

Agenda Item 9
Report NPA22/23-21

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority Committee**
Date **30 March 2023**
By **Cycling Projects Officer**
Title of Report **Centurion Way Extension Project Update Report**

Note

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to note the progress made on the Centurion Way Project since the last report.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides an overview of the work undertaken on the Centurion Way Extension since the report to the 17 February 2022 meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee. It also signposts Members, at paragraph 4.5, to the proposed funding and the decisions to be taken at Agenda Items 10 and 11 of this meeting, which will progress the next two sections of Centurion Way and enable preliminary work to be undertaken for further sections of the route.

2. Policy Context

2.1 Centurion Way is a strategic route and identified priority scheme in the SDNPA Corporate Plan 2020-25, an Access Team Priority Project for 2021-23 and is Delivery Action AN2 within the SDNPA Cycling and Walking Strategy. Centurion Way is also included as a key scheme in the West Sussex County Council Walking and Cycling Strategy and Sustrans National Cycle Network 20 Year Strategy.

2.2 A map showing an overview of the strategic routes and aspirational routes (including Centurion Way), extracted from the Cycling and Walking Strategy forms Appendix 1. SDNPA aspire to extend the route to Midhurst in the future long term.

The Centurion Way currently provides a segregated, shared use path, approximately 9 kilometres in length from Chichester into the SDNP, terminating at West Dean Appendix 2. The path provides a safe, sustainable access, Active Travel route alternative for visitors and the local community, importantly offering an alternative to the A286. The route is being extended in phases:

- Phase One Extension. SDNPA constructed the northern extent of approximately 2.5 kilometres in 2015 terminating at West Dean Tunnel.
- Phase Two Extension. The SDNPA secured planning permission for a further extension to Cocking in 2019.

3. Project Update (Phase Two Extension)

3.1 In 2019 SDNPA secured planning permission for the Centurion Way Extension from West Dean (Tunnel) to Cocking predominantly on the alignment of the former Chichester to Midhurst railway and approximately 5 kilometres in length. When complete, it will connect

with the South Downs Way National Trail above Cocking in the heart of the National Park extending approximately 14-15 kilometres in total from Chichester. The final stage of the Centurion Way would be to connect from the SDW down past Cocking to Midhurst.

- 3.2 The three tunnels which lie along the route have been the subject of much discussion. From an access and engineering standpoint they would offer advantages if used by the multi-user route. This particularly applies to the southernmost (West Dean) and northernmost (Cocking) tunnels as using these would make it easier to avoid sections alongside the busy A286, whereas the consented route near the Singleton Tunnel is attractive and safe, being well away from the road.
- 3.3 However, the group of three tunnels combined are of significant importance as bat roosts – and the northern two tunnels are designated SAC for this reason. The tunnel roosts also form part of a much wider landscape in West Sussex which is of exceptional importance for a range of bat species.
- 3.4 When planning permission for the extension was granted, the Planning Committee also wrote to the SDNPA reflecting the strong views held by the Members, requesting that further exploration be undertaken to the potential opening of the three tunnels for use as part of the Centurion Way. The letter from the Chair of the Planning Committee forms Appendix 3.
- SDNPA commissioned Ecology by Design to undertake extensive Tunnel Habitat Surveys and gather sufficient information which will inform any future proposals to use one or more of the three tunnels.
 - The first year of three, external Habitat Surveys were undertaken in 21/22 and the second in 22/23. The first year of three, internal Habitat Surveys were postponed from 21/22 by Natural England due to the pandemic (risk of disease transference from humans) and were undertaken in 22/23.
 - The findings report for all surveys to date is due in spring 2023, which will inform further surveys and the potential for the tunnel(s) to be considered for inclusion within the Centurion Way route in the future.
 - Any subsequent proposals to open any of the three tunnels would be the subject of a new planning application.
- 3.5 The Centurion Way Extension crosses through land owned by three major landowners - The Edward James Foundation (West Dean Estate), National Trust and the Cowdray Estate. To assist project delivery (planning, funding and construction) the route has been broken down into nine distinct sections. An Overview Plan and Plans for each section forms Appendix 4.
- 3.6 The total funding secured for the CW Extension to date is £683,000 mainly drawn from £128,000 South Downs National Park Trust and SDNPA CIL £500,000. And the addition of £55,000 of various funding contributions.
- 3.7 Extensive enabling works have been undertaken to clear the first sections of the Phase 2 route following extensive ecology and arboricultural surveys. Substantial restocking and additional planting alongside the route will improve the quality, biodiversity and resilience of the flora, increasing its value for wildlife.
- 3.8 Construction of the first two sections of Phase 2 is underway and scheduled to be completed by Q1 2023. It is approximately 1.3 kilometres long and comprises section3- West Dean to Singleton which passes through the former Singleton Station and section4- Cucumber Farm. The new section will connect with Station Approach in West Dean, opposite the entrance to West Dean Gardens and two Public Rights of Way footpaths in Singleton.

