

**SUSTAINABLE ACCESS
TO THE ICKNIELD WAY**

**A REPORT FOR THE
COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY EAST
OF ENGLAND REGION**

and

THE ICKNIELD WAY FORUM



**TFL
67 GROVE ROAD
ILKLEY
WEST YORKSHIRE
LS29 9PQ
01943 607868**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through the provisions of the Countryside Agency's Sustainable Visitor Transport Advisory Service, Transport for Leisure has been asked to provide advice to the Agency's East of England Regional Office and to the Icknield Way Forum. The advice relates to the development and promotion of sustainable access to the Icknield Way Path and to a number of heritage and visitor attractions along a 10-mile-wide corridor on either side of the Icknield Way and their accessibility using sustainable forms of transport.

The purpose is to allow the Agency and its partners to locate areas where good public transport links already exist and where improvement to sustainable access is needed thereby benefiting visitors and the venues alike.

Among key outputs required is a comprehensive report detailing existing links and identifying gaps. It is intended that the report will be used to encourage partners to work together to solve problems and to promote sustainable transport links. This would enable better access information to be made available to people without cars. This ties in closely with the CA's Diversity agenda. It is also seen as a good way of promoting the Icknield Way and recognising it as a brand.

Following meetings and discussions with Countryside Agency staff and a representative from Bedfordshire County Council representing the Icknield Way Forum, it was agreed that the report should take the form of an Action Plan with the following elements:

1. A Background to the Icknield Way Corridor project – this will summarise what has been achieved so far.
2. A Vision for the Icknield Way as a sustainable transport and tourism corridor.
3. The concept of Transport Zones along the Icknield Way Corridor – Transport Hubs and Local Nodes.
4. An audit of public transport access to the Icknield Way Path within the four Zones and priorities to deliver objectives.
5. An audit of accessible visitor attractions within the four Zones – and priorities to deliver objectives.
6. An Action Plan to deliver the Vision.
7. Monitoring progress – achieving objectives and outputs.
8. Conclusion and Recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE ICKNIELD WAY CORRIDOR CONCEPT

The 105 mile (168km) long Icknield Way Path between Ivinghoe Beacon and Knettishall Heath Country Park is remarkable for a number of reasons. It is one of the oldest walking and riding trails in Western Europe, being in constant use over a period of 4,000 years. It is also a complex route to define historically because of many variations over the ages, as travellers took different choices of routes depending on the condition of the highway, the nature of their journey and the goods they were carrying, and increasingly in the 20 and 21st centuries, motor traffic on the highway. Some sections therefore follow the authentic, prehistoric or medieval line of route; others have been devised in practical ways to avoid busy sections of main road or recent urban development.

In other words, the Icknield Way has always been a “corridor” and for this reason is admirably suited to be developed into a dual purpose route, on the one hand meeting the needs of walkers, on the other equally suitable for horse riders and cyclists, with many

parallel or braided sections, but also with many sections of track and quiet lane being used in common. This reflects both its historic and modern development and function.

A third special feature of the route is that it links two existing National Trails, both of them also of exceedingly ancient origin – The Ridgeway which links the Wiltshire Downs and the Chilterns, and Peddars’ Way – a comparative newcomer being largely Roman in origin – between the forested landscapes of Breckland and the Norfolk Coast.

This has led many people, for cogent and understandable reasons, to suggest that the Icknield Way should be regarded as a National Trail, a continuous, ancient “greenway” across the chalk uplands across central southern England from the Southwest to the East Coast. Whether or not the Icknield Way is of sufficient quality in terms of landscape and terrain to meet National Trail criteria is a subjective area and not one that need concern us in this study. What is important is that the Way is of at least inter-Regional significance, crossing as it does no less than seven English counties – Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, and one Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Chilterns. It is worthy of note that one of England’s finest nature poets, Edward Thomas, also wrote an outstanding guide book to the Icknield Way, adding to the literary and cultural importance of the route, and its national significance, irrespective of its formal status as a National Trail.

The Icknield Way is fortunate in having two excellent voluntary bodies that have, over the last few years, vigorously supported the development and promotion of the route, The Icknield Way Association and East Anglian Trails, the former focusing on the needs of walkers, the latter on the needs of horse riders and to a lesser extent cyclists. Both have produced excellent guide books to the Way with their own users in mind, and both have produced valuable accommodation guides with a choice of bed and breakfast and local inn accommodation. The East Anglian Trails list also includes overnight livery stables for horses. The Ramblers Association also support the route as one of the country’s leading long distance walks, with excellent web site pages.

An important recent development has been the establishment of the Icknield Way Forum, which has brought together, with the support of the Countryside Agency, the six key Local Authorities along the Way, together with the voluntary sector, with a view to close co-operation to achieve common standards of way marking, high standards of maintenance and joint promotion of the route as befits a major Regional heritage and leisure resource.

Two important recent studies of the route, **The Icknield Way Corridor Study** by Keiley Hunt Associates (2003) and the **Icknield Way Enhancement Corridor - Realising an Asset** (Waymark 2005) have suggested how the corridor should become a focal point for economic and social enhancement in both the rural and urban fringe areas through which it passes. The Corridor is defined as the area of countryside, including urban fringe areas, covering approximately ten miles on each side of the Trail. A key fact noted by the Waymark study is that an estimated 14 million people live within an hour’s travel time of the Corridor with a combined potential “user spend” in the Corridor of £5.5 million per annum.

