

## Agenda item 6

For decision – To support the Slow Ways initiative

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### Summary

Slow Ways is a project to create a network of walking routes that connect all of Great Britain's towns and cities as well as thousands of villages. Frome Town Council already offers guided walks through Discover Frome and works closely with Mendip Ramblers Association and Walkers are Welcome. Supporting outdoor activities has many benefits for the individual and for the economy of the town. The report outlines the thinking behind Slow Ways and asks Council to formally support the initiative.

### Background

Slow Ways was started by Dan Raven-Ellison. Dan began wondering why our incredible footpath infrastructure, heritage and culture is not better organised and easier to navigate. In February 2020 Dan invited anyone who likes maps and walking to attend a Slow Ways hackday at GeoVation, Ordnance Survey's innovation centre in central London. 700 volunteers completed a first draft mapping of the Slow Ways network during the Spring 2020 lockdown.

The organisers are now looking for 10,000 volunteers to help walk, review, record and improve the Slow Ways routes.

### The Concept

Each Slow Way route connects two neighbouring settlements; routes can be combined for longer journeys. As far as possible routes are direct, off-road, safe, accessible, easily navigable and pass through settlements with services and public transport hubs. The Slow Ways network aims to make it easier for people to see, plan, enjoy and share walks between places.

Slow Ways will be used for both recreational and functional purposes, aiming to offer reasonably direct walking options backed by trusted route information. This will include walking to visit friends and family, travelling to meetings, going to shops, pilgrimages, charity fundraisers, or travelling to school or work.

The average Slow Way route in England and Wales is 12km while in Scotland it is closer to 20km. Hundreds of routes in urban areas are under 5km.

### Benefits

Walking has many recognised health benefits, but the initiative will also encourage active travel by connecting people to 'nearby nature', heritage, places and communities. By providing safe, direct and enjoyable routes between neighbouring towns and cities and linking active travel to public transport hubs, Slow Ways hope to promote greater use of existing paths, trails, networks, and the connections between them.

Slow Ways also offers community benefits by sharing a positive, empowering, rewarding and

inclusive project at a time of national crisis and recovery. Involving volunteers offers a source of community engagement, focus, identity and pride.

### Latest Developments

Ledbury Town Council was the first to officially support Slow Ways, passing a council motion in July 2020 to promote the project to local residents.

Following the early success of the initiative, Slow Ways CIC has been established to formalise its status. It is currently being supported by: Paths for All, the Pilgrim Trust, Sport England, Urban Good and the Kestrelman Trust. The initiative is working in collaboration with Ordnance Survey and ESRI.

Slow Ways routes and associated information will be made freely available through the Slow Ways website. Versions of the network's data will be published for other organisations to use, and will also be released through the OS Maps platform.

### Further Information

Web – [slowways.uk](http://slowways.uk)

Twitter – [@SlowWays](https://twitter.com/SlowWays), [#SlowWays](https://twitter.com/SlowWays)

Contact – [hello@slowways.uk](mailto:hello@slowways.uk)

### Recommendations

1. Formally support the Slow Ways initiative
2. Include Slow Ways within future planning, policies and initiatives
3. Consider where new paths might strengthen the Slow Ways network
4. Encourage members of the public to sign-up personally to walk and review a Slow Way via the Walkers are Welcome group.