

Green Access Strategy Policies & Action Plan

The vision: More people using, enjoying and benefitting from Suffolk's Green Access Network

The objectives:

1. Increased community and volunteer involvement
2. Enhancing health wellbeing
3. Planning for resilient, healthy and sustainable communities
4. Infrastructure, including the definitive map (protecting, maintaining and enhancing green access)
5. Promoting Green Access and supporting economic growth and prosperity

The **policies** and plan of **actions**. **Policies** are statements the county council make which explain its expectations and principles for a given subject. **Actions** where stated are means of delivering a policy.

Objective	Heading	Policy	Means of Delivering	Means of Measuring	Timescale	Resource Required	Links to Other ROWIP & Wider Objectives
3.	Planning	The Government has signalled its commitment to see 1 million new homes delivered by 2020. Proposals for Suffolk vary from an estimated 70,000 to 95,000??? new homes being needed by 2031. This will have a significant impact on green access and SCC wants to work with planners and local councils to build healthy communities, with good access to greenspace.					
		Policy – one of the county council's three strategic policies is inclusive growth and building more homes. Wherever possible, SCC will work with planners to preserve PRoW within a green corridor in new developments. Where this is not possible SCC will seek the realignment of the PRoW within a green corridor that retains its integrity and links to the natural environment.					
		Policy – offsite, on larger developments SCC					

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		will require local PRoW to be improved, both to make them more resilient to increased use, and to encourage healthy access to the natural environment. In some cases SCC will seek the creation of new PRoW, to link with the other PRoW or to features of interest.					
		Action – SCC will take the time to help planners understand how improving green access can help build healthy communities, and will publish guidance on for LPAs and developers.					
		Action – SCC will encourage LPAs to ensure new developments place a strong emphasis on delivering those parts of the National Planning Policy Framework which relate to improving green access.					
		Action – SCC will assist local councils who want to improve green access in their towns and villages.					
		Action – the green access team will work with transport planners to improve the quality of access advice in home owners' packs?????	Inclusion of a map of local green access in the pack.		2018		
4.	Connectivity	Whilst it is extensive, Suffolk's PRoW network often does not lend itself to the type of walking, cycling and equestrian journeys that people want to make. This came out strongly in the consultation, as did the desire for children to be able to walk safely to school.					
		Policy – SCC will use every opportunity to improve, and even create, PRoW as healthy and sustainable links between communities and services. Opportunities will come through development, transport planning funding, external grants and partnership working.					

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		Policy – the Rights of Way & Access service will work with CYP and passenger transport to create safer routes to school, and in doing so reduce the transport to school bill.				Invest to save	
4.	Maintaining & Protecting PRow	There is still room for improvement in the condition of Suffolk's PRow. Path condition was one of the highest concerns expressed by the public in the consultation.					
		Policy – SCC will work with land managers to help them meet their statutory responsibilities, and use its enforcement procedure where PRow are persistently obstructed.					
		Action – SCC will work with land managers to improve compliance levels on restoring arable crossfield PRow, for example by sending out reminder letters at the start of the season.					
		Action – SCC will continue to help land managers protect their land against unauthorised access.					
		Consultation responses demonstrated the public value well maintained PRow highly.					
		Policy – SCC will develop its PRow asset management plan to ensure innovative and efficient management of the network.					
		Action – SCC will continue to use local contractors and land managers on small to medium scale PRow maintenance, and will work with Suffolk Highways to ensure large scale projects are delivered as cost effectively as possible.					
		Action – SCC will review the way customers report defects on PRow, to provide a more					

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		responsive service.					
		Damage to public byways is a regular source of concern to land managers and the public alike. Damage is frequently caused by anti-social use by off roaders.					
		Policy – ‘Making the best of byways’, published by Defra in 2005, still has relevance to byway management and SCC will have regard to it when responding to damage to byways.					
		Action – SCC will work with user groups to deter anti social use and take a proportionate approach to byways maintenance. Where damage by public vehicles cannot be repaired at reasonable cost, SCC will consider restricting or prohibiting access to those types of vehicle causing the damage. Access will only be restricted where there is evidence of a pattern of misuse.					
4.	(Severance)	Vulnerable highway users, eg walkers and cyclists, face difficulties when their journeys make use of both PRow and busy roads. This point was also picked up in consultation responses.					
		Policy – SCC will take a whole highway approach when considering the journeys of vulnerable users.	Awareness raising with Suffolk Highways and planners				
		SCC supports better rail services in Suffolk, and believes the right balance must be struck					

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		between safety, efficiency, and highway accessibility when addressing Network Rail's programme of closing level crossings.					
		Policy – SCC will continue to work with Network Rail to ensure that where PRow level crossings are closed, new PRow are created which work well for users, are well maintained and safe. SCC will oppose those proposals which do not meet the needs of local communities in accessing PRow.					
		Action – SCC will review and publish its guiding principles to protecting PRow threatened by closure.					
		Action – when PRow are created follow the closure of a level crossing, SCC will normally seek a commuted sum to offset the cost of its maintenance.					
1.	Communities	Communities and groups value their green access, and some want to become more involved in caring for, and promoting, their access. The opportunities for community involvement are significant and the benefits to wider agendas far reaching including promoting social cohesion and healthy lifestyles.					
		Policy – SCC will work with communities and groups to support their greater involvement in looking after, developing and promoting access.					

