

From: Minstead Parish Council

December 10th 2014

To: The Policy Team
New Forest National Park Authority
Lymington Town Hall
Avenue Road
Lymington
SO41 9ZG

Update to the New Forest National Park Management Plan 2015-20

Proposal from Minstead Parish Council for a New Action

Minstead PC propose an additional action be included in the 2015-20 revision of the New Forest National Park Management Plan under the 'Improving Traffic and Transport' section.

'To evaluate and develop, if feasible, a strategic cycle network through the National Park by creating dedicated and segregated cycle lanes on un-grazed land along the A337 from Cadnam to Lymington via Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst, creating a truly viable alternative to the car for journeys between settlements whilst minimising conflicts with other New Forest activities.'

This action would also make significant contributions to 'More healthy and sustainable lifestyles', and 'More opportunities for sustainable travel'.

As a Parish Council we have concentrated on the possible benefits to our parishioners. However it seems self-evident that many visitors could also benefit from this proposal.

To try and generate as much support for this proposal as possible we have distributed this document fairly widely. A list of those contacted can be found in appendix 2.

The History Behind our Proposal

Cycling in the New Forest has been a high profile, controversial subject over the last few years. Problems with large Sportives have hit the news regularly, and there have been several cycling schemes from the NFNPA which have failed, for a variety of reasons. The NFNPA also created the 'Cycling Liason Group' which has proved how difficult it is to find agreement between the various interested bodies.

Minstead PC feels that throughout these processes the interests of local cyclists have been under-represented. In September 2013 we raised a petition locally¹ and

received significant support for the idea of safe cycle routes between settlements for local people. Further, in March 2014, we had this as the main topic of discussion at our Annual Assembly². We found that number one on the Minstead cyclists wish list was a safe route into Lyndhurst, and that this could best be provided by a segregated cycle lane along the A337, as all existing routes and schemes (Community Routes) have problems which cannot be overcome.

Developments since this time, including the new 'Quiet Lanes' initiative have only confirmed our view that the only viable approach for local cyclists is a fundamental re-think to create a strategic cycle network between the major settlements in the New Forest.

The Proposed Cycle Route

We would like to see a cycle path beside the A337 from Cadnam to Lymington via Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst (see appendix 1). This cycle path would be segregated from other road traffic and should have a speed limit of 20mph to ensure it could be used safely by all cyclists.

Why this is a Good Idea

Safer Cycling – The All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group report of April 2013 'Get Britain Cycling'⁴, and the Draft 'Cycling Delivery Plan'⁵ of October 2014 from the Department of Transport both state that concerns over safety are one of the main reasons why people do not cycle. This view was supported by our own investigations^{1&2}. The cycle routes envisaged in this proposal would be much safer for cyclists looking to get between key New Forest villages. It should be noted that even the quieter New Forest roads still carry significant risks with many sections of single track road, poor visibility, collapsed road edges, free roaming commoners' stock, larger and faster moving agricultural vehicles, and visitors looking for their campsites.

Connectivity – The current New Forest cycle routes provide some very pleasant circular rides but are of little use when trying to get between settlements. To do this you either have to cycle very indirect routes along minor roads, or cycle on main roads (only for the confident experienced cyclist). The significant effort put into the 'Community Routes' project by the NFNPA has only served to emphasise how difficult it is to come up with practical connecting routes using existing infrastructure. Off road gravel tracks are un-useable in the dark, and cannot be used by road bikes. The provision of a cycle track alongside the A337 would significantly improve this situation. The proposed route would also connect with national cycle route 2 at Brockenhurst, national cycle route 236 at Lyndhurst, rail at Ashurst, Brockenhurst, and Lymington, and with the Isle of Wight Ferry at Lymington (appendix 1).

Strategic Thinking – The ‘Cycle Delivery Plan’⁵ and ‘Get Britain Cycling’⁴ make it absolutely clear that planning for cycling in the long term has to become a key part of the planning process for new and existing road infrastructure. To date there has been little evidence of this in the New Forest. This needs to change if we are to reap the benefits that would come from increased cycling as a regular means of transport, and we firmly believe this can only be achieved by cooperation between all the various bodies involved.

