

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

## **Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex**

At a meeting of the Forum held at Capron House, Midhurst on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs. R. Perrin (Chairman)	
Mr. B. Acraman	Mr. D. Deedman	Mr. D. Ribbens
Mrs. H. Baldwin	Mr. S. Evans	Mr. N. Sloan
Mr. P. Belden	Mrs. A. Janes	Mr. W. Trinick
Mr. P. Brown	Mr. T. Passmore	Mr. T. White
		Mrs. S. Wright

In attendance: Liz Beth, Tricia Butcher, Nikkie Enticknap, Cath Hart, Hilary Major, Jonathan Mitchell, Geoff Perks, Andrew Whitnall, Marion Wilder, John Wood.

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

### **Apologies**

32. Apologies for absence were received from Roy Bidwell, Peter Fancourt and Glynn Jones.

### **Membership of the Forum**

33. The Chairman reported that Dr Tony Whitbread had resigned from the Forum. A replacement for Dr Whitbread with a similar area of interest in conservation policy would be sought as soon as possible.

### **Welcome**

34. The Chairman welcomed David Ribbens, a new member of the Forum, David is a member of the Sussex Association of Local Councils and has been involved with the scouting movement for many years.

### **Declarations of Interest**

35. There were no declarations of interest.

### **Minutes**

36. Resolved – That the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005 be approved and that they be signed as a correct record.

### **Matters arising**

37. On item 16, the amendments to the Annual Report were being made and it was due to be published in the summer.

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

38. On item 28, the Secretary reported that the Countryside Agency training event was probably going to be held in London in July. Each Access Forum would be allocated two places. Members of the Forum agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should attend if the dates were convenient. The Forum expressed regret that only two members would be able to attend. The Secretary agreed to pass on the Forum's comments on permitted attendance to the Countryside Agency.

**Action: Rosemary Pugh**

### **Urgent Matters**

39. Members of the Forum requested clarification about the availability of sub-forum minutes. The Secretary confirmed that all West Sussex Access Forum minutes were available on the Forum website; [www.westsussex.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/countryside). Minutes of the South Downs Access Forum were available on; [www.vic.org.uk/access.htm](http://www.vic.org.uk/access.htm). Hard copies of the minutes would be sent to members not on e-mail together with the dates of future meetings of the South Downs Access Forum.

**Action: Rosemary Pugh**

### **Access Land**

#### **Access Management Grant Scheme**

40. The Forum Officer reported that Phase I of the work on installing infrastructure on access land was now complete. Grant money had been received from the Countryside Agency and they have agreed to extend the funding under the same arrangements for one more year. The South Downs Access Forum would also be bidding for funding as well as West Sussex County Council. Members urged officers of the County Council to maximise the amount of work carried out in the forthcoming year 2005/2006, as the funding arrangements for 2006/2007 would be reduced from a 75% grant to a 50% grant.

41. The Forum Officer agreed to investigate the possibility of using parish council notice boards to publicise open access land, including the location of access points and to look into making this information available on the West Sussex County Council website.

(Interactive Map – <http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/imap/index.html>).

**Action: Jane Noble**

#### **Telegraph House, North Marden Down**

42. At the last meeting of the Forum, members had expressed concerns about the lack of physical access to access land at Telegraph House and 'no access' notices. Christine Luff reported on the progress that had been made since then. Following meetings with the owner and her legal representative, the County Council as the Access Authority was satisfied that a proportion of

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

the land could be regarded as park or garden and so could be treated as excepted land. Photographs and a plan were displayed. In the circumstances, no action would be appropriate with regard to the 'no access' signs on this part of the land. However on the remaining land (Yew Tree Wood) which comprised a little over 60% of the total, the landowner now accepted public access, had also agreed to remove remaining 'private' notices and to a physical means of accessing the land being created from the adjoining bridleway 3642. The Sussex Downs Conservation Board would be working with the owner on the details. Due to the large numbers of deer in the wood, the landowner was considering asking the Access Authority for a direction to exclude dogs.

43. Members thanked the officers for the progress made and expressed the hope that now that a good working relationship had been established with the landowner, the door could be kept open for discussions on the establishment of further points of access in the future.

### **Quag's Corner, Stedham Common (CL12)**

44. The Forum Officer reported on another piece of access land with restricted access. Photographs of the notices which had been erected by the owner indicating that the land was excepted land were displayed. The Forum Officer described the piece of land (approximately 300m x 300m) as being mainly open woodland with houses to one end.

45. The County Council's Legal Services Unit had now written to the owner setting out the legal position and asking for his reasons for considering the land to be excepted. When that information was to hand the County council would be able to consider further the concerns that had been expressed about the notices and whether the authority's open access signs should be replaced.

