England Coast Path Stretch: Grain to Woolwich



Report GWO 4: Botany Marshes to Dartford Marshes

Part 4.1: Introduction

Start Point: Botany Marshes (Grid reference 561306 175289) End Point: Dartford Marshes (Grid reference 555348 177135) GWO 4a to GWO 4e **Relevant Maps:**

- 4.1.1 This is one of a series of linked but legally separate reports published by Natural England under section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which make proposals to the Secretary of State for improved public access along and to this stretch of coast between Grain and Woolwich.
- 4.1.2 This report covers length GWO 4 of the stretch, which is the coast between Grain and Woolwich. It makes free-standing statutory proposals for this part of the stretch, and seeks approval for them by the Secretary of State in their own right under section 52 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 4.1.3 The report explains how we propose to implement the England Coast Path ("the trail") on this part of the stretch, and details the likely consequences in terms of the wider 'Coastal Margin' that will be created if our proposals are approved by the Secretary of State. Our report also sets out:
 - any proposals we think are necessary for restricting or excluding coastal access rights to address particular issues, in line with the powers in the legislation; and
 - any proposed powers for the trail to be capable of being relocated on particular sections ("rollback"), if this proves necessary in the future because of coastal change.
- 4.1.4 There is also a single Overview document for the whole of this stretch of coast, explaining common principles and background. This and the other individual reports relating to the stretch should be read in conjunction with the Overview. The Overview explains, among other things, how we have considered any potential environmental impacts of improving public access to this part of the coast, and this report, and other separately published assessments we refer to, then provides more detail on these aspects where appropriate.

Part 4.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

- 4.2.1 Generally follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way, along most of this length.
- 4.2.2 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea.
- 4.2.3 Includes six sections of new path, at Swanscombe Peninsular. See maps GWO 4a and GWO 4b and associated tables below for details.
- 4.2.4 In some areas (GWO-4-S001 to GWO-4-S006, GWO-4-S026 to GWO-4-S031 and GWO-4-S033 to GWO-4-S040) significant inland diversions are necessary to take the trail past industrial units and commercial areas near Greenhithe (Map GWO 4c) as well as avoiding the water treatment plant at Swanscombe Peninsular (Map GWO 4a).

Protection of the environment:

- 4.2.5 The following designated sites affect this length of coast (See Overview Maps C):
 - Swanscombe proposed Marine Conservation Zone (pMCZ)
- 4.2.6 We consider that the coastal environment along this length of coast is unlikely to be sensitive to the improvements to coastal access envisaged and that no special measures are needed in respect of our proposals.
- 4.2.7 Natural England is satisfied that the proposals for coastal access in this report are made in accordance with relevant environmental protection legislation. For more information about how we came to this conclusion in respect of the natural environment; see the following assessment of the access proposals that we have published separately:
 - Our Nature Conservation Assessment, in which we document our conclusions in relation to other potential impacts on nature conservation.

Part 6b of the Overview includes some contextual information about protecting the environment along this length of coast.

Accessibility:

- 4.2.8 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route. However, the natural coastal terrain is often challenging for people with reduced mobility and this is the case on sections of our proposed route because:
 - The trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path around Swanscombe Peninsular;
 - There are steps in places where it would be necessary to ascend/descend.
- 4.2.9 At various locations, existing steps and some path surfaces will be improved, so as to make them easier to use. We envisage this happening as part of the physical establishment work described below.

See part 6a of the Overview - 'Recreational issues' - for more information.

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

4.2.10 **Estuary**: This report proposes that the trail should contain sections aligned on the estuary of the River Thames and its tributaries, extending upstream from the open coast. Natural England proposes to exercise its functions as if the sea included the estuarial waters of that river as far as the Woolwich Foot Tunnel in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map GWO 6h.

See part 5 of the Overview for a detailed analysis of the options considered for this estuary and our resulting proposals.

- 4.2.11 **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 path edge, promenade edge or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 4.3.1 below.
- 4.2.12 The Proposals Tables show where we are proposing to alter the default landward boundary of the coastal margin. These proposals are set out in columns 5b and 5c of table 4.3.1. Where these columns are left blank, we are making no such proposals, so the default landward boundary applies. See the note relating to Columns 5b & 5c (above Table 4.3.1) explaining what this means in practice.

See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for a more detailed 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.

4.2.13 **Restrictions and/or exclusions:** We have proposed to exclude access by direction under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) in certain places along this section of coast.

