

AGENDA

WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Thursday, 16 February 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Roger Clark, Nicholas Hampshire, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Richard Palmer, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen (Vice-Chair) and Corrie Woodford (Chair).

Quorum = 3.

Pages

Information about this meeting

Members of the press and public can listen to this meeting live. Details of how to join the meeting will be added to the website by Wednesday 15 February 2023.

Recording and Privacy Notice

Swale Borough Council is committed to protecting the security of your personal information. As data controller we process data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

This meeting may be recorded. The recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy and may be published on the Council's website. By entering the chamber and by speaking at a meeting, whether in person or online, you are consenting to being recorded and to the recording being published.

When joining a meeting online, your username will be visible to others in attendance. In joining the meeting you are consenting to us processing your username. You may use a pseudonym as your username but the use of an inappropriate name may lead to removal from the meeting.

If you have any questions about how we look after your personal information or your rights under the legislation, please email dataprotectionofficer@swale.gov.uk.

1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Visitors and members of the public who are unfamiliar with the building and procedures are advised that:

- (a) The fire alarm is a continuous loud ringing. In the event that a fire drill is planned during the meeting, the Chair will advise of this.
- (b) Exit routes from the chamber are located on each side of the room, one directly to a fire escape, the other to the stairs opposite the lifts.
- (c) In the event of the alarm sounding, leave the building via the nearest safe exit and gather at the assembly point on the far side of the car park. Do not leave the assembly point or re-enter the building until advised to do so. Do not use the lifts.
- (d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or friends.

The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the meeting held on Thursday 1 December 2022 (Minute Nos. 466 – 474) as correct records.

- 5. Kent County Council Community Services Consultation 5 - 6
- 6. Matters arising from previous meetings 7 - 22
- 7. Public Forum
- 8. Local issues to be raised
- 9. Matters referred to Area Committee by Service Committees
- 10. Matters referred to Service Committee Chairs for consideration

Issued on Tuesday, 7 February 2023

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about the work of the Area Committees, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

This page is intentionally left blank

Kent County Council Community Services Consultation

Kent County Council (KCC) has launched a public consultation on its Community Services which runs from 17 January to 26 March 2023.

The consultation proposes changes to the way we use our buildings to deliver some of our community services. We invite your feedback on our proposals as part of this consultation.

Why are we proposing changes?

The Council has experienced big increases in costs and has less money to spend. So we need to look ahead and do things differently to make sure we can still help residents in the years to come. Whilst ensuring effective support for residents who need our services, we need to:

- tackle the rising costs of maintaining our many buildings
- find savings, so we can balance the budget
- reduce our carbon footprint to meet our Net-Zero ambitions.

What services are included in the proposals?

Children's Centres and Youth Hubs, Public Health Services for Children and Families, Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, Community Learning and Skills, and Gateways.

What are we proposing?

- Having fewer permanent buildings, meaning that some of our buildings would close - we want to keep buildings in areas where they are needed the most
- Co-locating more of our services, meaning more than one service would be available from some of the buildings you might visit
- Continuing to deliver some services by outreach, which means they do not take place in a dedicated or permanent space, but move around to when and where they are needed
- Ensuring residents can continue to access services and information online.

Our proposals have been designed by considering where there is greatest need for our services.

Find out more and share your views

Please visit www.kent.gov.uk/communityservicesconsultation to find out about the proposals for your area. You can respond to the consultation by using the online questionnaire (or download the Word version).

On our website you will also find a list of our drop-in events where you can come along to talk about the proposals and ask your questions. In Swale the drop-in events are:

- Sheppey Gateway at Sheerness Library, 38-42 High Street, Sheerness, ME12 1NL Monday 27 February 10am-1pm
- Milton Court Children's Centre, Brewery Road, Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, ME10 2EE Thursday 23 February 4-8pm

KCC's Kent Communities Programme Team

communityservicesfeedback@kent.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Western Area Committee meeting: Progress on Matters Arising – 16 February 2023

