

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Agenda
Meeting Date:	9 July 2015
Author/Contact:	Jackie Gillis
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

		Paper Number
1.	15.00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting	LAF 15/11
3.	Declaration of interest	
4.	15.10 Coastal Access	LAF 15/12 – AW LAF 15/12 App A
5.	Network Rail Level Crossing Update	LAF 15/13 – AW
6.	Leader Workshop	LAF 15/14 - MH
7.	SLAF Annual Report	LAF 15/15 - CP
8.	General Progress Update Report	LAF 15/16 – AW
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership • LAF Annual Review Form • Natural England Letter to LAFs • LAF Engagement Plan • Summary of De-Reg Reforms • Ipswich Waterfront • Ramblers Big Pathwatch • Sizewell C • Suffolk Walking Festival 2015 	LAF 15/16 App A LAF 15/16 App B LAF 15/16 App C LAF 15/16 App D
	Public Question Time	
9.	Any Other Business	
10.	17.00 Dates & Venues of Future Meetings 22 nd October 2015 – venue TBA	

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Minutes of meeting held at SALC Offices, Claydon on Thursday 24th April 2015
Meeting Date:	Thursday 9th July 2015
Author/Contact:	Jackie Gillis
Venue:	TBA

1. **Welcome, apologies and housekeeping**

Present: Bryan Collen (Chair) (BC), David Barker (Vice Chair) (DB), Annette Ellis (AE), Barry Hall (BH), Jane Hatton (JH), Gordon Merfield (GM), Monica Pipe (MP), John Wayman (JW), Roland Wilson (RW), Anthony Wright (AWR), Margaret Hancock (MA).

SCC Officers Present: Jackie Gillis (JG) (minutes), Andrew Woodin (AW), Francesca Clarke (FC), Annette Robinson (AR)

Guest Speakers: Judith Linnane (JL) and Alastair Kratt (KP) of EDF.

Member of Public: Gordon Crosby (GC)

Apologies: Cllr Jane Storey, Alan Moore, Melinda Appleby, Cllr Diana Kearsley, Mike Taylor

The Chair welcomed Claire Parker who is David Falk's successor, taking up the post of Green Access Manager at SCC, Judith Linnane and Alastair Kratt on behalf of EDF and Gordon Crosby, member of the public.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting (LAF15/06)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2015 were reviewed and confirmed to be an accurate record.

3. **Declaration of interest**

Nothing was declared.

AWr arrived 15:10.

4. **EDF Presentation**

Sizewell C

The first presentation was an update on the user surveys carried out around Sizewell C. The Buffer Zone/study area was enlarged to 8km around Sizewell and 8km around settlements within the Sizewell 8km zone.

The surveying team consisted of 15 to 20 people a day observing users at Aldringham Walks, Bridleway 19, Kenton Hill car park, Dunwich Heath, the junction of the Sandlings Walk and Coastal Path and Sizewell Beach.

In total there were 4,214 users, 2,814 over 130 hours in August and 1,400 over 84 hours in November.

The variation in levels of use and patterns of activity were discussed. It was summarised that greater level of use was at weekends, the maximum peak was commonly during the afternoon and most surveys showed early morning use.

AW noted a gap in the timings and AK will check and confirm these.

JL advised that after the workshop in October they decided to monitor activity, the main one being dog walking. Sizewell Beach had the highest number followed by Aldeburgh.

514 questionnaires were completed; 500 was the target to ensure results were statistically significant. They showed the majority of people lived within the survey area. About 30% of respondents would stop using the area around Sizewell C during construction, of these, 96% would go to other locations within the study area; only 4% would go outside it. The most frequently mentioned locations were Dunwich Heath, Thorpeness, Minsmere, Aldeburgh and Sizewell Beach.

BC commented that the people surveyed seemed to be local users and questioned about tourists and those from outside the area. AP confirmed 25% were tourists or visitors.

GM highlighted the fact that a high percentage of homes were holiday homes and asked whether the users classed themselves as local or visitors. JL confirmed they classed themselves as visitors. A Social Economics workshop is being held that will cover the impact on tourism.

BC commented that there will be an increase in visitors during construction as they will want to see what is happening.

AE questioned the duration over which the surveys were carried out. JL advised they were done over two different weekends and weekday each month.

AW questioned the weather conditions. JL advised that August wasn't so warm and there was a storm during the one weekend, so another weekend was surveyed.

In response to the frequency of use, the majority of dog walkers used the routes more than once a day, daily and weekly. The majority of walkers, cyclists and wildlife watchers used them daily and weekly. Most of the routes were used all year round.

25 locations were given as to which locations/public rights of way were visited most.

AW questioned whether the disused railway line at Leiston was surveyed. JL will take this back as it may have been done under the transport work-stream. The next part of their work was to analyse the data of the RSPCA and Natural England.

RW's observation was that a significant number of first time users were probably tourists. Tourists must not be put off visiting and provision should be made to avoid any disappointment.

MH's observation was that visitor numbers to the area will increase due to the popularity of Springwatch and its focus on the area.

AWr stated Sustrans and EDF need to work together to ensure cyclists have up to date information and signage. AK confirmed these were important issues and will be picked up.

Aldhurst Farm

The second presentation was about planning permission granted for a habitat creation scheme. Within three years of completion an access strategy has to be submitted and consultation will take place. During the early years the area has to be left undisturbed to allow the habitat to mature. Works will start during the summer and will take around 9 months to a year; the area will be ready for public access in time for the Sizewell C construction

AW stated a safe route for non-motorised users is required, to take people off the busy Lovers Lane, forming a direct route from Minsmere to Aldeburgh. He questioned why the red line indicating the reed bed is right up to Lovers Lane, leaving no space for such a facility. JL explained they had no choice as it was already a natural reed bed and they had to replace the reed bed at Sizewell C like for like.

AW raised concern over the route during the construction period. JL explained it will be a pleasant place to be. Routes will be discussed and explored to secure connections.

AW expressed his disappointment that a post-construction route wasn't protected and that a dog leg route would put people off using the proposed Aldeburgh to Minsmere route.

MP commented that public access appears secondary to conservation.

BC stated a long detour was not acceptable.

AR stated the timescale was important and questioned when the beach and bridleway would be closed. EDF confirmed the diversion will be established in plenty of time.

AW requested that SLAF and SCC were kept informed. AK acknowledged that local activity was high and the situation was close to people's heart.

BC thanked EDF for the presentation and reiterated the need to keep SCC informed. AK replied that he fully understood SLAF's concerns.

EDF left the meeting at 16:05.

5. Definitive Map Casework (LAF 15/07)

AW explained the paper had been compiled by the Definitive Map Manager as a result of the request from AWr at the previous meeting. Appendix A, the breakdown of Order types was discussed and AW said the dip in numbers this year was due to staffing issues. The prioritising procedure and background was explained. An example of a difficult case was

given; the Lark Valley Path at West Stow Country Park has been washed away, partly due to crayfish damage and the cost to repair the bank and reinstate the footpath would be high. It would be cheaper to divert the footpath on to the opposite bank through land owned by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, discussions are currently taking place. SLAF voiced their concerns at the negative response from Suffolk Wildlife Trust so far.

BC stated SLAF would be interested to see how this case progressed as it would be in everyone's best interest.

AW advised that the County Council's Constitution Working Party is satisfied that a robust definitive map casework prioritising procedure is in place.

MH requested an update on the Waterfront. **ACTION: AW** to bring forward to a future meeting.

6. **A11 Article for LAF's Newsletter (LAF15/08)**

The article is in response to a request from the regional co-ordinator for good news stories.

DB commented that originally there was no crossing planned but because of SLAF there is now one in place. AW confirmed the text would be suitably amended.

BC stated that SLAF deserved a pat on the back for what they had achieved.

7. **Network Rail Level Crossing Update (LAF 15/09)**

Great Barton: The new bridge is now open and people are using it, in addition to the level crossing. AW described using the bridge as going up the Alps. AW responded he felt the 1:12 gradient was *just* about acceptable. He had spoken to locals who had no issue with the gradient but did with the appearance.

