

CONSULTATIVE PANEL MEETING – 3rd September 2026

CHAIR'S REPORT

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

1 Chair's Notes on the Previous Meeting 11th June 2026

1.1 A326 Waterside Improvements –

Martina Olley HCC Scheme Development and Programme Manager

Frank Baxter HCC Head of Integrated Transport

Martina and Frank outlined the road improvement proposals, its purposes and some of the elements of the preliminary design. The Planning Application was live with both HCC and NFNPA Planning departments.

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

[A326 Presentation Consultative Panel June 2026](#)

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

- Comment on assumptions made on the reduction of traffic where some currently divert from the A326 onto/from the A336 at the Goodies roundabout, using the A336 up to the M27/A31 junction at Cadnam. This currently includes HGVs notably causing noise, safety and road wear issues. Some history gone into about unsuccessful attempts to get safe crossings (especially near the school) and studies made. No proposals for mitigation have gone forward within the A326 application [likely outside scope]. What plans are there to mitigate the issues on that stretch of the A336, and under what time frame?
 - This is something they are working on, although not as part of the A326 work. Looking to secure funding and some designs have been put forward to NFDC to organize CIL funding. Waiting for pending decision.
 - Also, relating to the A326 application, but also relevant, looking to develop a National Park New Forest movement strategy. This would look at form and function of roads including the A336. It was once the main road, trunked designed to carry heavy vehicles, now it is de-trunked, measures should be taken to ensure appropriate design and use.
- Welcome recognition of the “severance” issues for active transport on the A326 and the additional crossing points that would be put in (a decades old unaddressed issue). However, will the crossing points be coordinated with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) for both the Waterside

and the New Forest National Park? This is important to have joined up thinking and joined up cycle routes to provide viable alternatives to the car.

- The crossing points are in the key “desire lines”, they are informed by/linked up to the LCWIP.
- Will the design of crossings include input from local cycling groups and experts so that they are designed well enough to be actually used?
 - The current design is preliminary; there is a detailed design stage to come which will have another round of engagement. We would have detailed discussions with the Cycle Working Group and others before or during that process.
- What type of crossings will they be?
 - At grade signal control crossings. The most modern type, minimising delay to through traffic while reacting as quickly as possible to those wishing to cross, and able to detect when the crossing has finished to allow road traffic to resume.
 - A balancing act between adding the additional road capacity, while making sure the severance was being addressed. Modelling shows reduced journey times even including these crossings.
- A query about the relatively short public comment period (around 5 weeks), for a large, complicated, major development. Also, about the rest of the timeframe.
 - As representative of the Applicant, not able to comment, deferring to the planning officers. (a follow up was posed later to David Illsley)
 - The current timeframe is allowing for the expectation that the planning authorities will take some time to process a large number of comments. Also, there is a possibility of a planning inquiry, which could take a year.
- What is being done at the Cocklydown roundabout, currently a tricky roundabout with much traffic trying to merge from either side.
 - Cocklydown and Fletchwood roundabouts would be significantly enlarged. The current deflection on these (as well as the Netley Marsh roundabout, which will be replaced with a signal junction) is insufficient, which keeps the speeds on the A326 quite high, making it difficult, potentially dangerous to get out of the side roads. Increased deflection from the enlargement should slow down approach to those roundabouts.
- Rushington Roundabout, also problematic, although not within the scope of the scheme, would likely be affected by changes to traffic flow. Can anything be done about SatNav directing drivers through this area, and should that work begin now?
 - There is not much they can do directly about SatNavs as they work on actual data from live vehicle traffic, attempting to plot a quickest route. However, over time, by making the A326 traffic on average faster, shorter travel time, the SatNavs would select that as the quicker route.

- This is the first part of the loss of the Waterside to overdevelopment, industrialization. The further development that the road enables will also degrade the supposed increased capacity leads to heavier usage. These developments in sum may have economic benefits prioritized by government, but will be detrimental to the quality of life, impact negatively on habitat, and irreversibly urbanize the Waterside. The level of development and infill between Southampton and Portsmouth as an example. This proposal is a bridgehead to overdevelopment which will destroy back up land, which has not been taken into account. The exclusion from the National Park protection has lost around 10,000 acres of the Waterside.
- More information on crossings for cyclists
 - Starting from the North, Two new crossings on Netley Marsh junction, one across the southern arm of the A326 and one on the eastern arm of the A336.
 - A crossing at Fletchwood and the A326.
 - There is already an underpass at Foxhills, so it was deemed unnecessary to have a crossing at nearby Cocklydown.
 - For the Southern Section: a new signalized crossing at Staplewood Lane and the A326.
 - The current crossing at Twigg's Lane would be moved within the "desire line" and made into a Toucan crossing for both pedestrians and cyclists.
 - At the two new roundabouts at Pilgrim, there will be a crossing between the two roundabouts to facilitate north/south movement which is strong at that point.
 - At the Main Road roundabout there will be two crossings, one across the southern arm of the A326 linking to Manor Road, and one on Main Road going into the Waterside.
- Concern that increased access by cyclists will encourage more cyclists who don't adhere to the cycle routes on the Forest.

