

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: *Monday 9th March, 2020*

Agenda item 3: *Chair's Report*

Forum Officer's Report – *report from Ruth Croker, New Forest Access Forum Chair*

1. Footprint Ecology Visitor Survey Findings.

A meeting on 28th February was held to share results of the Forest visitor survey conducted by Footprint Ecology. The coast was not included.

The survey was thought necessary because of the large amount of house building proposed and the consequent likely increase in population. A 16.4% increase within 25km is predicted by 2036. Most are likely to use the New Forest to access the countryside and for recreation purposes. Access is predicted to increase by 11.4%.

The results will inform a mitigation strategy.

The survey included:

- telephone interviews conducted with 2000 people living within 25km.
- face to face interviews on site with 5236 people.
- vehicle counts in car parks. These were at 270 parking locations on 15 occasions. 17000 vehicles.

Findings include:

Most users of the area are locals. Only 22% were holiday makers.

Some popular car parks were over full. Even on Easter Sunday only 60% car spaces were full. Camper vans used more than 1 space.

The most frequent visitors were dog walkers. 2nd were walkers.

Most chose to conduct their activity close to their home. Even cyclists travelled only 13.7km.

There were a lot of visitors from the Waterside and from the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch area.

Asked where they would go if they could not visit the forest almost all named somewhere on the coast near to the forest.

The survey will inform further work.

2. Volunteer Fair.

I participated as did a number of other LAF members. Once again there was a record attendance.

There were a number of groups that provided assistance and activities for those with a disability. Among them: PEDALL New Forest Inclusive Cycling, a Dementia group, a mental wellbeing group, New Forest Equine Assisted Learning- the learners face a lot of challenges both mental and physical, Fortune College which provides among other things, riding therapy for those with disabilities.

Many of these have not been considered by us in our work on disability this year.

I spoke to a member of the group Joan Cundhill was involved with. The walks Joan helped create which are now on our website, together with some added by Adam, are liked. More would be appreciated.

Ruth Croker