

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Agenda
Meeting Date:	23 April 2026
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Venue:	Endeavour House

		Paper Number
1.	14:00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	14.05 Minutes of previous meeting	LAF 26/07
3.	14.15 Declaration of interest	
4.	14.20 NSIP presentation by Graham Gunby	
5.	14.50 NSIPs approved	LAF 26/08 AR
6.	15.00 NSIPs in consultation	LAF 26/09 SDB
7.	15.10 Network Rail	LAF 26/10 SK
8.	15.20 King Charles III England Coast Path	LAF 26/11 CD
9.	15.30 Local Government review and devolution	AW
10.	15.45 Public Question Time	
11.	15.50 Any Other Business	
12.	16.00 Dates & Venues of Future Meeting	

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Minutes of Meeting
Paper:	LAF 26/07
Author/Contact:	Jennifer Green
Meeting Date:	Thursday 29 January 2026
Venue:	Endeavour House

1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping.

Present: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair); Christopher Bower (CB) (Vice Chair); Suzanne Bartlett (SB); Margaret Hancock (MH); Rowley Wilson (RW); Susan Mobbs (SM); Monica Pipe (MP); Ed Thompson (ET); Joanna Spicer (JS); Gordon Merfield (GM); Anthony Wright (AWr)

Minutes: Jennifer Green (JG)

SCC officers – Andrew Woodin (AW); Claire Dickson (CD); Steve Kerr (SK); Jane Skoulding (JS) Green Access officer

Members of the public: Daniel Warner (DW) - Green Lane Association - Suffolk area representative

Apologies and Absences: Jim Wayman (JWa); Clare Phillips (CP)

2. Minutes of previous meeting – DRAFT

The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 October 2025 LAF25/26 were reviewed and agreed. These will now be published and made available to the public via the SCC website.

These will be published and made available to the public via the SCC website.

3. Declaration of Interest – None.

4. Network Rail

SK gave an update on Needham Market Gipsy Lane and read out recent correspondence addressed to the Suffolk Local Access forum. It was agreed by SLAF members to delegate a response from the SLAF chair Mr Hall. It was also

agreed that all points addressed in the correspondence are not for the forum to answer.

ACTION: BH to draft response

SK gave a further update on the previous TWAO. Confirming that Paynes is still yet to be finalised.

SK stated that there is no further update on FP6 Brantham. This will be raised at the next SRRP meeting.

SK stated that there is no further update on the rail crossing extinguishment order application at FP13 Bacton. Consideration must be given to not obstructing FP39 where the route connects with FP13.

SK stated that Higham FP1 Network Rail requested funding this financial year from NR budget with construction in 2026/27.

AW stated that this forward funding means balancing risk of shortfall against loss of NR funding and no construction. SCC has decided to take the funds this financial year. This is a package already agreed.

SK stated that SRRP meeting was on 16th January and SK was unavailable to attend. CD attended the meeting.

CD updated the forum stating that NR are looking at the Millpost crossing (FP17 Spexhall) which is a National Cycle route. SCC would like to see improvements, including signing advising cyclists to dismount.

5. King Charles III England Coast Path

CD updated the forum on the progress of the KCIIECP.

Harwich to Shotley gate route is not open but Manningtree to Shotley Gate fully scoped and grant approved.

Bawdsey to Aldeburgh approved and works to start by the end of February. Rollback was taken into consideration.

Aldeburgh to Kessingland grant to come in and projected timeline for opening mid to late summer

MH gave positive feedback on the KCIIECP in the Nacton area

CD advised that JS is working closely with partners on the Ipswich Waterfront alternative route with bespoke signage interpretation boards and benches. The opening date of the alternative route is March 2026.

GM and SB asked about the impact of coastal erosion and the rollback process CD responded that roll back is considered as and when required. Where coastal erosion is affected the rights of way are legally closed and the route can be diverted on a road back from the coast.

BH thanks CD for all the hard work on KCIIECP.

6. SLAF Annual Report 2024 to 2025

BH stated that he presented the SLAF annual report to Cabinet in November with applause. SCC Cabinet members very supportive of the work SLAF does

There were members questions including the Fonnereau Way Railway bridge.

AW advised FP18 Westerfield will be extinguished when bridge is adopted.

MP noted NSIPS not treating ROW as separate topic. JS agreed that it should be better coordinated and key thread throughout planning

7. Local Government Review and Devolution

AW gave an update and advised that the 2026 election is postponed and that there are no further updates

AW stated new opportunities allows local access forums to be combined between local authorities and new opportunities for walking and cycling. Should need arise.

JS advised that mid-March for government response on shape of LGR

RW asked about status of LAFs. AW confirmed Highway Authorities must have a local access forum

ET advised Bedfordshire has three local access forums and Suffolk has two which are The Broads and Suffolk

ACTION: To add LGR to agenda for April meeting update on government response to preferred outcome

8. NSIPS (Approved)

AW gave an update to the members

JS asked how a SCC objection is dealt with

ACTION: SCC will correspond with JS

AW advised work on the PROW fund and PROW working group is progressing in absence of Sizewell C manager. SCC is ensuring delivery of more straightforward schemes.

9. NSIPS in (consultation)

AW advised any questions regarding other NSIPS and very large developments can be forwarded to the SLAF email address for the Green Access planning manager to respond.

ACTION: JG to forward members questions to the relevant officer regarding information on paper LAF 26/05

GM asked about road closures during work on the NSIPS and large developments

MP seconded GM question

ACTION: CD to clarify with the officer and respond

JS commented on solar farms and opportunities for new access

MP noted the increasing number of very large developments.

AW advised this will be reviewed to ensure SLAF have information to hand

ACTION: SLAF members to submit questions to the SLAF email address

10. Major schemes in consultation

AW advised any questions regarding other NSIPS and very large developments can be forwarded to the SLAF email address for the officer to respond.

JS reiterated opportunities for new access and BH advised there is a subgroup for this.

AW stated the importance of SLAF reviewing and SLAF input of very large developments regarding opportunity for green access. Felixstowe North and SLAF input was a good example. The forum can influence outcomes.

11. Prince Phillip local bridge at Ipswich Docks

SK gave verbal report stating there is 1.3 million fund available. Transport Strategy are leading on providing shared pedestrian/cycling routes within the Island site. These will connect to the Eastern quays at the Waterfront via the Lock bridge.

12. A12 Major Road Network Scheme

AW gave an update on three key areas of walking and cycling improvements as per report

13. Any Other Business

BH gave an update on the regional local access forum meeting. Norfolk County Council LAF has a new chair and vice chair. BH stated that SLAF has the best officer support.

14. Public Question Time

AW introduced DW and DW explained his role as the Suffolk Green Lane representative. DW stated the Green Lane Association promotes sustainable use of ROW and to assist councils.

CD emphasised the operational work with Green Lane Association and user groups over the years.

15. Date of next meetings

23/04/2026

23/07/2026

22/10/2026

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	NSIPS Approved (Sizewell C, SPR East Anglia, Bramford to Twinstead)
Paper:	LAF 26/08
Author/Contact:	Annette Robinson
Meeting:	Thursday 23 April 2026 2.00pm- 4.00pm
Venue:	Endeavour House

Sizewell C

SZC produce a monthly update on their website that summarises the current general works situation.

[Project Update - March 2026 - Sizewell C Works Tracker](#)

Current activities affecting PROW & Access

Sizewell Link Road and Two Village Bypass

Construction work has started on both schemes with Galliford Tye establishing compounds and constructing haul roads. The PRoW network will be either kept open on existing routes with controlled crossing points or have alternative routes put in place.

