

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

Minutes of the Hybrid Meeting of NFALC held
Monday 27 January 2025 from 6.00 pm

<u>Parish/Town Council</u>	<u>Name</u>
Ashurst & Colbury	Caroline Hubbard (on-line)
Beaulieu	Sami Reece, NFALC Rep Charlie Knight
Bramshaw	Sue Bennison (on-line)
Bransgore	Amanda Linford Jacque Lay
Brockenhurst	Russell Horne
Copythorne	Graham Chillcott Sylvia Wiggins David Rigby
East Boldre	Michael Husband
Hordle	Maggie Hill (on-line)
Landford (Wiltshire)	Mary Davies
Lymington	Tom Brindley (on-line)
Lyndhurst	Brice Stratford – Chairman
Milford	Anne Cullen (on-line)
New Milton	Graham Flexman – Clerk Joanna Hayward (on-line)
Sway	Katie Walding – (on-line)
Totton	David Harrison (on-line) Alison McGowan (on-line)
New Forest District Council	Joe Reilly Ashurst Bramshaw, Copythorne & Netley Marsh Geoff Blunden, Environment and Sustainability Portfolio
NFDC Officers	Richard Knott, Strategic Director – Housing & Communities NFDC Dean Brunton, Service Manager - Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Delivery NFDC Daniel Reynafarje - Democratic Services - ICT Officer NFDC
NFALC Cycling Representative	David Orme
CPRE	Nicky Tindall
Go New Forest	Nicola Carass

Apologies:

Brockenhurst
 Fawley
 New Milton
 New Forest NPA
 Ringwood

John Korbey
 Stephanie Bennett
 John Adams
 Steve Avery
 Gareth De Boos

1. Apologies

Steve Avery and Cllr John Adams were unable to attend due to a SW Quadrant meeting.

The Chairman welcomed 20 attendees from 14 councils within the New Forest district, and Mary Davies from Landford Parish Council in Wiltshire plus Richard Knott & Dean Brunton from NFDC, David Orme NFALC Cycling Rep, Nicky Tindall of CPRE, Nic Carass of GNF, and Cllr Geoffrey Blunden, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability at NFDC.

2. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this hybrid meeting including some attending on-line

3. Minutes - Annual General Meeting

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1, being the Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on 13 November 2024. The minutes were approved by those present and agreed as a correct record. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

4. Any Matters Arising

The Chairman referred to NFALC as the New Forest Assembly of Local Councillors and Association of Local Councils, and how this was apt in the light of forthcoming Devolution.

5. English Devolution Bill

Richard Knott of NFDC spoke at some length about future **Devolution** & associated **LGR**.

The government has outlined plans for changes to the structure of local government in its Devolution White Paper. As a result, there is significant speculation as to what the future may hold for local government authorities, including New Forest District Council (NFDC).

The government has emphasised its goal to create simpler and more efficient structures for local government. By autumn 2025, they expect proposals for LGR (Local Government Reorganisation) where unitary councils with populations of around 500,000 sit between new mayoral strategic authorities and town and parish councils.

For NFDC, which serves an area of around 180,000 residents, this would mean joining neighbouring authorities to form a new, larger council.

While some Cllrs are sharing their own perspectives on how new council boundaries could be drawn, no formal proposals have been made and no decisions have yet been reached. The wider geography of Hampshire is complex, and multiple options will likely need to be considered to ensure suitable outcomes for all local authorities and residents involved.

NFDC would not willingly want to see an end to a council that we are proud of, and we know that our residents value. However it is important that as the government has made its intentions clear, we do engage in the process to ensure that we deliver the best outcome possible for New Forest residents and businesses within this devolution framework. New Forest District Council supports the view that local democracy is important and that consultation with residents on such a fundamental change is vital.

In Hampshire, the decision to proceed with the **Devolution Priority Programme** sits with Hampshire County Council and the three unitary authorities (Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight). These authorities had until Friday 10 January to inform government of their decision on whether to move forward.

Under the government's proposals, all areas are expected to have a **Strategic Authority**, and it is likely this would apply to the whole of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This would also be likely to include the role of a mayor and would operate along the lines of current mayoral combined authorities in Manchester and the West Midlands.

The timeline for decision-making and implementation has yet to be confirmed but this will become clearer in due course. The government has said that consultation will be part of the process and that they will be leading this. NFDC will continue to keep staff / residents informed as more details emerge about devolution.

6. New Forest Cultural Assembly

The Chairman met with Richard Knott to discuss this and had a positive meeting together. It was recognised there is room for a body for connecting local people with artists using a bottom-up approach, creating a forum to support professional artists. The devolution debate has strengthened the idea.

