



Meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum Wednesday 4 May 2022

A meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) has been held online on Wednesday 4 May 2022.

M I N U T E S

Present

Graham Elvey (GE) – Chairman	Geoff Farrell (GF)
Tricia Butcher (TB) – Vice-Chairman	Ian Hunt (IH)
Helen Baldwin (HB)	Tim Thomas (TT)
Monica Collingham (MC)	Clare Weston (CW)

Officers

Jane Noble (JN)	Forum Officer, WSCC
Neil Vigar (NV)	Countryside Services Manager, WSCC
Nick Scott (NS)	Principal Rights of Way Officer, WSCC (part meeting)
Kevin Dewitt (KD)	England Coast Path Project Officer, WSCC

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Andrew Baldwin (AB), Nicol Beard (NB), Duncan Crow (DC), David Green (DG), Christine Johnson (CJ), Phil Miles (PM) and Carol Montgomery (CM).

Resignations had been received from Christine Supiot and Tim Thomas. GE expressed his thanks to both for their contributions. Members were asked to contact GE if they are aware of others who may be interested in joining the Forum.

2. Minutes of the Forum

- a) Minutes of formal meeting of 20 October 2021
- The minutes of the formal meeting on 20 October 2021 were approved as correct.
 - Actions and matters arising not covered by agenda. Items relating to actions and matters arising from the October 2021 meeting are either on the agenda or had been completed other than:

Item 3, 10a – Old Ford to Hunston Canal (Greenway) – JN to invite CS to October meeting. **Action – JN to contact Chris Sprules**

Item 7a)ii - A259 Chichester to Bognor Regis Corridor Feasibility Study - GF reported he has been invited to a workshop design group meeting.

- b) Minutes of informal meeting of 9 February 2022.

- i. The minutes of the informal meeting on 9 February 2022 were approved as correct.
- ii. Items relating to actions and matters arising from the February 2022 informal meeting are either on the agenda or had been completed.

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

None

4. **West Sussex Rights of Way Annual Report 2021**

The report had been circulated with the meeting papers. Nick Scott (NS), WSCC Principal Rights of Way Officer, talked through the key points, highlighting work achieved on the Rights of Way network in 2021. It was another year affected by COVID restrictions with staff working at home where possible. It had also been a year of staff changes and vacancies. The flexibility of WSCC's PRow routine contractor, County Tree Surgeons, during this challenging time has been much appreciated, as had been the input from volunteers, both helping with inspections and doing practical tasks.

A question and answer session followed including:

- Selsey Footpath 76 – WSCC had made a Section 26 Order to upgrade this footpath to a bridleway. GF asked if WSCC is confident that it will be able to move this forward despite the objections. NS reported there has also been a lot of positive support and is trying to engage with the objectors and hopes for a positive resolution. However, if needed it can be submitted to the Secretary of State for a decision. Unfortunately, at the moment it is not possible to put a timescale on this.
- Southwater Bridleway 1670 – TT passed on praise from locals for the surfacing works, saying they have made a massive improvement to this route.
- Funding - GE asked how the budget compares to last year. JN responded to say the funding for 22/23 has remained the same, however costs, including materials and fuel, have gone up significantly so it is likely less work on the ground will be able to be delivered and works will have to be prioritised.
- Volunteers - TB asked if WSCC PRow services was still looking for volunteers. NS/JN responded saying vacancies for volunteer Public Path Inspectors (PPIs) do arise from time to time, but now the inspection period has increased to 15 months the Access Rangers often prefer to fill gaps with experienced PPIs from neighbouring areas. Additional practical volunteers to help with tasks are always welcome. If anyone is interested they should contact JN and she will pass details onto the Volunteer Coordinator.

GE thanked NS, and WSCC's Rights of Way service, for their work.

5. **England Coast Path (ECP); delivering in West Sussex**

Kevin Dewitt (KD), ECP Project Officer, gave a presentation on the progress of the delivery of the Coast Path in West Sussex. Key points included:

- The ECP will be 2,795 miles long and will stay as close to the sea as possible, and in places there will be a coast margin between the ECP and the sea which will be Open Access land.
- KD is working to deliver the ECP in West Sussex. The route follows a combination of Public Rights of Way, roads and other routes such as

promenades and new undesignated routes. There are three sections covering the county:

- **South Hayling to Easthead** (part in Hampshire) - The route of this section has yet to be approved by the Secretary of State (SoS). Implementation work will start once approval has been granted. For this section there are some alternative routes proposed:
 - Thorney Island: where the alternative route will cut across the top of the island, in case the MOD needs to limit access
 - Bosham to Itchenor: several sections will have alternative routes provided, either to ensure access during high tides or for when the ferry isn't running.
- **Easthead to Shoreham** – the route has been approved by the approved by SoS and Kevin is organising the installation of the required infrastructure, working with landowners and contractors.
- **Shoreham to Eastbourne** – only a short part of this section is in West Sussex. Adur and Worthing Council and Shoreham Port Authority have managed the works to install infrastructure, mainly signage. This section will open on 19 May 2022.
- ECP will become part of the 'National Trails' family and sections will be managed by a Trail Partnership, mainly financed by Natural England, similar to the management of the South Downs Way. WSCC is currently considering its options of joining with others or forming its own Partnership.

