

Case Study: Dorset's Natural Health at its best

White Hart Link: A circular walking route connecting towns and villages in North Dorset



Lead Partner: White Hart Link

Other Partners: Dorset Council

Project Summary

The aim of the project was to raise the profile of North Dorset as an area of environmental interest, through the development and enhancement of a 50 mile (80 km) circular walking route between the five market towns of North Dorset (Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Blandford Forum, Sturminster and Stalbridge) and the villages in between.

The purpose was to develop a sustainable project bringing together stakeholders including the local communities, businesses and local authorities.

The project has focused on four elements:

- **Community:** to communicate a sense of pride in ownership by involving community groups and volunteers in the parishes along the route.
- **Health:** to support increased physical activity by awareness of the walking route and improved access and signage.
- **Tourism:** to highlight the 'hidden' assets in North Dorset to encourage tourism in the area, including local heritage and art.
- **Preservation:** to protect and preserve a rural asset, by encouraging the greater use of footpaths and rights of way responsibly, and to follow the Countryside Code.



View from North Dorset Trailway near Stourpaine
© White Hart Link



Finger post © White Hart Link

Progress to date

The route was established and waymarked by September 2019 with the help of Dorset Council Rangers.

Over the next few years there will be improvements to furniture along the route, improved signage and links to other routes, local facilities, and links to public transport (where possible).



Walking between Sutton Waldron and Shaftesbury
© White Hart Link

"It is not often a dream comes to such perfect reality, or that one finds such a dedicated and hardworking team of enthusiasts to carry it out over six years. I do hope those who walk and live along the White Hart Link will continue to enjoy, care for and develop it, planting wild flowers, seats and trees."
Janet Swiss, White Hart Link Committee

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Kingsettle © White Hart Link

How partnership working benefited the project

Working in partnership has spread the work load because White Hart Link partners will undertake projects that include repair and replacement of stiles and footpath furniture, identify routes, and repair and clear paths.

Working with communities along the path aims to develop community ownership, awareness and understanding.



Information board along the route © White Hart Link

More information

www.whitehartlink.uk

www.dorsetlnp.org.uk/case_studies

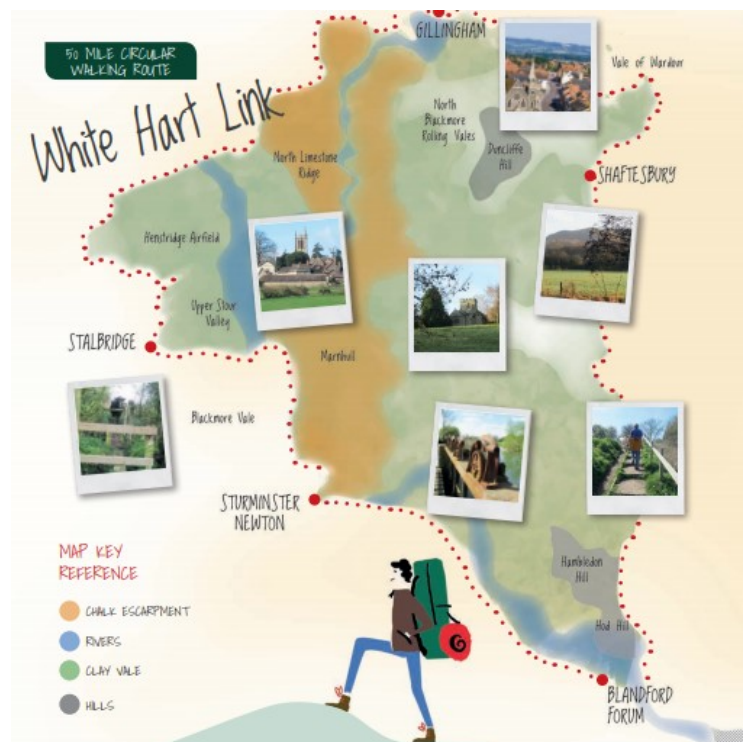
2020

Project aims

The White Hart Link group will establish a uniting and sustainable project for the enhancement and enjoyment of the Blackmore Vale in the North Dorset area.

With the support of Dorset Council and the Countryside Rangers, they aim to involve local communities along the route, engage with landowners, and promote local enterprises.

With the emphasis now on the climate and ecological emergency, they want to encourage walking as a sustainable means of transport, as well as the project providing opportunities for 'green' activities, and to encourage initiatives to create and participate in projects involved with health, education, heritage, art and tourism.



Map of the route © White Hart Link

