

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Agenda
Author/Contact:	Andrew Woodin
Meeting Date:	Thursday 24 April 2025, 2:00pm-4:00pm
Venue:	Needham Market Community Centre

		Paper Number
1.	14:00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping	
2.	14.05 Minutes of previous meeting – DRAFT	LAF 25/07
3.	14.10 Declaration of interest	
4.	14.15 Suffolk's Local Transport Plan followed by Q&A	Presentation Lewis Boudville
5.	14.55 Network Rail	LAF 25/08 SK Appendix 1
6.	15.15 King Charles III England Coast Path	LAF 25/09 AW
7.	15.30 Suffolk Energy Schemes	LAF 25/10 SB
8.	15.50 Any Other Business	
9.	15.55 Public Question Time	
10.	16.00 Date of next meetings Dates and venues tbc (July 2025, October 2025)	

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Network Rail Updates
Paper:	LAF 25/08
Author/Contact:	Steve Kerr / Andrew Woodin
Meeting:	24th April 2025, 2:00pm-4:00pm
Venue:	Needham Market Community Centre

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 at the Forum's January meeting, on the 18th of March the county council certified the Gipsy Lane diversionary works, which allowed NR to close the footpath level crossing. This has now been secured with palisade fencing.

NR have also now removed the whistle board that was used by train drivers to sound their horn when approaching the level crossing, in order to alert pedestrians. The closure has also allowed the previous 50mph speed restriction to be lifted, allowing trains to travel at 100mph and improving travel time performance between London and Norwich.

A joint NR/SCC press release was issued on Wednesday 19th March, via NR's Media Centre webpage – see [Gipsy Lane level crossing closed – new, safer pedestrian footpath is open](#).

Two further press articles have been issued by the Bury Free Press and the East Anglian Daily Times. Officers are, however, unable to access the articles without subscribing to the media websites. Whilst officers are unable to read the articles, they have received contact and reports from the landowners north of the railway corridor, relating to security and safety issues at the culvert. The landowners have also advised officers that it is their view that the new surfacing of their agricultural track is sub-standard, particularly for use by their agricultural vehicles. The surfacing of the track did not form part of the s278 agreement works and was included in the private licence agreement between the landowners and the railway operator. The county council does, however, consider it is suitable for pedestrian use and certified the route on that basis.

The landowners have also reported dog fouling on the new footpath (and provided photographic evidence) and have requested a dog waste bin be located at the Stowmarket Road junction, as there is already one on Gipsy Lane itself. The county council is liaising with the landowner south of the railway to agree its location and will then need to investigate submitting an application to Needham Market Town Council or the District Council.

Following the closure of the Gipsy Lane crossing, the path has been in regular use but unfortunately, has also seen unwanted use by cyclists.

The county council has procured the staggered metal barriers that are to be installed on the footpath, close to the junction with the now widened Stowmarket Road pedestrian/cycling facility. The county council expects use by cyclists to significantly reduce once the staggered metal barriers are in place, which will act as a deterrent.

SCC is also currently arranging for a footpath fingerpost to be erected at the Stowmarket Road junction with the footpath and will affix a 'no cycling' sign to it. A 'no cycling' sign will also be affixed to a way marker post at the Gipsy Lane end.

Officers are also pleased to report that the funding agreement was finally signed by SCC and NR on 17 March and the county council invoiced the railway operator for the funding amount on 21 March. The funding agreement requires NR to pay the funds within 28 days from receipt of the council's invoice.

General/Countywide

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

At its most recent meeting on 1st April, NR provided an update on their design programme progress for the 5 level crossings – see below.

