

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 11 January 2017

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)

SUBJECT: Delivering Core Paths and Active Travel Routes

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update PPRC Members on recent and proposed work to improve East Lothian's core path network and cycle routes for the benefit of all users, and how this has been delivered.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the PPRC Members note and consider the content of this report.
- 2.2 That Members note stakeholder involvement in identifying and helping to take forward path improvement initiatives and the benefits these can bring to local communities.
- 2.3 That Members continue to support the development of the walking and cycling network, and take opportunities to assist with the enhancement of the path and active travel network for the future.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report summarises the path development, active travel and awareness-raising work that has been undertaken in East Lothian to date, and details the ongoing and future work proposed, working in partnership with: including but not limited to East Lothian's Area Partnerships and other community groups and interest groups, including East Lothian Local Access Forum, East Lothian Cycle Forum and East Lothian Volunteer Path Wardens.

EAST LOTHIAN PATH DEVELOPMENT: CONTEXT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 3.2 East Lothian has a long history of walking routes and rights of way, which took people to and from the mines and fields, and along old trade routes from the harbours. East Lothian Council had an exemplary record in asserting rights of way and access management, and has always been at the forefront of access provision, recording, maintaining and protecting its right of way network.
- 3.3 Building from this strong tradition East Lothian Council has developed a connected network of core paths and active travel routes for walking, cycling and horse riding, for people of all ages and abilities, around the county, and long-distance routes of national significance connecting across our borders and further afield.

Benefits of the path network

- 3.4 A well managed and maintained path network provides many significant benefits at low cost:
- Promotes and encourages physical activity, health and wellbeing;
 - Promotes sustainable transport, enabling people to access their local amenities and the wider countryside on foot or by bicycle rather than by car, with the associated environmental benefits: helping meet carbon reduction targets and reduce vehicles on the roads;
 - Connects communities, promoting social inclusion and social interaction, benefitting people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds;
 - Attracts visitors, promoting tourism with the associated economic benefits;
 - Can facilitate green networks and connectivity of green spaces within and between urban areas and the countryside, which is beneficial for both people and biodiversity.

East Lothian's Sustainable Paths Network Strategy

- 3.5 East Lothian's Sustainable Paths Network (SPN) Strategy, developed in 1998, included the following objectives to benefit all user groups (walkers, cyclists, horse riders) of all ages and abilities:
- To develop a series of local path networks, to serve local communities and which can be promotable and attractive to visitors, resulting in economic benefits;
 - To develop an East Lothian Coastal Corridor Route in an environmentally sustainable way, to provide a highly attractive,

easily promoted recreation resource (this route became the John Muir Way); and

- To identify and develop in a phased manner, strategic path links to connect the Coastal Corridor Route with inland countryside and attractions such as the Lammermuir Hills (and to connect communities).

- 3.6 These objectives were achieved over the subsequent years. Following the adoption of the SPN Strategy, consultations were undertaken in many communities and new path networks were created around many towns and villages. By building over six kilometres of new paths and installing signposts, wide networks of paths were created. These were promoted with leaflets for many of the towns and villages. During that time the John Muir Way was also developed by building over 10 kilometres of new paths to link together existing paths and rights of way.
- 3.7 The principles of the SPN Strategy continue to guide path development to this day.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

- 3.8 The access rights introduced by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 further encouraged walking, cycling and recreational access, and the opportunities to manage public access. The Act also gave local authorities various statutory duties and powers, including duties to produce a Core Paths Plan, to uphold access rights, and to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Please see Appendix 1 for the type of access issues that the Council has received and how they were resolved, working closely with East Lothian Local Access Forum and taking their advice as required.

Other national policies guiding path and active travel development

- 3.9 In addition, the guiding principles set out in the National Planning Framework (published in 2009) and Scottish Planning Policy (revised in 2014) promote Green Networks through the development of a Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). Development of East Lothian's path network continues to deliver the objectives of CSGN by improving connectivity between communities and connectivity of green spaces alongside paths which benefit both people and wildlife.
- 3.10 Paths are a key component of East Lothian's Green Network Strategy, and will become of even greater importance and significance in areas of significant future housing development.
- 3.11 The vision of Scotland's National Walking Strategy is: "A Scotland where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, enjoys walking in the outdoors and where places are well designed to encourage walking".
- 3.12 The aspiration of Scottish Government's Cycling Action Plan for Scotland is: "By 2020, 10% of everyday journeys taken in Scotland will be by bike".

