

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting
Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall
11 March 2019

Present

Members: Ruth Croker (Chairman)
Ann Sevier (Deputy Chairman)
Gordon Garrett
Heather Gould
Jane Horton
Hallam Mills
Ross Mitchell
Gary North
Peter Scott
Nick Tomalin
Henry Mellor

Officers: Adam Vasey (New Forest National Park Authority)
Vicki Gibbon (New Forest National Park Authority)

In attendance:
Aynsley Clinton (New Forest National Park Authority)

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Alastair Duncan, Paul Brockman, Mark Cowling, Fran Carpenter, Jacqui England, Rachel Pearson and Leo Randall.

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 updated the Forum on the recent meeting she had attended for the New Forest Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Strategy, she advised that a new forum sub group is to be formed, and the Access Forum would be consulted on matters when required.

4 Forum Officer's Report

4.1 Adam Vasey presented his report highlighting that the Highcliffe to Calshot section of the Coast Path was currently waiting for the Secretary of State to manage the representations before the route would be determined, and the Calshot to Gosport section was still being proposed.

4.2 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

5 Additional Reports

- 5.1 Ross Mitchell gave an update on the Hampshire LAF advising that the format was comparable to the New Forest LAF and that they were using similar Planning Guidance. Hampshire LAF were currently in the process of drafting guidance for equestrians which she had requested a copy of. All Forum members agreed this would be a useful guide for the New Forest.
- 5.2 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 A discussion took place regarding the Fawley Waterside development and the problems that could be encountered with access and traffic management. There was concern regarding the increased number of large vehicles on the A326 especially during demolition and construction. It was advised that once the application had been submitted the Forum would have the opportunity to comment and highlight these areas of concern.
- 6.3 Nick Tomalin advised the Forum that he had recently attended a meeting with regards to large scale events taking place in the forest and how to ensure consistency across all landowners. Another meeting had been scheduled and Nick would update the Forum as necessary.

7 Cycle Working Group and ‘Stop and Say Hi’ Campaign – Aynsley Clinton (NFNPA)

- 7.1 Aynsley Clinton introduced herself to the Forum as the Sustainable Visitor Experience Officer at the NPA. She advised that she works with local businesses and partner organisations to encourage people to ditch the car and to use public and alternative ‘greener’ modes of transport and recreation. Aynsley also explained that she attends the Cycle Working Group and that during their recent meetings, they have focused on identifying the missing links within the cycle network (both on and off road, to improve safety, connectivity and sustainable travel). The Group plans to feed its ideas into the wider Recreation Management Strategy process being overseen by the Recreation Management Strategy steering group, in the hope that some might be acceptable.
- 7.2 Ms Clinton informed the Forum about the ‘Be Nice, Say Hi’ campaign which had been launched in conjunction with Cycling UK and BHS. It is hoped that this scheme would encourage people to respect each other and act as a useful reminder to courteously share the space on gravel tracks and the RoW network. It was advised that with the Forestry Commission’s / HCC’s permission, the discreet signs would be added to waymarker posts in various locations around the forest. Forum members commented that this was a useful campaign, however they did feel that more education was necessary for both cyclists and equestrians and how they should approach each other.

8 Work to improve rights of way network – Adam Vasey

- 8.1 Adam Vasey gave a PowerPoint presentation on the rights of way network, what rights of way were and why there was a network. Adam went on to explain that the

NPA had a walking app which was used for guided walks along the various rights of way networks in the forest.

- 8.2 Adam explained that ease of use surveys had taken place and currently the New Forest had received the lowest score compared with the other National Parks, this was due to limited funding and the criteria which was used for the surveys. The BVPI surveys which had taken place in the forest used a different criterion compared with the other National Parks, Adam advised that he would therefore like volunteers to redo the surveys using the correct criteria to gain an accurate picture. The main areas that the New Forest tends to fail on is signposting, waymarking and overgrowth.
- 8.3 Adam advised the Forum that officers at the National Park were currently looking at ideas for new signage in the Forest and would value the Forums opinion on this.

A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

9 Accessibility Workshop – Adam Vasey / Henry Mellor

- 9.1 Adam and Henry reminded the forum that accessibility covered a wide range of people including mums with pushchairs, people in wheelchairs and people with unseen disabilities including mental health issues; they explained that the forest should be accessible to all. A workshop discussing accessibility then took place.

A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

10 Professional Dog Walkers Charter – Dawn Rayment (NFNPA)

- 10.1 Dawn Rayment explained that the New Forest Dog Walking code encouraged dog walkers and owners to abide by standards that respect other people, dogs, wildlife and the environment. Dawn went on to explain that the New Forest Dog Forum had become aware of a significant increase in commercial dog walkers and had agreed that a New Forest Professional Dog Walkers' Charter should be introduced.
- 10.2 Dawn advised that whilst drafting the charter it became apparent that professional dog walking wasn't regulated, and the only regulations were in respect of businesses that walk dogs as part of a day care or home boarding service or by landowners that license professional dog walkers on their land. The 'Dog Walkers Charter' would be a voluntary code, however it was believed that companies would see complying as a commercial advantage as they would be promoted as doing so and would also receive tailored information from the NPA regarding car park closures, ground nesting birds etc. Dawn informed the Forum that the draft charter would be discussed at the upcoming National Park Authority meeting.

Date of next meeting:

10 June 2019, 9.30am – 1.00pm, Venue: Waghorn Room, Calshot Activities Centre