



RCCE House, Threshelfords Business Park, Feering, CO5 9SE

MINUTES
of a meeting held in the Acorn Room at Feering Community Centre
Tuesday 12th July 2016 at 2pm

Present Members:

Ray Booty (RB) (Chairman)	Katherine Evans (KE)	Doug New (DN)
Bob Drane (BD)	Louise Fuller (LF)	Martyn Towns (MT)
Ed Dixon (ED)	Richard Gray (RG)	John Victory (JV)
	Robert Johnstone (RJ)	

Observers:

Marlene Curtis (BHS); Roger Lankester (Tollesbury PC); Adam Scott (NFU);
 Rob Tongue (GLASS).

The following Officers were present in support:

Margaret Shaw (MS) Rural Community Council of Essex (ELAF secretary)
 Garry White (GW) ECC Public Rights of Way and Records Manager

Apologies: Jan Arthur (JA)

		ACTION
1	Welcome, introductions and Chairman's report	
	<p>Ray Booty welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Chairman's Report</p> <p>Unfortunately Vincent Pearce had been unable to attend.</p> <p>RB reported the outcome of a meeting with Garry White & Shirley Anglin (SA) & MS at County Hall, where the future format of the LAF & User Group meeting was discussed.</p> <p>It was decided that the current arrangement would continue with 2 User Group meetings each year, held on the afternoon after the LAF meeting.</p> <p>The LAF meeting would consider strategic issues. More detailed specific items would only be discussed at the User Group.</p> <p>RB reminded attendees that members of the public are not full members of the LAF and should only raise issues at the last agenda item, & otherwise only speak with the chair's agreement.</p>	
2	Minutes of previous meeting Tuesday 19th April 2016 and matters arising not covered on agenda	
	<p>These were agreed & signed as a true record. (proposed by RJ, seconded by JV).</p> <p>The Summer 2016 edition of Access Essex has now been published.</p> <p>There has been no response to our invitation to Phil Wadley to attend a future LAF meeting to discuss Lost Ways.</p>	
3	Essex County Council report	
	<p><i>Update by Garry White.</i></p> <p>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)</p> <p>GW distributed some hard copies of the current RoWIP so that members could highlight particular areas that are of concern, need updating or clarifying.</p>	

The **2009 ROWIP** is also available on our website.

Register of declarations made under section 31(6) of the highways act 1980 are now available on the ECC website. Legislation requires that all declarations made since 2013 are available online.

New fees have been introduced and will be charged retrospectively for declarations made since 2013. A standard letter will be sent to all Land Agents.

Essex Highways Reorganisation has now been implemented, with the purpose of introducing an Asset led approach to all Highway Service, with Asset Management therefore being central to the reorganisation.

PROW Engineers and Inspectors no longer come under the direct management of GW.

Andy Hilsdon will manage an integrated Inspector team, which includes Road Inspectors, Structures Inspectors and PROW Inspectors.

GW involvement continues with PROW from a policy perspective (including ROWIP & PRoW hierarchy).

GW will manage the Definitive Map and Highway records team which will incorporate the Land Charges team.

Day to day management of the PROW service will not be affected although Inspector patches may be reviewed.

GW confirmed that Andy Hilsdon will be responsible for faults reported to the CONFIRM system.

It was agreed that we should invite Andy Hilsdon to an ELAF meeting.

MS

PRoW Hierarchy

Cllr Bass, the Cabinet Member, requested a remodelling of the original model and the balance has swung from urban bias to a rural bias. Hence, category 1 now comprises 6 promoted routes (1A), byways and bridleways (1B); and the whole network outside the 0.25 mile radius around built up areas (1); and with everything in the 0.25mile radius slipping to category 2. This revised option constitutes 82% of the network. The funding to achieve this must be done within existing resource (there is £200k budget shortfall) and there is an expectation for increased volunteer participation. The analysis around the cost of this model is currently being undertaken with potential implications for cutting programme.

Category 1A will receive 2 cuts per year and a 3rd if funding available. Category 1B will receive 1 cut per year and a 2nd if funding available. All other routes (Category 1 and 2) will be cut once per year.

These principles will be incorporated into the revised ROWIP.

2 subcontractors have been invited to tender for the 2017 cutting contract.