	Complete	In Backlog	Within 14d	Within 28d	Within 56d											
				Finish	Start	Finish	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	56	Finish	Start	Finish	Finish
Supplier	Location	Site ID	Approvals	Submission to HA	HA Review	HA Review	HA Design Sign Off	LPA Review 1	LPA Review 1	LPA Review 2	LPA Review 2	Duration	Design Complete	Construction Start	Construction Complete	HA Certification Complete
Taziker	Island	S04	HA-LP-RSA-TMP	8-Oct-24	9-Oct-24	22-Oct-24	28-Apr-25	31-Oct-24	27-Dec-24	15-Jan-25	16-Jan-25	1	28-Apr-25	13-May-25	6-Jun-25	1-Aug-25
Taziker	Gislingham	S16	HA-LP	12-Nov-24	13-Nov-24	3-Jan-25	19-Feb-25	18-Nov-24	9-Jan-25	9-Jan-25	9-Jan-25	0	19-Feb-25	3-Mar-25	18-Apr-25	21-Apr-25
Taziker	Paynes	S17	HA-LP	9-Jun-25	10-Jun-25	7-Jul-25	28-Jul-25	13-Jun-25	7-Aug-25	5-Sep-25	2-Oct-25	27	2-Oct-25	17-Oct-25	2-Dec-25	27-Jan-26
QTS	Hawk End Lane	S29	HA-LP	8-May-24	9-May-24	6-Jun-24	24-Sep-24	15-Aug-24	14-Jan-25	14-Jan-25	14-Jan-25	0	14-Jan-25	24-Mar-25	23-Apr-25	14-May-25
Taziker	Lords	S30	HA-LP	21-Aug-24	22-Aug-24	26-Sep-24	4-Nov-24	7-Oct-24	15-Nov-24	15-Nov-24	15-Nov-24	0	3-Mar-25	3-Mar-25	18-Apr-25	22-Apr-25

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

Gislingham - Gislingham badger sett inspection undertaken 04/04/25. Taziker then plan to complete rotavating of diversionary route, as required by SCC before certification is possible.

Lords - additional rolling of diversionary route surface required by SCC before certification is possible.

Island - LPA sign off achieved. NR are in negotiations with the landowner over the additional 5m to divert around established oak tree.

Paynes - Taziker are to produce an updated design showing the alignment of the PRow as previously agreed.

Hawk End Lane - Awaiting updated design, which is due on 04/04/25. Contractors are looking to start de-vegetation works on 07/04/25, following agreement with Taylor Wimpey.

Officers are also currently finalising the commuted sums required for each site and will share these with NR once completed.

Footpath 6 Brantham (High Bridge)

Since the last update provided at the Forum's January meeting, in early March NR provided the county council with a Road Safety Assessment brief for the extinguishment of part of FP6 Brantham and the provision of a 2-metre-wide footway within the highway verge of the A137. The plan accompanying their brief is shown

below and should be read in conjunction with the accompanying narrative supplied by NR in their application and reproduced in italics.



Network Rail is proposing to apply for extinguishment of Brantham High Bridge level crossing together with part of the public footpath (ref. FP6 Brantham) connected with it to avoid leaving cul-de-sac. This is an unsurfaced route, and the level crossing had stiles in the railway boundary fence and near point F.

Aside from the general benefits to railway safety and efficiency that result from level crossing closures, this is driven by the fact that there is insufficient sighting of approaching trains for pedestrians using, or likely to use, the crossing. Track curvature means that users are reliant on trains whistling on approach. There is a significant risk that a passing train will mask the sound of an approaching train. This insufficiency has necessitated the level crossing being kept closed under a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order for several years.

Prior to the temporary closure, in 2015, contractors on site for four weeks observed no use of this crossing. It is believed to be very lightly used.

As there exist no nearby locations to cross the railway that are not already subject to highway rights, the proposal is to extinguish the level crossing without providing a replacement. It is anticipated that users will divert along the A137 (in part known as The Street). This is to be improved in places.

By reference to Plan A:

The route BCDEF is proposed to be extinguished. This includes the level crossing.

A new path may be created between points BG, or some other route between point B and The Street for local amenity use. The safety of walking on Jimmy's Lane (a private road) should be considered as part of this brief.

