

SOUTH DOWNS ACCESS FORUM

A sub-forum of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum and the East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove Local Access Forums

Sussex Downs Conservation Board HQ, Ford

29th October 2004

Meeting Minutes

Present

Members:

Ben Perkins (BP)	Glynn Jones (GJ)	Malcolm Walford (MW)
David Ashcroft (DA)	James Sharpe (JS)	Nigel Sloan (NS)
David Brookshaw (DB)	John Rennie (JR)	Paul Millmore (Pm)
David Taylor (DT)	Kuljit Randhawa (KR)	Sue Montila (SM)
Derek Cleaver (DC)	Jon Willis (JW)	

SDAF co-ordinator:

Keith Tyrell (KT) : South Downs Access Forum Officer

Observers:

Rosemary Pugh : West Sussex Local Access Forum Officer
Nicola Redwood (NR) : Strategic Access Officer for the South Downs
Tim Squire (TS) : Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum Officer
Christoph Kratz (CK) : Countryside Agency
Mike Smith (MS) : Eastbourne Borough Council

Public:

Six

Apologies

Andrew Shaxson (AS)
Craig Thomas
Janyis Hyatt (JH)
John Godfrey (JG)
Leo Hickish (LH)

Item	Minutes	Action
1	<p><u>Introductions and apologies</u> Sue Coles has been appointed as the Vice Chair of Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, and has therefore decided to stand down as cross-forum representative. SM has agreed to fill this role.</p>	
2	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u> There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
3	<p><u>AOB</u> No issues were raised</p>	
4	<p><u>Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</u> JW asked for the minutes to be amended. He did not state in his presentation that responsible motorised vehicle users would use footpaths if their rights were removed. On the contrary, he thinks most will sell their bikes and simply stop their activity, leaving no-one to exert peer pressure on the irresponsible users – KT To amend minutes. Apart from this amendment, the minutes were passed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Commencement of the new right of Open Access. KT reported that since the commencement of Open Access on 19th September the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and the Access Authorities have had very few enquiries from the public about the new rights. Similarly, very few landowners have reported any problems. DT has heard of few problems from landowners, The main concern is people accessing non-access land by mistake. PM was not surprised that there have been few reported problems, much of the land is not open yet and people have not been able to access it. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the Board would have heard of problems users finding and accessing Open Access Land.</p>	
5	<p><u>John Mills –Assistant County Archaeologist WSCC</u> John Mills gave a presentation to the Forum on the impact of the new right of Open Access on ancient monuments and heritage/archaeological sites. He identified a number .</p>	
6	<p><u>Update on Authorities progress on access management plans</u> Brighton & Hove: TS informed the Forum that B&H have applied for funding under the CA’s access management Grant Scheme (AMGS) and have been offered £399 for planning. TS revealed that most open access sites within the B&H area are already open to the public and that they do not envisage lots of extra work. In fact they are looking to dedicate even more open access land voluntarily.</p> <p>East Sussex: AW told the Forum that East Sussex officers met with SDCB officers in June and put in a bid to the CA for £12,000 which was successful. ESCC will be working with the SDCB to prepare a full access management plan and implement access on the ground</p> <p>West Sussex: LCG told the Forum, that WSCC had also submitted a bid and received £25,000. Like ESCC, WSCC will be working with the SDCB to prepare a plan.</p> <p>The CA wants plans to be submitted by the end of August, and all authorities are working towards this deadline, but they all recognise how difficult it will be to meet</p>	

	<p>this. The maps prepared by the SDAF are forming the basis of the management plan and are at the heart of the process.</p> <p>PM pointed out that the SDCB has historically provided landowners with gates and stiles free of charge and has ensured they are installed to a high standard. In addition the SDCB has uses local designs for infrastructure. The SDAF is keen to see infrastructure for open access installed to a similar high standard and that it incorporates local distinctiveness.</p>	
7	<p><u>Presentations on motorised vehicle use</u></p> <p>Jon Willis (motorised vehicle user): JW gave a presentation from the motorised vehicle user’s perspective. Jon is a member of the Trail Riders Fellowship. Jon made a clear distinction between legal and illegal users – he represents legal users and is as keen as anyone to rid the countryside of illegal or irresponsible users. He pointed out that the TRF has a voluntary code of conduct and its members are very careful and con-frontational with walkers and other users of Green Lanes. TRF Groups regularly volunteer to help maintain Green Lanes and often help other users. All TRF machines are road legal and the local groups research routes before travelling on them. JW pointed out that in West Sussex there are more than 4,000km of rights of way and of these only around 150km are RUPPS or BOATs which motorised vehicles can use. The TRF represents legal and responsible riders; most of the damage is done by illegal riders. If all legal use is banned, then all users will be illegal and many responsible riders will begin to use footpaths and bridleways. Others will sell their machines leading to a glut on the market and drop in price making it more affordable for illegal users. At the moment, TRF riders can exert peer pressure on illegal users and this pressure will be removed. So banning legal use will lead to more damage, not less.</p> <p>David Ashcroft (Landowner): Many Rights of Way are in sunken Lanes which were used to move livestock. They tend to be slow to dry out and are easily damaged. For the majority of their existence they have only been used by pedestrians, livestock, or horse and cart. DA has no problem with responsible motorised vehicle users, but irresponsible users can cause an immense amount of damage and nuisance for other users and landowners. A major problem is that it is very difficult to catch the culprits as landowners are not there 24 hours a day. PM pointed out that one of the biggest problems with motorised vehicles is the damage they cause, and the immense cost of putting this right – he cited the case of one green lane in East Sussex which has cost over £500,000 to repair after motorised vehicle damage. He wants Local Authorities to make realistic bids in their TPPs to reflect the added cost of maintaining existing and new BOATs. RoWIPS should take on board this thinking.</p> <p>AS pointed out that many motorised users are attracted to paths precisely because of their poor condition. Once they have been repaired use by 4x4s decreases and they go and find another poor lane to use. Repairing lanes simply moves the problem on.</p> <p>BP expressed concern that motorised vehicle user groups are applying for the dedication of new routes without taking the appropriateness of the road or its condition into consideration – they are simply trying to get as many miles as possible opened up – the cost implications of this approach are alarming.</p>	

