



Member Information Pack 2021

What is the New Forest Access Forum?

The New Forest Access Forum (NFAF) is an independent advisory body and the statutory LAF covering the geographic area of the New Forest National Park plus the New Forest District Council area. Most of this area lies within Hampshire, with the exception of the Redlynch/Whiteparish/Landford part of the National Park which lies within Wiltshire.

The main role of the Forum is to advise the National Park Authority and other organisations on how to make the New Forest countryside and coast more accessible and enjoyable for open-air recreation by everybody. The Forum encourages and assists access provision and gives strategic advice on issues of particular local relevance.

How is the New Forest Access Forum appointed?

The Forum is jointly appointed by the National Park Authority (NPA) and Hampshire County Council (HCC), with the NPA taking the lead. The role of the appointing authorities is to support the Forum and to help it to be effective. Each of the appointing authorities is represented by one of its own members on the Forum; these local authority representatives are expected to take particular care to avoid prejudicing the independence of the Forum's advice.

Membership of the Forum

Members are appointed to represent an interest, rather than a specific organisation. Members are expected to attend Forum meetings and to contribute positively to the advisory role of the Forum by engaging in constructive debate and seeking consensus where possible. Members should also engage with the interest which they represent and explain and promote the work of the Forum.

Forum membership is voluntary, but reasonable expenses will be paid in respect of travel costs and expenses for the care of children or dependents. Other than travel costs associated with Forum meetings and workshops, expenses must be agreed with the NPA in advance, and receipts will normally need to be provided. Expense claim forms should always be used. The mileage rate is currently set at 45p per mile.

Members contact details are usually made available to other Forum members, but are not published. Members of the public are asked to contact Forum members through the Forum's email address (access.forum@newforestnpa.gov.uk) or by contacting the Forum secretary.

Forum meetings

The Forum meets four times a year, typically on the first Monday of the month (March, June, September, December) from 9.30 to 13.00 at different locations across the New Forest.

Meetings are open to the public but are not public meetings meaning that observers may not take part in discussion unless invited to do so by the Chair. Questions can be submitted or representations made at meetings, provided notice of at least two weeks is given.

Additional workshops and sub-groups may be held throughout the year between full Forum meetings if there are specific topics that need attention.

Members' roles and responsibilities

- Be representative of access land and Rights of Way users, owners or occupiers of land, or other related interests especially relevant to the New Forest area.
- Provide an independent view, rather than reflect the delegated views of any organisation.
- Actively pursue opportunities to publicise the work of the Forum and obtain feedback through newsletters or other means, within that member's own organisation(s), if any, and also others with similar interests active within the area covered by the Forum.
- Be expected to attend all meetings (4 meetings a year anticipated), and training events; deputies will not be allowed. Members need to commit to attending at least two full meetings a year. Members who are absent from all meetings in a one-year period may have their appointment to the Forum terminated by the appointing authorities.
- Be willing to serve on the Forum for the period of their initial appointment. The Forum is appointed every three years – interim appointments last until the next full appointment process. There is no limit on the number of times a member can be re-appointed to the Forum.
- Allow a brief biography to be available to members of the public and other interested parties on publicity, including the Forum web pages.
- Regularly check and respond to email and written enquiries and include other Forum members when appropriate.

New Forest Access Forum Official Structure and Remit.

1 Status

- 1.1 The New Forest Access Forum is the Local Access Forum for the New Forest National Park and South West Hampshire (New Forest District Council area), as required under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The appointing authorities are the New Forest National Park Authority and Hampshire County Council.
- 1.2 The New Forest Access Forum is an independent advisory body, operating on a statutory basis. Membership of the New Forest Access Forum is voluntary.

2 Aim

- 2.1 Provide guidance on, and contribute towards, improving opportunities for all to enjoy the countryside and coast of the New Forest and South West Hampshire.

3 Remit

- 3.1 Fulfil the statutory duty to advise on the improvement of public access to land in its area for the purposes of open-air recreation, the enjoyment of the area, and any other lawful purpose, as described in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act).
- 3.2 Contribute in an advisory capacity to the implementation of Hampshire County Council's and Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plans as they apply to the New Forest and South West Hampshire.
- 3.3 Provide a source of local expertise and advice on a wide range of recreational access issues, not just those related to the CRoW Act, whilst having regard for the needs of land management and the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.
- 3.4 Advise on the promotion and improvement of appropriate use and enjoyment of the countryside and rights of way by all, whilst having regard for the needs of land management and the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.
- 3.5 Form links with Highway Authorities in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset.

4 Geographic Area

- 4.1 The New Forest Access Forum will consider access issues relevant to the area within the New Forest National Park boundary and the New Forest District Council area.

5 Other Local Access Forums and Organisations

- 5.1 The Forum will seek to establish and maintain links with the neighbouring Local Access Forums.
- 5.2 A representative of the Forum should attend, as an observer, all meetings of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, and meetings of other neighbouring forums whenever possible.
- 5.3 The Forum will seek to form links with other relevant local organisations and bodies and will seek representation at meetings of these if appropriate.

6 Operation of the Forum

- 6.1 Forum members will, through consultation, represent an area of interest rather than the views of any specific organisation they belong to.
- 6.2 Meetings will be held at least quarterly. Meeting dates and times will be determined by Forum members.
- 6.3 The meeting shall be deemed quorate when 50% of Forum members are present, with at least one representative from each of the categories of interest described in paragraph 7.
- 6.4 Specific issue groups will be established by the Forum, as and when required.
- 6.5 The Forum shall produce and distribute an annual report.
- 6.6 Members who have a personal interest, whether direct or indirect, in a matter to be discussed by the Forum should disclose that interest at the meeting. A personal interest is defined as one which might affect a member's well-being, financial position or business, or that of a relative or friend, to a greater extent than that of other council tax payers, ratepayers or other inhabitants of the area. Personal interests will be recorded in the minutes but will not necessarily prohibit that member from taking part in discussion of that item.

7 Chair and Vice-chair

- 7.1 The Chair and Vice-chair will be drawn from Forum members and elected annually by separate secret ballots. In the interests of balance, the chair and vice-chair should represent different categories of interest, the categories being principally (i) land owners and occupiers, (ii)

recreational users, and (iii) any other interests; members of the appointing authorities are not eligible for either position. In the event that either post becomes vacant, elections will be held having regard to the balance of interest on the Forum.

8 Observers

- 8.1 The following observers may attend and take part in discussion but cannot vote or take part in decision-making:
- Officers from New Forest National Park Authority and Hampshire County Council
 - Representatives from neighbouring Local Access Forums
 - Government bodies such as Natural England, Forestry Commission and Defra
 - Such other representative bodies or interest groups as may be called from time to time
- 8.2 The list may be amended by decision of the Forum, with due regard to the desirability of maintaining a balance of interests during discussion.

9 Public Access to Meetings

- 9.1 All meetings are open to the public.
- 9.2 There will be a period available for representations from members of the public at the start of each Forum meeting. Representation will be at the discretion of the Chair. Anyone wishing to make a representation must submit their written representation to the officer responsible for the administration of the Forum at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date. Copies of the representation will be circulated to members for information. The representative will be given a maximum of five minutes at the meeting to introduce their representation. A limited period will be available, after representations have been introduced, to deal with any issues raised.
- 9.3 The public may attend any Forum meeting but may not speak other than at the Chair's express invitation unless they have made prior representation as described above.
- 9.4 Agendas, minutes and reports relating to the New Forest Access Forum will be available to the public at the offices of the appointing authorities and via the New Forest National Park Authority website.

10 Review process

- 10.1 This document is to be reviewed on an annual basis or as required.