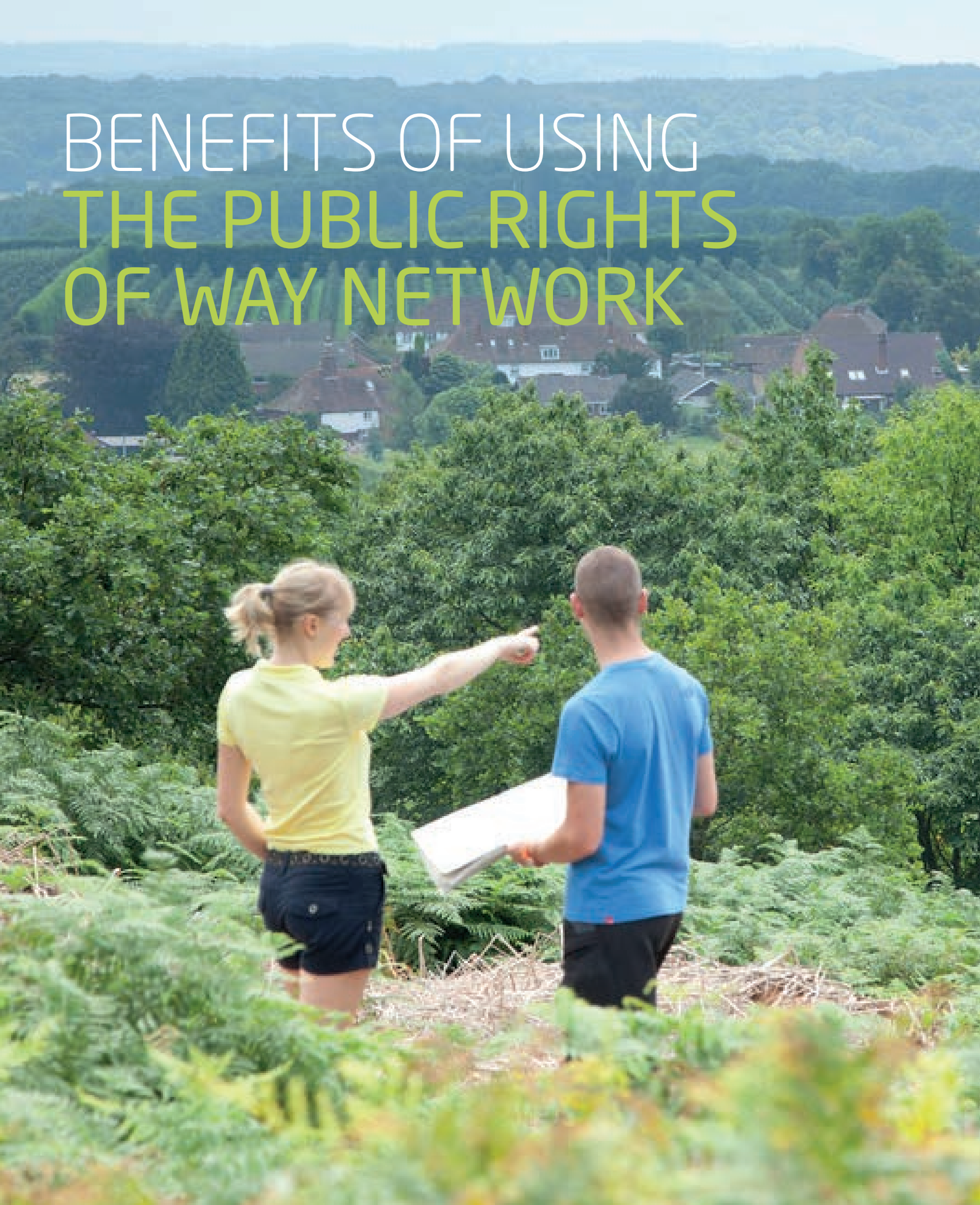


BENEFITS OF USING THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK



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INTRODUCTION

Evidence around the benefits provided by access to the countryside and coast has increased in recent years. The Public Rights of Way (PROW) network is a key component of the access resource, providing important social and economic benefits for Kent's people and communities. Overall the PROW network has a wide range of functions and public benefits which include:

- Use as a leisure resource
- Providing access to places of work, education and facilities
- Supporting better mental and physical health and wellbeing
- Improving Kent's environment
- Supporting the local economy
- Providing routes for more sustainable and less polluting transport
- Contributing to reducing congestion
- Contributing to improving air quality.

