

# South Downs

## Local Access Forum

**21 October 2016, 10.30am, at the South Downs Centre, Midhurst**

**Present:**

**Members:** Bob Damper BD, Glynn Jones GJ, Isabel Swift IS, , Karen Roberts KR, Neville Harrison NH, Richard Johnson RJ, Roger Mullenger RM, Russell Cleaver RC, Simon James SJ, Sue Dunkley SD, Susan Thompson ST, Val Bateman VB Robert Whitcombe RW

**Apologies:** Andy Hannaford AH, David Taylor DT.

**SDNPA Officers In attendance:** Nigel James NJ – Countryside & Policy Manager, Allison Thorpe AT – SDNPA Access & Recreation Lead

**Apologies:** Andrew Lee AL – SDNPA Director of Strategy & Partnerships;, Andy Gattiker AG - SDW National Trail Lead, Trevor Beattie TB - SDNPA CEO,

**Minute Taker:** Sara Osman SO, Support Services Officer, SDNPA

**Observers:** Graham Butler, Surrey Countryside Access Forum; Mark Holroyd, NFNPA; Gordon Garrett NF LAF; Sally Arnold, NFNPA LAF; Alastair Duncan, NFNPA; Alison Russell, NF LAF; Ruth Croker, NF LAF; James Emmett HCC.

### A. Welcome and Minutes

#### 1. Welcome

RM welcomed everyone. Apologies were accepted from Andy Hannaford and David Taylor.

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

**Factual accuracy:**

The previous minutes were agreed with no amendments.

**Matters arising:**

All actions from previous meeting had been completed, as detailed below:

- **Action 1:** James Emmett from HCC is on the agenda to report on proposed ETROs
- **Action 2:** This is covered by Item 3 on the agenda
- **Action 3:** Andy Le Gresley had confirmed that there is no Pathfinder report in relation to 'responsibility for the costs for management of waterways.' However, the Pathfinder website does include a lot of information on the work to date: <http://cuckmerepathfinder.org.uk/Home>
- **Action 4:** Andy Le Gresley had provided the following response to SDLAF question about future plans for a crossing for pedestrians at Cuckmere Haven: *"ESCC doesn't currently have any proposals to re-visit the pedestrian crossing issue at Seven Sisters Country Park. This is due to there being (according to previous studies) significant technical difficulties in delivering a dedicated crossing facility on this section of the A259. The topography and nature of the road means that a straightforward, at-level, facility would have the potential to introduce new crash issues at a location that currently has a good safety record. A more complex solution (bridge/underpass) has obvious financial, construction and visual impact challenges. ESCC's current priority is in investigating options for the replacement of Exceat Bridge (with a new offline structure) for which we have made a bid for Local Growth Fund monies. This proposal would include improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at this location."*
- **Action 5:** RM has responded to ESCCs Countryside Access Strategy consultation, on behalf of the SDLAF, which has been acknowledged

- **Action 6 & 7:** The work on Permissive paths will be covered on this agenda under Item 6
- **Action 8 & 9:** The England Coast Path Update and draft National Trails MOU will be covered under Item 4 on this agenda
- **Action 10:** AT and RM have sent a letter to HCC Highways regarding the flooding at Stocks lane on the Meon Valley Trail
- **Action 11:** RM and AT submitted report to Defra on 22 August 2016. An update is covered under agenda item 10
- **Action 12:** RM submitted a letter of response, on 2 August, from the SDLAF to the Buriton enquiry regarding Network Rails application for a Public Path Extinguishment in Buriton.
- **Action 13:** RJ updated the group that there will be a consultation on the Government's Buses Bill imminently. National Park Authorities will now become statutory consultees on future consultations, which they were not previously. RJ to contact AT when he hears more.
- **Action 14:** AT sent a response, on behalf of the SDLAF, to the WSCC consultation on the loss of bus stops on the A24.

**ACTION 1:** RJ to update AT when he has any information about a consultation on the Government's buses Bill

## B. Key Topics for Discussion

### 3. Cheriton Wood Open Access Direction Review (Allison Thorpe)

AT reported that the second phase of this public consultation closed on 17 October. One objection had been received during the first consultation and none at all during the second. AT summarised the restrictions included in the proposed direction and asked if there were any final comments from members before a recommendation was made to the NPA on the proposal to extend the restriction for a further 6 years. NJ added that the long term view of the SDNPA would be to work towards greater access at a future direction review. Members discussed and agreed to recommend that the SDNPA approve the direction for 6 years, on the proviso that this gives plenty of time before the next review for the SDNPA to explore with the landowner options for improved public access. It was noted that the information provided from the landowner was very useful and AT agreed to feedback thanks to the landowner.

**ACTION 2:** AT to report back to Sarah Manchester on the recommendations from the SDLAF concerning the Cheriton Wood Open Access direction review.

