



THURROCK LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Working Group – Minutes (1)

Tuesday 13 February 2018
7pm to 9pm, Committee Room 2
Civic Offices, New Road, Grays

Present:

Paula Watts – Projects Leader Highways Information & LAF Secretary – **PW**
 Sue Dobson – LAF Chair and Essex Bridleway Association Representative – **SD**
 Carley Hollands – LAF Member – EBA Member **CH**
 David Fish – LAF Member – Sustrans Ranger – **DF**
 Bernard Smith – LAF Member – Thurrock Ramblers Walk Leader – **BS**
 Bryan Benton – LAF Member – Thurrock Ramblers – **BB**
 John Lane – LAF Member- Rambler & Cyclist – **JL**
 Mike Ostler – LAF Vice Chair- **MO**
 Alison Loveridge – Thurrock Council – Public Rights of Way- **AL**
 Jenny Mann – LAF Member & EBA Local Representative – **JM**
 Peter O'Rourke – Forestry Commission – Beat Manager – **PO**
 Steve Plumb – Thurrock Council – **SP**

Item	Description	Action
1.	Introduction: SD Madam Chair opened the meeting by thanking those present for attending.	
2.	Apologies: Jenny Mann – LAF Member & EBA Local Rep Alison Loveridge – Thurrock Council	
3.	Minutes of Last Meeting: Minutes of Public meeting of the 12 th December 2017 were reviewed and approved by members.	
4.	Matters Arising PW Informed the meeting she had received an email from a Shirley Anglin the PROW and Localism Officer at Essex Highways on behalf of Essex Local Access Forum who would like to revisit the idea of LAF Chairs and Vice-Chairs holding once again regional LAF meetings on an annual basis. Natural England in the past provided resources to (1)	

support LAFs which was very helpful in achieving an active and relevant forum. Essex would be happy to host the first meeting, possibly in the spring to see how useful the meeting would be as there will always be matters that are relevant regardless to boundaries, Network Rail Crossing Reduction Order being an example. **SD** Having become a member of the Regional LAF feels it would be a good idea for Chairs of surrounding regional areas to come together to share and work on access issues.

BS clarified as in regional areas as being Essex County Council, Thurrock, Suffolk, Cambridge and Hertfordshire. **BS** also enquired if there were any London LAF's to which **PO** informed the meeting that adjoining Havering have no LAF.

BS With this regional proposal it will hopefully be useful in creating a collective argument against Network Rails proposals

SD requested that members email her with any items they wished to be raised at the forth coming regional meeting

MO as Vice Chair would also like to attend – **SD** to confirm

Cambridge LAF – Public Access Post Brexit.

PW Informed the meeting of a letter received from Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum enclosing a joint letter sent by the British Horse Society, Byways and Bridleway Trust, Open Spaces Society and the Ramblers to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP regarding the improvement of public access post Brexit. Cambridgeshire LAF also seeking the views of other forums on their view on public access after Brexit and is keen to hear whether Thurrock LAF would also write in with their support.

SD Understanding of this relates to the drawing up of a new Agricultural Policy following the UK's departure from Europe, and LAF's are being asked to support the aim to pay farmers to open up their land for public access, most likely with new routes on headlands to improve connectivity and increase available routes to other users, for example cyclists and horse riders as well as pedestrians. The present EU Policy penalises farmers for use of headlands, although any new scheme would need to be flexible and be practical for farmers as far as their operational needs, for example with livestock or lambing.

Having been discussed at the Essex LAF they are in support of Cambridge's request and have written to Michael Gove along with all Essex MP's. If all LAF's and other groups agree to support this by sending letters it will show there is a need to keep open and improve public access especially at a time when public health is of major concern and the government health wish is to get people out walking, cycling and horse riding all of which are good ways of exercising. We have to push for multi-user access to allow for use by all. This is an opportunity to enhance the existing rights of ways network supported by the Ramblers, British Horse Society and open spaces.

BS Agreed we should all be backing up each other...there may even be the opportunity to get the Farmers Union on board should farmers look to receive future funding.

SD With a green paper due out in March it would make sense to write a letter sooner than later and as she had been given the job of writing Essex LAF letter would members as a group wish to back this.

It was agreed **SD** would draft a letter and send out via email for members to comment upon.

Cycle Infrastructure – Creations and Improvements

PW Having provided an up dated progress report on the above was questioned by **DF** on the thinking by Highways Engineers not continuing with the proposal to improve junction 31.

Also clarification would be appreciated on the Stonehouse Lane proposal. **PW** to provide updates.

4 (A) Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan

SP Reported he had been trying to bring together many issues which relate to the RWOIP in particular the Councils Local Plan. At present it is looking like it will be 2021 before the Local Plan is ready for publication. It may now be beneficial to create an interim ROWIP up to say 2022 so we at least have a document from which we can negotiate... especially with the Lower Thames Crossing as Highways England will be looking to work in conjunction with Thurrock's ROWIP Plan.

4 (B) Lower Thames Crossing

SP and **PW** recently met with the John Lamb the Interim Assistant Director for the Lower Thames Crossing who wishes to gain much needed shared access improvements though out Thurrock especially parallel routes alongside the new motorway with new links leading off and connecting into existing PROW's. Planting would also be a high priority along all routes. John Lamb was informed of the LAF's wish list of access improvements and new accesses in particular Thurrock Ramblers wish to create circular routes and EBA's desire to create much needed bridleway connectivity, also the need for new and improved cycle routes. John lamb was also notified of the Councils adopted Active Travel Strategy as part of the Councils wider Active Place Strategy.

