

NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NFALC)

**Minutes of Meeting of New Forest Association of Local Councils
held at ATC in Lyndhurst Thursday 19 October 2023 at 6.00pm**

<u>Parish/Town Council</u>	<u>Name</u>
Bramshaw	Sue Bennison
Brockenhurst	John Korbey - Vice-Chairman
Copythorne	Graham Chillcott
	David Rigby
East Boldre	Michael Husband
Fawley	Paul Saunders
Lyndhurst	Brice Stratford - Chairman
Minstead	Bill Andrews
	Helen Bennett
New Milton	Graham Flexman-Coordinator
New Forest National Park	Steve Avery – Exec Director
Foxies Future	Vivienne Franklin
	Emma Stevens
Apologies:	
Fawley	Stephanie Bennett
Netley Marsh	Mike Welbourn
Ringwood	Gareth DeBoos
NFDC	Kate Ryan, CEO
NFDC	Dan Poole, Portfolio Holder

1. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed 10 attendees to the meeting including Steve Avery from the NPA

2. Minutes

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1 being the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 20 July 2023. The minutes were approved by those present and agreed as a correct record. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

Appointment of NFALC Representatives, Focus Groups and Committees was deferred.

4. Survey Responses and Constitution

It was generally agreed that because of low turnout these items would also be deferred.

5. Forest-borne diseases

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Guest Speaker Dr Alex Crook was unable to attend.

6. Accessible Public Transport

This item was deferred, pending further response from HCC regarding discontinuance of CANGO service and on-going complaint from Chairman of CANGO Users' Forum.

(Post Meeting Note: Hampshire County Council formal response attached for info)

7. Foxlease Estate

The Chairman introduced two representatives, from Foxie's Future group who are fighting to retain the popular activity centre in Lyndhurst. Vivienne Franklin explained the situation.

Girlguiding-run Foxlease on Clay Hill is one of five activity centres across the country facing the axe, alongside overseas operations, in a cost-cutting drive by the organization. It's just gone on the market with Savills for £4m.

Lot one has a guide price of £2.5m and includes the Grade II listed 23-bedroomed Princess Mary House, which is set within 65 acres of landscaped gardens. Additional accommodation provided onsite includes a separate three-bedroom residential bungalow, 14 self-contained campsites with facilities and an outdoor activity area.

Lot two, up for £1.5m, consists of three residential properties. Link Bungalow has four bedrooms and is detached and is currently let on an assured short hold tenancy. Foxlease Cottages are a pair of semi-detached, three-bedroom houses built in 1850, both let on assured short hold tenancies.

The sale brochure describes it as an extraordinarily rare opportunity to acquire a significant 65-acre Georgian estate located in the heart of the New Forest, with a wide range of accommodation across the site offering a range of potential alternative uses, subject to planning permission, adding the Princess Mary House is located at the centre of the estate. The Grade II listed house was built in 1792 and offers attractive and well-proportioned principal rooms with floor to ceiling height windows.

Within the wider estate, further accommodation and self-catering facilities are provided within Princess Margaret Lodge, The Barn and The Coach House. There are three residential properties, one detached and two semi-detached cottages, which are available as Lot two."

Bidding to save the facility, campaigners have formed Foxie's Future a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The group has also registered Foxlease as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) which could help them in their bid to buy the facility.

As part of the Localism Act 2011, assets of community value can be nominated by parish councils or groups with a connection to the community. If accepted by New Forest District Council, groups are then given a six-month window to be able to put a bid in when the asset goes up for sale.

Vivienne Franklin said the Foxies' Future group have expressed interest as a potential bidder, their main challenge being they don't yet know what other interest there will be. They have a number of grant applications submitted and wonderful supporters fundraising for us in all sorts of ways all the time at the moment.

They are hopeful that the ACV moratorium will give them time to prepare an appropriate bid. Support from local councils would be most welcome. The Chairman wished them success in their campaign, urging towns and parishes to help if possible.

8. New Forest National Park

Steve Avery believed in the NPA being accountable, and NFALC provides an opportunity for him to speak to councils outside of the National Park that he felt was important.

The Authority held its AGM earlier today and appointed a new Chairman, David Bence, an Authority member since January 2018, taking over from Gavin Parker who stepped down. He will continue to be deputy chair of the Authority's Resources, Audit and Performance Committee, as well as representing the Authority on a number of national and regional organisations and remains Chair of the Forest Farming Group.

