

<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>Thursday 24 October 2024, 1:00pm-3:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Melton Parish Council Office, Melton IP12 1QT</b>

			<b>Paper Number</b>
1.	13:00	Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	13.05	Minutes of previous meeting	LAF 24/22
3.	13.10	Declaration of interest	
4.	13.10	Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood James Goldberg, Development Enabling Lead, East Suffolk Council	Presentation
5.	13.45	Sizewell C update Annette Robinson, Senior Rights of Way Officer, Suffolk County Council	Presentation
6.	14.00	Suffolk Energy Schemes SLAF letter to National Grid Sealink	LAF 24/23 - SB Appendix A - BH
7.	14.10	King Charles III England Coast Path	LAF 24/24 - CD
8.	14.20	SLAF Annual Report to Cabinet	LAF 24/25 - BH
9.	14.30	East of England Local Access Forum meeting	LAF 24/26 - BH
10.	14.35	Network Rail Updates	LAF 24/27 - SK
11.	14.45	SLAF Membership Terms	LAF 24/28 - DF
12.	14.50	Any Other Business	
13.	14.55	Public Question Time	
14.	15.00	Date of Next Meetings: Dates and venues tbc (January 2025, April 2025, July 2025, October 2025)	

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/22</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Jennifer Green</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>25 July 2024, 2-4pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Tuddenham Village Hall</b>

## 1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping.

Present: Barry Hall (BH) (Chair); Christopher Bower (CB) (Vice Chair) Suzanne Bartlett (SB); Margaret Hancock (MH); Rowley Wison (RW); Claire Philips (CP); Gordon Merfield (GM); Susan Mobbs (SM); Monica Pipe (MP); Cllr Joanna Spicer (JS); Cllr Edward Thompson (ET); Jim Wayman (JWa)

Minutes: Jennifer Green

SCC Officers Present: Andrew Woodin (AW); Steve Kerr (SK); Oliver Wastell (OW); Samantha Bye (SBye); Sally Bungard (SAB); James Pickerin

Natural England Officers: Chris Hainsworth; Mike Taylor

Apologies and Absences: Adrian Shepherd (AS); Anthony Wright (AWr)

Member of the public: Joyce Crawford (JC)

The meeting was preceded by a morning site visit of Cavenham Heath led by Chris Hainsworth and accompanied by Mike Taylor of Natural England. Chris talked about open access on the site including the protection of ground nesting birds.

BH thanked CH and MT for leading site visits in the morning.

## 2. Minutes of previous meeting - DRAFT

The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 April 2024 LAF24/17, were reviewed and agreed. These will now be published and made available to the public via the SCC website.

AW gave an update on Horringer BR7 Road Safety Audit, Westley Lane Road junction has poor visibility. Possibility to move access further away from road junction. Adrian Shepherd looking at contribution from National Trust regarding additional signage and fencing on land.

MP mentioned Humber Doucy Lane planning application refused. SBye advised that it was refused for technical reasons.

JS advised there is open weekend Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July to look at plans for Felixstowe North. AW advised JG ESC planner will give an update in October. ET stated a concern about the loss of woodland at Eastwood Ho

**ACTION:** SLAF planning working group to voice concerns to David Falk/Sam Bye.

SK gave an update on Brandon BR1. The Landowner is agreeable to a creation agreement but would like stock proof fencing along full length and maintained. Oliver Wastell to chase quote from contractor.

SM asked about longer walks on the Suffolk Walking Festival 2024. AW advised the 2024 program reflected the balance of officer time. The coordination of the festival takes a lot of officer time.

### 3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. Welcome new member – Cllr Edward Thompson

AW welcomed new member Cllr Edward Thompson from ESC

### 5. Suffolk Energy Schemes

**Sizewell C** – AW gave an update on Sizewell C. There have been discussions with Annette Robinson regarding BR19 which runs through the site. An alternative diversion walking and cycling route, integrated into scheme road improvements, is required by the DCO before the PROW can be closed.

**ACTION:** SLAF to write Sizewell C to express concerns about any proposals which do not integrate new walking and cycling route and road improvements on Lovers Lane road scheme. [Post meeting note: following a meeting between BH and the Rights of Way & Access SZC specialist, reassurance has been given there are no plans in place to close Bridleway 19 until all necessary new highways infrastructure is in place.]

**Sunnica** going ahead and AW advised minor improvements including a possibility of a new PROW but issue with connectivity as funding does not cover it.

**Bramford to Twinstead** – awaiting examiners decision.

**Norwich to Tilbury** – SBye advised there is a change of request as opportunity for PROW Draft DCO submitted. Timeline unchanged. JS asked will there be a dedicated PROW section

SBye advised that there is only a dedicated section for PROW in the Management plan

SBye gave an update on Sealink. Extension to application with limited information. Concerns over red line changes and reduction in green space. Concern over change of working hours when PROW is busiest. A request has been made for more open green access around site, and to have the land dedicated as open access. Diversions must be implemented before any PROW is closed. ROW management plan is going in the right direction.

AW stated where there are areas grassland (not in agricultural use), these should be dedicated as open access under the CROW Act.

**ACTION:** SLAF to put response together by 18/08/2024.

**LionLink** will analyse the feedback received in the supplementary non-statutory consultation and its full consultation report, detailing all feedback, will be submitted with our Development Consent Order (DCO) application in 2025.

## 6. NSIP Working Group Feedback: Norwich – Tilbury consultation response

NSIP Forward Programme – AW advised that Annette Robinson is lead on officer guidance and there is a toolkit for staff. What cannot be mitigated should be compensated for financially.

JS asked about the impact of offshore windfarms. BH advised the SCC NSIP documents will have guidance.

AW advised that there will be an updated NPPF. SLAF to consider new planning reform.

SK advised there will be a program officer regarding overseeing public mapping for NSIPs. This will be led by IT and the Development & Improvement team will investigate whether the software allows the definitive map to be published to the web on a GIS rather than the current scanned .pdfs.

**ACTION:** what will public see? SK to liaise with Callum Etherton.

## 7. Network Rail Updates

Gipsy Lane SK gave an update on Gipsy Lane. The works compound was set up ready to start work 22<sup>nd</sup> August. Completion estimate October 2024. Culvert works will take place in the summer/autumn.

TWAO update SK stated that TWAO are gathering pace there is a new project team. Good working relationship.

Brantham SK gave update. Officers would like to see circular route C-A-E-F only if field margin D-I secured. SK advised a request to NR to engage with landowners, parishes and SLAF.

Bacton SK advised BMSDC refused to process RC extinguishment order.

Suffolk Rail-Road Partnership SK advised NR proposing to draft a TWAO applications in 3 phases for separate level crossings. There is support from SLAF for early intervention involving NR.

AW stated he'd had discussions with NR head of level crossing safety, IPROW and ADEPT regarding replacing stiles with gates.

SM advised members she wrote to NR regarding accessibility.

## **8. The King Charles III England Coast Path**

AW stated that the establishment works project is going well. Funding will be required for Orwell Bridge crossing – safety measures.

JS asked the forum are ferries promoted. AW stated not yet but would like to support them. Members agreed.

CB confirmed cyclists to support the use of ferries.

## **9. SLAF Annual Report 2023-2024**

AW mentioned a major road improvement to the A12 at Woodbridge. SLAF members to be updated on the consultation - expected towards the end of 2024.

**ACTION:** AW to keep SLAF informed.

CP working group agree A12 scheme a key priority. SLAF agreed severance is still a core forward priority looking.

CB asked about finding further Funding opportunities and use of volunteer groups.

JS questioned if the report is ambitious enough? Include achievements e.g. Horringer.

MP asked to include more positive news with NMGL and TWAO movement.

**ACTION:** SLAF members to contact DF regarding further comments on SLAF annual report.

**ACTION:** DF add CB to planning and severance working groups.

## **10. A.O.B**

CP asked about commercial events on PROW e.g. Stour Valley Ultra is imminent. Is this a concern for SLAF and SCC? Increasing commerciality and pressure on PROW.

**ACTION** – SCC to consider

## **11. Public Question Time**

JC leads on walking group and had submitted 56 ROW reports so far this year. JC led walk on SWF previously and expressed disappointment in this year's festival.

Noted that JC could not find recent years SLAF Annual reports.

JC noted Suffolk's PRow condition is very good compared to other counties.

BH stated not in SLAF's remit to talk about individual paths.

JC asked about funding.

