

The Brean Cross Link

Detailed proposals from the Sluices to Warren Road

Appendix One: Planning Submission



Brean Down: so tantalisingly close but so far from Weston

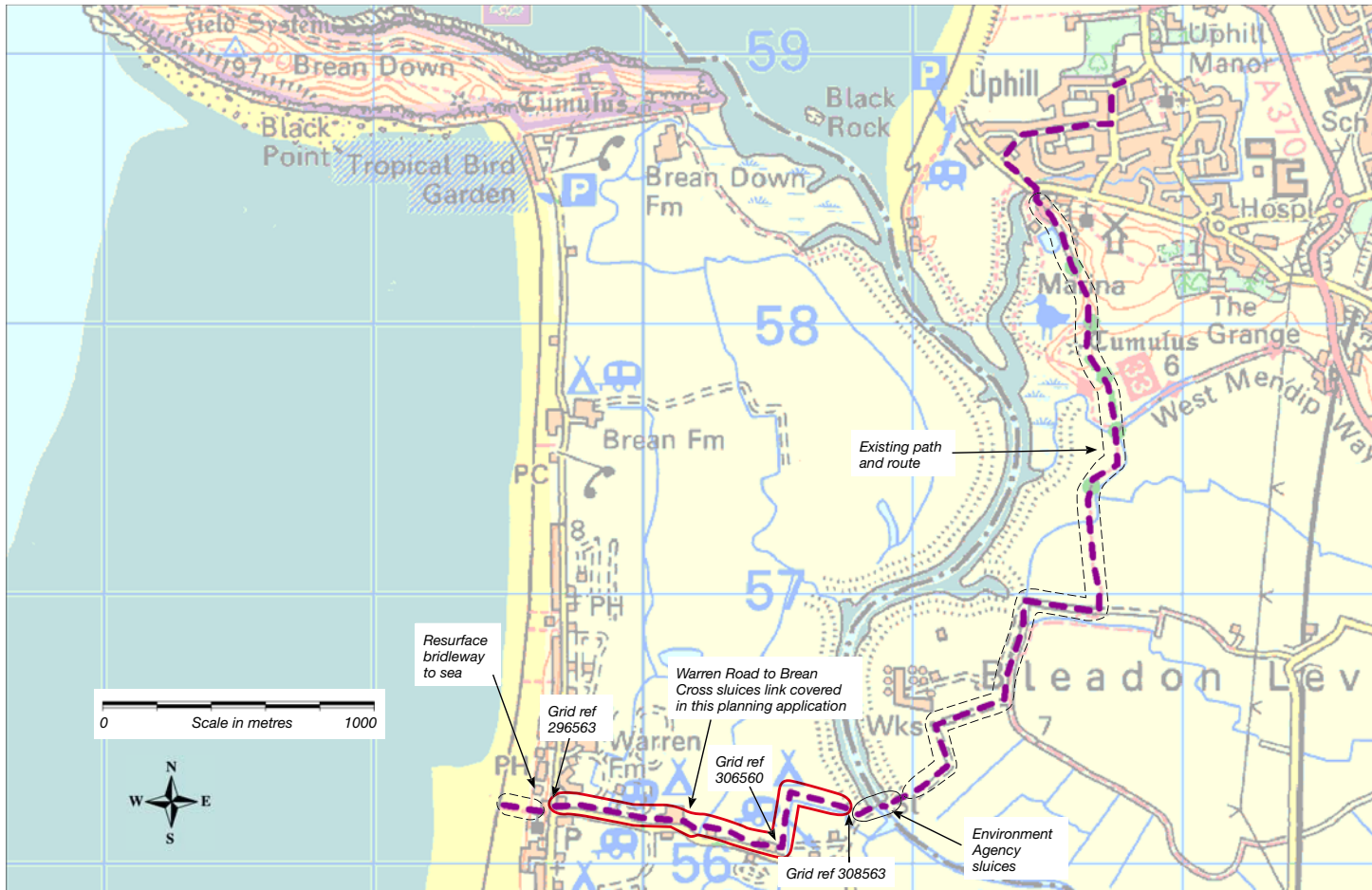


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The Brean Cross Link

Location Plan for Warren Road and Brean Cross Sluice link path

Length of proposed path 1.4km



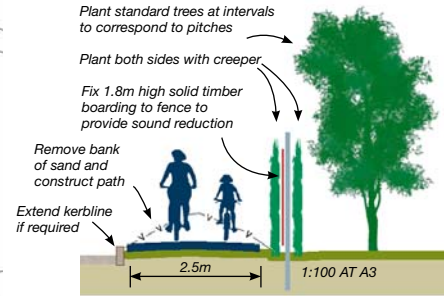
Map 1 of 3

Path continues to reach sea via existing brideway. Surface in interlocking brick blocks to give a firm surface which can be cleaned off by tractor, as this link is prone to drifting sand.

