

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting – 2 March 2015
Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall

Present

Members: Ruth Croker (In the Chair)
Sally Arnold
Lynden Bowen
Joan Cundill
Tracey Churcher
Sam Dovey
Gordon Garrett
Heather Gould
Hallam Mills
Alison Russell
Ann Sevier
Peter Walsh

Officers: Amanda Hull (Hampshire County Council)
Sam Jones (Hampshire County Council)
John Cartwright (Hampshire County Council)
John Lynn (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)
Isaac Walker (Hampshire Countryside Access Forum)
Mark Earp (Isle of Wight Local Access Forum)

1 Apologies, introductions and minutes of last meeting

- 1.1 Apologies were received from members Alastair Duncan, Cllr. Steve Rippon-Swaine and Gary North.
- 1.2 The minutes from the last New Forest Access Forum meeting of 1 December 2014 were agreed as a true record.

2 Matters arising

- 2.1 As per paper
- 2.2 Item 9.3 December minutes, Forum members would like Ordnance Survey to attend a future meeting to explain how routes in the New Forest would be digitised and what would be the purpose of these maps.

Action: Gillie Molland to ask Ordnance Survey to attend a future meeting
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3 Chairman's Report

- 3.1 Ruth Croker ran through the Chairman's report highlighting that following a recent meeting with Nigel Matthews, it had been agreed that John Lynn would be the support officer from the NPA. Gillie would continue to cover the Small Grants Scheme and 'Historic Ways and Pathways' issues.

Members felt that this was a step forward in opening up lines of communication and felt that the NPA valued the good range of knowledge held by Forum members.

4 Forum Officer's Report

- 4.1 Amanda Hull updated Forum members with her Officer's report commenting that the consultation on the Walking and Cycling Strategy for Hampshire will be open for 12 weeks from Spring 2015, so the forum will be able to consider this at the June meeting.

- 4.2 It was stated that Natural England (NE) would soon withdraw funding for the LAF Regional Co-ordinator. Instead LAF's are encouraged to have greater contact with the NE Area Team contacts and to make more use of Huddle (dedicated online workspace for LAF's). Members were encouraged to inform Amanda if they would like to be given access to Huddle. It was agreed that a letter would be written to Natural England expressing the concerns of the Forum.

Members took the remainder of the paper as read.

Action: Amanda Hull / Ruth Croker to draft and send a letter to Natural England expressing the concerns of the NFAF.

Action: All members to inform Amanda if they would like access to Huddle

5 Recruitment to the Forum

- 5.1 Forum members were advised that recruitment for forum membership for the period 2015-18 will begin in the next few months. The regulations require the appointing authority to conduct open and public recruitment current members may however be reappointed to the forum for a further term. If members would like to re-apply to stay on the forum please email Vicki Gibbon in the first instance and you will be sent the necessary paperwork. If members feel that there are any interests that are under-represented on the forum or know people who would like to be on the forum please do let Vicki or Amanda know. The recruitment process would be conducted by HCC and the NPA.

Action: All members to email Vicki if they are interested in re-applying to sit on the forum for a further term

6 Countryside Access Plan Review

6.1 Sarah Manchester reminded the forum that the County Council were currently updating their Countryside Access Plan, which is presently out for consultation until 31 March. Sarah asked members for any comments that they may have had on the plan. Some of the comments included –

- There should be more focus on promoting community routes especially multi user routes.
- Ensure that educational information is available for people with learning difficulties, this could be explored in conjunction with the NPA
- Mention of achievements since the last plan would be beneficial
- More information on digital mapping
- Would like to see more practical examples of working with children.

Based on the comments made, a full response to the consultation will be compiled and sent on behalf of the forum.

Action: Amanda to compile a response to CAP review consultation

7 National Park Management Plan

7.1 David Illsley updated members on the recent 'Call for Views' consultation which had taken place for the National Park Management Plan. 79 responses had been received from 29 organisations and 48 individuals with a total of more than 500 specific comments. Members of the National Park Authority would be considering the document at the next Authority meeting on Thursday 26 March. Due to the general and local elections the final public consultation would take place between mid-May and the end of June 2015.

8 'Give each other breathing space' (Previously entitled 'Share the Road')

8.1 John Lynn introduced the forum to a recent project that the NPA are planning to conduct. This would be a positive campaign to encourage more considerate use of roads and routes within the park by all users and to promote a mind-set of respect to all regardless of mode of transport. The Department for Transport would provide one year's funding and the NPA would be launching the project in June.

8.2 Following discussion the forum agreed this would prove to be a positive initiative with the opportunity to educate people to respect and care for the forest. A sub-group would be formed to discuss further, members who agreed to take part in the sub group were Ruth Croker, Heather Gould, Hallam Mills, Tracey Churcher, Lynden Bowen and John Cartwright.

Action: Vicki Gibbon to arrange a sub-group meeting and advise forum members

9 Funding Update

- 9.1 Mark Holroyd reported to the forum that the Department for Transport had recently awarded HCC £2m of revenue funding to improve car free travel across the New Forest and South Downs National Parks in 2015-16.
- 9.2 The NPA would be looking to improve bus and rail travel across the forest to encourage local residents and visitors to travel car free. Close working relationships would be built on with the local tourism sector to ensure they would be communicating positive sustainable transport messages to consumers.
- 9.3 Mark advised that an update of cycling projects were circulated with the agenda, this documented what would replace the public bike system scheme.

10 Regular Updates

- **HCC Countryside Access – Sam Jones**

Sam ran through his report highlighting that the Church path in Hyde would now be repaired following the significant amount of damage it had received following last year's winter storms, contractors should be on site by early March.

Sam updated the forum on the recent closure of Avon Valley Path which is currently accommodating one of South England's largest badger sets. A meeting with Natural England would shortly take place to discuss further options whereby both badgers and users of the path could be accommodated.

- **NPA Update – John Lynn**

John advised the forum that the walking festival dates for 2015 have been confirmed as 17 October – 1 November.

The NPA have recently recruited an Inclusive Cycling Officer who would be responsible for taking this vision forward and promoting to a wider audience.

It was noted that it is the NFNPA's 10th anniversary, several commemorative videos had been made looking at the special qualities of the forest.

- **Forestry Commission – Gary North**

No report was given due to Gary being unable to attend the meeting

- **SSSI Restoration**

No new visits had taken place

- **Small Grants Scheme – Joan Cundill**

Report was taken as read.

11 Reports from other LAF's

- **Hampshire Countryside Access Forum**

It was reported that this was the first meeting of the newly appointed Forum (a list of members can be found on the website – www.hants.gov.uk/hcaf-members). During this meeting the Chairman was elected as Graham Flatt, the next meeting would be 17 March.

- **Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum**

This was the first meeting since July 2014, a large amount of the meeting was related to 4-wheel drives, with tracks over plain being damaged.

12 Any Other Business

12.1 No other business was recorded on this occasion

Date of next meeting: Monday 1st June 2015 at 9.30am – 1.00pm Terrace Room, Beulieu Motor Museum