

# Rights of Way Improvement Plan Summary

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2017 Review



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# Forward

## What is a Rights of Way Improvement Plan?

Through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 (Section 60) the government recognises the value of public Rights of Way and requires each Highway Authority to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) in order to identify changes that will "improve provision for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with mobility issues." The ROWIP must be reviewed every 10 years. This is the ten year review plan of the original ROWIP, 2007.

## Vision for Rights of Way in Brighton & Hove:

*A city where people with diverse access needs have the opportunity to use a well maintained and joined up public Rights of Way network, connected to the varied green and blue spaces around the city: the seafront, city parks and gardens, open spaces on the urban fringe and the South Downs National Park*

Five main aims have been identified for improving access in and around the city:

1. Improve accessibility for diverse users in Brighton & Hove
2. Make information on the Rights of Way network and access to green spaces more accessible
3. Improve connectivity to green spaces within the city
4. Work with SDNPA and neighbouring authorities to reduce severance and improve access to the National Park and The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere
5. Improve connectivity of the existing Rights of Way network

In order to achieve these aims it is essential that the authority secures funding and involvement from corporate and charitable sources, to augment council budgets and help support potential bids for funding from other sources.

40% of Brighton & Hove is within the South Downs National Park. This beautiful and unique landscape has been created through thousands of years of farming. It is still a working, farmed environment today. It is essential that the improvements made to our access network goes hand-in-hand with improved communication with land managers and better informed users of the network.

Emerging from these 5 aims are more detailed objectives and the actions required to meet them. The full Statement of Action can be found in Table 1 at the end of this report.

A well maintained and enhanced network of Rights of Way has a major contribution to make to ensuring Brighton & Hove remains one of the best places to live.

*(For an outline of the national, regional and local policy framework that has informed the preparation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan [ROWIP] please see the full document).*

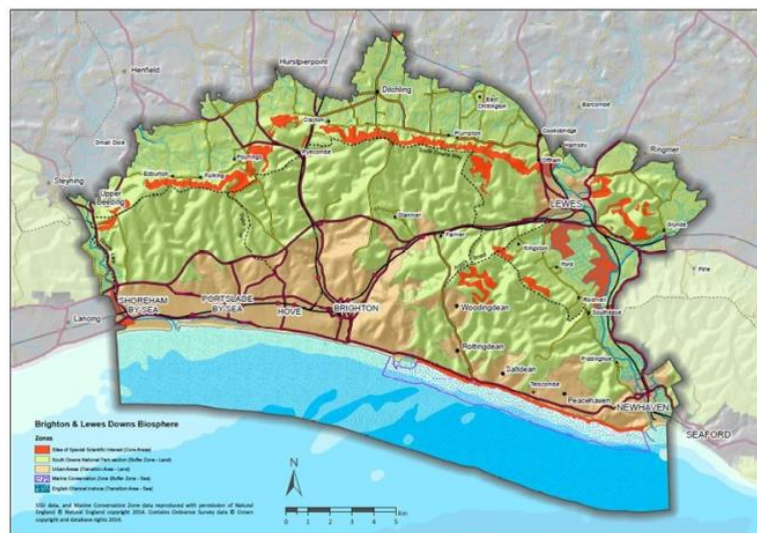
# 1. An Overview of Access in Brighton & Hove

**1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council** covers an area of approximately 8,267 hectares (40km<sup>2</sup>) between the south coast and the South Downs, and from Portslade in the west to Saltdean in the east, with 13km of seafront and a population of almost 285,300 (in 2015). The City attracts between 8 - 11 million visitors a year, providing 13% of the city's income.

**1.2** The city's existing **public Rights of Way network and open spaces** are summarised below:

- The Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network for Brighton & Hove is 159 km in total length, comprising: 54% footpaths, 40% bridleways, 4% restricted byways and 2% byways.
- There are 730 Rights of Way assets (pieces of countryside furniture: gates, stiles, waymarks, information boards), with a total replacement value of £191,808.
- 13.5km of 'easy access' trails have been put in around the city.
- There are 24 km of surfaced multi-user trails (aside from the bridleway and byway network). These paths have hard-surfacing, are fairly level and accessible to a wide range of users including families and people with restricted mobility.
- There is 40.1 km of Permissive Path network (21.2 km of permissive footpath and 18.9 km of permissive bridleway). Where dedication of public Rights of Way has not been possible these paths, under land owner /tenant agreements, serve an important role in providing links across the access network.
- Cycle routes (normally only open to walkers and cyclists) – National Cycle Network routes (NCN) promoted by Sustrans provide 24 km of off-highway cycle path and 15.5km of on-highway cycle path.
- The Council owns 4,045 hectares of Downland Estate, most of which is farmland, surrounding the city. 504 hectares is woodland. More than one third of this land is classified as Open Access (1,441 hectares). Open spaces such as these are often used to create routes to link with adjacent Rights of Way.
- 40% of the land area of Brighton & Hove is within the South Downs National Park.
- Within the city there are 232 hectares of parks and public gardens, across almost 100 sites, and an additional 40 privately owned parks & gardens. 7 of these are green flag parks. There are 50 playgrounds, 200 sports pitches, greens and courts. There are 36 allotment sites with 3000 tenants.
- Satisfaction with the city's parks and open spaces, including access to the South Downs, is very high at 91% (City Parks Survey, 2013).

