



Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal

Coastal Access Programme

This document records the conclusions of Natural England’s appraisal of any potential for environmental impacts from our proposals to establish the England Coast Path in the light of the requirements of the legislation affecting Natura 2000 sites, SSSIs, NNRs, protected species and Marine Conservation Zones.

Kingswear to Lyme Regis (KLR)

30th March 2017

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This appraisal should be read alongside Natural England’s related Coastal Access Report in which the access proposal is fully described and explained

www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-kingswear-to-lyme-regis

1. Our approach

Natural England's approach to protection of sensitive features under the Coastal Access Programme is set out in section 4.9 Coastal Access: Natural England's Approved Scheme 2013¹. We call our internal processes to support this approach 'Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal' (ASFA) and this document is a record of our conclusions. The appraisal includes Habitats Regulation Assessment wherever relevant to the site in question.

Our final published proposal for a stretch of England Coast Path is preceded by detailed local consideration of options for route alignment, the extent of the coastal margin and any requirement for restrictions, exclusions or seasonal alternative routes. The proposals are thoroughly considered before being finalised and initial ideas may be modified or rejected during the iterative design process, drawing on the range of relevant expertise available within Natural England.

Evidence is also gathered as appropriate from a range of other sources which can include information and data held locally by external partners or from the experience of local land owners and occupiers. The approach includes looking at any current visitor management practices, either informal or formal. It also involves discussing our emerging conclusions as appropriate with key local interests such as land owners or occupiers, conservation organisations or the local access authority. In these ways, any nature conservation concerns are discussed early and constructive solutions identified as necessary.

The conclusions of our appraisal are certified by both the member of staff responsible for developing the access proposal and the person responsible for considering any environmental impacts. This ensures appropriate separation of duties within Natural England.

Where our proposals for the England Coast Path and associated Coastal Margin are relevant to a Natura 2000 site, this appraisal fulfils our duty under the Habitats Regulations 2010 to assess their potential implications in order to ensure no likely significant effect on the site. The formal conclusions relating to this are recorded in Part 7 of the document.

2. Scope

In this part of the document we define the geographic extent for the appraisal and features that are included. Note that this appraisal is concerned with ecological, geological and geomorphological features; other possible sensitivities, including landscape and historic features, are discussed in our coastal access report.

2.1 Geographic extent

This stretch covers an area of Devon from Kingswear in the west to Lyme Regis in the east. The Report to the Secretary of State that this document accompanies is divided into the following 9 chapters. Section 4 of this document follows this chapter division.

1. Kingswear to Sharkham Point
2. Sharkham Point to Paignton (Marine Parade)
3. Paignton (Marine Parade) to Maidencombe
4. Maidencombe to Holcombe
5. Holcombe to Exmouth
6. Exmouth to Otter Estuary
7. Otter Estuary to Sid Estuary (Budleigh to Sidmouth)
8. Sid Estuary to Axe Estuary (Sidmouth to Seaton)
9. Axe Estuary to Lyme Regis

2.2 Designated sites

The following designated sites are present (See Secretary of State Report Map C):

Exe Estuary SPA
Exe Estuary Ramsar
Sidmouth to West Bay SAC
Dawlish Warren SAC
South Hams SAC
Lyme Bay & Torbay SCI
Torbay MCZ
West Dorset Coast SSSI
Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI
Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI
Ladram Bay to Sidmouth SSSI
Otter Estuary SSSI
Budleigh Salterton Cliffs SSSI
Exe Estuary SSSI
Dawlish Warren SSSI
Dawlish Cliffs SSSI
Babbacombe Cliffs SSSI
Hope's Nose to Wall's Hill SSSI

Meadfoot Sea Road SSSI
Daddyhole SSSI
Dyer's Quarry SSSI
Roundham Head SSSI
Saltern Cove SSSI
Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI
Scabbacombe SSSI
Froward Point SSSI
Berry Head NNR
Dawlish Warren NNR
Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs NNR

2.3 Cross reference - where applicable

West Dorset Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) overlaps this stretch and the adjacent Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle (LRR) stretch to the east. It is a 598.5ha site with 42 units and 23 notified features. Only 2 units and 7 features are present within this stretch so the remainder of the designated area won't be assessed in this appraisal as it has been assessed in the appraisal for the LRR stretch. Our proposals for LRR were submitted to the Secretary of State on 8th July 2015 and are available to view at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-lyme-regis-to-rufus-castle>

Sidmouth to West Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) also overlaps with the adjacent Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle (LRR) stretch to the east.

Lyme Bay & Torbay Site of Community Importance (SCI) also overlaps with the adjacent Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle (LRR) stretch to the east.

2.4 Designated features

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West Bay SAC	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay SCI	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point SSSI	Scabbacombe SSSI	Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head SSSI	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road SSSI	Hope's Nose to Wall's Hill SSSI	Babbacombe Cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton Cliffs	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to Sidmouth SSSI	Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI	Axmouth to Lyme Regis Under Cliffs SSSI	West Dorset Coast SSSI
Geological SSSI Features																										
EC - Aptian – Albanian																									√	
EC - Cenomanian-Maastrichtian																									√	
EC - Hettangian Sinemurian And Pliensbachian																									√	√
EC - Jurassic - Cretaceous Reptilia																									√	√
EC - Mesozoic - Tertiary Fish/Amphibia																								√	√	√
EC - Permian - Triassic Reptilia																					√	√	√	√		
EC – Rhaetian																									√	
IA - Coastal Geomorphology																			√				√			√
EC Marine Devonian										√			√	√	√	√	√									

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to	Sidmouth to Beer	Axmouth to Lyme	West Dorset Coast	
EC - Non Marine Permian Triassic (Red Beds)										√		√					√	√		√				√			
ED - Marine Devonian													√			√											
ER - Non Marine Permian Triassic (Red Beds)																		√						√			
EO - Non Marine Permian Triassic (Red Beds)																	√										
FM – Mineralogy																√											
IA - Coastal Geomorphology																			√								
EC - Quaternary Of South-West England																	√										
IS - Quaternary Of South-West England																	√										
Littoral rock and inshore sublittoral rock											√																
IA - Mass Movement																									√	√	
H8310 Caves not open to the public					√																						
Woodland and scrub																											
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland																√									√	√	

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to	Sidmouth to Beer	Axmouth to Lyme	West Dorset Coast
<i>Tilio-Acerion</i> forests of slopes, screes and ravines. (Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes)			√	√																				√	√	
Open Coastal Vegetation																										
Lowland calcareous grassland (CG1)									√																√	
Lowland calcareous grassland (CG2)									√						√									√	√	
Lowland calcareous grassland (CG6)																								√		
Lowland Calcareous Grassland (CG7)																								√		
Lowland Meadows																										√
H6210 Dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)				√					√																	

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to Wall's	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to	Sidmouth to Beer	Axmouth to Lyme	West Dorset Coast	
H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('White dunes') (Shifting dunes with marram)				√															√								
H2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('Grey dunes')				√															√								
H2190 Humid dune slacks				√															√								
Fixed dune grassland																			√								
Sand dune; strandline, embryo and mobile dunes(SD1-6)																			√								
Supralittoral littoral Rock and Dwarf Shrub Heath								√																			
H4030 European dry heaths					√					√																	
H7 Lowland dry heath								√		√																	
H8 Lowland dry heath								√		√																	
H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts			√		√					√														√	√	√	
Annual Vegetation of drift lines			√																								
Maritime Cliff and Slope (M8)								√																			
Maritime Cliff and Slope (M10a)								√																			
Maritime Cliff and Slope (M11)								√																			
Maritime Cliff and Slope (M12)								√																			

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West Bay SAC	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to Sharkham	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to Wall's Hill	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton Cliffs	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to Sidmouth	Sidmouth to Beer Coast	Axmouth to Lyme Regis	West Dorset Coast	
Hard maritime cliff and slope								√																			
Soft maritime cliff and slope																								√			
Swamp and Reedbed Habitats																											
S4 – <i>Phragmites australis</i> swamp																				√							
S21 – <i>Scirpus maritimus</i> swamp and reed-beds																				√							
Intertidal Habitat																											
SM4-28 - Saltmarsh																			√	√		√					
Waterfringe fen (lowland)																						√					
Littoral sediment																		√	√								
Littoral rock and inshore sublittoral rock										√																	
Sheltered muddy shores (including estuarine muds)																				√							
Plant Species																											
S1395 Petalwort, <i>Petalophyllum ralfsi</i>				√															√								
Population of Schedule 8 plant - Bupleurum baldense, Small Hare's-ear										√																	

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West Bay	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to Sharkham	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to Wall's Hill	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton Cliffs	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to Sidmouth	Sidmouth to Beer Coast	Axmouth to Lyme Regis	West Dorset Coast
Population of Schedule 8 plant - Eryngium campestre, Field Eryngo									√																	
Population of Schedule 8 plant - Romulea columnae, Sand Crocus																			√							
Lichen Assemblage									√									√								
Vascular Plant Assemblage							√		√				√		√				√					√	√	
Invertebrates																										
Invert. assemblage F111 bare sand & chalk																								√	√	
Invert. assemblage F112 open short sward																			√					√	√	
Invert. assemblage M211 sandy beach																			√							
Invert. assemblage M311 saltmarsh and transitional brackish marsh																			√							
Invert. assemblage W122 riparian sand																									√	
Invert. assemblage W211 open water on disturbed sediments																			√							

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to	Sidmouth to Beer	Axmouth to Lyme	West Dorset Coast
Population of Schedule 5 crustacean - <i>Chirocephalus diaphanus</i> , a freshwater fairy shrimp																								√		
Dragonfly																										
Outstanding Dragonfly Assemblage																				√						
Mammals																										
S1304 Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>				√					√																	
Breeding Birds																										
Assemblages of breeding birds - Mixed: Lowland fen, Woodland																						√	√			
Assemblages of breeding birds - Lowland damp grasslands																				√						
Aggregations of breeding birds - Guillemot, <i>Uria aalge aalge</i>									√																	

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West Bay	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to Wall's	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to	Sidmouth to Beer	Axmouth to Lyme	West Dorset Coast
Non Breeding Birds																										
A132 Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (Non-breeding)	√																			√						
A156 Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> (Non-breeding)	√																			√						
A046a Dark-bellied brent goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> (Non-breeding)	√	√																		√						
A149 Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> (Non-breeding)	√																									
A141 Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> (Non-breeding)	√																									
A103 Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> (Non-breeding)	√																									
A007 Slavonian grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i> (Non-breeding)	√																									
Waterbird assemblage, Non-breeding ¹	√	√																	√							

¹ The main component species are: Dark-bellied brent goose, Oystercatcher, Grey plover, Dunlin, Wigeon, Black-tailed godwit, Ringed plover, Greenshank

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West Bay	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to Wall's	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton Cliffs	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to	Sidmouth to Beer Coast	Axmouth to Lyme Regis	West Dorset Coast
Ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> (non-breeding)																				√						
Wigeon <i>Anas Penelope</i> (non breeding)																				√						
Broadscale Marine Habitats																										
Intertidal coarse sediment (A2.1)						√																				
Intertidal mixed sediments (A2.4)						√																				
Intertidal sand and muddy sand (A2.2)						√																				
Intertidal mud (A2.3)						√																				
Low energy intertidal rock (A1.3)						√																				
Moderate energy intertidal rock (A1.2)						√																				
Subtidal mud (A5.3)						√																				
Marine Habitats of conservation importance																										
Intertidal underboulder communities (HOCl 10)						√																				
Seagrass beds (HOCl 17)						√																				

	Exe Estuary SPA	Exe Estuary Ramsar	Sidmouth to West	Dawlish Warren SAC	South Hams SAC	Lyme Bay & Torbay	Torbay MCZ	Froward Point	Scabbacombe	Berry Head to	Saltern Cove SSSI	Roundham Head	Dyer's Quarry SSSI	Daddyhole SSSI	Meadfoot Sea Road	Hope's Nose to Wall's	Babbacombe Cliffs	Dawlish cliffs SSSI	Dawlish Warren SSSI	Exe Estuary SSSI	Budleigh Salterton	Otter Estuary SSSI	Ladram Bay to	Sidmouth to Beer	Axmouth to Lyme	West Dorset Coast	
1170 Reefs (infralittoral rocky reef, circalittoral rocky reef, subtidal stony reef, subtidal biogenic reef: mussel beds)						√																					
8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves						√																					
Marine Species																											
Long-snouted seahorse, <i>Hippocampus guttulatus</i> (SOCI 15)							√																				
Native oyster, <i>Ostrea edulis</i> (SOCI 22)							√																				

2.5 Other features about which concerns have been expressed

Feature	Conservation interest
Semi-improved calcareous grassland at Beer Head County Wildlife Site (CWS)	Habitat prone to damage from trampling
Peacock's tail <i>Padina pavonica</i> – Around Torbay	Priority Species/ Species of Principal Importance

3. Baseline conditions and environmental sensitivities

In this part of the document we identify any of the features mentioned above that are potentially sensitive to changes in access, and rule out from further consideration those that are not.

