

Agenda Item 3

Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS)

At a meeting of the Forum held at The Gordon Room, Worthing on 17th October 2007.

Present:

Mrs R Perrin (Chairman)

Mrs B Acraman	Mrs H Baldwin	Mr P Brown
Mrs T Butcher	Mr D Deedman	Mrs Gue
Mr T Passmore	Mr D Ribbens	Mr D Whyberd
Mrs S Wright		

West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) Officers: Lisa Creaye-Griffin, Jane Noble, Fiona MacLeod

Apologies:-

129. Apologies were received from Phil Beldon, Colin Bloomfield, Glynn Jones, Nigel Sloan and Shirley Wright. (Apologies received since the meeting from Jason Emrich, Sion Evans and Ted White)

Welcome

130. The Chairman welcomed Mr and Mrs Pitter, Ben Perkins (Chairman of the South Downs Access Forum (SDAF)), and five observers and members of the public to the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

131. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the Forum meeting of 18th July 2007

132. Mr Deedman confirmed that he was not present at the meeting.

133. Mrs Baldwin pointed out that the Restricted Byway in Minute 114 should be 711 not 771.

134. **Resolved: that, subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting held 18th July 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

Matters arising

135. **Minute 62** – Colin Bloomfield had now been appointed to the Forum representing cycling interests.
136. **Minute 65** – a letter had been sent to Julia Beuzeval thanking her for her support during her time on the Forum.
137. **Minute 74** – a letter had been sent to all district and borough council leaders in West Sussex reminding them and their cabinet members for recreational access of the role of CAFWS

Urgent Matters

138. There were no urgent matters raised.

Presentation on Harness Driving

139. The Forum received a very informative presentation with accompanying slides on the various elements of both recreational and eventing carriage driving. A key point made was that there is no more impact to the environment by a two-wheeled carriage with two people on board than with one person cycling or one person riding a horse. (Mr Pitter's notes are attached to the minutes for information)
140. Mr Pitter comes from an agricultural background and in addition to carriage driving for the past 30 years, he had also walked the South Downs Way and cycled.

Marion Gue joined the meeting at 10.40am.

141. He highlighted that, unlike some other forms of recreational access, disability was no barrier to carriage driving, and carriage driving for the disabled is mentioned in the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).
142. Mr Pitter offered to take any interested CAFWS members for a carriage driving experience.
143. The Chairman thanked Mr Pitter for his presentation which highlighted the level of interest and participation amongst carriage drivers in the area. The perception had been that this was a small, minority recreational activity, however with British Driving Society (BDS) membership in excess of 325 in West Sussex alone, and there are likely to many other drivers who are not members of the BDS, this had been proven not to be the case.
144. A short Questions and Answers session followed, summarised as follows:
 - Q** – can the horse(s) and carriage go on the bridleways or restricted byways
 - A** – yes. In addition many bridleways are wide enough and the surface is suitable for carriage driving and carriage drivers would like to see access available on these routes where appropriate. However, this would have to be in negotiation with landowners as

carriage drivers can only legally use Restricted Byways (RBs) or Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs)

Q – is it expensive to start carriage driving

A – carriage driving can suit all budgets, often starting with second hand carriages or carriages hand made from spare parts. Harnesses for pleasure driving are usually made from webbing with reinforced rubber rather than leather. It is not unusual for ponies that have been outgrown by family children to be used for carriage driving

Q – are carriage drivers aware that some horses get unsettled when passed by a carriage

A – yes, and the majority of carriage drivers take this into account. Responsible use is included in any courses he runs. It was important to note that this can also occur with cyclists.

