

**Norfolk Local Access Forum**  
**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24 January 2024**  
**at 10:00 at County Hall Norwich NR1 2SG**

**Members present:**

Martin Sullivan - Chair  
Ken Hawkins – Vice Chair  
Birgit Griem  
Rob Lodge  
Ruth Goodall  
Kevin Grieve  
Cllr Lana Hemsall  
Chris Allhusen  
Sarah Morgan  
Simon Fowler

**Representing:**

Motorised Vehicles / Pathmakers  
Walking  
Walking  
Nature Conservation  
Access to land at the water's edge  
Health and wellbeing  
Norfolk County Councillor  
Land Ownership  
Equestrian  
Voluntary Sector (and Pathmakers Chair)

**Invitees**

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Keith Bacon     | Chair of the Broads Local Access Forum             |
| Jo Thompson     | Waterways and Recreation Officer, Broads Authority |
| Danielle Radley | Natural England LAF coordinator                    |

**NCC Officers Present:**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Wendy Brooks  | Head of Environment                                      |
| Katy Owen     | Protected Landscapes Manager                             |
| Helen Terry   | National Trail Team Leader                               |
| Andrew Hollis | Project Officer (Greenways)                              |
| Su Waldron    | Project Officer (Environment Team) and NLAF co-ordinator |

**1. Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Fraser Bowe, Elizabeth Meath-Baker, Paul Baker, Anne Killett, Rebecca Durant, Cllr Maxine Webb. Jason Moorse (NCC staff)

**2. Chair's Announcements**

2.1 Consultations

Consultations that the NLAF had responded to between October 2023 and January 2024 are appended (Appendix 1)

**3. Minutes**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 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 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 had attended the East Region LAF chairs' meeting in January 2024 and offered to circulate the notes. The next meeting would be in six months' time.

8.2 The meeting discussed Natural England's involvement with LAFs which has reduced, and there are no central funds provided for LAFs any longer. Officers thought there was the opportunity for the NLAF to raise this with local elected councillors and MPs, whilst also highlighting the benefits of funding for National Trails and Protected Landscapes and LAFs coming from the same government body to capitalise on interest in green infrastructure, landscapes and access.

8.3 The Chair and Vice Chair had attended the Broads LAF meeting

8.4 The Chair had attended a meeting on access restrictions on Brettenham Heath for stone curlew.

## **9. Meetings Forward Plan**

9.1 The NLAF received the report which outlined agenda items for the forthcoming meetings.

There was a short discussion on one of the suggested future topics (water-based activities), and the BLAF's remit was explained (which is to cover access to the water, such as footpaths on the riverbank, staithes etc.; and pressing for improvements to water quality within the Broads Authority area).

Members felt that all forward topics should have a clear purpose and support the NLAF's objectives.

Officers thought that the NLAF and Pathmakers might play a role in exploring what communication tools work for different people to encourage greater uptake of countryside access and the current offer in Norfolk.

An update on the NCC Local Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy was offered for the April meeting.

Members were encouraged to send further topics for discussion at future meetings to the chair.

9.2 The NLAF **AGREED** to include water-based activities, and the NCC Cycling and Walking Strategy at the April NLAF meeting

## 10. Feedback from Task Group

- 10.1 The meeting received a report on the NLAFF Task Group held in November which had aimed to find ways of encouraging greater engagement and involvement of NLAFF members and to establish productive links between the NLAFF and lead councillors.

Discussions had continued at subsequent Vision and Ideas Subgroup meetings (see Agenda item 12)

- 10.2 On the specific issue of permissive access, the Vice Chair reported that at the Regional LAF, options available to landowners under the Sustainable Farm Incentive Scheme (not yet available – coming into being later in the year) for permissive access which had not been permitted under the EU (Stewardship) rules were:

- Educational Visits at £363 per visit
- Open Access at £92/ha
- New footpaths payment of £77 per 100 meters for a 5 year agreement
- New cycle/bridlepaths £158 per 100 meters
- Further sums for mobility paths

Source: Technical annex: The combined environmental land management offer - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024/technical-annex-the-combined-environmental-land-management-offer#access-and-engagement)) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024/technical-annex-the-combined-environmental-land-management-offer#access-and-engagement>

- 10.3 The **NOTED** outcomes from the Task Group held in November.

