

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>17 October 2013</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Elveden Village Hall</b>

			Paper Number
1.	10.00	<b>A11 Site Visit Elveden Village Hall</b>	
2.	12.30	<b>Lunch Elveden Café Restaurant</b>	
3.	2.00	<b>Welcome, apologies and housekeeping</b>	
4.		<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>	LAF 13/24
5.		<b>Declaration of interest</b>	
6.	2.10	<b>Welcome new SLAF members Introductions</b>	Verbal
7.	2.30	<b>Rights of Way Severance – Network Rail</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felixstowe Academy Hawkes Lane</li> <li>• Great Barton BR12</li> <li>• Needham Market Gypsy Lane</li> </ul>	Verbal - AW
8.	2.50	<b>SLAF Annual Report to Cabinet</b>	LAF 13/25 LAF 13/26
9.	3.00	<b>Countryside Access Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DfT Safer Cycling</li> <li>• BALANCE</li> <li>• Ipswich to Alton Water</li> <li>• Heritage Lottery Fund</li> </ul>	LAF 13/27 LAF 13/28
10.	3.20	<b>Stour &amp; Orwell Forum Management Plan Survey</b>	Verbal - BH
11.	3.40	<b>Correspondence / Updates:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wild Anglia</li> <li>• Regional Chairs Meeting</li> <li>• National LAF Conference</li> <li>• Web mapping</li> <li>• LAF News</li> <li>• Coastal Access</li> </ul>	LAF 13/29
12.	3.50	<b>Member's Topic / Any Other Business</b>	
13.	3.55	<b>Public question time</b>	
14.	4.00	<b>Dates &amp; Venues of Future Meetings</b>	

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Minutes of meeting held at Assington Village Hall on 11 July 2013</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>17 October 2013</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Jill Christley</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Assington Village Hall</b>

**1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping**

Present: Melinda Appleby (MA), Bryan Collen (Chair) (BC), Barry Hall (BH), Margaret Hancock (MH), Gordon Merfield (GM), Norman Southgate (NS), Cllr Jane Storey (JS), John Wayman (JW).

SCC Officers Present: Jill Christley (minutes), David Falk (DF), Andrew Woodin (AW).

Apologies: David Barker (Vice-Chair) (DB), Ann Langley (AL), Alan Moore (AM), Monica Pipe (MP), Mike Taylor (MT), Anthony Wright (AWR).

BC welcomed Michelle Gardiner (MG), Regional LAF Co-ordinator to the meeting.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting (LAF 13/15)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record.

4. Quiet Lanes. JW – Told the forum of a U road off the A14 that has a high national speed limit, and asked whether SCC could reduce it. AW advised that SCC had reviewed and implemented all speed limits that they intend to. JS was aware of a similar problem in her division, and told the forum that under certain circumstances it is possible to apply for speed restrictions. JS suggested that JW approach the parish council.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**4. Plan of engagement between NE, DEFRA and LAFs (LAF 13/16)**

Michelle Gardiner gave the forum an overview of her role as Regional LAF co-ordinator. The role has changed, with more focus being placed on providing direct support to LAFs. MG will be disseminating information, sharing good practice, resolving problems and giving advice on running LAFs.

MG will be compiling evidence supporting the argument for LAF funding, making sure that the value of LAF work is understood by funding providers.

Initially MG will be defining her role, and feeding back to Natural England. She will be attending LAF meetings in the region, and will arrange the Chair

and Vice Chair meeting. Although a national conference may not be held again due to costs, it is hoped that regional conferences will still take place.

MG was interested to hear about the forum's experience of Huddle. The forum explained that due to the restriction on users it had been of limited use. However, AW and DF regularly checked Huddle for current topics, and fed back to the Forum. MG advised that it was now possible to have unlimited users, but if they are inactive access would be lost. AW pointed out when logged on user did not necessarily actively input into the website, and that it was possible to read emails without logging on, which might give the impression that the user is inactive when they are still making use of the system.

MA felt it would be useful to strengthen links with neighbouring LAFs on specific topics e.g. rail crossings.

AW then summarised document LAF13/16.

The forum discussed urban rights of way and their links to the countryside. DF told the forum of a proposed route which is part footpath, part bridleway that could provide a useful walking and cycling link from Ipswich to Alton Water but is being blocked because of a proposed wind farm. The forum agreed that this route would be of benefit to the public.

**ACTION** SLAF to write to Ipswich Borough Council supporting SCC's proposal.

**5. National LAF Annual Report – 2011- 2012 (LAF 13/17)**

AW outlined document LAF 13/017, which was discussed. MG explained that the report was for 2011-2012 as this was the first time Natural England had produced a report. The forum asked who the s.94 consulting bodies are.

**ACTION** AW to advise SLAF who are the prescribed bodies under s.94 of the CROW Act 2000.

**6. SLAF Annual Report 2011 – 2012 (LAF13/18)**

**SLAF Annual Report 2012 – 2013 – draft (LAF13/19)**

DF outlined the reports, explaining that the 2012/3 report would be more concise than last year. The reports were discussed. JS asked that SLAF's activity and value for money be highlighted. MA asked that the report be rephrased to indicate the importance SLAF place on access. BC asked that the government's broadly supportive response on the Public Forest Estate also be included in the report as SLAF had played an active part in the consultation process.

