

New Forest Association (Registered Charity No: 260328)

Annual General Meeting

To be held at 10.30 am, Saturday 11th May 2019 at Brockenhurst Village Hall, Highwood Road, SO42 7RY

AGENDA

1. Welcome by the President, Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 2018 AGM – to approve the minutes (A)
4. Matters arising from the minutes
5. To adopt the Annual Report (B)
6. Treasurer's report (C) - to receive and adopt the Annual Accounts and appoint the independent Accounts Examiner
7. Election of Trustees: Bernie Austin has been nominated to stand for election
8. Election of Council members: Leo Randall is due to retire and has been nominated to stand for re-election. Jacob White has been nominated to stand for election
9. Election of Officers: There are the following nominations
Chair: John Ward
Vice Chair: Gale Gould
Honorary Secretary: Katie Campling
Honorary Treasurer: Brandy Gill
- 10 Election of President: Professor Matthew Kelly has been nominated
- 11 Election of Vice-Presidents: Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre and Peter Frost have been nominated

A Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the New Forest Association Held at the Barn, Foxlease, Lyndhurst on Saturday 21st April 2018

Sixty-five members attended, their names being registered in the attendance book.

1. Welcome by the President. At 10.30am the President, Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre, welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence. Received from ten members, namely Kate Ashbrooke, Graham Baker, Karin Berrigan, Susan Bishop, Brandy Gill, Keith Howe, Andy McClelland, Christine Parkhouse, Leo Randall and Robert Whiting.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 22nd April 2017. The meeting approved the minutes unanimously.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes. The meeting agreed any matters could be included in the later discussion.

5. To Adopt the Annual Report. The meeting agreed the Annual Report unanimously.

6. Treasurer's Report. In the absence of the Treasurer, Brandy Gill, Gale Gould read the report.

- Subscriptions had once again increased for 2017, as had donation and trading income as well as bank interest.

- Overall, income had improved by £8000 and expenses reduced by £1000.

- Grant giving had increased by £3000 to £17,000.

- Money had been committed to two projects in 2018: the RSPB Franchises reserve and 'Our Past, Our Future.'

The meeting was told that the Association's financial position was healthy. The meeting unanimously voted to approve the Financial Report and to re-appoint the independent accounts examiner.

John Ward asked all members to consider legacy donations in favour of the Friends of the New Forest.

7. Election of Trustees. Brian Tarnoff and William Ziegler, having been previously nominated and seconded, were elected unanimously as Trustees by the meeting.

8. Election of Council Members. Council members Clive Chatters, Jonathan Cox, Roly Errington, Eve Gillmon, Richard Reeves, Neil Sanderson and Jenni Tubbs, having been previously nominated and seconded, were re-elected unanimously by the meeting.

Ann Sevier, duly nominated and seconded, was also elected unanimously to the Council.

10. Election of Officers. John Ward had been previously nominated and seconded as Chairman, Gale Gould as Vice Chair and Brandy Gill as Treasurer. The meeting re-elected the candidates into the appropriate offices unanimously. There were no candidates for the Honorary Secretary position so this became vacant.

9. Election of President. Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre had been previously nominated and seconded to the position and was subsequently re-elected unanimously by the meeting.

11. Election of Vice President. Peter Roberts introduced Peter Frost to the meeting before nominating him to the position of Vice President. Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre seconded the nomination. Those assembled unanimously elected Peter Frost, who then thanked the meeting.

12. Any Other Business. Peter Roberts congratulated Sheila Ward for her hard work during the 150th anniversary year, particularly in organizing events and the National Parks Societies conference. Peter proposed that Sheila be given an honorary life membership of the Friends of the New Forest. The President seconded this and the meeting unanimously agreed.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.42am.

B Annual Report 2018

Patron: Belinda, Lady Montagu

President: Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre

Vice-President: Peter Frost

Chair: John Ward

Vice-Chair: Gale Gould

Hon Secretary: Katie Campling

Hon Treasurer: Brandy Gill

TRUSTEE BOARD MEMBERS (WHO WERE ALSO MEMBERS OF COUNCIL) during 2018

Graham Baker

Katie Campling

Brandy Gill

Gale Gould

Dionis Macnair

Peter Roberts

Brian Tarnoff

John Ward

William Ziegler

COUNCIL MEMBERS during 2018

Bernie Austin

Clive Chatters

Jonathan Cox

Roly Errington

Eve Gillmon

Keith Howe

David Humbert

Graham Long

Bob Morris

Leo Randall

Richard Reeves

Neil Sanderson

Ann Sevier

Jenni Tubbs

Trustees and Council Report

Formal meetings of Council were held six times and for the Board of Trustees three times during 2018. In addition there were regular meetings of the Habitats and Landscape Committee and the Planning and Transport Committee; and also ad hoc meetings of the Education Working Group. At the end of 2018 there were eight trustees and fourteen non-trustee members of Council.

