

New Forest Access Forum Meeting 14 March 2022

Chair's Update

1. Farming in Protected Landscapes.

Three meetings have taken place since our LAF meeting.

A number of projects have been supported.

Many involve planting trees and hedgerows and others reducing flooding.

Some applicants have wanted to plant wildflower meadows, usually as part of a bigger project.

Applications for a financial contribution towards the purchase of machinery are more difficult to support.

2. Recreation Management Advisory Group.

A meeting took place on 25th January via Zoom.

- The Habitat Regulations were discussed at length. Natural England emphasised the need to implement the regulations as proposed by Forestry England. I am still far from clear as to how the scheme will be implemented. I have had no written response to my letter on behalf of the LAF asking for clarification.

I was told verbally that asking cyclists to pay for parking in a Forest car park when cycling on roads was an error as permission is not required for this.

At the meeting I emphasised the importance of enjoyment of the great outdoors for both mental and physical health and also the importance of walking and cycling (there are HCC and Government strategies for this) to achieve this end.

I asked for consideration to be given to improving the rights of way network outside of the Crown Lands. Footfall increased because of covid and will increase far more with the restrictions to activities in the Forest. Therefore, I think that increased funding will be needed to improve path surfaces and to remove barriers to their use, such as stiles. Ideally alternative open spaces should also be provided.

- Pop up Campsites.
In 2022 permission will only be given for 28 days. In 2021 it was 56 days.
- Public Space Protection Orders.
Little progress seems to have been made. A strong evidence base is required to implement them.

3. Wetland Restoration.

I attended a site visit in the Ellingham/Poulner area, just off of the A31. It was a small boggy site and all attending agreed that the work should be undertaken. There is a cycle track nearby which would need to be crossed by vehicles to deliver and remove equipment and materials. The number of vehicle movements is likely to be small. There will be signage.

Ruth Croker