North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY SUB-COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 26TH JULY 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: PROPOSED DIVERSION OF PART OF PUBLIC

FOOTPATH AX 29/14

TOWN OR PARISH: WINSCOMBE AND SANDFORD

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: PENNY PRICE

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) That the Committee approve the submission of 'North Somerset District Council (Part of Footpath AX 29/14, over land west of A371 Banwell Road, Winscombe and Sandford) Public Path Diversion Order No. 1 2017' to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with a request for confirmation.
- ii) That the Committee approve the council's promotion of the Diversion Order in any subsequent proceedings.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

Further to there being no objections at the pre-order stage, the Director of Development and Environment's authorisation was given on 12th January 2017 to make a Public Path Diversion Order under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, for part of Public Footpath AX 29/14 within Winscombe and Sandford Parish, because it appeared to the authority that, in the interests of the owner of the land crossed by the footpath and of the public, it is expedient that the line of the path should be diverted.

There are two outstanding objections following formal consultation and, as the council cannot confirm an opposed Order itself, Committee approval is now sought for the Order and objections to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with a request for confirmation; and for the council to promote the Order in any subsequent proceedings.

A scanned copy of the Order/Public Notice is attached to this report at Appendix 1. The Order Map No. PPO 167 shows the existing route with a bold continuous line between points D-C-B-A and the proposed route with a bold broken line between points E-F-G-H-I-A.

2. BACKGROUND

This diversion order seeks to divert part of Public Footpath AX 29/14 in the following manner:

from the western side of the A371 Banwell Road at point D (grid reference ST 41142 57986) running in a westerly direction for approximately 186 metres to a stone slab stile at point C (grid reference ST 40955 57993) then running in a westerly direction for approximately 11 metres to point B (grid reference ST 40944 57993) and then running in a north, north westerly direction for approximately 5 metres to point A (grid reference ST 40942 57998);

to a footpath running from a pedestrian gate at point E (grid reference ST 41143 57982), at the western side of the A371 Banwell Road, in a west, south westerly direction for approximately 81 metres to point F (grid reference ST 41069 57948), then running in a west, north westerly direction for approximately 36 metres to point G (grid reference ST41037 57964), then running in a west, south westerly direction for approximately 66 metres, to cross a piped culvert bridge over the ditch at point H (grid reference ST 40972 57958) and running in a westerly direction for approximately 2 metres to point I (grid reference ST 40970 57958). The proposed route then turns to run in a generally north, north westerly direction for approximately 50 metres to point A (grid reference ST 40942 57998).

The proposed diverted route will have a stone track surface and a width of 2.5 metres between points E to H, with the remainder, on the west side of the ditch between points H to A, being on a pasture surface with a width of 2 metres.

There will be a pedestrian gate at point E, with a fingerpost Public Footpath sign, a new piped culvert bridge with stoned surface at point H and reinstatement of existing drainage between points H and A, as well as Public Footpath waymarking discs where appropriate.

The submitted application form states the reason for the proposal, as follows:

"This section of footpath crosses agricultural ground to be used as a commercial apple orchard and it is necessary to divert the path in order for the orchard to be safely and efficiently managed.

The lie of the ground dictates that the apple trees be planted in a north-south direction resulting in the rows crossing the east-west footpath. The trees are traditionally wired to add support. This would be difficult to achieve with the path crossing the rows. In addition, there will be numerous vehicular movements associated with spraying operations required to control pests and diseases plus during harvest therefore it would be beneficial, for both land management reasons and from a public health and safety perspective, for this section of path to be diverted.

The current definitive route is via an awkward stone slab stile at point C. It is proposed that the stile will remain in situ as a historical feature but public access would be safer and easier via the proposed new route which would be mainly on a stoned track providing a firm surface, easily negotiable at all times of the year.

