

Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next Forum meeting

Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS) DRAFT

At a meeting of the Forum held at Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, on 2nd July 2008.

Present:

	Mr Peter Brown	(Chairman)
Mr Bill Acraman	Mrs Helen Baldwin	Mr Phil Belden
Mr Chris Boocock	Mrs Tricia Butcher	Mr Derek Deedman
Mr Sion Evans	Mrs Ann Janes	Mr Glynn Jones
Mr Trevor Passmore	Mrs Sue Strudwick	Mr Peter Tompkins

West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) Officers: Christine Luff, Jane Noble, Fiona MacLeod

Welcome

62. The Chairman welcomed the new members of the Forum, the guest speakers and observers to the meeting. The new members able to attend the meeting (Chris Boocock (sustainable transport), Peter Tompkins (cycling) and Sue Strudwick (farming)) introduced themselves. Anthony Young (cycling) had also been appointed to the Forum but was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting.

Apologies

63. Apologies were received from Ronnie Perrin, David Ribbens, Nigel Sloan, Ted White, David Whyberd and Shirley Wright.

Declarations of Interest

64. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the Forum meeting dated 16th April 2008

65. **Resolved: that the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

Matters Arising not Covered in the Agenda

66. **Minute 10** – Helen Baldwin was pleased to update members that the gate had been correctly installed on restricted byway 952 at Graffham, although neither herself or Tricia Butcher had been contacted prior to it's installation due to an oversight by South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC).
67. **Minutes 14-16** – Christine Luff provided background on the situation at Pitshill to the new members and will provide a fuller update at the next Forum meeting.

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Urgent Matters

68. The Chairman agreed to take the matter of locked gates on 'G' roads in two areas (East Dean and Thakenham) which provide access onto the public rights of way network (PRoW) under this Agenda item. 'G' roads are routes for which WSCC is responsible but which receive only very limited maintenance. Although the roads themselves are under the jurisdiction of the Highways Section of WSCC, CAFWS should stress the importance of the availability to users of the of the PRoW network. The incident had been reported to WSCC by SDJC for action.
69. Chris Boocock reported that there had been a regional stakeholders meeting with the Highways Agency regarding issues with non-motorised vehicles, and a further meeting with Sustrans to progress. Members were requested to flag up similar issues.
70. The South Central railway franchise consultation closes on 14th August 2008 and the Off-Road Cycling Working Group will review.

Working Groups

Disability Access

71. The Chairman referred to the Executive Summary report on the findings of the Working Group and highlighted the comments regarding information and promotion, and cycling issues for members attention.
72. For clarification, the phrase 'cycle tracks' should only be used if they were created under the Cycle Tracks Act and there are no such tracks in West Sussex. Use of cycles can, however, be part of permissive agreement criteria although it would be up to the landowner (or local authority) to decide.
73. Members made the following points:
 - Promotion of appropriate routes was seen as key
 - Need to encourage both the WSCC and the SDJC to 'think mobility' when carrying out the access functions
 - Cyclists should always ride with consideration for other users
 - Cyclists and walkers both need to be considerate to other users
 - The wearing of a belt to identify hard of hearing walkers could be viewed as condescending
 - As a cyclist, how would you know if the walker in front has a mobility problem
 - Unless specifically excluded under a permissive cycling agreement, horse riders can use the same permissive path route as a cyclist
 - The National Trust (NT) and Forestry Commission (FC) also have cycle paths that WSCC are not consulted on regarding mobility access.
74. **Resolved: that the Secretary send the Report to both WSCC and SDJC to progress, and the Working Group to act on a consultancy basis if and when required**

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Off-Road Cycling

75. Glynn Jones reported that the group had reaffirmed that there is an issue with cycling in the countryside and he felt that there is a need to exercise common courtesy with cyclists negotiating round walkers and other users, and not vice versa. It appeared to be generational and there was an opportunity to educate younger cyclists. An article will be included in the CycleRight magazine aimed in a positive way towards families and young people. It had also been suggested that the CAFWS web pages promote online cycle routes and cycling etiquette at some stage.
76. Trevor Passmore and Anthony Young offered to join the Group, and Jane Noble was thanked for her helpful and proactive work with the Group.

