

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Agenda
Meeting Date:	16 October 2014
Author/Contact:	Jill Christley
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

		Paper Number
1.	15.00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting.	LAF 14/19
3.	Declaration of interest	
4.	15.10 Network Rail – level crossings in progress	LAF 14/20 – AW
5.	SLAF Annual Report	LAF 14/21 – AW
6.	General Progress Update Report	LAF 14/22 – AW
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A11 opening • Coastal Access • Sizewell C • LAF Engagement Plan – June 2014 • LAF Regional Chair Meeting • Open Access outcome of reassessment 	LAF 14/22 Appendix 1 LAF 14/22 Appendix 2
7.	Suffolk Walking Strategy	Verbal – AW
8.	SLAF working groups	LAF 14/23 – AW
9.	Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve	LAF 14/24 – AW LAF 14/24 Appendix 1
10.	Public question time	
11.	17.00 Dates & Venues of Future Meetings	

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Minutes of meeting held at Westleton Village Hall on Thursday 17th July 2014
Meeting Date:	16th October 2014
Author/Contact:	Jackie Gillis
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

1. Site visit

Members visited Sizewell with Judith Linnane of EDF Energy, and Alistair Kratt and Lisa Jenkinson of LDA Design, to understand the impact on the public rights of way network and countryside access from the development of Sizewell C.

2. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping

Present: David Barker (Vice Chair) (DB), Annette Ellis (AE), Barry Hall (BH), Jane Hatton (JH), Cllr Diana Kearsley (DK), Gordon Merfield (GM), Monica Pipe (MP), Mike Taylor (MT), John Wayman (JW), Roland Wilson (RW), Anthony Wright (AWR).

SCC Officers Present: Jackie Gillis (JG) (minutes), David Falk (DF), Andrew Woodin (AW), Katherine Potts (KP).

Guest Speakers: Judith Linnane (JL) EDF Energy, Alistair Kratt (AK) LDA Design, Lisa Jenkinson (LJ) LDA Design.

Apologies: Bryan Collen (Chair) (BC), Melinda Appleby (MA), Margaret Hancock (MA), Alan Moore (AM), Cllr Jane Storey (JS).

3. Minutes of previous meeting (LAF14/13)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th April were reviewed. JW flagged up a discrepancy concerning employment figures quoted at the bottom of page 2 and at the bottom of page 3.

ACTION: JC to amend pg. 2, under The Development, to read “2-3,000 during construction phase”.

4. Declaration of interest

AWR expressed an interest from Sustrans to agenda items 6, 8 and 13.

5. Sizewell C

Judith Linnane of EDF Energy, and Alistair Kratt and Lisa Jenkinson of LDA Design were welcomed to the meeting.

AK thanked the forum for the opportunity to provide an update on the initial design stage of the project and delivered a presentation which tied in with the morning’s site visit.

The Suffolk Coast Path would remain open for most of the 10 year construction period, with occasional closures expected during construction of a jetty and offshore deliveries. It was

not anticipated for there to be storage on the beach. Public liaison would be better than during the construction of Sizewell B.

Bridleway 19, which provides a north-south link between Sizewell and Eastbridge, would be closed during construction due to the location of works areas, access routes and staff campus.

Goose Hill would be closed to the public but permissive access in Kenton Hills would be retained with signage and access improved.

AK explained how the area around Leiston would be managed including working areas and staff campus for 2-3000 workers.

DF questioned the future use of a new access road after completion. AK advised that the road would provide access to Sizewell C and would be narrowed in a more naturalistic setting, and could possibly provide a permissive route for pedestrians and cyclists.

GM questioned the impact of lighting on wildlife. AK advised that they were working closely on lighting levels to minimise the height of lighting and utilise trees as screening.

JW commented that the development was due to be complete around 2027 and population was increasing each year. He questioned the intention to replace arable land that had been used for food production with natural habitat. AK advised this was a consideration at this stage.

GM asked whether the construction period would take longer than 10 years. JL advised that EDF have a legal requirement to complete works within a 10 year timescale.

The importance of an access legacy was raised, and AW commented that the access principles would be discussed at a JLAG meeting in September.

BH asked what the next stage was. AK advised that the consultation would go out later in the year.

A Rights of Way User Survey form was handed out. Views on it are sought from SLAF members. LDA are intending to use this form to conduct a survey during the summer and autumn. The purpose of this is to determine the effect of proposed closures and diversions of routes and the impact on visitors during the construction of Sizewell C. Responses will be used to form part of the planning application.

ACTION: ALL – comments to JG who will collate and pass to LDA by Wednesday 23rd July.

DB thanked JL, AK and LJ for their time and presentation. He felt it was important that dialogue was maintained and felt re-assured that countryside access was being taken on board.

Guest speakers and KP left the meeting

6. Coastal Rights of Way Update (LAF 14/14)

AW gave an update on closures. The group discussed the coastal defence trial and two proposals received from contractors. AWR stated that plastic honeycomb had been used successfully at Halesworth. AW said he would be interested in other contractors Sustrans were aware of.

AW is attending a meeting on Tuesday 22nd July concerning the Orford trial.

DB felt both options being put forward now should be trialled.

7. Network Rail Update (LAF 14/15)

Cotton FP 13 and 15: AW asked for comments and advised the group were not intending to object to the paths' closure.

DB will need to check the location as he is not familiar with it and DK will also make enquiries of her neighbouring district councillor.

Ipswich Cord and River Path: This is now complete and open. AWR stated Network Rail (NR) are in the process of handing land back to Sustrans and other land owners. Sustrans have also received money from NR which is being invested in a feasibility study and design of a ramp to replace steps. There is no money for the building of the ramp; this would be reliant on funding from the development of the neighbouring site.

Cattishall: The level crossing will be secured as it is and the underpass will be opened up by NR with a proposal to divert the national cycle route through it which AWR supported.

Great Barton: Following the resubmission of the planning application for the bridge, SCC reluctantly agreed to the 1:12 gradient (the preference was 1:20). Sustrans objected as the width of the return landings were insufficient.

MP felt the 'off the shelf' design of return landings was not a good idea and concerns should be raised. AW confirmed that SCC had stressed it was a one off and following a discussion on the landing shelf, MP suggested this matter was raised with other LAFs.

ACTION: AW to feed this through Huddle.

Needham Market: NR had advised SCC an underpass at Gipsy Lane was feasible but at an estimated cost of £3m, was unaffordable. SCC will continue to strongly oppose the bridge and invite local MP support.

