



Minutes of the West Sussex Local Access Forum Wednesday 25 January 2017

A meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) was held at **10.30am Wednesday 25 January 2017** at WSCC's Broadbridge Heath Highways Depot, Broadbridge Heath, Horsham RH12 3LZR

Present

Sam Wright (SW) – Chairman	Helen Baldwin (HB)
Graham Elvey (GE) - Vice Chairman	Nicol Beard (NB)
Geoff Farrell (GF)	Duncan Crow (DC)
Paul Brown (PB)	Derek Whittington (DW)
Val Rawlison (VR)	Bill Acraman (BA)
Tricia Butcher (TB)	

In attendance

Jane Noble (JN) – Forum Officer, WSCC
Charlotte Weller (CW) – Countryside Services Manager, WSCC
Jonathan Perks (JP) – Principal Rights of Way Officer, WSCC
Peter Phillips (PP) – Route Sponsor South Central, Highways England

1. Apologies and welcomes

The Forum welcomed those who were visiting the meeting, including Jackie Clay from Arun and Chichester District Bridleways Group.

Apologies had been received from Jason Lavender

2. Minutes of the Forum

Minutes of the Forum were agreed

3. Actions and matter arising not covered by the agenda

It was noted that Roger Hobbs had resigned from the Forum. JN reported she has sent a thank you letter to him

JN outlined to the group the progress which had been made on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Forum agreed it was too late to develop a line to take on the development of future Neighbourhood Plans as most were now written.

JN apologised that she had not finalised the Annual report from last year but she ensured the Forum that the Annual Report this year covered the work completed over the past 2 years.

JN

PB confirmed that he had not had a response from the local Access Ranger on the matter he had raised on HW110. JN to chase this up with the member of

staff.

JN

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

None

TB reported that her details were incorrect on the contact details. All to check the list when it is circulated

All

5. The work of Highways England in Sussex – Peter Phillips

PP explained he is the Route Sponsor for South Central, Highways England (HE) and covers the West Sussex area. His role includes the identification of schemes for the future. His area has a short length of motorway within it and is mainly dual and single carriageway. One of the challenges this brings is the allocation of funding from HE tends not to favour these types of road.

However there is a change coming to the way schemes are funded by HE that may help to address this. Last year there was only £80,000 of funding for cycling across the South but recently £500,000 was secured for a crossing in Kent.

PP is already making cases for the facilities in Arundel and Worthing so they are considered early on and can be designed in as part of the scheme development.

PP reported HE are close to announcing a preferred option for the A27 at Chichester. Although HE do consider NMU use, their primary focus is traffic usage so NMU assets will tend to be designed in at a later stage

The Arundel bypass options will be consulted on after the elections in late May 2017.

Worthing and Lancing A27 options are more complicated and the scheme is unlikely to result in a bypass or tunnel due to the costs and impact on the environment. The scheme is most likely to be a series of improvements to the current route. Local MPs are actively working to try and increase budget allocated from central government.

PP stressed that justification of need is very important when making business cases for funding for NMU improvements. Any information that can be provided on this aspect will help strengthen business cases.

PP took questions from the Forum:

TB – People south of the A27 are now actively working to provide evidence as requested. TB stressed the facilities for equestrians to cross the A27 were lacking and the cost differences between equestrian and pedestrian facilities were, she felt, minimal. Why are all bridges not designed for all?

PP – It is unlikely that Highways England would 'design for all' every time as that level of facilities will not always be needed but where there is evidence he agreed facilities should be provided where funding is available. For example, in Worthing PP feels bridges are a key part of the solution for safe use.

TB – Are bridges easier to put in place than subways?

PP – Yes along the A27 due to the ground water issues.

TB – Do the lists that she provides get passed on to the contractors as they change?

PP – Yes they do. Often personnel will TUPE across so they also understand the issues. Contractors will normally want to come and talk to users as part of the design process as well.

TB – Would it be possible for HE to meet with NMU groups before the consultation on the Arundel options in May?

PP – Once the options are ready for consultation then PP would be willing to come and meet with interested groups.

GF – Could the meeting take place before options are 'ready to go'?

PP – HE are restricted by DfT regarding when they can share info. PP confirmed May is not too late to influence the designs. PP committed to send the designs to the groups as soon as he is able.

