

## Appendix C

### Summary of ROWIP Draft Public Consultation Results

#### Who responded to the public consultation?

The majority of the people that responded were Kent residents with a total of 259 others included:

- A Parish / District or County Councillor (24)
- Parish / Town / District / County Council in an official capacity (17)
- Local community group or residents association (10)
- A charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS) (11)
- As a PROW volunteer (11)
- As a member of KCC staff (7)
- A visitor to Kent (4)
- On behalf of an educational establishment (1)
- A local business owner (1)

Other each with one entry: (8)

#### Q3. Do you currently use Public Rights of Way (PROW) in Kent?

Q3. Do you currently use Public Rights of Way in Kent?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	287	4	6

#### Q4. If you answered Yes to Q3, how often do you use Public Rights of Way in Kent?

If you answered Yes to Q3, how often do you use Public Rights of Way in Kent?	Once a day	At least once a week	At least once a fortnight	Once a month	Less often
	90	134	26	21	16

## Q5. Was the ROWIP document easy to understand?

Q5. Was the ROWIP document easy to understand?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	309	23	16

The majority of the comments received when asking this question was that the document was well laid out with lots of clear information, with 309 of people finding this. Negative comments included the use of jargon and that it was rather long and not very specific in the delivery plan actions with no specific or actual targets, no commitment given on action or to deal with shortcoming of the PROW network.

## Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the correct themes?

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we have identified the correct themes?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	180	151	23	6	2	0

Comments were made that the themes do not challenge priorities in a period of limited resource; for example the balance between urban or rural projects, and between maintenance of existing assets versus investment in new connections in the network. Also that we place high priority on the maintenance of the existing network but seek ways to improve connectivity especially when new development takes place.

## Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of our six themes?

There was some confusion over the order of the six themes and people thought that we had ordered them due to their priority and importance. People tended to disagree with the order that the themes were prioritised rather than objecting to the themes themselves.

## Other comments made

The themes concentrate on the larger more prominent PROW to the detriment of issues concerning smaller but important local footpaths and bridleways.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of our six themes?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Active Lifestyles	220	104	14	5	4	1
Evolution of the Network	176	126	30	6	5	3
Knowing whats out there	222	86	27	9	4	0
Well-maintained Network	265	61	10	5	5	0
Rights with Responsibilities	197	104	29	4	4	3
Efficient Delivery	179	122	33	5	4	2

## General Comments

### Active lifestyles

References to a longer distance network for active travel are too vague. There needs to be a much stronger commitment to building a network of protected active travel routes within and between urban centres. E.g. a high-quality cycle route linking Maidstone, Paddock Wood and Tonbridge along the Medway to the existing cycle route through to Pembury and Tunbridge Wells is easily achievable and would be really beneficial.

### Evolution of the network

#### EN03 Safe travel - Safety Issues

- Include Public Safety
- Connecting existing routes together and improving the safety on existing routes is not something that is mentioned. By targeting these two areas the greatest benefit could be achieved for the money spent. A key part of this must be to give pedestrians and cyclist priority when crossing roads.
- Could not find any reference to increasing safety using PROW in urban areas, especially to the use/upgrading of lighting where appropriate. These should be fed in too.

- We agree the six themes identified but suggest creating a 7th – “USER SAFETY”. Fear of traffic speeds and pollution does not appear in your research, yet this is known to be a major disincentive to walking and cycling in both urban and rural areas. This is certainly our experience in Royal Tunbridge Wells and no consideration of PROW and other places where people walk and cycle can be made without recognising the detrimental impact of motor vehicles.
- The USER SAFETY theme should be high priority where PROWs and other paths run beside or across roads of various grades or where different types of users share the same ‘road’ space in both urban and rural areas. Mandatory safety measures such as 20mph zones, speed restrictions, signage, safe crossing places with refuges or user-controlled lights, should be among the measures employed as standard. USER SAFETY should be integral to the local borough and county planning and development processes.
- The USER SAFETY theme would also cover a requirement to separate pedestrians and cyclists from motorised traffic on segregated or shared paths particularly on busy A and B roads and on all rural roads where local users (and potential users) require it for their safety. Typical situations would be footpaths/shared cycle ways from residential areas to the local primary and secondary school and community centre.

