

EGRETS WAY PROJECT (OUSE VALLEY CYCLE NETWORK)



ANNUAL REPORT 2015 – 2016

This is the fourth annual report since the Ouse valley cycle network was constituted in August 2011 with the ambition of creating a network of shared paths linking Lewes, Newhaven and the villages in between. At this point last year we had two stages completed: the Kingston to Lewes path and a bridleway connecting Rodmell and Southease and we were working in partnership with the South Downs National Park and Sustrans on phase three. The plan was to deliver the bulk of the riverside route with a grant of £620k from the South Downs National Park's award from central government for creating new shared cycle paths in National Parks.

Phase Three

With a contractor already appointed we had hoped that construction would have started soon after year's AGM. However establishing landownerships, making contact with over twenty landowners, negotiating detailed agreements on construction, maintenance, and a legal formalities for a fifteen year lease, have proved lengthy and more costly than anticipated. Although all landowners have agreed in principle to the path not all were in a position to allow us to start construction. When, eventually the contractors were able to start in November, exceptionally wet weather conditions resulted in further difficulties and delays. Nevertheless a one mile section from Southease Bridge to Dean's Farm Piddinghoe, and a short section at the Lewes end from Ham Lane to the start of the raised river bank, have now been completed.

The Southease to Piddinghoe section terminates with a 150m of share pavement on the C7 road running alongside the road. Construction of this pavement section has resulted in a significant improvement to the visibility sight lines at this difficult crossing point for those who want to continue their journey on bridleways leading to Peacehaven and to Harping Hill. For those who do not wish to venture further there is a Farm Shop just across the road and there are agreements in place to create a direct access to Riverside Farm where there are plans for a range of visitor attractions.

The river section from Southease to Dean's Farm will be formally opened at an event on May 14th.

Piddinghoe

In May a newly elected Piddinghoe Parish Council confirmed its support for the Egrets Way project's aspirations but has remained opposed to any route which encourages cyclists on the narrow road through the village. It was eventually agreed with the Parish councillors that we would carry out an opinion survey of all residents. The questionnaire was mutually agreed, posted to all residents on the electoral roll and counted by an independently. The result (see Table 3) showed a majority, all be it a small one, in favour of the EW going through Piddinghoe. However, a significant number of residents remain opposed to the route which was given planning permission in 2014 (SDNP/14/01443/FUL). We are continuing to work with the Parish Council, assisted by local County and District councillors (Cllr Carla Butler and Cllr Vic Ient) to explore a number of alternatives and to find a deliverable solution.

Newhaven and Seaford Sailing Club (NSSC)

Planning Permission for the whole path included using a track serving the NSSC club house and car park and continuing to the river on a path well-used by local people. The Sailing Club objected to this route on safety grounds as they often have activities and events involving large numbers of people which, however, has offered and agreed to an alternative route running around the north and east boundary of the pond on land in their ownership. Seaford Angling Club which uses the area between the pond and river banks for their activities have given their support. We have now agreed to withdraw the proposed route through the car park and are exploring how to integrate the new option into the Egrets Way.

Newhaven Town Council

Newhaven Town Councillors invited us to make presentation about the EW Project and a constructive and helpful meeting was held at the Council Offices in August. The Council supports the EW and recognises how it could link in with the Riverside Park community project. To strengthen contact with the Council it was agreed that a councillor should attend EW committee meetings. Cllr Alex was subsequently co-opted, with Cllr. Julie Carr as a substitute, to the committee

Riverside Park Newhaven

We have also established contact with the Friends of Riverside Park. The agreed EW route will run through Riverside Park where some exciting landscape and path improvements to the wild area (former landfill site) are currently being undertaken. There is the potential for the Riverside Community building and park to be linked with the Linklater Pavilion and Railway Land Wildlife Trust in Lewes, not only by the Egrets Way, but also by common aspirations for environmental educational opportunities, and is being actively explored.

Cockshut Lane

Cockshut lane is an existing route adjacent to the Stanley Turner Recreation Grounds which provides a vital link for the Egrets Way between the Kingston and Lewes path and Southover High Street and Ham Lane. Unfortunately although constructed in 1976 as part of the Lewes by-pass works its bridleway status had not been confirmed and it has been regularly used as short cut by motor vehicles at considerable risk to walkers, cyclist and riders. Applications by local businesses for a change of the planning conditions to allow them to use the route were made but after two applications were both refused and a planning appeal dismissed we can report that bridleway status has been confirmed; locked barriers are in place to ensure that only agricultural vehicles may now use the route. This successful outcome is important because we want as much as possible of the Egrets Way to be a facility where users, especially school age children, are safe from traffic risk, noise and pollution.

Strategic Plan

The 2015-16 plan has been reviewed and a new plan proposed for the coming year

Communications

Although much work was going on 'behind the scenes' slow progress with negotiations and construction meant there was little new to report but left many people feeling disconnected. Our communication system and policy has recently been reviewed and we hope to improve our engagement with Members, supporters and other interested groups using our web-site and e-mailings to keep in contact more regularly and effectively in the coming year.

