

**NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

**Minutes of Meeting of the New Forest Association of Local Councils held at NFDC in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst SO43 7PA on 20 April 2017 at 7.00pm**

<b>Parish/Town Council</b>	<b>Name</b>
Burley	Philip Daubeney
Hordle	Sue Bown Marion Still
Lyndhurst	George Bisson
Marchwood	Fred White Alison Hoare
Minstead	Richard Taylor Helen Bennett
Netley Marsh	Mike Welbourn Les Puttock
New Milton	Goff Beck – Chairman Graham Flexman – Coordinator
Sandleheath & Woodgreen	Victoria Eden
Sway	Barry Rickman
New Forest District Council	Bob Jackson
New Forest National Park	Steve Avery
<b>Apologies</b>	
Stephanie Bennett	Hythe
Neal Martin	Burley
Jane Arigho	Hyde
Sue Bennison	Bramshaw
John Korbey	Brockenhurst
Steve Postlethwaite	Fawley

**1. Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed 13 representatives from 10 local towns and parishes, plus Bob Jackson, Chief Executive of NFDC and Steve Avery, Executive Director of NFNPA. The Chairman commented on the low attendance, noting some are still on Easter holiday.

**2. Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman referred to the recent death on 12 March of Sally Arnold, stalwart member from Ashurst & Colbury. He extended his sincere condolences on behalf of NFALC and read out a recently published letter from Dr Julian Lewis, her local MP, as follows:

*"Every community, if it is lucky, has a tiny handful of people who form its backbone and constitute its spirit. Sally Arnold, former Chairman of Ashley & Colbury Parish Council, fulfilled this role admirably – both locally and in the wider New Forest area. On every good cause, issue of principle and worthwhile community activity, the presence of Sally could be felt. Campaigning for better mental health provision, organizing the annual fete, and commissioning brass band concerts at the end of every Remembrance Sunday were just three of the projects that I saw at first hand. As Sally's local MP, I knew her commitment, loyalty and sense of fair play could always be counted upon; she was a force for good in society and will be greatly missed by all who benefitted from her kindness."*

The Chairman referred to a recent Police Crime Panel's consultation regarding the Police Crime Commissioner's policy in respect of rural crime, making reference to Country Watch and highlighting what he saw as poor communications generally between PCC and Town and Parish Councils. The Chairman pointed out NFALC's relationship with Safer New Forest, and likewise the 2 associated visits of the new Police Commander and Fire Chief.

### **3. Annual Report**

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1, highlighting NFALC meets 4 times a year to discuss topics of mutual interest throughout the New Forest district.

In April 2016, Members considered the proposed engagement between NFDC and NFALC on matters relating to Safer New Forest Partnership issues and most members agreed it was a good idea in principle, with input from the Police and Fire & Rescue. Our AGM in July 2016 was dominated by a presentation from John Coughlan, HCC Chief Executive about devolution, suggesting a larger role for towns and parishes. Unfortunately, agreement could not be reached with other councils involved and so this initiative has floundered.

Discussion at our October meeting centred on DCLG Precept Consultation highlighting problems with proposed "capping". Many town and parish councils had increased their Council tax last year above the 2% level because they were taking on devolved functions, or undertaking a major project. No consideration has been given to the possibility of a principal authority having to conduct multiple referendums. NFALC responded accordingly to the DCLG consultation. The Government demurred. At our January 2017 meeting, we learnt about the Government's New Homes Bonus. A consultation will take place, but NFDC cannot hit growth targets, and so will lose out with £700k less grant next year.

In regard to Devolution, there was nothing new to report. Whatever the outcome of these discussions, without NFALC neither the District nor the National Park Authority nor County Council would have a vehicle through which they could all communicate and work in partnership with Town and Parish Councils. All 3 Authorities and now the Police and Fire & Rescue Service use this local Association to help them.

### **4. Minutes**

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2, being the Minutes of the General Meeting held on 19 January, 2017. The minutes were duly agreed and then signed by the Chairman.