We have continued to share issues and experiences with other National Park Societies and as a Council member of the Campaign for National Parks (CNP): and have collaborated with them to co-ordinate responses to government and other national consultations and draft proposals that will affect National Parks. Examples of national consultations and draft proposals with implications for the New Forest that have crossed our desks in 2018 include:

- Government consultation on proposals for the creation of a major road network
- Government consultations on a geological disposal site
- Government consultation on the future of food, farming and the environment
- Ofgem consultation on framework for future electricity price controls
- Consultation on revised National Planning Policy Framework
- Consultation on permitted development for shale gas exploration
- Glover review of Designated Landscapes
- Ofgem methodology for RII0-2 (national grid pylons)

We have held informal liaison meetings with the National Park Authority and Forestry Commission; and attend various New Forest forums and working groups including the Consultative Panel and meetings of the Verderers Court.

The Friends of the New Forest were in evidence on stands at the New Forest Show and at the Romsey Show. Sponsorship funding support was given for the animal accident 'advert' on the back of the New Forest Tour bus through 2018; and also for the 'Our Past Our Future' projects for ranger training and for habitat restoration.

The slide show presentation telling the story of the Association and the New Forest from the mid 19th century until today continued to be popular and was given to 12 groups, reaching over 500 people most of whom had not previously heard of us and gaining donations to support our work to protect the Forest.

Following the 2017 sell out success of our keynote address, "A Foot in the Past and an Eye to the Future" from Council member, Clive Chatters followed by a panel discussion, we decided to put on a similar event to start 2018. This was looking at "Changing Farming and Countryside", particularly in the light of the decision to leave the European Union. We did not think then that 12 months later at the end of the year we would still not know in what form and with what terms Brexit would take place!

During the year events for members included walks and visits to see Wildflower meadows, Commoners farm and adjacent open forest, Heathland restoration, Coppicing in Pondhead Inclosure and Forest and WW2 remains from Abbot's Well.

Recreation management continued to be a major issue for us through the year. Frustrated at the slow progress by the statutory authorities we remain convinced that this is the most pressing issue needing to be addressed within the Forest and significant action must to be taken to review and change the recreation infrastructure within the Forest. Our greatest concern outside, but on the edge of the Forest and within some Forest villages has been the scale of new housing development being proposed in NFNPA and NFDC local plans. While we understand the housing crisis, greatly exacerbated by the sale of much of the local Council Housing stock, proposals that will add to recreational pressures and traffic on Forest roads while providing only a small proportion of social housing compared to a large increase in market housing cannot be the way forward. We made objections and appeared at the Public Examination into the NFNPA local plan expressing our concern that the proposed development at the former Fawley Power Station site is intended to spill over beyond the site into the New Forest National Park.

Chair - John Ward

Planning & Transport Committee Report

We have an enthusiastic and knowledgeable committee with nine members regularly monitoring all planning applications submitted to the NFNPA. Items of interest are discussed and representations made to the Authority as necessary.

Having made an immense contribution over a number of years Graham Baker stepped down as Chairman in June but fortunately remains on the committee. His experience and interest in planning and forest matters has proven invaluable particularly when extensively researching and commenting on the NFNPA Draft Local Plan.

It was the Local Plan that dominated our thoughts this year particularly with regard to the inclusion of Tom Tiddler's land south of the Fawley Power Station site for residential development. We strongly opposed this proposal and employed a Planning Barrister to voice our views at the Public Examination on the grounds that land within the National Park should not be utilised to benefit a major project on a brownfield site in an adjoining Local Authority area. Another concern was the increase in traffic using the unfenced forest roads should the Power Station

redevelopment go ahead. At the time of writing (January 2019) there is no decision from the inspectors. The NFDC plan has yet to be examined although we have responded to the consultation document.

There is a steady stream of applications most of which are relatively straightforward domestic extensions, but others whether for stark and solid, two-metre high close boarded fencing or unsympathetically designed replacement dwellings pose a threat to the character and local distinctiveness of the Forest and its villages. Another matter is the seemingly increasing number of retrospective planning applications, which almost always get approved.

