

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Agenda
Meeting Date:	20th July 2017
Author/Contact:	Sophie Morling
Venue: Knodishall Village Hall, School Road, Knodishall, IP17 1UD	

		Paper Number
1.	14.00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting	LAF 17/10
3.	Declarations of interest	
4.	Review of Aldhurst Farm Visit	Verbal
5.	Coastal Access Update (paper)	LAF 17/11
6.	Network Rail Level Crossings (paper)	LAF 17/12
7.	The National LAF Conference	LAF17/13
8.	Leicestershire LAF Planning Advice	LAF 17/14
9.	Recruitment	LAF 17/15
10.	Any Other Business	
11.	Public Question Time	
12.	Next meeting – 19 th October 2017, venue TBA	

16:00

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Minutes of meeting held at Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre on 20 April 2017
Meeting Date:	20 July 2017
Author/Contact:	Sophie Morling
Venue:	Leiston Community Centre

1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping

Present: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair), Roland Wilson (RW), Monica Pipe (MP), Anthony Wright (AWR), Diana Kearsley (DK) John Wayman (JW), Gordon Merfield (GM), Jane Hatton (JH)

SCC Officers Present:, Andrew Woodin (AW), Steve Kerr (SK)

Member of the Public: Gordon Crosby (GC)

Apologies: Sophie Morling (SM), Claire Parker (CP), Margaret Hancock (MH), David Barker (Vice Chair) (DB), Cllr Jane Storey (JS)

2. Minutes of previous meeting (LAF17/07)

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2017 were reviewed and confirmed to be an accurate record.

- Recruitment – AW noted SCC hope to undertake this in the autumn. GM made request to have sport represented as well also consider where new members live e.g. West Suffolk.
- Interest forms – members to complete outstanding forms sent out after last meeting.

ACTION: SCC to Chase EDF re July meeting

3. Declaration of interest - none

4. Coastal Access Update (Paper)

AW presented a paper on coastal access.

SLAF expressed interest in being represented on any partnership to manage a regional coast path.

RW noted NCC standards on coast not actually as good as Suffolk, including the coastal path. AW noted that NCC have a lot of expertise in promotion and getting external funding.

ACTION: SCC invite NE to July meeting.

5. Network Rail Level Crossings Paper

Suffolk TWAO. AW and SK presented and explained SCC position on a possible holding objection.

SLAF now need to decide how they want to respond.

SK went through TWAO slides and level crossing proposals and various comments were made by members.

GC asked is closure of a level crossing is conditional on successful implementation of alternative routes, and could he have sight of RSAs – are they available in published documents?

MP and AWR proposed any letter from SLAF to SoS should express concerns around poor communications, consultation process, apparent lack of discussion with land managers. RW asked if SLAF's response could also state TWAO is not appropriate means to close PROW.

ACTION: BH to draft response.

Other Sites. Gipsy Lane – the saga continues. NR have asked if SCC will commence work on a diversion order prior to planning permission being granted. SCC have not made a final response.

GC noted National Rail state they are looking to find further funding to progress to the design stage.

6. Planning and Development

AWR asked are weekly lists still produced? AW believed they were. GC noted MSDC does list all apps and individuals can request lists. RW endorsed this.

AW noted he had recently attended a meeting with Mid Suffolk councils to raise awareness about green access and had asked the head of planning at MSDC to attend a future SLAF meeting. He had not received a response despite chasing.

ACTIONS: SCC still intend to invite a planner to a future meeting. AW noted SLAF could also ask planner to attend to discuss specific larger sites, e.g. Martlesham.

7. Working Groups

The meeting updated working groups as follows:

Topic	Membership
Network Rail	Barry Hall, Roley Wilson, Diana Kearsley
Sizewell C	Barry Hall, Anthony Wright, Roley Wilson
Forests and Woodlands	Gordon Merfield, Anthony Wright, Jane Hatton
Open Access	Barry Hall, Gordon Merfield,

ROWIP and Suffolk Walking Strategy	Roley Wilson, Jane Hatton, Diana Kearsley, Monica Pipe
Coastal Erosion and Access	Barry Hall, Roley Wilson
Planning and Development	Jane Storey, Jane Hatton, Anthony Wright
Agri-Environment Access Schemes	David Barker, John Wayman

AW made point members can also lead on escalating a matter of concern to the forum.

8. National Conference 21st June 2017

BH is attending

9. Any Other Business

AWR enquired about CTCO in Bury St Edmunds to Hospital. AW confirmed work should start in May.

AWR enquired about Ipswich alternative map and the river path.

10. Public Question Time – No questions from the public.

11. Dates of Next Meeting – 20 July 2017 Venue – Leiston Community Centre (possibly whole day), then 19th October 2017 venue tbc.

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum

Title: Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings

Meeting: 20th July 2017

Author/Contact: Steve Kerr

Venue: Knodishall Village Hall, School Road, Knodishall, IP17 1UD

Introduction

This paper updates the Forum on the main level crossings being addressed by Network Rail (NR) and Suffolk County Council (SCC), and progress on their Transport and Works Act proposals.



