



**MINUTES**  
**Held via Teams**  
**Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 2pm - 4.30pm**

**Present members:**

Cllr Katherine Evans  
 Ray Booty  
 Louise Fuller  
 Rowena Macaulay  
 Aaron Ashwood  
 Jan Arthur  
 John Victory  
 Vernon Glashier  
 John Buchanan  
 Martin Crisp  
 Geoff Fletcher  
 Sam Iddison  
 Martyn Towns  
 Louise Fuller  
 Malcom Lees

**Apologies:**

**LA Officers present:**

Shirley Anglin (SA)

**Minute Taker:**

Harry Annison, amended by S Anglin

1	<b>Chairman’s Welcome</b>	<b>Action</b>
	Katherine opened the meeting by providing the Chairman’s Welcome.	
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the previous virtual meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and matters arising.</b></p> <p>The Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) now allows payments for access – but it is only permissive access. It was discussed at regional LAF and five years of permissive access did not seem to be what was expected.</p> <p>New footpath payments were £77 per 100 metres, a new cycle or bridlepath was £158 per 100 metres. It does not say anything about byways.</p>	

	<p>Sam suggested that it is not very attractive, and that the access payments equate to about £36 per acre per year. These schemes are only attractive to those who are already doing that sort of access, in which case this would just be a top up for what they do. It was not thought to be enough to encourage people to take it up.</p> <p>It was mentioned that cross-field path reinstatement is no longer part of the farm grant schemes and that this could affect compliance.</p> <p>Rowena explained that some short sections of permissive access can be hugely beneficial to accessibility on the network and could still be a way of securing better connections.</p> <p>Rowena stated that related to Cymbeline meadows, herself and Aaron have put in a funding application to the Ramblers funding round that was circulated. Rowena explained that the application is for the removal of barriers in a section of the orbital that connects four public rights of way. <b>An update to be provided at the next meeting on this project</b></p> <p>Aaron stated that his role is Active Environments Officer at Colchester City Council. Aaron explained that his role is to create places and spaces for people to have the opportunity to become physically active and improve their mental well-being.</p> <p>Katherine asked if there has been any progress with getting the linear country parks on the interactive map.</p> <p>Shirley explained that she has contacted the environment team to find out whether they have any mapping of open public spaces, because the map is comprehensive where people can access where they are able to walk. That includes district council parks, district council owned spaces, and so on. She is hoping that they will send someone to the next meeting to give an update on the green infrastructure strategy and its implementation. Whilst adding the linear country parks to the map can be done, she does not think it is appropriate because it is a highways map about the highways service.</p> <p>Shirley explained that because it has terms and conditions associated with highways data they are reluctant to put other people's data on the map. Shirley added that ideally there would be an access map that links everything up together and not just certain elements. Shirley stated that that is what she hopes the Green Infrastructure Strategy Officer will draw in.</p>	RM
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Membership, election of officers and review of biographies</b></p> <p>Katherine stated that Ray has said that he wishes to stand down as vice chair.</p> <p>Ray explained that he has been either chair or vice chair since 2011 and thinks that it is time to stand down but remain in the LAF.</p>	

	<p>Katherine thanked Ray for his time as chair and vice chair, which has been great. Katherine asked if anybody is willing to step forward to become vice chair. Malcolm Lees agreed to stand as vice chair and was duly elected.</p> <p>Katherine welcomed Geoff formally as a new member of the LAF.</p> <p>Katherine explained that on the Local Access Forum website on the Essex Highways webpage that they are missing biographies of <b>Martin Crisp, Sam Iddison, and John Buchanan – and now, Geoff Fletcher. Katherine stated that Shirley needs a short biography from each of them.</b></p>	<p><b>JB, MC, SI, GF</b></p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>ECC Report and Budgets</b></p> <p>Shirley added an update from the ECC report saying that the Network Rail project might be moving forward, but she is a bit hesitant as they have said this before.</p> <p>Katherine asked for an update on the officer patches map. Shirley stated that it should be finalised by the end of February.</p> <p>Shirley explained that there has not been confirmation on the Budgets yet but presumes that it will be the same. She is producing their service plans for the year ahead. Shirley stated that she has not received any information that the funding levels are going to drop at all, so it is really positive.</p> <p>Katherine stated that Shirley gave a presentation at the Essex Area Ramblers AGM and that it was a super presentation. Shirley went through the presentation slides that summarised the PROW service.</p> <p>Shirley stated that in December 2021, there was a transformation of the PROW team. The transformation looked at ways that the service could save money without changing the service levels. As a result of this, there was the opportunity to change the way they were working and redefine how PROW did things. It has resulted in much better programming and prioritisation of the works.</p> <p>Shirley showed the PROW structure chart and explained that, despite not being on the chart, there are six operatives that are dedicated to do PROW work.</p> <p>Shirley explained that what she did early on was introduce the PROW Maintenance and Inspections Strategy, which include an hierarchy and definitions of PROW defects.</p> <p>Each defect is now risk assessed using a consequence vs likelihood matrix. Based on the score from the risk assessment, the defect is then given a response time which clearly sets out how quickly those issues will be dealt with.</p> <p>The presentation explained how each 'gang' is structured to work throughout the year.</p> <p>The presentation finished with information on England Coast path progress and some illustrations of works completed on the network. <b>Shirley stated that she will share the presentation.</b></p>	<p><b>SA</b></p>