Exclusion of access to the mudflat between Botany Marshes and Dartford Marshes.

- 4.2.14 Access to the mudflat and saltmarsh in the coastal margin seaward of the route sections GWO-4-S001 to GWO-4-S056 is to be excluded all year round by direction under s25A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as it is unsuitable for public access. The exclusion does not affect the route itself and will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply. See Directions Maps GWO 4A and 4B.
- 4.2.15 The mudflat in this area is soft and sinking. It does not provide a safe walking surface and is subject to frequent tidal inundation. RNLI and Coastguard data indicates incidents of people being rescued from the mud.

Exclusion of access at Swanscombe Peninsular

- 4.2.16 Access is to be excluded by direction all year-round in the coastal margin at Swanscombe Peninsula, adjacent to route sections GWO-4-S004 to GWO-4-S007 under Section 25(1)(b) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) for the purpose of ensuring public safety from contaminated ground and surface water from a historic landfill site. This exclusion will not affect the route itself and will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply. See Directions Map GWO 4A.
- 4.2.17 The historic landfill in this area comprises of cement kiln dust (CKD) buried under top-soil. The areas proposed for a direction could experience concentrated amounts of CKD leachate following heavy rain.
- 4.2.18 These directions will not prevent or affect:
 - any existing local use of the land by right: such use is not covered by coastal access rights;
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- any other use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner, or by informal permission or traditional toleration; or
- use of any registered rights of common or any rights at common law or by Royal Charter etc.

Any such use is not prohibited or limited by these arrangements.

4.2.19 The directions we give under section 25A are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the areas in question in view of the hidden dangers of mudflats.

See part 8 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for a summary for the entire stretch.

4.2.20 **Coastal erosion:** Natural England is able to propose that the route of the trail would be able to change in the future, without further approval from the Secretary of State, in response to coastal change. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll-back' set out in part 7 of the Overview.

Natural England may only propose the use of this roll-back power:

- as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea,
 or
- in order to link with other parts of the route that need to roll back in direct response to such changes.
- 4.2.21 Column 4 of tables 4.3.1 indicates where roll-back has been proposed in relation to a route section. Where this is the case, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps GWO 4a, GWO 4b and GWO 4e as the proposed route of the trail.
- 4.2.22 If at any time in the future any part of a route section upon which roll-back has been specified needs, in Natural England's view, to change 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 7 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.
- 4.2.23 On sections for which roll-back is <u>not</u> proposed in table 4.3.1, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps GWO 4a to GWO 4e as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

- 4.2.24 There are also places described in this report where we foresee the need for future changes to the proposed access provisions.
- 4.2.25 At the time of preparing the report, we foresee the need for changes to the access provisions at Ingress Park and Swanscombe Peninsular (Maps GWO 4a and GWO 4b) if planning consent is granted for residential and commercial development. This is likely to happen within the next 10 years. These changes are summarised at part 7 of the Overview.

See parts 7 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

Establishment of the trail:

4.2.26 Below we summarise how our proposed route for the trail would be physically established to make it ready for public use before any new rights come into force.

Establishment works will only start on this length of coast once these proposals have been approved by the Secretary of State. The works may therefore either precede or follow the start of establishment works on other lengths of coast within the stretch, and detailed in their separate reports.

4.2.27 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is £18,454 and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority, Kent County Council, in relation to the management of the existing public rights of way;
- the conclusions of our deliberations in relation to potential impacts on the environment; and
- information gathered while visiting affected land and talking to the people who own and manage it about the options for the route.
- 4.2.28 There are four main elements to the overall cost:
 - New Signs: A number of new signs would be needed on the trail, in particular on route sections where the proposed route differs from that of the existing public right of way network. New interpretation panels are required to manage the access exclusions at Swanscombe Peninsular.
 - New steps and a sleeper bridge will be installed where we are proposing new access in order to improve accessibility.
 - New gates and barriers are needed where we are introducing new access to take into account the adjacent land use.
 - New surfacing: There is one place where we will need to clear vegetation to create a new route and another where we need to carry out surfacing works where it is unsatisfactory at present. The surfaces and access furniture of the existing paths and footways on the rest of the proposed route are generally of a suitable standard for the trail.

Significant infrastructure items are shown on the relevant maps accompanying this report. Table 1 shows our estimate of the capital cost for each of the main elements of physical establishment described above.

