

**Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting**  
**Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall**  
**2 December 2019**

**Present**

Members: Ruth Croker (Chairman)  
Ann Sevier (Deputy Chairman)  
Paul Brockman  
Fran Carpenter (Local Authority Rep – HCC)  
Alastair Duncan  
Jacqueline England  
Gordon Garrett  
Heather Gould  
Jane Horton  
Richard Manley  
Henry Mellor  
Rosemary Mitchell (from agenda item 6)  
Alison Perry (Hampshire County Council)  
Leo Randall  
Peter Scott  
Julian Sheppard  
Richard Shirley

Officers: Adam Vasey (New Forest National Park Authority)  
Denise Allen (New Forest National Park Authority)

In attendance:

Mark Earp (Isle of Wight LAF)  
Cllr Edward Heron (HCC)  
Nigel Matthews (New Forest National Park Authority)  
Jonathan Woods (Hampshire County Council)

**1 Apologies & Welcome**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mark Cowling and Gary North.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Denise Allen, Member Services Administrator at the NFNPA. Denise will undertake Secretariat duties for the Forum.

**2 Round Table introductions**

- 2.1 The Chairman welcomed three new members to the Forum: Richard Manley representing Farming; Julian Sheppard representing Landowning and Conservation; and Richard Shirley representing Estate Management. Round table introductions followed.

**3 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

- 3.1 The minutes from the last meeting were approved as an accurate record.

## **4 Chairman's Report**

- 4.1 The Chairman introduced her report highlighting the International Dark Sky Reserve award to the Cranborne Chase AONB which will attract lottery funding to several Avon Valley parishes. Members were also advised that the AONB has moved offices to Rushmore Farm at Tinkley Bottom.
- 4.2 The Chairman drew Forum members' attention to a Fordingbridge project focusing on walking for those with disability which is currently seeking to recruit walk leaders and support volunteers.
- 4.3 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

## **5 Forum Officer's Report**

- 5.1 Adam Vasey ran through his report pointing out the link to the recently published 'Landscapes Report' by Julian Glover. Mr Vasey also highlighted plans to follow on from the Open Sight Hampshire visits and report with training sessions for B&Bs to raise awareness of visitors with impaired vision and to address potential website accessibility issues. He reported that future funding for next year has potentially been secured.
- 5.2 Discussion ensued on suitable ways to actively promote the improved 'Lepe Loop' both on-site and through social media.
- 5.3 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

## **6 Additional Reports**

- 6.1 Alison Perry introduced the HCC Countryside Access Report and invited suggestions of volunteer groups for the Community Engagement Ranger to contact. The 'Stiles to Gates' initiative was discussed, particularly the complex responsibilities involved for volunteers. Mr Vasey thanked Ms Perry for providing the quarterly reports and emphasized how useful and informative they are to the Forum.
- 6.2 The remainder of the Hampshire County Council report was taken as read.
- 6.3 The Forestry England report was taken as read.
- 6.4 Jonathan Woods reported that the Hampshire CAF Equestrian Strategy had been launched at Calshott and was now nationally accredited. The CAF has received an award for this work, and both the national media and other LAFs are showing interest. The CAF is looking at how relevant it is and how closely it engages with other legitimate bodies in an advisory capacity. It is also actively exploring engagement on accessibility for health and wellbeing along with social prescribing.

Action: Adam Vasey to explore the possibility of a visit by Southern Health to speak on health and wellbeing, and on social prescribing

Members felt that it would be very beneficial if the HCAF was regularly represented at NFLAF meetings.

## 6.5 **The Isle of Wight Access Forum – Mark Earp (Chair)**

Mark Earp presented an overview of the broad range of work engaged in by the IoW Access Forum including: the possible creation of 'no go' areas for certain groups, the problems and risks posed by electronic motored transport such as Segways and e-scooters on the island, winter gritting, obstacles to the Coastal Path, the Island Line train service, the RADAR key scheme for disabled toilets and gates, and the SAR (search and rescue) team. Mr Earp advised that there is a suggestion that the Isle of Wight apply to be included as an extension to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

## 7 **Any Other Business**

- 7.1 Henry Mellor raised the issue of access to suitable scale paper maps of the New Forest. The Forum recognised that up-to-date digital maps are downloadable and printable from the HCC website. The paper-based Lymington Keyhaven Nature Reserve map was highlighted as a particularly popular format.

