

SOUTH DOWNS ACCESS FORUM

A sub-forum of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex, the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, and the East Sussex, and Brighton & Hove Local Access Forums

South Downs Joint Committee HQ, Ford

13th April 2007

Meeting 18 Minutes

Present

Members:

Bob Damper (BD)	Glynn Jones (GJ)	Roger Foxwell (RF)
David Brookshaw (DB)	John Rennie (JR)	Sue Montilla (SM)
David Ashcroft (DA)	Jon Willis (JW)	

SDAF co-ordinators:

Nigel James (NJ) : Western Area Manager CMS
James Ort (JO) : South Downs Access Forum Officer

Observers:

Andrew Whitnall (AW) : ESCC Access Development & Forum Officer
Jane Noble (JN) : WSCC Senior Access Officer
John Carden (JC) : B&H LAF Chairman
Tim Squire (TS) : BHCC Rights of Way & Forum Officer
Dora Pilkington (DP) : Toll Roads Off Road Trust (TROT)

Pubic:

five

Apologies

Ben Perkins (BP)	David Taylor (DT)	Nigel Sloan (NS)
Craig Thomas (CT)	Derek Cleaver (DC)	Paul Strudwick (PS)

A date for your diaries:

The next South Downs Access Forum meeting will be held on the 29th June at the SDJC's Headquarters in Ford, near Arundel.

Item	Minutes	Action
1	<p><u>Introductions and apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GJ welcomed members and observers to the meeting. • Apologies were received from six members (as stated). 	
2	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no declarations of interest. 	
3	<p><u>Approval of minutes of last meeting and matters arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes were passed as accurate with no corrections needed. 	
4	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RF raised concerns that not enough of ESCC contributions to the SDJC's running costs were being put into RoW maintenance. It was agreed that the Forum meeting was not the best place to raise this issue. The Forum hoped that the confirmation of the National Park would resolve some of the funding issues and ensure some level of increased/secure funding. • RF reported that a tenant farmer at Seven Sisters Country Park had tried to put up some NFU endorsed, educational signs. The 'Farming Matters' notices are aimed at raising the general public's awareness to farming practices. RF reported that the SDJC officers had not allowed the signs to be put up at the country park. DA recommended that RF ask John Archer (NFU) to talk to the Eastern Area Manager at Seven Sisters. • Members of the Forum discussed interpretation of the countryside and questioned whether this was a possible area of involvement for the SDAF. The Forum agreed that signage was an important tool in educating visitors to the countryside, however the messages have to be appropriate. It was agreed that access points were a good place to put up signs, but care needed to be taken when putting up signage elsewhere. JR asked that the subject be discussed at a future Forum meeting. Could the SDAF develop some signage guidelines? Areas of funding would also need to be identified. JO and Forum members to bring together ideas for the next Forum meeting (18.01). 	JO & Forum members
5	<p><u>Mother Fora updates and feedback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCAF (SM). The Forum had met the previous week. The Forum received a presentation regarding the Hampshire Wildlife Trust's policy for public access. This arose from concerns about restricted access for dog walkers at St Catherine's Hill, one of the Trust's sites near Winchester. The Forum visited the Beaulieu Estate to examine the difficulties in creating new coastal access. Whilst 70% of England and Wales' coastline had access within 200 metres of the sea, the Forum felt that creating access on the remaining land would be difficult or near impossible, as there were numerous concerns regarding both safety and cost. A Forum Task Group looking at vehicles in the countryside were due to put forward a new proposed policy for HCC to adopt at the next meeting. • ESxLAF (AW). The last meeting at Seven Sisters Country Park had been most successful. Members received an update of the ESx RoWIP consultation and were briefed about a situation involving some vehicle users' byway claims. The claims were made during a review of the definitive map in 1971. The review had been abandoned. There was an assumption that the claims would be held and revised later. This was not the case, with new claims needing to have been made. This was not done before the deadlines set. • B&HLAF (DB). DB welcomed John Carden (JC), the B&HLAF Chairman, who was observing this meeting. The Forum had met on the 7th February. Bill Jenman had updated the Forum on the South Downs Way Management Plan. Adam Bates, Head of Tourism for BHCC had talked about the City's tourism and the role that 	