Users of the through route would be diverted to use the road AGHIJFK. The section AGHIJ has footways on one side or the other, but users would be required to cross the road at I. Users may also wish to cross the road at H to reach the connecting restricted byway (although this is not a direct consequence of NR's proposal). Users will have to cross the side road at J.

Between J and F, it is proposed to create a 2m wide footway in the verge of the A137, on the east side.

Whilst the section FK is not affected by NR's proposal, Suffolk County Council have requested improvements to footway provision and potentially a traffic island at point K.

A Road Safety Assessment of the route onto which users will be diverted is requested.

Officers now await the results of the RSA.

Footpath 13 Bacton

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



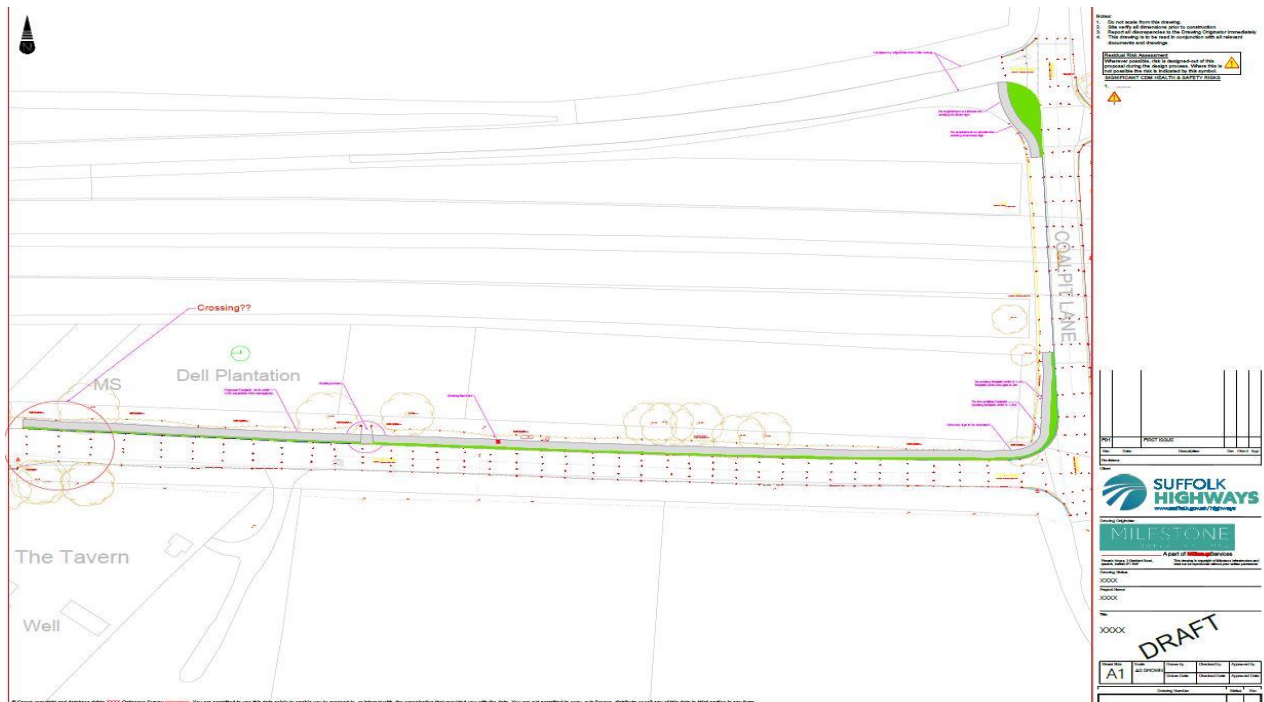
Higham – Highway Improvement Scheme

As previously reported to the Forum, as part of the council's agreement to administer the Rail Crossing Diversion Order for part of FP1 Higham, NR have agreed to fund the highway verge improvement scheme for a length of the highway known as Lower Green, linking Coalpit Lane to the A14 slip road. The design has been produced by Milestone (Suffolk Highways) and – see below. A 2-metre-wide surfaced path will be provided on the northern highway verge, with a 0.5 metre grass strip separating this from the carriageway.