This report builds on the work of these two studies, but focuses on sustainable access to the Trail and to and within the wider Corridor

3. A VISION FOR THE ICKNIELD WAY TRAIL AS A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AND TOURISM CORRIDOR

Users of the Icknield Way, whether they travel along the Path on foot, on horseback or by cycle, fit broadly into three categories:

- **Full Trail Travellers.** These are walkers or riders who will be spending several days doing the full route between Ivinghoe Beacon (or Hempton Winhill/Tring) and Knettishall/Thetford. In percentage terms they are likely to be no more than about 10% of users (a figure based on the 1994 Cotswold Way User Survey), but these are the high spenders in terms of overnight accommodation and food, which, at 2005 prices, is typically likely to equate to around £50 per head per person per night on the Trail. Most of this spend, by its very nature, will be to small businesses such as local inns, cafes and B&B establishments, and is likely to remain in the rural area as a local economic multiplier. Users are likely to travel to the Icknield Way from any part of the UK, with an inevitable South East dominance, but also will include many walkers/riders from abroad. Because they are walking end to end with a heavy time commitment to achieve their objective, they are less likely to visit other attractions away from the route itself. In terms of economic benefit to the Region, however, these are the most important users of all to target and to encourage.
- **Short Break Travellers.** These are people who will be spending typically just one to three nights along the Way, as part of a long weekend or mid week break, travelling perhaps from the South East or the Midlands. Short break holidays, including activity holidays, are now the prime growth area in the UK tourism market. A short walking or riding/cycling break may be combined with visits to other attractions in the corridor, e.g. Cambridge, The Chilterns or The Brecks. Short Breakers are likely to be more numerous than Full Trail Travellers but still significantly less in total numbers than Day Visitors. But for the duration of their stay they are relatively high spenders, who may also spend significant amounts in local market towns eating or shopping, buying souvenirs of their visit or simply being attracted by local specialist shops as part of their visit. They may well repeat their break at a later date to complete the full Trail in stages over a one or two year or more period. Both Short Break and Full Travellers may choose public transport as an option to reach and leave the Trail, but only if they have the right kind of up-to-date, detailed information quickly and readily available in a format which is easily digestible.
- **Day Visitors** These will be people who spend typically a full or part of a day walking the Trail. Typically this will be a circular walk from a parked car. Car-based walkers are, however, the lowest spenders, typically bringing their own picnic lunch with them, and parking for free. They are likely however to be numerically by far the highest proportion of visitors. Most will be from the one hour catchment zone identified by Waymark, but could also include a proportion of VFRs, that is people from outside the area staying with family and friends who want to explore the assets of the area. VFRs are more likely to visit similar heritage or countryside attractions in the area, and spend more in local shops and services - through a good deal less in total spend than staying visitors. Most day visitors will prefer to use their own car to access the Trail which allows them to make a visit with minimal pre-planning, perhaps dependent on weather conditions. However, if they are planning to walk the Icknield Way in sections, as

a linear route rather than a series of circular out-and-back walks, then a proportion of this group can be persuaded to make use of public transport networks to facilitate linear walking. Again this depends crucially on the right kind of information being quickly and readily available, including the best places to park and ride to take advantage of public transport capacity to facilitate a linear walk.

- **The Socially Excluded and Health Seekers** Day Visitors potentially include two important sub-categories that for a wide range of social and economic reasons, should be actively and positively encouraged - the socially excluded and those who for health reasons need to be encouraged to follow a more physically active lifestyle. The Socially Excluded includes many families on lower incomes including some from ethnic minorities. Many will not have access to a car. For such groups however, public transport is often not perceived as relevant to their needs, (mainly because of lack of access to information) yet could offer significant opportunities to reach, in the case of the Icknield Way, countryside of real quality offering high quality recreational activity close to their own their doorstep. This opportunity should therefore form a key part of the emerging Countryside Agency's new Diversity programme. There are also those who might be described as health seekers, often among the identical socio-economic groups, for whom regular walking and cycling, are vitally necessary to combat the growing threat of obesity and sedentary lifestyles. Given its easy accessibility to a large number of densely populated areas such as Luton, Dunstable, Bedford, Stevenage, Letchworth, Cambridge, Thetford, and Bury St Edmunds, the Icknield Way offers a superb opportunity for fairly easy to moderate day linear walks, as an ideal way of motivating and building up the strength and stamina of people, young and old who do not take regular exercise, but have an urgent need to do so. The easily achievable "challenge" of walking or cycling at least some short sections of the Icknield Way is an ideal motivator for both the young and the older walker or cyclist.

The other key aspect of the Icknield Way corridor is that it offers a vital reason and justification for retaining Green Belt and Open Space land between the growing conurbations of the South East and East of England, especially in the light of the anticipated massive expansion of new town residential development in the decades ahead. The Icknield Way Corridor can and should represent a Green Lung in emerging EEDA Regional Spatial Strategies, a facility for all the existing and proposed new communities along and close to the Corridor, essential space to enjoy relatively unspoiled, natural surrounding and a rich cultural heritage close to where they live and work, without having to travel long distances along crowded motorways to the National Parks, AONBs or Heritage Coasts. Especially in the Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire corridors, and to some extent south of Cambridge, the Icknield Way represents countryside and even moderately challenging walking or cycling and riding very close to home. It also adds significant value to local countryside, heritage facilities, and the Market Towns already identified by the East of England Regional Development Agency as key areas for economic revival and investment. Towns such as Tring, Mildenhall, Brandon and Saffron Walden are potential accommodation bases from which to explore the area and to undertake one or more day's walking or cycling along the Trail.

As this study shows, many of the existing public transport links offer a perfect opportunity to exploit the linear nature of the Trail, but are also a part of a wider green network of walking, cycling, horse riding and public transport opportunities from the catchment towns and cities into the Corridor.

Crucially perhaps, the existence of the Icknield Way and its Corridor close to the major conurbations including North London - which from most outer suburban towns are less than an hour away – adds significant value to the quality of life in these areas. It is somewhere to escape to at weekends and during school holidays, countryside close at hand, which, psychologically as much as physically, makes living in a town such as Luton or Letchworth more enjoyable and worthwhile, given that the Trail and its green corridor is only a short bus or train ride away.

