken. Mike Seddon requested that the Parish Council do as much as possible to encourage people to use the car parks provided at Kings Hat, Marchwood or Dibden instead.

ITEM 4
CONSERVATION AREAS IN THE NATIONAL PARK

4.1 Paula Freeland (Head of Environmental Design, National Park Authority) gave a detailed presentation, explaining that conservation areas were areas of special historical or architectural interest, the character of which it would be desirable to conserve. Officers looked at the quality of area as a whole rather than at individual buildings. She explained that eighteen conservation areas had already been in

existence in the Park when the National Park Authority was designated, and the Authority was carrying out a review of the National Park:

- to establish whether there were areas that were not covered by an existing designation that would merit conservation status;
 - to develop a framework for the management of conservation areas, which would include individual character appraisals, a generic conservation areas management plan and individual management plans to be adopted by 2013. The generic management plan was currently out for consultation; and
 - to review the boundaries of inherited conservation areas and produce character appraisals by 2009.
- 4.2 Paula Freeland then took Panel members through a number of slides to illustrate the character of each of the four recently designated conservation areas, namely Forest South East, Forest North East, Forest Central (North and South) and the Western Escarpment. For each of these areas an appraisal had been carried out which set out what gave the area its unique character.
- 4.3 The implications of conservation area designation included that conservation area consent would be needed for the demolition of all or the substantial majority of any building with a total cubic content exceeding 115 cubic metres, and for the entire removal of any gate, wall, fence or railing more than one metre high abutting a highway, public footpath or open space, or more than two metres high elsewhere. Trees within a conservation area would have the same protection as trees elsewhere that were the subject of a Tree Preservation Order and six weeks' notice would need to be given to the Authority of any tree works that were proposed to be carried out. The planning controls over properties in a conservation area were the same as those in the National Park generally, but the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area must be considered in taking decisions.
- 4.4 Panel members then raised various questions and comments, including the following. Peter Sopowski (Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council) asked that the Authority seek to prevent people creating block paved areas of off-road parking in conservation areas. Kevin Fuller (Hampshire County Council Highways) commented that the recent independent report by Sir Michael Pitt on flooding included a recommendation that planning consent would be required for certain types of surfaces for off road parking. Sam Dovey (New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society) asked that the National Park Authority remember that the National Park was not a museum but somewhere that people lived and worked; centuries of change had resulted in the character of the area as it was today. Paula Freeland agreed and said that the purpose of the conservation area controls was not to prevent change but to permit only change that was of an appropriate nature.

ITEM 5

WALKING IN THE NEW FOREST – STREAM AND FENCE CROSSINGS

- 5.1 John Thackray (Ramblers' Association) then gave a presentation on stream and fence crossings in the New Forest. He pointed out that walking was one of the most popular forms of public enjoyment of the New Forest, but although several publicly funded conservation bodies were active in the Forest there were none to champion walking. A number of established tracks were not easily accessible because they were waterlogged or fenced off; churned up banks or logs thrown in a stream where people commonly crossed were not conducive to conservation.
- 5.2 Mr Thackray pointed out that it was important to preserve a sense of wildness in the Forest, but marked footpaths should be safely usable by an able-bodied

person. He suggested a number of possible remedial measures including the following:

- stiles or squeeze gates could be placed in all fences across paths, including at the roadside;
- light corrugated plastic pipes could be dug in for bog drainage; and
- walking and horseriding crossings should be separated wherever possible.

5.3 Mary Lewis (New Forest Access For All) agreed that access to the Forest should be improved but stiles and squeeze gates were not accessible for those with certain disabilities. The Forestry Commission had recently provided a number of accessible gates.

5.4 Peter Sopowski (Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council) said that it was important to retain areas of wilderness in the Forest; there needed to be a balance between the provision of access in some areas and other areas that provided some challenge to walkers. Some Panel members raised concerns with the idea of using plastic pipes for bog drainage.

5.5 Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) explained that there was a right of access across all of the Crown Lands. It was important to balance the provision of access with maintaining the special character of the area and the fact that it was a working forest. He explained that there were approximately 367 bridges in the New Forest Crown Lands, all of which needed an annual inspection, taking a total of one man month. There were 459 gates in fences and a further 207 gates where adjacent fences had been removed; some inclosures were now partly open where fences had been removed to give access to stock. Overall there were 248 kilometres of fences with 459 access gates (which worked out at an average of one every 539 metres). The Forestry Commission would work with the Ramblers' Association as far as possible to ensure that gates were in the appropriate places, but it should be noted that the provision of access was already quite high. He explained that the re-bogging of parts of the Forest was a part of habitat restoration in what were often Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and access, while important, should be achieved in a manner that was sensitive to the landscape.

