

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Agenda
Meeting Date:	24 January 2019
Author/Contact:	Anna McGowan
Venue:	SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP60AJ

			Paper Number
1.	14:00	Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.		Minutes of previous meeting	LAF 19/01
3.		Declarations of interest	
4.	14:10	Network Rail – Public Rights of Way and Level Crossings Appendix A	LAF 19/02 – AW LAF 19/02A - AW
5.	14.20	The England Coast Path	LAF 19/03- AW
6.	14.30	ROWIP	LAF 19/04 - DF
7.	14.55	Sizewell C Stage 3 Consultation	LAF 19/05 BH
8.	15.05	Regional Local Access Forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAF Regional Meeting in Cambridge (16/01/2019) • Norfolk LAF 	Verbal - DB LAF19/06 - AM
9.	15.20	The Agriculture Bill	LAF 19/07 - AW
10.	15.25	LAF Correspondence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elveden Estate/SSSI Heathland Restoration Project • Correspondence to SLAF 	LAF 19/08 – BH LAF 19/09 - AW
11.	15.35	Community Rail Partnership	Verbal - MH
12.	15.40	Public Question Time	
13.	15.50	Any Other Business	
14.	16.00	Dates of next Meeting 25 April 2019	

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Minutes of Meeting
Meeting Date:	25th October 2018
Author/Contact:	Anna McGowan
Venue:	The Pykerrell Inn, High Street, Ixworth IP31 2HH

1. **Welcome, apologies and housekeeping**

Present: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair) David Barker (Vice Chair) (DB) Jane Hatton (JH), Cllr Jane Storey (JS), Cllr Diana Kearsley (DK), Gordon Merfield (GM), Monica Pipe (MP), John Wayman (JW), Roland Wilson (RW), Anthony Wright (AWR), Derek Blake (DB), Susan Mobbs (SM), Suzanne Bartlett (SB), Clare Phillips (CP)

SCC Officers Present: Anna McGowan (AM) (Minutes), Andrew Woodin (AW), David Falk (DF), Mark Wedgwood (MW)

Guest Speakers: George DiMascio (GD), Tom McGarry (TMG) - EDF
Alister Kratt (AK), Philip Brashaw (PB) - LDA

Apologies: Margaret Hancock, Cllr Diana Kearsley

2. **Minutes of previous meeting (LAF18/17)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th July 2018 were reviewed with following action points still outstanding:

AM to invite BNG Nick Dickson to future meeting to discuss the Fen Edge Project.
AM to chase the reply to SLAF ECP's letter.

3. **Declaration of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Welcome to new members and round table introductions**

AW welcomed new members – Suzanne Bartlett, Susan Mobbs, Clare Phillips and Derek Blake on behalf of Suffolk County Council.

5. **Sizewell C presentation by EDF (verbal and handout)**

1. TMG provided an update on Sizewell C (SZC) nuclear power station.
Government policy is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power stations by 80% by 2050. To fill this energy gap, there is a need for new sustainable production of power.
2. There are 3 stages to the Consultation: Stage 1 was in 2012; Stage 2 in 2016; Stage 3 of Consultation will be in January 2019 for 12 weeks. The application for the Development Consent Order (DCO) will be submitted in 2020 to the Planning Inspectorate.

3. AK gave an update on the role that LDA Design (EDF Energy's Amenity and Recreation consultants) will play over the next few years, advising on the masterplan and also the operational phase and the 600 hectare EDF site. There is a chapter on Amenity and Recreation covering PROW, and Tourism, and they will be liaising with AW.
4. PB talked through the presentation handout, explaining the results of the surveys of users of Public Rights of Way and the Suffolk Coastal Cycle Route which were conducted over summer and winter periods during 2014-16, which also provide a good database of where most people will be displaced.
5. PB ran over some of the stage 2 consultation feedback identifying where responses could be provided and where further work was being undertaken. There will be a closure of 3 ROW crossings on the rail route. Tabled slides were shown which included the SLAF's response. The England Coast Path was discussed and the need to account for disruption. SB asked about Kenton Hills and the path to the coast. PB responded that it will be diverted. SM asked about temporary diversion of the ROW along Lovers Lane, which will be covered in the DCO as all ROWs diversions will be shown. RW asked if DCO will state how long temporary closures will last – AK said it was not possible to state at this stage.

AWR asked to what standards would the temporary ROW be built to and stressed that it is imperative that surfaces are suitable and available to all users. The exact standards are to be determined after consultation with the Local Planning Authorities prior to the DCO submission.

BH asked when will legacy get confirmed, and AW sought clarification. This will be in the DCO after Stage 3, which will have a S106 to cover this, and will be part of the ongoing consultation.

PB then presented the construction and operation phase Rights of Way and Access strategies. There will be up to 5,600 workers on the site to support the construction and access, and 7m tonnes of material to be moved along the primary route A12. AWR questioned the speed limits on access roads and ROW crossings. EDF noted this and will look into this as the proposals develop.

The SSPs, The Sandlings, and biodiverse areas will be enhanced.

6. EDF Energy looks forward to SLAF's feedback at Stage 3 consultation and will be in contact soon. The handouts were collected back in by EDF, and the SZC representatives left at this point.

6. Network Rail update

1. TWAO - AW introduced paper, and noted, casework is often complex and bureaucratic, and not easy to deal with such a large organisation on complex pieces. Network Rail are robust in their asset protection and other organisations' standards at intersections. All proposals for crossings were individually addressed for safety and improvements. The TWAO proposed to close 25 PROW crossings – of which 9 have been objected to. The Public Inquiry ran from January to May 2018, and now waiting for the decision on the crossing closures – and are likely to hear after the Essex Public Inquiry which started on 25th September, and thus after all 3 counties have concluded.

2. AW gave an update on 3 cases:

Gypsy Lane – a section of railway has been reduced to 50mph speed limit. An Order has been made but has received objections. If the Landowner and Network Rail agree to an alternative then a new Order will need to be made following a consultation.

Felixstowe – The TWA Order was made last year, with 5-6 PROW to be replaced with a new bridleway bridge. Following the Public Inquiry in January the Secretary of State determined the Order should be made. AW has been surprised at Network Rail for not contacting Suffolk Highways after the decision and this is being followed up.

Newmarket – this has been a contentious crossing as it is a private crossing, and an application has been made to the CC to add the level crossing to the definitive map as a footpath. This has been approved by SCC Development & Regulation Committee.

3. National Picture - A meeting has been held individually with Network Rail at national level to agree better relations over working together, which was productive. Senior Network Rail managers are no longer talking about closing every level crossing, but to work towards more improvements on safety.

7. Coastal Access update

Natural England (NE) are continuing to scope the route of the England Coast Path in Suffolk, with spreading room. NE are still talking to Landowners. Suffolk County Council will become responsible for the ECP once the route is agreed.

BH reiterated that from the SLAF viewpoint there cannot be any shortcuts on the ECP on estuaries as ferries are seasonal.

8. SLAF Working Groups

The current Working Groups were reviewed in light of additional 4 new SLAF members and agreed as follows:

Topic	Membership
Network Rail	Barry Hall, Roley Wilson, Diana Kearsley, Clare Philips
Sizewell C	Barry Hall, Anthony Wright, Roley Wilson, Suzanne Bartlett
Open Access	Barry Hall, Gordon Merfield,
ROWIP and Suffolk Walking Strategy	Roley Wilson, Jane Hatton, Diana Kearsley, Monica Pipe, Derek Blake
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

Groups will meet in between SLAF meeting dates, when required, to discuss issues that require a more immediate response.