Increasingly, methods are being developed to evaluate the benefits achieved in these areas in economic terms. However, some benefits provided by PROW, such as enjoying a view or finding solitude, are more difficult to attach a monetary value to. Nonetheless, these are important needs which the PROW network provides for. In the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP), these are summarised under these broad categories:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Supporting Economic Growth

The need of supporting sustainable development and improving the environment is an over-arching theme, to which the above categories contribute. Many of the needs and benefits are inter-related: for example, increasing active travel also has environmental and health benefits such as reducing air pollution and increasing levels of physical activity, which in turn have economic benefits through, for example, increased productivity.

Looking in more detail at each of the key needs that the PROW network provides for, we can start to develop an understanding of how these link with the key themes, objectives and outcomes of the ROWIP.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Poor health, as well as being detrimental to the individuals themselves, also incurs a cost to society. Not only through the direct costs of health care provision but also resulting in reduced economic outputs due to, for example, lower employee productivity, higher absence rates and early mortality.

A national review of inactivity estimated that physical inactivity costs Kent £306 million and 300 premature deaths each year.¹

Over recent years evidence has been building on just how important being physically active is. There is an established causal link between physical activity and at least 20 different chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems.²

The UK faces an epidemic of physical inactivity. Over the last half century, we have simply stopped moving—in our schools, our work places, our towns and cities—and how we travel between them. In all human history, we have never been so inactive. But the human body was designed to move, and this slowdown in activity has seen significant consequences to our health and economy.³

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Although being physically active has been evidenced to provide several benefits mentioned above, where the activity is undertaken also influences the benefits gained. The natural environment not only supports increased physical activity but when compared with exercising indoors, exercising in natural environments was associated with greater feelings of revitalization, increased energy and decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression. Participants reported greater enjoyment and satisfaction with outdoor activity and declared a greater intent to repeat the activity at a later date.⁴

The levels of physical activity that people can achieve are directly influenced by several factors including the following:

- Distance to a green space;
- Ease of access;

¹ (UK Active, 2014)

² (Department of Health/Chief Medical Officers, 2011)

³ (All-Party Parliamentary Commission on Physical Activity, 2014)

⁴ (Thompson Coon, et al., 2011)

- Size of the green space in terms of levels of population use;
- Connectivity to residential and commercial areas;
- Attractiveness, including biodiverse habitats and absence of graffiti and litter;
- Range of amenity - the wider the range of facilities the more likely the space is to be used by different kinds of people.⁵

Access to and physical activity in the natural environment also has a greater impact on improved mental health than physical activity alone.⁶ Viewing nature can also help recovery from an acute stressor.⁷ Often the activity takes place with family, friends or in a group, increasing the mental health benefits gained through social interaction.

The benefits of green exercise happen almost immediately. Only 5 minute of exposure improves self-esteem and mood, irrespective of gender, age and health status.⁸

ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

Increased walking and cycling for journeys (termed 'Active Travel'), allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives, bringing a range of health and wellbeing benefits and reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and outputs of climate change gases.

Road transport is responsible for around 30% of Kent's greenhouse gas emissions.⁹

The UK All Party Commission on physical activity recommends measures to design physical activity back into our everyday lives, stressing the importance of Active Travel as regular daily transport and planning developments and infrastructure to be 'health-checked' to ensure prioritisation of walking, cycling and physical exercise. Vision for Kent's prioritises tackling physical and mental health disadvantage through physical activities, including walking and cycling and better and more accessible walking and cycling infrastructure, especially to help regenerate deprived areas.

Active children do better. Physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development, it increases cognitive outcomes and school attainment and improves social interaction and confidence.¹⁰

⁵ (Grant, Bird, & Marno, 2012)

⁶ (Pretty J. e., 2005), (Thompson Coon, et al., 2011)

⁷ (Brown, Barton, & Gladwell, 2013)

⁸ (Barton & Pretty, What is the best dose of nature and green exercise for improving mental health? A multi-study analysis, 2010)

⁹ Kent Environment Strategy (2016).

¹⁰ (All-Party Parliamentary Commission on Physical Activity, 2014)

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The Marmot Review¹¹ highlighted that the fair distribution of health, wellbeing and sustainability are important social goals and that health and wellbeing is influenced by a wide range of factors. These include community resilience, the built environment and the local economy as well as the wider environment. Sustainable places and communities are one of the Marmot Review's policy objectives, recognising the importance of good quality open and greenspace in tackling health inequality. However, availability and quality of access to greenspace is not evenly distributed, with those in deprived urban areas often having less access to health-improving greenspace; perhaps five times fewer public parks or green space.¹²

Health and wellbeing outcomes have historically been poorly integrated with spatial planning, an issue recognised in Kent's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) (Sustainability Chapter). This leads to the creation of places which do not support people in improving their health through regular activity through walking or cycling, or which contribute to poor health through high levels of road pollution, for example.¹³

In 2015, Public Health England published analysis of Kent's performance on health inequalities against The Marmot Review¹⁴ objectives. Overall, Kent scored significantly worse than the England average for 'Utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons'.¹⁵ There is also great inequality between different areas of Kent. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation combine data drawn from seven domains¹⁶ producing an overall deprivation score for geographic areas. The Kent JSNA recommends focusing efforts on these areas as this will have greatest impact on reducing health inequalities.

