

From: Rye Town Council

**ESCC
1066 Path
Sustrans
England Coastal Path
Rother DC**

Rye Connectivity: Cycleways and Footpaths

1. The Government has declared that it is committed to an increased focus on the planning, co-ordination and funding of active travel across England. As the East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) 10 year Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (CWIP) is set to be a local conduit for this, this paper considers the fact that there is no short, medium or long term investment for infrastructure in Rye, despite the fact that there are proposals as identified below.

2. The Rye appendix of the CWIP sets out a large number of (mostly cycling) based proposals. It is unclear what local consultation there has been in the designing of these. In particular some are at odds with the policies of the local statutory planning document the [Rye Neighbourhood Plan](#). There seems to have been little consideration of existing access routes across Rye (Enclosure 1), initiatives such as the Greenway proposal (Enclosure 2) or proposals set out by other groups (Para 5).

3. The Neighbourhood Plan reflects the fact that access to the countryside was rated highly by both citizens and visitors. The Plan also considers not only routes but signage which is so important to guide many of the one million or so visitors come to Rye annually.

4. This paper draws on the work of the Rye Neighbourhood Plan to put the ESCC proposals into a local context that has been subject of significant consultation. The Plan acknowledged that there are obvious benefits and opportunities for Rye including, to:

- a. Achieve improved connectivity (active links) to/from areas within walking distance of the Town Centre, such as Valley Park, Rye Harbour and Camber. This would benefit both Rye citizens and visitors, by improved access to services, education and employment;
- b. Providing a safe and accessible alternative to driving with the potential for reduction in the number of short car journeys thereby relieving congestion on the local road network including the A259;

- c. Consider the opportunities provided by the planning applications in the life of the Neighbourhood Plan that could provide enhancements towards improved connectivity through better active travel infrastructure.

5. It should be noted that there are several initiatives which have in common, connectivity for walkers and cyclists through the Town of Rye:

1066 Walks: <http://www.gps-routes.co.uk/routes/home.nsf/RoutesLinksWalks/1066-country-walk-walking-route>

England Coast Path:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-in-the-south-east-of-england>

East Sussex Active Access:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/6896/escc-active-access-for-growth-final.pdf>

The East Sussex Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (CWIP)

<https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/economy-transport-environment/escc-icwip-2020/>

Sustainable Transport <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/>

6. In addition to those listed above, there are other walking routes that run through Rye including the High Weald Landscape Trail; the Saxon Shore Way; the Royal Military Canal Path and the Sussex Border Path. This paper points to the need for integration of routes and signage at the pinchpoint of Rye.

7. For all routes, both walkers and cyclists need proper consideration. It seems that in many cases, where there is a footpath, the solution is to turn it into an unmarked shared use path, risking the safety and enjoyment of pedestrians.

8. Of the recent initiatives - some have stalled – there are those below for which significant work has been completed and, if implemented, could meet the aims of the ESCC proposals:

- a. The **Greenway** features in the RNP as a valuable Valley Park to Schools route which has some funding attached that is held by Rother District Council. Sadly, despite significant work here in Rye, the project stalled because ESCC suggested that the costs would be high

and outstanding funds difficult to priorities. At the time ESCC said that Rye just did not attract sufficient priority

- b. The **South Coast Path** is planned to stop at the entrances to Rye and therefore those walking it are “dropped off” without guidance to help them pick up the next stage of the route.
- c. There is some discussion, including with the project team, about where the **1066 path** will be signed to and from. This needs to be integrated with other routes in a way which is helpful for visitors.
- d. Any initiative by East **Sussex County Council to improve walking and cycling routes** to encourage people to become fitter should be overlaid on the existing system of connectivity and add value to it..
- e. Any future work on the **Environment Agency's flood defence works** around Rye, such as the Eastern Rother Tidal Walls Scheme, provide an opportunity to make improvements to both routes into Rye and connections between those linking outside.
- f. Any proposals for change of the internal road system of Rye should be carefully coordinated with work on traffic, parking and access and in particular the new **Civil Parking Enforcement plan**. The Rye Neighbourhood Plan considered a range of improvements which reflect public consultation and Referendum. Importantly, it was found during work on the Rye Neighbourhood Plan that any major proposal, such as reversing the one-way system in the High Street and elsewhere would have serious impacts for access at other points, where access was restricted because of narrow streets. Justification for pressing ahead with such proposals would need significant study and supporting data. .