If the application is successful it is felt there would be benefits for both the landowner, who will be able to better manage the commercial orchard, and for the public, who will be able to follow an un-impeded firm surfaced route avoiding the awkward stone slab stile and potential conflict with agricultural movements."

The length of the existing section to be diverted (points D-C-B-A) is approximately 202 metres, with the proposed section (E-F-G-H-I-A) being approximately 235 metres; an increase of 33 metres.

3. POLICY

The maintenance of the Definitive Map should be considered as part of the management of the public rights of way network and so contributes to the corporate plan "Health and Wellbeing" and "Quality Places"".

4. DETAILS

i) Legal context

The Order complies with the various provisions of Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 and the relevant sections are extracted below:

Section 119 (1)

This deals with the making of the Order and states that:

"Where it appears to the council as respects a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway in their area (other than one that is a trunk road or special road) that, in the interests of the owner, lessee or occupier of the land crossed by the path or way or of the public, it is expedient that the line of the path or way, or part of that line should be diverted (whether on to land of the same or of another owner, lessee or occupier) the council may" divert the path.

Section 119 (6)

This deals with the confirmation of the Order and states that:

"The Secretary of State shall not confirm a public path diversion order, and a Council shall not confirm such an order as an unopposed order, unless he or, as the case may be, they are satisfied that the diversion to be effected by it is expedient as mentioned in subsection (1) above, and further that the path or way will not be substantially less convenient to the public in consequence of the diversion and that it is expedient to confirm the order having regard to the effect which:

- a) the diversion would have on public enjoyment of the path or way as a whole;
- b) the coming into operation of the order would have as respects other land served by the existing right of way; and
- c) any new public right of way created by the order would have as respects the land over which the right is so created and any land held with it ..."

Although it is acknowledged that the existing legal line has been obstructed and the new route is already in place, the formal Public Path Diversion Order should be assessed as if the existing route were still available.

ii) Objection

Following Order consultations, there are objections from two outstanding parties which the council has not been able to resolve during further communication; necessitating this report. The objection points are summarised below:

FIRST PARTY OBJECTING - LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

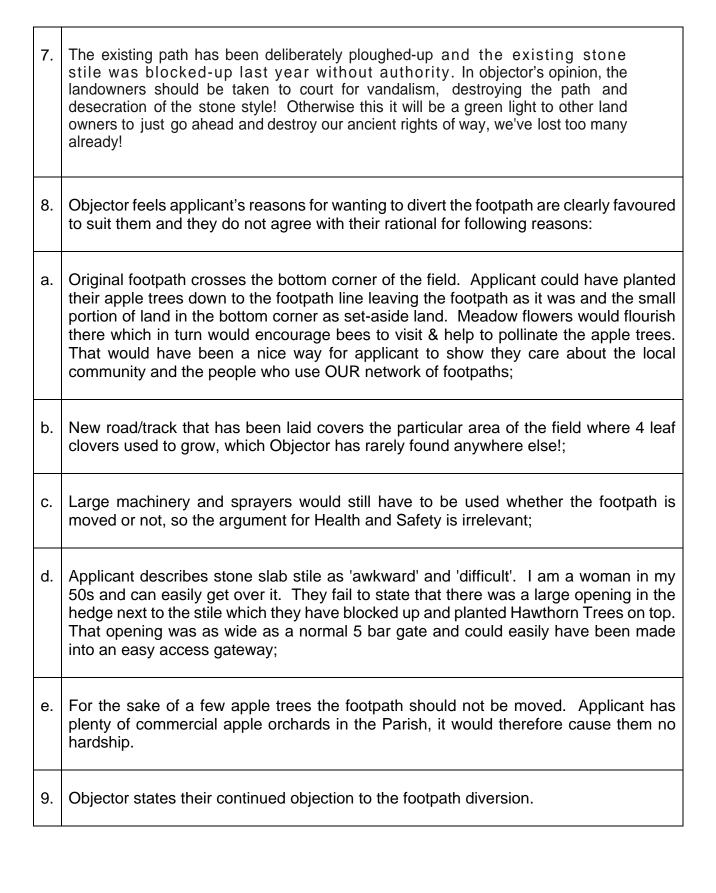
(the Officer has separated the paragraphs of the text into numbered rows, for ease of reference to these comments in the report)

