

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> January 2016</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Sophie Morling</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Bury St Edmunds Cricket Club Pavilion</b>

		<b>Paper Number</b>
1.	14.00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting	<b>LAF 15/22</b>
3.	Declarations of interest	
4.	Network Rail Level Crossings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needham Market Letter SLAF to NR</li> </ul>	<b>LAF 16/01</b> <b>LAF 16/01 App A</b>
5.	Coastal Access Update	<b>LAF 16/02</b>
6.	General Paper – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural England Engagement</li> <li>• Sizewell C</li> <li>• How Large Scale Developments Affect Green Access In Suffolk</li> </ul>	<b>LAF 16/03</b> <b>LAF 16/03 APP A,</b> <b>B, C &amp; D</b>
7.	Access Development Projects	<b>LAF 16/04</b>
8.	Public Question Time	
9.	Next Meeting Date 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2016. Venue tbc	

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Minutes of meeting held at Walberswick Village Hall on 22 October 2015</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>28 January 2016</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Jackie Gillis</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>TBA</b>

## 1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping

Present: Bryan Collen (Chair) (BC), David Barker (Vice Chair) (DB), Jane Hatton (JH), Mike Taylor (MT), John Wayman (JW), Roland Wilson (RW), Margaret Hancock (MA)

SCC Officers Present: Jackie Gillis (JG) (minutes), Andrew Woodin (AW), Sophie Morling (SM), Claire Parker (CP)

Guest Speakers: Rebecca Calder (RC), Judith Linnane (JL), Mike Humphries (MHu), Phil ??

Member of the Public: Gordon Crosby (GC), Mervyn Holden (MHo), Nigel Meadows (NM), Jim Richards (JR), David Waldram.

Apologies: Annette Ellis (AE), Barry Hall (BH), Cllr Diana Kearsley (DK), Gordon Merfield (GM), Monica Pipe (MP), Anthony Wright (AWR), Cllr Jane Storey (JS).

BC welcomed Sophie Morling to the meeting; Sophie will become the next SLAF Secretary.

JG is stepping down as SLAF Secretary due to work commitments; BC thanked JG on behalf of the forum for her involvement and assistance with SLAF.

## 2. Minutes of previous meeting (LAF15/17)

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2015 were reviewed and confirmed to be an accurate record.

DB questioned the action for AW on page 3, item 7. AW advised the forum that Cllr Terry Clements had intended to invite a SLAF representative to St Edmundsbury planning committee meeting but subsequent events had prevented this. Cllr Woods has been contacted concerning Suffolk Coastal planning committee but an invite has not been received.

DB recommended that SLAF write to each planning authority as a reminder of the importance of public rights of way (PROW). **ACTION: SCC officers will draft an appropriate letter.**

3. **Declaration of interest** – none identified.

4. **Appointment of New Chair**

BC has been a member of SLAF since 2003 and Chair for the past 5 years. DB stated how everyone has appreciated what BC has done for SLAF and his achievements and the forum showed their appreciation.

BC said he thoroughly enjoyed his time on SLAF and friendships he had made.

DB proposed, in his absence, BH as the next Chair. BH had previously worked for SCC and has been a member of SLAF for several years. MT seconded the proposal.

BC declared BH duly elected. In BH absence, BC agreed to continue chairing the meeting.

5. **Sizewell C Update and Review of Tourism Work Stream.**

RC started her presentation with mentioning the recent news of confirmation of Chinese investment at Hinkley Point C.

RC informed the group that there were 3 consultation stages; stage 1 has been carried out, the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage will be next year and the 3<sup>rd</sup> a couple of years after that. It is anticipated that Sizewell C will start operating in 2027, two years after Hinkley Point C.

MHu gave a presentation on the tourism work stream; about why people visit the area, the impact of construction of Sizewell C in the local area and the effect and benefits to the local economy.

The forum queried the figures quoted on page 13 regarding the tourist economy - 1.3 million nights spent in the area, and 3.7 million day trips. MHu confirmed this was per year.

JW felt the information was well thought out and commented that as a large proportion of the construction workforce would be 20-35 year old males, had any thought been given to using a redundant cruise liner moored alongside a purpose made jetty, as a large hostel?

MHu confirmed that happens at some off shore wind farms. There is a problem with attracting the best quality workforce and the situation can put people off. RC also confirmed this is done elsewhere so they had investigated the possibility but stated safety would be an issue due to weather conditions; the practicalities of getting people across the jetty would not be possible.

DB voiced his concern about the impact on the PROW, ensuring the routes are not abused by workers, eg motorbikes on bridleways and that they can still be used and enjoyed by the public. BC stated it was important where the campus would be situated. RC replied their preferred option is within the site boundary.

DB asked AW if there were real issues concerning PROW. AW felt there was potentially on recreation and questioned what work had been done to look at the cost/benefit implication and decrease in tourism. RC commented EDF can deal only with what *may* happen and carry out robust monitoring on the situation, trying to be as proactive as possible.

AW questioned whether models used elsewhere could be used at Sizewell. MHu confirmed there were, but they were all different to suit the situation. AW then asked about mitigation and MHu explained the marketing angle and how there would be a tourism fund available for local authorities and businesses to promote their services.

AW referred to the commencement of the Coastal Access Trail which may be completed just as construction works start so both parties will need to work hard together to increase tourism and promote the East Anglian Coast Path. EDF and SCC both felt there were real opportunities for Sizewell C to help fund and promote the new coastal path. RC advised the group that energy links into the school national curriculum so it would be good for schools and young people to visit the Sizewell visitor centre and she is keen to make it a visitor destination. RC will send details of a forthcoming workshop on the matter to AW.

BC stated it was critical for EDF to continually liaise with SLAF and hopes the scheme goes smoothly.

JL provided a recreation user survey update. The average time people spent in the area was an hour with the main group being dog walkers. Two main issues were identified; the Sandlings Walk will need to be closed and will the coastal path at some point during construction of the jetty. A meeting with Natural England will take place to discuss the impact of the sea wall and off shore works. A diversion will be put in place if the coastal path is closed.

A survey was carried out in the summer and another is scheduled for November to look at visitor displacement. A high proportion of visitors to Minsmere are tourists who walk and bird watch, arriving by car whilst visitors to the Sizewell area are local walkers and dog walkers.

2,000 construction workers will be local and the profile shows they will be young single people (no dogs) working long shifts who are more likely to use the sports facilities on campus. Around a further 1,120 will be long term workers who are likely to stay in rented accommodation be dog owners and go walking. EDF will be producing an Environmental Impact Assessment and Mitigation Strategy which will include the impact/effect for users of local access, the beach and PROW; they will be happy to attend future SLAF meetings.

BC stated SLAF would be happy to invite EDF back and AW asked at what point would be appropriate. JL said they had presented all the base line information to date and it was agreed they would attend the April meeting. **ACTION: AW** to invite EDF to April or July meeting.

## 6. Coastal Access Update – LAF 15/18

AW presented the paper and confirmed there was a 'soft launch' of Coastal Access in Suffolk by Natural England (NE) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015. Feedback from the meeting between NE and SLAF on 17 September 2015 was also discussed, along with the meeting between NE and SCC officers also on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015.

NE have written to landowners about forthcoming consultations with owners and occupiers of affected land. The drop-in sessions are booked for 14, 17 and 20 November. **ACTION: AW** to circulate occupier liability guidance.

BC asked the members of the public present if they wished to comment. Those representing Coastal Access confirmed they had seen the letter and there had been a meeting last week. Nigel Meadows is now the Ramblers' Coastal Access Officer.

*16.20 EDF left the meeting*

#### **7. Feedback from the ROWIP Renewal Workshop – LAF15/19**

CP gave an overview of the workshop. Following SCCs consultation with SLAF, the next stage is to consult with other groups.

BC felt there were terrible problems with getting children off roads to school and there were opportunities for those on the urban fringes. CP explained she had attended a meeting that morning to discuss safe routes to schools and AW commented that developments on urban fringes and safe routes to school came out top of the ROWIP priorities.

#### **8. Network Rail Level Crossing Update – LAF 15/20**

Needham Market Gypsy Lane was discussed. AW had concerns the culvert 'found' by Network Rail (NR) just north west of the crossing to which the Public Footpath 6 could be diverted should not be approved without further investigation and without significant mitigation and the approval of the local community and users.

There were members of the Design Panel in the public audience and GC advised the forum that the culvert was 257m each side of the line from the current crossing. A huge percentage of people using the route are dog walkers and wouldn't be put off, people from Capel St Mary would be as they use the route to get to the bus stop. Flood levels need to be checked and the culvert is likely to be too low for horses. There are certainly benefits for NR

There will be public exhibition events on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November at Needham Market Community Centre.

RW agreed that the nature of walkers is mainly local people, he frequently sees people with pushchairs, young children and elderly dog walkers who may be put off by the extra distance.

GC commented that the bridge NR propose would be alongside a wire fence. The route to the culvert is a more pleasant walk being across fields. MT felt the culvert option was a compromise and need to be mitigated by adding value to the network.

AW felt in retrospect that RW should be on the Design Panel to represent the wider community. GC will invite RW to attend the group.

*17.00 DB, MT, CP left the meeting.*

AW advised the group that countywide, NR had identified 100 or so crossings in Suffolk, 70 of which are mostly PROW, U roads or private roads. NR has engaged consultants Mott McDonald to investigate options for closure. AW asked the forum if SLAF were happy to adopt the guiding principles on pages 3 and 4 of the paper.

After a brief discussion BC gave full support of the forum to their adoption stating the loss of PROW should be as low as possible.

GC questioned whether this consultation tied in with the Anglian route study, was it about safety or Norwich in 90. It was confirmed as separate. The Anglian network route study findings will be released next week. **ACTION: AW** to circulate the results when they are available.

## 9. General Progress Update Report

Natural England Engagement with Local Access Forums – LAF 15/21  
Regional LAF meetings are being held on 25 November and 15 December in Cambridge, BH will be attending.

A National LAF meeting will be held February/March 2016. **ACTION: ALL** Those wishing to attend to advise AW.

### Dates for 2016 Meetings

28 January 2016 (apologies received from MH and JW)  
21 April 2016  
21 July 2016  
20 October 2016

Venues to be advised

BC commented that a member had requested a start time of 2pm; JW was happy with the proposal; a 2pm start time has been agreed for future meetings.

### Any other business

MH advised the forum that she had been approached by the Suffolk Archives Office seeking SLAFs support in their lottery bid to obtain funding for the new office building where localisation of digitising old historic records will be held. The bid has to be in by the end of October. **ACTION: MH** to email correspondence to SM.

**Public Question Time** – No further questions were raised.

BC finished off the meeting by thanking everyone for their support and wished BH well as the next Chair.

The meeting closed at 17.20

JG/SCC October 2015  
END

Edward Knight  
Network Rail (IP Anglia)  
One Stratford Place  
Montfichet Road  
West Stratford City  
London  
E20 1EJ

SLAF  
PO Box 872  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP1 9JW

Tel: 01473 264759  
Fax: 01473 216877  
Email: [slaf@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:slaf@suffolk.gov.uk)  
Web:  
<http://publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/suffolk-local-access-forum/>

Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Date: 18 December 2015

Dear Sir,

**Suffolk Local Access Forum response to Network Rail consultation on Gypsy Lane crossing closure at Needham Market**

This is the response of the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) to Network Rail's public consultation on the options to replace the Gypsy Lane level crossing in Needham Market. SLAF have been actively involved in ensuring that if this crossing is closed it is replaced with something suitable and which meets the needs of the local community.

Local access forums are established under sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Their purpose is to advise decision making organisations about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.

Following the recent exhibition of alternative options for the closure and replacement of the Gypsy Lane crossing and taking into account views that members of the Forum have put forward at previous meetings when this ongoing issue has been discussed and having considered carefully all the alternatives put forward, the preferred option of the Suffolk Local Access Forum is:

**Option D – an underpass to the north with access from Gypsy Lane.**

All the options have been considered against the criteria that the new route will not be substantially less convenient to the public as a consequence of the diversion and also the effect that the diversion will have on the public enjoyment of the path as a whole.

Considering the options in order:

Option A the first bridge option would not only be a substantial visual intrusion into the landscape north of Needham Market, but the length of the ramps wouldn't be an incentive

for families with small children and buggies, elderly people or those using mobility scooters to attempt the route.

Option B has the same drawbacks as Option A, the addition of steps only benefitting the more able whilst the need for additional footpath creation could cause problems.

Option C is the first underpass option and whilst providing a suitable route for all abilities, the relatively low additional cost saving over option D does not justify the longer detour and visual intrusion of the high fence needed to stop people accessing the private road.

Option D the second underpass option is the preferred option as it is the shortest diversion and will cause the least inconvenience to the public.

Option E involves a substantial route diversion and uses a substandard and unattractive culvert which couldn't be guaranteed not to flood.

Options F and G did not meet either of the criteria as they created substantial detours for the public with option G also forcing them to walk a long distance alongside the B1113 one way and the railway line the other.

It is the Forum's considered opinion that the additional cost of an underpass compared to a footbridge would be beneficial as it offers the least inconvenience to all sectors of society and would encourage more people to use Gypsy Lane as part of a circular walk thus promoting the health agenda as well.

The demand for faster rail journey times between Norwich, Ipswich and Liverpool Street should not be achieved at the disadvantage to smaller communities along the route by making access from one side of the line to the other more difficult. The relatively small additional cost of an underpass compared to a bridge should be set against the expected additional revenue for the train operator and the increased benefits to the economy of the region.

Yours faithfully

Barry Hall  
Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

cc : Paula Cuthbertson, Associate (Transport and Development Planning), WSP UK Ltd,  
66-68 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 1LA

Jo Churchill MP, 10 Hatter Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1LZ



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>
<b>Title: Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings</b>
<b>Meeting: 28 January 2016</b>
<b>Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Venue: Bury St Edmunds Cricket Club Pavilion</b>

## 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 October 2015 meeting, the Design Panel (DP) met again on 3<sup>rd</sup> November and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at Needham Market's Community Centre. The January meeting was held to review the results of NR's consultation on the 7 options for the replacement of the Gipsy Lane and FP6 Needham Market crossings. The public consultation period ran from 18/11/15 to 23/12/15, with two

exhibition events held on Wednesday 18 and Saturday 21 November. In advance of the consultation, notice was given in the local newspapers and 3000 letters distributed to local residents. SCC officers and councillors attended the Saturday exhibition. Other attendees included representatives from the local parish and town councils and the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF). Feedback was received by way of hard copy and online questionnaires, although some interested parties submitted their comments by letter. The Forum responded to the public consultation by letter (Appendix A), detailing their reasons as to why, in their view, the only option it would support would be a new underpass close to the Gipsy Lane crossing (Option D).

### Summary of consultation responses

WSP supplied the county council with the public consultation response results and analysis earlier this month. The results were presented to the DP at its January meeting. The feedback assessment can be summarised as follows:

- Total of 174 respondents,
- 43% use the crossing daily or weekly,

- 12% use the crossing for non-leisure purposes, including access to services, the remainder use it for leisure related purposes,
- 95% of use is on foot only (with/without children/dogs),
- 41% of users are over the age of 65, with 15% of this figure aged over 75,
- 12% of users have difficulties walking,
- 42% of respondents support NR's aspiration to close level crossings,
- Of the 158 respondents that expressed a view on the options:-
  - 58% ranked option E as their first preference (diversion to existing culvert)
  - 22% ranked option D first (underpass to the north of Gipsy Lane)
  - No respondents ranked options A or B (ramped footbridges) as their first preference and less than 10% the road walking options (F/G)
- Needham Market Town Council would like to see option E pursued,
- Creeting St Mary Parish Council want to see option D implemented but will consider options C (underpass to the south of Gipsy Lane) or E,
- Ramblers Association ranked option C first, followed by options D and E,
- Landowners are supportive of Option E
- Historic England, the Environment Agency, and the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) do not have any objections to the culvert option. The Police have also not objected
- SCC has responded, advising it considers the culvert structure to be substandard but would not object to this option if the loss of amenity is mitigated by appropriate compensatory measures. It also requested further flood modelling be undertaken.

When benchmarked with other similar consultation events, WSP advised the feedback response rate is considered good and the results statistically significant. It reviewed the responses in various ways. In addition to a simple analysis of the raw data, postcode and frequency of use weightings were also applied and these were represented graphically and geographically in the feedback report. Textual responses were also grouped by option and theme.

It is clear the weighted and unweighted feedback indicates the greatest support is for Option E, followed by the new underpass options, D and C. There was no support for the footbridge options and very little support for the road walking options. Option E is therefore the emerging or preferred option but there are significant drawbacks.

The existing dual arch culvert serves a tributary of the River Gipping, known as the River Bat. Early indications are that following typical winter rainfall, water levels in the river may rise by approximately 0.4 (1ft 4") – 0.64 (2ft) metres, resulting in water overflowing into the dry channel. To reduce the times when the footpath within the culvert is flooded, NR proposes to install a raised floor within the dry channel. This would have the effect of reducing the headroom to around 2 metres (6ft 6") at the centre of the arch. It is very likely the raised culvert will still flood, and WSP is commissioning further investigations to ascertain the extent of such events.

SCC considers the culvert structure to be sub-standard and not compliant with highway authority standards nor, probably NR's. Concerns were raised about the lack of headroom, the inconvenience to the public during flood events and the maintenance of the culvert. This is currently undertaken by the IDB who have raised no objection to its potential use as

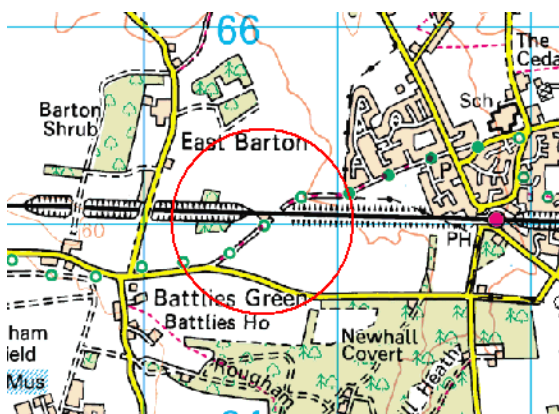
a public access route but on the condition that access is retained for heavy plant and that they would not be responsible for any repairs/maintenance.

Discussion also took place on the proposed diversionary route for the public. The current proposal would re-route the public to join the shared cycle/pedestrian facility alongside the B1113 (Stowmarket Road), at a point near to the Badley Bridge crossing. County councillor Truelove requested a traffic flow/speed survey be undertaken in December, the results of which have been shared with WSP/NR. There are concerns that public safety may be compromised by increasing the footfall along this facility and potentially bringing vulnerable users (eg the elderly/pushchair users) into conflict with cyclists. WSP have been asked to look into this potential increase in risk.

### Next steps to progress Option E

- complete topographical survey of the River Bat
- undertake further flood modelling once the above has been completed
- prepare GRIP 2 options report by 26/2/16
- liaise with landowners and stakeholders
- if still viable, present preferred option at a further public meeting in early March
- complete study by 25/3/16

NR and its consultants will need to discuss the results of the further flood modelling with the county council. If the detailed flood modelling indicates the culvert is likely to flood more regularly than initially estimated, SCC will need to take a view as to whether this acceptable. In the event the culvert option is taken forward for implementation, it is also likely planning consent will be required.



Bridleway 12 Gt Barton.

### **Great Barton Bridleway 12**

NR documentation on the transfer and first registration of the land south of the railway was finally received by SCC on 21 September 2015 and the bridleway creation agreement (made under s25 Highways Act 1980) finally signed by NR on 13 January 2016.

SCC is now in a position to proceed with the making of the Rail Crossing Extinguishment Order (RCEO) for the short length of at-grade



### **Cotton Footpaths 13 and 15**

The county council has completed the formal consultations and is now in a position to proceed to make and advertise the RCEOs for both routes.

## General/Countywide

Further to the Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction Strategy liaison meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015, NR requested a follow up meeting to discuss the results of their further investigations into proposals where the county council had sought further information, before being in a position to offer an initial view. The Forum is reminded that NR intend to address the closure/diversion of rights of way level crossings via one or more Transport and Works Act (TWA) orders, for which they are applying to the Secretary of State for Transport (SoSfT).

SCC met NR and their consultants, Mott MacDonald (MM), on 15 January 2016 to review the outcome of their further investigations. NR intend to address approximately 65 PROW crossings and a number of private/occupation crossings through the TWA process, as part of their overarching targets to reduce the number of railway assets and increase line speeds and improve journey times.

Phases I and II intend to address those rights of way level crossings which may experience lower use and/or there are safer, grade separated alternatives nearby. In addition, five road downgrades to footpath status were originally proposed. As a result of objections from the county council, MM is recommending to NR that bridleway status be retained at these crossings. The council supports this recommendation, as it will provide for future proofing of the network, allowing for future improvements that meet the council's health & wellbeing policies and cycling strategies.

Later phases of the reduction strategy will seek to address those level crossings (rights of way and roads) where bridges or tunnels are needed. Officers have not been out on site to assess NR's proposals and have provided their comments from a desk based exercise.

The county council raised concerns with NR at the poor recording of outcomes for individual crossings and the need for an audit trail for these decisions. Officers also discussed these concerns at a recent meeting between Richard Schofield (Anglia Route Director) and Councillors Finch and McGregor. Discussion ensued about the best way to consult with local communities and stakeholders. In view of the wide ranging impact of the proposals on both the general public and potentially local businesses, going forward the county council would like to see geographical sub-groups set up covering the whole of Suffolk to ensure full engagement with parish and district councils. This suggestion was well received by NR. **SLAF may wish to consider how it would like to engage with NR at a county-wide level.**

The county council has raised concerns at the amount of officer time that was being absorbed on this piece of work with NR and this was also raised with the Route Director.

NR have indicated the proposals are still commercially sensitive at the moment but have also confirmed that the Forum will be included as a pre-consultee, when they're in a position to start their consultations.

END  
AW/SCC January 2016

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>
<b>Title: The England Coast Path</b>
<b>Meeting Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016</b>
<b>Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Venue: Bury St Edmunds Cricket Club Pavilion</b>

### **Background**

The Government has put additional funding in place over the next 5 years, to make sure that the England Coast Path (ECP) is completed by 2020. 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.

