

New Forest Fact File

TOURISM & RECREATION

CROW Act in the New Forest

Q. What is the CROW Act?

A. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), is a national Act of Parliament with two main purposes. These are to improve access on foot opportunities and to provide better protection of wildlife, particularly to SSSI's.

Q. Who is responsible for implementing the Act in England?

A. There are three main bodies. These are the Countryside Agency who are responsible for mapping and designating new areas of access (called access land) which consists of mountain, moor, heath and downland. This process begins this year and will be completed by 2004/2005. English Nature is responsible for better wildlife protection and have specific powers and responsibilities to improve the condition of SSSI's. The Forestry Commission are responsible for encouraging improved access to woodlands through a dedication scheme.

Q. Is the CROW Act going to apply to the Crown Lands of the New Forest?

A. There are legal issues to be resolved and to date, nothing has been decided for the New Forest. It is our current understanding that the CROW Act could apply so it is likely that the Crown Lands will become access land. The FC nationally agrees with the principal of dedicating its land for access.

Q. If the Crown Land is designated or dedicated as access land, what will this mean for walkers, cyclists and riders?

A. It will mean that access on foot will become a statutory right (and no longer be by permission). Permissive access for cycling and other activities will carry on as normal. Access for horse riding would also remain unchanged.

Q. If the Crown Lands are designated or dedicated as access land, what will this mean for dog walkers?

A. The FC welcomes dogs on its land provided that they are kept under control (FC Bylaws 1982). For a long time there has been pressure from wildlife organisations to increase control of dogs, and recently there has been considerable pressure from dog owners to maintain the norm with control policy. The CROW Act has provision for dogs to be kept on leads during the ground nesting bird season and in the vicinity of livestock. It is up to the landowner (the FC in this situation) to decide whether it wishes to apply that part of the act. This decision would be made in consultation with statutory bodies, e.g. English Nature, and other relevant interested parties e.g. New Forest Dog Owners Group. No discussions about this have yet taken place.

Q. Where can I find out more about the CROW Act and its national implementation?

A. Contact the Countryside Agency for its leaflet 'New Rights, New Responsibilities' on: 01242 533439 or visit www.countryside.gov.uk/access. The New Forest Dog Owners Group can be contacted on 01590 622319.



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