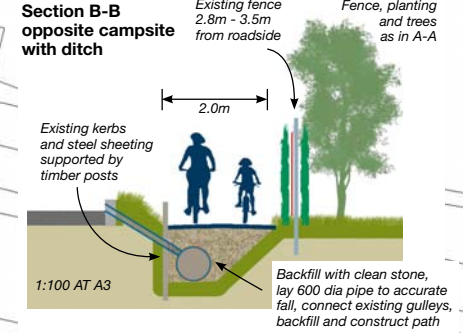
Start of planning application

A raised pavement crossing of Warren Road would be very helpful for local visitors wishing to reach the beach. Walkers to Brean Down will want to go this way.

Section A-A looking towards beach



Section B-B opposite campsite with ditch



Extent of culvert shown in blue

Path beside fence as shown in sections. Ditch to be infilled, piped and surfaced as in section B-B.

Cross 'Car Boot Sale' entrance which is normally gated and locked. Use zebra crossing markings to indicate path



View of typical block path through dunes



View of typical raised pavement crossing

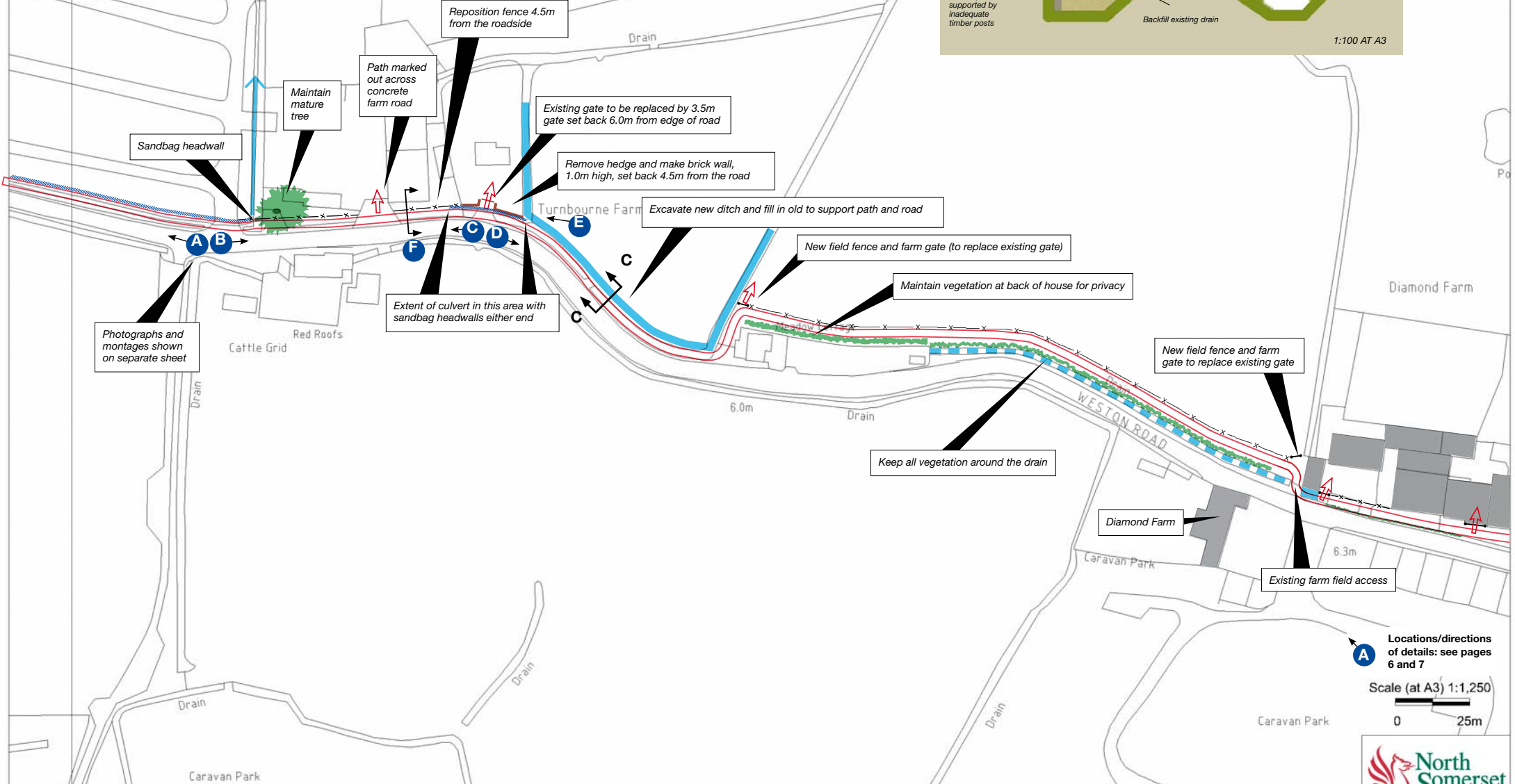
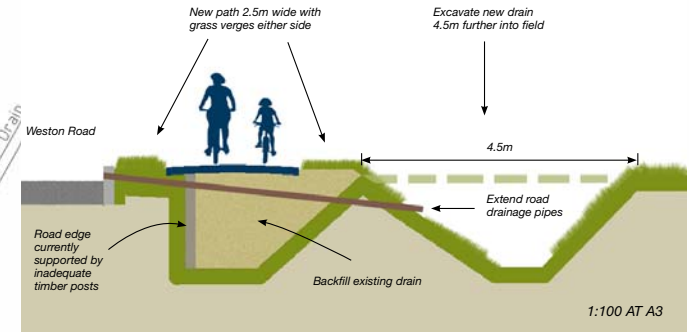
A Locations/directions of details: see pages 6 and 7