Action: Jacqueline England to approach Go New Forest re potential sponsorship of printed maps.

- 7.2 Concern was raised as to the fencing of a parcel of designated access land in Whiteparish, Wiltshire. Only one point of access to the land has been left open.

Action: Adam Vasey to check the legality under CROW and report back to the Forum.

## 8 **The Future Direction and Scope of the HCC Countryside Service – Cllr Edward Heron (HCC)**

- 8.1 Councillor Edward Heron introduced himself as the representative for the Lyndhurst and Fordingbridge Division with responsibility for Countryside and Rights of Way. He emphasized the necessity of balancing increased access to the National Park (all areas of which are sensitive) against the realities of budgetary constraints which are putting funding for services such as parish lengthsmen under threat. Whilst recognising that volunteer and restoration work can offset, to some extent, the inevitable toll on nature which enjoyment of the Forest by visitors takes, Cllr Heron advocated that we should not be too hesitant to clearly state the rules of engagement to visitors given that their right of access to the Forest is built on the expectation of a certain level of understanding and behaviour on their part.
- 8.2 The Chairman referenced the apparent current appetite amongst young people for conservation and environmental causes, raising this as a potential opportunity to harness the energy and enthusiasm of this traditionally hard to engage audience.
- 8.2 The potential negative impact of parking fees at Lepe was raised. Jonathan Woods reported that the 'honesty rate' had increased from 68 to 98% following introduction of the number plate recognition system.

## 9 **The Recreation Management Strategy, an overview and update – Nigel Matthews (NFNPA)**

- 9.1 Nigel Matthews presented an update on the New Forest Recreation Management strategy drawing comparisons with the findings of the Glover Report and pointing to the newly agreed approach being supported by multiple organisations. The full 22 actions arising out of the strategy are on the 'Future Forest' website.

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

- 9.2 Mr Matthews also drew members' attention to the 'Special by Design' project looking at a more co-ordinated approach to signage across the Forest, multi-agency educational campaigns working across the Forest, joint working with Forestry England on enforcement policy and staff training, training for social prescribing link workers, a co-ordinated strategic approach to developer contributions, and lastly, the new Partnership Plan coming shortly.

## **10 Training; The History of Local Access Forums and their relevance in the New Forest – Adam Vasey (NFNPA)**

- 10.1 Adam Vasey delivered a presentation detailing the history, role and relevance of local access forums. He drew particular attention to the outputs of the LAF such as meetings and discussions, formal advice, the annual report, the website, the dissemination of information on a wide range of subjects, and its role as a sounding board.

A copy of the full presentation can be found on the Access Forum website.

## **11 Discussion – Adam Vasey (NFNPA)**

- 11.1 Adam Vasey confirmed meeting dates for 2020 as follows:

9 March 2020, 9.30am – 1.00pm at the Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall

8 June 2020, Timing and Forest venue to be confirmed

7 September 2020, Timing and Forest venue to be confirmed

7 December 2020, 9.30am – 1.00pm at the Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall

- 11.2 Members discussed areas of potential focus for the 2020 work plan including; health and wellbeing, equestrian issues, links with transport, tick awareness, proactive community engagement, dogs, climate change, and car parks.

Action: Adam Vasey to run a workshop for members to discuss the work program further.

- 11.3 Concern was raised as to the increased number of organisations requesting permission to run larger scale events on the Forest.

Action: Adam Vasey to ask Forestry England to come and talk to the Forum regarding their policy on the grant of formal permissions.

- 11.4 Forum members requested the opportunity to provide input on any review of car parks in the New Forest.

Action: Adam Vasey to keep the Forum advised on appropriate timings for consultation.

**Date of next meeting:**

9 March 2020, 9.30am – 1.00pm, Venue: Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall

The meeting closed at 13.10