Public transport access to a long distance path is important in three related ways:

- It allows everyone, not just those with access to a car, to reach and enjoy the route. This is especially important for young people, for those on lower incomes, and those who do not choose to drive, including many visitors from abroad. The provision and promotion of affordable public transport links to the Trail is therefore fundamental to any agenda which includes social diversity and social inclusion.
- The essential quality of a National Trail is that of a linear route, not a series of short, circular walks from a parked vehicle which offer a very different kind of (and more limited) walking experience. If, however, access to or from more extended sections of the route is difficult or even impossible, this will implicitly encourage car use, either by forcing walkers to undertake circular walks or unsatisfactory “there and back” walks from a parked vehicle. The worst-case scenario is where two vehicles and two drivers, in effect more than double the required mileage, by driving each other to and from start and finish points – with cars parked at both ends, often in unsuitable village centre locations causing visual impact and obstruction. This doubles pollution and congestion, and is in every sense of the word unsustainable. Another scenario is using a chauffeur, that is where a friend or member of the family in effect accompanies the walkers with a car, depositing or collecting the walker(s) at the start and end of the day. Again this generates a lot of additional driving with a vehicle being driven along rural lanes parallel to the walkers, creating additional miles, as well as additional on and off-road parking and air pollution - contributing to global warming and acid rain. This is equally true of coach or minibus use, though the disbenefits per individual walker are reduced when larger numbers of walkers are carried.
- Cars parked in isolated rural locations are an environmental blight and a nuisance in terms of causing obstruction and congestion. Walkers are frequently guilty, especially when walking in groups, of leaving several vehicles parked all day in village streets, on lane side verges or in isolated lay-bys, where they are targets for car crime. Developing and encouraging green networks reduces traffic on narrow rural roads, on-road or verge car parking, traffic noise, visual and air pollution, risk of accidents.

In fact the Icknield Way is extremely well served by public transport, both rail (which offers cycle carrying potential) and buses, especially to or from the most heavily populated western sections. Ironically the least well served areas are at the start of the Trail at Ivinghoe Beacon (close to an hourly bus route, which is infrequent on Sundays) and at Knettishall where it meets Peddar’s Way which can be best described as a public transport desert – though the new Peddar’s Way bus may help to resolve that problem on the days it operates.

However if a route can be developed and promoted in ways which maximise opportunity to take advantage of existing public transport networks, this will meet key sustainability and social inclusion objectives. It will also help maintain the rural transport network by providing vital additional income for often heavily subsidised services at off-peak times, another important aspect of sustainable rural tourism.

4. THE CONCEPT OF TRANSPORT ZONES ALONG THE ICKNIELD WAY CORRIDOR – TRANSPORT HUBS AND LOCAL NODES

Public transport, especially local public transport, like the road network, generally follows a radial pattern around major service centres, towns and cities. Commuter routes to and from a local market town have in many instances shaped the pattern of outlying settlement, and bus and train services largely reflect these patterns. Even interurban routes share these patterns to and from the major centres. Many communities, especially in the southeast, largely reflect the busy rail corridors into London or centres such as Cambridge, with significant settlement growth around commuter stations.

However the Icknield Way long predates the Victorian railway or the twentieth century bus route network. Therefore little of the route runs parallel to a modern transport corridor. This militates against park, ride and walk opportunities, possible, for example along much of the Thames Path. In fact the worst place to park a car to walk is often alongside the Icknield Way itself, in many cases requiring a quite circuitous route to return by bus and train to that vehicle without retracing one's steps, or using a taxi and or a second car and driver.

If however, the walker out for a day understands how public transport works, it is generally better to park at a transport hub in a nearby town or city, catch a bus or train out to the Way, walk say 10 or 15 kilometres to the next point served by bus or train, (in most cases with a choice of return point) and return directly to the parked vehicle. This is equally true for someone wanting to spend a short break on the Icknield Way or even walk the full route, though the common sense solution is not to use a vehicle at all and make the entire journey by more sustainable modes, a practical course of action which in a car-dominant culture, many people no longer understand or are prepared to adopt. But if this can be presented in a positive way, many otherwise reluctant public transport users can be persuaded to leave their cars either at home or in one of the transport hubs.

This therefore leads to the concept for the Icknield Way of key public transport "Hubs" where services meet and interconnect, and "Nodes" that is the point where the bus or train route intersects the Icknield Way, or maybe is just two or three kilometres' walk away by lane or field path, requiring a minor deviation off the route to catch the relevant bus or train.

Hubs therefore are generally large towns or cities with an excellent choice of travel opportunity, which link into the national train and coach networks to make a journey from anywhere in the UK possible. Nodes may be a local rail station or a village served by bus, or even a bus stop on a main road where a bus can be caught. Villages are preferable as Nodes, providing shelter and services, (including accommodation) and spending opportunities, for example in a cafe or pub, which means that if there is half an hour or so to wait till the next bus or train, refreshment can be enjoyed and spending delivered into the local economy.

We have therefore divided the Ickniel Way into four key Zones, each corresponding to major hubs from where a section of the Trail and its wider Corridor can be accessed, easily, by public transport. Because of the way local transport works, these are also generally locally authority boundaries.

These are therefore as follows (from west to east):

Zone One – Luton, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire

This includes the main towns of Luton, Dunstable and Bedford. Buckinghamshire is included within this Zone, with good links (for example) from Aylesbury into Tring. Tring is a more practical starting point for Trail walkers than Ivinghoe.

Zone Two - Hertfordshire

This includes the key railheads of Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston, with Stevenage only a short distance away by train.

Zone Three - Cambridgeshire and Essex

This includes a significant section of the Corridor, which is served by remarkably good and frequent train and bus services from Cambridge and to a lesser extent Newmarket, Saffron Walden and Haverhill.

Zone Four - Suffolk and Norfolk

This eastern section of the Trail divides equally in importance between the two main hubs of Thetford and Bury St Edmunds, with good bus and train connections from and to the key Nodes.

5. AN AUDIT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESS TO THE ICKNIELD WAY PATH WITHIN THE FOUR ZONES AND PRIORITIES TO DELIVER OBJECTIVES

At Appendix One we present an Audit, in summary form, of the public transport opportunities to access the Ickniel Way Path, in each of the four Zones we have deliberately overlapped the Nodes at the borders between Zones to make it clear that the same services can be used to leave or access that particular section of Trail.

