Brean Down: so tantalisingly close but so far from Weston
The Brean Cross Link

Ever since the Uphill Ferry closed in 1980 Brean Down has been cut off from Weston-super-Mare. From the beach it is tantalisingly close, just across a narrow strip of water at low tide but the whale back hill has been frustratingly beyond the reach of ramblers and cyclists. And in the other direction the holiday makers in the campsites at Brean have lost an easy access to the attractions of Weston.

The Brean Cross Sluice has always been a possible solution but lying as it does across the question of Somerset, Sedgemoor and North Somerset Councils’ interests. However this situation has changed from that latter has put in hand the opening up of a path across the Tutshill Sluices across the River Yeo further to the north to link Weston and Clevedon, North Somerset wishes to overcome the barrier of the Axe to the south as well. This document sets out to describe the route in sufficient detail for discussions to be put in train with the landowners along the route. Without their support the proposal is stillborn.

A Weston and Brean Path

It is five miles from the Pier at Weston to the Parish Hall and Beach at Brean – provided one walks or cycles over the Brean Cross Sluice. By road it is another 3 miles following a circuitous route along the Accommodation and Weston Roads – roads which are narrow and so heavily trafficked that walking or cycling along them is far from pleasant and indeed hardly possible for most people including families.

For residents in Warren Farm, Southfield Farm and Diamond Farm Campsites the only realistic way to reach Weston is by car. Indeed it would be hard for them to visualise walking or cycling because it has never been possible. Nonetheless the existence of a traffic free route from Brean to Weston, and one which was just 5 miles in length, so well within the range of even a novice cycling family, would undoubtedly be a considerable attraction for visitors to Brean and one can imagine that a Brean Cross Sluice Path would quickly become part of the normal holiday activities for Brean campers.

Similarly visitors in Weston could look forward to cycling around to Brean Down to appreciate a view they have only been able to see from a distance before.

Apart from one small rise at Walborough, the route proposed is level and large parts of it are in place. The promenade at Weston is open to cyclists now. The beach through to Uphill has the same firm sand as at Brean. The path over Walborough has a tarmac surface and stone farm tracks of varying degrees of repair lead through to the Sluice.

The main works required, apart from repairs, are to create a promenade along Uphill Road North by widening the footway into the tree belt alongside the Golf Course; rendering the Sluices itself suitable for the public to use; constructing a new path on Diamond and Southfield Farm lands to avoid the very busy Weston Road; and providing a brick or similar surface to the bridleway through to the beach. None of these works are cheap and once permissions have been agreed, and planning details approved, then this Weston and Brean Path would become a significant new initiative by Somerset, Sedgemoor and North Somerset Councils and also by the Parish Councils, Brean in particular.

The various lengths of the different section of the route are shown in the table here, whilst possible details of the works follow on the next few pages. Here we have drawn up the suggested arrangements for discussion with the critical landowners along the route, and anticipate that considerable changes are likely in order to meet their requirements and to hopefully secure their support.

Table of distances and types of path: Weston Pier Head to Brean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path Description</th>
<th>Distance (m)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Weston Promenade</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>No work required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Uphill Road North</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Existing footway widened by at least 2m to make a promenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Plantation and Common</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>New path winding through the area so as to allow the public to enjoy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Minor Roads through Uphill</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>These could be avoided by following along the beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Walborough Hill</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>A generally good tarmac path already signed for cyclists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Farm track to Wayacre Grove</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Some repairs are required to this stone path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Wayacre Grove</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>Tarmac road used for access to sewage treatment works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Farm track to Sluice</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>This needs repair all through and reconstruction over central sections 250m long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sluice crossing of Axe</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>This wide concrete crossing will need security fences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Diamond Farm Fields</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>A new path is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Southfield Farm Field and Warren Farm</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>A new path is required first in the field edge and then parallel to the road as shown in the sketches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The Dunes to the Beach</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>A Dutch style surface of interlocking brick would enable the windblown sand to be removed more easily. Once past this section of soft sand, one is on the hard beach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Length 8,900m Length of new path - 2,100m

