

Slow Ways

Help create a national walking network

James Spratley

Strategic Access Officer – Buckinghamshire Council

Introduction to the Slow Ways Project

01

What's Slow Ways?

02

What benefits do
Slow Ways bring?

03

What assistance can
we provide?

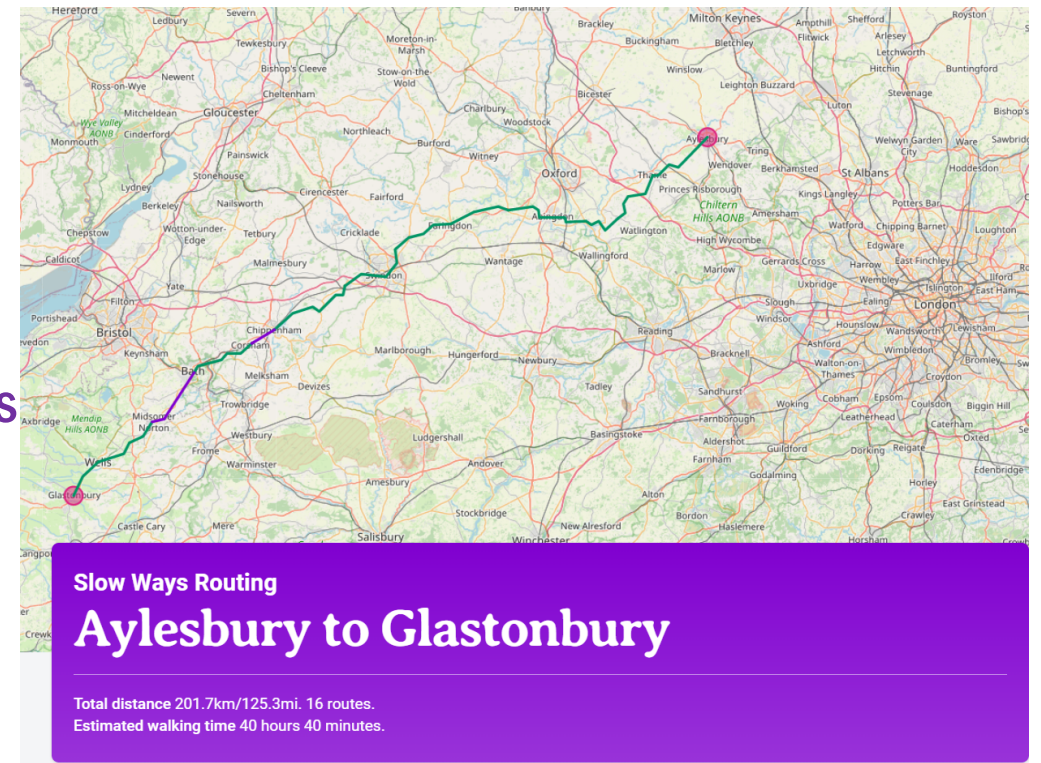
1. What's Slow Ways?

- Slow Ways is an initiative to create a national network of walking routes connecting all of Great Britain's populated places.
- It aims to inspire and support more people to walk further and more often, for more purposes than they do currently.
- The Slow Ways network combines the existing network of public rights of way, permissive paths, ways, trails, and roads to allow for people to plan and go on walking journeys.
- Emerging in the Spring 2020 lockdown - the Slow Ways volunteer 'swarms' have mapped over 8000 Slow Ways that stretch for almost 120,000km.
- The Slow Ways map is currently available to access online (<https://beta.slowways.org/>) alongside a Journey Planner and Routing tool which helps the user to chart the stages of a medium-to-long distance walk



1. What's Slow Ways?

- Currently there isn't a comprehensive and trusted network of routes designed to help people walk off-road between towns and cities.
- In many ways similar to the Public Rights of Way network, Slow Ways incorporate a survey and verification system which inform the user which ways are best to go.
- Slow Ways aims to inspire and support more people to walk more often, further and for more purposes.



