

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

		<b>Paper Number</b>
1.	14:00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	14.05 Minutes of previous meeting – Draft	<b>LAF 23/21</b>
3.	14.10 Declaration of interest	
4.	14.15 SLAF Annual Report 2022-23	<b>LAF 23/22– BH</b>
5.	14.30 Public Rights of Way and Access Team Restructure	<b>Verbal – AW</b>
6.	14.40 Energy Schemes	<b>LAF 23/23 – AW</b>
7.	14.50 Network Rail Updates	<b>LAF 23/24 – SK</b>
8.	15.00 Ipswich Byway 38 / Restricted Byway 38A – New Cut West	<b>LAF 23/25 – SK</b>
9.	15.10 Horringer to Bury Bridleway Phase 2 – Response from Cllr West	<b>LAF 23/26 – AW</b>
10.	15.20 Conversion of Footpaths to Bridleways	<b>LAF 23/27 – SK</b>
11.	15.30 King Charles III England Coast Path	<b>LAF 23/28 – AW</b>
12.	15.40 Correspondence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snape Warren Temporary Closure</li> <li>• SCC – Temple Bridge Bridleway</li> </ul>	<b>Verbal – DF</b> <b>Verbal – DF</b>
13.	15.45 Membership – Vice Chair Election	<b>Verbal – AW</b>
14.	15.50 Public Question Time	
15.	15.55 Any Other Business	
16.	16.00 Date of Next Meeting: January 2024 – date and venue tbc	

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/21</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> July 2023, 2-4pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>National Trust, Ickworth House, Horringer, Bury St Edmunds</b>

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

Present: David Barker (DB) (Vice Chair); Suzanne Bartlett (SB); Christopher Bower (CB); Margaret Hancock (MH); Gordon Merfield (GM); Susan Mobbs (SM); Monica Pipe (MP); Adrian Shepherd (AS); Cllr Joanna Spicer (JS); Jim Wayman (JWa); John Wayman (JW).

SCC Officers Present: Andrew Woodin (AW); David Falk (DF); Ben Heather (BH); Lily Hudson (LH); Steve Kerr (SK).

Apologies: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair); Jane Hatton (JH); Clare Phillips (CP); Anthony Wright (AWr); Roland Wilson (RW).

The meeting was preceded by a site visit to Horringer Bridleway 7, a newly created public right of way linking Horringer with Bury St Edmunds. On the site visit DF explained the background to the bridleway's creation, how delivery was phased in two parts, how phase 1 had been delivered, and plans for phase 2.

DB chaired the meeting in BH's absence and welcomed everyone to the meeting including new members appointed in April.

DB thanked AS for hosting the forum and officers for arranging the morning site visit.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2023 LAF23/16, were reviewed.

The forum discussed the accuracy of minutes relating to Needham Market Gypsy Lane from the meeting held on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This followed correspondence received on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023 referencing those minutes as either inaccurate or potentially misleading.

The reference was to legal agreements with Network Rail (NR), compensation, and timescales for works.

SK advised that compensation was a private matter and should not have been raised, but the timescale was as advised previously by NR. SK clarified that reference to a lump sum related to Suffolk County Council, not to compensation, and was an aspect that had been discussed openly at previous SLAF meetings.

SK apologised to the forum on behalf of SCC for the reference to compensation.

DB also expressed regret on behalf of the forum and asked members if any offending sentences should be struck out of the January minutes.

JS stated the minutes were technically accurate, were in the public arena and that nothing would be gained by changing them, but the minutes of this meeting should note comments made and express regret with the wording of the January minutes. JS also suggested minutes should be headed draft until agreed.

SK again clarified that a £300k lump sum referenced in the minutes was misinterpreted as compensation but was in fact a mitigation payment to SCC.

DB advised that these minutes clarified the situation and asked if forum members were in agreement.

All members agreed.

**ACTION:** SCC to ensure future minutes are watermarked as draft and not confirmed as final until the next meeting. The minutes will only be made public once confirmed at the next SLAF meeting.

### **3. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. Presentation: 'Approach to Sustainable Travel' by Adrian Shepherd, General Manager, National Trust Ickworth House**

AS described the Ickworth Estate as 1,800 acres with 297k visitors in 2022. Their busiest periods were January, February and November.

AS explained National Trust's (NT) was a conservation charity and visitors fund their conservation work. One of NTs biggest challenges was encouraging and enabling sustainable travel, especially for those without transport.

The Trust had a commitment to be carbon net zero by 2030 and tracked their carbon footprint daily.

AS explained how Ickworth's audience had changed since 2020 with increased visits from London, more people travelling for over an hour to get to the estate, visitors staying on the estate longer than pre-2020, and people using the estate as stop-over enroute to somewhere else. Two-thirds of Ickworth's visitors visit the estate with only one-third going inside the House.

AS explained how nationally NT's objective was to engage in urban locations such as in Birmingham, Manchester, and the Winter Gardens in Great Yarmouth.

At NT Ickworth, AS stated connecting the estate to local developments, such as the new Horringer bridleway, benefitted this objective and encouraged visitors to use public transport, walk, cycle and even horse ride to estate. The estate did not want to increase parking but instead improve sustainable access options. This was referred to as the 'Outdoor Hub' programme.

NT Ickworth was joining up with other places in Bury St Edmunds especially on Heritage Open Days in September by investing in a trial of free transport to bring people to the estate from town.

JS suggested some charities may want to sponsor or be involved in the free transport initiative.

DF advised that Ipswich groups would be very interested in this service.

BH advised that NT could advertise the free service on bus tables and at bus transport hubs.

AS talked about the 'Good Journey' website which allows a journey to a visitor attraction to be planned using public transport. NTs focus was on changing habits and promoting active outdoors. At NT Ickworth, a multi-user trail and cycle hire had been introduced, with over 6k cycle hires in the past year. In addition, Ickworth were due to start cycle training, group walks, and further develop existing programmes of Nordic walking and a woodland group.

AW advised SCC were now working on phase 2 delivery of Horringer Bridleway 7 and hoped they could continue working positively with NT Ickworth on funding.

DB suggested SLAF would write to SCC to support and encourage phase 2 of Horringer scheme.

DB thanked AS for his presentation.

**ACTION:** SLAF to write to SCC to support phase 2 funding of Horringer scheme.

## 5. Suffolk Energy Schemes

AW presented paper.

AW explained there was a high volume of energy projects in Suffolk which impacted on staff resources.

Sizewell – there were issues with Bridleway 19 (Lovers Lane) with temporary access being constructed by SZC, and a footpath over Benhall Fen Meadow having a temporary closure.

SB – asked about Sizewell C works on bypassing Stratford St Andrew and how many PRoW would be affected.

AW – advised two or three with diversion for each.

Sunnica – there was no further update.

Branford to Twinstead – this was now with the inspector. Forty-five public rights of way were affected. During works access would be lost in some locations.

AW is working with Public Health to put a financial figure against countryside access to value the economic loss of access when seeking mitigation against works.

JS – stated the debate regarding Bramford to Twinstead was twofold: whether the pylons should be built; how much mitigation is forthcoming.

AW – there was an issue on the quality of alternative routes being offered with a measurable loss of amenity value.

CB – had the scheme been decided yet?

DB – nothing decided yet. DB advised he has engaged with the Member of Parliament on proposals with some changes made to the original route.

SEALINK – will link to the converter station at Friston. Further stakeholder engagement has taken place with points raised by the PROW team.

## **6. Network Rail**

SK delivered paper.

Joint communication by Network Rail (NR) and SCC about Gipsy Lane would be released in due course. SCC were awaiting NR formal response for the Funding Agreement to be received as a lump sum.

A meeting with Cambridge and Essex on the Transport & Works Act (TWA) identified that Suffolk and Cambridgeshire had seen little progress, but Essex had seen more works delivered. A different contractor was working in Essex.

Higham Footpath 1 – order was confirmed with no objections and diversion operative on 12th July, all funded by NR.

Brantham Footpath (FP) 6 – no progress to date but most of FP6 will be extinguished with diversion alternative provided.

JS – can LAF pressure NR to progress Brantham FP6.