1.2 New Forest Together – James Hartley-Binns

James presented an update on the campaign against the current Hampshire LGR option which would divide the Waterside from the Forest to combine with the largely urban Southampton / Eastleigh unitary. This update followed on from the discussion of LGR at the New Forest Association of Local Council's meeting on the evening of 4th June, which included James and Sir Julian Lewis, New Forest East MP. Panel members had been invited to join this meeting online. [NFT Presentation to Consultative Panel June 2026](#)

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

- The option from Hampshire County Council & East Hampshire District Council had proposed the whole of the New Forest be combined with Eastleigh, Southampton, Test Valley. Do you have a preferred option?
 - As a campaign our raison d'être is to keep the New Forest Together.
 - The overwhelming preference of their supporters favoured the Mid Hampshire scenario combining mostly rural areas: East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester (as proposed by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, NFDC and TVBC).
- Can we learn from the example mentioned about Cumbria?
 - NFT's supporters are keeping abreast of similar issues elsewhere.
 - Cumbria has a unitary that was established under the Cameron government that has proved unsustainable, and that boundaries may need to be redrawn to reunite with more economically viable areas.
 - Reaching out to other areas that are similarly unhappy, and their MP's across party lines to garner a greater breadth of support.
- A request that the Consultative Panel vote on a resolution to express support for New Forest Together campaign.
 - The Chair pointed out that this was not without precedent (for example the panel had similarly acted on the issue raised by the Commoner's Defence Association of an encroachment by a landowner barring access to common land). The Chair also pointed out that the Panel itself has no actual powers, although a cross community consensus they may express may be meaningful.
 - This was brought to a vote that received nearly unanimous support from those present, three abstentions and none against. This note of support has been recorded in our minutes.

1.4 NFDC – Derek Tipp

Derek updated the Panel on NFDC's Local Government Reorganisation response and the legal advice they received suggesting they not seek Judicial Review (although, to date, the Council have withheld the basis given for that advice), the final stage of the waste wheelie and food waste bin roll out, as well as Sandheath and New Milton Neighbourhood Plans under consultation.

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

- Will recycling collection be upgraded to include all standard recyclable plastic, as processed in most areas of the UK (not just plastic bottles, but most rigid household plastics including pots, tubs, trays and lids)?
 - This is dependent on Hampshire County Council building Material Recovery Facilities to take this. NFDC are only in charge of "collection" not "disposal".

- [Chair's notes: Hampshire claims that this is due to limitations of their Material Recovery Facilities and the market value of different types of plastic [Why can't I recycle plastic pots, tubs or trays?](#) Although, somehow BCP, for instance, do collect and recycle these items.]
- [This does mean that Hampshire is falling short of the standards in government guidance published 27th March 2025, came into effect 31st March 2026, and will have the additional duty to collect plastic film packaging and plastic bags with plastic recycling from 31st March 2027. [Simpler recycling: household recycling in England](#)]
- [Hampshire scores just below middle (184 out of 318) on this [2024-25 Annual Recycling League Table](#). This is with 19 Disposal Authorities with better scores and 11 with worse.]

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

Nigel updated the Panel on the National Park's Senior Officer Restructure, Budget & Work Programmes 2026/27, their progress on Local Plan & Partnership Plan (including LGR), and the conclusion of the Vernon Dene case at the Court of Appeal, and separate ongoing enforcement case.

[NFNPA Update to June 2026 Consultative Panel](#)

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

- How involved is the National Park in the consultation on the Hurst Spit to Lymington project .
 - The NFNPA is involved in the consultation beginning in June.
 - The Chair mentioned that the Panel's September meeting would include a presentation from the Environment Agency on the project.
- The Local Plan and the perennial problem of Consultations spanning August, when many, particularly Parish Councils are off.
 - Unfortunately the Government deadline of the "end of December" which in practical terms means a few weeks previous, does squeeze the process. The consultation starts as far into August as practical running from the 17th to 30th September 2026. [Chair notes: drop in sessions are offered entirely in September between the 2nd and 16th, see below]
- Update of the charity rides for [PEDALL](#), there is a female led ride out on the 17th of June, and the main annual fundraiser, [Pass the Pedall](#) is 26th of September out of New Park, Brockenhurst.

