

Coastal Access – Minehead to Combe Martin



Representations with Natural England's comments

March 2021

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1. Introduction

This document records the representations Natural England has received on the original published proposals for Minehead to Combe Martin and the modification report, *Coastal Access Modification Report MR1*, from persons or bodies. It also sets out any Natural England comments on these representations.

2. Background

Natural England's report setting out its proposals for improved access to the coast from Minehead to Combe Martin, comprising an overview and six chapter, was submitted to the Secretary of State on 20 June 2017. This began an eight-week period during which representations and objections about the report could be made. Natural England submitted a modification report to the Secretary of State on 9 July 2020. This began a second eight-week period during which representations and objections about the modification report could be made.

In total, Natural England received 34 representations against the original report, of which ten were made by organisations or individuals whose representations must be sent in full to the Secretary of State in accordance with paragraph 8(1)(a) of Schedule 1A to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. These 'full' representations are reproduced in Section 4 in their entirety, together with Natural England's comments. Also included in Section 4 is a summary of the 24 representations made by other individuals or organisations, referred to as 'other' representations. Natural England received a total of nine representations against the modification report, of which four were 'full' representations and five were 'other' representations. These are reproduced in Section 5 in full or summary as appropriate, together with Natural England's comments. Sections 6 and 7 contains the supporting documents referenced against the representations.

3. Layout

The representations and Natural England's comments on them are separated below into the report chapters against which they were submitted. Each chapter below contains the 'full' and 'other' representations submitted against it, together with Natural England's comments. Where representations refer to two or more chapters, they and Natural England's comments will appear in duplicate under each relevant chapter. Note that although a representation may appear within multiple chapters, Natural England's responses may include chapter-specific comments which are not duplicated across all chapters in which the representation appears.

4. Representations against the original report and Natural England's comments on them

Report Chapter 1

Full representations

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R25\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Whole report (with the exceptions noted below)

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Whole report (with the exception of the 2 proposals below for which separate representations are submitted: proposal to move the coast path around Hurlstone Point (chapter 1, map 1g) and the proposal for the coast path at Lee Abbey (chapter 5, map 5b).

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

ENPA support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those sections referred to in part 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

Once the report has been determined, ENPA is supportive of its officers leading on the implementation of the report on this stretch providing costs are reimbursed as outlined by Natural England.

As far as maintenance is concerned, ENPA will continue to maintain the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park including the new sections that are proposed in the report. In order to maintain standards, it is essential that the Authority receives the continued support of Natural England as outlined in the National Trails New Deal (2013).

See Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority's meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R21\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Report chapter

Whole report, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The Exmoor Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Forum's statutory function is to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in Exmoor National Park for the purposes of open-air

recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and for any lawful purpose, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed. In carrying out its work, the Exmoor Local Access Forum must have regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Exmoor.

The Exmoor LAF met on Tuesday 27th June 2017 to consider the report.

The Exmoor LAF support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those referred to in section 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

See Appendix 6A1 – Minutes of Exmoor Local Access Forum meeting 27 June 2017 and Exmoor Local Access Forum's advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R22\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Report chapter

Chapter 1

Route section(s)

MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The Exmoor Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Forum's statutory function is to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in Exmoor National Park for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and for any lawful purpose, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed. In carrying out its work, the Exmoor Local Access Forum must have regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Exmoor.

The Exmoor LAF met on Tuesday 27th June 2017 to consider the report.

LAF members voted by majority against Natural England's proposal to make the route around Hurlstone Point the official Coast Path. There was concern that the route around Hurlstone Point is narrow in places, exposed to high winds and on some sections, has steep drops to the seaward side. LAF members felt that the current coast path route via Hurlstone

Combe was safer to sign and promote as the main route for the coast path and felt that the alternative more challenging and dramatic route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative. It is perfectly possible to sign this clearly on the ground at the top of Hurlstone Combe and still allow walkers to follow the Rugged Coast Path. The Exmoor LAF advice to Natural England and to the Secretary of State is to leave the official coast path route in Hurlstone Combe.

See Appendix 6A1 – Minutes of Exmoor Local Access Forum meeting 27 June 2017 and Exmoor Local Access Forum's advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority.

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

This proposal to take the route of the ECP seaward from the existing South West Coast Path along public rights of way around Hurlstone Point (route sections MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022) originated from the South West Coast Path Association (SWCPA), who were concerned about the safety of the existing path on Hurlstone Combe. The existing coast path is steep and often muddy, because of a spring which emerges towards the top of the path and poaching by cattle which graze the area. The SWCPA have observed that walkers have been seen to slip and fall over, particularly while descending the path. Discussions with the landowner the National Trust and Exmoor National Park Authority concluded that it would not be possible to make improvements to the existing route in Hurlstone Combe without engineering works which would have a visual impact on the landscape and which would still potentially be compromised by the dampness and poaching.

The proposed route around Hurlstone Point offers a significant improvement to the existing coast path in that it is closer to the sea and offers significantly improved views over Selworthy Sand and the Exmoor coastline in addition to addressing the issues raised over the existing route at Hurlstone Combe. There are some improvements proposed for this route including a short section of new route to be cut into the rock to avoid a steep and rough part along section MCM-1-S018 and the erection of signage to advise walkers of their options, including following the existing route at Hurlstone Combe (a public right of way), particularly during periods of strong winds.

We note the safety concerns raised in a number of representations (the Exmoor LAF, Exmoor National Park Authority and the Exmoor Society) that the route around Hurlstone Point is narrow in places, exposed to high winds and in some sections has steep drops to the seaward side. These representations hold the view that the current coast path route via Hurlstone Combe is safer to sign and promote as the main coast route for the coast path and that the alternative more challenging route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative.

In contrast, the National Trust as the landowner fully supports the proposed route and states the following: "Part of the National Trust core strategy is to 'provide access to extraordinary places and enable people to experience them in ways that deepen their understanding and engagement and inspire them to value places and to want to look after them. We are here for the nation as a whole and we offer an extraordinary range of experiences and activities to meet people's needs and interests through every season of the year. The National Trust owns and manages more of the South West Coast Path than any other body, organisation or landowner and therefore is well placed to assess what is suitable and consistent within our visitor safety framework. We should allow coast path users to make their own informed decisions based upon their own abilities, what they can see and the information provided by appropriate signage".

Following a site visit with representatives from the National Trust, Exmoor National Park Authority, the Exmoor LAF and the SWCPA on 20 July 2017 it was agreed that a further improvement to the proposed route will be made by widening the path along a 165m length of route section MCM-1-S020 to achieve a path width of 60cm (and where this cannot be achieved, the path will be as wide as physically possible). This increase in width will allow walkers to pass more easily and give more opportunity to walk further from the seaward edge of the path. Further details of the signage that will be erected to advise walkers of their route options were also discussed at this visit. These will include fingerposts at the top and bottom of Hurlstone Combe, advising people of an alternative route they could follow to avoid the cliff edge and also warning signs further along the route. It was also noted that most of the proposed route between sections MCM-1-S017 and MCM-1-S020 is to the east of the higher ground of Hurlstone Point and as such lies in the lea of the predominantly south westerly winds in this area.

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R26\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Chapter 1

Route section(s)

MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022 (Map 1g)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Chapter 1, map 1g (Bossington Hill to Hurlstone Combe)

This representation relates to the proposed change to the route of the Coast Path to run around Hurlstone Point from MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022.

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

Having considered the advice of the Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF), the Authority are unable to support the proposal to move the Coast Path to run around Hurlstone Point.

Members agree with the ELAF advice that that the new proposed route is more hazardous than the current route which runs up Hurlstone Combe. There is a very steep drop onto the rocky shore below, to one side of what is a narrow but good path for a section of around 200m.

Although there are many sections of the existing South West Coast Path outside of the National Park which are similar in character, the proximity to the settlements in and around Porlock mean that a wider variety of walkers make use of the paths in this area than can be found on more remote parts of the Coast Path. The fact that the route would appear on signage and maps as the main route would give users more confidence to use it, including

less competent walkers, regardless of any warning signs that were erected, and this may put them at greater risk.

The Authority therefore recommends that the proposal is reviewed on safety grounds.

See Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority's meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

This proposal to take the route of the ECP seaward from the existing South West Coast Path along public rights of way around Hurlstone Point (route sections MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022) originated from the South West Coast Path Association (SWCPA), who were concerned about the safety of the existing path on Hurlstone Combe. The existing coast path is steep and often muddy, because of a spring which emerges towards the top of the path and poaching by cattle which graze the area. The SWCPA have observed that walkers have been seen to slip and fall over, particularly while descending the path. Discussions with the landowner the National Trust and Exmoor National Park Authority concluded that it would not be possible to make improvements to the existing route in Hurlstone Combe without engineering works which would have a visual impact on the landscape and which would still potentially be compromised by the dampness and poaching.

The proposed route around Hurlstone Point offers a significant improvement to the existing coast path in that it is closer to the sea and offers significantly improved views over Selworthy Sand and the Exmoor coastline in addition to addressing the issues raised over the existing route at Hurlstone Combe. There are some improvements proposed for this route including a short section of new route to be cut into the rock to avoid a steep and rough part along section MCM-1-S018 and the erection of signage to advise walkers of their options, including following the existing route at Hurlstone Combe (a public right of way), particularly during periods of strong winds.

We note the safety concerns raised in a number of representations (the Exmoor LAF, Exmoor National Park Authority and the Exmoor Society) that the route around Hurlstone Point is narrow in places, exposed to high winds and in some sections has steep drops to the seaward side. These representations hold the view that the current coast path route via Hurlstone Combe is safer to sign and promote as the main coast route for the coast path and that the alternative more challenging route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative.

In contrast, the National Trust as the landowner fully supports the proposed route and states the following: "Part of the National Trust core strategy is to 'provide access to extraordinary places and enable people to experience them in ways that deepen their understanding and engagement and inspire them to value places and to want to look after them. We are here for the nation as a whole and we offer an extraordinary range of experiences and activities to meet people's needs and interests through every season of the year. The National Trust owns and manages more of the South West Coast Path than any other body, organisation or landowner and therefore is well placed to assess what is suitable and consistent within our visitor safety framework. We should allow coast path users to make their own informed decisions based upon their own abilities, what they can see and the information provided by appropriate signage".

Following a site visit with representatives from the National Trust, Exmoor National Park Authority, the Exmoor LAF and the SWCPA on 20 July 2017 it was agreed that a further improvement to the proposed route will be made by widening the path along a 165m length

of route section MCM-1-S020 to achieve a path width of 60cm (and where this cannot be achieved, the path will be as wide as physically possible). This increase in width will allow walkers to pass more easily and give more opportunity to walk further from the seaward edge of the path. Further details of the signage that will be erected to advise walkers of their route options were also discussed at this visit. These will include fingerposts at the top and bottom of Hurlstone Combe, advising people of an alternative route they could follow to avoid the cliff edge and also warning signs further along the route. It was also noted that most of the proposed route between sections MCM-1-S017 and MCM-1-S020 is to the east of the higher ground of Hurlstone Point and as such lies in the lea of the predominantly south westerly winds in this area.

Other representations

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\1\MCM0289

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Parish Council

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Fully supports the report (it is well researched, analysed and presented). The Vale of Porlock is an economically poor area with tourism as the main source of income. The SW Coast Path is a positive asset and anything that helps to improve and sustain it is to be commended. The report should be accepted and sufficient resources allocated and plans put in place so that the recommendations are implemented.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\30\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals (apart from the separate representations made) and welcomes the review by Natural England of whether the route could be improved by being closer to the sea. The South West Coast Path is an important access along the coast and does much to attract visitors to Exmoor National Park. It also provides significant income to the locality.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\3\MCM0275

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The National Trust

Route section(s):

MCM-1-S012 to MCM-1-S022

Summary of representation:

The National Trust fully supports the proposed route. Part of the National Trust core strategy is to 'provide access to extraordinary places and enable people to experience them in ways that deepen their understanding and engagement and inspire them to value places and to want to look after them'. The National Trust owns and manages more of the SWCP than any other body, organisation or landowner and therefore is well placed to assess what is suitable and consistent within our visitor safety framework. Coast path users should make their own informed decisions based upon their own abilities, what they can see and the information provided by appropriate signage. The proposed new section of path MCM-1-S017 to MCM-1-S020 along the route of a well-used existing public footpath offers the coast path user stunning views of the Exmoor coastline and a closer relationship with the coastal corridor than the present SWCP inland route.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\6\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Association

Route section(s):

MCM-1-S011 to MCM-1-S015

Summary of representation:

In favour of the proposed change for the 'Rugged Path'. The path is generally in good condition and meets the specifications for a National Trail, with the modest improvements proposed. The views to seaward offered by the proposed route are an improvement over the existing line.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\7\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Association

Route section(s):

MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022

Summary of representation:

This proposal was originated by the SWCPA, whose local representative was concerned about the safety of the existing path on Hurlstone Combe. The current path is steep and often muddy, because of a spring which emerges towards the top of the path, and poaching by cattle which graze the area. Many walkers have been seen to slip and fall over, particularly while descending the path. Improvements to make the existing route in Hurlstone Combe safer are not considered possible without compromising the scenic nature of the area.

The SWCPA strongly recommends the proposals to take the route around Hurlstone Point as this would offer a significant improvement - a safer walk and with much improved coastal views over Selworthy Sand. During periods of strong winds, walkers could use the current path on Hurlstone Combe with notices erected to advise of this.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\15\MCM0212

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Team

Route section(s):

MCM-1-S011 to MCM-1-S015

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change, as it offers much better views than the current route, and whilst more challenging is not more difficult than many other sections of the Coast Path.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\16\MCM0212

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Team

Route section(s):

MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposal to re-route the Coast Path out past the lookout point, as walkers will benefit by passing a point of scenic and historic interest. The proposed route is no more exposed or hazardous than numerous other sections of the Coast Path and with the proposed improvements will be easier for walkers to use (particularly in wet weather when the existing route down Hurlstone Combe becomes slippery).

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\31\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

Rachel Thomas, The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Chapter 1

Summary of representation:

The realignment on North Hill along the current 'Rugged Coast Path' is supported.

The proposed realignment around Hurlstone Point would be used by many visitors and locals, including elderly and children. Part of the proposed route from Hurlstone Point down to the Coast Guard Station has a path width of about half a metre with steep and long drops to the sea. Tripping or falling in this section could result in uncontrollable sliding and fatality. This section is particularly vulnerable to gusty winds, wet weather, and mist and cloud. For safety reasons it is recommended to retain the existing Hurlstone Combe route as the formal coast path with the Hurlstone Point route marked as a rugged/risky alternative.

Natural England's comment:

This proposal to take the route of the ECP seaward from the existing South West Coast Path along public rights of way around Hurlstone Point (route sections MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022) originated from the South West Coast Path Association (SWCPA), who were concerned about the safety of the existing path on Hurlstone Combe. The existing coast path is steep and often muddy, because of a spring which emerges towards the top of the path and poaching by cattle which graze the area. The SWCPA have observed that walkers have been seen to slip and fall over, particularly while descending the path. Discussions with the landowner the National Trust and Exmoor National Park Authority concluded that it would not be possible to make improvements to the existing route in Hurlstone Combe without engineering works which would have a visual impact on the landscape and which would still potentially be compromised by the dampness and poaching.

The proposed route around Hurlstone Point offers a significant improvement to the existing coast path in that it is closer to the sea and offers significantly improved views over Selworthy Sand and the Exmoor coastline in addition to addressing the issues raised over the existing route at Hurlstone Combe. There are some improvements proposed for this route including a short section of new route to be cut into the rock to avoid a steep and rough part along section MCM-1-S018 and the erection of signage to advise walkers of their options, including following the existing route at Hurlstone Combe (a public right of way), particularly during periods of strong winds.

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In contrast, the National Trust as the landowner fully supports the proposed route and states the following: "Part of the National Trust core strategy is to 'provide access to extraordinary

places and enable people to experience them in ways that deepen their understanding and engagement and inspire them to value places and to want to look after them. We are here for the nation as a whole and we offer an extraordinary range of experiences and activities to meet people's needs and interests through every season of the year. The National Trust owns and manages more of the South West Coast Path than any other body, organisation or landowner and therefore is well placed to assess what is suitable and consistent within our visitor safety framework. We should allow coast path users to make their own informed decisions based upon their own abilities, what they can see and the information provided by appropriate signage".

Following a site visit with representatives from the National Trust, Exmoor National Park Authority, the Exmoor LAF and the SWCPA on 20 July 2017 it was agreed that a further improvement to the proposed route will be made by widening the path along a 165m length of route section MCM-1-S020 to achieve a path width of 60cm (and where this cannot be achieved, the path will be as wide as physically possible). This increase in width will allow walkers to pass more easily and give more opportunity to walk further from the seaward edge of the path. Further details of the signage that will be erected to advise walkers of their route options were also discussed at this visit. These will include fingerposts at the top and bottom of Hurlstone Combe, advising people of an alternative route they could follow to avoid the cliff edge and also warning signs further along the route. It was also noted that most of the proposed route between sections MCM-1-S017 and MCM-1-S020 is to the east of the higher ground of Hurlstone Point and as such lies in the lea of the predominantly south westerly winds in this area.

Report Chapter 2

Full representations

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R25\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Whole report (with the exceptions noted below)

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Whole report (with the exception of the 2 proposals below for which separate representations are submitted: proposal to move the coast path around Hurlstone Point (chapter 1, map 1g) and the proposal for the coast path at Lee Abbey (chapter 5, map 5b).

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

ENPA support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those sections referred to in part 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

Once the report has been determined, ENPA is supportive of its officers leading on the implementation of the report on this stretch providing costs are reimbursed as outlined by Natural England.

As far as maintenance is concerned, ENPA will continue to maintain the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park including the new sections that are proposed in the report. In order to maintain standards, it is essential that the Authority receives the continued support of Natural England as outlined in the National Trails New Deal (2013).

See Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority's meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R21\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Report chapter

Whole report, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The Exmoor Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Forum's statutory function is to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in Exmoor National Park for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and for any lawful purpose, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed. In carrying out its work, the Exmoor Local Access Forum must have regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Exmoor.

The Exmoor LAF met on Tuesday 27th June 2017 to consider the report.

The Exmoor LAF support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those referred to in section 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

See Appendix 6A1 – Minutes of Exmoor Local Access Forum meeting 27 June 2017 and Exmoor Local Access Forum's advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Other representations

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\1\MCM0289

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Parish Council

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Fully supports the report (it is well researched, analysed and presented). The Vale of Porlock is an economically poor area with tourism as the main source of income. The SW Coast Path is a positive asset and anything that helps to improve and sustain it is to be commended. The report should be accepted and sufficient resources allocated and plans put in place so that the recommendations are implemented.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\30\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals (apart from the separate representations made) and welcomes the review by Natural England of whether the route could be improved by being closer to the sea. The South West Coast Path is an important access along the coast and does much to attract visitors to Exmoor National Park. It also provides significant income to the locality.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\1\MCM0289

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Parish Council

Route section(s):

Chapter 2

Summary of representation:

The Vale of Porlock is an economically poor area with tourism as the main source of income. It has the most elderly population in England and becoming an unbalanced community with few job opportunities. Tourism forms a vital part of the economy and people walking the SW Coast Path bring much needed income to the area. The SW Coast Path is a positive asset and anything that helps to improve and sustain it is to be commended. The report should be accepted and sufficient resources allocated and plans put in place so that the recommendations are implemented.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\3\MCM0275

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The National Trust

Route section(s):

MCM-2-S001 to MCM-2-S010

Summary of representation:

The National Trust fully supports the proposed route. Part of the National Trust core strategy is to 'provide access to extraordinary places and enable people to experience them in ways that deepen their understanding and engagement and inspire them to value places and to want to look after them'.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\8\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Association

Route section(s):

MCM-2-S018 to MCM-2-S028

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change. The proposed path through Porlock Weir harbour opens up views of this popular and picturesque historic port, and avoids the current path between the Ship pub and the Anchor hotel, which is easily missed, and often obscured by service vehicles for these businesses.

The proposals for roll-back following coastal erosion are important in this stretch, particularly on parts of route sections MCM-2-S023, MCM-2-S024 and MCM-2-S025, where erosion is taking place which will eventually breach the path.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\17\MCM0212

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Team

Route section(s):

MCM-2-S018 to MCM-2-S028

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change. The proposed path past Porlock Weir harbour gives better views of this popular and picturesque historic port, and will create a nice short circular route.

The proposals for roll-back following coastal erosion are important in this stretch, particularly on parts of route sections MCM-2-S023, MCM-2-S024 and MCM-2-S025, where erosion is taking place which will eventually breach the path.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\33\MCM0185

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Manor Estate

Route section(s):

MCM-2-S010 to MCM-2-S012

Summary of representation:

Does not wish to see the proposals implemented for these sections of path. The current status is that of Permissive Right of Way and the Estate would like this to continue and not be upgraded to greater public rights. Currently the Estate as landowner has the ability to vary the route for any management reasons and wish to retain that ability.

Additionally the roll back provisions are going to cause issues in the future and the Estate may want to oppose proposed changes that affect farming on this land. Any changes should be subject to scrutiny.

Natural England's comment:

In this area (route sections MCM-2-S010 to MCM-2-S012), we are proposing that the England Coast Path (ECP) follows the line of the existing South West Coast Path (SWCP) as currently walked and managed. This is along a permissive footpath. Where the existing SWCP meets the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme, whatever its status, we normally propose to adopt it as the line for the ECP, so long as: it is safe and practicable for the public to use; it can be used at all times; and the alignment makes sense in terms of statutory criteria and principles set out in the Scheme. This proposed section of the trail meets with these criteria and if approved will no longer have the status of a 'permissive' path.

If the owner or occupier wishes to restrict or exclude access along the trail or in the coastal margin for land management reasons, they may employ informal management techniques in discussion with the access authority or apply to us for land management directions (whether in relation to commercial or non-commercial activities).

We have proposed roll back for the sections of trail along the landward edge of Porlock Marsh and identified the need for this with the owners and occupiers during the preparation of our report. There is a need for roll back here because the coastline is subject to periodic flooding and tidal action and parts of the existing Coast Path can be impassable at times. Proposing roll-back provides a means by which onward access on foot along this section of coast can be maintained. If the trail has to be rolled back in the future then this will be done in consultation with all owners and occupiers of affected land and there will be the usual requirement to aim to strike a fair balance, when deciding how the route is to be realigned, between their interests and those of the public. Any discussions about roll-back with the owners will follow the statutory process as set out in the Coastal Access Scheme.

Report Chapter 3

Full representations

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R25\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Whole report (with the exceptions noted below)

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Whole report (with the exception of the 2 proposals below for which separate representations are submitted: proposal to move the coast path around Hurlstone Point (chapter 1, map 1g) and the proposal for the coast path at Lee Abbey (chapter 5, map 5b).

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

ENPA support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those sections referred to in part 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

Once the report has been determined, ENPA is supportive of its officers leading on the implementation of the report on this stretch providing costs are reimbursed as outlined by Natural England.

As far as maintenance is concerned, ENPA will continue to maintain the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park including the new sections that are proposed in the report. In order to maintain standards, it is essential that the Authority receives the continued support of Natural England as outlined in the National Trails New Deal (2013).

See Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority's meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R21\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Report chapter

Whole report, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The Exmoor Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Forum's statutory function is to advise as to the

improvement of public access to land in Exmoor National Park for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and for any lawful purpose, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed. In carrying out its work, the Exmoor Local Access Forum must have regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Exmoor.

The Exmoor LAF met on Tuesday 27th June 2017 to consider the report.

