

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 2-4 pm</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Anna McGowan</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>online via Zoom</b>

			<b>Paper Number</b>
1.	2:00	Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	2.05	Minutes of previous meeting	<b>LAF 21/19 - BH</b>
3.	2.10	Declaration of interest	
4.	2.10	Network Rail – Public Rights of Way and Level Crossings	<b>LAF 21/20 - SK</b>
	2.20	Network Rail Daniel Fisk & Steve Day	<b>Presentation</b>
5.	3.00	Suffolk Energy Schemes	<b>LAF 21/21 - AW</b>
6.	3.15	The England Coast Path	<b>LAF 21/22 - AW</b>
7.	3.25	SLAF Annual Report to Cabinet SLAF Annual Report 2020-2021	<b>LAF 21/23 – BH</b> <b>LAF 21/23 Appendix A</b>
8.	3.35	Highways England – Trunk Roads	<b>Verbal - DF</b>
9.	3.40	West Suffolk Council Green Infrastructure Strategy Workshop	<b>Verbal - DF</b>
10.	3.45	Public Question Time	
11.	3.50	Any Other Business	
12.	4.00	Dates & Venues of Future Meeting	

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LA 21/19</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>29 July 2021</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Anna McGowan</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>online via Zoom</b>

### 1. **Welcome, apologies and housekeeping**

Present: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair), David Barker (DB) (Vice Chair),

Roland Wilson (RW), John Wayman (JW), Clare Phillips (CP), Susan Mobbs (SM), Suzanne Bartlett (SB), Cllr James Mallinder (JM)

**SCC Officers Present:** Anna McGowan (Minutes), Andrew Woodin (AW), David Falk (DF), Steve Kerr (SK), Alex Maher (AJM).

**Speakers:** Vincent Pearce (VP)

**Apologies:** Gordon Merfield (GM), Monica Pipe (MP), Jane Hatton (JH), Anthony Wright (AWR), Margaret Hancock (MH), Derek Blake (DBL),

**Members of the Public:** Ken Hawkins (KH), Gordon Crosby (GC)

### 2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 were reviewed and agreed, with the following updates and outstanding actions.

- AW to invite Highways England to a future SLAF Meeting.
- Microphones for hybrid meetings – AM updated that currently there are no suitable microphones available for loan and external use. SCC meeting rooms are being adapted for hybrid meetings at various Council Office buildings.

### 3. **Declaration of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. **Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Council Planning Presentation**

Vincent Pearce, Principal Planning Officer, gave a powerpoint presentation with an overview of the process of planning applications, and how the Planning Team consults SCC departments: Highways, Travel Planners, and PROW.

VP was previously involved with Colchester Local Planning Authority and Essex Local Access Forum, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between the two bodies whereby the Planning Authority moved from a reactive to a proactive approach. ELAF thus could direct their influence on Local Plans and improve connectivity.

VP said that Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils embrace the growth agenda. The Planning Team is seeking SLAF inputs into Policy LP32 – Safe, Sustainable, and Active Transport.

VP gave a good overview citing various case studies as examples of planning applications and approvals: Thurston, Chilton Woods, Hadleigh East, and Snoasis/Valley Ridge, which illustrate piecemeal approaches.

In the question and answer section, DB noted that the SLAF role is strategic, and there has been positive movement in west and east Suffolk. on walking and cycling improvements.

RW said SLAF look to green corridors to encourage use of the access network, and better connectivity.

JM said there are concerns over the maintenance of footpaths and that planners need to be aware of connectivity and the 'walking transport'.

JM said that District Councils in Suffolk are working independently and asked if a minimum standard could be introduced to unify the county approach.

VP responded that all the development management teams will get together.

VP will speak to Phil Isbell to get an agreement on the minimum standards for connectivity across the county.

VP said there have been changes for planners in recent years, with the shifting focus on making settlements more sustainable, reducing the need to drive out, so SLAF's expectations were welcome as planners as focus on connectivity and greener networks.

BH thanked VP for attending the meeting for the presentation.

BH said SLAF looks at strategic development, adding that over the last few years the issues of SZC, Sunnica, the ECP, Network Rail and Public Rights of Way and level crossings have taking up a lot of SLAF time.

DF said his team gets to see all the planning consultations.

It was agreed that looking ahead it is anticipated SLAF will look into Local Plans.

DB also gave thanks to VP, and said it was difficult for SLAF to get involved with every planning application due to limited resources. DB added that SLAF provide strategic advice. SLAF supports the planners strategic views, with the expectation that insights into the improvements to PROW, and better greener connectivity are the key imperatives in the planning process. SLAF looks to SCC and the District Councils to protect the PROW issues in the planning process.

AW added that the Green Access Strategy guides planning policy in terms of better connectivity and working with Local Planning Authorities and that SLAF contribute to the Strategy.

**Action:** SLAF to set out their basic expectations of Local Planning Authorities.

SLAF to be consulted on strategic consultations - SCC will confirm who is responsible for this action point.

DF to send VP the Green Access Strategy

VP to ensure that SLAF is informed of Joint Local Plan, as it is too late to consult.

VP to share powerpoint presentation with AM who will distribute it to SLAF members.

## 5. **Energy Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in Suffolk**

AW stated that there are a lot of schemes in the county regarding NSIPs. Suffolk has schemes related to wind, solar and nuclear.

Sunnica – there are no further updates.

Sizewell C – this is currently in the middle of a series of Public Examination Hearings: traffic and transport, coastal geomorphology, biodiversity and ecology. Amenity and recreation has no specific hearing.

PROW are under traffic and management.

AW stated SCC are working closely with Transport Strategy. There may be more arranged for the end of August. It is not possible to say how long the Hearings will go on for. All Hearings have a tight deadline and are an intense process.

There is a need to make written representations to the panel, with the deadline for 6<sup>th</sup> August.

AW added that the National Infrastructure Planning Examination is not like a Public Inquiry. The former is more informal where a panel hears evidence and written representations, and all the documents can be found online.

The main areas of PROW concerns are as follows:

- The disruption of footpath access and the coast path along the beach.
- The relationship between the coast path and sea defence.
- The lack of an off-road route between BR19 and Eastbridge.

SCC is compiling a list of improvements under the Section 106 Agreement, which includes protecting the existing PROW and to improve local cycling facilities.

AW said that the Lead Officer, Annette Robinson (AR), on SZC is currently off work.

SM passed on her best wishes to AR. BH also expressed good wishes to AR on behalf of SLAF.

**Action:** SZC Working Group to consider their input into the submission to the examining panel.

BH to contact the Working Group by end of the week.

AW offered to help the Working Group to familiarise itself with the detail and send the relative link.

AW to pass get well wishes to Annette Robinson from SLAF.

### Scottish Power – EA1N, EA2, EA3 schemes, and Friston Sub Station

The DCO November 2019 for a cable route will affect 26 PROWs during the construction phase. The 3 substations will require the permanent stopping of a PROW section north of the village of Friston.

There has been a Public Examination. Hearings have taken place, and the final decision is due in 6 months.

JM noted that landowners at Friston are spraying and destructing farmlands and that there is a need to monitor what is happening on the ground affecting PROW in terms of obstructions.

**Action:** SCC to contact Friston Parish Council to remind them of the reporting tool.

## 6. **The England Coast Path**

The reports on all 5 stretches have been published on Natural England website, showing the latest progress on the ECP in Suffolk and Norfolk.

– All stretches are at the determination stage, with the Secretary of State.

The coast path will come into force as the SoS approves the stretches or individual sections within them, and establishment works have been completed.

AW said that the grant has been agreed with Natural England for a Project Officer to deliver the establishment works.