Needham Market Gipsy Lane and FP6

NR contacted council officers on 10 July 2017 to advise that, in view of the significant lead in times for taking a report to the Rights of way Committee and the need to report this to the committee meeting on 17 October 2017, they will shortly be applying to divert Gipsy Lane and extinguish Public Footpath 6 Needham Market, under the rail

crossing public path order provisions. NR are also aiming to submit their planning application for the culvert structure(s) to Mid Suffolk District Council by the end of July.

Halesworth Station - Barrow crossing



The county council is unaware of any subsequent update on this crossing since the Forum were last updated in January 2017.

Felixstowe Branch Line Improvements – Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO)



Further to the update provided in April, the draft Order was submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport (SoSfT) on 6 March 2017. The deadline for the submission of any objections or representations was 19 April 2017 and the county council submitted a corporate response, supporting the aims of the TWAO, which included PROW comments. It is known the landowner and some local residents are unhappy with the type, scale and form of the proposed bridleway bridge and a public inquiry will be arranged but at the present time it is not known when this will be

scheduled for. Parties wishing to exercise their right to speak at inquiry needed to submit a statement of case (SoC) by the 13 July. SCC submitted its SoC by the deadline date.

Lime Kiln Quay/Sun Wharf Level Crossings

After further clarification from the relevant project manager at NR, there are no current plans to close or divert either of these crossings. On 9 June the project manager updated officers as follows:

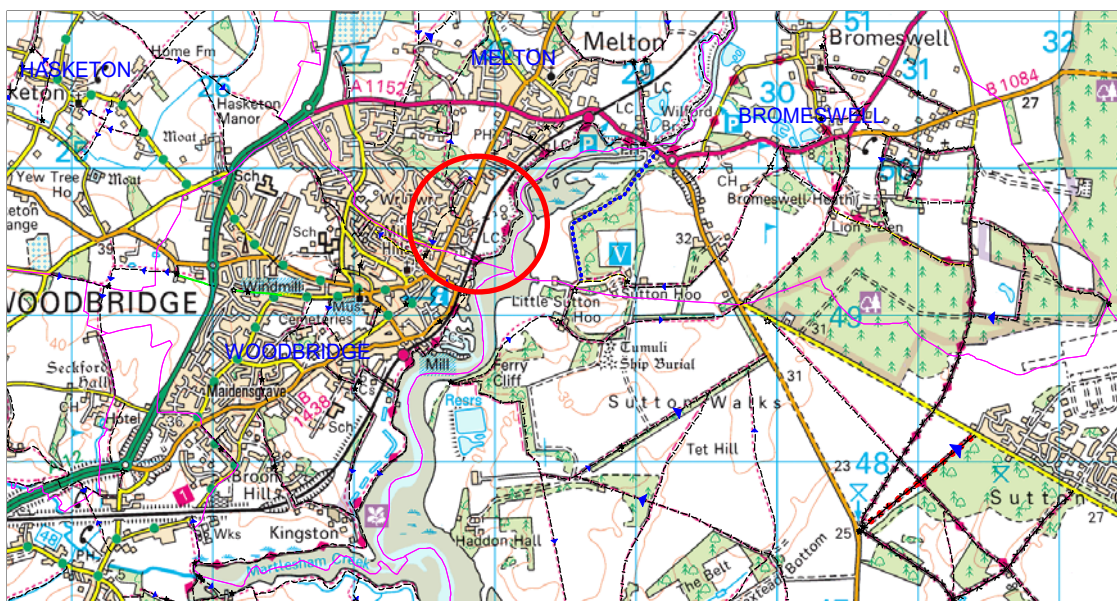
‘The project I am involved in was assessing the viability of upgrading the crossings at Ferry Quay, Haywards and Sun Wharf to a type of crossing that uses obstacle detection technology. This is the safest type of crossing currently available. The project was also assessing the possibility of closing Lime Kiln crossing due to its close proximity to Sun Wharf (approx. 30metres apart). Preliminary design has now been completed on this scheme and we were about to discuss this proposal with Mr Kerr and other interested parties when the election was called and prevented us moving forward with our consultation.

During the Purdah period we have taken the opportunity to take a fresh look at the scheme and having conducted a thorough bottom up review, the scope has been revised to exclude the upgrade of Sun Wharf and the closure of Lime Kiln crossings. Therefore the project will only be progressing with the upgrade of Haywards and Ferry Quay crossings. Please note that Network Rail may decide to continue with the works at Lime Kiln and Sun Wharf in the future and if so we will be sure to make you aware of this; however there is no current intention to undertake these works during the funding period which ends in March 2019.

I do not believe that any rights of way will be affected by our works at Ferry Quay and Haywards however I would be happy to have a meeting to discuss our intentions to confirm this. Also may I offer my assurances that NR will be following the correct processes when progressing these works and consultation will be undertaken with the Council as we progress.

