

Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS)

At a meeting of the Forum held at County Hall, Chichester on 27th January 2010

Present:	Mr Peter Brown (Chairman)	
Mr Bill Acraman	Mrs Helen Baldwin	Mr Chris Boocock
Mrs Heidi Brunsdon	Mrs Tricia Butcher	Mr Duncan Crow
Mrs Ann Janes	Mr Glynn Jones (V/C)	Mr Trevor Passmore
Mr Martin Reynolds	Mr David Ribbens	Mr Nigel Sloan
Mr Peter Tompkins	Mr David Whyberd	Mrs Shirley Wright
Mr Anthony Young		

Apologies were received from Dave Evans and Phil Belden

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Officers: Craig Bowdery, Lisa Creaye-Griffin and Jane Noble

South Downs Joint Committee Officer: Nigel James

Declaration of interests

100. There were no declarations of interests.

Minutes of the last meeting

101. Resolved –

That the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting held on 28th October 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Actions and matters arising from the minutes

102. Following the discussion at the last meeting (minute 72) Glynn Jones presented a discussion paper (copy appended to the signed minutes) on the options and indicative costs of developing a new **CAFWS website** that would be independent from WSCC's website. Glynn outlined the intention to use the site for all CAFWS information and to provide downloadable routes that would also give CAFWS the opportunity to convey an educational message. It was argued that the Forum's current web-presence was too restrictive and dry. Glynn also explained that WSCC had expressed reservations over providing routes as doing so would make the authority liable for those using them. The aim was to make CAFWS much more active and dynamic, with an independent website seen as a method of distributing information.

103. The Forum discussed the proposals and members agreed that the CAFWS website should be hosted by WSCC, but that improvements should be made. Jane Noble said this would only be possible if Forum members suggested the improvements. She informed members that it might in fact be possible to post routes on the WSCC website and as such it was considered that this would be cheaper and easier than establishing a new website. It was also argued that work needed to be carried out on the CAFWS pages that would allow a user to easily

locate them via a search engine, even if they were unaware of the Forum or the acronym 'CAFWS'. Jane Noble and Lisa Creaye-Griffin welcomed greater input from members and agreed to meet with Glynn Jones to discuss fully.

Action: Jane Noble / Lisa Creaye-Griffin

104. Following the discussion reported in minute 86, Glynn Jones also suggested that the CAFWS website could be a means of preserving **WSCC's guided walks programme**. Lisa Creaye-Griffin explained that WSCC had worked hard to try to make the *Exploring West Sussex* booklet break even in costs, but having failed to do so, publication of a hard copy had ceased. However walks that were submitted to WSCC were still being promoted on its website, both on the 'Visit West Sussex Events' and the Walking pages (www.westsussex.gov.uk/walking). Lisa reported that she was in discussions with Footprints of Sussex, who had expressed an interest in delivering a guided walks programme and that she would report on progress at the next meeting. It was suggested that CAFWS could contribute to a programme, and it was agreed that this should be discussed fully at a future meeting.

105. With reference to minute 79 and the Defra consultation on the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995 and structures on rights of way, members noted and approved the draft consultation response (copy appended to the signed minutes).

Urgent matters

106. There were no urgent matters.

South Downs National Park

Rights of Way and Countryside Management

107. Lisa Creaye-Griffin informed the Forum that WSCC had taken the decision not to delegate responsibility for the maintenance of rights of way and countryside management to the new South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). This decision had been called-in by the Council's Strategic Environmental Services Select Committee for further consideration, but the Cabinet Member had then confirmed the decision. Lisa explained that the intention of the decision was to carry out a full review of all rights of way management to improve and standardise the delivery across the county, and to do this all of the service needed to be brought back 'in house'. Lisa added that the decision did not preclude any changes in responsibility in future years and highlighted that the SDNPA did not know what its budget would be and therefore it was difficult at this stage to predict what non-statutory functions it would be able to take on without additional funding. It was also emphasised that the decision taken by the Cabinet Member was to determine *who* would deliver the service, not *how* the service would be delivered. WSCC would therefore be contacting relevant interested partners, including CAFWS, regarding how the rights of way would be managed in the future across the county.

108. The Chairman explained that he had attended the Select Committee call-in meeting and expressed his disappointment that CAFWS had not been fully consulted. At the meeting he had requested that the decision be deferred to

allow sufficient consultation with CAFWS and other organisations. The Chairman also emphasised the importance of maintaining the current high standards of service delivery. Members expressed their concern at WSCC's failure to consult them prior to the decision and Lisa Creaye-Griffin explained that the view had been taken that as the decision referred only to which body delivered the service, rather than on the service itself, consultation was not necessary. Nigel Sloan highlighted that the Forum had specifically requested to contribute to the decision at a previous meeting and the Chairman undertook to arrange a meeting with the Cabinet Member to convey members' disappointment.

