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REPORT TO: Members' Library Service

MEETING DATE:

BY: Depute Chief Executive – Partnerships and Community Services

SUBJECT: North Sea Cycle Route – Proposed Works at Whitekirk

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise Members of proposed works at Whitekirk as part of the North Sea Cycle Route. While responsibility for the works is delegated to Council officers, there has been significant public interest generated and consultation undertaken, particularly in relation to the proposal to provide alternative surfaces on a section of the path known locally as Becky's Strip. This report seeks to provide Members with an awareness of the proposal.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members note the content of this report and the works to be undertaken.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The North Sea Cycle Route (NSCR) was officially opened in June 2001 and comprises a 6,000km route around the coasts of the eight countries bordering the North Sea. The Council contributed to the cost of developing the route, however as there were only sufficient funds for signing, the current route follows the existing National Cycle Route 1 (NCN1) between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Edinburgh via Galashiels. At that time there was not a suitable route around the East Lothian coast to sign as the NSCR. Between Dalkeith and Edinburgh, NCN1 enters East Lothian and runs through Whitecraig and Musselburgh, a distance of some 6km.
- 3.2 It has been a long standing aspiration of the Council (and also Scottish Borders Council) to route the NSCR around its coast which would link the various coastal settlements and provide an attractive route for cyclists

and other users and generate economic activity at businesses along the route. From 2007 to 2009 a route was signed northwards from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Cockburnspath. Following the introduction of a new link between Dunglass and Torness, the route entered East Lothian linking with the NCN76 (Round the Forth Route) at Dunbar through East Lothian via East Linton, Haddington, Longniddry and onwards to St Andrews via Stirling.

3.3 In 2008 the Council commissioned a consultant to carry out a feasibility study into the routing of the NSCR around the East Lothian coast and subsequent implementation of recommendations. Sustrans, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity which promotes active travel and aims to reduce the environmental and resource impacts of transport, co-funded the study.

3.4 Consultations were held with a wide range of people and organisations including two workshops, one for Community Councils and ELC Members and the second for members of the East Lothian Cycle Forum.

3.5 The Consultant's report had a vision for the NSCR in East Lothian:

“The North Sea Cycle Route in East Lothian will comprise a continuous cycle route in the vicinity of East Lothian's coast, which encourages local residents and visitors to cycle, and to appreciate and enjoy East Lothian's coastal landscapes, natural and cultural heritage, and settlements. Much of the route will be available for use by walkers, cyclists and, where practical and sustainable, by horse riders and all-abilities users, for recreation, tourism and trips to work, school, etc. The cycle route will achieve social, economic and environmental benefits, through high quality cycling provision and effective marketing”.

3.6 The final report identified a proposed route around the East Lothian coast from the western boundary at Musselburgh via North Berwick to its eastern boundary at Dunglass (Appendix A) together with a number of potential links to other cycle tracks, the surrounding minor road network and visitor attractions. The proposed route would be constructed to an appropriate standard to attract a wide range of users and abilities including:

- Competent children (12 years and above), cycling unaccompanied
- Family groups with younger, supervised children

3.7 The route will be used for both long-distance rides and shorter circular rides within East Lothian. In selecting the route the criteria for the National Cycle Network routes was applied for directness – however “sections of a route may not follow the most direct route to take advantage of a route which may pose less hazards to less confident cyclists and children”.

3.8 In the report at Section C, the North Berwick to Dunbar Appraisal Summary, the consultant's recommended route from North Berwick to

Dunbar that met the criteria and provided “a continuous and relatively direct, safe, attractive and comfortable countryside route – was by shared use footways from east of North Berwick, on quieter country roads, rights of way and farm tracks to Tynemouth via Whitekirk” – (Appendices B and C).

