

1. WSCC Countryside Services and coronavirus

1.1 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) countryside sites are great places to exercise during the current coronavirus outbreak, however it is important people behave responsibly and follow Government guidance which currently includes:

- Self-isolation / shielding for vulnerable people or people with symptoms
- Only go out for exercise once a day and stay local
- Maintaining social distancing of 2m – individuals should try and avoid using areas/paths where this is not possible
- Maintain good hygiene, including washing hands thoroughly on returning from trips out, especially where gates, stiles and other structures are encountered as these are likely to have been touched by others

1.2 It is important to protect staff, volunteers and the public so WSCC has adapted how it delivers its Countryside Services. Current practice includes:

- All volunteer activity, including practical tasks, has been cancelled or postponed
- PRoW inspections have been suspended
- PRoW problem reports continue to be logged and prioritised
- PRoW site visits by staff are limited to investigating immediate safety issues, where a sit visit is essential, and posting closure notices
- WSCC's PRoW routine maintenance contractor is continuing to respond to H&S works
- Landowners are being written to, to alert them to safety issue they are responsible for
- The Capital Programme is still planned for delivery later in the summer and procurements are currently being run (subject to Government guidance)
- WSCC PRoW staff work from home
- Paths are not being closed for coronavirus related reasons – currently there is no legislation that allows WSCC, as highways authority, to do this
- Buchan Country Park car park, Crawley, is closed at week-ends – usage of the park is being monitored to ensure appropriate social distancing can be maintained
- White Ways car park (TQ002108) has been closed.

1.3 The above is under regular review and may change if Government guidance or County Council practices change.

2. WSCC Highways, Transport and Planning Restructure

2.1 The new Highways, Transport and Planning structure went live on the 1 April 2020.

2.2 Public Rights of Way is now part of the wider Highways Operations Service, who deliver the day to day aspects of highway works. The PRoW Office team has also been increased by one post, a role called the PRoW Officer (Community and Planning). The role will focus on supporting community groups and ensuring the network is protected from development by more in-depth engagement with the planning process.

3. Other WSCC PRow staffing changes

- 3.1 Interviews for the Principal Rights of Way Officer are planned for the week commencing 14 April 2020. In light of the current restrictions a decision has been taken to recruit to a temporary year contract with a view to fill the post permanently when working arrangements have returned to normal in April 2021.
- 3.2 Interviews for the maternity cover for the Countryside Services Manager are also planned for the week commencing 14 April 2020.
- 3.3 The PRow Officer, Becky Lawton, is leaving WSCC at the end of April 2020. Her post and the PRow Officer (Community and Planning) will be advertised as part of a wider Highways, Transport and Planning recruitment campaign in May 2020.

4. Improvement Projects – Tricia Butcher

- 4.1 Below is an update on Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) projects that West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) has supported and been involved with and which are ongoing.

5. LW10 – Downs Link (Christ’s Hospital)

- 5.1 The new off-road bridleway between Baystone Bridge and Christ’s Hospital is to take Downs Link users off a 1.5km stretch of busy country road.
- 5.2 WSLAF has been notified of an official opening ceremony planned by WSCC and Christ’s Hospital on Friday 24 April at 1pm at the old station platforms. However, invitations have not yet gone out, and in present circumstances it is highly likely this will be postponed.

6. LW12 – Downs Link (Partridge Green)

- 6.1 This scheme aims to provide a safer route for the Downs Link at Partridge Green, where it currently crosses and follows the B2135 for 500m. WSCC PRow commissioned an in-depth study of the Downs Link route options in Partridge Green following an initial feasibility study that had been completed by consultants WSP. The work was completed in January 2021 and was undertaken with support from West Grinstead Parish Council. WSCC met with the Parish Council in February to review the findings of the report and agree a way forward.
- 6.2 The work concluded there isn’t an obvious alternative route for the Downs Link through Partridge Green, or an easy way to upgrade the current route due to competing demands with other users and factors such as parking. A total of 8 route options were considered and each of them had their own challenges. However, there may be a potential route using some private land west of the B2135 to avoid a very narrow section along the road, crossing the B2135 on to Star Road which users would follow to pick up a new route through a future planned industrial development.
- 6.3 The Parish Council has volunteered to liaise with landowners and to talk to the developer of the industrial land to see if it would be possible to design and incorporate a route early on in the development process. If these conversations are positive then WSCC has committed to support them further in drawing up agreements and specifications. The agreed way forward is not a quick one, but all involved understand this.

7. NMU crossing of the A283 linking BWs 2623 and 2697- Washington (Project ref LTIP 0173)

7.1 WSCC consultants have drawn up a number of different options to provide a safe non-motorised user (NMU) crossing at this location. This has allowed WSCC to approach the adjoining landowner and the South Downs National Park Authority to establish what option they would consider supporting. It is important to obtain key stakeholder support for an option before going to wider consultation. However, due to COVID 19 restrictions, an NMU stakeholder meeting scheduled for April has been postponed for the foreseeable future.

8. Hassocks Developments and planning applications –North of Clayton Mills, Woodside level crossing, Friars Oak

8.1 WSLAF is supporting WSCC's aspiration to obtain a much-needed east west bridleway link from the A273 London Road, through Friars Oak development, a new tunnel at Woodside, and the Clayton Mills development to Ockley Road. However, discussions appear to have stalled in the last few weeks, with Mid-Sussex District Council (MSDC) approving a Network Rail application for the subway as pedestrian only, and advising that they cannot require an upgrade of a footpath through Friars Oak. Following swift and very pro-active engagement with the MSDC Planning Applications Team Leader by the local WSCC Access Ranger, supported by BHS, it is hoped the bridleway link may still be delivered.