ITEM 6

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETINGS

6.1 Steve Trotter (New Forest National Park Authority) briefly took the Panel through reports on the National Park Authority meetings held on 22 May and 26 June 2008.

6.2 He drew Panel members' attention to the National Park Plan draft which had been approved for consultation. The Plan was a major document which combined two significant statutory requirements of the National Park Authority, namely the National Park Management Plan and the Local Development Framework. The Authority had also issued its Recreation Management Strategy for consultation. Presentations would be made on these documents at the next Panel meeting in September.

ITEM 7

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 Steve Trotter (National Park Authority) explained that the Authority's boundary marker programme was nearing completion; 46 timber boundary markers had been installed at various points around the perimeter of the Park. Subsequently, a small number of these had been moved to improve traffic sight lines. Four roadside locations remained to be marked, at the side of the A31, the A36 and the M27.

Whiteparish Parish Council had requested a boundary marker should not be placed by the southbound side of the A36. Zinc waymarkers would be placed at minor footpaths. He asked that Panel members contact the Authority if they became aware of damaged or vandalised boundary markers. Jack Sturgess (Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society) expressed disappointment with the signs, which he felt were not very noticeable (for example, he suggested that they compared unfavourably with the granite markers used by Dartmoor National Park Authority), and were already marked with green mould. Steve Trotter explained that the New Forest markers were intended to blend in naturally with the Forest scene over time, and the Authority's budget had been insufficient to obtain equivalent markers to those used at Dartmoor, which had cost approximately £3.5 million, but said he would pass Jack Sturgess' views to the relevant working group.

- 7.2 Steve Trotter asked whether Panel members were aware of the proposals by British Telecoms (BT) to remove local phone boxes. Panel members expressed concern at these proposals, particularly in view of the fact that the mobile phone coverage of the area was not complete, and requested that the National Park Authority write to BT setting out these issues.

Action: Steve Avery (Head of Development Control, New Forest National Park Authority) to write to BT expressing Panel members' concerns regarding proposed removal of phone boxes in the New Forest area.

- 7.3 Kevin Fuller (Hampshire County Council) mentioned that seasonal ragwort clearance would commence shortly. Additional funding had been allocated for extra pothole filling that had become necessary as a result of the recent bad weather. Parish Councils had been sent a letter asking for local information on the worst affected roads.

- 7.4 Jo Russell (Denny Lodge Parish Council) raised the issue that the seasonal campsite at Denny Lodge appeared to have remained in the same place for some time. Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) said he would inspect the relevant campsite movement register.

Action: Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) to check campsite register and report back.

- 7.5 Mary Lewis (New Forest Access For All) asked about the evacuation, in the event of an emergency, of anyone with a disability. She was advised that the procedure was that anyone with a disability should make themselves known to the Panel Support Officer or Secretariat at the start of the meeting to discuss the arrangements for their evacuation. Mary Lewis then asked that a named person be responsible for this evacuation.

Note: Panel Support Officer and Secretariat will be responsible for the evacuation of disabled people in the event of an emergency.

- 7.6 Kathy Gulliver (Sway Parish Council) raised the issue of the number of lorries using Forest roads as short cuts; she believed Ordnance Survey were in the process of developing Sat Nav for commercial vehicles which did not show smaller roads. Kevin Fuller (Hampshire County Council) said this was a national issue and it was a matter of time before such software was developed. Alan Shotter (Marchwood Parish Council) asked that Kathy Gulliver write to him in his capacity as the Chairman of the New Forest Association of Local Councils (NFALC) and the matter could be discussed at the NFALC Annual meeting.

- 7.7 Peter Frost (Natural England) drew Panel members' attention to an article on the increase in littering and fly tipping in the area, published in VOICE magazine by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, and asked that it be circulated with the minutes of the current meeting. The Chairman suggested that this be discussed at the Panel meeting in November as the agenda for the September meeting was already quite full.

Note: A copy of the article is attached to these minutes.

ITEM 8

DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING

- 8.1 The next Consultative Panel meeting will be held at **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2008** in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst.

The meeting closed at 21.40 hours.