For the avoidance of doubt I’ve included a map showing the locations of the 4 crossings mentioned above.

Regarding Kingston Field, I am unaware of any works involving the crossings near this location. If there is such a project it is not something that my team are delivering and therefore I’m afraid I can offer no information on it.’



General/Countywide

NR's Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction Strategy - Transport and Works Act Order

Further to the Forum's last update, NR applied to the SoSfT on 24 March 2017 to close/divert 24 crossings within Suffolk, via a TWAO (known as the Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction Order). Following further investigations on the part of NR and its consultants, a further 4 cases have been dropped from the scheme. The deadline date for receipt of objections was 5th May 2017 and SCC submitted its holding response on 3 May. The county council has objected to 9 of the 24 level crossing proposals – see Appendix A. Again, a public inquiry is to be scheduled and those wishing to speak have had to submit their SoC to the SoSfT by 13 July.

However, due to the implications of section 239 of the Local Government Act and in order for it to be properly ratified as a formal objection, the holding objection must now be approved by the Council by way of a resolution of Full Council at its meeting on 20 July.

SLAF's letter of objection to the Suffolk TWAO is included in the papers, as are the responses of the Department for Transport's responses of 3rd May and 1st June 2017. Officers have been in touch with the Dept for Transport advising that should a statement of case be needed from the forum, then their letter of objection also fulfils that purpose.

A brief guide to Transport and Works Act orders can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-and-works-act-orders-a-brief-guide-2006>

END – SK & AW/SCC July 2017

SLAF
Suffolk Local Access Forum

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: SLAF/NR
Date: 2 May 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

The Network Rail (Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction) Order

At the recent meeting of the Suffolk Local Access Forum, members were apprised of the publication of the above Order which if implemented would see the closure of 24 rail crossings in Suffolk and agreed that because of the short timespan given for responses they would send this letter as an Holding Objection to the above Order.

The Local Access Forum has responded constructively to Network Rail's Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultations to the proposed crossing closures, but it would appear that for the Order little attention has been paid to the comments made by those who took the time to respond previously including Suffolk County Council who will ultimately have to take over the management of any diversions, user groups, landowners and individuals.

From the briefing that the Forum received, it appears that despite offers from the Suffolk County Council Rights of Way team to inspect the proposed diversion routes together with Network Rail consultants, this was not taken up. Consequently there are areas relating to routes on private land where they are unable to comment on the proposals regarding the suitability of the terrain, the length of any new footbridges or the need for any other structures required. Where they have been able to check the proposals it appears that where some changes to routes have been made, landowners have not been fully consulted. This we feel is unacceptable.

Regarding the Order, the Local Access Forum still has issues with some of the alternative routes proposed by Network Rail as they use narrow country roads with overgrown verges which may contain drainage grips, poor visibility on bends and narrow bridges over the railway where Network Rail suggest that painting white lines and erecting new signage will suffice.

In many instances, it is clear from the description of the project works that where a diversionary path runs alongside the railway a 1.8m chain link fence will be erected. This is

not acceptable in a rural setting as it would be visually intrusive, the more traditional 1.35m post and wire would be better.

Whilst a diversion that adds around 500m to a route seems reasonable, some of the diversions add over a kilometre which is a substantial addition.

Our response to the crossings that we feel further work needs to be carried out before this Order can be approved is set out below:

SO1 – Brantham Sea Wall

Whilst the proposed route is acceptable we would like to see the river path remain open as it well used by local birdwatchers.

SO2 – Brantham High Bridge

No explanation given for the change of route east of the railway line which now appears to use a private road and field margins. Has its impact on landowners been assessed? We do support the linking path footpath proposed alongside the A137 to Brantham Bridge.

SO4 – Island

We do not object to the deletion of the alternative footpath on the south side of the Capel St Mary road but still feel that narrowness of the road bridge for pedestrian use has still not been addressed.

SO5 – Pannington Hall

These proposals result in the extinguishment of a significant length of right of way and whilst accepting the proposals we urge that the proposed 2m footpath south of The Street should be changed to a 3m wide bridleway to connect with existing bridleways. Once again the impact on safety of the narrow road overbridge should be re-examined.

S12 – Gooderhams

The possibility that the existing stiles should be replaced by kissing gates at the Cow Creek crossing should be considered given that Fords Green and Bacton are also being closed, which could lead to greater use of that crossing.

S13/S69 – Fords Green & Bacton

These two proposals should be considered together. Although some attempt has been made to reduce the use of the B1113 for pedestrians it is essential that that a proper footway is established along Broad Road for safety reasons.

S22 – Weatherby

From Network Rail's survey, this is obviously a very well-used crossing even if it is not a public right of way. The suggested alternative route alongside a busy road and using a narrow under bridge is not acceptable. Also the suggested use of 2m high steel palisade fencing to stop trespass once the crossing is closed would be a visual intrusion.

S23 – Higham

The suggested diversion uses existing roads with inadequate verges. To reduce safety concerns we suggest that the possibility of putting a field edge path behind the group of houses by the war memorial should be investigated.

