

WHITE HART LINK

A CIRCULAR WALKING ROUTE CONNECTING TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN
NORTH DORSET



BUSINESS PLAN 2017-2019

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1: EXECUTIVE/MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The White Hart Link is a 50 mile/80 km walking route, which has been devised as a circular link taking in the five towns of North Dorset and the villages between. Using existing public rights of way and quiet lanes, it passes through some of the iconic countryside of the Blackmore Vale. The project will engage with local communities and businesses, and encourage initiatives to create and participate in projects involved with health, education, heritage, art and tourism. The White Hart Link will establish a uniting and sustainable project for the enhancement and enjoyment of the Blackmore Vale in North Dorset. Creating and promoting this long distance circular trail, with the support of the DCC Countryside Rangers, will involve local communities, landowners and enterprises along the route. Over the next two years, the White Hart Link will be route-marked, route improvements and ancillary projects commenced, and a website and associated publicity channels established.



2: Organisation Details

2.1: Name: White Hart Link

2.2: Address: c/o 20 Woodmill Close, Sturminster Newton, DT10 2ST

2.3: E-mail: info@whitehartlink.uk

2.4: Website: www.whitehartlink.uk

2.5: Legal status: The White Hart Link is a Community Group supported by the Three Rivers Community Partnership (3RP), which is a community charity supporting projects, events and services in and around Gillingham in North Dorset.

2.5.a): 3RP Details: Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee
Charity number 1106977
Company number 4801788
Address: Riversmeet, Hardings Lane, Gillingham, SP8 4HX

3: What the Organisation Does

3.1: Our Vision/Mission:

To raise the profile of North Dorset as a significant area of environmental and topographical interest, by creating a uniting and sustainable project, involving local communities, businesses and authorities, at the core of which is a circular walking route.

3.2: Our Aims¹:

- I. To establish a long-distance, circular walking route, known as the White Hart Link (WHL) which will connect the five towns of North Dorset and the villages between.
- II. To expand upon the underlying circular route by adding links and circuits.
- III. To define and provide a well-signed and managed walking route.
- IV. To promote the benefits of the WHL in terms of health, education, heritage, art and tourism.
- V. To provide good information for both local walkers and visitors.
- VI. To engage and involve local communities and organisations in the project.
- VII. To improve and protect the public rights of way comprising the wider WHL network.
- VIII. To promote responsible access to the countryside.
- IX. To encourage ecological/environmental activities.

¹ NB Apart from I, these are of equal importance, and are not ordered with reference to priority.

3.3: Our Objectives:

1. Inaugurate the route, section by section, with the whole route signed and walkable by September 2019.²
2. Provide information/interpretation boards along the route.
3. Form communities with local interest.
4. Help local groups to take responsibility for the project in their area.
5. Forge links to National and local Trails, heritage and art features, and local facilities.
6. Improve accessibility for walkers, for example by replacing stiles with gates.
7. Initiate management plans for each section.
8. Develop the route to the best standard through involvement of community groups and volunteers, with support from the DCC Countryside Rangers.
9. Publicise the launch of each section.
10. Create publicity materials for use at public events and for wider distribution.
11. Publicise the WHL project by attendance at appropriate public events.
12. Complete online and printed guides.
13. Develop an online presence on social media/via a website.
14. Register route with OS, for inclusion on Leisure series of Maps.
15. Raise funds for the implementation of the objectives.

3.4: Our Values are to:

- Treat everyone equally and involve all sections of society.
- Build positive relationships with all stakeholders.
- Seek to achieve the highest possible quality in everything we undertake.
- Source locally where possible and practical.
- Uphold Rights of Way Law, Practice and Procedures.
- Respect the Countryside and those who work with the land.
- Endorse the DCC 'SHIP' objectives.³
- Be environmentally responsible.
- Not knowingly bring into disrepute the name of the White Hart Link.

² See Appendix 3 for the route and parishes.

³ Safe, Healthy, Independent, Prosperous (Appendix 12)

3.5: Our Activities:

- Regular management meetings.
- Recruiting volunteers.
- Practical site work in conjunction with the Rangers, to enhance and maintain the route.
- Fundraising, both by grant applications, local fundraising opportunities and merchandising.
- Walks and activities associated with the route and its implementation, for example Launch events.
- Attendance at exhibitions/conferences etc to publicise and network.
- Liaising with media and broadcasting channels.

4: Background & Achievements to Date can be found in Appendix 4

5: Project Timeline

5.1: In the Year to September 2018

5.2: In the Year from September 2018 to September 2019

Detailed schedules/works can be found for the above at Appendix 10.

6: The Public Need, Opportunity and Benefit

6.1: What is the Public Need?

HEALTH: Approximately two thirds of adults in the UK are not doing enough physical activity⁴ therefore there is a need to encourage people to become and stay active. Walking is easy, free and accessible to nearly everyone, no matter what their physical abilities or health, providing there are safe routes. For currently inactive individuals, Public Health England has produced a report showing evidence of the health benefits that can be achieved from 10 minutes of brisk walking per day for 7 days⁵. Physical activity is essential for good health (NICE guidelines ⁶).

