



Meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum Wednesday 18 October 2023

A meeting of the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) was held on **Wednesday 18 October 2023**, at **Drayton Depot, Drayton Lane, Chichester, PO20 2BW**.

Minutes

Present

Graham Elvey (GE) – Chairman
Tricia Butcher (TB) – Vice-Chairman
Monica Collingham (MC)

Carol Montgomery (CM)
David Purcell (DP)

WSSC Officers

Jane Noble (JN) Forum Officer, WSSC
Neil Vigar (NV) Countryside Services Manager, WSSC
Donna Tretheway (DT) Planning and Communities PRoW Officer, WSSC

1. Apologies and welcomes

GE welcomed Simon Fathers, High Weald AONB Partnership, and Ian Myhill, West Sussex County Council.

GE also welcomed David Purcell as a new WSLAF Member.

Apologies had been received from WSLAF members Nicol Beard (NB), Geoff Farrell (GF), David Green (DG), Christine Johnson (CJ) and Phil Miles (PM).

2. Minutes of the Forum

a) Minutes of formal meeting of 19 April 2023

- i The minutes were approved as correct.
- ii Actions and matters arising not covered by agenda.

Item 2bi) Planning Application DM/22/3806 Bluebell Railway – JN to circulate revise plans.

Action – JN to circulate proposals to re-route permissive path

Item 5 – WSSC new process for Public Path Orders – JN had circulated the slides form Ami Dye (AD), WSSC Senior Access Officer.

Item 7a) WSLAF matters

- WSLAF Terms of Reference (TOR) – JN has revised and circulated the TOR to WSLAF members.
- Leaflet – CM has updated and circulated to members.

b) Minutes of informal meeting of 12 July 2023

i Actions and matters arising not covered by agenda

Item 12 - WSCC Developers Guide - GE had written to congratulate Ami Dye and Nick Scott, Principal Rights of Way Officer, on this document.

3. **Any urgent matters to be considered not on the agenda**

None

4. **High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (HW AONB)**

A presentation on improving access in the High Weald AONB was given by Simon Fathers, Access and Recreation Officer, HW AONB Partnership. This covered:

- The High Weald is a traditional working landscape with many small farms, across parts of Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex. Currently the Draft Management Plan is out for consultation. AONBs are to be rebranded following the 2019 Glover review. (*Post meeting comment – AONBs have been rebranded as 'National Landscapes'*).
- Aim of the project is to facilitate access for all to the High Weald through a variety of projects and funding opportunities. Two distinct grant schemes are available:
 - The Defra funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme, with grants up to £350,000, aimed at supporting farmers and land managers to recover nature, tackle climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover the landscape and support sustainable farm businesses.
 - Sussex Lund, supported by the Lund Trust, for community groups, parish councils, charities, other not-for-profit organisations and farmers and land managers, with grants between £500 and £15,000. This supports small-scale, practical projects that improve the landscape of the High Weald AONB and those on its fringes and can include conservation and access projects as well as community events celebrating the High Weald landscape.. Further details of the grants are available on the High Weald website ([Grants - High Weald](#)).
- In addition there has been some funding through the Defra funded Access for All scheme with £215,000 available for 2024/25. Specific projects delivered within the High Weald include surfacing works at Buchan Country Park, West Sussex, accessible toilets in Ashdown Forest, East Sussex, boardwalk and bridleway improvements in Sherwood Lakes and Woods, Kent, and funding towards the replacement of stiles with pedestrian gates on the PRoW network in East Sussex and Kent. Ideas for 2024/25 are welcome.
- Funding for capital projects is still available so SF would welcome suggestions within the AONB area of West Sussex

Action – JN to circulate the presentation slides

The presentation was followed by a number of questions and answers, after which GE thanked SF for a very enjoyable and informative presentation.

