

**NORFOLK LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
Public Rights of Way Subgroup Minutes**

Date: Monday 17th September 2018 **Time:** 2pm - 4pm
Venue: County Hall

Sub group members	
Keith Bacon (KB)	CPRE Norfolk, Broads LAF
Ken Hawkins (KH) (Chair)	Norfolk Local Access Forum
Ann Melhuish (AM)	Norfolk Local Access Forum, Pathmakers
Ian Mitchell (IM)	The Ramblers
Jean Stratford (JS)	Norfolk Local Access Forum
Martin Sullivan (MS)	Norfolk Local Access Forum
Officers in Attendance	
Matt Worden (MW)	
Andy Hutcheson (AH)	
Sarah Abercrombie (SA)	
Russell Wilson (RW)	
Su Waldron (SW)	

1	Introductions and apologies for absence Apologies from Vic Cocker, Ian Witham ; Helen Leith; Neil Cliff
2	Minutes of the meeting on 18th June 2018 – the minutes were approved as a correct record
3	NLAF Minutes of the meeting on 18th July 2018. The minutes were noted. 3.1 Re item 8.3 (progress with the NAIP). It was noted that progress with completion of the NAIP had been delayed by NCC. SW said that the new timetable was to have the document signed off by the NLAF on January 30 th 2019 and endorsed by the EDT committee at their February meeting. 3.2 Re item 6.5 (Volunteer Co-ordinator). Covered under item 5.1 of this meeting
4	Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda 4.1 With reference to NLAF minutes item 10.2 (letter concerning DMMOs), MS had received a reply stating that NCC would not undertake a review of its policy on DMMOs. 4.2 With reference to PROW subgroup minutes item 6.2 concerning enforcement, KB asked about parish council powers of enforcement. MW said he had a list of parish council powers that could be circulated with the minutes of this meeting. ACTION: MW to provide a list of parish council powers.
5	Partnership and Community Working 5.1 Volunteer co-ordinator role. AH said that Community and Environmental Services (CES) do use volunteers in a number of roles (including Norfolk Trails volunteers, and biodiversity recording volunteers) but there was no capacity at NCC to undertake a wider co-ordinator role (such as the Parish Paths Partnerships

scheme run in Bedfordshire).

MW said that there are informal/formal volunteers working on highways matters (such as vegetation cutting and grit spreading) and structured schemes with specific parish councils whereby they receive a devolved budget for maintenance, eg Dickleburgh, Ashwellthorpe and west Breckland. KB asked about insurance and permissions – MW confirmed that the best route to volunteering on highways matters was through parish councils which could arrange their own insurance etc. He had heard of a very successful volunteer initiative in Oxford.

MS said that the Green Lane Association provided insurance cover for working on highways (with local authority approval).

KH suggested that powers available to parish councils were publicised at the forthcoming parish seminars.

AH proposed that Pathmakers and the NLAF took forward the volunteer co-ordinator idea. MS said the role could dovetail with Pathmakers HLF Resilient Heritage bid and current Geovation project and offered to raise the issue with Pathmakers.

ACTION MS/AM agreed to broach the topic of volunteer co-ordinator at the next Pathmakers meeting (17th October).

ACTION SW to circulate future editions of the Trails newsletter for volunteers (“The Volunteer”) to the PROW group.

5.2 Vision and ideas group

AH explained current initiatives at CES with respect to ‘valorising’ the value of walking in terms of health and the local economy. Projects underway include: Green Pilgrimage; Staying Active and Independent Longer (SAIL); work ongoing at UEA on evaluating walking and cycling and the visitor economy/health benefits; and a bid under development to the European France Channel England (FCE) programme looking at promoting outdoor tourism (visiting the natural and historic environment will form a large part of this). AH felt that these ongoing projects would lead to the development of a vision for, and supporting datasets on, the value of the PROW network.

KH requested that the PROW subgroup were updated on a regular basis with developments and this was agreed. AH also offered to bring a paper to the group on the recycling the railways project.

ACTION: AH to bring paper on recycling the railways to a forthcoming PROW subgroup meeting.

5.3 Parish Seminars

KH had decided to postpone the first parish seminar to give more time for preparation and promotion, and to fit in with the revised timetable for the

NAIP.

The North Walsham Atrium booking for 23rd October had therefore been cancelled.

RW felt that March 2019 would be a good time for the first seminar.

KH said that he felt that the overall aims of the event should be broadened to include:

“Increase the effectiveness of total input into path monitoring and maintenance.” A revised proposal was suggested by KH (**Appendix 1**) which was agreed by the meeting.

KB felt that a break during the seminar would allow time for essential networking.

- 5.4 To consider any issues from represented organisations (CPRE, OSS, The Ramblers, U3A).

IM asked about cutting contracts – how these were arranged and monitored. MW noted that there had been problems with one contractor, but he and RW assured the meeting that stringent procedures were in place to let the contracts and monitor the work and that feedback was generally highly favourable. MW informs parishes prior to work going ahead. RW said that habitat regulation assessments were conducted where necessary. **KH thanked RW and MW for their ongoing work to manage the cutting contracts.**

6 Countryside Access arrangements

6.1 General update.

Reports had been circulated from MW and RW. KH asked about the new circular walks in the area of stretch 4 of the England Coast Path and King's Lynn and Hunstanton. RW said that he was liaising with Natural England about the proposed route so that circular walk signage could be adjusted to be future-proof. The deadline for completion of the ECP is 2020.

MW noted that he remained mindful of the wish to include clearer statistics showing processes and timescales of enforcement and maintenance.

KH thanked MW and RW for their report.