This table simply sets out the scale of the project. If a route can be agreed then it would be reasonable to look to see the route completed and open by summer 2015.
Weston super Mare Promenade signed for cycling
Uphill Road North showing boundary wall to be removed, and space gained for 4 metre wide promenade

Weston Road Traffic
Bridlepath Link to the beach

On the beach looking towards Burnham

Start of path from Uphill to Brean Cross Sluice

See inset map above

The Brean Cross Link
Location Map
The Brean Cross Link Map 1

The overall project has a number of stages which are described in varying detail in the following pages of maps, photographs and sketches.

The route may be divided as follows:
- The promenade section on which there is already a cycle route so no further work is required on this wide space
- The Uphill Road North section from Royal Sands to Church Road, Uphill, where a promenade shared use path is required to continue through on existing minor roads in Uphill itself
- The long length of path from Uphill Way through to the Brean Cross Sluices over the River Axe, much of which is owned by Wessex Water with agreement for the route and the path in place although it needs repairs
- The sluice crossing owned by the Environment Agency
- And the final connection to Warren Road and the coast where a new construction to bypass the busy Weston Road is required. This section is detailed separately and is the subject of a planning application

Section from Marine Parade to Golf Club entrance
1. To create a ‘continuation’ of the promenade by make a dedicated route around the current hatched lines with raised crossings to the entry and exit to the beach car parks.
2. Past the storm gates there is limited space. It may be that the narrow (1m wide) footway on the south side of the road could be increased by a pavement extension requiring cars exiting from the beach to give way to oncoming traffic. This could be a white line on the existing flush block paving.
3. Widen the southern footway (1.6m) of Marine Parade and provide a raised crossing over the entrance to Royal Sands - see montage.
4. Widen the footway by 2m into the road. This will be at the expense of the width of the two, one metre wide cycle lanes which start a little to the south. This path should be planted with a line of avenue trees as shown in the sketch, and lighting columns placed on this alignment so as to create a clear unobstructed shared use path at least 3m wide against the eventual tree trunk. Note that at the junction with Marine Parade the extent of the central road hatching may need to be revised in order to allow space for the shared use pavement around the corner. If this is considered inadequate then one option would be to negotiate to reconstruct the high stone boundary wall to Royal Sands, setting it back on the corner by some 2m.
5. Provide raised crossing of entrance to Royal Sands with the appropriate markings for cyclists and vehicles to give way to each other.
6. Carefully take promenade across Golf Course entrance. The surfacing should indicate the continuity of the promenade.
7. Route continues by widening into the main road as far as the south end of the Golf Club car park.

View along promenade
The Weston-Super-Mare Golf Club section

1. Cross the Golf Club entrance with detailed paving showing the continuity of the promenade, and give way markings to slow down cyclists.
2. Plant trees tight against the wall at every fourth car park space corner to soften boundary.
3. Continue to gain space from the main road by removing the two one metre wide cycle lanes and moving the centre line of the road to the east.
4. Some 15m before the end of the stone wall cut back away from the road by fencing off 2m width from the woodland. Over the first 37.5m incorporate a car park keeping trees where possible. Fence at path edge with 1.8m high green weldmesh fence, and over a short section provide fence by 18th Green. Final details to be agreed on site. Move the ‘bash net’ to the southern end of this new car park where the 5m of ground under the net area could be a permeable plastic mesh rather than solid tarmac. Access to the 18th Green would be by way of the car park road.
5. Make link to promenade for cyclists travelling north along Uphill Road.
6. Remove scrub and up to six trees near the fence. Plant up gaps with poplar and evergreen oak to extend existing tree cover.
7. Behind bus stop and some apparatus, set fence back 3m so path can continue through. Move a total of four telecom posts to the back of the path. Plant avenue trees all through on the line of the existing lamp columns.
8. Incorporate provision for crossing the main road at two or more locations in order that local people can reach the promenade.
9. Fell overhanging trees which are potentially liable to fall on road.
10. Past the practice range reinforce the boundary with a hedge as well as a few trees to bridge the gap in the woodland strip.
11. Extend the gravel car park 2m to the west to compensate for the loss of its eastern edge by the new fence.
12. Cross the Club access track (Old Harbour Lane) footpath with a raised pavement.
13. Detail a connection to the existing cycling path on the south side of Uphill Road South.
**Cross-section through proposed carpark extension**

