

2 Setting Rights of Way in the Wider Context

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 There are various plans, strategies and policies that affect public rights of way and wider countryside access in the county. As well as East Sussex County Council, the District and Borough Councils and the management bodies of the two areas of outstanding natural beauty (High Weald Unit and South Downs Joint Committee) also have key roles to play in the improvement of countryside access in East Sussex.
- 2.1.2 This chapter highlights the relevant sections of these documents which relate to rights of way improvement planning.

2.2 Annual Report on Rights of Way

- 2.2.1 In 1993 the Countryside Commission (since renamed the Countryside Agency and now part of Natural England). introduced the 'Milestones' approach to achieving the national target for getting rights of way legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised by the year 2000. East Sussex County Council was required to produce an annual report on its progress towards the Milestones target in order to qualify for associated funding. The requirement to do so was removed in 2000. However, the Council continued to produce the Milestones Report as a means of reporting the current position on rights of way issues. It is likely that East Sussex County Council will be required to produce an Annual Rights of Way Report again in the future under CROW Act legislation, which is yet to be implemented.
- 2.2.2 Two of the three Milestones targets – on legal definition work and publicity, have largely been achieved in East Sussex. However, the target for having all rights of way properly maintained is acknowledged by the County Council as being unachievable on the basis of current allocated resources.

2.3 East Sussex Local Transport Plan

- 2.3.1 The second Local Transport Plan for East Sussex (LTP2) sets out a clear long term vision for transport in the county from 2006 to 2011. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is designed to contribute to achieving this vision. Its vision is:

“To make East Sussex a thriving county where every resident enjoys an enhanced quality of life with improved travel choice and access to employment opportunities and local facilities; safer and healthier communities and a cleaner environment that is valued, protected and improved for future generations”

- 2.3.2 The statutory guidance for both the Local Transport Plan and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan stresses the importance of making links between the two documents. The East Sussex LTP, published in 2006, makes a number of references to the emerging Improvement Plan. It is anticipated that once the Improvement Plan has been published it will be able to take advantage of funding opportunities through the LTP process. The Government has indicated that the Improvement Plan may be absorbed into the next LTP (due to commence in 2011/12).
- 2.3.3 Through the LTP funding has been allocated for a county-wide programme of bridge replacement commencing in 2007/08 at £200,000-per-year for two years and a programme of surfacing works at £70,000-per-year for one year commencing in 2008/09.
- 2.3.4 Out of the LTP process, strategies for walking and cycling have been developed. These tend to concentrate on the needs of these modes of transport for utility purposes (commuting) such as safe routes to schools, to shopping areas and to places of employment. However, the new Walking Strategy deals with recreational as well as utility journeys and has strong links to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Walking Strategy

- 2.3.5 The Walking Strategy is in the process of being rewritten, and much of the content of the existing document will be changed to reflect more recent publications and guidance by Government and other relevant organisations. The revised Strategy will also include, for the first time, a target to see if improvements to pedestrian facilities encourage people to walk more. The target seeks to:

'Increase the proportion of journeys by walking by 2% by 2011, 3% by 2016 and 5% by 2021'

- 2.3.6 The aims of the Walking Strategy are:
- To promote walking as an alternative form of transport.
 - To make key services and facilities more accessible.
 - To encourage individuals to use walking in their daily routine to benefit their health.
 - To improve the quality of the walking experience through improved pedestrian facilities.
 - To support and promote the development and implementation of Work and School Travel Plans.
- 2.3.7 The objectives anticipated to be in the revised Walking Strategy are currently:
- To consider the needs of pedestrians in all new developments.
 - To improve social inclusion through the improvement of existing, and the provision of new, high quality pedestrian facilities.
 - To publicise and promote walking, with emphasis on the benefits to personal health and the environment.

- To increase the number of utility and recreational pedestrian movements in the county.
- To create a safe environment for pedestrians.

Cycling Strategy

2.3.8 The County Council's plans for cycling are to make the conditions for cycling safer and more attractive and to contribute to the national target of quadrupling cycle trips by 2012. We plan to do this by:

- Maximising cycling's role as a means of transport, to reduce dependency on cars.
- Bringing cycling to the heart of sustainable development in the county through an integrated approach to transport planning, land use planning, health improvement policies and education.
- Establishing a cycle-friendly culture through better infrastructure and routes.
- Developing partnerships with stakeholders and potential stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels.
- Working with partners to ensure better cycling provision to maximise external funding.

2.3.9 To achieve this, the County Council plans to:

- Create safe, convenient cycle routes.
- Improve roads and rights of way to provide for the needs of cyclists, including priorities at junctions.
- Develop coherent local cycle networks.
- Construct secure parking for cycles.
- Ensure that access and parking for cycles are included in development proposals.

2.4 East Sussex Community Strategy Objectives

2.4.1 The East Sussex Community Strategy, 'Pride of Place', provides a framework for the Council and its partners to take action in delivering "a sustainable county with an improving quality of life", recognising that East Sussex is a "wonderful county to live, work and spend leisure time in".

2.4.2 The Strategy makes clear the benefits of working in partnership across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, to provide 'joined up' action that improves quality of life.

2.4.3 Its vision for the county is built around a number of core elements – encouraging prosperity, ensuring participation, and protecting our environment. These are outlined in more detail in Appendix C.

