

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director for Environment and Economy

Report to:	Mid Lincolnshire Local Access Forum
Date:	16 October 2016
Subject:	English Coast Path – Sutton Bridge to Skegness

Summary: To provide an update of the latest situation of the English Coast Path, Sutton Bridge to Skegness.

Recommendation(s):

That the report be noted

Background

Lincolnshire County Council continues to work with Natural England on the provision of the English Coast Path with the sections from Sutton Bridge to Skegness and from Skegness to Mablethorpe already progressing. The section from Mablethorpe to the Humber will be started imminently and initial scoping meeting between the authority and Natural England have taken place.

Although most landowners along the stretch have had a visit although Natural England are currently at a difficult stage to make much progress with finalising the route and there are two issues that need answering before we can continue with work on the less obvious parts of the route that will not follow an existing public right of way.

The issue of crossing the Steeping River persists as Natural England have not yet identified a way of getting to the existing IDB bridge by a route that was both safe and avoided unacceptable disturbance and are investigating the option of a new crossing closer to the visitor centre. Quotes for such a provision have been recently received and it would appear that a realistic range for a new crossing would be between £90,000 to £130,000. LCC has been informed that should no alternative route be found then it is possible that the Coastal Path budget could support this amount and the idea will be continued to be developed as one of the options.

Council officers have however raised significant concerns regarding the operation of such a bridge alongside the matter of funding future maintenance. It has been suggested that Natural England should also investigate the potential of a route that

passes much further inland however this would have the effect of bypassing Gibraltar Point to a greater extent and does not fit with the principles of the coastal path.

The second issue is that of agreement with other areas of Natural England responsible for the SSSIs at Gibraltar Point and around the Wash on avoiding disturbance to the notified species. Until they have accepted that the expected level of use and mitigating measures will avoid disturbance Natural England cannot proceed with finalising the route along the preferred line.

The main areas of uncertainty are therefore around the crossing of the Steeping, Wainfleet to Friskney and the Freiston Shore area. At Gibraltar Point agreement with the Wildlife Trust to a fair level of detail for the route north from the visitor centre has been achieved with proposals for the route to take a route partly along the dune ridge and partly at the base. This takes into account Council advice that maintenance cutting would be more easily done in a strip at the base (providing a dry path and one that avoids trampling sensitive dune slack plants) and avoids significant and expensive scrub clearance on the dune ridge.

The schedule for the stretch is still to complete the report detailing the proposed route by June 2017. At this point the report is submitted to the Secretary of State and there is a brief opportunity for final objections and representations. The proposal should be given approval with or without alterations by December 2017. Establishment work can then begin so that the route will be ready to open at the end of 2018. It is accepted though that if the option of constructing a new bridge is chosen it may not be possible to complete this in time for the opening of the rest of this section .

Skegness to Mablethorpe

Natural England are in the processes of finalising the route for the coast path for this section with the major issues under consideration being the golf club at North Shore, Skegness, the road junction at Quebec Road, Mablethorpe and the potential for a seafront boardwalk to adjoin the existing sea defence at Chapel St Leonards near to the Sea Observatory being constructed at present. It is envisaged that timescales will be similar to those at Sutton Bridge to Skegness.

Mablethorpe to Humber Bridge

Natural England announced on 14th October the starting of the final Lincolnshire stretch of the Coast Path and walking the course with officers from LCC and North East Lincolnshire Council will begin in the near future. Drop in Sessions at North Somercotes and in Grimsby are due to be undertaken in December.

Conclusion

For noting only

Consultation

N/A

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

N/A

Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

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