

**NEW FOREST ASSEMBLY OF LOCAL COUNCILLORS**  
**& ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NFALC)**

**Minutes of King Edward's Day Ordinary General Meeting of NFALC ALC  
held at Appletree Court in Lyndhurst, Monday 18 March 2024 at 6.00pm**

<b><u>Parish/Town Council</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>
Brockenhurst	John Korbey - Vice-Chairman
Bramshaw	Sue Bennison
Copythorne	Graham Chillcott Sylvia Wiggins
East Boldre	Michael Husband
Landford	Mary Davies
Lyndhurst	Brice Stratford – Chairman Ben Tyrie
Minstead	Bill Andrews
Netley Marsh	Mike Welbourn
New Milton	Graham Flexman – Clerk John Adams
Sway	Katie Walding - Clerk
Totton & Eling	Susan Cutler - Town Clerk Alison McGowan – Dep Clerk
New Forest District Council	Joseph Reilly representing Wards: Ashurst, Bramshaw, Copythorne & Netley Marsh
NFDC	Neville Penman - NFDC Chair  Richard Knott - (Link Officer) NFDC Strategic Director – Housing & Communities
NFNPA	Steve Avery - Exec Director (Strategy & Planning)
<b><u>Apologies:</u></b>	
Fawley	Stephanie Bennett
Fordingbridge	Leila Cameron
NFDC	Jill Cleary, NFDC Leader

**1. Chairman's Announcements**

Chairman welcomed 18 attendees from 14 authorities within the New Forest area.

**2. Minutes & Matters Arising**

Chairman referred to Appendix 1 being the Minutes of the General Meeting held on Thursday 18 January 2024. Minutes were agreed a correct record and signed.

**3. Unauthorized Encampments**

Chairman referred to Appendix 2 detailing a seminar being held at Ringwood on 26 April regarding the issues of illegal encampments as part of their Town Clerk Chris Wilkins' initiative to produce a local policy for dealing with unauthorized / illegal encampments in conjunction with NFDC, for adoption by NFALC members, that local councils could then adopt.

Chris Wilkins offered to work via the new Clerk's Network to devise a suitable template, and NFALC Coordinator Graham Flexman said the Facebook page for New Forest Clerks set up by Stephanie Bennett of Fawley PC is now live and currently has 25 members.

The Chairman was pleased to learn that Clerks are already sharing information, and questions, so it is starting to improve communications between us all.

**4. County Policy Forum**

The Chairman referred to Appendix 3, detailing a proposed County Policy Forum.

In order to better engage with HALC members and understand their priorities and to help shape work on a County Wide level, HALC has decided to constitute a new County Policy Forum. This will be an inclusive gathering with participation open to all Hampshire ALC member Councils, replacing the County Executive.

The focus of the Forum will be to:

- maximise parish and town councils' interaction and share best practice;
- give members the opportunity to network;
- consider matters of relevance to local councils and to use this to help shape the future of Hampshire ALC's programmes and projects;
- update members on the activities undertaken on their behalf in the various external bodies at which Hampshire ALC is represented.

The work of the forum will sit alongside the work that is currently undertaken by the district associations. It is expected that the entire County Forum will meet at least twice a year and will be focused on members' priorities and issues. HALC hopes by broadening the scope and membership from models used previously, it will be better able to respond to member councils' priorities and give a stronger collective voice for member councils across Hampshire.

HALC envisages a number of task groups will be set up around the workstreams identified by the forum to progress work and policy development in specific areas. These will provide other networking opportunities for member councils in between the main forum meetings. The Chairman commended the proposal, confirming HALC is currently planning to hold its first full meeting of the County Forum Face to Face in June 2024.

## 5. NFALC Website

The Chairman announced an application for a grant from HALC is being made for a new NFALC website and it makes sense to appoint an IT expert as our IT Representative, someone who can help develop the proposed new website.

With that in mind, the Chairman introduced Ben Tyrie, a fellow Parish Cllr from Lyndhurst. Ben explained he has been involved with IT since 2005, working for Kingfisher PLC for the past 5 years until recently, first as a Project Manager, and then laterally as a peer Programme Manager. According to a LinkedIn reference>

*"He displays the skills you really want to see in both roles, he has a firm grasp of the basics of project management, all the usual good stuff, leading people through change, outstanding communicator, in depth knowledge of dealing with risks, issues, finances, scheduling, etc. During lockdown, Ben stepped up to a programme role and got the chance to display his excellent stakeholder management skills, dealing with everyone up to board level with consummate skill. He has run programme delivery on a complex set of projects and used his deep knowledge of technology and people skills to deliver exceptional performance on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, he is well liked by those around him, building key relationships at personal and team level. He is an excellent people manager who really works to take care of the people working for him and takes a genuine interest in their wellbeing."*

The Chairman commended Ben who said he was happy to contribute his skills to help NFALC develop its new website, answering IT queries with immediate effect. The Chairman suggested councils should feel free to contact Ben for any consulting around IT or tech, including acquisition, maintenance and online.

