

Item 11: Hampshire Countryside Access Forum Meeting on 18.07.13 (Heather Gould)

There were a few changes to names of those sitting on the forum. Sarah Manchester was in attendance and was a great help, pointing me in the right direction! She does seem to be enjoying her new role. This short summary can be backed up by meeting papers, should those be required.

- Emma Noyce gave an interesting presentation on how the County Council is prioritising the issues to be dealt with over ensuring access to public rights of way. She differentiated between the annual problems of sown over foot paths and the more deliberate blocking of access. Some of the latter was quite easily handled through discussion with the owners, but there were long term specific problems that would not be easily solved. It does seem likely that movement on this matter will progress, now that HCC have an enhanced access team – they will be dealing with the current issues first before tackling the long standing ones. They are setting up a working group so that they can share with other LAFs. I am not sure that this is particularly relevant to the NFAF, but what do I know about what happens on the non-Crown lands?
 - It was at this stage that the issue of entry to MOD land was debated as it appears that a group of more than four walkers can constitute a ‘public assembly’ and is therefore forbidden – parties being chased off the site by angry officers in landrovers.
- Petronella Nattrass, Countryside Access Development Officer, gave a very informative presentation of the changes to S106 funding which is being scaled back and replaced with Community Infrastructure Fund (CIL). This will allow for spending on general improvements to the infrastructure rather than the site specific S106. This should assist in supporting local plans. The Council cannot claim S106 and CIL for the same development. This was of interest to me as I was not aware of the changes!
- There was a brief presentation on the deregulation bill which seems to be just a tidying up exercise and not likely to have a large impact on anything.
- The item on the registration of village greens found the HCC Access team in a neutral position.
- The CAP update differed not a lot from what is happening in the Forest. Sarah will be carrying out a review and could pull it together with the NFAF review. One question of interest was “why did not the CC dedicate its permissive paths and relinquish ownership?” Perhaps a discussion for the future.
- The meeting was a little cynical about the Local Nature Partnerships and felt they had not achieved much concrete progress. There was some question as to its benefits.
- The meeting worked on some questions to put to the CLA regional Director at the next meeting. Whilst some suggestions were potentially provocative (and indeed raised a short spat about open access) the final suggestion was to examine areas of agreement and move forward from there.
- I gave an update on the NFAF last meeting, picking on the permissive access about to be withdrawn and the New Milton TC fencing the common and the community toilets scheme. I was very fortunate that Sarah was there to pick up on the questions about the common! I also made the point that we did deal with specific points/problems as the Chairman had earlier stopped discussion on a specific matter.
- The Forum officer’s report covered the Small Grants Scheme and the LAF Annual Report. Interestingly many had used the pro-forma as requested, but had also submitted a separate ‘free-hand’ report. Training could include IPROW in the Autumn which should be available for other LAFs.

All in all a very interesting meeting - if a bit technical at times!

Heather Gould