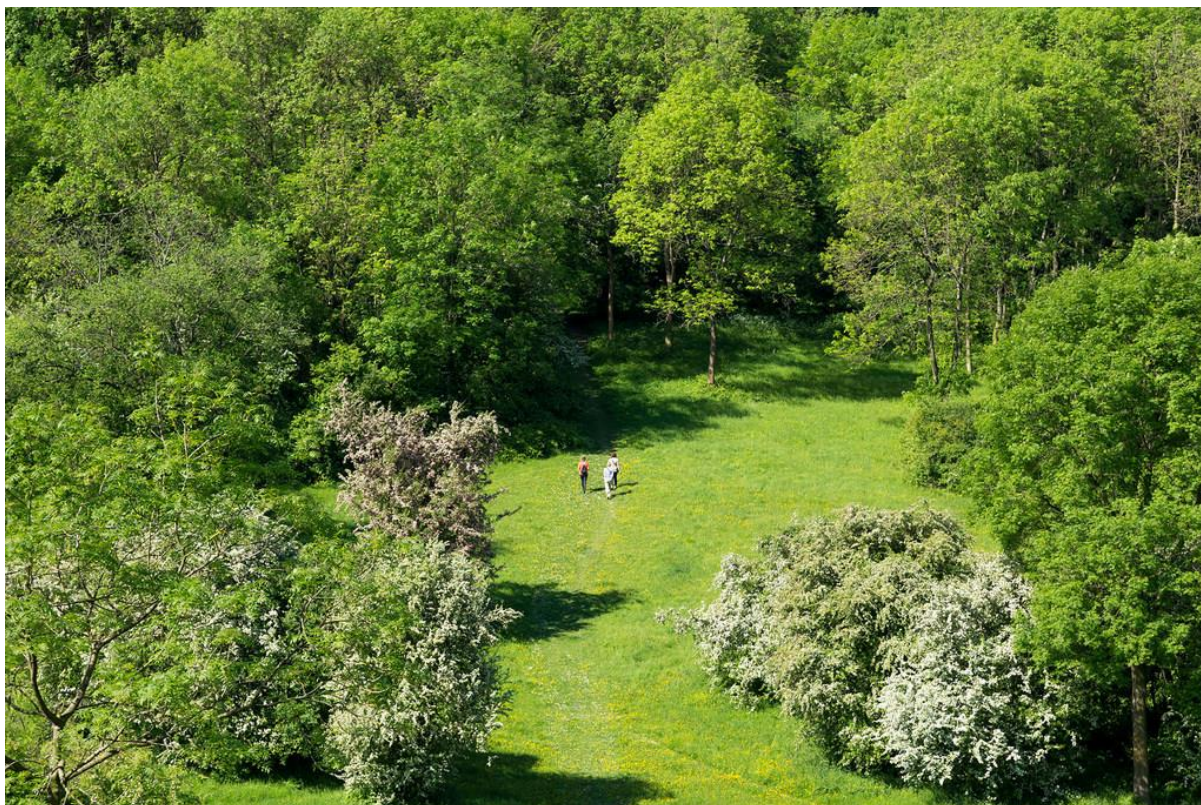


## 3D. REDUCING THE PRESSURE COMMUNITY LOCAL LANDSCAPE TRAILS



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### PROJECT AIM

Local communities are the ones that know their landscapes most intimately and there are many parts of the valley that are under-explored and contain hidden heritage. The DVLPS will support all the local communities in the valley to improve access to these areas by undertaking projects that make improvements to rights of way, create new permissive paths and develop circular local landscape trails that help introduce others to the heritage of the Darent Valley. These will be accompanied by appropriate interpretation that will encourage visitors to explore the valley away from the traditional 'hot-spots' close to the river and in the villages, to disperse the visitor pressures felt in these areas.

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### DELIVERY LEAD

Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme, but delivered by the local communities themselves.

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### LOCATION AND LAND OWNERSHIP

It is intended that every parish with a significant area within the DVLPS area will participate in this project. Communities will be encouraged to work together to develop their trails, and some trails will

serve more than one community. The trails will pass over multiple landownership, but will use predominantly public rights of way and existing permissive paths. Where feasible, communities can negotiate new permissive routes with landowners to enhance existing access.

