

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: *Monday 12 March 2018*

Agenda item 10: *Brexit and the Defra consultation on “Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit”*

Background

Since the referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union, there has been growing concern among Local Access Forums and user group organisations about the future of farm subsidies and what provision may be made for supporting public access to the countryside when we leave the EU. In February 2017 the Mid and West Berkshire LAF (MWBLAF) published its [‘Proposals for public access in future farm subsidies post Brexit’](#) (copy attached). Later last year a joint statement was issued by the British Horse Society, The Ramblers, Open Spaces Society and The Byways and Bridleways Trust on ‘How Public Access can be improved post Brexit’ (this was circulated to members on 4 January).

In January this year the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs , Michael Gove, set out proposals for farm subsidies post-Brexit, stating that Farmers will receive payments for "public goods", such as access to the countryside and planting meadows (see [BBC News report dated 4 January 2018](#)).

1. Defra Consultation

On 27 February Defra published an open consultation on the future for food, farming and the environment which runs for 10 weeks until **8 May 2018**. Forum members are asked to decide how they wish to develop their response to this consultation.

2. The New Forest Access Forum perspective

The Forum may wish in addition to formalise its own recommendations in regard to public access within future farm subsidies, in the way that the MWBLAF has done. Following a recent visit to the New Forest by Defra representatives, the New Forest National Park Authority has identified the following key points and actions which the Forum might wish to support and promote:

- While landowners are not keen on the creation of new routes, there is a strong desire to maintain access at a suitable standard.
- More circular routes.
- Schemes that promote education.
- Routes and projects that link access forums and make the most of opportunities within the Green Halo, outside the Crown land and on periphery of National Park.
- Routes and access that benefit communities.
- Identify how people used the access options within existing/previous schemes to help steer how future schemes may be developed.

The Forum may wish to convene a ‘Brexit’ sub-group to deal with both of these matters.

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