### **Traffic Issues**

PROWIP fails to recognise KCC's substantial maintenance and public safety liabilities of permitting off-road sport use of such BOATs.

Safety for users not addressed. Footpaths are dissected by very busy dangerous roads with no safe way to cross.

Fragmentation of the network is an important, complex and previous neglected area. It must be examined holistically - 'highways and byways' together. People can no longer walk where they once did because lanes have become carriers of large numbers of fast-moving vehicles.

Link paths to avoid walking on dangerous roads.

In NW Kent car journeys are prioritised with the extensive development of the road network aiding this, we need to look at PROW as sustainable transport not just for leisure and fitness.

We are concerned that local roads which are popular cycle routes are unsafe, particularly because of erosion at the edge from poor drainage and heavy vehicles. We would welcome better coordination of drainage and surface maintenance on key routes.

## **Knowing what's out there**

Information on the footpath network is widely available and the Parish Council values the on-line 'fault reporting' tool. It would be helpful if the definitive footpath map were available on-line in its own right, and not only as part of that tool.

## **Rights with Responsibilities**

Enforcement of the law needs to be strengthened.

### **RR05 Promote Responsible use: Illegal Use and Anti-social Behaviour**

Illegal use and damage by 4 x 4 's and trail bikes in Kent destroying access to walkers and fragmenting the footpath network has not been recognised. Concerns that the very good ambitions could not be achieved in a period of austerity.

We welcome the emphasis on improving access for non-motorised users to the network in this draft ROWIP, and the omission of the motorised vehicle objectives which were included on page 63 of the 2013-17 ROWIP.

The volumes of motor bikes and cars using BOATs cause continual damage that KCC cannot afford to maintain resulting in closure. Second use by vehicles prevents walkers and horse riders using some BOATs causing excessive surface damage and damage to surrounding land. These obvious themes are not addressed.

The small proportion of the network that comprises byways and UCRs is not addressed in the plan. Issues are - inadequate maintenance especially where damage caused by farm vehicles/ 4x4s; relentless removal of rights in favour of making ancient byways vehicle free to save money on maintenance; inappropriate focus on local objections based around property ownership against protection of a national leisure resource; inadequate responses from KCC staff to obstruction and maintenance reports. I'd support an approach which promotes motorcycle use of byways and UCRs even if 4x4s are restricted.

## **Maintenance**

More regular maintenance required for use by all abilities.

Maintenance has to have highest priority.....if PRoWs can't be used then the rest is meaningless.

Effective maintenance and extension of the network outweigh the other actions put together.

Current PROW vegetation clearance is too infrequent and is ineffective. Even urban paths, key to school access etc, are cut to infrequently.

When cutting is done trimmings are just left to rot causing path metalling to be covered and posing a puncture threat to cyclists. Cutting is done to the minimum so brambles soon grow across paths again. Shoddy.

At this point in time there are a lot of brambles and overgrown stiles that older people cannot climb over which can restrict their exercise and active lifestyle.

At the present time maintaining the network needs to be moved up the agenda as in some areas, stiles, bridges etc are in a poor state of repair even after they have been reported to PROW.

Royal Tunbridge Wells has a wealth of PROW, public footpaths, other paths, back allies, shared pedestrian/cycle routes and extensive Commons - Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall – within its urban centre and residential areas. Despite being well used and a vital part of the character and function of the town centre, these assets don't all enjoy the same protection in law or have the requirements to maintain them for continued and accessible use. Administratively connecting these various assets and maintaining and signing them to a common standard would be beneficial.

## **Efficient delivery**

### **Volunteers**

The appeal for volunteers in 2014 has not been successful. It is not appropriate to expect small teams of volunteers (often senior citizens) to tackle overgrown PROWs using only hand-tools.

## **Suggested changes**

### **Kent's Economy**

With the comments regarding the economic value of the PROW network to the local economy, there is little mention within the actions of our engagement with those very businesses that will benefit- joint working, them contributing back etc.

### **Brexit**

No mention of Brexit?

