

West Sussex Local Access Forum

At a meeting of the Forum held at Billingshurst Village Hall on 6th October 2004.

Present: Mr. I. Elliott (Chairman)

Mr B Acraman	Mr S Evans	Mrs R Perrin
Mrs H Baldwin	Mrs A Janes	Mr N Sloan
Mr P Brown	Mr G Jones	Mrs S Wright
Mr D Deedman	Mr T Passmore	

In attendance: Tricia Butcher, Peter Fancourt, Nick Harris, Nigel Hiscoke, Carol Houston, Eric Rimmer, Keith Tyrell, Andy Whitnall.

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

Apologies

62. Apologies for absence were received from Carla Barnes, Phil Belden, Roy Bidwell, Paul Quinton, William Trinick, Ted White.

Welcome

63. The Chairman welcomed Tricia Butcher, Chairman, High Weald Sub-Forum, Peter Fancourt and Keith Harris of the Trailriders Fellowship (TRF), Nigel Hiscoke of DEFRA, Carol Houston of Rudgwick Riding Club, Eric Rimmer of Graffham Parish Council, Keith Tyrell, Access Officer, South Downs Access Forum, Andy Whitnall, Access Officer, East Sussex Local Access Forum.

John Couzens

64. The Forum held a short period of silence as a mark of respect for John Couzens who had died in September.

Declarations of Interest

65. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

66. Resolved – That the minutes of the West Sussex Local Access Forum meeting held on 7th July 2004 be approved and that they be signed as a correct record.

Matters arising

67. On minute 32, the Secretary reported that a response had been received from DEFRA on the issue of excepted land. The response indicated that this was a challenging area of the new rights of access and that landowners and users

should refer to the Countryside Agency website for further information as the Agency itself was unable to offer categorical advice.

68. On minute 35, the Chairman reported that draft standing orders had now been prepared, a report and the draft standing orders would be considered at the next meeting in December.

Action: Mark Henshall

69. On minute 40, Lisa Creaye-Griffin reported that a survey to landowners had been sent out. A deadline of the end of this year had been given for responses.

70. On minute 53, the Secretary reported that there was some doubt about whether the letter from the Chairman to all parish councils had been circulated with the latest parish council newsletter, the County Circular. Ronnie Perrin agreed to investigate the matter.

Action: Ronnie Perrin/Rosemary Pugh

71. On minute 56, the Chairman reported that the launch event had taken place at Ditchling Beacon on 20th September 2004.

Motorised Vehicles in the Countryside

72. The Forum received and noted a report by the Director of Environment and Development and the County Secretary on Motorised Vehicles in the Countryside (copy attached to the signed minutes).

73. A late paper from the Trailriders Fellowship in response to the report was circulated at the meeting.

74. Lisa Creaye-Griffin advised that it was important to put the debate on this issue into context and that due to the small number RUPPs (roads used as public paths) and BOATs (byways open to all traffic) in West Sussex, the problems associated with access for motorised vehicles in the countryside was not widespread throughout the county.

75. David Marshall advised that the Forum should consider that, as part of its wider remit to advise the Highway Authority on the issue of access to the countryside generally, the future handling of access to the countryside by motorised vehicle users needed to be addressed. The Forum's comments and suggestions were sought.

76. Nigel Harris (National Representative of the Trailriders Fellowship) was asked to give comments as an observer. He stated that the view of the Trailrider's Federation was that restrictions on the legal use of the rights of way network for motorised vehicle drivers would not in any way reduce illegal use. It was important that those drivers using the network legally work closely and co-operatively with communities and local authorities to ensure that any negative environment impact of this recreational activity was minimal. Nigel Harris gave

the Forum details of the Lane Watch initiative, which had been set up with these objectives.

77. On the private members' bills referred to in the report, Bill Acraman believed that there was a strong possibility that they would not progress past their second parliamentary stage. In that case further legislation is unlikely until after the next general election and that would be the time to lean on the Minister, he suggested.

78. The following comments and suggestions were made: -

- If it was considered appropriate for motorised vehicles to use BOATs then the surfaces of the routes should be properly maintained. If it was not appropriate, use should be stopped.
- It was recognised that there would be budgetary implications associated with the work on providing appropriate surfaces and maintaining them.
- The negative environmental impact was described including the problems of noise, dust, mud, speed, and general damage. The problem of convoys of vehicles was also described.
- The benefits for disabled people through having access to the countryside by means motorised vehicles was discussed. It was noted that users invalid carriages that complied with the prescribed requirements (class 2 and 3) were already allowed to use footpaths and bridleways where conditions on the ground permitted.
- Permissive agreements for vehicular use could be considered.
- Members also requested advice from the TRF on how to 'assess the need' for access to countryside by motorised vehicle drivers.
- Where a BOAT claim, if successful, would result in inappropriate vehicular use, the County Council should be considering a TRO (traffic regulation order) at an early stage.

