

Norfolk's Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007—2017 Strategic Review



Executive summary

The Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2017 is a strategic document and action plan intended to guide the way we manage and improve our rights of way network for the benefit of the communities who use it. However, much of the existing document is out of date and no longer fits with the wider context of access for which the Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF) have agreed a development framework and action plan should be produced.

In addition to public rights of way (PRoW), the wider countryside access network also includes a series of circular walks and long-distance trails plus quiet lanes and unclassified county roads (UCR).

Our Aims and Objectives

Aims

- Manage the countryside access network so that it is better able to meet the varying demands placed upon it.
- Increase public, economic and environmental benefit.
- Actively seek involvement of communities.
- Take a collaborative and pragmatic approach to responsibilities and resources.
- Increase investment in the countryside access network.

Objectives

1. Develop a well-signed, maintained and easily accessible network of routes that facilitate countryside access.
2. Develop an integrated network that provides opportunities for all users.
3. Improve promotion, understanding and use of the network.
4. Increase involvement of communities in the development of their local network.
5. Promote and keep up to date web-based definitive and interactive maps and other access information.
6. Improve understanding of and promote access to Norfolk's landscape and natural and built heritage through the countryside access network.
7. Maximise the economic benefits to Norfolk that are generated through the countryside access network including via tourism.
8. Improve public health and wellbeing through use of the countryside access network.

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Timescale

This review provides the strategic framework for the development of a new Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) effective from 2017. The new CAIP will involve a wider public consultation as part of its development.

The NLAf will provide Norfolk County Council with regular strategic advice on the development of priority actions for improving countryside access. The priorities identified as part of this review process are being translated to a live, smart action plan which will be monitored by the NLAf. We will start building this action plan immediately based on our current short term and medium term goals which we believe we can achieve. These are identified in the review. Longer term goals will be considered more broadly but specific actions will be built into the action plan to help us reach these aspirations.

The following gives a clear timescale for the development and endorsement of the action plan as well as development of the new CAIP:

- March 2015: Confirmation of whether funding is available from DEFRA for the development of new Access Improvement Plans.
- April 2015: Action plan presented to the Norfolk Local Access Forum for endorsement.
- May 2015: Commencement of CAIP development.
- May 2017: Completion of CAIP.

A SMART "Live" action plan

Specific	<i>Identify clear, specific goals</i>
Measurable	<i>These goals must be measurable to monitor progress</i>
Achievable	<i>Goals must be within reach – we can achieve them</i>
Realistic	<i>Goals are realistic – we can and need to achieve them</i>
Timeframe	<i>We attach a realistic timeframe to each goal</i>



Contents



Introduction	1
Purpose of the review	1
Who manages our countryside access network?	4
Strategic Context	6
Governance: Norfolk’s Local Access Forum	10
Thematic Chapters	12
● Green Infrastructure and Planning	12
● Health and Wellbeing	15
● Access for All	19
● Community Engagement and Volunteering	22
● Children and Young People	25
● Economic Partnership and Business Engagement	28
● Historic Environment	31
● Environment, Biodiversity and Conservation	33
● Coastal and Open Access	36
● Cycling	38
● Horse Riding and Carriage Driving	42
● Mechanically Propelled Vehicles	44
Communication & Action Plan	46

Introduction

The Norfolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2017 sets out the future aspirations for improving our network of local rights of way. The plan provides an assessment of the needs of the county's residents and visitors and of Norfolk's existing rights of way network.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000) requires Highway Authorities to make a new assessment of specified matters in their Rights of Way Improvement Plans and to review these, deciding whether they should be amended, not more than 10 years from the date of publication.

The time has come to review our Rights of Way Improvement Plan within the current strategic context and to consider the wider factors that influence countryside access. We are striving for a smarter live action plan monitored by the Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF) that recognises the priorities which have evolved for our countryside access network over the last 3 years.

We must address the whole network which comprises Norfolk Trails, public rights of way (PRoW) and other highways and permissive access.

Equally as important is to address the needs of our users to ensure they can experience all that the countryside access network has to offer and to enjoy the many benefits that come with this. For example, we need the trails network to better provide for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with physical or mental disabilities and visual impairments.

In addition to a wide range of users, other beneficiaries include local businesses, landowners and the environment, all of which stand to gain from a high quality and better signed and promoted network.

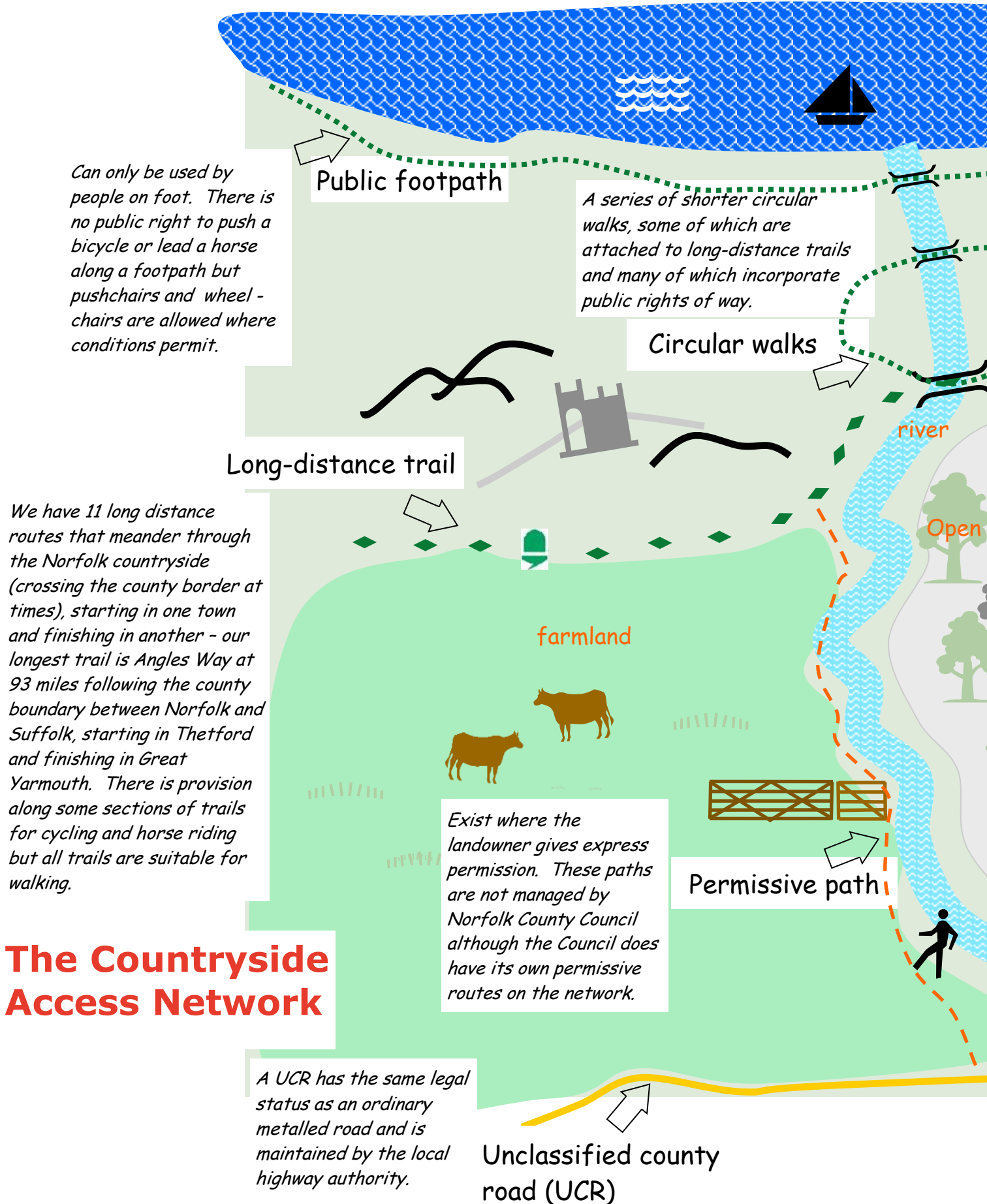
The current plan is out of date. It is timely to undertake the review exercise in order to prepare a new **Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP)** effective post 2017. This review will refresh the current aims and objectives and include an initial set of smart deliverables which will inform the new CAIP. These deliverables will be divided into achievable i.e. those that we know we can deliver in the short and medium term and aspirational for the longer term.

There will be actions attached to our aspirational objectives that demonstrate how we intend to make these achievable. For example identifying and successfully obtaining external (national or European) funding for projects or getting involved in other EU projects. We will be working closely with our projects team/EU project team and other internal partners to meet these objectives.

The evolutionary nature of the action plan means that it can be monitored and amended as necessary.

Aims of the review

- Update the strategic context for countryside access.
- Present a refreshed set of aims and objectives.
- Identify the development needs not covered by the current Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- Discuss our priority themes including areas of development opportunity and recommendations for action.
- Identify longer term aspirational goals.



Can only be used by people on foot. There is no public right to push a bicycle or lead a horse along a footpath but pushchairs and wheel-chairs are allowed where conditions permit.

Public footpath

A series of shorter circular walks, some of which are attached to long-distance trails and many of which incorporate public rights of way.

Circular walks

Long-distance trail

We have 11 long distance routes that meander through the Norfolk countryside (crossing the county border at times), starting in one town and finishing in another - our longest trail is Angles Way at 93 miles following the county boundary between Norfolk and Suffolk, starting in Thetford and finishing in Great Yarmouth. There is provision along some sections of trails for cycling and horse riding but all trails are suitable for walking.

