

South Downs Local Access Forum

Members Update October 2018

1.0 Purpose of this Report

This report is to update South Downs Local Access Forum Members on activity since the last SD LAF meeting and to provide information on projects and activities that may be of interest to LAF Members, but do not require debate or discussion time within the meeting. This is to provide maximum time to LAF Members during the LAF meetings to discuss and conclude important issues.

There will always be a standing item on each LAF agenda to allow Members to raise any issues as a result of these updates

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2.0 Chair's Update

2.1 Nothing to Report this quarter.

3.0 Other Access updates.

3.1.0 Consultations on cuts to public bus services affecting the National Park

3.1.1 Richard Johnson (LAF member – Public Transport), has highlighted the West Sussex County Council Bus user Survey. A LAF response has been drafted and sent.

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/consultation/streetlightandbusconsultation-infopack.pdf>

4.0 South Downs Way National Trail Update (2nd Quarter 1st July–30th September 2018)

4.1.0 Staff, Administration & Business planning.

4.1.1 Following negotiations with DEFRA, the family of National Trails has now received written confirmation of funding for 2019-20. This funding comes with a 5% cut, but is a significant achievement as DEFRA are committing Natural England to fund National Trails long before they have their own budget.

4.1.2 Following the conclusion of funding arrangements for 2019-2020 the national working group of National Trails partnerships, is looking at developing a unified long-term funding strategy with government. The start of this work was a very productive meeting and site visits in Streetly (where the Thames Path and Ridgeway cross). The meeting included the relevant directors from both Natural England and DEFRA.

4.2 Trail Maintenance

4.2.1 Our Countryside Access Management System, that allows us to keep track of all our maintenance issues, has still not been working correctly. Exegesis has now identified the issues and a temporary work around solution and we are awaiting and upgrade of the software. However we still have a backlog of both issues and completed work to enter. We hope to have an updated report of completed and outstanding issues for the next quarterly report.

4.2.2 The SDNPA has invested in a new database system to manage and report on volunteer activity across the National Park. Due to the transferring from one system to another again we are unable to give an accurate report on the total number of volunteer days achieved at this time. However we now have a volunteer entering the back log of both practical tasks and surveying.

4.3.0 Trail improvements and Route changes

4.3.1 Planned improvement works have now been completed at Edburton to Fulking Hill, Plumpton Plain and Charleston Steps.

- 4.3.2 The work at Edburton to Fulking Hill was to improve the surface of the gateways and their approaches. The work was part funded by Gatwick Airport as part of their accessible Downs project.
- 4.3.3 The work at Plumpton Plain was extended slightly to include a short section that had been left out of the specification. We felt that this section would deteriorate quickly if not addressed now. In total just over 1km of track was regraded and resurfaced. This work was part funded through the “Mend Our Way” fundraising campaign.
- 4.3.4 The work on the Chartleston steps between Litlington and Friston Forest on the walkers section of the SDW involved the complete replacement of all 70 steps and the handrail to one side. This work was part funded by Tesco’s “Bags of Help” fund.

4.4.0 User feedback & Stakeholder engagement

4.4.1 User feedback

136 people completed the on-line feedback survey. (See comments attached)

74% rated the SDW as “Excellent”, 25% “Good”, 1% “Not Good” and 0% Poor

LAF and user groups

- 4.4.2 There are no SDW specific comments or recommendations from the SD LAF at this time.

4.5.0 Press, Promotion & Web

- 4.5.1 The website received 55,091 users and 191,130 page views between July and end of September. Twitter now has 5498 followers. This quarter we generated 9487 impressions (Views of official SDW tweets)

4.6.0 Trail corridor & added value projects

- 4.6.1 Through funding from Gatwick Airport we have made available a new circular route suitable for off-road wheelchairs from and including part of the South Downs Way. The route takes in the SDW between Ditchling Beacon and Jack & Jill Windmills and opens up the circuit through Lower Standean Farm. Work involved the removal of a large step, building up track levels to remove gullying, surfacing a short section of bridleway and installing a new gate and sign.
- 4.6.2 The Wildflower meadow at Itford Farm has been cut and collected to maintain the diversity. Longer term expansion of the meadow and grazing by livestock is now being discussed to maintain the area sustainably without annual cutting.

4.7.0 SDW Budget & Income generation

- 4.7.1 The “Mend Our Way” Campaign has been going really well. As at the end of September we had secured just over £80,000 in donations. The final couple of months of the campaign which is due to end at the end of November is focusing on a national crowd funding campaign. We are expected to reach our funding target of £120,000.