The roundabout at the north end of the two-village bypass at the junction of the A12 and A1094 is now open and the diversion process for public footpath Benhall FP28, is coming to completion.

Main site works

Bridleway 19 has a short-term temporary diversion to accommodate the installation of a power line, and at the south end, is crossed by the current road access route to the temporary construction area and the new rail line (the green rail route). Discussions are underway regarding the management of this road/rail/bridleway interface.

The alternative bridleway construction is ongoing and is being closely monitored by the SCC NSIP engineers to ensure that the quality of the construction work and that the approved specifications are being followed.

The new rail line into the main construction area is being installed and crosses several PRow on the west side of Leiston. Measures have been put in place to ensure safe passage during this construction phase including a temporary (removable) bridge across the rail line.



On the coast

Construction of the Marine Bulk Import Facility (MBIF)

The footpath and beach was closed during February and March to allow for the construction work on the marine bulk import facility (overhead conveyor to a jetty for bringing in aggregates by sea). Unfortunately, the work didn't progress as quickly as hoped and so plans are now being developed to ensure that the coast footpath remains open whilst the MBIF is being constructed across the beach

A safety management protocol is being developed by SZC for approval by SCC.

[Marine Bulk Import Facility Construction Update - Sizewell C Works Tracker](#)



Pakenham Fen Meadow

SCC area awaiting a revised plan for the fen meadow works which should include the commitment to providing a dry route for the public footpath across the fen.

East Anglia Two Offshore Windfarm

The new footpath has been opened to the public and the footpath through the substation site (Knodishall FP6), has been permanently closed.



SCC were successful in persuading SPR to commit to providing a new public footpath around the sustainable drainage area as a local amenity. This will be provided once the SUDs area is established and the area is free from construction works.

Works to establish the cable corridor from Thorpeness to Friston have started and there is a PRow Management Plan in place to ensure safe crossing points and alternative routes where closure is necessary.

END

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	NSIPS in consultation
Paper:	LAF 26/09
Author/Contact:	Samantha Bye
Meeting:	Thursday 29 January 2026, 2:00pm-4:00pm
Venue:	Endeavour House

Details of all NSIPs affecting Suffolk can be found on Suffolk County Council's website here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects-including-nsips/nsips-in-suffolk>

In response to the number of NSIPs in Suffolk SCC produced a Supplementary Guidance Document which can be seen here: <green-access-prow-guidance.pdf>

1. **Sea Link**

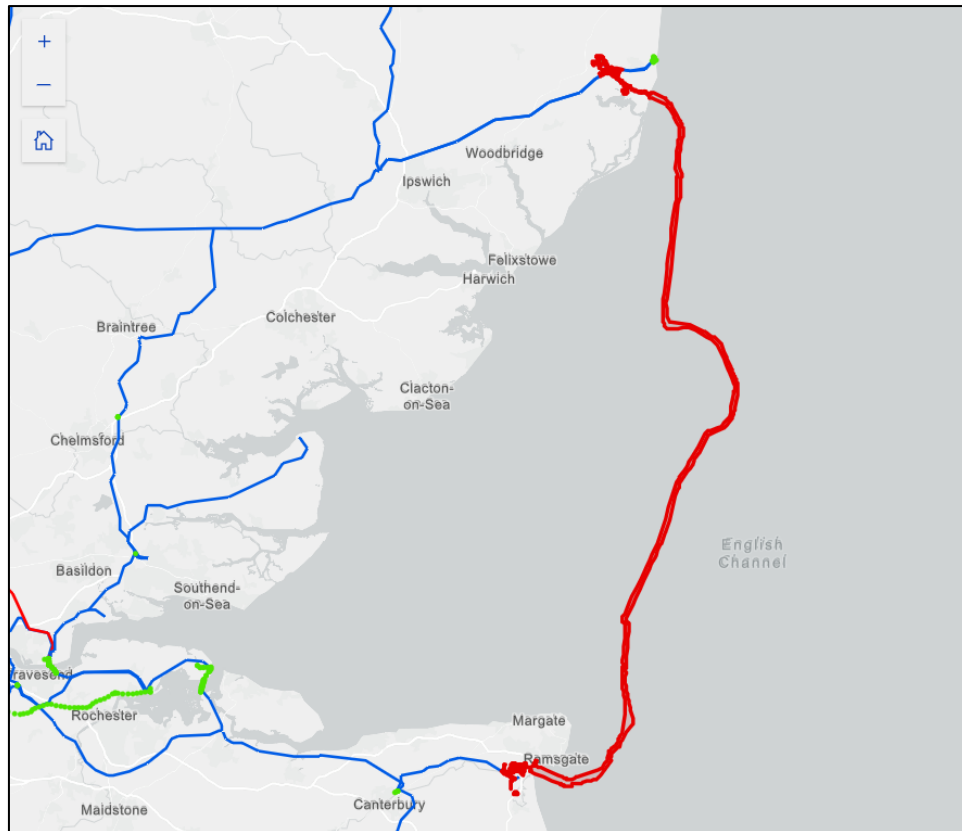
Sealink is a 130km long offshore cable with new onshore infrastructure allowing power to flow in either direction between Suffolk and Kent, depending on where renewable energy is being generated at that time and where in the country power is needed. The scheme's onshore infrastructure includes a converter station east of Saxmundham, substations and new underground and overhead electricity lines, as well as upgrading existing overhead electricity lines.

Details of the scheme can be found here:

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/the-great-grid-upgrade/sea-link>

An interactive map of the scheme can be seen here:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/dc9df77857724873877772709f8a970>



Planning Inspectorate details of the project are here: [Sea Link - Project information](#)

Key updates to date:

- Sea Link held a series of topic workshops following statutory consultation to address concerns raised by SCC over the impact on the access network and amenity value for users.
- Sea Link undertook further, targeted, consultation introducing changes including an alteration to the cable route north of Aldeburgh, confirmation of the proposed access route to the converter station, changes to access and associated bridge over the River Fromus, and outlining how coordination with other NSIP projects had evolved.
- An on-going issue for SCC PRoW is to have green access treated as a separate theme within consultation. At present it is placed within 4 separate topic themes.
- On 23 April 2025 the Planning Inspectorate accepted the application for development consent for Sea Link.
- At this pre-examination stage anyone with an interest has until 23 June 2025 to register to have their say:
[Register to have your say about a national infrastructure project - National Infrastructure Planning.](#)

Latest update:

