

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

**Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting of NFALC held at NFDC
Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Tuesday 18 November 2025 at 6.00pm**

<u>Parish/Town Council</u>	<u>Name</u>
Bransgore	Jacque Lay (on-line) Amanda Linford (on-line)
Copythorne	Graham Chillcott, Sylvia Wiggins Sherri Johnstone and David Rigby
Denny Lodge	Evelyn Elcoate (on-line)
Fawley	Paul Saunders Stephanie Bennettt (on-line)
Fordingbridge	David Millar
Lymington & Pennington	Tom Brindley (on-line)
Lyndhurst	Brice Stratford – Chairman
Ringwood	Gareth De Boos Charlotte Bennett (on-line)
Netley Marsh	Michael Welbourn
New Milton	Graham Flexman – Coordinator
Sway	Helen Schneider (on-line) Katie Walding (on-line)
Totton & Eling	Alison McGowan (on-line)
Wellow	Mike Richardson (on-line)
NFALC Cycling Rep	David Orme
NFDC	Richard Knott - (Link Officer) NFDC Chief Operations Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Daniel Reynafarje – NFDC Democratic and Support Services - ICT Officer
HALC	Robert Pettigrew, Policy, Comms & Engagement Lead, Hampshire Association of Local Councils
<u>Apologies:</u>	
Landford	Cllr Mary Davies, NFNPA
Hordle	Sarah Pitt
Ashurst & Colbury	Jo Reilly, NFDC
Ashurst & Colbury	Caroline Hubbard
Ringwood	Janet Georgiou
Brockenhurst	Gale Pettifer
Ellingham	Sarah Pinfold
NFALC Commoning Rep	Sami Blastock

1. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed 24 attendees to this hybrid meeting with 10 on-line from local councils within and around the New Forest district. The Chairman also welcomed David Orme, NFALC Cycling Rep and Robert Pettigrew as this evening's Guest Speaker from HALC.

2. **Minutes**

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1 being the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 22 September 2025. The Chairman went through the minutes page by page. The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

Mary Davies NFALC Vice Chair had tendered her apologies, due to attending another meeting

3. **Matters Arising**

The Chairman referred to Minute 8 NF LCWIP last sentence from 22.09.25 meeting, and asked David Orme, NFALC Cycling Rep to introduce this item and provide latest updates and referred to the last LCWIP comparison presented at September meeting, together with:

- Approved LCWIP response comment sheet blank.docx
- New Forest LCWIP Sept 2025 NFALC Response Draft **17Nov2025.pdf**

Basically, the LCWIP has been officially approved by HCC, and the consultation period is over. Glance at the maps and the proposed East West routes are missing now. They've very much gone for the philosophy that we've been trying to drive towards, which is use of existing low traffic minor roads rather than grandiose schemes along major roads that will never be funded, having taken onboard a lot of things and ideas that NFALC put forward.

So, David Orme was really quite gratified; the downside being leisure routes had disappeared, but coastal routes were largely retained. We don't necessarily need cycle routes we just need decent crossing points on major roads now. David asked members, if possible, to get comments to him by Xmas so he can incorporate them in a report at the beginning of January. Paul Saunders said Fawley commented about a lack of access down to Lepe into Calshot.

Referring to the appropriate slide, David said they've introduced Route 160 that kind of goes up to Dibden, which is good. There's a missing link to Brock from Brockenhurst East, which is one of our original proposed routes, we suggested "tube style route map" Route no.8. And then, coming to Lymington, there's a good connection to Beaulieu and then we have a problem with Route 250, which is the link up to Holbury and hence onto Calshot. Because we are starting to get into Watersdie territory then, that is within a different LCWIP, which is why it really stops at the border there.

The Chairman thanked David for his comprehensive report and quality of work undertaken.

