

New Forest National Park Authority
Draft Recreation Management Strategy
Working Group 2nd June 2009

Working Group Findings

Facilitated by



1. Introduction and background

- Introduction
- Session aims
- Session objectives
- Topic areas
- Approach to the session

Introduction:

This event was held as part of the consultation process for the New Forest National Park Authority's Recreation Management Strategy. A range of stakeholders was invited, to focus specifically on those issues which had emerged during the public consultation.

Session aim:

To give stakeholders an opportunity to contribute to the development of the Recreation Management Strategy, specifically focusing on the issues that have arisen through the consultation undertaken to date.

These issues were split into ***five topic areas***:

- Zoning
- Impact of the car
- Dog walking
- Cycling
- Recreational erosion

Session objectives:

By the end of the session we had:

- A clear picture of the main issues arising from the consultation on the Draft Recreation Management Strategy.
- Reviewed the key issues arising from the consultation.
- Discussed how the Management Strategy can be improved around these main issues.

Topic areas:

The following lists the detail of the five topic areas arising from the public consultation to date, and which were the focus of debate for the working group.

Zoning

- Support the strategic approach proposed to introduce zoning across the Park
- No need for zoning as recreational users automatically zone themselves; better to encourage the right activities in the right place at the right time
- Support the need for zoning but not on the basis proposed – needs further discussion
- Support in principle the need for zoning but needs clarification and evidence as to why

Impact of the car

- Supports seasonal road closures to increase safe non-motorised access for recreational user groups
- Against seasonal road closures
- Opposition to changes to existing car parks, including closures, repositioning, charges and screening
- Improvements to public transport needed, including co-ordination of, provision, charges, links to recreational routes, campsites and settlements
- There is a need for the development of an educational campaign; clarity needed on what issues to be addressed

Dog Walking

- Support the concept of introducing dog free areas where there is a conflict with other user groups or conservation interests
- No need to develop the concept of dog free car parks
- There is a need for the development of an educational campaign and supporting resources to encourage responsible behaviour
- Remove reference to worrying livestock
- Remove reference to soil enrichment

Cycling

- Support the concept of creating joined up cycle tracks
- There is a need to develop a co-ordinated approach to ensuring cyclists behave responsibly
- Does not support the need for additional cycle routes within the Crown Lands

Recreational Erosion

- Support the need for more evidence regarding causes of erosion and whether directly attributable to recreational activities
- Support the need to relocate existing activities to more robust areas e.g. cycling, camp sites, car parks, honeypot sites
- No need to include as recreational activities do not cause problematical erosion

Approach to the session:

The session was facilitated by Helen Bovey from Icarus, an independent facilitator with previous experience of working for and with National Park Authorities. Participative methods were used to get people talking and to support constructive thinking around possible changes to the draft Recreation Management Strategy.

In addition, one short presentation outlined the consultation progress and findings to date.

2. Introduction and background

- Purpose of the activities
- The activities
- Results of the group work
- Stage one results: reviewing the consultation findings to date
- Stage two results: examining the current draft strategy text
- Additional comments

Working group findings:

Purpose of the activities:

To enable participants to review the key consultation findings and to suggest how they should be incorporated into the Strategy.

The activities:

Participants had the opportunity to examine the consultation results for two topic areas of interest to them, working in small groups and supported by a 'table facilitator'. The first stage involved debate around the consultation findings within each topic area. Groups then moved on to explore how these discussions informed the content of the Draft Strategy by reviewing the relevant, specific pieces of text.

Results of the group work:

The following tables outline the results of the group discussions; these have been recorded exactly as they were written during the working group session.

Stage One was an examination of the relevant consultation findings for each topic area, recording the following points:

- Comments in support of the topic statements
- Comments against the topic statements
- Proposals about how to move the issue forward

Every participant was then asked to review each proposal and to 'score' it using a traffic light system as follows:

- Green: an acceptable proposal
- Amber: some elements are acceptable, but overall the proposal requires more thought / further review
- Red: an unacceptable proposal

In Stage Two, groups examined the relevant text within the Draft Strategy and debated which of the following options was the most appropriate:

- Left in the Strategy in its current form
- Amended
- Removed
- Replaced

Where the recommendation was for amendment or replacement, then groups suggested key words that would contribute to the new form of text.

