



MINUTES
Held via Teams
Tuesday, 21st February 2023 at 2pm - 4.30pm

Present members:

Katherine Evans – Chair
 Ray Booty – Vice Chair
 Sam Iddison
 Louise Fuller
 John Victory
 Malcolm
 Martyn Towns
 Vernon Glashier
 Martin Crisp
 Rowena Macaulay
 John Buchanan
 Jan Arthur

Apologies:

Ed Dixon

LA Officers present:

Shirley Anglin (SA)

Minute Taker:

Diana Lloyd

1	Chairman’s Welcome and Minutes of the previous meeting	Action
	<p>Katherine provided the Chairman’s welcome and noted that the day prior she circulated the draft minutes of the Regional LAF meeting from the 19th of January 2023 and the next meeting would be held on 20th of July 2023. They would carry on meeting virtually as it was easier for everyone from different localities to meet online.</p> <p>One of the topics raised was the ELMS, the Environmental Land Management Scheme, which was supposed to include public money for public good which was supposed to include public access and that appeared to have fallen off the bill or agenda from what they are trying to do.</p> <p>Katherine would circulate after this meeting a letter that the Norfolk LAF have written to the environment minister responsible.</p>	KE

<p>2</p>	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th November 2022 and matters arising. Katherine asked to go through the minutes and checked that no one had questions on the accuracy of the minutes.</p> <p>Meeting Minutes from 8th of November 2022 were approved with a couple of amendments noted.</p> <p>It was noted that clearer action points at the end would be helpful to pick out the important things to be done for the next meeting. The actions could be highlighted or made bold.</p> <p>Katherine’s action point about Longfield Solar Farms was saying that they had not bought the land and only had it for 40 years, so they were saying they could not do anything.</p> <p>Actions from previous meeting were discussed.</p> <p>Rowena, Vernon, and John would cover the action point on the Coastal Paths when it came up later in the agenda.</p> <p>Shirley was able to ask Adam Scott at the NFU for recommendations and he would do his best to connect with someone from NFU, but Shirley had not heard anything yet. Sam noted that the NFU represented the majority of farms membership and his only insight into the NFU would be Adam Scott. Shirley thought that what happened was Adam moved up in the organisation and his old position was not replaced, so now he’s taken on both roles. Sam noted they were very busy with the East Anglian Green Pylon project which is taking up a lot of resources.</p> <p>Katherine thought they should try to get some actual district and county councillors on board.</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>ECC Report Katherine was delighted at the barrier removal. The amount of work the team do around the county as part of their day-to-day efforts is not always evident, so it was nice to show LAF the things they were working on.</p> <p>Katherine asked about any possible publicity and Shirley noted they tweeted them and she could make them available to Simon Taylor and the User Group Meeting, so they are available and can see it as well. Twitter Handle is @Essex-Highways. They often try to post things from them on Footbridge Fridays, or Fingerpost Fridays during the winter since they do the gritting work throughout the night.</p> <p>Shirley would try to keep a list of the barrier removals throughout the year ahead.</p> <p>Rowena asked whether the kissing gates being placed in to replace the stiles would be wheelchair accessible, as mobility scooters would not get through, but Shirley confirmed they would need to be medium mobility in current British Standard. Most Kissing Gates going in are to get landowners to replace stiles with something better and they are generally quite nervous about that, which is why they typically end up with at kissing gate rather than a pedestrian gate which is preferred whenever there is livestock. Understandably, when landowner’s have</p>	

	<p>livestock, people do prop gates open and things like that, but they should all be medium mobility ones.</p> <p>In Little Samford, there were five on that path and it was a combination of Essex Highways giving the landowners some structures and the Ramblers providing some structures for the landowners from their funds to help make improvements.</p> <p>Regarding how long it would be before someone would cover the central patch, Shirley was trying to have it advertised on IPRoW and on the Countryside Jobs Service as well, internally and externally and one applicant had applied so far.</p> <p>There is a link online for the role, but it's on the Ringway Jacobs website. Shirley would send the link to the job opening to Sam so that he could send it around to his connections. Having an understand of the countryside would be key. Shirley believed it would be several weeks yet, at least two months.</p>	SA
4	<p>Coastal Path inclusive access – outcome of meeting of 1st Trail partnership group</p> <p>Shirley, Rowena, Vernon, and John provided an update on where they got to. They had a meeting with some members of the Maldon Ramblers Association who could possibly action some of the improvements they wanted regarding removing some barriers to access and providing some coverage where needed.</p> <p>Rowena noted one of the outcomes from that meeting was that they would go away in January 2023 and work on a model access guide that would be used as a template, starting with sections of the Essex coast that were thought to have higher levels of accessibility and then seeing how they would go from there.</p> <p>From a presentation Rowena provided on the Goldhanger to Heybridge Basin guide:</p> <p>Note 1. Rowena thought it was a good idea for their stretches to mirror the stretches that Natural England used except for where it was not appropriate. As Rowena had done here, it was put as part of the Maldon to Salcott coastal stretch. Natural England did all of their guides anti-clockwise and sometimes it only makes sense to walk in one direction, so there should not be a hard and fast rule about that. Rowena thought wherever possible they could mirror what Natural England had done so people could cross-reference between the two sets of guidance more easily, and otherwise what intuitively made sense in that stretch.</p> <p>Note 2 was to say that it was important to have some ownership of the document and suggested they name the person who surveyed it and do it in the name of the LAF.</p> <p>Also this template would be a way of controlling the quality that was going out in their name and the last survey date was important to let people know how up to date it was and if it did get out of date, then it would be good to let people know that this was done two years ago and not entirely accurate.</p> <p>Note 4 was that they might put web links there across to Natural England's site so the people could go look at the other materials, but the actual documents stretch that they had completed so far, were not intended for public circulation yet, so it was removed for now, but Rowena suggested it stay there for the model.</p>	

Note 5 was a choice image that felt it represented the character of the walk and Vernon thought they should have a copy of the map on this front page as well, which would be a good idea. Rowena thought they might just get a graphic designer to look at the template and construct it slightly better. Rowena knew from working with other designers it made a huge difference and they could fit a lot more in and it did not feel crowded.

Below was all the factual information, and Rowena set the task to keep all the factual information to one side for everything one would need to know before setting out on this walk. Vernon suggested that people might ask for postcode as well, for the start points and Rowena noted she had not included the endpoints details but that should be included as well.

The facilities at start, there are question marks for what needs more research, but that was the kind of information Rowena suggested would be useful. Would there be a place to shelter, eat and drink, is that place dog friendly, and the same for facilities at the end. Rowena was trying to include public transport and public parking as well and more likely than not, people would be arriving by car.

The rest was a photo trail with numbered pictures and Rowena made a note of quality of photographs and while these photographs were alright now, they were all a bit dark before. Rowena would prefer to think about the composition of the photo, what it is about, why it's been taken there, who is in it, and what information they are trying to give, since they would be checked against the real landscape to see how it compared and checking that it represented what LAF was trying to represent.

Rowena suggested this template as a proper blank version they could click inside and upload a photo would be great. Rowena was happy to get them going in the short term for people to produce information under those headings and Rowena would format it, as it would not take long. Rowena would like to take some advice from a graphic designer to see what some other possibilities are.

Rowena's grand idea was to get a few of these around Essex and with the conversation going with Jenny Moss who was responsible for the Coastal path in Suffolk and was keen to work with ELAF, and it was a suggestion in the minutes that Vernon, John, and Rowena might meet with her, but Rowena thought that Suffolk might be interested in developing a project like this as well, maybe around the coasts they could get similar guides going, maybe with different identities around Essex, or Suffolk, or Norfolk but they could create a model that others could use as well, maybe an East Anglian map, rather than just Essex.

John mentioned that as Rowena explained that the local Rambling Maldon group seemed enthusiastic, and they knew a lot of the seawall already and if they could do it in partnership would be good. There was a plan for John to meet up with John Little, from the Rambling group and he had the idea of playing with a drone in the area to see if that might be another way of adding to the photographic record.

John thought Rowena's work on the template was good, and it did not need to be over complicated and needed to be easy enough for other people to copy. Maybe the Maldon district could follow it up and maybe it could be mirrored elsewhere.

<p>Rowena noted the idea would be to have a link to the coastal path work on the Essex Highways Public Right of way page and they would host the guides there and a map of the sections that they relate to and then they could put any other links that are links to the Natural England guide for the same stretch there as well. Rowena agreed with keeping it simple so others could replicate it easily.</p> <p>Vernon thought it would be nice to ask for other parties walking the sections and if people may be interested, once a section has been walked and comments made, and getting one or two other people to walk a similar section to make sure those comments are valid.</p> <p>Rowena thought that was valid and if possible, double-checking the information they were putting out there and maybe having disabled walkers and wheelchair users to try out some of those routes based on the information given.</p> <p>It was noted that Darren Brain had stepped away in recent months and his main job was on farm grants. LAF would need to look for someone new for support going forwards.</p> <p>Rowena could write Darren Brain an email to ask him who would be the appropriate person to contact if he had stepped back from his role.</p> <p>Shirley noted Darren had been establishing the route and going forwards there should be someone that would support LAF in maintenance longer term.</p> <p>Katherine asked if it would be worth asking how much it would cost to have a professional graphic artist involved and maybe they could look into grant funding for that.</p> <p>Rowena could look into the pricing, but also ECC has in-house graphic designers and was thinking of the ECC in-house person to ask for her general advice just to find out what was possible.</p> <p>Shirley thought Natural England maintenance fund could help pay for it, so ECC could help fund the promotion of the England coast path, although Shirley was unsure about their graphic designers, ECC used to have a company they outsourced all the graphic design work to.</p> <p>It was noted that grants could be applied for although without a treasurer it would be more difficult.</p> <p>Katherine suggested Rowena, Vernon, or John might attend the next Regional LAF because Norfolk LAF and Norfolk County Council and Highway Authority were very much into promoting access and paths because they depend heavily on tourism which, which would be beneficial for Suffolk as well. Katherine would send invitation for the Regional LAF meeting. The next meeting for Regional LAF would be Thursday the 20th of July at 10:00-12:00.</p> <p>Rowena would revise her notes based the conversations and Vernon's comments and send those notes together with the guide.</p>	<p>RM</p> <p>RM</p> <p>KE</p> <p>RM</p>
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<p>5</p>	<p>Solar Farms – report from sub-group There had been no volunteers to be on a Solar Farm subgroup.</p> <p>Katherine reported the Longfield Solar Farm DCO examination closed on 18/01/2023 and the examiner said they would have a report to the secretary of state by 18/04/2023. Katherine believed she emailed the final submission made on behalf of the LAF.</p> <p>Martin added a note on the Birch Solar Farm just to the west of the Layer Marney and Layer Breton and is a huge potential site to be operated by Low Carbon, which has been out for consultation already and the southern end of the proposed site would be right on Bridleway 2 and it was unsatisfactory how they were proposing to screen off the site from the bridleway and how close it would be to the bridleway and there was a lot of public pushback as well on the site.</p> <p>They had taken the plans back and resubmitted them on a much smaller scale, further north to that bridleway which would leave another field separating the solar farm from the public right of way where previously it would have been adjacent to it. It was good to know that the consultation process resulted in the plans being scaled back to a degree.</p> <p>Katherine noted with Longfield Solar there would be footpaths that would have a palisade fence alongside them, even after they scaled back. There were other solar farms around and it would be good to have a working party and volunteers would be gladly accepted.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>A12 Widening DCO – update on the PINS enquiry The A12 DCO had started and LAF have made submissions which Katherine submitted on behalf of the LAF. There are more hearings coming up in person that Katherine registered to go on, plus the site visit as well.</p> <p>Shirley knew that Essex Highways was working in the background with National Highways about things that fall into the DCO that need to be ironed out. Shirley had another meeting with another new project officer employed to work on the A12 which would be related to the hearings in the next week.</p> <p>Essex Highways did not have too much to object to at the time, just things they wanted more information on. Shirley thought they wanted more information on the general arrangement plan and what was proposed for each section, where they had new sections of paths going in, what the designations would be. There were a couple of duplications and a couple of sections where dead-end paths could be deleted that had not been yet, for example Footpath 14 in Feering.</p> <p>Shirley noted they had deleted footpath sections elsewhere but because it was not material, it may have been they were not included. Shirley had concerns about a new section of path in Feering, they were looking at a new route along the river, which came out on a dangerous road for walkers.</p> <p>Shirley noted a lot of it was being connected up and a lot of good things were coming out of this.</p> <p>Shirley noted they had the major bridge going in on the bridleway which would go over the widened A12, over the widened slip road and over the railway and that</p>	

would link the Beaulieu Village area of Boreham with Boreham on the southside. Essex Highways were still pursuing National Highways for a segregated link from that bridleway into Boreham. Other than that, there were no other plans between Boreham and Hatfield Peverel. There were two road crossings in that section that people could use across the A12, but the footpaths could not be expanded much because of the railway.

John thought was not ideal and Katherine agreed because one of the footpaths, east of the new bridge goes under the railway and the issue was the A12, but Katherine had not walked that footpath. Shirley was unaware of an underpass under the railway there and Katherine only noted that people had mentioned it.

Network Rail would have rights over an old bridge but getting the addition of highway rights would be nearly impossible. Katherine would have liked more crossings but there was not much movement on that.

John Buchanan thought that was all counterproductive from conversations with other parts of ECC about their ambitions to improve access to the countryside for all, and they had many metrics they were pursuing about improving access on footpaths to be able to get from your house into what was perceived to be a greenspace as soon as possible and deleting those paths would be very unhelpful.

Katherine noted there was a disconnect between their green infrastructure aspirations and what they would fund and allow PRoW to do.

Shirley noted that where they were changing the location of the road, it was under the development consent order, which did not involve much negotiation with anyone, and because it was of strategic national importance, it allowed National Highways to occupy land without any compensation to Landowners. Sometimes the land is returned, and in some areas, it was only temporary possession, but there was limited scope for compensation and where they were not going to be buying or taking the land permanently into their ownership, then they cannot do anything that involved legal changes to the land.

Shirley noted that what they can change, they have changed, and they have input a lot of new bridges and new links and routes, and there had been historic severance up the A12 that would all be resolved through this scheme. Some smaller areas might have been missed out on in Boreham but there were significant improvements elsewhere.

John Buchanan asked if the detail design of the bridges would be optimised to make sure they had decent footpaths alongside the bridge, for instance if there were two prams walking in opposite directions, one would not be forced to walk in the road.

Now where public rights of way meet the local rural roads there is now footway provision, not just ejection out into the local road. Essex Highways asked for it, but they had not gotten to detailed design yet, but they would meet current local standards, so Shirley would expect they should be able to pass easily. Katherine had argued for a 2-metre footway.

7

A12 Designated funds

Katherine was still trying to find out about the designated funds, and they were a national thing and ECC has apparently applied for some designated funds, but they said to talk to National Highways, so it was going in a circle. Katherine had already applied through National Highways for some designated funds.

Shirley noted it was confusing internally as well and National Highways has the pot of money and the A12 Widening have to provide support to them to access that funding. The National Highway regional team applies to the countrywide team for the funding on their behalf. They put together the bids and they make it to the National Highways applications, and they will put it in.

Essentially the local teams provide Essex Highways with advice on bids and what they understand is that the Users and Communities pot is really low on funding and they had advised Essex Highways to put in only one strong bid.

Essex Highways had a couple of bids in the Environment and Wellbeing pot, including sustainable drainage systems, ponds, and a green bridge at Prested Hall which within that bridge Shirley had requested a route to accommodate walkers and cyclists.

There's also a heritage pot and Essex Highways has asked for money to restore the trestle bridge at Wickham Bishops, and it is on the Blackwater Trail, which is why Shirley was interested in it and at the moment they were considering closure on the footpath below it. They would need another structural engineer to look at it but if they could bolster that with funding to fix it up, it would be helpful.

Essex Highways asked for Mark's Tey Bridge to be extended as it was being replaced to be suitable for cycles, but that has been refused. So, the number one scheme right now was to provide a combined scheme for people to walk and cycle through the town centres along the A12 corridor.

Katherine confirmed that Shirley could add a horse riders path to the bridge because there were East Anglian Farm rides there, which do not show up on any published maps. Shirley was unsure what designation it would have but it would not be a footpath. Essex Highways was also continuing to push for some kind of cycling link between Kelvedon and Tiptree.

Finally, Shirley noted they were looking at an Innovation Scheme to be put in as well.

They started with a long list a few years ago, and most of the ones for PROW that Shirley put in were developed and pushed through as part of the widening and the ones Shirley wanted retained and updated were done so, so her list had been reduced down to just a few.

Shirley had lengthy conversations and put together a scheme bid for the Blackwater Rail Trail to ask for some money for a feasibility study for what structures

	<p>they had on that trail, south of the A12, and to start looking at what land acquisition might look at and cost, but it was refused. They do not fund projects like that, they only fund ready to build projects, not feasibility studies.</p>	
8	<p>May site meeting and date confirmation Tuesday the 9th of May, the day after the coronation bank holiday was agreed, and then the next meeting would be the 8th of August and the 7th of November. The 8th of August could be made into a Site meeting.</p> <p>For where to look at, the coastal path was suggested for 8th of August 2023.</p>	
9	<p>AOB Katherine asked about the interactive map. Some while ago, Essex Highways did add the linear country parks onto a map and it was placed on a map by the web development team, but it had disappeared again, and that layer had not been added back. SA to investigate this.</p> <p>Malcolm asked if the layer for country parks showed access land, because years ago there was a countywide map of access land but that seemed to have moved now. And no, access land were not included in the country parks layer. Shirley had not seen an access map for Essex.</p> <p>Malcolm noted it used to be a map of open spaces, locally designated open spaces that was available to access by the public but not shown anywhere. Since it was not under Essex Highways jurisdiction, they did not want to confuse the public. It would be nice though to have that map of open spaces and waterways to look at the holes and where to focus access and green infrastructure. John Buchanan could raise the question of open space owned by other than ECC in that conversation with the Green Infrastructure people. There was an element of open spaces on the maps, but they often did not mention if they had areas of public access.</p> <p>In and around Feering, there were two developments where all the development roads are private and showing up as yellow on the interactive map. The developers have undertaken to connect with the public rights of way that were adjacent to the site, but Katherine did not know how secure those connections are in terms of being available for public use, because if the estate roads were all private, what right would the members of the public have to walk on the estate roads. The estate roads would not be formally adopted by Essex Highway. Shirley noted all public pathways would have to be ended back into public roads. If the housing development was providing access to the public pathways, there was no guarantees, but it would be assumed that current access would not be affected.</p>	SA
10	<p>Items for next Agenda</p> <p>None.</p> <p>Katherine thanked the attendees and ended the meeting.</p>	

	Date of next meeting: 9 th May, 8 th August 7 th November 2pm via Teams	