

**Norfolk Local Access Forum**  
**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 07 October 2020**  
**at 10.30am via Microsoft Teams**

**Member:**

Martin Sullivan - Chairman  
Chris Allhusen  
Andy Brazil  
Elizabeth Meath Baker  
Mike Edwards  
Simon Fowler  
Ken Hawkins – Vice-Chairman  
David Hissey

**Representing:**

Motorised Vehicles / Pathmakers  
Land Ownership  
Voluntary sector  
Rural / local business / economy  
Land Ownership  
Walking / Pathmakers  
Walking  
Cycling

**Officers Present:**

Sarah Abercrombie	Green Infrastructure Team Leader (Projects)
Mike Auger	Projects Manager.
Su Waldron	Project Officer (Environment Team)
Jason Moore	Area Manager (West)
John Jones	Head of Environment
Nicola Ledain	Committee Services Officer, Strategy and Governance Department, NCC

**Broads Authority**

Lewis Treloar  
Ella Meecham

**1. Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Cllr Andrew Jamieson, Cllr Danny Douglas, Donna Gibling, Suzanne Longe, Bethan Edmunds, Louise Rout and Paul Rudkin.  
Technical difficulties meant that Brigid Fairman and Vic Cocker were unable to attend.

**2. Election of Chair**

- 2.1 Martin Sullivan was duly elected for the ensuing year.

**3. Election of vice-Chair**

- 3.1 Ken Hawkins was duly elected for the ensuing year.

**4. Chairman's Announcements**

- 4.1 The Chairman reported that Geoff Doggett had tendered his resignation from the NLAF. Members wished him well and thanked him for all his hard work and contribution to the NLAF.

- 4.2** A constitutional review was underway for the NLAF and this would be discussed at the January meeting.
- 4.3** A table of consultations received and responded to by the NLAF available to view on the NLAF SharePoint site  
[https://norfolkcounty.sharepoint.com/sites/Norfolk\\_Local\\_Access\\_Forum](https://norfolkcounty.sharepoint.com/sites/Norfolk_Local_Access_Forum) to which all NLAF members have access.

## **5. Minutes of the last meeting**

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2020 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## **6. Declarations of Interest**

- 6.1 There were no interests declared.

## **7. Urgent Business**

- 7.1 There was no urgent business.

## **8. Public Question Time**

- 8.1 No public questions were received.

## **9. Local member Issues / Questions**

- 9.1 There were no member questions received.

## **10. Feedback from Events**

- 10.1 Martin Sullivan and Ken Hawkins had attended 2 meetings of the Broads Local Access Forum held virtually.
- 10.2 Martin Sullivan and Ken Hawkins had attended a Regional LAF meeting in July and contributed to discussions on access elements of the Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) presented by Natural England, and the review of “at grade” crossings being conducted by Highways England.

## **11. NLAF Subgroups’ report (Permissive Access; PROW; NAIP; Vision and Ideas; Joint Communications)**

- 11.1 The NLAF received two annexed reports (11) (PROW subgroup and NAIP subgroup) which set out the latest discussions and recommendations of the sub-groups of the NLAF.
- 11.2 The PROW subgroup had continued to meet virtually throughout COVID lockdown with meetings held on June 15<sup>th</sup> and September 7<sup>th</sup> (a meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March was held in person).

- 11.3 The NAIP subgroup had also met twice virtually during COVID lockdown, with a meeting on September 10<sup>th</sup> (a meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March was held in person).
- 11.4 The Vision and Ideas group had met virtually on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (a meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup> was held in person)
- 11.5 The Parish Paths Seminars and report were discussed. The NLAF AGREED that actions of most help to Parish Councils and volunteers (and hence to the access network) identified by the seminars, were
- for parishes to join forces with a neighbouring parish to tackle PRow issues;
  - incentivise use of local paths by the younger generation;
  - provide information about PRow and suitability for different users;
  - appoint a footpath warden..
- 11.6 The NLAF discussed if there was any statistics about how many footpath wardens currently existed in parishes. Although there might be some statistics, it was probable that they were out of date and would need refreshing
- 11.7 It was suggested that there could be some literature or training for footpath wardens or if there was some already in existence and that the Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC) might be a good way to engage with parishes on the subject.
- 11.8 The NAIP subgroup has received three monitoring reports from NCC reviewing progress with the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan.

The subgroup reported overall satisfaction with actions to improve access, but highlighted 4 specific recommendations for action by NCC, which were:

- More resource for handling Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs)
- More resource for enforcement action to re-instate footpaths
- A mechanism to quantify PRow usage and hence estimate their contribution to Norfolk's economy and people's health
- Better public transport to connect PRow and Norfolk Trails to communities.

The group were keen to promote the existence of the NAIP document more widely and agreed to hold their next meeting with the Communications Group members, to work on a strategy to do this.

These recommendations were AGREED.