## 11. Norfolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 11.1 The meeting received a presentation on Norfolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). See Appendix 2. The NCC Head of Environment explained that the LNRS would map areas of potential for nature recovery and would describe measures to deliver nature recovery. NCC is working with Suffolk County Council on its Strategy as the two counties share landscapes and biodiversity and would consult with the same stakeholders.

- 11.2 There would be extensive consultation as the LNRS is developed, and the NLAFF would be invited to get involved with thematic working groups, including a communications group. Opportunities to add value by creating access to green spaces would be explored

- 11.3 Questions were raised following the presentation on managing communities' expectations, links with the Norfolk Strategic Planning Forum and potential to support nutrient neutrality.

- 11.4 NLAFF members felt that an ad-hoc NLAFF group could explore the Strategy in detail (when invited to as part of one or more thematic working groups).

- 11.5 The **NOTED** the report on Norfolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and looked forward to receiving information from NCC on (and joining) the thematic working

groups. Points that the NLAf wished to make would come to the full NLAf for agreement.

## **12. NLAf subgroups' report (PRoW; NAIP; Vision and Ideas)**

- 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 PRoW subgroup had requested further information on the National Highways Benchmarking indicators for NCC, to better understand the data on annual performance indicators for Public Rights of Way. In particular, it was hard to see how Norfolk could, as reported, be rated as first among comparable authorities for customer satisfaction regarding public rights of way, when the majority of the scores in the evidence provided showed Norfolk as being marginally below the average on most measures which related to public rights of way.
- 12.3 The PRoW subgroup had noted the continuing lack of progress in resolving an access obstruction at Upwell. The group also expected to work to draft an NLAf response to the Western Link Planning application once it had been submitted.
- 12.4 The potential to dedicate areas inland of paths lost to the river had been raised with Legal Orders.
- 12.5 The Vision and Ideas Subgroup had met twice, with useful discussions on how to proceed with meetings. Officers were thanked for their time.
- 12.6 The NLAf **NOTED** the updates.

## **13. Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF) update**

- 13.1 The Chair of the BLAF was pleased to attend the meeting and thanked the Chair and Vice Chair of the NLAf for regular attendance at BLAF meetings.
- 13.2 As outlined under 9.1, the BLAF's main areas are access to water (rather than navigation) in the Broads Authority Area, with a particular interest in staithes, and water quality. A recent Mills and Marshes project at Halvergate (access and windmills) is coming to a close.
- 13.2 The NLAf **NOTED** the updates.

## **14. Pathmakers Projects**

- 14.1 The NLAf received a report from the Pathmakers chair giving details of recent activities, including the recent WalkNorfolk 23, at which 33 guided walks and 31 self-guided walks were offered.

Pathmakers would continue to work with One Agency on marketing and would be appointing a digital manager, with funds secured to do so.

The outgoing NCC Head of Environment has joined Pathmakers as a trustee.

- 14.2 The NLAf **NOTED** the report.

## **15. Natural England SharePoint for LAFs**

- 15.1 The meeting received a presentation from Natural England (NE). The LAF SharePoint site is an information hub and has been set up to aid communication between LAFs, and with Natural England, and replaces Huddle. It is available to any LAF member who can request access by registering their email address with Natural England.
- 15.2 The meeting **AGREED** to send suggestions on improvements/ changes on the SharePoint to Natural England. NE guidance on registering for NLAF members would be circulated.

## **16. Countryside Access Arrangements update**

- 16.1 The Forum received the report which highlighted work to manage the countryside access network in Norfolk work in terms of the volumes of customer queries received and responded to. The report also updated the NLAF on Norfolk Trails activities, and work to establish the England Coast Path at Hunstanton to Sutton Bridge. The Brancaster boardwalk is progressing well. Issues with path management at Hembsy, Happisburgh and Sidestrand due to cliff erosion had required officer time to resolve.
- 16.2 Highlights from many Norfolk Trails and Greenways Team access improvements were reported with many photographs to illustrate what has been accomplished. Two more Trails Officers had been recruited. Planning permission will be submitted for Wherryman's Way improvements shortly. The NLAF were impressed.
- 16.3 The report summarised reported issues with PRoW logged on the Mayrise Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.  
  