9. LW14 – A281 Downs Link Crossing

9.1 This project is to improve safety of the Downs Link crossing of the A81 near Rudgwick. There has been a hold up with the installation of the sign, in part because the contractor is being changed. It is anticipated that works will take place in April under the terms of WSCC's new Highways contract.

10. Improvements to the Downs Link – funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural development (EAFRD)

10.1 Resurfacing of the Downs Link, from south of West Grinstead Old Station to the A272, is due to start on 14 April and work is expected to take about 4 weeks. The contractors are working to the current COVID 19 guidelines.

10.2 Once this is complete work will start on the section to the north, from the A272 to the junction with Footpath 1815.

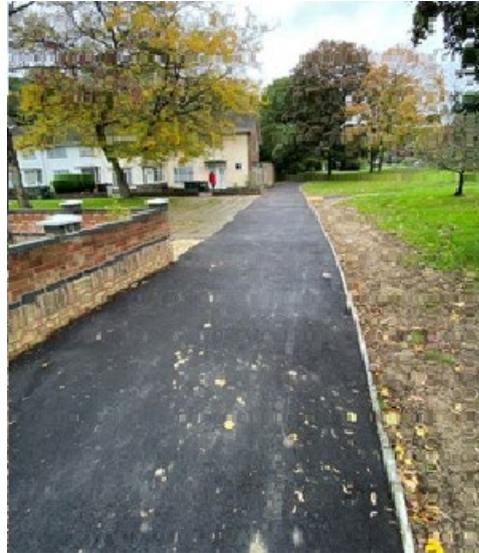
10.3 A closure will be in place for both sections from 14 April 2020 to manage people movements. West Grinstead car park has been closed since Monday 30 March to facilitate the works.

11. WSCC Highway works

11.1 **Stane Street, Westhampnett** - Works began on 4 November 2019 to create a shared cycleway along Stane Street, Westhampnett. This includes widening the existing footway on one side of the road, localised carriageway narrowing and parking restrictions.

11.2 **Ifield Avenue, Crawley** – The existing footway has been widened to create sufficient space for both pedestrians and cyclists to use this route.

Improvements have been made to existing junctions along Ifield Avenue to promote driver awareness of pedestrians and cyclists crossing at these locations. The photos below show the route under construction and the finished tarmac surface.



12. A29 realignment update

- 12.1 WSCC has awarded the contract for the design and build contract for Phase 1 of the project. The initial focus will be on the detailed design element of the scheme and where possible and appropriate, will reflect consultation responses.
- 12.2 A planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment is currently being prepared for Phase 1 and it is hoped this will be submitted to WSCC Planning in the summer of 2020. Ecological and environmental surveys for Phase 1 are ongoing.
- 12.3 Proposed Phase 1 timelines:
- Start of detailed design - January 2020
 - Submission of planning application - summer 2020
 - Finish of detail design - winter 2020
 - Start of construction of the road - spring 2021
- 12.4 [West Sussex County Council's A29 realignment webpage](#) has more details.

13. WSCC Rights of Way (ROW) Committee

- 13.1 There has not been a meeting of the WSCC Rights of Way Committee since the last WSLAF meeting. The meeting scheduled for 10 March 2020 has been cancelled. Future meeting dates are:
- 23 June 2020
 - 3 November 2020
- 13.2 All papers can be found on the [Rights of Way Committee web pages](#).
- 13.3 Since the last WSLAF meeting:
- The following Definitive Map changes have been made to all or part of the following paths:

- **Haywards Heath Footpath 25Cu** – Public Path Order (diversion) S119 Highways Act (HA)1980
- **Shoreham Footpath 13So** – Public Path Order (diversion) S257 Town and Country Planning Act (T&CPA) 1990
- **Billingshurst Footpath1336** – Public Path Order (diversion) S257 T&CPA 1990
- **Crawley Footpath 360Sy**– Public Path Order (diversion) S257 T&CPA 1990
- **Horsham Footpath 1633** - Creation agreement, HA S25, replacing a path previously extinguished due to development.

14. WSLAF Future Meetings

- 14.1 All formal meetings will start at 10.30am (tea/coffee at 10.15am) and are followed by lunch for members and speakers where meetings are held in person. Dates for future meetings, both formal and informal are to be confirmed. Suggested speakers include Forestry Commission, Highways England, Network Rail, WSCC Officer to explain Infrastructure Project delivery and role of County Local Committees (CLCs).

15. Neighbouring Local Access Forums (LAFs)

- 15.1 Neighbouring LAFs have also cancelled meetings due to the coronavirus.

15.2 [South Downs Local Access Forum](#) (SDLAF)

The next meetings of SDLAF are:

- 20 April 2020 and 22 July 2020– Cancelled
- 21 October 2020

15.3 [Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum](#)

The next meeting of BHAF is:

- Thursday 6 June 2020

15.4 [East Sussex Local Access Forum](#)

No data is available on future meetings on the East Sussex LAF.

15.5 [Hampshire Countryside Access Forum](#) (HCAF)

The next meetings of HCAF are:

- 16 June 2020
- 8 September 2020
- 8 December 2020

15.6 [Surrey Local Access Forum](#) (SLAF)

The next meeting of SLAF is scheduled for:

- 27 April 2020
- 20 July 2020

Jane Noble, Forum Officer