

Coastal access and the England Coast Path – Combe Martin to Marsland Mouth Update on progress – September 2018

Introduction

Natural England is investigating how to improve coastal access along a 128km stretch of the Devon coast between Combe Martin and Marsland Mouth. This new access is expected to be ready in 2020. Officers from Devon County Council are providing Natural England with expert local advice and helping to make sure there is full consultation with local interests during the development of the route.

We have completed stage 1 for the stretch. This has included:

- holding discussions with national and local organisations as well as interested individuals to get their ideas and concerns about current access along this stretch;
- assessing the problems, opportunities and constraints for improving access along this stretch of coast; and
- seeking to identify owners and occupiers of land that might be affected.

We are currently in stage 2 which is the main stage for dialogue with local landowners and other legal interests in potentially affected land. We share with them any initial thinking and ask for their views on coastal access. The route of the existing South West Coast Path National Trail (SWCP) is likely to be followed by much of the proposed England Coast Path (ECP) in this area and we will inform landowners where this is the case. Where improvements could be made to the existing SWCP route we will meet with landowners to discuss the best approach and ensure sensitive features are protected.

There will be a formal opportunity to comment on the proposals to improve coastal access at the end of stage 3, when a report for the stretch will be written up and submitted to the Secretary of State. This will be in 2019.

Update on progress

The Combe Martin to Marsland Mouth stretch has been split into 10 working chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1: Combe Martin to Torrs Park, Ilfracombe
- Chapter 2: Torrs Park, Ilfracombe to Barton Road, Woolacombe
- Chapter 3: Barton Road, Woolacombe to Saunton Down
- Chapter 4: Saunton Down to Velator
- Chapter 5: Velator to Taw Bridge, Barnstaple
- Chapter 6: Torr Bridge, Barnstaple to Bideford Long Bridge
- Chapter 7: Bideford Long Bridge to Merley Road, Westward Ho!
- Chapter 8: Merley Road, Westward Ho! to Hobby Lodge, Clovelly
- Chapter 9: Hobby Lodge, Clovelly to Hartland Point
- Chapter 10: Hartland Point to Marsland Mouth

Progress to date on each of the chapters is summarised below.

Chapter 1: Combe Martin to Torrs Park, Ilfracombe

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.

Chapter 2: Torrs Park, Ilfracombe to Barton Road, Woolacombe

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.
- There are some areas where we are looking at making improvements to the route of the SWCP/ECP and will shortly be holding discussions with landowners about possible options, including at Shag Point where the trail could be closer to the sea. At Mortehoe, the trail will follow the new route on National Trust land at Sharp Rock.

Chapter 3: Barton Road, Woolacombe to Saunton Down

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.
- There are some areas where we are looking at making improvements to the route of the SWCP/ECP and will shortly be holding discussions with landowners about possible options, including various options at Putsborough (potentially taking the route closer to the coast), Croyde (avoiding the dunes and cliff at Down End) and the difficult road crossing at Saunton Down.

Chapter 4: Saunton Down to Velator

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.
- There are some areas where we are looking at making improvements to the route of the SWCP/ECP and will shortly be holding discussions with landowners about possible options. These include a range of options at Saunton (where the route follows the busy B3231 for 400m), Braunton Burrows (where the route currently follows the tracks/roads landward of the golf course and sand dunes) and Braunton Marsh/Horsey Island.

Chapter 5: Velator to Taw Bridge, Barnstaple

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area, and we are informing landowners where this is the case.
- The ECP will follow the SWCP across the Taw Bridge, it being the first crossing point across the River Taw with pedestrian access.

Chapter 6: River: Torr Bridge, Barnstaple to Bideford Long Bridge

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.
- There are some areas where we are looking at making improvements to the route of the SWCP/ECP and will shortly be holding discussions with landowners about possible options, including minor changes in Bideford avoiding a steep set of steps where the route leaves the Tarka Trail close to Bideford Long Bridge.

Chapter 7: Bideford Long Bridge to Merley Road, Westward Ho!

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.
- There are some areas where we are looking at making improvements to the route of the SWCP/ECP and will shortly be holding discussions with landowners about possible options, including at Hubbastone Road, Appledore and Long Lane, West Appledore where the route currently follows narrow and busy roads for 1km and 650m respectively. There is also a minor change at Westward Ho! where the SWCP is now sign-posted to go landward of the cricket ground.

Chapter 8: Merley Road, Westward Ho! to Hobby Lodge, Clovelly

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.

Chapter 9: Hobby Lodge, Clovelly to Hartland Point

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.

Chapter 10: Hartland Point to Marsland Mouth

- Discussions with landowners and legal interests along this part of the stretch are ongoing. The route of the SWCP is likely be followed by much of the proposed ECP in this area and we are informing landowners where this is the case.
- There are some areas where we are looking at making improvements to the route of the SWCP/ECP and will shortly be holding discussions with landowners about possible options, including at Sandhole Cliff where the route currently follows a minor road for 700m.