It was then, unanimously,

**RESOLVED: That NFALC appoint Cllr Ben Tyrie as its IT Representative.**

## 6. Clerk's Network

As previously mentioned, Fawley took the lead on this by setting up a Facebook page for local clerks. Katie Walding, Clerk at Sway uses the system, mentioning:

- Network has been talking about various councils D-Day celebrations on 6 June.
- NFDC are seeking support for forthcoming elections on 2 May, PCC especially.
- Offer of a free copy of the King's portrait from the Government closing shortly.
- Latest 2021 Census Data is now available detailing more town and parish info.
- Verge cutting meeting in January attracted 9 clerks on how to do less cutting.
- Green Policy pilot scheme at Sway using 'Lengthsman re wildflower protection.

Katie added there is HALC training for new clerks re year-end accounts & AGARs.

## 7. New Forest National Park

Chairman welcomed Steve Avery NPA to update members on matters of interest.

Steve referred to a £1.3m Lottery Fund scheme to restore **New Forest habitats** and increase wildlife involving 250 hectares of land. Parish councils will be involved with the Programme of land the size of 350 football pitches being improved for nature across 25 sites, improving and linking habitats to help species

such as pine martin, great crested newt, pollinating insects and reptiles such as adder and smooth snake. 14 jobs created / retained + 5 interns and 50 volunteers. Work is progressing on the **Ringwood neighbourhood plan** subject to revision of their Local List of heritage buildings numbering over 150, the Inspector quoting that *'a substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets.'*

There has been some recent media speculation over the future of the **Fawley Waterside scheme** (the s106 legal agreement has still not been completed) NPA expect to receive some clarification from the applicants/investors on their future intentions for the site in the next few weeks. Also, ASB Ports land development is dependant on A326 road improvements.

A **Waterside Green Links Study** has been prepared and contains a thorough examination of the opportunities for creating green links between the National Park landscape and Southampton Water, across the Waterside and the A326, such links could enable new connections for wildlife and people within the Waterside area of Southampton Water with possible solutions such as green bridges and new underpasses, as well as improved cycling routes.

Steve referred to the on-going reforms to the planning system regarding their implications for the New Forest National Park and the statutory planning functions of the Authority. The Planning Committee meets on 19 March to consider a report on the latest proposed revisions to national **Permitted Development Rights (PDR)** which would extend the types of development that could be undertaken in nationally protected landscapes without the need for full planning permission.

This has been brought into sharper focus with the strengthened duty to seek to further the National Park purposes when making decisions that could affect National Parks, introduced through the **Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023**. Whereas previously all organisations had to have "regard" to NPA functions, they now have a statutory duty to "further" NPA functions. NPA are expecting further extended national permitted development rights to be announced.

At the Authority meeting on Thursday 21 March, the NPA will be reviewing its own **Local Plan**, against the background of on-going planning reforms, and proposals to extend Planning Development Rights (PDR) further in Summer.

Meanwhile, in regard to threatened closure of some **Waste & Recycling Centres** at Somerley and Marchwood, the NFNPA will be lodging a strong objection to such proposals. Also, HCC are considering charges at their forest car parks.

The mandatory requirement for major developments (of over 100) to deliver 'biodiversity net gain' (BNG) came into effect on 12 February 2024. This legal requirement is grounded in the Environment Act 2021 and the Government has recently published further guidance.

Support for New Forest habitats has moved forward with the introduction of nationwide **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** regulations. BNG makes sure habitats for wildlife are left in a better state than they were before development and developers must deliver a BNG of at least 10%. The requirement for BNG will apply to many smaller developments from 2 April 2024.

Steve mentioned project groups held at Quadrant meetings in Ringwood with Gareth De Boos, Mayor holding meetings about wilding and tree planting.

#### 8. **New Forest District Council**

The Chairman welcomed Richard Knott newly-appointed NFDC Strategic Director – Housing & Communities who advised that in support of member representation, he now acts as NFDC lead officer attendance at NFALC meetings when possible. Richard said he is happy to engage in meaningful topics on behalf of NFDC CEO. In regard to district wide issues of interest, he referred to the following items:

**Transformation Process** – Richard explained what NFDC are doing digitally, including introducing 10 initial customer process access points at Information Offices throughout the district, encouraging digital engagement with the council, for example helping with energy saving ideas. Also, a new NFDC Corporate Plan is coming to fruition, majoring on investments in future years under the headings of People, Place, Prosperity. The Corporate Plan will shape the way the council works for the next 4 years. It brings together strategic and service objectives, helping the organisation to work towards the same vision, values, and priorities.

