

General Report

1. Meetings Attended by the Vice Chairman

- 1.1 **Central Southern Local Access Forum.** The Vice-Chairman attended a meeting on 1st November at Winchester for all the access forums that share a boundary with Hampshire. It was to provide an opportunity to share experience across the SE/SW divide and see if there were any issues requiring a common or joint approach.
- 1.2 A common theme was the enthusiasm and expertise of the membership, but some were poorly served by their local authority where public ROWs are given less priority than in West Sussex.
- 1.3 All forums felt frustrated that they lacked any real power and had few resources. There was also the familiar criticism that there is no obligation to implement RoWIPs. Other topics discussed were rural speed limits, motorised vehicles in the countryside, voluntary work on public ROWs, and cross border issues. A further meeting may be held in twelve months time.
- 1.4 **Solent Forum Recreation Workshop.** An exploratory meeting with workshops was held on 19th October with representatives covering a wide range of interests. The objective was to identify and prioritise issues concerning recreation in the Solent and whether a new group should be formed to address them.
- 1.5 Although interesting, the Solent Forum is not particularly relevant to CAFWS at the present time. A Steering Group is being formed to take some initiatives forward and CAFWS will be kept informed of progress.

2. LAF Governance

- 2.1 The revised Guidelines and Guidance (best practice) documents expected by the end of 2006 have not been issued yet. However, the expectation is that this will take place in the near future and all LAFs will be notified accordingly. It is understood that it is awaiting final legal clearance before Ministerial approval.
- 2.2 The LAF 'members handbook' has been delayed due to budget cuts and is not expected to be available until 2008. Regional representatives have expressed their disappointment and have asked that a web page with links to useful documents that are already available be implemented in the interim.
- 2.3 The National Forum (NCAF) is also in abeyance whilst Natural England reviews the need for the Forum and what its role should be. Regional

representatives have told Natural England that there is a strong desire for a national body that they could communicate with on wider access issues and NCAF could fulfil this activity.

3. Forum Member's Expenses

- 3.1 As a point of 'good housekeeping', members are asked to ensure that any claims are made within three months of the cost being incurred and that there are no outstanding claims at the end of the financial year i.e. 31st March.

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

- 4.1 The October and December 2006 Newsletters covered the following topics: -

- Access to water
- Local Access Forums
- Guidance on means of access
- Online guidance on ROW provisions in NERC Act 2006 MoD byelaw review
- Understanding walkers with dogs

- 4.2 Copies will be available to view at the meeting and further details can be found on the www.defra.gov.uk web site.

5. England's Trees, Woodlands and Forests Consultation Document

- 5.1 Analysis of the consultation responses has been concluded and the Executive Summary and full final reports are available on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corportate/consult/forestry-strategy/index.htm> Hard copies are available on request from DEFRA's Forestry Policy Unit, Area 5D, Ergon House, Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2AL or email ForestryPolicyUnit:defra.gsi.gov.uk

- 5.2 The Executive Summary will be available to view at the meeting.

6. South Downs Advisory Forum (SDAvF)

- 6.1 The annual meeting of the Forum was held in December at the Weald & Downland Museum, Singleton and attended by Ronnie Perrin and Nigel Sloan, who were both re-elected to the Executive Panel.

- 6.2 Merrick Denton-Thompson, a member of the Natural England Board gave a keynote speech on the opportunities and challenges facing the South Downs in the foreseeable future.

- 6.3 Alison Tingley gave a presentation on the consultation responses received on the South Downs Management Plan (SDMP). The response submitted from CAFWS was supported by other respondees in particular regarding Ambition 8 (wide ranging opportunities for

countryside recreation and access respecting the natural beauty of the South Downs and avoiding conflict with other uses)

- 6.4 Workshops were held to identify what organisations within the Forum are doing to meet the ambitions set out in the Management Plan.

7. Sussex Pathwatch

- 7.1 Sussex Pathwatch has been identified as a good example of a partnership initiative in a recent DEFRA publication.