### **Recent Developments**

1. The commencement of work to develop coastal access in Suffolk started officially on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015,
2. Natural England's (NE) coastal access team are currently walking the route in Suffolk and Essex, liaising closely with SCC officers, land managers and other interested parties. This process will continue for a few weeks more,
3. The NE team is in discussions with EDF Energy on the effect of Sizewell C on the existing Suffolk Coast Path and route of the English Coast path both during and after construction,
4. Drop in sessions for local people were arranged for the section of coast from Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea on the following dates:

Southwold Library Saturday 14th November  
 Lowestoft Library Tuesday 17th November  
 Aldeburgh Library Friday 20th November

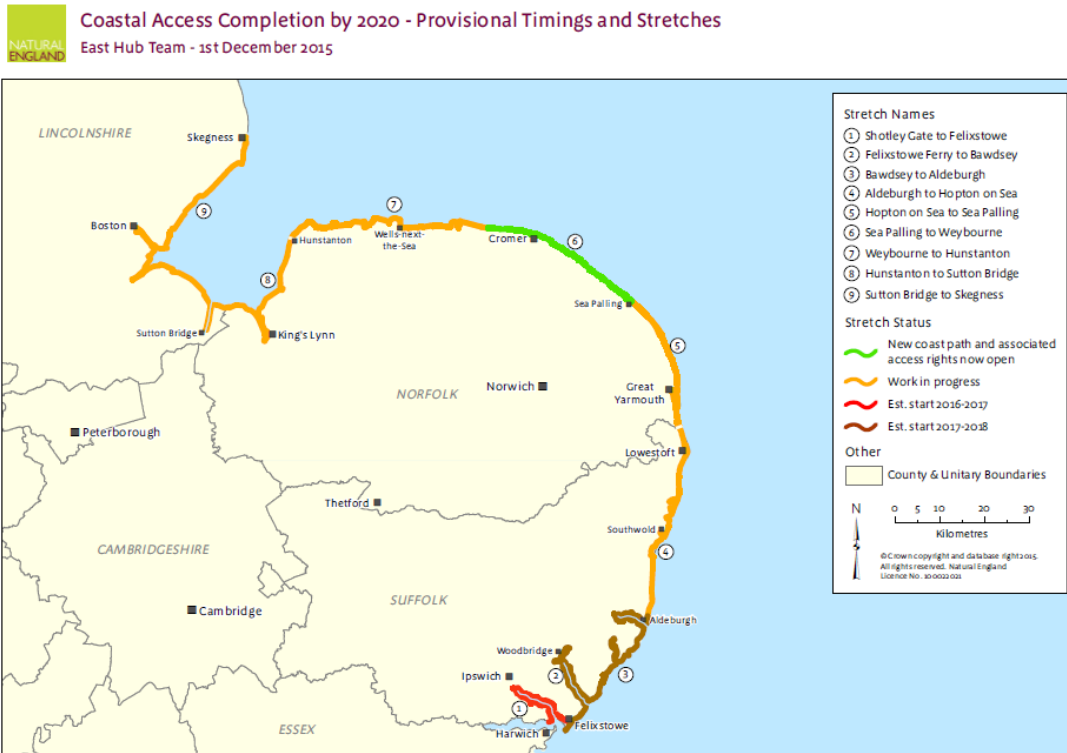
And have been arranged for the Harwich to Shotley Gate section on these dates:

Harkstead Village Hall Wednesday 20/01/16  
 Wrabness Village Hall Thursday 21/01/16  
 Manningtree Library Saturday 23/01/16

5. Andrew Woodin, Rights of Way & Access Manager and Annette Robinson, Area Rights of Way Manager will meet Natural England coastal access staff next month to review progress so far on scoping the route and ensure NE is getting the level of advice and cooperation needed to ensure a viable route is selected,
6. NE held a regional training session for local authorities on ECP Implementation in December 2015. This was a useful eye opener on how the route of the ECP is decided and the supporting legislation. Attendees fed back to NE the need for follow

up training on how the access authority discharges its duties and powers once the ECP is open, and this was taken on board.

### Coastal Access Map – East Coast



Further information here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-the-east-of-england>

### Coastal Access Map – The Stour



**Miscellaneous**

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

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

END  
AW/SCC January 2015

# LAF Survey 2015 Results

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## Introduction

This report summarises the results of a survey of Local Access Forum (LAF) Chairs and Secretaries conducted between 17th April and 8th May 2015. As in previous years, the survey was web-based, though electronic and hard copy versions were also made available on request for anyone with limited or no internet access.

Information about the survey was circulated to the Secretaries of all of the 86 LAFs and we received 100 survey responses in total representing 58 LAFs (67%). Similar surveys were conducted in 2014 when we received 87 responses and also in 2013 when we received 78 responses. We are encouraged that the number is increasing each year. Where possible data comparisons between the previous year's survey results are included.

The information we have received from the survey will be used to inform the 2014 – 2015 National Annual Report to be submitted to Defra and will help us plan our future work with LAFs so many thanks for your contributions to the survey. It also is useful to keep us up to date with the range and quantity of LAF work, and the challenges and opportunities they face. Once again this feedback has served to highlight the contribution LAFs make to improving public access at the local level and the huge level of commitment that individual members bring to making these things happen.

Andy Mackintosh  
23/10/2015

## Report

### How LAFs operate

Over the year around half of the LAFs (52%, slightly down from last year's reported 59%) retained the same number of members; 23% (up 5% on last year's survey) had increased and 25% had decreased membership.

Two thirds of LAFs (up 9% on last year's survey report) met more than 3 times a year and only 10% met less than twice. Virtually all (99% - up 5% on last year) of meetings had more than half of their members attending.

In general LAFs again received good support from their appointing authority but notably a very small minority (4%) are still not employing a secretary or funding member expenses (6%), which are required by the legislation that established LAFs (The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007).

Nearly two thirds of LAFs (63%, up 6% on last year's survey report) operated sub-groups, who met at variable intervals throughout the year. They again covered a very wide range of topics including matters regarding the operation of their LAF, specific local consultations and strategies and national consultation responses.

### Engagement with other bodies

Just under half (43%, down from last year's reported 51%) of the survey respondents reported that their LAF had engaged with a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) via written communication though only a quarter of them reported that their LAF had had a meeting with an LNP which is large drop of 18% from last year's survey. More positively, 12% said that their LAF had worked on a joint project with an LNP which is a 7% improvement on last year.

Only 10% reported that their LAF had had written communication or 4% a meeting with a LEADER group and there was no joint working reported (5% reported joint working last year). In some cases LAFs are still unaware of LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs).

Written communication with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) was reported to be more (15%, down 2% on the 2014 survey) than with LEADER groups though only 4% reported any meetings and again there was no joint working reported. There still appears to be very limited working relationships with LAFs.

Roughly a quarter (24%) of LAFs had engaged with Health and Wellbeing boards through written communication, 15% (down 5% on last year) reported engagement via meetings and 8% (down 4%) reported joint working.

### Links with Natural England

The majority of respondents reported that they knew their local Natural England contact (94% - an increase of 1% from last year's survey). Roughly three quarters of respondents (78%, down 9% on last year) said that the local support they received from Natural England was very good to satisfactory. Suggestions to improve this

support included that Natural England should continue to work to improve communication with LAFs and provide more clarity on who LAFs should contact and how.

The work of the Regional Coordinators was rated very similarly to last year's survey with the vast majority (95%) saying that the support they received was very good to satisfactory.

The work of the Natural England national LAF team was reported to be mainly very good to satisfactory (79%, down 7% on last year's survey results) though there was disappointment that a national conference was not held last year and that the funding for the Regional Coordinators was withdrawn.

The quality of technical and specialist advice from Natural England teams was, as last year's survey, mostly (80%) rated very good to satisfactory. Natural England was again encouraged to develop guidance for LAFs on who's who and who does what in all relevant Natural England teams and encourage Natural England staff in work areas other than access and engagement to attend LAF meetings.

### Advice and Guidance

The majority of LAF Chairs and Secretaries were aware of the Defra guidance (98%) and use it (89%) which is virtually the same result and figures as last year's survey.

Most (59%) reported that they feel it doesn't need to be revised but more than half (55%, much more than last year) say it does need to be revised to:

- Include working with LNPs, LEPS, LAGs, HWWB
- How sub-groups operate;
- Clarity on the working of larger joint LAFs
- Update parts of the guidance that are now out of date

Similar to the results from last year's survey, the majority (91%) know of the LAF handbook, and most (56%) use it.

Following suggestions from last year's survey to produce guidance in PDF form, the LAF Toolkit on Huddle is being developed and was mostly (90%) rated very good to satisfactory. Suggestions included to continue to develop the toolkit and include as much of the handbook as is still relevant and to do sections on LEPS and LAGs.

The number of LAFs receiving training for new members by their local authority was reported to be up (46%, up 6%). As last year, the training was rated mainly good to satisfactory. The results also show that most appointing authorities (90%) have paid for a LAF member to attend national conferences. The majority (81%, up 5% on last year) responded to say that Natural England should organise more face to face training for LAFs. The type of training required ranged from 'How to Chair a LAF'/LAF Operation, recruitment strategies, ROWIPs. Conference workshops were suggested as a possible way to deliver this training nationally.

Over three quarters (77%, up 5% on last year) of the respondents rated Huddle's ease of use as being very good to satisfactory.

LAF Chairs and Secretaries surveyed reported that they mainly accessed Huddle monthly (32%, same as last year) with 18% checking the site weekly and half of them, reporting that they checked less than monthly or never.

34% (down 8% from last years reported 42%) feed information from Huddle to their LAF at meetings.

There was a slight increase (4%) from last year's results in confidence to join in on Huddle and also a 5% drop in confidence to upload files or amend whiteboards. The individual sections on Huddle were again mostly rated very good to satisfactory. Suggestions to improve Huddle included simplifying the workspace to make it easier for users to navigate and to encourage greater use.










### **Reporting process**




The clarity and ease of use of the annual reporting guidance and Annual Review Form produced by Natural England was rated at very good to satisfactory by nearly all (99%) of respondents and most (83%) saw the benefit in using the Annual Review Form. Again, nearly all (96%, up 5% on last year's survey results) rated the annual reporting process overall to be very good to satisfactory. Respondents suggested that Natural England should continue to develop and improve the annual reporting process.

## Tables and Charts

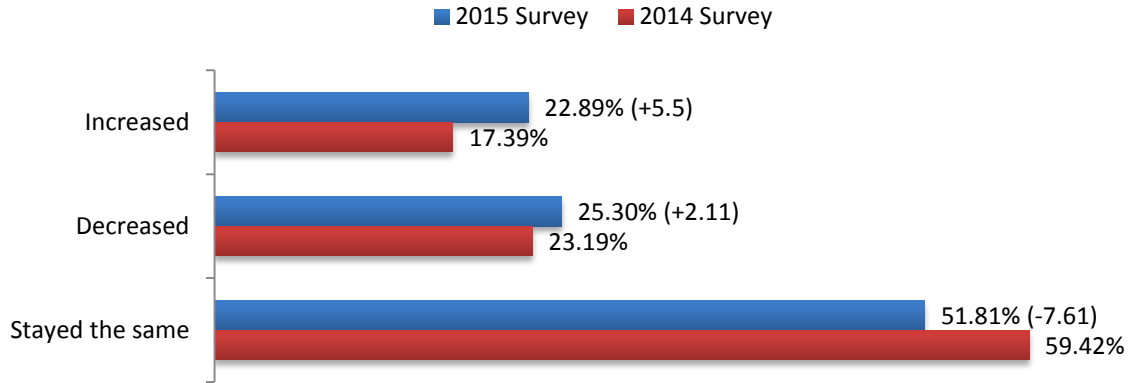
### About your LAF

What is the name of your LAF? (Leave blank if you would prefer not to say)			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	75
		answered	75
		did not answer	25

What region is your LAF located in?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	South West		15.48% 13
2	South East		23.81% 20
3	West Midlands		4.76% 4
4	East Midlands		15.48% 13
5	East of England		9.52% 8
6	Yorkshire and Humberside		13.10% 11
7	North West		9.52% 8
8	North East		8.33% 7
9	Rather not say		1.19% 1
		answered	84
		did not answer	16

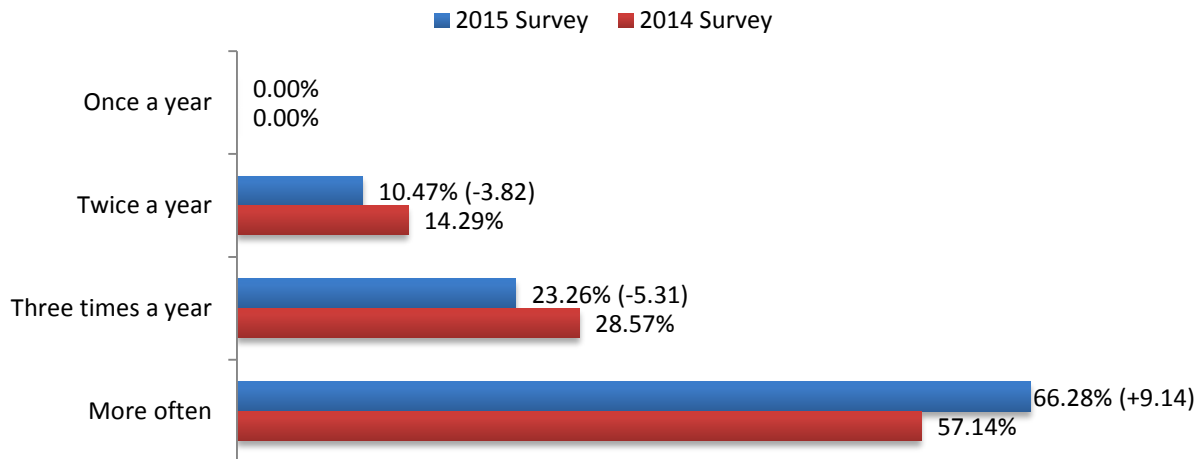
In the last 12 months, has your LAF membership:			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Increased		22.89% 19
2	Decreased		25.30% 21
3	Stayed the same		51.81% 43
		answered	83
		did not answer	17

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets






How often does your LAF meet?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Once a year			0.00%	0
2	Twice a year			10.47%	9
3	Three times a year			23.26%	20
4	More often			66.28%	57
				answered	86
				did not answer	14

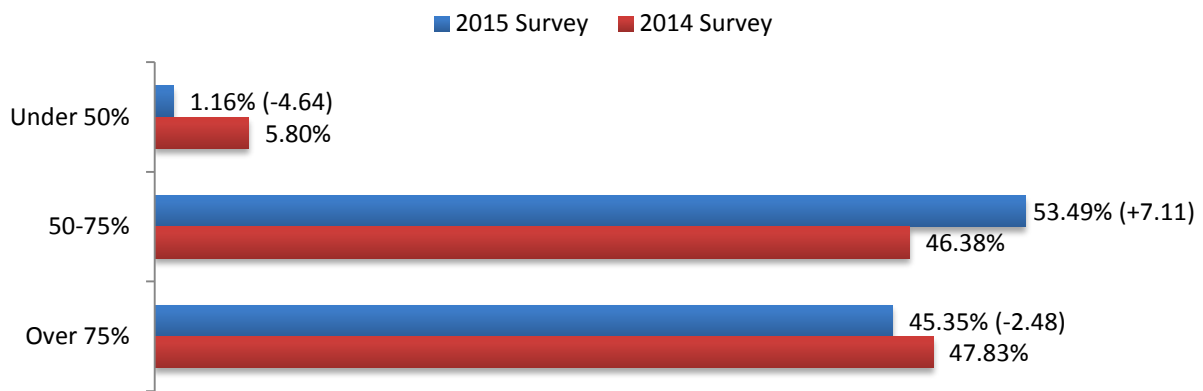
**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets




### What is the attendance rate at your LAF meetings generally?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Under 50%		1.16%	1
2	50-75%		53.49%	46
3	Over 75%		45.35%	39
			answered	86
			did not answer	14

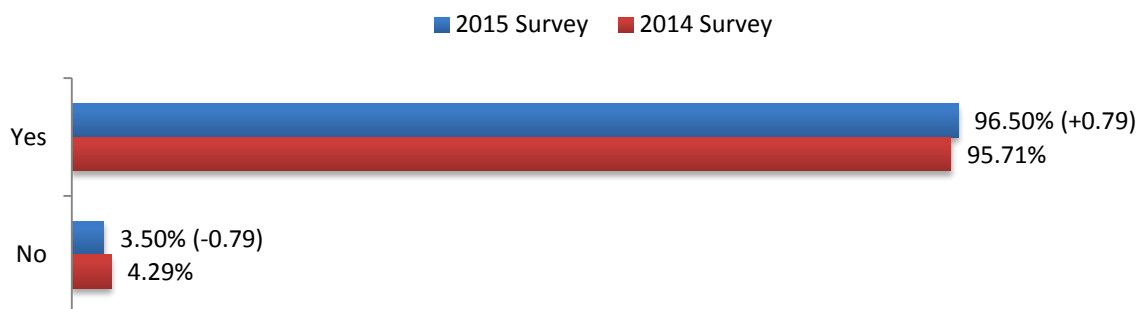
#### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



### How does the appointing authority support your LAF?

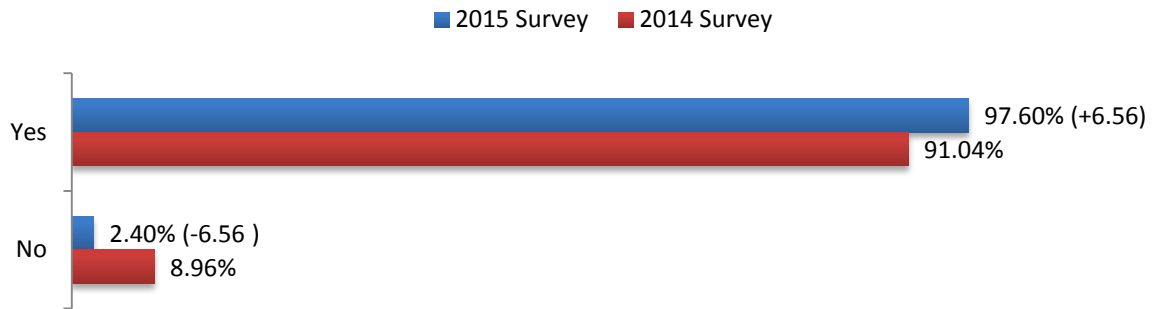
6.1. Provide or fund the LAF secretary			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		96.5%	83
2	No		3.5%	3
			answered	86

#### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



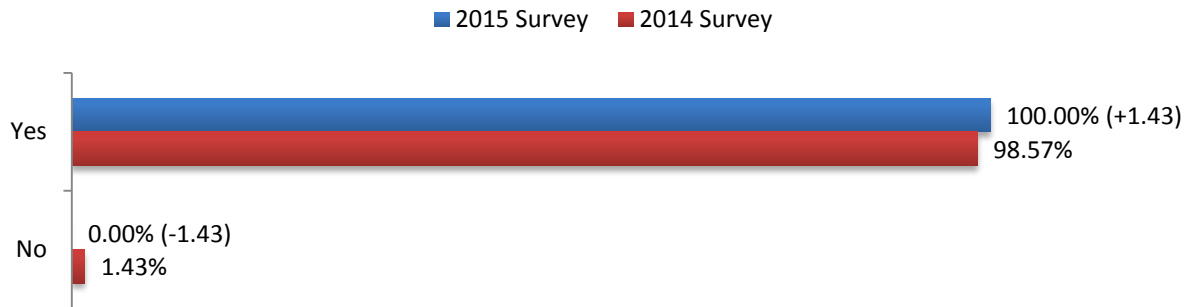
6.2. Provide meeting rooms			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		97.6%	82
2	No		2.4%	2
			answered	84

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



6.3. Provide expert advice from access and rights of way officers			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		100.0%	86
2	No		0.0%	0
			answered	86

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

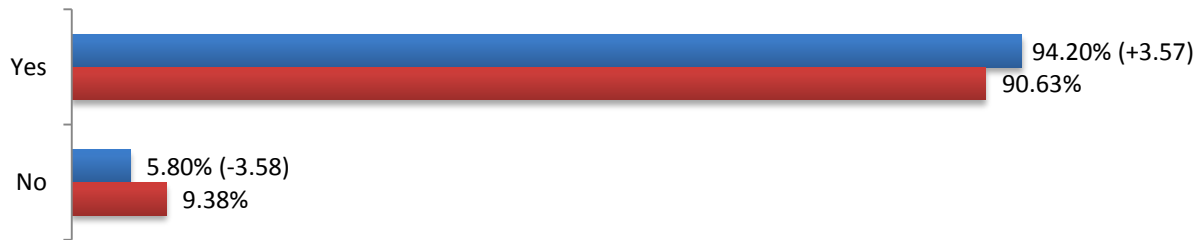


6.4. Fund attendance fee and/or travel costs for meetings			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		94.2%	81
2	No		5.8%	5
			answered	86



**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



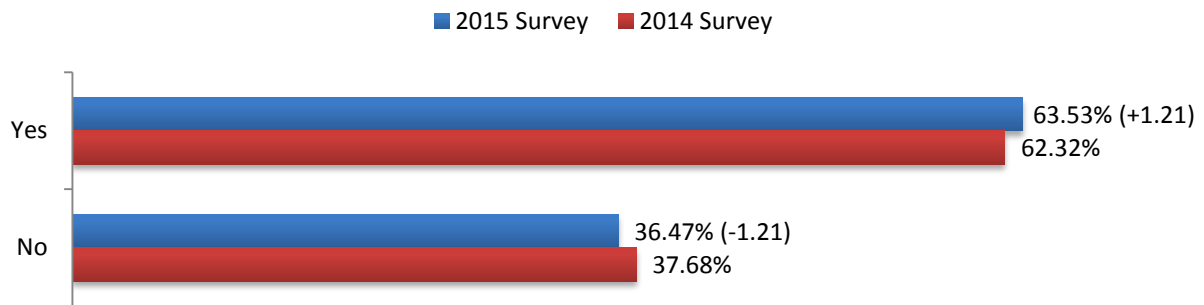
6.5. Does your LAF cover other member expenses for attending other events, meetings and activities?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		88.1%	74
2	No		11.9%	10
			answered	84

**Answers for:** Other form of support (please specify):

- Pays for refreshments
- Provides a county facilitator
- Attending other Local LAFs as a guest
- Host LAF's website
- Arranges and funds training events
- Arranges site visits including transport
- Attends regional meetings
- Various shows to promote and represent the LAF and special meetings over and above scheduled meetings
- Pays for speakers
- Provision of audio tape of papers for blind member
- Working with LAF and sub groups
- Invitations to outside speakers and presentations on relevant issues
- Produce a LAF banner to display at events
- Facilitate attendance at authority events for LAF members to raise profile
- Training and information sessions for new members and on subjects which have been identified as being of particular interest or relevance for LAF members

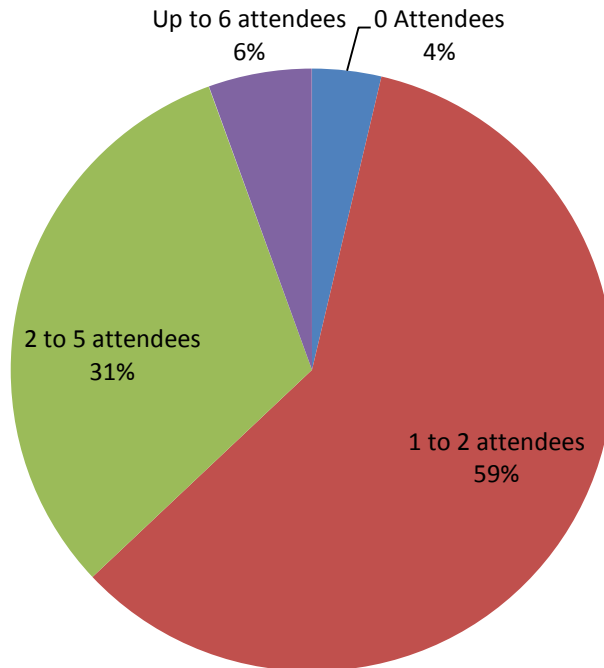
Do members of the public attend your LAF meetings?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		63.53%	54
2	No		36.47%	31
			answered	85
			did not answer	15

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
 Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets





If 'Yes' how many would usually attend? (57 answers)

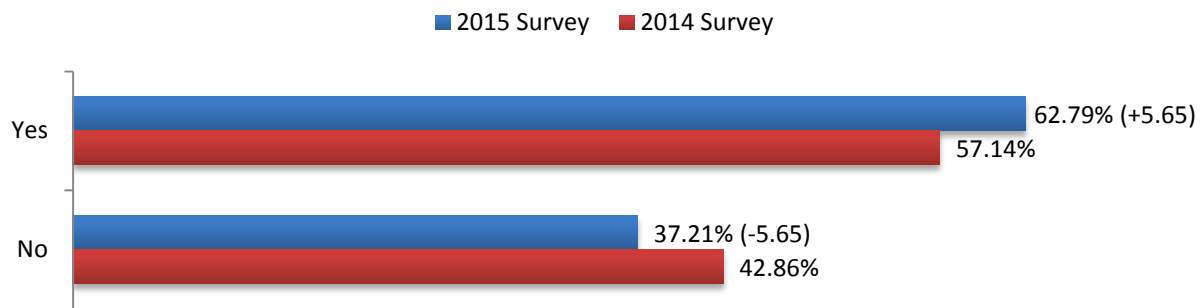
From the answers received, the following chart gives a percentage breakdown:



## LAF sub-groups

Does your LAF have sub-groups?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		62.79%	54
2	No		37.21%	32
			answered	86
			did not answer	14

### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



What subjects do they cover?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	54
			answered	54
			did not answer	46

### Common or notable answers

Access for All

Planning / Development

Rural Road Safety

Site visits

ROWIPs

Lost ways

Orders

Open access

Green Lanes

Coastal access

Study of Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads

---

Planning Application for Potash mine

---

LAF project - Providing Access to Hampshire's Heritage

---

Access on MOD land

---

List of Streets / Definitive Map

---

Policy advice

---

Access on Foot

---

Bridleways and Restricted Byways

---

Air / water sports

---

Cave and Crag

---

Service Delivery

---

Cycling

---

Disabled access

---

New access & Maintenance of existing access

---

Cave & Crag

---

Fast Response Team to provide responses to consultations outside of the formal meeting dates

---

representation on other National Park meetings/working groups

---

Strategic Development

---

Annual Work Plan

---

Parish Liaison

---

Network Rail

---

Site-specific changes and improvements

---

Dog Control Orders / Dogs in the countryside

---

Moorland and Open Access Working Group

---

Consultations

---

Publicity / Recruitment

---

Self-guided walk

---

RoW Standards review

---

Riparian access

---

Providing information for Wind Farm project.