**ACTION** DF edit annual report, as requested by the forum.

The lack of mapping on the SCC web site was discussed. SLAF agreed that the matter should be added to the Annual Report.

**ACTION** DF add item to report, as requested by the forum.

## 7. **SLAF Recruitment**

AL, NS and SM are stepping down from the forum after October. DF has approached the Suffolk Local Government Association for a new nomination to replace SM. Recruitment will be taking place this summer, in time for new members to attend the October meeting, when there will be a 'round table' introduction. DF will be looking for those with interests in walking, countryside access, outdoor activities and health. MA suggested that it would be useful to have good geographical coverage of the county. DF has also approached some possible potential members, and asked members whether they know of people who would like to become active, involved members.

Members were asked to check their profile on the SLAF website. It was agreed that it would be useful to add a photograph of members on the member profile.

**ACTION** JC circulate member details to all members.

## 8. **A Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk (LAF13/20)**

The Suffolk Wellbeing Board are seeking input into their Action Plans. The forum discussed ways to encourage and enable people to access the countryside. Suggestions included: having walking leaders in each parish council, liaising with developers to create footpaths in new developments, promoting treasure hunts. MA expressed an interest in hearing from a developer at a future meeting, and noted the effects of lack of information, cattle in fields etc. on deterring access.

**ACTION** SCC to consider inviting a representative of Hopkins Homes to attend a future meeting.

## 9. **Triennial review of EA and NE (LAF13/21)**

DF summarised document LAF13/21.

## 10. **Breaking New Ground (LAF13/22)**

DF summarised document LAF13/22. The two projects put forward by SCC are i) The Lark Valley Path Accessible Path, where SCC wants to build on work completed elsewhere on the Lark Valley path. ii) The Brecks Cycle Rides, which is a low-cost project requiring promotion with leaflets, signage, waymarking and distance markers. This project dovetails with a project from Norfolk County Council's creating multi-use trails.

**ACTION** SLAF to write to The Brecks Partnership supporting the bids.

## 11. **Rights of Way and Rail Crossings update (LAF13/23)**

AW outlined LAF13/23. The forum discussed the specification of the bridge at Felixstowe Academy, and were highly supportive of ramps to ensure the bridge met current and future requirements.

**12. Any other business**

MA had been surprised that the Definitive Map was not available online. AW explained that the SCC website was being re-designed, but that no mapping facility was proposed for the new website. The forum discussed this and agreed to write to SCC pressing for mapping to be added to the new website.

**ACTION** SLAF to write to SCC.

MA expressed concern about the lack of information on how to report path defects.

**ACTION** AW agreed to let MA have reporting details.

MA asked whether parish clerks in the east of the county could have a copy of the cutting schedule.

**ACTION** AW to investigate.

**13. Public question time**

No members of the public attended the meeting.

**14. Dates and venues of future meetings**

17 October 2013 Elveden Village Hall.

END

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>SLAF Annual Report to Cabinet</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>17 October 2013</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Elveden Village Hall</b>

BC presented the Suffolk Local Access Forum annual report to SCC Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013

- Cllr Graham Newman welcomed Bryan Collen to the cabinet, highlighting the forums recent success in gaining an un-motorised access under the dualled A11.
- BC introduced himself, explained that SLAF works to ensure access is available to all, thanked officer support and advised Cabinet that the cost of operating SLAF to the county council was just £1,100 with huge rewards.
- BC emphasised that the forum is committed to providing routes for horses, safer cycling routes and access for les able bodied, promoting health, leisure, wellbeing and tourism. He highlighted the recent funding secured from the Dept of Transport Safer Cycling.
- BC advised SLAF support the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, shares its enthusiasm and vision. The forum is keen for people in towns to visit the natural environment, and the need to promote countryside access to raise awareness of what is available.
- BC highlighted current access issues, such as Network Rail's attempts to close crossings which link PROW, when there are better ways to address the issue.
- BC expressed concerns that the Definitive Map is not publically available on a website and urged for this to be addressed.
- BC welcomed the opportunity for SLAF to work with Wild Anglia to promote countryside access.
- The forum had written to Ipswich Borough Council to support a project to provide a cycle link to Alton Water and will continue to support that project.
- Cllr Mark Bee thanked BC.

