

CONSULTATIVE PANEL MEETING – 11 June 2026

CHAIR'S REPORT

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

1 Chair's Notes on the Previous Meeting 5th March 2026

1.1 Re-Election of Chair

I was re-elected as chair for a third term, running unopposed.

1.2 New Forest District Council Local Plan Review – Tim Guymer, Assistant Director for Place Development, NFDC

Tim Guymer described elements of the NFDC Local Plan informing the Panel about the Consultation ending 20 March 2026.

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

- Pleased to see consideration of back-up grazing for commoning.
 - While it would be difficult to defend any potential land outside of settlements as a matter of principle, we need an approach to ensure that back-up grazing is protected so that the Special Protection Area and the culture of commoning are not damaged by its lack. Feedback from the community is vital to this element.
- Should there have been more drop in events for this consultation, none in the National Park?
 - Typically the protocol has been for NFDC to hold their exhibitions in the areas where they are the planning authority, i.e. outside the National Park boundary. Happy to take the point on board for possible future consultation.
- “Affordable” housing is a misnomer social housing for affordable rent is what is required. No low income household could afford an “affordable” home in this area.
 - The plan does talk about different tenures of affordable housing, the need for social rent is emphasised, it also recognizes that different parts of the community have different affordable housing needs, so that intermediate, shared ownership housing. There is evidence base behind the plan. Views are welcome.
- What consultation has been done with the Water companies / authorities to determine if they can cope with the proposed level of development.
 - All infrastructure authorities have been consulted with, and where growth areas are identified, informed as soon as possible. This area of viability is essential.

- Will there be joined up thinking between Active Travel infrastructure planning and design?
 - This is part work underway on design codes for the New Forest, and is being co-ordinated with Highways, Hampshire County, their Active Travel teams, to make sure mistakes of the past aren't carried forward to the future.
- Recreation Pressure and the use of the Thames Basin Heaths metrics for mitigation, which do not scale appropriately to the New Forest. At the previous plan examination, it was claimed that NFDC had never shown the efficacy of their mitigation. Does the current plan address this?
 - Current on the ground improvements include promotion of SANG (suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace), upgrading paths and bridleways with hoggins, hiring more rangers.
 - Have commissioned work to judge the effectiveness of some mitigations.
 - Going forward: given the high targets set by Government for all the Authorities in this area, NFDC accept that a rethink is necessary to address the increased pressure. There is a possibility under the future Hampshire Mayoral authority that some more strategic decisions may be made about where growth and regional parks may be accommodated.
- Can NFDC and the NFNPA challenge the government housing targets based on the threats to the designated habitats.
 - Current plan has approx. 500 homes per year, they are testing 1264 per annum in the local plan at the moment (may not be final figure). It is possible that protecting designations would be part of the case made to Whitehall for not delivering the target.

1.3 New Forest National Park Local Plan Consultation results – David Illsley, Head of Planning and Place, New Forest National Park

David presented the results of last year's two NFNPA Local Plan Consultations and the timeframe for the Plan's submission.

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

- Sought clarifications between housing need and targets. And mechanism for considering relationship to infrastructure.
 - Need is the starting point number set by Government (adds a factor of at least 0.07 to current housing stock per annum, but then ramped up further under the assumption that higher property values represent higher demand which needs to be supplied. For the New Forest this gives 1500 / year.

- However this is just an arbitrary calculation that does not factor in restrictions which limit the capacity of the area (designations, proximity to services, floodplain, safety zone around refinery, etc.).
- the local authorities then have to identify any suitable sites, not already used, and with willing landowners, that might be brought forward.
- Observation over the second homes which satisfy a private want, but not the public need. Many of those who service retirees and second home owners cannot afford to live near where they work.
 - Second home ownership in the National Park is around 7 to 8%, so is meaningful, and an even bigger issue in other National Parks where second homes account for 30 to 40%.
 - Some National Parks have tried to address this through identifying Primary residences, and charging higher council tax, although ostensibly many who can afford extra homes, this is a lacklustre deterrent.
 - In Wales, second homes require planning permission. No political party has gone near establishing a similar rule in England.
- One panel member expressed some reassurance, from the answers given by David, that the National Park planners do have the best interests of the Forest at heart, and are in the unenviable position of having to challenge the Government's housing demand. Others simply said they wouldn't want to have his job!

1.4 NFDC – Derek Tipp

Derek updated the Panel on the consultation on Local Government Reorganisation proposals, touched upon the Local Plan Review, youth unemployment and a 3% Council Tax increase. His presentation garnered no queries or comment from Panel members.

1.5 National Park Authority– Nigel Stone, CFO / Head of Resources

Nigel updated the Panel on the National Park's capital investment for a hub at Foxlease, Budget & Work Programme 2026/27, this year's Partnership Plan review and details of their new website coming in March.

