



Meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum Wednesday 16 December 2020

A meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) was held at 10.45am, Wednesday 16/12/20. Due to COVID restrictions the meeting was held online via Teams.

MINUTES

Present

Graham Elvey (GE) – Chairman	Ian Hunt (IH)
Tricia Butcher (TB) – Vice-Chairman	Christine Johnson (CJ)
Nicol Beard (NB)	Carol Montgomery (CM)
Monica Collingham (MC)	Tim Thomas (TT)
Geoff Farrell (GF)	Clare Weston (CW)
David Green (DG)	Derek Whittington (DW)

Officers

Jane Noble (JN)	Forum Officer, WSCC
Neil Vigar (NV))	Countryside Services Manager, WSCC

Observers - None

1. Apologies and welcomes

GE welcomed everyone to the first virtual meeting of WSLAF, held on-line due to COVID restrictions.

GE welcomed NV who is the Countryside Manager while Charlotte Weller is on maternity leave.

Apologies had been received from: Helen Baldwin (HB), Peter Bradbury (PB), Duncan Crow (DC) and Jason Lavender (JL).

Paul Brown had resigned due to other commitments.

2. Minutes of the Forum

a) Minutes of formal meeting dated 23 October 2019

- i) The minutes of the WSLAF meeting were approved as correct.
- ii) All actions from the previous meeting had either been completed or covered later in the Agenda.

b) Notes from informal meeting of 5 February 2020 - All actions from the informal meeting had either been completed or covered later in the Agenda other than:

- i) Item 3.1, Bridleways on the Coastal Plain – At the Informal meeting on 5/2/20 it was agreed to form a Working Group to further investigate the situation and positions of the parties involved, and to clarify the legislation

to report back to a future formal meeting. No further progress has been made as yet. **Action TB/Working Group**

3. **Defra Higher Level Stewardship access in West Sussex**

GE explained that most agreements had now expired including the three sites WSLAF decided it would be beneficial to retain.

CM reported that signage and entrance stiles had been removed from the site near Adversane

Knepp HLS routes - there appears to be a discrepancy between the signage of access paths on the ground and those shown on Knepp Estate's access maps. GE had been in contact with the Estate manager who advised that that visitors numbers had increased from around 8,000 pa to 30,000 and as a result the access provision would be considered over the Spring 2021, as access and conservation need to be balanced. GE will keep in contact with the Estate.

It was agreed that WSLAF should contact landowners for important routes where agreements had expired. JN to provide landowner details (data protection legislation allowing). **Action JN/GE**

TB reported that South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is offering money to retain some access routes. WSCC unlikely to do this outside the National Park. JN stated that permissive agreements with the County Council could be considered where access WSCC feel a route would be of significant benefit to the network.

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

None

5. **WSCC Highways Transport and Planning Restructure and PRow staffing**

Restructure – Highways, Transport and Planning within West Sussex County Council has been restructured. As a result, from 1 April 2020, Countryside Services, including Public Rights of Way (PRow), has transferred to Local Highways Operations under Michele Hulme. One aim is to bring closer ties between Highways Officers and PRow, including between Highways Inspectors who inspect urban PRow and the Access Rangers. All PRow staff have been slotted in and a new Planning and Communities post created.

In response to a question about the difference in time periods for inspections carried out by Highways on Urban PRow (annually) and rural PRow (15 months) JN explained that most urban paths are tarmacked so season variations are less extreme. 15 months is the agreed period for rural PRow to ensure paths are seen at all stages of the years to pick up issues, in particular surface and vegetation issues, that vary during the seasons.

A further question was asked invasive species. JN explained that these are generally considered a landowner issue as they usually come from adjacent land and landowners will be written to where appropriate.

PRow Staffing - An update on staffing within the PRow team has been provided within the General Report.

6. **West Sussex Rights of Way Annual Report 2019**

The WSCC PRoW Annual Report had been circulated with the meeting papers. TB thanked the service, in particular for the significant number of surfacing schemes completed.

7. **Consultations and advice**

a) **Current consultations**

- i. **New Monks Farm Highways Works:** Planning application AWDM/0906/20, Adur District Council – Deadline 21/12/2020 / determination date 15 February 2021.

WSLAF had commented on previous consultations. Concern was raised NMUs will have to cross the 4th arm to gain access to the Downs Link with resulting conflict with traffic and the new road access will considerably increase traffic on the narrow and winding road up through Coombes which is used by NMUs. It is important this is 20mph.

TB to lead on WSLAF response with all to send comments to her. The Transport Assessment and Design and Access statements are the key areas to concentrate on. **Action TB/All**

- ii. **Strategic development site at Ford (SD8):** Masterplan Document consultation, Arun District Council – Deadline 14 January 2021

It was noted that the Masterplan, including at least 1,500 houses and associated development, appears rather vague with little strategic access information.

It was noted that the BHS, Mid-Sussex Bridleway Group and WSCC PRoW had already commented and their submissions were worth referring to. It was also stated that the Arundel walking and cycling groups want an off-road route from Arundel to Ford Station. Aim would be to effectually have a continuous route to the A259 delivered via a combination of development and Highways England designated funding.

GE to lead on WSLAF response with all to send comments to him.

