

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting – 5 September 2016
Lymington Community Centre

Present

Members: Ruth Croker (Chairman)
Alastair Duncan (Interim Deputy Chairman)
Sally Arnold
Lynden Bowen
Joan Cundill
Gordon Garrett
Heather Gould
Ross Mitchell
Gary North
Rachel Pearson
Peter Scott
Ann Sevier

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: Mark Adams – British Cycling
Helen Chalk – Senior Ranger, Hampshire County Council
Ann Braid, Planning Officer, NFNPA
Sarah Young, Land Use Consultants

1 Apologies, introductions and minutes of last meeting

1.1 Apologies were received from Alison Russell, Sam Dovey, Hallam Mills and Steve Rippon-Swaine.

2 Matters arising

2.1 Mark Holroyd reminded the forum that if they would like to attend the SDNPA visit to advise Vicki Gibbon as soon as possible.
The remainder of the report was taken as read.

3 Chairman's Report

3.1 As per report

4 Forum Officer's Report

4.1 Petronella Natrass highlighted that the Parish Lengthman's scheme had proved a beneficial way in which to work with local parish councils. There had been a few glitches in the online mapping system which were currently being ironed out and Natalie Hands would be available to help parishes with online reporting.
The remainder of the report was taken as read.

5 British Cycling Letter sent to Defra – Mark Adams

(This was an extra item added to the agenda at late notice by Mark Holroyd)

- 5.1 Mark Adams introduced himself as the South Regional Development Manager for British Cycling, he was asked to attend the meeting by Mark Holroyd concerning a letter which had recently been sent to Defra to encourage the government to re-examine countryside access legislation in England. The letter included a request to explore enabling access to cyclists and horse riders on all rights of way. In the letter it was explained why the government should change the designation of cycle paths and how this could be achieved to ensure responsible cycling in the countryside.
- 5.2 Mr Adams explained that British Cycling had recently carried out a number of surveys which revealed that the majority of people didn't know where they could cycle off-road and believed that they should be allowed to cycle on the majority of publically accessible paths in the countryside. It had also become apparent that people want to cycle in a non-traffic environment however information to find such routes were limited. British Cycling wished to promote sustainable and careful access to ensure cyclists were aware of other users and environmental access.
- 5.3 Members were supportive of encouraging the government to look at this issue and would like to be kept informed of progress. Mark Holroyd commented that a response to the letter had not been received from Defra to date and that it would be useful for the NFAF to be aware of this as further debate may be provoked in the future. Members requested more information on how Scotland had achieved this.
(A copy of the letter can be found on the website)

Action: Mark Holroyd to forward information on how Scotland had achieved the re-designation of cycling paths to Forum members.
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6 HCC Countryside Access Report – Sam Jones

- 6.1 Sam Jones introduced his report highlighting that following all the changes which had occurred in his team they were now up to a full complement of staff, with Helen Chalk recently joining as Senior Access Ranger replacing John Cartwright.
- 6.2 Seasonal vegetation clearance was now well under way on the rights of way network and should be completed by October with an estimated total cut length of 275km.
The remainder of the report was taken as read.

7 NFAF Structure and Remit

- 7.1 Petronella Natrass advised the Forum that the structure and remit should be reviewed periodically and would provide an ideal opportunity to look at the purpose of the Forum.
- 7.2 Following discussion the following points were made:
- A need to ensure the accessibility of meeting venues for people with disabilities
 - To be more pro-active and identify where improvements could be made
 - Forum members to email Ruth, Mark or Vicki with potential agenda items

- Forum members to discuss 'hot topics' with their contacts which could be discussed at meetings
- Routine review of the work plan at each Forum meeting
- More discussion rather than re-reading of reports
- More information on events which were taking place, to ensure information is then circulated to the various interest groups
- Closer working relations with quadrant meetings
- Raising the profile of NFAF – possibly in Park Life and other newsletters, and a more vibrant annual report

Action: Mark Holroyd to discuss with the NPA communications team how NFAF information could be added to Park Life.
 Petronella Natrass to assess how these changes could be made and added to the structure and remit document.

