

WEST SUSSEX LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

At a meeting of the Forum held at the Civic Centre, Adur District Council, Shoreham on 7th April 2004.

Present: Mr. I. Elliott (Chairman)

Mr. P. Belden	Mr. S. Evans	Mr. N. Sloan
Mr. R. Bidwell	Mr. G. Jones	Mr. W. Trinick
Mr. P. Brown	Mr. T. Passmore	Mr. T. White
Mr. J. Couzens	Mrs R. Perrin	Mrs. S. Wright
Mr. D Deedman	Mr. P. Quinton	

In attendance: Andrew Whitnall East Sussex Access Forum Officer, Jonathan Mitchell - PhD student at University College, London.

Officers in attendance: Lisa Creaye-Griffin, Patrick Ellis, Mark Henshall, Christine Luff, Rosemary Pugh, Roland Seber.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

1. Resolved - That Mr. Ian Elliott be appointed Chairman and Mrs Ronnie Perrin be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

APOLOGIES

2. Apologies for absence were received from Ann Janes and Tony Whitbread.

WELCOME

3. The Chairman welcomed Andrew Whitnall, the Access Officer from East Sussex County Council and Jonathan Mitchell. Jonathan is working on a PhD project on the implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, part of which involves working with local access forums.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

4. It was reported that Mrs Linda Hare had given notice of her resignation from the forum. Mrs Hare was the Outdoor Activity Adviser for the Girl Guides and a replacement member from a youth organisation was being sought. Any suggestions for Linda Hare's replacement should be given to Lisa Creaye-Griffin. A letter of thanks from the Chairman would be sent to Linda Hare.

Action: Chairman/Lisa Creaye-Griffin/Rosemary Pugh

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

5. There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES

6. Resolved - That the minutes of the West Sussex Local Access Forum meeting held on 20th January 2004 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

7. On minute 56 (funding and the implications of the new access arrangements), Lisa Creaye-Griffin reported on the Access Incentive Grants. In order to apply for these grants an Access Plan would have to be prepared. Early application was recommended as funding is limited. Lisa also advised members that she had obtained a limited number of the Land Manager Guidance Packs from the Countryside Agency. Lisa suggested that workshops could be arranged in the future for land managers to give them the opportunity to ask questions about the new access arrangements.

Action: Lisa Creaye-Griffin

8. The Chairman observed that he had pursued the funding issue with the Highway Authority but at present no formal response had been received.
9. On minute 58 (participation of parish councils), Nigel Sloan observed that it was important to keep parish councils well informed about the work of the local access forum and its sub-forums. There was some discussion about the most acceptable and manageable way of utilising the expertise and local knowledge of parish councils. It was agreed that Carla Barnes (Sussex Association of Local Councils) be consulted about the best way to proceed.

Action: Roland Seber

10. On minute 60 (letter to the Countryside Agency on identification of excepted land), Lisa Creaye-Griffin reported that the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum had not been satisfied with the response they had received from the National Countryside Access Forum and that they would be writing again. It was agreed that the West Sussex Local Access Forum would also write to the Countryside Agency in support of Hampshire Countryside Access Forum.

Action: Chairman/Lisa Creaye-Griffin

11. On minute 78 (Defra Consultation on the Use of Mechanically Propelled Vehicles on Rights of Way), it was noted that the Forum's response had been sent. Phil Belden reported that the Sussex Downs Conservation Board had also responded to the consultation and copies of that response could be made available.

UPGRADING OF BRIDLEWAYS AND RESTRICTED BYWAYS TO BYWAYS OPEN TO ALL TRAFFIC (BOATs)

12. William Trinick alerted the forum to the campaign to upgrade bridleways to BOATs. by way of a number of recent Definitive Map Modification Order applications that had been made to the County Council as Highway Authority. Some of the issues were discussed by members. While the Highway Authority's determination of the applications would depend on the available evidence, Lisa Creaye-Griffin advised that the forum would have a role to advise the Highway Authority on the possibility of issuing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for sensitive areas if BOAT status was eventually established on any of the application routes. It was agreed to discuss the extent to which the forum would comment and advise the Highway Authority on such matters at the next meeting.

Action: RP for agenda

ANNUAL REPORT 2003/2004

13. The draft annual report was approved subject to the following amendments:

In paragraph 1 of 'What is Access Land and the West Sussex Local Access Forum' the final sentence should read 'In the south east of England, this is expected to be in September 2004.'