farmland

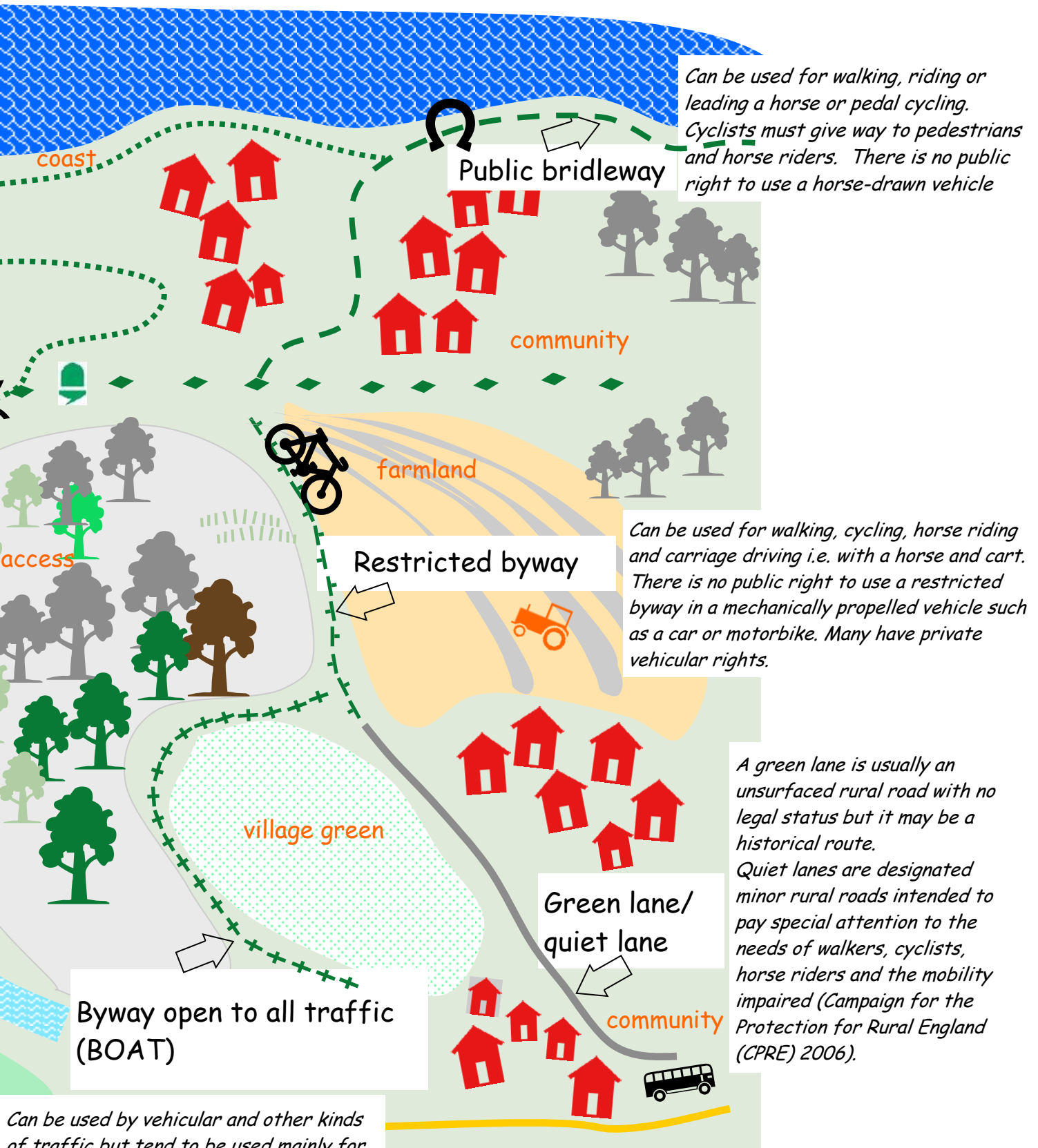
Exist where the landowner gives express permission. These paths are not managed by Norfolk County Council although the Council does have its own permissive routes on the network.

Permissive path

A UCR has the same legal status as an ordinary metalled road and is maintained by the local highway authority.

Unclassified county road (UCR)

The Countryside Access Network



Who manages our countryside access network?

The Highway Authority (Norfolk County Council)

Although management responsibility at the Highway Authority is divided between two different teams, the countryside access network remains one entity. For this reason both teams maintain a dialogue and are brought together by the Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAFF) which provides the strategic direction in terms of local access improvement.

As the Highway Authority, we are responsible for:

- Maintaining the surfaces of rights of way including the control of natural vegetation, to allow rights to be exercised.
- Assisting farmers and landowners with the maintenance of approved stiles and gates.
- Signposting footpaths, bridleways and byways where they leave a metalled road.
- Maintaining most bridges crossed by rights of way.
- Receiving complaints and taking appropriate action.
- Asserting and protecting the rights of the public to use and enjoy rights of way.

A right of way is usually maintained at public expense with responsibility for its surface lying with the Highway Authority and the underlying land probably owned by the adjoining landowner.

Landowners have a responsibility to ensure that public rights of way are accessible and the Highway Authority has the responsibility to enforce this. Norfolk County Council can prosecute a landowner or occupier such as a tenant farmer who does not comply with the law.

In practical terms, Norfolk Trails (Community and Environmental Services) manages the network of promoted routes: 11 long distance paths, around 200 circular walks and cycle and bridle routes that make up this network of over 1200 miles. You can find more information about this service at: <http://www.norfolktrails.co.uk>

A local partnership group has been set up to agree the management approach and allocation of funding to Norfolk's National Trail; The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path. This now includes the England Coast Path which is opening in stages as each section is completed. This approach is consistent with Natural England's "New Deal" for National Trails.

The Highways Department manages approximately 1900 miles of public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic (BOAT)). You can find out more information about this service at: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Leisure_and_culture/Public_Rights_of_Way/index.htm

The Public Rights of Way and Norfolk Trails teams are actively exploring external funding sources to expand the network and to extend its proactive management regime.

Landowners/Managers

There are large areas of land that are owned and managed by other people or organisations. For example, the Forestry Commission manages large areas of forest, often classed as Open Access land through which people are permitted to walk. The Forestry Commission also provide opportunities for cycling and horse riding within the forests that they manage.

Other examples include the Woodland Trust which manages woodlands across the county and Norfolk Wildlife Trust that manages over 50 nature reserves across the county. It is important to make good links and work with these organisations to cross-promote and improve access opportunities where we can. Certain bodies such as the Forestry Commission and Natural England also have a responsibility to seek advice from the NLA when they need to address or consult on access-related issues.

Other smaller-scale landowners have a role to play in ensuring local paths are accessible; sometimes they have a legal obligation to do so e.g. cross-field paths. In other situations, landowners may provide permissive routes across their land. However, with the removal of Higher Level Stewardship contributions from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the incentive for many landowners to provide permissive paths on their land will be affected. The Highway Authority aims to work with landowners to ensure all responsibilities are being met and further opportunities are being explored to improve and maintain the countryside access network effectively.

Communities

It is vital that we work in partnership and put localism at the heart of our approach to ensure as much of our countryside network is accessible to communities as possible. We have a particular opportunity to engage with parishes and work with volunteers in the development of their local path network; increasing "ownership" and bridging the gap between need and opportunity. This is already being demonstrated in some parishes and has been a positive step for the community. Boosting localism has been identified as a major priority and features amongst our objectives.



Strategic Context

Aims and objectives

The original Rights of Way Improvement Plan was developed in the context of other strategic documents such as the Local Transport Plan and strategy areas such as green infrastructure. It was also shown visually in relation to local, regional and national strategies or plans including Choosing Health, the Rural Strategy and East of England Plan. However, many of these are now out of date or no longer exist and have been replaced by new strategic policy documents. Whereas the original plan did not explore in depth the opportunities for working with stakeholders such as public health, businesses or community organisations and groups, the new CAIP will address these and will be integrated with a range of other relevant policy areas such as green infrastructure, access for all, historic environment, biodiversity, cycling, horse riding and children and young people.

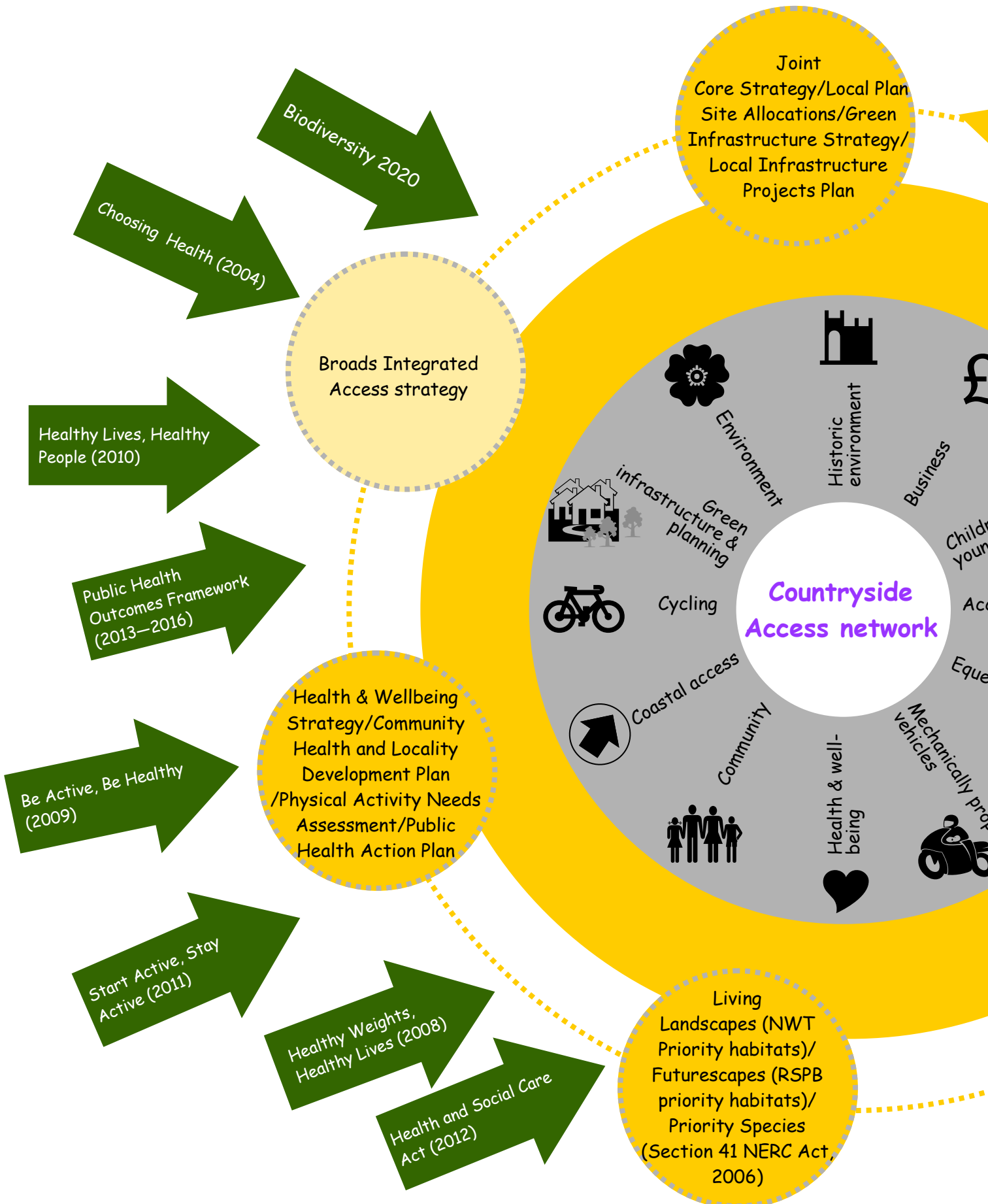
It is important to note that all policy areas involve walking as a basic means of accessing the countryside access network. Walking is not therefore given a thematic chapter on its own. It is encapsulated within the overarching themes and objectives we have identified. We are looking at those factors that affect people's ability to access the countryside and to enjoy an optimum experience when they do so; whether they are relating to individuals, families and lifestyles or whether they relate to where people live and the opportunities they have to access and engage in activity on the network.

Horse riders, cyclists, wheelchair users and drivers of mechanically propelled vehicles (MPVs) have been addressed specifically because they have different needs as a result of their equipment, animals and/or their physical/sensory capabilities. There is a very

clear priority for developing a "multi-user" network so that a variety of people may enjoy it simultaneously or be able to enjoy a much greater proportion of it than they presently do so.

Pages 8 and 9 show a visual representation of what the strategic context looks like today.





Governance: Norfolk's Local Access Forum

The role of the Local Access Forum (LAF) is to:

“Advise as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed”
(Section 94 of the CROW Act 2000).

The LAF therefore provides strategic advice and direction on access-related matters. Being an independent yet statutory group, there are a range of bodies who have a duty to consult the Local Access Forum on any issue or policy development that has access-related elements; first and foremost, the appointing authority, Norfolk County Council (NCC). Other such bodies include the Forestry Commission, Natural England, English Heritage and the local planning authorities.

Following an initial large stakeholder/forum meeting in April 2011, the following strategic priority areas were agreed by the LAF for the new CAIP.