DB advised the forum it would be worth them taking a look.

JH was asked if she had used the bridge with her horse; she has not seen it but said the gradient shouldn't be a problem, the surface grip is more important.

Suffolk Railroad Partnership: AW advised there is a meeting later in the month regarding the level crossing closures. He now sits on a joint Network Rail and ADEPT working group addressing level crossing closure procedures and highlighted comments made in a letter by Dan Rogerson MP to Network Rail concerning public rights of way and concerns over how orders will be made. Network Rail will have to finance order making which could also be packaged up under the Transport & Works Act.

BC congratulated AW on his membership of the group.

Gipsy Lane: A public meeting held in March by Network Rail was well attended by over 100 locals. Network Rail was represented by Richard Schofield, Anglia Route Manager and Sean Cronin, amongst others. Jo Churchill the prospective MP for Bury St Edmunds and Gordon Crosby also attended.

GC had produced a photograph of the Witham bridleway bridge which highlighted the sheer scale of a ramped footbridge built to similar standards as would be required at Gypsy Lane. AW confirmed that the minutes of that meeting have not yet been received from NR. Not one hand had been raised for preference to the footbridge but there was universal support for the underpass. The locals want to work with NR.

The forum discussed the height of the proposed underpass. SCC is proposing a standard height of 2.3m but there is a view to reduce it to 2.1m (over 6ft) to facilitate an underpass and still provide adequate headroom. GC stated a standard internal door is 1.98m and raising the floor would ensure it was above the water table. SLAF supported the reduction in height of the underpass if this made it more likely to happen.

Needham Market Town Council and Creeting St Mary Parish Council have made a formal application to SCC to support a reduced underpass height.

GC stated the Gypsy Lane bridge would be over 6m plus a cage on a 5.1m embankment. The ramp would equate to a trip of quarter of a mile. He also advised the forum Jo Churchill had requested to meet him after the public meeting to visit the location and did not support a bridge. GC advised the forum that it was worth looking at the Witham bridge, which was just off the A12.

The group discussed how the work would be done and compared the site to the A11 underpass and couldn't see a problem with providing an underpass.

AW thought there was movement at the conclusion of the meeting and Richard Schofield agreed Network Rail would undertake further design work on the bridge and underpass options.

BC stated that SLAF should keep working closely with NR and there was no objection to the closure of FP6. It was noted Network Rail's Built Environment Accessibility Panel would attend SLAF's July meeting.

8. General Progress Update (LAF15/10)

SLAF Annual Review Report: AW thanked BC and MH for their submission to the report. BC stated SLAF were happy to submit the record as it was.

Coastal Access: AW advised progress will start this year on the path. AW and AR had met with Norfolk County Council to discuss their experience. NCC's advice was to work closely with Natural England (NE), understand their rationale and discuss issues at an early stage. NE will create the route which will involve officer time, paid for by NE. When the route is secured, the maintenance will be down to SCC.

BC asked whether there would be funding to provide new access to the beach from the cliffs. AW explained that there will be a route with spreading room but there will be no funding for anything outside of this.

A discussion was held on the economic benefits of the path to Suffolk and that there may be other funding available to enhance user's experience. Essex CC had applied for EU funding for a "Deep History of Coast" project, to add value. AR commented history is being revealed as a result of coastal erosion.

BH stated it was a benefit to the area that estuaries were being included.

LAF Regional Coordinator: It was noted these posts are not being renewed this year.

Any Other Business

MH asked if the group had heard of the Outstanding Landscaping Project which provided funding for a web based tourism training website. One of the benefits is a 6ft high Constable painting on display at Christchurch Mansion.

GM said he had been asked by locals to raise the issue of warning signs for the Sandlings Walk which is along busy roads. Signs warning of walkers had been requested.

ACTIONS: **AW** to liaise with Highway colleagues. **GM** to advise of locations.

BC commented he was disappointed at the low numbers reported for August in the EDF presentation. AR said it had been a cold month and JW said he finds Cavendish is quiet during August.

AE advised a new Suffolk Coast Marketing organisation is up and running and will make a difference. She also wanted to congratulate and recognised DB on the Greenest County Award which SLAF fully endorsed.

AE also advised the group of the Suffolk Walking Festival taking place between the 9th and 31st May, which had already reached 48% booking capacity.

Public Question Time no questions were raised.

Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

9th July 2015: This will be a ROWIP renewal workshop in the morning with the normal meeting starting at 3pm. Venue TBA.

22nd October 2015 – venue TBA

The meeting closed at 17:00.

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Coastal Access
Meeting Date:	9 July 2015
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

Introduction

The Government has put additional funding in place over the next 5 years, to make sure that the England Coast Path is completed by 2020. This speeds up the previous programme as the Govt wants to ensure the benefits to local communities and economic opportunities that will arise will be realised more quickly. Natural England (NE) is the Govt agency leading the programme and will start on the first Suffolk section of the coast path this year.

NE has a duty to create a continuous walking trail around the entire coast of England, with wider access to beaches and open land as appropriate.

Coastal Access in Suffolk

Sally Fishwick, the Natural England officer Senior Advisor responsible for Coastal Access in this region, has made contact with the Rights of Way and Access Manager to start the roll out process in Suffolk, and a set up meeting will be held next month. The Rights of Way and Access Manager will be the primary contact for NE in Suffolk.

SCC officers will work closely with NE through this process, and have produced draft principles that it will ask NE to consider when establishing the route of the trail in Suffolk. These are attached as an appendix.

NE is required to consult relevant local access forums in the preparation of each coastal access report, and to invite representations from them on its final report. The intention is NE will brief SLAF at its meeting in October.

An area of concern in Suffolk will be striking the right balance between access and conservation interests. The conservation debate will focus partly on access along the estuary coastlines, which in the past SLAF has believed is important to achieve to deliver access to the coast from Ipswich, Woodbridge and other communities upstream of estuaries.

NE should be well used to dealing with constraints on the route the path takes, including business interests, industrial sites, gardens etc, as well as sensitive sites. In respect of conservation and other land management issues, the Coastal Access Scheme is the methodology Natural England must follow to implement the England Coast Path and associated coastal margin of coastal land. The scheme requires a

balance to be struck between access and other interests, eg of landowners, businesses and conservation interests. In the case of European sites, NE has a specific duty to assess the implications of proposals to introduce coastal access rights on the sites' conservation objectives, under the Habitats Regulations 2010. The proposals are designed locally, and may include any measures considered necessary to reduce impact on the European designated features. On some stretches of coast an appropriate assessment may be required and should NE conclude coastal access rights may have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site, they will modify their proposals to the extent necessary to ensure on reassessment that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site.

Where other protected sites or species may be affected, NE uses its flexible powers under the legislation to find solutions that best integrate its nature conservation and coastal objectives. In this way we expect NE, who will consult with land managers, coastal groups and other environmental organisations and agencies, as well as SCC, to strike the right balance between access and other interests in discharging their duty.

Where the proposed route of the trail is challenged, only someone who is an owner or tenant of the affected land, or other lawful occupier, can make an objection. All objections received by Natural England will be forwarded to Defra, who will refer each objection to the Planning Inspectorate and an Inspector will decide if the objection is admissible. If the objection is deemed admissible the Inspector will then go onto consider the substance of the objection itself and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State. But our principles will be useful in stressing to NE both our support for coastal access and the importance the county council places on its environmental value.

Once work is complete, a continuous walkable route around Suffolk's coasts and estuaries will be a significant economic and recreational asset for the county.

Discussions With Norfolk County Council

Two meetings have been held between access officers in Suffolk and Norfolk county councils. Norfolk already has a section of coastal access in place and two sections (out of a total of four), where work is in progress. These meetings have been useful in understanding the process and learning lessons from them (the main one of which seems to be to keep closely involved with the NE officers throughout the process).

