



MINUTES
Held via Teams
Tuesday, 8th February 2022 at 2pm-4.45pm

Present members:

Louise Fuller (LF)	Katherine Evans (KE) -	Jake Richards (JR)
John Victory (JV)	Chair	Rowena Macaulay
Robert Wright (RW)	Ray Booty (RB) – Vice	(RM)
Edward Dixon (ED)	Chair	Martyn Towns (MT)
Robert Lee (RL)		Malcolm Lees (ML)
Sandra Reynolds (SR)		Sue Dobson (SD)

LA Officers present:

Shirley Anglin (SA)

Apologies:

Jan Arthur (JA), James Astey (JA), Robert Wright (RW), Jake Richards (JR), Vernon Glashier (VG)

Members of the Public

Sam Iddison (SI)

Guest

John Buchanan (JB)

Minute Taker:

Val Cleare

1	Chairman’s Welcome: apologies and appointments	Action
	KE welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted. John Buchanan had put in an application to join the LAF. KE welcomed JB to join at this meeting. There was a proposer and seconder and unanimously JB was accepted as a new member of LAF. Sandra Reynolds, Friends of Flich Way, was welcomed to the Meeting.	KE
2	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th November 2021. Minutes were circulated. The Chair was unhappy with the minutes and proposed not to approve them at this meeting. It was agreed that SA will provide updates and send them round with corrections. The minutes will be approved outside of this meeting and recirculated. Action: SA.	SA
+	Matters Arising – RM reported on barrier successes in Colchester. RM had directly contacted Jason (PROW Officer) about the Colchester	

	<p>Orbital Route and he adjusted/removed barriers for all users. SR felt RM had done a brilliant job organising for this to be done.</p> <p>RM also described a wooden chicane has been put in place with a potential radar-controlled gate. Currently in discussion as a result of the route planning changes to the zigzag bridge at the University. This is ongoing.</p> <p>With regards to the PROW, RM reported Jason has been replaced by Sarah Potter.</p>	
3.	ELAF Secretary	
	<p>The Chair had sent an email round indicating she had not been happy with the minutes for some time and had made the proposal that the system we used to have with a volunteer part-time paid Secretary did work well. The Chair was concerned now that SA has increased responsibilities and workload, it means LAF will have less of SA's time. SA indicated she will still support the group. SA has a wider understanding of the PROW service as well as her own area. SA suggested we need to improve the service to LAF with the current resource we have got.</p> <p>Previously, a part-time volunteer Secretary was paid £16k and there were 6 meetings per year and more correspondence with the emails and we had meetings externally. There was also the meeting room hire charge and refreshments. Then it was brought inhouse with the Business Support Team and SA supporting with emails and Roy also sends out emails and manages the ELAF inbox.</p> <p>Malcolm suggested as we are using Teams, can we not record the meetings and one of us to jot it down on paper and send it round by email, if we keep the meetings short. Only need to record the decisions. The Chair was not suggesting to go back to the RCCE. It is about someone who understands our business and who is more available to help with correspondence and things. RM would support the idea but wondered if it is an option from what SA had said. SA was aware that money would have to come off her budget which is money SA would normally get to spend to deliver improvements on the network.</p> <p>The Chair reiterated we need someone more understanding of the PROW and someone the Chair can call on for secretarial support. SA reminded everyone that it has been a service provided to many areas of the ECC business. SA asked what other secretarial support is she looking for. The Chair wants help with drafting correspondence, dealing with responses to consultations, planning applications. The main thing is the minutes.</p> <p>Action: SA to talk to VC to give an opportunity to make improvements and suggest someone who has more experience in PROW matters.</p>	SA
4	Update from LAF Regional Meeting and ECC PROW User Group meeting	KE

<p>KE had circulated in January. There was concern about public money for public goods which does not appear to be happening. Norfolk is sending a template of LAF's right to inform MPs to improve access to the countryside and paths. Norfolk has been given public money for permissive access.</p> <p>In Cambridge they tried to use rubber crumb for bridleways which is ok for horse riders. However, in terms of sustainable transport and getting people to cycle on regular bikes, it was not at all popular.</p> <p>Also asked if anyone had experience in designated funds. A lot of things which the LAF asked about the A12 are not to be funded by A12 money but we were told to go to designated funds.</p> <p>With regards to the rubber crumb issue, Sue indicated cyclists are not in favour of this. It was noted with bridleways and new developments that new routes accessible to horse riders are being put in.</p> <p>KE suggested to go to the Cambridge LAF and ask Mary where the routes were so that we can be more informed and find out who the routes were designed for.</p> <p>Libby from the Hertfordshire LAF had mentioned that the Hertfordshire PROW people put QR codes to inform people as part of the routes. If any interest in ECC, KE can find out.</p> <p>ML reported we have tried wood chippings on paths and cyclists find it quite acceptable. In RM's opinion wood chippings are not good for those with mobility restrictions.</p> <p>SA commented on the QR codes. We have them at ECC and think they are great for highlighting particular projects that people are running or want to give more information about a particular site people are looking at. An example was given in Mistley – Stopping the Stiletos. This was about trying to get rid of the stiletto image (TOWIE conversation in Essex). In the Mistley area SA gave permission to put QR codes on wood marker posts.</p> <p>John Buchanan added there are a lot of initiatives with the Coastal Footpath project around Maldon and the Salt Marsh Way. Various sections have been implemented and amongst this there are QR codes and other environmental interpretation. SA explained the Salt Marsh Coastal Trail is a Maldon District Council project. They had funding of £1.2m to do it. SA recalled they did a drone flight across the marshes and it was amazing to see the footage.</p> <p>JV suggested Coastal Footpath to go on the next agenda. SR felt most people would use information boards. Unless there is a long-term plan to maintain QR codes, it would be better to have information boards. This is due to the fact that a lot of websites are not necessarily up there for 10 years. SA felt there is a need to ensure QR codes are taken down at the end of their use. We could continue to manage the QR codes on the website. SA informed we are using boards for the Essex Coast Path in conjunction with the</p>	<p>agenda item</p>
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	<p>RSPB where trying to protect their assets and manage the access for the route.</p> <p>KE reported there was no-one from Natural England to give an update at the meeting.</p> <p>PROW User Group Meeting SA updated on the features added to the Temporary Closure Order Map online. There is one outstanding, Footpath 5 at Mistley. SA to update TRO map. Action: SA – at the next User Group meeting SA to make the group aware that you do decline Temporary Closure Orders.</p> <p>SA commented if they are an emergency TRO, then they can slip through.</p>	SA
5	ECC Report	SA
	<p>SA had circulated the report. The key thing this time is the Essex Highways Transformation. Proposed capital schemes for next year were listed. 73% of the paths surveyed were easy to use. Working through winter work delivery programme phasing on fingerposts. Winter cutting programme was completed before December. SA stated there was no advice on budget yet. SA talked about the transformation, expecting a revenue cut but do not know what that looks like.</p> <p>SR asked about volunteers and what the policy is about work parities currently due to Covid, she said that it is different in PROW from other parts of ECC using volunteers. SA informed we work out of doors and follow Government guidance where possible. We had to follow Essex guidance by stopping with face-to-face meetings entirely. SA had to pull volunteers before but all are working now.</p> <p>SA talked about keeping groups down to six whilst Omicron hit in the county. SA will review at every opportunity. If people feel uncomfortable working with a group of people then they do not volunteer on that occasion.</p>	SA
6	Essex Highways Transformation	SA
	<p>SA reported that the consultation happened very quickly over four weeks and only affected the PROW Inspection team, not the Definitive map or the Enforcement teams. There was interviewing for the PROW Officer team to sit under SA. By the beginning of December we knew who was moving on in the business and who we would try and reposition within the organisation. We have not found roles for a few people, some have left and some are working through redundancy. We are trying to move forward as a new team.</p>	

	<p>There are seven remaining PROW Officers and SA as the PROW Lead Officer.</p> <p>P3 groups and parishes will get contact from new PROW Officers, not from SA. Direct contact will be with the PROW Officer.</p> <p>RM asked is there somewhere we can get the new titles and new roles? Action: KE to circulate.</p> <p>We do not publish PROW Officers to the public. We do not have an organisational structure chart. We are still going through the Transformation of Essex Highways. A structure chart will not be done until all has been sorted.</p> <p>SR asked what happens with remaining groups dealing with multiple officers. The rambler P3 groups will have contact with PROW Officers. People like the Flitch Way P3 group, all the team are aware of them and will feed them work directly. Work is coming in directly to SA and she is now able to push out to volunteers</p>	KE
7	<p>Essex Way – 50th Anniversary this year</p>	
	<p>The anniversary is to raise awareness. There are different groups that are going to be running events, particularly the long-distance walkers who want to walk the Essex Way. This will take place in the first week in September 2022.</p> <p>The Essex Way is split into 10 sections. The Ramblers are walking the first part at the beginning of April starting at Epping and going as far as Coggeshall. Other groups will follow and continue the rest of the path. Sandra reported she walked it last year in 5 days and used notes from the relay runners. However, some of the signage has been deliberately removed. If it had not been for the notes, we would not have done this. It is bad from Pleshey to Great Waltham.</p> <p>Action: KE asked for information to be circulated around the LAF of any other projects on the Essex Way to celebrate the anniversary.</p>	KE
8	<p>ELAF and Planning Application Forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minerals and solar farms specifically - barriers on paths and developments - PROWs on developments – widths and paths becoming enclosed. 	
	<p>Robert Lee deals with inputs to the planning applications that get advised to Essex Highways from the point of view of the PROWs. KE's concern is when you get a development of solar farms you have an open field and cross field path and at the end of the day you have a closed field path.</p> <p>JV commented that the Fairglen piece of work will involve closures of bridleways. RL had found out about this from SD.</p>	

RL will chase this up. It is an inhouse scheme where they have failed to consult people closest. RL was uncertain what they are intending in the bridleways.

Regarding solar farms RL has seen KE's email which was circulated. RL agrees with everything that has been said. RL stated where you have a cross field path we have asked for a large margin for a path and other criteria to make the route as enjoyable and easy to maintain as possible. SA has been asking if this can be shared with everyone. A standard document is being worked up to use as guidance for how to deal with PROW and solar farms.

Sandra mentioned land east of School Road around Great Notley Country Park. When standing on The Mound you will see lots of solar panels.

Footpaths in Frinton and Walton – the PROW is not affected by a solar farm, but it is right behind a housing estate and can again be seen if anyone wants to look at a completed project to see how it might affect PROW users.

Questions

Sue asked when you respond to solar farm applications, do you look for potential upgrades and looking for improvements?

Sue spoke about development policy for renewable energy by Chelmsford City Council - we need energy, we need to get what we can from renewables.

RL referred to the PROW and Developers guidance document which is being re-written.

Action: SA to share with everyone once completed.

SA

SA has been speaking to the Energy and Low Carbon Team in ECC about the content in the Design Guide. The latest status of the guidance is that approval by EPOA planning forum has been given to add solar guidance to the Design Guide. They have received comments on the latest draft being revised to be completed in the next two weeks and publish guidance on the Essex Design Guidance by April. SA has agreed for PROW to see this.

RB spoke about DEFRA landscapes review.

The Government has asked for a review of the management and rules around national parks and areas of outstanding national beauty. DEFRA came back with a report and 27 proposals. The Government has issued a response to the proposals and is now asking for a period of consultation which runs until 9th April 2022 and is open to individuals, PCO's, LAFs and user groups, ramblers, British Horse Society.

RB suggested that maybe LAF could develop a response offline.

9	<p>GO Jauntly App – Feedback on Usage -old walks on Essex Highways website</p>	SA
	<p>As circulated, John Buchanan’s report. It was quite similar to what VG said along with some of RM’s comments as well.</p> <p>JB was frustrated the route is good for walkers and dog walkers. The photos are good and basic directions. The failing was in the text and the topping and tailing. For example, it starts as you set off this is probably negotiable with a buggy and towards the end this is almost impossible with a buggy. It was slippy and muddy ground. What was missing at the start of the walk there should have been a sign: This starts from Tesco’s in Maldon and this route is suitable for walkers etc. but would be unsuitable for buggies or wheelchairs so that people are clear from the outset. Another issue was about the Language – he thought it was inappropriate at times. It invited people to stop and “drool” over expensive houses to be seen. Finally, in terms of information whoever is doing it had not done research and if tried to follow explanations, it was confusing. The canal was being described as a river.</p> <p>All the points mentioned were desk top edits and impression that this had been launched without any evaluating. JB would have thought if someone had been tasked to produce it, someone asking them to do so would have picked up the majority of the points mentioned.</p> <p>There was concern now about 3 reports. LAF opinion was that it was not professional enough and we would not want to see Essex Highways to support it.</p> <p>3 points mentioned: very poor use of language and inaccuracies, missing advance summary information. Photographs were confusing.</p> <p>RB commented that for some walks it is the user that loads the information. There is no vetting, hence the inaccuracies. There are lots of these types of Apps. It is reasonable to say if people have been asked to create walks as a group, they should have some level of consistency and integrity, and give guidance so that it can be improved at a later point in time.</p> <p>The route RB followed was put on by a family. There were problems and difficulties with the route which RB followed.</p> <p>Action: SA to feedback on the ECC walks to the Sustainable Transport Team</p>	
10	<p>Byway Working Group Update</p>	RB
	<p>RB has circulated a report. Any questions? Members were asked to email RB.</p>	

11	10th May 2022 – to be held as Site meeting.	
	<p>SA reported last year's site meeting was popular. There was the suggestion this time that it might be interesting to see a solar farm.</p> <p>Action: JV suggested we all send ideas to KE and circulate them, members then to vote on what they would like.</p>	All
12	Items for next agenda	
	<p>Please email any items to KE and SA.</p> <p>Items QR information boards.</p>	
13	Any Other Business	
	<p>Action: JB to send copy of report about concerns about Bealieu Chelmsford.</p>	JB
	Date of next meeting	
	<p>10 May 2022 – site visit 9 August 2022 2pm via Teams 8 November 2022 2pm via Teams</p>	