

# South Downs

## Local Access Forum

**14<sup>th</sup> July 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, Dave Brookshaw DB, Bob Damper BD, Andy Hannaford AH, Neville Harrison NH, Roger Mullenger RM, David Taylor DT, Jo Taylor JT, Tom Tupper TT, John Vannuffel JV, Pat Neal PN, Val Bateman VB

**Apologies:** David Williamson DW, Andrew Thomas AT, Terry Doyle TD

**In attendance:** Phil Belden PB, Head of Operations; Andy Gattiker AG, South Downs Way Officer; Allison Thorpe ATh, Access and Recreation Strategy Lead; Andy Beattie AB, Parkwide Manager; John Geoghegan JG, Partnerships Support Officer

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

**Observers:** Nigel Bird NB, Hampshire County Council; Martin Gilchrist MG, Natural England, Amanda Hull, HCC, Tricia Butcher, CAFWS, Jackie Rowlands, BHS/ESLAF

#### **1. Welcome and introduction of members**

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

#### **2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

Minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011 meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

Outstanding actions:

**Action 1:** TS to circulate a list of organisations the SDNPA is engaging with

**Action 2:** TS and GJ to agree future RoWIP working group meeting

**Action 3:** TS and GJ to draft a letter of response to Richard Benyon and circulate to the group for comments in the next seven days.

#### **3. Any other business**

None.

#### **4. Feedback on proposed work plan**

The draft work plan was approved.

#### **5. Management Plan**

Allison Thorpe gave a presentation on how the SDLAF would be engaged throughout the development of the Management Plan (attached to these minutes as appendix 1.)

Questions followed, and Allison answered that:

- A Forum would take place on 19<sup>th</sup> July, with around 200 delegates attending, to garner opinions from partner organisations to help form the early stages of the management plan;

- An access and recreation Technical Working Group, comprising 30-35 technical experts in the field, would be meeting for the first time on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011 in Chichester to consider the special qualities of the park and evidence regarding access and recreation. Membership of the group would be a cross-section of land managers, local authority managers, user group representatives and more. Four members volunteered to represent the SDLAF on the Technical Working Group;
- **Action 4:** GJ, SD, DA and BD to attend and feedback to SDLAF at next meeting.
- A visitors' survey was being commissioned to start in September and last over a year to cover peak and quiet times. The survey wouldn't cover those who *don't* visit the Park, however follow-up studies could be commissioned at a later date; and
- A South Downs National Park "App" was being developed, and the LAF was asked to consider what features could be included relating to access and recreation.

## 6. South Downs Way

Andy Gattiker, South Downs Way Officer, gave a presentation on an improved route into Eastbourne to create a single start/finish bridleway route rather than the current separate bridleway and footpath end points (Presentation attached to these minutes as appendix 2).

Questions followed, and Andy answered that:

- Parking would be easier near the start of the proposed route than at the existing route;
- The route would still split into a northern bridleway route and southern footpath route along cliff top. A de-designation of the southern route would be difficult without offering an alternative that matched the special qualities;
- The proposed new route was open downland, a grass track in good condition. No work would be necessary to bring it up to standard;
- An amendment to use metalled highways would be rejected as routes should be off-road where possible;
- Eastbourne Borough Council approve the proposals;
- There would be no change in the legal rights on the old route if the proposals went ahead;
- The National Trail website has available water sites signposted;
- There were no toilet facilities at the start of the new proposed route, but there was a private café nearby.

The SDLAF agreed to write a letter of support for the proposals for a re-designation of the route of the national trail by the Secretary of State.

It was agreed that the item tabled to look at alternative routes out of Winchester would be deferred to a later meeting.

**Action 5:** TS and GJ to draft letter of support

## 7. Langrish 14, BOAT TRO

There is a current TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) prohibiting access to any vehicles with three wheels or more. Hampshire County Council are now

proposing to make a new TRO prohibiting access to any motorised vehicle. The reasons given were read by TS as follows:

*“This route has been subject to a Traffic Regulation Order restricting motorised vehicles with three or more wheels since 1977, made under the Traffic Regulation Act 1967.*

*This steep route is subject to a high level of use by motorcycles and has suffered badly from erosion as a result, making it virtually impassable to cycles and horses, and a difficult walk for pedestrians.*

*On two occasions capital funds have been raised to repair the route but the repairs have proved unsustainable in the face of such use by motorcycles and the erosion has reoccurred. This has resulted in a waste of significant public funds.*

*The route is remote and difficult to access when accidents do occur and on three occasions a helicopter rescue has been necessary following accidents on the route caused by the poor surfacing, again at considerable public expense.*

*This route runs along the edge of [Butser Hill, adjoining] the Queen Elizabeth Country Park and the Ranger Team there are ideally placed to monitor compliance with the Order, having access to the DVLA database to identify offenders that display a vehicle registration plate.*

