

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: Monday 05 December 2016

Agenda item 15: Regular updates

a) **National Park Authority** – report from Mark Holroyd

- **England Coast Path** – Mark Holroyd has been ‘Trimbling’ with Natural England assessing the possible routes for the path for infrastructure requirements. Discussions are taking place around roles and responsibilities for the establishment and maintenance of the path. As the Access Authority, we anticipate that the NPA will be asked to carry out establishment works for the path, and we expect that the long term maintenance of the route will be undertaken through a ‘Trail Partnership’ of multiple Access Authorities along the south coast.
- **Miles without Stiles** – Many of you will be aware that some members of the National Park family have branded their accessible walking routes as ‘Miles without Stiles’. There has recently been an agreement among the UKs National Parks to work towards rolling this brand out as the method of presenting accessible walking routes to users, so it is a consistent offer for all National Parks. In the New Forest we currently have a set of ‘easy walks’ developed by our former Access Officer Sarah Manchester, and the set of routes developed by New Forest Access For All which have now been passed to the NPA. Alongside our colleagues in other NPAs we are shortly going to look for funding to refresh these routes, make further improvements on the ground and brand these in a consistent way.

New Forest Walking Festival update – for more information email

matt.stroud@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Total attendees: 1,935

The total above includes a Wild Play Day that attracted 600 people and New Forest Toddle that attracted 300 people. These have been excluded from averages below as they skew averages.

Summary (2015 figures in brackets)

Walks: 78 (79)

Organisations leading walks: 17 (14)

Bookings: 800 (708)

Attendees: 1,935 (1,096) - 77% increase on 2015

Cancelled walks: 1 (14)

Walks numbers: 1-5: 13 / 6-10: 16 / 11-15: 20 / 16+: 28

90% of walkers who left feedback said they enjoyed their walk(s) ‘a lot’

Average attendances

Overall average per-walk: 16 people

Wildlife Walks average: 13 people

History Hikes average: 16 people

Family Strolls average: 18 people

Activity walks: 7 people

Shorter Walks: 14 people

Longer Hikes: 26 people

Survey results (sample of 84 walkers)

Did you enjoy your walk? Yes, a lot: 90% Yes, quite: 9% No: 1%

Did you learn something new on the walk? 94% learnt something new

Did the walk encourage you to look for further opportunities to discover the New Forest? Yes: 98%, no: 2%

Age and gender: Female 21-40: 7% Male 21-40: 4% Female 41-59: 25% Male 41-59: 7%
Female 60+: 35% Male 60+: 23%

Type: Within the National Park: 42%, Within an hour's drive of the National Park: 48%,
Elsewhere in the UK: 10%, Overseas: 1%

b) Forestry Commission –report from Gary North

North Weirs

NE have consented a further programme of works along North Weirs, Brockenhurst. This is a residential/cycle route. The works are to improve drainage along the road for safe family cycling. This involves replacement of 2 culverts and creating a new shallow U shaped ditch along 3 sections of approx. 400mts each and removing the established spoil shoulder that holds water on the road. These works started in October, the ditching element is complete, and the 2 culverts are still outstanding at the time of writing this although all works should be completed by this meeting.

Winter Car Park Closures

These are now in place. 23 car parks have been closed this year. The purpose of this programme is to reduce unnecessary capacity during the quieter winter months and utilise our limited resources for maintenance more effectively. Some closed car parks may be repaired during this period, but it is anticipated that most of our resources will be directed to maintaining those popular car parks that remain open. There is one change to last year, Shave Wood; Minstead has been closed instead of Minstead Road as we wish to undertake a programme of vegetation management around the car park whilst it is closed.

Recreation Maintenance

All the planning stages of this year's sites have been undertaken. Site visits etc and the plans have been signed off. This will form the core work programme for my team for the Autumn/Winter period prior to the Christmas tree sales. The sites being worked are SE corner of the Forest. Sites already worked are Hatchet Pond, Hatchet Moor, Beaulieu Heath, Crockford and Crockford Clump, Bull Hill, Rans Wood, Ivy Wood and Culverley.

HLS

Farwell's are due to finally to complete the ditching and banking element of the verge protection works around Woodgreen this November/December. There has been a lot of issues in getting to this stage, contractual commitments elsewhere, residential pressures both for and against the works, Parish Council pressure to complete the works. We have finally reached a stage where we can proceed. This stands us in good stead, providing us with a good model and useful experience, to progress future verge restoration works for the next 3 years. The HLS board have agreed to recruit a Verge Protection Officer to drive this forward. The recruitment is currently underway.

c) Small Grants Scheme – report from Panel meeting of 8 November 2016 prepared by Joan Cundill

There were 11 applications for approx. £11,630. This was the third meeting of the financial year. All were accepted with some being referred to the Community Engagement Officers, CEOs, for more information before final approval..

There was one application from the New Forest area.

Fawley Parish Council requested £277 to raise and edge some areas of footpath 509 in the Warren Copse/ Holbury Manor area, which is protected woodland. This was to cover some exposed drainage pipes and tree roots.

The application was somewhat short on detail. Natalie Hands, our CEO will contact FPC to request more information and revised plans, which will hopefully be approved by e-mail before the next SGS panel meeting in February 2017.

Approximately £17,000 is available for grants in the February round of applications.

Joan Cundill
10th November 2016.