AW stated SCC funding is under pressure, and this may have an effect on budgets, through how reports and maintenance is prioritised.

JP updated the forum regarding operational issues on PRow in Suffolk and the number of officers. There has been an increase the number of reports.

BH Regional LAF – SCC compares well, and its annual report gets heard.

JS welcomed the comments from the member of the public.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

24 October 2024 - Venue TBC

END

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Suffolk Energy Schemes</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/23</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Annette Robinson / Sam Bye</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>Thursday 24th October 2024, 1:00pm-3:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Melton Parish Council Offices, Melton IP12 1QT</b>

## 1. Sizewell C

SCC continues to handle applications for the Discharges of Requirement (DoR) as set out in the Development Consent Order. For PRow & Green Access these include DoR 10, the need for a Rights of Way implementation Plan for any new or diverted PRow. Currently, SCC is working with SZC on the DoR for those PRow affected by the green rail route – the new rail link from the Leiston branch line into the main development site.

Other current works that affect public rights of way and green access includes:

- Design of new PRow associated with the highway works schemes including the Sizewell Link Road, the two village bypass and the creation of the new inland bridleway as part of other highway works around the main development site. This involves consultation on design and road safety plus negotiation for better design, compliance with standards and the provision of additional access. Works cannot commence without the technical approval from SCC Highways NSIP team.
- Fen Meadows – SZC are aiming to complete the fen meadow creation work at Benhall by the end of October. The public footpath that was damaged by the excavation works has been restored and we are awaiting the final surfacing work to be undertaken. Preliminary preparation works are being planned for the Halesworth and Pakenham site; meetings have been held with SCC PRow regarding works at Pakenham.
- Coastal public footpath and King Charles III England Coast Path – work has started on building the new temporary footpath in accordance with the DoR 10 Implementation Plan. The works area is fenced off and a new ramp has been built over the seaward dune ridge. SCC are closely monitoring the work.
- Leiston Walking & Cycling Fund – Funding was allocated in the Deed of Obligation (DoO) for delivering a series of works to improve the walking and cycling connectivity in Leiston (£728K) and this is being taken forward by the PRow officer

embedded in the Highways NSIP team. The schemes will link to town centre public realm improvements being delivered by SZC and to the wider PRow network improvements which will be delivered via the PRow fund (DoO).

- SZC submitted the revised Informal Recreation and Green Space Plan which outlines proposals to improve the recreation offer within the SZC estate, particularly Kenton Hills. [DC/24/2598/DRR | Sizewell C Deed of Obligation Informal Recreation and Green Space Plan associated with the Sizewell C Development Consent Order Project | Sizewell C And Associated Development Sites \(eastsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/projects/DC/24/2598/DRR/Sizewell-C-Deed-of-Obligation-Informal-Recreation-and-Green-Space-Plan-associated-with-the-Sizewell-C-Development-Consent-Order-Project-Sizewell-C-And-Associated-Development-Sites)

## **2. Sunnica**

As highlighted in previous SLAF paper 24/18 the examination for Sunnica concluded at the end of March 2023 and the new Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero granted the Sunnica Energy Farm application development consent on 12th July 2024.

There are no further updates.

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

In September 2024 the application for development consent was approved – the SoS decision letter is 39 pages long and a link is below:

[EN020002-001919-Bramford to Twinstead - Final Decision Letter.pdf \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](https://www.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/EN020002-001919-Bramford-to-Twinstead-Final-Decision-Letter.pdf)

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

This scheme is in pre-application stage with the application expected to be submitted between June and August 2025. A link to the Planning Inspectorate website with further details is below:

[Norwich to Tilbury - Project information \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](https://www.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/norwich-to-tilbury)

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

A total of nine offshore wind farm contracts have been awarded by the government after last year's auction failed to attract any bidders at all including East Anglia 2 - 963.07 MW and East Anglia Three (for 158.90 MW).

Numerous management plans continue to be submitted to SCC and ESC to discharge the planning requirements of the DCO; currently for the archaeological mitigation works and the construction of the substation haul road from the B1069 at Knodishall to the substation site at Friston. Considerable efforts are being made to try to ensure that the disruption to the PRow network is minimised. SCC is awaiting the final



proposals for 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**

The EA3 converter station is currently under construction at Bramford and works along the cable ducting are being undertaken. There are numerous rights of way that will be crossed by the haul roads, but most will remain open with short term minor temporary diversions during the construction of the roads and then remain open using management measures.

**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)**

This project is still in targeted consultation with National Grid and expecting a submission for development consent in early 2025. SCC officers are currently reviewing draft DCO documents

More details are at;

[Sea Link About the project | National Grid Group.](#)

**8. LionLink (formerly EUROLINK) – interconnector between Suffolk and Belgium**

As per the previous SLAF paper 24/18, a detailed response on public rights of way, access and amenity on the LionLink Scoping Report was submitted, focusing on the very concerning cumulative effects of this project in conjunction with the other east coast NSIPs.

SCC officers are now reviewing the survey points required along the route with regard to PROW which has not yet been agreed on both sides.

END

AR/SB/SCC Oct 2024

## Appendix A

**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: 7 August 2024

Dear Sebastian Stevens

### Re: National Grid Sea Link Consultation

Despite our request in our previous letter sent in December 2023 (copy attached as APPENDIX), asking SLAF to be formally consulted at the next stage this did not happen, and so as no formal public consultation open days were held, we found trying to tease out information relating the treatment of public rights of way from the many on-line documents not helpful. We feel that not treating such an important issue to its own section within the PEIR documents and detailing how temporary and permanent diversions would be handled in each case would be beneficial. The points made in our previous response still stand.

We are concerned that the Draft Order Line has been tightened up in several places which therefore restricts the opportunity to provide meaningful temporary or permanent diversions to public rights of way impacted by cable joint bays, link boxes, the construction of the convertor station and the width needed to be soil stripped for the installation of cable ducts.

SLAF is particularly concerned about the land removed from the Draft Order line in the Saxmundham to Friston section as we understand that although the Lion Link interconnector scheme seeks to approach the Friston sub-station from the north it also requires cable ducting from there to an additional convertor station adjacent to the one that you are proposing at Saxmundham. It would make sense that even if these schemes have different timetables, collaboration at an early stage (which seemed to have been suggested in your original consultation), would obviate the need for unnecessary temporary or permanent rights of way diversions for haul roads or cable trenching.

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

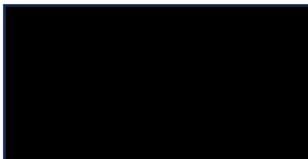
compensation would be required. This is particularly important where the impact is on locally promoted circular routes and named longer distance paths. We would expect that any green spaces created within or adjacent to the Draft Order Line would be designated as Open Access Land for public use.

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 other proposed NSIP's such as Lion Link and Nautilus likely to progressing through various consultation stages to DCO in the next two years, and then possible Inquiry, 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 this and other schemes could be being built during the same period as Sizewell C, the impact of construction traffic on a small area of Suffolk will have a significant impact on both local and visitors' enjoyment of the area through its rights of way network.

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

Yours sincerely



Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

**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

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

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>The King Charles III England Coast Path</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/24</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Claire Dickson</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024, 1:00pm-3:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Melton Parish Council Office, Melton IP12 1QT</b>

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

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

<b>Stretch name</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<a href="#">Harwich to Shotley Gate</a>	Four out of six reports at Stage 4, two at Stage 5
<a href="#">Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry</a>	Stage 5: <b>OPEN for use from 16<sup>th</sup> October</b>
<a href="#">Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey</a>	Stage 5: Approved. (Not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)
<a href="#">Bawdsey to Aldeburgh</a>	Four out of five reports at Stage 4 and one at Stage 5
<a href="#">Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea</a>	One out of six reports at Stage 4, others at Stage 5 (not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)

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 England Coast Path can be found [here](#).

