

Norfolk Local Access Forum
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 05 April 2023
at 10am at County Hall, Norwich

Member:

Martin Sullivan - Chair
Paul Baker
Elizabeth Meath-Baker
Simon Fowler
Ken Hawkins – Vice Chair
Birgit Griem
Rob Lodge

Representing:

Motorised Vehicles / Pathmakers
Cycling
Rural / Local Business / Economy / Tourism
Walking
Walking
Walking
Nature Conservation

Officers Present:

Matt Hayward	Lead Project Officer, Community and Environmental Services (CES)
David Burt	Senior Project Officer, Sustrans
Nicola Ledain	Committee Officer, Democratic Services
Su Waldron	Project Officer (Environment Team)
Katy Owen	Protected Landscapes Manager, CES

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Chris Alhusen, Cllr Penny Carpenter, Ruth Goodall, Kevin Grieve, Karen Davidson, Rebecca Durant and Cllr Maxine Webb. Apologies were also received from Jason Moorse.

2. Chair's Announcements

- 2.1 The Chair reported that there had been a record of consultations circulated and responded to via email to all NLAF members since the last meeting.

3. Minutes

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. Declarations of Interest

- 4.1 There were no interests declared.

5. Urgent Business

- 5.1 There was no urgent business.

6. Public Question Time

- 6.1 There were no public questions received.

7. Local member Issues / Questions

- 7.1 There were no member questions received.

8. Feedback from Events

- 8.1 The vice chair reported that the Suffolk LAF had taken place in January although he had not been able to attend. Nothing had been drawn to his attention.
- 8.2 The vice chair also reported that he attended the Broads LAF in March. The Broads LAF continued to be very interested in whether it could do anything regarding riverside paths which had been eroded into the river as the legal line for the path remains unaltered (i.e in the river). The Broads LAF had written to both Suffolk and Norfolk County Council but had received no response at the time of the meeting. They also had concerns for poor water quality within the Broads and were taking this up with the Broads Authority. Norfolk LAF raised the issue of ELMS and permissive access at the meeting. The Broads Authority was investing in a small number of digital signs on footpaths which would provide up-to-date information.
- 8.3 The next east regional LAF would take place in July. They occur every six months.

9. Meetings Forward Plan

- 9.1 The NLAF received the report which outlined agenda items for the forthcoming meetings.
- 9.2 It was reported that Norfolk Wildlife Trust were interested in attending a future meeting and Norfolk Rivers Trust were increasing their visibility and therefore a riverside site could be a suggestion for the July meeting to be held offsite.
- 9.3 The NLAF **NOTED** the Forward plan.

10. Sustrans Rural Travel Review (Norfolk)

- 10.1 The Forum received a presentation from David Burt, Senior Project Officer from Sustrans which is appended (Appendix A)
- 10.2 There were currently only two districts which had the 'quiet lane' initiative (where priority is given to non-car users) in North Norfolk between Cromer, North Walsham and Bacton and South Norfolk between Attleborough, Diss and Thetford. The Greenways project (Marriott's Way, Peddar's Way and Weavers' Way) also contributes to the rural travel network.
- 10.3 It was suggested that quiet lanes needed more signage and promotion
- 10.4 Bearing in mind the amount of development taking place in towns and the city centre, there could be a demand to cater for families as they were not always confident going out with young children and visiting the nice rural roads and network that existed. A reliably quiet road needed to be developed along with junctions and intersections.

- 10.5 If quiet lanes were to be successful, there needed to be much more to enforce them as quiet lanes. If there was only a sign up, it would not stop the hazardous driving or how to enforce it. It was also suggested that the signs showed drivers how they should behave. Currently it was relying on people knowing how to behave.
- 10.6 People needed to be aware that there was a quiet lane network, how to behave and how to access maps. Connectivity was important.
- 10.7 The Slow Ways initiative <https://beta.slowways.org/> was developed by inviting people to suggest linkages of existing walking routes to create a network. It was suggested that the Slow Ways experience could help with the quiet lanes initiative in Norfolk.
- 10.8 Safety was a concern with traffic speeds recorded in the survey as a major offputting issue. Supporting biodiversity (maintenance of verges and hedgerows) was viewed as important to improve the quiet lanes experience.
- 10.9 There were situations where closing roads would be an advantage and needed consideration, especially if it only meant a small detriment to someone's car journey and it meant that people were confident in getting out and enjoying nature.
- 10.10 The Sustrans report was submitted to NCC in December and would be considered during development of the Norfolk Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP). The work was commissioned to review the quiet lanes initiative, which was over 20 years old and to engage with those using the networks. The work would hopefully help inform national guidance as well further local initiatives.
- 10.11 The NLAf **NOTED** the findings from the Sustrans Rural Travel Review (Norfolk).

