

<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>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</b>

		<b>Paper Number</b>
1.	14:00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	14.05 Minutes of previous meeting	LAF 23/29
3.	14.10 Declaration of interest	
4.	14.15 Welcome new member	BH
5.	14.20 Vice Chair Election	Paper ballot
6.	14.30 Suffolk Energy Schemes	AW – LAF 24/01
7.	14.45 The King Charles III England Coast Path	AW – LAF 24/02
8.	15.00 Network Rail Updates	SK/AW – LAF 24/03
9.	15.15 Ipswich BY38 / RB38A - New Cut West	SK – LAF 24/04
10.	15.25 Definitive Map Cut-Off Date 2032	MG – LAF 24/05
11.	15.35 Open Access Review	DF – LAF 24/06
12.	15.40 SLAF Working Groups	DF – LAF 24/07
13.	15.45 Suffolk Local Access Forum Terms of Reference	AW – LAF 24/08
14.	15.50 Public Question Time	
15.	15.55 Any Other Business	
16.	16.00 Date of Next Meetings: April, July, October 2024 – dates and venues tbc	

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 23/29</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> October 2023, 2-4pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Bull Inn, Barton Mills</b>

## 1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping.

Present: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair); David Barker (DB) (Vice Chair); Suzanne Bartlett (SB); Christopher Bower (CB); Margaret Hancock (MH); Gordon Merfield (GM); Susan Mobbs (SM); Clare Phillips (CP); Cllr Joanna Spicer (JS); Roland Wilson (RW); Anthony Wright (AWr).

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

Apologies: Jane Hatton (JH); Monica Pipe (MP); Adrian Shepherd (AS); Jim Wayman (JWa); Claire Dickson (CD).

The meeting was preceded by a morning site visit to see how proposals by Highways England (HE) to close crossing gaps on the A11 between Fiveways and Red Lodge, and proposals to improve traffic flows at the Fiveways roundabout, would impact on existing access and the opportunities schemes offered for improving access.

**ACTION:** SLAF to contact HE for update

## 2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th July 2023 LAF23/21, were reviewed.

MH advised of typo on pg. 5 – Bramford not Branford.

Members agreed these and future minutes would be circulated in draft form after the meeting and commented on and agreed at the following meeting. They will then be published after that meeting.

BH advised a new member representing District and Borough Councils had been appointed. Sarah Whitelock (SW) is District Councillor for Aldeburgh and Leiston representing the Green Party. Sarah will join the forum at the next meeting.

**ACTION:** DF to correct previous minutes and publish.

**ACTION:** DF to circulate draft minutes of this meeting.

**ACTION:** DF to set up meeting between BH, AW and SW prior to next meeting.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. SLAF Annual Report 2022-23**

JS requested for Terms of Reference to reviewed and benchmarked against other forums.

**ACTION:** BH/AW to seek advice from Natural England (NE).

### **5. Public Rights of Way and Access Team Restructure**

AW explained new structure of Rights of Way and Access team, which came into effect on 1 September 2023. New structure chart had been circulated. The reason for changes was due to increased pressures of planning which had skewed team's work and removed staff from other priorities. This was especially the case with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

A new planning team was to be formed. In addition, due to a doubling of public reports on the network, attributed to much greater use post-COVID lockdown, an Operations Manager and a Development and Improvement Manager post had been created.

The new planning team will include a Planning Manager and staff to lead on Sizewell related projects, other NSIPs and scoping and delivering development related projects.

New posts would be funded through development contributions.

BH clarified that AW is the new Development and Improvement Manager and Claire Dickson is the Operations Manager, with Annette Robinson moving to work on Sizewell related projects.

BH advised members he had pushed the point at SCC Cabinet when presenting the Annual Report, of the importance of keeping the good work of the PROW team going.

### **6. Energy Schemes**

AW advised access work related to Sizewell had commenced with initial focus on Lovers Lane and BR19 with a bridleway bridge at Leiston Drain.

AW advised that Bramford to Twinstead Issue Specific Hearings were taking place on 9 November at 10.00. CD would represent PROW. Members would be able to view the hearing online.

JS questioned why SLAF were not represented at the hearing. BH advised the forum were not formally consulted.

BH advised the Inspectors report on Sunnica was due before Christmas. DB advised the forum had not been formally consulted on that development but had made a submission.

AW reviewed the changes between permanent impacts on the access network, such as with Sizewell and Sunnica where SCC wanted to maximise mitigation, and transient impacts such as with Bramford to Twinstead, but that even with temporary impacts SCC wants to secure funding to improve the access network.

BH advised the Norwich to Tilbury consultation had been extended and he would look at a joint response from eastern region access forums.

AW suggested the January meeting could include a review of working groups and for the forum's planning group to be able to respond to consultations in between meetings. SCC would support working groups by signposting to information.

BH asked when Friston starts construction. AW advised 2024.

JS suggested circulating the NSIPs presentation from the meeting at Sizewell as new members had missed that meeting.

BH asked about EA3 route.

BH expressed concern over a new SEALINK converter station that would be 26m high with 10km of link cabling to an inshore point between Aldeburgh and Thorpness. No public meetings were due but a public consultation exhibition at libraries starts on 24 October for 3 months.

CP commented that the consultation ending a week before Xmas was poor timing.

JS stated how important it was for the forum to respond and express concerns.

**ACTION:** AW to send link for Bramford to Twinstead Issue Specific Hearings.

**ACTION:** DF to circulate current working groups memberships

**ACTION:** DF to circulate slides from Sizewell meeting.

**ACTION:** AW to send link to plans of EA3 cable corridor.

**ACTION:** BH to review consultation on SEALINK converter station and discuss with the Planning and Development working group.

## 7. Network Rail Updates

SK advised SCC were still awaiting Gipsy Lane works programme from Network Rail (NR). Recent bad weather had damaged a private bridge which affected access to the site for NR contractors.

SK advised SCC were still awaiting NR to sign a funding agreement to release £300k for access improvements.

SK advised that notices for ecological and topographic surveys relating to a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo), were incorrectly posted to SCC by NR. SK had reminded NR of their agreement for joint site visits. NR have agreed to do this in future.

AWr spoke about Elmswell Hawk End Lane level crossing closure. SK advised works would commence in February 2024 and this was one of most important TWAo sites.

SK also advised that FP1 Higham was complete, the Definitive Map updated, and conversations being progressed on delivering a footway to Coalpit Lane.

SK had chased NR on their consultation with landowners on Brantham FP6.

SK advised members that NR should not close crossings until an alternative route had been opened and agreed. AW advised SCC had approached counsel to clarify the legality of NR actions and pressures SCC could put on NR. SCC were awaiting counsel's formal opinion.

AWr asked about the Cattishall Crossing which carries National Cycle Route 13. SK advised the Secretary of State had not agreed to a closure at this location.

BH commented how issues looked at 5 years ago were still not concluded.

AW pointed out the SLAF Network Rail working group can pick up rail related schemes and proposals between meetings.

**ACTION:** SK to chase NR at next board meeting on Gipsy Lane works programme and funding agreement.

**ACTION:** SCC update forum on Elmswell FP12, link to Parnell Lane, and siting of a footpath signpost.

**ACTION:** BH, RW and CP to review update prior to January's meeting.

## **8. Ipswich Byway 38 / Restricted Byway 38A – New Cut West**

SK advised the Public Open Space (POS) was still not open with maintenance yet to be agreed. Officers were seeking updates from IBC, ABP and EA on progress and issues had been escalated to GHI Director.

SK advised that EA was in process of agreeing heads of terms on a lease agreement, with temporary fencing being addressed.

BH stated the forum had never had a response from ABP despite being chased.

SK advised when open, there may be security patrols due to anti-social activity.

