



Verderers of the New Forest
Sent by Email

6 November 2024

Dear Sue,

The New Forest off-road cycle network

Thank you for your letter dated 17 October 2024 asking for the National Park Authority's views on Forestry England's presentment: A proposal for promoting responsible cycling and improving the New Forest off-road cycle network.

This work stems from one of the agreed [2019 Recreation Management Strategy strategic actions](#):

4.2. Manage the distribution and type of recreation facilities to protect the Forest, improve people's enjoyment and use resources effectively.

Options included "selective improvements to the network of permitted off road routes for cycling, carriage driving and organised events (in particular to address key gaps in the cycle network and thereby reduce the need for people to drive from residential areas or cycle on potentially dangerous roads – or be tempted to use other tracks and trails)."

The Recreation Management Strategy actions were taken forward in the more recently agreed [Partnership Plan](#) (2022) which acknowledges that there is a need for a "fundamental review of an increasingly outdated and fragmented infrastructure that includes...the waymarked off road cycle routes".

Following a presentment to the Verderers Court from the Cycle Working Group in November 2022, a new group was established consisting of four Verderers and four representatives from the Cycle Working Group to work on a solution. Our Access and Learning Manager Jim Mitchell was asked to attend meetings, alongside Forestry England. We assisted this group to come to a proposal which would better manage cycling in the New Forest in order to increase adherence and useability of a better joined up-network. The group met regularly over the last two years and has undertaken site visits to better understand the potential impacts of cycling on the practice of commoning and the wider

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landscape. The resulting proposal includes measures to improve digital and paper mapping and wayfinding, to engage the cycling community to influence people to keep to the network (Cycle Ambassadors) and also to develop a new cycling guide to support the wider New Forest Code. Several routes originally proposed by the Cycle Working Group representatives were not included following discussions within the working group.

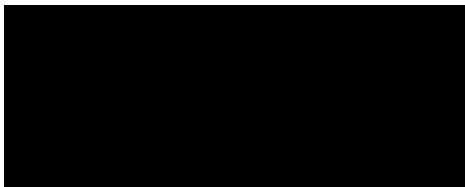
We note that the proposal is clear in stating that none of the routes would be implemented by Forestry England before all the necessary permissions are in place (for example Natural England consent, dealing with wildlife disturbance and habitat impact or any planning permission that may be required for qualifying works) along with suitable waymarking. We look forward to further discussions with Forestry England regarding these matters.

We acknowledge the concerns that have been raised regarding the potential impact on tranquillity and these will of course need careful consideration. The most recent study on tranquillity was undertaken by Land Use Consultants (LUC) in 2015. The methodology of the mapping and report followed much of the approach of earlier studies, placing the greatest emphasis on noise that reduced levels of tranquillity in the National Park, generated primarily by roads and rail, followed by settlements and flight paths to local airports (Bournemouth and Southampton). Cycle paths and footpaths were not considered to create sufficient noise levels to require being mapped, using the methodology applied.

We continue to rely on the LUC study to inform our work on tranquillity (such as the current review of our Local Plan).

The joint working between the Verderers and the Cycle Working Group has highlighted the benefit of partnership working, resulting in a proposal which we believe provides a realistic and carefully considered approach to managing off-road cycling in the New Forest which has the support and buy-in from the cycling community via the Cycle Working Group. We therefore support this process and the proposal for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Avery
Executive Director
New Forest National Park Authority