

New Forest Access Forum Meeting 6 December 2021

Chair's Report

Recreation Strategy.

A meeting of the Advisory Group was held in September.
The Action Plan continues to be reviewed.
Public Spaces Protection Orders were considered.

A presentation was given proposing how the permissions system for events and activities on Crown Lands could be changed to assist in the implementation of Habitat Regulations published by Natural England in July this year. It is Forestry England who have to implement the habitat regulations. The presentation suggested that groups of 10 people or more needed to apply for permission to undertake any activity on Crown Land. A fee of £75 would be required. This money would be used to provide more staff for policing the Forest. There was also a map detailing what areas of the Forest could be used for recreation and at what time if year. I was hoping someone from Forestry England Would be willing to give a presentation to the LAF. To date it has not been possible to arrange this. I found the proposals alarming. It is possible the proposals will be modified or not instigated as harshly as suggested in the presentation.

Farming in Protected Landscapes.

Defra have introduced a programme as part of its "Agricultural Transition Plan" to support projects in protected landscapes (National Parks and AONB's). The programme supports nature recovery, mitigates the impacts of climate change and provides opportunities for people to discover, and enjoy landscape and cultural heritage. It also supports nature-friendly sustainable farm businesses. This programme will run from July this year until March 2024. I am a member of the Local Assessment Panel which assesses all projects and decides if funding will be allocated. Nationally £52 million is available over the 3 years of the project. The application process is fairly demanding. Project Outcomes, Value for Money, Sustainability/Legacy and the Ability to Deliver the project all have to be considered.

Ruth Croker