

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting – 2 December 2013
Lyndhurst Community Centre

Present

Members: Alastair Duncan (Chair) Ann Sevier
 Lynden Bowen Joan Cundill
 Ruth Croker Tracey Churcher
 Heather Gould Gordon Garrett
 Ben Rayner Alison Russell
 Steve Rippon-Swaine Chris Lagdon
 Gary North Peter Walsh

Officers: Cath Hart (Hampshire County Council)
 Nigel Matthews (New Forest National Park Authority)
 Vicki Gibbon (New Forest National Park Authority)
 Sam Jones (Hampshire County Council)

In attendance:

1 Apologies and minutes of last meeting

- 1.1 Apologies were received from members Gary North, Peter Walsh and Gordon Garrett.
- 1.2 Minutes from the last meeting of 9 September 2013 were agreed as a true record.

2 Matters arising from the last meeting

- 2.1 Item 2.3 – Gordon Garrett had been looking into the safety issues on the one way system at Calshot and had been in touch with Hampshire County Council, Sam Jones advised that he had passed on the details to NFDC, currently nothing had been achieved however Sam and Gordon would continue to follow up with all parties involved.
- 2.2 Ruth updated members that she had responded to the Cranborne Chase consultation and that she felt the document was very positive. The AONB were keen to get people involved, they had recently added downloadable walking, cycling and driving maps to their website this can be found at www.discovernadder.org.uk
- 2.3 Item 6.3 – Sam Jones advised Forum Members that the MENE sub group had currently been put on hold however it would still be an important piece of work when completed.
- 2.4 Item 4.5 – Alastair Duncan updated Members that following comments sought on the Consultation of the future of the Forestry Commission a response had been formulated and sent.
- 2.5 Item 4.4 – Alastair Duncan had sent in a response with regards to the Highways Consultation

- 2.6 Joan Cundill read out a letter from NFDC advising that there would currently be a freeze on parking charges and therefore blue badge holders parking would remain free of charge.
- 2.7 Steve Rippon-Swaine commented that NFDC were replacing the older car park machines with models which accept cards and would be ensuring that they were at a height whereby people with mobility issues would be able to reach, this work would be taking place over the next few years. Joan requested that she or a member from Access for All be invited to assess the new meters prior to their installation.

Action: Steve Rippon-Swaine to ensure Joan Cundill and Access for All would be consulted on the choice and siting of new car park machines.

3 Martin Down Grazing – Robert Lloyd (Natural England)

- 3.1 Robert Lloyd was welcomed to the Forum to give a presentation on Martin Down Nature Reserve.
- 3.2 Members were advised that Martin Down was a large expanse of grassland which sat in Cranborne Chase AONB and is an SSSI and open land access, crossed by many rights of way. It was managed by Natural England and Hampshire County Council. The site was used by approximately 40,000 visitors per year and had been used for centuries by sheep grazing. The site is divided into many small parcels for management and on average only 10 HA (=3% of the site) if fenced for grazing at any time, using Natural England's 120 head of sheep; no major changes are planned for this regime. Robert presented his plans for limited fenced grazing on the Down and sought the Forum's views. His proposals were endorsed by the Forum. More information could be obtained by visiting www.naturalengland.org.uk.
- 3.3 Robert commented that NE was currently reviewing its management plan and would value the New Forest Access Forum's views and comments, more information on this would be made available to the Forum in due course.
- 3.4 Members of the Forum commented on how well the site was managed and agreed that it would be beneficial for a meeting of the Forum to be conducted there in 2014.

Action: Robert Lloyd to consult the Forum on the management of the site when appropriate.

4 Feedback on LAF member training day – Tracey Churcher

- 4.1 Tracey Churcher reported that a number of Forum Members attended the recent LAF member training day and all found it very beneficial, she commented that it was very useful to learn about the legislation surrounding rights of way.

5 Future NFAF Support – Nigel Matthews

- 5.1 Nigel Matthews updated Members of the Forum on the current situation regarding Officer Support to the Forum, commenting that, since Sarah Manchester had left the Authority, it had also undergone a re-structure and therefore would now need to decide how to move forward in its future support to the NFAF. It was agreed that Cath Hart would stay on for the interim as current Support Officer until the March meeting.
- 5.2 Following discussion it was decided that some members of the Access Forum would meet with Nigel Matthews to discuss in further detail future support, these members were Alastair Duncan, Rachel Pearson, Ruth Croker and Sam Dovey. It was further agreed that a report from this meeting to be circulated to all Forum Members to enable them to comment.

Action: Nigel Matthews to convene a meeting with the nominated forum members concerning the Forum's future support and then to circulate notes of the meeting to all members.

