

## Minutes of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum meeting, 13 September 2016

### Present

#### Members

Graham Flatt (Chair)  
Rachel Bryan (Vice-Chair)  
Robin Edwards  
Gail Johnson  
Mark Ludlow  
Alan Marlow  
Alan Taylor  
Isaac Walker  
Aileen Wood

#### Officers attending all or part of meeting

Petronella Natrass (HCC)  
Jon Dyer-Slade (HCC)  
Jonathan Woods (HCC – joined the meeting during item 5)  
Sam Jones (HCC)

#### Observers

Brenda King  
Ross Mitchell (NFAF)  
Mark Sumner (DIO)

### 1 Apologies

1.1 Cllr Alicia Denny, Sue Coles, Lyell Fairlie, Valerie Rawlings, Melanie Fortescue, Paul Knipe, Lindsay Marshall and Nigel Wolstenholme.

### 2 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The draft minutes were approved subject to two amendments.

2.2 Matters arising:

- **Yateley Common at Blackbushe Airport** – The Forum's letters to Hampshire County Council and Hart have been postponed pending the outcome of HCC meetings with Hart and with Kieran Foster. Both meetings have now taken place and Jonathan Woods had also met with Ken Baker of the North East Hants Group Ramblers. Hart DC, Kieran Foster and the Ramblers have all confirmed their support for the potential solution of a dedicated alternative bridleway to the north of the airfield, with a TRO in place for the lifetime of the airport. Further consultations are taking place with the landowners and local users. Gail Johnson said that she would provide details of a local horse-riding contact.

#### **ACTION: GJ to send PN contact details for local rider who knows the area around Blackbushe airport**

- **Draft Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy** – copies of both the Hampshire County Council and South Downs LAF responses were emailed to Forum on 18 August.
- **MoD Liaison Group** had met on 24 August – minutes and a verbal report to be given at item 5b.
- **LAF Annual Review form 2015-16** has been completed and submitted to Natural England on 21 July.
- **Influencing Planning Decisions** – the new HCC Planning and Development Officer, Owen Devine, took up his post at the end of August. The Planning sub-

group will be convened once he is fully established in role. Alan Marlow has a document prepared by the Ramblers which summarises existing guidance. Alan Taylor asked to be included in the sub-group, together with Graham Flatt, Alan Marlow, Gail Johnson and Nigel Wolstenholme.

- **Equestrian Needs – the Way Forward** – Gail Johnson had been unable to meet with JW and PN owing to family commitments.

### **3 Watercress Way**

- 3.1 Cllr Jackie Porter and Kim Adams (Chairman and Trustee of the Watercress Way charitable trust) gave a presentation about this initiative, which aims to create a circular route for non-motorised users based on the disused railway lines from Alresford to Sutton Scotney via Kings Worthy ([www.thewatercressway.org.uk](http://www.thewatercressway.org.uk)). Copies of the presentation slides are attached.
- 3.2 The project aims to connect those sections of the route that are already publicly accessible, to ensure that the open sections are well maintained, to develop the route for all ages and levels of mobility and to offer opportunities for voluntary work.
- 3.3 The Trust is working to raise the profile of the project with local user groups, local authorities and councils, businesses and developers
- 3.4 The route is viewed as being primarily for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists. Although some of the routes to be included are byways, it is not envisaged that the whole route will be available to carriage drivers.
- 3.5 Sections of the railway are owned by Hampshire County Council. As the landowner the Council is not opposed to the route, but does not propose further action until the rest of the route looks feasible. It was suggested that County Estates were considering this more from the perspective of a landowner wishing to preserve and enhance land values, rather than using the land asset to achieve public benefit. Alan Taylor and Alan Marlow agreed to draft a letter to Estates asking them to consider a change of approach.

**ACTION: AM and AT to draft a letter to County Estates, for Forum's approval.**

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

- 4.1 **Small Grants Scheme** – Robin Edwards asked about the difference in the costs for replacing stiles with gates and for surfacing. Sam Jones explained the variables that apply, e.g. whether gates are fully accessible, work done by volunteers or contractors, whether surfaces require sub-base or drainage and accessibility for machinery and materials.
- 4.2 **Forestry in England inquiry** – the Forum considers that there is insufficient reference to access within this consultation and agreed that Graham Flatt would coordinate a response from the Forum.

**ACTION: all Members to forward comments to GF, who will prepare a response to submit to the Forestry Commission by 18 October.**

- 4.3 It was also proposed that closer contact should be established between the HCAF and the Forestry Commission.

**ACTION: PN to invite Bruce Rothnie (Deputy Surveyor for Forest Enterprise) to come and speak to HCAF about the Forestry Commission's current position in relation to public access.**

## 5 Project/sub-group updates

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

No further claims will be processed until the situation on the De-regulation Bill is clearer. Hampshire Records Office has formally agreed to take the PATHH research data. Amanda Hull is working on the new website, and Stephen Fisher has volunteered to bring the old website up to date so that it can be left in place with a link to the new one. The upgrade of Chilworth 2 and 3 has been confirmed.

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

The HCAF-MoD Liaison Group had a constructive and useful meeting on 24 August, minutes of which had been circulated. The new section of the Shipwrights' Way at Bordon is working well for equestrians as well as walkers and cyclists. MoD is reviewing byelaws at Long Valley, Aldershot – Alan Taylor asked that HCAF be included in any consultation on this, and that it should be included on the agenda for the next Liaison Group meeting on 18 January.

**ACTION: ML to add item to agenda for next Liaison Group meeting.**

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

This project is on hold until a new horse-riding representative has been appointed to the Forum.

