

Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

At a meeting of the Forum held at Capron House, Midhurst, 1st December 2004.

Present: Mr. I. Elliott (Chairman)

Mrs. H. Baldwin	Mr. D. Deedman	Mr. T. Passmore
Mr R. Bidwell	Mr. S. Evans	Mr. N. Sloan
Mr. P. Brown	Mr. G. Jones	Mr. W. Trinick
		Mr. T. White

In attendance: Tricia Butcher, Nick Harris, Keith Tyrell, Andy Whitnall, Hilary Major.

Officers in attendance: Lisa Creaye-Griffin, Mark Henshall, Christine Luff, David Marshall, Rosemary Pugh.

Apologies

106. Apologies for absence were received from Bill Acraman, Ann Janes, Ronnie Perrin and Shirley Wright.

Welcome

107. The Chairman welcomed Tricia Butcher, Chairman, High Weald Sub-Forum, Nick Harris of the Trailriders Fellowship (TRF), Hilary Major of Graffham Parish Council, Keith Tyrell, Access Officer, South Downs Access Forum, Andy Whitnall, Access Officer, East Sussex Local Access Forum.

Declarations of Interest

108. On Item 10 (b) establishment of access to registered common land – Glynn Jones declared a personal interest as the National Trust owns land adjacent to registered common land at Telegraph House.

Minutes

109. On minute 67, the Forum noted that the Secretary had received a response from the Countryside Agency and not Defra as stated in minute 67, on the issue of excepted land.

110. On minute 71, the Forum noted that the launch event took place at Ditchling Village on 20th September 2004.

111. Resolved – That the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting held on 6th October 2004 be approved and that they be signed as a correct record.

Matters arising

112. On minute 77, the Forum was informed that both private members' bills had failed as they had been unable to progress past their second parliamentary stage.

Membership of the Forum

113. The Forum received and noted a report by the Acting Access Officer on the future balance of membership of the Forum (copy attached to the signed minutes).

114. The Forum agreed that there was a need for a new member with an area of interest in access to countryside for motorised vehicles. In addition there should also be a member who represented the Sussex Association of Local Councils (SALC) and that there should be a third new member with an area of interest in rural tourism.

115. The Forum recognised that it would be advantageous to have more representation from land-owning interests and preferably a landowner who had other specific expertise to offer in an area like forestry or a riparian landowner. Members also agreed that the Forum needed someone with an interest in activities for young people in the countryside, however the problem of regular attendance at meetings for young people was noted. The appointment of a youth leader might be a solution to that problem.

116. Members discussed the possibility of holding meetings on specific themes, for example access to the countryside for people with reduced mobility.

117. Resolved – That the Highway Authority be advised to appoint four new members with the following areas of interest: -

- (a) access to the countryside for motorised vehicles
- (b) a representative of the Sussex Association of Local Councils
- (c) rural tourism
- (d) activities for young people in rural areas (perhaps a young farmer)

Action: Lisa Creaye-Griffin

Standing Orders

118. The Forum received and noted a report by the County Secretary on draft standing orders for the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (copy attached to the signed minutes).

119. The Forum agreed that in section 10 – Interpretation, there should be a statement which explained that references to 'he' in the standing orders could be interpreted as 'she' when appropriate.

120. Resolved – That the standing orders be approved.

Action: Mark Henshall

Motorised Vehicles in the Countryside

121. The Forum received and noted a report by the Acting Access Officer on the future handling of recreational access to the countryside by motorised vehicles (copy attached to the signed minutes).

122. The Forum discussed the difficulties for the police and landowners in enforcing the law with regard to unlawful use of motorised vehicles in the countryside. The Forum recognised the importance of developing a network of communication between all stakeholders including the police, landowners, parish councils, the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and organisations like the Trailriders Fellowship to ensure that all illegal use is reported and develop a more accurate view of the extent of the problem.