## 7. **Network Rail – Public Rights of Way and Level Crossings**

Gipsy Lane and Footpath 6 – SK said some progress has been made since the last SLAF Meeting.

NR has produced a works programme and is currently negotiating a compensation package with the landowners that will include access arrangements for the works delivery phases on their land. Network Rail is also seeking permission for a further ecological survey from the landowners.

SK said a Programme Board has been set up to capture specific work streams via an Action Tracker. SCC have asked for appropriate hold points on the timeline to allow the Highways Authority to inspect works. The Programme also includes a Communications Strategy to advise the community and local residents of developments, and when the level crossing will be permanently stopped.

TWAO – General Countywide – There are 9 PROW crossing included in the TWAO. Two have been extinguished on the date of the TWAO. One crossing is of a private status. The crossing at Cowpasture Lane, Mellis, has been downgraded to a Bridleway with miniature warning lights. Both the footpaths at Higham (F/P1), and Brantham (F/P6) have TTROs.

The PROW Team has been out to check works are in order on 5 crossings in the West Area, where alternative routes are needed.

F/P1 – Higham – the temporary closure has been extended as the steps have not been repaired and the crossing does not meet the safety standards for re-opening.

A permanent diversion is sought here which SCC will agree to if Network Rail fund the hardening of the road verge between Higham Road and Coal Pit Lane, as proposed by Network Rail in the countywide TWAO

F/P6 – Brantham - SK said that Network Rail met with SCC recently to discuss the level crossing safety risk and will meet with Brantham Parish Council over the next few weeks. SLAF will be consulted on the options proposals and mitigation packages.

In the event that the diversions are considered to be appropriate solutions, there will be a need to make an Orders regarding the cases of Higham and Brantham. There is currently a lack of order making capacity in the Definitive Map Team. A Rights of Way Consultant has been approached, who it is hoped will be in a position to take on SCC work at the end of August. SLAF will be contacted for their views on the Orders. Network Rail will re-imburse all the costs. SCC will enter an Indemnity Agreement with the railway operator to cover this.

Stiles – The stiles that Network Rail are installing are unsuitable in their design. SK and AW attended a Network Rail webinar on level crossings and their upgrading for better connectivity. SCC has raised the problem of stiles and Network Rail's continuing their installations, on the principals of level crossing safety during the consultation. AW noted his disappointment the new ORR guidance on level crossing management, where SCC had responded to the consultation, was silent on the matter of stiles.

## 8. **Trunk Roads – Copdock**

DF attended the fourth Community and Environment Stakeholder Reference Group meeting for the proposed A14 J55 Copdock Interchange improvement scheme on 28<sup>th</sup> July. Highways England modelling of the interchange suggests there will be changes in traffic flows in the post Brexit era.

For example, roll-on/roll-off traffic at the Port of Felixstowe will shift towards more lift-on/lift-off.

Access improvements are being looked at.

The British Horse Society have attended the key meetings.

The public consultation is starting in October, with a series of mobile exhibitions, and online webinars. The findings will be presented to the Department of Transport by Autumn next year.

SLAF can influence the public consultation in respect of the PROW.

**Action:** DF to ask Highways England to display the PROW more clearly and accurately in all their presentations.

## 9. **Regional Local Access Forum**

BH said that most of the regional Local Access Forums have seen an increase in the use of PROWs. Some Local Authorities are putting in more money into PROW as a result of the problems that this increase brings – car parking, obstructions by landowners, paths being churned up and sometimes moved.

It was noted that the new Mayor in Cambridge is throwing out all the ideas of their predecessor – for example Park and Ride.

The next RLAF meeting will be in January 2022.

## 10. **Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report 2020-21**

DF said this report has already been drafted and will be edited following this meeting, to be submitted by October.

SLAF agreed that the key areas to be covered in the report are the NSIPs in Suffolk, Trunk Roads and discussions with Highways England, the Planning Process, and Network Rail and the Severance of Public Right of Way and Level Crossings. The report will highlight the need for continuing investment, and increased investment in PROW network, supported by the recent research which shows that people are going out for walks more and walking further.

AW said that there were lots of reports regarding the state of the paths this summer. The revenue budget goes only so far for the maintenance of the footpaths and that the standard 2 cuts per year is not enough during the vigorous growing season.

DF noted the generous contribution of £367k for footpaths through the Discovering Suffolk project.

JW expressed concerns that the government has not clarified the post Brexit ELS and stewardship schemes, and that there have not been any recent discussions on this issue at SLAF.

**Action:** DF to include concerns about ELS and stewardship schemes in the Annual Report

BH to present this report to Cabinet.

#### 11. **SLAF Membership**

DF said that after the May 2021 local elections, Jane Storey has now stepped down from SLAF representing the County Council

Some 3-year terms were coming up for members.

DB, JW, SB, SM, and volunteered to renew their membership at the meeting.

DBL, MP and AWR are yet to advise of their renewals.

The gaps in members interests were discussed.

**Action:** SCC to consider whether recruitment is necessary.

#### 12. **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

#### 13. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

#### 14. **Date of Next Meeting**

28<sup>th</sup> October 2021, venue to be arranged, which will include a training session in the morning.

END

AM/SCC August 2021



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 21/20</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Network Rail – Public Rights of Way Level Crossings</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Online via Zoom</b>

### 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. This report is deliberately brief, as Network Rail representatives will be attending the Forum meeting and providing members with presentations/updates on all the level crossing items contained in the report.

### Needham Market Gipsy Lane and FP6 Needham Market



Further to the update provided in July, Network Rail (NR) have since undertaken ground stability and ecological surveys. In respect of the latter, the county council was asked by NR to employ its powers of entry under s289 of the Highways Act 1980, as it had not been possible to secure the landowner's voluntary agreement to undertake this at this stage of the project.

In addition, whilst there was a significant delay in responding to the landowners' agents, NR have now recently written to Savills with a revised compensation offer. It

is hoped these commercially sensitive negotiations will result in agreement between the parties.

Officers also continue to attend the fortnightly Programme Board meetings and look forward to receiving the revised works programme, which will include appropriate hold points to allow the highway authority to inspect the works as they progress.

### **General/Countywide**

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

At the last catch-up meeting with NR held on 13 September, it was confirmed that funding authority had been granted to appoint a contractor to deliver the works for those level crossing proposals granted by the Secretary of State for Transport (SoSfT), for both the Cambridge and Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction Orders. The chosen contractor will be appointed in October 2021. Once the contract has been awarded, NR will introduce SCC to the successful contractor and amend the works programme to reflect this.

NR are also to re-serve the requisite notices on affected landowners, to allow the contractor to undertake the necessary site visits.

