

NFNPA Authority Meeting, 16 October 2008, Holbury  
3-minute Address to the Committee by ONE VOICE

“Thank you Mr Chairman and members of the committee

I speak on behalf of a quiet group, called ONE VOICE, who has the full support of many local councillors, The Federation of Small Businesses, our MP's – Desmond Swayne and Dr Julian Lewis and The Leader of Hampshire County Council, Mr Ken Thornber

Today is **NOT** a public meeting – it is a Meeting **held in Public** and this Authority has misguided the public by implying that this, or any other Authority Meeting, is the correct forum for public questions on the draft plan. All government “authority meetings” are **regular** meetings to discuss **general authority business**. This Authority uses a caveat which allows for the general public and press to be asked to leave the meeting room prior to any business under PART TWO of the Agenda. Other government authorities have discarded this old-fashioned caveat in order to demonstrate a willingness to engage with the public.

In the Authority's **quote** Public Participation in the Preparation of the Plan **unquote** there were a series of ‘stakeholder workshops’ involving a number of groups and organisations. But there was **no clear mechanism** provided in this process to include the views of thousands of stakeholders – the general public – who didn't belong to any of these groups and were therefore **NEVER REPRESENTED**

Further analysis of the 6 main workshops shows an average attendance of only 33%. This, together with the exclusion of Public Consultation Meetings, shows the ‘consultation process’ to be flawed and not as robust as the Authority would have us believe. Furthermore – **IT WOULD NOT STAND UP TO EXTERNAL SCRUTINY.**

The Governments “Code of Practice on Consultation” states: “Where consultation takes place over a holiday period or lasts less than 12 weeks, **extra effort** should be made to ensure that the consultation is still effective by supplementing the written exercise with other methods of consultation, i.e. stakeholder meetings, focus groups and **PUBLIC MEETINGS**. It also says “government departments should carry out a **full public consultation** whenever options are being considered for a new policy or if new regulation is planned”

The Authority must now **urgently** redress the balance, and we ask that priority be given to arranging a series of **public consultation meetings**, with a panel of Authority members and any external advisers who were involved in forming the draft plan, to answer direct questions from the public. These meetings should be at accessible venues and outside of working hours, with a **neutral** facilitator to chair them. These meetings should also be publicised in the local media. Other government authorities have done this very successfully in the past.

Finally, many organisations have had **several** opportunities to be involved throughout the process – the Authority should now give the general public **THEIR ONLY OPPORTUNITY TO BE PART OF THIS PROCESS**. Thank you”

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**Response from NFNPA:** email received 31 October 08 refusing to arrange public consultation meetings.