The Exmoor LAF support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those referred to in section 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

See Appendix 6A1 – Minutes of Exmoor Local Access Forum meeting 27 June 2017 and Exmoor Local Access Forum's advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Other representations

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\1\MCM0289

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Parish Council

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Fully supports the report (it is well researched, analysed and presented). The Vale of Porlock is an economically poor area with tourism as the main source of income. The SW Coast Path is a positive asset and anything that helps to improve and sustain it is to be commended. The report should be accepted and sufficient resources allocated and plans put in place so that the recommendations are implemented.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\30\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals (apart from the separate representations made) and welcomes the review by Natural England of whether the route could be improved by being closer to the sea. The South West Coast Path is an important access along the coast and does much to attract visitors to Exmoor National Park. It also provides significant income to the locality.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\9\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Association

Route section(s):

MCM-3-S011 to MCM-3-S023

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change. The proposed path will make a significant improvement to the existing route. First, it will open up sea views at Glenthorne, and second, it avoids the existing path through Handball, which crosses a dense rhododendron forest, obscuring the coastal views, and requiring ongoing maintenance.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\18\MCM0212

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Team

Route section(s):

MCM-3-S011 to MCM-3-S023

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change. As well as being closer to the sea, it passes the historically interesting lime kilns on Glenthorne Beach.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\30\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

MCM-3-S011 to MCM-3-S023

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals and considers the realignment past Glenthorne a substantial improvement because it opens up some stunning coastal views, the breathtaking beauty of which has not previously been experienced by the public. It has been described as one of the best views in the world.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Report Chapter 4

Full representations

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R25\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Whole report (with the exceptions noted below)

Route section(s)**Representation in full** *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Whole report (with the exception of the 2 proposals below for which separate representations are submitted: proposal to move the coast path around Hurlstone Point (chapter 1, map 1g) and the proposal for the coast path at Lee Abbey (chapter 5, map 5b).

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

ENPA support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those sections referred to in part 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

Once the report has been determined, ENPA is supportive of its officers leading on the implementation of the report on this stretch providing costs are reimbursed as outlined by Natural England.

As far as maintenance is concerned, ENPA will continue to maintain the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park including the new sections that are proposed in the report. In order to maintain standards, it is essential that the Authority receives the continued support of Natural England as outlined in the National Trails New Deal (2013).

See Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority’s meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England’s comments *Enter Natural England’s comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler’s Park).

Other representations

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\1\MCM0289

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Parish Council

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Fully supports the report (it is well researched, analysed and presented). The Vale of Porlock is an economically poor area with tourism as the main source of income. The SW Coast Path is a positive asset and anything that helps to improve and sustain it is to be commended. The report should be accepted and sufficient resources allocated and plans put in place so that the recommendations are implemented.

Natural England’s comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\30\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals (apart from the separate representations made) and welcomes the review by Natural England of whether the route could be improved by being closer to the sea. The South West Coast Path is an important access along the coast and does much to attract visitors to Exmoor National Park. It also provides significant income to the locality.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Report Chapter 5

Full representations

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R25\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Whole report (with the exceptions noted below)

Route section(s)**Representation in full** *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Whole report (with the exception of the 2 proposals below for which separate representations are submitted: proposal to move the coast path around Hurlstone Point (chapter 1, map 1g) and the proposal for the coast path at Lee Abbey (chapter 5, map 5b).

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

ENPA support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those sections referred to in part 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

Once the report has been determined, ENPA is supportive of its officers leading on the implementation of the report on this stretch providing costs are reimbursed as outlined by Natural England.

As far as maintenance is concerned, ENPA will continue to maintain the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park including the new sections that are proposed in the report.

In order to maintain standards, it is essential that the Authority receives the continued support of Natural England as outlined in the National Trails New Deal (2013).

See Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority’s meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England’s comments *Enter Natural England’s comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler’s Park).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R4\MCM0240

Organisation/ person making representation

[Redacted], Ramblers Association (Devon)

Report chapter

Chapter 5

Route section(s)

MCM-5-S008 to MCM-5-S010 (Map 5b)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

This Representation relates specifically to the section of the Coastal Access trail shown as section MCM-5-S009, that is, the section which is shown as running inland of the Lee Abbey buildings etc.

In routing the coastal access route as shown on Map 5b section MCM-5-S009 inland of the Abbey buildings, we do not accept that Natural England has “struck a fair balance” as required by the legislation (Section 297 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009) and the principles in the Coastal Access Scheme.

Section 297 (2) (b) refers to the desirability of the route adhering to the periphery of the coast and providing sea views. The route as proposed by Natural England does not satisfy this criteria.

Ramblers strongly suggest that a more seaward route of the coast trail is feasible and achievable running seaward of Lee Abbey to Duty Point, as considered but rejected by Natural England in Section 5.2.4 of the Coastal Access Report.

Ordnance Survey maps at 1:25,000 scale and commercially available aerial photography such as Google Earth suggest that such a route is possible; Map 5b in the Coastal Access report supports this contention as does aerial photography on the Lee Abbey website itself. See, for example, <https://leeabbeydevon.org.uk/visit/what-to-expect/our-great-outdoors/> Our contention is that such a route could be achieved outside any land which might be classed as “excepted” land.

We are further aware and express strong concern that Natural England has exercised its power under Section 24 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to make a direction for “land management purposes” to restrict public access for ALL of the year. (Please refer to Section 9 and Map D of the Minehead to Combe Martin Overview report). Paragraph 5.1.12 of Chapter 5 of the Coastal Access report states that the direction is necessary “to enable existing commercial activities to continue”.

Ramblers cannot and do not accept that routing the coastal path seaward of Lee Abbey would adversely affect commercial activities. Most commercial businesses of all forms which adjoin or are adjacent to the existing South West Coast Path recognise and appreciate the substantial economic benefits that the coast path brings to the various communities. We note (in Section 5.2.4 of the Report, paragraph relating to Map 5b) that “the owners do not wish to dedicate a suitable permanent route through the excepted area”.

We have to suggest that the Abbey could accept public access to a true coastal footpath, by dedication under Section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 any land which might otherwise be classified as “excepted” land. This would be welcomed by responsible users of such a route and accord with the Lee Abbey principles as espoused on its own website.

To conclude, we consider that a more seaward route for the coastal path is feasible and achievable at this location. If a direction under Section 24 of CROW is appropriate or necessary on such true seaward / coastal route we have to suggest it should be for a limited period or for a minimal number of days in a calendar year.

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England’s comments *Enter Natural England’s comments here with as much detail as possible.*

Natural England notes the concern expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a ‘fair balance’ between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

In determining the alignment of the ECP we looked carefully with the landowners, the Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship, at a number of options for the route, including the possibility of dedicating a route on the seaward side of the main house. After extensive discussions we opted for the proposed route because:

(i) a large area of the Lee Abbey Estate, in our opinion would be classed by Schedule 1 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as ‘land used as a park or garden’ and therefore excepted from any new coastal access rights. The Trustees do not wish to voluntarily dedicate a suitable permanent route through the excepted area in question as they have concluded that it would not be in the best interests of the charity for which they are responsible to agree to such a dedication. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through; and

(ii) adjacent to the area of excepted land there is an area of land which is required by the owners to enable existing activities to continue without undue impact on the business concerned. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through;

We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the Coastal Access Scheme criteria. The reasoning behind this conclusion is explained in more detail below.

A large area of the Estate between the Toll Road and the top of the cliffs at Duty Point fits the criteria of excepted land (land used as a park) as set out in the Coastal Access Scheme: the land was specifically designed and laid out for the exclusive recreation and visual enjoyment of the occupants of the house and their guests; that the land is still primarily in use for recreation and enjoyment either by the owner of the house and/or their private guests; and that the land is an enclosed area with clearly defined boundaries.

Lee Abbey is a non-profit making Christian religious charity. A central part of Lee Abbey's activities is to offer spiritual retreats including a number of silent retreats. In the words of the Trustees, Lee Abbey "provides 'refreshment and renewal and a place of stillness and silence for many of our guests who specifically come for these aspects of what Lee Abbey offers". The paths, seats and other areas to the seaward side of the main house are particularly important for prayer and silent reflection. In addition to private use of these spaces by individuals, this part of the Estate is used for guided prayer walks for guests and the Community and for some acts of worship.

If a route was taken to the seaward side of the house, it was felt that the exercising of coastal access rights on the route and on the coastal margin would have a significant adverse effect on the ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the places where users of the route would naturally stop to look at the views, such as Duty Point, would tend to be those places which are the most important places for services, silent prayer and reflection and are used throughout the year by guests and the Community.

We have proposed a long term access exclusion under section 24 of CROW for the area shown on Map D of the Overview document. We believe the circumstances at Lee Abbey pass the three administrative tests for a direction to be considered: the concerns relate to activities included in the coastal access rights, the land affected must be subject to the coastal access rights; and there must be valid grounds for a direction.

This reasoning behind this direction is to prevent impacts on the land management activities (managing the land for visitors) that take place on land adjoining excepted land where coastal access rights do not apply. The restriction will only be in effect over those parts of the shaded area on the map that are not excepted land but the exclusion covers both land that is excepted and land that is not. We believe this is important as it would be difficult to separately map the extent of excepted and non-excepted land and also difficult for access users to interpret. This way of presenting the restriction enables Natural England and Lee Abbey Estate to present a clear picture to the public about where they are entitled to go. Our expectation is that the restriction will remain in place for as long as Lee Abbey operates its business in such a way that requires exclusivity for its guests.

We have proposed two improvements to the route through Lee Abbey Estate (outside the area covered by the section 24 direction), the first taking the route through Church Close Field (MCM-5-S008) and the second following the edge of the Camp Field (MCM-5-S010). These would meet the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme more closely in terms of proximity to the sea, views of the sea (the Camp Field) and also in terms of the safety of users as they take the route away from the road. Both proposals have been agreed with the Lee Abbey Fellowship and have received supporting representations from the South West Coast Path Team and the South West Coast Path Association.

See Appendix 6B1 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\5\MCM0240

Organisation/ person making representation

[Redacted], Ramblers Association (Devon)

Report chapter

Chapter 5

Route section(s)

MCM-5-S010 (Map 5b and Map E in Overview)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Land parcel lying south westerly from The Grove and adjacent to Lee Cottage

Please refer to our separate representation regarding the routing of Sections MCM-5-S008, MCM-5-S009, MCM-5-S010. If our suggestions regarding that routing are not accepted then we make this further representation specifically relating to the Section 24 direction made in respect of the land shown at Map E in the OVERVIEW document.

We suggest that this Proposed Direction is unnecessary. We note that paragraph 5.1.13 of Chapter 5 of the Report states this land is used for “campsite activities”. Paragraph 8.19.5 in the Natural England Approved Coastal Access Scheme includes the following words:-

“People walking through land where others are camping normally do their best to stay clear of the tents or caravans, wherever other space is available”.

Ramblers have no reason to doubt that responsible walkers using a coastal access route through a campsite will accord with that sentiment. Accordingly, we suggest the Section 24 Direction is unnecessary.

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England’s comments *Enter Natural England’s comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We note that the representations quote section 8.19.5 of the Coastal Access Scheme which states that ‘people walking through land where others are camping normally do their best to stay clear of the tents or caravans, wherever space is available’.

However, the Camp Field through which route section MCM-5-S010 passes is used for camping at Lee Abbey during July and August each year by youth groups. Section 8.19.6 of the Scheme states that ‘it is recognised that further intervention may be necessary in particular instances where the trail passes through or close to affected land, for example in relation to the needs of specialist groups using a site’. Section 18.9.9 goes on to say that ‘sites used by recognised youth organisations for organised youth camps, where children or young people may be encouraged to explore freely within the safe boundaries of a site, knowing that any adult they encounter will be a trusted and accredited helper’. We would not normally propose to align the trail through such sites, unless it is possible to propose an alternative route for times when access is excluded because it is in use by such a group.

We have proposed in agreement with the landowner, that access to the Camp Field will be excluded under s24 for land management purposes during July and August in order to allow the site to offer a more private and secure environment. When the exclusion is in place, walkers will be directed to use the alternative route along the road (the route of the existing South West Coast Path).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\13\MCM0241

Organisation/ person making representation

[Redacted], Open Spaces Society

Report chapter

Chapter 5

Route section(s)

MCM-5-S009 (Map 5b)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The representation relates to the section of trail MCM-5-S009 which is shown as running inland of Lee Abbey.

We submit that the coastal access route shown on Map 5b section MCM-5-S009, inland of Lee Abbey and its buildings, does not strike a fair balance as required by section 297 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the principles in the Coastal Access Scheme.

Walkers are severely disadvantaged by being sited some distance from the coast without sea views. We advocate that the route should be located seaward of Lee Abbey and run to Duty Point.

We are concerned to see in para 5.2.4 of the report that Natural England has rejected the proposal that the route should be on the coast, largely because of conflict with commercial activities. We strongly resist this, it is a benefit to the local economy to have walkers coming close to a site; to keep them out is likely to result in less money coming into the local economy. We are confident that a suitable route for the coastal path can be identified which is truly coastal and will not cause any conflict with the interests of the owners of Lee Abbey.

We are deeply concerned that Natural England has already said it will make a direction for land management purposes to restrict public access for all of the year on the seaward side of its proposed route for the coastal path (see section 9 and map D of the Minehead to Combe Martin Overview report). This is apparently 'to enable existing commercial activities to continue'. We do not believe that if the coastal path was to follow the coast the existing commercial activities would have to cease.

The Lee Abbey website says: 'We offer a warm welcome to everyone'. Therefore it should offer a warm welcome to users of a coastal path which is truly coastal.

We therefore submit that the coastal path should be routed along the coast, and that Lee Abbey should dedicate under section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 any land which might otherwise be classified as excepted land. If Natural England considers a direction under section 24 of the CROW Act to be necessary, such restriction should be for a limited period only.

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

Natural England notes the concern expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

In determining the alignment of the ECP we looked carefully with the landowners, the Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship, at a number of options for the route, including the possibility of dedicating a route on the seaward side of the main house. After extensive discussions we opted for the proposed route because:

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(ii) adjacent to the area of excepted land there is an area of land which is required by the owners to enable existing activities to continue without undue impact on the business concerned. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through;

We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the Coastal Access Scheme criteria. The reasoning behind this conclusion is explained in more detail below.

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If a route was taken to the seaward side of the house, it was felt that the exercising of coastal access rights on the route and on the coastal margin would have a significant adverse effect on the ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the places where users of the route would naturally stop to look at the views, such as Duty Point, would tend to be those places which are the most important places for services, silent prayer and reflection and are used throughout the year by guests and the Community.

We have proposed a long term access exclusion under section 24 of CROW for the area shown on Map D of the Overview document. We believe the circumstances at Lee Abbey pass the three administrative tests for a direction to be considered: the concerns relate to activities included in the coastal access rights, the land affected must be subject to the coastal access rights; and there must be valid grounds for a direction.

This reasoning behind this direction is to prevent impacts on the land management activities (managing the land for visitors) that take place on land adjoining excepted land where coastal access rights do not apply. The restriction will only be in effect over those parts of the shaded area on the map that are not excepted land but the exclusion covers both land that is excepted and land that is not. We believe this is important as it would be difficult to separately map the extent of excepted and non-excepted land and also difficult for access users to interpret. This way of presenting the restriction enables Natural England and Lee Abbey Estate to present a clear picture to the public about where they are entitled to go. Our expectation is that the restriction will remain in place for as long as Lee Abbey operates its business in such a way that requires exclusivity for its guests.

We have proposed two improvements to the route through Lee Abbey Estate (outside the area covered by the section 24 direction), the first taking the route through Church Close Field (MCM-5-S008) and the second following the edge of the Camp Field (MCM-5-S010). These would meet the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme more closely in terms of proximity to the sea, views of the sea (the Camp Field) and also in terms of the safety of users as they take the route away from the road. Both proposals have been agreed with the Lee Abbey Fellowship and have received supporting representations from the South West Coast Path Team and the South West Coast Path Association.

See Appendix 6B1 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\14\MCM0241

Organisation/ person making representation

[Redacted], Open Spaces Society

Report chapter

Chapter 5

Route section(s)

MCM-5-S010 (Map 5b)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The land parcel lying south west from The Grove and adjacent to Lee Cottage.

Please refer to our representation for a coastal route for sections MCM-5-S008, S009 and S010. If our proposal for a coastal route is not accepted, we wish to make this representation regarding the direction under section 24 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 made in respect of map E in the overview report.

We submit that the proposed direction is unnecessary. It is said that the land is used for 'campsite activities' but paragraph 8.19.5 of Natural England's Approved Coastal Access Scheme states: 'People walking through land where others are camping normally do their best to stay clear of the tents or caravans, wherever other space is available.'

There is no reason why walkers here will not behave in the same way, and therefore the direction is unnecessary.

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We note that the representations quote section 8.19.5 of the Coastal Access Scheme which states that 'people walking through land where others are camping normally do their best to stay clear of the tents or caravans, wherever space is available'.

However, the Camp Field through which route section MCM-5-S010 passes is used for camping at Lee Abbey during July and August each year by youth groups. Section 8.19.6 of the Scheme states that 'it is recognised that further intervention may be necessary in particular instances where the trail passes through or close to affected land, for example in relation to the needs of specialist groups using a site'. Section 18.9.9 goes on to say that 'sites used by recognised youth organisations for organised youth camps, where children or young people may be encouraged to explore freely within the safe boundaries of a site, knowing that any adult they encounter will be a trusted and accredited helper'. We would not normally propose to align the trail through such sites, unless it is possible to propose an alternative route for times when access is excluded because it is in use by such a group.

We have proposed in agreement with the landowner, that access to the Camp Field will be excluded under s24 for land management purposes during July and August in order to allow the site to offer a more private and secure environment. When the exclusion is in place, walkers will be directed to use the alternative route along the road (the route of the existing South West Coast Path).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\23\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Report chapter

Chapter 5

Route section(s)

MCM-5-S008 to MCM5-S010

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The Exmoor Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Forum's statutory function is to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in Exmoor National Park for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and for any lawful purpose, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed. In carrying out its work, the Exmoor Local Access Forum must have regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Exmoor.

The Exmoor LAF met on Tuesday 27th June 2017 to consider the report.

LAF members voted unanimously against Natural England's proposal at Lee Abbey which was to move the route in two places, taking it closer to the sea and into fields. LAF members had visited Lee Abbey in October 2015 to examine coastal access and were disappointed to

see that there was no proposal in Natural England's report to align the coast path around Duty Point where a path largely already exists and has superb views. LAF members felt that this is a missed opportunity for a new, proper coastal route to have been found. Whilst appreciating the concerns of the land owners and the fact that a route around Duty Point can only apparently be achieved with the consent of the owners, LAF members felt that a better route for the coast path could be found through careful negotiation. The LAF advice to Natural England and to the Secretary of State is to re-examine this proposal and to put pressure on the owners to offer a route around Duty Point through negotiation.

See Appendix 6A1 – Minutes of Exmoor Local Access Forum meeting 27 June 2017 and Exmoor Local Access Forum's advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

Natural England notes the disappointment expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

In determining the alignment of the ECP we looked carefully with the landowners, the Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship, at a number of options for the route, including the possibility of dedicating a route on the seaward side of the main house. After extensive discussions we opted for the proposed route because:

(i) a large area of the Lee Abbey Estate, in our opinion would be classed by Schedule 1 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as 'land used as a park or garden' and therefore excepted from any new coastal access rights. The Trustees do not wish to voluntarily dedicate a suitable permanent route through the excepted area in question as they have concluded that it would not be in the best interests of the charity for which they are responsible to agree to such a dedication. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through; and

(ii) adjacent to the area of excepted land there is an area of land which is required by the owners to enable existing activities to continue without undue impact on the business concerned. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through;

We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the Coastal Access Scheme criteria. The reasoning behind this conclusion is explained in more detail below.

A large area of the Estate between the Toll Road and the top of the cliffs at Duty Point fits the criteria of excepted land (land used as a park) as set out in the Coastal Access Scheme: the land was specifically designed and laid out for the exclusive recreation and visual enjoyment of the occupants of the house and their guests; that the land is still primarily in use for recreation and enjoyment either by the owner of the house and/or their private guests; and that the land is an enclosed area with clearly defined boundaries.

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individuals, this part of the Estate is used for guided prayer walks for guests and the Community and for some acts of worship.

If a route was taken to the seaward side of the house, it was felt that the exercising of coastal access rights on the route and on the coastal margin would have a significant adverse effect on the ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the places where users of the route would naturally stop to look at the views, such as Duty Point, would tend to be those places which are the most important places for services, silent prayer and reflection and are used throughout the year by guests and the Community.

We have proposed a long term access exclusion under section 24 of CROW for the area shown on Map D of the Overview document. We believe the circumstances at Lee Abbey pass the three administrative tests for a direction to be considered: the concerns relate to activities included in the coastal access rights, the land affected must be subject to the coastal access rights; and there must be valid grounds for a direction.

This reasoning behind this direction is to prevent impacts on the land management activities (managing the land for visitors) that take place on land adjoining excepted land where coastal access rights do not apply. The restriction will only be in effect over those parts of the shaded area on the map that are not excepted land but the exclusion covers both land that is excepted and land that is not. We believe this is important as it would be difficult to separately map the extent of excepted and non-excepted land and also difficult for access users to interpret. This way of presenting the restriction enables Natural England and Lee Abbey Estate to present a clear picture to the public about where they are entitled to go. Our expectation is that the restriction will remain in place for as long as Lee Abbey operates its business in such a way that requires exclusivity for its guests.

We have proposed two improvements to the route through Lee Abbey Estate (outside the area covered by the section 24 direction), the first taking the route through Church Close Field (MCM-5-S008) and the second following the edge of the Camp Field (MCM-5-S010). These would meet the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme more closely in terms of proximity to the sea, views of the sea (the Camp Field) and also in terms of the safety of users as they take the route away from the road. Both proposals have been agreed with the Lee Abbey Fellowship and have received supporting representations from the South West Coast Path Team and the South West Coast Path Association.

See Appendix 6B1 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R27\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Chapter 5

Route section(s)

MCM-5-S008 to MCM-5-S010

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Chapter 5, map 5b (Lee Abbey to Crock Pits Wood)

This representation relates to the section of Coast Path that runs through the Lee Abbey Estate.

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

Having considered the advice of the Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF), the Authority are unable to support the proposals for the Coast Path as it crosses the Lee abbey Estate.

Authority members share the disappointment of the ELAF that there was no proposal in the report to take the Coast Path route around Duty Point. Whilst appreciating the land management and commercial concerns at Lee Abbey and the fact that a route could probably only be found with consent from the owners due to some of the area being 'excepted land', members felt that this was a missed opportunity to achieve a significantly better route for the public. A path around Duty Point largely exists and with careful negotiation and management, members hope it should be possible to achieve an acceptable route.

The Authority recommends that Natural England re-examine the proposals at Lee Abbey and enter into further discussions with the landowner with the aim of achieving a route for the Coast Path around Duty Point.

See Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority's meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

Natural England notes the concern expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

In determining the alignment of the ECP we looked carefully with the landowners, the Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship, at a number of options for the route, including the possibility of dedicating a route on the seaward side of the main house. After extensive discussions we opted for the proposed route because:

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See Appendix 6B1 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Other representations

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\1\MCM0289

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Parish Council

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Fully supports the report (it is well researched, analysed and presented). The Vale of Porlock is an economically poor area with tourism as the main source of income. The SW Coast Path is a positive asset and anything that helps to improve and sustain it is to be commended. The report should be accepted and sufficient resources allocated and plans put in place so that the recommendations are implemented.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\30\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals (apart from the separate representations made) and welcomes the review by Natural England of whether the route could be improved by being closer to the sea. The South West Coast Path is an important access along the coast and does much to attract visitors to Exmoor National Park. It also provides significant income to the locality.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\10\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Association

Route section(s):

MCM-5-S008 and MCM-5-S010

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change. The proposal removes a short section of the Coast Path from the trafficked road and improves the gradient for walkers. It considerably improves safety, by removing potential conflict between pedestrians and traffic on this road which is often busy in the summer season.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\11\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Association

Route section(s):

MCM-5-S009

Summary of representation:

Disappointed that a route to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point has not been included in the proposals as it would make a considerable improvement to the safety of walkers by avoiding conflict with traffic on the narrow road in front of Lee Abbey. Such a proposal would also open up dramatic seaward views at Duty Point, using physically existing paths. The suggestion is that such a realignment could only have been undertaken with the consent of the landowner, which was unforthcoming, but this is seen as a considerable missed opportunity. The SWCPA's position is that a true Coast Path could be provided around Duty Point which would not have a detrimental impact on the business of Lee Abbey, indeed could enhance it, while reflecting the Abbey's principles. The Association would ask that this section be considered again, and that further negotiations be commenced with the landowner.