## 2. The Stretches in More Detail

Natural England has provided this update on the national situation:

Status of proposals	Number of miles
<b>Total mileage submitted to government</b>	<b>2680</b>
- complete and open for public use	1251
- approved by government and work to establish the route taking place, or awaited	1144
- awaiting government decision	285
<b>Yet to be submitted</b>	<b>16</b>

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** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 15.10.24  
No change since previous report

- Stage 4 and 5 (Determine and Open)
- The proposals were published in January 2020 and received 7 objections.
- Reports 4, 5 and 6 are in Suffolk.
- Coastal Access Reports 1 and 4 have been approved. 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 15.10.24

- **Stage 5 Open for use.**

**Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 15.10.24

No change since previous report

- Stage 5 (Open) – but not yet available for use
- Natural England published proposals in December 2020
- Two reports were approved in May 2023 and the remaining sections were approved without change in May 2024.
- Work to establish the route is now taking place

**Bawdsey to Aldeburgh** – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 15.10.24

No change since previous report

- Stage 4 and 5 (Determine and Open)
- The report was published in February 2021.
- Report 3 has been approved 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 15.10.24

- Stage 4 and 5 (Determine and Open)
- Natural England published proposals in January 2020.
- 23 objections were received – all on Report 4. The Planning Inspector did site visits in April 2024.
- Reports 1,2,3,5 and 6 were approved in June 2022 and work to establish the route is now taking place.
- Proposals for minor variations at Corton and Dunwich were published on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 but do not prevent the route opening.



### 3. Suffolk Progress

The project officer has continued to predominantly focus on the establishment works on the three approved stretches covering Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry, Aldeburgh to Hopton and Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey. 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, revetment and surfacing works, design and construction of structures such as boardwalks, bridges, and steps, 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 successfully tendered over the summer months and are now in progress, namely:

- Installation of signs and waymarking from Aldeburgh to Hopton,
- Surface improvement and structures (bridges) at Dunwich (Aldeburgh to Hopton stretch),
- Revetment works and installation of steps at Thorpeness (Aldeburgh to Hopton stretch),
- Boardwalks and surfacing works at Walberswick (Aldeburgh to Hopton stretch).

Following successful completion of tenders and grant applications, works commenced in early January 2024 on the Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry section, with the majority of the works completed by early April 2024. Several works were outstanding due to the winter ground conditions; these have been completed over the summer period including the culvert works within the Orwell Park Estate.

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 have continued. National Highways have agreed to replacement steps, but the County Council are seeking agreement to a resting point on the embankment and information signs. The initial steps have been replaced prior to resting point being installed as we await agreement and resolution from National Highways on this matter.

The team have recently completed the signing works, including habitat mitigation signs, to tie in with the opening of this stretch. Natural England formal commenced

the new access rights between Shotley Gate and Felixstowe Ferry on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

Following verification of 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. Several grant applications have been approved and works commenced in September 2024. The start date of these works was required to tie in with ecology restraints.

The project officer has prioritised delivery of these two sections covering Aldeburgh to Hopton over the autumn. We currently do not have a set date for the opening of this stretch and are in discussion with Natural England to look at opening over the winter of 24/25. Our aim is to complete all works prior to Christmas 2024.

Works have been undertaken on the section of route by the Sizewell C site, this required the temporary rerouting of the trail as part of the Development Consent Order. These works have been overseen by the County Council's Senior Public Rights of Way Officer for Sizewell C Project.

The planning inspectorate visited the Southwold to Pakefield stretch in late March to consider objections. The Operations Manager attended the site visits as an advisory role. We now await a decision from the Secretary of State, we do not anticipate receiving this prior to the end of 2024. No decisions are provided during pre-election period resulting in further delay.

Following the approval of the Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey stretch on 7 May 2024, the team have verified the works required on site and raised a number of queries with Natural England. A joint site visit has been undertaken with Natural England and several landowners; we are currently working through the queries. Scoping of works are underway with a view to gain competitive quotes prior to January 2025.

The team are working 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.

Natural England have advised that funding is available for a second project officer. As works are currently on target for delivery, we are not in a position to progress with a second officer. Implementation work is progressing well on the approved sections. This will remain under review.

The Operations Team have established fortnightly meetings with Natural England representatives. We have carried out a two positive site visits with Natural England on both Aldeburgh to Hopton and Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey stretches, these were carried out in late April and early June. With proposals for a further site visit in November 2024. This enabled us to discuss delivery of works and to meet with

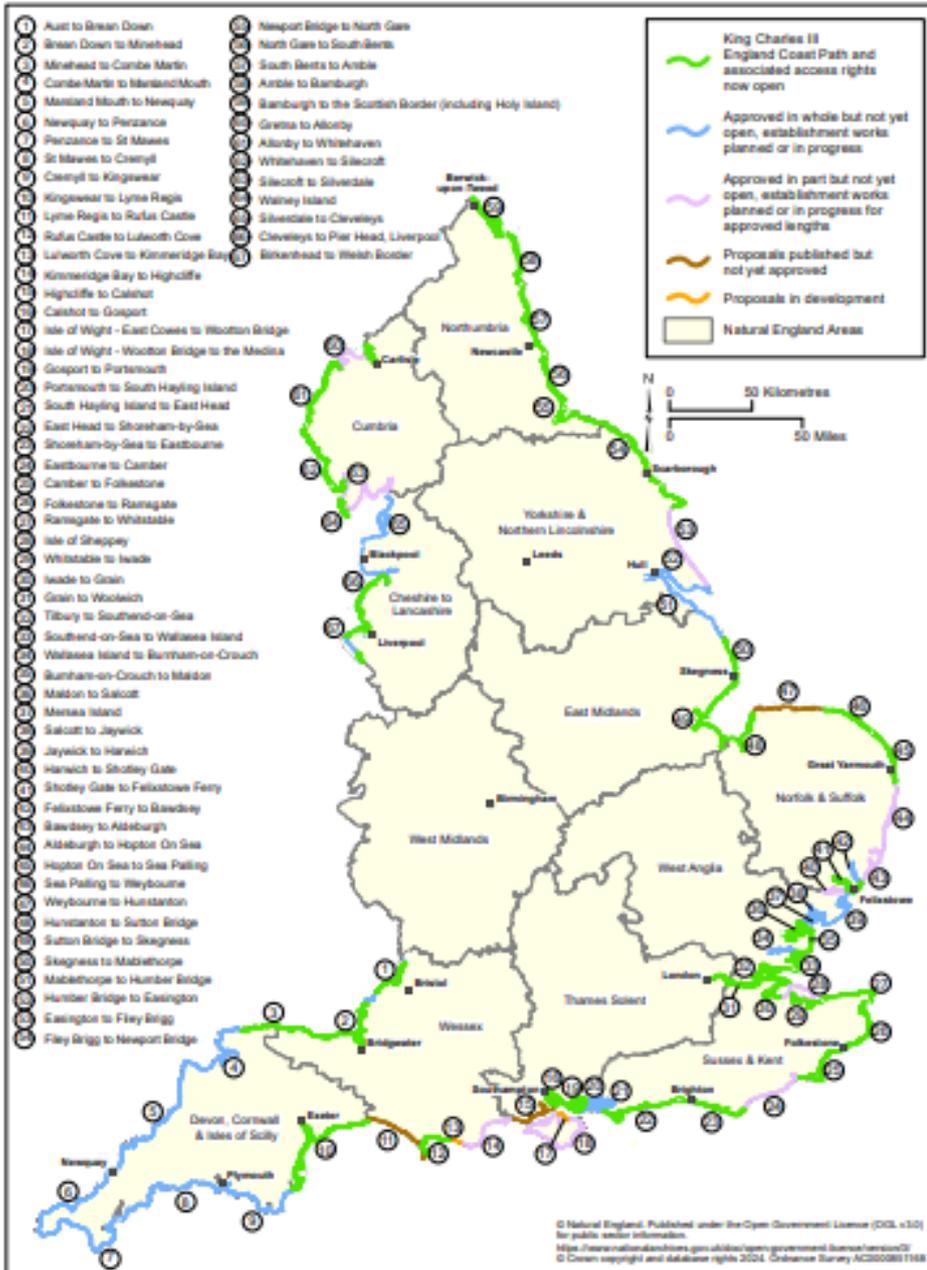
third parties on interpretation and works requirements. We have agreed that this will continue with remaining stretches following approval.

