

## **Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex      Agenda Item 7b**

**2nd July 2008**

### **Coastal Plain Sub Forum**

**Unconfirmed Minutes of meeting at The Grain Store, Dell Quay on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008.**

**Present:** Peter Brown (Chairman), Jane Noble, Chris Boocock, Nigel Sloan, Helen Baldwin, Alison Fowler.

**Apologies:** Chris Wright, David Biss, Carolyn Cobbold.

- 1. Minutes:** of the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2007 were approved.
- 2. Rights of Way Action Plan:** Jane reported that the ROWIP will soon be published in accordance with new procedures. All members of the main Forum and the Sub Forums will be invited to a special workshop to be held at Haywards Heath on the morning of Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July to discuss RoWIP delivery and production of the Action Plan.
- 3. Coastal Cycle Route** - Chris reported the completion of the northern section of the Chichester to Selsey route and a new study of the second phase, with hope that a solution can be found to the Ferry Corner dilemma. A bid for funding is being made for the upgrading of the Coastal Link, with a view to it being reclassified as a National Route. He also expressed concerns about proposed new byelaws at Pagham Harbour LNR which may criminalize cyclists walking their bikes across the farm to the west of the North Wall; the chairman was asked to pursue this matter.
- 4. LEADER Initiative**– Peter reported on the recent approval by SEEDA of a new LEADER programme entitled The Three Harbours and Coastal Plain. It covers a wide range of proposals focussing on economic viability, farm diversification and support of communities. The improvement of access to the countryside could well attract funding during the 6-year programme. It will be driven by the Local Action Group, of which Alison is a member – she promised to keep us informed.
- 5. Strategic Development at Flansham** – large areas of housing are due to be built north of Bognor Regis alongside the proposed bypass road. The Sub Forum will need to ensure the rights of way network is properly accommodated; Chris confirmed that it will affect the proposed Barnham to Felpham cycle path and Nigel reported that at present the new road will only be crossed at level. Peter and Jane will look at the plans and will raise the need to also look at equestrian issues.

**6. Ford EcoTown** – this large development is generally seen by locals as a threat to the quiet enjoyment of the countryside alongside the River Arun. Peter will see if at this early stage it is necessary for CAFWS to send in a standard position statement.

**7. Marine Bill consultation** – This was the main focus of this meeting and all members of CAFWS had been invited – hence the welcome presence of Nigel Sloan. In fact there were two consultations – one from Defra and one from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament. The Sub Forum reviewed the proposals by working through the Draft Scheme; in West Sussex it still seemed to be a project that however attractive was hardly a high priority and the main concern is that it may take resources away from more important activities – both at Natural England (NE) and in access authorities. However, it was pleasing to see that the scheme had been modified and improved following the original consultations in 2007.

A detailed response to both consultations will be attached to these minutes once they have been agreed and will include the following main issues:

- The proposed procedures and local consultations are satisfactory, but the time scale is not clear
- Members felt strongly that there should be provision to introduce multi-purpose (use?) routes where appropriate
- Beyond the set-up costs, which will be borne by NE, the ongoing management and maintenance will be a considerable burden on access authorities and new funding should be made available.
- Where landowners/farmers lose earning capacity as a result of the new route, compensation should be paid; also, NE will need to provide infrastructure to ensure exclusions and exceptions are respected.
- There is concern that areas of high conservation value will be vulnerable to disturbance – where these areas are excluded, will this be clear to the visitor?