



Central Baptist Church, Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, CM1 1LN

MINUTES

1st September 2009
2pm – 5pm

Present

Members:

Mick Brash (Chairman)	Edward Dixon	Robert Johnstone
Kevin Ascott	Karen Fulcher	John Victory
David Corke	Norman Hunt	Ed Woods

Observers: There were no members of the public present

Apologies: Christine Allman, David Anderson, Bob Drane, Hazel Jarrold, Richard Tattersall

The following Officers were present in support:

Michelle Gardiner – Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)
Garry White – ECC Definitive Map Manager
Jason Botelho – ECC PROW Officer
Anne Cook – Atkins

		ACTION
1	Welcome and introductions	
	The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Anne Cook from Atkins and Jason Botelho who has just started working at ECC as part of the Community Action Team. All ELAF members introduced themselves.	
2	Minutes of previous meeting	
	The minutes were proposed as a true record of the meeting held on 7 th July 2009. All agreed. <i>Matters arising</i> Michelle Gardiner reported that ELAF's general comments regarding the Sustainable Communities Act had been submitted. Members were reminded to send any comments about the mitigation of	

	<p>longstanding obstruction problems by Public Path Diversion Order, as discussed at the last meeting to Garry White.</p> <p>It was noted from reading the report of the regional LAF meeting held on 29th July that it seemed like it had been an interesting event and it was unfortunate that ELAF had not been represented.</p> <p>Garry reported that the ROWIP launch event held at Fyfield Village Hall was successful. At the event, Christine Allman gave a presentation about how the ROWIP had been developed and various PROW officers gave presentations about their areas of work. Hard copies of the document are not available yet as there was a problem with the printers, but should be available soon.</p> <p>Charlotte Fellingham had supplied the following page view figures for the online version of the Access Essex publication:</p> <p>1/1/06–31/3/06 – 553 page views 1/4/06–30/6/06 – 628 1/7/06–30/9/06 – 496 1/10/06–31/12/06 – 353 1/1/07–31/3/07 – 581 1/4/07–30/6/07 – 704 1/7/07–30/9/07 – 636 1/10/07–31/12/07 – 647 1/1/08–31/3/08 – 521 1/4/08–30/6/08 – 495 1/7/08–30/9/08 – 451 1/10/08–31/12/08 – 339 1/1/09–31/3/09 – 388</p> <p>It was felt that producing the publication might not be an effective use of officer time. It was suggested that an article in the EssexWorks magazine about ROW and ELAF would reach a larger audience and that parish councils could be asked to link to the ECC ROW web pages from their village websites because the ROW pages are difficult to find on the ECC website. Jason Botelho reported that he will be taking responsibility for Access Essex and invited members to submit ideas to him by e-mail jason.botelho@essex.gov.uk</p> <p>Ed Dixon reported that there was no update on the Dedham Vale planning application.</p>	
3	Public questions	
	There were no public questions.	
4	Combining Southend LAF with ELAF	
	Anne Cook explained that she is currently representing Southend Borough Council but is working for Atkins. Southend still does not have a LAF and cannot get dispensation from Defra. Defra suggested that	

	<p>linking Southend LAF to ELAF would be better than to Thurrock because of the geography of the county. Anne explained that ELAF members need to agree to Southend being represented on the forum before any progress can be made.</p> <p>Members discussed the issues of level of representation needed for Southend, how to ensure that Southend BC acknowledges ELAF's role as this is already a problem with ECC and using a population or geographic formula to calculate Southend BC's financial contribution. It was noted that many consultations are county wide and do not differentiate the unitary authorities so ELAF does sometimes consider Southend at present. It was suggested that the forum could be a collective group called Essex and Southend LAF.</p> <p>There were no adverse comments and members agreed that they are in favour of the idea of combining Southend LAF with ELAF.</p> <p>Anne reported that several Southend residents have expressed an interest in being LAF members in the past and would need to be approached again. Paula Dawson would be the Southend BC officer representative.</p> <p>It was agreed that a meeting needs to be convened between Paula Dawson and ELAF to discuss the issues in more detail.</p>	<p>MG</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Feedback from managing verges for biodiversity workshops</p>	
	<p>Robert Johnstone was unable to get to the East Area workshop, but Michelle Gardiner attended so ELAF was represented at all of the sessions.</p> <p>David Corke had circulated a report summarising the issues of managing verges for biodiversity and access. David explained that the two main problems for biodiversity considerations are the same as those for access: (i) scrub encroachment and (ii) loss of width through "theft" of the verge.</p> <p>It was agreed that ELAF should recommend to Councillor Hume that ECC takes action to manage all verges to address these two problems, not just the designated special roadside verges.</p> <p>It was recognised that ELAF should take advantage of the fact that verges are part of the pledges work this year by writing to Lord Hanningfield and Mary Atkins using the recommendations in David's report. It was felt that aerial photographs should be obtained to show examples of the problems, although David reported that he had experienced difficulty in the past when trying to access aerial photographs from ECC. It was suggested that a fact finding tour could</p>	<p>MG MB</p>

