

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting
Virtual Meeting using Microsoft Teams
7 December 2020

Present

Members: Ruth Croker (Chairman)
Paul Brockman
Fran Carpenter
Mark Cowling
Gordon Garrett
Heather Gould
Henry Mellor
Ross Mitchell
Gary North
Peter Scott
Ann Sevier
Richard Shirley
Richard Taylor (Local Authority Rep – NFNPA)

Officers: Vicki Gibbon (New Forest National Park Authority)
Alison Perry (Hampshire County Council)

In attendance: David Illsley (New Forest National Park)
Sam Jones (Forestry England)

1 Apologies & Welcome

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Alastair Duncan, Heather Gould, Jane Horton, Gordon Garret and Adam Vasey.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Richard Taylor to the Forum as new representative from the National Park Authority replacing Leo Randall.

2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.
- 2.2 At the last meeting Ruth Croker and Ann Sevier were confirmed as Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively for the forthcoming year.

3 Chairman's Report

- 3.1 The Chairman introduced her report advising that she had included a section on the Recreation Management Strategy and that now Richard Taylor was a member of the Forum would like to pass over to him for more information.
- 3.2 Richard Taylor advised that he was now the Chairman of the RMS Advisory group and went on to explain that since he had joined the group there was a focus on ensuring better communication between the advisory group and the steering group.

So that the advisory group were in a better position to feed information into the steering group and to receive feedback. The steering group met earlier this month and the minutes from this meeting would be available soon. The steering group were aware that there was a need to look at cycling and the coastal path. Richard asked the Forum to provide him or his fellow officers any questions that they wish to be addressed in the future.

- 3.3 The Chairman commented that as an Access Forum involvement would be required especially around any cycling issues. Richard advised that the next Cycle Working group meeting would be 21 December. He explained that there is currently a process on how to manage cycling in the forest which Forestry England were heavily involved in, a summary version of this would be available in January. Richard Taylor also reminded Forum members that there would be a round of Quadrant meetings in January and to let him or Debbie Copping know if there were any questions.

The remainder of the report was taken as read.

4 Forum Officer's Report

- 4.1 Due to Adam Vasey being unable to attend the meeting his report was taken as read.
- 4.2 Alison Perry gave a brief update on Historic routes advising that they have the routes established however were still waiting for the finger posts, which should be in place after Christmas. These would be positioned by volunteers; however, the community engagement officer was leaving after Christmas; they were currently recruiting and hope to get someone in place soon.

5 Additional Reports

- 5.1 No reports from Wiltshire or Dorset LAF's.

6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 Ross Mitchell brought members attention to the increase of human faeces on the forest, with one of the pressures clearly shown on the forest during lockdown was the lack of toilet facilities, this did improve slightly as toilets were opened however it still remains a real issue. The Chairman responded that over many years the Access Forum had raised the issue of a lack of facilities. Richard Taylor commented that this issue had also been raised during the Quadrant meetings and that Nigel Matthews was raising the issue with Forestry England. Contractors had been employed to clean particular problem areas. Sam Jones commented that toilets along with all other infrastructure would be looked at and the right platform would be required to work out what is required and where, a number of key issues had been flagged this summer with regards to toilets it was important they learned from this however must recognise that this summer was an exceptional period of time and dealt with a lot of unprecedented changes and pressures therefore the response needed to be proportional.

- 6.2 Peter Scott advised members that the Ramblers Association had recently been advised that British Rail wished to close public rights of way where they cross the railway line, he advised that he had seen the first one being Marsh Lane in Lymington where the footpath which runs along the woods and then crosses the railway line was closed. Alison Perry responded by saying that BR had consulted and she had been onsite to look at the options, their plan was to divert the path to continue down along the railway towards the road. A formal application had yet to be received but would be likely to come in in the next couple of months.
- 6.3 Fran Carpenter advised that the County Council had received notification that the bridge in Holsmley was scheduled in for June 2021 and to be finished by August.

7 Planning Update – David Illsley (NFNPA)

- 7.1 David Illsley gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Planning White paper and also the Fawley Waterside planning application, a copy of the presentation can be found on the website.

8 Recreation & Access Update from Forestry England – Sam Jones

- 8.1 Sam Jones introduced himself to the Forum as Head of Recreation and Public Affairs for Forestry England in the south of England and joined just over a year ago. He went on to introduce some of the key members of his team including Richard Burke the RMS programme manager, Nick Wardlaw who was now the District West Manager responsible for the strategic and operational work across the New Forest, Moors Valley and into Dorset. Zoe Cox who was now the District East Manager and Sammy Fraser the Community Manager and leading the recreation ranger team on the crown lands.
- 8.2 He then gave a general update on Covid19 and the impacts that it had on the forest. He explained that it had been a hugely challenging year not just in the forest but across the whole country in terms of managing the changes on public access and also the regulations and expectations in terms of supporting and lockdowns. There had been a huge increase in visitors and with that had brought the challenges on how they behave and the knowledge they had with regards to the forest and stock. It had been an unprecedented year with people coming to our greenspaces as they couldn't go anyway else.
- 8.3 Sam Jones then went on to brief the forum on the RMS with the key strategic objectives and a list of key actions which shows the alignment of partners and stake holders. Richard Burke would be taking many issues forward for Forestry England's side, from what the priorities were and the key stages to get these projects up and running on the ground. He also advised that a task group had been set up in FE with senior managers across all functions to inform on these priorities and the key actions were looked at with importance and feasibility. He also advised that they were setting up a business plan to help with their understanding of the pressures on the forest, FE's responsibilities and roles along with what to do to respond. Forum members noted the report.
- 8.4 Gary North discussed his report which had been submitted with the agenda. A question was raised with regards to bridges and the frustration that these had yet to be completed, Gary advised that due to the pandemic this had led to a number of

delays and work was hoped to be completed in the New Year. The remainder of the report was taken as read.

9 Questions from Members

9.1 There were no further questions.

The Video of this meeting is available using the following link -

Date of next meeting:

7 December 2021, 9.30am – 1.00pm, Venue: TBC

The meeting closed at 12:00pm