Scale (at A3) 1:1,250





Section C-C: Sketch showing view of proposed path arrangement around the bend of the Turnbourne Farm field



Photographs and montages shown on separate sheet

Red Roofs

Cattle Grid

Extent of culvert in this area with sandbag headwalls either end

Excavate new ditch and fill in old to support path and road

Keep all vegetation around the drain

Diamond Farm

New field fence and farm gate to replace existing gate

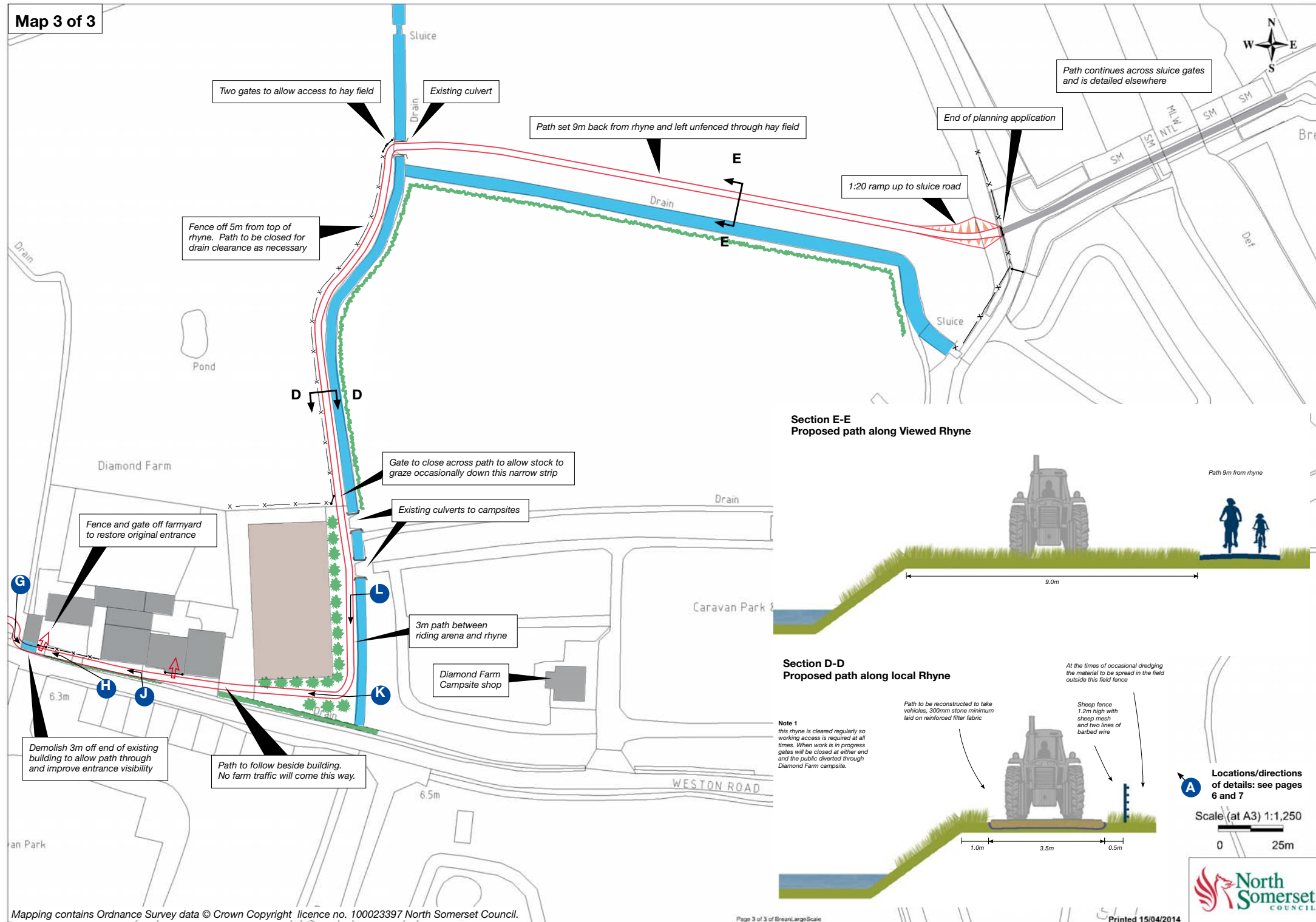
Existing farm field access

Locations/directions of details: see pages 6 and 7

Scale (at A3) 1:1,250



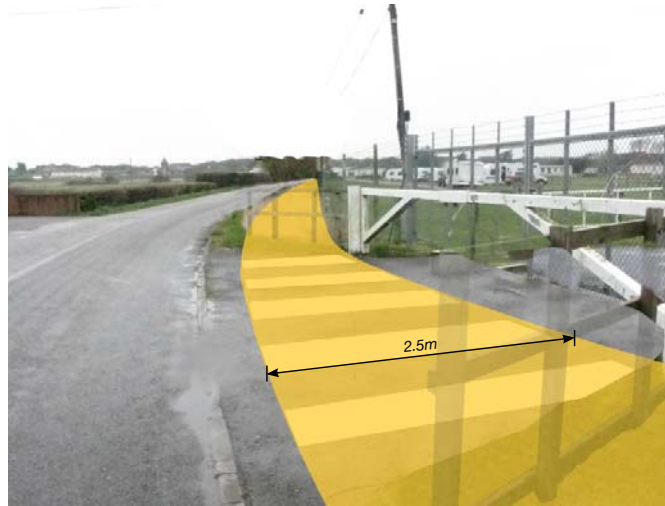
Map 3 of 3



View of newly planted willow work on Warren Farm. Similar planting to go along the inside - camp field side - of the Warren Farm Fence



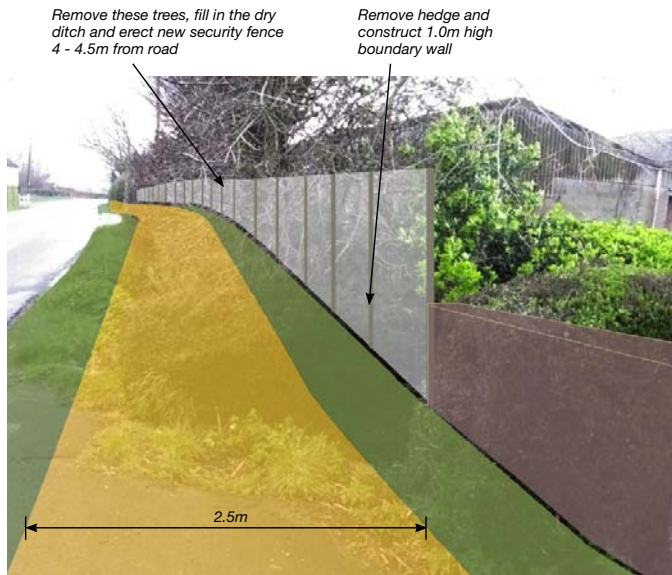
A. View across Warren Farm Gates looking towards the sea