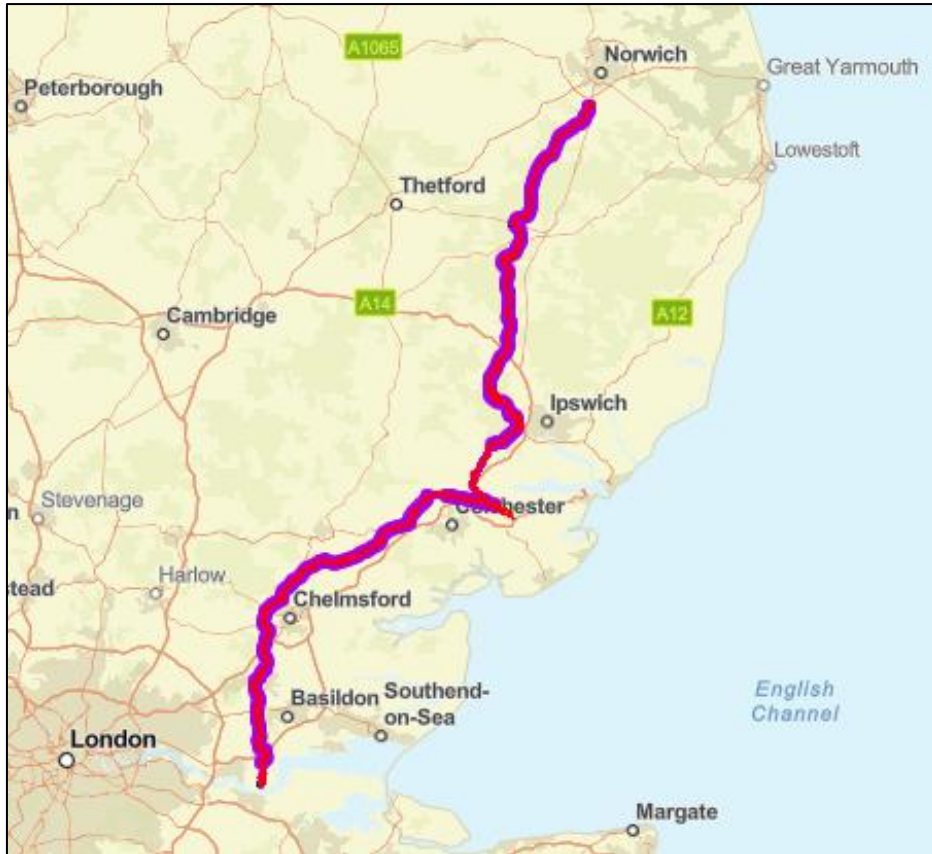
- Pre-examination - Interested parties were encouraged to submit Relevant Representations regarding the proposed development between 24 April and 23 June 2025, however, the Planning Inspectorate opened a further period running from 18 July until 18 August 2025 for parties who had not been notified to submit relevant representations by the previous deadline.
- Following the close of the Preliminary Meeting, the Planning Inspectorate will examine the proposals for a period of 6 months. The Examination opened on 5 November 2025 and will close on 5 May 2026.
- SCC PRoW are working through various deadlines and are currently on deadline 6 and ISH3 (item specific hearing 3). We continue to ask for a route across the River Fromas (if the bridge is permanent), Bridleway route to the south of the B1119, and resurfacing of the Sluice path at Aldeburgh, as recommended by the RSPB. We have also stated that if the routes cannot be achieved, we request a financial contribution for mitigation, so we can implement these routes and works ourselves.

2. Norwich to Tilbury (formally East Anglia Green)

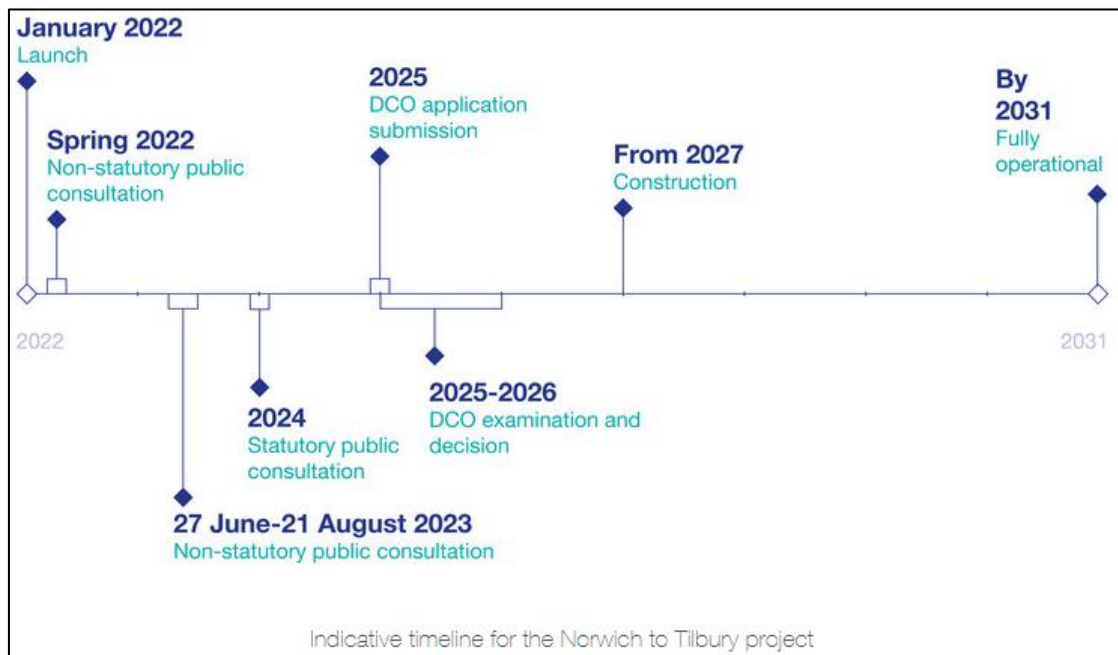
Norwich to Tilbury will reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk, and Tilbury in Essex, as well as connect new offshore wind generation. The scheme will build approximately 160km of overhead lines and pylons, over 20km of underground cabling through the Dedham Vale National Landscape, and a new substation on the Tendring Peninsula.

Details of the scheme can be found here: <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

An interactive map of the scheme can be found here: <https://norwichtotilburymap.nationalgrid.com/>



The timetable published by National Grid is shown below.



Key updates to date:

- Statutory consultation took place in summer 2024.
- SLAF's responded to that consultation in July 2024
- National Grid provided an opportunity for feedback on the consultation with targeted consultations in Norfolk and Suffolk between January and March 2025. Details below:
- <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury/document-library#4257225834-1659806241-3>
- This scheme is in pre-application stage with the application expected to be submitted by August 2025. A link to the Planning Inspectorate website with further details is here: [Norwich to Tilbury - Project information](#)

Latest update:

- A submission is expected mid-late August 2025
- The PROW team are very engaged in developing the Statement of Common Ground for PROW, and for Traffic and Transport.
- The application for Development Consent was submitted on 29 August 2025.
- Pre-examination - Occurring between 16 October and 27 November 2025, all interested parties were requested to submit relevant representations. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/scc-n2t-relevant-representation-nov-2025-with-appendix.pdf>
- This is now in the examination stage and we are working on statements of common ground.

3. LionLink (formerly EUROLINK)

LionLink is a partnership between National Grid and Dutch partner TenneT to build a subsea cable between Great Britain and the Netherlands connecting a Dutch offshore windfarm to the GB and Dutch electricity grids.