There then followed questions

- Cllr Newman – thanked BC for an interesting and enthusiastic report. He shared his concern about getting promoting countryside access, believed that Network Rail had been allocated funding to develop warning systems at crossing points, and agreed there was a pressing need to put the Definitive Map online, but felt it would be a couple of years before that was possible, and explained that whilst SLAF were unable to have a seat on the board of Wild Anglia, they were aware of the importance of access. Cllr Newman also expressed keen interest in a cycle route to Alton Water.
- Cllr Murray – welcomed the report as it dovetails with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Also agreed with a cycle route to Ipswich and is keen to help to push it forward.
- Cllr Finch – thanked BC for the report and aware of the importance of countryside access, suggesting there could be closer liaison and collaboration with the AONB Partnerships.
- Cllr Martin – enjoyed being on SLAF and disappointed to have had to leave. Raised potential for railway lines being developed as cycle routes, with benefits for tourism.
- Cllr Spicer – advised that she had received more complaints of surface damage to PROW, especially Byways, due to bad winter and added that PROW staff had invested a lot of time improving Byways in particular.
- As Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board, Cllr Spicer advised that the Strategy was now underpinned by an Action Plan and added needed to target by promoting countryside access and walking as a key strand for mental health and care of older people. The Health & Wellbeing Board have no funding but can advise others, and appreciate engagement with SLAF in achieving these aims. She thanked BC for the good efforts of the SLAF.
- Cllr Lockington – raised concern over closure of railway crossings and impact on the right of way network.
- Cllr Storey – as a member of the Suffolk Landrovers Club has helped restoring Byways. She thanked BC and David Barker for their inspirational leadership and thanked the officer team highlighting the forum was cheap to operate but receives national recognition for its work.
- Cllr Wood – requested SLAF work with the Shotley Cycling Campaign on developing a cycling link to Alton Water.
- Cllr Newman responded to the points raised, highlighting that former railway routes had not been fully exploited for access and expressed concern if PROW over rail crossings were closed.
- Bryan Collen concluded by saying SLAF welcomed links with the AONBs, advised Cllr Martin had been an excellent member of the forum, and re-emphasised that the forum would continue to address cycling as a growing activity. He also noted impact bad winter had had on PROW and said the officers had done well to keep them open.
- Chairman Mark Bee asked the cabinet if they were happy to accept the report, which was agreed.

END

## Suffolk Local Access Forum

**Title:** SLAF Annual Report August 2012 – July 2013

**Meeting Date:** 17 October 2013

**Author/Contact:** David Falk

**Venue:** Elveden Village Hall



### Agenda Item 5

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	10 September 2013
<b>Lead Councillor/s:</b>	Councillor Graham Newman, Cabinet Member for Roads and Transport
<b>Local Councillor/s:</b>	All Councillors
<b>Director:</b>	Lucy Robinson, Director for Economy, Skills and Environment
<b>Assistant Director or Head of Service:</b>	Alan Thorndyke, Head of Highway Network Management
<b>Author:</b>	David Falk, Countryside Access Development Manager, 01473 264752

#### Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report August 2012 - July 2013

##### What is the Cabinet being asked to decide?

1. The Cabinet is recommended to:
  - i) receive the 2012/13 annual report of the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) (Appendix A) and the recommendations as set out in the report; and
  - iii) endorse the action that the Council is taking to address these recommendations as set out in paragraph 3 a) to e).

##### Reason for recommendation

2. The Suffolk Local Access Forum is required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to submit an annual report on rights of way and access matters to the Council. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs guidance states: "We would expect the authority to respond positively to the forum's annual report and to say what actions they have taken on the advice and recommendations of the forum."

##### What are the key issues to consider?

3. The key issues raised by the Suffolk Local Access Forum 2012/13 report are as follows:
  - a) The forum supports the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk and considers that countryside access should play a key role in delivering many of the strategy's objectives through investment in countryside access, raising awareness and supporting events.

Suffolk County Council's (SCC) response: The Council, as a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, recognises the role of countryside access within the Strategy and will work with the Board to support access within action plans, where appropriate.



- b) The forum are concerned that pressure to increase rail speeds compromises countryside access and urge the council to continue pressing Network Rail to investigate alternative options to closing rights of way crossings, where practical.

SCC response: The Council remain committed to the development of the rail network for the economic benefit of Suffolk but are equally aware of the need and importance of retaining effective access to the countryside for the benefit of all users.

- c) The Suffolk Local Access Forum is keen to see the Definitive Map of public rights of way in Suffolk made available online to meet the needs of users of the network.

SCC response: the Council will look at opportunities to make the Definitive Map available online.

- d) The Suffolk Local Access Forum attaches importance to maintaining investment in countryside access and requests the council commits to maintain an effective and efficient service to manage the county's public rights of way network and open access sites.

SCC response: The Council acknowledges the importance of countryside access in meeting many of its objectives including the Most Active County and will reflect this in prioritising resources

- e) The Suffolk Local Access Forum provides a statutory advisory service to the Council by raising issues regarding countryside access and public rights of way related to leisure, health and sustainable travel.

SCC response: The Council acknowledges the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Suffolk Local Access Forum and its focus on key issues regarding countryside access and the use of public rights of way.

4. The priorities for SLAF over the coming year include:

- a) Ensuring that countryside access is recognised and becomes a key feature in Health and Wellbeing Strategy Action Plans;
- b) Ensuring that rights of way severance by road or rail are addressed effectively to maintain an efficient rights of way network;
- c) Seeing the Definitive Map made available online;
- d) Seeing the underpass on the A11 opened and promoted for use;
- e) Responding to the development of EDF Sizewell C and pressing for enhanced countryside access.

**What are the resource and risk implications?**

5. The Suffolk Local Access Forum considers that the Council should maintain an effective level of funding for rights of way and access maintenance and improvement. The County Council's revenue budget for 2013/14 includes £0.6m for management and maintenance of the rights of way network (works and staff costs). Additional funding is secured from time to time from other sources for improvement works, for example the Department of Transport Cycle Safety Fund.

