



MINUTES

Meeting Date: **Monday 08 June 2026**

Meeting Time: **2pm to 4pm**

Meeting Venue: **MS Teams**

Attendees:

Colin Finch, Jeremy Boxall, Anne Beecham, Richard Dickenson, Anne Rillie, Mark Robson, Robert Peel, Sarah Barker.

Apologies:

Apologies received by email from Charles Tassell and Theresa Trussell.

Minutes:

Serena Mitchell-Burns

Actions from this meeting:

June 2026 Action 1.

SMB to add 'KCC Highways Discussion' to September agenda, **CF** to find a KCC Highways representative to attend the meeting.

June 2026 Action 2.

CF to speak to PROW Canterbury Area Officer about Broadoak Reservoir to provide more information to Forum at September meeting.

June 2026 Action 3.

SMB to locate and book meeting venue in the Romney Marsh Solar farm area for September meeting.

Welcome and apologies:

CF introduced himself as the new Public Rights of Way Head of Service and spoke about his previous roles within KCC firstly with Public Rights of Way, then KCC Highways, then Developer Contributions, and now a welcome return to Public Rights of Way.

Item 1.

Minutes and matters arising from the last meeting:

Actions from meeting held on 09 March 2026:

March 2026 Action 1.

SMB requested to accessibility check and add relevant KCAF correspondence to the KCC website.

Completed.

March 2026 Action 2.

SMB requested to amend the attendees listed on the 08 December 2025 meeting minutes as Sarah Barker was not in attendance.

Completed.

March 2026 Action 3.

SMB requested to resend the DMMO Statement of Priorities consultation to **AB**.

Completed.

March 2026 Action 4.

SMB requested to send email to Forum members not in attendance at meeting to ask them to express whether they wish to be re-appointed as Forum members.

Completed.

March 2026 Action 5.

SMB requested to resend the email from Natural England originally forwarded to **JB**, **RD**, and **AB** which requests the Kent Countryside Access Forum to submit their Annual Report for 2025.

Completed.

Item 2.

Membership (*standing item*):

- a) **JBox** asked about the Forum Member reappointments and **SMB** advised that she had emailed those members who weren't in attendance at the March meeting to find out if they wished to remain as Forum members.

Charles Tassell and **Theresa Trussell** both responded by email to advise they would like to be reappointed, this was supported by the Forum members at this meeting.

Amanda Corp and **Michael Harden** had not responded to the email.

- b) **JBox** asked if there was any update on finding a Forestry representative to join the Forum, **RD** mentioned the Jeskins Ranger Craig Towell who may be interested and will send his details through to **CF** for him to approach Craig.

CF suggested a Planning representative and a KCC Highways representative on the Forum would be beneficial. He will follow this up with his KCC contacts.

AB suggested that it would also be good to have a forestry representative present to the Forum about the unique landscapes and multi-user environment of woodlands.

JBox noted that someone at a more senior level within Forestry England would be better, and **RD** suggested that he could ask Craig Towell for suggestions.

JBox also noted it would be beneficial to have a representative from KCC Highways speak to the Forum members at the September meeting.

JBox asked **SMB** to add this as an item to the September agenda, and **CF** advised he will speak to possible representatives from Highways.

ACTION 1.

- c) **JBox** mentioned a cycling coach at Bedgebury who may be a possible as a cycling representative for the Forum.

Item 3.

Development sites (*standing item*):

- a) **Lower Thames Crossing.**

RD noted there were currently no new updates on the Lower Thames Crossing project as the main consultations have now finished and that works and path closures have now begun.

He advised that it was now important to keep an eye on how things progress to make sure everything happening is as agreed and in planning consents.

- b) **Romney Marsh Solar.**

CF spoke about the solar project and the general PROW position, which is wherever possible not to divert paths around the solar panels but to work the solar panels around the existing paths.

CF asked the members whether the Forum would be willing to support the position that any Solar Farm planning application within the Romney Marsh area should be refused if the proposal is to divert the PROWs and that these should be maintained on their current alignment where at all possible.