S25 – Cattishall

We have consistently commented that the crossing should remain until developer funded footbridge in place and the underpass opened.

S27/S28 – Barrels/Grove Farm

These two proposals should be considered together. The alternative routes involve a significant amount of road walking and the moving of the footpath 5 Thurston from its position on the Definitive Map to alongside the boundary of 'Pheasants' has been done without consulting the landowner.

S31 – Mutton Hall

The proposal to use the narrow road overbridge near Butts Farm is unacceptable. We have suggested to Network Rail that it would be more sensible divert the path south of the railway line westwards and use the underbridge on Captains Lane.

The Suffolk Local Access Forum would, following any Public Inquiry and decision by the Secretary of State expects as part of the final Order that none of the crossings would be closed by Network Rail until the diversion route had been fully put into place and inspected and deemed as satisfactory by Suffolk County Council.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Hall', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Barry Hall
Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum



Department for Transport

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Our Ref: TWA/17/APP/04/OBJ/23
Your Ref:

3 May 2017

Dear Madam,

TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992 (TWA): APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (SUFFOLK LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER

1. Thank you for your letter of 2 May 2017 to the Secretary of State for Transport objecting to this application. We shall take your letter into account in considering the application and shall send a copy of it to the applicants for the Order as required by the TWA procedure Rules. Please note that the Rules enable us to let others have a copy (including any personal information contained in it) if they ask for one.
2. I enclose for your information a brief guide to TWA Orders. This explains the procedure for considering order applications and how you can take part in the process if you wish to do so.
3. Part 3 of the guide (page 16) explains that where there are objections to a scheme we may decide to hold a public inquiry or a hearing, or to deal with them by an exchange of written representations. A decision on this will normally be made within 28 days of the end of the objection period.
4. To help us to decide which procedure to follow please let me know as soon as possible if you wish to speak or be represented at an inquiry or hearing, if one is held. Part 4 of the guide (page 20) explains what is involved in giving evidence at an inquiry. If you do not wish to speak at an inquiry, you may still send further written evidence to the Inspector, preferably before any inquiry opens.
5. At question 12, the guide explains that certain types of objector are classed as 'statutory objectors' and have certain additional rights. **If you are a statutory objector and wish to exercise the right to have your objection heard, please inform us when letting us know that you wish to take part in any inquiry or hearing.**
6. If we do not hear from you, we shall assume that you are content to rely on the comments that you have already made. Your objection will, as required by the TWA procedure Rules, be sent to the Inspector appointed to conduct any inquiry or hearing.

7. Please let me know if you require any further advice about these procedures. Please keep the brief guide available, as we shall refer to it when writing to you again.

Yours faithfully,

Caroline O'Neill

Caroline O'Neill



Department for Transport

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Our Ref: TWA/17/APP/04/OBJ/23
Your Ref:

1 June 2017

Dear Madam,

TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992 (TWA): APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (SUFFOLK LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER

1. I refer to the application for this Order and to your letter of 2 May 2017 to the Secretary of State for Transport objecting to this application. I am writing to let you know that we have decided to hold a public local inquiry into this application.

2. This letter should be taken as the notice of the intention to hold an inquiry as required by rule 4 of the Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004, S.I. No. 2018 ("the Inquiries Rules"), and the date of this letter is the "starting date" for the purposes of the timetabling arrangements in those Rules.

For those who do not wish to give oral evidence at inquiry

3. If you do not wish to give oral evidence at the inquiry your correspondence about this scheme will, in any event, be forwarded to the Inspector conducting the inquiry for him to consider with all other evidence. Should you decide, however, that you wish to add to your correspondence, this may be done either in writing (before or during the inquiry) or, with the permission of the Inspector, orally during the inquiry. If at any stage you decide that you wish to present further written or oral evidence to the inquiry, please notify us immediately so that we can advise you about the procedures for doing so. Anybody may attend the inquiry as a member of the audience without intending to speak, without making prior arrangements.

For those who do wish to give oral evidence at inquiry

Statements of case

4. The procedures for those wishing to give oral evidence to an inquiry are described in Part 4 of the brief guide to Transport and Works Act orders that we sent to you when acknowledging your letter. The first stage in the inquiry process is for participants to prepare a "statement of case", the requirements for which are described in the answers to question 25 of the brief guide. If you (or a representative on your behalf) intend to present oral evidence to the inquiry, the Secretary of State requires you, under rule 7(3) of the Inquiries Rules, to serve a statement of case, on him (**at the above address**) and on the applicant (**c/o Winckworth Sherwood LLP, Minerva House, 5 Montague Close, London SE1 9BB**) no later than **13 July 2017**.

Other matters at this stage

5. We shall write again to those intending to give oral evidence with a statement of matters (see questions 30 of the brief guide) and to confirm the date and venue of the inquiry (which have not yet been fixed). Please also note the Department's policy on claiming costs for appearing at inquiries explained at question 39 of the brief guide. Further copies of the brief guide may be obtained from us at the above address.