11. Defra Statement regarding claims for unrecorded paths 1.02

- 11.1 The Forum received the report and a verbal update from the Vice Chair regarding the recent Defra Statement. It had been recently announced that the government had reinstated a deadline to register historic paths not registered on councils' definitive maps (such as the NCC Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way): the deadline would now be 2031.
- 11.2 The Forum felt that the reinstated deadline would put additional pressure on councils to verify and register claims for unrecorded paths.
- 11.3 The Forum **AGREED** that the NLAf writes to the minister of Defra to express that they are particularly unhappy with this recent decision and urge them to revert to the decision of 2022 (i.e. to abolish the deadline unrecorded paths) and that the NLAf draw this to the attention and gain support of Norfolk MPs.

12. NLAf Subgroups' report (Permissive Access; PROW; NAIP; Vision and Ideas; Joint Communications)

- 12.1 The NLAf received the reports which set out the latest discussions and recommendations of the sub-groups of the NLAf.

12.2 The NLAf **NOTED** the update and **AGREED**

1. That NLAf requests Norfolk Records Office to give consideration to opening on an evening and/or at a weekend to enable the widest possible access to the records held there, even if that means losing a current weekday.
2. That NLAf requests Norfolk County Council supports proposals to close Potter Heigham bridge permanently to motorised traffic.
3. That NLAf requests Norfolk County Council supports proposals from Somerton Parish Council to establish a route (and associated paths) in Horsey as a Public Right of Way

13. Pathmakers Projects

- 13.1 The NLAf received the report and a presentation which updated the Forum on the activities of Pathmakers. The presentation is appended at appendix B and highlighted the recent highlights and successes of Pathmakers along with a workplan for the year ahead.
- 13.2 The NLAf **NOTED** the report.

14. Potential and Future Funding for Access

- 14.1 The Forum received the report which gave the NLAf an overview of funding bids in concept/development stage and update on successful applications. The overview covered relevant areas of PRoW, Norfolk Trails and Highways Teams.
- 14.2 The NLAf **NOTED** the report.

15. Countryside Access Arrangements update

- 15.1 The Forum received the report which highlighted this work in terms of the volumes of customer queries received and responded to. The paper highlighted the work in terms of the volumes of customer queries received and responded to. The paper also highlighted other key areas of work.
- 15.2 The Forum asked, with reference to page 28, paragraph 2.9, if there was the ability to break the figures down in future, in order to get a better sense of the data, as the timescales for enforcements in the report didn't seem to match up with experiences received for some members of the NLAf. Officers agreed to see if a member of the reporting team could come to a meeting to talk through the data in more detail. Officers also suggested that maybe the graphs were manipulated to show the data that was wanted.
- 15.3 With regards to page 28 and the enforcement procedures mentioned for the path at Upwell, the NLAf expressed concern at the length of time this was taking to resolve (approximately 2.5 years)
- 15.4 The NLAf **NOTED** the progress made to date since the Countryside Access Officer posts were introduced and hoped that staffing resource could be increased to meet the

additional demand. The NLAF **AGREED** to express concern regarding the length of time enforcement procedures were taking

16. NCC Member Sustainable Transport update

- 16.1 The Forum received the annexed report which provided a summary of the key walking and cycling projects relevant to the Local Access Forum.
- 16.2 The NLAF **NOTED** the progress of the walking and cycling projects as outlined in the report.

