

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

29th June 2007

Meeting 19 Minutes

Present

Members:

Ben Perkins (BP)	David Ashcroft (DA)	Jon Willis (JW)
Bob Damper (BD)	Glynn Jones (GJ)	Sue Montilla (SM)
David Brookshaw (DB)	John Rennie (JR)	

SDAF co-ordinators:

James Ort (JO) : South Downs Access Forum Officer

Pubic:

five

Apologies

Craig Thomas (CT)	Derek Cleaver (DC)	Nigel Sloan (NS)
David Taylor (DT)	James Sharpe (JS)	Roger Foxwell (RF)

A date for your diaries:

There will be a South Downs Access Forum workshop held on the 21st September. All members are expected to attend.

The next formal meeting will be the AGM on the 6th December (venue to be confirmed).

Item	Minutes	Action
1	<p><u>Introductions and apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BJ welcomed members and observers to the meeting. • Apologies were received from six 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"> • A slight amendment was needed before the minutes could be passed as accurate. • SM asked JO to forward Cath Hart the SDAF's response to the National Park Authority's TRO consultation response (19.01). Members asked whether the LAF guidelines could be looked at in more detail to see whether they could be used to identify more areas of work for the Forum. JO had planned to look at the guidelines in the current meeting but the agenda had been filled with more pressing items. JO hoped that members would take more initiative and lead on some areas of Forum's work. JR thought that the SDAF could be involved in RoWIP implementation, focusing on where funding could come from. • JR felt that it was important that the SDAF look at areas of work that the Mother Fora do not address. GJ agreed, adding that the SDAF should give a South Downs perspective. DA also felt that it was important that the SDAF act as a bridge between the four Mother Fora and help develop closer ties between the groups. 	
4	<p><u>SDJC Finance Update (possible implications for the Forum) – Alison Tingley</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT updated the Forum on the SDJC's finances. Staff had recently discovered a possible £202,100 overspend in the organisation's account from the previous financial year. £70,000 had been planned to have come from the SDJC's reserves, however that left a £131,000 deficit. The SDJC Finance Team was investigating where this overspend had come from and a Task and Finish Group had been assembled to assess the organisation's current expenditure/work programme. Initial investigations suggested that the overspend was as a result of not claiming Interreg funding correctly. A moratorium on all non-essential expenditure had been implemented. Only essential purchases were allowed, for example RoW maintenance and other areas where the public's safety is at risk. • In an attempt to save money, AT discussed plans to decrease the number of Forum meetings a year and reduce the hours that JO spent on the administration of the SDAF. It was hoped that the saved time could be used to backfill a shortage of staff time allocated to the maintenance of the South Downs website. • Members agreed to downscale September's formal SDAF meeting (21/09/07) to a SDAF workshop in an attempt to free up some of JO's time. The Forum workshop would proactively address pre-designated topics with the aim of achieving solid outcomes. BP, GJ, JR and DB to meet up on the 14/08/08 to identify which areas would be best for the Forum to address at the workshop (19.02). JO to also attend the pre-workshop meeting and take notes (19.03). AT thanked members for their understanding on the matter. Concerns were raised over the future of the Forum, especially when the South Downs appeared to be much closer to a decision on the National Park than before. 	
5	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JO informed the Forum that the Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests had recently been released. The Forum had commented on an earlier draft when it was out for public consultation. • DA asked whether the SDAF should review road crossing on the South Downs Way? Could anything be done to help enhance the road crossing on the A31 at Winchester, perhaps like the A32 in the Meon Valley? JO to liase with Andrew Gattiker (the newly appointed South Downs Way National Trailer Officer) to 	

