

Report to: Lead Member for Transport & Environment

Date of meeting: 14 March 2022

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Formation of a South East Coast Path National Trail Partnership

Purpose: To seek approval for the establishment of a National Trail Partnership to manage the South-East England Coast Path

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the establishment of a National Trail Partnership to manage the South-East England Coast Path; and**
- (2) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to approve any related Inter Authority Agreement in conjunction with the Assistant Chief Executive and the appointment of an appropriate officer to the Partnership.**

1 Background Information

1.1 In 2009, the Government announced its intention to create a new continuous National Trail known as the England Coast Path (ECP) (See Plan 2 – Appendix 2) Once in place, the ECP will be a 2,795 mile (4,500 kilometre) walking route around the English coast.

1.2 Natural England (NE) is working with Access Authorities (usually County, City or Borough Councils) to design and deliver the ECP in their authority areas.

1.3 In East Sussex, the Shoreham-Eastbourne stretch of the ECP is expected to open in 2022. The Eastbourne-Camber stretch is anticipated to open during 2023/24.

1.4 NE provides each Access Authority with grants to fund the planning and implementation of the ECP. Once the Trail is open, the Access Authority becomes responsible for ongoing maintenance, monitoring and promotion. At that stage, NE provides annual trail maintenance funding to each Access Authority. The amount of funding allocated to each authority is based on a standard formula which takes account of the length of trail and other relevant factors.

1.5 It is proposed to establish a Trail Partnership between the five Access Authorities involved in the south-eastern section of the England Coast Path (SE ECP – see Plan 1 – Appendix 1) The section would be called the London to Brighton Coast Path.

1.6 East Sussex County Council, Medway Council, Kent County Council, South Downs National Park Authority and Brighton & Hove City Council are the five Access Authorities involved in managing the SE ECP and would form the proposed Partnership.

2 Supporting Information

2.1 A Trail Partnership to manage the SE ECP is considered necessary for the following reasons:

- a) Natural England's preferred model for ongoing management of a National Trail is that it is managed locally through a strategic trail partnership and that a trail manager is appointed. The activity of the trail manager is then managed by a

steering group comprised of representatives of the partner organisations - in this case the five Access Authorities

- b) The creation of a Trail Partnership enables NE to provide an additional 40% funding for trail management. This additional funding is on top of that which each Authority would receive individually and acts as a financial incentive for Local Authorities to set up strategic partnerships
- c) The proposed partnership members all share the view that the five authorities need to work together to manage the 250-mile London to Brighton stretch, running from Medway to Shoreham. This will achieve economies of scale and should allow a pooling of the NE funding, which is relatively small-scale on an individual authority basis
- d) The set-up of a partnership would enable the creation and funding of a trail manager post, likely to be hosted by ESCC. This would provide much-needed capacity across the five authorities. The trail manager acts as a single point of contact, a figurehead and champion for the trail. They would lead on the maintenance and promotion of the trail as well as the annual funding bids and monitoring required by NE. The partnership also has the potential to bring in a diverse range of organisations and opportunities to access skills and funding
- e) ESCC is already a member of the South Downs Way National Trail Partnership, along with the SDNPA, West Sussex County Council and Hampshire County Council, so has experience of this management arrangement. ESCC's experience in respect of the management of the South Downs Way National Trail is that this model works effectively and is the only realistic option within the current NE funding framework
- f) The Trail Partnership will consist of a relevant officer from each respective Access Authority and will be facilitated by the trail manager. The trail manager will be recruited and appointed by the Trail Partnership in 2022/23
- g) Financial information: NE have indicated that their 2022/23 funding contribution for the London to Brighton Coast Path would be £77k. In 2023/24, NE funding would increase to £123k as more stretches of the Trail open. To obtain this funding, the Trail Partnership is required to contribute 25% match-funding. Based on NE's funding projections, and the lengths of ECP in each authority area, ESCC would be expected to contribute annual match-funding of around £3k. There is existing budget available to contribute this match-funding
- h) The formation of a Partnership has also been supported by members of the East Sussex Local Access Forum, an independent statutory group of countryside access experts which provides advice to the County Council

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 As detailed above in Section 2, Lead Member is recommended to approve the establishment of a National Trail Partnership to manage the South-East England Coast Path.

3.2 It is recommended to delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to approve any related Inter Authority Agreement in conjunction with the Assistant Chief Executive and the appointment of an appropriate officer to the Partnership.

RUPERT CLUBB
Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Sam Adeniji	Seaford North
Councillor Matthew Beaver	Maze Hill & West St.Leonards
Councillor Chris Collier	Peacehaven
Councillor Godfrey Daniel	Braybrooke & Castle
Councillor Penny di Cara	Sovereign
Councillor Nuala Geary	Bexhill West
Councillor Keith Glazier	Rye & Eastern Rother
Councillor Alan Hay	Baird & Ore
Councillor Julia Hilton	Old Hastings & Tressell
Councillor Ian Hollidge	Bexhill South
Councillor Stephen Holt	Devonshire
Councillor Carolyn Lambert	Seaford South
Councillor Tom Liddiard	Pevensy & Stone Cross
Councillor James MacCleary	Newhaven & Bishopstone
Councillor Carl Maynard	Brede Valley & Marsham
Councillor Christine Robinson	Telscombe
Councillor Stephen Shing	Willingdon & South Downs
Councillor Barry Taylor	Meads
Councillor Trevor Webb	Central St.Leonards & Gensing

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None