- 1. Objection as the Open Spaces Society ('OSS') is of the opinion that temporary agricultural practices should not dictate a path diversion.
- 2. Proposed diversion moves the footpath closer to the Lox Yeo River and this is at risk of flooding as indicated on the Environment Agency's flood maps. The proposal passes close to flood zone 3 and due to the coarseness of modelling method employed it is likely that the River will be the centre of the outline and not just outside of it as indicated on the plan. This will mean the path will be subject to flooding and will likely be wetter for longer during the winter months, even if it is surfaced with stone, which is also of more benefit to the landowner as this will be used as vehicle access to the land.
- 3. To summarise: The path is longer, is likely to be wetter for longer, is on a vehicle access track and therefore the OSS believe it is of significantly more benefit to the landowner than it is for the public and they would like their objection to remain.

SECOND PARTY OBJECTING - MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

(the Officer has separated the paragraphs of the text into numbered rows, for ease of reference to these comments in the report)

- 4. Objecting because the proposed new path spoils the line of the original route. When you look from the Winscombe side of the road towards Barton, the path is visibly quite clear and unmistakable as a straight line going away in the distance. The new path goes off at an angle!
- 5. Also they do not wish to walk on the gravel track that has been laid. It is quite hard underfoot and they wish to walk on the path that generations of people before them have walked on!
- 6. When you get to the far side of the gravel track it is quite hard to decipher which direction the path then goes in. If you don't already know it is quite confusing!



COMMENTS FROM THE APPLICANT, when advised of outstanding objection points:

Thank you for your letter concerning the objections to the footpath on the land west of A371 Banwell Road.

I have listed my response to the objections raise in order: -

(the applicant makes reference to the numbered points, which summarised the first and second objecting parties objections. The officer has displayed these in tabular form, for ease of reference in this report)

	First party objecting
1.	This is not a temporary practice as it takes 25 years for an orchard to become established.
2.	It does not flood on that ground.
3.	The path will be stoned and raised up and will therefore be drier.
	Second party objecting
4.	When the land is planted, it would not be clear as to where the original route is.
5.	This contradicts number 3.
6.	Correct, signs need to be posted here
7.	No comment.
8.	
a.	This could not be done as apple trees needs to be planted north to south. We are planting meadow flowers around the outside of each of our orchards to encourage bees and other insects.
b.	We have never seen a four-leaf clover in this orchard and would love to see one.

c.	No comment.	
d.	This is true and can be difficult	
e.	This is irrelevant.	

OFFICER COMMENTS:

	General comments	
1.	This Public Path Diversion Order meets the requirements of Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 in that, in the interests of the owners of the land crossed by the footpath and of the public, it is expedient that the line of the path should be diverted.	
	With regards the tests to be satisfied for confirmation of the Order, officers are satisfied that the diversion will not be substantially less convenient to the public and that it is expedient to confirm the order as the diversion will not have a detrimental affect on public enjoyment of the Public Footpath as a whole. The land served by the existing and proposed Public Footpath would not be affected, as these are both in the applicant's ownership, for use as a commercial apple orchard.	
2.	The local representative of the Ramblers Association has not objected to the proposed diversion	
	First party objecting	
3.	Response to objection point 1 – with the trees planted in the orchard, the use of the land is not judged to be temporary.	
4.	Regarding objection point 2 – the main Lox Yeo River is some 300 metres to the south of the proposed diversion and is fed by Winscombe Brook and a resurgence at the old mill west of Nut Tree Farm. The deep watercourse on the southern field boundary adjacent to the proposed new route carries a minor stream and is, in the main, no more than a land and highway drainage ditch.	
	An officer has contacted the previous landowner, whose family had owned the land since the 1980s and they are not aware of any flooding in this particular field, although the main A371 further south towards Church Road has very infrequently been flooded for short periods.	
	The proposed new route is outside of the Environment Agency's Flood Zones 2 and 3, therefore the proposed new route is no more likely to flood than the existing one.	