**Housing Energy Efficiencies** – 70 Retro fits have been made to council housing stock, installing energy efficiencies such as Photo Voltic (PV) panels on roofs, new ways of providing heating / hot water with Energy ratings of E, F, G reduced to C or B, and A in one case. Part of an on-going improvement plan, with average savings of £500 pa per household off energy bills, with cleaner fuel than coal /gas.

**Community Grants** - On Wednesday 7 February, community awards totalling £130,000 in revenue grants, went to a wide range of organisations from across the district who support the most vulnerable residents and communities including Honeypot Childrens Charity, New Forest Basics Bank, Forest Forge Theatre Co, and New Forest Disability Information Services.

**Additional CCTV** - Fordingbridge was selected for a framework trial as it currently doesn't have any CCTV. If the trial's successful, NFDC will expand the network across other areas. The new camera roll-out over the next 2 years comes as part of continued commitment to supporting communities by helping residents feel safe with £300,000 investment into the expansion of the district's CCTV network.

**Southern Water** – Referring to the water outage at the beginning of November, customers in Waterside, New Forest and elsewhere experienced no water or a limited supply for a week. The interruption was caused by unprecedented issues with the quality of water taken from the River Test. Unfortunately, weeks of rain, including Storm Babet and Storm Ciarán, caused river levels to rise enormously, after floodwater ran into it from throughout the local area. This caused a build-up of mud, silt, and debris within the watercourse. Senior management proposals will be considered on 21 March 2024.

**Community Forum** – Richard confirmed the next New Forest Community Forum will take place on Wednesday 27 March in the Lyndhurst Community Centre. The event runs from 9.30 am to 1.15 pm and will be concentrating on **Community Resilience and Emergency Planning**. The aim of this Forum is to begin work to support local councils and organisations to respond to incidents or issues, such as above. NFDC have secured some excellent speakers from TVBC and attendees will all benefit from the knowledge and experience they will be sharing on the day, to implement and lead draft their own local community plans.

John Adams from New Milton talked about communication problems that he experienced elsewhere (BCP) and the importance of working together.

#### 9. **Any Other Business**

Mary Davies from Landford raised concerns about increased “fly-tipping” and wondered if a Working Group should consider this matter, especially in the light of threatened closure of some HCC Waste & Recycling facilities in the forest. Sue Bennison from Bramshaw was similarly concerned about fly-tipping on a local area near to a road described as no man’s land by the Forestry Commission. Neville Penman and 3 other NFDC Cllrs had written a letter of objection to HCC.

*[The facilities in Marchwood and Somerley, near Ringwood, are among 12 under threat, as Conservative-run Hampshire County Council seeks to meet a forecasted £132m budget shortfall by April 2025. Closing the sites at Somerley and Marchwood would leave Pennington as the sole household waste recycling centre for the whole of the New Forest. The county council states that if the changes are made, 93% of Hampshire households would still have access to a waste and recycling centre within seven miles.*

*HCC has identified five sites in other areas of the county which are the smallest and poorest performers, which it says closing could save around £500,000 per year. Closures at a further seven sites, including Marchwood and Somerley, due to “operational changes and investment requirements” would net savings of £1.6m pa.*

*Alternative ways to save money suggested by the council include reducing the opening hours of centres by 57%, which it estimates would save £1.2m. The disposal of expensive waste types, such as soil and rubble, could be limited to a few designated sites, and waste containers for rarely deposited waste types could be removed to free up space. Additionally, some waste management sites could become “recycling only” by restricting the deposit of non-recyclable materials such as household waste.*

*HCC says it is also “exploring” new ways for introducing new fees, such as a premium booking slot which would provide access outside of the standard operating hours, or the sale of chargeable items like gloves or sacks on site. The authority admits that closing some sites may impact employees, which Veolia manages on behalf of the council, and there could be job losses.*

*If given the go-ahead, changes are expected to be brought in from summer next year. Hampshire’s network of tips is the largest in England, with 24 sites of different sizes, accessibility and levels of efficiency, costing more than £10m a year to operate. In 2022/23, Hampshire residents made more than 2-million bookings to deposit nearly 120,000 tonnes of household waste across the network.]*

Michael Husband of East Boldre raised the matter of poor mobile coverage in his area. Sue Bennison of Bramshaw shared concerns about poor coverage in some areas of the New Forest, although she has witnessed a new trenching machine operating in her area that puts the ducting in. Ben Tyrie from Lyndhurst offered to take up the cudgels as the newly appointed NFALC IT representative. Graham Chillcott from Copythorne referred to the Digital Fund, and Ben will look into this.

The Chairman highlighted the importance of appointing expert representatives, noting NFALC now has 3 such reps, but is still seeking a Cycling Representative.

#### 10 **Next Meeting – AGM on Tuesday 11 June 2024 at 6.00pm at NFDC Lyndhurst**

##### **Further meetings as below:**

Thursday 1 August

Monday 30 September

Wednesday 13 November

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman closed the Meeting just after 7.00 pm.