3.9 The former northern platform needs to be stabilised as part of the works, to ensure it is safe for path users. A historical architect has surveyed the 200m long structure and is preparing a report detailing recommendations to stabilise the structure. It is anticipated that the existing budget will only fund limited stabilisation works.

3.10 The forecast cost for the two sections under construction and the enabling works for sections: 2- South West Bridges; 5- Wellhanger Copse; and 6- Littlewood Farm is within the current allocated budget of £683,000.

4. Next steps & cost implications

4.1 An additional estimated £1,450,000 is required to complete the extension from West Dean to the South Downs Way at Cocking.

4.2 Subject to funding, both amount and timing, and continued staff resource, the construction of the remaining sections could be completed by 25/26.

4.3 The cost estimates and potential delivery timescale for the remaining sections (subject to funding and staff resource) is summarised in the table below. Cost estimates have been provided by the Centurion Way Project Team, following value engineering of the initial estimates in March 2022 supplied by consultants Schofield Lothian.

Section	Funding	Delivery Timescale		
Section3: West Dean to Singleton And Section4: Cucumber Farm	£683,000 In place	Delivery Q1 23/24		
Section5: Wellhanger Copse And Section6: Littlewood Farm	£400,000 required	Delivery Q3/Q4 23/24		
Section 1: Woodland Link inc A286 footway And Section2: South West Bridges	£350,000 required		Delivery 24/25	
Section7: Chiitys Copse	£275,000 required		Delivery 24/25	
Section8: Marlows & Ramp	£640,000 required			Delivery 25/26
Section9: Cocking Link	£185,000 required			Delivery 25/26
Total Funding shortfall £1,450,000				

- 4.4 An opportunity exists to continue construction of the next two sections in sequence in 23/24 and build on the considerable project momentum generated in the past 18 months. Additional funding of £400,000 is required to deliver the next two sections 5 - Wellhanger Copse; and 6 - Littlewood Farm. This would deliver a further 1.4km of the extension.
- 4.5 At the Members Budget Workshop held on 31 January 2023, it was proposed that an Invest to Save reserve be created for the forthcoming financial year. Centurion Way was one of the projects which could be funded through the reserve. This could fund the construction of the next two sections mentioned above and provide initial funding of the preliminary tasks for subsequent sections. These preliminary tasks include surveys, route clearance, designs and legal costs. All of which can have lead times that could delay future construction schedules.
- 4.6 The approval for the works to proceed will be considered at Agenda Item 10 of this meeting. The approval of the funds themselves, which are included as part of the Invest to Save reserve, will be considered at Agenda Item 11 of this meeting.
- 4.7 As part of the project funding strategy, bids for SDNPA CIL have been submitted for £1,450,000 total, as per the table above, and discussions are ongoing with external organisations including the National Trust and Sustrans.

5. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Agenda Items 10 and 11 of this NPA meeting consider the approval for the works and the funds for the next two sections of Centurion Way along with preliminary tasks for future sections. Decisions on future funding, approval of works or tendering of a contract would come before the NPA or Policy & Resources Committee.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	SDNPA currently has sufficient resources in place, in terms of access project staff.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	SDNPA procurement protocols and the competitive tender process ensure value for money is delivered within the current and subsequent contracts.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	SDNPA Partnership Management Plan 2020-25 Outcome 5: Outstanding visitor experiences are underpinned by a high-quality access and sustainable transport network, supporting improved health and wellbeing. Priority Programme 5.2: Improve accessibility through a network of high-quality routes connecting communities with the landscape, heritage, attractions and transport hubs and gateways. Note: Centurion Way is an identified priority AN2 - Develop the network of non-motorised user (NMU) leisure paths along former railway alignments as opportunities and funding permits, within the SDNP Cycling and Walking Strategy 2017-24 and is an Access Team Priority for 2022/23.

