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Replies via Petronella Natrass
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Reference NFAF/Hatchet Pond 2018-03

DRAFT

Dear Ms Lewin,

Consultation on the future of Hatchet Pond

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation, and particularly for extending the deadline to enable the New Forest Access Forum (NFAF) to agree their response at their quarterly meeting on 12 March. As you may know, NFAF is the statutory Local Access Forum for the New Forest National Park plus the New Forest District Council area, as provided for under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Its membership is made up of individuals with a wide range of interests and expertise, including land owners/managers, conservationists, representatives of user groups and people with disabilities. The role of the Forum is to provide balanced advice that reflects the combined view of its members. Both Natural England and the Forestry Commission are among those organisations required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this Forum in carrying out its functions.

1. Current use of the pond

Hatchet Pond is undoubtedly one of the prettiest places in the New Forest, well-used and popular with a wide range of visitors. It is also one of the best sites for people with severely limited mobility who are about to enjoy the view of the pond from their cars. Much of the pond's appeal stems from the diversity of plant and animal species that it supports, and this Forum agrees that action must be taken to address any deterioration in the water quality and habitat if this special place is to be equally enjoyed and appreciated by future generations.

2. Causes of deterioration

It seems however that at present the causes of the deterioration in water quality are not fully understood. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency,

- a) In order to ensure that whatever measures are adopted to reverse the deterioration are appropriate, proportionate and effective;
- b) Any change in management and use will require support and compliance from visiting members of the public, which will be much more readily achieved if visitors understand and accept the reasons why they are being asked change their behaviours and/or patterns of use.

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3. Proposals for management

The background information for this consultation identifies a number of activities in and around the pond that may be contributing to the increased nutrient levels, from people and livestock wading into the water to fishermen's use of ground bait or children feeding the waterfowl. If some or all of these are found to be contributing to the pond's deterioration, then presumably certain activities may need to be either limited or proscribed. Any such measures must however be based on a clear understanding of the current patterns and extent of those activities and the degree to which they (rather than other factors) are affecting the pond.

In any change to management and access to the pond, the view of this Forum is that:

- If access to and around the pond is to be limited and/or refocused, thought should be given to the seasonality and timescales for any restrictions.
- If any activities are to be proscribed, alternative provision should be made elsewhere, wherever possible.
- The needs of those with limited mobility must be considered, particularly in regard to car parking and other facilities.
- Any change in management of or access to the pond should be supported by a campaign of public information and education, through on-site signage and any other appropriate means.

We ask that you continue to keep us informed of any further developments in regard to Hatchet Pond. In the meantime if there is anything within this response that you would like to discuss further with the Forum, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Croker

Ruth Croker
Chair, New Forest Access Forum