

## Minutes of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum meeting, 21 June 2016

### Present

#### Members

Graham Flatt (Chair)  
Nigel Wolstenholme (Vice-Chair)  
Rachel Moroney (Vice-Chair)  
Sue Coles  
Lyell Fairlie  
Cllr Rob Humby  
Gail Johnson  
Paul Knipe  
Alan Marlow  
Lindsey Marshall  
Valerie Rawlings  
Alan Taylor  
Isaac Walker

#### Officers attending all or part of meeting

Petronella Nattrass (HCC)  
Jonathan Woods (HCC)  
Jim Adkins (HCC)  
Stuart Roberts (SRMP)  
Karima Englefield (SRMP)

#### Observers

Mark Sumner (DIO)  
Emma King (member of the public)  
Bob McLellan

## 1 Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies received from members Mark Ludlow, Robin Edwards, Aileen Wood and Melanie Fortescue.
- 1.2 Sue Montila has stepped down after many years as the Forum's horse-riding representative, in order to concentrate on access improvement initiatives in her local area. As a founding member of HCAF she has contributed significantly to the work of the Forum and will be greatly missed. Members agreed to send her a card.
- 1.3 SC noted that the Forum had not had an off-road cycling representative since members were last reappointed and asked if an off-road cycling representative could be recruited, in addition to a new horse-riding representative.
- 1.4 Cllr Jacqui Raiment (representative for Southampton City Council) has also stepped down and Cllr Alicia Penny has been appointed as the new representative for Portsmouth City Council.

## 2 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 Minutes of the meeting of 15 March 2016 were accepted as a true record. AT congratulated HCC on the timely completion of the Shipwrights Way.
- 2.2 Matters arising:
  - **Small Grants Scheme** – dates have been set for this year's Panel meetings: 10 May, 16 August, 8 November, 7 February.
  - **LAF consultation** on 'making our needs known and influencing decision makers': Forum's response had been submitted by 31 March – the completed

response form had been circulated to members electronically, copies were tabled at the meeting.

- **Yateley Common at Blackbushe Airport** – as yet no action had been taken as the matter was still subject to an application to remove the condition requiring a diversion of Eversley Bridleway no. 11. It is recognised that this is a thorny issue, but the Forum feel that enforcement should be pursued.

**ACTION: Forum to write separate letters to HCC and Hart DC. AT to prepare a initial drafts for circulation to GF, SC and AM, possibly in consultation with Kieran Foster**

2.3 Other matters arising are addressed under items 6, 11 and 12.

### **3 Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership**

3.1 Stuart Roberts and Karima Englefield gave a presentation about the work of the SRMP (copy of slides attached). The project covers the south coast between Hurst Castle and West Wittering and the northern coast of the Isle of Wight. Much of this stretch of coast is internationally important for overwintering wildfowl and there are concerns about the impact of continuing development on these areas. SRMP seeks to influence behaviour of those visiting the coast rather than to discourage visits.

An interim strategy has been adopted and is being implemented until a longer-term Strategy has been developed. Funding is through developer contributions. Steve Jenkinson has been brought in to introduce initiatives developed elsewhere and 'Walk On' consultancy has been commissioned to carry out a dog-walking survey.

SRMP is closely involved in the England Coast Path consultations – discussions are very positive, looking at benefits of the Coast Path (e.g. by providing a defined route away from feeding grounds) as well as the avoidance of additional disturbance.

3.2 Questions: Volunteer involvement? – in due course, once ranger team fully established; is SRMP time-limited? – it is hoped not; legislation requires mitigation measures to be "in perpetuity".

### **4 Forum Officer's report**

#### **4.1 Small Grants Scheme**

The panel had its first meeting in May and approved all 3 applications that had been received – total value just under £4,500, leaving a balance of just over £47,500. A number of modifications to the scheme had been proposed and would be discussed under item 9.

#### **4.2 Hampshire County Council update**

- Parish Lengthsman scheme – this was originally purely a Highways scheme, but 25% of the funding for 2016-17 is coming from the Rural Grants Fund for the scheme to be extended to cover rights of way. Work on RoW will be recorded and monitored using the Countryside Service's online reporting screens.
- DfT consultation on a draft Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy – the Countryside Service had contributed to the HCC corporate response to this.

**ACTION: PN to circulate copy of HCC response to Forum, for information**

### 4.3 **LAF updates**

- National Conference on 23 February 2016 – materials from the Conference are now available from Natural England's website
- LAF consultation on 'Making our needs known and influencing decision makers' – both the Hampshire and New Forest LAFs had responded.
- LAF Survey 2015-16 – GF has completed this annual on-line survey on behalf of HCAF. The separate LAF Review Form would be discussed under item 8.

### 4.4 **Other**

- Isle of Wight Council has just published its draft ROWIP for consultation, deadline for responses is 16 September.

**AGREED: that Forum would not be responding to this consultation**

## 5 **Update on the Hampshire Rural Forum Steering Group**

5.1 Hampshire Rural Forum (originally set up by the late Cllr Ray Ellis) has not met for a couple of years, but is now being revived. The Forum comprises a network of 40-50 organisations, with a steering group of 11-12 including representatives from the two LEPs and both National Parks. The Forum is not intended to be a County-led or political entity, so while RH chaired the first meeting on 20 June, future meetings will be chaired by Mike Ridout (who is also Chairman of the Wessex Rural Farming Network (WRFN)), with Alison Barnes (NFNPA) as vice-chair. HCC has provided a small fund for the first year, after which it is expected that the forum will be supported by contributions from the member organisations.

5.2 At the first meeting the steering group decided to develop a set of themes for the Rural Forum. Once these are agreed, the Forum will broaden out to include other organisations including HCAF, Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC), and WRFN. The aim is for rural matters in Hampshire to be considered equally alongside urban.

