



**Minutes of the West Sussex Local Access Forum  
Wednesday 26 April 2017, 10:30am  
Edes House, County Hall, Chichester**

**Present**

Sam Wright (SW) – Chairman  
Graham Elvey (GE) - Vice Chairman  
Helen Baldwin (HB)

Tricia Butcher (TB)  
Nicol Beard (NB)  
Jason Lavender (JL)

**In attendance**

Jane Noble (JN) – Forum Officer, WSCC  
Charlotte Weller (CW) – Countryside Services Manager, WSCC  
Jonathan Perks (JP) – Principal Rights of Way Officer, WSCC  
Tendayi Mechen (TM) – Capita, Minute Taker

**1. Apologies and welcomes**

The Forum welcomed Tendayi Mechen, note taker. Julie Robinson, from Arun and Chichester District Bridleways Group, and Sarah Rayfield, BHS Officer, were welcome as observers.

Apologies had been received from Bill Acraman (BA), Paul Brown (PB), Duncan Crow (DC), Geoff Farrell (GF), Val Rawlings (VR), Derek Whittington (DW), Glynn Jones (GJ).

**2. Minutes of the Forum**

Minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum were agreed.

**3. Actions and matter arising not covered by the agenda**

Outstanding actions from previous meeting:

**Item 3 WSLAF Annual Report** - JN reported that the Annual Report had been drafted and asked members to look through it before this is sent out in 2 weeks.

**Action: Members to look through the Annual Report and feedback to JN.**

**Item 3 HW110 (upgrade to Footpath 5HK)** - JN had provided PB with the Access Ranger's contact details.

**Item 5 Meeting with Peter Philips, Highways England (HE)** - TB confirmed she had met with Sue Philipson, WSCC Access Ranger, and Peter Philips on site at Newtimber in Feb.

**Item 8 Planning Applications** - TB and NB confirmed they had liaised over the matter.

**Item 9 Waste and Minerals Plan consultation** - JN had not received any feedback from the group so no response was sent. Members present at the meeting confirmed they felt a response was not needed.

**Item 10 Projects South of the Downs** – JN and GF have not met yet.

**Action: JN and GF to arrange to meet.**

**Item 11** South Downs Local Access Forum – JN had circulated the papers.

**Item 12:** Walking and Cycling Strategy (WCS). CW had raised the concerns of WSLAF with WSCC Officers and confirmed that there is suitable paragraph in the Walking and Cycling Strategy about 'designing for all' and taking account of all users including equestrians. TB stated it was essential that equestrians were consulted early on during the design stage.

**Action: SW to add to the Work Programme**

#### **4. Any urgent matters to be considered not already on the agenda**

The LAF National Conference has been postponed to Wednesday 21st June 2017 in Birmingham.

**Action: JN to circulate details and to ask Natural England (NE) if accommodation is being provided.**

#### **5. WSCC Rights of Way Annual Report – JP**

JP presented the report, which had been circulated with the meeting papers, and invited questions.

TB asked if WSCC was able to access external funding for access projects. JP stated that WSCC runs a number of projects using external contributions including developer funding and local transport funding.

Members asked about the England Coast Path (ECP). JP confirmed WSCC officers are working with NE to identify necessary structures and other works required on the route. Costs/quotes are currently being worked up to be included in the report to the Secretary of State. Ongoing maintenance funding will be made available through the National Trails' budget. Members expressed concern this will put pressure on the budget. JP agreed. Sections of the ECP have been opened in Kent. Members asked how it was going regarding enforcement and management.

**Action: JP to contact Kent CC regarding their management of the ECP.**

GE noted that it's been quite a while since WSCC PROW moved from the 9 to 15 months inspection and maintenance cycle and asked if there had been any changes/differences noted. JN stated that work passed to the contractor takes account of the increase in time between inspections. She said that the contractor had reported that vegetation is now harder to cut back with the longer time between works, and as a result they are reviewing the machinery that is required.

