

Chapter 1:

# Minehead to Hurlstone Combe

England Coast Path: Minehead to Combe Martin - Natural England's Proposals

## Part 1.1: Introduction

<b>Start Point:</b>	<b>Minehead</b> (grid reference: SS 9716 4679)
<b>End Point:</b>	<b>Hurlstone Combe</b> (grid reference: SS 8991 4894)
<b>Relevant Maps:</b>	<b>1a to 1g</b>

### Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

#### The Trail:

- 1.1.1 Follows the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed between Minehead and Burgundy Chapel Combe (route sections MCM-1-S001 to MCM-1-S010). The existing South West Coast Path generally follows public rights of way along these lengths. See maps 1a and 1b and associated table 1.2.1 below for more details.
- 1.1.2 Differs from the existing South West Coast Path along a 6km length between Burgundy Chapel Combe and Bossington Hill (route sections MCM-1-S011 to MCM-1-S015). This new length follows an existing walked route seaward of the existing South West Coast Path, known as the 'Rugged Path'. See maps 1c to 1f and associated table 1.2.2 below for details.
- 1.1.3 Also differs from the existing South West Coast Path along a 1.2km length around Hurlstone Point between Bossington Hill and the base of Hurlstone Combe (route sections MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022). This new length follows an existing walked route and public footpaths. See map 1g and associated table 1.2.2 below for more details.
- 1.1.4 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea. The new length of the England Coast Path (ECP) along the Rugged Path and around Hurlstone Point runs along the top of the coastal slope and has significantly improved views along the coastline.
- 1.1.5 For part of this chapter length we propose adopting the walked line of the South West Coast Path as the line of the England Coast Path. However, there are places where we have proposed improvements to the existing route line (along the Rugged Path and at Hurlstone Point), and furthermore there may be places where the walked line differs slightly from the route originally approved by the Secretary of State, as the path has evolved over time to cope with coastal erosion and other processes. In both

situations, as explained at part 5a of the Overview, assuming these proposals are approved we intend to use a separate variation report to the Secretary of State to change the route of the existing national trail to reflect the approved line of the England Coast Path insofar as the two are different.

1.1.6 This part of the coast includes the following sites, designated for nature conservation or heritage preservation (See map C of the Overview):

- Exmoor Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Exmoor Coastal Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- North Hill medieval farmstead Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM).

1.1.7 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. The levels and patterns of public access along this length of coast would be unlikely to change significantly as a result of our proposals and we have therefore concluded that our proposals would not be likely to have any significant impact on these features.

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 'Natural environment' for more information.**

#### **Accessibility:**

1.1.8 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, which makes use of existing paths wherever these meet the criteria in the Coastal Access Scheme. However, there are places where it may not be suitable for people with reduced mobility because:

- The trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path along the cliff top, including the 6.5km length of the Rugged Path (sections MCM-1-S011 to MCM-1-S015 and the 1.2km length around Hurlstone Point (sections MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022);
- There are steep gradients in places for example as the route ascends North Hill from Minehead or steps where it would be necessary to ascend or descend steep slopes for example where the route descends around Hurlstone Point.

1.1.9 Along the Rugged Path (route section MCM-1-S014), a new zig zag section will be installed, so as to make the steep slope up the bank more accessible and less hazardous in wet conditions. See map 1e for more details. At Hurlstone Point a short section of new route is to be cut into the rock to avoid a very steep slope and rough part along route section MCM-1-S018. We envisage this happening as part of the physical establishment work described in part 6 of the Overview.

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

#### **Where we have proposed exercising our discretion:**

1.1.10 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 tables 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 below).

- 1.1.11 At North Hill and Bossington Hill, we have used our discretion to propose the inclusion of additional, more extensive landward areas of Open Access land within the coastal margin, to secure or enhance public enjoyment of this part of the coast. The owners of these areas of land are content for us to propose this.

**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'.**

- 1.1.12 Restrictions and/or exclusions: 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. We have not used our discretion to propose any additional restrictions or exclusions on this part of the coast.

