

South Downs

Local Access Forum

22nd January 2013, 10.30am, at Edes House, Chichester

Present

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

Apologies: Andrew Thomas AT, Tom Tupper TT, Roger Mullenger RM, David Ashcroft DA

In attendance: Tim Squire TS, Rights of Way and Access Officer, South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Trevor Beattie TB, SDNPA CEO, Phil Belden PB, SDNPA Head of Operations, Laura Warren LW Community Engagement Officer SDNPA, Andy Beattie AB, SDNPA Parkwide Manager

Minute taker: Nicola Winning, Strategy & Partnership Administrator SDNPA

Observers: Alan Marlow AM, Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, Amanda Hull AHu, Hampshire County Council, Tricia Butcher TBu, West Sussex Local Access Forum

A. General Business

1. Welcome

GJ welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the meeting 9th October 2012 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising: there were no matters arising

Previous Actions:

Action 1: Workshop on development and effectiveness. TS suggested that it would be useful for all to complete an evaluation form, which would then be collated to see if there is still a demand for a workshop.

Action 1: TS to send evaluation form to LAF members

Action 2: Letters of appointment still require sending out.

Action 3: TS spoke to DT regarding South Downs Land Managers Group (SDLMG). Agreed it would be a good idea if a member from LAF could attend a SDLMG meeting to give a presentation about LAF to them. Good to send annual report to Exec Committee. Next SDLMG will be the AGM in June 2013.

Action 2: TS to liaise with Mike Tristram to organise attendance at SDLMG AGM and to send LAF Annual Report.

Action 4: Annual Report was well received by all and will make a good record to look back on.

Action 5: Thanks to all who confirmed availability for dates for SDLAF 2013/14. TS to chase last few and send out by end of week.

Action 6: completed

Action 7: completed

Action 8: TS will be meeting Richard Thomas, case officer for NE dedications of NNRs on 07.01.13. Beacon Hill will be first to be dedicated Sep 2013.

Action 3: TS to meet Richard Thomas, NE, and discuss LAF engagement on NNR dedications.

Action 9: NH thanked LAF members for their support for P4C application. The panel considered last Thursday and refused funding until planning permission secured. NH disappointed as will delay for at least another 3 months despite statement from Director of Planning that it was unlikely to be a problem. NH is concerned that money could run out. NH feels this is frustrating but remains optimistic.

Action 10: National LAF conference has offered 1 space for a representative. NH could be participating in a workshop which would give another space. The conference will be held 27th Feb in Sheffield – GJ asked if anyone wanted to go. GJ will go to represent to LAF. DB will try and get invitation as B&HLAF member.

Action 11: GJ handed out the new West Sussex LAF leaflet, TBu advised that the website is not yet working, therefore the leaflet has not been distributed generally.

Action 12: on agenda, item 7

3. SDNPA Update

a) Work Plan 2013/14

The work plan document shows work that the LAF is to cover in next 12 months. PB advised there will be a NPA meeting on 18th June prior to which a presentation on Access is planned to which he invited LAF members to contribute to give NPA members an insight into the work of the LAF. The RoW and Access Accord Annual Report will be presented to NPA on this date and then to LAF formally in July. South Downs Way Winchester proposals to be added to July meeting.

Action 4: ALL send further suggestions for work items to TS.

Action 5: GJ to assist PB and TS in Access presentation at pre-NPA meeting 18.06.12

b) Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)

TS confirmed that a LSTF project manager has been appointed, and NPA are in the process of interviewing two sustainable transport officers who will be delivering projects and working on the sustainable transport grants scheme. The Sustainable Transport Solutions Fund (STSF) will fund projects between £250 and £15,000 until March 2015. BD asked if the officers will be for the 2 different parks. TS confirmed that they will.

Action 6: ALL to circulate information on STSF to interested parties when detail released.

c) South Downs Management Plan

TB updated members on the progress of the Management Plan (MP) and stressed that LAF can make valuable input to the National Park MP on high level policies. TB explained that public consultation on the draft MP would be carried out over the summer. From 25 Feb to 1st April there will be a survey, the purpose of which will be to produce broad outcomes, which will then shape the policies to go into the draft. Suggestions of the best method for consulting the LAF outside of the scheduled LAF meetings were discussed; a) some face to face meetings; b) host a working group with LAF; c) invite LAF to attend workshops. TB asked if it was possible to bring forward the next LAF to incorporate an MP workshop. GJ asked TS/SDNPA if Allison Thorpe can facilitate a meeting/workshop for all LAF members. TS suggested all should complete the on-line survey as individuals and then the workshop can capture whole LAF response.