Table 1: Estimate of capital costs

Item	Cost
Signs & interpretation	£6750
Steps & sleeper bridge	£2000
Gates & barriers	£1360
Surfacing works	£5937
Project management	£2407

Total £18,454 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

4.2.29 Once the Secretary of State's decision on our report has been notified, and further to our conversations with land managers during the route planning stage, Kent County Council will liaise with affected land owners and occupiers about relevant aspects of the design, installation and maintenance of the new signs and infrastructure that are needed on their land. Prior to works being carried out on the ground, all necessary permissions, authorisations and consents will be obtained. All such works would

conform to the published standards for National Trails and the other criteria described in our Coastal Access Scheme.

Maintenance of the trail:

- 4.2.30 Because the trail on this length of coast will form part of the National Trail being created around the whole coast of England called the England Coast Path, we envisage that it will be maintained to the same high quality standards as other National Trails in England (see The New Deal; Management of National Trails in England from April 2013: details at Annex A of the Overview).
- 4.2.31 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £3,324 (exclusive of any VAT payable). In developing this estimate we have taken account of the formula used to calculate Natural England's contribution to the maintenance of other National Trails.

Part 4.3: Proposals Tables

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

4.3.1 Section Details - Maps 4a to 4e: Botany Marshes to Dartford Marshes

Key notes on table:

- 1. Column 2 an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 4.3.2: Other options considered.
- 2. Column 4 'No' means no roll-back is proposed for this route section. 'Yes normal' means roll-back is proposed and is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.
- 3. Column 5a Certain coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail if they touch it at some point. The relevant land type (foreshore, cliff, bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or section 15 land see Glossary) is shown in this column where appropriate. "No" means none present on this route section.
- 4. Columns 5b and 5c Any entry in these columns means we are proposing to align the landward boundary of the coastal margin on this route section with the physical feature(s) shown in 5b, for the reason in 5c. No text here means that for this route section the landward edge of the margin would be that of the trail itself or if any default coastal land type is shown in 5a, that would be its landward boundary instead.

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number (s)	Current status of route section(s)		Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S001*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S002	Public footpath	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S003* and GWO-4- S004*	Not an existing walked route	No	No			
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S005*	Not an existing walked route	No	No	Track edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S006*	Not an existing walked route	No	No	Track edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S007*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - normal	Yes - barrier			

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number (s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed ? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S008*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - normal	No	Track edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S009*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S010*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Road edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S011	Public footpath	Yes - Normal	No			
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S012	Public footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S013	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S014 and GWO-4- S015	Other existing walked route	No	Yes- barrier	Promenade edge	Clarity and cohesion	It is not clear where the edge of the barrier is on the ground.
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S016 to GWO-4- S020	Other existing walked route	No	Yes - barrier	Promenade edge	Clarity and cohesion	It is not clear where the edge of the barrier is on the ground.
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S021	Other existing walked route	No	No	Road edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4b	GWO-4- S022	Other existing walked route	No	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S023 to GWO-4- S024	Other existing walked route	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S025	Other existing walked route	No	No	Promenade edge	Clarity and cohesion	

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number (s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed ? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S026	Other existing walked route	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S027 to GWO-4- S029	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S030 to GWO-4- S031	Other existing walked route	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S032	Other existing walked route	No	No	Promenade edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S033	Other existing walked route	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S034	Public footpath	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S035	Public footpath	No	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S036 to GWO-4- S038	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S039	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S040 to GWO-4- S043	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - bank			
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S044	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	No	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	
GWO 4c	GWO-4- S045	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - bank			
GWO 4d	GWO-4- S046 to GWO-4- S047	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - bank			

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number (s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed ? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
GWO 4d	GWO-4- S048 to GWO-4- S050	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - bank	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	The fence line provides a clearer boundary than the landward edge of bank (which extends beyond the fence line).
GWO 4d	GWO-4- S051*	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - bank	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	The fence line provides a clearer boundary than the landward edge of bank (which extends beyond the fence line).
GWO 4e	GWO-4- S052	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - barrier	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	It is not clear where the edge of the barrier is on the ground.
GWO 4e	GWO-4- S053	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - barrier	Path edge	Clarity and cohesion	It is not clear where the edge of the barrier is on the ground.
GWO 4e	GWO-4- S054	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - barrier			
GWO 4e	GWO-4- S055	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	Yes - barrier			
GWO 4e	GWO-4- S056	Cycle track (pedestrian)	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			