1. What's Slow Ways?

- Currently receiving positive media coverage and interest
- Nationally recognised
- Website allows the user to create very detailed journey plans and route maps, with OS Map Overlays and GIS functionality



The Pilgrim Trust

The Kestrelman Trust



1. What's Slow Ways?

Here's a selection of news stories about Slow Ways:

["Walk this way: army of hikers will road-test new map of footpaths"](#) The Guardian

["Slow map: Mapping Britain's intercity footpaths"](#) BBC News

["Can the 'Slow Ways' project change how we travel?"](#) The Telegraph

["New national walking network gets thumbs up from town council"](#) Frome Times

["How you can help plot the future of UK walking – from a standstill"](#) National Geographic

["How the Slow Ways network could change walking in Britain"](#) The Guardian

["New network of 7,000 walking routes connects Britain's towns, cities and villages for the first time"](#) Country Living

["Britain's all new Slow Ways to bring back the old ways"](#) Times of India

["Life after lockdown: one man's plan to get the UK back on its feet"](#) Positive News

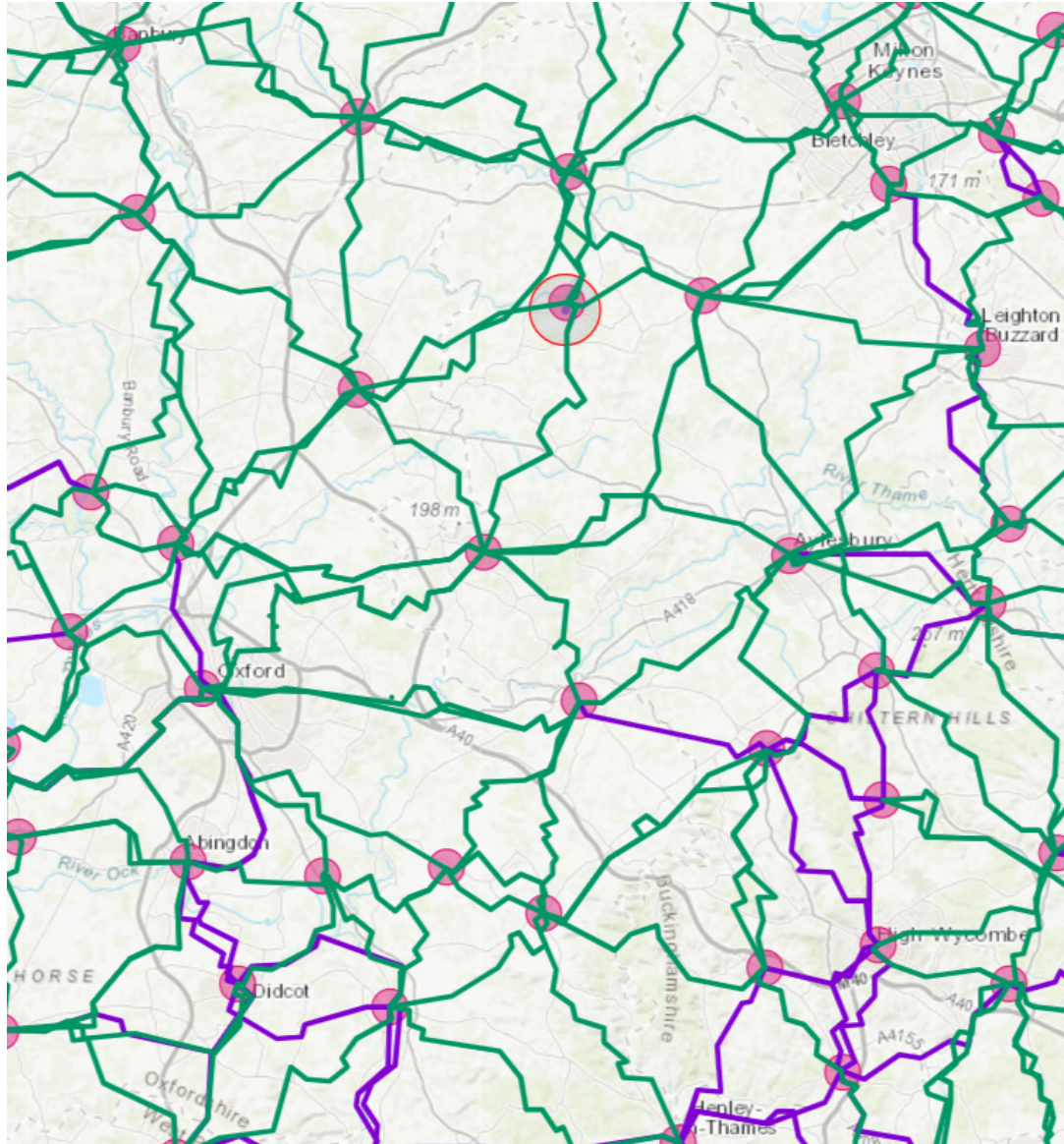
["New hiking network in the UK connects 2,500 towns, cities and notable spots"](#) Metro

