

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Agenda
Meeting Date:	29th April 2021, 2-4 pm
Author/Contact:	Anna McGowan
Venue:	online via TEAMS

		Paper Number
1.	14:00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	14:05 Minutes of previous meeting	LAF 21/06 - BH
3.	14:10 Declaration of interest	
4.	14:15 The England Coast Path	LAF 21/07 – AW LAF 21/07A LAF 21/07B
5.	14:30 Strategic Road Network – ProW Severance	LAF 21/08 - AW
6.	14:45 Natural England - Regional Local Access Forums	LAF 21/09 - BH
7.	15:55 Energy Schemes	LAF 21/10 - AW
8.	15:10 Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings	LAF 21/11 – AW/SK LAF 21/11A LAF 21/11B
9.	15:25 Discovering Suffolk	Verbal - DF
10.	15:40 Public Question Time	
11.	15:50 Any Other Business	
12.	16.00 Dates & Venues of Future Meeting	

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Minutes of Meeting
Meeting Date:	28th January 2021 2-4.30pm
Author/Contact:	David Falk
Venue:	Online via ZOOM

1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping

Present: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair), David Barker (DB) (Vice Chair), Suzanne Bartlett (SB), Margaret Hancock (MH), Jane Hatton (JH), Susan Mobbs (SM), Clare Phillips (CP), Monica Pipe (MP), Cllr Jane Storey (JS), John Wayman (JW)

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

Zoom issues: Derek Blake (DBL), Anthony Wright (AWR),

Apologies: Cllr James Mallinder (JM), Roland Wilson (RW)

Not present: Gordon Merfield (GM),

Members of the Public: Mr Andy Bird (AB), Mr Gordon Crosby (GC), Mr Ken Hawkins (KH)

2. Minutes of previous meeting (LAF20/18)

The minutes of the online meeting held by TEAMS on 19th October 2020 were reviewed and agreed.

An action related to Network Rail had been superseded. Other items from the previous minutes were covered in papers and verbal updates in this meeting.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Planning

DF presented paper LAF21/01.

DF explained three consultations for Garden Village developments in Saxmundham, Lowestoft and Mildenhall.

DF also updated the forum on a recent presentation by SCC's Green Access Team and East Suffolk Council on the Green Access Strategy and building better communities. The presentation on 19th January 2021 attracted 49 delegates. A second presentation will be delivered on 11 February and SLAF members were encouraged to attend.

BH requested the SLAF planning subgroup meet to develop a response to the Garden Village Consultations.

MH congratulated and thanked the Green Access team on the presentation and how well it had been put together and how useful it was.

ACTION: DF set up and attend a Zoom meeting for Tuesday 2nd February 2:00pm with AWR, BH, JH, JS, RW, SB.

5. Suffolk Energy Schemes

AW presented paper LAF21/02.

Sunnica

AW thanked DB for the SLAF response to Sunnica.

DB thanked the input of Claire Dickson (West Area Rights of Way Manager) and highlighted the importance of her advice for SLAF members to appreciate the scale of the development proposal.

DB advised the forum that the development was 4 square miles of panels close to Newmarket and that public rights of way had received lip service with an expectation by the developer to be able to close the rights of way network for the development.

DB had contacted Matthew Hancock MP and spoke with his researcher who advised the SLAF response had been very helpful.

BH advised that the SLAF response had been picked up by Cambridgeshire LAF, who until then had been unaware of the Sunnica development. Cambridgeshire LAF subsequently adapted SLAF's response to form their own response to the proposal.

Sizewell

AW advised the next consultation would be in late February/early March and there was an enormous effort within SCC to respond. This involved rights of way resources being very involved in responding on the construction phase, longer term impacts on the network and legacy improvements.

AW advised Annette Robinson (East Area Rights of Way Manager) was very involved in the s106 agreement to fund improvements to the network with a key issue being the route of the England Coast Path (ECP) and its diversion when the marine landing facility is in use.

AW advised SCC were awaiting confirmation on the alignment of the ECP and that SCC want it safeguarded at the top of the flood defence.

AW advised there were 26 PROW affected on the main site of the development.

DF informed SLAF of a scoping project for a legacy project to create a 20-mile, mainly off-road, mixed-use trail along the coast between Aldeburgh and Southwold. The scoping for The Sizewell Trail had been shared with internal colleagues and key stakeholders, including East Suffolk Council, to help develop the concept before wider consultation. AB asked if Sustran were being consulted on The Sizewell Trail and that in any design it was important to accommodate cycling.

DF informed the cycling community would be engaged in the project but also reiterated that the trail would be a multi-use trail and so would meet the needs of all users, including accessibility.

MH stated that the tourism element of the project was very important.

BH stated that SLAF has responded to the latest Sizewell C consultation and had reiterated the legacy idea.

Scottish Power

AW explained the county council has some concern over the methodology being used for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Friston substation. He advised that the EIA had not addressed the impact on the visual landscape, but this was picked up at the examination.

AW also advised that a Local Government Act Section 111 agreement should provide for better access.

6. Trunk Road Update

AW provided a verbal update.

AW advised that Highways England (HE) had requested a meeting with SCC to discuss severance of public rights of way (PROW). Highways England had committed £936M to mitigate the impact of trunk roads on local walking and cycling networks.

SCC Transport Strategy team were leading on the response. The first of 2 meetings focused on the A14 at Trimley where a number of PROW crossed the A14. A second meeting will focus on Sproughton.

The locations for discussion were chosen due to them being next to large towns, where sizeable developments were taking place, and there was an existing severed PROW network.

AW advised that discussions for Trimley focused on developing existing crossings with a nearby bridge and underpass.

At the next meeting for Sproughton the focus would be on the River Gipping and Church Lane underpasses.

AW advised there was a possibility for improvements, and it was positive that HE had initiated this meeting. AW will keep SLAF informed on progress.

AW also informed that DF had done work on PROW improvements in developing a Felixstowe PROW Masterplan and that work would feed into the discussions with HE.

MH asked about the Church Lane underpass in Sproughton and advised that it was not well maintained, and it met the Hadleigh Road which itself was narrow. AW took note for the next meeting with HE.

DF provided a brief verbal update on a meeting with HE on proposals for the Copdock interchange junction and advised a third meeting was being planned where access would be discussed.

DF suggested that a SLAF member should attend the next meeting to comment on access.

ACTION: SLAF member to attend next meeting on Copdock Interchange Junction.

7. The England Coast Path

AW presented paper LAF21/03.

AW advise on developments for the England Coast Path (ECP).

Sections between Shotley and Felixstowe Ferry had been approved by the Secretary of State with no objections. This would come into effect once works had been completed but there was no indication of when that would be.

The section Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey had been published and SCC response had been sent in. SLAF would be putting in a response once the working group had looked at the proposed route.

AW advised the section between Bawdsey and Ramsholt would be at the landward base of the river wall. The ECP would resolve access issues between Waldringfield and Melton. The section between Wilford Bridge and Sutton Hoo had an objection but SCC considered this to be the most appropriate route for the ECP to take.

ACTION: SLAF respond to the Felixstowe Ferry – Bawdsey section of the ECP.

8. Network Rail

AW presented paper LAF21/04.

AW advised on Gypsy Lane progress stating that construction was required to bring into operation the footpath diversion to the new culvert underpass. There had been long discussions between Network Rail (NR) and the landowner over the impact of works on land use with flooding of the culvert being a topic of discussion. There was assurance from NR that flood events would not exceed 6 per year.

These works were a high priority for SCC and in September 2020 the lack of progress by NR had been escalated to SCC Director of Growth, Highways and Infrastructure to discuss with the NR Anglia Route Director. The response was that NR were still in negotiations with the landowner.

BH stated the project had been going on too long and that whilst SLAF could not be involved in detail, they should ask NR to speed up the process.

AW advised that works by NR in Felixstowe were complete, and SCC were now responsible for the PROW routes.

