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Paths for Communities - Project summary sheet:

# Priests' Way

Project Location:	Dorset
Right of Way Created:	Bridleway 5.3 km
	Footpath
Improved existing rights:	n/a

Supporting local businesses:	3
Volunteer hours contributed:	1,025
Cost of project:	£160,340
Grant rate:	89%

An ancient track once used by 15th Century clergy, the Priests Way starts in the seaside town of Swanage and runs westwards for 5 km to the village of Worth Matravers, where it links in with the South Downs Way. The route has always been highly valued by local people but it is often unusable due to regular, seasonal flooding. £130,000

of P4C funding has enabled the local community to ensure year round access through the creation of new sections of bridleway and improving existing stretches.

The new route was launched in January 2014 and although it is still early days it has been noticed that



more cyclists are already using the path. The path improvements bring benefits to the local community, not least of which are increased trade for pubs, tea rooms, bike hire centres and accommodation providers. Local people are also benefiting from the improved route, mainly for recreation but also as a sustainable route to offices and shops in Swanage. The area is also popular for educational visits, particularly for its geology, and it is hoped that the improved route will encourage these activities, especially for younger children for whom access was previously limited due to deep gullies, mud and surface water.

This project was implemented and led by Langton Matravers and Worth Matravers Parish Councils, Swanage Town Council - supported by Dorset County Council and the National Trust.

“Since the improvement work to the Priests Way there has been a real increase in its use by walkers, horse riders and cyclists - especially families who live along the route but also those visiting the area. The work has really opened up this stretch of countryside to more people who are enjoying it to relax and take in the stunning scenery, keep fit outdoors in the fresh air and travel safely between home, campsite, pub, shop and the sea!”

Tara Hansford  
Dorset Countryside Access Development Officer  
Dorset County Council