145. A more detailed discussion took place concerning upgrading bridleways to restricted byways (RBs) for carriage driving.
146. As Chairman of WSCC Rights of Way Committee, Bill Acraman stated that he had no issues with applications for such upgrades. WSCC would also be happy to join in negotiations with landowners for permissive access to increase lengths of routes.
147. Thought must be given to bridleways being wide enough from start to finish to accommodate carriage drivers (i.e. no pinch points en route) before an application can be considered.
148. WSCC has a duty to maintain rights of way and there may be a cost element if upgrades take place.
149. A major concern for RBs is motorbike usage. This is an ongoing problem as evidenced at Graffham, and there is a need for resolution. Trevor Passmore agreed as this had been experienced at Lancing. It was key that the public phone in details of illegal use, quoting Pathwatch to create crime records and get an Incident Number. Eight motorcyclists had been caught recently, resulting in some bikes being confiscated.
150. Mr Pitter thanked Bill Acraman for his sympathetic and helpful comments.
151. If permissive routes were pursued, Trevor Passmore asked if the BDS would provide funding to help with the installation of gates etc to overcome cattle grids. Mr Pitter responded that although he was attending in a personal capacity rather than represent the Society, he felt that there was unlikely to be any specific funding available from subscription income. He will, however, raise this point with them.
152. Bill Acraman advised that it would be simpler to secure funding if there was an agreed way forward with all parties for a permissive route.
153. Helen Baldwin reported that there was a 15-mile permissive route belonging to the Forestry Commission (FC) and the National Trust (NT) but felt that permission could be withdrawn at any time by either party and therefore dedicated rights of way are much preferred. Bill Acraman clarified that where permissive routes are provided, through formal agreement with WSCC, they remain in place for an agreed period, typically

10 years, before renegotiation.

Working Groups

Disability Access

154. Members noted the Report from David Ribbens (copy attached to the signed minutes).
155. David Ribbens reported that wheelchair users had tried to access the beach at Pagham using the new boardwalk but had been unable to do so. Bill Acraman confirmed that the 2 boardwalks installed were intended to enable wheelchair access.
156. **Resolved: Bill Acraman and Lisa Creaye-Griffin to investigate access issues.**
157. Discussion took place regarding impaired vision access needs and it was agreed that there were many parts of the countryside where access would not be practicable.
158. David Ribbens had contacted the Disabled Association regarding the negotiating of cattle grids and reported that a right of way (not permissive) is required by law to have a route across/around the grid. For rights of way, with status higher than footpaths, this should also allow for horse traffic.
159. The Secretary updated members on behalf of Nigel Sloan that some Ramblers Associations (RA) groups in Sussex regularly host walks for blind groups and find it a very rewarding activity. Members welcomed this information.
160. Nigel Sloan raised concerns regarding unacceptable urbanisation of the countryside if the level of WSCC signage suggested for mud on the route was implemented.

Strategic Development – East Grinstead

161. Tricia Butcher updated members that although Mid-Sussex District Council had made a decision on their Preferred Options, boundary issues meant that there will be a Public Inquiry with consultation taking place in February/March 2008.

Strategic Development - Horsham

162. The Masterplan for 2,000 homes in Broadbridge Heath, near Horsham, had been issued for comment by 5th November. Members welcomed proposals for rights of way underpasses and a new road to be built to the south of the A264. The Masterplan will be sent to Nigel Sloan for comment.

Strategic development – West of Crawley

163. A consultation for 2-5,000 new homes is due out on 19th October 2007.

164. All the above/future developments will have a huge impact on transport and other infrastructure requirements. It was welcomed that documentation on strategic developments received to date mentioned rights of way for walker and cyclists, however the development approach did not take into account all recreational access users.
165. **Resolved: Secretary to issue Positioning Paper for Horsham and West of Crawley developments.**
166. Tricia Butcher attended the 'Visioning Horsham' Conference with members of the Horsham District Community Partnership on 11th October on behalf of CAFWS. Strategic Planners attended the Conference as well as the Leisure Services Manager.
167. Details of the South East Plan (SEP) strategy for the Gatwick Diamond (Gatwick to Burgess Hill) include for 13,000 new homes between 2006-2026, of which 4,000 would be on as yet unidentified Greenfield sites.
168. 125,000 people live in Horsham District, which is largely rural with an ageing population. 44,000 people live in Horsham Town itself, which has a growth in population.
169. There is a high level of commuting from Horsham to London, Crawley, Gatwick and Guildford and the District has a high skills level. However, there are affordability issues with housing provision and growth on the north east of the county will have a big impact for future development.
170. The District needs to protect what is good (countryside and attractive villages) whilst at the same time manage change and enhance social, leisure and cultural facilities.

