

# EGRETS WAY PROJECT

Registered Charity 1155182



## ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

### INTRODUCTION

At the 2017 AGM I reported that we had created 3.6 miles of the Egrets Way. Today, two years the situation is unchanged. However we are close to having two additional sections completed which will add a further 1.3 miles to the route which has involved a close partnership working with the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). There has also been much hard work in other areas, mostly unseen, undertaken by Committee members, all with local connections, confirming that the Egrets Way Project, initiated eight years ago by local people, remains firmly rooted in the community.

### PATHS & PLANNING

#### **Ham Lane to Linklater Pavilion**

Planning approval for an extension of the Egrets Way from Ham Lane to the Linklater Pavilion in Lewes was granted by the National Park in April 2018 [SDNP/17/05291] Funding for this has been achieved by a successful bid for a 'LEADER' grant (EU funds for Rural Development). We were offered a maximum grant of £75k which then enabled us to draw in a further £78k of additional funds from various bodies, including a generous donation to the Egrets Way from the Jo Holden Trust. This new section, which takes the path right into the heart of Lewes, was due to be opened this June to coincide with the Railway Land Festival, but a number of unexpected complications have delayed it: a variation in the path alignment required a new planning application which has recently been granted [SDNP/19/00926] ; securing complex agreements with National Rail to construct the path through the railway underpass, and the need to provide the farmer with a new cattle coral, the tunnel having previously served his purpose well. We anticipate construction will be underway in July and completed by the end of the year. The complex and detailed management work has been undertaken by SDNPA Access team Officers, and I would like to acknowledge their vital contribution to the project.

#### **Swanborough Holiday Lodges**

A number of luxury holiday lodges sited close to the Swanborough fishing lakes are now open. As we have noted in previous reports this development brings an unexpected bonus for the Egrets Way thanks to the Iford Estate: visitors and others will be able to enjoy the benefit of an attractive off-road route right into Lewes, as well as having access via Swanborough Village to the downs and the South Downs Way via an existing bridleway. The path from the lodges to the Egrets Way at the Spring Barn Farm corner is under construction and should be ready for cycling soon; the section to Swanborough will not be ready until the summer. We look forward to celebrating the opening of this important Egrets Way link in the coming months.

#### **Newhaven to Piddinghoe.**

We now have agreements in principle in place with the landowners to take the route from Riverside Park in Newhaven to Piddinghoe on a path running below the riverbank and around the Newhaven and Seaford Sailing Club pond. The section around the pond is not only attractive but will also

benefit members of the Seaford Angling Club by making it easier for them to get to the fishing bays with their equipment trolleys. This route, agreed to by Piddinghoe Parish Council, has planning approval granted in April 2018 [SDNP/17/05291]. It involves using a short section of footpath on top of the river bank with the agreement of the Environment Agency. This 200m of path is narrow and unsuitable for cycling and will be clearly designated and signed as a 'Dismount' section. Although the route avoids directing cyclists through Piddinghoe village, it will unfortunately, not be suitable for mobility vehicle users as it includes a 'pinch point' and some steps at the Boathouse.

### **More Good News**

We now have planning approval in place for the whole route, although the need for some minor variations may still arise. And another significant milestone was reached last December, when agreements in principle with all fourteen of the key landowners, were signed off. With this achieved our major focus is on funding.

### **FUNDING**

There are two major gaps in the riverside route and until these are completed the value of the project is limited and our wish to promote it considerably constrained. To construct these two sections, between Riverside Park, Newhaven and Piddinghoe and between Rodmell and Rise Farm we need substantial funding in the region of £1.5m -£2.0m. We are working on it in and to encourage funders we have been promoting the Egrets Way, not only as a safe route for non-motorised users (NMUs), but also for the wider benefits it will bring to the local economy, especially through tourism. With this in mind we have produced, with professional help, an attractive and informative Egrets Way Prospectus emphasising the wider benefits of investing in the project and can be accessed on our website. The wide-ranging health benefits that walking and cycling bring are increasingly recognised by health providers. A completed Egrets Way will be used by both 'every day' and 'recreational' users, and will be ideal for younger and inexperienced cyclists. We hope potential funders will see that a completed route will encourage visitors, in particular those coming from Europe to Newhaven, to stay in local accommodation and enjoy the historic villages, wonderful landscape and plentiful wildlife, including Little Egrets, to be found in the Ouse Valley.

We have been exploring a wide range of possible funders, to cover both day-to-day expenses and the more challenging major funding. Once a source of major funding is achieved other funders offering 'match-funding', can be approached. This is not an easy time to raise funds and we are working closely with the SDNPA, and benefitting from the input of several officers in the Access Team which now includes a newly created post of Funding Officer; one of the priorities of the new officer is the Egrets Way.

Ideally, we would like to construct the remaining path in one go, but even if new sections are constructed in phases, as they have been over the last eight years, we remain confident that, with the progress already made, wider recognition of the public and economic benefits, and pressure from the local people, a completed Egrets Way connecting Newhaven and Lewes will be achieved.

## WEBSITE LAUNCH

Last November we went live with a new website thanks to a great deal of work by committee members and input from designer Katie Moorman. We hope you have visited the site and found it attractive and informative; we welcome feedback. This change has also provided the opportunity to update our mailing system.

## ART TRAIL

An imaginative idea to raise awareness of the Egrets Way has been evolving over the last year or so. Local artists in villages and venues close to the Egrets Way have been encouraged to create artwork inspired by the Egrets Way and the wonderful Ouse Valley landscape, and to open their studios as part of the well-established Lewes Artwave Festival. We are grateful for the cooperation of the organisers of the Lewes District Council event and the support of Newhaven Town Council. Artwave takes place in late August, alongside the Newhaven Festival. The Egrets Way Art Trail will have a special promotional feature in the official Artwave brochure. There will be more information on our web-site and look out for some eye-catching Art Trail leaflets.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### **Lewes Neighbourhood Development Plan**

The Egrets Way has been represented on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group over the three years they worked on developing this important plan for Lewes Town. The plan was recently adopted following a resounding referendum 92% approval result. The plan will have an important influence on how Lewes develops over the next twenty five years and it contains some policies of relevance to the Egrets Way, in particular Policy SS4. This seeks to protect the riverside and to make it available for walking and cycling and for providing links to neighbouring villages with specific reference to the Egrets Way.

### **A New Map**

With piecemeal growth of the Egrets Way path it is inevitable that any map soon has inaccuracies. We are aware this applies to the map one on our leaflets. We are working to correct this and are grateful to Cycle Lewes for allowing us to use their basic map design as a starting point and with the help of map designer Andy Gammon, and much patient work, of committee members, to adapt it to our needs. The new map will make a clear distinction between sections of Egret Ways in use from those planned but not yet constructed. The map will be launched at the AGM and then available on the website and elsewhere.

### **Presentations**

We have responded to a number of invitations from a variety of organisations to talk about the Egrets Way. These are listed in Table 2 of the Appendix.

We welcome interest in the Egrets Way project and approaches from local Parishes and other organisations. After eight years involvement in creating a new path in the countryside we have acquired considerable knowledge of the challenges and we are happy to share these experiences, both triumphs and disappointments, with others.

## MAINTENANCE & VOLUNTEERS

As more sections of the path are completed we need to address how they are maintained and have been having constructive discussions with the SDNPA. Responsibilities currently vary from section to section, according to whether the path has been adopted by the Highways Authority or has a licenced agreement. Much of the pathway is licenced and maintaining these sections will involve arrangements with ourselves, the SDNPA and others. Surface repairs are likely to require professional contractors but much else, such as clearing vegetation, maintaining gates and signs, litter picking, and promoting the path through events and education, could be done by volunteers .We are exploring with the SDNPA Eastern Area Rangers, based at Stanmer Park, who have a wealth of experience of working with volunteers, how we can work together to deliver this approach on the Egrets Way.

## SHARED PATHS

The Egrets Way is a shared path: one that is available to all non-motorised users (NMUs) - walkers, dog-walkers, cyclists, pushchair and, wherever possible, mobility scooter users and horse riders. Opening the route to horse rides has proved difficult to achieve, and we know is a source of frustration to equestrians. Although we seek to include horse riders it cannot happen without landowner consent. We are entirely dependent on landowners agreeing to any new path and we would again like to take this opportunity to thank again those landowners who have generously allowed us to construct the Egrets Way on their land.

We understand the concerns that some have expressed to us about paths having a mix of users. However we believe that with courtesy, consideration and respect everyone can get along together. The National Park promotes a 'Share the Path' message which we fully support. We find most people accept that all varieties of legitimate users have equal rights to the path and respond appropriately. You can help us, and the Egrets Way, by encouraging courteous and considerate behaviour by example, and by talking to other users - a friendly greeting often leading to a conversation, can be powerful.

## A REQUEST

At last year's AGM we invited you to write a comment about the Egrets Way; many of you did so and we would like to thank you for your input as, by local people showing the desire and need for the path they made a helpful contribution to our successful funding bid .This year we would like to get your views on volunteering and ask if you would be interested in being an Egrets Way volunteer. We will launch this possible new area of involvement in the Egrets Way Project at the AGM, and then on-line.

Neville Harrison

Chair  
Egrets Way Project

May 20<sup>th</sup> 2019

APPENDIX TO THE ANNUAL REPORT: TRUSTEES, COMMITTEE & ENGAGEMENT 2018-2019

**Table 1 Trustees and Committee**

<p>TRUSTEES</p> <p>Wendy Brewer Barbara Dart Neville Harrison Mick Long Zara Luxford Susie Mullins John Parry [resigned 2018 ] Steve St.Clair [resigned 2018] Susan Thompson [Secretary from 2011 to 2018]</p> <p>CO-OPTED COMMITTEE MEMBERS</p> <p>Joe Attwood Cllr. Julie Carr (Riverside Park) Alister Linton-Crook (SDNPA Cycling Officer) Rick Ross Cllr. Alex Woolfson (Newhaven Town Council)</p>	<p>Deputy Chair</p> <p>Chair Treasurer</p> <p>Secretary [From June 2018]</p>
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**Table 2 Engagement**

PRESENTATIONS

Riverside Park AGM 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018      Update on Egrets Way

Newhaven Town Annual Meeting and Community Awards, Hillcrest Centre, April 2018  
Egrets Way Presentation

East Sussex Planning Development Managers Forum, YHA South Downs May 2018  
EW talk and site visit to the path at Southease Bridge.

Lewes & Havens Community Network ‘Green Open spaces & Health & Well-being’  
YHA South Downs March 19<sup>th</sup>  
Egrets Way Presentation and walk to path.

PUBLICATIONS

‘The Egrets Way’; a prospectus for funding bodies    Joe Attwood      2018 (Future Proof CIC)

PRESS

Sussex Express 23rd January 2018 Letter: ‘We plan to complete work’

Sussex Express 14th December 2018 News Feature: ‘Another Piece of the jigsaw in Walking and Cycling network’

Sussex Express April 2018      News of AGM: ‘Film Offering is so appropriate’

Viva Lewes April 2019    Article by Daniel Etherington: ‘Riders of Lewes #06 the Egrets Way