DF & JL as Gateway Cycling Club representatives both want to ensure they are able to partake in the consultation process. **BS** Essex Ramblers have asked Thurrock Ramblers to also be involved

SD Speaking for all aspects of rights of ways we no doubt will have a battle ahead of us especially when Highways England commences their public consultation. As Sue is also a member of the Road Users Group alongside the Brian Little, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation she will push for all of us and keep us up dated at our meetings, if not by email.

PO Could we not write to Highways England and introduce ourselves to make sure they are aware of Thurrock LAF as hopefully they will have a community liaison team

SP Ultimately the new motorway will not be your normal planning application / consent. HE requires a Development Consent Agreement. so they will have a lot of work to do as planning consents can be amended but a Development Consent Agreement cannot so they do not want to end up going to a public enquiry which may go against them.

4 (C) Network Rail Closures – Public Enquiry

PW Informed the meeting that there are now 47 crossings affected within the Essex TWAO. Essex CC's inquiry ran for 2.5 days but was adjourned to reconvene on the 9th January. Essex had seven witnesses appearing on behalf of the County Council with their LAF appearing independently at the inquiry.

NR Referred to two minor amendments to their proposals at the opening of the inquiry which ECC had no prior knowledge of at the time.

The Inspector adjourned the inquiry as Network Rail had also omitted to consult 12 landowners, along with 8 mortgage companies. Network Rail wanted to carry on with the inquiry and undertake the consultations in the background. Essex County Council objected to this. It was noted that ECC would not agree that the consultations had been undertaken correctly. More changes to individual proposals are now expected from Network Rail during the adjournment period. **BS** Cambridge County Council is back in court now with a new approach after the Essex County Council issues raised. **BS** could Thurrock check to see if any gates have been bolted at the At grade crossings as it has been reported this has been going on around the region so Network Rail can claim the footpaths or bridleways are not being used.

SP It would appear that Public Footpath 144 between Hume Avenue and Fort Road is likely to be closed as part of the Tilbury Two development. Reason being there is not enough physical room to build a bridge, plus a bridge at this location would mean adjacent properties would not have any privacy. At present the only option to cross the railway will be either via the Dock Road via the Hairpin Bridge or Fort Road via Brennan Road

Natural England- Coastal Path

PW At a recent meeting Natural England implied they would be happy to attend one of our future LAF meetings once they had made contact with the landowners and had a clearer idea of their proposed route.

In a recent report by ADEPT (the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport) it was been reported that Thurrock Council have an issue with routing the coastal path through a nature reserve situated by Tilbury Dock due to environment sensitivity.

MO believes this may be a strip of land within the former Power Station alongside the sea wall which was designated as a SSI site. **SP** believed it may be the Mucking Nature Reserve.

PW It seems unclear how the new coastal path will be managed going forward, at present it is hoped by Natural England that the route will be managed through a partnership between Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk.. there was no mention of Southend or Thurrock?.

4 (D) Operation Sacrifice

PW Informed the meeting that Essex Police had called for a meeting on the 28th February regarding the illegal use of quad and motor bikes. She would update members at the April meeting.

Planning Applications / PROW:

Tyelands Farm South Hill Langdon Hills

Still waiting formalisation of the diverted route

King Street Car Park, Stanford le Hope

Applicant informed the route of Public Footpath 166 must be retained within the new development

Howard Tennens, Stifford Road, South Ockendon

Request for the introduction of a new bridleway route albeit a permissive route between Stifford Road and Davy Down permissive bridleway.

Purfleet Regeneration

Request for riverside Public Footpath route to be retained and improved with possible new connection just west of QE2 Bridge between London Road and the river front be considered.

Footpath / Bridleway Issues:

Davy Down Bridleway Bridge

PW reported further delays in providing the new bridleway bridge.

BW 161 Green Lane Stifford Clays Road Orsett

Bridleway gate has been destroyed by illegal off roaders along with a further bridleway gate junction Stifford Hill and Pilgrims Lane onto BW 219. Hopefully there will be enough revenue funding to replace these gates by end of this financial year.

BW 58 East Tilbury

Railway gates found to be bolted shut.. Network Rail have done this illegally (they claim for safety reasons). Network Rail has been instructed to apply for a formal temporary closure.

SD Essex LAF has been made aware that Network Rail appears to be bolting a lot of their crossings throughout Essex.

BW 187 Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury.

Still to be investigated by **PW** & **AL**

FP & BW 91

Still being investigated by **AL** & **PW**

	<p>Capital Funding for Public Rights of Ways</p> <p>Footpath 147 Flooding Still continuing to obtain an agreement from the land owners (when we can find them) for the creation of a permissive route and relevant signage and footbridge.</p> <p>Footpath 162 up-grade to Bridleway has commenced. We are waiting on landownership. If this cannot be determined there is a procedure whereby the Council can place signs on site asking for alleged owner/s to come forward.</p> <p>Any other business</p> <p>JL This meeting has given positive news but also a lot of work ahead of us not only the Council, Council Officers but members of this forum MO Notified members of the Tilbury Riverside Projects up and coming events though many were already booked up...</p>	
7	<p>Next Working Group Meeting Tuesday 10th April 2018 at 7pm Followed by a Public Meeting Tuesday 5th June 2018 at 7pm</p> <p>Both in Committee Room 2</p> <p>(6)</p>	