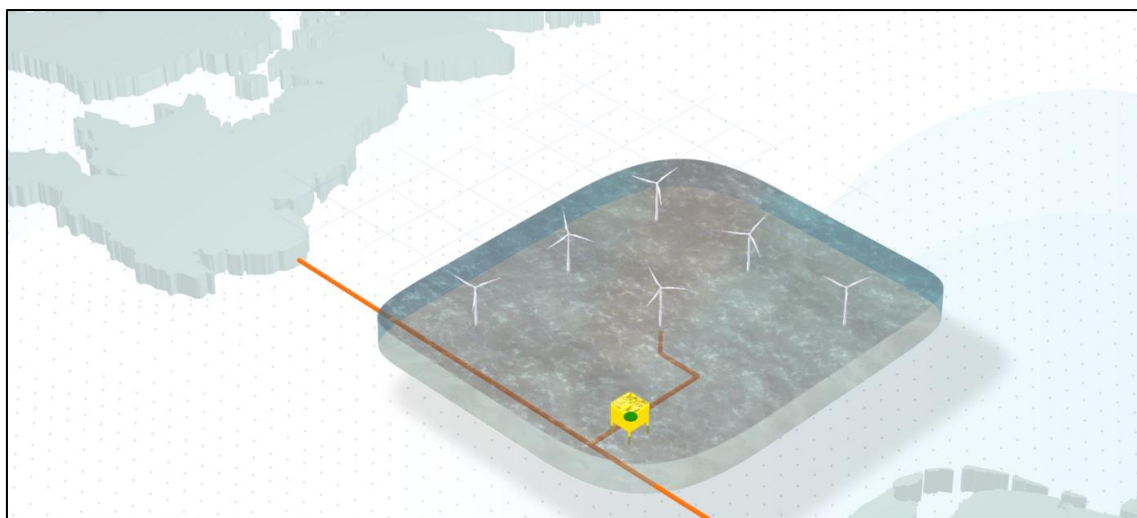
In Suffolk the scheme involves landfall of the subsea cable near Walberswick and the construction of an onshore cable corridor to a new onshore converter station east of Saxmundham. Onshore cabling will then link to an expanded National Grid substation at Friston (approved under the EA1North & 2 DCO consent). In Holland a new converter station is being constructed offshore.

Details of the scheme including an animation on proposals can be found here:

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/national-grid-ventures/lionlink/about>

The Planning Inspectorate website for information is here:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN020033>



Key updates to date:

- Detailed responses have been submitted by SCC's rights of way and access team expressing concern over the cumulative effects on the PRow network of this project with other east coast NSIPs.
- The county council has pressed for a co-ordinated approach with other NSIPs for the cable corridor and design of the proposed converter station site.
- As with Sea Link, the PRow topic is split across different themes making responding less easy.
- The team have responded to Transport Assessments to protect the PRow network (such as PRow conditions, user surveys, construction methods, use of banksmen, permanent infrastructure, and PRow diversions).

Latest update:

- Walberswick has been selected as the landfall site.
- The current timeline is for the Development Consent Order to be submitted in 2026.
- National Grid Ventures, the Applicant for the LionLink proposals, has launched their Statutory Consultation, which will run from 13 January – 10 March 2026. The consultation documents can be viewed via the following link: - <https://www.nationalgrid.com/national-grid-ventures/lionlink/library>
- Seismic testing took place in June 2025 on Walberswick beach.
- Statutory consultation closed on 10th March 2026. We continue to ask for PRow links through and off site to connect to other keys routes and PRowS, along with open access.
- SLAF responded to the Lion Link project public consultation (see appendix A)

4. EcoPower

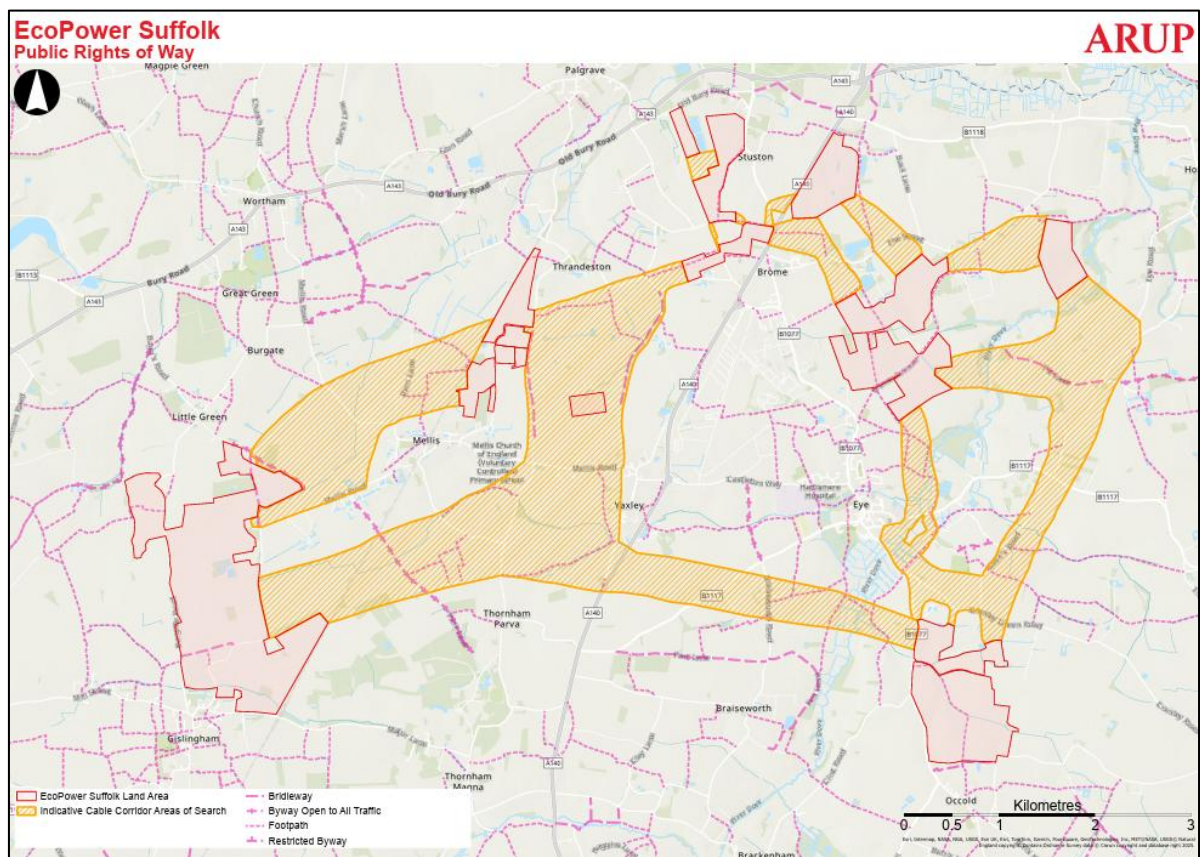
EcoPower Suffolk is a solar farm and a co-located Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure with grid connection via underground cable to the Yaxley substation.

The project area extends close to various villages in the Mid Suffolk District including Yaxley, Brome, Gislingham, Mellis, Eye and Occold. Collectively, the proposed energy farm will cover a land area of around 600ha.

EcoPower are aiming to submit their DCO application to PINS in 2026.

Details of the scheme can be found here:

<https://ecopowersuffolk.com/>



Key updates to date:

- Non-statutory consultation (Stage 1) with in-person and online consultation events took place in March 2025. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/SCC-EcoPower-Suffolk-Non-Statutory-Consultation-Response.pdf>
- Public statutory consultation is expected to be held in the Autumn of 2025.

Latest update:

- EIA scoping request submitted and responded to in February 2026.