SK – it's in NR interests to divert FP6 and therefore for them to negotiate with landowner. NR are funding TWA orders, therefore NR need to provide solutions, not for SCC to negotiate. SCC have spoken to the Parish Council who advised FP6 was not used.

AW – SCC is seeking counsel on its powers with NR to avoid closures to resolve issues or use other measures. This work was of national interest.

## **7. Ipswich Byway 38 / RB 38A**

SK presented paper.

The forum had agreed to write to IBC about the time taken to open up the Public Open Space (POS) with SCC agreeing to brief the Cabinet Member. Cllr West advised officers that GHI Director should communicate with IBC.

SCC received a response from IBC that they were working to open the POS but needed to ensure the area would be litter and waste free. They accepted the temporary nature of fencing and management of access. SK explained there was still no progress on opening up the POS.

AW – the Forum could write to SCC to welcome progress and efforts of officers but urge this is brought to a successful resolution.

MH – would welcome this as she's been addressing it for 3 years.

JS – could IBC email response be circulated to the forum.

SK – will circulate IBC email.

SK – still no response from Associated British Ports (ABP) since the forum's site visit and subsequent letter to seek improved fencing and deliver a solution using the port's legal powers.

**ACTION:** SK to forward email from IBC to forum members.

**ACTION:** The forum to write to SCC to seek successful resolution.

**ACTION:** SK to chase ABP regarding lack of response

## 8. The King Charles III England Coast Path

AW – presented paper.

Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey had no objections.

Aldeburgh to Hopton – Natural England had submitted comments to DEFRA on objections. Next step was an inspector site visit.

SCC have new project officer in post and benefitting from his skills and knowledge on works to be delivered on the approved Orwell stretch.

AW noted he is in discussion with SCC Public Health and other agencies on access over Orwell Bridge. A resting point and bench will be installed on the footpath on the south-west side of the bridge with information on The Samaritans.

MH – Samaritans sign is already on the bridge but another one at this point will be better.

JS – does the Orwell Bridge have footway?

Numerous members – yes.

AW – there is a walkway behind barriers. Natural England will fund all approved works and are open to other improvements.

AW – there had been political sign-off for a regional trail.

JS – can the forum see signage and logo?

AW – there would be new branding. The regional trail would likely have its own branding.

AS – Norfolk NT and Sutton Hoo were interested in ECP launch.

MH – regional trail name could be 'Anglo Saxon Way'.

**ACTION:** AW to share new King Charles III England Coast Path branding.

## 9. National Highways (NH)

DF gave a verbal update.

NH explained there were financial constraints which would affect delivery of projects. There was no further update on proposals for Copdock or Fiveways.

As a separate scheme, NH were proposing closing some vehicular crossings of the A11 between Red Lodge and Barton Mills.

This created a possibility of NH improving walking access between the Lark Valley Path, where it meets the dual carriageway, and Barton Mills via a formal crossing of the A11 by the junction with Tuddenham Road.

## 10. Regional LAF Meeting

DB gave a verbal update. He noted RLAF is a useful forum to exchange experiences.

Ten LAFs attended the meeting. The regional LAFs had received a report on accessibility of the coast path by an Essex LAF member and wheelchair user.

Bedfordshire LAF reported frustrations with objections by Open Spaces Society to green access improvements.

LAFs expressed frustration that Natural England (NE) provide no resources to supporting them. DB advised all LAFs to write to the NE Chair.

Cambridgeshire reported issue that some development improvements don't get delivered.

Essex reported issues with the A12.

Norfolk reported that the Peddars Way crossing of the A47 will have traffic lights.

SharePoint was discussed as a replacement to HUDDLE.

DB met with Janet Hughes, DEFRA advisor, on the future of Agri-Environment Schemes. DB advised he will seek a meeting with her and the Regional LAFs.

SM – could SLAF members sit in on any meeting with the DEFRA advisor?

DB – possible but all regional LAFs should be present.

JS – forums should collectively voice concerns and lobby. Regional forums can be a powerful voice.

DB – the Regional LAF was effective. It was interesting to see what was happening across the region and identify common issues. The meeting with the DEFRA advisor showed how the region could work collectively.

MP – the regional meeting highlighted the issue with NE withdrawing support to LAFs.

## 11. Annual Report

DF gave verbal update.

A draft of the annual report would be prepared in August and distributed to all members for comment. It was expected to deliver the annual report to Cabinet in October.

**ACTION:** DF draft and circulate annual report

## 12. Membership

DB would step down at the next SLAF meeting after 20 years on the forum.

Cllr James Mallinder (JM) had left the Forum following changes to committee membership at East Suffolk Council.

**ACTION:** SCC arrange for election of new Vice Chair.

**ACTION:** DF seek new SLAF member representing District and Borough Councils.

## 13. Any Other Business

AW advised the Rights of Way and Access team had a new structure from September with the service divided into two areas. The new structure reflected the scale of planning consultations and positioned the team better to deal with developments from small scale to NSIPs.

John Wayman stepped down from the forum. DB congratulated JW for his input over the years, his very considered and sensible views, his great experience as a councillor, a landowner and a farmer. DB presented JW with a gift from the LAF.

JW thanked the forum and expressed how over the years he'd been pleased to see the concept of Local Access Forums working with representatives from so many different groups, from different levels and from different places. He advised the forum members to 'keep at it' and thanked the forum very much.

On behalf of SCC, AW thanked John Wayman for all his service to the forum since its inception.

### **Date of next meeting**

**ACTION:** DF to liaise with BH on the date and venue of the next meeting.



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>SLAF Annual Report 2022-23</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/22</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk, Barry Hall</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

The SLAF Annual Report was presented to Cabinet on Tuesday 10 October by Barry Hall (BH), SLAF Chair, and David Barker (DB), SLAF Vice Chair.

Cllr West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, introduced BH and thanked DB for his 20 years of service to the forum and support to Suffolk County Council (SCC), highlighting the benefits DB brought to the forum with his links to central government. Cllr West commented that DB will be very much missed by the forum and thanked him for the incredible work he's done.

BH thanked DB stating he was one of the forum's longest serving members and brought much knowledge with links to the farming world and knowledge of agricultural policy.

BH stated 3 new members had joined the forum bringing skills in cycling, land management and farming and that the forum were now looking for another new member to be appointed representing district councils.

BH spoke about how site visits this year had been important for members to gain an insight into issues. The next SLAF meeting included a site visit to the A11 Fiveways junction to help members respond to future public consultations by Highways England.

BH thanked SCC officers for their time and energy in supporting the forum on top of their normal workload.

BH expressed frustration on the slow pace resolving issues citing Network Rail and closures confirmed in 2019, on-going work at Gipsy Lane, and responses to proposals for Sunnica Solar Farm.

BH explained that north sea wind farms have created issues including proposals for new pylons that will impact on the visual appearance of the landscape.

BH stated the forum supported the development of a regional trail along the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex sections of the King Charles III England Coast Path.

BH advised he met with other forum leaders in the east of England region and advised that SLAF were well supported and expressed gratitude for what SCC

officers did, stating the forum could not challenge issues without the knowledge and support of officers.

DB thanked councillors for their kind words. He re-emphasised the role of SCC supporting the forum, which was not experienced at other forums but was important as it allowed the Suffolk Local Access Forum to be robust in its comments and put pressure on organisations by objecting to proposals. DB highlighted a key success during his time on the forum being a bridleway underpass on the A11 between Mildenhall and Thetford. The forum fought hard to gain the underpass which DB described as a significant win.

Cllr West introduced Cllr Spicer as the county council representative on the forum.

Cllr Spicer thanked the forum for making her feel welcome in her first year on the forum, and thanked officers for their support. Cllr Spicer commented on how site visits helped create friendships between members allowing more effective meetings. Cllr Spicer commented on how the forum could become even more effective to ensure other organisations listen to them and suggested reviewing the terms of reference.

Cllr Smith thanked DB as a force for good in Suffolk and commended the work of the forum in raising concerns with EDF over proposals for Sizewell C.