It was agreed for MH to represent SLAF on the Community Rail Partnership, and MH to give verbal updates at SLAF meetings on the work of the partnership and how MH will influence it.

Action: AM to write to MH advising MH of this agreement and ask for update on next meeting.

9. SLAF Annual Report

BH presented the SLAF Annual Report 2017-18 to the Cabinet on 11th September 2018, highlighting the role of SLAF, and raising the issue of the Bailey Bridge.

Cllr Mary Evans gave a good introduction to the report and said that SLAF was holding Network Rail to account. The Cabinet accepted the Annual Report and noted its recommendations and the action that the Council was taking to address these recommendations.

10. Brexit update

DB gave a verbal update and circulated a paper which was tabled and to be circulated with the Minutes. DB noted that he met with Tim Morden from Defra with a group of farmers at his farm, where a useful and informal discussion was held. The Agricultural Bill is going through the House of Commons DB noted there could be an end to permissive access with nothing to replace it but there is an opportunity for SLAF to emphasise the benefits of PROW as a public good for health and local economy.

DB proposed to draft a letter to each Suffolk MP, to be circulated shortly on SLAF letterhead.

RW noted that there is also the facility to create public rather than permissive access in PROW as well and paid for by public money. MP noted this. CP asked what happens when stewardship paths expire post Brexit, to which end DB said that these would be mainly lost but occasionally Landowners will continue to allow their paths to be used.

JS noted that there is a cost to maintaining new PROW and these should come with funding.

Action: DB to draft letter to MP, AM to put on SLAF letterhead, DB to send to Suffolk MPs, AM to circulate to SLAF thereafter.

11. Walberswick Bailey Bridge

AW and MW gave an update that the Bailey Bridge, a steel construction from 1977, was closed on 1st October 2018, following professional advice. One of the beams is broken and there is corrosion on the bridge. Suffolk Highways are now looking at options to do a short term repair as soon as possible. At this stage the structural engineer's report is yet to be published.

Notices about the bridge closure have been placed at all access points leading back to the A12.

The ferry continues to be subsidised by Suffolk County Council through to Half Term Week.

For further information and updates please visit <https://southwoldtown.com/>

12. Public Question Time

Paul Cadman attended.

There were no questions.

13. Any other business

DF updated on the ROWIP, which is now formed in 3 sections: a) background; b) what has been achieved; and c) future objectives.

Action: DF to circulate future objectives to SLAF for the next meeting.
Action: AM to email SLAF members and update profiles.
Action: All SLAF members to update their member profile.

14. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

24th January 2019 – venue to be confirmed

25th April 2019 – venue to be confirmed

25th July 2019 – venue to be confirmed

24th October 2019 – venue to be confirmed

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings
Meeting: 24th January 2019
Author/Contact: Steve Kerr
Venue: SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

Introduction

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

Needham Market Gipsy Lane and FP6 Needham Market



At its last meeting the Forum was advised that NR were investigating the landowners' alternative diversion proposal and that Jo Churchill MP was awaiting the outcome of those investigations. NR sent a response to the MP and the objecting landowners on 15 January 2019, setting out why they are not in a position to progress the alternative route, concluding that this would not only add further delay but that, based on past experience, it was unlikely compensatory terms would be reached with the landowners in a timely manner. NR and their agents are currently assessing the level of compensation due to the landowners.

The landowners and another objector have also queried why the Council is not holding the Inquiry on the 4-7 June 2019 at a Needham Market venue. SCC did scope potential venues in Needham Market but none were available for the four consecutive inquiry dates. The Diamond Jubilee Hall in Creting St Mary is available throughout that period, although the Hall does also have evening bookings. The Hall is booked for the Inquiry between 08:30 and 17:30 every day.

In order to ensure that interested parties wishing to go the Inquiry are able to attend (particularly since there is no local bus service between Needham Market and Creeting St Mary), NR have agreed to fund a coach to transport members of the public from Needham Market to the inquiry venue, picking up at a pre-arranged location in the morning and returning to that same location at the end of the day. In addition, NR will provide tea and coffee for members of the public attending the proceedings. At the beginning of April the county council will advertise the public notice for the Inquiry and at the same time, advise the public about the transport arrangements.

SCC is currently preparing its Statement of Case (SoC), the deadline for submission to the Planning Inspectorate being 13 February. NR are also currently drafting their own SoC and both parties are working with Counsel to ensure that between the two, all the main issues are covered.

As part of the Order consultations in the summer of 2017, SLAF supported the use of the double culvert as a diversionary route and have echoed that support in its representations by the Chairman, when the Orders were advertised. Although the SoC submission deadline for the order making authority is the 13 February, for other parties it is 27 March 2019.

Everyone who has made an objection or representation and anyone who wishes to give evidence at the Inquiry must ensure their SoC is received by the Secretary of State (SoS). As soon as possible after the deadline, the SoS will send full copies to the Council. Copies will also be sent to the applicant, every person who has made an objection or representation and any other person who has written to the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) in respect of the Order (excluding copies of any supporting documents - these will be available to view at the Council's offices).

Within the same period the applicant, NR, must ensure their SoC is received by the SoS. As soon as possible after the deadline, the SoS will send a full copy to SCC. Copies will also be sent to everyone who has made an objection or representation and any other person who has written to PINs in respect of the Order (again, excluding copies of any supporting documents - these will be available to view at SCC's offices).

Following that, the Council, everyone who has made an objection or representation, the applicant and anyone who wishes to give evidence at the Inquiry must ensure their proof of evidence (together with any summary) is received by the SoS at least 4 weeks before the start of the Inquiry ie by the 7 May 2019.

The county council and NR would welcome SLAF's support at the forthcoming Inquiry.

The Chair of SLAF has drafted a statement of support, to be submitted to PINs by 27 March 2019. This is attached as Appendix A for members' consideration.

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



The works relating to the Secretary of State's decision to confirm the Felixstowe TWAO are now well advanced. The TWAO itself provides for the certification of the new routes by SCC but it is likely to be a while before this can be done as the new Gun Lane bridleway bridge will need to be constructed first.

The county council met with Network Rail on 7/11/18 to discuss progress and to ensure the county council is kept informed and consulted on new PRow specifications, including structures, and to ensure the definitive map portrays new PRow accurately.

General/Countywide

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

Further to the Forum's last meeting, the county council has not been in receipt of any decision or update from the Department of Transport.

The Essex Inquiry is currently programmed to finish on Friday 8th February 2019, although the following week is also held in reserve, should more inquiry time be required.

END – SK/SCC January 2019

App A



LAF 19. Network
Rail - Public Rights c

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings
Meeting: 24th January 2019
Author/Contact: Steve Kerr
Venue: SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

Appendix A

Draft statement by SLAF to the Public Inquiry into Suffolk County Council's Orders regarding the Gipsy Lane Path Diversions

Local Access Forums were set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Their purpose is to advise decision making organisations (such as local authorities) about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel. Local Access Forums can set their own priorities depending on local issues. They also respond to consultations and draft policy documents.

Because of significant safety issues with the Gipsy Lane level crossing in Needham Market, in 2015 Network Rail consulted on a range of options for overbridges or underpasses in that area. The Forum's response in December 2015 was for an underpass (Option D).