The second meeting with NCC included officers from Essex County Council and was held on 26/6/15 at Happisburgh. At the meeting, Andy Hutcheson (NCC Countryside Manager) gave a presentation on ideas around how Norfolk might promote the trail, based on some of the "Deep History" of the area, eg the discovery of footprints of early man at Happisburgh.

NCC mooted the concept of promoting a regional section of the coastal trail, rather than the access authorities each promoting their own section. An 'East Anglia Coast Path', similar to the South West Coast Path, has some merit in adding value to the promotion of this asset and making the value of the region's coastline greater than

the sum of its parts. Generally speaking, SCC is in favour of joined up working with its neighbouring councils.

Points and Questions for SLAF to Consider

Members are requested to comment on the following:

- The draft coastal access principles,
- The importance of the trail continuing along estuaries to the first permanent crossing point (rather than be reliant on ferry crossings),
- The need for an awareness raising session to understand conservation requirements,
- How the route should be promoted, eg on a local or regional basis,
- Whether a meeting should be convened earlier than October, to hear what NE has to say on the establishment process and the role of the forum.

The Working Group

SLAF has agreed a working group for coastal access, and this may require some involvement during the establishment of coast access:

Bryan Collen, Annette Ellis, Roley Wilson, Barry Hall

Miscellaneous

The Scheme (methodology) for establishing coastal access can be found here:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5327964912746496?category=50007>

A glossary of terms can be found here:

publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/91018

END

AW/SCC July 2015

Coastal Access in Suffolk – some formative principles

Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Local Access Forum, Suffolk Coast Forum, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Waveney District Council.

In rolling-out coastal access in Suffolk, Suffolk County Council, as Highways Authority, working in partnership with key stakeholders, particularly the Suffolk Local Access Forum and the Suffolk Coast Forum, would ask Natural England to consider the following:

1. The opportunity to enhance the public right of access to Suffolk's coastline, on a designated coastal route is welcome. Existing, promoted, coastal access already exists in part, and to enhance, and in some places change, this access into one continuous coastal trail, insofar as is possible, will clearly be of benefit to public enjoyment, health and tourism on our coast. The trail will also be an important mechanism in linking coastal and estuarine communities with each other as well as to coastal water.
2. We understand the need to take a phased approach to roll out and note the chronological progression north-south down the coast. However we would like to see the Stour & Orwell estuaries dealt with as one project, rather than split down the middle as currently planned. The estuaries are part of the same SSSI/SPA and the existing partnership, through which NE will need to consult, works across the two estuaries and the county boundary. The four Suffolk sections, currently programmed, are shown on this map here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/427843/coastal-access-england-map.pdf
3. The Suffolk Coast Path and Stour and Orwell Walks are already marketed at long-distance routes
<http://www.cicerone.co.uk/product/detail.cfm/book/654/title/suffolk-coast-and-heaths-walks>. It is likely the coastal trail will replace both, and we would urge Natural England to incorporate these existing routes into the coastal trail except where they do not meet the requirements of the scheme. Natural England should note the reference to coastal access in the [Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2013-2018](#) (Action 3.5.4), adopted by Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils and endorsed by Natural England.
4. Suffolk has five beautiful estuaries, each with its own character, and as such it is no surprise that how these estuaries are dealt with in the roll-out of coastal access is of principal importance locally. We note chapter 10 (estuaries) in NE's coastal access approved scheme
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5327964912746496>. We would expect the trail to form a continuous route along the coast and up the estuaries to a permanent crossing point where possible. In some places environmental sensitives (assessed through HRA Appropriate Assessment) or practicalities may make this impossible. In such cases setting back the trail away from the shoreline and / or the provision of a year-round ferry crossing will need

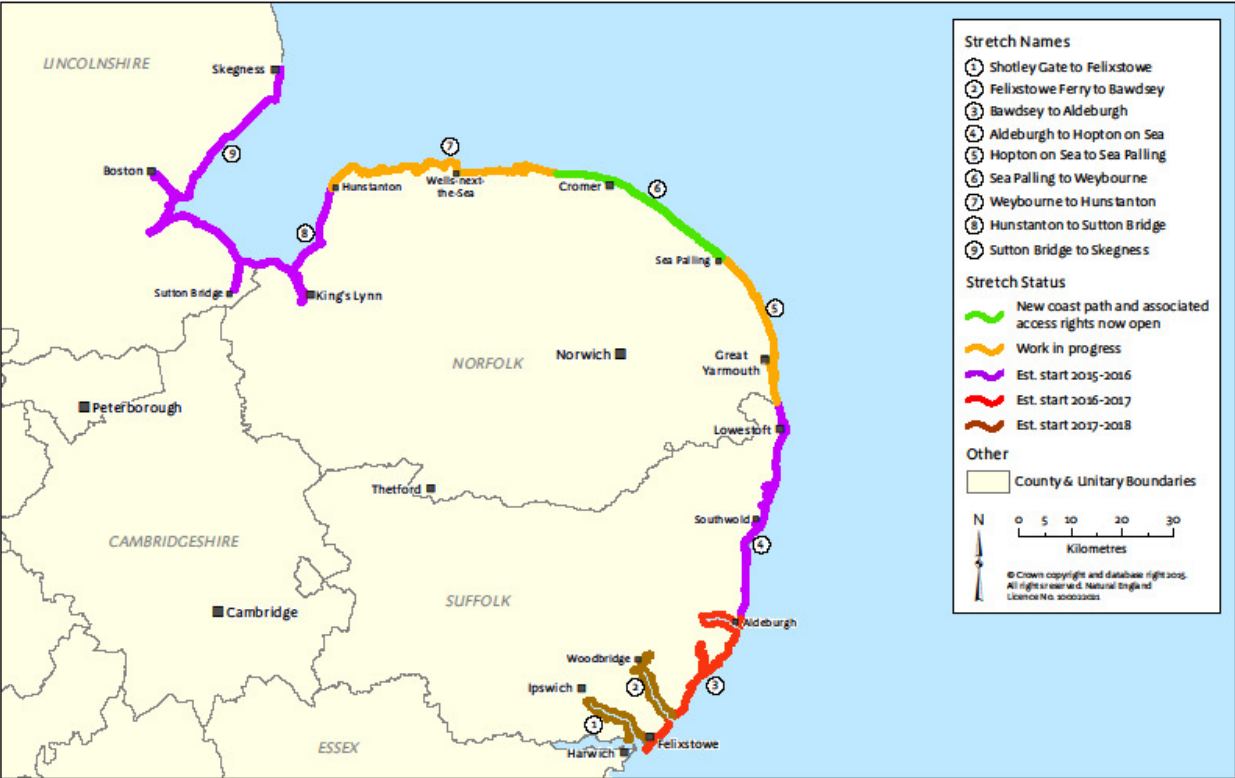
[to be assessed. We note NE has established Site Improvement Plans for EU coastal and estuary sites.](#)

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/4873023563759616>

5. Natural England must take into consideration the full range of existing plans and policies that will impact on the coastal access route, for example, estuary strategies, [shoreline management plans](#), AONB management plan, Rights of Way Improvement plan, local development plans and of course, national policy statements for energy infrastructure and ports.
6. Suffolk has a rapidly changing coastline and Suffolk County Council will seek reassurance from NE that the roll back process will meet the needs of users, agencies and land managers and ensure continuity of a coastal trail. Natural England will clearly also need to consider the implications of the Shoreline Management Plan policies on the open coast, and estuary plans, in determining an appropriate route.
7. As Highway and Access Authority and as an authority with a number of other duties, Suffolk County Council will actively seek to engage both the Suffolk Local Access Forum and the Suffolk Coast Forum in the roll out of coastal access. Skills, experience and representation on both forums, will be important for Natural England to harness in gaining support and collaboration for roll out.

