

Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS)

At a meeting of the Forum held at Burgess Hill Town Council on 28th April 2010

Present:

Mr Bill Acraman	Mr Peter Brown (Chairman)	
Mrs Tricia Butcher	Mrs Helen Baldwin	Mr Chris Boocock
Mr Peter Tompkins	Mr Glynn Jones (V/C)	Mr Robin Rogers
	Mr David Whyberd	Mr Anthony Young

Apologies were received from Dave Evans, Ted White, David Burden, Nigel Sloan, Phil Belden, Shirley Wright, Ann Janes, Martin Reynolds, Trevor Passmore and Heidi Brunsdon.

In attendance:

Craig Bowdery	-	WSCC, Democratic Services
Peter Bradley	-	WSCC, Safety & Traffic Management
Lisa Creaye-Griffin	-	WSCC, Rural Operations
John Newton	-	Friends of Burgess Hill Green Circle Network
Jane Noble	-	WSCC, Senior Access Officer
Ron Paterson	-	WSCC, Road Safety
Jon Perks	-	WSCC, Principal Rights of Way Officer
Roy Ticehurst	-	Friends of Burgess Hill Green Circle Network
Martin Wright	-	Highways Agency

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

1. **Resolved –**
That Mr Peter Brown be elected as Chairman of the Forum and Mr Glynn Jones be elected as Vice Chairman of the Forum for 2010/11.
2. Members also noted that Heidi Brunsdon would no longer be a member of the Forum and that Robin Rogers would be appointed to represent West Sussex County Council in her place.

Declaration of interests

3. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the last meeting

4. **Resolved –**
That the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting held on 27th January 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Actions and matters arising

5. With reference to minute 102 and the discussion on a new **CAFWS website**, Glynn Jones informed the Forum that the County Council's website was being redesigned to incorporate most of the information requested by members. In order to avoid duplication of work, the Forum agreed that an independent

CAFWS website should not be pursued. It was also agreed that Glynn should be consulted by WSCC officers if there were to be any significant changes to the County Council's webpages. Members requested that a PC be available at the next meeting to allow them to familiarise themselves with WSCC's countryside access webpages, and the Forum Secretary undertook to investigate the feasibility of this.

Action: Craig Bowdery

6. Lisa Creaye-Griffin updated members on WSCC's **guided walks programme** (minute 104). Due to limited resources *Exploring West Sussex* would not be produced this year, however there are links to other organisations' guided walks pages from the WSCC website at www.westsussex.gov.uk/walking. A new booklet, *Discovering Sussex*, would also soon be available on the website. The booklet featured a series of guided walks led by experienced guides and had been produced in association with Footprints of Sussex and PerRambulations. It was agreed that the publication should be promoted through local papers and the library service and Lisa Creaye-Griffin agreed to investigate. Members also noted that the West Sussex Food and Countryside Festival would be taking place on 8th-10th October in Steyning which is based around guided walks.

Action: Lisa Creaye-Griffin

7. The Chairman informed members that he had met with the **Cabinet Member for Environment and Economy**, Deborah Urquhart, following the Forum's discussion recorded in minute 108. The Chairman explained that he felt it was a productive meeting that had highlighted the importance of proper consultation with CAFWS and the value of WSCC and CAFWS working closely together. At the meeting it was agreed that to strengthen the link between the two, CAFWS minutes would be received by the Rights of Way Committee for information. It was also agreed that it would be useful for an issues paper for the South Downs National Park to be produced for the next CAFWS meeting. The paper would identify issues that needed addressing during the transition to, and development of, the National Park Authority and WSCC's delivery of rights of way and give CAFWS members an opportunity to comment.

Action: Lisa Creaye-Griffin / Jane Noble

8. With reference to minute 112, Jane Noble drew members' attention to the list of highways on which limited maintenance is carried out (often referred to as **G Roads**) in the county that was, along with a map showing their locations, available to view at the meeting. It was agreed that the list would also be circulated to the chairmen of the Forum and the sub forums as required, and to other members on request. Chris Boocock reported that he had contacted Mid Sussex District Council regarding their Core Strategy and the possibility of plans for **Worth Way** (minute 115). The Council had confirmed that they had no plans to use the route for a new road. Chris also informed members that the suggested route alteration of the **Downs Link** made at the last meeting (minute 119) may not be the most suitable option and that investigations were underway to assess using the south side of the road and extending the route to the roundabout.

Urgent matters

9. There were no urgent matters.

South Downs National Park Progress Report

10. Lisa Creaye-Griffin gave a verbal report on the development of the South Downs National Park Authority (NPA) and members noted that all 27 members had been appointed. At its first meeting, the NPA had elected a Chair and Vice Chair and adopted documents such as terms of reference and standing orders. The next NPA meeting in June was expected to make a decision on the NPA's functions, such as planning and development control. The National Park Establishment Team had been working with officers from the local authorities to consider how countryside management and access services would be delivered once the NPA became fully operational in April 2011. Whilst the NPA's budget was not yet known, it was confirmed that it would be wholly funded by Defra and that local authorities would only contribute financially if the local authority contracted a specific service to the NPA.