5. White Elm

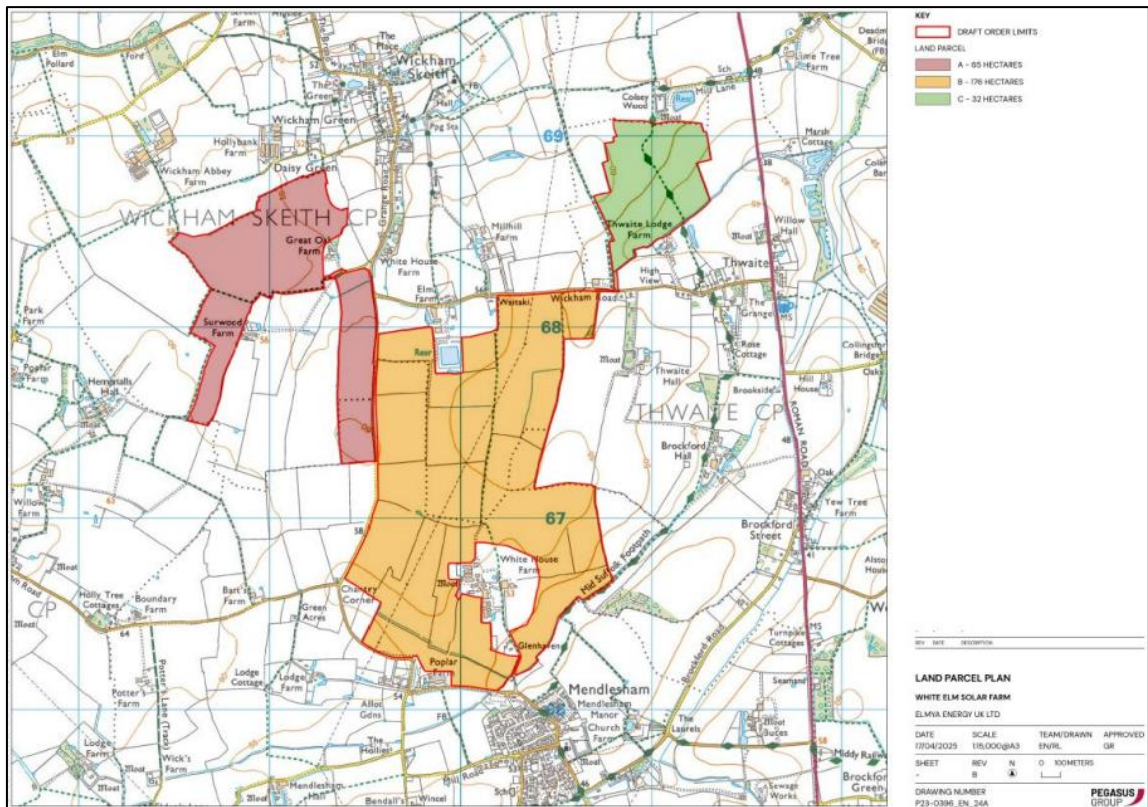
White Elm is a proposed solar farm and battery energy storage system (BESS) on land north of Mendlesham.

Details of the scheme including an animation on proposals can be found here:

<https://www.whiteelmsolarfarm.com/>

The Planning Inspectorate website for information is here:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110003>



Latest update:

- From 19 May to 30 June 2025, White Elm ran a non-statutory consultation for local communities, wider stakeholders and consultees to feed into detailed designs to be shared at statutory consultation in winter 2025.
- On Saturday 24th May 2025 the following was posted on the project website by the promoter:
“The project team has taken a decision to pause development of the project indefinitely. Please note that the ongoing non-statutory consultation has been cancelled with immediate effect. This includes the two public consultation events on Saturday 31st May and Wednesday 4th June 2025. We ask that any work being undertaken to respond to the proposals shared in our non-statutory consultation be cancelled.”
- No further update.

Planning Inspectorate Project Stage	Non-statutory Consultation	Pre-Application	Acceptance	Pre-Examination	Examination	Recommendation	Decision
1. Sea Link							
2. Norwich to Tilbury							
3. LionLink							
4. EcoPower							
5. White Elm							

KEY:							
Stage Completed							
Stage In Progress							

Appendix A

SLAF
Suffolk Local Access Forum

Freepost NGV LIONLINK

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

Email: slaf@suffolk.gov.uk

Date: 10/03/2026

Re: National Grid Lion Link Consultation

This letter constitutes a formal response by the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) to the Public Consultation on the Lion Link Project.

SLAF is a statutory body appointed by Suffolk County Council under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise various bodies on matters affecting countryside access and the public rights of way (PRoW) network. We have been consulted and responded to proposals by bodies such as Network Rail, Highways England, Natural England, National Grid and other National Strategic Infrastructure Projects.

Due to the lack that base maps are grey scale with the order limits and cable alignment in colour it has been difficult to locate where PRoW's exist. Also, information pertaining to them is not pulled together in the PEIR documents. However, our responses to your proposals are set out below:

Walberswick to Hinton

SLAF is very concerned about the impact that the Landfall site will have on the village of Walberswick which is not only a small community but also a significant tourist destination particularly in the summer months. The proposed 24/7 HDD drilling and seven days a week working on the whole scheme is not acceptable, especially in a designated National Landscape.

PRoW's affected in this section are in Walberswick E/536/11,14,15,17,18, 21 & 23; also, Blythburgh E/144/14. The King Charles II English Coast Path and other promoted walks are also impacted.

We would expect that in the construction phase there would be continuation of public access within this area. Any temporary closures would be kept to a minimum, and alternative routes provided where necessary.

Hinton to Theberton

Surprisingly only two PRoW's are affected, Blythburgh E144/25 and Darsham E/216/5.

Theberton to Saxmundham

SLAF notes that the proposed route affects several PRow's particularly around Theberton E515/3,4 & 5 and Middleton E396/15,17, 20 & 23. Some of these would not be impacted if the HVDC Western route option which enables co-location with the proposed Sizewell Link road is taken.

Saxmundham to Friston

The area around the proposed Converter Station site that is also the location of the Sea Link Converter Station will have the greatest impact on the landscape and PRow's. The site is very open with little tree cover, and at present has several rights of way on it or close by including Saxmundham E/460/23, Sternfield E/491/5, 6 & 10 and Knodishall E/354/15,16,17,18,29 & 32 which all provide green access routes from Saxmundham to the wider countryside to the east. SLAF expects a PRow management plan to be agreed with Suffolk County Council to be in place prior to any construction work. This would include showing how the loss of these routes would be mitigated against or diverted to allow new alternative routes and additional landscaping which would enable robust and attractive links between Saxmundham, Sternfield and Knodishall. The height and footprint of the proposed converter station(s) would also have a serious landscape and visual impact leaving Saxmundham on the B1119 which would be difficult to disguise.

Within the Converter Station site itself we appreciate that this would entail permanent and temporary diversions of PRow's in the parishes of Saxmundham, Sternfield and Knodishall but would expect that the applicant would work with the County Councils' officers to provide a more sustainable alternative access network. For example, providing a bridleway alongside the B1119, separated from the carriageway and watercourse by planting, from where Saxmundham E/460/023 leaves the road, to Sternfield E-491/010 and possibly as far as Workhouse Lane E/491/12.

SLAF would expect that Sea Link would also have regard to the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Adopted in July 2025 which one of its proposals is "ensuring the successful, physical, environmental and social integration of new development in the Garden Neighbourhood with the existing community". This is a development of eight hundred homes south of Saxmundham between the A12 and the B1121 bisected by the Ipswich to Lowestoft rail line within which are several PRow's which link to E/460/019 alongside the B1121.

As part of any mitigation measures, we would like to see the provision of a new PRow using the proposed access road to the Sea Link site off the B1121 to link up the Garden Neighbourhood with the existing and proposed diverted PRow's within the Order Line.

