

Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum AGM Meeting – Minutes 29/01/2026

Attendees:

Luke Burstow (LB) *Chair*

Dave Brookshaw (DB)

Liz Symes (LS)

Ali Polowski (AP)

Andrew Coleman (AC)

Pete Hodd (PH)

Chantelle Hoppé (CH) – BHCC Rights of Way Officer (*minutes*)

James Tulley (SDNPA LAF – Guest)

Apologies:

David Taylor (DT)

Introductions:

BHLAF members introduced themselves and their areas of interest. James Tulley introduced himself as a member of the SDNPA LAF – representing how cultural heritage intersect with PRoW and also on increasing diversity. He has local interests as part of Benfield Hill group, Stanmer Advisory Panel, the Tree festival amongst others.

1. AGM – voting in of the Chair

Luke has kindly offered to continue as Chair of Brighton & Hove LAF – nominator was David Brookshaw, seconded by Andrew Coleman and unanimously voted in by the group. Many thanks from the group for Luke's continued efforts as Chair of the group and dedication to the role.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (23/10/2025)

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed

Actions Update:

- CH – Saltdean Vale flooding – update in the agenda
- CH – undercliff flooding – chased the flood engineer on this
- DB – spoke to PH about bringing up the undercliff flooding at the Transport Partnership. PH – difficult to be heard in these meetings. Brought it up with Cllr Mutan at the end – he was unaware of the issue and deferred to the next meeting. DB – since the last meeting many of the drainage holes have been cleared but the debris has been left on the section behind the Marina – which will result in the holes being re-blocked. PH concurred that this is an on-going issue.
- CH - RB H11a beside West Hove Golf – passing places have been cut – work on-going to remove debris
- AC – Groyne Field Works by King Alfred. The works are not impacting access on the promenade – adequate safety measures are in place. However, none of the ideas to increase accessibility on the beach are being implemented. Beyond the remit / budget...

3. Discussion Items (Standing items)

SDNPA LAF – Devolution and Sussex LAFs (James Tulley from SDNPA LAF)

LB introduced James (JT) – meant to speak to James before Christmas but life got in the way – so this will be a good introduction for everyone on how we might be able to co-operate together and exchange information as Local Access Forums in Sussex.

JT – The governance and statutory role of SDNPA LAF (working across, Hampshire and Sussex) – implications of Devolution / Mayoral Authority – the role of Local Access Forums – opportunities and risks & how we might work together. This is an opportunity to raise the profile of LAFs and influence mayoral candidates – ensuring access issues remain visible and on the agenda. There have been changes to timetables of the mayoral elections – but they are still going ahead. For the mayoral tier of governing Transport / Public Transport is a big consideration – intersection with PRoW is important. JT posed the question – what do BHLAF members think about a joint statement from Sussex LAFs to mayoral candidates – giving a Sussex wide approach rather than just SDNPA? JT noted the difficulty in being heard in the Cabinet structure and being responded to – there is value in talking to each other and a unified approach.

DB – a long time ago attended SDNPA LAF as a representative of BHLAF. This has not been for a long time. It involved a lot of travel to Midhurst. DB appreciated the local focus of the BHLAF – focusing on local issues works well – more than enough to take on – would hate to lose that local focus, but sees the value in a central LAF voice.

JT – not suggesting we get rid of existing structures but rather coming together at strategic high level – getting our views heard and making sure access is front and centre. On BHCC website it was hard to find information on LAF – we can all find ways to improve.

AC – agrees it would be useful to have a joint statement. There is nothing to indicate we would no longer exist, current preferred model seems to be E.Sussex, W.Sussex and Brighton & Hove. It will be interesting to see where PRoW will sit – with the mayoral authority or the unitaries. With the top down approach of the Cabinet system and then the Mayoral Authority we do need to make sure that voices are heard on countryside access / ecosystem services etc.

LB – very conscious of increasing the diversity of LAF membership – wider footprint in the community. Political buy-in could drive this. There used to be much better attendance from BHCC councillors and council officers. Now only come to give presentations and get feedback on specialist projects.

The character of BHLAF is very different from the others in that we own a lot of the land that the PRoW network sits on. We tend to be pushing at an open door when it comes to increasing access opportunities. We worked well with Savills land agents – yet to see how the relationship develops with the new agents (Knight Frank). Agrees that local focus is important – we are very privileged that there is such a density of PRoW in a relatively small geographic area, mostly on council owned land. Meeting other LAFs and understanding their challenges will be very different – which will require different approaches. There is unity in prioritising green spaces / methods to access green spaces is different where bus services for instance maybe much more sporadic and networks more fragmented.

