

## **NFAF 33/7**

### **Item 11: Hythe Ferry Consultation (Joan Cundill)**

Joan reports:

Lynden and I attended this meeting in the Hythe Parish Hall to represent NFAF. HCC have or are about to apply to the LSTF for funding improvements to encourage sustainable transport using the ferry. Few introductions were made, so I do not know many of the people there or who they were representing.

The main focus seemed to be enabling an economic corridor from the Waterside to Southampton. When I asked 'what about the economic benefits to the National Park of improving access by sustainable transport from Southampton to the New Forest?' I received a less than enthusiastic reply!

The purpose of the consultation seemed to be limited to the economic corridor in the other direction using the ferry and Eddie Jackson from Halcrow [which now has a new title I can't remember, possibly CH2ML] had a remit which stopped as soon as the ferry arrived in Town Quay, Southampton. His job is to develop a 'draft travel plan' for this corridor.

The meeting entailed a short introduction about the purpose of the study, and then we were split into small groups for discussion of 5 main topics, covering the approach from the car parks, pedestrian access, cycling and bus transport. Finally the groups were asked to identify their priority action and I think all groups agreed that the road and area just outside the ferry terminal needed improving, either with a speed limit, moving the taxi rank, or turning it into a 'shared space' roadway.

I sent Eddie a short note on Friday with a few thoughts about improving the ferry terminal and the ferry itself for people with disabilities [SEE BELOW]. It is not meant to be an access audit as such, but some fairly low cost improvements that would make the ferry more accessible.

In summary, I don't think there were many issues of particular relevance to NFAF.

The main interest for NFAF was the need to improve the cycle routes and the signage for them in and around Hythe. There were also concerns about pedestrians crossing the road from the car park to the ferry due to bends in the road causing poor sight-lines for vehicles.

There was one item of interest to NFAF which I don't think was part of the consultation. We were given a leaflet about 'The Beach Bus, no 112', which will run in the summer school holidays and travel from the ferry to Lymington via Lepe Park and several tourist attractions. It links with two of the New Forest tour buses, so that may encourage families to leave their cars at home.

HYPHE FERRY ACCESS - some notes following site visit on 4th July 2013 - for Eddie Jackson, Halcrow

### FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL MOBILITY PROBLEMS.

Comments;

1. There is no Blue Badge parking adjacent to the ferry terminal at Hythe, nearest is in main car park.
2. Ferry kiosk, has a high counter window. It is difficult to see in from a wheelchair. [See also comments on sensory disabilities].
3. Train not accessible due to high step and design. Platform too narrow at land end of pier for people who use mobility aids such as sticks, walkers or crutches.  
  
Scooters and electric wheelchairs must drive along pier. Storage for manual wheelchair and child buggies at front of train on platform carriage if occupant can access carriage.
4. There is step-free access to ferry and parking space in covered area of deck with reasonable view. The ramp into one of the compartments was too steep for wheelchair access.
5. Many of the ramps had very short steep ends - risk of grounding especially with anti-tip wheels. I grounded on one join of ramps at the Southampton end. We travelled to Southampton at high tide and returned at low tide.
6. The driver of the free Bluestar bus was reluctant to take my mobility scooter, although I have been assured by Gary Nicholls, Communication support manager, of Bluestar buses that drivers have been instructed to carry small scooters. I appreciate that this is at the driver's discretion, but this bus had fairly easy access for a small scooter and I got in without difficulty.
7. At the Town Quay in Southampton, there is a ramp down and then a ramp up on the same floating dock. Why?

### FOR PEOPLE WITH SENSORY DISABILITIES.

Deafness - it would be helpful if the kiosk lighting could be improved so that people with hearing difficulties could see the face of the person selling tickets more clearly and be able to lip-read if necessary.

On the ferry the safety instructions should be written on a poster and placed in a prominent spot. The engine doors were open when we started our journey and the noise made it almost impossible to hear the safety announcement even without a hearing problem.

Visual impairment - much could be done to improve the experience for this group of people by using contrasting colours on structures, such as around the ticket kiosk window, hand-rails and door handles, and clearly marking the ends of ramps etc.

Joan Cundill

19th July 2013