6.2 Online reporting system

KH had some queries concerning logged issues still open (possibly not resolved?) on the system since January 2017 and felt that these dented user confidence. MW was unable to comment on specific issues, but agreed to feedback concerns to Maria Thurlow and the Countryside Access Officers. KH suggested that it would be useful to review outstanding issues on a regular basis to ensure that the system was operating as intended.

ACTION : MW to request update from Maria Thurlow on outstanding CRM issues.

6.3 Earsham footbridge

Five options presented by RW were discussed.

AH confirmed that the bridge would have to be removed (even if not repaired) which was expensive.

RW said that the boggy nature of the land either side of the river was a significant issue.

IM suggested that RW considered a Section 26 order to enable the otherwise easiest diversion (Option 1) to be used.

ACTION : RW to investigate IM suggestion involving a s26 order.

6.4 Response times.

KH questioned some of the criteria in the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP), which is risk-based. He suggested that there should be an addition to the 'High' priority category for legally required actions such as the ploughing out of a restricted byway. He also proposed that there should be a time limit on 'Low' priority actions so that they would be completed at some stage. RW queried what should be the timescale for a broken gate latch which did not prevent use. KH responded that he would not expect a visit to be made only for such an issue, but instead that it could be dealt with at the next following routine visit. In this connection, he felt that if the time interval between inspections on countryside PROW were shorter, low priority issues could be addressed within reasonable time.

MW said the TAMP was based on a national code of practice on well-managed infrastructure.

The PROW subgroup agreed to ask the LAF to request changes to the content of the Transport Asset Management Plan (9.1.1.1.7.1) as follows:

To amend the High priority category to read "High - if it affects a nationally, or regionally, promoted route, or if there unlawful action (eg a ploughed out Restricted Byway or an obstruction on a public right of way)".

ACTION: MW agreed to ask if it would be possible to generate a report detailing how long it takes for resolution of issues under all the different priority categories.

6.5 Other issues

Nothing further discussed

7 Claims for lost paths (2026)

7.1 The meeting considered the offer made by Helen Chester regarding training for making claims but felt that this was not needed at the present time. (MS said that some NLAF members had already had training.)

JS asked about how to check who is researching a particular claim. MW suggested recording this fact using the CRM reporting system. The link to do that is here:

<https://apps.norfolk.gov.uk/HighwaysDefect/>

KH said that the Ramblers were co-ordinating local activities to work on claims and nationally, the Ramblers Association has funded a project officer post.

8 Reports from NCC officers

- 8.1 SA said that 2 part time Green Infrastructure Officers had been recruited (one post – job share). They are: Gemma Harrison and Michelle Sergeant. They would concentrate on opportunities for access created through the planning process (growth). AH said the posts would flag up opportunities and help generate income.

9 AOB

AM asked for advice concerning dangerous conditions for carriage drivers on the Stoke Ferry bypass. MW agreed to help look into provision of a Kent gap to allow crossing.

10 Date of next meeting

The next PROW subgroup meeting would be on Monday 7th January at 2pm at County Hall. It was noted that LAF dates for 2019 are 30 January, 3 April, 17 July and 16 October. It was agreed that PROW subgroup meetings be held 3 weeks prior, at 1400 on Mondays 7 January, 11 March, 24 June and 23 September.

Appendix 1

Revised proposals for Parish Council seminars

Already agreed

- 3 events, one in each of the Highways management areas
- during 2018, originally agreed spacing to adjust subsequent events in light of experience of earlier ones
- information to be provided ahead of the meeting covering: definitions ('what are PROW'); the volunteer handbook (based on the Norfolk Trails volunteers' handbook); parish path partnerships

Aims

- **increase effectiveness of total input into path monitoring and maintenance**
- to build up a network of people interested in monitoring and maintaining publically available paths (primarily rights of way and promoted routes)

Attendance invited

- relevant LAF personnel
- NCC officer, including the Countryside Access Officers
- parish/town representatives (Clerks, Councillors, Footpath Wardens as appropriate)
- Trails volunteers
- The Ramblers, OSS, U3A, CPRE, WaW towns

Agenda content

- sources of information (to head off issues that can be resolved already)
- survey of current activity - by NCC, parishes/towns, The Ramblers, any others?
- review of action from 2016 Parish Paths Seminar report
- current volunteer network(s) and proposals to unify
- Pathmakers and HLF
- possible separate session/stand for registering specific issues
- the on line reporting system
- others?

Dates and venues

- to be agreed

Possible agenda: (all leaders are suggestions only! Names should be changed to match LAF membership and function if any have changed)

0930/1330 - welcome and very brief intro for NLAF (Martin)

0945/1345- information sessions - all to be backed with concise handouts giving key information and links/contacts, all to be 5 mins presentation, 10 mins questions/comments

Not sure if Pathmakers should be included here?

0945/1345 - NAIP - brief presentation, picking out key community themes (Ken?)

1000/1400 - overview of volunteer involvement (Russell for Trails, Peter James for The Ramblers, plus brief note from Ken on OSS, U3A, CPRE, WaW)

1015/1415 - permissive path issues (Chris or Vic)

1030/1430 - NCC resources - demo of website info and online system (Matt) **Not sure if Pathmakers should be included here? or next session? or at all?**

1045/1445 - resources available to parishes (?)

1100/1500 - tea/coffee/biscuits, networking; stand where specific issues can be logged - PRow related only!!

1130/1530 prompt - introduction to LAF aspiration for volunteer co-ordinator and development of a Norfolk 'vision' (as discussed at PRow and LAF meetings, and depending on progress) and reminder of aims (Martin)

- increase effectiveness of total input into path monitoring and maintenance
- to build up a network of people interested in monitoring and maintaining publically available paths (primarily rights of way and promoted routes)

Groups to discuss these with designated task of coming up with suggestions for either or both aims.

1230/1630 - feedback, discussion, dispersal