No.	Item	Background	Update on actions
1.	Youth provision in villages	<p>At the June 2021 meeting the lack of youth provision was raised as an issue. At the request of the Area Committee a project proposal was taken to the September 2022 meeting for VIBE youth workers to engage with young people. The proposal was agreed by Members and it was also agreed to run the project twice at a cost of £6,930 in total. The funding has been transferred to Brogdale CIC. An update on the progress of the project will be reported at the February 2023 meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Mike Baldock, the KCC Divisional Member for Swale West went through the list of Section 106 funding for Youth Services in the Western Area. Some discrepancies were noted and Councillor Baldock suggested it would be useful to monitor where the money was being spent. It was agreed that the Chair would write to KCC to find out what the Section 106 funding had been spent on for Application 16/501266/FULL Newington and report back to the Western Area Committee at the next meeting.</p>	<p>The Vibe update report – Appendix 1.</p> <p>KCC have been contacted – awaiting a response</p>
2.	Bredgar and Hartlip Conservation Area Reviews.	<p>The Area Committee requested that quotes be obtained for Conservation Area Reviews for Bredgar and Hartlip. These were considered at the September 2022 meeting and it was agreed to allocate £8,400 for Peter Bell to carry out the CA reviews. The Graphics Officer would be producing the documents.</p> <p>The Conservation & Design Team have advised that the review work for the Bredgar & Hartlip Conservation Areas</p>	<p>The Heritage Consultant has agreed to undertake the work within the allocated budget, and the Conservation & Design Team shall be organising a site walkabout with the consultant and key stakeholders soon.</p> <p>The final document will be issued by the consultant by end</p>

		<p>would be commissioned in the New Year. The consultant would need to confirm if he has capacity.</p> <p>This way the allocated funds can be spent by May 2023, however, due to the resource crunch and a number of other projects (AP1) being higher priority, the Conservation & Design Team recommend that the officers present the review work to Planning and Transport working group/committee for adoption in the Autumn of 2023.</p> <p>Members requested that officers presented the review to the Western Area Committee in the Autumn of 2023, in addition to the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group.</p>	<p>of May 2023, to be followed by public consultation soon after, Dates for the follow-on steps to be confirmed.</p> <p>The Director of Resources advised that as the work is commissioned and ongoing, SBC is committed to pay for the works. Therefore, it can be paid for when the work is complete at the end of May 2023.</p>
3.	Walking and cycling project	<p>In March 2021 funding was allocated to a walking and cycling project in the Western area. The Active Travel Coordinator attended the June 2022 meeting and there was a discussion on potential routes.</p> <p>A virtual workshop took place on 18 October 2022 where the Active Travel Coordinator received input on potential routes from Area Committee Members and Parish Councils. The Active Travel Coordinator provided a written update on the project at the December 2022 meeting.</p>	Please see latest update – Appendix 2
4.	Bus services	<p>A resident of Bredgar raised an issue about reduced funding for bus services and how this impacted residents in villages. She said that there was no incentive for residents to use buses which would reduce the number of cars on the roads.</p> <p>Cllr Bonney commented that KCC did not take the opportunity to use the Kent Science Park Section 106 funding to make a subsidised bus service viable by providing a timetable that would have benefitted the residents in the villages.</p>	See Appendix 3 for the response from KCC.

