

## **NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM**

**Meeting:** *Monday 4 December 2017*

**Agenda item 8:** *Draft Planning Principles – Petronella Natrass*

This document has been updated following discussion at the September meeting. The Forum is asked to comment on this latest version and agree next steps.

### **NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM – draft Planning Principles (Version 3 Nov 2017)**

#### **The New Forest Access Forum**

The New Forest Access Forum (NFAF) is a statutory advisory body under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Under section 94 of this Act, the function of this Local Access Forum (LAF) is to advise a range of bodies, including local planning authorities, about

*‘... the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed.’*

NFAF's area includes all of New Forest National Park and that part of New Forest District that lies outside the Park boundary.

#### **Introduction**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that

- 1. Local planning policies protect and enhance public rights of way and access,**
- 2. Local authorities seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users of rights of way and other access, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks,**
- 3. Plans and decisions seek to promote sustainable transport, create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic, cyclists and pedestrians, and reduces congestion and greenhouse gas emissions,**
- 4. Development does not hinder the creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast, and**
- 5. Impacts upon biodiversity are minimised and net gains in biodiversity provided where possible.**

A properly-planned and maintained network of rights of way and other non-motorised access can offer significant benefits, both within any new development and in the wider area, including:

- Walking and cycling routes to schools, shops and other local amenities
- Car-free connections to bus stops and railway stations
- Connections to the wider area for people to explore the countryside on foot, cycle or horseback
- Opportunities for local dog-owners to exercise their pets directly from home, away from sensitive wildlife habitats and farm land
- Health, social and environmental benefits associated with active lifestyles and sustainable transport
- Provision of an extensive network of green corridors, which support biodiversity.

A network of paths that is well laid out and that fulfils some or all of these adds both to the amenity and to the overall quality of any new development. Within the wider area it may also help reduce road congestion and mitigate impacts on sensitive areas protected for wildlife.

It is therefore important to consider the network beyond any site or administrative boundary so that the impacts and opportunities of development are evaluated over an appropriate range or area.

## 1. The New Forest – a special place

The New Forest is a unique area, highly valued for its landscape, history, tranquillity, community and wildlife. It is a popular destination for day visitors and holidaymakers, and a highly significant, internationally designated area for nature conservation. The following considerations are therefore particularly important and relevant to this area:

- Good on-site and local greenspace provision outside the designated Special Protected Area and other designated areas.
- Resources for the future management/maintenance of these areas if they are to represent adequate, sustainable provision.
- Health benefits of active travel and recreational access close to dwellings.
- While adequate green space should be provided close to home as much as possible, it is inevitable that the New Forest Crown Lands will continue to draw local residents for recreation; it is therefore important that there are non-motorised routes connecting to this area from population centres wherever possible to reduce car journeys.

## 2. Actions for Planners and Developers

Key points for planners and developers	Essential	Desirable
<b>DO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide SANGS (suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces) for dog walking and recreation, close to where people are living.</li> <li>• Provide adequate resources for the future maintenance of SANGS and other provision.</li> <li>• Retain on-site rights of way within a suitable green buffer which conserves their character and biodiversity value.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide short, multi-user circular access within the development site.</li> <li>• On larger sites consider more detailed provision to attract and retain dog walkers, e.g. enclosed dog walking area, dog agility course (see Kennel Club/HCC guidance <a href="#">Planning for dog ownership in new developments</a>).</li> <li>• Information boards showing circular routes.</li> <li>• On larger sites consider providing educational facilities, to educate and inform about the wider area of the Forest.</li> <li>• Seek opportunities for improving the rights of way network, e.g. through diversion, dedication of new routes and upgrading of existing routes.</li> </ul>
<b>AVOID</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where it is necessary to divert a right of way to accommodate development, any alternative</li> </ul>	

	alignment should follow suitable desire lines and avoid the use of estate roads, with preference given to paths through landscaped or open spaces away from vehicular traffic.	
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### 3. Effects of development within the Region on the road network

New developments in the New Forest and in the wider visitor catchment area are forecast to result in an additional x million additional visits to the New Forest each year, resulting in

- Increased traffic, including short journeys for dogwalking, etc.
- Road safety issues for NMUs due to number/speed of vehicles, leading to:
  - Cycling on pavements where a shared user route is not designated.
  - Fragmentation of the RoW and countryside access network, as the quiet lanes that link different parts of that network become busy with fast-moving traffic.

Key points for planners and developers	Essential	Desirable
<b>DO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide multi-user routes for sustainable walking and cycling to schools, employment, local amenities and wider countryside.</li> <li>• Where there are nearby rights of way and other access to greenspace and countryside nearby, provide direct access to them from development sites.</li> <li>• Provide safe/controlled crossing points, bridges or underpasses for NMUs on major roads.</li> <li>• Provide pedestrian links to bus stops and walking/cycling links to railway stations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade existing Footpaths to Bridleways, to provide off-road routes for cyclists and equestrians as well as pedestrians.</li> <li>• Seek opportunities to develop circular routes by creating new links.</li> <li>• Extend existing 'spine' routes such as the Castleman Trail to Burley from Ringwood.</li> <li>• Create new on- and off-road cycle routes that will contribute to a connected cycle network within the New Forest area.</li> </ul>
<b>AVOID</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laying roads over rights of way, where possible.</li> </ul>	

### 4. Impacts of development on the Rights of Way network

- Increased recreational and utility pressure upon the RoW network from new residents and visitors
- Enclosure of RoW between new structures and/or boundary features, with potential loss of character, amenity value, and biodiversity
- Narrowing of paths

<b>Key points for planners and developers</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
<b>DO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve surfacing of rights of way close to settlements and in other areas of heavy use.</li> <li>• Conduct early consultation with right of way user groups on any major proposals which may affect rights of way.</li> <li>• Ensure that new and improved access is accessible to all (including baby buggies and mobility scooters).</li> <li>• Make sure that paths are wide enough to accommodate the users for whom they are designed.</li> <li>• Identify and allocate resources for future maintenance of paths.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve local groups in maintaining access areas and rights of way using grant funding (e.g. <a href="#">Rural Communities Fund</a>; <a href="#">Countryside Access</a>) to get equipment and surface/drainage improvements.</li> </ul>
<b>AVOID</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enclosing paths on two sides between substantial structures and boundary features.</li> </ul>	