- 11.9 The NLAF RESOLVED to:
- Ask the Forestry Commission if it plans to take more land out of tree production in the Thetford Forest area.
  - Write to NCC expressing strong concerns about the lack of recognition of the amenity value of an area at Shouldham Warren identified for minerals extraction, and object to any proposed development in the area.
  - Approve and implement the revised protocol for commenting on Major Infrastructure Projects and planning applications (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects – NSIPs) which have potential implications for the access network.

- Request that a notice period of 6 months should be given of closures to rights of way affected by the laying of power cables (e.g. by Vattenfall), especially if there are more than minor diversions planned.
- Request that NCC safeguards or increases the very modest budget(s) allocated to the access network.

## 12. Pathmakers Projects

- 12.1 The NLAF received the annexed report (12) which updated the Forum on the activities of the Pathmakers:
- Sarah Abercrombie had become a Pathmakers trustee
  - HLF funding had been sought for an access project
- 12.2 The NLAF **AGREED**;
- To note the progress to date and to approve appointment of Sarah Abercrombie to the trustee board

## 13. Widening the Reach of the NLAF

- 13.1 The Forum received the annexed (13) report which summarised the identified actions in response to the recommendations of an earlier commissioned report; *Widening the reach of the Norfolk Local Access Forum*.
- 13.2 The recommendations from the report would be emailed to all NLAF members for any thoughts and a response was required by 7 November 2020.
- 13.3 The NLAF **AGREED** that a firm set of recommendations will be prepared and brought to the January 2021 NLAF.

## 14. 25 Year Plan for the Environment

- 14.1 The Forum received the annexed report (14) that provided an update to the joint working of Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council to drive development of a 25 Year Plan for the Environment for Norfolk and Suffolk. The Plan was a regional response to the Government's own 25 Year Environment Plan – 'A Green Future' which set out how the environment would be improved within a generation.
- 14.2 John Jones (Head of Environment at NCC) explained the work in more detail, which has included production of a Compendium of Natural Capital Assets by partners at UEA. This is an inventory of six categories of natural asset: land; soil; habitats and species; freshwater; coast and marine; and atmosphere; along with the current and future risks to these assets.
- 14.3 A Steering group of partners led by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils is now working on next steps which will see the Compendium used as a springboard for practical action across the region. Connecting people with the environment is a key way to improve health and wellbeing, reducing stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression and we are very fortunate to have accessible natural spaces in our counties, mostly free to enter, and our extensive public rights of way network
- 14.4 John Jones offered to talk further with NLAF members about the Plan if they wished.

- 14.5 The NLAF **NOTED** work in progress to establish a 25 Year Plan for the Environment for Norfolk and Suffolk.

## **15. Water, Mills and Marshes**

- 15.1 The Forum received the annexed report (15) which updated the NLAF on work to create a Mills Trail at Halvergate.

A presentation was given by Ella Meecham of the Broads Authority.

The Trail will allow people to get close to the mills and learn about heritage that is being restored. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Broads Mills Trail is nearer to Burgh Castle and follows the Waveney. Routes will be waymarked and have interpretation. Improved access would allow more people to enjoy the Trails.

- 15.2 The NLAF were pleased to see permissive routes as part of the project and were very interested in the agreements secured with landowners (over permissive access) and ongoing maintenance of the route. Lewis Treloar said that maintenance was being picked up by the Broads Authority where the parish was unable to do so.
- 15.3 The Halvergate route of 8.5 miles would incorporate all mills.
- 15.4 The NLAF **NOTED** work ongoing by the Broads Authority to develop countryside access through a Mills Trail and thanked Ella Meecham for her presentation.

## **16. Countryside Access Arrangements update**

- 16.1 The Forum received the annexed report (16) which highlighted this work in terms of the volumes of customer queries received and responded to. The paper also highlights other key areas of work including a new cutting contract, now managed jointly for Highways and Norfolk Trails.
- 16.2 The report would be looked through in more detail at the PROW sub-group before the next NLAF meeting.
- 16.3 The NLAF **NOTED** the progress made to date since the Countryside Access Officer posts were introduced.

## **17. NCC Member Walking and Cycling Champion update**

- 17.1 The Forum received the annexed report (17) which provided a summary of the key walking and cycling projects relevant to the Local Access Forum.
- 17.2 It was hoped that at the next meeting, the Champion would be able to attend to talk through some objectives for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and how they were aligned with the NAIP.
- 17.3 The NLAF **NOTED** the progress of the walking and cycling projects as outlined in the report.

## **18. Major Infrastructure Projects and Planning**

- 18.1 The Forum received the annexed report (18) which updated them on the major infrastructure projects that were currently underway in the County which impacted on Public Rights of Way.
- 18.2 The NLAF **NOTED** the table of major infrastructure projects in Norfolk.

## **19. Meetings Forward Plan**

- 19.1 The NLAF received the annexed report (19) which outlined agenda items for the forthcoming meetings.
- 19.2 The NLAF **NOTED** the forward plan.

The meeting closed at 12.10 pm

**Martin Sullivan, Chairman,  
Norfolk Local Access Forum**



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