### 4. Coast Path: Maps of proposed routes for the England Coast Path in the SDNPA (Nigel James)

Preparations are underway for the England Coast Path in the SDNP. The revised timetable for this work is:

- End November 16: NE to write to all landowners that may be affected
- Nov- Dec 16: Drafting preferred route with access authorities and major landowners
- January 17: Consultation road-show events for landowners and public
- Summer 17: Final preferred route published for final consultation
- Autumn 17: Final route submitted to SoS
- Summer 18: Required works schedule undertaken and section open

There are currently no maps, however it is hoped that AG will have the full maps and plans for discussion at the next SDLAF meeting in February 2017.

**ACTION 3:** SO to put Maps of proposed routes for the England Coast Path on February 16 agenda

## 5. Draft Memorandum on National Trails SDNPA (Nigel James)

NJ reported on behalf of Andy Gattiker, SDNPA National Trails Lead. Currently the SDW is managed by the SDNPA which receives funding from Natural England to cover this work. NE are due to report back to National Trail Partnerships shortly regarding the continuation of their 'New Deal' funding arrangements. A working group, seeking to establish a national body to represent National Trail, has agreed to submit 2 £1million + 'Discover England Fund' bids, one with NE and including the England Coast Path and one without NE and just focusing on existing National Trails. AG will give a full update on SDW funding at the next SDLAF meeting.

AG has also been developing innovative ideas to bring in income to support work on the SDW (posters, cards, items made from old used fingerpost signs etc.), and a new Head of Marketing and Income Generation has recently been appointed at the SDNPA.

**ACTION 4:** SO to put National Trails Funding Update on next agenda

## C. Updates

### 6. Countryside Stewardship permissive paths Update (Allison Thorpe)

AT reported on members' progress of the work reviewing permissive paths in the National Park under stewardship agreements. This is being undertaken because many of the stewardship agreements will expire in the next few years. A scoring system had been devised to ensure consistency in reviewing each path, and recordings are being logged by AT. Most paths have now been assessed and AT thanked members for their work. Once the final paths have been completed the SDLAF will need to discuss next steps they wish to take.

Members discussed the variety of states of different paths, with some paths clearly signed and well-maintained whilst other paths were poorly signed and not maintained, with paths petering out with no clear direction to follow. Members agreed that there was some work to be done with landowners to ensure consistency in path maintenance and signage is important to help public know where they can go and where they are not supposed to go. It was noted that many paths have great value and should be retained where possible.

NJ thanks AT for her work and suggested the next step should be to formulate a plan for how to secure and look after the paths for the future. This should include:

- deciding which paths do members want to keep as permissive paths
- how do we go about ensuring this? Should the SDLAF lobby or campaign to keep paths?

RM asked for support to help summarise and rate the paths once all the data is collected and proposed forming a subcommittee to take this forward. BD, VB, RC, GJ and ST all agreed to join RM in the New Year to move this forward. RM set deadline of end November to finish walking the paths, January for a meeting of the sub group, which would report back to the SDLAF in Feb 2017.

**ACTION 5:** SO to put item on next agenda for the sub group to report back on permissive paths to LAF in February and AT to arrange meeting of the sub group in January.

### 7. Report to SDLAF on HCC course of action following consultant report on proposed ETROs (James Emmett)

JE and his team at HCC have been looking at ways to address problems of damage done to byways from use of quadbikes, 4x4's and other motorised vehicles. They trialed a scheme where only registered motor users could access certain byways, which worked well but until it was met with a legal challenge. They have since commissioned a report to look at 10 specific routes, 4 of which are in the SDNP, to look at the condition of route, ability of the route to take traffic, historical use of route etc.

From these reports HCC has made a recommendation for each byway, consisting of one of the following 3 options:

- Keep the byway open and make no changes
- Recommend change and restrict use to 2 or 3 wheel vehicles
- Recommend change and restrict all use

These recommendations are out for informal consultation for four weeks, after which the formal process for making a TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) will begin. The recommendations for two of the SDNPA routes it is to restrict all vehicular use (in Selbourne and Worldham) and HCC have asked SDNPA to comment.

Members discussed the proposals and expressed disappointment that a permit system could not be used. They concluded that TROs to enable closure of paths at certain times of year is the only way to prevent extreme damage to some of these paths in winter. Members for the New Forest LAF reported that they have byways with gates and users have keys to these forest tracks and it works very well.

RM agreed to send a link to the consultation to all SDLAF members and asked that they feed back any comments to input into the SDNAP response.

**ACTION 6: SO** to email link to the HCC TRO consultation to SDLAF members and members to feedback any comments for the SDNPA response to this consultation

#### **8. Buriton Inquiry Update(Roger Mullenger)**

RM sent a letter of objection on behalf of SDLAF to the Inquiry into the proposed extinguishment order for footpath level crossing in Buriton. He subsequently submitted a Statement of Case to the Inquiry and has been invited to attend the Inquiry in December and present a Proof of Evidence. RM summarised his objections on the basis that Network Rail are not considering all alternatives and that the objection is against the process by which they have come to their conclusions. He agreed to circulate a draft Proof of Evidence for comment by SDLAF members, before the submission date of 15<sup>th</sup> November. AT reported that the SDNPA would also be represented at the Inquiry.

