

Minutes of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum meeting, 28 March 2017

Present

Members

Sue Coles (SC)
Graham Flatt (GJ)
Melanie Fortescue (MF)
Cllr Edward Heron (EH)
Gail Johnson (GJ)
Paul Knipe (PK)
Alan Marlow (AM)
Jim Morey (JM)
Gill Plumbley (GP)
Alan Taylor (Vice-chair) (AT)
Aileen Wood (AW)

Officers attending all or part of meeting

Petronella Natrass (HCC Forum Officer) (PN)
Jonathan Woods (HCC) (JW)
Jim Adkins (HCC) (JA)
Emma Broadbent (HCC) (EB)
Tim Oliver (Forestry Commission)
Christine Brislane (Southampton City Council) (CB)

Observers

Helena Barker (Mid and West Berks LAF)
Mark Sumner (DIO) (MS)
Brenda King (BHS)
John Milne (Landowner)

1 Apologies, welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Lindsay Marshall, Lyell Fairlie, Nigel Wolstehnlome and Andy Whincup. Rachel Bryan (Chair) had also sent apologies at short notice and the meeting was chaired by Alan Taylor.
- 1.2 The Forum welcomed Jim Morey as the new representative for people with disabilities.
- 1.3 Andy Whincup, (newly-appointed off-road cycling representative) was unable to attend due to a prior commitment, but expects to attend the next meeting in June.

2 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 GJ asked for paragraph 8.1 to be amended from 'Kent carriage gaps will be used' to 'it has been proposed that Kent carriage gaps could be used rather than gates to allow continued use by carriage drivers, but this is subject to further consultation.'
- 2.2 Subject to this agreed amendment, the draft minutes were approved as a true record.
- 2.3 **Matters arising:**
 - **Watercress Way** – the Forum had written to Josie Palmer, HCC Rural Estates Team Leader, who had met with PN for more background information on the Forum's request. A reply is still awaited.

ACTION: PN to follow-up and ask for a response to the Forum's letter.

- **HCC draft Enforcement Policy** – JW had received feedback on the draft Policy from 2 members of the Forum.
- **Planning** – JM asked to be included in the Planning sub-group.

ACTION: PN to update sub-group distribution list.

- **Yateley Common** – SC asked for news on the proposed dedication of an alternative bridleway to the north of Blackbushe airport. JW reported that while there was nothing new to report at the airport site, other work was progressing in relation to the diversion/extinguishment package for Yateley Common.
- **Cycle route from Petersfield to Queen Elizabeth Country Park** – SC asked if there was any further information about the legal status of this route.

ACTION: PN to enquire about the legal status of the new cycleway between Petersfield and Queen Elizabeth Country Park.

- 2.4 **Work Programme for 2017:** The Forum reviewed and approved the draft Work Programme for 2017. AT asked what is being done to develop closer links with Parish and Town Councils, given that the last Parish Conference was some time ago. EH said that this is an ongoing conversation within Hampshire County Council. It was also suggested that there would be further information in Emma Broadbent's presentation at item 6 on the agenda.
- 2.5 Under 'Training', GJ suggested that the Forum might be interested in the levels 1 and 2 BHS Access Training sessions that are taking place at Catherstone Stud, Stockbridge, in May and July. These are open to all, costing £10 per person per day.

ACTION: GJ to send details to PN (*completed 28 March*).

3 **Planning – next steps**

- 3.1 The Forum agreed that the letter PN had drafted should be sent to all local planning authorities (LPAs) asking what stage they are at in their Local Plan review.
- 3.2 Members are keen to be consulted on master planning/outline plans for Major Development Areas (MDAs) but conscious of the need to keep their input at a strategic/principles level rather than being involved in detailed planning. A 'light touch' will be needed in drafting any form of guidance, which has to be a document that planners and developers are prepared to read and refer to.
- 3.3 It was agreed that the sub-group should meet initially to agree a set of Aims and prepare a draft Remit to circulate to the whole Forum for approval. It should be possible subsequently for the group to work through email.
- 3.4 SC commented about the apparent lack of enforcement of planning conditions and that LPAs should be held to account if this did not happen.
- 3.5 EH said that there are also issues over the quality of conditions being imposed.