Natural England's comment:

Natural England notes the disappointment expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

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Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\19\MCM0212

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Team

Route section(s):

MCM-5-S008 and MCM-5-S010

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change, as removes a short section of the Coast Path from the trafficked road and improves the gradient for walkers. It considerably improves safety, by removing potential conflict between pedestrians and traffic on this road which is often busy in the summer season.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\24\MCM0342

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted]

Route section(s):

MCM-5-S008 to MCM-5-S010

Summary of representation:

Disappointed about the decision not to propose a route around Duty Point to the north and west of Lee Abbey. This is a major opportunity missed. Accept that it is not possible for Natural England to propose such a route without the consent of the landowner but further discussions could be tried. As land at Lee Abbey (seaward of the coast path/road) will be treated as excepted land this means that there is no real reason for the landowners here to offer an alternative. Measures such as screening and seasonal closures could be used to find a compromise position.

Natural England's comment:

Natural England notes the disappointment expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

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If a route was taken to the seaward side of the house, it was felt that the exercising of coastal access rights on the route and on the coastal margin would have a significant adverse effect on the ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the places where users of the route would naturally stop to look at the views, such as Duty Point, would tend to be those places which are the most important places for services, silent prayer and reflection and are used throughout the year by guests and the Community.

We have proposed a long term access exclusion under section 24 of CROW for the area shown on Map D of the Overview document. We believe the circumstances at Lee Abbey pass the three administrative tests for a direction to be considered: the concerns relate to activities included in the coastal access rights, the land affected must be subject to the coastal access rights; and there must be valid grounds for a direction.

This reasoning behind this direction is to prevent impacts on the land management activities (managing the land for visitors) that take place on land adjoining excepted land where coastal access rights do not apply. The restriction will only be in effect over those parts of the shaded area on the map that are not excepted land but the exclusion covers both land that is excepted and land that is not. We believe this is important as it would be difficult to separately map the extent of excepted and non-excepted land and also difficult for access users to interpret. This way of presenting the restriction enables Natural England and Lee Abbey Estate to present a clear picture to the public about where they are entitled to go. Our expectation is that the restriction will remain in place for as long as Lee Abbey operates its business in such a way that requires exclusivity for its guests.

We have proposed two improvements to the route through Lee Abbey Estate (outside the area covered by the section 24 direction), the first taking the route through Church Close Field (MCM-5-S008) and the second following the edge of the Camp Field (MCM-5-S010). These would meet the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme more closely in terms of proximity to the sea, views of the sea (the Camp Field) and also in terms of the safety of users as they take the route away from the road. Both proposals have been agreed with the Lee Abbey Fellowship and have received supporting representations from the South West Coast Path Team and the South West Coast Path Association.

See Appendix 6A3 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\28\MCM0298

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted]

Route section(s):

MCM-5-S008 and MCM-5-S009

Summary of representation:

A more seaward route around the northern edge of the estate is feasible and would not compromise Lee Abbey's business. It would be possible for Lee Abbey to dedicate a path. Questions whether the whole area to the north and west of Lee Abbey should be 'excepted land'.

Natural England's comment:

Natural England notes the concern expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

In determining the alignment of the ECP we looked carefully with the landowners, the Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship, at a number of options for the route, including the possibility of dedicating a route on the seaward side of the main house. After extensive discussions we opted for the proposed route because:

(i) a large area of the Lee Abbey Estate, in our opinion would be classed by Schedule 1 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as 'land used as a park or garden' and therefore excepted from any new coastal access rights. The Trustees do not wish to voluntarily dedicate a suitable permanent route through the excepted area in question as they have concluded that it would not be in the best interests of the charity for which they are responsible to agree to such a dedication. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through; and

(ii) adjacent to the area of excepted land there is an area of land which is required by the owners to enable existing activities to continue without undue impact on the business concerned. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through;

We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the Coastal Access Scheme criteria. The reasoning behind this conclusion is explained in more detail below.

A large area of the Estate between the Toll Road and the top of the cliffs at Duty Point fits the criteria of excepted land (land used as a park) as set out in the Coastal Access Scheme: the land was specifically designed and laid out for the exclusive recreation and visual enjoyment of the occupants of the house and their guests; that the land is still primarily in use for recreation and enjoyment either by the owner of the house and/or their private guests; and that the land is an enclosed area with clearly defined boundaries.

Lee Abbey is a non-profit making Christian religious charity. A central part of Lee Abbey's activities is to offer spiritual retreats including a number of silent retreats. In the words of the Trustees, Lee Abbey "provides 'refreshment and renewal and a place of stillness and silence for many of our guests who specifically come for these aspects of what Lee Abbey offers". The paths, seats and other areas to the seaward side of the main house are particularly important for prayer and silent reflection. In addition to private use of these spaces by individuals, this part of the Estate is used for guided prayer walks for guests and the Community and for some acts of worship.

If a route was taken to the seaward side of the house, it was felt that the exercising of coastal access rights on the route and on the coastal margin would have a significant adverse effect on the ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the places where users of the route would naturally stop to look at the views, such as Duty Point, would tend to be those places which are the most important places for services, silent prayer and reflection and are used throughout the year by guests and the Community.

We have proposed a long term access exclusion under section 24 of CROW for the area shown on Map D of the Overview document. We believe the circumstances at Lee Abbey pass the three administrative tests for a direction to be considered: the concerns relate to activities included in the coastal access rights, the land affected must be subject to the coastal access rights; and there must be valid grounds for a direction.

This reasoning behind this direction is to prevent impacts on the land management activities (managing the land for visitors) that take place on land adjoining excepted land where coastal access rights do not apply. The restriction will only be in effect over those parts of the shaded area on the map that are not excepted land but the exclusion covers both land that is excepted and land that is not. We believe this is important as it would be difficult to separately map the extent of excepted and non-excepted land and also difficult for access users to interpret. This way of presenting the restriction enables Natural England and Lee Abbey Estate to present a clear picture to the public about where they are entitled to go, but it does not mean, as this representation suggests, that all the land shown by the shading is 'excepted land'. Our expectation is that the restriction will remain in place for as long as Lee Abbey operates its business in such a way that requires exclusivity for its guests.

We have proposed two improvements to the route through Lee Abbey Estate (outside the area covered by the section 24 direction), the first taking the route through Church Close Field (MCM-5-S008) and the second following the edge of the Camp Field (MCM-5-S010). These would meet the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme more closely in terms of proximity to the sea, views of the sea (the Camp Field) and also in terms of the safety of users as they take the route away from the road. Both proposals have been agreed with the Lee Abbey Fellowship and have received supporting representations from the South West Coast Path Team and the South West Coast Path Association.

See Appendix 6A3 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Representation number:

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted]

Route section(s):

MCM-5-S008 and MCM-5-S009

Summary of representation:

A more seaward route around the northern edge of the estate is feasible and would not compromise Lee Abbey's business. It would be possible for Lee Abbey to dedicate a path. Questions whether the whole area to the north and west of Lee Abbey should be 'excepted land'.

Natural England's comment:

Natural England notes the concern expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

In determining the alignment of the ECP we looked carefully with the landowners, the Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship, at a number of options for the route, including the possibility of dedicating a route on the seaward side of the main house. After extensive discussions we opted for the proposed route because:

(i) a large area of the Lee Abbey Estate, in our opinion would be classed by Schedule 1 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as 'land used as a park or garden' and therefore excepted from any new coastal access rights. The Trustees do not wish to voluntarily dedicate a suitable permanent route through the excepted area in question as they have concluded that it would not be in the best interests of the charity for which they are responsible to agree to such a dedication. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through; and

(ii) adjacent to the area of excepted land there is an area of land which is required by the owners to enable existing activities to continue without undue impact on the business concerned. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through;

We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the Coastal Access Scheme criteria. The reasoning behind this conclusion is explained in more detail below.

A large area of the Estate between the Toll Road and the top of the cliffs at Duty Point fits the criteria of excepted land (land used as a park) as set out in the Coastal Access Scheme: the land was specifically designed and laid out for the exclusive recreation and visual enjoyment of the occupants of the house and their guests; that the land is still primarily in use for recreation and enjoyment either by the owner of the house and/or their private guests; and that the land is an enclosed area with clearly defined boundaries.

Lee Abbey is a non-profit making Christian religious charity. A central part of Lee Abbey's activities is to offer spiritual retreats including a number of silent retreats. In the words of the Trustees, Lee Abbey "provides 'refreshment and renewal and a place of stillness and silence for many of our guests who specifically come for these aspects of what Lee Abbey offers". The paths, seats and other areas to the seaward side of the main house are particularly important for prayer and silent reflection. In addition to private use of these spaces by individuals, this part of the Estate is used for guided prayer walks for guests and the Community and for some acts of worship.

If a route was taken to the seaward side of the house, it was felt that the exercising of coastal access rights on the route and on the coastal margin would have a significant adverse effect on the ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the places where users of the route would naturally stop to look at the views, such as Duty Point, would tend to be those places which are the most important places for services, silent prayer and reflection and are used throughout the year by guests and the Community.

We have proposed a long term access exclusion under section 24 of CROW for the area shown on Map D of the Overview document. We believe the circumstances at Lee Abbey pass the three administrative tests for a direction to be considered: the concerns relate to activities included in the coastal access rights, the land affected must be subject to the coastal access rights; and there must be valid grounds for a direction.

This reasoning behind this direction is to prevent impacts on the land management activities (managing the land for visitors) that take place on land adjoining excepted land where coastal access rights do not apply. The restriction will only be in effect over those parts of the shaded area on the map that are not excepted land but the exclusion covers both land that is excepted and land that is not. We believe this is important as it would be difficult to separately map the extent of excepted and non-excepted land and also difficult for access users to interpret. This way of presenting the restriction enables Natural England and Lee Abbey Estate to present a clear picture to the public about where they are entitled to go, but it does not mean, as this representation suggests, that all the land shown by the shading is 'excepted land'. Our expectation is that the restriction will remain in place for as long as Lee Abbey operates its business in such a way that requires exclusivity for its guests.

We have proposed two improvements to the route through Lee Abbey Estate (outside the area covered by the section 24 direction), the first taking the route through Church Close Field (MCM-5-S008) and the second following the edge of the Camp Field (MCM-5-S010). These would meet the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme more closely in terms of proximity to the sea, views of the sea (the Camp Field) and also in terms of the safety of users as they take the route away from the road. Both proposals have been agreed with the Lee Abbey Fellowship and have received supporting representations from the South West Coast Path Team and the South West Coast Path Association.

See Appendix 6A3 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\32\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Map 5a & Map 5b

Summary of representation:

Believes that the current route along the road at Lee Abbey could be improved by being realigned close to Duty Point and is disappointed that this has not yet been achieved. Aware of Lee Abbey's reasons for wanting to keep the path in its present position but believes these difficulties could be overcome through further negotiation and Natural England should continue its efforts to bring this to fruition.

Natural England's comment:

Natural England notes the disappointment expressed in a number of representations that we have not proposed a route for the England Coast Path (ECP) to the seaward side of Lee Abbey and around Duty Point and also the opinion expressed that we have not struck a 'fair balance' between the needs of the users and the needs of the landowner.

In determining the alignment of the ECP we looked carefully with the landowners, the Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship, at a number of options for the route, including the possibility of dedicating a route on the seaward side of the main house. After extensive discussions we opted for the proposed route because:

(i) a large area of the Lee Abbey Estate, in our opinion would be classed by Schedule 1 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as 'land used as a park or garden' and therefore excepted from any new coastal access rights. The Trustees do not wish to voluntarily dedicate a suitable permanent route through the excepted area in question as they have concluded that it would not be in the best interests of the charity for which they are responsible to agree to such a dedication. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through; and

(ii) adjacent to the area of excepted land there is an area of land which is required by the owners to enable existing activities to continue without undue impact on the business concerned. It has therefore not been possible to find a suitable route through;

We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the Coastal Access Scheme criteria. The reasoning behind this conclusion is explained in more detail below.

A large area of the Estate between the Toll Road and the top of the cliffs at Duty Point fits the criteria of excepted land (land used as a park) as set out in the Coastal Access Scheme: the land was specifically designed and laid out for the exclusive recreation and visual enjoyment of the occupants of the house and their guests; that the land is still primarily in use for recreation and enjoyment either by the owner of the house and/or their private guests; and that the land is an enclosed area with clearly defined boundaries.

Lee Abbey is a non-profit making Christian religious charity. A central part of Lee Abbey's activities is to offer spiritual retreats including a number of silent retreats. In the words of the Trustees, Lee Abbey "provides 'refreshment and renewal and a place of stillness and silence for many of our guests who specifically come for these aspects of what Lee Abbey offers". The paths, seats and other areas to the seaward side of the main house are particularly important for prayer and silent reflection. In addition to private use of these spaces by individuals, this part of the Estate is used for guided prayer walks for guests and the Community and for some acts of worship.

If a route was taken to the seaward side of the house, it was felt that the exercising of coastal access rights on the route and on the coastal margin would have a significant adverse effect on the ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the places where users of the route would naturally stop to look at the views, such as Duty Point, would tend to be those places which are the most important places for services, silent prayer and reflection and are used throughout the year by guests and the Community.

We have proposed a long term access exclusion under section 24 of CROW for the area shown on Map D of the Overview document. We believe the circumstances at Lee Abbey pass the three administrative tests for a direction to be considered: the concerns relate to activities included in the coastal access rights, the land affected must be subject to the coastal access rights; and there must be valid grounds for a direction.

This reasoning behind this direction is to prevent impacts on the land management activities (managing the land for visitors) that take place on land adjoining excepted land where coastal access rights do not apply. The restriction will only be in effect over those parts of the shaded area on the map that are not excepted land but the exclusion covers both land that is excepted and land that is not. We believe this is important as it would be difficult to separately map the extent of excepted and non-excepted land and also difficult for access users to interpret. This way of presenting the restriction enables Natural England and Lee Abbey Estate to present a clear picture to the public about where they are entitled to go. Our expectation is that the restriction will remain in place for as long as Lee Abbey operates its business in such a way that requires exclusivity for its guests.

We have proposed two improvements to the route through Lee Abbey Estate (outside the area covered by the section 24 direction), the first taking the route through Church Close Field (MCM-5-S008) and the second following the edge of the Camp Field (MCM-5-S010). These would meet the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme more closely in terms of proximity to the sea, views of the sea (the Camp Field) and also in terms of the safety of users as they take the route away from the road. Both proposals have been agreed with the Lee Abbey Fellowship and have received supporting representations from the South West Coast Path Team and the South West Coast Path Association.

See Appendix 6A3 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported by the Lee Abbey Fellowship, MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Lee Abbey Fellowship

Route section(s):

Map 5b, MCM-5-S008 to MCM-5-S010

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals for land at Lee Abbey. The route along the Toll Road will continue to offer exceptional sea views and is more direct and open. The proposed route also includes the improvements to two sections of the route (MCM-5-S008 and MCM-5-S010) which have been voluntarily agreed.

The majority of the land to the seaward side of the Toll Road is 'excepted land' and the trustees have a legal duty to protect the assets of the charity (and the Estate) and therefore not enter agreements (such as a dedication) which would be prejudicial to the charity. The exercise of coastal access rights on a route on the seaward side of the Toll Road would have a significant adverse impact on the ministry and the reason many people come to Lee Abbey, for peace, stillness and quiet reflection. The obvious places where members of the public would stop would tend to be those places which are the most important places of silent prayer and reflection currently used by guests and the Community.

See Appendix 6A3 setting out the reasons why the recommendations in Chapter 5 of the report are supported.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Report Chapter 6

Full representations

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R25\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor National Park Authority

Report chapter

Whole report (with the exceptions noted below)

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

Whole report (with the exception of the 2 proposals below for which separate representations are submitted: proposal to move the coast path around Hurlstone Point (chapter 1, map 1g) and the proposal for the coast path at Lee Abbey (chapter 5, map 5b).

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.

Natural England's report 'The England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin' was considered at a full Authority meeting on 4th July 2017.

ENPA support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those sections referred to in part 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

Once the report has been determined, ENPA is supportive of its officers leading on the implementation of the report on this stretch providing costs are reimbursed as outlined by Natural England.

As far as maintenance is concerned, ENPA will continue to maintain the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park including the new sections that are proposed in the report. In order to maintain standards, it is essential that the Authority receives the continued support of Natural England as outlined in the National Trails New Deal (2013).

See Appendix A2 – Papers presented at and the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority's meeting on 4 July 2017

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Representation number

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R21\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Report chapter

Whole report, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6

Route section(s)

Representation in full *Record the representation here in full. Do not summarise.*

The Exmoor Local Access Forum is an independent advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Forum's statutory function is to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in Exmoor National Park for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and for any lawful purpose, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed. In carrying out its work, the Exmoor Local Access Forum must have regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Exmoor.

The Exmoor LAF met on Tuesday 27th June 2017 to consider the report.

The Exmoor LAF support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin (with the exception of those referred to in section 1 above) and consider these four changes to the current SWCP route (Rugged Coast Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobblers Park Combe Martin) to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.

See Appendix 6A1 – Minutes of Exmoor Local Access Forum meeting 27 June 2017 and Exmoor Local Access Forum's advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority

Specialist input *Record the input received. It is not necessary to record the input in full. If no specialists were consulted or responded, leave the field blank.*

Natural England's comments *Enter Natural England's comments here with as much detail as possible.*

We welcome this expression of support about four of the proposed changes to the route of the coast path (the Rugged Path, Worthy, Glenthorne and Cobbler's Park).

Other representations

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\1\MCM0289

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Porlock Parish Council

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Fully supports the report (it is well researched, analysed and presented). The Vale of Porlock is an economically poor area with tourism as the main source of income. The SW Coast Path is a positive asset and anything that helps to improve and sustain it is to be commended. The report should be accepted and sufficient resources allocated and plans put in place so that the recommendations are implemented.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\30\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], The Exmoor Society

Route section(s):

Whole report

Summary of representation:

Supports the proposals (apart from the separate representations made) and welcomes the review by Natural England of whether the route could be improved by being closer to the sea. The South West Coast Path is an important access along the coast and does much to attract visitors to Exmoor National Park. It also provides significant income to the locality.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\2\MCM0295

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], Combe Martin Parish Council

Route section(s):

MCM-6-S031 to MCM-6-S033

Summary of representation:

Acknowledges the collaborative discussions and work with Natural England and Exmoor National Park Authority which has resulted in a voluntary dedication of a strip of excepted land within Cobbler's Park, conditional on physical works as agreed. The combination of the existing route and the route through Cobblers Park will prove popular with all users and provide day trippers to the village with a short circular walk.

A good balance has been proposed in meeting the needs and concerns of the local community and the criteria of the Coastal Access Scheme.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\12\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Association

Route section(s):

MCM-6-S031 to MCM-6-S033

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change. The proposal makes very considerable improvements to the seaward views towards the west of Combe Martin compared with the current route.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\20\MCM0212

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted], South West Coast Path Team

Route section(s):

MCM-6-S031 to MCM-6-S033

Summary of representation:

Supports this proposed change, as the current route on this section has very limited coastal views, whereas the proposed route provides a very attractive 'entrance' to Combe Martin.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome this expression of support.

5. Representations against the modification report and Natural England's comments on them

Full representations

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\37\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation:

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Name of site:

Glenthorne

Report map reference:

MR1c

Route section(s) specific to this representation:

MCM-MR1-S002 to MCM-MR1-S007

Representation in full

Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF) met via video conference on Tuesday 21st July 2020 and considered the Coastal Access Modification Report MR1 alongside a summary paper provided by the ELAF secretary (attached to this consultation).

ELAF members are supportive of the line amendment proposed at Glenthorne although there were some questions raised as to whether the new line represented much of an improvement on the existing South West Coast Path route. However, it is recognised that the new route is closer to the sea, has good sea views in places with potential for more and does represent new access for the public. Members were disappointed that the original proposal seaward of Glenthorne House is no longer possible but recognise the reason for this that are outlined in the report.

Natural England's comments

We welcome the supportive comments expressed in the representation from Exmoor LAF.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7):

Report from Exmoor Local Access Forum

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\38\MCM0031

Organisation/ person making representation:

Exmoor Local Access Forum

Name of site:

Hurlstone Point

Report map reference:

MR1b

Route section(s) specific to this representation:

MCM-MR1-S001

Representation in full

Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF) met via video conference on Tuesday 21st July 2020 and considered the Coastal Access Modification Report MR1 alongside a summary paper provided by the ELAF secretary (attached to this consultation).

ELAF members are supportive of the minor line amendment proposed at Hurlstone Point as this new line is already being used by walkers, there will be a reduction in necessary establishment works compared with the original proposal and therefore there will be less impact on the landscape and other natural features.

However, ELAF members were adamant that their original comments submitted in 2017 on the original England Coast Path Report on the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch are to be reiterated in this response. For ease and clarity, the original comments on the realignment at Hurlstone Point are below:

LAF members voted by majority against Natural England's proposal to make the route around

Hurlstone Point the official Coast Path. There was concern that the route around Hurlstone Point is narrow in places, exposed to high winds and on some sections, has steep drops to the seaward side. LAF members felt that the current coast path route via Hurlstone Combe was safer to sign and promote as the main route for the coast path and felt that the alternative more challenging and dramatic route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative. It is perfectly possible to sign this clearly on the ground at the top of Hurlstone Combe and still allow walkers to follow the Rugged Coast Path. The Exmoor LAF advice to Natural England and to the Secretary of State is to leave the official coast path route in Hurlstone Combe.

To reiterate, the view of the Exmoor Local Access Forum is that the England Coast Path route should remain in Hurlstone Combe (where the current SWCP is aligned) and should not be routed around Hurlstone Point.

Natural England's comments

We welcome the supportive comments expressed in the representation in relation to the minor modification proposed.

We note the Forum's opposition to our original proposals to align the route around Hurlstone Point rather than follow the SWCP route on Hurlstone Combe, due to safety concerns.

We have set out our response to this point in our comments on the LAF's original representation (ref MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R22\MCM0031). This can be found on page 10 of our previously submitted document '*MCM Full Representations with Natural England's comments – September 2017*'.

In summary:

The idea for this realignment originated from the South West Coast Path Association (SWCPA), who were concerned about the safety of the existing path on Hurlstone Combe. The existing coast path is steep and often muddy, because of a spring which emerges towards the top of the path and poaching by cattle which graze the area. The SWCPA have observed that walkers have been seen to slip and fall over, particularly while descending the path. Discussions with the landowner (National Trust) and Exmoor National Park Authority concluded that it would not be possible to make improvements to the existing route in Hurlstone Combe without engineering

works which would have a visual impact on the landscape and which would still potentially be compromised by the dampness and poaching.

The proposed route around Hurlstone Point offers a significant improvement to the existing coast path in that it is closer to the sea and offers significantly improved views over Selworthy Sand and the Exmoor coastline in addition to addressing the issues raised over the existing route at Hurlstone Combe. There are some improvements proposed for the modified route, including works to widen the path and the erection of signage to advise walkers of their options, including following the existing route at Hurlstone Combe (a public right of way), particularly during periods of strong winds.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7):

Report from Exmoor Local Access Forum

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\42\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation:

Exmoor National Park Authority

Name of site:

Glenthorne

Report map reference:

MR1c

Route section(s) specific to this representation:

MCM-MR1-S002 to MCM-MR1-S007

Representation in full

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) Members met at their Members Forum via video conference on Tuesday 1st September 2020 and considered the Coastal Access Modification Report MR1 alongside a summary paper provided by the Public Rights of Way and Access Officer (attached to this representation).