**What are the timescales associated with this decision?**

6. Not applicable.

**Alternative options**

7. Cabinet could change the responses given by Suffolk County Council to the recommendations from the Suffolk Local Access Forum, or could suggest additional issues that it would like the forum to explore over the coming year.

**Who will be affected by this decision?**

8. Officers acting on these recommendations and potentially users of public rights of way, land managers and communities within Suffolk.

**Sources of Further Information**

- a) Suffolk Local Access Forum web pages:  
<http://publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/suffolk-local-access-forum/>
- b) The Suffolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan:  
<http://publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/home/rights-of-way-improvement-plan/>

## **Suffolk Local Access Forum**

### ***Annual Report – August 2012 – July 2013***

#### **Introduction**

1. As required by the Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2002 I have pleasure in submitting the tenth Annual Report of the Suffolk Local Access Forum to Suffolk County Council as the highway authority.
2. The Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) was formed under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) in 2003. SLAF acts as an independent body to advise the Council on matters relating to public rights of way and countryside access. It is also a statutory consultee for Natural England on mapping of open access land and plans and policies produced by a wide range of organisations, including Defra, Highways Agency and Network Rail.
3. Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way and Access team administer the forum.
4. The forum is made up of individuals with an interest in rights of way and countryside access including members of community organisations, users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders), landowners and land managers, and those with conservation interests.
5. Full membership of SLAF for the period August 2012 – July 2013 is listed in Appendix B.

#### **The Work of SLAF**

6. In 2012-2013 the forum has discussed and responded to a wide range of issues arising from consultations, presentations, papers and reports. Responses in this period have been made to Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board, Defra, Natural England, Ministry of Defence, Highways Agency, Network Rail, EDF (Sizewell C), Ipswich Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council.
7. Members of SLAF have attended local and regional meetings and national conferences.
8. Members of the public are welcome to attend SLAF meetings and have the opportunity to raise items or comment on issues discussed or related to countryside access.
9. Local parish councils are advised of SLAF meetings in their area and are invited to attend.

#### **Administering SLAF**

10. SLAF are administered by SCC with officers from Rights of Way and Access providing secretariat functions.
11. The Forum retain their own identity to be clearly recognisable as an independent body with their own letter heading with PO address, an

independent email address and a dedicated website on the One Suffolk platform - <http://publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/suffolk-local-access-forum>

12. The cost to SCC for administering SLAF for 2012-13 was approximately £1,100. This included venue hire for meetings and refreshments, and member travel expenses. To place this in context, the overall budget for Rights of Way and Access is £1.2M.

#### **Investment in Rights of Way and Countryside Access**

13. Given the importance the forum attaches to maintaining investment in countryside access, it supports and welcomes efforts by officers to deliver improvements to public rights of way. Specifically, the forum congratulates officers on the completion of the Sailors Path project, the delivery of a new footpath at Aldeburgh Golf Club, and the delivery of the Lark Valley Path project. The forum also acknowledges the work of officers in dealing with the thousands of maintenance and definitive map queries received over the period of the annual report.
14. The forum is keen that opportunities to develop countryside access are taken, where appropriate. The Brecks Partnerships' Heritage Lottery Fund bid "Breaking New Ground", offers the opportunity to develop countryside access and the forum has written to support two countryside access bids from SCC officers. These are to improve access along the Lark Valley Path and develop a long-distance cycle route between West Stow and Brandon.
15. The forum is committed to providing safer cycling opportunities and so welcomes the success of SCC officers in securing significant funding from the Department of Transport Cycle Safety Fund. This will provide a safe cycle route along rights of way between Mildenhall and West Row (£200k), and a cycle bridge linking public rights of way in Bury St Edmunds (£2m).

#### **Health and Wellbeing**

16. The forum welcomes the development of "A Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk" and shares the Health and Wellbeing Board's vision for people in Suffolk to live healthier and happier lives.
17. The forum considers that countryside access makes a positive contribution to Suffolk's ambition to become England's "Most Active County" and therefore should be a key element in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
18. Within the strategy, countryside access has specific relevance to a number of Key Measures (Indicators). The forum considers that developing and promoting countryside access can offer a low cost approach in meeting those measures.
19. The forum requests the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider improving and promoting countryside access when making decisions on Health and Wellbeing priorities for Suffolk, including joint commissioning, spending public money and developing Annual Action Plans.
20. The Forum would like to ensure that those Key Measures (Indicators) that relate to green space, focus not only on managed green spaces (such as town and country parks), but also includes the natural environment accessible on public rights of way and through Open Access Land.

21. In developing Annual Action Plans, the Forum requests the Board to recognise the role public rights of way can play in providing safe routes to schools, services and facilities.