Nigel and the National Park was thanked by the representative of the Cycle Working Group for supporting the efforts by PEDALL cycling.

1.6 Forestry England – Craig Harrison & Richard Burke

Craig covered operation updates on heathland and woodland restorations, invasive species control, the beginning of nesting season. Joint working on animal road safety,

dog walking and fly tipping was highlighted. The very wet winter had caused many work and maintenance delays. Richard further updated the panel on Car Park charging.

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

- Concerns about displacement parking in settlements like Brockenhurst. This may affect not just residential parking, but take up spaces in town centre, shop and church car parks which are either charged at a lower rate than FE's or free. Also mention of deteriorating dragon's teeth.
 - Some of the funds will help refresh dragon's teeth.
 - FE has no jurisdiction on other land, but is willing to discuss once the roll-out of charged parking is under way.
- Does the Forestry England membership cover other Forestry England Car Parks outside of the New Forest.
 - Yes.
- Why have pay on site meters only been placed in certain car parks, not necessarily the larger ones.
 - For those on site meters to function they need a reliable connection to a cell phone tower to contact the network. This is a matter of geography / line of sight. Sixteen of the 129 car parks have on-site metering.
 - The tickets are transferable over their length of stay, so may be purchased from a meter, but then partially used in any non meter car park (and there are the app / phone / and retrospective online ways to pay as well).
 - As an aside to the questioner to whom this applied, it was pointed out that members of the Forestry Commission Retirement Association get free parking.
- What about those without phones / good signal / internet access. Those who can't afford that connectivity are unlikely to be able to afford annual fee.
 - The alternative payment methods are within industry standard. The grace period for payment to midnight the following day should allow flexibility.
 - The annual £96 fee may be paid by £8 / month direct debit.
- At the joint meeting of the New Forest Association and the New Forest Dog Owner's Group, a query was raised as to FE's Business Plan for Car Parking. Did one exist, and would it be made available?
 - FE have gone through a HM Treasury Five Stage Business Plan¹ which has been through FE's Board and Capital Investment Team. It is still a draft

¹ The Five Case Model (FCM) is the UK Government's best practice framework for preparing business cases. It is the standard across Whitehall embedded in [HM Treasury's Green Book](#) and required for all major spending proposals. The cases representing a critical dimension of a successful intervention: 1 Strategic Case / 2 Economic Case / 3 Commercial Case / 4 Financial Case / 5 Management Case <https://fivecasemodel.co.uk/building-blocks/>

- which hasn't been signed off, and so isn't publicly available. No guarantee was made that it would be published later.
- Approximately £3 million has been invested. FE stated that they wouldn't have made this investment had they not been assured of the return of investment of that public money.
 - Mythmaking has either had the scheme making a loss or tens of millions.
 - Many variables to be seen.
 - Will charging reduce visitor numbers
 - How many will pay on the spot or take annual membership
 - What will maintenance costs be
 - It was suggested that the return would close part but not all of the Forest "spending gap", but if the scheme did better than that, there would be options in greater re-investment in the Forest.
 - Request for the forecasts from the Business Case so that we may judge the success of the Car Parking scheme.
 - Could extra funding be directed at natural flood management?
 - Yes IF... funding appears, and projects agreed through usual stakeholders and with environmental / legal consents.
 - Observation from former Forestry Commission staff having been involved in running the 143 car parks installed in the 1970's (through 1991); It costs a lot of money! 5000+ car spaces, every space costs to maintain, signage, and the car free area system → 400 miles of car free area bank, ditch and 24000 dragon's teeth and about 4km of rails. £8 a month is pretty good value.

1.7 Verderers

Edward Heron sent apologies.

2 Statutory Member Updates and Current Presentations for March 2026 Meeting

2.1 National Park Authority – Nigel Stone, CFO / Head of Resources

Nigel will update us on the National Park's Senior Officer Restructure, Budget & Work Programmes 2026/27, their latest positions on Local Plan & Partnership Plan (including LGR), the latest on the Vernon Dene case and other planning news.

[Budget & Work Programme 2026/27](#)

[The National Park's initial statement on LGR](#)

Vernon Dene

The Vernon Dene decision from the High Court on 16th April 2025 in favour of the National Park Authority was overturned by the Court of Appeals 23rd April 2026. The case revolves around a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development (CLEUD) applied for in 2008 by the then owner for a relatively modest touring caravan park. The problems with the certificate, its validity and scope, hinge on whether there was misleading information from the applicant or a mistake by the Council which made the permission wider than intended (all but a small section of the 2.57 hectares). A subsequent owner revealed their intention to create a substantial residential mobile home park, when Easter weekend 2019 “without any prior warning” heavy plant and machinery was used at the site to carry out extensive site clearance and engineering work. This kicked off subsequent disputes and challenges.

