

# South Downs

## Local Access Forum

9<sup>th</sup> October 2012, 10.30am, at Amberley Museum

### Present

**Members:** Glynn Jones GJ (Chair), David Ashcroft DA, Simon James SJ, Jo Taylor JT, Bob Damper BD, Dave Brookshaw DB, Neville Harrison NH, Sue Dunkley SD, Roger Mullenger RM, Terry Doyle TD succeeded by Russell Cleaver RC, Val Bateman VB, Andy Hannaford AH.

**Apologies:** Richard Johnson RJ, David Taylor DT, Andrew Thomas AT, Tom Tupper TT, John Vannuffel JV,

**In attendance:** Tim Squire TS, Rights of Way and Access Officer SDNPA, Allison Thorpe ATh, Access and Recreation Strategy Lead SDNPA

**Minute taker:** Nicola Winning, Strategy & Partnership Administrator SDNPA

**Observers:** Phil Belden PB, SDNPA Head of Operations, Michael Clarke, East Sussex Local Forum Member, Andy Beattie AB, SDNPA Parkwide Manager, Sue Coles SC, Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, Tricia Butcher

## A. Annual General Meeting Business

### 1. Welcome

GJ welcomed all present to the meeting.

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

Minutes of the meeting 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising: there were no matters arising

### 3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Before stepping down prior to the vote, GJ gave a few words on the National Park and suggested that Members spend a little time reviewing the LAF and way forward. DA suggested a workshop on how SDLAF could work better; he wanted to focus on conflict between users. JT thought it was hard for LAF to advise due to the size of the Park. TD felt that being an advisory body can be frustrating and would like more work on the ground; he feels his own input has been minimal, therefore he doesn't wish to be re-appointed. DB said that consistency and consensus are important; there is frustration as things don't always move fast enough. RM feels it is more difficult to influence the County Councils. TS said the draft Annual Report circulated highlights the good advice already given by SDLAF and that the value of the LAF was very much appreciated by SDNPA as shown by the level of support shown to it including asking LAF members to sit on the Partnership, SCF panel and LSTF project panel. DB is concerned that the LAFs can be too much of a 'talking' group, but he feels SDLAF Members have made a difference, but not enough. There is a need for a more strategic view; what should the future be; how do we see LAF making a difference? There was a consensus of agreement around the room. NH agreed that some very good points

had been raised, some of which highlighted inherent problems of a LAF, but feels that with such a diverse group the LAF should take these ideas onboard, move them forward and improve on it.

GJ asked the Members if the discussions and suggestions had made them feel more positive. The Members agreed that they had.

### **Action 1: TS to organise workshop on development of effectiveness of SDLAF**

GL welcomed Russell Cleaver to the meeting and briefly gave the meeting over to TS.

TS asked the room if they were happy for GJ and SD to continue in their roles if there were no more nominations. No nominations were made. SDLAF agreed unanimously:

**Glynn Jones and Sue Dunkley elected as Chair and Vice-chair.**

### **4. Re-appointment of Members**

TS stated that the original appointment time for members was 18 months with an option to be re-appointed. TS confirmed that TD was stepping down and that Russell Cleaver, also a member of the Volunteer Ranger Service and with a career in countryside management, was now appointed. Richard Johnson, with an interest in public transport, was appointed and welcomed to the group. JT informed the room that she had decided to step down, feeling she can't give enough time between meetings. Members were sad to hear this news, but thanked her for all her work.

Members discussed the need for good representation from landowners on the LAF and another cycling representative.

TS recommended that the appointment should be for 1, 2 or 3 years, as this would save losing too many members in one go.

**Action 2: TS to send out letters of re-appointment**

**Action 3: TS/DA to talk to South Downs Land Managers Group members who are on SDLAF about possibility of other SDLAF members attending and TB suggestion of presentation (DA to present)**

### **5. Annual Report**

TS discussed the draft Annual Report, informing that this would help raise the profile of LAF. TS asked members for their comments by e-mail.

Discussion and comments followed about the requirement to fill out the pro-forma annual report for Natural England (NE). The LAF agreed that it was useful to have an Annual Report produced for publicity purposes but that the NE pro-forma should also be completed for the reporting back to Defra.

It was noted that there is a need to respond, as legislation says we have to give this information to Natural England.

**Action 4: TS/GJ to produce Annual Report and complete pro-forma**

### **6. Dates for 2013**

Next date was confirmed as 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013 [post meeting note: venue Edes House in Chichester]. Dates for April, July and October 2013 and January 2014 still to be confirmed

#### **Action 5: TS to arrange dates for 2013/14**

### **B. General Business**

#### **7. South Downs National Park Update**

a) Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) update

ATh explained that the detailed programme of works for the joint SD / New Forest National Parks LSTF programme was being developed. Schemes would be prioritised by the Project Boards as some measures (such as walking and cycling routes) were over-subscribed. BD would be the LAF rep. on the stakeholder group. The other successful LSTF bids covering the SDNP area were also briefly discussed.

b) South Downs Management Plan – Emerging Priorities

ATh gave a short presentation about the development of the five-year Management Plan including how the issues and priorities had emerged from stakeholder engagement. Four main points came out of the presentation/discussion which focused on the Access and Sustainable Tourism Pillars of the Emerging Priorities table:

- LAF supported the Emerging Priorities work
- LAF felt more attention should be given to RoW in the pillars and noted there was no reference to RoWIPs.
- LAF was pleased to see the proposal to develop work around Access for All and keen to support this area of work through the development of a working group.
- LAF felt there was scope for more on educating the public about using RoW and behaviour in the countryside.

