

## **Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS)**

At a meeting of the Forum held at Capron House, Midhurst on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

### **Present:**

Mrs R Perrin (Chairman)

|              |               |               |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Mr B Acraman | Mrs H Baldwin | Mr R Bidwell  |
| Mr P Brown   | Mr D Deedman  | Mr S Evans    |
| Mrs A Janes  | Mr G Jones    | Mr T Passmore |
| Mr D Ribbens | Mr N Sloan    | Mr T White    |
| Mrs S Wright |               |               |

WSCC Officers: Christine Luff, David Marshall (part), Fiona MacLeod, Jane Noble, Chris Punnett.

Presenter: Bill Jenman, South Downs Way National Trail Officer.

### **Apologies**

111. Apologies for absence were received from Mr W Trinick and Mr P Fancourt.

### **Welcome**

112. The Chairman welcomed the new Secretary to the Forum, Fiona MacLeod, and Bill Jenman, South Downs Way National Trail Officer.

### **Declarations of Interest**

113. There were no declarations of interest.

### **Minutes**

114. Mr Jones drew attention to minute no. 69 and advised that 'South Downs Conservation Board' should read 'Sussex Downs Conservation Board' (now the South Downs Joint Committee).

115. Mr Sloan referred to minute no 74. and advised that 'Access routes' should read 'All land to which the public have access'.

116. Mr Sloan also referred to minute no. 106 and additional wording was agreed. 'Several members expressed concern over the ability of the path surface to withstand all-year horse use whilst also being rideable by cyclists. David Marshall gave an assurance that a survey of the new route would be done to consider such matters'

117. **Resolved** – That subject to the amendments detailed above, the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2005 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

*Quags Corner, Stedham Common (CL12)*

118. In relation to minute no. 73, Christine Luff reported that that no 'excepted land' notices remain on site. The position will continue to be monitored.

*Equestrian Access – Forestry Commission*

119. In relation to minute nos. 75/76, Helen Baldwin reported on a meeting with the Forestry Commission (FC) discussing the height barriers and alternative parking sites. The FC has stated that the barriers will not be removed but would consider alternative options for parking horse boxes, and maps are now available for these sites and they will be reviewed for suitability. Droke is particularly important for carriage driving and consideration is being given to licensing for horse boxes at the site. CAFWS should endeavour to give advice if required.
120. The Chairman reported that the new Horse Industry Strategy includes improved access for off-road riding.
121. Mr Jones confirmed that the National Trust (NT) would welcome advice on horse access issues, and was pleased to advise that the NT car park without a height barrier at Slindon could be used for horse boxes.

*Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill*

122. In relation to minute nos. 93/94, Christine Luff updated the members on the progress of the Bill, part 6 of which will affect claim applications for Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs). The Bill passed to the Lords for a second reading on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2005 and the possibility was raised of a retrospective cut off date for claims of 19<sup>th</sup> May 2005. The Bill now has to pass through committee and report stages before the 3<sup>rd</sup> reading in the Lords and subsequent Royal Assent.
123. While the 19<sup>th</sup> May date may not eventually happen, if it does, only byway claims submitted prior to the Bill's introduction on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2005 will be preserved, the exceptions being where the local authority has already reached the stage of determining the claim and has made a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO), or where a claim is about access to owner's property. The number of BOAT claims have increased from 17 to 78 over recent weeks.
124. **Resolved** - It was agreed by a majority of members that a letter be sent to DEFRA on behalf of the Forum in support of the introduction of a retrospective cut-off date. A copy of the letter to be sent to West Sussex MPs for information.

**Urgent Matters**

125. There were no urgent matters for the Forum to discuss.

**South Downs Way Management**

126. The Forum received a presentation by Bill Jenman on the Review of the Management Strategy 2000-2005 and the way ahead for 2006-2010. This was followed by a request for CAFWS input into workshops to be held in Spring 2006 that will feed into the 2006 Management Strategy.
127. Mr Passmore referred to the recent closures of Youth Hostels in the area and the restrictions placed on the creation of alternative facilities by farmers due to AONB/National Park status. He asked if there were any plans for the National Trail to help farmers who wish to provide limited camping on their land. Mr Jenman replied that he was not aware of any policy prohibiting limited camping, however there would be a need for vehicle access, parking etc.
128. It was agreed that Mr Jenman contact farmers to take this suggestion further, including access and provision of water supply.