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

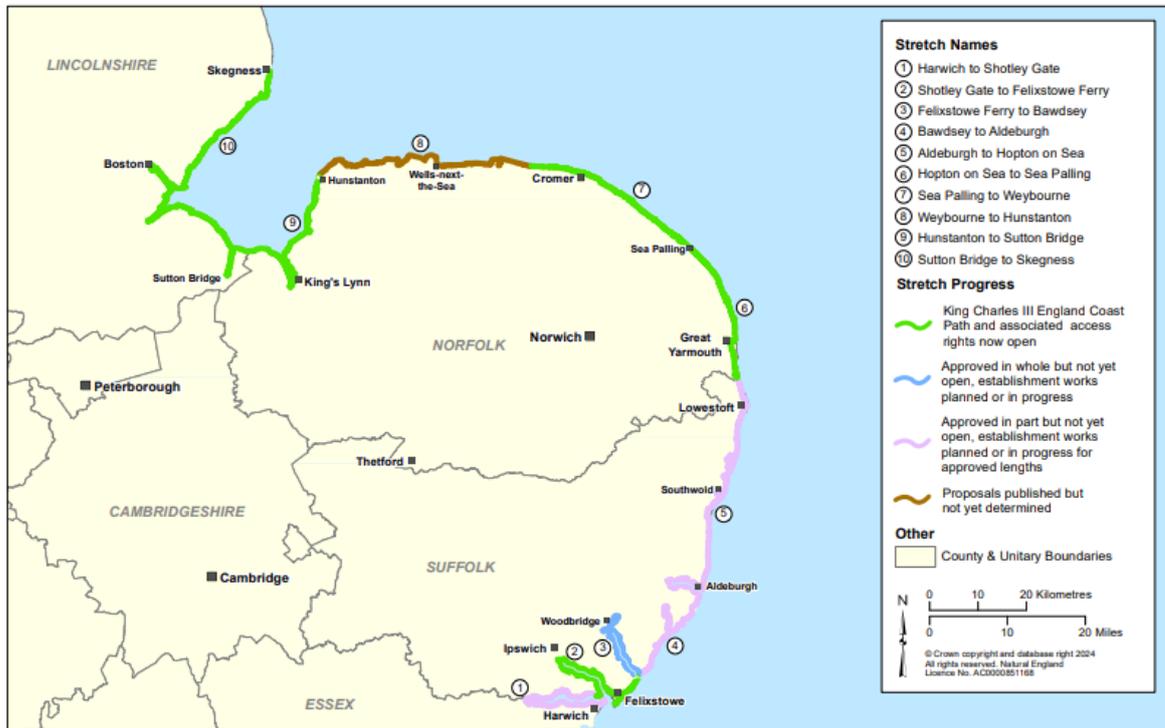
Following the withdrawal of one of the regional councils from the creation of a regional trail and partnership, the county council will review the best way of maintaining and marketing the King Charles III England Coast Path in Suffolk.

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 the last meeting the formula is being reviewed, and this process is ongoing, following the establishment of a review working group. The review will not affect 24/25 grant offers.

#### 5. England Coast Path – [Progress Maps](#)



The stretch between Shotley Gate and Felixstowe Ferry opened on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024.



END  
CLD/SCC October 2024

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>SLAF Annual Report to Cabinet</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/25</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>Thursday 24 October 2024, 1.00pm-3.00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Melton Parish Council Offices, Melton IP12 1QT</b>

The SLAF Annual Report was presented to Cabinet by Barry Hall (BH), SLAF Chair, on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September. Chris Bower (CB), SLAF Vice Chair, also attended.

Cllr Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, welcomed BH and CB, explaining that the report was by the Local Access Forum and not by Suffolk County Council, outlined that there had been good attendance of meetings through the year, and that the forum contained a good cross section of interests.

BH thanked Cllr West and introduced CB. BH explained much of the forum’s focus this year had been on NSIPs which were very concentrated on the Suffolk coast and that the forum had responded to many consultations related to Norwich-Tilbury, Sealink and EA1 and 2, amongst others, and that the forum would continue to scrutinise consultations as they arrive.

BH highlighted the impact of NSIPs on SCC officers and pressed how developments should provide funding to ensure the council had the resources to respond, that NSIPs should offer effective mitigation and better compensation, and that there needed to be better coordination between schemes. A key issue raised was the lack of communication between NSIPs.

BH explained the forum were particularly concerned over the impact NSIPs will have on the Suffolk coast and natural landscape, at the same time that construction of Sizewell C commences.

BH stated the forum were surprised that Sunnica had been approved and criticised the development for its impact on the public rights of way network, the lack of diversions to the network, and the poor level of compensation to cover officer time.

BH stated frustration with the slow progress by Natural England in delivering the King Charles III England Coast Path in Suffolk. BH thanked Natural England for funding resources to deliver the new path.

BH stated a new Public Open Space on Ipswich waterfront had now been opened but the forum remained concerned over management and fencing of a section of railway line beside the space.

BH thanked SCC officers for their support, arranging site visits, organising guest speakers, and providing detailed updates on key issues affecting countryside access and the use of the public rights of way network.

BH concluded by thanking SCC for their support to the Rights of Way and Access team ensuring the green network was accessible to the public for exercise, walking and natural reflection.

CB echoed BH's comments and thanked Cllr Spicer for her support to the forum.

Cllr Spicer advised that the same topics pop up again and again but that this year the forum had ticked off some things and commended officers and the forum for persevering with issues.

Cllr Spicer advised that the governance and terms of reference for the forum, membership terms, and the role of the local authority including how the forum is monitored and how important issues are advised to the forum, all needed to be looked at and asked Cllr West to speak with officers to ensure SCC is performing the correct role.

Cllr Spicer stated what a pleasure it was being on the forum.

Cllr West stated he hoped Cllr Spicer would carry on with the forum and would take on board comments made.

Cllr Reid thanked the forum for their report and shared concerns regarding NSIPs and the collective disruption they had on public rights of way.

Cllr Smith thanked BH for the annual report and agreed that NSIPs failed to communicate with one another and anything the forum could do to address this would be welcome. Cllr Smith stated there was less on Sizewell in this year's report compared with previous years.

BH explained the forum were being updated on developments with Sizewell at their next meeting but understood there was £2.8m for public rights of way improvements over the next 10 years, and that as work commences the forum would be updated and he would ensure next year's report contained more information.

Cllr Faircloth-Mutton thanked BH for presenting the report and looked forward to the completion of the King Charles III England Coast Path.

Cllr Hicks asked if the forum had spent much time on Sunnica.

BH advised there had not been a forum meeting since the development had received approval, and it would be discussed Sunnica at their next meeting.

Cllr Lockington asked about the Fonnereau Way north of Ipswich and a newly installed pedestrian and cycling bridge over the railway at Westerfield. The bridge was still not open to the public and diversions to the public rights of way network were not being upkept. Cllr Lockington asked if the forum had shown an interest in this issue.

BH advised the forum had become recently aware of this issue and understood the new bridge was still in the hands of the developer but there were regular meetings with SCC officers to gain the legal agreements necessary to adopt the bridge.

Cllr West assured Cllr Lockington that SCC would take this up with relevant officers.

Cabinet unanimously accepted the paper.

END  
DF – SCC Oct 2024



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>East of England Local Access Forum meeting</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/26</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Barry Hall</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>Thursday 24 October 2024, 1:00pm-3:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Melton Parish Council Offices, Melton IP12 1QT</b>

### **Minutes of the Microsoft Teams meeting held on 25 July 2024**

#### **Present**

Mary Sanders (Chair)	Cambridgeshire LAF
Clive Beckett, Louis Upton	Central Bedfordshire LAF
Ken Hawkins	Norfolk LAF

#### **In attendance**

Lynn Myland	to item 3.1
Rory Kerr	to item 4

#### **Apologies for absence** were received from

Bob Wallace	Borough of Bedford LAF
Barry Hall	Suffolk LAF

### **1 Welcome and introductions**

The meeting was delayed because of problems with the link: the issued link failed to work for most people; a new link was established and issued, but it may be that some did not see that it had been sent. It was decided after consideration to continue with the meeting. Mary welcomed those attending and thanked Euridce Baptista of Cambridgeshire County Council for setting up the MS Teams meeting for us.

### **2 Minutes of the meeting on 18 January 2024**

The minutes had been circulated and were approved as correct.

### **3 Matters arising from the minutes**

#### **3.1 Item 3.2: Defra**

Lynn Myland, Somerset LAF chair who represents LAFs on Defra's Access and Engagement Forum was welcomed to the meeting. Noted from a previous exchange had been presented on the agenda. Lynn amplified her notes,

reporting that meetings were held quarterly, most recently in May, with minutes available on the Natural England (NE) SharePoint. It was noted that SharePoint also included consultations, libraries and other useful information. Ken reported that NLAF, having had attendance from Danielle Radley of NE, had agreed to propose to NE that it should redirect the resource being used to support SharePoint into holding meetings for LAFs, online if needed to minimise costs. He added that the only way to know what was posted on SharePoint seemed to be to repeatedly log in, which he thought was unworkable. Clive supported that view - he had not used SharePoint as it was hard to find anything. Lynn pointed out that at present this was the only way to access information and communicate so it should be used. She agreed to provide details of where to find information, including that about Access and Engagement Forum, which she was leaving later in the year. It was further agreed that we, on behalf of all East of England LAFs, should seek representation on the Forum.

