

South Downs

Local Access Forum

21 January 2014, 10.30 a.m., at Norfolk Arms Hotel, Arundel

Present:

Members: Glynn Jones GJ (Chair), Andy Hannaford AH, Neville Harrison NH, Val Bateman VB, Russell Cleaver RC, John Vannuffel JV, Isabel Swift IS, Roger Mullenger RM, Susan Thompson ST, David Brookshaw DB, Richard Johnson RJ, David Taylor DT

Apologies: Sue Dunkley SD (Vice-chair), Jo Carr JC, Bob Damper BD, David Ashcroft DA, Simon James SJ, Trevor Beattie TB - SDNPA CEO, Andy Beattie AB – People and Places Manager, Allison Thorpe AT - Access & Recreation Lead

In attendance: South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Officers: Tim Squire TS - Rights of Way and Access Officer, Phil Belden PB - Director of Operations, Alister Linton-Crook ALC - Cycling Project Officer (LSTF), Ray Drabble RD – Sustainability Policy Officer, Jane Willmott JW – Sussex Wildlife Trust

Minute Taker: Nicola Winning NW, Office Support Services, SDNPA

Observers: Rob Morris RMo -Natural England, Tricia Butcher TBu - WSLAF, Graham Butler GB - SLAF, Helen Mountain HM - Petersfield Ramblers, Bruce Middleton BM - SDNPA Area Manager Wealden Heath, James Osman - NFU

A. GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Welcome

GJ welcomed all to the meeting

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Factual accuracy:

TS informed SDLAF that the copy of previous minutes sent out to SDLAF members have been changed in Item 5, paragraph c) to read: TB and Margaret Paren met with Hampshire's Police and Crime Commissioner regarding rural crime, including Countrywatch (their equivalent to Sussex Police's Farmwatch and Pathwatch) in order to coordinate with Pathwatch in Sussex.

Matters arising:

GJ asked what happens with follow up after SDLAF sends letters? It was agreed that each letter should contain a sentence requesting feedback be included in the letters. The feedback could then be discussed and noted in a future SDLAF meeting.

ACTION 1: TS to amend template

Actions from previous minutes:

Action 1: TS informed the members that SDNPA had undertaken a restructure and that there would be on-going discussions to work out the best way to communicate with regard to bringing relevant planning applications to the attention of the SDLAF, this would most likely be achieved via the link officers now being part of the Area Teams. South Downs Society area officers can assist with identifying applications also.

Action 2: TS awaiting more detailed map and information from SM.

Action 3: TS advised that the site visit planned for Beacon Hill in April would also include a visit

to Old Winchester Hill.

Action 4: Letter now in draft form. Circulation list to be finalised.

Action 5: JC to prepare article for end of Feb deadline.

Action 10: JV felt that draft letter did not reflect SDLAF view. He thought the SDLAF resolved not to oppose the order and that he did not support the proposal of a bridge. A discussion followed about how to reflect lack of consensus in LAF advice. It was agreed that the letter would be redrafted and circulated to members before sending.

ACTION 2: TS/GJ To redraft Telscombe diversion letter to ESCC

Action 15: revised draft of events guidance will be available later in spring.

All other actions complete.

3. South Downs National Park Update:

a). TS informed members of the publication of the South Downs Partnership Management Plan (PMP). A launch event will be held on 29 January with Lord de Mauley, Minister with responsibility for National Parks, who will officially open the Falmer to Woodingdean cycle path. TS confirmed that the SDNPA has had a staff restructure, this went live on 15 January 2014. Departments are now structured according to delivery of the PMP, with Living Landscapes (Purpose 1), People & Places (Purpose 2), where the LAF and strategic access would sit, and Sustainable Futures (Duty) teams; the Ops teams are being boosted with an additional Ranger in each Area, taking on responsibilities to help deliver key PMP actions. PB said there have been some substantial budget cuts since the NPA was set up and over the next two years all NPAs would be facing an additional 2% cut (a relatively low cut within the Defra family); the SDNPA budget would be cut by £1/2m.

