

Forestry Commission Access Forum Update June 2018

HLS

Concrete removal at Stoney Cross

These two sections of roadside concrete in the north of the New Forest is being removed to restore precious grazing for the free roaming animals, supporting the Forest's ancient Commoning community.

Before any work was scheduled these concrete laybys were independently assessed by archaeological consultants. This was part of a larger report looking at the relative significance of the range of features associated with the Second World War airfield at Stoney Cross.

These sections of concrete were not deemed to be significant as they are a fragmented and damaged part of the boundary road, partially covered by modern tarmac. They were therefore chosen as the most appropriate section of concrete to remove in order to increase the grazing available for animals.

In total, some 38,600 square metres of concrete laid during the Second World War survives at Stoney Cross today. The sections of concrete being removed are fragmented remains of larger features and in total account for only 2,000 square metres.

We are committed to preserving significant, intact heritage remains throughout the New Forest. Since 2010, we have recorded more than 3,000 heritage features throughout the National Park in order to preserve them.

Concrete removal is part of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, a landscape enhancement partnership between the Forestry Commission, The Verderers of the New Forest and the New Forest National Park Authority.

Some photos attached

Car Parks

We have been having a lot of issues with our car park maintenance during the last few weeks. The cold, wet spring caused us a prolonged period of deterioration closing down car parks for essential maintenance works recently. We have had barriers broken, locks cut off, signage stolen and this has caused us not only a lot of difficulties but additional expense. Car parks that have had their surface maintained need a period of rest to allow the gravel to harden off. This is being disregarded more frequently now, despite there always being nearby alternative parking. We have just issued the follow up press release to the one we did last year to explain why we close car parks and how we inform about this.

Forest Diary: *Creatures of habit*

By Gary North, Recreation Manager in the New Forest

Many of us have our favourite spot we like to always visit in the New Forest, we park in the same car park each time – we are creatures of habit. I'm the same, I leave the house for work at the same time, eat the same things most weeks, go to bed at a regular time, etc.

I bet you could think of six things that you regularly do every week... now think of completely changing them - frightening isn't it?

I recently had to change my usual route to work, due to planned roadworks and found that it really affected my routine, but change doesn't have to be negative, after all my commute to work takes me through a lovely area, and luckily for me the diversion was an even more scenic journey to work.

So why do we hate change? I guess as humans we are habitual in all of our doings, some good and some bad, regardless we often still keep the same habits.

As Recreation Manager in the Forest, my team are involved in keeping Forestry Commission car parks looking good and safe for all users. I appreciate that regular visitors like to park in their usual parking spot in the same car park that they always use, however, we have to carry out essential car park repairs and this means closing some car parks temporarily.

With hundreds of thousands of vehicles using our car parks they are subjected to erosion and the surface deteriorates at an alarming rate. Add to that bad weather earlier this year, and you begin to understand why so many potholes quickly develop.

Regular and ongoing maintenance is a key part of our work and we aim to keep the forest in fine fettle for residents and visitors. The problem arises due to the nature of the materials that are used to maintain the car parks and entrance tracks. We cannot use industrial materials, such as asphalt or concrete, due to the special nature of the Forest we must use naturally sourced hoggin gravel. The New Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is a stronghold for many rare and endangered species, so as responsible land managers we respect the Forest's fragile ecosystem and don't introduce non-natural materials.

The hoggin is made up of clay, ungraded sands and gravels, that are sourced locally from areas that have the same geological formations and once it's been laid and allowed to harden it functions very effectively. The new surface typically needs about two weeks to compress and harden, before vehicles can drive over the surface. Following heavy rainfall, when the underlying soil gets very wet the process can take longer and unfortunately that means we have to increase the length of time that the car park is closed.

Essential car park repairs have been recently completed in Longdown, Godshill Cricket, Godshill, Ashley Walk, Turfhill, Cadman's Pool, Puttle's Bridge, Wilverley Plain, Longslade Bottom and Burley. More car parks are scheduled for maintenance works during the coming weeks, Beaulieu Heath, Brownhills, Dibden Inclosure, Eyeworth Pond, Horseshoe Bottom and Setley Pond.

It's vitally important that people observe safety signage and do not enter work sites where machines are working. These short-term closures are needed in order to make improvements and we hope that our regular visitors will understand the need for the temporary closure of their usual parking spot.

While the car parks are being repaired - it's a good opportunity to explore another part of the forest that you may not often visit. There are plenty of alternative places to park in the beautiful surroundings of the New Forest, so there's no need to focus on the negatives of this change.

I strongly believe that visiting a different woodland can be a positive experience, and with over 130 Forestry Commission car parks in the New Forest there are plenty of locations to enjoy.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that change is often short-term and in a few weeks the car park maintenance will be completed and everyone can get back to their familiar routine.

Do visit our website to find out more about planned car park closures and take a look at a map of all our car parks.

Visit: www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest-closures

Balmer Lawn

I have been working with NFDC, HCC and Brockenhurst PC to look at the increased pressure on this site when the weather is good. We have agreed a way forward for the short term until the RMS review works its way through, which may result in longer term solutions. But HCC will replace the missing wooden bollards set in the pavement and the yellow lining will be redone and joined up in the section it is missing. NFDC will also be enforcing this area more frequently and the residents have agreed to also help with putting out the supplied traffic cones as an added visual deterrent to verge side parking. Of course, FC on-the-ground staff, also see this as a priority site for engagement.



Track repairs

We have undertaken repairs to two well used recreational routes that have suffered from the poor Winter/Spring conditions. The track from Meerut Road to Ober corner in Brockenhurst has had new material laid so it is now passable and the track that leads from Tilery Road to the B3055 that is used by the riding stables at Warren Farm, has also been upgraded as the constant use of the horses during the winter had deteriorated this track significantly. We are working with the riding stables to reach a longer term agreement with this.