Cllr Rout echoed the chorus of thanks to DB and also thanked the forum for its work on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), not just Sizewell C but also Sunnica, pylons and other solar farms. Cllr Rout asked what the forum had achieved with developers.

Andrew Woodin (AW) advised that with Sunnica the forum had supported the council in gaining £1¼ million in green access improvements.

Cllr Fairclough-Mutton complimented DB on his good work and thanked the forum for supporting green access improvements such as Fen Bridge in Dedham Vale. He asked what efforts were made to gain more Section 106 (s106) contributions for permanent structures.

AW advised there was £3.5 million of s106 in the pipeline with £1.5 million received to date allowing additional resources to be employed to deliver improvements.

Cllr Fleming echoed comments thanking DB and highlighted the threats to access caused by large scale infrastructure projects such as new pylon corridors and large-scale solar farms which specifically threatened tourism and equestrian use of the countryside and advised the forum to retain strong dialogue with developers.

Cllr West stated that officers work to mitigate the impact of large projects and the forum will continue to make representations.

DB commented on how the forum were not always statutory consultees and therefore a dialogue with private firms was difficult even when the impact of the rights of way network was quite severe. DB highlight a key issue being the loss of high-quality agricultural land and land set for biodiversity and insisted Suffolk must not lose the best agricultural land to solar farms.

Cllr Stringer thanked the forum for all their work and added how important it was to respond to planning consultations as the forum's voice carried weight and could affect a decision.

BH advised that wherever possible he attended public exhibitions on planning proposals to make comments on behalf of the forum.

Cllr Hicks thanked the forum for all their hard work and commitment stating it was greatly appreciated.

Cllr West asked if the annual report of the Suffolk Local Access Forum was accepted by Cabinet.

Cabinet accepted the report unanimously.

The annual report is Appendix A.

END  
DF/SCC October 2023

Cabinet

<b>Report Title:</b>	Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report 2022/23
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	10 October 2023
<b>Lead Councillor(s):</b>	Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding
<b>Local Councillor(s):</b>	All Councillors
<b>Director:</b>	Andrew Cook, Executive Director of Growth, Highways and Infrastructure
<b>Assistant Director or Head of Service:</b>	Steve Palfrey, Assistant Director, Waste and Environment
<b>Author:</b>	David Falk, Green Access Manager, 07843 467 964, david.falk@suffolk.gov.uk

**Brief summary of the item to be considered**

1. Local Access Forums were established by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Their role is to advise various bodies on matters affecting countryside access and the public rights of way network.
2. All forums have an appointing authority. For the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) that is Suffolk County Council (SCC). The authority provides secretariat services and appoints members. Forums can have between 10 and 22 members. Most members are volunteers with up to 3 appointed by the County and District Councils. Each member has well established connections with countryside access, bringing together a wide range of complementary skills, knowledge, and experiences.
3. In addition to advising their relevant appointing authority, forums are also statutory consultees to various organisations such as National Highways, Network Rail and Natural England.
4. Under the Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2007 (part 13), SLAF are required to submit an Annual Report to SCC. This is their twentieth Annual Report, and it provides a summary of their activities between August 2022 and July 2023.

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

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The Cabinet is being asked to accept the Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report 2022/23 and address the report's recommendations and state the actions that the Council is taking to address those recommendations.</li> </ol> |
|--|

**Reason for recommendation**

6. 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 and it is a requirement for that authority to publish the report. 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?

The key issues raised by the Suffolk Local Access Forum 2022/23 report are as follows:

##### a) Suffolk’s Energy Schemes:

The forum fully recognises the urgency of developing sustainable options for energy production in the UK and supports efforts by Suffolk County Council to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. However, the forum has serious concerns over proposals within Suffolk by energy companies for significant large-scale infrastructure projects that will impact on people’s continued enjoyment of Suffolk’s green access network, change traditional farming practices, and impact on the county’s natural environment. Of specific concern are large scale solar farms that will replace agriculturally productive land, new electricity pylons that will disrupt public rights of way (PRoW) and impact on the appearance of the landscape, and the effect of Sizewell C power station on a sensitive and protected landscape. The forum seeks alternative options to be fully investigated, wherever practical, and mitigations including payments to the county council, to deliver on the country’s energy needs but without avoidable adverse effects.

**Response:** The Council thanks the forum for their support for SCC’s ambition of carbon neutrality by 2030 and acknowledges their concerns over the numerous energy projects proposed and being developed in Suffolk. The Council recognising the key role Suffolk plays in developing sustainable energy production for the benefit of the UK and will continue to work with energy companies and key stakeholders to ensure mitigation on the green access network is integral to any proposal and, where appropriate, options to minimise the impact of schemes are achieved.

##### b) Severance of the Rights of Way network:

Over the years the forum has continually focused on how proposals by organisations and developers adversely impact on green access especially where they sever the public rights of way network. The forum continues to press Network Rail, National Highways, and developers to enhance access specifically with Network Rail implementing a Transport and Works Act Order, National Highways improving green access as an integral feature of proposals at Copdock Interchange and Fiveways roundabout, and the borough authority and developers enhancing access in Ipswich Garden Suburb and on Ipswich waterfront.

**Response:** The Council recognises the positive impact the forum has with various organisations including Network Rail and National Highways and will continue to support the forum in its work with such organisations and others to gain positive improvements to the green access network.

##### c) Enhancing Suffolk’s Green Access network:

The forum congratulates SCC officers on initiatives to enhance and promote green access in the county and press SCC to deliver phase 2 of a new trail linking Horringer with Bury St Edmunds, develop a brand that promotes the East Anglian sections of the King Charles III England Coast Path, and engage with community groups to promote Suffolk as a walking and outdoor destination for all.

**Response:** The Council thanks the forum for recognising such initiatives and the benefits they bring to Suffolk and its communities. SCC will continue to deliver such projects that, where appropriate, develop countryside access for all users with special regard to ethnic minorities and disadvantaged communities in line with the objectives of The Suffolk Green Access Strategy.

**How does this relate to the County Council objectives?**

7. This report is linked to the County Council’s objectives indicated below:

Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Strengthening our local economy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Protecting and enhancing our environment (including carbon reduction)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**How will this impact on the Council’s objectives?**

8. The Suffolk Local Access Forum’s role, activities and recommendations are based on encouraging and enabling a greater use of the green access network. Public rights of way form a significant part of that network and are integral to the county council’s walking and cycling highway infrastructure. The forum’s focus on improving the network benefits sustainable travel choices and healthier lifestyles. This relates to each of the County Council’s objectives.

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

9. The Suffolk Local Access Forum understands the on-going pressures for the Council on public finances.
10. The forum thanks the Council for acknowledging the importance of green access and providing additional resources to the Rights of Way and Access Team to manage this area of work more effectively. The forum encourages the county council to continue its investment in, and commitment to, green access.
11. The forum understands the importance of green access on people’s physical health and mental wellbeing, as well as its importance to the rural economy, and asks the Council to continue its on-going support in this area.
12. 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.
13. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for the SLAF Annual Report 2022-2023, as advised by SCC Lead for Equalities and Inclusion.

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

14. Not applicable

**Alternative options**

15. 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?

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

### Main body of report

#### Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report 2022/23

17. This is the twentieth Annual Report of the Suffolk Local Access Forum and provides a summary of the forum's activities between August 2022 and July 2023.
18. The forum met quarterly on:
  - 27 October 2022
    - a) Meeting held at The Hold, Ipswich (10 members attended, 4 apologies)
    - b) Meeting was preceded by a morning site visit to Ipswich Byway 38, Ipswich Restricted Byway 38A and Ipswich Waterfront Public Open Space.
  - 26 January 2023
    - a) Meeting held at EDF Sizewell B Visitor Centre (10 members attended, 4 apologies, 1 guest speaker).
    - b) Meeting was preceded by a morning site visit to Sizewell Beach to understand the extent and impact of proposals for Sizewell C on public access, the rights of way network, and specifically Leiston-Cum-Sizewell public footpath 21.
    - c) Presentation in the afternoon's meeting provided an overview of Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and other energy projects across Suffolk.
  - 25 April 2023
    - a) Meeting held at Mildenhall Cricket Club (12 members attended, 5 apologies).
    - b) Meeting was preceded by morning training session on public rights of way and green access and site visits to green access projects.
  - 27 July 2023
    - a) Meeting held at National Trust Ickworth House (11 members attended, 5 apologies, 1 guest speaker).
    - b) Meeting was preceded by a morning site visit to Horringer public footpath 7, a newly created public right of way linking Horringer with Bury St Edmunds.
    - c) Presentation in the afternoon's meeting provided an overview of National Trust's approach to sustainable access to their sites and how that linked with green access developments by SCC off-site.
19. Meetings are open to the public.
20. A full list of members is given in Appendix A.

