

Welcome to the e-Meresman aimed at informing you about the recent work of East Sussex County Council's Rights of Way and Countryside Management Group. The Group is responsible for maintaining and improving rights of way within East Sussex, managing a variety of countryside sites and Local Nature Reserves and coordinating the work of volunteers.

Exploring East Sussex, our programme of guided walks and environmental events is still available in printed form from East Sussex libraries and Tourist Information Centres, as well as on the internet.

## Ditchling Common Fun Day

The Dizzy the Ditchling Dragonfly nature trail was officially launched with a fun day at Ditchling Common Country Park in August.

The nature trail leads people through a range of habitats from open water to mature woodland with interpretation boards describing what's there and explaining the management of the site. More features and improvements will be made in the coming months.



*Fun day attendees rest by the pond*



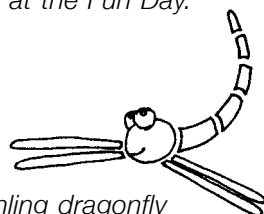
*Director of Transport and Environment, Rupert Clubb (left) with Ditchling Common Ranger, Ken McManamon (centre) and Councillor Meg Stroude at the Fun Day.*

The weather was great and the event was well attended by a wide range of over 200 people. Youngsters were able to try fishing coached by the Environment Agency's Fisheries Team. They were also able to explore the nature trail, do some pond dipping, make dragonfly models and willow stars on the way.

The trail was officially launched by Rupert Clubb, the new director of Transport and Environment at East Sussex County Council. Councillor Meg Stroude was also there to support the event.

The nature trail leaflets are now available. For further information about the nature trail, or a copy of the leaflet, please ring Ken McManamon on 01273 482670

[Ken McManamon, Ditchling Common Ranger](#)



*Dizzy the Ditchling dragonfly*

## A fresh face in T&E

We are very lucky to have such a fantastic rights of way network here in East Sussex. Many other counties are not so lucky! As I write this we have probably had one of the wettest summers for a long time. This means a lot of the improvement work planned for this time of year has been much harder going than normal. It will mean we'll have our work cut out for next year to improve some of the damage this summer's weather has caused.



I am fortunate to have joined a part of the County Council that touches on everyone, not least Rights of Way and Countryside Management. I look forward to getting out and seeing some of our work, perhaps when the summer actually arrives!

For the last few years I have worked for the Environment Agency as their Sussex Area Manager. I am very aware of the issues facing East Sussex and the need for us to balance environmental, social and economic challenges.

I am a Chartered Civil Engineer by profession and much of my work has focused on providing flood defences for rivers in the South East Region. I was heavily involved in the management of the flooding in Sussex in 2000. I am acutely aware of the difficulties people are facing in Gloucestershire and the Midlands.

My spare time is taken up by either walking or cycling on the Downs, fishing – although I don't seem to have much luck, and when I get the chance, shooting.

I am looking forward to getting to know the team here at County Hall and with them make a positive impact on our beautiful countryside.

Rupert Clubb,  
Director of Transport and Environment

## Countryside volunteering goes from strength to strength



*Trainee rangers and countryside volunteers learn how to build a Tern Raft*

Smiling, chatty, happy people. Not necessarily what you'd expect from a group of people who have just spent the day in the pouring rain, digging holes through clay and stone to install an interpretation board, or battling with brambles and nettles clearing paths does it? It doesn't rain every week, and the jobs are much more varied than this, but the faces, enthusiasm and good cheer are always the same.

It is my very good fortune to be the Western Area Volunteer Officer, charged with organising the volunteers who regularly work alongside our Countryside Rangers out on site. We have nearly 300 people on the Countryside Management volunteer database, with roughly 15 new people joining every month. Some of these people join us on site every week, rain or shine, while others fit a day in the countryside around their hectic schedules just every now and then. However much time our volunteers can offer, they are always gratefully received, and enthusiastically welcomed!

Cathy Cordery  
Volunteer Officer

## A new manager for the Rights of Way team

Mid-summer is always a busy season for the Rights of Way Team, so what better time to take on a new manager?