Implication	Yes*/No
Links to other projects or partner organisations	Centurion Way is an identified scheme in the West Sussex County Council Walking and Cycling Strategy and Sustrans National Cycle Network 20 Year Strategy. When complete, Centurion Way will provide a strategic link to the South Downs Way National Trail.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	Centurion Way is identified in the Authority's Climate Change Action Plan, Programme: Transport and Sustainable Access. The creation of off-road active travel infrastructure such as the Centurion Way supports the shift to low carbon travel.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	Current and subsequent contractors will be examined through the tendering process as to how they can deliver positive social value within the contract, such as improving the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the local area, for example through apprenticeships, carbon footprint reduction etc.
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Current and subsequent contractors will be examined as to how they will meet the Authority's equality duty through the tendering process. An equalities impact assessment was undertaken, and mitigations incorporated in the route and path designs approved during the planning process.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No The current contractor and companies bidding for subsequent contracts were and will be examined for compliance with the laws on Modern Slavery during the selection process.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No The probity of the current contracted company was examined and companies bidding for subsequent contracts will be examined as part of the selection process.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	The current contractor and companies bidding for subsequent contracts Health and Safety policies and record were and will be examined during the selection processes.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	The environmental policies of the current contractor and companies bidding for subsequent contracts were and will be examined during the selection process, as was and will their track record on sustainable construction. The current contractor demonstrated, and companies bidding for subsequent contracts will also need to demonstrate, how their policies and experience in sustainable construction will influence their approach to the contract. This will be examined at the Award stage of subsequent contracts during the procurement process.

6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Cost overruns in the project particularly on areas where we do yet have fixed prices.	2	3	Realign the programme based on available funding. Monitor risk of committed funding and maintain the project 25% contingency.
Not obtaining landowners permission.	3	4	Consider compulsory purchase of land.
Uncosted structural work (Bridges & Platforms, Buildings and roads)	2	3	Maintain a contingency fund for structural works. Seek assurance from third parties for the structural safety of all infrastructure.
Historic Railway Estate - Permission to cross either bridge structure too costly or refused.	3	4	Explore option for agreement or alternative routes.

ALISTER LINTON-CROOK

Cycling Projects Officer

South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer: Alister Linton-Crook

Tel: 01730 814810 / 07876 860060

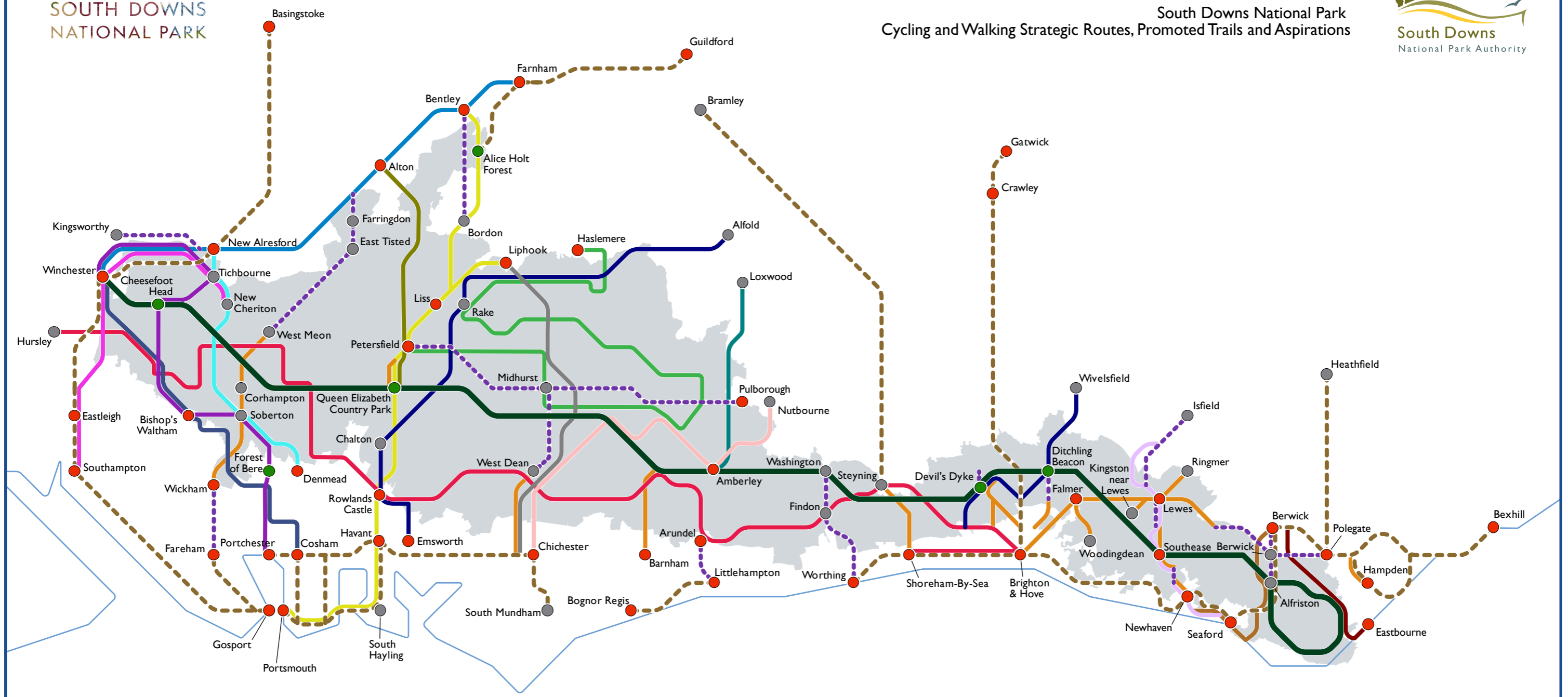
Email: Alister.Linton-Crook@southdowns.gov.uk