---

Coast - public transport & PRoW - RoWIP - numerous individual consultations

---

Reps - Health & Wellbeing Board, LNP, LEP, AoNBs, TROs

---

Network Opportunities

---

Verges

---

Eden Valley railway line

---

Long distant equestrian route

---

Landowner management perspective

---

Sizewell C

---

Forests and Woodlands

---

Agri-Environment Access Schemes

---

Website advice for the LA

Voluntary maintenance / Footpath clearance groups

Engage with Waterway Plan

Coastal Country park

Horse-riding

HS2

Investigating opportunities to create PRow on County Council owned farms

County Small Grants Panel

Asserting & Protecting the Public Rights

Public enquires

Opportunities and Promotion





RoW improvement goals

Mainly consultation requests from various sources such as Forestry Commission, the National Park Authority, the County Council etc.

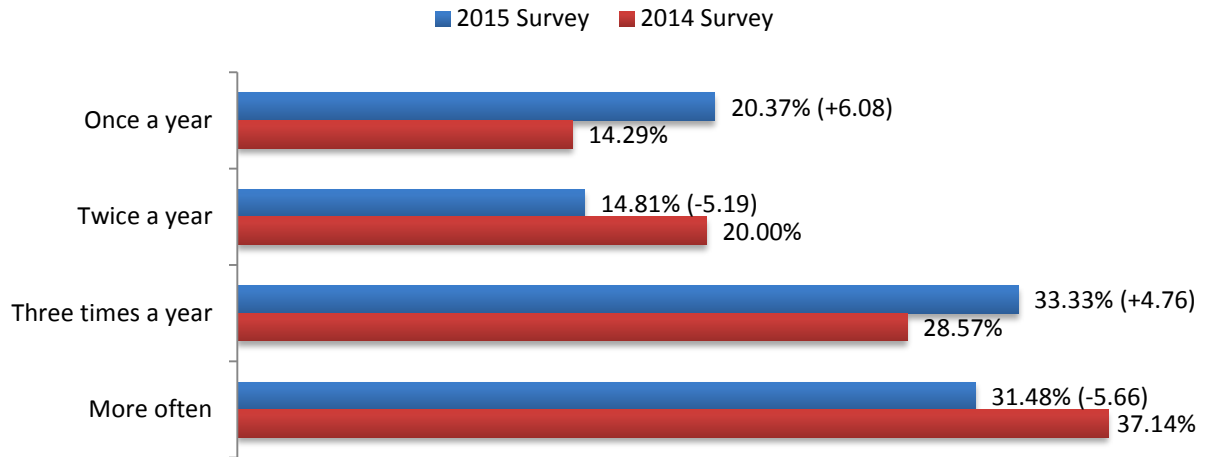
Multi-user group

Access restrictions

Codes of conduct

How often do they meet on average?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Once a year		20.37%	11
2	Twice a year		14.81%	8
3	Three times a year		33.33%	18
4	More often		31.48%	17
			answered	54
			did not answer	46

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



How do they report back to main LAF?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	54
		answered	54
		did not answer	46

**Common or notable answers**

Email between meetings - any meeting notes are circulated by email or with the meeting papers.

Written paper by sub group chairman - by papers at meetings

E-mail members at time then agenda item at meeting

Notes of meetings circulated and verbal update at next meeting

Written or verbal report to each meeting

On some issues full consultation report is provided

Findings presented at the main meeting for Q&A's

They provide written reports to record a significant development or report back verbally re brief update.

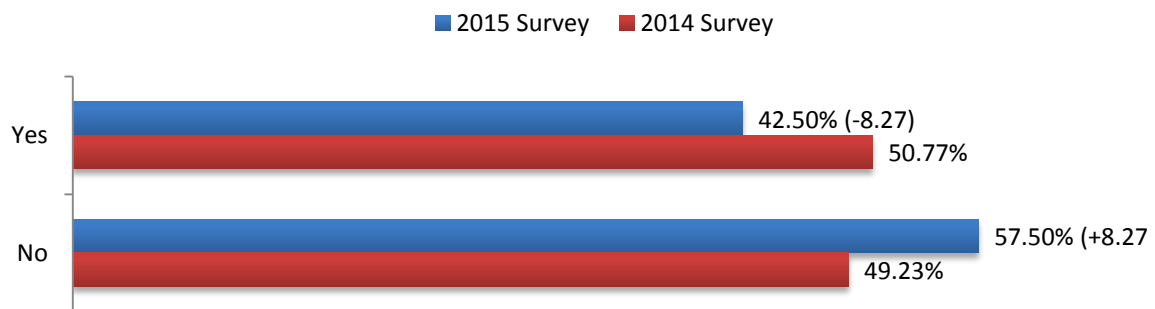
Informally through Google groups

## Contact with other bodies

### Local Nature Partnership

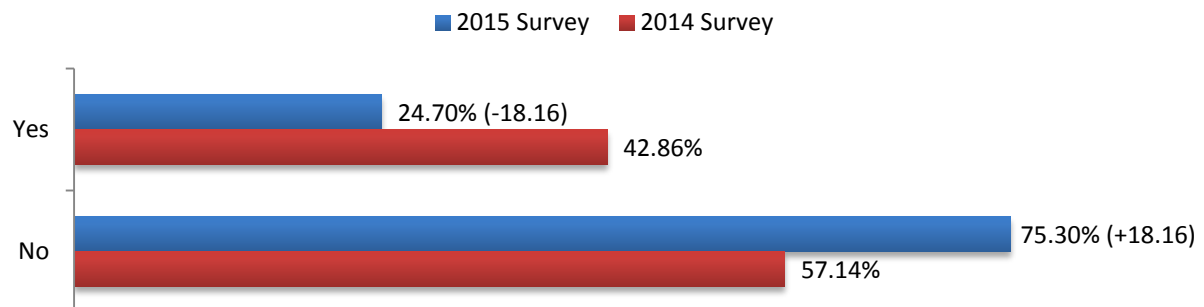
12.1. Written communication			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		42.5%	34
2	No		57.5%	46
			answered	80

#### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



12.2. Meeting			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		24.7%	20
2	No		75.3%	61
			answered	81

#### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



12.3. Joint work/projects			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		11.8%	9
2	No		88.2%	67
			answered	76

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



Other, please summarise activity: (30 answers)

**Common or notable answers**

One member of our LAF has been nominated as point of contact for Local Nature Partnership.

At conferences and also part of the 'Naturally Healthy Group' under the umbrella of the LNP

New LNP officer very recently in post - to be invited to update at the next LAF public meeting

I am on the LNP Board as Chair of the LAF

Our LAF has attended local LNP meetings & offered to assist in joint works/projects but the LNP's do not appear to be interested in any such relationship

A member of the LAF also represents us on the LNP, and reports back to us as necessary

Via the LA's Natural & Historic Environment Manager - Agenda item each meeting

No LNP

The Chairman of the LNP is in regular contact with a separate co-operation grouping in which the LAF is represented.

Have a workshop offered, gave input at that workshop and gave written feedback afterwards, but no positive action since

We have written to make contact as encouraged by Natural England - twice - but have had no reply or acknowledgement

Feedback has been received but general feeling from the LAF is that LNP needs to provide more information that is easily understood and readily available

One of our members is on the steering committee of the LNP

The LAF is recognised as a partner by the LNP and the LAFs role/input identified in an LNP publication

The LNP Development Manager gave a presentation to the LAF, describing the work of the LNP and the opportunities available.

Secretariat sits on the LNP Steering Group



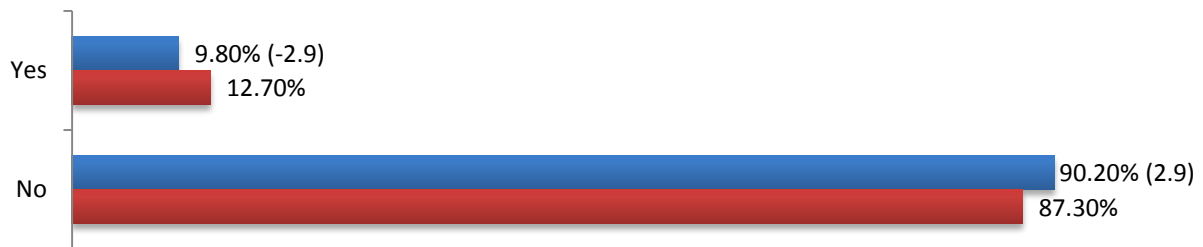
## LEADER Local Action Group

answered	82
did not answer	18

13.1. Written communication			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		9.8%	8
2	No		90.2%	74
			answered	82

### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

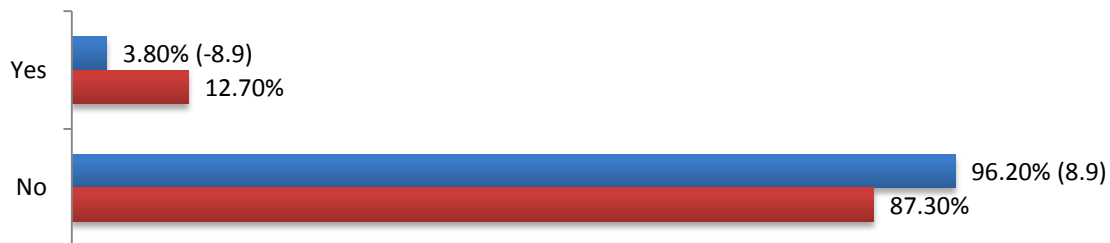
■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



13.2. Meeting			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		3.8%	3
2	No		96.2%	76
			answered	79

### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

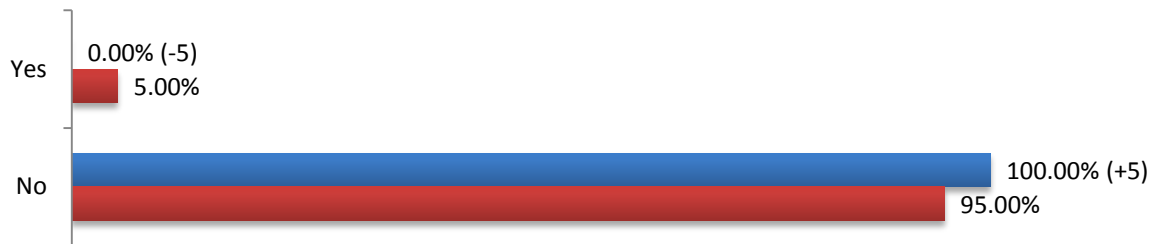
■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



13.3. Joint work/projects			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		0.0%	0
2	No		100.0%	79
			answered	79

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



Other, please summarise activity: (14 answers)

**Common or notable answers**

No current involvement

Via inputs from Natural England member of the LAF

No Local Action Group locally

National Park has contacts

Not in a LEADER Area

LAF member sits on the LEADER Local Action Group and reports back to the LAF at the quarterly meetings where appropriate

Information has been forwarded from the LAF Regional Co-ordinator on an introduction to LEADER funding. Some LAF members have knowledge of this funding being provided for projects in the area on a fairly limited basis

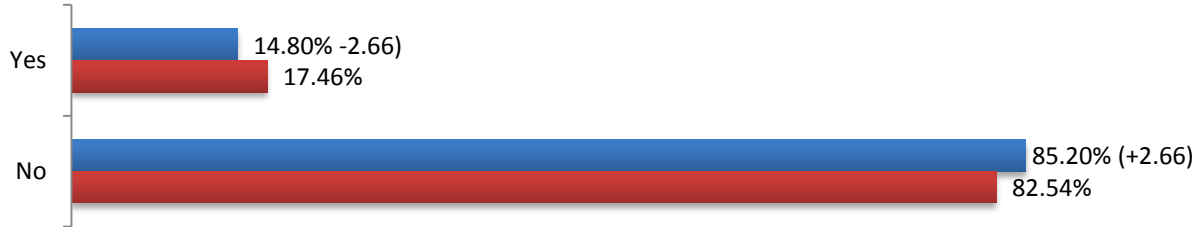
**Local Enterprise Partnership**

answered	82
did not answer	18

14.1. Written communication			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		14.8%	12
2	No		85.2%	69
			answered	81

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

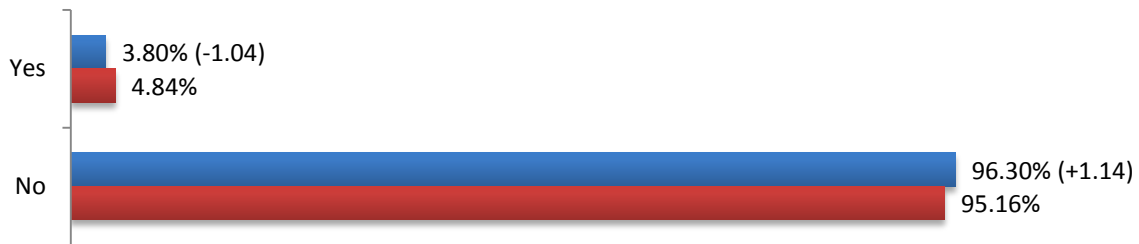
■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



14.2. Meeting			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		3.8%	3
2	No		96.3%	77
			answered	80

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

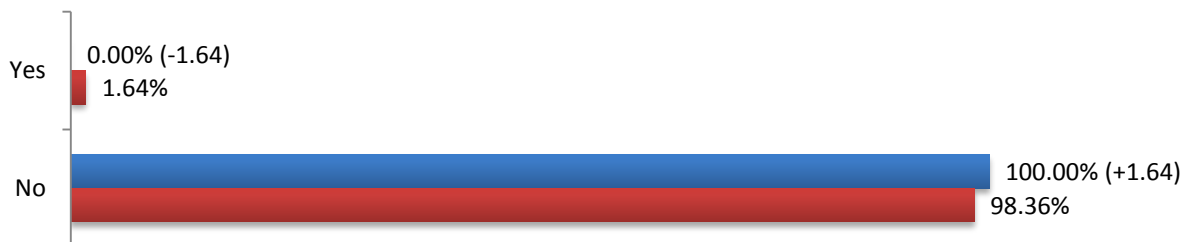
■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



14.3. Joint work/projects			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		0.0%	0
2	No		100.0%	79
			answered	79

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey



Other, please summarise activity: (15 answers)

## Common or notable answers

LEP priorities do not yet include access issues

Potential opportunities have been discussed but nothing has been progressed as yet

No contact

Via colleagues in the LA's Transport Planning Team

National Park in contact and setting up joint working with the LEP - The LAF are kept informed but not involved



We have written to make contact as encouraged by Natural England - twice - but have had no reply or acknowledgement

We continue to struggle to get any response at all from our LEP

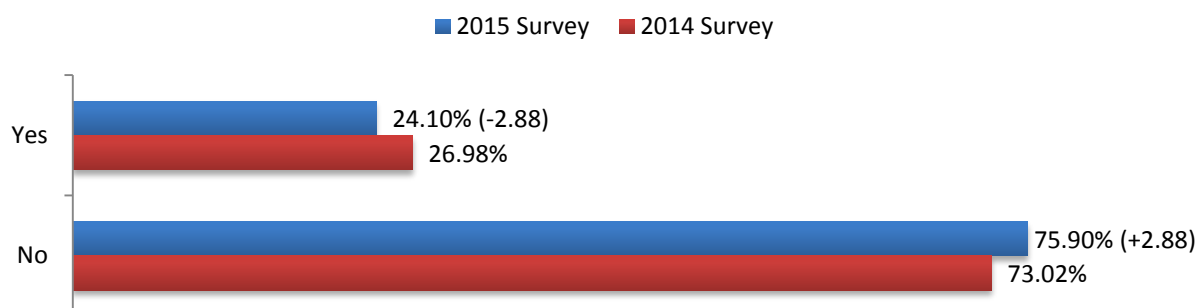
Information has been presented to LAF members



## Health and Wellbeing Board

answered	81
did not answer	19

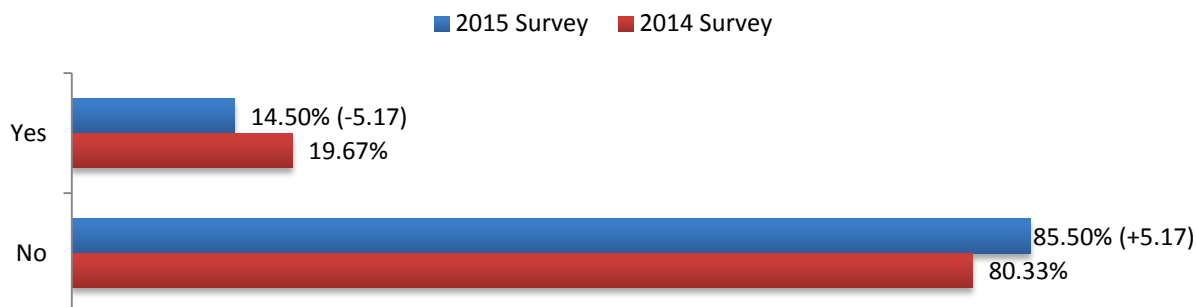
15.1. Written communication			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		24.1%	19
2	No		75.9%	60
			answered	79

### Results compared to last year's LAF survey Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



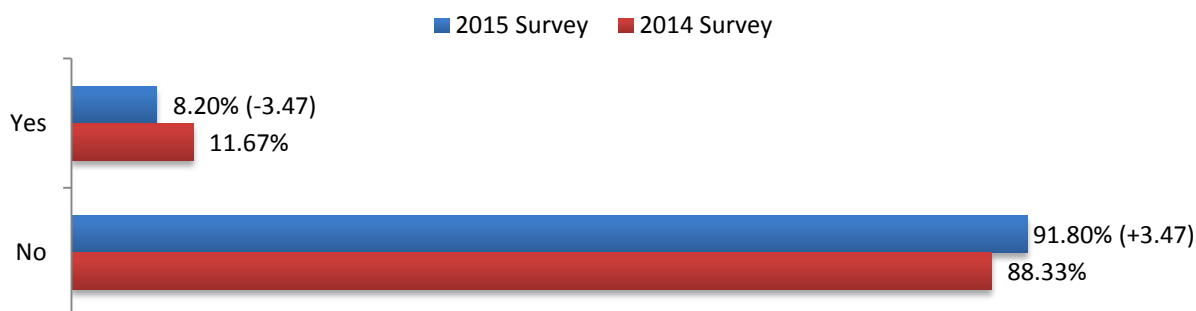
15.2. Meeting			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		14.5%	11
2	No		85.5%	65
			answered	76

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



15.3. Joint work/projects			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		8.2%	6
2	No		91.8%	67
			answered	73

**Results compared to last year's LAF survey**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



Other, please summarise activity: (23 answers)

**Common or notable answers**

The Health and Wellbeing Board has a strong connection with the Local Nature Partnership in terms of its programme of work

The LAF is aware but not in direct communication

LAF support the development of the Health Walks programme in the county, funded via the Director of Public Health, County Council, who is a member of the H&W Board. The Board's Strategy includes Healthy Living - Promoting healthy weight and increasing physical activity, under which health Walks sit

The LAF has written to the board to see if the LAF can be involved

Hoping to hear news of support for a primary schools walking initiative instigated by our LAF

We have had a presentation from Public Health. The LAF in conjunction with Natural England is in the very early stages of trying to develop a pilot project that would aim to get GPs to prescribe access to the outdoors, walking and connecting with nature as an alternative to other more costly interventions

Attendance at conference



We have found it very difficult to get a meaningful input to our local H&WB Boards, but are now making a bit of progress

There is a LAF member who has been attending meetings; however he has felt there has not been any opportunity to speak/ be actively involved in any way. He will keep a watching brief, but feels frustrated

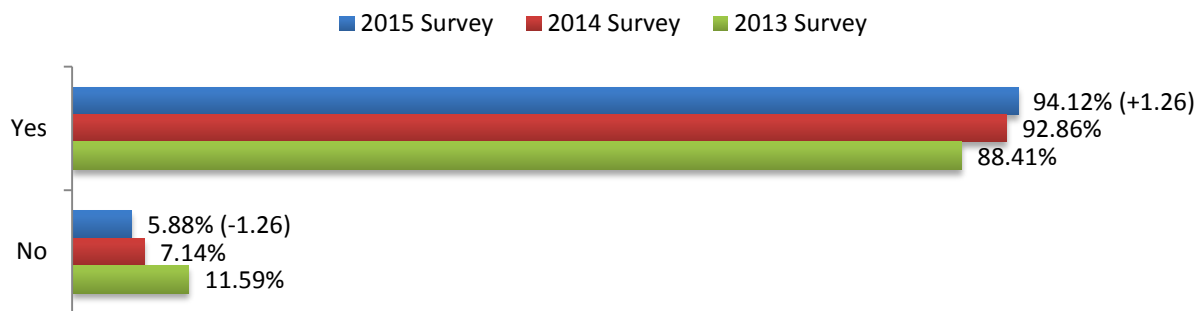
We have had engagement with Public Health but not direct contact with the Health and Wellbeing Board itself






Public Health Manager visited and presented at LAF meeting

## Local support from Natural England

Do you know who your LAF local contact is in Natural England?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		94.12%	80
2	No		5.88%	5
			answered	85
			did not answer	15

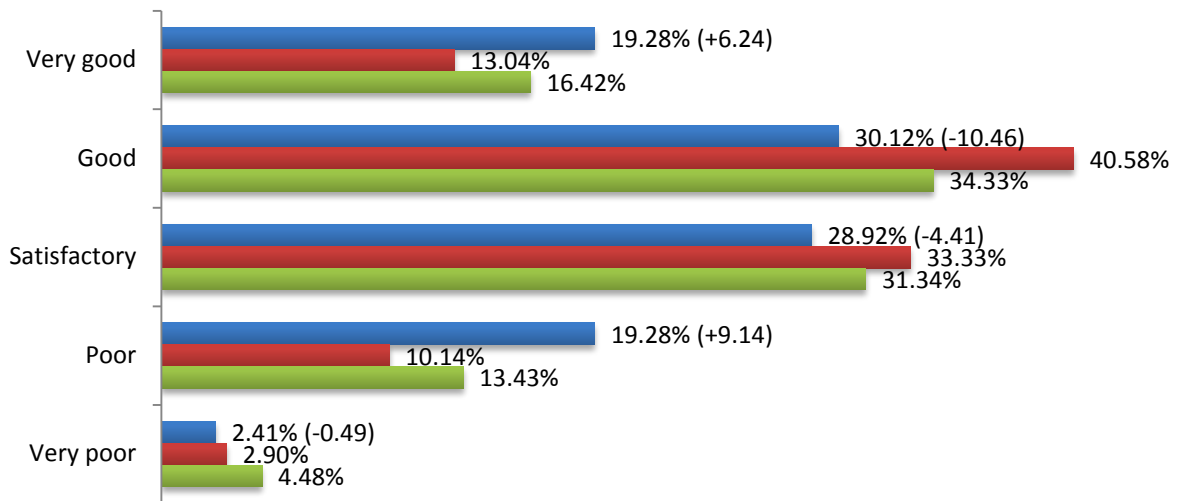
**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



How would you rate the level of support from your LAF local contact?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		19.28%	16
2	Good		30.12%	25
3	Satisfactory		28.92%	24
4	Poor		19.28%	16
5	Very poor		2.41%	2
			answered	83
			did not answer	17

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey



**What suggestions would you make to improve local support for your LAF from Natural England?**

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	57
		answered	57
		did not answer	43

**Common or notable answers**

We have not yet had the opportunity to develop ma relationship with the new NE local contact

Employ some full-time staff would help. Our local NE contact works part-time and I have no idea how much of that time is/should be dedicated to working with the LAF

More frequent attendance at LAF meetings

The representatives NE need to be far more flexible on times and dates.

