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Dear Sir or Madam

## EAST SUSSEX RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Please find enclosed a summary of the Consultation Draft of the East Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 the County Council is required to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan by November 2007. Part of working towards achieving this target is producing a draft Plan for public consultation.

We would welcome your comments by **Friday 23 March 2007** on the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan and there are several ways for you to do this.

From 14 December 2006 you can visit [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/currentconsultations](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/currentconsultations) and make comments using the online questionnaire as well as view the full Plan. Alternatively, you may respond by completing an electronic questionnaire from the website and emailing it to us.

If you have any queries please email [rowip@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:rowip@eastsussex.gov.uk) or telephone 01273 481627.

Yours faithfully

Access Development & Forum Officer



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



recycled paper

# East Sussex County Council

Are you interested in the future of access to the countryside in East Sussex?

This is your chance to tell us what you want

Public rights of way are the public footpaths, bridleways and byways that criss-cross England and Wales, often on private land. They can be in towns or in remote countryside. They can be narrow paths or wide tracks. All public rights of way are highways in law. Anyone may use a public right of way, and may do so at any time – just as you may use a road.

In most areas public rights of way are the main, if not only, method by which the public can access the countryside. In rural East Sussex they link villages and sites of interest, provide views and make an important contribution to the fragile rural economy.

The closure of public rights of way during the foot and mouth disease crisis in 2001 highlighted just how vital access to the countryside can be for some rural businesses. As a result, the links between the public rights of way network and the rural economy have been strengthened by the County Council's recent Paths to Prosperity project. Awareness has also increased of the importance of public rights of way in promoting exercise and healthy living.

East Sussex County Council has a duty to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan by November 2007. It should assess:

- The extent to which the local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public;

- The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the County Council's area;

- The accessibility of local rights of way to blind and partially sighted people and others with mobility problems.

The Plan is designed to look at potential improvements to public rights of way and access to the countryside above and beyond the County Council's normal maintenance and enforcement duties.

Many users of public rights of way in East Sussex believe that the priority for the County Council should be to ensure that the existing network of paths is kept in a fit and proper condition for the public to use.

However, we need to build upon that basic wish. Our vision for the public rights of way network in East Sussex is to achieve:

Importantly, this includes making the path network safer and more accessible for more potential users to enjoy.

In the Consultation Draft of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan we have set ourselves seven aims which, if achieved, will deliver a better network of paths for the public to enjoy. These aims are:

- To improve the bridleway and byway network
- To improve access for all, especially the disabled
- To improve access to the countryside from urban areas
- To provide a selection of long distance paths and circular routes
- To improve information about the rights of way network
- To improve the path network by reducing its fragmentation
- To resource the implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The East Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan is a document detailing our vision for the future of access to the countryside in East Sussex. However, this is not its only role. It is also designed to be an informative document setting the full context of the provision of rights of way and other forms of countryside access in the county.

The Plan also details the process we have gone through in developing our aims, objectives and actions. We have been guided by the advice of rights of way users and, in particular, by the East Sussex Local Access Forum.

In order to achieve these seven aims a number of objectives are set out in detail under each aim in our Statement of Action. To meet these objectives we then have a series of specific actions that we intend to carry out.

We have already started to meet some of the targets set in the Statement of Action. Included in the appendices to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan are several tables showing site specific problems. These tables were developed through the information gathering process and we recognise that this information is not complete. Therefore, we are also taking this opportunity to consult you on the content of these tables.

The full Statement of Action is attached to the Consultation Draft of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Many of the actions listed within the Statement of Action have been tailored to fit within existing and future budget expectations and we are committed to delivering on many of the actions. However, we recognise and accept that we may not be able to achieve everything that is hoped for. The County Council has developed the following draft overarching statement which encapsulates what the authority wants to achieve over the next four years.

We now need your help to ensure that our vision for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is the same as yours. To achieve this we have published the Consultation Draft of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan which is now available to the public.

There are a number of ways for you to view the Consultation Draft of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan:

- on our website ;
- at all East Sussex public libraries;
- at main Council offices in East Sussex;
- by emailing or telephoning ; or
- by writing to:

Rights of Way Improvement Plan  
Transport & Environment  
East Sussex County Council  
FREEPOST LW43  
County Hall  
Lewes  
East Sussex BN7 1UE

Your response must be received by **Friday 23 March 2007.**