The CLEUD was revoked by the New Forest National Park Authority in 2023. The revocation was based in part on the claim that there were false statements and withheld information in the original 2008 application. The Appeals Court suggested that the NPA decision was tainted by reliance on a report from Steve Avery who may have had apparent bias. The issues further exacerbated by missing documents and communications with the original applicant.

A legal blog which discusses key points.

<https://www.birketts.co.uk/people/nicola-gooch/further-thoughts/a-most-unusual-case-aarhus-cleuds-and-ai-guidance/>

A legal summary of judgement:

https://www.iclr.co.uk/document/2026002693/casereport_d3ebf664-39de-44f8-9f42-d51ce63320cc/html

2.2 Forestry Commission – Craig Harrison and Richard Burke

Craig and Richard will present the latest on the Car Park charging scheme which went live on 20th April 2026. Craig will also cover recent wetland restoration and upcoming operations.

2.3 NFDC – Derek Tipp

In addition to the usual updates from NFDC, Derek will comment on NFDC's current view on LGR, and the legal advice received on legally challenging the Government's option, the final stage of waste bin roll out, which has brought the whole district into the new system, and statutory consultations on a small addendum required to complete the

examinations of both the Sandleheath and New Milton Neighbourhood Plan (see 3.3 below).

2.4 A326 Waterside Improvements –

Martina Olley, HCC Scheme Development and Programme Manager

Martina will present the proposed scheme. This will be a live planning application by the time of our meeting (the HCC portion is live now, the NFNPA portion will go live by Friday 29th May, see 3.2 below). The timeframe for the application and opportunities to respond will also be covered.

2.5 New Forest Together – James Hartley-Binns

Following the March 2026 Government announcement on Hampshire's Local Government Reorganization, James and Emily Hartley-Binns started the [Keep the New Forest Together Petition](#). This quickly gathered enough support to require its debate at the 13th April NFDC meeting, where it received unanimous support. Their key point is that 97% of New Forest residents responding to the Consultation on LGR did not want the Forest split up. Their campaign believes there is a credible legal basis for challenging the decision. The Government's own criteria have not been met, the consultation results were disregarded, the decision-making process is inconsistent with principles set by Government.

<https://www.newforesttogether.co.uk/>

Their interim update to the Panel:

New Forest Together was founded by husband-and-wife team James and Emily Hartley-Binns after they were shocked and saddened by the Government's decision to break apart the New Forest District as part of Local Government Reorganisation. In response, they launched a petition calling on New Forest District Council to obtain independent legal advice and work with neighbouring authorities to challenge the decision. Support for the campaign has continued to grow rapidly, with more than 24,500 signatures gathered in just over eight weeks.

Working alongside local MP Sir Julian Lewis, the campaign is now seeking Westminster Hall debating time on the issue. At the same time, New Forest Together is working closely with Hampshire County Council as it takes the lead in progressing legal action, the first authority in Hampshire to begin the formal Judicial Review process, with the expectation that other councils may support. Having registered as a Community Interest Company (CIC), New Forest Together has also obtained its own independent legal advice, which broadly aligns with

Hampshire County Council's view that there are legitimate concerns around the Government's assessment of financial sustainability and long-term service delivery of the Mid-Hampshire Unitary.

The proposed changes would remove disproportionately younger and economically active communities, including Totton and the Waterside parishes, along with a significant share of the district's tax base and around 54% of business rates. The campaign believes this raises serious questions about whether the Government's own criteria for financial resilience and effective public service delivery have been properly met.

While community identity remains central to local concerns, the legal challenge increasingly focuses on whether the evidence underpinning the proposals is sufficiently robust. A Judicial Review may not, in itself, result in the Government changing course. However, with legal challenges now emerging from authorities across Hampshire and beyond, it could place significant pressure on the Secretary of State to reopen discussions and negotiate improved alternatives using the broad powers available to ministers under the reorganisation process. New Forest Together continues to believe every available avenue should be explored, every piece of evidence properly tested, and every effort made to secure the strongest possible long-term future for communities across the New Forest.

Panel members are invited to join the online version of the discussion of LGR at the New Forest Association of Local Council's meeting on the evening of 4th June, which will include James and Sir Julian Lewis, New Forest East MP (details to follow).

James will update the Panel on the campaign's further progress at our meeting the following week, and take Q&A from Panel members.

3 Consultations / Other Pertinent Information

3.1 Hampshire LGR Update

On 25 March 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government decided to proceed with local government reorganisation (LGR) in Hampshire by implementing “Option 1A”, which among other things, apportions the New Forest District into two new unitary councils from April 2028. The split gives Southampton and Eastleigh (South West Hampshire) the parishes of Totton and Eling, Marchwood, Hythe and Dibden, Fawley. A Full NFDC Council meeting on 13 April 2026, received and debated the “New Forest Together” petition which objects to the Government’s decision.

