

Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF) and Pathmakers Annual Report April 2019 – March 2020

The Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF) provides an important role in Norfolk to champion the role and importance of access to the countryside with local authorities and at a community level. This report covers the varied and significant work undertaken by the Forum's 22 volunteers during 2019/20, who contributed an estimated 1375 hours valued at £28,875 on work to improve countryside access in the county.

Introduction

It is a requirement (under the Local Access Forum (England) Regulations 2002) for Local Access Forums to submit an Annual Report to the appointing highway authority and then to Natural England.

Local Access Forums are important, independent advisory bodies, not part of local government, which play a role in local decision making relating to a range of social, economic and environmental issues.

The Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF) operates in Norfolk: the appointing body is Norfolk County Council (NCC).

The NLAF has set up an independent charity – Pathmakers Charitable Incorporated Organisation (charity number 1161475) which has a legal identity and can make direct improvements to access (or seek funding for access improvements). The NLAF appoints 5 trustees to the Pathmakers board of up to 10 trustees and the chair of the NLAF is an ex-officio trustee.

Whilst interconnected and sharing the common aim of improving countryside access in Norfolk, the two organisations have different structures and operation.

This report is a summary of NLAF and Pathmakers' activities between April 2019 and March 2020.

Summary of activities

Meetings

- 4 main meetings (open to the public) held including one off site at Sheringham.
- 16 subgroup meetings across 5 topic groups (PRoW; Permissive Access; Norfolk Access Improvement Plan; Visioning; Communications) held to discuss topics in greater depth. The Visioning and Communications groups were set up this year.
- 2 regional LAF meetings attended

Membership

- 10 brand new members and 9 re-appointed members and 3 Norfolk County Councillors welcomed to the Forum's first meeting in April 2019, although there were 3 resignations later in the year.
- Very sorry to lose the 'Access for All' member, George Saunders, who passed away in April 2019 after a short illness.

Pathmakers

- Development of the Forum's charitable arm, Pathmakers, supported. Pathmakers is upskilling its trustee complement through a programme of training funded by the National Lottery (Heritage Fund) - £30,000. The NLAFF made 2 trustee appointments and endorsed the appointment of 3 further trustees.

Advising Norfolk County Council

- Advised on mitigation measures for PRoW affected by major road schemes (Norwich Western Link; Long Stratton Bypass)
- Wrote to Norfolk County Council to press for greater resources for processing DMMO claims (2026)
- Made recommendations to NCC to take to Highways England regarding their review of 'at grade' crossings, where PRoW cross major trunk roads

Consultations and letters

- Responded to 8 further consultations including 2 CRoW restrictions
- Wrote to Norfolk MPs to press for withdrawal or deferral of the 2026 deadline to register lost paths

Partnership working

- Organised 3 Parish Paths seminars with NCC, to explore practical ways in which local people can be involved with public paths, attracting 226 people from 113 parishes overall

Norfolk Access Improvement Plan

- With NCC, reviewed progress with the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (NAIP) – Norfolk's Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Looking ahead

Priorities

- Support Pathmakers
- Monitor implementation of the NAIP by NCC and other organisations that can help with delivery
- Work with Norfolk parish councils to build on the recent Parish Paths seminars to encourage engagement with paths at a local level.
- Ascertain and demonstrate to NCC the value of the Public Rights of Way network to the Norfolk economy and people's health and wellbeing with a view to pressing for greater investment in the network.
- Actively monitor the legislation and processes of registering unrecorded rights of way (2026) with the aim of enabling the maximum number of applications.

- Press for including permissive access within the Environmental Land Management System (ELMs).
- Develop thinking to improve opportunities for off-road horse riding.
- Raise the profile of the NLAF with other LAFs (especially those in the East), other organisations and the general public.

Chair's statement

Without a doubt this has been one of the best years with our aim to make the work of the Norfolk LAF, better known. We have held three meetings across the county inviting members of our many parish councils, and altogether we had 226 people attend. The presentations covered the NLAF, the work of the highways department and how to report issues on PRow, the subject of permissive access, and the potential to get missing PRow recorded before 2026. Many questions were asked. We followed up each of these meetings with a survey to record the main issues.

Our sub-committees continue their good work, which has helped me to maintain our meetings to a reasonable time.

Our charity arm – Pathmakers (CIO) – has raised over £60k for projects on improving access to Norfolk countryside, and recently received a £30k Resilience grant from the HLF to help with establishing and training the trustees.