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

### **Establishment and ongoing management of the trail**

- 1.1.13 Where the trail follows the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed, there are no additional measures that we consider necessary to improve the safety or convenience of the trail on this length of coast.
- 1.1.14 For the 'Rugged Path' section between North Hill and Bossington Hill and the section around Hurlstone Point, some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary, in accordance with the general approach described in part 6 the Overview. This would include a new zig zag section along route section MCM-1-S014 and a short section of new route to be cut into the rock to avoid a very steep and rough part along route section MCM-1-S018. See maps 1e and 1g for more details.
- 1.1.15 Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 of the Overview. The overall need for this is likely to be greater than on some other parts of the stretch, recognising that it will be necessary for the route to roll back from time to time in response to coastal processes, as described below.

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

### **Future Change:**

- 1.1.16 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 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 below for details of the sections that may be affected in the foreseeable future.
- 1.1.17 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 1.2: Commentary on the maps

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

Table 1.2.1 includes sections of the trail that follow the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed. Table 1.2.2 includes sections of the trail that differ from the existing South West Coast Path.

### 1.2.1 Details for sections that follow the existing South West Coast Path: Maps 1a and 1b, Minehead to Burgundy Chapel Combe

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (\*) against the route section number means see also table 1.2.3: Other options considered.

Column 3 – ‘Yes – normal’ means roll-back approach is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future.

Column 3 – ‘Yes – see table 1.2.4’ means refer to that table below about our likely approach to roll-back on this part of the route.

1	2	3	4a	4b	5
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	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)
1a	MCM-1-S001	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	None
	MCM-1-S002	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	None
	MCM-1-S003	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	None
	MCM-1-S004	Yes – see table 1.2.5	Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
	MCM-1-S005	Yes - normal	Path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	MCM-1-S006	Yes - normal	Road	Clarity and cohesion	None
1b	MCM-1-S007	Yes - normal	Road	Clarity and cohesion	None
	MCM-1-S008* and MCM-1-S009*	Yes - normal	Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
	MCM-1-S010*	Yes - normal	Various	Additional landward area	None

### 1.2.2 Details for sections that differ from the existing South West Coast Path: Maps 1c to 1g, Burgundy Chapel Combe to Hurlstone Combe

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (\*) against the route section number means see also table 1.2.3: Other options considered.

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 1.2.4’ 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
Map(s)	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)
1c	MCM-1-S011*	Other existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Road	Additional landward area	None
	MCM-1-S012*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Fence line	Additional landward area	None
1d	MCM-1-S013*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Fence line	Additional landward area	None
1e & 1f	MCM-1-S014*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Various	Additional landward area	None
1f	MCM-1-S015*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Various	Additional landward area	None

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	7
Map(s)	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)
1g	MCM-1-S016*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Various	Additional landward area	None
	MCM-1-S017* to MCM-1-S020*	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Various	Additional landward area	None
	MCM-1-S021*	Public footpath	Concrete	Yes - normal	Various	Additional landward area	None
	MCM-1-S022*	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Various	Additional landward area	None

### 1.2.3 Other options considered: Maps 1b to 1g, Culver Cliff to Hurlstone Combe

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
1b	MCM-1-S008 to MCM-1-S010	We considered aligning the trail seaward along the existing public footpath between Greenleigh Farm and Burgundy Chapel and then rising up alongside Burgundy Chapel Combe.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the steep gradient and terrain in the Burgundy Chapel and Burgundy Chapel Combe area is not suitable to form part of the designated trail;</li> <li>under our proposals, this area and the public footpath would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room.</li> </ul>
1b to 1g	MCM-1-S010 to MCM-1-S022	We considered various options in relation to landward extent of margin over existing CROW access land in consultation with the relevant owners and occupiers	We opted for the proposed extent of landward margin because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>we concluded that this would strike the best balance in terms of the criteria described in section 4.8 of the Coastal Access Scheme – to make the extent of people’s access rights clearer or more cohesive on the ground. Our decision was made to best suit the local circumstances and after having taken into consideration the views of the relevant owners and occupiers to either include or exclude additional CROW access land as part of the coastal margin.</li> </ul>
1g	MCM-1-S016 to MCM-1-S022	We considered aligning the trail along the route of the existing South West Coast Path at Hurlstone Combe.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the steep gradient and terrain, particularly at the top of Hurlstone Combe means that at certain times of the year, the surface can become muddy and slippery underfoot;</li> <li>it adheres more closely with the periphery of the coast and there are significantly improved views of the sea by taking the route around Hurlstone Point;</li> <li>under our proposals, this area and the public footpath along Hurlstone Combe would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room.</li> </ul>