ENPA members are supportive of the line amendment proposed at Glenthorne. Members were disappointed that the original proposal seaward of Glenthorne House is no longer possible but recognise the reason for this that are outlined in the report.

Natural England's comments

We welcome the supportive comments expressed in the representation from Exmoor NPA.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7):

Report to Exmoor National Park Authority Members' Forum

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\43\MCM0188

Organisation/ person making representation:

Exmoor National Park Authority

Name of site:

Hurlstone Point

Report map reference:

MR1b

Route section(s) specific to this representation:

MCM-MR1-S001

Representation in full

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) members met at their Members Forum via video conference on Tuesday 1st September 2020 and considered the Coastal Access Modification Report MR1 alongside a summary paper provided by the Public Rights of Way and Access Officer (attached to this representation).

ENPA members are supportive of the minor line amendment proposed at Hurlstone point as this new line is already being used by walkers, there will be a reduction in necessary establishment works compared with the original proposal and therefore there will be less impact on the landscape and other natural features.

However, ENPA members wished to reiterate their original comments submitted in 2017 on the original England Coast Path Report on the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. For ease and clarity, the original comments on the realignment at Hurlstone Point are below:

Having considered the advice of the Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF), the Authority are unable to support the proposal to move the Coast Path to run around Hurlstone Point.

Members agree with the ELAF advice that that the new proposed route is more hazardous than the current route which runs up Hurlstone Combe. There is a very steep drop onto the rocky shore below, to one side of what is a narrow but good path for a section of around 200m. Although there are many sections of the existing South West Coast Path outside of the National Park which are similar in character, the proximity to the settlements in and around Porlock mean that a wider variety of walkers make use of the paths in this area than can be found on more remote parts of the Coast Path. The fact that the route would appear on signage and maps as the main route would give users more confidence to use it, including less competent walkers, regardless of any warning signs that were erected, and this may put them at greater risk.

The Authority therefore recommends that the proposal is reviewed on safety grounds.

To reiterate, the view of Exmoor National Park Authority is that the England Coast Path route should remain in Hurlstone Combe (where the current SWCP is aligned) and should not be routed around Hurlstone Point.

Natural England's comments

We welcome the supportive comments expressed in the representation in relation to the minor modification proposed.

We note the Authority's opposition to our original proposals to align the route around Hurlstone Point rather than follow the SWCP route on Hurlstone Combe, due to safety concerns.

We have set out our response to this point in our comments on the Authority's original representation (ref MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R26\MCM0188). This can be found on page 15 of our previously submitted document '*MCM Full Representations with Natural England's comments – September 2017*'.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7):

Report to Exmoor National Park Authority Members' Forum

Other representations

Representations containing similar or identical points

Representation number:

Organisation/ person making representation:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\39\MCM0344
The Exmoor Society

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\41\MCM0341
[Redacted]

Name of site:

Hurlstone Point

Report map reference:

MR1b

Route sections on or adjacent to the land:

MCM-MR1-S001

Summary of point:

Opposed to the realignment of the ECP away from the SWCP route and onto Hurlstone Point, due to safety concerns. The respondents note that the route around Hurlstone Point is exposed with steep drops to the seaward side and is dangerous particularly in wet and/or windy weather.

Natural England's comment:

We note both party's opposition to our original proposals to align the route around Hurlstone Point rather than follow the SWCP route on Hurlstone Combe, due to safety concerns.

We have set out our response to this point in our comments on the Exmoor Society's original representation (ref MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\31\MCM0344). This can be found on page 28 of our previously submitted document '*MCM Full and Other Representations on Report – September 2017*'.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7):

Review of Hurlstone Point proposals by [redacted] et al

Representations containing similar or identical points

Representation number:

Organisation/ person making representation:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\39\MCM0344
The Exmoor Society

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\41\MCM0341
[Redacted]

Name of site:

Hurlstone Point

Report map reference:

MR1b

Route sections on or adjacent to the land:

MCM-MR1-S001

Summary of point:

The HRA does not include an assessment of the impact on breeding birds, in particular ravens and peregrine falcons nesting in the area.

Natural England's comment:

The Habitats Regulations Assessment process includes an appraisal of likely impact based on a number of factors including habitat type, qualifying features of the site and their sensitivity to coastal walking. This then leads to a decision on whether the proposals would have an adverse effect on the site integrity of the Exmoor Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as a whole.

Breeding bird assemblage is not a qualifying feature of the Exmoor Heath SAC designation or the underlying Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), however the Supplementary Advice Conservation Objectives document lists 'an assemblage of breeding birds' as typical species of the SAC habitat feature.

The proposed changes to the route at Hurlstone Point detailed in the Modification Report will reduce possible impacts on the designated sites, from the previously proposed route, including by removing the need to install new steps.

[Redacted]'s comments on wildlife matters relate to Natural England's proposal to re-route the Coast Path around Hurlstone Point rather than to the proposed minor modification. Several points are made in the document appended in Section 6 'Review of Hurlstone Point proposals'. Our comments on these are as follows:

Point 1 - Widening the current path round the Point will damage SAC habitat.

- The proposal is to cut back surface vegetation to widen the line of the existing livestock path to 1 metre along a 90m length.
- The area of habitat affected by the widening works is small in the context of the site.
- The width of the path is naturally limited by the steep terrain and remote location.
- Vegetation will regrow and habitat will not be permanently lost.
- Some areas of bare ground or short vegetation, such as are associated with the path, help to provide structural diversity within the heath.
- The path around the headland is part of the fabric of the site and will be maintained to enable a person to walk easily around it without negatively impacting on the coastal heath feature.

Point 2 - Increased use of the path around the Point will interfere with grazing by rabbits, which in turn will have an impact on SAC habitat.

- Rabbits are able to thrive at locations with a much greater intensity of recreational activity.
- The nature of the terrain around the headland is such that walkers will stay on the path, limiting possible disturbance to grazing rabbits.
- Rabbits are active at dawn and dusk when fewer people will be using this section of path.
- Rabbits may be disturbed by passing walkers, however, we do not consider their overall grazing activity will be significantly affected by some increase in use of the path.

Point 3 - Increased use of the path around the Point will cause disturbance to breeding birds that are known to nest in the area, including raven, peregrine and wheatear.

- The SSSI and SAC have been designated for their habitat features.
- The coastal heathland that occurs at Hurlstone Point provides supporting habitat for a variety of species, including breeding birds.
- Since the extent and distribution of heathland will not be appreciably impacted by the proposals we do not consider the proposals will have a knock on impact for typical breeding birds.
- No new access rights will be created over the headland since the area is already Open Access land.
- The steep coastal slopes and cliffs mean that walkers are unlikely to leave the route and cause disturbance to nesting birds.

For the reasons set out above we do not believe that our proposals will have a negative impact on breeding birds in this area.

Signage is planned for either end of the route around the Point to inform walkers of their route options and some suitable conservation messages could be included on these.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7):

Review of Hurlstone Point proposals by [redacted] et al

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\35\MCM0030

Organisation/ person making representation:

[Redacted]

Name of site:

Glenthorne

Report map reference:

MR1c

Route section(s) specific to this representation:

MCM-MR1-S002 to MCM-MR1-S007

Summary of representation:

The new owner of Glenthorne is supportive of the modified proposals.

Natural England's comment:

We thank [redacted] for [redacted] assistance during the development of our proposals at Glenthorne Estate and the supportive comments expressed in [redacted] representation.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7): N/A

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\36\MCM0214

Organisation/ person making representation:

South West Coast Path Association

Name of site:

Hurlstone Point

Report map reference:

MR1b

Route section(s) specific to this representation:

MCM-MR1-S001

Summary of representation:

Supportive of proposed modification at Hurlstone Point and state that the proposed route represents a considerable improvement over the current SWCP route.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome the positive engagement from South West Coast Path Association and the supportive comments expressed in the representation.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7): N/A

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\39\MCM0344

Organisation/ person making representation:

The Exmoor Society

Name of site:

Hurlstone Point

Report map reference:

MR1b

Route section(s) specific to this representation:

MCM-MR1-S001

Summary of representation:

Supportive of the minor line amendment at Hurlstone Point as engineering works would not be necessary and therefore would have less impact on the wild character of this section.

Natural England's comment:

We welcome the Society's support for our modified route but recognise the caveat that it is opposed to the realignment of the ECP away from the SWCP route and onto Hurlstone Point, due to safety concerns (see full response to this point in section 4 above).

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7): N/A

Representation number:

MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\40\MCM0275

Organisation/ person making representation:

National Trust

Name of site:
Hurlstone Point

Report map reference:
MR1b

Route section(s) specific to this representation:
MCM-MR1-S001

Summary of representation:

As the landowner National Trust suggested the modified route at Hurlstone Point for a number of reasons:

- To reduce the works required to establish the route
- To minimise the impact on the SSSI and coastal heath habitat
- To move walkers slightly further landward of the cliff edge

They are therefore supportive of our modified proposals

Natural England's comment:

We thank National Trust for their assistance during the development of our modified proposals at Hurlstone Point and the supportive comments expressed in the representation.

Relevant appended documents (see Section 7): N/A

6. Supporting documents to original report representations

Appendix 6A: Information provided by those submitting representations

Appendix 6A1 – Further information in support of MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\21\MCM0031

Appendix 6A2 – Further information in support of MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\26\MCM0188

Appendix 6A3 – Further information in support of MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219, Lee Abbey Fellowship

Appendix 6A1 – Minutes of Exmoor Local Access Forum meeting 27 June 2017 and Exmoor Local Access Forum's advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority

EXMOOR LOCAL ACCESS FORUM [DRAFT]

Minutes of a meeting of the Exmoor Local Access Forum held on Tuesday 27th June 2017 at 6:30pm at Piles Mill, near Porlock.

PRESENT

[Redacted]

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

[Redacted] (Public Rights of Way & Access Officer)

[Redacted] (Rights of Way Support Officer)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** [Redacted].
2. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND INTRODUCTIONS:** The Forum welcomed [Redacted]. [Redacted] has a keen interest in walking and has been visiting Exmoor on holiday for the past 30 years. [Redacted] has since moved to Lynmouth and runs a hospitality business.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None
4. **(1) MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2016 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

(2) MATTERS ARISING:

- Wimbleball five-year management plan has now been received from the SW Lakes Trust, this will be circulated to members
ACTION: Add to next agenda.

5. **Meet the Community / Public Question Time:** [Redacted], Wheddon Cross wished to voice concerns that the Partnership Plan review (Item B) did not reflect farming, in particular how to encourage young people into farming. However, this paper has been specifically written from an access and recreation point of view for the Local Access Forum. [Redacted] suggested that the Farming Strategic Overview Group would probably cover this.
Also [redacted] was interested in how ENPA can better engage with members of the public to publicise the National Park. He suggested that ENPA could visit National Shows to publicise Exmoor; members explained that ENPA do visit local shows throughout the summer months to publicise Exmoor.
6. **Public Path Orders:** Since the last meeting, good progress has been made with Public Path Orders, including confirmed diversions at Yarde, Nettlecombe, West Hill, Parracombe and School House, Challacombe. Many of the Public Path Orders are as a result of long standing definitive map issues. [Redacted] reported that there are 70-80 outstanding issues that will require a Public Path Order, these are dealt with based on a priority basis. [Redacted] also asked if it could be minuted that more resources should be allocated to allow Public Path Orders to be progressed more quickly.

[Redacted] updated members on a diversion order at Wydon Farm. ENPA received three objections to the diversion order made on 10th March 2016 at Wydon Farm (WL14/3). One objection has since been withdrawn, however there are still two outstanding objections. The documentation has been sent to the Planning Inspectorate for determination.

- 7. ENPA Partnership Plan Review:** The Review has been delayed due to the election and consequent purdah which resulted in the timetable of the review being completely revised. The working group; [Redacted] met in January to discuss potential issues and focus for the Partnership Plan. The working group is looking for new members, [redacted] came forward to join.

ACTION: Working group to meet again before the next LAF meeting with a view to discuss action plans that will sit beneath the ambitions.

8. England Coast Path Consultation:

- a) Glenthorne site visit on 14th June 2017

Four forum members attended the site visit with [redacted] (Natural England). [Redacted] provided some comments after the site visit, 'a stunning contribution to the SW Coast Path' and 'good signage needed ahead of the proposed steps up from the beach to show the level of difficulty for walkers'. [Redacted] further added comments after the visit, 'the proposed route, in addition to the current Coast Path, adds enormously to the public's enjoyment of that stretch of coastline'. Also 'it is advisable to consider (limited) access agreements through the grounds of Glenthorne House to enable ongoing maintenance to be carried out by the Field Services Team without needing to hand-carry equipment and materiel over impractical distances.' This was also reiterated by [redacted]. [Redacted] commented that the new section of path would create a circular walk from County Gate car park. He further added that signage at key locations would need to mention the tides and the rocky beach surface not only at the junctions from where the new section of path leaves the current South West Coast path but also at County Gate car park. [Redacted] queried if there would be adequate width for the new section of path near the walled garden. [Redacted] stated that a visit with a Marine Coastal Consultant has established there is sufficient space for the path.

- b) Worthy site visit on 27th June 2017

Six forum members attended the site visit. Forum members were in agreement that it would be a fantastic addition to the coast path with spectacular sea views. [Redacted] suggested establishing a maintenance agreement with the landowner to access the new section of path. Members agreed that signage would need to be clear to advise users of the shingle ridge and tides.

- c) Response to consultation

LAF members support 4 of the 6 proposals in the report to change the current coast path route as follows:

1. Rugged Coast Path, Minehead & Selworthy Without
3. Worthy, Porlock
4. Glenthorne, Countisbury
6. Cobbler's Park, Combe Martin

LAF members were not able to support the remaining 2 proposals in the report for the following reasons:

2. Hurlstone Point:

LAF members voted by majority against Natural England's proposal to make the route around Hurlstone Point the official Coast Path. There was concern that the route around Hurlstone Point is narrow in places, exposed to high winds and in places has steep drops to the seaward side. LAF members felt that the current coast path route via Hurlstone Combe was safer to sign and promote as the main route for the coast path and felt that the alternative more challenging and dramatic route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative. It is perfectly possible to sign this clearly on the ground at the top of Hurlstone Combe and still allow walkers to follow the Rugged Coast Path (proposal 1). The LAF will be advising Natural England to leave the official coast path route in Hurlstone Combe.

5. Lee Abbey

LAF members voted unanimously against Natural England's proposal at Lee Abbey which was to move the route in two places, taking it closer to the sea and into fields. LAF members had visited Lee Abbey in October 2015 to examine coastal access and were disappointed to see that there was no proposal in Natural England's report to align the coast path around Duty Point. LAF members feel that this is a missed opportunity for a new route to have been found and whilst appreciating the concerns of the land owners, feel that a better route for the coast path could be found. The LAF will be advising Natural England to re-examine this proposal in their representation to the report.

ACTION: [Redacted] was asked to draft a paper to summarise this advice and provide it to ENPA members prior to the Authority meeting on 4th July. [Redacted] to draft representations to Natural England on behalf of the LAF.

9. Strategic Overview of Priority B2 Maintain High Quality Rights of Way, Services and Facilities to enable people to explore and experience the special qualities of the National Park.

- **(1) Advice from the Exmoor Local Access Forum to Exmoor National Park Authority on Permitted Higher Access Proposals on Land Owned by ENPA.** The paper has been approved by ENPA leadership team with one amendment, no new permitted linear access

will be proposed on Haddon Hill due to the breeding herd of Exmoor ponies and stallion associated with this herd. A wider consultation will be undertaken hopefully before the next meeting and may result in permitted open and linear access in some areas on a three-year trial.

- **(2) Undertake targeted improvements with rights of way furniture and surface improvements and possible establishment of new routes by agreement with landowners** [redacted] wished to clarify that this working group will not be looking into the establishment of new routes but will be looking at furniture as well as surface standards. The working group were open to new members, [redacted] wished to be involved. **ACTION:** [redacted] to organise a meeting with the newly formed working group involving [redacted].
- **(3) Development of simple recreation management plans for popular visitor locations where problems exist.** Tarr Steps plan is now complete and most actions have been undertaken, thanks to the members for providing advice and feedback. [Redacted] is working with the landowner at Landacre/ Withypool Common to help control unauthorised off road driving and has since installed vehicular barriers at several key locations. [Redacted] will be developing proposals for Sherdon Hutch and Greystone Gate to further control vehicles and the LAF will be consulted in due course.

10. 2026 Deadline for Claiming Rights of Way based on pre 1949 evidence – The

Position on Exmoor: [redacted] met with [redacted] and Get Involved Coordinator, [redacted] to discuss to best way forward. It was felt that ENPA could best assist by providing support to a LAF led project and/or provide advice and support to individuals wishing to make modification applications. Additionally, it was felt that promotion of the upcoming deadline may be most effective if it is led by the LAF. The forum was in agreement that the LAF should approach the Parish Councils, to raise the 2026 deadline and offer advice and help **ACTION:** [redacted] to draft a letter to Parish Councils.

[Redacted] raised the subject of Other Routes with Public Access (ORPA), [redacted] was concerned that there may be a discrepancy between ORPAs and the list of streets.

ACTION: [redacted] to collate a list of ORPAs on Exmoor, then to crossreference this with the List of Streets . [Redacted] to contact [redacted] (Open Spaces Society) to clarify the legal position.

- 11. Drones:** [redacted] had produced a paper and further addressed the members with concerns over increasing use of drones in the National Park from casual users to commercial users such as Amazon. [Redacted] suggested that ENPA could consult with other National Parks to establish comprehensive guidance for drone users. Members suggested a 'drone zone', where ENPA could encourage use of drones at specific locations. Members acknowledged that drones could be very useful including uses for farmers and

land managers. **ACTION:** [redacted] to instigate ENPA raising the issue at a national level within National Parks.

12. Lynton to Barnstaple Railway Planning Consultation Update: [redacted] provided a verbal update, as a result of the LAF advice, the planning application has been amended to dedicate a definitive footpath at Woody Bay and move the permitted path at Black Moor Gate to a better location. There will be a rights of way temporary closure with an alternative route on footpath 2 at Parracombe Bank during construction.

ACTION: [redacted] to ask LBR if permitted cycle access could be allowed on the footpath.

13. Rights of Way Work Update: [redacted] presented updates on rights of way improvements, field service updates, completed major works and future projects. The Rights of Way Annual Report 2016/17 will be emailed to members. **ACTION:** [redacted] to circulate Rights of Way Annual Report.

14. Date of next meeting and agenda items: Potential meeting dates for October/ November 2017 will be circulated to Forum members. Suggestions welcome for next meeting venue and possible site visits. [Redacted] requested if the next meeting/ site visit could be held in the daytime, members were in agreement to trial this new time.

ACTION: [redacted] to circulate possible meeting dates.

15. Any Other Business of Urgency:

- [Redacted] asked for an update on the Bridleway at Blackball House. [Redacted] stated that planning permission had been granted for a tarmac surface with granite chips and that an application to authorise the change in surface has recently been received.
- [Redacted] requested an update on Woodside Bridge, [redacted] reported that the contract for the bridge is being tendered at present, closing date is Monday 3rd July.
- [Redacted] raised the Ramblers Association's concerns about changes to cross-compliance after Brexit which currently supports compliance with rights of way legislation.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm
Chairman



The **Exmoor Local Access Forum** is an independent advisory body established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Forum's statutory function is to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in Exmoor National Park for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and for any lawful purpose, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed.

In carrying out its work, the Exmoor Local Access Forum must have regard to the needs of land management and the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of Exmoor.

The contents of this report constitutes formal advice from the Exmoor Local Access Forum. Exmoor National Park Authority is required, in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to, and to take into account, relevant advice from the Exmoor Local Access Forum in carrying out its functions

Advice to Exmoor National Park Authority from the Exmoor Local Access Forum

- The Exmoor Local Access Forum met on Tuesday 27th June 2017
- At the meeting, members considered Natural England's Report on the England Coast Path – Minehead to Combe Martin.
- LAF members support 4 of the 6 proposals in the report to change the current coast path route as follows:
 1. Rugged Coast Path
 3. Worthy
 4. Glenthorne
 6. Cobbler's Park, Combe Martin
- LAF members were not able to support the remaining 2 proposals in the report:
 2. Hurlstone Point
 5. Lee Abbey
- **Hurlstone Point:** LAF members voted by majority against Natural England's proposal to make the route around Hurlstone Point the official Coast Path. There was concern that the route around Hurlstone Point is narrow in places, exposed to high winds and in places has steep drops to the seaward side.

LAF members felt that the current coast path route via Hurlestone Combe was safer to sign and promote as the main route for the coast path and felt that the alternative more challenging and dramatic route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative. It is perfectly possible to sign this clearly on the ground at the top of Hurlestone Combe and still allow walkers to follow the Rugged Coast Path (proposal 1). The LAF will be advising Natural England to leave the official coast path route in Hurlstone Combe.

- **Lee Abbey:** LAF members voted unanimously against Natural England's proposal at Lee Abbey. LAF members had visited Lee Abbey in October 2015 to examine coastal access and were disappointed to see that there was no proposal in Natural England's report to align the coast path around Duty Point. LAF members feel that this is a missed opportunity for a new route to have been found and whilst appreciating the concerns of the land owners, feel that a better route for the coast path could be found. The LAF will be advising Natural England to re-examine this proposal in their representation to the report.

[Redacted]

Vice-Chairman

Exmoor Local Access Forum

28th June 2017

Appendix 6A2 – Papers presented at and an extract from the draft minutes of the Exmoor National Park Authority’s meeting on 4 July 2017

EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES OF AUTHORITY MEETING ON 4 JULY 2017

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO NATURAL ENGLAND’S REPORT ON ‘THE ENGLAND COAST PATH FROM MINEHEAD TO COMBE MARTIN’

Public Speaking: (1) [redacted], Exmoor Society
The Authority considered the **report** of the Chief Executive.

The Authority’s Consideration

The meeting noted the draft Authority response to Natural England’s report on The England Coast Path from Minehead to Combe Martin, and also noted the advice to the Authority from the Exmoor Local Access Forum. It was confirmed that in the light of this advice, the Authority’s Access & Recreation Manager proposed a revision to the Authority’s response to recommend to Natural England that the planned route of the England Coast Path at Hurlstone Point be reviewed on safety grounds. The Authority Committee supported this approach.

The Authority Committee concurred with the disappointment expressed by the Exmoor Local Access Forum in relation to Natural England’s proposal that access to the land at Lee Abbey be excluded for land management purposes to enable the commercial activities at the site to continue. Members requested that the National Park Authority’s response include a request that Natural England re-examine the proposed route at Lee Abbey and that Natural England enter into further discussion with the land owner.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the report and Appendix A as Exmoor National Park Authority’s formal response to Natural England’s consultation subject to revisions to recommend that:
 - (i) Natural England review the proposed route of the England Coast Path at Hurlstone Point on safety grounds;
 - (ii) Natural England re-examine the proposed route of the England Coast Path at Lee Abbey and enter into further discussion with the land owner.
2. To delegate to the Chief Executive authority to make any minor or typographical corrections to the Authority’s consultation response.

ITEM 15

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 July 2017

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO NATURAL ENGLAND'S REPORT ON 'THE ENGLAND COAST PATH FROM MINEHEAD TO COMBE MARTIN'

Report of the Chief Executive

Purpose of the report: To consider the Authority's response to Natural England's Report to the Secretary of State on 'The England Coast Path from Minehead to Combe Martin' and the implications for the Authority.

RECOMMENDATION: The Authority is recommended to **APPROVE** this report and Appendix A as Exmoor National Park Authority's formal response to Natural England's consultation and to **DELEGATE** to the Chief Executive authority to make any minor or typographical corrections to this consultation response.