AW advised that a decision in October/November 2020 by the Secretary of State on 24 level crossings had resulted in 2 being withdrawn and then a further 13 removed from the Order because of objections. The Inspector stated that these crossings had not met the test of alternative routes being either suitable or convenient. These included the 8 that SCC had objected to. AW advised the PROW team had put a lot of effort into this work.

BH advised that DB had attended the Inquiry and SLAF had objected to 9 crossings, the same as SCC plus one more, which was also removed.

AW advised that of the crossings that could be closed, 2 could be closed immediately but construction was required for others and it might take 1 year for closures to take effect.

SK advised that following the Suffolk Inquiry there was a Public Inquiry in Newmarket into the status of the Weatherby crossing, which was the subject of much debate at the TWAO inquiry. The outcome is awaited and if the decision is the crossing is indeed a PROW, Network Rail must continue to maintain it or seek other legal means to close it.

AW advised that NR had been replacing stiles in Suffolk with a new design of stile that was difficult to negotiate. The issue had been escalated to NR Safety Manager who had met with officers to discuss the design. The point presented by SCC was that the default for replacing stiles should be gates. SCC could press this point but did not have the power to change the structures. The issue had been escalated to a regional ADEPT PROW Group and so was now being addressed at a higher level. At the same time the Office of Rail and Road Regulation were consulting on a new level crossing design standard and SCC would be responding to this. AW suggested SLAF might respond too.

CP said she was happy to help formulate a response to the Design Standard. In addition, she had seen a new metal stile in Brantham with a dog gate. SM stated she had seen a stile on the East Suffolk Line that was very awkward and very heavy duty, but the dog gate had been put out of action because it was deemed dangerous. AW asked for details of that stile to be sent to him.

BH said this was a backward step for NR especially with work being done to improve accessibility at stations.

ACTION: SLAF to write to the NR Route Director to speed up the process at Gypsy Lane.

ACTION: SLAF to respond to NR Design Standard.

ACTION: SB and CP send details of stiles to AW.

9. Regional LAF Forum

BH and DB attended.

There was a very good online attendance with similar issues across the region including trunk roads, especially in Essex and in Cambridgeshire.

BH advised that Natural England (NE) were less supportive of the LAFs with NE no longer holding a national training event, regional events no longer held in Ely, no longer hosting meetings, and at the moment, no member of NE staff with LAF responsibility.

BH emphasised that LAFs needed that national support.

DB added that 8 LAFs had attended the meeting. Discussion included the 2026 cut-off; the use of PROW during lockdown; disputes between cycling and horse riding; and the level of input from NE.

ACTION: DB to write to MPs regarding level of NE support to LAFs.

ACTION: DF to circulate Regional LAF minutes once received from KH.

10. Discovering Suffolk

DF informed SLAF of Discovering Suffolk, a new £367k project funded by SCCs £3M 2020 Fund.

DB asked about the Hedgerow Project. DF advised he did not have details of the other projects.

JW asked if Discovering Suffolk would replace waymarking posts between highways. DF advised the project was focused on roadside signage.

AW added that there was no budget to audit and address all waymarking, but SCC could address individual high priority cases.

11. Correspondence

AW presented paper LAF21/05.

AW advised there had been a near doubling of use on some areas of the PROW network and some PRoW had widened due to a combination of increased use and very wet ground conditions, although sometimes only short sections were affected.

AW highlighted SCCs increased investment in the PROW network, especially bridges.

AW advised work on the Bailey Bridge would start in the summer as that was the best time to conduct works, but SCC would be working with the community to ensure a ferry connection was maintained.

MP asked about Quiet Lanes and whether there was push on that initiative.

DF advised that the initiative had also received funding through SCC's 2020 Fund and would send their web address to members in the minutes (below).

CP asked about raising awareness amongst parish councils for minor PROW repairs such as done by Shotley Open Spaces.

AW asked if details of any interested group could be sent to the PROW team.

CP asked if parishes could engage more on volunteer opportunities.

AW advised about the Walkers Are Welcome initiative which the Green Access team could help facilitate but if a parish is able to assist with works it should contact the area ROW & Access office.

ACTION: DF send web address of Quiet Lanes initiative:

<https://sites.google.com/view/quietlanessuffolk/>

15:54 BH welcomed Jane Storey to the meeting.

12. Public Question Time

AB asked whether the Green Access Strategy and Discovering Suffolk project were looking to expand the PROW network and whether this was SLAFs remit.

BH advised SLAFs remit was to respond to access issues as they arose and that they had been involved in the development of the Green Access Strategy.

DF advised that Suffolk has one of the most extensive networks of PROW in England and the priority was to develop the network for today's user rather than expand it. Where external funds were available, however, the county council did consider creating new PRoW where there was a need.

AB said it did appear difficult to expand the network and gave the opinion that footpaths were really good but shared use paths less so.

MP added that SLAF did not have funds and therefore the Green Access Strategy actions were not for SLAF to deliver.

GC asked about the PROW reporting system, stating that it was easy to use but felt there was sometimes no follow-up. CG appreciated that there had been a change in use of the PROW network in the past year but asked how he could escalate any problems. GC informed that a report about a stile had disappeared from the tool and also that he had been informed to report an issue to Network Rail (NR) directly.

AW advised that reporting directly to NR can get the issue resolved quickly, citing an example in Ufford, but agreed the matter should also be reported to the county council.

GC then asked if SLAF kept a watch on public reports.

BH advised not.

JS advised GC could escalate any issues to his local councillor or Cllr Reid.

AW advised he would pick up on the issue of report responses.

AW advised that for any public report, the response might be it was a complicated issue to be addressed; it was a work in progress; or it was a low priority.

GC would advise AW of any instances where his reports had not been followed through.

13. Any Other Business

MP said that she was aware of metal roadside signage disappearing.

DB added that signs were missing, especially since Christmas.

AW advised PROW team were not aware of any issues.

AB asked if there was anything online about the forum and their accountability.

AW advised there was a website.

DF advised that the website address was the one sent to public attending with the meeting's papers:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/suffolk-local-access-forum/>

MH advised that ESL Community Rail Partnership were developing a new series of station to station cycle rides.

AB asked who was putting the routes together.

MH advised it was members of the partnership who were keen cyclist.

AB said he was happy to help.

14. Dates of Future Meetings

1. 29th April 2021
2. 29th July 2021
3. 28th October 2021

END DF/SCC February 2021

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: The England Coast Path
Meeting Date: 29th April 2021
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: Online via TEAMS

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

Reports on all five stretches of coastal access in Suffolk have been published, on the dates stated.

Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry – 15th January 2020

Harwich to Shotley Gate – 22nd January 2020

Aldeburgh to Hopton on Sea – 29th January 2020

Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey – 9th December 2020

Bawdsey to Aldeburgh – 3rd February 2021

The latest information from Natural England's (NE) on its progress for the ECP in Suffolk and Norfolk is shown on their website. The website progress overview map was last updated on 3 February 2021.

Stretch name	Progress
Harwich to Shotley Gate	Stage 4: Determine
Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry	Stage 4 and 5: Partially approved (SGF2, SGF4 and SGF5 have been approved but are not yet available for public use – work to establish the route will shortly be taking place on these approved lengths)
Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey	Stage 4: Determine
Bawdsey to Aldeburgh	Stage 4: Determine
Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea	Stage 4: Determine
Hopton-on-Sea to Sea Palling	Open to the public

The stages to establish Coastal Access are 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.

Further information on the England Coast Path can be found [here](#).

2. The Stretches in More Detail

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

The right of access to the approved stretch of coast does not come into effect at this stage. Natural England will work with the county council to establish any infrastructure works before an Order is made by the Secretary of State under the 2009 Act to bring the rights into effect.

Natural England, Suffolk County Council, Defra and the Planning Inspectorate continue to work together to ensure much of the England Coast Path is open as soon as possible.