Coastal Access Map – East Coast

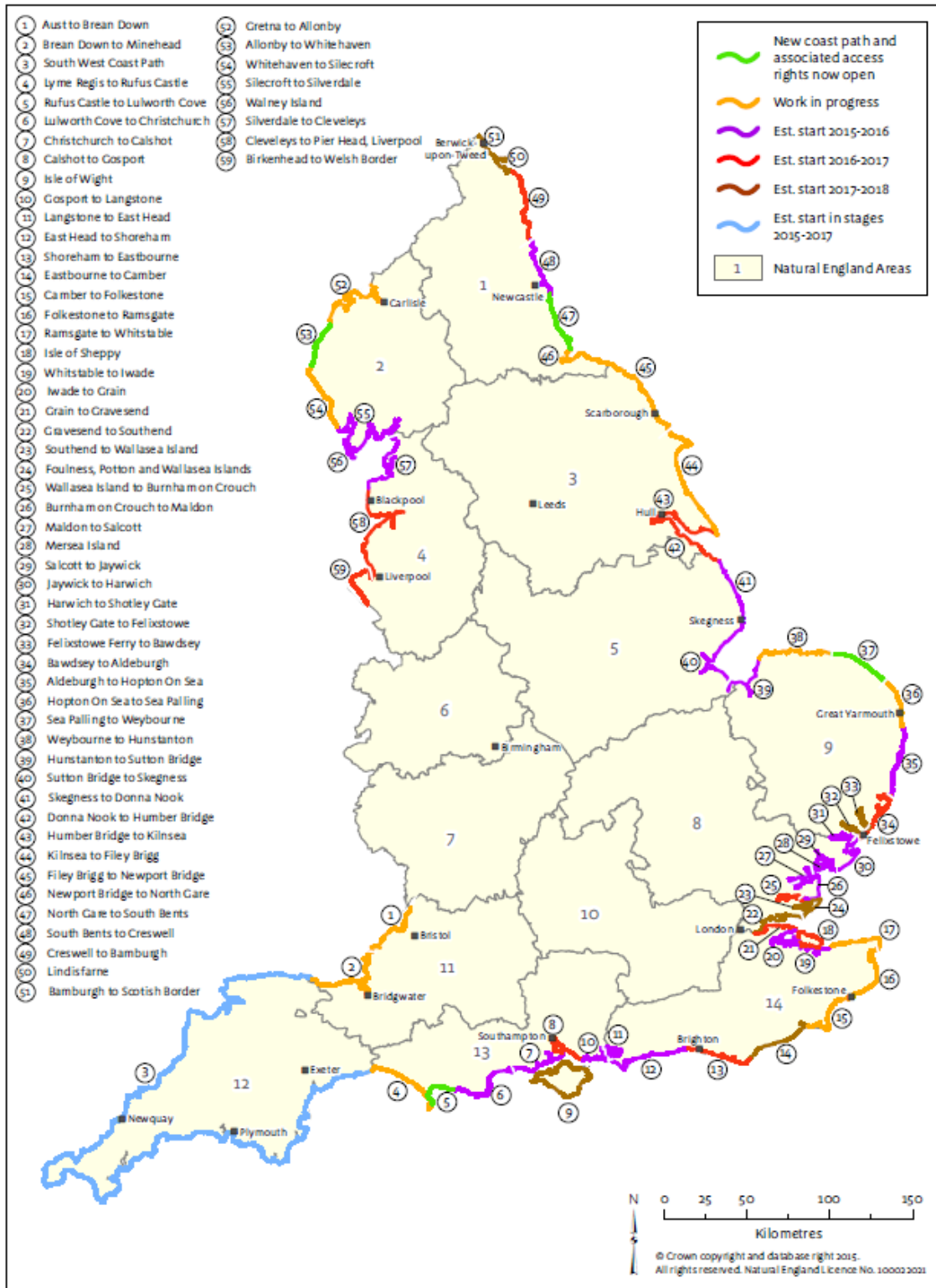
Coastal Access Completion by 2020 - Provisional Timings and Stretches
East Hub Team - 6th March 2015



Coastal Access Map – England



Coastal Access Completion by 2020 - Provisional Timings and Stretches
12th May 2015



END

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings
Meeting Date:	9 July 2015
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 (NR) and Suffolk County Council (SCC).

Needham Market Gipsy Lane and FP6



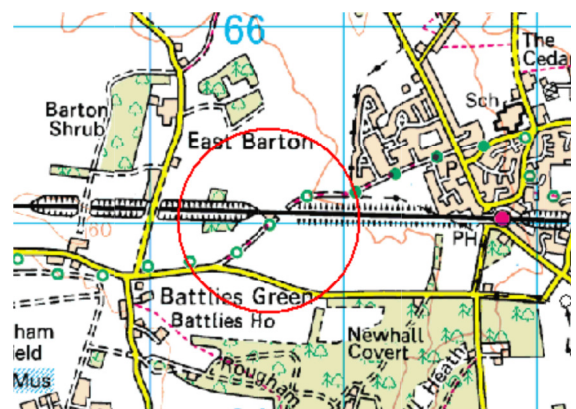
Further to the update provided at the Forum's April meeting, the main development has been the setting up of a Design Panel to investigate and inform the viability and design of the two remaining grade separated options, a ramped footbridge or underpass. NR has also previously given an undertaking to produce detailed designs for 1:15 and

1:20 gradient ramps, for both options.

The Panel is to be made up of representatives from the local community, parish, district and county councils. The first meeting has been arranged for the morning of Fri 10th July at Needham Market's Community Centre. At this inaugural meeting, the terms of reference will be agreed.

Great Barton Bridleway 12

Unfortunately, there has been a delay with the making of the creation agreement between SCC and NR. Incredibly, it transpires that NR agreed to enter into the creation agreement whilst the conveyancing of some of the land was outstanding. The land south of the railway line was transferred to NR on 4 June 2015. The



county council won't be in a position to complete the agreement until the land is registered.

SCC has undertaken all the necessary consultations for the Rail Crossing Extinguishment Order (RCEO) for the short length of at-grade bridleway, which will be made and advertised once the conveyancing is complete and the agreement executed.

Cotton Footpaths 13 and 15

As part of its investigations, the county council has identified that there is no known landowner for part of FP 13, the land being unregistered. This will require seeking special dispensation from the Secretary of State, in relation to the statutory requirement to serve the Rail Crossing Extinguishment Orders (RCEO) notices on all affected landowners. The next step will be to undertake the statutory consultations.



General

Suffolk Road Rail Partnership

Officers continue to liaise with NR to establish a strategy to deal with Suffolk's public road and rights of way crossings. A meeting was held on 29th April and further meetings are planned to discuss NR's proposals for the county.

END
AW/SCC July 2015

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Leader Workshop
Meeting Date:	9 July 2015
Author/Contact:	Margaret Hancock
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

NATURAL ENGLAND – LEADER FUNDING WORKSHOP
Landscape and LEADER

Braintree – Thursday 11th June 2015

Aim: To explore sustainable solutions through the promotion of tourism and access along the rivers of the area and on the coast and in the AONB

Background

Natural England is no longer able to fulfil the role of the Regional Co-ordinators. However NE plans to continue working in partnership with LAFs to enhance people's access to and experience of the countryside on more project-based, Area priority-focussed activities. Working in partnership with Cambridgeshire ACRE a series of LEADER workshops was organised to encourage networking, sharing of knowledge and expertise, and helping the development of projects around access and tourism, wildlife, farming and water management, and biodiversity.

Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020

Four strands of funding administered by Rural Payments Agency (RPA)

- Countryside Stewardship - £3.1bn - much of this is already allocated to existing schemes. Natural England & Forestry Commission
- Countryside Productivity - £141m. RPA Rural Development. Farmers and foresters can apply.
- Growth Programme - £177m. LEP's & RPA Rural Development. Priorities are to build knowledge & skills, fund new micro, small & medium sized businesses, super fast broadband & support tourism in rural areas.
- LEADER - £138m. Local Action Groups (LAGs) & RPA Rural Development

LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale)

Aim: To Grow the Rural Economy in England

Key Outcomes: Creation of Growth and Jobs

Minimum Grant: £2,500

National LEADER priorities:

- Support to increase farm productivity
- Support for micro and small businesses (non-agricultural) and farm diversification

- Support for rural tourism
- Provision of rural services
- Support for cultural and heritage activity
- Support for increasing forestry productivity

The total funding of £138m is for 80 LAGs across the country. LEADER can only be used as funder of last resort when a scheme cannot be funded by one of the other 3 strands. LEADER will fund farmers, foresters, rural businesses and rural communities to help create jobs, develop rural businesses, and support the rural economy.

