

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be agreed at the next meeting of the Forum**

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

At a meeting of the Forum held at Billingshurst Village Hall on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008.

**Present:**

Mrs R Perrin (Chairman)

Mr B Acraman	Mrs H Baldwin	Mr P Belden
Mrs T Butcher	Mr D Deedman	Mr S Evans
Mrs A Janes	Mr T Passmore	Mr D Ribbens
Mr N Sloan	Mr T White	Mrs S Wright

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

**Welcome**

229. The Chairman welcomed Andy Gattiker, National Trails Officer, and six observers to the meeting.

**Apologies:-**

230. Apologies were received from Peter Brown, Jason Emrich and David Whyberd.

231. The Chairman updated members that a letter of resignation had been received from Marion Gue. The Secretary will write a letter of thanks on behalf of the Forum.

**Declarations of Interest**

232. There were no declarations of interest.

**Minutes of the Forum meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

233. Shirley Wright clarified that she was not present at the meeting and Ann Janes confirmed that apologies had been sent.

234. **Resolved: that, subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**Matters Arising not Covered in the Agenda**

235. **Minute 156** – Jane Noble confirmed assurances had been received from the team at Pagham Harbour that the two beach boardwalks were appropriate and had been designed for wheelchair use.

236. **Minute 191-193** –Christine Luff updated members that she had met with Helen Baldwin and Tricia Butcher on 18<sup>th</sup> January to discuss the way forward and their concerns to exclude carriages regarding the Cocking, Graffham and Heyshott restricted byway 952 draft Traffic Regulation Order

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(TRO). She had suggested recommending to the North Chichester County Local Committee (NCCLC) that the draft TRO be amended to exclude only carriages with a width of more than five feet and this would mean that passage by carriages of five feet or less, through bridlegates, would not be illegal. A TRO still needs to be put in place to enable the bridlegates to be erected on the restricted byway. Whilst the preference of Mrs Baldwin and Mrs Butcher would be for no TRO at all, they personally felt that this compromise is an acceptable way forward. David Ribbens to forward a letter from Graffham Parish Council supporting carriage drivers to the Secretary

237. If the TRO is made following the next meeting of the NCCLC, Christine Luff advised that a gate would be put in place in the early summer. Members agreed that this was a pragmatic compromise which they supported, subject to monitoring. It was suggested that Helen Baldwin report back to the Forum in January 2009 on the TRO to measure its effectiveness and ability to police.
238. **Resolved: the Forum would not lodge any objection to the implementation of the TRO.**
239. **Minute 199** – the Secretary explained that although there was still difficulty in involving the Forestry Commission (FC) in the Forum's activities, she had been in contact with Stan Abbott, Environment and Planning Manager, based at Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham.
240. Mr Abbott had been able to attend the meeting as an observer, and at the request of the Chairman, addressed the Forum. He advised that, as with many other organisations, the FC had undergone several restructures resulting in staff and budget reductions and high staff turnover. There is currently a gap in their structure as no Recreation Manager is in post.
241. In response to a question, Mr Abbott advised that the FC took the decision to have representation on some, but not all, Local Access Forums (Kent and Chilterns in the South East). However, this involvement could be subject to review.
242. The FC has national policies on access but there are regional differences as to how these are interpreted on the ground. Members asked for information on the policies issued by the national office in Edinburgh, such as cycling, and how or if they are implemented at grass roots level. Mr Abbott will endeavour to attend a future meeting of the Forum to address members questions and concerns. The Chairman thanked Mr Abbott for his comments.
243. **Minute 212** - Jane Noble reported that Natural England (NE) had confirmed that the Nottinghamshire pilot project for the Discovering Lost Ways scheme (DLW) had included investigation into white roads and green lanes (excluding those that already form part of the ordinary roads network), and that the Local Access Forum (LAF) had provided useful information. It is the expectation that CAFWS will review and provide advice at the appropriate stage. However NE is currently undertaking a fundamental review of DLW and until this review has been completed, NE is unable to say when research will start in West Sussex.

