

OUSE VALLEY CYCLE NETWORK PROJECT

England & Wales · Charity number 1155182

Details

Other names EGRETS WAY PROJECT, OVCN PROJECT OR EGRETS WAY

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2014-01-06

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address 3 The Flints
Kingston
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 3JQ

Phone 01273 473801

Email info@egretsway.org.uk

Website www.egretsway.org.uk

Activities

Objects: TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AND THE OUSE VALLEY FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROVISION OF SAFE ROUTES, PATHS AND FACILITIES FOR CYCLING AND TO UNDERTAKE SUCH PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES OF A CHARITABLE NATURE WHICH WILL ASSIST IN PROMOTING HEALTHY RECREATION, THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CONSERVATION OF ENERGY RESOURCES.

Activities: OVCN works with local communities, landowners and organisations, including the South Downs National Park, Sustrans, the South Downs Local Access Forum, to create a network of safe multi-user paths (The Egrets Way) connecting Lewes and Newhaven and the villages of the Lower Ouse Valley and to develop links to other local, national and international cycling routes and shared walking routes .

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, Disability, Environment/conservation/heritage, Recreation, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Children/young People, People With Disabilities, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- East Sussex

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-02-28	£18,639	£18,639	-	-
2024-02-29	£549	£379	-	-
2023-02-28	£320	£2,987	-	-
2022-02-28	£320	£285	-	-
2021-02-28	£4,641	£6,293	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Wendy Anne Brewer	Chair	2013-12-04
Dr NEVILLE HARRISON		2025-08-09
Dr Richard Anthony Ross		2020-09-23
Joseph Dermott Attwood		2019-06-10
MICHAEL LONG		2016-04-29
SUSAN ANN THOMPSON BA		2013-12-04
SUSANNE WYLDE MA		2021-11-24

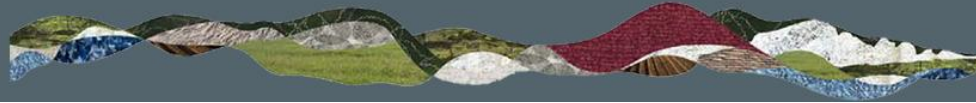
OUSE VALLEY CYCLE NETWORK PROJECT

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Accounts

THE EGRETS WAY

Safe shared village connections from county town to channel port



EGRETS WAY PROJECT Registered Charity N0 1155182

Alternative Name OUSE VALLEY CYCLE NETWORK (OVCN)

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

INTRODUCTION

I would like to start this year's Annual Report by looking at the map of the Egrets Way published at the end last year <https://www.egretsway.org.uk/route>

because it shows how much of the Egrets Way has been completed and is in use: from Rodmell to Lewes (Phase 6), we know it is used for recreation, but also commuting and shopping; and from Southease to Chapel Barn, and from Piddinghoe to Newhaven. The remaining, and final section (Phase 7) between Chapel Barn and the entrance to Piddinghoe village presents its own particular challenges [more details in the reports that follow].

EGRETS WAY NETWORK PROGRESS REPORTS

Ham Lane to Rodmell - Phase 6

Contractor JT Mackley Ltd (JTM) returned to site during 2024 to complete path construction and to lay the final top surface dressing of limestone dust to the 3.1km section of Egrets Way path. Improvements have also been made to the bridleway farm track which connects Rodmell to the Egrets Way Phase 6. Including track drainage and surface repairs to pot-holed sections and the install of new user-friendly gates.

The completed path and bridleway improvements have been very well received by the community and enable year-round journeys between Lewes and Rodmell following the River Ouse, passing through Lewes Brooks SSSI and a welcome alternative to the busy C7 highway.

Funding for construction was secured from a range of sources including National Highways, Lewes District Council CIL, South Downs National Park Trust (SDNPA) CIL and The Worshipful Company of Grocers.

Piddinghoe – Phase 7

Sustrans were appointed in the latter part of 2024, to undertake stage one feasibility work and stakeholder engagement for the final section which has its particular challenges. The project necessitates extending the current route south from Deans Farm onto the C7 road to the Piddinghoe village entrance and involves engagement with residential property owners and stakeholders,

including East Sussex Highways, Piddinghoe Parish Council, Active Travel England, and the South Downs National Park.

Due to physical constraints, proposed options will require the path to run adjacent to the C7 highway, interacting with residential accessways, and resolving the 'pinch point' at the junction with Harping Hill. It is anticipated that the construction of a safe path will lead to a reduction of highway speeds, improved pedestrian connections to bus stops and improved safety for all users crossing and joining the C7 from both The Street and Harping Hill .

The project team are also liaising closely with the Safer C7 Project to ensure designs are consistent with recommendations for the whole C7. Once the preferred path alignment has been identified and negotiations with landowners concluded over the next year or so , the next stage will be to finalise designs and develop a planning application for approval for construction. This will require significant capital funding and is still some time away.

Stage one funding has been secured from Active Travel England Capability Fund and SDNPA.

Maintenance - Newhaven to Piddinghoe section

Surface repairs funded by SDNPA Access budget were undertaken to repair approximately 100m that was damaged following the River Ouse over-topping the Environment Agency maintained flood defenses during the spring tides. Minor surface improvements only were undertaken to the final 50m of track between The Street in Piddinghoe and Newhaven and Seaford Sailing Club, which remains a rustic gravel track at the request of stakeholders to reduce vehicle speeds and the risk of any conflict with the adjacent stables.

The extreme weather event also damaged approximately 100m of path surface south of Southease which is scheduled for repair this summer. We are also exploring funding opportunities and resources with the South Downs National Park to resurface the Southease to Piddinghoe section which was constructed 10 years ago.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

"A Brief History of the Egrets Way Project" was updated to mark the completion of Phase 6 of the Egrets Way network in November 2024. This was circulated to registered supporters and posted on the website:

www.egretsway.org.uk/ourstory.

COMMUNITY EVENTS REPORT

'Egrets Way Update'. Presentation by Chair to Rodmell Parish Assembly March 2024

MAINTENANCE AND VOLUNTEERS REPORT

The maintenance volunteer group has gone out three times in the last year. This has mainly been brush clearance to retain the width of the route.