7. New Forest National Park

Details of the public drop-in sessions for the NFNPA **Local Plan** review are shown below (**Note** - All of these events will be staffed by members of the NPA's planning policy team)

- Bramshaw Village Hall, Community Room – Monday 24 February, 2pm - 7pm
- Hyde Memorial Hall - Tuesday 25 February, 1.30pm – 6.30pm
- Brockenhurst Village Hall, Craft Room – Monday 3 March, 2pm – 7pm
- Lyndhurst Community Centre, Pine Hall – Friday 7 March 2pm – 7pm

See update on New Forest Cycle Network, LCWIP, CDA, Verderers & FE. (**As attached**)

8. New Forest District Council

Dean Brunton provided an update on the **new NPPF**, which increases pressure on local authorities to meet housing targets and has been accompanied by concerning messaging from government ministers that every local area must deliver on these housing needs.

For areas like the New Forest, which has a unique balance of environmental, economic and social priorities, there is concern that the NPPF lacks necessary guidance to ensure sustainable growth or support the objectives of the New Forest National Park.

The New Forest is a nationally and internationally significant landscape that requires careful stewardship. NFDC is committed to delivering new homes to meet local needs, but statements made by the government expecting every local area to adopt a plan to meet the prescribed housing needs presents a deeply confusing message to unique areas with such limitations as ours. NFDC have written the Government expressing concerns and are awaiting a response.

Dean Brunton also provided an update on the work being undertaken by the District Council on a **review of the current Local Plan**. The Local Plan is the main part of the Development Plan for the New Forest outside of the New Forest National Park. There is a separate Local Plan for the New Forest National Park area, prepared by the New Forest National Park. Both are currently being reviewed.

A paper is being presented to the NFDC Cabinet on 5 February to approve a 6-week consultation on an Issues and Scope document, which will seek the views of residents on the issues the local plan should address. This revised plan is being prepared in light of the Government's new NPPF. At this stage there are no proposed site allocations and no policy wording being consulted on.

There will be significant difficulty in meeting the revised housing target of 1,501 new homes per year — over six times the recent average of 246 homes delivered annually. We have never been close to this figure in previous Local Plans.

NFDC are also mindful of the recent requests from two neighbouring authorities to accommodate their existing unmet housing needs, highlighting a broader challenge for the government in directing housing growth to areas with capacity to accommodate development in a sustainable way.

NFDC also want to make sure that local people have a chance to inform the development of their Local Plan and will be arranging a series of drop in events during the consultation and the dates for these will be publicised shortly.

An update on the **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** was also provided. This document sets out how NFDC consults and involves others in planning matters in the New Forest (outside of the National Park).

NFDC undertook a period of public consultation from 23 October to 6 December 2024 on a revised version to replace the current SCI adopted in October 2020. This was to take account of changes in national policy (NPPF) and updates to NFDC procedures.

The SCI only relates to planning and sets out how NFDC will involve the community and stakeholders in the preparation and review of planning policy documents and the consideration of planning applications. The SCI covers preparation of not only the Local Plans but also planning guidance and applications for planning permission.

An update was also given on the progress that the District Council had been making with regards to **allocating CIL monies to projects around the District** - with a paper to be presented to NFDC's Cabinet meeting in April.

Waste Collection in the New Forest. Richard Knott explained a new waste collection service is being rolled out in 3 area phases, starting this summer. Different areas of the district will start at different times. Residents can check online for their area. **(As attached)**

- i) **Phase 1** from June 2025, will see residents in New Milton, Lymington, and some other surrounding areas, start to get the new waste collection service.
- ii) **Phase 2** will start in October 2025, which covers the west and northwest New Forest, and includes Ringwood, Fordingbridge, Burley, and the surrounding areas.
- iii) **Phase 3** will begin in March 2026 in the east and northeast New Forest, including Totton, Hythe, and Marchwood.

NFDC are sending residents in phase 1, whose new waste collections start in June, a letter and leaflet explaining how the new service will work. Phase 2 and 3 residents will also receive letters and leaflets nearer to their phase start dates.

The bins are a black-lidded 180 litre wheelie bin for general waste, and a green-lidded 240 litre wheelie bin for recycling, along with a brown outdoor caddy and a grey indoor caddy for the food waste recycling service. Residents can see examples of the bins at NFDC information offices in Lymington, Lyndhurst (Appletree Court), New Milton and Ringwood.

When the new service starts, recycling and rubbish will be collected on alternate weeks. This means general waste will be collected one week, and recycling collected the next. Food waste recycling will be collected every week. To get people started with the new food waste recycling, there will be an initial supply of caddy liners provided.

The new waste collection service is all part of the council's work to make it easier for its residents to recycle more and throw less away, and weekly food waste collections are a key part of this improvement.

Residents will be able to recycle a wide range of food waste, including vegetable peelings, meat, fish and dairy products - including bones, tea bags, coffee grounds, plate scrapings. Once collected, food waste is taken to an anaerobic digestion facility where it will create renewable energy and fertilizer.

Cllr Geoff Blunden as NFDC Portfolio Holder explained that further information, including letters and leaflets are being produced, that will include guidance on how to use bins and caddies, when they will be delivered, and any changes to collection days.

The Chairman suggested this item remains an agenda item at future meetings. Agreed.

9. Any Other Business

- a) Nicola Carass introduced Go New Forest as the official tourist board for the New Forest. The principal aim of GNF is to manage and market the New Forest as a quality destination through co-operation with all interests, to enhance the environment and grow business.