17. Major Infrastructure Projects and Planning

- 17.1 The Forum received the annexed report which updated them on the major infrastructure projects that were currently underway in the County which impacted on Public Rights of Way.
- 17.2 The NLAF discussed the latest update regarding the East Anglian Green Enablement project where the possibility of offshore alternatives had been suggested rather than the in-shore pylons and that this was going to be reviewed. There had been nothing formal suggesting this that had come through to officers, but they agreed to look into it.
- 17.3 The NLAF **NOTED** the table of major infrastructure projects in Norfolk.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 5 July 2023 at 10am. Venue will be advised in due course.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm

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



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Norfolk County Council

Rural Network Review

David Burt
Liveable Cities and Towns Coordinator
Sustrans



Project outcomes

Sep – Dec Project timeline with three key outcomes:

1. High level network between Wells-Next-The-Sea and Cromer
2. Best practice design summary for rural active travel

3. Engagement

Engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, through a variety of means, to determine current habits and perceptions, inform them of best practice, and determine what measures would make it more likely for them to travel actively in rural Norfolk.

Local context

Current network

- Norfolk is one of the first counties in UK to introduce Quiet Lanes
- Two Quiet Lanes projects in Norfolk (54km²):
 - North Norfolk between Cromer, North Walsham and Bacton (2000)
 - Southern Norfolk between Attleborough, Diss and Thetford (2004)
- Greenways include Marriot's Way, Peddar's Way and Weaver's Way

Norfolk's population

- 70% live in a rural context
- Largely arable land use with a population density of 170 people/km²
- Urban and semi-urban populations in Norwich, Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth and market towns: Large propensity to interact with rural network
- Proportionally high number of older people and an ageing population

Methodology

Methods

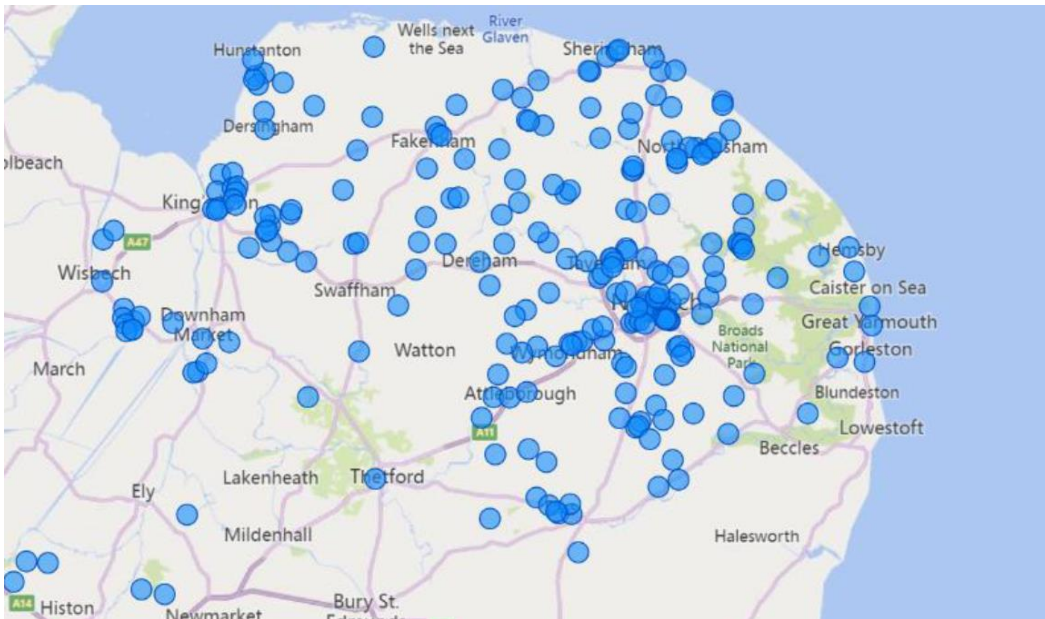
- **Website** as a landing page with information about Quiet Lanes, Greenways and the project more broadly.
- **Survey** promoted via Parish Councils, community gatekeepers, organisations
- **Communication materials** (posters, flyers)
- **Engagement Events** in central market locations: Diss, North Walsham and Swaffham
- **Consultation meetings** with key stakeholder groups

Key stakeholder groups

- Residents from a cross-section of rural locations
- Access & Inclusion experts: organisations with expertise in specific barriers
- Active travel users: Walking, wheeling, cycling and horse-riding
- Agricultural stakeholders: farmers and 'countryside' charities