- 3.9 This section of the route at Whitekirk was shown to follow a right of way/core path between Whitekirk and Gleghornie Farm Road, a distance of 1430metres (Appendix D).
- 3.10 This path, known locally as ‘Becky’s Strip’, was in the 15th century a section of the main road from Whitekirk to North Berwick, used by pilgrim travellers. With the construction of a connecting coastal road in the late 18th century the ‘Becky’s Strip’ route was less favoured by travellers and by the early 20th century the road did not fall into a ‘maintained’ road category, with the preferred routes being the A198 coast road and the C136 inland route passing Redside and Leuchie House. The path is now identified as Route number 74 in the East Lothian Core Path Plan.
- 3.11 Currently the path surface (approximately 3.5 to 4m wide throughout), is covered in grass, undulating, and rutted in small sections by agricultural vehicle use. According to the landowner(s) there are areas that are affected seasonally from poor rain water drainage. Some sections are also bounded by hedges, overgrown trees and open fields. The path is used by walkers, equestrian users and is suitable for off road cycling. The NSCR 2009 report recommended surface improvements using whindust incorporated into the path design and as a general path design guide, considerations where appropriate were also given to a separate soft surface (e.g. grass, sand) bridle path in parallel with the shared pedestrian/cycle route – especially where a whindust or gravel path may be damaged by horses (Appendices E, F and G).
- 3.12 This route is also part of the proposed cycling option for the Central Scotland Green Network/Scottish National Heritage John Muir Way opening on 21st April, 2014. This new long distance route will be signed from Helensburgh to Dunbar and will provide a global focus on Scotland and John Muir to market walking and cycling to encourage people to stay in East Lothian with the potential for significant economic benefits.
- 3.13 The NSCR report approved by Cabinet in October 2010 included a number of recommendations together with a detailed costed implementation programme amounting to £1.6 million spread over a 10 year period.
- 3.14 At that time discussions were taking place to identify funding and Sustrans had indicated that they were keen to assist in progressing the route and would welcome bids for match funding to complete sections of the route.

3.15 In a parallel study to the NSCR, in 2009 the East Lothian Coastal Tourism Strategy was produced in which cycling and the NSCR was integral. Extract :

- *P2.4 Promote path and cycle networks through the core path plan and adopt a consistent approach to signage*
- *P2.6 Establish & Promote the North Sea Cycle Route*
- *P2.8 Encourage & businesses into accreditation schemes like GTBS and Walkers and Cyclists Welcome*

3.16 More recent Council strategy documents and external organisation reports continue to support the focus on improving cycling routes and facilities for economic benefit with the following extracts:

East Lothian Economic Development Strategy 2012-12 vision:

In 2020 East Lothian will have a dynamic and flourishing economy with our citizens proud to live, learn work and play in East Lothian. SO2: To be Scotland's leading coastal, leisure and food & drink destination – There are untapped opportunities around wildlife, coast, cycling and walking tourism – which resonates with East Lothian's sustainability aims.

Transform Scotland – June 2013 Report – *The Value of Cycle Tourism in Scotland states: leisure and touring by visitors and residents nets as much as £239m annually.*

Sustrans Scottish Government Grant 2012-2015 – First Interim Report: *Value of leisure cycling and cycle tourism in Scotland is £168m*

Scottish National Heritage – John Muir Coast to Coast Trail – Economic Benefit Study 2012 – *estimated potential £2.9m in year one and over 5 years £27.2m.*

3.17 As a consequence of the NSCR report, successful funding applications by East Lothian were made to Sustrans Community Links Fund and also Scottish National Heritage to progress these surface improvements at the right of way path known locally as Becky's Strip.

3.18 In early October 2013, notices of planned works were posted on and nearby the access routes to the path. This generated a high degree of local interest both through correspondence and local media with the main claim that there had been no consultation on the path surface changes and that the proposed soil stabilised surface was not acceptable to equestrian users. The Council decided to postpone the works due to commence on 10th October, to allow comprehensive local consultation to take place.

