

**Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting – 5 December 2016**  
**Hythe & Dibden Parish Council**

**Present**

Members: Ruth Croker (Chairman)  
Sally Arnold  
Lynden Bowen  
Mark Cowling  
Gordon Garrett  
Heather Gould  
Ross Mitchell  
Steve Rippon-Swaine  
Alison Russell  
Peter Scott

Officers: Petronella Natrass (Hampshire County Council)  
Sam Jones (Hampshire County Council)  
Mark Holroyd (New Forest National Park Authority)  
Vicki Gibbon (New Forest National Park Authority)

In attendance: Jake White (Natural England)  
Gareth Owen (New Forest National Park Authority)  
Esther Smeardon (Hampshire County Council)

**1 Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from Joan Cundill, Alastair Duncan, Sam Dovey, Ann Sevier, Gary North and Rachel Pearson.

**2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

2.2 It was brought to the attention of the Forum that Mark Cowling was present at the last meeting, Forum members also agreed that the wording of minute item 5.2 should be changed slightly to read '*British Cycling wished to promote sustainable and careful access to ensure cyclists were aware of other users and environmental factors*' the secretariat agreed to make the necessary changes and circulate the updated minutes.

2.3 Following on from the actions derived from the September meeting, Mark Holroyd advised that the NFAF may be able to add some information to the next issue of Park Life and that a reprint of NFAF leaflets could also be made. The application for the recent wetland restoration project at Latchmore was refused by the National Park's Planning Committee. A response had now been sent to NFDC with regards to their Local Plan Review consultation, a second draft would be available in early spring 2017 with a follow up consultation in the summer.

**3 Chairman's Report**

3.1 As per report

#### **4 Forum Officer's Report**

- 4.1 Petronella Nattrass advised the Forum that Tracey Churcher had moved employment and would be stepping down from the Forum, although official confirmation was yet to be received.  
Planning approval had been received for the new visitor centre at Lepe Country Park.
- 4.2 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

#### **5 Update from National Trust – Jake White**

- 5.1 Jake White gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting that the National Trust owns 4000 acres of the New Forest, these commons in the north of the forest include Hale Purlieu, Rockford Common, Ibsley Common, Bramshaw Common and Foxbury. They work closely with their partner organisations to maintain and improve access where appropriate. Community engagement work is carried out to ensure sustainable access and wildlife conservation is well managed.
- 5.2 Foxbury is one of the main National Trust sites in the forest where heathland restoration had been carried out. Along with heathland restoration the 350 acre site would also benefit from having 20,000 trees planted. This had proved to be invaluable to the wildlife of the forest where it is now flourishing with night jars, lizards and adders. Foxbury benefits from having over 5 miles of open gravel tracks which cyclists, horse riders and walkers can use with ease. Sections of the site are able to be cordoned off to allow commoners to graze their animals. The National Trust run in house events on the land and therefore access can be controlled to alleviate any unnecessary pressures.
- 5.3 A question was asked regarding the recent difficulties horse riders were encountering with locks at Plaitford common, Sam Jones commented that he had recently visited the site and given advice on how to ensure safety for all user groups with regards to crossing the road. An objective safety audit would take place followed by a discussion with all stakeholders to look at how to take this forward.

*A copy of the presentation can be found on the website.*

#### **6 HCC Countryside Access Report – Sam Jones**

- 6.1 Sam Jones advised the forum that he had changed the format of his report to include the section; Action / request to forum; this would enable the Forum to determine how to support Sam and his team.
- 6.2 Sam brought members attention to item 4 of his report which asked the Forum for written support regarding the concerns over the suitability of surfaces for equestrian use at Denny Lodge Rail Bridge, Members agreed to this.

Action: Alison Russell to draft a letter and email to Forum members for agreement.
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## **7 NFPA Local Plan Review**

- 7.1 Petronella Nattrass reminded the Forum that a recent sub-group had met to discuss the Access Forum's response to the National Park Authority's Local Plan review, following this a letter had been drafted and circulated.
- 7.2 Ross Mitchell commented that she had drafted some changes to the original document which Petronella had circulated, this was due to the information that the new policies had been based on were out of date Ross wished to highlight this in the letter from the NFAF. The Forum agreed to these changes and also wished to add a concluding sentence regarding the importance of using up to date data.