- 3.13 Path and active travel development contributes to the Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework: increasing physical activity for an active Scotland.

DEVELOPMENT OF EAST LoTHIAN'S CORE PATHS NETWORK

- 3.14 The objectives of East Lothian's Sustainable Paths Network Strategy, and the existing path network, provided a strong foundation for development of East Lothian's Core Paths Plan. A statutory duty under the Land Reform Act, the Core Paths Plan was adopted by Council in December 2010 following three rounds of extensive public consultations across the county. In 2010 the Plan included 326km of paths plus 31km of aspirational routes selected by local public demand and working with landowners.
- 3.15 The extensive core paths network in East Lothian today (Appendix 2) resulted from this process of public engagement. Today there are 340km of existing core paths in East Lothian, and 17km of aspirational core paths.

Construction of the 'aspirational' core paths

- 3.16 The 'aspirational' core paths shown in the 2010 East Lothian's Core Paths Plan were routes which did not exist on the ground but were highlighted by local people as 'missing links'. These guided path development work over subsequent years, with Outdoor Access Officers achieving the construction of 14km of 'aspirational' core paths around the county (see Appendix 3) in response to public demand.

Improvements to and upgrading of existing core paths

- 3.17 The Land Reform Act gave local authorities statutory powers to maintain core paths. The Outdoor Access Officers have undertaken considerable improvement works to many existing core paths around the county, to improve the path network for the benefit of walkers, cyclists, horse riders, disabled users and land managers who wish to manage public access on their land.
- 3.18 These core paths were selected by local demand, importance and levels of use, in consultation with East Lothian Local Access Forum, and are shown in Appendix 3.
- 3.19 Path improvements included upgrading path surfaces, improving drainage, improving signage, installing bridges, reducing barriers such as stiles, steps or steep gradients, or realigning routes in conjunction with the landowner. Many changes are made to the path network each year to improve accessibility. Small changes, such as replacing a stile with a gate or attaching 'grip strips' to bridges, can make a great deal of difference to the accessibility of paths for all users.
- 3.20 Between 2000 and 2016 more than £2.2 million has been spent on path development in East Lothian with two thirds of this funding coming from external sources.

- 3.21 Core path upgrades and improvements were funded by Council capital funding allocated for “Core Paths Development”, with additional match funding from Sustrans Community Links, SEStran, Paths For All, community councils, landowner contributions, Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme, Nortrail, Scottish Natural Heritage, Tyne Esk Leader, Viridor, Scottish Rural Development Programme and many others.

East Lothian’s core paths network today

- 3.22 The core path network currently consists of 340km of paths, which include:

- the John Muir Way, now part of the 215km national coast-to-coast route across Central Scotland from Dunbar to Helensburgh;
- Haddington – Longniddry Railway Walk, which forms part of National Cycle Route 76;
- Pencaitland Railway Walk (National Cycle Route 196); and
- Whitecraig – Smeaton Railway Path, which forms part of National Cycle Route 1 connecting Dalkeith to Edinburgh.

- 3.23 The majority of core paths, other than the Railway Walks, are located on privately owned land and were constructed or upgraded with the goodwill and involvement of land owners and land managers. This has also assisted with the drawing down of external match funding, which requires that any proposed works have the agreement of the landowner.

- 3.24 The Outdoor Access Officers also work with planners and developers to ensure that outdoor access and path networks are protected and enhanced in new housing developments wherever possible.

Promotion of the core paths network

- 3.25 East Lothian’s Core Paths Plan is available to view on the Council’s website and a booklet containing core paths maps and other information about public access in East Lothian is available to purchase in all East Lothian libraries.

- 3.26 Many paths leaflets are available to view and download on the Visit East Lothian website, although some of these are now in need of updating to show the new paths that have been built. The walking and cycling leaflets are generally the most popular downloads on the Visit East Lothian website.

DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED-USE PATHS AND CYCLEWAYS FOR ACTIVE TRAVEL

- 3.27 In addition, new shared-use cycleways (for walking and cycling) have been constructed around the county by Roads Services on Council owned roadside footways and verges, with the particular aims of connecting communities and facilitating cycling for active travel, with

input and advice from East Lothian Cycle Forum. The Sustrans Community Links Fund has contributed, with match funding, to a number of new shared-use paths and also feasibility reports. See Appendix 4.