	<p>Geoff asked if the 'gangs' are people at Essex County Council or if they are contractors.</p> <p>Shirley stated that the gangs work for Ringway Jacobs, so they are all Essex Highways and part of Essex County Council. Shirley stated that subcontractors are also used to do some of the work, such as the cutting works (particularly during the summer).</p> <p>Rowena stated that it was good to see the slide on the presentation about the barrier removal works, but it would be great to have that work promoted as and when it happens as ,for example, a disabled walker will not be doing those routes as they know them to be inaccessible, so if there was a way that that information could be put out there it would be beneficial.</p> <p>Shirley and Rowena discussed waymarking of the Colchester orbital waymark discs attached along the route. Shirley stated that she is happy for them to put the discs on the infrastructure – waymark post, fingerpost, bridge surfaces. Shirley added that gates and fences would be for landowner permission.</p> <p>Rowena suggested that the thing to do is to come up with a map of where they are needed and start from there. Rowena added that she thinks that this will be in places where there is not existing infrastructure.</p>	<b>RM</b>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>ELAF Publicity</b></p> <p>Katherine asked what could be done to improve ELAF publicity – do the LAF need to host their own webpage?</p> <p>It was agreed that the LAF should stick with the current webpage and try to improve it. All the members should look at the webpage and suggest improvements that could be made to make it more interesting to the general public.</p> <p>Katherine asked Ray if they still have the other domain name.</p> <p>Ray stated that he is still paying £20 annually for it, and that he is happy to pass it on to someone else if they want to keep it. This expense can be reclaimed from ECC. He added that he thinks that somebody should resurrect the Facebook page as he is not able to at the moment.</p> <p>Katherine stated that if anybody feels moved to be the admin for the Facebook page to let her know.</p>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Magic Map and Open Access Areas</b></p> <p>Katherine stated that the Magic Map and Open Access Areas were discussed previously and explained that Shirley said that she was going to contact someone from green infrastructure and see if they could attend the next meeting.</p> <p>John Buchanan stated that he can try to meet with the local nature recovery strategy group and ask about mapping. He added that thinks it would be an interesting meeting to understand what the organisations are and who is involved in the project. .</p>	<b>JB</b>

7	<p><b>Coastal Path inclusive access guides update</b></p> <p>Rowena asked about the website and the access guides being on the website. Rowena added that the things that she may take forward are on hold until the website is up and running. Rowena explained that they can start looking at funding opportunities and promoting it, which are the next stages, but they are reliant on getting it all online.</p> <p><b>Shirley stated that she will endeavour to do it before the end of March.</b></p>	SA
8	<p><b>Essex Minerals Local Plan</b></p> <p>Katherine explained that she has got the Essex Minerals local plan, and that she thinks that the local access forum should respond to it. She volunteered to do the Braintree sites and the sites on the Braintree Maldon boundary and asked if some of the members could have a look at the other sites and feedback what they think. The deadline is the 16<sup>th</sup> of March.</p> <p>Martin stated that he will most likely do some work on it, from a bridleways perspective and focus on any significant ones.</p>	
9	<p><b>Major Planning Applications Update</b></p> <p>Katherine stated that she does not think that the LAF has had volunteers for a solar panel working group yet and welcomed any interest in taking this on.</p> <p>ECC have a PROW Policy regarding solar panels which has been previously circulated. <b>Shirley to put a link to this on the LAF webpages.</b></p> <p>Katherine explained that there is some input required for the Lower Thames crossing, but most of it is outside of the Essex County Council area.</p> <p>Martin stated that it is worth a conversation because quite a number of the Essex bridleways team has been involved with the project over the last couple of years – and have achieved some good results. Martin added that it is a very well-known site so if there are any questions, members should reach out to him.</p>	SA
	<p><b>Dates of the next meetings:</b></p> <p>14<sup>th</sup> May, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 12<sup>th</sup> November</p>	