- Invasive Species eradication, perhaps this should include Turkey Oak.
 - Targeted species are limited to current funding. There is an awareness of Turkey Oak, and willing to follow this up. [Chair notes: much of current invasive species work in the New Forest is done under the HLOW Wildlife Trust's [New Forest Non-Native Plants Project](#) which focusses on smaller herbaceous interlopers. Also, it may have been useful to query the Deputy Surveyor about FE's disposition towards Turkey Oak]
- Length of Consultation for the A326 seems short for such a major application, documentation of over 8000 pages (the Environment Statement accounts for 6410 pages, the main body of the ES is just over a thousand, the remainder being reports, surveys and diagrams – HCC took over 6 years to develop the proposal and the public are given less than 6 weeks to comment).
 - Under planning a thirteen week application period is standard, allowing usually 5 to 6 weeks for comment.
 - Any longer examination period must be agreed with the applicant.
 - If there are further revisions made, that would be highly likely to trigger further consultation.
 - [Chair notes: HCC did extend their consultation period by three weeks 03/06/2026 to 31/07/2026 while NFNPA consultation remained at 01/06/2026 to 06/07/2026]

1.6 Forestry England – Craig Harrison

Craig covered the commencement of Forest car park charging, recent habitat restoration including wetland and future work plans.

[Forestry England Update to June 2026 Consultative Panel](#)

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

- More queries about how those without internet access (or capability) could purchase the annual parking permits.
 - They may be bought directly from FE at King's House, Lyndhurst.
 - Daily charges can also be paid through a landline phone call to Ringgo.
- An observation to the Deputy Surveyor, currently styled FE South District Director and Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest, that historically a Deputy Surveyor could hold that role/title for more than one Forest. At one time the DS of the New Forest also covered Parkhurst Forest and Alice Holt. A further suggestion offered a more

simplified, historically consistent moniker of “Deputy Surveyor of the South District”. As such, it was offered and received with good humour, a welcome leavening to a long and serious evening.

1.7 Verderers

Edward Heron outlined measures regarding Equine Flu outbreak.

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

- Should livery stables be warned as they may include competition ponies/horses traveling afield and back.
 - Advice has been given, as much for the safety of liveried animals, while they are more likely to have been vaccinated, the vaccine is not 100% effective for prevention, its efficacy is in making subsequent infection milder.
 - Equine Flu is airborne, so simply staying off the Forest if you are nearby doesn't particularly help.

[Chair's update: information from a trusted, but not verified source 26/08/2026:

Just 0.78% of the New Forest Pony herd have died from Equine Flu in 2026. Whilst most ponies have shown symptoms the majority have recovered within 3 weeks. The flu has now passed through the majority of the New Forest. The decision to cancel drifts (August and September) and the sales (8th October) is a responsible one and will ensure any remaining animals that have not been exposed are not brought together or ponies still shedding the virus are not exported away from the Forest.

Vaccination is not possible in a semi-feral herd due to the requirements of the vaccine and the unnecessary stress it would cause.

The stallions have now been vaccinated as they represent 50% of the breeding herd and are critical from a bloodline perspective. The stallions are all handled and can be easily vaccinated when off of the Forest.

The evidence shared with local vets suggests that vaccinated horses and ponies living close to the Forest are extremely unlikely to contract or spread flu.

(Stats calculated based on 2026 marking fee data and the number of animals reported by the Verderers as having died from equine flu)]

1.7 AOB – Brice Stratford informal report from Hampshire LGR summit

Brice reported on the daylong meeting at Chilworth earlier the same day. He stressed the notion of Neighbourhood areas, which may be a local tier within the new unitary authority, potentially with some devolved powers. It may be a way in which communities like the Waterside might still have a say over local concerns not appreciated or alien to the rest of

the urban unitary in which they may be included under the current plan. It should be worth organizing local proposals to take advantage of this possibility, and head off further imposition of unwelcome divisions or boundaries.

