

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting – 3 March 2014
Lymington Town Hall

Present

Members: Lynden Bowen
Ruth Croker
Joan Cundill
Alastair Duncan (Chair)
Heather Gould
Hallam Mills
Gary North
Rachel Pearson
Steve Rippon-Swayne
Alison Russell
Ann Sevier
Peter Walsh

Officers: Cath Hart (Hampshire County Council)
Mark Holroyd (New Forest National Park Authority)
Rachael Bowen (New Forest National Park Authority)
Sam Jones (Hampshire County Council)

In attendance: Nigel Matthews (New Forest National Park Authority)

1 Apologies, introductions and minutes of last meeting

- 1.1 Apologies were received from members Tracey Churcher, Sam Dovey and Gordon Garrett.
- 1.2 The minutes from the last New Forest Access Forum meeting of 2 December 2013 were agreed as a true record.
- 1.3 As the new representative for the Verderers, Hallam Mills introduced himself and explained a little about his role as a dairy farmer running the Bisterne Estate.

2 Matters arising

- 2.1 Calshot on-road walking / cycling – Sam Jones reported he had spoken with NFDC regarding Calshot and confirmed that they are aware of the situation and it is on their 'to-do list'.
- 2.2 Car park pay machines – Cllr Rippon Swaine informed members that a Task and Finish Group had been established to take forward the work of updating car park machines. He added that a budget of £500k was available and consideration of siting and access was being taken into consideration. Joan Cundill requested input into the process.

Action: Cllr Rippon Swaine to facilitate contact between Joan Cundill and Cllr Alan Glass (Blue Badge holder on the Task and Finish Group) to discuss car park pay machines

- 2.3 Recreation Management Strategy – Alastair Duncan reminded members of the RMS update at the last meeting and that Group membership now included HCC

and NFDC. Nigel Matthews added that two meetings had now taken place, a further one planned before engagement with the Advisory Group. The Steering Group will be meeting approximately every two months with an overarching aim of how to identify and manage where people go for recreation.

3 Future Support of NFAF

- 3.1 Nigel Matthews had considered the work and future support of the NFAF with a small sub-group. The conclusion was the NFAF was a valuable Forum with a good track record and should stay as is with Cath Hart, HCC Officer, providing support for both the NFAF and the HAF. Alastair Duncan thanked Nigel Matthews for the positive outcome and specifically thanked Sam Dovey and Rachel Pearson for their input into the preliminary discussions. Nigel intimated that he still needed to finalise financial arrangements between the NPA and HCC to cover admin support.

4 Use of funding obtained for improvements

- 4.1 Mark Holroyd, Transport & Tourism Manager for the NFNPA updated members on the latest news about LSTF, DfT cycling in National Parks and Community Routes. Community Routes are intended to provide A2B journeys between settlements using existing routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. £185k will be spent by March 2015 on roads (e.g. edge of carriageway markings brought 30-90cm in from the edge to give an informal strip for non-motorised users), Rights of Way improvements (as nominated by Sam following NFAF's advice at the previous meeting) and existing Forestry Commission tracks. Decisions about improvements to be delivered in the next financial year will be made shortly by the steering group. A pilot Quiet Lanes initiative will also be piloted in the coming years in volunteer communities with support from HCC/NFNPA, and the hope was that community groups would assist in taking forward any proposals. Ann Sevier suggested road stencils would be less intrusive than signs and Mark confirmed he would look into this.
- 4.2 Mark briefly described the New Forest family cycling experiences programme, consisting of 5 elements; the Family cycling centre at Brockenhurst, bike docking station network, improved signage on the cycling network, cycling facilities fund and the proposed pedal bus initiative. The pedal bus initiative will undergo a review before being taken forward by means of a workshop. Lynden Bowen offered to represent the NFAF. Mark Holroyd concluded by reiterating that there are no new routes planned, only improvements to existing routes.

Action: Mark Holroyd to contact Lynden Bowen when appropriate to attend workshop on pedal buses

5 Officer's report (paper 34/1)

- 5.1 Cath Hart advised that the NFAF's letter to Robert Lloyd concerning the management of Martin Down had been acknowledged. The NFAF's approach continued to be supportive of the proposals.
- 5.2 Cath tabled individual biographies and asked that these be amended as necessary.

6 HCC Update – Sam Jones

- 6.1 Sam Jones reported that he had taken on a new area in West Hampshire, assisted by a new Ranger. Since the last meeting, the main issues had been flooding related and work was concentrated on managing the network and closures that had resulted. Other work included developing a green infrastructure programme and the bridge building work was continuing to progress.
- 6.2 Hallam Mills asked if local farmers, after sufficient training, would be allowed to help fill potholes. Cllr Rippon- Swaine replied that the County Council had a contract with a company to carry out such repairs, which had two more years to run, but the situation might be reviewed at the end of this period to take Hallam's suggestion into account. Cllr Rippon-Swaine also referred to HCC's 'Lengthsman' scheme which is working with Parish Councils to resolve local highways issues. Alastair Duncan commended both the innovative suggestion and the Council's pothole reporting page on their website.