6. Please let me know if you require any further advice about these procedures.

Yours faithfully,

Caroline O'Neill

Caroline O'Neill

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: National Local Access Forum Conference Birmingham, 21st June 2017
Meeting Date: 20th July 2017
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: Knodishall Village Hall, School Road, Knodishall, IP17 1UD

Introduction

The day was opened and chaired by Steve Jenkinson. Amongst his opening remarks were such gems as “If you can't make a difference, why bother to turn up?” Use dog walking to get people more active and connect with the countryside and fund it from the health agenda. Hampshire Countryside Service have a leaflet about “Planning for dog ownership in new developments”. He reminded us of the Defra guidance on Local Access Forums and commented that the National Coast Path has been supported by three different Governments.

Natural England Update

This was given by Bruce Cutts, Senior Adviser. There were now 150 long term restrictions in place on open access land and these are reviewed every five years, next reviews are in 2018 -2021. NE engaged in delivering England Coast Path, other coastal related issues, partnerships with local authorities, a programme of National Nature Reserve dedications and reconciling other land management issues.

In the last four years 64 NNR's have had access dedications giving 15,000ha of open access land, 262ha of open access for horse riders and 21km of cycle access. The 2,700 mile long England Coast Path will be finished by 2020 is currently 78% complete or consulted on (47 sections) with a further 21 sections in the next twelve months, eight teams are involved in its delivery. There are some dedications for higher rights and a user/economic benefit survey is being undertaken of the open sections.

Health and the Natural Environment

This was given by Sarah Preston who was leading an NE programme “Outdoors for All.” At its core was “transformational change through partnerships”. Key strategies included Defra's 25 year Environmental Plan, NHS Five year forward view of 2014, Health and Wellbeing Plans and Local Nature Partnerships. Analysis of MENE data will help to track inequalities in social, living conditions and health inequalities, work out who would benefit from access to the rural environment and green space e'g those with mental health or dementia illnesses or those physically inactive. Need to raise awareness with agencies of local opportunities delivering access to the natural environment and incorporate into Local Plans. She also suggested that perhaps health professionals should be invited to address a LAF meeting.

Workshops

There were two workshop sessions, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, with a choice from four on offer. For the morning session I went to 'Railway Crossings - Issues and Solutions' which turned out not to be by Network Rail but by Chris Miller and Richard Cuthbert, members of IPROW who along with Andrew had been trying to get some formal good practice guide on crossing closures with Network Rail. Collaborations and Protocol between NR/IPROW/ADEPT to provide guidance on RoWs for NR staff, awareness of NR issues for Access and RoW professionals and knowledge of the law and good practice. Unfortunately no good practice guide has resulted although there is still dialogue.

The draft protocol would involve using the All Level Crossing Risk Matrix (ALCRM) which looks at user numbers and user behaviour to calculate risk, a Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA), the use of either a Highways Act Order or Transport and Works Act Order to remove highways rights. It would also make clear that emergency closures were not a good idea. Principles would look at maintenance of structures and surfaces requirements, sufficient warning of approaching trains, vulnerable users, failure of lights and barriers and defects to stiles and decking.

Other things that need to be considered was there was a difference between Business and recreational use of a crossing, where possible the crossing should remain and if closed the impact on the wider network should be considered. Any diversion routes should be safe and not involve new maintenance costs to the local authority.

Despite the seemingly lack of positive agreement with NR some examples of LA/NR working together over sensible and beneficial diversions were shown.

The afternoon workshop on Multi User Routes was given by Mark Weston Director of Access for the BHS and Mark Slater the off-road advisor for Cycling UK (formerly CTC). Both were making the case for inclusion and providing more off-road access for higher right provision.

There were 2.7 million horses in the UK and 1.3 million regular riders. Over 2500 road incidents between horses and vehicles reported to the BHS in the last 6 years with 38 riders and 222 horse killed and 766 horses injured. Around 78% of vehicles travelled passed horse too close or too fast. It would therefore make sense to provide more off-road multi-user routes for equestrians as does already happen for the use of walking/cycling trails.

Cycling UK had 1000 member groups and 67000 members. Cycling is important for physical and mental health and the current RoW network is not working for many of those who want to use it as around 66% of cycling is recreational. Tarmac surfaces encourages speeding and leads to conflict with other users. Would like to see more strategic links using for example old railway lines and allowing easy access from built-up areas into the countryside. Improved signage would also help.

Some suggestions were put forward to allow better off-road use, such as routes should be looked at for their suitability and sustainability rather than the historic context. CROW access could be extended to equestrians and cyclists where there are good tracks. Network improvements could include footpaths regularly used by cyclists having status changed and traffic free loops promoted for family and recreational cyclists rather than enthusiasts.

Defra (Deregulation Act)

In this session Dave Waterman updated on the Rights of Way Reform Project. He first recapped on the background to the Definitive Map beginning with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 which began the process of recording a legal record of RoW's to the CROW Act 2000 which set a cut-off date of 2026 for claims to be added to the map.