Action 7: TS to contact Allison Thorpe to arrange MP workshop.

[Post meeting note: SDLAF MP Outcomes Workshop 10.00-12.00, 21 March 2013, Midhurst]

4. Defra and Natural England

TS tabled the Annual Report. Further hard copies are available.

Six grants were approved from Paths 4 Communities. AB says there is a demand but the criteria for applying are restrictive.

Funding for regional LAF co-ordinator role remains unclear.

5. Information Items – Feedback from other LAFs

Surrey – GJ

Management of Thursley, Ockley, Elstead, Royal and Bagmoor Commons – Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) were still awaiting the consultants report, and would report back to Surrey Countryside Access Forum as soon as there was something to report.

Oxted Quarry – Southern Gravel have sent a letter to all local residents, which said that they are going to apply for Planning Permission to build on the site rather than continue quarrying. Concerns about the rights of way in the area would still need to be addressed whatever happened on the site.

Hampshire – AHu

The last meeting of the Forum was the AGM in October 2012 where a new Chair and Vice Chair were elected - Sue Coles was confirmed as Chair (for a one year period), Graham Flatt and Nigel Wolstenholme as joint Vice-Chairs.

Major projects/items of discussion included:

- Access on MOD land
- List of Streets - the Forum is concerned that the List of Streets is an access resource that is not being fully utilised and without knowledge of it routes will be lost. The Forum had written to Hampshire County Council to request that Highways and the Countryside Service work together to: properly define the legal status of the list of streets designations; identify overlaps and gaps (between the List of Streets and the Definitive Map); and provide integrated, useful mapping available for public use. The response to this letter will be discussed at the next Forum meeting in February.
- Itchen Navigation - the Forum is concerned that multi-user access has not been provided as part of the project. A letter was sent to the Itchen Navigation Steering

Committee to request that management solutions be looked into, and to HCC to request that the Countryside Access Plan working group prioritise the issue. The responses to these letters will be discussed at the February meeting.

- Recruitment - the Forum currently has vacancies for representatives of landowners, managers, farmers and motor vehicle users. If members are aware of anyone in the Hampshire area who would be interested in these vacancies please direct them to the HCAF website: www.hants.gov.uk/hcaf
- Providing Access To Hampshire's Heritage - the research and outreach aspect of the project is now complete. A decision is now to be made about how to deal with the project output. It is anticipated that this will be discussed at the final Steering Committee meeting in February

Brighton – DB

The last LAF meeting was held on 10 January. They have a revolving chair in operation. Planning permission for missing link from Woodingdean to Falmer granted. B&HCC are progressing well with LSTF for over £4m. Hoping for a link from Lewes Road corridor to the Downs. Also work on electronic mapping of RoW and some outstanding definitive map work now being tackled.

West Sussex – TBu

Main point was concerning presentation from Gregg Merrit, Community Solutions Officer, regarding WSCC no longer having a cycling officer, their preference is to move to one person for each area covering all community work. WSLAF feel this is not good and will monitor. Still working on website. A lot of projects in coming year. The next LAF meeting will be held on 6th February which will be their AGM, they will also have Network Rail in attendance.

B. Key Topics for Discussion

6. SDLAF Public Events – Laura Warren, Community Engagement Officer

LW – explained her role within SDNPA, which includes the gathering of information at events, collecting and collating evidence to help develop the Management Plan.

The NPA would welcome LAF involvement at events like responsible dog owners day, where key messages about access can be delivered. GJ said the LAF represents the community and attendance at events is a good way to get to understand the concerns and interests of the public and help us feel we are representing them. Also we can raise the LAF profile. NH said it is good fun and there is lots of enthusiasm. It would be useful to have a badge and information about who the LAF are on the SDNPA stand. A map of Access Land would be useful and a leaflet for people to take away. LW said the expertise from LAF members would be invaluable and asked who would be interested in being involved. The majority of LAF members expressed interest. Once a confirmed event programme is set it will be circulated to LAF members with a request for volunteers. LAF members would receive a briefing paper, risk assessment form and a ticket, as required. Time committed to attend is flexible. Events usually have a minimum of three people per stand for good rotation, this gives everyone a chance to visit other stands etc throughout the day. If you choose to volunteer TS can have name badges for LAF made.