Walking in West Sussex – Review of Guided Walks Programmes in West Sussex

77. Ronnie Perrin would not be available to co-ordinate the Group in the near future and any volunteers to take on this role, or to sit on the group should contact the Chairman for more details about the Group.

Sub Forums

Coastal Plain, High and Low Weald Sub Forums

78. Not all Sub Forums had yet elected new Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen, reviewed their membership or agreed their 2008 Work Programme. The Chairman asked that all do so within the next month, taking into account any actions from the Rights Of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) workshop held before the meeting.
79. Tricia Butcher, Chairman, High Weald Sub Forum, had reviewed the membership and several members had resigned. Sion Evans, Chairman, Low Weald Sub Forum will contact his membership.

Coastal Plain Sub Forum

80. Members noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held 14th May 2008.

South Downs Access Forum (SDAF)

81. Glynn Jones provided the new members of CAFWS with background information on the recent issues on the SDAF and updated the Forum on the meeting held on 27th May 2008, which resulted in the recruitment of seven new members. The current membership stands at 13. In the future, SDAF will focus on access issues within the South Downs with less emphasis on national consultations.
82. Members had discussed their 2008 Work Programme and were asked to flesh out an Action Plan to assist the development of policies contained in Ambition 8 of the South Downs Management Plan (wide ranging opportunities for countryside recreation and access respecting the natural beauty of the South Downs). The SDAF was also keen to work on issues

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that would be helpful to CAFWS.

Trevor Passmore left the meeting at 2.28pm.

Presentation by Forestry Commission (FC)

83. The Forum received an informative and thought provoking presentation from Stan Abbott, Environment and Planning Manager, and Simon James, Forester, on, amongst other things, FC access policies, woodland status, strategy for equestrian users, and the RoWIP (copy presentation attached to signed minutes).
84. The management team structure of the FC in the South East was outlined, supported by appropriate maps, and initial contact should be made to one of the three Beat Managers (Simon James, (simon.james@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) Bruce Auchterlonie, (bruce.auchterlonie@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) and John Stafford, (john.Stafford@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)) or to Stan Abbott (stan.abbott@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) who is based at Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham
85. All freehold land owned by the FC had been dedicated as open access land through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (including Tilgate, St Leonard's Forests), however access to leasehold land was restricted to PROW unless the freeholder had agreed additional public access. Operational closures were necessary when large machinery was in use and buffer safety zones put in place and therefore the FC were prepared to agree to new permissive routes only on the basis that they could be closed from time to time.
86. There is no clear documented policy for cyclists on FC routes in West Sussex. At least 23 'informal' cycling areas with dirt jumps had been illegally constructed on FC land in SE England. Chris Boocock commented that Sustrans get requests for formal off-road cycling facilities in areas such as Tilgate.
87. The Chairman suggested members might want to lobby the FC to change local policies for local needs that they are unhappy about, and support any pilot schemes.
88. A Questions and Answer session followed:
 - Q** why does the FC appear to tolerate cycling on gravelled routes but not horses? The FC is a public body with a responsibility to allow access to all users
 - A** horses had the potential to cause the most disturbance to tracks due to the density of access. Such access should be addressed at a local level through the FC hierarchy of policies and will be reviewed in the near future. All FC regions south of East Anglia either use permits for equestrian use or regulate riders. Permitted access is the preferred method. In addition, some horse riders do not stick to routes and this discourages FC from further engagement on wider horse access.
 - Q** the Toll Rides (Off-Road) Trust (TROT) scheme works by riders/carriage drivers paying a fee according to how many miles of

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toll routes are open in their 'hackable' radius. Why should horse riders pay when cyclists don't – perhaps byelaws need revising?

A the FC is an independent organisation set up to manage the landscape and forests and does recognise the TROT scheme (which operates in Tilgate, St Leonard's and Gravetye forests). Policies are under constant review although it must be recognised there are resourcing/budgetary issues with the Dept for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra) and not everyone will be able to have what they want.

Q is there flexibility to renegotiate leases incorporating a more modern approach to access?

A This is not really a practical proposition because of the time negotiation may take and it is entirely dependent on the views of the landowner. As an example, negotiations have already started with one landowner in the Region when there is still 29 years left on the lease

89. The Chairman thanked both speakers for their presentation and honest and open comments, and looked forward to the Forum having a good working relationship with the FC.

