



**MINUTES**  
**of a meeting held via MS Teams**  
**Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 2pm-4.39pm**

**Present members:**

Louise Fuller (LF)	Katherine Evans (KE) -Chair	Jake Richards (JR)
Vernon Glashier (VG)	Ray Booty (RB) – Vice Chair	Malcolm Lees (ML)
John Victory (JV)		Rowena Macaulay (RM)
Sandra Reynolds (SR)		

**Apologies:** Sue Dobson (SD), Ed Dixon (ED), Martyn Towns (MT)

**LA Officers present:** Shirley Anglin (SA)

**Guest:** Koula Valsamis-Warren (KVW), Asset Manager - Structures, Essex Highways

**Minute Taker:** Val Cleare

**Members of the Public:** Sam Iddison (SI)

1	<b>Chairman’s Welcome: apologies and appointments</b>	<b>Action</b>
	KE welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted. KE also welcomed guest, Sam Iddison. Malcolm Lees was welcomed back as a member on the Forum having rejoined after a break. KE welcomed Koula Valsamis-Warren regarding Item 6 about Essex Highways Structures.	
2	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 November 2020</b>	<b>SA</b>
	<p>Amendments:</p> <p>Item 3 – access was part of the response..</p> <p>Item 6 – By Ways Working Group.</p> <p>Little Waltham 51 at Croxton’s Mill - amend to this is impassable.</p> <p>With these amendments, it was agreed that the minutes were a true record.</p>	
<b>Matters Arising</b>		<b>KE</b>
	<p><b>ELMS:</b> Environmental Land management scheme. JR has the Defra report on the trails. KE to circulate.</p> <p><b>Temporary Closure Orders</b></p> <p>Different ways of mapping the PROW temporary TROs was being looked into by members of the LAF.</p> <p>VG commented if you are living in the particular area, i.e. Colchester, it is very easy to see if there is a closure whether walking or cycling if it is mapped but not so easy to use the current table format to find closures. VG asked whether it is possible to use an Ordnance Survey map as a base layer as that would be useful.</p> <p>RM had done a trial using Google maps as a base as an example of what could be done but PROW depiction is limited. The landscape background in</p>	

	<p>Google is covered with adverts. JR suggested Bing maps which have an OS layer and add a link to the Highways Essex page to indicate where the closures are.</p> <p>SA noted that closure information can be embedded in Google Maps but cannot have a Public Rights of Way (PROW) layer. Can have dots on the map to show where the closures are but cannot show the PROW network. So of limited use.</p> <p>SA informed Bing / OS maps can be used with the PROW layer. SA together with the Commuunication Team will continue to look at options. KE suggested having the map separately and a searchable page listing the temporary closures.</p> <p>Action: SA thanked RM for doing this and SA will report back.</p> <p>RM said the issue would be who does the work of adding temporary TRO information on an ongoing basis. SA indicated this would be a resource issue. KE responded that under Item 8 she would be speaking at the Full Council meeting to see if we have something to show that we can make a case for resources to do this type of work.</p>	<p>SA</p> <p>KE</p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Regional LAF meeting update</b></p> <p>KE reported that there was a feeling from other LAF's that there was pressure on highway resources and maintenance because there was an increase in PROW usage with everyone getting out into the countryside during lockdown.</p> <p>KE asked if it is possible to get Essex LAF included as a consultee to ECC Minerals Planning applications.</p> <p>Action: SA to ask ECC Planning team to be on consultation list for Minerals and Waste.</p>	<p>SA</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>ECC Report</b></p> <p><b>ECC report</b> had been circulated by SA including:</p> <p>(i) temporary TROs: a new page on the PROW section of the Essex Highways website with information in table format. SA has updated the format to facilitate searching. SA is keeping a note of the frequency of temporary TRO's to assess the extent of the task. <i>Post-meeting note: now as a map layer with clickable links to the Orders</i></p> <p>(ii) capital PROW works: new page with information on the website. LF commented that this is very useful. KE asked about boardwalks - Earls Colne 16 &amp; Tilbury-juxta-Clare 13 have been completed.</p> <p>(iii) Winter cutting programme: the full programme is on the web. SA informed that the schedule was going well and that completion was imminent. Epping and Harlow are still to be completed in full. <i>Post-meeting note: URL/ link needed</i></p> <p>(iv) 2020 May+November Ease-of-Use survey: 77% "easy". Main failures: Crossfield paths not re-instated &amp; lack of waymarking.</p> <p><b>Parish Paths Partnership (P3)</b> – SA reported that volunteers did not operate during lockdown due to COVID restrictions. When restrictions allowed, volunteers went out in pairs or small groups. They adapted their working patterns e.g. starting at different times / on different days. SA has asked for work proposals for the coming year and this morning had met with the first aid provider who is looking at alternative options for training. The aim is to get</p>	<p>SA</p>

