



**MINUTES**  
**of a meeting held virtually over Teams**  
**Tuesday 10th November 2020 at 2pm-4.20pm**

**Present members:**

Louise Fuller (LF)	Katherine Evans (KE) Chair	Ed Dixon (ED)
Vernon Glashier (VG)	Ray Booty (RB)	Sue Dobson (SD)
Jan Arthur (JA)	Vice-Chair	Martyn Towns (MT)
Jake Richards (JR)		Rowena Macaulay (RM)

**LA Officers present:**

Shirley Anglin (SA)

**Apologies:**

Len Banister (LB), Sandra Reynolds (SR), John Victory (JV)

**Minute Taker:**

Theresa Tremain, Business Support BC3 Mid (TT)

1	<b>Chairman's Welcome</b>	<b>Action</b>
	KE welcomed Rowena Macaulay to her first meeting as a member of ELAF and gave apologies from Len Banister, Sandra Reynolds and John Victory. KE advised that when Len Banister sent his apologies he also tendered his resignation from ELAF. KE had sent him an email in response. Gary McCarthy has not sent apologies.	
2	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 February 2020 and matters arising</b>	
	<p>These were agreed. SA will add the approved minutes to the website.</p> <p><b>ELAF website:</b> Will return to this under Item 9.</p> <p><b>Temporary TROs - publicly accessible information</b> On 18 February, KE as Chairman of ELAF wrote a formal section 94(5) letter to Ms Jo Heynes, Essex Highways Asset and Records Manager, formally requiring that resource is put in place to complete the project to provide web-based information on temporary TROs. In reply a meeting was suggested in March which did not happen because of COVID lockdown.</p>	SA

	<p><b>Walking &amp; Cycling Strategies</b></p> <p>RM is now part of the Essex Infrastructure Steering Group and can represent ELAF. SA said Government have given money for walking and cycling to enable social distancing and increase pedestrian and cycle access to and around towns but nothing for the countryside. The second tranche of funding has just been announced. Will look at connecting urban and rural areas. Also look at rat runs which are difficult for cyclists. RM will send out list of members of this steering group. SA said we have to be prepared to submit proposals as soon as money is available. The Blackwater Trail has problems as some parts of it are in private ownership and linked to Maldon relief roads. KE asked ELAF members to volunteer to look at the cycle action plans for the districts.</p> <p>RM would like to present Digital Map of Colchester Orbital at the next ELAF meeting. Add to agenda.</p> <p><b>PROW Hierarchy</b></p> <p>Hierarchy Maps were discussed at the last meeting using hard copies. SA is not allowed to email these out as Cabinet Member has yet to see them.</p> <p>SA explained how the PROW Hierarchy applies a status to rights of way network therefore some will receive a faster response. The Cabinet Member and Governance need to approve first. SA wrote this 2 years ago and explained it is a difficult task to categorise rights of way to include housing, routes to shops and school routes. It is a work in progress.</p> <p>SA explained that the fault reporting system is not a great tool to indicate which the important and well-used paths are, as well walked paths are trampled down and rarely obstructed.</p> <p>SA commented that COVID may lead to a change in the hierarchy criteria as walking for leisure is a way of improving mental &amp; physical health. Add to next agenda.</p> <p><b>Structures presentation - bridges over 8 metres</b> by Koula Valsamis-Warren: scheduled for the May ELAF meeting which did not happen due to COVID. Schedule for a future meeting.</p>	<p>RM</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>RM / SA</p> <p>SA</p> <p>SA</p>
3	<p><b>LAF Regional Meeting (15<sup>th</sup> July) feedback</b></p>	
	<p>KE has circulated the draft Minutes. KE mentioned that the new system of written input from various local LAFs before the Regional Meeting saved time.</p> <p><b>Agriculture Bill and Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)</b> Discussed at the July LAF Regional Meeting.</p> <p>Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) JR said an NFU response to the White Paper has been submitted regarding a sustainable food farming scheme where farmers will be happy to share food production and public access. JR has not had a response yet from Defra. JR will email the paper to SA to circulate (<i>Note: circulated on 11 November</i>).</p>	<p>JR / SA</p>