AW showed the group a location at Ingatestone where NR are providing an underpass at a cost of £4½m, for a footpath giving access to the countryside and very similar to Needham Market.

DB stated that SLAF fully supports SCC's position and fully supports the option of an underpass which will be suitable for all users and emphasised the need for MP support.

ACTION: SLAF to write to the local MPs.

8. National LAF Conference 2013-14 (LAF 14/16)

Paper had been issued.

9. Suffolk LAF Annual Report 2013-14 (LAF 14/17)

DB suggested SLAF accept the paper.

ACTION: DF to add concerns regarding NR at Needham Market and involvement of local MPs.

GM and MP commented on how good this year's Suffolk Walking Festival was.

MT left the meeting

DF advised the forum that Richard Powell had stepped down due to other commitments. Membership would be kept at 16.

Concerning 'Looking Ahead' on page 5 of the paper, suggestions included budgets, the definitive map and issues around population growth and increased use of PROW.

10. Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve (NNR)

The group discussed enhanced access at Cavenham Heath NNR and the development of circular routes for higher rights by linking rights of way to permissive paths. The forum were advised that seasonal restrictions had now been lifted at Little Heath.

JH left the meeting

11. Influencing the Future of Forestry (LAF 14/18)

DF reported back on behalf of MA who had attended the workshop.

12. Updated/correspondence – A11 Underpass

The opening ceremony is scheduled for Autumn 2014, probably for the underpass as well, for which rights of way orders were soon to be confirmed.

AWR had chased the Highways Agency regarding a cycling facility and they had stated it was not feasible and referred him to Guy Smith at SCC.

DB said the forum should make representation to the Highways Agency as it was part of the scheme.

ACTION: AWR will draft a response on behalf of the forum.

13. Member's Topic/Any Other Business

AW informed members that the Government were renewing guidance on access for the public and land managers as per the link he had sent around.

Feedback to DEFRA is required by the end of July.

ACTION: DF to send further information to the members.

14. Public Question Time - no members of the public attended.

15. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings
Victory Sports Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

ACTION: DB to check availability.

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings
Meeting Date:	16 October 2014
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

Introduction

This paper updates the forum on the main level crossings being addressed by Network Rail and Suffolk County Council.

Needham Market Gipsy Lane and FP6

On 6/8/14, Network Rail staff, including Richard Schofield, Network Rail Route Managing Director, met with SCC officers to discuss improvements to the Great Eastern Mainline, including the possible closure of level crossings. Much of the meeting was devoted to the closure of Gipsy Lane and the county council's and local people's concerns at the loss of accessibility. At the



meeting, it was agreed that county council and NR engineers would meet to review the engineering detail of NR's underpass feasibility report and whether costs could be reduced.

The following day NR held its public meeting in Needham Market to present its case for a footbridge, for which the design is complete, to replace the Gipsy Lane crossing, and to have this project completed by spring 2015. At least 50 local people attended, with Radio Suffolk and BBC Look East present, and there was a passionate debate at which the local community's opposition to a footbridge of any description, and its support for an underpass, was made very clear. There were many elderly people at the meeting, and others (including dog walkers and a wheelchair user) for whom a footbridge would mean the end of their country walks and access to and from Creeting. (It is perhaps also worth noting that the distance of the proposed footbridge from Gipsy Lane is c.40m, whereas an underpass would be only c.20m.)

On 28/8/14 the meeting between SCC and NR engineers to review the underpass engineering and costs took place. NR conceded there were details they needed to look at, in particular relating to flooding and the need to engage more effectively with adjoining landowners, and costs stated in their report. The county council offered it's assistance in any way it could. NR has secured funding to commission a further study into the underpass and the outcome of their deliberations is expected next month.

Since the last SLAF meeting, local MPs David Ruffley and Dan Poulter have committed to supporting the case for an underpass. On his website, Dr Poulter has stated (extracts):

“Dr Dan Backs Local Residents In Fight Over Gypsy Lane Railway Crossing

“MPs Dr Dan Poulter and David Ruffley have called for an urgent meeting with Network Rail Chief Mark Carne to raise serious concerns about the future of Gypsy Lane Railway crossing at Needham Market.... Dr Poulter said: "I will always stand up for the best interests of residents, and it is essential that their views are heard. The large number of signatures on the petition emphasises the importance and strength of feeling on this issue.

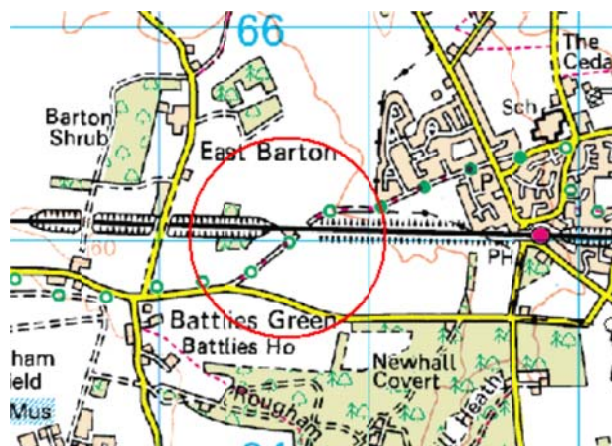
"We intend to meet with Network Rail's Chief Executive Mark Carne as a matter of urgency to discuss this and push for the underpass.”"

The local community organised a petition against a footbridge, closing it when it reached 1000 signatures. This has been submitted to the NR's chief executive and copied to the local MPs.

The discriminatory nature of a footbridge is very much at the forefront of people's objection to it.

Great Barton Bridleway 12

Following a re-submission by Network Rail of their 2013 planning application for a ramped brideway bridge, on 1 August 2014 St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) granted full planning permission for the development. The bridge will have 1:12 gradient ramps, equestrian parapets on the decking and cycle gutters on the steps leading to the decking. Although the 1:12 ramp gradients are compliant with BD29/04, these are not designed to be fully compliant for persons of restricted



mobility. Due to the circumstances and constraints surrounding the construction of the bridge, the county council reluctantly agreed to not object to the gradients, making it clear this in no way set a precedent for other structures.

The works have already started on site but Network Rail will be required to apply to the county council or SEBC to divert the bridleway on to the bridge structure, under the Highways Act rail crossing diversion provisions. Until such a time as any diversion order is confirmed, the level crossing will be required to remain open. At the time of writing, no diversion application has been received by SCC.