In 2014 Brighton & Hove became part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves, through designation of the Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere, now known as The Living Coast. <http://www.thelivingcoast.org.uk/>. Access to the natural environment is, therefore, of great importance in this area.



## 2. Delivery Mechanisms

The council is the highway and surveying authority\* and it has both statutory duties and discretionary powers. Statutory duties include keeping the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review, investigating Rights of Way claims, the maintenance of the Rights of Way network and the protection and assertion of the public's rights. Discretionary powers include making changes to the network (creations, extinguishments and diversions) as well as implementing improvement works (delivery of the ROWIP), volunteer schemes and furniture surveys.

All office based work is carried out by the Rights of Way Officer, with assistance from the Highways Legal team. The practical maintenance works are carried out by the Rights of Way officer with assistance from the Grounds Maintenance Team, Ranger Team, volunteers and contractors.

(\* Highways Authority is responsible for the maintenance of the highways network – including rights of way. Surveying Authority is responsible for the preparation and update of the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way. As a unitary authority Brighton & Hove holds both positions).

**2.1 Successful delivery of the ROWIP will require joined up working between various internal and external partners.** Example collaborative partners:

- Internal: Parks Projects, Estates, City Transport Division, Planning, Tourism, Legal, ICT
- External: SDNPA, surrounding Local Authorities, Local Access Forum, Biosphere Partnership

**2.2 Volunteering:** There are approximately 1,800 volunteers supporting council services. Around 700 of them support Cityparks activities and 60 are Healthwalks volunteers (Open Spaces Strategy 2016).

One objective of the ROWIP is to create more volunteering opportunities to increase participation in helping to maintain and improve the access network:

- **Volunteer Path Wardens** will look after sections of the network they regularly walk / cycle / ride. This will include carrying out seasonal surveys and minimal maintenance tasks (e.g. cutting back vegetation around signs / gates)
- City wide **volunteer work days**. Work with existing volunteer groups to carry out larger maintenance / improvement projects (e.g. surfacing / cutting back vegetation).
- Maintain and support the **Local Access Forum** – with representatives from various groups interested in access issues. To help guide the focus of maintenance and improvement works.

**2.3 Funding:** There is an opportunistic element to working with partners and drawing down external funds, and a need to balance potential improvements with objectives. This Plan sets out objectives and actions in a broad sense. Potential partners and funding opportunities may not align exactly with our priorities – requiring a reasonably flexible approach in order to achieve improvements across the network (*as recognised in Surrey County Council ROWIP*). Close working with partner organisations such as VisitBrighton and the South Downs National Park Authority will provide shared benefits.

Potential Funding Sources:

- National Government Funding (Local Sustainable Transport Fund; Local Enterprise Partnerships; Sport England; Public Health England)
- Local Government Funding (Local Transport Plan – Rights of Way Improvement budget)
- Developer contributions (through section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy)
- Lottery Funding
- Commercial sponsorship

### 3. Achievements since the last ROWIP (2007-2017)

#### Headline Achievements:

- 392 hectares of Open Access land created
- 43 km of new public Rights of Way added to the Definitive Map
- 30 km of new permissive paths (footpaths and bridleways) added to the network
- 14km of 'Easy Access' trails
- 13km of multi-user paths created / surfaced (with improved access for cyclists, equestrians, those with mobility difficulties)
- 39 missing links resolved (out of 48 identified from the last ROWIP)

The last Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2007-17), set out four main priority areas to work on over the ten years. These are set out below, with a summary of how the Council has performed over this period.

