

21st May 2020

Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Way
Norwich
Norfolk
NR1 2DH

Dear Cllr Proctor and Cllr Stone,

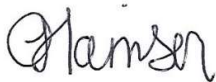
THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY – COVID 19

Walk Cromer would like to fully endorse the attached statement provided by the Ramblers which is attached to this letter below.

Whilst there have always been many people who have been passionate about the countryside and the need to enhance and protect Public Rights of Way, never before has the Rights of Way Network provided such a lifeline to everybody as it has now during the COVID-19 crisis. We have witnessed locally on our own network and nationally via social media that people everywhere are embracing their Public Rights of Way and have realised the importance of good connectivity and access to the countryside.

Whilst we have read Norfolk County Council's budget and understand the difficulties it faces in the coming months and years; we also acknowledge the aspirations set out in the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan. The Highways Team which are tasked to manage rights of way are over stretched and single officers are managing hundreds of parishes whilst neighbouring councils have officers managing areas a quarter of the size. Walk Cromer would welcome a change in stance when it comes to promoting the **Local** Public Rights of Way Network and look forward to seeing some of the aspirations as sent out in the NAIP being met in the future.

Kind Regards,



Gemma Harrison
Secretary Walk Cromer

cc. Cllr Timothy Adams – NCC Cllr for Cromer
cc. MP Duncan Baker – MP North Norfolk

**Ramblers Statement – Fully Endorsed by Walk Cromer
Dated 21st May 2020**

Much effort is, rightly, being put into social distancing and helping people stay free of COVID-19. But, important as the 'stay at home' message is, recognition has also been given to the equal importance of ensuring exercise, to enable people to maintain fitness. Further, it has also been known for some time that getting out and about plays a major part in maintaining mental health, a benefit of even greater value if you can get into green space - a park, or countryside, for example.

This is therefore a time when the existence of our network of public rights of way can be a significant asset to communities. Our footpaths meet our needs in two ways:

- they are local, so little or no need to travel far from home, thus meeting the restrictions on driving or using public transport; and
- they are often the route to open spaces on the edge of the town or village.

The UK's response to the pandemic is prompting a re-evaluation of not only of our health and social services, but also the employment of shop workers and many others, too frequently taken for granted and undervalued. While not in the same league, the same can be said of our public footpaths, all too often receiving little attention or funding for maintenance and sometimes hard to use because of this. In some areas, volunteers (particularly from The Ramblers and in Walkers are Welcome towns) have taken a lead in ensuring that the path network is kept in good condition in spite of lack of official attention, but we hope that its value will be recognised in the future, so that it can continue to be a source of support not only for those 'locked down' now, but for everyone.

We are very aware of the current effort and focus on keeping people safe and well, but as plans for the future start to emerge, we would remind you of the important contribution that the footpath network can make - and that an even greater contribution is possible with just a little more funding.