### **d) *Coastal Access***

The Coastal Access sub-group is recommending that Natural England route the coast path on the Hamble estuary via the bridge, rather than using the Hamble-Warsash ferry. The ferry has a limited timetable, is not accessible, and use of the ferry by cycles restricts access for pedestrians.

NE is new meeting with user groups in specific areas

There has been much discussion the delineation of spreading room on the map.

Sam Jones and Jonathan Woods are working on the legal agreement for HCC's support for implementation. SJ is giving advice on physical suitability and on structures. Agreement is also needed about long-term maintenance. HCC is speaking to other authorities which have already been through this process, (e.g. Kent). Rachel Bryan asked about the use of volunteers for the implementation work – it appears that this has not been considered by NE.

## 6 Reports from other LAFs

6.1 Valerie Rawlings had attended the South Downs LAF meeting on 20 July and PN had attended the New Forest Access Foun on 6 June in her capacity as Forum Officer.

### **a) *South Downs LAF – 20 July***

Valerie Rawlings and by Roger Mullenger (Chairman of the SDLAF) both submitted written reports – copies attached.

### **b) *New Forest Access Forum – 5 Sept***

- Mark Adams (South Regional Development Manager for British Cycling) had been invited to speak to the New Forest Access Forum (NFAF) about an open letter recently sent to Environment Secretary Liz Truss and Welsh

Environment Secretary Lesley Griffiths, calling for people on bikes to have access to more paths in the England and Wales countryside. The letter can be seen at <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/campaigning/article/20160706-campaigning-news-Open-up-countryside-paths-for-people-on-bikes-say-outdoor-groups-0>

- NFAF carried out a routine review of its Structure & Remit, and raised a number of points:
  - Members to be more proactive, putting forward items for inclusion on the agenda
  - Annual work plan to be reviewed at each meeting
  - Ideas for raising the profile of the NFAF
- There were presentations on the Latchmore Wetland Restoration project and on National Grid proposals for putting electricity cables underground at Hale.
- Forum approved a draft response to the NFDC Local Plan Review consultation, which has now been completed and submitted to NFDC. A key part of the NFDC Local Plan is the New Forest Mitigation Strategy for European Sites, adopted in June 2014  
<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/15454/Mitigation-Strategy-for-European-Sites>. This Strategy is being delivered by HCC in partnership with NFDC.

## **7 Member Discussion/project development**

### ***a) Equestrian Needs – the Way Forward***

Further work on this has had to be deferred, due to personal circumstances.

### ***b) Volunteering initiatives***

Rachel Bryan and Aileen Wood have met recently to discuss how volunteering could be promoted through the HCAF, and Rachel has undertaken to produce a discussion paper for the next meeting.

As an adjunct to this, Aileen reported that she, Rachel, Valerie Rawlings and members of Bursledon Parish Council had carried out an accessibility audit of footpaths in Bursledon and found 80% of paths were not accessible in one way or another. Aileen offered to give a presentation on this to a future HCAF meeting.

### ***c) Auditing the list of Streets***

The BHS has noted that in some parts of the country unclassified roads are being removed from the list of streets without consultation, and is encouraging LAFs to question their local highway authority about local procedures for removing unsealed highways from the list of streets. It was agreed that Gail Johnson would draft a letter on behalf of HCAF to Hampshire Highways asking what unsealed highways have been removed from the list of streets and what the procedure is for doing so.

**ACTION: GJ to prepare a draft for PN to circulate to the Forum for comment / approval.**

### ***d) Whitehill and Bordon Equestrian Survey***

As the BHS Access Officer for Hampshire, Gail Johnson has carried out a survey of local horse riders in order to support the case for the proposed Whitehill and Bordon Green Loop (planned at present as an off-road pedestrian and cycle route) being

made available to horse riders. The survey indicates that traffic is one of the biggest problems for riders in this area, and that local riders would welcome access to the Green Loop.

A decision is to be made on the Green Loop in the next few weeks and GJ asked if HCAF would support opening the route up to horse riders. Whilst some Forum members feel unable to support this proposal specifically, owing to lack of knowledge of the issues, it was agreed that Forum could comment on the basis of general principles such as a presumption of any new 'multi-use' route to include use by horse riders wherever possible.

**ACTION: GJ to draft a letter to EHDC (as lead authority) to be circulated to the full Forum for comment / approval.**

## **8 HCC Access Team update**

- 8.1 Jonathan Woods (Countryside Access Team Leader) reviewed the initial priorities he had discussed with Forum at the meeting on 15 March. The team are seeking opinion on a draft proposal for TROs and byway management and are developing a memorandum of agreement with Natural England to provide support for the implementation of the England Coast Path. The 3 Community Rangers are now in place and the posts of Planning Officer and Diversions Officer have both been filled. Of 20 bridges identified for replacement, 10 are complete and 2 more are starting this week. The Shipwright's Way on MoD land at Bordon has been completed and opened.
- 8.2 Over the next 6 months the Team's focus will be on planning responses and approach to planning policy, seeking new partnerships with district councils, reviewing Definitive Map processes (seeking to make them more accessible, transparent and faster) and developing a Strategic Network, as outlined in the Countryside Access Plan.
- 8.3 Forum asked whether there would be further cuts and restructuring of the team. The overall budget has fallen by about 20% and a further 20% reduction is anticipated by 2020. HCC are looking for ways to deliver the service through funding and resources from other sources, e.g. through its work with New Forest District Council to deliver the New Forest Mitigation Strategy.
- 8.4 GJ asked for clarification of the present team structure and contact details.

**ACTION: JW/PN to circulate copy of current team structure**

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.

***Date of next meeting: 13 December 2016 – AGM. Venue to be confirmed***

PN/2016-09-14