The decision of the National Park Planning Committee to refuse two commoners dwellings at Rockford Common against their own officer's advice was rather perverse and unexpected - this was an application that we supported. The lack of affordable homes continues to be a major problem so it was with great relief when the owners of Lyndhurst Park Hotel withdrew their appeal for total redevelopment with 75 age-related residential units and only 15 affordable homes. The emerging Local Plan indicates that a total of 50 dwellings would be possible on this site with 50% being affordable. All dwellings would be limited to an internal floor area of 100 sq. metres. Subject to design and other criteria this is likely to gain local support.

The Visual Impact Project promoted by National Grid to remove pylons across Hale Purlieu and bury the cables underground proved to be a complex and controversial issue through 2018. The resulting enhancement to the landscape has to be carefully weighed against the disruption and any long-term ecological damage. We are awaiting more substantive information and the Environmental Impact Assessment before making any formal comment. A planning application is expected in July 2019.

Unsurprisingly, the beauty of the protected landscape, individual character villages, tight planning controls and proximity to the coast continue to attract homebuyers and visitors alike. A Forestry Commission report in 1992 assessed visitor numbers at 8 million per annum. A recent study on behalf of the NFNPA puts the current influx at 15 million, which brings obvious benefits to the local economy but also adds to further traffic and recreational pressure on the Forest and has pushed property values to the highest of all the UK National Parks. This is a huge issue that has to be addressed - maybe some solutions will lie in the Recreational Management Plan due to be published in 2019?

Chair Planning and Transport Committee - Bernie Austin

Habitat & Landscape Committee Report

Although perhaps a hoary cliché, 2018 was arguably a Best of Times, Worst of Times year for the Forest. 'Bests' included the long awaited purchase of land by the RSPB for their new Franchises Lodge reserve, and two major TV documentaries, which may help us draw future public support for protection of the Forest. 'Worst' included limp Recreation Management Strategy Proposals, the Planners rejecting a new Commoners holding at Rockford, both NFNPA and NFDC Local Plan proposals supporting an unprecedented level of development subverting the first Park purpose to conserve and enhance.

Overgrazing Claims - Wet winter and subsidy based stock increases led to this perennial claim being lofted again, by those who would point to a few hot spots of supposed damage as representative of the whole of the Forest. We have previously countered such comments with views from ecologist Clive Chatters, and practicing commoner Anne Sevier; and we welcomed statements from the Verderers, the Commoners Defence Association and the Forestry Commission that recognised the need to address incidents of extreme poaching, and monitor these sites for recovery. In fact while stock levels have risen in recent years, both the Recovering Lost Lawns programme and clear fell of 1960s plantations have generated more than twelve hundred hectares of increased grazing land. Part of the problem is that 'overgrazing' is meaningless if you have not clearly defined outcomes sought by managing the Forest with livestock. Their pattern of grazing and trampling yields our highly designated forest habitats. At the same time we shouldn't merely accept the hoary chestnut that the animals are architects of the Forest. Future subsidy of livestock on the Forest must be tied to clear management criteria, with built in monitoring that shows benefit and mechanisms that reward stewardship rather than simply headcount.

England Coast Path - The overdue proposal for the Highcliffe – Calshot section of our Coast finally came forward for consultation between March and May 2018. It is severely problematic, due to how poorly the legislation is structured to deal with large areas of protected coastal habitat, and the subsequent definition of coastal margin spreading room to include the entire seaward side of the path. Both Natural England and the Ordnance Survey made poor key decisions before any stretches of the Coast Path had been implemented. These should be reviewed, including the Ordnance Survey's decision to depict all potential spreading room as access land, even where it has

been excluded or excepted. At least 75% of the coastal margin seaward of the Highcliffe – Calshot path will not be access land, but the OS will allow this grotesque inaccuracy onto their definitive map.

In their guidance, Natural England have overstepped, promoting access over habitat including a “least restrictive option” that is not in any of the legislation and which, within a National Park, is directly at odds with the Sandford Principle that places habitat considerations over public enjoyment and is enshrined in legislation. Natural England’s Sensitive Features Appraisal is severely compromised by their decision to presume their own mitigation proposals resolve issues that would require a full Habitats Regulation Assessment; a practice which last year was slammed in two court judgements (Sweetman and Halohan).

We would like more of the coastal margin to be restricted, no new disturbance to protected breeding and wintering bird sites should be created, dogs should be kept on lead on all stretches of the path directly adjacent to disturbance prone habitat or where livestock may be managed off the Forest (including back up land). We hope to have the current proposals blocked at the Examination stage, and that the route and the guidance behind it will meet a proper review.