4.7.2 Current budgetary position.

Detail	Income	Expenditure to date	Budget Remaining
Natural England core grant	£86,983.00		
Local Highway Authorities funding	£13,000		
SDNPA Core funding	£34,500.76		
SDNPA additional funding	£15,000.00		
Donations	£6000 (estimated)		
Mend Our Way campaign	£33,000		
Sales	£2000 (estimated)		
Other Grants	£5000.00		
Staff		£47,600.00	£34,000.00
Materials		£16,040	£1000
Equipment		£769.00	£2,231.00
Payments to Contractors		£86,933	£0
Publicity & Marketing		£3400.00	£0
Other		£1502.00	£2008
Totals	£195,483.00	£156,244.00	£39,239.00

4.8.0 Priorities for the coming quarter

- Complete tender documents for 2019-20 surfacing projects.
- Develop national business case for National Trails in partnership with other Trail Partnerships.
- Develop proposed improvements between M3 and Chilcomb.

5.0 South Downs National Park Authority Update

5.1 Community engagement event shares phase two of Centurion Way (West Dean to Cocking) plans.

- 5.1.1 The plans for the phase two of the Centurion Way NMU route between West Dean and Cocking were shared during a community consultation event. Comments were very supportive and a planning application is due to be submitted in November.

6.0 Natural England & DEFRA Updates

6.1 Glover Review of Protected Landscapes

- 6.1.1 At the end of May the government announced the launch of the Glover Review. This review is looking at the current suite of ANOB's and National Parks, and in particular: -

- the existing statutory purposes for National Parks and AONBs and how effectively they are being met
- the alignment of these purposes with the goals set out in the 25-Year Plan for the Environment
- the case for extension or creation of new designated areas
- how to improve individual and collective governance of National Parks and AONBs, and how that governance interacts with other national assets
- the financing of National Parks and AONBs
- how to enhance the environment and biodiversity in existing designations
- how to build on the existing eight-point plan for National Parks and to connect more people with the natural environment from all sections of society and improve health and wellbeing
- how well National Parks and AONBs support communities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-parks-review-launched#history>

- 6.1.2 The Glover Review has now published it's call for evidence. This is on the agenda for the next SD LAF meeting. All the questions and individual submissions can be made through the link below.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/landscapes-review-call-for-evidence/>

6.2 England Coast Path report submitted to DEFRA

- 6.2.1 Natural England has now submitted their report to DEFRA outlining the proposed route of the England Coast path between Shoreham and Eastbourne. Which includes parts of the South Downs National Park and South Downs Way. The route is as presented to the SD LAF in February 2017. Details of the route and forms to make representations and objections can be made to Natural England via the link below. All representation or objections but be received by midnight of 22nd November 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-shoreham-by-sea-to-eastbourne-comment-on-proposals>

7.0 Rights of Way Orders received by SDNPA since the last LAF Update.

Path / Location	Type of Consultation / order	Date received	Order Making Authority
Footpath 2218, Blakehurst farm, Angmering Park Estate.	TCPA 1990, Diversion	03/10/18	SDNPA
Bridleway 2086, North Farm, A24, Washington	TCPA 1990, Diversion	12/10/18	SDNPA

8.0 Updates from Neighbouring LAFs

8.1 Please see links below for dates & minutes of the neighbouring LAFs

East Sussex LAF

Minutes from 20th June 2018 <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/11581/minutes-june-2018-draft.pdf>

Next meeting 7th November 2018

West Sussex LAF

General update report from 31st October 2018.

https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/12094/wslaf_31102018_item9_general_report.pdf

Minutes from 25th July 2018 (Unconfirmed)

https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/12092/wslaf_25072018_minutes_unconfirmed.pdf

Date of next meeting: Not yet published.

Brighton & Hove LAF

Minutes from 12th July 2018.

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/BHLAF%20Minutes%2012-07-2018.pdf>

Date of next meeting: 18th October 2018 , 17th January 2019

Hampshire Countryside Access Forum

Unconfirmed minutes from 19th June 2018

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/ccbs/countryside/HCAF20182Minutes.pdf>

Date of next meeting: 11th September 2018, 11th December 2018

Surrey LAF

Minutes of meeting from 16th July 2018 (Unconfirmed).

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/177974/16.07.18-draft.pdf

Date of next meeting: 15th October 2018.