

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 24 JANUARY 2008

**NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT
SUMMARY OF THE MEETING ON MONDAY 3 DECEMBER 2007**

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 3 December 2007.

Recommendations:

- 1. To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 3 December 2007.**
- 2. To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is Monday 3 March 2008.**

Resources:

Routine.

Papers:

NFNPA 229/08: Cover paper

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Main Agenda

Items for discussion

1 Small Grants Scheme

- 1.1 It was reported that take up of this scheme was not as high in the New Forest as it is in the county of Hampshire as a whole. The Scheme has already been publicised through press release, a presentation to the Consultative Panel, and letters to Parish Councils. The Scheme will be promoted again by the Authority, but Forum members were also asked to make sure members of their interest groups and other contacts were aware of the Scheme.
- 1.2 Some Forum members also volunteered to attend Parish Council meetings to talk about the Scheme.

2 Foxbury Forum

- 2.1 Doug England gave a summary of the acquisition of the land by the National Trust, and the current work and future plans for the site. Doug is setting up a Forum to look at the various issues and to be involved with publicity. Doug invited a member of the Access Forum to join the Foxbury Forum; Ann Sevier volunteered for this.
- 2.2 The Forum requested that they be given a site visit, and it was agreed that the June meeting would be held in a Village Hall near to Foxbury, with a site visit in the afternoon.

3 Forestry Commission Cycle Network

- 3.1 Bruce Rothnie updated the Forum with recent news on the cycle network, and confirmed the Commission's view that the Access Forum is the main consultation forum for access-related matters on the Crown Lands of the New Forest.
- 3.2 The Forum was then asked for, and gave, its views on the appropriate level of access and provision for off highway cycling in the New Forest National Park, and on what members thought could be done to improve the understanding of cycling activity.
- 3.3 It was concluded that there is a need to look further at the cycle network, and that changes would be needed in order to make it function effectively. Further education is also needed for users of the network, both in relation to how people use the network and how different types of users relate to and understand each other.

4 New Forest Countryside Access Plan

- 4.1 Charles Cuthbert of Hampshire County Council informed the Forum of progress to date. The revised Plan, as influenced by the consultation responses, should be finished by March 2008. A county-wide plan, taking in all of the seven areas for which local plans were produced, is scheduled for publication in May 2008.
- 4.2 The County Council is looking for a local group in each Plan area to take forward the implementation. It was agreed that in the New Forest area this group would be the Access Forum, making use of the annual workshop to look at practical ways in which the access could be improved in one part of the New Forest area each year. It was felt that strong local input to the process could be achieved this way, as Parish Councils, land owners, and user groups attend the workshops.

5 The Verderers' policies for conserving the New Forest

- 5.1 Forum members were each provided with a copy of the recently published booklet. The Chair asked members for their comments on the policies only, with specific reference to policy 6 – Recreation and Recreational Facilities.
- 5.2 Comments were made that it would be helpful for some 'tightening up' of the wording to be made, along with further definition of some of the meanings, and the use of less subjective wording. The Chair summarised by saying that it was useful for members to be aware of the policies, which would be helpful in future discussions.

6 Additional items

Additional items included:

- a) reports from meetings of neighbouring access forums in Wiltshire and Hampshire;
- b) report from the 'Finishing the Definitive Map' sub-group, which is looking locally at similar issues to the national Discovering Lost Ways project;
- c) the members representing 'Tourism' and 'Disability' have stepped down, and a recruitment process will be undertaken to replace them;
- d) Peter Walsh is now representing the Forum on the Authority's Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Recreation Management Strategy;
- e) a National Countryside Access Forum has been set up, and members gave their views on topics that might be discussed at the first meeting;
- f) updates on the Authority's Recreation Management Strategy and the Forestry Commission's PROGRESS project.

Recommendations:

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