Go New Forest (GNF) is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC) that delivers marketing and promotional support for the New Forest destination. Their area of interest is the New Forest District Council (NFDC) boundary, including the New Forest National Park.

A main priority of GNF work is to protect the New Forest. It will, therefore, work in close partnership with all managing interests in the New Forest, especially the New Forest National Park Authority, NFDC and the Forestry Commission to deliver its strategy.

GNFs mission is to develop and grow a successful and sustainable visitor economy working closely with a wide range of industry partners to make The New Forest the destination of choice - regionally, nationally and globally, noting 55% of the NPA is SSSI.

As a community interest company without local authority funding GNF relies entirely on the support of 170 local businesses, including towns and villages investing in membership and seeing the value of its marketing channels. Last year, GNF were able to:

- Generate over 4.8 million website visits to the GNF destination site, with 1.2 million unique users seeking local accommodation, places to eat and drink and things to do.
- Launch keyword specific marketing campaigns to a highly engaged audience of 79,000 followers across our social platforms and 63,000 e-newsletter subscribers.
- Promote responsible tourism through visitors following the New Forest Code **As attached** sharing in 72 social media posts, generating 56,017 total impressions, 15,533 video views.
- Additionally, GNF sent out 2,779,684 emails featuring the New Forest Code (**As attached**) to subscribers, spreading awareness & working in partnership to protect the environment.

Nicola Carass explained some of the benefits of towns & parishes joining Go New Forest and will shortly be making a presentation to Milford on Sea Parish Council highlighting...

- Town / village featured in one destination newsletter sent to 66,000 subscribers
- A dedicated town or village page on number 1 destination gonewforest.com/
- Networking with members from all sector groups including attractions, self-catering, hotels, holiday parks, campsites, retail, food, drink and corporate membership.

Lymington & Pennington Town have invested in 2025 membership in order to help drive visitors to their Saturday weekly market, and to promote Lymington as a destination.

The Chairman thanked Nic for her presentation, and suggested she contact Sami Reece and others who expressed interest at the meeting, including David Rigby at Copythorne.

- b) David Rigby introduced this item as a Trustee of CPRE, that is now 100 years old, he said. Formerly known as the *Council for the Preservation of Rural England* and as *Campaign to Protect Rural England*, it was formed in 1926 to limit [urban sprawl](#) and [ribbon develop](#).

CPRE’s Hampshire Hedge project centres around rejuvenating, extending old hedgerows in Hampshire over the next 3 years, connecting up the New Forest and the South Downs National Parks. This will provide connectivity and increased habitat for wildlife, as well the many benefits to farming and ecosystem services that we all benefit from.

The project hopes to enhance the quality of the landscape, grow local community engagement, and raise awareness of the importance of hedgerows for wildlife, climate, and sustainable farming. National campaign launched in 2021 to extend UK hedgerows network by 40% by 2050 saw CPRE Hampshire plant 37,500 whips / 7.5km new hedging.

Hampshire Hedge is an ambitious new initiative to connect 2 National Parks in Hampshire, South Downs National Park and New Forest National Park, with a nature recovery green corridor of hedgerow. It will wind its way through the central heart of Hampshire parishes and link woodlands, meadows, local nature reserves and SSSIs.

Hedgerows play an important role in boosting biodiversity, capturing carbon, improving food production and enhancing the rural economy. CPRE Hampshire has already worked for several years on restoration of hedgerows across the Hampshire countryside, educating and working with local communities, schools, landowners and farmers. The Hampshire Hedge will build on that work, with the help of 3 local farmers in Copythorne.

The hedge itself will start from Copythorne in the New Forest and finish at Compton, on the edge of the South Downs, near Winchester. It will provide an important link between fragmented green spaces and offer a beautiful landscape feature in one of the areas of Hampshire under most pressure from development.

If you would like to know more about The Hampshire Hedge project, please contact Alison Talbot at opsmanager@cprehampshire.org.uk David will forward a report to Brice for info.

- c) **Graham Chillcott from Copythorne** previously raised the subject of how it might be possible for NFALC to interact directly with NFNPA, and others, on various matters, and formed a Working Group that met on 8 January 2025 and recommended trialling of a four-part approach, per Appendix 5 (Page one, Paragraph 5). It was unanimously

RESOLVED: That the 4 bullet points highlighted by Graham Chillcott and agreed with Steve Avery of the NFNPA be progressed.

It was also unanimously agreed bullet point 5 be progressed if devolution happens

RESOLVED: That NFALC offers its structure & linkages for bodies and authorities to access at local community level.

- d) David Orme Cycling rep commented on 12/13 April cycling event, that SAG had approved.

10. Meeting Dates 2025

Members noted the proposed dates of meetings for the rest of the year (as below) Chairman referring to an LGO Training Seminar at 7.00pm after the next meeting.

Wednesday	19 March	Monday	22 September
Thursday	15 May	Tuesday	18 November
Thursday	31 July (AGM)		

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending on the night of Storm Herminia and closed the Meeting at 8.21pm.

Chairman

Date