

South Downs

Local Access Forum

Active Travel Network Plan - Formal Advice from the South Downs Local Access Forum

1. Strategic Context and Timing

While supportive of the plan's intent, we note that pressing ahead now feels slightly premature given the ongoing CWIS3 consultation and the delay of the Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS). To prevent the strategy from looking dated quickly, it must reference the Carbon Budget assumptions—specifically the target that 50% of short journeys (under 5 miles) in towns and cities will be walked or cycled, rising to 55% in 2035.

Furthermore, regarding Section 2, the National Park must prioritise engaging with National Highways immediately regarding the Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3) which will be set in March. Unless priorities are firmly established now, the Park risks being left out of major infrastructure upgrades that could resolve severance.

2. The "Missing Gap": Quiet Lanes and On-Road Provision

A major concern is that the plan focuses heavily on off-road provision, overlooking the potential of the rural road network to provide connectivity.

- Designated Quiet Routes: We strongly propose creating a designation system—such as "Quiet Cycle Route" or "Scenic Quiet Route"—to identify a network of quiet lanes. This would create a mosaic of circular options essential for those (including users with mobility issues) for whom rough off-road tracks are not viable.
- Maintenance Reality: In a time of budget constraints, Local Highway Authorities prioritise road maintenance over Rights of Way. Incorporating these quiet lanes offers a pragmatic way to secure accessible, paved surfaces.
- Missing Links: The plan must explicitly address short "missing links" (e.g., south of Small Dole to Upper Beeding) that are required to open up much longer routes.

3. Inclusion, Hubs, and Facilities

To deliver true equity, the plan requires more specific commitments:

- Mobility & Accessibility Hubs: We urge the Authority to identify locations beyond Falmer. We suggest trialling pop-up accessibility hubs (hiring Trampers/4-wheel rollators) and secure cycle hubs to test demand.
- "Quick Wins" on Maintenance: We suggest collaborating with local recycling centres to use approved donated materials (paint, wood) for non-official facility upgrades (benches, way markers) as a cost-effective delivery mechanism.
- Signage: Consistent wayfinding from stations to trails is a high-impact, low-cost priority that is currently lacking.

4. User Conflict and Safety

We note that the issue of conflict on Rights of Way was omitted from the new Partnership Management Plan (PMP). It is therefore critical that it is addressed here. Previous surveys indicated 49% of respondents categorised dangerous byways as a barrier; the ATNP must include measures to address this.

5. Technical Corrections

- Page 4: Clarify if 1,627 refers to km (distance) or km² (area).
- Page 18 (Chart): The axis scaling is misleading as it starts at 4.2; this makes "Severance" look disproportionately higher than other priorities which also scored highly.
- Maintenance: Maintenance of the existing PROW network must be explicitly included in the Section 10.3 table to ensure routes remain accessible.

We look forward to seeing these points incorporated into the final Strategic Framework.

Yours faithfully,
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On behalf of
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Chair of the South Downs Local Access Forum

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