As part of the optioneering Network Rail put forward the proposal to use an existing culvert under the railway line as this seemed to offer a quicker and cheaper solution. When consulted nearly 60% of the respondents supported the culvert option. Before the County Council and the Forum would agree to this, they had to be convinced that the culvert that was sub-standard and liable to possible flooding was a suitable alternative.

Once agreement was reached an update on the progress of this proposal became an agenda item at every meeting of the Forum in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

It is further noted the proposed works at the culvert received planning consent by Mid Suffolk District Council in January 2018. The Forum supported the orders made by the County Council for the footpath diversions on behalf of Network Rail because the package included improvements to the local network, provided better and safer east-west links between the Creeting Triangle and Needham Market, and the improved surfacing would create a more user friendly route.

Due to similar public safety issues, the extinguishment of Footpath 36 Creeting St Mary/Footpath 6 Needham Market (referenced by Network Rail as the 'Willow Walk' crossing) is also considered necessary by the Forum, The Forum notes that the crossing has been temporarily closed and unavailable for public use for several years, and understands that there have been no subsequent requests for the route to be opened up again for the public.

To conclude, the Forum remains firm in their support of the Rail Crossing Diversion and Extinguishment Orders 2018 and would hope that this long drawn out process can be swiftly and satisfactorily resolved.

As Suffolk County Council are making these orders on behalf of Network Rail, the Forum would expect the latter to bear all costs associated with them, as well as fully funding the physical works needed to open the routes up on the ground and provide for ongoing maintenance. They would also not expect the Gipsy Lane crossing being closed until the alternative routes were in place.

END – SK/SCC January 2019

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: The England Coast Path
Meeting Date: 24th January 2019
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

1. Progress on Establishing The England Coast Path (ECP)

The latest information from Natural England's (NE) on its progress for the ECP in Suffolk and Norfolk is shown on their website. The links in the table below give access to more detail, but please note the website was last updated on 9 November 2018.

Stretch name	Progress
Harwich to Shotley Gate	Stage 2 and 3: Develop and Propose
Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry	Stage 2 and 3: Develop and Propose
Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey	Stage 2 and 3: Develop and Propose
Bawdsey to Aldeburgh	Stage 2 and 3: Develop and Propose
Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea	Stage 2 and 3: Develop and Propose
Hopton-on-Sea to Sea Palling	Open to the public
Sea Palling to Weybourne	Open to the public
Weybourne to Hunstanton	Stage 4: Determine
Hunstanton to Sutton Bridge	Stage 2 and 3: Develop and Propose
Sutton Bridge to Skegness	Stage 4: Determine

Natural England's website shows the sections being developed in Suffolk including the estuaries.

The stages to establish Coastal Access have been simplified as follows:

Stage 1: Prepare

Initial preparations will begin for the implementation of a new stretch. Natural England will:

- define the extent of the stretch
- ask key organisations about their ideas or concerns about the stretch
- consider the current public access use and the options for the route

Stage 2: Develop

At this stage, Natural England will:

- speak with local landowners and other legal interests on land that may be affected to:
 - ask for views on where they think the route should go
 - offer to 'walk the course' and explain initial ideas
 - discuss any local issues that might need to be addressed
- speak with relevant organisations to make sure that any important sensitive features are protected

Stage 3: Propose

Natural England will finalise proposals for the England Coast Path on this stretch and publish them in a report to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Stage 4: Determine

After the report has been published, there's an opportunity to comment on the proposals. At this time:

- anyone who wishes to comment can make a representation on the report
- owners or occupiers can submit an objection relating to particular aspects of the proposals

See the guidance about how to comment for more information.

Once the period to comment on the proposals has ended, the Secretary of State will decide whether to approve the proposals in Natural England's report. When making a decision, any representations or objections that have been submitted will be considered along with the recommendations from the Planning Inspectorate.

Stage 5: Open

The Secretary of State approves the route of the England Coast Path on this stretch.

Preparations are then made on the ground and the necessary legal paperwork is completed. Once complete, the new public rights of access will come into force on the stretch.

The link to the relevant part of website is [here](#).

2. The Stretches in More Detail

Natural England has provided the following updates around the Suffolk coast stretches:

Harwich to Shotley Gate (HSG) – Sally Fishwick, Kim Thirlby and Patrick Welsh.

- Stage 3 Propose.
- All letters sent out advising landowners identifying our preferred route.
- Report overview and chapters have been drafted.
- Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal (ASFA) drafted. There will however be a delay in its publication due to a separate matter affecting whole country, the People over Wind court ruling. This requires Natural England to take its proposals through an appropriate assessment. This affects a very large number of Natural England reports and each will be assessed in turn.
- Public safety is a statutory criteria Natural England must take into account in making our proposals and we are obliged to assess whether areas of salt marsh and mudflat are 'suitable' for public access. A statutory restriction can be used to exclude the new coastal access rights where it feels this is required, taking into account the expert opinions of those who know, such as the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Natural England has reviewed its proposed restrictions on salt marsh and mudflat on this stretch and have amended them in relation to areas close to those already popular for access where it is content that restrictions are not needed.

Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry (SGF) – Darren Braine, Laura Chellis & Araminta Jackson.

- Stage 2 – develop.
- Natural England has completed walk the course visits with all key landowners and the preferred route is emerging but not yet finalised. There is one large and complex site where Natural England is still evaluating options.
- Mapping has been completed including sites where a number of route options exist. Discussions with landowners continue.
- Early thoughts about the route are being shared with statutory stakeholders and their input is helping focus down options.
- Sensitive Features Assessment – This will followed the revised process required by the People Over Wind court ruling. This affects a very large number of Natural England reports and each will be assessed in turn.

Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey (FFB) – Sally Fishwick, Giles Merritt & Araminta Jackson

- Stage 2 develop.
- Natural England has now met the majority of affected landowners on the Deben stretch.
- There are 3 main gaps in current access provision - Waldringfield to Martlesham, around Sutton Hoo and Ramsholt to Bawdsey. Natural England has made progress with all three and negotiations with landowners are still ongoing.
- Natural England has sorted the views of many key stakeholders including Suffolk CC, National Trust, Deben Estuary Partnership, the Suffolk Coast Forum and the River Deben Association.
- Natural England has now begun mapping the stretch using GPS devices. So far Woodbridge is mapped and from Felixstowe Ferry to Hemley. By the end of January Natural England should have mapped from Hemley to Woodbridge

and Woodbridge to Methersgate. Natural England is currently mapping sections with existing public rights of way (PROW). Sections where there are gaps in the PROW network, will be mapped once a referred alignment has been found. These maps form part of Natural England's final published report that goes to the Secretary of State for consideration.

- Sensitive Features Assessment – This has started and Natural England is collecting data. It will followed the revised process required by the People Over Wind court ruling. This affects a very large number of Natural England reports and each will be assessed in turn.

Bawdsey to Aldeburgh (BSA) – James Lamb, Fiona Taylor, Jonathan Clarke and David Waldram

- Stage 2 develop.
- Letters sent out advising landowners where Natural England has a preferred route.
- Walk the course (WTC) visits taking place with landowners.
- Main focus is investigating issues and potential alignments arising from WTC.
- Sensitive Features Assessment – this has started with the Responsible Offers (RO), collecting and collating data. It will followed the revised process required by the People Over Wind court ruling. This affects a very large number of Natural England reports and each will be assessed in turn.
- Natural England is currently identifying sections where the preferred route option has been identified for mapping using a GPS device

Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea (AHS) – Sally Fishwick, Fiona Taylor and David Waldram

- Stage 3 propose.
- Letters sent to landowners with outline of emerging proposals and maps – dealing with subsequent issues that have arisen.
- Legal restrictions, exclusions and dedications where required prepared.
- Report (Overview and Chapters) and Report Maps drafted and being QA'd (except where on-going issues apply).
- Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal (ASFA) drafted. There will however be a delay in its publication due to a separate matter affecting whole country, the People over Wind court ruling. This requires us to take our proposals through an appropriate assessment. This affects a very large number of Natural England reports and each will be assessed in turn.