Health and Well-being - The recent All-Party Commission on Physical Activity report³ makes it clear how increasing physical activity has huge beneficial effects both physically and economically. Within this the use of cycling as a regular means of transport is seen as a key factor.

Conflict with Other Forest Activities - Cycling has had much adverse comment in the New Forest when it has come into conflict with commoning and equestrian activities. This proposal keeps cyclists separate from these activities and does not involve the loss of any grazed land. Thus we would hope that the Verderers of the New Forest and the Commoners Defence Association would support this proposal in principle.

Sustainable Transport - The provision of a strategic cycle network through the heart of the New Forest would make cycling a real, year round, alternative to the car for many journeys. We do not see any other actions in the NFNPA management plan which achieve this.

The Natural Environment – Keeping the proposed new cycle route alongside an existing main road should minimise any effects on the natural environment. Any reduction in car use is also to be welcomed.

Organised Cycle Events - Most problems associated with these events have been as a result of large numbers of cyclists on inappropriate minor roads causing problems for local communities and commoners. We have experienced these in Minstead. We do not think that provision of a safe cycle route along the A337 would make this worse. It would also not affect pony drifts.

Significant Problems

Cycling through Major Settlements - The safe routing of cyclists in and around Cadnam, Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, and Lymington is a significant area of concern. We would welcome discussions with interested bodies to try to find solutions to this and would not propose that these cycle routes are built until practical solutions have been agreed.

Cost - We understand this would involve significant cost. There should be a realistic evaluation of this which needs to be balanced against all the potential benefits.