### 3.2 Item 3.1: Natural England

Danielle Radley, Higher Officer, Natural England had intended to join the meeting but had to cancel at the last minute.

## 4 **NFU (National Farmers' Union) - Rory Kerr**

Rory Kerr, NFU County Adviser (Cambridgeshire) introduced himself, noting that most other counties also have Advisors. His remit was to promote the interests of NFU members - lobbying local authorities, Defra, MPs, Police & Crime Commissioners, etc. He was currently tasked with finding a landowner member for CLAF. The discussion that followed noted the issues reported by Central Bedfordshire (below). Rory said that these issues had increased following covid. **He was concerned that certain members of the public could be on the look out for an opportunity to steal something or inform others of where certain items might be. Due to an increase in footfall from members of the public and dog walkers, farmers may have to be more vigilant.** He reported that LAF members were welcome to contact him at [Rory.Kerr@nfu.org.uk](mailto:Rory.Kerr@nfu.org.uk) or on 07974 227395.

## 5 **LAF issues**

Where a LAF had submitted a report in advance of the meeting, that report is included here, *with comments at the meeting added in italics*.

### 5.1 Borough of Bedford LAF

Items from the BoBLAF meeting held on 23rd July were -

#### a) LWCIP

The BoBLAF was updated on the progress of the new strategic plan that the Borough Council is developing for walking and cycling routes, Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LWCIP). This will now be sent to the BoBLAF and other stakeholders within the next few weeks for consultation. To enable government funding to be secured the final document needs to be submitted before the end of 2024.

#### b) Explore your Borough

Bedford Borough had successfully obtained funds from the UK Shared Prosperity Funds, some of which was allocated to the 'Explore your Borough' project. This would devise a series of walks between 2 to 5 miles to encourage residents to access the paths and parks of the Borough. The BoBLAF had been asked to provide advice on this project with members contributing suggestions and routes. The work is ongoing with completion by March 2025.

c) RoWIP 2024-2029

The Consultation phase of the RoWIP was now complete and the responses were being analysed. A review of this analysis together with the suggested revision of the Plan would be circulated to members before the October BoBLAF meeting. The intention would be to publish the 2024-2029 RoWIP before the end of 2024

d) PPO in the Borough

At a previous meeting it was noted that a significant number of the objections made to PPO work had been received from the Open Spaces Society (OSS). It was explained that OSS Local Correspondents continue to delay and attempt to deter the council from making PPO's in line with the OSS guidance notes given to their local correspondents. The good news was that in the past few months PINS had confirmed 9 of the PPOs – there are another 5 orders awaiting PINS instructions.

e) Volunteering

A report was given on the extensive work that the Ramblers RIPPLE (Restoring and Improving Public Paths for Your Leisure and Enjoyment) team had carried out on a weekly basis over the last few months.

f) Buffalos on Public Rights of Way

A Complainant had contacted many organisations including the Local Authority and the BoBLAF concerned that Buffalos kept in a field with RoW going through it had, allegedly harassed, horse riders on the RoW. The Local Authority outlined the Due Diligence procedures that were being carried out which may result in a warning notice being issued to the landowner. The BoBLAF were in agreement with the process that the LA were adopting and would inform the complainant of their backing of the Local Authority.

## 5.2 Broads LAF

No report had been received.

## 5.3 Cambridgeshire LAF

CLAF staggers on from crisis to crisis. Two years ago we were moved from 'Asset Management' to 'Highways', within the County Council, and have been facilitated by the Deputy Manager of Highways, Jon Munslow. His new PA, Euridce Baptista, has been helping with virtual meetings, minutes and agendas. The new Head of PROW has presented at a CLAF meeting. Then, towards the end of May, Jon left the CC without giving notice, and Euridce told us that he'd left. We hear that the department is being re-organised, so we await developments.

The CC is in dispute with the BHS about the surfaces of the 'cycleways' as so many footpaths and bridleways are being tarmacked. Also, on the advice of Sustrans, the Government has given £1m for a bridleway to be tarmacked over

to make a new cycleway to between Soham and Wicken. Most people feel this is an enormous waste of money, as apart from taking people to Wicken Fen, it will have no 'commuter' function. There has now been a planning application from a landowner for a 6-metre-wide route to be tarmacked for heavy lorries to cross the Roman Road to get to an anaerobic digester, which also meets with anxiety from horse riders.

*Mary reported that this planning application had been approved.*

We have invited the regional manager of Urban and Civic to our August meeting to tell us about their developments at Wintringham, Alconbury and Waterbeach, and the connecting Greenways and cycleways.

#### 5.4 Central Bedfordshire LAF

##### 1. ROW Budget

Budget cuts expected although hopefully this will not affect staffing. We are aware that rights of way maintenance budgets will be affected and under the new Milestones contract seasonal vegetation clearance will be reduced from 3 cuts to 2 cuts. In addition, contribution to farmers who help clear undergrowth is likely to be reduced or even terminated.

Also good news, as another Definitive Map Officer appointed and a PROW Team Leader post created. However, this does not cover the Definitive Map function therefore coordination of rights of way management is still fragmented.

##### 2. ROWIP

Two LAF workshops completed to identify issues of concern to LAF. Very useful and will feed back into ROWIP process. Plan originally intended to be completed in October 2024 but this has been pushed back to Spring 2025 [note after meeting - now Winter 2025].

*Ken asked about the process used to develop the RoWIP, noting that in Norfolk there had been joint working between the LAF and County staff. More recently there had been increasing notice taken of the policies throughout the Council. Mary added that in Cambridgeshire, this had previously been set up via a PRow senior post; a new appointee intended to survey all paths in the county, via U3A and RA groups, presumed to be a precursor to generating the RoWIP.*

##### 3. Leisure Strategy

LAF made initial comments on proposed new Leisure Strategy. Mainly related to the need provide and maintain green infrastructure and that the local authority must play a more positive approach particularly where new green infrastructure is down to the developer to provide and maintain possibly by contributions from house owners. LAF's view is that green infrastructure requires LA accountability.

##### 4. Farming Perspective

LAF received a presentation from the Area NFU representative on farmers issues concerning rights of way. Main issues which are no doubt common across region:

*Costs to farmers of public walking in the countryside include:*

- Loss of crops by footpaths and public use.
- Threats to wildlife and biodiversity.
- Dogs – importance of keeping them on leads.

- Cost of sheep death.

#### *Health and Safety – Arable considerations*

Farmers unable to see pedestrians when very dusty work, and poor visibility within their tractors.

#### *Livestock considerations*

Livestock remain one of the top causes of fatal and serious injury

NFU provides guidance,

#### *Other considerations*

Hare coursing – hunting hares with dogs.

4 x 4s cross the fields and can damage fences, they are usually stolen vehicles, so do not care for the damage that they do.

Need for farmers to crop spray responsibly, and the need for signage for public to be aware.

Rural Crime: Police are working with NFU in regard to parts of machinery and tractors being stolen. Sometimes this machinery is left in field margins, to see if they have trackers before taken. So again if tractor parts are found, to contact police with Serial no. and photograph it, rather than touch it.

#### 5. GLEAM report 'Calling Time On Off-Roadings' – A TRF (Trail Rider Fellowship) perspective

LAF considered the 'Calling Time on Off-Roadings' report. Chris Hall of the Trail Riders Fellowship attended the meeting and explained the Fellowships views on the report.

Trail Riding groups are restricted to 6 or max. 8 at a time. TRF has a good working relationship with County Councils to maintain and improve byways.

The code of conduct for TRF states that trail riders should have regard for other users and give way.

Evidence indicates that the main cause of damage to lanes is from agricultural vehicles and heavy plant and the main misuse by motor cyclists are non TRF members and illegal riders. LAF agreed that the issue is with the illegal riders, and the police through operation Meteor have dedicated teams on trail bikes to catch offenders. Generally felt that new legislation was a hammer to crack a nut. LAF agreed with the TRF views on the GLEAM report that further restricted legislation which penalises the whole should be avoided, bearing in mind the availability of temporary TRO's and action that can be taken by the police.