		<p>The Chair of the Western Area Committee wrote to KCC about the effect the cuts to bus services would have on residents living in villages in the Western Area and request that the timetabling and routes of remaining services were reviewed as they were not viable. The attached response was received and circulated to Members.</p>	
5.	Refurbishment of King George V Toilet Refurbishment	<p>Cllr Sarah Stephen brought a proposal to the September 2022 meeting to consider the refurbishment of the King George V toilet. The Western AC agreed to allocate £5,054 to this project. They requested that an alternative hard-wearing wall covering as an alternative to white roc be used.</p> <p>The Buildings Manager advised that the project is planned to take place during the winter months when King George Park would be less busy. The contractor has been asked to investigate an alternative wall covering instead of white roc, as per the Area Committee comments.</p>	<p>The Buildings Manager confirmed the work is planned to take place January/February 2023 when the park is not busy. After consulting with Cllr Sarah Stephen, the contractor has been instructed to use 10cm x 20cm flat white tiles with a double band of pale grey tiles to break up the 'whiteness'.</p>
6.	Flooding in rural areas	<p>Councillor Mike Baldock raised the issue of flooding in rural areas. Due to changing weather patterns, drains were not able to cope and this was now a problem for some residents in the Western area. Members felt that this matter was beyond KCC and should be taken up with the Government as a proper funding package was needed to deal with the issue.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Environment Committee has requested this matter goes to Environment Committee to seek their endorsement for him to write to Central Government.</p>
7.	Reduction in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the effect in the Western area.	<p>Councillor Richard Palmer spoke about the reduction in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the effect in the Western area. The Chief Executive said that she had met with the Chief Inspector who acknowledged this was an issue in Kent.</p> <p>It was agreed the Chair will formally contact the SBC representatives on Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to</p>	<p>Councillor James Hall, one of the SBC representatives on the CSP raised this matter at their January 2023 meeting. He confirmed the PCSOs who cover the Western area are:</p>

		request that they take up the matter of no PCSOs in the Western area with the CSP.	<p>Kirsty Linge – Lower Halstow, Bobbing & Iwade, Newington, Hartlip & Upchurch (07772226114)</p> <p>David Ansbro – The Meads, Borden & Grove Park (07772226090)</p> <p>Councillor Hall advised that PCSOs are likely to reduce and there is no current plan for recruitment. In December 2022 15 new police officers started with a further cohort expected February 2023.</p>
8.	Donation to foodbanks that provide a service to residents in the Western Area.	<p>Members agreed to allocate £10,000 of the 2022/23 funding to The Swale Foodbank and The Bus Shelter Foodbank.</p> <p>Both foodbanks agreed to meet to meet the conditions set out below and £5,000.00 has been transferred to each of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members would like the funding to benefit residents who live in the Western area rather than other parts of Swale. They hope this is possible as the foodbanks operate a voucher scheme so it should be possible to identify where people live. The Western area covers the following wards (Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow, Borden and Grove Park, Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch, The Meads, West Downs and Woodstock). 	<p>Swale Foodbank reported they have so far spent £1,542.87 of the funds allocated. They have helped 93 people across the whole of the Western area, the busiest location of those wards was Newington, Hartlip and Upchurch.</p> <p>The Bus Shelter Foodbank update is to follow.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of residents in the villages do not have cars and bus services have been either reduced or removed. Members asked if some of the funding be used to deliver food parcels either to residents houses in the Western area or to pick up points in the villages. 	
9.	Proposal to support residents having difficulties purchasing alternative heating products.	<p>Area Committee members considered a proposal to help homeowners in the Western area with reducing their energy costs. SBC provided a Fuel and Water Home Advisor Service, managed by the Swale charity Children and Families. One of the services provided by the Advisor was to give households advice on ways to reduce their use of energy and thereby reducing costs. As part of the service, energy efficient packs were given out which contained items like radiator reflectors, draft excluders, LED light bulbs and timers. The content of the packs were tailored to the needs of the household. Each pack costed approximately £50. The proposal was to allocate funds to the Fuel & Water Home Advisor Service via the charity Children and Families so the Advisor could provide energy efficient packs to households in the Western area.</p> <p>Western Area Committee agreed to allocate £4,523.13 to the Fuel and Water Home Advisor Service, via Children and Families, to provide homeowners with energy efficient packs to be given out after advice was given.</p>	<p>A progress report will be circulated to Area Committee Members in March 2023.</p> <p>A leaflet has been produced for Members to distribute to residents. It will also be circulated to Parish Councils so they can make residents aware.</p>
10.	Rose Hill & Meads Woodland Management & Work Plans.	In March 2021 the Area Committee allocated funding to develop management plans. These had now been completed by an external consultant and there were £2,158.00 of funding remaining. The plans indicated if the tasks should be carried out by a contractor or a volunteer group.	The Policy & Engagement Officer will arrange for the transfer of funds when the bank details for the Meads Woodland Friends Group are received.