1. New position of boundary fence - green weldmesh fence 1.8m high
2. Plant evergreen honeysuckle behind fence to grow over it and create an attractive boundary
3. Maintain existing trees and scrub for a width of 2m
4. Finish car parking bays in bound gravel
5. Carpark access road to be finished in bitmac
6. Maintain a corridor of existing trees and scrub 2m wide
7. Erect new fence in netting 3m high, over 40m near 18th green
8. Existing lighting column to remain. Avenue trees to be planted on the same line at 10m centres
9. Uphill Road North
10. New Promenade 3m wide minimum between tree trunk and fence, for shared walking and cycling use

**Cross section showing path behind the bus shelter and new planting beside the fairway**

1. Bus shelter to remain
2. Fence veers 3m back to allow the promenade to pass behind the bus stop
3. Lamp posts to be moved back to just behind fence. A total of four posts
4. Existing woodland strip approximately 15m wide
5. Selective new planting to fill gaps in woodland at locations to be agreed with golf club. Trees to be similar to existing: spanish oaks, white poplar and pine
6. Grass through to fairway
The Plantation and Bluebell Field section through to Walborough Hill

1. The Plantation and Bluebell Field are managed by the Woodland Trust who would like the local community to lease and manage them. It may be that the Uphill Society would be willing to agree to take on the Bluebell Field, but not the woods.

2. The Bluebell Field was part of the parkland of Uphill Manor. It has traditionally not been open to the public but managed for its bluebells and grazed in the summer. Its western section has been invaded by blackberry and copses of scrub trees. Although it has retained its parkland aspect, set off by a background of large trees in the Plantation, the leylandii hedge boundary of the first house on Old Church Road rather jars with this idyll and the overall aspect of the Bluebell Field would be enhanced if this could be masked, or replaced with perhaps hawthorn or yew.

3. The main road, Uphill Road South, carries a great deal of traffic and the promenade from Weston does need to be continued as far as Old Church Road. This could either be done by repositioning the railings alongside the road to gain space, or to create a new path around the west side of the field. This would be preferable as it would be more attractive and it would create a lovely way for the public to enjoy the plantation and the view of the Bluebell Field on their daily journeys.

4. Extend footway onto plantation by 2m to continue the 4m wide promenade.

5. Reposition existing railings 2m into field and plant a number of beech trees as shown in the sketch.

6. Alternately take a way through the plantation, keeping clear of any mature trees and constructing past them on root mesh or similar cellular material.

7. Make a new path around the west side of the Bluebell Field, including a matching iron railing to separate the path from the field, clear out all the scrub and brambles and plant specimen trees as may be agreed with the Society. Infill the corner of the field behind the bend of the path with beech trees, and remove the fence to the plantation allowing public access there.

8. Plant around the boundary with beech trees or similar to mask the suburban nature of this background, and set the cattle drinking trough inside the new field boundary fence.