General

We are particularly concerned at the lack of acknowledgement of the cumulative effects in terms of traffic generation, visual intrusion, loss of habitat and impact on local communities that other proposed developments in the area which are part of The Great Grid Upgrade will bring. These include the Scottish Power NSIP consent for the Friston substation. If this ends up being constructed or extended as part of the Lion Link project, we expect that all conditions from that DCO to be adhered to and the current and future off-site projects associated with the construction of Sizewell C.

For Lion Link it would make sense for the ducting between Saxmundham and Friston to be put in as part of the Sea Link DCO to avoid additional temporary PRow diversions later.

We would expect that in the construction phase there would be continuation of public access within the Draft order limits. Any temporary closures would be kept to a minimum, and alternative routes provided where necessary. Where tracks which are also PRow's are to be used as haul roads, we would expect the rights of walkers and/or equestrians to be protected.

Public Rights of Way represent a great resource in Suffolk, providing green access for local communities as well as visitors. Any disruption of the network, albeit only temporary, could have adverse consequences to the county's social, physical, mental wellbeing as well as its economy, so it is important that consideration should be given to ensuring mitigation measures are put in place to minimise the effect on the wider landscape due to changes in the views and the impact of construction traffic. If this is not possible then other forms of compensation would be required. This is particularly important where the impact is on locally promoted circular routes and named longer distance paths. We would expect that any green spaces created within or adjacent to the Draft Order Line would be designated as Open Access Land for public use.

As this is a long-term project that could take several years to implement if the DCO is confirmed we would expect some sort of Community Fund to be put in place to compensate the affected areas which could be used for community and green access improvements. There would also be benefits in appointing a liaison person who could work with local communities as well as the local authority as the work progresses, to ensure that any temporary diversions are in place and signed off by the relevant officer.

With the proposed Sea Link NSIP DCO currently progressing through the Public Inquiry stage, it would seem sensible for all parties involved to get together, particularly over the issue of rights of way, so that an already diverted route does not have to be disturbed again. As both Lion Link and Sea Link could be being built within the same construction time frame as Sizewell C, the impact of construction traffic on this small area of Suffolk in National Landscape designated area will have a significant impact on both local and visitors' enjoyment of the area through its rights of way network.

Other issues which SLAF have with the proposals includes, the seeming lack of co-ordination between energy schemes on the Suffolk Coast with its numerous conservation and environmental designations, the impact this proposal would have on the local economy in terms of the loss of socio-economic, tourism and recreation potential, and the possible impact of construction traffic in the area conflicting with that likely to arise from Sizewell C if both end up going ahead at the same time.

SLAF would hope that the above points will be taken on board.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum.

Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Network Rail and Associated British Port Updates
Paper:	LAF 26/10
Author/Contact:	Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin
Meeting:	Thursday 23 April 2026, 2:00pm - 4:00pm
Venue:	Endeavour House

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



Officers still await the signing off of the Road Safety Audit (RSA3) and the submission of the outstanding documentation by the railway operator. Officers have requested this information from NR on various occasions.

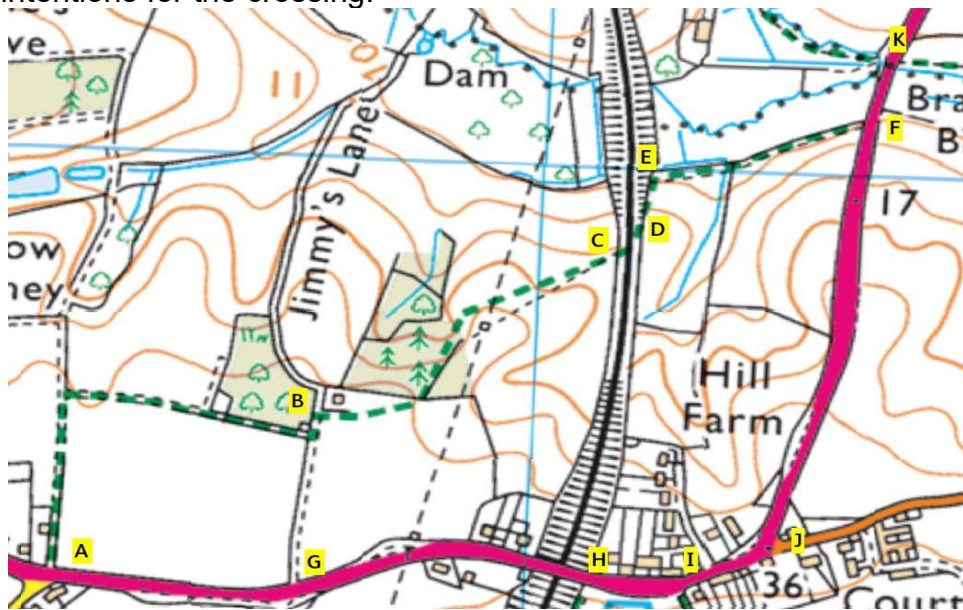
General/Countywide

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

Further to the update provided in January, all but one of sites have been certified by the county council. Officers have yet to receive the final design drawing for the Paynes crossing and will work closely with NR to go through the approval process.

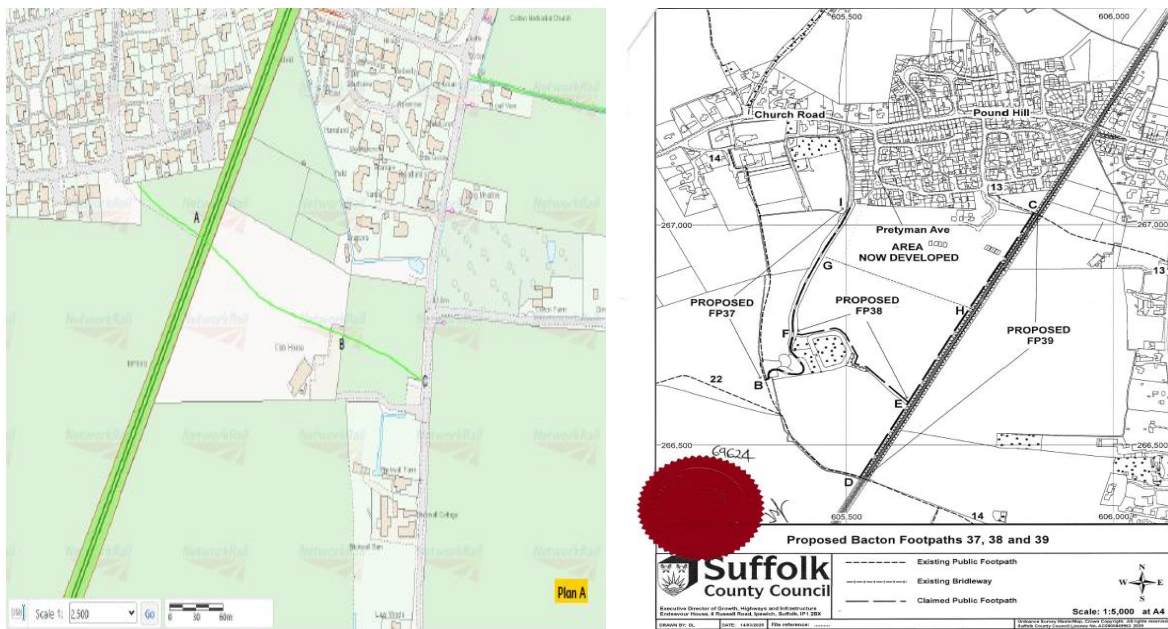
Footpath 6 Brantham (High Bridge)

Since the Forum's last meeting there has still been no further update provided by NR on their intentions for the crossing.