STAGE ONE: REVIEWING THE CONSULTATION FINDINGS TO DATE

ZONING: KEY THEMES

Zoning	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
<i>Support the strategic approach proposed to introduce zoning across the Park</i>	Group 1	Sound to identify sensitive areas	<p>Value of zone 3 understated</p> <p>Need for consistency between RMS and Park Plan</p> <p>Concern it is a blanket tool – too broad-brushed</p> <p>Zone 3 potential loss of back-up grazing</p>	<p>Z1 Also need a complementary education campaign</p> <p>Z2 What tools are available to implement</p> <p>Z3 Need to emphasise Park purpose to ‘encourage’ where it doesn’t detract from special qualities</p> <p>Z4 ‘Responsibility’ needs emphasising</p>	<p>Z1 – 1 green; 1 amber; 1 red</p> <p>Z2 – 1 green</p> <p>Z3 – 3 green</p>
	Group 2	No zone 1b and 2b in NPP			
<i>No need for zoning as recreational users automatically zone themselves</i>	Group 1	<p>No need for zoning</p> <p>Unclear who gives consent for what</p>		<p>Z5 Replace text with Strategic Aims (pg33) as better than the zoning concept (pg34-5). Remove page 35</p>	Z5 - 9 green

Zoning	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
	Group 2	<p>Concern that zone 1 will result in everything being excluded – dog walking, horse-riding.</p> <p>RMS too general – not site specific</p> <p>Can't see what it adds</p> <p>Already have safeguards – don't need an additional layer</p>			
<i>Support the need for zoning but not on the basis proposed – needs further discussion</i>	Group 1	<p>What is the recreational capacity of the Forest? Evidence?</p> <p>RMS underplays the need for public buy-in</p> <p>Need buy-in from neighbouring authorities for Green Infrastructure</p>		<p>Z6 Lack of clarity on how zoning would work</p> <p>Z7 Maybe and interim stage – criteria to judge new proposals on their merits</p>	<p>Z6 – 5 green; 1 red</p> <p>Z7 – 5 green; 1 red</p>
	Group 2				

Zoning	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
Support in principle the need for zoning but needs clarification and evidence as to why	Group 1	<p>Need a clear action plan – how will you move towards targets?</p> <p>No attempt to define capacity</p>		Z8 If the RMS is to mitigate recreational impacts (ie. AA, HR) need greater evidence	Z8 – 7 green; 1 red
	Group 2	<p>Things should be looked at individually: to include views of local PCs</p> <p>Zone 3 also needs protection</p> <p>Needs details on the process by which decisions are made</p>			

IMPACT OF THE CAR: KEY THEMES

Car	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
Supports seasonal road closures to increase safe non motorised access for recreational user groups	Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tranquillity ▪ Better experience ▪ Access for all ▪ Safer / healthier ▪ Potential for 'car free' day out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emergency access ▪ Capacity of other roads ▪ Disruption to normal life 	<p>Additional factors to be considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need for facilities - proper feasibility <p>needs to form part of a wider access agenda</p>	Car1 6 green; 2 amber; 1 red
	Group 2		People seeking tranquillity want to avoid other people	Car parking needs to be considered / Highway Authority needs to be on board – impact of population growth	
Against seasonal road closures	Group 1				
	Group 2				
Opposition to changes to existing car parks, including closures, repositioning, charges and screening	Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ground nesting birds ▪ Longer journeys ▪ People are 'attached' to certain car parks ▪ Higher expectations if parking was charged for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crime levels ▪ More robust locations 	Strategic approach / support further investigation	Car3 3 green
				Proposals need to respond to a wider (all modes) access strategy	

Car	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
	Group 2		Support for dispersal of car parks	More lay-bys? Less car parks	Car4 1 amber; 5 red
				Needs a robust evidence base	Car5 7 green
Improvements to public transport needed, including co-ordination or, provision, charges, links to recreational routes, campsites and settlements	Group 1	Creates sense of community	No funding	Better marketing of all bus services	Car6 5 green; 1 red
		Reduces impact of the car	It is cheaper to go by car	More joined up services	Car7 4 green
		Benefits non car users	Bus costs more in money and time	Investigate new routes - greater frequency on sections of route	
	Group 2	Link with more camp sites		More recreational public transport	Car8 5 green
				More innovation / routes etc	
				Better links with rail	
There is a need for the development of an educational campaign; clarity on what issues to be addressed	Group 1	Agreed – but needs to be carefully thought through	Practical schemes	Persistent marketing needed to change attitudes	Car9 5 green
			More valuable		
	Group 2			Detail needs to be worked out but general support	Car10 2 green