### Administering SLAF

21. Members of SLAF are all volunteers with a wide range of experiences and knowledge of countryside access. They represent interests in walking, cycling, horse riding, disabilities, conservation, outdoor sport, land management and tourism. All are recruited following SCC's recruitment process.
22. In addition to the volunteer members, the Suffolk Local Access Forum has 2 councillor members, representing the County Council and the District Councils. These members are appointed by SCC Full Council and by the Suffolk Chief Officers Leadership Team, respectively.
23. The forum's independence is reflected in them having their own logo, letter heading, email address and website 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>.
24. SCC's Rights of Way and Access team administers the forum, providing secretariat services, booking meeting rooms, arranging refreshments, inviting speakers, organising site visits, re-imbursing travel expenses, and recruiting new members.
25. The cost of administering the forum in 2022-23 was £1,628.05.
26. 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 2022/23

#### *Suffolk Energy Schemes*

27. The forum welcomed a presentation in January 2023 from SCC's Strategic Energy Projects Manager on the variety and complexity of the numerous energy schemes affecting Suffolk.
28. During the year the forum also received presentations and updates from SCC officers on the following schemes:
  - a) Sizewell C:
    - Forum members were concerned over closures to Leiston-Cum-Sizewell Bridleway 19 and how an alternative route was being provided.
  - b) Sunnica Energy Farm:
    - The forum supports the dedication of new routes for walking and cycling as public rights of way as a legacy of this development.
    - The forum congratulated SCC officers for gaining agreement for £250,000 funding for green access improvements but noted this was far short of expectations.
  - c) National Grid Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement.
    - The forum is concerned over the impact new pylons will have on existing land management and the use of public rights of way and raised these concerns with Jo Churchill MP.



- d) Norwich to Tilbury (formerly East Anglia Green Energy Enablement (GREEN)).
  - The forum questioned the need for overground infrastructure in place of offshore options, the use of green field sites instead of brown field sites for new infrastructure and worked regionally with other LAFs to respond to proposals.
- e) Scottish Power East Anglia ONE North and East Anglia TWO offshore windfarms.
- f) Scottish Power East Anglia THREE (EA3) offshore windfarm:
- g) National Grid Sea Link (Suffolk to Kent).
- h) National Grid Nautilus Interconnector (UK to Belgium).

#### *Network Rail*

- 29. The forum has raised concerns with Network Rail over significant delays in progressing the Suffolk-wide Transport and Works Act Order.
- 30. The forum has also expressed frustration to Network Rail over lengthy delays delivering works associated with the closure of the Gipsy Lane crossing in Needham Market.
- 31. The forum congratulated SCC officers in securing £300,000 from Network Rail as compensation for the closure of the Gipsy Lane crossing, to enhance public rights of way and green access along the Gipping Valley Path and in Needham Market. The forum notes, however, the payment has still not been transferred to the county council.
- 32. The forum was pleased to see works implemented under the Transport and Works Act Order to divert Higham Public Footpath 1.
- 33. The forum questioned Network Rail on the closure of Brantham Public Footpath 6 and their proposals to extinguish the route. The forum requested additional information is posted at key points along public rights of way, and on the Discover Suffolk app, to inform users when closures were in force.

#### *National Highways*

- 34. The forum pressed National Highways for proposals under the Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) for the Copdock Interchange junction of the A12 and A14, and the Fiveways junction on the A11 at Barton Mills, to deliver significant improvements for green access, if schemes are approved.
- 35. At Copdock Interchange the forum pressed for safe connections between communities to be created by developing existing underpasses under the main carriageways.
- 36. At Fiveways junction the forum is keen to see a grade-separated crossing of the A11 to link residents of Mildenhall and Barton Mills with the Lark Valley Path, a long-distance promoted trail between Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds.

#### *New Cut West, Ipswich*

- 37. The forum carried out a site visit to a public outdoor space (POS) at New Cut West, on Ipswich waterfront to understand the context and issues surrounding opening the space to the public.

38. The forum welcomed the opportunity to improve access along the waterfront and potentially create a continuous cycle link between the waterfront and Wherstead Road.
39. However, the forum is frustrated by the lengthy delays opening the POS, by access to and around the POS, and by the aesthetics of existing and proposed new fencing related to train movements into the POS.
40. In November 2022 the forum wrote to Associated British Ports (ABP) and in February 2023 to Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) asking both organisations to address their issues and resolve matters for the benefit of people living in and visiting the area. The forum gained a response from IBC but are still awaiting a response from ABP.

#### *Planning*

41. In August 2022, the forum responded to Ipswich Borough Council on a Reserved Matters consultation on 'Land South of Railway Line Westerfield Road'. The forum raised issues over the impact of the Ipswich Garden Suburb on the rights of way network and pressed for routes to be well designed to encourage walking and cycling throughout the site and on to neighbouring destinations.

#### *King Charles III England Coast Path*

42. The forum welcomes ongoing work by SCC Officers and Natural England to determine and approve the route of the King Charles III England Coast Path.
43. The forum strongly supports proposals by SCC for a new branded regional trail following the coast path through Suffolk, Norfolk, and Essex.

#### *Fen Bridge, Dedham*

44. The forum attended and welcomed the opening of Fen Bridge over the River Stour in Dedham Vale, but questioned SCC on why temporary structures could not be installed until permanent new bridges were built. The forum accepted this could increase project costs and understood budget pressures within the authority, but pressed SCC to improve accessibility at Fen Bridge as a second phase of the project.

#### *Improving Green Access*

45. The forum congratulated SCC officers on opening phase one of a new bridleway linking Horringer with Bury St Edmunds, providing an off-road route for walking and cycling to avoid using the A143.
46. The forum wrote to SCC to support phase 2 of this project which will surface the bridleway to enable year-round, all-weather use.
47. In July 2023 the forum received a presentation from the General Manager of National Trust Ickworth Estate and learned how actions within the estate to encourage more active visits, linked with the new bridleway between Horringer and Bury St Edmunds.

### *Regional Local Access Forum*

48. The forum chair attended a regional LAF meeting via Zoom on 19 January 2023 and the chair and vice-chair both attended a meeting via Zoom on 20 July 2023.
49. Regional meetings allow LAFs to learn from each other, share advice, identify common issues and work collectively to effect change.
50. The forums remain frustrated at the lack of support provided by Natural England to them.

### *SLAF Membership*

51. The forum had 17 members during the period covered by this report. Three new members joined the forum in April 2023 and two members stepped down in July 2023.

### *Working Groups:*

52. 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*

53. Priorities for SLAF over the coming year include:
  - a) Investment in Green Access  
To ensure that the high levels of use of the green access network is effectively reflected in the Council's management of public rights of way and green access.
  - b) Energy Schemes  
To ensure that the development of energy schemes acknowledges and addresses the forum's concerns for green access.
  - c) Severance of Public Rights of Way

To ensure that Network Rail, National Highways, and the planning process deliver works that maintain a well-connected and easy to use green access network.

d) King Charles III England Coast Path Regional Path

To advise the county council in its discussions with Natural England, Essex, and Norfolk county councils on the form of the proposed new regional trail.