The NFDC Cabinet is due to discuss [a report](#) based on further legal counsel at the [3 June Cabinet meeting](#). One of the recommendations from the report summary includes this codicil “the independent legal advice which concludes that there is not any real prospect of persuading a court that a material error of law has been made, and that a challenge would have no real prospects of success”.

There are other parallel efforts to challenge the decision from HCC, Test Valley Borough Council, New Forest Together and others that may call for a judicial review.

3.2 Hampshire County Council A326 Waterside Improvements

The possibility of improvements to the A326 was first introduced in 2017 as part of the Waterside Transport Study. Three scheme options were presented as part of the summer 2021 public non-statutory consultation. That consultation presented little or no detailed consideration of the schemes impacts on habitat or the National Park, so merely surveyed poorly informed public opinion on preferences between the options offered.

The scheme seeks to extend the A326 dual carriageway to the Marchwood, Main Road junction. This is meant to address current congestion, and seems to be key to future development including ABP Solent Gateway 2 / Dibden Bay, residential growth in Marchwood, and Fawley (although at the time of the Fawley Waterside examination, the then developers insisted that extending dual carriageway would not be necessarily to serve their added traffic). Challenges include minimising impact on the New Forest, and avoiding disruption to recreation and transport access to the Forest from the Waterside.

HCC submitted their funding bid on 24th March:

[Milestone reached for A326 upgrade as Hampshire County Council progresses with submission of funding bid to Government](#)

The full planning application for the A326 works has now been validated by the National Park Authority. The application and several thousands of pages of supporting documents will be available on the National Park Authority’s planning webpages by Friday 29th May.

This is a slightly unusual application, in that the application 'red line' includes land within both the New Forest National Park and New Forest District. The NFNPA is therefore the determining authority for the elements of the scheme within the National Park (which is just over half the footprint); and Hampshire County Council are the determining authority for the areas of the scheme that lie outside the National Park. This portion of the application is already live on HCC's planning website:

<https://planning.hants.gov.uk/Planning/Display/HCC/2026/0213>

Hampshire County Council's more general summary of the project: [A326 Waterside Improvements](#)

3.3 NFNPA Consultation on Revised Local Requirements (planning)

The National Park and all planning authorities are required by Government to review their own local validation requirements. This consultation focusses on revisions made to keep these current. Key changes include:

- Updated policy references;
- Clarification in relation to some plans and document types required; and
- Updates to reflect current legislation

These updates cover areas including Biodiversity Net Gain, nutrient budget calculations, and advice on exterior lighting.

This consultation runs from 20 April - 15 June 2026.

<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning-home-page/consultation-on-revised-local-requirements/>

3.4 NFDC Extended New Forest PSPO's

On 1st April 2026, NFDC Cabinet extended the two New Forest PSPO's prohibiting fires and barbeques on the open Forest and feeding or petting free roaming commoners ponies and donkeys. They will both be in place for another three years and would need to be renewed by June 2029.

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

3.5 NFDC Sandleheath and New Milton Neighbourhood Plan Consultations

The draft Sandleheath Neighbourhood Plan had its Regulation 16 consultation ending in December 2025, and the examination commenced on 9 April 2026.

However due to new Basic Conditions introduced by the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023, the examiner, Mr Andrew Ashcroft, requested an Addendum to the Basic Conditions Statement.

Sandleheath Parish Council submitted this addendum on Tuesday 28 April 2026, and the addendum must now be subject to public consultation. The consultation started on Friday 1 May 2026, and closes on Sunday 14 June 2026. After this, the examination of the Sandleheath Neighbourhood Plan will continue.

<https://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/4233/Residents-invited-to-shape-the-future-of-Sandleheath>

On a similar basis, although not mid examination, the consultation on the addendum to the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan started on 29 April 2026 and closes 5pm on Friday 12 June 2026.

<https://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/4230/Residents-invited-to-shape-the-future-of-New-Milton>

3.6 DEFRA Consultations

DEFRA are currently running two consultations which may bear interest from some panel members, both closing on 10th June. Considering a targeted exemption of the Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for residential brownfield development, and Reform of UK fertilisers legislation ostensibly to support innovation in the fertiliser sector with the goal being fertilising products which are less polluting to the environment or are less resource intensive in their creation. I leave it to Panel members to judge whether either thread may yield positive outcomes.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/defra-biodiversity-net-gain/biodiversity-net-gain-considering-a-targeted-exemp/>

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/fertilisers-team/uk-fertilisers-regulatory-reform/>