### AUDIENCE

This project will target the local communities to plan and create the trails themselves. These may be parish or town council led, but there will be an expectation that there is the participation and involvement of the wider community. Alternatively, a local community group may be willing to lead the project. In both circumstances. A small informal Local Landscape Trail working group will be established to spearhead the individual projects.

The use of the trails will include the local communities themselves, and visitors from elsewhere within the valley, or from outside the scheme area. The trails will provide the opportunity for people to learn about the local stories that are otherwise missed by the communities, or are not included in other projects within the DVLPS.

### HERITAGE VALUE

With an area so rich in multiple layers of history it is difficult for a landscape partnership scheme to encompass these stories within its projects. The Local Landscape Trails provide an opportunity for local communities to identify and promote their local heritage within their villages and the surroundings, but also celebrate and reveal the story of their landscape to visitors.

Stories such as Percy Pilcher and the first manned flight (before the Wright Brothers) in his 'Gull' and 'Hawk' gliders from the 'knob' near Eynsford; the Vickers Airfield on Dartford Marshes; the World War II dummy airfield at Lullingstone; the ancient Filston Trackway near Shoreham; or the Westerham Valley Branch Line that ran between Dunton Green and Westerham; are all stories that deserve to be told and communicated to visitors. At the same time, these walks will draw visitors out into the wider valley, reducing the pressure on the valley floor and enhancing enjoyment of the landscape on the valley slopes.



*The George, Shoreham*



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## ISSUES AND THREATS

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Many of these stories can be easily lost if not retained and passed onto each generation. A component part of the story of the evolution of the Darent Valley landscape is in danger of going missing, particularly if the focus remains on 'big' heritage. With greater mobility amongst the population, if even just one generation misses out on being told these stories, they can be lost forever and the local connection with the landscape is irrevocably broken.

Areas such as Eynsford Riverside are extremely popular and have been so for many decades (see image below). Whilst it is positive to see visitors enjoying the Darent Valley's landscape, at its busiest times numbers exceed the carrying capacity for visitors. This does present many problems including congestion, parking issues, litter and friction between visitors and residents. Similar issues arise in many of the villages along the Darent. This isn't an issue that the DVLPS can solve, however it can help to address the problems caused by encouraging visitors to explore further afield and enjoy the tranquillity of the wider landscape. This also helps to challenge the perception of the river just being about lavender fields, country parks and Roman villas.

The valley has a good and well connected public rights of way network. However, for visitors and residents who are less confident in exploring the countryside, a lack of waymarking can cause anxiety regarding where they can go legally. With the loss of the Parish Paths Partnership in Kent, there is no longer the mechanism to support local communities wishing to undertake improvements to the right of way network themselves. There is a will and enthusiasm from local communities to be proactive in improving their access network, but no resources to support it.



*Eynsford Riverside in the 1950s*

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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This project will deliver an initiative based on the Parish Paths Partnership (P3) model for local communities to make access improvements. However, the emphasis will not just be on the network itself, but will also be to encourage promotion and interpretation of the heritage that is important to their local community. The initiative will be deliberately broad and flexible in its delivery as it is recognised that the needs will vary across the valley. Key criteria will be:

