

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting – 1 December 2014
Lymington Town Hall

Present

Members: Alastair Duncan (Chair)
Sally Arnold
Lynden Bowen
Ruth Croker (Vice Chair)
Joan Cundill
Sam Dovey
Gordon Garrett
Heather Gould
Gary North
Tracey Churcher
Alison Russell
Steve Rippon-Swaine
Ann Sevier
Peter Walsh

Officers: Marilyn Meeks (Hampshire County Council)
John Cartwright (Hampshire County Council)
Gillie Molland (New Forest National Park Authority)
Vicki Gibbon (New Forest National Park Authority)

In attendance: David Illsley (New Forest National Park Authority)
Sarah Manchester (Hampshire County Council)
Amanda Hull (Hampshire County Council)

1 Apologies, introductions and minutes of last meeting

- 1.1 Apologies were received from members Rachel Pearson and Sam Jones. The Chairman welcomed Sally Arnold as the NPA representative to the forum, he also welcomed Amanda Hull as the new HCC Officer who would be replacing Marilyn Meeks at future meetings, Marilyn was thanked for all her help.
- 1.2 The minutes from the last New Forest Access Forum meeting of 8 September 2014 were agreed as a true record.

2 Matters arising

- 2.1 Minute item 3.2 – Nigel Matthews spoke to the landowner at Mill Lane regarding the footpath, unfortunately the landowner does not wish to pursue this further due to the anti-social behaviour that had occurred.
- 2.2 Minute item 4.1 – Nigel Matthews and Alastair Duncan have yet to meet to discuss improving lines of communication between the NPA and NFAF, this however will happen in the near future.

Ruth Croker reported that she had received a request by email to submit a walk for the 'New Forest walking festival'. It was a requirement that walks must start and finish near a bus stop or train station, with walk details being submitted to the website. It had not been possible to include sufficient words to give clear instructions and attempts to contact the NPA communications department were unsuccessful. Following discussion it was agreed that Vicki would speak to the Communications department and ask that they consult the NFAF for future walking festivals.

Action: Vicki Gibbon to advise the NPA Communications Team to ask for early involvement by the NFAF for future walks and walking festivals.

3 Officer's Report – Marilyn Meeks

- 3.1 Marilyn ran through her report highlighting that a draft report on the HCC cycle strategy would be presented to the Cabinet on 15 December, subject to approval this would then be followed by a public consultation beginning mid - January.
- 3.2 Natural England had now completed their restructure and Heather Whetter would be the Access & Engagement Officer for Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight. Heather would endeavour to attend one of the forthcoming Access Forum meetings.
- 3.3 Marilyn advised the forum that the Deregulation Bill is currently with the House of Lords and that the target for royal assent would be January 2015.

4 New Forest Management Plan – David Illsley

- 4.1 David Illsley gave an update on the draft National Park Management Plan emphasising that the Management Plan is for the National Park and not just for the Authority, it also includes partner organisations who have a vested interest in the Park. Following on from a steering group it was agreed not to change the document considerably and to add as a supplementary document.
- 4.2 David explained that the document is currently in the consultation stage and would welcome any feedback from the forum. With the most relevant section being Enjoy.
- 4.3 The initial draft for discussion and comments would run from 20th October until 19th December. In January the comments would be considered by partner organisations with a further public consultation following February to March 2015. The final version would be formally agreed by all partners in June 2015. Any comments should be sent by email to the Policy Team at policy@newforest.gov.uk
- 4.4 Following discussion it was agreed that a sub group would be formed to discuss further and suggestions would be sent back to the NPA Policy team.

Action: Vicki Gibbon and Alastair Duncan to arrange a meeting for a subgroup to be held at NPA offices in Lyminster to discuss the Management Plan

5 CAP Update – Sarah Manchester

- 5.1 Sarah Manchester gave a PowerPoint presentation which documented Hampshire County Council's Countryside Access Plan review, this is a more in depth and focused plan looking at countryside wide access. There had been a lot of consultations and public engagement to ensure that as many people as possible could get involved and give their views.
- 5.2 Sarah explained that following these consultations it was found that the issues that were identified in the 2008 CAP are still relevant today with the issues identified as having the highest priority as-

- Maintaining and improving the condition of the path network, and
- Improving connectivity of the network.

