

South Downs

Local Access Forum

22 July 2014, 10.30am, at South Downs Centre, Midhurst

Present:

Members: Sue Dunkley SD (Vice-chair), Russell Cleaver RC, Roger Mullenger RM, Bob Damper BD, Simon James SJ, Andy Hannaford AH, Neville Harrison NH, Val Bateman VB, John Vannuffel JV, Isabel Swift IS

Apologies: Glynn Jones GJ (Chair), David Brookshaw DB, Richard Johnson RJ, Susan Thompson ST, David Taylor DT, Jo Carr JC, David Ashcroft DA, Tim Squire TS - Rights of Way and Access Officer

In attendance: South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Officers: Trevor Beattie TB - SDNPA CEO, Phil Belden PB - Director of Operations, Allison Thorpe ATh - Access & Recreation Lead, Jonathan Mycock JM – Heathland Project Manager, Andy Gattiker AG – SDW Officer, Ben Bessant BB – SDW Assistant. Hampshire County Council (HCC) James Silvester JS – Senior Transport Planner. Hilary Jubert HJ - District BHS Officer, Kat Woollard KW – Local Rider

Minute Taker: Nicola Winning NW, Interim PA to Operations Director and Strategy & Partnership Director, SDNPA

Observers: Tricia Butcher TBu – WSCC, David Larkin BHCC, L McCormick – Mid Sussex BW Group

A. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Welcome

Sue Dunkley welcomed all to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was quorate therefore decisions could be made by the Members.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Factual accuracy:

The previous minutes were agreed.

Matters arising:

There were no matters arising

Actions from previous minutes:

TS to invite Sebastian Anstruther and canoe representative/s to give presentations at the October 2014 SDLAF meeting, as Sebastian Anstruther is unable to make the July meeting
All other actions are complete.

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

ATh confirmed that GJ had stepped down as Chair. Nominations were invited for Chair and Vice-Chair. SD was happy to stand again as Vice-Chair,. RM indicated that he was happy to stand as Chair. As, no other nominations were received, ATh asked for a show of hands for SD as Vice-Chair and a show of hands for RM as new Chair. SDLAF agreed unanimously: **Roger Mullenger elected as Chair and Sue Dunkley re-elected as Vice-Chair.** SD congratulated RM and handed over to RM to Chair the meeting.

RM thanked the Members and said he he would be happy to take any comments or suggestions from Members on how to take the SDLAF forward. RM also thanked GJ, in his absence, for Chairing the SDLAF for the last 3 years.

4. SDLAF Annual Reports

Two reports were tabled and RM confirmed that the Review form was sent to NE/Defra and a

separate script report sent from the Forum. RM asked if there were any comments concerning the reports. BD was concerned about blank sections in the Review form in particular the section recording achievements. It was agreed that some additions were needed and RM confirmed that TS would be asked to complete these and send a revised version to NE. This would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

ACTION 1: RM/TS to revise and re-send Review form to NE and circulate to LAF members

B. GENERAL BUSINESS

5. South Downs National Park Authority

a) TB welcomed the Members to the new South Downs Centre (SDC) and invited them to look around the interpretation centre within the reception area. **SDC public Open Day** - takes place on Sunday 27 July from 11am until 5pm. The building meets BREEAM Excellent standards for energy and efficiency sustainability. **Local Plan** – the preferred options are currently in preparation, there will then be further consultation. **Rampion** was approved by the Secretary of State despite the National Park's opposition. The Secretary of State, in approving the scheme for wider economic and energy supply reasons, said that the case for the National Park had a great deal of weight and he approved the sum of £358,000 to the National Park for mitigation purposes. PB added that as the on land cable route would mean massive disruption through the National Park the SDNPA intends to work closely with the contractors to minimise the landscape impact and disruption to access. **Cycle Ambition** is moving on fast, projects in development include the major realignment and extension to Centurion Way to the West Dean tunnel. The planning application will go to planning committee in October. NH confirmed that the Egrets Way application had been approved 10 days previously. SD asked how the path locations are decided or do you look to others for ideas? TB commented that the routes are part of a 10 year plan of cycle and pathways. ATH mentioned that some of the routes that have funding had been in the pipeline for a number of years before the National Park came into existence. There is still more work to be done in terms of developing a Cycling Strategy and suggestions for further routes would be considered. The announcement of **LEPs growth fund** on 17 July has created potential opportunities for the National Park to work with the LEPs. **Stanmer** - two big applications to HLF are nearly ready to be submitted; one in August, one in October, totalling around £9 million.

