

NORFOLK LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 01 March 2017 at 10.30am in the Edwards Room, County Hall

Member:

Martin Sullivan - Chairman
Chris Allhusen - Vice Chairman
Victor Cocker
Geoff Doggett
Mike Edwards
Ken Hawkins
Pat Holtom
Ann Melhuish
Ian Monson
Paul Rudkin
George Saunders
Jean Stratford

Representing:

Motorised vehicle access / cycling
Land ownership / management / farming
Walking
Conservation / voluntary sector
GI and planning / conservation / sustainability
Walking / cycling
Economic development / walking
Equestrian / all-ability access
Norfolk County Council
Walking / GI and planning
All-ability access / health and wellbeing / voluntary sector
Youth and education / walking / voluntary sector

Co-Opted, Non-Voting Member:

Hilary Cox
Norfolk County Council Member Champion - Cycling and Walking.

Officers Present:

Sarah Abercrombie	Senior Projects Officer
Grahame Bygrave	Area Manager (South), Community and Environmental Services
Su Waldron	Project Officer, Environment Team
Russell Wilson	Senior Trails Officer (Infrastructure)
Matt Worden	Maintenance Projects Manager

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Stephen Agnew, David Ansell, Tim Bennett, Julie Brociek-Coulton, Rebecca Champion, Helen Chester, David Hissey, Seamus Elliott, and Kate MacKenzie.
- 2.2 Hilary Cox was due to arrive late to the meeting.

3. Minutes of last meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 12 October 2016 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

3.2.1 **Matters arising from the minutes:**

- 3.2.2 Mr Hawkins queried the brevity of the minutes and the Chairman explained the reason for this. Members raised points associated with the discussion at the last meeting:
- Mr Hawkins recalled that, in relation to the resolution at 7.2, the Forum agreed to add in 3 additional items;
 - Mr Rudkin recalled an item was discussed about widening paths which the Forum resolved to support, followed by a motion by Mr Monson which was also agreed. The Chairman confirmed this would be discussed under agenda item 13;
 - Mr Hawkins recalled that it had been agreed to add into the forward plan consideration of issues around the 2026 cut off, network rail and closure of level crossings, and consideration of the review of the Norfolk Local Access Forum.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. **Items received as urgent business**

- 5.1 There were no items of urgent business.

6. **Public Question Time**

- 6.1 None were received.

7. **Public Rights of Way Maintenance**

- 7.1.1 The Maintenance Projects Manager (Community and Environmental Services) introduced the report discussing management of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) service, work done since 2012 and work to improve public satisfaction.
- 7.1.2 The Maintenance Projects Manager reported that this would be the last meeting of the LAF (Norfolk Local Access Forum) he would attend due to PRoW staff restructure.
- 7.2.1 The Maintenance Projects Manager had received an email query from Mr Hawkins which he would respond to in due course; Mr Hawkins **suggested** that the Maintenance Projects Manager and colleagues attend a PRoW sub-group meeting to discuss this, and the outcome be brought back to LAF. The LAF **AGREED** with this suggestion.
- 7.2.2 A concern was raised that the restructure may leave too few people managing the geographical area and cutting budget. The Maintenance Projects Manager explained that PRoW officers would be based as "countryside access staff" in 3 localities to deal with local issues reporting to one of 3 area managers. PRoW would come under the remit of "Highways", and highways' staff would see their remit expanded to include PRoW maintenance. Officers felt more staff would be focussed on rights of way and the locality model would support issues to be dealt with locally.
- 7.3.2 It was confirmed that out of the highways maintenance budget, a proportion was designated for grass cutting and rights of way maintenance. The inspection schedule

had been formalised; rural rights of way were now inspected on a 5 year basis, and urban rights of way annually.

7.4 Hilary Cox arrived at 10:52am

7.5.1 It was felt that more could be done with parishes, i.e. dialogues maintained to support rights of way maintenance. Some members of the Forum felt the policy in the report did not sit well with the requirement to assert and protect PRow.