70% of all projects must directly support the rural economy.

30% of projects will also need to demonstrate that they are contributing to improving the local rural economy.

The amount of funding available depends on the type of project, size of business and the costs involved (not all costs of the project may qualify for funding).

CONCLUSION

Current status of LEADER funds seems very woolly and not really finalised. John Simmons, Rural Payments Agency, Defra who spoke about "EAFRD, LEADER et al" stated that contracts are not yet formalised and payment not received but this should be sorted by August (apparently original, missed deadline was January 2015). However, applications to the Local Action Groups will be accepted now, and advice from LAG representatives in attendance was that it is worth getting proposals in early to 'catch the worm'.

There are two LAGs covering Suffolk as well as parts of Essex i.e. 'Wool Towns' and 'Heritage Coast'. Chair of both is Harry Barnett who has a personal interest and enthusiasm in forestry projects.

Guidelines for applications for future grants are very complex and confusing but outcome of any project should be to grow the rural economy. Similar criteria for grants to Paths for Communities. 70% of projects must directly support rural economy with much emphasis on job creation. However, there is some funding to support rural tourism & this could be by developing access infrastructure to help people connect to the natural environment e.g. paths & cycle ways. Capital costs only - no funding for salaries but wide range of applicants allowed including community groups & social enterprises. Match funding has to be capital not volunteer time. Successful applications will demonstrate a clear vision, strong partnership, enthusiasm and determination.

END

MH/SLAF July 2015

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	DRAFT SLAF Annual Report 2014-2015
Meeting Date:	9 July 2015
Author/Contact:	Claire Parker
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

This is a draft of the substantive content for the Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report – August 2014 to July 2015, which will be presented to Cabinet in September. Every forum is required to produce an annual report on the discharge of its functions. SLAF is invited to comment on the contents and where it might like to emphasise its views, and select four top priorities to put to Cabinet.

Introduction

As required by the Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2002 I have pleasure in submitting the twelfth Annual Report of the Suffolk Local Access Forum to Suffolk County Council as the highway authority.

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 rights of way and countryside access. It is also a Statutory consultee for Natural England on mapping of open access land and plans & policies produced by a wide range of organisations.

The forum is made up of individuals with a keen interest in rights of way and countryside access including users, members of community organisations, those with conservation interests, landowners and land managers.

Full membership for 2014/15 is listed in Appendix B (*this will be attached in the report to Cabinet*).

Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way and Access team administers the forum, and the cost of servicing SLAF for 2014-15 was approximately £1,500. This includes secretariat services, hire of meeting rooms, site visits and member travel expenses.

The Work of SLAF

The Suffolk Local Access Forum is passionate about countryside access. Each of our members has a keen interest in developing access to the natural environment. Members represent interest in walking, cycling, horse riding, off-road driving, sport, disability, tourism, rural businesses, nature conservation, land management and land

ownership. The forum works closely with Suffolk County Council and other agencies to protect and develop access for the benefit of all residents in, and visitors to, Suffolk.

The forum continued to meet at quarterly intervals during 2014/15 to discuss a wide range of issues that had arisen from consultations, presentations, papers, reports and site visits.

Members of the public are able to attend meetings and have the opportunity to raise items or comment on issues discussed or related to countryside access. Local parish councils are alerted to SLAF meetings in their area and invited to attend.

Activities SLAF Have Been Involved With

EDF Energy: Sizewell C

The SLAF are keen that the development of Sizewell C has minimal impact on the rights of way network but maximises enhancements as a legacy improving off-road connectivity between Aldeburgh and Minsmere. This year the forum has continued to impress upon EDF Energy the need to mitigate closures of rights of way and permissive routes, with suitable alternative routes provided and that the legacy of Sizewell C provides an access network that meets the future needs of residents and visitors to the area with positive outcomes for the local economy, employment and health and wellbeing. To this end the forum are key consultees to EDF Energy and are stressing the need for routes that meet the needs of all users from less mobile to more active users.

Specifically this year the SLAF has received two presentations on the “SZC Public Rights of Way Visitor Surveys Report” which were carried out in August and November 2014. The surveys showed high access usage and the forum expressed concern and disappointment about decisions taken by Sizewell around the conflicting demands between biodiversity and access.

The forum was disappointed that a more direct off road access could not be accommodated within the Aldhurst Farm habitat creation scheme.

This work continues.

ROWIP 2

The County Council is required to deliver a new Improvement Plan by 2016. Before preparing or reviewing a rights of way improvement plan, or in making assessments related to a rights of way improvement plan, each local highway authority must consult their local access and must have regard to the advice given to them by the forum. The SLAF will therefore be heavily involved in the development of the ROWIP 2. This year early preparation has taken place to facilitate initial consultation with the SLAF in relation to assisting Suffolk County Council setting priorities for the new plan. *This section will be updated to reflect the outcome of this morning's workshop.*

Network Rail and Rights of Way Level Crossings

Amongst Local Access Forum's in England, the Suffolk LAF lead on severance issues. Throughout this year, the forum has continued to focus on addressing proposals by Network Rail to close rights of way level crossings and to achieve reasonable outcomes to NR proposals. Specifically the SLAF has been successful in helping secure a suitable alternative to a steps only footbridge to replace a level crossing at Gypsy Lane in Needham Market.

Coastal Access

The SLAF have noted the Government's new 2020 deadline for completion of the English Coast Path and that Natural England intend for work to begin in Suffolk this year. The SLAF will work closely with SCC and NE on this piece of work throughout the forthcoming year. *This section will be updated to reflect the outcome of today's meeting.*

Suffolk Walking Festival

The forum support efforts by officers to deliver the Suffolk Walking Festival to promote countryside access and encourage use of public rights of way. The forum is very encouraged that the event has grown significantly and has become established as a key Suffolk event supporting tourism and promoting positive health and physical activity. *Would members like to express a view on the future of the festival?*

Opening of A11 Underpass

The A11 Fiveways to Thetford trunk road was officially opened in December 2014 accompanied by the opening of a non motorised user underpass. Due to their hard fought campaigning throughout this scheme the SLAF have set a precedent for new road schemes involving PROW and have been instrumental in reconnecting access in the Brecks.

Suffolk Walking Strategy

The forum supported, and members contributed to, the development and successful implementation of the Suffolk Walking Strategy. The forum asks that the county council take full advantage of the value of walking in the countryside in improving people's physical and mental well being.

Presentations

SLAF have received presentations on:

Sizewell C: Judith Linnane, EDF Energy Alastair Kratt LDA Design
Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2016 -26
SLAF Annual Report to Cabinet.

Consultations

SLAF have been consulted on
EDF Sizewell C User survey form
Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2

Site Visits

SLAF members have had site visits to
Elveden – A11 NMU underpass opening.

Conferences/Training

SLAF members have attended the training by Natural England on Landscape and LEADER funding.

Meetings

SLAF members have held meetings as follows:

- 16 October 2014 - Victory Cricket Pavillion, Bury St Edmunds
- 29 January 2015 - Castle Hill Community Centre, Ipswich
- 23 April 2015 - Hill View Business Park, Claydon nr Ipswich
- 9 July 2015 - Victory Cricket Pavillion, Bury St Edmunds

Membership of SLAF

Membership of the forum currently stands at 15 following one member resigning in 2014.