Former North Wealden Rights of Way Officer, Andy Le Gresley, has recently been appointed as Rights of Way Manager. This is a newly-created position which will provide leadership and support to the Rights of Way team. Andy will be responsible for managing five Rights of Way Officers, the Access Development and Forum Officer and the Definitive Map Officer.

Andy said: "I am lucky to have an extremely knowledgeable, experienced and committed team to manage and look forward to working with them to make East Sussex an easier and more accessible county to walk and ride in."

Near the top of Andy's in-tray will be the implementation of a county-wide network survey; this will enable the Rights of Way Team to undertake maintenance and enforcement in a more proactive and targeted way.

"Carrying out the network survey will also make it necessary to improve the technology used by my team – for example, introducing enhanced fault-reporting processes, better work-tracking and planning systems, updating the Rights of Way homepage and the introduction of an interactive online map that the public can easily access," said Andy.

As well as helping the Rights of Way Team to work more efficiently, Andy is keen to place a greater emphasis on enforcement – this will help to ensure that landowners carry out their obligations towards the Rights of Way network in a timely way.

Part of Andy's new role will also aim to improve the Rights of Way Team's liaison with Parish Councils and user groups: "I am hoping that better communication between the Rights of Way Team, local councils and the various Rights of Way representatives will help to support the more proactive approach that my Team will be taking."

## RoW Volunteers update

Over the summer, volunteer groups working to maintain Rights of Way have managed to carry out a great deal of work, despite weather conditions that might have put many people off the idea of working outside. One of the biggest achievements has been vegetation clearance, with more than 3km of paths being cut.

Two groups have also been working on projects to improve the access along paths in their local Parishes. The Sedlescombe Parish group have been replacing stiles with gates which will, when all the work is completed, create a short circular route from the village without any stiles. The Maresfield Conservation Group are working to improve a footpath link between Maresfield and Uckfield. So far, two stiles have been removed, two new kissing gates installed, and two structures removed completely to leave gaps. There are still a few jobs to be done which will then make this a much easier route to use.



*A new kissing gate installed by the Maresfield Conservation Group*

This summer has also seen new opportunities for rights of way volunteering, with the launch of staff led task days across the county. So far the work has included the construction of a ditch bridge, signposting, step building, and the installation of a new kissing gate. It is hoped that opportunities for this form of volunteering will be increased, giving more people the chance to lend a hand with maintenance works and improvements to the rights of way network.

*Chris Tweed, Volunteer Officer – Rights of Way*

## Interreg project comes to a close

The two-year Interreg funded project for Access to the Countryside for Disabled People comes to an end on 31 October 2007.

During the project we have increased access to countryside sites and the wider network through improvements to enable people of all ages to enjoy the countryside.

Our work has been accomplished with the help of many volunteers, those from our partner organisation British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and others working directly with us. Many people have been involved in the project, helping not only with the practical work of countryside maintenance but with our research into developing a policy on disabled access to the countryside. A Steering Group has overseen the project, comprising staff from ESCC, BTCV, East Sussex Disability Association and Hastings and Rother Disability Association.

To mark the end, the project had a final event on 8 August 2007 at Horntye Park, Hastings, to which all those who had been involved in the work of the project were invited.

Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, Councillor Matthew Lock and Councillor Godfrey Daniel attended the event to say a few words of thank you.



*Councillor Matthew Lock, Councillor Godfrey Daniel and Vicky Lawrence thanking all those involved.*



*ESCC staff, volunteers and partner organisations sitting on 'the mound' in Summerfields Woods.*

Councillor Matthew Lock said, "This has been a very successful and worthwhile project to make sure that our beautiful countryside is available to all."

The day involved a guided walk to Summerfields Wood, led by Andy Phillips from Hastings Borough Council and Derek Binns, Chairman of the Friends of Summerfields Wood.

Information on the project and easier access countryside sites is available on the East Sussex website. Leaflets will soon be on the site and can be downloaded. There are also hard copies available.

Although the funding for the work undertaken by the project is soon to end, we intend to continue the best practice regarding countryside access which has been established through the project.