A minor point was also made in relation to the Tourism pillar – the mention of specific towns/villages such as Plumpton might lead other locations to feel excluded.

GJ commented that RoWIP working group should also meet again to look at what actions the LAF could support.

#### **Action 6: TS to set up RoWIP working group meeting with JV, VB, BD, DB, GJ**

#### **8. Defra and Natural England**

- a) Huddle: Unlimited spaces for LAF members are now available on Huddle.

#### **Action 7: TS to get invites sent from Huddle co-ordinator to all LAF members**

- b) Dedication of NE and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) as Access Land: TS explained that NE had announced that they are to dedicate as open access all the NNRs where they are freeholder. The three sites in the South Downs are mapped under CRow already but there is an opportunity to investigate dedicating higher rights. TS would like to see LAF members look in detail at the three sites: Beacon Hill, Winchester Hill and Kingley Vale. It was agreed that a group of LAF members will look at the potential for higher rights on these sites with regard to effects on land management and nature conservation and report back to the LAF.

## **Action 8: TS to let LAF members know when NE consult and set up site visit**

- c) Paths for Communities: TS confirmed that NH should have the application in by November 2012. Applications can include the cost of volunteer time.

## **Action 9: NH to report back on progress with P4C application**

The National LAF Conference will be held in February 2013.

## **Action 10: TS to forward invite to National LAF conference when it comes through**

### **9. Information Items**

- a) Feedback from LAF members:  
WSLAF: GJ said WSLAF are focussing on raising its profile looking at presence on WSCC website and producing a leaflet.

## **Action 11: GJ to circulate WSLAF leaflet**

B&HLAF: DB told the group that he had served his full three years as Chair but in absence of willing volunteer for new Chair the chairmanship will be on a rolling basis for each meeting – this was not thought to be a good idea by the members. B&HCC has announced the dedication of a large area of access land on some of its farm estate.

HCAF: DA, also at end of his chairmanship, said normally Vice-chair would take up chairmanship but their Vice-chair has resigned. HCAF looking for two new members. DA praised Sue Cole and Alan Marlow for their excellent work on PATHH project. [post meeting note: Sue Coles elected as new Chair]

ESLAF: Michael Clarke – ESLAF member, has a special interest in mountain biking and cycling and feels greater access is important for everyone. ESLAF experience the same issues as SDLAF. Work includes; priorities for RoW improvements, upgrades on join up routes, strategic issues working group (site specific). ESCC have produced a really good on-line RoW map.

## **B. Key Topics**

### **10. Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage, PATHH – Sue Coles HCAF**

SC gave an informative presentation on PATHH for Hampshire which was well received by members.

### **11. Access on MOD Land – Roger Mullenger SDLAF**

RM tabled a paper outlining a walks leaflet that Liss Parish wished to produce which included a well used route across an area of MoD “managed access” land. The parish council consulted the MoD who insisted the route should not be promoted. RM feels the SDNPA and/or SDLAF could help to stop the Army from refusing permission to promote access. DA informed the LAF that HCAF has a presentation from the MoD at its next meeting. PB told the Members that he had been to a preliminary meeting with MoD to talk about NP issues including biodiversity and

access issues. Being sensitive and diplomatic is the right way to start (winning friends and influencing people). SDNPA can help with some of the anti-social aspects of access experienced by MoD on their land; the Area team is in liaison with the MoD and should be able to pick this up. BD suggests that this is a good opportunity where LAF can be pro-active and could advise the SDNPA. Communication between HCAF and SDLAF is crucial to give a unified message. DA will represent both Forums on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012

## **Action 12: DA to report back on MoD HCAF discussion at next SDLAF**

### **Close**

### **Next Meeting: 10:30am 22 January 2013 at Edes House, West Street, Chichester**

After lunch a site visit took place attended by several SDLAF members and SDNPA officers:

### **SDLAF Amberley 09.10.12**

#### **Note of site visit**

- Considered historical context of the changing route of the SDW, away from the old bridge and a potential footpath upgrade to bridleway to link with SDW to allow cyclists and horse riders access to services/facilities in Amberley village.
- Contemplated sympathetic design within landscape of SDW bridge over the river.
- Experienced surfacing problems of double fenced path after long wet summer.
- Pondered problem with sewage lorries obstructing path, and offered a possible solution of a hard standing area built up on the eastern side of the railway bridge
- Experienced crossing point on fairly fast road, and looked at innovative QR code badging on SDW marker posts giving information to smartphone users about the location/points of interest, the QR codes serving as a virtual information board
- Looked at informal campsite area and discussed the benefits and problems associated with it and general discussion about need for affordable accommodation and the importance of camping sites or barn sleeping facilities on South Downs.
- Looked at dead-end RoW and potential for link to railway station.
- Discussed the possibilities of railway station being a hub for visitors and potential for promotion as gateway into NP and provision of facilities including cycle hire. Discussed how train services could be more integrated and more convenient to use and meet the needs of the visitor.