Cotton Footpaths 13 and 15

These two footpath crossings are on the Ipswich to Norwich line and NR have written to the county council proposing to apply to close them on safety grounds under the Highways Act 1980 S.118A (stopping up of footpaths and bridleways crossing railways). The line speed at this location is 100mph and both level crossings are near to public bridges providing alternative access over the railway. As use of the paths is believed to be low, and with convenient alternative crossings nearby, the county council is not intending to object to the paths' closure.



In September 2014 Network Rail attempted to secure an emergency temporary closure of FP13 Cotton (to be then followed by a 6 month temporary closure). This was refused by the county council, on the basis that the path was physically impassable to the public and hence was receiving very little, if any, use. NR attempted to argue that a local landowner was trespassing on NR land to gain access to the footpath crossing and this was, in itself, a safety concern. The county council replied that trespass was not grounds for an emergency closure and repeated that it had, already agreed in principle, to the permanent extinguishment of both FPs13 (part) and 15 Cotton.

Network Rail withdrew the emergency application and the county council awaits the completed s118A application forms.

END

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Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	SLAF Annual Report
Meeting Date:	16 October 2014
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

Introduction

SLAF chairman Bryan Collen presented the forum's annual report to Suffolk County Council Cabinet on 9th September 2014. The report was very well received and the discussion is summarised below.

SLAF will need to consider:

- Cllr Woods' invitation to attend the Suffolk Coast and Heaths joint advisory committee, which he chairs,
- Cllr Spicer's suggestion that SLAF present their annual report to borough and district councils,
- Cllr Spicer's challenge to be bolder in ensuring district and borough planners take account of the effects of development on access,
- Cllr Clements follow up offer to facilitate this as the St Edmundsbury portfolio holder for Planning and Regulation.

Presentation of the Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report to Cabinet

Councillor Jane Storey sent apologies for absence at Cabinet but wanted to express her appreciation for the work that SLAF has been doing, with a special mention to David Falk and Andrew Woodin for their work and support. JS highlighted that the work from SLAF Forum was not always fully appreciated and should not be underestimated.

Councillor Graham Newman welcomed Bryan Collen. GN considered SLAF to be very important, with the forum members working successfully with Suffolk County Council. SLAF were successful in securing the A11 underpass, and are currently involved with the Sizewell C development and Network Rail's level crossing closure programme, in particular Gypsy Lane, Needham Market. GN reminded Cabinet that SLAF members were all volunteers and thanked the current members for their work and dedication.

BC then presented the 11th Annual SLAF Report to Cabinet highlighting the following key points:

1. It had been a successful year with almost 100% attendance of all meetings.
2. BC congratulated SCC officers in their success securing external funding (£165,000 for cycle route at Mildenhall and £2 million for footbridge over A14 in Bury St Edmunds).

3. BC emphasised that maintaining public rights of way delivers significant benefits to health, both mental and physical, and to tourism, that far outweighs the costs of managing access.
4. Sizewell C could deliver significantly improved access along a corridor between Woodbridge and Lowestoft.
5. SLAF support an efficient rail network but not at the expense of access. For example they oppose closing the level crossing at Gypsy Lane, Needham Market and support the construction of an underpass.
6. BC congratulated officers for their speedy response to the December tidal surge to re-open access along coastal rights of way.
7. BC was pleased that following pressure by SLAF, Open Access restrictions on 2 sites had been lifted.
8. BC thanked Rights of Way officers for their support and enthusiasm.

There then followed comments and questions:

9. Cllr Newman – thank you to the rights of way team for ensuring the links between Dunwich and Walberswick were reopened following the December storm.
10. Cllr Murray – Thanked SLAF for their involvement in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy
11. Cllr Smith – Was pleased that SLAF were addressing access at Sizewell C
12. Cllr Martin – SLAF were successful securing the underpass at the A11 and asked if the same level of robustness was being used against Network Rail. BC pointed out that Network Rail was aware of SLAF's outcome with A11.
13. Cllr Woods – Invited SLAF to attend a meeting with the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Joint Advisory Committee to discuss Sizewell C. BC agreed to meeting.
14. Cllr Spicer – Advised that SLAF should present its Annual Report to both district and borough councils. Suggested that someone from public health becomes a member of SLAF. BC took comments on board to present to the report to district and borough councils.
15. Cllr Lockington – Was pressure being applied to develop the Definitive Map for Ipswich. BC advised it was on their agenda.
16. Cllr Field – Thanked SLAF for their work with Network Rail on behalf of Needham Market residents.
17. Cllr Clements – offered to facilitate SLAF presenting their report to St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Need to join up not just footpaths but also cycle routes.
18. Cllr Flood – Expressed concern over damage caused by dogs and walkers at Knettishall Heath Nature Reserve. Appreciated all efforts that encourage walking in Suffolk.
19. Cllr Gage – (asked to Cllr Newman) The published cycle network needs to be brought up to date and could there be a county- wide cycle map. GN stated a review of cycle maps was in progress but as of yet there were no plans for a county-wide cycle map.

Cabinet accepted the report.

END

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Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	General Progress Update Report
Meeting Date:	16 October 2014
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

Introduction

This paper summarises progress on other cases of interest to the forum

A11 Opening

Preparations are in hand for the formal opening of the A11 trunk road improvement scheme between Fiveways roundabout at Mildenhall and Thetford. The date has not yet been fixed, but likely to be later this year, possibly in December.

The Highways Agency is proposing a three stage opening event which is summarised below. Please note this is subject to change:

- a high profile VVIP event close to the site for relatively few invitees; which will be followed by
- a VIP event, possibly in Elveden; and
- a NMU event at the underpass which will involve Cllr. Graham Newman.

The Agency has indicated they are targeting the NMU underpass to be ready for the public for the weekend of 8th/9th November. All public path diversion order making and works are complete, and the date the underpass is ready for use will be the date the order comes into effect.

Representatives of the local access forum will be invited to the NMU opening, and this can be discussed at the meeting.

Coastal Access

The September and October Defra Access newsletters state that:

1. The Deputy Prime Minister announced at the recent RSPB's State of Nature Conference that additional funding will be put in place to ensure that the England coastal path is completed by 2020. His speech can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/deputy-prime-minister-speech-on-the-state-of-uk-nature>
2. On 29 September 2014 Natural England submitted its report and proposals to the Secretary of State for coastal access for the 20 mile (31km) stretch of the coast

between Hopton on Sea to Sea Palling, Norfolk. Details are set out on Natural England's coastal access website pages at: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/coastalaccess/default.aspx>. The report is available on the Gov.uk website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/england-coast-path-from-hopton-on-sea-to-sea-palling-comment-on-proposals>. Objections and representations should be received by Natural England no later than 17.30pm on Monday 24 November 2014. All objections and representations will be considered before the Secretary of State makes a final decision about the report.

