

South Downs

Local Access Forum

The formal meeting was preceded by a morning introduction and induction session covering the following areas:

- An introduction to the National Park and its purposes and the structure and function of the South Downs National Park Authority
- An overview of the Access and Rights of Way provision in the South Downs including the South Downs Way National Trail
- An introduction to the function of LAFs
- Chair and Vice-chair candidate's addresses to members

Minutes of the inaugural meeting

**16th May 2011, 2pm, at Arundel Town Hall
Maltravers Street, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 9AP**

Present

Members: David Ashcroft DA, Dave Brookshaw DB, Bob Damper BD, Terry Doyle TD, Sue Dunkley SD, Andy Hannaford AH, Neville Harrison NH, Glynn Jones GJ, Roger Mullenger RM, David Taylor DT, Jo Taylor JT, Andrew Thomas AT, Tom Tupper TT, John Vannuffel JV, David Williamson DW

Apologies: Val Bateman, Pat Neal, Pete West

In attendance: Andrew Lee AL, Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Jim Redwood JR, Head of Planning, Phil Belden PB, Head of Operations, Pete Currell PC, Partnerships and Delivery Manager

Secretary: Tim Squire TS, Rights of Way and Access Officer

Observers: Brian Bailey (Ramblers), Hugo Blomfield (B&HCC), Tricia Butcher (CAFWS), Jane Noble (WSCC), Patrick Wallace (ESLAF)

1. Welcome and introduction of members

Neville Harrison welcomed members and observers to the first meeting of the new statutory local access forum for the South Downs National Park area. He thanked members for their attendance at the induction session in the morning where they had the opportunity to hear the three candidates for the chair and vice chair positions address the meeting.

2. Set up of new LAF

a. Nominations and election of Chair and Vice-Chair

GJ nominated DA, DW seconded

DB nominated SD, BD seconded

DA nominated GJ, SD seconded

A secret paper ballot elected GJ as chair by a clear majority

A second ballot elected SD as vice-chair by a very close majority

GJ thanked the members and took the chair

b. Agree name of new LAF

Three names were proposed for the new LAF. The name chosen by a show of hands with 8 votes against 3 each for the other two options was the South Downs Local Access Forum.

c. Agree Terms of Reference

TS ran through the amendments suggested during the discussion in the morning induction session. With these changes the Terms of Reference were unanimously agreed. TS to circulate.

Action: TS

3. Management Plan presentation by Pete Currell, Partnerships Delivery Manager

PC gave a presentation on the development of the South Downs Management Plan. He explained that LAF members could make up a core part of the Access and Recreation Technical Working Group. LAF members were also invited to join the South Downs Forum (SDF), which will be an all inclusive engagement group for the Management Plan. There will be a large SDF engagement event with about two hundred people invited on 19th July in Stanmer Park.

Questions followed.

PC said that the NPA was working hard to get to the traditionally hard to reach groups, the Learning and Outreach Strategy Lead will be a key person in this, for example in work supporting the Mosaic project. The SDF will encompass a wide range of people. The NPA will take advice from the LAF on how to reach these groups.

State of the Park report is to be available Apr 2012 but trends will emerge before. Data relevant to Access and Recreation will be most relevant to the LAFs interest. Membership of Technical Working Group will be limited to 30 to 40 attending a meeting but email group can be larger.

It was agreed the role of the LAF is crucial. GJ encouraged members who had particular interests and the time to get involved to come forward.

Action: PC to seek to provide list of organisations being engaged with

4. Planning in the National Park presentation by Jim Redwood, Head of Planning

This introduction to the Planning system in the South Downs was followed by questions:

DT asked what would happen if planning authorities wanted to charge more for providing planning services.

JR explained that there was currently a wide range in the charges. The SDNPA would seek to bring these into alignment over the next two to three years. The SDNPA is prepared to carry out the planning for a district if the authority chose not to.

GJ wants LAF to help get the best deal for access from development and also asked how to avoid developers not delivering on their agreements.

JR said the framework will come out of the Management Plan that the LAF will help develop and the LAF will also be able to comment on individual applications. SDNPA must make sure that s106 agreements are tightly worded and give teeth to enforcement and that the NP purposes are key in securing these.

DB asked how "Local Transport Plan 3"s fitted in with SDNPA planning function.