### 1.2.4 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Map 1a, Minehead to Culver Cliff

Map(s)	Section numbers(s)	Feature or site potentially affected	How we will manage roll-back in relation to this feature or site
1a	MCM-1-S004	Open land at Culvercliffe Green	If it is no longer possible to route the trail along the existing public footpath through Culvercliffe Green (an area of excepted land as it is used as a park) we will aim to find a route landward of it within the park following discussions with the owners.

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. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future.

## Part 1.3: Chapter 1 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 1a to 1g.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

### Formal Proposals – Minehead to Hurlstone Combe

#### Proposed route of the trail

- 1.3.1 In relation to route sections MCM-1-S001 to MCM-1-S003, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on map 1a as the proposed route of the trail.
- 1.3.2 In relation to route sections MCM-1-S004 to MCM-1-S022, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 1a to 1g as the proposed route of the trail.
- 1.3.3 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.

#### Proposed route of the trail

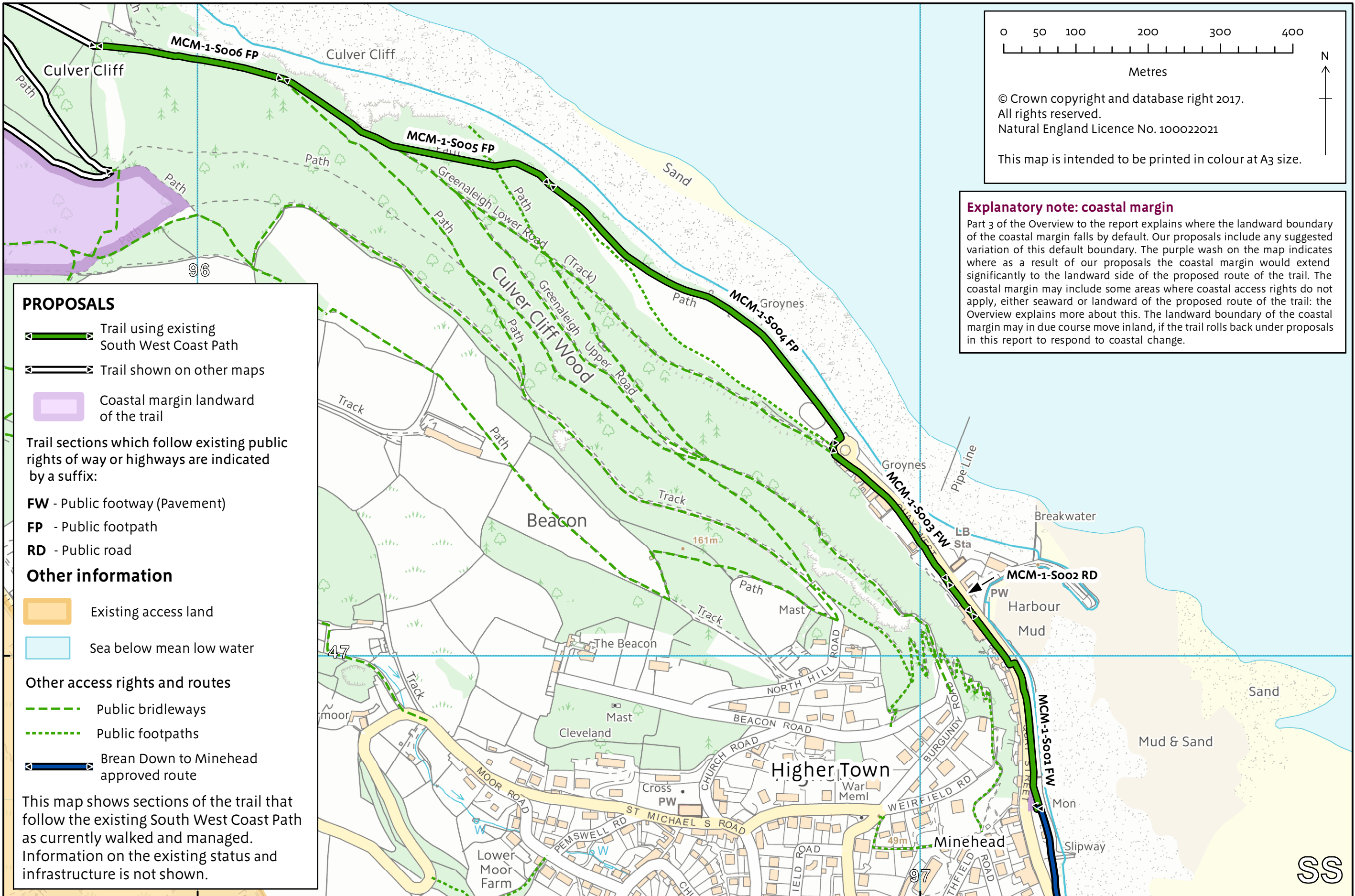
- 1.3.4 Adjacent to route sections MCM-1-S001 and MCM-1-S003, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the pavement shown as the trail on map 1a.
- 1.3.5 Adjacent to route sections MCM-1-S002 and MCM-1-S006 to MCM-1-S007, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the road shown as the trail on maps 1a and 1b.
- 1.3.6 Adjacent to route section MCM-1-S005, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the path shown as the trail on map 1a.
- 1.3.7 Adjacent to route sections MCM-1-S010 and MCM-1-S014 to MCM-1-S022, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with various boundary features, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on maps 1b and 1e to 1g.
- 1.3.8 Adjacent to route section MCM-1-S011, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the existing road, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 1c.
- 1.3.9 Adjacent to route sections MCM-1-S012 and MCM-1-S013, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the existing fence line, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on maps 1c and 1d.