Continue with and organise regional meetings

More regular communication and contact

Provide regular updates

Difficult to contact (often out of office and calls not returned)

Reinstate Regional Co-ordinators

More consistency in NE contact roles

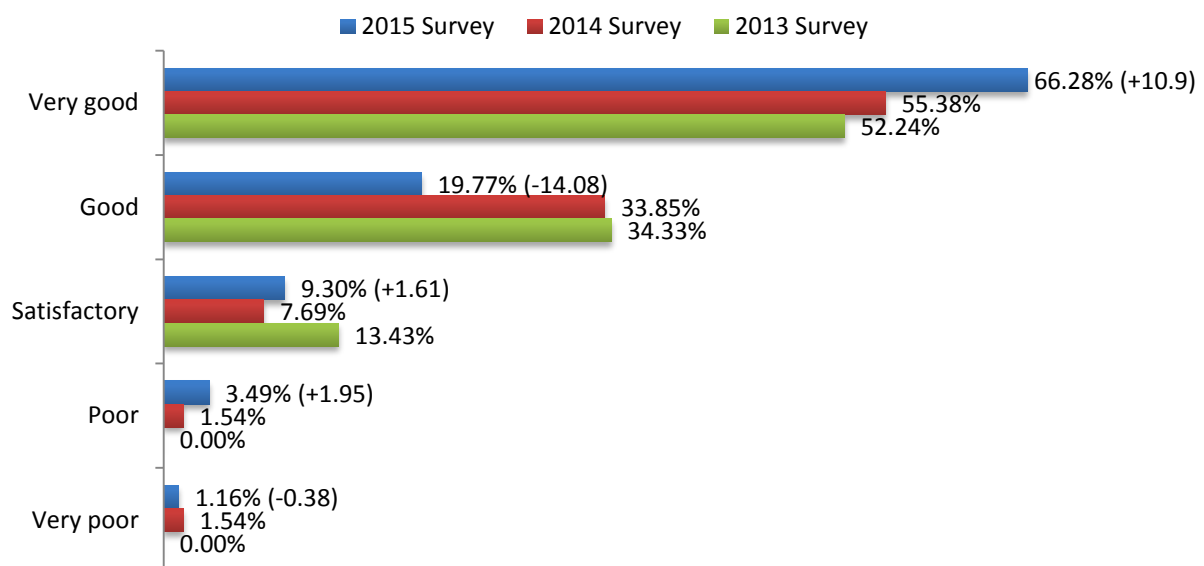
Help with access to Huddle

Not sure who our contact is now

## Regional support from Natural England for 2014/15

How would you rate the level of support from your LAF Regional Coordinator?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		66.28%	57
2	Good		19.77%	17
3	Satisfactory		9.30%	8
4	Poor		3.49%	3
5	Very poor		1.16%	1
			answered	86
			did not answer	14

### Results compared to previous LAF surveys Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



What suggestions would you make to improve regional support for your LAF?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	61
			answered	61
			did not answer	39

### Common or notable answers

Reinstate the regional co-ordinator position

The services provided by the NE Regional Coordinators are unlikely to be replicated by the NE LAF contact staff



Funding to support and organisation of regional meetings

Keep a strong regional structure

The fact of our Regional Coordinator's discontinuance as a role will have a negative effect on our work, and we would welcome the reinstatement of the role without delay

More inter regional interaction and communication. Joint working on national interest issues. More coordinated Support for the LAFS since it has been withdrawn

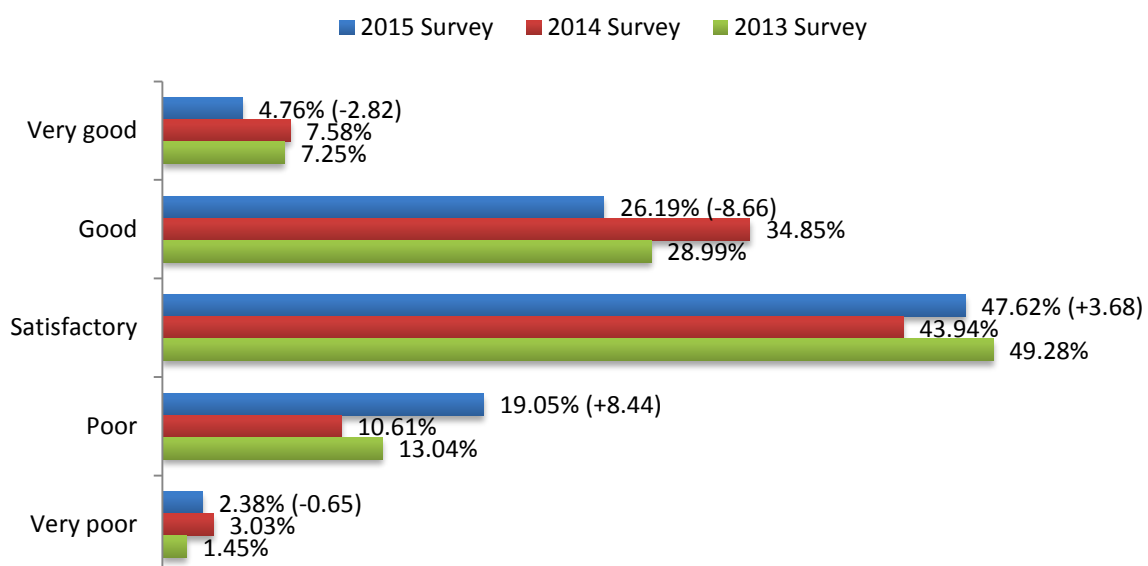
Profile raising

She provides excellent support; I would like that formally recorded please

## National support from Natural England

How would you rate the level of support from Natural England nationally?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good			4.76%	4
2	Good			26.19%	22
3	Satisfactory			47.62%	40
4	Poor			19.05%	16
5	Very poor			2.38%	2
				answered	84
				did not answer	16

### Results compared to previous LAF surveys Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



## What suggestions would you make to improve national support for your LAF from Natural England

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	49
		answered	49
		did not answer	51

### Common or notable answers

It was disappointing that the planned national conference for LAFs did not take place during 2014-15.

Provide some funding for regional activities

It would be good if resources could be found to deliver a series of information sharing and networking events in 2015-16, possibly four across the country to minimise venue and travel costs.

It is always useful to have feedback from the Defra Minister on the LAF Annual Report as that encourages LAF members in their work as volunteers

Continue to provide a national conference. Funding for National conference including travel and accommodation costs

Opportunities (fully funded) for other LAF members to receive training

It would help if I knew who was the contact for what ,so questions could be directed to the right section and what it is that could be expected

Collation & dissemination of good practice examples of LAFs' work & projects

Naive faith in Huddle is misplaced - not accessible to all LAF members, a nuisance to have to use it, if somebody sends an e-mail saying he has posted something, please say what the subject is - then we can decide if it important or not

Huddle, annual reports etc. are well run. If LAFs are to continue to function properly, there needs to be an annual National or Regional conference to spread good practice and inspire LAF Chairs and members

Giving LAFs more promotion and publicity

Regular LAF newsletters are useful, although use of Huddle is still relatively low and LAF members do not seem that keen on using an online Forum

A more integrated and active approach

reviewing the regulations / guidance that govern how LAFs should be run.

Interpretation of government directives and policies

The sharing of feedback from national and regional conferences is extremely useful. Sharing best practice is vital now in planning strategic work






Support has become progressively more indirect and distant. To resolve resource constraints more needs to be done in facilitating federation of LAF's at both a national and regional level giving a better support framework for volunteer efforts

LAF News is very useful

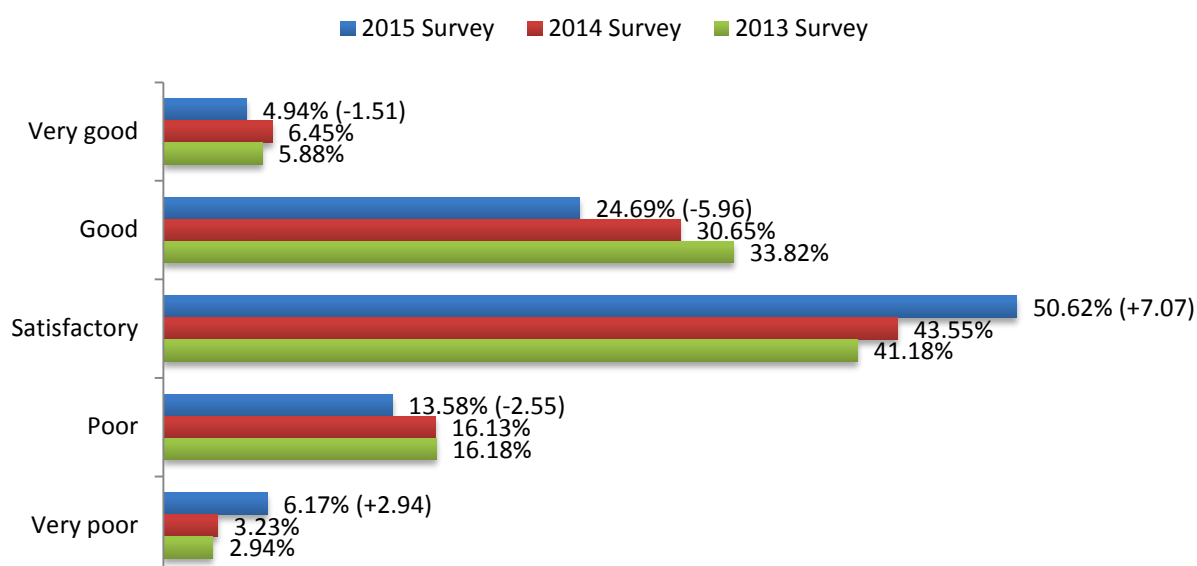
Continue to host Huddle as an online forum for LAFs

Assist with raising the profile of LAFs and continue with guidance/ help as to how they can engage more constructively with LNPs, Public Health Boards etc. to tap into funding for rights of way and access work in the light of the cuts being faced by local authorities.

## Other contributions to LAFs from Natural England

How would you rate the level of support and advice from Natural England teams?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		4.94%	4
2	Good		24.69%	20
3	Satisfactory		50.62%	41
4	Poor		13.58%	11
5	Very poor		6.17%	5
			answered	81
			did not answer	19

### Results compared to previous LAF surveys Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



What suggestions would you make to improve this?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	38
			answered	38
			did not answer	62

### Common or notable answers

There may be areas of work that Natural England are involved with, unbeknown to the LAF, which it could be useful to share. For example, the LAF has had no contact with Natural England on green infrastructure and planning and it is

possible both NE and the LAF are responding to the same consultations and policy documents

The support and advice from the Coastal Access team has always been excellent

Support in respect of 'P4C' was good but haven't had cause to seek advice on any other matter. Would be interested to know what else is available

Info on what the teams, their contact details and their priorities

More contact and communication with LAFs

The only recent support has been from contact for the renewal of Open Access Restrictions

While quite good in some respects, NE's advice often seems rather idealised and removed from real world - we seem to be expected to network with everyone, including e.g. LEPs, which inhabit a rather different environment. NE's view of LAF role seems over-ambitious and removed from my own experience and understanding

We are in dialogue across the north east in an attempt to produce a Regional Access Strategy in the absence of our inclusion in a Regional Transport Plan. Up until now Natural England are not assisting with the development of this project other than offering to assist with the search for funding pots. This is not satisfactory and should be addressed promptly

Huddle is great for discussions/information sharing etc. but sometimes the veracity of discussion content is questionable - it is difficult to know who is an authority on a subject and who is not.

The advice sheets on huddle are great but more in-depth/detailed ones are needed or at the least links to such detail.



Whilst the theory behind making links with bodies such as LNPs is good/common sense etc. in reality - from county to county- the experiences/set up can vary greatly.

I have often found getting information - especially with regard to specific LAF questions - from NE very difficult. Everyone is always very helpful but you often get passed from one person to another often ending up back where you began. Again I appreciate how stretched staff are and on other matters I have often had good support/advice re broader general info requests examples including P4C, MENE

Some of these areas are quite sensitive ones and I have sought and obtained some very good advice for certain areas such as open access restrictions etc. where particular concerns have cropped up. Again, I think LAFs have a responsibility to seek the advice they need but I wouldn't necessarily know who to go to for each of the things listed above and so would go through the regional co-ordinator and other existing contacts to find the right person. Again, any important information relating to any of the above-listed items should always be cascaded via Huddle. I think the end of DEFRA stewardship schemes for example is going to be a major agenda item for many LAFs from now on and Natural England should prepare to provide an amount of advice on this. Again, sharing ideas and practice across the country will be useful

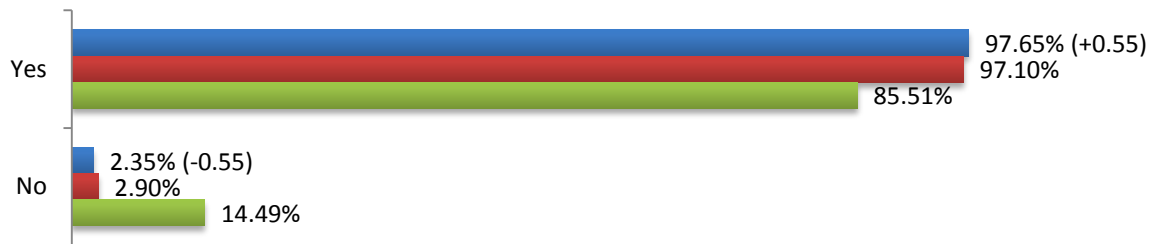
There is quite a bit of room for improvement here e.g. clarifying who does what in Natural England and the possibility of specialists in certain fields attending LAF meetings to discuss particular topics and offer advice, better understanding etc. - perhaps to a gathering of several LAFs in an area to make this more worthwhile

## Defra guidance

Are you aware of the Defra guidance issued by the Secretary of State in 2007?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		97.65%	83
2	No		2.35%	2
			answered	85
			did not answer	15

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

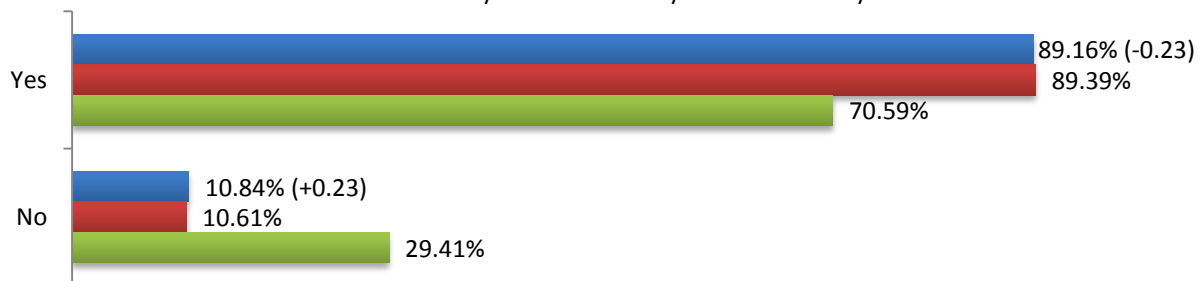
■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey



Do you use it?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes			89.16%	74
2	No			10.84%	9
				answered	83
				did not answer	17

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

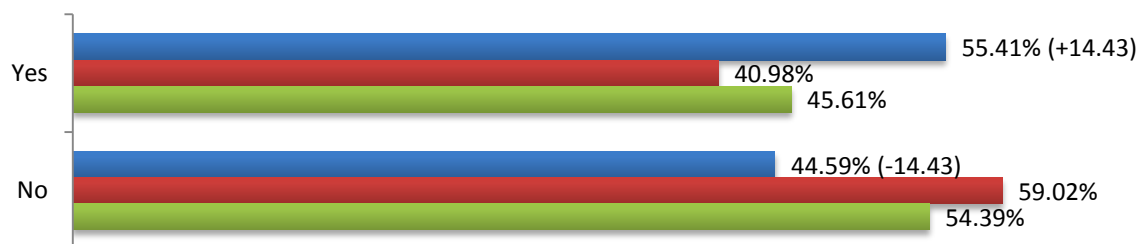
■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey



Does it need to be revised?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes			55.41%	41
2	No			44.59%	33
				answered	74
				did not answer	26

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey   ■ 2014 Survey   ■ 2013 Survey



If 'Yes', how? (44 answers)

**Common or notable answers**

Defra's working practices has changed since 2007 so there may be elements which are no longer relevant

An addendum to explain the roles of Local Nature Partnerships, LEADER, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Boards etc.

Reference to annual reporting arrangements needs to be updated

4.6 Sub-groups. Sub-groups and working groups form a very important part of LAF work, enabling responses to be made to consultations within deadlines and to develop positions on areas of work the LAF is pursuing. Greater flexibility on how these operate, but still with the proviso that a report should be made to the next public meeting, would be very helpful

7.2 The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes reference to LAF involvement. This would also supersede the sections on dog control orders and alley gating which are incorporated in the new Act

The Guidance makes no reference which LAFs are now being encouraged to develop links with

Annex C. Information on selected bodies and associated web links need checking

Reference to "The Discovering Lost Ways Project" on page 31 need to be updated

Some areas of the Guidance are out of date, for example 11. Discovering Lost Ways Project; 20. permissive access under stewardship

Does section 4.4 need to include reference to any right by the public to record or film LAF meetings?

The process of getting new members need to be made simpler and the term of membership extended

Updated to take account of LAs' budget cuts, affecting access teams

Improvements on representation

Revise along the lines of the Smarter Guidance Criteria, inc. the Equality Act 2011, etc.

Needs an executive summary

Needs to reflect the changes in legislation and how Local Authorities now operate following years of funding reductions.

It would be helpful to give clear advice to what can/should happen if a section 94(4) body declines to take the LAF advice offered. The highways department has never once consulted us, and when offered constructive advice and a meeting requested, it has been disregarded. It is difficult to engage with them, and they see any consultation only on 'their' terms



To reflect the situation where there are more than 3 appointing authorities so that each authority can have proper member representation

Needs to be bought up to date - or replaced by a rolling program of revised best practice guides

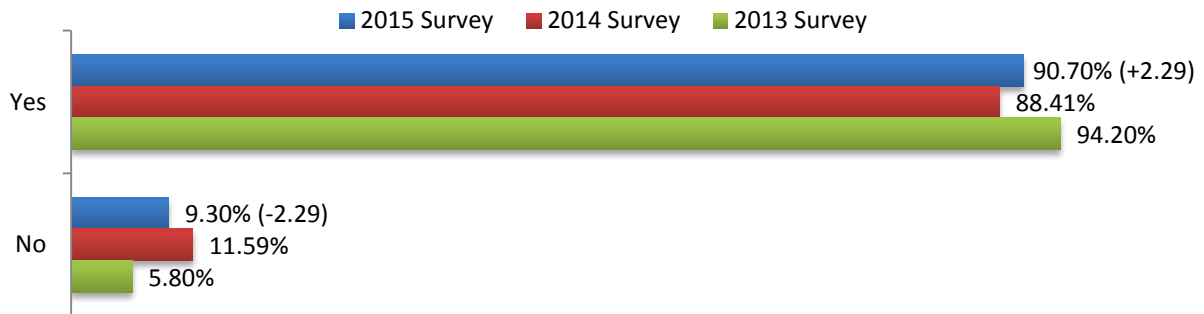
Reduce the burden on county councils for facilitating LAFs. LAFs should be run in a less bureaucratic way in time of reduced resources. This includes officer time - I spend a LOT of time performing secretarial duties for the LAF at certain



times when I have a lot of other work that needs to be done and a reduced number of colleagues

## LAF handbook

Are you aware of the LAF handbook?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		90.70%	78
2	No		9.30%	8
			answered	86
			did not answer	14

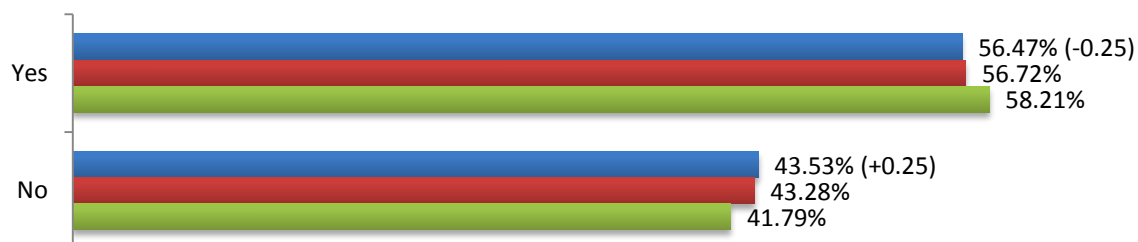
### Results compared to previous LAF surveys Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



Do you use it?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		56.47%	48
2	No		43.53%	37
			answered	85
			did not answer	15

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey   ■ 2014 Survey   ■ 2013 Survey



## LAF Toolkit

How would you rate it as a mechanism for sharing up to date good practice with the LAFs?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		12.66%	10
2	Good		39.24%	31
3	Satisfactory		37.97%	30
4	Poor		8.86%	7
5	Very poor		1.27%	1
			answered	79
			did not answer	21

What other mechanisms do you suggest?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	40
			answered	40
			did not answer	60

## Common or notable answers

The Handbook contains some essential information but in a lot of areas is very out of date. An online toolkit with separate sections would be most useful

Huddle since it exists already

The handbook is good - we use it from time to time (and I think all members have a copy) . An online version would be useful, as it is easier to keep updated, and this would increase its usefulness

Although Huddle could be a good resource for updating LAF members it is not fully signed up to by a long stretch



despite encouragement to do so on many occasions. The best mechanism will have to be newsletters or email updates

LAF News - copy dates should be circulated

Could these Toolkits be delivered by training courses across the UK by Natural England? This would have a double effect of engaging members and bringing them up-to-date with best practice and re-engaging the LAFs with NE

Short good practice bulletin shared via Huddle but also via web links as most LAF members do not have Huddle logins

Shared training is good - enabling members to get together - train together - share experiences etc.