RP suggested additional wording to advise that keeping PROWs on current alignment where possible, but to accept a diversion where there is a clear opportunity for improvement to the route.

c) Otterpool Development:

CF spoke about the Otterpool Development which is a large scale 8,500 homes development in the Folkestone & Hythe District. It looks like the planning application will be going back to committee some time this year for some minor changes, and the PROW team are fully engaged with this.

d) Highsted Park:

CF spoke about the Highsted Park development application which is east of Sittingbourne. There is currently no decision on this application yet as it is currently with the Planning Inspectorate to write their report, and then for the Secretary of State to make their recommendation however this is anticipated to be summer 2026.

e) RD asked if there was any update on the Broadoak Reservoir and **JBox** mentioned that the possibility of having the PROW Area Officer for Canterbury join a KCAF meeting to discuss the reservoir development had previously been mentioned.

CF advised that he will speak to the Area Officer and find out their availability for this, alternatively a representative from South East Water may be a good option if possible.

ACTION 2.

Item 4.

King Charles III England Coast Path (*standing item*):

a) CF updated the Forum members on the latest sections of the path which is mostly now open to the public. There are still some issues preventing a couple of sections from being opened to the public, around the Kingsferry Bridge area on the Isle of Sheppey where there are currently some works and a section between Minster and Warden Bay where the path runs through some caravan parks. A decision is still to be made by the Secretary of State to determine the route, and PROW will not be commencing any works on the path until that determination is through.

There is also a small section of the planned KCIIIECP in the Iwade to Grain area where there have been problems opening the path. The stretch from Otterham Quay and Kingsferry bridge around the Raspberry Hill area is still not opened due to opposition from landowners.

b) RP mentioned the closure at Richborough Quay which is coming up for review soon and noted that in 2021 both the Forum and the Ramblers submitted representation that the closure should not be continued but were unsuccessful in this, and suggested that the Forum should now begin planning and making ready to submit new representations for the next review.

He suggested in preparation for the review date compiling information for this such as has the land ownership has changed, has the usage changed, and what can be done to raise public support to get the closure opened.

CF said he believes that ownership may have changed but he would need to speak to Natural England for more information on this.

RP suggested adding this as an item to the September KCAF meeting agenda for further discussion, **JBox** agreed to this and also suggested finding out when the review will commence so that the Forum are aware of the timescale they have to work within.

- c) **RD** noted that a section of the KCIIIECP at the Canal Basin in Gravesend had reopened after the swing bridge has been repaired and is back in operation.

Item 5.

KCAF Annual Review:

JBox asked for comments on the KCAF Annual Review for 2025 as requested recently by Natural England, as none have been submitted by the Forum since 2009.

SMB advised that she has created a draft for the Forum, which was emailed to **JBox**, **RD**, and **AB** as the chair and vice chairs. An introduction section needs to be written by the chair, and any other items discussed during the year that have been missed for inclusion need to be added, and then the document checked for approval by the Forum before being returned to Natural England.

SB asked if once approved by the KCAF members if it would be published on the on the KCC Website and whether she could also distribute to the KALC members, **SMB** noted that Natural England advise in their email that they will be publishing the Local Access Forum Annual Reviews, so would be best for the Forum to first check with Natural England if this can be published on the KCC website.

Item 6.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR):

CF advised the Forum members on the timeline for LGR, and possible ways PROW may be affected. **CF** noted that PROW are currently in a lot of conversations with Council's, such as Surrey County Council, who have been going through and are currently going through LGR to help shape our plan for the Service.

CF advised that the next step is the announcement by Government, proposed to be by 16 July 2026, as to what the structure of Unitary Authorities will be.

The elections for the Shadow Authorities will happen in May 2027, and the new Unitary Authorities will go live on 1st April 2028.

CF went over the different options for PROW, and specifically for the Definitive Map depending on how many authorities we have, and whether there will be shared services, part disaggregation, or full disaggregation.

CF noted that once we have the Government's decision on the Unitary Authorities for Kent it would be worthwhile the Forum members discussing how they see PROW moving forward in this, what place KCAF would have going forward, and any suggestions in regard to PROW operations within the new structure.

