

## **Teign Estuary Walking and Cycling Trail Update**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

***Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.***

**Recommendations: It is recommended that**

- (a) approval be given for the Teign Estuary Trail strategy between Passage House Inn and Dawlish;**
- (b) approval be given to progress with land acquisition by agreement and a planning application for the Teign Estuary Trail section between Passage House Inn and Teignmouth.**

### **1. Background/Introduction**

The Teign Estuary Trail is a long-term aspiration of Devon County Council, forming part of the 'Cycling and Multi-Use Trail Network Strategy' with work being undertaken to progress design of various sections over recent years. The current strategy is for the route to be delivered incrementally, with some sections already delivered. The first section of the Teign Estuary Trail between Town Quay, Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton was opened in March 2013. This section, whilst part of the future Teign Estuary route, is a valuable connection for local utility trips to work and other facilities in its own right. More recently, the route eastwards linking Newton Abbot Racecourse to Passage House Inn was opened in April 2018. This now leaves a gap on the coastal walking and cycling route between Passage House Inn and Dawlish. From Dawlish it becomes the Exe Estuary Trail and provides a high standard route via Exeter to Exmouth.

Cabinet previously agreed an outline alignment for the Teign Estuary Trail route between Kingsteignton and Teignmouth rail station/town centre at its meeting on 13 February 2013. Design work, land negotiations and feasibility investigations have since been undertaken to provide greater clarity on the deliverability, costs and benefits of these various scheme elements. This process has identified a number of challenges which have delayed the progress of the scheme. The aim of this report is to recognise the benefits of completing the development of the Teign Estuary Trail between Passage House Inn and Dawlish, agree a deliverable strategy and enable progress to be made with a planning application.

### **2. Scheme Justification**

The County Council has had a long-standing strategy of investing in Coastal Trail routes as part of its efforts to promote walking and cycling, as a contributor to providing alternatives to the private car, local economic growth by attracting tourism including day visitors whilst also improving the health of the local population by encouraging greater levels of exercise. Routes of this type are much more than just cycle routes: they are trails that are accessible to people walking, cycling and less able users with wheelchairs and mobility scooters, as demonstrated by experience on the Exe Estuary.

Any extension to the existing Teign and Exe Estuary routes to connect Dawlish, Teignmouth and Newton Abbot would form a national showcase supporting local cycling utility trips, for example to work and education, providing economic and health benefits. In addition, the trail would link to an emerging network of routes centred on Newton Abbot and provide a much safer cycling alternative than the current A381.

The development of the route is a long-term aspiration and progressing it through the planning system, whilst continuing to negotiate land acquisition, is the first step in providing confidence to a possible future funding application.

The planning application will require the appointment of a number of experts and a range of environmental surveys to be undertaken. Teignbridge District Council have identified £200,000 from Community Infrastructure Levy that could be contributed towards this work. The District Council's Executive Committee are considering a report seeking approval for this contribution on 5 March 2019. The outcome of this will be confirmed at the 13 March 2019 Cabinet meeting.

The work to connect the Teign and Exe Estuary routes has been split into sections: Passage House Inn to Bishopsteignton and Teignmouth and Teignmouth to Dawlish.

### **Passage House Inn to Bishopsteignton and Teignmouth**

The route would be approximately 5km in length from the end of the current section at Passage House Inn to Bishopsteignton and Teignmouth. The section to Bishopsteignton runs over open land, inland of the railway. There would be a connection to Bishopsteignton which would enable local businesses, including the pub and hotel within Bishopsteignton village and the Passage House Inn, to benefit from additional trade.

Beyond Bishopsteignton the route has several constraints given the nature of the topography together with the proximity to the A381, neighbouring properties, the main west coast railway line and the estuary. The estuary itself also contains further significant environmental constraints. To address these, a route on the northern side of the A381 has been identified to utilise sections of old highway segregated from the A381, as well as widening sections of existing footway, some set into the hillside to achieve desired path widths and provide estuary views. This would stretch from Bishopsteignton for approximately 1.5km, terminating at the junction of the A381 with the entrance to Morrisons superstore/garage.

### **Teignmouth**

Within Teignmouth, pedestrians would use existing footways. A segregated cycle route is not currently possible as it is constrained by the urban environment. It is therefore proposed that the current Teign Estuary Trail strategy does not include sections within the Teignmouth urban environment beyond the junction of the A381 with the entrance to Morrisons. It is expected that confident cyclists would remain on the existing highway to navigate the urban environment, whilst those that are less confident would permeate through quieter, residential routes.

Should suitable funding sources be identified, a further phase of the Teign Estuary Trail to include the provision of an urban route through Teignmouth could be explored. However, to prevent the resolution of these challenging aspects stalling the route as a whole, it is suggested that this is omitted from the current strategy.

## **Teignmouth to Dawlish**

A complete route between Teignmouth and Holcombe has been identified, beginning in Teignmouth town centre. Pedestrians could use the promenade adjacent to the railway. For cyclists the route would head northeast using quiet roads and public rights of way to the south and east of Eastcliffe Mules Park, before running on shared-use paths parallel to the A379 to Holcombe. However, there are ongoing discussions with Network Rail regarding their plans to provide an improvement between Teignmouth and Holcombe and the potential to provide walking and cycling infrastructure as part of the public amenity aspect of the scheme. It is recommended that work on this section is paused whilst further clarity is sought from Network Rail.

Continuing northeast from Holcombe, the trail would continue along shared use paths parallel to the main A379 to reach Dawlish. There is an existing pedestrian route along the coast.

