

## South Downs Management Plan – Response from the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

Please find below the response from the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex to the consultation draft of the South Downs Management Plan. As may be expected the Forum has mainly concentrated on the access aspects of the Draft Plan, Ambition 8, and has completed the relevant section of the questionnaire.

More specific comments are detailed in the comments log that follows the Access section of the questionnaire below.

The Forum looks forward to seeing the final document along with the action plan.

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**Ambition 8. Wide ranging opportunities for countryside recreation and access respecting the natural beauty of the South Downs and avoiding conflict with other uses**

**How important is Ambition 8 to you?** **Very Important**

*Do you support the following targets for Ambition 8?*

*T8.1 Completed strategic review of visitor access and use across the South Downs* **Yes**

*T8.2 95% of the Rights of Way network open and easy to use* **Yes**

*T8.3 50% of major recreation sites managed in accordance with a sustainable management plan* **Yes**

**Should aim for much higher than 50%**

*T8.4 No increase in car borne visits over 2006 levels to the South Downs through existing and five new, sustainable transport projects* **No**

**Nice idea, but unrealistic. Cars are now a part of people's lives and it will be very hard to get people to shift mode of transport even if a viable, affordable public transport service is provided. Some users will perceive using public transport as very difficult – families, dog owners, horse riders, cyclists etc**

Please provide any further comments relating to these targets

**See above**.....

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*Do you support the views provided in the Draft Management Plan on the following issues for Ambition 8?*

- i8.1 High and increasing number of visitors* **Yes**
- i8.2 High car dependency for visiting the South Downs* **Yes**
- i8.3 An uneven distribution in recreational activity* **Yes**
- This can be desirable to protect wildlife etc. A more even distribution of ‘honeypot’ sites across the south Downs would be desirable**
- i8.4 Localised recreational impacts and conflicts between different recreational activities* **Yes**
- i8.5 Maintaining and enhancing an access network* **Yes**
- i8.6 Illegal and inappropriate use of the rights of way network* **Yes**
- Illegal/misuse of vehicles in the countryside is a cause of conflict. Conflict, of whatever nature, is often very localised**
- i8.7 Conflicts between formal recreation provision and other interests* **Yes**
- The CAFWS was not unanimous on this – one land/access manager in particular felt there was very little on this type of conflict and reported that on the whole different users got on remarkably well**
- i8.8 Widening the welcome of the South Downs for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside* **Yes**

Please provide any further comments relating to these issues

**Education and communication are key if people are to be able to enjoy the South Downs while respecting other users, those that live and work there and the wildlife/landscape.**

**Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS)  
South Downs Management Plan - Consultation draft June 2006**

**Comments log**

REF	COMMENT
General	I found this consultation draft very interesting and informative.
General	<p>The document itself was very interesting to read and contained a great deal of information that gives the reader a better understanding of the South Downs as an area. While broadly in agreement and supportive of the over-arching aims of the Plan, it is felt there needs to be greater co-operation, consultation and understanding between the public affected by management decisions and management themselves. This lack of understanding was evident this year amongst equestrian users of rights of way on the Downs when they heard, either by accident, on the grapevine or through an individual ranger trying to be helpful, that no money would be spent on the maintenance of rights of way this year only on "furniture". This despite previous assurances that long awaited improvements would be carried out. A lack of funding can be explained and understood, a lack of communication is an issue that needs to be addressed.</p> <p>The majority of comments relate to Ambition 8 concerning recreation and access, however, there are equestrians who live within the South Downs area or just outside, who will be affected by other ambitions, targets and policy responses in this plan. The one thing all equestrians will all have in common is the need to exercise their horses on public rights of way.</p>
A.1.15	The Forum welcomes the Consultation Draft as a whole and endorses the aims of the Management Plan
A.1.19	This is an important context. By its shape and topography, the South Downs cannot be managed in isolation – e.g. sustainable links with centres of population (e.g. Town to Downs initiative) will depend on good liaison and communication with neighbouring authorities and agencies.
A.2.5	<p>It should be emphasised that this development pressure will be particularly felt by the prowl network and access points. Due to growing traffic volumes, the rights of way network outside of the Downs is becoming increasingly fragmented. It is noticeable even now, that urbanisation is creeping outwards from towns into the countryside bit by bit, what were once quiet lanes used to link recreational routes are filling with traffic, some inappropriate such as heavy lorries, creating an environment which makes vulnerable road users feel unsafe.</p> <p>For equestrians these roads are dangerous and the lack of safe crossing points has resulted in severed bridleways. It is therefore not surprising, that increasing numbers of riders box their horses to the Downs where they feel they can ride in safety on a cohesive network of bridleways and enjoy peaceful and pleasant surroundings.</p> <p>Rural economy – horse related activities contribute to the rural economy through farriers, tack and feed businesses and providing employment. These activities also bring visitors and tourists to the area to shows and events such as Goodwood (racing) and Cowdray Park (polo).</p>
A.6.2	It is agreed as stated that this is a time of immense challenges and change.

