

NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS ANNUAL REPORT – 2015

Our Association meets 4 times a year, and at our meeting in April 2014 Neil Beswick (HCC Local Bus & Transport Manager) explained that Hampshire County Council needed to save £1.25m to £1.5m from public and community transport spending by 2015/16. The authority undertook a county-wide review of subsidized **Bus Services**. Savings were achieved by a mixture of reducing or ceasing support for: Sunday services; evening services after 7pm; ceasing the 9am early start for the older persons bus-pass; reducing the frequency and/or days of service; reducing the amount of printed publicity/timetables.

In regard to Broadband, NFALC supported the New Forest Rural Communities Broadband application to improve speeds across the New Forest. HCC are currently experiencing delays with the installation of a number of cabinets in the New Forest National Park area due to special circumstances and additional stakeholders involved specifically in this area, including: the National Park, NFDC, Natural England, the Verderers and the Forestry Commission. Additional resources have been allocated to ensure timely delivery, but the time taken to establish the additional processes that need to be followed has caused a delay in the rollout within the Forest and it is estimated that the affected cabinets will now go live by December 2015.

NFALC has worked closely with the National Park Authority in regard to Cycling Club activities within the New Forest and the difficulties caused when several thousand cyclists descend on our narrow roads and towns. This contentious topic is discussed at every NFALC meeting, and a Working Party established by the NPA drew up a Code of Practice for participants of these events ("**Cycling Code**"). In January 2015, NPA members agreed a "**Cycling Charter**" for organizers of such events that included a cap of 1,000 riders, clearly identified by displaying both front and rear numbers.

Neighbourhood Plans - This new initiative was introduced by the Localism Act (2011) and allows local communities to prepare a plan for development and land use in their area. Both New Milton and Totton Town Councils successfully applied to New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority to designate a 'Neighbourhood Area' for the whole of their town council areas. It enables local councils to influence where new developments take place.

Community Infrastructure Levy - CIL is a new levy that local authorities in England and Wales can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money will be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the district council, local councils and communities want - for example, new or safer road schemes, park improvements or new community facilities. The system is very simple. It applies to most new buildings and charges are based on the size and type of the new development. New Forest District Council formally approved the adoption of a CIL Charging Schedule at a meeting on 14 April 2014 with implementation to start from 6 April 2015. Development permitted from 6 April 2015 onwards will be liable to pay the levy; until that date, existing S106 tariffs remained in full force and effect.

The levy is charged in pounds (£) per square metre on new floor space (measured as Gross Internal Area). The Charging Schedule sets a rate of £80 per square metre for residential which will apply in all areas of the District. Larger sites of over 50 dwellings will be required to provide the equivalent of 8 hectares per 1,000 people of suitable alternative natural green space (SANGS) either on or close to the site. When it was announced that CIL would replace **s.106 agreements** for raising monies used to improve Amenities and Highways, it brought with it restrictions on how existing s106 monies could be used. This was done deliberately to encourage Councils to adopt CIL. However, the Government agreed a moratorium on the restrictions until 5 April 2015 in order to allow Councils to look at how best to use existing monies.

In regard to CIL, NFDC might raise as much as £800k in a good year, but £300k of this has to be used to provide **SANGS** (suitable alternative natural green spaces), improved connectivity between SANGS, monitoring and possibly wardens. This was a condition imposed by the Inspector regarding the recent adoption of the Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management DPD (Development Plan Document). A total of 15% of CIL money will go to the town / parish where the money was raised. At the moment, all money is held by the District Council as the Planning Authority, so this is a significant change. The money cannot be used in lieu of the precept and must be accounted for annually. If there is an approved Town or Parish 'Neighbourhood' Plan in place, the money increases to 25%, while 5% is retained by NFDC for admin.

Without an Association, neither the District nor the National Park Authority or County for that matter would have had a vehicle through which they could communicate with and work in partnership with Town and Parish Councils. We believe that all 3 Authorities are now able to utilise the Association to help them.