I could not complete my thanks without mentioning the officers and staff of Norfolk County Council and the tremendous support that is provided. I'd like to name thank Su Waldron, Matt Worden, Russell Wilson and Sarah Abercrombie in particular, and all others who have helped throughout the year.

Appointing authority's statement

Many thanks to all the volunteers of the NLAF for all the time and effort they have put in again this year to improve public access to the countryside and quality of life for local people.

An estimated 1375 volunteer hours were contributed by members of the NLAF and Pathmakers over the course of the year with an estimated value of £28,875 to the county (excludes Pathmakers time on LiftOff) – a truly staggering figure – thank you.

The Forum has responded to many consultations to advise on public access; has highlighted resourcing for path maintenance and handling of DMMO claims; has been incredibly supportive of work to progress the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (NAIP); has highlighted the need to integrate paths with the public transport network; and shown through the Parish Paths seminars organised with the Council's help, that there is a good degree of interest at community level to increase involvement with local paths. NCC is grateful for these insights and the Forum's help with the NAIP. The Council looks forward to working in collaboration with the Forum over the coming year on initiatives to deliver social and economic benefit from Norfolk's countryside access network wherever possible and making the very best of resources available.

Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF) and Pathmakers Annual Report April 2019 – March 2020 – detail

NLAF Meetings

The NLAF met at quarterly intervals as follows:

3rd April 2019 (County Hall)

9th July 2019 (Oddfellows Hall, Sheringham)

16th October 2019 (County Hall)

22nd January 2020 (County Hall)

Meetings are open to the public who have the right to raise items or comment on issues discussed.

Regional meetings (Vice Chair attended)

10th July 2019 (Peterborough)

15th January 2020 (Cambridge)

Administration for the NLAF

The Norfolk Local Access Forum is an independent body with its own logo, letterhead, email address and page on the Norfolk County Council website www.norfolk.gov.uk/nlaf. It is currently administered along the lines of a formal NCC Committee, with agendas and reports published on the Council's CMIS system

https://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/Committees/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/381/id/42/Default.aspx.

The Forum is supported by staff from Environment Team and Democratic Services. Costs include secretariat, hire of meeting rooms (currently minimal), site visits and member expenses, recruitment of new members, production of annual report.

NLAF Membership

22 members were appointed in March 2019 by Norfolk County Council's Environment, Development and Transport committee (though there have been 3 resignations since). An induction event was held March 20th 2019 attended by all the new appointees. A full list of NLAF members and their appointed interest areas is given in Appendix A.

NLAF Working groups

The Forum has 5 working groups (subgroups) which met in-between main meetings to discuss key issues and make recommendations which are put to the main NLAF membership for discussion and agreement. Each subgroup has a defined membership and terms of reference.

Table 1: NLAf working group meetings

SubGroup (and meetings April 2019 to March 2020)	Purpose	Membership *=Pathmakers **= non-NLAf
Communications (NLAf and Pathmakers) Met 3 times (1 st May, 7 th August, 8 th November)	To raise the profile of the NLAf and Pathmakers	Geoff Doggett (chair), Paul Cowley*, John Jones*, Kate MacKenzie*, Martin Sullivan*, Paul Rudkin.
Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (NAIP) Met 4 times (21 st May, 26 th September, 19 th December, 16 th March)	To work with NCC on the NAIP's annual delivery plans, monitoring and promotion.	Martin Sullivan (chair), Keith Bacon**, Vic Cocker, Geoff Doggett Ken Hawkins, David Hissey Paul Rudkin.
Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Met 5 times (11 th March, 24 th June, 23 rd September, 16 th December, 16 th March)	To consider issues affecting the PRoW network. The group also include representation from The Ramblers, CPRE, U3A, and Open Spaces Society.	Ken Hawkins (chair), Keith Bacon**, Neil Cliff**, Vic Cocker, Brigid Fairman, Simon Fowler, David Hissey, Ann Melhuish**, Ian Mitchell**, Martin Sullivan*, Ian Witham**.
Permissive Access	To promote the retention or creation of permissive routes	Chris Allhusen (chair); Vic Cocker, Mike Edwards, Kate MacKenzie*, Ann Melhuish**
Vision and Ideas Met 4 times (16 th May, 31 st October, 23 rd July, 18 th December)	To develop arguments promoting the value of the wider PRoW access network.	Vic Cocker (chair), Charles Auger*, Suzanne Longe, Ken Hawkins, Martin Sullivan*.