	<p>volunteers back out as soon as safely possible. KE commented there should be more resources to manage volunteer teams. SA did not think that this was the case. The PROW Inspectors are engaging more and more with volunteers and once up and running they are autonomous. P3 is well-funded and ECC support it really well in terms of budget allowed.</p> <p><b>England Coast Path</b></p> <p>The progression of the scheme has been held up due to Covid-19 impacting Natural England (NE) &amp; PINS site visits. JR questioned why replies had not yet been received as to whether objections and representations submitted in January 2020 were valid or not (thought to be Burnham-on-Crouch to Wallasea Island stretch). SA commented they should have had a response from NE. Anyone who objected, should be informed whether the representation was valid, or awaiting a planning inspector's site visit or was being consider via written representation.</p> <p><b>Action: SA to pass details to JR &amp; will contact Darren Brain of Natural England.</b></p> <p>SA /ECC have had to change PROW works programme several times to tie in with funding for the establishment works. NE is urging grant submissions for establishment works to be made by May 2021 for approval by the June 2021 cut-off date for European funding submissions. The funding has to be spent by July 2022. With the very slow approval by the Secretary of State of the many sections still outstanding, it will be difficult to apply in time to get funding for the works. There are seasonal restrictions on when work can be done (e.g. bird nesting) and so it will be very difficult to deliver the rest of the route via the current funding stream. KE asked if a formal letter from ELAF to Natural England would be useful?</p> <p>SA suggested the letter should be to the National Trails Team of Natural England and should include pushing for longevity of support for the works. JV asked whether it would be worth writing to the Secretary of State?</p>	<p>SA</p> <p>KE</p>
5	<p><b>PROW User Group</b></p> <p>Nothing specific to report. Minutes have been circulated.</p>	
6	<p><b>Essex Highways Structures</b></p>	
	<p>Issues with bridges comprise a noticeable proportion of PROW temporary closure. ELAF therefore asked and SA arranged for Koula Valsamis-Warren (KVV), who manages ECC/ Essex Highways large structures, which includes PROW structures over 8 metres long and shorter PROW structures if they are of a more complicated construction, to explain how the maintenance of such structures is managed and prioritised.</p> <p>Essex has 1400 structures over 8 metres long - this includes bridges, culverts, subways, sign gantries, retaining walls, etc. including PROW bridges over 8 metres. The 1400 includes 273 footbridges (e.g. over main roads, railway lines, over rivers / streams) of which about 210 are PROW footbridges. All 1400 structures are inspected every 2 years and their condition is scored. A low score for a critical element (e.g. parapets, decking) raises a concern.</p> <p>This year there have been 7 PROW / footbridge schemes of which 4 were major ones (2 over railway lines and 2 over main roads) with 3 more complex</p>	

