



ANNUAL REPORT - 2020 to 2021

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Charity Reg. No. 1191171

Introduction:

This is the first Annual report for Hastings Greenway Trust (HGT) since it was launched in 2020. It covers the reporting period up to end March 2021 with additional information about HGT work up to the Autumn of 2021.

History & Formation of HGT:

Hastings Greenway Trust was set up by the Hastings Greenway Group with input from other groups and organisations, with an interest in walking & cycling infrastructure and the Greenway concept, and with support from Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA).

The **Hastings Greenway** concept was conceived over 20 years ago as network of radial walking & cycling routes connecting the Town Centre to other parts of the Borough by utilising the natural corridors to create direct routes at gradients to 'smooth out' the hilly terrain.

Although a refined version of the original Greenway network has now been adopted by East Sussex County Council and Hastings Borough Council (in the Hastings Walking & Cycling Strategy and the Hastings Local Plan), funding and progress on construction of these routes has been limited and slow.

Hastings Greenway Group was itself set up by Hastings Urban Bikes and the local Ramblers to promote and campaign for the Hastings Greenway.

The decision to set up the **Hastings Greenway Trust** was taken in order to create a charitable organisation that would be a legal entity with the power to raise funds, acquire land and develop some parts of the Greenway network and other routes to link in. In other words to focus on the delivery of Greenway routes and their maintenance and enhancement.

Hastings Greenway Trust was launched in February 2020 and was registered by the Charity Commission as a **Charitable Incorporated Organisation** in September 2020.

The small group of HGT trustees have significant and relevant skills and expertise together with detailed knowledge of the Borough and the planned routes and strong community connections. The process of recruiting more trustees with complementary expertise and connections is a continuing process.

HGT is in the early stages of its development but has already undertaken some detailed design and costing work on key sections of Greenway and made several funding applications, not as yet successful.

In addition HGT is working with the local authorities and other organisations and community groups to realise its aims and objectives.

Principle Objects & Role:

Principles Objects (as accepted by the Charity Commission)

To promote and assist in the development and provision, for the public benefit, of safe Greenway routes, paths and facilities for cycling, walking and healthy recreation in and around Hastings.

Operational Role

- Promote and consult on Greenway routes
- Support campaigns for Greenways and walking & cycling route infrastructure
- Obtain grant funding from statutory and charitable sources
- Design and develop routes and sections of routes
- Acquire land by purchase or transfer for Greenway routes
- Take on the lease of land corridors for Greenway routes where this is an option
- Research new Greenway routes and link routes
- Work with other organisations such as local authorities and land developers to construct, manage and maintain routes
- Involve other organisations and community groups to seek support and help to make the Greenway network a reality
- Enhance Greenway routes with surface improvements, seating and other amenities
- Train and support volunteers to maintain Greenway routes and infrastructure

Trustees (at Dec. 2021) :

- Gordon Russell: Managing Director of a local business and previous lead roles in

community organisations in Hastings

- Julia Hilton: Landscape architect, environmental activist and local councillor

- Ian Sier: Chair of Hastings Urban Bikes and trustee of Ore Community Land Trust,
qualified engineer.
- Tim Jemison: Landscape architect and originator of the Hastings Greenway
Concept, liaison connection to Network Rail
- Linda Jeal: Founder member of the Living Streets group with a 'walking' focus,
teaching experience and focus on school involvement

Objectives and Development Work in 2020/21:

The primary organisational objective was to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission and this was achieved with significant help from Hastings Voluntary Action.

Links with and joint working with a number of other local organisations and forums, including Ground works South, Ore Community Land Trust, Hastings Urban Bikes, Hastings Sustainable Transport Forum and the Living Streets group, have been fostered. Support from Hastings Borough Council has also been forthcoming.

Recruiting more trustees has been a continuing objective.

However, the plans to organise a public launch for HGT have been carried forward, partly due to the time invested in project development and grant applications and partly because of the Covid pandemic.

Setting up an HGT web site was also deferred but is now underway.

In terms of development work, HGT decided to initially focus on two key sections of the Greenway network. These are:

- The Rail Trackside route divided into two sections
 - 1/. from Hastings Station to Waterworks Road (connected to Alexandra Park via the Bethune Way underpass)
 - 2/. continuing to Mount Pleasant Road and via Hughenden Road to Ore Station
- The Ore Valley Greenway from Ore Station which splits into two sections, one to the Broomgrove Estate and the other to Ore Village

Two project groups were set up with two trustees in each and with co-optees invited to provide additional expertise

Some design work had already been carried out on both routes and this was further refined, and the construction costs estimated in order to submit funding applications to the Hastings Town Fund as detailed later in this report.

Although these funding applications were unsuccessful, the two project groups will continue to seek alternative sources of funding.

Collaboration with Ore Community Land Trust, in respect of the Ore Valley Greenway, is expected to enable corridor clearance work and more detailed survey and design work on some sections of the routes, subject to the green spaces in the Lower Ore Valley being transferred to the Land Trust. Detailed design and costings have already been completed on the Greenway section that runs through Speckled Wood at the top of Ore Valley.

The project group working on the Rail Trackside route have benefited from previously established liaison with Network Rail and aim to involve the two local authorities in a broader task group to try to take this project forward. The first section is technically far easier and less costly but relies on Network rail being willing to relocate their electrical maintenance compound

Two other Greenway projects were also taken on by HGT:

- The Country Park Greenway route from the top of the East Hill lift to Fairlight, via Barley Lane was adopted and a construction costing assessment was made in order to make a joint bid, with Groundwork South (and supported by Hastings Borough Council) to a new Government grant source. This is further detailed later in this report but was unsuccessful.
- A new Greenway linked project from Ore Village to Mill Lane (behind and providing a route to the Hastings Academy) has also been under consideration and may be subject to design, costing and a funding application in the future.

Chairs Review of the Report Period:

Setting up a brand-new charity and then to be hit with the impact and following restrictions of COVID-19 has been, to say the least, challenging! The Trustees managed to overcome the 'technical challenges' of arranging meetings using an online facility, Zoom in this case...and we were pleased to eventually meet face to face again.

The experience of identifying routes, calculating outline costings, and making applications for various funding pots has been an invaluable lesson in the early days of the trust's development! Whilst the funding bids were not successful, the experience of going through the processes put us in good stead for the future.

Originally, a 'pilot' section of the Greenway Concept (Brisco's Walk) was developed some years ago, attracting funding from the Single

Regeneration Budget (£450k) and some community input. This completed section was made possible by a meaningful partnership which included the local and county authorities as well as Railtrack. We recognise the importance of partnership-working therefore each of the project groups will seek to build strong relationships with other bodies.

I would like to thank my Co-trustees for the amazing input, and knowledge, that they collectively bring to Hastings Greenway Trust!

Further Activities & Achievements in 2021:

Some of the activities undertaken in the second year of HGT (2021/22) up to the Autumn of 2021 include:

- Working with Hastings Greenway Group (HGG) to produce and circulate the very well received Hastings Greenway Leaflet and another leaflet to focus on the Ore Valley Greenway, both funded by HGG.
- Making a submission to the Hastings Local Plan review.
- Taking drone aerial videos of the Rail Track side and Ore Valley Greenway routes
- Organising a tour of key Greenway sections for the Hastings & Rye MP and two councillors
- Contacting Hastings Academy over the Greenway link route proposed in Ore
- Holding a joint meeting with Hastings Greenway Group to develop a joint web site and decide on the roles that both groups would take on. HGG is focusing on campaigning and promoting Greenway routes and the Greenway concept including organising popular walks along Greenway sections.

Funding Applications:

Seed funding to get HGT underway and pay for meeting venue hire and other basic costs was provided by HVA.

HGT worked with Groundwork South to make a funding bid, based on the **Hastings Country Park Greenway route**, to the Government Green Recovery fund in September 2020. This bid was supported by Hastings Borough Council - the landowners.

The project was to construct both sections of the Greenway route (included in the Hastings Local Plan) and utilising the design work carried out by East Sussex County Council on the key section from Barley Lane to Fairlight. HGT would take on this part of the project and Groundwork South would involve volunteers and help to enhance the route design work and associated amenities.

Unfortunately, this bid was not successful, but the design and costing work undertaken can be used for future funding bids

HGT was also very optimistic in its two project applications to the Hastings Town Fund that was scheduled to receive a substantial Government allocation based on investing in towns needing regeneration support. The Government funding criteria both included a section on connectivity and featured examples of walking & cycling infrastructure projects, so it was a very good fit for Greenway projects.

HGT submitted a bid for the construction of the **Ore Valley Greenway** in 2021, based on design work and costings previously prepared. Given this preparation work and that the land availability would be resolved well within the funding period HGT expected this project to be accepted but the criteria adopted by the Hastings Town Deal Board was arguably very weak on 'connectivity' and over focused on the Town Centre. The project was not accepted.

HGT also submitted a bid for the **Rail Trackside route** to the Town Fund and this was also not accepted.

Further project bids will certainly be made by HGT in 2022, making use of the design and costing work already carried out and may well focus on sections of the above routes in that the whole route can be constructed in stages that will still provide valuable infrastructure in their own right.

Sadly, Greenway development funding has never been allocated from regeneration funding made available to Hastings Borough Council over the last 20 years. In addition, funding obtained by East Sussex County Council for sections of the walking and cycling (Greenway) network was severely cut from the original share of a £6M allocation from the Southeast Local Enterprise Partnership. Progress on the two routes that are in the County capital program (Alexandra Park and from Silverhill to Queensway) is very slow and has been subject to many delays. However, these routes should be realised in 2022

Summary of Annual Accounts 01/04/2020 - 31/03/2021:

Income:

- 'Seed' grant from H.V.A. £500.00

Expenditure:

- Triodos Bank – interest £ .20

Balance @ bank £499.80

Note: The grant income from Hastings Voluntary Action was largely unspent in this financial period.

Plans and Objectives for 2021/22:

1. Launch and publicise HGT (*deferred from June 2021 to 2022*)
2. Engage with (a Town Deal selected project) Garden Town and Green Connections Project to make case for Greenway routes to be included.
3. Ore Valley Greenway - engage with stakeholders in collaboration with Ore Community Land Trust - using a project information 'leaflet'
4. Ore Valley Greenway - start route corridor clearance work in the Lower Ore Valley - after land transfer, for further design work.
5. Rail trackside route - lobby politicians and key organisations for support, promote project and call on local authorities to set up a task group
6. Continue to support the wider campaign for walking & cycling routes and faster progress by ESCC.
7. Seek funding for projects and to develop HGT
8. Consider new Greenway and link projects
9. Recruit more trustees (including representatives from Health & other interest groups).
10. Plan a public Greenway display and mini conference.

Gordon Russell - HGT Chair & Treasurer

Ian Sier - HGT Secretary

(Dec. 2021)

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Hastings Greenway Trust

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The annual accounts 2020 - 2021 were approved by the Trustee Board at its meeting on 16th Dec. 2021

Notes:

1. The grant income from Hastings Voluntary Action was largely un-spent in this financial period.
2. Following three unsuccessful grant applications during the accounting period, further funding applications will be made in future years.
3. Hastings Greenway Trust has opened a bank account with the Triodos Bank

Gordon Russell
Hastings Greenway Trust - Treasurer
(Dec. 2021)

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