

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: Monday 4 December 2017

Agenda Item 12: Regular updates

a) New Forest National Park Authority – report from Mark Holroyd

Mend our Mountains

Alongside all the National Parks in the UK, we are participating in the British Mountaineering Council's Mend our Mountains campaign to raise £1million for footpath repairs in all our National Parks. We have proposed the Lepe Loop as the most suitable project for fundraising, with the support of the Friends of Lepe and HCC's Countryside service. There is a good story around this circular route – with the arrival coastal access in the area, the redevelopment of Lepe Country Park and a strong and active volunteer group. The fundraising campaign has now launched, and you can view details and a fantastic video about the Lepe Loop on the Mend our Mountains website: <http://mendmountains.thebmc.co.uk/>

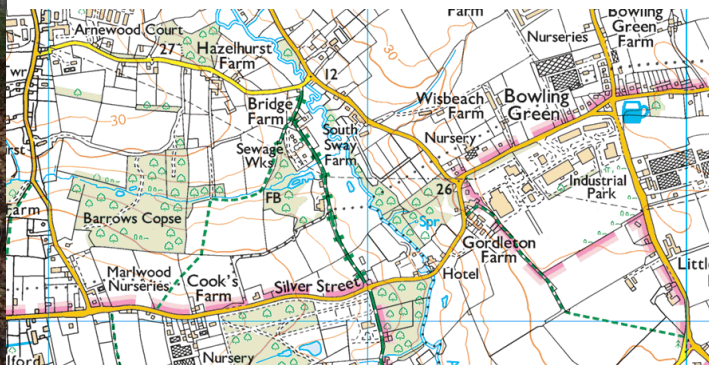
If the BMC are successful in raising significant funds we should receive £25,000+ which will enable new way marking and some surfacing improvements on the trail.

Recreation Management Strategy

Analysis has continued on the comments received. An update was provided to the RMS advisory group in mid-November and will be published shortly.

Hurdle BOAT 9 / 743

Through the small grants scheme, HCC and the NPA has supported local resident Anna Bruce to improve the surfacing of these routes near Silver Street. The works have recently been completed by Farwells and a launch event will take place on 11th December. The NPA has acted as the accountable body for the funding, of which a significant proportion of the costs were funded by local donations.



Transport

The New Forest Tour carried around 34,156 passenger journeys this summer. This is lower than last year's 39,318, but this was expected with a later start date. The average number of Tour passengers per day was actually 525 in 2017 (498 in 2016 and 438 in 2015), which suggests an improvement in the financial position and a more sustainable service going forward. Overall customer satisfaction on the Tour was maintained at a good level at 4.49/5 (4.52/5 in 2016). We are exploring the possibility of introducing a headset-based commentary system in 2018 to enhance the experience further.

The Beach Bus service between Hythe and Lymington carried 4,447 passengers this year (6,606 in 2016). We reduced the number of vehicles on this route from three to two, with an associated

reduction in frequency. When this is factored in, the reduction in patronage is broadly comparable to the reduction in mileage this year, which suggests the financial position hasn't changed here.

Mark Holroyd
November 2107

b) HCC Countryside Access (South Area team) – report from Sam Jones

1. England Coast Path:

HCC Access Team is continuing to work with Natural England (NE), advising upon physical suitability of the route proposals. The HCC sections outside of the National Park have been costed and details confirmed with NE. All relatively straightforward, with the exception around Barton cliff tops, where we have requested a robust and forward thinking approach from NE. Priority being to ensure access is protected in the future and with minimal disruption or onus on landowners and the 'Trail Partnership'.

We're now awaiting finalisation of the report whilst looking to take part in discussions with NE and the National Park around implementation and ongoing management.

2. New Forest Mitigation Partnership:

Works on the Lymington and Pennington circular walk are progressing (see Sept report for full details). Majority of the 560m of new surface has been laid and installation of the new bridge along with 5 new gates underway. Completion target set for January 2018.

The team are working with NFDC to identify the project program for 2018/19, with projects coming through in Butts Ash (Totton), Ringwood, Fordingbridge and the coastal areas.

3. Network management:

The seasonal vegetation program is now completed, which has seen the clearance of over 350km of rights of way. Work has started on our winter program of 'reclamation' cuts, which looks to focus on more heavily overgrown routes. Given the machinery and works required, it is conducted in the winter period to avoid impacting the bird nesting season.

As well as working on the above programs, the Ranger Team have been busy working on other network issues. Whilst 75 issues have been reported the team have worked to resolve 275. This positive resolved:received trend has been maintained since the team reached full strength approximately 6 months ago and is expected to continue to make a steady and positive improvement to the network.

Our thanks to all the hard work of those working with the team, with a particular special mention to Kelvin Winch at the Footpath society who has been particularly busy with the team over the last few months.

Sam Jones
November 2017

c) Forestry Commission – verbal report from Gary North

**d) Rural Communities Fund (formerly Small Grants Scheme) for access improvements –
Joan Cundill**

There has been no activity from the RCF - no further applications have been forwarded to us, so there is nothing to report from RCF.

Joan Cundill
November 2017