Appendices

1. SDNPA Cycling and Walking Strategic Routes Map
2. Centurion Way Overview Map
3. Planning Committee letter (25.10.2019)
4. Phase Two Extension Map (Construction Stages)

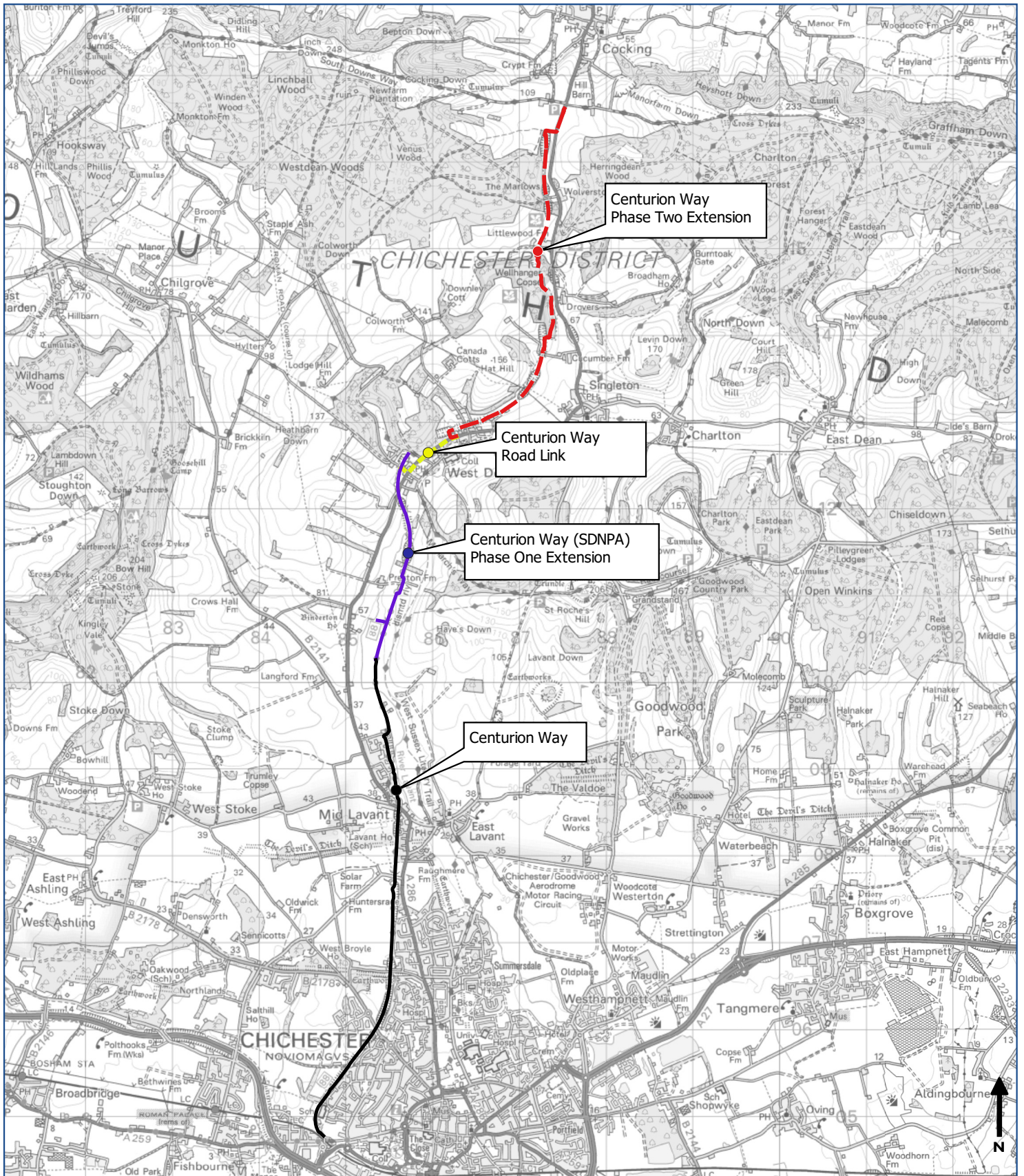
SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services.