### **Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)**

46. David Marshall advised that the timetable for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan had been amended and presented the revised timetable to the meeting. Following a recommendation from Government that a short interim report on the ROWIP should be included in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) in 2005, David Marshall reported that this had now been achieved. Consistent with the new timetable, the draft ROWIP would be prepared during the summer of 2005, the Forum would be consulted on the draft at its next meeting in October 2005 and a public consultation would follow in November/December of this year. The final document would be completed by March 2006, which would be in line with the government directive on preparation of Local Transport Plans.

47. The Forum received and noted the record of the last meeting of the ROWIP Working Group (copy attached to the signed minutes). The Forum Officer thanked all the members of the sub-fora who had provided valuable input to the preparation of interim report for the LTP. The Forum Officer highlighted the following key points in her presentation.

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

- Projects which had been put forward as priorities by the sub-fora had been assessed to identify those that could be implemented with little further feasibility work if funding became available
- The implications for staffing and resources in general had to be considered
- Project partners e.g. Sustrans and district councils need to be identified
- Consideration of whether landowner agreement could be achieved needs to be carried out
- Funding available through the LTP process is likely to be able to be used to carry out some feasibility work
- The report submitted for inclusion in the LTP did not identify all projects that could be implemented with LTP funding but an indication of the type of projects that would be a priority
- Other sources of funding to implement the ROWIP, in addition to LTP funding, would be sought

48. Members of the Forum agreed that more emphasis needed to be given to the utility aspect of the rights of way network in the 'vision' for the ROWIP.

49. Resolved – to recommend to West Sussex County Council that the words 'develop the rights of way network to provide safe and sustainable means of access to work, to school and for leisure purposes' be included in the 'vision' for the ROWIP.

**Action: Jane Noble**

50. Members of the Forum discussed the importance of a change of attitude amongst highways engineers and planners. The Local Transport Plan should not just be concerned with improving the road network but should include wider issues particularly with the growth of leisure opportunities and the consequent implications for safety.

51. Resolved – that an officer of the Highways Authority involved in the preparation of the LTP be invited to the next meeting of the Forum.

**Action: Rosemary Pugh**

### **Discovering Lost Ways**

52. The Forum received and noted a report by the Forum Officer on Discovering Lost Ways (copy attached to the signed minutes).

53. As a result of the Lost Ways Project it was likely that many new public paths would be created by the Definitive Map Modification Orders which could in turn lead, members believed, to an increase in the number of applications for diversion orders. Members recommended that a more flexible and streamlined

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

system should be adopted by Government to cope with the increased demand for diversion orders in the future.

54. Resolved – that

(a) members of the Forum be invited to attend a WSCC session on guidance and practical training for Rights of Way Committee members and

(b) the Forum consider making recommendations to Government on streamlining and improving the system for processing diversion orders at a future meeting.

**Action: Rosemary Pugh**

### **West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) Policy**

55. David Marshall gave a presentation on the application of the WSCC TRO policy on RUPP 952 at Graffham, (copy of the presentation and the policy is attached to the signed minutes).

56. Following the presentation there was some discussion about the demand for TROs in the past and what the demand was likely to be in the future. David Marshall advised that cost benefit analysis would be vital as the cost implications for financing TROs could be considerable. He also explained that he was working closely with other colleagues in the south east particularly with reference to managing restricted byways in the future.

### **Letter from Minister for Rural Affairs and Local Environment Quality**

57. The Forum received and noted a letter from the Minister for Rural Affairs and Local Environment Quality, (copy attached to the signed minutes). The letter set out the Minister's next priorities as part of DEFRA's five year strategy 'Delivering the Essentials of Life'. Comments and suggestions were sought.

58. Resolved – that a letter be sent to the Minister recommending that the Forestry Commission is asked to give improved access to horse riders and carriage drivers. To remove the requirement to pay for permits and that access is created to link with the rights of way network to enable riders to avoid dangerous roads.

59. The Forum agreed that further clarification was needed on the legal position with regard to access to water, reference was made to the Reverend Caffyn's report on the Right of Navigation on Non-Tidal Rivers and the Common Law.

60. Resolved – that a themed meeting on 'Access to Water' be held in the future, an officer from Legal Services would be invited to clarify the legal aspects.

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

### **General Report**

61. The Forum received and noted a general report on a range of issues of interest to the Forum (copy attached to the signed minutes).

62. The system for notifying the Ordnance Survey about recording access land on their maps was discussed. An officer of WSCC would take the matter forward.

**Action: Jane Noble**

### **Agenda items for the next meeting**

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

The draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan  
Local Transport Plan – (officer from the Highway Authority to be invited)

### **Date of next meeting**

64. The next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum will be held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2005 at Clair Hall, Haywards Heath.

### **Chairman**