#### **Rights of Way Severance**

22. Following its persistent call for adequate bridleway underpass provision, the Forum has been kept advised by the Highways Agency of progress of the A11 dualling at Barton Mills. The forum looks forward to visiting works in autumn 2013. Members consider this underpass to be a major achievement for the forum. When completed, the underpass will enable visitors to the area to enjoy an off-road network of public rights of way extending over 25km between West Stow and Brandon.
23. The forum has expressed concern to Network Rail on a national initiative to address high risk crossing on the rail infrastructure. In Suffolk this has resulted in pressure to close or divert rights of way crossings, when alternative measures could mitigate issues. These include changing approaches, improving decking, clearing trackside vegetation, adding warning lights, or installing grade separated crossings.

#### **Definitive Map**

24. SLAF would like to see the Definitive Map of public rights of way for Suffolk made available online through the Suffolk County Council website. This will enable members of the public to view the map and identify with certainty which routes have legal rights for access.
25. The Definitive Map is available in neighbouring counties, including Essex, where it can be viewed as an "interactive map" on OS mapping. The benefit of this is that the public rights of way are depicted on their legal alignment, which can differ to that depicted by OS. This benefits users when providing feedback to SCC on the rights of way network.

#### **Other Issues**

26. **Open Access:** The forum was consulted by Natural England (NE) on Open Access Restrictions. The forum supported the lifting of seasonal restrictions at Horn Heath. Horn Heath sits alongside the route of the dualled A11, with site access near the location of the new bridleway underpass. The forum was pleased NE agreed to lift restrictions due to the absence of threatened bird species, as per policy.
27. **Coastal Access:** The forum has followed the development of Coastal Access with keen interest and in the lessons learned by Norfolk County Council with specific regard to diversions around private property and how far inland routes go. SLAF remain concerned that a key feature of Suffolk's coastline, its estuaries, will prevent a continual coastal route and SLAF will press Natural England to enable the Coastal Path to continue along estuaries to the first permanent crossing point.
28. **"Wild Anglia":** The forum has expressed concern about how access will be represented in the new Local Nature Partnership "Wild Anglia". The concern centres on access being overshadowed by conservation interests. The forum have requested that access is represented effectively in the board of "Wild Anglia" and within working groups.



29. **The future of the Public Forest Estate in England:** The forum was an active contributor to the debate on the future of forestry and woodlands in England, and met the independent panel on forestry when it visited Suffolk in March last year. The forum was broadly supportive of the Government's response to the panel's final report in February this year that it shares the panel's vision for the future of our forests and that the Public Forest Estate will remain in public ownership.
30. **Ipswich Northern Fringe:** The forum expressed concern to Ipswich Borough Council on the large scale development proposed in the north of Ipswich. The Forum lobbied for the need to protect and enhance the Fonnereau Way and ensure safe links were made between the development, rail stations, schools, managed green space, Ipswich and the wider rights of way network.
31. **Ipswich-Alton Water Cycle Link:** The forum has written to Ipswich Borough Council to express concern over the failure to secure a bridleway link between Ipswich and Alton Water. This link would connect Belstead and Sustrans cycle routes, to the cycle network at Alton Water, providing a near continuous safe, off-road route.
32. **Communication between Local Access Forums:** The Forum wishes to maintain good contact with neighbouring LAFs where there are shared interests such as level crossing closures along Greater Anglia's routes and access to the Public Forest Estate at Thetford Forest. The Forum welcomes the recruitment of a regional coordinator to disseminate information and provide communication between the Forum and Natural England. Forum members have not signed up to use the online resource provided by Natural England 'Huddle' partly due to issues with broadband speeds in rural Suffolk.

#### **Consultations**

33. SLAF has been consulted on:
  - a) A Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk;
  - b) Triennial Review of Environment Agency and Natural England;
  - c) DEFRA / Independent Panel on Forestry;
  - d) Review of Open Access Site Restrictions;
  - e) Natural England Dedication of Higher Rights on National Nature Reserves;
  - f) MOD Open Access Sites;
  - g) Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership;
  - h) Forest Heath Dog Control Order (SLAF had no objection to the order to control dogs on Aspal Close Local Nature Reserve);
  - i) Gating Order, Felixstowe (SLAF had no objection to the extension of a gating order to control Anti-Social Behaviour).

### Meetings

34. SLAF have held meetings on:
- a) 18 October 2012 – Town Hall, Beccles;
  - b) 24 January 2013 – West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds;
  - c) 18 April 2013 – Great Blakenham Village Hall;
  - d) 11 July 2013 – Assington Village Hall.
35. SLAF members have attended meetings on:
- a) 4 October 2012 – The Suffolk Coast and Estuaries Community Conference 2012, Thorpness Country Club, attended by Bryan Collen (Chair). This meeting related to coastal erosion and was of interest to SLAF regarding coastal access and the development by Natural England of a Coastal Path;
  - b) 24 October 2012 – Open Access Restrictions, Natural England teleconference, Endeavour House, attended by Barry Hall and Gordon Merfield. At this meeting seasonal Directions that restrict access on sites with ground nesting birds was discussed with interested partners including conservation groups, landowners and users;
  - c) 15 November 2012 – LAF Chairs and Vice Chairs East of England Meeting, Kings Cross, London, attended by Bryan Collen (Chair). Regional LAFs met with Natural England officers to raise issues relating to access;
  - d) 23 November 2012 – A11 Fiveways to Thetford Improvement Scheme Public Information Exhibition, Elveden Village Hall, Elveden, attended by David Barker (Vice Chair);
  - e) 27 February 2013 – LAF National Conference, Sheffield, attended by Barry Hall. Representatives of 73 LAFs (89%) attended the conference to learn from and meet other LAFs and participate in workshops;
  - f) 23 July 2013 – Stour and Orwell Estuaries Forum 2013, Wherstead, attended by Barry Hall.

### Presentations

36. SLAF received presentations on:
- a) 18 October 2012 – Coastal Access, Carrie Kerry, Norfolk County Council;
  - b) 18 October 2012 – Angles Way Project, Carrie Kerry, Norfolk County Council;
  - c) 24 January 2013 – Issues Affecting a Walk in the Countryside, Sharon Berry, Public Rights of Way Officer, Mid-Suffolk District Council. This presentation concerned the physical and psychological barriers that affect people accessing the countryside;
  - d) 24 January 2013 – Countryside Access and Health, Saraïd Cann, Professional Advisor, Adult and Community Services, SCC. This presentation focused on the role that countryside access can play in enhancing the health and wellbeing of a community;

- e) 18 April 2013 – Quiet Lanes, Neil Winship, Parish Councillor Waldringfield, SALC Representative on Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership Committee.
- f) 18 April 2013 – SCC Natural Environment, Nick Collinson, SCC Natural Environment Manager. This presentation introduced Nick Collinson to the forum to explain his new role and how it relates to the role of SLAF;
- g) 11 July 2013 – East of England Local Access Forums, Michelle Gardiner, Regional LAF Coordinator. This was an opportunity for the new regional coordinator to meet members and explain her role.

#### **Membership of SLAF**

- 37. SLAF membership throughout this year has been 15 members.
- 38. A full membership list for 2012/13 is in Appendix B.

#### **Looking Ahead**

- 39. The practice of meeting key partners and seeing issues relating to access in situ will continue.
- 40. The priorities for SLAF over the coming year include:
  - a) Ensuring that countryside access is recognised and becomes a key feature in Health and Wellbeing Strategy Action Plans;
  - b) Ensuring that rights of way severance by road or rail are addressed effectively to maintain an efficient rights of way network;
  - c) Seeing the Definitive Map made available online;
  - d) Seeing the underpass on the A11 opened and promoted for use;
  - e) Responding to the development of EDF Sizewell C and pressing for enhanced countryside access;

#### **Main Recommendations for Suffolk County Council to consider are:**

- 41. The forum supports the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk and considers that countryside access should play a key role in delivering many of the strategy's objectives through investment in countryside access, raising awareness and supporting events.
- 42. The forum are concerned that pressure to increase rail speeds compromises countryside access and urge the council to continue pressing Network Rail to investigate alternative options to closing rights of way crossings, where practical.
- 43. The Suffolk Local Access Forum is keen to see the Definitive Map of public rights of way in Suffolk made available online to meet the needs of users of the network.
- 44. The Suffolk Local Access Forum attaches importance to maintaining investment in countryside access and requests the council commits to maintain an effective and efficient service to manage the county's public rights of way network and open access sites.



45. The Suffolk Local Access Forum provides a statutory advisory service to the Council by raising issues regarding countryside access and public rights of way related to leisure, health and sustainable travel.

**Bryan Collen**

Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

**David Barker**

Vice Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

**July 2013**

## Appendix B

**Suffolk Local Access Forum – Members Details**

**Melinda Appleby** – Since childhood Melinda has had an interest in wildlife and conservation. With a degree in Rural Environmental Studies, Melinda has pursued these interests in her career with the Countryside Movement, the RSPB, NFU, and at Suffolk County Council.

**David Barker** (Vice Chairman) – With his wide experience within the NFU, CLA and as a former Countryside Agency commissioner, David seeks to work to balance all interests involved in countryside access. David is also Chair of Creating the Greenest County.

**Bryan Collen** (Chair) – Bryan has been involved in the NFU, Anglian Water, Internal Drainage Boards and the County Council's Rights of Way Liaison Committee.

**Barry Hall** – Barry is a retired local government officer with experience of working on countryside and rights of way projects. Barry retains an interest in countryside access as a member of the RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and National Trust.

**Margaret Hancock** – Margaret is a Blue Badge Tourist Guide. A keen cyclist, Margaret is passionate about promoting sustainable tourism by encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Margaret is a volunteer for the Out and About charity, providing support for children and young people with disabilities.

**Ann Langley** – Ann is involved with the Pony Club, the Easton Harriers Hunt, and is a founder member of the Mid-Suffolk Bridleways Association which works to maintain and open bridleways. Ann is also Councillor on Ashfield cum Thorpe Parish Council.

**Councillor Sandy Martin** – Ipswich Borough Council and SCC Councillor. Sandy Martin lived in Halesworth from 1971 to 1993, and has lived in Ipswich since then. He is a keen walker and cyclist. He was elected to Suffolk County Council in 1997 and to Ipswich Borough Council in 2002, and is currently a Councillor on both Authorities. He acted as deputy to the County Portfolio Holder for Environment & Transport from 2001 to 2005, and is now Portfolio Holder for a Fairer and Greener Ipswich at Ipswich Borough Council and Leader of Suffolk County Council Labour Group. Cllr Martin stepped down from SLAF in July 2013.

