

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

Minutes of the Hybrid Meeting of NFALC held
Thursday 29 May 2025 from 6.00 pm

<u>Parish/Town Council</u>	<u>Name</u>
Ashurst & Colbury	Caroline Hubbard (on-line)
Boldre	Alison Bolton
Bramshaw	Sue Bennison (on-line)
Bransgore	Jacque Lay (on-line)
Brockenhurst	John Korbey
Copythorne	Graham Chillcott David Rigby
Damerham	Ann Bellows (on-line)
Hordle	Maggie Hill (on-line)
Landford (Wilts)	Mary Davies
Lymington & Pennington	Tom Brindley
Lyndhurst	Brice Stratford – Chairman James Carney -
Minstead	Helen Bennett
New Milton	Graham Flexman – Clerk
Ringwood	Gareth DeBoos (on-line)
Sway	Peter Dance
Totton & Eling	David Harrison (on-line) Alison McGowan (on-line)
New Forest District Council	Joe Reilly Ashurst Bramshaw, Copythorne & Netley Marsh
NFDC Officers in attendance	Richard Knott, Strategic Director – Housing & Communities Joe Tyler - NFDC Democratic Services - ICT Officer
PEDALL inclusive cycling	Richard Taylor

1. Apologies

NFALC Cycling Representative

David Orme

2. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting with 13 in person and 11 on-line with representation from 16 local councils - including Landford in Wiltshire - plus Richard Knott and Joe Tyler from NFDC, plus Richard Taylor (former Cycling Rep) from PEDALL.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1 being the Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on 27 January 2025. 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 the joint NFDC / NFALC Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) briefing held at Lyndhurst Community Centre on Monday 28th April that was well-attended with 50 representatives from 25 New Forest towns and parishes.

Regarding representation from New Forest National Park Authority at future meetings, the Chairman said Steve Avery, Executive Director of Strategy & Planning had recently left the authority for a new role at the Planning Officers Society (POS). Steve currently chairs the Royal Town Planning Institute's Management Board and SE Region Activities Committee.

Steve joined the New Forest NPA in spring 2006 when the authority assumed statutory planning responsibilities for the national park area. Prior to joining the NPA he was at NFDC for 8 years and will continue to support the delivery of planning through his new role as regional co-ordinator at POS which represents public sector planners in England.

Following his departure, David Illsley has been appointed as interim Head of Planning & Place and is likely to join us at future NFALC meetings, this one being too short notice. David has worked at the NPA since 2005 and has been the authority's Policy & Conservation Manager since 2009, working closely alongside Steve Avery.

5. PEDALL

The Chairman introduced Richard Taylor, former NFALC Cycling Rep, in his new role today as representative of local charity PEDALL - New Forest Inclusive Cycling.

Richard explained PEDALL is run by charity Friends of PEDALL and the NFNPA (New Forest National Park Authority) supported by NHS, SCARF and Colton Care. PEDALL is funded by National Lottery Community Fund, Sport England, British Cycling. It provides inclusive cycling around the New Forest and aims to make cycling available to everyone.

PEDALL provides cycling sessions for people who face a barrier to cycling on the New Forest off-road cycle network. A barrier is anything that prevents someone from being able to cycle without additional support, including those with Health and Mobility issues; Physical and Intellectual disabilities; Those with Special Educational Need (SEN).

They use an extensive fleet of specialist bikes (some costing up to £7.5k) available from two sites in the new Forest (Burley and Ashurst). Richard said they provide a unique and positive experience for over 5,000 riders per year. They have expanded to share their skills with the local community offering training programs and bike repair advice.

Richard gave an illustrated presentation about *Pass the Pedal* Festival being held on Saturday 27 September 2025 at New Park near Brockenhurst in the New Forest. This is a

fundraising challenge event and a celebration of cycling for all in the New Forest on the designated off-road cycle tracks, away from traffic, amongst nature. Per slides attached.

