



A bridge installed by WSCC volunteers

West Sussex Local Access Forum

Annual Report: February 2015 – January 2017

Introduction

Welcome to the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) Report. I hope you enjoy reading about the Forum's work.

During the period of this report the Forum has continued to respond to a wide range of consultations delivering balanced advice and getting involved with a number of projects on the ground. The Forum has heard from some excellent speakers followed by informative question and answer sessions.

There have been a number of changes to the Forum with several new members being appointed, however there is still capacity for a few more so if interest please contact the Forum Officer for details. I am delighted that the Forum voted Sam Wright as Chairman in January 2016 and again in 2017. During the previous year the Forum had been without a Chairman and I would like to thank Glynn Jones for chairing meetings during 2015 and Tricia Butcher, the previous Chairman, for her four years of hard work at the helm that saw several exciting schemes come to fruition.

Lastly I must thank all LAF members, new and old, for their enthusiasm and commitment, especially those who have led projects and consultation responses.

Jane Noble – Forum Officer

WSLAF Meetings

In 2015 and 2016 seven formal meetings were held, generally alternating between Horsham and Chichester. The meetings are always busy covering items from our work programme and included the following presentations:

- West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Annual Review 2015 and 2016 - Jon Perks, WSCC Principal RoW Officer gave the annual report on the work of the WSCC PRoW team.
- WSCC Rights of Way IT management system demonstration - Jane Noble, WSCC
- England Coast Path – Kevin Haugh, Paul Vincent and David Pearce, Natural England gave an overview of the process and timescales for the section through West Sussex.



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- Are you a cyclist or a person who cycles? – Geoff Farrell, West Sussex Cycle Forum and WSLAF Member
- WSCC Walking and Cycling Strategy – Andy Ekinsmyth, Service Manager Transport and Countryside, WSCC
- The Work of Highways England in West Sussex - Peter Philips, Highways England

Summary of WSLAF work

The Forum's aim is to improve public access, mainly via the rights of way network, for informal outdoor recreation. This has to be balanced by trying to ensure responsible use and respect for the people who live and work in the countryside.

Consultations and advice

As always the Forum has been very active in responding to consultations and offering advice to organisations on a wide range of subjects to further WSLAF's aims. In particular The Forum has built on its interest in previous years to ensure Local Plans contain good policies and wording regarding access to the countryside. Responses, which have been supportive of policies where appropriate, have been submitted to Planning Authority consultations on Local Plans and associated documents. The Forum sees the continued input into such consultations as essential if future access improvement opportunities are to be realised.

Other consultations the Forum responded to include:

- Cycling Delivery Plan – Department for Transport
- South Downs Local Plan – South Downs National Park Authority (SNDPA)
- West Sussex Draft Cycling and Walking Strategy, including inputting some projects for inclusion on the project suggestions lists
- Draft West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan – WSCC and SDNPA.

Forum members also had the opportunity to input their views to inform changes to the WSCC Inspection and Maintenance Cycle, which changed from a 9 to 15 month cycle, and on how WSCC prioritises maintenance works on the network.



Walker and dog enjoying the West Sussex countryside

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

The current West Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan –A Strategic Framework 2007-2017 is due for review. A workshop was held in October 2016 where plans for the revised RoWIP were outlined and members had the opportunity to input their priorities for the next 10 years. The desire for continued maintenance of the existing network featured highly along with the need for improvements to improve safety and connectivity. WSLAF looks forward to commenting on the draft RoWIP during public consultation in the summer of 2017.

Progress has been made on several projects that meet the aims of the West Sussex Local Rights of way Improvement Plan some of which are outlined below.

- **England Coast Path** - WSLAF has keenly followed the progress of delivery of the England Coast Path through West Sussex. A members' Working Group met with Natural England to discuss the proposed route, which includes some innovative solutions to ensure a route is available at all times. The Working Group took the opportunity to make comments that are being considered as the final route is progressed, in particular to ensure the Path is as accessible to all users as is possible (accepting where there is no alternative that some sections will be along shingle foreshore).



- **Kilnwood Vale Development** – The Forum has continued to take an interest in the delivery of the access element associated with this development near Crawley, and through one member has campaigned to ensure the proposed Pegasus crossing across the A264 is delivered. This will be suitable for all users including horse riders. It should be installed in 2017.
- **Rampion windfarm** – The Forum made suggestions for improvements to be delivered in connection with major cabling works associated with the new off-shore windfarm at Shoreham. Surfacing works have now been completed to several routes crossing the cable line.
- **Downs Link Crossing of A283 Bramber** –A new safe crossing of the A283 was opened in the summer of 2016 using an existing underpass and new connecting routes. Users of the Downs Link bridleway now do not have to cross the busy A283. WSLAF, in particular Tricia Butcher, has been instrumental in securing this safe crossing.



Forum members on a site visit to the new Downs Link / A283 crossing

- **Access on Forestry Commission Land at Eartham** – additional permissive bridleway routes through the Forest Commission woodland at Eartham are now open and signage is in place. The Forum has worked closely with the Forestry Commission to see these improvements delivered.
- **Centurion Way mobility scooter access** – Following contact by a member of the public the Forum worked to improve access onto the Centurion Way at several locations in Chichester for mobility scooters.



Looking Forward

During the next year the input from new members will be important to the success of the Forum. Support and training will be provided to help them achieve the aims of the Forum.

The Forum will also continue to develop projects on the ground where possible, working with others and actively looking for projects where our support and assistance will facilitate improvements to access. This will include working closely with Natural England to progress the England Coast Path through West Sussex, and with West Sussex County Council to maximise benefits delivered through the Walking and Cycling Strategy.

Contact the Forum/further information

WSLAF meeting dates, agenda, minutes, consultation responses and list of members can be found on the Forum's website:

www.wslaf.org

Members of the public are always welcome to attend our meetings as observers.

The Forum is always looking for new members, particularly from those representing landownership or land management to ensure a balance of members. Please contact the Forum Officer (details below) for further information.

Forum Officer Jane Noble

E-mail wslaf@westsussex.gov.uk
Telephone 01243 777620
Post Jane Noble, Forum Officer
 West Sussex Local Access Forum
 1st Floor, Northleigh
 Tower Street, Chichester
 West Sussex PO19 1RH

If this information is required in an alternative format please contact us and we will try to meet your needs.