

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 MARCH 2008

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT
Summary of the meeting on Monday 3 March 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 3 March 2008.

Recommendations:

- 1. To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 3 March 2008.**
- 2. To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is Monday 2 June 2008 at Bramshaw Village Hall to be followed by a site visit to Foxbury Plantation.**

Papers:

NFNPA 245/08: Cover paper

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Main Agenda Items for Discussion

1 Open Spaces Study

- 1.1 Edward Gerry, New Forest District Council, gave a presentation to members on the Open Spaces Study (PPG17). He summarised some of the consultants' recommendations regarding the level of provision of open spaces, the potential for a new managed facility such as a Country Park, and the advantages of opening up the 'blue infrastructure' – i.e. the coastal area.
- 1.2 Members asked a number of questions relating to delivery of new open spaces, the potential for using developer contributions, provision for disabled users, and likely timescales.

2 Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Wiltshire

- 2.1 Paul Broadstock, Wiltshire County Council, introduced the draft Plan and outlined the timetable for its production, consultation and future delivery. In particular, Paul noted that the production of the Plan was being undertaken in conjunction with the updating of policies within the Council's Local Development Framework Document, and that the final Plan will include the re-written policies.
- 2.2 During the discussion of the Plan, the following information was given:
 - The Action Plan is very aspirational. Many of the actions, particularly those relating to improving communications, can be implemented within the existing available resources, but others will require additional resources which are currently unsecured.
 - Improvement of the county's access resource will be considered first, before looking at cross-boundary issues.
 - The Action Plan has not been prioritised because of the way that the actions were consolidated from the comments received during

the initial research phase. The Council is looking to change the way that its current maintenance work is prioritised.

- The omission of any reference to the New Forest Access Forum in the Plan is not deliberate, but a result of the speed with which the Plan was produced. The New Forest Access Forum will be involved as a delivery partner. The County Council is proud of having part of the National Park in its area; this is seen as being good for the county and especially good for the promotion of tourism.

2.3 The Forum welcomed the production of the draft Plan and the clear intention shown by the County Council of its desire to improve access to the countryside.

3 Forum Workshops

3.1 The Forum was given an update on progress on the suggestions made following the 2006 and 2007 Workshops.

3.2 Mr Anderson of Hamptworth Estate was invited by the Chair to address the Forum in relation to recommendations the Forum had made regarding potential access improvements to Pound Bottom (post-landfill) and the Hamptworth Estate.

3.3 Copies of a letter from Mr and Mrs Bouskell of West Park were distributed to members. The letter indicates that the provision of new public access to the Monument will be considered. The Forum thanked West Park for its cooperative approach, and asked Charles Cuthbert of Hampshire County Council to progress the matter.

3.4 John Durnell informed the Forum about two new leaflets being produced by the Wildlife Trust for Testwood Lakes and the Lower Test Valley. The Forum thanked the Wildlife Trust for the work it is undertaking to improve and promote access to its sites.

3.5 The Forum decided that the 2008 Workshop will look at the area included within the boundary of the Open Forest. Speakers will be invited from the Forestry Commission, National Park Authority, Natural England and the Verderers. A sub group was set up to organise the Workshop, which will be held in Lyndhurst in late June / early July.

4 Recreation Management Strategy

4.1 Peter Walsh updated the Forum on the recent work of the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

4.2 As the consultation period for the draft Strategy is scheduled to finish between the June and September meetings, the Forum agreed that it

should meet, as a sub-group, to discuss the Strategy and propose a response which will then be agreed at the June meeting.

- 4.3 Forum members agreed that the off-road cycling network, with particular reference to the provision on the Crown Lands, should now be reviewed. It was agreed that this view should be conveyed to the National Park Authority, as it was thought that the Authority should deal with the overall principles of providing a joined up network, with perhaps the Cycle Working Group advising on implementation.

5 Additional Items

5.1 Additional items included:

- a) the Forum resolved to write to Natural England to express its support for continuation of the Access Management Grant Scheme;
- b) the Forum resolved to write to the highway authorities and National Park Authority to welcome their individual decisions to continue monitoring the ease of use of public rights of way by collecting BVPI 178 data as a local performance indicator;
- c) members received a report on recent regional LAF member training provided by Natural England, and agreed to consider the need for local training at a later meeting;
- d) members welcomed a proposal from the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum that an event for Parish Councils should be co-hosted by the two local access forums in October 2008;
- e) information on progress on the establishment of a National Access Forum;
- f) updates from neighbouring local access forum meetings, and other meetings at which the Forum is represented by individual members.

Recommendations:

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