- 3.6 JW advised the Forum that Owen Devine has given a technical briefing on rights of way to Havant Borough Council and is seeking opportunities to deliver similar to other LPA.
- 3.7 **The Forum AGREED that the Planning sub-group should meet to flesh-out the key points that came out of the workshop in December.**

ACTION: PN to finish drafting the letter ready to send out to LPAs.
ACTION: Planning sub-group to meet and agree a set of Aims and prepare a draft Remit to circulate to the whole Forum for approval.
ACTION: Planning sub-group to work on producing a schedule (maximum 2-3 pages) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what planners and developers should PROVIDE / AVOID within new development • examples to help planners and developers identify appropriate mitigation and worthwhile opportunities for access improvement
ACTION: PN to set up a meeting date for the Planning sub-group members. (NB: SC suggested Andy Whincup should be invited to represent cycling rather than her, owing to the number of other sub-groups she is currently involved in.)

4 Access in the Forestry Commission (FC) Estate

- 4.1 Tim Oliver (based in Cumbria but currently seconded to Lyndhurst as the Forestry Commission's Head of Recreation and Public Affairs) gave an overview of aims and challenges for the FC in relation to public access. These include:
- **Forest Centres** (i.e. those with visitor facilities such as Alice Holt, Moors Valley) to break even financially.
 - **Access woodlands** – increased and better-managed parking charges
 - **Health and Safety** – FC is reviewing waymarked trails in the context of the growing 'claims culture'.
 - **Play equipment** – where this is wearing out/degrading it is being removed. Better planning is needed for replacement and upgrading.
 - **National marketing campaigns**, e.g. Gruffalo Trails to encourage younger/future generations of users
 - **Permission systems** – permits are required for anything that challenges forest byelaws and there are currently about 4,000 permit systems in England, 1,600 of them in the South area. Receipts for these currently do not cover administrative costs.
 - **Access for all** – the FC is trying to cater for a range of disabilities, e.g. Rough-riders scheme, which provides 4-wheeled cycles for wheelchair users to go mountain-biking.
- 4.2 FC and HCC face a number of similar challenges, e.g. reduced resources and increasing costs. This is one of the busiest parts of the country, but the Countryside Service and the FC offer some really important possibilities, e.g. Health & Wellbeing but also how to balance enjoyment with management. IT is becoming increasingly relevant with e.g. 'Gruffalo App' and geocaching. Responsible dog-ownership is another area of interest for the FC.

4.3 GJ asked what the FC is doing to communicate with Equestrian users who very often have to pay for access, unlike other users. The BHS has had difficulty communicating with FC on this matter; likewise HCAF has previously found it difficult to engage with the FC. One issue has been frequent changes of personnel within FC, but it was agreed that the Forum should continue to try and maintain channels of communication with the FC.

5 Update on Countryside Access Plan implementation (*Jonathan Woods*)

5.1 Work is still being done on end-of-year figures so JW focused on plans for the coming year.

5.2 Strategic approach:

- **CAMS** (Countryside Access Management System) – HCC is purchasing mobile technology to enable staff and volunteers to work remotely from this system
- Volunteers from the Ramblers will be using CAMSmobile to undertake a county-wide survey to identify the existing infrastructure benchmark.
- ‘Strategic Network’ needs to be identified – 3 networks: District Network, Parish Network and RoW.

5.3 **Working with others:** e.g Ramblers and other volunteers. More work is planned with parish councils, e.g. through the Lengthsman scheme.

5.4 Listening, informing, education:

- New Countryside Service website launched in the last month, which is more easily used on mobiles and tablets
- Working in promoting on-line working
- Planning – raising profile of access and the value it brings to communities; Hampshire as a very rural county.

5.5 JW is preparing a paper mapping out what has been done over the past year and what is planned for the next.

5.6 AT asked about the draft Enforcement Policy that HCAF were asked to review. This is now with the HCC legal team as part of a wider Scheme of Authorisation, which is expected to help expedite enforcement action.

5.7 AM asked about the Strategic Network, which has been under discussion for a long time, and whether users would be consulted. Having joined the Countryside Service since earlier work on this, JW will be scoping how this initiative should be progressed.