7.5.2 In response to a query, it was reported that a meeting had been held with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) and National Farmers' Union (NFU); the leaflet referred to in the report had been shared to circulate to landowners. Discussions would also be held with parish councils regarding their role in distributing leaflets.

7.5.3 Mr Monson declared an "other interest" as a member of CLA and NFU; he reported that he had seen the leaflet published in their journals.

7.6 The Norfolk Local Access Forum (LAF) **NOTED** the changes made to the delivery of the Public Rights of Way Service.

8. Countryside Access - Restructure

8.1.1 The Senior Trails Officer (infrastructure) introduced the report discussing changes to the staffing structure of Countryside Access Management and the effect on Countryside Management in Norfolk.

8.2.1 Clarification was requested on the implementation date of changes and whether a reduction in staff working on roads and PRow would be seen:

- Countryside Access Officers had been appointed;
- The new structure would come into effect from 1 April 2017;
- A map of Norfolk was shown; members of the Forum requested a clearer map, indicating the boundaries of the 3 localities to be covered by Countryside Access Officers, see Appendix A;
- The Area Manager (South) for Community and Environmental Services felt the restructure would support more focus on the PRow network due to Countryside Access Officers' work prioritising PRow issues, supplemented by the work of Highways Officers.

8.2.2 The highways team were also being restructured which would facilitate closer working with the PRow team.

8.2.3 The Senior Trails Officer clarified the Norfolk County Council bridges team had a work programme in place to deal with repairs and maintenance of bridges; bridges below a 900mm span would be dealt with by area PRow teams. If the issue was structural it would be referred to the specialist bridges team.

8.2.4 A briefing would be sent to Parish Councils; conversations were already underway regarding the restructure.

8.3 The Norfolk Local Access Forum (LAF) **NOTED** the changes in the structure for managing countryside access and the changing roles of officers within the structure.

9. Norfolk Access Improvement Plan – Review of the Norfolk Rights of way Improvement Plan 2007-2017

- 9.1 The LAF viewed a presentation outlining plans to review the Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP), which the LAF had recommended be renamed the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (NAIP). See presentation attached at appendix B:
- The Senior Projects Officer had been working with the ROWIP sub-group looking at how to take forward the NAIP;
 - It had been recommended that the Welsh Government guidance 2016 was viewed as a useful tool;
 - Work to involve user groups in planning had started;
 - At the last sub-group meeting a template was drafted for the NAIP shown on slide 10; ideas on improving this were welcomed.
- 9.2.1 Mr Doggett offered to rewrite the part of the plan related to access to water bodies and to re-join the sub-group.
- 9.2.2 The date of the next ROWIP sub-group meeting was confirmed as 12 April 2017.
- 9.2.3 Concern was raised over the loss of strategic resource for permissive paths and damage of interconnectivity of some walks. Mr Cocker asked whether Permissive Paths could be included in section 6. The Senior Projects Officer confirmed that it would be included, however, as it was not a Council plan she was unsure where.
- 9.2.4 The Senior Projects Officer clarified that while the Welsh Guidance referred to local Welsh landscape and conditions, the processes involved and structure of the plan were being used for guidance, therefore it was suitable for use by Norfolk.
- 9.2.5 The asset management plan was queried; the Senior Projects Officer confirmed the statement of action would account for reduction in resources at Norfolk County Council and across the board and seeking of resources and new ways of working to improve and maintain the network. The annual plan would go into more detail, identifying the priorities which could be sought through external funding.
- 9.2.6 Mr Doggett highlighted a successful model of funding and visitor giving scheme used by “Love the Broads”. (www.lovethebroads.org.uk)
- 9.3 The Norfolk Local Access Forum (LAF) **RECOMMENDED** that the revised timetable and structure for the NAIP be adopted by Norfolk County Council.