		<p>Two Friends groups have been formed, Rose Hill Woodland Friends Group and The Meads Woodland Friends Group. It was agreed that a Borough Councillor would sit on each Friends Group and they should provide annual updates to the Western Area Committee.</p> <p>Funding has been transferred to the Rose Hill Woodland Friends Group. Awaiting bank details for the Meads Woodland Friends Group.</p>	
11.	Heritage issues	<p>Cabinet adopted a Heritage Strategy and Action Plan on 18 March 2020. The Action Plan contains a programme of Conservation Area (CA) reviews.</p> <p>The Area Committee agreed to fund CA reviews for the areas below which are outside of the planned programme of reviews in the Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rodmersham Church Street • Rodmersham Green • Milstead • Tunstall 	<p>The current position of the Conservation Area Reviews is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rodmersham Church Street • Rodmersham Green • Milstead • Tunstall <p>The adopted versions of the Conservation Area appraisal documents are now published on the Swale Borough Council website, adoption notifications to local residents and the parish councils have been sent out.</p>



Appendix 1

Western Area Committee Youth Provision

Provision started at the beginning of November 2022, led by Adam McKinely, (Community safety warden and Vibe detached youth worker), with a team of Vibe youth workers.

The team have worked in pairs for 6 hours a week, spread over 2 or 3 evenings. They have trialled different times to target young people as they get home from school and as they are out in the evening with friends. They completed the first 6 weeks at Christmas and are currently in the middle of the second 6 week provision.

The team have taken the Vibe youth van to as many areas as possible including The Meads, Iwade, Newington, Upchurch, Hartlip, Borden, Lower Halstow, Bredgar, Tunstall, Rodmersham, Milstead, Bobbing and Bapchild.

We are continuing to visit all locations and have found places in the areas where young people gather such as youth shelters, village halls and local shops. Despite it being the winter months, and therefore not the best time of year to engage in detached work, we have been able to make connections with young people in Iwade, Newington, the Meads, and Borden, advertising on social media where our van will be. The team have set up youth meet ups for this term in Iwade, Newington and the Meads and will continue to add others. These meet ups will be focused on recording and reporting the opinions and feedback of young people in the area. We will look to get these reports to you by March.

All other areas are visited once a week. The general feedback from young people so far is that they feel overlooked or isolated as they live in villages and are unable to attend youth provision in Sittingbourne. They want somewhere for older young people to hang out, and the provision of older youth clubs. Two of the team attended the Iwade Parish council meeting on request to represent the voice of the young person and youth provision in the village, and were able to provide this feedback.

We are aware that this provision does not need to be competed until May, so we are considering taking a break after half term, and then continuing with the final 6 weeks when the weather is warmer to increase the potential of engagement with young people.

Tanya Mitchell 31/01/2023

This page is intentionally left blank

WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE – Appendix 2

Project	Walking & Cycling Project
Lead Councillors	Cllr Sarah Stephen and Cllr Monique Bonney
Lead Officer	Adrian Oliver, Active Travel Co-ordinator
Objective	Use South-West Swale resources, the Villages, historical sites, food producers, ancient woodlands, nature reserves and war graves to name some, and create walking and cycling experiences similar to those created for Faversham
Budget	£13,000
Status	In Progress

Thank you to everyone who has continued to provide input into the development of these Walking & Cycling Trails.

All the ground-truthing work of the four walks has now been complete. During this process:

- lots of changes have been made to the original concept routes
- 12 fault reports have been submitted to Kent PROW
- The step-by-step guides have been created
- A theme has been created for each walk

One of the original walks – The Meads-Milton Trail has had to be dropped as so much of the walk was through residential streets, we could not find a way of making it attractive. Plus, a considerable amount of the walk was outside the Western Area. Consequently, a new walk through Upchurch and Lower Halstow has been developed linking in with the Saxon Shore Way and the England Coast Path.

