

Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group

24 February 2025 via Teams

Attendance:

Brice Stratford (Chair, NFNPA)
Steve Avery (NFNPA)
Richard Burke (FE)
Edward Heron (Verderers)

Tim Guymer (NFDC)
Mandy Preece (NE)
Graham Smith (TVBC)
Jonathan Woods (HCC)

1. Welcome / apologies / introductions

- 1.1 Everyone was welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Graham Horton.

2. Minutes and matters arising from the RMSSG meeting on 12 December 2024

- 2.1 The minutes were agreed as a true record. Any matters arising will be covered in the agenda items.
- 2.2 The Chair sought views on the RMSAG and RMSSG meetings as previously discussed. A brief conversation followed and the favoured proposal was to have a yearly meeting, but with more flexible and responsive meetings as appropriate.

3. Forestry England proposals to introduce car parking charges

- 3.1 RB went through the current issues that Forestry England were facing nationwide and the breadth of work that they cover. RB detailed the financial pressures Forestry England are dealing with, along with the escalating costs and shared goals. He explained the approach to address these issues and the current work to date. (Presentation attached). RB shared how the charges would work and how the infrastructure would fit in, including likely a NF specific membership scheme. The anticipated start date for the car parking proposals will be around late spring 2026.
- 3.2 EH suggested the Partnership Plan Leaders Panel summer tour (hosted by Forestry England and the Verderers) include what Forestry England have been able to do with funding and what they haven't been able to do and to include those things that are funded by government. SA suggested a joint communications plan be developed to help communicate the right messages in an innovative way. When sharing this information with the Consultative Panel, it would be helpful to explain how much money stays in the New Forest. TG agreed it was important to share the plans with the local community and detail the benefits whilst recognising the demography. The use of yellow and white lines was discussed, along with visitor passes, the potential use of physical measures and the likely displacement of cars.

Action: RB will contact GS to arrange a meeting with TVBC, Wiltshire and National Trust to discuss the parking charges

BS suggested the nationwide discounted rate could be a good fit. JW proposed that information about where the money goes could appear on the back of the parking ticket

4. Update on off road cycle network

- 4.1 Scoping for the HRA is currently taking place. A set of proposals will go through the habitats regs assessment process with a consultant and an update will be available after that. The Verderers will consider the proposals once all the information is received.

5. Update on Spatial Plan

- 5.1 SA will share a link in the next couple of weeks, that will show the Spatial Plan in its current form. An accompanying narrative will also be produced in the next couple of weeks.

6. Update on respective Local Plan Reviews relevant to managing / mitigating recreational pressures

- 6.1 SA gave an update regarding the progress of the NPA local plan. The plan included further details about recreation management, nature recovery, habitat mitigation and joint working amongst other things.
- 6.2 EH thanked NFDC for their questions on back up grazing and recognised it was a tricky topic, but it did need to be addressed. The Verderers would require funding to commission specialist studies.
- 6.3 The Verderers were clear the increasing recreation pressure was having a negative impact on life in the forest but there seemed to be less funding available to address these issues.
- 6.4 Regarding parking charges, Test Valley don't charge for recreation car parks. Lepe charge for parking and are considering introducing charging for smaller HCC sites and in line with FE charges.
- 6.5 GS reported The Borough Council is actively working on delivering a Special Area of Natural Green Space (SANG) within the borough, including a potential acquisition near West Wellow, which offers multiple benefits for its environment and biodiversity. The council is introducing a financial contribution system for housing developments within the forest's catchment area, generating funds to support both on-site and off-site mitigation efforts.
- 6.6 HCC have finished their Countryside Access Plan (CAP), with a view to going out to consultation around April. The aim will also be to map aspirations, changes to the network and look at any potential new routes.
- 6.7 RB referred to the latest work by Footprint Ecology completed on behalf of the local authorities around the edge of the New Forest who have been working on a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) package. This

package outlines how the collected funds will be spent on measures directly within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The goal is to address the impact of visitors who will continue to come to the forest, even with the creation of local Special Areas of Natural Green Space (SANGs) for new housing developments. The current status of this work is unclear, but it aims to identify necessary actions for managing the environmental pressure caused by visitors.

- 6.8 TG suggested revisiting the footprint ecology work, further to the governments huge increase in housing figures for the area.

7. AOB

- 7.1 None.

8. Date of next meeting

- 8.1 TBC.

DRAFT