10. Pathmakers – Burgh Castle Project

- 10.1.1 The LAF received the report providing an update on plans and progress towards construction of a boardwalk at Burgh Castle to improve accessibility of the site.
- 10.1.2 The Chairman gave a presentation on progress of construction (appendix C):
- 6 consents were required to construct the boardwalk;
 - Work was being carried out by Norfolk County Council and college students;
 - A progress plan was shown, see slide 5;
- 10.1.3 The Senior Trails Officer (Infrastructure) gave a second presentation; see appendix D:
- The boardwalk now allowed disabled access to the beach;

- He spoke about the work with college students to install the boardwalk which supported them with team-working, communication and practical skills.

- 10.2 The Senior Trails Officer assured the Forum that arrangements for managing the boardwalk were in place.
- 10.3.1 Pathmakers' future plans were queried. The Chairman reported that they planned to install a boardwalk at the "Horse seals" dunes to enable disabled access.
- 10.3.2 The Senior Trails Officer discussed audits carried out by disabled users to identify improvements which could be made to the countryside access network, for example Holm boardwalk which had inaccessible steps at the end.
- 10.3.4 Mr Saunders spoke about discussions held with members of the public which identified a need to improve disabled access to the dunes at "Horse seals". The Senior Trails Officer confirmed the audit would inform provision of a boardwalk for this area.
- 10.4.1 There were plans for a number-counter to be put on Burgh Castle boardwalk and for the college students to visit during the summer season to see it in use.
- 10.4.2 Mr Doggett suggested Gun Hill for work by Pathmakers; he spoke of a 2 mile walk on the flood bank and a boardwalk on the dunes. Part of this walk was inaccessible to disabled users. The Senior Trails Officer queried whether a long boardwalk would be needed. Mr Doggett and the Senior Trails Officer **agreed** to discuss after the meeting.
- 10.5.1 The Project Officer for the Environment Team confirmed that the 14th and 20th June 2017 had been suggested for the launch of Burgh Castle boardwalk but had not been confirmed.
- 10.5.2 The Project Officer **AGREED** to circulate the dates of the soft launch and formal launch of the Burgh Castle Boardwalk when confirmed.
- 10.6 The Norfolk Local Access Forum **SUPPORTED**:
- The progress to date;
 - The recommendation for a launch in June.

11. Report from Working Groups

11a. Public Rights of Way Sub-group

- 11a.1.1 Ken Hawkins introduced a report updating the Forum on discussions held at the previous meeting of the Public Rights Of Way (PRoW) sub-group.
- 11a.1.2 There were still concerns about the use of the PRoW online reporting system, maintenance issues and enforcement, and issues at Cley.
- 11a.1.3 The sub-group were seeking endorsement and input on:
- What actions might be taken to improve public satisfaction with rights of way;
 - What further could be done to support Footpath Wardens in parishes;
 - And what LAF could do to respond to the approaching deadline to support work to research and where appropriate submit claims to have routes recognised as rights of way before the 1 January 2026 deadline.

- 11a.2.1 The Senior Trails Officer (Infrastructure) reported that during the restructure changes would be made which could support with some of the issues raised by the sub-group. Therefore he **suggested** a report be brought back to the LAF in June 2017 detailing changes brought about by the restructure.
- 11a.2.2 Work was underway to ensure a single reporting system for parishes and Norfolk County Council.
- 11a.2.3 Mr Hawkins confirmed there were some Footpath wardens. The Senior Trails Officer discussed that wardens' reports came to the Trails Team; development of the single reporting system would prevent doubling up of reporting.
- 11a.2.4 Some members of the public were not confident using the online reporting system; it was felt public satisfaction would improve if the public were confident to use it without support, and improvements would be made more effective alongside supporting people to understand it.
- 11a.2.5 The Senior Trails Officer confirmed that during the restructure, information would be cascaded to Parishes about reporting of trails issues. It was suggested that speaking to non-expert users to inform improvements to the online system would be useful.
- 11a.2.6 The Senior Trails Officer and the Area Manager (South) for Community and Environmental Services were invited to attend the next PRoW sub-group meeting on the 27 March at 2pm.
- 11a.3.1 The Norfolk Local Access Forum **CONSIDERED**:
1. What actions might be taken to improve public satisfaction with rights of way in the County;
 2. Support for Footpath Wardens in parishes;
 3. Support for work to research and where appropriate submit claims to had routes recognised as rights of way before the 1 January 2026 deadline.
- 11a.3.2 The Norfolk Local Access Forum **NOTED** the report of the PRoW sub-group.