9. Cyclists and pedestrians then follow Old Church Road around to the seafront and the existing path up Walborough Hill. This section on Wessex Water land is covered on the next group of maps.
**Wessex Land**

**Map 3**

**Introduction to Wessex Water Section**

This section from the sluices to Uphill runs along tracks which are used for farm access. They are difficult to maintain as a consequence. Works involve reconstruction of surface to higher standard, hedging, and requesting that the farmer travels off the tracks in the adjacent fields where possible.
**Wessex Land**

**Map 4**

- **Use short section of road**
- **Existing locked gate to be maintained with 1.2m wide gap on west side. Surface through to connect with road**
- **New path to be constructed parallel to the road in space between two existing fences 5m**
- **Install 3.5m farm gate, locked, with 1.2m slot for access**
- **Plant hedge full length to define route and for conservation. Reconstruct track by taking up all stone, levelling base, installing Netlon fabric and reinforcement, relay stone and top up with 3 courses of additional stone**
- **View towards Uphill**
- **View of existing track showing poor conditions of low level section**
- **Field access into field from track. Harden up first 20m across soft ground**
- **Cars to reverse into parking bays in order that they have good views of walkers and cyclists**
Reconstruct this section of the track with new fabric and additional stone to ensure that the track is strong and dry.

Normal field to field access for wide equipment

Plant new hedge alongside track for wildlife and to maintain track for pedestrians and cyclists.

Maintain existing pond

The Old Wall track is in better condition as it is elevated and dry. Repair, regrade the stone, make up deficit and compact with a central camber.

Sketch A-A (not to scale) showing reconstruction of farm track over those areas where repairs will be insufficient

Recover any clean stone possible for reuse and compact a level sub-base of soil and remaining stone.

Compact earth shoulders sloping away from the road for drainage

Camber

4.0m wide layer of reinforced polypropylene fabric

300 - 400mm of compacted stone to make the farm road. Finish this 3.6m wide with a 50mm central camber. The finished road surface must be at least 150mm above the surrounding ground for drainage.

4.0m wide layer of reinforced polypropylene fabric

4.0m wide layer of reinforced polypropylene fabric

View of track looking towards sluices showing proposed boundary hedge

View of track to be repaired

See separate drawing to come for details across Brean Cross Sluices

The Diamond Farm connection

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1. Much of these farm access roads is in fairly good condition and simply needs repairing with compacted stone reconstructed to a good specification.

2. Existing ramp to the sluices.

3. This is the crucial crossing of the sluices. The section shows new security fencing either side of the existing concrete road way over the sluice structure. These fences may need to take the form of gates in order to allow speedy access to maintain the sluice as necessary.

4. Ramp straight ahead.

5. Run along the rhyne as shown in the section. Note that the Drainage Board will require access for maintaining the waterway. See detailed cross sections.

6. Arrange gates to provide easy farm access and use existing bridge.

7. Path to continue along the existing margin of land between the horse ring and the rhyne. Plant line of trees along existing boundary fence and in the triangular fragment of land near the road plant copse of trees.

8. Path to continue along in front of farm buildings. Plant creepers on barn walls and maintain hedges to just 1m above path level so as to keep good visibility.

8a. Links to campsites via existing bridges.

9. Across the current farmyard provide new fence to separate path and yard.

10. Cut back end shed by 3m to give space for path and so as to provide good visibility for the occasional farm vehicle to emerge from the original access site marked out by dropped kerbs in the highway.

11. Continue along field boundary, fencing path off from the agricultural land as required by the owner.

12. Residents of the adjacent campsite can gain access to the new path at this point where it goes into the field edge. Reposition new gate with field on new fence line.
The Brean Cross Link
Detail along Viewed Rhyne

1 Ramp straight ahead.
2 Run along the rhyne as shown in the section. Note that the Drainage Board will require access for maintaining the waterway. See the detailed cross section on page 13.
3 Arrange gates to provide easy farm access and use existing bridge.
4 Path to continue along the existing margin of land between the horse ring and the rhyne. Plant line of trees along existing boundary fence and in the triangular fragment of land near the road plant a copse of trees.