It was recognised early on that this was not achievable and new reforms were proposed. A stakeholder working group with an independent chair met to come to a consensus of how things could be progressed. Their report in 2010 aimed to give greater certainty to users and landowners, protect useful routes, provide better quality applications, replace need to advertise in local newspapers. There was a public consultation in 2012 and the changes were included in Government 'catch all' Bill in March 2015. Work is on-going on the regulations and guidance but there are problems at the Treasury and they won't be available until after April 2018.

ROWIPs and Access in the future

Pippa Longford's from NE message was for ROWIP reviews to be positive and ambitious as things may improve in the future. The guidance is still current for the ten year review, the assessment would show whether changes are required. Legal requirements haven't changed and LAF's still have an active role especially as there is now more evidence the use of RoW's and the benefits to health and the value to tourism and the rural economy.

Various studies help to inform ROWIP work such as the Tourist Action Plan 2016, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment and MENE surveys. Suggestions include good signposting and waymarking, preferably showing where to and distance, well drained robust surfaces for all weather use, two-way opening gates and safe off-road routes for cyclists and equestrians.

Need to try and engage with non and infrequent users including those with disabilities and minority ethnic groups. Use MENE and other tools to demonstrate value of RoW's to the local economy and improve funding opportunities through grants and other sources of funding such as LEP's and Health Partnerships and have schemes that could be implemented as soon as opportunities arise.

Wrap Up

Steve Jenkinson brought the conference to an end saying he recognises that there is frustration that there is a lack of resources at the present time, but this can change, things can be done differently. LA's and LAF's should be prepared for opportunities of funding that may arise so don't be despondent and make sure you have a 12 month work programme.

Conclusion

There were around eighty attendees at the conference, but although we all had name stickers, there was not a delegate list which gave information of which LAF's people were attached to. Although I did talk to someone from Essex about the NR TWAO there was very little time to network and there was a rush to get to the workshop rooms before sessions started. Some of the presenters powerpoints were rather wordy rather than bullet points and as yet none have been sent on to delegates.. However it was useful to get

some idea of what is happening on a national scale and realise that we are not alone but part of a national body working locally to achieve better access to the countryside for all.

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: Leicestershire Local Access Forum Planning Advice
Meeting Date: 20th July 2017
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: Knodishall Village Hall, School Road, Knodishall, IP17 1UD

This is a generic advice / response agreed by Leicestershire Local Access Forum to be given to planning authorities and or developers. Elements may be omitted depending on their relevance to any particular situation and points may be added regarding specific applications after email or other consultations with the members of the Planning & Travel Committee.

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The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF) wishes to make what we trust you will find constructive suggestions for when considering planning applications and local plans. Planners are quite constrained by national guidelines but still have sufficient discretion to make a difference in a number of areas of concern.

The LLAF is an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000, and exists to represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways and byways, cycleways and areas of open access.

Section 94 of the CROW act makes it a statutory function of the Forum to give advice to a range of bodies, including local authorities, on access issues in respect of land use planning matters. Ministers have advised that in particular forums were asked to focus on the impact and options for minimising possible adverse effects, of planning policies and development proposals in respect of future public access to land and identifying and expressing support for opportunities to improve public access, or associated infrastructure, which might be delivered through planning policies or new development.

There are three issues which we wish to highlight where the planning process can help greatly. There is an amount of overlap. These are:

- Access and sustainable travel
- Open spaces for both people and wildlife
- Planning for the environment.

#### Access and sustainable travel

When considering new developments, the design of our neighbourhoods is key to promoting healthy travel habits, where local facilities such as shops, doctors, schools and other services are located to encourage routine walking and cycling.

The benefits of the footpath, bridleway and cycleway networks are multi-dimensional and have impacts on sustainable travel, green infrastructure, recreation, tourism, local economies, health and general well-being. They are an essential mechanism for linking communities and facilities if we are to reduce motorised transport and the carbon emissions that ensue. They play a major part in the development of the recreational potential of any area. It is essential to create a physical, social, economic, and legal context in which more people will be encouraged to walk more often and to walk further.

The benefits of the rights of way network should be balanced against the need to protect and enhance the ecology and landscape and enable regeneration and economic growth. These should not be viewed simply as competing demands but as a challenge to use best practice and/or innovative approaches to achieve good quality outcomes to meet each of the aspirations. The LLAF recommends that any policy includes a dedicated section that makes specific reference to the existing network and potential improvements to it and to this end we would suggest the paragraphs in appendix 1 be included in any policy or plan.

When looking at planning applications there are a number of areas that should be considered. If we want to encourage sustainable travel and improved physical and mental health of the residents, then all developments should be designed to encourage and facilitate the taking of exercise by walking. This does not mean providing no bus service but it does mean wherever possible offering attractive alternatives.

