

“Feet First”



Enabling and promoting walking in Thanet

***March
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1. Introduction

Walking accounts for 26% of all trips made by Thanet residents (Thanet Travel Survey 1998). Walking has recognised health benefits, reducing the risk of coronary illness and stress. It is socially inclusive, with no age or income barriers. However, pedestrians are currently vulnerable, enjoy little protection and in a crash, usually come off worse. Walking, as an alternative to the private car, contributes to reduced congestion and improved air quality.

This document is intended to compliment Kent County Council's "Walking Strategy for Kent" published in 2001 and to add a local dimension. It supports policies TR12, TR15, TR16 and SR14 of the Thanet Local Plan and Chapter 12 of Thanet's District Transport Plan.

The assistance given by Thanet Travel Forum and our other partners in the preparation of this document is gratefully acknowledged.

2. Providing and maintaining the infrastructure

OBJECTIVE

TO ENSURE THAT THE APPROPRIATE INFRASTRUCTURE IS PROVIDED AND MAINTAINED TO ENABLE THOSE WISHING TO WALK TO DO SO SAFELY AND CONVENIENTLY.

2.1. Removing the Barriers to Walking

Thanet District Council will work with its partners to remove perceived and actual barriers to walking:

2.1.1. Pavement parking/obstructions:

Ensure that positive enforcement action is taken against vehicles parked on the footway.

Press for tighter controls and enforcement of legislation on footway parking.
Work to eliminate footway obstructions.



2.1.2. Perceptions of safety/security:

Press for tighter controls and enforcement of legislation on speeding.

Look at other methods for reducing speed and volume of road traffic, such as 20 m.p.h. zones & "Home Zones".

Ensure clean, quality and well maintained surfaces.

Ensure the provision of enhanced street lighting in town centres.

Introduce appropriate measures to reduce conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.
Increase the number of crossing facilities on popular pedestrian desire lines.
Improve and extend pedestrianised areas within town centres.



2.2. Rationalising and Improving the Network

Thanet District Council will work with its partners to rationalise and improve the available network of suitable routes for walking:

2.2.1. Filling in the gaps

Rationalise the network by ensuring that there are purposeful links between paths.

2.2.2. Incorporate Desire Lines

Ensure that, where possible, pedestrian desire lines are incorporated in footway design.



2.2.3. New routes.

Develop improved footway links between car parks, bus stops, rail stations and town centres and schools.
Ensure through the planning process that new developments have high quality pedestrian access.

2.2.4. Signing.

Ensure good quality signing of pedestrian routes, including named and themed walks. If possible, signs to include distance in time (mins) as well as miles/Kms.

2.2.5. Street seating.

Ensure the provision of good quality benches along pedestrian routes.



2.2.6. Toilets.

Ensure the adequate provision of public conveniences at key locations on pedestrian routes.

2.2.7. Route Audits.

Carry out a planned programme of “audits” of existing and proposed walking routes to ensure that the necessary infrastructure, as listed above, is in place and in good order.

2.3. Improving Access for the Mobility Impaired

Thanet District Council will work with its partners to improve access to the footway network for the mobility impaired.

2.3.1. Implement, where possible, a planned programme of measures to improve access for the mobility impaired including:

Drop kerbs at crossings.

Tactile indicators at crossings.

Eliminating steps and providing ramps.

Improving inadequate footway widths.

Removing footway obstructions and trip hazards.

Providing street seating in accordance with the recent guidelines issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Provision of adequate and appropriate lighting.



2.4. Planning & Development Control

Thanet District Council will work through the planning and development control process to secure improvements to the footway network:

2.4.1. Access to new developments.

Ensure that any new developments include a high standard of provision for pedestrians, including measures to discourage criminal activity.



2.4.2. Developer contributions.

To seek contributions from developers to extend and improve the footway network and related infrastructure.

- 2.4.3. To encourage through the planning/development control process and by positive partnership working the formation of “Green” Travel Plans. These initiatives will include:
School Travel Plans.
“Walking Buses”.
Safer Routes to School.
Company Travel Plans.
Thanet District Council Travel Plan.



- 2.4.4. To institute a system of “Walking Audits” of planning applications, to ensure that the needs of pedestrians are taken into account.

3. Promoting and encouraging walking

OBJECTIVE

TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE WALKING AS AN HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRIVATE CAR FOR SHORT WORK AND LEISURE JOURNEYS AND AS A MEANS OF RECREATION

3.1. Thanet Travel Forum

Thanet District Council recognises and supports the role of the Thanet Travel Forum in promoting and encouraging walking.

3.1.1. Thanet Travel Forum provides a means whereby those wishing to walk can raise and discuss issues and needs with Thanet District Council.

3.1.2. Thanet Travel Forum provides a means whereby those who walk can advise and help Thanet District Council promote and encourage walking.