In general terms, the Ickniel Way Path is well served by public transport, so that anyone, with a modicum of pre-planning, can access almost the whole of the Trail via any of the major transport Hubs. Gaps in the network relate to Knettishall Heath (though the Ickniel Way Association very sensibly has an alternative route to Thetford which is a point much simpler to return or start from, even on Sundays) and on Sundays where in the eastern parts of the Trail, bus services are virtually non-existent. Elsewhere, the Trail can be accessed seven days a week, albeit with gaps of two to three hours between services on Sundays in the remoter locations.

By looking at the actual public transport services to and from the Hubs to the particular Zones, it is therefore possible to ascertain to what extent existing bus and train services meet the needs of walkers and more general visitors to the heritage attractions within each of the Zones. Distance between Nodes have been assessed and these are generally easily within the capacity of average fit walkers in relatively easy terrain for a day's walk,

the longest being around 21-24k (13-15 miles). However there are also sections of the Trail with only short sections (4km - 8km) between Nodes which could be used for shorter day visits or be promoted to less experienced walkers, or perhaps combined with a visit to a nearby heritage attraction.

The needs of cyclists are largely met by the train network, all the stations at or close to the Way providing access within an easy day's ride of each other. Horse riders are unlikely to be users of public transport during a riding trip – unless accessing the area to hire a horse. Their needs are more for suitable parking places where horses can be “boxed” at the start or end of a day's ride, a requirement which is outside the scope of this study.

We look at each of the Zones in turn:

Zone One – Luton, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire

Both Tring and Luton/Dunstable and to a lesser extent Bedford make excellent Hubs for the western end of the Trail, which can offer a choice of attractive days' walks, including the Northern loop which avoids urban Luton.

We would strongly recommend using Tring or Tring Station as the formal start of this section of the Trail because of ease of access by train - seven days a week - and by bus, with good, frequent links from London and from both Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The Northern loop around Luton via Sundon Hills Country Park offers an additional choice of attractive short local linear walks served by useful local bus services. The suggested Inter Zonal point near Ickleford is suggested because of a choice of bus service along the main A600 at Ickleford into Hitchin from where there are hourly bus services, but it is not far to continue either to Letchworth into Hitchin, for example on Sundays when there are no buses along this route.

Zone Two Hertfordshire

This Zone between Ickford/Letchworth, Baldock and Royston is served by frequent train services between London and Cambridge, and is also easily accessible from Stevenage or Hitchin, and offers attractive day or short break walking along the Trail from a number of major towns, including north London.

Use of the frequent train services on the Cambridge line will also allow people living in Hertfordshire easy access to the Cambridge sections, albeit sometimes with a change of service/mode at Cambridge. The rail services are also especially valuable for cycle access into this Zone and into Zone Three.

Zone Three Cambridgeshire and Essex

Cambridge is an excellent Hub for a large section of the Trail from Royston to Kennet. Again distances between Nodes are longish but realistic for good walkers through relatively easy terrain, (though in this section it is generally a full day's hike between Nodes and less suitable for beginners or those with health problems), and there is generally a choice of buses and at least some trains available at the end of the walk to return to Cambridge.

This makes the Ickniel Way an important countryside attraction in its own right for both local residents and visitors to Cambridge and to a lesser extent to Newmarket.

Saffron Walden, making use of the services in and out of Cambridge, is also a potential good base to explore this section of the Way.

Zone Four - Suffolk and Norfolk

Thanks to the 200, 352, and 355 Suffolk rural bus services, most of the eastern part of the Icknield Way Path is remarkably well served from Thetford, Bury St Edmunds and Mildenhall on weekdays, though Sundays is a serious problem any distance from Thetford, Brandon and Kennet Stations.

The failure, for whatever reasons, of the Brecklands Warrener Bus service, makes any future new Sunday bus services in the area extremely problematical. The proposed Peddar's Way Bus, if it operated on a Sunday, could help fill the gap at least between Thetford and Knettishall Heath.

The solution may be to consider establishing a shared taxi service, perhaps based in Brandon, to meet key trains at Brandon Station and offer a demand-responsive service between Brandon, Mildenhall, West Stow, Euston and Thetford, perhaps operating late morning and late afternoon to and from key trains and the Icknield Way and related attractions in and around Thetford Forest. This facility could also serve residents at Centre Parcs.

However the Brecks is especially rich in walking and off-road and quiet cycling opportunities as well as heritage/natural history attractions, and this might be an opportunity to encourage people to stay longer in the area to access local attractions on foot or by cycle, and access the Trail on the next available weekday.

6. AN AUDIT OF ACCESSIBLE VISITOR ATTRACTIONS WITHIN THE FOUR ZONES – AND PRIORITIES TO DELIVER OBJECTIVES

At Appendix Two is a breakdown of over 50 countryside and heritage attractions in the Corridor – including the Market towns – which can be accessed without a car in each of the Zones. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but has been selected to include main attractions or ones that are likely to appeal to visitors with an interest in the countryside and the wider cultural heritage of the Corridor. Some attractions are actually on or close to the Icknield Way Path Trail, and would attract users enjoying a welcome pause whilst walking, riding or cycling the route, others are more likely to attract cyclists or horse riders who can deviate more easily two or three kilometres from the route. Others may be too far away to be combined in any meaningful way. However the breakdown also gives a clear indication of how, from each of the main Hubs, someone living in household without a car, or visiting the area without a car, can enjoy a range of attractions using local buses and trains, but in some cases being prepared to undertake a short walk from the bus stop or train station to the attraction. All but one are accessible by public transport and on foot, within 4km of a bus route or train station, the exception, Brandon Zoo is included, because it is a pleasant cycle ride along very quiet lanes from Attleborough Station, though too far for most people to walk.

Some of the attractions, such as larger Museums, Country Houses and Parks are a half or even a full day visit, others such as Duxford Medical Chapel may require less than an hour, and are best combined with other attractions or as a focal point for a walk or cycle ride. Some such as West Stow Saxon Village, Cavenham Heath and King's Forest Walk form a cluster of outdoor attractions which together with the Icknield Way itself would

form an excellent day out from such key centres or market towns as Mildenhall, Brandon or Bury St Edmunds.

