

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 16 OCTOBER 2008

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT
Summary of the meeting on Monday 8 September 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 8 September 2008.

Recommendations:

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

Resources:

Routine.

Papers:

NFNPA 271/08: Cover paper

Contact:

Sarah Manchester
Countryside Access Officer
Tel: 01590 646669
Email: sarah.manchester@newforestnpa.gov.uk

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Main Agenda Items for Discussion

1 Hampshire Local Transport Plan, 2009-10

- 1.1 Members received an update from Charles Cuthbert of Hampshire County Council. Financial year 2009-10 will be the third year of a 5-year programme in which funding allocated from a capital budget is used to improve access to the countryside. The funding can support practical works that are not considered to be a statutory duty; projects funded in this manner should meet a need identified in the Countryside Access Plan.
- 1.2 A total of £200,000 is available throughout Hampshire in 2009-10, with funding to be allocated across the county. Any projects that receive funding must be able to be completed by March 2010. Suggested projects should include an estimate of costs.
- 1.3 Members were asked to nominate projects that meet the funding criteria. It was agreed that suggestions made at the Forum's September Workshop would be considered in light of the LTP funding criteria, and any suitable suggestions would be submitted.

2 Dogs in the countryside

- 2.1 Jo Hale of Hampshire County Council gave a presentation on the County Council's recent innovative work on managing dogs in the countryside. The County Council has worked with organisations including the Kennel Club to look at the psychology of dog walkers, and to introduce management at some of its own countryside sites.
- 2.2 Three reports on the subject have now been published, all of which are available to the public via the Country Council web site. Lepe Country Park now has dog restrictions in some areas over the summer months, and a dog focussed event for the public was held at Lepe in early September.

- 2.3 The presentation was well received by the Forum who felt that this was an excellent initiative, and that some of the management methods could be considered by other public land managers within the New Forest. The Forum also recommended that NFD OG and the County Council be encouraged to work together on any future projects within the New Forest.

3 Recreation Management Strategy

- 3.1 All members who attended the half day workshop held in July were thanked for their contributions. Forum members had discussed their thoughts on the Strategy, and the Forum's initial draft response to the Strategy had been formulated from agreed comments made at the Workshop. That draft response was now to be further amended and agreed at this meeting.
- 3.2 Members raised some additional points that had not been raised at the Workshop, and the draft response was expanded and amended.
- 3.3 It was further agreed that the Forum should comment on the National Park Authority's Park Plan, and a sub-group was formed to draft an initial response.
- 3.4 The Chair will prepare the Forum's response to the Recreation Management Strategy in accordance with the Forum's agreed comments at the meeting. The Chair will approve the Forum's response to the Park Plan before it is submitted. Both responses will be available to the public via the web site.

4 Accessibility Works

- 4.1 Sarah Manchester gave a brief update on the progress of the National Park Authority's pilot project to publish detailed accessibility information about countryside sites in the area.
- 4.2 Helen Wood gave an update on the progress of the Forestry Commission's 'Lifting the Barriers' project, which has been working to improve accessibility since its inception in 2005. Practical improvements, some of which have been part funded by the National Park Authority, include improved path surfacing, more easily usable gates and gate catches and the provision of picnic benches which are accessible to wheelchair users.
- 4.3 The Forum endorsed the work of the Forestry Commission on this project, and offered its assistance, if required.

5 Additional items included:

- a) an update on Government's proposals for new Coastal Access including a summary of the reports from the scrutinising committees;
- b) a report on the recent Open Day held at Wilverley Inclosure, at which the Forum had a presence. The Day was very well attended and was well received. It is hoped that similar Open Days will be held in future;
- c) the England Access Forum will be meeting in September. The south east regional representatives on this Forum have still not been formally appointed. There will be a meeting of representatives from LAFs in the south east area in October which should resolve this issue;
- d) members were updated on the recent appointment of two seasonal Rangers – the Coastal Ranger and the Mobile Unit Ranger;
- e) an update on the organisation of the September Workshop. There has been a good rate of acceptances, and parish councils and user groups will be particularly well represented;
- f) the Forum received updates from neighbouring local access forum meetings, and other meetings at which the Forum is represented by individual members;
- g) there was insufficient time at the meeting to receive a presentation from Bruce Rothnie on Stream Crossings. This presentation, which followed on from a presentation on the same subject at the previous meeting, will be carried forward to the December meeting.

Recommendations:

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