Action: Peter Brown

Future Local Access Forum arrangements

109. The Chairman gave a verbal update on the meeting of 22nd January 2010 to discuss future arrangements for a statutory local access forum in the South Downs National Park. Once the SDNPA became fully operational in April 2011, it would become the access authority for the area, and therefore be required to establish a local access forum. It had been agreed at the meeting that the current non-statutory South Downs Access Forum would continue to operate in the interim and that the four 'mother forums' (including CAFWS) would continue to cover the South Downs. Trevor Passmore highlighted that he was uncertain whether he would be able to continue as a CAFWS member as he understood that he had been appointed as a farmer from the area. Therefore once the statutory South Downs LAF had been established he would no longer be from the area covered by CAFWS. The Chairman explained that this would be clarified in the future and that Trevor should continue serving on CAFWS.

Feedback on the recent meeting with the Forestry Commission

110. Members received an update report (copy appended to the signed minutes) on recent discussions with the Forestry Commission. The Chairman also gave a verbal report on a meeting of LAF Chairman in the South East that took place on 26th January 2010. At the meeting it had become apparent that the rest of the country did not experience the same difficulties as in the South East, in particular relating to equestrian access in FC managed woodlands, and that as the problems were local issues, they would best be solved with local solutions. It had been agreed that a working party of representatives from the South East LAFs would be established to look at the matter in greater detail, and that Glynn Jones would represent CAFWS. Members agreed that a wish-list of specific examples should be developed and that details of any proposals should be sent to Glynn (and copied to Jane Noble). Tricia Butcher informed members that some progress was being made and that the local FC manager for Eartham woods had proposed introducing box parking from April 2010. Such measures were welcomed as they were relatively inexpensive and addressed the concerns of a large number of users, although further improvements to the network were still needed.

South East local access forum Chairmen and officers meeting

111. The Chairman gave a verbal report on the meeting of the South East local access forum Chairmen and officers that took place on 26th January 2010. As well as relations with the Forestry Commission, the meeting discussed the national

structure of local access forums. The SE LAF representative on the England Access Forum had reported that, although it had made some strides to improve access, as it was not a statutory body it was not being consulted by Natural England (NE), and that its members were becoming disillusioned. NE also did not have the resources to adequately support the EAF and it was agreed that the Forum would suspend further meetings until more resources were available. Jane Noble also informed members of the officer discussions that took place. NE had given a presentation on green infrastructure and offered to attend LAF meetings and members agreed that a presentation on how the HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) scheme could be used to achieve RoWIP objectives should be included on a future CAFWS agenda. Jane also gave her thanks to all CAFWS members for their work as it had become apparent that CAFWS was performing well in comparison to some other LAFs in the region.

Sub Forums

112. Members received verbal updates from the chairmen of the Coastal Plain, Low Weald and High Weald Sub Forums and noted the unconfirmed minutes of each sub forum. All three had been working on the prioritisation of the proposed Rights of Way Improvement Plan projects in their areas and thanked their members and the local access rangers for their hard work. It was agreed that it would now be important to manage expectations as many of the short-listed projects could not be delivered immediately. In his report on the Low Weald Sub Forum, Peter Tompkins highlighted the confusion over G roads in the area and voiced the Sub Forum's frustration that there was not a comprehensive list of G roads. Bill Acraman explained that there was such a list, and undertook to provide it.

Action: Bill Acraman

Current/future strategic developments

113. The Forum noted the response sent to Horsham District Council's West of Bewbush Development consultation (copy appended to the signed minutes). Tricia Butcher also informed members that despite the Inspector accepting the need for the right of way removed from the original plans, this did not compel the developers to reinstate it. Outline planning permission was expected to be applied for in March 2010.

114. Chris Boocock reported that the transport assessment carried out by developers for the West of Horsham development had been rejected by the County Council as unsatisfactory. However the developers were still not proposing a grade separated crossing of the A264 and so CAFWS needed to continue applying pressure. Nigel Sloan voiced his concern that WSCC officers were not recognising the need for the grade separation and Bill Acraman undertook to investigate the issue and to apply pressure if necessary.

115. Heidi Brunsdon highlighted that Mid Sussex District Council's Core Strategy had been rejected by members but that it had described the Worth Way as not significant. Heidi argued that CAFWS should take this opportunity to lobby MSDC to clarify their intentions for the route, as in the past there had been attempts to make it into a road. Chris Boocock explained that he and Sustrans

were unaware of any threat to the route, but that he would investigate and clarify.

Action: Chris Boocock

Current/future consultations

116. Jane Noble explained that the proposed consultation meeting on Natural England's Coastal Access consultation did not take place due to the adverse weather. Jane explained that Natural England was seeking comments on its proposed scheme for delivery of coastal access. Members were informed that the consultation document attempted to balance the interests of the landowner and access, and was proposing that the corridor would generally be 4metres in width. Natural England was to be the lead authority, working in partnership with the access authority in each area. Local Access Forums were mentioned in the document, so Jane was confident that CAFWS would be involved in the process. It was also confirmed that the coastal route would not have a statutory status as a right of way. Members noted that it was proposed that the seaward side would be considered as spreading room and the Forum expressed concern at the detrimental effect this could have on the wildlife and nesting birds in particular.