Sizewell C

It is hoped a report on the rights of way user survey held in August, and which members were consulted upon at their meeting in July, will be available at the meeting.

LAF Engagement Plan – June 2014

An updated version of the plan is attached as Appendix 1.

LAF Regional Chairs Meeting in November or December

Margaret Shaw, the new regional LAF coordinator, has advised the date for the East of England LAF Chair & Vice Chairs meeting is yet to be decided but is provisionally planned for the weeks commencing 24th November 2014 or 1st December 2014.

SLAF are invited to put agenda items forward, officers would suggest Network Rail's programme of level crossing closures in the region would be a fruitful talking point.

The notes of the East of England LAF meeting held at Coton on 11th September for circulation to LAF members is attached as Appendix 2.

Open Access Outcome of Reassessment for Case Number 2008010085

The outcome of this reassessment has resulted in CROW restrictions being removed from Little Heath and, when CROW rights commence on dedicated land at Cavenham Heath NNR, the existing restriction there will be extended to cover the area in open access from 1 March to 31 October each year. Full details were circulated to members earlier this month and as the contents are confidential are not included here.

END

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Plan of Engagement between Natural England, Defra and the Local Access Forums

1. Purpose

1.1 This plan summarises the role of Local Access Forums (LAFs) and clarifies the relationship between the LAFs, Natural England and Defra. It is designed to be a dynamic document that informs and guides all three parties to direct and focus effort. It is kept under regular review and revised as necessary in the light of annual reports and conferences.

1.2 In parallel Natural England will produce a LAF Annual Report to Defra which will highlight achievements and current issues.

2. Introduction

2.1 Local Access Forums (LAFs) are advisory bodies established under the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*. LAFs are established by local highway authorities and National Park Authorities (termed the Appointing Authorities in the legislation) and their main function is to provide independent advice to the Government and to section 94 bodies¹ on the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and on other matters prescribed.

2.2 'Guidance on Local Access Forums in England' was issued by the Secretary of State in 2007. It remains an essential reference guide which details respective roles and responsibilities and can be found on the LAF section of the Natural England Website and on Huddle².

2.3 Whilst LAFs have clear statutory duties, they can add value to their local access agenda by going beyond their statutory brief and embracing a wider role.

2.4 There are currently 85 active LAFs in England and they are made up of voluntary members appointed by the Appointing Authority (local authority or national park authority). The Appointing Authority provides secretariat support for the meetings as well as expenses for the LAF members.

2.5 The importance of LAFs was recognised in the Natural Environment White Paper, June 2011, particularly in para 4.33 which recognised that *'Clear, well maintained paths and bridleways are important to give people access to the natural environment and can be enjoyed by cyclists, walkers and horse riders. There is considerable scope to improve and extend this network for example through LAFs and Rights of Way Improvement Plans.'*

¹ The Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, Section 94(4) specifies that it is the function of a local access forum, as respects to the area for which it is established, to advise the appointing authority; the local highway authority; other bodies exercising functions under CROW Act Part 1 (Natural England, Forestry Commission and English Heritage) and such other bodies as may be prescribed. These other bodies are set out in the LAF Regulations 2007, paragraph 21, and include: any conservation board established by the Secretary of State, any parish or town council in the area covered by the LAF, and Sport England.

² Huddle is the Defra social network which has a section dedicated to Local Access Forums.

3. The LAF role

3.1 The primary purpose of LAFs is to provide advice to a range of organisations specified in the CROW Act, 2000 and in supplementary regulations and guidance. Specifically to:

‘advise as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed (Secretary of State, Guidance on LAFs, 2007, para 3.1.1).’

The LAFs set their own priorities depending on local issues and what is of interest to the group members, as well as providing a local input to consultations and draft policy documents.

Matters of interest are likely to include:

- the management of access land;
- the condition of PROW and work to record PROW;
- improvements to the network of routes and open spaces in an area including PROW and access land;
- provision of greenspace (including woodland and coast);
- relationship with other sectors with an interest in providing opportunities to enjoy open air recreation including health, sport tourism, land management and biodiversity;
- how local authorities prioritise their spend on access and recreation;

3.2 Each forum meets at least twice per year, but generally more often. Members of the public are entitled to attend meetings and may be permitted to contribute to discussion.

3.3 Members serve in a personal capacity to represent interests rather than particular organisations.

4. Role of the Appointing Authority

4.1 Appointing authorities have a duty to support their forum and contribute to its effectiveness, by:

- setting the Terms of Appointment for forum members;
- appointing suitable forum members and notifying them of their Terms of Appointment;
- providing a secretary to administer the forum;
- publicising the forum agenda, minutes and papers for public inspection;

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- publishing the forum's annual report (and if necessary assisting with writing), and sending a copy to Natural England;
- assisting LAFs with producing their Annual Review Form (see below), and adding comments where required;
- meeting the forum's reasonable running costs and reasonable training needs;
- providing suitable venues and refreshments for forum meetings;
- maintaining a good working relationship with the forum, and assisting the forum in developing its forward work programme, promotional material and events etc.;
- helping the forum to develop criteria for measuring effectiveness; and
- reimbursing members' expenses in respect of travel and subsistence costs, and any expenses for the care of children or dependants (and notifying the forum members of the rules for claiming expenses).

4.2 As a section 94(4) body, an appointing authority should also:

- have regard to relevant advice from the LAF;
- consult the LAF at an early stage on relevant (not just statutory) matters;
- provide information, reports, background papers, speakers etc;
- give timely feedback on advice received from the LAF;
- raise awareness of the LAF amongst officers and members throughout the authority.

4.3 The appointing authority must ensure the LAF is made up from a range of different people from the local community representing landowners / managers, access users (such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders) and other interests (such as health and conservation. Members are appointed to provide **independent, constructive, relevant, inclusive, incisive and informed** advice which takes account of a broad range and balance of local interests about access issues and priorities affecting the local area or which influence national policy.

5. Defra role

5.1 Defra is the Government department with responsibility for policy on access and recreation in England, including access to open country under the CROW Act and management of public rights of way. Defra is also responsible for policy on local access forums.

5.2 Defra's core purpose is to improve the current and future quality of life. It brings together the interests of farmers and the countryside; the environment and the rural economy; the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. This is achieved by integrating environmental, social and economic objectives - putting

sustainable development into practice every day, and by championing sustainable development as the way forward for Government.