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244. **Minute 226** – the Secretary had made contact with Daniel Duthie, the new National Trust Property Manager at Slindon, and he hoped to attend the April meeting as an observer.

### Urgent Matters

245. Lisa Creaye-Griffin, the Rural Strategy Group Manager, updated the Forum on the current situation regarding the WSCC Fundamental Service Review (FSR) and a proposed restructure. The proposal is for the Rights of Way (ROW) Team to transfer from the Rural Strategy Group into the Transport Group within a new Operations (Infrastructure) Division, which is currently part of the Highways and Transport Service).
246. The internal WSCC consultation runs until Friday 25th January 2008 and the objective of the proposal is to deliver efficiencies and to facilitate cross-team working.
247. It could also provide an ideal opportunity to access additional funding as ROW would sit comfortably in the same Group as the Local Transport Plan Team and with other like-minded disciplines such as Safer Routes to Schools, Travelwise, and cycling.
248. Wider access and recreational activities, including providing technical support to CAFWS and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) would remain within the Rural Strategy Group, and it is proposed that there will be a one-year transitional period for review of the changes.
249. In response to a question regarding the loss of officer support and budget for the Sustainability Forum, Lisa Creaye-Griffin confirmed that there were no plans to reduce support or budget for CAFWS.
250. Mr Acraman advised members that WSCC had again received the lowest Government budgetary settlement in the country and, as a result, both the County Council and its officers must ensure that ROW does not lose status through the move.
251. Members made the following comments:
- the relevant Director or senior manager should be invited to talk to members at a future meeting
  - general concern regarding the involvement and philosophy of Highways and Transport towards ROW – leisure is the main reason for the use of ROW network.
  - if the proposed restructure goes ahead, inspection and maintenance of ROWs will be monitored closely by CAFWS to identify any degradation, or improvement, in quality and service provided
  - there may be additional funding opportunities if the proposed changes go ahead, however there will need to be very strong working relationships in place to make this work effectively and positively
252. Forum members were invited to email the Secretary with any further comments by 25 January.

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253. **Resolved: that the Chairman write to the Director, Environment and Development, expressing the Forum's concerns and aspirations on the proposed new structure i.e. seeking assurances that ROW will continue to be funded, maintained and respected.**

## **Working Groups**

### **Disability Access**

254. Members noted the Report from David Ribbens. (copy attached to the signed minutes)

### **Off Road Cycling**

255. Nigel Sloan and Ann Janes updated members that the Working Group had only had one meeting due to member availability. Jane Noble advised that there was interest from WSCC officers responsible for the Safer Cyclist Training Scheme magazine, CycleRight, to include an article on off-road cycling and asked the Forum, via the Working Group, to identify suitable content. The Code of Conduct originally produced by Natural England could be used as a base document.

## **Strategic Developments**

### **East Grinstead**

256. Members noted the Forum's response and thanked Tricia Butcher and Clive Grummet for their input. (copy attached to the signed minutes)
257. **Resolved: Secretary to send letter of appreciation to Mr Grummet.**

### **West of Crawley Joint Area Action Plan**

258. Members noted the report and ratified the Forum response. (copies attached to signed minutes)
259. Tricia Butcher will attend a further meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008 with Crawley Borough Council and Horsham District Council.

### **West of Horsham Masterplan**

260. Members noted and ratified the Forum response. (copy attached to signed minutes)

### **Site 6 Bognor Regis**

261. Members noted and ratified the Forum response. (copy attached to signed minutes)
262. As a general point on strategic developments, Derek Deedman commented that where RoWs are subsumed into development it is unlikely that they will receive the high level of maintenance expected of 'urban paths'. Jane Noble updated that early negotiations are underway for inspection and maintenance of urban ROWs to become the responsibility of the Highways

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and Transport Service, so they will receive a similar priority as footways alongside roads.