Off-Road Cycling Group

171. On behalf of Glynn Jones, the Secretary updated members that a meeting had been held and available material and information gathered. The next stage will be a meeting to discuss options for West Sussex from the information-gathering phase.

South Downs Access Forum (SDAF)

172. Members noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held 29th June 2007. (copy attached to the signed minutes)
173. The Chairman introduced Ben Perkins, Chairman, SDAF, to the meeting in the absence of Glynn Jones and Nigel Sloan (CAFWS members who also sit on SDAF).
174. Jane Noble explained that she is to represent WSCC at a meeting on 19th October where the future role of the SDAF is to be discussed. Officers from the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC) and other local authorities with an interest in the Forum, along with the Chairman will be attending. She will present the views of CAFWS, as well as WSCC, at the meeting.

175. She reminded members that the SDAF was set up as a sub forum to the mother forums of Hampshire, East and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove in 2004, to provide local knowledge, expertise and advice on the South Downs predominantly on open access and the RoWIP. This was at the same time that the three other CAFWS sub forums (Coastal Plain, Low Weald and High Weald) were established. Unlike CAFWS, the sub forums are not statutory and it should be noted that CAFWS covers the geographical area of the South Downs within West Sussex. The SDAF also provides a more strategic role for the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC), being set up in the expectation that the proposed South Downs National Park would have been designated by 2008.
176. Since SDAF's creation, WSCC has contributed £2000pa towards the servicing of the SDAF by SDJC officers. Three other local authorities (Hampshire, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove) also contribute towards SDAF, with in recent years the major contribution coming from SDJC itself, since funding from the Countryside Agency stopped.
177. WSCC services the three other sub forums, although since 2004, they have been largely self-serving with the Chairs setting agendas and providing minutes, with Jane Noble, arranging rooms, providing refreshments and sending out information as required.
178. In addition, there have been issues with poor attendance at the SDAF and the retention/recruitment of members. The workshop to be held in September in place of a formal meeting had been cancelled due to lack of interest.
179. Ben Perkins agreed with the comments made and suggested that the SDAF should be considered separately from the management of the other CAFWS sub forums. He was keen for the SDAF to continue as a starting point and model for the statutory SDNP Local Access Forum. However there may be constraints regarding future funding.
180. Peter Brown commented that the SDAF provided detailed knowledge to CAFWS on the West Sussex area of the South Downs and wider strategic direction regarding the proposed SDNP. It would therefore make sense if the SDAF did not have regular meetings but met on an ad hoc basis when needed by the four mother Forums.
181. Discussion took place on the future of the SDAF. The Chairman presented three options for the Forum to consider for discussion and agreement in principle to take to the Officer meeting on 19th October at the South Downs Joint Committee offices at Ford:
- Option 1 – do nothing
 - Option 2 – disband the SDAF altogether
 - Option 3 – hold meetings/themed working groups on an 'as needed' basis in the same way that CAFWS had previously agreed for its three other sub-forums (preferred option for WSCC)

182. Members comments are summarised below:
- SDAF have done very good work in the past and provided a sounding board for projects
 - it was questionable that the SDAF currently needs to meet four times a year, especially as there is currently recruitment and retention issues with membership
 - SDAF Work Programme not always influenced by mother forums eg Open Access Mapping initiated by SDAF. Therefore, if SDAF continues, the mother forums must take the lead in the Work Programme
 - minutes indicate that the SDAF is an independent, standalone body, as the name suggests, rather than a sub forum
 - roles of both the South Downs Advisory Forum (Recreation and Access) and SDAF need to be clarified to avoid duplication and repetition
 - SDAF should share the same format as the sub forums and meet on an 'as needed' basis such as the Coastal Plain Sub-forum does
 - due to constraints at WSCC, funding for SDAF unlikely to be available in 2008, however funding for member expenses, venues, refreshments etc could be available on an ad hoc basis
 - if just the SDJC wish to use the SDAF members in an advisory capacity then they would be expected to fund in full
 - complications could arise if advice was only wanted on West Sussex issues, in which case may only need local SDAF members to progress
183. The Chairman reminded members of the three options to take forward for agreement in principle in readiness for the multi-authority officers meeting on 19th October 2007.
184. **Resolved: that the consensus of members was for Option 3 (hold meetings/themed working groups on an 'as needed' basis in the same way that CAFWS had previously agreed for its three other sub-forums).**
185. **Action: JN to take this to the meeting on 19th October.**