The England Access Forum/Natural England

90. The Forum noted the report. Jane Noble advised that Natural England (NE) had now agreed to host the meeting to democratically decide who should represent the South East Local Access Forums on the England Access Forum and to agree reporting/communications systems. As a result, the recommendation in the report was no longer relevant.

Current Strategic Developments

91. Responses had been sent by the Secretary on the following, and high level updates given at the meeting (copy attached to the signed minutes) as applicable:

- Site 6 Bognor Regis – to be reviewed by the Coastal Plain Sub Forum
- Crawley Borough Council Local Development Framework to 2016: Development at Gatwick Airport to 2015 draft SPD – comments submitted
- Planning Application 08/01155/OUT (Mid Sussex) Keymer Brickworks – comments submitted
- Proposed Eco-town at Ford – comments submitted
- East Grinstead – awaiting publication of the South East Plan in July 2008, which is expected to give planning guidance on East Grinstead regarding housing numbers and a transport plan. A revised Submission Core Strategy is planned for public consultation in summer 2009
- West of Bewbush Submission Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) – circular routes are identified in the development Masterplan Map, together with a signalised crossing on the A264, however there is no bridge over the railway for the bridleway. Objections also raised regarding bridleway links, although it was felt that the rest of the document had been very good and had taken into account previous comments from CAFWS. The Chairman thanked Tricia Butcher for

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- West of Horsham Masterplan (from 2007) – meeting held with Tricia Butcher, Nigel Sloan and Horsham District Council (HDC) on 19th May to discuss progress. WSCC preferred Option 2 for the new road and at a meeting of HDC, members refused to accept this decision and are continuing to lobby WSCC to reinstate Option 1. The result is expected by the end of the summer with a report to HDC in October 2008.

92. Helen Baldwin requested that carriage drivers be mentioned in the standard letter accompanying development consultation responses.

Current/Future Consultations

93. Responses had been sent by the Secretary on the following consultations, and high level updates given at the meeting as applicable:
- FC High Weald Forest Design Plan – comments submitted
 - Draft Marine Bill – comments submitted to both Defra and Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee
 - Chichester Harbour Management Plan – comments to be submitted to meet closing date of 16th July 2008
 - Pagham to East Head Draft Coastal Defence Strategy – to be reviewed by the Coastal Plain Sub Forum to meet closing date of 29th August 2008.
 - Review of National Trails and Routes – due out September 2008 and will be reviewed for new Forum meeting
94. A letter dated 26th June 2008 had been received from Adur District Council (ADC) regarding The Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act 2005 Dog Control Orders (Prescribed Offences and Penalties etc) Regulations 2006. They are looking to introduce Dog Control Orders (DCOs) covering the whole district and are seeking views on the proposals. However, before the Forum would be able to review for comment, there had been some fundamental questions that needed a response from ADC and Jane Noble is progressing these.
95. Members commented that dogs off leads that are not under control are a big problem to all users but especially to horse riders, and owner education is required. A Forum approach could be to emphasise responsible owner behaviour but to defend against the proposed blanket approach restrictions by ADC. On initial appraisal, it was felt that the DCO proposals had not been properly thought through.
96. Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve was highlighted as an area where limited restrictions had been successfully put in place in specific areas and this had now been introduced at Buchan Country Park. It may be beneficial if ADC contact Chichester District Council for guidance.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

97. The RoWIP Action Plan Delivery workshop held prior to the meeting had been productive, well attended by both Forum and Sub Forum members and thanks were given to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Jane Noble for

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facilitating.

98. The output from the workshop will be circulated as soon as WSCC resources allow.

General Report

99. The Forum noted a General Report on a range of issues and interest to the Forum (copy attached to the signed minutes).

Agenda Items for Consideration for the Next Meeting of the Forum

100. The following items were agreed for consideration: -
- Clarification on common law/civil trespass and land owners public liability regarding access land
 - Use of volunteers
 - Role of the parishes
 - Reflection on FC presentation
 - Enjoyment of flora, fauna and wildlife in the countryside (future meeting)

Matters for Information

101. Jane Noble will arrange a training session for the new members.

Date of Next Meeting

102. The next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum will be held at Pulborough Village Hall/Social Centre on 29th October 2008.

The meeting finished at 3.40pm.

Chairman