3.1 Geological features

Composition of feature group
<p>For the purposes of this appraisal the following geological features have been grouped together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EC - Aptian – Albian• EC - Cenomanian-Maastrichtian• EC - Hettangian Sinemurian And Pliensbachian• EC - Jurassic - Cretaceous Reptilia• EC - Mesozoic - Tertiary Fish/Amphibia• EC - Permian - Triassic Reptilia• EC – Rhaetian• IA - Coastal Geomorphology• EC Marine Devonian• EC - Non Marine Permian Triassic (Red Beds)• ED - Marine Devonian• ER - Non Marine Permian Triassic (Red Beds)• EO - Non Marine Permian Triassic (Red Beds)• FM – Mineralogy• IA - Coastal Geomorphology• EC - Quaternary Of South-West England• IS - Quaternary Of South-West England• Littoral rock and inshore sublittoral rock• IA - Mass Movement• H8310 - Caves not open to the public
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are notified geological features for the following SSSIs (for details see table 2.4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI• Saltern Cove SSSI• Roundham Head SSSI• Dyer's Quarry SSSI• Daddyhole SSSI• Meadfoot Sea Road SSSI• Hope's Nose to Wall's Hill SSSI• Babbacombe Cliffs SSSI• Dawlish Cliffs SSSI

- Dawlish Warren SSSI
- Exe Estuary SSSI
- Budleigh Salterton Cliffs SSSI
- Otter Estuary SSSI
- Ladram Bay to Sidmouth SSSI
- Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI
- West Dorset SSSI and Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI

All of these features are coastal rock exposures or landforms important for sedimentology, mineralogy fossils or coastal geomorphology.

Sensitivities to changes in access

None identified as they are rock exposures, landforms or deposits not susceptible to existing or increased access. The fossil features can be damaged by unmanaged geological specimen collection, however, we do not think this is an issue at present, or is likely to become a problem as a result of our proposal since the foreshore is already accessible and well used.

This feature group is therefore not considered sensitive to the proposed changes in access and is not further considered in this appraisal.

3.2 Woodland and scrub

Composition of feature group - where applicable

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
- *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines

Current conservation status and use of the site by features

The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):

- South Hams SAC
- Hope's Nose to Walls Hill SSSI
- Sidmouth to West Bay SAC
- Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI
- Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI

At **South Hams SAC and Hope's Nose to Walls Hill SSSI** the woodlands support interesting lichen assemblage and are currently in favourable condition.

At **Sidmouth to West Bay SAC, Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI and Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI** the woodlands support a wide variety of invertebrate fauna. The woodland is mostly favourable but recovering in parts due to undesirable levels of sycamore or holm oak.

Sensitivities to changes in access

At all of these sites the woodland and scrub habitat is largely inaccessible as it is associated with the cliff slopes and ravines or impenetrable due to the density of the woodland and the terrain. Therefore there is no evidence to suggest this feature will be sensitive to the types of change in access proposed, and is not further considered in this appraisal.

3.3 Open coastal vegetation

Composition of feature group - where applicable

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- Lowland calcareous grassland (CG1)
- Lowland calcareous grassland (CG2)
- Lowland calcareous grassland (CG6)
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland (CG7)
- H6210 Dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)
- H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ('White dunes') (Shifting dunes with marram)
- H2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('Grey dunes')
- H2190 Humid dune slacks
- Fixed dune grassland
- Sand dune; strandline, embryo and mobile dunes (SD1-6)
- H4030 European dry heaths
- Lowland dry heath
- H7 Lowland dry heath
- H8 Lowland dry heath
- H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts
- Annual Vegetation of drift lines
- Maritime Cliff and Slope (M8)
- Maritime Cliff and Slope (M10a)
- Maritime Cliff and Slope (M11)
- Maritime Cliff and Slope (M12)

Current conservation status and use of the site by features

The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):

- Froward Point SSSI
- Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI (part of the South Hams SAC)
- Dawlish Warren SAC/SSSI Sand dunes
- Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI and Beer Head CWS
- Axmouth to Lyme Regis Under Cliffs SSSI
- West Dorset SSSI

Froward Point: The site is owned and managed by the National Trust in conjunction with tenants who graze livestock and manage scrub. The site is currently in favourable condition as a result of this ongoing management.

Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI (part of the South Hams SAC): There is no lowland heath within the proposed coastal margin but there is calcareous grassland and vegetated sea cliffs. The last assessment of calcareous grassland was favourable.

Dawlish Warren SAC/SSSI Sand dunes: Assessed as unfavourable in 2010 largely due to cover of undesirable invasive plants and species and scrub encroachment, there is a chance that this may start declining due to uncertainty of funding for a management agreement that was put in place to address this.

Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI and Bear Head CWS

Within the Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI, the recovering or unfavourable condition is due to undergrazing and scrub encroachment (Units 3 + 7 which the current path cuts through).

Axmouth to Lyme Regis Under Cliffs SSSI

Within the Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI the grassland is assessed as recovering rather than favourable due to the level of undesirable ongoing management. In addition, some grassland under HLS is assessed as recovering rather than favourable due to undergrazing. The lowland calcareous grassland areas are part of the mosaic of habitats along this coastal stretch. They contain a number of nationally rare and scarce plants and support a variety of important invertebrate fauna. Rarer plants are mostly on the cliff edges and within hidden glades. Patches vary in their current status, some are favourable, some recovering and others unfavourable.

For woodland and scrub, see Table 3.2

The vegetated seacliffs (H1230) incorporate pioneer communities on recent slips, calcareous grassland, scrub and self-sown woodland dominated by ash or sycamore.

The pioneer communities are currently favourable.

West Dorset SSSI

The lowland meadows are in favourable condition in unit 1 and unfavourable recovering in unit 2, and occur on the National Trust owned area.

On the West Dorset Coast SSSI there is a small amount of suitable habitat for an Annex 2 feature 'Annual vegetation of drift lines' between the Cobb in Lyme Regis and the Devon County boundary. This habitat type occurs on deposits of shingle lying at or above mean high water spring tides, and ephemeral and composed of annual or short lived perennial species.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Froward Point The steepness of slopes and density of vegetation means the features are not likely to be sensitive to a change in access levels, they are not considered to be vulnerable to the proposed changes and are not further considered in this appraisal

Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI (part of the South Hams SAC): Short grassland communities are fairly resilient to trampling so are not thought to be sensitive to a change in access, they are not considered to be vulnerable to the proposed changes and are not further considered in this appraisal.

Dawlish Warren SSSI/SAC dunes: The vegetation of sand dunes can be susceptible to excessive trampling. See 4.5.

Axmouth to Lyme Regis Under Cliffs SSSI and Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI (and Beer Head CWS)

Many parts of the Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs and Sidmouth to Beer sites are inaccessible due to the difficult terrain and dense vegetation. Fresh landslip areas (including developing pioneer communities) fall under this category. They are typically inaccessible and hazardous so are unlikely to be accessed or affected by the public.

The areas of calcareous grassland flora within the site are small and fragmented and could be sensitive to increased access (see 4.8 and 4.9).

West Dorset SSSI

The lowland meadows are potentially sensitive to access. See 4.9.

The vegetative seacliffs on this site are not sensitive to access, and the steepness and impregnability means they are not generally accessed.

Drift lines: This feature is not currently considered sensitive to access at this location. There is already access to the shoreline at this site and we do not expect the levels and patterns of access here will change noticeably as a result of our proposals. Therefore we have ruled out any potential impact.

3.4 Swamp and reedbed habitats

Composition of feature group - where applicable

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- S4 – *Phragmites australis* swamp
- S21 – *Scirpus maritimus* swamp and reed-beds

Current conservation status and use of the site by features

The features included in this group are represented at the following site (for details see table 2.4):

- Exe Estuary SSSI

These habitats are restricted to the Topsham, Exminster and Countess Wear areas of the site. More specifically the RSPB reserves at Bowling Green Marsh and to the east and west of the main river, parts of Exminster marshes, Topsham lock, and the Old Sludge Beds. All of the units which support these habitats are considered to be in favourable condition.

Sensitivities to changes in access

These habitats can be sensitive to changes in access, however; as they are not situated near to the proposed England Coast Path or associated margins, they are not considered to be vulnerable to the proposed changes and are not further considered in this appraisal.

3.5 Intertidal habitat

Composition of feature group - where applicable

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- SM4-28 - Saltmarsh
- Waterfringe fen (lowland)
- Littoral sediment

- Littoral rock and inshore sublittoral rock
- Sheltered muddy shores (including estuarine muds)

Current conservation status and use of the site by features

The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):

- Saltern Cove SSSI
- Dawlish Cliffs SSSI
- Dawlish Warren SSSI
- Exe Estuary SSSI
- Otter Estuary SSSI

Saltern Cove: The rocky coastline at Saltern Cove supports diverse communities of intertidal plants and animals. At low tide, sandy areas are exposed between the rocks and these support a characteristic fauna. Last assessment was favourable.

Dawlish Cliffs: The littoral sediment is assessed as favourable.

Dawlish Warren: The littoral sediment (mudflat) and saltmarsh is assessed as favourable

Exe estuary SSSI: Saltmarsh is in favourable condition across the site. Similarly sheltered muddy sediments are mostly favourable apart from recovering areas of *Zostera noltii* to the north, and mussel beds to the west of Exmouth.

Otter Estuary: The saltmarsh flora is well developed with good zonation, most land is in favourable condition but Unit 5 is unmanaged and undergrazed (2010) resulting in encroachment of dense scrub. The waterfringe fen is at risk of being dominated by reed.

The saltmarsh habitat is used by a number of bird species which are considered separately in this appraisal in 3.10.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Saltern Cove:

Intertidal plants and animals of rocky coastlines are not usually sensitive to use of the foreshore for informal recreation on foot as the places they inhabit provide natural protection. Therefore they are not considered to be vulnerable to the proposed changes and are not further considered in this appraisal.

Dawlish Cliffs:

Mudflats (littoral sediment) are not sensitive to being walked on occasionally. The sensitivity of feeding birds to the presence of people is considered in section 3.10 of this appraisal.

Dawlish Warren & Exe Estuary:

Mudflats (littoral sediment) are not sensitive to being walked on occasionally. Established saltmarsh is generally able withstand people walking on it occasionally, but localised damage could occur if there is repeated trampling (see 4.5). The intertidal habitat of the Exe Estuary is used by a number of bird species and these are considered separately in this appraisal (see 3.10).

Otter Estuary:

The saltmarsh and fen habitats in the Otter Estuary could be sensitive to increased levels of footfall given that they are isolated areas of habitat and support such a large number of invertebrates and birds. See 3.10 and 4.7.