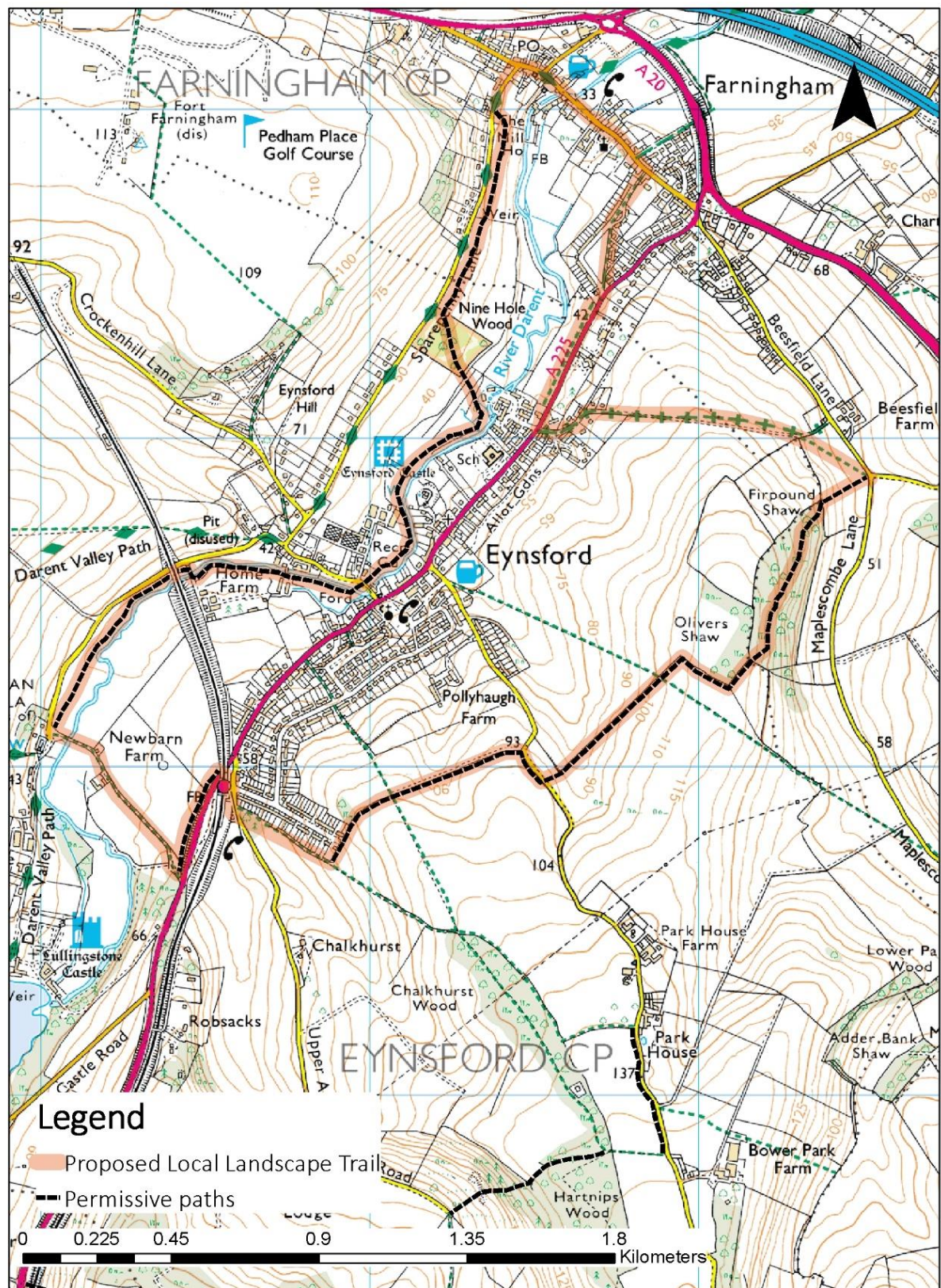
- A survey is undertaken of the rights of way within the parish area covered by the scheme.
- A circular Local Landscape Trail is identified that takes in local natural and cultural heritage and plotted.
- Identification of the need for waymarker posts, stile replacement, surfacing, steps and vegetation clearance to make the route easily usable. This can be extended to the rest of the access network within the parish if other improvements can be made.
- Kent County Council Area Public Rights of Way Officer (or in Bexley or Surrey where appropriate) is consulted on the route.
- Landownership is identified and in principle agreement gained for any new permissive path creation or replacement of access infrastructure.
- Proposals for content of leaflet guide, and if any other interpretation is proposed.
- An explanation of how local people will be involved in developing and delivering the improvements.
- In-kind contributions such as volunteering, donation of materials or expertise provided free of charge are expected.
- An explanation of how the Local Landscape Trails will be maintained in the future.

The information and images for the Local Landscape Trails will be provided by the communities, but to ensure consistency of style, the design and printing will be co-ordinated and undertaken by the DVLPS. This will ensure cost efficiency, as well as ensuring Darent Valley LPS integration.

There will be an annual application deadline and decisions will be made by a small Darent Valley Access Group consisting of KCC PROW, Explore Kent, DVLPS, North West Kent Countryside Partnership and two representatives from the DVLPS Explore Theme Group. Decisions will be made on how well proposals meet the DVLPS objectives, geographic spread of projects, amount of local community involvement and level of matching contributions.