- 3.19 As a consequence, council officers engaged with a range of local and national organisations who could provide expert guidance and advice to assist in identifying a way forward and primarily an alternative surface to the 'soil stabilised' option, to address the equestrian users concerns.
- 3.20 The following national organisations and local bodies were involved in the consultation process:
- British Horse Society
 - Scottish Endurance Riding Club
 - Paths for All
 - Ramblers Scotland
 - Sustrans
 - Seacliff Equestrian Endurance Event organisers (*annual event takes place on sections of the path*)
 - Cycling Scotland
 - East Lothian Cycle Forum
 - Dunpender Community Council
 - East Lothian Local Access Forum
 - Beyond Boundaries East Lothian (cycling for persons with disabilities)
- 3.21 Discussions and meetings took place with representatives of all the aforesaid organisations and groups, in particular the British Horse Society and Scottish Endurance Riding Club, who were very supportive of the Council and who proposed a path design and recommended surface option using a material called 'Toptrec' which cyclists and the other user groups could use at this location. 'Toptrec' had been used at other locations in Scotland where walking/cycling/horse users shared the same surface and had met with approval (Appendix H).
- 3.22 The BHS/SERC proposal was acceptable to the Council, their funding partners Sustrans & SNH and also the landowners who would use their agricultural machinery on path sections. The proposals and path design were presented at meetings of both Dunpender Community Council and East Lothian Local Access Forum. The design and surface proposal met with their approval, although the local ELLAF equestrian representative expressed reservations about any change to the existing surface.
- 3.23 The section used by vehicles would have a 1.5metre wide 'Toptrec' path in the middle of the grass track leaving approximately 1 metre of grass either side for horse riding. The agricultural vehicles would straddle the 'Toptrec' and use the grass either side (Appendix I).

- 3.24 Where this is no vehicle use there would be 1.5metre wide 'Toptrec' path set to one side, parallel with approximately 2.5 metre wide existing grass path (Appendix J).
- 3.25 A public meeting was arranged for 28th January 2014 at Whitekirk Golf & Country Club to provide local users and members of the public the opportunity to discuss the proposed use and options for surface changes. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Jim Goodfellow and comprised of a presentation by a council officer on the background and the reasons why the path had been identified for surface improvements, the proposed path design and the benefits. A question and answer session followed.
- 3.26 Around 78 people attended the meeting, including Councillors David Berry and Norman Hampshire, along with representatives from Sustrans, British Horse Society and Scottish Endurance Riders Club. The landowners indicated that the proposed works, in particular on the path section where there is vehicular use, should ideally take place in February to take account of their crop management. The proposed works will take approximately 2 weeks to complete. Throughout the meeting, there was vociferous commentary and discussion about the suitability of the proposed path with a number of those present suggesting that the path be left alone, while others, including the British Horse Society, Scottish Endurance Riding Club and Sustran supported the proposed design. Following the Q & A session, the Chair requested a show of hands which resulted in 19 in favour and 34 against the proposal. The Chair closed the meeting informing those present that the views of all concerned would be considered in coming to a decision.
- 3.28 Following the meeting, the Council received a further 15 e mails, 10 of those in support of the work.
- 3.29 Following the consultation process with the various organisations and local bodies identified in 3.20, together with the comments made at the public meeting and subsequent written communication, officers consider that the proposed 'Toptrec' path offers the best compromise solution while appreciating the various concerns raised throughout the consultation process.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposal ties in with a number of Council policy initiatives including promoting physical activity, tourism and sustainable transport.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and no negative impacts have been found.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – A tender for the path works has been submitted for £103,875.
Sustrans are contributing £75k grant which is only available for the current financial year 2013/14
Scottish National Heritage are contributing £15k grant which is only available for the current financial year 2013/14.
East Lothian Council will provide the balance, currently £13,875
- 6.2 Personnel - The proposed works will be supervised by existing staff as part of their current duties
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 2009 North Sea Cycle Route (National Route 76) in East Lothian: Feasibility Study
- 7.2 East Lothian Core Path Plan
- 7.3 East Lothian Council Coastal Tourism Strategy 2009
- 7.4 North Sea Cycle Route through East Lothian, Feasibility Study: Report to Cabinet 14th September 2010
- 7.5 East Lothian Council Economic Development Strategy 2012-22
- 7.6 Scottish National Heritage – John Muir Coast to Coast Trail, Economic Benefit Study 2012
- 7.7 Transform Scotland, The Value of Cycle Tourism June 2013
- 7.8 Sustrans Scotland: Walking and cycling Outcomes, Scottish Government Grant 2012 -15 First Interim Report September 2013