PP – Confirmed that a site visit with TB to talk about the A23. PP to send TB dates he is available so she can liaise with the local Access Ranger and invite her along too

TB/PP

VR – Can it please be remembered that disabled users cannot use steps so ramps are preferable?

PP – Confirmed HE try and provide both but where there is only room for one they will provide a ramp

GF – Pointed out that liaison with County Council and Cycle Groups is not happening effectively and people are still frustrated where schemes have been less than ideal.

PP – Confirmed that he believed designers should talk to local users and find out what would work in the area.

GF – Confirmed the West Sussex Cycle Forum is the key contact group for cyclists and he is the contact. Asked to what extent will the NMU use be maintained at the A27 at Arundel?

PP – If a new bypass was put in then there would be sections of the old route which would remain so there may be opportunities to consider building in better access. A new bypass may also provide opportunities to provide flatter options for cyclists.

GF – By looking at traffic needs first does Highways England miss the opportunity to build in assets early on where they know they will be needed and

worse still sometimes take facilities out?

PP – Agreed with the sentiment

GF – Local people and Local Authorities want to keep the Oving Crossings and it seems the only party that want to remove the crossing in Highways England.

PP – Stated that crossing at the point of the roundabout would provide design challenges.

NB – Made the point that bridges are particularly useful for younger users as difficult to cross busy roads with them

DW – Described work that has been delivered on routes linking into crossings which is useful for local users

JC – Who do people contact when site lines are not being maintained?

PP – Replied he would be the best person to contact but highlighted problems can be reported on line **CW TO ADD LINK ONCE RECEIVED**

PB – Has PP found the Propensity to Cycling tool useful?

PP – Replied he hadn't used it personally and not sure if the design consultants have but he could confirm they have access to the tool. PP said he believed there is an opportunity to develop a wider Forum to consider these sort of issues with equestrians and cyclists. All agreed with him

6. Public Path Order consultations – Jon Perks

JP shared with the Forum the work that officers had been developing in order to respond to the Deregulation Act which needs to be debated in Parliament before being rolled out.

The Deregulation Act will make it a duty for Local Authorities to consider and determine Public Path Order applications within four months.

WSCC currently has a back log of 35 applications that, using the current application process, would take three years to work through.

JP took a number of questions from the Forum:

TB – Asked JP to clarify when and how the consultation would be completed?

JP – Confirmed the applicant would complete the consultation before the application was submitted to WSCC.

GE – Will there be an opportunity for the applicants to talk to WSCC before the application is made?

JP – Confirmed he was talking about PPO applications only, not DMMOs. WSCC is considering how advice might be offered to applicants throughout the process.

PRoW are seeking to align their process with the planning process so options of chargeable pre-application advice may be offered.

NB – How would WSCC ensure appropriate parties had been consulted and they had been given the necessary opportunity to submit comments which had been considered?

JP – WSCC is mindful of this and would need to ensure due process had been followed. The details around how this might be ensured have not been decided yet. He reminded the Forum there is still an opportunity for people to object at the Order Making stage if they so wish

TB – Do the consultation responses on come to PROW?

JP – Copies would be helpful but it has not been decided if this will be a requirement yet

CW – Reiterated that WSCC is more interested in seeing that conversations and negotiations have taken place between the interested parties so the final solution meets the needs of all.

PB – Does WSCC envisage that agents will be used to make the applications in the future?

JP – There are agents out there that could be used but the hope is that info on the website will allow individuals to still make an application

BA – More onus is now on the applicant which he does not agree with. Who will be monitoring the four month timescales and what are the trigger points?

JP – WSCC are still awaiting guidance re. monitoring requirements and clarification around when the four month period starts.

CW – Stated that a number of applicants may financially benefit from their applications so may be happy to accept the costs associated with using an agent for their application e.g. developers.

BA – Sated that he believed people will be put off by the increased work

TB – What happens if landowners change the route of the path on the ground without making a PPO application?

CW – It would become an enforcement issue for WSCC and would be picked up as part of the inspection cycle.

7. England Coast Path – Jane Noble

JN reported that Local Access Rangers have met with Natural England representatives to talk about their plans and routes.