B. View across car boot sale access gate, looking towards Diamond Farm



C. View from Turbourne entrance looking towards Warren Farm and Brean



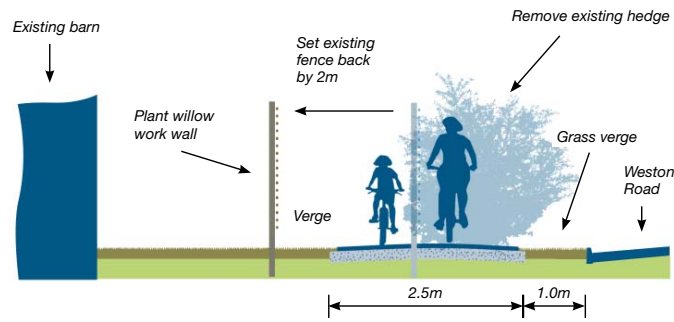
D. View looking away from Turnbourne entrance towards Diamond Farm



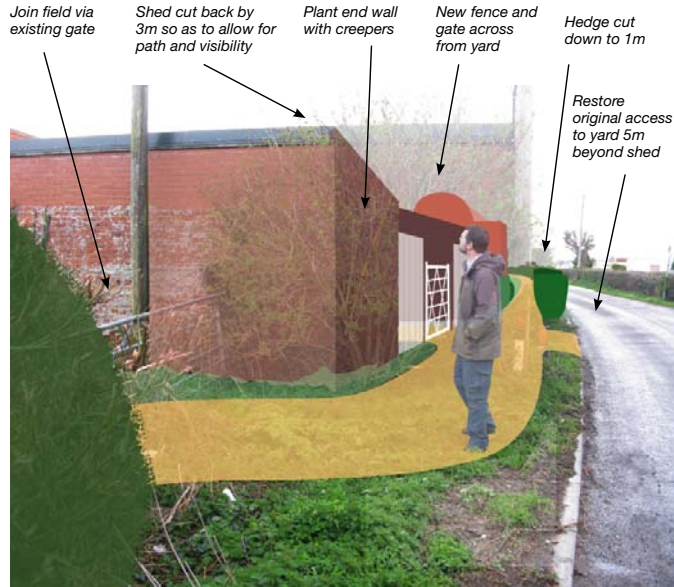
E. View of proposed path looking towards Turnbourne entrance



F. Sketch section showing path past Turnbourne Farm buildings looking towards Diamond Farm



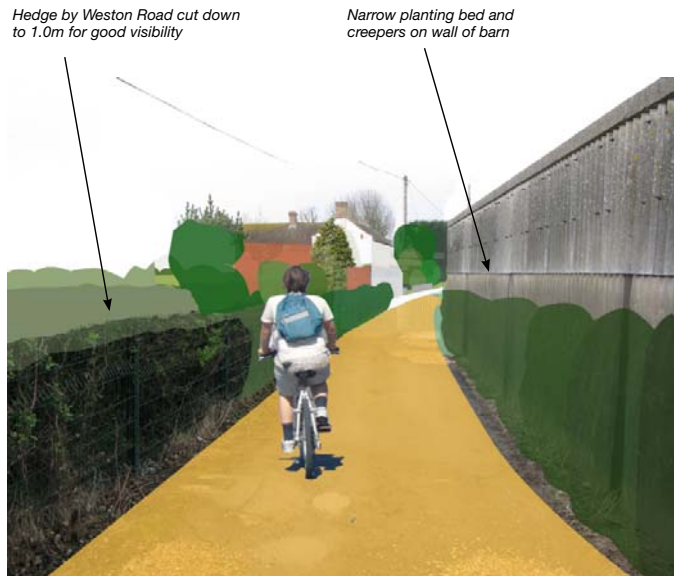
G. View at start of Diamond Farm buildings



