

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2008

**NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT
SUMMARY OF THE MEETING ON MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 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 1 December 2008.

Recommendations:

- 1. To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 1 December 2008.**
- 2. To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum on Monday 2 March 2009.**

Papers:

NFNPA 281/08: Cover paper

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Main Agenda Items for Discussion

1 Forum's September Workshop

- 1.1 The Forum held a Workshop in September to which representatives of local Parish Councils, interest groups and land managers were invited. The Workshop encouraged delegates to make wide-ranging suggestions about how access to the central part of the Forum's area, the area within the boundary of the Open Forest, could be improved.
- 1.2 All the ideas generated at the Workshop were collated and presented to Forum members, together with suggested actions. Forum members discussed and agreed which ideas should be taken forward, and agreed the actions the Forum would take.
- 1.3 A large proportion of the suggestions related to the provision of access for cyclists. It was agreed that the sub-group that had been formed to organise the Workshop would reconvene to examine these proposals in more detail and to recommend some coherent actions.

2 New Forest Countryside Access Plan

- 2.1 Petronella Natrass of Hampshire County Council summarised the way that the rights of way improvement plan for the county had been prepared and issued copies of both the County Overview and the Plan for the New Forest and South-West Hampshire.
- 2.2 The County Overview describes the process through which the individual Plans were produced, and identifies the county-wide priorities for improving access to the countryside. The local Plan provides the County Council and its partners with a framework through which the specific issues affecting enjoyment of the countryside can be addressed in a co-ordinated way.

- 2.3 The Forum will be a key partner in advising the County Council on the delivery of the Plan, with the annual Workshop being one of the main mechanisms for identifying actions for the improvement of access and solutions to existing issues or problems.

3 New Forest National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy

- 3.1 The Forum has requested that an update on the progress of the two Authority Plans is included as a standard agenda item.
- 3.2 David Illsley, Planning Policy Officer, reported on the consultation process, summarising the legal requirements, the procedure followed, and the numbers of responses received to both Plans. Forum members were also informed about the proposed next stages.
- 3.3 In the following discussion it was noted that the Plans had received a great deal of publicity, and that this had meant that large numbers of the general public had looked at the Plans and become involved in the process. It was generally felt that this was beneficial, and that most other planning authorities' consultations did not attain this level of public involvement.
- 3.4 The Forum looks forward to being involved in future work associated with the development of the Plans, and particularly in the revision of the Recreation Management Strategy and its implementation.

4 Accessibility works

- 4.1 Sarah Manchester distributed copies of the first draft of the accessibility information for the two pilot sites, Blackwater and Lymington/Keyhaven.
- 4.2 Forum members were asked for initial reactions, and were also asked to provide more detailed comments on the documents in order to improve and refine the procedure by which the information is collected and the production and formatting of the information.
- 4.3 Initial reaction to the documents was good, with Forum members agreeing that the degree of information provided was appropriate for the target audience. Some suggestions were made as to how the presentation of the information could be improved.

5 Additional items included:

- a) a brief update on the Government's response to the Committee Report on the proposed new Coastal Access. Forum members agreed to write to local MPs and the England Access Forum to express their disappointment that Government appears to be ignoring many of the recommendations made through the public consultation that were also supported by both scrutinising committees;
- b) forward planning for future meetings. Forum members agreed that they would like to look at the development of accessibility symbols and signage, recreational cycling provision, support for outdoor play, and the registering of commons;
- c) a report on the Mobile Unit from Andy Brennan, one of the Authority's Seasonal Rangers;
- d) a report on the Hampshire Parish Conference organised by the County Council, which was hosted jointly by both the local access forums for the area and supported by the National Park Authority;
- e) a reminder that the Forum membership expires in Spring 2009, and that existing members will need to submit applications if they wish to be reappointed;
- f) updates from neighbouring local access forum meetings, and other meetings at which the Forum is represented by individual members.

Recommendations:

- 1. To note issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 1 December 2008.**
- 2. To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting on Monday 2 March 2009.**