



New Forest Access Forum Annual Report 2007-2008

The year 2007/08 was the New Forest Access Forum's second year of operation as the statutory local access forum for the New Forest National Park and south west Hampshire. The Forum's area stretches from the Western Downslands in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire AONB to the Waterside parishes by Southampton Water.

Since the formation of our Forum we have seen a greater emphasis on access to the countryside by the different organisations with responsibility in our area, which have all worked towards this improvement.

Hampshire County Council has produced its Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the New Forest and southwest Hampshire, and this will be published later in 2008. The Plan gives a future direction on improving access to rights of way and area-wide access.

The Forum will be contributing advice on how the Plan can be implemented by holding an annual workshop in different areas to which Parish Councils, landowners and user groups are invited. This year our workshop was in the northwest area of the Forest and the Western Downslands, where representatives from the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the National Trust, the National Park Authority and Wiltshire County Council came and spoke to us about their work on access. This was followed by discussions on possible improvements in that area.

In autumn 2008, we plan to hold the Workshop in Brockenhurst, and we will be considering the issues in the central part of our area.

Wiltshire County Council consulted this year on its rights of way improvement plan, which includes the northern part of the National Park. The Forum has commented and we await the publishing of the final plan.



The New Forest Access Forum is a key stakeholder in the production of the Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park and has been working with the National Park Authority on the production of this document. Forum member Peter Walsh represents the Forum on the Stakeholder Advisory Group for the production of this document. The draft document, when it is complete, will be available for public consultation in autumn 2008.

The Recreation Management Strategy will provide a vision for recreation in the New Forest in twenty years time. It will identify guiding principles and develop strategies for the principal recreation activities of walking, cycling, horse riding, camping and caravanning. It is anticipated that work on developing and implementing the Strategy will form a key part of the Forum's work over the coming years.

We also take an interest in access and countryside issues in our neighbouring areas, and we always try to have one of our members attending each meeting of our neighbouring local access forums in Dorset, Wiltshire and

Hampshire. This enables our Forum to keep up-to-date with developments in these areas, to learn from the other Forums, and will hopefully lead to some good joint working between us.

In addition, the Forum is represented on the Access Topic Group of the Cranborne and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, the New Forest Consultative Panel, and the New Forest Cycle Working Group.

One of our members, Ruth Croker, has been working with Hampshire County Council and the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum on a local 'Discovering Lost Ways' (DLW) project. Even before Natural England called a halt to the national DLW project it was decided to try to identify those routes in Hampshire that would be particularly useful and apply for them to be recorded on the Definitive Map of public rights of way. For example, paths that would provide a missing link in a circular route, or would provide an off-road link between settlements and places of interest. Many of these "lost ways" are in use and are not really lost at all, but simply unrecorded. In order to record them, it is essential to find



historical evidence, so the project is looking at old maps and documents. There are around 50 volunteers involved in total, of which 6 have a special interest in the New Forest.

There is continuing joint work with Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, and this year a group with members from both Forums was formed to advise on the proposal from government for the provision of a continuous path around the English coast. Coastal access continues to be an area of strong interest for the Forum, and we look forward to being closely involved with its implementation, when and if the legislation receives Royal Assent.

The New Forest District Council has produced an assessment of open space, play, sport and recreation facilities in the area. One of the key emerging themes was that the area is blessed with a range and diversity of high quality natural landscapes but there is a need for more accessible open spaces near to where people live.

The Forum was pleased to have been involved with the Forestry

Commission's four year long 'PROGRESS Project', which finished this year. The Project looked at ways to improve the access to the open Forest and help conserve and protect the New Forest. The work done has included promoting studies of important wildlife, promoting responsible recreation, improving 'access for all' to the Forest and the provision of new adventurous cycling track in one of the Commission's woodlands in neighbouring Dorset.

The Forum members are local people with a wide range of knowledge covering land management, recreational use, nature conservation, disability and local business. We are encouraged with the commitment we have seen from others towards access improvement. We have been informed and consulted and were pleased to offer in return encouragement, advice and comments. We are looking forward to another interesting and busy year.

Ann Sevier

CHAIR



Membership of the New Forest Access Forum 2007/2008

Forum member	Representing
Mike Bowles	Access to Water
Pete Brown	Camping and Caravanning
Cllr Nigel Clarke	Hampshire County Council
Olive Collins (until October 2007)	Disability
Ruth Croker	Walking
John Cropp	Dog Walking
Joan Cundill (from February 2008)	Disability
Sam Dovey	Farming
Alastair Duncan (vice chair)	Volunteering
John Durnell	Nature Conservation
Gordon Garrett	Horse Riding
Cllr Kathy Heron (until July 2007)	New Forest National Park Authority
Wendy Hughes	Education
Chris Marshallsay	Local Business (Equestrian)
Vicky Myers (from July 2007)	New Forest National Park Authority
Roger Neath (until September 2007)	Tourism
Rachel Pearson	Land Management
John Pemberton	Land Management
Bruce Rothnie	Land Management
Ann Sevier (chair)	Commoning
Peter Walsh	Cycling
Brian Way (from February 2008)	Tourism

All members can be contacted via the Forum Secretary on:

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More information and all papers relating to the Forum can be found on the New Forest National Park Authority's website www.newforestnpa.gov.uk. Select *Looking After* and then *New Forest Access Forum*.

All Forum meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak at a meeting, please contact the Forum Secretary at least two weeks in advance.

The New Forest Access Forum is the Local Access Forum for the New Forest National Park and Southwest Hampshire, and is a requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

