

THE EGRETS WAY

Safe shared village connections from county town to channel port



EGRETS WAY PROJECT Registered Charity No.1155182

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

Our last AGM to be held as a live event was in June 2020. Since then, we have exercised the Charity Commission's option for up to fifteen months between AGMs. This report covers the period from November 2021 to December 2022. As the report will show the Project has experienced some unexpected setbacks in this period, and we have decided to limit the AGM to essential business and to hold the AGM online again this year.

Nevertheless, there have been a number of positive developments and we have worked hard to remain optimistic and to keep our supporters well-informed through mailings and updates published on the website.

THE EGRETS WAY NETWORK PROGRESS REPORT

Newhaven to Piddinghoe - Phase 5

In October 2021, shortly before our last AGM, construction started on this section alongside the river and around the Newhaven Seaford Sailing Club (NSSC) lake. Funding had already been secured from Lewes District Council Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), SDNPA CIL and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Strategic Fund. The southern section through Riverside Park at Newhaven was completed in January 2022. Construction of the path northwards was halted as a legal agreement could not be reached to route the Egrets Way (EW) path along the riverside to the Hoe at Piddinghoe.

Following extensive renegotiations with landowners and stakeholders, agreement was reached to permit the EW path to follow an alternative route via the NSSC access track and car park to connect with The Street in the south of the village. Works recommenced in late 2022 and construction of the path is now almost complete, pending some minor adjustments and, subject to weather conditions, should be open in the Spring. The revised alignment will provide a safe, segregated one mile path for the community and other users to enjoy all the year round avoiding the busy C7 road.

Ham Lane to Rodmell - Phase 6 Early in 2022 legal agreements were executed with the Iford Estate, securing a riverside route in perpetuity and a 25-year license for the SDNPA to construct, operate and manage the path in partnership with the EWP team. Funding for construction was secured from

a range of sources including National Highways, Lewes District Council CIL, the South Downs National Park Trust, SDNPA CIL and an anonymous donor. Preparation works began in August and construction started in September with the anticipation that the path could be completed by Christmas. Unfortunately works were suspended due to unforeseen ground failure of dense, wet clay at the narrowest section of the route, through which all construction vehicles and materials have to pass. Since withdrawing from the site, the Lower Ouse Valley has sustained significant levels of flooding which also would have made construction impossible.

Engineering designs to stabilise the ground are underway and once finalised, need to be authorised by Natural England and the Environment Agency. It is planned for the contractor to return to site in late spring (once the area has dried) to undertake the ground stabilisation works and then re-commence the EW path construction, and we look forward to seeing this phase completed in 2023.

FUND RAISING REPORT

Securing the funding for Egrets Way Phase 6 had long been our primary focus as the estimated cost of its construction is £930k. Fortunately, as 2021 drew to a close, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) awarded us a grant from their CIL funds which finally took us to our goal.

During this time, there were also donations from the Chalk Cliff Trust and the Worshipful Company of Grocers of £5,000 each to pay for signage, access equipment and other Egrets Way operating expenses. These funds were raised by the SDNPA Trust.

With the funding for fencing and gates for the new Iford to Rise Farm right of way (Bridleway 13) already secured, we then received news of a successful application to the SDNPA for £15k to help pay for improvements to the areas of the surface of the bridleway which become very muddy in wet weather. An 'Expression of Interest' was subsequently submitted to Lewes District Council with the intention of making an application for an equivalent amount from their CIL funds. We are intending to submit this application in Spring, 2023.

Two other CIL awards from the SDNP were announced late last year, one was to the Iford Estate for £26k for the upgrading of a permissive bridleway and cycleway on the Estate connecting the villages of Iford and Swanborough thereby matching an earlier contribution from LDC CIL funds.

The other was for £300k the from SDNPA CIL for the eventual construction of the path from Piddinghoe to Deans Farm (Phase 7).

It is clear that the funding provided by the South Downs National Park has been and continues to be critical to the success and completion of the Egrets Way Project.

Finally, looking ahead to future operational and expenses funding needs and having joined the Lewes District Local Lottery (LDLL) when it was set up in 2019, we have been receiving small but regular contributions generated by individuals who record their support for the Egrets Way Project when they purchase tickets for the weekly lottery draw. We have to date received £936.50 from the LDLL and are planning to publicise this means of supporting the Egrets Way Project to our supporters when we send out our next progress update.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Unfortunately, much of our communications programme for this period has consisted of sending updates to supporters about unexpected delays: the suspension of work on Lewes to Rodmell and weather-related delays to the construction of the Newhaven to Piddinghoe path. Fortunately, we expect surfacing of the Phase 5 section to be completed soon and to be able to announce its opening in the Spring.

In April, 2021, an illustrated article entitled “Shared path draws people to the river” appeared in a publication called Transport Professional and related a brief history of the EW Project and its purposes. [Article in Transportation Professional.pdf](#)

And, in April, 2022, another brief history with many colourful photos of sights along the routes and activities which have taken place over the years that the project has been running, was published on the Greenhavens website: <https://greenhavens.network/health-wellbeing/egrets-way-a-10-year-history-in-pictures/>

We’re hoping that the coming year will bring more events and progress to report.

COMMUNITY EVENT REPORT

Members of the Egrets Way committee were very pleased to welcome Green United cyclists to Iford village in July 2022 at the end of their off-road cycle ride which celebrated the opening of the latest section of the Egrets Way Network linking Lewes to Iford. This event was organised by pupils from Lewes Priory, Southover primary, South Malling Primary and Western Primary, St Pancras Primary and Lewes Old Grammar School and involved a cycle ride from the Linklater pavilion to Iford on the new Egrets Way Rise farm link. Members of Cycle Lewes and Dr Bike were on hand to help out on the day.

The group gathered in the paddock next to Iford village hall to brainstorm environmental solutions with the help of their mentor Dr John Parry of Lewes. Deputy Mayor Cllr Mathew Bird congratulated the Green United group for raising £900 of funds for Re-Cycle, an organisation which repairs and sends UK bikes to Gambia, Ghana, Zambia and South Africa and for developing this “brilliant sustainability initiative which highlights the health, climate and fun benefits of cycling.” The event was such a success that it will be repeated this summer!

MAINTENANCE AND VOLUNTEERS

The completed sections of the Egrets way have required little maintenance this year and that which was needed required only the work of the maintenance volunteer coordinator on three occasions. This constituted only the cutting back of overgrown foliage.

Japanese knotweed is under control being kept under surveillance by a professional specialist company who is contracted to deliver an agreed management plan for 5 years from the initial works in 2019.

A document for the Governance of Maintenance Volunteers has been produced and will be used for further maintenance activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Egrets Way Facebook page is currently followed by 778 people in the local area, including community group pages.

701 'Likes' have been recorded shown here by location

LOCATION	NUMBER	PERCENT
LEWES	237	35
NEWHAVEN	174	26
SEAFORD	93	14
PEACEHAVEN	57	8
BRIGHTON & HOVE	54	8
EASTBOURNE	25	4
UCKFIELD	10	2
HAILSHAM	8	1
BURGESS HILL	7	1
LONDON	7	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	672	100

WEBSITE

Our website www.egretsway.org.uk which was redesigned in 2018 using Squarespace, remains our main communication method. Since the AGM last year, the website has recorded over 4800 visits (down 18% from last year) the majority of which (80%) are from users who have not accessed the site before. As with last year THE ROUTE page takes roughly half of the total number of page views (some 4900 views) with NEWS AND EVENTS taking second place with about 1500 views. A 'refresh' exercise was undertaken on the content of the pages mid-year, but this was not reflected in the traffic statistics, which remained steady at roughly 400 visitors per month over the summer period.

Emails we have received using the 'Contact Us' form generates a small but steady number of questions and criticisms, some more helpful than others, but these are always noted and responded to. Our mailings list of supporters receives direct mailings of updates and other information being posted on the website. There are currently 335 subscribers listed as supporters of the EW down 42 from 2022.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

It is now twelve years since the communities located along the Lewes to Newhaven Road, better known to locals as the busy and dangerous C7, agreed they must find a safe, off-road alternative for cyclists and the Ouse Valley Cycle Network (OVCN) came into being with the objective of creating a route linking Lewes and Newhaven alongside the River Ouse. More about how the project progressed can be found in 'A Brief history of the Egrets Way Project' available of our website <https://www.egretsway.org.uk/our-story>.

We recognise that the Covid pandemic delayed the projects progress but there were high hopes that the largely riverside EW path linking Newhaven and Lewes path would have been completed by the end of 2022; these hopes were dashed by a number of unexpected issues including the weather. Some of these have been resolved and it seems likely that the section from Riverside Park to Piddinghoe will open in the Spring and we hope to be holding a celebratory event later in the year.

The route that has now been agreed for this section is essentially the one that was proposed in our original design plans drawn up for us by Sustrans and is a far more satisfactory than the earlier option, granted planning approval in 2018, which included a 200m section on top of the river bank where cyclists would have been required to dismount.

Phase 6

Construction of this section between Ham Lane, Lewes and Rodmell had contractors ready to be on site in August 2022 and was expected to be straightforward and completed by the end of 2022. This has also run into unexpected problems as detailed in the Network Progress report. Plans are in place to resolve the collapsed bank but are requiring considerable additional work for Alister Linton-Crook, SDNPA Cycling Project Officer. The repair work is expected to start at the beginning of May and take four months. We remain optimistic that construction of Phase 6 should be completed this year.

Phase 7

The C7 on road section between Dean Farm and the northern entrance to Piddinghoe village has always been expected to be challenging, in particular because a section close to the northern entrance to Piddinghoe will need to be constructed alongside the road and will require realignment of the highway and be costly. Nevertheless, although achieving this may take a few years, some progress has been made in discussions with Piddinghoe Parish Council. Their recently published Traffic Study by ESCC Highways identifies a possible solution but usefully points out the cost would be in excess of £1m and beyond the ESCC budget.

We have already had financial support from National Highways for Phase 6 so we are hopeful they will want to help us complete this vital final section. The costs would be relatively small in comparison to the amount spent on the magnificently engineered and attractive new cycle path on the A27 between Beddingham and Polegate.

Despite these setbacks there have been two unplanned developments that have added another 3.5 miles (4.7km) to the EW network of paths. The first was the creation of a new bridleway between Iford and Rise Farm, Lewes which links to the EW at Cockshut Lane. Now on the definitive map as Bridleway 13 this came about thanks to the Ramblers Association identifying it as a 'lost' byway' and the Iford Estate's willingness to give their agreement.

The second also involves the Iford Estate decision to construct a cycle path on land in their ownership between the northern end of Iford village and Swanborough where it connects to the EW via the track to the Swanborough Lodges. From there it continues to Spring Barn Farm joining up with the very first section of the EW to be opened in 2013.

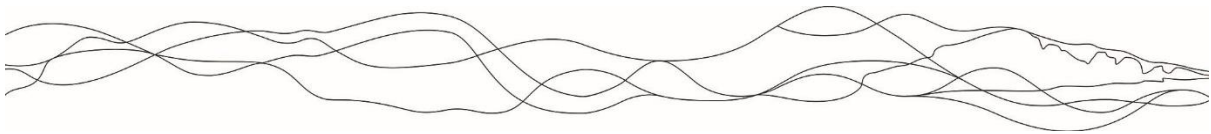
Although completing the largely riverside route stretches into the future we can celebrate that there are currently 10 miles (16km) of the EW network, largely off road, with some quiet lane sections, available to cyclists and walkers to use now. Although our policy is to get bridleway status where possible so horse riders can enjoy the EW this has been difficult to achieve and there are currently only a few sections, 4miles (7km), that equestrians can access.

As always, we want to end this report by expressing our sincere thanks to the landowners who have allowed the Egrets Way to run over their land as, without their cooperation, we would never have been able to make progress with the project. Permission from the NSSC to allow us access their track and car park for the completion of Phase 5 and the decision of the Iford Estate to construct a permissive cycle path, available to horse riders, which will connect Iford and Swanborough to the Egrets Way, are two recent examples of the generosity and community spirit which have always underpinned this project.

Neville Harrison

Chair of Trustees Egrets Way Project

January 2023



APPENDIX TO THE EGRETS WAY 2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Committee Meetings

Since the last AGM in November 2021 the Committee met 5 times [January 10th 2022; April 4th; June 13th; August 30th; November 7th].

All the meetings since July 2020 had been held online via Zoom but in August last year, we resumed the more satisfactory face to face meetings returning to the Abergavenny Arms where the new Landlord Chris Bentley has made us very welcome.

EW Project Steering Group

This was established in 2019 to provide a more formal liaison between the EW and the SDNPA. We have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place to support delivery of the remaining capital works required to deliver the Egrets Way and to ensure a clear understanding of the roles of the two parties; these include issues related to securing funding, to delivery of a public project, maintenance of the constructed route network and communications with landowners and supporters. The SG met has met twice during the current period: (28th March 2022, 14th February 2022).

Although these more formal meetings are important, but relatively infrequent, there are frequent, often daily, email and telephone exchanges between the SDNPA Project Manager, Alister Linton-Cook and the EW Chair/Deputy Chair.

Presentations, Press and Publicity

Due to the covid restrictions and later limited progress to report we have made only one public presentation during this period.

Presentation:

Egrets Way update to Rodmell Parish Annual Assembly April 2022 EW Chair

The following articles have been published:

Press:

- 'Egrets Way funding'; Sussex Express feature December 16 2022
- 'Cash Raised for Cycling Charity' Sussex Express feature on Green United Cycle ride supported by Egrets Way Sussex Express July 8th 2022

Feature

- 'Shared Path Draws People to the River' Article on EW with photos in the Journal 'Transportation Professional' April 2021
[Article in Transportation Professional.pdf](#)

- ‘Egrets Way a 10 year history in pictures’, published on Greenhavens website:
<https://greenhavens.network/health-wellbeing/egrets-way-a-10-year-history-in-pictures/>
 April, 2022
- ‘A Brief History of the Egrets Way Project 2011 to 2022 and still counting...’
 Invited article for Action in Rural Sussex Newsletter December 2022 Author Wendy Brewer

Our supporters are kept informed by being notified of updates that are posted on the EW Website

Trustees and Committee Members

TRUSTEES		OTHER ROLES
Joe Attwood		Website & Mailings
Wendy Brewer	Deputy Chair	Communications & Fund Raising
Neville Harrison	Chair	
Mick Long	Treasurer	
Susan Thompson		Events, photography & art
Rick Ross		Volunteers & Maintenance
Sue Wylde	Secretary	
COOPTED COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Cllr. Lesley Boniface		
Tiger Cox		Riverside Park Committee
Alister Linton Crook		Social media
		SDNPA Cycling Officer