Working Groups

In order to be able to respond more effectively to priority access areas, the forum has agreed the following working groups:

Topic	Membership
Network Rail	Bryan Collen, Roley Wilson, Diana Kearsley
Sizewell C	<i>Margaret Hancock, Anthony Wright, Roley Wilson</i>
Forests and Woodlands	<i>Melinda Appleby, Alan Moore</i>
Open Access	<i>Barry Hall, Gordon Merfield, Mike Taylor</i>
ROWIP and Suffolk Walking Strategy	Annette Ellis, Roley Wilson, Jane Hatton, Diana Kearsley, Monica Pipe
Coastal Erosion and Access	Bryan Collen, Annette Ellis, Roley Wilson, Barry Hall
Planning and Development	Jane Storey, Jane Hatton, Anthony Wright
Agri-Environment Schemes	David Barker, John Wayman

END
CP/SCC July 2015

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	General Progress Update Report
Meeting Date:	9 July 2015
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Victory Cricket Pavilion, Bury St Edmunds

Introduction

This paper summarises progress other items of interest to the forum.

Membership

1. Melinda Appleby has resigned from the forum due to clashes with other commitments. Melinda commented that she enjoyed her membership and the range of issues covered, in particular the forum's role in the threatened sale of the public forest estate. She wished the forum productive years ahead.
2. The forum chair, Bryan Collen, has announced his intention to step down this year. October will be his last meeting in the chair and it is hoped a new chair will be announced at that meeting. Any current members who would like to consider the role of chair are welcome to raise this at today's meeting, or express an interest direct to the forum secretary.

Regulations require forum members to elect from amongst their number a chairman and vice-chairman, taking such steps as may be necessary to ensure as far as practicable that they are drawn from members representing different categories of interest (note - they may both represent 'other interests' provided they do not represent the same interest). Members of the appointing authority should avoid offering themselves to these posts if possible

LAF Annual Review Form 2014-15

The final version is attached (Appendix A).

Natural England Engagement With Local Access Forums

NE are decreasing their commitment to local access forums (see attached letter, Appendix B). This reflects reduced budgets. Their priorities from 2014 to 2019 are:

1. Terrestrial biodiversity
2. Marine biodiversity
3. Landscape and geodiversity
4. Access and engagement
5. Environmental land management

6. National Nature Reserves
7. Support to the planning system
8. Wildlife management
9. Evidence

Of the eight substantive priorities, only one relates to access, and a significant amount of the resource here will be in implementing coastal access. If NE have a lesser role in championing access, then this can only increase the importance of local access forums in ensuring they fill any space left by Natural England.

Local Access Forum Engagement Plan

See attached document (Appendix C). The plan summarises the role of local access forums and clarifies the relationship between them, Natural England and Defra. The following statements are of relevance:

- 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.
- 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;

Summary of Deregulation Reforms

This is attached (Appendix D).

Ipswich Waterfront Traffic Management Update

At the last meeting, Margaret Hancock requested an update on traffic management at the waterfront.

Following further discussions with the landowners in 2014, there has been a change to part of the traffic management proposals for the Ipswich Waterfront.

It is now proposed to upgrade that part of Restricted Byway (RB) 36 to a public vehicular highway, between Foundry Lane and Coprolite Street (Northern Quays). The county council is liaising with the landowners, Ipswich Borough Council and Associated British Ports, to dedicate vehicular rights along this stretch of the Waterfront. This will have the benefit of clarifying and regularising maintenance

responsibilities, whilst also allowing the existing parking bays to be used for parking by blue badge holders, the provision of a taxi rank and loading/unloading for the waterfront businesses.

Although public motor vehicles will be allowed to continue to drive along the Northern Quays, between the Old Custom House (OCH) and Coprolite Street, no public car parking spaces will be provided. Officers do not consider there will be any significant extra vehicular traffic generated as a result and are still intending to prohibit public motor vehicles from using the section between Foundry Lane and the OCH. Along this section the traffic regulation order (TRO) will be reinforced through the retention of the key-operated bollards outside Pizza Express and Dance East. Bi-directional access will, however, be permitted to allow for access by private rights holders.

No status change is proposed for the Eastern Quays (Coprolite Street - Shiplaunch Road), which will remain as RB36, and public motor vehicles will still be prohibited. The two sets of key-operated bollards outside Neptune Marina and the Aurora restaurant will also act as further reinforcement measures to the TRO for that part of the route. Private rights holders will continue to be able to access this area for business and maintenance purposes.

For Byway 38 Ipswich (New Cut West), no further changes are proposed. It has previously been identified that there's a need to exempt cyclists from the movements TRO, to allow them to travel in both directions between Dock Street and Bath Street.

In respect of enhancing Orwell Quay, in 2014 the county council drafted and consulted on an initial design for the street furniture scheme, funded by a s106 agreement between Persimmon/UCS and the Borough Council. The feedback from the Waterfront Business Forum members, landowners and local councillors is varied and SCC will be seeking to address these over the coming months. The design, procurement and works delivery will be commissioned through Suffolk Highways once a final draft design has been agreed with stakeholders.

The Ramblers Big Pathwatch

This is the email sent by the Ramblers to local access forums:

From: campaign [<mailto:campaign@ramblers.org.uk>]
Sent: 29 May 2015 10:50
To: Suffolk Local Access Forum
Subject: The Ramblers' new rights of way project

Dear Ms Christley,

As you may have heard, the Ramblers is launching a project called the Big Pathwatch on 13 July. The Big Pathwatch is an initiative aimed at motivating communities to survey our rights of way network—footpaths, bridleways and byways—in England and Wales, and then to report their findings, both good and bad, via our purpose-built app or our website. Once the survey closes later in the year, we aim to produce the first comprehensive nationwide analysis of the condition of our paths.

We would be very grateful if you could share information about this project with the Chair and members of the Suffolk Local Access Forum.

We understand that councils are facing reductions to their funding and many have cut their rights of way budgets as a consequence. Ramblers members tell us they are increasingly concerned that some of our path network is falling into disrepair and some paths are even becoming un-walkable. We also know that some councils are continuing to support their rights of way network well, finding innovative ways of working with our volunteers to ensure this statutory responsibility is met. The picture is mixed.

The Ramblers want to work with councils to find cost-effective solutions to maintain our path network. The results of the Big Pathwatch will help us identify areas which are in good repair and find good practice. It will also help us find out which maintenance issues cause walkers the most difficulty, which should help councils prioritise reported problems. Additionally, the project should increase our understanding of the impact of our volunteer path maintenance teams. Ramblers volunteers already clear and maintain paths in nearly every highway authority across England and Wales and we are looking at how to build on this work where it is most needed.

More broadly, the Big Pathwatch will help us celebrate our path network and show its value, as well as help improve the health of our communities by encouraging more people to get outside and enjoy our beautiful country.

We very much hope that the Suffolk Local Access Forum will take part in the Big Pathwatch when it launches. We would also be very keen to hear:

- Why your community values the path network and how you use it.
- What impact cuts to path budgets have had on your community.
- Examples of councils managing the path network cost effectively.

Please find below some more information about the Big Pathwatch which you may want to use in any communications you have.

Please do not hesitate to contact my colleague Lizzie Flew at campaign@ramblers.org.uk if you have any questions or to share your thoughts about the project.

With best regards,

Benedict

Benedict Southworth
Chief Executive
The Ramblers

What is the Big Pathwatch?

The Big Pathwatch is an exciting new project from the Ramblers which aims to get walkers to survey all the rights of way—footpaths, bridleways and byways—in England and Wales to find out whether they are open and walkable - and where the best bits are! We'd like you to strap on your walking boots, download the Big Pathwatch app - or grab a pen and paper - and inspect our rights of way.

How can people get involved in the Big Pathwatch?

It's easy to take part in the Big Pathwatch:

- 1) From 13 July, visit: www.ramblers.org.uk/BigPathwatch
- 2) Download the free app
- 3) Choose your grid square
- 4) Walk every path in the grid square and use the app to tell us what you find

Don't have a smartphone? No problem – you'll be able to print off a survey card, complete it and upload the results to our website.

The county council is looking forward to seeing the results on path condition in Suffolk and seeing how this compares with its own sample based condition surveys, which are undertaken twice a year.