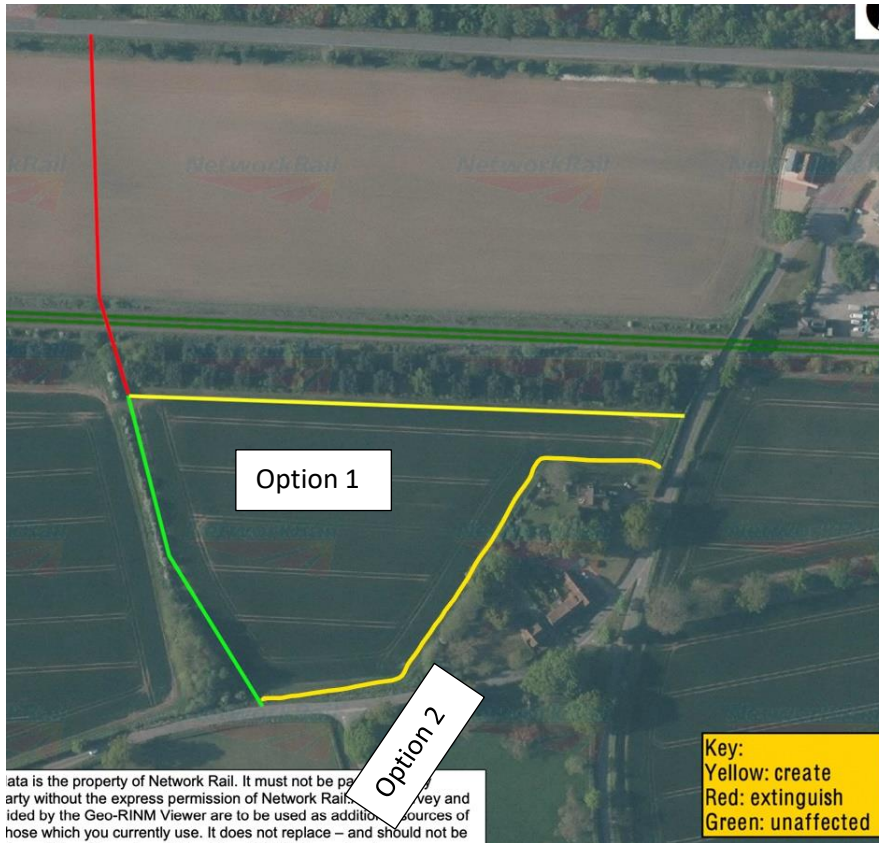
As advised at its July meeting, SCC has now appointed a Rights of Way consultant to process both the Higham and Brantham rail crossing orders.

#### **Footpath 1 Higham (High Bridge)**

SCC has recently received the draft Rail Crossing Diversion application for FP1 Higham.

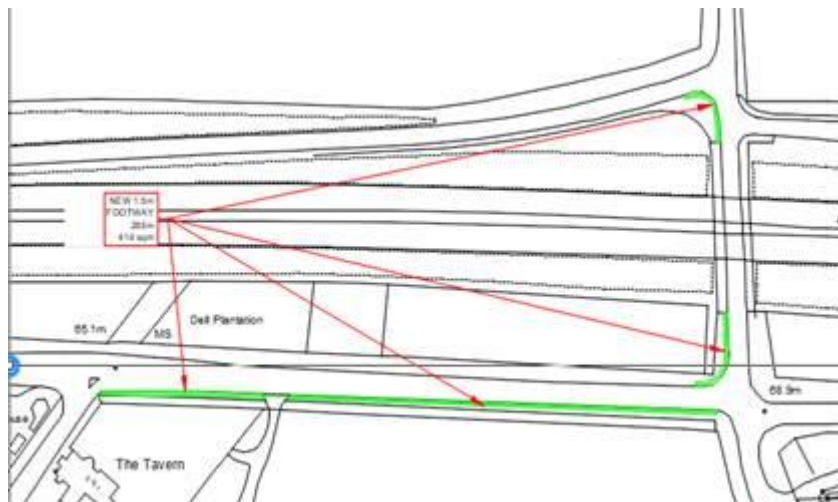
Whilst the application is not entirely complete, it has been agreed with NR that this will allow the council's consultant to start initial work on this case.

The first step will be for the consultant to approach affected landowners and reach agreement on the best diversion alignment. A further option includes adapting Option 2 to provide a further off-road link, to the point at which Option 1 re-joins Coalpit Lane.

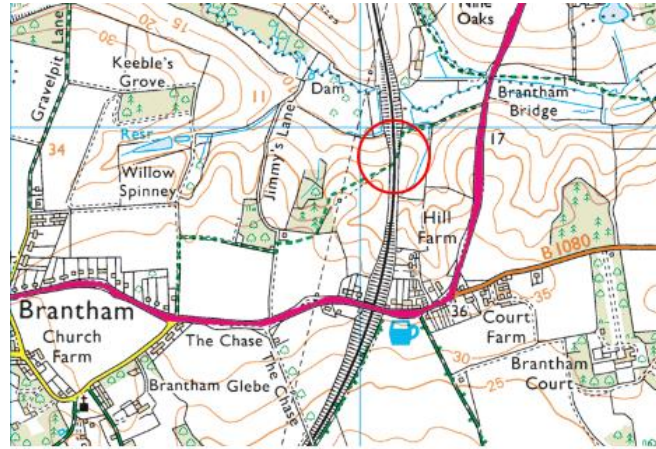


As advised at the Forum's last meeting, NR have also agreed to fund improvements to the A14 highway verge, although the detailed designs have yet to be drawn up.

Highway verge improvements



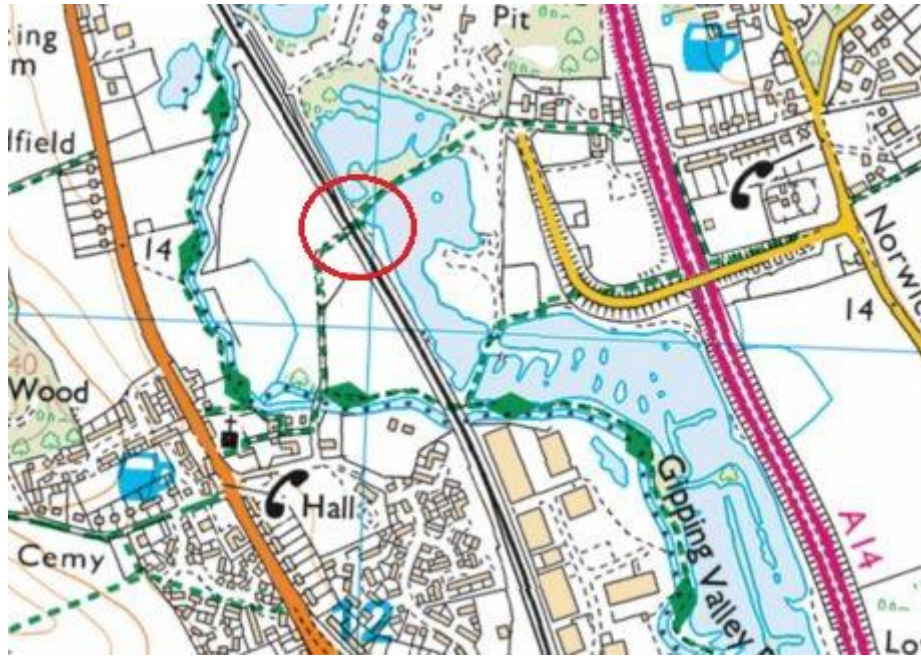
## Footpath 6 Brantham (High Bridge)



On 21 September SCC and NR held an online meeting with the Chairman of Brantham Parish Council to discuss the various options available to address the public safety risk affecting the level crossing. The Chairman considered the level crossing had a low level of usage and did not oppose a proposal to divert or partially extinguish the footpath but noted Brantham Parish Council would be formally consulted on any proposals and this would need to be discussed at a future parish council meeting.

## Barham FP12 (Broomfields)

Barham FP 12 has been closed since an emergency temporary closure was introduced on 15 January 2021 at the request of NR, and since extended by SCC and the Secretary of State. NR have recently advised that the tree clearance works that were impacting on the railway line visibility are close to completion, after which time the path will be re-opened.



END – SK/AW/SCC Oct 2021

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 21/21</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Suffolk Energy Schemes</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Online via Zoom</b>

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

**1. Sunnica**

There is nothing to report on Sunnica since the last meeting. For reference Sunnica's proposal as the statutory consultation can be found [here](#).

