

South Downs

Local Access Forum

19th May 2021 10.00am

Meeting Held Virtually on Zoom

Members Present:

Bob Damper BD, Doug Jones DJ, Russell Cleaver RC, Richard Waring RW, Roger Mullenger RM, Glynn Jones, GJ, Susan Thompson ST, Richard Johnson RJ, Simon James SJ.

Apologies: Sue Dunkley.

SDNPA Officers in attendance:

Allison Thorpe AT (Access & Recreation Strategy Lead), Andy Gattiker AG (National Trail & ROW Lead), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside & Policy Management), Tania Hunt (Support Services Officer - Minutes)

Apologies: Trevor Beattie TB (Chief Executive SDNPA), Nigel James NJ (Countryside & Policy Manager).

1. Welcome & Apologies

AG welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were given, as listed above.

2. Items for AOB

BD requested a copy of the notes from the last meeting.

ACTION 1: TH to send last SDLAF meeting notes via email to all the Members after the meeting.

RJ wanted to raise National Bus Strategy.

DJ wanted to raise an item to the SDLAF concerning a planning application SDNPA/21/02014. He would like support from the SDLAF for comment regarding an access route as part of the agreement for the site from the SD Local Plan.

3. Chair's Update

BD wanted an update on the Rampion II Windfarm Project from RM and GJ.

RM reported that there have been no meetings on Rampion, only emails and therefore no major updates for the SDLAF. AG commented that although there were not many updates on projects, it was important for the SDLAF to reconnect at this time and hopefully meet again in person soon.

ST updated that approval had been given for a planning application, which would enable the delivery of Phase 6 of the Egrets Way from Lewes to Rodmell. ST went on to thank AT and Alister Linton-Crook for their work and help with the project.

RM reported that he had seen the SDNPA's permissive path map signs while he was out walking. He thought they were very visible with good information and believed it was good to see the SDNPA publicising their work.

AT wanted to remind SDLAF members that it was due to the concern of the SDLAF that permissive paths coming out of their agreements may be lost, that survey work was done and paths were identified that should be kept. This is the culmination of that work and NJ has been sending out the agreements. AT went on to say that, the maps on site were an important part of this and it is good to see it come full circle.

AG updated further on the permissive paths stating that NJ had managed to secure 9 agreements, which cover 17 paths. It had been an onerous task getting the legal agreements drafted therefore, it has been agreed that next year the agreements will last up to 3 years, running until the end of 2024. The new agri-environment schemes will then be established and some of the landowners can hopefully move to the more permanent funding streams. It is hoped that this will involve access provision but these new schemes are still in development and the SDLAF will be updated on this in the next meeting.

AG commented that one of the new schemes that Defra is briefing national parks on is 'Farming in Protected Landscapes'. This scheme has 4 priorities, 1 of which is inclusion. He hoped that all the work that has been done on the permissive pathways will be funded as part of access projects within this new scheme.

ACTION 2: AG to add; NJ to update SDLAF on the new agri-environment schemes at the next meeting agenda.

4. Refresh of the SDLAF and Membership

AG reported that he would like to take the opportunity at our next formal meeting to review the Chair and Vice Chair positions, along with the regular formalities of the SDLAF that are perhaps overdue now.

AG followed on to say that he feels that the SDLAF can move forward with some exciting projects in the next couple of years and therefore there is a need to ensure good, active membership.

AG will send out correspondence to SDLAF members highlighting going forwards and inviting members to reaffirm their interest in membership of the SDLAF. AG reported that some members have struggled with attendance and therefore there may be a need to recruit new members. AG wants to complete this task before the next meeting so that the SDLAF is in a good place to move forward.

AG urged Members to respond indicating their support if they would like to continue, he will also indicate areas where new members are needed and encourage ideas of possible new recruits, which will be taken forward.

ACTION 3: AG to send out correspondence to SDLAF members regarding membership.

5. Update on Seven Sisters Country Park, new access land and Landscape Management Plan

AG updated regarding SSCP and access. The SDNPA is in the process of acquiring SSCP from ESCC, this formal process has not yet been completed, but it is imminent. Most of the park is open access, following the completion of a Section 16 dedication process by ESCC. Only a small part was originally designated under CRoW in 2000. The process to reassure the Secretary of State that it is in the public interest and ease the transfer, is to formalise the access. This process is now complete and the SDNPA has more open access land.

AG then displayed a map of the land at SSCP and the access areas.

AG also reported that the England Coast Path has confirmation of funding for the implementation work, which will be completed this summer.

6. Reviewing the SDW Management Plan

AG showed a presentation of the SDW Management Plan. The plan is currently dated until 2020 and now needs reviewing as part of the requirement for grant funding from NE.