Officers have sought more information from the Ramblers about the content and reporting of the surveys, and, in response to a statement that the Ramblers expect SCC to deal with the reports as it would any path problem report it receives, has explained how it deals with report contents will depend on volume and available staff resources. SCC has asked that any safety issues encountered whilst surveying PRow should be reported separately to Customer Services in the normal way.

Sizewell

EDF will be presenting to SLAF at its meeting on October 22nd. They will cover both the Tourism and Amenity and Recreation work streams.

Suffolk Walking Festival 2015

The festival took place from 9th to the 31st of May and was supported by the county, district and borough councils. This year the successes of the festival include:

- 92 walks provided, catering for all ages and abilities,
- Launched by Suffolk Walking Festival patron, Lesley Dolphin of BBC Radio Suffolk,
- Supported and attended by Deborah Cadman,
- 1553 people took part and explored the Suffolk countryside using its public rights of way and other access networks,.
- 72% of walk places were booked, which is a good result,
- 38 out of the walks were fully booked.

The festival is an effective way of getting residents and tourists out and about in the county, and encouraging people who might not otherwise consider walking for pleasure to get acquainted with our access network. We are looking forward to building on these successes in future years and ensuring we maximise the economic and health benefits the festival delivers.

Bookings were slightly down this year, which is thought to be mainly the result of not having a challenge walk.

Work is in progress to shape next year's walking festival.

END
AW/SCC July 2015

Local Access Forum Annual Review Form

April 2014 to March 2015

Name of LAF	Suffolk Local Access Forum
Name of LAF Chair	Bryan Collen
Name of LAF Secretary	(Vacant - contact Andrew Woodin)

Total number of LAF members	18
Number of members representing users of public rights of way or access land	6
Number of members representing owners and occupiers of access land or land over which PROW subsist	5
Number of members representing other interests	7

1. LAF achievements? (Please give examples to illustrate how your LAF has improved public access to land for the purpose of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area)

Championing the needs of local communities in securing accessible alternatives where Network Rail wish to close level crossings,

Meeting the county council and Network Rail to demand an accessible alternative be provided should the level crossing at Gipsy Lane, Needham Market, be closed, and securing a commitment to do so,

Advising the county council and EDF energy on protecting and enhancing public access in the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station,

Advising Natural England on open access restrictions and the dedication of higher rights on National Nature Reserves,

Attending the opening of the A11 non motorised user underpass, for which SLAF had campaigned,

Supporting the work of Officers and Councillors in the organisation of Suffolk Walking Festival, thus encouraging physical activity for health and education, and promoting and increasing use of the ROW network.

Presenting its annual report to SCC Cabinet and receiving praise for its work.

2. What are the main challenges affecting your LAF's ability to deliver improvements to public access in the coming year?

SLAF to provide

Members continue to be concerned about the challenge brought about by continuing budget cuts of those responsible for delivery.

3. What are your top three priorities for the year ahead?

Suggest: Continue to lobby Network Rail,

Continue to advise SCC & EDF re Sizewell C and public access,

Something on larger planning proposals??

Promote health & well-being benefits of use of ROW network for walking and cycling.

Promote access to ROW network by public transport wherever possible to support Suffolk's 'Greenest County' initiative (MH)

Local Access Forum Annual Review Form

April 2014 to March 2015

--

4. Is there any particular support or training that you need to deliver your priorities?

Suggest:

Planning processes and neighbourhood plans,
Transport and Works Act processes and use of.

LAF activity in 2014/15

Number of full LAF meetings held	4	Number of sub-group meetings held	2 Walking Stratgy 2 NNR & 2 NR?
Number of working groups led by others	0	Number of training days provided by the Appointing Authority	2

Partners the LAF worked with during 2014/15 (click on a box or type 'x')

Local Nature Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Enterprise Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health and Wellbeing Boards	<input type="checkbox"/>	LEADER funding Local Action Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please add numbers to the following differentiating between formal consultations and general advice given by the LAF on particular subjects. If a consultation covered more than one subject area, please count separately.

	Consultations	Advice
Green Infrastructure strategies		
Public Space Protection Orders (including gating orders)		
Transport (LTP, traffic management, rail, DfT, Highways Agency)		4
Water / Coast (slipways, flood defence, EA, shoreline)		1
Public open space (protection orders, commons, village greens)		
Dog exclusion/on leads/fouling orders		
Planning applications	1	
Housing development schemes		
Local development frameworks and planning strategies		
PROW creation, diversion or closure - number of each		
Right of Way Improvement Plan review	1	
Route improvements (to PROW and other multi-user/cycling/horse-riding/walking routes)		
Promotion of access, open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area		
Definitive map and recording PROW		

Local Access Forum Annual Review Form

April 2014 to March 2015

Parish Council or other grant schemes		
Disabled access / access for people with mobility issues?		-1
Vehicular access and issues relating to motorised use of PROW		
Nature conservation (including SSSIs)		
Land use and planning matters (e.g. informal advice on land development)		
Greenspace including Country Parks and Local Nature Reserves		
Open Access land restrictions		
Coastal Access/National Trails		1
NNR dedication	2	
Agri-environment scheme issues (HLS and new Countryside Stewardship) e.g. expiring permissive access agreements, effects of land management options on public access etc.		
Forestry and woodland		1

Any other LAF activity (please specify)

SLAF were consulted on SCC Walking Strategy

5. Summarise any feedback received from section 94(4) bodies¹

6. Please provide any comments from your Appointing Authority

Extract of minutes from SCC Cabinet meeting on 9th September 2014:

Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report August 2013-July 2014

A report at Agenda Item 6, by the Chief Fire Officer, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and Public Protection, Highways and Transport, invited the Cabinet to consider the 2013-2014 Annual Report of the Suffolk Local Access Forum and respond to any recommendations within the Report.

The Chairman welcomed Bryan Collen, Chairman, Suffolk Local Access Forum to the meeting and invited him to present the report.

Decision: The Cabinet accepted the 2013/14 annual report of the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) and noted the report's recommendations and the action that the Council was

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.

Local Access Forum Annual Review Form

April 2014 to March 2015

taking to address these recommendations.

Reason for Decision: The Suffolk Local Access Forum was 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 stated: "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."

Comments by other Councillors: The Cabinet Member for Roads, Transport and Planning noted that the walk from Dunwich to Walberswick had now been reinstated and thanked the SLAF for enabling this to happen.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care stressed the importance of the work carried out by the SLAF and the impact it had on people's health and wellbeing.

A Councillor commented that he knew that the SLAF was fully aware of the issues surrounding the Sizewell C development and the considerable disruption it would have on the countryside and he acknowledged that the long term prospects were very good. In response the Bryan Collen advised Cabinet that the SLAF was very concerned about the aftermath of Sizewell C and would monitor the situation closely. He and the Cabinet Member had met with the developers on three occasions to discuss all the issues and concerns.

Bryan Collen accepted an invitation from the Chairman of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership to attend one of the Partnership's meetings.

Councillors considered it very importance for the report to go to the district and borough councils' Cabinets in order to push the work forward across the county.

Councillors were informed by Bryan Collen that the definitive map for Ipswich was on the SLAF's agenda and it would continue to apply pressure in order to achieve it.

The Cabinet Member for Roads, Transport and Planning advised that a published cycle network had not been considered at this stage however the council could make an input to that process.

7. Comments from LAF Chair

SLAF objectives are promoting healthy enjoyment of the countryside by ensuring access is available for all categories of user ie walkers, riders and cyclists in harmony with each other. We further believe if tourists can be made aware of what Suffolk access has to offer, the economic benefit should in itself, justify the cost of staffing and managing of all.

8. Any important information to bring to the attention of Natural England

SLAF to provide

Network Rail's general policy to replace ROW crossings with cheapest possible alternative regardless of Disability Discrimination Act requirements
SLAF to provide (MH)

9. Any other comments

The Forum is fortunate to have considerable continuing support from Suffolk County Council members and officers in the current economic climate.