TB said that it is sometimes hard to know whether plants are from the side or surface of the path. JP agreed and reminded the Forum it is only surface vegetation which is the responsibility of WSCC.

TB commented that she felt the signage has 'improved massively'.

TB asked for an update on CAMS web. JN reported this had slipped due to the need for further IT testing. JN said she was working to get this live as soon as possible and further training will be provided for PPIs as required.

TB asked for clarification on the capital funding available in 2017/18.

**Action: CW to circulate the figures.**

TB asked if there was a plan to tarmac the Downs Link in the future. JP said at the present time there are no plans to do this and WSCC endeavours to provide suitable surfaces for all users.

#### **6. England Coast Path – feedback from the WSLAF working group meeting with Natural England**

GE referred to the ECP item in the General Report. He stated that NE has identified and mapped the provisional route. NW will contact Landowners again before the final report goes to the Secretary of State. It is planned for the whole West Sussex route to be implemented by late summer 2018.

#### **7. Current / future consultations and advice given**

a) There are no current consultations.

b) **Technical Working Group for the South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework** - DW had attended on behalf of WSLAF, as TB was unable to attend. TB reported on the purpose of the group. She asked why the PROW team were not represented at the meeting. CW confirmed Green Infrastructure matters are dealt with in another team in WSCC and they had sent a representative.

**Action: TB will circulate an email sent to the Technical Working Group.**

**Action: DW will circulate minutes of the meeting when available.**

#### **8. Rights of Way Improvement Plan – update**

JN provided an update on the development of the new RoWIP. She reported she had attended the SDLAF, and run a mini-workshop asking the same questions asked of WSLAF previously. She outlined the key points the SDLAF members had raised.

A discussion followed about working with landowners to increase public access. JR stated that the landowners were reluctant to increase access due to concerns such as livestock management and future sales. Given incentives landowners might be more forthcoming and suggested permissive paths can be good alternative option.

Following a question from an observer JN highlighted that the PROW service is aware the bridleway network on the Coastal Plain is very limited. JP stated that WSCC seeks to increase provision through the planning process. Increasing the network requires input from others to develop potential routes and agreements with landowners.

When asked if WSCC would write to landowners on the Manhood Peninsula, to encourage them to increase access, and meet with user groups, CW suggested that these conversations could be progressed without WSCC involvement. She stated that sometimes people are more willing to talk to users rather than 'the council'.

A scheme will be delivered this year for cyclists. CW said bridleways can meet the needs of all users and funding can be applied for through the established funding streams.

NB asked if it was easy to upgrade routes. CW answered that it could be done fairly easily, but depends on whether the landowner supports the upgrade.

SW said it's best to approach the landowner first and build a good relationship with them. Julie Robinson (JRob) asked if WSLAF would take on that mediation role on the Coastal Plain. CW confirmed it would be appropriate for WSLAF to play this role and invite parties to meet and discuss certain routes.

**Action: GE & TB to consider if WSLAF could play in mediation role in relation to creating/upgrading bridleways and report back to group.**

It was commented that communication needs to be improved so everyone is aware of the work different access groups are progressing in an area, for example the GLAM group is working to improve bridleway access on the Manhood Peninsula. It was agreed WSLAF could have a role to play here.

JRob highlighted that equestrian yards are going out of business and are questioning investment due to poor bridleway provision and the traffic volumes on roads. These businesses contribute to the local economy and should be supported.

## 9. Improvement Projects

TB updated the group on projects North of the Downs.