Overarching priority areas

- Health and Wellbeing
- Business
- Community

Local stakeholder meetings followed and these overarching themes were broken down into particular areas for action.

In April 2013, the LAF agreed that the above themes were still relevant and that they should form the backbone of the new CAIP. A working group comprising members of the LAF was subsequently set up to drive this work forward. A number of relevant stakeholders were identified for face-to-face consultation.



Stakeholders

- Public Health, NCC
- Economic Development, NCC
- City and District Council planning teams
- Broads Authority
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)
- Norfolk Coast Partnership
- Norwich Access Group
- Landowners (LAF members)
- Horse riders (LAF members)
- British Horse Society (BHS)
- Cyclists (LAF members and Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC))
- Sustrans
- Green Infrastructure, NCC
- Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, NCC
- Norfolk Historic Environment Service, NCC
- Ramblers' Association
- Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- Highways, NCC
- Passenger Transport Services, NCC
- Norfolk Trails, NCC

Strategic themes

Following the consultation exercise the key strategic themes were identified and agreed by the working group. These were presented to the LAF who agreed that the following were priority areas for development:

- Green infrastructure and planning
- Health and wellbeing
- Access for all
- Local engagement and volunteering
- Children and young people
- Economic partnership and business

engagement

- Historic environment
- Environment, biodiversity and conservation
- Coastal and open access
- Cycling
- Horse riding and carriage driving
- Mechanically propelled vehicles (MPVs)

The following chapters explore each of the strategic themes in depth looking at:

- **The current situation**
Does the current plan meet the new aims and objectives? What is missing and what needs to be addressed?
- **Opportunities for development**
Given the condition of today's network and our approach to management and improvement (including partnership working), what opportunities are there to address identified access needs both on the ground and amongst communities?
- **Recommendations for action**
What needs to be done to address needs? Identify short, mid and long term.
- **Priority actions**
What are the short term and mid-term achievable goals for improving countryside access?

Green infrastructure and planning

The current situation

The 2007 Rights of Way Improvement Plan includes a section on green infrastructure and an appendix in which the term is defined. At that time, Norwich, Thetford and King's Lynn had been identified as 'Growth Points' where significant amounts of new housing were to be located and a Green Infrastructure Strategy drawn up for the Greater Norwich area. Since then, a number of new developments have taken place to further green infrastructure planning in Norfolk:

- A Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan was produced for the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) area in 2009. This developed the green corridors of the GNDP Green Infrastructure Strategy into a series of green infrastructure priority areas that could be used in the prioritisation of potential projects.
- The Joint Core Strategy for the Greater Norwich area was adopted in 2011. This document provides a strategy for development control planning in the Norwich City Council, Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council areas.
- A Green Infrastructure Plan for Thetford was produced in 2007.
- A Green Infrastructure Plan for King's Lynn

was produced in 2010.

- Dereham Town Council produced its own Green Infrastructure Plan in 2008.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a locally set tariff charged to developers by local authorities and is used to fund new infrastructure such as roads, schools and green infrastructure related to the new developments.
- Parish and town councils have been given the power to draw up their own Neighbourhood Plans if there is sufficient local support. If approved by the government and accepted by local voters, this plan must be taken into account when planning decisions are reached. It also results in the parish or town council responsible for producing it receiving a significantly higher proportion of any Community Infrastructure Levy money collected by the planning authority than they otherwise would. A number of parish and town councils are currently drawing up Neighbourhood Plans or are considering doing so.
- The CROW Act (2000) sets out the requirement for all historical public rights of way to be officially recorded on the definitive map by 1st January 2026. This relates to those routes that existed pre-1949.



Opportunities for development

Since green infrastructure is all about creating multifunctional linked green spaces, there are great opportunities to create new non-vehicular access routes linking development areas to the countryside. The green infrastructure documents listed above include suggested projects that would contribute to the countryside access network.

The sort of projects that could be delivered through either inclusion within the masterplans for new development areas or by funding from developers include:

- New circular routes linking development areas to the trails and PROW network.
- New trails (or parts of trails) where a strategic need to extend the network has been identified and the route goes through or close to a development area.
- Improving the quality of existing trails or paths which will be used more because of the increased local population.
- Maintaining new or existing trails or paths for an agreed period through a Section 106 agreement or similar legal agreement.
- Using historical rights of way that are officially recorded before 2026 as part of the development of local circular multi-use routes.

Recommendations for action

To take advantage of the opportunities to improve countryside access offered by green infrastructure planning, the following actions should be considered:

- Engage with planning officers and

communities drawing up Neighbourhood Plans to ensure that opportunities for improving the countryside access network are included in their plans.

- Try to get projects that will enhance the countryside access network included in the Local Infrastructure Project Proposals (LIPP) documents that are drawn up by planning authorities and which are used to allocate funding.
- Develop a new multi-use trail between Wroxham and Broadland Business Park (and from there to the Norwich Cycleway Pink Route and potentially to the Wherryman's Way) through the Broadland Growth Triangle.
- Bring the Kett's Country Trail up to National Trail standard, obtain funding for on-going maintenance and add it to the Norfolk Trails network.
- Investigate opportunities for funding the Tas Valley Way in order to add it to the Norfolk Trails network.
- Investigate the possibilities of creating a cycle route between Norwich, Hethersett and Wymondham, with a link to Hethel via Ketteringham and to the Norwich Business Park.
- Create circular walks off Boudicca Way that will link the trail with Long Stratton and the development sites to the east of the existing built-up area.
- Investigate the possibility of creating a cycle-able route along the disused railway line between King's Lynn and Hunstanton (as suggested in the King's Lynn Green Infrastructure Strategy).
- Create a series of circular walks off the Fen Rivers Way at Downham Market (as suggested in the King's Lynn Green

Infrastructure Strategy).

- Investigate opportunities to create a walking and cycling route between King's Lynn and Bawsey Country Park as the first stage of a possible trail between King's Lynn and Wells-next-the-Sea via Fakenham.
- Create a new bridge to link Norwich to Whitlingham Country Park more directly.
- Encourage users of historical routes, particularly those that date pre-1949, to apply for a right of way status by the January 2026 deadline.

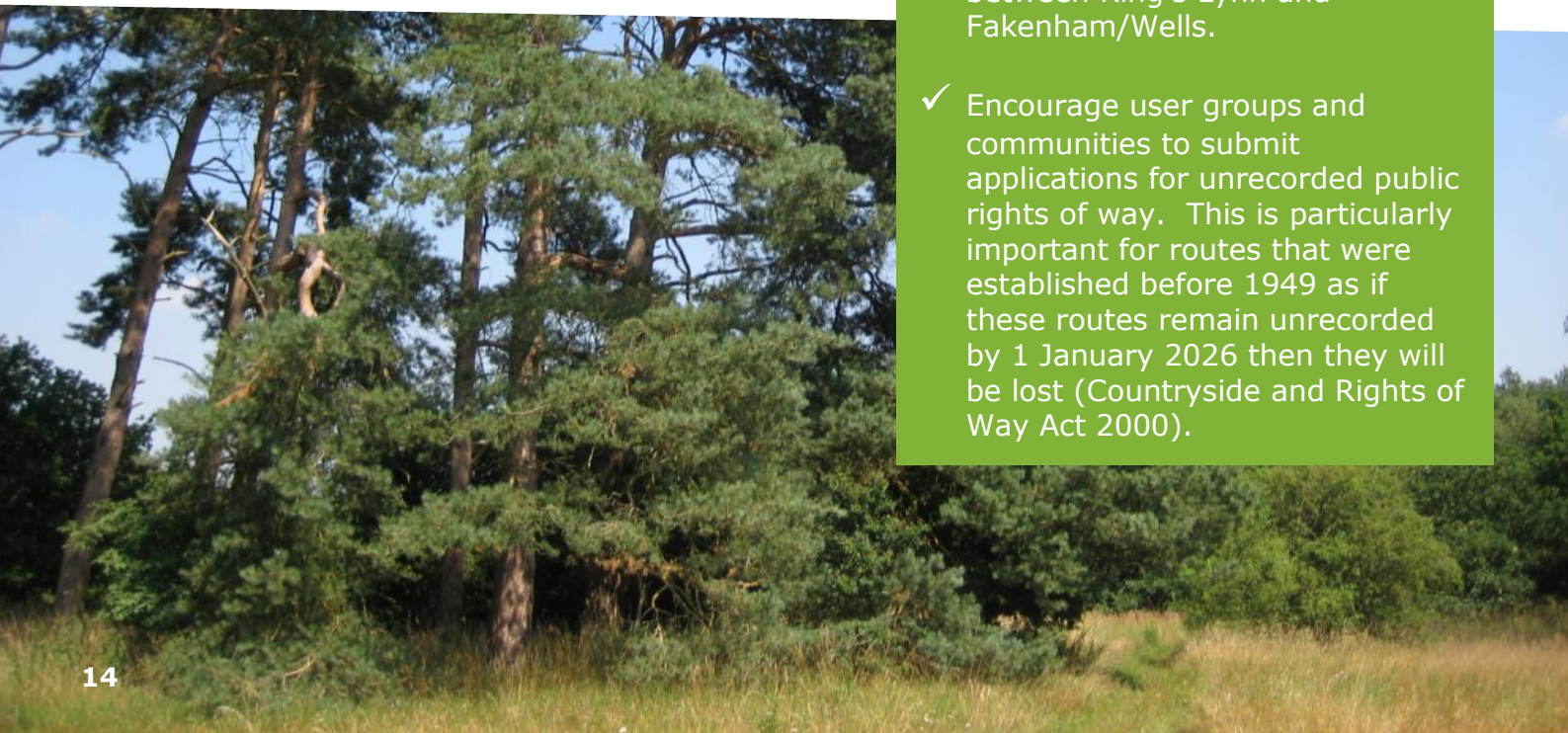
Who might we work with?

- NCC Green Infrastructure team
- Norwich City Council
- District Councils
- Parish and Town Councils
- Local 'Friends of' groups
- Highways (PRoW team)
- Natural England

- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)

Priority actions

- ✓ Develop and promote the 'green loop' linking the Marriott's Way and Bure Valley Path with a new trail between Wroxham and Norwich (Thorpe St. Andrew) called The Broadland Way.
- ✓ Improve the Kett's Country Path to Norfolk Trails standard.
- ✓ Develop a new long distance path along the disused railway line between King's Lynn and Hunstanton.
- ✓ Develop a new long distance path between King's Lynn and Fakenham/Wells.
- ✓ Encourage user groups and communities to submit applications for unrecorded public rights of way. This is particularly important for routes that were established before 1949 as if these routes remain unrecorded by 1 January 2026 then they will be lost (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).



Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing is a core theme embedded within the County Council's three strategic ambitions. Healthy and well communities will be stronger, more vibrant and aspirational with a greater sense of pride and value in themselves and in their surrounding environment. Feeling healthy and well in mind and body is more likely to lead to individuals and population groups who feel motivated, empowered and inspired to take a positive role within their community. This is something we can help address through improvement and promotion of countryside access.

The current situation

The new Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) must consider how countryside access contributes to public health outcomes and priority areas for action. The Department of Health Public Health Outcomes Framework 2013-2016 includes **"Utilisation of green space for exercise and health reasons"** as an indicator for tackling the wider determinants of public health. In addition, the health improvement category (helping people to live healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices and reduce health inequalities) includes:

- The proportion of physically active and inactive adults.
- Excess weight in 4-5 year olds.
- Excess weight in 10-11 year olds.
- Excess weight in adults.