The political landscape is changing and its becoming much more formal within BHCC to navigate. A wider Sussex approach to interacting with the mayoral authority may be a good thing.

PH – endorse the comments of DB and LB – concern with mayoral amalgamation – we are Local Access Forum. Issues in the wider Sussex area are very different to here. If we centralise but don't have a more local level of engagement, worry LAF's will become less useful.

LB – agrees a lot our effectiveness is in being able to point to issues in the local area. However, engagement process of bringing LAFs together – SDNPA covers a lot of area and is the Planning Authority across boundaries – useful unifying agent.

PH – there is a Sussex wide Ramblers Association – a lot less attended and engaged with than the small local groups – people wanting to walk together in the same area. Sussex group are far away.

JT – this is not about Midhurst becoming a LAF empire – there is value in the Local nature of LAFs. As we are all experiencing changes in the political landscape it is useful to pool resources, initially through Chairs, to get a general position statement from the LAFs. This can be used to feed into the wider discussion on devolution. This gives a wider opportunity for LAFs to socialise.

LB – this is a 2 level discussion: one is challenging anti-localisation and the other is about conversations between the existing LAFs in the area. Part of the problem is that none really knows what's happening – what the mayoral authority might look like and if there will be any changes to the statutory function of LAFs.

It will be interesting to see what engagement with the mayoral authority is like – the police commissioner elections have been very poorly attended. The main thing is to be talking to politicians who will be influencing what's going on. As has been noted – this is becoming difficult in BHCC with the Cabinet system. A unified approach with other LAFs may be very helpful. LB very happy to talk to other LAF Chairs about a way forward. Can use Teams now to access other groups remotely – save on travel.

DB – appreciate LB's comments – could very well attend SDNPA LAF meetings remotely. Living in Saltdean the National Park is on the doorstep. Change is coming and it's good to be thinking about it.

AC – questions: JT, do you know what the proposals are for LAFs in new local government re-organisation. JT – no idea. Suggest BHLAF come to a view on what they would like to see in a new structure. AC preference would be to remain BHLAF.

LB – if transport like buses not managed at a local level, but at mayoral level, it is important we are included in discussions. Transport Partnership across the whole of Sussex?? Need to talk to each of LAFs and have a watching brief

AC – CH, which councillor is the lead for PRoW issues. CH we have two: Cllr Mutans for Transport and Cllr Rowkins for Countryside Access

JT – thank you for contributions – will feedback to Chair of SDNPA LAF, Doug. Will keep a watching brief on political developments and agree a statement with other LAF Chairs on the role and local impact of LAFs and the intersections with other key policy areas like public transport. (Note – there are a lot of people on SDNPA LAF from Brighton & Hove – there is cross over).

LS – is there an accessibility rep on the SDNPA LAF? Yes they do – JT is rep for under- represented groups and there is a rep for accessibility and disability – there has been real change in the composition of the LAF.

LB – thanks to JT for attending the meeting. This was a very useful discussion. Lots to think about both in terms of the changing political landscape, the role of LAFs and the composition of LAFs.

City Downland Estate Plan (CDEP) (DB):

DB forwarded the minutes of the last Downland Advisory Panel meeting. The only things of interest from an access point of view was making sure paths are signed and encouraging use. They were interested in the urban fringe bus walks project – CH to update

Actions:

- ***CH to update the DAP on the urban fringe walks project as it develops – spring / summer 2026***

Transport Partnership (PH):

This is now a very frustrating meeting in terms of trying to be heard. With the Cabinet led system it is much more top down dissemination of information from council officers. The wide ranging people there from different organisations feels like a box ticking exercise. With the heavy agenda and amount of presentations there is very little time for discussion. There seem to be a small group of people who are heard and for anyone else it is hard to get a word in.

LB – is it possible to raise issues ahead of time from the agenda that goes out? As a statutory advisory body we should have a voice.

PH – the Teams system that the meeting is operated through makes it hard to log on to see the agenda items ahead of time if you don't have a council log on. It seems to be a built in barrier to engagement. Hybrid nature of the meetings is painful.

