

DRAFT – unapproved by the Forum

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

Washington Memorial Hall, Pulborough, West Sussex

6th December 2007

Meeting 21 Minutes

Present

Members:

Ben Perkins (BP)	David Ashcroft (DA)	Nigel Sloan (NS)
Bob Damper (BD)	David Taylor (DT)	Sue Montilla (SM)
David Brookshaw (DB)	John Rennie (JR)	

SDAF co-ordinators:

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

Observers

Alison Tingley (AT) : SDJC Countryside Manager (Strategic)
Andrew Gattiker (AG) : South Downs Way, National Trail Officer
Andrew Smith (AS) : HCC Assistant Head of the Countryside Service
Angela Shepherd (ASh) : SDJC Western Area Ranger
Beverly Wadge (BV) : SDJC Western Area Team
Hugo Blomfield (HB) : BHCC Countryside Manager

Pubic:

four

Apologies

Derek Cleaver (DC) Glynn Jones (GJ)

Item	Minutes	Action
1	<p><u>Introductions and apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BP welcomed those present. It was disappointing that so few members had attended or sent apologies. Apologies were received from just two members (as stated above). 	
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"> JO had amended June's SDAF minutes to reflect the concerns that Jon Willis (JW) had raised. The Forum approved the minutes. JO went through the actions from the last meeting. The majority had been completed. JO was still to write a letter to the appropriate Minister supporting increased funding for RoWIP implementation (21.01). JO to pass on the SDAF's support for the establishment of a National Countryside Access Forum (21.02). 	
4	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JR asked whether there were any updates on the SDJC's finances. NJ reported that the budgets for the current financial year had been balanced. The moratorium was still in place, but would hopefully be lifted shortly. 	
5	<p><u>Election of Chair and Vice Chair</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Perkins was unanimously re-elected as Chair for a further 12 months. John Rennie was unanimously elected to be the new Vice-Chair of the SDAF. 	
6	<p><u>Mother Fora updates and feedback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAFWS (BP); The members had received an interesting presentation on harness carriage driving. The Forum had discussed the future of the SDAF and felt that the SDAF should meet on an ad hoc basis, much like CAFWS's sub forums. HCAF (SM); The Chair and Vice Chair had been re-elected at the AGM. The Forum had advised how the Local Transport Plan's (LTP2) 'access to the countryside' projects should be selected, as well as how to enhance links between the LTP2 and CAP. Dog control orders had also been discussed. Parish Councils were able to impose control orders, which members feared could create disjointed approaches to dog control across the county. Trisha Butcher (TB), an observer and member of CAFWS, informed the SDAF that CAFWS had not been consulted on the West Sussex LTP2 funding allocation. This was worrying, as the Forum was supposedly a consultee. TB said that JN had complained about the oversight. DB said that this was a shame, the SDAF had emphasised the importance of LTP funding for RoWIP implementation. AS said that he had not been given much opportunity to consult on Hampshire's LTP2 funding allocation - it had been an internal decision that was largely out of his control. DB asked whether the letter regarding RoWIP implementation should incorporate this matter. JO to incorporate the concerns of securing LTP2 funding for RoWIP implementation into the SDAF's imminent correspondence (21.03). B&HLAF (DB); The AGM had been on the 25th October. Eric Huxham and Chris Boocock had been elected Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. The Forum had formally approved the final RoWIP document. LTP funding had been secured to implement the RoWIP, DB just hoped there was the officer time to implement it. Brighton & Hove City Council was a major landowner surrounding the city. DB applauded the Council for seizing opportunities to enhance access opportunities, particularly when tenancy agreements had come up for renewal. HB said that the Council had been working strategically, using the recommendations of the Downland Initiative document to great success. The B&HLAF had discussed the cancellation 	