5. **West Sussex Active Travel and S106 access improvements**

A presentation on Active Travel in West Sussex was given by Ian Myhill, Active Travel Officer, WSCC. The key points were:

- Schemes delivered aim to bring about a change in modal use by encouraging more cycling and walking, in particular walking. A wide range of schemes was covered, including projects associated with road improvements, school safety zones and smaller schemes such as 'build-outs' (where the kerb/footway is extended into the carriageway to narrow the road. They can reduce crossing distances and improve visibility for pedestrians).
-
- Funding allocated to the HS2 section that has been scrapped has not yet been re-allocated and could possibly be re-allocated to active travel schemes.
- West Sussex County Council's ability to bid for funding to the Active Travel grants scheme is linked to it proving it can deliver to the Government's Active Travel priorities, mainly aimed at walking and wheeling (i.e. scooter, wheelchairs and pushchairs and similar). The Council will next be assessed in Q4 of 2023/24. WSCC is currently delivering Active Travel schemes through funding such as developer contributions.

A number of questions were answered by IM, including:

Q – Where do equestrians fit in? Pegasus crossings seem over-designed, so are very expensive, but just an island in between carriageways is not a satisfactory solution. Riders need a button they can reach on controlled crossings. It would be really beneficial for the BHS to be consulted at an early stage for all schemes involving crossings.

A - Horses are generally not considered an Active Travel option, as not used for trips to school, work etc, but we do also need to consider leisure use.

Q - Will the proposed alternative crossing at Washington be suitable for equestrians to enable access to bridleways and stables? Funding could be available via the BHS is so.

A – The original was rejected on sight-lines and impact on dark skies. Now looking at an option opposite the quarry and have been in touch with the BHS.

Q – What is the situation with the Downs Link crossing of the A281 at Rudgwick?

A - The estimated cost of a bridge would be £2m and a Pegasus crossing would be around £1m due to geotechnical complexities. Bids to funding streams such as the Levelling up Fund had not been successful and, at this time, unfortunately both the bridge and the Pegasus crossing are unaffordable for the County Council. £2m is approximately a third of the entire annual capital improvements grant funding WSCC receives for all local highway improvements. However, other options regarding speed and vegetation are still being considered. Members were disappointed with this decision.

Q – What is the situation with electric scooters?

A – No plans for trials within West Sussex.

GE thanked him for a candid and enlightening presentation.

6. Consultations and advice 11:45

a) Current consultations

- i High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (closing date 5/11/23)
Action – Input from All to GE who will coordinate the response
- ii Active Travel in West Sussex - West Sussex County Council (closing date 15/11/23)
Action – Input from All to GE who will coordinate the response

b) Consultation responses and advice given:

Members noted the responses sent since the last formal meeting:

- i A259 Bognor Regis to Littlehampton – WSCC
- ii Worthing Sustainable Transport Corridors; Walking and Cycling Improvements – WSCC
- iii Permissive bridleway Fp5K, Friars Oak - WSCC

c) Other Consultations

GE reminded members that some consultations are best completed by members individually due to the need to have local knowledge. The two below fall into this category and WSLAF did not submit a response.

- i Active Travel proposals for Chichester – West Sussex County Council (closed 7/8/23) -
- ii Proposed Active Travel Improvements for Westgate and Fishbourne Road East Stakeholder Engagement Briefings - June 2023

A short debate was had whether Active Travel was within WSLAF's remit as it relates to mainly utility journeys rather than leisure and recreation ones. GE said consultations are reviewed and ones that are definitely not relevant aren't circulated. If there is any uncertainty if relevant or not they are circulated and it is fine to respond to say that it doesn't seem relevant to the Forum.

7. WSLAF matters

- a) **Recruitment** – A couple of people had expressed interest in joining the Forum following the article in the WSCC walking and cycling e-newsletter. GE to contact them. Other options for attracting new members were discussed including contacting Parish Councils. The website needs to be updated before recruitment is progressed.
Action - JN/GE/TB to plan further recruitment
- b) **Web work** – JN to update the web, including adding revised TOR, the revised leaflet, meeting papers/dates, members information and continue to try and get email alerts working.
Action - JN to update web
- c) **Members priorities for WSLAF work** – GE had not heard from members regarding future priorities and work programme. He would value some input in helping to direct WSLAF's work and identify possible speakers / meeting topics.
Action - All to give GE suggestions for future meetings

8. **General Report**

The General Report was noted.

9. **Dates of Next Meetings**

- Informal: 7 February 2024 - Horsham
- Formal: Wednesday 17 April 2024 – Chichester
- Informal: TBC (July 2024)
- Formal: Suggested 30 October 2024 - Chichester