2.4.4 Public rights of way can play a role in helping to achieve these aims. The provision, improvement and promotion of access to the countryside helps more people to enjoy the county and, in doing so, helps the rural economy and brings a greater appreciation of our natural environment. The County Council's programme of guided walks 'Exploring East Sussex' (more detail

in 5.11) and the 'Paths to Prosperity' series of self-guided walks (see 4.8) both play a particularly key role in achieving the 'Pride of Place' aims.

2.5 Local Development Plans

- 2.5.1 District and borough councils are responsible for producing district wide local plans for their areas, covering all topics other than minerals and waste. County councils, and unitary authorities, are responsible for preparing minerals and waste local plans.
- 2.5.2 The East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan establishes a framework that more detailed local plans must conform to. East Sussex County Council has a joint responsibility with Brighton & Hove City Council to provide a broad framework of planning policies for the long-term development and conservation of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.
- 2.5.3 More detail on the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan and the local plans for each district and borough council in East Sussex, where they relate to public rights of way and access to the countryside, can be found in Appendix G.

2.6 Other Plans and Strategies

East Sussex County Council Cultural Strategy

- 2.6.1 The County Council's Cultural Strategy supports the:
- continuing promotion and management of the County Council's countryside sites for conservation, public access and recreation;
 - continuing production of publications which encourage walking and cycling;
 - promotion and celebration of the county's heritage, townscapes and landscapes;
 - creation and maintenance of long distance paths and trails, and;
 - continuing provision of information, advice and practical assistance to the public, landowners and parish councils about countryside management and access issues, including information about rights of way.

South Downs Management Plan

- 2.6.2 At the time of writing, the South Downs Management Plan is at the draft stage. Under 'Rights of Way and Promoted Routes' the South Downs Joint Committee's priority actions are to:

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- Maintain public rights of way.
- Manage and enhance the South Downs Way National Trail to National Trail standards.
- Deliver Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) through the County Local Access Forums as required under the CROW Act 2000. Furthermore, through this work, to develop a South Downs ROWIP for implementation.

2.6.3 The South Downs Joint Committee is also drafting a Strategic Access Plan for the South Downs which is likely to develop the above themes and link with the Rights of Way Improvement Plans in East Sussex, Brighton & Hove, West Sussex and Hampshire.

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High Weald Management Plan

2.6.4 The High Weald Management Plan seeks increased protection for and awareness of the best-preserved examples of networks of ancient routeways (traditional Wealden sunken lanes and droeways that now form part of the road and rights of way networks) within the High Weald AONB.

2.6.5 By 2009 the best examples of ancient routeways will be identified through a research project and protected through national heritage designation for areas of landscape importance, and thereafter taken into account in Rights of Way Improvement Plans so that they become part of the overall access planning for the AONB.

2.6.6 The Management Plan seeks improved maintenance standards of the rights of way network in areas close to towns, villages, visitor attractions and within AONB rural tourism hubs. The targets for 2009 are:

- 100% of network in these zones meeting basic rights of way standards.
- 10% of network in these zones meeting enhanced AONB standards.
- AONB priority networks included in the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

2.6.7 The Management Plan seeks an increased range of high quality promoted access opportunities that meet the needs of all users. Targets for 2009 are:

- A research project to develop understanding of the needs of existing and potential users.
- Identification, development and promotion of a range of AONB high quality walking routes.
- All key promoted routes meeting AONB promoted route standard.
- Projects to improve and promote access for users with impaired mobility.
- Five new sites/areas promoting family cycling opportunities.
- The High Weald long-distance bridle route developed and maintained in a usable condition

2.6.8 The High Weald Management Plan also seeks the development of key strategic links in the rights of way network for all walkers, cyclists and riders. The targets for 2009 are:

- A study to identify areas with the need and potential for development of strategic linkages.
- The expansion of the South East toll ride network.
- Local Authority awareness of opportunities for local linkages.
- Government supported land management schemes to focus access.

2.6.9 Improved links between promoted informal access opportunities and public transport provision are also sought on jointly agreed priority areas. By 2009

there should be public transport options available for all promoted routes and green tourism areas.

Secured by Design

- 2.6.10 Secured by Design is the UK Police flagship initiative supporting the principles of designing out crime by use of effective crime prevention and security standards for a range of applications. Secured by Design says the following about footpaths through housing developments:

“Their provision is strongly encouraged by current government planning guidance, but awareness is needed of the potential problems that poorly located or poorly designed footpaths can have. They can, for instance, provide opportunities for unobserved access to the rear of buildings, means of escape for offenders and opportunities for crimes against people. Furthermore, poorly designed or sited footpaths may cause users to feel ill at ease and give rise to fear of crime, particularly after dark. This is likely to lead to reduced levels of use, which reduces the benefit to the community and will in turn exacerbate the problem. Well-designed, well-used and well-maintained footpaths on the other hand provide fewer opportunities for crime and are likely to feel safer.”

- 2.6.11 Ideally, the Secured by Design standards should be followed for new developments.

Objective 1.b.

Seek to secure benefits to the public rights of way network from major developments and road schemes.

Objective 2.c.

Improve working with town and parish councils, other authorities and organisations.