*Officers recommend replacing the existing permanent TRO (which restricts motor vehicles with 3 or more wheels), with a new permanent TRO restricting motor vehicles with 2 or more wheels under s1(b) for preventing damage to the road, s1(c) for facilitating the passage of other classes of traffic (i.e. horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians), 1(d) for preventing use by vehicular traffic in a manner which is unsuitable and 1(e) for preserving the character of the road”*

Nigel Bird, Countryside Access Team Leader from Hampshire County Council, said that there had been 133 responses opposing the proposal and 42 representations supporting the proposal. He explained that the route had been realigned to follow the definitive line and had suffered considerable damage to the surface. [post meeting note: final total of responses was 146 against and 47 in favour]

The following points were raised:

- Despite the majority of off-road motorcyclists using the route responsibly, the route was still open to those who use it irresponsibly;
- The route A-B on the map (previously circulated) cost the tax payer a lot of money to maintain;
- JV said that the route was not maintained to a sufficient standard and expressed concerns that HCC is not following correct procedure in making this order - a point disputed by HCC
- The cost of upkeep of the route from points A-B might be surpassed by the cost of a non-statutory public inquiry, if HCC chose to hold one, or by a Judicial Review if the proposed TRO were to be made and then challenged; and
- There is a possibility of a greater level of motorised traffic being pushed onto those nearby sections of the SDW where vehicular access is permitted and a greater weight of traffic onto other nearby vehicular routes.

It was agreed (with dissent from JV) that the LAF should not comment on individual cases such as this but develop a statement of advice on TROs on BOATs generally. This will feed into development of SDNPA policy through the management plan process.

## **8. Future of Forest**

**Action 6:** All SDLAF members to send TS their thoughts, Tim will collate them and circulate to the rest of the group.

**Action 7:** TS will draft a response and include as an appendix on the next agenda.

## **9. RoW Accord - RoW NPA Member Task Group**

This has been set up to look at the role of the NPA, working with the LHAs, to promote understanding and enjoyment in the SDNP, and what possible added-value the NPA could bring. Currently the group was looking in more detail at the options of how to work with the local highway authorities and it was hoped an accord could be agreed between the parties. A Discussion followed. LAF members raised the following points:

- It is very important for the SDNP to have a RoW network of the highest quality and the RoW Accord is essential to achieving this.
- The SDNPA and LHAs need to consider not just the SDW, but the entire RoW network; the management of the SDW was a good example of what could be achieved, which may help in developing approaches for other RoW within the SDNP; and

It was agreed that a LAF working group will be needed to feedback on the RoW Accord as it is developed but not until the Task Group has had another meeting to look at the evidence presented by officers.

**Action 8:** TS to include report back to the LAF as item on next agenda.

## **10. Cross Forum Business**

### a) Memorandum of Understanding

This item would be deferred until the next meeting as more amendments were expected from the West Sussex Local Access Forum.

### b) Report on PATHH Steering Committee, Terry Doyle

[post meeting note: TD sent apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting with a brief email report on the PATHH meeting. TS to circulate]

**Action 9:** TS to circulate report with the minutes

### c) Local Sustainable Transport Fund joint bid

A joint bid is to be made to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund by the New Forest NPA, the South Downs NPA and six local highways authorities for up to £5 million. SDLAF is signed up as a partner. An expression of interest has been made and the full bid is to be developed for submission in February 2012. The aim of this bid is to encourage sustainable travel, thus improving access through gateways to the National Parks, improvements to walking and cycling routes, improvements to public transport and innovation with regards to access. If the bid is successful, funding would run from 2012-13 onwards. It was agreed that the bid was not yet ready for the SDLAF engagement but that this should be brought back to the next LAF meeting.

**Action 10:** TS to prepare a paper on the bid in advance of the next LAF meeting

**Action 11:** ATh to find out if the New Forest's sustainable transport plan is on their website.

### **11. Defra and Natural England business**

Martin Gilchrist of Natural England introduced himself to the LAF as the Access and Engagement contact, working in the People and Partnerships Directorate. He reported that the Regional LAF Officers would no longer be the contacts for Local Access Forums after April next year, but that he would be the officer who would act as a link between LAFs and feed issues back to NE and Defra.

**Action 12:** TS to circulate the link to the Natural Environment White Paper with highlights on parts relevant to LAF work from MG

### **12. AOB**

The South Downs Society was keen to launch a range of access maps and were looking for an event at which these could be launched. The Chair recommended that LAF members should endeavour to attend the event, further details will be circulated once they become known.

The Hampshire Countryside Access Forum will be taking place on 21<sup>st</sup> July in Alice Holt, Hampshire. SDLAF members are invited.

**Next Meeting: 10.30 a.m., 13 October 2011, Arundel Town Hall**