



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

MINUTES

January 11th 2011

2pm – 5pm

Present

Members:

Mick Brash (acting Chair)	John Victory	Kevin Ascott
Edward Dixon	Alan Adcock	Robert Johnstone
Ed Woods		

Observers:

Jeremy Squier

Apologies:

David Eagle
Hazel Jarrold

The following officers were present in support:

Jo Metson (RCCE) (ELAF secretary)
Garry White (ECC Definitive Map Manager)
Christine Allman (ECC PROW and Rural Network Manager)
Nick Burley (Southend LAF)
Michelle Gardiner (RCCE)

		ACTION
1	Welcome and Introductions	
	<p>Mick Brash was back in the Chair because Hazel Jarrold, the acting Chair, was unwell and unable to attend. The importance of finding a new Chair was stressed again.</p> <p>He wished all members a happy New Year, and passed on his condolences to all those who knew Alan Sievewright, a member of the Essex Ramblers Association who had often attended ELAF meetings, and who had sadly passed away recently.</p>	
2	Minutes of Previous Meeting	

	<p>The minutes of the 3rd November 2009 meeting were proposed as a true and accurate record by Kevin Ascott, seconded by John Victory, with a correction from Garry White.</p> <p><i>Matters Arising:</i></p> <p>Item 6: A letter had been written to Jane Swain, Essex County Council's Working Strategy Manager, to recommend the inclusion of PROW information on the Council's digital map.</p> <p>Item 8: The RCCE's Oyster magazine had now been printed, including ELAF's article and Jo Metson distributed copies.</p>	
3	Public Question Time	
	There were no questions from the public.	
4	ELAF meeting dates May 2011 – March 2012	
	<p>After discussion, it was decided by members that the pattern of meetings would remain the same, i.e. the first Tuesday of every month (2nd Tuesday in January) at the Central Baptist Church, 2pm-5pm with the possible exception of an outdoor meeting in the summer.</p> <p>The Stour Valley Way was put forward as a possible destination, and Mick Brash would liaise with the NE Essex PROW team.</p> <p>Jo Metson would contact the Central Baptist Church to book the room for the other months.</p>	<p>MB</p> <p>JM</p>
5	Membership including Southend provision, Chairmanship, new members	
	<p>Southend Provision:</p> <p>Nick Burley apologised on behalf of Southend Borough Council for the lack of progress. The group manager had been absent due to illness, but he remained hopeful that all would be in place for the next ELAF meeting.</p> <p>All was in place with Essex County Council, and Christine Allman was looking into how to give notice to ELAF and the required changes to the constitution.</p> <p>New Members:</p> <p>Although ELAF has above the minimum number of members required by its constitution, we have lost two members in the last year and it was felt a recruitment drive may be an idea.</p> <p>It was felt that members representing equine users/bridleway users and motorised vehicles may be under-represented. Jo Metson asked for any particular individuals to contact to be sent to her, and also the names of any appropriate publications in which to</p>	All

	<p>advertise.</p> <p>It was also thought that Jason Botelho would put an article in Access Essex. JM to investigate.</p> <p>Chairmanship:</p> <p>Following Mick Brash’s retirement from the Chair no new candidates had come forward. Hazel Jarrold, ELAF’s vice-Chair was willing to chair in the interim but not on a permanent basis.</p> <p>Robert Johnstone was proposed by Alan Adcock and second by John Victory and he was prepared to stand for a three year term. All members agreed with his appointment, and he was welcomed.</p>	JM
6	<p>Opportunity for County Council Reports</p>	
	<p>Christine Allman:</p> <p>The County Council restructure is almost complete, and now both she and Garry White report to Chris Smith, Asset Manager.</p> <p>Two officer vacancies remain to support Uttlesford and Tendring, but people are there to fill them. CA will send through a plan and directory of the new structure so members know who is who.</p> <p>There are three shortlisted contractors for Highways and they are being moderated. This will hopefully lead to a better value for money service.</p> <p>The Community Action Team will remain unaffected, and the promoting the use of volunteers will increase, with a new campaign being launched at the end of this month, piggybacking onto the ECC “Big Society” campaign.</p> <p>The Roach Valley Way booklet has been revised and refreshed and is now downloadable from the ECC website.</p> <p>The Best Value Performance Indicator results have been released.</p> <p>November survey scored 75.8%</p> <p>May survey scored 84.4%</p> <p>Total pass rate of 80.4 for the year.</p> <p>This is very pleasing as the target was 65%. The BVPI are no longer obligatory but ECC will continue with them, along with most authorities in the Eastern region. The ultimate goal is 100%!</p> <p>Garry White:</p> <p>Settling the backlog of Public Path Diversion orders has accelerated in the last three years. 85% are now resolved.</p> <p>50% of landowners contribute to the costs and the money has been ploughed back into training meaning expertise can now be built on.</p> <p>Now, work done for neighbouring councils is providing a revenue stream too.</p>	CA