Volunteer time contribution

An estimated 1375 volunteer hours were contributed by members of the NLAf and Pathmakers over the course of the year with an estimated value of £28,875 (£21* per hour):

*based on a Heritage Lottery Fund volunteer rate for skilled labour of £150 per day
<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/discussions/how-calculate-volunteer-time>.

Table 2: NLAf volunteer time 2019 – 2020 (detail in Appendix B)

What	Hours	Time value (£21 / hour skilled work)
Main NLAf meetings & preparation	392	£8232
Regional LAF meetings	12	£252
Subgroups	498	£10458
Parish Paths seminars	168	£3528
Pathmakers meetings & trustee recruitment (excludes other Pathmakers activities)	305	£6405
TOTAL	1375	£28875

NLAf Activities in 2019/20

- (a) Subgroups
2 new subgroups were set up: Vision and Ideas to further discussions on the economic and health benefits of the PRoW network; and Communications, to improve awareness of the NLAf and Pathmakers. There are now 5 subgroups: PRoW; Permissive Access; NAIP; Vision and Ideas; Communications
- (b) UEA final year student 'consultancy' project
The NLAf took up the offer of a project: 'Widening the reach of the NLAf' with a brief to improve the standing and reach of the Forum's work across Norfolk in consultation with current members and supporting staff. The project includes a survey of members, background desk research into the operation of other nearby Access Forums looking for opportunities for joint action, with a final report expected in May 2020.
- (c) Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (NAIP)
The NAIP subgroup worked with NCC on a monitoring mechanism to enable progress with delivery of the plan to be reviewed, and drafted a statement on progress
- (d) Parish Paths seminars
The PRoW subgroup organised 3 seminars with NCC each based on a Countryside Access Officer 'patch' to explore practical ways in which Norfolk County Council, parish and town councils and local volunteers can work together for the benefit of public paths. Seminars were held in North Walsham, Narborough and Thompson. Collectively, the seminars were attended by 226 people from 113 parishes
- (e) Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) applications
The NLAf wrote to NCC in November 2019 to press for greater resources for processing DMMO applications arising from 2026 claims (2026 cut off

to register paths missing from the Definitive Map). NCC agreed to review staff workload to ensure claims are processed within the given deadlines.

The NLAF will also attend to a further letter received from a member of the public detailing case specific concerns regarding NCC's handling of 2026 claims (March 2020).

The Forum also wrote to NCC Legal Orders and Registers team requesting an update on progress with a DMMO at Thompson, Pockthorpe lane. NCC responded to explain why there had been delays and to confirm the case had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for determination

- (f) **Highways England review of 'at grade' crossings**
The NLAF made recommendations to Norfolk County Council to discuss with Highways England proposals to close crossings over trunk roads, pressing for: bridges or underpasses where feasible; particular consideration for crossings involving National or Norfolk Trails or RoW of higher status than public footpath; that PRow crossing diversions should be reviewed on a case by case basis; recognition that if a right of way runs up to the edge of any road and then continues on the other side, people have a right to make use of both parts and also to cross the road itself, being a highway open to public use
- (g) **2026 deadline**
The NLAF wrote to all Norfolk MPs in January 2020 to press for withdrawal (or deferral) of the 2026 deadline to register paths missed off the Definitive Map and to seek increased funding for highway authorities to deal with the backlog of claims. No responses have yet been received
- (h) **A47 / A11 Thickthorn junction improvements**
The NLAF supported Option 4 (a new bridge) suitable for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and suggested that the highways team investigated re-using the old bridge in a new location
- (i) **Long Stratton bypass**
The NLAF submitted a detailed written response regarding 6 PRow affected by the route of the Long Stratton bypass and also recommended that the continuity of the footpath network was properly attended to for the benefit of the community for years to come
- (j) **Norwich Western Link (NWL)**
The NLAF responded to the Sustainable Transport Measures Questionnaire regarding PRow affected by the route of the new NWL bypass. The NLAF recommended that most current roads should be stopped up (Ringland Lane, Weston Road, Breck Road, The Broadway) for all but non-motorised users with underpass crossings wherever possible to accommodate all users including carriage drivers; and that where flat crossings are made,

central refuges should be provided for walkers and cyclists. It also prioritised options to support those travelling by non-car modes and identified improvements that would enhance connectivity in the RoW network around Ringland.

A further Norwich Western Link local access consultation was postponed (Covid 19).

- (k) Dersingham United Charities draft woodland management plan consultation.