3.6 Plant species

Composition of feature group - where applicable

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- **S1395 Petalwort, *Petalophyllum ralfsi***
- Population of Schedule 8 plant - *Bupleurum baldense*, Small Hare's-ear
- Population of Schedule 8 plant - *Eryngium campestre*, Field Eryngo
- Population of Schedule 8 plant - *Romulea columnae*, Sand Crocus
- Lichen Assemblage
- Vascular Plant Assemblage

Current conservation status and use of the site by features

The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):

- Froward Point SSSI
- Scabbacombe SSSI
- Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI
- Daddyhole SSSI
- Hope's Nose to Walls Hill SSSI
- Dawlish Warren SAC and SSSI
- Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI
- Axmouth to Lyme Regis Under Cliffs SSSI

Froward Point SSSI: The site is in favourable condition (although limited amount of information available at last condition assessment for some plant species).

Scabbacombe SSSI:

Field Eryngo is still recorded on site although recent evidence suggests populations are occurring both inside and outside of the SSSI boundary. The site is within an HLS agreement and is in unfavourable recovering condition.

Hope's Nose to Walls Hill SSSI & Daddyhole SSSI & Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI: The rare flowering plants are in favourable condition, but the condition of the lichens at Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI has not been assessed and there is very little information available, though they may be present on trees or on exposed rock surfaces at this site.

Dawlish Warren SAC/SSSI: Rare plants in favourable condition (although limited amount of information available at last condition assessment).

Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI:

Purple gromwell – currently favourable, present along path in units 5, 9 and 11 (potentially more).

Nottingham catchfly – present along path and on clifftops, many seen during site check 2016.

White horehound – currently favourable.

Axmouth to Lyme Regis Under Cliffs SSSI:

Nottingham catchfly, purple gromwell, Portland spurge populations are present and haven't depleted.

Early gentian – currently favourable, the population has not dwindled and is on the edges of an area of grassland which is not actively promoted or easy to find.

Sensitivities to changes in access
<p>Froward Point SSSI: Localised impacts could occur if changes in access lead to more frequent trampling of vegetation in sensitive areas. See 4.1.</p> <p>Scabbacombe SSSI: There is some local variation in where this plant has been found colonising within the site. There is also some evidence which suggests the plant is fairly tolerant to light trampling, and most recent records suggest plant populations are located some way from well used existing paths. See 4.1.</p> <p>Hope's Nose to Walls Hill & Daddyhole SSSI & Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI: Rarities in flowering plant favour open habitats that can tolerate a degree of trampling. See 4.2 and 4.3. Lichen species on trees or exposed rock surfaces are unlikely to be susceptible to changes in access, therefore they are not considered to be vulnerable to the proposed changes and are not further considered in this appraisal.</p> <p>Dawlish Warren SAC/SSSI: Rare plants are associated with open habitats that can tolerate some trampling (indeed part of the area is grazed by ponies). Only severe trampling could be detrimental. See 4.5.</p> <p>Sidmouth and Axmouth SSSIs: The vascular plant assemblages and individual species reside on the cliff tops within the calcareous grassland and along the pathways. The vascular plant assemblages could potentially be damaged by increased visitor pressure. The individual plants along the pathways are perhaps under less threat given that they are already directly connected to the well-walked area and still in favourable condition. See 4.8 and 4.9.</p>

3.7 Invertebrate assemblage

Composition of feature group - where applicable
<p>For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invert. assemblage F111 bare sand & chalk • Invert. assemblage F112 open short sward • Invert. assemblage M211 sandy beach • Invert. assemblage M311 saltmarsh and transitional brackish marsh • Invert. assemblage W122 riparian sand • Invert. assemblage W211 open water on disturbed sediments • Population of Schedule 5 crustacean - <i>Chirocephalus diaphanus</i>, a freshwater fairy shrimp
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dawlish Warren SSSI • Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI • Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI <p>Dawlish Warren SSSI: Condition assessments for invertebrates have relied on indirect (habitat) attributes; therefore there is limited information available about these interest features. Most of the units that might support invertebrates are unfavourable. This is due to factors such as flood defences blocking natural processes and lack of management of short turf habitats.</p> <p>Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI: The last visit in 2012 stated that unconsented coastal defences are negatively</p>

<p>affecting natural coastal processes and therefore the invertebrate assemblage F111 bare sand & chalk. As above, some of the grassland habitat is unfavourable or recovering due to undergrazing and scrub encroachment but many patches are still in good condition.</p> <p>Scaly cricket was reintroduced at Littlecoombe Shoot in 2016 due to their disappearance from Branscombe beach. The species occurs in areas of shingle.</p> <p>The fairy shrimp was last surveyed for in 2013 but none were found. However, this does not conclude its disappearance from the site.</p> <p>Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI: Here the invertebrate habitats were found to be favourable during the last survey.</p>
<p>Sensitivities to changes in access</p>
<p>Dawlish Warren SSSI: The invertebrate interest is either associated with open habitats that are already well visited or within habitats that would be unattractive to large numbers of visitors (e.g. saltmarsh).</p> <p>Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI: The location of the fairy shrimp pond is already accessible as it is within the vicinity of the current footpath. Considering this and given its nature, it is unlikely that increased footfall will have a negative effect on the pond. In addition, disturbance to the pond itself (when dry) is desirable for management.</p> <p>Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI: The invertebrate assemblage F111 is unlikely to be affected as their habitat is on the bare areas of rocky slopes and cliff which is hard to get to for the public, there are also many hiding places here for insects.</p> <p>The invertebrate assemblage F112 is reliant on the calcareous grassland patches throughout the site. Potential impacts on this habitat are considered further in section 4.9 of this document.</p> <p>The invertebrate assemblage W122 locations are unknown but are unlikely to be affected by the general public as they occur in slow flowing water and seepage areas.</p> <p>Apart from F112 at the Undercliffs, ecological sensitivity of this group of features to access is deemed to be low and therefore it is not considered further in this document.</p>

3.8 Dragonfly assemblage

<p>Composition of feature group - where applicable</p>
<p>For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:</p> <p>Exe Estuary SSSI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding Dragonfly Assemblage
<p>Current conservation status and use of the site by features</p>
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following site (for details see table 2.4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exe Estuary SSSI <p>The key dragonfly sites are identified as Bowling Green Marsh, Exeter Canal, Exminster Marshes, and the Old Sludge Beds Nature Reserve.</p>
<p>Sensitivities to changes in access</p>
<p>All sites important for this assemblage are not in close proximity to the proposed England Coast Path or its</p>

associated margins. Therefore, this group is not likely to be effected by any of the proposed changes in access and is not further considered in this appraisal.

3.9 Breeding birds

Composition of feature group - where applicable

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- Aggregations of breeding birds - Guillemot, *Uria aalge aalge*
- Assemblages of breeding birds – Lowland damp grasslands
- Assemblages of breeding birds - Mixed: Lowland fen, Woodland

Current conservation status and use of the site by features

The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):

- **Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI**
- **Exe Estuary SSSI**
- **Otter Estuary SSSI**

Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI

The Guillemot colony is counted annually so good data is available. And it was last assessed in 2009 as in favourable condition.

Exe Estuary SSSI

A breeding bird assemblage can be found in the northern sections of the site, species that make up this assemblage are associated with the lowland (wet) grasslands that can mostly be found at Exminster marshes, bowling green marsh, areas around Exeter Canal, Topsham lock, the Old Sludge Beds and the Lower Wear.

Otter Estuary SSSI

The Otter Estuary SSSI was surveyed for its bird population during the 2016 breeding season, although the survey route was along the woodland edge it gives an indication of birds present within the estuary. A total of 42 species were recorded on site during the 2016 breeding season of which 13 were confirmed to have bred, 20 were considered likely to have bred and 3 possibly bred. The remaining 6 species were recorded off site and/or believed not to have bred on site. A number of red and amber birds of conservation concern (BoCC 4) were recorded.

Breeding birds confirmed in 2016 include Chiffchaff, Jackdaw, Mallard, Treecreeper, Blackcap, Nuthatch and Cetti's warbler.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI

The guillemots nest on a sheer cliff on Berry Head, which is completely inaccessible except by experienced climbers. The birds may be threatened by offshore factors such as marine pollution and fisheries but these are not issues affected by the coastal access proposals. There may however be a potential interaction between experienced climbers and guillemots. See 4.2.

Exe Estuary SSSI

All sites important for this assemblage are not in close proximity to the proposed route of the England Coast Path at the Exe Estuary, or its associated coastal margin. However, the proposed alternative route

around the Exe Estuary does pass alongside multiple areas of lowland damp grasslands, notified for their assemblages of breeding birds. This group will not be sensitive to changes in access to the main proposed England Coast Path route, however if increased access occurs along the alternative route an increase in disturbance may occur. See 4.5.

Otter Estuary SSSI

Increased access to the Otter estuary edge is likely to increase disturbance to nesting birds. Common breeding birds of reedbeds and scrub (including for example Cetti's warbler) are generally less sensitive to walkers or walkers with dogs due to the fenced off nature of the habitat (assuming dogs are not entering the reedbeds). The area is currently well used by visitors and locals (with their dogs), along the right of way, and the additional visitor pressure from the England Coast Path is likely to be small but possibly increasing, as the path is promoted further. Due to the unstable terrain of the saltmarsh and estuarine habitat it is unlikely that the public will leave the path to access the estuary, however there may be potential for an interaction with these proposals. See 4.7.

3.10 Non-breeding birds

Composition of feature group - where applicable

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

Exe Estuary SPA

Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*); Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa islandica*); Dark-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*); Dunlin (*Calidris alpina alpina*) Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*); Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*); Slavonian grebe (*Podiceps auritus*); Waterbird assemblage (Main Components Species: Dark-bellied brent goose, Oystercatcher, Grey plover, Dunlin, Wigeon, Black-tailed godwit, Ringed plover, Greenshank).

Exe Estuary Ramsar

Dark-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*); waterbird assemblage

Exe Estuary SSSI

Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Avocet, (*Recurvirostra avosetta*); Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Black-tailed godwit, (*Limosa limosa islandica*); Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Brent goose (dark-bellied), (*Branta bernicla bernicla*); Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*); Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Wigeon (*Anas Penelope*).

Current conservation status and use of the site by features

The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):

- Exe Estuary SSSI, SPA and Ramsar
- Dawlish Warren SSSI

The Exe Estuary and Dawlish Warren are internationally important feeding and roosting areas for overwintering migratory waterfowl and waders, providing one of the most important sites for wintering and passage waterfowl in the south-west (WeBS, Cook *et al.* 2013).

The designated sites encompass the coastal and offshore waters, intertidal mudflat and sandflats, low lying land and marshes, and the beaches and dunes of Dawlish Warren.

The intertidal mudflat and sandflats of the estuary support large populations of invertebrates attracting internationally important numbers of wintering and passage waterbirds to feed at low tide. During severe winter weather the site assumes even greater international importance as a cold weather refuge. Waterfowl from other areas concentrate here, attracted by the relatively mild climate and abundant food resources available.

The upper estuary consists of predominantly muddy sediments, becoming more coarse and sandy towards the mouth of the estuary. The intertidal mud and sand-flats support eelgrass *Zostera* beds and *Enteromorpha* species, which enhance the abundance and diversity of food items for site interest features. The blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) beds including those on the harder substrates of the lower estuary are also available as intertidal prey items for wading birds such as oystercatcher.

Saltmarsh communities found in areas such as Dawlish Warren, and surrounding grazing marshes such as Bowling Green Marsh, provide feeding and roosting areas for wildfowl and waders, particularly for the dark-bellied brent goose, avocet and black-tailed godwit. However during the rising tide intertidal mudflats hold high numbers of feeding birds such as black-tailed godwit.

The WeBS Alerts system provides a method of identifying changes in numbers of waterbirds at a variety of spatial and temporal scales. Trends are assessed over the short-, medium-, and long-terms (5, 10 and up to 25 years respectively) and also since site-designation. Where declines exceed 50%, High-Alerts are issued and where declines lie between 25% and 50% Medium-Alerts are issued.

Of the 10 species that have been evaluated for the Exe Estuary SPA by the WeBS Alerts system, which identifies changes in numbers of waterbirds, alerts have been triggered for five, with alerts ranging from short term through to medium and long term:

- High alert: Oystercatcher (since classification) and Lapwing (short term, long term and since classification).
- Medium alert: Brent Goose (Dark-bellied) (since classification); Red-breasted Merganser (medium term and since classification), Grey Plover (medium term and since classification), Oystercatcher (medium and long term) and Lapwing (long term). Cook *et al.* 2013.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Changes in coastal access have the potential to increase above water noise and visual disturbance. All non-breeding bird species associated with the designated sites are sensitive to these pressures.

