



Minutes of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum meeting, 20 June 2017

Present

Members

Sue Coles (SC)
Robin Edwards (RE)
Graham Flatt (GJ)
Gail Johnson (GJ)
Paul Knipe (PK)
Alan Marlow (AM)
Jim Morey (JM)
Gill Plumbley (GP)
Alan Taylor (Vice-chair) (AT)
Isaac Walker
Aileen Wood (AW)
Andy Whincup (AWWh)

Officers attending all or part of meeting

Petronella Natrass (HCC Forum Officer) (PN)
Jonathan Woods (HCC) (JW)
Christine Brislane (Southampton City Council) (CB)
Nick Scott (Portsmouth City Council) (NS)
Kim Dawkins (HCC Admin Assistant)

Observers

Mark Sumner (DIO) (MS)
Brenda King (BHS)
Ruth Croker (Chair, New Forest Access Forum)

1 Apologies, welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Melanie Fortescue, Lyell Fairlie, Cllr Edward Heron, Nigel Wolstenholme and Rachel Bryan (Chair). The meeting was chaired by Alan Taylor.
- 1.2 The Forum welcomed Andy Whincup as the new representative off-road cycling representative.

2 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 **Minutes:** John Milne to be included in the list of Observers. Final sentence of paragraph 12.5 to be amended to read 'Once the report goes to the Secretary of State there will be 8 weeks' consultation during which only landowners can object but other bodies (including LAFs) can make representations.'
- 2.2 Subject to these agreed amendments, the draft minutes were approved as a true record.
- 2.3 **Matters arising:** all had either been completed or would be covered later in the Agenda, other than
 - **Countryside Access Plan implementation** – the Forum asked that JW provide at the next meeting (September) the paper and the draft Enforcement Policy referred to in paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 of the draft Minutes for 28 March

ACTION: JW to provide (a) a paper setting out what has been done to deliver the CAP over 2016-17 and what is planned for the next year, and (b) a copy of the draft Enforcement Policy.

- **Planning – next steps** – the Forum had written to LPAs had been sent out, asking for replies by 10 July. GP asked to be included in the Planning sub-group.

ACTION: PN to update sub-group distribution list.

- **Letter to Natural England re former marshalling yard at East Dean** – there has been no response from Natural England and the Forum would like to follow this up in due course.

3 Bursledon Accessibility Audit (*Aileen Wood / Jim Morey*)

- 3.1 AW gave a presentation on the findings of this audit (copy attached with minutes).
- 3.2 JM commented that a single factor could ‘make or break’ a path’s accessibility and that some paths may require only a small intervention to make them accessible to many more people.
- 3.3 One of the issues in Bursledon is the range of land ownership and responsibility, including Eastleigh Borough Council and Hampshire County Council. The Councils appear supportive but have differing priorities.
- 3.4 AM observed that despite the many issues identified within the audit, in the 2016 Ease of Use survey for Bursledon only 10% of paths had failed - a comparatively low rate. The audit shows, however, that there is considerable scope for improving access around this parish, in many cases involving relatively minor works.

4 Draft Equestrian guidance (*Gail Johnson / Gill Plumbley*)

- 4.1 This is very much a work in progress. GJ and GP have based their continuing work around the Kennel Club/HCC guidance ‘[Planning for dog ownership in new developments](#)’, but putting the ‘Do’s and Don’ts’ all together in a single list . At this stage they ask for the Forum’s opinion on whether they are on the right track.
- 4.2 The following points were raised in discussion:
 - Many of the issues raised in the draft are common to all and are ongoing concerns with all the development that is taking place in the county. Are we missing an opportunity to make the focus ‘across the board’?
 - From the Countryside Service perspective, this is about all users being able to use the RoW network safely.
 - The summary of ‘Do’s and Don’ts’ should be at the beginning of the document, not at the end.
 - It needs to be made clear why planners and developers should take notice.
 - Authorities say that there is no legal requirement to consider equestrians within development plans – but what about the **moral** requirement?
 - Would it be helpful to consider what is in the Cycling and Walking Strategies that applies to equestrians and distil down the **additional** needs of equestrians – and should the 3 Hampshire documents be combined into a single short summary document?