6 Community Engagement (*Emma Broadbent*)

6.1 A copy of Emma’s presentation is attached.

6.2 The Forum suggested that the CERs’ newsletter should be more widely distributed, and that a link should be added to the Access Homepage. GJ said that there was scope for more input from equestrians, and that this might be more easily achieved via a clear, identifiable project.

7 Equestrian Guidance – first draft (*Gail Johnson/Jonathan Woods*)

- 7.1 GJ, GP, JW and PN have been working on a first draft and are currently condensing the information down into key messages relating to safety, connectivity, economic benefits, health & wellbeing. GJ has met with some local planning authority representatives, who have been interested and receptive.
- 7.2 JW is concerned about fragmentation of the equestrian network. Roads form essential connections within that network. Planning authority decisions lead to changes in traffic volumes and speed and there is a risk that the network of bridleways, restricted byways and BOATs could 'disappear' through lack of use if the connecting roads are no longer safely useable by equestrians. This would affect all users.
- 7.3 SC commented that engagement with Hampshire Highways is essential and should not be delayed. AT noted that this was on the Forward Plan for discussion in June prior to inviting Highways manager to the September meeting.

ACTION: GH/GP agreed to work on a list of principles of what developers and planners should PROVIDE and what they should AVOID in new planning proposals.

8 North Area Access Team (*Jim Adkins*)

- 8.1 Jim Adkins gave an overview of the work done by the North Area team in the last year. In 2016, 541 jobs had been completed from the parish councils' Priority Cutting List, in the first 3 months of 2017, 435 jobs had been completed.
- 8.2 The number of issues logged on the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) had fluctuated from 788 in 2011/12 to 1,218 in 2012/13 to 894 in 2016/17. During the past year, 19 bridges have been replaced at a cost of £400,000.
- 8.3 Within the North area, major development areas include Andover and Odiham Deer Park, as well as Manydown near Basingstoke.
- 8.4 The Area teams have split specific projects/areas of work as follows:
- South area – England Coast Path
 - Central area - Planning
 - North Area – projects, e.g. Shipwright's way and signage
- 8.5 JA mentioned that a lead officer had been designated for promoted routes

ACTION: JA to provide Gail Johnson with details of promoted routes.

9 Access Team update (*Jonathan Woods*)

9.1 Key Legal work has included

- Public inquiries on rail crossings at Buriton (extinguishment) and Chandlers Ford (path diverted onto a footbridge with no net improvement). Both inquiries found in favour of Network Rail.
- Claim for Village Green status on land to the north of Winchester. As the Commons Registration Authority HCC opted for a non-statutory public inquiry; the inspector advised that the site should not be designated as a village green but that there could be a claim for a footpath around the periphery.

- 9.2 **Bridges:** more than 460 new bridges had been put in, some relatively simple, others involving detailed specifications, access to private land, authorisation (e.g. from Environment Agency) and the complexities of HCC procurement system.

ACTION: JW to circulate report on bridge work to HCAF. *(Completed)*

- 9.3 **Planning:** more than 600 planning consultations had been dealt with (though not all with a full response) during the last year. More work is needed over the next 6 months to ensure correct figures and charges are applied in mitigation and section 106 agreements. Work is also being done to map planning application to facilitate planned delivery of works.
- 9.4 **Byway management:** a report on the recent Traffic Regulation Order consultations is going to the Executive Member for a decision in June.
- 9.5 **Writers Way:** a new 13-mile cycle route from Chawton to Selborne returning via the Watercress railway line has been launched to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's death.
- 9.6 **County Survey:** The Ramblers are working with HCC to extend what they currently do for the twice-yearly Ease of Use survey to record on CAMS (the Countryside Access Management System) all the structures on Hampshire's rights of way. New tablets and CAMSmobile app have been purchased and will be rolled-out in May. The survey is expected to take 2-3 years to complete. Main purposes of the survey are to identify:
- a) what is already there
 - b) any safety issues and
 - c) location of any high-cost items or sections, e.g. bridges, areas of coastal erosion; and
 - d) to create a volunteer work programme, identifying those tasks in a parish that a volunteer team could do.

ACTION: JW to forward a report on the proposed Survey to PN for circulation to Forum.

