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West Sussex Local Access Forum



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Sent by email to: WalkingandCycling@westsussex.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

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 (prows), 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.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the West Sussex Local Access Forum. West Sussex County Council 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.

Draft Walking and Cycling Strategy

In general members of the Forum support much of what is in the draft strategy, but feel that success will inevitably be determined by whether resources for implementation can be secured. Until funding can be secured its objectives will remain aspirational.

Equestrians were mentioned in the draft which is welcomed as maximum benefit for all users must be made of all opportunities. The Forum has been notified that although the draft does not consider the need of some vulnerable users, such as those with mobility impairments including wheelchair users, the elderly, cyclists with trailers and trikes, that WSCC will be including these in the final draft and will be considered in design of schemes (even though ultimately a scheme may not be suitable for all). The Forum strongly supports this.

Consultation with stakeholders representing the full range of users and interests will be important at all stages to ensure maximisation of opportunities and this will often need to include those from outside the immediate locality. WSLAF, having a balance of interests is well placed to provide advice.

1.3 Objectives

A new objective should be added to consider all user groups from the earliest stages of scheme development.

2. Existing Situation

Although approximately one third of the PRow network in West Sussex is bridleway, restricted byway or byway open to all traffic and can therefore legally be used for cycling this figure is misleading as some of these paths have unsuitable topography or surfacing to be suitable for cycling for most riders.

2.5 Sharing the network

Members support this section and agree that users have responsibilities to be respectful to others and to behave responsibly. It is good to see that it is acknowledged that appropriate design is required to preventing conflict between users, which can be real or perceived.

3.1 Infrastructure Design and Safety - Introduction

The member representing equestrian interests on the Forum was particularly pleased to see equestrians mentioned. It is good that the differing needs of various users are recognised and that it is acknowledged that the approach must vary accordingly. Leisure facilities that are mainly off-road will be welcomed though care must be taken if vulnerable users are routed along less busy lanes as even these can be uncomfortable for some to use, particularly as the lanes are increasingly busy.

3.4 Off Road/Less Busy Leisure Routes

Much of the wording in this section is supported in particular recognition that changes / improvements must not be at the detriment of existing users.

Noting that the RoWIP will be revised in 2016/17, WSLAF notes and supports the final paragraph of this section. Some members felt it would be useful to have reference to expert design guides in the next revision.

4.7 Working with delivery partners and key stakeholders

It is good to see commitment to continued inspection and maintenance of the access network. WSLAF supports continued engagement with stakeholders, but it is important that this is from the earliest opportunity to ensure 'joined-up planning of infrastructure'.

5 Infrastructure Priorities

It was felt by some members that with some initial estimates of delivery cost the larger and the smaller schemes could be better compared. Some schemes may be quite low cost and local councils or other stakeholders might be best placed to advise and hence minimise administration on the part of WSCC.

Appendix: List of Schemes

It is not fully clear if the Rate no in the first column of the table is a reference number or a calculated value – this needs to be made clear. It would be easier to use if the scheme types were listed just above the tables, possible with page numbers, as it is easy to miss the headings as you scroll through the lists.

The brief information given on each scheme makes it difficult to fully assess if individual schemes will benefit or possibly be detrimental to various users.

WSLAF would very much appreciate being kept informed of progress on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Jane Noble, Forum Officer, West Sussex Local Access Forum

Copy for information to: All WSLAF members