MH suggested the more the area is used the better although nighttime anti-social activity may continue.

JS asked if there was any press publicity on the situation. SK advised none he was aware of.

MH advised previous press coverage had been from pressure groups, especially the Ipswich Society. MH reiterated that opening the POS has been delayed for 3 years.

CP asked about the forum's policy on press releases. BH advised forum had never done one. CP suggested the forum could make a statement but acknowledged it would require a spokesperson to comment.

**ACTION:** SCC to confirm whether there is any reason for the forum NOT to issue a press release.

## **9. Horringer to Bury Bridleway Phase 2 – Response from Cllr West**

AW briefed that Horringer Phase 1 was delivered and there had been some positive news on funding construction of Phase 2 of the scheme. If funding was secured there would be wider communications with landowners and stakeholders. Progress will be reported at the next meeting.

AW also advised that Exning-Burwell cycle path funding had been received from the developer of the Burwell housing scheme. CB and AWr both asked about the exact route of the Exning cycle path. AW explained the details.

## **10. Conversion of Footpaths to Bridleways**

SK advised how the network can be modified, explaining powers under various Acts of Parliament including the Highways Act 1980 and Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

CB asked if there was another way to achieve improvements. JS asked if new access could be achieved without going down legal route. SK advised it could but required landowner and community support. AW added any project needed demonstrable public benefit.

AWr spoke about the use of License Path Agreements (LPAs). JS asked whether LPAs could be a suitable alternative. SK advised they may be but are not permanent.

AWr advised that footways could be upgraded without consultation because they are within the extent of the highway.

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

BH expressed concern over the lack of progress by Natural England (NE) and slow progress by PINS on the undetermined reports.

MH suggested a regional trail name of 'Hermitage and Holidays Way'.

**ACTION:** SLAF to write to NE chasing progress.

## **12. Correspondence**

DF updated the forum on a temporary closure at Snape Warren Open Access site.

SK explained why SLAF had been consulted on a legal case at Temple Bridge.

## **13. Membership – Vice Chair Election**

**ACTION:** Members to express interest in time for next meeting.

## **14. Any Other Business**

MH shared a press article of a car using the Trimley bridleway bridge.

**Dates of next meeting**

- 25 January 2024, Needham Market, preceded by a site visit – details to follow.
- 25 April 2024, location tbc.
- 25 July 2024, location tbc.
- 18 October, location tbc.

DB stepped down from the Forum. BH thanked DB for over 20 years of service to SLAF. BH presented DB with a gift.

DB gave anecdotes on SLAF and thanked officers for all their help and support, and to everyone who had been involved in SLAF over the years.

On behalf of SCC, AW thanked DB for all his service to the forum and his legacy to access.

END  
DF/SCC October 2023

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Suffolk Energy Schemes</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/01</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</b>

## 1. Sizewell C

Sizewell C triggered the formal commencement of the DCO on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January with a visit from the Nuclear Minister, Andrew Bowie meeting the project team, local business leaders and representative from local authorities.

This activates the £250m funding package which includes a 2.9 million fund for a variety of works and initiatives for green access. See [here](#) for details of the PRow Fund.

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/EN010012/EN010012-007818-Sizewell%20C%20Project%20-%20Other-%20SZC%20Bk9%209.113%20PRow%20Fund%20and%20Leiston%20Walking%20and%20Cycling%20Projects.pdf>

Current design works that affect green access includes

AD6 highway and PRow works at the main development site including the design of the inland alternative bridleway route as replacement for BR19 which will be closed for the duration of the construction period.

AD3 Sizewell Link Road – the new road will bisect 13 public rights of way between Kelsale to Theberton, stop up some minor roads to motorised traffic and create new links to the B1122 and B1125. All the PRow will be permanently diverted to at-grade crossings of the new road and we are pressing the designers for quality design for the access network including creating new access where possible.

Benhall Fen meadow – work has stopped for the winter due to the flooding on site. The public footpath was damaged during the land sculpting works and SZC will be producing a restoration and surfacing plan.

Coast Defences – The public footpath and King Charles III England Coast Path are directly impacted by the construction of the coastal defences. A sheet piled wall with a security fence off set by 10m will be constructed approximately 30m-50m seaward of the current position of FP21. SCC has raised concerns regarding accessibility and ensuring the safety of walkers using the footpath and coast path as this temporary location (for the duration of the build) places walkers closer to the high tide line. There have been ongoing discussions, and we expect SZC to cover these aspects in the public



rights of way implementation plan to SCC in order to discharge requirement 10 of the DCO.

The Deed of Obligation fund for PRow has been triggered by the commencement and funds will now be paid to SCC. There are a number of projects and works earmarked for the fund – see [here](#) for details of the PRow Fund. This aspect is overseen by the Rights of Way Working Group with representatives from SCC (1 from Highways team, 1 from the Green Access Team), ESC and 2 from SZC.

(link n/a from pdf – please Google Search ‘The Sizewell C Project 9.113’)

## **2. Sunnica**

The Examination for Sunnica concluded at the end of March 2023. The county council and other interested parties await the examiners’ decision, the deadline for which has been extended to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

An over view of the Sunnica application can be found here - [Sunnica Energy Farm | National Infrastructure Planning \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/sunnica-energy-farm/?ipcsection=overview)  
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/sunnica-energy-farm/?ipcsection=overview>

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

The scheme is now in examination, which commenced on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, this is expected to close on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

The Local Impact Report (LIR) was submitted to the Planning Inspector on behalf of the local authorities at the start of the examination. This includes the impact on the rights of way network in Suffolk, covering 45 routes with temporary restrictions and no permanent changes proposed.

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.

Currently representations have been made at each stage of the examination by the county council regarding the public right of way network, including providing evidence at two Issue Specific Hearings. Pressure from the county council has also resulted in securing a separate public rights of way management plan.

Meetings continue outside of the examination. A full assessment of the impacts of restrictions is continuing following the submission of the sequencing of public rights of way closures as a supplementary document at the last deadline. The county council continues to ensure that the network is protected.

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

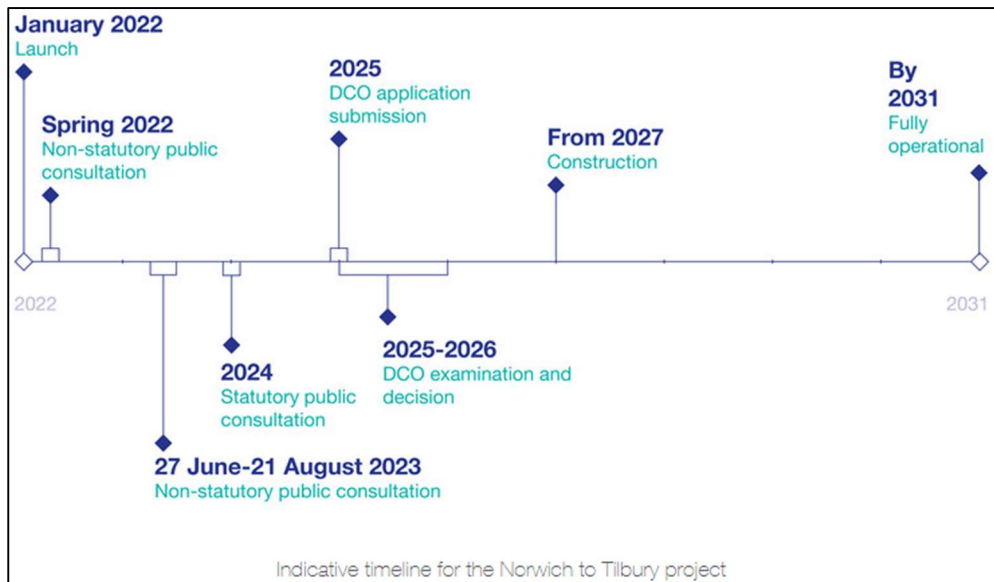
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/bramford-to-twinstead/>

Further details can be found on the National Grid website here - [Bramford to Twinstead | National Grid ET](#)  
<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/bramford-twinstead>

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

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

Liaison between the National Grid and county council continues to be at a high level and the last meeting was held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The timetable published by National Grid is shown below.