Footpath 13 Bacton

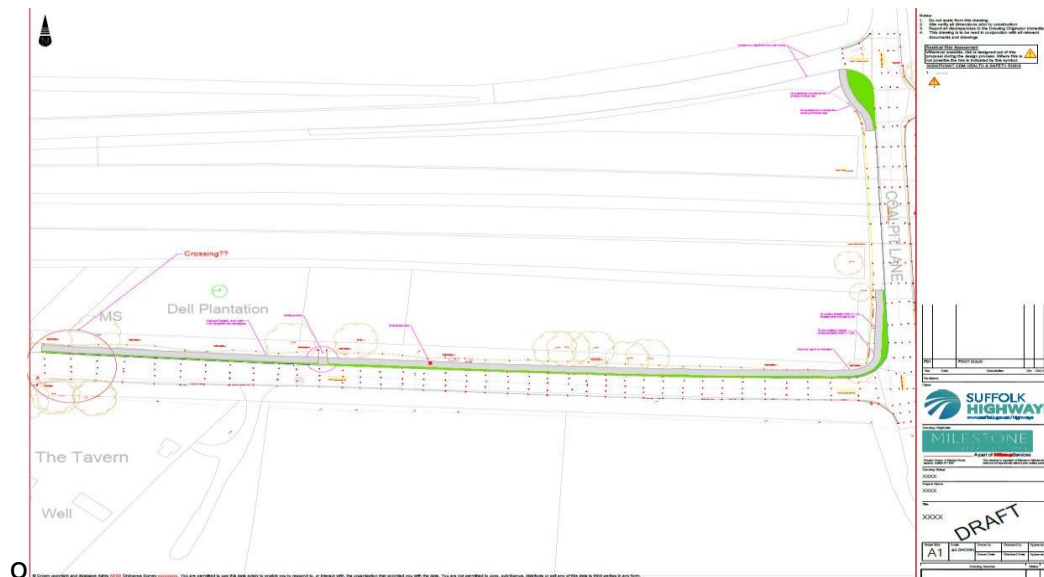
Further to the update at the Forum's last meeting, there has been no further dialogue with NR regarding the Rail Crossing Extinguishment Order application.



Officers understand Mid Suffolk District Council is still trying to organise a meeting with the developer, NR and SCC officers to ensure FP39 is unobstructed.

Higham – Highway Improvement Scheme

Further to the previous update provided to the Forum, NR has now provided the funds for the improvement scheme, and the works are to be undertaken this financial year (2026/7). Officers have requested a works programme from Suffolk Highways. Officers are still to update and publish the Equality Impact Statement (EIA) relating to the scheme, which is to be informed by the programme.



Byway 38/Restricted Byway 38A Ipswich (Griffin Wharf)

Members will recall the significant amount of work that took place to open up the Public Open Space (POS) last year and the fact that parts of Byway 38 (BY38) and Restricted Byway 38A (RB38A) are recorded coincident with the operational railway that serves the Bretts Aggregates plant. Associated British Ports (ABP) have recently approached the county council to restart discussions on providing a permanent solution to stop up those elements of the highway coincident with the railway.

A meeting was held between SCC, IBC and ABP on 14 April. The outcome of that meeting was that SCC will work with ABP and their agents to develop an order package to be brought before the Magistrates Court that will look to stop up those parts of BY38/RB38A which are coincident with the operational railway, whilst providing one or more gated public level crossings to allow access to the public open space. If the package is granted by the Magistrates, it will then also allow ABP to erect a permanent fence along the railway corridor, which is required for H&S reasons.

Future TWAO application

Since the Forum's last update, the county council has still not received any further detail or update on NR's future TWAO proposals.

Suffolk Road Rail Partnership /group (SRRPG)

At its last meeting the Forum was provided with a verbal update on the discussions held at the Group's January meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 23 April.

END SK/SCC April 2026

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	The King Charles III England Coast Path
Paper:	LAF 26/11
Author/Contact:	Claire Dickson
Meeting:	Thursday 23 April 2026, 2:00pm - 4:00pm
Venue:	Endeavour House

1. Progress on Establishing The King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIECP)

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

Stretch name	Progress
Harwich to Shotley Gate	Stage 5: Approved. (Not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)
Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry	OPEN for use from 16 th October 2024
Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey	OPEN for use from 24 th September 2025
Bawdsey to Aldeburgh	Stage 5: Approved. (Not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)
Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea	Four out of six reports are OPEN for use from 12 th December 2024. Two out of six reports at Stage 5: Approved. (Not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)

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

Stage 4: Determine

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 KCIIIIECP can be found [here](#).

2. The Stretches in More Detail

Natural England has provided this update on the national situation:

Just over 78% of the whole route is now open. Nationally 82 miles have opened since the previous LAF meeting.

Status of proposals	Number of miles
Total mileage submitted to government	2689
- complete and open for public use	2099
- approved by government and work to establish the route taking place, or awaited	512
- awaiting government decision	78

The latest information from Natural England on its progress for the King Charles III England Coast Path in Suffolk is shown on their website. The progress report update dates are shown in the links at the start of the report and more detail from Natural England is shown in the table below.

The Five Suffolk Stretches

Harwich to Shotley Gate – Giles Merritt. Last updated 13.04.26

No change since previous report

- Report 1 and 4. Secretary of State announced their approval of this stretch on 31 August 2021
- Report 2, 3, 5 and 6. Secretary of State announced their approval of this stretch on 18 September 2025.
- Stage 5 (Open) – but not yet available for use
- Work to establish the route is now taking place, for opening in early Summer 2026.

Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry – Giles Merritt. Last updated 13.04.26

- Open for use.

Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey – Giles Merritt. Last updated 13.04.26

- Open for use.

Bawdsey to Aldeburgh – Giles Merritt. Last updated 13.04.26

- Secretary of State announced their approval of this stretch on 2 May 2025.
- Stage 5 (Open) – but not yet available for use
- Work to establish the route is now taking place, for opening in early Summer 2026.

Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea – Giles Merritt. Last updated 13.04.26

- Stage 5 (Open)
- Reports 1, 2, 3 and 6 opened to the public on 12 December 2024.
- Report 4 - Secretary of State announced their approval of this stretch on 18 September 2025. Work to establish the route is now taking place, for opening in late Summer 2026.
- Report 5 - work to establish the route is now taking place, for opening in early Summer 2026

3. Suffolk Progress

Following the Secretary of State announcement regarding the approval of Bawdsey to Aldeburgh stretch in early May 2025, Harwich to Shotley Gate and remaining two sections of Aldeburgh to Hopton in September 2025. The project officer has predominantly focused on the establishment works for these final approved stretches over the last nine months due to the complexities of the vast amount of new access. With works completed on Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry, Aldeburgh to Hopton (stretches 1, 2, 3 and 6) and Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey, with all these stretches now open to the public. All works are funded by Natural England by applying for grants from them. The breadth of the establishment works is broad, ranging from ecology and tree safety surveys, revetment and surfacing works, design and construction of structures such as boardwalks, bridges, and steps, installation of mitigation fencing, new interpretation boards, bespoke heritage signs in conservation areas as well as the more familiar installation of new signposts and waymark posts.

The county council has 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 Natural England grant scheme. Understanding and clarifying the many legal and technical aspects of the National Trail works and grant process with Natural England has been a key piece of work during this initial period.