["A new hiking network links thousands of towns around Britain"](#) Lonely Planet

["Can a network of 7000 walking routes transform the way we travel?"](#) Euro News

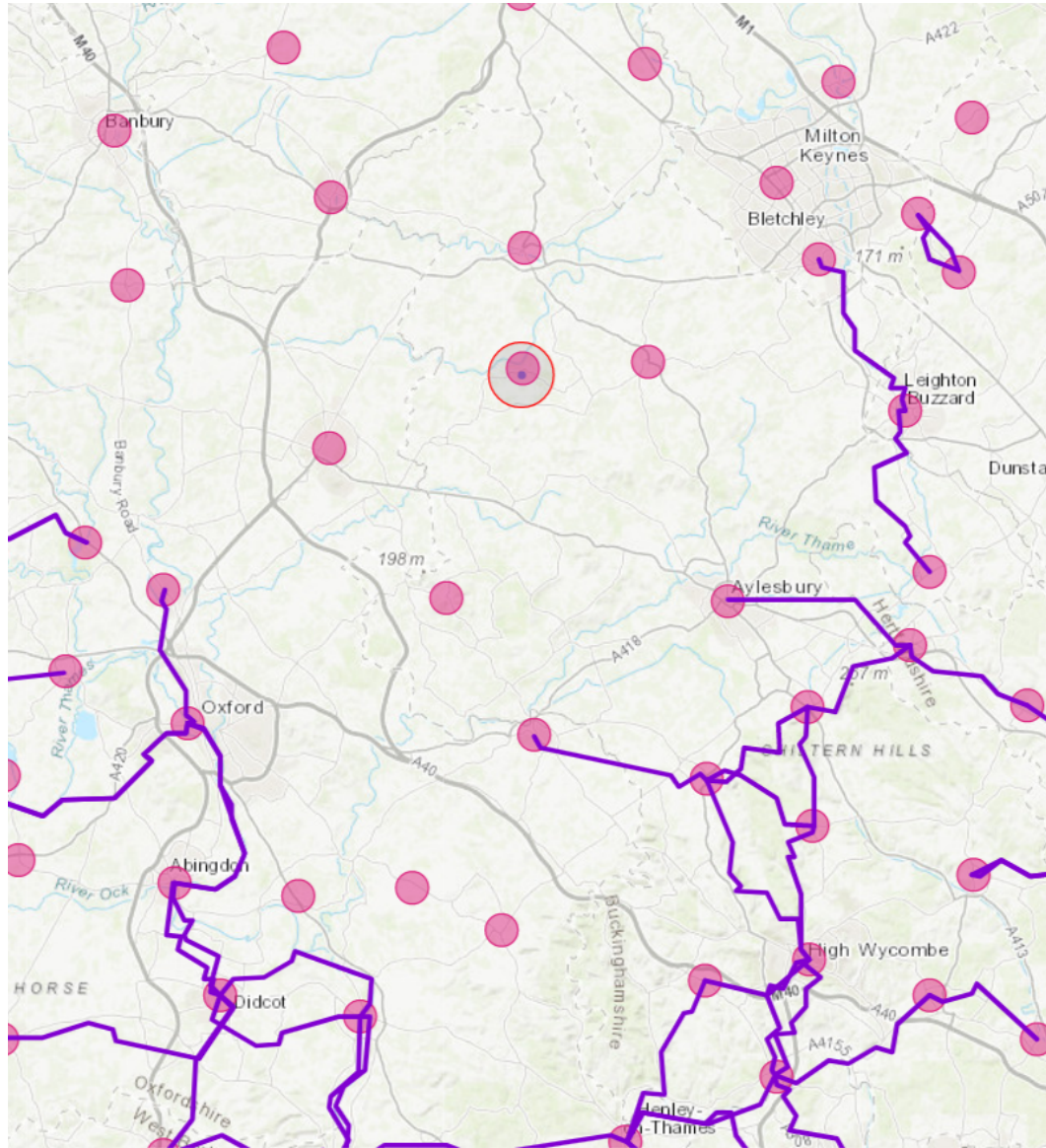
1. What's Slow Ways? - Buckinghamshire

- 13 Slow Ways places / nodes
- 59 Slow Ways
- 75 Routes (some Slow Ways have more than one route option)
- 17 Verified Routes (3+ Positive Reviews)
- 58 Routes with at least one review
- 10 Routes with a least one survey
- 392 Subscribers to Slow Ways newsletter identifiable as being in Bucks