Work has also been done by South Downs National Park when heavier tools were required.

In the forthcoming year we will be exploring liaison with other groups of volunteers along the Ouse valley and exploring new ways of working with the South Downs National Park.

WEBSITE REPORT

After our mailing list of supporters, our website www.egretsway.org.uk remains our main communication method. Since the AGM last year, the website has recorded over 5300 visits (down slightly from the year before by 3% but still a very impressive figure). Of these visits, again the majority are from users who have not accessed the site before. The vast majority of these are direct searches (i.e. people typing in Egrets Way into their browser). As always the page THE ROUTE remains the most popular page taking roughly half of the total number of page views (9900 total views) with NEWS AND EVENTS taking second place again.

Emails we have received from enquirers using the 'CONTACT US' form generates a small 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. Our current subscribers list has fallen by 20 to 333 from the 2024 reported numbers.

CHAIRS COMMENTS

We are now into the fifteenth year since the Ouse Valley Cycle Network (OVCN) was formally adopted as a community organisation August 2011 with the help of the, then newly established, South Downs National Park (SDNP). Our ambition was, and remains, to create a safe shared path between Lewes and Newhaven, largely following the River Ouse. We have worked in close partnership with the SDNP from the beginning and more recently also with Sustrans.

In January 2014 we became a registered Charity which helped us to raise funds for the construction of the 9km of surfaced path in use today. Although the OVCN is a network of paths linking villages in the Ouse Valley we decided we needed a more engaging name and , following a public competition, chose 'The Egrets Way', reflecting the Little Egret's arrival in the Ouse Valley as a summer visitor some thirty years ago, and now a resident.

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Preparatory work on the final section (Phase 7), which includes 800m of path alongside the C7 road connecting the Egrets way at Chapel Barn to the entrance to Piddinghoe village, is well underway, working closely with the Safer C7 Project where we have shared objectives. There are still some challenges to be resolved but I think we can feel confident that completion of the Egrets Way project, is in sight.

The Egrets Way runs on land owned by over twenty individuals or organisations and without the generous consent of every one of them the path could not have been constructed. We are extremely grateful to them.

Coming up for discussion are some important decisions to be taken about the ongoing roles for the EW Project, the OVCN Charity, the SDNPA and Sustrans following completion of the path. As I am stepping down as Chair these will be for others but I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank the contribution made by the Trustees and members of the working Committee.

Two people require special mention:

- Alistair Lynton-Crook, the SDNP's Cycling Officer, has played a pivotal role in our journey; liaising with contractors and landowners and dealing with day to day detailed matters of path construction, always with care, courtesy and clarity.
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If approved at the AGM Wendy will take over as Chair at a key time when decisions have to be made about the future role for the Project and the Charity.

Neville Harrison
Chair of Trustees, Egrets Way Project
July 2025

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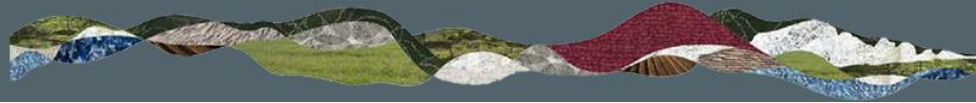
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Joe Attwood		Website & Mailings
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Neville Harrison	Chair	
Mick Long	Treasurer	
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THE EGRETS WAY

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TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2023- 2024

INTRODUCTION

The report covers the period from February 2023 through to March 2024.

This year we are pleased to be holding the AGM in a village hall with a guest speaker for the first time since 2020 . Disappointingly the project has moved forward hesitatingly as we have experienced some significant weather-related setbacks during this period.

However, there have been some positive developments particularly with regard to improving access for users of Disability Scooters. The SDNP has recently introduced Mobility Scooter hire at five locations within the National Park and is exploring the prospect on including the Egrets Way network of paths in the lower Ouse Valley as an additional site. Coincidentally, the Disabled Ramblers Association has recently approached us when looking for a new area to include in their programme of rambles in 2025. We are currently exploring and mapping potential routes with both organisations. So we remain positive about the eventual completion of the Egrets Way Project and the significant benefits which it will continue to provide to local residents and visitors to the SDNP. As always , we will endeavour to keep supporters well-informed through mailings and updates published on the website.

THE EGRETS WAY NETWORK PROGRESS REPORTS

Newhaven to Piddinghoe - Phase 5

The final elements of the construction works in Piddinghoe were completed in March 2023 connecting with the southern section through Riverside Park, Newhaven which was completed in 2023. The new path extends for over 1.5km and provides a safe, year-round, surfaced route for pedestrians, the less abled (such as mobility scooters users), families with pushchairs, and cyclists avoiding the busy C7 road. Minor surface improvements only were undertaken to the final 100m in Piddinghoe between The Street and Newhaven and Seaford

Sailing Club, which remains a rustic gravel track at the request of stakeholders to reduce users, vehicle speeds and the risk of conflict with the adjacent stables. Egrets Way Phase 5 was delivered with funding from Lewes District Council CIL, SDNPA CIL and SDNPA Strategic Fund.

Ham Lane to Rodmell - Phase 6

In October 2022, following unforeseen ground failure on the narrowest section of the route, through which all construction vehicles and materials have to pass during construction the contractor JT Mackley Ltd (JTM) had to withdraw from site. New engineering designs requiring 10m depth sheet piling, were developed by Sustrans to stabilise the ground and raise the path height above the high-water table. Once the works specifications were authorised by Natural England and the Environment Agency, JTM returned to site in May 2023 once the ground had sufficiently dried, to undertake the ground stabilisation works and recommence the path construction.

A new 3km section of Egrets Way opened in October 2023 providing a new path between Lewes and Rodmell, within Lewes Brooks SSSI, following the River Ouse. JTM completed almost half of the new path surfacing, however due to excessively wet ground conditions making construction works impossible activities were suspended once again. It is intended that JTM will return to the site in late spring this year to complete path construction and apply the top surface dressing of limestone dust. Prior to completing the path, JTM will be undertaking planned Environment Agency works at the Rodmell Pumping Station, and we look forward to seeing this phase completed in 2024.