During the development of the DVLPS some communities proposed such trails for inclusion, and these have formed the basis for the project development. Eynsford Parish Council has submitted the trail shown on the map overleaf. This proposal requires further consultation with landowners as it includes the creation of new permissive paths, and there is a need for interpretation proposals to be included. This, however will form the basis for Eynsford's proposal.





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## OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Activity	Outputs	Outcomes
Delivery of Local Landscape Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 new self-guided circular trails created.</li> <li>• 60km of new self-guided circular trails created.</li> <li>• Series of 10 Local Landscape Trail leaflets created (paper and downloadable).</li> <li>• 200 new waymarker posts installed.</li> <li>• 250 volunteer days contributed (200 unskilled, 50 skilled).</li> <li>• The signing and waymarking of 100km of rights of way is improved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local communities take a leading role in developing improved access in their area.</li> <li>• Local communities and visitors have clearly waymarked trails and rights of way network and feel more confident about exploring the countryside.</li> <li>• Greater awareness and understanding of the heritage immediately around the areas that people live.</li> <li>• Local people will have developed new skills in heritage research and rights of way improvement.</li> <li>• Visitors are encouraged to explore a wider area and reduce pressure on visitor hotspots.</li> <li>• Visitors have a greater understanding of the heritage of the Darent Valley.</li> </ul>

## PROJECT COSTS

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Element/Item	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	
Physical improvements to rights of way network		£7,000	£7,000	£6,000	£5,000	<b>£25,000</b>
Design and production of Local Landscape Trail leaflets			£5,000	£5,000		<b>£10,000</b>
In-kind contribution: waymarker posts, fingerposts, kissing gates and other hardware		£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	<b>£4,000</b>
Volunteer time - skilled		£2,500	£2,500	£2,500		<b>£7,500</b>
Volunteer time - unskilled		£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	<b>£10,000</b>
Contingency (default 10% of capital costs)	£0	£700	£1,200	£1,100	£500	<b>£3,500</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£13,700</b>	<b>£19,200</b>	<b>£18,100</b>	<b>£9,000</b>	<b>£60,000</b>



### PROJECT RISKS

Risk	How likely	Severity	Consequence	Action required
Low uptake of project	Low	Medium	Full range of Local Landscape Trails not possible.	Local communities expressed a need for this project and therefore high uptake is expected. The project will be developed with a light-handed and easy to apply initiative to reduce the administrative burden as much as possible.
Local communities unable to commit time to the project	Medium	Medium	Projects are limited in their scope and volunteer contribution is reduced.	Each parish council has a footpaths representative. Support can be provided by the North West Kent Countryside Partnership if required.
Landowners not predisposed to allowing further permissive access	Medium	Medium	Some circular routes may be difficult to deliver without the creation of new permissive paths.	Local communities are most likely to have existing relationships with landowners and are best placed to negotiate. DVLPS and other partners may be able to support if there are issues.

### TRAINING REQUIRED

- Rights of way law
- Heritage research
- Rights of way maintenance.

### MAINTAINING A LEGACY

Local communities will have a vested interest in maintaining these trails and the skills learnt in their development will support future maintenance. As rights of way, depending on the nature of the paths, the responsibility for their maintenance will either be with Kent County Council or the landowner. Where new permissive paths are created, a logical next step will be to agree a permissive path agreement, or if possible agree to the path's official dedication.

The Local Landscape Trails themselves will have a life of at least ten years. The designs of the leaflet will be made available to the local communities so that they can be reviewed, revised and reprinted when appropriate. Links will also be established with Explore Kent who will be able to provide ongoing support with access promotion if required.

### LINKS TO OTHER PROJECTS

- All other projects in the scheme.

Theme 3: Darent Valley Exploration

3D: REDUCING THE PRESSURE: COMMUNITY LOCAL LANDSCAPE TRAILS

PROJECT TIMETABLE

Activity	Year 1												Year 2												Year 3												Year 4												Year 5											
	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May												
Discussion and development of final criteria with Explore Theme Group																																																												
Guidance made available to local communities.																																																												
Path surveys undertaken																																																												
Applications received																																																												
Decisions made by Darent Valley Access Group																																																												
Work undertaken																																																												
Evaluation																																																												