**2. Sizewell C**

The period since SLAF last met has one of intense activity, in meeting the National Infrastructure Planning examination panel deadlines. The last closed on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and the last official day of the examination was 14<sup>th</sup> October.

The ROW & Access Manager made the case to protect and improve green access both direct through Issue Specific Hearing 12, deadline responses, direct discussions with SZC Co, discussions with lawyers for either side and meetings by:

- Aligning FP21 (the coast path) on top of the hard coastal defence feature to give the best all round views, rather than a lower route on the seaward side,
- Getting the best deal for ROW & Access in the discussions on the Statement of Common Ground and Deed of Obligation,
- Seeking the upgrading of Sandlings walk at Kenton Hills/Goose Hill to a PRoW,
- Delivering an off road route to link the northern terminus of BR19 with Eastbridge, adjacent to Eastbridge Rd. It has been conceded this link will be delivered under the Deed of Obligation,
- Ensuring as far as possible the Development Consent Order Schedules and Access & Rights of Way Plans are so drafted to enable the county council to modify the definitive map and statement and accurately record status, alignment and width of new PRoW. The outcome at the time of writing is it will be the Public Rights of Way Implementation Plans which give this level of detail, and this will be referenced in the ROW & Access Strategy,

- Ensuring all PRow crossings on both existing and new SZC Co rail links are dealt with properly (all of the PRow FP crossings on the existing line will have stiles replaced with gates, and have mini stop lights),
- Addressing PRow affected by the A12 two village bypass, where a local business owner in Farnham is very unhappy with a proposed PRow grade crossing used by his customers. A proposal requiring further design work has been agreed by SZC Co, to provide users of the FP29 Benhall grade crossing with an alternative grade separated crossing to the south, and a possible crossing with a pedestrian refuge on the proposed A12 roundabout to the north,
- Responding to examiners questions at ISH12, which covered community matters, including ROW & Access under Recreation and Amenity matters.

So far, the upgrading of the Sandings Walk from BR19 to the coast to a PRow has been agreed, with a status of bridleway (a favourable upgrade in status), and the allocation of £2.5m for ROW & Access improvements (to be overseen by a Rights of Way Working Group, comprising staff from SZC Co, the county council and East Suffolk Council).

All the documentation and exam timetable can be found on the National Infrastructure Planning website [here](#), and the Access and ROW Plans, including PRow numbers referenced above, can be found [here](#).

### 3. EA3

Suffolk County Council have recently been requested to review East Anglia THREE Limited (EA3L) Interim Documents. This covers the onshore cable route which will use the existing ducts from EA1 and the same alignment for the haul road, aiming to have limited impact. Scottish Power have produced more detailed documents for Public Rights of Way with a Code of Construction Practise. This covers details for construction details, interactions (closures and diversions of routes) and control measures. This covers not only public rights of way but also references open access and common land and cycle routes.

Meetings are due to commence with Scottish Power in mid October to discuss further detail to form the final DCO. Currently details provided are thorough and the importance of limited impact on the network has been considered. Details of enhancements to the network have not been presented or discussed.

Scottish Power's dedicated website is [here](#).

### 4. Review of National Policy Statements

There is a review of the National Policy Statements (NPS) which underpin the consideration of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) applications. SCC were consulted on this review and the PRow team made the following comments relevant to solar farms:

- Under 'Landscape and Visual', the review referred to visual impacts relevant to height but the point was made that impact should also be based on sprawl (xxx hectares of land covered in solar panels can have as significant a visual impact as one tall chimney stack).
- Under 'Landscape Impact' the review referred to a number of effects a project can have on the landscape but omitted the impact on countryside access.
- Under 'Land Use' the review referred to Green Infrastructure but could also have made reference to Public Rights of Way as a key means of accessing the landscape.
- Under 'Site Layout, Design and Appearance' the review referred to 'local footpath networks' but would have been better worded 'public rights of way networks' as many sites are crossed by bridleways, restricted byways and byways, not just by footpaths.
- The review also stated that a Public Right of Way Management Plan would be 'anticipated' but stronger and more effective wording would be to state that such a plan would be 'expected'.

END

AW/SCC October 2021



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 21/22</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>The England Coast Path</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Online via Zoom</b>

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 – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Harwich to Shotley Gate – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020

Aldeburgh to Hopton on Sea – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Bawdsey to Aldeburgh – 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

<b>Stretch name</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<a href="#">Harwich to Shotley Gate</a>	Stage 4: Determine
<a href="#">Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry</a>	Stage 4 and 5: Partially approved (not yet available for public use – work to establish the route in Suffolk will be undertaken by SCC once a project officer has been recruited)
<a href="#">Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey</a>	Stage 4: Determine
<a href="#">Bawdsey to Aldeburgh</a>	Stage 4: Determine
<a href="#">Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea</a>	Stage 4: Determine
<a href="#">Hopton-on-Sea to Sea Palling</a>	Open to the public

The remaining stages to establish Coastal Access in Suffolk are as follows:

#### **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** – Sally Fishwick. Last updated 04.10.21

- Stage 4 and 5 (Determine and Open)
- 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 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020
- Natural England received 7 objections, to 5 of the 6 individual reports.
- Natural England have submitted their comments on the objections and representations received.
- The Appointed Person visited the stretch in June and will advise the Secretary of State on the Objections.
- Coastal Access Reports 1 and 4 have been approved by the Secretary of State. Work to establish the route can now take place on these lengths.

**Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry** – Darren Braine. Last updated 11.10.21

- Stage 5 (Open) – but not yet available for use
- All 5 reports are approved by the secretary of state and are available for Suffolk County Council to apply for the establishment grants.

**Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey** – Araminta Adama & Sally Fishwick. Last updated 04.10.21

- 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.
- Natural England are currently writing their comments on the objections and representations received.

**Bawdsey to Aldeburgh** –Jonathan Clarke & Darren Braine. Last updated 11.10.21

- The report was published on 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2021 and closed for public comment at midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- The Planning Inspector ruled the objections were admissible.

- Natural England will now undertake administrative processes around the objections and representations received and pass them on towards the end of 2021 to the Planning Inspectorate and Defra (respectively) for their review and consideration.
- No schedule is yet set for the Planning Inspectors visits. (likely to be first half of 2022).

**Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea – Sally Fishwick. Last updated 04.10.21**

- Stage 4 (Determine)
- Natural England published proposals on 29th January 2020. The 8 week period for public comment, closed on 25<sup>th</sup> 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.