	<p>SC Warned that even though RoWIPs are linked to the LTP, the SDAF should not expect large amounts of additional cash from the transport budget. Money that is allocated to resurfacing BOATs will probably come from the Rights of Way budgets. It is important that RoWIPs focus on improving the network and prioritise actions.</p> <p>JW pointed out that BOATs and RUPPs are part of the highways network and as such authorities have been receiving money for their maintenance from central government for years – it is about time they spent the money on their upkeep.</p> <p>LH asked that the Forum recognise there is a demand for motorised access to the countryside, but he also said it was important for the police to tackle illegal use.</p> <p>JG insisted that the police do take this issue seriously and that they have been working closely with the SDCB to tackle the problem, in some cases, using new anti social behaviour orders.</p>	
8	<p>RoWIPs</p> <p>Feedback from Brighton & Hove working group: The SDAF Brighton & Hove working group met on 1 July and discussed the progress and issues relating to the Rights of Way Improvement plans in the Brighton & Hove area. JR reported that the working group was concerned at the lack of work on the Brighton & Hove RoWIP. They were also very alarmed to learn that no funds allocated for this work this year and no allocation or availability of staffing time to do any work. The Local Transport Plan work seems to be taking all the priority and all of the budget in B&H. The working group made the following recommendation:-</p> <p><i>That the SDAF seeks consistency across the South Downs in progressing RoWIPs, not least because they are a statutory requirement, reviews and assesses the work across the South Downs to date, and presses the highways authorities, through the mother fora, for significant progress during the current funding year wherever that progress is lacking. Initially, in our view, each authority should be allocating funding and a member of staff with the specific task of RoWIP work, on the grounds that the work on RoWIPs is an integral part of the national drive towards creating better access for everyone to enjoy.</i></p> <p>This recommendation was passed unanimously.</p> <p>CH informed the SDAF that there is a suggestion that Defra and DfT guidance on integrating RoWIPs into LTPs will advise authorities to do very little until the 2010 LTP and only provide a summary for the 2005 LTP. DB and SC were concerned to hear this and stressed it was essential that the RoWIPs are linked into the LTP quickly and asked CH to provide more information.</p> <p>Priorities for West Sussex: RS presented West Sussex CC's initial ideas on the areas which will be addressed in its RoWIP. He identified four priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the existing Right of Way network to a high standard 2. Improve links to and between communities for all users 3. Provide routes to encourage sustainable transport 4. Creation of safe circular routes for all users 5. <p>RS then asked the SDAF whether they thought the issues were adequate and if there were any others that should be included.</p>	CH

	<p>BP suggested that priority 1 (maintenance) should not be part of a RoWIP as authorities already have a statutory duty to maintain the network and the aim of RoWIPs should be to genuinely enhance the network.</p> <p>PM said that the RoWIPs are a key opportunity to address issues such as prioritising long distance paths; providing a network of circular routes for villages in the South Downs. He also suggested that when considering area 3 (sustainable transport) that lessons could be learned from the SDCB’s transport without traffic initiative.</p> <p>SC suggested a 5th point – linking access land into the network and wanted to see more focus on creating new rights of Ways. The term RoWIP is too narrow – the plan should be about improving access in general.</p> <p>The Officers will be meeting in the near future to discuss what input they would like from the SDAF into their RoWIPs. KT will then organise the working groups and to achieve this – meetings for the working groups should be scheduled in September.</p>	KT
9	<p><u>Agenda items for next meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the South Downs Strategic Access Plan and its relationship with the local authorities’ RoWIPs • Feedback on the commencement of the new rights of access from the access authorities; landowners and the SDCB. • Ask the County Archaeologist to discuss the effect of open access on the archaeology/heritage assets of the South Downs • Clarification from the local authorities on their policies on TROs (including temporary ones) • Examples of local distinctiveness in the South Downs 	
11	<p><u>Dates for next meetings</u></p> <p>The forum agreed the meeting dates for a year in advance. The dates are to fall shortly after the LAFs have had their meetings so LAF advice can be filtered across. The dates agreed were :</p> <p>Friday 29th October 10.00am SDCB HQ Ford Tuesday 7th December 19.00pm (AGM) Venue to be confirmed</p>	