- Sometimes it is qualitative factors that determine whether a route is usable or unusable.
- The document needs to be no more than 4 sides of A4 or it won't be read.

4.3 The Forum agreed to take this outside the full meeting and set up a sub-group, to include Andy Whincup, Alan Marlow, Aileen Wood or Jim Morey, Gail Johnson and Gill Plumbley. Alan Taylor asked that he and Rachel Bryan be copied-in.

ACTION: PN to arrange for the sub-group to meet.

5 Planning

5.1 Notes of the Planning sub-group meeting on 22 May had been circulated with the Agenda.

5.2 **Aims of the sub-group:** the Forum agreed that there should be greater clarity/emphasis to the fact that these refer to Rights of Way and Access, and that the first aim should be amended to read:

To improve the Rights of Way network and access to the countryside by raising awareness of HCAF's statutory status with Unitary Authorities / Borough / District planners, Highways, developers and other decision makers.

5.3 Letters had been sent to all Local Planning Authorities in the HCAF area, as discussed. The sub-group will next meet in mid- to late July to discuss responses.

5.4 Owen Devine is developing a database to track LPAs' progress on Local Plan Review and whether comments made by the Countryside Service are taken into account.

ACTION: PN to find out whether Owen has information that can usefully be shared with the Forum.

ACTION: Sub-group to meet in mid- to late July to discuss responses from LPAs.

5.5 RE said that information about the stage LPAs nationally are at with their local plans is available at www.planningresource.co.uk.

6 Hampshire Walking and Cycling Strategies - update

6.1 JW believes that a lot of work is being done to deliver these, but that so far there have not been the resources to review and report on progress.

6.2 Members expressed concern that cycling and walking (and equestrian) needs appear to be considered a lesser priority within infrastructure planning. It was suggested that this be addressed further under Item 8 as one of the areas that the Forum would like to discuss further with Hampshire Highways.

6.3 Nick Scott advised that cycling is currently very much a focus in Portsmouth as the City Council is developing its own Cycling and Walking Strategy. Portsmouth has a high density of development and little additional space, and the City Council is aiming for increased engagement with cycling and walking groups across the area.

The Strategy will be overarching rather than specific, and aims for active travel to be considered equally alongside other travel options.

7 Project/sub-group updates

7.1 a) PATHH

7.2 An Order is about to be made on the 'Top Three' routes identified by PATHH.

7.3 JW advised the Forum that in the last year the Definitive Map team had received 8 requests for Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs). Since January the team have received 10.

7.4 With effect from April 2017 the team has a Scheme of Delegation, allowing them to sign-off diversions and dedications that would previously have required a Committee decision. It is hoped that this will expedite the processing of these categories of DMMO.

7.5 b) MoD Liaison Group

7.6 MS reported that there had been a useful meeting of the group on 17 May. The group discussed the decision on the South Downs Way at Chilcomb and Roger Mullenger (Chair of South Downs LAF) would be writing to the South Downs National Park Authority to propose that an alternative route is sought for this section of the SDW.

7.7 The local byelaw review for the Home Counties is on the back burner.

7.8 The group also discussed equestrian access at Bordon where the lack of access to the Green Loop is an ongoing concern. This is an example of the importance of early consultation with all users in planning new developments, particularly in relation to Highways infrastructure.

7.9 c) Multi-user routes

7.10 This topic has been on hold, pending the appointment of new horse riding and off-road cycling representatives to the Forum, but with the appointment of GP and AWh can now be revived.

ACTION: Sue Coles to re-convene this sub-group.

7.11 d) Coastal Access

7.12 The sub-group had met for an update with Tim Hall of Natural England (NE) on 5 June. The submission of reports to the Secretary of State (SoS) has been delayed by elections and other factors: AM reported the following:

- Old Portsmouth to South Hayling to SoS at the end of June.
- S Hayling to Emsworth (county boundary) and beyond, to SoS end of August
- Highcliffe to Calshot (so NFAF), to SoS 'not before' the end of July
- NE will start work formally on the Calshot to Gosport section when the New Forest section is finished. Target date for report to SoS 1st or 2nd quarter of 2018

- Work will start on the Gosport to Old Portsmouth section (round Portsmouth Harbour) when the Old Portsmouth section is complete and they have a new team leader to replace Gemma Marchant (hopefully soon)

7.13 John Taylor is starting formal work on the Isle of Wight route, but a target date has not been specified for completion.

