

## Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail

### Report of the Head of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

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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.

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#### **1) Recommendation**

That the Cabinet be asked to:

- (a) approve the preferred scheme, as shown in Appendix 1, to proceed to tender and construction at an estimated cost of £1,234,376;
- (b) approve delegated powers for the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highway Management and the local member, to make minor amendments to the scheme details.

#### **2) Background / Introduction**

The Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail proposes to link the communities of Seaton and Colyford with a safe, direct and attractive path which is accessible for all. The route between the settlements is designated as part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 2, which includes the Exe Estuary Trail and connects the East Devon market and coastal towns of Exmouth, Budleigh Salterton, Sidmouth, Seaton and Axminster through to the Dorset border and onwards to Portsmouth. Whilst the majority of the existing NCN2 between Seaton and Colyford consists of high-quality off-road provision, there is a missing gap in the middle which currently diverts users onto a section of road, unsuitable for families and less confident cyclists. This scheme proposes to complete this section of the route with a parallel and off-road shared use path, consistent with the standard of route running north of Seaton. In doing so this would deliver approximately 3km of high-quality, safe and attractive cycle route suitable for all ages between the communities of Seaton and Colyford, improving access to the Seaton Wetlands and beyond on low traffic lanes to Axminster.

A planning application for improvements to this section of the Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail was approved in September 2011. Compulsory Purchase Orders for the required land were successfully secured in 2021 and the council is now in a position to construct the link during the summer of 2023.