A question and answer session followed including:

- Opening – TB asked when the ECP would be open. KD replied to say it should have already been completed, but has been delayed for a number of reasons and is now expected to be delivered by 2024. KD said he had encountered a significant number of unknowns which are taking time to resolve, so he is unable to give a date for the completion of the West Sussex sections.
- Signage - TB also emphasised the importance of good signage to give users confidence. KD is aware and explained it is a balance between providing information and having signage clutter.

GE thanked KD for his informative and excellent presentation.

6. **Consultations and advice**

a) **Current consultations - None**

b) **Consultation responses, advice given**

- i. New Place Farm development, Pulborough, Planning application DC/21/2321 – Horsham District Council
- ii. A27 Arundel Bypass – Highways England

The above responses have been circulated to members.

7. **Downs Link / A281 crossing at Rudgwick**

The feasibility report into crossing options had been circulated to WSLAF members. There are reservations about some of the information, such as the speed study data traffic counts and the NMU data counts. TB is aware further studies are planned over the Summer to obtain missing information.

Costs for a bridge are very high, although it is felt the costs for the Pegasus crossing option are incomplete due to unknowns. Further work is required to have better cost estimates for each option. User groups, Sustrans and some local Parish Councils will continue to push for a bridge.

There was a discussion about lighting. Lighting is required for a Pegasus crossing but members were unsure why lighting would be required for a bridge. TT reported that conservation groups are concerned that lighting close to the ancient woodland would be detrimental, in particular to bats.

TB advised she will take forward any further questions from Members to Ian Myhill who has confirmed he will be happy to provide a response.

WSCC to invite Ian Myhill, WSCC Local Transport Improvements Project Officer to its October meeting.

Action – JN to invite Ian Myhill to the next formal WSLAF meeting

Action – TB to take any additional Members questions to Ian Myhill for a response.

8. WSLAF matters

- a) **Website, including e-mail alerts;** Work is required to ensure WSLAF website is up to date and includes relevant information, including reconfiguring the WSLAF leaflet into a web friendly format. JN, TB, GE and CM to review and report back to WSLAF. JN to investigate why WSLAF not included on WSCC email alert system.

Action – JN, TB, GE and CM to review web pages

Action – JN to investigate WSLAF email alerts system

- b) **Annual Reports** – Previous WSLAF Annual Reports have been published on the website. GE to complete the Annual Report for 2021-22, JN to format and publish. All to send suitable photos to JN.

Action – All to send JN photos for Annual Report

Action – GE/JN to publish Annual Report for 2020-22

Members' priorities (future topics/training) – GE asked members to consider their priorities for future meetings, training and site visits and email suggestions to him. He added that Ami Dye, WSCC, had offered training of how changes could be made to the Definitive Map via Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO) and Public Path Orders (PPO).

Action – All to send GE suggestions for future meetings, training and site visits

9. General Report

The General report was noted.

NV explained that recruitment for a permanent replacement for the Countryside Manager post was being finalised. JN reported that the closing date for applications for the 2 vacant Access Ranger posts is Monday 9 May.

10. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman

JN took control of the meeting. When invited there was no interest from members to put themselves forward for the role of Charman or Vice-Chairman. JN encouraged others to think about helping out / getting more involved as GE and TB will want to hand over the reins at some stage.

GE was asked if he was willing to re-stand as Chairman, which he was and was

unanimously voted in.

TB was asked if she was willing to re-stand as Vice-Chairman, which she was and was unanimously voted in.

Control of the meeting was handed back to GE.

11. **Future meetings**

TB reported she had attended a recent South Downs Local Access Forum meeting which had been a hybrid, with some people present in person, while others joined on-line. In her view this had worked well. A short discussion took place covering the benefits of meeting in person and of online meetings. In general, most favoured a hybrid approach, but the aim would be for the next informal meeting and the October formal meeting to be in person. Equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings is being installed in to WSCC hub buildings, including Chichester and Horsham.

Action – JN to investigate hybrid meeting options

Dates of next meetings

- Informal: Wednesday 13 July 2022
- Formal: Wednesday 19 October 2022

12. **AOB**

Shoreham hard (slipway) - A member of the public had contacted WSLAF, via JN, regarding access along a Restricted Byway in Shoreham, that is used for boats to access the water. This is a planning matter but not of a strategic nature, so GE and TB felt it wasn't a matter for WSLAF. NS, at WSCC, has been consulted.