

Minutes of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum meeting, 20 March 2018

Present

Members

Rachel Bryan (RB) (Chair)

Sue Coles (SC)

Robin Edwards (RE)

Jaqueline England (JE)

Graham Flatt (GJ)

Melanie Fortescue (MF)

Anna Hammond (AH)

Paul Knipe (PK)

Lindsay Marshall (LM)

Jim Morey (JM)

Gill Plumbley (GP)

Alan Taylor (Vice-chair) (AT)

Andy Whincup (AWh)

Aileen Wood (AW)

Officers attending all or part of meeting

Petronella Natrass (Forum Officer)

Deborah Watkins (HCC Countryside)

Jane King (Minutes)

John Truswell (Natural England)

Amanda Birch (Natural England)

Observers

Helena Barker

Mark Sumner

1 Apologies, welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Nigel Wolstenholme, Gail Johnson, Alan Marlow, Cllr Edward Heron and Sandra Nichols. Jonathan Woods had also given his apologies, owing to sickness.

2 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 **Minutes:** The Minutes of 12 December 2017 were agreed.

2.2 Matters arising:

- **Raising awareness of HCAF** – various amendments to the letter that RB had drafted: change “upcoming” to “future”. First paragraph: “to remind you” to “introduce”. Forum started in 2003, who the members are and what the Forum does. To be updated and recirculated for approval before the next Forum meeting in June, for distribution through Hampshire Association of Local Councils.

ACTION: RB/PN to update RB’s draft letter to Parishes/LPAs etc in line with comments and circulate to whole Forum in time to be signed-off at the June meeting.

- **List of Streets** – sub-group had met with Mark Housby – notes/report under para 11.2.
- **Planning** – PN had circulated the NFAF’s planning guidance document.
- **Reports from other LAFs** – Circulated, to be updated.

3 Work Programme for 2018

- 3.1 This had been circulated and looked at briefly at the last meeting. No further comments received, all confirmed. It was suggested that “Engage with MoD...” and “Monitor progress with and implications of Brexit...” should be moved from sections 4 and 5 respectively to section 3, and that “Engage with Hampshire Highways (Section 3) should be appended with “including restoring lost routes”. PN to update.

ACTION: PN to update Work Programme and re-circulate.

- 3.2 There have been some significant changes (e.g. Brexit) since the 3-5 year Forward Plan was last updated (Sept 2015) and it was agreed that RB and AT should review / update and bring to forum in June to discuss.

ACTION: RB/AT to review/update the Forward Plan and circulate for comment before the June meeting.

4 HCC Draft Enforcement Policy

- 4.1 Jonathan Woods had had to give his apologies for this meeting so this item will be taken forward to June Forum meeting.

5 Draft Equestrian Guidance

- 5.1 Forum agreed in principle that this could be adopted as a HCAF document, but that the draft needs further work if there is to be full consensus – and an agreed process for achieving that consensus. SC and AWh both expressed interest in assisting with this. SC suggested that the document needs to be more nuanced and will set out her views on this in writing.

ACTION: SC to email Forum with her thoughts on nuance within the document.

ACTION: PN to email all Forum (for benefit of those who were absent from the meeting) to inform of agreement in principle and check whether other members wish to be involved.

ACTION: GP to coordinate a meeting to agree/progress process for finalising the guidance.

- 5.2 AT suggested that in principle HCAF should produce such guidance only where there was a need to 'fill a hole', rather than as a matter of routine. AWh proposed that there should be provision within the Forward Plan for similar 'plugging of gaps'.

ACTION: RB/AT to include this in their review of the Forward Plan.

6 Sub-groups

- 6.1 There are currently a large number of sub-groups working on different projects, with potential for overlap between the different work streams. RB advised the Forum need to identify Sub-groups and Lead Member. PN distributed a list of groups and names to discuss at the workshop after lunch.

7 Brexit – Response to DEFRA

- 7.1 The current consultation 'Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment' is an opportunity for Forum to comment both collectively and individually. It was agreed that HCAF should respond, as a statutory advisory body.
- 7.2 While the Government's 25-year strategy includes some strong policy on access, it was felt that this is not reflected in the current consultation.
- 7.3 After in-depth discussion on the balance between the desire for new access and the need to manage/mitigate adverse effects on land management, RB advised AT will do the first draft submission for Defra within the next 2 weeks and circulate with a further 2 weeks for comments.