**Gordon Merfield** – With a background in agriculture, since the 1980's Gordon has been active in participating and coaching in field sports events as well as being interested in the wider countryside and walking in foreign countries.

**Alan Moore** – Alan is a retired Head of Regional Planning and Transport for the East of England Regional Assembly, and is now a volunteer with the Stroke Association and West Suffolk Headway. With a particular focus on access for disabled people, Alan is interested in the issue of local access and the need to

ensure that it is properly and effectively provided for in both urban and rural areas.

**Monica Pipe** – Monica farms just north of Ipswich and has many well-used footpaths on her land including the promoted Fynn Valley Walk.

**Norman Southgate** – Rights of way officer for the Suffolk Landrover Owners Club, Norman keeps members aware of where they can legally go off-road. He is a keen sailor and member of the Copdock & Washbrook footpath maintenance working group.

**Councillor Jane Storey** – SCC Councillor for Thedwastre North, has interests around walking, dog-walking, off-road driving and being a farmer's daughter with some strong views along the lines that with rights come responsibilities. Jane believes that we should preserve our Rights of Way, including BOATS and Bridleways, but not at the expense of common sense. These are an important part of presenting Suffolk as the Greenest County, useful for getting from A to B, but also for getting people who do not normally exercise out and about at little or no expense.

**Mike Taylor** – With a Forestry Commission background, Mike brings experience of managing large tracts of land as a business whilst ensuring that conservation and public access are fully taken into account.

**John Wayman** – A former district council member farming in the Stour Valley, John feels that he now would like to contribute to a the wider rural picture.

**Anthony Wright** – a long-term cyclist and walker, Anthony has worked with several local authorities on the production of cycling and walking publications and works part time with the sustainable transport charity Sustrans.

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Countryside Access Development</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>17 October 2013</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Elveden Village Hall</b>

The following is an update on the delivery of countryside access projects

- **BALANCE**
  - £106,000  
BALANCE has been a 3-year, European partnership project between England, Holland and Belgium to improve countryside access. In Suffolk projects have been delivered in partnership between SCC and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. The project is now concluding with access improvements delivered on The Sailors Path, Walberswick, Martlesham and Woodbridge.
- Ipswich-Alton Water link
  - This project is being pursued with Ipswich Borough Council.
- Heritage Lottery Fund
  - £10,500  
Breaking New Ground is a project by The Brecks Partnership to develop learning, participation and access in the Brecks.  
SCC put in 2 bids for consideration and was successful with a project to develop a Brecks Rides long distance route from West Stow to Santon Downham.

END

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>DfT Safer Cycling Fund</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>17 October 2013</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Elveden Village Hall</b>

### New Funding for Cycling in Suffolk

In competition with schemes throughout the country, Suffolk County Council were successful in receiving funding for two schemes in Suffolk.

The first scheme is in Bury, which received £1.5m funding from the Department for Transport Cycle Safety Fund to deliver a £2m cycle bridge over the A14. The county council will contribute the remaining budget through the local transport plan and on street parking account. The provision of the bridge over the A14 will provide an improved off road link for pedestrians and cyclists from schools, residential and employment areas to the north of the A14 to the railway centre and town centre and supports the county's transport strategy aims to encourage the use of sustainable travel and reduce the dependence on cars for short journeys.

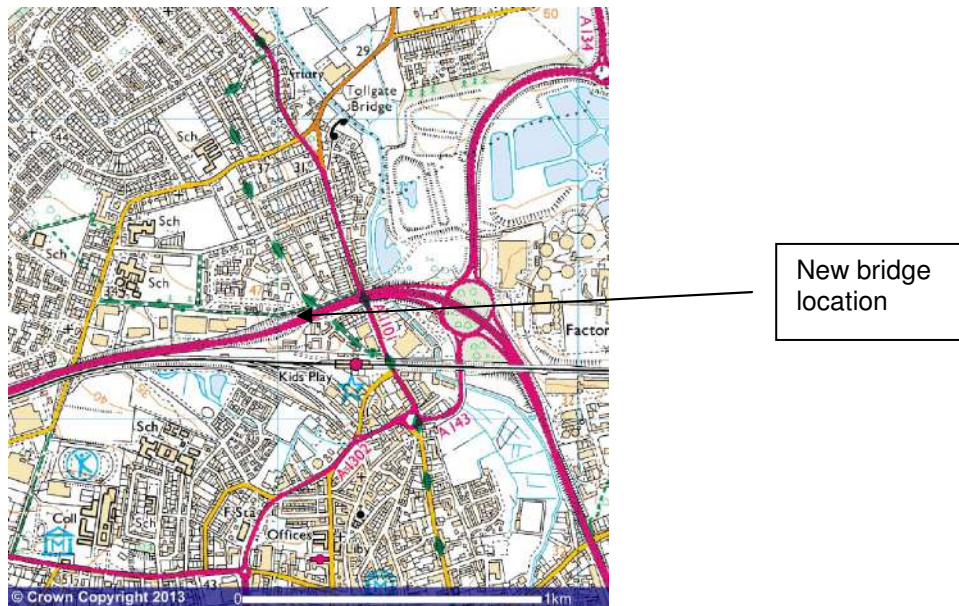
There has been a long held desire for the provision of a bridge at this location, including from Sustrans.

