

**17<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

**General Report**

**1.      Foot and Mouth**

- 1.1      In August, Foot and Mouth Disease was discovered in livestock in Surrey. Since then, animals on several other farms within Surrey have also tested positive for the disease. Tests on animals at Rogate, near Petersfield, which is within 3km of the West Sussex border, and at Scaynes Hill, near Haywards Heath, have proved negative.
- 1.2      West Sussex County Council (WSCC) has been monitoring the situation closely and, led by its Emergency Planning Team, has provided information to landowners and the public through dedicated Foot and Mouth pages on its website ([www.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk)).
- 1.3      All rights of way and open access land in West Sussex remained opened during the outbreak. The Council, in consultation with the Ramblers Association and National Farmers Union (NFU), had also made available notices providing information to users for landowners to erect on site if they wish (available to view at the meeting). A number of illegal notices indicating paths are closed have been reported to the Right of Way (ROW) Team which have been promptly dealt with resulting in removal of the notices. ROW Access Rangers have been provided with disinfectant and are liaising closely with landowners regarding access.
- 1.4      Advice from Defra (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/footandmouth>) is that there is no need for people to stop visiting the countryside. At the present time, the only impacts on rights of way outside the infected premises are those which result from the closures of some paths and access land within the Protection Zone.

**2.      Access Newsletter from the Dept for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)**

- 2.1      The Newsletter covered the following topics: -
- Consultation on proposals to improve access to the English coast - Local Access Forum Events
  - Proposed South Downs National Park
  - Public Rights of Way (Hearings and Inquiries Procedure) (England) Rules 2007
- 2.2      Copies will be available to view at the meeting and further details can be found on the [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) web site.

### **3. Replacement Bridge over River Adur at Ashurst**

- 3.1 Following a campaign, WSCC has recently completed work replacing this bridge, which is the only way that riders in the area can reach a network of well used bridleways through woodlands across the river at Ashurst.
- 3.2 The original concrete bridge had steep access slopes at either end and metal slats on the concrete, with only scaffolding poles acting as a barrier for horse and rider along the edges as they crossed the water. The replacement bridge is now level with a good surface, protected sides and concrete mounting block on either side.
- 3.3 According to the organiser of the campaign, users are delighted with the work by WSCC in replacing the bridge.

### **4. Walking Festivals**

#### **4.1 Walking West Sussex Festival; 10-14 October 2007**

This years Walking Festival is based at the Weald and Downland Museum. There are 28 organised walks and a total of 164 people have booked 512 places (as of 22 September). It offers a range of walks, varying from 1 to 13 miles, with longer walks appealing to the already committed walker but with a selection of shorter walks, many of which incorporate added attractions such as first hand theatrical, historical and farming experiences to entice the less experienced walkers, including families, to participate. In general the longer walks booked first, but this is likely to be as early marketing targeted this audience – additional marketing did attract further bookings on to the shorter, themed walks but this audience was generally harder to reach.

#### **4.2 Crawley Walking Festival**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Crawley Walking Festival saw participants enjoying 17 walks. Organised by a partnership of WSCC, Crawley Borough Council, and Gatwick Green Space Partnership which runs the successful Health walks in the area, the aim of the Festival is to encourage people, including those who do not traditionally go walking, to discover their local countryside.

### **5. Exploring West Sussex; Autumn – Spring 2007/2008**

- 5.1 The new edition of the WSCC booklet of guided walks, rides and events includes information on CAFWS (page 5). It is now for sale at West Sussex libraries, Tourist Information Centres and Sussex Stationers for £1.50. It is also available to download from the Council's website ([www.westsussex.gov.uk/walking](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/walking)).

## **6. Rights of Way Improvement Plan for West Sussex**

6.1 The West Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan is undergoing final proof reading and design and is on schedule for publication to meet the Government's deadline on November 2007. Copies will be sent to all Forum and Sub Forum members.

## **7. WSCC Rights of Way (ROW) Committee Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> June 2007 and Other Items of Interest to the Forum**

7.1 The following recommendations were agreed as a result of the meeting:-

- Agenda Item 7a – extinguishment of Public Footpath 64c, East Grinstead by Chairman's casting vote
- Agenda Item – 7b diversion of part of Footpath 2410/1 and upgrade to bridleway, West Chiltington
- Agenda Item 8 – dedication of a new Footpath, Amberley
  - Agenda item 9 – enter into a Permissive path Agreement to introduce permissive cycle use to Public Footpaths 147, 147 and 153, Barnham and Felpham

7.2 Details of new decisions can be found at [www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/row\\_order\\_advertising/councils/new\\_decisions\\_added\\_by\\_date.htm](http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/row_order_advertising/councils/new_decisions_added_by_date.htm)

7.3 The Pitshill Inquiry on 16-19<sup>th</sup> October will be held at Lodsworth Village Hall.

7.4 CAFWS has been added to the electronic consultee list for proposed Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) affecting local public paths.

