

Brighton and Hove City Council
Local Access Forum

27th August, 6pm at the Operations Conference Room, Hollingdean Depot,
Brighton

Present:

David Larkin (DL), Robert Walker (RW), Will Furze (WF), David Brookshaw (DB), Dieter Hachenberg (DH), Andrew Coleman (AC), John Funnell (JF), Peter Jarman (PJ), Corinna Edwards-Coledge (CEC), Maire McQueeney (MM).

Apologies:

Councillor Gill Mitchell (GM) and Chantelle Hoppe (CH)

Welcome and Introductions:

RW welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance. Everyone then proceeded to introduce themselves to the group, giving a brief background of their personal interests etc.

Presentation on the Role of the LAF by David Brookshaw (DB):

DB gave a presentation on the background of LAF's, how and why they came in to being and what their aims are. His presentation also focused on some of the achievements of the BHCC LAF for example, Stammer park open access land and the Falmer to Woodingdean cycle lane. DB then went on to explain how BHCC LAF was originally within the Countryside Team but was transferred to Highways, unfortunately highways were unable to commit to giving the LAF the time it needed and so a decision was made by Cityparks to take it back in to the Countryside team which is the point where we are at now. DB then went on to suggest some possible issues which the LAF could focus on e.g. Stanmer Park parking and the Old Boat Corner pedestrian crossing and the resolution of the Missing Links list with particular regard to the 2026 deregulation bill.

After the presentation CEC asked if BHCC had been logging the use on the new multi user paths along the Falmer and Ditchling Roads, WF stated that the South Downs National Park authority had been monitoring use on the Falmer –Woodingdean path, but was unsure of the Ditchling road one.

Presentation by Will Furze (WF) on the Rights of Way Work 2014–15:

WF gave a presentation of the report on the works completed on public rights of way between 2014 – 15; the report was compiled by CH. The

report detailed the works which Cityparks have undertaken in updating the definitive map, recording assets on the network, resolution of a number of missing links, routine maintenance work including way marking and vegetation clearance and future works.

General Discussion:

RW emphasised the need for the LAF to have a permanent chair, he emphasised that the chair needed to be a member of the LAF and could not be a council officer.

Recruitment of future LAF members and volunteers:

DB suggested that we look at the SDNP LAF recruitment event in November to see if we could tap in to this for a source of volunteers. CEC suggested that Cityparks should have a representative at all council led volunteer events as we could recruit new members from these events. MM suggested that Duke of Edinburgh students could be a good source of volunteers as they were people already using the network. CEC mentioned that Healthwalks had a series of “round the city” walks which could be a good forum for advertising for LAF members and volunteers.

OS Maps:

DB expressed his thanks to CityParks for the work which they had been undertaking on ROW. He asked if the open access land and new definitive map data would be given to OS mapping so they can update the OS map? DL confirmed that OS would receive the information but that this would happen once the Highways Lawyer has signed the official paperwork. CEC asked how often the OS maps were updated; DL stated that he believed it to be every 2 years.

Missing Links:

AC asked if the list of missing links represented known links which exist on the ground but simply hadn't been added to the definitive map, or whether they were unknown. DL stated that the majority were known links but that research was needed to confirm whether there was historical evidence of their use as ROW's, he suggested that it was not necessarily BHCC who would undertake this research. PJ stated that the Ramblers Association were already undertaking elements of this work.

Moving the LAF forward and General Discussion:

RW asked about how we take the LAF forward with regards to the chair and if there was anyone present who would be interested in taking on the role. RW also asked about the frequency of LAF meetings and the suitability of the Ops Conference room as the venue.

JF proposed DB as the new chair of the LAF; DB thanked JF for this but stated that he had to decline the offer as he did not feel he could commit the time needed to role.

CEC then proposed MM as the Chair; MM stated that she was led to believe there was a lot of paperwork involved with the role but that she would seriously consider it. DB stated that good support was needed for the chair and he felt that BHCC officers would offer this support well.