263. Referring back to the proposed WSCC restructure and the ROW Team move, Bill Acraman pointed out that it would be preferable if a footpath (ROW) that is not a footway of a road, i.e. is a 'twitchen', should not be treated any differently to a footpath in a field. Such paths should clearly be the responsibility of the ROW team rather than Highways.
264. It was agreed that, where appropriate, future consultation/strategic development responses would include reference to carriage drivers, disabled access and health benefits. In addition, it should be documented that there was a need to ensure that 'green corridors' are provided so that ROWs are not urbanised or tarmaced.

### **Mid Sussex District Council Core Strategy Pre Submission Document**

265. Sion Evans was concerned that the Strategy would only pay lip service to ROW and gave the proposed development of up to 1500 houses in Hurstpierpoint as an example. It was interesting to note that Hurstpierpoint had been included as being part of Burgess Hill. There is a need to ensure that ROW retain their rural character and are not enclosed by development.
266. **Resolved: the Secretary to provide members with the opportunity to comment when the Strategy was in the public domain. The consultation closes on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008.**

### **Burgess Hill Infrastructure Audit**

267. With the agreement of the Chairman, members were updated on this new strategic initiative. WSCC had drawn up a 'wish list' for improvement schemes, including access projects, that may be considered in the future for implementation through Section 106 funding when development takes place in and around Burgess Hill. Jane Noble had asked relevant CAFWS members for their input and thanked them for their ideas which had been added to the list provided by WSCC Access Rangers.

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

268. Members noted the unconfirmed minutes of the SDAF Annual General Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2007. (copy attached to the signed minutes)
269. Phil Belden updated members on the report and presentation on the future of the South Downs Access Forum and potential future funding issues taken to the meeting of the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC) on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Three of the four local authorities involved had agreed funding for the SDAF for the next financial year. The recommendation agreed by the SDJC was:
- That the Joint Committee supported the continuation of a South Downs Access Forum which has a clear work programme supporting the work of the mother fora, local highway authorities and the Joint

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Committee, in a format that is financially viable; option 1 or 2, depending on the resulting financial settlements.

- (Option 1 – continue the SDAF in its current format. This would only be possible if the current level of funding is sustained. However, with one of the local authorities indicating it will not contribute towards the SDAF, this option is less likely).
- (Option 2 - to reduce the number of meetings each year, with member workshops when required. SDAF's work could be partially guided by the SDJC, mother fora and local highway authorities. As direct funding is unlikely to come from all local authorities, SDAF members could determine its work with less guidance from the mother fora. However, it should be remembered that SDAF was set up as sub-forum to the statutory mother fora, so they should have an input regardless of the funding – keeping the SDAF's link to the mother fora is essential. This option would require some financial support; but, if there was insufficient funding for a part-time co-ordinating/admin post, SDAF members would need to take a more organisational and active stance in managing the Forum and leading on subjects it addresses. This should be monitored/reviewed to see whether it could effectively work.)

270. The Chairman emphasised that CAFWS had valued the work of the SDAF and in light of the response already made by the Forum on the future of the SDAF, the SDJC resolution seemed a sensible compromise. She reminded members that the SDAF had been set up with the expectation that the South Downs National Park would have been designated by March 2008.
271. Nigel Sloan, who had been unable to attend the CAFWS meeting in October 2007, commented that the minutes implied that members were not supportive of maintaining the SDAF. In response, Lisa Creaye-Griffin reconfirmed that funding to support ad hoc meetings of the SDAF for local West Sussex issues would be available. In addition, WSCC already funded the SDJC direct and she felt funding for SDAF to give specific advice to SDJC, rather than to the mother Forums, should be made available from this core funding.
272. **Resolved: in light of further information, particularly regarding funding, and resolution by the SDJC at their meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Forum members agreed a minor reassessment of their previous position and now supported the recommendation approved by the SDJC.**

## **Consultations**

### **Forestry Commission High Weald Design Plan**

273. Jane Noble updated members that CAFWS was on the consultees list for the Plan which is due out for consultation in February/March 2008. Further details will be sent to members when available.