## **8. Permissive Access - Environmental Stewardship, Higher Level Scheme (HLS)**

8.1 WSCC has recently been notified of two agreements that give new permissive access to areas of Cowdray Estate:

- Cowdray Ruins Rest – a small permissive open access area adjacent to the Cowdray ruins, Midhurst; expires 30 April 2017
- Whiphill Walk – Linear and open access route providing an off-road link between Lamberts' Lane, June Lane and Beggars Corner, Midhurst; expires 30 April 2017

8.2 Details will be available to view at the meeting and will also soon appear on Defra's website (<http://countrywalks.defra.gov.uk>) where permissive access provided through the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, including at 32 other sites in West Sussex, is promoted.

## **9. Open Access – Fire prevention direction restrictions**

9.1 WSCC responded to an informal consultation on the activation and expiry of fire prevention restrictions under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The proposals, if implemented, will reduce the number of times fire restrictions are activated due to inaccurate forecasting, but still ensure they apply when there is a high risk of fire.

9.2 There are 10 open access sites in West Sussex that have been registered – these are all heathland sites in the Midhurst/Haslemere area (within the area managed by the South Downs Joint Committee Northern Team). A map and summary of restrictions on a site by site basis will be available to view at the meeting.

## **10. Access to Inland Waterways Bill**

10.1 The Bill has been rescheduled for a second reading in the House of Commons on 19th October.

## **11. Southern Local Access Forum Officers Liaison Group (SLAFOLG)**

11.1 The Forum Secretary attended the meeting held at the Natural England offices in London. Minutes will be available to view at the Forum meeting.

11.2. A training event is scheduled for November 2007 and will be held in London. Likely topics will be off road vehicles and dogs in the countryside, with workshops on chairing meetings and effective responses to consultations. Numbers will be limited to two per forum and members should let the Secretary know if they are interested in attending.

## **12. Neighbouring LAFs**

12.1 The neighbouring LAFs have either recently held meetings or have meetings scheduled. Members are welcome to attend neighbouring meetings. Please contact Fiona MacLeod if you are interested. Agenda items of interest since the last CAFWS meeting include:

12.2 Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2007

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1116054>

- RoWIP main theme of meeting
- Date of next meeting 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007 - AGM

12.3 East Sussex Local Access Forum – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2007

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/rightsofway/localaccessforum/default.htm>

- RoWIP main theme of meeting
- Date of next meeting 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007

12.4 Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF) – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007

<http://www.countrysideaccessforum.hants.org.uk/>

- Election of Chair & Vice-Chair, annual report and planning for next year
- Site visit to Alice Holt to look at Forestry Commission management
- Reports back on the results of the coastal access consultation, the vehicles policy and work on access land
- A project seeking volunteers to research claims for rights of way
- Feedback from Southampton City Council's ROWIP consultation
- Results of the new paws waymark system being trialled at Danebury Hillfort
- Results of the audit for walkers with dogs in Winchester
- A review of the criteria used to assess possible Local Transport Plan projects
- Date of next meeting TBA

#### 12.5 Surrey Local Access Forum –30 July 2007

- [http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/SCCWebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE\\_RTf/Surrey+Countryside+Access+Forum?opendocument](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/SCCWebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTf/Surrey+Countryside+Access+Forum?opendocument)
- RoWIP
- Right to Apply consultation
- Encroachment on Common Land
- D Roads
- Annual Report
- LEADER bid
- Date of next meeting 15<sup>th</sup> October 2007

### 13. Documents available to view at the meeting

The following may be of interest to Forum Members:

- Defra advice on Foot and Mouth
- Foot and Mouth notices
- Access Newsletters (Defra)
- Permissive access – details of HLS access at Cowdray Ruins and Whiphill Walk
- WSCC response to consultation on the activation and expiry of fire prevention restriction
- Summary of Fire Restrictions in West Sussex and map of sites
- Briefing note on Dog Control Orders
- Minutes of SLAFOLG meeting
- Minutes of neighbouring LAFS (as available)
- Minutes of Rights of Way meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> September 2007 and associated reports

Fiona MacLeod  
 Secretary to the Forum  
 01243 753542  
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