7.14 It had been proposed at the December meeting to write to Ordnance Survey about the magenta wash denoting spreading room, however the Forum felt that it was difficult to see how they can influence what is essentially a National issue.

7.15 The group also discussed NE's proposed use of the Warsash Ferry on the section between Calshot and Gosport (closed 1-2 days/year. There is some local feeling against this, but it is allowable within the scheme criteria. The sub-group had not reached a consensus and it was agreed that AM should take this forward on behalf of the Ramblers rather than HCAF.

7.16 **e) List of Streets**

7.17 The sub-group have written to Stuart Jarvis and Karen Murray (HCC) and are awaiting a reply.

8 Hampshire Highways

8.1 The Forum agreed that in order to engage effectively with Highways it should identify specific topics and questions they wish to raise with Highways, in particular:

- The extent to which the Hampshire Cycling and Walking Strategies influence the prioritising of Highways work;
- The apparent distinction between recreational and utility routes;
- Concerns about safe links between rights of way;
- How to develop a holistic approach to the Highway network, in its broadest sense (i.e. including Rights of Way).

8.2 It was agreed that each member should put forward 3 key points or issues they wish to raise with Highways, and that these could take the form of 2 questions plus 1 suggestion of how HCAF could assist or support.

8.3 GF noted that there had been a meeting between HCAF and Highways in 2013 in which the following points had been raised:

- Highway design and management for non-motorised users
- Access and the urban/rural interface
- Policies and management of adopted, unclassified and un-metalled roads
- Highway Authority responses to the localism agenda including links and relationship to Town and Parish Councils

ACTION: PN to find notes from 2013 meeting and email all Forum, asking for 2 key concerns and 1 proposal for support/assistance.

ACTION: PN to send a summary of points to Graham Wright, asking him to advise who HCAF should be speaking to within Highways, and invite them to the next meeting.

9 County Estates and Access (*Josie Palmer, Countryside Rural Estates Manager*)

9.1 JP gave an overview of the County Council's priorities in managing its rural estate. The County's farm land is used primarily to provide start-up smallholdings for people wanting to get into farming, rather than for investment purposes. There are 36 equipped farms (i.e. units with buildings and houses); these are small but viable units which provide a base for farmers to gain extra land to build up their enterprises. HCC regards these farms as part of the rural fabric of the county, their tenants very much part of the rural community, supporting social events, education, informal activities such as carers' days-off and permissive access.

9.2 Some farmers take steps to enhance the experience for those using rights of way and other access, e.g. one dairy farmer supplies raw Jersey milk via an on-site vending machine and is planning to make it possible for passing walkers to see the cows being milked; another farmer maintains a "what's happening on our farm" noticeboard.

9.3 Responding to the specific question about the Watercress Way that the Forum had asked in its letter of 15 December 2016., JP advised that the County landholding at Kings Worthy is a 500-acre block with 5 farms of between 60 and 130 acres. It is important that any provision of access does not affect the viability of these units. The land that lies along the proposed route of the Watercress Way is part of a unit that rears Galloway cattle which are particularly protective of their calves; any additional access would therefore have to be fenced off, substantially reducing the area of an already small farm unit. There would also be concerns about *Neospora caninum* (a protozoan parasite transmitted by dogs that causes bovine abortion).

9.4 In the Q&A session that followed, JP advised that the County's Rural Estates include any rural land owned by HCC apart from Countryside Service sites and comprises grazing, woodland and fishing as well as county farms. Permissive access has generally been provided rather than a dedicated right of way because that is what has been asked for, e.g. at Kings Worthy where a permissive path provides an alternative route around a previous slurry problem in the farmyard. Any request for additional access would be considered individually in relation to the specific unit involved. County Estates are open to providing equestrian access, provided it does not create difficulty for the farm enterprise. County Farms are let initially for 7 years with an optional top-up to 10 years. Holdings that are progressing have an option for further 5-yearly top-ups.