b) ALC introduced himself as the Cycling Project Officer for the Two Parks (New Forest and South Downs) Local Sustainable Transport Fund. ALC will help delivery of funding the NP through LSTF. There is a budget of around £5m to spend on encouraging more sustainable travel, including cycle routes and infrastructure throughout the NP and gateways leading into the NP (e.g. Arundel railway station). A further grant, Linking Communities, a £4m cycling fund, will support additional routes (e.g. Egrets Way, Ouse Valley) and signage and bike parking/repair stands with tools within the NP alongside routes / villages / attractions. It will be challenging to deliver the projects and spend the budget by 2015. LSTF have around 14 specific projects identified, some will be a harder task than others to complete and there will not be many easy wins. VB asked if the 14 new projects involving routes will be multi-user or just bikes? ALC confirmed that they will be shared paths where possible which will include equestrian access. A Cycling Code of Conduct will be printed on our leaflets (e.g. South Downs Way guide), surfaces will be prepared but not sealed (as appropriate) and therefore suitable for horses as well.

ALC is also involved in a specific element of the LSTF, a local community targeted Sustainable Transport Solutions Fund (STSF) that has £100K to aid onward sustainable travel behaviour. STSF is scheduled to spend £60K in 2013/14, 40K in 2014/15, supporting a wide range of community led projects, ranging from electric bike hire, walking events and leisure walking / cycling routes / leaflets /etc.

c) Riparian Access Paper – Appendix 1: GJ tabled the letter from Sebastian Anstruther, SDNPA Member, which makes a point that SDLAF has no specific remit in this area, but GJ referred to the LAF guidance which states remit over “land covered with water”. GJ suggested that SDLAF should invite Sebastian Anstruther as well as canoe representative/s to come and give presentations and discuss how to go forward. NH commented that it raises some interesting points that relates to the LAF although members should be wary of being drawn into the matter until the legal dispute is sorted out.

ACTION 3: TS to invite Sebastian Anstruther and canoe representative/s to give

presentations at the 22 July 2014 SDLAF meeting

4. Defra and Natural England Business

- a) The National Conference will be held on 4 February 2014. There will be one held in the south and one in the north. SDNPA is happy to pay travel expenses for anyone who wishes to go to the Bristol conference. RM to attend and GJ will also attend if two spaces can be secured and will likely travel with RM.
- b) The South East Regional Conference will take place on 20 May 2014. NH said he attended last year and would recommend the conference. GJ to attend.
- c) Paths 4 Communities newsletter was tabled.
- d) LAF newsletter was tabled.

5. Information from Members and other LAFs

a) Feedback from other LAFs

West Sussex LAF – Glynn Jones GJ

High sided vehicle parking at Eartham Woods is now in place and signed. An alternative route for the Downs Link at Bramber has been identified that will avoid having to cross the busy road; TBU approached the Crown Estate who are in possession of 'trackways' on the northern side of the A283 who, although unable to make a S25 dedication, would not object if West Sussex County Council (WSCC) made a S26 creation order. WSLAF waiting to see if WSCC RoW Committee will approve the making of the Order, bearing in mind they have not made such an Order before. The SDLAF thanked TBU for her efforts to get to this stage. GJ will attend the RoW committee on 25 Feb, SDLAF fully supports this.

TBU added that Peter Philips from the Highways Agency spoke to WSLAF about their new Route Based Strategy initiative. WSLAF needs to increase membership, and will be running a major recruitment campaign shortly.

Surrey Countryside Access Forum (SCAF) - Graham Butler GB

A big issue for Surrey and Hants has been access to Ministry of Defence (MoD) land e.g. around Aldershot where walking parties have been stopped. GB reported that SCAF had a useful meeting with the MoD regarding Hankley Common (Surrey) and whereas they have refused cycle and horse access on some sites, came to the meeting with offers to create new bridleways on Hankley. Another meeting is due to take place on 30 January to discuss some regional issues and they hope to solve some matters in the south east. The MoD seems more prepared than previously to listen and discuss. RM reported that at a presentation he attended in Farnham it was explained that the Army are re-organising and surprise was expressed at reluctance to permit access in Hants.

Brighton & Hove LAF – David Brookshaw DB

The January meeting was postponed until February. RJ commented that there have been requests for the old (SDJC) bus walks leaflets and asked if SDNPA could revise and publish again. ALC said he would be happy to liaise with Allison Thorpe so that this can be explored. Reproduction may be possible via the cycling / train / walking leaflets budget or via a small STSF grant (see 3b). LSTF has funded the Stanmer and Ditchling Beacon buses to run on Saturdays as well as Sundays.