Other work undertaken to date has included ecological and topographical surveys and a Ground Penetration Radar assessment. A road safety audit has also been booked.

The current cost of these works is £19K. Officers have requested Milestone supply the total estimated cost, which has also been requested by the railway operator.

Officers have now undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening exercise, but further information is required from Suffolk Highways, including timescales for completion and the total cost of the scheme to allow the EIA to be signed off.



Future TWAO application

At its meeting on 23 January NR officers presented their proposals to the Forum, which included three additional routes to the original 15 the county council and SLAF were previously made aware of. These were Newmarket Restricted Byway 30 (Weatherby), FP17 Great Barton (Cattishall) and FP17 Spexhall (Millpost).

On 24 February NR provided the county council with a Road Safety Brief for the diversion proposal affecting FP34 Wherstead, which includes use of a road overbridge across the railway.

The county council has not received any further detail or update on the other future TWAO proposals.

Suffolk Road Rail Partnership (SRRP)

The next meeting of the above group is scheduled for 11 April and officers will verbally report the outcomes of that meeting.

END
SK/SCC April 2025

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

Date: 19 February 2025

Dear Mr Day

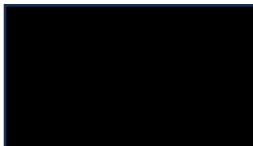
Re: Proposed Network Rail Transport and Works Act Order

Thank you for yourself and your colleague coming to the last meeting of the Suffolk Local Access Forum to update members on a number of railway foot crossings that were being considered for closure and diversion in advance of a formal TWAO consultation.

Members were very interested in your presentation and some of the solutions that were being proposed. SLAF members look forward to considering them in detail when Network Rail embarks on a formal consultation. This will involve us considering the length of any proposed diversions, the risks involved with the use of narrow roads with no verges and whether there are opportunities to provide improvements to the rights of way network in mitigation. We would also expect that pre-consultation will take place with Suffolk County Council as highway authority and any affected landowners.

Thank you once again for your attendance.

Yours sincerely



Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	The King Charles III England Coast Path
Paper:	LAF 25/09
Author/Contact:	Claire Dickson
Meeting:	Thursday 24 April 2025, 2:00pm-4:00pm
Venue:	Needham Market Community Centre

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

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

Stretch name	Progress
Harwich to Shotley Gate	Four out of six reports at Stage 4, two at Stage 5
Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry	OPEN for use from 16 th October
Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey	Stage 5: Approved. (Not yet available for public use – work to establish the route is currently taking place)
Bawdsey to Aldeburgh	Four out of five reports at Stage 4 and one at Stage 5
Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea	Four out of six reports are OPEN for use from 12 th December. Work to establish the route is currently taking place where Approved.

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 the Coastal Access Reports comprising the stretch have been approved.

Further information on the KCIIIECP can be found [here](#).

2. The Stretches in More Detail

Natural England has provided this update on the national situation:

Nearly 55% of the whole route is now open. Nationally 88 miles have opened since the previous LAF meeting.

Status of proposals	Number of miles
Total mileage submitted to government	2680
- complete and open for public use	1469
- approved by government and work to establish the route taking place, or awaited	941
- awaiting government decision	270
Yet to be submitted	16

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 4.4.25

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.
- 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.

- Open for use.

Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 4.4.25
No change since previous report

- Stage 5 (Open) – but not yet available for use
- Work to establish the route is now taking place, for opening in 2025.

Bawdsey to Aldeburgh – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 4.4.25
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.
- Reports 1, 2, 4 and 5 - we are waiting to hear the decisions from the Secretary of State.