REF	COMMENT
A.6.2	The key threats to the landscape as set out here are absolutely right and development pressure and traffic growth can already be felt in the County and is having a detrimental effect on rights of way and access and compromising the safety of users.
1.5.1	Ambition 1 – <b>Issue 5 – 1.5.1:</b> Pony paddocks, horse related development and subdivision of fields with field shelters can be inappropriate and look out of place, however, if properly planned and managed can be in keeping with a rural feel. Advice and assistance, given in a friendly, supportive and helpful way, should be the aim. Key players should include the BHS.
1.12	<b>Issue 6 – P1.12:</b> Highway design – key players should include BHS
2.0	Ambition 2 Whilst supporting the commitment to conserve the historic and cultural heritage of the South Downs, this has to be balanced with the needs and desires of communities and users of the Downs today. You cannot “bubble wrap” the area, there have always been changes over the centuries.
3.4, 3.5, 3.6	<b>Ambition 3 - Issue 2 – P3.4, P3.5, P3.6:</b> Support all of these measures to control traffic growth within the Downs area.. The growth of traffic in areas outside the boundary of the South Downs as a result of development will make the rights of way network more fragmented and difficult to use, measures taken to avoid this happening within the Downs area will be welcome. Any new links to the ROW network or off-road routes (such as extensions to the National Cycle Network and cycle links) should be made available to all vulnerable users, in consultation with relevant user group bodies, who should be included in the key players to these policies (Ramblers, BHS, CTC).
3.3.1	<b>Issue 3 – 3.3.1:</b> What about helicopter movements – these are very intrusive and noisy and have safety implications where riders are concerned.
3.8, 3.9, 3.10	<b>Issue 4 – P3.8, P3.9,P3.10:</b> Fully support policies to control or prevent intrusive activities.
4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6	<b>Ambition 4 - Issues 1,2,3,4,5,6:</b> Support policies on these issues but conservation and protection should be balanced with needs of recreational users and managed to reflect this.
4.3	<b>Issue 3:</b> Mentions sites suffering from recreational disturbance and erosion – recreational user group bodies should be included in policy response key players.
6.3	Ambition 6 - Issue 2 – P6.3: Support targeting of HLS as regards access. Payments for access can only be made under the HLS and opportunities should be looked for to use this as an incentive to provision of access.
6.7	<b>Issue 3 – P6.7:</b> It is felt recreational user group bodies should be consulted on these special projects where appropriate, as it is possible some projects may have unforeseen and undesirable consequences for users. These bodies should be included as key players.
6.10, 6.11	<b>Issue 5 – P6.10, P6.11:</b> Support these policies promoting good practice and providing advice and encouragement, to ensure good management of land used for horse keeping or related activities.
7.12	<b>Issue 1 – 7.1.2:</b> Should include businesses linked to equestrian industry (farriers, tack shops, feed merchants and vets) which provide local services for local people and businesses linked to recreational users.
7.14	<b>Issue 7 – P7.14:</b> Mentions ensuring sufficient accommodation within easy reach of South Downs Way for riders and their mounts – BHS should be included on list of key players.
Target 8.2	Ambition 8 <b>Target 2:</b> Fully support this.