ACTION 4: ALC to speak with RJ and Allison Thorpe regarding SD bus walk / cycling information

b) PATHH – Roger Mullenger RM

RM - after the meeting in December all were out walking the identified routes. Some paths were discounted. They are now in process of reviewing maps for evidence, identifying land owners and drawing up claim forms for short-listed routes. RM explained that the next meeting will go into more detail and it will be challenging to find all the land managers / owners. The next meeting is in March. Helen Mountain from Petersfield Ramblers was researching a route also being investigated by PATHH. JV advised checking with the motorised groups for advice on routes that may be BOATS.

6. National Nature Reserves dedication Rob Morris RMo, Open Access and National Trails Team Natural England

RMo gave a presentation on the NE programme to dedicate as Access Land all its freehold National Nature Reserves(NNRs). In the discussion that followed RMo, in answer to questions raised, explained the following:

- The project could be seen as a pilot for other NNR landowners to do the same in the future.
- The land already dedicated would hopefully be shown on OS maps in May this year to be followed by 6 monthly or yearly updates.
- The dedication instrument for land at Beacon Hill had been signed and the direction to relax restrictions to create the higher rights would be done later in the year.
- The budget for physical works relating to on-site management for this programme is small. The SDLAF will have opportunity to discuss ideas with the reserve manager for Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill at the April meeting.

7. Fencing Iping and Stedham Commons - Jane Willmott JW, Sussex Wildlife Trust

JW gave a presentation on proposals for fencing and grazing management for Iping and Stedham Commons. The consultation has approximately 90 responses so far and included two drop-in events. The consultation has been extended to 24 February with two more drop-in sessions in February. Comments and questions to JW followed: RC commented that SWT had been thorough throughout and congratulated the SWT on their consultation. VB said she has enjoyed riding on Stedham Common since the works had been carried out there. DT asked if there was any supplementary feeding of cattle and what about handling of cattle? JW said there would be no supplementary feed given, just occasionally mineral licks provided. This will avoid cattle congregating around fencing awaiting feed, although there will be water troughs on site. They are a hardy breed and generally do well on their own but during harsh winter conditions they will be taken off the common. SWT have mobile handling facilities. Testing will be carried out off-site. RC asked about signs and JW confirmed that signs are in place with contact details when cattle are present. PB asked if there are any long term landscape scale aspirations to join up areas. JW said more cattle grids and use of electronic fencing could be used to keep the commons more open in the future. TBU has concerns of grazing for 18 months with respect to horse riders. JW did not want to rule it out but said that it would be exceptional to have the cattle present for this extended period of time. VB also said mounting points at gates would be useful for horse riders. GJ asked the forum if they supported this plan, there was a unanimous yes. GJ is personally happy to give enthusiastic support and commended SWT on achieving something that has historically been a “very hard sell”.

ACTION 5: GJ/TS to write letter of support for Iping and Stedham proposals to SWT

8. Green Infrastructure in the Local Plan – Ray Drabble RD, Local Development Framework Officer, SDNPA

RD gave a presentation on Green Infrastructure options within the Local Plan and asked members to contribute by reading the detailed reports and comment via the Survey Monkey by 7 February. TS confirmed that the survey link had been sent to all by NW. A discussion followed

on the health benefits of accessible natural green space and comments were received on the presentation and reports. JV asked if the coast is counted as accessible natural green space? RJ pointed out that low car ownership was not necessarily an indicator of deprivation because for some people in Brighton, for example, it was a positive choice not to own a car. VB was pleased to see north – south access given priority as severance of these routes is a problem. RM asked how Green Infrastructure can be provided through development. RD said this work will feed into the Local Plan and shape policy. TBU noted that the reports talk about walkers and cyclists but do not mention horse riders and also that RoWIPs should be taken into account.

ACTION 6: RD to investigate a proxy equivalent for coastal / green space with consultants.

ACTION 7: LAF to read the linked reports and complete the Survey Monkey

Next Meeting Date:

1 April 2014, Soberton Village Hall

This meeting will include a site visit to Beacon Hill & Old Winchester Hill