	<p>95% of enforcement notices have been dealt with by liaison in the last year. Digitisation is 92% complete. The next batch of criteria for the definitive map is being looked at for after 2012.</p>	
7	<p>Discussion of context and contents of EAF letter</p>	
	<p>ELAF had received a letter from Duncan Graham at England Access Forum about its future (please see attached.) Essex LAF had written to Richard Benyon MP in support of them.</p> <p>Ed Woods had asked for this to be discussed further. He felt there was a great need for EAF as a central voice, but was worried how it will be managed, and the influence of central government. They are being pushed towards Natural England, who is becoming too diverse, and more interested in bio-diversity than access.</p> <p>MB felt we could enforce the need for it. ELAF had written in support but addressed its letter to Richard Benyon MP by good coincidence, rather than Paul Christenson. Duncan Graham had since met with Mr Benyon and hopefully ELAF's opinion was at the forefront of his mind!</p> <p>MB suggested we write to Paul Christenson now, stating that we want to reinforce the need for a group that has a voice in parliament, and who can focus on the small issues that are a consensus between LAFs, before they become big issues. JV also wanted a straight answer to whether they supported EAF.</p> <p>EW volunteered to draft something and forward to RJ and JM.</p>	EW
8	<p>Essex Local Access for cyclists and horseriders</p>	
	<p>Ed Woods reported on his progress to get cycling facilities at Writtle college, linking in with the possible need for dual access for cyclists and horseriders on bridleways and the problems thereof. He was considering sending a questionnaire to relevant clubs asking them what they would want access to and to make plans for development.</p> <p>The scheme would provide circular routes around college grounds and linking with existing routes, for recreation, enjoyment, exercise and access.</p> <p>The problems faced may be perceived rather than actual. MB has experience on both sides and seen no problems. However, out of control dogs were a problem for both groups.</p> <p>The scheme was discussed in depth, and various issues were raised and discussed, such as Higher Level permissions, the need to fit in with wildlife, and budgets.</p> <p>It was felt by ELAF that this could become a flagship scheme, as many similar situations</p>	

	<p>must exist. There would be a lot of support from user groups.</p> <p>EW will keep ELAF informed of his progress.</p>	EW
9	<p>Vehicular Rights on sensitive byways.</p>	
	<p>A member of the public had written to ELAF concerned with motorised traffic using a historical byway in Gestingthorpe, please see attached.</p> <p>CA had spoken to Jim Bartley who covers this area. It is a historical road, and it is the County Councils to protect all rights for all users. This instance will be looked at in more detail to check the severity.</p>	CA
10	<p>Correspondence</p>	
	<p>No correspondence had been received that hadn't already been covered, except for the following footpath orders:</p> <p>Proposed Footpath Diversion orders:</p> <p>Footpaths 2,3,11 and bridleway 5 – Stapleford Tawney</p> <p>1, 2 – Dedham</p> <p>13 – Ramsey</p> <p>11, 12, 13 - Stock</p> <p>26, 10 - Nazeing</p> <p>3 – Little Clacton</p> <p>13 - Mundon</p> <p>5 – Navestock</p> <p>21 – Doddinghurst</p> <p>Confirmed:</p> <p>10 – Sandon</p> <p>37 – Galleywood</p>	

