

The press release below has been issued by Defra announcing the outcome of the National Park Governance consultation for the New Forest; the link at the end of the news release takes you to the national release. Below the release is an extended statement from the New Forest National Park Authority Chairman Julian Johnson

NEW POWER TO LOCAL PEOPLE FOR NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Government meets pledge to improve local accountability of National Parks

Local people will have more say in the running of the New Forest National Park, under new Big Society plans announced by Defra today.

A pilot will take place in The New Forest for people to vote for members of their Park Authority, through democratic local elections. A proportion of all members will be appointed through this new system. The pilots in the New Forest and Peak District National Parks will last for four years.

Chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority Chairman Julian Johnson said: *“The New Forest National Park Authority welcomes the opportunity to explore new ways of governance for National Parks which will improve our accountability.”*

Natural Environment Minister, Richard Benyon said, *“Our National Parks are our most treasured landscapes enjoyed by millions of people every year and contribute significantly to regional economies. The changes we are making will give the local communities a greater say in how their National Park is managed.”*

The changes are expected to come into effect from April 2013, following consultation and pending legislative approval.

The Government is meeting the pledge made in the Coalition Agreement to review the governance arrangements of National Parks in order to increase local accountability.

Notes to editors

1. The National Park Authority's proposals have been made following public consultation with people local to each National Park between 9 November 2010 and 1 February 2011.
2. The Environment Secretary will no longer be required to approve parish members' appointment to National Park Authorities.
3. National Parks are protected for their beautiful countryside, wildlife and cultural heritage. People live and work in the National Parks and the farms, villages and towns are protected along with the landscape and wildlife. National Parks welcome visitors and provide opportunities for everyone to experience, enjoy and learn about their special qualities.

National news release from Defra:

Government meets pledge to improve local accountability of National Parks

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2011/09/13/power-people-national-parks/>

The summary of responses is available on the Defra website at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/national-parks/> under 'Latest News'.

Quote from National Park Chairman:

Chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority Chairman Julian Johnson said:
'The New Forest National Park Authority welcomes the opportunity to explore new ways of governance for National Parks which will improve our accountability.'

'We are pleased to note that given our extensive awareness-raising of the issue through public meetings and other mechanisms to facilitate input to Defra's consultation, the New Forest received the most views of any of the national parks and we look forward to working with our local partners to develop the pilot.'

'We are pleased the announcement appears to have taken on board a number of the NPA's recommendations which we sent in as our response to the consultation process. These include increasing transparency around how members are appointed and removing the role of the Secretary of State in formally appointing the four Parish Council members.'

'Our response also indicated a willingness to consider having a proportion of directly locally elected members to broaden the membership.'