The NLAF had no objection to proposals but advised Norfolk FWAG that as the forestry work was undertaken, it should allow PRoW on the site to be aligned with their definitive routes

- (l) Other consultations

- England Coast Path (Norfolk) restrictions: Caravan parks
- Forestry England Santon Warren CRoW restriction for purposes of a motorbike event
- North Norfolk District Council draft local plan, environment policies
- Norfolk Greenways consultation (formerly recycling the railways)
- Elveden estate heathland restoration.
- Proposal to remove 6ha birch and Scots pine on Brettenham Heath
- Broads Local Access Forum constitution consultation
- Greenways consultation

- (m) Requests

- i The NLAF was approached to help with a survey to understand more about the motivations of visitors walking green ways to get to the pilgrim site of Walsingham.
- ii Broads Authority raised a query over horse riding circuit at Filby

- (n) Presentations received

- Greenways project to recycle Norfolk's disused railways.
- Permissive Access subgroup gave a presentation on their work to establish permissive footpaths in Bradenham
- Coastal Treasures – a NCC externally funded project combining access and heritage in West Norfolk
- Update from Natural England on progress with stretch 4 of the England Coast Path in Norfolk (Hunstanton to Sutton Bridge)
- Management of ash dieback on Norfolk Trails (and more generally across Norfolk)
- Developing access for equestrians
- 'Wildlife in Common' presentation by Norfolk Wildlife Trust followed by guided walk to Sheringham and Beeston Common at July off-site meeting

- (o) Other NLAf activities
- Supported Pathmakers, making 2 direct trustee appointments and endorsing the appointment of 3 further trustees (Pathmakers' appointed trustees) and received regular updates on the charity's resilience project 'Paving the Way', funded by the National Lottery (Heritage) to build trustee skills and organisational resilience
 - Received training from NCC on input to NSIP consultations
 - Set up time recording to capture volunteer time input
 - Received regular and detailed updates from NCC Highways Team (Countryside Access Officers) and Norfolk Trails team (development of promoted long-distance trails in the county). Significant progress with the online reporting of faults affecting PRoW was noted, and the efforts of the Countryside Access Officers to maintain PRoW which had led to improvements for NCC in the National Highways Survey benchmark indicators was also recognised. The Forum was very impressed with the development of Norfolk Trails and the way in which the Council had sought external funding to do this.

Pathmakers' activities

- (a) Pathmakers had submitted a bid to the National Lottery (Heritage Fund) in January 2019 for £28,200 to increase organisational resilience through a programme of training, site visits to local projects, stakeholder relationship development, and development of trustee team working. The 12 month Paving the Way project received funding in May 2019 with the first training workshops taking place in January to March 2020. Paving the way will put Pathmakers on a good footing to take forward initiatives and projects for the NLAf in line with NAIP objectives and activities. A part time Project Co-ordinator, Niki Taigel has been appointed by Pathmakers (seconded from Norfolk County Council Environment Team) and Community Action Norfolk are contracted to lead Phase 1 of the project to deal with governance/ visioning/ mission and strategic planning. Phase 2 of the project on communications, marketing and fundraising will follow, with a programme of study visits, community events, evaluation and contracting for a web design bringing the project to a conclusion at the end of the year (all subject to Covid 19 restrictions).
- (b) Pathmakers concluded work on the LIFT OFF project (Local Investment in Future Talent Outdoors For the Future) funded through the European Social Fund in partnership with Norfolk County Council Environment Team. The project delivered work trials in rural Norfolk with SMEs businesses (Small and Medium Enterprises) for people who might otherwise face barriers to developing careers in the environment sector. Participants gained skills in access audits and other practical outdoor skills relating to countryside access, whilst participating small businesses gained accreditation as mindful employers and disability confident employers. Pathmakers employed Ella Meecham (seconded from Norfolk County

Council Environment Team) to deliver the project, with supervision from Sophie Cabot (senior project officer with NCC Environment Team). This £66,700 project relied on significant trustee match funding time commitment (advice on project management and delivery) which did lead to some initial shortfall as it co-incided with the end of term of office for some trustees who did not then seek re-appointment. A recruitment campaign led to 2 NLAFF trustee appointments and 3 new trustee appointments by Pathmakers (endorsed by the NLAFF). Over the course of the project from April 2019 to February 2020, trustees volunteered 186 hours, valued at £4243 (individual hourly rates were applied reflecting professional expertise).

- (c) Pathmakers altered its constitution to widen the trust's charitable objectives – Clause 3 - (Charities Commission permission sought and obtained beforehand) to cover improvements to the wider environment (not just the countryside) and areas adjacent to Norfolk; and to alter the number of appointed trustees to three (from one) bringing the total number of trustees to 10. Both alterations were agreed at the Pathmakers AGM on 24th June 2019 and the changes to the constitution registered with the Charities Commission

NLAFF priorities

Please see 'Looking ahead' above.