ED asked about the status of Parish Path Partnership (P3) Groups. GW said that P3 groups are seen as an important part of the rural bias, but can't be expected to take up the shortfall.

If parishes choose to undertake 2nd or 3rd cuts then that would be welcomed.

RB reminded GW that he has suggested to SA that motorized user groups would be willing to get involved in path cutting.

KE commented that there was some disquiet that Rambler volunteer groups were being asked to work in Country Parks rather to than maintain PRoW.

MT asked how the hierarchy would apply to Chelmsford City Council (CCC). GW replied that CCC will continue to work within the SLA that doesn't recognise the revised categories.

CCC cutting map on the ECC website is accurate for 2016.

GW/SA

Byway experimental closures

The completion of first tranche of 18 month closure, comprising the first 5 selected byways for experimental closure, are currently being assessed from an ecological perspective and for consideration by the Commissioning Board.

The rationale for the project from the outset has been to assess whether restricting public vehicular use in winter months results in significant benefits to the surface

	<p>condition and environmental quality of a Byway, both in short and medium term. Also to provide an evidenced based indicator for countywide policy based on prioritisation and potential surface depletion whether bound or unbound surface. As the project continues to evolve there should be defined criteria on categories of use that may be prohibited and the length of seasonal closure that may vary for any Byway according to its unique features.</p> <p>The second tranche will be closed again in November 2016, and a third tranche has been requested.</p> <p>The amount of money, time & effort spent on Byways is disproportionate as they only comprise 3.7% of the PRoW Network.</p> <p>GW reported that Byways are increasing being used as access to housing developments. ECC is asking for developers to contribute to their upkeep via S106 agreements.</p> <p>Byway 40 Greenstead Green at Markshall – encroachment onto adjacent woodland is causing serious ecological damage. BD suggested that the main problems are in fact caused by forestry commission and Mark Hall estate employees rather than Byway users. Problems are developing at High Garrett.</p> <p>The ACU are taking action against rogue motorcyclists.</p> <p>The law does allow for minimum diversion from a PRoW to avoid obstructions.</p> <p>JV suggested some form of traffic counting technology to identify usage.</p> <p>GW commented that camera evidence of misuse is not permissible in court.</p> <p>RB asked what % of Byways would be eventually covered by seasonal closures.</p> <p>GW replied that the top 20 byways at any one time. Some seasonal closures may be limited to axled vehicles rather than all motorised users.</p> <p>The report on the first tranche will go to the Commissioning Board at the end of July.</p> <p>GW will give a further update at the next meeting.</p> <p>Enforcement.</p> <p>Simon Taylor is concentrating on cross field paths in Epping area and Toppesfield & Wethersfield.</p> <p>MAP Essex still evolving but will eventually be a better system.</p> <p>RJ suggested that a search on a particular PRoW on the interactive map would be welcome.</p> <p>LF suggested putting path numbers visible on the interactive map and asked that the search facility by Parish was reinstated.</p> <p>GW confirmed that the original on-line interactive Map of PRoW will be retained as well as the newer Highways Information Map.</p> <p>Members commented that the maps were much appreciated.</p> <p>Annual ECC PRoW cut</p> <p>GW reported that this is 80% complete.</p>	
4	<p>ECC Cycle Action Plan</p> <p>GW apologised that Charles Freeman, the project leader, was unable to attend.</p> <p>GW reported that the Essex Cycling Strategy was adopted on 21st June 2016.</p> <p>GW presented the briefing document - Essex Cycling Strategy & Borough/District Cycling Action Plans. A copy will be sent to MS for distribution to members.</p> <p>Jacobs has been commissioned by ECC to prepare updated existing plans and with prioritisation of 5 Districts.</p> <p>As part of RoWIP review ECC will be looking at possibility of creating some new bridleways where appropriate, rather than rural cycle ways.</p> <p>Cycle Action Plans (CAPs) are part of the Essex Cycling Strategy (ECS).</p> <p>There is no consultation with Parish Councils as District Councils are the stakeholders.</p> <p>GW reported that although cycle tracks exist many are informal / permissive and they are not on any definitive map. Sustrans negotiated routes with individual landowners along existing PRoW.</p> <p>Cycle Tracks will be for non-motorised users.</p>	GW/MS