Christine Luff reported that the Countryside Agency was hoping to provide hard copies of the Conclusive Map to the Access Authority by June. In that case the maps would be made available at the next meeting of the Forum in July.

14. In paragraph 2 of the summary of the main items considered by the forum. The amended sentence on the Milestones Statement will now read 'Most of the Milestone Statement targets will be included in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, one of the main areas of work for the West Sussex Local Access Forum.'
15. It was agreed that the annual report be circulated to parish councils, neighbouring district and county councils, the National Countryside Access Forum as well as public libraries, council information points, the website and the Connections Magazine.

Action: Rosemary Pugh

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SUB-FORUMS

16. Patrick Ellis advised the forum of the background to the latest report on terms of reference for sub-forums. The report to members of the forum was produced following of a meeting between officers of West Sussex County Council, the South Downs Access Forum, the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, the East Sussex Access Forum and the Brighton and Hove Access Forum on 4th February 2004.
17. There was disagreement amongst some members of the forum, in particular over the item in the report which referred to the handling of South Downs Access Forum (SDAF) advice. Some of the members of the Forum felt that it was important to

recognise that Sub-Forum members were giving up their time voluntarily and were concerned that their views would not be passed to the Highway Authority. Patrick Ellis advised that this issue was a matter of principle for West Sussex County Council. The Chairman observed that the West Sussex Access Forum needed to be able to freely and independently give its own advice to the Highway Authority. Therefore it had to be able to accept in part or reject advice it received from other bodies before sending its own advice to the Highway Authority.

18. Following a vote the recommendations as set out in the report were approved.

Resolved - (1) That the views expressed in the report on Terms of Reference for Sub Forums be endorsed and forwarded to the SDAF and the other parent local access forums.

- (2) That the Terms of Reference for the West Sussex Sub-Forums (Appendix B) be approved.

Action: Patrick Ellis/Mark Henshall

COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT 2000 PART 1

19. The forum noted the report on 'islands' of access land (registered common land) with no means of public access at present. Christine Luff advised that there were three units of common land that were complete islands. Officers would report at future meetings on progress being made to establish access to these areas and would also report on parcels of other access land where there was currently no continuity with existing highways. It was agreed that a progress report should be an agenda item for each meeting.

Action: RP for agenda

20. The Forum considered the draft response to the DEFRA Consultation relating to regulations about public places under section 42 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. With reference to the consultation proposal 10, Trevor Passmore did not agree that poaching was an activity that was "very unlikely to be carried out on access land" and other members shared his views. The Forum agreed that Christine Luff would respond to the Consultation on behalf of West Sussex Local Access Forum, amending the response to proposal 10 to reflect the Forums concerns.

Action: Christine Luff

21. The Forum agreed to accept the proposals reported in the draft response to the DEFRA Consultation concerning regulations on appeals against notices under section 38 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Christine Luff would respond to the Consultation on behalf of the West Sussex Local Access Forum.

Action: Christine Luff

22. The content of the press release was considered acceptable to the Forum. The Forum agreed that the public/landowners needed to be educated and informed about the new access arrangements as soon as possible and that a 'drip feed' approach to releasing information would be preferable to a single press release.

Action: Lisa Creaye-Griffin/Roland Seber

23. The Forum Officer's report was noted. With reference to the minutes of the meeting of the Low Weald Sub Forum of 15th March, Sion Evans observed that the issue of previously downgraded roads used as public paths (RUPPs) which could be upgraded again, had been omitted. Roland Seber agreed to amend the minutes and add the item to the next agenda of the Low Weald Sub Forum.

Action: Roland Seber

AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING

24. The agenda for the next meeting will include:
- Update report on parcels of land with no public access
 - Report on the analysis of the questionnaire to Rights of Way users and landowners
 - Practical management of restricted byways
 - Report by SDAF on access maps
 - Advice to Highway Authority on upgrading restricted byways to BOATs
25. The coastal link path between Shoreham and Steyning would be discussed at the next meeting of the Coastal Plain Sub Forum on 15th June 2004.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

26. The next meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum will be held at 10.30 am on Wednesday 7th July at Horsham District Council Offices.

CHAIRMAN