The new bridge requires planning permission and the application will be considered by the county council's Development Control Committee at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013 (further details can be found here:

<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=17/Oct/2013&c=Development%20Control%20Committee>).

The scheme also involves the adjoining byway to be surfaced and made more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists. To help achieve this, the county council proposes to prohibit use of the byway by vehicles other than cyclists and for access to premises, by means of a traffic regulation order.

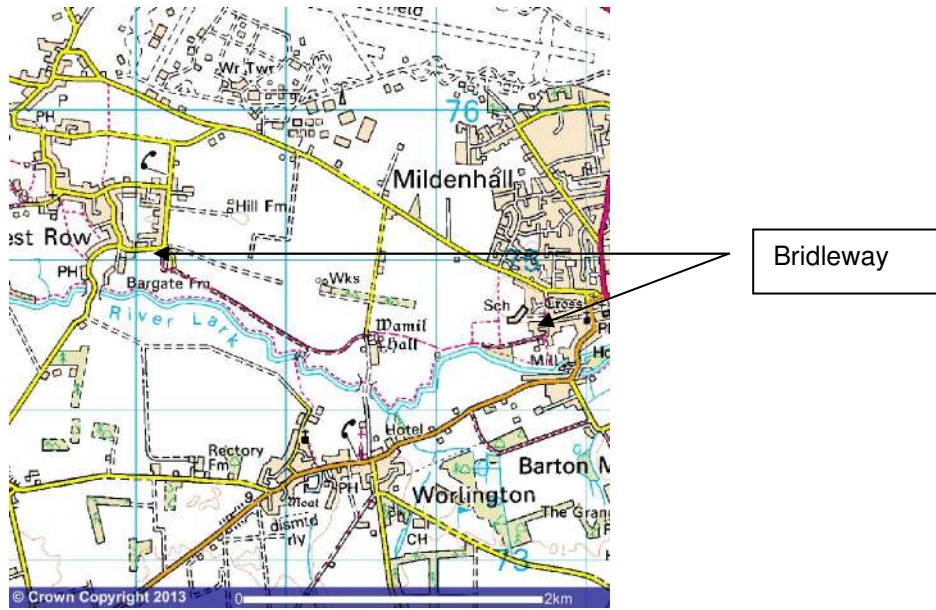
It is hoped the new bridge will be in place by next summer.



The second scheme is in the north west of the county where there has been a long held aspiration to improve the bridleway from Mildenhall to West Row for cycling, thus avoiding the alternative road route. Here, the Department for Transport Cycle Safety Fund will contribute £150k, with the remainder of the c.£220k scheme cost being made up by the county council and Sustrans. Whilst enjoying much support locally, the scheme has proved contentious amongst equestrians both locally and nationally, who felt they would lose a public bridleway to cyclists. In close consultation with the BHS, local equestrians and colleagues in the county council's property department, a section of the bridleway will be widened to allow the retention of a grass strip for equestrians with the construction of a tarmac strip alongside. The remainder of the route is either already tarmac, farm track or is a trodden earth path, narrow in parts.

The scheme meets national and local policies to encourage cycling, improve road safety, reduce car use and increase levels of physical activity. Another outcome of the scheme will be to make the bridleway accessible to people with disabilities and mobility restrictions, in a way it has not been before.

It is hoped the improved bridleway will be ready by next March.



END



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Web mapping</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>17 October 2013</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Elveden Village Hall</b>

**SLAF**  
Suffolk Local Access Forum

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<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/PublicRightsOfWay/SuffolkLocalAccessForum>

Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Date: 23 July 2013

Dear Mr Higgins,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF), about the county council's website. Local access forums are statutorily prescribed bodies and their main function is to advise their appointing authority (SCC in this case) as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. The appointing authority has a duty to have regard to the advice.

The subject of SCC's website arose when a SLAF member reported back to the meeting that she had been unable to find any mapping on the county council's website, that would allow her to find out where she could walk in the countryside on public paths. In the course of discussion it became clear that many other highway authorities publish their definitive maps on their websites but not, it seems Suffolk County Council, whose internal mapping service is not on the web.

In order to meet its policies on improving sustainable access and public health, SLAF believes it is a pre-requisite that the public are able to see easily where they can walk and ride away from the county's road network. No doubt land managers feel much the same about ensuring both the public know the true location of public rights of way, as well as land managers having access to definitive information for farming and other land management purposes.

I would very much welcome your comments on whether the county council will be able to include mapping on its website and, if it is, whether this will include public rights of way.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan Collen  
Chairman, Suffolk Local Access Forum

cc: Alan Thorndyke, Head of Highway Network Management  
Malcolm Hollister, Customer Service Strategy Manager  
Rebecca Atkinson, Service Quality and Improvement Manager  
Andrew Woodin, Rights of Way and Access Manager