The Exe Estuary Disturbance Study looked at disturbance caused by a wide variety of recreational activities to non-breeding wildfowl and waders which use the Exe. This study compared disturbance responses between species. Using black-tailed godwit as a reference species it found that all other species looked at were significantly more likely to undertake major flight. Curlew had the highest probability of major flight, followed by oystercatcher, redshank and brent goose (Liley *et. al.* 2011). Evidence presented in this study suggested that bird distribution on the Exe may be related to access, with parts of the estuary with the lowest access having some of the highest bird counts. In some areas of the site there was evidence that the number of birds varied in response to the levels of access over the previous 45 minutes, i.e. when more people had been present, fewer birds were recorded (Liley *et. al.*). It can therefore be expected that an increase in access can have the potential to affect the bird's usage of the site.

Bird numbers are generally high to the north of Dawlish Warren in areas associated with little access. In this area both roosting and feeding areas are used by a high proportion of the estuary's brent geese,

oystercatchers, bar-tailed godwits, wigeon and teal. The upper estuary mudflats hold a high number of birds at certain states of the tide particularly dunlin and black-tailed godwit which feed on the rising tide (Liley et. al). Brent geese tend to feed on the seagrass beds particularly on the east side of the estuary, however as this resource is depleted, and at times of high tide, the birds disperse to the surrounding grazing marshes and amenity grasslands, particularly golf courses and playing fields.

While the wildfowl and waders which use the estuary when both feeding and roosting, the lack of available alternative high tide roost sites around the estuary means they are particularly vulnerable when at the main roosts such as Dawlish Warren.

This group of features may be sensitive to the proposed changes in access and is considered further in 4.5 and 5.2.

3.11 Greater horseshoe bat

Composition of feature group - where applicable
Greater horseshoe bat (<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>)
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI <p>Caves in a disused quarry at Berry Head are used for hibernating and by a nursery colony. This location is part of the South Hams SAC/ Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI.</p> <p>A relatively small population (average summer counts around 60-70 adults) of bats use caves within the disused quarry at Berry Head, both as a maternity roost and hibernation roost. The population numbers (based on summer counts) show a gradual decline, which is at odds with the national trend of population increase. The reasons for this decline are not fully understood but the population maybe under some stress due to the lack of suitable foraging habitat adjacent to the roost. Despite this slight decline, the bats (as a feature of the SSSI/SAC) are assessed as favourable condition.</p>
Sensitivities to changes in access
<p>Bats are sensitive to disturbance by people entering a roost site, where they rely on being hidden from any predation or disturbance. Disturbances could cause them to take flight when they should normally be resting; this would burn up valuable energy which would have to be replenished by feeding at a time when their habitat is sub-optimal for feeding. Disturbance is therefore likely to cause a loss of body condition, which could lead to increased mortality and/or reduced breeding success. Bats are most sensitive to disturbance at times of year when they are in hibernation and when food resources may not be available (October to March), or at nursery sites used by maternity colonies (May to August). The bats are also vulnerable to direct damage at their roost by vandalism, e.g. lighting fires, or injuring individuals.</p> <p>This feature may be sensitive to the proposed changes in access and is considered further in section 4.2.</p>

3.12 Caves

Composition of feature group - where applicable
Caves not open to the public
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South Hams SAC and Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI <p>The caves are not excessively disturbed as they are in difficult to access locations (in sea cliffs) or where access is prevented (in the disused quarry at Berry Head). They are not suffering other potential threats such as from development. SSSI condition assessment is therefore favourable.</p>
Sensitivities to changes in access
<p>As geological features the caves are fairly robust. Cave-specialist fauna is likely to be hidden deep with relatively inaccessible parts of the cave and would be unlikely to attract attention and is therefore also deemed to have low sensitivity to disturbance. The exception is where the caves are used by greater horseshoe bats, which are assessed elsewhere within this document (3.11).</p> <p>This feature is therefore not considered sensitive to the proposed changes in access and is not further considered in this appraisal.</p>

3.13 Broadscale habitats at Torbay MCZ

Composition of feature group - where applicable
<p>Natural England has grouped together all the broadscale habitat features within Torbay MCZ for the purpose of this appraisal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intertidal coarse sediment• intertidal mixed sediment• intertidal sand and muddy sand• intertidal mud• low energy intertidal rock• moderate energy intertidal rock• subtidal mud
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Torbay MCZ <p>The General Management Approach (GMA) for all of the intertidal sediments (intertidal coarse sediment, intertidal mixed sediment, intertidal mud, intertidal sand and muddy sand) are 'maintain in favourable condition'. For the intertidal rock (low energy intertidal rock and moderate energy intertidal rock) the GMAs are 'maintain in favourable condition'. The subtidal mud GMA is recovering to favourable condition.</p>

Sensitivities to changes in access
<p>Increase in access onto the foreshore may lead to the following pressures ‘abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed’, ‘penetration and/or disturbance of the substrate below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion and ‘introduction or spread of non-indigenous species.’</p> <p>All intertidal features are sensitive to the pressures of abrasion, disturbance and penetration of the substrate on the surface and/or below the surface of the seabed, other than intertidal coarse sediment.</p> <p>All the features are sensitive to the pressure ‘Introduction or spread of non-indigenous species’, other than intertidal coarse sediment, intertidal mud and subtidal mud.</p> <p>Marine features that are underwater at all states of the tide will not be affected by our proposals for coastal access.</p> <p>These marine features that are found in intertidal areas could be sensitive to activities that cause abrasion or disturbance to the surface of the seabed, or harvesting or removal of species, and are considered further in sections 4.2 and 4.3.</p>

3.14 Habitats of Conservation Importance at Torbay MCZ

Composition of feature group - where applicable
<p>For the purposes of this appraisal the following habitats of conservation importance within Torbay MCZ have been grouped together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intertidal underboulder communities • seagrass beds
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torbay MCZ <p>Seagrass beds occur both intertidally and subtidally within the site. Coverage is patchy however there are large beds at Torre Abbey Sands and off the coast of the Approach Golf Course, Paignton. Intertidal underboulder communities occur commonly across the site in mid-low intertidal areas, isolated locations include Corbyn’s Beach, Black Rock and Fishcombe Point.</p> <p>The current GMA for intertidal underboulder communities is to maintain in favourable condition, whilst the seagrass beds will recover to favourable condition.</p>
Sensitivities to changes in access
<p>Both these habitats are sensitive to the following pressures associated with increased access to the foreshore;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed. • Penetration and/or disturbance of the substrate below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion. <p>Seagrass beds are also sensitive to the pressure ‘Introduction or spread of non-indigenous species’.</p> <p>This feature may be sensitive to the proposed changes in access and is considered further in 4.2. and 4.3.</p>

3.15 Species of Conservation Importance at Torbay MCZ/ Priority Species

Composition of feature group - where applicable
<p>For the purposes of this appraisal the following species of conservation importance have been grouped together within Torbay MCZ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-snouted seahorse (<i>Hippocampus guttulatus</i>) • Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>) • <i>This appraisal also includes the Priority Species/ Species of Principal Importance Peacock’s tail (<i>Padina pavonica</i>)</i>
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torbay MCZ <p>The one record of long-snouted seahorse in this site was recorded within subtidal seagrass beds. Native oysters have been found across the site predominantly in habitats such as low energy intertidal rock and intertidal underboulder communities. Native oyster and long-snouted seahorse are both ‘Species of Principle Importance/Priority Species’ as listed under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006.</p> <p>Native Oyster has a GMA of maintain in favourable condition whereas the long-snouted seahorse is recovering to favourable condition.</p> <p>The two main sites for <i>Padina pavonica</i> in Torbay are the lower intertidal areas present at Corbyn’s Head and Goodrington Sands.</p>
Sensitivities to changes in access
<p>These features are not considered sensitive to the proposed changes in access and are not further considered in this report.</p>

3.16 Marine habitats at Lyme Bay and Torbay Site of Community Importance (SCI)

Composition of feature group - where applicable
<p>For the purposes of this appraisal the following marine features within Lyme Bay and Torbay SCI have been grouped together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reefs (infralittoral rocky reef, circalittoral rocky reef, subtidal stony reef, subtidal biogenic reef: mussel beds) • Submerged or partially submerged sea caves
Current conservation status and use of the site by features
<p>The features included in this group are represented at the following sites (for details see table 2.4):</p>

- Lyme Bay and Torbay SCI

There are 85 known sea caves within the Lyme Bay and Torbay SCI. These range from high tide to fully submerged in several different rock types.

The reefs, all of which are subtidal, are some of the most biologically diverse in the country and are considered to be a marine 'biodiversity hotspot'.

Sensitivities to changes in access

As the reefs designated as part of the SCI are entirely subtidal they are not sensitive to changes to the England Coast Path or its associated margin. The caves also associated with this site are not sensitive to any of the proposals as it is not expected that caves already accessible will see a substantial increase in access/use, and subtidal previously inaccessible caves are likely to remain difficult to access.

This feature is not considered sensitive to the types of change in access proposed and is therefore not considered further in this appraisal.

4. Potential for interaction

In this part of the document we identify places where sensitive features are present *and* whether there could, or will not, be an interaction with proposed changes in access. Where we conclude there is potential for interaction between sensitive features and our proposals for the England Coast Path at a particular location, we consider the circumstances in more detail in Part 5 of this document. This includes current access provision, how this will be affected by our coastal access proposals, and how use of the site for recreation might change as a consequence.

Our proposals for the England Coast Path have two main components:

- Identification and physical establishment of a trail; and,
- Identification of an associated coastal margin.

Trail

A continuous walking trail – the England Coast Path National Trail - will be established by joining up existing coastal routes and creating new sections of path where necessary.

Along this stretch of coast our proposed alignment for the England Coast Path follows the existing South West Coast Path National Trail. This route is already an international tourist destination and its designation as part of the England Coast path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this stretch of the coast.

Coastal Margin

An area of land associated with the proposed trail will become coastal margin, including all land seaward of the trail down to mean low water.

Coastal margin is typically subject to new coastal access rights, though there are some obvious exceptions to this. The nature and limitations of the new rights, and the key types of land excepted from them, are explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of our Coastal Access Scheme (Natural England, 2013). Where there are already public or local rights to do other things, these are normally unaffected and will continue to exist in parallel to the new coastal access rights. The exception to this principle is any pre-existing open access rights under Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) over land falling within the coastal margin: the new coastal access rights will apply in place of these.

Where public access on foot already takes place on land within the margin without any legal right for people to use the land in this way, the new coastal access rights will secure this existing use legally. Access secured in this way is subject to various national restrictions. It remains open to the owner of the land, should they wish, to continue tolerating other types of established public use not provided for by coastal access rights.

Natural England has powers that mean that we can, where necessary, impose local restrictions or exclusions on the new coastal access rights on grounds set out in the legislation. Such restrictions or

exclusions do not apply to public rights of way, or to other types of pre-existing access right other than CROW rights (see above).

4.1 Kingswear to Sharkham Point

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path between Kingswear and Sharkham Point. The route mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea apart from through Kingswear where the path moves inland to avoid an area affected by erosion and the eastern area of Kingswear where the path is landward of private residences.

No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast Path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

At Man Sands an optional alternative route will be created for use at times when the ordinary route is unavailable for use because of high tides or when the adjacent lake overflows. It would not have the effect of creating any additional coastal margin on either the seaward or the landward side.

The Coastal Margin

All land seaward and some land landward of the trail will become coastal margin. The full extent of the proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 1a-1e.

