



THE CENTURION WAY

PROJECT UPDATE FOR STAKEHOLDERS

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This update is provided by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and distributed to the local community, landowners, user groups and interested parties who may wish to be informed of the progress of the Centurion Way extension from West Dean to Cocking.

Background

The Centurion Way is a shared use path that runs along the former Chichester to Midhurst Railway Line, which finally closed to all rail traffic in 1991. A shared use path, open to the public, to Lavant was first established in the mid 90's, and in 2015, the South Downs National Park Authority opened a 2km extension to the route taking it as far as the West Dean Tunnel.

Planning permission has been granted to complete a further 5km extension of the path to link to the South Downs Way at the Hilltop car park, Cocking (overview map attached). The construction of the extension is a challenging undertaking, requiring considerable resources and co-ordination with many landowners and will take a number of years to achieve. We have secured sufficient Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to commence work on elements of the southern section of the route from West Dean, opposite the College entrance, to the bridge and footpath connection at Hat Hill in Singleton. We aim to begin construction towards the end of 2022 and are hoping to complete a new usable section in 2023.

We've already undertaken preliminary works including ecological and arboricultural surveys. We will be undertaking further enabling works this year including vegetation clearance and tree removal work. The arboricultural surveys identified hazard trees and ash trees showing signs of dieback, that need to be removed for public safety. A small number of trees on the path alignment also need to be felled prior to path construction. Subsequent re-planting is planned to provide a net gain in trees once the route is completed. The new planting will increase the diversity of stock and the habitat's resilience in the long term.

February Tree Thinning. Manual felling at the southern end of Singleton Station is to commence in early February. Thinning will remove 25% of the tree cover, specifically Ash and Sycamore of varying age and size. Restocking with 400 whips of various species will maintain the woodland corridor habitat and improve biodiversity.

The tree thinning will be carried out with the intention of limiting the visual impact and maintaining the shape of the treeline as seen from local houses. There will be limited felling on the slopes of the southern embankment, which is home to the compartment's most mature trees and form the most obvious feature of the treeline's southern aspect. Ultimately, this work will improve the health, age and diversity of the trees in this location in line with good woodland management practice and will improve its visual amenity.

Right of Way Improvements. Our Area Ranger Team has carried out improvements to the Singleton-Hat Hill footpath (which will link to the CW extension by foot), replacing

dilapidated stiles with gates and replacing a bridge over the watercourse. The improvements have made the footpath accessible at grade and thus more usable by the community. There are no further plans currently to undertake any surface improvements to the path or to alter the status of the path to permit additional modes.

We are working closely with both landowners, and tenants and will continue to consult with stakeholders as the project develops.

Tunnel Surveys. The first year of three, Tunnel Habitat Surveys are complete and the findings report due in spring. The West Dean tunnel is the priority, as this would enable a seamless connection between the existing CW and the extension. If unfeasible, we will discuss alternative route options to connect the two sections with the landowner, tenants and stakeholders.

Finally, the West Dean Estate has given consent to create a link to Motor Road behind West Dean School bypassing the existing steps. As a first step, our Area Ranger Team will undertake some vegetation clearance in addition to that already undertaken as part of the ash dieback clearance in 2021.

<p>The future route remains closed to the public. In the interest of public safety, the South Downs National Park Authority, Edward James Foundation and National Trust urge the public to not trespass onto private land and not place themselves at unnecessary risk during the construction works.</p>
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Centurion Way - Phase 2 Extension Overview