ACTION: AT to prepare a first draft response to the DEFRA consultation on ['Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit'](#) and circulate to Forum with a 2 week deadline for **ALL** to comment. **(NB Responses are due by 8 May)**

8 England Coast Path

- 8.1 John Truswell and Amanda Birch from Natural England updated John's written report on Highcliffe to Calshot, Calshot to Gosport, Gosport to Portsmouth and an IOW update. Gosport-Portsmouth is very urban, well-populated and with a high level of existing access on RoW. No new access will be needed and the report will be published end of May/early June.
- 8.2 Portsmouth – South Hayling is still with the Planning Inspectorate.
- 8.3 It was agreed that the Coastal Access Sub-Group should reconvene.

ACTION: RB to arrange a meeting of the Coastal Access sub-group.

9 HCAF Engagement with Highways

- 9.1 Following the workshop in December the Strategic Transport representatives were to have spoken to others in their Department about closer liaison with HCAF as a consultative group. GF suggested that there might be an annual workshop – although the Forum would need to define what outcomes it would be seeking. Alternative would be to engage with Highways on a case by case basis.
- 9.2 The Forum remains concerned that although there are policies and guidance about the requirement to consult, there is an ongoing problem of lack of consultation on road improvement schemes and users finding out about projects too late to be effective in advising and informing them. HCAF itself needs to be more aware of what guidance exists, and find some means of establishing earlier consultation. Another approach would be to identify case studies on which to build a set of principles that could be referred to within road improvements and other strategic transport planning.

ACTION: PN to contact Graham Wright for update on progress following the workshop and options to develop earlier/more effective consultation.

- 9.3 Forum agreed to continue this discussion at the next meeting. Include in Forward Plan in June and action/next steps in September.

10 Forum Officer's Report

- 10.1 **Rural Communities Fund** – concern was expressed about the nature of gates for easy access and equestrians. PN advised that this is covered in the Countryside Service's Design Standards, which applicants are required to comply with.
- 10.2 The Panel is now formally standing-down from its advisory role but will continue to monitor applications through routine quarterly reports to HCAF.

ACTION: ALL to review what improvements this scheme has delivered in a year's time (March 2019).

11 Project/sub-group updates

- 11.1 **Byways Management Sub-group** – assessment form and guidance to be updated by Countryside Service and discussed at the next meeting in June.
- 11.2 **List of Streets** – the group is awaiting an update on officers' progress with actions agreed at a meeting with Jonathan Woods, Harry Goodchild and Mark Housby on 7 February.

ACTION: PN to follow-up and report back.

11.3 **MOD Liaison Group** – met on 7 March 2018. The Forum approved Alan T's draft letter to MoD re review of MoD bye-laws, subject to removal of '...with the addition for the sake of clarity of the words "for all types of non-motorised users" from the final paragraph of page 1. It was further agreed:

- that the draft should explicitly mention carriage drivers
- that it should be adopted as HCAF advice and that
- (with the agreement of Surrey, South Downs and possibly Kent LAFs) this should be issued as joint advice.

ACTION: AT to coordinate sign-up from other LAFs.

11.4 **Multi-user Routes** – is still in abeyance, however the Forum were notified of the Meon Valley Trail celebration day scheduled for 2 June 2018 which is being coordinated by user groups.

11.5 **PATHH** - there is £255.14 remaining from the PATHH HLF funding, and it is proposed that this be spent on work towards recording routes on the Definitive Map, e.g. copying of records. This has to be within the agreed terms of HLF.

ACTION: SC to identify:

- What the funds are to be spent on
- How this fits with HLF terms

ACTION: Sub-group to bring a recommendation to Forum for decision on 19 June.

11.6 **Planning Sub-group** – no updates.

12 Reports from other Forums

As per report tabled at the meeting.

Mid and West Berks LAF – Helena Barker reported the following at the meeting:

- LAF has been discussing Brexit and the current DEFRA consultation in some detail.
- Reviewed ROWIP for Reading – a largely urban authority with 34km of footpaths, working closely with The Ramblers and Sustrans
- LAF is proposing to publish guidance on gates, gaps and stiles.

Date of Next Meeting: 19 June at Royal Victoria Country Park