

## South Downs

### Local Access Forum

#### East Hampshire District LCWIP

The attention of the South Downs Local Access Forum (SDLAF) has been drawn to this current consultation exercise.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the South Downs Local Access Forum.

As a body listed under Section 94(4), Hampshire County Council is required, in accordance with Section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

It will also be important for the County Council to take account of the strengthened duty on all local authorities (and others) included in the recent Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (S.245):

*In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in any National Park in England, a relevant authority must seek to further National Park purposes and if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, must attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park.*

The comments of the Local Access Forum are as follows:

- it is not clear whether the SDLAF has been consulted at earlier stages of this LCWIP
- there seems to be relatively little regard to (or mention of) the existence of a National Park in the document
- the LCWIP should be looking to improve access (by walking and cycling) into and within the National Park – as well as seeking modal changes from motorised modes
- attention should be paid to this matter before the LCWIP is finalised to ensure that opportunities are not lost, as they may have been in the past
- there seems to be a lack of integration with Land Use planning in the National Park parts of the LCWIP (contrary to DfT guidance) with sites in Petersfield etc not mapped, listed or discussed
- one example of this lack of integration and the risk of missing opportunities is illustrated by Policy SD85 in the South Downs Local Plan – but there could be more (including in emerging proposals in the current Review of the South Downs Local Plan)

- Policy SD85 (allocating 15-18 new houses at Pulens Lane in Sheet) has a specific requirement, saying that: “a publicly accessible cycle and pedestrian route should be provided through the entirety of the site from Pulens Lane to the eastern boundary.” This would provide a safe, off-road route from Sheet to the Taro Leisure Centre etc. But this appears to have been omitted from the LCWIP (unless SDLAF members have missed it somewhere)
- the LCWIP is rather urban orientated and recreational users / opportunities should get more consideration
- a number of designated long-distance walking and cycling routes pass through the area and opportunities to improve each one should be considered as part of the LCWIP (if only to ensure that increases in road traffic do not hamper vulnerable users on these long distance routes)
- relevant designated long-distance routes include: the Serpents Trail (which starts in Petersfield), the Shipwrights Way, Hangers Way, South Downs Way and the Sussex Border Path. There is also the potential Rother Valley Way cycle route
- quite a number of the proposed cycling routes appear to be on relatively heavily trafficked roads. But there is evidence that potential users may feel too scared to use such routes (including children and families) where opportunities for segregation are low
- has the LCWIP really considered alternative, off-road routes? SDNPA, HCC and EHDC should work together (with parish and town councils) to identify potential alternatives – including improving the surfacing of bridleways etc if relevant
- off-road routes are important and there is a need for them to meet a standard that makes them a pleasure rather than an ordeal to use for walkers, horse-riders and cyclists
- it is understood that the New Forest LCWIP goes beyond the identification of a utility trip network to include a leisure network encompassing both on- and off-road routes. The LCWIPs for the parts of Hampshire that sit within the South Downs National Park should follow this good practice
- the East Hampshire District borders the Chichester District in West Sussex and it is hoped that adequate liaison will take place to ensure that cross-boundary issues and opportunities are not overlooked.

It is hoped that these comments are helpful to you and that they can all be considered in the next stages of your process.

Yours Sincerely

Andy Gattiker

On behalf of

**Doug Jones**  
**Chair of the South Downs Local Access Forum**

Please reply to:

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For more information about the South Downs Local Access Forum: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/laf](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/laf)