	<p>the South Downs could play. DB felt this was important following the talk of the breeze buses failing and a lack of low cost accommodation on the Downs. The Forum had also looked at some gating orders, the TROs in National Parks consultation and a planning application in Stanmer Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAFWS (GJ). The Forum had discussed plans to fence Blackdown, a site owned by the National Trust, in order for it to be grazed. The Forum looked at Strategic New Developments,(new housing developments across the county). Members received two presentations, one on the integration of recreation and countryside access into the planning process at Mid-Sussex DC and then WSCC’s Design and Access Statements. The Forum may advise on a new development in East Grinstead, although were disappointed that because planners are so busy, it cannot be guaranteed that access provision will always be made on new developments. The Forum was also informed about the Fundamental Service Review within WSCC. David Marshall and other officers had been made redundant. It was not yet known as to what effect this would have on the Forum. GJ asked whether there would be a complete reorganisation. JN stated that it would more likely be a reassessment. 	
6	<p><u>SDAF response – Brighton & Hove RoWIP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB explained his thoughts on the B&H RoWIP public consultation document. DB stated that in the past he had been most vocal about the RoWIP, but now defended it. Additionally, he stated that it was important to recognise that B&H is smaller and considerably more urban than neighbouring authorities. DB considered that BHCC should be applauded for securing five years of LTP funding for the RoWIP (something that none of the neighbouring RoWIPs had been able to achieve). JO had sent out previous analysis documents put together by the SDAF and SDJC. DB said that these illustrated how the document had been made more succinct. Considering that the amount of officer time dedicated to the RoWIP had not been along, DB was pleased with the outcome. It was also important to be realistic about likely budget allocations for the RoWIP and concentrate on the key objectives of the plan. He was also pleased that the work at Stanmer had been carried out, even if it was at the expense of the RoWIP. DB to forward JO his comments on the Brighton & Hove RoWIP for inclusion in the SDAF’s response (18.02). • JR questioned what level of response the SDAF should make to the consultation. Considering that the Forum has inputted into the document’s development already, he suggested it should be relatively low key. Members were asked for their thoughts on the RoWIP. • RF questioned whether the RoWIP should refer to the Countryside Code at least as an appendix. • JR felt that the consultation document should be more forward in its objectives, such as expressing the desire to develop closer links with the Walking & Cycling Strategy. Considering the more urban nature of the B&H, it was important that the RoWIP creates links from the city to the countryside. It should also emphasise its differences from neighbouring RoWIPs. Finally, JR stated that in his opinion the plan did not address the range of needs required by different users groups, for example the RoWIP stated that there were no RoW available for motorised vehicle users. However, JW said that there were byways in the network, BHCC’s PRow, but TS said that they were all subject to TROs. JW said that the statutory guidance for RoWIPs is to consider the demand for all types of access and respond to this where possible. GJ agreed, stating that RoWIP’s should be considering the needs of motorised vehicle users more seriously. GJ was aware of an un-maintained byway near Edburton Hill which could be extended and improved. JW thought that the needs of all users should be considered when identifying improvements, such as the missing links. The consultation document had over 40 missing links, all 	<p>DB</p> <p>Forum members</p>