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DATE	5/02/2014

Appendix B

EXTRACT FROM PETER SCOTT'S REPORT 2009 Page 15

C. North Berwick to Dunbar - consideration of strategic route options

An attractive route is available from West Barns to Dunbar. Options have been assessed for -

1. North Berwick to A198 south of Tynninghame -

- a. **coastal route using the network of farm roads between Seacliff and Limetree Walk** (northern access to John Muir Country Park) – this would provide an attractive route in the vicinity of the coast on private farm roads and with dramatic seaward views (e.g. to Bass Rock) on northern sections. However, the roads are sometimes used by heavy farm traffic and the route is indirect and would add over 3 km to a trip from North Berwick to Dunbar, due to the 'barriers' posed by Tynninghame House policies and River Tyne. While rejecting this option for the North Sea Cycle Route, **this network of farm roads could provide an attractive, alternative scenic route around the coast, subject to the landowners' agreement to improvements and signing.**
- b. **A198 from North Berwick to A198 south of Tynninghame** – a footway is available from the edge of North Berwick to near the Tantallon Castle access, which could provide for shared use. **It is recommended that the footway to Tantallon Castle access be widened and extended to provide a link from North Berwick for less confident cyclists.** The remainder of this road is well used by vehicles, often travelling at speed and has sections which are steep and have sharp bends and poor sightlines. This road is potentially hazardous and is not recommended for the North Sea Cycle Route
- c. **A198 from North Berwick, minor roads and right of way to A198 south of Tynninghame (*consultants' preferred option*)** – having assessed various minor roads southwards from N. Berwick, the favoured route is by shared use footway along the A198 to the minor road past Woodlea and Blackdykes Farms, the right of way south towards Whitekirk and minor roads south west from Whitekirk to the B1407 and Knowes Ford. Potential new cycle paths alongside the A198, south of Whitekirk and through Binning Wood, were rejected, as these will prove costly to construct and maintain, whereas minor roads are already available. Signing, road repairs/improvements and traffic management on these minor roads would contribute to cyclists' comfort and safety and path-works are required to provide a suitable surface and drainage on the right of way (subject to landowners' agreement).
Options from Knowes Ford eastwards are -
 - i. **improved riverside path to Tynninghame Bridge and headland path to Ware Road (route of John Muir Way) (*consultants' preferred option, on safety grounds*)** - this route would be costly to provide/improve, but would avoid potentially hazardous crossings of the A198 from Ware Road to Knowes Farm road (option ii.), or cycling on the A198 from Ware Road to the R. Tyne Bridge. This section of the A198 has frequent and fast traffic and poor vertical sightlines (i.e. blind brows of hills obscuring approaching vehicles). **The farm tenant opposes the proposed headland path.**
 - ii. **minor roads from Knowes Ford to A198** – these roads would provide a convenient, low cost link to the A198 and A1, but, due to poor vertical sightlines and fast traffic, would require cyclists to make potentially hazardous crossings of the A198 at its junctions with the farm road and/or Ware Road (see i.). **The farm tenant opposes promotion of cycling on the public road and private roads through Knowes Farm – especially through the steading.**

