

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting
Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington SO41 9ZG
2 December 2024

Present

Members:

Caroline Rackham (Chair)
David Bennett
Gordon Bird
Ruth Croker
Erika Dovey
Sarah Hammett
Pippa Hutton
Lucy Kennedy
Paola Palma
Ann Sevier (Deputy Chair)
Richard Shirley
Brian Tarnoff

Officers:

Adam Vasey (New Forest National Park Authority)
Vicki Gibbon (New Forest National Park Authority)

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Bob Damper and Paul French.

2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting held on 2 September 2024 were agreed as a true record.

2.2 Ann Sevier made a declaration of interest, that should discussions arise regarding the Verderers she would be unable to take part.

3 Member and Officer Reports

3.1 Forum Officer's Report

3.2 Adam Vasey gave a National Park Access update highlighting that the Dilton Farm surface works were now complete, and the NPA had relaunched the volunteering offer and were now offering four volunteering tasks per month with a focus on Nature Recover and path improvements.

3.3 The full report can be found on our website.

3.4 Forestry England Report – Lucy Kennedy

3.5 Lucy Kennedy gave a brief update on work which had been carried out by Forestry England this included the continuing access update at Knightwood Oak along with

work being carried out at Blackwater Arboretum to enable a better visitor experience.

- 3.6 Paola Palma thanked the forum for the letter which had been sent to the Heritage Lottery Fund regarding the bid for funding for the Salt pans of Lymington project, she hoped to hear if the bid was successful by the end of the year and will update the forum as necessary.

4 Public Representations

- 4.1 None.

5 Hampshire Countryside Access Plan – Abby Sullivan (HCC)

- 5.1 Abby Sullivan gave an overview of the Countryside Access Plan 2025-2035, she began by discussing how the Plan was developed by talking to Local Access Forums along with internal HCC colleagues. She explained that it became clear that four areas would be required to focus on: planning and transport, health and wellbeing, accessibility for all and climate change. To enable HCC to achieve these objectives funding and partnership working would be necessary. Ms Sullivan explained that the Plan was currently in the process of initial sign off, then would be sent to the design team with a public consultation for 12 weeks beginning early 2025 and should be ready for adoption by the end of 2025.

- 5.2 Forum members discussed the plan, and the following questions were asked –

How would routes be prioritised?

Abby responded that HCC would look at the whole area and decide if the route would feed into the community, if it was busy / well used etc.

Were any review documents available?

Abby was uncertain if there was a review on the previous plan, however it had been written into the current plan to produce a review.

Was a fundraising team available to help?

Abby explained that currently there was not a fundraising team but more of a project team who deals with this, however she believed her role may change to incorporate this.

Was there anywhere with a list of routes which were currently closed?

Abby advised that should a route be closed / inaccessible it should be documented online.

It was suggested that more physical signage be placed where routes were inaccessible.

It was suggested that there should be increased communication, possibly online to help visitors to know routes, what clothing / footwear to be used possibilities of lyme disease etc.

It was asked that Abby return to the Forum annually to give an update on how the plan was progressing.

6 FE Charging for Car Parks

- 6.2 Following a recent article in the Daily Echo members were asked their thoughts on the possibility of FE charging for forest car parks.
- 6.3 Lucy Kennedy (FE) told the forum that less than 10% of FE's funding comes from government and that FE were looking at ways to increase their funding. She assured the forum that this was not a new discussion, and that FE were in conversation with partner organisations and would keep the forum updated.
- 6.4 Forum members understood the need for further funding for FE, it was suggested that a parking clock could be made available for residents. Forum members were concerned about verge parking and Wi-Fi availability should parking charges be applied.

7 LCWIP & Gravel Track Update

- 7.1 Gordon Bird informed forum members that a recent sub-group meeting had taken place where the LCWIP and Gravel Track update was discussed. Following the sub-group meeting a consultation response was submitted.

8 Members Representing the Access Forum

- 8.1 Adam Vasey advised that there were several upcoming meetings and regular meeting groups to which the Access Forum were invited and asked members to express their interest in these. It was agreed that David Bennett would represent the Forum on the RMS Advisory Committee, and that Lucy Kennedy would represent the Forum on the Wiltshire LAF.

9. AOB

Action – Caroline Rackham (Chair) to write a letter to partner organisations regarding consultation timelines

Date of next meeting:

Monday 10 March 2025, 9.30am – 1.00pm – Council Chamber, Lyminster Town Hall.