Authority Priority: B2 Maintain high quality rights of way, services and facilities to enable people to explore and experience the special qualities of the National Park.

Legal and Equality Implications: In association with coastal access, the statutory duties of a National Park Authority are:

- to provide Natural England with information for the preparation of a coastal access report.
- to ensure that the public has reasonable access to the coastal margin.

The following powers enable this Authority to carry out its responsibility to ensure that the public has reasonable access to the coastal margin. They also provide this Authority with optional powers to establish and maintain the path:

- to undertake, or to make an agreement with an owner/occupier to undertake, works associated with the establishment and/or maintenance of the coastal route and associated margin
- to erect and maintain signs and notices, appoint wardens and make byelaws.

Further relevant legislation includes: Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

The equality impact of the recommendation of this report has been assessed as follows: There are not considered to be any equality impacts as result of this report.

Consideration has been given to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and an assessment of the implications of the recommendations of this report is as follows: There are not considered to be any human rights implications as a result of this report.

Financial and Risk Implications: The financial and risk implications of the recommendation of this report have been assessed as follows:
The new sections of Coast Path which will be created as a result of this report will be implemented by ENPA with 100% grant assistance from Natural England. The new sections will then become part of the England Coast Path and the South West Coast Path National Trail. As such, future maintenance will also be grant funded by Natural England in line with the National Trails New Deal (2013) and there will be no duty for ENPA to maintain the Coast Path should it choose not to.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The creation of a public right of access along the English coast for open-air recreation on foot is provided for by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCA). The Act places a duty on Natural England (NE) to secure this access by means of a route and an associated margin of open access land for the public to enjoy. The coastal margin includes both the 'trail' (also referred to as the Coast Path) and 'spreading room' (those parts of the margin other than the trail).
- 1.2 The primary intention of the new coastal access rights is to create more opportunities for the public to enjoy the natural and cultural environment of the coast and to understand it better. NE's approach is to find the best outcome that secures these opportunities whilst ensuring appropriate protection for key sensitive features. This principle is in keeping with NE's statutory purpose to conserve, enhance, and manage the natural environment; and also the National Park purposes. It is also acknowledged that a balance must be struck between the needs of private land owners and benefits to the public.
- 1.3 NE staff have been working to an approved scheme to implement the route. The scheme covers most of the complex situations and balances which need to be taken into account. Where a new situation is encountered, NE has a national programme board to resolve issues.
- 1.4 The route through the National Park falls into one complete stretch of the England Coast Path – Minehead to Combe Martin. For the entire stretch, the South West Coast Path National Trail already exists. For much of the route, this line is proposed to become the England Coast Path as it fully meets the criteria laid down under the MCA Act. Where the current SWCP route does not meet the criteria, a new route is proposed in the report and once the new route is established, the SWCP will also move to follow this new line.
- 1.5 ENPA is the Access Authority for land within the National Park, defined under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW). The MCA legislation and subsequent approved scheme for the delivery of the programme; consistently refer to the role of the Access Authority rather than the Highway Authority (which has a duty to manage Public Rights of Way). The role of NPAs in implementing the route is also referred to in the Governments circular for National Parks in 2010.

2. COASTAL ACCESS IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- 2.1 The five stages of the implementation process are summarised below:
 - Stage one (Prepare) – Define the extent of the coastal stretch in discussion with local access authorities. Ask key organisations about

their ideas and concerns for this stretch. Raise awareness of the work that is about to take place through public drop-in sessions.

- Stage two (Develop) – Contact owners of relevant land, do alignment checks on the ground, share initial thinking with owners and occupiers and offer to ‘walk the course’ with them if they wish. Plan protection of key sensitive features (e.g. sensitive habitats, heritage features).
- Stage three (Propose) – Finalise materials and associated maps. Publish them in a statutory report to the Secretary of State (SoS). Invite any representations on the report from anyone who wishes to comment. Invite any objections on the report from owners or occupiers.
- Stage four (Determine) – Receive any representations or objections. Forward or summarise them to the SoS together with any comments by Natural England.
- Stage five (Open) – Establishment works on approved stretch after discussion with land owners by Access Authority. Any agreed restrictions or dedications implemented. Order brings new public rights into effect.

2.2 ENPA officers have supported Natural England through stages 1, 2 and 3 of this process over an 18-month period. Officers have walked route options to help NE select the most appropriate and sustainable route, provided advice on new infrastructure requirements and liaised with landowners where appropriate. Advice has been provided on archaeological, ecological and landscape impacts of new sections of the route.

2.3 The NE team has engaged positively and constructively with land and property owners along the route, aiming to strike a ‘fair balance’ between the interests of owners and those of the public. Where concerns have been raised, all possible options have been considered and the report reflects these discussions.

2.4 The report to the Secretary of State was published on 20th June 2017. An 8-week public consultation period now follows where affected landowners can make objections and the public and other organisations can make comments. The Planning Inspectorate will determine the report and respond to objections from landowners.

2.5 The Exmoor Local Access Forum has been kept informed throughout the process to date. Forum members have had the opportunity to visit some of the proposed new sections of Coast Path and will discuss their response to the report at the LAF meeting on 27 June 2017. A summary of their comments and any advice to the Authority will be tabled at the Authority meeting on 4 July 2017.

3. SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND’S REPORT ‘ENGLAND COAST PATH FROM MINEHEAD TO COMBE MARTIN’

3.1 The full report on the England Coast Path from Minehead to Combe Martin can be found by following this link;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-pathminehead-to-combe-martin>

The report consists of an overview and then six chapters each with a map index showing that stretch in detail.

3.2 The six chapters in the report cover the following stretches:

- Chapter 1: Minehead to Hurlstone Combe
- Chapter 2: Hurlstone Combe to Worthy
- Chapter 3: Worthy to The Foreland/Foreland Point
- Chapter 4: The Foreland/Foreland Point to Lynton
- Chapter 5: Lynton to Woody Bay
- Chapter 6: Woody Bay to Combe Martin

3.3 Much of the England Coast Path route proposed in these six chapters coincides with the current route of the South West Coast Path. The sections that differ are outlined below and are shown on the overall plan found in Appendix B.

3.4 Section 1 Rugged Coast Path: The England Coast Path route follows the 'rugged coast path' which is more seaward and offers excellent coastal views (the current SWCP route was further inland – this is still a public right of way so will remain open and usable by the public) – see plan in Appendix C.

3.5 Section 2 Hurlstone Point: The England Coast Path route goes out and around Hurlstone Point offering dramatic views and a challenging route (the current SWCP route follows Hurlstone Combe which will still offer an alternative route in poor weather conditions or for those preferring a less challenging option – this is a public footpath) – see plan in Appendix C.

3.6 Section 3 Worthy: The England Coast Path route will go north from Porlock Weir, around Gore Point, along the top of the beach and then climb the cliff through a paddock and woodland to rejoin the current route near Worthy. It has excellent views and is closer to the sea (the current SWCP route follows a public footpath further inland – as such this path will still be available to the public and could be used in conjunction with the new England Coast Path to form an excellent circular walk from Porlock Weir) – see plan in Appendix C.

3.7 Section 4 Glenthorne: The England Coast Path route will descend to Glenthorne Beach along an existing public footpath, run along the beach north of Glenthorne House, climbs the cliff via a new staircase and then follow an old garden path through the western end of the Glenthorne grounds and then an old track up through the woodland to rejoin the current route near Handball. This route offers access to a beautiful, wild beach which adds variety to the Porlock Weir to Lynmouth stretch. The old paths through the grounds of Glenthorne and the woodland beyond which the new route will follow offer some stunning and unique views of the Exmoor coast which are currently

not available to the public (the current SWCP route follows a level track some way inland with few views of the sea – it is a public footpath throughout so will still be available for the public to use and will provide an alternative route when the proposed new route is cut off by the tide) – see plan in Appendix C.

- 3.8 Section 5 Lee Abbey: The England Coast Path route differs from the current SWCP route in two places taking it closer to the sea and into fields (the current SWCP route is along a tarmacked drive/road) – see plan in Appendix C.
- 3.9 Section 6 Cobblers Park, Combe Martin: The England Coast Path route will go around Lester Cliff and descend to the village through Cobblers Park, a route that is closer to the sea with dramatic, open views of the bay (the current SWCP route follows a narrow enclosed path behind houses which has poor views – this is a public footpath so will remain open for the public to use) – see plan in Appendix C.
- 3.10 The England Coast Path on Exmoor will still be marked with the National Trail acorn and where a new Coast Path route has been created, this will become the route for the South West Coast Path.
- 3.11 The route changes described in sections 3.4 – 3.9 have been negotiated by NE with the owners of the land with guidance and advice from ENPA officers. The combination of these 6 changes will add significantly to the Coast Path experience on Exmoor and will undoubtedly help make it one of the most interesting and dramatic section of the entire England Coast Path.
- 3.12 In addition to the changes to the line of the coast path outlined above, a right of access on foot will be created in the coastal margin. This will apply to all land seaward of the England Coast Path (with the exception of ‘excepted land’ which is defined under the legislation) and some land landward of the England Coast Path where this has been agreed with the landowner.
- 3.13 Finally, sections of Coast Path that are vulnerable to coastal erosion and slippage are identified in the report as ‘roll-back’. This means that if required, the coast path will be able to automatically roll back to a new, more secure position if coastal erosion causes the current route to be unusable. “Roll back” will only take place after prior consultation with owners and occupiers of effected land and the same requirement to strike a fair balance between owner’s interests and those of the public will still apply.
- 3.14 The draft formal response of Exmoor National Park Authority to Natural England’s consultation can be found in Appendix A. This is a standard pro forma and is the only form in which representations can be made. This report will also be submitted as an attachment.

4. ESTABLISHMENT WORKS

- 4.1 Once the 8-week public consultation period is complete, NE will compile the representations and any objections and send these to the Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate) for determination.
- 4.2 Once the report is determined, ENPA have been asked to implement the proposals (including applying for planning consent where necessary) and carry out establishment works on the ground. This will be managed by officers from the Access & Recreation Team and carried out using local contractors, specialists and/or our ENPA Field Services Team as appropriate.
- 4.3 The new sections of Coast Path which will be created as a result of this report will be implemented by ENPA with 100% grant assistance from Natural England. The new sections will then become part of the England Coast Path and the South West Coast Path National Trail. As such, future maintenance will also be grant funded by Natural England in line with the National Trails New Deal (2013).

[Redacted]

Access and Recreation Manager

22 June 2017

Background papers on which this report, or an important part of it are based, constitute the list of background papers required by Section 100 D (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to be open to members of the public comprise:

Appendices

Appendix A Draft Formal Response to the Consultation

Appendix B Plan of Entire Stretch – Minehead to Combe Martin

Appendix C Plans of Sections where England Coast Path route differs from the current SWCP route

APPENDIX A

<p>FORM FOR MAKING REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT A COASTAL ACCESS REPORT</p>
<p>Any person may make a representation about a coastal access report.</p> <p>This form should be completed if you wish to make a representation about the coastal access report which Natural England submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on Thursday 20th June 2017 under section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, pursuant to its duty under section 296(1) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The report relates to coastal access between Minehead in Somerset and Combe Martin in Devon.</p> <p>Any representations about the report must be made on this form and received by Natural England no later than 15th August 2017. If you require more space for your comments, please continue on a separate sheet.</p>
<p>1. Please give the chapter number of the report and number of the map to which the representation(s) relate(s):</p>

Whole report	
2. If the representation(s) relate to specific land on the map(s), please describe the land here:	
N/A	
3. Please tick the appropriate box below to show who is making the representation(s), or on whose behalf you are making the representation(s):	
An access authority for an area in which land to which the report relates is situated	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
A local access forum for an area in which land to which the report relates is situated	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage)	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Environment Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>
A person specified in Schedule 1 to the Coastal Access Reports (Consideration and Modification Procedure) (England) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 2010/1976)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please give details):	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If you have ticked the "other" box above, please also indicate if you are a person with a relevant interest (within the meaning of section 55J(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 ^(a)) in land to which the report relates	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Please give details of, and the reasons for, the representation(s) you are making about Natural England's report:	
<p>Exmoor National Park Authority are the Access Authority for the Minehead to Combe Martin stretch. ENPA officers have been working closely with Natural England staff for the past 18 months on the first three stages of the process to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act on Exmoor.</p> <p>ENPA fully support the report's recommendations for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Minehead and Combe Martin and consider the six changes to the current SWCP route to be positive and beneficial additions to the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park whilst also maintaining a fair balance with the requirements of the owners and occupiers of the land.</p> <p>Once the report has been determined, ENPA is supportive of its officers leading on the implementation of the report on this stretch providing all costs are reimbursed as outlined.</p> <p>As far as maintenance is concerned, ENPA will continue to maintain the Coast Path as it passes through the National Park including the six new sections that are proposed in the report. In order to maintain standards, it is essential that the Authority receives the continued support of Natural England as outlined in the National Trails New Deal (2013)</p>	
6. Please list below any documents or evidence you have included in support of the representation(s):	
Paper approved at the Authority's meeting on 4 th July 2017	
7. Have you made any other representations about the report?	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
No <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
8. If you are a person with a relevant interest in land to which the report relates, have you made any objection(s) which relate(s) to that land?	

Yes

No NO

9. Please complete your details below:

Name:	[Redacted], Chief Executive Officer
Organisation/company (if appropriate):	Exmoor National Park Authority
Address (including post code):	[Redacted]
Telephone:	[Redacted]
E-mail:	[Redacted]
Date:	XXXXX

10. The completed form should be sent to Natural England at:

England Coast Path Team (South West)

Natural England

Sterling House

Dixs Field

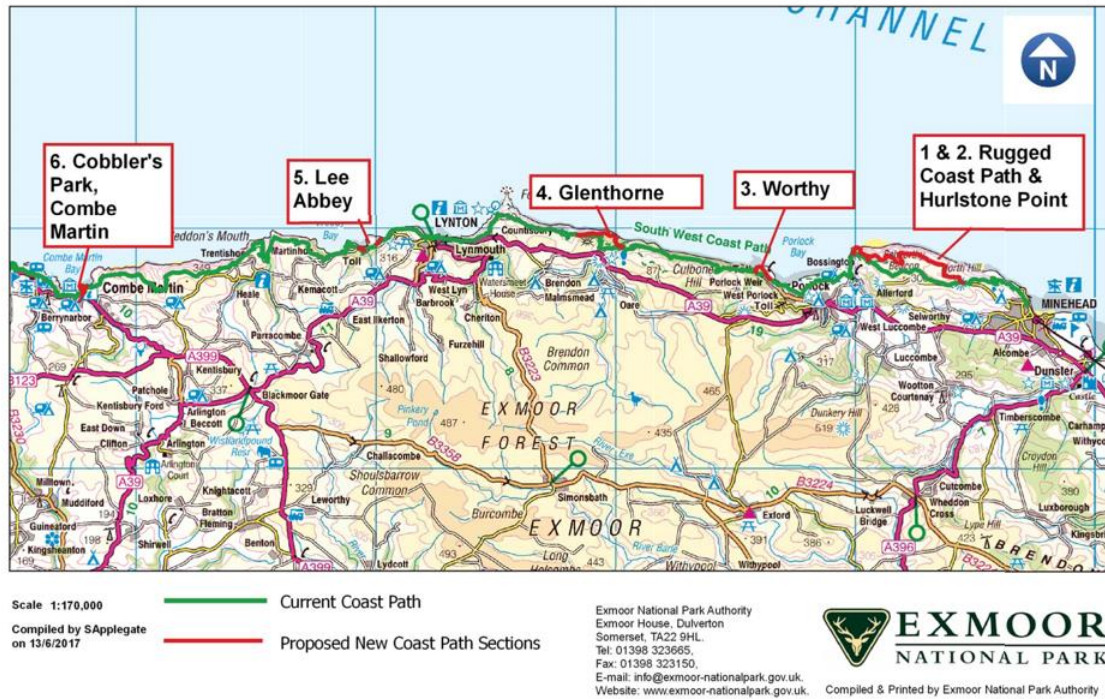
Exeter

EX1 1QA

Email: southwestcoastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk

(a) Section 55J(2) provides that a person has a relevant interest in land if the person is the owner of the land, holds a term of years absolute in the land, or is in lawful occupation of the land.

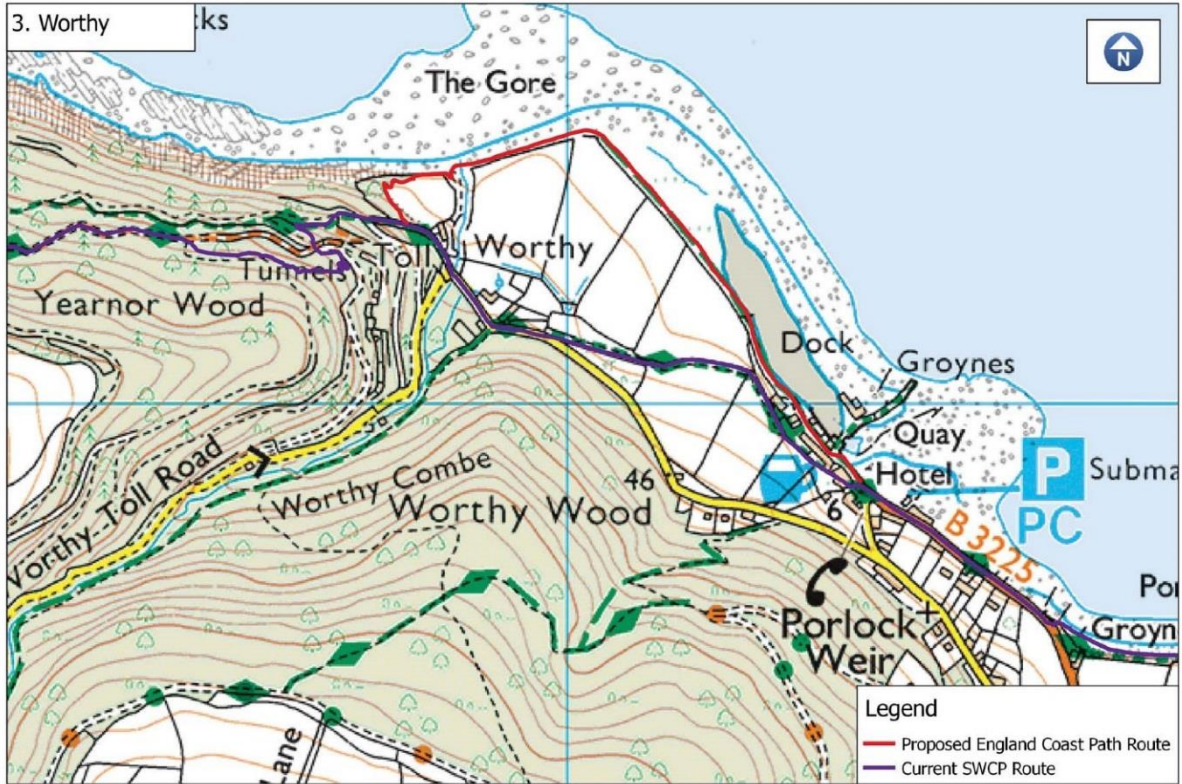
Proposed Coast Path Changes on the Minehead to Combe Martin section



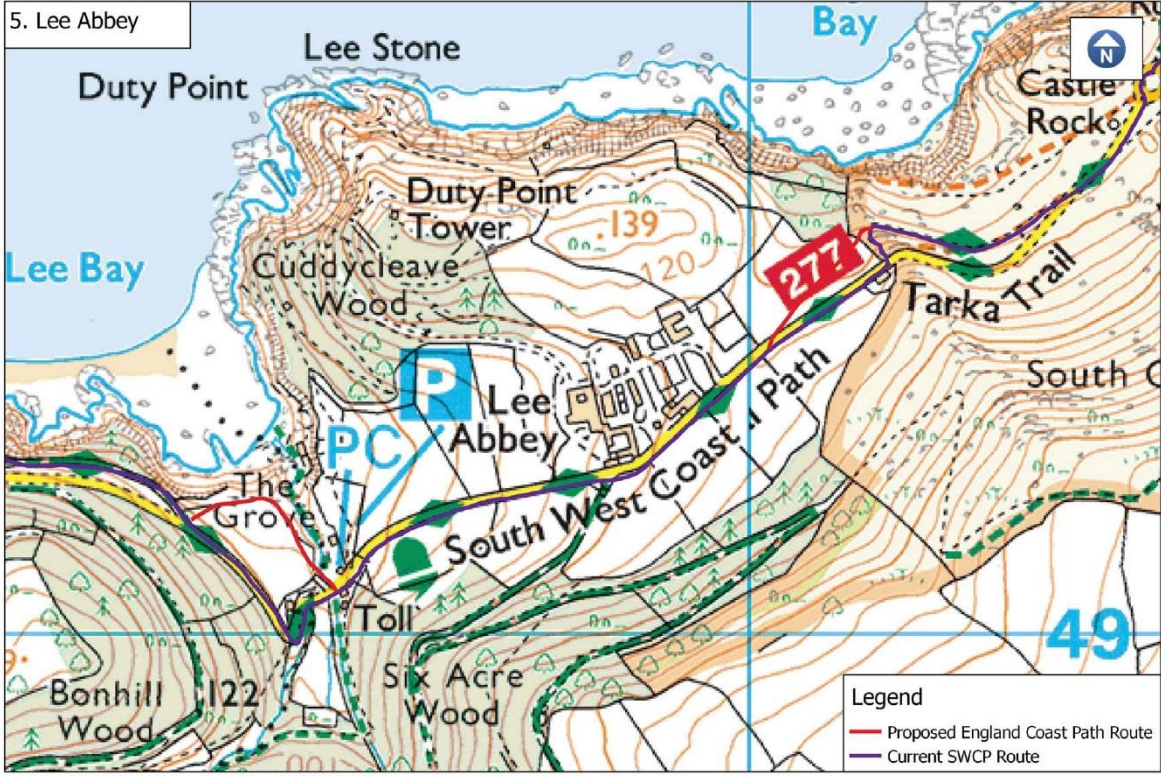
Appendix C

- 1. Rugged Coast Path
- 2. Hurlstone Point

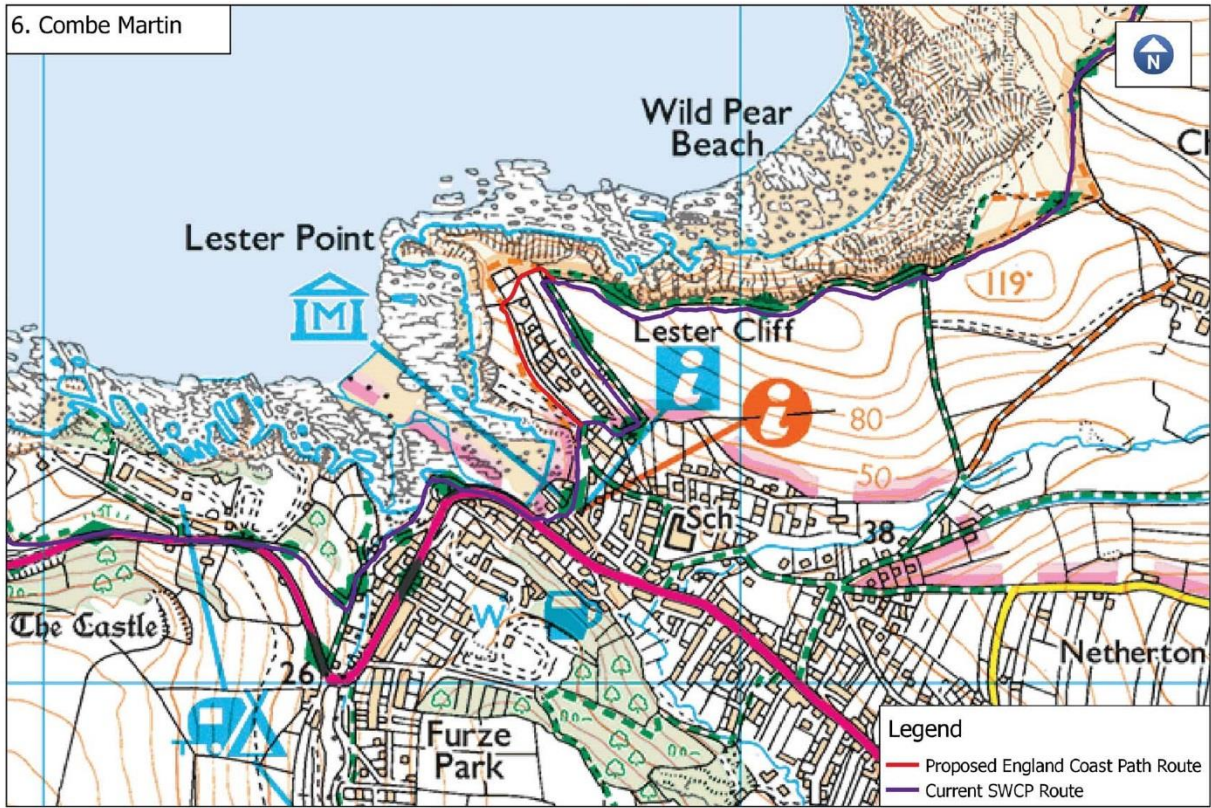




5. Lee Abbey



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Advice Note from [redacted], Access and Recreation Manager

Dear Members

Following the advice of the LAF regarding Natural England's Proposal Report on the England Coast Path we would like to add the following comments to the existing officer report:

Hurlstone Point

We have revisited the site and considered the LAF advice.