The meeting took a five minute break following this item

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

117. The Chairman drew members' attention to the work being carried out by the sub forums prioritising the proposed projects that would be included in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) for each sub forum area. The Chairmen from the Coastal Plain, Low Weald and High Weald Sub Forums circulated details of their selected projects (copies attached to the signed minutes).

118. Peter Brown explained that on the Coastal Plain the selected projects were predominately cycling routes as it was felt that this was a particular issue for the area. Early work had begun on all of the selected projects, and as such Peter was confident that they would all be achieved.

119. Peter Tompkins explained that the Low Weald Sub Forum had selected seven projects, one of which being a reserve in case any of the others proved to be infeasible. The majority of the sub forum's choices were upgrading existing routes from footpaths to bridleways. Peter highlighted that for the project to establish a Pegasus crossing for the Downs Link to cross the A283 in Bramber, a bridge over the road would be the most suitable, but it was recognised that this would not be possible within existing budgets. Trevor Passmore suggested that instead of this it would be cheaper and easier to divert the path to the river bank and then back up the other side. Peter agreed that this seemed to be a suitable solution and undertook to investigate further.

120. Nigel James explained that the South Downs Access Forum had been asked to collate such priorities at a very late stage and as such was not able to circulate the RoWIP priorities for the South Downs. Nigel also explained that the SDAF was no longer meeting as a formal forum due to limited funds to support

it, but that James Ort was continuing to canvass the views of SDAF members on this issue.

121. Tricia Butcher reported that work on seven projects was already being undertaken by partners, and so had selected a further six that were achievable. Heidi Brunsdon asked whether the bridge on FP28 (between Brambletyne Bends and Harwoods) had been repaired yet. Jane Noble undertook to investigate and inform Heidi directly.

Action: Jane Noble

122. The Chairman thanked the sub forum members for their work and also the Access Rangers for their valuable contribution. It was agreed that for each project the next steps would need to be considered individually but that in most instances the Rangers would be able to provide an initial assessment of the project's feasibility. It was also agreed that the collated list of RoWIP priorities should be submitted to West Sussex County Council for the Cabinet Member to consider. It was suggested that the Rights of Way Committee should consider the list before submission to the Cabinet Member. The Chairman undertook to speak to James Ort regarding the priorities for the South Downs, and agreed that the South Downs list would be circulated to all CAFWS members prior to submission.

Action: Peter Brown

Local Transport Plan 3

123. Tim Yair (Senior Transport Planner, WSCC) joined the meeting to inform members of the work underway on the development of West Sussex County Council's third the Local Transport Plan (LTP3). LTP3 was due to come into effect in April 2011. The document would comprise a strategy element, which would set out the Council's transport policies and strategies until 2026, and a separate five year rolling Implementation Plan. It was noted that the consultation document (copy appended to the signed minutes) did not reference the RoWIP and Tim recognised that this was an omission that would be addressed. Tim highlighted that LTP3 would not create additional funding, but that sustainable travel was a priority of the Plan and as such there may be instances where rights of way can contribute to WSCC's aims. It was suggested that LTP3 should aim to incorporate the list of RoWIP projects identified by the sub forums. Tim explained that he wanted to avoid replicating the RoWIP, but that suitable schemes could be referenced and included within the Implementation Plan. Due to the limited time available at the meeting, it was agreed that any members with further questions could contact Tim directly at ltip@westsussex.gov.uk. The Forum agreed that a response to the consultation should be sent.

Action: Peter Brown/Jane Noble

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 1:25pm and reconvened at 2:10pm

General Report

124. Members noted the General Report from the Forum Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes) and the correction that the Rights of Way Committee was taking place on 23rd February 2010 and not 22nd as stated.

Matters for information

125. David Ribbens announced that he was stepping down from the main Forum but that he would continue with his role on the Low Weald Sub Forum. He announced that David Burden was a prospective candidate to represent Parish Councils' interest on CAFWS. The Chairman thanked David for his valuable input into CAFWS matters over the past years and wished him well for the future.

Agenda items for future meetings

126. Members agreed that the following items would be discussed at a future meeting:

- The High Weald AONB unit
- The Highways Agency and dangerous road crossings (with possible inclusion of WSCC's highways team)
- Natural England and agri-environmental issues

Date of next meeting

127. Members noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 28th April 2010 at 10.15am, with Haywards Heath a possible location. Subsequent meeting dates were noted as:

- 21st July 2010
- 10th November 2010
- 2nd February 2011

The meeting closed at 2:20pm

The Chairman