#### **Aim A – Improve the existing Rights of Way network and maintain it to a high standard**

The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for Public Rights of Way is: percentage of public Rights of Way that are open and in good condition. Since carrying out a condition survey of the whole network in 2016 it was found that 83% of the network reached this standard. The South Downs National Park carried out a survey of Rights of Way in 2017. The results were: % Number of Paths Passed = 80%; % Length of Paths Passed = 95%

#### **Aim B – Implement identified Missing Links to improve route coherence, access to the network and reduce dependence on the car by meeting local transport needs**

Missing Links are desirable routes between existing Rights of Way that will enable more circular and/or varied distance routes to be opened up. 48 Missing Links were identified with the Local Access Forum for the last ROWIP. Since then 38 have been resolved (10 outstanding & retained within this ROWIP).

Additions of Public Rights of Way to the Definitive Map have resulted in 43.3km of new path network. *Between 2015 and 2017, 500 urban link footpaths (twittens) were added to the Definitive Map.*

#### **Aim C – Develop and promote the access network to support healthy exercise for all**

- 14.3km of 'Easy Access' trails have been created since 2007
- A further 12.6km of multi-user trails were created / existing bridleways or byways surface
- 19 obstacles have been removed (stiles replaced with gates; gates replaced with gaps)
- There is a close relationship between the **Healthwalks** program and Rights of Way provision.

#### **Aim D – Make full use of the council's position as a major landowner to ensure that a holistic approach is taken towards access to the surrounding countryside and South Downs.**

- 329 hectares of new Open Access and Permissive Access land opened up
- Expansion of permissive footpath and bridleway network by 30km

A great deal has been achieved on improving the public Rights of Way network and access over the last 10 years. It is the aim of this Plan to build on those successes to further improve access for a diverse set of users and provide the information people need to make the best use of the access opportunities available to them.

The Action Plan for this ROWIP has been based on an assessment of Brighton & Hove's Public Rights of Way network and access (*which can be seen in the full document*). From this assessment, a number of common themes emerged:

- The need to improve accessibility for the diverse users of the Brighton & Hove's public Rights of Way network: walkers, cyclists, equestrians and those with mobility issues
- The need to improve information provision – both on the website and on the ground
- The need to reduce severance from the South Downs National Park
- The need to improve connectivity both within the network and to green spaces within the city

In most instances these themes cut across most user groups. They have helped shape the aims of this ROWIP.

## 4. Priorities for 2017-2027, an Action Plan (see Table1)

### Aim1: Improving accessibility for diverse users in Brighton & Hove

*Multifunctional Rights of Way improvements that will improve access for everyone, through effective partnership working with internal and external partners*

#### Objectives

- **Increase the accessibility of the network** for all users, including blind and partially sighted people and those with mobility issues. Every improvement should be assessed; adhering to the principles of 'least restrictive access'
- **Improve safety through design of new Multi-User paths** that are traffic free / off-road for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and mobility vehicles (Non-Motorised Users, NMUs). High quality multi-user routes close to where people live could make a substantial contribution to a modal shift to more sustainable transport choices. Generally bridleways and byways offer a greater potential for use by people with restricted mobility than most footpaths.
- **Surface improvements to increase access opportunities** for those with impaired mobility, in wheelchairs or mobility scooters and sight impairment. The gradient of the South Downs landscape makes the creation of true 'Easy Access' trails challenging in many parts of the Authority.
- **Integrated transport:** look at links with public transport to get people to the public Rights of Way network. Help connect people with education facilities, workplaces, facilities & services, parks and open spaces, the Downs and the coast, and other visitor attractions.
- **Promote off-road rides for equestrians and cyclists.** Provision of long distance, circular routes for cyclists & equestrians (the latter from areas where horses are stabled), out into the Downs and back.

### Aim 2: Make information more accessible to residents & visitors

Make information on access to green spaces and path networks more accessible to the public (local residents and visitors). Improve signage on the ground and online resources: mapping information, downloadable route leaflets and digital route guides.

#### Objectives

- **Improve online resources** to enable route planning for residents and visitors to Brighton & Hove. The Definitive Map only shows recorded public Rights of Way. There are other paths that are used with the permission of the landowner. There are also cycle tracks, access land and public open space. They make a significant contribution to improving access and connectivity in the network, but if they do not appear on maps their use is likely to be restricted to local communities only. Create a new online 'Access Map'.
- **Improve on the ground information** provision to help new and inexperienced users access the Rights of Way network and green spaces. Improve signage from the road and at junctions points.
- **Improve the working relationship with tenant farmers & land managers.** Within Brighton & Hove City Council the countryside estate is looked after by the Estates team, who employ an external land management agency to liaise with tenant farmers. Access and Public Rights of Way are the remit of CityParks. There is a need for more joined up working and to improve communication with tenant farmers.
- **Work with land managers** (landowners and tenant farmers) to help improve education about access and reduce conflict in the countryside. Increase visitor information about the nature of the farmed landscape they are entering, helping them to be sensitive to aspects of farming need and nature conservation aims.
- Improve access to **volunteering opportunities** and link those opportunities to green prescribing from health care providers. The authority will engage with local communities and encourage volunteers to assist with the

maintenance, promotion and enhancement of the Rights of Way network in line with the objectives set out in this Plan, through the Volunteer Path Warden scheme (*see PDF 1: Volunteer Path Warden Leaflet*).