There is no doubt that the new proposed route is more hazardous than the current route however it does also have more spectacular views from the headland which would enhance the experience of coast path walkers significantly.

There is a very steep drop onto the rocky shore below, to one side of what is a narrow but good path for a section of around 200m. There are many sections of the existing South West Coast Path outside of the National Park which are similar in character and if this route was not near to a settlement I don't think there would be any doubt at all in my mind that the sensible option would be to realign it as suggested in the Proposal Report.

However, the proximity to the settlements in and around Porlock do mean that a wider variety of walkers make use of the paths in this area than can be found on more remote parts of the Coast Path. The fact that the route would appear on signage and maps as the main route would give users more confidence to use it, including less competent walkers, regardless of any warning signs that we erected, and this may put them at greater risk.

Another important factor is that full access exists for the proposed route already, by the fact that it is a public right of way and the land is Access Land designated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Consequently, the route could be promoted as a 'rugged alternative' for Coast Path walkers even if it was not designated as the official route.

Given the balance of factors above I would be minded to suggest that the Authority recommend to Natural England that the proposal is reviewed on safety grounds.

Lee Abbey

Whilst we fully understand the disappointment of the LAF regarding the route around Lee Abbey, we also have a detailed understanding of how Natural England have come to their decision. The fact that a large area of the Lee Abbey Estate appears to meet the criteria of excepted land, due to it being considered Park or Garden, it does not appear possible for Natural England to propose a route around Duty Point without the consent of the landowner. We can also see that rerouting the Coast Path around Duty Point would have a significant impact on the main business of Lee Abbey and that mitigation is difficult. For these reasons we would not be minded to alter our suggestion to support the proposal as it stands.

The Authority also have the option to delegate their representation to the Chief Executive. Given the tight time constraints of the Natural England consultation (all representations need to be in

by 15th Aug) this may be wise and would give us time to consult further before finalising our view.

[Redacted], Access & Recreation Manager
30th June 2017

Appendix 6A3: Information provided by the Lee Abbey Fellowship

APPENDIX A

(referred to in section 5 of Representation Form)

Introduction

The Trustees of Lee Abbey Fellowship who own the Lee Abbey Estate (“the Trustees”) support the recommendation made by Natural England in Chapter 5 of their Report on the England Coast Path (Minehead- Combe Martin) for the route of that Coast Path between Lynton and Woody Bay. In working with Natural England we continue to demonstrate our long term commitment to public access and our tradition of working closely and positively for many years with such bodies, including Exmoor National Park, where we are a Park Partner and an active participant in the Local Access Forum. The Trustees of the Lee Abbey Fellowship simply wish to keep and continue into the future their well established heritage of offering a place of stillness and peace in our busy world for the many people who value this as part of their life, spirituality and religion.

The Trustees have become aware that the recommendation in Chapter 5 in relation to the route through the Lee Abbey Estate has attracted some comment. Many of these comments do not take into account the specific and religious nature of the ministry and vocation of Lee Abbey and the special factors relating to the use of the Estate. They therefore appear to show a lack of understanding of the reasons why Lee Abbey, working with Natural England, came to the decision on the recommended route of Coastal Path across the estate. A key part of the Lee Abbey ministry, which is further detailed below, and referred to elsewhere as our ‘business’, is as a retreat centre which provides refreshment and renewal and a place of stillness and silence for many of our guests who specifically come for these aspects of what Lee Abbey offers.

In these circumstances the Trustees believe that it will be helpful to the Secretary of State if they set out the reasons, in more detail than appear in the Report, why the Trustees concluded that it would not be appropriate to agree a voluntary dedication of a route on the seaward side of the main Lee Abbey House (eg round Duty Point): see Map D in Overview of the Report.

Lee Abbey’s support of public access

At the outset we emphasize that Lee Abbey has for many years voluntarily given members of the public access to those parts of its estate where such access will not prejudice its ministry as a retreat centre.

For example:

- i. we have created a number of permissive paths through the woodlands on the southern side of the Toll Road (the road shown on Map D in Overview).
- ii. within the last few years we have dedicated a new section of the SW Coastpath across the western side of the Estate
- iii. We have provided a public car park allowing access to Lee Bay

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- iv. We have provided public toilets at the beach
- v. We provided and constructed a temporary alternative to the coast path following a landslide in Crock woods
- vi. We actively cooperate with local walking festivals
- vii. We are active participants in the local access forum
- viii. We provide a range of facilities and access for walking, running and cycling events on the estate

In our discussions with Natural England in relation to the present proposals, we have voluntarily agreed improvements to the route of the SW Coast Path across fields on the eastern and western sides of the Estate as shown in plan (see MCM – 5- S008 and MCM -5- S010 on Map 5b in Chapter 5 of the Report). The area on the seaward side of the Toll Road is, however, a great deal more sensitive as it is of particular importance to our ministry as a major Christian retreat and conference centre in this country.

The ministry of Lee Abbey

Lee Abbey is a Christian religious charity. It is a non-profit making body. Its resident community which serves our guests has been formally recognized by the Church of England as an Acknowledged Community under the Church's *Handbook of Religious Life*. A central part of Lee Abbey's activities is to offer spiritual retreats including a number of silent retreats. (On silent retreats guests, whether they are in the House or spending time out on the Estate, will spend up to three continuous days in silence.) As well as organised and led retreats, people throughout the year come to Lee Abbey to make their own individual retreats. In an age of noise and frenetic activity as one writer has recently said "*the human encounter with the divine comes in the context of stillness*" (L. Telfer) It is widely recognized that the quality of stillness and silence "*can allow a particular consciousness of God.*" The Psalmist encourages us to "*Be still and know that I am God*". This biblical and spiritual principle lies at the heart of our ministry at Lee Abbey. Over the years countless people testify to encountering God in stillness and especially on the Estate. The paths, seats and other areas along the seaward side of the main House are particularly important for this ministry of prayer, silent reflection and listening. Because both guests coming to Lee Abbey and the resident Community understand the importance of these quiet places people can generally be confident that their silence and privacy will be respected. Moreover, in addition to private use of these quiet spaces by individuals, we also regularly use this part of the Estate for guided prayer walks for guests and the Community and for some acts of worship. The exercise of general coastal rights of access and enjoyment (including the impact of spreading room and such rights as the right to picnic) on a route on the seaward side of the Toll Road – eg round Duty Point - would inevitably have a significant adverse effect on this ministry and the reason why many people come to Lee Abbey. One example would be that the obvious places where members of the public would naturally stop and have refreshments or picnics (with no restrictions on noise levels) would tend to be precisely those places which are the most important places of silent prayer and reflection currently used by guests and the Community.

NB We have seen it suggested that adequate protection for the ministry could be provided by closing the path at the times of major Christian festivals eg Christmas and Easter. This misunderstands the nature of Lee Abbey's ministry which is year-round. Again it was suggested that a coastal trail round

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Duty Point could be screened off, but apart from the visual intrusion of screening the nature of the terrain is such that most of the major prayer and meditation points around the route would be lost.

Excepted land

After reviewing the evidence of the history and use of the Estate, the Trustees concluded that – as Natural England recognize in their report – a large part of the Lee Abbey Estate (and including in particular the main paths around Duty Point) qualifies as “excepted land” within Schedule I to Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as land “used as a park or garden”. We refer to the detailed evidence submitted to Natural England (including the reports on the history and design of the estate e.g. *Lee Abbey submission– Designed Landscape*, [redacted] (*Environmental Co-ordinator*) October 2015; and also references to ENP comments on the historic nature of the parkland in planning submission 62/41/14/014 and ENP Historic Landscape characterization map 5.) We also refer to the evidence set out in our letter to Natural England dated 25.8.2016 and annexures). It is apparent that:

- (a) The relevant land is part of a landscaped area which was designed and laid out by Charles Bailey in the mid 19th century for the exclusive recreation and visual enjoyment of the occupants of the House and Charles Bailey’s guests.
- (b) The relevant land is an enclosed area with clearly identifiable boundaries.
- (c) The relevant land has been maintained and used over a long period of time for the recreation and enjoyment of the occupants of the House in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and (over the last 70 years) for the Lee Abbey guests and residents. It continues to be used for recreation and enjoyment by the thousands of Lee Abbey guests and visitors every year and also by the ninety members of the Community of Lee Abbey.

The route recommended by Natural England

It is important to note that that part of the recommended route which continues to run along the Toll Road will continue to offer exceptional sea views especially as one begins the descent from by the main House. The route is also more direct and more open.

The recommended route also includes the improvements which we have voluntarily agreed: see MCM – 5- S008 and MCM -5-S010 on Map 5b in Chapter 5 of the Report)

The Trustees’ duties as charity trustees

The Trustees are mindful that as trustees they have a legal duty to protect the assets of the charity (including the Estate) and therefore not enter into agreements which could be prejudicial to the objects and ministry of the charity. They cannot therefore properly waive any excepted land exemption to which the charity may be entitled unless they are satisfied that it would not prejudice the ministry and business of Lee Abbey to create certain voluntarily dedicated routes over their excepted land.

The Trustees and local management team did over a period of several months look carefully at a number of options (including the possibility of dedicating a permanent route on the seaward side of the main House). Having considered the possibilities the Trustees unanimously concluded that in this particular case it would not be in the best interests of the charity for which they are responsible to agree to such a dedication.

Appendix 6B: Information provided by Natural England

Appendix 6B1 – Further information in support of MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\34\MCM0219, Lee Abbey Fellowship

7. Supporting documents to modification report representations

7A - MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\37\MCM0031 and MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\38\MCM0031 - Report from Exmoor Local Access Forum

EXMOOR LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

NATURAL ENGLAND'S REPORT ON 'THE ENGLAND COAST PATH – MINEHEAD TO COMBE MARTIN – MODIFICATIONS TO ORIGINAL PROPOSALS'

AIMS:

To consider the information in this summary report and the full report (link provided below)

- To agree the Local Access Forum (LAF) response to the report (to be submitted to Natural England as a representation)
 - To agree any advice that the LAF may wish to provide to Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) who will be considering their own response
1. **Background - Original England Coast Path Report & Exmoor LAF Response**
 - 1.1 In June 2017, Natural England Published their report on the England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-minehead-to-combe-martincomment-on-proposals>
 - 1.2 The Exmoor LAF considered this report at their meeting on 27th June 2017 – the link to the summary report is below: https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/291692/Item-C.pdf
 - 1.3 The Exmoor LAF supported most of the proposals but did not support those at Hurlstone Point and Lee Abbey for the reasons below.
 - 1.4 Exmoor LAF Representation on Hurlstone Point:
LAF members voted by majority against Natural England's proposal to make the route around Hurlstone Point the official Coast Path. There was concern that the route around Hurlstone Point is narrow in places, exposed to high winds and on some sections, has steep drops to the seaward side. LAF members felt that the current coast path route via Hurlstone Combe was safer to sign and promote as the main route for the coast path and felt that the alternative more challenging and dramatic route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative. It is perfectly possible to sign this clearly on the ground at the top of Hurlstone Combe and still allow walkers to follow the Rugged Coast Path. The Exmoor LAF advice to Natural England and to the Secretary of State is to leave the official coast path route in Hurlstone Combe.
 - 1.5 Exmoor LAF Representation on Lee Abbey:
LAF members voted unanimously against Natural England's proposal at Lee Abbey which was to move the route in two places, taking it closer to the sea and into fields. LAF members had visited Lee Abbey in October 2015 to examine coastal access and were disappointed to see that there was no proposal in Natural England's report to align the coast path around Duty Point where a path largely already exists and has superb views. LAF members felt that this is a missed opportunity for a new, proper coastal route to

have been found. Whilst appreciating the concerns of the landowners and the fact that a route around Duty Point can only apparently be achieved with the consent of the owners, LAF members felt that a better route for the coast path could be found through careful negotiation. The LAF advice to Natural England and to the Secretary of State is to re-examine this proposal and to put pressure on the owners to offer a route around Duty Point through negotiation.

Natural England submitted their report along with representations from the consultation to the Secretary of State in October 2017. The report (along with several others) has still not been approved due to a ruling on mitigation measures in European protected areas which has meant that parts of the Sensitive Features Appraisal have had to be redone.

2. Consultation on Modification Report

2.1 On 9th July 2020, Natural England submitted its Modification Report MR1 – Hurlstone Point and Glenthorne to the Secretary of State. The Exmoor LAF is being consulted as a statutory consultee and have 8 weeks to respond.

3. Summary of the Modifications

3.1 The email inviting representations has been forwarded separately to Exmoor LAF members but the modification report can be found at the following link:

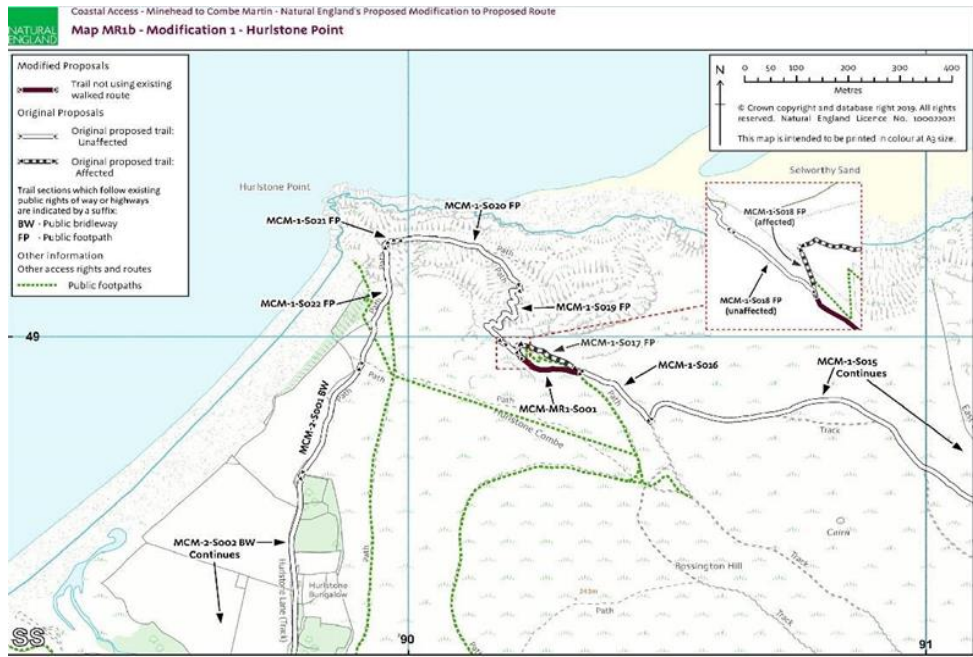
www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-at-minehead-to-combe-martincomment-onchanges-to-the-proposed-route

3.2 The report proposes to amend the proposed line of the England Coast Path in two places.

3.3 Hurlstone Point:

The report proposes a small change put forward by the landowners, the National Trust, to implement the route. The reasons for this are explained in the report in section 2.1.2 but for ease are set out below along with an extract from the plan in the report:

Following a site visit post submission, to gather information for the review of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (see paragraph 1.2), it became apparent that a new cattle track had opened up some 20m to the west of the public right of way. This track was now being used by walkers and it seemed clear that adopting it, suitably improved, as part of the proposed ECP alignment would lead to a reduction in necessary establishment works, compared with the original proposal, and would therefore have even less impact on European Site features.



3.4 Glenthorne:

The report proposes a change to the route at Glenthorne. The reasons for this are explained in the report in section 3.1 but for ease are set out below along with an extract from the plan in the report:

Our original alignment of the ECP in this area, as proposed in Natural England’s original report submitted to the Secretary of State, reflected an undertaking at the time by the then landowner of Glenthorne to dedicate part of the gardens of Glenthorne House for coastal access. This offer of dedication was to enable Natural England to propose a new seaward route for the coast path through the landholding despite its status as excepted land under the legislation.

However subsequent to submission of the proposals, ownership of Glenthorne House and Estate has changed and the new owners do not want to dedicate a route through the gardens in this way. As the gardens extend to the cliff top, this makes it impossible to identify a route for the coast path to the seaward side of the buildings and other excepted land.

Natural England has worked with the current landowners of Glenthorne House and with the neighbouring landowner, to negotiate a changed route for the ECP seaward of the existing alignment of the South West Coast Path, but landward of any areas of excepted land.

In our original proposals we proposed an ‘optional alternative route’ which would operate at times when part of the route along the beach would be unavailable due to high tides. However, as the proposed modification no longer aligns any part of the main trail here along the beach, an optional alternative route is no longer needed.

Once the 8-week public consultation period for this Modification Report is complete, Natural England will compile the representations and any objections and send these to the Secretary of State for determination alongside the full, original report.

When the report is determined, ENPA have been asked to implement the proposals (including applying for planning consent where necessary) and carry out establishment works on the ground.

- To agree the ENPA response to the report to be submitted to Natural England as a representation (consultation deadline 3rd September 2020)

1. **Background - Original England Coast Path Report & ENPA Response**

1.1 In June 2017, Natural England Published their report on the England Coast Path Minehead to Combe Martin.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-minehead-to-combe-martincomment-on-proposals>

1.2 Exmoor National Park Authority considered this report at their meeting on 4th July 2017.

1.3 The Authority supported most of the proposals in 2017 but did not support those at Hurlstone Point and Lee Abbey for the reasons below. 1.4

Authority comment on Hurlstone Point:

Having considered the advice of the Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF), the Authority are unable to support the proposal to move the Coast Path to run around Hurlstone Point.

Members agree with the ELAF advice that that the new proposed route is more hazardous than the current route which runs up Hurlstone Combe. There is a very steep drop onto the rocky shore below, to one side of what is a narrow but good path for a section of around 200m. Although there are many sections of the existing South West Coast Path outside of the National Park which are similar in character, the proximity to the settlements in and around Porlock mean that a wider variety of walkers make use of the paths in this area than can be found on more remote parts of the Coast Path. The fact that the route would appear on signage and maps as the main route would give users more confidence to use it, including less competent walkers, regardless of any warning signs that were erected, and this may put them at greater risk. The Authority therefore recommends that the proposal is reviewed on safety grounds.

1.5 Authority comment on Lee Abbey:

Having considered the advice of the Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF), the Authority are unable to support the proposals for the Coast Path as it crosses the Lee abbey Estate.

Authority members share the disappointment of the ELAF that there was no proposal in the report to take the Coast Path route around Duty Point. Whilst appreciating the land management and commercial concerns at Lee Abbey and the fact that a route could probably only be found with consent from the owners due to some of the area being 'excepted land', members felt that this was a missed opportunity to achieve a significantly better route for the public. A path around Duty Point largely exists and with careful negotiation and management, members hope it should be possible to achieve an acceptable route.

The Authority recommends that Natural England re-examine the proposals at Lee Abbey and enter into further discussions with the landowner with the aim of achieving a route for the Coast Path around Duty Point.

1.6 Natural England submitted their report along with representations from the consultation

to the Secretary of State in October 2017. The report (along with several others) has still not been approved due to a ruling on mitigation measures in European protected areas which has meant that parts of the Sensitive Features Appraisal have had to be redone.

2. **Consultation on Modification Report**

2.1 On 9th July 2020, Natural England submitted its Modification Report MR1 – Hurlstone Point and Glenthorne to the Secretary of State. Exmoor National Park Authority is being consulted as a statutory consultee and as the Access Authority and have to respond by Thursday 3rd September 2020.

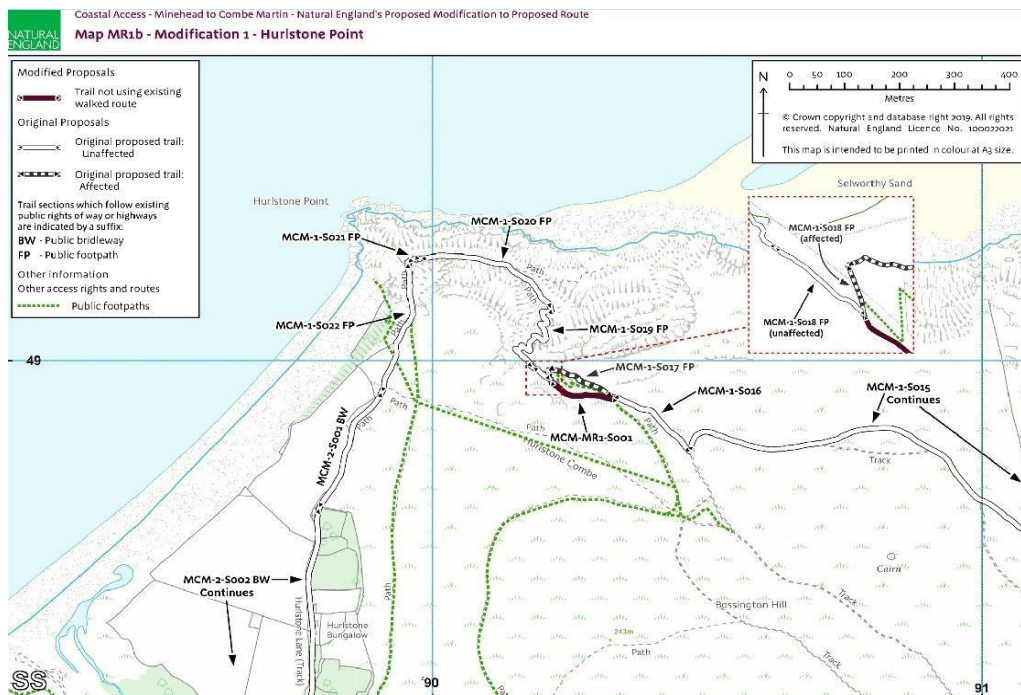
3. **Summary of the Modifications** 3.1 The full modification report can be found at the following link: www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-at-minehead-to-combe-martincomment-onchanges-to-the-proposed-route

3.2 The report proposes to amend the proposed line of the England Coast Path in two places.

3.3 Hurlstone Point:

The report proposes a minor change put forward by the landowners, the National Trust, to implement the route. The reasons for this are explained in the report in section 2.1.2 but for ease are set out below along with an extract from the plan in the report:

Following a site visit post submission, to gather information for the review of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (see paragraph 1.2), it became apparent that a new cattle track had opened up some 20m to the west of the public right of way. This track was now being used by walkers and it seemed clear that adopting it, suitably improved, as part of the proposed ECP alignment would lead to a reduction in necessary establishment works, compared with the original proposal, and would therefore have even less impact on European Site features.