*Clive added that the Great Chalk Way would be launched at Dunstable on 25 September, with members of this forum invited. How develop RoWIP? Original RoWIP incorporated in wider document and fully considered within wider strategy. Now separating RoW from Outdoor Access IP, but project team fallen; LAF actively involved in commenting - liked Bucks format and content.*

#### 5.5 Essex LAF

Apologies for this very late Essex report. Google mail decided to put all the Regional LAF emails in its spam box – I only become aware of this today (Wednesday). It only seems to have affected these Regional LAF emails and not any other emails to my chairman.essexlaf@gmail.com email address.

1. Accessibility: Coastal Access Guides & August site meeting & Ramblers Accessibility Fund

Sadly the “Access Guides” to two sections of the Coastal Path, developed by Rowena and two other ELAF members, are still waiting to be added to the Essex Highways website. Apparently the IT people would like to see a more interactive document rather than the pdf document as produced plus there are some accessibility requirements for sight impaired people.

Our meetings continue to be held virtually on Teams except for the August site meeting where we aim to have an accessibility theme. The meeting on 6 August is to the Ironworks Meadow Community Nature Reserve at Maldon. ELAF member John is one of a group of local residents who, fearing this land was going to be sold for development, formed a Community Interest Company and successfully negotiated to lease the land from Tesco on the basis that it would be managed as a community nature reserve. Money has been raised and a network of paths installed to allow access to the site, including disabled access which Rowena our wheelchair member will be test driving!

Rowena / Walk Colchester together with a Ramblers group & Colchester Borough Council successfully applied for £8k of funding from the Ramblers Accessibility Fund to improve the accessibility of 1km of the NMU (non-motorised user) Colchester Orbital Route section across Cymbeline Meadows – redesigning 4 kissing gates, a stepped bridge access & improved drainage on a 350m section.

## 2. Infrastructure

### i. National Highways A12 widening & junction improvement DCO

There has been a legal challenge to the DCO so the process is stalled at present.

### ii. Network Rail crossing closures under the Transport & Works Act Order

At the May ELAF forum meeting, members were informed that the Project Manager had recently been replaced and Essex Highways are starting to engage on the detailed design of the diversion routes for crossing where closures were agreed.

### iii. Essex Replacement Minerals Plan consultation

In April, ELAF responded to the policy points in draft Minerals Plan consultation. Site specific responses were not made as we do not have the resources to be familiar with all the proposed sites.

### iv. National Grid: Norwich to Tilbury proposed pylons

The close date for this consultation was extended to Friday 26 July due to the General Election. Currently ELAF have not responded and will probably not do so.

## 3. One information source / map of publicly accessible green spaces

Malcolm’s project to see whether all publicly accessible spaces in Essex can be pulled together on one map – or at least in one place with links from one website – is currently seeming impossible to achieve. There is an action to connect with the ECC Green Infrastructure Team and the Local Nature Partnership project to explore resources.

## 4. Essex Highways (EH) & ELAF & PRow budgets

It is expected that PRow funding will continue at the same level in 2024/25.

EH have an annual summer cutting programme of PRowS – an interactive map shows when paths were cut which allows users to monitor the work

<https://www.essexhighways.org/vegetation-cutting>. There is also a hard winter cutting programme mainly for byways and bridleways.

There used to be a 5 year rolling inspection programme where PRow Officers undertook to check all the paths in a Parish once every 5 years. This was scrapped in about 2022 when manpower was cut and the way of working was reorganised. Work is now driven by faults reported on the interactive fault reporting system by members of the public. This seems to be working well with faults being resolved instead of lingering. Some issues like fingerposts and (non-urgent) bridge works are scheduled for the non-summer growing season (i.e. winter / times when the ground is hard) and so can be efficiently grouped together.

There are still issues with the production of the Minutes of the ELAF meetings.

#### 5.6 Hertfordshire LAF

No report had been received.

#### 5.7 Norfolk LAF

Current issues and actions are

- 1 Attendance has been patchy for recent meetings, with the April meeting inquorate and the July meeting only just meeting the minimum. Councillor attendance has been generally poor, with corresponding lack of action between meetings. We are engaged in discussions to try to improve this and at the same time increase our profile with Councillors: there are some signs of improvement, but still a good way to go. One positive sign is that the Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan (incorporated into a wider Norfolk Access Improvement Plan) is featuring more strongly in the Council decision making structure.
- 2 Our Chair for the last several years, Martin Sullivan, has announced his intention to stand down after the next meeting, so we will be seeking a new Chair at that time. Other organisational changes continue. The officer who has supported the LAF for many years is shortly leaving the Council and though support has been confirmed, we await the details of how that support is to be provided in future,.
- 3 Access in Norfolk has been for some years split between Norfolk Trails and the rest of the PRow network, with the former under separate and better funded management and the latter a part of Highways. In recent times, the support and involvement from Norfolk Trails has increased while that from Highways has faded almost completely. We are discussing this with supportive staff in an effort to improve the position.
- 4 NLAF has continued to reply to consultations on NSIPs, major planning applications and other significant issues. It is not clear in some cases that these representations have been properly considered, so NLAF has agreed a standard format to accompany all comments, stating the legal requirement relating to LAF advice and requesting a specific response showing how our advice has been taken into account.
- 5 It is also monitoring the Council's response to reports of difficulties on the public right of way and associated access network within the county. There is a continuing concern about the level of resource available as the number

of outstanding issues is fairly constant from quarter to quarter, if anything increasing slightly. Similarly, notwithstanding the recent deferral of the 2026 deadline to 2031, NLAf remains concerned at the backlog of DMMO applications still outstanding, anticipating that the momentum created by the approach of 2026 is unlikely to decrease and may very probably increase.

6 NLAf is asking Natural England to redirect any resource from its SharePoint initiative (about which nothing further has been heard) and instead devote it to arranging national (or two or more regional) meetings for LAF members every year or two years.

7 NLAf's charitable arm, Pathmakers, has again planned a walking festival throughout October.

#### 5.8 Suffolk LAF

Unfortunately, there will be no attendance from me on 25<sup>th</sup> as it clashes with our SLAF meeting where in the morning we will be looking at Open Access Land issues in the Brecks. However, since my last report there has been movement on several outstanding issues.

- In January our site visit was to look at the long-term issue of the closure of the Gipsy Lane foot crossing in Needham Market. At that time Storm Babet had washed away a vehicle bridge on the landowner's land which was to be used by Network Rail to construct the diversion route though a culvert. This week Network Rail were finally able to announce that the agreement had been signed and construction would begin at the end of this month.
- A less welcome announcement was made within a week of the new government being in place, that the long-delayed Sunnica Solar Farm proposal had been approved against the objections put forward at the public inquiry.
- Agreements between ABP, IBC and SCC have meant that most of the Byway/open space access issues at Griffin Walk in Ipswich have been resolved.
- Further announcements have been made that work can now begin on creating the King Charles III England Coast Path around the Deben Estuary although there are still sections along the Suffolk Coast awaiting signing off.
- SLAF earlier this month sent off its response to the National Grid Norwich – Tilbury DCO as far as it related to Suffolk and the impact on rights of way. Our Energy Schemes sub-group will now look at the latest National Grid DCO proposals for the Sea Link project which again affects rights of way before sending in a response.
- As the Sizewell C DCO is now in place SLAF will making sure that all measures relating to rights of way and access are adhered to.

Our April meeting was held in Felixstowe so that in the morning we could visit a large area in the north of the town allocated for housing which already has



several significant rights of way. Our Planning and Development subgroup will be involved monitoring the masterplan and development proposals which are due later this year.

SLAF's next meetings are on 24th October and probably 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025.

#### 5.9 Thurrock LAF

Staff had reported that Thurrock still has no LAF but does hope to reestablish one.

#### 5.10 Luton

**Louis** reported that a pre meeting had been arranged to set up a Luton LAF, due on 25 September. **Louis** confirmed he would put the new LAF into contact with this frum.

### 6 **East Anglia Green**

It was understood that Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils all opposed the application to build a pylon run across the counties. Ken added that Norfolk LAF had submitted a comment asking for alternatives to be explored (such as offshore linking of the wind farms and a single short landfall or undergrounding the cables), but if pylons were erected: that the impact on PRoW be minimised, with closures co-ordinated to avoid blocking large parts of the network; that all paths affected be restored to at least their previous condition and where possible, improved; and that the visual impact be minimised. It was further noted that The Ramblers had submitted a response on behalf of its members in the three counties.