The current RoWIP looks at each type of existing user in turn and discusses their needs. Commonly, these needs tend to be physical or practical in nature i.e. needs identified once a person is using the network. That is important in itself but equally as

important are those people who could become users of the network given the right information and support. Health behaviour is a big factor that we must consider when designing projects, working in partnership with health professionals and engaging our target users. The design of our communication materials, portals and promotional campaigns will also be important for getting the right messages to the right people. The current RoWIP does recognise the need for better promotion and clearer information on access opportunities but does not explore what exactly needs to be done.

Current policy and guidance

"Improving the environment in which people live can make healthy lifestyles easier. When the immediate environment is unattractive, it is difficult to make physical activity and contact with nature part of everyday life. Unsafe or hostile urban areas that lack green spaces and are dominated by traffic can discourage activity. Lower socioeconomic groups and those living in the more deprived areas experience the greatest environmental burdens". Healthy Lives, Healthy People (2010)

The Choosing Health White Paper (2004) referred to in the current plan has been built upon by more recent strategies such as:

- Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England (2010) and its updated document in 2011 about moving forward.
- Start Active, Stay Active, 2011.
- A Public Health Outcomes Framework for England 2013-2016.

The National Institute for Health and Care

Excellence (NICE) has also published a range of guidance around physical activity, planning and the environment. You can view this at www.nice.org.uk.

Access to good quality green space and green infrastructure is recognised as highly important throughout the policy and guidance and there is substantial evidence to suggest that access to green spaces and countryside has a positive effect on physical and mental health.

Driving forward public health

With the support and guidance of Public Health England (an executive agency of the Department of Health) local authorities now have a responsibility for driving forward the public health agenda and have set up statutory health and wellbeing boards to oversee the development of joint strategic needs assessments (JSNA) and joint health and wellbeing strategies. They will adopt an

integrated strategic approach to commissioning services and will ensure a local community-wide approach to improving and protecting the public's health and wellbeing. Integration and partnership working are key mechanisms for ensuring countryside access can contribute to the priorities set out by Norfolk's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority areas for action:

- Obesity
- Dementia
- Children and young people



Opportunities for development

In consultation with Norfolk County Council's Public Health team, the following have been identified as areas of joint work:

- Physical Activity development and strategy.
- Feeding in to:
 - Director of Public Health Report
 - Public Health Action Plan
 - Community Health and Locality Development Plan
 - Physical Activity Health Needs Assessment
- Community-led health initiatives in built up and rural areas.
- Public Health and Transport/Travel planning working together
 - Tackle social exclusion by encouraging and enabling links with public/community transport and corridor communities.
- Public Health and Trails projects.
- Public Health and future work with the Local Access Forum ensuring health forms a key strand of their action plan.
- Public Health and Physical Activity work (health walks etc).
- Working with Norwich City Council on a new cycle route and walking revenue funded project.
- Coastal access path.

Recommendations for action

- Promote public rights of way (PRoW) and trails as a valuable resource to be recognised and utilised by health professionals in health improvement.
- Work closely in partnership with stakeholders to maximise the health and social benefits to individuals using the countryside access network.
- Work with the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) and Norfolk Wildlife Trust to engage people *actively* in nature.
- Engage local volunteers in path monitoring and maintenance, biodiversity recording, surveying and conservation or other schemes through community champion networks and/or ambassadors for trails and PRoW.
- Engage those typically hard-to-reach inactive populations experiencing health issues such as overweight and obesity and their co-morbidities such as high blood pressure and type II diabetes.
- Engage those who are experiencing mental health issues ranging from mild depression to dementia in activity outdoors.
- Develop and improve information for hard-to-reach groups.
- Compile data on use of the trails network for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- Map health outcomes over access opportunities to trails and associated walks across the county.
- Joint appointment of a health and transport post.
- Joint appointment of health project co-ordinator/delivery posts.
- New objective in the CAIP around

empowering local people to access local PRoW and trails to improve and sustain healthy behaviours.

- Marketing around engaging sedentary/low active people

Who might we work with?

- NCC Public Health
- NHS Norfolk
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)
- Active Norfolk
- Schools
- Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS)
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Macmillan Cancer and the Ramblers (Walking the Way to Health)
- County and district planning/transport teams
- Mental health charities such as Mind and the Alzheimer's Society
- Health Trainer Service
- Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)
- The Conservation Volunteers
- Outdoor Education and Learning
- Age UK
- Community Service/Norwich Prison
- Education Sector e.g. University of East Anglia (UEA)
- UEA Medical School
- Norfolk Recovery Partnership



Priority actions

- ✓ Design bespoke projects and identify funding to engage those typically hard-to-reach inactive populations experiencing health issues in outdoor activity on trails and other PRoW. These health issues/target groups will be consistent with those identified as priority action areas by the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (obesity, dementia and mental health and giving every child the best start in life).
- ✓ Develop a project based around male mental health and physical activity.
- ✓ Support the 'Enabling Communities' workstream by increasing co-production across communities linked to trails and health and wellbeing.
- ✓ Make stronger links with CCGs.
- ✓ Utilise/pilot Danish good practice model of approach to health development.
- ✓ Develop partnerships between the environment and health sectors to deliver effective projects that connect people with nature and improve health as a result.
- ✓ Evaluate the use of PRoW and the potential health and wellbeing benefits that PRoW provide communities to feed in to the evidence base for upgrading and improving the network.

Access for all

The current situation

The network of public rights of way (PRoW) and trails should be, as far as possible, accessible to all types of user including the elderly, those with chronic health conditions including physical and mental disabilities, people with visual impairments and those with young families.

The physical needs of these groups of people in relation to the countryside access network are identified by the existing Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) and the action plan pledges to identify and develop accessible routes as well as promoting these with partners. This work has been done to an extent. The Norfolk Health, Heritage and Biodiversity Walks developed between 2008 and 2011 ensured that each town provided some routes accessible to wheelchair and pushchair users. These were easily identifiable in the books which were promoted through a range of community outlets including GP surgeries, community centres, libraries; children's centres, mental health services etc. However, developing these walks highlighted the lack of accessible routes in the more rural locations and an obvious need to address this situation. Other circular walks and long distance trails have been upgraded in places to improve accessibility to more users but there are still gaps in the network and this is a high priority for the new CAIP.

The Deregulation Act (2015) will allow (once the relevant sections are in force) greater flexibility for landowners and users to negotiate the position of claimed and registered public rights of way and alter the processes leading to the registration of unrecorded public rights of way. This could be useful for user groups with particular needs on paths.

The new Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) must sufficiently explore the opportunities to promote the countryside access network to a wider range of users. For many, finding, accessing and understanding the information in front of them could pose a challenge in the first instance and then there could be issues of confidence, self-esteem and familiarity in going outdoors and venturing into the countryside. We will need to build relationships with carers, groups and organisations that help and support people with chronic conditions so that they are given the best opportunities to discover and enjoy the countryside. Similarly we will need to find the most effective means of promoting the countryside access network to the elderly or those with young families.

The LAF includes representation for disabled users of the countryside. This member has given his own time to audit the Boudicca Way, one of Norfolk's long distance trails that runs for approximately 36 miles between Norwich and Diss. His mission has demonstrated the following important points:

- People are willing and able... and can inspire you with what is possible.
- People care and want to be involved.
- Voluntary involvement from members of groups such as this is invaluable to our knowledge and our ability to build a picture of what needs to be done.
- Members of particular target groups will have contacts that can help us promote countryside access more effectively.
- Members of particular target groups can advise us on what needs they have.

Opportunities for development

- The physical upgrading of PRow and trails i.e. infrastructure to make them accessible to all types of user.
- Consideration of health and safety needs of disabled users.
- Looking at whether current signage is appropriate for all types of user and if not, what changes need to be made?
- Ensuring our information is accessible, understandable and useable by members of different user groups.
- Working with health and community groups/professionals to ensure that we are effectively reaching our target groups.
- Working with health and community groups/professionals to ensure we are effectively communicating with our target groups.
- Making better links between public transport and countryside access.
- Deeper consideration of the physical and social needs of different types of user e.g. disabled, visually impaired, young families, mental disabilities or illnesses such as dementia, depression and learning difficulties.
- Working with landowners to improve access on farmland.
- Working with local businesses to ensure facilities cater for the needs of multi-users, especially those with physical disabilities.

Recommendations for action

- Audit all trails for easy access. Identify where improvements need to be made.
- Works to improve surfaces on PRow and trails where audit demonstrates the need and potential for access for disabled and other users.
- Install easy access gates in replacement of stiles or existing gates on PRow or trails where there is reasonable opportunity to do so.
- Ensure that bridges and boardwalks forming part of access routes utilise a ramp at each end to allow use by all users e.g. over streams and drains and through wet woodland. Boardwalk must be suitable for use by wheelchairs and pushchairs.
- Improve condition and ensure reinstatement of cross-field paths.
- Based on the Deregulation Act (2015), work with route users and landowners to ensure that paths are adequately positioned to accommodate needs.
- Consultation with user groups – assessment of needs.
- Consultation with health and community professionals – what emotional/social/physical support is required for certain types of user and how can we accommodate this?
- Ensure information is tailored to need. Make information accessible to particular types of user e.g. Braille, large print, audio.
- Ensure signage can be seen and interpreted effectively by different types of user.

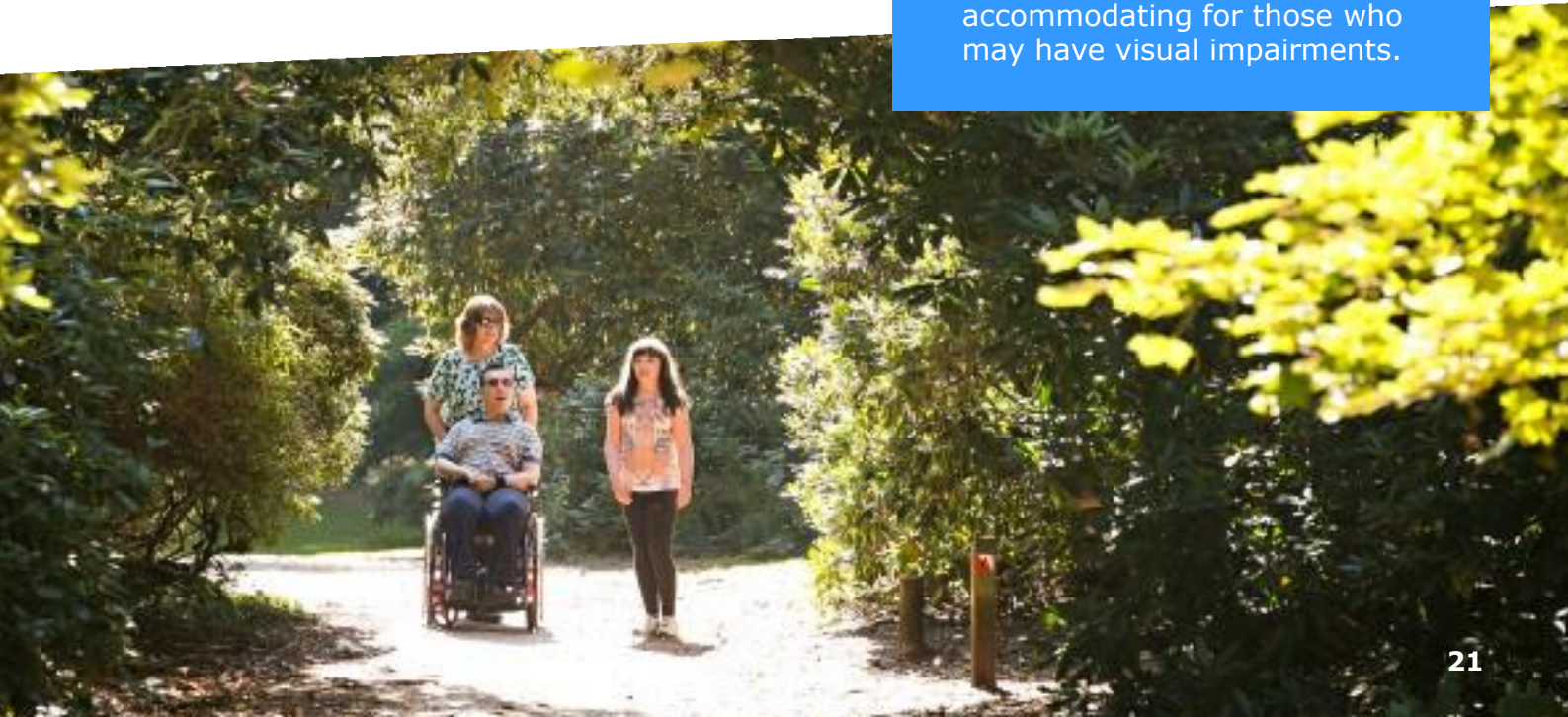
- Improve safety of or install crossings over busy main roads.
- Promote easy access routes via website and social media and via health and community professionals.
- Ensure adequate signage for easy access routes.
- Assess the degree of access to public transport links in relation to accessible routes.
- Promote access points to accessible routes that link closely to public transport.