3.4 Glenthorne:

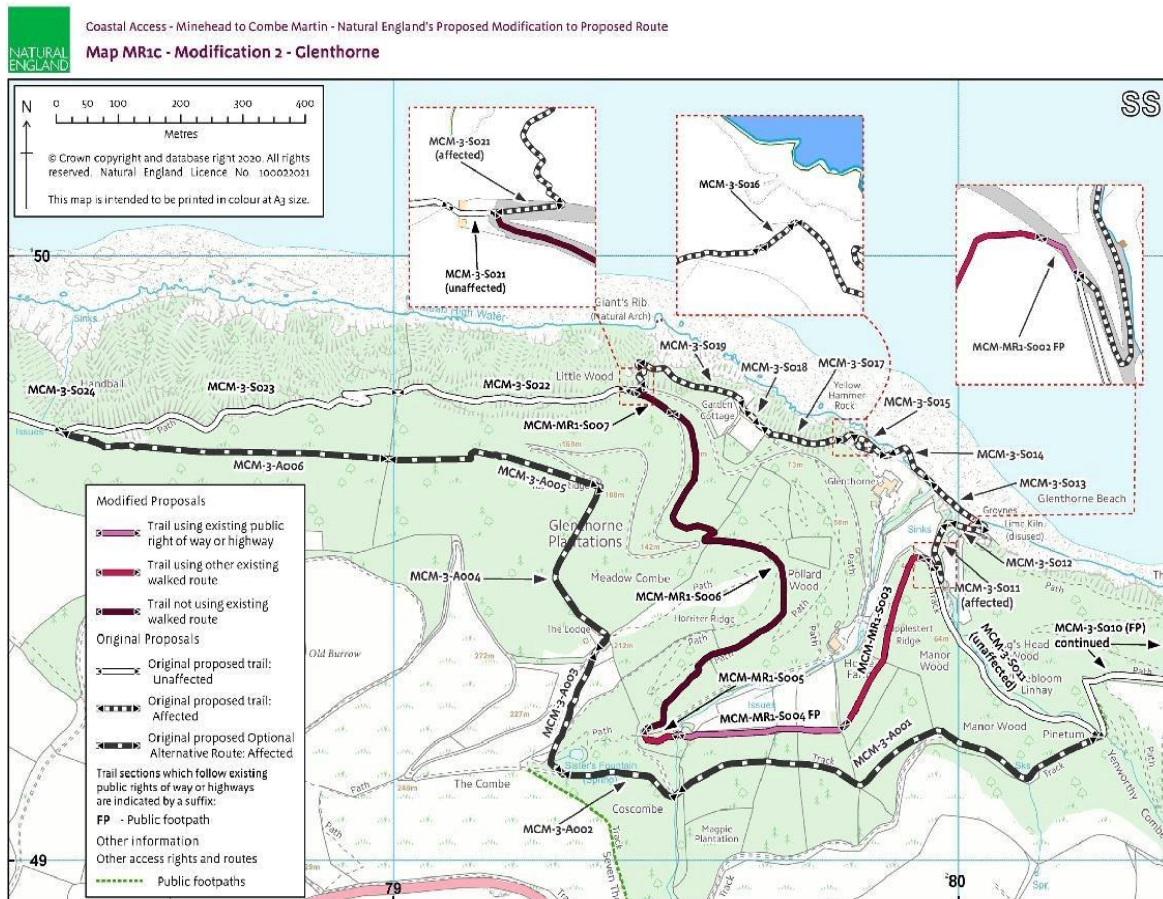
The report proposes a change to the proposed route at Glenthorne. The reasons for this are explained in the report in section 3.1 but for ease are set out below along with an extract from the plan in the report:

Our original alignment of the ECP in this area, as proposed in Natural England’s original report submitted to the Secretary of State, reflected an undertaking at the time by the then landowner of Glenthorne to dedicate part of the gardens of Glenthorne House for coastal access. This offer of dedication was to enable Natural England to propose a new seaward route for the coast path through the landholding despite its status as excepted land under the legislation.

However subsequent to submission of the proposals, ownership of Glenthorne House and Estate has changed and the new owners do not want to dedicate a route through the gardens in this way. As the gardens extend to the cliff top, this makes it impossible to identify a route for the coast path to the seaward side of the buildings and other excepted land.

Natural England has worked with the current landowners of Glenthorne House and with the neighbouring landowner, to negotiate a changed route for the ECP seaward of the existing alignment of the South West Coast Path, but landward of any areas of excepted land.

In our original proposals we proposed an ‘optional alternative route’ which would operate at times when part of the route along the beach would be unavailable due to high tides. However, as the proposed modification no longer aligns any part of the main trail here along the beach, an optional alternative route is no longer needed.



4. Local Access Forum

The Local Access Forum met via video conference on 21st July 2020. The LAF had no specific advice to give to the Authority on this Modification report. However, in their own response to the consultation, they have reiterated their view that the England Coast Path should follow Hurlstone Combe rather than going around Hurlstone Point.

4. Implementation

Once the 8-week public consultation period for this Modification Report is complete, Natural England will compile the representations and any objections and send these to the Secretary of State for determination alongside the full, original report.

When the report is determined, ENPA have been asked to implement the proposals (including applying for planning consent where necessary) and carry out establishment works on the ground. This will be managed by officers from the Access & Recreation Team and carried out using local contractors, specialists and/or our ENPA Field Services Team as appropriate. The new sections of Coast Path which will be created as a result of this report will be implemented by ENPA with 100% grant assistance from Natural England. The new sections will then become part of the England Coast Path and the South West Coast Path National Trail. As such, future maintenance will also be grant funded by Natural England in line with the National Trails New Deal (2013).

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that in its representation, the Authority supports the changes in the Modification Report but also reiterates its view that the England Coast Path route at Hurlstone Point should be reviewed on safety grounds and the route at Lee Abbey should be re-examined.

[Redacted], Public Rights of Way & Access Officer, August 2020

7C - MCA\Minehead to Combe Martin\R\41\MCM0341 – Review of Hurlstone Point proposals by [redacted] et al

NE South West Coast Path realignment proposals at Hurlstone Point.

Review by [redacted] et al

Executive Summary

In the Porlock area, in 2017 and 2020 Natural England (NE) proposed realignments of the South West coast path (SWCP) from the current safe route up/down Hurlstone combe to go around Hurlstone Point. This would include a new path from the end of the rugged coast path, then zigzagging up/down the steep rocky ridge, then on a narrow contour path with a steep drop to the coast rocks far below, then past the Old Coast Guard Station.

This realigned route would be exposed to high winds and rain, and, facing north limited sun.

This proposed realigned route is seldom used currently. It has limited mobile phone signal.

It is described by the 1999 ENPA rangers walk book as “*dangerous*”, with a recent fatality.

Despite a requirement, no risk assessment of the realignment was provided by NE.

The realigned route has generally good views looking north of the sea. The view from the current Hurlstone Combe SWCP is of the wooded Heritage Coast to the west, much nicer.

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One object is to increase the access land, but all the area is already access land.

The NE choice of route principle is *“favours one that is accessible to the widest range of people.”* This is a tourist area where the walkers on the coast path are almost entirely social walkers including locals, visitors, children, dogs and the elderly. These can use Hurlstone Combe but the realigned route would not be safe or appropriate for many of them.

The land here is an SAC. The Conservation objectives include the *“assemblage of nesting birds”*. Ravens, a protected species, and Peregrine Falcons nest in the area of the proposed realignment. The anticipated use of the realignment would disturb these, possibly leading to abandonment of this as a nesting area. This was not considered in the HRA.

Clearly the existing Hurlstone Combe route is much more favourable than the “dangerous” and difficult proposed steep cliff path.

This proposal was objected to in 2017 as not being adequately safe for users in this area by both the Local Access Forum, the Exmoor National Park Authority, and ourselves, The Exmoor Society.

The 2020 Natural England proposal is a modification of about 90m of the proposed route on habitat grounds, with minimal cost saving and a small improvement in overall safety.

Thus representation against these realignment proposals is on the grounds of less safety, less *“ease of use by the greatest number of people”*, and no SAC assessment of impact on birds.

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1.Introduction

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At the west end of North Hill the rugged coast path and the normal South West Coast Path (SWCP) join and proceed down/up Hurlstone Combe. In 2017 Natural England (NE) proposed in NE649 to realign the Hurlstone Combe section to go along Hurlstone ridge, down the zig zag path, along the cliff path to the Hurlstone Point Coast Guard Station, then rejoin the existing Coast Path at the bottom of Hurlstone Combe. In July 2020 Natural England submitted its Modification Report MR1 a small modification to the proposed route of about 90m at the top of the ridge.

This response is based on specific site visits by [redacted], [redacted], and [redacted], discussions with walkers on the SWCP and others who have walked the relevant section, and a professional walk leader, [redacted]. More information is provide in Appendices A including counting and comments by some of the walkers met and B about the authors.

2 Scope

The proposals are set out in the Natural England document about the Minehead to Combe Martin coast path realignment June 2017 NE649 and the Modification Report MR1 NE 766 dated July 2020. "It is therefore *recommended that, for determination purposes, Natural England's original report relating to this stretch should be read in conjunction with this MR. In particular the Overview to the original report provides vital context to many of the issues discussed within this MR. The original report can be viewed at "* web link. MR1 1.4 page 2 Thus our Review considers both the original 2017 proposals and the 2020 MR1 proposals.

"These changed proposals are subject to fresh objections and representation process" MR1 2020 page 2. " Public rights of access to this stretch therefore have yet to commence." MR1 2020 page 2.

Thus our Review considers both the original 2017 proposal and the 2020 recently proposed modification.

3. Proposed realignments.

3.1 Direction

On the South West Coast Path Association web site there are a series of Frequently Asked Questions. "*Why does the path run anti-clockwise? Most people's walk starts at the Minehead end and heads towards Poole, but that is mainly because that is the direction most of the guidebooks are written...If you are using the Baggage Transfer Service, it helps to go that way as you'll be going with the flow.*" And it costs less.

The main baggage transfer service provider web site says "*a 4 to 1 ratio in favour of walking in the Minehead to Poole direction*"

This Review generally follows this convention.

3.2 Current coast path

The current coast path runs westwards from the top of Hurlstone Combe, down Hurlstone Combe, to join the wide track from Bossington Car Park to the Coast Guard Station on Hurlstone Point. This route is about 1 1/2 to 3m wide, is generally a grassy slope, Photo A, with some underlying stones near the bottom of the combe and a few informal earth steps in one section near the top.



It has a significant slope but not one with any worries. Taking the elevation change from the OS map of 220m at the top and 60m at the bottom, a difference of 160m, and a length from MR1b of 600m, the slope would be about 1 in 3.75. Were anyone to slip on wet grass, as happened to one of [redacted]'s visiting friends, then they would be unlikely to fall badly. Whatever there is wheeled access to the bottom of the combe and the top of the combe. Going westwards, as most would, it provides a magnificent view over Porlock Bay and along the coast to North Foreland. As there is little need to watch ones footing, for much of the time, one can admire the view along the Heritage Coast whilst walking. This is very appropriate as a coast path, there being plenty of views out to sea from the existing rugged coast path and elsewhere.

“Access along this stretch is generally good with the South West Coast Path National Trail providing a high quality and popular route through Exmoor National Park with access to the shoreline in some places, “ NE2017 page 15. Of note, the proposed realignment does not increase access to the shoreline.

The route goes through the National Trust car park at Bossington, about one km to the south west of Hurlstone Point. This is a popular tourist area, so the car park is well used by general walkers who generally walk along the SWCP towards Hurlstone Point. These include many visitors, locals, children, elderly people, and dogs. Near the top of Bossington Hill, and near the current SWCP, is the Bossington Hill Car Park, also well used by the full range of walkers and dogs.

3.3 2017 and 2020 Proposed realignment.

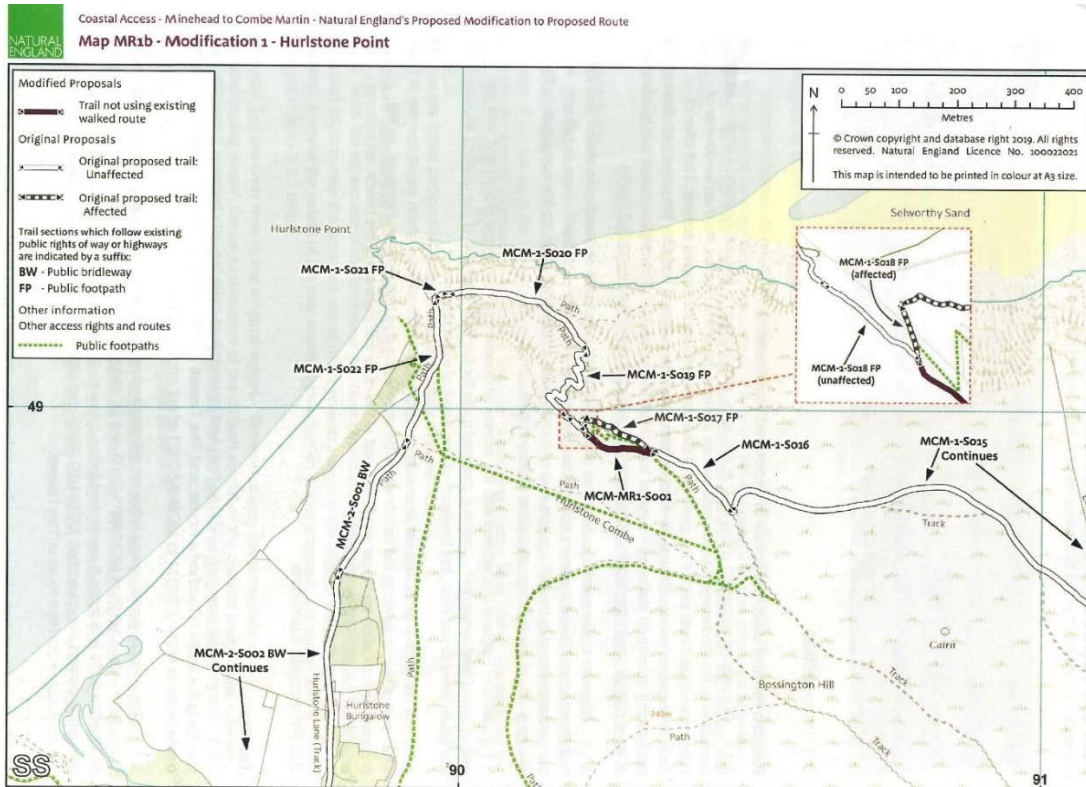
Formation of proposals by Natural England.

“Where we have proposed change to the existing route, in particular at Hurlstone point...we have held detailed discussions with affected owners.” NE 2017 Page The owner of the Hurlstone point land is the National Trust. There is no evidence provided of discussions with local organisations or visitors representatives as to whether the proposals would be welcomed by the majority of the users.

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“The main issues highlighted to us in discussions with user groups and the Local Access Forum, concerns the stretch of the South West Coast Path that are not in close proximity to the sea.” NE 2017 page 15. The Local Access Forum (LAF) did express concern regarding the Lee Abbey section being further from the sea than expected. Regarding the Hurlstone Point realignment the LAF raised concerns on safety grounds and proposed that the main SWCP continue to be along Hurlstone Combe. Thus the LAF is not correctly reported by NE concerning the Hurlstone Point realignment.

The proposed realignments are shown on **map MR1b** below



Top link path section MCM-1-S016

The proposed realignment takes off from near the western end of the current “rugged coast path” The first part of the realigned SWCP heads down to the crest of Hurlstone Point. “Our original alignment of the ECP in this area, as proposed in Natural England’s original report submitted to the Secretary of State , followed the public right of way (PROW) along the ridge at Hurlstone Point.” MR1 2.2.2. Whilst this is a path marked on the map it is not a Public Right of Way.

This is about 200m long. It is very difficult to find. It is little more than a narrow sheep track, maybe 0.2m wide, winding between low gorse bushes which obscure much of the route. There is no evidence that this path is ever used by walkers. **See Photo B below.**



There is a designated footpath up to 50m to the west on the west side of the ridge and about 1m wide. This is used by walkers who have climbed the zigzag path, but this is not the route of the proposed realigned SWCP. Considering its width and location this section of path would be a good route with good views along the coast and this should be reconsidered rather than making what would effectively be a new path through the low gorse of the SAC.

Photo C Existing top path.



“Through these proposals we are not making any changes to public rights of way”. Again, looking at map MR1b, and the Ordnance Survey map of public rights of way, it is clear that this statement is incorrect, MCM-1-S016, the proposed route in that area, being clearly not currently a Public Right of Way.

“Cow path” section MCM-1-S017 FP.

The 2017 proposals included then a 90m length of steps on a rocky ridge.

[See photo D Ridge path](#)



This section is subject to the MR1 realignment proposals. The July 2020 modification is to realign about 90m at the top of Hurlstone ridge up to 20 metres to the south east along a new track made by the moorland cows, thus reducing the impact of the proposals on the habitat, improving the safety of this stretch, and saving a small amount of cost.

“The proposed route would follow an existing cattle track through the dry heath vegetation along section MCMR1-S001.” NE 2020 page 4 *“The Livestock path is already being used by some walkers as it avoids the rocky section and offers a more even gradient.”* NE MR1 2020 page 5. In the context of the whole realignment, this modification seems sensible.

Zig-zag path section MCM-1-S019 FP.

This area is described as a *“steep rocky section”*. From the crest of Hurlstone Ridge the path zig zags down the rocky spur. Photo D, This would be very exposed to wind and rain on the steep and rocky slope. There is a small path that continues straight on along the spur. In bad weather conditions it might well be taken by walkers but it peters out after about a couple of hundred metres. In bad weather /low visibility this alternative path could be taken by mistake, particularly if the walker had not been there before as many coast walkers would be, leading to increased risk.

The main path turns right to descend via a series of zigzags. *“Create a new graded zig-zag section of path with steps where the route traverses a steep/ rocky slope”* NE MR1 page 4. The OS contours are difficult to follow here but, without the zigzags the path would appear to drop from about 190mOD to about 70m, a drop of about 120m, in a distance of 120m. A straight line slope of about 1 in 1. With actual heights and the longer zig zag route this would be somewhat flatter, but it does indicate the very steep nature of this section. It would be possible to fall here, especially in bad weather conditions, but the slope below flattens out somewhat so a fall could result in serious injury but should not be fatal. However the area is out of sight with no mobile phone

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signal and, when found, recovery would not be easy. Even a helicopter would need reasonable weather conditions.

Cliff path

The path then becomes sensibly level, about 0.5m wide with a good surface. With an effective shoulder width of about 1 to 1 1/2m, passing oncoming walkers who had large backpacks could require care. Here the side slope is very steep, about 1;1, and for much of this length, about 200m, any one going over the edge is unlikely to be able to stop on the slope or survive the subsequent drop onto the rocks some 70m below. Further, because the slope has been undercut by the sea, it would generally not be possible to see the faller. Were they to be alone then it could be a long time before they were found. We were unable to obtain a mobile phone signal on this stretch. About 2018 a resident of Porlock committed suicide by stepping off the path here. His badly broken body was eventually found on the rocks below and recovered by boat.

The view from the Old Coast Guard Station is are impressive and it is frequently visited by social walkers from the Bossington village car park.

West of the Coast Guard Station

The path continues westward from the Coast Guard Station along a wide path with substantial vegetation cover on either side and this section of the proposed realignment is safe and satisfactory.

It then meets up with the current coast path at the bottom of Hurlstone Combe and continues along the existing wide track to the Bossington Car Park.

3.4 Weather

Walkers on the section from the top of Hurlstone Point down to the Old Coast Guard Station would be significantly more vulnerable in adverse weather conditions. This is because this can be an area of gusty winds. It is also in an area of high rainfall. As it faces north, the sun does not always get there to dry it out, especially in winter when ice can linger. It also gets enveloped in mist and low cloud more often than elsewhere.

3.5 Safety

The Exmoor Rangers Favourite Walks, published by Halsgrove, a renowned local publisher, in 1999 describes the path from the west end of the current rugged path down to the Old Coast Guard Station on page 60 as "*dangerous*".

There are railings for about 15m around the path at the Coast Guard Station. The ENPA has said that no other safety protection would be provided elsewhere.

3.6 Comparison

"A new section of coastal path would be created in places which will significantly improve the existing coastal path" NE 2017 page 5. Considering the current SWCP benign Hurlestone Combe route, the greatly increased difficulty of walking the proposed realignment thus reducing the number of walkers who could/ would be prepared to, walk the realigned route the increased safety risk of the proposed realignment, then this allegation of improvement is not supported by the evidence, see also later sections of this review.

4 Landscape and views.

*"In a few places our alignment criteria ... typically... in places for better views."*NE 2017 page 15.

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A walker following the realigned route in the conventional westward direction, would see the wide open sea more than the Hurlstone Combe route. Whilst the views of the sea are good, they are largely similar to elsewhere, the sea being the sea. A coast path walker would already have seen a lot of sea. The walker down Hurlstone combe would, in contrast, generally see the view along the high and heavily wooded Heritage Coast towards North Foreland Point. *“longest stretch of coastal woodland in England is between the Foreland and Porlock”* NE 2017 page 18. That historic wooded coast is inspiring, see the photo on the front cover of the MR1 report for a similar view of this coast. Whilst the cliff route walker would see it from the crest of the ridge and at Hurlstone Point, the latter would be from a much lower level and the route then turns south away from the westward view so the walker would not normally be looking at the view.

In any case a walker on the zig zag path and cliff path would need to look where their feet were going on this section so would have less opportunity to see the views. The walk down Hurlstone combe, being grassy and uniform allows the walker more time to admire the view whilst walking.

Thus there seems little, if any, viewing benefit in the proposed realignments.

Historic Environment

“We had particular regard to Scheduled Monuments, see Map C.” There are many such Scheduled Monuments in the area of Map C. However only the fishing stakes in the sea off Minehead are shown on the map. It is believed that there are none in the area of Hurlstone Point so the reason for the “particular regard” is unknown.

5. Walkers in this area.

5.1 Coast path walkers

One would have expected that the NE proposals would include numbers of walkers and how that would change with the proposals. How else would one be able to assess the benefits of the realignment? However I cannot find any numbers in the proposals.

There are a number of walkers who walk the entire about 630 miles of the SWCP. These are the ones who use the more remote sections of the Coast Path and get great enjoyment from it. They would be fit, appropriately dressed, and experienced for these conditions and, for many of them, the proposed realignments would be satisfactory.

We have approached the South West Coast Path Association (SWCPA) for the numbers of walkers in the Minehead to Porlock section but we were told such data did not exist. From the documentation provided, the use of the Cornwall and South Devon sections were clearly the most popular and the Minehead to Porlock section less so.

Clearly transporting one's luggage would be an issue. Few would want to carry their overnight gear up and down the many coast path climbs. None of those seen were carrying their luggage. The SWCPA web site gave us a contact for the luggage transport company and we contacted them. They said that in 2019 they transported 261 and 105 sets of baggage. This would make a total of 366. They said that, as far as they knew, they were the only luggage transport company on this stretch. Clearly some other walkers would make their own arrangements. A reasonable assumption might be that the factor might be about 3, ie a total number of coast path walkers on this stretch might be about 1,000/year. This would not conflict with the 3 coast path walkers met during much of the day on my survey during good weather in August 2020,, see Appendix A, a time when one would have expected higher than normal usage. All the coast path walkers I met, 3, came down Hurlstone combe on the SWCP. Two found Hurlstone combe steep and unpleasant.

5.2 General walkers in this area.

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“Tourism is a major contributor to the economy of the area with the SWCP being a popular facility for visitors.” NE 2017 page 19. From our surveys, few of the visitors knew of the Coast Path and it contributed little extra to the local economy.