123. A scheme was described whereby landowners could prevent unauthorised access, while at the same time allowing permissive access, by allocating keys to locked gates to authorised users. This suggestion was welcomed as a positive and helpful possible solution. Mrs Baldwin emphasised that the British Driving Society and the South Downs Harness Club could never support locked gates to prevent legal use of a right of way.

124. Resolved – that the Highway Authority be asked to advise the Forum of the extent of recreational use of the countryside by motorised vehicles. A report would be brought to the Forum at its meeting in June 2005.

Action: David Marshall

Access Land

Access Management Grant Scheme

125. The Acting Access Officer advised that the Countryside Agency had agreed a grant of £104,951 under the Access Management Grant Scheme. £96,742 would be allocated to the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The grant will cover 75% of the total expenditure and the remaining 25% will be met by the Highway Authority. The Acting Access Officer advised that claims had to be received and work carried out by April 2005, an extension to this deadline would probably be needed.

Access land with no means of public access

126. Christine Luff advised that the Rights of Way Committee had agreed two permissive agreements with the Leconfield Estate at Marehill Common, Pulborough and Sware Lane, Sutton.

127. An additional parcel of registered common land with no means of public access had been identified at Tangmere, near Chichester. Christine Luff advised that the obvious means of access would be along Decoy Lane, however as this route was largely impenetrable and would be likely to require a great deal of expense to bring it up to standard, the possibility of alternative means of access would be investigated. An update would be given to the Forum at the next meeting.

Action: Christine Luff

128. Access to common land at Telegraph House: following an enquiry by Glynn Jones, who expressed a personal interest as the National Trust owns land adjacent to Telegraph House, Christine Luff will be writing to the owner about notices and fencing.

Action: Christine Luff

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

129. The Forum noted that the Highway Authority had formally accepted the revised timetable. The Chairman suggested to members of the Forum that the ROWIP might evolve gradually on a rolling programme and that the timetable would be adjusted accordingly. Regular reports to each meeting of the Forum would be necessary to update members on the progress of the plan.

Action: David Marshall

130. The Acting Forum Officer updated members of the Forum on the recent meeting of the ROWIP Working Group which had met to make a preliminary examination of the priority projects put forward by the sub-fora. (A note of the meeting is attached to the signed minutes).

131. The Acting Forum Officer reminded the Forum that the ROWIP should be an aspirational document and reported that the Working Group had discussed a checklist which would assist members of the Forum and Sub-Fora by ensuring that the advice given on the ROWIP covered all areas in the county and a wide range of activities associated with access to the countryside.

132. The Chairman requested that information on the projects and schemes already being progressed by the Highway Authority would assist the Sub-Fora in their task of identifying priority projects for the ROWIP.

133. Resolved – That the Sub-Fora meet again early in the new year to ensure that there is adequate geographical coverage on a wide range of projects which have been considered and should now be prioritised for their areas.

Action: Lisa Creaye-Griffin/Rosemary Pugh

Defra Consultations

134. The Forum received and noted a report by the County Secretary on the Defra Consultation relating to Registers of Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) Applications; and Highways Act Applications and Declarations, copy attached to the signed minutes. Views of the Forum are required by January 31st 2005.

135. Resolved – That the Forum response to the Consultation would be in line with that of the Highway Authority with the addition that the content of the DMMO register should also include an indication as to when an opposed order would be submitted to the Secretary of State.

Action: Christine Luff

136. The Forum received and noted a report by the County Secretary on the Defra Consultation relating to Joint Orders and the Power to include Modifications in other Orders, copy attached to the signed minutes. Views of the Forum are required by January 31st 2005.

137. Resolved – That the Forum response to the Consultation be in line with that of the Highway Authority.

Action: Christine Luff

General Report

138. The Forum received and noted a general report on a range of issues of interest to the Forum.

Agenda for the next meeting

139. The agenda for the next meeting would include items on: -

Draft annual report
Signage on access land

Date of next meeting

140. The next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex will be held at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday 2nd March 2005 at Adur District Council, Shoreham.

Chairman