The plan is a sound document and helpful, it may however have missed an opportunity to be more forward looking and ambitious. While there is significant uncertainty as we prepare to leave the European Union there is also opportunity, we think that the plan could make

more of the opportunities for instance in post Brexit Environmental Land Management Schemes, early documents from Defra would seem to show us that the very considerable resource that is currently spent will be retained and there is an increasing emphasis on benefiting the public good, there is also several specific mentions of promoting access to the landscape. We think that there is a significant opportunity to seek new and significant investment, working in partnership with farmers and land owners/ land managers to raise the quality of public rights of way management through investments from these schemes. Clearly this would have to be above the minimum statutory requirement but we would propose really exciting new access provision along some public rights of way, perhaps with new connective permissive paths so that the public and benefit from visiting and enjoying the landscape – and benefit their health, wellbeing and the rural economy at the same time as potentially offering a new income stream to farmers and land managers.

### **Types of PROW**

Urban and rural PROWs serve different functions and have different needs which need to be distinguished in KCC's PROWIP.

- The two have different uses, functions, and benefits.
- Urban PROWS are an alternative means to get from A to B, may be used more frequently, and make a greater contribution to physical health.
- Rural PROWS are destinations in their own right, and make a greater contribution to well being and tourism.
- Each needs a different plan and strategy.
- Urban costal PROWs maybe both.

### **Conflict between Users**

- ROWIP does not address conflict between different uses.
- Cyclists using footpaths instead of bridleways create quagmires.
- Cyclists without bells endangering walkers.
- Shared use routes put me off walking.

### **Insurance Liabilities**

KCC's consequent maintenance and insurance liabilities are not recognised. ROWIP fails to mention the impediment of current legislation which leaves KCC carrying the can, in the public view of incompetent management, excessive maintenance costs, and insurance liabilities.

## **Funding and Finance**

There were concerns that this detailed Improvement Plan does not have a similarly detailed budget or budgetary priorities attached to it. It also does not explain where additional resource identified by £+ would come from, or how County level aspiration as expressed in this Improvement Plan and local need and demand will be fulfilled.

Funding for maintaining prows is very limited and unlikely to increase significantly in the foreseeable future. KCC cannot be criticised for this. However, management must adequately take account of this difficulty.

Requires information on financial expenditure and sources of revenue, residents need to know costs in their area, local priorities, current and future projects.

We welcome the aspirations in the document, but are disappointed by the lack of detailed actions and, in particular, the budget in order to realise the stated aspirations

It appears that all listed target areas require the full range of inputs, including financial ones. Is there a way of prioritising these?

## **Ecology**

More reference to the nature/ecology/wildlife to which the network facilitates access and among which it passes should be made. Such considerations should apply to efforts to exclude uses of the network which are merely enjoyable to users (e.g. motorists and motorcyclists) and not to other users and the wildlife along the PROW and in its vicinity, and which damage the PROW itself.

## **Equestrian Use**

Too simple to describe what's needed to improve rights of way especially for equestrians. In spite of the last ROWIP very little has been accomplished for equestrians 7% of population taking healthy exercise!

Equestrians don't want to be 'pushed' into specific routes.

Horse friendly pubs – could these be added to Explore Kent maps? A good business opportunity which would certainly encourage use of the surrounding network (Hook and Hatchet at Hucking is a good example of this). Horses Welcome B&Bs (an approval system for these already exists with BHS) and these, along with horse friendly pubs, etc.

Routes must be multi user. Routes need to be continuous, circular and safe. Must not be to the detriment of legitimate users and should not be the responsibility of the PROW team. Height especially important for disabled riders or older riders who may be less flexible. 4.3 Not tarmac please outside of towns!



Those areas with the best off road networks for equestrians become most densely populated as riders move there or move their horses there.

There has been talk of “slow roads” creating them either by benign neglect or by signing and marking and reducing speed limits. This would certainly help. The original “Quiet Lanes” in parts of the country would also benefit from this treatment and would provide useful links between bridleways for many equestrians and leisure cyclists.

## **Presentation & Structure of Document**

A clear definition of a right of way at the beginning is required.

The current legal distinction between PROW and other paths crossing public parks and open spaces, commons and other sites is confusing and generally not understood by those who use them. It results in a disjointed approach to route planning, maintenance, ownership of responsibility and funding.

### **Delivery Plan**

A lot of overlapping.

We welcome the aspirations in the document but are disappointed by the lack of detailed actions and, in particular, the budget in order to realise the stated aspirations.

There are FAR TOO MANY actions listed. You should (a) have less, and (b) prioritise them very clearly and fund them accordingly.