There is a wide range of computer literacy within LAF membership. There has not been a great take up of on-line resources e.g. Huddle. Should NE provide training/familiarisation sessions at LAF meetings? Although members are intelligent, well informed individuals, they are often retired and it is not easy to keep up the latest technology. A well-structured training course could help overcome barriers to its use

I would say that although Huddle is a useful tool, it could be more user friendly and operate more like a Bulletin Board

Themed training for LAF members to build knowledge and specific areas of expertise

What other guidance is needed?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	27
		answered	27
		did not answer	73

## Common or notable answers

Guidance on making and maintaining contact with LEPs, LNPs and Health and Well Being Boards

Helpful and informative summaries of legislation that impacts on LAF work, reviewed and updated quickly as soon as there are any changes, would assist LAFs in their work

Basic training re RoW for new LAF members, as those coming in with "other interests" are often well meaning but ignorant of the law

There are concerns about criminal records. Individuals should declare any CR's

Also some individuals attend with a private agenda. It must be made clearer that members represent the whole Community. Not company's, land agencies or organisations etc.

But guidance as to how to approach any new initiatives would be useful

Areas that LAFs can give advice on and clarification of what statutory functions are. More guidance on revision of Rowips and what LAFs role is in the process

Much more support for LAF Administrators and Secretaries - MUST be issues of best practice that can be shared so an Administrator's forum would be a big help

Guidance as to how LAF's should review the RoWIP - particularly in terms of suggests process or focusses

An on line introduction to the LAF may be helpful for new members

Guidance and best practice for LAF's set in urban areas where the issues faced differ from rural areas would be helpful

Guidance to LAs - reminding them of their responsibilities regards LAFs - how they can help develop/give weight to their LAFs. To help those LAs/LAFs where LA support is/has had to be reduced. Whilst appreciating how stretched LAs are - I always feel I could do more to help our LAF in its independent role but am stretched with my other responsibilities

An online toolkit is a good idea for sharing good practice and as an information tool. More information about the emerging toolkit would be beneficial. It should be noted that not all LAF members have access to online documents so alternative methods for sharing this information need to be considered

Why is access to Huddle restricted? Should it not be open to all LAF members on a read only basis, with any restriction, if necessary, being on the ability to contribute?

We tend to operate on a strategic basis while some other LAFs get a lot more involved in projects on the ground, never quite sure what our role should be

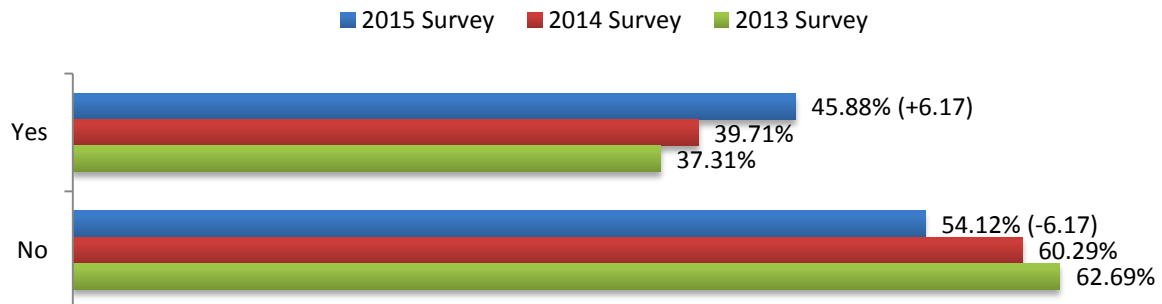
More focussed time at Conferences. Stronger links with related organisations

How to encourage new membership to LAFs

## Training

Does your appointing authority provide training for new LAF members?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes			45.88%	39
2	No			54.12%	46
				answered	85
				did not answer	15

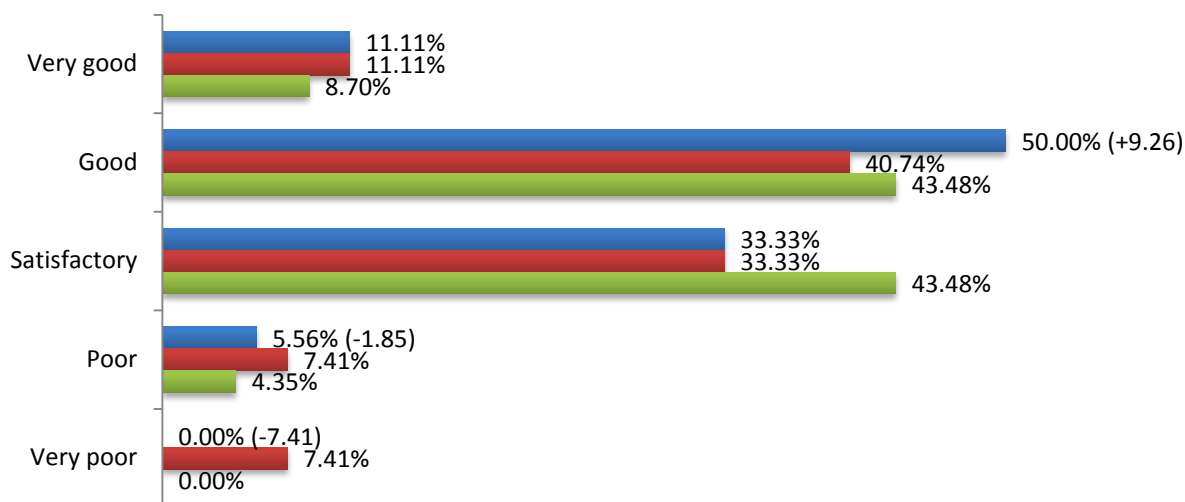
**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



If so how would you rate the training?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good			11.11%	4
2	Good			50.00%	18
3	Satisfactory			33.33%	12
4	Poor			5.56%	2
5	Very poor			0.00%	0
				answered	36
				did not answer	64

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey



**Does your appointing authority provide any other training?**

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	57
		answered	57
		did not answer	43

**Common or notable answers**

If requested

Yes

No

The Public Rights of Way senior officers do updates at each meeting and this would cover any legislative changes affecting public rights of way work

A Training Day is held each year to explore different aspects of recreational access on-site. Such days are always very informative and contribute significantly to a wider appreciation and understanding of issues

An induction pack only

Twice yearly field trips to highlight & discuss strategic access issues.

As LAF Administrator I organise training - induction for new members, courses as required e.g. recently I have arranged courses on High Ways Law, multi-user routes, definitive maps

I think the LA would probably try and provide any training we particularly asked for. However, no one has asked for any over the last year

They probably would, but I am not sure that members would take up the opportunity

We offer an Induction Course for new members so they understand what is expected of them

Definitive Map and Archive training has been provided to LAF members. LAF members are also invited to join training sessions for other volunteers

I am the coordinator/secretary. We provide induction packs, have guests speakers informing members about various issues either specific to the members work and/or informing them of a matter of interest. Members go on site visits as and when necessary. We have had workshops to help members develop work programmes. A previous chair and resource constraints has restricted some of the above in recent years but I am liaising with members re their training needs and how we can address this after current LA service review/restructure

Training has been provided where a need has been identified and appropriate cost effective external courses are available

Yes, to support voluntary maintenance

Yes, a half day training session at each quarterly meeting. In the main this is provided by the Local Authority. Any NE contribution has been minimal although the local Coastal Access team have presented updates at meetings

Countryside for All Audit training and Lost Ways

Ongoing updates on legislative changes and update reports through meetings and a pre session before each meeting

Provides training to volunteer groups

We have no specific training for new members but we have offered to meet individuals requirements. We have also arranged ad-hoc informal training for the LAF

We ought to provide training, not just for new members but on other aspects of LAFs where necessary. This may be online where appropriate. The toolkit should be populated with common training needs and how to access such training

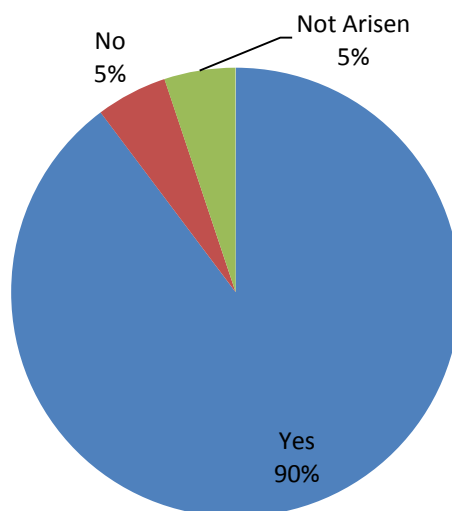
No direct training, advice available but do feel training would be very useful, authority would struggle to provide it currently

Providing training to members where required e.g. how to chair or facilitate effective meetings

Yes if LAF members identify a need to understand a particular topic in more detail e.g. processing Definitive Map Modification Orders. Site visits are also useful

Does your appointing authority pay for a LAF member to attend LAF conferences?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	78
			answered	78
			did not answer	22

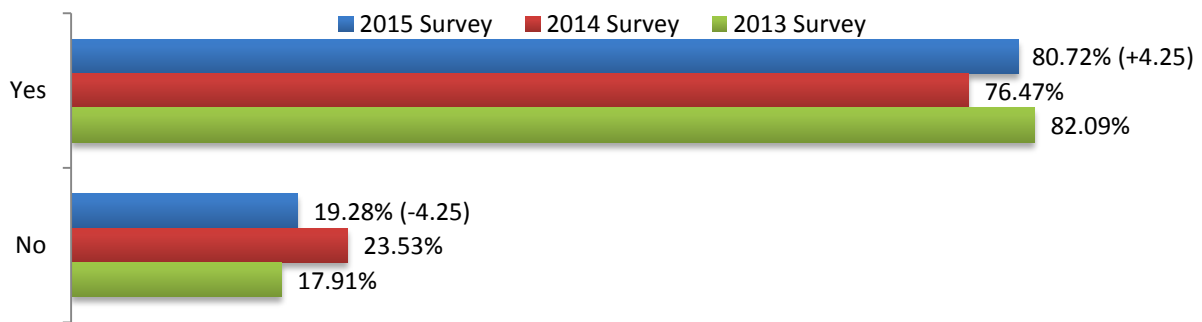
The following chart gives a percentage breakdown from the 63 completed answers received for this question:



**Do you think some form of training should be organised nationally (or regionally) by Natural England?**

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	80.72%	67
2	No	19.28%	16
		answered	83
		did not answer	17

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



**If you feel that further training should be organised nationally or regionally by Natural England, what subjects should be covered?**

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	60
		answered	60
		did not answer	40

**Common or notable answers**

Digital mapping - is there a role for the LAF?

Deregulation Act 2015

Effectiveness of LAF working arrangements

Rights of way training (i.e. legislation)

Highway law / Law relating to common land

Coastal Access / Access land

How to Chair

Land Use Planning

Public Engagement by LAFs

Definitive Map Modifications Orders

Open access & permissive paths

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BHS training

---

Disabled access

---

Funding sources and applications / bids

---

How to run a LAF / The function and purpose of LAFs

---

Formulating strategies for the LAF, and tactics in e.g. selecting appropriate contact routes

---

LEP's, LNP's, Health and Wellbeing boards – working with

---

Recruitment strategies and tactics

---

Dealing with dogs/dog mess, using Apps in the Countryside etc.

---

Consultation handling

---

Forestry matters

---

Multi-user routes - Path sharing by different users - conflict reduction

---

general PRoW management, including how the definitive map and statement works, and updates on the changes to row legislation contained in the Deregulation Act and how the 2026 cut-off date will be implemented. It would be useful to have training on how LAF's can undertake work to assess their network in terms of finding routes that need to be recorded before the cut off

---

I have already suggested that the updated Toolkits be delivered nationally, in the absence of a Conference and the demise of exceptional regional co-ordination, it could demonstrate that NE take these Volunteers seriously

---

RoW legislation, countryside stewardship sources of funding. Natural England's priorities and policies

---

We are affected by a small but significant minority of irresponsible access users e.g. dogs worrying stock, speeding cyclists, poor manners. Education in considerate use and work on enforcement is required. LAF's need to be engaged in facilitating such education

---

How to be an effective LAF member. Role of the LAF member. the breadth of access related issues LAF members can get involved in. How to prepare a work programme/prioritise. The importance of work between meetings - working groups etc. How to publicise themselves etc.

---

ROWIP renewals

---

Lost ways

---

Team working

---

Latest access development, MENE, health and well-being and planning where relevant

---

Training to encourage members to access on-line resources more/ reduce barriers due to lack of familiarisation

---

DMMOAs, Minor Highway Law (The British Horse Society are really good at this

---

Footpath Claims, Planning Application response effectiveness

---

Induction for new members

---

How to engage with other sectors such as health and wellbeing, voluntary sector, environment etc. Equip members with the confidence to work proactively




---

Use case study/practical examples as your tools for training so that LAF members understand what they could do. This may include how to research subjects and where to look

---

Session on what strategic priority areas exist for LAFs wider than just physically improving paths for access. These areas have been covered by national conferences in the past, This is a good thing

---

In what form would you like this training?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Webinar		6.35%	4
2	Huddle		6.35%	4
3	Other (please specify):		87.30%	55
			answered	63
			did not answer	37

Other (please specify): (55 answers)

### Common or notable answers

Workshops

Face-to-face training event

Seminar






Conference

In paper form

At LAF or regional meetings

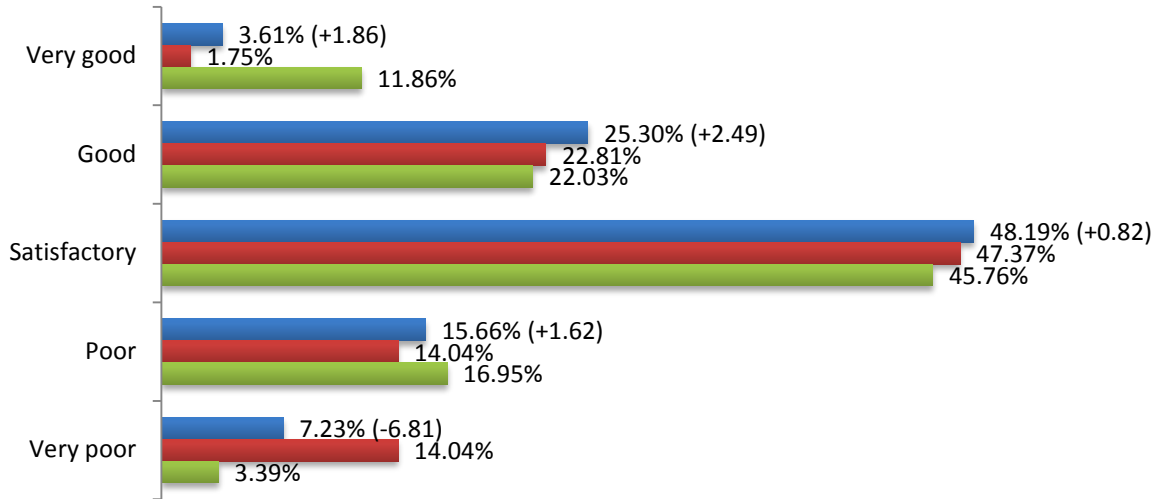
Online / Huddle / Webinar

### Huddle

How would you rate Huddle for ease of use?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		3.61%	3
2	Good		25.30%	21
3	Satisfactory		48.19%	40
4	Poor		15.66%	13
5	Very poor		7.23%	6
			answered	83
			did not answer	17

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
 Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey   ■ 2014 Survey   ■ 2013 Survey



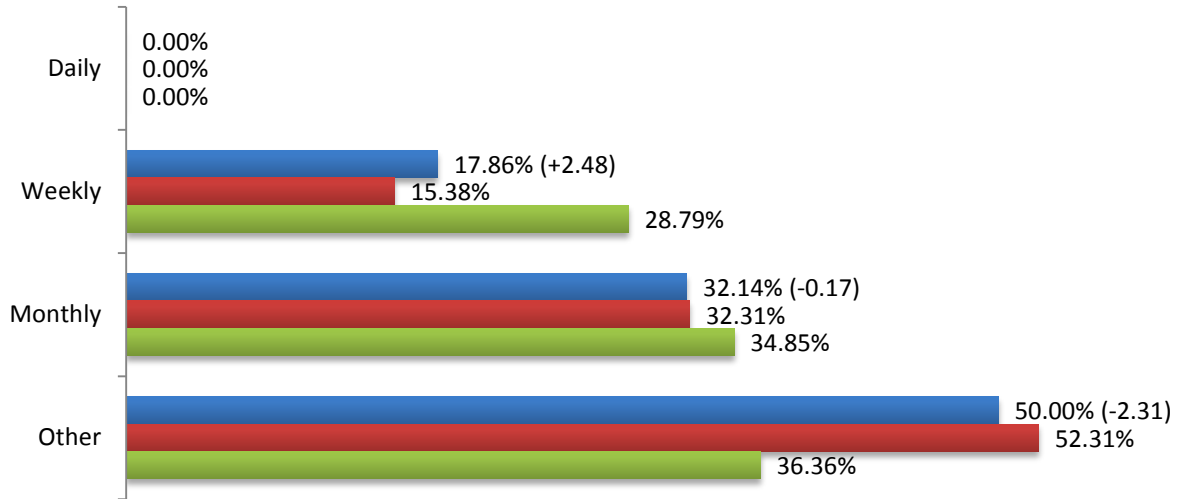
**How often do you go onto Huddle?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Daily		0.00%	0
2	Weekly		17.86%	15
3	Monthly		32.14%	27
4	Other (please specify):		50.00%	42
			answered	84
			did not answer	16



**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey   ■ 2014 Survey   ■ 2013 Survey



Other (please specify): (42 answers)

**Common or notable answers**

Never

Infrequently

Mainly on receipt of an email notification

As necessary

Occasionally

Varies between weekly and monthly

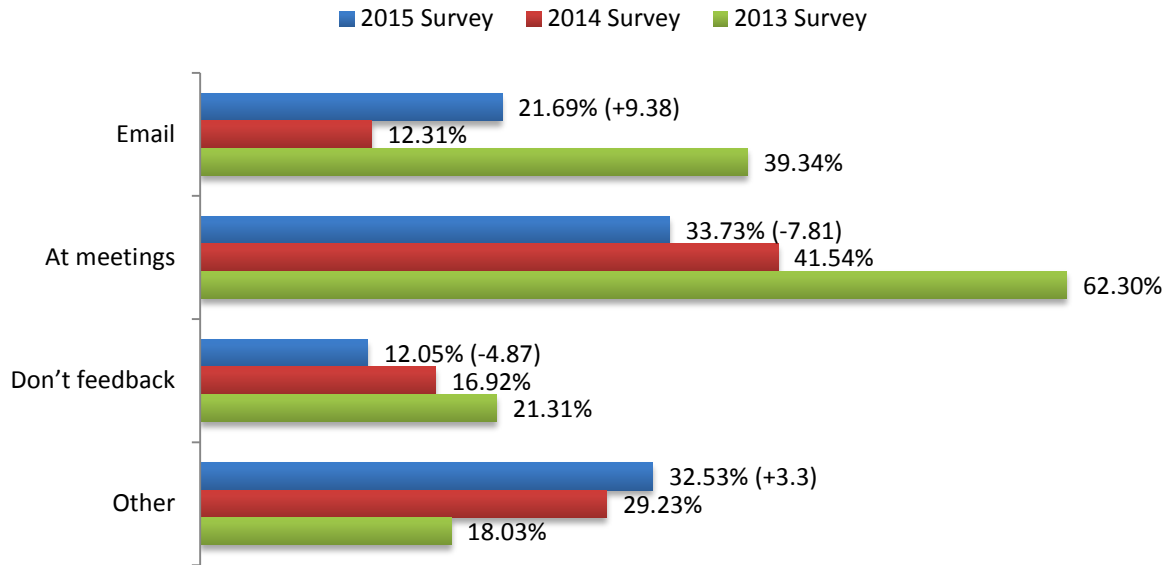
Ad hoc prior to meetings or if interesting links are circulated which are/or will be of interest to the work of our LAF and our members.

Rarely

**How do you feedback information from Huddle to your LAF?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Email		21.69%	18
2	At meetings		33.73%	28
3	Don't feedback		12.05%	10
4	Other method (please specify):		32.53%	27
			answered	83
			did not answer	17

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



Other method (please specify): (27 answers)

**Common or notable answers**

Rely on Regional Co-ordinators extracting relevant information and circulating by email

Monthly news sheet

We are all allowed to go on it, so all keen members are informed directly.