Natural England would like to meet with representatives from the Forum in the new financial year to talk about ongoing maintenance and potential Trail

Partnerships. Volunteers to be part of this working group included:

- Derek Whittington
- Geoff Farrell
- Nicol Beard
- Graham Elvey
- Val Rawlingson

JN to contact Natural England to ensure that the group have the opportunity to comment at a stage when they can influence the proposals.

JN

8. WSLAF Matters

Meeting Minutes

As Roger Hobbs has left there is no one to write the minutes for the Forum. SW asked if there were any volunteers who wanted to take it on, whether they should rotate it or if they want to try WSCC Admin Services.

TB made the point that it had been hard to edit them as the administrator has no knowledge of RoW issues so someone from the Forum will have to go through the drafts.

It was agreed that Capita will take minutes in the future and they will send them to the Chairman, SW, to proof read and edit them.

Meeting arrangement (timings/frequency)

The Forum was asked whether moving the timings of the meetings would make them more accessible to those potential members who work as WSCC finds it very difficult to recruit to WSLAF.

The Forum agreed they did not want to change the time of the meetings.

The Forum were asked whether they felt four meetings a year was appropriate as the Forward Programme is light. The Forum agreed that they would like to continue with four meetings but agreed if required meetings would be cancelled, (Chairman's decision in consultation with the Forum), if there was not enough business.

Future Work Programme

NB offered to take on the role of lead for Chichester area planning applications. TB and NB to meet and discuss what should be considered when looking at applications and how she collects comments from WSLAF members.

TB/NB

SW asked the Forum for ideas for the future work programme. Two items were put forward:

- GF suggested the use of bicycles on footpaths which is an initiative Cycling UK are pushing forward.
- PB suggested a project to develop access and views to the Wier Wood Reservoir – DW reported that there is a project to develop a cycle route around the site.

9. Current / Future consultations and advice given

The Waste and Minerals Plan is out for consultation – closing date 3rd March 2017. It can be found at the below link

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-plans-and-policies/environment-planning-and-waste-plans-and-policies/minerals-and-waste-policy/new-minerals-local-plan/consultation-and-engagement/>

Forum members to feed any comments they may have to PB.

TB reminded the group to keep their eye out for Strategic applications now the Local Plans have been agreed in a number of areas. She stated it was important to comment as early as possible in the process.

10. Improvement Projects

North of the Downs

TB updated the group on projects in the North of the Downs

- Pegasus Crossing at HW3 should be built late spring/summer
- BW3727 – CW reported that WSCC will be developing a drainage design in 2017/18 which could potentially be delivered in 2018/19. In the meantime Natural England will be work with the landowner with a view to divert the path out of the sunken section onto the bank.
- Partridge Green – funded has been secured to design a section of the Downs Link which runs along the road currently
- North Of Horsham development is offering a new bridleway which is a positive

South of the Downs

No progress to report.

JN to meet with GF and take the matter forward in time for the next meeting

JN

11. South Downs Local Access Forum

GJ was not present so no update presented. JN to circulate the report

JN

12. General Report

DW thanked GF for his work and contributions to the Walking and Cycling Strategy. He reported that there is now a Working Group taking forward the schemes in the Strategy.

GF reported that it was very helpful to have a Strategy, especially for accessing funding.

TB reported that she felt that it was a major step back from the perspective of equestrians as they used to quote the RoWIP as their Strategy. She also stated that the cycle routes are not considering equestrians at the beginning of the design process. DW reported that the majority of the routes were urban so he believed equestrians wouldn't want to use.

JN reported that the RoWIP will still exist and be available for WSLAF in terms of responding to planning applications etc.

CW reported she would take to message back to officers re. designing for all. She also suggested the Walking and Cycling Strategy be added to the Work Programme so WSLAF ensure they are getting involved as and when they need to. The Forum agreed to add it to the Work Programme – SW to action

SW and CW

JN asked for ideas of speakers for future meetings. None received at the time of the meeting.

13. Dates of Future Meetings

Wednesday 26th April 2017 - Chichester
Wednesday 19th July 2017 – Horsham
Wednesday 18th October 2017 – Chichester
Wednesday 30th January 2017 - Horsham

14. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

SW was confirmed as Chairman and GE as Vice Chairman

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Forums will be on Wednesday 26 April 2017 at County Hall Chichester