Further details on the Norwich to Tilbury scheme can be found on the National Grid website here – [Norwich to Tilbury | National Grid ET](#).  
<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

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

Work on the main site is not expected to start until later in 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**

SPR are working through discharging the numerous requirements in preparation for starting construction of compounds and haul roads for the cable pulling using the ducts laid by EA1 project. The first stages include the checking of the cable ducts for blockages or other problems and SCC has

been commenting on the numerous management plans including the public rights of way management plan. There are numerous rights of way that will be crossed by the haul roads but temporary diversions will be put in place and a method for safely managing these crossings has been agreed by SCC.

**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 response to the statutory consultation once again raised the concern that the impact on the access network and its users had been overlooked because it had not been addressed as a separate topic in its own right. Instead, the impact on the access network and its users is assessed as part of the chapters dealing with transport, socio economic, recreation and tourism, health and well being and landscape and visual impact. Each of these has its own set of parameters but none reflect the actual impact on the quality of the experience of people using the access network. It is a significant weakness in the NSIP process and results in projects being assessed as having little impact on access and as a result, weakens the case for mitigation.

Following its October meeting, the SLAF chairman wrote to Sebastian Stevens at the National Grid, giving the forum's formal response to its consultation. His letter raised two main points: 1. the lack of information on the width and depth of the cable trenches and the visual impact of the proposed cable joint bay and link boxes and 2. The impact of the converter station on the landscape and local PRow.

The letter also noted that in the construction phase there should be continuation of public access within this area. Any temporary closures should be kept to a minimum, and alternative routes provided where necessary.

The letter made clear the forum expected these matters to be redressed and is attached at **Appendix 1**.

**8. LionLink (formerly 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.

## 9. NSIP Forward Programme

The latest estimated timeline for existing and future NSIPs is attached at appendix 2. Members will see it is a very full and will impact heavily on both Suffolk's green access network and staff resource.

The programme is attached at **Appendix 2**.

END  
AW/SCC January 2024

## Appendix 1

**SLAF**  
Suffolk Local Access Forum

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

Email: [slaf@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:slaf@suffolk.gov.uk)

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

Date: 14 December 2023

Dear Sebastian Stevens

**Re: National Grid Sea Link Consultation**

This letter constitutes a formal response by the Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF) to the Public Consultation on the Sea 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 and EDF.

There are two main issues that SLAF wish to comment on.

First, is that as with other energy schemes that they have been involved with, there is a line on the map showing the draft order limits from Saxmundham to the Suffolk landfall of the offshore cable just north of Aldeburgh adjacent to the old railway line. Within the line would be a trench for cable ducts from there to the Friston substation and then on to Saxmundham. However, there is a lack of information on the width and depth of the cable trenches and the visual impact of the proposed cable joint bay and link boxes.

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.

Second, at the Converter Station site, which will have the greatest impact on the landscape and PRoWs, this is very open with little tree cover and at present has several rights of way on it or close by including Saxmundham 23, Sternfield 5, 6 & 10 and Knodishall 15, 16, 17 & 18 which all provide green access routes from Saxmundham to the wider countryside to the east. SLAF would expect a PRoW management plan 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

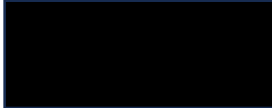
Providing independent advice on access to the countryside in Suffolk

proposed converter station(s) would also have a serious landscape and visual impact leaving Saxmundham on the B1119 which would be difficult to disguise.

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 also request that they are formally consulted at the next stage of consultation.

Yours sincerely



Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

## Appendix 2



NSIP Horizon  
Timeline.xlsx

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>The King Charles III England Coast Path</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/02</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</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="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-harwich-to-shotley-gate">Harwich to Shotley Gate</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-harwich-to-shotley-gate">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-harwich-to-shotley-gate</a>	Four out of six reports at Stage 4, two at Stage 5
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-shotley-gate-to-felixstowe-ferry">Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-shotley-gate-to-felixstowe-ferry">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-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="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-felixstowe-ferry-to-bawdsey">Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-felixstowe-ferry-to-bawdsey">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-felixstowe-ferry-to-bawdsey</a>	Two reports at Stage 5; four reports at Stage 4
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-bawdsey-to-aldeburgh">Bawdsey to Aldeburgh</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-bawdsey-to-aldeburgh">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-bawdsey-to-aldeburgh</a>	Four out of five reports at Stage 4 and one at Stage 5
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-aldeburgh-to-hopton-on-sea">Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-aldeburgh-to-hopton-on-sea">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-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="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-hopton-on-sea-to-sea-palling">Hopton-on-Sea to Sea Palling</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-hopton-on-sea-to-sea-palling">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-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](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast>

## 2. The Stretches in More Detail

Natural England has provided the following updates around the Suffolk coast stretches. Members will note the continuing delays with the planning inspectorate.

### **The Five Suffolk Stretches**

#### **Harwich to Shotley Gate** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 15.1.24.

- 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 in July 2023 there was the opportunity to submit further representations about an objection in the Essex part of the stretch. We are waiting to hear the decision from the Secretary of State

#### **Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 15.1.24.

- 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 15.1.24.

No change since previous report

- Stage 4 (Determine)
- Natural England published proposals on 9th December 2020
- 7 objections were received.
- Two reports (Sections 2 and 3) where no objections were received were approved in May 2023.
- A Planning Inspector visited the sites in November 2022 and has considered the 7 objections. Now awaiting decisions by the Secretary of State.

**Bawdsey to Aldeburgh** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 15.1.24.

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 but work has not started.
- The Planning Inspector visited the stretch in July 2022 to consider the objections, and we are waiting to hear the decision from the Secretary of State.

**Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 15.1.24.

- 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 in October 2023 but had to cancel at short notice. New visit dates are currently being discussed.

### 3. Suffolk Progress

The 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 them. 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. 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.

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 – grant application approved,
- Tree survey and tree surgery on the Orwell Park Estate,
- Clearance and fencing on the Orwell Park Estate.

Following successful completion of tenders and grant applications, works commenced in early January 2024 on the Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry section, these will be undertaken over the next few months.

The project officer has also started to verify the infrastructure required on the Aldeburgh to Hopton stretch which was surveyed by Natural England (with SCC) in 2017/18, starting with the confirmed reports from Aldeburgh to Southwold and from Pakefield to Hopton. Grant applications will shortly be submitted for this stretch. 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. The county council is liaising with National Highways and Natural England on agreeing establishment works (the steps and resting point up the A14 embankment) and the design of information signs.

Natural England have advised that funding is available for a second project officer. Unfortunately, due to there being no further progress on approvals we are not in a position to progress with a second officer. Implementation work is progressing on the approved sections.

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

A meeting took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 between the five access authorities involved in establishing a regional trail (Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex Southend and Thurrock) and Natural England, to progress the project. Two substantive points agreed at the meeting were for Norfolk and Suffolk county councils to discuss which authority would host the next stage of establishing a trail officer post, and Thurrock and Southend would consider the way forward for their unitary authorities and whether to be part of a partnership.

Subsequently, concerns by one of the partners on the future of Natural England funding has led to this project to being suspended, and the Natural England lead officer is escalating this matter with a view to getting clarity on next year's funding and beyond. The management of the King Charles III England Coast Path is dependent on Natural England grant aid, whether it is by an individual access authority or a regional trail partnership.