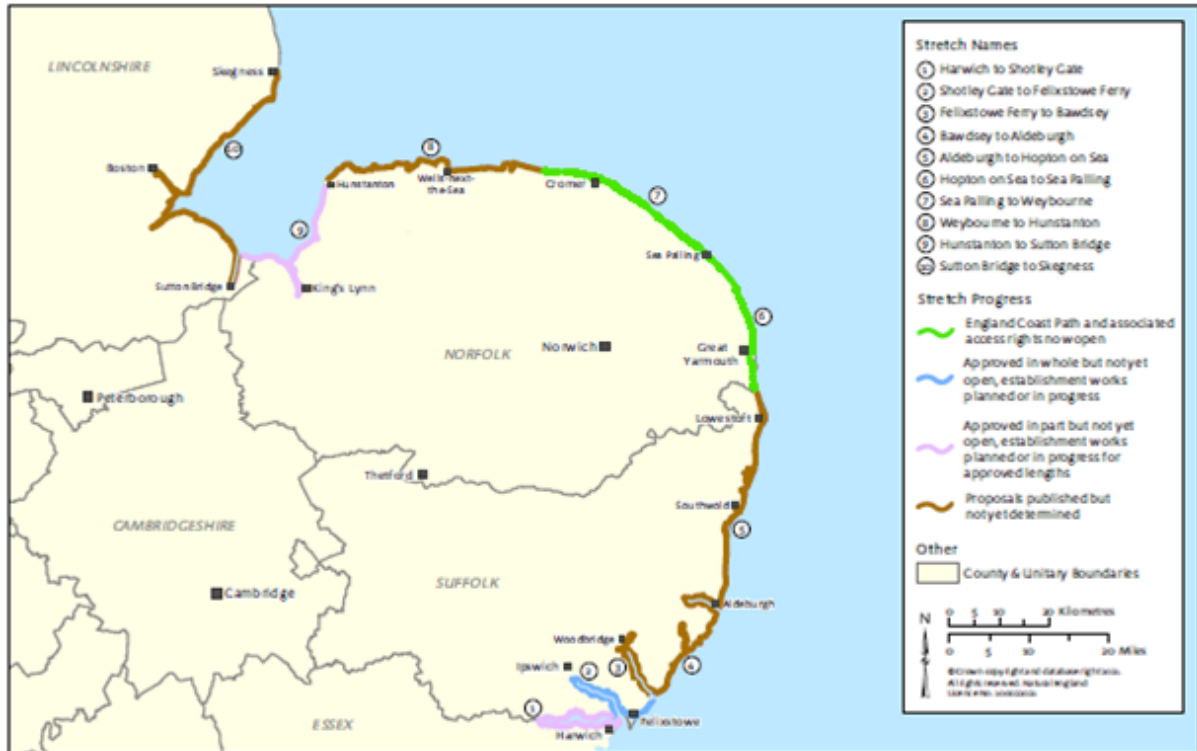
Natural England is currently writing their comments on the objections and representations received.

The county council has approved the recruitment of an England Coast Path project officer, which will be funded by Natural England. The recruitment process has started, and job interviews will be timed for November, by which time the Area Rights of Way Manager is expected to have returned to work.

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



END

AW/SCC October 2021

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 21/23</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>SLAF Annual Report to Cabinet</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Online via Zoom</b>

The SLAF Annual Report 2020-2021 was presented to Cabinet on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> October by SLAF Chair Barry Hall.

BH was welcomed and introduced by Cllr Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding.

BH thanked Cabinet and attending councillors for welcoming him to the meeting.

BH outlined the contents of the annual report highlighting:

- Energy schemes and the forum's involvement in consultations for Sizewell C including their concerns over Leiston-Cum-Sizewell Bridleway 19, the future alignment of the coast path, and the lasting legacy of 10-12 years of disruption to the rights of way (PROW) and access network.
- The forum's response to the Sunnica Solar Farm consultation and their review of further solar farm developments in the Bramford area with concern over the impact on the visual amenity of the rights of way network.
- Network Rail and delivery of Transport and Works Act Orders, especially with regard to changes at Gipsy Lane in Needham Market, and more recent actions installing stiles rather than installing kissing gates which would enhance access for those with limited mobility and other issues.
- The forum were pleased to see Highways England (National Highways) getting involved with improving access where public rights of way were crossed by the A14, such as at Trimley and Copdock.
- The forum were looking at large developments including the council's own garden village proposals, they had met district planning officers, and they planned to develop a bullet point list of considerations for PROW and planning.
- The forum were pleased to see the England Coast Path reports all published and provided important access along estuaries, were pleased to see that Natural England would pay for all works and for a development officer, stated there was a need to lobby Natural England for longer term maintenance grants for works, and then stated the need to look at marketing the new route in the east of England region.

- Were pleased to see the development of the Discovering Suffolk project and looked forward to seeing the 2022 Suffolk Walking Festival delivered.
- Understood that due to COVID-19 many more people were using the PROW network which was good for people's physical health and mental wellbeing and hoped SCC recognised that it was more economical to maintain the PROW network than provide health care. BH also highlighted that increased access had created issues with maintenance and parking.
- Finally, BH thanked the right of way and access team and Suffolk County Council for their on-going support.

Cllr Hicks thanked BH and the forum for all they do.

Cllr West thanked BH for all they've done and officers for assisting the forum.

Cllr Smith thanked BH and the forum especially for their role with Sizewell C.

Cllr Rout thanked BH and the forum and agreed that spending on the natural environment could offset other costs and strain in other areas. Cllr Rout welcomed the forum's work with National Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) especially Sizewell C, solar farms and the prominence given in the report to the impact of these on the visual amenity. Cllr Rout asked if the forum had been properly consulted on National Grid proposals and how online consultations had been received.

BH explained the forum used to have presentations, but things had been more difficult with online meetings and the forum relied more on officers relaying information to them.

Cllr Vigo di Gallidoro thanked BH and said that disabled access was a major issue and asked what progress the forum could make on this issue.

BH referred to the forum's work with Network Rail emphasising that there was no need for stiles to be installed and that kissing gates were a much better option. BH added that elsewhere, if stiles were no longer needed, then they should be removed. BH also highlighted that countryside access had to be made as access friendly as possible.

Cllr Martin asked about the problems of parking and stated how it was better for people to walk or use public transport to get to a walk. He asked if the forum had spoken with passenger transport about this issue.

BH referred to work that had been done with East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership.

Cllr Finch thanked BH for all he and the forum do. He asked if there was more the council could do regarding Network Rail and Needham Market.

BH advised that the forum had written to Network Rail to do more.

AW then advised that Network Rail had engineering and landowner issues at the site in Needham Market. He added this was a Network Rail project but that they were

covering SCC staff costs and had retained an open crossing ensuring the route could still be used. AW hoped to see progress made this year.

Cllr Lockington also asked about accessibility and how disabled people need more accessible paths, and to look across Suffolk for opportunities.

BH advised that the forum always looked at accessibility and gave Mildenhall as an example where an accessible trail had been created. He added that finance was an issue.

Cllr Newman commented on the East Suffolk Lines and mentioned there were 6 promoted walks between Felixstowe and Ipswich.

Cllr West concluded by stating that the motion before Cabinet was to accept the SLAF Annual Report 2020-2021.

Cabinet accepted the report.

END

DF – October 2021



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 21/23 Appendix A</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>SLAF Annual Report 2021-2022</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Online via Zoom</b>

### Report Author Checklist

**Before submitting this report to Democratic Services:**

**1. Please confirm you have:**

	<b>Please confirm 'yes' below</b>
Prepared the report in accordance with the <a href="#">Cabinet Report Writing Guidelines</a>	Yes
Included the Equality Impact Assessment (or information on why one is not required) in the report as instructed in the Report Writing Guidelines	Yes

**2. Please confirm that the FINAL version of the report has been cleared by:**

	<b>Date cleared:</b>
The Assistant Director	21/09/2021
The Director	31/08/2021
The Cabinet Member	22/09/2021
The Head of Legal Services	22/09/2021
The Head of Communications	22/09/2021
The Chief Financial Officer	08/09/2021

**Please note: Failure to comply with relevant guidance and to complete the checklist correctly may result in your report being returned to you as the report author, for further work and may jeopardise its timely consideration by the Cabinet.**

Updated May 2021

## Cabinet

Report Title:	Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report 2020/21
Meeting Date:	12 October 2021
Lead Councillor(s):	Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding
Local Councillor(s):	All Councillors
Director:	Mark Ash, Executive Director of Growth, Highways and Infrastructure
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	Steve Palfrey, Assistant Director, Waste and Environment
Author:	David Falk, Green Access Manager, 07843 467 964, david.falk@suffolk.gov.uk

### **Brief summary of report**

- Local Access Forums are independent bodies established by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The forum's role is to advise the Council on matters relating to rights of way and countryside access. They are also statutory consultees to other organisations including Network Rail, Highways England and Natural England.