Attached are the maps of the revised walking trails:

- Woodland & Duck Ponds
- Apples Galore
- In the footsteps of kings
- Birds Boats & Countryside

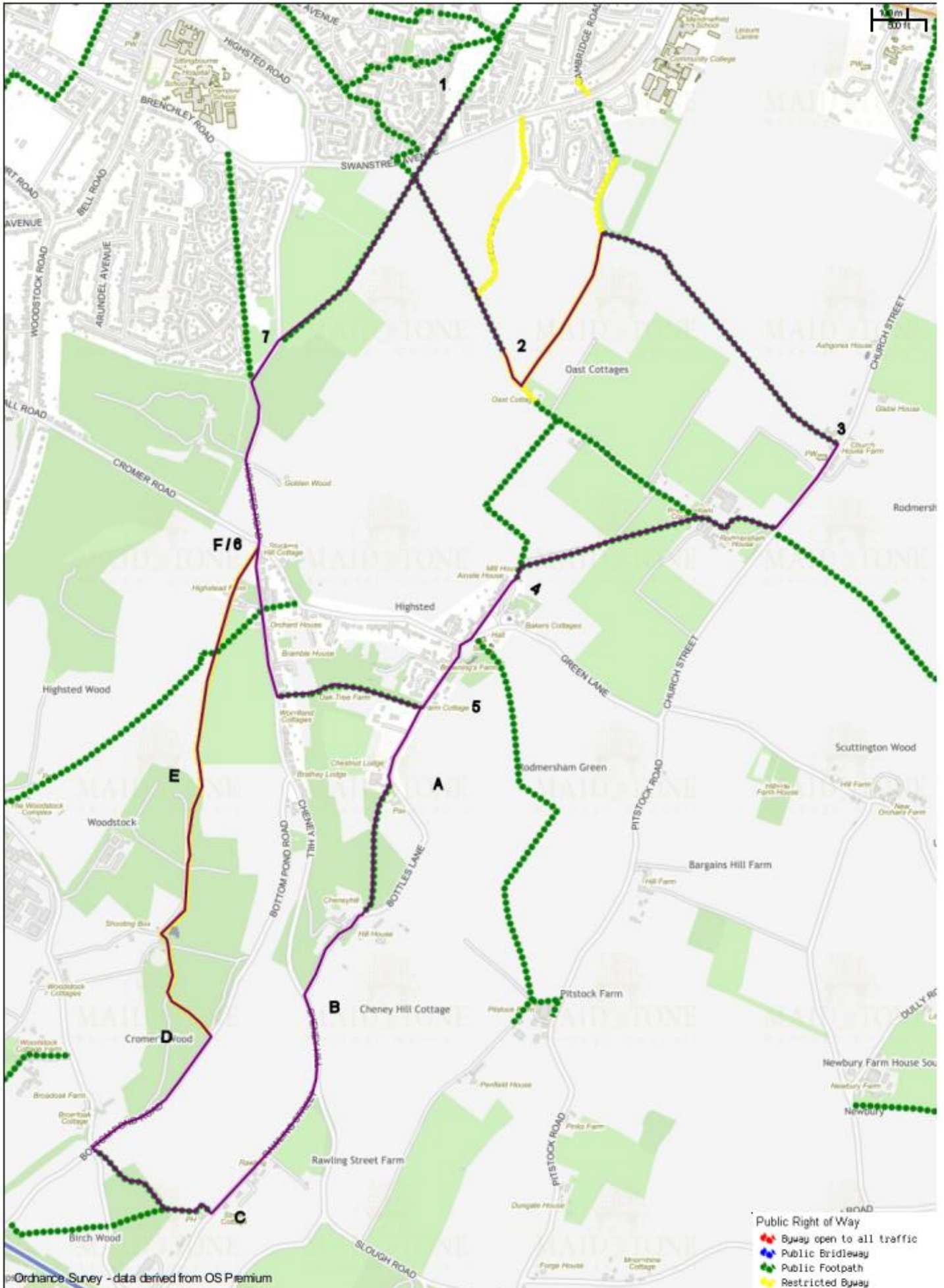
Tribal Voice Communications (TVC) work is now finished, although they will be reviewing the text and maps as we move through production.

Next stages:

- Submit trails to Explore Kent
- Work with Explore Kent to create OS Maps
- Work with Communication team on map leaflets and promotion
- Launch the walks on Visit Swale
- Print map leaflets and distribute

Distribution – Committee Members will be contacted when the map leaflets are ready to print, to ask how many copies of each leaflet they would like to distribute (this could be to homes and businesses).