Also at its AGM, Victoria Mander was elected as Deputy Chair and has been on the Board since September 2020. A wildlife conservationist, she has worked in the UK and overseas and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. At its AGM, NPA members Mary Davies, Mel Kendal, Keith Mans, Dan Poole, Joe Reilly, Ann Sevier, Brice Stratford and Derek Tipp were also formally welcomed to the board.

The New Forest National Park Authority is inviting nominations for its prestigious Building Design Awards 2024. The Authority is asking people to nominate their favourite building which has been completed in the last three years. Residential schemes, non-residential schemes, conservation projects and 'green buildings' are all eligible for an award.

Now in its ninth year, the Building Design Awards have previously recognised a converted dairy building, a restored Victorian Ice House, Peppa Pig building at Paulton's Park, and the modern Lookout Café at Lepe – as well as many residential improvements with proportions and materials in keeping with their surroundings. Nominations are open until 31 December 2023 and winners will be chosen in the new year by a panel of members drawn from the National Park Authority's Planning Committee.

The NPA gained funding for its Youth for Climate and Nature 'YouCAN' scheme which, with match funding, represents a £1.4 million investment into the Forest and surrounding area. The scheme will run over three years supporting the NPA's wide ranging youth work. The launch of the project in September will allow NPA to retain team members and recruit another youth engagement coordinator to work full time on projects including Junior Rangers, youth volunteering, youth action projects, inspiring and enabling young people.

The Ranger Team '3 E' approach of 'engage, educate and enforce' was deployed through joint patrols with Police for Operation Mountie and Safer New Forest and with the rollout of the pony feeding and BBQ Public Service Protection Orders (PSPOs) introduced in July. Engagement with over 700 people suggests the PSPOs have been working well with a reduction in the number of reported wildfire and pony petting/feeding incidents. Rangers from Forestry England and the National Park Authority have been recording the results. A planning training event for Parish Councils was held at Brockenhurst Village Hall on 6 September. Topics covered included an overview of planning, the Local Plan, a step-by-step guide to determining planning applications, enforcing planning control and tree work applications and making Tree Protection Orders.

The event was attended by over 130 parish Cllrs (including Bill Andrews and John Korbey) and provided a useful opportunity to set out the planning policy framework for the area and the role of the statutory 'development plan' in decision making

The Policy team co-ordinated the Authority's response to the Government consultation on proposed changes to national permitted development rights (PDR). The response was endorsed at the Authority meeting on 21 September and submitted to the Government by the consultation deadline, setting out strong objections to the proposed extension of a range of permitted development rights into National Parks, including temporary campsites.

To protect local communities and the environment of the New Forest, the NPA has issued new planning controls for temporary campsites. Before deciding whether to confirm the 'Article 4 Direction', the NPA are asking for people's views. Under new national 'permitted development rights' introduced by the Government in summer 2023, pop-up campsites can operate for 60 days a year without planning permission.

Planning authorities can make an 'Article 4 Direction' which means proposals cannot be carried out under national permitted development rights and instead require a planning application. In ecologically sensitive areas such as national parks, this allows the proposal to be considered in more detail and suitable planning conditions may be attached. The Authority are making a new Article 4 Direction to remove the permitted development right for the temporary use of land as a recreational campsite.

In terms of water quality impacts on the River Avon and Solent designated sites, recent debates on Government Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill have resulted in the requirement for 'nutrient neutral' development in affected catchments remaining. NPA continue to work closely with landowners and neighbouring planning authorities to bring forward mitigation schemes that deliver nutrient neutrality and other benefits for the environment.

The popular National Park Walking & Cycling Festival on 29 October is being promoted and this year has the theme of accessibility with over 30 walks and guided cycle rides available to book on the NPA website. Following receipt of funding (to spend in the current financial year) from South-Western Railway, the NPA offered to support / deliver projects relating to exploring nature, accessibility and disadvantaged young people. Our Walking and Cycling Festival 2024 is the obvious ongoing initiative where this can be implemented.

The NPA continues to work with HCC around the New Forest Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). There was an online stakeholder meeting in July to update on progress so far, including a map of proposed routes. The Cycle Working Group met in July and further subgroups have since formed to deliver on improving communication and mapping for the cycling community, in tandem with the Verderers.

9. NFALC Representation

The Chairman said he will be writing to all town and parish Council Chairmen before our next meeting emphasizing that NFALC is a Forest-wide body with a legitimate democratic mandate, that has real potential to be a valuable and influential institution for the area, and an important supporter of local councils. He hopes NFALC will become a far more active organization, one which offers real value to the parishes and towns it covers.

10. Next Meeting – To be held on Thursday 18 January 2024 at 6.00pm at NFDC Lyndhurst

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman closed the Meeting just before 8.00 pm.