### 7 **Next meeting**

It was agreed to fix the next meeting (online, Microsoft Teams) for 1000 on Wednesday 22 January 2025, subject to this being possible for Cambs CC. It was also agreed that to prevent similar problems to those occurring at the start of this meeting, it would be set up only about 2 weeks before the meeting.

END  
SCC Oct 2024

<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Network Rail Updates</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/27</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>24th October 2024, 1:00pm-3:00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Melton Parish Council Offices, Melton IP12 1QT</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**



As previously reported to members, in July NR provided very little advance notice of their intention to start mobilisation works at Gipsy Lane, which after further clarification on their part, commenced on 15 July. At that time articles appeared online in the East Anglian Daily Times (EADT) and the BBC – see below.

[Gipsy Lane level crossing in Needham Market to close | East Anglian Daily Times \(eadt.co.uk\)](https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/2024/07/15/needham-market-railway-crossing-to-close/)

[Needham Market railway crossing where actress died is to close - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-681038)

The actual construction works, including the provision of a temporary haul road from Stowmarket Road to the southern side of the culvert, commenced on 22 August but at that time the s278 agreement had still not been completed by NR. Following further correspondence and urgently arranged online meetings the county council advised no further works could take place until a Minor Works Licence (MWL) was in place and the s278 agreement had been finalised.

The MWL was subsequently granted on 29 July and the s278 agreement and associated plans finally signed on 4 September 2024.

Works are currently taking place within the culvert, with all the works associated with the project expected to be completed by the end of the year. These include the ramped approaches on both sides of the culvert, widening improvements to the footway along Stowmarket Road and some minor works at the junction with Gipsy Lane.

The Gipsy Lane crossing is to be stopped up once all the works are completed and certified by the highway authority.

Despite recent assurances from the railway operator, the county council has still not received a revised works programme/timeline.

On 26 September, NR's Communications team emailed to advise that an advert alerting the public to the future closure of the crossing would be placed in the EADT newspaper the following day, and this would appear once a week for four consecutive weeks. In addition, a leaflet drop would be undertaken with residents within a 2-mile radius of the crossing, the week commencing 30 September. The advert and leaflet are reproduced at Appendix A. These are intended to help raise awareness that the work to close the crossing is ongoing and to start seeding the information about how the diversionary route will work.

NR had also advised they would be re-starting the liaison meetings with council officers and the first of these fortnightly meetings was held on 4 September.

NR have not provided any further update on the progress of the costs agreement and officers will be raising this again with the railway operator.

### **General/Countywide**

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

Since the Forum's last meeting, two further monthly meetings have taken place with NR's ALXR Project team, on 25 July and 17 September. August's meeting was cancelled due to leave commitments.

At the September meeting, NR shared their current design programme for the 5 level crossings that include diversionary routes and associated works – see below.

Programme						
Contents						
	Forecast Date	Complete				
				Finish	Start	Finish
Supplier	Location	Site ID	Approvals	Submission to HA	HA Review	HA Review
Taziker	Island	S04	HA-LP-RSA-TMP	16-Sep-24	17-Sep-24	14-Oct-24
Taziker	Gislingham	S16	HA-LP	16-Sep-24	17-Sep-24	14-Oct-24
Taziker	Paynes	S17	HA-LP	27-Jan-25	28-Jan-25	24-Feb-25
QTS	Hawk End Lane	S29	HA-LP	8-May-24	9-May-24	6-Jun-24
Taziker	Lords	S30	HA-LP	21-Aug-24	22-Aug-24	19-Sep-24

Further information on the progress for each of these are listed below:-

#### S04 Island – FP18 Bentley

There's currently a delay in the submission of the design due to a clash with Suffolk Highways' Bridge Vehicle Incursion (BVI) scheme.

The design is being updated to incorporate SCC's GIS data for the BVI scheme and recommendations from the Road Safet Audit. NR will advise the county council once the submission date is known.

#### S16 Gislingham – BR10 Finningham

There's currently a delay in the submission of the design to NR from the contractor and the railway operator will advise SCC once a submission date is known.

#### S17 Paynes - FPs 22 and 26 Gislingham

The design submission is currently on hold whilst various design options and cost estimates are explored, due to the existence of a drainage ditch on the alignment of the proposed diversion. NR intend to submit their design to SCC in January 2025.

#### S29 Hawk End Lane – FP12 Brantham

This proposal is the most advanced and works were anticipated to start onsite in mid-October. NR are currently liaising with Babergh Mid Suffolk, regarding the discharge of a planning condition and a s106 obligation, which has reserved funding for the diversion of FP12 Brantham, so as to allow for the closure of the at-grade crossing.

At a ALXR Project team progress meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> October, officers were advised that the start date for works had been pushed back to the middle of November, due to further liaison required with the local planning authority.

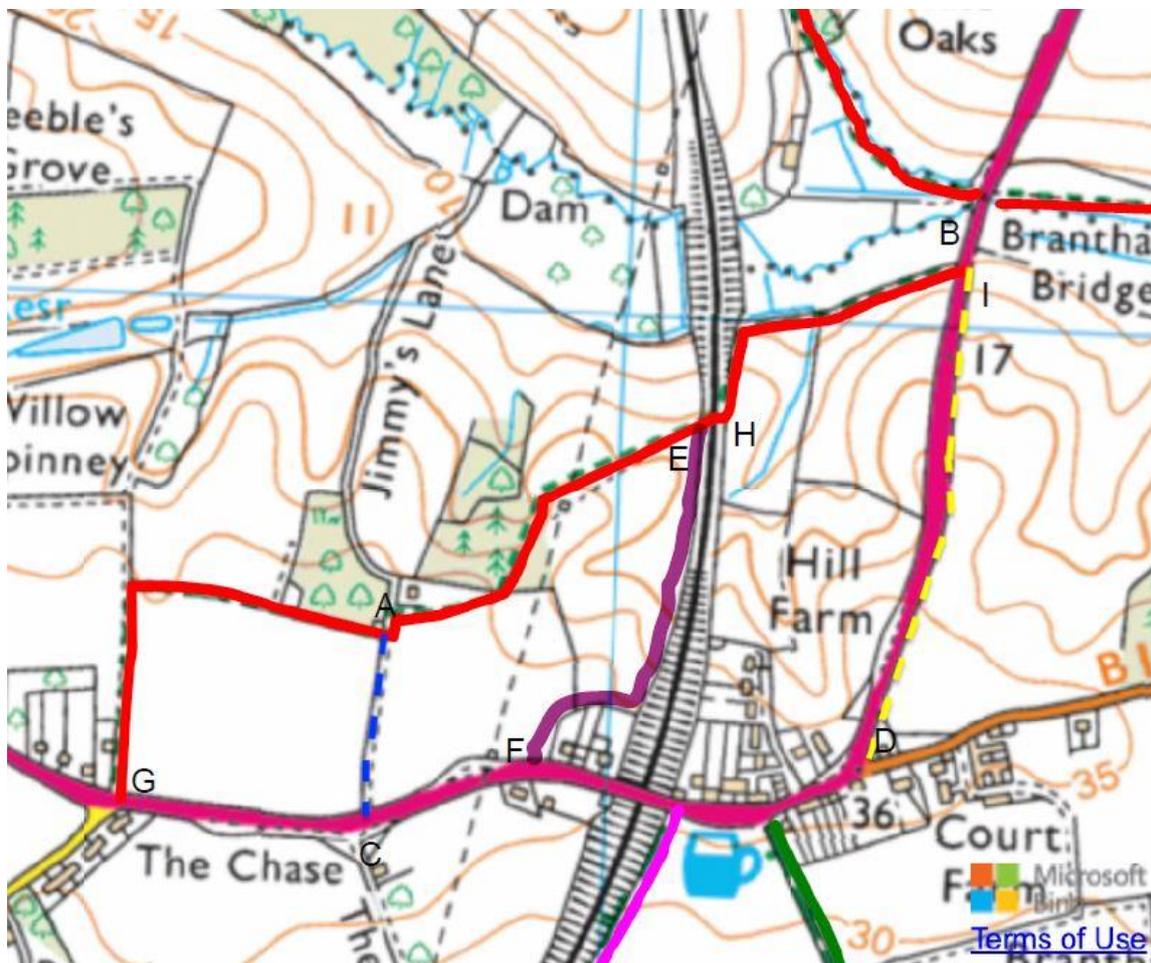
#### S30 Lords 29 – FP9 Elmswell

NR submitted their design to SCC on 21 August and the county council provided its comments by the deadline date, on 19 September. The railway operator is currently reviewing the council's comments.