Members represent a range of interests, and all are volunteers. Each forum reports to their relevant appointing authority, which for the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) is Suffolk County Council (SCC) and under the Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2007 (part 13), they are required to submit an Annual Report to that authority.

This is the eighteenth SLAF Annual Report presented to Suffolk County Council, and it provides a summary of their activities between August 2020 and July 2021.

### **What is Cabinet being asked to decide?**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cabinet being is asked to accept the Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report 2020/21 and address the report's recommendations and state the actions that the Council is taking to address those recommendations.</li> </ol> |
|---|

### **Reason for recommendation**

- Under the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007, local access forums are required to submit an annual report on rights of way and access matters to their appointing authority. It is a requirement for that authority to publish the report and guidance states that: "We would expect the authority to respond positively to the forum's annual report and to say what actions they have taken on the advice and recommendations of the forum."

### **What are the key issues to consider?**

4. The key issues raised by the Suffolk Local Access Forum 2020/21 report are as follows:

- a) **Sizewell C:**

The forum remains concerned over the impact the development of Sizewell C will have on the green access network and has pressed Sizewell C to ensure green access is effectively managed during construction and that there is a lasting legacy of improved green access once construction has been completed.

**Response:** The Council is thankful to the forum for its on-going support throughout the consultation process and, if consent for Sizewell C is granted, remains committed to protecting green access during the construction of Sizewell C and pressing for a strong green access legacy after construction.

- b) **Green Energy Schemes:**

The forum is concerned over plans for Sunnica Solar Farm and Scottish Power Friston Sub Station and has emphasised to both the importance of the green access network within and around the sites to the communities living, working and visiting there.

**Response:** The Council welcomes the involvement of the forum in putting pressure on both schemes to acknowledge the importance of the green access network and will work with both projects to mitigate their impact on access and enjoyment of the countryside, should consent for them be granted.

- c) **Severance of the Rights of Way network:**

The forum has pressed Network Rail to address rights of way severance and is concerned over the lack of progress implementing a Transport and Works Act Order and delivering works to improve access in Needham Market. The forum is also keen to see on-going dialogue with National Highways produce positive outcomes for rights of way severed by the county's trunk roads.

**Response:** The Council thanks the forum for their strong support in meetings with Network Rail and National Highways and will continue to work with both organisations to secure positive outcomes for the green access network.

### **How will this impact on the Council's ambitions for carbon reduction?**

5. The Suffolk Local Access Forum's role, activities and recommendations are based on encouraging and enabling a greater use of the green access network and improving that network to benefit sustainable travel choices and healthier lifestyles. This is very relevant to reducing carbon emissions and Suffolk achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

### **What are the resource and risk implications?**

6. The Suffolk Local Access Forum continues to recognise and support the Council in these times acknowledging there are, and will be, budget pressures in all areas of the Council's work.
7. The forum welcomes the Council's funding of large bridge structures on the rights of way network. The forum also welcomes the significant funding from the Suffolk

2020 Fund for the Discovering Suffolk Project, which will promote outdoor activity through a walking app for Suffolk and the use of QR codes.

8. The forum believes that since the COVID-19 pandemic there is an even greater relevance of the green access network to address health issues, ensure sustainable communities, and support the county's tourism economy.
9. The forum understands that visits to the countryside have increased significantly over the past year and the growing demand for countryside access has put significant additional pressures on managing of the county's access network.
10. The forum asks the Council to continue its positive support of green access in response to these changing habits by ensuring budgets allow for effective management and promotion of the public rights of way network.
11. The Executive Director for Growth Highways and Infrastructure will consider and discuss with the Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding the appropriate level of Suffolk County Council funding for the public rights of way and green access network when looking at the priorities for Council revenue and capital budgets, recognising the contribution to healthy and sustainable communities and the benefits to the rural economy that the network provides.
12. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for the SLAF Annual Report 2020-2021, as advised by the Lead for Equalities and Inclusion.

**What are the timescales associated with this decision?**

13. Not applicable

**Alternative options**

14. Cabinet could change the responses given by Suffolk County Council to the recommendations from the Suffolk Local Access Forum or could suggest additional issues that it would like the forum to explore over the coming year.

**Who will be affected by this decision?**

15. Officers acting on these recommendations and potentially users of public rights of way, communities and landowners within Suffolk.

**Main body of report**

**The Work of SLAF**

16. The forum meets quarterly but over the period of this report in-person meetings were not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, meetings were held using Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Those meetings took place on:
  - 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – Microsoft Teams.
  - 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – Zoom.
  - 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Microsoft Teams.
  - 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 – Zoom.
17. Meetings are open the public and members of the public attended each of the above meetings.
18. A full list of members is given in Appendix A.

### **Administering SLAF**

19. There are 13 volunteer members on the forum representing interests in walking, cycling, horse riding, accessibility, conservation, outdoor sport, land management and tourism. Members are recruited following SCC's recruitment process.
20. In addition, there are 2 members of the forum representing the County Council and District Councils, appointed to the forum by SCC Full Council and by the Suffolk Chief Officers Leadership Team, respectively.
21. The forum's independence is reflected in having their own logo, letter heading, email address and page on the Suffolk County Council website at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/suffolk-local-access-forum/>.
22. SCC's Rights of Way and Access team administers the forum, providing secretariat services, booking meeting rooms, providing refreshments, reimbursing travel expenses, arranging site visits and recruiting new members.
23. Due to COVID-19 restrictions preventing site visits or face to face meetings, there was no cost administering the forum in 2020-21.
24. The forum thanks the Rights of Way and Access team for their on-going support, advice and assistance which is vital to the forum performing their duties.

### **SLAF Activities in 2019/20**

#### **Sizewell C**

25. Since the start of consultations on Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station, the forum has had regular presentations from EDF and has welcomed the opportunity for dialogue.
26. The forum has responded to the Second, Third and Fourth consultations and in September 2020 made representations to the Planning Inspectorate in response to the Development Consent Order for the proposed Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station.
27. In August 2021, the forum wrote to the Sizewell Planning Inspectorate to express concern that no hearings had been scheduled to specifically discuss access issues.
28. The forum is concerned over the impact to the local public rights of way network with 26 PROW affected during construction. The forum is concerned that although some of their comments have been taken into account, there are still outstanding issues they feel that need to be addressed by EDF.
29. In December 2020 the forum wrote to the Sizewell C Consultation to support the inclusion of a bridleway link between Aldhurst Farm and Kenton Hills within the Development Consent Order rather than in post-construction funding, the upgrade of a bridleway as part of the two village bypass, and the removal of the Sizewell B Outage Car Park from Pillbox Field alleviating conflicts with public rights of way.

30. However, the forum remains concerned over proposals for the Permanent Beach Landing Facility, Temporary Beach Landing Facility, changes to the sea defences, and the impact of each on the public rights of way network.
31. The forum accepts the loss of Leiston-Cum-Sizewell Bridleway 19 during the construction period but seeks assurance from EDF that an alternative off-road route is extended to Eastbridge. In addition, the forum seeks assurance that there will be a safe pedestrian link between the B1122 and Sandy Lane. Furthermore, the forum seeks assurance that the route for the England Coast Path is secured to the top of new hard sea defences to safeguard the route against future coastal erosion.
32. The forum accepts new road schemes to mitigate traffic impact for construction traffic but seeks assurances that all rights of way crossings of these roads are subject to a risk assessment audit.
33. Furthermore, the forum understands the significant economic importance of the coastal region to Suffolk and seeks assurances that post construction there is a significant legacy to public access in the wider area with improved links and better off-road routes for walking, cycling and horse riding.

