

Minutes of the New Forest Access Forum Meeting
Calshot Activities Centre, Calshot
10 June 2024

Present

Members: Ruth Croker (Chair)
Erika Dovey
Paul French
Pippa Hutton
David King
Paula Palma
Ann Sevier
Sarah Hammett
Caroline Rackham
Richard Shirley
Teresa Monks
Gordon Bird
Brian Tarnoff

Officers: Adam Vasey (New Forest National Park Authority)

In attendance: n/a

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies received from Lucy Kennedy, Bob Damper and David Bennett

2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 No matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

3 Chair's Report

3.1 The Chair ran through her report highlighting the issues with online meetings via Teams or Zoom.

3.2 The remainder of the report was taken as read.

4 Forum Officer's Report

4.1 AV touched on the current and upcoming access projects including the National Grid project bid concerning access improvements along the Breamore Railway line.

5 Additional Reports

5.1 In Lucy's absence Richard Burke delivered the Forestry England update. Rich also mentioned discussed the Penny Moor bridge issue which has seen significant consultation on through the Verderers, Commoners and Natural England. The plan is to remove two old bridges, with access to the site still supported by a larger metal bridge to the East.

CW – Car park closures cause confusion amongst regular users and summer visitors. Could additional signage at closed car parks list nearby, alternative car parks?

RB – All car park closures are listed online. The New Forest is a working forest and a highly protected area in which the wildlife must be protected and that is the main concern. With over 130 free car parks in the New Forest there are many alternative options.

PF – It is the visitor's responsibility to check the website before visiting. If people are inconvenienced, then they will learn for next time and choose a different car park to visit.

Some members felt that expecting visitors to check the website every time they travelled to the Forest was unrealistic.

Richard gave an update on the PSPO for fires and pony feeding. His feedback from the FE ranger team was that it is a useful tool, acting as a good talking point and deterrent. So far one notice has been issued regarding fire lighting.

ED – Agree with this point. When in my ranger role I feel it works and is effective even if few notices are given.

Richard then gave reasons and rationale for wanting to improve the quality of food vans which are present in 20 locations. Currently he has issues about the ice-cream vans who do not source local produce and seemingly have little interest in caring for the New Forest. On other FE landholdings third party food providers are held to higher standards and Richard want to bring this approach into the New Forest.

Negotiations are ongoing for trialling new contracts at five of the 20 sites with providers having better environmental credentials, using local produce and reducing the amount of single-use plastics which can often become litter. The tenders also involve litter collection and for each site a comprehensive risk assessment is completed, supported by regular site monitoring.

AS – Issue is resolved now but better communications between Verderers and FE are needed.

6 Public Representations

6.1 None.

7 Equestrians using footbridges on Forestry England Land – Richard Burke (Forestry England)

7.1 Richard explained that recently there have a been a couple for incidents of horse riders using pedestrian footbridges to cross rivers when they are in flood. The pedestrian footbridges are not designed to bear the weight of horses and thus have resulted in accidents.

There are 90+ small pedestrian bridges in the New Forest and Forestry England will be added a small warning bade to each of these to let riders know that the bridges are not designed to take horse traffic. In a few areas they are replacing pedestrian

bridges with larger horse-capable bridges. Richard would like to get the opinions of the forum to help him communicate this message.

PH – Happy to help spread the message amongst the equine community although how many riders already using pedestrian bridges as a regular route will stop she didn't know.

CW – Would more signage around the route help?

RB – With so many paths leading to 90+ bridges this would require a huge number of signs all of which would require permissions from Verderers and Natural England. In addition, signage is often removed from sites or rubbed by ponies until it breaks.

DK – Please can we make sure that signs indicate no horses rather than pedestrians only? Don't want to discriminate against those using mobility scooters.

RB – Confirmed that signs would state either with words or image 'No horses'.

8 Site visit to the England Coast Path

8.1 AV led a short walk to the start of the Calshot to Gosport section of the King Charles III England Coast Path. Interpretation and Signage were inspected and discussed.

9 Open Discussion

9.1 There were no topics for open discussion.

10 Any other business.

10.1 No other business.

Date of next meeting:

Monday 2 September 2024, 9.30am – 1.00pm – Lymington Town Hall