



Blakeney Harbour, Norfolk © Andy Tryner

The England Coast Path

Natural England has started work on the England Coast Path – a new long-distance trail that will eventually allow people to walk around the whole English coast.

The England Coast Path is possible because of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

As well as a long-distance walking route, there may be areas of ‘spreading room’ beside the route where people can explore, relax and admire the view.

The Act also means that for the first time, where existing footpaths erode into the sea, a replacement route can be quickly put in place – securing people’s right to walk around the coast forever.

The new path will avoid certain areas such as private houses and gardens, major ports and in some locations, areas that are important for sensitive species.

What’s happening in Norfolk?

We have already proposed the route from Sea Palling to Weybourne and we are now working from Weybourne to Hunstanton (see map overleaf). Work to extend the path around The Wash will follow.

Natural England is working closely with officers from Norfolk County Council, who are providing expert local advice and helping to ensure local interests are taken into account during the development of the route.

We expect to use the existing route of the Norfolk Coast Path National Trail where this meets everyone’s needs, but have the scope to vary this where necessary. Designating it as part of the new England Coast Path will bring additional benefits such as the ability for the trail to ‘roll back’ if it’s affected by erosion or slumping, ensuring a replacement route can be quickly opened. The project is also creating secure public rights of access for the first time to popular coastal areas such as beaches, sand dunes and cliff tops. Such areas of “spreading room” are part of the ‘coastal margin’ identified alongside the trail by our proposals to the Secretary of State for each stretch of coast we work on.

Designating the route as part of the England Coast Path will bring more support for local services like shops, hotels and pubs through increased visitor spending where additional visits are made.

Getting involved

Local people will be fully consulted about our proposals before each new stretch of path is put in place. There are 2 main stages to this process.

Develop

Initially, we will write to land owners with a map showing our initial thinking on the route, clearly explaining how their land would be affected, and to seek their views. In certain areas we may also arrange a suitable time to visit their land and discuss the available options. We call these visits "walking the course".

We will also work to alert other people with a legal interest in the affected land - such as farm tenants and people with shooting interests – and encourage them to contact us.

We will discuss our thinking with key organisations and consider any concerns or insights they might have, and ensure that the right protection for any key sensitive features is built in.

Propose

When we have looked carefully at all the options we will submit a report to the Secretary of State setting out our proposals, which we will publish on our website and advertise locally. We will also notify landowners and other people about an 8 week consultation period.

Any person will be able to make representations about the report. Owners and occupiers of affected land will also be able to make formal objections, which will be considered by an independent planning inspector. The Secretary of State will make a decision after all representations and objections have been considered.

When will the new coast path be ready?

After the Secretary of State has approved a new stretch of the path, any new infrastructure that is needed - such as gates and signs - will be installed. Once these preparations are complete, the public will be able to use any new sections of path and adjoining spreading room by right.

Walkers will be able to continue to use the Norfolk Coast Path as usual whilst this project is underway, and we expect it to become part of the England Coast Path by 2016.

Find out more

Check our website for the most up-to-date information about progress in Norfolk and on other parts of the English coast, www.naturalengland.org.uk/coastalaccess

Contact Norfolk.CoastalAccess@naturalengland.org.uk or phone 0300 060 1103