At land surrounding Inner and Outer Froward Point (sections KLR-1-S018 to KLR-1-S026), between Pudcombe Cove and Scabbacombe Head (sections KLR-1-S032 to KLR-1-S036), at Southdown Cliff (sections KLR-1-S048 to KLR-1-S049), and near Sharkham Point car park (section KLR-1-S051) we have used our discretion to propose the inclusion of additional, more extensive landward areas within the coastal margin, to secure or enhance public enjoyment of this part of the coast. The owner of this land (National Trust) is content for us to propose this as margin, and this land has historically had access over it.

We do not expect any noticeable increase in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals because it is already accessible. The nature of the seaward coastal margin along much of the coast, much of which is steep cliffs, means that walkers and other users will normally remain on the established trail. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at this location, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access.

Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals. There are a couple of sites to the east of Kingswear where there is new access in the margin, a currently private beach and an area of woodland, but these areas are not covered by any designated sites.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Of the sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document the following feature group occurs in areas

that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast:

- Plant species

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites are present along this stretch:

- Froward Point SSSI (Unit 1)
- Scabbacombe SSSI (Unit 1 abuts the trail on the landward side)
- Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI (Unit 7)

Froward Point SSSI: As described in 3.6. the vascular plant assemblages could potentially be damaged by access pressures but some species already exist here near to well used paths without suffering significant damage, and the nature of the seaward coastal margin along this section of the coast - steep cliffs – means that walkers and other users are likely to remain on the established trail.

Scabbacombe SSSI: As described in 3.6. there is some evidence which suggests the sensitive plant is fairly tolerant to light trampling, and most recent records suggest plant populations are located some way from well used existing paths, and again given the nature of the seaward coastal margin along this section of the coast - steep cliffs – means that walkers and other users are likely to remain on the established trail.

Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI: it has been found that rarities in flowering plant favour open habitats that can tolerate a degree of trampling, but again the nature of the seaward coastal margin along this section of the coast - steep cliffs – means that walkers and other users are likely to remain on the established trail.

Conclusion

Along this section of coast, and on the designated sites listed above between Kingswear and Sharkham Point, we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features that could be sensitive to access identified in Part 3 of this document.

4.2 Sharkham Point to Paignton (Marine Parade)

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path between Sharkham Point and Paignton (Marine Parade).

The route mainly follows the coastline quite closely (apart from at Berry Head) and maintains good views of the sea.

No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast Path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

Coastal Margin

All land seaward and some land landward of the trail will become coastal margin. The full extent of the proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 2a-2g.

We do not expect any noticeable increase in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals because it is already accessible. The nature of the seaward coastal margin along much of the coast - inaccessible steep cliffs – means that walkers and other users will normally remain on the established trail. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at this location, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access.

Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals. An exception to this is the disused quarry at Berry Head to which there is no current public access.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Several of the potentially sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast. These include:

- Plant Species (3.6)
- Aggregations of breeding birds - Guillemot, (*Uria aalge*) (3.9)
- Greater horseshoe bat (3.11)
- Broadscale habitats at Torbay MCZ (3.13)
- Habitats of Conservation importance at Torbay MCZ (3.14)

The following designated sites are present along this stretch:

- Berry Head to Sharkham Point Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI (Units 1-10) and South Hams Special Area of Conservation SAC
- Saltern Cove Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI (Units 1,2,3)
- Roundham Head Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI (Units 1&2)
- Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI
- Torbay Marine Conservation Zone MCZ

Berry Head to Sharkham Point Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI (Units 1-10) and South Hams Special Area of Conservation SAC

At Berry Head (Unit 8) there is potential for interaction between the access proposal and use of a disused quarry by greater horseshoe bats (see 3.11). This potential interaction is considered further in 5.1.

There is a potential interaction between experienced climbers and the guillemot colony at Berry Head, however the climbing is already occurring in low frequency and will not be affected by our proposals, and climbers tend to avoid the breeding season.

The rarities in flowering plants favour open habitats that can tolerate a degree of trampling, but again the nature of the seaward coastal margin along this section of the coast - steep cliffs – means that walkers and other users are likely to remain on the established trail.

It has already been found that that there is no potential interaction between sensitive features and these proposals at Saltern Cove SSSI and Roundham Head SSSI.

Marine Reserves

Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI:

The boundary of this marine reserve only reaches as far as Mean Low Water, therefore there will be no interaction because public access to be implemented by this proposal doesn't give access to the sea and public access to this section of coast will not be affected by the proposal.

Torbay Marine Conservation Zone MCZ:

Broadscale habitats and other habitats of conservation importance may be sensitive to pressures associated with coastal access but along this section of the coast, our proposed route for the England Coast Path will not pass over any intertidal areas.

People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for example walking (including walking with dogs), and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals. Popular destinations include Broad Sands, Goodrington Sands and Paignton Sands. Such access on foot to the foreshore is not considered harmful to intertidal habitats.

Harvesting or removal of species could have an impact and is a possible concern, however; no new rights to do this are created by our proposals. Neither will what we are proposing interfere with ongoing work to investigate the possible impacts of hand gathering and bait collecting activities on MCZ features or measures to manage these activities.

Conclusion

Along the rest of this section of coast outside of the quarry at Berry Head, and on the other designated sites listed above between Sharkham Point and Paignton, we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features listed above or in s3.

4.3 Paignton (Marine Parade) to Maidencombe

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path between Paignton and Maidencombe. The route mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea apart from around Anstey's Cove, St Marychurch and Watcombe where the route passes through coastal woodland.

No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

Coastal Margin

All land seaward and some land landward of the trail will become coastal margin. The full extent of the

proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 3a-3h.

We do not expect any noticeable increase in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals because it is already accessible. The seaward coastal margin along much of the coast is steep inaccessible cliffs, which means that walkers and other users will normally remain on the established trail. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at these locations, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access. Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Several of the potentially sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast. These include:

- Plant Species (3.6)
- Broadscale habitats at Torbay MCZ (3.13)
- Habitats of Conservation importance at Torbay MCZ (3.14)

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites, or parts of, are present along this stretch

- Dyer's Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (Unit 1)
- Daddyhole Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1,2,3)
- Meadfoot Sea Road Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 2&3)
- Hope's Nose to Wall's Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI (Units 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,15)
- Babbacombe Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI (1,2,3)
- Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI
- Torbay Marine Conservation Zone MCZ

Hope's Nose to Walls Hill & Daddyhole SSSI: The rarities in flowering plants favour open habitats that can tolerate a degree of trampling and the nature of the seaward coastal margin along this section of the coast - steep cliffs - means that walkers and other users are likely to remain on the established trail.

Dyer's Quarry, Meadfoot Sea Road and Babbacombe Cliffs SSSIs: These sites are all notified for their geological interest and it has already been found in 3.1 that there is no potential interaction between geological features and these proposals.

Marine Sites

Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI:

The boundary of this marine reserve only reaches as far as Mean Low Water, therefore there will be no interaction because public access to be implemented by this proposal doesn't give access to the sea and public access to this section of coast will not be affected by the proposal.

Torbay Marine Conservation Zone MCZ:

Although broadscale habitats and other habitats of conservation importance may be sensitive to pressures associated with coastal access, along this section of the coast, our proposed route for the England Coast Path will not pass over any intertidal areas.

People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for

example walking and walking with dog, and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals. Such access on foot to the foreshore is not considered harmful to intertidal habitats.

Harvesting or removal of species could have an impact and is a possible concern, however; no new rights to do this are created by our proposals. Neither will what we are proposing interfere with ongoing work to investigate the possible impacts of hand gathering and bait collecting activities on MCZ features or measures to manage these activities.

Conclusion

Along this section of coast, and on the other designated sites listed above between Paighton to Maidencombe, we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features listed above or in s3.

4.4 Maidencombe to Holcombe

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path between Maidencombe and Holcombe. The route mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea apart from at Holcombe where the trail passes inland along Teignmouth Road for a short distance. No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

The Coastal Margin

All land seaward and some land landward of the trail will become coastal margin. The full extent of the proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 4a-4d.

We do not expect any noticeable increase in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals because it is already accessible. This is the case for all the margin going north as far as Maidencombe, and further north the trail runs close to the cliff edge to Shaldon. The coastal margin is very limited and well accessed past Teignmouth where the trail runs along the promenade and sea wall. The nature of the seaward coastal margin along much of the coast, much of which is steep inaccessible cliffs, means that walkers and other users will normally remain on the established trail. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at these locations, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access. Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

None of the potentially sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would

become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast.

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites are present along this stretch:

- Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI

The boundary of this marine reserve only reaches as far as Mean Low Water, therefore there will be no interaction because public access to be implemented by this proposal doesn't give access to the sea and public access to this section of coast will not be affected by the proposal.

Conclusion

Along this section of coast we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features listed above or in s3.

4.5 Holcombe to Exmouth

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

From Holcombe to Exmouth, the proposed ordinary route for the England Coast Path follows the existing South West Coast Path National Trail. The route mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea apart from at Dawlish Warren where the route passes inland of holidays parks along Dawlish Warren Road. No changes in alignment are proposed along this section of the route.

Between Starcross and Exmouth, the South West Coast Path uses the seasonal ferry across the Exe Estuary, which runs from Easter to Monday 31 October 2016, 7 days a week.

During the period November to Easter, when the ferry is not available an alternative route is proposed that would follow the Exe Estuary Trail route inland around the estuary.

For more details about the proposed route, including maps, refer to Chapter 5 of our Coastal Access Report.

No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

Coastal Margin

An area of land associated with the proposed ordinary route of the trail will become coastal margin, including all land seaward of the trail to mean low water. There is no coastal margin associated with the

alternative route.

The coastal margin along this section of the route comprises mostly houses and gardens around Holcombe, then follows along the railway line and seawall to Dawlish, with the only accessible coastal margin being the beach. At Dawlish Cliffs SSSI the coastal margin is separated from the coast path by the railway and steep cliffs.

There is then a large area of coastal margin in the Exe Estuary. At Dawlish Warren this includes Dawlish Warren beach, some categories of excepted land such as buildings and the curtilage of, and a golf course; areas of dunes and scrubby areas, most of which is part of Dawlish Warren National Nature Reserve.

To the north of Dawlish Warren is a large area of mud and sand stretching up as far as the Starcross Ferry.

The Exe estuary as a whole is very well used by informal users and more organised groups. The Exe Estuary Recreational Framework categorises 21 activities into those taking place on the water, intertidal areas and the shore, see Table 1, Exe Estuary Recreational Framework (Exe Estuary Partnership, 2014).

Part of Dawlish Warren is a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and part is a Local Nature Reserve, which includes the golf course. Dawlish Warren has various zones where different management of dogs is already in place through local byelaws, for example dogs are excluded all year on the beach past Groyne 9, around the spit, and the Bight, and right across the mudflats to Cockwood. On the beach up to Groyne 3 dogs are excluded between 1st April and 30th September, and then between Groyne 3 and 9 they are allowed off leads all year. On the NNR behind the beach, dogs have to be on leads all year. This management will not be affected by the coastal access proposal.

There are multiple access points onto the wider estuary including causeways, slipways and passageways.

There are steps down to the foreshore at four locations: one in Exmouth and three on the west bank of the estuary which are accessed via crossings over the railway line. There are crossings at Exton and Powderham Church which provide access to the foreshore over the railway line. There are also 8 public slipways across the estuary, including the imperial slipway at Exmouth, as well as a number of private slipways (Exe Estuary Partnership, 2014). There are also various pontoon, piers, quays, and marinas around the estuary.

Given that these existing formal and informal arrangements will not be affected by our proposals we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals. An exception to this is an area between Dawlish Warren and Cockwood Harbour where public access to the foreshore is currently discouraged and it is proposed following further consultation by the Exe Estuary Management Partnership to establish a Voluntary Quiet Zone.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

The Trail

It has been noted that the sensitive feature, breeding birds (3.9), associated with the Exe Estuary SSSI, could be sensitive to disturbance if numbers of people using the alternative route were to increase.

Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use, we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals, and therefore we conclude no potential for interaction between the access proposal and this feature.