8 Planning Consultation – Latchmore Wetland Restoration Project

- 8.1 Sarah Young introduced her presentation highlighting the overall aim of the project was to return SSSI's in the catchment to a more favourable status which would in turn stabilise, restore and improve the Latchmore mire and river system. The main overview of proposed works would include tree felling, vegetation clearance, meander restoration and raising the bed levels of main channels. An indication of proposed works was given which included the stockpiles of hoggin and gravel in 9 locations and proposed access routes, these would be confirmed by an ecologist and would face an on-going programme of archaeological monitoring.
- 8.2 Ms Young advised that a full consultation had taken place with statutory and non-statutory bodies which would form part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) plus a number of further public consultations. The EIA can be found on the NFNPA planning portal website.
- 8.3 Following discussion members agreed that a letter should be compiled from the Forum to detail their concerns which included; that the gravel tracks would be useable, that fords would be accessible for those with disabilities and that car park closures would be detailed in advance.
(A copy of the presentation can be found on the website)

Action: Mark Holroyd to produce a letter detailing comments and circulate to forum members for agreement.

9 National Grid plans for underground cables at Hale

(Sarah Kelly gave her report at the end of the meeting but for minuting purposes, this item is minuted in context)

- 9.1 Sarah Kelly updated the Forum on the progress which had been made by National Grid regarding the proposal for the undergrounding of high voltage cabling at Hale Purlieu. To date there had been a variety of stakeholder meetings and a site visit which involved walking the line and looking at alternative routes. National Grid were currently awaiting consent from Natural England to carry out a bore hole test, which would involve drilling 8, 150mm diameter by 20 foot deep holes to assess soil and geology in the area, should consent be received the works would be carried out in October. More information on this project can be found at www.nationalgrid.com/vip

Sarah Kelly gave a brief presentation on the recent Landscape Enhancement Initiative project which is being run by National Grid, this initiative would enhance special landscapes within 3km of high voltage cabling and could include the planting of trees, hedgerow management and improvement of footpaths. All projects would have to go through the NPA, up to £200k per project would be available and it would be possible to have 3 projects running at any one time. *(A copy of the presentation can be found on the website)*

- 9.2 Mark Holroyd informed the meeting that the National Park Authority has commissioned some initial scoping work to assess rights of way in the vicinity of high voltage pylon routes to see whether there are any potential projects for the LEI funding in these areas. The Forum will be kept informed of progress.

10 Draft response to NFDC Local Plan Review consultation

- 10.1 Forum members were asked for their endorsement on the draft letter which had been compiled by a sub-group in accordance with the NFDC local plan review consultation, all members agreed, with two minor amendments.

Action: Petronella Natrass to update response and send to NFDC by 16 September.

11 Reports from other LAF's

11.1 a) Hampshire

The Forum were reminded that a member should to attend each meeting of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum as detailed in the Structure and Remit. Ross Mitchell agreed that she would attend the next meeting.
The remainder of the report was taken as read.

b) Wiltshire

As per paper

c) Dorset

As per report

12 Report from Coastal Access sub-group

- 12.1 As per paper

13 Regular Updates

13.1 a) *New Forest National Park Authority*

Mark Holroyd presented his report, he brought the Forum's attention to the recent request to assist Marchwood and Hythe Parish Councils with an off-road cycle link between the two settlements, this was currently being investigated by the Authority. The Authority was currently engaging with National Trust and the New Forest Equestrian Association regarding problems with equine access by local residents to Plaitford Common. It was agreed that Mark would circulate an email regarding those affected and the Forum would do all that it could to support this.

Action: Mark Holroyd to email the Forum about those affected by equine access at Plaitford Common

b) Forestry Commission

Gary North advised that the Forestry Commission were currently working with Natural England to gain consent for works at North Weirs, this would include the maintenance of tracks and the improvement to ditches to deter water from the main tracks. A recent inspection had been carried out at Longslade and the recommendation was the closure of two bridges, the FC were looking at various options to ensure these were kept open. The FC would be looking at parking issues at Boldrewood which had occurred over the summer along with vegetation and litter issues.

d) Small Grants Scheme

As per paper.

14 Any Other Business

- 14.1 Joan Cundill asked if the railway bridge at Lymington Shores would be accessible, Mark Holroyd responded that it should be.
- 14.2 Gordon Garrett advised that he had been corresponding with the National Trust regarding access to Plaitford Common, however he had not received any response to date, and he would keep in contact with Mark Holroyd with any future communications.
- 14.3 Ruth Croker reminded the Forum that Alastair Duncan was still acting Deputy Chairman and that the position is still available.

Date of next meeting:

5 December 9.30 – 1.00, Venue: Hythe & Dibden Parish Council Offices