However Exmoor is an area that attracts many general visitors to walk and enjoy the landscape. This is particularly true of the Porlock Vale area. There are numerous people who walk local paths, either on holiday or for social reasons, or for exercise. Most of these are less fit, some are children, some are elderly and some have dogs with them. I carried out two specific surveys of walkers. See Appendix A

Of the many people we have seen on this section of the coast path, very few were of the former coast path walker category, the vast majority being of the second general walker category. Most had parked at the Bossington or Bossington Hill car parks and were walking to the Old Coast Guard Station or back along the Bossington local paths.

Of relevance the map in the National Trust Bossington Car Park does not show the existing public footpath east of the Old Coast Guard Station, although it does show the Hurlstone Combe footpath and the footpath out to the Old coast Guard Station. Thus few visitors would be likely to go east of the OCGS.

Because of the issue of walking back to one’s car at either Bossington, about 10m OD, or Bossington Hill car park 270m OD, there are few social walkers who walk Hurlstone Combe.

5.3 Walkers on the proposed realigned route.

Two walkers had walked it clockwise from the Old Coast Guard Station, but said that was a mistake and they would not have walked it had they known what it entailed and would definitely not walk it anticlockwise as proposed by NE. Over the years I have seen two other couples walking it anticlockwise, one couple as a local walk and the other unknown. One walker set out to walk the proposed realignment clockwise from the Old Coast Guard Station but freaked and said no way. One local walker said she had walked the route clockwise but would not walk it in good weather and would not walk it anti clockwise. Another knowledgeable regular walker in the area would not walk the realigned route. No walkers of the proposed realigned were seen walking it westward, ie anticlockwise, as proposed by NE. This is not surprising as the coast path is marked down Hurlstone Combe and the few locals who know of the route down Hurlstone ridge do not appear to like the route.

5.4 Future usage of the proposed realigned route.

The numbers in this section are not robust but are based on comments by the current walkers.

Rerouting of the SWCP would expect that the majority of coast path walkers would take the new route. However , from our limited survey, some would find it too challenging and use the easier Hurlstone combe route instead. This might well be more than the general switch, as this would be towards the end of their first day of coast path walking

Designating the realigned route as the Coast path would encourage social walkers to use it in the belief it is safe. Thus consideration of the safety of all users needs to take this into account.

Of relevance is the comment by one visitor who intended to walk past the Old Coast Guard Station but came back saying *“absolutely no way”* Gavin Western from Taunton walks in the general area regularly. He knew the proposed realignment route and had walked it but *“even in the right gear he would not walk past the Old Coast Guard Station again.”* Thus it would appear that the realignment would have little benefit to most of the local or visitor walkers. In contrast the Hurlstone Combe SWCP is walked often. We ask why bother with the effort and cost of the change?

5.3 Usage

"It is not anticipated there will be any significant changes to current levels or patterns of usage of either the path..." NE 2020 Assessment page 9. Were this to be true, why are Natural England going to the effort of getting permission for the realignment and carrying out the construction work on the route, if only an insignificant number of people are going to use the realigned route? The cost benefit analysis would be awful. Has it been assessed?

"The Coast Path will be promoted as part of the family of National trails." NE Assessment 2020 page 10. This reads as if the realigned SWCP will be promoted with the expectation of increased usage as a long distance trail. Thus one could conclude that, despite its dangers, numbers using the SWCP would increase. In which case the numbers using the realigned route would increase due to it becoming the SWCP, and also increase due to the increased promotion of the SWCP

However, based on general observations and limited data I have hypothesised the following table.

	Hurlstone Combe	Hurlstone Point/ridge
Current		
Long distance	1,000	10
Local adventurous	300	200
Total	1,300	210
Post realignment		
Long distance	200	900
Local adventurous	200	300
Total	200	1,200

This would indicate an appreciable rise in the number of walkers using the realigned route, a factor of over 5 on these assumptions. This would feed into the Habitats Risk Assessment.

6. Natural England Key Principles of alignment.

Natural England’s Approved Scheme 2013 Part B section 4.1.1 states *"Natural England is required by the 2009 Act to have specific regard to*

6.1 Safety

-The safety and convenience of those using the route."

it would be important to consider the capability of the users. For much of the coast path these would be generally experienced walkers. However, because this is a high tourism area, this section of the coast path has a high proportion of social walkers, children, the elderly and dogs.

Without any doubt the existing SWCP down Hurlstone Combe has a good level of safety.

However, approaching from the east as is conventional, the section from Hurlstone Ridge, down to the Old Coast Guard Station is steep or with a very steep side slope, is narrow making passing oncoming walkers a challenge, is subject to adverse weather such as gusty winds, rain, or mist, with potentially fatal consequences from a misstep or fall. Whilst the proposed realigned section would be safe for experienced coast path walkers, almost all those walking in the area are less well equipped or less able and include children, the elderly, and dogs. The suicide shows what could happen. Had the person who fell in Hurlstone combe fallen on the cliff path, there would have been another fatality.

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The Exmoor Rangers Book of Walks 1999 edition page 60 describes the proposed realignment as “*dangerous*”.

No safety assessment has been provided in the documentation. Considering the usage and the classification as “*dangerous*”, this is an unfortunate omission.

Thus Natural England might become in breach of their statutory duty for safety if the 2017 proposals on realignment were implemented.

6.2 Trail width.

4.3.4 This allows for the trail to be 4 metres wide under ordinary circumstances, enabling two people to walk comfortably abreast.”

Most of the existing coast path down Hurlstone Combe is generally about 1 1/2m to 3m wide and is capable of taking two people side by side for most of its length.

In contrast the greatest width of the realigned section mentioned in the 2020 assessment is 1m, although parts of the existing section from the Old Coast Guard Station to the bottom of Hurlstone Combe exceeds this. There are no other sections where it is likely that two people could walk side by side on the realigned routes.

A further question is how easy would it be on most of the realigned routes, to pass a person coming the other way, possibly with a back pack on or with a dog on a lead.

6.3 Access for the widest range of people

4.3.8 We follow the principles set out in our publication “By All reasonable Means” to make the trail as easy to use as we reasonably can for disabled people and those with reduced mobility. Where there is a choice of routes... we favour the one that is accessible to the widest range of people or most easily adapted for that purpose.” I cannot find reference to this consideration in the 2017 proposals.

The 2020 MR1 states.2.2.9, *“Like the original proposed route, the modified one is likely to be unsuitable for some people with reduced mobility because of the nature of the terrain.”* The cliff route round Hurlstone Point would not be suitable for many of the walkers arriving at the Old Coast Guard Station. This would exclude most children, all dogs and most of the elderly. The steep zig-zag path with steps also would also exclude those with reduced mobility.

MR1 states, 2.2.9 *“We have chosen a route alignment which takes the path off a rocky outcrop that could be slippery when wet.”* In this area it rains a lot, and, as it faces north, it gets much less sun to dry out. Thus the MR1 proposal is of benefit. But the remaining alignment goes over more rock outcrops on its zig zag down the steep slope. Thus this danger has been somewhat reduced but most of the danger of the zig-zag path and rocks remains.

The existing coast path route up/down Hurlstone Combe is suitable for almost all people. Without doubt the route up/down Hurlstone Combe is the one that is accessible to the widest range of people. Thus Natural England, in proposing the steep and rocky realignment, has not followed its own principle.

7 Financial and economic analysis.

It would be normal for any project to include a financial and economic analysis to show to Treasury and others that the proposed works are good value for public money. The benefit would normally be based on a Willingness to Pay assessment.

The cost quoted assumes that much of the work is done by volunteers. However, in economic terms, these could be used on other works, so their cost should be included at full value.

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The NE statement that *“it is not anticipated there will be any significant changes to current level or patterns of usage”* NE Assessment version 2.0 July 2020, page 9, would give a serious problem in the financial and economic analysis as it could mean there would be no significant benefit hence no justification for cost of the realignment around Hurlstone Point. However the best evidence I have been able to obtain, does show there would be a small increase in usage.

8. Coastal margin

“Natural England has a statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009...to create an associated margin of land for the public to enjoy, either in conjunction with their access along the route, or otherwise” NE 2020 page 2.

Natural England Minehead to Combe Martin 2017 states *“Table 1.2.3 Other Options considered.*

We opted for the proposed extent of landward margin because

We concluded that this would strike the best balance in terms of the criteria described in section 4.8 of the coastal access scheme-to make the extent of peoples access rights clearer or more cohesive on the ground” The land between the existing Coast Path and the proposed Hurlstone Point realignment is already access land, see 2017 proposal Map C, so I understand that the realignment would make no difference to the amount of access land.

“Our decision was made to best suit the local circumstances” none given so the decision is not supported by evidence *“and after having taken into consideration the views of the relevant owners and occupiers to either include or exclude additional CROW access land as part of the coastal margin.”* This seems to have excluded consideration by the local community and local walkers.

“Use our discretion to propose a physical feature as the landward boundary of the coastal margin” NE 2017 page 16,

The realigned path has no obvious physical feature zigzagging down the steep rocky hillside. In contrast the existing SWCP route down Hurlstone Combe has the clear feature of the combe itself.

Thus the proposed realignment does not change access or make the boundary any clearer, if anything the reverse.

9. Habitat, protection of sensitive features.

9.1 General

Looking at the NE 2017 map C page 21, the whole of the 2017 proposed realigned section is within the Exmoor Heath SAC. (Note the western boundary of the SAC runs effectively north/south from Hurlstone Point whereas all the proposed realignment is to the east of that line.) *“and is a notified feature of the underpinning Exmoor Heaths SSSI.”*NE 2020 page 4.

“With regard to the European Sites “ SACs are European sites “ Habitat Regulation Assessment were carried out on the proposals in this “2017 “ report.” “The assessments are documented in an Access and Sensitive Features appraisal published alongside the report.” NE 2017 page No link was provided in the 2017 NE report and no such document was found on the web. However NE provided the document promptly when asked.

“It was concluded that the habitat in this location is European dry heath.” Assessment 2020 page 23.

“We looked for evidence of any proposals to have detrimental effect on protected sites and species.” “This included potential effects arising from the works that would be necessary to establish and/or maintain the proposed route and from peoples use of the new access rights.” NE2017 page 17.

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9.2 Vegetation

Hurlstone Combe

The current SWCP goes down the Hurlstone combe. This is a designated footpath. This would remain as such. Thus any change due to realignment of the SWCP would result in increased impact elsewhere.

General proposals

The cliff edge path would be widened, the zigzag path would be widened, the link to the rugged path which is currently about 0.3m wide meandering through low gorse would be widened. This is shown on NE Assessment 2020 Map 3 page 33. The policy would be to 4m, but that would impact the SAC more, so the general proposals are 1m.

Ridge path

When I visited as part of this review in July and August 2020 the route A to C route was exceptionally difficult to find, being little more than a narrow sheep track through low gorse, see Photo B. It is not a designated footpath. Even my free running sheep dog had difficulty. Thus the impact would be about 200m of new 1m wide path through the SAC. Were the existing designated footpath up to 50m to the south west to be adopted then the impact on the SAC/SSSI, would be minimal.

What has become more popular with the very few walkers who use this general route is the definitive footpath from C to B. There are few distinguishing features in this area and it is easy for someone visiting to mistake the paths. Whatever the current, about 0.3m wide, sheep track is to be widened to about 1m over about 200m.

C-E, the "cowpath".

The cow path C-E. see map 3 2020 assessment page 33 *"A livestock path has developed between A to F. The path is convenient and attractive and is increasingly becoming the preferred route for walkers."* NE MR1 2020, 2.1.2 .

The subject of NE MR1,2020, similar effect and widened to 1m for about 90m. It is claimed that *"the area of habitat affected is small in the context of the site."*

Zigzag path, steps, and cliff contour path E-F-G-H.

"This public footpath round the point has become narrow as a result of encroaching vegetation and soil and will be restored to its former width so that it is easier to use." The widening of this narrow path is to be welcomed as that would reduce the risk of fatality. However, in habitat terms it is interesting to consider what is the base condition. I have known the area since 1945 and would consider that generally there has been little further encroachment by soil in modern times. Thus, if the situation that is the base case is the situation at SAC designation, as might be the case, then the widening, which would be important for access and safety reasons, might well be deemed as an effect on the SAC. The length of this section is about 400m taking account of the zigzags.

Impact

"When carrying out works to alter the alignment of the SWCP, the process of undertaking these works may cause temporary damage to a wider area of open coastal habitat." NE 2020 Assessment Table 8 page 20.

"The area affected will be small and impacts will be short lived since vegetation will quickly recover." NE

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Assessment 2020 Table 7 page 25. It would be presumed that since this would be a national trail the full width of path, already only generally 1m instead of the 4m normally required, would be maintained free of vegetation. This would be particularly so along the top of the ridge where the new and yet to be designated path crosses an area of low gorse.

The previous countryside manager to the National Trust for this area, [redacted], has said *"The short maritime grassland that covers the steep ground to the east of the point is quite fragile and reliant on rabbit grazing.."* email [redacted]/[redacted] 9.8.2020. With increased path usage it would be expected that the rabbit population would decline.

"Conclusion The plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the following qualifying features H4030 European dry heaths." NE 2020 assessment page 18.

"Conclusion... no adverse effect on site integrity (taking into account any incorporated mitigation measures) can be concluded , although there is some residual risk of insignificant impacts which will be considered further in combination with other plans and projects.." NE 2020 Assessment page 26. I have been unable to identify any mitigation measures proposed. Following the "People over Wind" judgement it might be that such mitigation measures would need to be spelt out. Whilst the extent of loss of SAC habitat would be small, the top path resulting in loss of 200m by about 1m of low gorse, it is difficult to conclude there is *"no adverse effect"*.

Staying with the current SWCP route along Hurlstone Combe would, of course, mean no loss of SAC habitat.

9.3 Birds

The SSSI notification for Exmoor Coastal Heaths states *"The coastal heaths support many of Exmoor's breeding Wheatear,...and Raven Corvus corax nest within the site and Peregrine Falco peregrinus hunt over the cliffs.."*

The Commission note on Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, states, *"require that Member States do more than simply prevent the further deterioration of these species and habitat types. They must also undertake positive management measures to ensure their populations are maintained at, or restored to, a favourable conservation status throughout their natural range."*

As I understand it, the area of this SAC is classified as a dry heath. Looking at the NE publication European Site Conservation Objectives Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features Exmoor Heaths SAC UK0030040 page 21, key structural influential and/or distinctive species, this lists Targets *"Assemblage of moorland breeding birds."* There are moorland breeding birds in the vicinity of the realigned coast path, in particular peregrine falcons and ravens, see Somerset Ornithological Society annual publications, 2017. *"Peregrine falcon breeding at seven sites including coastal"* page 85. I am informed by several sources that these sites include the rocky area just east of Hurlstone Point close to the proposed realignment. *"Raven breeding site Hurlstone Point."* Page 87, *"Wheatear one pair bred successfully at Hurlstone Point"* page 113.

The Ravens are a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The South West Coast Path Association web site Frequently asked Questions page 3 says *"When is the best time of year to walk the Path? It is possible to walk the Coast path at any time of year, but the best months are April June and September -October..."* This would appear to include the spring breeding season.

[Redacted], the Vice President of the Somerset Ornithological Society, a local resident, a regular walker and someone who knows both the proposed realignment path and where these nests are on Hurlstone Point, has stated that, *"in his view, the realignment of the SWCP along this route would lead to increased disturbance and*

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possibly result in abandonment of this as a breeding site for peregrine falcon and raven. "Tel call [redacted]/[redacted] 11/8/2020. Similar views have been expressed by two other local residents.

"Evidence is also gathered as appropriate from a range of other sources which can include information and data held locally by external partners. " NE Assessment 2020 page 5. "Natural England has checked whether there is any new substantive data or evidence that has become available since the proposals were submitted to the Secretary of State and which might have a bearing on the assessment. Where relevant we have contacted relevant stakeholders and interests to ask whether they are aware of any such information." The Exmoor Natural History Society, and the Somerset Ornithological Society, who keep the definitive record of birds in Somerset, tell me they have not been approached and were not aware of the realignment proposals.

Whatever, the Hurlstone Point realignment is set out in section D3.1B of the 2020 NE assessment on pages 23 & 24. We cannot find in the assessment dated July 2020 where the impact of the proposals, ie increased use of the path, down the zigzag path and along the cliff path due to its becoming the SWCP, would have on the breeding birds. The risk would be that the increased use of the path would lead to abandonment of this breeding site. This has not apparently been considered in the NE HRA.

*"Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy **where wildlife is protected...**"* NE 2017 back page, our emboldening.

We cannot find where these important birds have been considered, in the Habitats assessment, let alone protected. This applies particularly to the ravens, a formally protected species.

10 Consideration by Local Access Forum and Exmoor National Park Authority

The Local Access Forum for Exmoor considered the original proposals at its meeting on 27th June 2017 and their advice to Natural England and the Secretary of State was *"the current coast path route via Hurlstone Combe was safer to sign and promote as the main route for the coast path and felt that the alternative more challenging and dramatic route around Hurlstone Point should be the one signed as the alternative."*

In 2017 the Exmoor National Park Authority considered the proposals and unanimously decided against the NE 2017 proposals.

11. Conclusions

1. The existing SWCP runs down Hurlstone combe and has been safe and satisfactory for many years with good views along the wooded Heritage Coast.
2. The 2017 NE proposal was to leave the existing rugged coast path, construct a new link path to Hurlstone ridge, go down a zigzag route on the ridge, then along the contour cliff path to the Old Coast Guard Station.
3. The NE proposal claims the top 200m link path is an existing designated footpath. The path is little more than a winding sheep path through the low gorse and the map shows no such designation.
4. The current Modification Report replaces about 90m of the ridge section with a better route.
- 5 The whole realigned route is very exposed to high winds, wet weather, and, facing north, has less sun to dry out or thaw the potentially slippery rocks.
6. The cliff route section has steep slopes dropping several hundred feet to the coastal rocks below.
7. It is known that there has been at least one fatality off the proposed realignment.
8. The Exmoor Rangers book calls this route *"dangerous"*

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9. Whereas most sections of the coast path have predominantly experienced coastal path walkers, in this tourist area with well known car parks at Bossington and Bossington Hill, most walkers are social walkers with often children, dogs and some elderly people.
10. The NE principles require a risk assessment but none has been provided, identified or referenced.
11. Field surveys indicate that the current numbers of walkers going down Hurlstone Ridge to the OCGS are negligible.
12. NE state *"It is not anticipated there will be any significant changes to current levels or patterns of usage of either the path..."*. In which case why does NE go to the effort and expense of the realignment?
13. A cost/benefit analysis of the proposal should have been provided to meet Treasury requirements. The NE statement of no significant change in usage anticipated would mean little benefit for the cost and could lead to concern the Treasury concern.
14. One reason for the scheme is the view. The main view of the realigned route is the sea, similar to what the walker has seen many times. In contrast the view going down Hurlstone combe is generally along the wooded Heritage Coast towards north Foreland, an inspiring view.
15. Another reason given is the provision of access land between the new path and the sea. But the whole area here is already access land so there would be no benefit.
16. The land is a SSSI and a SAC under the Habitats Directive. There would be a small loss of natural vegetation by realigning the path. However retaining the Hurlstone Combe route as the SWCP would mean there would be no loss.
17. The Conservation Objectives Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features lists as a target *"Assemblage of moorland birds"*. The SSSI notification states that protected ravens nest in the area, believed to be on Hurlstone Point. The Vice President of the Somerset Ornithological Society has said that the anticipated increased use of the path to the east of the Point could result in the abandonment of breeding by these birds in this area. The Habitats Directive Article 6 requires that their populations are maintained at, or restored to, favourable conservation status. The NE Assessment should identify how this would be achieved. However, it does not include consideration of this feature. This is a serious omission.
18. The NE principles include a trail 4m wide so people can walk side by side. The current SWCP up/down Hurlstone combe is generally about 3m wide and largely meets the criterion. Little of the realignment, bar the yet to be constructed top 150m, would exceed 1 m and this criterion could not be met on the realigned section.
19. The principles include *"choice of routes...we favour the one that is accessible to the widest range of people ."* Without doubt the existing coast path route along Hurlstone Combe is much easier and safer to use by the widest range of people, thus why realign the coast path?
20. In 2017 both the Local Access Forum and the Exmoor National Park Authority decided against the proposal and that the SWCP should stay in Hurlstone Combe. The Hurlstone Point cliff path could then be adopted as a rugged path for experienced coast path walkers.
- 21.. We recommend the Secretary of State reconsiders the proposed realignment of the main coast path in Hurlstone Combe and retains it on safety, use by the widest range of people grounds, and minimises Habitat impact..

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

28th August 2020

Appendix A Survey of path users.

Date 9th August 2020 0930 to 11.15. good walking weather.

Location. On the SWCP at the foot of Hurlstone combe

Adult visitors 19, Adult locals 13, Elderly 1, Children 5, Runners 2, Toral 40, Dogs 8

Almost were talked with by me. Of those talked with

No visitor had previously heard of the SWCP route locally

Both runners used the SWCP at the bottom of Hurlstone Combe and are believed to have come through Bossington Wood, not down the combe itself.

No local walker had heard about the proposed coast path realignment.

Only one person was prepared to try the proposed realignment but she came back from the Old Coast Guard Station saying “ *Absolutely, no way, was she going to walk that beyond the Old Coast Guard Station!*” Put very vehemently.

One local said she had previously walked the proposed realignment once going upwards, ie clockwise, the opposite way to the main flow of the proposed realignment, but would only consider walking it that way in good weather.

[Redacted] from Taunton walked in the general area regularly. He knew the proposed realignment route and had walked it but “ *even in the right gear he would not walk past the Old Coast Guard Station again.*” He not even going the easier way.

Previously

I have walked in the general area for many years and have seen, and often talked with, many hundreds of other walkers. I have never seen anyone walking the cliff ledge east of the Old Coast Guard Station and only once previously have I seen two people walking the definitive footpath that leads from the “cow path” area to the top of Hurlstone Combe. They returned down Hurlstone Combe so were local walkers. They said they had enjoyed the climb.

[Redacted]

[Redacted] lives locally. [Redacted] monitored usage. None of the 28 walkers [redacted] saw had the right walking footwear to walk the proposed realignment.

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Thursday 13th August 2020 mid afternoon good walking weather

Two coastal path walkers, They had started from Minehead. They had walked the first part of the rugged coast path but had found that too challenging. They had come down Hurlstone Combe and found it unpleasant. They would definitely not have walked the proposed realignment along Hurlstone ridge.

A visiting couple with two small children. They had walked the proposed realignment clockwise, ie starting from the OCGS, going along the cliff path and up the zigzag path. They would not have done it if they had known what it was like and had only gone on because of the greater issues of going back. They said they would not do it again and certainly not the normal way, starting at Minehead and doing this section anti-clockwise. Other walkers commented that they were crazy to take children and asked me to check that all were OK.

One foreigner who was walking the SWCP and had come down Hurlstone Combe. Communication limited.

Two women seen in the distance on the designated footpath linking the cow path to the top of Hurlstone Combe. le going eastwards. No comments as they were well out of range.

Summary

Some of the many local walkers visited the OCGS and most the paths through the Bossington Woods.

Three coast path walkers. The period covered much of the walking day. There was good weather, mid summer after lock down, so likely to have been a high period of coast walking in this area. All three coast path walkers had come down Hurlstone Combe. All coast path walkers were going westward.

I have seen only four walkers going eastwards on the proposed realignment, I believe none of them were coast walkers. All had used the public footpath on the west side of Hurlstone Ridge and none were on the sheep track link path, proposed by NE

Appendix B Compilers of this report.

[Redacted], Vice Chairman of the Local Access Forum, local resident, regular walker, local walk leader, member of the Exmoor Society Executive Committee.

[Redacted], resident close by, member of the Exmoor Society Executive Committee

[Redacted], local resident Member of the LAF,

[Redacted] Local resident and professional walk leader.