Funding for Phase 6 construction was secured from a range of sources including National Highways, Lewes District Council CIL, the South Downs National Park Trust, SDNPA CIL and The Worshipful Company of Grocers.

FUND RAISING REPORT

With the funding for Phase 6 (Rodmell to Lewes) already in place and construction underway, weather permitting, securing the additional funding required for essential improvements to the surface of Bridleway 13 (Iford to Lewes) became our immediate goal.

The South Downs National Park Authority had made available £15k from their Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds for this project in 2022 so securing the remaining £16.5k was our major focus. When the next Lewes District Council CIL bidding round was announced in autumn, 2023, an Expression of

Interest was submitted and approved with the result that our application is now pending with a decision anticipated in late spring/early summer this year.

In early 2023, an application which had been made to the Chalk Cliff Trust for funds to cover essential operating costs such as path maintenance, insurance, printing and signage, was successful when they awarded us a grant of £3,000.

A later application to the Lewes Town Council Community Grants programme for capital funds of £1800 to purchase much needed equipment for our path maintenance volunteers was also successful and enabled us to purchase both an electric chainsaw and strimmer for their use.

And, most recently, the £167 received since January 2023 from the Lewes District Local Lottery was augmented by a £125 grant from the Lewes Town Council Community Grants programme.

As always, we are grateful to the many local organisations which continue to support the Egrets Way project by providing the funding needed to complete and maintain this network of multi-user paths in the Lower Ouse Valley.

Looking ahead, the next capital funding challenge is likely to be provided by the engineering work which will be required to gain approval and support for Phase 7 of the Egrets Way network of paths, running from the northern entrance to Piddinghoe to Dean's

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

- Sussex Express article May 17th 2023 'Work begins on next Phase of Path'
- Sussex Express article May 26th 2023 'Progress update on the Egrets Way Path -further construction scheduled'
- Sussex Express article September 15th 2023 'Safety Concerns Close Path'
- Sussex Express Rodmell Parish Pump September 8th 2023 'Egrets Way Update'

COMMUNITY EVENT REPORT

The Egrets Way committee members were very pleased to welcome Green United cyclists to Iford village again in July 2023, offering refreshments at the halfway point of their circular off road Joint Schools Sponsored Bike Ride. This well supported cycle ride and brainstorming event was organised by pupils from Lewes schools. The group gathered in the paddock next to Iford village hall where participants exchanged sustainability ideas for their respective

schools. The return trip to Lewes was more direct this year thanks to the newly constructed Iford to Swanborough bridleway link.

Bike ride participants raised for funds Dr Bike, an organisation promoting increased bike usage in Lewes by offering assistance with bike repairs. Details for the event can be found:

<https://greenunited.org.uk/completed-project/joint-schools-sponsored-bike-ride/>

MAINTENANCE AND VOLUNTEERS

Since the last report the maintenance co-ordinator has only had to organise two outings of volunteer groups to clear ingress of foliage onto the cycleway. Once again, the volunteers have been extremely willing and helpful, and the work done was enjoyed by all.

Certain sections have had very heavy ingress of established shrubs, and this is required coordination with South Downs National Park Rangers who have willingly stepped in when this was required.

Liaison with the Rangers is now well established and we anticipate working closely together in the future.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Egrets Way Facebook page is currently followed by 898 (778) people in the local area, including community group pages. 836 (702) 'Likes' have been recorded. An increase from last year's figures shown in brackets.

WEBSITE

Our website www.egretsway.org.uk remains our main communication method. Since the AGM last year, the website has recorded over 5700 visits (up a very significant 23% from last year) the majority of which 4600, as with last year are from users who have not accessed the site before. The vast majority of these are direct searches (i.e. people typing in Egrets Way into their browser) however 5% are referrals from social media such as Facebook.

The page THE ROUTE remains the most popular page, not unexpectedly. This page takes roughly half of the total number of page views (some 10900 total views) with NEWS AND EVENTS taking second place. Average time spent on viewing across all the page is 1.5 minutes. 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 362 subscribers listed as supporters of the EW up 27 from 2023.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

It is now nearly thirteen 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) Project, came into being with the objective of creating a safe and attractive route away from the C7 linking Lewes, Newhaven and the villages in between. More about how the project progressed, through building sections of the Egrets Way while supporting the development of new permissive paths and public rights of way can be found in 'A Brief history of the Egrets Way Project' available on our website

<https://www.egretsway.org.uk/our-story>.

Phase 6 There were high hopes that the continuous Egrets Way route from Lewes (Ham Lane) to Rodmell would have been completed last year (2023) but once again these were dashed by adverse weather resulting in Mackley Construction, having to abandon the target and withdraw from the site. They will be returning to complete the surfacing in later this year when surface conditions have improved. The contractors will also be carrying out essential engineering work for the Environment Agency (EA) at the Rodmell Pumping station through which the path runs. When this work is undertaken, the Egrets Way path will have to be closed until completed. Notice of this temporary closure will be provided.

Phase 7 The C7 on road section of the Egrets Way (Phase7) between Dean Farm and the northern entrance to the 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 this will require realignment of the highway. However, positive discussions between Piddinghoe Parish Council, the SDNPA, Sustrans and ESCC Highways are ongoing with a firm commitment from the National Park to get this done.

Bridleway 13. This bridleway, which runs across the Ouse Valley between Iford and Rise Farm, Lewes needs to undergo surface upgrading to make usable all the year round. It has been agreed with the landowner, Iford Estate, that the best way to do this is to concrete surface at the cattle coral and carry out

surface repairs to potholed sections. Good progress is being made in raising funds for this.

