

South Downs

Local Access Forum

Terms of Reference

Title

The “South Downs Local Access Forum”

Purpose

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on Highway Authorities and National Park Authorities for any area to establish a Local Access Forum (LAF) for that area. The Act defines these authorities as appointing authorities. The South Downs National Park Authority is the appointing authority of the South Downs Local Access Forum. The LAF is a statutory and independent advisory body with no executive powers. However the appointing authority and Natural England must have regard to the advice of the LAF.

The main purpose of the LAF will be to give advice on the improvement of public access in the area for the purposes of open air recreation, responsible enjoyment and other related matters. Some of the issues that may be addressed include:

- i) Rights of Way Improvement Plans
- ii) Recreation, transport and access strategies
- iii) Management of access land
- iv) Local restrictions on access land
- v) Proposals for bylaws on public open spaces and access land
- vi) Promoting visitor understanding
- vii) Impact of proposed development on access

The LAF will be able to set its own agenda and give advice on any issues concerning public access that it feels falls within its remit.

The LAF will, in carrying out its function, have regard to:

- i) the needs of land management
- ii) conserving the natural beauty
- iii) protection of flora and fauna, and geographical and physiographical features
- iv) guidance given by the Secretary of State

Also, as the LAF for the area of the South Downs National Park, it must also have regard to the purposes of the National Park as defined by the Environment Act 1995:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
2. To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

The LAF will also have regard to the duty that the South Downs National Park Authority has in pursuing the purposes:

- Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the communities living within the National Park.

Reference Area

The South Downs National Park.

The LAF will also take an interest, as appropriate, in the access of visitors from outside the Park area especially in the nearby conurbations but also in the wider context of the National Park as a tourist destination. It will work closely with neighbouring LAFs and local authorities on cross border issues.

Membership

The appointing authority is the South Downs National Park Authority.

Members of the LAF were appointed in April 2011 for a period of eighteen months. After this period members of the LAF may be re-appointed for between one and three years. There is no limit to the number of times members can be re-appointed.

The membership must have a balance of numbers between members who are land owners or land managers and members who are countryside users.

The number of members who are also members of the South Downs National Park Authority will be limited to two. In accordance with the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2002 the number of members who are also members of “a district or county council or National Park authority” must not be more than three. The South Downs National Park Authority as appointing authority interprets this as including members of Brighton & Hove City Council.

A Chair and Vice Chair will be elected at the first meeting of the LAF and at the Annual General Meeting each year.

Members will be expected to be able to work towards consensus and be part of a team. They will have the ability to liaise with others and discuss and disseminate information.

Members of the LAF will act in an individual capacity rather than as a representative of a particular organisation. Members will aim towards forming advice which will benefit the residents and visitors of the South Downs National Park.

Members who have a personal interest, whether direct or indirect, in any matter to be discussed by the LAF shall disclose the nature of the interest to the meeting. The regulations do not prohibit that member from participating in the discussion, but it is necessary that the member’s interest is made known to other members of the LAF and will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Secretariat

Secretarial and administrative work will be provided by the South Downs National Park Authority.

The SDNPA will reimburse reasonable expenses incurred by members attending meetings of the LAF and other approved activities, including travel, subsistence and dependent care, in the course of members undertaking their duties.

The SDNPA will publish an annual report on the activities of the LAF.

Administration

The quorum for meetings of the Forum shall be half the current membership plus one which will include a minimum of 1 member from the land interest group and 1 member from the user interest group and the Chair or Vice Chair is present

Agendas will be agreed between the Chair, Vice Chair and the Secretariat.

Members of the LAF may request items for inclusion in the agenda of any meeting provided that they inform the Secretariat no later than eight working days before any meeting.

Members of the public will not be able to speak at the meetings, except where they have given two working days notice to the Secretariat. This will normally be limited to up to five minutes and relate to an item on the published agenda. The Chair may reduce this time limit because of the length of the agenda or the number of people wanting to speak. Speakers must keep to the subject, avoid using offensive or abusive language, and keep to time.

Voting

It should be the aim of the LAF to carry out its business by discussion and consensus without the need for frequent formal voting. However where this is not possible, each member of the LAF present at a meeting shall be entitled to exercise one vote. Voting on any issue shall be determined using the simple majority method by show of hands. In the event of an equality of votes the Chair shall have a second or casting vote.

Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed at the Annual General Meeting.

Date: May 2011