RW emphasised the need for recruitment of more LAF members, especially tenant farmers. DB suggested that the LAF invite the Council's land Agents Smiths Gore to attend future meetings – RW stated that this would be unlikely to happen as BHCC would have to pay the Smiths Gore staff for their time.

CE stated that Healthwalks have over 1300 walkers on file and that could be emailed to see if anyone was interested in attending the LAF or becoming a ROW volunteer.

MM asked whether the current timing of the LAF meetings (6pm) would be convenient for any tenant farmers who might be interested in attending. RW stated that in the past it was not so much the timing of the meetings which was a problem for tenant farmers, rather that the seasonality of their work load e.g. harvest time, was the determining factor in them being able to attend.

DB suggested that future meetings could take place from 4 –6pm, and RW stated that there was a wide choice of Council buildings which could be used for the meeting. RW and DB suggested that quarterly meetings would be suitable and this was generally agreed upon by the group; DB highlighted the importance of setting a date for the next meeting and also suggested that inviting a guest speaker was a good idea for future meetings. RW suggested that Thursdays would be a good day for the meetings, the group agreed and the next meeting was decided as 26th November 6pm at the Operations Conference Room.

RW asked PJ if he could give some further information on the Rambler's Association "Big Pathwatch" scheme – DL asked if PJ could tell the group RW asked whether it was a one off or yearly survey – PJ stated that it was a one off.

DL asked if the Ramblers had "Path Wardens" who could go out and survey parts of the network and provide reports back; PJ said that this didn't exist but that any reports from Ramblers Association members in the BHCC area would be emailed to him. DL suggested setting up an 'adopt a path' scheme with people sending the reports back to PJ. DB mentioned "Area Access Officers" who do a similar job within the Southdown's Society. DL emphasised the need to keep the physical areas, people were expected to survey, small. CEC suggested that Healthwalk leaders could help with this as they are out using the network regularly. DB suggested publicising the scheme through the Argus and CEC suggested the Brighton Independent.

BHCC Future Priorities:

DL stated the key priorities for BHCC included completing the ground audit of the network and then reviewing the ROWIP. AC asked if the ROWIP was a statutory document, DL stated that this was the case.

CEC spoke about "Gateway Points" in to the National Park from some of the estates within the city and mentioned the lack of use of the countryside by many people from deprived areas, as well as some of the misconceptions which people who aren't as familiar with the countryside may have about it. She emphasised the need to draw people in to the park and suggested that creating new interpretative signage within the communities would be a good idea. DL and DB both mentioned the existing leaflets which give details of circular walks etc. within the countryside surrounding Brighton. CEC also mentioned that Journey On has an app which has mapped routes on it and that this could be something which could be looked in to.

DB mentioned that the previous LAF had drawn up a list of road crossings which they felt could be improved for the benefit and safety of ROW users and suggested that these still be something the LAF focuses on. CEC asked about the state of the crossing at Old Boat Corner, Stanmer; WF stated that he thought it had been looked at under the LSTF funding bid but that the works had proven too expensive. MM also mentioned the dangerous crossing across Mill Road in Patcham. RW emphasised that LAF had the ability to put pressure on the Highways Department with regards to these issues, he also emphasised the limited funding which Cityparks has.

AC stated that he had heard there had been issues between mountain bikers, walkers and Stanmer Preservation Society, and also asked about the incidents of wire being placed across paths in Coldean Woods. WF replied that the wire incident seemed to have been a one off and that regular patrols with the police had been carried out since, he also confirmed that there had been no similar incidents within Stanmer Park.

DH asked what the Council's view was on the Mountain Bike trails in Stanmer Park. RW stated that the council was aware but that the trails were informal and not anything to do with the council; he did emphasise the need for Stanmer to be a multi-use park and suggested that the future HLF funding bid for the park would be looking at better ways of integrating cycling within the park. DH asked if the LAF was the appropriate place for raising issues regarding cycling, RW stated that it was.

DH mentioned the differences between recreational cyclists and mountain bikers and suggested that social media would be one way of getting in touch with local mountain bikers.

RW thanked everyone for their attendance, the meeting closed at 7.55pm

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 26th November 2015, Ops Conference Room, Hollingdean Depot.