Abstract: This report advises the committee of the actions taken to close off sections of the path along Seaton Cliffs and Seaton Den in the interests of public safety and seeks authority to investigate both short and long term solutions.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee:-

1. notes the actions taken to close off sections of the path along Seaton Cliffs and Seaton Den in the interests of public safety;
2. authorises the Head of Planning & Transport in conjunction with the Head of Roads to investigate options for the re-opening of the path on a short and long term basis;
3. authorises the Head of Roads to undertake detailed investigations of remedial options at an estimated cost of £5,000, this expenditure to be contained within resources available to Planning & Transport in 2011/12; and
4. agrees to await a further report on progress in due course.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Seaton Cliffs to the east of Arbroath are undoubtedly one of Angus’ greatest natural assets. The majority of the cliffs and the path that runs along the top of the cliffs are owned and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust as part of the Seaton Nature Reserve. The cliff top path is an adopted Core Path and forms part of both the Arbroath Path Network and the Angus Coastal Path.

2.2 In 2007, the Council extended the cliff top path from Seaton Den/Carlingheugh Bay to Auchmithie. This provided a continuous path link between Arbroath and Auchmithie. Although no specific pedestrian counts have been taken, it is believed that this is one of the most popular walking routes in Angus. A plan showing the path is appended (see Appendix A).

3 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 Three separate ACCESSline calls were received by the Roads Division between 17-18 March 2011 relating to reports of landslides and path erosion at Seaton Cliffs and Seaton Den.

3.2 A site inspection was undertaken by staff from the Roads Division on 18 March 2011, at the two locations identified as being affected by landslides, which are shown on the plan appended plan (see Appendix A):-

(a) Seaton Cliffs

Seaton Cliffs are made of Old Red Sandstone with bands of conglomerate, and dips in a south-easterly direction. The dip and weathering of the rock along the coast leads to
instability and periodic collapse. The rock is subsequently overlaid by an approximately 10m thick layer of soil, the upper 500mm being organic topsoil. A significant collapse of the rock and soil were noted during the site inspection. As a result of the slope failure the coastal edge of the path along this section is now as little as 900mm from the top of the cliff face.

(b) Seaton Den

The narrow metalled path in this section has been undermined and collapsed as a result of a slope failure within the upper soils caused by water ingress.

3.3 Based on the above inspection, an assessment was made of the risk to public safety using the path from the slope failures. As a result, the Head of Roads instructed that the path be closed under Section 93 of Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 as of the afternoon of 18 March 2011.

3.4 On subsequent inspection and assessment of the coastal path between St. Ninian’s Well and Seaton Den on 20 March 2011, a slope failure was noted on the northern side of Dickmont’s Den (see plan in Appendix A). This is a shallow slope failure running parallel to the slope face and having a depth of around 1.2 m. A further failure of the exposed slope immediately above is considered to be likely. This would be a particularly dangerous condition as the upper slope is in close proximity to the current coastal path running along this section. The path closure was therefore extended to include this section so as to allow further monitoring and assessment to be undertaken by staff from the Roads Division. Additional barriers and signage for the closure of the extended path were erected on 21 March 2011 under the direction of staff from the Roads Division.

3.5 As of 30 March 2011, there have been no further significant slope failures since the 18 March and regular inspections continue to be undertaken by staff from the Roads Division. The path however remains closed to protect the users from the danger of further slope failure and collapse of the path, which is still considered to be a risk.

3.6 There is currently no reasonable diversion in place. The only means of accessing the path beyond Carlingheugh Bay is by the public roads via East Seaton/Auchmithie and the path through Seaton Den. This is not considered to be a suitable long-term alternative.

4 OPTIONS

4.1 Although the sections of path that have been closed are owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), they do not have the necessary resources to resolve this situation in isolation. In view of this and the importance of the route to public access, it is recommended that the Head of Planning & Transport in conjunction with the Head of Roads be authorised to investigate options for re-opening the path on both a short and long term basis. These investigations would be undertaken in association with SWT and in discussion with the adjoining landowner. They would assess the viability of establishing a temporary diversion for the summer period as well as a longer term permanent solution.

4.2 To aid these investigations, it is further recommended that the Head of Roads be authorised to undertake detailed investigations of remedial options to reinstate or realign the path.

4.3 The outcome of these investigations will be reported to the Committee in due course.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 It is estimated that the cost of undertaking the detailed investigations by Roads Division staff referred to in para 4.2 above is £5,000. This expenditure will be contained within resources available to Planning & Transport in 2011/12.
5.2 There may be financial implications arising from the establishment of any temporary diversions and any more permanent solution identified. These will be fully detailed in the further report to this Committee in due course.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus:

- The health of the Angus population is improved;
- Communities in Angus are safe, secure and vibrant;
- Angus’ natural environment is protected and enhanced.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Head of Law & Administration and have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 Sections of the path at Seaton Cliffs and Seaton Den have been closed in the interests of public safety due to landslips. As this is a very popular and well used path, investigations will be undertaken into options to provide both short and longer term solutions.

ERIC S LOWSON
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

NOTE : No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

P&T/GWC/RM/KW/IAL
30 March 2011