#### **Sunnica Solar Farm**

34. In December 2020, the forum objected to the Sunnica Solar Farm consultation. The forum's objection centred on an unacceptable adverse impact on public rights of way and a lack of sufficient mitigation.
35. The forum wrote to Matthew Hancock MP with their concerns. They also shared their response with Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum who aligned with SLAF.
36. The forum recognises the need for renewable energy, but their concern relates to the loss of good agricultural land, changing a landscape of open countryside with one of solar panels, and the significant adverse impact on views and enjoyment of the countryside.
37. The forum finds proposals for permissive paths to be unacceptable and insists that any development creates public rights of way that accommodate walking, cycling and equestrian use.
38. SLAF insists that any closures of rights of way are minimised and only when essential on safety grounds with sensible alternatives established and the needs of users fully considered.

#### **Scottish Power Friston Sub Station**

39. The forum has been kept updated by SCC officers on proposals for East Anglia 1, East Anglia 2 and Friston Substation, noting the impact the development will have on 26 public rights of way, difficulty over bridleways proposals, and stopping up of rights of way north of Friston. The forum is concerned over the methodology used and conclusions of the Environmental Impact Assessment as it does not address the impact on amenity and quality of user experience on the access network.

### **Environmental Stewardship Scheme**

40. The forum is concerned over the lack of clarity for the post-Brexit Environmental Stewardship scheme and how it will benefit countryside access. The forum sees this as a key area for them to focus on in 2021-22.

### **Network Rail**

41. The forum is concerned at the efficiency with which a Transport and Works Act Order is being implemented, despite its Public Inquiry concluding in May 2018.
42. In addition, the forum is concerned over the lack of progress by Network Rail on closing Gipsy Lane (Needham Market Footpath 6) and bringing into operation a footpath diversion to a new underpass of the rail line.
43. The closure of Gipsy Lane was initially requested in 2015 with works authorised following a Public Inquiry in 2019. In April 2021, the forum wrote to Network Rail Anglia Route Director to state that despite urgency, there had been no progress made on implementing the scheme and the forum insists that a constructive dialogue takes place to resolve issues holding up progress.
44. The forum is pleased that subsequent to writing, Network Rail have produced a work plan, set up a Programme Board and developed a communications strategy for works.
45. The forum is also concerned over Network Rail's Design Standard for replacing existing wooden stiles at rail crossings with metal stiles. The forum wrote to Network Rail to state that the new stiles are difficult to use and expressed the need for stiles to be replaced with gates to ensure the countryside is as accessible as possible for people with limited mobility.

### **Trunk Roads**

46. The forum is a member of the Community and Environmental Stakeholder Reference Group advising Highways England on proposals to develop the Copdock A12/A14 junction. The forum is keen that any development brings improved access on public rights of way between Washbrook, Copdock and Belstead.
47. The forum supports SCC's Rights of Way and Access team in their discussions with Highways England over the severance of the network by Trunk Roads and identifying diversions of rights of way to safe crossings. The forum has requested a presentation from Highways England to understand more about this area of work.
48. The forum is especially keen to see discussions lead to improvements to the public rights of way network at Sproughton and at Trimley St Mary, and for any opportunities to improve the A14/A137 junction at Wherstead to provide improved access between Wherstead and Bourne Hill.

### **The Planning Process**

49. Although the forum is not a statutory consultee to Local Planning Authorities on planning applications, they are keen to learn of larger developments where there could be significant gains for the green access network.

50. SLAF's Planning and Development Working Group met on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 to review consultations for Garden Village Sites at Land North of Lowestoft (Corton), South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, and Land West of Mildenhall.
51. In July 2021, the forum received a presentation from the Principal Planning Officer at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council on the planning process and key developments within the district.
52. The forum advised the officer that they expect District planners to protect the public rights of way network in the planning process, and that the forum intended to respond to consultations on strategic plans and on larger, significant developments.

### **England Coast Path**

53. The England Coast Path is a new 2,500 mile National Trail around England's coastline. Natural England are tasked with consulting on the alignment of the path.
54. In all communications with Natural England, the forum has pressed the case that in Suffolk the path needs to include access along river estuaries to ensure continuity of the route and avoid reliance on ferry crossings.
55. The forum responded to proposals for the England Coast Path between Bawdsey and Aldeburgh welcoming the inclusion of access around estuaries with new paths providing improved coastal and waterside access.
56. The forum also responded to proposals for the England Coast Path around the Deben Estuary from Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey and strongly support the route presented which addresses significant gaps in the existing access network .
57. The forum is pleased that Natural England have agreed a grant application from the Rights of Way and Access Team for a Project Officer to deliver works establishing the new National Trail.
58. Overall, the forum is very pleased that Natural England have responded positively to their case, however, the forum has concerns over the longer term maintenance of the path which will rest with the County Council.

### **Open Access Restrictions**

59. The forum is one of a number of consultees to Natural England on Open Access sites. The forum comments on proposals for dedicating sites and for permitting seasonal restrictions to public access for land management or conservation purposes.
60. The forum considered a new Direction from Natural England on seasonal closures for a site in Euston for land management reasons and the forum had no objection to this Direction.



### **Promoting Countryside Access**

61. The forum sees the promotion of countryside access as important to the health and wellbeing of local communities and promoting Suffolk as an outdoor tourism destination. The forum welcomes the significant funding from the Suffolk 2020 Fund for the Discovering Suffolk project which will create a Suffolk walking app and use QR codes to promote countryside access.
62. Although the Suffolk Walking Festival had to be cancelled for the second year in a row, the forum was delighted it was replaced with the 2021 Virtual Suffolk Walking Festival, offering inspiration for walking across the county.

### **Regional Local Access Forum**

63. A Regional Local Access Forum Meeting was held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 on Zoom and attended by Barry Hall, SLAF Chair, and David Barker, SLAF Vice Chair.
64. In April 2021, SLAF wrote to Natural England expressing serious concern over the gradual withdrawal of support from Natural England to Local Access Forums in East Anglia with the cessation of an annual training event, the ending of hosting Regional LAF Meetings, and no officer within Natural England with responsibility for LAFs. The forum expressed that in these times the link between Natural England and LAFs should be strengthened, not weakened.
65. Another Regional Local Access Forum Meeting was held on 8 July 2021 on Zoom and attended by Barry Hall, SLAF Chair.

### **Norfolk Local Access Forum**

66. The Vice Chair of the Norfolk Local Access Forum suggested a change to SLAF's constitution to allow a reciprocal arrangement where a member of the Norfolk and the Broads LAFs join the Suffolk LAF as non-voting members.
67. The Suffolk Local Access Forum agreed that any cross-border issue of interest to neighbouring LAFs was effectively dealt with at the regional LAF meetings. Those meetings offered a broader scope for issues to be shared and commonality identified across the eastern region. This has proved especially constructive for SLAF on issues relating to Network Rail, Highways England and cross-border planning proposals.
68. The forum emphasised that members of other LAFs were always very welcome to join SLAF's quarterly meetings and they were always invited to raise any issue that may be of mutual interest.

### **SLAF Membership**

69. In June 2020, following local elections, Councillor Jane Storey (formerly Thedwastre North Ward) stood down from the forum. A new county council representative will be appointed in due course.