Snickets and cut-throughs should enable people to get to facilities such as shops, schools and bus routes. We need however to look at the bigger picture beyond the actual potential development site. Does an existing right of way pass nearby or is there some green space close by? If so can a link from the site be achieved? If not within the control of the landowner could section 106 monies 'buy' a way to join the network up?

We need to ensure that in the planning of our communities, access to basic amenities and services is not dependent on car ownership but is always available to those on foot, bicycle, wheelchair and public transport.

#### Open spaces for both people and wildlife

If we are to encourage walking we need attractive places to attract them. Green open spaces are great for wildlife and provide an outlet for residents to enjoy. If trees feature they are also 'lungs' helping counteract air pollution. Planners should always bear this in mind when permission is requested to remove trees.

The built environment has a major impact on how we travel, so planners and policymakers have an opportunity to make changes in that environment to promote healthier and more active communities. The presence of, and access to, green areas and the natural environment can help increase activity and reduce obesity. Daily physical activity is essential for maintaining health; inactivity directly contributes to 15% of deaths in the UK

Whether for walking, running or the riding of either bicycles or horses, the benefits of all kinds of access to green space have mental and general health benefits plus many economic benefits especially to rural communities by transferring money from the urban

areas to the countryside. To harness these benefits a concerted and co-ordinated effort is needed from policy makers, planners, public health practitioners, health professionals, the voluntary sector, community groups, local media and the public themselves. This collaborative effort needs to identify available green spaces, make them safe and accessible for everyone, make use of them for community and group activities and prescribe their use to promote health and wellbeing. They could help treat a number of conditions, particularly mild to moderate depression.

Planning can assist by either encouraging provision within developments or rejecting applications which would threaten such areas.

Larger developments are required to leave green oases but these are often overly manicured. Sown and fertilised 'parks' are good at absorbing rainwater but rough grassland is over four times more effective and trees improve things further. Such wilder 'semi-natural' areas are also much better for wildlife. We must plan for more absorbent habitats especially in the flood plains. Wetlands and woodlands are ideal at holding back floodwaters as are moors but these are in short supply in Leicestershire. They also provide a varied landscape for residents to access and enjoy.

The National Planning Policy [NPPF] provides protection for Local Green Space although local Green Space does not have a single definition but provided it is of local significance to the community it should be protected. All new development should produce a green infrastructure plan to show how the development can improve green spaces and corridors for people and nature, in the context of the surrounding landscape. Even small scale developments could contribute significantly to creating and enhancing local wildlife habitat thereby encouraging people to get out into the wilder areas to see it. This may be by requiring or suggesting using native plants in landscaping schemes. Also for every tree that is removed they could be required to plant two or even three. Developers should be encouraged to create new habitat such as woodland, wetland, wildflower meadows or other wildlife habitats and adding a green roof to new buildings is also to be encouraged. It can be a win-win situation. If we create wetland and woodland areas and green corridors linking them, we can help wildlife to migrate between populations keeping them healthier and introducing them to our gardens; can create ideal walking possibilities for the health and general well being of the population and cut down the risk of flooding all at the same time.

We must protect and extend natural habitats that soak up and store rainwater. We can employ these natural processes in urban areas, including water-holding habitats in the urban scene and by installing more green roofs on our houses and garages, more permeable surfaces in our towns and cities and more sustainable drainage systems to capture excess water.

### Planning for the environment

Many parts of Leicestershire suffer air pollution levels close to or in excess of acceptability. When agreeing any new roads or industrial sites it is essential not to add to this problem. Parts of the County are prone to flooding which can close off rights of way and hinder

access to open spaces. All applications should be assessed for impact in this regard. Other parts of the country have suffered far worse, but homes in some areas are at risk and we must not add to the problem. There is increasing pressure to build in the flood plain of the Soar and its tributaries in particular the Rothley Brook corridor. It is little use building flood protection barriers if it just transfers the problem downstream.

When looking at major developments flood relief basins are required but more use of planning could be made on a small scale. Wherever possible parking areas should be made of permeable material and that includes drives to domestic properties. Far too many homes are paving over front gardens for parking which stops rain being absorbed into the ground and speeds up run off. Urban areas lack the vegetated spaces needed to absorb water safely and release it slowly. Poor planning in the past has allowed too much hard landscaping. Another means of slowing this run off which planning can promote is the application of green roofs to larger constructions.

We need an integrated approach to flood alleviation and water quality issues and adverse side effects like wildlife decline. This is just as important locally as nationally and we must stop ignoring Environment Agency advice and building in the wrong places.

Where Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) are needed they should be designed in a way that benefits wildlife. Good SuDS schemes not only help with water management to prevent flooding but also benefit wildlife for little or no extra cost and provide attractive oases for walkers to visit.

## APPENDIX 1

### Footpaths, Bridleways, Cycleways and Access Land

Whenever new developments are considered it is important that improvements to the foot/bridle/cycle path network are considered. Such changes should aim to improve sustainable transport, green infrastructure, recreation, tourism, health and general well-being. Improvements will normally have beneficial impact on local economies and the aspiration should be for improvements rather than for maintenance of the status quo.