External Consultees none



	South Downs Way		Hangers Way		New Lipchis Way		St Swithun's Way		Wayfarer's Walk		Rail station		South Downs National Park
	Aspirational route		Itchen Way		Pilgrim's Trail		Sussex Border Path		Wealdway		Landmark		Coastline
	Strategic cycle route		King's Way		Serpents Trail		Sussex Ouse Valley Way		Wey South Path		Settlement		
	National cycle route		Monarch's Way		Shipwright's Way		Vanguard Way		West Sussex Literary Trail				

Centurion Way Overview (2023)



Scale at A4 1:60,000

0 2 4 6 8 m

© Crown copyright and database rights 2023
Ordnance Survey 100050083

22 March 2023

Ken Bodfish
Chair – Policy & Resources Committee

Dear Ken,

Centurion Way Phase 2

I am writing following the 10th October 2019 Planning Committee meeting, where Members approved permission for Centurion Way Phase 2 at West Dean (ref: SDNP/18/05920/FUL).

During their deliberation on the application, Members expressed concern that the end of Phase 1 (currently terminating in Motor Road, West Dean) does not directly link to the start of Phase 2 (due to start by the Scout Hut opposite West Dean House) because of the approach taken to avoid the currently closed West Dean Tunnel (a Local Wildlife Site). There was particular, strongly expressed concern about the aspect of the application scheme that would 'force' users of Centurion Way out onto the footway of the A286 road, in order to continue their journeys onto Phase 2.

Members noted and agreed that the West Dean Tunnel would provide the most obvious, direct, flat route for the continuation of Centurion Way, avoiding the busy A286, and creating a route that would be accessible for all (avoiding the use of awkward, sloping access pathways to get people on and off the former railway alignment. While Members were able to understand the reasons why the application before them did not include the re-opening of this tunnel (i.e. the presence of protected bat species, and the fact that the tunnel is designated a Local Wildlife Site), they wished to be reassured that this issue has been thoroughly explored, and will be explored further, as far as is practicable.

Members also sought assurance that the practical feasibility of re-opening to human use the two further tunnels on the route, at Singleton and Cocking, was being explored, albeit clearly having regard to the legal obligations following from the acknowledged presence of protected bat species in those tunnels (and their status as a Special Area of Conservation). Once again it was noted that, from the point of view of the use and enjoyment of Centurion Way by humans, considerable advantages would flow from the ability to continue along the level route of the old railway line, as opposed to the need to use ramps etc to get people up / over and away from the tunnel entrances, and then over the intervening ground between those entrances.