LB – this accessibility issue needs to be raised with the meeting organiser so that it is not discriminatory – CH

Thank you to PH for persevering with these meetings and trying to represent the LAF

PH – ran out of time in the meeting to discuss the undercliff – brought it up with Cllr Mutans at the end – he wasn't aware of the issue and said he would discuss it at the next meeting. There was strong support in the meeting for A259 (west Hove seafront) active travel plans. Valley Gardens Phase 3 took up about a 1/3 of the meeting – how it is affecting buses, taxis, pedestrians, businesses. There was discussion about the lack of access to bus stops from Churchill Square to the Pavilion for disabled people – a long way to self-propel. No real conclusion. There was a discussion on digital parking permits. Also School Streets – camera operation – active travel. Problems with bus information screens. More cycle hangers rolling out. Increased EV chargers – still encroaching on pedestrian space rather than roads. Enforcement of bans on pavement parking – for discussion next time.

There is an E-Scooter trial starting in March (the LAF did have an opportunity to comment). There will be 'Geo-Fencing' so the scooters will not work in certain areas they are not wanted (undercliff, Lewes Rd going up to the universities etc).

AP – will E-scooters be only for pavements or can they go off-road (bridleways). Concerned about them coming up behind horse riders with no warning. PH – people will use them where they can, however, there will be exclusion zones where they won't work. They are mostly for the city centre rather than countryside use. They do have bells to signal their presence (and like an E-car, there is a noise to them). They will be speed limited to 10mph – slower than illegal scooters. There was a lot of discussion about anti-social use. There will be a video to watch on responsible scootering before you can hire one. There will also be a 3 strikes and you're out policy on misuse like abandoning scooters in the middle of the pavement. There will be opportunities to feedback on their use during the trial.

Actions:

CH – talk to the Transport Partnership meeting organiser to discuss difficulties with participation from the LAF

LB – if that is not successful the LAF should write a letter to the Chair explaining that the LAF, as a statutory advisory body to the council, is being excluded from adequately participating in the meetings.

4. AGM Reports

Maintenance & Management

Gate Repairs	31
Gate Replacements	25
Stile Replacement / Repair	12
Waymark installation	16
Vegetation Clearance (from public requests)	10
Surface Improvements	5
Obstruction	16

Summary of works in 2025:

- Surfacing: Bevendean BW B47 drainage & surfacing, repairs to Norton Drive Woodingdean BW B21a, access improvements to entrance of RB P11 Foredown, repairs to easy access trail Hollingbury Woods, repairs to Stanmer BW B30 after tree works
- Metal fingerposts being installed as wooden ones rot out / continued junction signage with roundels
- Replacement signs on England Coast Path after Black Rock works
- Clearance of Benfield Valley cycle path
- Remedial works to RB H11 at West Hove Golf – passing places
- Wilson Avenue – prevention of parking in lay-by – improved sight lines for crossing BW B41
- Rolling program of gate replacement with metal gates
- Ad hoc works – fencing at Hollingbury woods (badger hole), repaired chicane at Falmer Rd path and lectern signs
- Replacing stiles with gates (4x) at Ovingdean Grange Farm
- Asset management – trailing use of Confirm software

Up-coming projects:

- Coldean Woods path surfacing (SDNPA CIL funding)
- Stanmer bridleway – missing links surfacing BW B30
- Coldean gate access to 39 Acres access land – step installation
- Saltdean Vale BW B4 – flooding issue. Upcoming meeting to discuss intermediate works before any long term plans through Planning – from proposed housing at old nursery site.

(DB) Flooding is horrendous, drainage put in on BW B3 hasn't worked. Objected to planning application for the old nursery site – bridleway not wide enough for segregated use as bridleway and entrance road (entrance into Loose Barn is 7m, entrance here is 4.6m – can't enlarge because of buildings on each side). If it does go ahead and they connect the road drainage up to the main sewer this may help the problem.

(AC) Southern Water are trying to get surface water out of sewers – so doesn't overwhelm treatment plants

(LB) would assume this would not be segregated bridleway – bridleway users would share the space with cars

Actions:

- **CH update the group on Saltdean Vale discussions**

Legal Rights of Way Work

Summary of 2025:

- Applications in process: Longridge Avenue (Saltdean), Hangleton Link Road (Old Shoreham Rd to Hangleton Lane)

- Planning applications consulted on: Benfield Valley, Seafront Groyne field, Saltdean Old Nursery site (Saltdean Vale BW B4)
- Legal notices served: FP P26 Hangleton (blocked with cars), TW B88 Bevendean (dangerous tree) – both resolved
- Boundary dispute – East Brighton Golf and Ovingdean Grange Farm – farmer moved the gate
- Path dispute FP B82 Saddlescomb Rd – farmer asserting the path was diverted, placed feeders online of path (in progress)
- Diversion applications: BW B3 eastern end (farmer) – wanting to divert around the edge of the field. BW B3 western end – landowner proposing to divert the line to create more contoured path with drainage (in progress)

(DB) Can we ask for where the Longridge application sits on the PINs list? CH – we keep chasing on this with no feedback. Will continue to chase.

