

Norfolk Local Access Forum
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 20 January 2021
at 10.30am via Microsoft Teams

Member:

Martin Sullivan - Chair
Chris Allhusen
Elizabeth Meath Baker
Cllr Danny Douglas
Bethan Edmunds
Brigid Fairman
Simon Fowler
Ken Hawkins – Vice-Chairman
David Hissey
Cllr Andrew Jamieson
Suzanne Longe
Cllr Bev Spratt

Representing:

Motorised Vehicles / Pathmakers
Land Ownership
Rural / local business / economy
Norfolk County Council
Nature Conservation
Equestrian
Walking / Pathmakers
Walking
Cycling
Norfolk County Council
Equestrian
Norfolk County Council

Officers Present:

Sarah Abercrombie
Mike Auger
Su Waldron
Jason Moore
John Jones
Nicola Ledain

Green Infrastructure Team Leader (Projects)
Projects Manager.
Project Officer (Environment Team)
Area Manager (West)
Head of Environment
Committee Services Officer, Governance Department,
NCC
Heritage Project Officer, NCC
Lead Project Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Vic Cocker, Mike Edwards, Andy Brazil, Paul Rudkin, Donna Gibling and Louise Rout.

2. Chairman's Announcements

- 2.1 The Chair reported that;
- A simple spreadsheet had been created for assist LAF Members partake in the time recording exercise that was required. Spreadsheet can be accessed via the SharePoint site.
 - Document sharing was in use via SharePoint and reminded members to view it frequently. There was officer support if anyone needed some assistance using it.
 - NLAF member recruitment was in progress.

3. Minutes

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2020 were confirmed as a true record.

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 No public questions were received.

7. Local member Issues / Questions

- 7.1 There were no member questions received.

8. Feedback from Events

- 8.1 KH had circulated the details of meetings attended by Broads LAF and Suffolk LAF (Appendix A).

9. Constitution Amends

- 9.1 The NLAF received the annexed report (9) which outlined the proposed changes to the NLAF's constitution as in appendix 2 of the report.
- 9.2 The NLAF **AGREED** the changes.

10. Widening the Reach of the NLAF

- 10.1 The Forum received the annexed (10) 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*.
- 10.2 The NLAF **AGREED** the recommendations as outlined in the report and **AGREED** to discuss how the recommendations could be implemented by the Forum themselves or how they could work with Officers to put them in place.

11. Meetings Forward Plan

- 11.1 The NLAF received the annexed report (11) which outlined agenda items for the forthcoming meetings.
- 11.2 The Chair reminded members that they can contribute to the forward plan and if they had any suggestions to contact the Chair.

11.3 The NLAf **NOTED** the forward plan.

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

12.1 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.

12.2 It was highlighted on page 3 and 33 that the Fakenham riverside paths needed some attention after the high level of water flowing down the river, and some of the paths had disappeared. Officers were working on this.

12.3 The NCC Transport Asset Management Plan sets out at a high level, how the rights of way team respond to issues affecting public rights of way (there are 4 status categories for action: immediate, high, medium, low). KH said many rights of way fall outside any priority category so issues affecting them are not addressed. He said that the PROW subgroup would discuss this and make proposals for amendment to the TAMP to put to NCC.

12.4 A response still hasn't been received NCC Planning team on Shouldham Warren minerals site regarding public access.

12.5 As far as the NLAf had been informed, the claims for the lost paths by the NCC Legal Orders and Registers Team were still being dealt with in order of date of receipt. The understanding was that any application goes through a validity process and then proceeds to be logged and assigned priority.

12.6 KH confirmed that the NLAf's representation on the route of the England Coast Path (Hunstanton to Sutton Bridge) had been submitted to Natural England.

12.7 The NLAf **RESOLVED**:

- To inform parishes through the NALC newsletter and direct contact of the outcomes from Parish Paths Seminars; the NLAf agreed the setting up of a small working group to take this forward;
- To provide comment on a paper drafted by the group concerning the economic value of PROW and concerns regarding funding for ongoing maintenance, and agree to further discussion at the April full NLAf meeting.
- To explore specific recommendations to improve access with NCC staff at the next PROW subgroup meeting

13. Pathmakers Projects

13.1 The NLAf received the annexed report (13) which updated the Forum on the activities of the Pathmakers.

13.2 The NLAf **AGREED**;

- To NOTE the progress to date.