11. Glynn Jones gave a verbal report on the meeting of the South Downs Access Forum (SDAF) held on 9th April 2010. The SDAF meeting was preceded by a site visit to Breaky Bottom near Lewes, where the Local Access Forum had initially not been consulted on a restriction to an area of open access land. It was agreed that a list of restrictions on open access land in West Sussex should be prepared for CAFWS's consideration at a future meeting.

Action: Jane Noble

12. Glynn also informed the Forum that the April meeting had been the final meeting of the SDAF. As part of the transition to the NPA, a statutory Local Access Forum would be established for the South Downs however the decision to cease the SDAF had been brought forward following the departure of key support staff at the South Downs Joint Committee. It was felt that appointing a replacement officer to support the final months of the SDAF would not be possible and as such the SDAF members would be involved as a sounding board to help with the organisation and development of the new statutory Local Access Forum. Members expressed their disappointment that this decision had left CAFWS without a sub forum for the South Downs area, and that CAFWS's sub forum had effectively been dissolved without prior consultation. It was agreed that any issues arising in the South Downs would be brought before the full Forum until the sub forum arrangements had been confirmed. The Forum also noted that there would be an urgent need to clarify the roles and relationship between CAFWS and the new statutory South Downs Local Access Forum, particularly in the development and monitoring of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Action: Lisa Creaye-Griffin

13. Bill Acraman gave a verbal report on the formation of WSCC's Rights of Way Working Group that would be considering how rights of way management is delivered across all of West Sussex and how to implement the recent decision not to delegate maintenance responsibility to the NPA. Members noted that the Working Group would be looking at how volunteers could have a greater involvement in rights of way management, but that it was not the intention to establish a 'rival' force of volunteers to the Joint Committee/NPA. It was expected that the Working Group would produce early proposals by July and that CAFWS's views would be sought at the next meeting. It was agreed that a

CAFWS workshop to discuss the delivery of rights of way management in West Sussex would be arranged for the afternoon of the next meeting.

Sub Forums

14. The Forum noted that the Coastal Plain and High Weald Sub Forums had not met since the previous CAFWS meeting. The Low Weald Sub Forum had met although meeting notes were not yet available. At the meeting, the members discussed the seven identified priority projects for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan with the local access ranger and considered how each could be progressed.

Road safety issues relating to countryside access for non-motorised users (NMUs)

15. The Forum received a presentation from Ron Paterson and Peter Bradley (copy appended to the signed minutes) on West Sussex County Council's efforts to reduce the number of accidents for NMUs on countryside roads. The work was split between education, awareness and publicity campaigns to raise the awareness of all users, and engineering solutions to make roads and crossings safer. The Forum also received a verbal report from Martin Wright on the Highways Agency's work in this area. The Highways Agency work closely with WSCC but receive strict targets from Government on the reduction of the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) and on improvements to journey time reliability. It was stressed though that the Highways Agency still recognise their duty to NMUs and there was a wide range of projects underway to improve crossings identified as unsatisfactory. Their work was directed by data evidence in order to address the crossings with the greatest need first.

16. Following the presentations, members asked the following:

- Was there any evidence that increased signage decreases traffic speeds? *Research had been carried out on village gateway signs that found that a driver's awareness increased and they drove with much greater caution, even if speeds only dropped 1-2mph.*
- Do young cyclists get taught the 'rules' of off-road cycling as part of their cycling proficiency at school? *Bikability has replaced the old-style cycling proficiency, and the focus was on harm reduction and off-road cycling was not covered by the syllabus, although it was agreed that its inclusion would be beneficial.*
- It was important that both WSCC and the Highways Agency regularly consulted with local users before any plans were implemented and throughout any developments to ensure that proposals could benefit the maximum number of users. *Agreed.*
- Relying on statistical data to identify the most dangerous crossings would not give the most accurate picture as many users are too scared of using some crossings so there are no accidents. *Agreed, however there is limited funding available and the lack of numerical evidence as justification for expenditure would make projects extremely unlikely.*

Robin Rogers left the meeting at 12:30

Current/future strategic developments

17. Members noted the CAFWS response to the Highways Agency's consultation on a new pedestrian/cycle/equestrian crossing on the A27 at Castle Goring/Holt Farm (copy appended to the signed minutes). Tricia Butcher gave a verbal update on the West of Bewbush development and members noted that another exhibition had been arranged by the developer for 14th May to present the latest revisions to the plans.