3.2. Published & Themed Walks

Thanet District Council recognises the wide variety of reasons why people choose to walk. Walking is still a significant niche market for many tourism destinations and there is an obvious potential to grow and exploit this market in Thanet. This plan acknowledges the different types of walks that are available, or might be promoted in the future.

3.2.1. Health Walks.

Walking provides regular exercise and reduces the risk of coronary illness and stress. Thanet already has a programme of health walks through the Primary Care Trust's "Walk & Talk" initiative and this is being developed further.

3.2.2. Leisure Walks.

Leisure is the main (and sometimes only) reason that people walk, particularly in rural areas. Walking accounts for some 30% of all visits to the countryside. Leisure walking is the most effective way of acquiring the "walking habit". Thanet District Council and its partners will continue to promote leisure walking as part of its tourism strategy. Thanet District Council is a member of the Car-Free Leisure Network.



3.2.3. Coastal Walks.

Thanet has 26 miles of coastline, much of it of international scientific and ecological importance. The Thanet coast provides some excellent walks, which the Council will continue to promote.

3.2.4. Rail walks.

With seven rail stations in Thanet the opportunity for walks starting and finishing at a station is considerable. Thanet District Council will work in

partnership with the train operating company to promote walks that combine with rail travel and to improve facilities for the disabled at stations.

3.2.5. History/cultural walks.

The potential to exploit Thanet's history and culture for themed walks is considerable. An existing example is the "St Peter's Tour". The Council will work with the owners of historical buildings, cultural attractions and other partners to promote walks based on these themes.

3.2.6. Information.

Whilst most would recognise the importance of good quality information for visitors, many residents remain unaware of the excellent walking opportunities in Thanet. Thanet District Council will work with partners to make walking information available through the following means:

Walking Guides.

Walking Maps.

Quality Signing, including named and themed walks.

Internet kiosks - Consideration is being given to including walking information on two electronic information points being installed at Ramsgate Station as part of the Transport Interchange project.

3.2.7. Grading of walks.

Those wishing to walk in Thanet will be of a wide range of ages and abilities. Although the District is relatively flat, it will still be important to grade the accessibility and length of signposted or published walks. Further consideration will need to be given to describing the length of walks by time or distance.

3.2.8. Thanet Walking Festival

During 2003 a Thanet Walking Festival has been promoted and this could become an annual event.

3.3. Improving the Image

This plan recognises the need to improve the image of walking, if it is to make a contribution to reducing car use and the resultant traffic congestion and air pollution.



3.3.1. Getting the walking habit.

Most people who walk start walking for leisure (see 3.2.2.). It will be important to persuade more people to try walking and much of this document is aimed at that end. However, it will be vital to encourage children and parents to walk more and promote the role of school travel plans along with other Green Travel Initiatives. These will be explored in the following paragraph.

3.4. School Travel Plans

The “school run” is recognised nationally as the largest single cause of traffic congestion. By encouraging more children to walk to school, we can reduce congestion, improve children’s health and help them to become used to walking as an alternative to the car for short journeys.

3.4.1. School Travel Plans.

Thanet District Council and K.C.C. will work with local schools to encourage and enable them to prepare and adopt School Travel Plans.

3.4.2. “Walking Buses”.

The Walking Bus concept involves children walking to school together with adult supervision. The Walking Bus is particularly suited to primary schools, where children generally travel short distances to school. It can form part of a wider Travel Plan or be used as a separate initiative. T.D.C. has recently provided funding to extend the East Kent Walking Bus Group into Thanet to promote the concept in local schools.



3.4.3. "Safer Routes to School".

Thanet District Council will continue to support K.C.C.'s "Safe Routes to School" initiative. Although this is primarily aimed at cycling, there can also be benefits for those walking to school.

3.5. Company Travel Plans

3.5.1. Company Travel Plans.

Company Travel Plans are being required increasingly as part of the planning/development control process. Thanet District Council will work proactively with local businesses to encourage the adoption of Company Travel Plans and offer advice on the preparation of these. The Council will also use planning powers to ensure that new developments provide good pedestrian access. (See 2.4.1.)

3.5.2. Thanet District Council Travel Plan.

During the coming year, Thanet District Council will be preparing its own Travel Plan. This plan will draw on "Best Practice" from elsewhere and will seek to be an example to businesses and other organisations in the District.

4. Priority Routes

OBJECTIVE

TO IDENTIFY PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING A PLANNED PROGRAMME OF HIGH QUALITY WALKING ROUTES IN THANET

4.1 Schedule of Routes

- 4.1.1. The enclosed plan shows the network of routes that has been identified following further consultation for improvements to infrastructure.
- 4.1.2. A series of “Walking Audits” will now be carried out by interested volunteers in conjunction with KCC/TDC officers to determine what works will be necessary on the routes identified.
- 4.1.3. As a first priority, a “Flagship Walking Route” from Margate via St. Peter’s to Broadstairs will be implemented with the working title “Turner to Dickens”.