



# NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION

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## **National Park Management Plan and Core Strategy – Final Plan and Revised Draft December 2009**

The New Forest Association, protecting the forest since 1867, thanks the officers for agreeing some of the points raised in our letters and in particular is grateful to Steve Avery for his helpful response.

Despite this we are disappointed with the direction in which the Park is heading. We believe this will be seen as a critical lost opportunity for the Authority to have a major impact on the Conservation of the Area.

The Officer's Report states [NFNPA 326/09, Annex 2, 1.4] 'a large part of the text, a number of the objectives and the overall structure of the Plan have been fully revised.' Elsewhere [NFNPA 326/09, 2.3 ] it is considered that some of our recent points would 'markedly alter the tone...and move it back towards the approach of the original draft'. It may be recalled we were one of the few major organisations who not only supported the original draft but were prepared to stand up and say so.

The original plan, published last year, was very good, with a few exceptions, which could have been addressed fairly easily, and should have formed the basis of looking after the Park for the next decade. Instead the Authority chose to 'throw the baby out with the bath water' and we now risk another period of inappropriate development. We have watched your planners struggling with the inherited plans over the last 3½ years and through regular comment hoped to persuade you of the need to adopt stronger unified policies which would justify the designation of a National Park. When the draft plan was released last year we felt that a strong move in the right direction had been taken.

Now the Authority has gone from perhaps, being a little bit too optimistic in its aspirations to keeling over before the vociferous single interest groups who lack focus for the overall future of the New Forest. Instead of building on and strengthening inherited policies you have taken them backwards to be less suitable to manage the many pressures on this fragile place.

We suggest that the job is not crowd control and appeasement but taking forward National Park purposes into relevant plans and policies that will further the reason this area was designated a National Park.

The need [320/09, 4.4] 'to make the document more positive....' is stated at one point. Conservation and protection are "positive" in a National Park whereas being "positive" about incrementally harmful development is not. May we remind you that there is one body that has been protecting the Forest for more than a century by knowing when to say 'No' and that is the Verderers; you might care to take a leaf out of their book.

It is tempting to suggest amendments to the Core Strategy Policies but as some alterations are only just being tabled thanks to late interference from the Government Office of the South East we will have to save our detailed remarks for next year.

In the meantime we should perhaps remember that when Dartmoor took its Core Strategy through the examination process a couple of years ago the Inspector agreed that, as a National Park, they could adopt a different approach to other planning authorities and not entirely follow the Regional Government Office line.

Whilst there is much in these draft documents that the NFA welcomes, our verdict at present is that they are lost opportunities in the long history of fighting to protect the special needs of the New Forest.

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