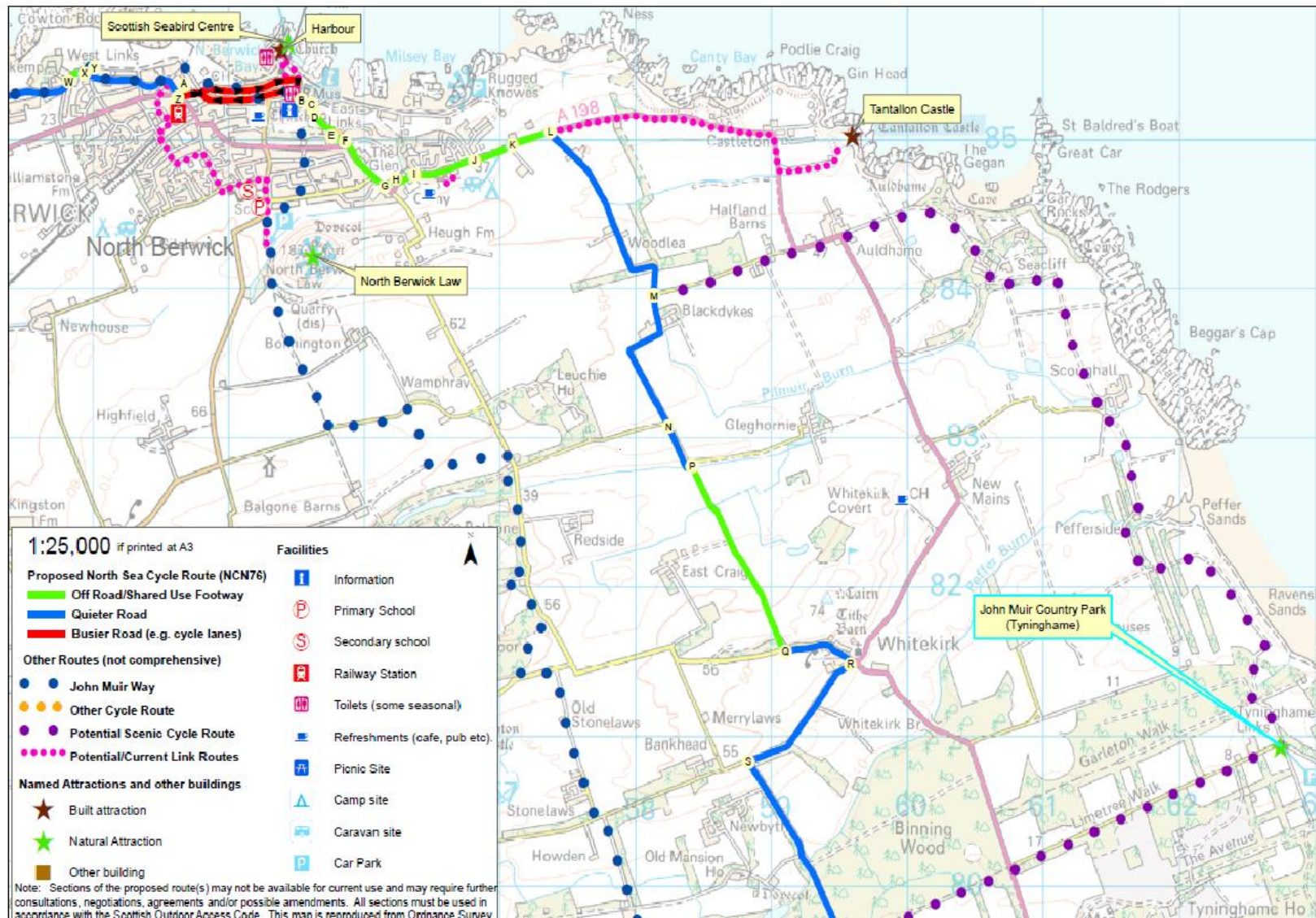
provide a direct route, but the long, straight footway along the A199 is a low amenity route, due to the speed of passing traffic, exposure in winds and lack of visual diversity. **This route will provide a more direct alternative route for longer distance/touring cyclists to a., and could provide part of a circular cycle route from/to Dunbar.**