Our facilitator keeps an eye on it

Feedback information in PDF format

I usually forward the information by email

At LAF meetings

Active huddle members on group report back

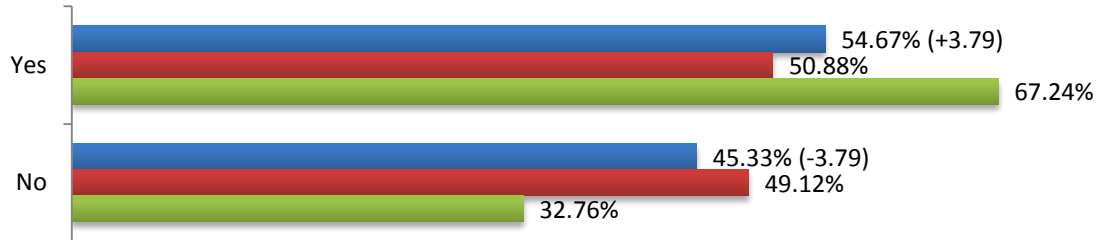
A LAF member acts as "Huddle Champion" and reports on items of interest at each meeting

**Do you feel confident to join in discussions or post comments?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		54.67%	41
2	No		45.33%	34
			answered	75
			did not answer	25

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey

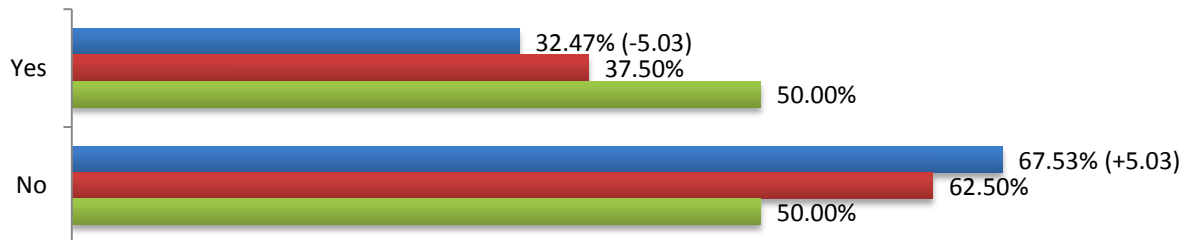


**Do you feel confident to upload files or create/update Whiteboards?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		32.47%	25
2	No		67.53%	52
			answered	77
			did not answer	23

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

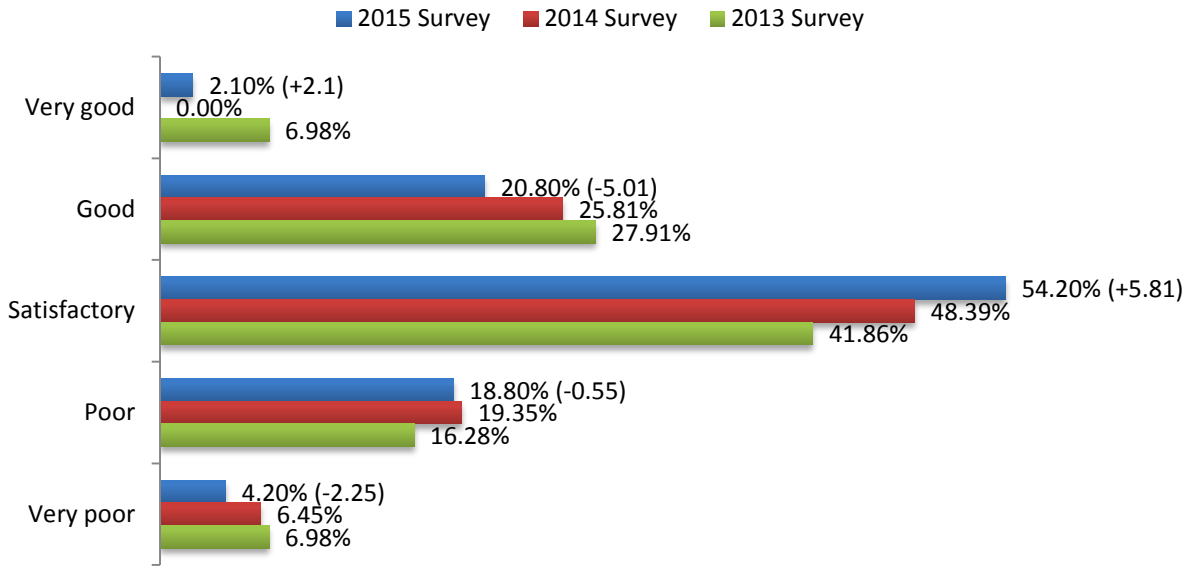
■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey



**How useful do you find each section on the LAF Workspace**

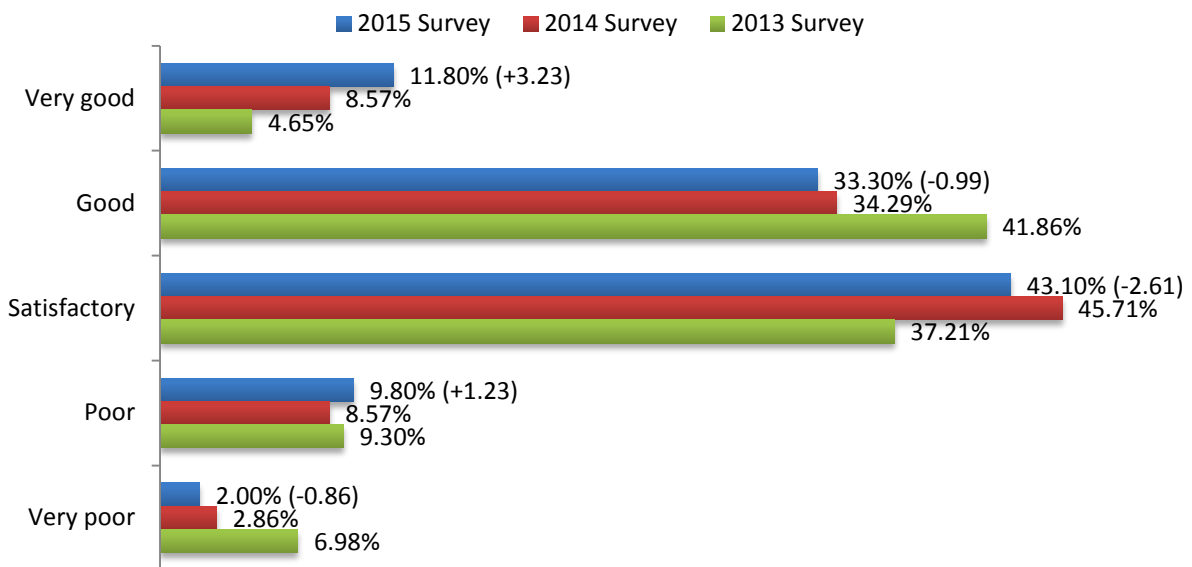
45.1. Overview/Calendar			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		2.1%	1
2	Good		20.8%	10
3	Satisfactory		54.2%	26
4	Poor		18.8%	9
5	Very poor		4.2%	2
			answered	48





**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



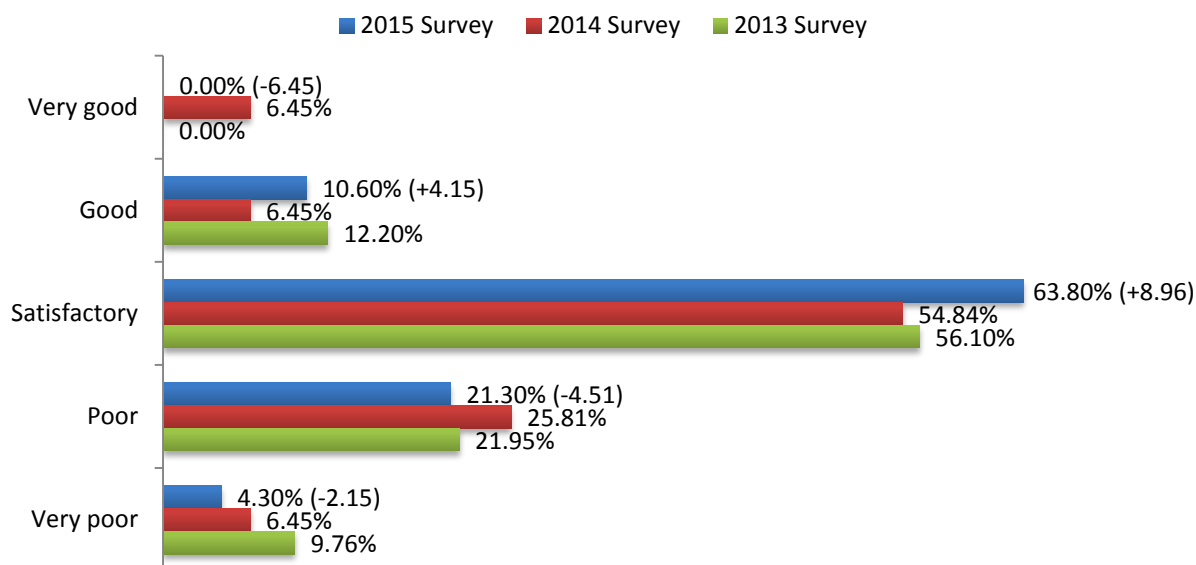
45.2. Whiteboards			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		11.8%	6
2	Good		33.3%	17
3	Satisfactory		43.1%	22
4	Poor		9.8%	5
5	Very poor		2.0%	1
			answered	51


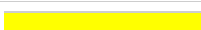



**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



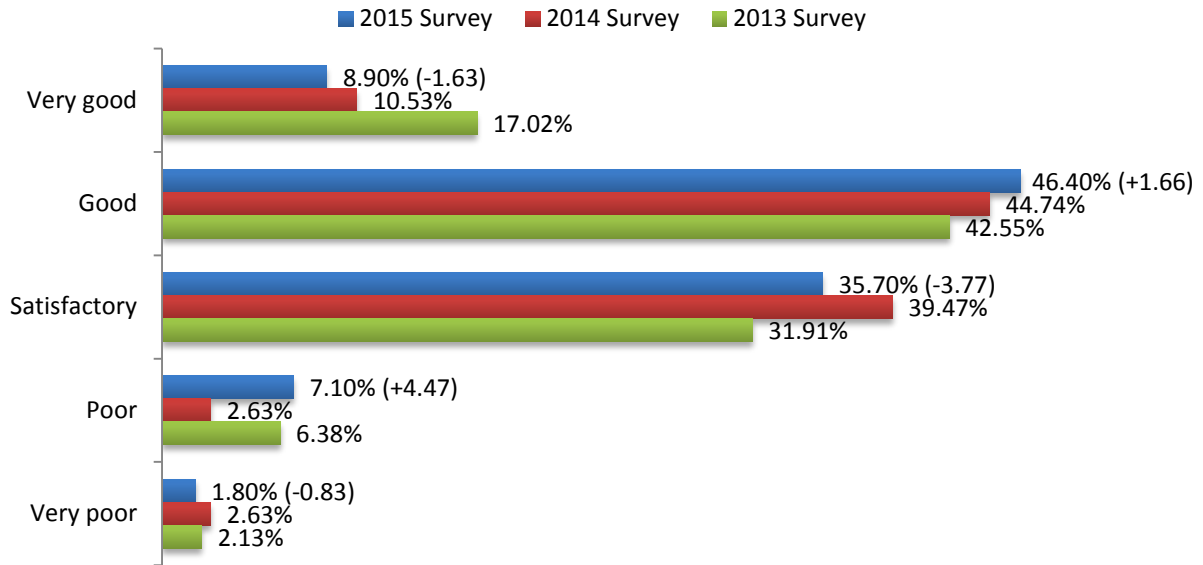
45.3. Tasks			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		0.0%	0
2	Good		10.6%	5
3	Satisfactory		63.8%	30
4	Poor		21.3%	10
5	Very poor		4.3%	2
			answered	47

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



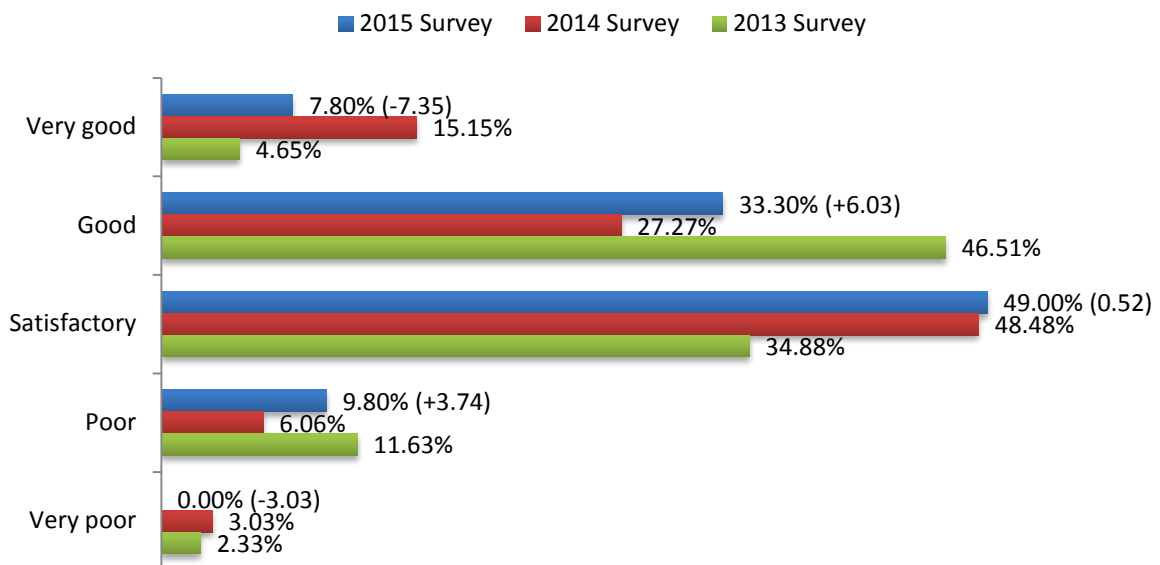
45.4. Discussions			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		8.9%	5
2	Good		46.4%	26
3	Satisfactory		35.7%	20
4	Poor		7.1%	4
5	Very poor		1.8%	1
			answered	56

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



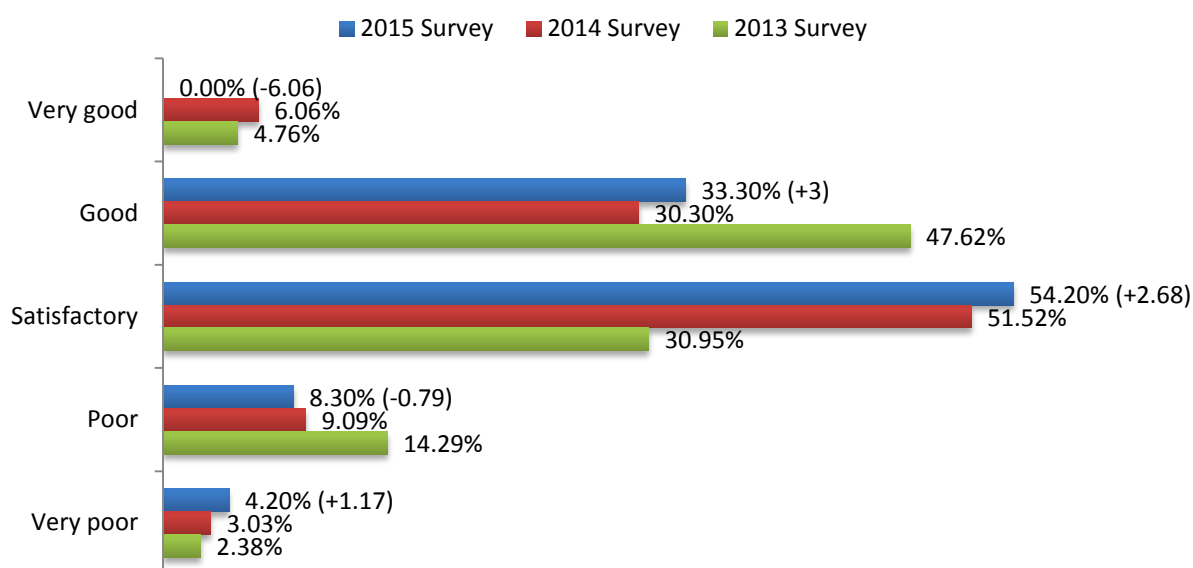
45.5. Files			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		7.8%	4
2	Good		33.3%	17
3	Satisfactory		49.0%	25
4	Poor		9.8%	5
5	Very poor		0.0%	0
			answered	51

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



45.6. People			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		0.0%	0
2	Good		33.3%	16
3	Satisfactory		54.2%	26
4	Poor		8.3%	4
5	Very poor		4.2%	2
			answered	48

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



What could we do to improve Huddle for users?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	42
			answered	42
			did not answer	58

### Common or notable answers

Authoritative interpretations of legislation. Some Huddle discussions are dubious in their accuracy which reduces the value of Huddle as a whole.

A front page explaining what happens under the above headings

Make it available for all LAF members to increase its effectiveness - I raised this at a recent regional LAF Chairs meeting

An email bulletin linking to key information added to the system each month may be useful

make it easier to understand for the mature luddite

Make it easier to find documents

There should have been some kind of training at the start - I'm sure it is a good and useful tool - also at the start it was made too 'exclusive' i.e. only a few members could join

Most of the comments on Huddle have seemed lightweight to me, and I pass them by. I do not use the Workspace and would benefit from a Huddle 'teach-in'. Others have agreed with me and suggest the system needs a moderating filter, but the concept is good if it works as otherwise there is little inter-LAF opportunity for exchange of news and views.

Encourage more people to use Huddle

I would suggest that we invite guests to have presentations on site, so it appeared broader in appeal.

Search results in Date order rather than random

Calendar - is this necessary?

The discussions are of interest to those who can gain a clearer picture of the legal position of the query in hand, quite often the minutiae is overwhelming for ordinary members. Huddle therefore can get bogged down by this minutiae and can miss the broad and important strategic view. This may be why some users feel intimidated by the minutiae and not use Huddle more.

I am led to believe that, rather like Wikipedia, information can become rather misleading or 'lost in translation'!

I only ever go there in response to messages saying that such and such a piece of information has been posted there, life would be easier if the info was just sent to me as an EM.

Better moderation of discussion threads. Sometimes used as a 'soap-box' for subjective opinion and not necessarily balanced or professional.

I have already mentioned the need for familiarisation training/ universal access to LAF members

no suggestions - the limitations are mainly down to my lack of usage.

Find another way of serving the purpose it is intended for

Simplify it into more of a Bulletin Board, where members can post topics and upload files

Option to not be notified of comments posted by other people - opt out option

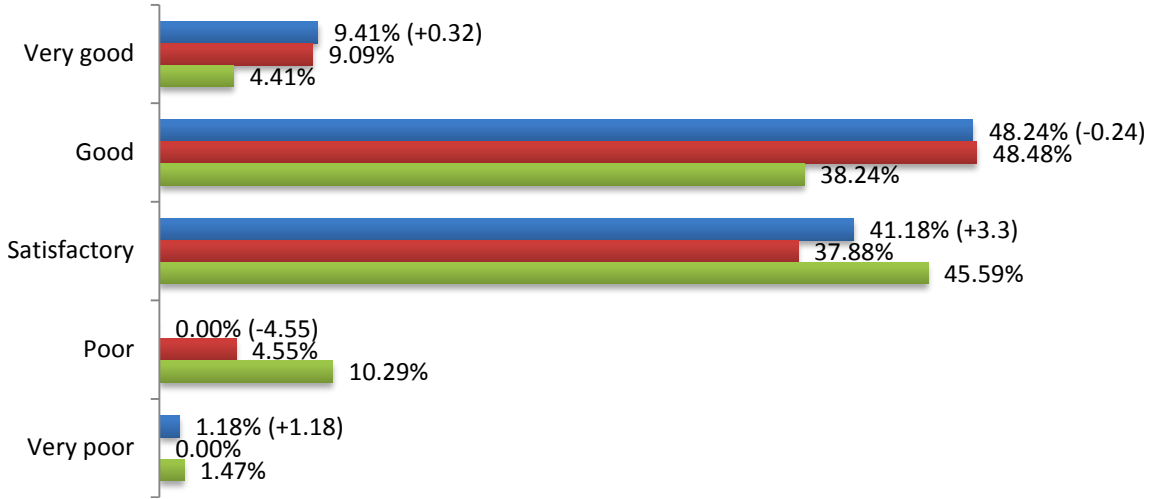
## The annual reporting process

How clear and easy to follow did you find the annual reporting process guidance and form this year?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		9.41%	8
2	Good		48.24%	41
3	Satisfactory		41.18%	35
4	Poor		0.00%	0
5	Very poor		1.18%	1
			answered	85
			did not answer	15



**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey

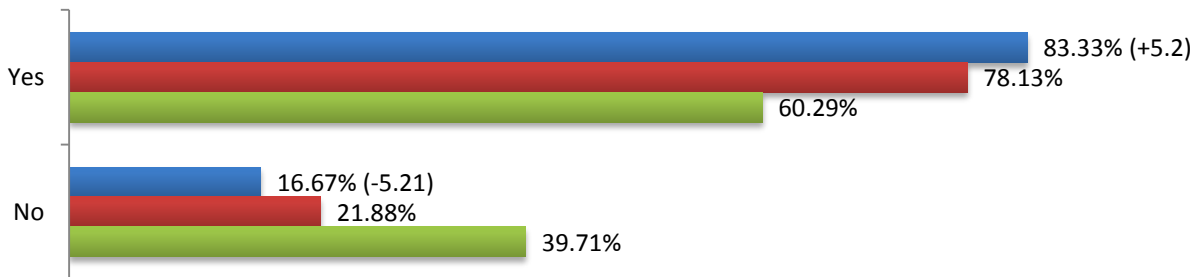






**Do you see a benefit to using the Annual Review Form?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		83.33%	70
2	No		16.67%	14
			answered	84
			did not answer	16

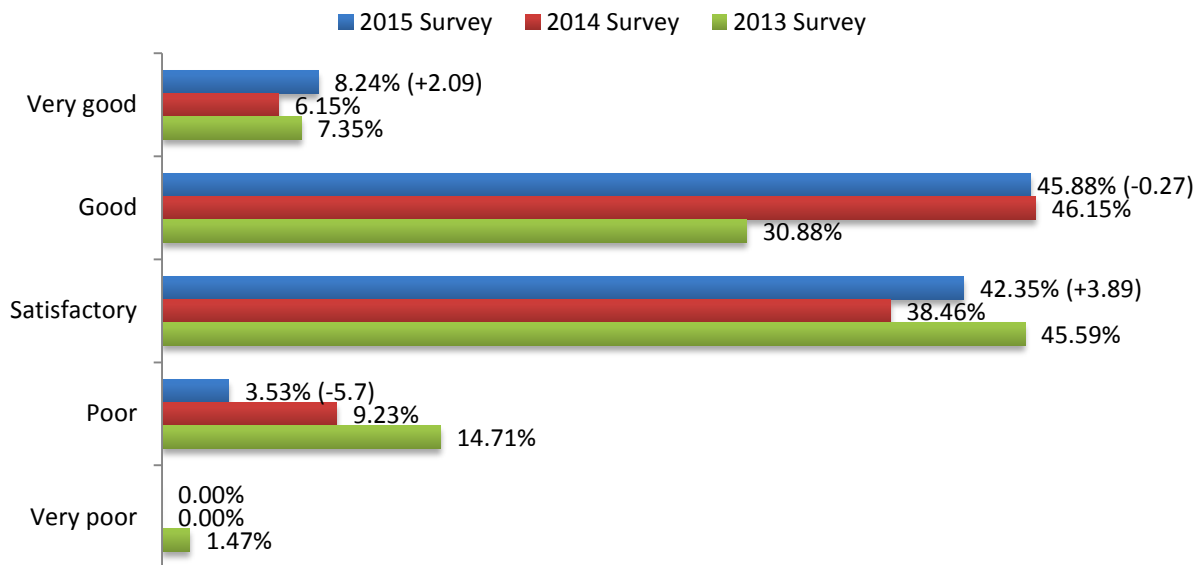
**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets

■ 2015 Survey ■ 2014 Survey ■ 2013 Survey



How do you rate this year's annual reporting process overall?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		8.24%	7
2	Good		45.88%	39
3	Satisfactory		42.35%	36
4	Poor		3.53%	3
5	Very poor		0.00%	0
			answered	85
			did not answer	15

**Results compared to previous LAF surveys**  
Plus/minus comparison to 2014 results in brackets



Any suggestions to improve it?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	26
			answered	26
			did not answer	74

### Common or notable answers

It duplicates our own annual report, so simply serves as an onerous administrative exercise with no perceptible benefit for the LAF

LAF achievements should include how the LAF has influenced policy as well as improved public access to land

I don't know how useful it all is in terms of improving the rights of way network?