## 6 **Project/sub-group updates**

### **a) Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage (PATHH)**

Hampshire Records have a copy of the research database and seem amenable to holding it, although this has yet to be formally confirmed.

Amanda Hull will be working as a volunteer to set up a new website; this is expected to incur an annual cost of just over £42 which will be met from the balance of PATHH funding.

Formal investigation has started on the first of 3 claims that have been submitted. It is not intended submit more claims before Deregulation (possibly December 2016).

### **b) Access on MOD land**

Mark Sumner apologised that DIO have still not offered any dates for the next meeting of the MoD Liaison Group and assured the Forum that his organisation is keen for these meetings to continue. He will try to provide meeting date(s). NW emphasised that even if it is not possible for the whole group to meet on the date(s) offered, there must be at least one user and one landowner representative at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Mark Sumner to identify meeting dates and notify the HCAF representatives.**

**c) *Multi-user routes***

This had been led by Sue Montila prior to her stepping down from the Forum. It was agreed that further work on this should be deferred until a new horse-riding representative had been recruited.

Gail Johnson is meanwhile working with the BHS and East Hants DC on provision for equestrians in the 'Green Loop' at Bordon/Whitehill. The next step will be a survey on how local equestrians use access in this area.

**d) *Coastal Access***

The sub-group's first meeting with Natural England involved detailed discussions of routes. NE are listening and are keen to consider all angles, e.g. seasonal availability of ferries and support for local businesses.

VR was concerned about the reference in the notes from 24 May to disabled access not being a primary focus, and emphasised that the needs of disabled people should be considered wherever possible.

**e) *Draft Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy***

The Forum thanked SC, AM, GF and GJ for their work on the response to this, the final version of which was circulated with the agenda and papers.

**7 Reports from other LAFs**

7.1 AM had attended the South Downs LAF meeting on 26 April and PN had attended the New Forest Access Froum on 6 June in her capacity as Forum Officer.

**a) *New Forest Access Froum***

At the AGM on 6 June Ruth Croker was re-elected as Chair. Alastair Duncan stood down as Vice-Chair, however there were no nominations and Alastair agreed to continue as Vice-Chair until September.

NFAF is forming a sub-group to respond to consultations on NFDC and NFNPA Local Plan Reviews, which are due in July and October respectively.

**b) *South Downs LAF***

SDLAF has also responded to the DfT draft Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, with views very similar to those of HCAF, and have asked for a copy of the HCAF response for info.

**ACTION: PN to contact SDLAF officer about exchanging copies of responses.**

A number of new members had been very interested in PATHH.

There had been no report from the SDLAF surfacing work, but some very positive comments had been received on the Meon Valley Trail.

**8 LAF Annual Review Form 2015-16**

8.1 This annual return reports to Natural England on the range of activities and advice given by Forum over the last financial year. GF tabled an initial draft which members reviewed and commented on. A copy would be circulated to the whole Forum for any updates or comments in time to meet the submission deadline (31 July)

**ACTION: PN to update the draft and circulate to whole Forum, for comments by 11 July.**

## 9 Changes to the Small Grants Scheme

- 9.1 SC remarked that it was disappointing that the number and quality of the applications was still not particularly high. The HCC Community Engagement Rangers have a key role to play in guiding Parishes through the process and also advising them on appropriate specifications, using the Countryside Service Design Standards (a link to these is provided on the SGS web page).

**AGREED: that the Forum supports the changes approved by the Panel.**

## 10 Millennium Path Alresford

- 10.1 Cllr Jackie Porter was seeking HCAF support for a long-term solution to the surfacing problems on this path, which is being undercut by the river.

**AGREED: that the Forum supports in principle a longer-term solution that will provide a safe, stable path for the next 30 years**, on the basis that this path is historically important, highly used and a key strategic link between Alresford and the surrounding countryside

## 11 Influencing Planning Decisions

- 11.1 NW opened the discussion with the view that the only way HCAF can influence planning decisions is at policy level, possibly by introducing a form of guidance note that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) can include in their Local Plan. The Forum feel that there are many different agencies pursuing the same end in different ways and not joining up.
- 11.2 Understanding of RoW issues appears to be limited among many LPAs. It is believed that they are more likely to listen to a voluntary body such as the Forum rather than to another authority such as HCC. GF has spoken recently to a number of LPAs and feels that planners are looking for and would welcome some form of guidance.
- 11.3 **AGREED: to convene a sub-group that will agree a process for developing guidance, aiming to presenting a proposal to the Forum in September.** Initial volunteers include GJ, NW and AM, supported by JW. The group will seek input from a planning officer.

## 12 Member discussion/project development

### a) Equestrian Needs – the Way Forward

GJ gave a verbal update on her approaches to various Local Planning Authorities. The first question most asked was for information on where riders actually ride.

PN had provided a written update which included a draft structure for the proposed guidance document. It was agreed that the next step should be to try populating this and in the process establish where the gaps in information are. While this is a unique area with unique problems, it is acknowledged that there may well be convergence with the Planning guidance initiative.

**ACTION: JW, GJ and PN to meet and agree next steps.**

### b) Volunteering Initiatives

RM had prepared a proposal to research and implement ways in which HCAF can support and encourage volunteering on Hampshire's Rights of Way. RM and Aileen Wood had met with 2 of the HCC Community Engagement Rangers. Their discussion focused on concerns about communication, and the promotion of volunteering opportunities.

RM is seeking HCAF support for setting up an HCAF social media page and to develop ways to showcase and promote volunteer projects.

***Date of next meeting: 13 September 2016 – Venue to be confirmed***

PN

27 May 2016