The Margin

Several of the sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast. These include:

- Open Coastal Vegetation (3.3)
- Intertidal Habitat (Saltmarsh and Sheltered muddy shores) (3.5)
- Plant Species (3.6)
- Non-breeding birds (3.10)

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites, or parts of, are present along this stretch:

- Dawlish Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1,2,3)
- Dawlish Warren Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1,2) and SAC
- Exe Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar
- Exe Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units: 37,40, 41, 42)

Dawlish Cliffs SSSI: This site has been notified for its geological interest and it has already been determined in 3.1. that there will be no interaction between its sensitive features and these proposals.

Dawlish Warren SSSI and SAC: The Open Coastal Vegetation refers to the vegetation of the sand dunes which can be susceptible to excessive trampling. But the site is already popular with visitors and this established use and any existing impacts on these habitats are not likely to be increased by establishment of the England Coast Path, as it is not expected that the proposals will attract significant numbers of new visitors. Therefore we conclude there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and this feature.

At Dawlish Warren SSSI and SAC the plant species refers to rare plants that are associated with open habitats that can tolerate some trampling, whereas severe trampling could be detrimental. But this area behind the dunes at Dawlish Warren is already popular with visitors (indeed part of the area is grazed by ponies), and this established use and any existing impacts on these habitats are not likely to be increased by establishment of the England Coast Path, as it is not expected that the proposals will attract significant numbers of new visitors. Therefore we conclude there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and this feature.

At Dawlish Warren and the Exe Estuary there is the potential for interaction between the saltmarsh intertidal vegetation that could be sensitive to trampling. In general along this section of the coast, the extent of new access rights within the coastal margin is in keeping with already established use and is not expected to attract significant numbers of new visitors. Where new access to the margin could potentially increase visitors, such as between Dawlish Warren and Cockwood Harbour, public access to the foreshore is currently discouraged and there is a proposal by the Exe Estuary Management Partnership to implement a Voluntary Quiet Zone. Therefore it is not predicted that the proposals will attract significant numbers of new visitors and we conclude there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and this feature.

Between Dawlish Warren and Cockwood Harbour, as stated above, public access to the foreshore is currently discouraged and it is proposed to establish a Voluntary Quiet Zone. There is potential for interaction between the establishment of new coastal access rights and the use of this area by feeding non-breeding birds (see 3.10). These potential interactions are considered further in 5.2.

Along the rest of this section of coast, between Holcombe and Exmouth, for the reasons given above, we

do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction elsewhere between the access proposal and the features listed above.

4.6 Exmouth to Otter Estuary

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed, mainly following the coastline quite closely, and maintaining good views of the sea apart from at Straight Point where the route passes landward of the rifle range. No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

Coastal Margin

All land seaward and some land landward of the trail will become coastal margin. The full extent of the proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 6a-6f.

The route follows the promenade along Exmouth seafront and then stays very close to the coast, on the cliff edge to Budleigh Salterton. The Coastal Margin is very limited being mostly cliffs, beaches, promenade or an inaccessible Ministry Of Defence rifle range at Straight Point (which will be Excepted Land).

At Orecombe Point (section KLR-6-S009) we have used our discretion to propose the inclusion of an additional, more extensive landward area within the coastal margin, and the owner of this land (National Trust) is content for us to propose this, and the area has been accessed historically prior to this project.

We do not expect any noticeable increase in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals because it is already accessible. The nature of the seaward coastal margin along much of the coast, much of which is steep inaccessible cliffs, means that walkers and other users will normally remain on the established trail. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at these locations, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access. Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

None of the potentially sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast.

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites are present along this stretch:

- Budleigh Salterton Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest (Unit 1&2)

This is a site noted for its geological interest and it has already been determined in 3.1. that there will be no interaction between its sensitive features and these proposals.

Conclusion

Along this section of coast, and on the above designated site we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features listed above or in s3.

4.7 Otter Estuary to Sid Estuary (Budleigh to Sidmouth)

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path between the Otter and Sid Estuaries, mainly following the coastline quite closely, and maintaining good views of the sea. No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast Path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

Coastal Margin

Land both seaward and landward of the trail will become part of the coastal margin. The full extent of the proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 7a-7e.

The report proposes that the trail should include a route around the estuary of the River Otter, extending upstream from the open coast as far as White Bridge, which is the first public foot crossing point over the river. The trail covered by this chapter includes part of this estuary route. Most of the Coastal Margin here is proposed to be excluded under a s25A Saltmarsh and Flats direction as it has been assessed and deemed unsuitable for access. See Overview Map G.

The trail then follows the cliff edge to Ladram Bay, goes inland past a caravan site, and past High Peak, and along the cliff edge to Sidmouth where it joins the esplanade. Therefore this stretch of coastal margin already has defacto access being mostly cliffs, beach or esplanade. We do not expect any noticeable increase in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals because it is already accessible. The nature of the seaward coastal margin along much of the coast, much of which is steep inaccessible cliffs means that walkers and other users will normally remain on the established trail. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at these locations, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access. Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Some of the potentially sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast. They are:

- Intertidal Habitat (Saltmarsh)
- Assemblages of breeding birds - Mixed: Lowland fen, Woodland

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites, or parts of, are present along this stretch

- Otter Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1-6)
- Ladram Bay to Sidmouth Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1,2,3)

At the Otter Estuary the intertidal habitat saltmarsh and fen is sensitive to increased levels of footfall given that they are isolated areas of habitat and support a large number of invertebrates and birds. The assemblages of breeding birds could be affected by changes in access, however there will be no interaction because it is proposed public access to this section of coastal margin will be excluded under a s25A Saltmarsh and Flats direction, as it is deemed unsuitable for access (see Overview Map G). If this direction were no longer in place there would be a potential for interaction between new access and sensitive features and this potential interaction would need to be reviewed.

Conclusion

Along this section of coast, and on the designated sites listed above between the Otter and Sid Estuaries, we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features listed above or in s3.

4.8 Sid Estuary to Axe Estuary (Sidmouth to Seaton)

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path, mainly following the coastline quite closely, and maintaining good views of the sea apart from near Sidmouth and Seaton where the route moves inland to avoid areas of landslip and private residences. No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the England Coast path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

Coastal Margin

All land seaward and some land landward of the trail will become coastal margin. The full extent of the proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 8a-8i.

We do not expect any noticeable increase in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals because it is already accessible. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at these locations, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access. Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use and we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Some of the potentially sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast. They are:

- Open Coastal Vegetation (3.3)
- Plant Species (3.6)

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites are present along this stretch:

- Sidmouth to Beer Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12)
- Sidmouth to West Bay SAC
- Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI

Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI, Beer Head CWS and Sidmouth to West Bay SAC:

Many parts are inaccessible due to the difficult terrain and dense vegetation; however some of the areas of calcareous grassland flora within the site are small and fragmented and could be sensitive to increased access. The vascular plant assemblages and individual species reside on the cliff tops within the calcareous grassland and along the pathways. There already is interaction with calcareous grassland and the associated invertebrate community F112, and therefore potential for further interaction if access levels were to increase, and areas that are not usually accessed at the moment were to become more popular, causing new desire lines to form.

However in general along this section of the coast, the extent of new access rights within the coastal margin is in keeping with already established use and is not expected to attract significant numbers of new visitors.

Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI:

The boundary of this marine reserve only reaches as far as Mean Low Water, therefore there will be no interaction because public access to be implemented by this proposal doesn't give access to the sea and public access to this section of coast will not be affected by the proposal.

Conclusion

Along this section of coast, and on the above designated sites we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features listed above or in s3.

4.9 Axe Estuary to Lyme Regis

Outline of changes in access

The Trail

The route of the proposed trail follows the existing South West Coast Path between the Axe Estuary and Lyme Regis. The route provides views of the sea at some points, generally towards each end of this section at Axmouth and Lyme Regis. The majority of the route passes through the Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs National Nature Reserve (NNR), an active coastal landslip system, where there are limited sea views. No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Some new plaques will be added to fingerposts at key locations to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path.

Since the South West Coast Path is already an international tourist destination, its inclusion as part of the

England Coast path is expected to make little difference to overall visit numbers along this section of the coast.

Coastal Margin

All land seaward and some land landward of the trail will become coastal margin. The full extent of the proposed landward coastal margin along this section of the route is shown in report maps 9a-9e.

The route passes through the Undercliffs NNR for most of this section, where access is limited to the route of the trail by the density of the surrounding woodland and advisory signage. The route then leaves the Undercliffs and passes behind Monmouth Beach into Lyme Regis.

The nature of the seaward coastal margin along much of the coast is steep inaccessible cliffs and dense woodland, this means that walkers and other users will normally remain on the established trail particularly through the Undercliffs NNR. There is no reason to suppose members of the public would be interested in exercising their access rights to the cliff slope at these locations, since they do not do so now. Where there are existing fences, these will remain in place, providing a physical barrier which is an effective deterrent to access. Because the extent of new access rights is in keeping with already established use we don't expect there to be any noticeable change in access as a result of our proposals.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Some of the potentially sensitive features identified in Part 3 of this document occur in areas that would become part of the coastal margin along this section of coast. They are:

- Plant Species (3.6)
- Invertebrate Assemblage F112

Of the sites listed in s2, the following designated sites are present along this stretch:

- Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10)
- West Dorset Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (Units 1,2)
- Sidmouth to West Bay SAC

Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI and Sidmouth to West Bay SAC:

Many parts are inaccessible due to the difficult terrain and dense vegetation. Fresh landslip areas (including developing pioneer communities) fall under this category. They are typically inaccessible and hazardous so are unlikely to be accessed or affected by the public.

The areas of calcareous grassland flora within the site are small and fragmented and could be sensitive to increased access. It would be a concern if areas that are not usually accessed at the moment were to become more popular, causing new desire lines to form. However the grassland locations are largely hidden from the coast path, are not actively promoted and are difficult to get to without specific knowledge of the site. The new path through Goat Island is already well used and there have been no unexpected negative impacts on the grassland.

The vascular plant assemblages and individual plant species reside on the cliff tops within the calcareous grassland and along the pathways. The vascular plant assemblages could potentially be damaged by increased visitor pressure. The individual plants along the pathways are perhaps under less threat given that they are already directly connected to the well-walked area and still in favourable condition.

The nature of the seaward coastal margin along this section of the coast - steep cliffs and dense woodland – means that walkers and other users are likely to remain on the established trail.

Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSI:

The invertebrate assemblage F112 is reliant on the calcareous grassland patches throughout the site that could be threatened should visitor numbers increase, therefore so is the invertebrate community which feed on the flowers and use them as egg-laying substrate. Increased disturbance could also be detrimental.

Again the nature of the seaward coastal margin along this section of the coast - steep cliffs and dense woodland – means that walkers and other users are likely to remain on the established trail.

West Dorset Coast SSSI:

The lowland meadows are potentially sensitive to access but the area is already well accessed and in general along this section of the coast, the extent of new access rights within the coastal margin is in keeping with already established use and is not expected to attract significant numbers of new visitors.

Conclusion

Along this section of coast, and on the above designated sites, we do not expect any noticeable change in public use of the land either side of the route as a result of the proposals. Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction between the access proposal and the features listed above or in s3.

5. Assessment of any possible adverse impacts and mitigation measures

In this part of the document we look in more detail at sections of coast where there could be an interaction between the access proposal and sensitive features. We discuss possible risks to sensitive features and explain how these have shaped the design of our proposals and/or led to the inclusion of specific mitigation measures.

5.1 Berry Head (Sharkham Point to Paignton)

5.1.1 Environmental sensitivity

This section is now focussed on the area of Berry Head Quarry where it has been identified in 4.2 that there could be an interaction between sensitive features and the coastal access proposals (see Report Map E).

The following designated features are present:

SAC & SSSI feature: Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) (3.11)

The Greater horseshoe bats use two caves in the quarry face, one as a maternity roost and one as a hibernation roost. Both caves are open and accessible from the quarry floor through a relatively easy scramble by any curious visitor.

Bats are sensitive to disturbance at their roosts, and are most sensitive to disturbance when they are hibernating, during cold periods when there are no food sources available, and during their maternity period.