Ultimately, the Planning Committee (having regard in particular to the point that existing Centurion Way users on foot can and probably do use the A286 footway in West Dean if they wish to continue northwards) did grant planning permission for the scheme as currently proposed. However, they also agreed that I should write you, as your Committee is understood to be the 'sponsor' of the underlying project on behalf of the NPA, requesting

that the applicant continues to explore further the potential for use of the West Dean tunnel, and the two further north, for the Centurion Way, by gathering sufficient information to be able to consider investigating whether humans and bats can in practice share the use of these tunnels (as is understood to be under investigation in other places in England), and the making of such licence applications as may be necessary in connection with any such proposals.

Yours sincerely

Alun Alesbury
Chair – Planning Committee

South Downs Centre, North Street,
Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH

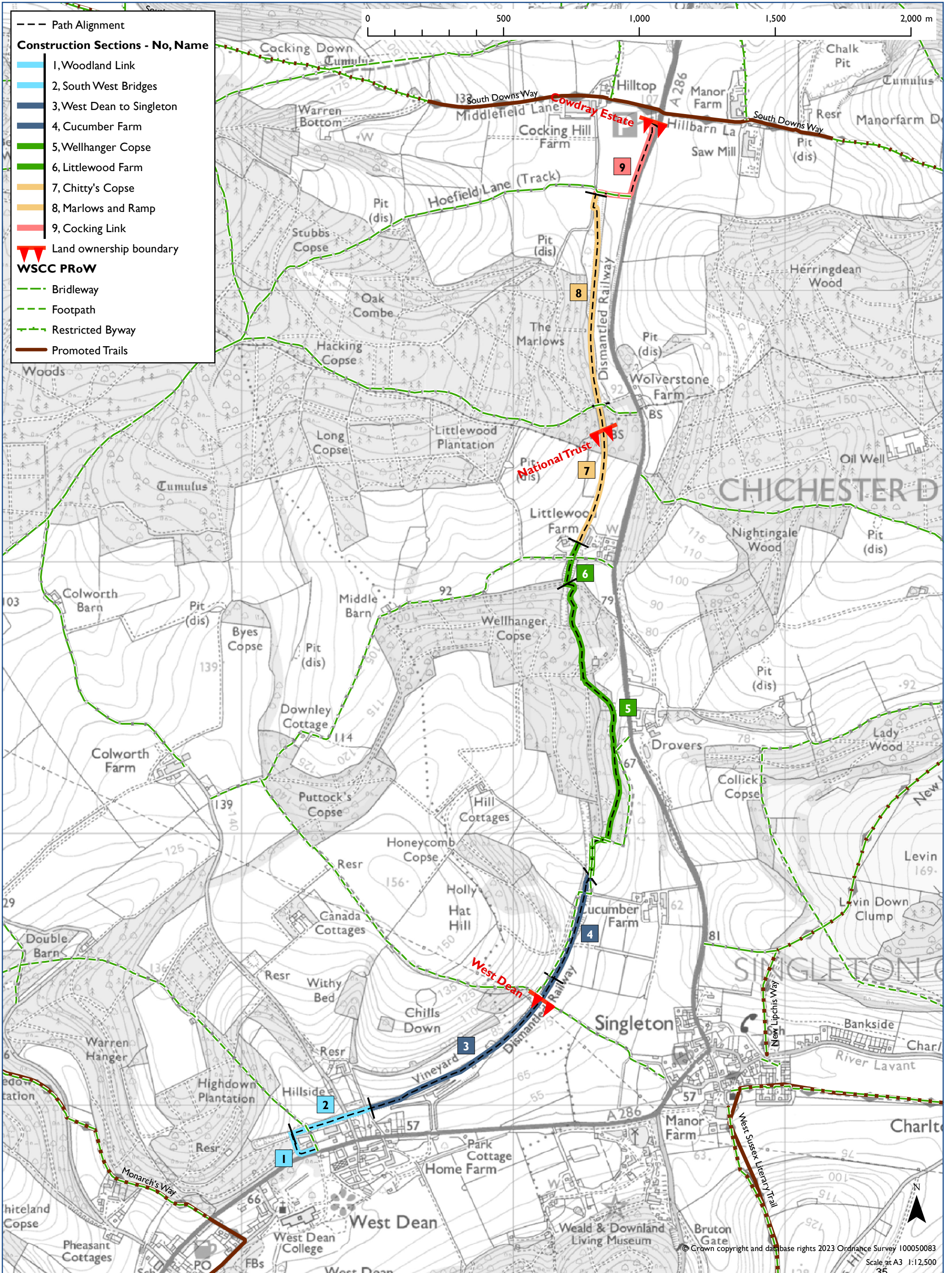
T: 01730 814810

E: info@southdowns.gov.uk

www.southdowns.gov.uk

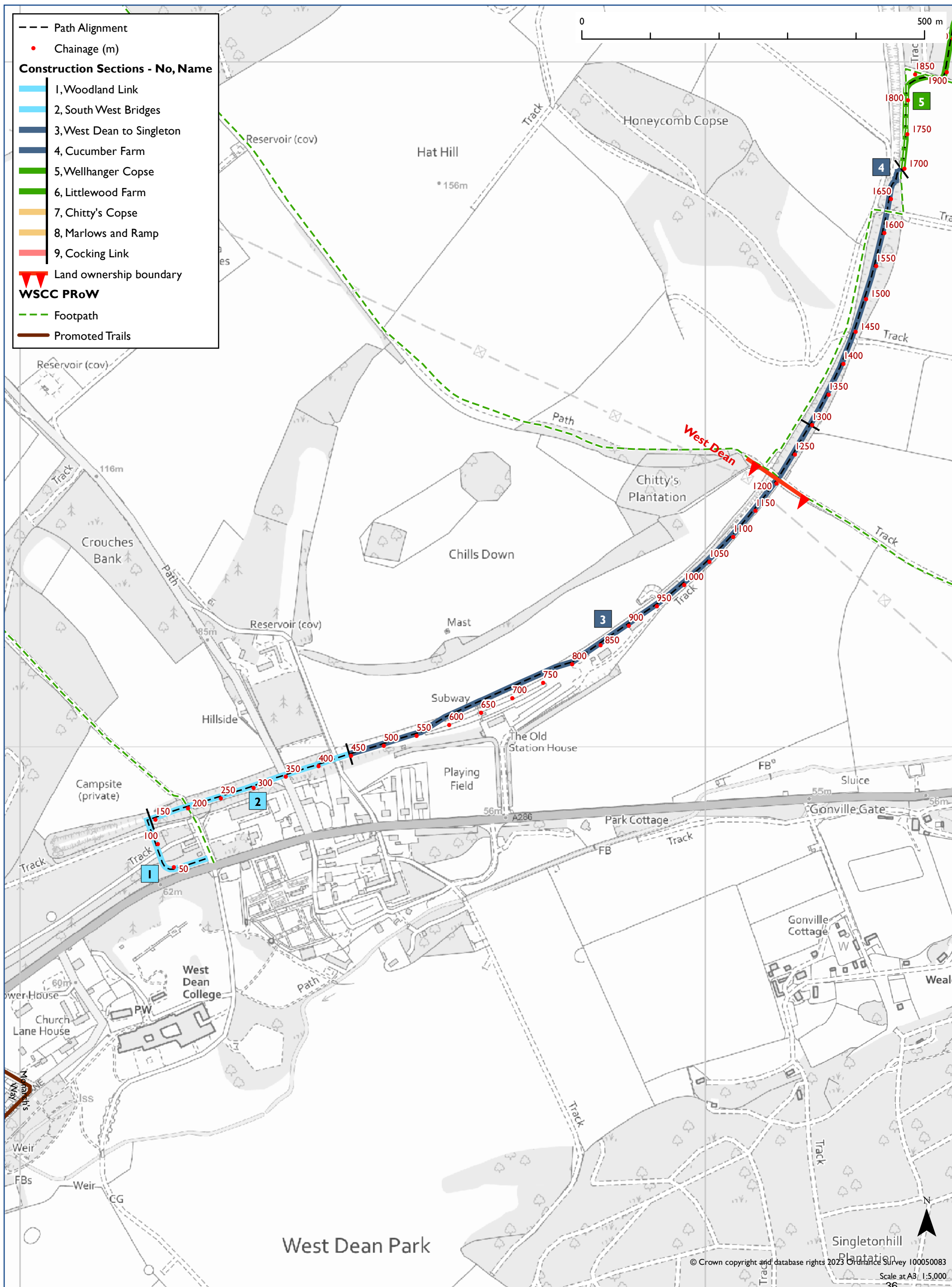
Chief Executive: Trevor Beattie

Centurion Way Extension Phase 2 - Overview

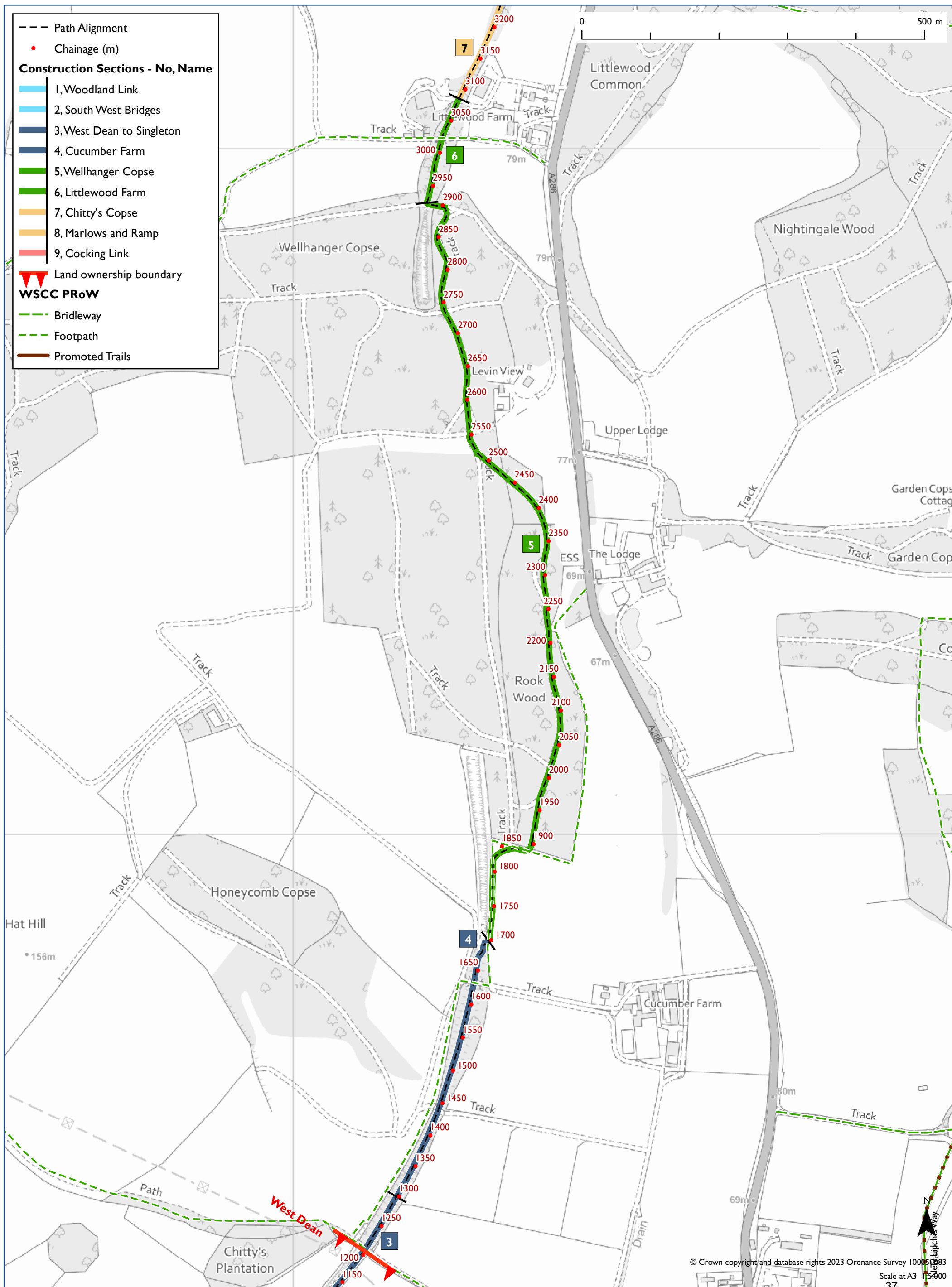


Centurion Way Extension

Phase 2 - Pt. I West Dean to Singleton (Sections 1-3)



Centurion Way Extension Phase 2 - Pt.2 Singleton to Littlewood Farm (Sections 4-6)



Centurion Way Extension Phase 2 - Pt.3 Littlewood Farm to Cocking (Sections 7-9)

