

Forestry Commission Access Forum Update 11th March 2019

Bridges Longslade

We were hoping to get the bridges at Longslade replaced this year. We engaged a consultant to manage this for us as a project, to obtain planning consent, design the bridge structures, manage the site decommission of the old and install of the new etc. However, the cost of this far exceeded the budget available.

Our new internal civil engineer started with us in January. We have now handed this project over to them with the view of looking at a similar bridge structure as there is currently, as technologies have moved on since we had those fabricated. We are optimistic we can achieve this in the next financial year after April 2019.

The cycle route along the old railway section remains open, with minor diversions in place for all users to follow, whilst the bridges are out of action. We are all fortunate to be in this position, with the only disruption being a slight diversion off and back onto the official network.

The bridges have been closed as a precautionary measure based on advice following structural surveys. It's a damage limitation measure so as not to exacerbate the weakening structure of the bridge deck and therefore safeguard the current open access under them.

Broomy Plain

The works to install formal passing places along this section of road started in early January undertaken by contractors working to HCC. The Forestry Commission will be installing Dragon's Teeth throughout March in-between the passing places to protect the verges and ensure appropriate use of the passing places. The road closure will remain in place until all the works have been completed. This is a two phase project and once phase one is complete, the road closure will move to the other side of the road junction to install the final 3 passing places.

Car park Maintenance

The following car parks are currently closed and being maintained by our civil engineers. Andrews Mare, Deerleap, Beaulieu Heath, Bramble Hill Walk, Busketts Lawn, Dibden, Fritham, Longslade Bottom, Moonhills and Roundhill. To militate against any disruption, we have opened nearby winter closure car parks and directed people appropriately to alternative parking.

Ground Nesting Birds

Over the coming weeks the ground nesting bird season will begin, a time when several rare species of birds including the Nightjar, Curlew, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler, start their breeding cycle. Unlike most birds they choose the rather risky tactic of building their nests on the ground rather than in the trees making them extremely vulnerable. If disturbed, they may flee their nests and expose their eggs and chicks to predators.

The New Forest is a favourite spot to nest for these birds, one of the reasons that much of the Forest is a Special Protection Area for birds. This is why each year we close a small number of car parks in areas that provide important habitats for these birds. The car parks affected are Crockford, Crockford Clump, Hinchleslea Moor and Clay Hill in Burley.

This year we have also added Yew Tree Heath Car Park following a detailed survey of the area that revealed it to be one of the best sites for breeding waders. The numbers of these birds are in decline so it is particularly important to find ways to improve their breeding success rate.

Closing the car park here will help us to create a quiet zone around this very sensitive site offering the birds greater protection which we hope will make it more likely that they will be able to breed successfully. We have also taken the opportunity to reduce informal verge side parking in this area too. The laybys you refer to are not laybys but official operational access points that are needed for land management and fire control and should not be used for parking as this will restrict the access when needed.

We will continue to monitor and assess the birds at this site to help us understand how best to help halt the decline of these species.

Verwood SANG

My team have been working in Dorset in February installing a new recreational facility with infrastructure for a SANG in Ringwood Forest as part of a housing development in Verwood. This has included the installation of 2 waymarked circular trails and a lot of drainage works, benches, upgraded footpaths and signage. This will be completed by the end of March.



Trails

North Glade trail ●●●
Easy 1.2km
This trail has a fairly smooth surface with some softer ground in places, with a slight gradient.

Eblake trail ●●●●
Easy 1.3km
A circular route that includes a gentle gradient and takes you along a gravel track, with some softer ground in places.

Look out for...

Smooth Snake
Smooth snakes usually emerge from hibernation in April-early May. They are non-venomous and feed mainly on common lizards, slow-worms and small mammals. The smooth snake is a secretive animal and when it basks in the sun it does so entwined amongst the stems of heather plants, where it is superbly camouflaged.

Roe Deer
These small, shy deer can be identified by their pale rump, with no visible tail, black nose and white chin. Their summer coat is dark, reddish brown to sandy yellow and in winter it turns brown-grey. Males (bucks) develop simple spiky antlers, typically with three points (tines).

Silver-studded Blue Butterfly
This small, rare butterfly is found mainly in heathland where the silvery-blue wings of the males provide a beautiful sight in July to August as they fly low over the heather.

Be aware
Please keep dogs under control in the forest, especially during bird nesting seasons. Always keep to the tracks to reduce disturbance.