Hopton-on-Sea to Sea Palling (HSP) – Sally Fishwick, Diana Curtis and David Waldram

- Open to the public.

NB: Natural England's current publication timetable for all stretches is given on our website at the link given here but is subject to change.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast> As soon as Natural England has worked through the implications of the People over Wind court ruling (previously referred to in SLAF papers as the Sweetman case), and the additional work that must be done on all stretches to bring them into compliance with this, it will update this timetable.

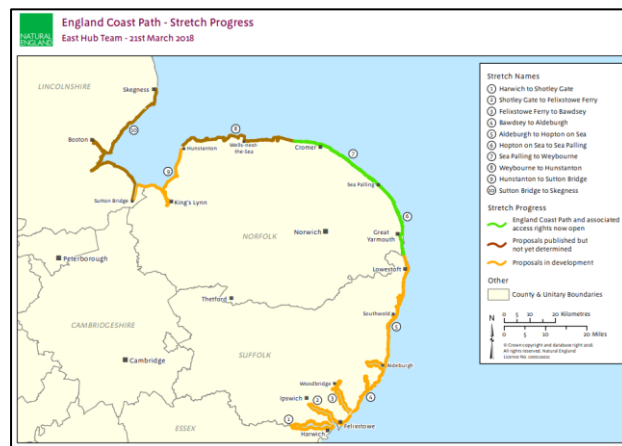
3. SLAF's Role in Influencing Route of the Coast Path

Following SLAF's meeting in July, and discussion around the use of estuaries for the route of the coast path, the chair wrote to Natural England and the letter is attached as appendix A, which also includes the response from Natural England dated 13 November 2018.

4. Future Management of the England Coast Path in the East of England

Officers from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex will reconvene their discussion on managing and promoting a regional, rather than county based, coastal path in December once further progress on the England Coast Path in the east of England has been.

5. England Coast Path – Progress Map for the East



END
AW/SCC January 2019

App A:

Letter from SLAF to Natural England:



Response from Sally Fishwick at Natural England:

From: Fishwick, Sally (NE) <Sally.Fishwick@naturalengland.org.uk>

Sent: 13 November 2018 08:59

To: Barry Hall <barry@hall64.plus.com>; Anna McGowan <Anna.McGowan@suffolkhighways.org>

Cc: Andrew Woodin <Andrew.Woodin@suffolkhighways.org>; Chellis, Laura (NE) <Laura.Chellis@naturalengland.org.uk>; Thirlby, Kim (NE) <Kim.Thirlby@naturalengland.org.uk>; Taylor, Fiona (NE) <Fiona.Taylor2@naturalengland.org.uk>; Clarke, Jonathan (NE) <Jonathan.Clarke@naturalengland.org.uk>; Merritt, Giles (NE) <Giles.Merritt@naturalengland.org.uk>

Subject: RE: SLAF letter to Natural England 23.08.2018

Hi Barry & Anna

I think Anna and Andrew's emails crossed in the ether! I emailed Anna yesterday acknowledging receipt of the Local Access Forums' letter and advising that our web pages have recently been updated to show the current stretch timings. These can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-the-east-of-england>

With regard to the use of our estuary discretion you will be aware that Natural England's duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 relates to the open coast. However, the intension of the legislation was to have as few gaps in the route as, so government gave us the discretion (this is a power not a duty) to go up an estuary to the first crossing point to enable us to make route the continuous. The 1st principle we work to is to try to achieve a continuous route – but every estuary is different, so we've been given 7 additional criteria to work to in using our discretion to see if it is appropriate for us to do so. These can be found in section 10.2.2 of The Coastal Access Scheme here <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5327964912746496?category=50007>

We look at each estuary individually on its own merits and research all the available options before coming to a decision about the use of our estuary discretion. This means looking at all the land which might be affected and this takes us some time. As a rule of thumb if there isn't a full time ferry crossing an estuary we we'll look to go up river to first crossing point because a seasonal ferry is not sufficient to provide a continuous route, however this is not an absolute rule and we might still propose it if having looked at the 6 other criteria we feel it represents the right balance we're required to achieve under the Act.

To date we've made the decision to use our estuary discretion to propose alignment around The Stour and also The Blyth estuaries to the first crossing points. I expect these to be the next two Coastal Access Reports to be published around Spring next year. The Alde and Ore estuary has no ferry so we'll align around it, but we are still looking at options around the Butley river including the ferry crossing. This winter we expect to take a decision about using our estuary discretion on The Orwell and Deben estuaries.

I hope this answers your queries but do get back to me if you have other questions.

Regards

Sally Fishwick Senior Adviser England Coast Path Delivery Norfolk and Suffolk Area Team

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)
Meeting:	24 January 2019
Author/Contact:	David Falk
Venue:	SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) are a statutory requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). Each ROWIP identifies changes that will “improve provision for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with mobility problems”. ROWIPs are intended to last 10 years with periodic reviews to reflect new priorities and changing levels of investment.

Suffolk’s first ROWIP, In Step with Suffolk, was published in 2006. The second ROWIP is titled the Suffolk Green Access Strategy. It has been drafted following detailed consultation with a wide range of consultees, including the Suffolk Local Access Forum.

The strategy will complement many of the county council’s existing strategies, as well as its three corporate properties of Inclusive Growth; Health, Care and Wellbeing; and Efficient and Effective Public Services.

The strategy is in 3 parts: an introduction to set the scene; a review of the previous ROWIP, In Step with Suffolk; and a delivery plan. The delivery plan identifies deliverable actions set against required resources, timescales and performance measures.

The draft strategy will be discussed at this meeting in readiness for final edits before a final public consultation in spring 2019. It is envisaged the strategy will be presented to cabinet by late spring/early summer for adoption in summer 2019.

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Sizewell C Stage 3 Consultation
Meeting:	24 January 2019
Author/Contact:	Barry Hall
Venue:	SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

The Working Group comprising: Barry Hall, Anthony Wright, Roley Wilson, Suzanne Bartlett will consider the Consultation and drafting an appropriate response. The County Council will respond jointly to the Consultation with Suffolk Coastal District Council.

Email received from Sizewell C Project Team:

From: Sizewell C Project Team
Sent: 04 January 2019 16:50
To: Highways SLAF
Subject: *Correction* Sizewell C Stage 3 Public Consultation Begins



*Building
better energy
together*

Sizewell C
Project Update

Jan
2019

Sizewell C Public Consultation Begins



Our third stage of public consultation on the proposals for a new nuclear power station at Sizewell begins on 4 January 2019. The feedback we receive plays an important part in the development of our proposals, so we encourage you to play an active role in the consultation.

See the end of this newsletter for details of our public exhibitions. Responses to our proposals, briefly summarised in this newsletter, need to be received by 29 March 2019.