5.3 Defra will work with ministers and departments to promote LAFs and their work. It will work with Natural England to report annually to ministers, based on the information gathered from the LAF annual reports. It will also provide Natural England with the direction for LAFs from Ministerial interests.

5.4 Defra is responsible for the creation of regulations and guidance to support the CROW Act. It keeps this under review and updates it as necessary.

5.5 Defra is keen to support the success of LAFs and will assist with the development and delivery of training when possible.

6. Natural England role

6.1 Natural England is the Government's advisor for the natural environment in England. Its job is to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations. Its work is a significant component in the delivery of the Government's aspirations for improving the natural environment in England as described in the Natural Environment White Paper of 2011, and is the lead body for the Government's Biodiversity 2020 programme.

Natural England is charged with conserving the natural environment as a resource for people to enjoy, understand and study. We are also responsible for promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open air recreation.

Natural England's access and engagement work includes supporting the maintenance and promotion of 13 National Trails and managing 143 National Nature Reserves (NNRs), delivering coastal access, regulating open access and working in partnership with others to deliver and promote responsible public access and engagement.

6.2 Natural England's statutory role in respect to LAFs is limited and covers:

- receiving copies of all local access forum annual reports; and
- being notified of changes made to forum arrangements and changes in the Secretary.

6.3 In addition, as a section 94 body (see paragraph 2.1) Natural England welcomes advice from the LAFs on:

- the operation of open access restrictions, management and mapping;
- the condition of National Trails;
- access to the coast;
- the implementation of HLS/conservation management on access land;
- the effects of HLS/conservation management on rights of way;

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- facilities and services for visitors at National Nature Reserves;
- opportunities afforded to LAFs through engagement with Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs); and
- other matters relating to the provision of access and opportunities for the enjoyment of the natural environment.

6.4 In addition to its statutory function, Natural England provides support to LAFs by championing their role at national and local levels and by facilitating the exchange of good practice. To do this, where resources allow, Natural England will:

- maintain an online LAF workspace (e.g. Huddle) which enables LAF members, NE and Defra to communicate and work together nationally;
- produce an annual national LAF report for Defra;
- facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practice gathered from meetings, annual reporting, meetings and events. To support this, Natural England issues a quarterly newsletter and supports a themed good practice section on Huddle;
- facilitate the provision of external Regional Coordinators who support LAFs by providing advice, training and facilitation as well as producing regional reports and encouraging the production of annual reports and organising regional LAF meetings and conferences;
- hold a regular national LAF conference;
- provide focussed input to LAF meetings (through an agreed targeted plan of engagement), particularly regional groupings, seeking to attend where it can make a difference;
- maintain a LAF section on its website which includes information and up to date contact links to all LAFs;
- manage communication between LAFs, Defra and Natural England (and other national bodies) via meetings, email, Huddle (in effect providing a conduit between local LAF interests and Defra / Ministerial interests).

Martin Shaw, Natural England, June 2014

East of England Local Access Forums Regional Meeting

11am Thursday 11th September 2014

Wheatcases Barn, Martin Car Park, Coton Countryside Reserve CB23 7PZ.

Present

Seamus Elliot	Norfolk LAF
Kate Mackenzie	Norfolk LAF
David Robinson	Peterborough LAF
Roger Buisson	Cambridgeshire LAF
Lynda Warth	Cambridgeshire LAF
Mary Sanders	Cambridgeshire LAF
Ray Booty	Essex LAF
Martyn Towns	Essex LAF
George Saunders	Broads LAF
Andrew Pym	Central Beds & Luton JLAF
Norman Jones	Herts LAF
Liddy Lawrence	Herts LAF
Fiona Taylor (FT)	Natural England
Jane Barrett (JB)	Natural England
Giles Merritt (GM)	Natural England
Lynda Foster (LF)	Natural England
Philip Robson	Cambridge Past, Present, Future
Catherine Cairns	Cambridge PPF (from noon)
Margaret Shaw (MS)	Secretary Essex LAF, E of E LAF co-ordinator

Apologies

Pauline Hey	Central Beds and Luton JLAF
Tony Welch	Central Beds and Luton JLAF
Jan Arthur	Essex LAF
Robert Johnstone	Essex LAF
Roger Thomas	Herts LAF

Natural England update – FT

Natural England has new Chief Executive (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/james-cross>) and new Chair (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/andrew-sells-appointed-chairman-of-natural-england>)

CAP reform <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/common-agricultural-policy-reform>

National Trails <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-of-national-trails-the-new-deal>

NNR dedications programme continues

(<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/nnr/dedicatingournnr-sforpublicaccess.aspx>) . Rights dedicated on Westleton Heath (Suffolk) and Holme Fen (Cambridgeshire) NNRs; Cavenham Heath (Suffolk), Ludham and Potter Heigham Marshes (Norfolk) and Suffolk Coast to follow.

DPM announcement re expediting Coastal Access delivery; implications for Essex - GM to deliver presentation to Essex LAF. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/deputy-prime-ministers-office>.

Natural England have still been told to expect budget cuts this autumn.

New organisation: 14 Area Teams.

Those in EE: Area 8 (Cambs, Beds, Herts, Essex and Northants); Area 9 (Norfolk and Suffolk); Area 5 (Derbyshire, Lincs, Leics, Notts, Rutland and Peak District National Park).

LAF contacts:

FT for Cambs, Peterborough, Central Beds and Luton, Herts, Bedford Borough Council, South Lincs and Rutland and Reg Co-ordinator

LF for Norfolk, Suffolk, Broads Authority

GM for Essex and Thurrock

JB for Northants.

As usual, Natural England officers will attend meetings if LAF have specific questions requiring Natural England response which cannot be dealt with by phone/ email or if NE contacts have questions/ presentations to share with your LAF.

Funding opportunities – FT

FT discussed *Innovation Fund* (held by Area Teams), and sent this email to RCs in August (which was circulated to LAF secretaries):



INFOACTION for LAFs
- Partnership and Innc

FT also mentioned *GI fund* (national pot available through Natural England) for which you might be part of a partnership bid for funds, but focussed on *LEADER* and sent this email to RCs in July (which was circulated to LAF secretaries):



Presentation on
potential LEADER fund

Whilst it's too late to feed into LEADER Local Development Strategies, there are still opportunities to put project bids together with partners for access/ tourism type projects, or to get a place on a Local Action Group (the "panel" which will decide which project proposals and applications for grants from a LEADER area should be supported). Contact your local LEADER programme manager. For more information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leader-approach-in-the-rdpe-national-delivery-framework>

Decision from Defra about who has been granted LEADER status and how much funding they'll get is due in November.