4	<p><b>England Coast Path Update</b></p>	
	<p>SA sent an update through in her report. She confirmed that The Ramblers do not get updated directly – only through the User Group. She is happy for KE to circulate her report on the Coast Path to the Ramblers. KE confirmed she is no longer the Ramblers Essex Area Footpath Secretary. SA invited questions. VG felt that not a great deal was happening. SA thought that Natural England should have progressed the ECP – apparently they could not access their post room during lockdown. SA is disappointed not to have received any further approvals from SoS – it will be difficult to deliver within the timescales now. Essex Ramblers are supporting with Maldon Ramblers installing footpath markers.</p> <p>KE asked about the impassable footpath at Brandy Hole, Hullbridge on the south bank of the river Crouch. SA informed that a route has been agreed for the ECP but it is not permissive and so is not available to be used at present.</p>	KE
5	<p><b>ECC Report</b></p> <p>KE thanked SA for her report. VG said it was a very good job and congratulated SA. KE asked for these thanks to be minuted.</p> <p><b>Staffing - vacant PROW Inspector patches</b></p> <p>LF asked for an update on the staffing position. SA reported no change - there are 12 inspection patches still with vacancies in areas 12 and 4 which are presently being covered by other inspectors. Helen Baker is still trying to replace Laurie Page, who retired as a Definitive Map Officer. A project officer will be recruited instead of a definitive mapping officer as this gives a more flexible job role.</p> <p><b>Winter Cutting schedule</b></p> <p>LF had emailed SA previously regarding the winter cutting schedule. It was explained that cutting bi-annually should be enough as if the schedule is smaller contractors can be more thorough and cut back severely. This should ensure paths are more accessible and wide enough for horseriders if required.</p> <p><b>Network Rail</b></p> <p>The report of the inquiry into the Cambridgeshire Network Rail Transport &amp; Works Act Order to close mainly PROW at-grade crossings has been publicised. Of the 25 crossings in the Order, 15 paths are being closed with 10 remaining open.</p> <p><i>Post-meeting note: the report into the Suffolk Network Rail Transport &amp; Works Act Order to close mainly PROW at-grade crossings has now also been publicised. Of the 22 crossings in the Order, 9 paths are being closed with 13 remaining open.</i></p> <p><b>Capital Schemes</b></p> <p>Schemes for next year are being looked at now so that when the new financial year starts in April schemes are ready to go. For example, Bardfield Saling Byway 5 - is currently under a temporary TRO and a lot of cutting back of sidegrowth has been done and surfacing will start in the new financial year.</p> <p>LF asked if capital schemes covered byways, footpaths and bridleways. SA confirmed they do, two footpaths were done this year. Byways are generally given a higher priority as they provide good access for all.</p>	

<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Byways Working Group report (RB)</b></p> <p>RB advised that all seasonal prohibitions have been reviewed and no changes are required.</p> <p>North Weald Bassett 21 &amp; 23 – concrete blocks will be left in place to stop fly tipping but allow legitimate use</p> <p>Burstead 56 - a tree has been removed at Botany Hill and culvert work will be carried out.</p> <p>Doddinghurst 22 – covered in Capital Programme notes for 2021.</p> <p>Black Cat Lane (Abbess Roding 5/ Fyfield 1) – have been waiting a long time for improvements and hope to fund these first.</p> <p>Stanford Rivers 26 – this is open again after resurfacing by the landowner but it is already in a poor condition.</p> <p>Black Notley 9 &amp; 10 – These have been resurfaced and are due to re-open all year round to motorized users.</p> <p>Little Waltham 51 at Croxton's Mill – this is impassable at the River Chelmer and part is narrowed by several big trees.</p> <p>Monks Lane, Dedham 47, Colchester – Byway is now open and driveable. Additional culvert works will be carried out next summer.</p> <p>Debden 37 – landowner diverted route of byway which had been in a bad condition for many years. Landowner will request diversion and pay for repairs. JR thanked Highways, byways groups and Simon for the work done on Debden 37. A number of farmers had been affected by social media attracting and encouraging unwelcome visitors and are pleased that motorized vehicles have been temporarily prohibited so that work can commence to build a diversion route for the byway.</p> <p>Bobbingworth 10 – The proposal for diverting this byway is in Southend Court today and the outcome is as yet unknown.</p> <p>RB shared that people come from as far as South Wales to try out byways which are advertised on social media.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>A12 Widening: Designated Funds - project proposals</b></p> <p>Highways England have designated funds to overcome historic disruption of the network and look at rerouting public rights of way.</p> <p>SD attended a presentation at Thurrock LAF where a presentation was given by Highways England regarding designated funds to improve public rights of way. The pot of money has got to be used reasonably close to where the road runs. SD said that until the Lower Thames Crossing finalized route details are published in the DCO (Development Consent Order), Thurrock LAF will not know what they want from Highways England.</p> <p>KE asked if we should make some lists of rights of way which have been affected by the A12 preferred route. KE thought roads and public rights of way around the Witham bypass have been affected. Kelvedon to Marks Tey - paths have already been severed. We also need to know what is happening with Network Rail proposed crossing closures. Looking for off-road links and bridges or underpasses to provide safe crossing points</p>	

<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>A12 Widening: Designated Funds - project proposals (contd)</b></p> <p>SA said there is little detail available which makes it difficult to plan in advance. The PROW Team has looked at what are the most important crossing points essential to network connectivity and has identified the most important to retain and also potential improvements e.g. around Witham including cycling route improvements. KE asked SA if she could share Essex Highways conversations between Network Rail and Highways England with ELAF. SA replied that she has submitted this project to the Essex Highways Infrastructure Team (Alastair Southgate).</p> <p>SD brought up Junction 19 Boreham Interchange. Need to get a holistic picture involving Network Rail, Chelmsford Planning, Highways England and Essex Highways. Need a link between Boreham and Beaulieu not just to the railway station. Possibly a green hedged route away from the main carriageway.</p> <p>SD asked for a better map of preferred A12 route. KE will email the link to the Highways England Technical report which contains more detail.</p> <p>JA asked if we should set up a sub-committee to look at the A12. KE advised us that we need to know what we want before making a request for funds. Important to highlight what has to stay and what we would like to see. She will find out the timescale for applications and send an email out after this meeting to set up a working group. KE and SD both want to be involved. KE/SD will also email parish councils along the route asking if they want to be involved.</p>	<p>SA</p> <p>KE</p> <p>KE SD KE</p>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>2026 Cut-off and unrecorded rights of way "Lost Ways"</b></p>	
	<p>Helen Baker, Essex Highways, gave a talk on this during the ELAF November 2019 meeting. If a route was recorded and a legal event has changed its classification or location it cannot be included in 2026 Lost ways. VG thinks we need direction as work can be duplicated. LF reported that in the past mistakes have been made and routes have been lost in error e.g. at Braxted Mill part of the route was missed off but historical evidence and user evidence led to this being reinstated. JR asked how Essex Highways will cope with extra work.</p> <p>Essex Highways will facilitate public to look at maps in a Covid secure way when restrictions allow. Essex Legal Services will look into any lost paths. There has not been much feedback so far. VG mentioned the book "Rights of Way – Restoring the Record". The Ramblers have not been pro-active and there is nothing to show yet. SA said old maps are not in a digital format. She will talk to Helen in Records Management to see if this will be possible. SD said she is working with British Horse Society to centralise maps and put on the website for public access. KE offered some unpaid volunteer time. SA envisaged problems scanning as the maps are odd sizes. KE suggested asking the Essex Record Office for advice.</p>	<p>SA</p> <p>SA</p>

<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Access information online – Temporary closure orders</b></p> <p>SA told ELAF we have lost the resource to put temporary closure orders on the website. It is not possible for these orders to be added to the ELAF website by a forum member as the server is within Essex firewalls. ELAF pages are within Essex Highways which means there is no cost to us. VG said Essex &amp; Herts TRF have a Google Maps site where TROs are added and removed as necessary for byways. RB said he is often asked on Facebook where FP13 is – people need to see it on a map. SA said the problem is TROs are constantly changing, she will talk to Helen and Gemma Hill to try and find a solution. RM will have a look at setting up a webpage for Colchester temporary orders. SA does not get these notifications any more so has no idea of weekly volume. SA agreed to see what she can do – just a link to PDF on the website.</p> <p><b>Access information online –the location of stiles / barrier free routes</b></p> <p>VG mentioned Facebook page Rambling Essex. He said majority of people have no idea where they are allowed to walk.</p> <p>KE asked for a layer showing the location of stiles. SA explained that this would not be pursued as it is difficult to maintain accuracy. They are on a definitive map and some have already been removed. Essex Highways are working with landowners to remove stiles to improve access. JR said there can be difficulties when livestock are present but happy to work together on this. KE asked if we could publish where stiles are not present. VG shared his screen showing the status of TRF Herts &amp; Essex byways. RM can create this easily on a free platform and give authority to the whole group. Give consideration to showing stile free routes for next ELAF agenda.</p> <p>Previously Laurie Page did a walk, took photos and posted a monthly update. There is a lot of interest in GPX files to follow GPS on phones. ED pointed out difficulties including slopes, steps, narrow sections need to be included. VG offered to go out and create a 5 mile walk and check for accessibility. RM has a meeting this evening with Slow Ways Project – 700 volunteers mapping the entire country throughout lockdown. She said routes need to be barrier free rather than stile free. No manmade barriers, steps, kissing gates or closed gates. Particularly muddy or steep gradients must be highlighted – need to be transparent.</p>	<p>SA</p> <p>RM</p> <p>SA</p> <p>RM</p> <p>VG</p>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Blackwater Rail Trail – Project Update</b></p>	
	<p>SD reported that Countryside are happy to share engineering expertise dependent on the development going ahead. Once the land has been purchased structure of bridge information will be given to us to apply for grant funding. Add this to the agenda in the future if necessary.</p>	
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>Items for next agenda</b></p>	
	<p>Presentation on structures (Koula Valsamis-Warren)</p> <p>Presentation on Colchester Orbital digital map (RM)</p> <p>PROW Hierarchy</p> <p>Barrier Free Routes</p>	
<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>Dates of next meetings 2021 - 2pm - 4pm</b></p>	
	<p>9<sup>th</sup> February 2021, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021</p>	

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