### ***Working Groups:***

70. The forum has the following working groups:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Membership</b>
PRoW Severance, including Network Rail and Highways England	Barry Hall, Clare Philips, Roley Wilson
Sizewell C	Suzanne Bartlett, Barry Hall, Roley Wilson, Anthony Wright
Open Access	Barry Hall, Gordon Merfield
Coastal Erosion and Access	Barry Hall, Susan Mobbs, Roley Wilson
Planning and Development	Jane Hatton, Roley Wilson, Anthony Wright
Agri-Environment Access Schemes	David Barker, John Wayman
East Suffolk Line Community Rail Group	Margaret Hancock

### **Looking Ahead**

71. Priorities for SLAF over the coming year include:

- a) Investment in Green Access
  - i) To ensure that the increasing use of the green access network is effectively reflected in the Council's management of public rights of way and access.
- b) Sizewell C
  - i) To ensure that the development of Sizewell C acknowledges and addresses the forum's concerns for green access both during construction and after construction.
- c) Environmental Stewardship Scheme
  - i) To ensure the scheme adequately addresses public access into the countryside with public money for public goods.
- d) Planning
  - i) To engage with the planning process at a strategic level to seek a better green access network.

#### **Barry Hall**

Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

#### **David Barker**

Vice Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

**August 2021**

### **Sources of further information**

*The public have a right to inspect any documents included in this box – they are therefore in the public domain once the agenda is published. Background papers used in preparing the report must be kept by the report author for four years from the date of the meeting.*

*If there are no sources of further information, don't delete the box. Please insert the wording "No other documents have been relied on to a material extent in preparing this report".*

- a) Local Access Forums:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-access-forums-participate-in-decisions-on-public-access>

- b) The Suffolk Green Access Strategy: Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030:

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

- c) Suffolk Local Access Forum web pages and membership

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

- d) Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting 24 October 2019

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way/SLAF-Minutes-etc/2019-10-24-SLAF-agenda-and-minutes.pdf>

- e) Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting 23 January 2020

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way/SLAF-Minutes-etc/2020-01-23-SLAF-agenda-and-minutes.pdf>

- f) Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting 21 July 2020

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way/SLAF-Minutes-etc/2020-07-21-SLAF-agenda-and-minutes.pdf>

### Suffolk Local Access Forum – Members Details

#### SLAF Membership August 2020 – July 2021

The forum had 15 members during the period covered by this report.

**Barry Hall** (Chair) – Barry is a retired local government officer with experience of working on countryside and rights of way projects. Barry retains an interest in countryside access as a member of the RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and National Trust. *Barry has been a member of SLAF since October 2007 and Chair since January 2016.*

**David Barker MBE** (Vice Chair) – With his wide experience within the NFU, CLA and as a former Countryside Agency commissioner, David seeks to balance all interests in countryside access. David was also Chair of Creating the Greenest County. *David has been a member of SLAF since July 2003 and Vice Chair since April 2010.*

**Suzanne Bartlett** – Having been brought up on a farm near Framlingham, Suzanne has spent most of her life living and working in Suffolk. Since retiring from her profession as a Librarian, she has dedicated more time to walking and cycling in the countryside, whilst continuing as a self-employed writer and researcher. She is particularly concerned with promoting the benefits of outdoor activities for both physical health and mental well-being. *Suzanne has been a member of SLAF since October 2018.*

**Derek Blake MBE** – Chairman of Clare Walkers and the Activity Planning Trustee at Clare Castle Country Park, Derek has a keen interest in all aspects of leisure walking, as well as issues related to access, health & well-being, and tourism. *Derek has been a member of SLAF since October 2018.*

**Margaret Hancock** – Margaret is a Blue Badge Tourist Guide with a particular interest in promoting sustainable tourism. She is keen to encourage visitors to explore Suffolk by public transport, walking and cycling to benefit the local economy and preserve the peace and tranquillity of the county. Margaret has experience of supporting children and young people with disabilities, enabling them to access leisure facilities. *Margaret has been a member of SLAF since April 2010.*

**Jane Hatton** – Jane has always lived in Suffolk enjoying the countryside as both a horse rider and dog walker. Jane has a background in Sales and Marketing and has previously been the Sudbury Town Centre Manager. She continues to work to improve access for the community into the countryside with an interest in promoting the benefits to health and tourism. She has introduced new walks for both the Suffolk Walking Festival and Walking for Health. *Jane has been a member of SLAF since October 2013.*

**Councillor James Mallinder** – James is an active parish councillor in Hollesley, volunteer for 'Meet up Mondays', and treasurer of a local Good Neighbour scheme. In 2019 he entered East Suffolk Council as ward member for Deben and with an

enthusiasm for the environment, holds the Environment Portfolio. *James has been a member of SLAF since October 2019 representing District and Borough Councils.*

**Gordon Merfield** – With a background in agriculture, since the 1980's Gordon has been active in participating and coaching field sports events as well as being interested in the wider countryside and walking in foreign countries. *Gordon has been a member of SLAF since September 2004.*

**Susan Mobbs** – Sue is a walker and a cyclist mainly because of the opportunities they give for exploring landscape, history and nature at close hand. She is a volunteer with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, doing practical work on local reserves, and a member of the Long Distance Walkers Association. Sue's professional background is in social care and social and community development, and she is keen to see improved access to the countryside and outdoor activities for people of all ages and abilities. *Susan has been a member of SLAF since October 2018.*

**Clare Phillips** – With a background in journalism, Clare has worked on the BBC's 'Farming Today' programme and presented countryside documentaries for BBC Radio Suffolk. Clare enjoys off-road running and walking in the Suffolk countryside, organises several Trail Races, and runs each year for her running club. She is a horse-rider and a Trustee of Ipswich Riding for the Disabled Group with experience of working with a wide group of riders with disabilities. Clare also chairs the footpaths sub-committee of Brantham Parish Council. *Clare has been a member of SLAF since October 2018.*

**Monica Pipe** – Monica farms just north of Ipswich and has many well-used footpaths on her land including the promoted Fynn Valley Walk. *Monica has been a member of SLAF since July 2003.*

**Councillor Jane Storey** – Jane was SCC Councillor for Thedwastre North. Jane's interests include walking, dog-walking, off-road driving and, being a farmer's daughter, a strong view that along with rights come responsibilities. Jane believes that we should preserve our rights of way, including byways and bridleways, but not at the expense of common sense. These are an important part of presenting Suffolk as the Greenest County, useful for getting from A to B, but also for getting people who do not normally exercise out and about at little or no expense. *Cllr Jane Storey joined SLAF in October 2009 representing the County Council and left in May 2021.*

**John Wayman** – A former district council member farming in the Stour Valley, John now contributes to the wider rural picture. *John has been a member of SLAF since July 2003.*

**Roley Wilson** – Roley is actively involved in the promotion of the health benefits of walking for all. He has a lifelong interest in nature and open-air pursuits. During a 33-year police career one of his many postings involved being the Wildlife Liaison Officer for Suffolk. He is a member of the Ramblers and since retirement has spent an increasing amount of time in volunteer activities for that organisation. A keen bird watcher and member of the RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust he has a passion for

ensuring that everyone has free and responsible access to the countryside. *Roley has been a member of SLAF since October 2013.*

**Anthony Wright** – A long-term cyclist and walker, Anthony has worked with several local authorities and publishers on the production of cycling and walking guides. For 15 years before retiring Anthony worked part-time for the national sustainable transport charity Sustrans as its Area Manager for Norfolk and Suffolk, while also working part-time as a Suffolk County Council Cycling Officer. He maintains an active interest in developing cycle routes and advises the Highways Agency and Norfolk & Suffolk Highways of their responsibilities for non-motorist users safety on the highway. *Anthony has been a member of SLAF since July 2003.*