Current issues affecting your LAF

Fund-raising arm of LAF

Norfolk are working towards forming a charitable incorporated organisation with its own bank account to act as platform from which to source funding that a LA can't. Norfolk LAF will and does still exist and set the priorities, but this new organisation will be better placed to find funding for projects.

Outsourcing

Discussion re out-sourcing of RoW service – experiences shared amongst group. Many LAFs also experiencing loss of support to some extent: secretarial support, meeting facilities being withdrawn.

National conference

Will be held in February 2015 possibly w/c 23rd February. Probably 2 meetings again this year.

ACTION – MS to emphasise at the National Regional Co-ordinators meeting in October that EE LAF members would much rather attend one National Conference where all LAFs could be represented.

Huddle

Becoming easier to use for some; others have put in request for their information to be given to them via email. Some of these emails would be very large! And some info, despite being sent out in email form (e.g. FT's info attached) still hasn't reached some.

Q: *Where does Natural England's information reside?*

Info added post meeting: external info is on Huddle and NE website (until migration to .Gov.uk); internal information is placed on Huddle (on a limited access area called admin workspace), TRIM (Natural England's record management system), intranet, N drive (a shared drive for Natural England staff), TIE (Technical Information Exchange) may also have some old info or links as well.

Natural England information on their website will not be updated when it is migrated to .Gov.uk but will be available as an "archive".

Future meetings

The next meeting of Chairs and Vice Chairs will be held in Natural England offices in Cambridge either w/c 24th November or w/c 1st December 2014.

ACTION – MS to circulate details and ask secretaries to ask Chairs and Vice Chairs for their preferred dates.

AOB

LF – highlighted plans of Highway Authorities in relation to their RoWIP. Specific resources allocated to this unlikely. Range of responses: Norfolk completely re-writing theirs due to extent of changes, esp financial; Peterborough likely to just update Appendix of listed, costed, prioritised projects which deliver their still-viable main RoWIP. Some RoWIPs not due for an interim review for some time.

Coton Nature Reserve

Philip Robson (Estates for Cambridge Past Present and Future (CPPF)) and Catherine Cairns (Trustee of CPPF) introduced the Coton Nature Reserve, and their recent successful bid for Paths for Communities (P4C) funding.

They described the funding application process, relationship with and requirements of Natural England, management of the sub-contractors and their work to establish a positive relationship with the local community.

The group then enjoyed a walk to see the new bridge and associated work that had received P4C funding, and highlights of the wider Reserve.

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Local Access Forum Working Groups
Meeting Date:	16 October 2014
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

Introduction

There are often occasions when business involving SLAF members needs to be done outside of the quarterly meeting cycles.

It is suggested that the current ad hoc arrangements are formalised and a list of members' interests held against the relevant topics. This will be used for consultations and advice outside of the meeting cycle. Members of the working group would be expected to put time aside when the county council requires members' input and advice.

SLAF is asked for its views.

Suggested Working Groups

Members with an interest in the topic have been included to get the ball rolling.

Topic	Membership
Network Rail	Bryan Collen
Sizewell C	Margaret Hancock, Anthony Wright,
Forests and Woodlands	Melinda Appleby, Alan Moore
Open Access	Barry Hall, Gordon Merfield
Suffolk Walking Strategy	Annette Ellis
Coastal Erosion and Access	???
Planning and Development	???
Other Topics ???	

END

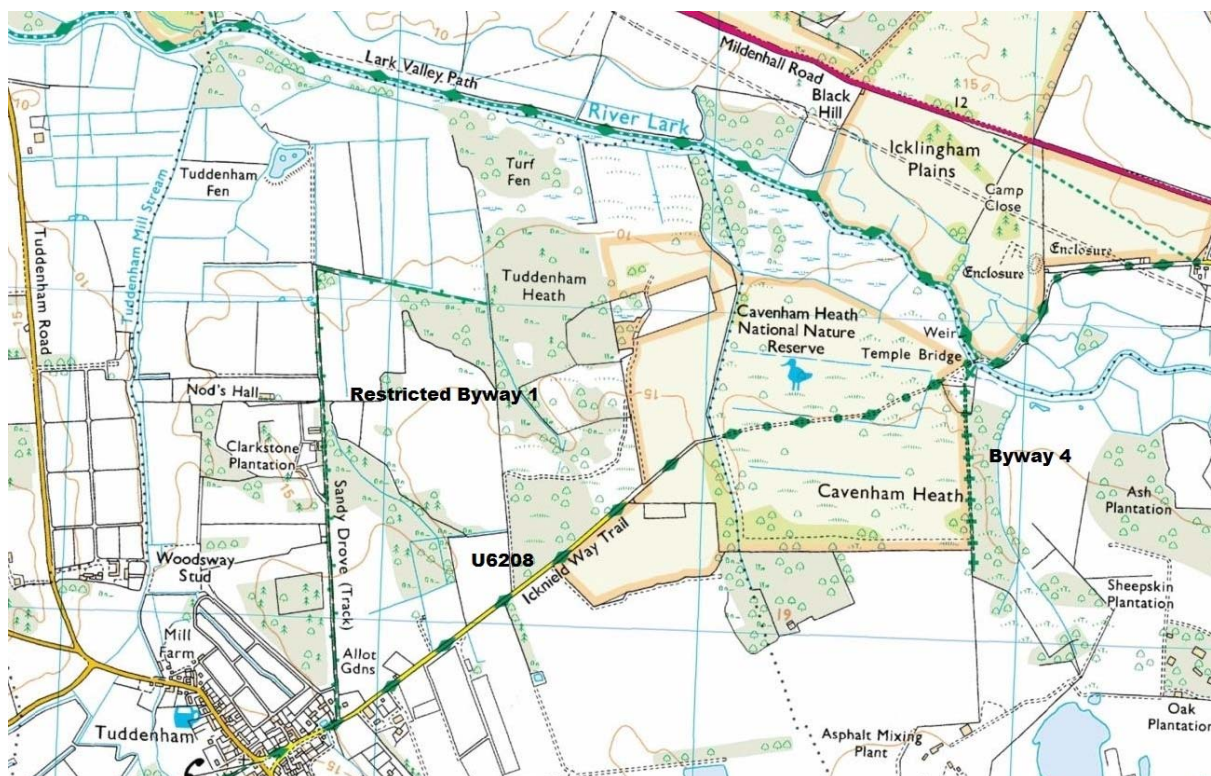
AW/SCC
October 2014

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve
Meeting Date:	16 October 2014
Author/Contact:	Barry Hall (SLAF)
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

Dedication of Higher Rights at Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve

On 2 July 2014, myself and David Falk met with Sarah Haigh from Natural England's Statutory Access Team and two other NE officers at Cavenham Heath to explore the possibilities of NE dedicating new routes for use by horse riders and cyclists which would link into the U6208 which passes diagonally through the NNR.