Post Meeting Note: David had the opportunity to meet with Ben Mitchell, HCC Transport Planner, at the NF Transport Summit today. He presented on the LCWIP and said to me that he was very amenable to getting feedback from NFALC. As a result, I have made some minor changes to the documents previously sent – latest attached. Note that the Leisure routes **are** still part of the LCWIP, although not described, only shown on a map (p12 of LCWIP). David had also just received the following response from UK Cycling Events regarding the accident on Bolderwood Hill during the New Forest Tour:

"We have been in contact with the rider and his recovery is going well by his own words and expects to be back out on the bike in the coming year. The descent in question is already highlighted to by the way of signage on the hill, to the effect of "slow down" + "Caution" for the cattle grid just prior and then "Slow down" + "Slow down bends" signage for the descent itself. We can brief riders at the start, but we feel signage at the location is far more informative. We would be more than happy to make the amendments [requested by David Orme] to the wording [on our website]."

4. **New Forest Cultural Council**

The Chairman said there was little to update on as far as the proposed **New Forest Flag** is concerned and are awaiting upon the UK Flag Registry who are not a speedy organisation. But the **Dialect Survey** is underway and there's going to be an initial desk-based report that should come out in the New Year. Hopefully in January or February, and from that there should be enough to get some further funding from the Arts Council, which will then fund the sort of field work to take it further. The **Arts & Crafts Project** is similar, following two recent Open Day events in Brockenhurst at the Community Centre showcasing physical theatre and workshops the last couple of weeks. The hope is as a result of this sort of proof of concept is enough to gain further funding from the Arts Council and expand it into more specific crafts.

5. **Flooding & Ditching Matters**

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2, being a proposal from Copythorne Parish Council requesting that NFALC ask NFNPA to instruct its Officers to liaise with Forestry England (FE) and National Trust (NT) about providing answers to local Parish Councils on Flooding and Ditch Restoration Matters. Cllr Graham Chilcott put forward the following proposal(s). It was

RESOLVED:

That NFALC write to the Chair (Victoria Mander) of the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) asking for an agenda item to be included at the next Authority Meeting on 29th January 2026 to discuss a proposal from NFALC, which in turn asks that the Authority instructs its Officers to identify senior colleagues within FE and NT who are suitably empowered to take the necessary actions to resolve the above matters with the respective Parish Councils. Furthermore:

a) Having identified and spoken to them both request that they (FE and NT) make contact with Copythorne PC and Wellow PC directly with a view to speedily resolving the above matters.

b) That FE be asked to nominate a person to whom all New Forest Parish Councils can speak to directly to discuss parking-related issues arising out of the forthcoming FE parking charges.

6. **New Forest District Council**

Richard Knott, recently appointed Chief Operations Officer / Deputy Chief Executive, updated the meeting as follows, starting with a couple of local planning updates.

NFDC have paused the next stage of their **Local Plan**, which was a consultation, because of the impending local government reorganization consultation shortly. But that will be obviously picked up in the New Year and there will be communications as to what's next for local plan.

The **Associated British Ports** consultation regarding Solent Gateway 2 proposals for an expansion to the existing site, ABP are currently considering representations received so far on their informal consultation and will feedback to NFDC in due course. The project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, more commonly known as an NSIP, that is to be determined by the Secretary of State rather than the LPA. The NPA will continue to engage proactively on the project. Steve Cornwall is the lead officer. NFDC are keen to work with local town councils and NFDC encourages them to get in touch with Steve if they have any queries.

NFDC have recently held local **Community Infrastructure Levy** review and project funding for 2026-27 will be considered by Cabinet in December having gone through all of the proposals received. In regard to separate strategic CIL, expressions of interest are currently being reviewed and that will progress more fully in the New Year.

Waste-Wheelie Bin roll-out is going well with Phase 2 covering 15,000 properties. New Year Phase 3 will cover 31,000 properties. Long driveways were of a concern to Copythorne PC.

New Housing Schemes. Today in Hythe, NFDC with local representatives including ward members and Hythe Parish Council saw their new scheme both inside and out, that provides 22 new homes for local people. Next week is launch of another similar scheme in New Milton, being a mix of temporary accommodation and general needs being new Housing on the old Advertiser & Times site just off Old Milton Road.

NFDC has just undergone a senior management restructuring which has created a new role of **Chief Operations Officer and Deputy Chief Executive**, and that new role will oversee the three strategic directors, creating an extra layer in between. The new role of Deputy will allow the Chief Executive to focus on important local government reorganization work. As the deputy role will be led by Richard, he will be stepping out of the Strategic Director role for housing. NFDC currently has an interim director, Richard still continuing with the work as the **Liaison Officer with Parish & Town Councils** for now. NFDC have advertised the permanent role of replacement strategic director, who will then become the more permanent face and liaison for town and parish councils.