Aldeburgh to Hopton-on-Sea – Jonathan Clarke. Last updated 4.4.25
No change since previous report

- 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 and 6 opened to the public on 12 December 2024.
- Report 4 - we are waiting to hear the decision from the Secretary of State
- Report 5 - work to establish is now taking place, for opening in 2025.
- Proposals for minor variations at Corton and Dunwich have been proposed. They only received one representation (supportive) and so should be approved in time. They did not prevent the route opening.

3. Suffolk Progress

The project officer has continued to predominantly focus on the establishment works on the remaining approved stretch covering Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey. With works completed on Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry and Aldeburgh to Hopton (approved stretches 1, 2, 3 and 6). All works are 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 winter months and completed by March 2025, namely:

- Surface improvement and installation of various structures (Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey)
- Creation of new headland access at Waldringfield (Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey)

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 agreed to replacement steps, and these have been installed, but the County Council are seeking agreement to a resting point on the embankment and information signs. In late February, National Highways confirmed that they would not want a resting point placed adjacent to the steps.

The Green Access Team are also scoping an alternative route through Ipswich Waterfront that can be promoted, including gateway signage at either side of the Orwell Bridge. An offer of funding match funding from National Highways community pot has been received. The Green Access team will also look at additional funding options for the remaining match funding.

The team await decision from the Secretary of State decision on the opposed stretch from Southwold to Pakefield. This was following the planning inspectorate site visit in March 2024. Natural England anticipate that this decision will be received later in 2025.

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. Several joint site visits have been undertaken with Natural England and relevant landowners over the last few months to resolve matters and confirmation of all detailed works has now been secured.

The team are fully focused on delivery of the works on this stretch, with a large part of the infrastructure installed between Felixstowe Ferry and Woodbridge in March 2025. Remaining works will be delivered over the summer months to meet Habitat Regulation timing requirements. This includes the installation of 5 kilometres of dog proof fencing at Ramsholt, this is required to be installed between late May and September

An opening date for this stretch has not been agreed with Natural England currently. This will be dependent on completion of all mitigation works. The County Council do not currently envisage any delays with works in line with habitat regulation requirements. It is anticipated the route will be fully open late Summer 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. Mitigation signage has been installed in line with RAMS Manager agreement on the two open stretches.

Natural England have advised that funding is available for a second project officer. As works are currently on target for delivery, we are not able to progress with a second officer. Implementation work is progressing well on the approved sections. This will remain under review and dependent on the timing of approval of the remaining stretches.