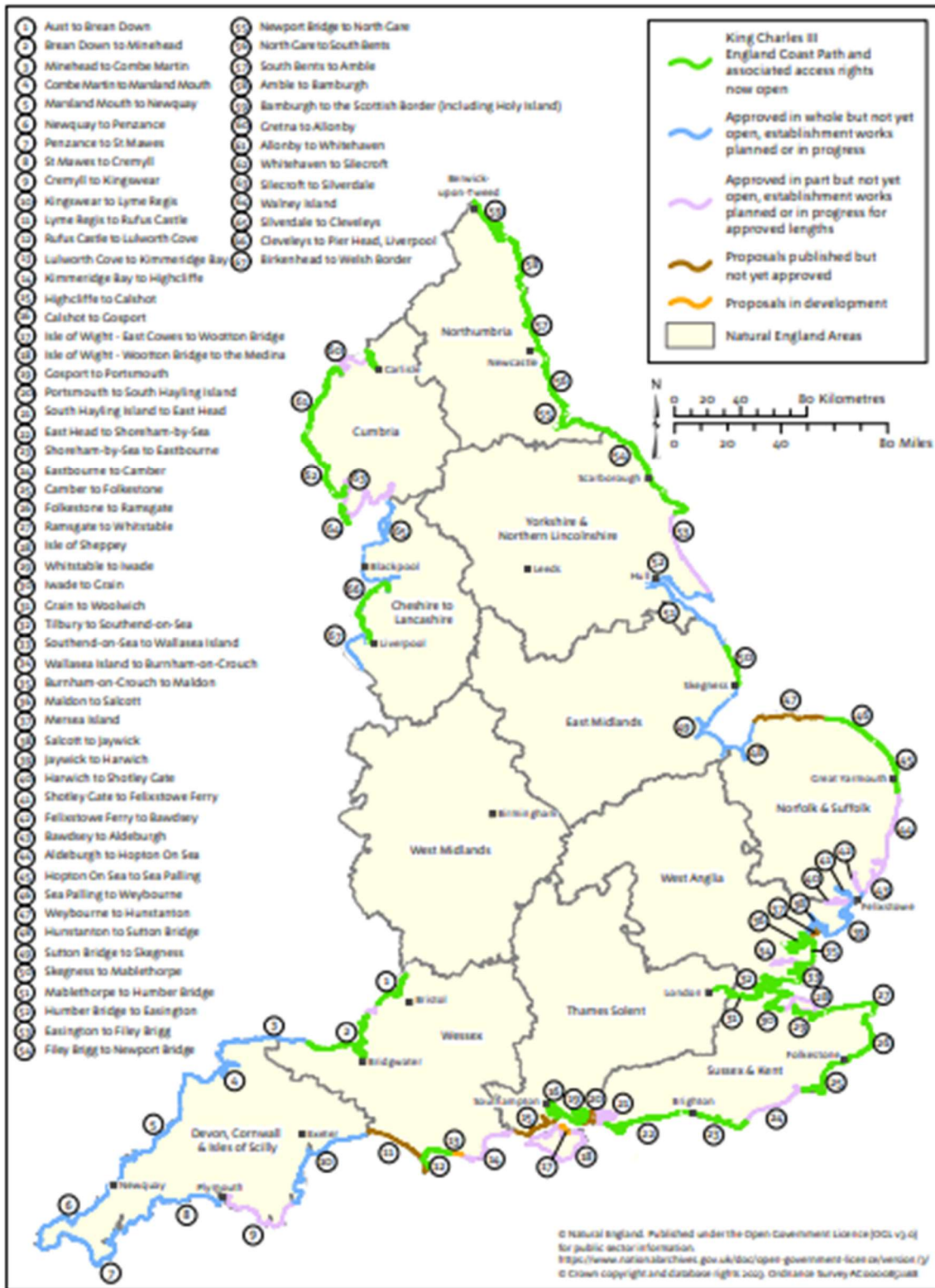
Members will wish to discuss this further at January's meeting.

On 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 officers from Natural England delivered training on managing access rights; changes to trail alignment; financial management of grant aid; promotion and information. The training was helpful but drew out some concerns over 1. Lack of clarity and detail on Natural England's and access authorities' legal powers and duties, 2. Future funding and 3. The remote likelihood of the King Charles III England Coast Path being "fully walkable by the end of 2024" as has been publicly stated by Natural England. These points were taken away by Natural England officers.

5. SLAF Correspondence With Natural England

At its October meeting, members resolved to write to Natural England to express their concern at the slow progress in approving the King Charles III England Coast Path in Suffolk, with only one out of five stretches fully approved. SLAF's letter and Natural England's response are included as **Appendix 1**.

6. England Coast Path – [Progress Map](#)



## Appendix 1

Date: 30 November 2023

Dear Sarah Haigh

### **Re: Progress of King Charles III England Coast Path**

At our recent Suffolk Local Access Forum meeting members received an update on the current state of progress on the Coast Path in Suffolk regarding reports still to be signed off by the Planning Inspectorate or the Secretary of State, which if by the latter would enable progress to be made on whole sections.

At present the only full section, out of five stretches in Suffolk, where work can commence on implementing the new path is from Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry. Of the other sections, whilst having some reports at Stage 5, several are held up at Stage 4, one still requiring a visit from a Planning Inspector, whilst others had been visited by them in mid-2022 but are still awaiting the approval of the Secretary of State.

Members are becoming frustrated at the lack of progress and length of time that this Natural England flagship scheme is taking to become a reality in Suffolk, given the involvement by the Council's rights of way team with NE staff prior to the publication of the draft proposals. They took the view that it is important that efforts are made to expedite the signing off of all reports in each section of the path in Suffolk and that NE will remain committed to funding the implementation costs and ongoing maintenance due to the delay.

Members also welcomed the news that there was political support from Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils to promote the path regionally.

Yours sincerely



Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

Below is the response from Natural England:

**From:** Haigh, Sarah  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 12, 2023 9:48 AM  
**To:** Suffolk Local Access Forum <slaf@suffolk.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Braine, Darren; Claire Dickson  
**Subject:** RE: Letter from The Suffolk Local Access Forum

Dear Barry

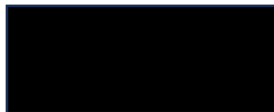
Thank you for your letter relating to progress on the establishment of the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIECP).

We are currently planning work with Suffolk County Council (SCC) on the stretch between Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry (SGF), with establishment works just getting underway. We have also started to plan for works with SCC on the stretch between Aldeburgh and Hopton-on-Sea (AHS) on approved sections between Aldeburgh and Southwold, and between Pakefield and Hopton-on-Sea. Once the establishment works are complete, these sections will be opened. With regard to the section between Southwold and Pakefield on the same stretch, a section subject to objections, we are awaiting dates from the Planning Inspectorate for the Appointed Person to make their site visits, which we hope will happen early next year. You will appreciate, I hope, that the timing of these visits is set by the Planning Inspectorate and is not in Natural England's control.

The decision to approve the rest of our outstanding proposals is with the Secretary of State (SoS). As soon as any decision is notified, we will update our website accordingly: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-the-east-of-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-the-east-of-england). Once we have approval we will work with SCC to implement the proposals.