11b. Permissive Paths Sub-group

- 11b.1.1 The Vice-Chairman introduced a report providing an update on meetings held by the Permissive Paths Sub-group since 12 October 2016.
- 11b.1.2 Norfolk County Council had confirmed that Section 106 funding couldn't be used to fund permissive paths. The Senior Projects Officer clarified that it could be used for designated paths. It was queried whether it could be sought in relation to the NAIP; it was confirmed this would be used in the planning section.
- 11b.2 When paths became unavailable due to schemes ending, it was recommended that it should be reported to Parish Councils first.
- 11b.3 The Norfolk Local Access Forum **NOTED** that letters had been circulated to landowners with the leaflet attached at appendix A of the report.

12. Local Access Forum – National Conference 2017

- 12.1.1 The LAF received a report discussing the upcoming Natural England Local Access

Forum national conference in Birmingham.

12.1.2 After publication of the agenda and report, this conference had been postponed; the new date was not yet known.

12.2 The Norfolk Local Access Forum (LAF) **AGREED** to **CONFIRM** the additional representative for the upcoming Natural England Local Access Forum national conference in Birmingham upon confirmation of the rearranged date.

13. Widening Access to Public Paths

13.1.1 At the meeting of the LAF on 12 October 2016, Appendix A of the report was circulated outside of the agenda order and agreed informally. The Chairman requested this to be confirmed formally by the Forum at the meeting.

13.1.2 Discussion was held:

- Mr Cocker recalled that following a vote on the recommendations it was agreed that recommendation 1 would be deleted, as shown in the appendix;
- Mr Hawkins **suggested** adding a recommendation for the item to be referred to the Rights of Way sub-group for discussion;
- Mrs Stratford mentioned the comparison to Scotland; she reminded members that Scotland did not have the same regulations governing rights of way as England.

13.2 After discussion on the recommendations at Appendix A to the report, the LAF:

- **RESOLVED** that recommendation 1 was **NOT AGREED**, as shown;
- **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** recommendation 2, "The Forum should encourage a dialogue with British Cycling and Cycling UK to explore whether Norfolk might pilot a location for trials and to research properly the likely effects of enhanced off-road cycle access", as shown;
- **AGREED** to refer the item to the Rights of Way sub-group for discussion.

13.3.1 A short discussion was held over the report, providing an update on widening access of public paths since the last meeting of the LAF on 12 October 2016.

13.3.2 It was noted that the Government's Walking and Cycling Strategy was not yet published; Norfolk County Council had decided to go ahead with its own walking and cycling strategy.