Considering their public utility, footpaths have very low maintenance costs. The larger the scale of any developments, the greater should be the opportunity to enhance all aspects of the foot/bridle/cycle paths network.

|                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>                                        |
| <b>Title: SLAF Membership, Terms, Renewals and Recruitment.</b>          |
| <b>Meeting Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2017</b>                           |
| <b>Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin</b>                                     |
| <b>Venue: Knodishall Village Hall, School Road, Knodishall, IP17 1UD</b> |

## Background

Since 2013/14 SLAF membership has reduced from 19 to the current position of 11 members. This is considered to be fewer than required to properly advise on improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.

Current Members are as follows

| Name                     | Primary Interest                 | Secondary Interest                         | Network affiliations |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Barry Hall (Chair)       | Planning                         | Countryside Access                         |                      |
| David Baker (Vice Chair) | Farming and agriculture          | Countryside Access                         | NFU                  |
| Margaret Hancock         | Sustainable Tourism              | Disability Access                          | Blue Badge Guide     |
| Jane Hatton              | Equestrian Access                | Health                                     |                      |
| Diana Kearsely           | Wildlife and nature Conservation | Communities                                |                      |
| Gordon Merfeild          | Agriculture                      | Sport                                      |                      |
| Monica Pipe              | Farming and Agriculture          |                                            |                      |
| Jane Storey              | Walking and off road driving     |                                            |                      |
| John Wayman              | Farming and agriculture          |                                            |                      |
| Roley Wilson             | Walking                          | Wildlife and nature conservation<br>Health | The Ramblers         |
| Anthony Wright           | Cycling, walking                 | Sustainable transport                      |                      |

Full membership and updated profiles can be viewed in appendix 1.

## Government guidance on LAF membership

Guidance states members of LAFs are volunteers and include a range of people from the local community, including:

- Land owners and land managers
- Access users such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- Those representing other interests, such as health and conservation

New members are appointed by the local authority or national park authority, known as the 'appointing authority' or 'access authority'.

## Timeline for recruitment

It is the responsibility of the Access Authority to manage and undertake the recruitment process on behalf of the SLAF. The expected time line is as follows

|                                                                            |               |                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Identify gaps in SLAF membership to inform number and nature of new roles. | July 2017     | <b>Discuss at July meeting</b>                            |
| Develop job advert for new roles and clarify terms of appointment          | September     |                                                           |
| Place advert according to identified procedures                            | October       | Use interest groups and networks to promote opportunities |
| Interview for posts                                                        | November      |                                                           |
| New SLAF members join group                                                | February 2017 |                                                           |
|                                                                            |               |                                                           |
|                                                                            |               |                                                           |
|                                                                            |               |                                                           |

SLAF members are requested to confirm that they wish to renew their memberships. Those members wishing to step down should advise the county council, to enable any new vacancies to be mopped up in the recruitment process.

## Interests to be recruited

The county council will be seeking new members whose interests include health, physical activity in the natural environment, disabilities and green tourism.

END  
CP & AW/SCC Jul 2017



## Appendix 1

### SLAF Membership January 2017

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

**David Barker** (Vice Chairman) – With his wide experience within the NFU, CLA and as a former Countryside Agency commissioner, David seeks to work to balance all interests in countryside access. David is also Chair of Creating the Greenest County. *David has been Vice Chair of SLAF since April 2010.*

**Margaret Hancock** A Blue Badge Tourist Guide particularly interested in promoting sustainable tourism. Keen to encourage visitors to explore Suffolk by public transport, walking and cycling to benefit the local economy and preserve the peace and tranquillity of the County. Experience of supporting children and young people with disabilities, enabling them to access leisure facilities.

**Jane Hatton** – A horse rider since a child, Jane was born and brought up in Suffolk enjoying the countryside both as a keen horse rider and dog walker. Jane has background in Sales and Marketing and works for Intelligent Health. *Jane became a member of SLAF in October 2013.*

**Cllr Diana Kearsley** – With a keen interest in wildlife and preserving Suffolk, Diana has specific responsibilities for community issues and is also a member of the 'Development Control' committee for Mid Suffolk District Council. *Cllr Diana Kearsley became a member of SLAF in October 2013.*

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

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

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

**John Wayman** – A former district council member farming in the Stour Valley, John now contributes to the wider rural picture.

**Roley Wilson** – Roley is actively involved in the promotion of the health benefits of walking for all. He has a lifelong interest in nature and open air pursuits. During a 33-year police career one of his many postings involved being the Wildlife Liaison

Officer for Suffolk. He is a member of the Ramblers and since retirement has spent an increasing amount of time in volunteer activities for that organisation. A keen bird watcher and member of the RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust he has a passion for ensuring that everyone has free and responsible access to the countryside.

*Roley became a member of SLAF in October 2013.*

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

## **Appendix 2**

### **2013 SLAF Recruitment Advert**