EDUCATION: there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding about public rights of way, access to the countryside, and the Countryside Code. There is a need for better understanding of the countryside in terms of the natural environment and importantly as a rural, working environment. There is a need to raise awareness of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).⁷

⁴ The Lancet, [Volume 380, Issue 9838](#)

⁵

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/639030/Health_benefits_of_10_mins_brisk_walking_evidence_summary.pdf

⁶ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph41/chapter/2-Public-health-need-and-practice>

⁷ https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/169085/The-Dorset-Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2011-2021./pdf/The_Dorset_Rights_of_Way_Improvement_Plan_2011-2021.pdf

HERITAGE AND ART: in addition to popular venues such as Gold Hill, in Shaftesbury, there are numerous 'hidden' assets in North Dorset, which could be accessed by the WHL, for example, Fiddleford Manor, or the Blandford Railway Arches. The biennial Dorset Arts Weeks is one of the largest Open Studio Events in the country, bringing artists and visitors together. Accessing this type of event need not only be by vehicle, and engagement with the artists, designers and makers in North Dorset at an early stage would bring an additional element to these events.

TOURISM: According to the Dorset Destination Management Plan (DMP) in 2011 North Dorset had the lowest percentage of visitors at 5% (Bournemouth had 31%)⁸ the lowest. There is a need to promote the tourism asset of Northern Dorset as different from, but complementary to the Jurassic coast. The WHL will contribute to this, as part of the attraction of the area. Bringing people into the area will increase visitor spend and support local tourism related businesses.

6.2: Who will benefit from the project	6.3: How they will benefit?
Walkers of all ages and abilities	Increase in feeling of well-being through easier access to outdoor exercise and activities.
Inactive/reluctant walkers	Encouraged to venture further by informative signs.
Local interest groups (e.g. history, art)	Increased availability of information and links to similar groups
Educational establishments, common interest groups etc	Opportunities for themed walks
Commercial enterprises; local councils	Opportunities for team building exercises through volunteering days. Start-up enterprise along route.
Local tourism related businesses	Economic benefits from increase in tourists.

6.4: How the Organisation will integrate with other activities/Providers/Charities

- Make links with Community Groups and Health professionals.
- Seek partnership with Tourist organisations and local charities.
- Facilitate links with service providers, such as community transport.
- Network at local exhibitions/conferences etc.
- Raise awareness within local branches of National Charities e.g. National Trust

7: Performance Monitoring

7.1 How the progress and benefits of the project can be assessed is set out in Appendix 11.

⁸ <http://www.creativedorset.co.uk/images/uploads/2014/09/Dorset-DMP-Evidence-base-Visitor-data-only.pdf>

8: Promotion and Brand

8.1: How & Where the Activities/Services will be promoted.

- Primarily through the website, which will enable links to other web-based sources of information
- Through Community news outlets, such as parish magazines and newsletters
- Through Dorset based publications
- By on-line media such as Facebook, Twitter etc.
- By attending seasonal events, such as May Fairs etc.
- Through Tourist Information Centres

8.2: How the project will be ‘branded’.

- By agreeing and adhering to a house-style employing standard colours/font and logos throughout all publications and the website. (Appendix 9)

9: Managing Risks

Identified Risks and their management are set out in Policies and Procedures, (Appendix 2.)

These are divided into:

- 9.1: Governance Risks (Organisation’s work and reputation)
- 9.2: Operational Risks (Practical work, events etc, for which Risk Assessments will be carried out)

10: Running the Organisation

General: The White Hart Link group is a Community Group supported by Three Rivers Community Partnership.

Patron: Councillor Pauline Batstone.

10.1: Management Team: Management is by a Committee of volunteers from interested groups, who meet regularly and whose composition is laid down in the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1.)

10.2: Committee: Chair
Secretary
Project officer
Finance officer
3RP link
Design

10.3: Accommodation: There is no accommodation registered to the White Hart Link. The address of the Secretary is used for correspondence.

10.4: Equipment: Will be recorded in an Inventory, which will be updated with new items as purchased. Storage locations will be identified.

10.5: Consumables: Will be purchased when needed.

10.6: Policies & Procedures: Policies and procedures are listed in Appendix 2.

10.7: Membership: There is no formal membership. The structure of the individuals and parties involved is shown in Appendix 5.

11: Funding and Fundraising Strategy

11.1: General Funds: NDDC has provided an initial £1,000 for 'start-up' and running costs. Donations will be allocated to this category, unless specified by the Donor to be allocated elsewhere.

11.2: Restricted/Projects Funds: The Dorset Community Innovation Fund Grant of £10,000 is for route/furniture improvements over and above statutory requirements, and community engagement and health promotion projects (including some marketing costs)

11.3: Fundraising: Applications for appropriate Grants will be submitted for specific projects or areas. Local groups will be encouraged to raise funds for additional projects along the relevant section.

12: Income & Expenditure Forecast

A spreadsheet for the Budget is included in Appendix 8. (Note: the time period for this is beyond the planned 'completion' of the WHL route, in order to allow for ongoing management/operational requirements, and will be reviewed regularly.)

13: Appendices:

- 13.1 Terms of Reference
- 13.2 List of Policies and Procedures
- 13.3 Map of area of operation of WHL and parishes
- 13.4 Background and achievements to date
- 13.5 Personnel structure
- 13.6 SWOT analysis
- 13.7 List of potential projects and costings
- 13.8 Financial: Budget/Income/Expenditure
- 13.9 House style/branding for website and publications
- 13.10 Project Timeline and Schedule of work
- 13.11 Outcomes and Outputs
- 13.12 SHIP Objectives (DCC Corporate 2017/2018)