Transport related air pollution impacts most on the disadvantaged with increased risk of respiratory diseases and other illness. People in the 10% most deprived areas in England experience worst air quality, suffering for example 41% higher concentrations of nitrogen dioxide than the average.¹⁷

Kent overall is performing worse than the England average for two public health indicators, however, the Kent average hides local disparities, all but two of the districts

¹¹ Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review) (2010)

¹² (Jarrett, et al., 2012)

¹³ (Barton H. , 2009), (Building Health Foundation, 2009)

¹⁴ Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review) (2010)

¹⁵ 2013/14 figures. (Kent Public Health Observatory, August 2016)

¹⁶ Income, employment, education, skills, health, crime, housing and the environment,

¹⁷ (Walker, Fairburn, Smith, & Mitchell, 2003)

are performing worse than the national average for at least one of these indicators, further details are included in the 'Policy and Literature Review', part of the supporting documents available online and on request. The ROWIP can contribute to improving these figures; reducing excess weight in adults and those killed and seriously injured on roads.¹⁸

The number of people who cycle to work in Kent is decreasing, contrary to this decline in Kent, cycling to work has increased in Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells. Cycling to work is lowest in Gravesham and Sevenoaks, at less than 1%, and highest in Canterbury at 2.7%. However, all Kent districts are below the South East average of 2.9% and Kent is 1.7%.¹⁹ Concerted action is required to reverse this trend.

There are 36 areas in Kent where air pollution exceeds the Government's objectives. Public Health England estimates that in 2010 this led to a mortality burden of 745 premature deaths and 7436 life years lost for Kent as a whole. The highest mortality burdens were in Thanet and Canterbury, followed by Maidstone.²⁰ Active Travel not only has a positive impact on health and wellbeing, but can contribute towards reducing traffic congestion and road traffic air pollution.

A lack of routes, poor availability of information about routes, concerns over safety and the speed and convenience of motorised transport can all act as barriers to people choosing Active Travel.²¹ People cycle more when there is cycle infrastructure and separation from traffic. Furthermore, findings from the 'Walk this Way' project also recognising the importance of information provision, signage and good quality paths especially in areas of need.²² The ROWIP will seek to address barriers, to better promote the existing network and work in partnership with planning authorities and developers to create well-designed, accessible environments to encourage people to walk and cycle.

Supporting cycling to work leads to lower staff turnover (greater staff retention).²³

¹⁸ (Public Health England, Kent Profile, 4th July 2017)

¹⁹ (Kent County Council, 2013, Cycling to Work Census 2011)

²⁰ (Public Health England, 2014) Thanet 90 premature deaths, Canterbury 81 and Maidstone 75.

²¹ (Lee & Moudon, 2004), (Kent County Council, 2017, Active Travel Strategy (draft))

²² (Heron & Bradshaw, 2010)

²³ (Raje & Saffrey, 2016)

KEY FINDINGS – PRIORITIES AND NEEDS

The ROWIP has a significant role in delivering the health and wellbeing priorities and needs, and can contribute to redressing some of the spatial planning deficiencies and health inequalities throughout Kent in the following ways:

Identified Need	Evidence	Potential ROWIP Objectives
<p>Support measures to tackle health issues through increasing physical activity</p>	<p>UK is becoming less active and in human history we have never been so inactive, this has seen significant consequences in our health and economy.</p> <p>Physical inactivity causes chronic health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes & mental health problems.</p> <p>Improved physical and mental health benefits and being physically active in green space. Participants reported greater enjoyment and satisfaction with outdoor activity and declared a greater intent to repeat the activity in the future.</p> <p>Levels of physical activity in green space are improved by close proximity, better access, connectivity and an attractive environment.</p>	<p>Prioritise encouraging physical activity especially in those districts where uptake of this is lower than the England average (Dover, Gravesham and Thanet) and where diabetes and cardiovascular conditions are higher than the England average (Shepway, Swale, Thanet, Gravesham, Dartford).</p> <p>Providing a basic resource for community-based activities, such as walking for health and local walking groups, thereby not only improving health, but also fostering social cohesion.</p> <p>Within these districts, but also in pockets of poorer health within less health deprived districts, deliver improvements in priority areas to increase Active Travel, to improve green access networks and connectivity and to encourage recreational activity.</p> <p>Support promotion activities to increase Active Travel and recreation activities in areas of poorer health.</p> <p>Improve network links to access areas of green space including Country Parks and other ‘Honey Pot’ sites to provide gateway to wider network to increase leisure and recreational activity.</p>

