

Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group Tuesday 11 August via Microsoft Teams

Attendance:

Rachael Bowen (notes), New Forest National Park Authority
Richard Burke, Forestry England
Anthony Climpson, Go New Forest
Ruth Croker, Ringwood & Fordingbridge Footpath Society & Access Forum
Barry Dowsett, Verderers
Louise Evans, NFDC
Heather Gould, New Forest Dog Owners Group
Charlotte Lines, CDA
Nigel Matthews, New Forest National Park Authority
Leanne Sargeant, Forestry England
Graham Smith, Test Valley Borough Council
Brian Tarnoff, New Forest Association
Richard Taylor, New Forest National Park Authority
Claire Upton-Brown, NFDC
Nick Wardlaw, Forestry England
Jonathan Woods, HCC
James Young, CDA

Apologies:

Richard Black, Mark Cowling, Allison Potts, Sam Jones and Stephen Lorton.

1 Welcome / Introductions

1.1 NM welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

2 Election of Chairman

2.1 Richard Taylor proposed Nigel Matthews as Chair which was agreed.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

3.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

4 Strategic actions

4.1 The RMS Advisory Group worked through the report which lists achievements since RMS Steering Group organisations agreed, in 2019, the 22 strategic actions for managing recreation. The Advisory Group had played a key role in informing these strategic actions and in defining what would be done to progress them. Over time, the list can be updated so that progress is monitored.

Action: All to forward any additional achievements to NM for consideration

Several actions prompted discussion including the following.

1.2: A new scheme called New Forest Ambassadors has been launched recently with a particular focus on litter picking. 500 litter picking kits are being distributed to seven outlets and 250 of these have already been collected by members of the public. The Ambassadors are also being encouraged to collect data on verge and gateway car parking and report issues. The Ambassadors are not the same as rangers or fully trained volunteers but are a valuable resource at this time when so many people are visiting the New Forest.

The New Forest Code is now available in a printed format and is available at the same outlets. The 'Report a Problem' page on the NFNPA website has been improved and is easier to locate.

The Government has yet to make a formal response to the recommendations in the Landscapes (Glover) Review, which included a significant increase in the number of rangers working in protected landscapes.

1.3: Go New Forest find there is constant misunderstanding about them and tourism businesses. Please sign up to Go New Forest newsletters by visiting www.thenewforest.co.uk.

2.3: Forestry England staff are investigating options for strengthening the response to parking on verges and in front of access gates. Options include body worn cameras, 'ticket and tow', Traffic Regulation Orders and better use of existing bylaws. The educational sticker campaign is ongoing and the Police are looking at a system to contact repeat offenders.

The CDA would welcome more information about bylaws and their enforcement.

There was clear enthusiasm from the Group for verge parking to be treated as a priority by the Steering Group along with a request for improved and more frequent communication between the Advisory and Steering Groups – a regular, two-way dialogue.

Action: NM to request that the RMS Steering Group treats verge parking as a priority and commits to better communication with the Advisory Group.

2.4: Forestry England is working on new Habitats Regulations Assessments for permitted activities, which are due to be agreed before the end of the year.

4.1: NM summarised the purpose of the proposed Local Development Order (LDO) which is a planning tool that could allow changes to car parking provision (e.g. to modify or extend a car park) without the need for planning permission.

The Group felt that more evidence was needed to inform the spatial plan which is a key part of this work.

Land Use Consultants have been appointed to develop the LDO and the criteria that would determine which changes could be allowed. Natural England staff are currently working with other Steering Group organisations regarding the need for Habitats Regulations Assessment.

The Advisory Group would like to be consulted on the draft criteria.

Action: NM to request to the Steering Group that the Advisory Group should be consulted on draft criteria for the LDO.

Action: Advisory Group members to put forward any additional suggestions to help alleviate recreational pressures in the New Forest

4.2: Test Valley Borough Council and Eastleigh Borough Council have been working on delivering 35 hectares of 'country park' as part of their habitat mitigation strategy.

5 High priority RMS actions for the Partnership Plan

- 5.1 The Group considered the list of suggested actions for recreation management to be included in the Partnership Plan which is currently being reviewed. Verge parking and the spatial plan were highlighted as being very important.
- 5.2 The proposed Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is the Government's preferred tool for cross collaboration between organisations to develop an agreed plan for where people should be encouraged and enabled to walk and cycle.

Action: All to send NM any further comments on potential RMS actions to be included in the Partnership Plan by 26 August

6 AOB

- 6.1 None raised.

7 Date of next meeting

- 7.1 Next meeting to take place in early October after the Steering Group has met (on 21 September). It was noted that some conservation organisations had not been able to attend this meeting, and proposed that they be encouraged to find a representative even if some staff are furloughed.