b) **Discovery Ticket / Getting Around Map:** ATH introduced the Discovery bus ticket, funded by Two National Parks Local Sustainable Transport Fund Programme (LSTF) programme. While this ticket covers all of the bus operators in the National Park, the Explorer ticket still exists in the Eastern parts of the park. The Discovery Map and Getting Around pages on the SDNPA website have been improved with downloadable itineraries, suggestions for days out etc. The Growth Fund was announced on 7 July and the revenue funding for LSFT was also announced. ATH explained that the Two National Parks LSTF programme had secured a one year extension, resulting in £2m revenue for the project partners. The focus of our work will be on, marketing, route guides, maps, leaflets and funding activities getting people out there using the infrastructure that has been created.

c) **Access & RoW Annual Review:** PB confirmed that the Annual Review had been deferred, as there was too much business to cover at the National Park Authority (NPA) meeting, therefore it will be going to the next NPA in September. The document will be available on the public website one week before the meeting.

d) **Heathlands Reunited Project:** JM explained how the SDNPA is leading on the development of the Heathlands Reunited Project. This aims to achieve 'bigger, better, more & joined up' heathland in the SDNP. SDNPA are working with 12 partner organisations and had received a Development Grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund of £48,300. This will fund the development of a more detailed Stage 2 application, to be submitted early in 2015.

Three areas of work being carried out relevant to the SDLAF are:

- Visitor survey (9 heathland sites in total)
- Developing methods of communication to influence behaviour of site users (especially walkers with dogs)
- Audit of heathland interpretation (21 sites to be surveyed)

JM offered to return to a future LAF meeting to update the members

6. Defra and Natural England Business

ATh gave a briefing in the absence of Kevin Haugh. Natural England has restructured and there are now 14 teams, the NP falling largely into team 14, which is the Sussex and Kent team. The Sussex and Kent team has been further subdivided into areas: Sussex Downs is led by Nicola Davies, the Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Dorset team is led by Matthew Carter and Helen Ward covers the Hampshire Downs. For the time being Kevin Haugh will remain our main contact with Natural England. PB confirmed that Mel Hughes is taking on overall responsibility for the protected area for the National Park, therefore at strategic level we will have one main contact.

a) **Regional Conference, London 20 May:** BD reported good attendance at the conference and that it was well put together. BD gave feedback on the various topics and confirmed that the slides are all available to view on Huddle. The next conference is being planned for Windsor, although there is concern that this may be more difficult/costly for delegates to reach. [post meeting note: location now confirmed as Friends House, Euston, London]

b) **Defra Reforming Access and Engagement Guidance:** RM has looked at the paper and commented that there are approximately 100 documents that are due to be deleted, some of these are completely irrelevant to LAF whilst others, for example an Audit of Coastal Access, may of more interest. RM mentioned the briefing paper that had been sent out, this covers the new format which looked ok although it was noted that there was so little detail it would be difficult to tell how useful it would be, as it only gives very broad headline about the structure of the new guidance. RM confirmed that comments regarding this new paper need to be received by 31 July. There was a suggestion that the SDNPA might collate important and archive key documents. However, this suggestion was ruled out by TB who explained that the NPA website was due for a change and would not have the capacity to provide this sort of facility.

ACTION 2: LAF Members to look at the on-line consultation document paper and comment as necessary

7. Information from Members and Other LAF's

a) **WSCC – TBU:** Site visit to Medmerry to look at access was very impressive and recommends everyone to have a look. The main LAF meeting focussed on recruitment, the new recruitment pack will be available on the website. Charlotte Eastley (WSCC) gave an update on the Rights of Way Review as there are some changes coming in during April 2015.... PB mentioned that they are changing their regime from a 9 months cycle to a 15 month cycle and will be fully consulting on it.

b) **Brighton & Hove – DL:** No Chair currently just an acting Chair. Just opened up a new access area, north of A27. Getting closer to having a definitive map online, next stage will be a handheld GPS to do a condition survey

c) **PATHH – RM: Working** through 80-100 suggested bridleways that could be mapped / claimed. They are trying to do this in a consensual way in discussion with Land Managers. There is a short list of about 20 in Hants that are being worked on.