APPENDIX C

EXTRACT FROM PETER SCOTT'S REPORT 2009 Pages 35-36

C. North Berwick to Dunbar - appraisal against objectives for North Sea Cycle Route	
a. continuous route meeting NCN criteria	While no direct cycle route is available in the immediate vicinity of the coast between North Berwick and Dunbar, a continuous and relatively direct, safe, attractive and comfortable countryside route is available on shared use footways (east of North Berwick), quieter country roads, rights of way and farm tracks to Tyne Mouth, via Whitekirk. From the A198 at Ware Road eastwards, improvements to farm roads/tracks, paths through Hedderwick Plantation and around Belhaven Bay, and less trafficked roads (e.g. Back Road, North Road) provide an attractive route to Dunbar. Current signing of the John Muir Way from N. Berwick to Dunbar is inconsistent and improved and systematic signing of the cycle route will be essential
C. North Berwick to Dunbar - appraisal against objectives for North Sea Cycle Route (continued)	
b. connect settlement and promote tourism recreational and functional cycling	<p>Section C will connect North Berwick, Whitekirk, West Barns, Belhaven and Dunbar and provide links to East Linton, Tynninghame, other settlements and the National Cycle Network.</p> <p>North Berwick, Dunbar and smaller settlements attract tourist and day visitors and this section of the North Sea Cycle Route will cater for longer distance cycling and shorter day trips and provide a spine from which local cycle networks can be established. Local cycle paths, quiet roads and cycle lanes can provide/enhance cycling links to attractions (e.g. Tantallon Castle, Preston Mill), villages (e.g. Tynninghame, East Linton), schools and stations (e.g. North Berwick, Dunbar) (see Map 5.).</p> <p>New cycle routes and the further development of cycling clubs/groups in North Berwick and Dunbar and the East Lothian Cycle Forum will encourage a local cycling culture.</p>
c. showcase and facilitate coastal enjoyment	<p>The cycle route (and link routes) will provide opportunities for enjoyment and appreciation of the coastal scenery and historic buildings and villages and for coastal recreation and wildlife watching (e.g. John Muir Country Park, Dunbar cliffs).</p> <p>Further information and interpretation will encourage awareness and appreciation of the rich natural and cultural heritage of this coastal area.</p>
d. contribute to visitor economy	Visitor accommodation, places to eat and drink, attractions (e.g. Tantallon Castle, East Links Family Park) and local services in North Berwick, Dunbar and smaller settlements will contribute to the cycle route's potential to attract cycling visitors and generate local income.
e. encourage safe and responsible cycling: avoid adverse impacts	<p>Information boards, leaflets, etc. will promote safe cycling and responsible access. Development and signing of the North Sea Cycle Route will help to 'manage' coastal cycling activity and reduce pressures on sensitive sites – especially John Muir Country Park.</p> <p>Improvements to shared use paths (e.g. John Muir Way) will minimise walker/cyclist conflicts.</p>
CONCLUSION	Section C can help to achieve the objectives for the North Sea Cycle Route in East Lothian and bring social, economic and environmental benefits for the local communities.

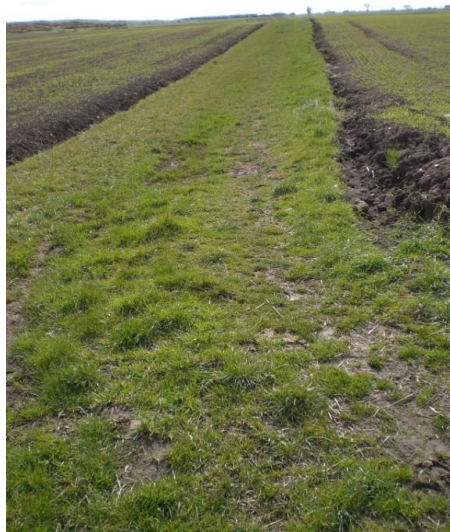
APPENDIX D
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Appendix E Photos Becky's Strip Path