**Barry Hall**

Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

**David Barker**

Vice Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

**August 2023**

*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 following 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) 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>

c) Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting 27 October 2022

[2022-10-27-SLAF-Agenda-and-Meeting-Papers \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/suffolk-local-access-forum/2022-10-27-SLAF-Agenda-and-Meeting-Papers)

d) Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting 26 January 2023

[2023-01-26 SLAF Agenda and Meeting Papers \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/suffolk-local-access-forum/2023-01-26-SLAF-Agenda-and-Meeting-Papers)

e) Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting 25 April 2023

[2023-04-25 SLAF Agenda and Meeting Papers \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/suffolk-local-access-forum/2023-04-25-SLAF-Agenda-and-Meeting-Papers)

f) Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting 27 July 2023

[2023-07-27 SLAF Agenda and Meeting Papers \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/suffolk-local-access-forum/2023-07-27-SLAF-Agenda-and-Meeting-Papers)

g) 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>

**Suffolk Local Access Forum – Members Details****SLAF Membership August 2022 – July 2023**

The forum had 17 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 its inception in July 2003 and has been Vice Chair since April 2010.*

**Suzanne Bartlett** – Having been brought up on a farm near Framlingham, Suzanne spent most of her life living and working in Suffolk. Since retiring 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.*

**Christopher Bower** – Chris is a keen cyclist who enjoys off-road hiking, biking, and running, exploring the natural environment, and participating in ultradistance cycling events. As a Cycling UK advocate, he has created a long-distance multi-terrain cycling route around Suffolk to encourage responsible green access and improve physical, mental, and environmental health. *Chris became a member of SLAF in April 2023.*

**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 works to improve access for the community into the countryside with an interest in promoting the benefits to health and tourism and 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, held the Environment Portfolio. *James was a member of SLAF from October 2019, representing District and Borough Councils, and left the forum in July 2023.*

**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** – Susan is a walker and a cyclist mainly because of the opportunities they give her 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. Her 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 range 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 long-distance trail, the Fynn Valley Walk. *Monica has been a member of SLAF since its inception in July 2003.*

**Adrian Shepherd** – Adrian is General Manager of National Trust Ickworth Estate. The Trust was founded on the principle of maintaining spaces for people to enjoy and benefit from, and this is what motivates Adrian in his work. In his professional capacity he is committed to making the estate more accessible to cyclists, walkers, and horse riders, and developing sustainable travel options to National Trust properties. Away from work, Adrian is a walking enthusiast. *Adrian has been a member of SLAF since April 2023.*

**Councillor Joanna Spicer** – Joanna has lived in Suffolk for over 50 years having come to live here in 1972 to work for the newly formed East Anglia Tourist Board as the Information Officer. She was first elected to Suffolk County Council in 1989 and represents the 16 rural villages of the Blackbourn Division, north-east of Bury St Edmunds. Joanna is not only a keen walker, but also works with parish councils and landowners to press for additional rights of way and green space to be a larger part of new developments. *Joanna has been a member of SLAF since June 2022 representing Suffolk County Council.*

**Jim Wayman** – Jim works for a company representing east Suffolk potato farmers. He has an interest in balancing the needs of landowners and farmers with maintaining the natural beauty of Suffolk's landscapes and ensuring there is access for all to enjoy the countryside for recreation. *Jim has been a member of SLAF since April 2023.*

**John Wayman** – A former district council member farming in the Stour Valley, John now contributes to the wider rural picture. *John had been a member of SLAF since its inception in July 2003 and, after 20 years of service, stepped down from the forum in July 2023.*

**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 career in the police 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 its inception in July 2003.*

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Energy Schemes</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/23</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

## 1. Sizewell C

Although the formal commencement of the SZC Development Consent Order is not expected until early 2024 the considerable amount of pre-commencement activity continues. SZC have set up a website where all their current works can be tracked <https://www.szcworkstracker.co.uk/track-a-project/?view=list>. The county council has received funding from SZC to enable it to manage the technical aspects of the design and construction work on highways and PRow. Several highway engineers and a senior PRow officer have been appointed to manage this work in the Highways NSIP team.

Temporary site access route – having been denied permission to use BR19 for other site works, SZC have constructed a temporary access point on Lovers Lane and are constructing a temporary access road that leads to the rear of Goose Hill. which crosses BR19 at a controlled and manned crossing point. This temporary access road will be used for bringing in the spoil from the Benhall fen meadow site, materials for the construction of the access road itself and for the removal of the felled timber from Goose Hill woodlands, plus site staff.

Benhall Fen Meadow creation – the fen meadow earthworks are underway, and the spoil is expected to start being removed from site in mid-October to be taken to the main development site via the temporary access road – this is expected to be 80 HGV movements per day for a number of weeks. The public footpath that crosses the fen meadow site is temporarily closed with an alternative route put in place very close by. Once works are completed, SZC is committed to providing a dry route for this footpath.

In addition, detailed design work on the highway and bridleway works close to the main site has started and discussions continue on the design of the alternative bridleway. The design work for the proposed bridleway bridge over the Leiston drain in Aldhurst farm is continuing. Design work on the two other road bypass schemes, park and ride sites and other associated highway works has also started, many of which impact on the PRow network.



## **2. Sunnica**

The Examination for Sunnica concluded at the end of March. The County Council and other interested parties await the Examiners decision; this is expected later this year.

An over view of the Sunnica application can be found here - [Sunnica Energy Farm | National Infrastructure Planning \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](https://www.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/sunnica-energy-farm/)

## **3. National Grid Bramford to Twinstead**

The scheme has now entered the pre application stage, with the application submitted and the Planning Inspectorate accepting the application on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023. This includes the draft DCO and supporting documents for the application.

The planning inspectorate now has three months to prepare for Examination. Although dates have yet to be given, we anticipate this will start in late August 2023.

At the last meeting a member asked for the number of PRow affected by this scheme and what is the permanent impact on the PRow network. The Development Consent Order directly effects 45 public rights of way in Suffolk through temporary restrictions, There are no proposals for permanent changes to the network. 16 PRow are shown where diversion routes will be available and 29 shown without any diversion option. The impact is greater with connecting routes also severed during this period, resulting in greatly limiting access in those parishes during that period.

Unfortunately, Public Rights of Way is not a separate topic as requested. This is covered within the chapters of Traffic and Transport, Landscape and Visual, and Socio-Economics and Tourism.

The county council is currently preparing its Local Impact Report for submission in August 2023.

An over view of the Bramford to Twinstead application can be found here - [Bramford to Twinstead | National Infrastructure Planning \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](https://www.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/bramford-to-twinstead/)

Further details can be found on the National Grid website here - [Bramford to Twinstead | National Grid ET](https://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/energy/infrastructure/bramford-to-twinstead)

## **4. Norwich to Tilbury (formally East Anglia Green)**

The scheme has just entered public consultation prior to a formal application. The public consultation opened on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023 for a period of eight weeks.

The scheme effects a vast number of routes in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. This remains at pre application stage, and it is now anticipated the application being submitted in late 2024.

The county council awaits further discussions with the applicant's agents regarding the scheme and the cumulative and in combination effects of multiple energy projects in this area.

Further details on the Norwich to Tilbury scheme can be found on the National Grid website here - [Norwich to Tilbury | National Grid ET](#)

#### **5. East Anglia One North and EA2 offshore windfarms with onshore infrastructure**

Work on the main site is not expected to start until 2024. Discussions are ongoing with SPR regarding the proposed route of the diverted public footpath at the Friston site and the design of the accesses with respect to public rights of way onto the construction sites and haul roads.

#### **6. East Anglia 3 offshore windfarm with onshore infrastructure**

Works to create access off the road into construction compound along the cable route have been agreed. Highway agreements are being put in place for the various access points from the highway into the proposed cable corridor in order to create new haul road and to access the existing jointing bays.

#### **7. SEALINK – National Grid offshore link from Suffolk to Kent-onshore cable corridor , new converter station and connection to Friston NG substation (if approved as part of EA1N &EA2 application)**

The scheme involves the construction of an onshore cable corridor linking to a new converter station that will link to an expanded National Grid substation at Friston (approved under the EA1n & 2 DCO consent)

There has been further stakeholder engagement regarding highways and public rights of way – summary of comments raised by the PRoW service below:

- Clarity and standardisation of terminology for identifying and labelling PRoW
- Use of the PRoW digital data for identifying correct location and status of PRoW
- Clarification of impact on ROW of access points/haul roads
- Request for a PRoW Strategy or Management Plan as part of the DCO submission, that identifies where and how the project affects PRoW in the pre commencement stages, construction and operational phase, management measures, mitigation, and improvement measures.