*Rachel Solomons, New Opportunities for Sustainable (Social and Environmental) Integration (NOSI) Project Officer*



Project part-financed by the European Union

## Update on Chailey Common Local Nature Reserve Consultation

Earlier this year the Chailey Common Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Management Committee carried out the first phase of consultation on the possible implementation of extensive grazing on Chailey Common. This followed a report by specialist independent consultants Footprint Ecology, which recommended that extensive grazing be introduced as a sustainable way of managing the common for people and wildlife. The Committee has considered all the responses and based on these has decided to promote a scheme for the introduction of grazing with permanent perimeter fencing to contain the stock.

The scheme proposes that the areas known as 'Red House' and 'Lane End' Commons would be fenced separately and, subject to the agreement of the County Council's Highway Manager, that 'Pound', 'Memorial' and 'Romany Ridge' Commons be joined as a single grazing unit with cattle grids on North Common and Beggars Wood Roads. The feasibility of an underpass between 'Memorial' and 'Red House' Commons is also being examined, or alternatively the provision of a 'pegasus' crossing for walkers and riders.

It is proposed that all existing access routes onto the Common (except where these are dangerous or very close together) are retained, with gates and stiles of suitable design. Grazing would be by cattle, sheep and possibly ponies, using traditional quiet breeds with no bulls, cows with young calves, or stallions. It is also proposed that at any one time at least one of the grazing areas would be clear of stock to allow dog walkers and others to wander more freely.

The next phase of the consultation is to produce a detailed plan for comment and debate. This will be available at a drop-in day to be held at Chailey Village Hall on Sunday 7 October between 11am and 3pm. You can also obtain information or make your views known by accessing the County Council's website or by email to [chaileygrazing@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:chaileygrazing@eastsussex.gov.uk).



*Hebridean sheep*

You can also write to: East Sussex County Council, Transport and Environment Department, [ref: E1 Chailey Grazing], Freepost [LW43], Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1BR.

The Management Committee would like to hear from everyone with an interest in the future of this greatly loved, site so please do get in touch. This is your chance to let us know what you think!

Heli Gittins, Chailey Commons Ranger

### East Sussex Local Access Forum

#### **Future meetings at venues to be confirmed:**

2pm on Wednesday 5 December 2007

2pm on Wednesday 5 March 2008

2pm on Wednesday 4 June 2008 (AGM)

All meetings are open to the public

For more information call

01273 481627 or visit

[www.eastsussex.gov.uk/  
localaccessforum](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/localaccessforum)



## Rights of Way Ranger Teams continued

Willow sourced directly from one of our nature reserve sites may need to be planted as a traditional approach to river bank management.

In the South Wealden area, the team has cleared over eight miles of right of way, including hedgecutting, brushcutting, flailing and tree felling. This has been on paths with some small scale undergrowth, to the opening up of previously impassable routes. Amongst other work the team has installed six bridges of up to 10 metres in length and carried out path condition surveys.

### East Area

In the East area, the team have undertaken large scale works near Etchingham, to help ensure footpaths from the village were improved for local people to use. This included the installation of four bridges, several fingerposts and clearance of nearly 1½ miles (approx 2000 metres) of dense scrub. A number of stiles were also removed and left open as gaps and several more stiles are to be removed in the future and replaced with gates in partnership with the landowner.

In addition, a long section of steps at Playden near Rye have been replaced by the team with help from volunteers and trainee rangers. The steps, which follow the old cliff line near Scot's Float, had become eroded over the years and needed to be cleared and rebuilt into the hill side. A hand rail will also be installed and it is



*Karl Woolmer installing a hand rail on a new bridge.*



*Overs Bridge, Barcombe*

hoped that the footpath will now be much easier to use and allow walkers to enjoy the fantastic views out across the Romney Marsh and the Rye Bay from the top.

### West Area

One of the highlights of the summer was replacing Over's Bridge in Barcombe (above) after it had become unsafe for equestrians in particular. This is a 12 metre bridge spanning Longford Stream on a busy stretch of bridleway between Anchor Lane, Barcombe and Isfield village. The new bridge was built on steel beams with easy-access gates and surfaced ramps.