	<p>13, 96 – High Easter</p> <p>63 – Roydon</p> <p>8, 10, 26 – Nazeing</p>	
11	Any other business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Victory gave a vote of thanks for Mick for standing in as Chairman for the meeting. • Michelle Gardiner introduced herself to those who didn't know her. She is usually the ELAF secretary but has been on maternity leave and Jo has been covering for her. She is catching up on what is going on in preparation to return to work, but is unsure what projects she will take on again. • Kevin Ascott wanted to propose that the Saffron Trail – a route from Southend to Saffron Walden, cutting from the north to the south of the County – was recognised as much as the two major historical routes in the County – St Peters Way and the Essex Way. It requires County Council support before it can be added to Ordnance Survey maps. CA replied that it was the County Councils responsibility to ensure the quality of all public routes and their permissions of all the route before it were published nationally. This is already being auctioned and Charlotte is looking at the route to match it with the definitive map to ensure quality and legality before the CC condones it. Nick Burley added that Southend Borough Council was to add the route to their website in a different colour to the other routes. • Robert Johnstone had an update on an issue raised in a previous meeting that of developers building blocks of flats on footpaths. Two positive outcomes had resulted, one that Colchester Association of Local Councils had adopted the advice note on PROW (from Garry White, see previous minutes) and any new developments affecting PROW will have to go through Chelmsford Borough Council. Secondly, it has been proposed that the Local Highways Panel should include PROW. • The Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been revised due to a change in funding; ELAF has not been informed of this. CA will chase this up. • The British Horse Society makes awards every year, and this year includes an award for a LTP that recognises bridleway issues and the needs of non motorised users. If Essex County Council's LTP is worded well, they may qualify, and this may boost their profile. MB will forward all information on to CA, and a letter to Cllr Hume. 	<p>CA</p> <p>MB</p>

	Date of next meeting	
	1 st March 2011	
	Attachments: 1. EAF letter 2. Letter from public regarding byways in Gestingthorpe	

1.

Dear Colleagues,

Quite a bit of time has elapsed since the closing date for LAFs to submit their views on the future of the England Access Forum. In the absence of any meaningful progress on the key issue of our existence to date, I felt that you deserved a brief update. Although there has as yet been no joint verification of the outcome, from those I have seen and from work done by our Secretary the indications are that:

- The vast majority of those LAFs which responded would like to EAF continue. There is a clear demand for EAF as a national forum to represent LAF views at national level and to champion access.
- LAFs felt strongly that EAF should be adequately resourced, funded, and supported with a degree of independence from Natural England.
- Not surprisingly, in the light of two fraught years for EAF, there were a number of constructive suggestions as to how improvements could be made.

Of course there will have to be a full report agreed by both parties. That means a great deal of work for both NE and ourselves – credibility requires that evidence, conclusions and recommendations on improvements be validated jointly. I have suggested that could best be achieved by a joint working group of us and NE.

But, - and it is a big but - what is the point of embarking on what will be an onerous undertaking for LAF volunteers if at the end of it all NE in effect says “ Fine but there isn’t going to be an EAF which is properly funded, supported and free to represent LAFs”? My fears have been heightened by an interim response from NE which in summary, tells us how treasured we are, accepts that LAFs clearly want an effective EAF and then goes on to do no more than confirm that this year’s inadequate budget exists and that there is no future commitment beyond March 2011. In effect the totally unsatisfactory status quo is confirmed and our fundamental concerns remain unaddressed.

Inevitably there are all the expected caveats about NE’s problems and cuts with which, in fairness, one sympathises – but hey the real world has to go on too, and the cost of EAF is tiny in relation to the remaining NE budget.

In September Matthew Balfour and I had a meeting with the new Minister, Richard Benyon at which it was obvious that he was surprised that the Chair and Chief Executive of NE had not found time to meet with us or take any part in the discussions about the future of EAF. He wrote subsequently saying he would be in touch with the Chair of NE Paul Christensen.

Sadly if predictably nothing happened. This has dragged on long enough and after consultation with Matthew I decided to take the initiative and write to the Chair and Chief Executive of NE, with a copy to the Minister, asking for an early meeting. A copy of that letter is attached.

I shall inform you of the outcome.

Best wishes

Duncan Graham

2.

In Gestingthorpe we have an attractive unmetaled track called Delvyn's Lane, which runs from the centre of the village to Edey's Farm on our border with Castle Hedingham.

Unfortunately, while it is really a bridleway also occasionally used by farm traffic, it is classed as a byway open to all traffic. As a result gangs of four wheel drive addicts come when the weather is at its wettest and use it to practice wheel-spins.

They get through the layer of surface dressing, stir up the clay and stop the drainage.

This wet autumn they have managed to churn it up so much that, not only is it impassable for walkers and cyclists, they are having to trespass onto joining land to get through themselves.

Vehicular use is not necessary. Edey's is easily accessible from the Hedingham side.

I imagine it to be a nationwide problem. I have encountered similar major problems near Malham Tarn (Yorkshire) and problems to slightly lesser extent on Wesborough Hill, Bulmer, Essex.

I hope your organisation can campaign to make it easier to extinguish vehicular rights on sensitive byways from a previous era.