

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

**Minutes of the Meeting held at the Linden Hall, Lyndhurst Community Centre,
Lyndhurst, SO43 7NY
on THURSDAY 7 OCTOBER 2021 at 7.30 pm**

Those present: Andrew Gilruth (Chairman)
Steve Avery (NFNPA)
Graham Ferris (Verderers)
David Stone (Panel Secretariat)
Vicki Gibbon (Panel Secretariat)

1 Apologies for absence

Craig Harrison (FE)
Gordon Bailey (Test Valley)
Lorraine Blomfield (NFU)
Alexa Carcas (Fawley Parish Council)
Mark Carter (Chartered Foresters)
Tim Cook (Netley Marsh)
Sam Dovey (NF Pony Breeding and Cattle Society)
Martin Fletcher (Royal Forestry Society)
John Haywood (Ringwood Town Council)
Pamela Keen (Norleywood Society)
David Russell (NFDC)
Simon Smith (Lymington & Pennington Town Council)
Rob Waite (Environment Agency)
Russell Webb (CPRE)
Frank Weller (Ramblers)
Anthony Climpson (Go New Forest)

Substitutions:

Chris Frost for Frank Weller (Ramblers)
Cllr Sharon Merrill for Tim Cook (Netley Marsh Parish Council)

2 Approval of Minutes from the meeting held on 3 June 2021

2.1 The minutes of the Panel on 3 June 2021 were approved.

3 Matters Arising

3.1 There were no matters arising on this occasion.

4 Matters for Discussion

4.1 White Tailed Eagle reintroduction update – Leanne Sargeant, Forestry England

Leanne Sargeant began her presentation by explaining what a White Tailed Eagle was; a large bird with a wingspan of two metres which eats most things

from fish to small mammals. Like many birds of prey, the White-tailed Eagle suffered relentless persecution from the Middle Ages onwards and haven't been around for the last 200 years.

Ms Sargeant explained that the first project to reintroduce WTE was in Scotland and began in 1968, this was very much trial and error and did fail a couple of times but had slowly been building with now 130 plus pairs residing in Scotland. Following the Scottish reintroduction, Ireland followed suit between 2007-2012 using the same techniques, it again took a while for the breeding to be successful. There were initial concerns from the farming industry, however they are now mostly on board with the breeding programmes.

Following the success of the WTE projects in both Scotland and Ireland it was agreed to restore the population on the South Coast which would link the populations in Ireland and Scotland with those in the Netherlands and France. The location of the Isle of Wight was agreed as an ideal breeding location as it was not dissimilar to nearby Netherlands, suggesting that the birds would thrive it was also the last known breeding site in Southern England.

Ms Sargeant was pleased to announce that following receiving the licenses from Natural England and the Scottish Natural Heritage the reintroduction project was well under way. She explained that chicks were collected at roughly 10 weeks old from nests, reared in special pens before being tagged and released into the wild. Up to 12 birds will be translocated over a five year period with the licence allowing the project to release up to 60 birds.

For more information on the project and regular updates please see social media @seaeagleenlan and @RoyDennissWF. A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

4.2 Southern reintroduction of Hen Harriers – Simon Lester, Natural England

Simon Lester of Natural England gave a presentation on the reintroduction of Hen Harriers in Southern England through the Hen Harrier Recovery Project. After describing the characteristics, status and habitat of the Hen Harrier, he said that the aim of the project was to source chicks from parent birds living in an arable environment and introduce them back by a soft release site over a 5/6 year period commencing in 2022/23.

Referring to the background to the project, Mr Lester said that in the UK the Hen Harrier was specially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. DEFRA had made plans to increase the number of birds in England including the Southern reintroduction on Salisbury plain.

Natural England had been working with local stakeholders in Wiltshire, Spain and France to source and release Hen Harriers onto a reserve on the edge of Salisbury plain. He said that following research, Salisbury plain was considered a suitable site for the project offering a central location next to a

large area of natural grassland and adjacent arable land holding a rich food supply and hosting a number of wintering harriers.

He and others in the team had been raising awareness with local land managers, shoots, the MOD, farmer clusters and conservation groups and to canvas their feedback and gain support for the project. He was pleased to report that the vast majority were now fully committed to help the project succeed. Following the trip to Spain, the project was in a good position to move ahead in the spring with released birds being tagged for tracking and monitoring purposes. He said that his main concern with regard to the welfare of the birds was not persecution but predation – as ground nesting they would be vulnerable to the high numbers of foxes and badgers in the south of England.

A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

4.3 Consultative Panel Consultation – Andrew Gilruth

In referring to the specific qualities of the Panel, the Chairman presented a slide highlighting the following:

- Wide spectrum of experience across the Panel
- A discussion forum not replicated in other National Parks (or ANOBs)
- Has stood the test of time
- Should review its working procedures every five years
- Propose that Members input their views via an online review and bring this back to the December meeting

He then presented another slide on possible areas for the Panel to explore

- What works and what do you gain from the Panel?
- What else are you seeking?
- Format and regularity of meetings?
- Panel discussion topics(select or make own suggestions)?
- Field visits?
- Publication on panel membership?

He requested members to consider the above points which would be sent out ahead of the next meeting on 2 December for discussion and debate at that meeting.

5 Matters For Reporting

5.1 NFNPA Update – Steve Avery

Steve Avery reported to members on the following:

- The formal joint public consultation on behalf of the partnership of statutory bodies on the emerging new Partnership Plan which ran from 23 June to 3 September and which had received 347 responses from individuals and 27 responses from organisations. The partners would be going through the

response over the coming weeks and making appropriate changes to the Plan. A report on the results of the consultation and next steps will be reported to the Authority meeting on 21 October 2021.

- The NPA would be consulting on the withdrawal of permitted development rights on pop up camp sites of over 50 pitches or more to bring a degree of control over this level of activity, these proposals were not expected to come into effect until December 2022.
- The NPA was asking for public views on the new Design Guide in a six-week consultation running from 10 September to 22 October 2021.
- A new campaign by the NPA and other New Forest organisations calling on people to ‘care for the Forest, care for each other’ in a joint action plan to better manage the increasing visitor numbers expected this year. The NPA and its partners would be better prepared for the number of visitors coming into the National Park with more signage, monitoring and public awareness.
- Mr Avery drew attention to a lead article in the latest edition of ‘Park Life’ dealing with grant funding which had been secured from the Green Recovery Fund in the amount of £800,000.

6 Statutory Consultations

NPA officers would look at proposals to present information on public consultations to the Panel

7 Any other items the Chairman feels urgent

The Chairman drew attention to forthcoming ELM Test and Trial for Commons events being held by the Foundation for Common Land. These would take place at Godshill Village Hall on 18 October, the Old Station Tea Rooms, Holmsley on 20 October and the East Bolder Village Hall on 21 October; all events being from 9 am to 2 pm.

8 Dates of next Panel Meetings.

8.1 Thursday 2 December