Action TB/All

b) **Scheme announcements**

- i. **Rampion Offshore Wind;** 'Rampion 2' – Evidence gathering

It was commented that PRoW closures for Rampion 1 went smoothly, with access maintained via gates/work stopping to allow people to pass. The liaison was very good with a number provided for people to call if there was a problem. Reinstatement was also to at least as good, if not better standard. This is the aspiration for Rampion 2.

Still early days and the landing point hasn't been decided on nor the route beyond a wide scoping corridor. More information expected January 2021. TB will keep members updated as she will be on the project liaison group.

Previously there was mitigation money available used for some PRoW works and tree management. Expected to be available again – WSCC PRoW will identify and put forward suggestions. All to let JN have any suggestions when route known.

ii. **Arundel A27** - Preferred Route

Highways England (HE) has announced option 5BV1 (grey route), which goes south of Arundel, as the preferred route for the Arundel bypass and will now start detailed design work.

GF mentioned that the WSCC Lyminster bypass (north) scheme, that is proposed to join the A27 at the eastern end of the Arundel bypass preferred route, may be affected by the decision.

c) **Response to consultation / advice given**

Responses to the following consultations were noted:

i. **Adur and Worthing Cycling and Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan** – response sent via online form January 2020

ii. **Arun Design Guide** – response sent 21/02/2020

iii. **Horsham Local Plan 2019-2036** – response sent via online form March 2020

iv. **England Tree Strategy, Defra/FC** – response sent via online form August 2020

v. **West Sussex Transport Plan Review Survey** – WSLAF opted not to complete the online survey at this time (December 2020)

All of the above responses have been circulated to members.

8. **Agriculture Act 2020**

The Agricultural Act 2020 (AA 2020) received Royal Assent on 11 November 2020. The aim is to establish a new agricultural payment system, post Brexit and the European Common Agriculture Policy, based on the principle of public money for public goods.

WSLAF had previously input its view that payment should be provide for improved access, however there is no direct provision for access payments in the Act, although it does talk about money for public good and environment issues. Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF) has written to the Secretary of State for the Environment, advising Defra to use section 1(1)(b) of the AA 2020 to promote public access to the countryside by means of a scheme such as the Environmental Land Management Scheme which allows land managers to integrate access with their other environmental and commercial considerations.

Members agreed WSLAF should also write to express disappointment at access being omitted. JN to ask HCAF for a copy of their letter. GE to draft letter and circulate for comment.

Action GE/All

9. **Ramblers Initiative**

WSLAF has been contacted regarding the Ramblers' Don't Lose Your Way campaign, which aims to get paths onto the Definitive Map before the 2026 cut-off date. Ramblers' volunteers have identified around 48,000 potential paths countrywide. WSLAF has been asked to visit the [Don't Lose Your Way](#) website and identify routes that would be most advantageous to put further effort into.

JN gave a demonstration of the map which is easy to use. GE felt there are some key routes that would be beneficial, however others duplicate existing routes so would not be a priority.

There was some discussion about the project and some members were keen to be involved providing it is not duplicating effort – GE to check. Action GE

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DW and CM – left the meeting

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10. Improvement Projects

a) **Old Ford to Hunston Canal (Greenway)**

Most WSLAF members are supportive, in principal, of this potential project being promoted by Chris Sprules and supported by a number of organisations. However, DW is concerned this duplicates and might dilute efforts to get a route with a similar aim that is currently being worked on delivered. He also expressed other concerns, including that parts of the Old Ford to Hunston Canal route have been sold off, whether it provides good links to services and the viability of a new bridge across the railway. He offered to lead a socially distanced walk along the route. **Action DW**

It was felt Chris Sprules should be invited to a future meeting as more information on the proposed Greenway is required. **Action JN/GF**

b) **A283 crossing at Washington, linking BWs 2623 and 2697**

BHS would like a Pegasus crossing, but there are objections due to the lighting that would be required. WSCC is having a meeting with the National Trust and South Downs National Park Authority. This is LTIP priority project (ref LTIP0173).

c) **Downs Link crossing, Rudgwick**

Sadly, a cyclist using the Downs Link was killed crossing the A281 in July. WSCC and the police are investigating the incident and there will be a coroner's inquest.

d) **Downs Link – Re-routing at Partridge Green**

WSCC has employed a consultant to consider the options and find a suitable route for the Downs Link past the industrial estate. The Parish Council will be liaising with landowner and once permission has been obtained an agreement can be drawn up.

11. General Report

The General report was noted.

12. Dates of Next Meeting

- Informal: Wednesday February – online – date to be agreed
- Formal: Wednesday 21 April 2021 –Online; AGM

Any members who may be interested in getting more involved were invited to attend a Pre-agenda meeting, where the meeting content is agreed. Please contact GE or JN if interested.

13. **AONB**

- a) **Feedback on online meeting** – most felt it worked well due to a good chairman and saved travel time. Some issues with admitting members who lost connection or join a little late need to be addressed.
- b) **Walking and Cycling Strategy Local Transport note 1/20** – GF asked for suggestions of who can best represent utility walkers e.g. to comment on where walking routes should go through development. He is already in touch with Living Streets.