### **5. Matters Arising**

Referring to Minute 9 - imminent retirement of Chris Elliott, Head of Planning the Chairman read out a letter of thanks agreed by those present, highlighting Chris' ability to explain the intricacies of planning law within the New Forest. In January last year, Chris presented to this Association the ins and outs of the latest Local Plan review that NFDC is currently undertaking, providing a timetable for the plan to be published this Summer, explaining succinctly in his usual way the legal background and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Chris always tempered his advice, highlighting potential advantages while making us aware of pitfalls, pointing out Neighbourhood Planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people. Sound advice indeed from a planning professional of many years.

## 6. Brexit

In the absence of the Police Crime Commissioner, who was invited to address NFALC, the Coordinator instead presented a paper on Brexit suggesting Whitehall should grant small town England radical new powers to revive local economies.

As the Chairman mentioned in his Annual Report, during the year we were regaled with promises of a larger role for towns and parishes resulting from devolution. That never happened, and it appears unlikely to happen without Government diktat – probably after the elections. We were facing Brexit without too clear a mandate from Government / Local Government. That appears to be the essence of the Localis report attached at Appendix 3.

It talks about Strategic Authorities leading economic renewal in certain places - suggesting devolved areas can lead on industrial strategy. But it points out the devolution process or deal has left two-thirds of the country without strategic authorities. The report argues that every village, town and city should be covered by a strategic authority, and the Government (Greg Clark/Green Paper) seems to support this view. It says such places need new, devolved powers to deliver growth with a shift in focus to small towns.

It also says small and rural towns should be granted new powers to revive areas, including devolved control over planning to help towns and cities expand. Interestingly, it also says some areas, including Christchurch and the IOW, have never recovered from the economic trauma of the 1980s and make up the heart of Brexit Britain. They refer to these areas as STUCK.

They also refer to places that are growing quickly but whose growth is physically restricted by their boundaries, such as Bournemouth, Southampton and Portsmouth. These areas they refer to as STIFLED.

And in between, you have the New Forest and towns like New Milton which is surrounded by Green Belt – the SQUEEZED?

The Coordinator handed out the attached map highlighting the areas referred to above. The Chairman agreed not much was likely to happen before the Election on 8 June 2017. But in the aftermath of triggering Article 50, members agreed the Government's industrial strategy will have to address a political imperative of how the benefits of growth are fairly shared across the nation to reach all of these areas, including the New Forest.

## 7. Reports of Focus Groups

- a) **Dibden Bay** – Alison Hoare was upbeat regarding communications and liaison with the new Military Port Director.
- b) **Broadband** – Steve Avery said Burley no.2 cabinet was now approved, and Hythe have bought their own cabinet.
- c) **Quadrant Reports** – The last NE Quadrant meeting was held on 3 February 2017 at Minstead Village Hall. The last SE Quadrant meeting was held at Exbury on 8 February 2017 and considered flying of drones over the Forest. The last SW Quadrant meeting took place at Sway on 28 February 2017 covering planning matters and their next meeting is on 30 May at Brockenhurst.
- d) **Neighbourhood Planning** – In the absence of Stephanie Bennett, nothing to report.
- e) **HALC** – The Chairman provided a brief update on the last HALC Board meeting. The main item was the recommendation that Ken Thornber take over as President.

## 8. New Forest District Council

Bob Jackson updated members on matters of local interest including elections on 8 June, polling stations, devolution and local plan, plus fiscal savings of 10% following staff reorganisation/tourism outsourcing while maintaining front line services; lottery funding for Eling Tide Mill / learning centre; A35 litter picking plus Milford Beach Hut project.

The project to replace 119 beach huts and improve the seafront at Milford-on-Sea is nearing completion after the original 1960s terraced concrete beach huts were severely damaged in a huge storm on Valentine's Day 2014. The beach huts project provided the opportunity to improve Milford's seafront. A walkway with handrails has been installed along the tops of the beach huts, with connecting bridges between each terrace, enabling pedestrians to walk the full length and enjoy the spectacular Solent views from an elevated position. Steps up to the rooftop walkway from the rear upper promenade double as extra seating.



