

South Downs

Local Access Forum

18th April 2013, 10.30am, at Springwells Hotel, Steyning

Present

Members: Glynn Jones GJ (Chair), Sue Dunkley SD (Vice-chair), Val Bateman VB, Dave Brookshaw DB, Bob Damper BD, Andy Hannaford AH, Neville Harrison NH, Simon James SJ, Richard Johnson RJ, David Taylor DT, John Vannuffel JV, Susan Thompson ST

Apologies: Andrew Thomas AT, Roger Mullenger RM, David Ashcroft DA, Russell Cleaver RC, Jo Carr JC

In attendance: South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) officers: Tim Squire TS, Rights of Way and Access Officer, Phil Belden PB, Director of Operations, Andy Gattiker AG, South Downs Way Officer, Andy Beattie AB, Parkwide Manager

Minute taker: Nicola Winning, Strategy & Partnership Administrator SDNPA

Observers: Chris Wheeler & Michael Clarke - East Sussex Local Access Forum, Tricia Butcher TBu - West Sussex Local Access Forum, Eddie Jenkinson - Steyning Downland Scheme, Geoff Cook – Sussex Ramblers

A. General Business

1. Welcome

GJ welcomed all to the meeting and introduced newly appointed Susan Thompson to the LAF.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Matters arising: - Action 9, NH confirmed that the planning application for construction of section of Egret's Way was submitted to the April planning committee and was approved. Natural England (NE) will be considering the bid next week.

Factual accuracy: BD initials incorrect in item 3b and typographical errors to be corrected - **TS**

Actions from previous minutes:

Action 1: TS to discuss a format of LAF members evaluation form with other officers regionally who want to develop a template for evaluation

Action 2: SD Land Managers Group AGM 19 June, GJ is available and will attend

Action 3: Would be discussed in item 9 on the agenda

Action 4: Some suggestions received for LAF work plan.

Action 5: GJ agreed to present LAF item at the NPA meeting on 18 June

Action 6: LAF members to be kept informed of Sustainable Transport Solutions Fund

Action 7: LAF Management Plan workshop took place

Action 8: Laura Warren has received a few responses request for help at events. Please help if you can, members will be given info as needed

Action 9: Letter sent to MoD by HCAF, awaiting response

Action 10: LAF feedback taken into account on dog walkers code of conduct.

Action 11: Environment Agency responded to the letter concerning River Arun flood defenses, although GJ felt they were slightly dismissive of LAF, saying EA has no duty to protect public footpaths, even though there is a duty. This will remain as work in progress. PB encouraged perseverance.

Action 12: Letter sent to Sussex Wildlife Trust about fencing common land and TS will draft response to National Trust following site to another common to be fenced

3. SDNPA Update

a) Feedback from LAF SD Management Plan Working Group

PB summed up workshops: Management Plan will be published in Dec 2013. SDNPA held 21 face to face meetings with stakeholders and 205 people attended workshops, 142 responded to forum survey, 133 to stakeholders' survey. Policies have been re-drafted since. Proposed draft will go to NPA in June then full public consultation for three months over the summer (late June to early September).

DB commented that the change to RoW and Access policy no.27 is much improved.

TS will send round the policy changes for Access to the members which shows how comments have been incorporated. LAF should let people in their groups know about public consultation. DB suggested that there should be a date and version on any documents so people knew which was the most recent draft.

ACTION 1: TS to send round policies on Access to members.

ACTION 2: ALL to inform their relevant groups of the public consultation

b) Update on Dog Charter

A pocket sized leaflet will be produced, along with a dog code on the website, patrols with police and land managers at hot spots, and appropriate signage. GJ asked about response from events i.e. how popular are these events? PB said a dog event at Woolbeeding was very popular. There will also be ad hoc targeting. Members discussed how using a survey to engage with dog walkers (no judgement) was an effective way to communicate messages. GJ recommended an event placing flags in dog poo as good visual message.

DB: Page 2: the reference to bird nesting season dates should be included. JV feels it's a softly softly approach which is probably a good idea at the outset. NH emphasised that it uses positive messages which is what we need. Will National Park distribute this document? PB said yes - produced with plastic wallet covers and handed out to farmers, land managers, the general public etc. Professional dog walker issues still need addressing. It was felt that there should be a fee for these professionals. The reduction in dog wardens and cost of dog poo bins was discussed. NH asked if LAF could have a progress report; will this be monitored to see if people change their habits?