	<p>take that into account. How much future-proofing, spreading room will there be?</p> <p>MS will send GM a copy of the briefing document - Essex Cycling Strategy & Borough/District Cycling Action Plans.</p>	MS
7	Coordination of Lost Ways Project	
	<p>GW has taken advice from the ECC legal team and their opinion is that ELAF has no powers to address these issues on behalf of ECC nor to be an applicant for a claims (Schedule 14) application. Any evidence sharing / collation should be dealt with outside the meeting – may be useful for user groups to share information after the ELAF meeting.</p> <p>Members felt that as we would only be creating a central database of Lost Ways to co-ordinate the work of others and avoid duplication and we would not making any schedule 14 claims then there should be no problem.</p> <p>RB to make an enquiry on Huddle of other LAFs.</p>	RB
8	Road Building	
	<p>A120 Braintree to Marks Tey RB & KE attended the A120 Non-motorised Users Stakeholder Workshop & KE attended the A120 Environment Forum pre-route selection meeting which outlined the process by which route options are developed. There will be a consultation on 3-5 routes in January 2017.</p> <p>Philippa Garden, of Jacobs, is the Engagement Lead for the A120 & A12 widening projects.</p> <p>A12 improvements Chelmsford to Colchester. There will be a consultation on widening between Boreham and Marks Tey in January 2017. There are many potential problems – bridges, roads, houses, junctions, River Blackwater. The railway crossing closures planned near the A12 must also be taken into account. GW has asked to meet the strategic planners to discuss the A12 feasibility study and its effect on PRoW.</p>	
9	Correspondence	
	<p>MS has written to Steve Day thanking him and his colleagues for their presentation at the April meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Johnson has been invited to attend a LAF meeting but as yet we have received no reply. MS to chase.</p> <p>MS has circulated the Marine planning 'Call for Issues with Supporting Evidence' for the north east, north west, south east and south west marine plan areas, that was sent by Nicky Spurr of the Coastal Access Forum.</p> <p>MS has written to Peter Davey at Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) to ask them to assist in recruiting District and County Councillors to the LAF.</p> <p>MS had received an email from former LAF member Adrian Liddle about Bridleway 66, Waltham Abbey, which was passed to GW.</p> <p>We have received an email from Len Bannister about the ELAF meeting with Network Rail. He: <i>"would want to record the fact that I thought that the reaction of the last LAF to the Network Rail presentation was rather less critical that I would have expected"</i>.</p> <p>He enclosed a letter that he sent to The Ramblers' Association setting out his position. MS to circulate.</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>GW</p> <p>MS</p>

10	National and regional LAF updates	
	<p>Annual report 2015-2016 Our Annual report to Natural England is due at the end of July. MS to organise. Topics addressed this year include: Network Rail; Essex Coast Path; ECC Byways strategy; A12/A120/Lower Thames Crossing; Concerns caused by budgetary constraints.</p>	MS
11	Website, Social Media, Members Interests	
	<p>MS asked for outstanding biographies for the website.</p> <p>RB has set up a Facebook page for Essex. RB urged members to link to it.</p> <p>Members agreed that the spreadsheet of their interests could be loaded to our website.</p>	KE/DN/ MT ALL MS
12	Huddle	
	<p>Current topics include: Report on 2016 National LAF Conferences. LAF News - Issue 9 (a link is on our website). Lost Ways / White Roads</p>	
13	Any other business	
	<p>JV asked if a different meeting venue was being investigated. GW confirmed that SA is investigating the possibility of a meeting room at County Hall.</p>	GW/SA
14	Public question time	
	<p>Roger Lankester asked various questions about the implications of Neighbourhood Plans for the PRoW network, and raised the possibility of a ferry service between Bradwell and Tollesbury across the Blackwater which would link footpaths on either side.</p> <p>GW reported that the land between the high and low water mark will be covered by NE in their Essex Coast Path proposals.</p> <p>Marlene Curtis raised issues with Bridleway 36 Rochford. GW reported that Simon Taylor is in discussion with Rochford DC with a view to a diversion. Enforcement action will be taken if necessary.</p>	
	<p>Date of next meetings Walk 20th September – details to be confirmed.</p> <p>Tuesday 11th October 2016 10am followed by PRoW User Group at 1.30pm.</p> <p>Tuesday January 17th 2017 at 2pm.</p>	ALL