



Have Your Say on Changes to Rights of Way

A guide to Public Speaking at Suffolk Coastal District
Council Rights of Way Committee Meetings

WHAT DOES THE RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE DO?

The main role of the Rights of Way Committee is to consider:

- applications to create, divert or extinguish public footpaths or bridleways to which there has been objection during the consultation process or which may not meet the relevant legal criteria
- Public Path Orders to which there has been objection

If the Committee is considering one of the above we will send a letter to everyone who has expressed an interest in the matter - whether it was an objection or in support - letting them know when and where the Rights of Way Committee will be meeting to discuss the matter.

We will also send everyone a copy of the Agenda for the meeting.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE MEETING?

At the meeting there will be the chance for **one person** from each of the following groups to speak:

- objector
- interested party
- applicant (or an agent on their behalf)
- other landowners or land occupiers affected by the change
- local Town or Parish Council
- local District Councillor

In exceptional cases, more than one Town or Parish Council may be allowed to speak, if the proposal has a significant effect on more than one parish. More than one objector or interested party may also be allowed to speak, but only where it is clear that conflicting views cannot be effectively presented by one speaker.

There is no need for anyone who wants to speak to make arrangements before the day of the meeting. Just come along and tell a Council Officer **half an hour** before it starts.

It is important to attend half an hour before the start of the meeting so that we can find out who wants to speak on which item on the Agenda and establish the number of speakers. The Chairman of the meeting may decide to re-order the Agenda if there are a lot of people wanting to speak on one item - another reason speakers must attend half an hour before the meeting starts.

Any one who turns up after the meeting has started will probably not be able to speak - so get there early to have your say.

THE ORDER OF SPEAKING AT THE MEETING:

- Introduction by Council Officer
- Objector speaks
- Interested party speaks
- Applicant (or agent) speaks
- Other affected landowner or land occupier speaks
- Town or Parish Council speaks
- District Councillor speaks
- Rights of Way Committee debate
- Adjournment for Site Visit (if required by the Committee)
- Rights of Way Committee debate and conclusion

Each public speaker will be asked to leave the public seats, to occupy a seat set aside before speaking, and to confirm which of the above groups they represent.

Please note:

Each public speaker will have up to 3 minutes to speak and will be asked to stop at the end of this time. Speakers should confine their statements to relevant matters of fact or opinion. It's to everyone's benefit if:

- speakers are brief and to the point
- speakers limit their opinions to the merits of the proposal under discussion
- speakers address only relevant rights of way issues

If a speaker wishes to ask a question it should be about a matter of fact and addressed to the Chairman. The Chairman has absolute discretion over how many and in what form questions may be asked above the 3 minute speaking time.

No speaker will be allowed to speak a second time and there will be no general debate involving speakers. The purpose of public speaking is to give each speaker an opportunity to make appropriate representations and raise matters of fact. If a speaker wishes to refer to illustrative material this must be provided to Officers before the meeting so that it can be properly displayed. Ideally a spare copy of such material should be supplied for the Council to keep.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS A SITE VISIT?

Formal Site Visits are carried out by the Rights of Way Committee when appropriate - for example, to understand local conditions and the physical characteristics of existing and proposed routes. It is the Committee's usual procedure to adjourn a meeting while it undertakes a Site Visit. When

adjourning the Chairman will state the time at which the meeting will reconvene, allowing enough time for travel and inspection of the site in question.

The Site Visit is not a part of the Committee meeting and so the public do not have the right to attend. However, when adjourning the meeting Chairman will invite **one** representative from each of the groups present at the meeting to attend. It is not appropriate for Members of the Committee or Officers to share transport to the site with these representatives.

The purpose of the Site Visit is fact finding. When on site Officers will point out relevant features of the routes and surroundings to the Committee Members. Members of the Committee will be able to ask questions to the Chairman or to Officers to seek clarification as necessary.

Committee Members do not discuss the merits of a proposal when on site. This happens in the formal Committee meeting. There cannot be any discussion of the issues involved with the representatives. No lobbying is allowed.

However, when on site the Chairman will ask the representatives if there are any physical features of the existing and/or proposed routes that have not been visited that they think the Committee Members should see. The Chairman will decide whether to agree to requests for those features to be visited.

The visiting party of Members, Officers and representatives will stay together as a group. Please remember that no lobbying of Members is allowed. If any representative persists in attempting to lobby the Chairman may decide to curtail the Site Visit and return on another occasion.

The Council will keep a written record of the Site Visit, including details of those who attended.

ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about a Rights of Way application please phone the Council's Rights of Way Section on 01394 444243 or email rightsofway@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

If you have any questions about procedures and arrangements for Committee meetings please phone the Council's Democratic Services Section on 01394 444320 or email committeesection@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk



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