There is no way all these actions will be delivered with the resources you currently have.

### **Maps**

Maps need to be larger

Some confusion over data maps.

### **Comparing the new plan to the previous plans**

I felt you needed to differentiate more clearly between the previous plan, all the research and then what you hope to achieve in the next ten years.

Would be good to have a concise "what we are planning to do/ do different" section that clearly summarises changes to previous plans - placed early within the document with the option of looking at details in later pages.

**Index and Glossary** - Needed a clearer index so people could go to sections that concerned them.

**Design** - Please note, as one ages it is not so easy to see small and faint type e.g. p12 bottom left pale type on white is very hard to read so are the footnotes on pages 31 -39 the second column 'Objective some of the type is very pale, especially relating to section 2. I realise you are trying to coordinate the colour of the type with the colour of the heading, but maybe you consider ameliorating this feature in future documents in order to facilitate reading by older people and those with poor eyesight.

## Key Partners

**The key partners are listed as part of the actions; it would be helpful to include an explanation of the process of engagement with those key partners.**

The Trans European Trail (TET), aimed at responsible motorcycle touring using tarmac and legal trails, runs through Kent. This will bring additional tourism into the area, including visitors from overseas. The impact on byways/ UCRs in terms of user numbers ought to be relatively small. The TET organisers have been collating information on the positive benefits this will bring. I hope local authorities would welcome this development and support it.

We are disappointed to see no mention of Kent Ramblers amongst the Key Partners in view of the work we do to promote walking in Kent and we hope you will agree to remedy this. We would like to discuss with Kent County Council how we might work in partnership to promote walking in Kent generally and along the many fine but little-used named routes in particular. While Explore Kent has focused on the on-line promotion of walking in Kent, Kent Ramblers could complement that work by helping to fill the considerable gaps in printed promotion. We might also be able to assist with funding for interpretation boards and waymarking improvements.

As far as your Delivery Plan is concerned it would be appreciated if you could give the Ramblers a few mentions. We've established a good relationship with KCC's PROW teams as far as shared maintenance is concerned. The Open Spaces Society also has a feed in on PROW diversion applications. Potentially relevant (to the Ramblers), but not necessarily exclusive aspects of your Delivery Plan "Key Partners" are KT04, MN01, RR01 (5.6), EN03 etc., ED01, ED02 & ED04 More generally we would like to see our contribution to the walking environment in Kent better recognised, not least the work we do on vegetation clearance and other aspects of path maintenance.

Parish mentioned as partner but we have never been contacted hopefully that will change now.

Hawkhurst is blessed with two GP Surgeries and a Cottage hospital – there is apparently limited support for the promotion of rights of way. In addition, groups such as U3A are very active in the area but the benefits of PROW network are not promoted directly to them.

I undertake free and paid for guided tours which use PROW - the likes of me should be readily considered by KCC as partners delivering out in the parishes.

We think it would be helpful to have closer engagement with local groups e.g. cycling groups such as TWBUG; TBUG, SBUG - as well as Sustrans. KCC should co-ordinate these groups across the county.

As part of the key partners, there is not a reference to public health bodies. It is noted that local authorities are included as a key partners, as well as planning authorities. It would be helpful to clarify which department within the local authorities are the key partner in each scenario.

In the statement of actions there is no mention of the Ramblers, long distance walkers associations, the cyclist tourist club or even a generic reference 'PROW users' as key partners. Members of these organisations are the people who know what's wanted and would probably be will be first to benefit or otherwise from any change.

Equestrians are under represented among the Key Partners. The British Horse Society represents riders and carriage drivers. The Riding for the Disabled local representatives should also be consulted.

## Issues reported

As an over 70 year old, it is essential that we can get access to these places easily. This means having adequate car parking at access points, or clear directions from bus stops and train stations. Better availability of maps like "The Great Stour Way" leaflet would help enormously.

Saxon Shore Way, National Cycle Network Route 1, England Coast Path all use byway NG2a/Footpath NG2 through Gravesend. Potholed, fly-tipped, littered, overgrown, blocked drains, defective lighting, highly obstructive parking by adjacent businesses every weekday. There has been some patch repair of potholes and whilst welcome it is shoddy at best. This should be an important link between Gravesend, the Thames and North Kent Marshes. It is more like a no go zone.