- 3.28 The multi-use core path network is a key component of East Lothian's cycling network, providing additional opportunities for active travel. 'Active travel' is walking and cycling for the purpose of everyday journeys such as getting to work, school or local amenities.
- 3.29 In 2015/16, external funding from Sustrans Community Links for active travel projects totalled £511,000. The total combined Council and Sustrans spend on active travel improvement projects in 2015/16 was £706,000. Some projects were 100% externally funded by Sustrans as detailed in Appendix 4.

PATH/ACTIVE TRAVEL IMPROVEMENT OUTCOMES

East Lothian Plan outcomes

- 3.30 Development of paths and active travel routes contributes to several outcomes in The East Lothian Plan Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023, including:
- **Outcome 3:** We are able to adapt to climate change and reduced finite natural resources: People walk, cycle and use public and community transport more often, and travel less in cars;
 - **Outcome 6:** In East Lothian we live healthier, more active and independent lives: People are more physically active;
 - **Outcome 8:** East Lothian has high quality natural environments: We have quality, attractive greenspace that is valued and enhances the wellbeing of our communities.

East Lothian's Active Travel Improvement Plan

- 3.31 Active travel is a key element of the East Lothian Local Transport Strategy (currently in preparation). An Active Travel Improvement Plan is currently being developed, which will supplement the Local Transport Strategy. The aims of the Active Travel Improvement Plan include:
- To help meet the Scottish Government's climate change target of the decarbonisation of road transport by 2050, with significant progress by 2030;
 - To facilitate and promote walking and cycling as part of everyday journeys;
 - To mitigate against the potential of increased car journeys resulting from new housing developments, particularly in the west of the county;

- To ensure that active and sustainable travel are integral to maintaining the county as an attractive and desirable place to live and work now and for the future; and
- To maintain East Lothian as a sustainable travel destination.

INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL PEOPLE IN ACHIEVING IMPROVEMENTS TO PATHS AND ACTIVE TRAVEL

East Lothian Path Wardens

- 3.32 In 2011, Countryside Service formed a Path Warden Scheme of volunteers who assist the Council by monitoring and undertaking basic maintenance and upgrading work on core paths in their local area. There are currently 45 Volunteer Path Wardens looking after the majority of East Lothian's designated core paths, undertaking over 2000 hours of voluntary work in 2015/16. The "East Lothian Path Wardens" are now a constituted group and registered charity. The scheme is recognised as a national model of best practice in path maintenance, now being rolled out in other local authority areas.

Working with Area Partnerships: 'East Lothian On The Move'

- 3.33 Working with colleagues in the Sustainable Transport Officers' Group, the Outdoor Access Officers and Sustainable Travel Officer successfully obtained funding from the Scottish Government's 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' (SCSP) fund (£84,863 in 2015/16, and £91,000 in 2016/17), for improving active and sustainable travel in East Lothian.
- 3.34 Entitled 'East Lothian on the Move', this project was undertaken in partnership with all six Local Area Partnerships, and involved Local Action Planning through focused community engagement. Following public consultations, Area Partnerships created and prioritised Action Plans to deliver active and sustainable travel improvements in their respective areas, which had been suggested by local people. These Area Action Plans will be incorporated into and form key components of the Active Travel Improvement Plan and Area Plans.

Delivering improvements requested by local people

- 3.35 The Outdoor Access Officers and Sustainable Travel Officer have been key to the success of the 'East Lothian on the Move' project by working closely with Area Partnerships and attending their meetings. They have facilitated the majority of the successful outcomes of this project by creating a direct link between identifying the improvements local people wish to see in their communities and delivering projects on the ground.
- 3.36 In 2015/16 the Area Partnerships utilised 'seed funding' to deliver a range of locally relevant active and sustainable travel solutions as part of the 'East Lothian on the Move' project, which had been identified and requested by local people. These included cycle racks, speed-reactive traffic signs, core path/cycleway surface improvement, and a core paths leaflet for Fa'side Area to encourage local people to explore their local

path network. Additional seed projects are planned for 2016/17 with the SCSP funding.

