

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

Footpaths Group delighted by Creekside path decision

The Faversham Footpaths Group was delighted to learn last week that the lengthy campaign for a continuous Creekside path on the north bank of Faversham Creek has been successful. The Inspector who chaired a public inquiry in January has approved the footpath Orders made by Kent County Council to divert the obstructed public footpath at the Faversham Reach housing development and to create a public right of way along the promenade there and also at the neighbouring Waterside Close development, where it was part of the original planning approval for the development. The path will eventually form part of the England Coast Path.

Trevor Payne, Chair of the Faversham Footpaths Group, said that the decision was “very satisfying”, adding: “It’s taken a lot of time and effort to achieve this, beginning with the proposals first submitted by Faversham Town Council in 2012 and involving two public inquiries. We believe the path will be a great asset to Faversham residents and visitors. The diversion at Faversham Reach will also resolve the problem of the ‘blight’ on the affected houses there and avoid potential difficulties for the residents of both estates, arising from wider public access, if the route of the England Coast Path were to run inland instead. We are very grateful for the support given by KCC officials, Swale Borough Council, Faversham Town Council, Faversham Municipal Charities, Bensted’s Charity, Ramblers and many individuals. We hope that the residents who have opposed the proposals will now accept that this matter has been fully aired, having been considered by two independent Inspectors, and not carry out their threat to withhold co-operation, which would almost certainly increase the cost of the works required to open the path.”

The residents of both estates have claimed that the cost of the footpath will be much greater than estimated because large compensation payments will have to be made to them. However, evidence was given at the public inquiry that professional advice was that any compensation would be minimal. The Inspector also said that he did not “conclude that the implications for compensation will be such as to significantly affect the overall expediency of the creation of the proposed path”.

It will take some while to open the path since ramps will need to be built at either end, at Crab Island and Ham Marshes, plus a footway at the slipway between the two developments. Once opened, the path will mean that it will be possible to walk along the Creekside all the way from Stonebridge Pond to the Shipwright’s Arms and round to Oare. The path will eventually form part of the England Coast Path: the route between Whitstable and Iwade is expected to be opened in the next eighteen months or so.

Background Note

A summary of the history of this matter is at <http://favershamfootpathsgroup.org.uk/creek-side-path-at-faversham-reach-and-waterside-close/>

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