

Access Suffolk

Linking communities to nature

Suffolk County Council is committed to improving the environment, protecting our landscape and ecology and encouraging sustainability and better countryside access. As a rural county, the extensive public rights of way and wider access network provides important links between communities and services as well as allowing people to experience the countryside.

The county council wants to encourage and help local communities to become more involved in caring for their local countryside and access network. Groups and volunteers will not only be working to improve the environment but will also benefit the health of their community by enabling more people to enjoy the countryside.

This guide introduces Access Suffolk. It explains why we are launching the scheme, what it will achieve and how you can join.



What type of work will the scheme support?

There are three main areas of work that the scheme will support:

Awareness and experience

An important aspect of Access Suffolk will be encouraging people to visit the countryside. This will focus on developing information to promote and inform people about their environment.

Activities may include:

- Promotion of routes by developing circular walk, horse riding or cycle route leaflets.
- Interpretation/information panels placed along routes or on village greens.
- Leading guided walks, holding events or open days.
- Producing and promoting fitness walks.
- Producing local network maps to be displayed on Parish/Town notice-boards, in pubs, shops, local visitor attractions and at bus stops.



Skills development

Developing the skills of volunteers will enable people to gain practical experiences and use those skills for the benefit of others.

Skills development may include:

- Volunteer training with courses organised through the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) or other environmental organisations.
- Advice about funding sources and grant applications with practical guidance on where and how to obtain funds.
- Assistance with publishing a leaflet or route map, writing a press-release or article, or holding an exhibition.
- Advice on organising an open day, leading walks or recruiting volunteers.





Practical volunteering

The work done by groups and volunteers may be varied and ideas may come from a group's previous experience or from an individual. The Community Involvement Officer will also be able to suggest practical works. Ideas will need to be discussed with the officer to ensure they meet the aims and objectives of the scheme and complement the work of our own Rights of Way Officers.

Practical volunteering may include:

- Network surveys; a very useful activity to identify what you could do, and to prioritise improvements.
- Carrying out minor improvements to routes to allow easier access along them. This may include pruning and clearing, collecting litter, removing graffiti, and improving way-marking.
- Volunteering for other local environmental and conservation projects to broaden your experiences and skills.
- Assisting schools and colleges who bring groups to visit your area by passing on your local knowledge; for example developing their understanding of the role of farming, local food production, and countryside management in society.

We want local groups to think about what improvements are really needed to improve access to the countryside in their area. This is not just about improving or clearing existing paths but also thinking about educating your local community about their environment, encouraging people to use the rights of way

network, helping to look after natural areas and working with the Council and landowners to create or improve access resulting in richer natural places.

The Community Involvement Officer will help you put together your action plan, advise on what can be realistically achieved and help you deliver your objectives. If a group would like to carry out work or embark on a project that the scheme is not able to support we will try to give guidance on funding opportunities or put you in contact with other officers at the county council for further advice.

How will the scheme operate?

A Community Involvement Officer employed by the county council will be the main point of contact for all those taking part in the scheme. The officer will be actively involved with groups, offering guidance, advice and practical support.

Your ideas will be discussed with the officer to formulate action plans and identify what can be achieved and how it can be carried out. Each group will have a nominated individual who will be the main contact. Volunteers will be an important aspect of the scheme and will be involved in generating ideas as well as carrying them out. The Community Involvement Officer will encourage you to share best practice with other groups to see how they have tackled specific issues.



What is Access Suffolk?

Access Suffolk is designed to provide a wide range of volunteering opportunities and involve a diverse range of community groups and individuals in working with us.

Access Suffolk will give all people in Suffolk the opportunity to play an active role in improving sustainable access to the countryside and local services. It will encourage more people to enjoy the outdoors, whether young or old, fit or getting back to health, or who may simply not normally visit the countryside. Communities will be able to come up with ideas for improvements to their access network and carry out work, publish information, or hold events to inform and encourage others.

This scheme aims to engage with a wide variety of community groups and volunteers in accessing nature and increasing awareness and understanding of the countryside. As such, the scheme will work closely with community groups and volunteers during a pilot phase to highlight and address any issues that arise. Taking part at this stage will allow groups and individuals to play an active part in developing a scheme that meets the needs of everyone, in preparation for extending the scheme more widely.

Who can participate in the scheme?