Projects delivered in 2016/17 by working with the Area Partnerships

- 3.37 **Fa'side:** Already during 2016/17 work has been undertaken and completed on core paths in the Fa'side Area in response to feedback from local people via the Fa'side Area Partnership. Core paths 129 and 190 near Macmerry and New Winton, and core paths 156 and 152 at Tranent, connecting from Elphinstone Road to Polson Park, have been upgraded and improved to make them more accessible to a wider range of path users. Positive feedback has been received from local people. A Path Audit of all Fa'side's core paths is currently being undertaken by local groups and volunteers, to inform future improvement work.
- 3.38 **Haddington and Lammermuir:** Various projects are already underway, including resurfacing 200m of a local path in Gifford, building 125m of tarmac pavement on the Gifford to Bolton path, resurfacing 80m of the River Tyne Path in Haddington, changing steps to a ramp to improve disabled access in Gifford, and installing cycle racks in Gifford and at Amisfield Walled Garden.
- 3.39 **Preston, Seton, Gosford:** A core paths leaflet for the area is currently being prepared. The leaflet will inform residents about their local path network and encourage visitors to explore the area.
- 3.40 **North Berwick Coastal:** Resurfacing and improving drainage are underway on Coffin Lane in Aberlady, and improvements have been made to the John Muir Way at Archerfield.
- 3.41 **Dunbar:** A considerable amount of work is being undertaken to the Cliff Top Trail (part of the John Muir Way) at Dunbar, including new railings, steps and improvements to the surface.
- 3.42 **Musselburgh:** Following Fa'side's good practice example, a Paths Audit of the Musselburgh Area is now being organised, and various improvements are planned to improve cycling in Musselburgh.
- 3.43 The Outdoor Access Officers and Sustainable Travel Officer continue to work closely with the Area Partnerships to help them deliver paths and active travel improvements in their local area. The prioritised Area Action Plans will guide path and cycleway development over the coming years.

ACHIEVEMENTS FOLLOWING PATH AND ACTIVE TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Increases in walking and cycling

- 3.44 **Walking and cycling to school:** Investment in safer routes to school, Walk to School Week campaigns and promoting the benefits of active travel around schools have resulted in East Lothian being the top performing local authority in Scotland for the past 8 years, with almost 90% of school pupils using active travel modes, compared to the national

average of 49.7% (source: Sustrans National HUS Survey Report May 2016).

- 3.45 **Increased use of paths:** Path counters have been installed on many of the new or upgraded paths around communities, and they show a marked increase in use following upgrading work. For instance, visitor numbers on the Knowes right of way increased from 1,500 to over 7,000 a year after it was upgraded. Path counters on the Gifford path network showed a similar increase in use. A questionnaire undertaken in Gifford after the development of the local path network showed that more people were walking as a result of the improvements.

Benefitting local people

- 3.46 **Elphinstone – Ormiston Core Paths Improvement Project:** Following consultation with local people in Fa'side area, core paths connecting Elphinstone to Ormiston were improved to a more durable path surface in 2015/16. Feedback from local people and observation of path use has revealed more inclusive use of these paths by people of all abilities, with local people now able to access the routes on mobility scooters and on bicycles with children. Positive feedback has been received from the local community and path users on the newly improved path surfaces. This project was funded by ELC capital funding (£45,000) and additional external match funding of £206,000 drawn down from Sustrans Community Links 2015/16.

Walking tourism and economic benefits

- 3.47 The economic benefits of walking in Scotland are well documented. East Lothian, with its spectacular coast and countryside and accessible path network, on Edinburgh's doorstep, is increasingly a visitor destination for walking. The recent East Lothian Visitor Survey (2015) highlighted the importance to East Lothian's economy of walking tourism, and showed that East Lothian's walks and scenery are key attractions to visitors.
- 3.48 **John Muir Way:** Following the launch and national promotion of the John Muir Way coast-to-coast route, a commissioned report by Scottish Natural Heritage (2015) estimated increased visitor numbers and economic benefits from people walking the John Muir Way. The East Lothian Visitor Survey (2015) showed that the John Muir Way is one of East Lothian's most popular attractions visited. There is anecdotal evidence from local people and local businesses along the John Muir Way in East Lothian of increased numbers of visitors and economic benefits, including in Prestonpans and East Linton.

FUTURE WORK

Working with Area Partnerships

- 3.49 Working closely with colleagues in the Sustainable Transport Officers' Group and the Area Partnerships, improvements to the path network and active travel infrastructure will continue to be delivered, based on the prioritised Local Area Action Plans developed with the Area Partnerships.

