

South Downs

Local Access Forum

17th July 2012, 10.30am, at Pulborough Village Hall

Present

Members: Glynn Jones GJ (Chair), David Ashcroft DA, Val Bateman VB, Dave Brookshaw DB, Terry Doyle TD, Andy Hannaford AH, Neville Harrison NH, Jo Taylor JT, Andrew Thomas AT, John Vannuffel JV.

Apologies: David Taylor DT, Bob Damper BD, Sue Dunkley SD, Roger Mullenger RM, Simon James SJ, Tom Tupper TT.

In attendance: Trevor Beattie TB, Chief Executive, SDNPA; Tim Squire TS, Rights of Way and Access Officer, SDNPA; Allison Thorpe ATh, Access and Recreation Strategy Lead, SDNPA; Jeremy Burgess JB, Area Manager, SDNPA; Sue Montila SM, The Trails Trust South Central; Eleri Owen EO; E-On.

Minute taker: John Geoghegan, Partnership Support Officer, SDNPA.

Observers: Tricia Butcher, CAFWS; Andy Beattie AB, SDNPA Parkwide Manager; Brian Bailey BB, Sussex Ramblers; Phil Belden PB, SDNPA Head of Operations; Jane Noble, WSCC; Zena Gibbs, ESLAF Disabled Access; Tony Gibbs, Interest in Disabled Access; Alan Marlow, HCAF and Hampshire Ramblers; Martin Gilchrist, Natural England; Leila McCormick, Mid Sussex Bridleways Group and landowner; Hilary Pierce, Mid Sussex Bridleways Group; Robert Walker, BHCC.

A. General Business

1. Welcome

GJ welcomed all present to the meeting. Pat Neal had tendered his resignation from the LAF and a replacement is being sought.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the meeting 24th April 2012 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising: Action 9; the letter should be redrafted reflecting concerns of access users. As well as addressing sites that were possibly incorrectly mapped, the review could allow for gaps in the mapping to be addressed and the letter should express this more strongly.

Action 1 – TS to redraft and circulate for approval

3. October AGM meeting

GJ explained that LAF members will have had an 18 month term by October 2012, and invited nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair for the next year.

Natural England had requested an annual report on the work of the LAF. It was agreed that the report would be a good opportunity to raise the profile of the LAF, which offered a balanced outlook on access issues across the Park and was underused at present.

Action 2 – TS to draft the annual report

4. SDNPA Update

a. Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)

ATh explained that the joint bid with New Forest NPA and the local highway authorities had been successful, resulting in £3.8m being made available to use for sustainable transport provision over the next 2.5 years. Most options outlined in the scheme had been approved. A programme board would oversee the programme, with a designated Programme Manager, and a Stakeholder Group set up to allow the input of interested parties.

In the year 2012/13, £650,000 of this money would need to be delivered, in schemes for visitors and leisure users, with a ratio of 60% revenue spend and 40% capital spend.

The LAF commented that the Stakeholder Group should be involved at every stage to ensure a successful programme, and in-house expertise should be utilised where available.

Action 3 – SDLAF members who are interested in being part of the Stakeholder reference group should let ATh know

b. Local Highway Authorities (LHAs) / NPA RoW & Access Accord

The Accord had been signed, now work was underway with the LHAs to establish more detail. This will include an annual report on work carried out on RoW and Access. SDNPA in its role as Access/Relevant Authority has produced an Access Land Report for 2011/12, which would be circulated after the SDNPA had approved it. The report details all the work carried out by SDNPA and VRS to improve Access Land. Of the 16 previously inaccessible Access Land sites, 3 now had access agreed. Natural England deals with closures on behalf of the SDNPA, as per a Memorandum of Agreement, which had worked well to date. For the next year the priority would be accessibility and connectivity of Access Land.

c. Land Managers' Survey

JB reported that as part of the South Downs Management Plan work, a Visitors' Survey was being undertaken, which had included questioning land managers, along with visitors and environmental organisations. The LAF decided, following a discussion on a range of issues involving dogs, to have a discussion at a future meeting regarding responsible dog walking.

Action 4 – TS to add to list of future agenda items and to circulate JB summary [post meeting note: JB paper circulated by email 18.07.12]

d. State of the National Park Report / National Park Management Plan

The SNPR should be approved at the 26th July NPA meeting, and available in a printed format by September. The South Downs National Park Management Plan was an ongoing consultative process, and the LAF would be consulted at various stages in the process.

5. Information items

a. RoW legislation and Stepping Forward

There was an agreement that JV would draft a response to this consultation and TS would combine with any other comments.