Suffolk Stretches

Harwich to Shotley Gate – Kim Thirlby & Sally Fishwick. Last updated 08.04.21

- Stage 4 (Determine)
- The Overview, and the compendium of six separate reports (covering individual lengths of coast within the stretch) were published on 22 January 2020. The 8 week period for comment closed on 18th March 2020
- Natural England received 7 objections, to 5 of the 6 individual reports. As stretches are published as a compendium of reports, the absence of objection on 1 of the 6 reports means Natural England anticipates that this will progress positively to Secretary of State approval which would then allow Suffolk CC to undertake establishment works.
- Natural England have submitted their comments on the objections and representations received.
- The Appointed Person will be visiting the stretch in June and then advising the Secretary of State on the Objections.

Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry – Darren Braine. Last updated 13.04.21

- Stage 4 (Determine)
- Natural England published proposals on 15th January 2020 and the 8 week period for public comment ended on 11 March 2020.
- 3 of the 5 reports were approved by the secretary of state and are available for Suffolk County Council to apply for the establishment grants.
- The 2 reports with objections (SGF1 and SGF3) have been visited by the Planning Inspectorate and we await their report to Defra.

Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey – Giles Merritt & Sally Fishwick. Last updated 08.04.21

- Stage 4 (Determine)

- Natural England published proposals on 9th December 2020 and the 8 week period for public comment ended on 3 February 2021.
- 7 objections were received. As stretches are published as a compendium of reports, the absence of objection on 2 of the 6 reports means Natural England expects these 2 reports to progress positively to Secretary of State approval which would then allow Suffolk CC to undertake establishment works.

Bawdsey to Aldeburgh –Jonathan Clarke & Darren Braine. Last updated 13.04.21

- The report was published on 3rd of February 2021 and closed for public comment at midnight on 31st March 2021.
- Natural England will now undertake administrative processes around the objections and representations received and pass them on to the Planning Inspectorate and Defra (respectively) for their review and consideration.

Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea – Sally Fishwick. Last updated 08.04.21

- Stage 4 (Determine)
- Natural England published proposals on 29th January 2020. The 8 week period for public comment, closed on 25th March 2020.
- 23 objections were received, to 1 of the 6 individual reports. As stretches are published as a compendium of reports, the absence of objections on 5 of the 6 reports means Natural England expects these will progress positively to Secretary of State approval, which would then allow Suffolk CC to undertake establishment works.

Natural England is currently writing their comments on the objections.

Since the last meeting, the chairman of SLAF submitted a response to the Bawdsey to Aldeburgh stretch, which is included as appendix A, and to the Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey stretch which is included as appendix B.

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

Resumption of discussions with Essex and Norfolk County Councils on establishing a trails partnership await further progress on establishing the coast path in the east of England.

4. England Coast Path – Progress Map for the East

England Coast Path - Stretch Progress
 East Hub Team - 3rd February 2021



END
 AW/SCC April 2021

App A



SLAF Response BSA Report (Apr 21).docx

App B



SLAF Response FFB Report (Feb 21).docx

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: The England Coast Path
Meeting Date: 29th April 2021
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: Online via TEAMS

Appendix A

FORM FOR MAKING REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT A COASTAL ACCESS REPORT
<p>Any person may make a representation about a coastal access report.</p> <p>This form should be completed if you wish to make a representation about the coastal access report which Natural England submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on Wednesday 3 February 2021 under section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, pursuant to its duty under section 296(1) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The report relates to Bawdsey to Aldeburgh.</p> <p>Any representations about the report must be made on this form and received by Natural England no later than midnight on Wednesday 31 March 2021. If you require more space for your comments, please continue on a separate sheet.</p>
<p>1. Please give the number of the report and number of the map to which the representation(s) relate(s):</p>
<p>Bawdsey to Aldeburgh BSA1 – BSA5</p>
<p>2. If the representation(s) relate to specific land on the map(s), please describe the land here:</p>
<p>3. Please tick the appropriate box below to show who is making the representation(s), or on whose behalf you are making the representation(s):</p>

An access authority for an area in which land to which the report relates is situated	<input type="checkbox"/>
A local access forum for an area in which land to which the report relates is situated	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage)	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Environment Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>
A person specified in Schedule 1 to the Coastal Access Reports (Consideration and Modification Procedure) (England) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 2010/1976)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please give details):	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>4. If you have ticked the "other" box above, please also indicate if you are a person with a relevant interest (within the meaning of section 55J(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949^(a)) in land to which the report relates</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5. Please give details of, and the reasons for, the representation(s) you are making about Natural England's report:</p>	
<p>The Suffolk Local Access Forum welcomes the publication of the final stretch of the England Coast Path in Suffolk. We are pleased that it also includes the associated estuaries with new paths that provide improved coastal route north of Bawdsey Manor to East End Bawdsey, and improved waterside access on the east and west banks of the Butley River. We support the seasonal use proposed for part of that new route.</p> <p>In Aldeburgh we appreciate the difficulties of keeping a path close to the Alde Estuary so although not as ideal we support the route along the A1094.</p> <p>Like Suffolk County Council we are concerned about the longer term funding provided for maintenance of the English Coast Path particularly in regard where the path has to be fenced to separate it from SSSI's and SPA's</p>	
<p>6. Please list below any documents or evidence you have included in support of the representation(s):</p>	
<p>7. Have you made any other representations about the report?</p>	
<p>Yes</p>	

No

8. If you are a person with a relevant interest in land to which the report relates, have you made any objection(s) which relate(s) to that land?

Yes

 No

9. Please complete your details below:

Name:	Barry Hall
Organisation/company (if appropriate):	Chair Suffolk Local Access Forum
Address (including post code):	24 Denmark Gardens Holbrook Ipswich IP9 2BG
Telephone:	01473 328121
E-mail:	barry@hall64.plus.com
Date:	31 March 2021

10. We hope that you can appreciate that due to restrictions related to Coronavirus the preferred method for contacting us is by email. If you do not have access to email please use the address below.

The completed form should be sent to Natural England at:

eastcoastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk

or

Coastal Access Delivery Team – East, Natural England, Eastbrook, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8DR.

(a) Section 55J(2) provides that a person has a relevant interest in land if the person is the owner of the land, holds a term of years absolute in the land, or is in lawful occupation of the land.

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: The England Coast Path
Meeting Date: 29th April 2021
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: Online via TEAMS

Appendix B

SLAF England Coast Path - Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey response

The Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) strongly supports the proposed route put forward in the reports FFB 1 to FFB 6 for the England Coast Path around the Deben Estuary from Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey. Prior to the Natural England proposals there have been significant gaps in a continuous safe route around the estuary, particularly from Waldringfield to Kyson Point (FFB 2), Widford Bridge to Ferry Cliff (FFB 4) and Ramsholt to Bawdsey (FFB 6) and SLAF welcomes the proposals that have been put forward in these reports and recognises that a balance has been struck between recreational and environmental considerations and public and private interests.

FFB 2 – SLAF supports the proposed route from Sandy Lane to Kyson Point as this been a long-standing gap in the provision of a safe off-road route around the Deben Estuary due to historical path erosion and which will now enable outstanding river views.

FFB 4 – SLAF welcomes and supports the provision of new public access from Widford Bridge to Ferry Cliff as it removes the need to walk alongside the busy B1083 to access other public rights of way links down to the Deben in this area.

FFB 6 – The addition of a new route from Ramsholt to Bawdsey will allow the completion of a continuous walking route around the Deben Estuary. SLAF accepts however that due to environmental considerations this will not necessarily be on top of the river wall due to habitat designations, but we would press for Suffolk County Council to be provided with sufficient funding for the establishment and maintenance of the works required to provide this essential link.