Findings - reach

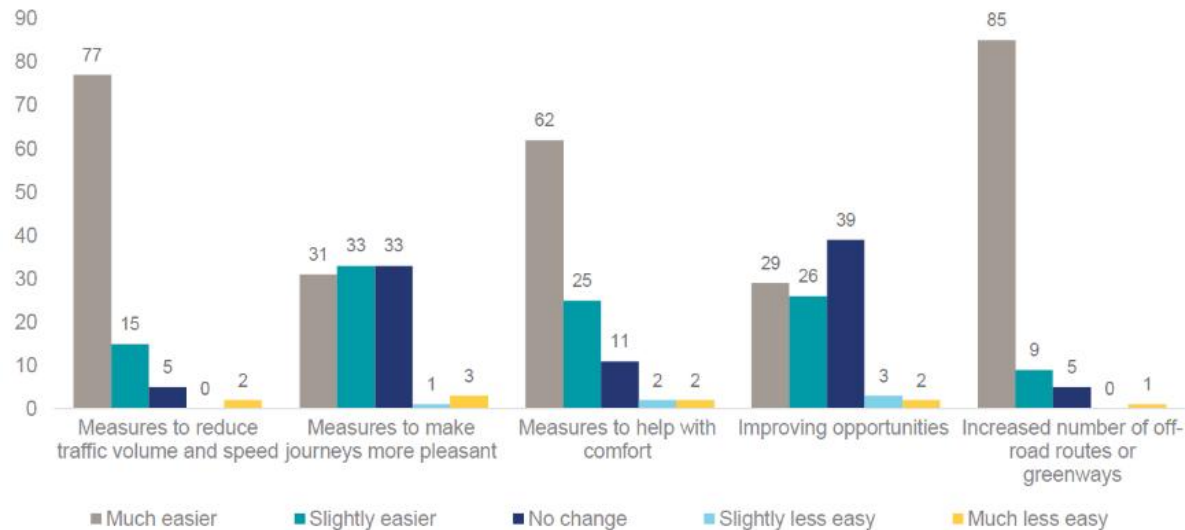


Method	Reach
Website	451 total website views
Survey	299 responses
Engagement events	174 people
Stakeholder discussions	15 people
Total engagements (not unique)	938

Key Findings

- Low **awareness of Quiet Lanes** in general (38%), with more awareness from active travel groups.
- Of those that had heard of Quiet Lanes, there is the **perception that they are ineffective**: *What are they, what are they for, where to find information?*
- Majority of people said they would **travel actively more often if routes were high quality** (73% for leisure/fitness, 64% to access services, 45% for work/school).
- People with **disabilities, access needs and/or sensory impairment are disproportionately marginalised** in rural active travel.
- There are big issues with **connectivity** to and between rural routes which severely limits peoples access to rural routes or rural active travel in general. There is a need for integrated planning to ensure accessible public transport, safe junctions and crossings and inclusive communications to enable people to get to the countryside in the first place.

Findings - measures



Measure	1st place votes	Total points	Rank
Biodiversity	37	167	1
Seating/rest areas	25	153	2
Traffic free roads	30	137	3
Route information	26	119	4
Speed restrictions	21	101	5

Qualitative findings

Theme	No. of notes
Accessibility	47
Safety	29
Quiet Lanes	22
Surface conditions	13
Speeding	12
Signage	9
Volume of traffic	8
Connectivity	6
Conditions	4
Total notes on discussions	150

Theme	Coded measure	No. of comments
Places for people	Traffic speeds	215
	Traffic volumes	64
	Road closures	4
	Quiet Lanes	6
Making journeys more pleasant	Seating/rest areas	3
	Boosting nature	5
	Lighting	12
Route information	Wayfinding	30
Travelling in comfort	Surfacing	108
	Connectivity	58
Improving opportunities	Services – led walks, access to bikes etc.	4
Other	Accessibility and disability	91
	Safety	321
	Routes	70
	Infrastructure	99
	Other	81

