

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: *Monday 07 March 2016*

Agenda item 3: *Chair's Report*

Wootton Riverine Restoration Scheme.

I visited the drop in session at Bashley.

This is part of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme.

There were displays and the opportunity to discuss the scheme. The work is designed to return the artificially straightened Avon Water to a meandering course in order to safeguard the important wetland habitats and prevent erosion. Access does not seem to be adversely effected.

The proposed scheme is likely to achieve its objectives.

If the scheme is approved work will take place in 2 stages later this year .

Local Access Forum National Conference (South) 23.02.2016.

There were both presentations and workshops. Details of these will appear on Huddle in due course.

The presentations were :

1. Updates and Reforms.

This was mainly about the Deregulation Act. Work continues with the stakeholder group. 12 sets of guidance are being produced. The April publication date will be missed but it is hoped the guidance will be available soon afterwards.

2. New Barriers to Disabled Access.

A speaker from the Disabled Ramblers explained how they were helping the less mobile to regain access to the countryside. Using top of the range trampers difficult terrain was being crossed allowing users to enjoy areas usually not accessible to them.

The group want man made barriers to be removed (stiles, squeezes, narrow gates and bridges) and there to be a greater use of radar keys.

www.disabledramblers.co.uk

3. A stakeholders guide to influencing your local council.

This was about horseriding and the desire to increase routes available to those living in the Wokingham area.

Actions, including a ride through Wokingham and the production of leaflets were explained. Safer routes and more bridleways are desired and the group hope local policies will be developed to include bridleways in and around new housing developments .

4. Alternative funding for access projects.

Descriptions of adventurous projects to get those who do not usually visit the countryside to do so. This should improve social cohesion. This included giving publicity to what is available and possibilities for mountain biking and the use of 4 wheel drives.

Local Authorities were seen as facilitators not doers.

Workshops. Everyone was able to attend 2.

I attended.

1. Naturally Healthy

Speakers from 2 National Parks described their 3 year projects. Their aims are to improve health and wellbeing and get people more active and into the countryside.

Dartmoor.

A "Naturally Healthy Group" has been set up in Buckfastleigh (said to be the most socially deprived place on Dartmoor). The project coordinator is working with the GP practice. GPs were giving green prescriptions (no longer allowed to call them this as it is a legal term) Now patients are

referred by the doctor and advice is given in the waiting room .advice is about attending and participating in activities in the countryside. The project officer is involving local groups and they are running some of the activities now and it is hoped they will take on more. It is the intention that similar projects will start in other places on Dartmoor.

Exmoor.

This project is called "Moor to Enjoy " it is a health and wellbeing partnership. The project aims to demonstrate the health and wellbeing benefits of visiting Exmoor National Park. The emphasis is on physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing. It hopes to get people into the National Park and concentrates on those who would not normally visit. Activities include walking, mountain biking, art, creative writing, photography picnics etc.

2. Dementia Adventure (www.dementiaadventure.co.uk)

This charity is aiming to get those with dementia accompanied by their carer / partner into the countryside for short walks, perhaps only 30mins. Those in residential care are included in the project. Volunteers are trained.

This looked at the benefits of and taking the fear out of supporting people with dementia to go for a walk. It draws on the success of dementia inclusive walks programmes.

Ruth Croker
Chairman
24 February 2016