**Action: Secretary**

129. Mrs Baldwin asked if there were any plans to make access routes such as farm tracks 'over urbanised' on the National Trail. Mr Jenman advised that they are not widening farm tracks and had no ambitions to do so.
130. Mr Jenman highlighted that the South Downs Way has a new website, including interactive maps for B&B locations along the Trail. (<http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/Southdowns>)
131. The Chairman thanked Mr Jenman for his presentation and for responding to members' questions.

**Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)**

132. Jane Noble reported that preparation of Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) was still underway and is a large and complex exercise. Information received from the Forum and Sub Fora is being added to the RoWIP database and it is planned to create a GIS computer mapping layer to show this information as well. A lot of time and effort is needed to bring this information together into a working document for review by the Forum.
133. The Forum recognised the heavy workload carried by Jane Noble and noted that the RoWIP would be produced as quickly as possible.
134. Members also noted that an Access Providers Event is being held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December which will raise the profile of the CAFWS input to RoWIP. Representatives of the Highways Agency, Environment Agency, District Council and larger estates have been invited to attend.

**South Downs Advisory Forum**

135. The Chairman reported on the launch of the South Downs Advisory Forum at the Weald and Downland Museum on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2005. (copy of the

Chairman's notes attached to the signed minutes)

136. The Advisory Forum's panel has now been agreed and includes the Chairman of the Access Forum. Mr Passmore commented that the farming representatives were not aware that the selection had been completed and felt under-represented in the Forum groups.

### **South Downs Access Forum (SDAF)**

137. Nigel Sloan reported on the South Downs Access Forum (SDAF) AGM held on 1<sup>st</sup> December at the Chalk Pits Museum, Amberley. In addition to the Forum members, there were 20 members of the public/observers in attendance.
138. A presentation on hang gliding was given and covered various problems encountered with this activity, including issues with landowners on take-off and landing points. This will be an Agenda item at the next meeting of SDAF.
139. Bill Jenman also gave his presentation on the South Downs Way National Trail.
140. The South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC) plan to use any underspend in AGMS funding to resurface access routes to access land and SDAF have been asked to prioritise routes for resurfacing using their extensive local knowledge.
141. Funding for 50% of the Access Management Database Mapping initiative has been received from the Sustainable Development Fund. The Ramblers Association and the South Downs Society have also provided additional funding, however there is still a shortfall. It is expected that there will be a legally watertight database in place by April 2006.
142. The blanket Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) request in Graffham was discussed and supported, as the large majority of the Forum did not want any extension to motorised recreational use.

### **Future Arrangements for Sub-Fora (Coastal Plain, Low Weald, High Weald)**

143. The Forum noted a report outlining proposals for the future arrangements of the Sub Fora. Jane Noble explained that there is a need to consolidate the valuable knowledge and expertise contributed by the Sub Fora regarding RoWIP and other activities.
144. The Chairman stated that the Sub Fora need to evolve due to the changes in scope from Defra. The Sub Fora were initially involved in providing local knowledge and expertise to the CAFWS regarding open access land. The focus is currently on RoWIP, and may be on the recreational use of rivers and the coast as well as further work regarding the RoWIP in the future.
145. The Sub Fora are currently supported by staff of the Rural Strategy Unit, and there is an inevitable impact on limited resources. To enable the

**Unconfirmed Minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Forum**

Forum Officer to concentrate time and energy on progressing the RoWIP it was proposed that the Sub Fora be retained, with meetings being held as and when required by the members, without officer support