79. Resolved – that the Acting Forum Officer, noting members' comments and suggestions, prepare a report with the objective of giving specific advice to the Highway Authority on its future handling of recreational access to the countryside by motorised vehicles.

Action – Lisa Creaye-Griffin

Membership of the Forum

80. The resignations of Carla Barnes and Nicky Webber were noted.

81. Lisa Creaye-Griffin advised that the full Forum originally had 22 members and that there were now four vacancies. The original aim of the selection panel had been to achieve a balance of interests, age and gender to ensure that the forum represented as many views and interests as possible. She advised that there was now an opportunity to discuss the future membership of the Forum as we needed to recruit four new members. Bill Acraman suggested that by holding meetings later in the day, the problem of time off for those in full time employment might be reduced.

82. Resolved – that the Acting Forum Officer prepare report for members to agree the future balance of the membership of the Forum.

Action – Lisa Creaye-Griffin

Future Direction of the Forum

83. The Forum received and noted a report by the Acting Forum Officer on the future direction of the Forum (copy attached to the signed minutes).
84. Lisa Creaye-Griffin advised that the chairmen of the four sub-fora would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Forum's working group but that this would not be a permanent arrangement.
85. Forum members welcomed the fact that the Forum would be considering a wider range of access issues and that access to the coast as well as the countryside should become a focus, access to woodland areas was also suggested.
86. Peter Brown commented that since the Parish Councils were going to be asked for their input, then there should be flexibility in any future programmes to ensure that that is was possible to incorporate their suggestions.
87. The Chairman reminded members that the Forum's role was as a statutory independent advisory body to West Sussex County Council, however this would be too cumbersome to have in a title, it was therefore agreed that the wording 'for West Sussex' at the end of the title reflected this independence.
88. The Acting Forum Officer advised that the Forum's website would be updated to include more information about its future work programme as well as the new title.
89. Resolved – (1) that the Forum be known as The Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex.
- (2) that the outline for the forward programme be agreed.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

90. The Forum received and noted a report by the Director of Environment and Development on the revised timetable for the West Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan (copy attached to the signed minutes).
91. The Forum received and noted a report by the Acting Forum Officer on the revised timetable for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (copy attached to the signed minutes).
92. The Acting Forum Officer advised that if the extended timetable as set out in the report was accepted by the Highway Authority there would now be an opportunity for the Forum to discuss exactly how it should be involved in

advising on the plan. Once finalised the Chairman suggested that the Forum should receive an update on the timetable at each meeting of the Forum.

93. Resolved – the Forum advise the Highway Authority that the timetable for the ROWIP be extended to allow completion in March/April 2006, the plan could then be submitted with the annual report for the Local Transport Plan.

Action – Rosemary Pugh/David Marshall

94. Subject to the Highway Authority being able to agree to the extension of the timetable for the ROWIP, members felt that there would be an opportunity to take more time to consider the priorities for the plan. David Marshall agreed to report back to the Forum when a full analysis of the current consultation had been completed.

Action – David Marshall

Access Land

95. The Forum received and noted a report by the Forum Officer on the opening of access land in West Sussex (copy attached to the signed minutes).

96. Forum members noted that Chris Burke of the Countryside Agency would be attending the next meeting of the Forum to update members and answer any questions on the Access Management Grant Scheme (AMGS).

97. Christine Luff advised that a route to the Marehill Common 'island' site had been agreed with the Leconfield Estate. She added that an additional piece of access land at Sutton had been identified to which there was no access from the rights of way network. The land was also owned by the Leconfield Estate who had again kindly agreed to dedicate a permissive means of access. The authority of the Rights of Way Committee would be sought to enter into formal permissive agreements and a progress report would be given to the next meeting of the Forum. She also mentioned that Roland Seber had just received information of a further piece of access land in the Chichester area that was without direct continuity with the existing network of public highways. Officers would be opening discussions with the owner about securing access.

Action – Christine Luff/Lisa Creaye-Griffin

Access to Access Land – General Principles

98. The Forum received and noted a report by the Director of Environment and Development on the General Principles proposed by the South Downs Access Forum (copy attached to the signed minutes).

99. Members agreed that the principles were helpful, but that a flexible approach towards them would be taken in the future.

General Report

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

101. On item 4.1, Roland Seber reported that the Countryside Agency had now agreed to discuss the issue of training for access officers and forum members with the Southern LAF Officers Liaison Group.

102. The Chairman drew the Forum's attention to item 8.1 of the General Report to remind them of the procedure on raising questions.

Agenda for the next meeting

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

- Membership of the forum
- Standing Orders
- Motorised Vehicles in the Countryside
- Chris Burke to update and answer questions on the AMGS.

Calendar of Meetings for 2005

104. Meetings of the Forum will be held on: -

- Wednesday 2nd March 2005
- Wednesday 29th June 2005
- Thursday 6th October 2005

Date of next meeting

105. The next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex will be held at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday 1st December 2004 at Capron House, Midhurst.

CHAIRMAN

