

NFAF 31/5

Item 11 – Forestry Commission Update

Access Update from the Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission across the Crown Lands of the New Forest provides the following in terms of 'access':

134 Car Parks

107 miles of approved way marked Cycle Route

Many hundreds of access Gates and Barriers

350 bridges (vehicular/pedestrian)

7 Toilet Blocks

6 Way marked trails

Forest roads and tracks

Signage across all car parks and recreational sites

Provision of information/interpretation (website, cycle map, Bolderwood unit)

Events Program – deer watching, walks and talks etc

Open surgeries/Drop in – GNB, Dog Poo and antisocial behaviour

Public Engagement – New Forest Show, Christmas tree sales

Volunteer Ranger's

Reptile Centre – DWN

1. Car Parks

Car Park maintenance

The following car parks are being worked throughout March by FCE

Clay Hill Burley - Car park surface but also some potholes in tarmac entrance road getting quite big and deep.

Hincheslea - Surface works but also drainage problems due to x2 culverts laying under current surface level. Needs a bit of ditching/drainage works and culverts freed up.

Longdown - Car park and entrance road surfacing

Roundhill - Car park surfacing, plus a couple of very big holes which you could easily lose 10tns of gravel in each.

Deerleap - Surface potholes

Knightwood Oak - Surface potholes

Whitefield Moor - Surface being eroded down to soil base due to cars racing around the roundabout section. When this is programmed to be worked, we want to come in and close the roundabout section off to stop this in the future.

Pigbush - Entrance road (basalt) and car park surface potholes.

Car Park Closures

The Winter Closure car parks are due to open at the end of March and GNB car parks will be closed as of 1st March until 30th June. These being Clayhill Burley, Crockford, Crockford Clump and Hinchesea.

2. Cycle Routes

Route closures/diversions

Queen's Meadow and Setthorns sections of cycle route remain closed.

HLS project

Cycle map is currently being re-edited, due to be printed and out for Easter. Cycle counters have gone in and collecting data, every hour, every day.

3. Waymarked Trails

Maintenance

During January, all our Way marked trails were 'tidied up', leaf litter was raked off of gravel surfaces, culverts cleared, overhanging vegetation cut back.

Ober Water trail has some major clay holes that need repairing but due to the wet weather cannot be done until the ground dries out. We have erected signage explaining this and taped off these areas individually, rather than close the trail.

Bolderwood is currently having some vegetation maintenance. Tree surgery work following tree safety inspections.

New Interpretation is currently being worked on for all our waymarked trails, in order to provide similar theme and standard.

4. Toilet Blocks

Having refurbished Hatchet Pond and Whitefield Moor toilets under HLS, we have just purchased stainless Steel fittings for Bolderwood and Blackwater toilets. These are harder wearing, less vandal proof and easier to clean/maintain, and just nicer in appearance and use. To be fitted over the next few weeks.

Wilverley block requires a whole new roof to the sum of £5K. The toilets will be closed for a couple of weeks.

Maps have been put up under HLS on Hatchet and Whitefield of whole New Forest NP boundary, showing all public toilet locations.

5. Open Forest Management

HLS 'guttering' works were started in October 2012 and have been completed in the areas of Hilltop (11km) and Setley/Sway (10km). The final area at Ipley (9km) is due to be completed before the GNB season.

HLS partners are fully supportive of these works to protect grazing land from potential erosion, livestock from walking between verge parked vehicles and becoming a hazard and preventing access points becoming obstructed. I am currently putting a proposal together for further 'guttering' under HLS as FC sees HLS funding as an important resource to utilise in order to undertake these 'additional' protective works.

6. Harvesting

There are currently harvesting operations ongoing in Setthorns and Markway. Operations are due to start in Longdown. With all operational sites there may be restrictions on access.

7. Events and Education

National FC Learning Strategy

Due to be launched this Spring. The vision being to enable everyone, everywhere to connect with the nation's trees and forests so that they understand their importance and role of the FC in their management. How – Self-guided learning trails, downloadable resources, public events etc making the 'forest' more accessible to all.

Seasonal Ranger

There will be a seasonal Ranger, sourced from the VR team, this Spring/Summer – main duties are to man Bolderwood Unit and engage with the public.

It would be useful to have a brief discussion after this to assess the level of information and content required. The idea being this is an agenda item for all future meetings.