**Local Access Forum Annual Review Form
April 2014 to March 2015**

--



Natural England
Suite D
Unex House
Bourges Boulevard
Peterborough
PE1 1NG

12th May 2015

Dear LAF members

Arrangements following withdrawal of funding for Local Access Forum Regional Co-ordinator post.

As you will be aware we are no longer able to fund the LAF Regional Co-ordinators post and we thought it might help if we made clear the support we can provide given reduced resources in this and other areas.

Natural England's Strategic Direction focusses on four key areas of our business which are defined by legislation and our statutory purpose:

1. Protect and build understanding of our landscapes and geo-diversity
2. Reverse the decline in terrestrial biodiversity
3. Restore marine biodiversity
4. Promote and encourage access to and understanding of the natural environment

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.

Whilst continuing to work more effectively with fewer resources, we recognise the contribution LAFs can make; as a [section 94 body](#)



CSE



Natural England continues to welcome 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 and effects of the EU funded agri-environment scheme on access land and public rights of way;
- facilities and services for visitors at National Nature Reserves;
- opportunities afforded to LAFs through engagement with Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and
- other matters relating to the provision of access and opportunities for the enjoyment of the natural environment.

Our updated Engagement Plan available now on Huddle: <http://my.hdle.it/24002279> . However, each Natural England Area has its own priorities in relation to our Strategic Plan. The engagement with LAFs may therefore vary between Areas.

Local contacts

We are undergoing a significant re-organisation of staff and will update you via your new contact when this process is complete. In the meantime, please contact us through [Carolyn \(Caz\) Healey](#) (tel 0300 060 3860).

And just a reminder of how to keep us updated with your LAF contact details via Huddle: <http://my.hdle.it/18436821>.

Communication

We will continue to disseminate information to you with all our communications going in our team. Please keep Caz updated with any changes to your LAF's contact details. Our ability to respond to queries may be limited but should go through Caz in the first instance.

Rob Leek will continue to support you in the use of Huddle to help you communicate across Areas. Huddle gives a central point to which up to date information, guidance and discussions are regularly posted. There is no limit to the number of LAF members who can join.



Regional chair meetings and National conferences



We recognise the importance of Regional Chair meetings to you and would be happy to book a venue, e.g. our Natural England office at Eastbrook, Cambridge (refreshments available at café), or at Unex House in Peterborough (near mainline rail station). We can secure two dates per year if booked well in advance, free of charge if attended by a Natural England officer. You may wish to consider a rota for preparing the agenda, note-taking and chairing your meetings.

Please let Caz know attendees so that she can inform reception; we may have to cancel if numbers are low to allow others to use the room.

We will facilitate national LAF conferences when practicable.

Reporting

Rob Leek will continue to collate your feedback for the National Report. Please see reminder in attached email:



LAF Annual Review
Form 2014 - 15.msg

Future engagement of Natural England with LAFs

It's clear that Natural England cannot fulfil the role of the Regional Co-ordinators. However, we look forward to continuing working in partnership with you to enhance people's access to and experience of the countryside on more project-based, Area priority-focussed activities.

One such area of work is the new LEADER funding. We've worked hard over the months to establish partnerships with LEADER programme managers to ensure that access and tourism type projects feature in each area's Local Development Strategies. Every potential LEADER area in Natural England Area 8 has been successful in securing funds – now we want to support you in developing projects to spend them!

We are working with our partners, Cambridgeshire ACRE, to hold a series of four LEADER workshops in four locations across the Area to give you an opportunity to be inspired, network, share knowledge and expertise, and help you develop your projects around access and tourism, wildlife, farming and water management, and biodiversity.



CSE



Workshops will be held on:

9th June Ramsey Heights, Cambridgeshire
11th June Braintree Town Hall, Essex
23rd June March Town Hall, Cambridgeshire
26th June Ampthill, Bedfordshire



So save the date! You may already have received your formal invitation with further details next month. We look forward to welcoming you to one of these events.

Thank you for your patience and continued hard work to improve access for your local communities.

Yours faithfully

Fiona Taylor
Access and Partnerships Team, Area 08

Further information on LEADER funding:

<https://www.gov.uk/rural-development-programme-for-england-leader-funding>

<http://www.cambsacre.org.uk/leader-2014-2020.php>



CSE



April 2015

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;

- 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 and effects of the EU funded agri-environment scheme on access land and public rights of way;
- facilities and services for visitors at National Nature Reserves;

April 2015

- opportunities afforded to LAFs through engagement with Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs); 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 (informed by an annual survey of LAFs conducted by NE and the completion of an Annual Review Form by each LAF);
- support the work of LAF area team contacts by the promotion and co-ordination of their role within the organisation;
- facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practice gathered from meetings, annual reporting, meetings and events. To support this, Natural England regularly issues a newsletter and supports a themed LAF toolkit section on Huddle;
- facilitate LAF conferences when practicable;
- provide focussed input to LAF meetings, particularly regional/area groupings, seeking to attend where it can make a difference, for example to alert LAFs on Natural England work that might impact on local access;
- maintain LAF sections on Gov.UK which includes information and up to date contact web 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).

Andy Mackintosh, Natural England, April 2015

Summary for Local Access Forums

Rights of way clauses in the Deregulation Act 2015

The rights of way clauses are part of a wider de-regulatory package of public rights of way reforms; other aspects of the reforms will be implemented through secondary legislation (regulations) and guidance.

The existing legal processes for recording public rights of way are complex, slow and resource intensive. The reforms make improvements to benefit users of rights of way, landowners, local authorities and developers alike by creating a simpler system for mapping, changing and extinguishing rights of way. The proposals are a balanced package supported by a group representing the full range of interests in rights of way. They make procedures more streamlined, and flexible, but also give local authorities more scope to use their judgement in dealing with insubstantial or irrelevant applications and objections, and enable the development of locally negotiated solutions.

Detail on the clauses in the Act

The clauses in the Act introduce a preliminary sift for applications to record rights of way, so that local authorities are relieved of the burden of dealing with poor or spurious applications. They also provide that local authorities (rather than applicants) approach landowners, but only where claims pass the preliminary sift, and enable the local authority to negotiate an alternative route with the landowner before recording the way; this will reduce the number of applications that result in costly dispute procedures. Provision for landowners to apply for gates on byways will also reduce the number of applications that are disputed and end up at public inquiry.

Other measures cut the number of cases that are referred to the Secretary of State for resolution; these include providing for recourse to a local magistrate's court rather than the Secretary of State where a local authority has failed to deal with a viable application and ensuring that any given case can go before the Secretary of State only once, rather than several times, which can often be the case at present. A similar measure enables authorities to refer only those parts of orders that are disputed to the Secretary of State for resolution.

Improvements to provisions for a 'right to apply' make it easier for landowners to get local authorities to respond positively to requests for the extinguishment or diversion of an existing right of way.

There are a number of smaller procedural changes to cut the administrative and financial burden on local authorities and others. These include giving local authorities discretion to disregard irrelevant appeals and objections, rather than having to submit them all to the Secretary of State as is currently the case; a fast track procedure for correcting minor administrative errors on the definitive map and statement, rather than having to go through the full modification order procedure;

reducing the requirement for advertising rights of way orders in newspapers; providing that the courts quash only the Secretary of State's decision, where that is found to be at fault, so that the order-making process does not have to start all over again from scratch; providing that applications to have a right of way recorded do not have to be accompanied by copies of documents that are already in the authority's possession; enabling volunteers to transfer applications, so that work does not have to start over again where an applicant can no longer pursue it;

Other measures reduce the scope for disputes over rights of way once the definitive map and statement is closed at the 2026 cut-off date. One measure ensures that, just as rights of way cannot be claimed or upgraded after the cut-off, they also cannot be downgraded. Providing for local authorities to designate a right of way for protection during a short window after the cut-off will enable local authorities to derive maximum benefit from the work undertaken by volunteer groups in the period leading up to the cut-off date.

Jonathan Tweney - Defra

April 2015