Who might we work with?

- Norwich Access Group (NAG)
- Disabled Ramblers
- Mind
- Alzheimer's Society
- Age UK
- Norwich and Norfolk Association for the Blind (NNAB)
- Equal Lives
- Riding for the Disabled

Priority actions

- ✓ Audit routes (PRoW and trails) to assess current provision for wider access such as surface condition and infrastructure suitability for wheelchairs and pushchairs or appropriateness of signage for users with visual impairments or mental health difficulties such as dementia.
- ✓ Conduct user needs assessments and undertake subsequent improvement of infrastructure and signage on trails and PRoW where needs are identified.
- ✓ Develop promotional material suitable for a range of target users and ensure the website is accommodating for those who may have visual impairments.



Community engagement and volunteering

The current situation

For many years, community groups have been actively involved in the management and promotion of countryside access. Walking, cycling and horse riding are activities that large numbers of people participate in, and many of those who do are willing to help to promote and look after their local routes. Examples of such community involvement that are going on at the moment include:

- Groups that organise programmes of walks, such as the Norfolk Ramblers. They offer a chance to go for a walk in the countryside with a group of like-minded walking enthusiasts. Norfolk has nine branches of the Ramblers, covering the whole county.
- The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) Norfolk is working with the Ramblers and the Open Spaces Society to bring together a network of Parish Footpath Wardens to share experiences and access advice and news. The Footpath Wardens monitor the condition of local paths and report their findings to their parish council, who can then help resolve any issues.
- Some parish councils have taken responsibility for the management and maintenance of public rights of way (PRoW) in their parishes, ensuring that some of the footpaths and bridleways that the County Council has stopped cutting on a pro-active basis due to budget cuts are maintained to a higher standard than the County Council is able to currently achieve.
- Volunteers are involved in the management of a number of Norfolk's trails, such as the Norfolk Coast Path and the Weavers' Way. They inspect the section of path that has been allocated to

them, report any problems that they find and, in some cases, carry out maintenance work themselves.

- A number of parish councils have instigated the creation of footpaths within their parishes. An example of this is the new Horseshoe Way path in Tasburgh - an old route which has been recreated by the parish council through the purchase of the land from a parishioner.
- Research into the history of footpaths and bridleways has been carried out by volunteers, such as those involved in the CPRE Norfolk's 'Exploring our Footpaths' Research Project. This involved people from the four parishes of Thompson, Beachamwell, Horning and Reepham researching the history of footpaths in their area.
- Sustrans have a team of volunteer Rangers who help to manage the National Cycle route network, part of which goes through Norfolk. As well as inspecting the routes to report any problems, volunteer Rangers also carry out maintenance work such as improving signs, removing graffiti, picking litter and cutting back vegetation where needed.
- An interactive map has been developed which allows members of the public to report any problems they have encountered by recording them directly onto a map on the Norfolk County Council website.

Opportunities for development

- More parishes could be actively involved in the management of countryside access, with an increase in the network of parish footpath wardens and local agreements over the management of some PRoW through which parish councils carry out the

management with the support of the Highway Authority.

- More parish councils could use their local connections to negotiate the creation of their own permissive paths to create local countryside access links.
- More parish councils and local community-based organisations could create their own circular walks that can be promoted to local people and visitors.
- All Norfolk's trails could have volunteer Trail Rangers who inspect them and help to maintain them. The same concept could be applied to PRow networks in parishes.
- All Norfolk's trails and networks of parish PRowS could have one or more 'Friends' groups. These groups would help to promote the Trail/PRow network locally by organising events on them and raise money to fund improvements (like new seats or signage). Some might also have a more active role in managing a section of a trail or specific parish paths.
- Stakeholder groups could be set up for people with a particular interest in an aspect of countryside access, such as MPVs, horse riding and carriage driving, improved access for people with disabilities and cyclists.
- Further develop Norfolk as a walking and cycling-friendly county for example by continuing to engage towns in the Walkers are Welcome initiative. Steer from the recently appointed Walking and Cycling Champion and Members-led working group will help to prioritise activities.
- Further develop Norfolk as an all-user friendly county with steer from the LAF multi-user subgroup and recently appointed cycling and walking champion and Members-led working group. Activities could involve encouraging more market towns to engage in the "Walkers are Welcome" accreditation initiative and holding community consultations to establish need for improved access and access links in specific areas.



Recommendations for action

- Continue the programme of recruiting local volunteers to form a team of 'Trail Rangers' for all Norfolk's trails. The next Trail to be focused on should be Marriott's Way.
- Consider using the same concept for PRow e.g. PRow rangers.
- Provide training for people who have volunteered to be Trail Rangers, to enable them to carry out the role in a safe and effective way.
- Potentially develop this training for volunteers on PRow.
- Facilitate the setting up of 'Friends' groups for the Paston Way and Weavers' Way, with others to follow.
- Set up a 'Trails User Group' for people with an interest in MPVs, with other special interest user groups to follow such as the Ramblers, Open Spaces Society etc.
- Further develop Norfolk as an all-user friendly county with steer from the LAF multi-user subgroup and recently appointed cycling and walking champion and Members-led working group.

Who might we work with?

- Active Norfolk
- Voluntary Norfolk
- Parish councils
- NCC Public Health
- Mind
- Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF)
- Broads Local Access Forum (BLAF)
- Suffolk Local Access Forum (SLAF)
- Local "Friends of" groups
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Youth Offending Team

Priority actions

- ✓ With a Local Access Forum lead, engage further with parishes and develop agreements for local ownership of path monitoring and maintenance, producing exemplar models to help attract other parish involvement. Identify further funding sources to enable this; potentially linking with Local Action Groups. As part of this, organise and host an annual workshop of parishes and other interested groups to generate ideas and actions that benefit the PRow network.
- ✓ Develop and expand the Trails Rangers voluntary scheme across trails and by including networks of PRow in parishes. Deliver training sessions to volunteers and develop an interactive web forum/tool box for Rangers on the Trails/PRow websites.
- ✓ Set up user focus groups in communities to help complete user needs assessments for multi-use trails.
- ✓ Facilitate the set up of community 'Friends of' groups for individual trails and parish path networks to increase local ownership and enhance the sense of pride communities have in their countryside access network.
- ✓ Further develop Norfolk as an all-user friendly county with steer from the LAF multi-user subgroup and recently appointed cycling and walking champion and Members-led working group.

Children, young people and education

The current situation

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of research showing the value to the physical and emotional development of young people of having contact with the outdoor environment. Research also shows a decline in the amount of time that young people spend outdoors, with more time being spent indoors looking at computer screens.

The 2007 Rights of Way Improvement Plan includes a section on Young People in the 'Assessment of Needs' section. It points out that many young people think that the countryside is not for them.

Surveys of users of Norfolk's trails show that young people are under-represented in comparison to their proportion of the population. This under-representation is particularly pronounced amongst teenagers. For example a survey of users of the Angles Way in 2013 showed that only 13% of Norfolk's trail users are under 18 years of age whereas 24% of the total population fall into this age category.

While the overall picture suggests that there is

still much to do to encourage more young people to explore the Norfolk countryside on its paths and trails, there have been some successful initiatives:-

- The Duke of Edinburgh Award includes an expedition, which involves young people in back-packing on a long-distance route.
- Uniformed groups such as Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Explorers participate in activities that involve walking on our footpaths including trails. In 2013, there was a special Brownie event in Norfolk to get as many groups as possible walking a trail.
- Geocaching (a high-tech treasure hunting game involving hand-held GPS devices or smartphones) has proved to be very popular with families and a great way to encourage young people to go out walking with their parents. A pilot project introducing school students to geocaching on the Nar Valley Way and Weavers' Way also proved to be very successful.
- In May and June 2014, a 'Beat the Streets' initiative was run in parts of Norwich as part of a government-funded project organised by Norwich City Council and run by Living Streets. It involved encouraging young people to compete for their school or youth club by recording how far they walked by swiping a smart-card against recording posts that had been put up across the area on a temporary basis. Prizes were given to the teams who, over the period of the initiative, had walked furthest.
- Leaflets have been produced with games and challenges for young people to encourage them to walk in the countryside. Examples of this include the 'Treasures of the Gaywood Valley' pack of leaflets and an 'eye-spy' leaflet produced for Marriott's Way.



Education is not just for young people, and there have been initiatives to inform older people about the natural and cultural history of Norfolk's paths and trails:

- The University of East Anglia had a 'Pathways to History' project, which worked with volunteers to find out more about the history of Norfolk's footpaths and green lanes.
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England—'Connecting Threads: Exploring our Footpaths'—a project aimed at communities to encourage them to explore the history of their local parish paths and enrich their knowledge of public rights of way so that they value them and explore them more.
- Guided walks programmes such as those run by museums to educate people on the heritage of the local area.

Opportunities for development

- More young people could be encouraged to access Norfolk's paths and trails by tapping into their spirit of adventure and desire to play games and collect things.
- Working more closely with education providers could result in elements of the curriculum being delivered through visits to Norfolk's paths and trails. There are particular opportunities for teaching history and ecology in an exciting and memorable way where paths and trails link to heritage sites.
- Working more closely with uniformed groups with an interest in outdoor exploration.

Recommendations for action

- Create a Norfolk County Council geocache

trail on every Norfolk trail, to be maintained by volunteers.