4.3.2 Other options considered: Maps 4a to 4e: Botany Marshes to Dartford Marshes

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S001	We considered aligning the trail on the public footpath that runs seaward of the proposed trail.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it is more convenient and safer as the public footpath is situated along a road frequently used by HGVs we concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme
GWO 4a and GWO 4b	GWO-4- S003 to GWO-4- S010	We considered aligning the trail along the most coastal route utilising existing tracks and public footpaths around the north of Swanscombe peninsular.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it is acceptable from a public safety perspective having considered the legacy of cement kiln dust landfill and the leachate treatment water bodies on the site it avoids the key area for wintering birds considering the constraints above, the proposed route is the closest to the coast and maintains views of the sea the public footpath near Bell Wharf is partially obstructed by hoarding and scrub and includes steps. Kent County Council has advised that our proposed route follows the walked route and therefore their preferred alignment we concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S003 to GWO-4- S007	We considered aligning the trail along the existing public footpath that runs east/west landward of the proposed route.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it closer to the coast and has better views of the sea we concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
GWO 4a	GWO-4- S003 to GWO-4- S006	We considered aligning the trail inland from the industrial depots and water bodies, utilising the east-west footpath and a track that runs north-south through the centre of the peninsula to the westernmost section of GWO-4-S006.	perspective having considered the legacy of cement kiln dust landfill and the leachate treatment water bodies on the site
GWO 4d	GWO-4- S051	We considered aligning the trail along the public footpath. No other options were identified for the trail in relation to this map.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it offers a well surfaced route with elevated views the public footpath is on low lying land and is partially obstructed by a jetty we concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme

Note: Any public rights of way not forming part of the proposed trail would remain available for people to use under their pre-existing rights.

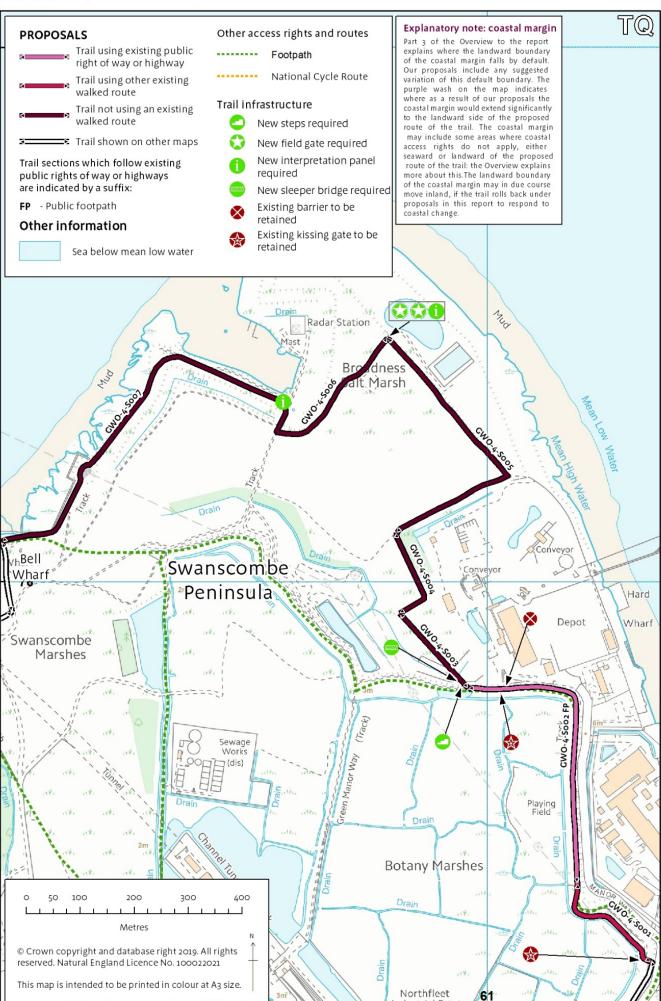
Part 4.4: Proposals Maps

4.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
GWO 4a	Botany Marshes to Bell Wharf
GWO 4b	Bell Wharf to Greenhithe
GWO 4c	Greenhithe to Stone Marshes
GWO 4d	Stone Marshes to Littlebrook Power Station
GWO 4e	Littlebrook Power Station to Dartford Marshes
Directions Map GWO 4A	Directions for Report GWO 4: Botany Marshes to Dartford Marshes
Directions Map GWO 4B	Directions for Report GWO 4: Botany Marshes to Dartford Marshes