	see if this is possible (19.04).	
6	<p><u>Mother Fora updates and feedback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAFWS (GJ). Ronnie Perrin had been re-elected as the Chair of the Forum. Louise Goldsmith had discussed WSx RoWIP funding and the Fundamental Service Review with the Forum. Peter Brown (the newly elected Vice Chairman) was pleased to confirm that CAFWS would be consulted in the early stages of the planning process for new building developments. A Disabled Access Working Group and Cycling Working Group had also been set up. SM to forward on some cycling guidelines that she has to GJ (19.05). Lisa Creaye-Griffin had informed members about a 10-20 year Rural Strategy that was being put together by the Rural Partnership group. • B&HLAF (DB). The B&H RoWIP consultation was now closed with the final version due to be put to the Environment Committee for approval. The Forum had been informed that money had been found to extend an easy access route for wheel chair users. The Forum had discussed new routes for improvement, members felt the Woodingdean to Falmer route should be a top priority. • HCAF (SM). A sub group had held two workshops on the definitive map's claiming process and areas for possible HCAF involvement. The members had been updated on various aspects of dogs in the countryside. A new signage system had been implemented at Danebury Hillfort, paw signs are colour coded to indicate to what degree a dog should be controlled. The Forum had discussed the coastal access and right to apply consultations. A site visit had entailed members to be driven along certain byways by representatives from the Wessex Hillrunners. DA understood why vehicle users enjoyed using green lanes, but never the less felt that the expenditure required to repair damaged routes exceeded the benefits. It was a shame that vehicle users who were willing to voluntarily repair surfaces were not allowed to for health and safety reasons. SM agreed, through her work on the bridlegroups she was aware of significant differences in contractor prices depending on which county they were from. • ESxLAF. RF had given his apologies shortly before the meeting, no one else was able to give an update from the last ESxLAF meeting. • Members asked that JO forward the SDAF members the minutes of all Mother Fora meetings (19.06). 	
7	<p><u>Verbal update on the Open Access Mapping Project – James Ort</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JO updated the Forum on the Open Access Mapping Project. Bev Wadge, a South Downs Voluntary Ranger, had been paid a small sum of money to finish the project. Bev had modified the maps where needed and had received written consent to map the sites from most of the landowners. BP and DB were disappointed that the project had gone on for such a long period but were pleased to hear that it was progressing. BP requested written feedback in light of there not being a September SDAF meeting. JO to arrange for members to receive an update on the Open Access Mapping Project in which ever format is most suitable (19.07). 	
8	<p><u>SDAF response – Consultation on the right to apply for orders to extinguish and divert public rights of way, and associated rights of appeal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum discussed the consultation. BP felt that it was an injustice that landowners could currently not apply directly to extinguish or divert a RoW. DA felt that the system was currently bureaucratic and needed to be more user friendly, however the new regulations may potentially allow wealthy landowners to apply even if there is no justified case for an extinguishment or diversion. DA also added that some farmers think that the CRoW Act was rather anti-landowners. Giving landowners the ability to remove or divert some RoW may mean that in the future they may feel more inclined to assist in allowing new routes. Concerns were raised that an increased number of applications may also overwhelm local authorities and user groups. BP felt that in ESx and WSx extinguishments/diversions are normally dealt with, often without the need to go to appeal. BP said that one of the SDAF's 	

	<p>key responses to this consultation should be that before orders are made, there should be adequate scope for informal discussion about the plans between the local authority, landowners and user groups. This could potentially remove the need for drawn out inquiries and be a lot cheaper. After some discussion, the Forum decided that the 4 month period by which local authorities must determine an application was an adequate duration. JO to send out a comments log for members to record additional thought on the Right to Apply Consultation (19.08). JO to draft the Forums response to the consultation by 31st March (19.09).</p>	
9	<p><u>Countryside interpretation/signage – discussion on the SDAF’s way forward</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This agenda item was postponed. The small working party would decide whether the SDAF should look at this topic during the workshop in September. The working group should also decided whether it would be best for the Forum to look at what was currently done or make recommendations. Members felt that it was important to have consistency across the South Downs. 	
10	<p><u>SDAF response – Cocking, Graffham and Heyshott: Restricted Byway 952 Proposed TRO Consultation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum discussed WSCC’s proposal for making an additional TRO on restricted byway 952. Illegal motorised vehicle use had continued as a result of motor cyclists being able to get onto the byway through the existing Kent Gaps. Local groups had lead for enhancements to be made to the existing TRO to curb this illegal use. Whilst carriage drivers would be legally excluded from the byway it was implied that they would be allowed the keys for the locked gates. JO showed the Forum a few photos of the route. It was noted that there was limited physical damage on the byway’s surface, implying that the claim was mainly on account of noise pollution, antisocial behaviour and conflict with other users. Tricia Butcher (TB) (an observer) said that the situation had improved considerably since the original TRO’s implementation and the creation of Sussex Pathwatch. • GJ thought that it would be near impossible for physical barriers to stop the illegal use of the restricted byway altogether; motorcyclists and quad bikes often do no need to use main entry points to gain access. Putting up barriers can be both very expensive and impeding for other users. BD echoed concerns that cyclists would be impeded by the new TRO. DA agreed with GJ, although he had seen a series of four sleepers embedded in the ground which acted as an effective barrier for motorcyclists. If the gate was to be adopted, issues would arise as to how carriage riders would get gain access. SM thought that a combination code padlock could be used, although these were not always ideal. Paul Dimmer (PD) (an observer and resident of Graffham) said that he had never actually seen a carriage driver using the PRoW before. JW said that the TRF’s predications for this TRO had come true, considerable investment* had gone into the implementation of the existing TRO and yet it had failed to stop illegal use. • GJ felt that enforcement was the key to illegal motorised vehicle use. Schemes like Pathwatch should be encouraged and relied upon above everything else. He was aware of a very successful project that actually crushed confiscated vehicles. Members agreed with GJ and felt that it was difficult to comment on the consultation on account of not knowing whether the number of incidences of illegal behaviour would justify the level of expenditure for TRO implementation. At a previous meeting the Forum had taken the stance that the need for tranquillity outweighed motorised vehicle use in the South Downs. The SDAF is therefore in favour of promoting increased tranquillity in the Downs, but members did feel that it would be better to pursue a more medium term strategy to stop illegal use, such as encouraging Pathwatch. JO to organise feedback on Sussex Pathwatch at a future SDAF meeting or at the next appropriate opportunity (19.10). <p style="text-align: right;"><small>*on the 6/05/05 David Marshall quoted that the TRO’s costs to date were £5,784.84 (from SDAF Meeting 9)</small></p>	