- Explore the potential of 'Munzee' (a smartphone based urban treasure hunting game similar to geocaching but using hidden QR codes) to get young people walking in urban areas by setting up a pilot trail in Norwich.
- Produce curriculum-linked education materials on the heritage and biodiversity of Norfolk's paths and trails.
- Promote countryside access using the social media that young people use e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc, and be prepared to add new methods of communication as social media evolves.
- Encourage more young people to get directly involved in helping to manage local paths and trails through creating more links to schools and youth clubs. This might range from making bird boxes to use on the identified route, to a school taking on the inspection of paths or sections of a trail under the Trails or potential PRoW Rangers volunteer scheme.
- Organise school visits to paths and trails, linking a trails-based activity (such as geocaching) with another educational activity such as a visit to a heritage site or nature reserve.
- Produce interpretation materials that are more tailored to young people in their content and method of delivery. For example, mobile phone apps with digital games that are played on a trail could be used or the use of stampers to encourage young path/trail users to try to collect the full set of stamps.
- Work with local 'Friends of the Trails' or 'Parish Paths' groups to organise events that will encourage young people to walk more, such as Easter egg hunts and

Halloween or ghost walks.

- Provide information on the Norfolk Trails/ PRow websites about play equipment along or close to the routes.
- Pilot the use of podcasts to provide downloadable audio information about what can be seen while using Norfolk's paths and trails. This may involve experts talking about heritage of the area or local people telling about their memories of the locality.
- Encourage 'Friends' groups or Walkers are Welcome groups to organise guided walks programmes.

Who might we work with?

- Primary and secondary schools
- Forest Schools Steering Group
- NCC Children's Services
- Active Norfolk
- NCC Public Health
- Norfolk Education and Action for Development (NEAD)
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Country Trust
- National Trust
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Norfolk Museums' Service

Priority actions

- ✓ Deliver bespoke projects in communities for children and young people to engage them in activity and in their surroundings (heritage and nature) on and around Norfolk's trails e.g. Munzee, geocaching, linking to Duke of Edinburgh, organising activities in conjunction with local

'Friends of Trails' or 'Parish Paths' groups and delivery of Young Roots, Heritage Lottery Fund project (subject to successful funding bid).

- ✓ Work closely with education providers such as schools and outdoor learning programmes to design and deliver activities on trails and path networks that:
 - Help teach the curriculum.
 - Raise awareness of the value of the environment.
 - Provide opportunities for those who find difficulty learning in a classroom environment.
 - Help develop confidence, self-esteem, team working and practical skills.
- ✓ Develop and promote trails and paths in a style appropriate to children and young people.
- ✓ Design user-friendly website pages and resources appropriate for children and young people.
- ✓ Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to promote events and opportunities.
- ✓ Develop apps for tablets and smartphones to help young people engage more with the outdoor environment while using trails.
- ✓ Hold events targeted at families with children, or at young people, to raise awareness of opportunities to participate in activities on trails and gain 'sign-up'.

Economic partnership and business engagement

The current situation

The new Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) must include information about the connections between countryside access and businesses. There are a number of important links.

- Tourism is one of the key sectors of Norfolk's economy – a recent survey calculated that the value of day-visitors and longer-staying tourists was **£2.8 billion** in 2012.
- Countryside access is an important part of the county's tourism offer. In terms of numbers of visitors recorded, two Norfolk trails were in the top ten Norfolk tourist attractions in 2013.
- Many rural businesses benefit greatly from the custom of the people who use Norfolk's footpaths and trails. These include pubs, cafes, holiday accommodation providers, shops, and cycle hire providers.
- Norfolk's fine landscapes and the opportunities to enjoy them provided by its countryside access provision help to provide the quality of life that can encourage some businesses to relocate here – they know that in Norfolk they will be able to attract and retain high-calibre staff.

In recent years, some measures have been taken to help businesses take advantage of the opportunities provided by Norfolk's paths and trails.

- Relevant businesses can sign up to be featured on the Norfolk Trails website's interactive map.
- Fingerposts on some trails let users know

where there is a relevant business close to the trail but not visible from it.

- Training on how to make the best use of marketing tools such as social media has been offered to businesses within trail corridors through externally-funded projects.
- Business networks such as 'Walkers are Welcome' have been set up in some towns to help to market them as places to visit in order to go for a walk in the countryside.

Opportunities for development

- Inform more local businesses about the commercial opportunities offered by people using Norfolk's paths and trails, and provide materials and training to help them to benefit from these.
- Work with businesses to develop and promote new trails and visitor offers.
- Explore ways in which businesses can financially support the maintenance of Norfolk's paths and trails.
- Develop more business networks to help to promote countryside access in their area.
- Market Norfolk as a place to come to on holiday in order to explore its network of paths and trails.
- Work with the British Horse Society (BHS) to promote Norfolk as a riding holiday destination.

Recommendations for action

- Work with partners to set up a web-based 'business toolkit' to provide information to rural businesses and start-ups about how best to market themselves in order to take advantage of the opportunities generated by their local paths and trails.
- Organise training sessions for rural businesses to show them how to use new media to promote themselves better as places to come to in order to enjoy the Norfolk countryside.
- Work with 'Visit Norfolk' and other organisations such as the BHS to promote Norfolk as a place to come to for great outdoor experiences.
- Develop and promote themed trails linked to local businesses. Examples of this would be a 'sea-food trail' on the coast, or an art and craft trail linking local studios, galleries and shops.
- Encourage every town in Norfolk where there is any interest in the scheme to become accredited 'Walkers are Welcome' communities.
- Set up 'Friends' groups for all of the Norfolk trails and encourage local businesses to get involved.
- Improve the way in which businesses sign up to get featured on the Norfolk Trails website's interactive map in order to encourage more businesses to do so.
- Set up a 'visitor payback' scheme, through which businesses that benefit financially from countryside access contribute to the maintenance of the paths and trails by adding a small donation to the cost of an item or service such as a cup of tea or the hire of a cycle.
- Explore sponsorship opportunities, through

which businesses contribute to the cost of the maintenance or improvement of a path or trail in return for the favourable publicity that comes with the association.



Photograph credited to the Norfolk Food and Drink Festival.



Photograph credited Andy Tryner, Countryside Agency.

Who might we work with?

- Visit Norfolk
- Destination Management Organisations (DMOs)
- Local tourism businesses
- NCC Economic Development
- Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- Walkers are Welcome groups
- Outdoor activity businesses
- British Horse Society (BHS)
- Equestrian services such as livery yards, farriers, feed merchants, vets and horse-friendly accommodation providers.



Priority actions

- ✓ Work with partners to develop and set up a web-based toolkit for businesses including a training package to assist with use and implementation and to help businesses better promote themselves.
- ✓ Develop and promote themed walks and trails linked to local businesses such as arts, food, landscape and history. Explore sponsorship opportunities which could help fund trail and path developments while providing businesses with publicity as a result of the partnership.
- ✓ Through the set up of "Friends of" groups for trails and parish path networks, encourage towns to apply for "Walkers are Welcome" accreditation. Facilitate and support this process with the aim of handing local management of the scheme to the "Friends of" groups; including attracting involvement from business and linking with Visit Norfolk.
- ✓ Find better ways to monitor PRoW use and evaluate their economic benefit, investigating funding through departments such as Norfolk Trails, Public Health and Economic Development to carry out such work and to feed in to the evidence base.

Photograph credited to the Norfolk Food and Drink Festival.

Historic environment

Current situation

The new Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) must include a specific section on Historic Environment, which is significant given the clear importance of Norfolk's heritage. Accessing heritage in the countryside is a key element of many peoples' outdoor experience. Paston Way is a good example of a managed trail that has heritage as its focus, with fourteen churches integral to the experience and the 'Paston Letters' as a focus for exploring the area's medieval history. Equally there is Boudicca Way's eponymous association with the queen of the Iron Age Iceni Tribe and with the Roman development of Norfolk.

Opportunities for development

Widening the information available to people accessing the countryside about the surrounding landscape and its heritage is an important aim for extending the appeal of our offer for both local users and visitors to Norfolk. Providing this information can be done through a variety of means, from producing books and leaflets, to developing the information available on the internet. Another potential way to increase access to Norfolk's historic environment is to produce themed walks and cycle rides. Many of Norfolk's promoted routes lend themselves well to this approach.



Recommendations for action

- Heritage top 50 – working with the Historic Environment Section to develop information on the top 50 heritage sites associated with Norfolk’s paths and trails.
- Pilgrim routes – a linking theme examining Norfolk’s pilgrim heritage and the sites that were important stops on the way to Walsingham.
- Ancient Ways – working in conjunction with UEA to examine some of the oldest routes in the county.
- Ancient landscapes – provide more contextual information on the changes that

some of our special landscapes have gone through.

- Industrial Norfolk – drawing out themes relating particularly to the former railways that once linked much of the county.

Who might we work with?

- NCC Historic Environment Service (HES)
- English Heritage.
- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- National Trust.
- Round Towers Churches Society.
- Norfolk Churches Trust.



Priority actions

- ✓ Work with the Historic Environment Section to develop information on the top 50 heritage sites associated with Norfolk’s paths and trails.
- ✓ Build on and link with existing projects such as Deep History Coast and the UEA’s Pathways to History to develop bespoke projects around ancient routes including pilgrimage routes and contextualise the influence of ancient landscapes on today’s environment.
- ✓ Develop themed projects drawing on industrial Norfolk; in particular the railways that once linked much of the county.

Environment, biodiversity and conservation

The Current Situation

The 2007-17 Rights of Way Improvement Plan includes as an objective the enhancement of biodiversity through the management of public rights of way (PRoW). A set of measures were included in the Action Plan in order to work towards this aim. At the time it was written, the system for protecting and enhancing biodiversity was through a combination of site designation (i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest), legal protection for particular species (such as bats and badgers) and Biodiversity Action Plans drawn up by local Biodiversity Partnerships for those species and habitats felt to be most under threat. All three of these mechanisms still exist, but there have been a number of significant new developments as well:

- 'Making Space for Nature' was published in September 2010. This was an independent report by a group of experts chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton. It argued that existing measures for protecting biodiversity had not been effective, and that landscape-scale measures were needed.
- A Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice' was published in June 2011. In this, the government accepted the arguments put forward in the Lawton report and suggested various mechanisms for delivering landscape-scale measures.
- 'Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services' was published in Summer 2011. This document outlines the government's ambition to halt the loss of England's biodiversity by 2020.
- Local Nature Partnerships are one of the mechanisms for delivering landscape-scale changes described in the Natural Environment White Paper. 'Wild Anglia' is

the Local Nature Partnership covering Norfolk and Suffolk. It is closely aligned with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, which covers the same area.

- The concept of 'ecosystem services' has become more widespread. This gives a financial value to ecosystems by considering how much it would cost to provide the same service through other means. A National Ecosystem Assessment was published in June 2011, which provides values for ecosystem services.
- The Stern Report on the Economics of Climate Change was published in October 2006 (just before the Rights of Way Improvement Plan). This report, along with the fourth assessment report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of 2007, increased public awareness of the likely consequences of climate change if CO2 emissions continue to rise. Isolated populations are more vulnerable to the effects than those that can move along corridors to find suitable climatic conditions.



- Ash die-back (*Chalara fraxinea*) is a fungal disease that kills ash trees. It was first reported in Britain in February 2012, and by October that year had reached woodlands in Norfolk. The effects of the disease on Norfolk's woodlands are still not certain, but it seems possible that a high proportion of the county's ash trees might be lost in the next decade.

Opportunities for development

- Countryside access can provide 'green corridors' that can increase the connectivity between otherwise isolated habitats and contribute to an increased resilience of wildlife populations in accordance with the 'Biodiversity 2020' strategy. This is particularly true of long-distance trails such as Marriott's Way, which is already a County Wildlife Site.
- Footpaths and trails are a place where the public has a chance to encounter Norfolk's wildlife and flora. There are opportunities to better interpret the biodiversity of the routes to users.
- Where sections of trails are owned by public authorities, there is a particular opportunity to manage the trail corridor in order to maximise the value for biodiversity.
- Areas such as Open Access land can provide green space hubs for both wildlife and people. The use and promotion of open access land must be considered and clarified in terms of responsibility.