ACTION 3: TS to add to list for future agenda items

4. Defra and Natural England Business

a) Report on National Meeting 27 February 2013

GJ reported on the meeting and has circulated notes to LAF members. DB echoed GJ and thought it was a valuable conference and encouraged members to attend in future.

b) Invite to LAF Regional Conference 21st May 2013

TS said that BD offered to do a presentation at Regional Conference, NH expressed an interest in attending. There are still spaces for anyone else interested in attending.

5. Feedback from Other Local Access Forums

a) Surrey – GJ

GJ did not attend the last Surrey Countryside Access Forum, but highlighted to members the forward plan available on their website.

b) West Sussex – SJ / TB

SJ was unable to attend the planning meeting. Network Rail were keen to engage and will attend the next WSLAF. The LAF website is now online.

Action 4: TB to provide Network Rail contact to TS

c) Hampshire

No report from Hampshire

d) East Sussex

No specific items to feedback; MC reported LAF working group focus prioritising Row Improvement Plan projects, with many actions needing support from Local Authority.

e) Brighton & Hove

DB attended on 11th April 13 and felt it was a useful meeting, however they still have a revolving chair with no permanent chairman; officer supporting LAF unable to attend which is a concern.

RJ: A new bus service is in place between Brighton and Ditchling Common, this will open up more opportunities for the public. Website is Metrobus, or via the City Council website under metro.

f) Bramber crossing, TB:

There were 300 projects and now have the project list down to something manageable. Bramber was one of the projects that everyone wanted to help with because of the danger associated with it. Only two options were available: 1. Pegasus road crossing - this was not likely for various reasons; 2. Utilising road bridge over the Adur, which is large enough to get under easily - land on the northern side is owned by land banking company. TB wrote to them, they were very friendly and has since discovered that it is possibly Crown Estate land. Still in early stages TB will make a site visit to see if feasible. JV asked what happens to existing route. TB advised that it will stay in place.

g) Eartham Woods, SJ:

Access improvement project started in 2009. Concerns were raised about making improvement for cyclists and horsebox users. SJ gave a presentation showing changes made to car parks.

6. Cycling in Britain's Two Newest National Parks, BD: BD presented on the obstacles confronting cycling promotion in the New Forest, marking a stark contrast to the South Downs National Park.

7. Hampshire Countryside Action Plan review – CAP Review

Hampshire County Council will be setting up a working group.

ACTION 5: TS will email the details to LAF members

8. Newhaven Rail Crossing NH:

NH tabled the map showing the Newhaven railway crossing diversion which he explained was required to allow for a new siding for trains servicing the incinerator. NH is making recommendations that Network Rail provide easily accessible gates. There is potential as a network it has a lot to offer.

A letter needs to be drafted to make a response which could include commenting on any gates. SD agreed to take a look and take photos. There needs to be an emphasis on disabled access. If anyone has any photos please send them in.

ACTION 6: NH to send in a letter in response to diversion order consultation

ACTION 7: SD will visit the site and take photos

9. National Nature Reserves open access Dedication

Due to time constraints it was agreed to deal with this item via email

ACTION 8: TS will send timetable and proposal for LAF engagement

10. South Downs Way Items, AG

AG showed presentation of the South Downs National Trail and Natural England review of National Trails and clarified how it will affect the South Downs Way.

AG summarised review: explained inequality of funding National Trails due to setting up at different times. No uniform standard. Review will attempt to standardise Trails across England. How NE funding is spent is to be determined locally by Trail partnerships. It is important that there is input from people who use Trails and local stakeholder input at all levels.

AG would like to formalise the SDW steering groups relationship with the SDLAF as part of it's broad stakeholder engagement.

One proposal is for a nominated LAF representative to site on the SDW Steering Group that meets quarterly.

Or

The LAF take on the role of the SDW Steering Group (Not a possible option)

Or

AG to circulate the SDW Officers quarterly report and other papers to the LAF as well as the Steering Group, then attend each LAF meeting and feedback any comments to the SDW Steering Group.

This last option was agreed.

AG said an open invitation for a LAF member to attend the SDW Steering Group remained.

Future Meeting Dates

18 July 2013, 10.30-13.30, Norfolk Arms Hotel, Arundel

17 October 2013, 10.30-13.30, venue tbc

21 January 2014, 10.30-13.30, venue tbc