**ACTION 7: RM** to draft a Proof of Evidence to Buriton Inquiry into footpaths extinguishment orders and circulate document for approval by LAF members.

#### **9. Recruitment & Reappointment (Roger Mullenger & Allison Thorpe)**

- Member Recruitment** – The SDLAF needs to recruit a member following the resignation of Dave Brookshaw (specialism: walking access). RM has contacted BHAF to ask if any members would be interested but has had no response.
- Reappointment emails** – AT explained the re-appointment procedure. Reappointment emails will be sent to members asking them to confirm they are happy to continue on the SDLAF for a further 3 years. A process for renewing membership will be explained in this email.
- AGM** – The AGM will take place on 25 April 2017, where the Chair will be elected.
- Member Survey** – RM thanked members for their continued support of the SDLAF and informed them they will be sent a survey soon to ensure the meetings are effective and productive.

**ACTION 8: AT** to send reappointment emails to all SDLAF members

**ACTION 9: AT** to email a survey to all SDLAF members

#### **10. Defra and Natural England business - SDLAF report to Defra (Roger Mullenger)**

RM circulated the report which was submitted to Defra in October. It was proposed that LAF members provide input into the report next year by submitting information for specific sections.

**ACTION 10: SO** to ensure that the SDLAF report to Defra is on a future agenda, asking for sub groups to submit sections of information to the final report.

## 11. Reports from other LAFS

**Surrey LAF:** Graham Butler, from Surrey Countryside Access Forum, reported that their work has focussed on:

- working with cyclists to plan cycling routes across the county, as Surrey Hills is a very popular area for cycling
- working with the horse riding community to create longer riding routes and linking up existing routes
- working with local nature partnerships to see how they can work better together
- looking at disabled access to paths and how to improve access for less abled users. This is leading to major piece of work over the next few months
- working with local people to find ways to manage a popular local beauty spot after Surrey County Council plan to withdraw a grant to the Wildlife Trust for looking after this area.

**New Forest LAF update:** The New Forest LAF look after the whole of the New Forest district area and not just the National Park. Their key work at present includes:

- addressing coastal access. Good progress is being made in some major conservation areas, with input into wetland restoration schemes and how this affects access
- ensuring access is taken into account for new housing developments
- providing an advisory role to the recreation management strategy group

It was also noted that they have done work on disabled access in past and would be happy to share their experience.

## 12. SDNPA update (Nigel James)

**Centurion Way:** The SDNPA has submitted a planning application for access from the Centurion Way into the village of West Dean to increase accessibility to the path. There are no objections to the application and funding is available to do this work. It is hoped that planning permission will be given shortly so that work can begin. A contract to design and submit a planning application for the next phase of the footpath has been tendered. The SDNPA will be interviewing contractors next month and the SDLAF will be updated at next meeting.

At present the Centurion Way is open for walking and cycling only. A trial has taken place allowing equestrian access on the southern section through Lavant. The trial was suspended after 2 weeks due to high numbers of complaints from local residents. There has been a well-attended public meeting to discuss the issues and it is possible that the trial could resume in the future. Discussion is continuing between the equestrian interests, the parish council and Chichester District Council.

**Extinguishment Orders:** NJ showed 3 slides outlining proposed extinguishments of ROW at Fittleworth (footpaths 2866 and 702). The proposal was made by WSCC following an application by the landowner who suggests alternative paths can be used. The SDNPA have objected to this on the basis that these paths link important areas and are well used. If WSCC decide to proceed it would now trigger a public enquiry. As the SDNPA is often consulted on Rights of Ways modifications (including diversions and extinguishment orders), NJ asked the SDLAF members if they wanted to be consulted on them in future to ensure input from LAF members who have local knowledge. It may be that comments would need to be sought by email if consultations close before LAF meeting dates. Members discussed and agreed that it was entirely appropriate for the SDLAF forum to be consulted on these proposals and agreed for NJ and AT to bring them to the attention of the SDLAF. NJ proposed, and Members agreed, that details of Rights of Way Modifications would be passed on to SDLAF members when SDNPA Ranger officers are asked to comment.

**Forthcoming SDLAF Meeting Dates: 16 February 2017**

## **ACTION LIST – SDLAF 21 October 2016:**

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**ACTION 2:** AT to report back to Sarah Manchester on the recommendations from the SDLAF concerning the Cheriton Wood Open Access direction review.

**ACTION 3:** SO to put Maps of proposed routes for the England Coast Path on February 16 agenda

**ACTION 4:** SO to put National Trails Funding Update on next agenda

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