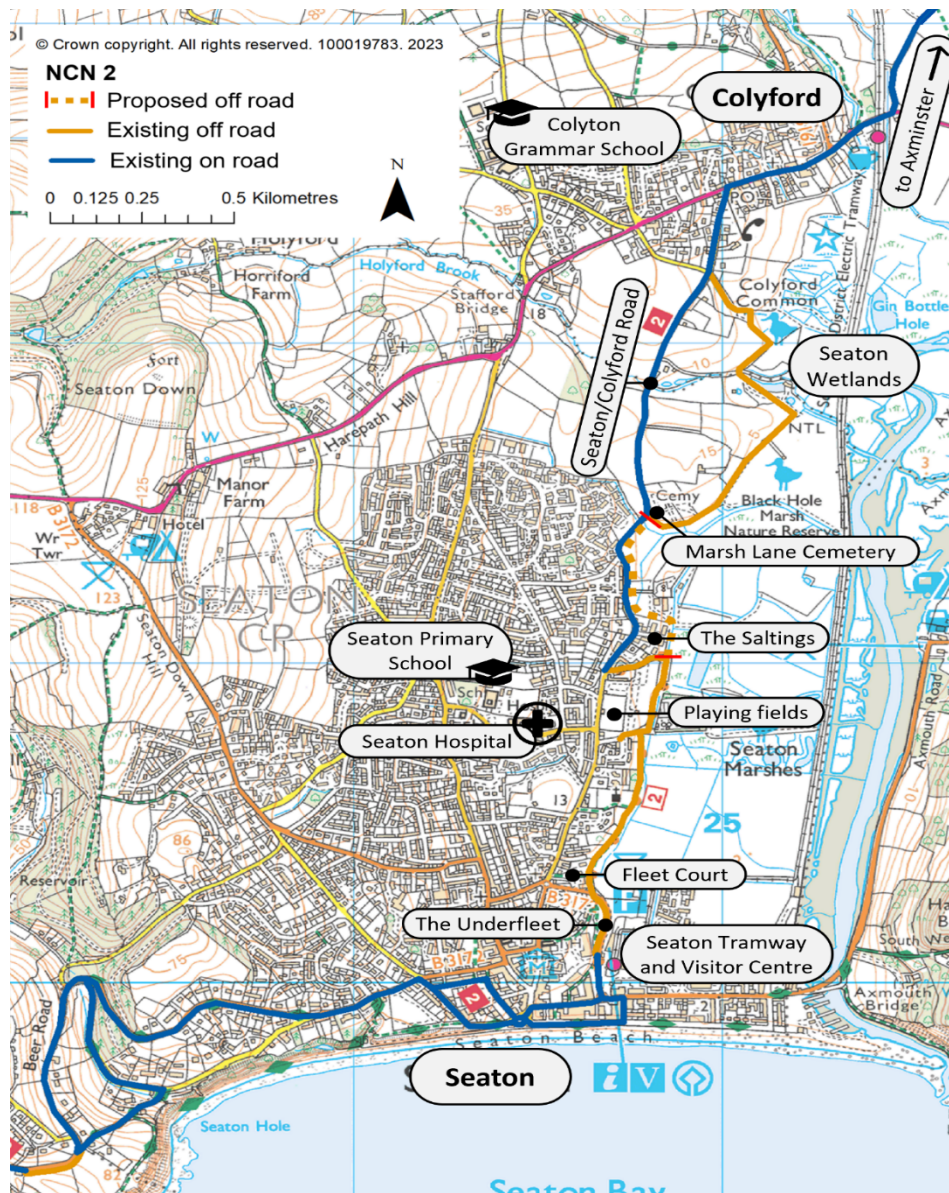


Figure 1: Existing and proposed NCN 2 between Seaton and Colyford amenities

### 3) Proposal

#### Proposed Route (Appendix 1)

Improvements to the southern section of the route from The Underfleet / Tramway Station / Visitor Centre to Seaton/Colyford Road south of The Saltings have already been delivered. In the other direction, users travelling south from Colyford can access Seaton Wetlands for 1.2km until they reach Seaton/Colyford Road at Marsh Lane Cemetery. However, there is a need to complete the missing off-road link with a safe, accessible, attractive and direct route.

Where the existing track turns west to meet Seaton/Colyford Road a new shared-use path is proposed to instead maintain the off-road provision. A new length of approximately 625m of path would continue north along the rear of residential properties located on The Saltings. After this the new route would then turn eastwards and run

parallel with Seaton/Colyford Road before connecting to the existing off-road provision at Marsh Lane Cemetery and to the Wetlands routes beyond. The path would be 2.5 – 3m wide and surfaced with tarmac. The route can be seen in Appendix 1.

This new section of path would therefore bypass the on-road section. Connecting two existing sections of off-road provision for walkers, wheelers and cyclists would result in a complete and high-quality sustainable travel link of approximately 3km between Seaton and Colyford and release the full potential of the route for people of all abilities.

The specific route proposed for the Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail is supported in the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 3, 2011-2026. Devon County Council's Cycling and Multi-Use Trail Network Strategy prioritises the Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail, as does its 2021 update. The route also aligns with the vision of the future for Seaton, as set out in the adopted East Devon Local Plan 2013 - 2031. These include enhancing 'green tourism', 'sustainable transport links' and opening up access to the Axe wetlands and Jurassic Coast 'key environmental assets that will be integral to the future success of the town.'

### Benefits

A complete route will encourage sustainable travel between residences and businesses in Colyford and the education, employment and tourist attractions in Seaton (such as the Seaton Tramway, Seaton town centre and Seaton Primary School). In addition to providing benefits for local utility trips, the completed route would also offer wider benefits for sustainable leisure travel and bring additional visitor spending to the area, owing to the location's stunning natural environment which has both international and national recognition for its geological, wildlife habitat and landscape quality value (World Heritage Site, three European Special Areas of Conservation, East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and numerous wildlife designations). Development of the NCN in Devon has a successful track record of delivering economic benefits, seen for example in the creation of jobs and tangible improvements to the local economy along the Exe Estuary Trail and the Tarka Trail.

Delivery of the scheme will enable the existing route to reach its full potential; the Propensity to Cycle Toolkit suggests that significant improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure in the Seaton/Colyford area could increase numbers of commuting cyclists 6-fold. Improving key sections of NCN2 will also encourage use of the route for longer journeys as more confident walkers and cyclists can continue from Colyford on quiet lanes to link to a mainline rail station, local secondary school and further employment and retail in Axminster (approximately an additional 8.5km/5 miles, see Figure 2).