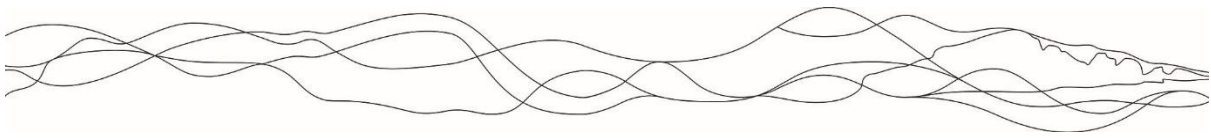
There are currently over 10 miles (16km) of the EW network of off-road paths, available for cyclists, walkers and mobility scooters to use. This focus on 'Access for All' with the inclusion of mobility scooters and the involvement of the Disability Ramblers Association is a very positive development on which to end this report.

Once again, the Trustees wish to express 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.

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Chair of Trustees Egrets Way Project

March 2024



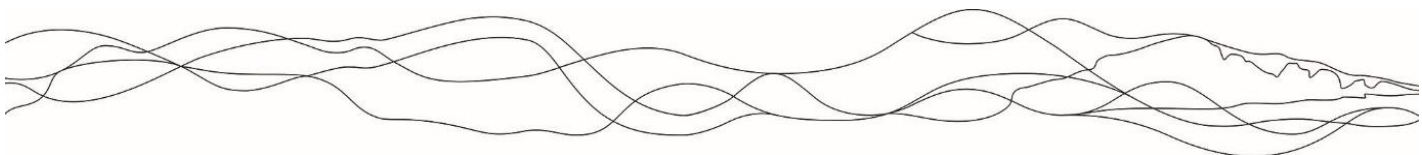
APPENDIX TO THE EGRETS WAY 2022-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Committee Meetings

Since the last AGM in February 2022 the Committee has met 6 times [April 4th; June 13th; August 30th; November 7th, January 10th & March 18th]. All the meetings since July 2020 had been held online via Zoom but in August last year, we resumed face to face meetings returning to the Abergavenny Arms where we are always made very welcome by the landlord Chris Bently and his staff.

Trustees and Committee Members

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



Ouse Valley Cycle Network - Financial Statement for Year 8 (1/3/22-28/2/23)

Opening bank/cash Position **7,287.95**

Income

Donations	lewes Lottery	234.00
	2CV Ltd	115.00
	Lewes District Council	200.00

Total Income **549.00**

Expenses

Constuction	Iford Bridleway	(45.00)
Website	Domain costs	(33.92)
Insurance	Indemnity Ins	(155.44)
Other	Zoom Pro	(109.58)
	Maintenance Equipment	(34.95)

Total Expenditure **(378.89)**

Total Income/(Expense) **170.11**

Closing bank/cash balance **7,458.06**

made up of

Bank	7,427.17
Cash	30.89

Accounts prepared by M Long, Treasurer



Accounts checked by



OUSE VALLEY CYCLE NETWORK PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 1155182

Accounts

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/> 672	<hr/> 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.

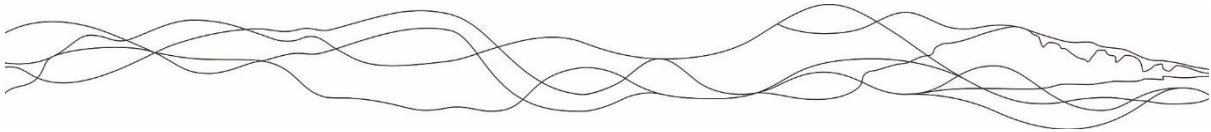
Although completing the largely riverside route stretches into the future we can celebrate that there are currently 10 miles (16km) of the EW network, largely off road, with some quiet lane sections, available to cyclists and walkers to use now. Although our policy is to get bridleway status where possible 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

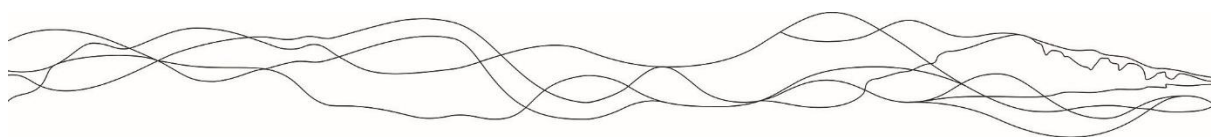
- 'Shared Path Draws People to the River' Article on EW with photos in the Journal 'Transportation Professional' April 2021
[Article in Transportation Professional.pdf](#)

- ‘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



Ouse Valley Cycle Network - Financial Statement for Year 7 (1/3/21-28/2/22)

Opening bank/cash Position 9,955.64

Income

Donations Lewes Lottery 320.00

Total Income 320.00

Expenses

Constuction Iford Bridleway contribution (2,689.35)

Website Domain costs (33.92)

Insurance Indemnity Ins (13.44)

Other Zoom Pro (143.88)

Egrets Way A3 signage (48.60)

Planet Party printing (58.50)

Total Expenditure (2,987.69)

Total Income/(Expense) (2,667.69)

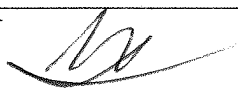
Closing bank/cash balance 7,287.95

made up of

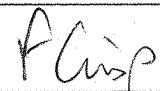
Bank 7,257.06

Cash 30.89

Accounts prepared by M Long, Treasurer



Accounts checked by



F. CRISP

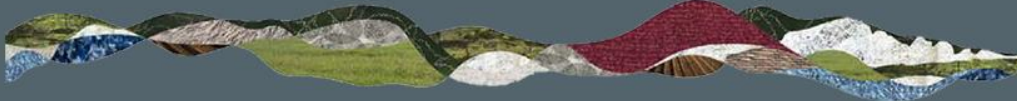
OUSE VALLEY CYCLE NETWORK PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 1155182

Accounts

THE EGRETS WAY

Safe shared village connections from county town to channel port



EGRETS WAY PROJECT Registered Charity No.1155182

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus pandemic, which continues to impact on the lives of millions of people worldwide, has inevitably affected the progress of the Egrets Way Project (EWP) over the last year. However, as this report will show we have worked hard to maintain a degree of momentum and to keep the public informed.

Until last year our AGMs have been held earlier in the year, in May or June, but since then we have moved the dates closer to the time limit the Charity Commission allows. This report covers the period from June 2020 to October 2021. Although there has been some welcome relaxation in Covid-19 restrictions, we have decided to exercise the option of holding the AGM online.