14. Update on the EXPERIENCE Project and its Norfolk Objectives

- 14.1 The Forum received the annexed report (14) and presentation (appendix B) which provided the Forum with an update on the Experience Project, a 23million euro tourism project funded by Interreg of which 5.8million euros is allocated to Norfolk.
- 14.2 Officers explained that the project will develop 250 new tourist activities and itineraries and is designed to extend the visitor season through experiential tourism. Minority groups and under represented groups were being consulted with e.g. Hindu Temple, about what might work for their community. Their members were being asked what would attract their members to Norfolk and the project would be able to support the development of those projects within any constraints that the group had. The Experience project was aimed at the adults rather than families.
- 14.3 The 'Walkers are Welcome' towns, Aylsham, Dereham and Cromer, would be groups which would be consulted with as the plans developed.
- 14.4 Pathmakers and NLAF were keen to promote all-ability access and it was appropriate for NLAF to look out for projects and funding. The project would consult with Pathmakers for product testing and thoughts around accessibility. One third of activities developed by Experience will be accessible (physical, sensory, cognitive and cultural). Experience has set up the Experience Norfolk Access Group – an informal network with a wide range of interests and first-hand experience of living with disability. The group will act as a sounding board for Experience.
- 14.5 Due to the off-season aim of the project, it would mean that the masses of crowds wouldn't exist and therefore this would help with the sustainability theme of the project. Businesses involved would also abide by certain criteria around sustainability, no plastic knives and forks for instance. Carbon footprint would also be important, and the project would not promote the use of cars but instead promote train links, walkers, cyclists etc.
- 14.6 Trails surface improvements, circular routes, installation of heritage railway features will be developed. A route branded The Norfolk Way, a 250 mile route will bring together all the Norfolk Trails. This will include 7 permanent high quality outdoor artworks, one per district. NLAF members were invited to email the Experience team if they need more information. experience@norfolk.gov.uk
- 14.7 A innovation incubator fund will be offered by Experience to partner organisations who have good ideas to develop improvements that are: innovative; offseason; enhance natural and cultural environment; good value; sustainable; accessible. Partners can apply for funding. BF asked if the NLAF and Pathmakers could apply and the answer was yes.
- 14.8 BE asked how sustainable access to Norfolk Trails would be maintained if the footfall was increased through the project. PD said that the project would market care of the countryside
- 14.9 The NLAF **NOTED** the objectives of the EXPERIENCE project, how it will be achieved and its impact on the visitor economy.

15. Countryside Access Arrangements update

- 15.1 The Forum received the annexed report (15) 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.
- 15.2 There was concern expressed that the small amount of resource for PROW maintenance was being diverted to other areas of highway maintenance. Currently, the prowl countryside access officers roles were being asked to help address highways' defects on a temporary part time basis. The length of time that this would last was dependant on the Covid-19 situation and how that affected the organisation and the sickness levels.
- 15.3 Less people were currently using the highways and more people were using the public rights of way such as Marriotts Way. The NLAF questioned if NCC were addressing the change of people travel behaviour by putting the right level of resources to the right area considering the current behaviours. Officers explained that although there were no extra resources, current resources had not been taken away.

Cllr DD said he would raise the matter with the Infrastructure and Development Committee.

- 15.4 JM said that NCC had come out well overall in the annual National Highway and Transport Public Satisfaction benchmarking Survey
<https://www.nhtnetwork.co.uk/isolated/page/793> .

KH had noted that there were some areas concerning footpaths where scoring was lower. JM agreed to circulate the full report to the NLAF.

- 15.5 The NLAF **NOTED** the progress made to date since the Countryside Access Officer posts were introduced.

16. NCC Member Walking and Cycling Champion update

- 16.1 The Forum received the annexed report (16) which provided a summary of the key walking and cycling projects relevant to the Local Access Forum.
- 16.2 The Walking and Cycling Champion reported that NCC were aware that the Trails and the PROW hadn't been attended to in the manner that they should have been. There was a commitment to maintaining and renewing the trails and the wider prowl network and as a result there would be extra money for both in the medium-term financial settlement.
They were hugely conscious of the value of both the Trails and the PROW to walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- 16.3 SF asked if NCC were working with Defra and local landowner groups on the potential to extend rights of ways through permissive schemes e.g through the emerging Environmental Land Management System (ELMs).

CA recommended the NLAF's response to Defra on ELMs was forwarded to AJ.

- 16.4 The Transport Asset Management Plan there was £280 million of capital used for infrastructure plans with £16 million involved in non-car schemes. The Champion confirmed that the capital finance would be extended towards non-car ways of travel.
- 16.5 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 (17) which updated them on the major infrastructure projects that were currently underway in the County which impacted on Public Rights of Way.
- The Hornsea windfarm project has been approved by the Secretary of State
 - Highways schemes at Blofield have been uploaded to the Planning Inspectorate with a formal consultation period commencing thereafter
- 17.2 The NLAF **NOTED** the table of major infrastructure projects in Norfolk.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm

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



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