	be useful and MB offered to look into arranging this.	
6	Feedback from Shoreline Management Plan event	
	<p>Kevin Ascott attended this event on behalf of ELAF and had produced a summary report of the event which had previously been circulated. Garry White had also attended the event.</p> <p>Stakeholders at the event had the opportunity to discuss the current condition of seawalls and their likely lifespan. Seawalls will be maintained by the Environment Agency (EA) primarily where they affect people and properties.</p> <p>Garry reported that he was disappointed that the EA are only addressing the defence of existing seawalls. There are some areas that are not protected at present e.g. Maylandsea. The EA did not give any definite answers about future seawall maintenance.</p> <p>It is a cost/benefit analysis as to whether seawalls continue to be maintained; there is no guarantee that definitive routes on seawalls will be taken into consideration. Is it possible to have vertical movement of a definitive route, but not lateral i.e. if a seawall collapses, the definitive line is on the foreshore. The problem is that the EA do not think that they need to protect PROW on seawalls and that the coastal access provisions in the Marine Bill will provide a solution.</p> <p>Garry explained that the next stage will be in late October/early November when the draft SMP goes out to public consultation. The finalised SMP is planned for publication in 2010, probably later on in the year. ELAF could make representation at the public consultation stage.</p>	
7	Roadside margins	
	<p>(i) Barleylands John Victory reported that initial discussions with the landowner, Mr Kingston, had not been positive. The Parish Council was going to audit the land to determine the boundaries and confirm landownership. John will follow up with the parish clerk to check progress.</p> <p>(ii) A133 Little Clacton bypass Christine Allman had sent Michelle Gardiner an e-mail to update that she has looked at parts of the A133 with Sally Bartrum and a local rider to explore the issue. Sally Bartrum is now looking at the sections in Mick's proposal. Mike Cazneaux has not responded to Christine yet. MB reminded members of the importance of maintaining impetus regarding connectivity of PROW.</p>	
8	PROW severance	
	Amanda Earnshaw from Natural England has asked LAFs to provide local examples of PROW severance. Natural England is trying to set up	

	<p>an internal group to look specifically at severance issues and how the organisation can exert influence both nationally and locally on this matter. Members discussed the ongoing problems of PROW severance and noted that it seemed to be an issue for all LAFs as it had been talked about at the regional LAF event. MB will send information to Amanda Earnshaw.</p>	MB
9	Commons and village greens	
	<p>David Corke offered to scan and pdf the delegate notes from the course that he attended.</p> <p>David reported that Nicky Rowbottom put him in touch with the relevant person at Defra regarding the creation of commons management councils. David had previously circulated a letter he had received from Defra which explained that the commons councils section of the Commons Act has not yet been brought into force but that district councils already have legal powers to do this anyway.</p> <p>David had also circulated a letter he had sent to Uttlesford District Council requesting they make a Commons Regulation Order for Ellis Green Common in Wimbish. UDC has responded that they will only go through this process if district councillors agree to it. Wimbish Parish Council and Uttlesford's LA21 group are supporting the request. If successful, grants could then be obtained to improve the management of the common. David will keep ELAF members updated.</p>	
10	Forestry Commission consultation	
	<p>Michelle Gardiner had previously circulated details of this consultation and maps of the Forestry Commission sites in Essex. The purpose of the consultation is to determine the long-term role of the Public Forest Estate. MB read out the points for consideration from the consultation summary.</p> <p>ELAF members discussed the fact that equestrians are the only users that currently have to pay a licence fee to access the forest. Members felt that there should be equality of use for all; if tolls are charged, this should apply to all users and all access should be higher level.</p> <p>MB and Michelle will submit a response on behalf of ELAF by the 28th September deadline.</p>	MG MB
11	Regional LAF event	
	<p>Michelle Gardiner had previously circulated the minutes of the regional LAF event. MB read out some key points from these minutes. MB feels that the relevant information from the minutes should be passed on to ECC. It was generally agreed that ELAF has good rapport and relationship with PROW staff at ECC but that the role of ELAF is not understood by ECC members. Garry White confirmed that he finds</p>	

	<p>ELAF meetings useful and feeds back information to colleagues when appropriate.</p> <p>Any comments from ELAF members in response to the regional event minutes to be sent to Michelle.</p>	
12	Correspondence	
	<p>ELAF has been invited by the East of England Regional Assembly to attend a public consultation event for the review of the East of England Plan on 3rd September. MB is unable to attend but would like ELAF to be represented because Councillor Jowers (Cabinet Member for Localism) will be there. David Corke and Ed Woods offered to attend on behalf of ELAF. Michelle Gardiner will book their places. ELAF members to e-mail David or Ed with any comments to be fed in to the consultation.</p> <p>The Sadlers Farm Public Inquiry took place at the end of July. Additional mitigation works were offered on the British Horse Society's concerns in terms of lighting in the tunnel and increased height in the parapets on the Church Lane bridge. The inspector will report back to the Planning Inspectorate and a formal decision is expected in the Autumn. Further details can be found on the website www.essexcc.gov.uk/sadlersfarm John Victory reported that newt fencing has already been put up on site.</p> <p>Natural England has asked LAFs to provide any evidence of the potential or actual impact of windfarms on PROW so they can assess whether or not there is an issue that EAF needs to address.</p>	<p>MG All</p>
13	Any other business	
	<p>Jason Botelho reported that Lisa Cross has moved on to a waste/recycling job at ECC and he has been in post now for two weeks. Jason spoke about his background and his previous job roles. He is part of the Community Action Team at ECC, working on the Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme. His P3 area will be Colchester and Tendring. As mentioned earlier, he will be responsible for the production of Access Essex.</p> <p>MB reported that there is British Horse Society training on 26th September in Huntingdon.</p> <p>MB reported that Natural England has made a request to LAF chairs to respond to a discussion paper outlining a simplified process for DMMO. MB described the proposed new process. EAF has asked for feedback. MB will circulate the document. Garry White suggested the proposed process would clutter the system rather than streamlining it, and explained that there would be no extra revenue to deal with the new process.</p>	

14	Date of next meeting	
	Tuesday 3 rd November 2009	