

New Forest National Park Authority
Authority Meeting 29 October 2009
South Efford House

STATEMENT BY SUE BAILLIE on behalf of ONE VOICE

I only have 2 points for consideration today:

Firstly I would like to thank the authority and staff for their teamwork and resolve over the past few months in bringing together a revised formula for the Management Plan; but in particular, for their honesty in accepting that communications in the past were not as they should be. So, whilst we all currently bask under the canopy of warmer relations and 2-way dialogue I would like to ask members if it is now time to remove from future NP job vacancies the words "The position may involve contact with people **hostile** to the Authority's objectives". We have all been asked to draw a line in the sand in order to move on – could removing this sentence be a symbolic gesture from the Park please?

Secondly, 6 months ago the CE tabled a report "Duty to Involve" (NFNPA 293/09) at the 26th March Authority meeting. The Minutes from that meeting resolved that the requirements of the new Duty to Involve be **noted** and a review of the Authority's engagement processes be conducted **after the approval of the National Park Plan**.

This new Act and statutory requirement for all best value authorities (excluding police authorities) came into force on 1st April this year and is backed by statutory guidance "Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities".

Some key parts of the statutory guidance are that:

- The Duty to Involve is **additional** to any existing consultation and/or involvement duties and applies across all authority functions, "that is all of an authority's powers and duties".
- "Local persons" does not mean just local residents – it includes local workers, students, local 3rd sector groups (i.e. non-governmental organisations) and includes children and young people.
- Authorities will need to consider how they go about meeting the Duty in relation to routine functions, **as well as significant one-off decisions**.

These are just a few points of interest.

I believe this new Duty to Involve has more significance than being just "noted" and the authority members should have addressed it at a time when the management plan was taking a new turn - it should certainly not have been 'shelved' for six months or longer. I therefore ask the authority to now give priority to this new statutory duty by reviewing the Authority's engagement processes as a matter of urgency and compliance.