

# South Downs

## Local Access Forum

18 July 2013, 10.30 am, at Norfolk Arms Hotel, Arundel

### Present

**Members:** Glynn Jones GJ (Chair), Sue Dunkley SD (Vice-chair), Neville Harrison NH, Simon James SJ, Richard Johnson RJ, David Taylor DT, Susan Thompson ST, Roger Mullenger RM, Russell Cleaver RC, Jo Carr JC

**Apologies:** David Ashcroft, Dave Brookshaw DB, Bob Damper BD DA, , Val Bateman VB, John Vannuffel JV, Andy Hannaford AH

**In attendance:** South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Officers: Tim Squire TS, Rights of Way and Access Officer, Phil Belden PB, Director of Operations, Ben Bessant BB, South Downs Way Assistant, Andy Beattie AB, Parkwide Manager, Allison Thorpe ATh, Access & Recreation Strategy Lead, Tim RichingsTR, Planning Policy Manager

**Minute taker:** Nicola Winning, Strategy & Partnership Administrator SDNPA

**Observers:** Mike Farley, Clive Robey & Emma Robinson – Network Rail, Alison Perry AP, Area Countryside Access Manager, HCC, Tricia Butcher TB, WSLAF

### A. GENERAL BUSINESS

#### 1. Welcome

GJ welcomed all to the meeting.

#### 2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

**Factual accuracy:** typographical error item 5e Metrobus is one word

**Matters arising:** ATh informed the meeting that through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (three-year Government grant to New Forest and South Downs NPs) there would be a grant scheme for communities and parishes called the Sustainable Transport Solutions Fund.

Applications can be applied for to help fund sustainable access including: cycling, walks and public transport etc. Grants range from £2000 - £15000.

**Actions from previous minutes:**

Action 1: Policies were improved with LAF steer

Action 3: TS tabled the new leaflet and signs that have been produced – landowners will be able to put up the signs to help manage gate and dog issues re their livestock concerns.

Item 10: Invitation for LAF member to attend SDW Steering Group 23<sup>rd</sup> July, Chichester.

#### 3. Rail crossings (brought forward from item 7 on agenda)

TS gave an update on the footpath diversion at a rail crossing at Newhaven. ESCC has carried out a consultation on the proposal; there will then be a formal consultation when the diversion order is made. NH has visited the site and believes it is an important gateway into the NP. LAF members questioned National Rail (NR) on the need to use stiles rather than more accessible gates. NR explained their duty to reduce level crossing numbers or make them safe; they are also not able to do anything that would increase risk i.e. a structure that would allow more

people to use the crossing. NH mentioned that ESCC has a policy for changing stiles to gates. NR has a policy of updating like for like and do not generally seek to reduce access. NR was asked if they had statistics for the crossing at Newhaven. Increased use will mean that NR would require consultation to improve safety. Risk assessments are normally carried out every 3 years, if it becomes apparent that incidents are occurring then the assessments are carried out 3-6 monthly.

**ACTION 1: NH proposed a meeting with NR, ESCC, SDLAF and SDNPA to discuss the full history of this crossing.**

**ACTION 2: NR will send Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) guidance on level crossings and link to Rail Accident Investigation Branch website.**

**ACTION 3: GJ & TS to draft letter in response to diversion consultation.**

**ACTION 4: GJ & TS to write to ORR for clarification of the interpretation of its advice to not increase risk**

#### **4. SDNPA Update**

##### **a) Draft Management Plan Consultation**

AT confirmed that the public consultation paper has now gone live. AT tabled the postcards and poster that have been created. These have been placed in public places: libraries, buses, parish councils and newspapers etc. Local Authorities will have internal meetings to respond as one voice. LAF members will be able to respond as individuals.

So far SDNPA has received around 150 responses on line. The closing date for responses is 16 September 2013. Hard copies of the Management Plan are available on request.

##### **b) Rights of Way and Access Annual Report**

PB gave a presentation on the RoW and Access Annual Report 2012/13 – PB confirmed that the report was also presented to the NPA's AGM on 18 June. The report summarises work done by SDNPA on Access Land and the SDW, LHAs' work on RoW, plus joint working on access. It also includes the SDLAF Annual Report.

NH thanked GJ and TS for their excellent presentation on Access, RoW and the LAF to NPA members and public prior to the NPA AGM.

RM asked how quality would be measured? TS said that it would be a measure based on condition of assets on Rights of Way. RC noted that surface condition is not mentioned. If SDNPA needed to do surveys, it would endeavour to have trained volunteers; WSCC already uses some volunteers to survey. TS said, with HCC and WSCC adopting electronic management systems, more consistent reporting will be possible in the future. ATh confirmed that there are indicators within the South Downs Management Plan for RoW.

**ACTION 5: TS will report when a template is developed for RoW reporting**

#### **5. Defra and Natural England Business**

##### **a) Report on Regional Conference 21 May 2013, London, NH**

NH said that the conference was well worth attending as it was very interesting with good presentations: CLA on how to improve RoW legislation, MoD on defence land, smart phone technology, Paths for Communities, Bob Damper on Cycling in SDNP and NFNP. The Paths for Communities presentation informed of 17 successful applications. Projects have to be completed by end February to claim the money. LAF discussed mechanisms for securing unspent funds. TS can send the power point presentations that were given by email or when they are uploaded to Huddle.

