



# MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

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PLA(21)09

## England Coast Path

### Opening up the Bawdsey to Felixstowe stretch via Melton

#### **Briefing note to councillors**

The consultation document describes the opening of the England Coast Path as a significant opportunity to improve public access to this beautiful stretch of coast, bringing benefits for residents and visitors alike.

A new statutory access route will be designated, including increased use of the river wall on the Melton side of the Deben and opening the lower track leading to Sutton Hoo and Ferry Cliff which has been closed off for many years.

Businesses and tourism are set to benefit and there will be a sustainable travel benefit with rail users alighting at Melton railway station to access the coast. There is an opportunity for us to link the coast path to the existing network of footpaths in Melton.

New signage is to be installed, such as finger posts and way-mark posts and there may be a requirement for access furniture such as pedestrian access gates.

#### **Higher Rights and Infrastructure Requirements**

The core objective of the legislation is to create a continuous and uninterrupted route for the public around the coastline in a cost-effective way. This means using the existing pedestrian access and the proposal is to align the trail round the Deben estuary, crossing at the Wilford Bridge and joining up with the river wall as far as Kyson Point.

The legislation makes provision for reduced liability for landowners and there is a “Roll-back” facility designed to future-proof the path by recognising that a continuous and sustainable trail cannot follow the same route year after year without damage and erosion and so there is provision for it to be moved inland if necessary.

There are specific challenges facing Melton because of numerous reported instances of cyclists using the footpath inappropriately and this new extensive access to the river path for open air recreation is likely to result in further conflicts between the needs of walkers and cyclists which will need to be mitigated.

A case in point is this extract from a resident's complaint given here:

*I am increasingly concerned by the significant increase in cyclists using the riverside footpath from Wilford Bridge to Kyson Point. Individuals and groups of cyclists often travelling at speed are a significant hazard to pedestrians both young and old. Much of the path edges are also becoming very cut up both by pedestrians but also by cyclists. When challenged the cyclists claim to not know it is a foot path or claim to have not seen any signage.*

*There appears to be a significant sense of entitlement by cyclists to use this footpath!*

*Unfortunately it is probably only a matter of time before a pedestrian is knocked down by these thoughtless individuals.*

**Melton Parish Council is invited to consider submitting a formal response to the consultation, suggested along the following lines:**

**Whilst MPC welcomes the open access to the continuous coast footpath and the opportunities provided by this new route through Melton for residents and visitors alike, there is a clear need for mitigation on behalf of walkers, as evidenced by numerous complaints.**

**MPC strongly recommends the use of additional signage and pedestrian access gates along the path specifically designed to deter cycling anywhere on the river wall and reminding users that it is a walking trail not a cycle path.**

**There will be a need for entry gates and repeater signs at all four main access points in Melton, namely Wilford Bridge, Melton Station, Dock Lane and at the Woodbridge end of the route near Lime Kiln Quay.**

Councillor Bryony Abbott, Melton Parish Council, January 2021