There is no spell checker on the form, it is really strange set up, just make it a normal word document with spell check

An "other" section for other consultations

Not enough about what individual LAFs have done - their achievements for example, what they have addressed, how many consultations have they had, what issues have arisen for the first time, trends, membership problems, recruiting

The annual reporting is now very generic and does not allow for much local variation to be reported.

Perhaps improve the layout so that it is more user friendly

It is getting better every year

I answered yes to all the above because I obviously see the point to clear/consistent feedback from all LAFS for you to compile a national report. But I don't think it easily captures all the work each LAF does..... often the LAF's priorities are not those of NE/Defra - e.g. open access restrictions ... if a LAF does little in this area this seems to be of importance whereas that LAF might have been focusing on another area of work with greater relevance/impact in its area that gets overlooked by this report

Time consuming but OK

Less prescriptions which do not always apply

Got a bit confused in the consultations / advice section. The LAF have been consulted on a range of issues, but felt only 4 or 5 were relevant. Wasn't sure how this should be recorded on the form

The 2014/15 annual report format has been streamlined and the changes are welcomed

I do not feel that all questions are applicable to LAF secretaries e.g. some of the questions on the use of Huddle

Choices are ok but they rarely fit with your exact feeling on a subject.

The Annual Review Form seems to be more tailored to what Natural England want to report rather than what we as a LAF would like to report to the public. We therefore produce our own 'glossy' version (in addition to the NE review form), which runs via the calendar year and which we can publish online.

New form requires more subjective answers with less 'what have you been doing?' type questions which officers were able to complete on behalf of the LAF. More onus on LAF members providing information to complete the form this year. We still produce our own Annual Report for local distribution which members feel is a more user friendly summary of what the LAF does. Put on webpage and can include photographs etc.

## Final question

Do LAFs need any additional support not covered by this survey?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	42
		answered	42
		did not answer	58

## Common or notable answers

No

Need to be properly funded with effective and continual support from NE

It would be helpful to raise awareness nationally of the role of LAFs, particularly to bodies that LAFs could advise

NE should consider meeting costs rather than assuming LAs will do so

finance to help organise and run regional meetings

A conference for Chairs is now well overdue

And this survey needs to be more about individual LAFs

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More guidance on "other sources of finance"

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Needs more and better support from its appointing authority.

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Would be useful if the local contact could explain exactly what the relationship should be, from which support might then flow.

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I can see a role for LAFs - independent access focused group - but I feel they are not receiving the recognition they should - in particular from Sec 94 bodies. LAFs need help re training and raising their profile - they consist of a variety of people - variety of interests - expertise - but it can be difficult for them to see things through/thoroughly get stuck into due to their lack of experience in certain areas

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Better appreciation of the valuable work Local Access Forums and their volunteers undertaken would be welcomed

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Annual training for Secretaries in all aspects of LAFs. They can then feedback and train members. All resulting materials to go on Huddle

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I'm updating/revising my induction packs and designing training for members and it would be good to be able to discuss this with an NE contact - I currently do not have one

---

Authoritative guidance and information on how the Deregulation bill will influence Countryside Access

---

A course on the functioning of the Planning Inspectorate process and how to influence it

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A nationally developed training course on Huddle/on-line resources

---

Seems to be very dependent on the LAF's local authority. We [self and vice chair] meet annually with the Chief Exec to discuss matters of interest, but many councillors are oblivious to both the presence and role of the LAF. One suspects this is true of other organisations [such as Forestry Commission for example]. Council staff do not appear to understand the independent nature of the LAF

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It would be useful if Natural England used the Newsletter to keep LAFs informed of the work Natural England carry out

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Support to replace dwindling Council support

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East of England Local Access Forums

**Chairs and VC's Regional Meeting**

**Eastbrook, Cambridge 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015**

Attendance

LAF County	Attendee 1	Attendee 2	Attendee 3
Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum	Mary Sanders, Chair	Roger Buisson, Vice-Chair	
Central Beds & Luton Local Access Forum	Pauline Hey, Chair		
Essex Local Access Forum	Ray Booty, Chair	Margaret Shaw, Secretary	
Hertfordshire Local Access Forum	Liddy Lawrence, Chair	Lynn Myland, Vice-Chair	
Norfolk Local Access Forum	Kirsty Webber-Walton, Secretary	Stephanie Howard, LAF Member	Seamus Elliott, LAF Member
Peterborough Local Access Forum	Peter Garnham, Peterborough CC	Lee Moore, Secretary	

Suffolk Local Access Forum	David Barker, Chair	Barry Hill, LAF Member	
Natural England	Chris Gordon Hertfordshire Team	Giles Merritt Coastal Access Team	

## 1) Last meeting 4 Dec 14

Seasonal Temporary Restriction Orders – normally ignored. Kent CC have used a system of permits and locked gates (with combination). The permits are free and the system seems to be working reducing damage to road surfaces.

## 2) Natural England Update – Chris Gordon

Key points:

**Annual Report** - due for sign off by minister this month (December)

Annual review form – positive response so likely to continue

**National LAF working group** –

**ACTION:** Are minutes/ agendas available LAF's are interested in what is being discussed

**Engagement Plan** – updates were presented

**Defra Guidance, Good practice guides** –LAF toolkits section being developed for Huddle

### **National Conference Updates -**

Bristol, Temple Quay House: Tuesday 23rd February 2016

Leeds, Oxford Place Centre: Tuesday 1st March 2016

Attendees

1 delegate from each LAF +Speakers/workshop leads +

Representatives from partner organisations +Volunteers to help on the day (first come, first served) + Reserve list (first come, first served)

Programme and invites to go out mid December

Please contact us asap for speaker/workshop lead suggestions:

### **Meeting response/ Actions**

LAFs did not want to have two conferences. One bigger conference would have more impact & Herts may have been able to offer county hall as a venue.

### **Suggested Workshop topics:**

**Network Rail** – Level crossing closures. Seems to be a big issue for all and national coordination of our relationship with Network Rail. They currently seem to be using divide and rule tactics. Invite someone from Network Rai to speak

**Lost Ways** – With 2026 looming this is an important issue Phil Wady has produced an excellent guide.

**Highways England** – Strategic Road improvements effects on rights of way

### **3) Network Rail – Liddy Lawrence**

See above. We need to change the debate to looking at how we make crossings safer. Currently there is little account taken of the effects of closures on surrounding communities. There needs to be national coordination to the response and discussion

### **4) Highways England Strategic Road Investment Programme - Roger Buisson**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-investment-strategy>

changes to A14, A12, A428, A47, A12/M25

Key issues – Opportunities for cycling, historic severance not considered

### **5) White Roads – Ray Booty**

Herefordshire Report with a lot of detail on Huddle.

“White roads” are the tracks and lanes coloured white rather than yellow on Ordnance Survey maps. In some areas they do not appear on the definitive map and may be lost as routes after 2026. This could cause particular problems when they act as links in the rights of way network

**ACTION: See Hereford report on Huddle**

**Topic on national conference.**

### **6) LAF issues**

**Herts** – Lost ways & crossing closures

**Beds** – RoW team moved into highways, Lot of development planning consultation ignores LAF/ RoW issues



**Norfolk** – RoW team moved to highways, reviewing RoWIP now to Countryside Access Improvement Plan, Setting up charity linked to LAF to fundraise and raise profile.

**Cambs** – County farms potentially sold off , Cambs LAF good links with LNP (not the same for others where LNP's seen as inactive) Cycling policy strong

**Suffolk** – Network Rail, Sizewell C, Development

**Peterborough** – LAF consulted on developments, RoW team now outsources but building relationship with client.

**Essex** Difficult to recruit to LAF, relationship with EA (not restoring banks s/b sea defences with rights of Way along top

## **7) Coastal access**

Current phases of Coastal access and progress presented by Giles Merrit.

See links

Essex: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-essex>

East of England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-the-east-of-england>

## **8) General Natural England Update**

**Countryside Stewardship**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management>

**LEADER funding**





The NE area team have worked with Local Action Groups to include access in their local priorities. The map of local leader groups can be seen here:




[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/448033/Map\\_approved\\_LEADER\\_2014-2020.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/448033/Map_approved_LEADER_2014-2020.pdf)

The funding is new and is part of a 5 year programme. To find out more about your local programme have a look at your local LAG web site/ get in touch.

Contact details are as follows:

<b>East of England</b>			
Beds and Hunts Claylands	Lisa King <a href="mailto:lisak@bedsrcc.org.uk">lisak@bedsrcc.org.uk</a> ☎ 01234 832643	<a href="#">yes - but under development</a>  <a href="http://www.bedsandhuntsclaylands.org.uk">www.bedsandhuntsclaylands.org.uk</a>	1,625
Brecks	<a href="mailto:leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk">leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk</a> ☎ 01603 222930	<a href="#">Yes</a> <a href="http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm">http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm</a>	1,755
Broads	<a href="mailto:leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk">leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk</a> ☎ 01603 222930	<a href="#">Yes</a> <a href="http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm">http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm</a>	1,513
Cambridgeshire Fens	Kieran Carr – Programme Manager <a href="mailto:Kieran.carr@camsacre.org.uk">Kieran.carr@camsacre.org.uk</a> ☎ <b>01353 865047</b>	<a href="#">Yes</a> <a href="https://cambsfensleader.wordpress.com/">https://cambsfensleader.wordpress.com/</a>	1,447
Eastern Plateau	Paul Pullin <a href="mailto:paul.pullin@eastherts.gov.uk">paul.pullin@eastherts.gov.uk</a> ☎ 01992 531606	TBC	1,843
Essex Rivers	Beverly Davies - Programme Manager	<a href="#">Yes</a>	1,811

	<a href="mailto:beverly.davies@essexrcc.org.uk">beverly.davies@essexrcc.org.uk</a>  01376 574 330	<a href="http://www.essexrivers.co.uk">www.essexrivers.co.uk</a>	
Greensand Ridge	Lisa King – Programme Manager <a href="mailto:lisak@bedsrcc.org.uk">lisak@bedsrcc.org.uk</a>  01234 832643	<u>Yes</u> <a href="http://www.greensand.org.uk">www.greensand.org.uk</a>	1,443
Heritage Coast	Andy Cuthbertson  01473 260184  Gavin Talbot  07734 540707  <a href="mailto:RuralDevelopment@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk">RuralDevelopment@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk</a>	<u>Yes</u> <a href="http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/finance/funding/leader-rural-development/">http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/finance/funding/leader-rural-development/</a>	1,972
Rural Peterborough and Rutland	Samantha Demaio <a href="mailto:samantha.demaio@opportunitypeterborough.co.uk">samantha.demaio@opportunitypeterborough.co.uk</a>  01733 317422	TBC – update due end of November	1,322
Waveney Valley	<a href="mailto:leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk">leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk</a>  01603 222930	<u>Yes</u> <a href="http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm">http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm</a>	1,764
Wensum and Coast	<a href="mailto:leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk">leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk</a>  01603 222930	<u>Yes</u> <a href="http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm">http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm</a>	2,061

West Norfolk	<a href="mailto:leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk">leaderteam@norfolk.gov.uk</a>  01603 222930	<a href="#">Yes</a> <a href="http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm">http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Business_support_and_funding/Funding/European_funding/Leader/index.htm</a>	1,921
Wool Towns	Andy Cuthbertson  01473 260184  Gavin Talbot  07734 540707  <a href="mailto:RuralDevelopment@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk">RuralDevelopment@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk</a>	<a href="#">Yes</a> <a href="http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/finance/funding/leader-rural-development/">http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/finance/funding/leader-rural-development/</a>	1,845

### 9) LAF representation on LNP's & LEPs in the Region

Cambridgeshire representation seems good otherwise little engagement between LAF's and LNP's

### 10) Next meeting June

Action : Kirsty to investigate possible Norfolk location

## **Meeting in Cambridge on Tuesday December 15<sup>th</sup> of Regional local Access Forums.**

Present were representatives of Essex, Beds and Luton, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Hertfordshire and Suffolk. Also Chris Gordon and Giles Merritt of Natural England.

Under Matters arising the subject of seasonal Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) in Kent was raised. Due to on-going problems of damage Kent County Council had introduced a permit system and gated the byways, those with permits could open the numbered locked gates but in times of adverse weather the network was closed, notification being given to permit holders by email. The system it was reported had worked well and reduced fly tipping.

National Update. The national working group meets monthly giving advice in many areas that include Open Access, mapping and management of the network etc. Also to update the engagement plan.

It was reported funding for regional co-ordinators had been removed. A quarterly newsletter is remaining.

A member raised the issue of lost ways a book has been written by Philip Wadey outlining lost ways with regard to the 2026 cut-off date for claims

Network Rail's crossing closure programme. A number of cases were mentioned where Network Rail had closed well used crossings without any notice, Hertfordshire LAF had a case where a crossing was closed overnight and they had to battle for it to be re-opened. Concern was expressed that there was no strong national voice to represent users and LAF's were be picked off one by one.. Essex reported there were 55 proposed closures proposed and the objections had gone to the Secretary of State.

Mention was made of the Strategic Road Improvement Schemes taking place Highways England had a long list of proposed road improvements that include A 14 from Cambridge to Huntingdon, A 12 Chelmsford to A120. A428 near Caxton Gibbet. It does now seem after the A11 Elveden that highways England are more respectful to the Rights of Way network.

White Roads concern was expressed that these white roads in mainly towns are not on the definitive map it was suggested there could be as many as 8,000 in Herefordshire and 1,000 in Essex. ( In Suffolk the belief is most claims have been made due to John Andrews)

We had a coastal access update by Giles Merritt.

Issues affecting LAF's these include Railway crossing closure, Lost Ways, New Developments that restrict rather than enhance Rights of Way. It was felt often small

developments cause more problems but larger developments better address the infrastructure. Hertfordshire LAF have little secretarial support from their County Council. Essex LAF has no landowners attending. Peterborough reported with a unitary council planning is much easier. Norfolk reported that their Countryside Access plan was being developed with emphasis on building equestrian access. Mention was made of the Sizewell development and how it affects the Rights of Way network in the area.

A national conference will be held in 2016 in Leeds and Bristol. Members discussed their experience of huddle as a way of communicating.

Photograph of finger post in the Dales by Ursula Wolff

# LAF NEWS

2015/16

Issue 8

## Welcome

Welcome to Issue 8 of the LAF newsletter.

I hope that you all had a good festive period despite the seemingly relentlessly bad weather which unfortunately brought much more than the inconvenience of staying indoors to those affected by the terrible flooding in so many areas. Hopefully we've seen the worst of it for now and can look forward to getting out and about in 2016.

We're all looking forward to the upcoming LAF conferences in Bristol and Leeds in February/March and Rob Leek has been very busy organising these events which we hope will be a great opportunity to meet-up and promote the great work that LAFs do. The programme is now just about settled and it looks to be both varied and challenging.

Speaking of variety we have a wide range of topics in this edition with an update from the England Coast Path team, a follow-up item on the Black Environment Network, an introduction to IPROW and articles about Local Nature Partnerships and the Cotswold Water Park. There's also more information about the conferences and what we think is a significant report on the socioeconomic value of the Paths for Communities Scheme; one that highlights the immense benefits that public access can bring.

So I hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to seeing many of you in February and March.

Andy Mackintosh, Natural England

### In this issue...

[Local Nature Partnerships](#)

[England Coast Path](#)

[Black Environment Network](#)

[IPROW](#)

[Cotswold Water Park Bridge](#)

[National Conferences](#)

[Paths for Communities](#)

[What's Hot on Huddle](#)



# LAF News

## Local Nature Partnerships

By Paul Hill-Gibbins, Defra

With the topic of physical and mental health fast rising up the political and public agenda's a number of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) have been involved with projects to raise awareness and get people outside.

Natural Devon, Devon's LNP, has a vision for everyone to be 'naturally active'. The '[Naturally Healthy](#)' theme is led by a collaboration of partners including Public Health, Active Devon, Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks, Local Authorities, AONBs and the Devon Countryside Access Forum. Work includes research into the barriers which stop people accessing the natural environment, two health projects in the National Parks, a *Naturally Healthy Week* and a research project with schools. The national LAF conference on 23rd February includes a workshop on the two National Park projects. With only 13% of adults in Devon regularly participating in a sport or active recreation (including walking and cycling) the challenge is clear.

[Nature Connected](#), the LNP for the Liverpool City Region, was involved with The Natural Choices for Health and Wellbeing [Programme](#). Funded by the Liverpool Primary Care Trust, communities were asked to design their own projects to improve health and wellbeing through utilising the local environment. This included developing connections with others and the environment through 'green exercise'.

The LNP is now, through one of its partners The Mersey Forest Team, backing '[Nature4Health](#)'. A three year project which uses the natural environment to reduce health inequalities by encouraging community participation in activities that include woodland walks, therapeutic gardening and practical conservation sessions designed to get the heart pumping. Both Liverpool University and Liverpool John Moores University will be studying the new programme as part of the emerging Centre of Excellence for Research into the Natural Health Service.

Announced by the government in the 2012 Natural Environment White Paper, 47 [Local Nature Partnerships](#) now cover the majority of England. Founded on the principle that local people know their local environmental priorities better than central policy officials they empower local people to make decisions. Consequently the activity, expertise and priorities of LNPs will often differ as they are tailored to local needs.

However, one aim that LNPs are likely to share with LAFs is ensuring that the value of nature, and the services it provides to the economy and the people who live there, nowadays referred to

## Links

[Naturally Healthy](#)

[Nature Connected](#)

[Natural Choices for Health and Wellbeing Programme](#)

[Nature4Health](#)

[Local Nature Partnerships \(.GOV.UK\)](#)

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# LAF News

as 'natural capital', is taken into account in local decisions. This will include the creation, restoration and enhancement of green space and the importance of access to it for recreation. So a great deal in common with the aims of LAFs.



Membership of LNPs is wide-ranging and includes local conservation organisations, landowners, businesses and individuals with many led by Wildlife Trusts or local authorities. They work in a strategic way, encouraging cooperation and facilitating the coordination of action on the ground.

Working with your local LNP could provide you with a greater strategic overview of projects in your area. They may enable you to develop and strengthen local relationships with many now increasingly forging links with the health sector. LNPs would also benefit greatly from an increased awareness of access.

Further details on individual LNPs, including a map and contact details, can be found on [.GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or you can contact Defra via [LNPs@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:LNPs@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

## Links

[LNP Map and Contact details \(.GOV.UK\)](https://www.gov.uk)

## England Coast Path – work now underway to open up half of England's coastline

By Sue Shipston, Coastal Access Team, Natural England

Natural England has reached a key milestone in its work to deliver the England Coast Path, with work underway to open up half of England's coastline. Set to become one of the world's longest coastal walking routes, the path will stretch out across 2700 miles of stunning walking routes covering 100% of the country.

### What Natural England has achieved so far

Natural England has already opened up 101 miles of our spectacular coastline via the England Coast Path in Cumbria, Durham, Dorset and Norfolk, with a further 95 miles of new routes

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set to open in Kent and Somerset in the Spring.

They are now building on this progress with the aim of completing the coastal path around England by 2020. It is hugely challenging – Natural England staff are learning lessons as they go and sharing these around the coastline.

## **What benefits will the England Coast Path bring?**

Walking in the countryside is good for people's health and wellbeing, and providing more access to our coastline brings huge benefits by both connecting us with nature and boosting local tourism.

Tourism is hugely important to the rural economy, contributing around £11 billion each year – and by attracting even more visitors to explore our iconic coastline, we expect the England Coast Path to benefit even more local businesses like pubs and hotels.

The new routes will also improve public access to our coastline, beaches and foreshore, with existing coastal footpaths used where possible, or in some cases moved nearer the sea so walkers have a better opportunity to properly enjoy our coastal views and beaches.

The England Coast Path will be a well way-marked National Trail around the whole of the English coast, passing through some of our country's finest and iconic landscapes such as the White Cliffs of Dover, St Bees Head, and the sunny beaches of the South West, together with picture postcard villages and the cities that plot our colourful maritime history.

## **Boosting local economies and supporting tourism**

Welcoming the development Rural Minister Rory Stewart said:

“None of us lives further than about 75 miles from the sea, and most of us live much closer, so it's vital to our ongoing relationship with our countryside that the public has easy access to our outstanding coastline.”

“We have already opened up miles of our beautiful coastline for everyone to enjoy, boosting local tourism and growing the rural economy, so it makes sense to extend these plans even further. We know that walking in the countryside is good for people's health and wellbeing, and what better way to do it than with the accompaniment of a nice sea breeze?”

Andrew Sells, Natural England's Chairman added:

“This is the most significant footpath project for a generation, it will be an incredible legacy for our island nation and I'm delighted to report on our excellent progress this year. Visitors from home and abroad enjoy our spectacular coastlines and love to walk our National Trails, which pass through some of our most stunning countryside.”

“We know from our evidence of spending by visitors to the coast, that the route will boost the local economy and help support coastal communities. We are on target and have built a momentum to complete the entire route by 2020.”

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## How Natural England are opening up the England Coast path

To establish the route we've divided the coast of England into 66 'stretches' with eight Natural England delivery teams working around the country. The teams work closely with local authorities, land owners and occupiers, communities, interest groups and others to ensure the best and most appropriate alignment for the new coast path.

Work to open up or improve access along our coast is underway around the country, with work recently started in Essex, Devon, Hampshire, Lincolnshire and Lancashire.

### Find out more

You can see where Natural England teams are working and check the latest progress in your area on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Or you can contact Natural England's England Coast Path Delivery Leads:

**North East** [andrew.best@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:andrew.best@naturalengland.org.uk) 01943 839684

**East** [sally.fishwick@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:sally.fishwick@naturalengland.org.uk) 07900 608 446

**Essex** [james.lamb@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:james.lamb@naturalengland.org.uk) 0300 060 1552

**South East** [jenny.bowen@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:jenny.bowen@naturalengland.org.uk) 0300 060 4056

**South** [tim.hall@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:tim.hall@naturalengland.org.uk) 0300 060 1067

**South West** [sophy.allen@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:sophy.allen@naturalengland.org.uk) 07825 546 123

**West** [andrew.chester@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:andrew.chester@naturalengland.org.uk) 07900 608 111

**North West** [gerry.rusbridge@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:gerry.rusbridge@naturalengland.org.uk) 01931 7144985

## Black Environment Network (BEN) Training Event

By Kathy Miles, Secretary Cumbria LAF and Gareth Lawler, Natural England

*This is a follow-up to the article in [LAF News Issue 6](#)*

The trainers for this event, held in March at the Quaker Meeting House in Manchester, were Max Ghani and Saleem Oppal from the [Black Environment Network \(BEN\)](#). The day was fully-subscribed, with representatives attending from most of the Northwest's LAFs, as well as a Woodland Trust officer, and also three from Natural England. Thanks to Natural England's David Jeffreys' hard work in pulling the event together – putting in a successful funding bid, liaising with Saleem/BEN, and arranging an excellent venue and catering – everything was in place for the day's training. We crowded around tables in a 'cosy' meeting room: ready for group work at various points through the day.