	<p>of the SDAF's workshop and agreed that it was important not to forget the good work that the SDAF had done.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESxLAF. RF was not present and no one else was able to give an update. 	
7	<p><u>Future of the SDAF</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJ outlined the background behind the agenda item. The SDJC's members had formed a number of Task and Finish groups to look at all SDJC work to ensure it achieved value for money. The potential withdrawal of local authority financial support and a lack of attendance/apathy amongst SDAF members had resulted in the future of the Forum needing to be looked at. If the South Downs National Park was confirmed, the National Park Authority would likely be given money to run a National Park Access Forum, however in the mean time the SDAF needed to provide value for money. NJ requested the members to make a recommendation on the future of the SDAF, based on the four recommendations made in the report that JO had sent to the members (these recommendations are summarised in the insert below). <div data-bbox="272 674 1369 898" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><u>The four options for the SDAF's future, as stated in the SDAF Report (Dec 07):</u> <i>Option 1 - Continue the SDAF in its current format.</i> <i>Option 2 - Reduce the number of meetings to one a year but have workshops when required.</i> <i>Option 3 - Members incorporated into the South Downs Advisory Forum's.</i> <i>Option 4 - Abolish the SDAF.</i></p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SM asked about the SDJC's overspend that was reported at the previous SDAF meeting in June. NJ informed that the accounts had been balanced for 2007/08 and there was no deficit. The SDJC were now looking at funding and the business plan for 2008/09. Natural England and the local authorities were all facing budget constraints that could no doubt affect the SDJC. • JO outlined the results of the questionnaire that had been returned by the SDAF members. Unfortunately only 8 responses had been received and, as a result, did not give a true reflection of the member's opinions. The responses received indicated that members were generally pleased with the way that the meetings were run, but would like to see the SDAF achieve more practical improvements on the ground. Members felt that it was more important for the SDAF to be involved in more on the ground and South Downs-wide matters, rather than regional or national access and recreation issues. Open access implementation, RoWIP development and the open access mapping project were deemed to be the SDAF's most positive achievements. It was evident from the report and questionnaire that amongst both the SDAF members and Mother Forums, there were differing opinions on how the Forum should operate, particular over what level of guidance the Mother Forums should give. JO to send the results of the SDAF questionnaire to the full Forum (21.04). • The Forum then discussed the four proposed options in the report. Option 1 was extremely unlikely to happen. BP thought that Option 3 would not be a good choice as the South Downs Advisory Forum's (SDAdvF's) 6 sub groups met only rarely and could not directly set their own agendas. AT had informed the SDAdvF about option 3 the day before; members wanted to know more about the incorporation of SDAF members but seemed okay with the theory of it. Option 2 had been proposed because West Sussex County Council (WSCC) had indicated that it would be unable to fund the SDAF in the future. The assumption had been that having one of the local authority's pull funding would result in the others withdrawing funding as well. However, AS indicated that Hampshire County Council (HCC) would be prepared to fund the SDAF next year. BD pointed out that Option 2 did not necessarily have to be just one meeting a year as it was surely dependent on the amount of funding available for officer time. DT felt that having just one meeting a year would result in members' falling out of the loop if they missed the meeting. He asked whether 	

	<p>Option 4 should be the SDAF's recommendation and questioned whether the SDAF was simply duplicating the existing work of the SDJC. DA endorsed this opinion and recommended Options 3 & 4. He felt that the SDAF had demonstrated a value for money when it started but now questioned its relevance. SM sadly agreed with this opinion and suggested the SDAF pause until/if the National Park was confirmed. A number of Forum members disagreed. DB said that the members could give up and recommend Option 4 but shouldn't because the SDAF had the potential to achieve more good work in the interim. He felt that a mixture of Option 1 & 2 should be recommended, depending on the funding available. Option 3 should be explored as well. AS thought that it would be a shame to go with Option 3 or 4 and believed that if the SDAF limited itself to distinct areas of work it could be a powerful entity. NJ said that he would rather see the SDAF have a smaller dedicated core of members with a specific work programme to follow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BP said that it was evident that a decision would not be reached at the meeting. JR suggested that a workshop be organised to reach a decision, as time was running short. SM suggested it be done via email, which was agreed by the Forum. DA, JR, SM, BP, BD and DT said that they would be prepared to take part in discussions. <p>JO to write up the minutes and co-ordinate the email discussion on the future of the SDAF (21.05). The Forum's recommendation was needed by the end of January in order for it to be worked into reports for SDAdvF and SDJC Executive Committee meetings.</p>	
8	<p><u>South Downs Open Access Mapping Project</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NJ introduced BW who was part of the Western Area and had been asked to complete the remaining work on the South Downs Open Access Mapping Project. BW had obtained written permission from some landowners, mapped inaccuracies, made changes and answered the landowner's questions. There had been some inaccuracies in the mapping, including the overlapping of the GIS polygons and the inclusion of some CRoW open access sites. In two cases the landowners for certain sites had changed and as a result new permission forms had been sought. Unfortunately some Natural England sites, formerly managed by the Rural Development Service (RDS) had been withdrawn from the submission due to having expiry dates on the open access sites. BW informed members that the project had been largely completed, with 2584 Ha being identified. This was less than expected but still a substantial area. BP asked whether expiry dates could not have been added for the RDS sites. DA raised concerns that users would not check the expiry dates of the sites and would assume it was still open access. NS asked whether the RDS sites could not be added to the South Downs website. BW thought that this would be difficult to keep up to date. JO to investigate whether a link from the South Downs website to Natural England's could be created (21.06). NS asked whether the access points had been mapped. JO said that this had never been an objective and that the Ordnance Survey (OS) currently did not map entry points into open access land. BW was still awaiting confirmation for one HCC site and once receiving this, the sites would be ready to be passed to the OS. BP thought that some excellent work had been achieved through the project if over a longer duration that ideally foreseen. JO to co-ordinate the delivery of the South Downs Open Access Mapping Project to the OS (21.07). 	
9	<p><u>South Downs Way Management Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AG, the South Downs Way (SDW) National Trail Officer, gave an update on the development of the new 5 year SDW Management Plan (2008 – 13). The Plan set out the aims and objectives of the Trail's management, the actions needed to achieve the Trail's vision, as well as the key partners and resources needed to implement it. AG acknowledged the SDAF's help in identifying and ranking what issues should be addressed in the plan; these had been used to develop the consultation document. The Management Plan had 4 strategic aims, these being managing the Trail and its 	