#### Local restrictions and exclusions

- 1.3.10 At the time of writing this report, there are no proposals for local restrictions or exclusions in relation to this length of coast.

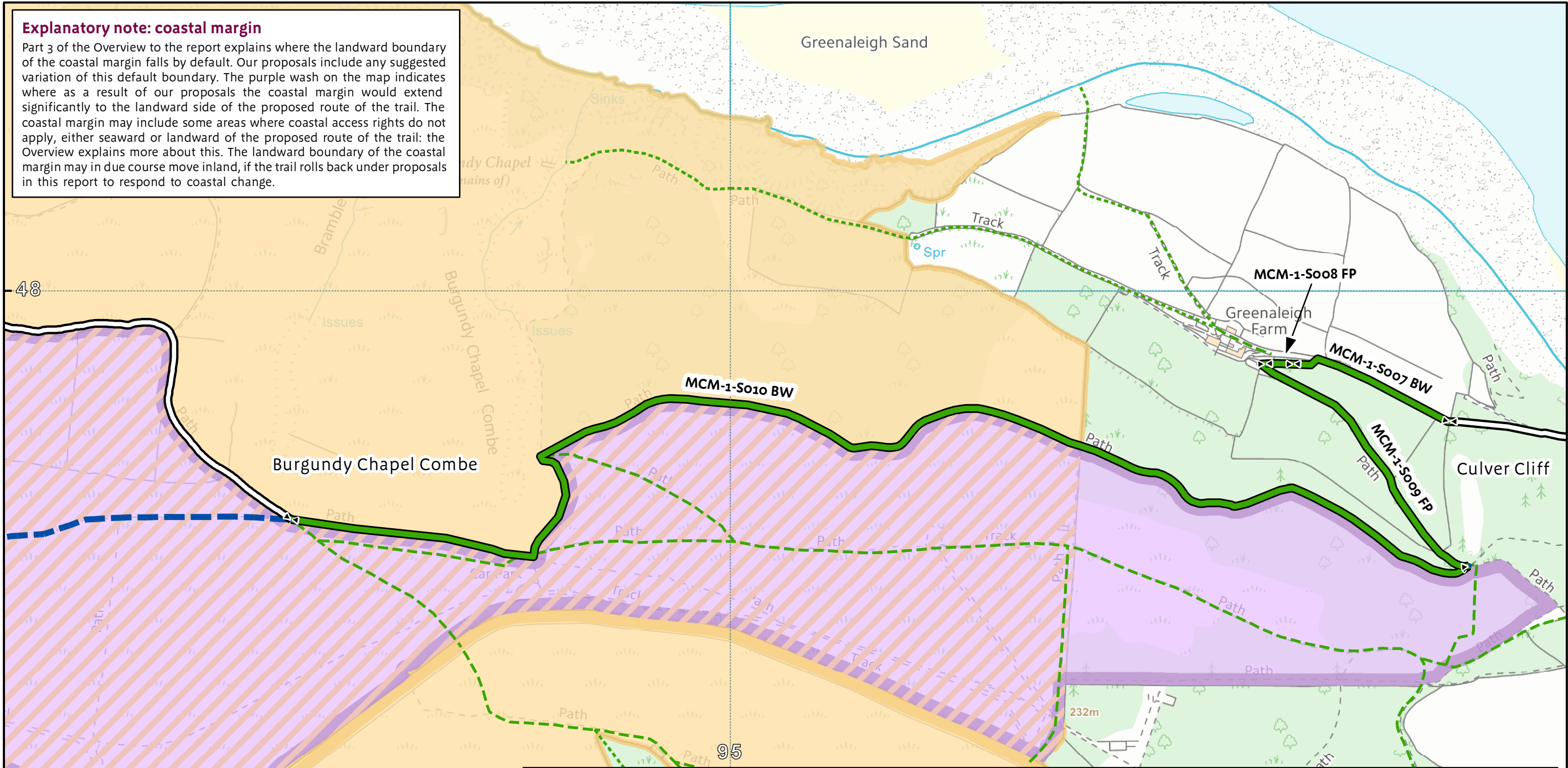
#### Alternative routes

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



**Explanatory note: coastal margin**

Part 3 of the Overview to the report explains where the landward boundary of the coastal margin falls by default. Our proposals include any suggested variation of this default boundary. The purple wash on the map indicates where as a result of our proposals the coastal margin would extend significantly to the landward side of the proposed route of the trail. The coastal margin may include some areas where coastal access rights do not apply, either seaward or landward of the proposed route of the trail: the Overview explains more about this. The landward boundary of the coastal margin may in due course move inland, if the trail rolls back under proposals in this report to respond to coastal change.



**PROPOSALS**

- Trail using existing South West Coast Path
- Trail shown on other maps
- Coastal margin landward of the trail
- Coastal margin landward of the trail which is existing access land

Trail sections which follow existing public rights of way or highways are indicated by a suffix:

- BW** - Public bridleway
- FP** - Public footpath

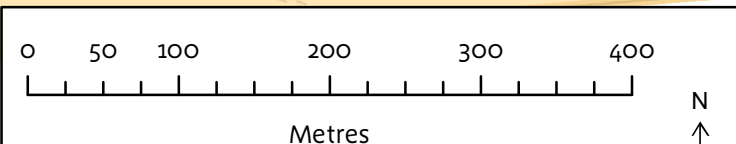
**Other information**

- Existing access land
- Sea below mean low water

**Other access rights and routes**

- Public bridleways
- Public footpaths
- South West Coast Path

This map shows sections of the trail that follow the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed. Information on the existing status and infrastructure is not shown.