Action: Petronella Nattrass to make the agreed changes to the letter and forward to the NPA policy team.

## **8 Changes to Small Grants Scheme**

- 8.1 As per report.

## **9 Closure of Lyndhurst Visitor Information Centre – Lynden Bowen**

- 9.1 Lynden Bowen updated the Forum on the recent news that the New Forest Visitor centre had now closed, the centre provided tourist information and accommodation booking services both of which are now increasingly carried out online.
- 9.2 Mark Holroyd commented that the NPA were in agreement with NFDC that there was no longer a need for face to face accommodation booking however did feel that a need for face to face engagement with the public was still required to help visitors to plan their day and to communicate our 'caring for' messages. Discussion was currently taking place with the Ninth Centenary Trust (who own and run the New Forest Centre) and NFDC on how a seasonal arrangement could take place, a report would be heard at the next full Authority meeting in January.

## **10 Historic Routes – Gareth Owen (New Forest National Park Authority)**

- 10.1 Gareth Owen introduced the Historic Routes project which the NPA would be conducting in 2017, with the aim of establishing 5 new trails with historical significant importance. Approximately 30 volunteers would be recruited to identify and record historical landscape features on the rights of way network, around 480 routes had currently been identified which would need to be reduced to around 120.
- 10.2 A steering group would be formed to discuss the routes and Gareth asked for 2 members of the Access Forum to volunteer, more details would follow.

Action: 2 Members of the NFAF to volunteer for the historic routes steering group.

## **11 New Forest Mitigation Project – Esther Smeardon**

- 11.1 Esther Smeardon gave a PowerPoint presentation updating the Forum on the New Forest mitigation partnership between HCC and NFDC, the aim of the project was

to manage recreational pressure from the residential pressures outside of the National Park through recreational walking and open landscape enhancements.

- 11.2 The project would be publicly delivered by Dawn Rayment, People and Wildlife Ranger at the NPA and would be branded as the GreenWay project.
- 11.3 Ms Smeardon explained that the first project which had been undertaken was in Sandleheath where a new footpath had proved invaluable to the local community. The next project would take place in the New Year in Lymington. The Forum commented that it was good to see mitigation projects now being delivered on the ground after much preparation, they asked to be kept informed as further projects are delivered.

*A copy of the presentation can be found on the website.*

## **12 Feedback on visit to South Downs LAF – Chairman**

- 12.1 The Chairman commented that the recent visit to the South Downs LAF had proved to be extremely beneficial and Members were made to feel very welcome. Once the England Coast path moves towards the establishment phase, it may be appropriate to extend an invitation to the South Downs forum to visit us.  
*The full report can be found on the website.*

## **13 Reports from other LAF's**

- 13.1 a) Hampshire  
Ross Mitchell attended the recent Hampshire Countryside Access Forum meeting and reported that an excellent presentation had been given on a new initiative to use the now disused Watercress Way railway line and to create a new circular route for non-motorised users.  
*The full report can be found on the website.*
- b) Wiltshire  
No report was given
- c) Dorset  
No report was given

## **14 Report from Coastal Access sub-group – John Truswell**

- 14.1 John Truswell informed the Forum that that the team has made significant progress with the Highcliffe to Calshot stretch of the Coast path.
- 14.2 Local large estates had now received the outline proposals however some tweaking would be required. The second landowner letters would be sent out by Christmas.
- 14.3 The full report for coastal access would be submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2017, an 8 week public consultation would follow.

## **15 Regular Updates**

- 15.1 a) *New Forest National Park Authority*  
As per paper.

*b) Forestry Commission*  
No report was given

*d) Small Grants Scheme*  
As per paper.

## **16 Election of Vice-Chairman**

- 16.1 Petronella Nattrass advised the Forum that Alastair Duncan no longer wishes to remain as vice chairman, therefore a new vice-chairman would be required. If a Member would like to be considered for this role please advise Petronella as soon as possible.

## **17 Any Other Business**

There was no further business

### **Date of next meeting:**

13 March 2017, 9.30 – 1.00, Venue: Fordingbridge Town Council