The statutory consultation is due from October-December 2023

**8. LionLink – formally EUROLINK – interconnector between Suffolk and Belgium**

The scheme involves the construction of an onshore cable corridor linking to a new converter station that will link to an expanded National Grid substation at Friston (approved under the EA1n & 2 DCO consent). A non statutory consultation was carried out in late 2022, to which ROW & Access responded (see April paper). An additional non statutory consultation was carried out in September which proposed new landfall sites and cable corridor routes around Walberswick and Southwold area. The consultation for the scoping for the Environmental Impact assessment is due at the end of October 2023

END  
AW/SCC October 2023

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Network Rail Updates</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/24</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</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.

## **Needham Market Gipsy Lane and FP6 Needham Market**



Further to the update provided in July, the county council has been advised that the Heads of Terms have now been finalised between the parties, and NR will issue a works programme to SCC once the legal document has been signed. At this point in time it is not known when the 16 week works programme will start.

As previously advised, in advance of the works starting NR will implement their communications strategy, which will include the issuing of a joint NR/SCC press release.

The county council is again still waiting for NR to provide its formal response to its comments on the draft funding agreement but the revised Agreement sets out that the £300K will be received as a lump sum, upon its signing.

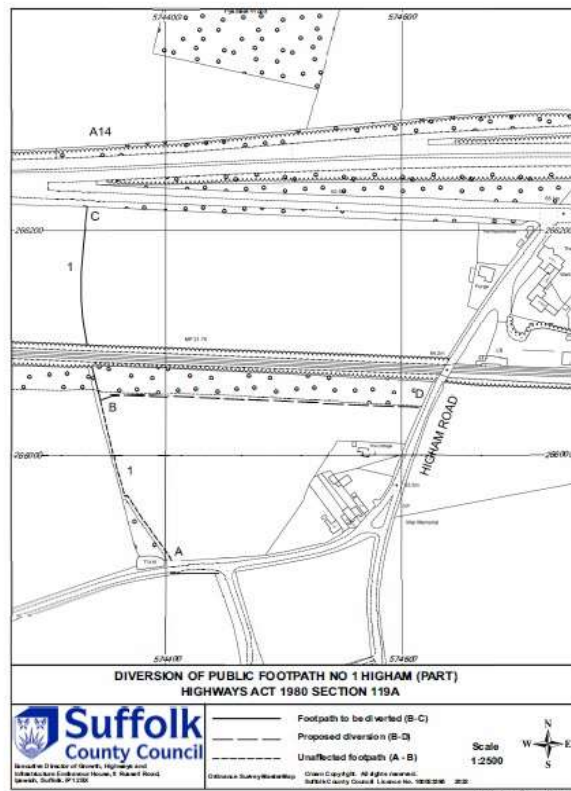
## General/Countywide

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

Further to the update at the Forum's last meeting, officers unexpectedly received various Notices from NR's appointed solicitors, advising that ecological and topographical surveys were being undertaken at various level crossings. The Notices were served on the county council but not addressed to any specific officer or service, and as a result, two of these were received after the surveys had taken place. Officers raised this with both the solicitors and NR's Project Manager, and reminded NR that it had previously been agreed that joint site visits would be undertaken. NR apologised for this oversight and a meeting has been arranged for the 16<sup>th</sup> October to discuss this and how the project is progressing. As previously advised, the delays with this project have resulted from difficulties with the original contract tender. In early September NR advised that the project programme had been subject to a big reshuffle due to recent changes to their budget in this financial year. As a result, they confirmed the majority of the Suffolk sites were now scheduled to complete from mid to late 2024-25 (Control Period 7 - Year 1).

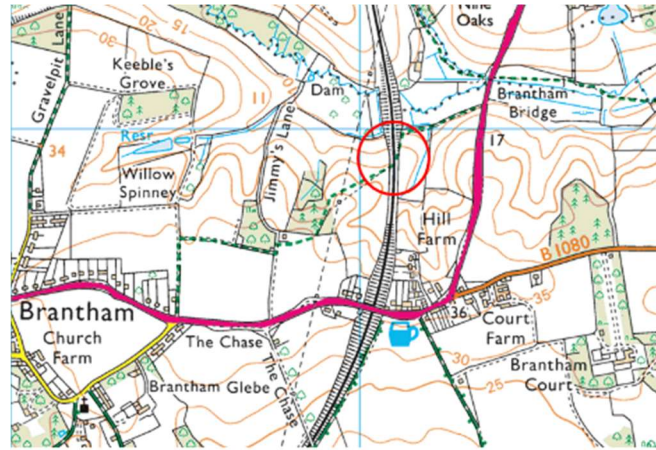
### **Footpath 1 Higham (High Bridge)**

Further to the update provided to the Forum at its last meeting, the Order was confirmed on 3 May and the confirmation Notice advertised on 9 June, with the Order taking effect on 12 July. All the works have been satisfactorily completed and the working copy Definitive Map for Higham amended to reflect the diversion.



SCC's final consultant and officer costs have now been invoiced to NR. Officers are currently making enquiries with Suffolk Highways regarding programming the NR funded highway improvement works to Higham Road and the A14 verge, as part of the new highways contract with Milestone.

Footpath 6 Brantham (High Bridge)



Since the update provided to the Forum in July, there has been no further progress update from NR regarding their engagement with affected landowners on the diversion proposal illustrated below. At this stage, it is also worth mentioning that NR have previously agreed to improve a section of highway verge between point 'C' and Brantham Bridge.



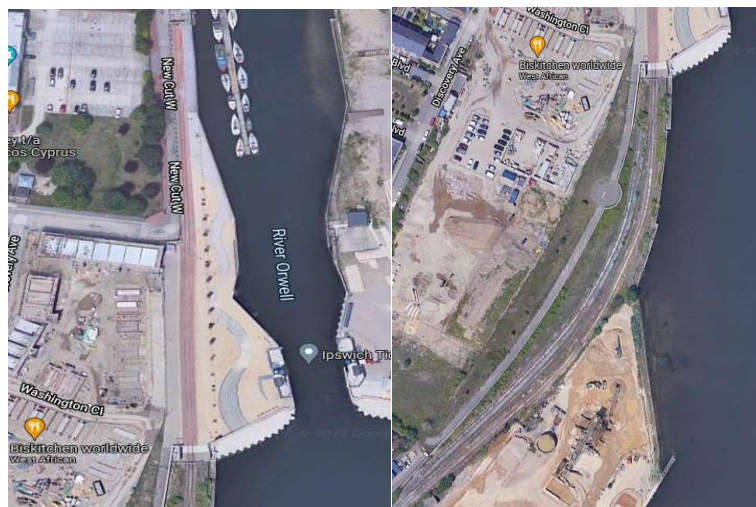
END  
SK/SCC October 2023



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Ipswich Byway 38 / Restricted Byway 38A – New Cut West</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/25</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Steve Kerr</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

Further to the update provided to the Forum in July, unfortunately the Public Open Space (POS) at Griffin Wharf continues to be unavailable to the public.

At the Forum's last meeting in July, members agreed to write to SCC (Director of Growth, Highways and Infrastructure) to welcome progress and the efforts of officers but request this is brought to a successful resolution. Appendix A is a copy of the letter sent by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman on behalf of the Forum.



Officers have been regularly seeking progress updates from Ipswich Borough Council (IBC), Associated British Ports (ABP) and the Environment Agency (EA) on the progress of the tri-partite Service Level Agreement (SLA) that IBC has confirmed is required to be able to take-over maintenance of the POS.

On 11 September IBC confirmed the draft SLA had been sent to the EA and ABP in July of this year but had not received any communications from the other parties. Following several chasers on the part of SCC officers, the EA provided an email update on 5 October, advising that they had been affected by resourcing issues but were confident that all the necessary plans and Heads of Terms would be submitted to ABP (an affected landowner) by the end of October, and once these have been agreed, the Agency would be able to enter into the SLA with IBC regarding the future maintenance of the POS whilst the lawyers finalised the documentation regarding the 999 year lease.