13.4 The LAF **NOTED** the update of British Cycling campaign.

14. Dates of future meetings:

The next meeting was due to be held on Wednesday 19 April 2017

The Meeting Closed at 12:20 PM

CHAIRMAN



WEST

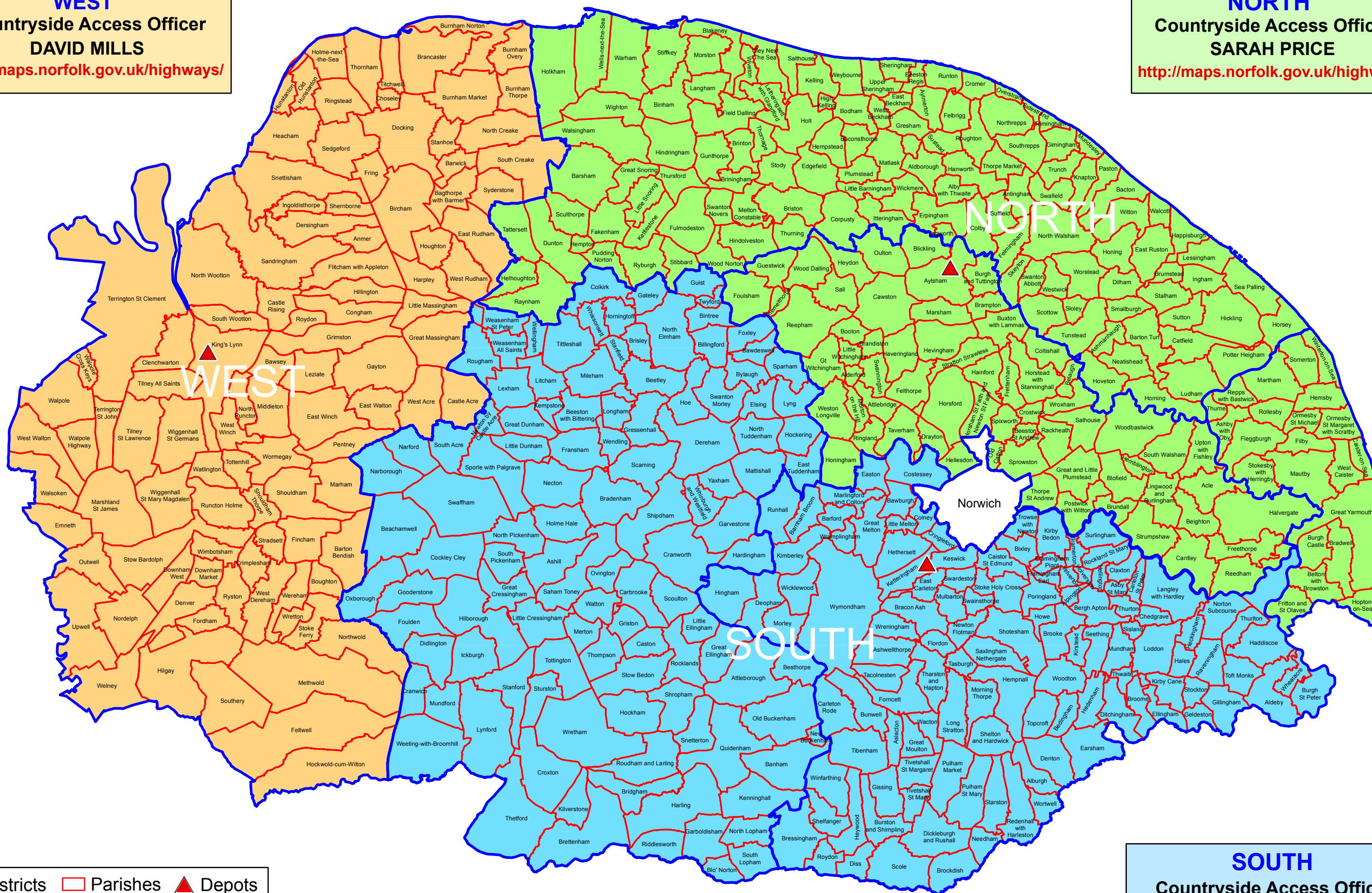
Countryside Access Officer
DAVID MILLS

<http://maps.norfolk.gov.uk/highways/>

NORTH

Countryside Access Officer
SARAH PRICE

<http://maps.norfolk.gov.uk/highways/>



▭ Districts ▭ Parishes ▲ Depots

© Crown copyright and database rights
2011 Ordnance Survey 100019340 09 March 2017
Produced by Highway Network Management in 2017.

SOUTH

Countryside Access Officer
JODY THURSTON

<http://maps.norfolk.gov.uk/highways/>

Norfolk Access Improvement Plan 2017 - 2027

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Norfolk

Rights of Way Improvement Plans

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Sections 60 - 62 local authorities must review plan every 10 years.

