

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum
Meeting Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall
3 September 2018

Present

Members: Ruth Croker (Chairman)
Ann Sevier (Deputy Chairman)
Paul Brockman
Mark Cowling
Gordon Garrett
Heather Gould
Gary North
Ross Mitchell
Leo Randall
Henry Mellor (from item 10)

Officers: Petronella Natrass (Hampshire County Council)
Nigel Matthews (New Forest National Park Authority)
Adam Vasey (New Forest National Park Authority)
Vicki Gibbon (New Forest National Park Authority)

In attendance: Dawn Rayment (New Forest National Park Authority)
Esther Smeardon (Hampshire County Council)
Ria Loveridge (Hampshire County Council)

1 Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Fran Carpenter, Alastair Duncan, Jacqui England, Hallam Mills, Rachel Pearson and Alison Perry.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Adam Vasey, Access Ranger at the New Forest National Park Authority to the Forum. Adam will be the Authority's representative for the Forum replacing Mark Holroyd.

2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

3 Chairman's Report

- 3.1 The Chairman ran through her report highlighting the National Grid Visual Impact Provision project which had been in the press recently. A significant number of consultations had taken place with the public attending in their hundreds. Opposition to the scheme is more concerned with the short term disruption than the long term outcome. Nigel Matthews advised the Forum that planning consent would be required for the scheme to go ahead and that an application had yet to be received by the Authority.
- 3.2 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

4 Forum Officer's Report

4.1 As per report.

5 New Forest Recreation Management Strategy – Nigel Matthews, NFNPA

5.1 Nigel Matthews informed the Forum that the RMS consultation was now complete with 1073 responses received, 39 of which were from organisations. The overall support for the actions was very strong, 75% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the draft proposed actions. The free text comments will now be analysed. Clear plans will be developed on how the work would be delivered and the Access Forum can play a significant role going forward.

6 Potential areas of work 2018-19 / meeting dates 2019

6.1 The areas of work for 2018-19 were discussed as per report. Paul Brockman advised that he would like to develop a 'New Forest' course which would give students a basic understanding of the Forest and motivate and inspire the next generation. Paul will liaise with the education team at the NPA.

6.2 It was agreed that route signage would be a high priority for the Forum and Adam Vasey explained that this would not be confined to the coastal path and would also be looking at other paths including the Lepe Loop. He advised that a potential sub-group could be set up in the future to look into this further.

6.3 Gary North advised the forum that the Forestry Commission had recently recruited a Permissions Administrator, Linda Devon and they would now be reviewing the permissions system.

6.4 It was asked if the dates for future neighbouring LAF's could be listed in order for members to attend. The potential areas of work were agreed by forum members.

Action: Petronella Natrass to check the dates for neighbouring LAF meetings and to advise forum members.

7 Forum Membership

7.1 Nigel Matthews advised that following a recruitment process in the summer three new members are being appointed: Henry Mellor who would represent disability, Jane Horton who would represent equestrians and Nick Tomalin who would represent nature conservation and land owners.

8 Rural Communities Fund

8.1 Petronella Natrass presented her report on the year to 31 March 2018, emphasising that it had been a year of transition with the small grants scheme closing in May 2017 and schemes subsequently being funded via the Rural Communities Fund. There had been a drop in applications this year which could have been due to the turnover of Community Engagement Rangers. However, since the introduction of Community Engagement Rangers there had been an increase in the quality of applications and percentage of approval rates which

demonstrates the benefits of this role to the fund. Petronella advised that Ria Loveridge would now be the Community Engagement Ranger for the south / south west.

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation can be found on the website.

9 Historic Routes

- 9.1 Adam Vasey gave an update about the Historic Routes and Past Pathways Project. The project is going well, with twenty potential routes being highlighted. These routes will be checked by volunteers for their suitability and eventually whittled down to five. Parish involvement is a critical part of the project and AV has been visiting the quadrant meetings to brief the various parish councils and enlist their support. Routes will only be selected if approved by the parish council.

10 Regular Updates

- 10.1 a) NFNPA – Nigel Matthews
As per report.

- c) Forestry Commission – Gary North
Gary North updated the forum on recent Forestry Commission work. He advised that it had been a busy few months; with the New Forest Show, much of the work they had completed had been reactive. Due to the very dry summer there had been an increase in fire risk, and signage detailing this was erected across the forest over the summer months. 25 deliberate fires were started on the fringe of the Waterside and the team had been attending local schools to educate children on the dangers of this.

- e) England Coast Path
As per report

11 Reports from other LAF's

- 11.1 a) *Hampshire*
As per report

12 Implementing the Green Way New Forest Habitat Mitigation Strategy

- 12.1 The Green Way project is NFDC's work to ensure new housing development does not impact negatively on the New Forest SPA. Developer contributions fund improvements to local green spaces (SANGS), improvements to routes (implemented by HCC) and engagement with people (through the NPA).

- 12.2 Esther Smeardon, Hampshire County Council, gave a PowerPoint presentation summarising works which had been completed on delivering improvements to rights of way and other routes, including provision for those with disabilities. Some further projects included Ballard Lake Park and Walkford Walks in new Milton, and Buttsash Woodland Walk in Hythe & Dibden.

A copy of the presentation can be found on the website.

12.3 Dawn Rayment introduced herself to the Forum as the People and Wildlife Ranger for the National Park Authority. Much of her engagement work is to help mitigate the potential impacts in the forest by dog walkers. This is achieved by raising people's understanding and awareness and by offering positive solutions to help dog owners avoid impacts. Dawn attends puppy classes to help develop good practice and had recently set up 'Bark Ranger' classes – a skills-based class to enable owners to keep effective control of their pets.

13 Site Visit

13.1 Esther Smeardon and Ria Loveridge conducted a site visit to look at the new Green Way project in Lymington.

Date of next meeting:

3 December 2018, 9.30 – 1.00, Venue: Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall