



MINUTES

Tuesday, 11th November 2025 at 2pm – 4.20pm
Held Virtual (via Microsoft Teams)

Present: Members:

Cllr Katherine Evans (KE) – Chair
John Buchanan
Steph Driver
Vernon Glashier
John Victory
Martyn Towns
Geoff Fletcher
Rowena Macaulay
Sally Macmanus
Janet Arthur
Aaron Ashwood
Lucy White

LA Officers present:

Shirley Anglin (SA)

Members of the Public:

Apologies:

Louise Fuller (LF) – not recorded. Note: Louise has resigned from the Forum.
Ed Dixon

Minute Taker: Val Cleare, ECC

1. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were retrieved and circulated. It was noted that content relating to byways and prospective members appeared truncated. Action agreed for Shirley and Katherine to tidy the minutes (including byways notes and membership items), remove duplication on page 6, and bring the revised version to the February meeting.

2. Membership and Recruitment

- Application forms to be sent to Lucy White and Aaron Ashwood.
- Shirley to email Liz to confirm ongoing interest and send an application form if appropriate.

- Clarified that individuals may join in a personal capacity; organisational affiliation is not required.
- Steph Driver (guest) expressed interest in joining. Shirley to send an application form and Terms of Reference.

3. Vice Chair / Chaining Arrangements

No volunteers for Vice Chair at this time. John Buchanan agreed to chair the February meeting on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

4. Coastal Path Access Guides and Communications

- Press release on the existing Coastal Path Access Guides to be scheduled for spring (not winter).
- Slides may be produced in addition to PDFs to improve mobile accessibility; Shirley to check template/format with IT/Internal Comms.
- Rowena to align slide templates with ECC standards and proceed once guidance is confirmed.

5. Regional LAF (25 January) and GIS Mapping

- Items proposed for the Regional LAF include GIS mapping of publicly accessible green spaces and definitions.
- Clarified that the GIS layer discussed is for general public access, not disability-specific accessibility; Shirley to send the link to Steph.
- Katherine to table comments and collate feedback for January and February meetings.

6. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Review

Rowena presented consolidated input (drawing on member work since 2015) proposing an aspirational, SMART-objectives-based ROWIP. Natural England's more recent perspectives (e.g., Pippa Langford, 2017) were referenced. Simon to issue a working draft by Christmas; the Forum is commenting prior to first draft creation.

- LAF to submit the agreed input to Simon immediately (today/tomorrow).
- Wording update to cycle layer (B7): include "quiet on-road routes" and add a definition/warning that byways may carry motorised traffic.
- Add caveat that conversions of footpaths to WCH routes should occur only where width and surface are suitable.
- Include glossary/definitions (e.g., WCH; byways) and avoid implying byways are off-road.

7. ECC Report

- Staffing: vacancy for PROW Officer (Castle Point & Basildon, 2 days/week) and a 12-month PROW Assistant (bridges condition work).
- Highway Records team capacity slower pending recruitment approval.
- Capital schemes (24/25) completed: Byways at Hempstead, Little Burstead, Swards End/Saffron Walden, and bridleways at Waltham Abbey, etc.
- Winter cutting programme is live on maps; progress shown as segments turn black with completion dates. Slight delay due to contractor theft incidents.
- Network Rail TWAO diversions progressing (e.g., Camps change completed; works at Henham and Maldon Road commenced).

- England Coast Path: works at Wallasea Island/Burnham-on-Crouch due by March; bid being developed for Jaywick–Harwich with grant-year spend constraints. Mersea Island and Harwich–Shotley Gates stretches starting via partners/volunteers.
- NSIPs: Norwich–Tilbury pylons at pre-examination; phased works anticipated to limit disruption.

8. NSIPs and Major Schemes

- Decision: Register ELAF as an Interested Party for Norwich–Tilbury Pylons by 27 November (watching brief for PROW and access land).
- Lower Thames Crossing: DCO granted; funding being sought; limited direct ECC PROW impact—watching brief only.
- A12 Widening: DCO (2022) granted but not funded; project inactive. Consider opportunities via National Highways Designated Funds where applicable.

9. Designated Funds

Shirley to review previously considered schemes and advise on any bids to revive in the next financial year.

10. Longfield Solar Farm – Greenway

Construction phase sign-off underway. A WCH Greenway has been secured through the site. It will be permissive and opened upon completion of construction (estimated 2–3 years).

11. Ramblers Accessibility Fund

Fund continues and reopens on 1 January (guidance references updated to 1 January 2026). Grants typically average ~£1,300; must be on PROW (not permissive). Collaboration with local Ramblers encouraged. Potential applications include barrier removal at Hilly Fields and linked access improvements along the Colchester Orbital.

12. Byways Working Group – Updates

- Croxton's Mill: TRO out for consultation; at least one objection (TRF) noted.
- North Weald Bassett 21: 2m width-restriction TRO to be implemented.
- Ridgewell 21: fly-tipping monitored; potential surfacing next year.
- Stebbing 34 & Barfield Sailing 13: hedge encroachment limiting turning; land-owner engagement ongoing.
- Black Notley 13: structure on byway; Essex Legal Services seeking counsel's opinion on how to proceed with securing removal of the obstruction.
- Wethersfield 14: surface improved naturally after badger disturbance; monitor only.
- Navestock 34 & 61: encampments, drainage/vegetation issues; some fly-tipping reported; ongoing.
- Nazeing 67: install bollards to prevent motorised access beyond bridleway.
- Dedham Byway 47: monitor for possible seasonal TRO.
- Wimbish 98: consider width restriction to deter heavy vehicles; assess interaction with proposed footpath closure.
- Great Waltham 25: candidate for surfacing to reduce 4x4 damage.
- Willingale 61: fly-tipping persists; involve Epping Forest DC waste team.

- Great Dunmow 7: reinstated by landowner; no further action.
- North Weald Bassett 36: monitor planning proposals to downgrade byway (cf. Takeley, Jack's Lane).
- Radwinter 33: slight rutting; monitor only.
- Stisted 41: minor rutting on short, undressed section; small works would assist walkers/equestrians.

13. Local Government Reform (Devolution) – LAF Implications

Discussion noted potential move to 3–5 unitary authorities. Services (including PROW) may be split between new unitaries. ELAF preference is to maintain a Greater Essex LAF if practicable. Katherine to raise experiences at the Regional LAF. Government consultation anticipated November 2025; ELAF to submit views then.

14. Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Strategy (National) – ELAF Response

- ELAF to submit a response advocating inclusion of equestrians where appropriate, and recognition of leisure walking/green routes for health benefits.
- Highlight systemic barriers: parking (cars/adaptive cycles), toilets, mobile signal, and compliance with accessibility standards (e.g., widths, no chicanes, turning radii).
- Working group to draft response (Jan, Lucy, Katherine, Geoff, others as available); align with NHS health plan synergies and LCWIP interface.

15. Cudmore Grove – Permissive Bridleway

Reported locked/obstructed due to environmental measures for wintering birds. Chris Rust (EBA) engaging with ECC Country Park and neighbours to explore an alternative permissive route.

16. Future Meetings

- Retain annual August site visit; weather-dependent – ensure an RSVP cut-off and a planned lunch stop.
- Majority content with virtual format for other meetings; consider one additional in-person meeting if demand arises.

17. Administration and Any Other Business

- Minutes to be produced by ECC Business Support (this meeting: Val Cleare) from recording.
- Barrier reporting: ECC actively removes non-compliant legacy barriers on PROW; members to report via online portal. Consider Ramblers Accessibility Fund for barrier-removal schemes.
- Maldon Nature Reserve: post-fire recovery supported by ~£10,000 community fundraising; revised plans aim to improve wheelchair accessibility.
- Record thanks to Louise for her years of service and note her departure from ELAF.

18. Next Meeting

Tuesday, 10 February 2026 ; Chair: John Buchanan; Guest: Jane Holton (Natural England) – mapping alignment discussion (definitions, accessibility).

Action Log

Ref	Action	Owner	Due	Status
A1	Tidy previous minutes; add byways & membership notes; remove duplication; return in February.	Shirley / Katherine	Feb meeting	Open
A2	Send membership application forms (Lucy, Aaron); email Liz to confirm interest.	Shirley	ASAP	Open
A3	Confirm slide template and accessibility approach for Coastal Path guides.	Shirley	Before spring PR	Open
A4	Convert access guides to slides (once template confirmed).	Rowena	Before spring PR	Open
A5	Table GIS mapping at Regional LAF; collate feedback.	Katherine	25 Jan	Open
A6	Send GIS map link to Steph.	Shirley	ASAP	Open
A7	Submit ELAF ROWIP input to Simon.	Rowena / Katherine	Today/ Tomorrow	Open
A8	Update ROWIP wording: cycle layer, byways note, WCH caveat, glossary.	Rowena	With submission	Open
A9	Register ELAF as Interested Party – Norwich–Tilbury	Katherine	27 Nov	Open

	Pylons.			
A10	Review designated funds opportunities for 2025/26 bids.	Shirley	Next FY planning	Open
A11	Prepare ELAF response to Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Strategy.	Working group (Jan/Lucy/Katherine/Geoff)	Consultation deadline	Open
A12	Barrier reporting and Ramblers Accessibility Fund opportunities (e.g., Hilly Fields).	Rowena / Steph / Aaron	From 1 Jan	Open
A13	Prepare input for Govt consultation on Greater Essex reorganisation.	ELAF	Nov 2025	Planned
A14	Arrange August site visit (RSVP cut-off, lunch stop).	Katherine	Summer	Planned

Meeting closed at 16:20.