

Community and Environmental Services Minutes of Meeting

Local Access Forum Public Rights of Way subgroup.

Held on: Monday 12th June 2017 Time: 14:00 – 16:00

Venue: Room 1, Floor 6, County Hall

Present		Post Title
Keith Bacon (KB)		CPRE Norfolk, Broads LAF
Neil Cliff (NC)		U3A
Ken Hawkins (KH)		Norfolk Local Access Forum
Ian Mitchell (IM)		The Ramblers
Jean Stratford (JS)		Norfolk Local Access Forum
Invited		
Vic Cocker (VC)		Norfolk Local Access Forum
Ann Melhuish (AM)		Norfolk Local Access Forum, Pathmakers
Andy Hutcheson (AH)		Norfolk County Council
Russell Wilson (RW)		Norfolk County Council
Su Waldron		Norfolk County Council

Item Minute

Action by

1.0 Introductions and apologies for absence

All present introduced themselves. Apologies were received from Ian Witham (IW) (Open Spaces Society); Sarah Abercrombie (NCC) (sick leave); Helen Chester (HC) (NLAF); Helen Leith (CPRE); Martin Sullivan [Su - did the Helens send in apologies?] VC and AM will be joining the subgroup: this will be proposed for agreement at the NLAF.

SW –
background on
Pathmakers

A recent Pathmakers workshop (21st November) proposed strengthening links between Pathmakers (the charitable arm of the NLAF) and NLAF subgroups (PROW; Permissive Access; NAIP). A further subgroup would be set up – but this would be a Pathmakers subgroup not an NLAF subgroup. Proposals have been agreed in principle by Chairs of subgroups/Pathmakers. Report will go to next NLAF to agree this, with the subsequent

need for the subgroups to review terms of reference and remit and each to include Pathmakers trustee membership.
NC asked for further information on Pathmakers and SW said she would supply it.

Minutes of the meeting on 12th June 2017

- 2.0 IM comment (3.2.2) should be included: For the minutes what I meant was that, having considered the evidence and made a Definitive Map order, if there are objections which cannot be resolved, the NCC Definitive Map team submit the whole file to the Planning Inspectorate to make a decision and apart from arranging a public inquiry if the Inspectorate want that, they take no part in the proceedings, except possibly to act as witnesses.

Otherwise, the minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting.

3.0 Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1 Re 3.2.4 Unresolved case closures. MW confirmed that all unresolved cases were being dealt as reflected by their individual history.

- 3.2 Re 4.1 Staff family tree. MW had appended a schematic to his report (Draft 20171228 Countryside Access arrangements update_Amended.docx) showing in outline the Highways staff hierarchy. KB requested that this was supplied with more detail (staff names) and also how Norfolk Trails and the Definitive Map Team fitted into the structure. AH said that a more detailed version could be supplied.
- MW to Request that a more comprehensive staff structure is made available

- 3.3 Re 4.2 NAIP update. SW said that the timetable was as follows:
- SW to send NAIP documents to KB (BLAF) at earliest opportunity

Date	What	Who
23/1/2018	NAIP consultation draft complete	NCC/NLAF
7/2/2018	NAIP consultation draft signed off (this meeting)	NLAF
1/3/2018 to 31/5/2018	NAIP consultation (stakeholders and the public) – Citizen Space	NCC/NLAF
Mid April 2018	NAIP stakeholder consultation events (4 in total – one for stakeholders at Norwich County Hall and 3 in countryside officer ‘patches’ in Norfolk for the public. Drop in format with appropriate officers and NLAF in attendance	NCC/NLAF
1/6/2018/-/30/6/2018	NAIP redrafted and completed	NCC/NLAF
18/7/2018	NAIP signed off	NLAF
7/9/2018	NAIP approved by EDT committee at NCC	EDT committee

KB asked when consultation with the Broads LAF would take place. RW said that the BLAF would be invited to the stakeholder consultation event (the one at County Hall). AH suggested that the draft NAIP, Statement of Action and Delivery Plans should all be sent to the BLAF at the earliest opportunity (ahead of the NLAF). Comments would feed in via the consultation period and structure. KB said the BLAF is preparing its own Improvement Plan.

