

# Information

## for County Councillors

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From:	Sarah Littler, Project Manager, Rights of Way, Major Programmes Team
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To:	David Hall, John Denbee, Peter Burrridge-Clayton, John Woodman, Mark Healey, Dave Loveridge, John Edney, Andrew Davies, Christine Lawrence, Terry Venner, David Fothergill All other members for information

## The England Coast Path National Trail

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 requires Natural England (NE) to develop a walking route around the coast of England-the England Coast Path (ECP) by 2020. During the last seven years Somerset County Council has worked in partnership with Natural England to establish the new Coast Path. We have also worked closely with all landowners over whose land the new Coast Path will run. The first section to open in Somerset is 90km in length from Brean Down to Minehead via Bridgwater along both banks of the River Parrett.

This new section of Coast Path is almost complete and will open in March 2016 before the Easter holidays. It will connect to the South West Coast Path in Minehead and follows some of the route of the West Somerset Coast Path.

Research carried out on other National Trails in the country show that they can bring economic benefits to an area. Figures released in December 2015 on the South West Coast Path reveal that walkers using this Trail spent around £468m during 2014, an increase of almost 23% in the past five years. This bucks the trend for tourism in the region as a whole, which increased by 12% overall but has remained fairly static in the past two years. With 1 million more visitors spending an additional £86.7m in the region's tourism businesses, the South West Coast Path is clearly a valuable asset to help grow the region's economy and is responsible for the employment of 10,610 full time equivalent jobs.

Regular walking can also bring mental and physical health benefits. A report published by McMillan Cancer and the Ramblers provides evidence of this. [http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Documents/AboutUs/Health\\_professionals/Physicalactivity/Walking-Works-professionals-version.pdf](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Documents/AboutUs/Health_professionals/Physicalactivity/Walking-Works-professionals-version.pdf)

Natural England, with the support of SCC has commenced work on the next section of the ECP from Brean Down to the Severn Bridge which amounts to approximately 6km in Somerset. Once this stretch is open it will connect the ECP to the Wales Coast Path. Exmoor National Park Authority will work with NE on the 20km section from Minehead west to the county boundary with Devon

although it is expected that the route will, for the most part, follow the existing South West Coast Path.

All costs (including officer time) of developing the Coast Path in Somerset have been met by Natural England. Future maintenance of the route will be on three to one basis with Natural England contributing 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the funding for the Coast Path which is largely made up of public rights of way.

For more information  
please contact:

Name: Sarah Littler  
Email: sslittler@somerset.gov.uk  
Tel No.: 01823 357215