The only thing I would say is that the document states that Explore Kent is to be a primary communication tool for users to find PROW etc. I cycle and the only routes shown for Tonbridge when you want to use it, is the Tudor Trail. The website would really benefit from allowing users to see where they can use PROW to travel around Tonbridge, there are a number of existing cycle paths that are being joined up, but Explore Kent doesn't show any. It gives directions using roads.

Local PROW HL26 near Dennes Lane, Lydd has been barbed wired so access is impossible. Please investigate.

Tyler Hill, I can walk to the bus stop, but I cannot walk to nearby Blean with shops/doctor/more frequent buses/etc., without walking on a fairly dangerous road with double bend, which had accident just two weeks ago. Likewise access to Sustrans Canterbury- Whitstable Salt Road route is difficult without using the same road.

Although not strictly speaking a PROW, the Sandgate Maintenance Gangway has become part of the England Coast Path also KCC and Folkestone&Hythe DC have promoted cycling along this route. I agree the main road is only for experienced cyclists but a large majority of the gangway/promenade cyclists do not share the path, they dominate. Sometimes they are dangerous, especially for the elderly and young children.

Alkham byways regularly damaged by misuse of vehicle traffic, causing safety issues with pedestrians and horse riders.

Heavy traffic routes – B2017, Somerhill Schools no footway before reaching bend at Postern Lane. Solution to purchase strip of land alongside the B2017.

Lydd need better network to access villages and towns, due to heavy traffic, suggest a cycle path would make life easier and safer and could be integrated into the current pathway near Lydd golf course. A cycle path down Dungeness Road would be a fantastic asset to the area for both locals and visitors alike.

Tonbridge is a gridlock and communicating existing routes, actively building new routes through and around the town is key

All footpaths should be made into bridleways to allow for greater accessibility for everyone to enjoy the countryside. Horse riders and cyclists are becoming more vulnerable on the roads so we need to provide further off road access.

Many rural communities are car dependant and can not be safely accessed by active travel means, the situation is made worse by poor public transport. For example there is no path between Meopham and Istead rise in Gravesham with the connecting "A" road being narrow with high traffic flows.

Currently the surface of the two main byways/PROWs in the Alkham Valley area (the Bull run & Pimlico way) are both in a bad state of repair and require a lot of work before promoting to more users. Horse riders are frightened to use them in case of injury to their horses and dog walkers (the average age of such local walkers is over 65) are fearful of having a fall due to ruts and dislodged flints, caused by 4x4s etc using the byways in anti-social ways.

Delivering the plan is all very well, but you need to bring all PROWs up to an acceptable standard before you promote them to new users. Inviting new users to certain byways in

the Alkham Valley area (we are sure there will be other areas as well) is inviting some serious claims against KCC for personal and animal injury (to horses) at certain times of the year due to damaged surfaces caused by off roaders.

The strategies need to be implemented into local plans, into planning policies and, importantly, as conditions for planning applications. See EN02; RR01; ED04. Our experience is that this does not happen:

e.g. Hawkenbury Farm development plans, which are not consistent with RR01 and RR04: how does a "kiss and drop" facility sit with active travel? See AL02 and AL03; EN01, 02, 04, 05. e.g. an excellent new non-motorised facility almost links Tonbridge, Pembury and Tunbridge Wells but fails because there is no safe infrastructure into the centre of those places. e.g. non-motorised access to Pembury hospital along Blackhurst Lane: current barriers exclude use by mobility vehicle users and many cyclists. See EN 01-5. e.g. an improved cycle route along the A26, which is part of the local council's strategic cycle network and which was approved by local residents and by local councillors in open committee, was cancelled by politicians at KCC because of objections from a small number of residents.

My biggest request is for a cycle path on the coast side of the A259 from the western edge of Hythe (Reachfields in Dymchurch Road) to the Redoubt in Dymchurch. There is sufficient grass verge nearly all the way, with a minor encroachment of the Rifle Range needed in places. The completion of this would provide a cycle path (much of it on the promenade) from Folkestone Harbour all the way to Littlestone. With the new bike hire facilities just introduced along this stretch, the fitness, commute and tourism opportunities are enormous.