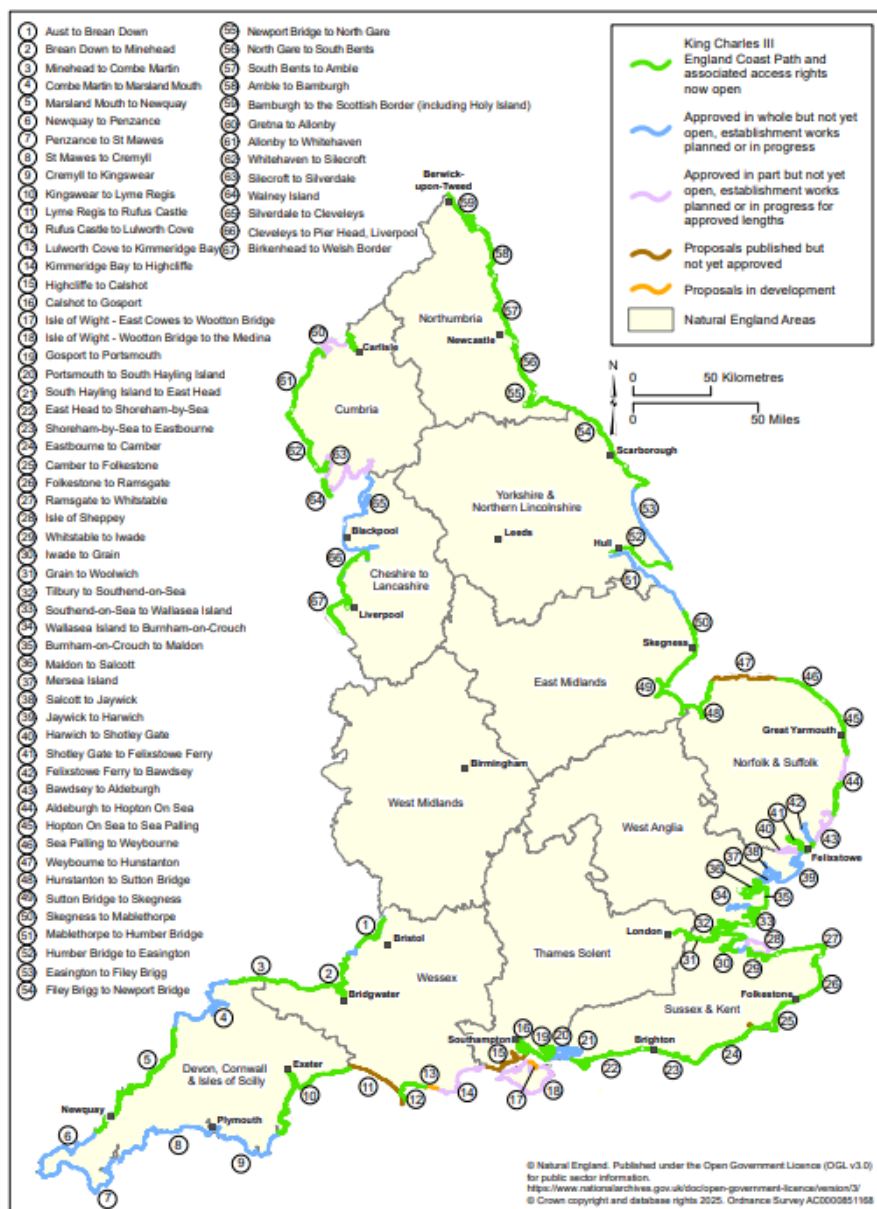
The Operations Team have established fortnightly meetings with Natural England representatives. We have carried out a six positive site visits with Natural England on both Aldeburgh to Hopton and Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey stretches over the last year. This has enabled us to discuss delivery of works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