Publications, talks given and events attended are listed in Table 2

Committee and Trustees (Table 1)

At last year's AGM all trustees resigned as required by our CIO (Charitable Incorporate Organisation) constitution but were eligible for re-election. All, except Katherine Mondon, sought re-election and the members at the meeting agreed to those nominations. In addition two new Trustees were elected: Noel West and Elle Osbourne.

At the first meeting of the EW committee the following Officers were agreed: Chair Neville Harrison, Deputy Chair Wendy Brewer, Secretary Susan Thompson and Treasurer Elle Osbourne. Alister Linton-Crook, SDNPA Cycling Officer, continued as a co-opted member.

During the year two Trustees resigned: Noel West and Elle Osbourne.

Steve St.Clair was co-opted as a resident of Piddinghoe

The Committee has met on eight occasions during the year. We are grateful to the Abergavenny Arms Rodmell for allowing us to hold committees in the pub.

Conclusions

Although it is disappointing not to have achieved as a much newly constructed path we had hoped a great deal of essential background work is in now in place. We have always accepted that creating a largely new riverside route between Lewes and Newhaven would be achieved in a piecemeal fashion as landowner agreements and funding became available. We are entirely dependent on the goodwill of landowners to allow a public path across their land. We appreciate this a decision not to be taken lightly and we are grateful to those who to date have been willing and able to do so. We have been careful to ensure that each new section opened brings some real benefits and opportunities. Our ambition of a complete route linking Lewes, Newhaven and local communities remains undiminished and we believe, as more people recognise the many benefits this will bring for local people, and by encouraging visitors to this attractive area to local enterprises, support for the project will continue to grow. Working in partnership with the South Downs National Park and Sustrans from the beginning has been invaluable. The EW is on the SDNP's list of projects to be supported because the Authority recognises that shared paths are an important way of encouraging and enabling access to the National Park for people of all ages and abilities, and at the same time contributing to health and wellbeing and the local economy.

Neville Harrison

Chair of Trustees Egrets Way Project (Ouse Valley Cycle Network)

14th April 2016

TABLES

Table 1 Current Committee Members

Wendy Brewer	Trustee	Deputy chair
Barbara Dart	Trustee	
Neville Harrison	Trustee	Chair
Alister Linton-Crook	Co-opted	SDNPA Cycling Officer
Zara Luxford	Trustee	
John Parry	Trustee	
Susan Thompson	Trustee	Secretary
Steve St.Clair	Co-opted	
Cllr. Alex Woolfson/Cllr Julie Carr	Co-opted	

Committee resignations

Noel West	Trustee
Elle Osbourne	Trustee

Table 2 Press articles, Talks and Events Attended

Cycling Active magazine	June 2015	'As the Egret flies' by David Bradford
Sussex Express	June 26 th 2015	'Work to start on more sections of riverside path'
Sussex Express	September 2015	Egrets Way Project 'Work starts on shared path'
South Downs Society AGM	May 9 th 2015	Talk: 'The Ups and Downs pf the Egrets Way '
Newhaven Town Council	August 4 th 2015	Egret Way Video presentation
Seaford Ramblers AGM	February 3rd 2016	Talk: 'The Ups and Downs of the Egrets Way'
Friends of Riverside Park AGM	March 19 th 2016	Egret Way Video presentation
Lewes Hike and Bike Festival, the Cliffe, Lewes	May	2 015

3. Piddinghoe Survey

3.1 Survey Questionnaire

PARISH SURVEY

The Egrets Way Project seeks to link the villages of the Ouse Valley from Lewes to Newhaven with a safe shared path intended for walkers, dog walkers, cyclists, and push-chair and mobility scooters users, as an alternative to the dangerous C7 road.

The Egrets Way Committee and South Downs National Park need to know if the Village community is in favour of them continuing to develop a river route through Piddinghoe.

The Parish Council are of the view that the inclusion of Piddinghoe in The Egrets Way Project presents the best possible opportunity of obtaining a speed and noise reduction scheme at the C7 at the north end of the Village.

PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU SUPPORT THIS PROJECT (Please tick)

YES []

NO []

Name Date

Please put your answer in the self addressed envelope and return as soon as possible but **NO LATER than the 17th April** when the information will be independently collated.

All response are confidential and will not be seen by the Parish Council or the Egrets Way Committee. Only the results will be disclosed to them.

Thank you

Piddinghoe Parish Council & Egrets Way Committee

6th April 2014

This survey has been sent to everyone on the Piddinghoe Parish Electoral Roll. Forms are enclosed for everyone registered at your address.

3.2 Survey outcome

Total responses: 149 (of 204 = 73%)

Yes: 74 (51.4%)

No: 70 (48.6%)

Spoiled: 5

Votes spoiled were not counted. A vote was spoiled if the reply was conditional, un-named or unanswered.