



New Forest Dog Owners Group

New Forest National Park Authority
South Efford House
Milford Road
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9th November 2009

Sirs,

Response to Draft Management Plan

New Forest Dog Owners Group is pleased to present its response to the above Draft Plan, following a Committee meeting on 28th October 2009. It welcomes the opportunity to put its views to the members of the NFNPA.

General Comments:

Firstly, NFDOG welcomes the change of approach now taken by the NFNPA and values the dialogue with stakeholders that has now been adopted as part of the process. It notes that NFDOG is specifically mentioned in the list of organisations in the Chapter on “Working together”.

The Committee also notes and welcomes the promise that the five-yearly reviews of the Management Plan will involve public consultation and looks forward to NFDOG being an active part of it.

It is also pleased to note the following commitments made publicly by NFNPA personnel:

- The dropping of the ‘concept of dog free car parks’.
- The removal of reference to three separate zones.
- The stated aim to work more closely with stakeholder groups.
- A more reasonable period of time to digest and respond to the draft documents.

NFDOG Committee was unanimous in its opinion that the new Draft was easy to read and understand and agreed that the revised approach to the planning for the future of the New Forest was a reasonable first step. As ever, however, the devil will be in the detail and for this reason, the Committee reserves its final judgement until it has been able to study the Core Strategy and the Recreation Management Strategy (RMS).

Specific Comments:

NFDOG specific comments refer to Chapter 4 – Taking Action.

NFDOG feels uneasy about the approach to recreation found in Section 07 of that chapter, especially the apparent emphasis, which is also echoed in Section 02, on management of recreation rather than improvement. The Committee fears that this may imply that recreation will be subservient to the other aims and objectives of the Management Plan, rather than being an equal partner in the structure of the future of the New Forest.

The following sections omit any reference to recreation, of which Dog Walking is a significant part:

01 Conserving local distinctiveness.

04 Planning for climate change.

05 Safeguarding Tranquillity. In the objectives, bullet 2, there is a phrase “reducing the impacts of.....inappropriate activity”, but there is no mention of recreation being a partner in the priority actions. This does lead to a perceived risk that the actions to be taken to reduce ‘inappropriate activity’ could be unilateral and not through a consensual approach.

All of these specific comments may be proved to be premature, but as the RMS has not yet been produced, no judgement can be made about its placing in the hierarchy of precedence.

Finally, NFDOG would like to confirm that although it is pleased that three of its own objectives have now been met, there are others that will have to await the production of the RMS.

Signed:

Pauline Ludlow
Chairman