5. Response to objection points 2/3 – the proposed route should give walkers a better surface than the existing, being a stone surface, raised-up and therefore drier.

Although approximately 33 metres longer, after the pedestrian gate at point E, the proposed route will have no further structures across it, therefore it will be safer and easier for all users, especially the less able, who often struggle to negotiate stiles.

6. Response to objection point 3 – although there is an increase of approximately 33 metres between the existing and proposed sections to be diverted and it would be more direct to take the existing line, the proposed section is not judged to be considerably longer, especially within it's setting.

If walking the existing or diverted routes from Banwell Road, walkers need to continue on Public Footpath AX 29/14 until reaching Max Mill Lane. The total existing route between Banwell Road and Max Mill Lane is approximately 1,168 metres and the total if initially using the proposed diversion instead, would be approximately 1,201 metres, therefore not substantially less convenient to walkers in it's context.

Second party objecting

- 7. Response to objection, shown in their report at point 4 the path to be diverted would no longer follow the initial straight line, however the nature of the whole continuing path AX 29/41 up to Max Mill Lane is that it follows field boundaries instead of a straight line.
- 8. Objection shown at point 5 although the officer appreciates the opinion of the objector with regards the gravel track surface of the proposed route, this surface brings benefits to the year-round condition of the proposed route. Native vegetation will soon populate the track making it softer underfoot.
- 9. Objection shown at point 6 if diverted, the council will ensure that the path is sufficiently waymarked in order for the new route to be safely followed. In addition, a Notice of Confirmation with accompanying Order Map showing the diverted route will be placed at the site. The council's online interactive mapping showing Public Rights of Way will be updated and we will notify Ordnance Survey of the diverted route.
- 10. Objection shown at point 7 through the council seeking resolution of the existing legal line being obstructed, the landowner has submitted an application to formally divert part of the Public Footpath and the applicant is to pay the council's normal application costs. As officers consider that has been expedient to make this Public Path Order and that it will also be so to confirm it, it is hoped that this will address the matter of the obstructed route.

11. Objection shown at point 8.a – in their reasons for the submitted application and their response to this objection point, the applicant has advised that the apple trees need to be planted north to south. The applicant further advises of their practice to plant meadow flowers around the outside of each of their orchards to encourage bees and other insects.

Since acquiring the land on either side of Banwell Road, the applicant has worked closely with the Highway Authority, in removing six stiles and replacing them with easy access metal gates. This demonstrates their willingness to encourage the use of the Public Rights of Way on their land.

- 12. Objection shown at point 8.c the public will have a separate clearly-defined path and will be clearly visible to any machine operators, as they will not be walking through the planted orchard itself.
- 13.. Objection shown at point 8.d it is appreciated that, while some walkers may be able to climb the stone stile, this is difficult for less able walkers. The council ideally seeks the least restrictive means of path furniture and the proposed route on the western side of the ditch will not feature any path furniture.
- 14. Objection shown at point 8.e under the Highways Act 1980, a landowner is at liberty to apply to the council to divert a Public Footpath. In this case, the reason is for their commercial apple orchard. It is not relevant to this application whether the landowner has other such commercial operations, as we have to assess the landowner's request on it's own merit, whilst also ensuring the Public Footpath is not substantially less convenient.

5. CONSULTATIONS

Formal order consultations were undertaken (including landowners, any interested parties/local user groups and utility companies who had commented at the pre-order consultation stage, the six statutory consultees, Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council, the local ward councillor). In addition, copies of the Public Notice and Order Map were placed at the site and on the council's website, with the Public Notice also appearing in the Western Daily Press.