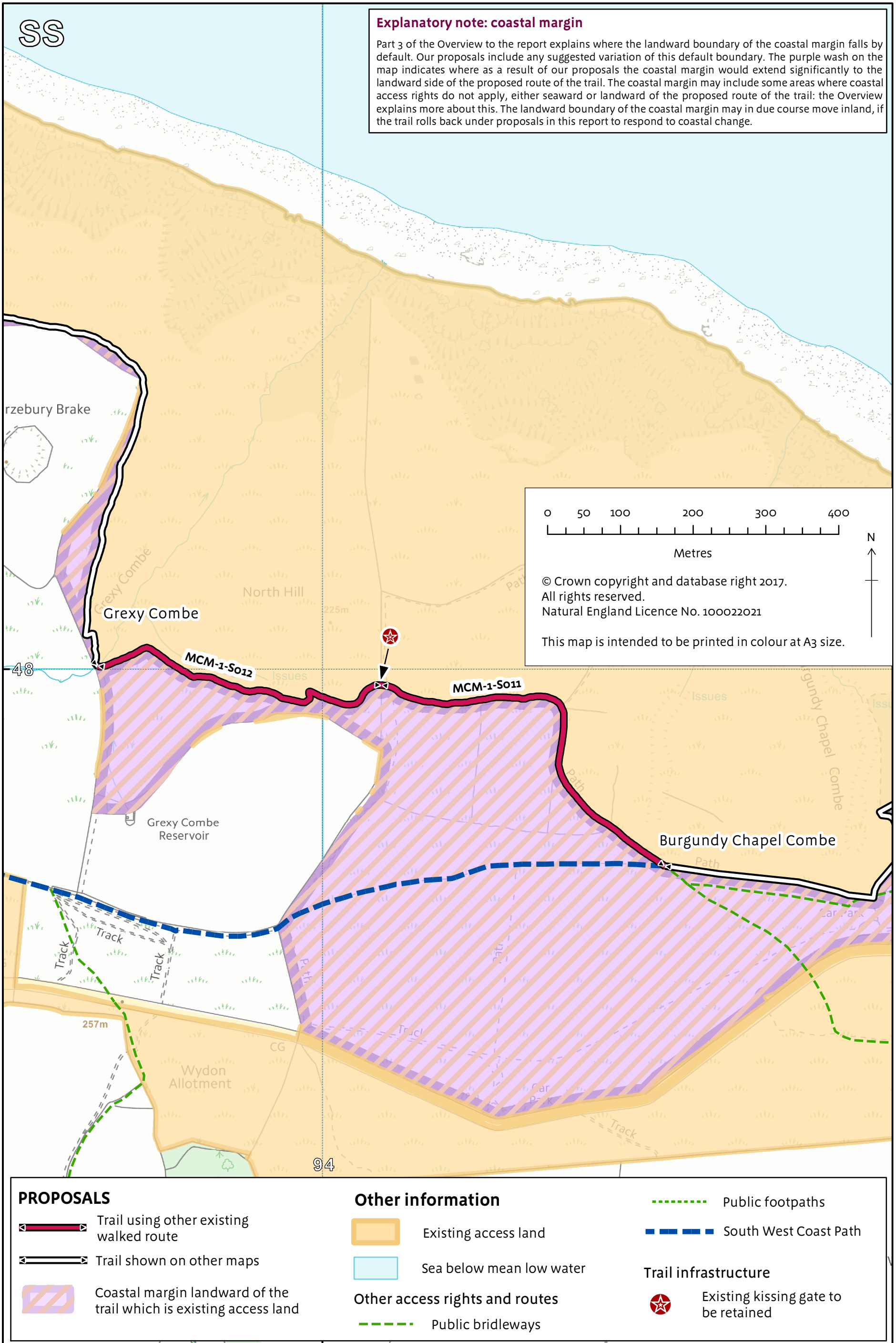


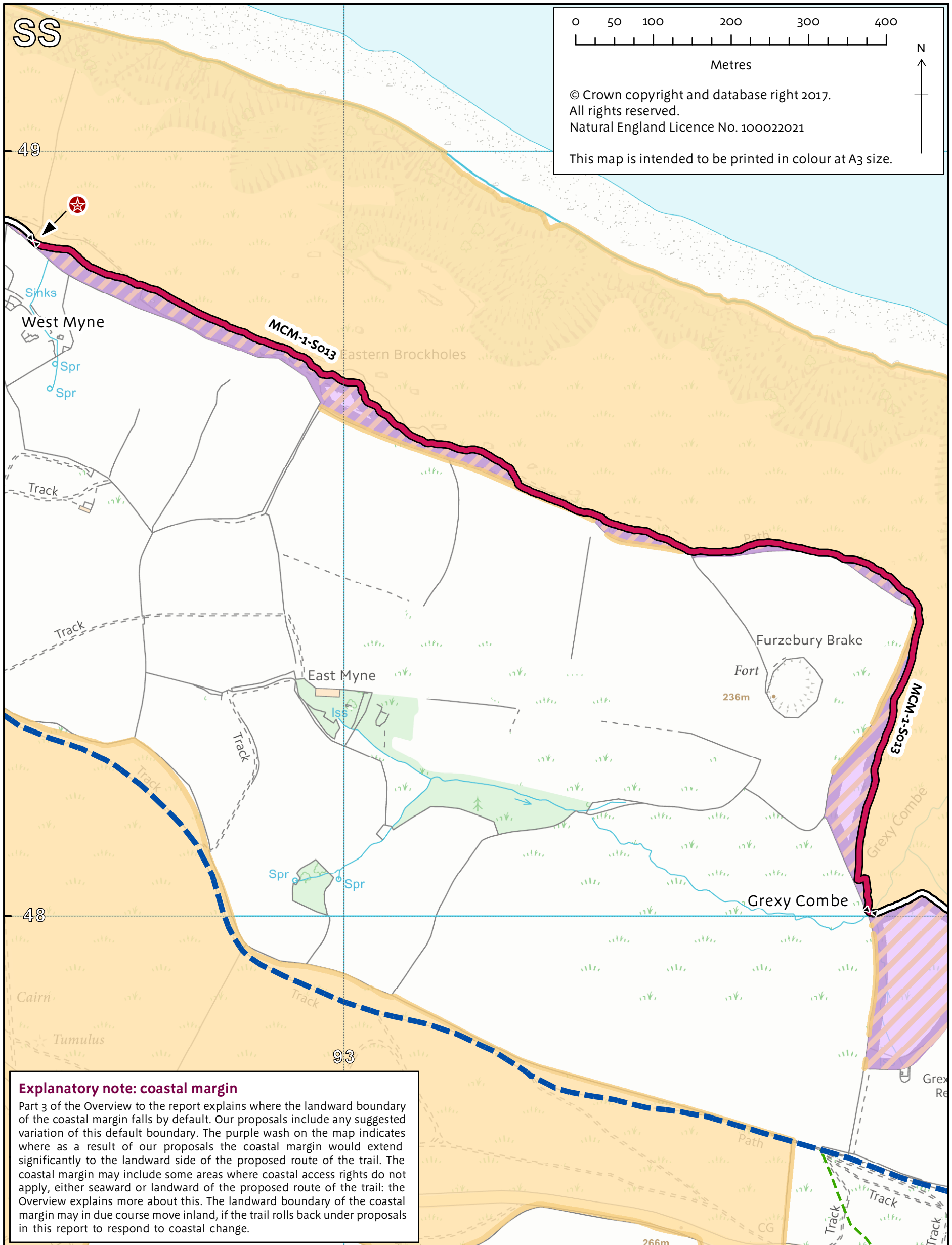
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This map is intended to be printed in colour at A3 size.









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<b>PROPOSALS</b>			<b>Other information</b>			<b>Other access rights and routes</b>		
	Trail using other existing walked route			Existing access land			Public bridleways	
	Trail shown on other maps			Sea below mean low water			South West Coast Path	
	Coastal margin landward of the trail which is existing access land						Trail infrastructure	
							Existing kissing gate to be retained	

