



West Sussex Local Access Forum

Annual Report: April 2023 – May 2024

Introduction

Welcome to the WSLAF Annual Report within which I hope you will find some items of interest. We have continued to provide an independent view on consultations affecting all aspects of the access network and will remain involved with a number of long-term projects some of which reached their conclusion during the year.



A small number of Forum members retired during the year and we are therefore very keen to recruit new members from all sectors of interest to maintain a balanced forum and bring in fresh ideas. One of the best ways to discover what's involved is to come along to a future meeting as an observer to see what it's all about. We will be very pleased to see you.

I thank the Members for their ongoing support and commitment to the Forum and to our Forum Officer, Jane Noble, for her support and help throughout the year.

Graham Elvey - Chairman

WSLAF Meetings

WSLAF holds four meetings per year. Two Formal meetings are fully supported by WSCC and two Informal meetings are organised and run solely by WSLAF members. We have welcomed two new members over the year.

The meetings covered items from our work programme and other Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and wider access work. The meetings included the following presentations:

- Improving Access in the High Weald - Simon Fathers, Access & Recreation Officer, High Weald Natural Landscape
- Active Travel in West Sussex - Ian Myhill, WSCC Active Travel Officer
- Access Work and Challenges in Chichester Harbour - Richard Austin, Natural Landscape Director, Chichester Harbour Natural Landscape



- Public Rights of Way Annual Report – Nick Scott, WSCC Principal Rights of Way Officer
- King Charles III England Coast Path (ECP), delivery in West Sussex – Kevin Dewitt, ECP Project Officer



Summary of WSLAF work

As in previous years the Forum's work this year has been associated with its core aim to improve public access to the countryside for informal outdoor leisure mainly using the public rights of way and greater access network.

The most appropriate mechanism for WSLAF to achieve this is via the planning process (i.e. through strategic planning applications), road improvement consultations and ensuring relevant policies are included in Local Plans. We have to bear in mind that many of the areas concerned are living and working environments and we seek to provide balanced advice to try to ensure responsible use and respect for those working and living in these areas.



Consultations and advice

The Forum has responded to a considerable number of consultations over the past year. These have predominantly concerned highway matters and our response has been related to the effect the proposals have on public access and how it could be improved and enhanced. Although there were statistically fewer consultations on major housing developments this year, this is likely to increase again in the future due to the significant pressure in West Sussex for development of this type.

The consultations the Forum responded to include:

- A259 Bognor Regis to Littlehampton Proposed Enhancements consultation – WSCC Highways
- Proposed changes to legislation for electrically assisted pedal cycles - Dept. of Transport
- Durrington to Goring Transport Improvement Scheme – WSCC
- Draft High Weald Management Plan 2024-2029 - High Weald Natural Landscape

- Active Travel In West Sussex; WS Active Travel 2023-2036 and Draft WS Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – WSCC
- Ardingly - Bluebell Railway extension Planning Application – Mid Sussex District Council
- A259 Bognor Regis to Littlehampton Improvements – WSCC
- Worthing Sustainable Transport Corridors, Walking and Cycling Improvements - WSCC
- Hassocks - Proposal to create a new permissive bridleway along part of FP 5k within Friars Oak development -WSCC
- Chichester Sustainable Transport Corridors - WSCC

Long Term Projects

A281/Downs Link Crossing

Following the tragic fatality that occurred at this crossing in 2020 WSLAF gave evidence to the Coroner at the Inquest. On receipt of the Coroner's Report WSLAF wrote to WSCC to state our desire that a feasibility study be conducted as soon as possible to determine the best way to improve non-motorised user safety at the crossing, emphasising our strong support for the installation of a bridge. WSCC commissioned consultants to look at the options to improve safety and the Forum has been in regular contact with Officers concerning the progress of the report and costs of the options whilst WSCC has continued work to identify funding options. The report was circulated to WSLAF in May 2022, but further studies are required to provide better cost estimates. WSCC will be invited to attend the next Formal meeting to discuss the contents of the report and the further information that will be available.

Rampion 2

The planning for the Rampion 2 Windfarm off the coast from Worthing progressed throughout the year. Our representative on the PRow Project Liaison Group continued to monitor and comment on the design stage of the project including the route of the onshore cable and plans for dealing with PRow; the location of the proposed sub-station; consultation responses and updates on surveys and data collection. WSLAF has registered as an "interested party" to receive updates regarding the Development Consent Order (DCO) Examination in Public, which started in Feb 2024.

A283 NMU crossing at Washington

The originally proposed site for the Pegasus crossing has been abandoned for various reasons. There is a proposal to move the crossing westwards close to BW 2627, tied in with a speed reduction on the A283, and to widen the paths to enable Active Travel use, which may not include equestrians. Secured S106 money is still available.

FP 5K Woodside Underpass, Hassocks

The newly built Woodside underpass links the developments east and west of the railway line (Clayton Mills and Friar's Oak). There are opportunities for significant improvements to the PRow network at this location to provide east/west and north/south connecting routes for all NMUs. The Forum will continue to assist and support WSCC's ongoing efforts to achieve a strategically beneficial outcome. for all PRow users.



Green Links across the Manhood (GLaM)

The Forum has continued to receive notes from GLaM meetings from our representative in order to participate in any access matters.



Looking Forward

Consultations on major housing developments, road building works and improvements will require a response from WSLAF during next year due to the ongoing pressure from development throughout West Sussex. A close relationship with WSCC's new Planning & Communities Officer is proving beneficial in this area. We will continue with our aim to provide balanced and independent advice on public access.

Some of the projects currently of interest will continue beyond 2024 and WSLAF will maintain its monitoring and advising until the projects have been completed.

Contact the Forum/further information

WSLAF meeting dates, agenda, minutes, work programme, consultation responses and a 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.

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