To aid our current plans for establishment on SGF and AHS, and the establishment following subsequent approvals that we anticipate next year from the SoS, Natural England (NE) have agreed to fund an additional member of staff within Suffolk CC during the next financial year, so there will be two full time posts funded by NE within SCC working to deliver the KCIIECP.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Haigh  
Senior Adviser, King Charles III England Coast Path Delivery  
Norfolk and Suffolk Area Team  
Natural England, Mail Hub, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NP  
[www.gov.uk/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/natural-england)

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Network Rail Updates</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/03</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</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 October of last year, the project has unfortunately been delayed further due to the effects of Storm Babet. The exceptional rainfall and severe flooding that occurred between 18 – 20 October resulted in the landowner's private access bridge being damaged beyond repair. This bridge was to serve as the access for NR's contractors and the plant needed to undertake the works to the culvert. The landowner and NR are in discussions regarding the bridge replacement, but it is clear this set back will impact the timeline for the completion of the works and the associated permanent closure of the Gipsy Lane crossing.

The county council continues to await NR's comments on SCC's formal response to the draft funding agreement that was previously circulated and has not been provided with an update on the bridge replacement investigations and how this may impact the delivery of the project.

Since October 2023 the landowner has been severely impacted by the effects of flooding and has been reporting all flood incidents to the Floods Management team, which are being investigated in line with operational priorities and service standards. It has also recently been identified that Ravens Bridge, adjacent to Ravens Farm,



has been damaged by the high flood waters and its safety is currently being monitored.

## **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 met with NR's contractors onsite on 27 October 2023 to discuss the proposed works for the diversionary route of FP12 Elmswell (S29 Hawk End Lane). SCC has yet to receive the draft detailed design proposals, even though the county council was previously advised that the contractors were aiming to start works at this location in late February 2024. On 8 November, officers again met with NR and its appointed contractor (Taziker) to run through the proposed works relating to the following sites:

- S30 Lords 29 – FP9 Elmswell
- S17 Paynes - FPs 22 and 26 Gislegham
- S16 Gislegham – BR10 Finningham
- S04 Island – FP18 Bentley

At the site meeting NR advised that Taziker had already submitted a couple of designs to NR, and that these would then be sent to SCC after approval, but that they will only do this when they have several to send over. SCC is still awaiting further contact from NR on the proposed designs and clarification on a number of issues relating to the works themselves.

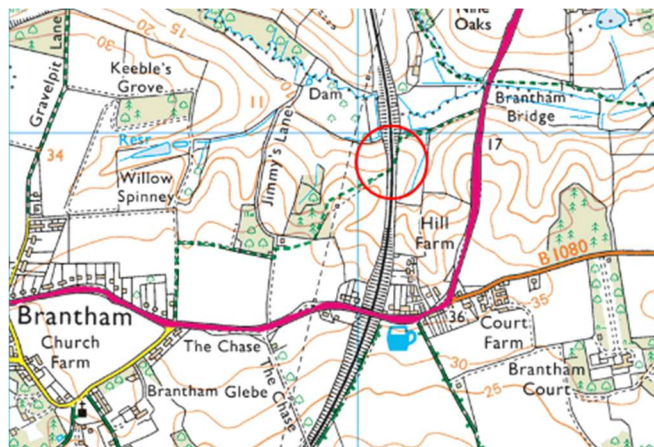
At the Forum meeting in October, members were advised that NR had informed SCC that the majority of the Suffolk sites were scheduled to be completed from mid to late 2024-25 (Control Period 7 - Year 1).

The TWAO and associated plans can be viewed via the following link [Network-Rail-Suffolk-level-crossing-reduction-order-2020-plans](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/network-rail-suffolk-level-crossing-reduction-order-2020-plans)  
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/network-rail-suffolk-level-crossing-reduction-order-2020-plans.pdf>

Following a query from Anthony Wright at the October meeting regarding the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) closure and associated signing at Hawk End Lane, officers visited the site on 28 November and emailed its response on 15 December. This was forwarded to Forum members on 20 December.

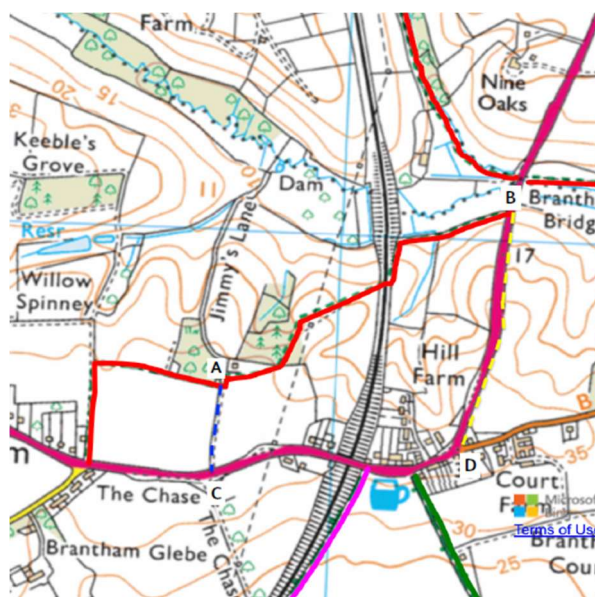


## Footpath 6 Brantham (High Bridge)



Since the last update provided at the Forum's October meeting, officers met with NR online on 7 December to discuss the outcome of NR's landowner consultations on options for the closure/diversion of FP6 Brantham.

NR advised that they had met both the affected landowners, who were supportive of the length of FP6 between A and B being extinguished (see map inset below).



West of the railway, the landowner is prepared to dedicate a footpath along Jimmy's Lane, between points A and C, providing a circular walk for nearby residents.

East of the railway, NR advised that their earlier proposal of a field edge route is not now considered reasonably practicable. This is due to gradients at the north end and, more significantly, a steep cutting on the field boundary. The presence of this cutting means that any route would require steps to be provided, reducing accessibility and increasing installation and maintenance costs.

As a result, NR have proposed that east of the railway, vegetation clearance and levelling and hardening of the highway verge on the eastern side of the A137 is undertaken, between points B and D. The landowner here considers there is sufficient width on the verge to allow for this.

NR did explore the possibility of creating a field edge footpath on the eastern side of the A137 but the landowner was not willing to agree to this, as he uses the field for livestock.

At the meeting, the county council made it clear that it did not consider NR's suggested PRow diversion, with a short circular walk utilising part of Jimmy's Lane, to be adequate compensation for the loss of the footpath from Brantham to Brantham Bridge. However, it requested NR prepare a design, to include a specification, to harden the highway verge on the east side of the A137 between Brantham Bridge and Brantham, with the constructed path having a width of 2 metres; and for a stage 1 Road Safety Assessment (RSA) to be prepared for the design, and for this audit to include pedestrians crossing the road at Brantham Bridge.

NR submitted their initial design in early January (**see Appendix A attached**), and officers responded to advise that the RSA would be required for the whole of the affected section of the A137, including the highway verge, and also requested a draft order plan for the proposal that has been put forward. Once officers have received a response, another meeting will be convened with NR to discuss further, and to look to commission the design through Suffolk Highways and establish the likely costs. Once the final design has been agreed and the outcome of the RSA's known, the county council will undertake its own site visit.

### Footpath 13 Bacton

On 4 January 2024, the PRow Officer at Babergh Mid Suffolk (BMS) contacted SCC to advise that she had received a Rail Crossing Extinguishment Order (RCEO) application from NR to extinguish the whole length of FP13 Bacton, as shown below.



The application was being made on the basis that, whilst the sighting time at the crossing is considered sufficient, the risk profile was high due to several incidents of trespass onto the operational railway by people retrieving footballs that had been kicked over the railway fence. It is understood Bacton United 89 Footpath Club are

supportive of the proposed extinguishment and the owners of the land west of the crossing are being contacted to ascertain their views on the proposal.

The BMS PROW Officer considers it more appropriate that the highway authority deal with the RCEO application, as it has previously led on such applications. However, officers have yet to discuss the request, or its response to BMS.