THE EGRETS WAY NETWORK PROGRESS REPORT

Ham Lane to Rodmell - Phase 6

The majority of this two-mile section on the Egrets Way (EW) running alongside the river is on land owned by the Iford Estate. A decision by the SDNPA Planning Committee in April 2021 to approve a Farm Consolidation application (SDNP/20/05439) was linked to three legal agreements, one, (a S.106) that will allow the Egrets Way path to be constructed on Estate land, another for a 25-year license to operate and manage the path, and one more to secure the path in perpetuity. We understand that the three legal processes are very close to completion which, when signed, will mark a key moment in the Egrets Way journey as it will clear the way for construction of this final section of the Egrets Way riverside route. With substantial funding already in place we expect Phase 6 to proceed to construction in 2022.

Newhaven to Piddinghoe - Phase 5

At the end of 2019 we reported that we had secured funding for the riverside section between Riverside Park in Newhaven and Piddinghoe village. With planning approval and landowner agreements in place we had anticipated that construction would have started early in the new year and been completed by now. Unfortunately, a number of factors including finalising detailed legal agreements with five different landowners, concerns over the ownership of Piddinghoe Common land, Covid-19, and most recently fuel shortages, have slowed progress so that the contractors only started work on site in the third week of October. Reaching this stage has involved much detailed work and consultation with Piddinghoe Parish Council, landowners, the village community, and individual residents, which has been patiently and

courteously led by Alister Linton-Crook, SDNPA Cycling and Access Officer. We look forward to seeing this phase completed and in use by spring of 2022.

Iford to Rise Farm Bridleway

At the end of year, we reported on the possibility of an unexpected addition to the EW network of paths. This opportunity arose from an application submitted by Chris Smith on behalf of the Ramblers Association for a 'lost' byway from Iford Church to Rise Farm to be added to East Sussex Highways Definitive Rights of Way map. Much of the old route followed an existing permissive path and discussions with the applicant and the Iford Estate resulted in an agreement for the route to be designated as a public bridleway. One outcome of this agreement was a requirement for a number of new gates and fencing to be installed on the path in order to prevent livestock from straying and to keep users safe. Raising funds to meet these costs has been coordinated by the Egrets Way and the required amount secured from five local organisations: the British Horse Society, the Mid Sussex Area Bridleways Group, the SDNPA Eastern Area Ranger, Iford Parish Meeting, and the Egrets Way. In July this year the legal dedication of the path as a bridleway was announced publicly, however due to Covid-19 related delays the gates and fencing have only recently been installed. Still to come is appropriate signage which will be funded and installed by the SDNPA, in agreement with ESCC Rights of Way Team. Thanks to the initiative of the Ramblers and to the Iford Estate's cooperation and agreement we now have 2.4 km more of public bridleway linking to the Egrets Way. The path is a shared one available to walkers, cyclists, and horse riders to enjoy and experience the beauty of the lower Ouse Valley with its wonderful 360-degree views to Lewes Castle and to the Iford, Caburn and Kingston downs. What a great example this is of the benefits which a landowner can bring both to local people and visitors to the South Downs National Park and for which we express our gratitude. In return we ask users to treat all other users with courtesy and consideration and to respect the Countryside Code

FUND RAISING REPORT

With the funding secured for the delayed Newhaven to Piddinghoe route (Phase 5) by the end of 2019, work began on raising the £930k required for the riverside Rodmell to Lewes section (Phase 6).

Working closely with our SDNP partners, Emma Allen and James Winkworth, significant contributions were secured from Lewes District Council CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds and a private donor. However, it was the July, 2020 public announcement by Highways England of a very substantial grant for this route which pushed us much closer to our goal.

With £820k of funding assured, two sequential, but unsuccessful, applications were made to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for the remaining amount. However, with a recent successful application for funding from the SDNPA CIL programme and discussions soon to take place with a National Lottery Heritage Grants programme representative, we are reasonably confident that the required funding will be available when this next phase of the Egrets Way Network is taken forward in 2022.

Another funding challenge arose from the creation in July 2021 of the new bridleway which runs from Iford village to Rise Farm in Lewes, referred to earlier. The Egrets Way Project co-ordinated raising the necessary funds from other interested groups and the total costs of fencing and approved BHS standard gates will be met as follows:

BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY	£2600
MID SUSSEX AREA BRIDLEWAYS GROUP	£ 600
IFORD PARISH MEETING	£ 350
SDNPA AREA	£1000
EGRETS WAY PROJECT	£2689.35
TOTAL	£7239.35

The Egrets Way contribution will be met from operating funds donated by the NINO and Lewes Funds which are both administered by the Sussex Community Foundation.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Despite the disappointment of the unavoidable cancellation of the scheduled opening celebration of the Linklater to Ham Lane route in March, 2020, there have since been opportunities to remind Egrets Way Project supporters that progress, though slowed by Covid-19 restrictions, was still being made. Updates were posted on the Egrets Way website to ensure that supporters were kept aware of developments and included the announcement by Highways England of their substantial grant for the Egrets Way Project; progress made since 2011 in the “Brief History of the Egrets Way Project, the creation of the Iford to Rise Farm bridleway and the approval of the Iford Estate planning application in April, 2021.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Inevitably, due to Covid-19 restrictions, there have been no opportunities to organise community events until very recently. Because of the cancellation of the celebration in March 2020 we were especially pleased to have an Egrets Way stand at the Planet Party held on the Railway Land in Lewes on 19th September 2021, We were glad to welcome supporters into our lovely underused new gazebo with an exhibition of photographs of the Egrets Way. This event was a great chance to catch up with EW supporters, to let them know about the latest progress on construction and funding, and to introduce others to the project. We also had an updated map of the Egrets Way routes and links to distribute and 46 new names were added to our supporters mailing list.

We were also pleased to have shared the Egrets Way stand with Cycle Lewes and Dr Bike. The event was very well attended and having a stand with other related organisations proved to be an effective and friendly way of working together and sharing the tasks.

MAINTENANCE AND VOLUNTEERS

Responsibility for maintaining the network of path varies from section to section: statutory (Right of Way) sections are the responsibility of East Sussex Highways Footpaths team, whereas non-statutory sections are largely the responsibility of the SDNPA and the Egrets Way. Following last year’s AGM we recruited a group of volunteers whose work is coordinated by one of our Committee members to help with maintenance. SDNPA Area Ranger, Jan Knowlson, has kindly provided practical advice, tools, and materials.

We have had a relatively quiet year with little maintenance required for the completed sections of the Egrets Way but, once again, a very willing team of volunteers turned out to cut back vegetation, erect some signs, and to help clear a fallen tree on a section of the path under our responsibility (professional tree surgeons were engaged to clear the bulk of the tree).

We have benefited from the cooperation of the ESCC Rights of Way team who have done work along certain sections of the path. The Environment Agency (EA) has also helped by agreeing to mow a strip of vegetation along the riverside sections as they require access to the EW to mow the grass on the flood defence river banks for which they are responsible. This year, unfortunately, in one area a five-metre strip of vegetation was inadvertently cut, rather than the agreed one metre, which prompted some sharp criticism of the EA on social media for causing unnecessary harm to wildlife. Once notified the EA promptly gave correct information to their machine operators that we required only a narrow strip to be cut, sufficient just to stop progressive encroachment onto the path surface.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Two years ago, we decided to make use of social media and co-opted a youthful member onto the committee for his expertise. The Egrets Way can be found both on Facebook and Instagram. We also use WhatsApp for internal communication. This rather tentative start has meant that social media has not been a major part of our communication strategy but latest statistics show it is working.

For the Way Artwave Trail event in 2019 we started an EW Instagram account www.instagram.com/egretswayart, which now has over 350 members, and proved to be a reliable means of circulating information during the 2020/21 lockdown encouraging people to make good use of the shared of the EW and other paths in the Ouse Valley.

The Egrets Way Facebook page is currently followed by 387 people in the local area, including community group pages such as Cycle Lewes. Each post is reaching on average 1000 unique accounts with the latest post reaching 3,821 accounts.

WEBSITE

Our website www.egretsway.org.uk which was redesigned in 2018 using Squarespace is our main communication method.

Since the AGM last year, the website has recorded over 5500 visits, 4500 of which are from users who have not accessed the site before. Of the 10000 page views, just over half focus on THE ROUTE and then a further third focus on NEWS AND EVENTS. The balance is taken up equally over the other pages.

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 receive direct mailings of updates and other information being posted on the website. There are currently 377 subscribers listed as supporters of the EW.

CONCLUSIONS

This year the Egrets Way Project celebrated its tenth anniversary having been underway since August 2011 when it was started by a group of local residents seeking an alternative to cycling between Lewes and Newhaven on the busy C7 road. Apart from embracing a more inclusive user group our vision has not changed and remains to create a network of safe, shared paths for walkers, cyclists and wherever possible horse riders and disability vehicle users. The Project also aims to connect Newhaven and Lewes by a route running largely alongside the river, and to link to villages, amenities, and to other routes in the lower Ouse Valley. The automatic counters installed on two sections of the EW record the steadily increasing path usage which has accelerated since the Covid-19 (See Appendix) as more people discovered the benefits of walking and cycling in the countryside.

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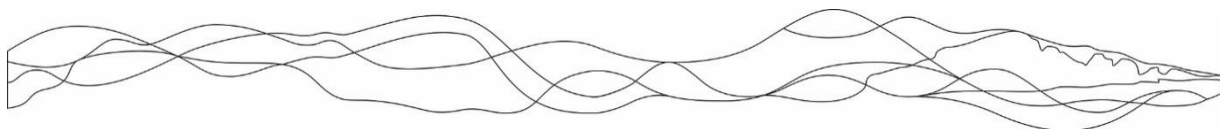
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Over these years there have been many people who have contributed to the project in various ways, especially as trustees or committee members, to whom we are grateful, however, our final thanks go as always, go to the generous landowners who have agreed to the paths running on their land, as without their permission the Egrets Way would have remained just a community dream.

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Chair of Trustees Egrets Way Project

October 2021





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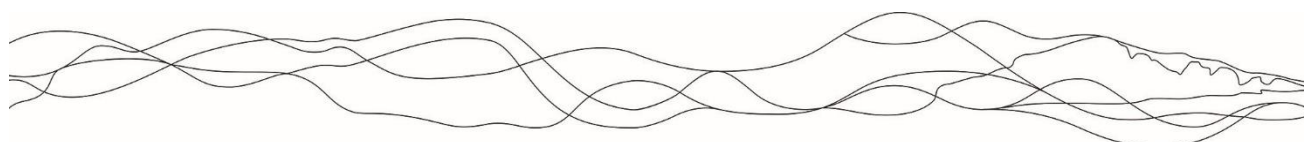
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Ouse Valley Cycle Network - Financial Statement for Year 7 (1/3/21-28/2/22)

Opening bank/cash Position 9,955.64

Income

Donations Lewes Lottery 320.00

Total Income 320.00

Expenses

Constuction Iford Bridleway contribution (2,689.35)

Website Domain costs (33.92)

Insurance Indemnity Ins (13.44)

Other Zoom Pro (143.88)

Egrets Way A3 signage (48.60)

Planet Party printing (58.50)

Total Expenditure (2,987.69)

Total Income/(Expense) (2,667.69)

Closing bank/cash balance 7,287.95

made up of

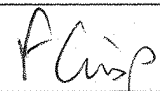
Bank 7,257.06

Cash 30.89

Accounts prepared by M Long, Treasurer



Accounts checked by



F. CRISP

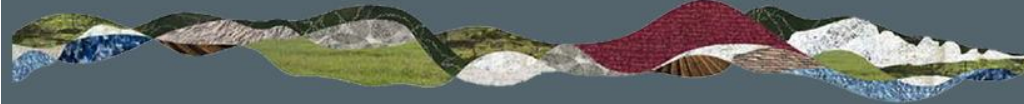
OUSE VALLEY CYCLE NETWORK PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 1155182

Accounts

THE EGRETS WAY

Safe shared village connections from county town to channel port



EGRETS WAY PROJECT Registered Charity No.1155182

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus pandemic, which continues to impact on the lives of millions of people worldwide, has inevitably affected the progress of the Egrets Way Project (EWP) over the last year. However, as this report will show we have worked hard to maintain a degree of momentum and to keep the public informed.

Until last year our AGMs have been held earlier in the year, in May or June, but since then we have moved the dates closer to the time limit the Charity Commission allows. This report covers the period from June 2020 to October 2021. Although there has been some welcome relaxation in Covid-19 restrictions, we have decided to exercise the option of holding the AGM online.

THE EGRETS WAY NETWORK PROGRESS REPORT

Ham Lane to Rodmell - Phase 6

The majority of this two-mile section on the Egrets Way (EW) running alongside the river is on land owned by the Iford Estate. A decision by the SDNPA Planning Committee in April 2021 to approve a Farm Consolidation application (SDNP/20/05439) was linked to three legal agreements, one, (a S.106) that will allow the Egrets Way path to be constructed on Estate land, another for a 25-year license to operate and manage the path, and one more to secure the path in perpetuity. We understand that the three legal processes are very close to completion which, when signed, will mark a key moment in the Egrets Way journey as it will clear the way for construction of this final section of the Egrets Way riverside route. With substantial funding already in place we expect Phase 6 to proceed to construction in 2022.

Newhaven to Piddinghoe - Phase 5

At the end of 2019 we reported that we had secured funding for the riverside section between Riverside Park in Newhaven and Piddinghoe village. With planning approval and landowner agreements in place we had anticipated that construction would have started early in the new year and been completed by now. Unfortunately, a number of factors including finalising detailed legal agreements with five different landowners, concerns over the ownership of Piddinghoe Common land, Covid-19, and most recently fuel shortages, have slowed progress so that the contractors only started work on site in the third week of October. Reaching this stage has involved much detailed work and consultation with Piddinghoe Parish Council, landowners, the village community, and individual residents, which has been patiently and

courteously led by Alister Linton-Crook, SDNPA Cycling and Access Officer. We look forward to seeing this phase completed and in use by spring of 2022.

Iford to Rise Farm Bridleway

At the end of year, we reported on the possibility of an unexpected addition to the EW network of paths. This opportunity arose from an application submitted by Chris Smith on behalf of the Ramblers Association for a 'lost' byway from Iford Church to Rise Farm to be added to East Sussex Highways Definitive Rights of Way map. Much of the old route followed an existing permissive path and discussions with the applicant and the Iford Estate resulted in an agreement for the route to be designated as a public bridleway. One outcome of this agreement was a requirement for a number of new gates and fencing to be installed on the path in order to prevent livestock from straying and to keep users safe. Raising funds to meet these costs has been coordinated by the Egrets Way and the required amount secured from five local organisations: the British Horse Society, the Mid Sussex Area Bridleways Group, the SDNPA Eastern Area Ranger, Iford Parish Meeting, and the Egrets Way. In July this year the legal dedication of the path as a bridleway was announced publicly, however due to Covid-19 related delays the gates and fencing have only recently been installed. Still to come is appropriate signage which will be funded and installed by the SDNPA, in agreement with ESCC Rights of Way Team. Thanks to the initiative of the Ramblers and to the Iford Estate's cooperation and agreement we now have 2.4 km more of public bridleway linking to the Egrets Way. The path is a shared one available to walkers, cyclists, and horse riders to enjoy and experience the beauty of the lower Ouse Valley with its wonderful 360-degree views to Lewes Castle and to the Iford, Caburn and Kingston downs. What a great example this is of the benefits which a landowner can bring both to local people and visitors to the South Downs National Park and for which we express our gratitude. In return we ask users to treat all other users with courtesy and consideration and to respect the Countryside Code

FUND RAISING REPORT

With the funding secured for the delayed Newhaven to Piddinghoe route (Phase 5) by the end of 2019, work began on raising the £930k required for the riverside Rodmell to Lewes section (Phase 6).

Working closely with our SDNP partners, Emma Allen and James Winkworth, significant contributions were secured from Lewes District Council CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds and a private donor. However, it was the July, 2020 public announcement by Highways England of a very substantial grant for this route which pushed us much closer to our goal.

With £820k of funding assured, two sequential, but unsuccessful, applications were made to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for the remaining amount. However, with a recent successful application for funding from the SDNPA CIL programme and discussions soon to take place with a National Lottery Heritage Grants programme representative, we are reasonably confident that the required funding will be available when this next phase of the Egrets Way Network is taken forward in 2022.

Another funding challenge arose from the creation in July 2021 of the new bridleway which runs from Iford village to Rise Farm in Lewes, referred to earlier. The Egrets Way Project co-ordinated raising the necessary funds from other interested groups and the total costs of fencing and approved BHS standard gates will be met as follows:

BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY	£2600
MID SUSSEX AREA BRIDLEWAYS GROUP	£ 600
IFORD PARISH MEETING	£ 350
SDNPA AREA	£1000
EGRETS WAY PROJECT	£2689.35
TOTAL	£7239.35

The Egrets Way contribution will be met from operating funds donated by the NINO and Lewes Funds which are both administered by the Sussex Community Foundation.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Despite the disappointment of the unavoidable cancellation of the scheduled opening celebration of the Linklater to Ham Lane route in March, 2020, there have since been opportunities to remind Egrets Way Project supporters that progress, though slowed by Covid-19 restrictions, was still being made. Updates were posted on the Egrets Way website to ensure that supporters were kept aware of developments and included the announcement by Highways England of their substantial grant for the Egrets Way Project; progress made since 2011 in the “Brief History of the Egrets Way Project, the creation of the Iford to Rise Farm bridleway and the approval of the Iford Estate planning application in April, 2021.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Inevitably, due to Covid-19 restrictions, there have been no opportunities to organise community events until very recently. Because of the cancellation of the celebration in March 2020 we were especially pleased to have an Egrets Way stand at the Planet Party held on the Railway Land in Lewes on 19th September 2021, We were glad to welcome supporters into our lovely underused new gazebo with an exhibition of photographs of the Egrets Way. This event was a great chance to catch up with EW supporters, to let them know about the latest progress on construction and funding, and to introduce others to the project. We also had an updated map of the Egrets Way routes and links to distribute and 46 new names were added to our supporters mailing list.

We were also pleased to have shared the Egrets Way stand with Cycle Lewes and Dr Bike. The event was very well attended and having a stand with other related organisations proved to be an effective and friendly way of working together and sharing the tasks.

MAINTENANCE AND VOLUNTEERS

Responsibility for maintaining the network of path varies from section to section: statutory (Right of Way) sections are the responsibility of East Sussex Highways Footpaths team, whereas non-statutory sections are largely the responsibility of the SDNPA and the Egrets Way. Following last year’s AGM we recruited a group of volunteers whose work is coordinated by one of our Committee members to help with maintenance. SDNPA Area Ranger, Jan Knowlson, has kindly provided practical advice, tools, and materials.

We have had a relatively quiet year with little maintenance required for the completed sections of the Egrets Way but, once again, a very willing team of volunteers turned out to cut back vegetation, erect some signs, and to help clear a fallen tree on a section of the path under our responsibility (professional tree surgeons were engaged to clear the bulk of the tree).

We have benefited from the cooperation of the ESCC Rights of Way team who have done work along certain sections of the path. The Environment Agency (EA) has also helped by agreeing to mow a strip of vegetation along the riverside sections as they require access to the EW to mow the grass on the flood defence river banks for which they are responsible. This year, unfortunately, in one area a five-metre strip of vegetation was inadvertently cut, rather than the agreed one metre, which prompted some sharp criticism of the EA on social media for causing unnecessary harm to wildlife. Once notified the EA promptly gave correct information to their machine operators that we required only a narrow strip to be cut, sufficient just to stop progressive encroachment onto the path surface.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Two years ago, we decided to make use of social media and co-opted a youthful member onto the committee for his expertise. The Egrets Way can be found both on Facebook and Instagram. We also use WhatsApp for internal communication. This rather tentative start has meant that social media has not been a major part of our communication strategy but latest statistics show it is working.

For the Way Artwave Trail event in 2019 we started an EW Instagram account www.instagram.com/egretswayart, which now has over 350 members, and proved to be a reliable means of circulating information during the 2020/21 lockdown encouraging people to make good use of the shared of the EW and other paths in the Ouse Valley.

The Egrets Way Facebook page is currently followed by 387 people in the local area, including community group pages such as Cycle Lewes. Each post is reaching on average 1000 unique accounts with the latest post reaching 3,821 accounts.

WEBSITE

Our website www.egretsway.org.uk which was redesigned in 2018 using Squarespace is our main communication method.

Since the AGM last year, the website has recorded over 5500 visits, 4500 of which are from users who have not accessed the site before. Of the 10000 page views, just over half focus on THE ROUTE and then a further third focus on NEWS AND EVENTS. The balance is taken up equally over the other pages.

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 receive direct mailings of updates and other information being posted on the website. There are currently 377 subscribers listed as supporters of the EW.

CONCLUSIONS

This year the Egrets Way Project celebrated its tenth anniversary having been underway since August 2011 when it was started by a group of local residents seeking an alternative to cycling between Lewes and Newhaven on the busy C7 road. Apart from embracing a more inclusive user group our vision has not changed and remains to create a network of safe, shared paths for walkers, cyclists and wherever possible horse riders and disability vehicle users. The Project also aims to connect Newhaven and Lewes by a route running largely alongside the river, and to link to villages, amenities, and to other routes in the lower Ouse Valley. The automatic counters installed on two sections of the EW record the steadily increasing path usage which has accelerated since the Covid-19 (See Appendix) as more people discovered the benefits of walking and cycling in the countryside.

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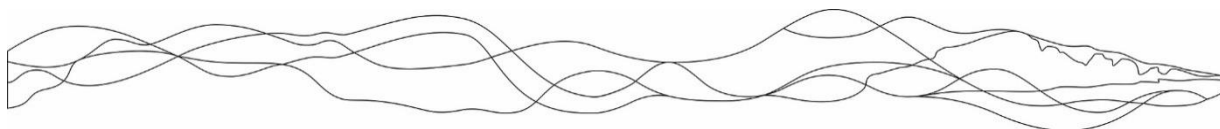
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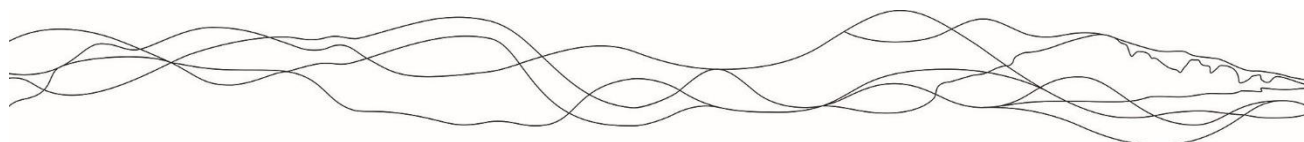
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Opening bank/cash Position **11,608.44**

Income

Donations	Iewes Lottery	391.00
	SDNPA Trust Grant	4,250.00

Total Income **4,641.00**

Expenses

Construction	Linklater contribution	(5,000.00)
	Earth works	(450.00)
	Tree Surgeon	(380.00)
Website	Site Costs	(144.00)
	Domain costs	(33.92)
Insurance	Indemnity Ins	(142.00)
Other	Zoom Pro	(143.88)

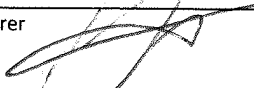
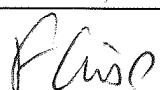
Total Expenditure **(6,293.80)**

Total Income/(Expense) **(1,652.80)**

Closing bank/cash balance **9,955.64**

made up of

Bank	9,924.75
Cash	30.89

Accounts prepared by M Long, Treasurer		27/10/21
Accounts checked by		27/10/21