Following a similar approach to the urban area in Teignmouth, a light touch approach would be taken through Dawlish itself. Pedestrians would use existing facilities. It is expected that confident cyclists would remain on the existing highway, whilst those that are less confident could be routed through quieter, residential routes.

### **3. Options/Alternatives**

#### **Passage House Inn to Bishopsteignton**

The alternative route on the estuary side of the railway line was discounted by Cabinet at its 13 February 2013 meeting due to the environmental constraints, costs and the Environment Agency's objection. There are potential minor variations to the inland route between the A381 and the railway but it is expected that the alignment following the railway where possible would be the least disruptive to land owners and minimise costs. There is no practical road-based route.

#### **Bishopsteignton to Teignmouth**

An option to simply utilise the existing footpath alongside the A381 between the two settlements was considered unsafe and of insufficient width in several key locations. This option would not serve its purpose of attracting commuter and leisure users and generating economic benefits.

Structures within the estuary have been discounted on economic and environmental grounds as they would negatively affect both landscape and ecology. Two other alternative routes taking the route further into Teignmouth centre have been considered and discounted due to major physical constraints.

### **4. Consultations/Representations**

The last full public consultation on a Teign Estuary cycle route was carried out in 2005. There was generally strong support for the concept of route.

Dialogue with the public is ongoing through regular stakeholder consultations, including meetings with Teign Estuary Trail Campaign Group, Bishopsteignton Parish Council, Teignmouth Town Council, affected landowners and local councillors.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

The 'Devon Cycling and Walking Strategy 2018' report, presented to the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee in November 2018, provided an update on the strategy for walking and cycling in the county. This identified the Teign Estuary Trail as one of the priorities for delivery.

Officers have been in discussion with Teignbridge District Council, who are eager to progress the scheme. The District Council's Executive Committee, meeting on 5 March 2019, are considering a report seeking approval for a contribution of £200,000 accumulated Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money towards the preparation of a Teign Estuary Trail planning application. The outcome of this decision will be reported at the Cabinet meeting of 13 March 2019.

Approximately £374,000 of Investing in Devon (IID) funding remains allocated to the scheme. Some of the IID will be used to match the Teignbridge District Council contribution towards the planning application, which is estimated to cost in the region of £400,000. It is proposed that the majority of the remaining IID funding is reserved for completing design work, progressing land acquisition and a contribution towards construction. There will remain a significant funding shortfall for the route construction and as such external funding will need to be secured in order for the scheme to progress once planning approval has been obtained.

A proposed funding package will be confirmed as part of the scheme approval report to a future Cabinet meeting.

## **6. Sustainability Considerations**

The environmental impacts of the Passage House Inn to Bishopsteignton section will be minimised by adopting the inland route. It is possible that a full Environmental Impact Assessment will be required as part of the planning application. Archaeological surveys will also be required. The impacts of the Bishopsteignton to Teignmouth section have also been reduced by opting for works to adapt the existing footpath alongside the A381 on the non-estuary side.

There are clear social and safety benefits to providing a new walking and cycling route along the Teign Estuary, enabling local people to access green infrastructure. Routes open up access to a wider range of groups who may not be able to physically access current facilities. More people, particularly younger age groups, will have greater access to employment and training opportunities without incurring the costs of driving or public transport. There may be some negative social impacts on individual land owners.

## **7. Carbon Impact Considerations**

The scheme is expected to reduce carbon emissions by encouraging greater levels of commuting and other short trips by walking or cycling compared to travel by car. Reductions will also result from leisure trips using the route that would have otherwise involved a car journey elsewhere.

## **8. Equality Considerations**

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment/Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective. An Impact Assessment will be carried out alongside the development of detailed scheme designs and options.

## **9. Legal Considerations**

Cabinet has previously agreed to the purchase of the necessary land along the route.

## **10. Risk Management Considerations**

The principal risks are the numerous constraints in the process of securing a planning consent and obtaining land. This will contribute to a degree of uncertainty over timescales and cost.

## **11. Public Health Impact**

The scheme would be expected to generate public health benefits by further encouraging the growing culture of walking and cycling in Devon. Experience in Exeter and elsewhere in Devon has shown that introducing people to walking and cycling through leisure routes encourages take up for more regular utility type trips for journeys to work education, shopping etc. in conjunction with improved facilities in their local area. This is particularly the case with cycling where it incentivises the purchase of new or improved equipment including bikes.

The main health benefits accrue through greater physical activity reducing levels of obesity and improving general fitness levels allied with reduced levels of mental illness through new activities and greater physical activity levels.

## **12. Reasons for Recommendations**

The 'Devon Cycling and Multi Use Trail Network Strategy 2015', presented in April 2015 PTE15/22, prioritised the development of the Teign Estuary trail and the section between Dawlish and Newton Abbot. An update to the Teign Estuary Trail strategy has been considered and detailed in this report, including the recommendations to pause on the section between Teignmouth and Dawlish until opportunities with Network Rail have been explored and the strategy focusing on links to, but not within, Teignmouth due to significant constraints.

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**Electoral Divisions: Dawlish; Kingsteignton & Teign Estuary; Teignmouth**

Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
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Nil

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# Teign Estuary Trail Strategic Route



Key	
Existing Exe Estuary Trail	
Dawlish Warren to Dawlish	
Dawlish to Teignmouth	
Teignmouth to Bishopsteignton	
Bishopsteignton to Passage House Inn	
Passage House Inn to Newton Abbot Race Course	