

## South Wilts Walks: Empowering communities...

A community led project initiated by the Southern Wiltshire Area Board in partnership with the Rights of Way team.

### Purpose of the report...

This report forms the basis of a paper developed to share our project with partners to assist us in our aim to open up a short term Volunteer Coordinator opportunity in Southern Wiltshire. This role will help to develop capacity within the local community to ensure the project can continue to deliver in the long run. We are seeking the support of the Area Board to progress this work further. No funding is required at this stage.

### About the project...

#### Area Board theme...

In 2012, Footpaths emerged as an achievable theme, also scoring high on importance in the Area Board consultation.

See more here (pictures, videos and info) [www.southernwiltshirewalks.weebly.com](http://www.southernwiltshirewalks.weebly.com)

#### Funding...

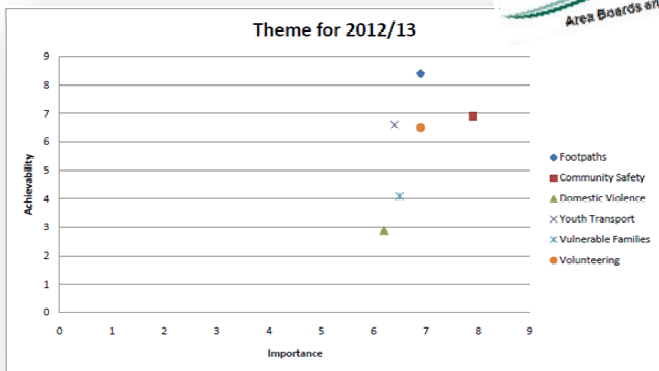
Parish Councils  
Around £15,000 was invested in gates and kit, and volunteer training coming from the Ramblers  
Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters  
Area Boards and Rights of Way

#### Hard work...

Since October 2012, 47 gates have been installed by local residents in monthly sessions; this is around 400 hours of volunteering.

#### Rewarding...

This project promotes active and healthy lifestyles for both the volunteers and the many people who can now access the footpaths.



### There's more...

**Developing the kissing gates project:** To broaden the scope of the work a range of activities from cutting back to way marking could be developed. This would bring more walks based activities.

**Local Walks & Attractions Guide:** Work has also started on a guide aimed at families to encourage the enjoyment of our wonderful countryside. By focusing on 10 local places of interest, ranging from Bentley Wood to River Bourne Community Farm, we would like to show what the area has to offer and then encourage readers to explore a bit further...funding is in place for the publication but some work is needed in terms of the data collection.

**Linking footpaths:** In 2013, footpaths remained high on the Area Boards agenda. Building on the success of the kissing gates project, we are looking at path improvements that improves links between and within villages. So far, we have funded a path from Whaddon to Grimstead via the CATG and we are looking at work at Redlynch and Laverstock so far.

### Links to priorities...



Local Decisions



Getting more done



Healthy lifestyle



Encouraging walking



Supporting economy

## **Taking the project further...**

These actions will help us to make this project more sustainable.

1. The Rights of Way team, beyond their statutory duties, is focused towards stimulating community action, working as community leaders, to achieve the goals set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

2. To develop capacity in the short-term, dedicated volunteer support is needed to enable us to develop the volunteers to become more self sufficient and unlock greater capacity from within the community. Taking this further this support could enable specific projects with young people, the unemployed, ex-service personnel and disabled people to advance the reach and benefits of this project further.

**Resources required:** Volunteer Coordinator funded and employed through a partner organisation to develop this work in Southern Wiltshire and possibly extend to other areas. The primary aim is to develop the work of the South Wilts Walks Group, setting up parish groups and by the end of the period produce a 'toolkit' for communities to help them deliver the service in their community.

3. In the short-term we should continue to develop Community Area wide activity days to encourage participation and provide training and familiarisation.

4. Where there is a nucleus of activity in a parish, help them to develop a local group and assist them to manage work and footpath priorities in their parish.

## **Where next?**

With the Area Board's support the Community Area Manager will develop a comprehensive paper, in conjunction with Cllr Leo Randall (lead councillor for this project), to develop the actions above, in particular action 2.

### **Councillor Leo Randall**

Lead Councillor for Southern Wiltshire Walks project

### **Tom Bray**

Community Area Manager

Email: [tom.bray@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:tom.bray@wiltshire.gov.uk), Tel: 01722 434252