The Borough recently contacted the EA and ABP to request an online meeting (week commencing 9/10/23), to try and expedite the legal documentation.

In addition, as part of the email exchanges, the Borough confirmed that ABP had set out their proposals regarding the temporary opening up of the POS. As previously advised, the Forum is aware that the intention is to erect Heras fencing around the operational railway line as a temporary solution, for public safety reasons. Once the POS is opened up to the public, the area will be patrolled by security guards 6 times in a 24-hour period, and any defects in the Heras fencing will be reported and contractors instructed to remedy as soon as possible.

The ongoing delays in making the POS accessible to the public are, of course, frustrating, but as indicated above it now appears that the EA are having resourcing pressures themselves, so the current delays can't be attributed to inaction on the part of IBC.

It is possible officers may receive further updates before the Forum's meeting, and if this is the case, these will be reported verbally.

Officers have also requested another meeting with Andrew Cook (Executive Director of GHI), to report on the current situation.

END  
SK/SCC October 2023



# APPENDIX A

## SLAF

### Suffolk Local Access Forum

Andrew Cook  
Executive Director for Growth,  
Highways and Infrastructure  
Suffolk County Council  
Endeavour House  
8 Russell Road  
Ipswich  
IP1 2BX

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

Tel: 01473 260159  
Email: [slaf@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:slaf@suffolk.gov.uk)  
Web:  
<http://publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/suffolk-local-access-forum/>

Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Date: 3 August 2023

Dear Andrew,

#### Public Open Space (POS), Griffin Wharf, Ipswich

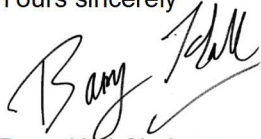
I am writing as chair of the Suffolk Access Forum on behalf of its members, regarding the above case.

Over the last 24 months, Suffolk County Council (SCC) officers have kept the forum regularly updated regarding progress in opening up the POS to the general public. At its most recent meeting held on 27 July, officers reported that following intervention at director level, an encouraging response had been received from Ipswich Borough Council (IBC), indicating that the landowners and the Borough had agreed to enter into a service level agreement (SLA) to access and maintain the POS and that this was currently being actively progressed.

The forum welcomes this intervention and would like to extend its thanks to SCC officers and the Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding for their contributions to get to this point. The forum urges a swift conclusion of the SLA to enable residents and the public to finally be able to access and enjoy this important public space.

I look forward to confirmation all outstanding matters have been concluded. If the forum could be given an idea of timescale please, that would be very welcome.

Yours sincerely



Barry Hall Chairman

Kind Regards  


David Barker Vice Chairman

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Horringer to Bury Bridleway Phase 2 – Response from Cllr West</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/26</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

**Email sent from SLAF to Cllr Paul West on 6 August 2023.**

To Cllr West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding.

Dear Cllr West,

First, to introduce ourselves, David and I are chair and vice chair respectively of the Suffolk Local Access Forum. Local access forums are statutorily constituted groups representing land manager, users and other interests, and advise decision making organisations (eg local authorities) about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel. LAFs can set their own priorities depending on local issues and also respond to consultations and draft policy documents.

We are writing to you to draw your attention to the work county council officers have been doing over the last year or so to connect Horringer and Ickworth House with Bury St Edmunds with an all weather walking and cycling route. So far phase 1 of 2 has been completed, being the creation of Public Bridleway 7 between the two communities, phase 2 is the construction of the all weather surface, for which funding partners are being sought. The scheme was initiated by the local community to access local services in a safe, sustainable and healthy way, and I know the community is keen to see the completion of it. Phase 1 was funded by the county council's on street parking account.

At its quarterly meeting on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023, SLAF members made a site visit to BR7 and were impressed by what the county council has achieved. The PRow is a welcome alternative to walking and cycling the A143 road as it is, but for all weather and season use, and to make the best of it, will require surfacing, the cost of which we understand to be around £250k.

Officers explained they are receiving offers of contributions, including from the National Trust, but for phase 2 to be realised it will require SCC to fund the major proportion from its capital budgets, hence our contacting you. I know there have been internal officer level discussions around county council funding, however no firm commitment so far.

Having seen the bridleway and its potential, the local access forum urges the county council to bring forward capital funding to enable the construction of an all weather surface. We are sure a firm commitment at this stage will help lever in funding from other stakeholders and encourage those stakeholders to go the extra mile with the size of their offers.

We see more and more the importance of improving public health, safety and sustainability, and the role of walking and cycling in achieving local and national priorities. But too often rural and edge of town areas miss out on walking and cycling funding, which is focussed on towns and cities. It seems to the forum here is a perfect example of a 'shovel ready' scheme the county council could promote as an exemplar of the lead it is taking.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Hall, David Barker  
Chair and vice chair of the Suffolk Local Access Forum

## **Response to SLAF on 10 August 2023**

Dear Barry and David

Thank you for your email dated the 6th August 2023 regarding the Horringer Public Bridleway 7.

I have received the following information from the Public Rights of Way Team:

Thank you for your interest and comments on the work achieved by Suffolk County Council (SCC) to date, to improve walking and cycling opportunities between Horringer and Bury St Edmunds. The team are aware the community very much wants to see an alternative to having to drive the mile or so to Bury St Edmunds, also of course the very high volumes of visitors to Ickworth House and parkland, many of whom are from Bury.

SCC is actively investigating funding for phase 2. No commitments can be made at this stage as surfacing the route will incur significant expense, but it is being given priority.

Officers will update members at your next meeting in October 2023, when the situation on funding phases should be clearer.

Kind Regards

Paul West

County Councillor for Bixley Division &  
Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding  
Suffolk County Council

END  
AW/SCC October 2023

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Conversion of Footpaths to Bridleways</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/27</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Steve Kerr</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

## **Introduction**

This report has been produced in response to part of a query from a Forum member, on the ways in which the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network can be made more continuous for cyclists and equestrians and how public footpaths can be upgraded or converted to allow for their use.

## **The Legislative Background**

There are essentially two legislative mechanisms for ‘upgrading’ public footpaths to bridleway or restricted byway status, and one for converting footpaths to allow for cycling and pedestrian use.

- **Highways Act 1980** – allows for the creation of new bridleways or restricted byways, or for the upgrading of existing recorded footpaths. Can be achieved through the making of creation orders or creation agreements under sections 26 or 25 respectively.
- Creation agreements are made between the affected landowner(s) and the order making authority and have the benefit of not being subject to widespread consultation or open to public objection.
- Orders made under s26 have to meet a statutory test and can be made on a compulsory basis, although the county council always initially seeks to negotiate entering into creation agreements.
- Both sections allow for compensation to be paid to the landowner(s) for the resultant loss of land, as a result of the dedication but landowners are entitled to claim compensation under s26.
- Creation agreements/orders can be made by both district/borough councils and the highway authority. Highways Act orders are merit based
- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** – under the Act the county council has a statutory duty to maintain and review the Definitive Map and Statement (DM&S) and to make orders to modify the map where evidence is discovered to show that unrecorded rights exist, or recorded rights are in error.
- s53 of the Act allows for the making of Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs), to modify the DM&S. DMMOs can only be made on the basis of documentary and/or user evidence. Anyone can submit a formal application to claim the addition or deletion of PROWs, or that a particular PROW status

should be modified, but a claim can only succeed if there is sufficient evidence to support it.

- Documentary evidence can include items such as Enclosure Awards, Tithe Maps, Railway Plans, Finance Act 1910 Maps and property sale plans but historic Ordnance Survey maps only provide evidence of the physical existence of a route, they cannot provide evidence of public or private status.
- Under Suffolk County Council's constitution, claims to modify the DM&S are determined by the Council's Development and Regulation Committee. DMMOs can only be made by the county council, in its capacity as the surveying authority.
- If the county council has not determined a formal application within 12 months of receipt, the applicant has the right to appeal to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, requesting that the county council be directed to determine the claim within a set timescale.
  