They are less susceptible to disturbance for a short time (a month or two) between these periods, however they are present and prone to disturbance all year round.

5.1.2. Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

The focus of this section is the large abandoned limestone quarry that was historically quarried for 300 years. The track leading to the entrance to the quarry is reached from a metalled road that leads down from the South West Coast Path to a disused quay and the water's edge. This road takes visitors past the entrance track to the quarry.

The route down to the quay is well used, especially by local fishermen. There is currently no public access to the quarry. The only entrance to the quarry is secured by a metal railing fence and locked gate. This is to prevent disturbance to the bats and to prevent any risk to public safety from the steep quarry sides. Berry Head is an urban fringe site that receives large numbers of visitors, and it is thought a small number of local people do breach the defences and trespass into the quarry. The quarry is used under licence granted by Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, by local youth groups for abseiling, although they do not use the area near the bat caves.

5.1.3. Access proposal

We propose that the England Coast Path should follow the existing South West Coast Path, landward of the quarry at Berry Head. The quarry would become part of the coastal margin by default. Coastal access rights will be established over the area, unless local restrictions or exclusions are put in place (see below).

5.1.4. Predicted change in use of site for recreation

No new physical means of access to the quarry would be created by our proposals. The site is on the urban fringe and there is a small risk that more people might be encouraged to attempt to enter the quarry if new coastal access rights are established.

5.1.5. Possible adverse impacts to sensitive features

Unsupervised use of the quarry by the public could cause disturbance to roosting greater horseshoe bats.

5.1.6. Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address possible impacts

To avoid the risk of more people attempting to enter the quarry and potentially causing disturbance to the roosting bats, we propose to exclude access to the quarry all year by direction under s26(3)(a) of the CROW Act (see Overview Map E).

Natural England will liaise with the site manager to ensure appropriate signage will be installed at the entrance to the quarry.

5.1.7. Conclusion

Potential impacts on sensitive features will be avoided by excluding access to the quarry.

In addition to above measure in 5.1.6. Natural England will discuss with the owner about installing a warning sign at the top of the quarry next to the road alerting people to the danger of falling off the cliff edge at this point. This will further help discourage unauthorised access to the quarry.

5.2 Dawlish Warren to Cockwood Harbour Voluntary Quiet Zone

5.2.1 Environmental sensitivity

Dawlish Warren to Cockwood harbour Voluntary Quiet Zone

This appraisal is now focussed on the coastal margin in the Exe Estuary, specifically on the margin in between Dawlish Warren and Cockwood Harbour. Map 1 shows key features of the access proposals for this area, the route, the coastal margin, the designated sites and the proposed Voluntary Quiet Zone.

The area is designated as Units 1,2, and 4 of Dawlish Warren Site of Special Scientific Interest and has also been mapped by the Exe Estuary Management Partnership (EEMP) as a proposed Voluntary Quiet Zone, see 5.2.3. It is also part of the Exe Estuary SPA and Ramsar Site. At the time of writing the boundary of the Voluntary Quiet Zone is undergoing consultation by EEMP and is therefore yet to be confirmed.

Sensitive Features

Section 3 and 4.5 of this document identified a group of sensitive features present at this part of the Estuary that could have an interaction with the proposals:

- Non-breeding birds (3.10)

The sensitive species from the Non Breeding Birds group 3.10 that are specifically found in this area are:

- Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa islandica*);
- Dark-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*);
- Dunlin (*Calidris alpina alpina*)
- Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*);
- Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*);
- Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*);
- Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Wigeon (*Anas Penelope*)
- *Waterbird Assemblage*

The Exe Estuary SSSI SPA Ramsar site is internationally and nationally important for passage and non-breeding species as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Exe Estuary SPA. Advice on Seasonality. Data collected 2007-2012

Feature name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avocet (<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>), Non-breeding												
Black-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>), Non-breeding												
Dark-bellied Brent goose (<i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>).												

Non-breeding													
Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>), Non-breeding													
Grey plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>), Non-breeding													
Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>), Non-breeding													
Slavonian grebe (<i>Podiceps auritus</i>), Non-breeding													

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-conservation-advice-for-special-protection-area-exe-estuary-uk901008>

The sensitivities can be seasonal and the nature of this seasonality varies according to the ecological requirements of the non-breeding features.

There are few available high tide roosts around the estuary, with Dawlish Warren providing the main roost site for the entire SPA (Liley et al. 2011). The waterbirds using this roost site are sensitive to disturbance during the times around high tide and the availability of alternative roost sites is limited. The saltmarsh associated with Dawlish Warren and to the north of Dawlish Warren are important high tide roosts for bar-tailed godwit, dunlin, redshank, grey plover, oystercatcher, shelduck and turnstone (Exe Observers Group 2008, Dawlish Warren Wardens pers. comms. 2017).

Areas of intertidal habitat are important for feeding by a number of waterbird species, during times when these areas are uncovered. At low tide the mudflat provided between Dawlish Warren and Starcross is important for the majority of wildfowl and waders. These include oystercatcher, curlew, redshank, turnstone, dark-bellied brent goose, shelduck, wigeon and, to a limited extent, Dunlin (Exe Observers Group, 2016) (Dawlish Warren Wardens Pers. Comms, 2017). Shutterton Creek which runs across Cockwood Corner is considered to have some of the highest bird counts of the estuary coupled with some of the lowest levels of access (Liley et al. 2011).

Some non-breeding species are present throughout the year, including outside the main passage and winter periods. This is particularly the case for oystercatcher whose numbers peak between August and February, however moderate numbers can be found in the remaining months (Frost *et al.* 2016). Over the summer months, moderate numbers of non-breeding individuals (first year birds and other failed or non-breeding adults) depend on the mussel beds in the area as a source of food.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-conservation-advice-for-special-protection-area-exe-estuary-uk901008>

On passage, species such as Whimbrel aggregate during April on parts of Dawlish Warren while ringed plover can be found here during July and August (Exe Estuary Observers Group, 2016)(Dawlish Warren NNR Wardens, 2017). Dawlish Warren, particularly the Bight is an important feeding and roosting area for passage sandwich tern during July (Exe Estuary Observers Group, 2016).

5.2.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

There is limited current access to the foreshore between Dawlish Warren and Cockwood Harbour. The

railway line follows the coastline and is on a raised embankment that provides a physical barrier and screening between the road and the South West Coast Path that are landward of the railway along this section.

The main access points to the site are:

- Cockwood steps and rail crossing is the main access point
- A few people actually access the area from Dawlish Warren and can cross the Shutterton creek at low tide
- Cockwood Harbour, people can walk south from here at low tide, or from even further north up the estuary

Existing access management of the site seeks to minimise disturbance to waterbirds feeding on the foreshore and includes:

- a byelaw implemented by Devon Wildlife Trust that excludes dogs from this area
- a sign at the southern edge of the site discouraging others from accessing the foreshore stating there is no access (northwards) to the mudflats and saltmarsh (and that the golf course is private)
- a bird hide on the southern edge of the site which is accessed via a waymarked permissive route around the foreshore at the edge of the golf course.

Wardens that visit the site report that the main use of the foreshore is by crab tilers and bait diggers and anglers using the northern part of the area, and a few crab tilers using the southern part of the area. A small number of local crab tilers use this area on a regular basis and are thought to have traditional rights to gather from the foreshore.

The wardens have noticed that people occasionally attempt to make their way around the foreshore from Cockwood and alongside the railway embankment, anecdotal evidence suggests that while still relatively low, an increasing number of people are accessing the foreshore from Cockwood Steps and walking down to Eales Dock and back (Dawlish Warren NNR Warden Pers. Comms., 2017).

The Exe Estuary Management Partnership is consulting on proposals to establish a Voluntary Quiet Zone over the site. Under these proposals:

- people would be asked not to go onto the foreshore at any time
- a code of conduct and voluntary permit scheme would be agreed with and run by the crab tilers
- improved signage will be installed at the 3 main access points to explain this approach to users and explain the history of crab tiling and the fact that if people do see people out on the mud flats it is likely to be crab tilers
- it is also proposed to re-position the bird hide away from this area to further enhance the quiet zone.

This approach is being undertaken as it is the only area in the estuary that has been identified as potentially quiet enough to provide a sanctuary for overwintering waterbirds. This approach was recommended in the Exe Estuary Recreational Framework (Exe Estuary Management Partnership, 2014) and was the result of a review of all available evidence, which included the Exe Estuary Disturbance Study (Liley et. al 2011) WeBS monthly peak counts and low tide counts, Exe Estuary bird distribution surveys (Exe Estuary Bird Observers Group, 2008) and anecdotal evidence from National Nature Reserve wardens (Dawlish Warren NNR Warden Pers. Comms., 2017).

5.2.3 Access proposal

Our proposed route for the England Coast Path is from Holcombe to Starcross and all land seaward of the trail will become part of the coastal margin, including the foreshore between Dawlish Warren and Cockwood Harbour. Coastal access rights will be established over the area, unless local restrictions or exclusions are put in place. An alternative route will follow the existing Exe Estuary Trail between Starcross and Exmouth however no associated coastal margin will be created in this area.

5.2.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

There could be some increased use of the site as a result of our proposals. We do not propose to promote the site as a visitor destination and the voluntary measures the partnership plan to introduce are compatible with our proposals, however; there is a possibility that use of the site could be encouraged if coastal access rights were to apply.

5.2.5 Possible adverse impacts to sensitive features

An increase in people and their dogs using any accessible areas of the intertidal areas increases the potential for those visitors to interfere with or amend feeding and roosting behaviour of the waterbirds, resulting in reduced feeding rates and increased energetic requirements.

Whilst the overall effect on the SSSI and SPA populations is not possible to quantify, the bird count data (WeBS low tide and high tide data; Frost et al. 2016) and other evidence relating to bird disturbance on the Exe Estuary (Liley et al. 2011) is such that it is reasonable to suggest a realistic possibility that an increase in these types of bird responses could lead to adverse impacts on the populations. As an example, the Exe Estuary bird disturbance study recorded a response (alert/walk/short flight/major flight) from dark-bellied brent goose in 59% of disturbance observations (Liley et al. 2011). Walking on the shore was identified as one of a number of activities which contributed to the majority of major flight events.

5.2.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address possible impacts

Following discussions with the Exe Estuary Management Partnership, we propose to exclude access to the site all year by direction under s26(3)(a) of the CROW Act. The reason for this is to avoid the risk of increased disturbance to birds feeding on the foreshore as a result of our proposals for coastal access, and to not compromise plans for a Voluntary Quiet Zone. The excluded area will coincide with the Voluntary Quiet Zone proposed by the Exe Estuary Management Partnership. The exclusion will apply to access rights that would otherwise be secured by our proposals. Such exclusion *could* affect existing use, unless a person using the site can demonstrate that they do so by right or with permission of the owner.