H. View through farmyard looking towards Brean



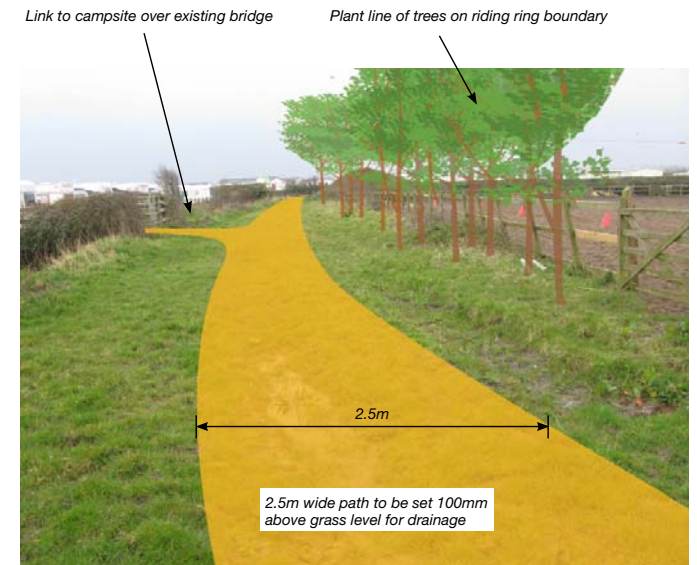
J. View of existing farm track, past Diamond Farm barns, which will now be for public use



K. View looking towards Brean past Diamond Farm buildings



L. View of link beside riding ring



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THE BREAN CROSS SLUICE PATH PROJECT

ECOLOGICAL REPORT, BREAN CROSS SLUICES TO COASTAL ROAD SECTION

OCTOBER 2013

PROPOSED CYCLEPATH, BREAN CROSS SLUICES TO COASTAL ROAD

ECOLOGICAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to assess any impact on biodiversity of proposals to create a cyclepath in this area, and to make mitigation proposals where appropriate. The proposed cyclepath runs largely through improved grassland and along road edges, but in places it would be necessary to remove a stretch of hedge and to culvert a derelict rhyne.

METHODS

An Extended Phase 1 field survey was carried out on 23rd October 2013. It covered vegetation types and vascular plants, birds and protected species. In particular the following were carried out:

- The working corridor and, as far as possible, all areas within thirty metres were checked for badger setts and for signs of badger activity;
- Habitat quality for reptiles was assessed;
- The banks of rhyne were checked for signs of otter and water vole activity.

The hedge was surveyed to a level that allows assessment under the ecological criteria of the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations.

A data search was carried out at Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC).

SURVEY RESULTS

Site Description

Between the sluices and the road junction the path would run along a mixture of existing tracks and grassland. The edge of the path would be 1m from a large rhyne. Along Weston Road construction of the path would involve removal of a roadside bank at the western end of the road, and to the east removal of a hedge and culverting of a derelict rhyne.

None of the area through which the route runs, or any adjacent area, has any nature conservation designation. The closest designated site are the Severn Estuary SSSI, SAC and SPA and the Brean dune system Local Wildlife Site, which are within 200m of the proposed working area, but are separated from it by developments.

Vegetation

Grassland

The grasslands along almost all of the route are fairly uniform. They are overwhelmingly dominated by perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), with the only frequent herb species being creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). Other species are characteristic of highly disturbed conditions and include rough-stalked meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*), scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) and ratstail plantain (*Plantago major*).

The bank along the western end of Weston Road is more diverse. The top and north-facing sides of the bank have tall grassland with frequent false-oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), white campion (*Silene latifolia*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*). The grassland on the south-facing side of the bank is much more sparse, with patches of bare sandy ground. The most frequent grass species here is red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), with other plants including sand sedge (*Carex arenaria*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), creeping restharrow (*Ononis repens*), bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and small-flowered evening-primrose (*Oenothera cambrica*). In places the bank is overgrown by ivy (*Hedera helix*).

Hedges

The along Weston Road is thin and gappy, with sections dominated by bramble. Elsewhere it has small pollards and coppice growths of grey willow (*Salix cinerea*), osier (*Salix viminalis*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), green-leaved willow (*Salix x rubra*), white willow (*Salix alba*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

Rhynes

The rhyne close to the sluice has spiked water milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), Canadian pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*), fennel-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*), common duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and greater duckweed (*Spirodela polyrhiza*) with a narrow fringe of branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*).

The rhyne along Weston Road is now blind-ended and is heavily shaded by the adjacent hedge. Only very small lengths hold water and the only wetland plants remaining are common reed, yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*) and water figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*). Of these, only common reed is locally frequent.

Birds

The only species seen on the route of the main were blue tit, robin and dunnock in the hedge along Weston Road. Mallard and moorhen were present in the rhyne close to the sluices. Other species present in the wider area included grey heron, buzzard, redwing and skylark.