Our latest proposals have been informed by:

- feedback from our previous two stages of consultation;
- on-going engagement with local communities and stakeholders;
- further technical work and environmental studies; and
- lessons from Hinkley Point C, the new nuclear power station we are building in Somerset, which is on track to generate electricity from 2025.

Sizewell C consultation: where are we now?



What is Sizewell C?

- Sizewell C is a proposed new nuclear power station that would be built to the north of Sizewell B on the Suffolk Coast.
- It would have two reactors, known as UK EPRs(TM), capable of generating enough electricity to supply around six million homes.
- Sizewell C would take 10-12 years to build.
- At the peak of construction, it would provide around 5,600 jobs on-site.
- Some temporary associated developments will be needed in the local area during construction of Sizewell C, such as park and ride sites, transport infrastructure and an accommodation campus.
- Once operational, the new power station would support around 900 permanent jobs.
- Sizewell C would generate electricity for 60 years. It would make an important contribution to the UK's future needs for low carbon, secure and affordable electricity.
- It would create significant business, training and employment opportunities locally, regionally and throughout the UK.

Sizewell C Proposals

Sizewell C will have two reactors, known as UK EPRs(TM), capable of generating enough electricity to supply approximately six million homes in Britain.

The design of the UK EPRs(TM) is based on pressurised water reactor (PWR) technology that has been used successfully and safely around the world for many years, currently operating in over 80% of nuclear power stations worldwide.

In developing and designing our proposals, we have sought opportunities to limit the impact of the construction of Sizewell C on local communities, the environment and the local highway network wherever possible.

The key elements of our approach are to:

- use either a rail-led or road-led strategy for moving materials on and off site;
- build an on-site accommodation campus to reduce the number of workforce journeys;
- provide park and ride facilities at key locations on the A12 for workers to travel by bus to the main construction site;
- provide direct bus services to the site from Leiston, Saxmundham station, Lowestoft and Ipswich;
- operate working patterns that minimise workers travelling at peak times; and

- provide road improvements where necessary to mitigate the impact of construction traffic.

Local Opportunities

Sizewell C would bring significant economic and employment opportunities, supporting the security of the UK's economic future and also producing a long-term boost for the local economy.



Construction of Sizewell C would create approximately 25,000 roles on the main development site. There would also be a need for a significant workforce in non-construction roles, including in the hospitality, food production, and business support sectors. Once operational, there would be a long-term legacy of 900 permanent jobs and a regular short-term workforce of around an additional 1,000 people during refuelling and maintenance outages.

We are committed to ensuring local people can access the jobs and benefits Sizewell C will bring.

Environmental Considerations

In addition to the economic and employment benefits Sizewell C would bring, the environmental sensitivities of the location are key considerations for us, including in relation to construction and temporary development.

We have continued to undertake environmental surveys and identify likely impacts to help inform our proposals.

Where impacts are likely to be significant, we have embedded mitigation into our design, or are proposing separate measures to reduce impacts. See the [Stage 3 Consultation Summary Document](#) for the latest information.

Main Development Site



- **The Sizewell C site platform:** covers 32 hectares. The station would generate 3.2GW, enough power for six million homes.
- **SSSI crossing:** there are watercourses that make up a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which would need to be crossed to access the station platform from a new access road. We are proposing a causeway over a culvert for the

crossing.

- **Sea defence:** designs for an effective sea defence and landscape feature have been progressed.
- **Training building:** a training building with car parking facilities for workers is required. It is proposed that this will be located at Goose Hill, north of the main platform.
- **Electrical connection:** we are now proposing to connect to the Grid via an overhead line within the Sizewell C site as further work has shown significant safety and programme risks associated with the underground cables proposal.
- **Borrow pits:** we are proposing to use borrow pits to source construction material for use in building Sizewell C. The borrow pits would be backfilled with peat and clay excavated from the foundation area of the power station. We are now considering - on a precautionary basis - retaining the remaining three elds from the Stage 2 options for borrow pits.
- **Campus:** a 2,400-bed accommodation campus would be located within the main development site to the east of Eastbridge Road. Only three and four (rather than up to five) storey accommodation buildings are proposed. Off-site sports facilities (in Leiston) are proposed to be shared with the community during construction and left as a legacy afterwards.
- **Caravans:** we are proposing to provide a 400-pitch caravan site on land east of Eastland Industrial Estate (LEEIE). They will be available in the early years before the campus is established and retained throughout construction as an option for workers.
- **Electrical substation:** a new substation, located east of Old Abbey Farm, is required to complete the electrical connection between the Leiston substation at Sizewell Wents, the Emergency Equipment Store and the ancillary buildings.
- **Emergency response equipment store and backup generator:** an equipment store to enable rapid response to an emergency event is proposed, with a Combined Heat and Power plant for the accommodation campus retained for backup power during operation.

There are two alternative strategies – rail-led or road-led – proposed for the movement of materials:

- **Rail-led:** direct access into the main site for five freight trains a day using an extended temporary railway line into the site from the Saxmundham - Leiston branch line (the green route), and a road bypass of Theberton; or
- **Road-led:** a new Sizewell link road from the A12 to the B1122 east of Theberton, and a freight management facility to the east of Ipswich, along with two trains a day to Sizewell Halt or a new rail siding throughout construction.

Rail

Our proposal to use freight trains for construction deliveries would require some improvements to existing rail lines.

We are proposing use of the existing terminal known as Sizewell Halt or construction of a new rail siding (on land east of Eastland Industrial Estate (LEEIE)) on the same Saxmundham - Leiston branch line:

Option 1: reconfiguration of the existing Sizewell Halt rail terminal on the branch line to accommodate longer trains and an overhead conveyor system to move material over King George's Avenue into LEEIE.

Option 2: a new rail siding adjacent to the existing branch line in the LEEIE.

The Saxmundham - Leiston branch line would need upgrades to nine level crossings (between the Saxmundham junction and Sizewell Halt) under both the rail-led and road-led strategies.

The East Suffolk line would need significant improvements under the rail-led strategy, the closure of 12 level crossings and diversion of public rights of way, along with the upgrade of 33 other level crossings.

Accommodation

Around a third of the peak construction workforce would be home-based.

Other workers would seek accommodation in the private rented and tourist sectors, as well as in our proposed campus and caravan accommodation.

Our proposed temporary worker accommodation - both the campus and caravan site - would play an important role in helping to:

- reduce the amount of traffic generated by the construction workforce on local roads; and
- relieve pressure on tourist accommodation and the private rented market from Sizewell C workers.

We are also proposing to establish a Housing Fund to enable local authorities to take early measures to mitigate against potential impacts of Sizewell C on the local housing market.

We are developing systems to enable local landlords, tourism businesses and residents to register accommodation available for workers and to guide our workers towards it.

A12 – two village bypass

At previous stages of consultation we proposed options to mitigate the impact of construction traffic on the A12 going through Farnham.

We are now proposing a bypass of Farnham and Stratford St Andrew (a two-village bypass) - with key design changes aimed at reducing environmental impacts - to significantly reduce the traffic passing through the Farnham bend on the A12.

The single carriageway bypass would leave the A12 to the west of Stratford St Andrew via a new roundabout near Parkgate Farm and re-join the A12 with a second roundabout to the east of Farnham at the A12/A1094 Friday Street junction.

A12/B1122 junction and other road improvements

The junction between the A12 and B1122 would require improvement.

Our proposal to improve the junction of the B1122 with the A12 at Yoxford is a roundabout.