C. KEY TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

8. ESCC Diversions (appendix 2) – Newhaven and Telscombe

Newhaven (railway crossing): RM gave a summary of the tabled reports: Newhaven; There is no objection to the re-routing of the path, the concern is whether to have stiles or gates: Following discussion it was agreed not to object to the order, but to support East Sussex in trying to gain more info on whether this is setting a precedent for making it more difficult to

cross railway lines generally and press them, as the highway authority, along with the NP authority's support to try and get the most commodious option. **Telscombe:** The new proposal was generally agreed by those that attended as being the most practical and acceptable solution for the path diversion.

ACTION 3: SDLAF letter to withdraw objection to Newhaven Diversion Order and to seek means of improving access with ESCC and NR. RM/TS.

ACTION 4: SDLAF letter of support for Telscombe proposed diversion. RM/TS

9. Steyning Cycling and Horse Rider Conflict (Appendix 3)

RM tabled the letter sent to Wiston Estate and Steyning Downland Scheme (SDS) with reference to cycling and horse riding, Steyning bridleways 2714 and 2716. The letter was sent from the SDLAF on 15 July giving balanced advice as an independent body. At present there has been no response to the SDLAF. TBu confirmed that WSLAF had received a response to their letter; the project manager of SDS does not believe the landowner will allow the route to go anywhere else. If the route is shut down, the mountain bikers are likely to put in their own route and not be organised. Further discussion on management of MTB's on bridleways followed.

ACTION 5: A response to SDLAF letter to Wiston Estate and SDS to be sought and circulated.

10. Horse Box Parking – Hilary Jubert & Kat Woollard

KW and HJ presented a report on horsebox provision in the National Park. A discussion followed. BD suggested the report be extended to cover the Hampshire area. PB said the report provided a good overview and that the next step is to develop an action plan of what can be achieved. AG confirmed he would update the current car parking information adding that it is important to provide good information such as differentiating symbols showing car parks suitable for horse box and/or trailers etc. so that people can make an informed decision before visiting. In order for the SDNPA to take this forward TB said that landowners' liability, private owners' rights to operate their land as they see fit and the responsibilities of the Highways Authorities must be considered. RM confirmed that the SDLAF supported the objectives set out in the report. SDNPA will consider the report in detail and discuss with HJ and KT further support.

ACTION 6: AG to update the National Trail current car park information with horse box survey findings.

ACTION 7: SDNPA/HJ/KT to discuss the wider proposals put forward in the report.

11. Hampshire Cycling Strategy – James Silvester, Senior Transport Planner HCC

JS gave a presentation on the development of the Hampshire Cycling Strategy. The success of the Strategy will depend on a variety of factors one of which will be the County Members buy-in. The draft Strategy will be sent out to key stakeholders on 22 July for a 3 week consultation. A six week public consultation will then follow.

ACTION 8: JS to send Cycling Strategy Engagement paper to LAF Members

ACTION 9: LAF Members to send comments on Strategy to TS

ACTION 10: TS to send collated responses to JS by 12 August

12. South Downs Way (SDW) – Andy Gattiker, SDW Officer and Ben Bessant

AG explained the SDW Management Plan is due for review. A more strategic plan will be produced focussing on key issues over the next 5 years and beyond.

Birling Gap: BB presented a map and explained the proposed route change. The proposal will eliminate road crossings, enable users to access the local facilities and direct people along the most favoured route. This, plus proposed path improvement works, will reduce erosion from walkers. National Trust (NT) and NE are in support. NT will need to dedicate the proposed route as a public footpath. The proposed route change was supported by SDLAF.

ACTION 11: SDLAF members to make strategic comments on the SDW Management Plan and send to TS/RM to collate and forward to AG

Next Meeting Date:

15 October 2014, South Downs Centre, Memorial Hall, Midhurst