Recommendations for action

- Draw up management plans for all stretches of trails that are in public ownership. Where management plans already exist, make sure that they are up-to-date and take into account the possible impact of ash dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*).
- Introduce people to the biodiversity of trails corridors by developing biodiversity recording activities. These might involve:
 - 'Young Recorders of Tomorrow' projects, working with local schools.
 - 'Citizen Science' projects where path users are encouraged to send in wildlife records seen on a particular trail or circular walk (as is being organised by Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the British Trust for Ornithology within their Bure Valley Living Landscapes project).
 - Guided walks along countryside access routes led by an expert in an aspect of biodiversity.
 - Providing training in wildlife recording to local volunteer 'Trail Ambassadors'
- Promote public-access nature reserves and sites where the public are encouraged to watch wildlife from Norfolk's trails through signage and the website.
- Engage in the green infrastructure planning process, and in doing so, try to use new access routes to direct people away from the most sensitive biodiversity sites and towards those that can best cope with increased numbers of visitors.
- Set up a LAF sub-group including other relevant key stakeholders to address use and promotion of Open Access land.

Who might we work with?

- Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS)
- Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- RSPB
- Wild Anglia (Local Nature Partnership)
- Natural England
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)
- Forestry Commission
- National Trust
- Woodland Trust

Priority actions

- ✓ Draw up management plans for all stretches of trails in public ownership including associated PRow following the example of the Marriott's Way strategy.
- ✓ Engage the public, particularly young recorders in citizen science projects to help monitor wildlife populations e.g. Breaking New Ground projects. Such projects aim to boost sense of value, ownership and responsibility for environmental conservation through training trails/paths ambassadors who can help engage other local people or fellow students in recording and developing environmental awareness.
- ✓ Engage with the green infrastructure planning process ensuring that accessible routes are designed into new developments so that they provide safe and attractive opportunities for people to choose to walk or cycle and they are considerate of environmentally sensitive sites.



Coastal and open access

Current situation

Norfolk currently has significant coastal access on the North Norfolk Coast with the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail forming part of the Trails portfolio.

The new England Coast Path and its associated spreading room has been established by Natural England. Stretch one of the Coast Path has now been handed over to Norfolk County Council for management.

There are also significant areas of open access land across the county. Areas of open access woodland are managed by the Forestry Commission while other areas with open access rights fall within the remit of Natural England. Areas with such rights allow people access on foot.

The Commons Act (2006) Part 1 picks up on the possibility that mistakes may have been made in the initial registration process for common land and town village greens. This means that local users may submit applications to either add to or deregister such areas of land.

Opportunities for development

- Natural England is tasked with creating the England Coast Path and is currently creating new coastal access in Norfolk as part of this.
- Stretch 1 of coastal access runs from Weybourne through to Sea Palling; stretch 2 runs from Sea Palling to Hopton on sea.
- Stretch 3 from Weybourne to Hunstanton is looking again at the current Norfolk Coast Access to see if there is an opportunity to re-route the path so it retains the proximity to the coast only making changes as and where required.
- Stretch 4 is likely to be Hunstanton through to Sutton Bridge creating a coastal access opportunity right around the Norfolk coastline.
- Norfolk Trails is seeking to create and promote circular walks from the work Natural England are engaged in when creating the new coastal access route.
- Strengthen communication between open access land management and the Local



Access Forum, ensuring that advice is sought and given as appropriate.

- Areas such as open access land can provide green space hubs for both wildlife and people. The use and promotion of open access land must be considered and clarified in terms of responsibility.

Recommendations for action

- Create circular walks from the Norfolk Coast Path inland linking business, heritage and cultural sites to the footpath.
- Develop other access opportunities including cycling and horse riding.
- Set up a sub-group of the Local Access Forum including other key stakeholders to address the use and promotion of open access land and link more closely with managers of open access land.
- Advise users of the possibility of applications being made for additions to

and deregistration of common land and town and village greens where it can be shown that mistakes were made at the initial registration stage.

Who might we work with?

- Natural England
- National Trust
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Landowners
- Norfolk Coast Partnership
- Highways (Public Rights of Way) team

Priority actions

- ✓ Create circular walks from the Norfolk Coast Path inland from the route linking business, heritage and cultural sites.
- ✓ Developing opportunities for cycling and horse riding and linking these with other routes including quiet lanes. Organise user focus groups to assess need.
- ✓ Link with the Norfolk Coast Hopper and ensure information is provided on the coastal bus service to enable people to plan their trips using public transport.
- ✓ Set up a sub-group of the Local Access Forum including other relevant key stakeholders to address the use and promotion of open access land and link more closely with open access land managers.

Cycling

Current situation

The widening of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan to a broader remit offers a good opportunity for taking a closer look at the Local Access Forum's approach to cycling. There is a case to be made in favour of adopting not only a cycling strategy for the county of Norfolk but also having a strong vision for how the LAF would like to see cycling develop in Norfolk.

The public health related reasons for a cycling vision are hugely compelling. Equally persuasive are the potential economic and environmental rewards in pursuing an ambitious cycling vision for the county. Using cycling as a way of ultimately defining Norfolk as a destination and as a place to live has real potential for marketing the county. Green infrastructure can help to deliver this vision, but it also requires that funding be sought from a wide variety of sources including the EU, national government, charities and district councils. Attracting such funding will be made much more likely if there is a coherent and attractive vision for cycling that is well integrated in policy and has wide political approval. Key to the success of such a vision is building the evidence base for the benefits. Good practice elsewhere has demonstrated that implementing a range of pro-cycling measures tends to obtain the best results.

Opportunities for development

Encouraging cycling, both for leisure and as a means of travel for short journeys, including commuting to work, is recognised as having a wide range of public benefits. These include, lowering carbon and traffic emissions, raising the level of physical activity in the general population and creating healthier and more intellectually engaged employees. What is less well understood and has been covered less by

the media, are the economic benefits for rural economies that cycling can provide through increased tourism and the networking of small to medium enterprises. Increasingly national, county and district level planning frameworks and policies have cycling articulated throughout them. Much good work has been carried out recently; notably Norwich City Council has secured £3.7m from the Department of Transport for work that forms part of the Norwich Area Transport Strategy.

Public Health

There is now a significant and growing body of evidence for the public health benefit to be derived from encouraging cycling. Specific interventions can boost cycling to some effect, but many studies have found that interventions were most effective as part of a



package of measures. The specific health benefits accruing from cycling have been well documented and include significant reductions in cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. Arguably the LAF should be looking at cycling from a more rural perspective, but there are lessons to be learned from urban situations in this regard. In order for a rural cycling vision to be really successful it must be thoroughly integrated with Norfolk's urban centres.

Childhood inactivity is a problem in our society generally. The Chief Medical Officer for England's report (2011) noted:

"There is clear evidence that dietary control and physical activity are effective in reducing obesity and overweight at an individual level, although creating environments that promote and enable healthy eating and active lives requires action across industry, Local Government and the NHS."

Norfolk has a particular issue with school age children's activity levels, with only 41% reaching the recommended levels of daily activity (Chief Medical Officer for England's Report 2011, 2013). With such high levels of inactivity there will in future years be an increased public health burden, as higher levels of obesity and type 2 diabetes are likely to be present at raised levels within the inactive component of the population. Enabling the school-age population in particular to cycle more will inevitably have an impact on activity levels and knock-on health benefit, particularly in terms of increased cardiovascular fitness levels. There is also good evidence to show that removing incentives to making car journeys has a significant effect on the number of active travel instances.

Economic

In addition to public health benefits there is clear economic potential in making Norfolk's leisure cycling offer more attractive to visitors and tourists. There is excellent potential for building on existing infrastructural capacity and linking together a number of outdoor pursuits such as cycling, walking, horse riding, geocaching, and running into a competitive and attractive visitor offer. Velo Loisir de Luberon (Leisure Cycling in Luberon - <http://eng.veloloisirluberon.com/>) provides an interesting and successful case study on how to integrate a series of cycling routes effectively with local small to medium sized businesses, including campsites, accommodation providers, restaurateurs, and cycle sales, hire and repair businesses. All these businesses have formed a network to make cycling holidays in their region as seamless as possible, including cooperation between cycle sales/hire businesses facilitating the hire of a bike in one location that can then be ridden along a route and handed back to another business at the end of the journey. There are also cooperative agreements in place on repairs so that a bike can be repaired at a number of separate businesses on route. Norfolk has the potential to make a very strong offer for cyclists, with its large number of quiet country lanes. The green infrastructure planned for in the Greater Norwich Development Plan includes new trails, some of which could be multi-functional. The Norfolk Coast Partnership has met with success in promoting cycling on the north coast. There is strong competition and the offer will need to be distinctive and well organised, with information presented in an accessible and convenient manner.

Commuting

A proportion of our off-road network has direct potential for increasing the number of cycling commuters. To enhance this will require a concerted approach and investment. Capital investment can potentially be delivered through funding bodies. A strategy would assist greatly in successfully securing capital investment from central government, lottery, EU and public health related programmes. One of the weaknesses in the current set of Norfolk cycling policies articulated at county and district level is the lack of a joined strategy and the link between rural and urban commuting.

improvement grants to increase the cycling off-road network, for example, the further development of disused railways (in appropriate locations) as cycle-ways.

- Examine increasing the use of quiet lanes for leisure cycling and for commuting routes linking rural locations to urban centres.
- Examine the best way to input into the co-ordinate information on cycling in partnership with districts – there is good potential for working with Norwich, King’s Lynn, Thetford and Great Yarmouth and with rail companies – joining up cycle hire and public transport options.