<p>Active Travel</p>	<p>Increased walking and cycling for journeys (termed 'Active Travel'), allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives, bringing a range of health and wellbeing benefits and reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and outputs of climate change gases.</p> <p>The UK All Party Commission on physical activity recommends measures to design physical activity back into our everyday lives, stressing the importance of Active Travel.</p> <p>Active children do better. Physical activity is essential for healthy growth & development, it increases cognitive outcomes and school attainment & improves social interaction & confidence.</p> <p>The number of people who cycle to work in Kent is decreasing.</p>	<p>Integrate Active Travel into planning, support district councils and influence partner authorities.</p> <p>Work with developers to ensure Active Travel routes are incorporated, to link to other networks and transport hubs and to ensure routes and green spaces are attractive.</p> <p>PROW network to provide a motorised traffic-free network which improves safety and encourages Active Travel uptake.</p> <p>Increasing sustainable and 'Active Travel' through PROW providing safe walking and cycling routes for short journeys, creating links through towns and urban areas and to the wider countryside.</p> <p>Develop and promote recreational routes to introduce people to Active Travel.</p>
<p>Support measures to address health inequalities</p>	<p>Kent overall is performing worse than the England average for two public health indicators.</p> <p>There are 36 areas in</p>	<p>Support measures to address health inequalities, prioritising those areas of greatest inequality.</p> <p>Improve access to the natural environment and greenspaces particularly in those areas where</p>

	<p>Kent where air pollution exceeds Government's objectives.</p> <p>Public Health England estimates that in 2010 this led to a mortality burden of 745 premature deaths and 7436 life years lost for Kent as a whole.</p>	<p>existing access to greenspace is low and where there is poor health, using the PROW network as alternative green areas for Active Travel and recreation.</p> <p>Support reduction of air pollution, particularly in those area where levels are high, and measures of deprivation and health is poor (see also Active Travel section).</p>
<p>Modal shift to cycling and walking to reduce road air pollution</p>	<p>36 areas in Kent where air pollution exceeds the Government's objectives.</p> <p>The number of people who cycle to work in Kent is decreasing.</p>	<p>Modal shift to cycling and walking, especially for short journeys, to help keep towns moving at peak flow times.</p> <p>The PROW network can provide traffic-free alternatives to on-road routes, which can encourage people to travel by cycle or foot.</p> <p>Providing traffic-free walking and cycling routes to schools, to improve health and wellbeing, reduce congestion and air pollution.</p> <p>Improving and upgrading PROW to increase cycling, especially in urban areas to support modal shift for short journeys.</p>
<p>Safe travel</p>	<p>The ROWIP can contribute to reducing England Public Health figures for those killed and seriously injured on roads.</p>	<p>Maintain the PROW network to support safe and easy travel.</p> <p>Work in partnership to provide new and upgraded routes in areas of evidenced need and to improve safety.</p>
<p>Better environment</p>	<p>36 areas in Kent where air pollution exceeds the Government's objectives.</p>	<p>Increased cycling and walking and reduced congestion improves air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Green corridors also actively ameliorate</p>

		air pollution and provide important habitat connections for wildlife.
Tackling deprivation & disadvantage	Availability and quality of access to greenspace is not evenly distributed, with those in deprived urban areas often having less access to health-improving greenspace; perhaps five times <u>fewer</u> public parks or green space.	<p>Improving health disadvantage by providing access resources in areas of high health inequality, in areas of deprivation and where access to greenspace may be limited.</p> <p>Increasing walking can be a particularly effective and low-cost way of increasing physical activity.</p> <p>Encourage Active Travel to schools, through promotion and route creation, particularly where there is a high level of childhood obesity or deprivation affecting children.</p> <p>Enabling access beyond the urban areas (where there are generally the highest levels of health deprivation) to the wider countryside and coast, providing connectivity to nature and cultural landscapes.</p> <p>Providing free-at-the-point-of-use resource facilities for exercise, thereby removing barriers for economically disadvantaged communities.</p>
Delivering Kent's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment sustainability themes	Poor planning leads to the creation of places which do not support people in improving their health through regular activity through walking or cycling, or which contribute to poor health through high levels of road pollution.	<p>Remove barriers to Active Travel and recreation and promote routes and opportunities.</p> <p>Work with partners to support implementation of health improvement initiatives, such as Walking for Health and GP referrals, for example through route accessibility improvements.</p> <p>Support volunteering in greenspace to support health and well-being.</p> <p>Promote access to natural environment, biodiversity and heritage.</p>

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