### **Discovering Lost Ways**

274. Members noted the Forum response. (copy attached to the signed

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minutes)

### **Local Transport Planning: The Next Steps**

275. Members noted the Forum response. (copy attached to the signed minutes)

### **Tree Safety – Forestry Commission**

276. The Chairman was delighted that the Forum had been approached by the FC on this subject, given the difficulty CAFWS had experienced in achieving FC representation at their meetings. However the consultation appeared to be aimed at landowners rather than Access Forums. Mr Abbott added that there is a risk-based tree inspection criteria, the highest risk having a yearly inspection on roads, property and ROW dependent on usage. The FC are self insured by the Crown in respect of public liability.
277. **Resolved: that the Secretary respond to the FC to advise that although the Forum is not developing tree safety policies, it would like to know who will be on the committee once set up and kept advised on progress.**

### **Draft South Downs Way (SDW) Management Plan**

278. Andy Gattiker had taken over responsibility for the SDW National Trail from Bill Jenman.
279. As background to the consultation, he stated that a co-ordinated approach to management was needed across the South Downs Way, as well as direction and strategy. He highlighted that the Action Plans contained within the Management Plan needed stakeholder/partnership commitment for funding and delivery to make them work. Funding is primarily provided by NE and the SDJC with input from the South Downs local authorities, including WSCC.
280. In light of the tight timescales it was agreed that the Forum response and individual members responses could be received shortly after 1<sup>st</sup> February if necessary. Comments made by members at the meeting and by prior email included:
- needs to be review of present regime and its success, leading to identifying principle issues
  - update on changes relating to access and environment since last Plan would be useful
  - Meon Valley is a key issue and deserves more information
  - acknowledgement of needs of local users as well as visitors
  - management of number of visitors versus number of car parks
  - no reference to status of sections of South Downs Way (SDW), and in particular no reference to carriage drivers being able to use restricted byways sections
  - horse box parking still an issue
  - support action to improve road crossing along the SDW where dangerous
  - funding and stakeholder commitment
  - action plans do refer to any identified problems

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- action plans need partnership approach to succeed
- expect to see reference to conflict resolution
- new opportunities for circular routes not always on ROWs
- integrated goal and service levels with SDJC
- need background information relating to performance targets
- what is justification for arts project
- reference be made to regular Walking Festivals

281. **Resolved: that the Secretary respond to Andy Gattiker on behalf of the Forum as soon as possible, and that more detailed individual responses from Forum members should be sent directly to Andy.**

282. It was noted that, although the consultation covered the South Downs, there would be no formal response from the SDAF, although their members could submit individual responses.

### **Access Management Grant Scheme and Ramblers Association (RA)**

283. Members considered the request from the RA for Forum support for the continuation and extension of the Access Management Grant Scheme (AMGS).

284. **Resolved: that the Secretary respond to the RA advising that Government should fund ongoing maintenance to, from, and within open access land that came into being following the implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.**

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

285. Jane Noble advised that the RoWIP will be passed to the printers imminently for production. All comments received had been considered, ideas from CAFWS and SDAF captured, and the Plan will be totally up-to-date once produced. She reminded members that it would be a balance between being realistic and aspirational.

286. Even though the Plan had not been formally issued yet, the RoWIP had already triggered actions; a tangible example given was the Bognor-Barnham cycleway and Jane Noble's post coming into being partly due to the requirement to produce a RoWIP.

287. Members will receive a copy of the RoWIP once produced and their comments on the Annual Action Plan will be welcomed at the April Forum meeting.

288. The Chairman and members thanked Jane Noble for her hard work in producing the Plan.

### **Work Programme for 2008**

289. Members discussed the information paper for an achievable work programme for 2008. (copy attached to the signed minutes)

290. It was agreed that a senior manager or Director from WSCC Infrastructure

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(Operations) Division be invited to talk on the restructure at the spring meeting. Jon Perks, WSCC Principle Rights of Way Officer, will report on the management of the RoW network. Members should submit any questions to the Secretary in advance of the meeting. David Ribbens will report the findings of the Disability Access Working Party at the spring meeting. It was further agreed to reverse the summer and autumn meeting programmes and include the FC representation in the summer meeting.