The prime requirement is for an effective and imaginative programme of marketing, in print and on the internet, of green travel opportunities by developing Icknield Way as a strong “green” branding which can be used not only to market the Icknield Way itself, but as a shorthand for sustainable access to much that is very special in terms of the natural beauty and cultural heritage which is available within the Region.

7. AN ACTION PLAN TO DELIVER THE VISION

Developing Sustainable Access to the Icknield Way Path Trail Corridor must be seen within the wider context of the work of the Icknield Way Forum to adopt a uniform approach towards the maintenance, way marking, branding and Marketing of the Trail as a major Sustainable Tourism Product for the East of England Region.

Task One – Preparation of a Data Base/Travel Guide

To deliver sustainable access to the Trail will require the preparation of a detailed Travel Guide, of which Appendices One and Two form a summary, in both printed and web site format. This will include summary timetables of key services, both outward and return, using the identified network of Hubs and Trails.

Based on experience in the Cotswolds, and Cotswold Way in particular, this is a task which will require several days’ work, but once completed can be easily updated and made available to users in both printed and electronic format.

Task Two - Promoting the network

This information should form the basis of indicating on all publicity about the Icknield Way Path and attractions within the Corridor, the existence of green travel options from the major Hubs. This will not include actual departure times but will indicate service numbers, departure points (where possible with sketch maps to show location of bus stops and routes on foot or by cycle to train stations, service numbers and frequency details, plus reference to the relevant web site/publications. Both the National Trust and English Heritage offer models of good practice in their publications, even though service frequency and sketch maps of bus stops are not generally included.

Task Three - Great Days out on the Icknield Way

The above information should form the basis of a series of simple travel guides aimed at people who rarely if ever participate in outdoor recreation, suggesting how they can use a local bus or train to access the Icknield Way for a short walk, together with other attractions in the Corridor. As these publications would have a short shelf life, exact details of departure times and costs of tickets would be indicated, suggesting just one or two weekday and weekend outward and return times from key originating points in each Zone – Luton, Dunstable, Bedford, Letchworth, Stevenage, Cambridge, Newmarket, Brandon, Thetford, Bury St Edmunds would be examples. They would be single colour format, in clear prose, providing details of facilities at each site length of walk, attractions along the route, costs of entry (where relevant) toilets, shelter, cafes. They would use the common Icknield Way branding, but perhaps even adopt a cartoon style and clear simple prose. Where necessary (e.g. with ethnic minority groups in Luton)

ethnic minority languages might be used. This could link closely with the Chilterns Gateway project.

The above programme and publications need to be supported by a range of activities, including events, guided walks and a pro-active press campaign that helps to raise the profile of the Icknield Way among people and organisations in the Region, so that they feel ownership of what is a major asset to the people of this region. The two voluntary organisations have achieved a great deal, but much on-going work, particularly improvement, maintenance, and waymarking, is required. Some of this work can be undertaken and prioritised within the statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plans within Local Authority Local Transport Plans, including sections of route which can be made fully accessible to those with disabilities, using the principle of the least restrictive option, and including creating certain sections, where appropriate, to be accessible for wheelchair users.

But because there is already a good quality route in existence, this work can continue concurrently with the raising of the profile of the route, a process which in turn will help ensure resources are prioritised by all the local authorities along the Corridor.

Task Four - A Brandon Shared TaxiBus

Lack of Sunday travel opportunities around Thetford and Brandon is a major handicap to any form of green tourism development in the Brecks area. It is therefore suggested that opportunities should be explored with the Brandon Market Town Partnership to develop a shared taxi scheme, perhaps in partnership with Suffolk Community Transport or a local Taxi company, to provide a shared taxi facility. This could include travel from the town and the station to and from local heritage attractions and the Icknield Way, over a wide, pre-agreed area, within a range of easily understood zonal fares. The services would be closely linked to train arrivals and departures at Brandon Station (two hourly on Sundays) on the lines of the Dutch TreinTaxi service, with pre-booking essential to allow drivers to match demand with supply, and routes to be determined by passenger requirements on the day.

Task Five - Short Breaks along Icknield Way

The Icknield Way represents an ideal opportunity to encourage short break walking/cycling/heritage holidays in the Corridor. Package holidays as such are less successful, but if, mainly through the Internet, individuals could put together their own short tailor-made car-free breaks based on local accommodation and a choice of activities based around the Icknield Way Path and the Icknield Way Corridor, all accessible on foot, by hired cycle or using the available local bus services, this would prove extremely attractive to visitors both from the UK and overseas. This would require significant research and collaboration between Forum members including the private and voluntary sectors, but could be based in any of the key Corridor market towns, or even larger centres such as Thetford, Bury St Edmunds or Cambridge.

Task Six - Monitoring progress – achieving objectives and outputs

It is essential that at every stage of the project progress towards objectives are carefully measured. This will include carrying out regular surveys along the Trail to discover, among other aspects, the form of transport used to access the Trail or attractions, and to what extent choice has been influenced by the range of publications/web site used. This will facilitate feedback to ensure that the product and promotion is developed to meet

visitor needs, building on strength and success, eliminating problems and weaknesses. This needs to be linked to visitor spend so that a picture can be built up of the additional spend in the local economy resulting from people who have chosen the greener travel option to the Icknield Way or attractions within the corridor, including any short break participants. This should include qualitative information, finding out just how people respond to the particular publications and activities and how well (or otherwise) they have worked in term of ease of use and comprehensibility.

Co-ordination and Development: The Sub-Region Investment Programme

There is no way any of the above tasks can happen without a project champion, that is a committed individual, who received support from all the local authorities and agencies along the Icknield Way, including the voluntary sector, who will have the time and resources to deliver the necessary outcomes. Existing officers are not likely to have sufficient time nor resources to give the tasks the kind of commitment needed. It is also essential to have an officer shared with public, private and voluntary stakeholders, who can work across local authority boundaries to ensure the kind of unified approach needed is developed, and sufficient momentum built up to ensure things happen. There will also be budget requirements for the kind of promotional work and publications, as well as costs of monitoring which have to be built into all tasks as an inherent part of their development, and an essential requirement to ensure long term funding.