Joe Reilly, David Harrison and others spoke in support of the project. The Chairman thanked Richard for his interesting talk. Richard Knott confirmed a £25k grant from NFDC.

6. New Forest Cultural Assembly/Council

The Chairman announced this initiative is moving forward, having talked to the CDA and Heritage Centre. The idea is now firmly established, and the Chairman enquired of NFALC members who may be interested in taking this forward. There are 3 different projects:

a) Dialects project

James Carney was elected as Arts & Media Rep at our 18 January 2024 NFALC meeting. James has recently secured some Arts Council funding which will support a Dialect Survey over the next 12 months for recording older surviving examples of the New Forest dialect, a positive project continuing the work of The English Project at the University of Winchester. James explained the recording process, that may be provided anonymously for those taking part, and is seeking suitable suggestions and volunteers, details of whom can be forwarded by email to james@unseenthings.co.uk

b) New Forest Flag project

The Chairman introduced this item, extolling the virtues of New Forest having its own flag, designed for local recognition, separate from NFNPA / NFDC organisational flags flown. A distinct flag for the New Forest would serve as a powerful symbol of its unique identity, heritage, and environmental significance. It could foster a stronger sense of community, promote local pride, and contribute to the area's tourism, brand and stewardship, viz:

Symbol of Identity and Heritage

- The New Forest, with its diverse landscapes and rich history, deserves a visual representation that reflects its distinct character.
- A flag could serve as a visual reminder of the area's unique blend of ancient woodlands, heathlands, rivers, and coastline.

Promotion of Local Pride and Community

- A flag can create a sense of belonging and unity among residents and visitors, fostering a stronger connection to the New Forest.
- It could be used at local events, community gatherings, and educational initiatives to enhance awareness and appreciation of the area's values.

Tourism and Branding

- A distinct flag can help distinguish the New Forest from other areas, attracting tourists and boosting the local economy.
- It can be used in marketing materials, signage, and merchandise to create a memorable and recognizable brand for the New Forest.

Symbol of Environmental Stewardship

- A flag could be a visual reminder of the need to protect the area's natural resources and promote sustainable practices.
- It could be used to raise awareness about environmental issues and encourage responsible tourism.

c) Arts & Crafts project

Finally, James is also heading up a proposed Community Arts & Crafts project, engaging with NFDC, seeking expressions of interest in rural crafts such as leather / wood working, making face masks (Punch & Judy style), charcoal burning and other traditional crafts.

It was unanimously agreed by those present that these were good projects to undertake.

RESOLVED: That NFALC establish the New Forest Cultural Council as a convening partner, and that a steering group is formed to initiate it with the 3 inaugural projects above.

7. New Forest Commoners

The Chairman referred to the Commoners' Defence Association's (CDA) recent decision, taken unanimously at their AGM of 11 April 2025, to self-identify as a National Minority, and to seek Government recognition of their National Minority Status in the context of UK legislation under the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), highlighting their distinct heritage and culture. The initial response from the Government is encouraging, recognising Commoners as a minority group. CDA is spearheading this initiative, with the aim of protecting their traditional way of life and retaining a voice in decision-making post Devolution and LGR.

New Forest Commoners are individuals who occupy land or property within the New Forest to which are attached specific rights over the Forest, and who actively practise and maintain them. These rights allow them to graze livestock, use Forest wood for fuel, and other historically significant activities. Commoning is a traditional way of life that has played a crucial role in shaping the landscape and ecology of the New Forest for centuries. It's worth noting the following key aspects of commoners:

- **Rights**

Commoners hold rights to graze animals (ponies, cattle, donkeys, sheep) on the open Forest, turn out pigs in the autumn to feed, and obtain firewood.

- **Community**

Commoners form a close-knit community, with most families having been Commoners for many generations, passing down their knowledge, culture and traditions experientially and orally.

- **Identity**

Commoners maintain a distinct cultural identity tied to the New Forest, with a continuity in the area that goes back over a thousand years.