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		Action – The ROW & Access team will work with SCC and LA partners in Health and Economic Development to support local communities achieve and maintain Walkers are Welcome (WaW) status.	Walkers are Welcome is one way to deliver this				
		Action – The ROW & Access team will support at least 8 local communities to achieve and maintain WaW accreditation.					
		Action – The ROW & Access team will work collaboratively with local communities and relevant partners and stakeholders to develop and support a Suffolk Walkers are Welcome Alliance. This will provide support and a strategic direction for local communities with and aspiring to achieve the WaW accreditation.					
		Action – SCC will work collaboratively with local communities and other relevant partners and stakeholders (public health) to develop a “Community Offer” which will empower and enable local communities to become more involved in maintaining and improving their local ROW network	Informal consultations with WaW and other communities to develop appropriate and relevant community offer. Pilot for 6 months Upscale and replicate to other areas where possible				
		Some land managers face an uncertain future as the UK leaves the European Union.					
		Action – when working with land managers, SCC will take a holistic approach to raise awareness of how well maintained PRoW can					

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		help them make the most of their natural capital when looking to diversify business interests.					
5.	Promotion	For an asset to justify the resources needed to maintain it, it needs to be used. The consultation demonstrated Suffolk's green access is well used, and more people want to enjoy the benefits of walking and cycling but lack the confidence and information to do so.					
		Action – SCC will publish its definitive map to the web within the next two years.	ICT lead project		Complete 2019	Will require additional funding	
		Action – SCC will maintain its Discover Suffolk website and increase its use of social media to reach out to new audiences			In progress	Within existing	
		Action – SCC will continue to champion the Suffolk Walking Festival. It will work collaboratively with stakeholders and partners including Onelife Suffolk, Public Health and local community groups to take part in the SWF and to develop year round sustainable walks for local residents.	Engagement with existing and new stakeholders. 3 x volunteer events each year Continued partnership working with OneLife Suffolk, Health Walks, Local Communities and LA Communities	Volunteer events each year			
		Action – SCC will investigate potential partners to help run the SWF to reduce the operational input of the green access team.					
		Action: SCC will maintain and develop					

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		relationships with Destination Management Organisations, SWF, WaW and communities with Discover Suffolk leaflets to promote green access widely and to a broader audience.,					
		Between 2016 and 2020 Natural England will complete work on creating the England Coast Path in Suffolk and East Anglia. The coast path is expected to bring significant benefits to the coastal economy, providing a vital lifeline for local businesses such as shops, hotels and pubs. It will improve people's physical and mental wellbeing					
		Action – SCC will work with Norfolk and Essex councils to investigate establishing a partnership to launch a regional coast path to maximise its benefits. The partnership will oversee maintenance, promotion and fund raising for the path.					
2.	Health	The health benefits of walking and cycling, especially in the natural environment, are well know and well evidenced. SCC supports the objectives of Suffolk's Health and Wellbeing board through the aspirations set out in the Health and Wellbeing strategy, the Walking and Cycling Strategy, the Volunteering Strategy, the Nature Strategy and the STP.					
		Policy – the target in the Walking Strategy					

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		that all journeys which can be walked in 20 minutes or less, should be, is supported strongly. SCC considers this target should be extended to cycling. SCC will use this standard when considering proposals impacting on green access and when opportunities arise to improve access.					
		Action – SCC will work in partnership with the IHLS provider to deliver more health walks on the ROW network.					
		Action – SCC will work in partnership with Suffolk's Most Active County and Public Health to optimise opportunities for green access across a range of programmes.					
4.	Open Access	There are c.5000 ha of open access in Suffolk, which the public have a right to access on foot. This is mainly heathland and there is about the same amount of forestry land where the public have similar rights. This is a valuable recreational resource which must be balanced with the needs of conservation. This done mainly through seasonal restrictions of access.					
		Policy – SCC will continue to work with Natural England, land managers and communities to manage open access and to dedicate new areas of open access, where there may be a public benefit.					
		Action – SCC will continue to work with Natural England, the local access forum and land managers when restrictions are reviewed. SCC will seek to ensure the reasons for imposing a restriction are valid.					

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