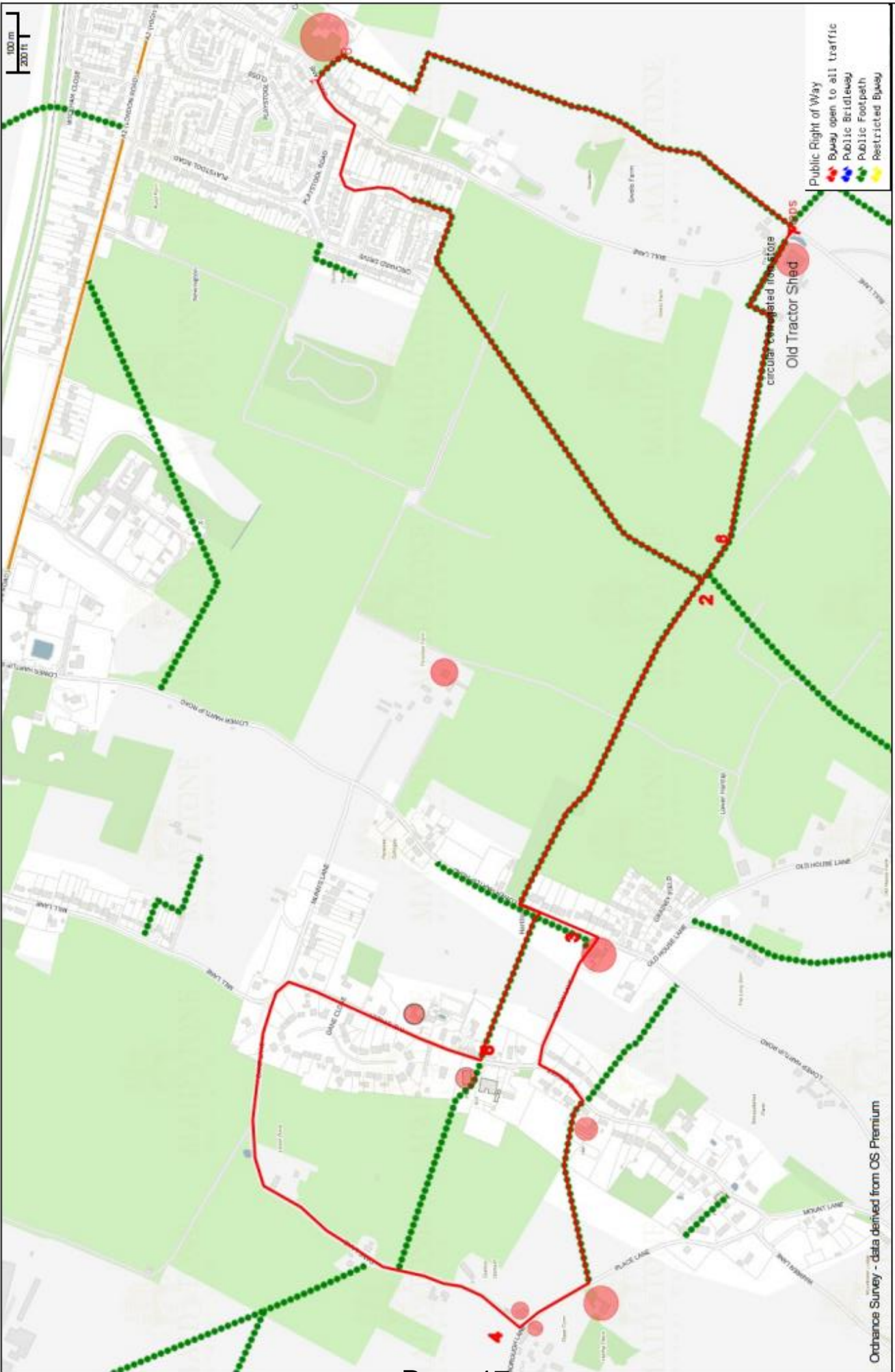
If there is budget remaining, we will work with gojauntly app to create photo walks of the trails.