As part of the council's responses to individual design submissions, it has provided an assessment of the commuted sums needed to maintain any new infrastructure, such as steps.

### **Footpath 6 Brantham (High Bridge)**

Since the last update provided at the Forum's July meeting, there has been no further update from NR, following the county council's comments on the suitability of NR's proposals and SCC's preferred options (submitted in early July).



As reported at the Forum's last meeting, the county council would like to see the circular walk C-A-E-F, together with the field edge footpath D-I secured, in lieu of the extinguishment of the section E-H-B. However, SCC would also be prepared to consider the extinguishment of the route marked A-E-H-B, with the circular walk provision between G-A-C but only if the field edge route D-I can also be delivered.





Extracts from 1<sup>st</sup> DM for Old Rural District of Deben (relevant date 01/01/1961) and current working copy DM for the parish of Rushmere St Andrew (relevant date 26/10/2015)

The railway operator has been wanting to extinguish this FP level crossing since 2016 as there is a suitable grade separated alternative nearby (Stennetts 2 – FP17 RSA).

Due to incidents of misuse at the crossing, NR applied to SCC to temporarily close the crossing and the temporary closure was duly made on 24 July 2024. It remains in force for 6 months, until 23 January 2025. Authority to extend its closure can only be granted by the SoSfT but it is anticipated NR will re-apply for an extension.

Again, it is understood NR also intend to include this in one of their future TWAO applications.

### **Suffolk Road Rail Partnership (SRRP)**

A Teams meeting was held with SCC (including Rights of Way, Transport Strategy and Suffolk Highways officers) on 19 July. The remit, objectives and make up of the SRRP, as set out by NR is:-

*A Road Rail Partnership Group is a forum for road and rail authorities to come together to discuss joint issues. These should be established in each County Council area by senior Network Rail Manager.*

*The shared objectives of the group shall be to consider, from a Rail perspective:*

- *crossings that concern Rail from a safety (misuse) perspective.*
- *crossings that are limiting train speed and / or capacity.*

*And from a Highways perspective:*

- *crossings that are impinging on Local Transport Plans and are a factor in road delay and congestion.*
- *crossings that if bridged / diverted may lead to development for closure.*

*The RRPG attendees should include Highways and Planning, Road Safety Partnerships (or combination of skills such as Road Safety Engineering and*

*Enforcement where no such partnership exists), Highways Authorities (County Council or Unitary Authority), Planning Authorities, BTP, Local Operations Managers, Liabilities Managers, Level Crossing Managers, Level Crossing Engineering expertise, Route Enhancement expertise.*

*The focus of the RRPg is to develop a long-term strategy and shall be:*

*a) co-ordinated management of the risk using a template around closure, automation, improvement and leave alone, on a rail route by route basis.*

*b) understanding the safety and other impacts of level crossings, (such as delay and congestion), making sure that opportunities for minimising those impacts in a joined-up fashion are maximised.*

*c) influencing enforcement.*

*d) facilitating education of users as to the risks at the road / rail interface and how to act safely.*

*e) influencing planning likely to impact on the road rail interface.*

*f) helping facilitate the closure, diversion or upgrade of protection at level crossings.*

END  
SK/SCC October 2024



# Appendix A

## Advert



### GIPSY LANE LEVEL CROSSING IS CLOSING

To improve railway safety, we're closing Gypsy Lane level crossing in Needham Market and building a new public footpath for pedestrians to safely cross the railway.

We're currently in construction and are aiming to complete the works by the end of 2024. A notice will be placed at the crossing once closure is certified by the local authority.

Follow the map to see your new public footpath that will take you under the railway.

If you have any questions or concerns you can contact Network Rail's 24/7 helpline at: [www.networkrail.co.uk/contactus](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/contactus) or on 03457 11 41 41.



## Leaflet



### GIPSY LANE LEVEL CROSSING IS CLOSING

To improve safety for the railway and pedestrians using the level crossing at Gypsy Lane, we are closing the level crossing and building a new footpath for you to safely cross the railway.

The results of the public consultation indicated overwhelming support for the diversion of level crossing users to a dry channel of an existing culvert underpass approximately 230m to the north of Gypsy Lane. This involves the creation of a new footpath through private land on both sides of the railway, linking with Stowmarket Road. The new route is now in construction and due to be completed by the end of 2024.

Once the new pathway is complete and certified by the local authority, we will close the crossing and remove all infrastructure including the whistle boards. An access gate on Stowmarket Road side of the railway will remain in place for railway staff use only. A notice will be placed at the crossing to let you know.

Below is a map showing you where the new route will be for pedestrians to cross the railway.



Gypsy Lane Culvert Underpass artist's impression



<b>Suffolk Local Access Forum</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>SLAF Membership Terms</b>
<b>Paper:</b>	<b>LAF 24/28</b>
<b>Author/Contact:</b>	<b>David Falk</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>Thursday 24 October 2024, 1.00pm-3.00pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Melton Parish Council Offices, Melton IP12 1QT</b>

This paper details members 3-year terms of membership.

For information, all members serve on SLAF for 3-year terms, but terms can be renewed indefinitely. For the benefit of members and officers it would be useful to know if any member wishes to end membership at the conclusion of their current term.

Barry Hall (Chair)

Member of SLAF since October 2007 (Chair since January 2016).

3-year terms: Oct 2007-Sep 2010; Oct 2010-Sep 2013; Oct 2013-Sep 2016; Oct 2016-Sep 2019; Oct 2019-Sep 2022.

**Current term: Oct 2022-Sep 2025.**

Christopher Bower (Vice Chair).

Member of SLAF since April 2023 (Vice Chair since January 2024).

**Current term: Apr 2023-Mar 2026.**

Suzanne Bartlett

Member of SLAF since October 2018.

3-year terms: Oct 2018-Sep 2021.

**Current term: Oct 2021-Sept 2024.**

Margaret Hancock

Member of SLAF since April 2010.

3-year terms: Apr 2010-Mar 2013; Apr 2013-Mar 2016; Apr 2016-Mar 2019; Apr 2019-Mar 2022.

**Current term: Apr 2022-Mar 2025.**

Gordon Merfield

Member of SLAF since September 2004.

3-year terms: Sep 2004-Aug 2007; Sep 2007-Aug 2010; Sep 2010-Aug 2013; Sep 2013-Aug 2016; Sep 2016-Aug 2019; Sep 2019-Aug 2022.

**Current term: Sep 2022-Aug 2025.**

Susan Mobbs

Member of SLAF since October 2018.  
3-year terms: Oct 2018-Sep 2021.  
**Current term: Oct 2021-Sep 2024.**

Clare Phillips  
Member of SLAF since October 2018.  
3-year terms: Oct 2018-Sep 2021  
**Current term: Oct 2021-Sep 2024.**

Monica Pipe  
Member of SLAF since July 2003.  
3-year terms: Jul 2003-Jun 2006; Jul 2006-Jun 2009; Jul 2009-Jun 2012; Jul 2012-Jun 2015; Jul 2015-Jun 2018; Jul 2018-Jun 2021; Jul 2021-Jun 2024.  
**Current term: Jul 2024-Jun 2027.**

Adrian Shepherd  
Member of SLAF since April 2023.  
**Current term: Apr 2023-Mar 2026.**

Councillor Joanna Spicer  
Member of SLAF since June 2022.  
**Current term: Jun 2022-May 2025.**

Councillor Edward Thompson  
Member of SLAF since July 2024  
**Current term: Jul 2024-Jun 2027.**

Jim Wayman  
Member of SLAF since April 2023.  
**Current term: Apr 2023-Mar 2026.**

Roley Wilson  
Member of SLAF since October 2013.  
3-year terms: Oct 2013-Sep 2016; Oct 2016-Sep 2019; Oct 2019-Sep 2022.  
**Current term: Oct 2022-Sep 2025.**

Anthony Wright  
Member of SLAF since July 2003.  
3-year terms: Jul 2003-Jun 2006; Jul 2006-Jun 2009; Jul 2009-Jun 2012; Jul 2012-Jun 2015; Jul 2015-Jun 2018; Jul 2018-Jun 2021.  
**Current term: Jul 2021-Jun 2024.**

END  
DF – SCC Oct 2024