Sarah commented that moving forward the draft CAP will be taken to Members later this month, with the draft document out for public consultation early next year with full publication in Spring 2015.

- 5.3 It was commented that routes for people with disabilities need to be looked at more closely and forum members agreed that they would like to see more for the ageing population. This would also be discussed during the subgroup meeting.

6 Chair Update – Alastair Duncan

- 6.1 The Chairman updated the forum on the recent tranquillity mapping that had taken place looking at particular tranquil areas of the forest and how to protect them in the future. The draft tranquillity map had now been produced with ground truthing currently taking place with a forthcoming meeting to review progress.
- 6.2 The cycle working group had met since the bike docking scheme had not been pursued by the NPA. The group considered a list of alternative schemes which had been drawn up by the NPA. These to include re-surfacing the Lyndhurst to Ashurst cycle route and improvements to the A35/A337 junction in Totton. A list of these would be circulated to all forum members.
- 6.3 The Chairman advised the forum that the NPA and landscape partnership team are currently working up the second stage bid of a Landscape Partnership Scheme bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund called 'Our Past, Our Future'. If successful, a substantial amount of funding would be received for this project which would involve the restoration of lost habitats, development of forest skills and inspiring a new generation to champion and care for the forest. Alastair and Ruth would soon be meeting with James Brown, project manager to discuss implications for access and would bring the results back to the next forum meeting.
- 6.4 A recent consultation had been circulated with the agenda from Sustrans which would be looking at the cycle network between Salisbury and the New Forest, forum members were asked to look at the document and submit any comments to either Alastair Duncan or Vicki Gibbon.

<p>Action: Alastair and Ruth to meet James Brown and report back. Alastair Duncan to circulate a list of schemes the NPA would be looking at following the cycle docking scheme.</p>
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All: to read the Sustrans consultation and submit any comments to Alastair Duncan or Vicki Gibbon

- 6.5 Gillie Molland gave a brief presentation on the recent New Forest Historic Ways and Path Pathways project which the NPA is conducting as one of the Landscape Partnership Scheme projects in conjunction with partner organisations. The aim of the project is to identify rights of way with significant historical importance within the National Park and to promote greater understanding of the heritage and importance of these routes to local communities and users.
- 6.6 Gillie commented that the aim would be to select between 6 to 10 routes to take forward and would like a New Forest Access Forum representative on the panel.

7 Regular Updates

- 7.1 A paper had been circulated to forum members with the HCC update in Sam's absence.
- 7.2 Gary North gave a presentation with an overview of his role in the Forestry Commission. Gary informed the forum that his position involves managing all the car parks, waymarked tracks and signage in the forest. It is his job to ensure everything that is provided for the public is safe and in a useable condition. Gary has a team of 4 staff and they find their three biggest challenges being finance, resources and stakeholder engagement.
- 7.3 Ruth updated the Forum that the SSSI restoration programme for 2015/16 is currently underway.

8 Reports from other LAF's

- 8.1 There were no further reports on this occasion.

9 Any Other Business

- 9.1 Joan Cundill updated forum members on Ashurst recreation ground, the Parish Council had now agreed to keep the site open for the next three months to evaluate any impact. It was agreed that someone would need to take overall responsibility for any mess and issues that may occur, a suggestion was made of possible metal motorcycle gates to try and deter motorcyclists and horses getting onto the ground. Sally Arnold would take this back to the Parish Council.
- 9.2 Marilyn Meeks advised the forum that The Deputy Leader, Nick Clegg had stated that the completion date for the Coastal Access is to be 2020 with more funding being provided. Natural England are currently looking at engaging new staff to assist in this work.
- 9.3 Gillie Molland commented that Ordnance Survey and all NPA's are currently working together to enable all routes to be digitised.

9.4 All dates for 2015 NFAF meetings were agreed with venues to be confirmed.

Date of next meeting: Monday 2nd March 2015 at 9.30am – 1.00pm Venue TBC