- **Advertise Promoted Routes** – to encourage new users and visitors. Promoted routes, national trails and distance paths (most of the them based on public Rights of Way), are considered to be an important part of the network, particularly in terms of encouraging local residents to start walking and attracting long stay visitors from outside the area. These routes would include:

**England Coastal Path (to be opened 2019)**

**Brighton & Hove Way (29km boundary Walk)**

**Discover the Heart of The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere - Castle Hill National Nature Reserve**

### **Aim 3: Improve connectivity to green spaces within Brighton & Hove**

#### **Objectives**

**Improve links between urban areas, housing estates and green space within the city.** Links to parks and gardens in the city centre, but also to natural green space on the urban fringe, such as the many designated sites for nature conservation.

Whilst the management of open land for public recreation does not form part of this plan, it is nevertheless important to ensure that existing access from the Rights of Way network is improved and new points of access to open land created where appropriate.

### **Aim 4: Work with SDNPA & neighbouring authorities to improve access to the National Park & The Living Coast Biosphere**

#### **Objectives**

- **Reduce severance from the National Park** and improve safety at crossing points – where the Rights of Way network (particularly bridleways) intersects with the highways network. Where a path ends at the highway with no direct connection, vulnerable road users are forced to use the carriageway, which can act as a serious disincentive to use of the route (particularly for those on horseback). Even where there is a direct connection across the road, the volume and speed of traffic can make the crossing itself a barrier to users. Certain parts of the city have access to pedestrian bridges or tunnels across the A27. Improving safety at highways junction points will increase the amount of the population with a safe means of accessing the Downs for NMUs and reduce inequality of access. *See Map 1 and Table 2 for priority crossings*
- **Improve 'gateway' sites:** access points to the National Park from housing estates and green spaces on the urban fringe. (Link to Stanmer Park Restoration Project – gateway to the Downs). *See Map 2 for gateways*
- Prioritise Rights of Way improvements along '**Biosphere green corridors**'; from blue to green space: linking the seafront, through the city and out to the South Downs (*the three key environments of The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere*). Green corridors provide a vital link between open spaces, urban areas and the wider countryside, enabling wildlife migration and a sense of continuity of green space for residents. Opportunities to enhance the provision of green corridors as part of Green Infrastructure planning can contribute considerably to improving the Rights of Way network, particularly in urban and urban fringe areas. Improvements can include work to up-grade existing paths and improve connectivity between Rights of Way, making the network more complete and useful to residents and visitors. This will also contribute to the corporate objective of encouraging more people to make short journeys on foot or cycle. *See Map 3 for Green Corridors: Sea →Town →Downs*



- **Falmer Road Corridor:** Rottingdean→Ovingdean→Happy Valley→Woodingdean→Castle Hill
- **Lewes Road Corridor:** Valley Gardens→The Level→Lewes Rd→Woodvale Cemetery→Saunders Park→Wild Park / Hollingbury Woods→Coldean Woods, Ditchling Rd Multi-User Path & Stanmer
- **London Road Corridor:** Valley Gardens→Preston Park→Surrenden Field→Withdean Park→Patcham Place / Horsedean Rec→Waterhall & Patcham Open Access
- **Hove Corridor:** Grand Ave→The Drive→Hove Rec→Hove Park→Three Cornered Copse→Green Ridge / Toads Hole Valley→Waterhall
- **Portslade Corridor:** Shoreham Harbour (development plans see improvements to harbour walkway)→Vale Park→Victoria Rec→Emmaus & Easthill Park / Hangleton Link →Foredown / Benfield Valley→Newbarn Farm & Benfield Hill

## Aim 5: Improve connectivity of the existing Rights of Way Network

A well connected network is likely to be more user-friendly, more beneficial to local people and therefore more likely to contribute to meeting targets such as encouraging more sustainable travel choices; safer routes to school, work, community links and tourism opportunities; reducing congestion and improving health.

The aim is to develop well-connected circular and linear paths that can be enjoyed by walkers, cyclists and horse riders; with increased information about routes and route planning on our website.

### Objectives

**Reduce Fragmentation:** fragmentation of the Rights of Way network often reflects its historical origins. This history is reflected in the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way. It is a priority to keep the Definitive Map up-to-date and improve access opportunities and **connectivity** where possible.

An updated version of the Brighton & Hove Definitive Map was printed and posted at Stanmer Park and Hove Town Hall in 2017 (the original map was created in 1995).

The authority will continue on working to fill in the Missing Links and anomalies on the Definitive Map (such as cul-de-sac paths), along with the Local Access Forum. **See Map 4 and Table**

### Summary:

The difficult financial climate means securing resources for improvements is very challenging. The authority needs to pursue an opportunistic approach to improving our Rights of Way and access, without diverting resources from delivering statutory maintenance work. The authority is not in a position to outline in advance all specific work for a variety of reasons including landowner / tenant permissions and resource constraints. The authority must achieve improvements in partnership with other council services, the National Park and neighbouring authorities; and usually by responding to opportunities as they arise.

Budget allocations for Rights of Way improvements have previously come from the Local Transport Plan capital programme. With restricted internal funding, resourcing improvements to public Rights of Way and countryside access is a challenge. However, the Rights of Way network is of great value and can contribute towards many corporate policies and priorities. This presents the opportunity for improvement by developing delivery partnerships and securing funding from a wide variety of sources. This opportunistic approach to improving the network, where securing funding is possible, still requires direction and prioritisation.

This consultation process provides the opportunity for people to feedback on where they feel the authority should concentrate resources and prioritise improvements.

## 5. Performance Monitoring

The Key Performance Indicator for Rights of Way at Brighton & Hove is: percentage of public Rights of Way that are open and in good condition.

There are various ways to monitor the performance of the Rights of Way network in relation to this indicator:

- Public reporting of issues with the network – through the council website, on the ‘report a problem’ form on the Rights of Way page.
- Volunteer Path Wardens carry out a survey of the path(s) they have adopted four times a year (once each season).
- South Downs National Park Authority volunteers carry out sample audits on random Rights of Way across the different Highway Authorities.
- Every 3 years a condition survey of the entire network is carried out. The last survey was completed in 2016. The next is scheduled for 2019.
- South East ADEPT Rights of Way group have initiated an annual benchmarking exercise between highways authorities in the South East of England.
- The National Highways & Transport Satisfaction Survey. The survey asks specific questions on accessibility and on the rights of way network.

The maintenance and improvement works carried out on the Rights of Way network are reported on to the Local Access Forum every quarter. The independent board of members help prioritise Rights of Way improvement projects. The authority reports on improvements made each year to Natural England through the Local Access Forum annual report.



## Statement of Action (Table 1)

Abbreviations used in the Statement of Action (*Methodology adopted from East Sussex County Council ROWIP*)

### Projected cost column (based on approximate costs)

N	Negligible (within existing resources)
£	Less than £5,000
££	Between £5,000 and £15,000
£££	Between £15,000 and £25,000
££££	Between £25,000 and £50,000
£££££	More than £50,000
P	Mainly with existing staff / volunteer levels
PP	Some increase in staff / volunteers required
PPP	Significant increase in staff / volunteers required
C	Requires use of contractors

It must be stressed that this is a 10 year plan. The actions outlined and costs of implementation will have to be spread over the period of this ROWIP (2017 – 2027). There is a need to prioritise works and, if the aims and objectives are to be met, external funding through developer contributions and funding applications are essential.

### Partners column

LAF	Local Access Forum	BCV	Brighton Conservation Volunteers
ESCC	East Sussex County Council	GG	Green Gym
WSCC	West Sussex County Council	Barch	Brighton & Hove Archaeological Society
SDNPA	South Downs National Park Authority	SWT	Sussex Wildlife Trust
RD	Riding for the Disabled		
NE	Natural England		
CW	Community Works		
LMA	Land Management Agents		
VPW	Volunteer Path Wardens		
BIO	Biosphere (BHCC) / Biosphere Partnership		
PP	Park Projects (BHCC)		
GIS	GIS Team (BHCC)		
Ra	Ranger Team (BHCC)		
CTD	City Transport Division (BHCC)		
PI	Planning Department (BHCC)		
To	Tourism Department (BHCC)		
Se	Seafront Team (BHCC)		
Co	Communications Team (BHCC)		
Ph	Public Health (BHCC)		
L	Legal (BHCC)		

### Maps, Tables & PDFs at the end of this report: (preceding the Appendix)

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