

South Downs

Local Access Forum

AGM

30 November 2017, 10.30am, at the South Downs Centre, Midhurst

Members Present: Andy Hannaford AH, Bob Damper BD, Annie Brown AB, Doug Jones DJ, Glynn Jones GJ, Neville Harrison NH, Nick Taylor NT, Roger Mullenger RM (Chair), Russell Cleaver RC, Simon James SJ, Val Bateman VB.

Apologies: Edward Seymour ES, John Vannuffel JV, Richard Johnson RJ, Robert Whitcombe RW, Sue Dunkley SD, Susan Thompson ST.

SDNPA Officers In attendance: Allison Thorpe AT – SDNPA Access & Recreation Lead, Andrew Lee AL – SDNPA Director of Countryside & Policy Management, Andy Gattiker AG - SDW National Trail Lead, Nigel James NJ – Countryside & Policy Manager, Trevor Beattie – SDNPA CEO.

Minute Taker: Sara Osman SO, Support Services Co-ordinator, SDNPA

Observers: Graham Elvey (Chair, West Sussex LAF), Robert Self (South Downs Society), Russell Oppenheimer (HCC Councillor/ SDNPA Member)

A. Welcome and Minutes

1. Welcome

RM welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were accepted, as listed above. RM welcomed two new members to the SDLAF: Annie Brown is a tenant farmer of Brighton and Hove City Council; Doug Jones is a SDNPA Member, sits on the Planning Committee and is a Parish Councillor in Buriton. The Observers present (as listed above) also introduced themselves.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

RM explained role of Vice Chair and asked for nominees, however no nominations came forward.

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were accepted as accurate. All actions were completed, or were on the agenda to be covered at this meeting, except for the following:

- *Action 3:* No comments had been received regarding the National Trails Framework papers
- *Action 4:* There has been no response yet from the MOD regarding locations where red flags are not taken down. The Chair will update SDLAF members when he receives any correspondence.
- *Action 11:* A site visit has taken place to the proposed Fittleworth extinguishment order. Whilst the SDLAF could not formally object, a response has been submitted. The applicant has also submitted their response to the inspector and the deadline for public comments to the public enquiry is 14 December 2017. The inspector will then look at all the submissions and may request a site visit. Nigel James will update the group and thanked all the members involved for their support.

RM proposed that a footbridge could be a solution to the problems on the crossing of the SDW and the Meon Valley Trail, where flooding coming from 4 directions causes the path to be impassable with mud and deep water. It was agreed that the SDLAF should put a proposal to Hampshire County Council, which should be discussed further at a future meeting.

ACTION 1: RM & AG to add a discussion point on the next agenda regarding the development of a SDLAF proposal for a footbridge as a solution to issues on the SDW where it crosses the Meon Valley Trail.

4. Matters arising from the LAF Update report

RM explained the new format of sending out a LAF Update report instead of verbal updates at the meetings. The aim was to give members the opportunity to be briefed prior to, and raise points during, meetings which would enable more time at meetings for discussion on other topics.

The following points in the November Update report were discussed:

Item 2 – Chairs report:

- 2.2 RM updated that the MOD are putting fences around some areas of MOD and common land. Whilst the public often assume that they have access to this land, in some areas access will be permanently withdrawn. They are in the process of working out what access will be included and excluded in relevant areas of the Park, in conjunction with drafting new by-laws.
- A complaint has been received regarding the use of byways by motorcycles in the Hampshire area and the Chair and Access Lead are following up on this.

Item 3: SDW National Trails Update - Trail improvements and Route changes:

- 3.3.1 DJ commended that the work to the SDW at Buriton had been done to good standard and he has received positive feedback from local walkers.
- 3.3.2 New fingerpost signage are due to be rolled out from January to replace old fingerposts need replacing. The new fingerposts will include the shared identity so that visitors will know when they are in the SDNP. They will also include symbols for walking, cycling and horse riding rather than relying on the colour-code system which the public do not always understand. Responsibility for replacing footpath signs lies with the Highways Authorities.
- 3.7.0 Income is looking healthy and it is planned to increase in the next year with the launch of the Mend Our Way campaign.

Item 6: ROW orders received since the last SDLAF meeting:

- It was noted that there were four DMMOs (Definitive Map Modification Orders) which are proposed new routes. The group discussed that it takes a long time to put through a proposal for new route and get work done to existing routes. Whilst Highway Authorities have a duty to respond to DMMOs, they do not have any time restrictions to do so, and they are often not a priority. It was agreed that the SDLAF had a responsibility to put pressure on the County Councils to progress work. AT explained that the SNPDA had invested in training staff to make its response process more streamlined.

Key Topics for Discussion

5. Review of Access elements of SD Partnership Management Plan

AT outlined the process for reviewing of the South Downs Management Plan which runs until 2019. The SDNPA aims to engage with all stakeholders to input into the next Management Plan. AT highlighted the policies relevant to the LAF:

- **Outcome 5** relates to a high-quality access network, including PRowWs,
- **Access Policies 28, 29 and 30**, relating to 'Access for All' and improved rights of way and access land,
- **Transport Policies 35-40** relating to public transport, cycling and vehicle management.

A workshop was held for members to discuss these and highlight areas where the evidence base needed updating, identify Drivers for Change, and propose priorities which will input into a new delivery framework of projects for the SDNPA to focus on from 2019- 2024.

A summary was given from each group:

Outcome 5

- Agreed outcome 5 still relevant and that the 4 indicators need to be SMART,
- More clarity on what is defined as 'easy-to-use' or 'good condition for PRowWs,
- More clarity on accessibility for whom, and which routes should be accessible,

- Broaden indicator on public transport to include all sustainable transport, specifically cycling,
- Define what people are visiting.

Access Policies:

- **Policy 28:** should include signage which is important to make the network visible, especially from the road; 'Easy-to-use' should include how easy it is to find out about the access network; there should be more information about permissive paths.
- **Policy 29:** Relates to health and wellbeing but the 'how' is not clear and there are no measurable indicators.
- **Policy 30:** Access for all - How do these actually work on the ground and how can you measure success?
- **Other comments:**
 - Lack of Horse box parking means horse riders are underrepresented as users;
 - There needs to be proactive, positive language about promoting responsible use of the countryside.

Transport Policies:

- **Policy 36:** It was suggested that under public transport provision, 'Sunday services' should be changed to 'general leisure services'.
- **Policy 37:** It was suggested that 'off-road cycling' should refer to cycling generally in Park, not solely off-road cycling.
- **Other comments:**
 - Highway behaviour is mentioned but traffic speed should be included in particular.
 - Policies should be updated to include information about electric vehicles, improving cycle storage on trains and vehicle parking.

ACTION 2: AT to feedback SDLAF comments on PMP to the SDNPA

Other Business

6. Amendments to SDLAF Terms of Reference (ToR)

The changes were agreed and the ToR was adopted.

ACTION 3: SO to amend the SDLAF Terms of Reference and put on the website

7. Permissive path letter (approach to be approved)

AG outlined the letter template, which could be tailored to be sent out to landowners responsible for the 30 permissive paths on the list. The letters point out responsibilities for maintaining permissive paths and also opportunities to work together and support the LAF can provide.

It was agreed to change the wording 'Countryside Stewardship' to 'Higher Level Stewardship', to ensure clarity for farmers, and that the letters could be sent out.

ACTION 4: AG to send out letters to landowners with permissive paths, taking into account those landowners where rangers already have a working relationship.

8. Approach to future SDLAF meetings and development of yearly work programme.

AG said it was key to focus meetings on discussions and actions with real objectives. He asked members for ideas on how the SDLAF could work differently. Suggestions included:

- Meetings could be held around the Park, and include site visits to see the achievements on the ground;
- Create a list of projects that the SDLAF want to achieve and outline how the SNDPA can help deliver this on the ground, e.g. path orders, consultations, open access land;
- The SDLAF should have more public engagement to promote information about access land and make it more visible - knowing where land is, knowing how to get in and out of access land and better signage is needed;

- It was generally agreed that SDLAF members would be able to visit path orders in their area between meetings, and that the access team could approach SDLAF members in the relevant area;
- It was suggested that the SDNPA LAF webpage should contain links to websites where you can search open access land, which would help the public find out about open access land and where they can go. Natural England are currently focussing on coastal path and an open access review will be addressed in 2019;
- Proposed project topics included:
 - Stocks Lane
 - Explore shared paths and the responsible use of paths
 - Path orders – led by SDNPA
 - Future plan to go with walk cycle strategy
 - Proposed site visit to SDW at Chilcombe regarding possible changes in route of SDW

It was agreed to put this item on the agenda for a future meeting to work on developing the way the SDLAF works and programme of projects and activities

ACTION 5: ALL to provide the Chair with ideas for future projects

ACTION 6: AG to put information and links on the SDNPA website about open access land

ACTION 7: AG to circulate suggestions for future projects work and ask SDLAF members for priorities

ACTION 8: AG to put development of yearly work programme on agenda

9. AOB

A. Reports from other LAFs:

- **Annie Brown reported from the East Sussex LAF** – Major discussions have included: The new Coastal Path, the proposed changes to Stanmer Park and the future of the Downland estate. The Mayors walk was very well supported and they are keen to make it a properly waymarked path. There has been a lot of work on the many twitterns in Brighton, and the RoW improvement plan is in its second draft and picks up missing links in paths.
- **Graham Elvey reported from the West Sussex LAF** – They have been looking at how projects can get funded. Discussions have included the walking and cycling strategy and its narrow focus. They received a representation from Cycling UK which was very broad. They are holding a workshop next week about the SDNPA Management Plan.

- B. Proposed changes to M3 Junction 9 by Highways:** Bob Damper raised the issue of access into the Park from Winchester. There is currently only one good access route on cycle route 23 which uses an underpass. An Inspectors decision dismissed the claim for a bridleway across the junction hearing and found in favour of the Highways agency despite evidence of use by cyclists for some years. As Highways England are about to launch a consultation on proposed major changes to the junction AL assured LAF members that the SDNPA would be heavily involved in responding to this issue and would be seeking significant mitigation as part of the plans for changes to this junction. AT will share Highways England's proposals when they become available.

Forthcoming SDLAF Meeting Dates: Tuesday 23 January 2018

ACTION LIST – SDLAF 30 November 2017:

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