	<p>schemes (e.g. a bridge next to a gas main). There is also a special budget for emergency urgent repairs. At the end of the financial year the spend against budget is reviewed and extra "quick" projects may be undertaken e.g. redecking work. It can sometimes take 3-4 years before work is started on site - e.g. for design work, if consents need to be applied for (e.g. by main rivers, on SSSI sites). Arrangements with landowners are also required especially where PROWs pass over privately owned bridges / culverts. KE asked whether it might be more cost-effective to divert a PROW if there are issues with private structures. SA advised that such a diversion would have to be in the interest of the public, rather than in the usual "interest of the landowner", and is not something that ECC would entertain.</p> <p>SR queried about getting the Flich Way footbridge at Dunmow over the river Chelmer upgraded to a bridleway / cycleway (NCN16) bridge [just east of the Chelmsford Road B1008, aka Cherry Garden bridge]. To get grant funding, a survey has to be done first to find out how much such an upgrade would cost. Survey information / design assistance has been sought unsuccessfully from ECC. Why is assistance not possible?</p> <p>KVW's department are only authorised to &amp; only have a budget to work on a structure if the condition score is low / the structure has reached the end of service life. There is no budget to upgrade an asset e.g. a footbridge to a bridleway / cycleway bridge. Money for this has to be found through joint funding / working with other third parties to upgrade the asset which is time consuming and may not succeed.</p> <p>KVW advised going through LHP and get their buy in, they can do a basic survey and outline all of that is required and then that can be used to fund raise the money. SR advised that Uttlesford LHP have been approached but there is no money available as there are a lot of byways, on-road safety schemes, etc. which are being funded.</p> <p>KE asked whether we have to do an FOI to get scoring reports and critical scoring reports on PROW structures? KVW responded that it would take a lot of work by the department to fund and respond to such a request. It was suggested KVW be asked to provide an end-of-year update from database, however this is not part of her work description. It would have to go as a special request with time and resources. There was further discussion and KE asked for an FOI to be put in. LF indicated for the FOI we would have to be clear why we wanted the information. SA reiterated that ECC/ Essex Highways job as Highways Maintenance is to maintain what we have and budgets are based around that. It is difficult to support and get improvements such as this.</p>	
7	<p><b>Byway Working Group Update</b> Report had been circulated previously by RB.</p>	
8	<p><b>ELAF Promotion to ECC Full Council</b> KE wondered if she as Chairman of LAF should request a slot to present to ECC Full Council to inform ECC Councillors about ELAF &amp; what we are doing. Also to make the case for supporting PROW Staff, numbers and budgets, bearing in mind how well used the PROW network has been this last year during COVID lockdowns. Two areas still have no PROW Inspectors due to funding issues. PROW inspectors are very important in resolving problems - liaising with landowners &amp; Parishes &amp; users. <b>Action: KE to write brief paper.</b> Forum members to provide feedback.</p>	KE

<p>9</p>	<p><b>2026 Cut-Off date to claim paths based on historical evidence - Update</b></p> <p>SA had an action to talk to Helen Baker about access to historic maps. The PROW team have the 1951 parish survey and 1953 definitive maps which are working copies that are laminated but are not in digital format. They are stored in folders which are very big and heavy but can be viewed. The problem is that the 1951 and 1953 maps are falling apart and need to be preserved as much as possible. The 1932 County Surveyor book of maps has been scanned and is available on a set of CD's through the Essex Record Office. The 1932 maps provide pre 1949 evidence about paths that existed. VG mentioned there are lots of OS maps online on the National Library of Scotland website.</p> <p>SA explained that once a claim has been put on our register it does not have to be resolved before 2026 - submitting the claim and getting it on the Register is the important thing. ECC/EH are receiving submissions (e.g. from the Uttlesford area) that are anonymous and do not contain sufficient evidence to the correct legal standards to be able to consider them. Application forms and information are on the Essex Highways website, with completed applications to be sent to Essex Legal Services (ELS) <a href="https://www.essexhighways.org/mapping-errors">https://www.essexhighways.org/mapping-errors</a></p> <p>VG informed there is a petition to increase the 2026 cut-off date. This is on social media.</p> <p>KE was concerned that people will look at old maps, compare them with current maps, notice that paths are missing and think there may be a claim when in fact the path may have been legally extinguished or diverted. Is there a summary of definitive map modification orders (DMMOs) going back to 1950 that could be scanned and put on the website? SA confirmed this was not to hand &amp; possible, however ECC have a lot of information on definitive map modification orders which can be checked.</p> <p>LF mentioned that Parish Council's should hold information about all the paths in their Parish and all those changed by modification orders with the accompanying statement. People can also ask to see the definitive map and definitive statement and modification orders at County Hall.</p> <p>SA reported that ECC have carried out a definitive Map review to pick out errors and mistakes. A lot of counties have not done this. Essex are fairly confident that the majority of paths are already recorded.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p><b>A12 Widening: Boreham (J19) to Marks Tey (J25) Update from Highways England Workshop and Project. Proposals for the Designated Funds Element.</b></p> <p>The "new" A12 will be constructed under a Development Consent Order (DCO) which Highways England expect to submit in Spring 2022. A DCO is a slightly different process to a normal planning application. Actual construction work is scheduled to start in 2023/24.</p> <p>It was noted that the proposals for the Designated Funds Element is a separate project to the actual A12 widening route work. <a href="https://highwaysengland.co.uk/designated-funds/">https://highwaysengland.co.uk/designated-funds/</a></p> <p>KE, SA and SD attended the Highways England workshop in December 2020 regarding walking, cycling and horse riding (WCH) proposals. SA circulated the Minutes in January - which however do not include any of the maps / plans. SA presented the main elements to members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 lanes in both directions with a concrete central reservation and Smart technology.</li> <li>• three existing junctions between Boreham and Marks Tey will be taken out - junctions 20a &amp; 20b around Hatfield Peverel and junction 23</li> </ul>	