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: Strategic Road Network – PRow Severance
Meeting Date: 29th April 2021
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin/David Falk
Venue: Online via TEAMS

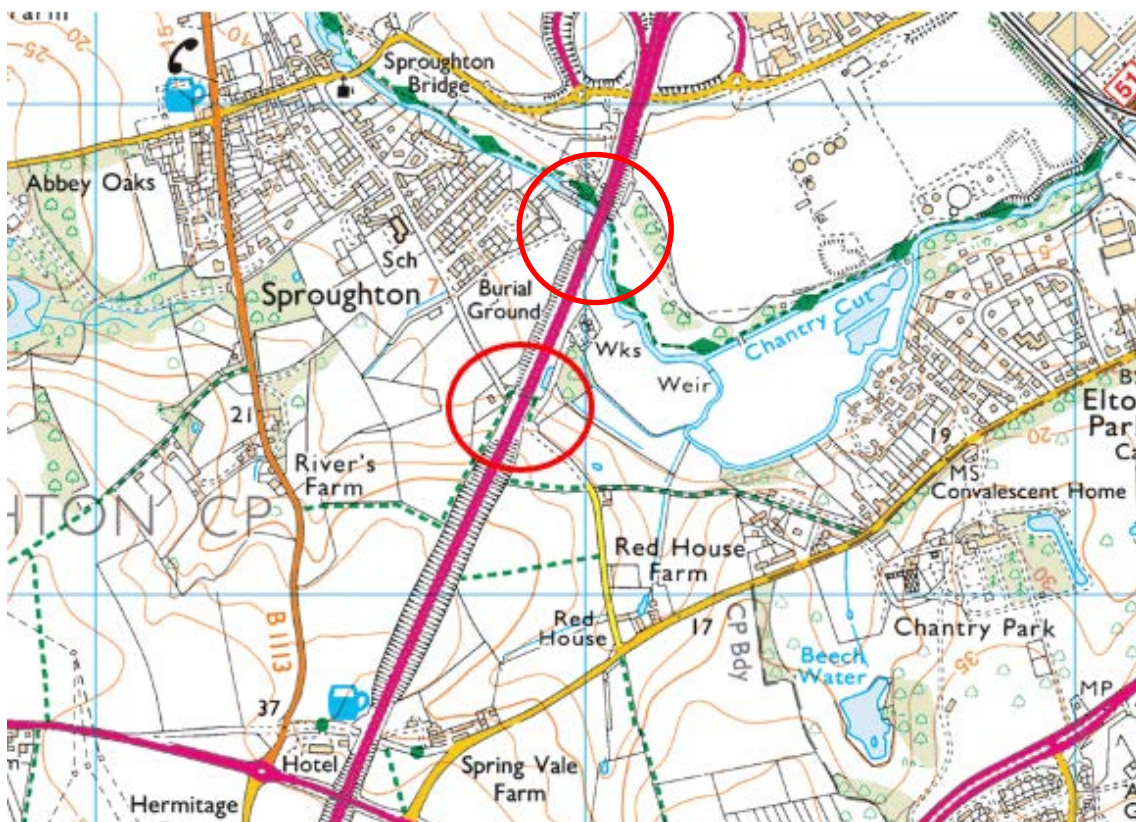
1. Introduction

The county council's ROW & Access team has an ongoing dialogue with Highways England to improve access across the A12 and A14 in Suffolk, where the roads sever the access network and separate communities.

2. Progress in 2021 – A14 at Sproughton and Trimley

Two meetings have taken place this year with officers from Highways England, to discuss locations at Sproughton and Trimley, on 27th January and 5th February.

At Sproughton, it is Highways England rather than the county council which has raised concerns about two grade separated crossings, at Church Lane and where the A14 crosses the River Gipping. The locations are highlighted in the plans below.



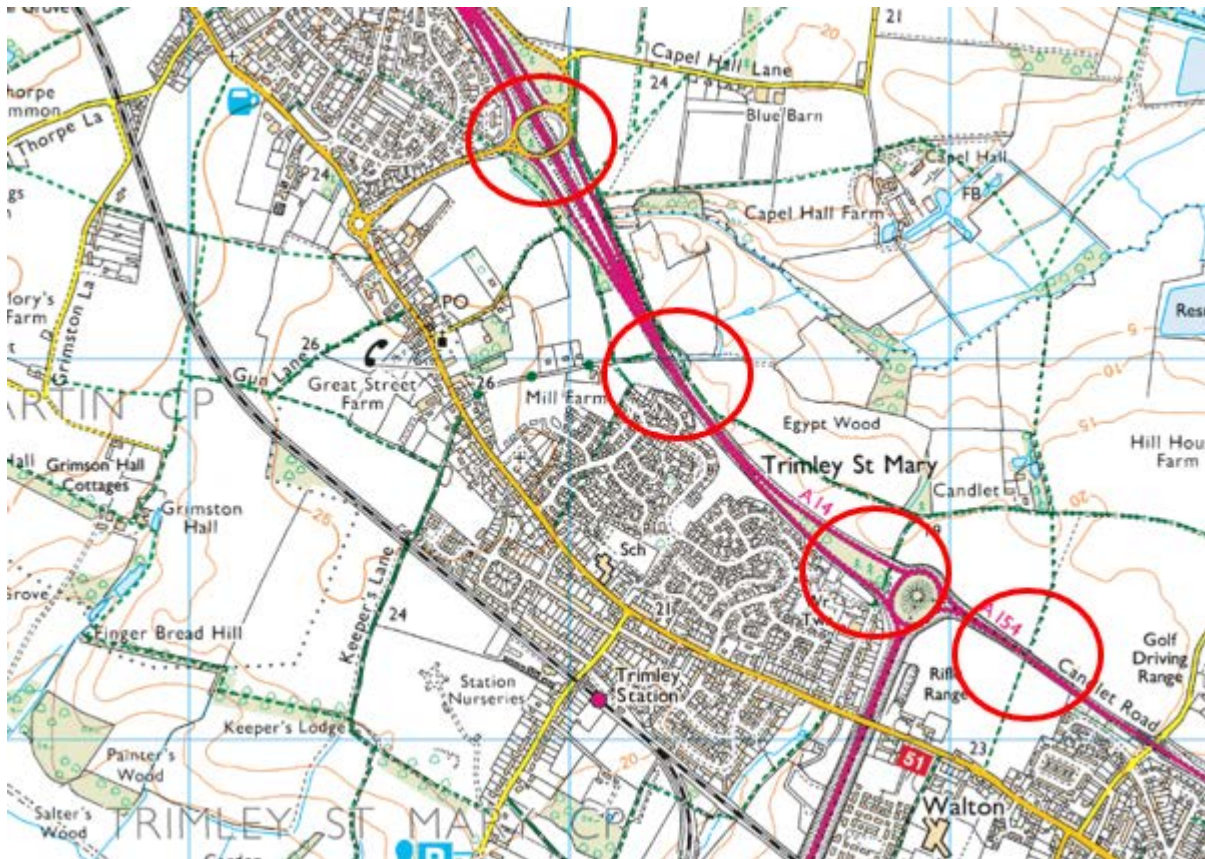
Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database rights 2021

Improvements to both underpasses were discussed, for example the tatty condition of the Church Lane underpass and presence of steps, and the lack of handrail next to the Gipping. The condition of connecting PRow was discussed at both locations. At SLAF's meeting on 28th January Margaret Hancock noted the Sproughton Church Lane underpass is unappealing, litter strewn and a meeting point for youths and the footpath towards Chantry Park Hadleigh Road is narrow and improved signing is needed, and these points were relayed by Andrew Woodin to Highways England at the follow up meeting on 5th February. Christos Galanopoulos from Highways England agreed these connecting routes would benefit from improving

The photos below give an idea of the condition of the two A14 crossings (the last two are the Gipping underpass).



At Trimley, there are at grade PRow crossings, and evidence on the ground people accessing the PRow network also use the Howlett Road/A14 junction, which is the northernmost highlighted location on the plan.



Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database rights 2021

At both locations Highways England expressed a wish to work with the county council on improving access at the two locations. An update on progress is expected from them and this has been chased by the county council.

The county council's Transport Strategy team were represented at both meetings by the engineer who mainly covers cycling interests.

3. Progress in 2021 – A14 at Copdock

Highways England are currently looking at a plans to reduce traffic pressure on the roundabout at the A12/A14 Copdock interchange. Two plans were presented to an invited group of local councillors, the British Horse Society and the Rights of Way and Access Team. The two plans addressed flow rates on the roundabout in different ways, but both would impact on the rights of way network in the immediate vicinity.

