



West Sussex Local Access Forum

Annual Report: March 2013 – February 2014

Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to West Sussex Local Access Forum's (WSLAF) Annual Report 2013/2014.

We set out in March 2013 with the clear intention of working closely with WSCC and other partners, to implement and deliver a number of Rights of Way Improvement Plan projects 'on the ground'. Despite a very challenging financial situation, we believe we have made a great deal of progress. It is easy to underestimate how much time, effort and determination is needed to achieve improvements that make a real difference to users experience. Thank you to all LAF Members for their support and commitment, especially those who have taken on individual projects and worked hard to bring them to a positive conclusion, and a big thank you to all the Council Officers we have worked with.

Annual budgetary cuts and increasing pressure of work within West Sussex County Council's (WSCC) Countryside Services, has resulted in a need for Forum members to take on more responsibility for administrative and key activities. Thank you to our Forum Officer Jane Noble who has done her best to cope in very difficult circumstances. Whilst appreciating the pressure everyone is under and that further cutbacks are inevitable, we have reached a point where we must now review our priorities, and this will be our first task in the coming year. We urgently need to increase our membership in all areas, and share the load if we are to continue being effective. If you have an interest in access and rights of way in any capacity, and would be interested in joining us please do get in touch, you will be very welcome.

Tricia Butcher - Chairman

WSLAF Meetings

Four formal meetings were held, one of which included a site visit. These meetings are always busy covering items from our Work Programme and also included the following presentations:

- Iain Steane, WSCC - Cycling Access to the South Downs. Explanation of and consultation on joint bid (with SDNPA) to DfT Linking Communities Fund.
- Cllr Derek Whittington - Five Villages cycle network.
- Clive Robey, Network Rail - Rail/PRoW crossings proposed for closure.
- Jon Perks, WSCC Principal RoW Officer -WSCC Rights of Way Annual Report.
- Ian Bromley, Forestry Commission Ranger - Site visit to Tilgate Park, South of Crawley.
- Peter Philips, Highways Agency Asset Manager (West Sussex) - Route Based Strategies, an explanation of the Highways Agency new working methods.



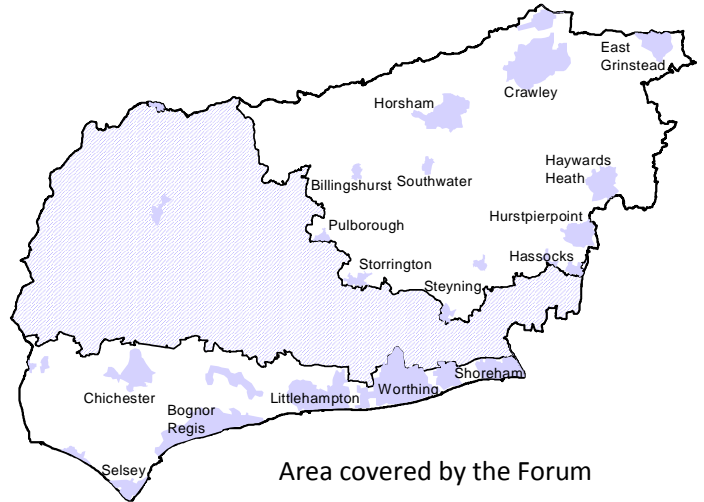
Sub Groups

The work of the two Sub Groups, Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Publicity, has been completed for the time being. A new Working Group was set up in October to assist with a recruitment campaign and review on-going secretarial support for WSLAF from WSCC.

Summary of WSLAF work

Key achievements

We have responded to Local Plan consultations from District and Borough Councils, promoting access and public rights of way (PRoW), written to all Parish Councils encouraging them to include access and PRoW in their Neighbourhood Plans, and given advice to WSCC on issues relating to the improvement of access. We have engaged with the Highways Agency, Network Rail and the Forestry Commission, to seek mutually beneficial improvements to the PRoW network. We have taken a lead, or supporting, role in implementing and delivering a number of Rights of Way Improvement Plan projects.



Area covered by the Forum

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

This subject is a standing item at our meetings, and the revised format of our Project Lists enables updated information to be provided easily. Key projects Forum members have worked on this year include:

- Downs Link A283 Bramber - provision of a safe alternative to present at-grade crossing (with SD LAF)
- Crawley, Tilgate Park/Worth - achieving formal bridleway dedication of three strategic off-road routes in this very urban area which link into the wider network.
- Balcombe off-road footpath from station to link into PRoW network and take users off the busy B2036 Balcombe Road
- Bracklesham/ Siddlesham, Medmerry Managed Realignment Scheme - creation of new PRoW.

Highways Agency (HA) - A23 Handcross to Warninglid widening scheme - Over 2013, Members have responded to HA requests for advice on the new routes for non-motorised users (NMUs) being delivered in this scheme, and have secured formal bridleway dedication for one of them. Scheme completion date is Autumn 2014.

Forestry Commission (FC) - In partnership with the South Downs Local Access Forum and National Trust, WSLAF has continued to seek additional access routes in Eartham Woods for cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers. In November 2013, FC put forward proposals which exceeded our expectations, with a provisional delivery date of April 2014.

Network Rail (NR) - NR have sought on-going Forum advice on their priority PRoW crossings for closure at two meetings. The liaison has proved useful in giving an insight into the working methods of NR, and providing contact with key officers.



Consultation responses

- Environment Agency - Lower Tidal River Arun flood risk management strategy
- Chichester DC - Development at Portfield, Chichester
- Chichester DC - Chichester Draft Local Plan
- Crawley BC - Crawley Draft Local Plan
- Department for Transport - Proposed Changes to the cycle racing on the highway regulations.
- Adur DC - Draft Adur Local Plan
- Defra - Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Review

Advice given

- WSCC Property - regarding access improvements to land owned by WSCC.
- Parish Councils - to encourage inclusion of access and public rights of way in Neighbourhood Plans.

All consultation responses and advice letters are available to view on our website.



WSCC Volunteer Support

Several of our members are Parish Path Inspectors assisting West Sussex County Council maintaining the rights of way network. Over 170 volunteers are involved across the county with inspections and practical tasks. 73 task days, including installation of bridge and kissing gates, surfacing and vegetation clearance, were completed by the Volunteer Rangers in 2013. This volunteer scheme is seen as a huge success by the Forum.

Looking Forward

Our priorities in 2014 will be:

- Organising a recruitment campaign to increase Forum membership to cover all aspects of our work.
- Continuing Forum involvement with implementation and delivery of RoWIP projects.

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.

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