We believe that the Icknield Way Path project represents exactly the kind of project which should closely reflect the objectives for sustainable development likely to meet the criteria of the East of England Regional Development Agency's Sub-Regional Investment Programme. It will be necessary to examine the outline 2006-7/8/9 programme closely to see to what extent the Icknield Way Corridor Development project can fit into and reflect current strategies, programmes and priorities of the EERDA.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Icknield Way Trail is both a nationally important landscape heritage feature and a major recreational asset to the people of the East of England Region. Its development into a major Corridor for Sustainable Tourism activity should form a central part of any coherent Regional Spatial Strategy, and Strategy for Sustainable Development, given its present and future importance as a vital green space between the major, and rapidly growing, conurbations of the South and East of England.

Excellent work has so far been achieved, initially by the voluntary sector, and more recently in partnership with Local Authorities through the Icknield Way Forum.

Promoting and developing use of the Trail and its Corridor to the widest possible audience will also meet important national, Regional and local criteria, in terms of rural economic development, social inclusion and health agendas. This makes concerted action, on a Sub-Regional level, by the Forum in partnership with the EERDA, imperative.

Developing the Trail and its Corridor as a network of sustainable access opportunities – on foot, on horse back, by cycle, by public transport, reflects all these agendas. The fact that most of the Icknield Way and its Corridor is perfectly accessible by good train and bus services- many of them already financially supported by local authorities and therefore in need of increased patronage to demonstrate Best Value – is a major opportunity to translate this vision into reality.

However, it is recognised that Britain in the early 21st century is dominated by an aggressive, heavily promoted car culture which makes it difficult even for individuals without their own vehicle to understand and appreciate other modes of travel. This means that green travel needs to be actively promoted to potential users. A long distance route offers a superb way of educating visitors into the special kind of experience that healthy, non car dependent, active travel can bring, and the Icknield Way is a perfect opportunity to do so.

We have therefore outlined what we have defined as the six key tasks required to deliver such outcomes. As such it would make a contribution to the wider understanding of Sustainability both regionally, and, through example, nationally.

The six tasks focus on the promotion and development of sustainable ways of accessing the Trail and the Corridor.

- **Preparation of a Data Base/Travel Guide**
- **Promoting the network**
- **Preparing suggested Great Days out on the Icknield Way**
- **Developing a Brandon Shared TaxiBus**
- **Promoting Short Breaks along the Icknield Way**
- **Monitoring progress – achieving objectives and outputs**

Whilst certain of these tasks can be achieved by the Forum partners through their own resources, it is clear that there is an urgent need for a Product Champion, a Project Officer to support the Forum in the delivering of these tasks, which require a considerable degree of co-ordination between bodies to achieve common purpose and to make the best use of available resources.

We suggest that this is precisely the kind of Regional strategic initiative that should receive support through an EEDA Sub-Regional Investment programme.

APPENDIX ONE

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESS TO THE ICKNIELD WAY (WALKING ROUTE)

ZONE 1 LUTON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND BEDFORDSHIRE

MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN – LUTON, DUNSTABLE, BEDFORD

Transport Node	Hubs/Origin points	Km from prev. node	Mode	W'day frequency (mins)	Sun
Tring Station	Northampton, Milton Keynes, Watford, London Euston	-	Train – London-Northampton	30	60
Tring Town Centre	Luton, Dunstable	-	Bus 61 weekdays 161 Sundays	60	180
Ivinghoe Beacon	Luton, Dunstable, Tring	19km	Bus 61 weekdays 161 Sundays	60	180
Dunstable church	Luton	9km	Bus 24,25	30	60
Leagrave	Bedford, Luton, St Albans, London St P.	12km	Train London-Luton-Bedford	15	15
Ickleford	Hitchin, Bedford	17km	Bus 171. 181, 182	60	-
Letchworth	Hitchin, Cambridge, Stevenage, Royston, London Kings Cross	4km	Train London – Cambridge	30	30
Northern Loop					
Toddington	Luton	13km from Dunstable	Bus 20 weekdays, 223 Sundays	120	120
Streatley	Bedford, Luton	7km	Bus X1	60	120
Ickleford	Hitchin, Bedford	12km	Bus 171k 181, 182	60	-

ZONE 2 HERTFORDSHIRE

MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN, STEVENAGE, ROYSTON

Transport Node	Hubs/Origin points	Km from prev. node	Mode	W'day frequency (mins)	Sun
Ickleford	Hitchin, Bedford	17km	Bus 171. 181, 182	60	-
Letchworth	Hitchin, Cambridge, Stevenage, Royston, London Kings Cross	4km	Train London – Cambridge	30	30
Baldock	Hitchin, Cambridge, Stevenage, Royston, London Kings Cross	3km	Train London - Cambridge	30	30
Royston	Hitchin, Cambridge, Letchworth London	19km	Train London-Cambridge	30	30

ZONE 3 CAMBRIDGESHIRE

MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN: CAMBRIDGE, NEWMARKET

Transport Node	Hubs/Origin points	Km from prev. node	Mode	W'day frequency (mins)	Sun
Royston	Hitchin, Cambridge, Letchworth London	19km	Train London Kings + Cambridge	30	30
Great Chesterford	Cambridge, Broxbourne, London	21km	Train London LS- Cambridge	60	60
Great Chesterford	Cambridge, Saffron Walden	21km	Bus 32 Cambridge- Saffron Walden	60	-
Linton	Cambridge	8km	Bus 13 Cambridge- Haverhill	30	120
Balsham	Cambridge,Haverhill	7km	16/17 Cambridge- Haverhill	120	-
Dullingham Station	Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Ipswich	12km	Cambridge- Ipswich	60-120	120
Kennet Station	Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Ipswich	20km	Cambridge- Ipswich	120	120
Herringswell	Bury St Edmunds, Mildenhall	23km (from Dullingham)	355 Bury St Edmunds- Mildenhall	120	-