VC said that he had some concerns over priorities going into the improvement programme – important to ensure that metrics reflect improvements accurately.

MW said the document would be in the public domain after the NLAF meeting.

3.4 Re 4.3 – Widening access to public paths. MS to advise at a future date.

MS to advise at future meeting

3.5 Re 3.2.2
KB said he was unhappy about current NCC representation (or lack of) when cases concerning public rights of way come to public enquiry. He felt that NCC didn't provide sufficient help to those proposing route modifications even when there was public support for the change. Reference was made to occasions when an individual or Parish Council applicant might face a barrister

MW – statistics on cases supported at public enquiry after 2011

MW to

opposing the order. IM noted that the Planning Inspectorate had apparently initially been surprised at the change of policy.

establish what
other councils
do

KH said he'd be interested to find out what other counties do.

MW said that all cases were viewed on their individual merits (case by case basis).

JS said she felt that there should be a clear policy on what cases would be supported. This led to a request to have information on the criteria used by the County in deciding whether to promote an order or take a neutral stance.

MW said that much information had already been provided in the note appended to the agenda (from John Shaw, regarding modification orders) including changes that had been made to procedure since 2011.

It was agreed to request that statistics be supplied on the County's actions after the change in policy, and on what other councils) do.

4 Maintenance and enforcement issues

The meeting discussed MW report.

Trails statistics not incorporated into reported problem figures – RW to supply.

Good news that NCC members have agreed £200k for PROW. MW is working on list of schemes that will deliver benefits.

Discussion on grass cutting. NC asked which paths were considered higher priority (point 2.4 of MW report). MW said those that had highest use and that the Countryside Officers considered highest priority. RW said that Trails cutting pattern is different (to PROW) and AH confirmed that NCC was looking into how the statistics could be integrated.

4.1,
4.2

Discussion on reinstatement of path following ploughing.

Discussion on loss of access (restricted byway) to some users posed by locked gate.

VC asked if mechanisms (and resources) are in place to ensure problems are dealt with.

RW said that Trails and circular public rights of way are an improving situation, with better signage and use (signs had been provided largely through external funding). Countryside Officers are also doing a lot to re-sign many PROW. Need a mechanism to capture miles of PROW where no problem is recorded.

KH invited ideas on how we could all channel goodwill and work together better and achieve better outcomes for PROW. The PROW group is a good forum to channel ideas.

- 4.3 Online reporting system. The improvement in the system was noted – feed back good news to Maria Thurlow.
- RW said he wanted one system of reporting for Trails and PROW so the figures could be amalgamated.
- 4.4 NHT survey (MW). Norfolk is 3 points below average

MW to let Maria Thurlow know improvements have been noted

5.0 Parish Council seminars

Build on previous seminars. Suggestion to run NAIP area (Countryside Officer patch) events in conjunction with Parish seminars. Half event dedicated to each part.

KH and RW to liaise

KH felt the Parish seminar part should have the aim of building up a network of people interested in monitoring, maintaining paths etc to support local PROW.

- 5.1 SW said that the Pathmakers bid to the HLF (to build resilience for Pathmakers) will potentially include a public engagement event to build support and establish need (for Pathmakers interventions) – hopefully it would be possible to include within the seminar format.

JS said there was a huge variation in levels of expertise at the previous event (some people didn't know what a PROW was).

Need to have a format that avoids getting side-tracked by reporting of specific issues (could have a specific desk set aside for this).

Use NALC to promote.

- 5.2 Timing and logistics: to take place mid April (one per week) – 3 in total in mid point within Countryside Officer patch, amending the format if necessary after the 1st one.

6.0 Claims for lost paths ('2026')

Deferred

7.0 Partnership and Community working

NC had expressed concern over apparent loss of path between Cley and Weybourne. RW said the path was always at the top of the shingle and that fencing was to protect nesting birds. Natural England determines line of the path.

8 Next meetings: 19 March, 18 June and 17 September, all at 1400

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