6 Community Routes – Sam Jones

- 6.1 Sam informed forum members that the Community Routes were long-term aspirations. However the short term approx £150,000 of Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) monies are available for the Community Route improvements which can be delivered by March 2015. This equates to around 4 projects, probably on existing rights of way given the short term timescale. He requested members' help in identifying projects for this money. During the coffee break members were asked to look at maps situated around the room and make comments on the proposed routes.
- 6.2 Following further discussion, it was agreed that a short term working group would be formed to view the routes and discuss and feedback possible options, this group would consist of Ruth Croker, Alastair Duncan, Alison Russell and Lynden Bowen.

Action: Short term working group to be set up to discuss proposals for core routes and advise Sam Jones of their views on a preferred option.

7 Officer's Report – Cath Hart (paper 34/1)

- 7.1 Cath Hart brought the Officer's report to the attention of Forum Members highlighting the recent letter that was sent on behalf of the Forum regarding the Common Agricultural Policy consultation explaining how the Forum was disappointed at the lack of provision for public access.
- 7.2 As Gary North was unable to attend the meeting Cath advised that he had emailed a report to notify members that HLS work had started at Hatchet Pond / East Boldre and that anti-social behaviour had resulted in the temporary closure of the gents toilets at Hatchet Pond.

Members agreed that the remainder of the report would be taken as read.

8 Hampshire County Council Update – Sam Jones

- 8.1 Sam updated Forum members on the current situation of bridge building, - HCC was undertaking the building of bridges under 6 metres in length whilst bridges over this length would be contracted out.
- 8.2 Sam advised that he is now also a site manager looking after 7 sites and has also taken on both Test Valley and half of the Winchester districts this has given him a greater and more effective team.

9 Mire Restoration Visits

- 9.1 Avon Water (Wootton Bridge) – Heather Gould (*paper 34/2*)
- 9.2 North Slufers Inclosure – Tracey Churcher

Tracey updated members that the Forestry Commission was currently restoring stream routes throughout the Forest, as the original meandering routes were considered more beneficial to the environment. Prior to the restoration work being carried out a consultation was conducted whereby members from various organisations were invited to visit and walk through the area to discuss the envisaged outcome and environmental benefits.

Action: Members are requested to advise Alastair if they would like to attend a mire restoration visit.

10 Community Routes, DfT cycling fund & LSTF (*paper 34/3*)

- 10.1 Members agreed that this paper would be taken as read, however Members would like an NPA Officer to attend the next meeting in order to ask further questions.

Action: Members of the Forum would like an NPA Officer to attend the next meeting to discuss Community Routes, LSTF and the DfT cycling fund, Nigel / Cath to contact the relevant officer.

11 Recreation Management Strategy – Alastair Duncan

- 11.1 Alastair updated Forum Members that the RMS Group had recently been reformed into a two tier format with the RMS Steering Group containing the 6 statutory bodies, namely the NPA, NFDC, Verderers, Forestry Commission, HCC and Natural England the next meeting of this Group would be 3 December 2013.
- 11.2 Nigel Matthews had previously drafted a plan for the RMS Group which had been circulated to Forum members.

12 NFAF-led workshop at the National LAF day in Bristol – Alastair Duncan

- 12.1 Alastair had agreed that the NFAF would submit a report for the next conference, to include information on Access for people with mobility issues.

Action: Alastair and Joan to provide a workshop on projects benefitting people with disabilities at the National LAF conference in February.

13 Reports from representatives

- **Small Grants Scheme – Joan Cundill**
Paper Taken as read

- **Hampshire Countryside Access Forum – Cath Hart**
Cath advised that a new Chair Graham Flatt and Vice Chair Nigel Wolstenholme had been appointed.

- **Wiltshire CAF – Ruth Croker**
Ruth informed the Forum that Wiltshire are going through budget cuts and restructuring at the moment.

14 AOB / Items for next meeting

- 14.1 It was requested that Vicki contact Forum Members approximately three weeks prior to the meetings to request reports that would need to be submitted.
- 14.2 Joan Cundill commented that Totton & Eling Parish Council had put in a bid to the National Lottery Fund to make the Eling Mill more accessible.
- 14.3 Joan notified the Forum that there was still no public access at the Ashurst recreation ground and the gates were still locked, it was agreed that another letter should be written.
- 14.4 Dates for 2014 NFAF meetings were agreed as follows –
3 March, 9 June, 8 September and 1 December. Venues would be confirmed in due course.

The meeting ended at 1:00pm

Date of next meeting: Monday 3 March 9.30am – 1.00pm Venue to be confirmed