Cross rhyne via existing bridge and arrange farm gates appropriately

2.5m wide path

9m from top of bank

View of path running past Diamond Farm campsite on the way to Brean

Section 1-1
Proposed path along Viewed Rhyne

Note 1
this rhyne is cleared regularly so working access is required at all times. When work is in progress gates will be closed at either end and the public diverted through Diamond Farm campsite.

Note 2
The promoters of the Brean Cross Link Path Project - North Somerset Council - accept the responsibility of repairing any damage caused by the Drainage Board’s machinery.

Path to be reconstructed from 300mm stone minimum laid on reinforced filter fabric

At the times of occasional dredging the material to be spread in the field outside this field fence

9.0m

Path 9m from rhyne

View of path running past Diamond Farm campsite on the way to Brean

0 metres
100
200

Detailed section Revised April 2014

Path to be 9m away from rhyne

Line and direction of drainage
The Brean Cross Link
Map 7 Warren Farm & Southfield Farm

The Weston Road problem
There is no doubt that the Weston Road poses a particular problem which has been difficult to resolve. The options have always been as follows:

A. Remove central white line and paint two advisory walking and cycling lanes with logos both sides. Traffic would then give way to oncoming traffic if the lane were occupied.

B. The same as above but with a 2-way advisory lane on one side. This would give right of passage to one direction of traffic but with the other giving way if the walking/cycling route were occupied.

C. To culvert one side ditch or the other so as to gain a good 3m width of path. This would be best done on the Southfield Farm side for continuity.

D. To acquire a narrow strip of land one side or another to allow for a path to be set back. The sketch section here shows the agreed option on the Warren Farm side.

Points on the map
1. Shared use of existing footway approaching Warren Road
2. See section A-A for details.
3. Over the length of path as far as the car boot sale access gate, culvert the existing ditch, connect to each of the existing road drainage gulleys set in the existing kerb and carefully backfill to support the retained side of the road. Note the telephone poles may need to be realigned to run along just inside the campsite fence hard against the boundary. Also one or two electricity supply poles will need to be repositioned.
4. Remove the farm hedge and replace with new fence and hedge, culvert fragments of ditch.
5. Carefully detail across Turnbourne Farm entrance; these gates are already sufficiently set back.
6. Around this bend, dig the drain further back in the field so as to allow for improved support to the road and space for the path, as shown in the sketch.
7. Cross into the field edge and follow tight beside the existing vegetation to give some privacy against the cottage. Fence on the field side against livestock. Reposition field access gate to convenient spot in the new fence.
8. Continue along the field side of the hedging and trees leaving these all in place for an attractive path.

Options for providing for walkers and cyclists on the carriageway of Weston Road - by means of advisory lanes
- Option 1: Remove centre line
- Option 2: 3m wide, 2 way advisory and walking lane
- Option 3: 1.5m out from edge of road
- Option 4: Cyclist and walker logos at 50m centres (signs at either end warning of the arrangement)

Section A-A looking towards beach
- Plant standard trees at intervals to correspond to pitches
- Plant willow on campsite side of fence to grow through mesh to path side.
- Keep trimmed

Section B-B opposite campsite with ditch: see detailed section 3-3
- Remove bank of sand and construct path
- Extend kerbline
- Backfill with clean stone, lay 600 dia pipe to accurate fall, connect existing gulleys, backfill and construct path

Section C-C looking towards Diamond Farm
- View of Warren Farm campsite showing the space to be gained by moving the fence back by approximately 2m
- Existing trees overhanging drain to be left
- 2.5m wide path running along a 3.5m wide space between fields
- New field fence with sheep netting and barbed wire

Section AA looking towards the Sluices - section of bank to be removed for the path

Section BB showing piled edge to ditch and space to campsite fence

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Plan showing the line of the proposed path described in these notes, together with the possible route of a future coastal footpath from Brean to Weston-Super-Mare
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 rhynes 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 hedge along Weston Road is thin and gappy, with sections dominated by bramble. Elsewhere it has small pollards and coppice growths of grey sallow (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 hedge 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 rhynes.

**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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