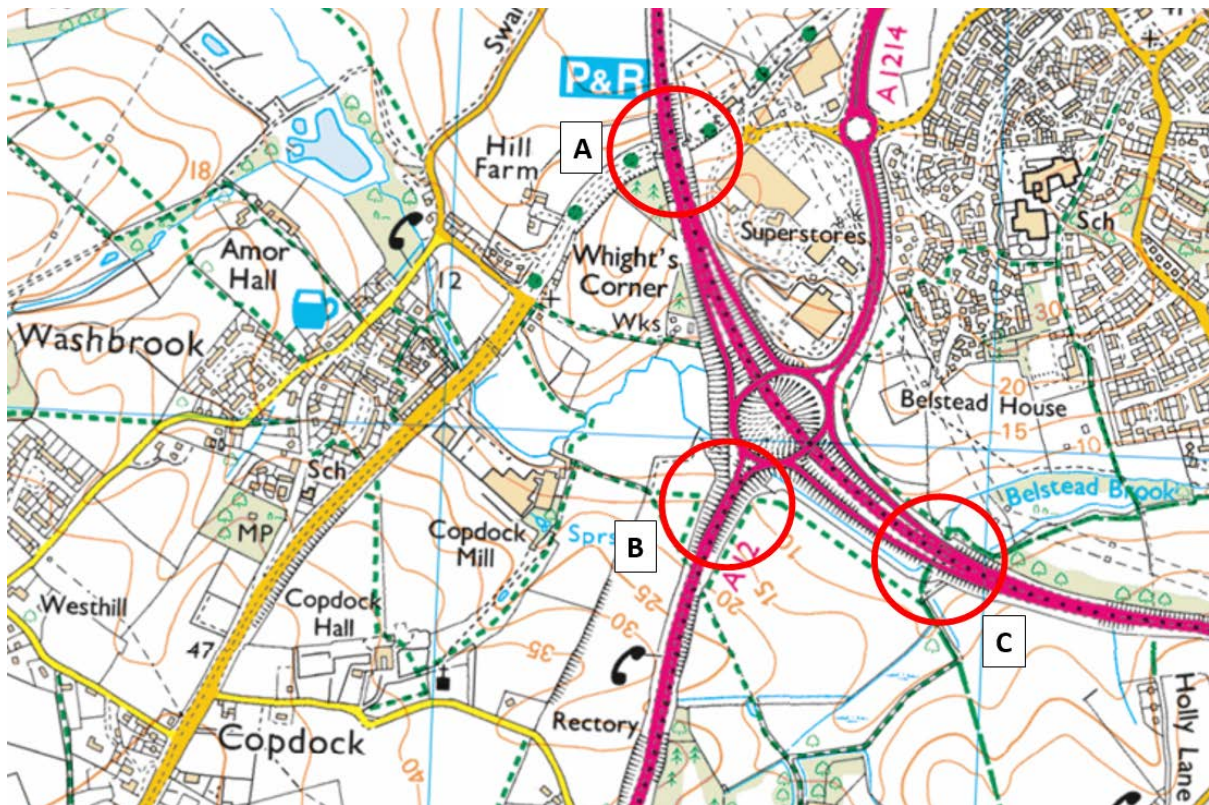
The issue for the rights of way network in this vicinity is severance which occurred when the trunk roads and roundabout interchange were constructed. Public rights of way links remain to the west (A) and the east (C) of the interchange, but not to the south (B) of it.

The link to the west (A) of the interchange is a lit underpass suitable for walking and cycling but not for horse riding. The link to the east (C) is an underpass culvert meaning it takes a water course, with a raised walkway. At times the underpass is very wet and muddy and unusable for cycling or horse riding. South of the

interchange there is no official rights of way link but there are three adjacent culverts (B), none of which are currently suitable for access on foot or saddle.

Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way and Access Team, with the support of the British Horse Society, are looking for the following:

- The southern access link (B) to be reinstated and adjoining footpaths upgraded to bridleway status to provide a safe and convenient link for walking, cycling and horse riding between Belstead in the east and Washbrook in the west.
- The eastern culvert link (C) improved for access for all.



Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database rights 2021

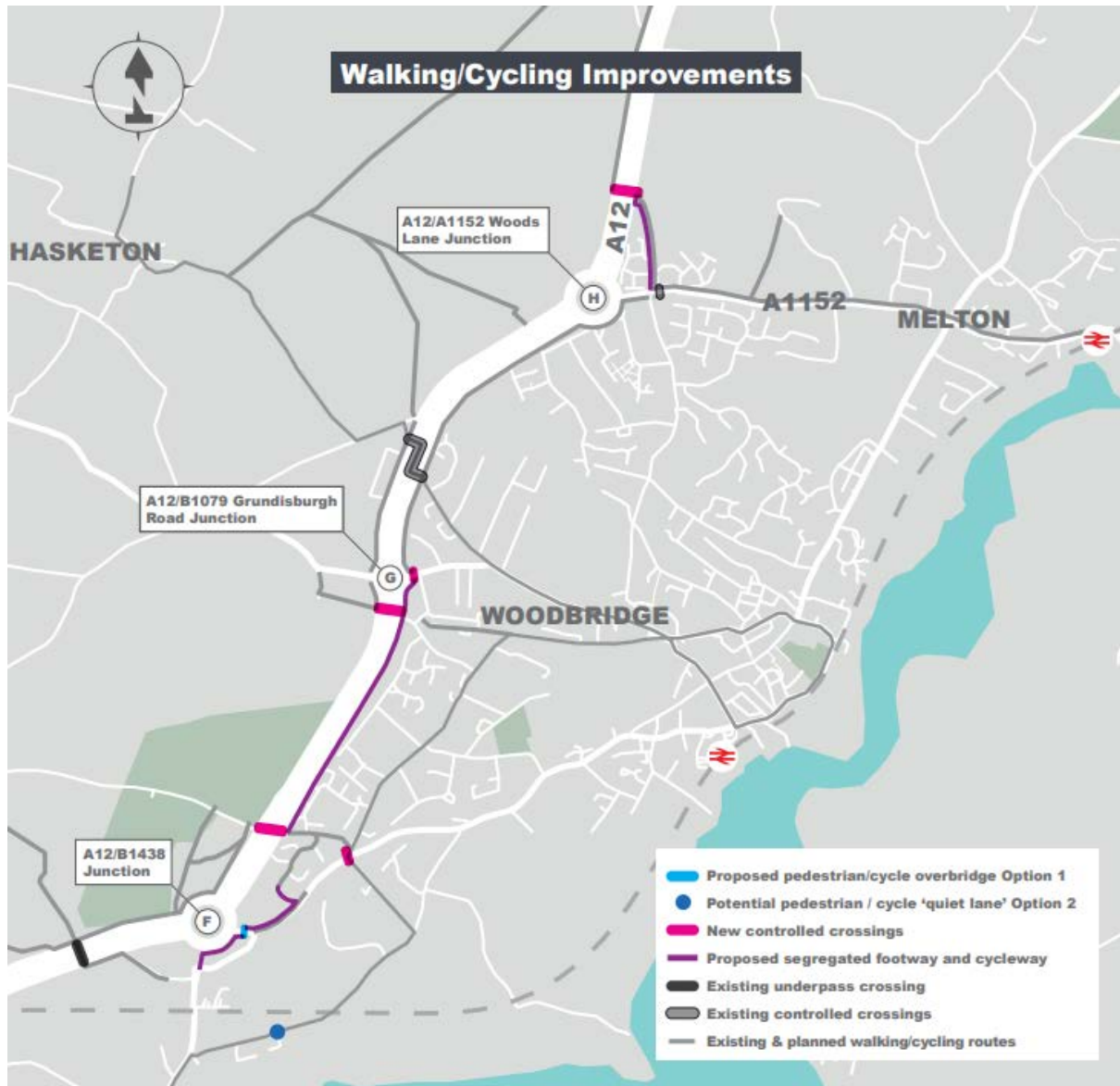
4. Progress in 2021 – A12 improvements: A14 'Seven Hills' to A1152 Woods Lane

The A12 is part of Suffolk's Major Road Network (MRN). It is recognised that there are issues along an 11km section of the A12 between the A12/A14 junction at 'Seven Hills' and the A1152 at Woods Lane, Melton. Modelling indicates that these issues would worsen as a result of planned growth.