Coastal Plain

186. Members noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held 9th August 2007. (copy attached to the signed minutes)

Consultations

Proposed South Downs National Park

187. Members noted the Forum's response to the consultation. (copy attached to the signed minutes)
188. Bill Acraman updated the Forum regarding the advice of the County Council QC that there cannot be a period when the West Weald will not be in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

189. The proposed northern eastern boundary was illogical and WSCC proposed response was that there should be a different line closer to the start of the chalk ridge to the south of the four Commons.
190. In essence, WSCC was minded to agree to a National Park with a contracted area.

Cocking, Graffham and Heyshott (Restricted Byway 952)

191. The Secretary made members aware of a letter received from Mr E Rimmer regarding the above application and the debate that took place at the July Forum meeting.
192. **Resolved: that the Secretary respond to Mr Rimmer with copies to include the local councillors of the North Chichester CLC.**
193. Members were reminded that the decision on the TRO is scheduled to take place at the CLC meeting on 11th December 2007.

Improving Access to the English Coast

194. Members noted the Forum's revised response (copy attached to the signed minutes) and the Chairman thanked the Coastal Plain Sub Forum and CAFWS members for their comments to achieve a balanced view on this major consultation.
195. It was noted that there are very few gaps for access by foot along the West Sussex coast, and there were concerns expressed regarding a) the lack of compensation for landowners/farmers in the Defra preferred option (option 4) for new legislation being unjust and b) concentration for access mainly for walkers rather than all users.
196. Examples where roll-back provision will be needed to combat path erosion are Pagham Harbour and Chidham.

West Sussex Rural Strategy

197. Lisa Creaye-Griffin reported that the Strategy objectives should be completed by the end of November 2007 and the Executive Summary will then be sent to members for consideration. The Action Plan will be reviewed at the CAFWS January 2008 meeting.

Forestry Commission High Weald Forest Design Plan

198. Jane Noble had contacted the Forestry Commission (FC) regarding the consultation and requesting Forum involvement in any future consultation.
199. **Resolved: Secretary to contact FC again regarding Forum involvement.**

Local Transport Planning – Next Steps

200. Members were disappointed to note that the Forum had not been included in the consultation process and that there was no reference to rights of

ways in the consultation document.

201. The Local Transport Plan must be integrated with the Rights Of Way Improvement Plan to secure funding opportunities. In addition, funding would be now allocated to specific criteria up to 2011 and would not allow variables
202. **Resolved: Secretary to respond on behalf of the Forum to meet the deadline of 19th October 2007.**

National Parks

203. Members noted the summary for new powers to ban off-road vehicles. (copy attached to the signed minutes)

Three Harbours and a Coastal Plain

204. Members were informed that this was a LEADER (a European Community Initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area administered by SEEDA) funded initiative providing a potential way into funding for access and recreation. The Forum will have a positive opportunity to contribute to the initiative by joining the Local Action Group (LAG) bidding for an overall budget of £350,000 per annum.
205. The project covers most of the Coastal Plain between Langstone Harbour and Littlehampton south of the A27 but excludes the major towns. The Coastal Plain Sub Forum will take part in future meetings and consultations.
206. Lisa-Creaye Griffin reported that the Rural Development Programme for England covers climate change, rural and access issues. There are two bids covering parts of West Sussex, of which the Three Harbours and Coastal Plain is one and the other is South Downs and Low Weald. The Forum will have the opportunity to get involved in developing both.

Discovering Lost Ways (DLW)

207. Members noted the summary for response by 30th October 2007. (copy attached to the signed minutes)
208. Members agreed a suggested response from the Vice Chairman that as the DLW is mainly a legal process, local access forums (LAFs) should not become directly involved in such a process.
209. However LAFs should advise on priorities to meet local needs, and the RoWIP should already highlight areas where links in the present network are missing and where extra legal/administrative sources are needed.
210. **Resolved: Secretary to respond as above by 30th October 2007.**
211. Comments were made that Natural England appear to be looking to LAFs to carry the work out for them, and that parish councils had not been included in the process to date. Jane Noble reported that the scheme is

unlikely to be rolled out to West Sussex for several years so it is not surprising that parish councils have not yet been contacted by Natural England.