Map of Buckinghamshire Slow Ways

Verified and unverified routes



Map of Buckinghamshire Slow Ways

Verified routes only

2. What benefits do Slow Ways bring?

Community benefits

- Sharing a positive, empowering, rewarding and inclusive project at a time of national crisis and recovery
- Offering a source of community engagement, focus, identity and pride
- Increasing the use of currently under-used paths – thereby keeping them open and valued



Buckinghamshire Council Key Priorities 2020-2025

2. What benefits do Slow Ways bring?

Health benefits

- Improving health and wellbeing by encouraging physical activity for short trips and longer journeys. Aligns with Buckinghamshire Simply Walks
- Helping to mitigate the causes and effects of Covid-19, being part of recovery plans, and offering public transport alternatives
- Creating opportunities for people to connect with friends, family and colleagues
- Encouraging people not to rush, connect with nature, and enjoy their journeys supports better mental health.



Buckinghamshire Council Key Priorities 2020-2025

2. What benefits do Slow Ways bring?

Environmental benefits

- Reducing pollution and emissions through active travel options as an alternative to carbon-based transport
- Contributing to the decarbonisation of local and national transport systems and helping to address the climate emergency
- Connecting people to 'nearby nature', heritage, places and communities



Buckinghamshire Council Key Priorities 2020-2025

2. What benefits do Slow Ways bring?

Economic and Transport benefits

- Saving people money by encouraging an inexpensive form of travel
- Spreading economic activity by inspiring visits to, and stays in, more places
- Supporting more people to walk more of the time, for more purposes
- Providing safe, direct and enjoyable routes between neighbouring towns and cities
- Linking active travel to public transport hubs
- Promoting greater use of existing paths, trails, networks, and the connections between them



Buckinghamshire Council Key Priorities 2020-2025

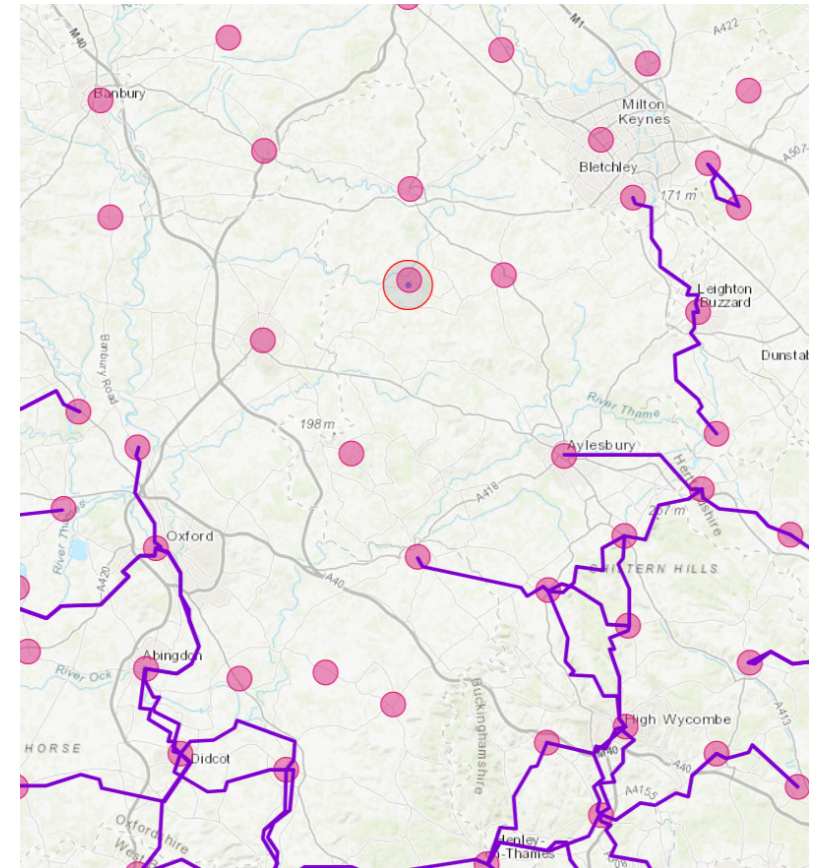
3. What assistance can we provide?