This will be reviewed over the year. AG felt that the SDLAF made good comments last time and it would be helpful to have comments from the members again, either as a whole, or as individual members. Commenting on the style, content of the plan, if the policies are relevant, or anything that is missing.

The plan currently includes key qualities, key issues and policies, including, what the trail partnership plan to do. The plan also includes; managing the trail, improving the corridor, communication about the trail and shared assets and how to reconcile potential conflict, going on to describe how the SDW supports the rural economy.

ACTION 4: AG to send the SDW Management Plan to all SDLAF members for comment.

ACTION 5: AG to send a link to show how the SDW have delivered so far on the SDW Management Plan.

ACTION 6: SDLAF members to send comments back to AG by end of June.

7. Relaunch of the Serpent Trail

AG shared a PowerPoint presentation showing the relaunch of the Serpent Trail and the new guidebook, after a significant amount of work from the Heathlands Reunited team and the Wealden Heath Ranger team. There have been improvements to the route, including some permissive path routes. The route has new way markers and a mile has been added to the route, which is now 65 miles in total.

The whole route is available now on View Ranger and the SD website.

8. Future SDLAF Meetings

AG hopeful to meet in person but saw benefits to digital meetings. There is also the possibility of combining the two. AG would like to review how and when we have meetings in future.

BD pointed out that site visits would need to be done in person.

ACTION 7: AG to include in communication to members, what time meetings are more suited to them and how they would like to attend, either; digital, in person or hybrid.

ACTION 8: AG to check guidance on voting via digital/ hybrid meetings with Governance team.

9. A.O.B

DJ wanted to highlight the allocated development sites as part of the Local Plan and combining added or improved rights of way as part of this to allow added value. A planning application has been submitted in Buriton where the Local Plan is encouraging an addition to the ROW network, but the application is not including this at the moment. Therefore, DJ wanted to confirm if there a principle to look for these applications when they come forward and link in with local communities and see if there is something that could be paid for by developers and if this is something that the SDLAF should raise as a comment on planning applications.

AG mentioned that AT reported a process in a previous SDLAF meeting that has been gone through on the generic sites. Does the SDLAF want to be proactive at commenting on applications as they come in, in relation to those sites.

DJ described the site and where the ROW would be to the other SDLAF members and AG showed a map of the site.

RM suggested a permissive path initially with the agreement from the parish council to maintain.

DJ suggested that the SDLAF look at the allocated sites in the SD Local Plan coming forward over the next few years. The SDLAF could write to the parish councils in those areas to discuss potential access improvements, the SDLAF could also review for added value and assist with this.

ACTION 9: AT suggested an Officer from the Local Plan Policy team provide a list of sites and background information regarding access on that site, from the allocated sites in the Local Plan. This could be a task for the SDLAF to look into.

Local Plan Policy team to be invited to the next meeting.

ACTION 10: DJ to draft a letter from SDLAF regarding the Buriton planning application and send it to the Members for comment.

RJ reported on the National Bus Strategy, stating that bus-rerouting plans have to be produced by every authority by October. Councils will have to work towards, faster, cheaper, more frequent, reliable and comprehensive bus services with better access to information. In addition, buses could carry bicycles. The buses will have to be easy to use with improved integration with rail services and the emphasis on improving connections to tourist attractions, scenic and rural areas. Therefore, the SDLAF has to look at engaging with authority's plans, as this could make a difference to access across the park.

ACTION 11: RJ to update the SDLAF on National Bus Strategy at the next meeting.

Dates for next LAF meeting*

Next meeting end of July 2021

ACTION LIST – SDLAF 19th May 2021

Action	Who	Update/ Closed
ACTION 1: TH to send last SDLAF meeting notes via email to all the Members after the meeting.	TH	
ACTION 2: AG to add to next agenda - NJ to update SDLAF on the new agri-environment schemes at the next meeting.	AG/NJ	
ACTION 3: AG to send out correspondence to SDLAF Members regarding membership.	AG	
ACTION 4: AG to send the SDW Management Plan to all SDLAF Members for comment.	AG	
ACTION 5: AG to send a link to show how the SDW have delivered so far on the SDW Management Plan.	AG	
ACTION 6: SDLAF Member to send comments back to AG by end of June.	All Members	

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<p>ACTION 8: AG to check guidance on voting via digital/ hybrid meetings with Governance team.</p>	AG	
<p>ACTION 9: AT suggested an Officer from the Local Plan Policy team provide a list of sites and background information regarding access on that site, from the allocated sites in the Local Plan. This could be a task for the SDLAF to look into. Local Plan Policy team to be invited to the next meeting.</p>	AT	
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<p>ACTION 11: RJ to update the SDLAF on National Bus Strategy at the next meeting.</p>	RJ	