I would like to see off road links between established cycle paths such as the old railway routes. In particular it would be lovely to have an off road cycle route from Edenbridge to Penshurst to join the Tonbridge cycle path.

KT01. Whilst not technically PRoW the cycling network in Kent is often poorly signed. National Cycle Network Route 1 through Sittingbourne is an excellent example. Between Kemsley and Murston the route is variously on shared footways at one side of the road or in the carriageway. It is often difficult to determine which due to the paucity of signage.

In Faversham, for example, there are a number of alleyways and paths that are currently prohibited for use by cyclists but could arguably be shared between pedestrians and cyclists, encouraging children in particular to use safer means of cycling to school. But it is equally clear from social media comments that there is also a good deal of opposition from some pedestrians to shared use, although this occurs quite widely in other countries.

EN01 – The Hawkhurst NDP identified 4 green routes linking various parts of the village plus the of importance linking the various settlements to Bedgebury. This would be our top priority and we feel that the importance of Bedgebury as a hive of activity makes linking the PROW to it strategically important for Kent. KT02 – We have promoted walking locally with our own "Hawkhurst Walkfest" and are working with the High Weald and local groups on promoting walking in the area. A joined up approach would be a positive step forward.

We need to look to the future and invest in green transport. Even though Romney Marsh is flat, we have less cycle paths than other regions. We need to encourage tourism in this field.

Although the prows in Rusthall are well maintained (apart from the alleys from Grange Road which need some vegetation cut back) I feel they need to be better signposted to aid access and use.

2. The footpath network is lacking to the east and west of Westerham and would benefit from new paths.

Extension of the PROW network is highly desirable. There are several areas where new ROW or permissive paths would benefit the public, eg a footpath along the Beult from Headcorn to Yalding, and permissive public use of the footpaths that already exist along the Teise and Lesser Teise.

I would really love to see improvements to the ROWs in Sellindge incorporated into the future developments (eg. an improved footpath to Westenhanger station has been mooted in discussions re the proposed development behind Rhodes House, which would be a great start).

I would like to be advised of any new PROW projects. The reason being that some years ago I participated in the proposed extension of the path along the Royal Military Canal from Aldergate Bridge to Appledore & Ry . But clearly, and I understand , there were amongst other things financial constraints , so it seemed to die a death . I frequently get asked by Hythe residents is this ever likely to happen.

I have twice stopped and discussed with whoever happened to be around in the Brogdale Road (Faversham) development site whether they could not earn themselves some local goodwill by clearing the public pathway that now runs alongside the barred off area.....promises to 'speak to the contract/site manager' but no change so far. I wondered generally whether local businesses could not 'adopt' a pathway and keep it clear as a community contribution - whilst fighting through the pathway from Faversham to Oare - which goes right round the Marks and Spencer building amongst others.

More needs to be done to allow dog walkers access. Some stiles are next to impossible especially for those with older animals. For instance the shipbourne church path past the rectory is completely impossible with a dog they are expected to jump four feet over a stile several times!

The public footpath (Footpath 90) on the north bank of the river Stour needs to be reinstated where the bank has been breached in order to provide the original access from Fordwich to Grove Ferry. Google maps shows the Stour Valley Walk on private land at Fordwich and not the true route, KCC needs to contact Google Maps to correct this and improve signage in Fordwich.

We need more bridleways, especially in the Ashford/Brabourne area.

I found the Saxon Shore Way and the Stour Valley Way were impassable to use as a circular walk from Richborough recently. Further many footways are not signed or kept clear by farmers. However deletion of certain prows is sensible when redundant and there are better alternatives.

Sevenoaks District Council, working with Kent Wildlife Trust and other local partners, has received a confirmed National Lottery grant of £483,600 for the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons heritage project. This will be a four year project covering the 300ha of Commons that largely fall under SDC's management and will include Seal Chart, Fawke Common and Bitchet Common in Seal Parish and Crockenhill, Hosey Common and Farley Common in Westerham Town. Including match funding and volunteer time the project will have a value of £685,274 and aims to restore the landscape, social and natural heritage of the Commons, improve footpaths, bridleways and signage. There will be opportunities for people to find out and share more about the history and wildlife of the Commons and to take a lead role in the on-going management of their conservation and promotion of their heritage.