The roundabout would replace the existing priority junction and is considered to be safer and more efficient than signalling the existing A12/B1122 junction.

Other road improvements at key locations to improve safety, visibility, and mitigate the impact of construction traffic are also proposed.

Park and Ride

Two park and ride facilities are proposed on the A12 to help reduce the amount of additional traffic generated by the movement of the construction workforce and pressure on local roads.

Our traffic modelling now shows a need for more car parking spaces than previously proposed; however the land required for the park and ride sites remains the same as shown at Stage 2.

- Northern park and ride: a park and ride site is proposed at Darsham for workers travelling from the north. Since the Stage 2 consultation, we have changed the proposed site entrance and revised the landscaping proposals.
- Southern park and ride: a site in the parish of Hacheston - the Wickham Market site - has been identified for workers travelling from the south.

We are proposing two options for mitigation of potential delays on the B1078 between Border Cot Lane and River Deben bridge that may occur as a result of the southern park and ride:

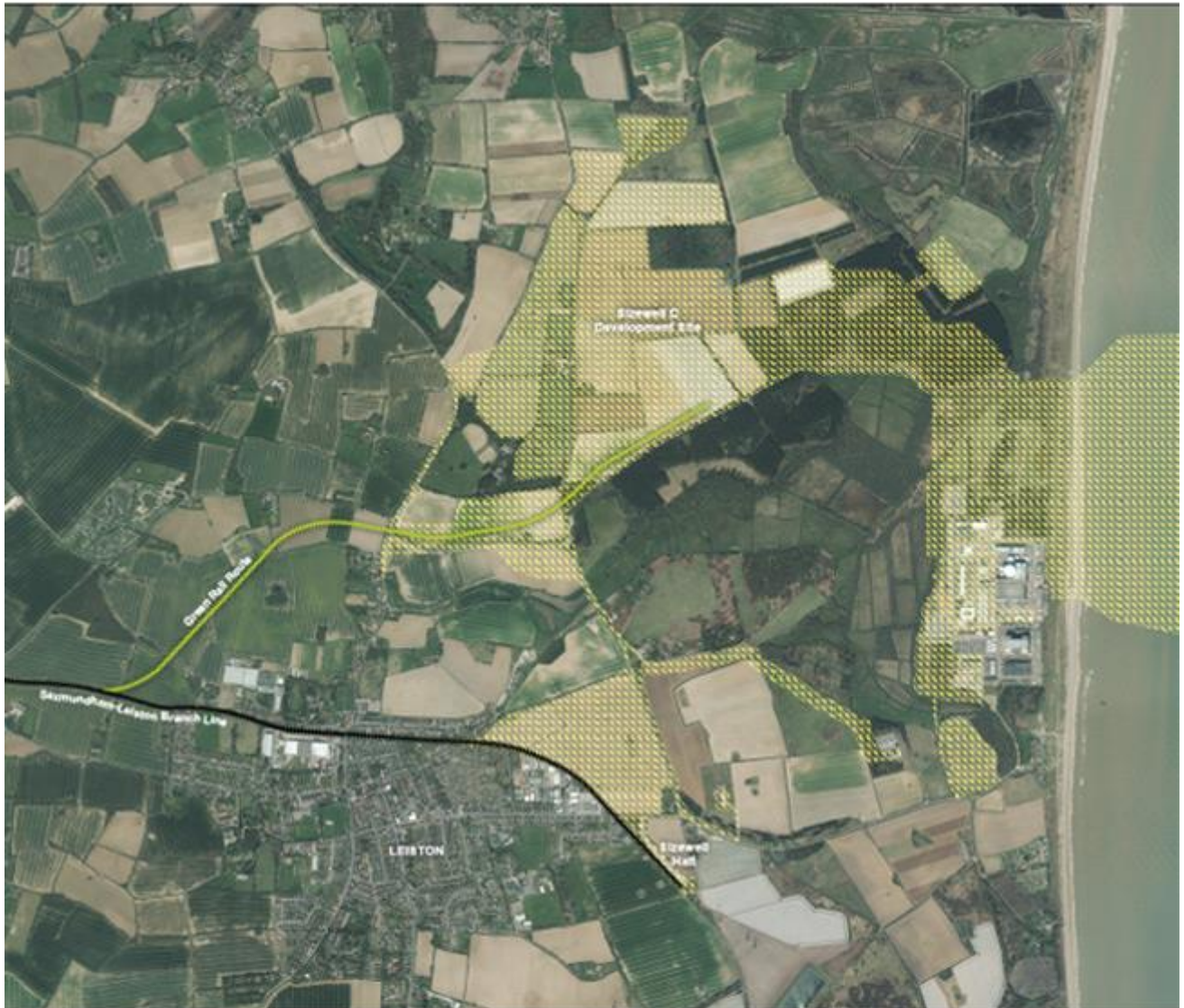
Option 1: temporary removal - and provision elsewhere, to be identified - of on-street parking spaces on the B1078 between Border Cot Lane and the River Deben bridge to create a continuous two-way road that would minimise delays. On-street parking would be reinstated when the park and ride is no longer needed.

Option 2: improvements to Valley Road and Easton Road to allow Sizewell C traffic from the B1078 to be diverted north of Wickham Market via Valley Road, Easton Road and the B1116 to reduce the potential for congestion on the B1078. This would include realigning Valley Road, formalising junctions, improving road markings, resurfacing and drainage improvements, and extending Easton Road to move the B1116 junction north for improved visibility.

Rail-led Strategy

A rail-led strategy would provide direct access into the main site for five trains a day along a proposed new rail route off the

Saxmundham - Leiston branch line, together with a bypass of Theberton, relieving the B1122 through Theberton of peak construction traffic and substantially reducing impacts associated with Sizewell C.



We do not yet know with certainty whether the rail-led strategy is fully feasible or could be delivered on time. We will need to continue our work with Network Rail to understand risks and potential implications on our construction programme.

Level crossings

The rail-led strategy would require closure and diversion of 12 level crossings along with upgrades for 33 others. The crossings that would be closed are:

- Westerfield Footpath
- Lacy's Footpath
- Stennetts 1
- Stennetts 2
- Gamekeepers
- Martlesham
- Melton Bromswell
- Pettistree
- Orchard
- Wickham Market
- Blaxhall 2
- Saxmundham

We are considering two options where the new rail route would cross Buckleswood Road:

Option 1: temporary closure of Buckleswood Road to vehicles, with a new footbridge to provide a pedestrian connection; or

Option 2: a new level crossing on Buckleswood Road.



