

Chapter 4:

Little Murston to Ridham Docks (Iwade)

England Coast Path: Whitstable to Iwade - Natural England's Proposals

Part 4.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Little Murston (grid reference: TQ 9352 6617)
End Point:	Ridham Docks (Iwade) (grid reference: TQ 92121 67788)
Relevant Maps:	4a and 4b

Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

The Trail:

- 4.1.1 Generally follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way and highways, along all of this length.
- 4.1.2 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea.
- 4.1.3 Follows a route similar to the existing Saxon Shore Way, but departs from this to cross Milton Creek at the Swale Road Bridge (B2005). See Overview Map B – Existing Access: Whitstable to Iwade.
- 4.1.4 This part of the coast includes the following sites, designated for nature conservation or heritage preservation (See map C of the Overview):
 - The Swale Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - The Swale Ramsar site
 - The Swale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its geological / wildlife interest.
 - The Swale Estuary Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

We have assessed the potential impacts of access along the proposed route (and over the associated spreading room described below) on the features for which the affected land is designated and on any which are protected in their own right.

- 4.1.5 After advice from specialists we have concluded that our proposals would not be likely to have any significant impact on these features. In reaching this conclusion we took note that the saltmarsh and mudflats along this coast are not suitable for access and are excluded from the new access rights (see 4.3.10).

In relation to those nature conservation sites listed above, refer to our published Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal for more information.

See part 5b of the Overview - 'Protection of sensitive features' - for more information.

Accessibility:

- 4.1.6 Generally, there are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, which makes use of existing paths, minor roads and highways, wherever these meet the criteria in the Coastal Access Scheme.

However, there are places where it may not be entirely suitable for people with reduced mobility because:

- much of the trail is aligned along the top of seawalls. The surfaces of these are generally grass and this can be uneven and soft, particularly in wet weather;
- few of the metal pedestrian kissing gates along these seawalls are accessible by wheelchairs; and
- there are steps at Little Murston (section WSI-4-S002, map 4a) where the path goes around a flood gate.

See part 5a of the Overview - 'Recreational issues' - for more information.

Where we have proposed exercising our discretion:

The discretions referred to below are explained in more detail in chapter 5 of the Overview.

- 4.1.7 Estuary: This report proposes that the trail should include a route along The Swale Estuary and its tributaries: Faversham Creek; Oare Creek; Conyer Creek and Milton Creek, as far as the first public foot crossing points over these rivers. The Swale Estuary extends from Seasalter, which marks its eastern tidal extent, to a point west of this report stretch between Chetney Marshes and the Isle of Sheppey, which marks its western extent (see part 10 of the Overview). The trail covered by this chapter includes part of this estuary route.
- 4.1.8 Landward boundary of the coastal margin: We have used our discretion on some sections of the route to map the landward extent of the coastal margin to an adjacent physical boundary such as a fence line, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 4.2.1 below.

See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an explanation of the default extent of the coastal margin and how we may use our discretion to adjust the margin, either to add land or to provide clarity. See also Annex C of the Overview - 'Excepted land categories'.

- 4.1.9 Restrictions and/or exclusions: We have proposed to exclude access year round in certain places along this section of coast:
- From the intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh between Little Murston (map 4a) and Ridham Docks, Iwade (map 4b), as they are unsuitable for public access. This exclusion will not affect the route itself.

For details of this direction, see 4.3.10 in the Formal Proposals Section of this report and Map E and Part 9 of the Overview.

- 4.1.10 These directions will not prevent or affect:

- any other use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner, or by informal permission or traditional toleration.

- 4.1.11 Any such use continues unaffected by these arrangements.

- 4.1.12 However the directions are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the areas in question in view of:

- the hidden dangers of the mud flats and salt marshes to which new users of the land would be subject, because of the local patterns of tidal inundation and the hazardous nature of the substrate;

- 4.1.13 Access rights to the spreading room would be subject to the national restrictions on coastal access rights listed in Annex D of the Overview. These restrictions would not apply to public rights of way.

See part 9 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for details.

Establishment and ongoing management of the trail:

- 4.1.14 Some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary, in accordance with the general approach described in part 6 the Overview. Most of this length of trail is in good condition. Some minor repairs and upgrades will be carried out to the path surface and trail furniture prior to opening. There are no additional measures that we consider necessary to improve the safety or convenience of the trail on this length of coast.

- 4.1.15 Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 of the Overview.

See parts 6 - 'Physical establishment of the trail' and 7 - 'Maintenance of the trail' of the Overview for more information.

Future Change:

- 4.1.16 The proposed route will follow the seawall along the majority of this stretch and will therefore not be likely to be affected directly by shoreline erosion. However, the sections referred to below include those within the Environment Agency's Shoreline Management Plans and may in future 'rollback' as part of the future re-alignment options currently being identified within the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy. The trail is likely to be adjusted to follow any new seawall or re-alignment design when the existing flood bank is no longer viable as a walking route.

- 4.1.17 Part of the route of the trail on this length of coast would be able to change without further approval from the Secretary of State in response to coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes, or encroachment by the sea. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll back' set out in part 8 of the Overview. See tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 below for details of the sections likely to be affected in the foreseeable future.
- 4.1.18 At the time of preparing the report, we do not foresee any other need for future changes to the access provisions proposed for the length of coast described in this chapter.

See parts 5e - 'Coastal processes' and 8 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

Part 4.2: Commentary on Maps

See Part 3 of Overview for guidance on reading and understanding the tables below

4.2.1 Section Details – Maps 4a and 4b: Little Murston to Ridham Docks (Iwade)

Notes on table:

Column 5 – ‘Yes – normal’ means roll-back approach is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future.

Column 5 – ‘Yes – see table 4.2.2’ means refer to that table below about our likely approach to roll-back on this part of the route.

