

The Independent Voice of Local Business.....

SOUTHAMPTON & FAREHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

RESPONSE TO THE REVISED DRAFT NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN – November 2009

The Chamber provided a response to the draft National Park plan that was issued in 2008. Whilst it was not a direct consultee during the process that took place between August and November 2008, it has taken a close interest in the response to the original Plan and the interim events since then. The Chamber has members throughout the New Forest, as well as elsewhere in southern Hampshire, so it does have an interest in the Management Plan and the shortly to be published Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

The Chamber's Planning and Transportation Committee have been able to briefly consider the revised Draft Plan and wish to respond as follows:

The Purpose of the Management Plan

The Chamber essentially supports Section 2 dealing with the purpose of the Management Plan.

Summary of Consultation Process

It has been accepted that the concerns of business in the New Forest were not properly addressed in the original plan. The Chamber was omitted from the consultation process that occurred last autumn 2008 and despite having submitted comments last year, it is not included in the current list of organisations under Appendix 2. We are disappointed that the Chamber was not seen as a suitable consultee alongside the New Forest Business Partnership, the Federation of Small Businesses and members of the Chamber's Planning and Transportation Committee who have been involved in other guises acting for other organisations. We hope that this can be amended and that the Chamber can be formally involved in the consultation on the Core Strategy.

Major Revisions to the Plan

The decision to separate the plan into two documents is supported and the Chamber will comment on the Revised Core Strategy at the relevant time.

- The Chamber essentially supports the amendment to the Plan's approach to transport.
- The Chamber supports the change in the planning concept of zoning and is pleased to see that it has been removed from the Management Plan and the Core Strategy.
- The Chamber supports the change in approach to development and the removal of Service Villages.

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- More particularly, the Chamber supports the more positive approach to the economy and to business in the revised Plan.

Turning to the Management Plan itself, for the purposes of this consultation the Chamber has restricted its consideration of the Plan to Chapter 4 Section 3 – Working together, Section 8 – Supporting local communities, Section 9 – Fostering economic wellbeing and Section 10 – Improving traffic and transport.

Section 3 – Working Together

As a representative body of business both in the Forest and across the boundary in Southampton and the remaining parts of southern Hampshire and the Test Valley, we would welcome working in partnership with the National Park Authority as envisaged in Section 3

Section 8 – Supporting Local Communities

It is noted that about one third of the total of the 13,400 residents of the National Park live in the four main villages. These together with the adjacent towns of Ringwood, Lymington and Fordingbridge act as local centres of cultural and economic life in the Forest but so do the larger centres of Southampton, Eastleigh and Winchester.

It is evidently recognised that the major housing growth in south Hampshire and the development of Southampton Airport will bring about pressures on the Forest. These in turn will give rise to greater local and regional/international tourism with the consequential effects on the Forest. It is for that reason that wider consultation with a body such as the Chamber will be beneficial for the future of the Forest.

Whilst a substantial number of residents of the Forest travel out of it for employment and recreation, it is important that the cross boundary effects are properly managed on both sides. In general terms the development of areas within the Forest must be encouraged, within limits, so that employment is sustainable and travelling is reduced. If community facilities and services are under threat now, history shows us that unless demand for these services and facilities increases they will decline further.

Section 9 – Fostering Economic Wellbeing

The general thrust of the strategy under "local employment" is supported. The ability for businesses to expand as well as establish within the Forest must be catered for. It is understood that any new development has to be appropriate in scale and respect its environment. The sustaining of communities through encouragement of business is supported by the Chamber.

The benefits of the New Forest are only of value if they can be shared. Tourism is to be encouraged subject to a proper balance being struck between the environment and effects that those businesses, and the vehicle journeys required, have on the environment.

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Whilst it is appreciated that land based businesses should be encouraged, these are relatively low in number and value and increase the demand for more low cost housing. The more intense businesses found in offices, workshops and tourism will provide higher value employment.

The contents of Section 9 are encouraged and the Chamber would like to suggest the addition of:

“Providing opportunities for home working and low key business to be accommodated within existing built up areas to provide a diversity of living and working units. The first new Smarter Working Centres to be established in January 2010 by eHampshire could be a suitable model to adopt.”

Section 10 – Improving Traffic and Transport

The general thrust of the text within this section is supported. The inherent restrictions on traffic passing through Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst are recognised as is the desire of tourists to go to those areas. Encouragement should be given to businesses, including tourist accommodation to be located on the periphery of the Forest and encouragement given to park and ride and community bus services to provide the links into the Forest involving , and hopefully expanding, the existing rail services.

Land adjacent to railway stations should be earmarked for potential small scale park and ride projects. We advocate that the final objective on page 56 be amended to read:

...."Develop and promote a more integrated sustainable transport network adopting existing rail and road links but encouraging walking and cycling from suitable transport interchanges.”

Conclusion

The overall change in the style and objectives of the Management Plan are applauded and we look forward to being able to take part in the consultation on the Core Strategy when it is released.

ABOUT US

Your regional Chamber working for you locally.....

As the independent voice of local business, Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce is able to represent some 2,000 businesses in the South Hampshire region and further a field through Hampshire Chambers concerning the issues that affect their ability to grow and prosper. Their views are central to the Chamber's lobbying on issues of concern to our members and are the basis of our thinking on the many local, regional and national planning or government policy initiatives on which we are asked for formal comment as a business representative organisation. The volunteer Chamber members on the committees provide expertise and a wide knowledge of specialist topics which is used in formulating the **Chamber Viewpoint**, which is published monthly in the centre pages of our magazine and on our web site.