Preference for measures to improve usership and support inclusion

- High scoring measures: reduce **traffic speed and volume**
- **Maintenance** of verges/hedgerows (+ support biodiversity)
- Clear **surfaces** and appropriate differentiation of surfaces for different users
- **Lighting** to support access and personal safety (sensitive to environment)
- **Seating** and rest areas for inclusivity and trip attractor
- Off-road paths can be problematic if there is ambiguity about **shared use** between different users
- People want to keep the **character of rural routes**
- **Soft measures** could help to raise awareness about the needs and priorities of different users including vulnerable users – especially among drivers and cyclists
- **Wayfinding** that is consistent, well-placed, designed with access expertise

Recommendations

- **Accessible design:** People with expertise in barriers to access must be involved from the earliest design stages
- **Communications & branding:** Update, streamline and centralise information about rural routes and Quiet Lanes
- **Accessible information:** provide accurate descriptions of rural routes so people can make informed judgements about what is accessible for them
- **Make a Quiet Lane, a quiet lane:** Use measures to reduce traffic volume and speed. Evidence suggests the current approach is not effective.
- **Ambitious policy and design** (including road closures) to create inclusive, coherent, connected routes

Learnings

- Limitations of this study: Further consultation is needed with stakeholder groups, including farming and agricultural communities and groups experiencing different types of barriers to access
- Consider in-depth engagement and co-design with communities in locations where routes are developed
- There needs to be a strategic alignment with public transport, health, disability, education and community sectors locally to activate the existing network and provide input to future networks.
- Norfolk has an ageing population with more people likely to have inclusive access needs or requirements. Champion life-long active travel, for young families and older communities, to support improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

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**WE ARE PATHMAKERS.
WE IMPROVE ACCESS
TO THE NORFOLK
COUNTRYSIDE TO
MAKE LIVES BETTER.**

An introduction to Pathmakers.
Who we are. What we do. And why.



Pathmakers
Connecting Norfolk countryside & communities



Pathmakers
Connecting Norfolk
countryside and communities

WE'RE A CHARITY DEDICATED TO IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE FOR PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITIES AND BACKGROUNDS.

How do we do it?

We work in partnership with organisations and communities to help run, facilitate or support projects - both financially and in other ways - that improve countryside access.

Why do we do it?

Improving countryside access will enable communities to get outdoors and connect with nature, which in turn will have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

Background to the Walking Festival

Pathmakers ran a successful Walking Festival in October 2022 which was designed as a pilot to explore the potential for organising a regular event.

Project Outline for the 2022 festival:

- A focused month of walking activities in October 2022 that will form a significant part of a larger year-long walking and cycling festival being held as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.
- A pilot to develop a sustainable model that will enable Pathmakers to secure funding for future festivals.
- The project should aim to engage those less likely to walk and those less likely to access the Countryside.

Target Groups

7 target groups were identified in the original project :

- Dementia
- Elderly / Care homes
- Autism & Aspergers
- Down Syndrome
- Deaf & Blind
- Inner-city families
- Young families

What happened :

- 26 guided walks , 31 self-guided walks.
- 1,361,000 steps or 670.5 miles were walked, with a total of 236 participants taking part.
- Norfolk's first ever disabled-friendly foraging walk.
- 6 out of the 7 target groups originally identified in the project work plan were successfully reached as a part of Walk Norfolk 2022.

Walks



Foraging Walk



Feedback :

- Overwhelmingly positive and it has identified a need and a niche for an access-friendly walking festival in Norfolk.
- 80% of those completing feedback forms were very interested in future events, 80%+ very satisfied, 0% unsatisfied and 80% very likely to share future events with their friends.
- People most enjoyed gaining new knowledge, the social aspect of the event, and that it was inclusive for all.
- Most popular events were nature walks, history & heritage walks, foraging walks and forest bathing walks.

Projects This Year

1. Identifying and working with partners, land-owners and land managers;
2. Identifying and working with under-represented groups
3. Development of a website and a social media offering.



Fishermans' Walk
Cromer, October 2022

Closing Comments

Any Questions?

We created the charity Pathmakers in 2016 to help people get out into the Norfolk countryside and have since embarked on projects that have aided countryside access and supported people facing barriers to employment to train for work in the Environment Sector.

**THANK YOU
FOR LISTENING.**



Pathmakers
Connecting Norfolk countryside & communities