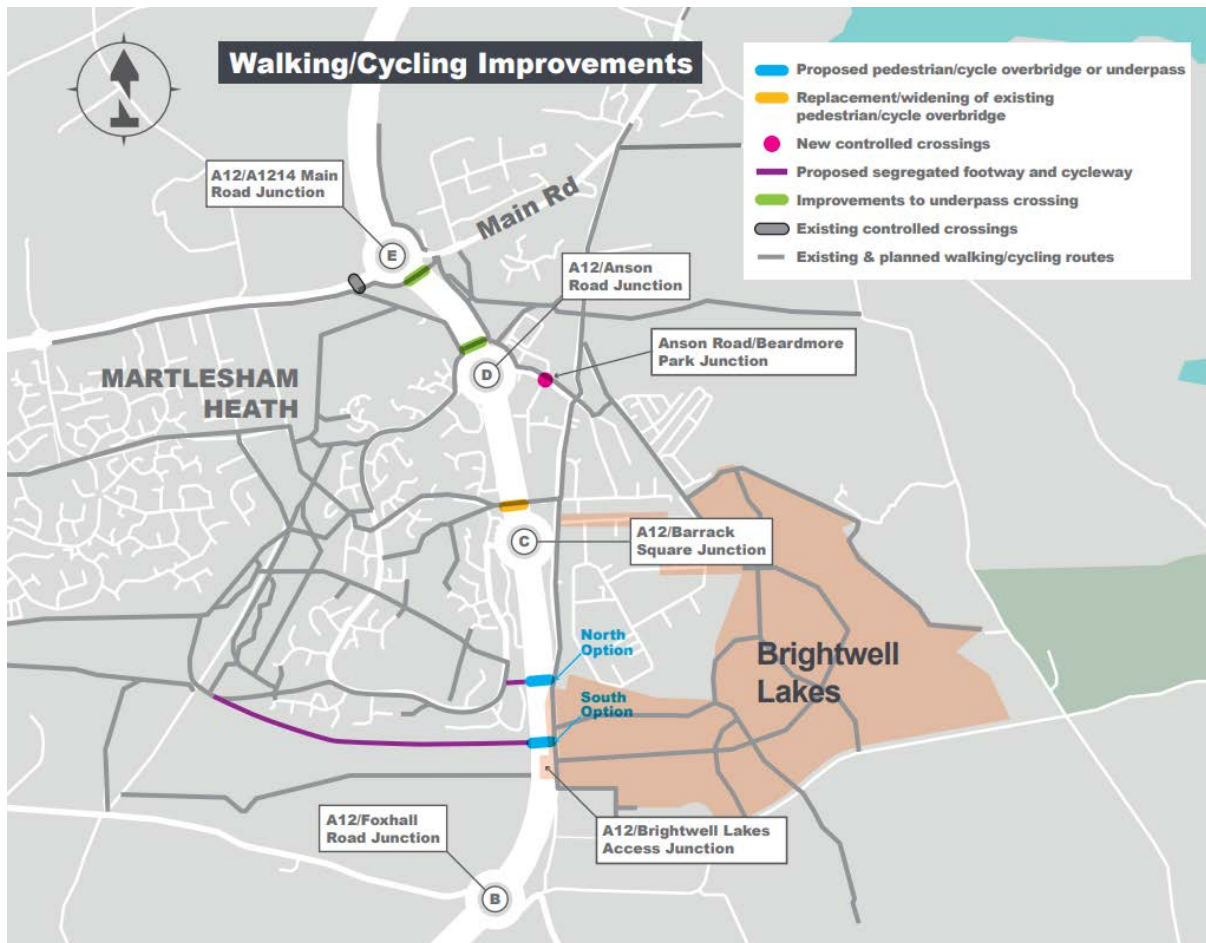
Suffolk County Council received funding from the Department for Transport to develop a Scheme to improve this section of the A12 and make the further case to fund those improvements.

The Scheme being proposed will enhance capacity at eight junctions along this section of the A12, including a new section of dualled road and improved walking and cycling and public transport facilities.

Walking and cycling improvements in the Woodbridge area are illustrated below:



Walking and cycling improvements in the Martlesham area are illustrated below:



Public consultation closed on 19th March and received over 700 responses. Officers are now analysing those responses, and this will inform an Outline Business Case for the Scheme. The improvements are estimated to cost between £40 million and £60 million and a decision will be taken by SCC Cabinet in the summer on whether a funding bid will then be submitted to the Department for Transport later in 2021. If a bid is submitted and is successful, then SCC expect to see the Scheme completed by the end of 2025.

The consultation documents are available on SCC's website
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations-petitions-and-elections/consultations/a12-improvements/>

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: Natural England – Regional Local Access Forums
Meeting Date: 29th April 2021
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: Online via TEAMS

SLAF
Suffolk Local Access Forum

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

By email
FAO: Hazel Thomas
Natural England

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

Your Ref:
Our Ref: SLAF/13/04
Date: 13th April 2021

Dear Ms Thomas

Re: Natural England Local Access Forums

Following a recent zoom meeting of chairs of Local Access Forum's in East Anglia, I raised the issue of the gradual withdrawing of support for these statutory bodies by Natural England at our latest Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting.

In the past Natural England have organised national conferences which have brought LAF members together from all parts of the country to hear not only what is going on nationally within NE but also presentations of good practice from LAF's, as well as a selection of useful workshops. These were supplemented by smaller regional events; the East Anglia events being held at Ely Matings.

Since these have all finished, up to now we have been able to meet as a regional body at a room provided either at Cambridge or Peterborough NE offices with a member of the Regional NE providing an overview of any relevant issues. We now understand that this will no longer be the case, we are no longer able to meet at NE offices and there will be no one from NE who LAF's can contact for information.

With everything that has been going on over the past year in relation to the Covid pandemic, the need for good access links to the local countryside through public rights of way has never been greater for people's physical and mental health and we therefore feel that the links between NE and LAF'S should be strengthened not weakened.

It would be helpful to know what input NE as had in the proposed ELMS. Has your input been confined to conservation and biodiversity or are you also proposing that there should be payments for improved public access?

Your sincerely



Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

cc: Hannah Thacker, Natural England Area Manager for Norfolk and Suffolk

Providing Independent advice on access to the countryside in Suffolk

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 28th January 2021, the local access forum agreed to raise the issue of lack of support for the regional local access forum meetings, including not even hosting the meetings now and having no staff with a local access forum responsibility.

The SLAF chairman has written to Natural England and the letter is reproduced above.

AW/SCC Apr 21
END

Suffolk Local Access Forum
Title: Suffolk Energy Schemes
Meeting: 29th April 2021
Author/Contact: Andrew Woodin
Venue: Online via TEAMS

1. Sunnica
2. Sizewell C
3. Scottish Power EA1N & EA2 and Friston substation

1. Sunnica

Introduction

Members have received previous updates on the proposals for a large solar farm spanning the Suffolk/Cambridgeshire border, between Mildenhall and Newmarket.

The statutory consultation for the proposal took place between 22 September 2020 and 18 December 2020.

Following the statutory consultation, Sunnica Limited are currently reviewing the comments received and continue to develop its design for the proposed Sunnica Energy Farm ahead of submitting a development consent order application to the Secretary of State.

For reference Sunnica's proposal as the statutory consultation can be found [here](#).

Public Access

A joint response from all local authorities affected by the proposed solar farm was submitted on 15 December 2020. A copy of the joint response can be found [here](#).

. The main points raised for public rights of way are as follows:

- The visual impact on PRoW and views from the network. This includes the various different users of the network, with view points not being covered for equestrian use as previously discussed with Sunnica.
- The closure of all PRoW within the red line boundary for the duration of the construction phase seems excessive and needs to be reconsidered. There is concern that Worlington and Freckenham will effectively be cut off from recreational routes in the area during the construction phase. A phased approach should be adopted, and routes should only be closed for a minimum period, when works require it or accommodated through the site. Alternative routes should be provided. There are areas of the network that should remain

open at all times due to routes being round the edge of the scheme area and not physically affected by works.