Invertebrates

Common darter dragonfly was seen on the rhyne close to the sluices. Field grasshopper and small copper butterfly were seen on the bank along Weston Road. The micro-moths *Stigmella aurella* and *Phyllonorycter corylifoliella* were recorded in the hedge along Weston Road.

Protected Species

No badger setts or other signs of badger activity were found.

No otter signs were seen along any of the rhynes.

No water vole burrows, or other signs of water vole activity, were seen along any of the rhynes.

Further details are given in the Assessment section below.

Data Search

The data provided includes a large number of records of notable plant and bird species from the dunes to the west of the site and from the estuary beyond. There are also several records of notable plants and invertebrates from rhynes in the wider area, although most of these date from before 1997.

The only protected species recorded in the area are badger and pipistrelle bat, the former in 1992 and the latter in 1960. Neither record is on or adjacent to the route of the proposed path.

ASSESSMENT

The nature conservation value of the various habitats along the route has been assessed in order to determine whether they are of nature conservation value in a national, regional or county context, are of either high or low value in a local context, or are of minimal nature conservation value. The assessment has used standard ecological criteria, including diversity, rarity, fragility and recreatability. Reference has been made to suitable guidance, including the UK and Somerset Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. The value

of groups not surveyed, such as most invertebrates, has been assessed using information gathered on the nature and structure of the habitats present.

Habitats

The bank along Weston Road supports a limited range of species indicative of unimproved grassland and sand dunes, both of which are BAP priority habitats. These include lady's bedstraw, creeping restharrow, bird's-foot trefoil and sand sedge. The last-named species has a very limited distribution in Somerset, although it is locally frequent along the coast. Although the presence of these species is of some significance the overall diversity of plants is not outstandingly high and all of the species recorded are present in much greater quantity on the nearby dunes. The open, sandy sward is likely to be of some value for invertebrates, although the scale of such interest will be limited by the small area of the habitat.

This area is of low nature conservation value in a local context.

The other small areas of grassland have been agriculturally improved and no plant species indicative of unimproved grassland or any BAP priority habitat are present. Intensive management means that none of the grasslands is likely to be of significant value for invertebrates.

The other grasslands are of minimal nature conservation value.

The rhyne along Weston Road no longer functions as a drainage channel as a consequence of earlier works and it only holds water seasonally. This, and the shade cast by the hedgerow, mean that it does not support wetland vegetation and it is unlikely to be of any significant value for invertebrates, birds or other animals.

The rhyne is of minimal nature conservation value.

The hedges is relatively species-poor, probably an indication that it has developed relatively recently as a consequence of neglect of the rhyne. It does, however, support a good diversity of willows, possibly as the result of planting, and those present include the rare hybrid green-leaved willow. This hybrid is present in other hedges locally. The hedge is gappy and thin and this relatively poor structure means that its interest for birds is limited.

The hedge is of low nature conservation value in a local context, but the presence of green-leaved willow is of some significance.

Protected Species

No indications were seen, either during the field survey or as a result of the data search, that any protected species is present in the area around the proposed working corridor.

There are no potential bat roosts within the potential working corridor. The hedge does not have significant potential as bat commuting routes.

The data search did not produce any records of amphibians and there are no potential habitats for these species within the working corridor.

The grasslands along the route are not suitable for reptiles. However, it is possible that there are populations of grass snake along the rhyne.

IMPACTS

The proposals would involve construction of a path alongside the rhyne close to the sluices, and removal of the habitat described along Weston Road.

Habitats

There would not be any significant ecological impact associated with works in the section close to the sluice.

There would be a moderate impact associated with loss of the grassland on the bank.

There would be a slight adverse impact associated with the loss of the hedge.

Protected Species

The only potential impact on protected species would be damage to any grass snakes using the hedge.

MITIGATION

The loss of grassland on the bank could be mitigated by creating a similar feature elsewhere by using the soil in the bank, or a similar substrate, to create an area of grassland. This grassland need not necessarily be on a bank, although this would be beneficial for invertebrates.

The loss of the hedge could be mitigated by replanting a hedge elsewhere. Willows take readily from sets and whips should be collected from the existing hedge and used to establish the new hedge.

The hedge is likely to be used by nesting birds and should therefore be removed during the period 1st September to 15th February. If this is not possible it should be checked for birds' nests before removal and if any are found then delays to works will be necessary.

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Wessex Ecological Consultancy

31st October 2013