Improving this final section of the Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Path will also promote inclusivity and accessibility. The new length of trail will be suitable for wheelchair users and families using pushchairs and would allow people to access and enjoy the Devon countryside from Seaton, boosting health and wellbeing in an environmentally friendly way. The connecting section of NCN2 immediately north provides access to the Seaton and Black Hole Marsh Nature Reserves offering shallow gradients, which would be attractive to young people, older people and people with disabilities. The scheme would

generate public health benefits by encouraging the growing culture of walking and cycling in Devon.



Figure 2: Existing and proposed NCN2 route between Seaton and Axminster

#### 4) Options / Alternatives

Alternative routes have been explored however none of these were viable for the following reasons:

Eastern Route: A longer route continuing north from The Saltings and travelling east was not considered compliant with the criteria set out in National Guidance Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 surrounding directness and safety, due to its remoteness from Seaton/Colyford Road. This alternative would also require construction on unsuitable areas of land, with the alignment crossing flood zones 2 and 3 and a County Wildlife Site and Coastal preservation area by the East Devon Local Plan (2016-2031). This alternative also does not have planning permission.

Shared Use Provision along Seaton/Colyford Road: This was discounted due to the following reasons:



- Additional distance required (155m);
- Crossings of side roads, and potentially of Seaton/Colyford Road, increasing the risk to users;
- Limited widths within the Seaton/Colyford Road highway boundary which are insufficient for a shared use path and might involve realignment of the main road and therefore acquisitions from further landowners;
- Unsuitable existing gradients on other land; and
- Loss of coherence of route through the change in environment;
- Incursion of path within the visibility splay potentially impacting road safety for drivers.

Existing route along Seaton/Colyford Road: To keep the status quo would not offer a suitable environment to attract new cyclists or pedestrians due to the traffic volumes and speeds combined with the narrow carriageway.

## 5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

The Council approved a full planning application, with conditions, for the Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail in September 2011. The scheme has been advertised through the processes involved in gaining planning permission and consultation responses regarding the scheme have largely been positive. A consultation on the preliminary design was held during February 2011, with exhibitions held at three separate locations – Seaton, Colyford and Axminster. Approximately 450 visitors attended the public exhibitions over the three days.

East Devon District Council support the application and consider that the multi-use path will provide a stimulus for further tourism growth alongside the regeneration programme in Seaton and fitting well alongside the recent extension to the nature reserves in this part of the lower Axe valley.

## 6) Strategic Plan

Proposals are well-aligned with a range of Strategic Plan priorities and actions. The scheme seeks to promote and create more opportunities for active travel, encouraging sustainable lifestyles for all ages and abilities. The table below summarises how the proposals would impact achievement of relevant Strategic Plan actions according to a seven-point scale, whereby -3 represents a large negative impact and +3 represents a large positive impact.

Strategic Plan Priority	Strategic Plan Action	Alignment
<b>Responding to the climate emergency</b>	Support a green recovery from COVID-19	+2 (Moderate positive)
	Prioritise sustainable travel and transport	+3 (Large positive)
	Encourage sustainable lifestyles	+3 (Large positive)

<b>Investing in Devon's economic recovery</b>	Maintain and, where necessary, improve our highway network and improve sustainable transport options	+2 (Moderate positive)
<b>Improving health and wellbeing</b>	Give people greater opportunities for walking and cycling to increase their physical activity	+3 (Large positive)
<b>Helping communities to be safe, connected and resilient</b>	Enable a range of transport options, including public transport	+2 (Moderate positive)

## 7) Financial Considerations

£1.8 million was allocated from the 'Investing in Devon' fund for various sections of the Stop Line Way, including the Seaton to Colyford Trail. £548,711 was spent in previous years on the Seaton to Colyford section, of which £503,537 was funded from Investing in Devon and £45,174 from internal borrowing. Internal borrowing of £37,048 remains in the 2022/23 capital programme. Estimated costs for 2022/23 and 2023/24 total £685,665 therefore the balance of £648,617 will be funded from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) annual funding. This is allocated in the Transport Capital Programme.