Action 8: LW to circulate list and calendar of events to LAF members

7. Access to MOD land – Alan Marlow, Walkers Representative HCAF

There have been a number of incidents where walkers are being stopped by MoD and being told if they are a group they need a permit. The Aldershot and District Military Bylaws and the website 'Public access to military areas' make no mention of a requirement for a permit, what the criteria is or how to obtain one. AM tabled a draft letter which would be sent to Richard Brooks and asked LAF members for comments;

RC made a point on the length of the letter, too long and feels it needs to be 'punchy'.

VB noted that there is no mention of horse riders within the letter, AM replied that as there were no specific requirements this was not included.

JV asked AM if he was aware of project Ubique. JV went on to explain that user groups worked with the MoD. The main goals being to get clarity with MoD, increase and improve access and safe access. "Treadlightly" scheme tries not to be adversarial.

Salisbury Plain use live ammunition although Hants don't.

NH noted that this appears to be site specific, feels the letter is too aggressive and suggested a local liaison group.

TB feels letter should focus on the three last points made.

PB suggesting splitting the letter into points of principle and site specific issues

SJ can be difficult to define what is commercial, for insurance purposes. Forestry generally has some guidance on their website.

LAFs should continue to work together on this so that there are no contradictions.

JV Ubique was probably successful due to being able to give something back to MoD.

It was agreed that SDLAF would like to see a revision of the letter.

Action 9: AM to send revised MoD letter to SDLAF

8. Dog Walkers Code of Conduct/Charter

TS tabled the draft Dog Walkers Code Of Conduct/Charter to the LAF which is a piece of work being led by Jeremy Burgess, SDNPA Eastern Area Manager, and asked for comments

AH felt that as a document that is advising, if you want to get owners on your side, you should seek their co-operation, otherwise it could alienate people; it should be more positive

DT felt there should be more clarification on dog bags i.e. when they need to be used

NH felt it was a good start and an important document; also agreed that it has a bit too much negativity

TB wants to see the document be more SDNP specific. It would be useful to land owners and farmers as a leaflet to hand out.

JV mentioned the highway code; i.e. one must keep a dog on lead when on a path shared with horse riders or cyclists

DT mentioned that Neospora was a health risk to livestock, therefore owners have a responsibility to keep their dogs wormed

DB title should be about owners/handlers

There were conflicting views expressed about the need to pick up after your dog

Action 10: TS will feed back LAF comments on Dog Code of Conduct to Jeremy Burgess

9. Any Other Business

Flood strategy

GJ raised the consultation on the Lower Tidal River Arun Flood Risk Management Strategy, the bulk of the area that falls under consideration is within the NP. The draft recommendation does not mention RoW. GJ feels something needs to be done about this, although it is possible that what they are proposing won't affect RoW. GJ suggests LAF offer some advice to point out that these not mentioned and point out the issues of losing a RoW. A path by path assessment is required.

Action 11: GJ & TS will write to Environment Agency to raise issue of RoW

National Trust and Sussex Wildlife Trust fencing proposals

GJ spoke of the fencing proposals by Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) at Graffham Common. TS circulated a map showing the proposals going into the application, suggesting that it would be good for LAF to endorse on the 2nd phase.

The National Trust (NT) has proposed a scheme for a very small area of wooded heathland at Warren Hill. NT are to be applauded for this. Grazing will take place a few weeks of the year only and whilst there is stock present there will be gates. During other times the gates will be removed.

Action 12: GJ & TS to write in support of SWT fencing application and in approval of NT proposals.

Pigs on Annington Hill

GJ explained problems caused to South Downs Way users by a pig farm. TB confirmed that this was within allowed agricultural use and planning permission is not required for the temporary pens. Engagement with the farmer and the community is the best way to ease conflict. GJ feels the LAF should be keep up to speed on policy, although they would not deal with these things individually.

Future Meeting Dates

The next LAF meeting will take place in April to be held in Steyning followed by a site visit.

18 April 2013, 10.30-13.30, Springwells Hotel, Steyning

18 July 2013, 10.30-13.30, venue tbc

17 October 2013, 10.30-13.30, venue tbc

21 January 2014, 10.30-13.30, venue tbc