A budget of £1.26m was allocated in 2014 for the like for like replacement of 119 beach huts at Milford-on-Sea. The scheme expanded to include improvements to the public areas around the huts, resulting in a total investment in the seafront and the 119 replacement beach huts of £2.36m. This includes £430k contributed to the rebuild costs by the owners of the 119 beach huts.

New Forest District Council has been recognised at the *Energise Me* awards (30 March 2017) for their contribution to improving activity in the workplace. Jamie Burton, physical activity manager, picked up the Active Workplace award on behalf of NFDC for the work he has done to give employees the opportunity to be more active.

"New Forest District Council strives to continue to be a great place to work and the wellbeing of employees is important if we are to deliver a quality service to our local residents. People who exercise during working hours have the same or even higher production levels and take fewer absences from work. Regular exercise has many benefits and results in a workforce that is healthier and more energetic. Employees are often happier to be at work, more resilient and less depressed. People often find difficulty in fitting the recommended 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week in to their busy lives. Spending 30 minutes at lunchtime being active is a great way of achieving this"

Some of the projects Jamie has been instrumental in supporting include Ping Table tennis, the Sustrans Active Steps scheme to encourage active commuting, Cycling UK healthy cycle rides, beginners running sessions, and participation in the *Energise Me* awards.

The awards, which took place at St Mary's stadium in Southampton, also saw Paralympic gold medal swimmers Alice Tai and Mikey Jones nominated for junior and senior sportsperson. Both from New Milton, Alice and Mikey are recipients of support from NFDC through the Hampshire Talented Athlete scheme, which supports selected athletes, recognising their potential. Alice Tai won the Junior Sportsperson category.

## **9. New Forest National Park**

Steve Avery referred to the Housing White Paper and NPA response on their website.

Following the eight-week public consultation on the draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036 held late last year, a summary of the main points, including brownfield site availability, has been prepared and is available on the NPA Local Plan webpage.

Linked to the on-going work on the revised Local Plan, the NPA continue to liaise with neighbouring authorities on cross-boundary planning issues facing the National Park. This has included a three way liaison meeting with Christchurch Borough Council and New Forest District Council in late January 2017 where topics of discussion included the Christchurch Urban Extension, providing Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANGs) and the Green Belt review.

Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, a number of local town and parish councils in the New Forest started work on Neighbourhood Plans. The communities in Lymington & Pennington and New Milton have been progressing this work over the last couple of months and the Policy team continue to support it with technical advice (alongside colleagues at New Forest District Council).

The second year of the Traditional Building Skills Project began with a professional course taking place on historic masonry structures at Buckler's Hard. The course was fully booked and well attended by professionals who have backgrounds in architecture, engineering and surveying and who carry out work within the National Park.

The Spring Clean litter pick was launched at Picket Post by New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission. They were joined by representatives from the nearby McDonald's who regularly undertake litter picks into the Forest acting as a role model for other local businesses. A new temporary roadside sign is being used to highlight that a road has been 'litter picked in the last week'.

The NPA recently submitted an Authority response to the Department for Transport consultation on the safe use of drones in the UK, reflecting issues which have been raised by partners and at quadrant meetings. The Government is looking to update legislation and guidance to reflect current and future growth in drone use for a range of purposes. NPAs generally have expressed concern that there are limited powers (beyond local bylaws) to restrict the use of drones in sensitive SSSI and SPA areas.

## **10. Safer New Forest Partnership**

Nothing further to report at this stage

## **11. Any Other Business**

Fly-tipping was highlighted by Vicky Eden of Sandleheath & Woodgreen Parish Councils. NFDC & NPA are taking steps to tackle the problem, checking vans and fining fly tippers.

## **12. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of New Forest Association of Local Councils will be the AGM to be held on Thursday 20 July, 2017 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst SO43 7PA

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.25 pm.

Chairman

Date



## Map of strategic authority areas, the *stifled* and the *stuck*