Open issues on CRM had not changed significantly since the last report, indicating a significant backlog.
- 16.4 The NLAF **NOTED** that the significant backlog of issues reported to NLAF over recent years remains and seeks the views of the County Council on ways of addressing this..

## **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. Latest information on each of the schemes was highlighted in the report appendix.
- 17.5 The NLAF **NOTED** the table of major infrastructure projects in Norfolk

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024 at 10am at County Hall.

The meeting closed at 11:55.

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

## Appendix 1

### NLAF consultations July 2023 to September 2023

1. October 2023. Invitation to comment on NCC proposals to develop Hunstanton Bus Station and former library. Circulated to NLAF members but no formal response sent
2. October 2023. CPRE Norfolk invited to attend a future NLAF meeting to present their recently published views on countryside access
3. October 2023. NLAF invited to a Dark Skies event
4. October: NCC Walking and Sheeling Strategy for 2023 – 2036. NLAF response supported the vision to create a healthier and greener Norfolk by enabling people to walk, wheel and cycle more often, and supported the need for effective engagement with local communities and recommended fully maintained and improved PRow links from people's doorsteps to the wider network and the need for multi modal journey planning to start from a person's home
5. November 2023. Invitation to join a seminar in November 2023 organised by Norwich City Council on regenerating Norwich's Parks and Green Spaces. Circulated to NLAF members to make them aware
6. November 2023. Opportunity to comment on proposals for a new woodland at land surrounding a PRow at Newton by Castle Acre. NLAF commented that the land runs between FP5 and RB6, proposing that the public was given access from each of these ROW through the woodland
7. November 2023. Santon Downham access restriction owing to a regular motorbike event. NLAF asked that the organisers take steps to ensure that users of PRow crossing the motorbike event route do not stray
8. November 2023. Bridleway issues reported at Old Buckenham by a member of the public visiting Norfolk with his horse. Specific points were reported which included a faulty gate, poor signing and difficulties crossing the A11 in addition to comments on NCC mapping of PRow. The NLAF responded, encouraging reporting of faults on the CRM system
9. November 2023: Western Link. NLAF to agree recommendations at/ after January 2024 meeting when NCC submits its planning application
10. November 2023. Following up on NLAF's comment on extending opening times, the NRO pilot Friday opening was successful and will continue.
11. December 2023. Anglia Green project: newsletter circulated
12. December 2023. West Hall felling licence notification regarding poplar adjacent to a PRow. NLAF requested clearer information about the location of the work and species of poplar

13. December 2023. Invitation to join a Invitation to join online meeting reviewing directions restricting CROW access rights for stone curlew
14. January 2024. BBC article on widespread PROW maintenance issues circulated for interest, leading to email discussions
15. January 2024. Essex Access Guide circulated to NCC
16. January 2024. Query from parish councillor at Scoulton seeking advice regarding lack of footpaths. Detailed response from the NLAF with information on creating permissive access and potential for investigating paths not incorporated on the definitive map

## Appendix 2: Presentation on Norfolk's LNRS

Norfolk & Suffolk

Nature Recovery Partnership



# Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Wendy Brooks

Head of Environment

Norfolk Local Access Forum – 24.01.2024





# LNRS - Key facts

## CONTEXT

- Introduced by the Environment Act 2021
- Tool designed to guide action for Nature Recovery

## OUTPUTS

- Current situation & local priorities for Nature Recovery
- Maps of existing areas of particular importance for biodiversity
- Location of the priority opportunities for Nature Recovery

## WHO?

- Norfolk County Council
- Suffolk County Council

## USE

- Helping to shape the Nature Recovery Network
- Targeting Biodiversity Net Gain funding in the areas where it will have the most positive benefit
- Targeting Environmental Land Management payments
- Local planning policies can refer to it

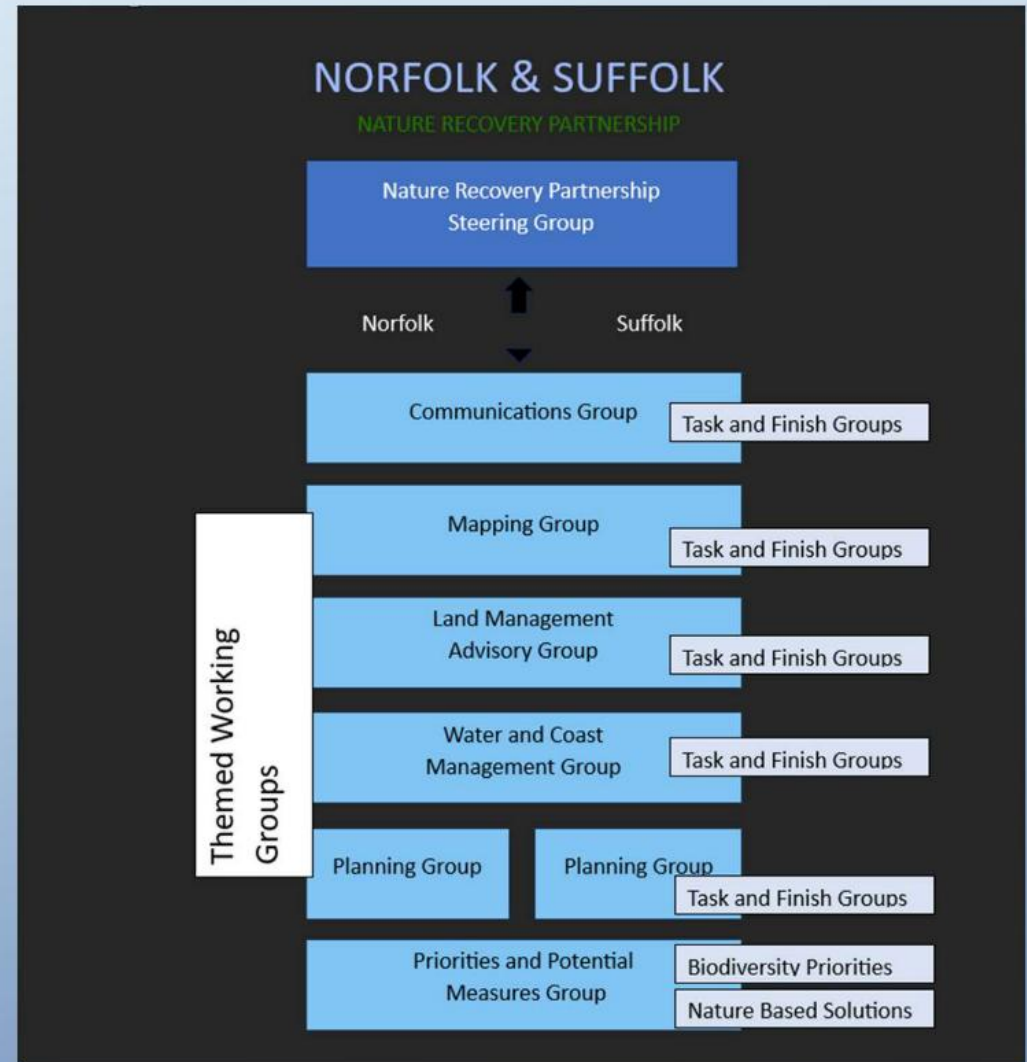


# NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK NATURE RECOVERY PARTNERSHIP

| Members                      |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Norfolk County Council       | Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service           |
| Suffolk County Council       | Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service           |
| Supporting Authorities       | Natural England                                    |
| Broads Authority             | University of East Anglia (Environmental Sciences) |
| Norfolk Wildlife Trust       | Environment Agency                                 |
| Suffolk Wildlife Trust       | And others...                                      |
| Norfolk Coast AONB           |  |
| Suffolk Coast AONB           |  |
| Norfolk Farmers Union (East) |  |
| Norfolk Rivers Trust         |  |
| FWAG                         |  |

# LNRS Steering Group & Themed Working Groups

(Proposed Structure)



# How to get involved



ENGAGEMENT PLAN IN  
PROGRESS



ENGAGEMENT  
ACTIVITIES WITH A  
WIDE RANGE OF  
STAKEHOLDERS



EMAIL US ON  
*[naturalnorfolk@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:naturalnorfolk@norfolk.gov.uk)*  
TO GET INVOLVED



An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. On the left, there's a sandy beach with some wooden structures. To the right of the beach is a rocky shoreline with some vegetation. Further right is a large, green field, possibly a marsh or a park. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Thank you!

Any  
questions?

Norfolk & Suffolk  
Nature Recovery Partnership