END  
SK/SCC January 2024

## Proposed works at Brantham

Improvements to existing highway to provide a through route in lieu of FP13.

Draft for discussion and for purposes of obtaining a quote for the cost of designing and delivering all works set out below.

Please refer to enclosed plan.

Within area edged blue hatched blue (being eastern side of A137), and within the existing highway verge, creation of a 2m wide footway. To require clearance of vegetation and some levelling of surface. Approximate length: 630m.

Suggest self-binding gravel for surface with timber edging as usage is not anticipated to be intensive and the path is in place of cross-field and headland paths. Example:



There appears to be at least 2m 'level' land alongside the carriageway at all points, e.g.:





The drawn lines on the above plans are 2m long.

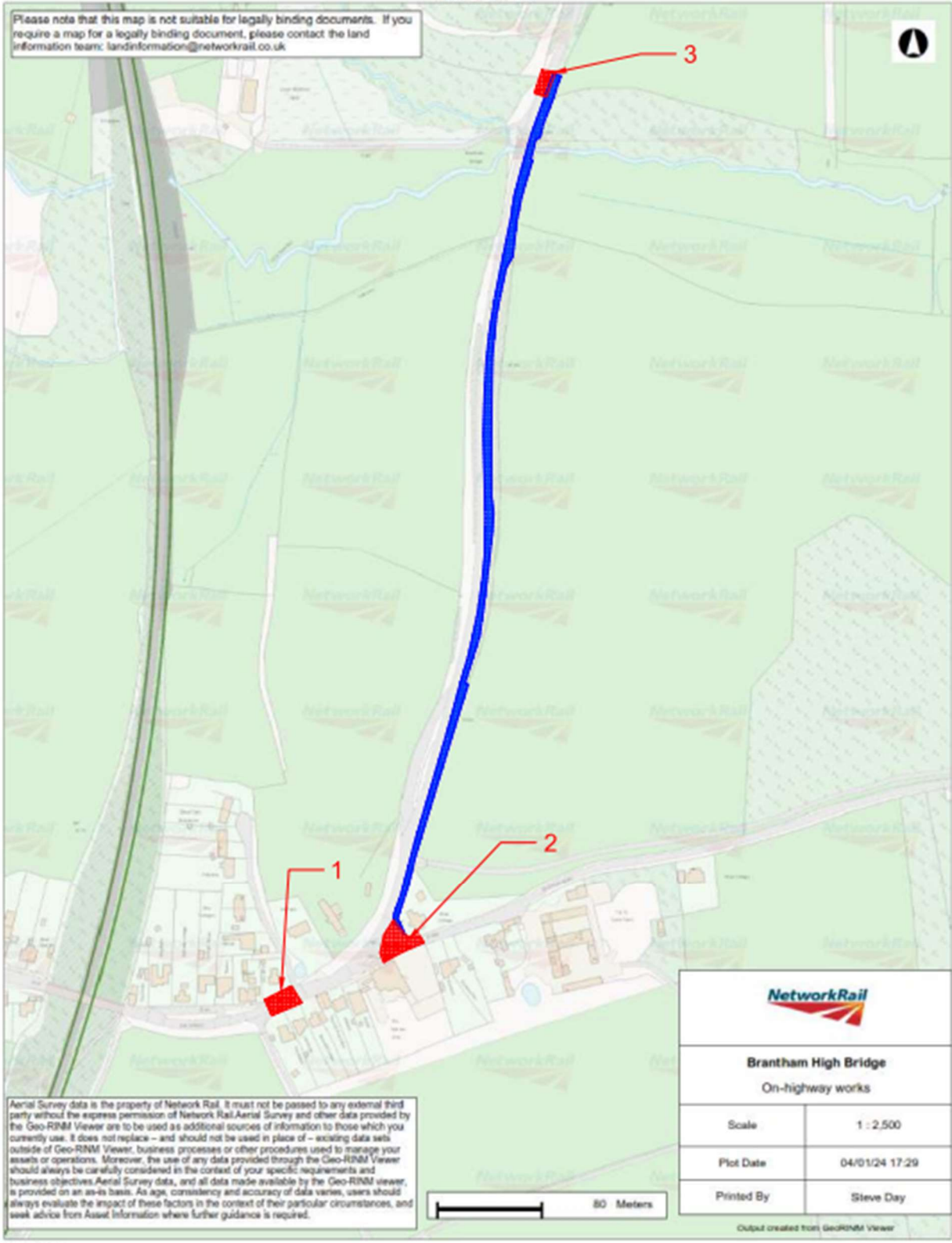
The three No. areas edged red hatched red are where users diverted from the public footpath will need to cross the A137 or Stutton Road to continue their journeys.

This includes the A137 between FP1, west of the A137, and FP34, east of it, to the north of Brantham Bridge, at site No. 3. Note the location of this site is approximate because it cannot be determined exactly where the footpaths join the A137 (they are not visible from aerial surveys nor Google Maps streetview). It will be noted that not all users diverted from FP6 will require to cross the road at No. 3.

Designer is to undertake Road Safety Audits to establish what mitigations (if any) may be required at the three sites where diverted users will cross the road. Suitable locations for crossing the road could be marked with signage, tactile paving, dropped kerbs, etc. Constraint: remain within highway boundary and provision of electrical apparatus (e.g. zebra crossing) likely to be disproportionate.

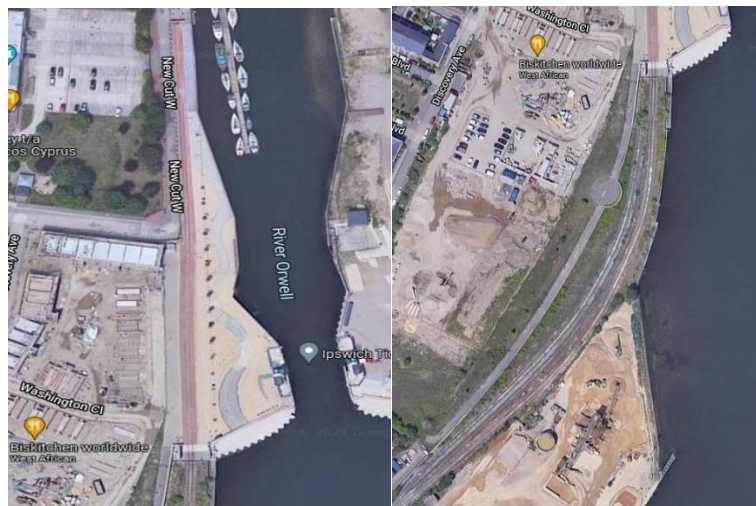
Steve Day  
Network Rail  
05/01/2024

Name Of Team



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Ipswich BY38 / RB38A – New Cut West</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/04</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Steve Kerr</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</b>

Further to the update provided to the Forum in October, officers regret to advise that the Public Open Space (POS) at Griffin Wharf continues to be unavailable to the public.



At that meeting officers advised that, due to resourcing constraints at the Environment Agency (EA), there were ongoing delays in signing the draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) that Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) had circulated to the EA and Associated British Ports (ABP) in July 2023. This prompted officers to brief SCC’s Executive Director for Growth, Highways and Infrastructure, Andrew Cook, following which he emailed the EA’s Area Director for East Anglia on 6 November 2023, to request this work be expedited. The EA replied on 8 December 2023 and copies of Andrew Cook’s email, the EA response from Graham Verrier, and correspondence from SLAF, are all attached at **Appendix A**.