The plan must explain how improvements made by the local authority to the public rights of way network in their area will provide a better experience for these users:

- walkers
- cyclists
- horse riders
- horse and carriage drivers
- people with mobility problems
- people using motorised vehicles, eg motorbikes

Two statutory elements:

- An Assessment of local rights of way; and
- A Statement of Action for the management and improvement of local rights of way
- Local Access Forums are one of the bodies prescribed in section 61(1) of the CROW Act 2000 who must be consulted prior to the review of a ROWIP and there is an expectation that they will be involved throughout the process and kept informed of progress with the development and subsequent implementation of the plans

Guidance – Welsh Government 2016

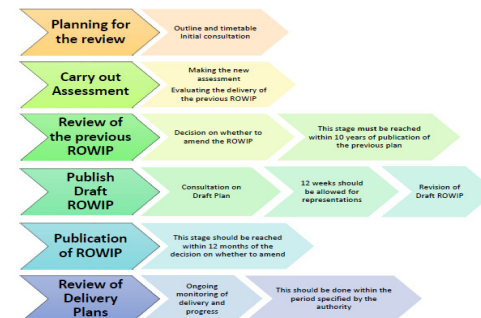


Diagram 1: Summary of the ROWIP process and timetable

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Overview of Achievements of the ROWIP 2007 – 2017
3. Assessment of Available Evidence relating to current and likely future public need - User Groups and Other Sections Community
4. Assessment of extent to which local rights of way meet present or likely future needs/ provide opportunities for doing so

Contents

5. Evaluation of the condition of the network (Definitive Map and Statement, applications for changes to PROW and promotion of outdoor recreation)
6. Overview of potential crossover between ROWIP and other Plans, Priorities and Partnerships
7. Statement of Actions and Delivery Plans

Section 6 - crossover between ROWIP and other Plans, Priorities and Partnerships

- NCC – Local Transport Plan, Green Infrastructure, Active Travel Plans, Walking and Cycling Strategy
- Health and Well-Being
- Visit East Anglia/ Norfolk – Tourism
- Active Norfolk – Sports Partnership
- District Council Local Development Plans
- Education – Outdoor Education
- Broads Authority Plan
- AONB – Norfolk Coast Partnership Management Plan
- Environment – Natural and Historic Management Plans
- Natural England - Coastal Access, National Trails and England Coast Path
- Rural Development Plan

User Groups

- Walkers, Walking
- Cyclists, Cycling
- Equestrians, Horse Riding and Carriage Driving
- Drivers of Motorised Vehicles, Mechanically Propelled Vehicles (MPV)
- People with Mobility or Visual Impairments Access for All

Other Sections of the Community/ Other Interests

- Landholders Landownership and Management
- Young People - education Children and Young People
- Health, Mental Illness Health and Wellbeing
- Businesses Economic Partnership and Business
- Parish Councils
- Growth Infrastructure and Planning
- Environment, Biodiversity and Conservation
- Community Engagement and Volunteering
- Historic Environment
- Coastal and Open Access
- Access to water bodies

NAIP Template

Title
*Current situation/Background
XXX
*Opportunities for development
XXX
*Recommendations for action
XXX
*Who might we work with?
XXX
*Priority actions
Bullet list
"Quote"
Suggestions/recommendations for Section 7
"Statement of Actions"
Xxx
xxx

Statement of Action – 2017 - 2027

New Statements of Action - long-term and strategic actions Short and medium term actions - Delivery Plan, or in rights of way policies.

Key aims and priorities arising from the Assessment over 10 years;

- Long term strategic commitments;
- Details of what deferred to Delivery Plans, how, and when renewed and published, how implementation evaluated and reported
- Details of process followed to make changes to key policies relating to local rights of way

Annual Delivery Plans

Delivery Plans can be renewed periodically without the need to review the entire ROWIP but will still form part of the plan from the perspective of the public; meaning they only have to consider a single document to understand how the authority manages its network and why.