Recommendations for action

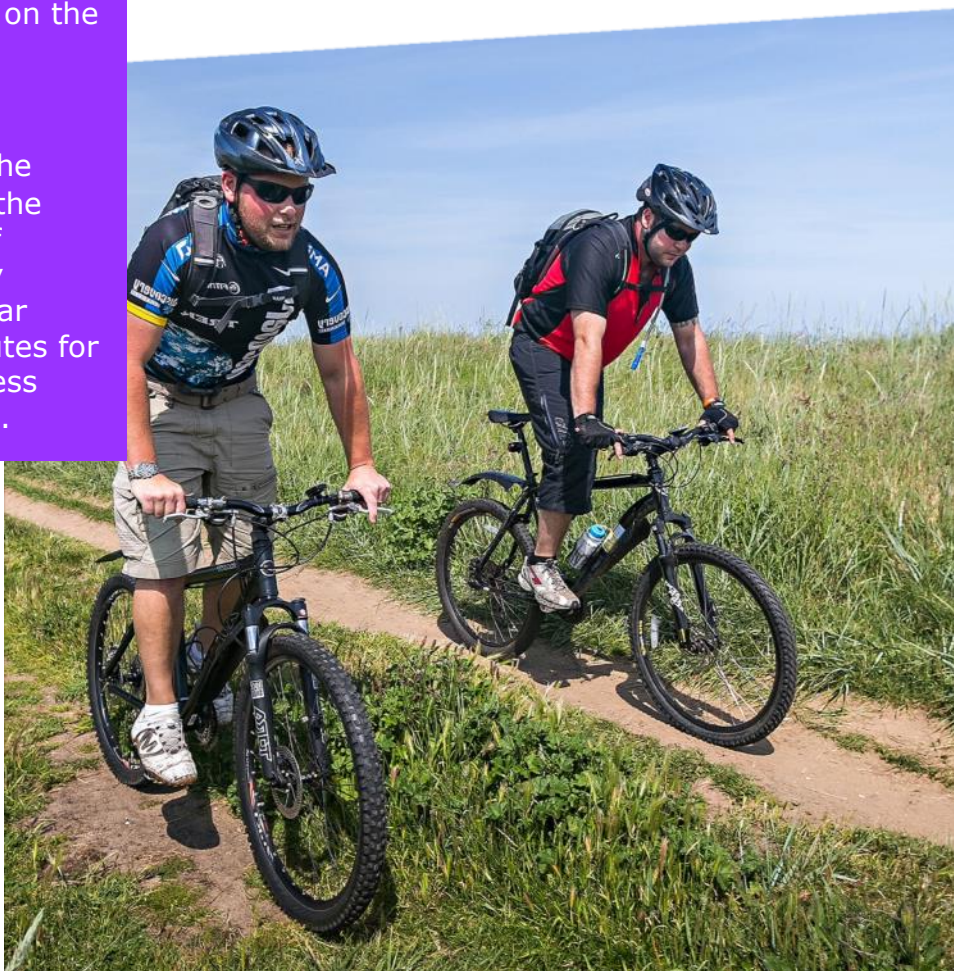
- Norfolk Local Access Forum adopts a county wide Norfolk Cycling Strategy prior to the new Countryside Access Improvement Plan being written, and adopts the strategy within the plan when published.
- Develop the evidence base for cycling.
- Consider establishing a LAF sub-group for cycling or representation on a multi-user sub-group.
- Consider the best way to achieve integrated information for outdoor activities in Norfolk to make accessing cycling within the county as easy as possible.
- Work with national cycling associations to bring cycling events such as the Tour of Britain and Tour de France to Norfolk but also work with local communities to link with and promote local events as there is a great deal of participation in cycling amongst residents and visitors to the county.
- Support bids for infrastructure

Who might we work with?

- Norwich City Council
- City and district councils
- Sustrans
- Department for Transport (DFT)
- Cyclists’ Touring Club (CTC)
- Active Norfolk
- NCC Public Health
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

Priority actions

- ✓ Increase the evidence base to attract funding to develop Norfolk's cycling offer including feasibility/pilot studies for the use of disused railways for off-road cycling and the use of quiet/green lanes for cycling to school, teaching children to ride bikes and improve cycling proficiency.
- ✓ Promote the concept of the green loop linking Marriott's Way with the Bure Valley path and the planned multi-modal path between Thorpe St Andrew on the East side of Norwich and Wroxham.
- ✓ Promote cycling access to the Broads Authority Area and the North Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as alternatives to car travel for leisure. Audit routes for suitability and improve access conditions where necessary.



Horse riding and carriage driving

The current situation

Riding is a growth activity according to the Equestrian Access Forum's 2012 report "Making Ways for Horses – Off Road Equestrian Access in England". It states

"Between 1999 and 2006 the number of riders in Britain increased by 44% to 4.3 million (i.e. people who had ridden at least once in the past 12 months) which works out at 7% of the total population".

The network of bridleways, restricted byways, byways open to all traffic and unclassified country roads (UCRs) across Norfolk is sparse and scattered with a minimal number of joined up circular routes compared to the network of footpaths.

Off-road access is important for equestrians i.e. riders and carriage drivers. On-road riding can be pressurised and dangerous not only on faster, bigger roads but on some smaller country 'rat runs' where the volume and speed of traffic are extremely off-putting for both horse and rider. There are many of these roads across the county and this can create potentially hazardous circumstances for both equestrians and vehicle users due to the unpredictable nature of horses. Many motorised vehicle users do not respect this fact and their driving behaviour around horses demonstrates this.

What horse riders and carriage drivers want

According to Making Ways for Horses (2012), horse riders and carriage drivers want a local network of rideable and driveable routes which gives a variety of local rides and links to wider networks. Riders want to get off the roads away from tarmac and traffic.

Opportunities for development

- To consult with the equestrian/driving community and establish where there are particular opportunities to improve access to create multi-use routes away from roads.
- To engage with farmers to address equestrian access across farmland.
- To engage with bed and breakfasts to consider providing horse-friendly vacation facilities.
- To engage with stables to increase awareness of Norfolk Trails, improve access and promote their business.
- To raise the voice of the equestrian community.
- To ensure equestrian awareness is part of road safety/driving tests/speed awareness courses and campaigns.



Recommendations for action

- To evidence the need for improving equestrian access through consultation and auditing and to use this to seek funding for projects that will allow us to create multi-use trails for this purpose.
- Develop circular routes using green lanes and permissive access where appropriate.
- Clearly sign all circular routes.
- Upgrade trails i.e. surfacing and widening where appropriate to accommodate horse riders/carriage drivers and join up routes/ provide access links.
- Provide gates wide enough to allow passage of carriages.
- Provide sufficient horse box/carriage parking and facilities for riders and their horses such as hoses, mounting blocks, benches and shade.
- Include horse box parking on the interactive map.
- Include stables on interactive map.
- Work with accommodation providers to develop horse-friendly facilities.
- Include accommodation which provides facilities for horses on the interactive map.
- Signpost to nearest stables – work with stables.
- Establish a LAF sub-group for multi-user trails that includes equestrian representation.

Who might we work with?

- Horse riders and carriage drivers
- Local riding establishments
- Local landowners
- British Horse Society (BHS)
- Active Norfolk
- Riding for the Disabled
- Age UK

Priority actions

- ✓ Improve, develop and promote circular horse riding/carriage driving routes that minimise risk to horse and rider/driver; upgrading routes to multipurpose function where suitable.
- ✓ Evidence the need for improving equestrian access through consultation and auditing and to use this to seek funding for projects that will allow us to upgrade trails to multi-use for this purpose.
- ✓ Provide education and raise awareness about equestrian use of the network amongst all user groups and develop a general toolkit for all users of the network which provides tips and "etiquette" on multi-use.

Mechanically Propelled Vehicles (MPVs)

Introduction

Many people may use some form of mechanically propelled vehicle (MPV) to enable them to enjoy their chosen way of experiencing the countryside. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders may use a car for example to get to walks, rides and trails that are too far away to leave the car behind. However, this section is directed towards the specific use of Norfolk's network of un-surfaced roads or green lanes by users of MPVs as a means of accessing the countryside.

The driving of both vehicles and motorbikes on these types of route is NOT off-road driving. Off-road driving means just that and can only take place on private land off the public highways; but even then there are rules in place that have to be followed. The county's network of un-surfaced roads are public highways* and as such require vehicles to meet the same standards as they would driving surfaced roads.

****The public has a right to drive motor vehicles on Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) as well as a presumed right on Norfolk's unclassified county roads (UCRs), typically shown on Ordnance Survey maps as Other Roads with Public Access.***

The current situation

Norfolk is a popular destination for users of its network of green lanes. Although Norfolk has a small number of BOATs it is well provided with many miles of un-surfaced UCRs which make it an ideal destination for family breaks when combined with its many other tourist attractions. Many of these can be driven, with care, by almost any car.

Since the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 removed the right to drive Roads Used as Public Paths (of which Norfolk had 304 miles) and they became Restricted Byways, the interest in using un-surfaced roads continued to grow. This has put more pressure on the remaining network with increased demand yet less provision.

Unfortunately, as with all laws and regulations, there are those who choose to ignore them. The use of un-surfaced roads is no exception, and it is the few who choose to act anti-socially who are a cause for concern; driving on Public Rights of Way where they are not permitted, straying into planted crops, driving too fast and ignoring other users are just some of the problems that are faced.

Opportunities for development

- Raising awareness of the opportunities to access the countryside respectfully and safely using MPVs through organising and promoting events.
- Introducing or improving signage on soft-road tracks and UCRs.
- Working closely with clubs and associations,



Photograph credited to Martin Sullivan
(Norfolk Local Access Forum)

landowners, local communities and the police to ensure that legal MPV access to the countryside is monitored, understood and accepted.

- Developing voluntary opportunities for drivers of MPVs such as 4x4s to help improve countryside access e.g. surfaces, signage and access points as well as providing help and support during emergency situations through 4x4 Response.

Recommendations for action

- Promote National Codes of Conduct for Green Lane Driving such as those promoted by the Land Access Recreational Association (LARA).
- Encourage and support the establishment of properly run 'off-road' days, either at temporary or permanent sites. These provide a challenging environment, and help to discourage bad behaviour on un-surfaced roads.
- Waymarking UCRs (which are multi-user routes) with black arrows as observed practice in other counties; especially where they intersect Public Rights of Way (PRoW).
- Encourage the reporting of any anti-social driving on un-surfaced roads and monitor feedback.
- Recruit members of clubs and associations to help with volunteer work, local promotion and emergency response. Promote their involvement.
- Identify UCRs suitable for MPV access on the interactive map.
- Provide information on the Norfolk Trails and Public Rights of Way websites/pages about MPV access to Norfolk's countryside.
- Set up a subgroup of the Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF) to focus on specific MPV issues and include representation on a multi-user group.

Who might we work with?

- Green Lane Association (GLASS)
- Treadlightly
- Trail Riders Fellowship
- Highways
- Land Access Recreational Association (LARA)

Priority actions

- ✓ Promote National Codes of Conduct for Green Lane driving e.g. LARA and demonstrate acceptable use of MPVs away from quiet lanes and UCRs through organised events at permanent or temporary sites. Involve local enthusiasts and members of clubs as volunteers and ambassadors for these events and activities.
- ✓ Waymarking UCRs in combination with policing and community monitoring of inappropriate use as well as highlighting UCRs on the interactive map.
- ✓ Recruit members of clubs and associations to help with volunteer work, including maintenance of UCRs, local promotion, education and emergency response. Promote their involvement and seek external funding to maintain and promote UCRs as multi-user routes.
- ✓ Devolve leadership of MPV actions to NLAF sub-group set up to focus on this type of access.

Communication

Communication is key to ensure validity of our new CAIP. Without this, it will mean nothing. Engagement of new users or businesses cannot happen without working in partnership or without tailoring the message to the right people. The action plan will specify who we need to communicate with and how. There are five main channels through which we will communicate with our target audiences:

- Online (website and social media)
- Partnership working internally and externally
- Promotional events
- Public relations
- Printed materials such as leaflets and display banners

Who are we targeting?

In terms of countryside access we are targeting users and beneficiaries of the countryside:

- Potential new users (hard-to-reach groups and those who are starting out)
- Existing users
- Business owners
- Communities

In terms of this strategic review:

- Local government officers
- Stakeholders as listed on page 11
- Additional stakeholders as required
- Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAF)
- Politicians

Action Plan

The local action plan will:

- Be based on the outcomes of the strategic consultation and review of the existing aims and objectives.
- Be a live and evolving document.
- Involve a range of partners including local government officers and other stakeholders.
- Inform the Norfolk Local Access Forum's forward work programme.
- Be integrated with cross-sector business/strategic plans and objectives.
- Focus on short and medium term priority actions as well as identifying the priority actions that will help to achieve our longer-term aspirations.





www.norfolk.gov.uk/trails
www.norfolk.gov.uk/nlaf

 **Norfolk** County Council

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