

# SOUTH DOWNS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

## ANNUAL REPORT: NOVEMBER 2012–APRIL 2014

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### A FEW WORDS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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The South Downs Local Access Forum (SDLAF) is a group of 17 people who give advice to various government authorities and other bodies on how to provide access to land for open-air recreation and enjoyment. They must consider the needs of land management as well as conservation of the natural beauty of the area. A Local Access Forum (LAF) is a statutory body and, by law, the organisations that it advises must take note of that advice.

The SDLAF is appointed by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and has a range of members that reflect the views of both land managers and recreational users of the countryside. The forum may also have members who represent the interests of conservation, tourism, people with disabilities, transport or other interests.

This has been the last of my three years as Chairman. I have thoroughly enjoyed watching the members blend and coalesce into an effective and representative group of advisors. We have not always agreed on details but we have been able to discuss and compromise enabling us to offer advice that we hope has been useful and acceptable reflecting the interests and expertise of a wide band of knowledge, opinion and experience. I would like to thank the SDNPA for its full and enthusiastic support. This support has come from all levels of the organisation and has been a major factor in our growth and development into a mature advisory body.

#### **Glynn Jones**

Chairman, South Downs Local Access Forum



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### BEHAVIOUR CHANGE OF COUNTRYSIDE USERS

SDLAF helped shape the messages the SDNPA are communicating on responsible dog ownership via a new leaflet for dog walkers and a plaque to be supplied to farmers to make people aware of being in a farmed landscape and their responsibilities whilst exercising their dogs.

### CYCLING IN TWO NATIONAL PARKS

A cycling representative from the SDLAF with experience of cycling in both the New Forest and the South Downs gave presentations comparing the cycling provision in the two National Parks. He presented to the SDLAF and also the regional and national LAF conferences, identifying opportunities to enhance the networks and highlighting best practice.

### SOUTH DOWNS WAY NEW DEAL

A review of the management of National Trails has resulted in the adoption of a new Trail Partnership. The SDLAF agreed to be the formal independent representative of the stakeholder community of the South Downs Way users and the land through which it passes, a "critical friend". SDLAF has an invitation to send a representative to Trail Partnership meetings and will also be able to verify the reporting on a new set of indicators.

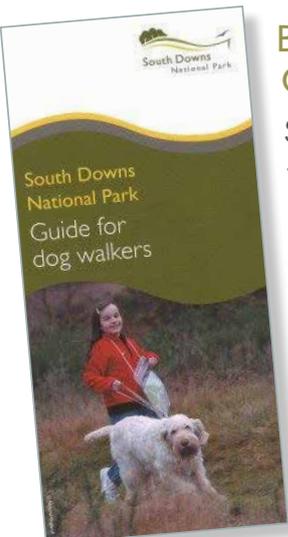
## NATIONAL NATURE RESERVES DEDICATION

Natural England consulted the SDLAF on its programme of dedication of its freehold National Nature Reserves as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Although the first two NNRs in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) to go through this process, Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill, are largely Open Access Land anyway, the process allowed the SDLAF to offer advice formally and informally on access improvements and the dedication of higher rights.

### LOCAL PATH ISSUES

The SDLAF has spent time considering some significant local rights of way issues.

- A footpath diversion which crossed a railway at Newhaven led to challenging questions being asked about the implementation of safety guidance by Network Rail, and the implications for easier accessibility. Issues that still have to be resolved by Network Rail.
- A solution to a long standing missing section of otherwise accessible coast has been considered and revised, providing an easier route for users than would have been provided under the original plans.
- A proposal to avoid a dangerous road crossing on the important Downs Link path was followed intently by the SDLAF with regular updates from colleagues from neighbouring West Sussex LAF and advice given in support of the creation of new rights of way.



- Brighton and Hove City Council sought SDLAF advice on the creation of a new multi-user route linking the city with the National Park. The highly interesting proposal for open grazing across a busy road accessing the city made for great discussion.

## STRATEGIC ADVICE

The SDLAF are able to be consulted by all the authorities and agencies within the SDNP on their strategic plans, strategies, policies and key delivery proposals.

- Hampshire County Council consulted on their new Traffic Management Policy Guidance and Highway Maintenance Management Plan.
- SDLAF gave advice on Lower Tidal River Arun Flood Risk Management Strategy to the Environment Agency.
- Following on from helping to shape the South Downs Partnership Management Plan the SDLAF is now being fully engaged in the production of the South Downs Local Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy.

## FENCING COMMON LAND

The potentially controversial subject of fencing of common land has been tackled by the SDLAF on several occasions. The latest proposals from Sussex Wildlife Trust to fence common land at Iping and Stedham Commons, in order to conserve precious heathland sites by grazing, was again well supported by the



Site visit to Newhaven rail crossing



Site visit to South Downs Way at Annington piggery



Site visit to mountain biking track at Steyning

SDLAF who offered detailed advice on access and commended Sussex Wildlife Trust on its consultation process.



## SDLAF MEMBERS

Name	Interest	Elected member/member of other LAF
David Ashcroft	Land manager	East Hampshire District, Hampshire Countryside Access Forum
Val Bateman	Horse riding	Funtington Parish Council
Dave Brookshaw	South Downs Society, Volunteer Ranger	Brighton and Hove LAF
Jo Carr	Land manager	SDNPA
Russell Cleaver	Countryside management, Volunteer Ranger Service	
Bob Damper	Cycling	
Sue Dunkley	Disabled access	
Andy Hannaford	Education and adventure recreation	
Neville Harrison	Walker	SDNPA
Simon James	Forestry Commission	
Richard Johnson	Public transport	
Glynn Jones	South Downs Society	West Sussex LAF
Roger Mullenger	Walk leader, nature reserve volunteer	Liss Parish Council
Isabel Swift	Land agent	
David Taylor	Land manager	
Susan Thompson	Cyclist	
John Vannuffel	Trail motorcyclist	Brighton and Hove LAF

Resignations since last Annual Report: Jo Taylor, Andrew Thomas, Tom Tupper

## MEETINGS

Date	No. of Members	No. of Officers (Incl. secretary / minute taker)	No. of Observers
22.01.13	12	6	3
18.04.13	12	6	5
18.07.13	10	7	5
17.10.13	15	7	6
21.01.14	12	6	6

## LINKS/CONTACT

Website: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/laf](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/laf)

Email: [tim.squire@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:tim.squire@southdowns.gov.uk)

Address: South Downs Local Access Forum  
c/o Tim Squire  
South Downs National Park Authority  
Stanmer Park  
Lewes Road  
Brighton  
BN1 9SE

SDLAF is a statutory forum administered by the SDNPA

## BUDGET

Date	Venue	Room hire £s	Catering £s
22.01.13	Edes House, Chichester	Courtesy of WSCC	120.00
18.04.13	Springwells Hotel, Steyning	70.00	100.00
18.07.13	Norfolk Arms Hotel, Arundel	83.33	174.17
17.10.13	Norfolk Arms Hotel, Arundel	100	157.50
21.01.14	Norfolk Arms Hotel, Arundel	100	195.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>353.33</b>	<b>746.67</b>

Members travel expenses total: **£375.21**

Total running costs: **£1,475.21**