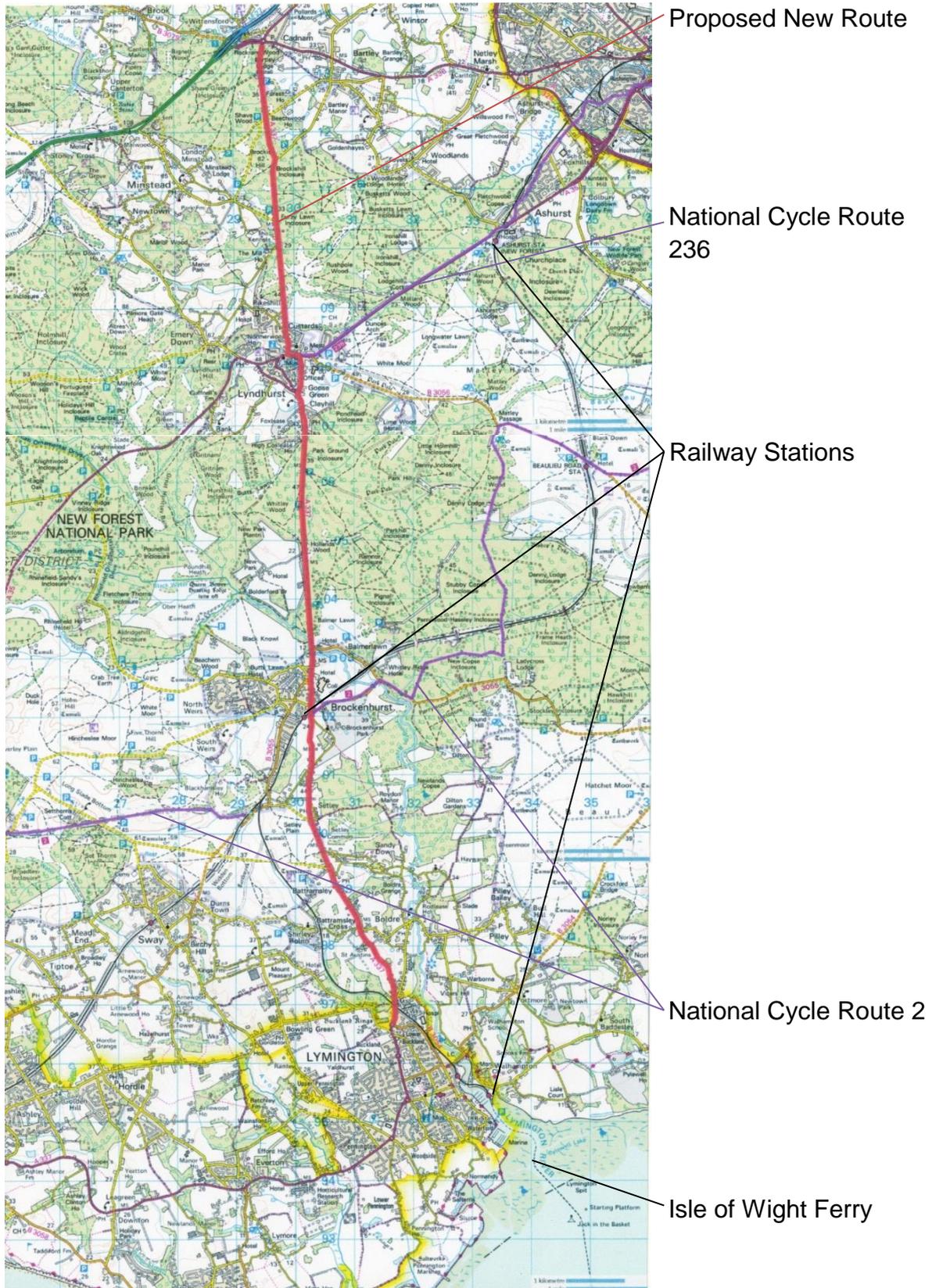
In Conclusion

We feel this proposal should be included as an action in the New Forest National Park Management Plan Update. Progress on improving provision of safe cycling routes in the Forest has been limited to date, and this provides the basis for a fundamental strategic rethink of the issue.

References

1. Minstead PC petition September 2013 'Support Local Cycling in the New Forest' – further information available <http://minstead.org.uk/parish-council/strategic-cycling-network-initiative/>
2. Minstead PC Annual Assembly discussion March 2014 – further information available via <http://minstead.org.uk/parish-council/strategic-cycling-network-initiative/>
3. Tackling Physical Inactivity – A Coordinated Approach. Report by the All-Party Commission on Physical Activity – April 2014.
<http://parliamentarycommissiononphysicalactivity.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/apco-pa-final.pdf>
- 4) Get Britain Cycling. Report by the All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group – April 2013. <http://allpartycycling.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/get-britain-cycling1.pdf>
- 5) Draft Cycling Delivery Plan – The Department for Transport – October 2014.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/364287/141015_Cycling_Delivery_Plan.pdf

Appendix 1 – Map of Proposed New Route



Appendix 2 – Distribution List

New Forest National Park Authority

The Policy Team

Alison Barnes – Chief Executive

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre – Chairman

Sally Arnold – Parish Member

Nick Evans – Senior Policy Officer

Nigel Matthews – Head of Recreation Management and Learning

Mark Holroyd – Transport and Tourism Manager

Hampshire County Council

John Sorrell - Senior Transport Planner

Cllr Keith Mans – Deputy Leader

Cllr Sean Woodward - Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Environment

New Forest District Council

Cllr Diane Andrews

New Forest Association of Local Councils

Cllr Goff Beck – Chairman

Cllr Neal Martin – Cycling representative

Copythorne Parish Council

Lyndhurst Parish Council

Brockenhurst Parish Council

Lymington and Pennington Town Council

Sustrans

Nick Farthing – Regional Director (South East)

Dr. Julian Lewis MP

Desmond Swayne MP

Department for Transport

Robert Goodwill MP - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport with responsibility for cycling.

Verderers of the New Forest

Dominic May – Official Verderer

Commoners Defence Association

Mike Eccles – President
Graham Ferris - Chairman

Forestry Commission

Richard Burke - Recreation & Public Affairs Manager, South England Forest District

Natural England

Jenny Thomas - Lead Adviser, The New Forest

Enterprise M3

Kevin Travers – Local Transport Body Lead Officer

Brockenhurst College

Di Roberts CBE - Pricipal