

Norfolk Local Access Forum

Report title:	Proposal to set up an NLAF communications subgroup
Date of meeting:	30 January 2019
Responsible Chief Officer:	Steve Miller – Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage
Strategic impact Addresses the need for improved communication and awareness raising of the NLAF and Pathmakers work.	

Executive summary

The trustees of Pathmakers, the charitable wing of the NLAF, have identified the need for better promotion of Pathmakers, which they consider could be most effectively achieved by developing a joint communications plan with the NLAF (the plan would cover promotion of both organisations). Although differing in structure (the NLAF is a statutory advisory group whilst Pathmakers as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation is able to undertake a more proactive role) the aims of both are the same: namely, to seek improvements in countryside access in Norfolk.

The trustees propose:

- (i) that a joint communications group is set up to work on a joint Pathmakers/NLAF communications plan that would ensure that the work of the NLAF and Pathmakers is better understood and promoted. The plan will cover joint branding; joint or linked website; linked annual review; joint awareness raising; joint relationship-building with stakeholders.
- (ii) that the NLAF re-brands to align its name with Pathmakers CIO to become Pathmakers Local Access Forum (Norfolk).

Recommendations:

That the NLAF agrees to:

- (i) set up a communications group which will operate for Pathmakers and the NLAF;**
- (ii) identify NLAF members and Pathmakers trustees who would sit on the new communications group to develop a joint communications plan;**
- (ii) re-brand to become Pathmakers, Local Access Forum (Norfolk).**

1. Proposal (or options)

- 1.1. That the NLAF agrees to set up a communications group which will operate for Pathmakers and the NLAF and to re-brand to become Pathmakers Local Access Forum (Norfolk).

Members /trustees will be identified to sit on the new joint communications group. Ideally they should have the following attributes (or willingness to develop them):

- Excellent written, verbal and graphic communication skills
- Confident at presenting ideas
- Audience-minded
- Persuasive
- Good networking skills
- Experience / awareness of social and digital media (and web) and how it

can be applied

- Experience/ awareness of campaigning and marketing
- Leadership / Team working

2. Evidence

2.1. Please see Executive summary, proposal and background

3. Financial Implications

3.1. None as a result of this report

4. Issues, risks and innovation

4.1. None as a result of this report

5. Background

5.1. The Constitution of NLAF (dated June 2018) sets out that Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) requires local authorities and National Park authorities to establish bodies to advise about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel. This includes improvement of public access (whether on foot or by horse, cycle, mechanically propelled vehicle or any other lawful means) to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.

As well as delivering its statutory services on Public Rights of Way, Norfolk County Council has developed an enhanced initiative called Norfolk Trails, which is largely project funded. It became evident that there were still many opportunities to develop the access network which were not being addressed, such as access for those not currently using and engaging local communities in the management of their local routes.

Following a strategic review of Norfolk's Rights of Way Improvement Plan, NLAF agreed in 2013 to set up a safe and sustainable "not for profit arm" to fund improvements to countryside access in Norfolk. It would do this by applying for external funding (some of which is beyond the limitations of the public sector) for specific schemes. This was developed into a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation known as Pathmakers in 2015.

Pathmakers came about to begin to bridge the gap between the LAF's aims for improvement to access, the capacity communities have and the limitations the public sector has to make improvements on the ground. A priority of Pathmakers is to raise awareness of its work which is guided by the priorities and the strategic intentions determined by the LAF. The majority of the Trustees are members of the NLAF and all are appointed by it. Pathmakers reports to every meeting of the LAF. Pathmakers has a Memorandum of Understanding with NCC. Overall, therefore, the LAF is effectively the charity's umbrella organisation.

Up to now the projects delivered by Pathmakers include the development of a Boardwalk at Burgh Castle, the completion of access audits to various trails and the securing of "Geovation" resources to develop increased activity levels through what is known as Community Friends Walks. Further funding bids underway involve HLF 'Our Heritage' and 'Resilient Heritage' projects (which includes funding for a volunteer coordinator as identified by PROW subgroup of the LAF) and a LIFT bid.

The effectiveness of both the LAF and Pathmakers depends upon their public profiles, reputations and successes. As neither are widely known across Norfolk

at present, it raises the obvious question of whether bringing the two closer together would have symbiotic benefit. There are already examples of LAFs in other counties which choose another operating name (e.g. Shropshire Great Outdoors Strategy Board) which choose another operating name.

Such a course would not necessarily have to change the operating arrangements of the charity.

The benefits of pursuing such a course would be:

- To improve the profile and visibility of both organisations;
- To enhance the ability of the charity to secure or to raise resources;
- To provide better opportunities to achieve the strategic objectives of the LAF;
- To provide more resources to assist the charity at key times.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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