We see this as an opportunity to significantly improve a number of existing PROWs in terms of adjacent vegetation clearance to complement KCC's statutory responsibility for surfacing, possibly create some permissive paths, and to improve the connectivity to the Commons via PROWs. This has been identified as a priority by local people following extensive consultation during the Development stage of the bid to the HLF.

This project offers unique opportunities to use volunteers working with the support of the landowners to both identify improvements but also to support work needed to bring the PROWs up to a standard that can be enjoyed by many people. We welcomed the support of KCC footpaths officer during the Development stage who committed to providing in kind and real resources to support a successful bid and this consultation offers us an opportunity to flag up some of the very real benefits that could result from working in partnership with KCC over the coming 4 years.

## **How this meets Objectives of KCC's Plan**

### **Ref code AL01, 02 and 03**

With the input of volunteers, and alongside one of our project partners, we have identified some desirable improvements in the Seal area. In particular there is a strong desire to improve connectivity between paths and bridleways to give better access the Commons by foot, horse or cycle, and to link them with nearby National Trust properties such as Knole and the local communities. We have examples of gaps in the network:

- On Seal Chart the A25 is a dangerous barrier to horse-riders, cyclists and walkers. A safer crossing is needed between Seal Chart and Oldbury Hill, linking well used leisure routes and the settlements either side of the road. This might be located at the Pillar Box Lane /Church Lane cross roads, or at Coldhanger where bridleway 112 meets the A25 and there is a permissive path to lane C326.
- A cycleway could be created from Seal to Seal St Laurence school using the pavement on the north side of the A25 from Seal to a crossing point at Church Lane, and a path created on the Common along Church Lane.

Several bridleways end at dangerous points on roads with no safe return route. We suggest the following improvements:

- Upgrade footpath 115 to a bridleway to form a circular route between Seal Chart and Godden Green, using path 115 and bridleway 129.
- Upgrade path 160 to a bridleway from Back Lane, Godden Green to Fawke Common.
- Link Hosey and Crockhamhill Commons which are separated by a dangerous road, by clearing a grass verge and using National Trust land.

We anticipate that there will be other improvements on/between the project sites that will emerge and develop over the 4 year Sevenoaks Greensand Commons lifetime.

Less work has been done in the Westerham area, however local residents have already identified to us that there is an obvious link to create between Hosey and Crockhamhill Commons, currently separated by a very dangerous road. It has been suggested this might be possible, by clearing a grass verge and using some NT land, but further work needs to be done to investigate this further and we would welcome approaching this in a collaborative manner with Kent County Council.



In summary, we look forward to working with you to ensure the full benefits of the project are delivered and PROWs are improved significantly with the additional support from volunteers and funding for work beyond the statutory duties of Kent County Council.

Our comments are on behalf of a community bisected by the congested and hazardous A25. It is part rural with an exceptional landscape and popular walking routes, and part urban with relentless pressure on unsuitable minor roads from cars and heavy vehicles.

There is inadequate provision for safe walking and cycling within the community and to three expanding schools, two new care homes and possible major new housing nearby. Our priority is to improve the connectivity of walking and cycling routes to schools, rail stations etc., and for exploration of the countryside.

#### *Safe routes to schools*

Seal Primary school has a wide catchment that includes Kemsing, a kilometre to the north on Childsbridge Lane. A footpath at Copse Bank also leads directly to secondary schools less than a kilometre away. All the schools are expanding, but despite desperate parking problems no one walks or cycles this route because it crosses a road bridge with no pavement. We are at an impasse in our efforts to install a pavement and traffic management at the bridge, and seek help to improve the path at Copse Bank.

#### *Effective cycle routes*

The Sevenoaks Cycle Strategy includes many potential cycle routes, but nothing has been done to provide clear and where possible segregated routes where they are most needed. The priorities should be:

- an east/west alternative to the A25, linking housing, schools and rail stations in north Sevenoaks, intersecting with:
- a north/south route between the town centre, housing, schools and the rail station.

We continue to impress upon the local authorities the importance of an alternative to the car, especially when major new development is taking place and two new multi-storey car parks are being built.

#### *Rural connections*

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a significant grant for the 'Sevenoaks Greensand Commons' project, to conserve and improve over 300ha of common land along the Greensand Way, from Hosey Common to Seal Chart.