The team is currently putting together a specification for disabled access ramps on a very busy section of the Sussex Ouse Valley Way long distance path at Barcombe Mills. This will enable those that are currently unable to negotiate the squeeze-stile and steps to access this popular and beautiful part of Ouse Valley. It is anticipated that further sections of this path, especially the bridges, can be made more accessible for pushchairs and disabled users in the future.

### Back issues

Issues 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the printed *Meresman* are still available. If you would like copies please send a large (A4) stamped addressed envelope to the above address.

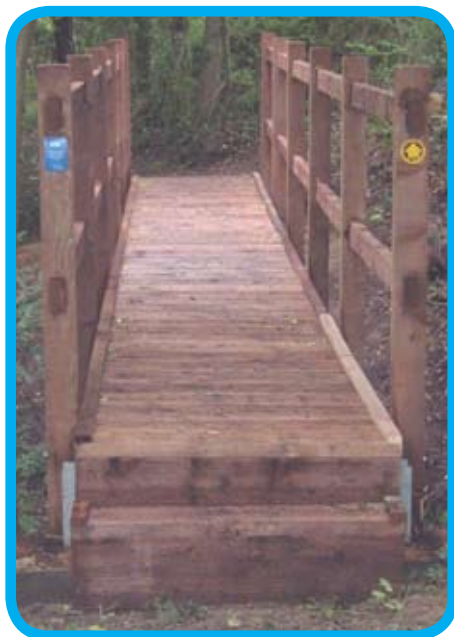
## Works on Capital Bridge Programme

The first quarter of the Capital Bridge Programme has now flown by and we've been busy completing a condition survey together with our Structures team of 170 bridges across the whole county that require attention, either involving remedial works or complete replacement. The data collected will be used to prioritise a work programme for the year.

As well as surveying, we have been busy replacing bridges. So far we have replaced four bridges over 10 metres, as shown in the pictures below. As well as these, we've also replaced a further 14 bridges of various sizes across the county.

We have an on going surveying inspection programme, so if you encounter any problems regarding bridges please let us know by dialling numbers for Rights of Way on the back page.

Look out for the next issue of the *Meresman* which will include an article describing the different stages in bridge replacement.



*Danehill*



*Hellingly*



*Forest Row*

## Volunteer with us!

The Rights of Way and Countryside Management Group have several volunteering opportunities available.

If wading around knee-deep in ponds and streams, constructing stiles or gates or leading guided walks or cycle rides appeals to you, then why not get involved?

Whatever your preference, volunteering with us can give you new skills, whilst working in some of the most beautiful countryside in East Sussex. It is also a great way to meet new people.

### For more information, contact:

#### Countryside Volunteers

Cathy Cordery 01273 482670

#### Rights of Way Volunteers

Chris Tweed 01435 866408

#### Guided Walks and Cycle Rides

Vicky Pannell 01273 481654

East Sussex County Council publishes the **e-Meresman** and **Exploring East Sussex** twice a year, in April (Spring edition) and September (Autumn edition). If you have any articles or letters that you wish to be considered for publication, please submit them to the address on the back page at least two months prior to the month of publication. For further information please contact **Vicky Pannell** on 01273 481654.

## Contacts

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**Rights of Way Rangers:** Ant Hart, Dave Tonge

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‘NOSI’ Interreg Officer

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### Rye Bay Countryside Office

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## Welcome to . . .

Chloe Rowling – Rights of Way Officer  
Jo Spenceley – Rights of Way Officer  
Dave Darroch – Chailey Ranger  
Al Wallis – Capital Bridge Team Ranger  
Trainee Rangers – Simon Irvine, Adam Buzuk  
and Tom Adams

## Good luck to . . .

Heli Gittins is going on a sabbatical to Wales to study for an MSc in Conservation and Land Management.

We say a sad farewell to Michael Diprose after 15 years with the Rights of Way Maintenance Team, firstly as a fresh faced maintenance team member and later as the Eastern area works supervisor. In this time Michael has increased the standard of maintenance and been instrumental in many of the large scale surfacing and bridge works throughout the county. His infectious sense of humour and dedication to the work will be sorely missed.