That leads onto **Local Government Reorganization** consultation, with an imminent announcement very soon by the government, that will provide opportunities for local Town and Parish Councils to feedback directly to the government with opinions on the options they publish as part of that consultation. There were 4 options put forward.

7. Post Meeting Note - Email from HALC of 20 November regarding the LGR consultation:

“Further to our recent communications that government would soon be starting consultation on the proposals received in relation to Hampshire and the IoW for re-organisation, we can confirm that this consultation is now open. Four separate proposals were registered from principal authorities in Hampshire. These was a joint proposal from Hampshire County Council and East Hants District Council for 4 Unitary Authorities; a joint proposal from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, New Forest District Council and Test Valley Borough Council for 5 Unitary Authorities; a proposal from Winchester City Council for 5 Unitary Authorities; and the final proposal from the remaining principal authorities, with the exception of Gosport Borough Council and the IoW Council who chose not to respond. This final proposal was for 5 unitary authorities but includes splitting some existing district council areas between the proposed new councils.”

8. New Forest National Park

The Chairman explained David Illsley could not attend the meeting today, but he had provided a written update that the Chairman read out as follows:

Development Management

The National Park Authority continues to receive a full and varied planning caseload. Larger-scale applications and emerging proposals for particular interest include:

Solent Gateway 2: APB major port development: In September, Associated British Ports published information on its planned port development on the eastern edge of the National Park, branded ‘Solent Gateway 2’. The scale of the proposals mean they will be considered through the ‘Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project’ process, rather than a planning application to the relevant planning authorities. We responded to this initial consultation by the deadline of 13 October and will continue to engage as the proposals develop.

The planning team at the National Park Authority is working closely with colleagues at Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council, with the focus for the next few weeks being a review of the Environmental Impact Scoping Report submitted by ABP in early November – see Solent Gateway 2 Project information

Former Fawley Power Station: This 49-hectare brownfield site located within New Forest District Council's planning jurisdiction and is entirely surrounded by the National Park. The previous outline applications for 1,500 dwellings (including 120 dwellings in the National Park) was withdrawn in Summer 2024 due to concerns over viability. The site is part of the Solent Freeport and the emerging revised proposals for the future of the site focus on employment-led development; Old Fawley power site vision moves from housing to business - BBC News.

A326 widening: The A326 forms the eastern boundary of the National Park for significant parts of its length. Hampshire County Council intend to submit an application in January 2026 for widening and junction improvements to improve access for the 80,000 residents of the Waterside, ABP's port land at Marchwood, Fawley Refinery and the former Fawley Power Station site (the latter 3 of which are Solent Freeport Tax sites). NPA will be the determining planning authority for the elements of the scheme in the National Park, with Hampshire County Council determining the application for the elements outside the National Park.

Planning Policy: The primary focus of Policy team's work over recent months has been preparing the draft New Forest National Park Local Plan Review. This has involved the consideration of a series of key evidence base reports focusing on matters including housing needs, employment needs and the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the emerging Plan. The Regulation 18 initial draft Local Plan was published for a 6-week consultation period on 5 November, running to 19 December 2025. We are hosting the following drop-in sessions:

- **Redlynch Village Hall – Tuesday 2 December, 2pm – 7pm**
- **Colbury Memorial Hall – Thursday 4 December, 2pm – 7pm**
- **Sway Village Hall – Friday 5 December, 2pm – 7pm**
- **Lyndhurst Community Centre – Tuesday 9 December, 2pm – 7pm**
- **Landford Methodist Hall – Friday 12 December, 2pm – 7pm**

The matter of how to address housing need is likely to be central to the Local Plan Review, with the National Park having a significant local housing need in a nationally protected landscape where (in addition) over 50% of the area is internationally designated for its nature conservation value.