Consultation for the project found a strong desire to improve connectivity between paths and bridleways to give better access the Commons by foot, horse or cycle, and to link them with nearby National Trust properties such as Knole and the local communities. We have examples of gaps in the network:

- On Seal Chart the A25 is a dangerous barrier to horse-riders, cyclists and walkers. A safer crossing is needed between Seal Chart and Oldbury Hill, linking well used leisure routes and the settlements either side of the road. This might be located at the Pillar Box Lane /Church Lane cross roads, or at Coldhanger where bridleway 112 meets the A25 and there is a permissive path to lane C326.
- A cycleway could be created from Seal to Seal St Laurence school using the pavement on the north side of the A25 from Seal to a crossing point at Church Lane, and a path created on the Common along Church Lane.

Several bridleways end at dangerous points on roads with no safe return route. We suggest the following improvements:

- upgrade footpath 115 to a bridleway to form a circular route between Seal Chart and Godden Green, using path 115 and bridleway 129.
- upgrade path 160 to a bridleway from Back Lane, Godden Green to Fawke Common.
- link Hosey and Crockhamhill Commons which are separated by a dangerous road, by clearing a grass verge and using National Trust land.

The Sevenoaks Greensand Commons project will enable limited improvement of walking and cycle routes, and measure to create 'safe lanes.' The Parish Council will support the project and welcomes engagement with the PROW unit to address its priorities in Seal.

### **3 Knowing what's out there**

Objective KT01 – Information on the footpath network is widely available and the Parish Council values the on-line 'fault reporting' tool. It would be helpful if the definitive footpath map were available on-line in its own right, and not only as part of that tool.

### **4 Well-maintained network**

- MN01 Better Network for Leisure and Daily Use – We strongly support this objective and the measures proposed, especially work with Parish Councils to Identify local priorities.

We are concerned that local roads which are popular cycle routes are unsafe, particularly because of erosion at the edge from poor drainage and heavy vehicles. We would welcome better coordination of drainage and surface maintenance on key routes.

Some paths and bridleways become unusable at times because of deep mud and water; for example, bridleway 107 needs scraping to provide a better link between Seal Chart and Oldbury.

## 5 Rights with responsibilities

- PR01 Provide advice on PROW Network – We support this objective and the measures proposed, especially the need to work with developers, land owners and Local Planning Authorities in the planning process. We believe that more than advice is required. A lead needs to be taken to promote at least one traffic free walking and cycling route in every town, and these should be given priority for funding.

## 6 Efficient delivery

- ED05 Working in Partnership – We support this objective and draw your attention to the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons project as an opportunity to work with the Parish Councils to identify and remedy local priorities for network improvements.

### **Q9. Do you have any other comments on the ROWIP?**

Your research found that less than 10% use PROW to take children to school or get to work (page 14). We believe this underlines the need for greater connectivity in the network.

You illustrate the use of spatial data to target schools and potential links to the PROW network, encouraging active travel and healthy lifestyle choices (page 28). We support this aim, and in our experience more coordination and commitment is needed by all those involved to make walking and cycling routes safe, including provision of a pavement where none is present, better road crossings, and lower speed limits.

We note your emphasis on working with local authorities and developers to identify the infrastructure needed to accommodate future growth by encouraging more sustainable travel (pages 13 and 23). Development of 600 dwellings has been proposed nearby at Sevenoaks Quarry, and we believe this will not be practical unless proper provision is made for walking and cycling.

The Parish Council hopes that the PROW Unit will be vigilant of the proposals for this site, and work with us to ensure that the Local Plan and a design brief require well connected walking and cycling routes, supported by developer funding.

Some paths and bridleways become unusable at times because of deep mud and water; for example, bridleway 107 needs scraping to provide a better link between Seal Chart and Oldbury.

I would like to be sure that there is consideration to the link between our village of Appledore and Appledore Station, which is located just over a mile from the actual village, (The Street).

The Friends of Appledore Station, which has been established to 'Improve the Image of Appledore Station by Providing a More Attractive, User Friendly Facility and thereby Encourage an Increase in the Usage of the Marshlink Rail Service'. Passengers and Villagers have consistently expressed the view that a suitable pathway between the Village and Appledore Station, for Pedestrians and Cyclists is highly desirable, moreso in view of the very limited parking facilities at Appledore Station.