146. Mr Acraman stated that he supported this way forward and suggested that Chairs of the Sub Fora could liaise with the staff of the Rural Strategy section to agree processes on servicing their own meetings (Agendas, minutes etc).
147. Mrs Butcher (observer and Chair of High Weald Sub Fora) advised that Phillip King, the WSCC Officer responsible for the Crawley Area Transport Plan is setting up a group with cyclists, walkers etc to identify gaps in the highway network and that similar groups were to be set up in each of the 11 transport groups.
148. David Marshall commented that he is already working with Phillip King and through this relationship he would ensure that a co-ordinated approach would be taken towards the work of the new groups and that of the Sub Fora and CAFWS. Based upon the success of the projects David Marshall has already worked on with Phillip King, he advised that once in place, these groups could well assist with funding for some of the RoW improvements identified in the RoWIP that would have otherwise not been achievable through Rights of Way budget, for example, attract funding through 'Safer Routes to Schools'.
149. Jane Noble will contact Phillip King, WSCC to ensure that any relevant projects will not be done in isolation of CAFWS and should be fed into the main Forum. It is planned that WSCC Highways will have access to the RoWIP database.

**Action: Jane Noble**

150. Sub Fora contacts:

Coastal Plain – Peter Brown  
Low Weald – Sion Evans  
High Weald - Patricia Butcher

151. WSCC Countryside Area Team Contacts:

Coastal Plain – Neil Mitchell (01243 756856)  
Low Weald – Richard Dales (01403 864001)  
High Weald – Margaret Enstone (01293 542088)

152. **Resolved** – The Forum agreed that the Sub Fora should proceed as per minute nos. 145/146 above, subject to a review in six months time.

**Work Programme for 2006**

153. Jane Noble referred to the Programme of Work and copy of Jim Knight's speech circulated with the Agenda. She emphasised that input to the Programme of Work should be led from the Forum members rather than WSCC.

154. The items on the suggested Programme were reviewed in light of the contents of Jim Knight's speech. Discussion took place as to what CAFWS could effectively achieve or influence during 2006. RoWIP should be taken as the priority piece of work. A pro-active approach should be taken on access to woodlands, access to water (both coastal and river issues), use of vehicles in the countryside, and public awareness of access availability.
155. The amount of work as a result of the Programme should not be underestimated.
156. Jane Noble will keep in view Strategic Reviews and requests for consultation as they may provide potential funding opportunities.
157. **Resolved** - It was agreed by the Forum that the following work programme and topics be included in the CAFWS Programme for 2006:
- March – access to forestry/woodland including wildlife interest with presentation by Patrick McKernon (to be confirmed) This meeting is also the AGM.
  - March – RoWIP update meeting to follow on the CAFWS main meeting to which Sub Fora members will be invited.
  - June – Access to water/rivers/the coast. This is a large topic and will therefore be the main Agenda item for the meeting. Angling interests should be represented.
  - October – A selection to be chosen from: District Councils on the process of Planning Departments when considering planning applications submitted that affect public rights of way; horse riding awareness for disabled riders and carriage drivers; cycle routes presentation by Phillip King; vehicles in the countryside.
  - Training/site visits could be held following the CAFWS meetings as required

### **General Report**

158. The Forum noted a general report on a range of issues and interest to the Forum. (copy attached to the signed minutes)
159. Jane Noble reported that surfacing work on a path around the open access land at Buchan Park has been completed.

### **Matters Suitable for Press Release**

160. Matters suitable for press releases will include open access land, including success on negotiating access to 'island sites' and promoting open access sites to the public. Spring 2006 was considered a suitable time for this.

**Action: Jane Noble**

161. Forum Members also felt Guided Walks could be a useful way to promote open access. Offers to lead these walks were invited from Forum Members.

**Action: Forum Members**

**Agenda Items for the next meeting of the Forum**

162. The Agenda for the next meeting (AGM) to include items on:-

- Access to forestry/woodland including wildlife interest
- A presentation by Patrick McKernon (to be confirmed)

**Date of Next Meeting**

163. The next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum will be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006 at Adur Civic Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea.

164. The Secretary advised that date of the June 2006 meeting is now 21<sup>st</sup> June and that the December 2006 meeting has been cancelled and rescheduled to 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

165. The timing of the October and December meetings do not allow sufficient time, or opportunity, to provide updates or progress activities. As a result there will be only 3 meetings in 2006, and the 2007 meetings will be in January, April, July and October to provide a more even spread.

The meeting ended at 12.57 pm

**Chairman**