

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: *Monday 5 September 2016*

Agenda item 4: *Forum Officer's report*

1. HCC update

- **Staff recruitment** – The new Senior Countryside Access Ranger for the South/West area team is Helen Chalk. In Winchester the new Network Development Officer is Tara Pothecary and Owen Devine has joined the team as the Planning and Development Officer.
- **Parish Lengthsman scheme** – 29 parishes in New Forest District are participating in this scheme. The amount of work being undertaken by the Lengthsmen on rights of way varies; some have given priority to Highway work, others have allocated more to rights of way. We are monitoring the scheme and trying to ensure that all rights of way work by Lengthsmen is recorded in order to support the case for continued funding.
- **Lepe Country Park** – HCC has submitted a planning application to provide more modern facilities at Lepe including landscape works, better car parking and a new glass fronted elevated visitor centre with uninterrupted views of the Solent and Isle of Wight. If the plans are approved, work would start on site in the New Year and be completed during winter 2017. The country park will be open as normal throughout this period, and the existing café will remain until its replacement is ready. All planned works have been approved by Natural England to avoid disturbance to the wildlife.

2. Local Government in Hampshire – consultation

Members will be aware from the recent email that the County Council is consulting on the future shape of local government across Hampshire (details online at <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/servinghampshire>). There will be an opportunity on 5 September to discuss whether the Forum wishes to respond. The consultation is open until 20 September.

3. LAF updates

- **LAF News** – [Issue 9](#) of this has been published and includes articles on
 - LAF Conferences
 - River Tees rediscovered
 - Annual Reporting
 - England Coast Path – progress report

4. National updates

- **[Forestry in England inquiry](#)** – the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee has launched an inquiry into the role of Defra in supporting a thriving forest economy and environment. The Committee is seeking recommendations on how effectively current government policies achieve the objectives below and how they should be developed in future to:
 - Increase the level of tree cover and improve management of private and public forests in England;
 - Balance woodland protection, including of ancient forests, with economic exploitation, including developing woods as an energy source;
 - Provide a strategic framework, including fiscal and regulatory regimes, to support forestry businesses;
 - Provide grants and advice through the CAP and the Rural Development Programme, and any successor programme, for England that incentivise the sector to deliver multiple economic and environmental benefits; and
 - Ensure there is the right research, including into management of pests and diseases, which is well integrated into policy development

The deadline for written submissions is 18 October 2016