7 FC Update – Gary North

- 7.1 Gary North reported the FC are working flat out dealing with fallen trees and flooded culverts etc. The recent storms demonstrated that good systems were in place by the FC to deal with such situations.
- 7.2 The Ground Nesting Bird season would mean that a number of car parks would close along with the usual winter closures. Heather Gould confirmed that NFDOG were aware of the closures, as they were each year, but questioned if it was not time to review whether the standard list of closures was still the most appropriate. Nigel Matthews confirmed that through the RMS Steering Group and the HLS, various ground nesting bird surveys would be repeated in 2014.

Action: Forum members to discuss FC car park closures at next meeting (9 June 2014) - Gary to raise Heather's question with his superiors

- 7.3 Additional updates included New Forest Campsite season starting on 12 April; the installation of handrails on the bridge at Brockenhurst were complete and bridleway improvements at Fawley Inclosure were continuing.

9 National Park Management Plan

- 9.1 Nigel Matthews explained that National Park Management Plans need reviewing every 5 years. Thorough consultation took place when the document was initially produced, however the actions are in need of refreshing. A list of possible actions is being drafted for the spring with input from a range of organisations. A revised draft is expected by the summer with the final document being published in the winter.

Action: Nigel Matthews to confirm if the draft Management Plan will be at a suitable stage to be reviewed at the next NFAF meeting in June
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10 Parish Conference

- 10.1 Cath Hart referred to her paper providing background and summary of the Parish Conference on 5 June 2014 at the Royal Victoria Country Park. A sub-group meeting of the three LAF's was planned for 18 March 2pm where suggestions and ideas could be discussed. Alastair Duncan commented on the success of the previous conferences. Ruth Croker, Lynden Bowen and Alison Russell volunteered to attend the sub-group. Ann Sevier also volunteered if required.

11 Update on NPA Cycling Liaison / Code of Practice

- 11.1 Peter Walsh summarised the current position on cycling in the New Forest (paper attached with these minutes). Peter added that the cycling code had been finalised but there were still a number of issues surrounding the cycle charter. Alastair Duncan thanked Peter for an interesting and useful briefing.

12 Update on dog deaths and NFDog's funding initiative

- 12.1 Heather Gould informed the Forum that there were a total of 22 deaths from the mystery illness in and around the New Forest. Further information and advice was available on Anderson Moores website (www.Andersonmoores.com/vet/news) the veterinary specialists that are leading on the research into the illness. NFDog have set up a fund to contribute towards ongoing research, currently standing at £9568. Heather concluded by reminding Forum members to be aware of any lesions appearing on lower limbs and that they should take their dog straight to the vets.

13 Ashurst recreation ground update / LAF conference

- 13.1 Despite a number of letters from the Forum and Access for All to the Parish Council seeking changes to current arrangements for access to the recreation ground, no positive response has been received. Joan Cundill reported that there was a combi-lock on the gates at the recreation ground therefore blocking access to the path. Only a very few people had access to the code, which meant that the majority of people with disabilities were precluded from using the facility. This meant that the terms of the Big Lottery grant were not being adhered to. Joan, having recently attended the National LAF conference, raised this as a query with a representative of the Big Lottery but to date has still not heard back.

Action: Hallam Mills will send a chasing email regarding the combi-lock at Ashurst recreation ground
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- 13.2 Ruth Croker, with Alastair Duncan and Joan Cundill attended the recent 'south' LAF Conference. Ruth reported a turnout of 58 people to the conference that was held in Bristol. A number of presentations, workshops and speakers were very informative, including information about the Deregulation Bill and State of Paths. Alastair and Joan offered a paper on disability access in the New Forest that was well received. Alastair thanked Joan for all her efforts on the day.

14 Reports from representatives

- 14.1 Small Grants Scheme – nothing additional to report.
- 14.2 Hampshire Countryside Access Forum – Cath Hart reported that the HCAF met 2 weeks before. Two representatives from the MoD were present to address issues with walkers on MoD land, however this issue looked like it was likely to be resolved. Cath also advised that the Shipwrights Way was almost complete. Forum members briefly discussed the suggestion of a country park in land around the Rownhams areas.
- 14.3 Wiltshire Access Forum – Ruth Croker will be attending the next WAF to be held later in the month.

15 AOB

- 15.1 Alastair Duncan reported that the HLS AGM will be held on 27 March. Alastair also asked for any comments on the NFDC traffic management plan be sent to him for consideration. He went on to remind members that at the next meeting in June, both the position of Chair and Vice-Chair will be up for election. Alastair said that he was of the opinion that it was healthy for any organisation to have a change of Chair from time to time, and he invited members to consider putting their name forward.

Action: All - contact Cath Hart if you wish to stand for the position of either Chair or Vice Chair at the next meeting

Date of next meeting: Monday 9 June 9.30am – 1.00pm