

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting
6 December 2021

Present

Members: Ruth Croker (Chair)
Ann Sevier (Vice Chair)
Peter Armstrong
Bob Damper
Paul French
Pippa Hutton
Trudi Lloyd-Williams
Richard Shirley
Richard Taylor

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

1 Apologies & Welcome

1.1 Apologies were received from Paul Ames, Gary North, Richard Manley, Julian Sheppard, Henry Mellor and Sarah Hammett.

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 The Chair advised that the Forum were still waiting for confirmation as to who would replace Fran Carpenter for Hampshire County Council. Katie Porter had now resigned as youth representative.

3 Chair's Report

3.1 The Chair ran through her report highlighting a recent presentation which was given to the RMS Advisory group regarding proposed changes to the permissions system for events and activities on Crown Lands to assist the implementation of Habitat Regulations. The presentation had suggested that groups of 10 or more people would be required to apply for any activity taking part on Crown Lands. It was agreed further discussion on this matter would take place later in the meeting.

3.3 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

4 Forum Officer's Report

4.1 Adam Vasey updated the Forum on the path clearance crew volunteers who had now stopped their work for the season, this would restart in March 2022, many of the volunteers were now skilled using power tools and had very good experience at vegetation clearance. Further surveys of rights of way would continue in the new year which would produce a snapshot of how easy these were to use.

4.2 The Forum officer was pleased to announce that the Calshot to Gosport section of the coast path had now been determined, works would begin in March / April and

the entire section was scheduled to open at the beginning of August 2022. There was currently no time scale for the Highcliffe to Calshot section.

4.3 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

5 Additional Reports

5.1 There were no additional reports.

6 Public Representations

6.1 There were no public representations.

7 Upcoming National Park Access Projects – Adam Vasey (NFNPA)

7.1 Adam Vasey began his presentation explaining that 2022 would be a busy time for access in the Forest. The Calshot to Gosport stretch of the Coast Path was moving forward but care was required due to the number of SSSI's, the path would also require alternative routes due to high tide and a path rollback would be necessary should sea levels increase and footpaths were lost. A number of maps were shown to illustrate this.

7.2 Five new historic routes were now in place some of which would be upgraded with funding which had been awarded. Whilst walking each route a soundbite could be listened to via the walking app.

7.3 Adam went on to highlight the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), this was National Grid's initiative to provide up to £24 million over six years for local visual improvement projects. The NPA was successful in its most recent LEI bid which seeks to improve the landscape and access infrastructure on five promoted routes which are adversely affected the route of the high voltage power lines.

7.4 Mr Vasey brought Forum members attention to the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme which opened in July. He explained that the programme would help to fund projects, which support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and cultural heritage and support nature friendly, sustainable farm businesses. The Farming in Protected Landscape programme had been developed by Defra with the support of AONB and National Park staff across England, the programme would run until the end of March 2024.

A copy of the presentation can be found on the website.

7.5 Trudi Lloyd-Williams brought members attention to 'Access to Water' she advised that currently she was looking at pollution and ways to improve water quality in the Forest. It was suggested that this could be discussed in further detail at a future meeting and included in the Forums future action plan.

8 Discussion of Meetings & Future Focus – Adam Vasey (NFNPA)

8.1 Adam Vasey proposed a new scheme for Forum meetings in the future, rather than continuing with 4 formal meetings per year it was suggested that the Forum reduce to two formal meetings per year with 2/3 site visits per year.

- 8.2 Following discussion, Forum members resolved to continue to hold 4 meetings per year to include site visits and online 'teams' meetings where necessary.

A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

9 Discussion on Accessibility

- 9.1 Following the Chair's report regarding new permission requirements on Crown Land, Forum members agreed that a letter would be written to the Chair of the RMS Advisory and Steering group, along with Steve Avery (NFNPA) to express concerns and appeal for further clarity on these issues.

Action: Ruth Croker to draft a letter to the Chair's of RMS Advisory and Steering group for further information on permissions required on Crown Lands.

- 9.2 Ruth Croker advised the Forum that Henry Mellor had requested a letter be sent to all Parish Council's asking them to identify potential routes for improvement. Following discussion it was agreed that potentially there could be considerable costs involved in this work and currently not enough resources to take this forward. It was suggested that Henry contact those organisations who organise health walks to establish where these potential routes were. The RMS groups were currently looking at accessible routes and it was mentioned that should routes be inaccessible due to overgrown hedgerows this was easy to report via the HCC website.

- 9.3 Bob Damper requested that the Forum look at improvements on the cycle network. Richard Burke (FE) was currently looking at this and it was agreed that he should give an update to the Forum at a future meeting.

Action: Adam Vasey to approach Richard Burke to give a verbal / written update on the cycle network at a future meeting.

- 9.4 Finally it was agreed to make the following a priority's for the forum in 2022
- Access to Water
 - Habitat Regulation Mitigation Restrictions
 - Education

10 Any other business

- 10.1 No further business.

Date of next meeting:

14 March 2022, 9.30am – 1.00pm, Venue: TBC

The meeting closed at 12:30pm