

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

Present

Members:

Ruth Croker (Chair)
David Bennett
Erika Dovey
Paul French
Sarah Hammett
Pippa Hutton
Lucy Kennedy
David King
Caroline Rackham
Ann Sevier
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, Theresa Monks, Paula Palma, and Richard Shirley.

2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 SH – advised that she would like to revise the wording around car park closures in the previous minutes, it was agreed that she would send some wording to AV to use as an amendment. The remainder of the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 June 2024 were agreed as a true record.

2.2 The Chair introduced two new members of the forum; David Bennett who would be representing volunteering and Brian Tarnoff who would be representing wildlife and conservation.

3 Chair's Report

3.1 The Chair gave a brief overview of her report commenting that there had been very few meetings over the period.

The remainder of the report was taken as read.

4 Forum Officer's Report

4.1 Adam Vasey gave a National Park Access update highlighting the Dilton Farm improvement works where work would be starting within the next couple of weeks, Defra Access for All fund, Volunteering, the National Grid Landscape Enhancement project and the England Coast Path.

4.2 The full report can be found on our website.

5 Additional Reports

5.1 Lucy Kennedy gave an overview of the current work being carried out by Forestry England. A copy of the presentation can be found on the website.

6 Public Representations

6.1 None.

7 Access for All – Adam Vasey (NFNPA)

7.1 Adam Vasey gave a PowerPoint presentation to the forum, advising that the forum had always had a good focus on accessibility. He said that Defra had awarded £80,000 from the Access for All Fund in 2022 which had been spent on rights of way improvements at Cadland, new bikes for PEDALL and upgrading the leaflets for NFNPA walks.

7.2 Adam explained that it was now year 3 of the fund where £90,000 had been awarded and this would be spent on increasing accessibility at the Knightwood Oak site, PEDALL and the Dilton Farm track.

7.3 It was requested that when the Dilton Farm path was completed members carry out a site visit.

A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

8 Accessibility in the Forest – Marcus Ward

8.1 Marcus Ward gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the work of Wild New Forest which helped with access to the Forest for those with limited mobility. He explained that discussions had taken place with disabled ramblers asking what was important to them in relation to issues within the New Forest. One of the main concerns was poor toilet facilities in and around the New Forest and a lack of suitable routes. Mr Ward then provide the forum with a wish list which would help those with disabilities have more access to the Forest.

8.2 Following discussion, Adam Vasey suggested that should money be available there was a possibility of investing in some trampers. It was also suggested that mobile welfare units be provided, Flourish & Nature have these available – AV to forward information on this to Marcus. Lucy Kennedy advised that FE were currently looking at upgrading toilet facilities throughout the forest.

A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

9 Open Discussion

9.1 Jim Mitchell provided the forum with a brief update on LCWIP advising that the consultation would begin on Monday 9 September. He explained that this consultation would set out the investment priorities over the next 10 years, the consultation would take form of a questionnaire along with interactive maps.

- 9.2 AV advised that forum members should complete the consultation as individuals along with a forum response and asked all members to send in any comments. It was agreed that a sub-group meeting would take place week commencing 21 October to enable a forum response to be submitted.
- 9.3 RC advised that an FOI had recently been submitted asking how many rights of way were currently being decided, she explained that a lot had been submitted to HCC and she asked if as a forum should we request this information too. AV informed how rights of way were determined and that currently the average length of time for this was around 10 years. It was agreed that RC would submit an FOI to gather information on rights of way waiting to be determined. BT said he would check if the forum was a consultee on these matters.
- 9.4 BT requested that the SAMM document be circulated to forum members and if Footprint Ecology and David Illsley could attend a future meeting to discuss. AV agreed that he would action this.

10 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

- 10.1 An election took place to determine the Chair and Deputy Chair for the ensuring year, Caroline Rackham was elected as Chair with Ann Sevier as Deputy.

Date of next meeting:

Monday 2 December 2024, 9.30am – 1.00pm – Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall.