



# **IMPROVEMENTS TO THE DOWNSLINK LONG-DISTANCE BRIDLEWAY**

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL  
LOCAL COMMITTEE (WAVERLEY)  
13 OCTOBER 2006**

## **KEY ISSUE:**

To inform members of progress with improvements to the Downs Link long-distance bridleway for cycling.

## **SUMMARY:**

The Downs Link long-distance bridleway provides a leisure corridor for walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Sensitive surface improvements with links to neighbouring villages mean that it can also be a vehicle free off-road cycling facility for functional journeys.

## **OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Local Committee (Waverley) should note the progress report, and support the work of Countryside Access staff in improving the route for cycling.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** None

## **BACKGROUND**

1. The Downs Link long-distance bridleway forms a continuous off-road shared walking, horse riding and cycling facility between St Martha's Hill on the North Downs Way National Trail and Shoreham-by-Sea in West Sussex. The trail is jointly managed by Surrey County Council, Waverley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council. It mainly follows the route of the dismantled Guildford–Horsham and Horsham-Shoreham railway lines, being completed as a bridleway in 1984. As a mainly level route, it is particularly suited to cycling.
2. It is currently widely used as a recreational and leisure facility. Leisure activities bring additional benefits in terms of health and well-being, and sustainable tourism. Management as a green traffic-free corridor is beneficial in terms of biodiversity.
3. Key policies
  - The proposed improvement scheme will aid the achievement of a number of key objectives in the Provisional LTP 2006-2011, principally to deliver a 20% increase in cycle journeys. This will help counter traffic congestion, reduce pollution and promote general health in the population.
  - The improvement of the Downs Link will also help achieve a number of targets expected to be in the draft Rights of Way Improvement plan, improving the quality of the network, increasing recreational enjoyment, and improved connectivity.
  - The improvement of the Downs Link for cycling is part of the Local Committee's Business Plan 2005-2007.

## **WORK TO DATE**

4. The Downs Link has been extended along the disused railway line north of Bramley to link with an existing cycle route promoted jointly by the County Council and Guildford Borough Council west of Shalford. The work included a dedication agreement with the National Trust, surfacing the route with a sensitively selected sealed surface, and a new bridge over the River Wey. The Godalming Initiative has funded the upgrade of Bridleway 473, Shalford at Unstead to afford a partially off-road link to Catteshall Lane, Godalming. This first phase of works has resulted in a significant increase in use by walkers, cyclists, and people with mobility problems. Cycle counter data indicates a near three-fold increase in cycle journeys between August 2004 (prior to the first phase of the scheme) and August 2006.

## **THE PROPOSED EXTENSION**

5. The proposed works will build a 2.5m wide sealed surface multi-use track from Station Road, Bramley 1.8km south to Birtley. At Birtley a further 0.8km link to Lordshill, Shamley Green is proposed along the route of

Bridleway 261 Bramley/Wonersh. Negotiations are progressing with the landowner to widen this route slightly and replace the fencing.

6. The use of a tar spray and chip sealed surface with glass fibre reinforcement will remove the need for major surface maintenance for an estimated period of 10 years, a significantly longer interval than required with the existing aggregate/earth surface. In moving the route to a sealed surface, the positive texture of the tar and chip also makes the route more suitable for shared use, especially for equestrians.
7. This phase of construction is planned to take place during the winter of 2006 and spring 2007. £75,000 is approved from the Rights of Way LTP allocation for this scheme.
8. The total cost of this phase of works is estimated at £112,000 (prior to the procurement of firm estimates from suitable contractors). The shortfall will either be met from grant funding (already received from Sport England and Sustrans for cycle routes in the Guildford area), or the length of sealed surface will be reduced to fit the allocated budget, leaving part of the route improved, but with an unsealed limestone dust surface.

## **CONSULTATION**

9. As the route is entirely public bridleway, consultation has only been carried out with Bramley Parish Council and Waverley Borough Council Officers, and with the only other landowner. All support the scheme.

## **PUBLICITY**

10. West Sussex County Council is currently revising the route guide for the whole of the Downs Link trail (in partnership with Surrey County Council and Waverley Borough Council). A local cycle route guide is currently being discussed with the County Cycling Officer, and is a requirement of the Sport England funding.