Letter from Alfriston Parish Council to
Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority
Re: Bridleway works on South Downs Way at Alfriston.

Alfriston Parish Council Questions.

1. Given that the project was initiated in 2024, please explain why Alfriston Parish Council was not consulted in the subsequent two years and was only advised of the intended works after the SDNPA had approved procurement in March 2026.
   The minutes of the SDNPA meeting on 20 March 2026, Item 14 .179 show that it was questioned whether the local parish council had been consulted, and in Item14.180 confirmation is recorded that the local parish council had been consulted. This was clearly not the case.

   (NOTE: The first communication received by APC was sent by Ben Bessant was sent at 17:14 on 20th March 2026, AFTER the SDNPA meeting at 10:30 of the same day.)

2. Please detail what consultation with adjacent landowners and residents took place.

3. Please supply copies of any consultation documents and communications which were issued.

4. How did SDNPA determine that the communications with adjacent landowners and residents were received? It transpires one land owner had not been notified as SDNPA had been contacting the old owner who failed to pass any communications on.

5. What was the statutory/planning basis on which the works were authorised? Specifically did SDNPA regard them as non-development under s.55(2)(b), permitted development under Schedule 2 Part 9 Class A of the GPDO, or something else? Why was it not deemed necessary for planning permission to be sought for this development?

6. Please can we have copies of the proposal that was sent to DEFRA for their approval.

7. Please can SDNPA provide detail as to the process that is followed for projects such as this. We ask this as it would appear that only one officer had ownership of this (Ben Bessant) and the details of this proposal were not checked by anyone else at SDNPA i.e. when it was presented at a committee meeting in March, there is no evidence that the committee drilled down into the detail of the proposal which would have highlighted the use of tarmac.

8. We note, from the project tender document (Agenda Item 14 Report NPA25/26-30 Appendix 2), that a vehicle and pedestrian gate is specified at the lower end, adjoining The Broadway. When will this part of the plan be completed?

9. From the same document, we note that Treated Timber Edgings are specified yet suburban concrete kerbstones have been used. Why?

10. The specification refers to annual maintenance to include a mechanical sweep and power wash, and a 10-year refresh of aggregate layers, with a cost contribution from local residents. What arrangements have been made for this and with which residents?

11. Where did the finance for the work come from?

12. To whose benefit was this extensive work carried out?

13. Please can Alfriston Parish Council receive data on the complaints received about the issue of gravel / water runoff? This is important as these complaints are being used as a major justification for the works.

14. The proposed signage shows that motor bikes and scooters are not permitted - can that be extended to include cars as well. Preferably a sign on the lines of 'Access for authorised vehicles only' should be provided. Please note that that this wording exists in a faded format on the current wooden fingerpost.

15. The impression given by SDNPA is that the work required joint support from SDNP and ESCC. What involvement did ESCC have in the decision and design process? Please could you provide the contact/s of the ESCC Rights of Way staff that were involved in the process and copies of any documents they received as part of the process.

16. Where was the conservation and visual amenity discussion in the decision process?

17. How does the use of tarmac, and the resulting appearance of the bridleway as a new suburban road, reconcile with SDNPA's core statutory purpose under the Environment Act 1995 to 'Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the area'?

18. How will unintended consequences of the change be addressed by the SDNP;
    a. Increased speed of cycles
    b. Increases access by vehicles to the route
    a. Potential for fly tipping, parking and overnight stops
    b. Increased vulnerability to rural crime in area

19. Alfriston parish Council look to SDNPA for assurance be given that the change from rural bridleway to a suburban road of tarmac will not lead to further development on this part of the South Downs Way?

Sent by email 26th October 2026