REF	COMMENT
Target 8.3	T8.3, should be higher than 50% and seek towards 100%
Target 8.4	T8.4, should seek to reduce car borne visits with more public transport, subsidised if necessary. (Whilst a cost to local authority, this would be offset by savings to future environment.) Ambition 8 – target 4 is idealistic but unrealistic in view of the anticipated amount of housing development
8.0	<b>Target 4:</b> It is thought this will be impossible to achieve.
8.0.2	This may be so, but the actual impact on the wider landscape of the Downs is minimal – the perceived damage is magnified when the observer is at a “honeypot”
8.0.4	<b>8.0.4:</b> Reasons for visiting the South Downs. Surprising there is no mention of equestrian activity in these responses, were riders included in any survey or mentioned in any questionnaire?
8.0.5	The list of major attractions should include Harting Hill and the Trundle. Although not presently within the area, Arundel should get a mention.
8.0.5	List of major attractions should also include Cowdray Park (polo).
8.0.8	The figures in the chart are incorrect – probably transposed and more likely to be For West Sussex is should read Restricted Byway 119 km and Byway (BOAT) 3km. [ <i>Jane Noble (WSCC) – I agree that the figures are wrong and have been transposed, I have not checked exact figures but in all West Sussex we have only 10km of BOAT!</i> ].
	Re policy on high car dependency – some groups of people find public transport impractical i.e. those with young children, disabled with wheelchairs, people with dogs, wanting to ride horses or even cycles. Car parks are still very important. Payment for parking should be carefully thought out so as not to penalise those who cannot use public transport.
8.1, 8.2	<b>Issue 1 – P8.1,P8.2:</b> Support these policies to encourage and improve access in a responsible way. Key players should include BHS.
8.1.1	Another key factor causing additional numbers of visitors is the recent promotion of the Downs as a National Park. Another factor is the proliferation of sponsored walks/rides – especially along the South Downs Way – this needs a policy response such as introducing a registration system so several events do not coincide (no doubt also picked up in SDW Management Plan)
8.2	Issue 2 - One of the greatest concerns for equestrians visiting the Downs is box parking areas. There is no “alternative means of transport” for a horse and rider. As the severance of rights of way outside of the Downs area increases due to growing traffic volumes, more riders will box to the Downs for safety. The vast majority of riders would prefer to exercise their horses and enjoy their riding on circular routes from where they are stabled. This is becoming impossible in some parts and I am aware that even riders based at yards or stables within the South Downs area, box their horses to access the rights of way network, rather than use busy roads. This can happen for even relatively short distances because of the actual or perceived danger. Riders on the coastal plain, south of the A27, routinely box their horses to cross this road. Many of the crossing points they used in the past have become too dangerous or there have been “road improvements” <b>for vehicles</b> which have ignored the needs of vulnerable users. The lack of sufficient box parking areas is a real problem, especially as traveller incursion increasingly results in the erection of height barriers, with the knock on effect of excluding equestrians or those with cycle racks on their cars.
8.2.1	Ambition 8, issue 2 – need to encourage more cycling with improvements, better maintenance to existing routes such as Coastal Link

REF	COMMENT
	(Shoreham-By-Sea to Steyning) and safer crossing facilities on fast and dangerous roads such as at Downs Link crossing on A283 at Bramber,
Policy 8.3	Strongly support alternative and intergrated transport access to and within the downs
8.4	Ambition 8, issue 4 - major issues such as dog fouling and litter (District Councils need to make effective use of powers in new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act), and conflict between cyclists and walkers should be included
8.5.1	'Site works to restrict vehicular use' I am very concerned about this statement. Horse drawn vehicle users (both abled and disabled) look forward to having restricted byways. We need well maintained (not special surfaces) routes with no barricades. With more people driving using wheelchairs in special vehicles even the Kent carriage gap needs re-designing.
8.5.2	Absolutely agree.
8.5.4	This paragraph should also say that SDJC have delegated responsibility for maintaining rights of way inside the AONB.
8.5.1	Issue 5 - Totally agree with what is said in this paragraph, rights of way are the essential arteries of recreation provision within the South Downs. Their continued maintenance and improvement should be a basic priority and funding should be made available annually from the South Downs budget to achieve this. User groups can assist with any prioritisation that needs to be undertaken. If you do not look after the rights of way in the Downs area, you are failing a basic need at a grass roots level and South Downs plans should be built on a sound foundation. Any site works on Restricted Byways should be done in consultation with the British Driving Society.
8.6	Should also include a review of box parking and look at the possibility of providing box parks just outside the boundary at points that have good rights of way access on to the Downs and also in quieter areas away from "honeypots", where riders would prefer to be. This would reduce horse box use within the Downs area. Riders would more than likely be willing to pay a small charge for this provision.
8.8	Ambition 8, issue 8 - much better education/information communication is the key.
8.9	Issue 3 - Support policy response, although it will be difficult to direct people other than to where they want to go. Riders would much prefer to be in more peaceful areas and this could be encouraged by the provision of strategic box parking areas as mentioned above. Key players should include BHS.
8.10, 8.11	Issue 4 - Support these policies to reduce conflict, hang gliders can be a real safety issue for riders. However, recreation and conservation objectives should be balanced and impacts on users thought through. Recreational activities should not have a detrimental impact on the peace and quiet of the Downs. Key players should include BHS.
8.12	Ensuring new links are open to <b>all users</b> , including equestrians and cyclists, where there is need and potential to do so, in consultation with user group bodies.
8.13	Ensuring new links are open to <b>all users</b> , including equestrians and cyclists, where there is need and potential to do so, in consultation with user group bodies.
8.14	Absolutely agree but consultation with user groups should be undertaken to help prioritise areas needing attention, management should not make autocratic decisions.
8.15	Key Players should include Local Access Forums

REF	COMMENT
8.15	Fully support
8.16	Issue 7: Fully support. Consultation with user groups can help identify issues.
8.18	Tools should include the guided walks programme and the ranger service.
9.0	Ambition 9 - Support all policies
10.2.1	Ambition 10 issue 2 - Absolutely agree with what is said in this paragraph but this is all about communication, which it is felt needs to be improved. Recreational user groups should be included as key players.
10.13	If this policy includes the monitoring of rights of way, key players should include recreational user groups.