

**Pewsey Area Board – 7 March 2011
Chairman's Announcements**

GREAT STONES WAY

Update from Peter Bell, Chairman of Marden Parish Council:

Parish Chairman and Landowners from eleven villages in the Pewsey Vale and Kennet area met at Wilsford Village Hall on 11th January and voiced considerable concerns about the current Great Stones Way proposal. They agreed to raise these issues with Wiltshire Council and a letter signed by eight Pewsey Vale Parish Chairmen was forwarded on the 28th January to Mr Mark Smith (Director of Neighbourhood Services). This letter largely mirrors the points made at the last Pewsey Area Board Meeting in particular demanding an independent environmental assessment and that time frames are extended. At the time of print a reply had not yet been received.

Update from Jeff Goddard, Friends of the Ridgeway:

The Friends of The Ridgeway (FoR) has been made aware of the Resolution proposed from the floor and adopted at the last Meeting of the Board on 10th January, 2011, and has also subsequently seen a letter signed on behalf of a number of the Vale of Pewsey parishes to Wiltshire Council expressing concerns about the proposed Great Stones Way walking route.

We have taken note of the suggestion that an Environmental Impact Assessment be carried out in order to determine the suitability or otherwise of the proposed route and of any possible adverse impacts on the historical, natural or social environment from the expected use of the route by walkers. We have no objection in principle to this, and, subject to financing, will commission suitable consultants for this purpose. Terms of reference have been drafted and will be discussed with the organisations concerned. It would be helpful if the parishes could set out for the consultants the reasons why they believe that the Vale of Pewsey, or any particular sections of it, are unsuitable for countryside access.

We also note the request for assurances that funding for car parks and other facilities, and for future maintenance of the route, will be made available without recourse to Wiltshire Council or the tax-payer. We are seeking a meeting with the appropriate officers in the Council to discuss ways in which the expected visitor numbers can best be catered for, taking account of the economic benefits likely to accrue to the community. We agreed some time ago with the Council's Rights of

Way Department that FoR will assist it to deliver a higher standard of maintenance for this route than its normal legal responsibilities, by initiating a volunteer scheme and by fund-raising.

Concerns have been expressed by the parishes as to the time allowed for consultation within the planned time-frame. We are happy to devote more time to this, and to do all that we can to allay the concerns of all parties interested in the project. However, in view of increasing interest from the walking public it is advisable for the process to be completed without undue delay.