	<p>of which were footpaths or bridleways. Forum members to send their thoughts on the draft B&H RoWIP to JO (18.03).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JC said that it had been hard work persuading senior council members to back the RoWIP, although it was wanted by the general public. He was however, happy that progress has been made and thanked DB especially for his hard work. 	
7	<p><u>SDAF Response – Consultation on the power for National Park Authorities to make Traffic Regulation Orders</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SDAF discussed how it would respond to the consultation on the power of National Park Authorities to make Traffic Regulation Orders. The Forum had been asked to respond to the consultation on behalf of the Mother Fora (although it should be noted that the Brighton & Hove LAF had prepared their own response which was sent independently). The Forum went through each of the consultation’s questions. JO to prepare the SDAF’s official response to the NPA TRO Consultation, based on member’s comments from the meeting *(18.04). Members to email any additional thoughts or comments regarding the NPA TRO Consultation to JO (18.05). JO to send notes or the SDAF’s drafted response to GJ for the use at the next CAFWS meeting (18.06). <p style="text-align: right;">* The Forum’s response to the consultation is available on request.</p>	<p>JO Forum members JO</p>
8	<p><u>Presentation from Toll Rides (Off-Road) Trust (T.R.O.T) – Dora Pilkington (DP)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP, founder and trustee for TROT, gave a presentation about the organisation’s work and history. TROT negotiates agreements with landowners that gives TROT members permission to use designated routes to ride horses on. These toll rides can be links between two bridleways, circular routes or a network of different links. Toll rides can greatly contribute to bridleway networks that are fragmented or poorly maintained. TROT works closely with receptive landowners to identify possible routes, whilst assessing the degree of local need. If the route is considered viable carry out risk assessments, pay for set up costs and arrange an official opening. TROT members pay minimal membership fees determined by the amount of miles that are ‘hackable’ within a certain radius, with 70% of members’ fees go to the landowner(s). DP said that TROT aims to give the farmers a minimum of £200 a mile/acre per annum. The remaining 30% of membership fee’s goes towards TROT’s admin costs. TROT’s toll rides can be used for equine tourism which can greatly benefit local livery yards as well as the wider economy. DP felt that TROT toll rides were not needed in many parts of the South Downs because equestrians are generally well provided for. Temporary toll rides could be occasionally useful though. DP emphasised that TROT routes are without prejudice on any previous claims and do not influence any decisions on creating a new RoW. • RF asked whether there were problems with other users using toll rides. DP said that this was generally not a problem. She also added that TROT members are also told not to use toll rides if the landowner has arranged shoots or if poor weather was damaging the surface of the route. TROT routes can go over a footpath, however if the surface is damaged, it is the landowners’ responsibility to correct/repair the damage and find alternative routes. • SM raised some concerns that had been voiced through her horse riding contacts. Many equestrians are concerned that the growing success of TROT would have a negative impact on the future of the RoW network. Many argue that permissive routes should not be sought over those that are potentially statutory. With ever decreasing funding available to maintain RoW, the fear is that Local Authorities will come to expect equestrians to agree independent permissive routes through organisations such as TROT. Many feel that they should not have to pay for the privilege to enjoy the countryside on horseback, when it has and always should be free. DP said that it was not realistic to expect local authorities to invest large sums 	

	<p>of money in maintaining and enhancing the RoW network. If it was to happen, she would happily disband TROT, closing its 400 miles of routes and telling its 3000 members. Horse riders have a choice whether or not to join. DP said that representatives from local authorities have been delighted to see riders being proactive in obtaining new routes, but have not seen it as a reason not to carry out their statutory duty in relation to RoWs. With one horse death a month, many on roads, and increasingly poorly maintained RoW, DP felt that something needed to be done. She asked that the BHS members respect TROT and look to fight the problems faced by equestrians together.</p>	
9	<p><u>Additional items for the Member's attention</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JO alerted members to the forthcoming Coastal Access consultation, but pointed out that much of the coastal access on the South Downs, along the Heritage Coast, was open access already. • The new LAF regulations and guidelines had recently been released. JO asked whether the Forum would like to discuss the guidelines at some point. Members agreed that it should be discussed at a future Forum meeting to identify new areas of work and enhancing the work of the Forum. Forum members to use the LAF guidelines to think of ways to enhance the work of the SDAF (as a possible agenda item for the next meeting) (18.07). • JO told the Forum that the Accessible Natural Greenspace report had been published. The report was available for download from the Forestry Commission Website (www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6Z2JCK). 	Forum members
11	<p><u>Agenda items for next meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following suggestions were made for agenda items for the next or future Forum meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access for all - Sussex Pathwatch - Site visit - LAF regulations and guidelines - Cuckmere conservation and access issues - Lost ways - Resolving wildlife and human access conflicts 	

Summary of Actions from meeting 18

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Who by</i>
18.01	JO and Forum members to bring together ideas for the next Forum meeting.	JO and Forum members
18.02	DB to forward JO his comments on the Brighton & Hove RoWIP for inclusion in the SDAF's response.	DB
18.03	Forum members to send their thoughts on the draft B&H RoWIP to JO.	Forum members
18.04	JO to prepare the SDAF's official response to the NPA TRO Consultation, based on member's comments from the meeting.	JO
18.05	Members to email any additional thoughts or comments regarding the NAP TRO Consultation to JO.	Forum members
18.06	JO to send notes on the SDAF's drafted response to GJ for the use at the next CAFWS meeting.	JO
18.07	Forum members to use the LAF guidelines to think of ways to enhance the work of the SDAF (as a possible agenda item for the next meeting).	Forum members