



nature's voice
llais natur



William Powell AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff,
CF99 1NA

11th June 2012

Dear Chair,

Re: Letter concerning Petition: Against the Proposed Cardiff to Newport Coastal Path

Thank you for your letter seeking the RSPB's views on the possible impacts on wintering waterbirds of the Cardiff to Newport stretch of the Wales Coastal Path (WCP).

The RSPB supports the quiet enjoyment of the countryside, and encourages its million members, and members of the public, to access the countryside and its wildlife responsibly. The Wales Coastal Path is an important means of enabling and encouraging access to Wales' incredible coastline and marine environment.

There have been a number of sections of the WCP across Wales where appropriate measures and some realignment has been necessary to avoid any material (i.e. significant) adverse impacts on nationally important populations of bird species of acknowledged conservation concern, and statutorily designated nature conservation sites. It will be important that these sites are monitored, employing approved survey methods, and appropriate further action is taken if required.

In terms of the Cardiff to Newport stretch of the WCP, the petition focuses around possible impacts on populations of wintering waterfowl which are features of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA), which is internationally important for its bird interest, the main possible adverse impacts cited by the petitioners being

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disturbance to these populations by walkers and their dogs.

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) commissioned an Appropriate Assessment (AA) pursuant to the Habitats Regulations (under which the Severn Estuary SPA is designated). The AA, which was completed in May 2011, concluded that, provided that certain steps were taken to avoid the risk of adverse impacts on the integrity of the site, the WCP at these locations would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. These steps included :-

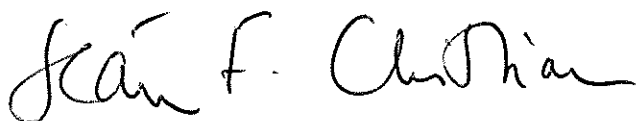
- Realignment of the path at certain locations
- Screening of the path at certain locations
- Implementation and enforcement of Dog Control Orders
- Severe winter weather restrictions
- Use of signage, to ensure users do not stray from the path at certain locations

The CCW report also concluded that there will need to be a comprehensive programme of monitoring and review of these measures to ensure their success, and that further measures may be introduced if needed.

RSPB Cymru supports these conclusions, provided that they are thoroughly enforced, and are in place in perpetuity. We look to all stakeholders in this process to ensure that the laudable aim of encouraging the public to experience the wildlife spectacles which the Wales Coastal Path can offer at this location does not compromise the wildlife which makes it so attractive to the public.

Please let me know if I can provide any further information to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean F. Christian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'C'.

Sean Christian
Head of Conservation