9.5 JW commented that the single farm payment scheme has been a disincentive to landowners to dedicate rights of way – particularly because of the detailed application that has to be filled in each year. NB: It is the farmer who must claim for a tenanted unit, rather than the landowner.

9.6 The Forum thanked JP for her presentation and the subsequent wide ranging and open discussion.

10 CAMSmobile demonstration (*Rachael Hawkes*)

10.1 RH gave an overview of CAMS (Countryside Access Management System) and how it has transformed the Access Team's work. Previously desktop-based, this system is now being developed as a mobile, tablet-based application to be used by operational teams across the whole Countryside Service, on sites as well as rights of way. A pilot is being launched that will provide 20 tablets to the three Access

teams, sites and country parks teams, and also to volunteers from The Ramblers who are surveying the county rights of way network. All devices have Wifi capability and some will have 4G so that the teams can access and update the system wherever they are working (provided there is a signal), including providing photographs. They will also have GPS so that information can be plotted/located accurately.

10.2 Testing will start once CAMSmobile has been synchronised with the County's main IT system. The introduction of CAMS as a desk-top application has transformed the way the Service is able to work. Moving the system from the desk-top to a fully mobile application will be a further step-change.

11 Countryside Access Plan update (*Jonathan Woods*)

11.1 JW to provide a written report on CAP implementation (see Action for paragraph 2.3 above)

11.2 Strategically, the two Planning officers in the Access Team are focusing on development mitigation and planning policy. The Countryside Service would welcome the opportunity to develop schemes such as the New Forest Mitigation Strategy with other local planning authorities.

11.3 In parallel with this work, the Service is looking at the benefits of providing a service to local planning authorities (LPAs) to implement diversions under the Town & Country Planning Act. This would help to avoid mistakes in Definitive Map Modifications under the TCPA (which at present require extra officer time to unravel them) and generate income for the Service.

11.4 The Strategic Network is another part of the CAP which JW sees as involving closer links with LPAs.

11.5 A new Capital bid is being made for 2018-19 for work on 3 major Byways (2 of which are currently closed) and for coastal access; footpaths at the coast edge are increasingly at risk due to Environment Agency's reduced investment in coastline management.

11.6 The key challenges for the current year are:

- i. The England Coast Path – the Access Team needs to see the final map before specifications can be provided for the work.
- ii. Coastal Erosion
- iii. Byway management
- iv. Order processing – thanks to the new Scheme of Delegation, legal event orders (LEOs) are moving forward quite quickly (at a rate of around 1 decision/week, mainly on anomalies).

11.7 AM commented that as Ramblers representative he did not appear to be receiving all the consultations on LEOs.

ACTION: JW to advise relevant officers that AM does not appear to have received recent consultations on Legal Event Orders.

12 South Area Access Team

12.1 Written update to be included with JW's report under item 11.

ACTION: JW/Sam Jones to provide a written update on the work of the South Area Access Team.

13 Forum Officer's Report (*Petronella Natrass*)

13.1 The report was taken as read.

14 Reports from other LAFs

14.1 **a) New Forest Access Forum** – Ruth Croker (Chair of NFAF) reported that the NFAF is focusing on Planning and implementation of the CAP.

14.2 The England Coast Path is proving difficult in the New Forest where there are many private estates and nature conservation designations.

14.3 The National Park Authority is currently consulting on the New Forest Recreation Mitigation Strategy (RMS), which considers the New Forest District outside the National Park boundary in addition to the National Park itself. Members of NFAF are due to meet on 5 July to draft a response to this consultation.

14.4 NFAF had also had a presentation from Anna Parry, the new Manager of BirdAware (formerly the Solent Recreation Mitigation Project), which aims to influence visitor behaviours in the coastal areas during the overwintering season in order to minimise disturbance to overwintering birds.

14.5 **b) South Downs LAF** – the meeting in April was cancelled as the Chairman had been unwell.

14.6 **c) Wiltshire CAF** – has not met since January.

14.7 **d) Surrey LAF** – met in April, but no HCAF members were available to attend.

The meeting closed at 15:30 hrs

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 12 September 2017, in the Empire Room, Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley Abbey SO31 5GA