Delivery Plans should consist of:

- An evaluation of the degree to which the previous Delivery Plan was achieved
- A review of key policies for Rights of Way work
- SMART Action plans and detailed work plans

Timetable NAIP

1 st March 2017	Present initial content and timetable to LAF
LAF meeting on 19 th April	Update and Priorities for Action Plan LAF
end of May 2017	First draft
end of June 2017	Consult wider Stakeholder Group by
LAF meeting on 5 th July 2017	Review revised draft
August 2017	Develop consultation plans and design
September to November 2017	Hold consultation
LAF meeting 11th October 2017	Agree Delivery Plan for 2017/18
LAF in January 2018	Present feedback from consultation
Spring 2018	Publication NAIP



Connecting Norfolk countryside and communities

Pathmakers – charitable purposes



Charitable purpose 1

For the public benefit, the advancement of health of residents of and visitors to Norfolk by promoting, raising awareness of, improving and creating countryside access for outdoor recreation in the area of Norfolk

Charitable purpose 2

For the public benefit, the advancement of improvement to the environment in the Norfolk countryside for the benefit of residents of and visitors to Norfolk by the promotion of, assisting and organizing projects to conserve and improve the areas of countryside the public can access

Connecting Norfolk countryside & communities



Burgh Castle boardwalk



- ❑ NCC applies to WREN for funding for a 600 metre boardwalk at Burgh Castle to improve access for all. Application welcomed by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust which owns the site. Funding application is successful
- ❑ Pathmakers chosen as contractor to deliver the construction
- ❑ Lengthy process required to obtain all the statutory permissions before work can commence.
- ❑ Experienced staff from Norfolk Trails are seconded to Pathmakers to make the boardwalk. Construction Design Method followed.

Connecting Norfolk countryside & communities

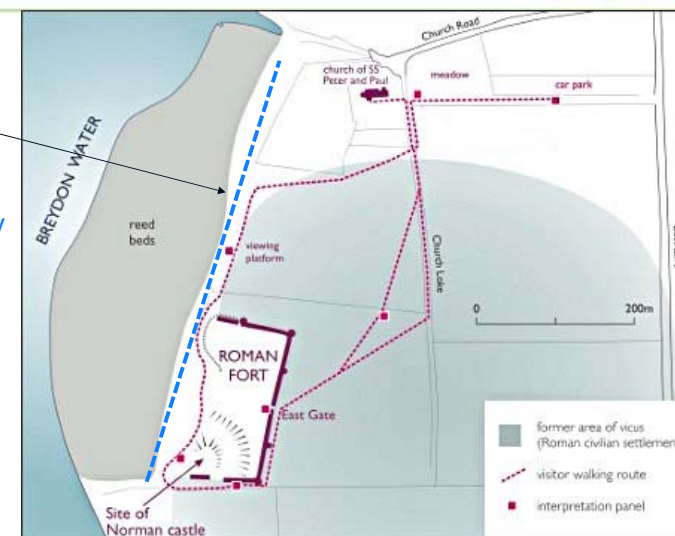


Burgh Castle – location of boardwalk



Boardwalk

Site is owned by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust



Connecting Norfolk countryside & communities



Construction



Progress

- ❑ Scrub removed to 'clear the line'
- ❑ Post driver being used to install posts
- ❑ Ongoing work to install timber rails
- ❑ Ongoing work to install timber deck
- ❑ Volunteer help brought in – Norwich City College apprentices
- ❑ Soft launch expected early April
- ❑ Formal launch expected June



Burgh Castle Boardwalk

Norfolk County Council Objectives - Our Priorities

- Excellence in education
- Real Jobs
- Good Infrastructure
- Supporting vulnerable people



Working with Education groups

Norwich City College
Vocational pathways
co-ordinator



College students

Not high academic achievers
Starting at North Denes and
then scaling up to Burgh
Castle





Excellence in education

Providing opportunity for young people to get involved in practical work on the ground

- Working with others
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Sense of pride



Real Jobs

Improving young peoples CV to better equip them to apply for other jobs

Allowing young people to develop and grow to better equip them for the world of work



Good Infrastructure

New 600m boardwalk at the end of the project

Allowing improved access for all visitors to the area

Improving access opportunity for Great Yarmouth residents and visitors



Supporting vulnerable people

Working with vulnerable young people

Building better infrastructure to allow range of vulnerable people to access the countryside in new ways