New Forest Transport Summit: Thursday 20 November, Brockenhurst. The New Forest National Park Transport Summit is a flagship event for community groups, businesses, elected representatives and local organisations to help create a vision and strategy for how people move around the National Park in ways that protect and enhance our special, working landscape. This event is held by the National Park Authority, in partnership with Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and Go New Forest. (**Note:** Tom Brindley & David Orme are both attending the summit and will update NFALC at its next meeting in January).

Tackling Climate Change: The New Forest National Park Authority has been recognised for its work in response to climate change and the challenge to reduce emissions. The NPA achieved an impressive 'B' rating in its first year of reporting under the United Nations Race to Zero initiative. This global campaign unites organisations, cities, and regions to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. The rating recognises the NPA as a 'Climate Manager' – an organisation effectively managing its environmental impact and encouraging measures that will enable the landscape to respond to climate change such as public engagement, sustainable farming support and planning policies. Last summer, the New Forest NPA joined all 15 UK National Parks in signing up to the initiative.

New Chair and Deputy Chair of the New Forest National Park Authority: Victoria Mander has been elected as the new Chair of the National Park Authority. Victoria is one of the Secretary of State's 6 appointees to the membership of the NPA and has been a member since September 2020 (as well as being Deputy Chair since October 2023). Victoria is a wildlife conservationist who has worked on multiple projects in the UK and overseas and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management. Keith Mans was elected Deputy Chair, representing Brockenhurst on HCC he's a former HCC Chair, a former MP for Wyre (Lancs) for 10 years to 1997 and one of 5 members appointed to the NPA by HCC.

9. HALC – Clustering

The Chairman welcomed Robert Pettigrew of HALC who provided an illustrated presentation, per the attached slides. Robert said he been asked to provide a briefing on what clustering is on the grounds that it seems to mean different things to different people in different areas.

“What I found is that if you look in different places, clustering is a different thing in all of those, so I will try and be definitive. I will try and be helpful, but it is with the caveat that different parts and different geographies have applied it in different ways. From a practical perspective, clustering is about increasing capacity, reducing duplication, facilitating the efficient use of resources and amplifying the voice of individual communities when it’s done at its best.”

Robert explained what Clustering is, provided numerous examples and explained the benefits. There are various models of Clustering used throughout the country, he advised on setting-up suitable clusters and talked about the influence LGR may have in different parts Hampshire. If proposals are to subsume the New Forest, Test Valley and Eastleigh into what you might call Greater Southampton or West Hampshire, then there are quite a lot of challenges in the way in which decisions might be made, and where the balance of power may sit.

There is potential with clustering to actually make a stronger voice, to build coalitions in advance of LGR. The Government started off with the White Paper, being very keen on Neighbourhood Governance. We took that to mean an enthusiasm for town and parish councils, but they seem to have rode away from that, quite a lot. Under the last Minister before the reshuffle, it seemed to be largely driven by an appetite to recreate Greater Manchester in all the other different parts of the country. But now the LGR Bill has progressed, they seem to have gone back from that.

Robert was very pleased that during the second reading debate, a lot of the Government’s own backbenchers are saying “don’t forget the value of parish and town councils”. While the battle is certainly not yet won, clustering does provide an opportunity. Robert felt at this point in time we have the chance to shape neighbourhood governance in the way that works well for us and the communities we represent and serve.

In conclusion, Robert said clustering offers sustainability, efficiency, stronger representation for parish and town councils and where it’s done properly, it works for all partners. It can be especially valuable for smaller councils facing tight resource constraints to enable them to deliver services that they might not be able to deliver on their own. But always be careful to ensure one’s outlook and aspirations are aligned to those of other partners.

The HALC County Forum will be held on Thursday 29 January 2026 to support member councils in relation to LGR. This will also be supported through County Forum workstreams, such as Town & Larger Parish Group, the first meeting of which will be held on Wednesday 21 January 2026. In between, NFALC has a meeting scheduled for Monday 26 January 2026.

10. Meetings for 2026

Meetings for 2026 were agreed, subject to availability of the NFDC Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst SO43 7PA

Monday	26 January	Thursday	23 July (AGM)
Wednesday	25 March	Tuesday	22 September
Thursday	28 May	Wednesday	18 November

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the Meeting at 7.30 pm.

Chairman

Date