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West Sussex Local Access Forum



11 October 2017

Sent by email to:
A27ArundelBypass@highwaysengland.co.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

WSLAF response to A27 Arundel Bypass Improvement Scheme

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF).

West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) is an independent advisory body, established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to give access advice to local authorities, statutory organisations and non-government organisations. In giving that advice, the Forum's main objective is to ensure the existing network of public rights of way (PRoW), as well as the wider access network, is protected and where possible enhanced. The Forum has a balanced membership of knowledgeable and experienced users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), landowners and other interests (including conservation, disabled access, landscape). For further information about the Forum please visit www.wslaf.org.

Forum Members have for very many years raised particular concerns about the severance caused to PRoW and access routes by the A27. Whilst appreciating that relieving traffic congestion is the primary reason for Highways England (HE) Arundel Bypass Scheme proposals, WSLAF is firmly of the opinion that this Scheme, whichever Option is chosen as the preferred route, must also provide significant benefits for vulnerable road users (walkers, cyclists and equestrians) and other PRoW users.

Members welcomed the publication in May 17 of the revised [DMRB 42/17 Walking, Cycling & Horse Riding Assessment and Review](#), which encourages the consideration of non-motorised users (NMU) within all schemes, with a shift in focus towards identifying opportunities for improvements to facilities, and maximising these.

The DMRB requires early assessment of existing NMU provision in the Scheme area. HE designers should, therefore, be aware of the lack of multi-use (available to walkers, cyclists, and equestrians) routes on the West Sussex Coastal Plain to the south, and the lack of north south and east west linkages across and alongside the present A27, which makes this road a barrier to access for NMUs.

This situation is highlighted in the [West Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan \(RoWIP\)](#), at present being reviewed. Page 37, para 7.5 addresses the issue of "Safety using the countryside including using and crossing busy roads to link off-road access".

The present RoWIP was produced 10 years ago, but even then “representatives of all user groups felt that having to cross or use certain sections of road presented such a barrier to using rights of way, that only the daring, or foolhardy, would consider using some paths even where they could form a significant link in the network.”. Over the last 10 years the traffic on our roads has increased greatly, and everyone will be aware of how much worse the situation is now. Future development planned in the area, will bring even more vehicles onto the roads, both local and the A27, making it essential that Schemes such as this build for the future, and provide all PRow users, including the disabled, with facilities to navigate across and alongside new and existing roads safely, as it would be difficult and costly to do so in the future.

In the document A27 Arundel Bypass Facilities for walking cycling and horse riding (NMUs), the Forum notes that no new facilities for horse riders are shown in the scheme drawings, but that HE welcomes comments on this topic. WSLAF is of the opinion that wherever safe off-road routes/links are provided in the Scheme for walkers and cyclists, these facilities should also be made available to horse riders, with the provision of appropriate signage, width and surfacing.

SCHEME OPTIONS

Regardless of which of the three Options HE eventually chooses to take forward, the Forum would like to see a multi-use path, or bridleway, along the northern edge of the present A27 from Ford roundabout to BW 397. This would provide connectivity with all PRow to the north, which are at present cul-de-sac routes, and would provide all NMUs with the opportunity to use circular routes.

In order to take full advantage of this facility, safe north south crossings are required for all NMUs in the vicinity of Tortington Lane (east), and Barn’s Copse (west). Members appreciate that in Options 3 and 5A, Scheme plans are to downgrade part, or all, of the existing A27 to a local road. However, there are many ‘local’ roads in the county that are difficult and dangerous for NMUs to cross, and the Forum believes this will likely be the case here in future years when all the planned future development on the Coastal Plain is completed.

In Option 5A, Members feel the proposed bridge crossing at the western end junction is a totally unsuitable route for NMUs to use, requiring them to cross three slip roads. If this is eventually chosen as the ‘preferred’ Option, this will need to be looked at again. A bridge catering solely for NMUs, which could be combined with the “green bridges”, alluded to in Options 3 and 5A, would be a much safer option.

Two A27 crossing points are just outside the Scheme area, but they are both very important for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. Poling Crossroads, used by all NMUs from Lyminster, Poling and west of Angmering, gives access to Blakehurst Lane, the old A27 through Crossbush, and the PRow network to the north in the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

Potwell Copse, a direct bridleway (walker, cyclist, equestrian) crossing, giving access to Slindon, and the PRow network in the SDNP, is the most convenient and accessible crossing for Walberton NMUs.

The Forum would like to see these crossings, and safe NMU routes to them also improved, as part of the Scheme, and we understand this could be possible with an application for Delegated Funds, a route which WSLAF Members will discuss and explore at our next meeting.

The Forum looks forward to hearing in the New Year which of the three route Options HE intends to progress as the preferred route. At this time WSLAF would welcome the opportunity to be involved in a more detailed design of the route, so that all possible improvements to NMU facilities can be highlighted.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the West Sussex Local Access Forum. Highways England is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this Local Access Forum in carrying out its functions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Noble', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Jane Noble, Forum Officer
West Sussex Local Access Forum

Copy for information to: All WSLAF members