- **Kilwood Vale Pegasus crossing** - TB stated that June had been given as the date for the Pegasus crossing at Kilwood Vale. However, the road space needs to be booked and this will be managed by WSCC's Street Works team. This could cause delays due to other works already programmed in and as such scheme could be delivered in October rather than June.
- **Bridleway 3727 (Greentrees Farm)** - JP and CW confirmed they have yet to receive a diversion application from NE. As agreed with NE WSCC will progress a design for surfacing the definitive line this financial year and will implement it next year if an application is not forthcoming.
- **Downs Link – Partridge Green** - CW confirmed that funding has been made available in 2017/18 to design improvements on the Downs Link section at Partridge Green, where users are forced to use the road. TB asked that BHS be consulted early.

**Action: CW said she would inform the officers working on the project.**

- **A23 Newtimber** - At Newtimber, following the dualling and straightening of the A23 in the early 1990s, an officially signed 'Equestrian Route' was put in alongside the A23 to allow continued access to Newtimber bridleway5N (the only link route to Wolstenbury Hill). However, the public inquiry agreed safety barriers to protect users of the route have never been installed, and without them the route is considered unsafe for use by anyone. Following a site meeting in February, HE advised a bid should be prepared for funding for improvements, and this was completed and submitted by TB in early April.
- **North of Horsham site** - Liberty, developers of the North of Horsham site, have now included in their latest master plan a link bridleway on the southern edge of the development. This runs from bridleway 1585 (Bush Lane), on the eastern side, to Langhurstwood Road on the western edge.

- **A27 crossing – Sussex Pad** - The signalised A27 crossing point at the Sussex Pad, Shoreham, used by all non-motorised users (NMUs) to access the SDNP, is proposed to be removed and replaced by a roundabout further west, under preliminary proposals by the New Monks Farm developer. Adur DC Local Plan, states that a safe crossing for all NMUs must be provided at this location, and when an application is formally submitted, WSLAF support and involvement will be required.

#### 10. **WSLAF – Items for next meetings**

SW stated that the Forum needs more input from Forum members. If anyone has any input for the next, July, meeting please send to JN and copy to SW and GE.

TB suggested having someone from WSCC Highways attend to discuss the crossing at New Monks Farm. CW suggested the timing of this agenda item would be dependent upon when the application goes in.

Network Rail's (NR) attendance had been requested in the past. JP reported that NR is coming to the end of its 5 year control period (control periods are important as NR develops and delivers improvements within this period). There are a lot of schemes that are still to be completed within the current control period, although opportunities to improve both transport and access have been missed.

JN said site visits can be arranged for meetings if members suggest suitable venues.

NB asked if an Access Ranger could come and talk about their job. JN stated that this can be arranged. SW agreed.

GE said that there is correspondence on the LAF Huddle site relating to Brexit, the withdrawal of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the status of permissive paths under the Countryside Stewardship schemes, where landowners could obtain a grant to establish access. The South Downs LAF is looking into the paths under this scheme in their area to identify where they are located and how useful there are. GE suggested investigating these paths in the WSLAF area.

JL noted landowner concern regarding overuse as the reason why permissive paths are not widely publicised. It was suggested that local ramblers might know how much they are used. JN said parish councils might also know.

**Action: GE will investigate and report back.**

#### 11. **South Downs Local Access Forum**

The Forum meeting scheduled for Tuesday 25 April 2017 was postponed due to the Chairman not being available.

Members requested that details of the Centurion Way extension be circulated.

**Action JN to circulate Centurion Way update.**

#### 12. **General Report**

The report was noted. JN responded to an enquiry regarding updates to Parish Councils following the inspection and maintenance visit. She explained that

these have been replaced with an annual report detailing PROW works WSCC has carried out in the parish. This includes capital and volunteer work, and identifies paths to be included in the summer surface vegetation programme for the coming year. This is accompanied by a letter from the Cabinet Member. This is not copied to the BHS and Ramblers, but could be if required. TB confirmed it would not be necessary.

**13. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Forums will be at 10.30am on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017 in Horsham.

**AOB**

HB asked about G roads and how to find out about proposals to reclassify them, as the downgrading of these routes can impact on carriage drivers. JP confirmed that any potential changes would be advertised on site.