Within the NNR heading due south from Temple Bridge is Cavenham Byway 4 which is a cul-de-sac right of way. It was suggested to NE that by dedicating a new bridleway along the southern boundary of the reserve and then using an existing track linking back to the U6208 a circular route for higher right users could be implemented. The on-site response was not very positive because of the possible disturbance to nesting woodlark on this part of the heath. Possible ways to overcome this were put to NE such as if the extension of the route was made permissive it could be closed at crucial times of the year. Sarah Haigh did agree to take the suggestion back to discuss with other colleagues.



The second suggested route was on the western edge of the NNR where a permissive track for walkers headed due north from the U6208, about halfway along its length another cul-de-sac route, Tuddenham Restricted Byway 1, reached the western boundary of the NNR. Dedication of higher rights on this track would allow a circular route to be created. There was a more positive response to this suggestion although it was acknowledged that improvement works would be needed to be carried out by both Natural England and the County Council to bring the route into use.

The formal response to these suggestions made on behalf of the County Council and the Suffolk Access Forum has now been received. The heathland route has been turned down on the basis of increased disturbance to ground-nesting woodlark and possible damage to heathland vegetation but they are willing to go ahead with the second route and work will be put in hand to improve the route within the NNR whilst the County Council will ensure the Restricted Byway is linked into the reserve.

Whilst it would have meant greater access for all if both suggestions had been accepted it would seem that once again access loses out to conservation.

End

Barry Hall/SLAF
October 2014

Postscript:

Natural England has advised “they will be dedicating CROW access rights on foot across all our freehold land at Cavenham Heath NNR (this excludes the area of land owned by Cavenham Poor Trust). Where there are no existing CROW rights, these will go live 6 months after the dedication instrument is signed off. The latest batch of NNRs proposed for dedication, including Cavenham Heath, is with our Board, pending their approval; I will let you know when we have approval.”

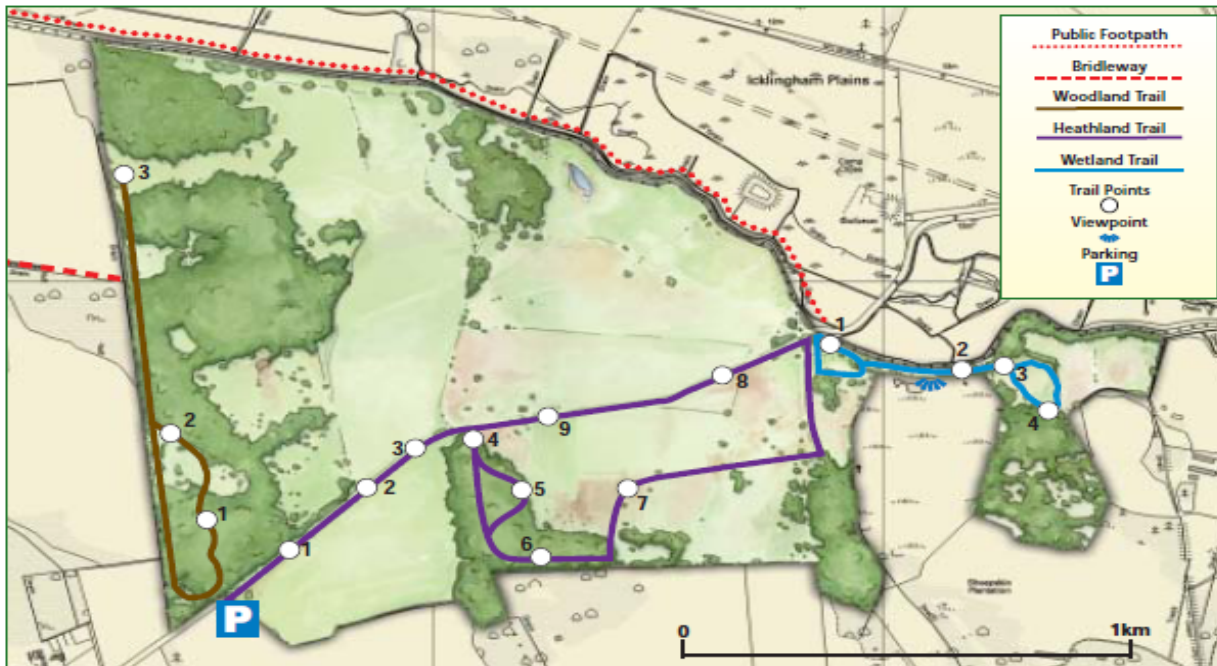
Following the request by SCC and SLAF and subsequent site visit, part of the Woodland Trail, which links the minor road running east to west through the NNR with the bridleway joining the western boundary of the NNR, has been assessed with the Responsible Officer and the Senior Reserve Manager, and Natural England is content to permit access for horse and bike use. Appropriate works are now being implemented by the NNR and the council to make this route accessible.

Regarding the Heathland Trail, NE considers that additional access and potential damage from horse and bike use on this compartment of heathland would create another stress on sensitive species and have decided not to permit additional access for horse and bike use along this part of the at this time.

Natural England has drafted a leaflet which is attached as Appendix 1.



Cavenham Heath NNR - Nature Walks



We have developed three trails. Each trail explores a different aspect of this unique site and shows how our on-going active management helps to maintain it.

Dogs are welcome on the reserve. Please be considerate to other users and clean up after your dog. A dog bin is located in the main car park. **From 1 March to 31 July dogs must be kept on a short lead to protect nesting birds (dogs can walk off the lead along the main track if they stay within the fence).**



The Woodland Trail

Length: 2.3 km. Easy Access- 30mins. Walkers extension 1hr.

This trail includes 1000 metres of a compacted 'Easy-access' surface suitable for wheelchair and pushchair users. The remainder of the loop does not have an artificial Easy access surface, but is firm and level. The 'Walker's extension' is 1300 metres is uneven and muddy.