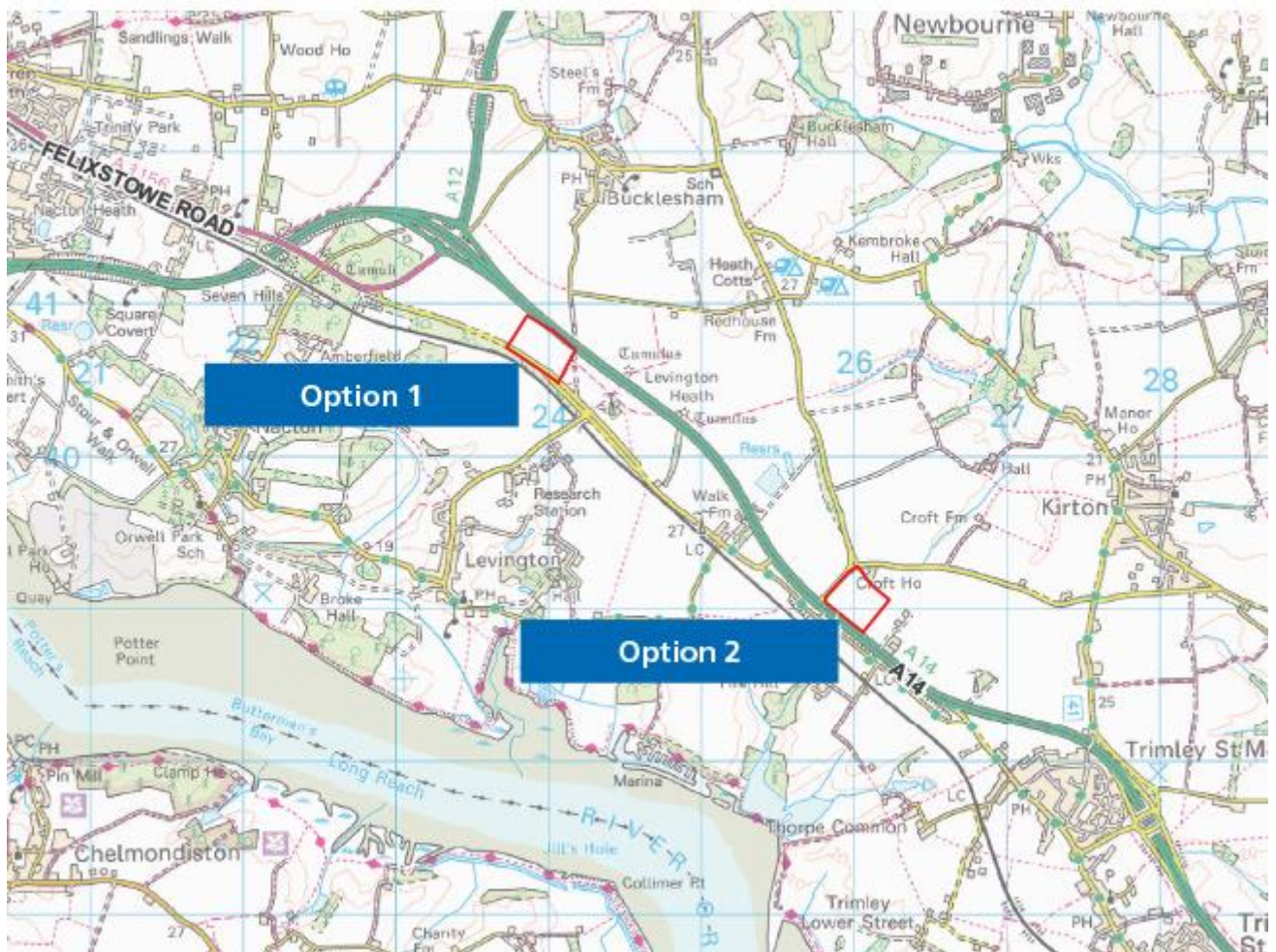
Road-led Strategy

The road-led strategy includes a new Sizewell link road from the A12 to the B1122 that would substantially reduce Sizewell C traffic volumes passing through Yoxford, Middleton Moor and Theberton.

It also includes a freight management facility near Ipswich, (to serve as a holding area for HGV's, helping regulate timing and flow of vehicles to the main development site), along with two trains a day (to Sizewell Halt or a new rail siding on LEEIE) throughout construction.

Freight Management Facility Options

We are considering two sites for the freight management facility, explained below.



Option 1, Seven Hills: a site of approximately 9.9 hectares close to the A12/A14 Seven Hills Junction which would be accessed off the Old Felixstowe Road.

Option 2, Innocence Farm: a site of approximately 9 hectares at Innocence Farm, located immediately to the north of the A14.

Public Exhibitions

We hope you can join us at one of our exhibitions where you can find out more about our proposals, speak to members of our project team and share your feedback.

EXHIBITIONS			
TOWN/PARISH	VENUE	DATE	TIME
Sizewell	Visitor Centre, Sizewell B, Leiston IP16 4UR	Friday 4 Jan	4 - 8pm
Leiston	Leiston United Church, High Street, Leiston IP16 4EL	Saturday 5 Jan	11 - 5pm
Theberton	Jubilee Hall, Church Road, Theberton IP16 4SB	Monday 7 Jan	11 - 5pm
Yoxford	Village Hall, Old High Road, Yoxford IP17 3HN	Tuesday 8 Jan	11 - 5pm
Darsham	High Lodge, Haw Wood, Hinton, Nr Darsham IP17 3QT	Wednesday 9 Jan	2 - 8pm
Hacheston	Village Hall, The Street, Hacheston IP13 0DW	Thursday 10 Jan	3 - 8pm
Wickham Market	Village Hall, High Street, Wickham Market IP13 0HE	Friday 11 Jan	2 - 8pm
Saxmundham	Market Hall, High Street, Saxmundham IP17 1AF	Saturday 12 Jan	10 - 4pm
Woodbridge	Community Hall, Station Road, Woodbridge IP12 4AU	Tuesday 15 Jan	10 - 4pm
Middleton	Village Hall, Mill Street, Middleton IP17 3NG	Wednesday 16 Jan	11 - 5pm
Southwold	Methodist Church Hall, East Green, Southwold IP18 6LB	Thursday 17 Jan	11 - 5pm
Aldeburgh	Community Centre, Victoria Road, Kings Field, Aldeburgh IP15 5HY	Friday 18 Jan	1 - 7pm
Stratford St Andrew	Riverside Centre, Great Glemham Road, Stratford St Andrew IP17 1LL	Saturday 19 Jan	10 - 4pm
Trimley St Martin	Trimley Sports and Social Club, High Road, Trimley St Martin IP11 0RJ	Tuesday 22 Jan	11 - 5pm

SZB Consultation: from 4 January to 1 February 2019, EDF Energy is consulting on proposals to relocate some Sizewell B facilities. To participate in that consultation, please see www.rlfsizewellb.co.uk for more information.

Next Steps

Following Stage 3 we will consider all responses and use them – along with our technical and environmental assessments, continuing engagement with statutory authorities and others, and lessons from Hinkley Point C – to further inform the development of our plans. We will then prepare and submit our application for development consent for Sizewell C to the Planning Inspectorate.

The Planning Inspectorate will process and examine the application, including encouraging the submission of views from interested parties, before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will make the final decision on whether or not to grant consent.

Please visit the [project website](#) for all Stage 3 documentation, and more details on how to respond.

Call us: Freephone 0800 197 6102*

Email us: info@sizewellc.co.uk

**Calls on 0800 numbers are normally free when you call from a landline but charges may vary if you use a mobile.*

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Norfolk LAF
Meeting:	24 January 2019
Author/Contact:	Anna McGowan
Venue:	SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

Ken Hawkins, Norfolk LAF vice chair, is interested in fostering links between Norfolk, Suffolk, and the Broads LAFs, please see email below:

From: Ken Hawkins
Sent: 14 November 2018 09:28
To: Anna McGowan
Subject: Suffolk LAF

I have been a member of Norfolk LAF for 3 years, and have (subject to being reappointed early next year) just become Vice Chair. I'm interested in fostering links between Norfolk and Suffolk (and the Broads) LAFs: I know that there have been meetings between Chairs and Vice Chairs, but would also like to consider attending Suffolk LAF as an observer. Do you have a list of dates for 2019? - I couldn't see anything on the website.