Members took a five minute break and Peter Bradley, Ron Paterson and Martin Wright left the meeting

Rights of Way Improvement Plan – CAFWS priority projects

18. The Forum noted the report submitted to the Rights of Way Committee that identified the priority projects that CAFWS would like to see progressed through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) delivery. There had not yet been a formal response from the Cabinet Member, although the report had been received positively by the Committee. It was noted that CAFWS would need to press WSCC for a response and subsequent action to ensure that the projects were progressed. Jane Noble agreed to look at how a better dialogue could be developed to ensure that progress was relayed promptly. It was also noted that closer integration of the RoWIP and the Local Transport Plan 3 could be an effective means of ensuring progress, although securing funds for RoWIP projects through LTP3 would still be very difficult to secure.

West Sussex County Council Rights of Way Annual Report

19. The Forum received a presentation from Jon Perks outlining the work carried out by the Rights of Way Team in 2009/10 (copy appended to the signed minutes) with particular emphasis on work that contributes to RoWIP delivery. Members' attention was drawn to projects such as surface improvement schemes at Weirwood Reservoir, a new cycle route from Barnham-Flansham, working with volunteers, raising awareness in the community, developing new access opportunities across the county and working to improve a busy road crossing on the A24.

20. Members thanked Jon for his presentation and for the work of the Rights of Way Team. It was highlighted that the ratio of expenditure to number of users meant that rights of way projects represented much better value for money than highway schemes so should be welcomed and commended. It was asked whether there was a list of all rights of way projects that would be delivered if funding were secured that was similar to the Blue Book for highways projects. Jon explained that rights of way projects were incorporated in the Blue Book, which was available on the County Council's website at www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/roads-and-transport/development-control/developer-funded-scheme-list.en.

Current/future consultations

21. The Forum noted that the consultation from Natural England on making representations and objections to coastal access proposals would be considered

by Martin Reynolds and that any members with comments to make should inform Martin or Jane. The Forum also noted the responses sent to

- Coastal Access – Natural England's Scheme
- Local Transport Plan 3 – West Sussex County Council
- Existing direction restricting access under Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (fire direction) – no response sent as no comments were received from members

It was asked whether there would be an opportunity to contribute to the decadal review of the CRoW Act 2000 and agreed that as Sue Batstone (Natural England's Open Access Advisor) was expected to attend a future meeting, the issue could be raised then.

South East Region

22. The Forum received a verbal report on the LAF South East regional conference, where Tricia Butcher and Chris Boocock gave a presentation on their experience of securing rights of way provision at the West of Bewbush development. The Vice Chairman also attended the conference and it was agreed that it had been a useful and informative day.

23. Glynn Jones reported on a recent regional meeting of LAF representatives that considered equestrian issues and access to Forestry Commission land. The meeting proposed that each LAF should establish a Forestry Commission Access Group that would select one FC wood in its area where it is judged that public access should be significantly improved. The Group should then develop some positive suggestions to test the FC's willingness to work with users.

24. **Resolved** –
That a Forestry Commission Access Group be established and that Glynn Jones, Tricia Butcher and Helen Baldwin be members of the Group.

England Access Forum

25. Glynn Jones informed members that the Chairman of the England Access Forum (EAF) does not think the national forum is viable with the limited support provided by Natural England, despite LAF representatives feeling that there was a strategic need for a national LAF voice in issues such as Forestry Commission access. Discussions on how the EAF could continue were ongoing and members agreed that CAFWS should send a letter of support to the EAF.

Action: Peter Brown / Jane Noble

Burgess Hill Green Circle Project

26. The Forum received a presentation from Roy Ticehurst and John Newton on the Burgess Hill Green Circle Project. The Project aimed to provide a network of routes in and around Burgess Hill, creating a circle around the town of a combined wildlife corridor and multi-user routes almost entirely off-road. There were 'spokes' in the 'wheel' which then connected to the centre of town and the routes used green spaces, multi-user paths and proposed cycle lanes beside existing roads. Following the meeting, members attended a site visit to observe some of the improvements made by the Project. Members were impressed by the

achievements of the Project to date and its future plans, and commented that similar initiatives in other areas should be encouraged.

General Report

27. Members received the General Report from the Forum Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).

Matter for information

28. Chris Boocock informed the Forum that he would soon be leaving Sustrans, but that he would be continuing to be a member of CAFWS. Tricia Butcher drew members' attention to a Government consultation on a draft new Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment, which Jane Noble agreed to circulate to members for their comments.

Action: Jane Noble

Agenda items for future meetings of the Forum

29. Members noted that the following items would be considered at a future meeting of CAFWS:

- Workshop on rights of way delivery in West Sussex
- Farming issues and the access opportunities of stewardship schemes (higher level)
- The High Weald AONB Unit
- Health Walks
- Restrictions on open access land

Date of next meeting

30. Members noted that the next meeting of CAFWS would be on Wednesday 21st July 2010, with the meeting beginning at 10:15am and a workshop taking place in the afternoon. Subsequent meeting dates were noted as:

- 10th November 2010
- 2nd February 2011

The meeting closed at 1:51pm.

The Chairman