The response from the EA apologises for the delay and advises that, until such a time as the tripartite SLA has been signed, the EA will maintain the POS, and that the current outstanding issue appears to be the erection of the temporary fencing around the railway corridor, which ABP had previously agreed to undertake. On 20 December ABP advised they were arranging an online meeting with DB Cargo (the railway franchise that operates this railway line) to discuss the fencing arrangement, following which a site meeting would be scheduled with SCC and IBC to discuss the fencing proposals. Officers are not clear why a further onsite meeting is required, as

it believes the temporary fencing arrangements had already been agreed with the railway operator quite some time ago. Nonetheless, it has accepted a site meeting request for the morning of 19 January 2024. Officers will provide a verbal update at the Forum's meeting regarding the outcome of this site meeting. At the meeting it is hoped firm agreement can be reached regarding when the POS will be opened up to the public.

END  
SK/SCC January 2024



**Correspondence between Suffolk County Council and the Environment Agency**

Dear Graham,

**Public Open Space (POS), Griffin Wharf - New Cut West, Ipswich**

I am writing to you regarding the above case, in the hope you will be able to assist.

By way of background, the POS was secured as part of the planning process associated with the Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Ipswich Tidal barrier, which was officially opened in 2019. However, within the POS there is a section of operational railway (serving the Brett Aggregates plant) which is owned and maintained by the landowner, Associated British Ports (ABP). This is further complicated by the fact that there is a Public Right of Way coincident with the railway corridor and running through the POS. Due to public health and safety concerns, at the time ABP applied for a hoarding licence and the site has been unavailable to the public ever since. Since 2020 discussions have taken place between ABP, the Environment Agency (EA), Ipswich Borough Council Planning, the Police and the county council on how to mitigate the risk to the public, whilst still allowing the public to access the site. This culminated in 2022, with agreement between the stakeholders to make the site accessible to the public, but to erect temporary fencing along the length of the railway corridor to mitigate that safety risk. Whilst currently train movements are infrequent, there is clearly a need to address the public safety issue, and the temporary fencing will prevent members of the public from accessing the operational railway.

When the site was developed, part of the design included several lighting columns. Before being in a position to open up the POS to the public, the Police required the lighting columns to be made operative and last year my Lighting Team and the EA Project Executive worked hard to undertake the necessary works to connect these to the electricity grid and the parties were then in a position to allow the public to access the area.

However, the Borough's Legal team subsequently advised that it would need to enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with all landowners, in order to be able to access the POS and maintain it, including for waste collection from the various refuse bins onsite. The county council understands that the SLA was sent to the EA in July of this year. Officers have also advised me that the EA is entering into a 999 year lease with ABP for the land they own, and that the associated Heads of Terms need to be agreed before signing the SLA with the Borough Council. The county council has been advised that progress to complete these legal documents and associated plans is now being impacted by a lack of resources within the Agency.

I hope you can understand the frustrations stakeholders and the public are experiencing regarding public access to this open space being denied for over 4 years now. This includes the Suffolk Local Access Forum, who have been regularly updated by my officers and have been campaigning for the site to be opened up for some time now.

I'm sure you will appreciate the health and wellbeing that comes with public access to waterfronts, as well as the significant public interest of the tidal barrier itself, both of which would be realised once the site is opened up.

I am therefore contacting your assistance in ensuring that the outstanding legal paperwork is expedited as soon as possible.

I hope to hear shortly from you with news on how we might progress this matter to resolution in the near future.

Kind regards

Andrew

Andrew Cook  
[Andrew.Cook@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Cook@suffolk.gov.uk)

Comref: AAM022023/19422  
Your ref: SH-IKEN120121  
Date: 8 December 2023  
Date: 8 December 2023

Dear Andrew,

**Public Open Space (POS), Griffin Wharf - New Cut West, Ipswich**

Thank you for your email of 7 October 2023. I fully share your frustrations in the matter. Despite ongoing liaison with yourselves, Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) and our staff in trying to resolve these issues, we have together not been able to progress it. This is a disappointing result for such an important structure that brings many benefits to the people of Ipswich and the wider community.

We do have a number of issues to resolve with the draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) initially provided by IBC:

- It comprises a tripartite agreement between IBC, the Environment Agency and Associated British Ports (ABP).
- The Environment Agency is only able to take responsibility for the area to the east of the railway, of which we own part (plot 3a on the plan attached) and are in negotiation with ABP for a 999-year lease of the remainder (plots 2d & 2q). Accordingly, ABP will not need to be party to the SLA. The heads of terms for the lease are with ABP for consideration.
- The area to the west (including the railway line) would remain the responsibility of the current landowners
- The suggested commuted sum appears to include costs for maintaining this area to the west, which will not form part of the SLA
- It covers only a 20-year period of maintenance and is terminable within that period, whereas the Environment Agency requires the SLA to run in perpetuity.

Staff turnover in the estate's teams at both the Environment Agency and IBC have regrettably delayed the resolution of these issues. However, to facilitate the opening of the POS as soon as possible we have undertaken to maintain the area to be included in the SLA ourselves until such time as the agreement can be completed.

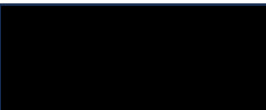
A meeting was held with interested parties where, amongst other things, it was agreed that:

1. We would upgrade the lighting based on a Suffolk County Council design;
2. ABP would implement a temporary fence around the railway line that would allow the area to be opened up.

The lighting has been upgraded and I have been informed that it is ready to be switched on. Therefore, it does appear that, the only remaining issue preventing the opening of the POS is that ABP have not yet erected their temporary fence around the railway line. This was agreed as necessary to address their remaining concerns about public safety.

I trust this has answered the matters raised to your satisfaction. If I can be of further help in this, please do contact me.

Yours sincerely



Graham Verrier  
Area Director East Anglia, East

Iceni House, Cobham Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9JD  
customer service line 03708 506 506  
[gov.uk/environment-agency](http://gov.uk/environment-agency)

# 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>Definitive Map Cut-off Date 2031</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/05</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Mary George</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</b>

## **Introduction**

This report has been produced in response to a request from a Forum member for an update regarding the 2031 definitive map cut-off date.

## **Background to the Definitive Map Cut-off Date**

- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) introduced a proposal to close the definitive map and statement to the addition of historic rights of way after 1st January 2026. This was known as the '2026 cut-off date' and would have the effect of extinguishing historic footpaths or bridleways that existed prior to 1949, if those rights have not been recorded (with certain limited exceptions). Claims based solely on user evidence will not be affected by the cut-off.
- Following the CROW Act DEFRA set up the 'Discovering Lost Ways Project' and volunteers were trained to research historic evidence for unrecorded PROW. It soon became apparent that the DMMO process caused a bottleneck and the legal procedure needed streamlining to deal with the number of orders that would be necessary.
- DEFRA set up a 'stakeholder group' (representing three key sectors: rights of way users, landowners/managers and local authorities) to recommend changes to the existing legislation with the aim of speeding up the process for claiming and adding paths to the definitive map and statement.
- In 2010 the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) presented its report, 'Stepping Forward' to government ministers. It contained 32 recommendations setting out ways of capturing or preserving useful routes before or at the cut-off date and improving the process of adding paths to definitive maps prior to the cut-off date.
- Measures recommended by the SWG were included in the Deregulation Act 2015 but are not yet available for use. Secondary legislation is required to bring the rights of way clauses in the Act into operation. The necessary regulations and guidance are still awaited from DEFRA.
- In February 2022, the promised ROW reforms had still not materialised, and DEFRA announced its intention to repeal the 2026 cut-off date.

- Then in March 2023 DEFRA made a U-turn and announced that the cut-off date would be commenced, but it will be extended by five years to 1 January 2031.
- At the same time assurances were provided that the Secretary of State remains committed to specifying certain exceptions to extinguishment and is working to complete these as soon as possible.
- On 17 November 2023 a Statutory Instrument brought the 2031 cut-off date into force and the cut-off will now happen on 1 January 2031.
- The regulations and guidance to reform the DMMO process, together with details of any provisions for exceptions to extinguishment, are still awaited.