- **Cycle Tracks Act 1984** – this allows public footpaths to be converted to cycle tracks, following confirmation of a Cycle Track Conversion Order (CTCO). Cycle tracks allow for use by pedestrians and cyclists, but not equestrians.
- As with the other types of order above, the legal process requires consultation and an order is open to public objection. Upon confirmation, the footpath is removed from the DM&S and the cycle track becomes highway maintainable at public expense and is recorded on the List of Streets.
- CTCOs cannot be made for footpaths recorded across agricultural land, without the express consent of affected landowners. They are therefore more often used in urban settings, for instance where a footpath is recorded linking two development sites and there is a need for cycling connectivity.
- Cycle tracks can be shared or segregated, and are normally 3-3.5 metres wide, with a sealed surface to facilitate cycling. The footpath must be wide enough to be converted to a cycle track, otherwise additional footpath width must be created first, necessitating a two stage legal process.

### **Order making requests and prioritisation**

- The county council has more order making requests than it has the capacity to deal with, and as a result, in 2013 introduced a prioritisation scheme. All formal applications and potential order making cases received since September 2013 have been assessed using the current prioritising scheme. Further information on this can be found by visiting [Making changes to the definitive map and statement - Suffolk County Council](#) under the heading 'Prioritising definitive map order making'. There is also a link to the criteria officers use when assessing incoming order making requests.
- By way of a general update, the county council currently has 139 undetermined DMMO claims. For 52 of these the applicant has not yet fully completed the formal application process by serving Schedule 8 on the affected landowner/s to notify them that the application has been submitted. Almost all of these 52 applications were submitted by the British Horse Society whose focus is to get applications onto the register, they intend to complete the application process at a later date. The county council has no duty to determine these 52 until the application process has been completed. The county council also has 22 other cases requiring legal order making on its prioritised list, these include public path orders and traffic regulation orders.

The county council are scoping definitive map anomalies and possible definitive map drafting errors which may also require legal order making to resolve.

- The above figures do not include s106 cases, which are treated as high priority orders as they are externally funded and time constrained. The county council seeks opportunities to deliver improvements to the public rights of way network through s106 development funding and many of these schemes will deliver new cycling and bridleway links.

END  
SK/SCC October 2023

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>King Charles III England Coast Path</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/28</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>26 October 2023, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

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

The latest information from Natural England's (NE) on its progress for the ECP in Suffolk and Norfolk is shown on their website. The progress report update dates are shown in the links.

<b>Stretch name</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<a href="#">Harwich to Shotley Gate</a>	Four out of six reports at Stage 4, two at Stage 5
<a href="#">Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry</a>	Stage 5: Approved (not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)
<a href="#">Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey</a>	Two reports at Stage 5; four reports at Stage 4
<a href="#">Bawdsey to Aldeburgh</a>	Four out of five reports at Stage 4 and one at Stage 5
<a href="#">Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea</a>	One out of six reports at Stage 4, others at Stage 5 (not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)
<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, or a report within the 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.

**Note:** Whilst individual reports for sections within a stretch can be approved, in Suffolk stretches will not normally be launched until all of the Coastal Access Reports comprising the stretch have been approved.

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 Five Suffolk Stretches**

#### **Harwich to Shotley Gate** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 11.10.23

- Stage 4 and 5 (Determine and Open)
- The proposals were published on 22 January 2020 and received 7 objections.
- Reports 4, 5 and 6 are in Suffolk.
- 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.
- The Planning Inspector undertook a further visit in July 2022 and has recently given the opportunity to submit further representations about an objection in the Essex part of the stretch prior to advising the Secretary of State on the outstanding objections.

#### **Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 11.10.23 No change since previous report

- Stage 5 (Open) – but not yet available for use
- Work to establish the route is now taking place.

#### **Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 11.10.23 No change since previous report

- Stage 4 (Determine)
- Natural England published proposals on 9th December 2020
- 7 objections were received.



- A Planning Inspector visited the sites in November 2022 and has considered the 7 objections. Now awaiting decisions by the Secretary of State.
- Two reports where no objections were received were approved in May 2023 by the Secretary of State Notice by the Secretary of State under section 52 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949: Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey, lengths FFB2 and FFB3 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

**Bawdsey to Aldeburgh** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 11.10.23  
No change since previous report

- Stage 4 and 5 (Determine and Open)
- The report was published on 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2021.
- Report 3 has been approved by the Secretary of State.
- The Planning Inspector visited the stretch in July 2022, and we are waiting to hear the decision from the Secretary of State.

**Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 11.10.23

- Stage 4 and 5 (Determine and Open)
- Natural England published proposals on 29th January 2020.
- 23 objections were received – all on one of the 6 individual reports.
- Coastal Access Reports 1,2,3,5 and 6 were approved in June 2022 by the Secretary of State.
- The Planning Inspector was due to visit earlier in October but had to cancel at short notice. NE has not yet been told when it will be rescheduled.

### 3. Suffolk Progress

The new project officer has focused on the establishment works on the Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry stretch. All works will be funded by Natural England by applying for grants from two NE held funds. The breadth of the establishment works is broad, ranging from tree safety surveys, design and construction of structures such as steps and culverts, new interpretation boards, bespoke heritage signs in conservation areas as well as the more familiar installation of new signposts and waymark posts. We have developed new technical specifications and a GIS method for recording works including the production of bespoke maps and scheme details for the works packs needed for the quotation process, in line with the requirements of the NE grant scheme. Understanding and clarifying the many legal and technical aspects of the National Trail works and grant process with NE has been a key piece of work during this initial period.

Several works packages have been put out to tender, namely:-

- Materials for signing works.
- Installation of signs and waymarking from Shotley to the Orwell bridge - grant application approved.
- Structures (bridges) and minor works from Shotley to the Orwell bridge
- Tree survey and tree surgery on the Orwell Park Estate

- Clearance and fencing on the Orwell Park Estate

The project officer has also started to verify the infrastructure required on the Aldeburgh to Hopton stretch which was surveyed by NE (with SCC) in 2017/18, starting with the confirmed reports from Aldeburgh to Southwold and from Pakefield to Hopton. The planning inspectorate is still to visit the section from Southwold to Pakefield to consider objections.

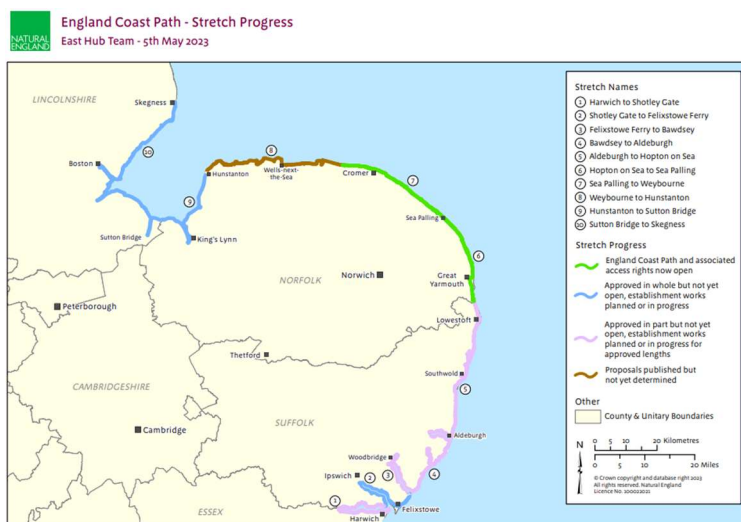
We are currently awaiting the new waymark discs for the King Charles III England Coast Path from Natural England before the signing work can start on the ground.

Discussions continue between SCC Public Health, National Highways, Natural England, and the Development & Improvement Manager on access by the King Charles III England Coast Path over the Orwell Bridge. Public Health understand any restrictions on, or modifications to, access over the bridge will require the cooperation of Natural England and will require funding. As it stands the intention is to improve signing and provide a rest stop on the new steps to be installed on the south west embankment, measures intended to provide reflection and intervention opportunities for those intending to take their lives.

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

Now political support for establishing a regional trail has been given by Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, a set up meeting has been arranged for next month. A regional trail was touched on at the presentation of SLAF's annual report to Cabinet earlier this month.

#### 5. England Coast Path – Progress Map for the East



END  
AW/SCC October 2023