Improving the path network

3.50 Work will continue with colleagues and volunteers to ensure the path network is maintained to a high standard, to ensure it remains accessible to as many users as possible and provides a good experience for local people and visitors to the area. **The following specific improvement works are scheduled for the current financial year 2016/17:**

- As a result of East Lothian Council's good history of working with Sustrans to improve the cycle network, Sustrans recently offered us 100% funding to undertake further works on the National Cycle Network in East Lothian:
 - £250,000 has been awarded by Sustrans Community Links 2016/17 to upgrade a further (4km) section of the Pencaitland Railway Walk (National Cycle Route 196) from the Woodhall road crossing point near Pencaitland, eastwards to its terminus near West Saltoun;
 - It is anticipated that up to £200,000 of Sustrans funding will be spent to upgrade the North Sea Cycle Route (National Cycle Route 76) past the Cement Works at Dunbar;
- Tranent to Ormiston: completion of the new shared-use path/footway, including a direct connection onto the Pencaitland Railway Walk (NCN 196) at Puddle Bridge;
- Glenkinchie: progressing a new path to link Glenkinchie to the Pencaitland Railway Walk.

Implementing the Active Travel Improvement Plan

3.51 A key proposal of the Active Travel Improvement Plan is the proposed Segregated Active Travel Corridor (SATC): an active travel 'super highway' which will connect communities across the county from Dunbar to Musselburgh and beyond to Edinburgh. The SATC will facilitate and encourage active travel commuting, and will form East Lothian's primary 'spinal' active travel route with connections to the settlements along the route.

The Local Development Plan

3.52 East Lothian is facing considerable challenges and demands on transportation as a result of the levels of anticipated housing growth. Never has there been greater pressure and greater need to develop and promote active and sustainable travel solutions.

3.53 Opportunities will continue to be taken through the development process, working with planners and developers to improve paths and routes for walking, cycling, recreational access and active travel in new housing developments, and to ensure connectivity with the wider path network and links to amenities such as train stations. The Segregated Active Travel Corridor is included in East Lothian's Local Development Plan as

an intervention seeking developer contributions. Sustainable travel is an integral element of the planning process moving forward. Well planned recreational paths through green spaces in urban areas benefit housing developments and are attractive to potential residents.

Promotion and tourism

- 3.54 Opportunities will continue to be explored to promote East Lothian's path network and the John Muir Way to visitors, with the economic benefits that tourism brings to local communities.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The content of this report makes a significant contribution to a number of policy areas, in particular the Council Plan in growing our communities, and the Council Single Outcome Agreement, particularly outcomes 3, 6 and 8.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - None
- 6.2 Personnel - None
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Typical examples of the types of access issues received and resolved by East Lothian Council.
- 7.2 Appendix 2: Map of East Lothian's Core Paths (September 2016).
- 7.3 Appendix 3: Map of Core Paths which have been upgraded or improved in recent years, including 'aspirational' core paths which have been constructed.
- 7.4 Appendix 4: Sustrans Community Links match funded new shared-use paths/cycleways and Paths Feasibility report in recent years.

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APPENDIX 1

Typical examples of the types of access issues received and resolved by East Lothian Council

General summary:

160 access issues have been received in total since 1st April 2009. 155 of these have been resolved by the Outdoor Access Officers.

