

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: *Monday 06 June 2016*

Agenda item 4: *Forum Officer's report*

1. HCC update

- ***Ease of Use survey for the New Forest*** – results of the 2015 survey of rights of way within the National Park boundary were recently analysed and showed a pass rate of 63.9% in Hampshire and 50% in Wiltshire. This compares with a pass rate of 72.2% for the rest of Hampshire. This is disappointingly low for both authority areas; sample sizes were small (only 6 paths/16.6% of the network in Wiltshire and 72 paths/15.8% of the network in Hampshire), which meant that the impact of a single failed path within the sample was proportionately higher.
- ***Parish Lengthsman scheme*** – this Hampshire Highways scheme was under review but is continuing for the current financial year due partly to funding from HCC Countryside Service, which is providing 25% of the £1,000 given to each participating parish so that Lengthsmen can work on Rights of Way as well as highways. Work done on RoW by the Lengthsmen will be recorded via CAMSweb (online access to the HCC Countryside Access Management System), which will enable the scheme to be monitored and assessed for future funding.
- ***National consultation on a draft Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy*** – the Countryside Service contributed to the County Council corporate response to this consultation, citing the Countryside Access Plan as a strategic framework for managing off-road paths in Hampshire for both utility and leisure/recreation. The Service actively supports use of the RoW network for encouraging walking and cycling, but considers that any improvement scheme on RoW must recognise the needs of other vulnerable road users, particularly equestrians, whose off-road network is shared with cyclists and pedestrians. Hampshire Countryside Access Forum has also submitted a response.
- ***Changes to the Small Grants Scheme*** – a number of changes to the scheme were proposed at the last Panel meeting on 10 May. Further details of these are set out in Joan Cundill's report (item 7).

2. LAF updates

- ***National Conference, 23 February 2016*** – materials from the Conference are now available from <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5560243957268480?category=4680890114375680>
- ***LAF consultation on 'Making our needs known and influencing decision makers'*** – both NFAF and HCAF responded to this consultation, which asked whether LAFs require a single national body to represent their needs. The view of both Forums was that this is not necessary, and that most of the issues raised could be tackled through National and Regional meetings, including the recent (and very successful) National Conferences.
- ***Review of Structure and Remit*** – it is proposed to allocate some time at the September meeting to a review of the New Forest Access Forum's statutory function and advisory role and the requirements for 'section 94 bodies' (Local Planning Authorities, Natural England, Forestry Commission etc) to consult or notify Local Access Forums. These are set out in Annex A of the *Defra Guidance on Local Access Forums in England*, which can be found at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402151656/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/countryside/crow/laf-guidance.pdf>.

- ***LAF Survey 2015-16*** – this annual online survey for Chairs and Secretaries has been completed on behalf of NFAF. The separate Local Access Forum Review Form 2015-16 (due by 31 July) will be discussed under item 9.