As there are two outstanding objections which necessitate this report to Committee, the objection points, the applicant's comments to these and the officer's comments are summarised at section '4. Details' of this Report, above.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The applicant is to pay the council's normal Public Path Diversion Order application costs and those of bringing the new route into a fit condition for use by the public. If the Order is submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation, none of the associated and subsequent costs can be recovered, so these would be borne by the Council.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

If this Diversion Order is submitted to the Secretary of State, there are three methods which an Inspector can use to determine the matter: written representations; a Hearing or a Public Inquiry. The Objectors would be invited to state which method they wish to be followed, the Council have no say in deciding.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Public rights of way are available for the population as a whole to use and enjoy irrespective of gender, ethnic background or ability and are free at point of use.

9. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Any changes to the network will be reflected on the GIS system which forms the basis of the relevant corporate records.

10. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The options to be considered by this Committee are:

- i) to approve the submission of 'North Somerset District Council (Part of Footpath AX 29/14, over land west of A371 Banwell Road, Winscombe and Sandford) Public Path Diversion Order No. 1 2017' to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with a request for confirmation
- ii) and to approve the council's promotion of the Diversion Order in any subsequent proceedings.

OR

to abandon the proposed Public Path Diversion Order application and advise the applicant, having regard to the risk management factors at section 6, above.

AUTHOR

Penny Price Access Support Officer Public Rights of Way (Natural Environment) Tel. 01934 427467

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Public Rights of Way Section File PPO 167

NOTICE OF MAKING OF AN ORDER

HIGHWAYS ACT 1980

NORTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL (PART OF FOOTPATH AX 29/14, OVER LAND WEST OF A371 BANWELL ROAD, WINSCOMBE AND SANDFORD) PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION ORDER NO. 1 2017

The above Order, made on 27th January 2017, under section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, will divert that part of Public Footpath AX 29/14 in the Parish of Winscombe and Sandford within the District of North Somerset as described below:

from the western side of the A371 Banwell Road at point D (grid reference ST 41142 57986) running in a westerly direction for approximately 186 metres to a stone slab stile at point C (grid reference ST 40955 57993) then running in a westerly direction for approximately 11 metres to point B (grid reference ST 40944 57993) and then running in a north, north westerly direction for approximately 5 metres to point A (grid reference ST 40942 57998), as shown by a bold continuous line on the Order Map No. PPO 167.

to a footpath running from a pedestrian gate at point E (grid reference ST 41143 57982), at the western side of the A371 Banwell Road, in a west, south westerly direction for approximately 81 metres to point F (grid reference ST 41069 57948), then running in a west, north westerly direction for approximately 36 metres to point G (grid reference ST41037 57964), then running in a west, south westerly direction for approximately 66 metres, to cross a piped culvert bridge over the ditch at point H (grid reference ST 40972 57958) and running in a westerly direction for approximately 2 metres to point I (grid reference ST 40970 57958). The proposed route then turns to run in a generally north, north westerly direction for approximately 50 metres to point A (grid reference ST 40942 57998), as shown by a bold broken line on the Order map No. PPO 167.

The proposed diverted route will have a stone track surface and a width of 2.5 metres between points E to H, with the remainder, on the west side of the ditch between points H to A, being on a pasture surface with a width of 2 metres. References to the lettered points above are references to the points on the Order Map No. PPO 167.

Copies of the Order and Order map have been placed and may be seen free of charge at the Reception desk, North Somerset Council Offices, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1UJ from 9.00am to 4.30pm Mondays to Thursdays and 9.00am to 4.00pm on Fridays, or may be viewed on the Council's Web site (at the address: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/notices). Copies are also available for inspection at Winscombe Library, 23 Woodborough Road, Winscombe BS25 1AB during normal opening hours (Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 5pm, Fridays 10am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 6pm and Saturdays 10am to 12.30pm). A copy can be obtained from North Somerset Council at the price of £6.50 if collected and £7.80 if posted out.

