

Dorset Local Access Forum

6

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	18 February 2011
Subject of Report	Update on Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 coastal access implementation – Weymouth Bay (Rufus Castle to Lulworth Cove)
Executive Summary	This is an update on the process of coastal access implementation and next steps. Public consultation on draft proposals for the alignment of the coastal trail and associated spreading room ended on 10 th January 2011 and the Final Report is now being produced with appropriate amendments.
Impact Assessment: <i>How have the following contributed to the development of this report?*</i>	Equalities Impact Assessment: An EIA is not a material consideration in producing this update, but it should be noted that the coastal access draft proposals have been developed by Natural England and DCC officers following principles of least restrictive access and inclusivity. The consultation on the draft proposals was open to all to comment on and was available in alternative formats by contacting the Natural England enquiries line [0845 600 3078 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk.]
	Use of Evidence: The process of coastal access implementation is being carried out by Natural England and DCC officers in accordance with the approach set out in Natural England's Coastal Access Scheme, as approved by the Secretary of State.
	Budget/ Risk Assessment: This update carries no implications for LAF budget.
Background Papers	Coastal Access Implementation Scheme: http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/NE269 Draft proposals for Weymouth Bay: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/coastalaccess/weymouth/

Recommendation	LAF members consider update, note date of publication of Final Report and refer any queries to Coastal Access Officer (contact details below)
Report Originator and Contact	Name: Suzanne Powner Email: s.powner@dorsetcc.gov.uk Tel: 01305 228677

Coastal Access Weymouth Bay

1. Background

- 1.1 The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on Natural England to secure a long distance walking trail around the open coast of England, together with a wider area of land along the way known as 'spreading room', where people will be able to spread out and explore, rest or picnic. A Coastal Access Scheme, which has been approved by government, sets out in detail the processes involved in putting the new rights in place and the criteria that are used to guide the proposals for the alignment of the trail and the associated spreading room.
- 1.2 Government asked Natural England to start the implementation of the new rights in Weymouth Bay, in time for the sailing events during the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. Since April 2010 Dorset County Council have been working on the project with Natural England and on 15 October 2010, based on this initial period of research and consultation, Natural England published the draft proposals on improving coastal access in Weymouth Bay. The consultation ended on 10th January 2011.
- 1.3 The draft proposals would make the following key improvements to existing access arrangements in Weymouth Bay:
 - The existing South West Coast Path would move closer to the sea in several places;
 - For the first time there would be secure statutory rights of public access to world-famous areas of beach, cliff and other coastal land on this part of the coast;
 - The coast path would be able to 'roll back' as the cliffs erode or slip, solving long standing difficulties with maintaining a continuous route around the slumping cliffs between Weymouth and Lulworth Cove.

2. LAF involvement in process

- 2.1 The DLAF coastal access working group have been involved in detailed consultation about the alignment of the trail and associated spreading room from the beginning of implementation in Weymouth Bay. During this latest phase of consultation the working group has considered the draft proposals and have walked the course in freezing conditions to look at the proposed alignment and potential alternatives on the ground.
- 2.2 Natural England thanks Dorset Local Access Forum for their involvement in the process and for their consultation response. The hard work that has been put into this by DLAF is acknowledged and much appreciated. The DLAF response will be

taken fully into account when assessing any amendments needed to the proposals before production of the final report.

3. Update on consultation and next steps

- 3.1 Forty-eight responses to the draft proposals were received by Natural England. These are being reviewed and in some cases respondents are being contacted for further clarification. A short consultation report summary will be produced by Natural England.
- 3.2 Appropriate modifications will be made to the proposals in the light of the consultation responses. A Final Report will then be produced, to be published at the end of March 2011. This will be set out in the same format as the draft proposals. At this stage the report will be advertised and the representations stage will begin.
- 3.3 Any person will be able to make a formal representation to Natural England regarding the final report. In addition, any owner, tenant or lawful occupier of affected land will be able to make a formal objection (on grounds set out in Schedule 1A of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949). The publication and representations period will last for a minimum of 8 weeks. The 2009 Act does not allow Natural England to make consequential changes to the Final Report but does allow them to make comments on representations or objections.
- 3.4 The Final Report will then be sent to the Secretary of State for consideration, alongside objections and representations, with Natural England's accompanying comments. Objections will trigger an independent review of that specific aspect of the proposals by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 3.5 The Secretary of State may confirm the report in full, confirm it with modifications to the proposals or reject some or all of the proposals.
- 3.6 Once the report is confirmed any necessary establishment works will take place before the public access rights are brought into force.
- 3.7 DLAF will receive updates and further detail as key parts of the process take place, in the meantime please direct any queries to Su at s.powner@dorsetcc.gov.uk.