- The closure of routes may potentially negative impact other recreational areas in the wider area, including areas designated for their ecological value. These impacts will need to be assessed in a Habitat Regulation Assessment.
- There have not been sufficient improvements to green access to mitigate the impact on quiet enjoyment of the countryside by such a large scale solar farm on the local landscape. The original suggestions from the Rights of Way Officer for desired additional routes were not taken further by Sunnica; some of the proposed additional permissive routes may interfere with ecological aims, for example in stone curlew areas.

Sunnica's Preliminary Environmental Information Report can be found [here](#).

Sunnica Limited invited Access and Highways representatives to a meeting on 25 March 2021 to start addressing the joint consultation response from the Local Authorities. This covered both the road and public right of way network.

The main summary points relating to public rights of way from the meeting are as follows:

- Sunnica Limited identified that not all routes will require closures for the duration of the scheme and that some routes will be able to remain open. Details of these have not been confirmed at present but they alluded to the routes that run along the edge of the scheme boundary and in addition the U6006, which links Freckenham and Worlington.
- Additional routes are now proposed linking the U6006 to Red Lodge as originally proposed by the Rights of Way Manager. Sunnica Limited identified the need for additional access to assist with mitigation.

As yet the slides that were presented have not been shared with the Local Authorities, these have been requested.

Conclusion

Members should await a response to their consultation submission.

2. Sizewell C

The Preliminary Meetings for Sizewell started on the 23rd - 24th March, concluding on the 14th April after which the Examination Timetable will be published and the Examination formally starts. The Examination runs for 6 months and will include a series of open floor hearings, issue specific hearings and site visits.

The county council continues to raise concerns regarding:

- the disruption of the public footpath and ECP along the beach,
- its future proposed position on the sacrificial sea defence,
- the inadequacy of the alternative coastal footpath,

- a plethora of technical and legal matters that affect the 26 PROW on the main site, the Sizewell Link Road, the Two Village bypass and at rail crossings on the branch line and green rail route.

There are also workstreams looking at s106 obligations. The county council is developing proposals for mitigating the impact on PROW and amenity, including proposals for physical works, signing, information ideas, new routes and improvements to the bridleway infrastructure.

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/the-sizewell-c-project/>

3. Scottish Power EA1N & EA2 and Friston substation

Scottish Power submitted their Development Consent Order in November 2019. It involves a cable route from the coast that will affect 26 PROWs during construction and three substations that will require the permanent stopping up of a section of PROW to the north of the village of Friston.

The county council has raised concerns about the inadequacy of the methodology and conclusions of the Environmental Impact Assessment, as it does not measure or address the impact of the development on the amenity and the quality of the user experience of the PROW network. We have also tried to influence the outcome for the footpath that will be stopped up because of the substations.

The Examination should have concluded in early April but has been extended by permission of the SoS for BEIS beyond the normal 6 months until the 6th July. The reasons for this are the impact of Covid on the ability of participants to engage effectively in the Examinations, the ability of the Panel to examine the applications fully and the range, scale and pace of the two Examinations leading to a strain on participants

The Panel will be focussing on issues around the proposed substations site at Friston, including, but not limited to, considerations of landscape, design, historic environment, visual impacts, and proposed mitigations as well as consideration of alternatives and cumulative impact onshore, flood risk and drainage; and Biodiversity and Habitat Regs Assessment.

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-one-north-offshore-windfarm/>

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings
Meeting:	29th April 2021
Author/Contact:	Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Online via TEAMS

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



The main development since the forum met in January has been Network Rail/SCC seeking Counsel's opinion on whether the inconsistencies within the confirmed Order and the associated objections of the landowner, are of enough significance to conclude that the Order is fatally flawed. Counsel's advice concludes that the intention of the Order must be given significant weight and that the Order schedule description supports what the Order sets out to achieve.

Due to the current lack of an access agreement between the railway operator and the landowner, Network Rail are currently reviewing the culvert design to avoid having to use any private land, allowing for the construction works to be delivered entirely from within the boundaries of the diverted highway and Network Rail land. Any change to the design will require both the Eastern Internal Drainage Board and SCC's approval.

The county council has recently written to the landowner confirming its and Network Rail's intention to proceed with the confirmed Order, whilst also offering to re-engage

negotiations on a full and final compensation package that could potentially include agreement on access arrangements and a temporary works compound.

At its last meeting the forum agreed to send a letter to Ellie Burrows, Anglia Route Director at Network Rail, setting out its concerns regarding the lack of progress on this case. This is attached as Appendix A.

General/Countywide

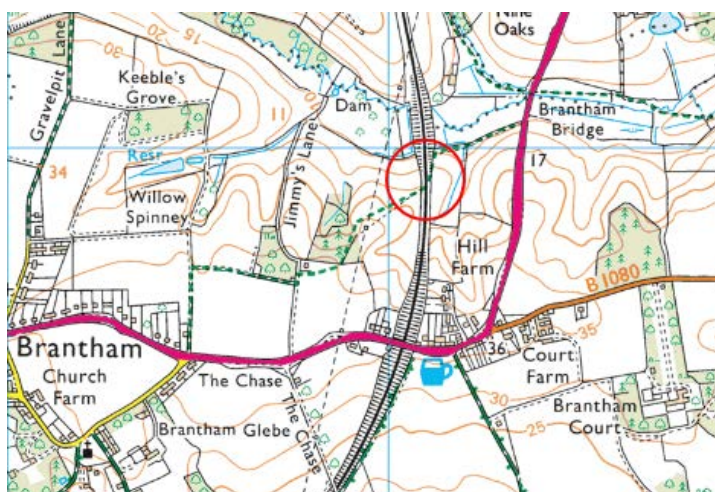
NR's Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction Strategy - Transport and Works Act Order

Since the forum's previous meeting, on the 8 February 2021 the county council met NR to discuss the programme for delivering the works on those PRow level crossing proposals that were included in the Order, which all fall within the West Area Rights of Way Team's geographic area of responsibility. As the highway authority, the county council's role is to ensure the works are completed to a satisfactory standard and certified as such. Joint SCC/NR site visits have been scheduled in order to scope the necessary works, but SCC has yet to be informed if all the necessary landowner access consents have been secured, and to date those site visits have not taken place.

At its last meeting the forum was advised that two of the PRow included in the TWAO were already the subject of temporary traffic regulation closures (TTROs) on safety grounds (FP 1 Higham and FP 6 Brantham). In the case of Higham, the temporary closure was required by NR to repair a set of embankment steps. At the time of writing these works have not been completed. The closure was introduced on 15 September 2018 and expires on 30 April 2021, after which time the path will have to be re-opened.

At Brantham, where the safety grounds cited were insufficient sight lines, the county council met Network Rail on 28 January to discuss the future of the crossing.

Footpath 6 Brantham (High Bridge)



At the meeting NR presented several options for mitigating/eliminating the safety risk, including installing Miniature Stop Lights (MSLs) or a bridge/underpass, and the scoping of a permanent diversion or extinguishment. NR argued that both the MSL and bridge/underpass options were too costly, and their preferred option was to permanently

divert or extinguish all or part of FP6. The county council had previously advised NR it is prepared to consider rail crossing diversion applications under Highways Act 1980 powers, where a suitable and convenient alternative route can be found for the PRow. However, at the meeting it became evident that there was no suitable diversion alignment that would provide an alternative crossing point over the operational railway.

The county council has requested NR provide a business case setting out all the options to address the level crossing safety risk and to provide more detail on any diversion or extinguishment proposal. This information is still awaited but, in the meantime, the temporary closure has been extended until 30 March 2022. The county council has fielded enquiries from members of the public and user groups, who are keen to see the crossing re-opened.