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

- As discussed by a number of Parish Clerks, guidance on population sizes for Neighbourhood areas was already being sought.
 - At the meeting a Clerk from Farnham, Surrey stated that their area population was @15000, but that the Chief Exec of Test Valley Borough Council suggested that it was unlikely to be as rigid within Hampshire as that target would be unworkable on the ground.
 - The suggestion is that, given the wider boundary issues, it would be likely that local concerns would be an overriding factor in designation of these areas.
 - Pro-active work is being done through the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and elsewhere to develop proposed Neighbourhood Areas.

2 Statutory Member Updates and Presentations for September 2026 Meeting

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

Nigel will update us on the Wildfire Response / New Forest Resilience, the [NPA Annual Review 2025/26](#), Partnership Plan 2027-32 Update, and Project Updates – Youth for Climate & Nature ending, potential future projects.

[New Forest organisations lead recovery effort following heathland fire 28th August](#)
Current [Partnership Plan 2022-2027](#)
[Youth for Climate and Nature scheme \(YouCAN\)](#)
[NFNPA Local Plan Review 2025-27](#)

2.2 Forestry Commission – Craig Harrison and Richard Burke

Along with the usual operational updates, Craig and Richard discuss the recent A31 Wildfire incident and its implications on Forestry England's work.

2.3 NFDC – Derek Tipp

In addition to the usual updates from NFDC, Derek will comment on the [Revised Approach to NFDC Local Plan Review](#) and the [Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\)](#). The latest round of NFDC CIL bids closed on 7th August and is being reviewed until 1st October.

It's proposed that play provision and space for events will be improved at Bath Road recreation ground in Lymington; land will be repurposed in Totton Civic Square to strengthen town centre identity; footways and carriageway surfaces will

be updated at Brokenford Lane Link in Totton to support safer travel; and route improvements through Forestry England's multi-user trails programme. Public consultation and engagement on these projects will take place between September and December 2026.

From 6th August NFDC Statement [Cabinet supports next phase to progress major community projects](#):

2.4 Hurst Spit to Lymington Strategy –

Marianne Piggin, Rhian Edwards, Environment Agency

Marianne and Rhian will present the proposed scheme. The consultation on the Draft Strategy is open and runs from 19 June to 25 September 2026.

[Hurst Spit to Lymington Draft Strategy Consultation](#)

Remaining September Drop in sessions available:

Fri 4	11.00am - 3.00pm	St Thomas Parish Church, 47-48 St Thomas St, Lymington
Wed 9	7.00pm - 8.30pm	Online Webinar - register via email
Sat 12	10.00am - 1.00pm	All Saints Church Hall, Greenbanks Close, Milford on Sea
Mon 21	11.00am - 3.00pm	Bridge Centre, 9 Sea Rd, Milford on Sea

2.5 New Forest Marque Update – Brice Stratford, New Forest Marque Chair

Brice will give a brief update on [the New Forest Marque](#), which promotes local produce and services.

2.6 AOB Minstead Roads and SatNavs

Cllr Harriet Standeven will outline Minstead's attempt to reduce the volume of traffic that gets diverted by SatNavs off the A31 and through Minstead's unsuitable narrow lanes, with the resulting nuisance, danger to livestock, and damage to verges. During the Forest fire, chaos and gridlock for the surrounding communities was largely caused by drivers following their SatNavs rather than following official diversion routes. This is likely issue across the Forest, and the Minstead Roads Subcommittee would like to widen their work and collaborate.

3 Consultations / Other Pertinent Information

3.1 Hampshire LGR Update

Hampshire County Council have launched a website on the LGR changes:

<https://www.futurehampshire.gov.uk/>

A case study in May on Test Valley Borough Council suggests ways in which local areas may form a tier of “Neighbourhood Governance”

[Read the summary: Neighbourhood Governance in Practice](#)

[Download the full report: Neighbourhood Governance in Practice](#)

3.2 Southern Water Drought Plan

Unfortunate timing, in the blink between our June and September Panel meetings we missed this initial high level consultation which ended on 6th August. Drought Plans are updated every five years at minimum. Southern Water’s most recent was published in August 2025. They have promised a more informed consultation once further assessments have been made and supporting documentation is published.

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/about-us/our-plans/drought-plan/>

3.3 NFNPA Local Plan review 2025-27

The Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan consultation is open from 17 August to 30 September 2026.

<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning-home-page/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-review-2025-27/>

ONLINE (Microsoft Teams) **Thursday 10 September**, 4pm – 5.30pm.
Joining link to be published on the NFNPA webpage (above).