11	<p><u>SDAF response – Consultation on access to the English coast</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members agreed that as the Sussex Heritage Coast was largely open access already, the SDAF’s response should be relatively low key. Members agreed that Option 4, a coastal access corridor, would be the most appropriate choice as it suits a continually eroding coastline. SM was disappointed that £50M had been earmarked for walkers benefit alone and could not other users also benefit from the initiative? BD agreed, adding that at minimum the plans should not disadvantage existing users. JO to draft a response before the consultation ends (19.11). 	
12	<p><u>Countryside Access Plan for the South Downs (Hants) area – Forum members opportunity to input into specific rights of way</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a result of the developing the Countryside Access Plan for Hampshire (the county’s RoWIP equivalent), HCC were gathering information about which routes the general public most use and how they would like to them improve. This would then be recorded onto GIS to prioritise route improvements. Petronella Natrass had invited SDAF members to input into the process for the South Downs. Members let JO know which Hampshire maps they would like to comment on (19.12). JO to co-ordinate the appropriate maps and instructions to be delivered to participating Forum members (19.13). JR was pleased to see that HCC had asked for the SDAF input, perhaps the other local authorities could do something similar. JO agreed, although did point out that SDAF members had already inputted into the other RoWIPs in a similar way, only at early stages in their development. 	
13	<p><u>Letter on RoWIP implementation from Barry Gardiner (MP) – Forum members to discuss whether a response is needed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JO informed members that the ESxLAF had asked the SDAF to discuss the letter from Barry Gardiner. The ESxLAF were of the strong opinion that the Government should be more committed to implementing RoWIPs through identifying and ideally creating new sources of funding. The ESxLAF had asked the SDAF to discuss the letter and if it felt in agreement, ask all the Mother Fora lobby Defra to identify more funding for RoWIP implementation. JR said that RoWIPs were always intended to be aspirational, but there was no reason why the aspirations could not be taken one step further. JR agreed that LAFs should be asking Defra to create extra funding which is dedicated to RoWIPs. Could there not be a central pot of money which could be distributed to the ‘best visions’ across the country or percentage of local budgets ring fenced for completing RoWIP objectives? DB agreed, if RoWIPs were given just a small percentage of Local Transport Plan budgets a lot of good work could be achieved. DA informed the Forum that 20% of Single Farm Payments are removed to pay for environmental schemes. Could some of this not be given back to the landowners if they allow for RoW improvements to be carried out on their land? Members agreed that a letter would be a good idea. JO to draft a letter regarding the funding for RoWIP implementation to Barry Gardiner (or the appropriate Minister) (19.14). JO to also ask how the ESxLAF responded to ensure a degree of consistency between the responses (19.15). 	
14	<p><u>Agenda items for next meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No agenda items were raised for the SDAF meeting on 6th December. Members to tell JO would topics they would like to see on the meeting’s agenda (19.16). 	

Summary of Actions from meeting 19

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Who by</i>
19.01	JO to forward Cath Hart the SDAF's response to the National Park Authority's TRO consultation response.	JO
19.02	BP, GJ, JR and DB to meet up on the 14/08/08 to identify which areas would be best for the Forum to address at the workshop.	BP, GJ, JR & DB
19.03	JO to also attend the pre-workshop meeting and take notes.	JO
19.04	JO to liase with Andrew Gattiker (the newly appointed South Downs Way National Trailer Officer) to see if this is possible.	
19.05	SM to forward on some cycling guidelines that she has to GJ.	SM
19.06	JO forward the SDAF members the minutes of all Mother Fora meetings.	JO
19.07	JO to arrange for members to receive an update on the Open Access Mapping Project in which ever format is most suitable.	JO
19.08	JO to send out a comments log for members to record additional thought on the Right to Apply Consultation.	JO
19.09	JO to draft the Forums response to the consultation by 31 st March.	JO
19.10	JO to organise feedback on Sussex Pathwatch at a future SDAF meeting or at the next appropriate opportunity.	JO
19.11	JO to draft a response before the consultation ends.	JO
19.12	Members let JO know which Hampshire maps they would like to comment on.	Forum members
19.13	JO to co-ordinate the appropriate maps and instructions to be delivered to participating Forum members.	JO
19.14	JO to draft a letter regarding the funding for RoWIP implementation to Barry Gardiner (or the appropriate Minister).	JO
19.15	JO to also ask how the ESxLAF responded to ensure a degree of consistency between the responses.	JO
19.16	Members to tell JO would topics they would like to see on the meeting's agenda.	Forum members