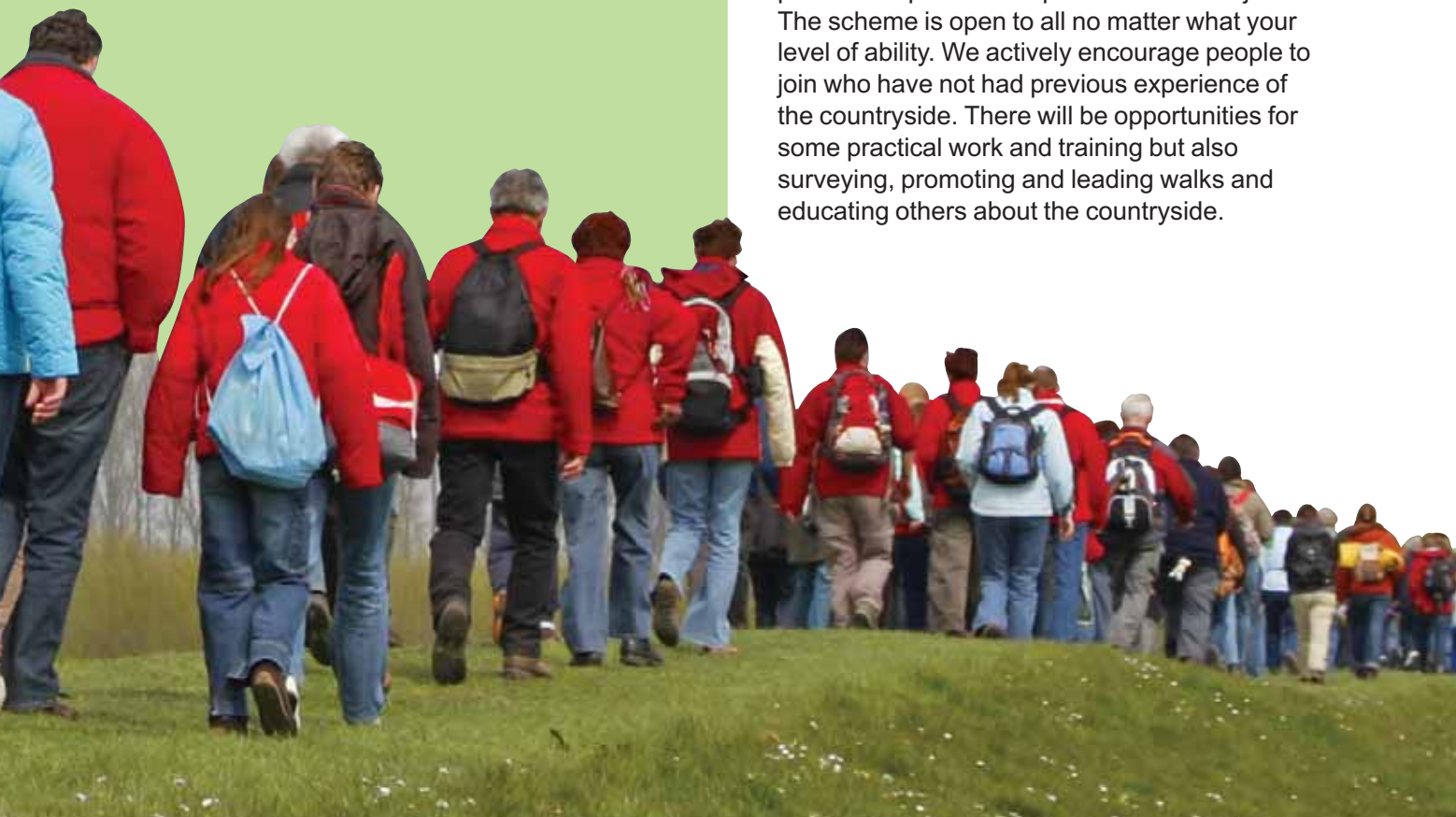
Everyone can!

We want as many people as possible to make the most of the countryside. This includes those who have previously not been involved in the countryside, or have been restricted in their knowledge of the local environment, possibly through a disability or a lack of opportunity.

We are particularly interested in hearing from local organisations who already have ideas about improving their area, would like to come up with new ways to get people into the countryside and who would be willing to talk to other people about the work they carry out.

Any group that would like to participate will need to be properly constituted. You may be a parish council, women's institute, a local outdoor activity group, a youth organisation, a college or school, an allotment or village green society, or a community association. In many areas it may be easiest to run the group through the parish or community council, but the scheme is not limited to these organisations. The Community Involvement Officer will be able to advise you if your group qualifies for participation.

As a volunteer, you do not need to have any previous experience or particular skills to join. The scheme is open to all no matter what your level of ability. We actively encourage people to join who have not had previous experience of the countryside. There will be opportunities for some practical work and training but also surveying, promoting and leading walks and educating others about the countryside.



Next step... joining up

During the pilot phase we are keen to work with a selection of groups to help develop the scheme.

The number of participants will therefore be limited during the pilot phase based on the type of group, previous experience and location.

To join the scheme, simply contact the Community Involvement Officer who will guide you through the application process. Each group will be asked to sign an agreement to clarify what your role is and what support you can expect from us. If your group is not run through a local council you may also be asked for further details of how it is organised and operated. Once your group has joined it can then promote the scheme locally to gather volunteers and submit ideas on what you would like to achieve in your area. The Community Involvement Officer will be able to help you with this process.

If you would like to join as a volunteer then you can speak to your local group, or the Community Involvement Officer, about taking part. Anyone is eligible to take part, although there will be limited places available during the pilot phase. The Community Involvement Officer will be happy to discuss any particular needs you might have as a volunteer to help you take part in the scheme.

We look forward to hearing from you and working together to promote, manage and enhance Suffolk's natural environment.

Apply using the application form or contact Robin Richardson, Community Involvement Officer:

Tel: 01473 260812

Email: robin.richardson@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk



Suffolk
Creating the Greenest County

We are working towards making Suffolk the Greenest County



If you need help to understand this information in another language please call the number below.

إذا تحتاج إلى مساعدة لفهم هذه المعلومات في أي لغة أخرى فالرجاء الاتصال على الرقم التالي.

Arabic

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষাতে বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন

Bengali

如果你需要其他語言來幫助你了解這些資訊，請撥以下電話。

Chinese

જો તમારે આ માહિતી બીજા ભાષામાં સમજવા માટે જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરી નીચેના નંબર પર સંપર્ક કરો.

Gujarati

بەم زانیاریەش تێنی ئە بە تۆ گەشتی دە یارمەر پێویستی بە گەیه بە گەیه دە ی خوارم ژمارەندی بەهێوه بەزمان گەشتی تۆتکایە

Kurdish

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer.

Polish

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo.

Portuguese

If you would like this information in another format, including audio tape, large print or easy read, please call 08456 066 067.





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