In-person drop-in sessions 2pm – 7pm

- **Wednesday 2 September:** Landford Village Hall, Lyndhurst Road, **Landford**
- **Friday 4 September:** Bartley Village Hall, Bourne Road, **Woodlands**
- **Monday 7 September:** The Copythorne & District Royal British Regional Hall, Southampton Road, **Cadnam**
- **Tuesday 8 September:** Jubilee Field, Station Road, **Sway**
- **Friday 11 September:** Lyndhurst Community Centre, Main Car Park, **Lyndhurst**
- **Wednesday 16 September:** Redlynch Village Hall, Vicarage Road, **Redlynch**

Each in-person drop-in includes:

2pm – 5pm

Drop in to view the display boards and chat informally with National Park Authority officers about the revised draft Local Plan.

5.30pm

Join a presentation explaining the key changes since the 2025 consultation and the next steps for the Local Plan, followed by a managed Q&A session.

3.4 Environment Agency: enforcement and sanctions policy

As noted, we are in the middle of an EA consultation on their coastal strategy at Hurst Spit, however this wider consultation should also be of interest. Among other things it discusses how EA should apply more recent legislation including the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 - Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 and its civil sanctions when they become available. These include detail on the Environment Agency's approach to enforcement in relation to water companies.

[Consultation on changes to the enforcement and sanctions policy - including implementing new water and waste enforcement powers](#)

This consultation opened 10th Aug 2026 and closes 4th Oct 2026.

3.5 Chair's Addendum on the A326 Improvement Application Cumulative Effects

While my personal opinion, which may not be of interest to the panel, is that the proposal would not deliver enough benefit to justify its cost and damage and in combination impacts on the Forest. Putting aside evaluating its worthiness, I do think I should draw the Panel's attention to a major flaw in the application.

There are clear stipulations in the NFNPA responses to the EIA Scoping reports (both original Nov 2021 and amended Feb 2024) that Cumulative Effects have been agreed with HCC to have been scoped into the EIA and that projects include "Plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable i.e. projects for which an application has not yet been submitted but which are likely to progress before completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects." ⁱ

You will have heard and seen in HCC's presentation claiming benefits the road improvements would deliver potential for other port and housing development, yet the Environment Statement chapter on Cumulative Effects, a twenty five page document that mostly discusses the methodology by which they made an evaluation, does not mention ABP's Plan at Dibden Bay, other port expansions, or any housing allocations in the relevant area. Dibden Bay is mentioned in a list in two separate appendices to the Chapter, but not in the actual evaluation.

The Hampshire and IOW Wildlife Trust has this to say on the issue in their response:

Failure to Adequately Assess Cumulative Effects

A key concern is the treatment of cumulative impacts within the Environmental Impact Assessment.

The application documentation makes clear that the A326 Improvement Scheme is intended to facilitate and accommodate future growth associated with a range of

major development proposals, including Solent Gateway 2, port expansion activities, Freeport investment and wider strategic growth across the Waterside.

In our view, the environmental assessment does not adequately evaluate the combined impacts of these proposals on biodiversity, ecological networks and the wider environment. Instead, the highway scheme has largely been assessed in isolation despite its clear relationship with planned development that is expected to generate the need for additional highway capacity.

This raises concerns that the true scale of environmental effects has been underestimated. Habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance, recreational pressure, air quality impacts and effects on protected species are all likely to be greater when assessed collectively rather than as individual projects.

Failing to mention that a portion of a nearby SSSI would likely be destroyed (in ABP's Dibden Bay SSSI plan) is not a minor omission that may be ignored. Not including consideration of major developments as stipulated in agreement with the National Park during the Scoping Process, is a violation of that agreement. HCC are willing to tout the alleged benefits of the scheme, whilst minimising or ignoring its impact.

Further info:

[The full response from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust](#)

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

ⁱ Environmental Statement Volume 3 Appendix 1-6 Scoping Addendum Response NFNPA 29 April 2024 from the Executive Director (Strategy & Planning) of the New Forest National Park pg. 12

Cumulative Effects

As previously, it is agreed that cumulative effects should be scoped into the EIA. This is considered to be an important element of the assessment given the number and scale of other schemes proposed in the locality. All supporting infrastructure should be included within the assessment of cumulative impacts. The following types of projects should be included in the assessment:

- Existing completed projects;
- Approved but uncompleted projects;
- Ongoing activities;
- Plans or projects for which an application has been made and which is under consideration by the consenting authorities; and
- Plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable i.e. projects for which an application has not yet been submitted but which are likely to progress before completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects.

Consultation with the local planning authorities to ensure that all schemes with the potential for cumulative impact have been included for assessment in the ES is supported.