Many thanks

Best wishes

Ken

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: The Agriculture Bill
Meeting Date: 24th January 2019
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

1. Introduction

At its meeting in October 2018, David Barker circulated a paper which was later circulated with the minutes. DB noted that he met with Tim Morden from Defra with a group of farmers at his farm, where a useful and informal discussion was held. The Agricultural Bill is going through the House of Commons and DB noted there could be an end to permissive access with nothing to replace it but there is an opportunity for SLAF to emphasise the benefits of PROW as a public good for health and local economy.

DB proposed to draft a letter to each Suffolk MP, to be circulated shortly on SLAF letterhead and this was agreed. The letter is attached as appendix A and also went to Lord Gardiner.

2. Responses

The letter received responses from Lord Gardiner and Jo Churchill MP and these are attached at appendix B.

Lord Gardiner's letter acknowledges the wealth of evidence supporting the benefits to health, including mental health, of being in the natural environment and notes the 25 year Environment Plan includes commitments that will benefit health by making it easier to spend time in natural spaces. He also said in his letter the potential for including access arrangements in future land management schemes is being explored by Defra and that other groups have made similar representations.

In her letter, Jo Churchill agreed there is a big opportunity to create and agricultural system that delivers wider benefits, and the MP explained she has both written and spoken to George Eustice MP, minister for agriculture, fisheries and food regarding access to the wider countryside.

Taken together these are at least encouraging signals from Government that access is being considered and taken seriously, and that other groups are making similar noises.

App A



Letter SLAF to MPs
(David Barker) 1.11.1

App B



Letter Defra to SLAF
14.11.18.pdf



Letter Churchill MP
to SLAF 23.11.18.pdf

END
AW/SCC January 2019

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	SLAF Response to Elveden Estate/SSSI Heathland Restoration Project
Meeting:	24 January 2019
Author/Contact:	Barry Hall
Venue:	SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

Letter dated 17th December 2018, to Matthew Willetts, Elveden Estate SSSI Heathland Restoration Project:

SLAF
Suffolk Local Access Forum

Matthew Willetts, Senior Forestry
Consultant
Lockhart Garratt
8 Melbourne House
Corbygate Business Park
Weldon
Corby
Northamptonshire NN17 5JG

SLAF
C/O Suffolk Highways
Phoenix House
Goddard Road
Ipswich
IP1 5NP

Tel: 01473 260159
Email: slaf@suffolkhighways.org
Web:
<http://publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/suffolk-local-access-forum/>

Your Ref:
Our Ref: BH/AM
Date: 17 December 2018

Dear Mr Willetts

Elveden Estate/SSSI Heathland Restoration Project

Thank you for letting the Suffolk Local Access Forum know of the estates' plans in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and Natural England to carry out heathland restoration on several sites which are classified as Open Access Land under the ~~CROW~~ Act 2000.

The Forum has no objection to these plans being carried out and welcomes the opportunity it gives for the creation of further areas of open heath, a key feature of the Brecks landscape. This would also encourage a more diverse range of species and improved habitats.

The Forum would expect that where possible the felling operations would take place outside the breeding season to avoid unnecessary disturbance to nesting birds. They would also hope that subject to any seasonal restrictions already in place, public access to the areas would remain, with a phased felling programme in place to facilitate this.

When your plans are further advanced the Forum would be grateful for an update.

Yours sincerely

Barry Hall

Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: Correspondence to SLAF
Meeting Date: 24th January 2019
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: SALC, Unit 11a, Hill View Business Park, Old Ipswich Road, Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ

1. Introduction

In November, an email was sent to the Suffolk Local Access forum from Mr Fisk, who lives in the Elmswell area. The email is reproduced below.

From: Andrew Fisk
Sent: 19 November 2018 15:51
To: Highways SLAF <slaf@suffolkhighways.org>
Subject: Suffolk's Rights of Way & Suffolk's Local Access Forum

Dear Sirs

As someone who has for many years been an active walker, I have walked many of the rights of ways in villages close to my home in Elmswell. In the course of these walks I consistently find issues regarding the signage, obstruction, and reinstatement of those ROW. At times I have reported these to Suffolk CC ROW Department using the online facilities, and on occasions made contact with ROW Officers directly. Whilst those that I have dealt with have usually been most helpful, a common theme seems to have been encountered over the past few years.

Basically there is a system to report issues, and usually a very quick response to the effect that the issue will be dealt with. However the reality is normally that nothing happens for a long time, and often nothing after years. It is clear to us all that resources are limited, and certain issues must be prioritised, but fundamentally it would seem to me that the ROW Department are struggling to deal with the basics. I could if you so wish give examples of issues reported online, reported again, referred to ROW staff directly by email, and yet still nothing happens after over five years! Clearly something isn't working as it should?

Consequently I find it somewhat frustrating, when reading the SLAF meeting minutes and other papers, that there always seems to be considerable discussion of "big issues" such as Network Rails crossing closure plans, and the Coastal Path for example, which I know are important, but there is never seems to be any discussion about the realities of everyday walking, and the types of problems I and I am sure many others face. Surely we need to be looking at getting the basics right?

By that I mean ensuring all ROW's are signposted, that all ROW's are reinstated when across cultivated fields, and that obstructed routes are cleared. There is something very wrong when I can take a five mile walk and see ten or more issues that need reporting to Suffolk CC. As I recently explained to one of the ROW Officers I just don't bother reporting most issues anymore as it would often take longer to do than the actual walk!

I would be very interested to know what the SLAF view is, and particularly how, if at all, they actually monitor the performance of Suffolk's ROW Department, with regard to it's basic duties of maintaining Suffolk's ROW?

Yours faithfully
Andrew D Fisk

2. The County Council's Response

Whilst the email was not addressed to the council, an investigation was made into Mr Fisk's reports, and an email was sent to him, which again is reproduced below. This response was copied to the chairman. No response has been made by the forum, which may be satisfied the council's response suffices, or members may wish to discuss further at the meeting. There has been no follow up by Mr Fisk at the time of writing this report.

From: Andrew Woodin
Sent: 02 January 2019 14:58
To: 'Andrew Fisk'
Subject: RE: Suffolk's Rights of Way & Suffolk's Local Access Forum

Dear Mr Fisk,

Your email of 19th November came into Suffolk Highways' local access forum inbox and was forwarded to Barry Hall, the chairman of the forum.

If I may, I am happy to comment from the county council's perspective.

Between 28/03/2018 and 27/11/2018 you submitted 48 reports, many of which were about waymarking, which I believe you accept is a low priority for the county council.

Some reports related to roadside signposting of PRow. Missing roadside signs brought to our attention are added to our works programme, although these are batched so it may be some time before a reporter sees the new signpost in place.

On the matter of ploughing and cropping, on reports 4432140 in Wyverstone and 4432275 and 4432298 in Walsham-le-Willows, the county council took action and the paths were reinstated. Reports 4440282 and 4623141 in Thurston and Gt Barton respectively are cul-de-sac paths and therefore of low priority.

The role of the local access forum is to concentrate on strategic issues (not that I am saying the overall condition of the network, or budgets, isn't), like the threat to PRow which comes from closing level crossings.

I hope this goes a little way to explaining the county council's position, and I would conclude by saying we value customer reports in bringing defects to our attention, even if they cannot always be given a high priority.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Woodin

END
AW/SCC January 2019