

1007/2/8

**WSCC rebuttal to 1330/0/28: NE "Factual paper" on NFNP****1 Introduction**

- 1.1 NE should have submitted their "New Forest" paper (1330/0/28) before the Topic 6 evidence, so that WSCC could respond at that time. Ms Hankinson was not asked any questions about the matters raised in this late NE paper.

**2 Comparison between the Avon Valley and Western Weald**

- 2.1 NE claim that the Avon valley 'has not enjoyed the same level of support for designation as the Western Weald' (1330/0/28, 4<sup>th</sup> para). The CA (now NE) proposed the designation of the Avon valley and strongly supported its inclusion at the NFNP Inquiry. They claimed that it fully met both NP criteria and that strong historical and cultural links connected it to the New Forest (CD 204 Inspector's Report, pp 184-188, para 5.89-5.111). Objectors, including the Council for National Parks, the New Forest Consultative Panel, New Forest District Council, NF Commons Defence Association, NF Association, Ramblers Association, National Trust, a Parish Council, Footpath Society and Hants and loW Wildlife Trust, supported both the inclusion of the Avon Valley, and the further extension west of the NFNP (CD 204, pp 199-207, paras 5.179-5.225).
- 2.2 NE also claim that the Avon Valley being smaller than the western Weald makes a difference (1330/0/28, 5<sup>th</sup> para). There is absolutely no difference of principle. A large area of CA's proposed NFNP was excluded from the designation because, as a whole, it failed to meet the statutory criteria for a NP. The same principle applies to the SDNP.

**3 Reasons for exclusion of the land**

- 3.1 The Assessor recommended exclusion of most of the Avon valley, although of high quality:  
**"I recognise that the majority of the Avon Valley, and especially the floodplain landscape is unique and outstanding in its own right and... that a fascinating landscape evolution has occurred in the valley. However, I do not find that there is sufficient cultural, ecological or land management connectivity to justify the majority of the valley landscape being part of the suite of types that form the distinctive landscape mosaic that is the New Forest" (CD 204 Appendix 1, 3.15; our underlining).**
- 3.2 The Inspector agreed with the Assessor's conclusion in relation to the Avon valley:  
**"...I concur with the Landscape Assessor's conclusions on the geographical extent of the land which both meets the natural beauty criterion and displays a firmly established 'New Forest' character" (CD 204 NF Inspector, 5.340 our underlining).**

3.3 The land north of the Avon valley, north of Breamore, was also within the CA's PNFNP. This was found by the Assessor to be 'not distinctly of NF character. While I appreciate that the landscape quality here is high, it is not of the appropriate type for inclusion without weakening the rigour with which the boundary is selected for what is recognised as the New Forest, rather than any other nationally recognised landscape fulfilling the natural beauty criterion' (CD 204, p 224, para 5.321, *our emphasis*).

#### **4 Conclusion**

4.1 WSCC remains firmly of the view that the NF designation supports their case for the exclusion of the western Weald. In confirming the only 21<sup>st</sup> century English National Park to date, the Secretary of State supported the reasoning of the NF Assessor and Inspector. The SDNP designation should be consistent with that designation.