

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM REPORT
Summary of the meeting on Monday 3 September 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 3 September 2007.

Recommendations:

- 1 To note items of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 3 September 2007**
- 2 To note the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting is Monday 3 December 2007**

Resources:

Routine.

Papers:

NFNPA 208/07: Cover paper

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Main Agenda Items for Discussion

1 Matters arising

Access to Inland Waterways Bill

The Bill has still not had its second reading; this is now scheduled for 19 October.

Cycle Route Signage Report

The report was sent to the Boundary Markers and Signage Advisory Group. The Group is advisory in nature, and is not expecting to progress 'on the ground' projects. It was suggested that the involvement of the Highway Authority will be required to take forward the recommendations made in the report.

2 Coastal Access Consultation

- 2.1 A draft response to the consultation had been agreed by the coastal access sub-group. The Forum discussed the draft and agreed some amendments to it. In particular the Forum considered that whilst it supported most of the wording of Defra's vision, it did not agree with the proposal for rights to walk the length of the coast.
- 2.2 The Forum considered that the main needs are for easier and cheaper access to the coast, and to improve access along the coast including the creation of new access to fill strategic gaps
- 2.3 There was some discussion of the four options proposed by Natural England. It was agreed that not enough consideration had been given to the use of a combination of the existing powers to create new access (Options 1 – 3).

- 2.4 The Forum considered that the costs of implementing coastal access will be far greater than Defra envisages.

3 Local Transport Plan – possible projects for 2008/9

- 3.1 Hampshire County Council allocates a proportion of its Local Transport Plan funding for improvements to countryside access in accordance with the priorities identified in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The County Council asked the Forum to recommend projects for inclusion in a programme of schemes that would meet some specific criteria.

- 3.2 The Forum agreed that the following projects should be put forward:

- cycle signage project, as described in the report previously presented to the Forum;
- extension of the Castleman Trail;
- creation of a public right of way on the route of the old railway at Breamore;
- replacement of the Midgham Bridge on the Avon Valley Path.

4 ‘Life in Common’ Heritage Lottery Fund project

Libby Holmes gave a presentation about the project and asked members to consult with their interest groups and suggest ideas for projects that could be included in the bid submission.

5 Forum workshop

A paper was presented which summarised the recommendations made at the workshop held in June to look at how local access improvements could be made in the northern part of the Forum’s area. Forum members discussed the suggestions put forward at the workshop, and agreed a shortlist of ideas to be taken forward.

6 Forestry Commission Cycle Network

Bruce Rothnie summarised the existing provision for cycling on the Crown Lands. He asked for the Forum’s opinion on whether, and how, the cycle route network could be improved to better meet the needs of cyclists. Bruce also asked for the Forum’s view on whether cycling is appropriate in the New Forest, whether cycling should be restricted to certain types of area, and what the positive and negative aspects of cycling in the New Forest are.

7 Additional Items

Additional items included:

- a) reports from meetings of neighbouring access forums in Wiltshire and Hampshire, and of the Cranbourne Chase Access Topic Group;
- b) response to a questionnaire from Wiltshire County Council which is gathering data to form the basis of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan;
- c) an update on the progress of Hampshire County Council's Countryside Access Plan;
- d) confirmation that the Forum meeting dates for 2008 are March 3, June 2, September 8, and December 1.

Recommendations:

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