

Agenda Item Introduction

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION
Date	2 MAY 2024
Topic	COASTAL PATH MAINTENANCE AND BEACH ACCESS

1. Background

- 1.1 The committee requested a review of the delivery of the agreed budget that relates to coastal path maintenance and beach access.

2. Focus for Scrutiny

- To receive background information on how funding for the Coastal path is made up – i.e. Central Government Funding, Regional funding, IOW Council funding, any other if relevant
- To receive a breakdown on how funding has been spent across the coastal areas of the Island
- Identification of any spend not for construction or maintenance of footpaths
- Identification of forward projects and budget estimates
- To understand the link with the Shoreline Management policy

3. Document(s) Attached

- 3.1 PRoW Response to Scrutiny
3.2 Appendix 1: KING CHARLES III ENGLAND COAST PATH
3.3 Appendix 2: Public Rights of Way Network: Flooding/Storm Coastal Damage Oct-Dec 2023
3.4 Appendix 3: Photographs of completed works in support of grant claim

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY

RESPONSE TO FOCUS FOR SCRUTINY

TOPIC	Coastal Path Maintenance and Beach Access
PROPOSED COMMITTEE DATE	4 January 2024
BACKGROUND	To review the delivery of the agreed budget that relates to coastal path maintenance and beach access.
FOCUS FOR SCRUTINY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To receive background information on how funding for the Coastal path is made up – i.e. Central Government Funding, Regional funding, IOW Council funding, any other if relevant• To receive a breakdown on how funding has been spent across the coastal areas of the Island• Identification of any spend not for construction or maintenance of footpaths• Identification of forward projects and budget estimates• Does this tie in with the Shoreline Management policy?
RESPONSE (Introduction, context and limitations)	<p>The Public Rights of Way Service is prescribed by statutory duties to record, maintain and protect the 530 mile network of public rights of way recorded on the definitive map.</p> <p>A coastal path route for the Island is believed to have been devised in the 1960s (the earliest known map/guide was published in 1973). This route is along public rights of way, the adopted highway network and other IWC owned land/assets.</p> <p>The Service is responsible for approximately 58 access points/paths (recorded on the definitive map) to the beach/shore.</p> <p>This response does not relate to numerous beach accesses which are not recorded on the definitive map (e.g. steps built into coastal sea wall defences and temporary/portable timber beach access steps provided in the summer at locations such as Sandown and Appley beaches). This information will need to be provided by Commercial and Coastal Services, if required.</p> <p>The Committee will be aware of the extensive cliff erosion and landslides which have occurred as a result of storms Babet and Ciaran and continuing wet weather, and most notably the extensive damage at Bonchurch landslip on 10 December 2023. Due to the sheer extent of wet weather and this occurring so early in the winter season, further landslides, cliff erosion and resulting path closures is inevitable.</p> <p>This paper will include a summary of the current position of the King Charles III England Coast Path scheme (ECP) (see Appendix 1).</p> <p>Unless the ECP aligns along a beach and thus uses a beach access (which is uncommon) then the ECP scheme does not provide for the repair or improvement of such accesses and liability for improvement and repairs for the vast majority (circa 58) remains solely with the</p>

	<p>Council.</p> <p>The existing coastal path, ECP and beach accesses are important for Island residents and visitors and support health and wellbeing. They are beneficial to the tourist industry and the Island economy and support the image which the Island projects of being a leading location for coastal living and holidaying.</p>
<p>Funding and Spend</p>	<p>Maintenance of the public rights of way network (including the current promoted coastal path route) is funded corporately by way of a revenue budget. As of 2023/24 a contractors and materials budget totalling £31,219 was provided to maintain the entire 530 mile network. In addition, the Service has historically been provided with an annual “core” capital budget in the region of £100k per annum to carry out specific improvement schemes and to continue the signage programme. Occasionally, the Service benefits from S106 funding to improve specific coast paths/locations. The current coastal path route (definitive map sections) and all definitive map beach accesses are required to be funded from these three sources.</p> <p>Formation of the ECP route is funded by DEFRA by way of an establishment grant. All necessary works to form ECP are 100% funded (with no match funding required). However, a Local Authority is expected to deliver establishment and a 10% project management fee can be claimed.</p> <p>In addition, Council time in supporting NE with the scheme (prior to opening) is funded by way of a Planning Grant.</p> <p>To date the Council has benefited from an establishment grant in the sum of £214,031 to deliver the majority of the works on stretches 4 and 5 (Binnel Bay to Colwell Chine) of the ECP. This includes a 10% management fee. Appendix A summaries the ECP scheme and provides further information on the funding associated with it.</p>
<p>Forward projects and budget estimates</p>	<p>See Appendix 1 for ECP.</p> <p>Appendix 2 sets out the current coastal path and beach access closures as a result of recent and historic coastal erosion and landslips. Most of these are recent. Accordingly, the full extent of the damage will not be known until after the end of the winter season when ground conditions usually begin to stabilise. The timescale for reopening (if possible) and estimates are therefore highly speculative.</p>
<p>Shoreline Management Plan</p>	<p>There is no direct “tie in” between Public Rights of Way, the England Coast Path and the Shoreline Management Plan. The surfaces of existing public rights of way recorded on the definitive map are statutorily bound to be maintained and remain open so long as the land over which they run physically exist. Generally, there is no duty to maintain or restore land over which a public right of way runs in the event of it being destroyed by natural causes.</p> <p>The ECP scheme will have regard for policy and plans relating to the coast, but the legislation relating to ECP does not provide for construction or maintenance of coastal defences and in the event of the route being lost to coastal erosion the “roll back” and modification</p>

	provisions will be engaged (see Appendix 1).
Conclusions	<p>ECP: Following completion of establishment works and stretches being formally opened a resource issue will need to be resolved in order that the route (being a National Trail required to be maintained to a high standard) can remain a success on the Island, supporting both the rural and tourist economies. Limited maintenance funding is currently granted by DEFRA but has to be matched funded by the Access Authority. A dedicated England Coast Officer is recommended to monitor and manage ECP on the Island in order to effectively drawdown maintenance funding from DEFRA, oversee repairs, deal with “roll back” and modification processes and project manage route changes. Formation and the running of an ECP Trail Partnership will also be essential. There is no capacity within the Service at current staff levels to take on these additional duties or for match funding to be found from existing budgets. Additional resource was identified as being required at the time the Council requested for the Island to be included in the ECP scheme (see Appendix 1).</p> <p>Beach Accesses: Recent storms and resulting path closures (see Appendix 2) highlights the continuing liability and high cost for the Council to repair, maintain and keep open beach accesses recorded on the definitive map. This is likely to be a continuing and indefinite trend and additional resource is required to maintain and reopen these paths (when physically possible) in a timely fashion.</p>