9. Considering all the proposals above and those suggested in other recent papers, there are two particular opportunities that are described below. Both could provide improvements to existing routes across Rye and in turn could link to the **Station Approach** - an area that is listed for improvements in the local Infrastructure Plan, but awaits funds - the natural transport hub of Rye. In particular these two should be explored further:

a. The Coastal East-West Path – The Southabout Route

The **Rye Harbour Road junction** with the A259 should be an immediate priority for some improvement as it has been the subject of much public correspondence in recent years. With traffic levels forecast to increase on the Harbour Road because of employment development there the Authorities should re-examine the situation with a view to making change to benefit public safety. We have heard the arguments that there is no justification for changing the current junction but casual viewing at peak hours will show large vehicles mounting the pavements and threatening pedestrian safety. We also know that land

adjacent to the crossing was earmarked for improvements by East Sussex County Council, when it disposed of its former gritting depot. Improvements of the Harbour Road junction could then lead to an enhanced connection between Harbour Road and the Monkbretton bridge which will have the added advantage of allowing the England Coast path to run through Rye as was originally envisaged. This has in part been factored into planning proposals for the Rock Channel.

b. The East West Connections within Rye : The Northabout Route

Valley Park to Camber (Route 3) of the current ESCC initiative.

This could be facilitated in part by the stalled **Greenway project** (Rye Neighbourhood Plan), for which Rother District Council retains some funds, and would provide via a pedestrian footbridge over the River Tillingham. A route between the majority of the population in the west of Rye and the educational and leisure campus, with onward links to the key hub of the Station Approach; to the Monkbretton Bridge for links to the East; to Rye Hill and the Military Road, would greatly improve safe connectivity in all directions.

10. In summary this paper recommends the need for integration of all work on connectivity to improve routes across Rye and to provide safe linkage with the centre of Rye (Station Approach). The paper points to two routes that have been considered in detail in recent years (Para 9) but neither have attracted formal attention or the resources to progress them. In addition, signage needs improvement throughout as it has developed piecemeal and is mostly lacking in uniformity and clarity. Local input and leadership for the work by ESCC and other agencies could be provided by the Rye Parking Strategy Steering Group (a mix of councillors and citizens) , which has been established to provide an overview of access, parking and traffic issues following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement this year.

Enclosure:

- 1: Rye Neighbourhood Plan – Existing Accessibility Map
- 2: Rye Neighbourhood Plan – The Greenway proposal
- 3: Rye: Southabout and Northabout Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

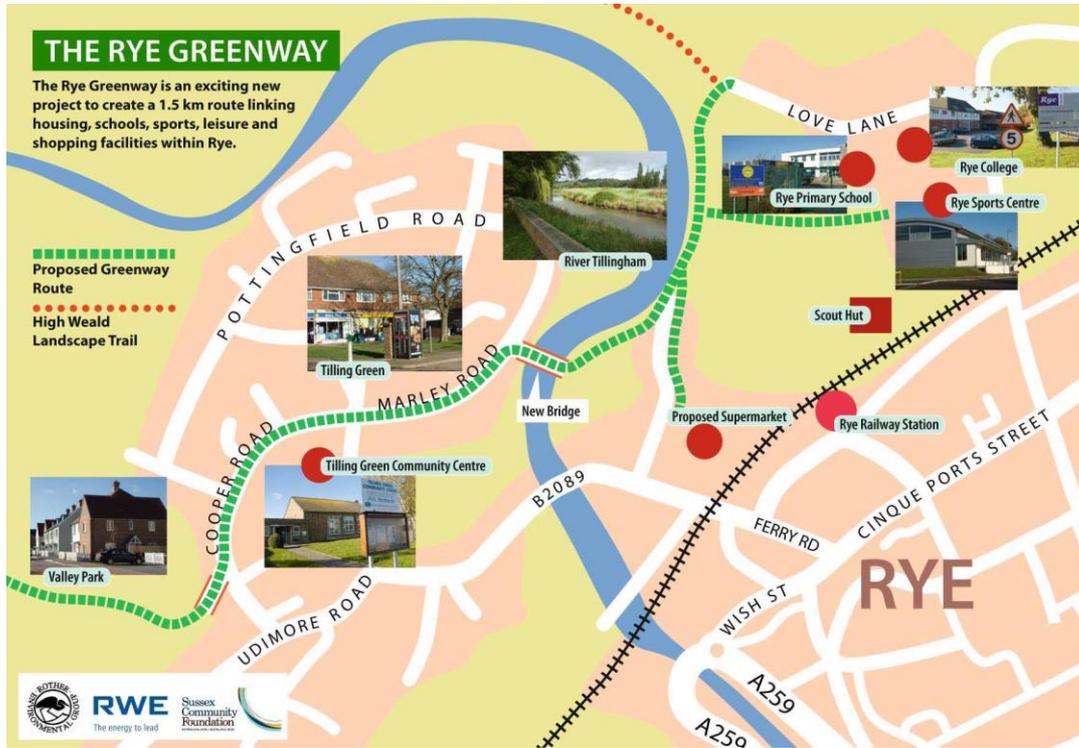
Anthony Kimber PhD
Rye Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Rebekah Gilbert
Mayor of Rye