	<p>corridor, promoting the SDW and providing information for Trail users, maximising the economic benefits of the Trail and addressing sustainability. Each strategic aim had its own set of management objectives that essentially stated where the National Trail should be at the end of the Plan's life. A comprehensive action plan had also been developed and showed how each of the strategic aims would be achieved on the ground.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG invited the SDAF to make a formal response to the consultation document. Responses should be returned by 1st February 2007. A consultation response form had been prepared. AG to email digital copies of the SDW Management Plan consultation document and associated documents to members of the SDAF (21.08). • AG also updated the SDAF on a number of SDW matters. Natural England primarily funds the National Trails. Funding for 2008-09 had been confirmed but it was not known how much. AG discussed the missing routes along the SDW. A possible alternative route into Winchester was being investigated but was at early stages of consultation with the affected landowners. AG said there were still a number of hurdles to overcome, but thought the route had potential. With regards to the Meon Valley, the Inspector was due to publish a formal decision soon. • BP was pleased to see the comprehensive action plan. BD noticed that the plan said the route into Winchester should be completed in three years and asked whether this was realistic. AG said it was ambitious, but if there were no major hurdles to overcome, it was a realistic timeframe. 	
10	<p><u>Sussex Pathwatch</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASH had given a presentation to the SDAF in May 2006. Since then Sussex Pathwatch had gone from strength to strength; 120 warning letters had been sent to offenders, 5 Section 59 Warnings had been issued for antisocial behaviour and there had been an estimated 50-75% reduction of incidences at Graffham. Regrettably, Police Constable Mark Hillman (MH) (who had been instrumental in the establishment of Pathwatch) was due to retire, making important to expand Pathwatch to areas beyond the Chichester District. Arun, Crawley and Horsham District Council's had expressed interest in running the scheme. HCC were also potentially interested, but needed to investigate how it would fit into the current rights of way management structure. ASH was also due to give presentations to Oxfordshire County Council and the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The reported incidences of illegal motorised vehicle use had been used to identify hot spots, which ASH hoped to target using specific signage (particularly on restricted byways). ASH was also approaching motorised vehicle retailers to raise awareness through them. ASH invited SDAF members to attend the next Sussex Pathwatch meeting at Lurgashall Village Hall on 28th February. • NS had recently tried to report an incident but had kept being passed to different operators. ASH explained that large turnovers at Police call centres meant that the operators were not always properly informed about Pathwatch. ASH hoped these were merely a teething problem and said it was important that the community maintain the scheme's momentum by reporting any incidences. ASH did not know the number of reports that had been made but would ask MH for the figures. ASH to email Pathwatch feedback to NS to pass on to the Ramblers Association (21.09). BP thanked ASH for the presentation and was pleased to see it was such a success story. He wished it furthered success in other areas. 	
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"> - Open access. - Linear access. 	

	- Strategic Access Plan.	
--	--------------------------	--

Summary of Actions from meeting 21

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Who by</i>
21.01	JO to write a letter to the appropriate Minister supporting increased funding for RoWIP implementation.	JO
21.02	JO to pass on the SDAF's support for the establishment of a National Countryside Access Forum.	JO
21.03	JO to incorporate the concerns of securing LTP2 funding for RoWIP implementation into the SDAF's imminent correspondence.	JO
21.04	JO to send the results of the SDAF questionnaire to the full Forum.	JO
21.05	JO to write up the minutes and co-ordinate the email discussion on the future of the SDAF.	JO
21.06	JO to investigate whether a link from the South Downs website to Natural England's could be created.	JO
21.07	JO to co-ordinate the delivery of the South Downs Open Access Mapping Project to the OS.	JO
21.08	AG to email digital copies of the SDW Management Plan consultation document and associated documents to members of the SDAF.	AG
21.09	ASh to email Pathwatch feedback to NS to pass on to the Ramblers Association.	ASh