Any representations about or objections to the Order may be sent in writing to the Director of Development and Environment, Natural Environment Team, Streets and Open Spaces, North Somerset Council, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ not later than **3rd March 2017**, quoting the reference **PAP/PPO 167**. Please state the grounds on which they are made.

If no such representations or objections are duly made, or if any so made are withdrawn, North Somerset District Council may confirm the Order as an unopposed Order. If the Order is sent to the Secretary of State for the Environment for confirmation, any representations and objections which have not been withdrawn will be sent with the Order.

Dated: 2nd February 2017

David Carter
Director of Development and Environment

North Somerset Council Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road Weston-super-Mare BS23 1UJ



Highways Act 1980 Section 119

North Somerset District Council

(Part of Footpath AX 29/14, over land west of A371 Banwell Road, Winscombe and Sandford)

Public Path Diversion Order No. 1 2017

N P Brain
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Town Hall
Walliscote Grove Road
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 1UJ

HIGHWAYS ACT 1980

NORTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

(PART OF FOOTPATH AX 29/14, OVER LAND WEST OF A371 BANWELL ROAD, WINSCOMBE AND SANDFORD)

PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION ORDER NO. 1 2017

This Order is made by North Somerset District Council ("the authority") under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 ("the 1980 Act") because it appears to the authority that in the interests of the owner of the land crossed by the footpath described in paragraph 1 of the order and of the public it is expedient that the line of the path should be diverted.

The applicant has agreed to defray any compensation which becomes payable in consequence of the coming into force of this order and any expenses which are incurred in bringing the new site of the path into a fit condition for use by the public.

BY THIS ORDER:

- 1 The public right of way over the land situated west of A371 Banwell Road, Winscombe and Sandford and shown by a bold continuous line on the Map No. PPO 167 contained in this order and described in Part 1 of the Schedule to this order shall be stopped up on the date on which North Somerset District Council certify that work has been carried out to bring the site of the new highway mentioned in Part 2 of the Schedule into a fit condition for use by the public.
- 2. Notwithstanding this order British Telecommunications plc shall have the following rights over the land referred to in paragraph 1 namely: they shall for the purpose of carrying out their undertaking continue to have the same rights in respect of their apparatus as they had immediately before the date on which the footpath is diverted.
- 3. There shall at the end of 28 days from the date of confirmation of this order be a public footpath over the land situated west of A371 Banwell Road, Winscombe and Sandford described in Part 2 of the Schedule and shown by a bold broken line on the Map No. PPO 167 attached to this order.
- 3. The rights conferred on the public under this order shall be subject to the limitations and conditions set out in Part 3 of the Schedule.

SCHEDULE

PART 1

DESCRIPTION OF SITE OF EXISTING PATH OR WAY

That part of footpath AX 29/14 in the Parish of Winscombe and Sandford from the western side of the A371 Banwell Road at point D (grid reference ST 41142 57986) running in a westerly direction for approximately 186 metres to a stone slab stile at point C (grid reference ST 40955 57993) then running in a westerly direction for approximately 11 metres to point B (grid reference ST 40944 57993) and then running in a north, north westerly direction for approximately 5 metres to point A (grid reference ST 40942 57998), as shown by a bold continuous line on the attached Map No. PPO 167.

PART 2

DESCRIPTION OF SITE OF NEW PATH OR WAY

To a footpath running from a pedestrian gate at point E (grid reference ST 41143 57982), at the western side of the A371 Banwell Road, in a west, south westerly direction for approximately 81 metres to point F (grid reference ST 41069 57948), then running in a west, north westerly direction for approximately 36 metres to point G (grid reference ST41037 57964), then running in a west, south westerly direction for approximately 66 metres, to cross a piped culvert bridge over the ditch at point H (grid reference ST 40972 57958) and running in a westerly direction for approximately 2 metres to point I (grid reference ST 40970 57958). The proposed route then turns to run in a generally north, north westerly direction for approximately 50 metres to point A (grid reference ST 40942 57998), as shown by a bold broken line on the attached map No. PPO 167.