A bid has been submitted to the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 for this scheme. If successful, this will reduce the total LTP required. It is expected that Active Travel England will confirm funding allocations for successful schemes by the end of this financial year.

<b>Costs (£)</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Land</b>	0	82,500	<b>82,500</b>
<b>Works</b>	25,000	498,665	<b>523,665</b>
<b>Design</b>	63,000	0	<b>63,000</b>
<b>Supervision</b>		16,500	<b>16,500</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>88,000</b>	<b>597,665</b>	<b>685,665</b>

Table 1: Scheme Costs

## 8) Legal Considerations

Planning permission has been granted for the section of the route to be improved.

Following the issuing of a successful Compulsory Purchase Order in 2021, notices of entry were issued in October 2022. These notices ensure that access to the required land is permitted while ongoing negotiations finalise agreements with the relevant landowners. These notices enable the land to be entered to complete surveys and advance works, and also to complete construction of the route.

## 9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail Scheme falls partly within a flood zone, an area of great landscape value and nature conservation zone. Conditions are placed in the planning permissions in order to mitigate impacts of the project on these zones, including landscaping requirements, inspections and mitigation planting. East Devon

District Council has been directly involved in the detailed engineering design process so as to ensure mitigation can be correctly carried out to a high standard to compensate for any potential loss of habitat or grassland. To mitigate the effect the route has on the area of great landscape value, the route largely follows field boundaries and existing vegetation for the purposes of screening. Additional hedge tree planting will also be carried out to further screen the route. In relation to flood impacts, all culverts would be approved by the Environment Agency and the track is to be constructed at ground level to ensure no reduction in the functioning flood plain.

If the scheme is constructed during summer 2023, vegetation clearance will be undertaken in Spring 2023 with mitigation planting expected in October of the same year.

The scheme is expected to reduce carbon emissions through encouraging greater levels of commuting and other short trips by active travel rather than by motorised vehicle. Emission reductions will also result from leisure trips using the route that would otherwise involve a car journey elsewhere. There are clear benefits enabling local people to access green infrastructure, the new multi-use-trail would further open up access to Seaton Wetlands for a wider range of groups who may not be able to physically access current active travel facilities. More people, particularly younger age groups, will have greater access to employment/training opportunities without incurring the costs of driving or public transport.

## **10) Equality Considerations**

In progressing this particular scheme / proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Members and also is available on the Council's website at [Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail - February 2023 - Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

Members will need to consider the Impact Assessment for the purposes of this item.

## **11) Risk Management Considerations**

This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been to safeguard the Council's position.

The scheme is subject to the normal engineering risks. A quantified risk assessment has been undertaken and these risk costs have been included in the scheme estimate.

## **12) Summary**

Improving the National Cycle Network Route 2 between Seaton and Colyford is set out as a priority in the Council's Multi-Use Trail Network Strategy. The improvements outlined in this report were granted planning permission in 2011 and their construction will complete the high-quality, safe and sustainable route, fulfilling this ambition. Providing an alternative to the on-road provision will increase perception of safety as vulnerable road users will be able to enjoy a continuous trail segregated from the road with access to the Seaton Wetlands and other local tourist attractions. Improving the Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Path will therefore promote inclusive access for walking, wheeling and cycling to East Devon's outstanding countryside, boosting the local economy in a low carbon way. The proposed scheme aligns well with the aims set out in

the council's Strategic Plan and responds to the climate emergency through prioritising and encouraging sustainable, healthy lifestyles and supporting a green recovery from COVID-19.

**Meg Booth**

Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

**Electoral Divisions:** Honiton St Michael's and Seaton Coastal

Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

**Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

Nil

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Seaton to Colyford Multi-Use Trail – Final