10 Forum Officer's Report

- 10.1 As per written report

11 Review of access restriction at former MoD Marshalling Yard, East Dean

- 11.1 Forum reviewed the draft response to this consultation and agreed that it should be sent, with one minor amendment ('accepts' rather than 'supports' in paragraph 3).

ACTION: PN to amend and send the letter to Natural England. Also to check whether any response was received to the Forum's previous letters to NE and ask that reasons be given should NE choose to ignore the Forum's advice.

12 Project/sub-group updates

- 12.1 **a) PATHH** – the new website is now live, although at present fairly basic. Next steps remain difficult to determine until there is confirmation of whether/when Deregulation will happen. JW advised that it has not been shelved but is ‘on the back burner’ at the moment. PATHH sub-group may therefore need to review their strategy. AM has a volunteer near Andover who has added to the PATHH data and is proceeding with making claims.
- 12.2 **b) MoD Liaison Group** – met on 15 February. The group includes Roger Mullenger (S Downs Access Forum) and a representative from Surrey. Progress has been slow, but relationships are developing. The Forum has expressed interest in the Long Valley Byelaw review, which is in the early stages of data-gathering, using a new format. It is hoped that this will provide a template for other sites that will speed up what is currently a very slow process. The group will next meet on 17 May.

ACTION: GF to circulate a link to the Byelaws web page to the whole Forum.

ACTION: MoD Liaison Group to put some ideas together for general guidelines or a statement on byelaws.

- 12.3 **c) Multi-user routes** – this project remains on hold, pending the arrival of Andrew Whincup, the new off-road cycling representative.
- 12.4 **d) Coastal access** – Natural England had cancelled the meeting on 6 March due to pressure of work to complete their recommendations to the Secretary of State.
- 12.5 AM was concerned that all sub-group meetings had been led by Natural England and have concentrated on the state of progress with the work, rather than on HCAF points of view. 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.
- 12.6 Calshot-Gosport: Warsash ferry – sub-group has not as yet written to NE about this. NE have quite a lot of discretion about what they do with estuaries, the Forum needs to focus on addressing the points in the scheme that NE is required to take into consideration. Next step is for Group to meet (without NE) and identify the questions to pass on to NE.

A significant concern for HCC is which authority will be responsible for managing the route once it is established.

AT suggested that the sub-group should consider how HCAF might write formally to NE to ask what they propose to do to address the Forum’s concerns. Purple wash is a National issue. Local issues must relate to the NE Scheme. HCC position is that we’re not planning put any more money into the National Trails in Hampshire than they already do (£5k).

ACTION: PN to arrange meeting of Coastal access sub-group.

- 12.7 **e) List of streets sub-group** – the Aim of this group is to get all routes maintained at public expense onto the OS mapping. Information needs to come from a recognised body such as HCC. Sub-group to consider writing to Highways AND Countryside Service.
- 12.8 Volunteers needed for desktop research.

ACTION: List of Streets sub-group to draft a letter to Hampshire Highways. PN to find out who to direct it to.

ACTION: ALL to let Sue Coles know if they would be prepared to help with desktop research.

13 Reports from other LAFs

13.1 **a) NFAF** – as per written report

13.2 **b) South Downs LAF** – as per written report

13.3 **c) Wiltshire CAF** – as per written report

13.4 **d) Surrey LAF**

13.5 **e) West Berks LAF** (*Helena Barker*) – 5 new members have been recruited, but Landowners are still under-represented on the Forum. Last meeting focused on ROWIP and Planning applications. A disabled access group is to work with the Wildlife group to set up more disabled access on Commons.

HCAF then discussed the paper about future farm subsidies post-Brexit that had been produced by WBLAF. It was felt that the Hampshire Forum is probably not ready to look at this. AT suggested further discussion be postponed until more Landowner representatives were present. It may also be a matter that should be discussed at the National Conference in June. LAFs need to find a way to work collectively, as e.g. the Ramblers do. There is a powerful conservation lobby, and also user representatives (e.g. Ramblers). HCAF is well-placed to bring in the Landowner perspective.

ACTION: PN to contact conference organisers to propose topic of 'Future farm subsidies post-Brexit' (provided that timing is such as to provide a degree of clarity about what is happening). (*Completed*)

The meeting closed at 15:00 hrs

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 20 June 2017, Wellington Room, Winchester