

Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group
The Library, Queen's House, 9 May 2016

Attendance:

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre (Chairman), New Forest National Park Authority
Jenny Thomas, Natural England
Tim Oliver, Forestry Commission
Colin Read, New Forest District Council
Nigel Matthews, New Forest National Park Authority
Dominic May, Verderers
Jonathan Woods, Hampshire County Council
Bruce Rothnie, Forestry Commission
Rachael Bowen (notes), New Forest National Park Authority

1 Welcome

- 1.1 OCE thanked everybody for attending and welcomed new representatives, Colin Read, Tim Oliver and Jonathan Woods.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3 Matters arising

- 3.1 A new voluntary organisation called 'Wild New Forest' had been set up by Professor Russell Wynn and Marcus Ward. They have instigated a survey of curlews across the Forest. As well as locating nest sites and recording success rates, volunteers will record any recreational impacts they observe. These data will hopefully help clarify the extent of impacts of recreation on this species, compared with other factors. Further details of the survey are in the attached annex.

4 Progressing a review of car parking and cycle routes

- 4.1 Following the decision at the last meeting that a review of car parking and cycle routes should be done, representatives from all Steering Group organisations had contributed a range of initial ideas for changes that would result in wins for the environment, the recreational experience and the economy.
- 4.2 There was some discussion about the underlying rationale for some of the changes and OCE confirmed that the priority task had not changed and that in due course any proposed changes will be carefully explained.
- 4.3 JT sought opportunity to reiterate how important the biodiversity of the New Forest SSSI is both nationally and internationally and that all the partners present have the same responsibility for protecting the wildlife. It was evident that for NE to be in agreement, it would need to be demonstrated that any changes would not have an adverse impact on wildlife.
- 4.4 CR suggested that NFDC leisure centres could be used as possible hubs for recreation as they offer parking, toilets and cafés.

- 4.5 OCE re-iterated the need to achieve something early in the process and the importance of focusing on parking and cycle routes at this stage.
- 4.6 The Group then considered the wide range of options that had been collated, the challenges that need to be addressed, and the opportunities and benefits that could accrue. Options included improved management of parking, better join-up of cycle routes, better use of areas with networks of rights of way and potential new sites for recreation around the perimeter of the National Park.
- 4.7 Although vital to the management of recreation in more sensitive areas, many of the opportunities outside of the Crown Lands are likely to be considered as part of the reviews of Local Plans being done by planning authorities.

Action: Further discussion to take place between representatives from the NPA, FC, NE and the Verderers, focussing on cycle routes and car parks within Crown Lands.

5 England Coast Path

- 5.1 The route of the new Coastal Path had yet to be identified, although some parts of the route look obvious and are unlikely to be contentious. The five public drop-in sessions had good attendance and NE staff had been on hand to answer questions. Concerns expressed included parking problems due to increased visitor numbers, litter and impacts on wildlife. At this stage, there was no clarity on responsibilities for the upkeep and maintenance of the Path. Although the Crown Lands are likely to be unaffected, there could be an impact in grazing if the route travels through estates adjacent to areas used by stock, so it was likely the Verderers would need consulting.

Action: JT to instigate a meeting between the Natural England Lead Officer of the England Coast Path and a Verderer

Action: NE Lead Officer to be invited to give presentation when the proposed Coastal Path route is known

6 Funding

- 6.1 Nothing was raised.

7 Liaison with Advisory Group

- 7.1 No specific liaison is needed at this time.

8 Date of next meetings

- 8.1 Every 3 months for the next 12 months.

9 AOB

- 9.1 It was agreed that it may be helpful to know when different car parks are full. Data could be recorded by Rangers and technology such as satellite imagery might be useful.