291. Access to water will be considered when the Access to Inland Waterways Bill gets its second reading. The Secretary informed members that yet again, the Bill did not get its second reading due in October 2007, and as far as she was aware, no new date had been published.

### **Widening and Increasing Participation in Walking**

292. Lisa Creaye-Griffin explained that an Active Crawley initiative was being run in partnership with the Primary Care Trust (PCT). NE had agreed to fund a pilot with Crawley Borough Council based around five GP surgeries in areas such as Bewbush, Southgate and Leighcroft, who will prescribe walking as one of their 'prescriptions'.
293. Members were asked for input and ideas as part of a review of walking activities in the county, including Exploring West Sussex (a booklet detailing guided walks in the county) and the Walking West Sussex Festival. These would be co-ordinated by a Working Group initially consisting of Nigel Sloan, Ronnie Perrin and Sion Evans. Nigel Sloan advised that the RA had previously received Lottery funding to progress walking projects and therefore were perhaps a valuable source of information and experience. Sion Evans highlighted the wildlife aspects of walking.
294. **Resolved: the Working Group to meet and Lisa Creaye-Griffin/Jane Noble to facilitate arrangements.**

### **Commencement of Section 69 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000**

295. Members noted the report from the Senior Access Officer. (copy attached to signed minutes)
296. Nigel Sloan commented that the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) required the replacement of stiles with kissing gates where appropriate. It had proved difficult to get landowner agreement east of the Adur Valley and funding is not the issue here. Trevor Passmore agreed, and emphasised that farmers were concerned that the kissing gates were not 'stock-proofed', giving the example of the South Downs Way bridge at St Botolphs.

### **General Report**

297. The Forum noted a General Report on a range of issues and interest to the Forum (copy attached to the signed minutes).

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298. With regard to Item 1, Derek Deedman raised the east to west gap in the coastal cycleway. Lisa Creaye-Griffin confirmed that WSCC were in dialogue with Sustrans who were aware of the situation. The new bridge is unlikely to be in place for 3-4 years as further funding is required.
299. Jane Noble is now the named WSCC officer consultee for Environmental Stewardship, Higher Level Scheme applications which can have an access element. The question of the amount of liaison work undertaken by NE with the Schemes will be raised at the regional event for LAF members organised by NE on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008. The event will be attended by Ronnie Perrin and Trevor Passmore.
300. Mr Acraman reported that it was satisfying to note that the Government Planning Inspector declined to confirm the orders to divert footpaths and bridleways at Pitshill, near Petworth, following the Public Inquiry in October 2007. It is not yet known whether the applicant will seek Judicial Review on the decision.

### **Agenda Items for Consideration for the Next Meeting of the Forum**

301. The following items were suggested for consideration:-
- verbal report from WSCC senior management on the impact of ROW Team transfer
  - verbal report from WSCC on the management of the rights of way network
  - verbal report from SDJC on the management of the rights of way network within the South Downs
  - implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

### **Matters for Information**

302. Following the resignation of Marion Gue, the number and balance of Forum members was discussed. Trevor Passmore will investigate the potential for members from the farming community. WSCC Youth Council, Scouts and Guides leaders, Duke of Edinburgh Awards leaders will also be considered for future membership.
303. Ronnie Perrin reminded members that this was her last meeting as Chairman of the Forum and thanked members for all the support and encouragement they had given her over the past three years. Peter Brown had indicated that he was willing to stand for Chairmanship.
304. On behalf of the Forum, Ann Janes thanked the Chairman for all her hard work during her Chairmanship.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

305. The next meeting of the Countryside Access Forum will be held at County Hall, Chichester at 10.30am on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

The meeting finished at 1.30pm.

### **Chairman**