

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON
MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 10:00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON**

Present:

Members:

Gordon Bailey
Mary Davies (Chair)
David Harrison
Victoria Mander
Keith Mans
Joe Reilly
Ann Sevier
Derek Tipp
Malcom Wade (Deputy Chair)

Officers:

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive
Paul Walton	Head of Environment and Rural Economy
Nigel Stone	Head of Resources (CFO)
Gareth Hale	Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Jim Mitchell	Access and Learning Manager
Vicki Gibbon	Member Services Administrator
Frances Connolly	Executive Assistant

16. Apologies for absence

16.1 Apologies for absence were received from Brice Stratford and Adarsh Parekh.

17. Declarations of Interest

17.1 None.

18. Chair's announcements

18.1 None.

19. Minutes

19.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

Voting: Unanimous

20. Public Question Time

20.1 None.

21. Third Quarter Progress Report 2025-26 (RAPC 581-26)

21.1 Nigel Stone introduced the report, explaining that it was the standard quarterly update reviewing third-quarter progress against the objectives set out in the 2025/26 Work Programme. He reminded members that, following the request made at the previous RAPC meeting, the RAG statuses had been broken down by individual bullet point to provide greater clarity. Mr Stone then took members through the report page by page, providing an opportunity for questions and discussion.

21.2 Beginning on page 4 of the report, members reviewed the Key Performance Indicators. A question was raised regarding the Enforcement Team results and why this data was unavailable, as it would have been helpful in understanding the team's workload. Nigel Stone explained that, due to officer leave, the information was not available at the time the report was prepared. He confirmed that he would gather the relevant data and report back to the Committee as necessary.

21.3 The Chair drew attention to the member attendance KPI, noting that while unforeseen circumstances do arise, it remains the responsibility of members to provide apologies and ensure meaningful attendance at meetings. It was proposed that the Chair of the Authority write to members to address ongoing attendance issues. Nigel Stone further clarified that the KPI represented only a proportion of overall member meetings, as the data related solely to statutory meetings.

21.4 Continuing to the main body of the report, members noted the update on the draft National Park Local Plan on page 3. Work is ongoing, and a further draft is expected to be issued for public consultation in the summer following the July full Authority meeting. On page 5, Paul Walton highlighted the importance of developing a spatial plan to support the delivery of the Re:New Nature Partnership. He explained that work was underway to engage landowners and that significant preparatory work was still being carried out.

21.5 Members continued to review the report, discussing various points of interest. The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to the necessary actions as outlined.

22. Third Quarter Budgetary Control Report 2025-26 (RAPC 582-26)

22.1 Nigel Stone provided members with two updates that were not included in the written report. He informed them that, as had been reported at last Thursday's Authority meeting, the audit for the 2024–25 financial year was close to completion and he hoped it would be signed by the end of the week. The auditors had indicated that the Authority would receive a Qualified audit opinion due to the missed 2022–23 audit, which had been affected by national issues. Nigel noted that this still represented an improvement from the previous year, when the Authority received a Disclaimed audit opinion. He hoped that for the current financial year, 2025–26, the Authority could move to an Unqualified opinion, which he viewed as a very positive step.

- 22.2 He also reported that the Authority had completed the purchase of some land and buildings at Foxlease Park, and that the Defra capital funding had therefore been fully utilised as at the end of January.
- 22.3 Nigel Stone drew members attention to 2.2 of the report which showed the overall expenditure position which showed a £4.26m spend over the first nine months of the financial year (60% of budget). Without the partnerships project, spend was £3.4m from a budget of £5.74m (59%). Further excluding the capital projects, spend was 79% of budget.
- 22.4 The overall income position showed £5.02m received over the first nine months of the financial year , Without the partnership projects, income was £4.35m from a budget of £5.74m.
- 22.5 Nigel Stone informed members that, following discussions with the Chair and Deputy Chair, it was proposed that at the end of public meeting, the meeting would move into Part 2 (closed session) to consider Section 10 of the report: *Future Budgets*. This would allow them to be briefed on the anticipated 2026–27 and future budgets. He said that even though the Authority was only eight weeks away from the next financial year, the grant settlement from Defra had not yet been received.

Resolved, that the current income and expenditure position, including the potential savings and pressures be notified.

Voting: Unanimous

23. Authority Carbon Reduction Plan – Update (RAPC 583-26)

- 23.1 Nigel Stone explained that, following the previous oral update on the Authority’s Carbon Reduction Plan, this report provided further progress and information to increase transparency. It was noted that since 2022 the Authority has been working closely with Defra’s sustainability team and the Carbon Trust to simplify, standardise, and improve the data relating to carbon footprints.
- 23.2 Mr Stone highlighted several sections of the report, outlining how the carbon footprint calculations had been determined. He was pleased to report that, despite the Authority’s ambitious target of achieving net zero by 2030, progress remained on track. He further noted that the Authority currently had the lowest emissions of any National Park within Defra.
- 23.3 Following discussion members were asked to note the report.

24. Any other items that the Chair decides are urgent

- 24.1 The Chair advised that the Committee would be required to move into a Part 2 (closed) session. This was duly proposed and seconded, as detailed below.

Resolved, that

Members ask that the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business, as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during this item, there would be

disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 and Paragraph 5, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, namely the need to avoid disclosing sensitive information relating to the Authority's financial and business affairs.

Voting: Unanimous

On closing the meeting, the Chair thanked officers, teams and members for their input into reports and debate at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 11:40 hours.

Signed
(Chair)

Date.....