

AGENDA ITEM NO 6

Slow Ways Initiative & Tavistock Town Council

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide information about the Slow Ways initiative, which is mapping and promoting walking routes nationally and in the local area, and to invite support.

Detailed information

Slow Ways is an ambitious initiative to create a comprehensive network of walking routes that connect all of Great Britain's cities and towns as well as thousands of villages.

700 volunteers completed a first draft mapping of the Slow Ways network during the Spring 2020 lockdown. The organisers are now looking for 10,000 volunteers to help walk, review, record and improve the Slow Ways routes.

Each Slow Way route connects two neighbouring settlements; routes can be combined for longer journeys. As far as possible routes are direct, off-road, safe, accessible, easily navigable and pass through settlements with services and public transport hubs. The Slow Ways network – through its unique approach to plotting, mapping and recording routes – aims to make it easier for people to see, plan, enjoy and share walks between places.

Slow Ways will be used for both recreational and functional purposes, aiming to offer reasonably direct walking options backed by trusted route information. This will include walking to visit friends and family, travelling to meetings, going to shops, pilgrimages, charity fundraisers, or travelling to school or work.

The average Slow Way route in England and Wales is 12km while in Scotland it is closer to 20km. Hundreds of routes in urban areas are under 5km.

To give you more of an idea of how Tavistock integrates into the wider network of 7000 routes, volunteers have made walking routes between Tavistock and Callington, Launceston, Lydford, Princetown and Yelverton.

Benefits

A large number of **potential co-benefits** have been identified by volunteers, partners and backers in developing the Slow Ways initiative.

These include, but are not limited to:

Health benefits

- improving health and wellbeing by encouraging physical activity for short trips and longer journeys
- helping to mitigate the causes and effects of Covid-19, being part of recovery plans, and offering public transport alternatives
- creating opportunities for people to connect with friends, family and colleagues

Environmental benefits

- reducing pollution and emissions through active travel options as an alternative to carbon-based transport
- contributing to the decarbonisation of local and national transport systems and helping to address the climate emergency
- connecting people to 'nearby nature', heritage, places and communities

Transport benefits

- encouraging modal shift – supporting more people to walk more of the time, for more purposes
- providing safe, direct and enjoyable routes between neighbouring towns and cities
- linking active travel to public transport hubs
- promoting greater use of existing paths, trails, networks, and the connections between them

Economic benefits

- saving people money by encouraging an inexpensive form of travels
- spreading economic activity by inspiring visits to, and stays in, more places

Community benefits

- sharing a positive, empowering, rewarding and inclusive project at a time of national crisis and recovery
- offering a source of community engagement, focus, identity and pride
- boosting the equity of use of path networks
- increasing the use of currently under-used paths – thereby keeping them open and valued

Following the early success of the initiative, Slow Ways CIC has been established to formalise its status. It is currently being supported by Paths for All, the Pilgrim Trust, Sport England, Urban Good and the Kestrelman Trust. The initiative is working in collaboration with Ordnance Survey and ESRI.

Slow Ways routes and associated information will be made freely available through the Slow Ways website. Versions of the network's data will be published for other organisations to use, and will also be released

through the OS Maps platform.

Further Information

Web – slowways.uk

FAQ – [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Newsletter – slowways.uk

Twitter – [@SlowWays](#), [#SlowWays](#)

Contact – hello@slowways.uk

Recommendation

That Tavistock Town Council supports the Slow Ways initiative by:

1. Promoting Slow Ways for local residents to walk, review and use routes.
2. Considering, within the Sustainability and Environment Working Group, where new paths would strengthen the Slow Ways network between Tavistock and nearby towns and villages.