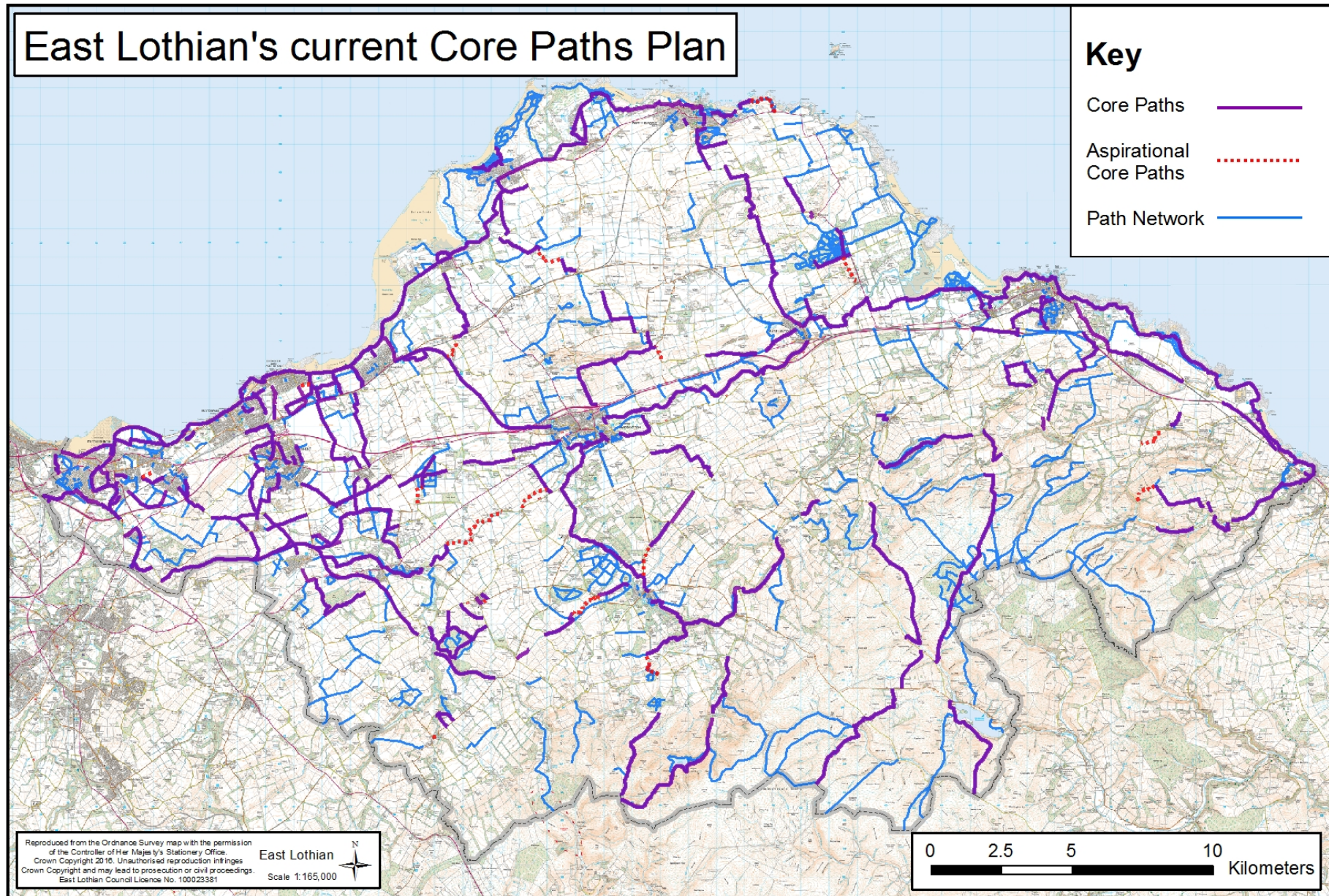
Of the 5 unresolved access issues, ongoing monitoring is taking place, and work is ongoing with the landowners for 2 of these issues.

10 access issues have been received so far during 2016, and 9 of these have been resolved to date.