1-In the Birch Woodland. This wood is maturing allowing oaks to steadily colonise – look for young oak saplings as they slowly take over. The soil is becoming richer by the annual addition of leaf-litter which is processed by fungi. Birch grows in poor soils but oak will grow taller and stronger in rich soil and eventually shade out birch. Dead trees and decaying branches are excellent for biodiversity. Birds such as Wren, Great Tit, Blue tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, chiffchaff, Bullfinch and blackcap may be seen.

2. Nightjar country- Looking out across the open ground with trees sheltering you, this glade is suitable for nightjars. Elusive summer visitors, nightjars are active at dusk and dawn feeding on moths. They make a strange churring noise on warm summer nights. They nest on the ground with camouflage being their only defence. This is one reason that during the bird breeding season dogs are kept off the heath.

3. Wet Woodland and Fen- notice how the wood changes as you approach the floodplain of the River Lark, with nettle, reed and sedges, muddy pools and wet woodland. Eventually you encounter the open fen. This fen and scrub is great for insects which attract summer visitors like cuckoo, grasshopper warbler and nightingale. At the end of the track you'll spot a Second World War Type 47 pillbox. A heavy machine gun would have been mounted in its open roof.



The Heathland Trail- Length: 3.8 km, 1-2 hours

This trail shows aspects of Cavenham Heath's human and natural history. The wooded and heath sections of the trail are less suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

1. Birch Woodland - (See Woodland Trail point 1 for information)

2. Rabbits- were introduced into Britain in the 12th Century. Rabbit farming for was one of the key industries in medieval Breckland. Rabbit grazing is brilliant at keeping the heath free from trees. Burrows and scrapes are ideal for pioneer plants, insects and nesting stone curlews. The yellow flowered Ragwort can be regarded as a problem as it is poisonous to horses, sheep and cows avoid it. However, it provides many bees, moths and butterflies with a valuable nectar and pollen food supply often when there is little else in flower-you may see the rare metallic green Forester moth. The orange and black Cinnabar moth caterpillars munch the leaves of ragwort to make themselves poisonous to birds. We control ragwort in bad years, but in small amounts regard it as an important part of the flora.

3. The Trackway- was an important medieval route from London to Norwich across the River Lark. For ancient travellers the heather, sheep and rabbits would be very familiar. However the wilderness would have stretched for miles in all directions and strong winds creating dust storms and sand dunes. Look for heathland flowers growing on the verge, blue Viper's bugloss, white stitchwort and the yellow mouse ear hawkweed providing nectar for numerous mini beasts. Small holes in the sandy banks could be from a green tiger beetle or a black and red solitary wasp storing caterpillars to feed its young. This profusion of insect life is an important food source for heathland birds such as the Woodlark, the Stone-curlew and Stonechat.

4. Heather- is the heath's most distinctive plant. Our native heathers flower August to September. Heather supports loads of insects. Each hectare supports over a million spiders. Over the next few years you may see us mowing it to rejuvenate it. In areas of really thin soil the light green string like lichens and carpet forming mosses are the only plants tough enough to survive. Lichen heath is a really rare habitat.

5. Medieval Sheep Farming- the slightly raised circular bank is all that remains of an old sheepfold. Two medieval manors had rights of sheep 'walking' on the heath. Sheep were kept in the fold at night so their valuable dung was collected to be used to fertilise crops. Before manmade fibres wool production was one of the main industries of the area.

6. Once in the Birch Woodland- you notice most trees are about the same size and age. A combination of shepherds leaving to go to war and myxomatosis in the 1940's and 50's reduced grazing and allowed the birch to gain a foothold and rapidly invade the heath. We have removed a lot of trees from the heath but will keep this wood as its good for wildlife.

7. On the Open Heath- you can appreciate the wide open space and views. Bracken is trying to take over and we frequently mow it to keep it in check. Grasses with thin wiry leaves can tolerate the dry conditions such as sheep's fescue and wavy hair grass. Lizards and even the rare adder may be glimpsed warming up in the early morning sun. Adders are rare and protected and we want to protect them. Bites are really rare, but do be careful in the early spring when they are coming out of hibernation and are a bit dozy. Please do not let your dog harm them in the spring.

8. The Second World War was important in altering the heath as large parts of it formed an airfield which remained until the 1960's. Four pillboxes, numerous slit trenches and several anti-glider ditches were built to repel German invaders. You can see the ditches either side of the track way by the twin lines of spoil heaps. The defences were part of the 'Eastern Command Stop Line'. Military ownership protected the heath from being turned into farmland.

9. Heathland Birds may be spotted in the open heath – including the rare Stone-curlew, woodlark, wheatear and stone chat. In the summer we hope to get 2-3 Stone-curlew nests on the heath, only 350 nest in the UK. Nests are basic - a bit of flint, some rabbit droppings being enough to impress! The birds lay only 2 eggs and the chicks are very vulnerable to foxes, stoats and crows until they fly at 6 weeks. Stone-curlew spend the winter in south Spain/north Africa and 100+ individuals usually congregate on the heath in the Autumn before migration. The heath is a key place for Stone-curlew nationally and internationally and this is why access to it is closed for part of the year.



Wetland Trail: please follow this symbol.

Length 1.3km – Allow 20minutes each way.

This trail reveals the spectrum of wetland habitats – wet woods, fen, water meadows and riverbanks.

1. Scrub takes over as you approach the river. Our scrub management keeps the trees young and ensures a wide variety of birds can be seen throughout the year. From April to June common whitethroats and lesser whitethroats sing here. During the autumn and winter the bushes act as feeding stations and roosts for Redwings and Fieldfares. Try to identify the various scrub species – there's alder, buckthorn, elderberry, elm and hawthorn.

2. Along the river bank The reedy margins are great for reed and sedge warblers in the summer, thriving on the rich invertebrates using the mud and silt. Overhead, dragonflies and damselflies, such as the banded demoiselle, hunt other insects. Improving river water quality has increased brown trout numbers and led to otter re-colonising the river. You may see water vole or even a grass snake swimming.

3. The Secret Fen- is being restored. A programme of cutting and grazing is improving the fen's flora. Birds such as warblers, nightingale and hobby use this area. In late summer it is full of dragonflies and damselflies.

4. Wet woodland known as 'Ash Plantation' has been here for about 300 years. Alder trees, which prefer wet conditions, replaced much of the ash during the last century. Mosses and the rare marsh fern also thrive in the wet conditions. The seasonal pools are vital for the success of the fern's life cycle.

Contacts;

Find out more at www.naturalengland.org.uk and going to National Nature Reserves.

Or email brecklandnnr@naturalengland.org.uk or by calling **Chippenham Fen NNR Office on 01638 721329**