Woodland Duck Ponds 310123

Scale: 1:10000

Printed on: 31/1/2023 at 12:58 PM by AdfanO



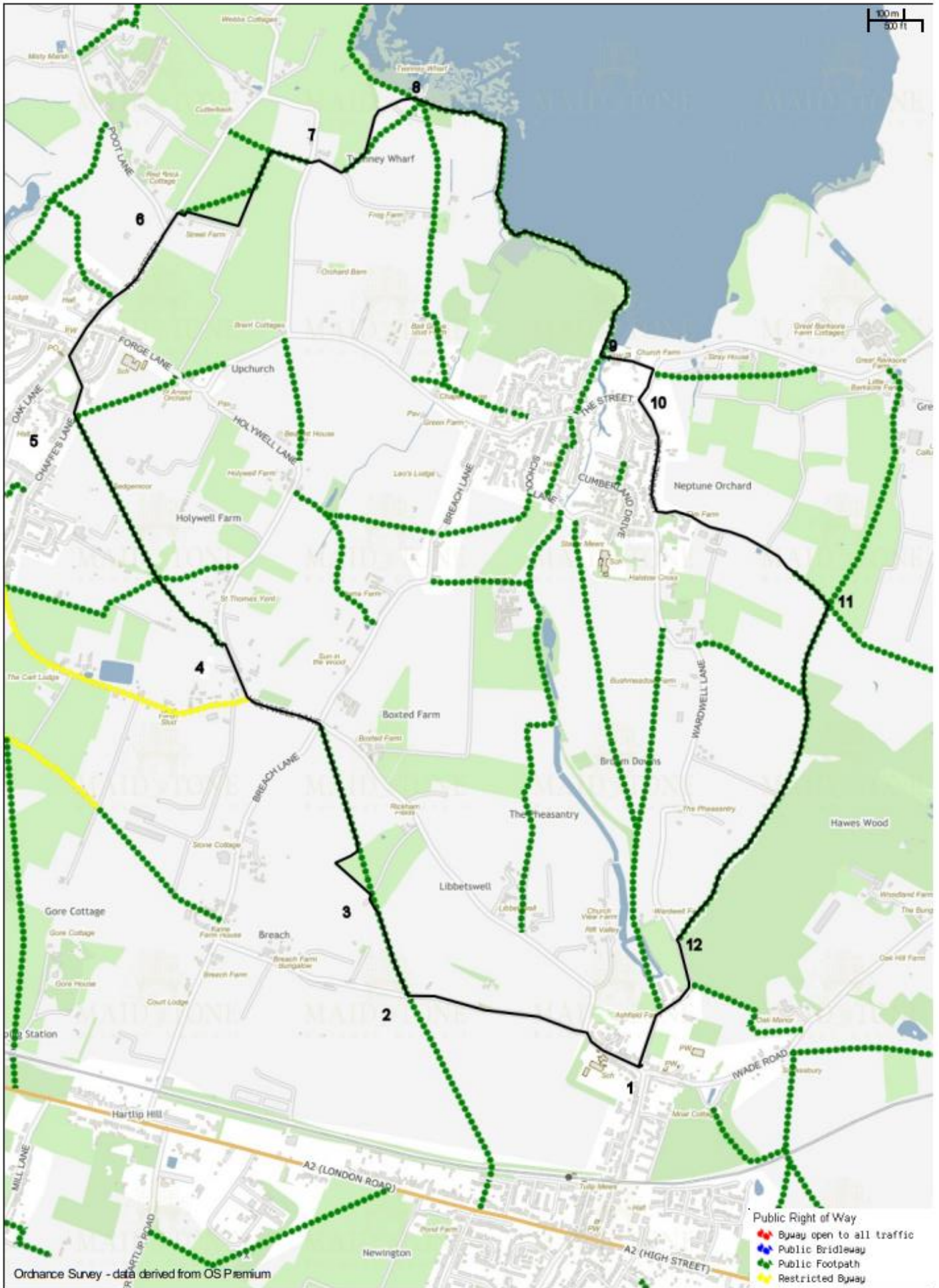
- Public Right of Way
- Byway open to all traffic
 - Public Bridleway
 - ⋯ Public Footpath
 - Restricted Byway