Item 7.

Forward Engagement Plan:

JBox began the discussion on the KCAF plan for 2026 with four main questions to help determine this:

1. What subject matter do they want to discuss.
2. Who do they want to engage with.
3. What message do the Forum want their audience to receive from them.
4. How do they want to engage with people to get their message across, social media, in-person discussions, Parish/Town meetings, etc.

CF suggested engagement with Parish Councils, which may be something that **SB** could organise for the Forum in her role with KALC. **SB** advised that she would send an email to various KALC contacts and copy **CF** in so that they all have the contact details.

A few members suggested better engagement between the Forum and KCC Highways for information and discussions.

JBox suggested contacting the KCC Members representing PROW to introduce the Forum, explain what they do, and seek for improved future engagement with the Members. **CF** agreed this would be a positive action and advised that Richard Palmer is the new KCC [Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services](#), and his contact details are available on the KCC website.

RD mentioned engagement with Parish and Borough/ District Councils in respect of LGR.

RD also mentioned that engagement with KCC Highways would be beneficial due to the high number of Public Rights of Way Claim applications which relate to roads and paths that are already on the List of Streets but have not been maintained to public road standards and are now being applied for as Public Rights of Way for maintenance reasons only.

AB suggested more engagement with landowners/land managers, especially as she feels that the Forum could be helpful in the updating of the PROW landowner responsibilities guidance.

AR suggested public education on Public Rights of Way, what they are, how to best use them, the Countryside Code, reporting issues, etc. and wondered whether this could be something done in schools.

RP advised that he creates Walking Guides for the Ramblers, and as part of this work he has noticed a deterioration in Public Transport links to public rights of way and to Country Parks, which has a negative impact on walkers and especially long-distance walkers. He asked if the Forum could campaign for improved Public Transport links, and **CF** noted that he would look for contacts within KCC's Public Transport department for discussion on this and advise the Forum.

JBox noted there was a lot to consider and to work on, and there would be a lot of reaching out to various organisations by the Forum and asked **CF** for assistance with this. **CF** advised that

he would find contact details for Officers and teams within the KCC Departments that the Forum wish to communicate with, but that as a Local Access Forum it is not for PROW to overstep and do the Forum's work but only to support where needed.

JBox noted that the KCAF Forward Engagement Plan would require input from all Forum members, and for anyone to send their ideas and suggestions to him, including the members not present at this meeting but reading the minutes afterwards.

Item 8.

Correspondence (*standing item*):

- a) **JBox** advised he had no correspondence to discuss.
- b) **SMB** advised that all consultation correspondence received in the PROW-KCAF mailbox had been forwarded to all members.
- c) **AR** asked about the Forum writing a chase up letter to Maidstone Borough Council in regard to Squirrel Woods and advised that she will draft a letter for the Forum's approval and then send to **SMB** to be emailed from their mailbox on a headed email.

Item 9.

Any Other Business:

- a) **RP** mentioned the Ramblers upcoming meeting in Lenham where both **GR** and **CF** will be in attendance, and **GR** will be giving a talk on his 35 years in Public Rights of Way, and that everyone is welcome to go along for the meeting.
JBox advised that he will be attending the event and will be presenting **GR** with a retirement gift on behalf of KCAF for his long and valued service and contributions to Public Rights of Way.
- b) **RP** advised that he has created a new Ramblers Walking Guide on West Kent valley walks, this has been done in collaboration with Explore Kent.
- c) **RP** provided an update on the Parish Maps Project the Ramblers are completing in conjunction with Explore Kent, and that they have created another two replacement Parish Map boards for Crockenhill and Godden Green.
- d) **AB** mentioned the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018-2028) and that it would be good for the Forum to be involved in this, as they were involved in the current edition.
CF noted that work is now beginning on reviewing the current ROWIP and planning the next version, and that over the next 12 months there will be lots of opportunities for KCAF to be involved and engage with this.

Next meeting:

Date: **Monday 07 September 2026.**

Site Visit Time: **12:30pm.**

Meeting Time: **2pm to 4pm.**

Meeting Venue: **The Nest – New Romney.**