

## *Appendix O: Exe Estuary Trail (EET)*

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Developed by Devon County Council as part of the National Cycle Network, the Exe Estuary Trail (EET) has brought social and economic benefits to Lympstone village and the wider community. These include improved recreation and travel opportunities for villagers and increased business for shops and pubs. However, empirical evidence, gathered during the LNP consultation, shows the primary concern of Lympstone parishioners to be the negative effects of the Exe Estuary Trail (EET) route through the centre of Lympstone. This concern includes the increased safety risk and stress to pedestrians, especially the elderly and children, the increased risk of cycle/vehicle collisions and the impact on community life. This is due to the huge number of cyclists using the Trail for leisure, sport and commuting purposes<sup>(1)</sup>.

Many residents have experienced incidents and near misses involving cyclists, and there is a widely held view that use of the village roads as the primary route for the EET is unsuitable and unsafe. The risks are particularly high in Lympstone because: (1) the narrow roads through the village include steep hills and blind bends, (2) some sections are single track with no pavements, (3) many residents' front doors open directly on to the road and (4) high pedestrian movement in and out of the village facilities, including the pubs, café, shop and Post Office.

At the initial village meeting on 18 April 2012 to get suggestions on the content of the Neighbourhood Plan there was divided opinion, with a debate between those who saw the EET as 'the best thing to happen to the village' and those who saw it as 'the worst'. This division of opinion was replicated at the Infrastructure Focus Group on 3 July 2012 which discussed a number of potential solutions to the problem.

Responses to the formal consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan showed strong support for the EET to be routed alongside the railway line from Lympstone Village Station to Sowden End Bridge, improving public safety and increasing the opportunity for sustainable commuting on the EET. Of the 110 LNP responses from individuals, 49 expressed concern about the Trail alignment as it is, the majority suggesting it passes alongside the railway line.

These responses supported the findings of a survey conducted by village residents in October 2011<sup>(2)</sup> in which all 70 respondents expressed concern about the safety risks of the EET

Public perception through LNP consultation has identified any risk to public safety in the village centre is likely to increase as cyclist and pedestrian traffic increases, when the EET is completed and promoted by DCC. In addition, concern remains regarding the increasing number of cars that bring cyclists and bikes to Underhill Car Park in order to access the EET, limiting residential usage. It is important to remember that many people using the Trail do not wish to stop in Lympstone. They would much prefer to continue past the village, without having to negotiate at their own risk, Lympstone village centre life and activities.

During the EET consultation stage in 2005, consideration was given to routing the Trail along the railway line with clear access points to the village centre. This would have enabled cyclists, joggers and walkers to pass by the village, while residents and visitors wishing to enter could do so easily without danger. This was considered technically feasible and recommended by Lympstone Parish Council. Unfortunately this safer and more sustainable option was not adopted by Devon County Council.

For these reasons, Lympstone Parish Council will:

- Lobby, discuss, plan and secure with DCC, Sustrans, Network Rail and other parties an alternative route for the EET alongside the railway line from Lympstone Village Station to Sowden End Bridge.

- Work with DCC to provide better traffic management on The Strand, Cox's Hill and at Sowden End.

Where support and funding are available for safer and sustainable travel, these must be identified and utilised effectively to facilitate the realignment of the EET from Lympstone Village Station to Sowden End Bridge, alongside the railway line. All Lympstone councillors (parish, district and county) must work together to achieve this primary objective.

### **Next steps**

1. In the view of the Working Party, it would be very helpful if those residents concerned about this issue established a more formal group. This would be able to seek funding from the Parish Council, and have a place at the table in future discussions.
2. The Working Party recommend that the Parish Council call a timely meeting with the parties mentioned above with the purpose of ensuring that DCC and other parties are aware of the parishioners' views and to establish the facts.
3. These might include whether any of the options originally proposed are still viable, what data and information has been collected to date, what further data is available, identification of potential funding sources for rerouting and mitigation measures.
4. The meeting should also consider any learning from areas where a similar situation has been resolved.
5. The meeting should also consider the suggestions for mitigation methods expressed at the initial village meeting and focus group described above.
6. It is anticipated that the meeting would result in a clear action plan that might include a more extensive survey, risk assessment and cost benefit analysis of different options.
7. The action plan should be based upon all parties working constructively together to address a situation that is of mutual concern, the resolution of which will bring mutual benefits.
8. The Parish Council should consider liaising with Woodbury Parish Council who face similar issues where the EET passes through Exton.
9. Throughout the process the Parish Council should take responsibility for ensuring that the views of all local residents and interested parties are taken into account in any decisions, including those concerned about the potentially adverse impact of rerouting or mitigation measures. This should include residents of Underhill Close, ALRUG, and local businesses if appropriate.
10. The Parish Council should also take responsibility for ensuring the timely provision of information to the parish about progress towards achieving this NP objective (RL to reference when numbering complete)

### **Notes:**

- (1) *Early numbers recorded using the Exe Estuary Trail have been in the region of 200,000 a year, but this has at least doubled more recently and the number is likely to increase considerably as the population of Exeter and surrounding area grows, other cycle routes are linked into the Trail, and it is widely promoted throughout the UK.*