

## NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: Monday 13 March 2017

Agenda item 12: Regular updates

### a) National Park Authority – report from Mark Holroyd, Transport & Tourism Manager

- In partnership with UK Youth (Avon Tyrell), NFNPA has submitted an application to the HLF's Kick the Dust programme which supports collaborative projects that encourage youth and heritage organisations to work together to make heritage relevant and inclusive for 11-25 year olds. Taking place over three years 'Youthscape' will offer varied and engaging routes into heritage for young people including practical conservation, digital archaeology and interpretation design as well as work placements, ambassador programme and taster days. Youthscape also includes opportunities for heritage organisations to learn and develop skills in youth engagement to help work towards long-term organisational change.
- On 7<sup>th</sup> March we organised an event for Commercial Dog walkers in the National Park with expert Steve Jenkinson. There was also a training session around dog walker engagement with New Forest ranger teams. The number of commercial dog walkers using the New Forest is rising, and it is likely to continue to do so, with demand in a business which is currently unregulated. Whilst a lot of work has been done to positively engage with dog owners using the forest – this is the first event aimed at commercial walkers, and aims to start building a positive relationship with businesses and land managers.
- This summer we'll be delivering lots of youth sessions in the Forest as part of the Government's National Citizen Service scheme. Two new seasonal ranger posts will be created through this work.
- As in previous years, we'll be recruiting two further seasonal rangers to boost our ground nesting bird season engagement work and deliver activities at Camping in the Forest campsites throughout the Forest.
- The NPA is facilitating discussions with various Forest organisations concerned with commoning and the management of the Crown Lands, around the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union. The current Higher Level Stewardship programme ends in 2020, so the Forest needs to present a clear ask to Government around the future of agri-environment schemes beyond this. As countryside access is a key service provided by the Forest, it is important that the Access Forum are engaged in this and we'll ensure this happens. At present we are awaiting the publication of the Government's 25 year plan for the natural environment which we anticipate will set out the broad policy direction for future schemes.
- At the [last Authority meeting](#), members agreed that the National Park Authority will undertake the establishment role for the England Coast Path within the National Park. More details of this decision are on our website.

### b) Forestry Commission – update from Gary North

### c) Small Grants Scheme – report from Panel meeting of 7 February prepared by Joan Cundill

There were 13 applications for approx. £15,035. This was the final meeting of the financial year. Congratulations are due to the Community Engagement Rangers, CERs, for increasing the number of applications SGS is receiving.

There were two applications from the New Forest area.

1. **Fordingbridge Town Council** - requested £422 to replace a map board showing the Avon Valley footpath. The map board is in the church yard, which is on the footpath. This was approved.

I requested that style-free areas of footpaths should be shown in a different colour. This would help parents with child buggies as well as people with disabilities.

2. **Sway/Hordle BOAT no. 743** - to improve ditching, trim hedges and resurface 120 metres of the BOAT, which is very muddy with water-filled potholes. This is an interesting application as it has been put forward by a local resident with the support of Hordle parish council. The resident has been crowd-funding on the 'Just-giving' website and has already raised £1,300 towards the cost of the match funding. Approved.

3. The **Fawley Parish Council** request for £277 to raise and edge some areas of footpath 509, which was submitted to the previous SGS meeting in December, was approved.

4. I would also appreciate some discussion on the following application which was submitted for SGS funding by a parish council.

An estate had two 3 metre-wide permissive paths, running along the edge of cultivated fields, which were funded under the HLS scheme. The paths were well used as they avoided a dangerous, narrow road. HLS funding finished on the 1<sup>st</sup> November last year.

Since then the paths have been ploughed and the farmer is asking the parish council for £800 to re-instate the footpaths, plus £1,200 annually to cover footpath maintenance and loss of arable land, presumably the 1 metre strip of land which is more than 2 metres from the hedge.

This kind of application may arise in the future as HLS funding for access improvements is no longer available.

Joan Cundill

25<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

d) **Cycling working group** – update from Mark Holroyd

e) **Historic Routes steering group** – update from Alastair Duncan/Ann Sevier