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

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

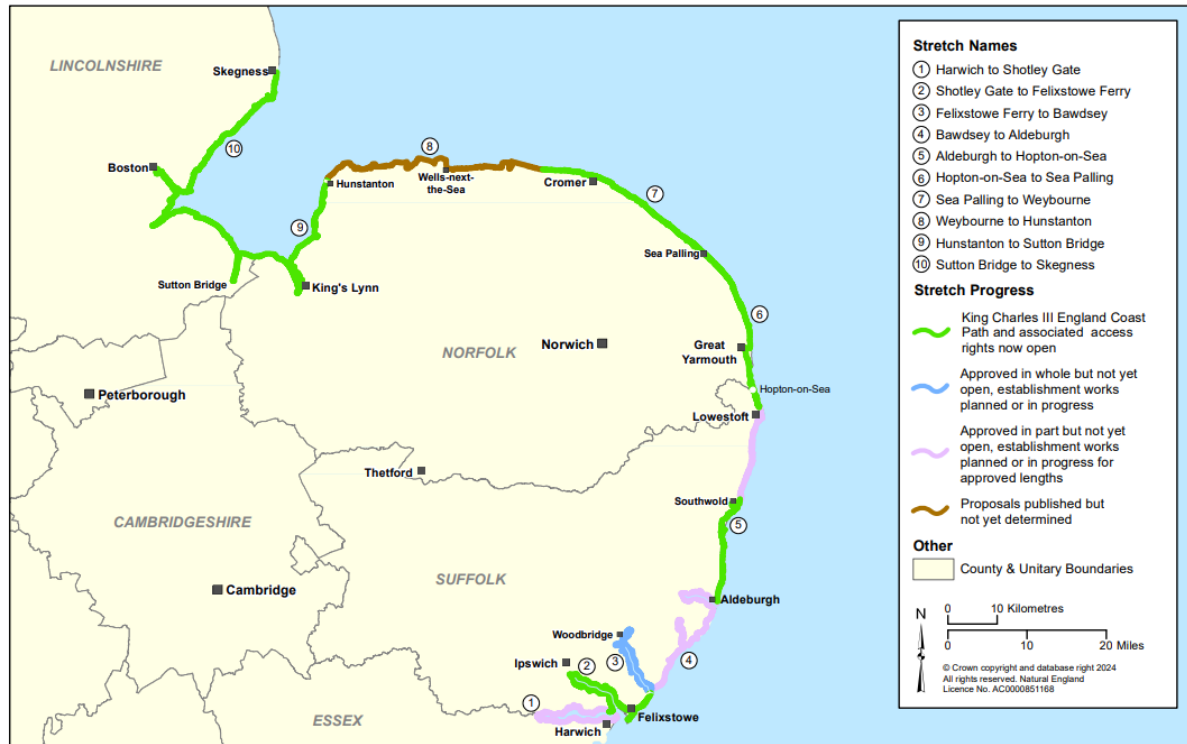
The amount of national trail maintenance grant access authorities and trail partnerships receive from Natural England is worked out using a funding formula. As reported at the last meeting the formula is being reviewed, and this process is ongoing, following the establishment of a review working group. The review will not affect 25/26 grant offers.

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



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

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



END
CLD/SCC APRIL 2025

Suffolk Local Access Forum	
Title:	Suffolk Energy Schemes
Paper:	LAF 25/10
Author/Contact:	Samantha Bye
Meeting:	Thursday 24 April 2025, 2:00pm-4:00pm
Venue:	Needham Market Community Centre

National Grid Bramford to Twinstead

No further updates to report:

Numerous documents coming in for comment equivalent to discharges of condition) all referring to being in accordance with the PROW management plan and DCO Doc 2.7. For example, soils, LEMP, minerals and waste, landscape. SCC response has reiterated need for compliance to these documents.

Link to public site: <https://www.nationalgrid.com/the-great-grid-upgrade/bramford-to-twinstead>

Norwich to Tilbury (formally East Anglia Green)

Statement of common Ground has been in for comment, we are still expecting a separate section for PROW and we would like to be advised of all surveys and agree parameters and techniques prior to undertaking them.

Otherwise, no further update.

Link to public site: <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

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)

DCO is in for comment to SCC, internal response due by 16th April 2025.

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

LionLink (formerly EUROLINK) – interconnector between Suffolk and Belgium

Construction Management plan is in for comment to SCC PROW. Meeting booked for the 16th April with relevant PROW officers SCC & ESC.

Link to public site: <https://www.nationalgrid.com/national-grid-ventures/lionlink/about>

White Elm Solar

A proposed 675-acre solar farm, with Battery Storage, that would have a design capacity of over 50 MW, located 7.5 kilometres to the north of Stowmarket.

No update from last month.

Link to public site: <https://www.whiteelmsolarfarm.com/>

EcoPower Solar Farm

EcoPower Suffolk is putting forward plans to build a solar farm and battery storage facility, which would impact Yaxley, Brome, Gislingham, Mellis, Eye

and Occold, with connections made at the existing substation to the north of Yaxley.

Large Solar farm comprising of five parcels of land and associated infrastructure. SCC PROW have had a Non-Statutory Consultation where we have set out our parameters/requirements and attached the SCC PROW Solar position statement.

Link to public site: <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110019>

END/SCC SPRIL 2025