

South Downs

Local Access Forum

**13th October 2011, 10.30am, at Arundel Town Hall
Maltravers Street, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 9AP**

Minutes

Present

Members: Glynn Jones GJ (Chair), Sue Dunkley SD (Vice Chair), David Ashcroft DA, Val Bateman VB, Dave Brookshaw DB, Bob Damper BD, Terry Doyle TD, Andy Hannaford AH, Roger Mullenger RM, Pat Neal PN, David Taylor DT, Jo Taylor JT, Andrew Thomas AT, Tom Tupper TT, John Vannuffel JV, David Williamson DW

Apologies: Neville Harrison NH

In attendance: Richard Shaw RS, Chief Executive; Allison Thorpe ATh, Access and Recreation Strategy Lead; Andy Beattie AB, Parkwide Manager

Secretary: Tim Squire TS, Rights of Way and Access Officer

Observers: Tricia Butcher, CAFWS; Graham Elvey, CAFWS, Alison Perry, Hampshire County Council; Jane Noble, West Sussex County Council; Hugo Blomfield, Brighton & Hove City Council; Guy Streeter, Smith Gore; Jonny Morris, Smiths Gore;

1. Welcome

GJ welcomed all present to the third meeting of the SDLAF.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the meeting 14th July 2011 were agreed as an accurate record.

Outstanding actions:

Action 1: TS explained that SDNPA had engaged very widely and there were between six and seven hundred people on lists across the seven strategy themes which had been invited to attend the forum, workshops and technical working groups. It would be very difficult to put together a list of organisations for the LAF and remove individual's private information. LAF agreed.

Action 2: RoWIP working group would be held after this meeting.

Action 5: TS/AG deferred discussion on the Winchester end of the SDW to January meeting.

Action 11: TS confirmed Chapter 10 of New Forest National Park Authority Management Plan deals with Sustainable Transport

3. Any other business

AT – one item to be dealt with at end of meeting.

4. The South Downs National Park, How We Are Doing, Richard Shaw, Chief Executive

RS addressed the LAF. He said it was very important to have the LAF to advise on access issues. He gave an overview on how the SDNPA was developing after six and a half months of being operative. The four permanent directors had all now been appointed and interviews for Chief Executive would take place at the end of

November. He explained how SDNPA was building as a strategic organisation. It does not have the same service delivery responsibilities as local government bodies. Planning and Access (but not rights of way) are its only statutory functions. The guiding principles that it has adopted, following extensive engagement on how it could best add value, mean that it will focus on an enabling role, working to bring people together and to influence and co-ordinate through its expertise and knowledge.

In order to create immediate impact in local communities, the Sustainable Communities Fund had been launched in April with a total budget of £400,000 and had so far funded £300,000 to 34 local initiatives enabling total spend of between £1.3 and £1.4 million.

He said that in developing the NPMP it was crucial to take people with you, listen to them and give them a sense of ownership.

He said that the work of the LAF fitted very well with the NPA's guiding principles. He sees them as an important test bed in the development of the management plan. He encouraged the LAF to be strategic and not to get drawn into contentious local issues.

DB congratulated RS on recruiting good staff and emphasised the importance of the ranger service. He would like to see action on the ground even while the Management Plan is being developed. He also highlighted the role of LAF as an advisory body.

DA asked if NPA will fund LHAs to provide a better RoW network befitting of a National Park?

RS replied that the NPA budget was not large and that the Authority did not intend to fund work that was the statutory responsibility of others. RS thinks we can be smart about how we spend our money to ensure it has most impact. TT added that the NPA's RoW members task group was already looking at how the NPA could add value to the access network over and above the LHAs statutory role.

GJ commented that the aspiration for a National Park was to bring in central funding and not for local people to be paying for what is a national asset.

Action 1: LAF members to declare themselves as such on SDF

5. Work Plan update

TS presented the updated Work Plan. It was agreed that this would be a working document to be kept current.

Action 2: TS to circulate with minor changes suggested by members.

ATh asked if the members would be interested in a session on disabled access at a future meeting. It was agreed that David Livermore from Hampshire Roamability should be invited to give a presentation at the next meeting. Various members made suggestions regarding examples of good practice that could be included and proposed that the theme be 'easy access' rather than disabled access.

Action 3: SD and ATh to work together on a programme for the next meeting to cover this theme. GJ/SD/TS/ATh to look at next agenda.

Action 4: TS to co-ordinate setting dates for next year's LAF meetings.

6. Management Plan

AT thanked all the LAF members who had attended the Technical Working Group (TWG) and Workshops and for their activity on the online Forum. She explained that the consultation on Special Qualities was almost at an end.

a) State of the Park report and Indicators:

Evidence was now being gathered for the State of the Park report with a draft due for consultation in Feb/Mar and final version in June. AT explained that indicators for the State of the Park report were being considered and would be consulted on at the end November.

A discussion followed around the condition of the RoW network and the importance of collecting this data as evidence of the State of the Park. LAF members made suggestions on gathering information including using parishes and volunteers. Some members felt there was value in a single on line reporting system to enable the public to report problems with the network, others felt it was enough to use the information collected by path warden such as those on the SDW who monitor and report on their sections on a monthly basis. TT confirmed that this is one of the topics being looked at the RoW members group.

b) Feedback from members on TWG:

Feedback from LAF members on the TWG and Workshops was very positive. GJ commended the facilitators. There were complaints about the start time of 4pm and perhaps a late evening or a Saturday may appeal better to people who work. AT said there was much debate about times and days for workshops and that this time was seen as best to fit everything in.