DOG WALKING: KEY THEMES

Dog Walking	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
Support the concept of dog free areas where there is a conflict with other user groups or conservation interests	Group 1	There is evidence that dogs do disturb birds – if it happens it should be monitored to see its effects	<p>Need more evidence about what conflicts?</p> <p>Scientific evidence about ground nesting birds disturbance needed not just anecdotes</p> <p>All user groups should be catered for – dogs should not be singled out</p> <p>Should not have dog free areas but not have any users allowed in area</p>	To remove dog free areas and introduce dog control areas	D1 4 green; 1 red
				More surveys and good base line data of scientific evidence for disturbance of birds	D2 4 green
				Need a precautionary principle – err on the side of conservation	D3 5 green
	Group 2	<p>Need family car parks – no poo</p> <p>Disturbance by dogs is different due to birds habituating</p> <p>National evidence available</p>		Voluntary and / or seasonal	D4 2 green
				Consult dog owners to get something acceptable e.g. ‘dogs on leads’ areas / ‘dogs under close control’ / max no. dogs per person / etc. Need ownership	D5 5 green; 2 amber

<i>No need to develop the concept of dog free car parks</i>	Group 1	Dog free car parks for families and children because of mess		Advise and encourage people to go to less sensitive areas	D6 1 green
Dog Walking	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
	Group 2	Might be start of slippery slope Difficult to police Dog free car parks for families and children because of mess		Select a small number of car parks make them dog free and promote heavily. Culture of use will change.	D7 6 green
<i>There is a need for the development of an educational campaign and supporting resources to encourage responsible behaviour</i>	Group 1	Education for all – not just for dog owners		1:1 with rangers seems to work	D8 2 green
				Needs to be long term not a quick fix	D9 4 green
				Personal approach is better	D10
				Target school groups	D11
	Group 2		Do not want proliferation of signage	Involve the user group	D12 1 green
				Cultures take a long time to change	D13 2 green
				Offer free obedience / agility classes, etc as a way of contacting owners	D14 2 green

<i>Dog Walking</i>	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
<i>Remove reference to worrying livestock</i>	Group 1		Do not take out – it is a fact	Should be data kept on livestock worrying	D15 4 green
	Group 2	Should be taken out – not enough evidence to support		Ask Agisters for evidence	D16 4 green
<i>Remove reference to soil enrichment</i>	Group 1		Can be concentrated in car parks Houses can do the same thing	Need local information about the effects Needs dog bins in every car park – would help prevent the problem	D17 2 green; 4 red
	Group 2		Use of language – it is not clear if ‘enrichment’ is good or bad		

CYCLING: KEY THEMES

Cycling	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
Support the concept of creating joined up cycle tracks	Group 1	<p>The necessary number of cycle tracks needed to join up the cycle routes is very few.</p> <p>Identify existing cycle tracks for use</p>	<p>Cycle tracks need policing, cannot have cycle tracks with no way of policing – no point in having tracks as people will go off road without enforcement</p> <p>No new cycle pathways</p>	<p>Investigate the possibility of using existing tracks to link existing cycle tracks as opposed to making new tracks</p> <p>Restricted number of waymarked routes should be allowed across the open forest</p>	<p>C1 – 11 green</p> <p>C2 – 3 green; 1 amber; 3 red</p>
	Group 2	<p>Supporting linking of tracks</p> <p>Multi-use core network</p> <p>Create a network that works – no evidence that cycling does any damage</p>	<p>No overall increase in mileage of tracks i.e. to link a track loose part elsewhere</p> <p>Do not use tracks that link to unsuitable areas / paths i.e. gravel track in inclosures leading to grass path / open forest</p>	<p>Policing – leave those who are in appropriate places to be. Police only those who are undertaking a destructive activity.</p> <p>Promote core route network – do not worry if people are not on the network. Instead police all destructive activities, if cycling taking place off network in suitable area leave be</p>	<p>C3 – 3 green; 2 amber</p> <p>C4 – 4 green; 2 amber</p>

Cycling	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	Scores
<i>There is a need to develop a co-ordinated approach to ensuring cyclists behave responsibly</i>	Group 1	<p>Already cycle code of conduct in existence but need strengthening with an education process. Opportunity for existing providers to fulfil this role on a wider scale not just cycling</p> <p>User guides not too draconian</p>		<p>Use current providers to educate those not a member of a cycling organisation i.e. through schools</p> <p>Use website to make available codes of conduct</p>	<p>C5 – 7 green</p> <p>C6 – 4 green</p>
	Group 2			Educate all irresponsible users not just cyclists. Face to face education extremely effective	C7 – 8 green
<i>Does not support the need for additional cycle routes within the Crown Lands</i>	Group 1	<p>Additional cycle routes will fracture and break up the wilderness of the forest and will impact on the wildlife</p>	<p>Additional routes needed with evidence available that these arguments for environmental impacts are over-stated.</p> <p>Major cycling organisations support a joined up network</p>	<p>No mention of other forms of cycling. What about the need for bike parks near settlements and more technical routes to discourage this behaviour on the open forest – Strategy incomplete – so focused on families not on cycling world as a whole. e.g. Wild cycling areas for local kids – not promoting; single routes on private estates</p>	8 green
	Group 2		There is a need for a joined up network		

RECREATIONAL EROSION: KEY THEMES

<i>Erosion</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Comments for</i>	<i>Comments against</i>	<i>Proposals</i>	<i>Scores</i>
<i>Support the need for more evidence regarding causes of erosion and whether directly attributable to recreational activities</i>	Group 1	Need for more evidence to identify worst areas		E1 Where are worst problems? What damage? Causes of damage? Need to record historical erosion; collate existing studies	E1 – 12 green
		Erosion of verges (parked cars)		E2 Targeted restoration	E2 – 6 green
		Far greater increase in all other recreation		E3 Check data on recreational horses – evidence shows no increase in numbers since 1994 study	E3 – 1 green
	Group 2	Need to clearly define what is recreational erosion		E4 look at evidence of erosion in other NPs	3 green; 1 red
		Need to consider other forms of erosion caused by recreation i.e on tranquillity and cultural heritage		E5 Need conditional study of erosion over same years / decades	E5 – 1 green; 1 amber
				E6 Use volunteers to monitor erosion	E6 – 2 green
<i>Support the need to relocate existing activities to more robust areas e.g. cycling, camp sites, car parks, honey pot sites</i>	Group 1			E7 Should be related to 'worst problems' above	E7 – 1 green
				E8 Knock on effects of any action must be considered	E8 – 1 green; 1 amber
				E9 Banks preferred to Dragon's Teeth	E9 – 1 green; 1 amber
				E10 Would need regulation and enforcement	E10 - 1 amber
				E11 Close some car parks but enlarge others?	E11 – 2 green; 1 red
				E12 Fixed penalties for infringements of bye-laws. Questionnaires to Parish Councils to elicit problems	E12 – 1 green

Erosion	Group	Comments for	Comments against	Proposals	scores
	Group 2			E13 Need economic impact study of moving campsites	E13 – 3 green
				E14 allowing existing facilities to develop to take pressure off rest of Forest (e.g. campsites, activity centres)	E14 – 1 green; 2 red
No need to include as recreational activities do not cause problematic erosion	Group 1				
	Group 2		Disagree		

STAGE TWO: EXAMINING THE CURRENT DRAFT STRATEGY TEXT

ZONING: KEY TEXT

Zoning	GROUP 1				GROUP 2			
	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace
KEY RELEVANT TEXT:								
<i>The Strategy is to consider outdoor recreation in the context of three zones which will also be used to implement other policies in the National Park Plan. The zones are based on the potential degree of sensitivity of the natural environment to defined activities. (page 34)</i>			P	P		P		
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	<p>The Strategy is to consider outdoor recreation in the context of subtle zones based on activities and sensitivities which will also be used to implement other policies in the National Park Plan</p> <p>Replace existing text with the Strategic aims (pg33)</p> <p>NB. Potentially focus on activities rather than broad geographical zones.</p> <p>Zones are too broad-brushed, need more flexibility</p> <p>Don't lose sight of alternative sites inside and outside the Park</p>				<p>The Strategy is to consider outdoor recreation in the context of subtle zones based on activities and sensitivities which will also be used to implement other policies in the National Park Plan</p>			

IMPACT OF THE CAR: KEY TEXT

Impact of the car	GROUP 1				GROUP 2			
	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace
KEY RELEVANT TEXT:								
<p><u>Policy T2.1</u> <i>Make road space available for visitors thereby increasing the recreational experience, especially for walkers, horse riders, cyclists and the less able by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Zone 1 and 2 introducing the experimental closure of selected roads during peak periods between Easter and September and potentially at weekends throughout the year</i> • <i>Introducing a range of mechanisms that allow the shared use of road space such as reduced speed limits and other potential options</i> 			✓				✓	
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Replace 'introduce' with 'investigate'				As per group 1			
<p><u>Policy T3.2</u> <i>In Zones 1 and 2 reduce impacts of parking on the most sensitive areas of the National Park by managing the size, capacity and location of car parks through:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The relocation of certain car parks to more robust locations</i> • <i>Taking opportunities to reduce the number of car parking spaces on a temporary or permanent basis</i> • <i>Promoting the temporary closure of car parks</i> • <i>Ensuring that all of the above is informed by the results of ongoing monitoring</i> 			✓				✓	
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Amend to reflect proposal				As per group 1			

DOG WALKING: KEY TEXT

Dog walking	GROUP 1				GROUP 2				
	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace	
KEY RELEVANT TEXT:									
<i>If dogs are not kept under control they can damage other interests. They can disturb ground nesting birds including waders (a primary reason for the international wildlife designations of the New Forest). (page 58-59)</i>	✓					✓			
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...									
<i>They may worry livestock.</i>	✓							✓	
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	They can worry livestock					There have been instances where they do worry or kill livestock Livestock have been destroyed because of dog attacks			
<i>Dog fouling can also be an issue – both for public health and because it can lead to the enrichment of the impoverished soils of the New Forest on which its ecology depends.</i>	✓							✓	
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Dog fouling could also be an issue					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and enjoyment • Clarification of 'enrichment' • Say it is localised 			

Dog walking	GROUP 1					GROUP 2				
	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace		Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace	
KEY RELEVANT TEXT:										
<u>Policy T3.2</u> <i>In Zones 1 and 2 reduce impacts of parking on the most sensitive areas of the National Park by managing the size, capacity and location of car parks through:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Promoting the temporary closure of car parks and developing the concept of 'dog free' car parks</i> 			✓					✓		
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Remove last 9 words						Like 'dog free' Temporary or permanent			
<u>Policy W1.3</u> <i>In Zones 1 and 2 minimise disturbance to species that are sensitive to disturbance or trampling (e.g. ground nesting and over wintering birds and bog vegetation) through a range of mechanisms.</i>	✓							✓		
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...							Need to define range of mechanisms, or 'subject to....'			

Dog walking	Group 1				Group 2				
KEY RELEVANT TEXT:	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace		Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace
<p><u>Policy W1.4</u></p> <p><i>Promote responsible dog walking within the National Park through a range of co-ordinated mechanisms.</i></p>	✓					✓			
<p>Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...</p>									

CYCLING: KEY TEXT

Cycling	GROUP 1				GROUP 2				
	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace		Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace
KEY RELEVANT TEXT:									
<p><u>Policy C1.1</u></p> <p><i>Provide a strategic cycle network within the National Park and linking to surrounding settlements, through implementation of the New Forest District's Strategic Cycle Network with appropriate information provision for users.</i></p>									
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Linking existing network not creating new tracks – case by case					Is the Strategic cycle network up to date – needs checking. Consultation needed. Check that Strategic Cycle Network is what we want			
<p><u>Policy C2.1</u></p> <p><i>In Zone 1, on a trial basis, within the Inclosures that are linked to the Strategic Cycle Network allow cycling on the existing network of forest tracks to allow dispersal, monitored against criteria agreed with the Forestry Commission, Verderers and Commoners.</i></p>									
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Research should have a finite time					Focus should be on core route network Very hard to remove people from trial area – cannot stop once used			

RECREATIONAL EROSION: KEY TEXT

Recreational erosion	GROUP 1				GROUP 2				
	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace	Keep	Remove	Amend	Replace	
KEY RELEVANT TEXT:									
<i>Horse riding can cause localised erosion and associated damage to vegetation. Whilst individual horse riders are unlikely to generate significant impact, damage does occur on well used routes close to riding schools, livery yards and areas used for pony trekking, and also at pinch points such as stream and road crossings. (page 66)</i>			✓				✓		
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Delete 'horse riding' and replace with 'recreational use'					All recreational activity should be considered for the erosion it causes			
	Take out 'Horse riding can cause localised erosion and associated damage to vegetation' and put amended text in generic section. Keep rest of text under HR.								
<i>Work with users and land managers to maintain and repair damaged and eroding routes in the National Park. (page 67)</i>	✓					✓			
Alternative key words if you are suggesting amendment or replacement ...	Generic section								

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Participants were invited to add any further comments that had not been picked up through the activities undertaken at the working group session:

Zoning:

- I can't see a need for any zoning – just regulate activities on their individual merits

Recreational Erosion

- Erosion of the cultural heritage of the New Forest Commoning thought to conflict with recreation
- Erosion from all activities should be considered e.g. New Forest ponies, woodland management etc