Andrew Woodin has been scoping potential mitigation options to enable the FP6 to be closed, with the area ROW & Access office and discussed local PRow with Clare Phillip's in March, and how local people accessed the countryside in the area around the crossing. It is understood FP6 has caused some problems locally because train drivers have to sound their horn for the crossing, and FP6 is not well used as its eastern end terminates on the A137, which means walking along the main road to access onward PRow. Local people do use unofficial access between Brantham and the A137. Improvements to the condition of existing PRow was also discussed as possible mitigation.

Members are asked to comment on a mitigation package, and how much involvement they might want in scoping the mitigation. Members are welcome to contribute any knowledge of the local area, and how PRow are used.

Stiles on Network Rail Land

Discussions on the installation and design of stiles have continued with Network Rail since members met in January, and whilst some improvements have been made to their design, there has been no progress on the principle of installing stiles in the first place, when the county council's stated policy is that any necessary barrier on PRow should be as accessible as possible.

The county council responded to the recent consultation by the Office of Rail and Road on guidance on the principles of level crossing safety, and the response is included as appendix B.

END – SK/AW/SCC April 2021

App A



Letter SLAF to NR
13.4.21 (NMGL).pdf

App B



ORR Consultation
Response.docx

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings
Meeting:	29th April 2021
Author/Contact:	Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Online via TEAMS

Appendix A


SLAF Suffolk Local Access Forum

By email
FAO: Ms Ellie Burrows
Network Rail

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: SLAF/13/04
Date: 13th April 2021

 Dear Ms Burrows

Re: Gypsy Lane Level Crossing Needham Market

At a recent Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting we again reviewed progress on implementing the necessary works as authorised by the Inspector following the Inquiry in 2019 into Network Rail's application to close the Gypsy Lane foot crossing with the associated closure and diversion of public rights of way to a new route using a culvert under the railway. The Planning Inspector's report was accepted by the Secretary of State in December 2019.

We were concerned to note that, despite the urgency, no progress has been made on the implementation of this scheme due to unresolved issues between Network Rail and the landowners. Given that the closure was requested as long ago as 2015 on safety grounds, we ask that a constructive dialogue should take place with all parties to ensure that the situation is resolved as soon as is practicable so that the works needed on the ground can get underway and the unsafe foot crossing closed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bang Idell', with a flourish at the end.

Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

cc : Steve Kerr, Suffolk County Council
Andrew Woodin, Suffolk County Council

Providing independent advice on access to the countryside in Suffolk

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings
Meeting:	29th April 2021
Author/Contact:	Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Online via TEAMS

Appendix B



Date: 19th February 2021

To: Office of Road & Rail

From: Suffolk County Council

Contact: Andrew Woodin Rights of Way and Access Manager

Andrew.woodin@suffolk.gov.uk 01473 264753

Subject: Consultation on New ORR guidance on Principles of Level Crossing Safety

This is the response from Suffolk County Council to the ORR consultation on the management of level crossings. The county council has considerable experience of working with Network Rail on level crossings on its 5,600km network of public rights of way (PRoW) across the county, from managing requests for temporary closures, to Highways Act 1980 public path orders to full scale Transport and Works Act Orders, including the Anglia Region Network Rail (Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction) Order 2020.

The county council's Rights of Way and Access Manager was part of the working group which published the Memorandum of Understanding between Network Rail, ADEPT, LGA & IPROW, to improve communications between Network Rail and the PRoW profession.

1. ORR Principles for managing level crossing safety

Comments On Principles For Managing Level Crossing Safety.

Page 4. The draft for consultation states the document will be supplemented with case studies, but doesn't ask for examples. The ORR should seek case studies from highway authorities of good practice and where level crossings have not met the needs of users, including on PRoW, or clash with the policies of the authority.

Page 5 para 1.1. The county council is encouraged by the reference to following a user-centred approach.

1.2. The introduction states the document does not place additional burdens on duty holders or prescribe how a level crossing should be designed, operated or maintained. The county council considers it reasonable to introduce new responsibilities on designers, planners and engineers where improvements to level crossings can be made.

Page 7 paras 13 to 16 and elsewhere. The county council welcomes the acknowledgement of the importance of parties working together in the process of level crossing risk assessment. This is consistent with the [Memorandum of Understanding between Network Rail, ADEPT, LGA & IPROW](#) published in 2019.

Page 9 para 22. The county council agrees it is essential that decisions and options for level crossing control measures are informed by a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. This should include where level crossing entry and exit points are being installed or renewed. In the case of stiles on a PRow, the county council contends these are no longer suitable for inclusion as furniture and only gates should be provided. The county council has had defect reports about the design of stiles and dog flaps being installed by Network Rail, including an injury resulting from poor design.

Page 11 para 29. The county council fully supports the use of new technology on level crossings, but has come up against resistance to warning lights, for example, on the grounds of cost and/or technical reasons. **Too often it seems technology is ruled out by Network Rail at an early stage, on grounds of cost or technical reasons. Moreover, mitigating risk at a level crossing can sometimes be as simple and cost effective as improving sight lines by the clearance of vegetation.**

Page 12 paras 33 and 34. The county council would welcome details on how CBA is used to assess the benefits of using PRow crossing level crossings, where the reason for a journey may be recreational as well as to access services.

Page 13 user principle 1. The county council agrees on the importance of understanding who uses level crossings and would emphasise the importance of (f) assessing users with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, e.g. age, disability, pregnancy, maternity, and race. The guidance should acknowledge that a disability can be hidden, and that a person who can navigate most terrains might still struggle to negotiate a stile.

Page 16 user principle 6 (a). The use of active warning systems in preference to relying on the user to determine whether or not a train is approaching the level crossing is supported, and **this principle should be applied at PRow level crossings.**

Page 17 user principle 7 (e). Hazards created by the level crossing surface should be extended to include the crossing in entry and exit points. Whilst these points do not directly impact on crossing the railway line themselves any impediment of the user, eg the need to negotiate stiles, will slow the overall crossing time.

Page 18 railway principle 1. The heading of this principle is **Ensure the entry and exit to a level crossing and any closure sequence does not create a risk of injury to users.** As noted above stiles being maintained and replaced by Network Rail do create a risk to users, and the county council has received defect reports to this effect. The policy

of most highway authorities in the country will be to remove barriers to access, including always seeking or requiring the replacement of stiles with a gap or gate. Whilst it is accepted gaps at level crossings is not appropriate, there is no reason the principle cannot be extended to this guidance. In respect of (a), stiles should not be considered an acceptable barrier to prevent access to the railway (“by provision of barriers or gates activated or locked by the approach of a train”).

Page 23 safe highway principles. The county council is disappointed the draft for consultation does not include entry and exit furniture for PRow. For example highway Principle 2: “Ensure that highway approach surfaces enable users to cross the level crossing safely”, should be extended to include approaches and entry and exit points.

Furthermore, overgrowing vegetation should be cut back regularly to ensure sight lines are kept clear.

2. ORR Consultation on Principles for managing level crossing safety guidance

Comments on ‘Principles for managing level crossing safety’ guidance

The Consultation on ‘Principles for managing level crossing safety’ guidance asks on page 11 under question 6. “Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities”, and acknowledges there are, including people with restricted mobility and disabilities. The section goes on to note footpath crossings are often only accessible via rural footpaths, which may incorporate features such as stiles or gates, and known inequalities involve being able to reach level crossings due to inappropriate approaches such as poorly maintained footpaths, stiles etc. The last paragraph notes level crossings can also be in some circumstances the only accessible route for people with restricted mobility to cross the railway in that area and that this should be taken into account in any proposal to close a level crossing.

The county council wishes to emphasise the difficulties for people with restricted mobility and disabilities in negotiating stiles at level crossings, and believes strongly gates should be the default option for any new, maintained or replaced PRow crossings, and that **exceptions should be made only with the agreement of the highway authority.**

On page 11, question 7 of the Consultation on ‘Principles for managing level crossing safety’ guidance asks “does the policy relate to any equality objectives that have been set by your organisation”. The county council’s Green Access Strategy has as objective 1.2.2 Make it easy to access the PRow network: When opportunities arise, remove unnecessary physical and psychological barriers that adversely affect people using the network. This includes removing stiles.

AW/Suffolk County Council
Feb 2021