JR said SDNPA would want access in NP mentioned in all of the LTP3s and would really like the advice of the LAF on engaging on this. JR said it was important for NPs to get recognised in national legislation.

5. Future work items for LAF;

a. RoW Accord

TS explained that SDNPA and Local Highway Authorities (LHAs) will be working towards an accord for the management of RoW in the NP. A series of options on what SDNPA would expect from LHAs and what the SDNPA would be able to offer as added value will be discussed with operational staff and a SDNPA members working group. The LAF will be given an opportunity to feed into this process. PB said that the new working group will initially be information gathering, but the LAF will be brought in as soon as there is something to work on.

b. Improvements to CRoW Access Land

It was agreed that this was an area of work the LAF was keen to tackle. A discussion was had about the nature of the access provision, the mapping process and review and how permissive access may be used. PB explained that the former South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC) has undertaken an audit of Access Land, which could be made available to LAF members.

Action: TS to find out how permissive agreements work across the area.

c. Vehicle damage to BOATs and TROs

DA explained how on two BOATs in Selbourne damage caused by vehicles is detrimental to all users. GJ outlined how situation varied in different counties. JV informed the LAF that NPA and LHAs can both make Traffic Regulation Orders. GJ said that the LAF needs to influence at policy-making stage.

d. Future of Forest Panel

DW outlined the work of the Panel which will make a report to government in April 2012 to advise on the future of forestry and woodland policy in England. GJ pointed out two possible access champions on the panel. He hoped that this would be an opportunity for the management of forests to include minimum standards for access which are very variable across the country. TD asked how much woodland was private and how much public. DW replied that 90% was private in SE, but the policy formulated should be able to influence this land also.

Action: GJ/TS to write to be included in consultation. On agenda for next meeting.

e. Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs)

DB referred to the SDJC's database of RoWIP improvements ("James Ort's spreadsheet"). LHAs might suggest possible projects that the SDNPA could assist with. GJ asked for volunteers for working group: DB, JV, BD.

Action: TS to re-visit the spreadsheet and agree with the chairman on future working group meeting

f. Any other items

JV suggested that the LAF look at historic evidence for paths that may be lost at 2026 cut-off date.

TT recommended early work for LAF should be to look at long standing problems on SDW as it is the most valuable asset.

DA suggested LAF identify some quick wins.

Action: GJ, SD and TS to formulate initial work plan for LAF

6. Cross-Forum business

Following a question from DA, LAF agreed that there was not a conflict with members of SDLAF also being members of other LAFs and that the LAFs want to work together. Those members are: DA – Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (chair), DB – B&H LAF(chair), GJ – Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (vice-chair), JV – Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum (N.B. Patrick Wallace, chair of East Sussex Local Access Forum was present as observer)

a. Memorandum of Understanding, agree possible cross-forum representatives

With minor amendment as proposed in draft, to have Chairs meetings as necessary, the Memorandum of Understanding between SDLAF and the four HA LAFs was agreed unanimously.

b. Invitation for LAF member to join PATHH Steering Committee

DA introduced the Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage project which was set up through a Heritage Lottery Fund bid by HCAF which aims to record and bring into being lost or incorrectly designated RoW that meet the Countryside Access Plan's objectives. TD was nominated to sit on the Steering Committee.

Action; TD to attend meeting 30 June

7. Defra business

a. Letter from Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, response from LAF

GJ expressed regret that the England Access Forum was not supported by government and worried about mechanism for LAFs to feed up to Defra. He had reservations about a "virtual forum". A discussion ensued about how a LAF member from all the LAFs could be chosen to sit on the Rights of Way Review Committee. NH said the SDLAF should try and be positive about this approach from the Minister. DA said that Defra should value LAFs for their balanced and agreed advice.

Action: GJ/TS to draft letter of response for circulation to members

b. Defra Consultation on Coastal Access Regulations

Agreed that this was not a major issue in the SDNP, where nearly all of the coastal strip was already open access; also, it was early days for the LAF, so it was a little premature to be responding to consultations with such deadlines.

8. Times and dates for the year's meetings

14 July 2011, 13 October 2011, 12 January 2012
10.30 a.m. start. Venue(s) to be central location.

9. Any Other Business

10. Close at 4.15pm.