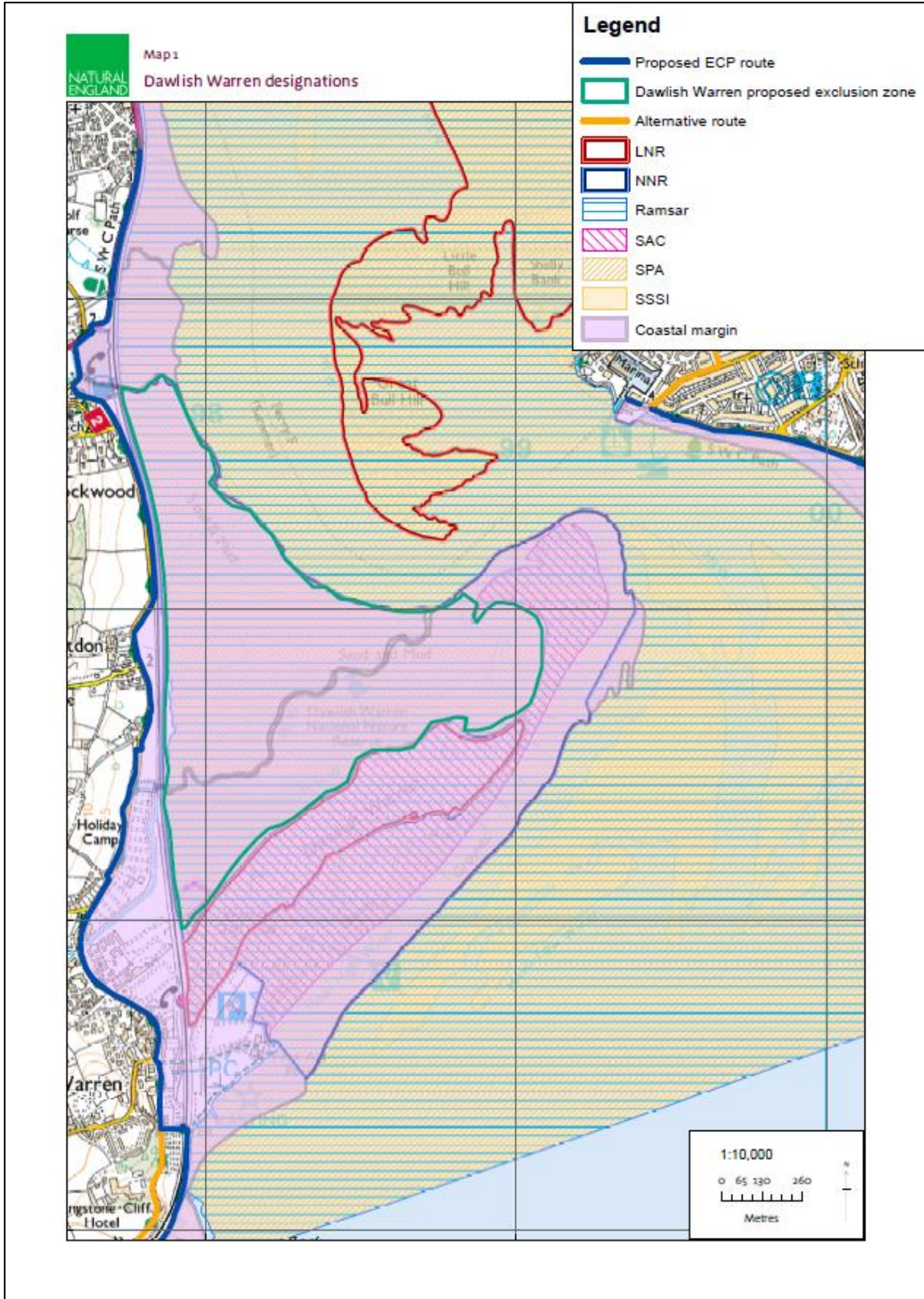
We will continue to liaise with the Exe Estuary Management Partnership about practical implementation and signage. At this stage, we assume that the necessary on-site signage will be installed by the Partnership. We will advise about appropriate wording.

Overview Map F shows key features of the access proposals for this area, the route, the coastal margin, the designated sites and the proposed restriction area.

5.2.7 Conclusion

Taking account of proposed mitigation measures, our proposals offer a way of strengthening planned access management at the site and will not have a negative impact on sensitive features at this location.

Map 1 – Dawlish Warren designations



6. Establishing and maintaining the England Coast Path

In this part of the document we describe how the access proposal would be implemented and arrangements for ongoing management and maintenance once coastal access rights are in place.

Note that before the access proposal can be taken forward, the coastal access report must first be considered by the Secretary of State in light of any representations, any objections from affected owners or occupiers and the Appointed Person's recommendations as to how any objections should be determined.

6.1 Establishment

6.1.1. Works on the ground

Once approval for a coastal access report is received from the Secretary of State, works can be carried out on the ground to make the trail fit for use and prepare for opening. In this case, works on the ground would be carried out by Devon County Council and East Devon District Council.

An estimate of the total cost of works needed to establish the trail is given in our coastal access report for the stretch. The cost of establishment works will be met by Natural England.

Devon County Council and East Devon District Council are responsible for ensuring they take appropriate steps to protect sensitive features whilst works on the ground are carried out, in line with any recommendations or conditions agreed in advance.

We have held preliminary discussions with Devon County Council and East Devon District Council about the works required and believe that it is feasible for them to be carried out without adverse effect on the designated sites considered in this appraisal. At the Exe Estuary any works should be undertaken outside of the overwintering period (September – March inclusive) to minimise impacts on overwintering wildfowl and waders.

Devon County Council and East Devon District Council will instigate the SSSI assent process by writing to us to confirm the timing of works and how operations to be undertaken in line with these conditions. Natural England will provide further ecological advice as necessary.

6.1.2. Implementation of mitigation measures

The mitigation measures described in Part 5 of this document ([5.1.5](#) [5.2.5](#) etc) will be implemented as follows:

Measure	Implementation
Restriction Signage at Berry Head	Natural England will liaise with Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust to ensure appropriate signage is installed.

Restriction Signage at Dawlish Warren to Cockwood Harbour	NE will liaise with the Exe Estuary Management Partnership to advise on wording to assist with the installation of appropriate signage.
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6.1.3. Local restrictions or exclusions

Where specific restrictions or exclusions have been included in the proposal and are approved by the Secretary of State, Natural England will give the necessary directions before public rights come into force to make the rights subject to those restrictions or exclusions.

6.2 Maintenance

Where there is a need for ongoing maintenance of any special measures proposed, this will become part of longer term arrangements for upkeep of the trail. An overall estimate of the ongoing cost of maintaining stretches of the England Coast Path is given in the relevant part of our report for the stretch.

6.3 Monitoring

Monitoring of the protected site will continue through established programmes including our common standards monitoring protocols. The access authority will be responsible for ongoing monitoring of trail condition. Natural England will be tracking general trends, including in the number of people using the path, as part of our evaluation of the coastal access programme nationally.

6.4 Future changes

The access proposals in this document are designed to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features, taking account of any mitigation measures that are included. The coast is a dynamic environment and we have taken account of changes predicted by the Environment Agency as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes in the design of the access proposals. Should it be necessary in the future to identify a new alignment for the trail in line with ‘roll back’ proposals in the stretch report, due care will be taken at that stage to minimise any potential impacts of this change on sensitive features. The same will be true if any unforeseen other changes arise in the future that may require a variation of the access arrangements described in these proposals, following due procedures.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Overall conclusion – Natura 2000/Ramsar sites

7.1.1. Population level effects

Exe Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Feature - or feature group	Conclusion
Non-Breeding Birds (A007 <i>Podiceps auritus</i> ; Slavonian grebe; A046a <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> ; Dark-bellied brent goose; A130 <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> ; Eurasian oystercatcher; A132 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> ; Pied avocet; A141 <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> ; Grey plover; A149 <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> ; Dunlin; A156 <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> ; Black-tailed godwit; Waterbird assemblage)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.

Dawlish Warren SAC

Feature - or feature group	Conclusion
Open Coastal Vegetation (H2120. Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes"); Shifting dunes with marram H2130. Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes"); Dune grassland H2190. Humid dune slacks)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
Plant species (S1395 Petalwort, <i>Petalophyllum ralfsi</i>)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.

Sidmouth to West Bay SAC

Feature - or feature group	Conclusion
Open coastal vegetation (H1210. Annual vegetation of drift lines. H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
Woodland and scrub (H9180 Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines; Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.

South Hams SAC

Feature - or feature group	Conclusion
Greater horseshoe bat (S1304 <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
Caves (H8310 Caves not open to the public)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
Woodland and scrub (H9180 <i>Tilio-Acerion</i> forests of slopes, screes and ravines; Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes.)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
Open coastal vegetation (H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts. H4030 European dry heaths. H6210 Dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>).)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.

Lyme Bay & Torbay Marine SCI

Feature - or feature group	Conclusion
Marine habitats at Lyme Bay and Torbay SCI (H1170 Reefs; H8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.

7.1.2. In combination assessment – where applicable

Not applicable

7.1.3. Overall screening decision

X

No likely significant effect - as the new access proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on Exe Estuary SPA and Ramsar, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC, Dawlish Warren SAC, South Hams SAC, Lyme Bay & Torbay Marine SCI, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) no further Habitats Regulations assessment is required;

OR

Likely significant effect - as the new access proposal is likely to have a significant effect on Exe Estuary SPA and Ramsar, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC, Dawlish Warren SAC, South Hams SAC, Lyme Bay & Torbay Marine SCI, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects (despite any proposed mitigation measures), appropriate assessment is required to consider whether the new access proposal may proceed.

7.2 Overall conclusion - SSSI

In the light of this appraisal, Natural England has concluded that the new access proposal:

complies with Natural England's duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of the SSSIs, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions² - and accordingly the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified in this template

OR

would not comply with the duty referred to in (a) – and accordingly permission/ authorisation/ assent should not be given for the new access proposal in the form finally specified in this template, for the following reasons:

Reasons (where second box is ticked):

7.3 Overall conclusion: Marine Conservation Zone

In respect of any duties that may arise under section 125 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Natural England has concluded for Torbay MCZ that:

The access proposal (including any special measures specified in this appraisal) is the one that, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions under section 296 of the same Act, is least likely to hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives for the Marine Conservation Zone - and accordingly may proceed

OR

The above test is not met, and accordingly the access proposal should not be taken forward in this form, for the following reasons:

Reasons (where second box is ticked):

² The reference in 7.2 above to Natural England's functions includes its balanced general purposes for access, nature conservation and landscape under the NERC Act 2006, any specific statutory duties it may have to deliver specific improvements to public access, and the access-related policies and priorities it periodically agrees with Defra.

7.4 Overall conclusion - National Nature Reserve

In the light of this appraisal, Natural England has concluded that the new access proposal:

will not compromise the management of the National Nature Reserves for its conservation purpose of preserving features of special interest in the area

OR

would compromise the management of the National Nature Reserves for its conservation purpose of preserving features of special interest in the area - and accordingly the new access proposal should not proceed in the form finally specified in this template, for the following reasons:

Reasons (where second box is ticked):

7.5 Other features about which concerns have been expressed

In the light of this appraisal, Natural England has concluded that:

the appropriate balance has been struck by the new access proposal between NE's conservation and access objectives, duties and purposes - and accordingly the new access proposal should proceed as finally specified in this template

OR

the appropriate balance referred to above has not been struck – and accordingly the new access proposal should not proceed in the form finally specified in this template, for the following reasons:

Reasons (where second box is ticked):

8. Certification

8.1 Certification – access proposal

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that the final access proposal, incorporating any special measures, is the least restrictive option necessary to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features.

Signed:



Name: Richard Thomas

Date:

29 March 2017

8.2 Certification – environmental impacts

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that potential environmental impacts of the access proposal Froward Point SSSI and Scabbacombe Point SSSI have been fully addressed.

Name:

Jon Grimes

Signed:



Date:

22/03/2017

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that potential environmental impacts of the access proposal Berry Head to Sharkham Point, Saltern Cove, Roundham Head, Dyer's Quarry, Daddyhole, Meadfoot Sea Road, Hope's Nose to Wall's Hill, Babbacombe Cliffs and Dawlish Cliffs SSSIs and Berry Head NNR and South Hams SAC have been fully addressed.

Name:

Phil Stocks

Signed:



Date:

14/03/2017

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that potential environmental impacts of the access proposal Dawlish Warren SSSI, SAC and NNR, Exe Estuary SSSI, Exe Estuary SPA & Ramsar, Lyme Bay and Torbay Marine SCI and Torbay MCZ have been fully addressed.

Name:

Andrew Stanger

Signed:



Date: 10/03/2017

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that potential environmental impacts of the access proposal Budleigh Salterton Cliffs, Otter Estuary, Ladram Bay to Sidmouth, Sidmouth to Beer Coast and Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs SSSIs and Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs NNR have been fully addressed.

Name:
Christy Tolliday

Signed:



Date:
15/03/2017

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that potential environmental impacts of the access proposal West Dorset Coast SSSI and Sidmouth to West Bay SAC have been fully addressed.

Name:
Tom Sunderland

Signed:



Date:
13/03/17

9. References

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