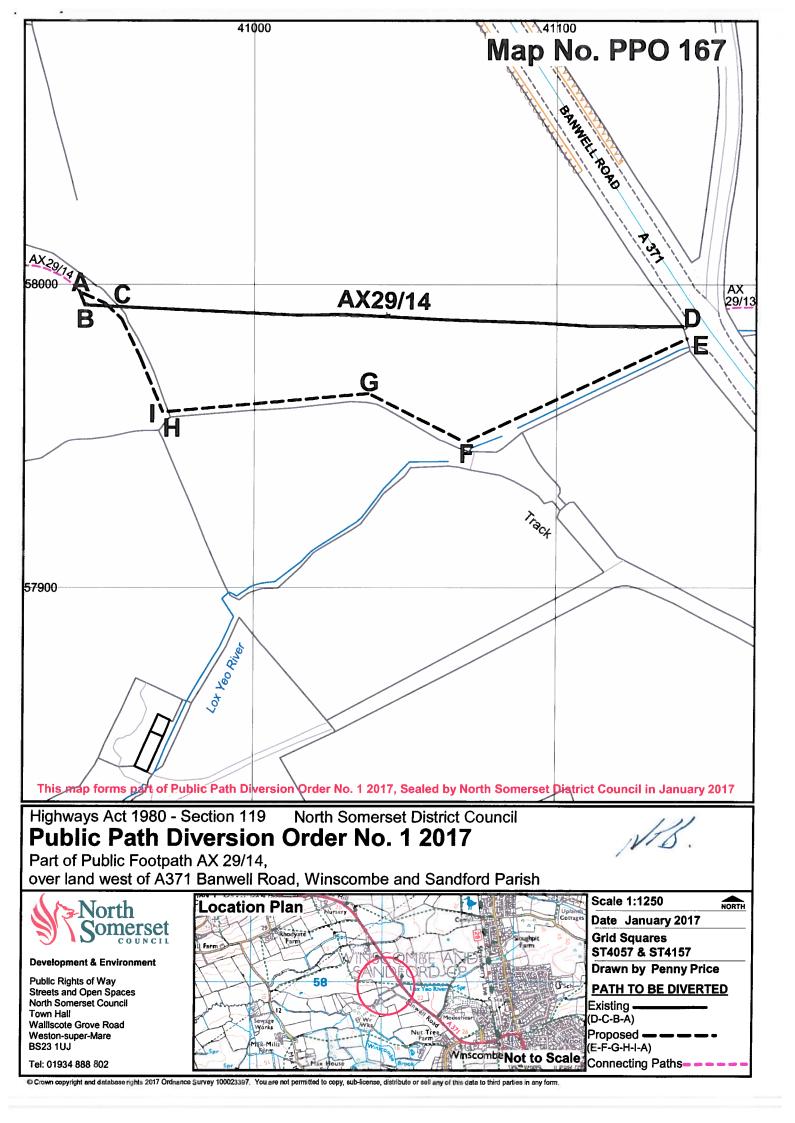
The proposed diverted route will have a stone track surface and a width of 2.5 metres between points E to H, with the remainder, on the west side of the ditch between points H to A, being on a pasture surface with a width of 2 metres.

PART 3

LIMITATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Point E (Grid Reference ST 41143 57982)	Pedestrian gate

The pedestrian gate specified above is to be provided to comply with BS 5709.2006 and should be considered for removal in the event that it is no longer required to prevent the ingress or egress of animals or if the land is no longer used for agricultural purposes (including forestry and the keeping of horses).



Given under the Common Seal of North Somerset District Council the 27th day of January 2017.

THE COMMON SEAL of NORTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL was hereunto affixed in the presence of:

17093

HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES