

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 JUNE 2008

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT
Summary of the meeting on Monday 2 June 2008

Report by: Sarah Manchester, Countryside Access Officer

Summary:

This report outlines the proceedings and issues discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum held on 2 June 2008.

Recommendations:

- 1. To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 2 June 2008.**
- 2. To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is Monday 8 September 2008 at Foxlease, Lyndhurst.**

Resources:

Routine.

Paper:

NFNPA 263/08: Cover paper

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Main Agenda Items for Discussion

1 Coastal access, draft Marine Bill (Part 9)

- 1.1 Members had been provided with a paper summarising the proposed procedure for improving coastal access, the provisions that had arisen since the Forum was last consulted on coastal access, and a comparison between the proposed new legislation and the Forum's responses to the previous consultation on coastal access.
- 1.2 Members agreed that they would like to comment to Defra on part 9 of the draft Bill, and that the Forum's comments should also be copied to local MPs.
- 1.3 The Forum was broadly supportive of the principles of the Bill and what the Bill is trying to achieve. However, members expressed strong concerns over a number of details within the proposed legislation.
- 1.4 In addition, members felt the Marine Bill to be an inappropriate vehicle for introducing new coastal access rights, and were disappointed that in drafting the proposed legislation little weight appeared to have been given to the responses to Defra's consultation document of 2007.

2 Forum workshop

- 2.1 The Forum was updated on the progress made towards organising the 2008 Workshop. Given the time pressures on the Forum in June and July, it has been decided to postpone the Workshop to the autumn.
- 2.2 The Workshop will be held on 17 September at Brockenhurst Village Hall. The theme of the Workshop is "Focusing on Future Forest Access" and speakers have been confirmed from the National Park Authority, Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Verderers (represented by the Head Agister).

- 2.3 A sub-group of the Forum is organising the Workshop, and each sub-group member will facilitate discussion within break-out groups during the afternoon. The aim of the Workshop is to gather specific suggestions for improving access within a defined geographical area. The outputs from the Workshop should assist with the implementation of the rights of way improvement plan, and feed into the operation of policies and actions of organisations such as the National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission.
- 2.4 The Forum was supportive of the Workshop organisation to date, and members made suggestions about additional bodies to invite to attend the Workshop.

3 Stream and fence crossings

- 3.1 John Thackray, representing the Ramblers' Association, gave a presentation to the Forum on stream and fence crossings in the New Forest.
- 3.2 The presentation raised concerns that many stream crossings are dangerous and difficult, and that fences around inclosures are an unsatisfactory barrier to walkers. The presentation was illustrated with examples of public rights of way and paths on Crown Lands.
- 3.3 The Forum agreed to discuss the matter in full at a future meeting.

4 Additional items included:

- a) Ann Sevier was re-elected as Chair, and Alastair Duncan was re-elected as Vice-chair. Both posts were unopposed, and both appointments are for one year;
- b) the Forum resolved to write to Natural England requesting that it organises a meeting for representatives from all local access forums in the south east region. The meeting should elect two Local Access Forum members as regional representatives on the newly formed England Access Forum, and should discuss the mechanisms by which the elected representatives can effectively and formally represent the views of the Local Access Forums in the south east;
- c) the Forum noted that Hampshire County Council is intending to publish its final Countryside Access Plan this summer, and the County Overview from that document was presented to the Forum;

- d) members were informed of the criteria for selecting projects for funding through Hampshire's Local Transport Plan, and asked to nominate some suitable projects at the September Forum meeting after consulting with their interest groups;
- e) members received a short presentation on the role of the Hampshire Action Teams;
- f) the Forum received updates from neighbouring local access forum meetings, and other meetings at which the Forum is represented by individual members.

Recommendations:

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- 2. To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is Monday 8 September 2008 at Foxlease, Lyndhurst.**