8. West Sussex Footpaths Secretary (Ramblers Association)

- 8.1 Derek Knights has taken over from Chris Wright as the new Secretary.

9. New Member Training

- 9.1 Training on Rights of Way and access networks was undertaken by officers for the 4 new members of the Forum. This pro-active approach was well received and as a result, the new members are up to speed with access information, guidelines and legislation etc regarding Forum matters.

10 Cycle Route Between Sompting and Lancing

- 10.1 Work has started on the final stage of a WSCC scheme to extend a popular seafront cycle route that allows riders to avoid the busy A259.
- 10.2 The work is expected to take 6 weeks to complete and is the culmination of the £300,000 project to extend the South Coast Cycle Route from Sompting to West Beach Road in Shoreham.
- 10.3 Lieutenant Col Tex Pemberton, WSCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport said "this scheme will form another link in the national cycle route, and improve safety for the growing number of people who prefer 2 wheels to 4 for leisure and to get to work".

11. Neighbouring LAFs

- 11.1 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:
- 11.2 Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum – 25th October 2006
<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1116054>
- AGM
 - Draft Annual Report
 - Presentation on Local Development Framework consultation
 - Presentation on gating orders
 - Downland Initiative feasibility study

- RoWIP out for consultation January 2007
- Date of next meeting 7th February 2007

11.3 East Sussex Local Access Forum – 14 December 2006

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

- South Downs Way Management Plan
- Future role of the LAF
- Draft RoWIP issued for consultation (14 Dec 2006 - 23 March 2007) <http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/currentconsultations>
- Date of next meeting 15th March 2007

11.4 Hampshire Countryside Access Forum (HCAF) – 30 November 2006

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

- AGM
- Recruitment of new members
- 2006 Annual Report
- 5 Year Plan
- LTP projects for 2007/8
- Vehicles in the countryside
- Public Inquiry re DMMO and cyclists rights
- Rural speed management
- Date of next meeting 25th January 2007

11.5 Surrey Local Access Forum – (SLAF) –16 October 2006

http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/sccwebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTFCountryside+Access+Forum?opendocument

- AGM
- RoWIP
- Annual Report
- Restrictions to Open Access land
- Forward Plan for 2007
- Date of next meeting is 22 January 2007

9.6 The South Downs Access Forum (SDAF) – 7 December 2006.

<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk>

- AGM – Ben Perkins* elected Chairman and Glynn Jones elected as Vice Chairman
- Ordnance Survey presentation by the 'Mapping Intelligence' section (copy available to view at the meeting)
- RoWIP comments for input at the CAFWS RoWIP meeting on 13 December
- 2007 work programme
- Bill Jenman on the South Downs Way Management Plan (due for consultation February 2007)
- Date of next meeting 13th April 2007

* Dr Ben Perkins, a keen walker from Brighton, has over the years held many senior posts within the Sussex Downsmen, Sussex Wealdsmen and Sussex area of the RA; he has published several books of walks and writes a regular article on walks for the Brighton Argus.

9.7 A meeting of the Eastern Region LAFs will be held at Ely, Cambs on 5th February 2007. Details of suggested topics and a review of the Workshop on 'making LAFS more effective' that was held on 15th November 2006 will be available to view at the meeting.

10. Documents available to view at the meeting

The following may be of interest to Forum Members:

- Presentations and Workshops Report from the Solent Coastal Recreation Workshop held in October 2006.
- English Nature Annual Report 2005-2006
- Natural England Strategic Direction 2006-2009
- Access Newsletters from DEFRA
- Executive Summary from DEFRA re England's Trees, Woods and Forests Consultation
- Design and Access Statement Document
- Press Releases: Funtington Bridleway transformation, Stedham to Midhurst cycle route clean up
- 2005/6 CAFWS Annual Report
- East Sussex RoWIP
- Ordnance Survey presentation to SDAF
- Local Access Forums – meeting dates for 2007
- Eastern Region LAFs workshop November 2006 and February 2007

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