

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 28 MARCH 2007

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT
Summary of the meeting on Monday 5 March 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 5 March 2007.

Recommendations:

- 1. To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 5 March 2007.**
- 2. To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is Monday 4 June 2007.**

Resources:

Routine.

Papers:

NFNPA 174/07: Cover paper

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Main Agenda Items for Discussion

1 Matters Arising

Neighbouring Access Group Meetings

The Forum received reports from the Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset local access forum meetings, and also from Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Access Topic Group.

Strategic Cycle Network

The Forum received a report from the New Forest Cycle Working Group. Members expressed some concern about the usability of the existing cycle route map and that it could lead to cyclists inadvertently straying from the cycle network. A new cycle map is being produced commercially by Walking Distance. It was agreed that the Forum would write to Walking Distance asking to be consulted on the draft map.

Access to Inland Waterways

It was noted that the Access to Inland Waterways Bill had stalled in Parliament due to lack of time. Members are invited to attend a forthcoming meeting of the Dorset Local Access Forum at which a presentation will be given on this subject, with reference being made to the River Avon.

2 Coastal Access

Members were informed of a recent Natural England Board paper on this subject. A sub group has been set up to look at the issue and prepare a draft response on the expected consultation. It was noted that local access forums are identified in the Board paper as having an important role to play in the local implementation of any new coastal access.

3 Special Qualities of the National Park

A presentation from Steve Trotter was well received by the Forum. The Forum resolved to write to the National Park Authority in general agreement with the importance of the qualities identified in the consultation, and to suggest that since local communities play an important role in maintaining the special qualities of the area, the importance of local, sustainable jobs should be recognised.

4 Workshop

The Forum agreed to hold a Workshop in the northern part of its area this summer. Local Parish Councils, and owners and managers of land used for recreation will be invited to attend. The Workshop will look at how recreational access provision in the area could be improved.

5 Castleman Trail

The Castleman Trail is a multi-purpose route between Poole and Ringwood. The whole Trail is available to walkers, with many sections also available to cyclists and horse riders. Andrew Jones of Hampshire County Council gave a presentation on the existing Trail within Hampshire, planned improvements and potential extensions. Roland Tarr of Dorset Local Access Forum also gave a presentation on the existing provision for cycling from Brockenhurst to Wimborne, noting that the on-road section between Burley and Ringwood was not particularly suitable for inexperienced cyclists. The Forum discussed the potential for extending the Trail and the attendant issues. The Forum resolved to write to Hampshire County Council in broad support of extending the Trail from its current termination on Barrack Lane to link with the Forestry Commission cycle trail at Burbush. The Forum also supports in principle the 'swapping' of two footpaths for corresponding sections of the Trail with bridleway status.

Additional Items

6 Additional items included:

- a) a presentation from the Forestry Commission on the results of recent surveys of cyclists and an update on the PROGRESS project;
- b) information on the new regulations and guidance from Defra on local access forums;
- c) an update on the Small Grants Scheme – the Forum will write to Parish Councils to further promote the Scheme;

- d) information on the Dorset County Council consultation on a pre-draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan to which members were encouraged to respond individually;
- e) an update on the progress towards the revision of Hampshire County Council's policy on vehicles in the countryside;
- f) a short presentation on the progress of the National Park Authority's Recreation Management Strategy;
- g) members approved a draft response prepared by the Chair on the Defra consultation on Traffic Regulation Orders in National Parks;
- h) members agreed to write to Defra in agreement with Cumbria Local Access Forum regarding the provision of financial support for the implementation of rights of way improvement plans;
- i) a summary of the Task Groups associated with the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, which members were invited to join;
- j) it was noted that National Park Authority officers would be working with the Chair to produce the first annual report;
- k) three Forum members had resigned during the first year of operation, and recruitment will take place to fill the vacancies in the areas of land management, access to water, and camping and caravanning.

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