**ACTION 5: PB to contact Natural England and enquire whether there might be a mechanism to carry forward unspent funds**

**ACTION 6: TS to send Ramblers link to summary of RoW legislation changes in Deregulation Bill [sent 12.08.13, also with Defra summary]**

**ACTION 7: TS to send link to SELAF conference presentations**

## **b) Natural England LAF Annual Report 2011/12**

All LAFs have to report to NE – the link to see the report is at <http://www.naturalengland.gov.uk/ourwork/access/laf>

## **c) Beacon Hill NNR Dedication**

TS confirmed that Rob Morris is now the NE officer for the dedication process in this area. Beacon Hill is the first NNR on the list in the South Downs to be dedicated as Access Land. Higher rights need to be taken into consideration i.e. cycling / riding. A report to go to NE board in September for this to be dedicated. TS asked if anyone wanted to go to Beacon Hill and complete the proforma to be submitted to NE. RC and GJ offered to visit the site.

**ACTION 8: RC and GJ to visit Beacon Hill and to co-ordinate visit if possible**

**ACTION 9: TS to invite Rob Morris to attend LAF to talk about the dedication of the NNRs.**

## **6. Feedback from Other Local Access Forums and Members**

### **a) West Sussex**

WSCC has had a lot of discussion regarding the Bramber crossing, where the Downs Link path crosses the Bramber bypass. It was agreed that as WSCC had started they should finish working on this project which is in the SDNP. An enormous amount of progress has been made and GJ thanked Trisha Butcher for her hard work.

### **b) Hampshire**

HCAF was absent today and no report available. TS informed that they are still awaiting a response from the MoD. [*post meeting note: response from MoD to HCAF circulated 06.08.13*]

### **c) Brighton & Hove**

RJ confirmed that the 78 bus service into Stanmer Park is at risk of being withdrawn due to traffic and parking blocking the route through the park. Metrobus 271, Crawley to Brighton, has become very popular on the Sunday service into Ditchling. The 99a bus service from Petworth to Chichester is also doing very well.

**ACTION 10: TS will put RJ in contact with SDNPA Communications Team regarding leaflets**

**ACTION 11: AT to contact RJ for passenger numbers**

### **d) HCAF PATHH report and proposal for representative on enforcement working group**

Alison Perry, Area Countryside Access Manager, HCC: A PATHH project sub-group has been formed to carry out the work arising from the research output. SDLAF is invited to have a representative to join this group. HCAF is also seeking SDLAF support in principle for the continuation of the work of the PATHH project. GJ asked who would like to be a representative – RM agreed.

**SDLAF agreed that they support the continuation of the work of the PATHH Project**

HCC is reviewing their enforcement policy on RoW. There are an increasing number of issues that have not been resolved many of which are historical and could go back as long ago as 40-50 years. HCC is to set up a joint working group to review the policy. SDLAF asked if it supports the review and invited to have a representative join the group.

**SDLAF agreed to support the review of HCC's enforcement policy**

TS informed the LAF that DA hopes to sit on the working group and that he is happy to act as the SDLAF representative, but would also welcome another SDLAF member to take on this role

or to stand-in for him if he can't attend. There were no other volunteers forthcoming so the SDLAF resolved to ask DA to be SDLAF representative.

**ACTION 12: RM to be SDLAF representative on PATHH project sub-group**  
**ACTION 13: DA to be SDLAF representative on HCC Enforcement Policy working group**

## **B. KEY TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **7. South Downs Way, Winchester**

BB presented and explained the proposed new route of the SDW into/out of Winchester. The SDLAF are being consulted on this prior to public consultation.

SDLAF was strongly in support of the new route and welcomed the improvements to access and enjoyment it would bring. During the discussion some suggestions were put forward:

- a. Improve signage from railway station to the SDW;
- b. A sign offering alternative of slightly shorter current route to walkers.

**ACTION 14: GJ/TS to write to SDW Officer in support of new proposed route of SDW**

### **8. South Downs National Park Local Plan, Tim Richings, Planning Policy Manager, SDNPA**

TR gave an interesting and informative presentation on the Local Plan structure and timing and answered questions from the SDLAF members.

#### **Local Plan Timetable:**

Jan-Feb 2014	Issues and options
Jan-Feb 2015	Preferred options
October 2015	Pre-submission
June 2016	Submission to Secretary of State
By June 2017	Adoption

TR welcomed the SDLAF input into the development of the Local Plan. He said that the policies to be developed on Green Infrastructure will be of most pertinence to the LAF and that his colleague, Ray Drabble, will be able to engage with the SDLAF on these.

TR also briefly explained the development of the Community Infrastructure Levy. TS informed the LAF that a project list was being compiled which includes RoW improvement projects which LHAs and other LAFs have been invited to add to.

**ACTION 15: TR to give draft topic papers to TS to circulate for SDLAF members comments**

**ACTION 16: TS to invite Ray Drabble to a future SDLAF meeting to consult on Green Infrastructure Policies**

Requested agenda items for next meeting:

Fencing control for cattle – RM

#### **Future Meeting Dates**

**17 October 2013, 10.30-13.30, Norfolk Arms Hotel, Arundel**

**21 January 2014, 10.30-13.30, venue tbc**