ZONE 4 SUFFOLK AND NORFOLK

MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN: BURY ST EDMUNDS, THETFORD, BRANDON, MILDENHALL

Transport Node	Hubs/Origin points	Km from prev. node	Mode	W'day frequency (mins)	Sun
Kennet Station	Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Ipswich	20km	Cambridge-Ipswich	120	120
Herringswell	Bury St Edmunds, Mildenhall	23km (from Dullingham)	355 Bury St Edmunds-Mildenhall	120	-
Icklingham	Bury St Edmunds, Herringswell, Mildenhall	5km (11km from Kennet Station)	355 Bury St Edmunds-Mildenhall	120	-
Thetford	Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Brandon	19km	Train Ely, Cambridge, Norwich	30-60	60
Euston Corner	Thetford,	19km (from Icklingham)	Bus 332 Thetford-Bury St Edmunds	180	-
Knettishall Heath	Thetford	8km (Thetford 10km – road walking)	New Peddar's Way bus may serve – details not known		

APPENDIX TWO

COUNTRYSIDE AND HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS WITHIN THE ICKNIELD WAY CORRIDOR

ZONE 1 LUTON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND BEDFORDSHIRE MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN – LUTON, DUNSTABLE, BEDFORD

Place	Attraction	Location	Getting there
Tring (Market Town)	The Walter Rothschild Zoological Museum, part of the Natural History Museum	Tring Town Centre, 3.5km miles from the railway station	Buses 30, 64, 327 from Railway stn to High Street, then walk, 61, 161 from Luton,Dunstable
Tring	Tring Park and Mansion	Near A 41, on the outskirts of Tring, 1km off Icknield Way	By footpath from town centre/the Zoological Museum, 30, 64 and 327 bus from railway stn
Tring	Pendley Manor and Court Theatre: Every year in August hosts the annual open-air Shakespeare Festival	in Station Road between Tring and Tring Station	Buses 30, 64, 327 from Railway stn to High Street, then walk, 61, 161 from Luton,Dunstable
Marsworth	Tring Reservoirs, Grand Union Canal	Accessible from Tring Station and off the Icknield Way	Bus 61, 161 from Luton, Dunstable Tring Centre; walk from Tring Stn
Marsworth	College Lake Wildlife Centre - a mixture of habitats and among top bird watching sites in the UK. Wheelchair Accessible	Marsworth,	Bus 61, 161 to Marsworth ; Walk from Tring Stn, along Grand Union Canal (4km to Tring Reservoirs)
Ivinghoe	Beacon Hill - outstanding views and start of the Ridgeway Path	1km miles from Icknield Way	Bus 61, 161 from Luton, Dunstable, Tring
Pitstone	Ford End Water Mill - a restored 1800s corn mill - one of the very few operating in the country, open Sundays and Bank Holidays, Country Life Museum and Pitstone Windmill	2km from Icknield Path	Bus 61, 161 from Luton, Dunstable and Tring. Cycle along quiet lanes from Cheddington Station
Aldbury and Ashridge	Picturesque village of Aldbury, surrounded by Ashridge Estate Park (NT) - chalk downland and woods, and close to the Ashridge house - at one point home to Elizabeth I - gardens open to the public on summer weekends.	On Icknield Way	Bus 327, 30, 31 from Tring

Wendover	Wendover Woods - a mix of coniferous and broadleaved woodland on the northern edge of the Chiltern escarpment, are home to a variety of birds, including the rare Firecrest. The Woods are ideal for wildlife walks and have circular waymarked trails and give spectacular views across Aylesbury Vale. 6 miles/ 9km waymarked horse riding trail is also available. Other routes are available by permit	Close to Wendover and Halton village; adjacent to Icknield Way	Bus 63, 64, 161 to Halton (2km); 3km from Wendover Station
Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard Heritage Railway	10 miles from Icknield Way west of Leighton Buzzard town	Access along Grand Union Canal, or by train to Leighton Buzzard Station (3km)
Whipsnade	Whipsnade Zoo: part of the Zoological Society of London, and is one of Europe's largest conservation parks. There are over 2500 animals in its 600 acres of parkland.	On Icknield Way, near Dagnall	Bus 43 from Dunstable or Hemel Hempstead; 161, 327 Sunday only
Berkhamsted	Berkhamsted Market Town; Norman Castle (English Heritage)	Castle is next to Berkhamsted station, on the Grand Union Canal Walk, 7 kilometres from Icknield Way	Train to Berkhamsted; bus 500, 501 from Tring
Dunstable	Priory and church, open market	In town centre on Icknield Way	Bus 24,25 from Luton; 61, 161 from Luton, Tring
Dunstable Downs	Part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Downs command excellent views over the Vale of Aylesbury and offer a popular area for kite and glider flying. There is a Countryside Centre and walks close by.	Between Dunstable and Whipsnade on Icknield Way	Walk from Dunstable (3km); Bus 43 from Dunstable to Kensworth; Sundays 161, 327
Sundon Hills Country Park	A Site of Special Scientific Interest within the Chilterns AONB. Sundon Hills is one of the highest points in the county, and offers superb views, along with woodland walks through stands of beech and	Between Upper Sundon, Streatley and Harlington.	Cycling along quiet roads from Luton and Dunstable; Bus X1 between Luton and Bedford to Streatley Corner (hourly; two hourly Sundays) then short walk on IW

	ash. The Icknield Way Trail (Northern Loop) passes through the park, cycling/riding trail close by. Sharpenhoe Clappers (National Trust) is adjacent		
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ZONE 2 HERTFORDSHIRE

MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN, STEVENAGE, ROYSTON

Place	Attraction	Location	Getting There
Biggleswade	Market Town	Biggleswade	Train from Hitchin Bus 171 from Hitchin and Bedford
Fairlands Valley Park	Countryside Park	Stevenage centre	Train; frequent local buses from station
Knebsworth House and Country Park	Country House and Park, gardens	Old Knebworth	2km from Knebworth Station and on Bus 44, 45 from Stevenage and Luton. National Cycle Route 12 passes the entrance
Letchworth	Letchworth Garden City Museum	Letchworth	Train
Hitchin Museum	Hitchin Museum – Victorian Chemist and Physic Garden	Hitchin town centre	Rail
Ashwell	Ashwell Village Folk Museum	Ashwell (on Icknield Way)	On Icknield Way; Bus 91,92 from Letchworth
Ayton St Lawrence	Shaw's Corner, Ayot St Lawrence	Bernard Shaw's Birthplace – Museum National Trust	Bus 382 from Stevenage.