- **Ecology**

Commoning practices, such as grazing, play a vital role in maintaining the unique landscape and internationally important biodiversity of the New Forest, and the current Forest ecology cannot be maintained without the Commoners.

- **Modern Life**

Due to modern economic and social pressures most Commoners now also work in other industries, and struggle to viably maintain their traditional way of life.

- **Support**

Both the [New Forest Commoners Defence Association](#) and New Forest National Park Authority actively support Commoners and work to protect their traditional way of life, recognising their ecological value and important cultural heritage.

- **Criteria**

The three criteria for recognition under the FCNM are self-identification, connection to a specific territory, and a distinct heritage and culture - the New Forest Commoners fulfil these criteria.

The Chairman asked members to vote to recognise and support New Forest Commoners.

RESOLVED:

That NFALC recognises the Commoners' self identification as a National Minority under the FCNM, and supports their pursuit of Government recognition.

8. New Forest National Park

The Chairman and other NPA members updated the meeting on topics of interest.

NFNPA Local Plan Review

The Chairman advised David Illsley will be working with Paul Walton and Nigel Stone on the Local Plan Review. The Timetable for the NFNPA Local Plan Review is attached.

Car Park Charges in the New Forest

Forestry England say “The recreation management strategy, developed by all New Forest organisations, sets out a number of ways to manage the impact of the huge numbers of people spending time in the Forest and raising the funds needed to do so. These plans include introducing charging for some facilities. With only around 10% of our core funding coming from government, we need to raise the majority of funds for car parks, trails and all of the work we do, ourselves. A sustainable approach to funding New Forest car parks is needed if we are to going to be able to continue to maintain such a large network and carry out our work. We are working together with other Forest groups to look at how we fund this work in the future and will share more information as plans develop.”

9. New Forest District Council

Richard Knott referred to the following items:

- a) A grant of £25k to PEDALL was confirmed funded from the UK Prosperity Fund.
- b) New waste scheme service is being introduced from 9 June for those in Phase 1.
- c) LGR, the Government has replied regarding NFDC submission asking for an extension of submission to November, which was declined. Local council leaders must develop a proposal for local government reorganisation by 26 September.
- d) There is an on-going Community Resilience Forum (Flooding) engagement plan.

NFDC continues engaging with others on LGR proposals, with 25 out of 37 local councils attending the recent briefing in Lyndhurst on 28 April. In developing a dialogue, it is clear

local services are important. An Asset Management Strategy Review is being undertaken before NFDC transfers any assets to local councils. Splitting the Waterside from the New Forest to form an authority with Southampton and Eastleigh councils had been mooted. There was a call from the floor requesting a vote that NFDC do all it can to avoid this split.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: That NFALC supports NFDC in opposing proposals to split the Forest.

10. Report from NFALC Chairman

Ahead of the AGM on 31 July 2025 the Chairman tabled his review for 2024-25 that's also used towards a NFALC entry in the annual HALC Handbook. Members noted the report.

11. Any Other Business

It was noted that Hybrid approach to meetings is working well with increased attendances.

Following on from his presentation at the January NFALC meeting, David Rigby said the CPRE offer to help with Hampshire hedgerows still stands.

Joe Reilly NFDC Cllr for Ashurst, Bramshaw, Copythorne & Netley Marsh referred to a recent presentation by Donna Jones, Hampshire Police Crime Commissioner. Invitations were sent to local councils on 2 May 2025 to attend the Local Policing Conference at the Southampton Hilton Utilita Bowl on Wednesday, 7 May 2025 (see attached PCC report).

The Chairman said PEDALL will be at the New Forest Show in July, and there will be a New Forest Thrive nature festival on Sunday 6 July in Ringwood (per attached NPA email)

12. Meeting Dates 2025

Members noted the proposed dates of meetings for the rest of the year, as below:

Thursday	31 July (AGM)
Monday	22 September
Tuesday	18 November

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.05pm.

Chairman

Date