

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 MARCH 2009**

**NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT**  
**Summary of the meeting on Monday 2 March 2009**

**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 March 2009.

**Recommendations:**

1. **To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 2 March 2009.**
2. **To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is 1 June 2009.**

**Resources:**

Routine.

**Papers:**

NFNPA 294/09: Cover paper

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**Main Agenda Items for Discussion****1 Coastal Access Update**

- 1.1 Sarah Manchester updated the Forum on the Marine Bill which is continuing to progress through Parliament and is still expected by Natural England and Defra to receive Royal Assent in summer 2009. Natural England has published a draft 'scheme' of implementation for consultation after Royal Assent.
- 1.2 Hampshire County Council has commissioned a project to look at improving access to the coast. It is expected that the draft report will be completed by the end of May 2009 and will come to the New Forest Access Forum for comments at the June meeting.
- 1.3 The need to link new provisions for access with the Shoreline Management Plan which is being co-ordinated by New Forest District Council was highlighted. Following discussion it was agreed that the benefits of coastal access may not be being taken into consideration within the Shoreline Management Plan, and this is a concern that should be highlighted.
- 1.4 It was suggested that the Pylewell permissive path is a good place to observe the potential loss of access due to coastal processes, if the coast is not defended.

**2 Registered Commons**

- 2.1 Hampshire County Council gave a presentation on the history of commons and outlined the measures within the Commons Act 2006 that will allow amendments to be made to the Commons Register.
- 2.2 Hampshire County Council inherited the commons register in June 2008 and since then has scanned all the documents electronically. New regulations have not yet been published but there will be very limited circumstances under which additional commons can be registered. There would be a period of one year, likely to start in October 2010, during which the register can be updated with events that have happened since 1965, with a longer window to register corrections.

- 2.3 It was confirmed that the Law of Property Act 1925 covered more land than just Metropolitan Commons, and it was agreed that it would be useful if the commons register recorded how each common came into being, as this would help to determine which rights were in existence. The area within the New Forest perambulation is exempt from commons registration; but the Act does apply to other land within the Forum's area.
- 2.4 The register is published and is available for the public to view. Hampshire County Council can send out specific information about a common on request. Hampshire County Council is still considering whether it would be a worth while exercise to put the register on the internet.
- 2.5 There is a drive to preserve the landscape value of commons, and there is a proposal to establish a Hampshire Commons Initiative to look at the management of commons. It was agreed that it would be useful for the Forum to have some representation on, or involvement with, this Initiative.

### **3 Stream Crossings**

- 3.1 Bruce Rothnie presented a paper on stream crossings and highlighted the problems the Forestry Commission faces with getting consent for works, the legislative requirements and how the Forestry Commission is undertaking mire and stream restoration to bring those habitats into favourable condition. Views have been expressed that these works are making the Forest wetter and less accessible. The Forestry Commission consults with commoners when such restoration works are planned, and those doing the consultations have been tasked with also taking access into consideration. For example, at Warwick Slade and Alderhill Inclosures, crossing points and fords will be incorporated into the restoration works.
- 3.2 There was general agreement that the mire restoration works in particular had made conditions worse for walkers, but that the particularly wet weather of the past year or two had probably also contributed. Whilst walkers can wade through most streams, the mires are impassable. It was felt that the level of work being done to enhance the conservation value of the Crown Lands was comparatively high, and that similar efforts should be put into supporting the provision of recreation.
- 3.3 Anyone who had examples of routes or walks that have become too wet due to restoration works was asked to send them to the Forestry Commission.

### **4 Cycling in the New Forest**

- 4.1 The Forum discussed cycling issues in the National Park following a presentment from a local sufferer of Multiple Sclerosis who can cycle up to 20 miles a day but can only walk unaided for about 300 metres. The main questions were: why can't he cycle on all the gravelled forest tracks?; what is the logic of the existing permitted routes?; and why are the many good tracks that are frequently used by vehicles unavailable to cyclists? The Verderers currently take the view that allowing cycling on additional routes

will open up the Forest to trespass and this would seem to be the main obstacle to improving the network at the moment.

4.2 Members expressed sympathy with the need to improve provision for cycling and noted that the Forum was undertaking a lot of work at the moment in the hope that access provision for cyclists within the Forum's area can be improved. Members also expressed their opinion that, in general, it was felt that there was little conflict between cyclists and walkers. A strategic cycle network plan had already been developed but not been implemented. The Forum would like to open a constructive discussion with the Verderers about cycling on the Crown Lands.

4.3 The Forum was informed that signage for the National Cycle Network 2 route in Hythe is likely to be in place in the Spring, and that options for the A35 crossing are being investigated.

**5 Additional items included:**

- a) An update was given on the Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy process.
- b) The Forum agreed that the 2009 workshop will focus on the coastal parishes in the south part of the Forum's area.
- c) A report was given on recent meetings of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum.
- d) The New Forest Local Access Forum's Annual Report 2007/08 has now been produced. Duncan Graham, chair of the England Access Forum, has congratulated the Forum on the Annual Report.
- e) The election of the Chair and Vice-Chair will be held at the next meeting in June.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. **To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 2 March 2009.**
- 2. **To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is 1 June 2009.**