ZONE 3 CAMBRIDGESHIRE

MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN: CAMBRIDGE, NEWMARKET

Place	Attraction	Location	How to get there
Newmarket	Market Town; National Nuseum of Horseriding	Newmarket	Rail; Bus 16 from Cambridge
Saffron Walden	Market Town; Fry Art Gallery and Gardens	Saffron Walden	Bus 32 from Cambridge, 132 Suns.
Haverhill	Market Town	Haverhill	Bus 13, 13A, 16 from Cambridge
Soham	Market Town	Soham	Bus X12 from Cambridge, Ely
Ely	Cathedral, Cromwell House, Ely Museum	Ely	Train, Bus X12 from Cambridge,
Fowlmere	Fowlmere RSPB Bird Reserve	2km west of Fowlmere village	Bus 31 from Cambridge; quiet cycle lanes
Duxford	Imperial War Museum	In Duxford village	C7, 132, DWM1
Whittlesford	Duxford Chapel – medieval hospital chapel	By Whittlesford Station	Train, cycle routes from Cambridge
Audley End	Audley End House and Garden (English Heritage)	Audley End, 2km from Saffron Walden by footpath; easy access by cycle from Icknield Way	Bus 32 from Cambridge, 132 Suns.
Linton	Linton Zoo wildlife park and gardens	Close to Linton village	On Icknield Way walkin and cycling route; Bus 13, 13A from Cambridge and Haverhill
Lode	Anglesey Abbey (National Trust), Gardens and Lode Water Mill	1km west of Lode village	Bus 111 from Cambridge and Newmarket; close to Newmarket Cycle Way
Burwell	Burwell Museum of Fen Edge Village Life and Windmill	In Burwell village	Bus 111 from Cambridge and Newmarket; on Newmarket Cycle Way
Old Wimpole	Wimpole Hall and Park (National Trust), and Wimpole Home Farm	Close to Old Wimpole village	Bus 175/177 Cambridge- Biggleswade goes close by; on Wimpole Way from Cambridge and Harcamow Way. Cycle entrance from A603 and network of bridleways
Wicken	Wicken Fen National Nature Reserve (EN, National Trust)	Close to Wicken village	Bus 122 from Cambridge (Suns) 117 from Ely (Thurs,

			Sat) or X12, 122 from Cambridge, Newmarket and 5km walk on footpaths to Wickham Fen. Choice of cycle routes – links to Newmarket Cycle Way.
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ZONE 4 SUFFOLK AND NORFOLK

MAIN POINTS OF ORIGIN: BURY ST EDMUNDS, THETFORD, BRANDON, MILDENHALL

Place	Attraction	Location	How to Get there
Brandon	Market Town; Brandon Heritage Centre	Brandon town	Train Thetford, Ely, Cambridge, Norwich, Bus 200 from Thetford, Mildenhall, Newmarket
Mildenhall	Market Town, Museum	Mildenhall	Bus 355 from Bury St Edmunds; 292 from Ely; 200 from Thetford, Brandon, Newmarket
Diss	Market Town	Diss	Train from Ipswich, Stowmarket, Norwich
Thetford Forest	Thetford Forest, Cycling, walking	2km west of Thetford, 1km north of Brandon	Cycling, walking routes from Thetford and Brandon Train to Thetford, Brandon; Bus 200 from Thetford
Thetford Forest	Grimes Graves – Neolithic flint mine (English Heritage)	4km north of Santon Downham on forest footpath	Walking, cycling routes from Brandon or Thetford via Forest. 200 from Thetford, Brandon, 200 from Mildenhall, Newmarket
Knettishall Heath	Knettishall Heath Country Park	10km east of Thetford	Peddar's Way Bus
Kings Forest	King's Forest Walk	On Icknield Way 3km east of Icklingham	Bus 355 from Bury St Edmunds, Mildenhall
Mildenhall	Mildenhall Woods	1km east of Mildenhall	Bus 355 from Bury St Edmunds; 292 from Ely; 200 from Thetford, Newmarket
Mildenhall	Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve	On Icknield Way walking and cycling route, just south of Mildenhall	Bus 355 from Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds
Brandon Country Park	Brandon County Park – woodland walks, cycle routes	1km north of Brandon	Walking cycling routes from Brandon or Thetford via Forest. 40, 200 from Thetford, 200 from Mildenhall, Newmarket
Thetford Warren Lodge	Medieval gamekeepers lodge in Forest	4km west of Thetford	Walking cycling routes from Brandon or Thetford via Forest. 40, 200 from Thetford, 200 from

			Mildenhall, Newmarket
West Stow	West Stow Saxon Village and Country Park	1km north of Lackford – on Icknield Way	Bus 355 from Bury St Edmunds, Mildenhall
Euston	Euston Hall, house, gardens, watermill	On Icknield Way 8km south of Thetford	Bus 332 Thetford-Bury-st Edmunds
Banham	Banham Zoo	Close to village of Banham	On Norfolk Cycle way; 8km from Attlborough Station; no public transport access.
Bressingham	Bressingham Steam Museum and Gardens	1km south of Bressingham village on A1066	5km west of Diss Station; irregular bus 192 from Thetford and Diss
Ickworth	Ickworth House, Park and Gardens (National trust)	In Horringer, near Bury St Edmunds	7km from Bury St Edmunds; Bus 344 Bury St Edmunds-Haverhill
Thetford	Ancient house Museum and Gardens; Thetford Priory, Tom Paine monument	Thetford town centre	Train from Brandon, Cambridge, Norwich; Bus 332 from Bury St Edmunds, 200 from Brandon, Mildenhall, Newmarket
Bury St Edmunds	Abbey Gardens, Water Mill, Historic Town Trail.	Bury St Edmunds	Train from Ely, Ipswich, Cambridge; bus 332 from Thetford, 355 from Mildenhall.