Action 5: AT to feedback to team on timings of events.

c) LAF discussion group on Forum:

TS explained a proposal for the LAF to have a separate discussion group on the online Forum. The general consensus was that the SDF was a good tool and that this development would be useful. GJ said it felt worthwhile as it could be seen that officers were listening as they could be seen to join in the discussions occasionally. LAF members would not like to have their discussion group totally private but have it visible to other forum users.

7. Break

8. RoW Accord

TT explained the work of the NPA's RoW Members Task Group: specifically that the group is looking at how the NPA works with LHAs on RoW management; the development of an Accord; and how the NPA can add value. TT said that RoW are a key issue for the NPA and that they are the main interface between the economic activity, visitors and residents. A discussion followed in which LAF members emphasised the importance of being able to monitor the condition of the RoW. GJ expressed concern at a possible duplication of effort in survey work. TT explained that the task group would be looking at the best way of doing this.

DT highlighted the fact that landowners in Sussex were having to get used to working with LHAs on RoW and that anything the NPA could do to support landowners with what was seen as an additional burden would be welcome.

Questions were asked regarding the role of the this group in relation to the LAF: AT explained that the group was a task and finish group and would not need to meet once the NPA had agreed ways of working with LHAs and established ways in

which the NPA could add value to access in the Park. It was agreed that for the LAF to feed into this a longer debate was needed. JV suggested using the Forum. Members expressed willingness to have a workshop dedicated to this following the next LAF meeting.

Action 6: TS/GJ/Others to arrange workshop on RoW added value.

9. Byway Management

TS explained the definitions of Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) and Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). JT felt that the use of these routes by motorised vehicles was not compatible with SDNP purposes and duties. JV then explained the current provision for motorcycles in the Park (less than 2% of the network available) and made a case for the retention of existing routes and better management rather than wholesale closure of those that are in poor condition. The following discussion acknowledged the problems caused by inappropriate use of the network, particularly by 4x4 drivers. There was a view supported by many members that a balanced approach was needed and that it should be recognised that temporary TROs might be appropriate in some locations or that TROs could be used to restrict more damaging use by some vehicles. JT felt there was an argument for SDNPA seeking a complete ban on motorised vehicles on the network. JV invited members to email him for more details on successful schemes around the country where motorised use is well managed. The discussion concluded with a vote on whether the LAF should support legal use of the network or seek to ban motorised vehicles. By a show of hands for supporting legal use, there were 12 votes in favour, 3 against and 1 abstention.

10. Cross Forum Business

a) Memorandum of Understanding. All LHAs have now agreed this.

Action 7: TS to arrange for Chairs to sign.

b) Telscombe Tye and dealing with local consultations

SD reported that following ESLAF meeting where the issue of fencing the common land was raised she attended a meeting with the applicant, Telscombe Town Council, where she was assured that the new fencing would incorporate fully accessible gates. TS explained that ESLAF had commented on the application but had deferred the item to SDLAF as it was now in the National Park. SD had attended the meeting with Jackie Rowland from ESCC to advise. TS thought this exercise could prove a model for future working. He proposed to write to LAF officers to request to be alerted to matters that the LHA LAFs would previously advise on and to write to the two chairs if LHA LAF members wished to offer local advice to SDLAF.

Action 8: SD to write in support of fencing application on behalf of SDLAF

Action 9: TS to write to LAF officers with proposed working arrangement.

c) Report on PATHH Steering Committee

TD said he was very impressed with the PATHH project but he was concerned the many volunteers would not submit their work before funding for the project manager runs out. There had been 1 DMMO made and now they were in stage two to identify more to go forward. DA commented that it was then up to Hampshire County Council to process the orders. This would be at the rate of about six per annum. JV asked if it requesting dedication by the landowner could be investigated as a more efficient method of recording RoW. DA said that they hope to be able to this in Hants. TD had requested that the PATHH project look at linking isolated access land sites.

d) Local Sustainable Transport Fund joint bid

ATh presented the list of strategic initiatives for the joint LSTF bid. The criteria for the fund are to increase sustainable transport, lower carbon emissions and to support the local economy so all the projects must meet these criteria. DB commented that B&HCC have already been awarded LSTF money. ATh said that officers were working to make this bid complement the successful first tranche bids.

Action 10: TS to circulate the list of initiatives and LAF members to return with their top priorities indicated.

11. Defra and Natural England business

TS reported that an online networking facility called the “Huddle” was now available for LAF members to use for online discussion and for communicating with government. There was the offer of a training video from NE and the request for a champion member from each LAF.

A national LAF conference planned for October had been cancelled and two were now planned in February or March in Reading and Newcastle.

Action 11: TS to send further information

12. Any Other Business

AT explained that there was a fund that electricity companies had available for burying overhead cables in designated areas or along RoW. AB explained he was co-ordinating bids into this fund for the NPA and encouraged LAF members to bring any proposals to him.

Action 12: All to contact AB with proposals for burying power lines. N.B. low voltage cables on poles not pylons.

Upcoming LAFs – CAFWS on 2nd November in Amberley, HCAF moved from 25th October to 29th November at Royal Victoria Country Park

Next Meeting: 10.30 a.m., 12 January 2012, venue to be confirmed