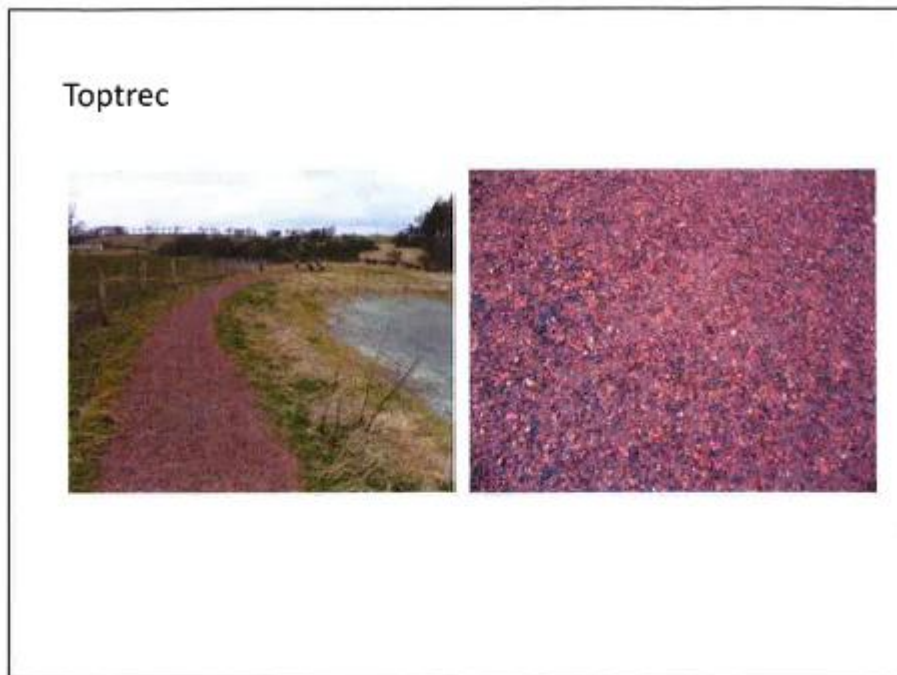


Appendix F



Appendix G Photos of Becky's Strip Path





What is it? A semi-bound surface made from concrete, blaes, and screened road planings on top of a Tope 1 granular sub base laid on geotextile in a formation tray.

Toptrec is a proprietary, 100% recycled path surfacing product. It is available in two colours, brick red and black.

How does it work? Toptrec, generally graded as 20mm to dust, contains significant quantities of fine particles. When wetted, the particles start to 'set' and then 'harden' when dry. The screened road planings bind the finer materials together and make the surface easier to lay and compact

Toptrec applications

Foot paths

Cycle paths

Horseriding pathway areas

Park and woodland paths and lanes

Maintenance : easy to maintain, should holes appear fill with Toptrec and roll and compact, no excavating required or dictated by seasonal weather such as frost.