- In a meeting with the Chief Exploration Officer Dan Raven-Ellison in January we discussed Slow Ways' current projects and where a Local Authority partnership might be advantageous
- These included:
 - Identifying a trial route for the UK's first physically waymarked Slow Way.
 - Paper map of Buckinghamshire Slow Ways
 - Health Walks
 - Identifying Rights of Way 'deserts' in an effort to advocate for new ways to access the land
 - Health walks, or opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to experience the countryside.



3. What assistance can we provide?

- Perhaps a more specific, measurable, and achievable target for co-operation would be to achieve a **100% verified** network of Slow Ways.
- As of today, no local authority has achieved a 100% completion rate
- Doing so has the potential to bring lots of positive publicity to Buckinghamshire in a year where we have lots to celebrate and showcase for the region.
- May go some way to counter the narrative of excessive infrastructure development in Buckinghamshire with HS2 and EWR permanently altering the landscape and restricting access



3. What assistance can we provide?

- Slow Ways is a collaborative project that relies on the input of volunteers and local communities. By promoting Slow Ways to your memberships, you can encourage them to get involved in the project by contributing their local knowledge and helping to verify potential walking routes
- To verify a route the volunteer needs only to complete a survey sheet on a selected route.
- Training information available on the Slow Ways website
- This includes information on the gradient, surface, obstacles, and ability to complete using a wheelchair or a pushchair.

Which of these grades best describe route? You should assign the grade that best matches the worst part of the route's path - even if it is very short.

Grade 1: Entirely smooth and compacted surfaces.

Grade 2: Mostly smooth and compacted surfaces, but there may be some loose gravel, muddy patches or cobbles.

Grade 3: Route includes rough surfaces that may include small boulders, potholes, shallow ruts, loose gravel, short muddy sections.

Grade 4: Route includes very rough surfaces including deep ruts, steep loose gravel, unmade paths and deep muddy sections. Wheelchairs may experience traction/wheel spin issues.

Grade 5: Route includes technical and arduous terrain where there may be potentially impassable barriers if the correct equipment is not used or barriers which require assistance to overcome.

Access		Access judgement	
Free of stiles		Y / M / N / D	
Free of single steps or kerbs		Y / M / N / D	
Free of flights of steps (flight = two or more steps)		Y / M / N / D	
Free of barriers and other obstacles that could block access for a wheelchair or scooter		Y / M / N / D	
What's the narrowest part of the path?	cm		
What is the steepest uphill gradient if walking east?	cm		
What is the steepest uphill gradient if walking west?	cm		
What is the steepest camber gradient across the path?	cm		
How clear is waymarking on the route?			
Access experience		Access judgement	
Have you successfully completed this route with any of the following?		Relevant experts or professional?	
And would you recommend it to someone with the same requirements?		Is this route suitable for someone with any of the following?	
Small Pug-sized dog	Y / N / D	Small Pug-sized dog	Y / N / D
Medium Labrador-sized dog	Y / N / D	Medium Labrador-sized dog	Y / N / D
Large St. Bernard-sized dog	Y / N / D	Large St. Bernard-sized dog	Y / N / D
Standard pushchair	Y / N / D	Standard pushchair	Y / N / D
Off-road rugged pushchair	Y / N / D	Off-road rugged pushchair	Y / N / D
Standard wheelchair	Y / N / D	Standard wheelchair	Y / N / D

Excerpt of a Slow Ways Survey – available in Appendixes

3. What assistance can we provide?

- Opportunities to complete surveys could be found whilst completing other activities – Duke of Edinburgh Award or for Scouting badges.
- Walking Festival-type event
- Internal promotion on intranets or newsletters
- Volunteering days
- Local newspaper / radio appeal
- Very much open to suggestions!



Walking Festival – ‘Joe Stuart Spring Time Walk’
accessed on Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural
Beauty Website

Any questions, comments, or feedback?

The Local Access Forum's expertise and advice would be greatly appreciated as we decide whether to dedicate time and resource to the promotion of this initiative.

Thank you