	<p>Kelvedon South. Junctions 21 &amp; 22 around Witham and Junction 24 Feering /Kelvedon North will be made all-ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be no minor road or private access, in including farm /agricultural access, directly onto/off the new A12. Redundant sections of the current "old" A12 will be de-trunked - access will be maintained and bus services re-instated.</li> <li>• Cycling provision: not on the new A12; provided by the "old" A12 - current "old" &amp; sections due to be detrunked.</li> <li>• Major works at J19 Boreham and J25 Marks Tey to connect roads and to provide walking, cycling, horse riding routes for people to stay separate from the traffic.</li> <li>• WCH bridges / farm crossings of the new A12 envisaged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ NE of J19 Boreham</li> <li>○ between Hatfield Peverel (current J20b) &amp; Witham (new J21)</li> <li>○ around new J22 east of Witham</li> <li>○ between Rivenhall End and Kelvedon south</li> <li>○ between Feering (current J24) and Marks Tey (J25).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• No new bridges / farm crossings appear to be planned for the sections due for on-line widening around Hatfield Peverel or around Witham.</li> </ul> <p>KE asked what should we as ELAF do? Designated Funds proposals? Speak to Parish Councils? Ensure that walking, cycling and horse riding are not lost sight of. SA believed we had done a lot already. SA suggested continuing to remain aware of developments and to be present at the next consultations. EBA/ BHS are compiling a schedule of horse riding facilities nearby.</p> <p>ML asked is there any chance of restoring bridleways cut-off by closures included in the Network Rail Transport and Work Act Order (decision still awaited) - some are currently closed by 2 year temporary TRO's. Highways England proposals appear to be assuming that PROW railway crossings will be in place. The proposal NE of Boreham is for a WCH crossing of both the railway line and the improved A12. The proposals SW of Kelvedon by the Police &amp; Fire HQ appear to envisage Snivellers Lane and the bridleway remaining open with access enabled south across the new A12.</p>	ALL
11	<p><b>Barrier Free Walks – Project Update</b></p> <p>KE suggested to have a tutorial with RM about a barrier free walk at the summer (August) meeting, assuming COVID rules allow this.</p> <p>VG offered to walk potential routes in advance. VG asked RM if there is any way of grading the walks i.e. the ground under foot and who it is more suitable for. SR mentioned she lives in Great Notley where there are barriers which impede access everywhere on a 20 mph housing estate. SR will be raising this with the parish council.</p> <p>RM informed there are design standards that communities should be adhering to when trying to develop routes. Historic barriers that no longer need to be there are being identified in the Colchester area.</p> <p>Action: KE suggested this to be an agenda item for the next meeting.</p>	ALL  KE/SA
12	<p><b>Blackwater Rail Trail – Project Update</b></p> <p>No report.</p>	
13	<p><b>Items for next agenda</b></p> <p>Draft mapping of Temporary Closure Orders.</p> <p>Please email any other items to KE &amp; SA.</p>	

14	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>Report on the work with Flich Way which has been designated as a nature reserve. The issue is it does not appear on the Defra map. Local Councils have been informed. KE suggested the need to inform Parish Councils and the second wave of communication from the Park Rangers.</p> <p>Sam Iddison, who is a landowner in the Mountnessing area, was invited to today's meeting. JR is from the NFU and was keen to get engagement from landowners. SI was curious to learn about the structure that exists between users, Essex Highways and plans for the future which he considered to be to the public good.</p> <p><b>Action: KE to circulate JR's report on environmental land management scheme.</b></p>	KE
	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b> Tuesday 11 May 2021 – 2pm via Teams</p>	

DRAFT