

South Downs

Local Access Forum

Review of East Sussex County Council's Rights of Way Access Plan

Thank you for your letter of 20th January informing the South Downs Local Access Forum about the forthcoming work to update East Sussex County Council's Rights of Way Action Plan. The Forum looks forward to inputting to the Plan.

The issues listed in your letter all look to be very relevant and it is also likely to be appropriate to include a dedicated theme for Protected Landscapes within the Plan. This is likely to assist the County Council to demonstrate that it is taking account of the enhanced Protected Landscapes duty placed on all local authorities by Section 245 of the 2023 Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA).

In consultations with other partners the SDLAF has explained that it would expect to see different policies applying in the National Park compared with other parts of the county and that this should encompass retaining amenity, character, heritage, nature and habitats. Considering the increasing impacts of climate change and proactively seeking solutions may also be relevant.

Recent Government Guidance about the LURA Act 2023 also highlights functional connectivity between a Protected Landscape and its setting, including Rights of Way, Open Access Land and other recreational links joining the designated area to the wider countryside.

The National Park area offers important opportunities for recreation, relaxation and improved health & wellbeing. It is possible that collaboration between the County Council and the National Park could improve access for under-represented groups and increase opportunities for social prescribing initiatives. These enhancements could potentially attract funding from a range of sources.

In other places safety concerns, lack of information and lack of confidence have all been identified as key barriers to Rights of Way use and findings from the SDNPA's current review of its Partnership Management Plan (PMP) may also be relevant to your work.

Endeavouring to attract potential users to the Rights of Way network may require new policies in the Plan if people are currently discouraged by danger or safety issues, something which can be particularly important for vulnerable users and for health & wellbeing improvements. Inconsiderate behaviour between users can also be a significant concern for both users and landowners.

In other consultations the Forum has noted effective engagement with Parish Councils amongst key stakeholders. They can often offer valuable insights, and represent a diverse range of perspectives, and so the Forum would encourage your consultations with them.

It is hoped that this letter is helpful at this early stage in your work and the Forum looks forward to further involvement in the future.

Yours Sincerely,
Ben Marsh

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:
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