212. In response to a question, Jane Noble to investigate if the routes to be put forward for investigation will include 'white roads'.

Widening and Increasing Participation in Walking

213. WSCC currently runs a variety of walks programmes, including health walks in Crawley, walks and events from the Coastal Plain, Low Weald and High Weald Offices and the Exploring West Sussex booklet of guided walks and events. It also holds a Walking West Sussex Festival in October each year (this year based at Weald and Down Museum) which incorporates shorter walks and theatre walks (working with Poems and Puddings – WSCC's arts project) aimed at attracting new audiences. WSCC is also a partner in the Crawley walking festival. Various booklets were handed to members at the meeting.
214. The Council are working in partnership with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and local GPs who prescribe walking activities to patients to help combat the obesity epidemic and other health issues.
215. Focus Groups had been set up to identify and break down barriers for those groups of people who would not normally be found taking recreational walking in the countryside. Surveys had shown that most walkers contacted are already involved in walking in the countryside. Feedback is due from the PCT consultants at the end of November and will tie in with the launch of the WSCC Obesity Strategy on 7th November.
216. There is a perception by those not familiar with the countryside that it can be daunting and unwelcoming.
217. Promoting Walking is one of the main charitable objectives of the RA and the Walking for Health initiatives run by district councils had proved very successful eg Horsham. The RA organised a large number of walks through its local Groups in West Sussex together with 10 affiliated clubs with walks often suitable for beginners or the elderly. Nationally, the RA had been awarded lottery funding for projects encouraging inner-city residents and ethnic minorities to start walking for health and pleasure. WSCC should continue to encourage school pupils to walk/cycle to and from school.
218. Trevor Passmore suggested that farmers could give talks on why recreational access users should stay on footpaths etc when on farm land, or run educational Farm Walks. Jane Noble advised that the Rural Development Service (now incorporated into Natural England) had run a series of Farms Walks for both professionals and the public in the past.
219. It was suggested that a half day workshop on promoting access to the countryside and walking could be appropriate for the Forum in Spring 2008 to take this further and include input from Safe Routes to Schools and Walking Busses initiatives. Members were asked to feedback their thoughts to the Secretary before the next Forum meeting.

General Report

220. The Forum noted a General Report on a range of issues and interest to the Forum (copy attached to the signed minutes).
221. Jane Noble reported that the RoWIP was on track for publication to meet the Government's November deadline, when copies of the Plan will be sent to Forum members. It was understood, however, that some LAFs may not meet the deadline
222. The Secretary reported that the National Countryside Forum is likely to be reinstated in 2008. The National Forum will need clear objectives on what it wants to achieve going forward.
223. The Secretary updated members that the South Downs Joint Committee have a co-ordinated approach on Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) with all four local authorities to ensure consistency.
224. Mr Passmore reported that although FMD is hopefully under control, the same cannot be said for Bluetongue. The disease is carried by midges and thought to have arrived in Europe by flowers transported from Africa. Unlike FMD, it cannot be carried by footwear or clothing.
225. There is a 70% kill rate and as there is no compensation payable, farmers bear the full cost of the loss of their animals. There are eight identified strains of the disease and it is hoped that a vaccine will be available in 2008. The disease only affects cattle, sheep and deer (which may have natural immunity) and has the potential to change the face of the countryside as we know it today.

Mr Acraman left the meeting at 1pm.

Agenda Items for Consideration for the Next Meeting of the Forum

226. The following items were suggested for consideration: -
- volunteering for rights of way work
 - RoWIP as part of the Forum 2008 Work Programme
 - invitation to attend the meeting to the new National Trust Manager at Slindon
 - invitation to attend the meeting to the Forestry Commission

Matters for Information

227. There were no matters for information.

Date of Next Meeting

228. The next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum will be held at Billingshurst Village Hall at 10.30am on Wednesday 23rd January 2008.

The meeting finished at 1.10pm.

Chairman