

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

**Present**

Members: Ruth Croker (Chairman)  
Mark Cowling  
Gordon Garrett  
Heather Gould  
Henry Mellor  
Gary North  
Leo Randall (Local Authority Rep – NFNPA)  
Peter Scott  
Richard Shirley

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

In attendance: Erika Dovey (New Forest National Park)

**1 Apologies & Welcome**

- 1.1 An introduction to Microsoft Teams etiquette was given by the Forum Officer.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Paul Brockman, Fran Carpenter, Alastair Duncan, Jane Horton, Richard Manley, and Ann Sevier.

**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. All actions from the last meeting had now been signed off with the exception of Jacqui England's update on 'Go New Forest' as she was unable to attend this meeting.

**3 Chairman's Report**

- 3.1 The Chairman ran through her report highlighting that she had recently attended an RMS Advisory group meeting via Microsoft Teams, where discussion took place on enforcement and Local Development Orders and the role and remit of the group, it was felt by some that the advisory group should have more influence on the Steering Group. The next RMS meeting would take place in early September.
- 3.2 Ruth Croker advised that she had also recently attended two meetings of the New Forest Freshwater Restoration Group, with one meeting devoted to evidence and monitoring. Considerable funding would be required to take these projects forward.

## **4 Forum Officer's Report**

- 4.1 Adam Vasey presented his report highlighting the progress that has been made on the England Coast Path, the current timescale for the Calshot to Gosport section would be early 2021 and Highcliffe to Calshot would be July / August 2021.
- 4.2 New signage designs had now been agreed and working with HCC would be erected shortly, new signage would also be erected along the Lepe Loop later this year.
- 4.2 Adam explained that a bid had been submitted to National Grid for landscape and access enhancements, if successful this project would begin in 2021/22 and run for three years.
- 4.3 The walking and cycling festival would be taking place with Covid secure guidelines and were currently in the process of contacting walk providers. More details on this would be provided on the NFNPA website shortly.
- 4.4 Finally Adam Vasey advised the Forum that the outline application for the Fawley Waterside proposal had been approved subject to conditions including a S106 agreement.

## **5 Additional Reports**

- 5.1 Alison Perry gave a brief update on behalf of HCC advising that across Hampshire it had been extremely busy with a 50% increase in people using the network. At the beginning of lockdown there had been many reports from landowners with people not sticking to designated pathways, picnicking and dogs roaming. More recently receiving reports of cycling on footpaths. There had also been an increase of reporting of issues, which is believed to be due to more people using the networks rather than new issues. Natural England have given the go ahead for Hampshire to recruit a new officer which would be advertised shortly.
- 5.2 Gary North gave a brief update on behalf of Forestry England, at the beginning of lockdown many FE staff were furloughed and car parks across the Forest were closed. With the huge influx of visitors when lockdown restrictions were eased, staff were then on the ground engaging with the public and dealing with incidents of anti-social behaviour. Forestry England had been working closely with the NFNPA, HCC the police and Hampshire Fire & Rescue to try and mitigate these issues on the Forest.
- 5.3 There were no reports from Wiltshire or Dorset Local Access Forum.

## **6 Any Other Business**

- 6.1 None

## **7 Post Lockdown Pressure: New Forest – Adam Vasey & Erika Dovey (NFNPA)**

- 7.1 Adam Vasey introduced his report commenting that the pressure on the forest had been unprecedented since lockdown had eased with people wanting access to nature. The NPA had been working closely with Forestry England to try and manage this, which had taken place in a number of ways including officers on the

ground, working with partner organisations and using social media. Adam explained that the New Forest code had now been streamlined to 9 actions which was now available on the NPA website. A campaign was also run to reduce the number of disposable BBQ's being sold in the forest which was received very well by local businesses. Recently the Ambassador scheme was launched which had given people the opportunity to get involved with the likes of litter picking, reporting problems in the forest including verge parking etc. he explained that there are numerous ways to get involved, more details of this can be found on the NPA website.

- 7.2 Erika Dovey introduced herself as an Authority Ranger who had worked for the National Park for 18 months along with being a New Forest Commoner for over 30 years. Erika advised the forum that it had been extremely busy recently and that the Ranger team had been working flat out since post lockdown. She explained that the team had been working closely with partner organisations including Forestry England and Hampshire Fire & Rescue. Erika highlighted some of the issues the team had been faced with including wildfires, BBQ's, gazebo's and the new issue of selfies with Donkey's. In one weekend over 120 issues were dealt with. Erika was please to announce that she would stay on as Ranger for the National Park over the winter season along with her colleague Jake Barnes.

## **8 Walking For Health – Christina Egginton**

- 8.1 Unfortunately Christina Egginton was unable to join the meeting, therefore Adam Vasey gave a brief update and said that he would ask Christina to attend a future meeting. He advised that Christina would be leading walks from 11 September, walking for health is a part of the Ramblers who do a fantastic job at getting people out walking and socialising and is funded by the NPA. It was suggested that the Access Forum could go out with them on a healthy walk to find out more and how the network is suitable for those with additional needs.

## **9 Questions from Members**

- 9.1 It was asked if someone could attend a future meeting to discuss the impact on recreation in the forest especially in light of the current situation. Adam Vasey agreed that he would look into this and take it forward.

**The Video of this meeting is available using the following link -**  
<https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/7f56af60-c0c9-40e4-a9f6-87feffd6b197>

### **Date of next meeting:**

7 December 2020, 9.30am – 1.00pm, Venue: TBC

The meeting closed at 10.45