NB: Each County Council in the National Park had an interactive map – West Sussex County Council's map could be found at www.westsussex.gov.uk/imap

Action 5 – JV/TS/All to draft a response to the above consultation

b. Community Protection Orders

Community Protection Orders (CPOs) were a new type of order, described in a government white paper, aimed at addressing anti-social behaviour which would replace, amongst other things, Dog Control Orders and Gating Orders for which LAFs are consultees. It was suggested that CPOs would be less effective in the countryside than in urban areas. There would need to be consistency and the CPOs must be enforceable.

Action 6 - All comments on CPOs to TS and GJ to formulate a response

6. Defra and Natural England Business

a. Feedback from LAF Regional Conference

DB gave feedback from the meeting of the Natural England Regional Conference. The main points of this feedback were that: no land managers were present; Huddle was not proving popular; and the future of the regional LAF co-ordinator was unclear.

Action 7 - DB to circulate the notes of the Regional Conference [post meeting note: circulated by email 18.07.12]

b. Huddle Feedback

66 of the 83 LAFs nationwide had signed up to Huddle to date. 137 LAF members were using Huddle, and 91 discussion posts had been posted in June 2012. Opinion on the effectiveness of Huddle was divided, some members felt it had failed as an alternative to the All-England Forum, others felt that it needed more buy-in from LAF members to succeed. There were still 3 spaces available for any SDLAF members who were interested.

Action 8 – SDLAF members to contact TS if interested in joining Huddle

7. Information items

a. Feedback from other LAFs

ESCC are recruiting a new Definitive Map Officer to work on digitising the Definitive Map, a twelve month post funded through Interreg.

B. Key Topics for discussion

8. Proposal for a local Trails Trust branch, Sue Montila

SM, a Trustee of the Trails Trust South Central, gave a presentation on the Trails Trust scheme, which aims to open up new routes through working with landowners. The Trails Trust is a registered charity, and the methods used are supported by Defra. Routes are negotiated and become rights of way through the process of express dedication. The routes do not have to meet LHAs' requirements, but it was hoped each scheme would have their backing. Following a question SM explained that permit schemes were not considered as part of a TT approach, however local permissive use can be used to trial routes on a short term

basis. SM was looking to work with landowners with outstanding claims to explore possibilities of opening up new routes.

The maintenance of the routes would be undertaken by the LHAs once the route was on the definitive map. Funding could be sought for ongoing maintenance should that be necessary. SM hoped that there could be gains on RoWIP priorities. She seeks personal introductions to landowners. TT could help pay for diversions of RoW that landowners would like to see moved in return for an upgrade of the path.

Action 9 – All to contact Sue, via TS, with any offers of assistance or contacts or any potential routes.

9. E-on Rampion wind farm consultation

Eleri Owen from E-On gave a presentation about the consultation on the proposed wind farm project, particularly the route of the cabling. Under the current proposals, Rights of Way and two areas of Access Land would be closed, for 6-12 weeks at a time per section, for trenching and cabling works. Alternative access routes would need to be established.

A discussion followed, and the following points were raised:

- The proposed cable route intersects 37 Rights of Way;
- Given the time of year of the proposed works, the quicker the works could be completed the better, from the landowners' and users' perspectives;
- The opportunity should be taken to bury existing cables underground with the new lines;
- It was pointed out to E-on that it was the National Park Authority that was the Access and Relevant Authority in relation to Access Land and not Natural England as stated in the consultation documentation.
- There was no mention of during what season these works were proposed, which could impact on landowners if wet, ground-nesting birds in spring and summer visitors;
- The LAF should respond to this consultation formally in order to get its points considered;
- The LAF should advise the SDNPA on their response to the consultation; and
- This consultation allowed for comments on the proposed project as a whole, not just E-on's preferred route for the cables.

Action 10 - LAF Members to send their comments by email to TS to respond to the consultation, and advise the SDNPA on their response

10. Ouse Valley Cycle Network P4C application, Neville Harrison SDNPA

NH gave a presentation on the Ouse Valley Cycle Network and the Paths for Communities application. This related to the section of the route between Rodmell and Southease.

The following points were raised:

- The surface must be suitable for a bridleway, but would be accessible for all users;
- The project group should consult the BHS;
- The LAF enthusiastically supported the project; and
- There may be an issue of match-funding with P4C.

Action 11 – GJ to write to NH in support of the application

**Next Meeting: 10.30 am 9 October 2012 at Amberley Museum.
Future Meetings: 22 January 2013.**