Recreation Management Strategy - We continued to be disappointed with the National Park’s Recreation Management Strategy review, which included two online polls on a set of proposals so inoffensively bland that they might imply a high level of support from fewer than 1500 unverified respondents. On the plus side the NFNPA and other regional partners commissioned a study on current visitor use from Footprint Ecology, which should will contribute to a full review of recreational infrastructure, car parks and camp sites on the Forest.

Other Consultations - During 2018 our responses included:

- Natural England’s Template for Drafting New Byelaws for Individual SSSIs. This is a power they have had since the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amended Section 28R of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, but which they have not yet exercised.
- The NFDC / Southampton joint Clean Air Zone consultation, which was sadly narrow in scope to congestion charge type solutions, addressing from the NFDC side the effect of the A35 from Rushington to Redbridge, but no joined up thinking to allow comment on how NFDC’s planned 10,500 homes (including many proposed sites down the Waterside) will greatly exacerbate the present situation as the A326 and A35 are further impacted by the inevitable traffic increases.
- We also participated in ongoing Wetland Restoration Strategy workshops.

RSPB Franchises Lodge Reserve - The RSPB purchase of 386 Hectares of estate land directly adjacent to the Forest was ‘All Our Christmases Come At Once’. We can be proud that we have been directly involved in this project. A committee member identified the opportunity, our Council contributed modest seed money, and Council members with ours and others’ hats on worked with the National Park and Conservation Charities to bring it to fruition. As well as having that parcel of land on track for the RSPB’s high standard of conservation management, RSPB are elevating the whole of the New Forest within their list of priorities. This will give greater resources to the paltry level of research on the Forest. The RSPB want to work with us for our local knowledge, experience and expertise, and with us and the other conservation charities to form a united front on Forest conservation issues with the statutory authorities (including their Local Plans).

Documentaries – 2018 saw not one, but two major broadcast documentaries on the New Forest. Both clearly conveyed many of the special qualities of the Forest, and the Channel 4 ‘A Year In the New Forest’ certainly portrayed the love for the Forest felt by its main participants (including our Council members Richard Reeves and Ann Sevier).

Going Forward – The implications of the NFDC Local Plan’s intent to increase the rate of new homes by three to four fold to deliver 10,500 homes in ten years, and develop extensively on greenbelt in 13 out of 20 strategic allocated sites will have strong negative impacts on the habitat of the Forest, blocking wildlife corridors and smothering the area with further recreational pressure. One of these sites has already come forward ahead of the Plan’s approval, 143 Homes at Snails Lane, Blashford, cheek by jowl with the HLOW Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve. This wildlife filled site would be prime for habitat restoration, a breeding ground for lapwing and little ringed plover, but may instead be developed with inadequate mitigation or compensation for the damage it will do to habitat and the Forest. We will be opposing this and the other greenbelt developments.

Chair Habitat & Landscape Committee - Brian Tarnoff

C Treasurer's Report 2018

Our income for charity activities dropped from £17,340 in 2017 to £10,226 in 2018. Though our membership income was relatively stable, our income from donations and book sales was much lower due to 2017 being our 150th anniversary, hence our donations were higher and higher book sales in 2017 were due to the launch of Peter Roberts book.

Income from other receipts dropped from £9,605 to £3,513. In 2017 we received a legacy of £5000, but unfortunately that was not repeated in 2018. Secondly, our dividend income from M&G Charibonds dropped considerably due to weak market conditions. Finally, our Gift Aid reclaim of £1,616 for 2018 has not yet been processed by HMRC. We will receive it during 2019.

Our payments in 2018 were £16,998 versus £12,482 in 2017. The main increase was in professional fees, which was £7,200 for legal fees paid to a Q.C. to represent us at the Examination into the National Park Authority Local Plan, including our opposition to the major development of the Fawley Waterside project. Excluding legal fees, other payments were reduced from £12,482 to £9,798 in 2018. The main reductions were in office supplies and in printing and postage of our newsletter.

Grants given in 2018 amounted to £36,500 versus £17,500 in 2017. The largest grant of £25,000 was to RSPB towards their purchase of the 'Franchises Lodge' land within the Hamptworth estate.

Overall our payments exceeded our receipts by £39,758 thereby reducing our cash funds from £138,228 to £9,8470 at end 2018. These funds are held in four banks, all paying very low interest rates.

Our investment asset M&G Charibond has reduced in value to £9,6410 due to weak market conditions.

Overall your charity is in a strong financial position with no liabilities.

Hon Treasurer - Brandy Gill