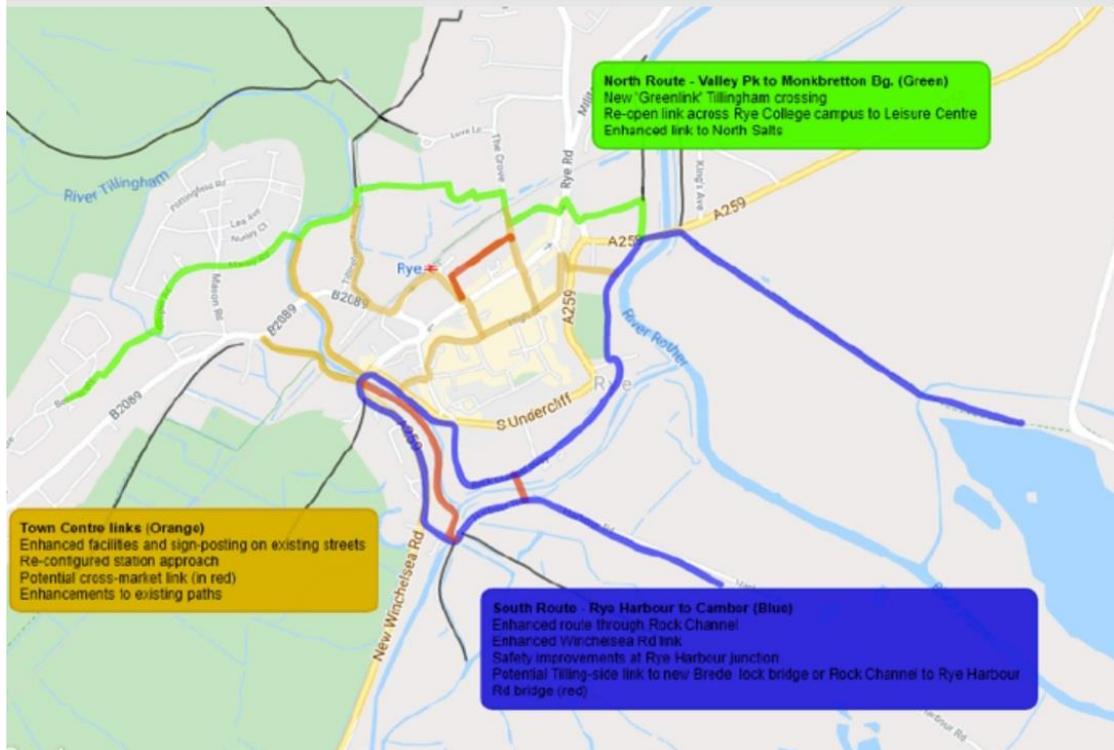
Allan Thomson
Rye Conservation Society

Cllr Chris Hoggart

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Enclosure 2: Rye Neighbourhood Plan – The Greenway proposal



Enclosure 3: Rye: Southabout and Northabout East – West Pedestrian and Cycle Routes