

## Exmoor Local Access Forum 1 August 2006

### South West Coast Path routes

Following the last LAF meeting I was asked to investigate further the proposed alternative routes to the coast path at Culbone wood and Greenaleigh farm. I have set out below my thoughts and findings for both the existing routes and the new proposals.

#### Culbone wood

##### Existing route

##### Positives;

- A good wide easily accessible track
- Well maintained with easy to open gates
- Route passes a B & B
- Many more views of the Bristol Channel
- Easy to follow and well signed
- Passes through interesting farming landscapes

##### Negatives;

- Muddy areas during wet spells
- Possible encounters with working farm machinery
- Dogs to be kept on leads for long stretches while passing through fields with livestock
- Feel a long way from the sea, couldn't hear the waves
- An approximately 500 foot ascent and then decent to reach the same points
- Numerous farm gates to open and close
- More exposed to the weather conditions
- Approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile longer

##### Proposed new route

##### Positives;

- Follows roughly the same contour, no large climbs
- Sheltered from the weather conditions
- Feel closer to the sea, could hear the waves
- Good quality path throughout
- No gates to open or close giving uninterrupted walking
- Approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile shorter
- A feeling of remoteness and wildness
- An easy to follow route
- Greater chance of seeing more diverse wildlife

##### Negatives;

- Few sightings of the Bristol Channel
- A danger of landslips
- Possible higher maintenance levels from path slippage and fallen trees
- Long stretches of path not easily accessible with machinery for maintenance

## **Minehead to North Hill**

### **Existing route**

#### **Positives;**

- A good well maintained path
- Well signposted and easy to follow
- After initial steep climb path then levels out and climbs gently to North Hill
- Once off of tarmac it is a pleasant walk through open woodland

#### **Negatives;**

- Very urbanised with long stretches of tarmac for first ½ mile
- Immediately faced with a long steep zigzag climb
- Very few views of the sea until quite high up
- Climbing away from the sea for first 2 miles

### **Proposed new route**

#### **Positives;**

- Nice level walk for first ¾ mile
- Path runs very close to the sea for first ¾ mile
- As you climb through the woods you are much closer to the sea
- Many sightings and sounds of the sea as you climb through the woods
- After 5 minutes walking you enter open woodland and on natural paths
- Easy to signpost along existing public rights of way
- Passes the harbour and lifeboat station

#### **Negatives;**

- A very urbanised start along a tarmac path on the edge of a busy road
- Steeper more direct climbs through woodland
- Route passes within close proximity to Greenaleigh Farm
- Some path improvements needed on the section near the farm

### **Extension through Burgundy and Bramble combe of the proposed new route**

I feel that this is not really a viable option. To make a new route through this area would be at considerable cost both financially and to the environment. It would involve using a mini digger to push out a brand new path which gently climbs up around the hill only to then meet the existing coast path route higher up. It would also mean the clearing of some trees and removal of established heathland vegetation. The only small gain would be that the coast path would be slightly closer to the sea. The gain does not warrant the damage which would be caused to the area by the path.

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