Ordnance Survey - data derived from OS Premium



- Public Right of Way
- Byway open to all traffic
- Public Bridleway
- Public Footpath
- Restricted Byway

Ordnance Survey - data derived from OS Premium



This page is intentionally left blank

Matters Arising

Proposed reduction of bus services in the Swale Western Area

Response from Kent County Council

Dear Cllr Corrie Woodford

Thank you for your letter dated 1 November 2022, regarding the withdrawal of subsidy for bus service 8 and, which to date has been subsidised by KCC. I am sorry that the need to reduce our bus subsidy has implications for you and will comment on the position below.

This Council has fought hard to protect its budget in this area whilst other authorities have reduced their support or stopped spending money on bus services altogether. However, as the pressure on our finances has increased, the Council has needed to make tough decisions in order to guarantee that statutory services for our most vulnerable residents can continue. The impact of this does unfortunately mean that, as a Council, we are having to consider savings measures across a whole range of services.

In the previous financial year, KCC continued to spend over £6m per year on supporting bus services which are not commercially viable to bus operators owing to the limited use that is made of them. It is understood that these services are valued by those that use them, but as the costs of providing them are increasing and their use has fallen since the pandemic, this has become an area where we can no longer sustain funding at current levels. Ultimately this is a discretionary area of spend and in order to meet our legal duty to set a balanced budget we have therefore had to reduce our financial commitment by £2.2m when setting the budget for the 2022/23 financial year.

To retain spend in this area and for the Council overall within the budget available we identified contracts for possible withdrawal using the Council's criteria for the prioritisation of services. These take account of the nature of the service, the availability of alternative services and value for money measured on a subsidy per journey basis. The approach we took and the services identified for potential withdrawal were then subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment informed and updated by a full public consultation that ran from February to April of this year.

Following consideration of the outcomes of the consultation and the updated Equalities Impact Assessments we decided to protect the funding for some services, notably the Kent Karrier Dial-a-Ride services. These services are used by some of our most vulnerable residents who through either age, disability or location are unable to use other public transport, and protecting these services meant that they can be accessed by existing users as well as those affected by other changes to bus services.

We will continue to spend £4m per year on supporting bus services, which is more than many other authorities, and we are also making funding available to support

Parish Councils and other Community groups if they want to find local solutions to transport needs in their area.

Unfortunately, whilst the Council would like to be able to protect all of the services it currently supports and indeed have additional monies that we could use to retain other buses being withdrawn by bus operators, this is simply impossible within the funding that we have available. Therefore, following extended consideration of the matter by our Environment and Transport Committee and then by Full Council, we have regrettably had to make the decision to withdraw the funding for 38 service contracts which we expect to stop operating from Sunday 12th February.

With regard to your particular comments about the provision of services carrying school children, whilst understanding the particular issues that this will create for some families, the provision of these services does, I'm afraid, fall into the same category as journeys made by other users. The need for the Council to arrange transport for school children is governed by national legislation which identifies which children are entitled to free transport to school, and if there are children with this entitlement using services being withdrawn then alternative arrangements will be made. Whilst the Council tries to support sustainable access to education through sustainable means, outside of those children with a legal entitlement this is also a discretionary activity and the Council simply cannot guarantee buses or other transport for all children in the County.

I note your comments about the use of other forms of funding in the form of money from the National Bus Strategy and other Covid support grants that have been provided by Government. Unfortunately at the time of writing the National Bus Strategy funding is yet to be secured and the rules around the use of this and Covid funding is clear that it should not be used to replace existing services except where short term support may enable services to continue on a without subsidy basis in the longer term, which would not be the case for services which have always relied upon ongoing levels of subsidy.

I am sorry that I can only explain why we have had to arrive at such a regrettable decision rather than provide hope of a different outcome.

Yours sincerely

David Brazier
County Member, Sevenoaks Rural North East Division
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Kent County Council