NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the Meeting held at the Linden Hall, Lyndhurst Community Centre, Lyndhurst, SO43 7NY
on THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2026 at 7.00 pm

Those present:

Brian Tarnoff (Chair)
Nigel Stone (NFNPA)
David Illsley (NFNPA)
Richard Burke (FE)
Derek Tipp (NFDC)
Vicki Gibbon (Panel Secretariat)

1. Presentations

1.1 Hurst Spit to Lymington Strategy Presentation – Rhian Edwards Environment Agency

Rhian Edwards delivered a detailed presentation on the Hurst Spit to Lymington Strategy, highlighting that this is a significant long-term project designed to secure a sustainable future for the Hurst Spit to Lymington area over the next 100 years. She explained that the strategy aims to support local communities, the natural environment, wildlife, and businesses in adapting to the impacts of climate change and rising sea levels.

Ms Edwards outlined the projected effects of flooding and sea-level rise across the area and described how the proposed strategy would help mitigate these challenges. The public consultation on the proposal is now open, and comments from Panel Members are welcomed. Further information is available on the project website: www.hurstspit2lymington.co.uk.

1.2 New Forest Marque Update – Brice Stratford

Unfortunately, Brice Stratford was unable to attend the meeting.

1.3 Minstead Road Safety -Harriet Standeven (Minstead Parish Council)

The Panel received an update on the work of the Minstead Roads Sub-Committee, which was established in response to concerns from residents regarding the increased volume of traffic being diverted from the A31 through Minstead and other areas of the New Forest via satellite navigation systems.

It was reported that these diversions had resulted in congestion, safety concerns for residents and free-roaming livestock, damage to road verges and infrastructure, and a detrimental impact on the special qualities of the New Forest. Evidence gathered by the Sub-Committee indicates a strong correlation between sat nav re-routing and traffic congestion within the village.

Members were advised that the Sub-Committee was collecting data to support its case and was developing guidance to assist other parishes in monitoring similar issues. The recent closure of the A31 during the forest fire highlighted the scale of the problem, with many drivers following sat nav routes rather than official diversions.

The Sub-Committee's primary objective was to secure formal recognition of the issue within the Partnership Plan Review and to work with relevant authorities and navigation providers to reduce inappropriate traffic diversions. A draft letter had been prepared for Hampshire County Council and National Highways, and support from parish councils and other organisations across the New Forest was being sought.

Copies of all presentations are available on the website.

The Chairman thanked the above representatives for their presentations.

2 Apologies for absence

Melissa Sheppard – Bransgore Parish Council
Alexa Carcas – Fawley Parish Council
Margaret Bunyard – CPRE
Janet Georgiou – Ringwood Town Council
Gordon Bailey – Test Valley
Edward Heron – Verderers
Ian Davis substituted for Ailsa Farrand – NFEA
Richard Burke substituted for Craig Harrison - FE

3 Approval of Minutes from the meeting held on 11 June 2026

3.1 The minutes were approved.

4 Matters for Reporting

4.1 Forestry England Update A31 Wildfire Incident – Richard Burke (FE)

Richard Burke, Head of Land Management at Forestry England, provided an update on the recent heathland wildfire and subsequent recovery efforts. The fire originated from a vehicle fire on the A31 and spread rapidly, resulting in significant damage to over 80 hectares of heathland and woodland.

Members were advised of the extensive multi-agency response and the role played by Forestry England staff in supporting fire services, maintaining public safety, enforcing restrictions, and assisting with wildlife rescue efforts.

The ecological impacts of the fire were outlined, including the loss of heathland vegetation, damage to rare plant species, destruction of ancient trees, and impacts on local bog habitats. Recovery plans were now being developed, drawing on previous experience of large-scale wildfire restoration projects.

The Panel also noted proposals to strengthen the Forest's long-term resilience through an enhanced programme of wetland restoration aimed at improving water retention, reducing drought impacts, and supporting natural flood management

4.2 NFNPA Local Plan Update – David Illsley (NFNPA)

David Illsley, Head of Planning and Place, gave the Panel a presentation on the draft New Forest National Park Authority Local Plan Review (Regulation 19), which sets out the proposed planning framework for the National Park.

The Panel were advised of the identified local needs within the National Park, including housing, employment land, and accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The draft Plan proposes a limited number of housing allocations, provision for employment growth, and policies to address accommodation needs while balancing the statutory purposes of the National Park.

Mr Illsley also outlined key changes made since the previous consultation, including updates relating to affordable housing, principal residency conditions, coastal change management, and site allocations.

Panel members noted that the Regulation 19 consultation was in the final stage before submission of the draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State by the end of 2026. The Plan would then be subject to independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate during 2027

4.3 NFNPA Update – Nigel Stone (NFNPA)

Nigel Stone, Director of Resources and Operations, provided an update on recent activities and priorities of the New Forest National Park Authority.

Panel members were informed that the response to the recent wildfire incident had moved from the emergency phase to the recovery phase, with a multi-agency Recovery Coordinating Group established to oversee environmental, business, economic and community impacts. A formal debrief and lessons-learned exercise was planned.

Mr Stone informed the Panel of the publication of the Authority's Annual Review 2025/26, the success of the New Forest Show, progress on the Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) programme, and ongoing partnership work to promote the Care for the Forest and New Forest Code campaigns during the summer period.

An update was also provided on the development of the Partnership Plan 2027-2032, which would set out shared priorities and actions for key organisations across the New Forest. The Panel were advised of opportunities to contribute to the review process.

The Panel also noted the forthcoming Pass the PEDALL '26 Inclusive Cycling Festival.

4.4 NFDC Update – Derek Tipp (NFDC)

Derek Tipp provided an update on New Forest District Council's Local Plan. He explained that, as work had progressed, it had become increasingly evident that the Council would not be able to meet the original end-of-year submission deadline. New Forest District Council would therefore utilise the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) timetable and take the full 30 months available to ensure the Local Plan was supported by comprehensive evidence and fully complies with government requirements.

Mr Tipp also provided an update on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), noting that total CIL receipts are projected to reach £25 million over the next five years. He highlighted a range of projects that had benefited from CIL funding, including improvements to Totton Civic Square, traffic flow measures in Lymington, and enhancements to walking links across the New Forest. He further noted the recent petition submitted by New Forest Together, which was due to be presented at Downing Street later that week.

Copies of all presentations are available on our website.

5 Any other business

5.1 There were no further items of business.

6 Date of next Panel Meeting.

6.1 Dates of the next Panel Meetings – 3 December 2026, 4 March and 3 June 2027.