Appendix I

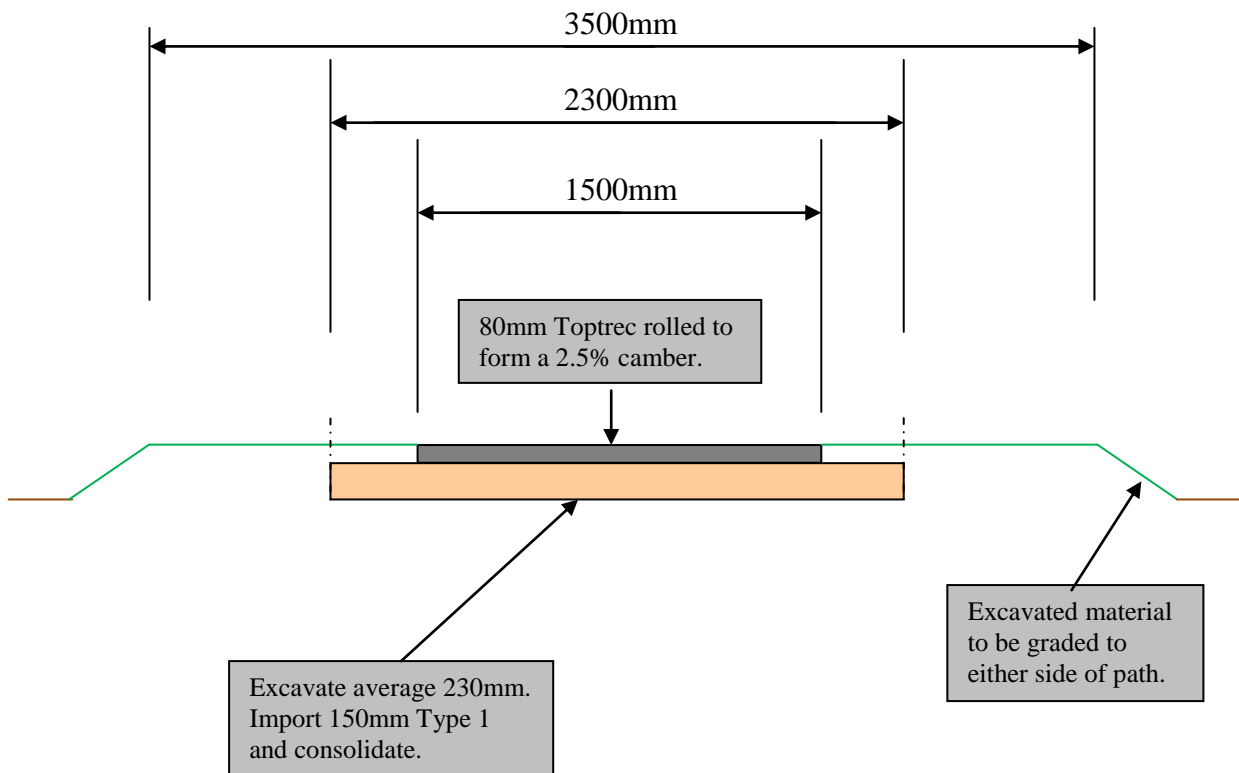
Brief specification for Toptrec path at Becky's Strip, Whitekirk

Section B – D

For this section of the track it is intended to have a 1.5 metre wide Toptrec path along the centre of the track leaving approximately 75cm of grassy track either side. This will give a level surface for cyclists, allow horses to ride on either side of the Toptrec and agricultural machinery can straddle the Toptrec.

Excavate centre of existing track an average of 230mm to form a smooth and level surface to a width of 2300mm, compacting with excavator; Import average depth of 150mm Type 1 and compact with heavy vibrating double wheeled roller; Cap with single layer of 80mm thick Toptrec using an asphalt mini-paver; Topsoil to be brought back over either side of the Type 1 and seeded with grass seed; Roll edge of soil and Toptrec with roller to 2.5% camber (it is important to roll the Toptrec well); Excavated material to be spread and graded to each side of track.

Please infill any major undulations on either side of track with Type 1, topped with 25mm topsoil and grass seed.



Appendix J

Brief specification for Toptrec path at Becky's Strip, Whitekirk

Sections A - B and D - E

For this section of the track it is intended to have a 1.5 metre wide Toptrec path to the eastern side of the track leaving a grassy track at the other side. This will give a level surface for cyclists on one side and allow horses to ride on the other side of the track.

Excavate the eastern side of existing track an average of 230mm to form a smooth and level surface to a width of 2300mm, compacting with excavator; Import average depth of 150mm Type 1 and compact with heavy vibrating double wheeled roller; Cap with single layer of 80mm thick Toptrec using an asphalt mini-paver; Topsoil to be brought back over either side of the Type 1 and seeded with grass seed; Roll edge of soil and Toptrec with roller to 2.5% camber (it is important to roll the Toptrec well); Excavated material to be spread and graded to each side of track.