### **Potential exceptions to extinguishment at the 2031 cut-off date**

- The DEFRA representative leading the ROW reforms was scheduled to provide an update to the IPROW annual conference in October 2023 but was unable to attend. Participants expressed frustration at the continuing uncertainty and the difficulties this presents with forward planning.
- Several IPROW members are members of the SWG and they outlined some of the group's discussions about potential exceptions to extinguishment. From their comments it appears that lack of access to the DEFRA legal team is holding up further progress.
- It is understood that the Secretary of State intends to make a provision to except all PROW recorded on the List of Streets (LOS) from extinguishment at the cut-off date. (The LOS is the record of highways maintainable at public expense and it includes all recorded PROW by default).
- This exception would address concerns that have been raised about a potential unintended consequence of the cut-off – that it might extinguish the un-recorded or under-recorded width of definitive PROW. (Many Suffolk definitive PROW do not have a recorded width and many other counties are in the same position).
- It is also expected that any route which is the subject of a formal application should be protected from extinguishment; however, it is unclear whether there may be any time limit set for authorities to determine formal applications after the cut-off date.

### **2031 cut-off Scoping**

- SLAF report reference LAF23/27 (see Appendix A) provided information regarding the backlog of undetermined DMMO applications and Suffolk County Council's definitive map case prioritising scheme.
- The British Horse Society (BHS) has submitted 52 applications, although they have not yet completed the application process and a number of these claimed routes are already recorded on the LOS as unclassified roads. The Ramblers Association also have a project to identify lost paths, but to date

Suffolk County Council has not received applications resulting from this project.

- The County Council has records of several hundred definitive map anomalies requiring further investigation. These include cul-de-sac routes and routes where there is an unexplained change of status, together with definitive map errors where routes are known to have been incorrectly recorded or omitted from the map in error. The Deregulation Act 2015 included provision for a simpler method of resolving 'obvious' definitive map errors, avoiding the need to use the DMMO process.
- Work is on-going to scope and prioritise formal applications and anomalies but until the new regulations and guidance are published it is not possible to assess how much the Deregulation Act 2015 changes will speed up the process of determining formal applications and dealing with order making and definitive map anomalies.
- When the new regulations and guidance do bring the new legislation into operation, initially at least there will be an additional workload for surveying authorities and the Planning Inspectorate to understand and implement the changes in procedures.

END  
MG/SCC January 2024

## APPENDIX A

<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. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/making-changes-to-the-definitive-map-and-statement>
- 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>Open Access Review</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/06</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</b>

A statutory review of seasonal closures and restrictions on Open Access sites across Suffolk and Norfolk was undertaken by Natural England (NE) on Wednesday 17 January 2024. Within Suffolk, seasonal restrictions were reviewed at the following sites:

- Thetford Heath
- Cavenham Heath
- Icklingham Plains / Avenue Heath
- Deadman's Grave
- Berners Heath
- Foxhole Heath
- Lakenheath Warren
- Westleton Walks
- Walberswick Lumphall
- Minsmere Mount Pleasant
- Icknield Heath

Agreement was made to retain all seasonal restrictions as they currently are.

NE announced a small fund for improvements to signage and structures at OA sites which SCC will assess during 2024/2025.

At the review, NE were asked whether there were plans to review the mapping of OA sites. A review would allow new sites to be identified and recorded as Open Access. NE advised any review would be as directed by DEFRA.

END  
DF/SCC January 2024

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>SLAF Working Groups</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/07</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</b>

The forums current working groups are:

<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	Roley Wilson, Anthony Wright
Agri-Environment Access Schemes	Vacant
East Suffolk Line Community Rail Group	Margaret Hancock

Please consider which group(s) you are in and any group you wish to join so that all groups and memberships can be reviewed at this meeting.

END  
DF/SCC January 2024

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum Terms of Reference</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/08</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2024, 2:00-4:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Needham Market Community Centre</b>

### 1. Introduction

At its October meeting Cllr Spicer JS requested SLAF's terms of reference (ToR) be reviewed and benchmarked against other forums.

### 2. Review of ToR

Officers first sought advice from Natural England. Their view was there is no up to date statutory or advisory guidance on drafting terms of reference for local access forums. The most authoritative local access forum guidance was the Guidance on Local Access Forums in England Issued by the Secretary of State in 2007. This publication is no longer available on gov.uk and ToR are not covered by it in any case. It is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Benchmarking carried out in December 2023 with neighbouring access authorities revealed a range of responses from no ToR, to not updated, to under review. [This link](#) will take members to a selection of LAF ToR which members can peruse for themselves.

[https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=+local+access+forum+terms+of+reference&ca\\_esv=595971146&hl=en&ei=NxKYZe2eFpfd7\\_UP\\_fOG4Ao&ved=0ahUKEwittlXfusaDAxWX7rsIHf25AawQ4dUDCBA&uact=5&oq=+local+access+forum+terms+of+reference&gs\\_lp=Egxnnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiJiBsb2NhbCBhY2Nlc3MgZm9ydW0gdGVybXMgb2YgcmVmZXJlbnNlMgQABiABBiiBDIIEAAYgAQYogQyCBAAGIAEGKIESNECUABYAHAAeACQAQCYAYEBoAGBAaoBAzAuMbgBA8gBAPgBAeIDBBgAIEGIBgE&sclient=gws-wiz-serp](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=+local+access+forum+terms+of+reference&ca_esv=595971146&hl=en&ei=NxKYZe2eFpfd7_UP_fOG4Ao&ved=0ahUKEwittlXfusaDAxWX7rsIHf25AawQ4dUDCBA&uact=5&oq=+local+access+forum+terms+of+reference&gs_lp=Egxnnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiJiBsb2NhbCBhY2Nlc3MgZm9ydW0gdGVybXMgb2YgcmVmZXJlbnNlMgQABiABBiiBDIIEAAYgAQYogQyCBAAGIAEGKIESNECUABYAHAAeACQAQCYAYEBoAGBAaoBAzAuMbgBA8gBAPgBAeIDBBgAIEGIBgE&sclient=gws-wiz-serp)

### 3. Suffolk Local Access Forum

SLAF's ToR state:

#### **Terms of Reference (agreed 7 July 2003)**

1. The Suffolk Local Access Forum will have a wide role in advising upon strategic access and recreation issues in Suffolk and act as a statutory advisor to the County Council as local highway authority. This will involve:
2. Being consulted on:
  1. the draft maps of open countryside and registered common land for Suffolk
  2. any bylaws to be made by the access authority affecting access land

3. the appointment of access wardens on land where the new right of access applies
  4. directions proposed by "relevant authorities" which would restrict or exclude long-term access from access land
  5. the preparation of rights of way improvement plans by the County Council, including any opportunities for access to open countryside especially where new linear routes may be desirable and assisting in setting priorities for implementation
3. Providing advice on for example:
    1. strategies or plans incorporating recreation and access which set rights of way and open access in a broad context
    2. the extent to which fair provision is made for all current and potential users and reflects the needs of local people and businesses
    3. the co-ordinated use of resources to provide and manage integrated recreation and access
    4. the dissemination of information to interested groups and the wider public
  4. In providing advice the Local Access Forum should have regard to:
    1. the needs of land management
    2. the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area
    3. the management and maintenance of access whilst balancing this against the needs of biodiversity, wildlife management, the interests of landowners and managers, and countryside management projects in Suffolk.

Members are invited to comment on these ToR and bring their comments to the January meeting.

END  
AW/SCC January 2024

## Appendix 1



LAF Handbook  
2007.pdf