## Links

[England Coast Path \(.GOV.UK\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[LAF News Issue 6](#)

[Black Environment Network](#)

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Photograph by David Jeffreys

We naturally began with introductions and then, from Saleem and Max, a brief on the day's structure, aims and objectives, followed by some information about BEN's origins and work. We looked at case studies on working with and engaging black and minority ethnic communities, and then took part in an exercise and discussion on cross-cultural working and communication. Before lunch we learned about cultural and religious awareness.

After our break and some networking we resumed

for the afternoon, hearing about communication with community groups and organisations and the pitfalls of consultations if not done well. A little quiz followed and then the morning's case studies were reviewed. This showed that participants' initial views had to some extent changed over the course of the day.

A lively open discussion ensued, including talking about the barriers that may prevent BME communities and people from accessing the countryside; that accessible routes are transferable to health walks for the elderly or for BME groups; and that sport is a key way to engage with young people and can lead on to further activities including those based in the countryside.

There were varying views in the room on the role of LAFs and what level of engagement was appropriate for them; considering their own role and how they act in partnership with other groups, including the highways authorities. Following the event David Jeffreys observed:

"We had a good mix of experiences in the room which helped stimulate some really useful discussions on the day, which I found most thought-provoking. I'm sure that the learning from the day will also help drive debates at a local level within each LAF as they examine how they continue to deliver their core aims whilst also adapting to the changes that are taking place around them."

A participant from Bury LAF fed back:

"I learnt such a lot and now feel much stronger to market our

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new Walking Loop to a wider group and hope to interest the ethnic community in Manchester North.”



Photograph by David Jeffreys

Finally, Saleem and Max drew the day to a close with a brief review of its aims and objectives and some parting thoughts and comments. They encouraged everyone to use them as a resource and said they would be happy to come and talk to individual LAFs if this would be helpful. With that, participants chatted as they left, still mulling over the issues they had covered.

## Introducing IPROW

By Jayne Benson, IPROW President

IPROW, or, to give it's full title, The Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management, was established in 1986 as the membership organisation representing professionals involved in the management of public rights of way and access in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, principally, but not exclusively, as local government officers.

2016 is thus a celebratory year for us since we will be 30 years old!

IPROW exists to represent and promote the views and interests of members, raise standards of management, encourage the exchange of ideas and information in public rights of way and access management, and to foster communication and co-operation between related bodies. Our member services include: exclusive access to information and the opportunity to share experiences and ask questions of colleagues via our website and online forum, reduced fees for specialist training, direct mailing of job opportunities and receiving our in-house journal 'Waymark' four times a year. Some of these services are also available, either free or for a modest charge, to other interested parties.

The website [IPROW](http://www.iprow.org.uk) has a number of public-facing pages in the 'Good Practice Guide' containing information on a range of rights

## Links

[IPROW](http://www.iprow.org.uk)

[Good Practice Guide](#)

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of way/public access topics. Groups, such as a LAF, can also subscribe to Waymark for £78 (plus VAT) and several LAF's are already subscribers; (Please contact Lisa Smith on 01768 840428 or email [membership@iprow.co.uk](mailto:membership@iprow.co.uk) for more information.) You can also follow us on Facebook by "liking" our page [IPROW FB](#); here we post news items of interest and information about what we are doing as an organisation.

One of our main activities is providing specialist training courses on a range of rights of way and access subjects; we are the leading training-provider in our field. Non-members are also welcome to attend training courses. Bespoke training for groups can be arranged at a time and venue to suit (if your LAF is interested please contact Geri Coop on 01536 514749 or by email [training@iprow.co.uk](mailto:training@iprow.co.uk) for more information).

As well as these services, IPROW is a respected and consulted voice for the profession. We respond to Government consultations, in England and in Wales; a recent one for example being the proposed 'Guidance for the Review of ROWIPs in Wales', (issued by Natural Resources Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government), and we are currently helping DEFRA with the revision of Circular 1/09. IPROW is also represented, either in its own right or via members with dual roles, at ADEPT Rights of Way Managers Group national meetings and on Rights of Way Review Committee meetings.

IPROW does not provide an information service to members of the public over and above what is on our website. We will however, try and put enquirers in touch with individuals or organisations that may be able to assist. As an organisation we generally do not intervene in specific rights of way or access cases, even where there are concerns about poor practice, since there are other mechanisms which are enabled to do this, such as the Local Government Ombudsman. However, where a member of the public considers that an IPROW member has behaved unprofessionally, we have a code of conduct and disciplinary process, in common with other similar professional bodies but, in our 30 year history, complaints of unprofessional conduct have been very rare.

So, in short, IPROW is:

- A respected and influential voice for access professionals
- Concerned with rights of way and access matters
- A leading provider of specialist training
- Consulted by government and representing members on national and local bodies
- Helping to keep access issues on the political agenda
- A great way for rights of way people to keep in touch and share their professional knowledge.

## Improving Access – Cotswold Water Park

By Gloucestershire Local Access Forum (GLAF)

A meeting between Swindon and North Wiltshire LAF and Gloucestershire LAF was arranged to share matters of common interest. One issue that emerged was an unspent 'pot' of money that was being held by the Cotswold Water Park Trust for access

## Links

[IPROW Facebook](#)

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[Cotswold Water Park Trust](#)



Bridge before improvements

improvements within the Water Park.

This was investigated by Gloucestershire PROW team at the request of GLAF, and a representative of the Trust was invited to a GLAF meeting. It transpired that approximately £5,000 of funds

remained from an original sum of £21,000. Importantly, if the fund was not spent before the end of the 2015 financial year in April, it might be 'lost'. A couple of projects were considered by GLAF and following consultation it was agreed to explore the potential of replacing a narrow foot bridge on a heavily used route near the Gateway Visitor Centre, South Cerney with a multi- user fully accessible bridge.

To access the funds an independent organisation was required to make the application. The local Cirencester Ramblers agreed to take on this role for GLAF. With



Bridge after improvements

the support of local disability organisations, parish and district councils as well as other local organisations, an application was made to the Trust's Community and Environment Improvement Fund. The application was successful and the Ramblers, with the assistance of Gloucestershire Public Rights of Way, Amey PLC and a local contractor, completed the new bridge earlier this year. Concurrently, a significant project was undertaken to upgrade and improve the muddy footpath running along the lake edge.



GLAF site visit - June 2015

These projects now enable anyone with limited mobility and those with pushchairs to access a circular walk from the Gateway Centre along a wildlife lake, returning via the Thames and Severn

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Canal. The Gateway Centre also provides the added benefits of parking, toilets and a café.

The whole project was initiated by a chance remark by Swindon and North Wiltshire LAF at the joint meeting, without which GLAF would never have been made aware of this source of funding. The pivotal role of the Ramblers and the co-operation of other local organisations was crucial to its delivery.

Further information available from GLAF member Richard Holmes [horbox@hotmail.com](mailto:horbox@hotmail.com)

## National Conferences

By Rob Leek, Natural England

As covered in an article in the [last edition of LAF news](#), from 11th to the 30th September 2015 we ran a short online survey of LAF members and Officers regarding the possibility of holding national LAF conferences this financial year. We had 138 responses to the survey and many thanks to everyone who responded to it.

Using the information provided to us from the survey we concluded that LAFs would value national conferences being held this year and that their Appointing Authorities would mostly be prepared to pay travel and subsistence expenses for LAF representatives to attend.

To try and keep delegate's travel costs and time to a minimum, we are holding two national conferences, one in the north and one in the south, in locations with good national rail links. Both conferences will run from 10.30 to 16.30 and lunch and refreshments will be provided free for all delegates.

The dates, venue addresses and links to the online delegate booking pages for the conferences are:

LAF National Conference (South)

Tuesday 23rd February 2016

Temple Quay House

2 The Square

Bristol

BS1 6EB

[LAF National Conference \(South\) Online Booking](#)

LAF National Conference (North)

Tuesday 1st March 2016

Oxford Place Centre

Oxford Place

Leeds

LS1 3AX

[LAF National Conference \(North\) Online Booking](#)

The conference ticket options that can be booked via the links above are:

- LAF Representatives (LAF Chair, member or officer - 1 per LAF)
- Speakers or workshop leads

## Links

[LAF News - Issue 7](#)

*Huddle specific links*

[Conference Survey Results](#)

[Conference Whiteboard](#)

[LAF National Conference \(South\) Online Booking](#)

[LAF National Conference \(North\) Online Booking](#)

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# LAF News

- Natural England/Defra staff
- LAF Volunteers to help on the day (LAF members or officers - limited spaces available)
- Partner organisation representatives to run stalls (limited spaces available)
- Reserves list (for any LAF members or officers - will be able to let delegates know nearer the date of the conference if a space is available)

There will be talks at both conferences from Defra, the Disabled Ramblers, the British Horse Society and a presentation on alternative sources of funding.

## **Workshops (delegates can choose 2 per conference)**

### ***Bristol - South***

- 2026 – Open Spaces Society
- Recreational Vehicles - LARA (Land Access and Recreation Association)
- Registering our White Roads - Herefordshire LAF
- Nottinghamshire Guided Walks Partnership - Nottinghamshire LAF
- Disability Access - Gloucestershire LAF
- Naturally Healthy Project - Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks
- Charitable status for sub-groups - Norfolk LAF
- Dementia Adventure - Dementia Adventure

### ***Leeds - North***

- 2026 – Open Spaces Society
- Recreational Vehicles - LARA (Land Access and Recreation Association)
- Registering our White Roads - Herefordshire LAF
- Nottinghamshire Guided Walks Partnership - Nottinghamshire LAF
- Cycling on a footpaths - Redcar & Cleveland LAF
- Access prioritisation - Durham LAF
- Dementia Adventure - Dementia Adventure
- Story behind the Sandstone Way - Northumberland LAF

We also hope to produce a conference briefing or newsletter to include information and topics that can't be fitted into the programme so please contact [LAF@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:LAF@naturalengland.org.uk) as soon as possible if you would like something included.

## **Paths for Communities (P4C)**

By Pippa Langford, Natural England

The Paths for Communities grant scheme run by Natural England on behalf of Defra closed in March 2014 after awarding just under £2 million to 43 projects. At the end of the scheme Natural England produced a final report which includes information about all the projects that were supported. More recently Defra have released a report which assesses the economic and social impacts of the project. The results of the project are significant: from a grants programme of £2 million the Gross Value Added

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# LAF News



Bottesford Beck before P4C improvements

was estimated to be over £7.5m with an estimated 187 full time equivalent jobs supported or created. There were also significant benefits to the health of users. Whilst it might seem obvious to LAF members that improvements to the rights of way network result in more people using paths and those extra people also generate local economic and health benefits, actual evidence of the benefits of investing in new public rights of way and improved surfacing and signage is rare. This report should provide very useful data which could be

used by LAFs in conversations with their local authority, LEP and Local Health and Wellbeing Board to demonstrate the local benefits of a programme of path improvements.

The results are provided in the executive summary of the final report which can be downloaded from [here](#)

The Natural England final report which gives more detail about each of the projects is available from [.GOV.UK](#)



Bottesford Beck after P4C improvements

## What's Hot on Huddle

By Rob Leek, Natural England

### Public Participation in the Management of PROW's Survey

Sue Philipson an Access Ranger for West Sussex County Council is running a survey via Huddle to gather thoughts on the 'effectiveness' of LAFs, be that from a members point of view of from the view of a member of the Appointing Authority. My end goal is to develop a model of participation for Access Forums and Appointing Authorities to use to further develop their working relationships and processes to become as effective as possible in improving access in their local areas.

Although this research is for academic purposes I hope you will find the outcomes both interesting and useful and I have agreed to share my final report with Huddle members. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete and closes 31st January 2016.

### Organised Events on ProW

A number of comments have been posted to this whiteboard regarding policy/guidance to give to walkers, equestrians, cyclists etc. holding organised events using wholly/partly PROW

### Consultations whiteboard

## Links

[P4C Executive Summary](#)

[P4C Final Report \(.GOV.UK\)](#)

*Huddle specific links*

[PROW Survey](#)

[Organised Events on PROW](#)

[Consultations Whiteboard](#)

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This whiteboard was introduced on Huddle in October 2015 and is used to alert Huddle members to consultations that they or their LAFs may be interested in responding to. Natural England will continue to keep the whiteboard updated with new consultations though Huddle members are welcome to also use it to alert other members to consultations they may become aware of.

## Huddle or alternative?

In 'what's hot on Huddle' in [issue 7 of LAF News](#) it included an article on an informal consultation that was held In September 2015 of all LAF Huddle members for their views and suggestions about whether an alternative social media platform might be more suitable for LAFs than Huddle.

The feedback received suggested that the overwhelming majority of Huddle users would prefer to keep using Huddle rather than move to an alternative) though Natural England will work to try and improve, simplify and produce new guidance for the workspace for its users

For more details see the Huddle link to the right.

## Links

[Issue 7 of LAF News](#)

*Huddle specific links*

[Huddle or Alternative](#)

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<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>
<b>Title: General Paper</b>
<b>Meeting Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016</b>
<b>Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Venue: Bury St Edmunds Cricket Club Pavilion</b>

## **Introduction**

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

## **Natural England Engagement**

1. In October 2015 Natural England (NE) published its local access forum survey results for 2015. The survey is attached in the appendices to this report.
2. On 15th December 2015, NE held its Chairs and VC's Regional Meeting at Eastbrook, Cambridge. Vice chairman David Barker's and NE's report of proceedings are attached in the appendices to this report.
3. The National LAF Conferences will be held on Tuesday 23rd February 2016 in Bristol and Tuesday 1st March 2016 in Leeds. The chairman will be attending the event in Leeds.
4. Issue 8 of LAF News (2015/16) is attached in the appendices to this report.

## **Sizewell C**

At its last meeting in October 2015, SLAF heard a presentation from EDF, including work on the tourism workstream. Since then, SCC officers involved in access and conservation attended a Recreation and Amenity Workshop in December 2015. The main business of the workshop was to agree aspects of the Amenity and Recreation impact assessments for Sizewell C Main Development Site and the Associated Development Sites, specifically the A&R impact assessment method, the initial proposed study areas and approach to defining the final study areas and the scope of the baseline.

The discussion was relatively straightforward and will allow EDF to finalise the environmental statement for: a) the content of the draft baseline for the Amenity and Recreation chapter for Sizewell C (SZC) Nuclear Power Station and the construction site for discussion and agreement with consultees and b) the proposed method and initial study areas for the Amenity and Recreation chapters for both the construction main development site and the associated development sites (eg the park and ride sites).

## **How Large Scale Developments Affect Green Access in Suffolk**

At its last meeting, SLAF suggested writing to each of the local planning authorities to remind them of the importance of green access and public rights of way. In discussion with the chairman, it was agreed such a letter would elicit little or no response and a more

focussed approach should be adopted. Consequently, the following email was sent to West Suffolk Council, which is a planning authority the ROW & Access team has had some successes with. Steven Wood is West Suffolk Council's Head of Planning & Growth.

**From:** Andrew Woodin  
**Sent:** 14 January 2016 13:06  
**To:** 'steven.wood@westsuffolk.gov.uk'  
**Cc:** Peter White; 'marie.smith@westsuffolk.gov.uk'; Barry Hall (barry@hall64.plus.com)  
**Subject:** SUFFOLK LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Dear Steven – as per our brief chat this morning... I had drafted this email before we spoke but it gives the relevant information.

I am writing on behalf of the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF). Local access forums are established under sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and their purpose is to advise decision making organisations about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.

One of SLAF's priorities is to ensure public rights of way and other access to the natural environment are properly catered for when new developments are proposed in Suffolk. With council officials estimating up to 70,000 new homes will be needed over the next 15 years, this will have a significant impact on the countryside and PRow network, with increased demand for good quality access.

The forum would be interested to hear direct from a local planning authority on how it regards the role of green access in new developments, and how its policies both safeguard and enhance access for residents and workers in the new developments. I am aware of some of the good work done between SCC and West Suffolk officers on the proposed larger scale developments near Bury St Edmunds for example, which if delivered will see existing access protected and create new opportunities to encourage sustainable journeys and healthy lifestyles.

SLAF would welcome the opportunity to hear from you or one of your team, and how examples of good practice could be rolled out in other parts of the county. In particular, SLAF would like to hear more on:

- How your policies address PRow and green access,
- How this translates into shaping new developments,
- Engagement with SCC officers,
- How advice and recommendations translate into delivery,
- A flavour of the larger developments in west Suffolk.

I look forward to hearing from you or one of your colleagues. If you want an informal discussion about SLAF's role and interest in the effect of planning on access, I am happy to discuss further.

Barry Hall is the chairman of the local access forum and their next meeting is the afternoon of 28<sup>th</sup> January, which I guess is probably too late now to prepare for (although it is not too late to add to the agenda, which goes out on 22<sup>nd</sup> January), the next two are arranged for 21<sup>st</sup> April and 21<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Andrew Woodin

SLAF will be updated on the outcome of this meeting, but the hope is a senior officer from West Suffolk planning will attend the forum's meeting in April or July.

END

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>
<b>Title: Green Access Development Update</b>
<b>Meeting Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016</b>
<b>Author/Contact: Claire Parker. Green Access Manager</b>
<b>Venue: Bury St Edmunds Cricket Club Pavilion</b>

### **Introduction**

This report summarises development projects the Green Access Manager is either leading, scoping or involved with, and which should be of interest to the forum.

### **Bury to Horringer Cycle Route.**

A project to deliver a safe off road route for use by cyclists and pedestrians between the two communities of Bury at Edmunds and Horringer. This project is in its early stages and is listed as an action point in Suffolk County Councils Cycling Strategy Delivery Plan.

Aims of the project are to facilitate

- A modal shift in transport to support increased levels of healthy and sustainable transport particularly cycling and walking.
- A reduction in CO2 emissions.
- Sustainable and safe links to schools and employment.
- Increased levels of physical activity.

Strong support exists from within the community and from the local Councillor and the Green Access Manager is working closely with both to ensure that the work is in line with community needs and expectations. This includes identifying a mutually appropriate route and shortly managing negotiations with land owners. We have secured funding to commission a safety audit of the route and to work up a design to incorporate findings from the assessment. An ecological assessment is due to be undertaken prior to then during February.

### **Safer Routes to School**

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is a national initiative to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school.

The programme examines conditions around schools and conducts projects and activities that work to improve safety and accessibility, and reduce traffic and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. As a result, this program helps make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing transportation choices thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. The Green Access Manager is working alongside SCC Passenger Transport to identify ways in which Public Rights of Way might contribute to these efforts and a number of footpaths and bridleways have been identified as being potential options for a safer route to school. The programme is complex and in some circumstances contentious and political.

### **Suffolk Walking Festival**

The 9th annual Suffolk Walking Festival will take place this year between 14th May and 5<sup>th</sup> June. It is being launched for the first time at Minsmere and significantly our launch event will also launch Suffolk's Year of Walking. The festival offers arguably the most diverse programme to date, with over 70 walks, designed to attract both visitors and residents, and keen and beginner walkers alike.

The programme is an eclectic mix of walks, with lengths ranging from 1.5 to 60 miles and which explore various themes, including history, architecture, dementia, photography and even pilates! To celebrate Suffolk County Council's Year of Walking, the programme also includes *three* 'challenge walks' all of which are being delivered by SCC officers. Two will be delivered by the ROW team.

Work has been undertaken behind the scenes by the Green Access Development Team to firm up the structure of the festival including ownership, constitution of the steering group and health and safety. We have also secured additional funding of £10 000 for the 2016 and 2017 festival.

### **Walkers are Welcome**

The Walkers are Welcome scheme is a community-led initiative operating in England, Scotland and Wales. The scheme offers a nationally recognised accreditation and promotes towns and communities as 'walker-friendly', based on a number of criteria, aiming to benefit local economies by attracting tourism.



Currently there are no Walkers are Welcome accredited locations in Suffolk. The Green Access Development Team has identified interest in/from four Suffolk towns and is in early conversations with them to help support the development of the WRW programme in their community. These towns are Sudbury, Hadleigh, Woodbridge and Framlingham.

Benefits of the scheme include

### **Tourism/Economic Benefits**

- Attracts more people to visit your Town to enjoy local walks
- Economic benefit for local shops, B&Bs, Hotels, Pubs, Cafés, Restaurants, etc. through increased footfall
- Strengthens Towns' reputation as a walking destination when signposted walks/walking guides are available
- Promotes local visitor attractions
- Compliments Towns' economic generation/tourism plans and strategies
- Demonstrates that walkers will be given a warm welcome by the local community

### **Footpaths**

- Ensures that public footpaths remain open and maintained for the benefit of local people and visitors
- Promotes effective liaison arrangements with local councils and agencies responsible for footpaths. WAW members provide a focus for cooperation.
- Helps to create new footpaths and walking groups
- Encourages preparation of local walk guides and signage
- Promotes the health benefits of walking and being in the countryside
- Gives local people and visitors the opportunity to learn about the culture, history and biodiversity of the Towns and surrounding countryside
- Helps ensure that footpaths and facilities for walkers are kept in good condition

### **Being Well in the Wild**

This is a SCC lead initiative which aspires to promote the natural environment, particularly green space, as a tool to achieve positive physical and mental wellbeing.

Members of the Green Access Development team sit on the BWiTW steering group and the Green Access Manager is pro-actively leading a collaborative and innovative project as part of this initiative, which is based on referral into green walking and conservation work to improve levels of mental health. An evaluated small scale pilot programme using the wider workforce to deliver health outcomes will begin at the end of February which if successful may lever in future funding to help upscale and mainstream this piece of work.

### **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Every Highway Authority in England has a statutory Duty to produce and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and Local Access Forums are statutory consultees in the process. The current Suffolk ROWIP expires in 2016 and the ROWIP 2 (2016 -2026) needs to be drafted. Consultation with the SLAF took place in July 2015 during which key themes began to emerge. Wider consultations are currently being planned. This process will take the form of three tailored questionnaires to Parish Councils, user groups and non user groups.

### **Promotion**

**Website:** The Discover Suffolk Website underwent a face lift towards the end of 2015 and is now hosted by SCC and kept up to date and relevant, including a rolling news section, by the Green Access Development team. Plans are in place to evaluate the content of the website and to manage further improvements during 2016.

**Social media:** Discover Suffolk currently has over 5000 twitter followers and has grown significantly over the past 12 month. We are now expanding our tweets to include strong messages about the health benefits of walking, green activity and connection with nature. Facebook is also incorporating these messages to broaden the range and number of followers.

**Leaflets:** The Green Access Team has recently produced two new leaflets (Wickham Market and Leavenheath). These leaflets are produced and funded by partnership working with Parish councils. The range of Discover Suffolk leaflets is currently small (23) and limited resources means that the team is creating new opportunities to produce more leaflets with less output. This involves working with external partners, identifying shared outcomes and careful pooling of resources. The Green Access manager is currently working with Sport England and Suffolk Trail runners to way mark and promote 10 short

(running) routes across the county, and has instigated relationships with a History focused charity called Eighth in the East who also wish to promote routes.

**Media:** A positive relationship has been developed with Archant, specifically The East Anglian Daily times via the Editor of the Environment Supplement, in which a well-received front page and double page article has recently been printed. Support has been agreed for the Walking Festival beginning with a piece due to appear at the beginning of February. Meetings are arranged with the Editor of The Suffolk magazine who has also expressed an interest in supporting the Suffolk Walking Festival

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