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	7
Maps	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 8 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 9 of Overview)
4a	WSI-4-S001	Public footpath	Grass	Yes – see table 4.2.2	Default: Landward edge of bank	Not used	Margin
	WSI-4-S002	Public footpath	Stone: Aggregate	Yes – see table 4.2.2	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
	WSI-4-S003 to WSI-4-S005	Public footpath	Grass	Yes – see table 4.2.2	Default: Landward edge of bank	Not used	Margin
	WSI-4-S006 and WSI-4-S007	Public footpath	Grass	Yes – see table 4.2.2	Fence	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WSI-4-S008	Public footpath	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Tree line	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WSI-4-S009 and WSI-4-S010	Public footpath	Grass	No	Fence behind scrub	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WSI-4-S011	Public footpath	Gravel	No	Bridge superstructure	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WSI-4-S012	Other existing walked route	Gravel	No	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
	WSI-4-S013	Other existing walked route	Grass/ gravel	No	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
	WSI-4-S014 to WSI-4-S018	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
	WSI-4-S019	Other existing walked route	Gravel	No	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
	WSI-4-S020 and WSI-4-S021	Other existing walked route	Gravel	No	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	WSI-4-S022 and WSI-4-S023	Public footpath	Gravel	No	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	WSI-4-S024 and WSI-4-S025	Public footpath	Gravel	Yes see table 4.2.2	Default: Landward edge of bank	Not used	Margin
	WSI-4-S026 and WSI-4-S028	Public footpath	Grass	No	Default: Landward edge of bank	Not used	Margin
4b	WSI-4-S029 to WSI-4-S030	Public footpath	Grass	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WSI-4-S031	Public footpath	Stone: Aggregate	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WSI-4-S032	Public footpath	Stone: Aggregate	No	Default: Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
	WSI-4-S033 to WSI-4-S035	Public footpath	Stone: Aggregate	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WSI-4-S036 to WSI-4-S038	Public footpath	Grass	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	Margin

4.2.2 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Map 4a: Little Murston to Kemsley Marshes

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Feature or site potentially affected	How we will manage roll-back in relation to this feature or site
4a	WSI-4-S001 to WSI-4-S007 and WSI-4-S024 to WSI-4-S025	Designated and local wildlife sites	<p>Stretches of seawall along this low lying coast have been identified for future ‘managed re-alignment’ within local Shoreline Management Plans. The exact locations are currently being defined within the Environment Agency’s Medway Estuary and Swale flood and coastal risk management strategy.</p> <p>The trail is likely to be adjusted to follow any new seawall or re-alignment design when the existing flood bank is no longer viable as a walking route.</p> <p>In doing this, we will choose a route after detailed discussions with the relevant wildlife experts and with any potentially affected owners or occupiers.</p> <p>In reaching this judgement we will have full regard to the need to seek a fair balance between the interests of potentially affected owners and occupiers and those of the public.</p>

In relation to all other sections where roll-back has been proposed, the trail is likely to be adjusted to follow the current feature (e.g. flood bank/beach) for the foreseeable future.

Part 4.3: Chapter 4 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 4a and 4b.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

Formal Proposals – Little Murston to Ridham Docks (Iwade)

Discretion to include an estuary

- 4.3.1 Natural England proposes to exercise its functions as if the sea included the estuarial waters of The Swale Estuary, including Milton Creek as far as the first pedestrian crossing point at the River Swale Bridge, as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map 4a.

Proposed route of the trail

- 4.3.2 In relation to route sections WSI-4-S008 to WSI-4-S023 and WSI-4-S026 to WSI-4-S038 the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on map 4a and 4b as the proposed route of the trail.
- 4.3.3 In relation to route sections WSI-4-S001 to WSI-4-S007 and WSI-4-S024 to WSI-4-S025, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on map 4a as the proposed route of the trail.
- 4.3.4 If at any time any part of a route section listed in the previous paragraph needs, in Natural England's view, to change as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea, in order for the overall route to remain viable, the new route for the part in question will be determined by Natural England without further reference to the Secretary of State. This will be done in accordance with the criteria and procedures described under the title 'Roll-back' in part 8 of the Overview and section 4.10 of the Coastal Access Scheme. If this happens, the new route will become the approved route for that section for the purposes of the Order which determines where coastal access rights apply.

Landward boundary of coastal margin

- 4.3.5 Adjacent to route section WSI-4-S006 to WSI-4-S007 and WSI-4-S009 to WSI-4-S010, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the fence line which at the time of writing this report is landward of the trail shown on map 4a.
- 4.3.6 Adjacent to route section WSI-4-S008, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the tree line which at the time of writing this report is landward of the trail shown on map 4a.
- 4.3.7 Adjacent to route section WSI-4-S011, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the bridge superstructure landward of the trail shown on map 4a.
- 4.3.8 Adjacent to route sections WSI-4-S029 to WSI-4-S031, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the fence line which at the time of writing this report is landward of the trail shown on map 4b.

4.3.9 Adjacent to route sections WSI-4-S033 to WSI-4-S038, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the fence line which at the time of writing this report is landward of the trail shown on map 4b.

Local restrictions and exclusions

4.3.10 Natural England proposes to exclude access relevant to this length of coast, as follows:

- New coastal access rights are to be excluded all year-round from the intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh, seaward of the route, along this length of coast at route sections WSI-4-S001 and WSI-4-S003 to WSI-4-S038 (maps 4a and 4b). This exclusion is proposed under s25A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as in our view the land is unsuitable for public access. This exclusion will not affect the route itself. See map E in the Overview for details.

Refer to Part 9 of the Overview for further details.

Alternative routes

4.3.11 There are no proposals for alternative routes in relation to this length of coast.



