

South Downs

Local Access Forum

AGM

15 May 2018, 10 am
South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst

Members Present:

Val Bateman VB, Annie Brown AB, Bob Damper BD, Neville Harrison NH, Simon James SJ, Richard Johnson RJ, Glynn Jones GJ, Roger Mullenger RM, Edward Seymour ES, Susan Thompson ST, John Vannuffel JV

Apologies: Russell Cleaver RC, Sue Dunkley SD, Andy Hannaford AH, Doug Jones DJ, Nick Taylor NT, Robert Whitcombe RW

SDNPA Officers In attendance:

Allison Thorpe AT (Access & Recreation Strategy Lead), Andy Gattiker AG (National Trail & ROW Lead), Nigel James NJ (Countryside & Policy Manager)

Apologies: Trevor Beattie TB (CEO), Andrew Lee (Director, Countryside & Policy Management)

Minute Taker: Rebecca Osborne RLO, Support Services Officer, SDNPA

Observers: Andy Beattie (SDNPA), Tricia Butcher TB (WSLAF), Graham Flatt GF (HLAF) Dan Oakley DO (SDNPA), Russell Oppenheimer RO (SDNPA Member & HCC), Jeremy Richardson JR (ESLAF), Patrick Wallace PW (East Sussex LAF)

1. Welcome & Apologies

RM welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were accepted (see above). RM thanked everyone for their support during his Chairmanship, and the work achieved by the LAF, including projects and recommendations and influence on County Council policy.

2. Appointment of Chair & Vice Chair

This item was deferred until after item 4, when the meeting became quorate.

3. Renewal of LAF Membership

AG stated that a number of members are due to renew, and Sara Osman will send out emails to those due for renewal next week. Members who have not attended for a number of meetings will be contacted, and it is likely that some new members will need to be found, and AG will be looking at gaps in areas of representation.

ACTION 1: All Members to give suggestions for new SDLAF members to AG.

ACTION 2: AT to circulate an up to date list of all members for the next meeting.

4. Minutes (23 January 2018) and matters arising

The minutes of the 23 January 2018 meeting were accepted as a true record.

Actions update:

- **Action 1** (investigation of the legality for non-appointment of Vice Chair): SO had checked with Governance Manager, who agreed that in the absence of a Chair at a meeting, the process of electing a chair from those present for that meeting only would be appropriate.
- **Action 2** (All members to suggest locations for gates and log seats to Friends of the South Downs): AG is progressing this. It is not too late to add further suggestions, particularly for sites where stiles could be replaced. All suggestions to be sent to access@southdowns.gov.uk.

- **Action 3** (Letter by RM and AG to landowner of Annington Hill and WSCC with SDLAF's recommendation, and invite WSLAF to support the move): Letter has been sent. AG to check that WSLAF invitation has been sent and chase up.
- **Action 4** (NJ to investigate feasibility of using engineers from Centurion Way to work on Meon Valley Trail, and RM to draft letter to HCC with suggested actions to resolve flooding issues): AT updated that a letter has been sent, and Richard Sykes at HCC is now dealing with this, but no response has been received to date. NJ has spoken to engineers who say the same design could be used. No further action will be taken until a response from HCC has been received, as further work will involve costs.
- **Action 5** (AT to circulate dates for M3 consultation meetings at Winchester, and SO to send permission details to SDLAF members for sharing contact details to enable car sharing): Completed.
- **Action 6** (SO to scan report on Exceat bridge and circulate to SDLAF members): Not yet circulated. AG to chase up.

2. (Deferred item) Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

One nomination for Chair of SDLAF was received from Bob Damper. Nominated NH, Seconded GJ. All voted in favour, and BD appointed as Chair. NJ (on behalf of SDNPA) and BD (on behalf of SDLAF) thanked RM for his exemplary chairmanship, hard work and commitment to SDLAF over the past three years.

5. Matters arising from the LAF Update report

- RM explained he had responded to the Government Consultation on Health and Harmony on access issues in a personal capacity.
- In relation to the extinguishment order at Fittleworth, NH emphasised that the site visit had been of great importance in the outcome, where the order was not granted.

6. Joint LAFs advice to MOD on Bye-Law review

RM explained that there was pressure on the MOD for more use by the Army on the land. The letter drafted to the MOD was the result of many hours of consultation with the MOD. GF of HLAf is establishing a liaison group with the MOD to include West Sussex and Hampshire LAFs, with national and local representation. This group working has been very beneficial and will set the stage for future work with the MOD for our region.

There was unanimous support from SDLAF members for the letter.

ACTION 3: AG to write to HLAf to express SDLAF support for the draft letter to MOD

7. HCC DRAFT Byway operational procedure

Key Comments:

- RO spoke about the report in his role as a representative of Petersfield Hangars, supporting the HCC approach, but would like to see more special status given to BOATs situated in the National Park, relating to the Purposes and Duty of National Parks. He emphasised the need for bodies to work together, to include trail riders, 4x4s, SDNPA and HCC. He asked for SDLAF to support HCC's draft procedure but ask for more weight to be given in the scoring system to National Park status.
- Any decisions on BOAT access need to take into account those needing to use them for business use, eg Forestry Commission, farmers, National Trust.
- Damage is not just caused by 4x4 vehicles, but also horses and cyclists, and the vast majority of motorised vehicle users use routes responsibly.
- JV stated TRF research shows the trail riding economy is worth £26,000 per mile per year, and the NP should consider the economic benefit.
- JV asked for consideration of Public Space Protection Orders instead of TROs, which are easier to use, and last for three years (with a possible further three year extension). The new procedure may be a barrier to quick wins such as investigating tyre restrictions and prohibiting

recreational towing/winchng. The package of East Sussex regulations has been successful and should be considered. TRF would like to engage with HCC on the procedure.

- The draft HCC Byway Assessment Form provided was blank, and it would be good to have a worked example, as there were concerns about how the form would work in practice.
- A holistic approach was felt to be needed, which looked at all routes not just BOATs or isolated routes, and each route should be considered on a case by case basis.

Those present agreed on the following points:

- SDLAF agree with the document in principle, but not all specifics.
- SDLAF agree with the points/grading system in principle, but the scoring system needs to be reviewed, as there are anomalies.
- SDLAF do not agree with the triggering mechanism, which is reactive and complaint driven, and recommend pro-active monitoring, whilst acknowledging there would be a resourcing issue.
- The assessment form needs to provide flexibility to look at individual circumstances, and worked examples need to be provided and reviewed. There is a need to consider connectivity with other routes, if a route is closed.
- SDLAF recommend that the system is trialled and reviewed, and a subgroup from LAF would be happy to be involved.

GF stated that HLAf had been involved from an early stage, and have expressed similar views to SDLAF above. They are also keen to trial the system in the field.

ACTION 4: SDNPA (NJ/AT/AG) to draft a response to HCC and circulate to SDLAF members for comment before sending to HCC.

8. SDLAF 2017 Annual Review

BD thanked RM and AT for putting the review together, and for SDNPA for the presentation of the document. He reminded members of the need to take a camera on site visits, to provide good images of work done for the next review, as most images had been generic.

AT stated that Natural England are no longer sending a questionnaire to LAFs about their work, but had emailed asking for updates. AT will send them a pdf copy of the 2017 Annual Review.

The members felt the Review to be worthwhile, in terms of recruitment of new members and emphasising the positive work done by the SDLAF. NH requested it be sent out to the Parishes.

ACTION 5: AT to distribute a pdf copy of the SDLAF 2017 annual review to SDNP Parish contacts.

9. Future SDLAF meetings (frequency and location)

The members considered the frequency of future meetings and felt that four meetings per year were still required. All voted in favour of keeping to four meetings per year.

It was also felt that future meetings should:

- Concentrate on key issues with a relevant site visit if appropriate
- Consider using sub-groups of local members for site visits/tasks required between meetings, who can then report back to the members
- Move around the National Park in terms of venue, where relevant to items on the agenda
- Consider access to the chosen venue by public transport in the location of any future meetings

No site visit has been carried out in relation to the M3.

ACTION 6: AG to form a small working group to undertake a site visit to the M3 and report back to the SDLAF.

10. Any other business

Reports from other LAFs:

- Tricia Butcher from WSLAF reported that the April meeting was cancelled. More members are needed. Due to pressures at WSCC there is less support for WSLAF from the Forum Officer. WSLAF members are becoming active in subgroups, working independently between meetings.
- Annie Brown of Brighton & Hove LAF reported the group is working well and the last meeting discussed the restoration of landscape at Stanmer, which is a large piece of work. Consultation on the RoW Improvement Plan concludes this week.
- Graham Flatt of Hampshire LAF reported that they are keen for joint working between LAFs where there are overlapping issues. They have been working on the Defra consultation on Health and Harmony, and small subgroups work on tasks between meetings.
- Graham Butler of Surrey CAF reported (by email) that they have ratified the letter to MD. They have looked at the proposed route of the Esso pipeline from London Chobham Common to Southampton which currently goes under Chobham Common. SCC is planning to recover its costs in managing its Countryside Estate (which Surrey Wildlife Trust administer) by introducing car parking charges at Newlands Corner and five larger sites across the county. Many Surrey residents have complained and are very opposed to the scales being charged. He can supply details if SDLAF members are interested.
- Patrick Wallace of East Sussex LAF reported they are currently well staffed but need an equestrian representative. He described ESLAF's successful opposition to improve the Old Coach Road, which is now managed by selective, seasonal (generally October-April) TROs. This method has been applied to nearly all vulnerable routes. The TROs are selective, not blanket (eg distinguishing 4x4s from smaller two and three wheelers and small quad bikes). He commended this adoption of approach, emphasising the importance of selective TROs to balance the interests of all users.
- Richard Johnson reported on the Bus Services Bill Report, where positive trends can be seen around the country. Following an outcry in Norfolk, Kent and Derbyshire against cuts to bus budgets, these cuts are not now being implemented, and this will have implications for countryside access.

Further discussion on item 7 – HCC Draft Byway Operational Procedure

Following PW's comments above, further actions were agreed as follows:

ACTION 7: JV to provide further information to members regarding Public Space Protection orders

ACTION 8: NJ/AT/AG to suggest (in their response to the HCC draft document) methods other than rubble and tarmac to stabilise surfaces, and that routine maintenance needs to look at getting rid of the surface water which causes a lot of the damage.

Timing for meetings

It was agreed to keep to the usual meeting start time of 10.30 am.

Forthcoming SDLAF Meeting Dates for 2018:

- Tuesday 17 July 2018
- Tuesday 23 October 2018

ACTION LIST – SDLAF 15 May 2018

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