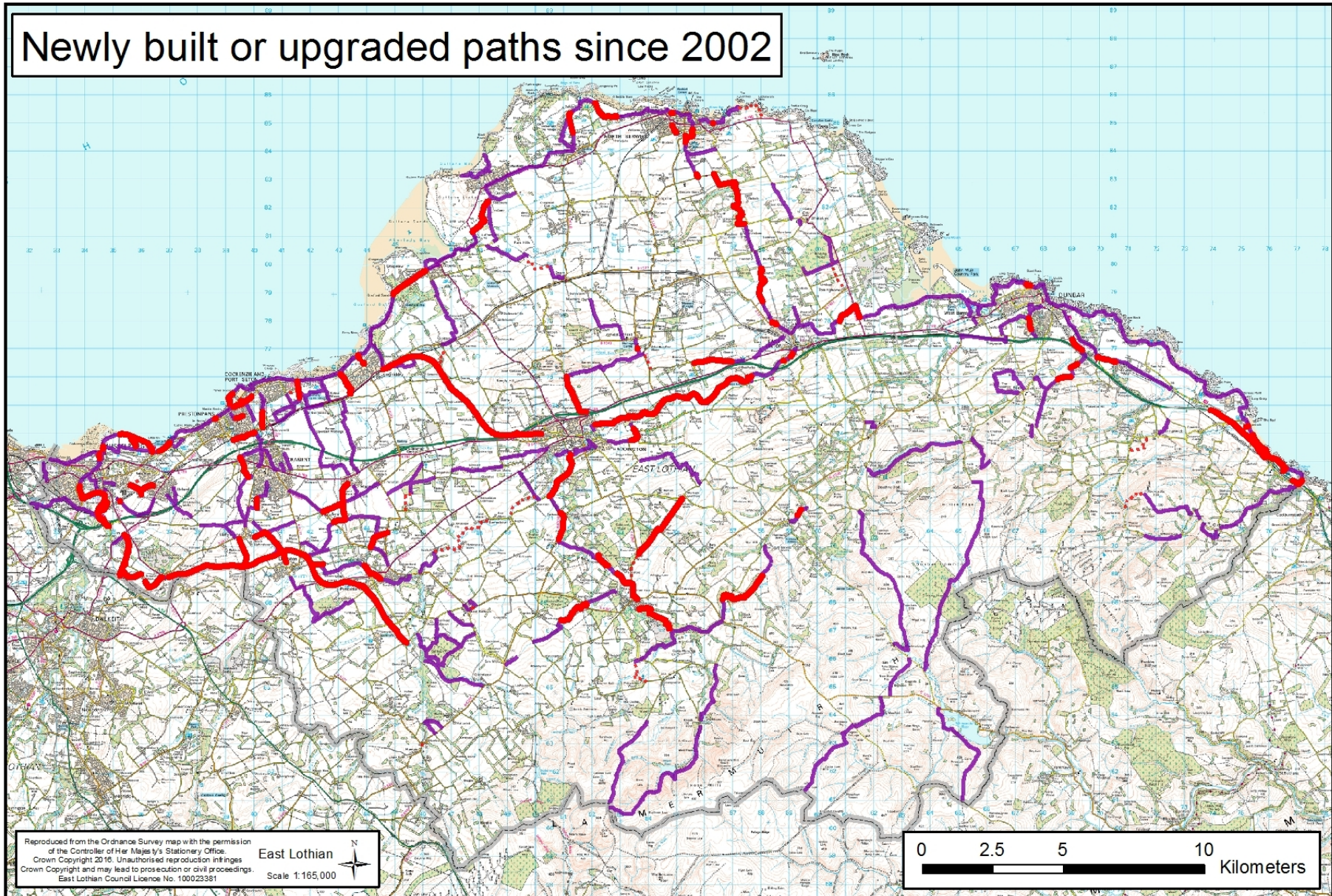
Examples of types of access issues received and resolved:

Type / location of access issue that was reported	Category of access issue
Locked gate on woodland track	Obstruction
Unauthorised closure of core path/right of way by developer	Obstruction
Irresponsible dog walking on farmland	Behaviour
Locked gates at golf course	Obstruction
Core path ploughed up	Obstruction
Irresponsible dog walking causing distress to horses	Behaviour
New signs on access tracks in estate not Land Reform Act compliant	Information
Horse rider injured following incident involving cyclist in estate	Behaviour

APPENDIX 2: Map of East Lothian's Core Paths (December 2016)



APPENDIX 3: Map of Core Paths which have been upgraded or improved in recent years (highlighted in red), including 'aspirational' core paths which have been constructed



APPENDIX 4

Sustrans Community Links match funded new shared-use paths/cycleways and Paths Feasibility report in recent years:

- Meadowmill Footbridge improvements 2011/12.
- Paths Feasibility Study 2013/14.
- Broxburn to Whitesands (NCN 76) (near Dunbar) constructed in 2014/15.
- North Berwick to Dirleton: Phase 1 constructed in 2014/15; Phase 2 underway in 2016/17 scheduled for completion in October 2016.
- Archerfield to Gullane constructed in 2015/16.
- Gullane to Luffness to be delivered within financial year 2016/17.
- Tranent to Ormiston: Phase 1 completed in 2014/15; Phase 2 completed in 2015/16; Phase 3 to be delivered within financial year 2016/17.
- Surface improvements and lighting to the Haddington – Longniddry Railway Walk (NCN 76) at Gateside, Haddington: 2015/16 (100% Sustrans Community Links funded).
- Upgrade to lighting system on National Cycle Route 1 at Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh, in 2015/16.