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. National Highways agreed to replacement steps, and these have been installed, but the County Council continue to seek agreement to a resting point on the embankment and information signs. In late February 2025, National Highways confirmed that they would not want a resting point placed adjacent to the steps. Further discussions are ongoing with National Highways over future improvements to the embankments.

The Green Access Team launched the alternative route through Ipswich Waterfront in March 2026. The route is promoted with gateway signage at either side of the Orwell Bridge. This project has funded by National Landscapes DEFRA Access Award. The project has included working with a variety of partners including Ipswich Borough Council, Greenways, All About Ipswich, National Highways, National Landscapes, Suffolk Food Hall and St Joseph's College, Ipswich. National Highways and the county council's public health team are pleased to see this project completed, which both gives an alternative to walking the bridge and promotes Ipswich.

Focus is now on the remaining approved sections covering Bawdsey to Aldeburgh, Manningtree to Shotley Gate and Southwold to Pakefield, all stretches have received approval over the last 12 months. Scoping works have been completed with full Habitat Regulation Assessments carried out and mitigation works identified. The team have liaised closely with Environment Agency over permits and exemptions for planned works. With all approvals gained for remaining stretches. Several joint site visits have been undertaken with Natural England and relevant landowners over the last year to resolve matters and confirmation of detailed works has now been secured. Work tenders have been completed for physical works for Bawdsey to Aldeburgh, Manningtree to Shotley and part of Southwold to Pakefield. Establishment grants have recently been awarded by Natural England. With the majority of the works completed or commenced on site.

Works have been scoped for remaining tenders for Southwold to Pakefield. The county council are awaiting resolution by Natural England for a couple of issues prior to grants being submitted for approval. We anticipate the matters being resolved shortly.

The team have continued to liaise closely with Natural England over work requirements and completed several joint meetings with relevant landowners on both stretches over the last few months.

Discussions continue with Natural England on opening dates of the remaining approved stretches; the majority are likely to open late June 2026. It is anticipated that all stretches will be open by Autumn 2026.

The team continue to work closely with the RAMS Manager (Suffolk Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy) and Natural England to review all mitigation information signs. This is a positive area of work that will unify information signs on the trail and wider RAMS areas. Mitigation signage has been installed in line with RAMS Manager agreement on the three open stretches. This is continuing for the remaining approved stretches with detailed designs already agreed.

Natural England have advised that funding is available for a second project officer. As works are currently on target for delivery, we have not progressed with a second officer but increased support from current team members with Natural England agreement.

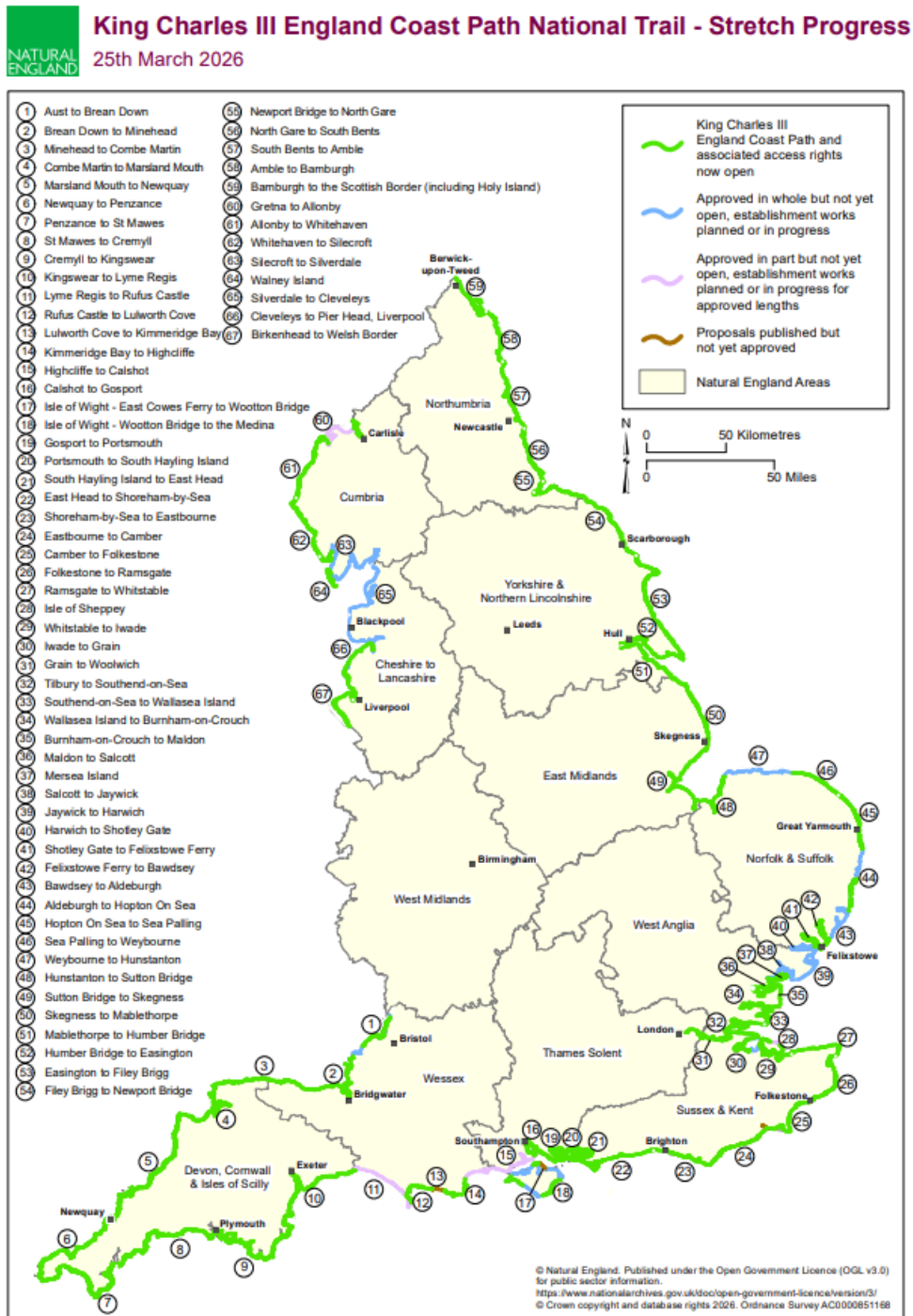
The Operations Team have established fortnightly meetings with Natural England representatives. We have carried out a twenty-six positive site visits with Natural England on all stretches over the last year. This has enabled us to discuss delivery of works and to meet with third parties on interpretation and works requirements. We have agreed that this will continue with remaining stretches.

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

The county council will review the most effective way to promote the King Charles III England Coast Path in Suffolk once the remaining stretches have been open to the public.

The amount of national trail maintenance grant access authorities and trail partnerships receive from Natural England is worked out using a funding formula. As reported at January 2025 meeting the formula is being reviewed, and this process is ongoing, following the establishment of a review working group. The review has not affected the 25/26 grants, and we await details for 26/27 grant offer.

5. England Coast Path – Progress Maps



The stretch between Shotley Gate and Felixstowe Ferry opened on 16th October 2024.

The stretch between Aldeburgh to Hopton (part) opened on 12th December 2024.

The stretch between Felixstowe Ferry and Bawdsey opened on 24th September 2025



King Charles III England Coast Path - Stretch Progress

East Hub Team - 24th September 2025



END
CLD/SCC APRIL 2026