NLAF members 2019/2020 Appendix A

Name	User group or interest area represented
Andy Brazil	Voluntary Sector
Bethan Edmunds	Nature Conservation
Brigid Fairman	Equestrian
Chris Allhusen	Land ownership
David Hissey	Cycling
Donna Gibling	Sport/outdoor recreation
Elizabeth Meath-Baker	Rural, local business, economy
Geoff Doggett	Access to land at the water's edge
Ken Hawkins	Walking (and Vice Chair)
Louise Rout	Tourism
Martin Sullivan	Motorised vehicles (and Chair)
Mike Edwards	Land ownership
Paul Rudkin	Green infrastructure and planning
Simon Fowler	Walking (and Chair of Pathmakers)
Suzanne Longe	Equestrian
Vic Cocker	Walking
CLr Andrew Jamieson	NCC Councillor
CLr Beverley Spratt	NCC Councillor
CLr Julie Brociek-Coulton	NCC Councillor
Resignations	
George Saunders	All abilities access
Phoebe Gale	Youth/education
Hilary Cox	Health and wellbeing

Appendix B – NLAf meetings and member time April 2019 to March 2020

Time estimate based on 6 hours per person per meeting (2 hours for meeting, 2 hours travel, 2 hours to read papers).

Values based on a rate of £21 per hour (as used by the Heritage Lottery Fund for skilled work)

Meeting	Number of volunteers present	Time (hours)	Value (£)
Main NLAf 3 rd April 2019	16	96	£2,016
Main NLAf 9 th July 2019	10	80	£1,680
Main NLAf 16 th October 2019	16	96	£2,016
Main NLAf 22 nd January 2020	13	78	£1,638
Agenda-setting 11 th March 2019	2	12	£252
Agenda-setting 11 th June 2019	2	12	£252
Agenda-setting 23 rd September 2019	1	6	£126
Agenda-setting 16 th December 2019	2	12	£252
Public Rights of Way subgroup 11 th March 2019	7	42	£882
Public Rights of Way subgroup 24 th June 2019	10	60	£1,260

Meeting	Number of volunteers present	Time (hours)	Value (£)
Public Rights of Way subgroup 23 rd September 2019	13	78	£1,638
Public Rights of Way 16 th December 2019	7	42	£882
Public Rights of Way subgroup 16 th March 2020	3	18	£378
Norfolk Access Improvement Plan subgroup 21 st May 2019	3	18	£378
Norfolk Access Improvement Plan subgroup 26 th September 2019	6	36	£756
Norfolk Access Improvement Plan subgroup 19 th December 2019	4	24	£504
Norfolk Access Improvement Plan subgroup 16 th March 2020	2	12	£252
Pathmakers 24 th June 2019	3	18	£378
Pathmakers 23 rd September 2019	6	36	£756
Pathmakers 18 th November 2019	6	54 (long meeting)	£1.134

Meeting	Number of volunteers present	Time (hours)	Value (£)
Pathmakers 21 st January 2020	6	54 (long meeting)	£1.134
Pathmakers 12 th February 2020	6	54 (long meeting)	£1.134
Pathmakers 23 rd March 2020	5	45	£945
Pathmakers recruitment 13 th August 2019	3	12	£252
Pathmakers recruitment 18 th July 2019	2	8	£168
Pathmakers recruitment 23 rd July 2019	3	12	£252
Pathmakers recruitment 18 th December 2019	3	12	£252
Vision and Ideas subgroup 16 th May 2019	4	24	£504
Vision and Ideas subgroup 31 st October 2019	5	30	£630
Vision and Ideas subgroup 28 th November 2019	3	12	£252
Vision and Ideas subgroup 18 th February 2020	5	30	£630
Communications subgroup 1 st May 2019	5	30	£630

Meeting	Number of volunteers present	Time (hours)	Value (£)
Communications subgroup 7 th August 2019	3	12	£252
Communications subgroup 8 th November 2019	5	30	£630
Regional LAF 10 th July 2019	1	6	£126
Regional LAF 15 th January 2020	1	6	£126
Parish Paths seminar 29 th May 2019	5	40	£840
Parish Paths seminar 29 th October 2019	8	64	£1344
Parish Paths seminar 28 th February 2020	8	64	£1344
GRAND TOTAL 2019/2020		1375	£28,875