

North Somerset Council are budgeting to spend a figure around £15,000 to complete this section of the Coast Path, which forms part of the 2,700 mile England Coast Path (ECP).

The first section in North Somerset was opened in North Somerset on 16<sup>th</sup> June between Sandy Bay and Breen Down Fort, a 13.4 mile section, which includes the 'Tidal Trail' from Uphill Beach Car Park.

There is a belief that an instant decision must be made about the surface of the route, or the funding will be lost. Although a decision needs to be made, it is important that the correct decision is arrived at which is best for all users in the long term and that the local community achieves the optimum benefit from the ECP.

There are two important considerations the Parish Council need to consider carefully:

### Surface

So often there is a default position of either a stone surface, or a sealed surface [tarmac based] which some argue 'urbanises' the rural countryside.

Undoubtedly the current route can be wet and subjected to waterlogging or flooding during wetter periods and can be rutted when dried out.

Stoning is a solution, but not necessarily the best one. It is easy to maintain, but its disadvantage is that it is hard and concussive. If a walker or cyclist falls on it, they are likely to hurt themselves, particularly if they are elderly. For horses the surface is concussive – continually walking or in particular, trotting on hard surfaces is not good for horses' feet.

Crushed rubber crumb [usually called by a trade name, Flexipave] is a surface which is used to great effect on recreational trails nationally as it is easy to install as it is poured, it is maintenance free and 'green' as it does not need to be produced by extracting stone – it is made out of recycled car tyres therefore saving carbon.

If this surface is installed it is better for people to walk on as it has a spring to it and is ideal for people with joint issues. It is completely porous, which allows water to pass through it, so cyclists do not get splashback. It is also nonslip, which is ideal for cycling, walking and horse riding. For equestrians it is superb to ride on as it is non concussive and does not harm either hooves or joints.

### Access Opportunities

The improvement of the trail allows for significant access opportunities for local equestrians.

There are 722 horse passports registered to addresses in the BS24 postcode area, with 25,247 registered in Somerset [Defra figures, 2021]

In 2020 there were 19 road incidents involving horses recorded by the BHS, and this figure rose to 81 in 2021. A fourfold rise, and the BHS estimate that only 10% of incidents get reported.

Around 20% of the Public Rights of Way network is open to horse riders.

Horses need safe off-road access and this provides an ideal opportunity to create a safe route to the Beach and to Breen. Because of the lack of bridleways in the area it will be to only place to canter a horse.

There is also the potential to negotiate the use of the concrete track from Purn to Purn Hill SSSI through Church Field. This route could be used as a permissive route when cattle are off the field.