(DB) Will we have an opportunity to be formally consulted on the BW B3 diversions? CH – yes, the formal applications haven't gone in as yet. Once they do it will go out to our statutory consultees as well as being advertised locally for people to comment on.

(PH) Diversion of western end of BW B3 seems to be a better route to cycle down and nicer route for walkers through the woods

(AC) Following contours looks good.

Actions:

- ***CH Keep group updated on Longridge Avenue DMMO, Hangleton Link DMMO application and diversion applications for BW B3***

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

Summary of Projects 2025:

- Adhering to least restrictive access: replaced 25 gates on network, replacing 4 stiles with gates
- Accessibility improvements: improved the entrance to RB P11 for wheeled users, repairs to Hollingbury woods easy access trail
- Multi-user paths: clearance of Benfield Valley cycle path, path widening & passing places on RB H11
- Improving connectivity to green spaces in the city: road crossing improvements to Preston Park
- Improving connectivity to SDNPA: road crossing upgrade to Foredown on Fox Way
- Surface improvements of PRoW network: Bevendean BW B47 drainage & surfacing, repairs to Norton Drive Woodingdean BW B21a, repairs to Stanmer BW B30 after tree works
- Improved information provision: metal fingerposts at highways, roundels at junctions, No motorbiking signs on Whiteways Lane, supply of 20x no motorbiking signs for countryside estate, replacement of signage on England Coast Path

Pipeline Projects:

- FP B91 Coldean Woods surfacing – link to Stanmer
- Stanmer park bridleway loop – surfacing missing links
- Ditchling Rd north – improvements to PRoW crossings and bus stops
- Ditchling Rd north – multi-user path from High Park Corner to Ditchling Beacon
- Urban Fringe bus walks
- Brighton & Hove Way waymarking (funding application from association)

- New access: applications in for Longridge Ave bridleway extension and new footpath at Hangleton Link

(PH) Pipeline projects look great. However, one of the main barriers to access the Downs from the city is the A27 crossing at Dyke Road. It is a massive barrier. Any detours are very long. Any progress on this?

(CH) upgrading this junction for pedestrians and cyclists is part of the planning approval for Toads Hole Valley development. This involves planning approval from SDNPA for access onto 19 acres (suggested ramp) and involvement with National Highways. Not sure where this application is – will chase with Planning

(LB) Agree this is with Planning – nothing has happened rather than there being no desire

(AC) Ditchling Road proposals are great – such a fast road its very hard to cross the PRow. Any chance of warning signs on the road? (CH) Yes – part of the project is for warning signs on the road at each junction point. Will forward the proposal once it is finalised

(LB) WSCC seem to be quite happy to reduce road speeds. (CH) this is mostly in ESCC and here doesn't seem to be such a desire to tackle road speeds

(DB) At the Downland Advisory Panel meeting there was a lot of interest in the urban fringe walks. Can send out the detailed maps? (CH) Yes, this was sent out at a previous meeting – but will resend

Actions:

- ***CH follow up with Planning Dept on Toads Hole Valley / Dyke Rd junction***
- ***CH send out the Ditchling Rd crossings / bus stop proposal once finalised***
- ***CH send out urban fringe bus walks maps (detailed)***

5. Missing Links / Lost Ways / Unrecorded Paths (CH)

Covered in the previous agenda items (Longridge Avenue and Hangleton Link path)

6. Any Other Business

(AC) wanted to minute thanks to CH for continued works on improving PRow

(LB) Will talk to James Tulley on increasing diversity on the LAF membership. Would it be possible to look at LAF pages on the council website to make to more accessible to people? CH – can take a look at this.

(LB) Thank you to everyone who turns up and participates at the meetings – it is much appreciated

Actions:

- ***LB – talk to James Tulley about increasing LAF diversity***
- ***CH – to look at LAF pages on council website to make it more obvious how to participate***

Date of Meetings 2026: (Thursdays 6-8pm)

30th April

30th July

29th October