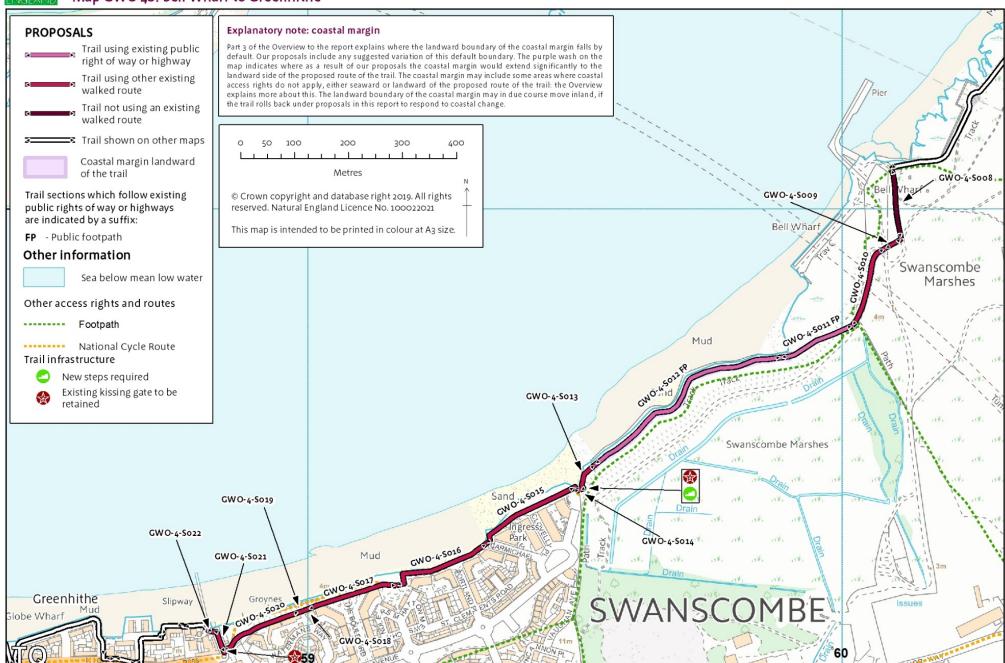
Map GWO 4a: Botany Marshes to Bell Wharf





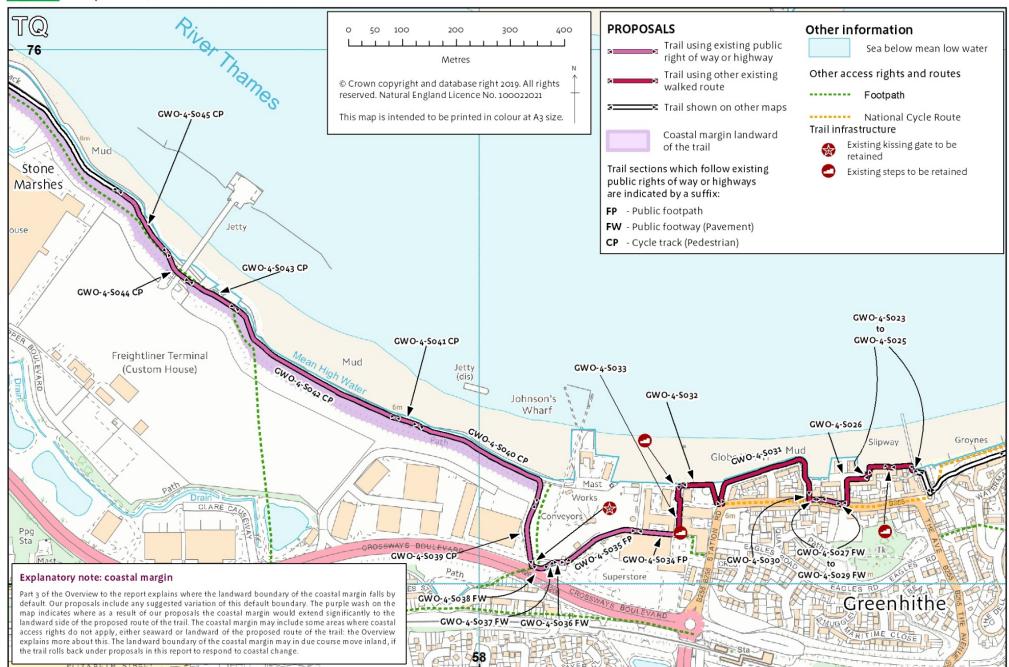
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Map GWO 4b: Bell Wharf to Greenhithe



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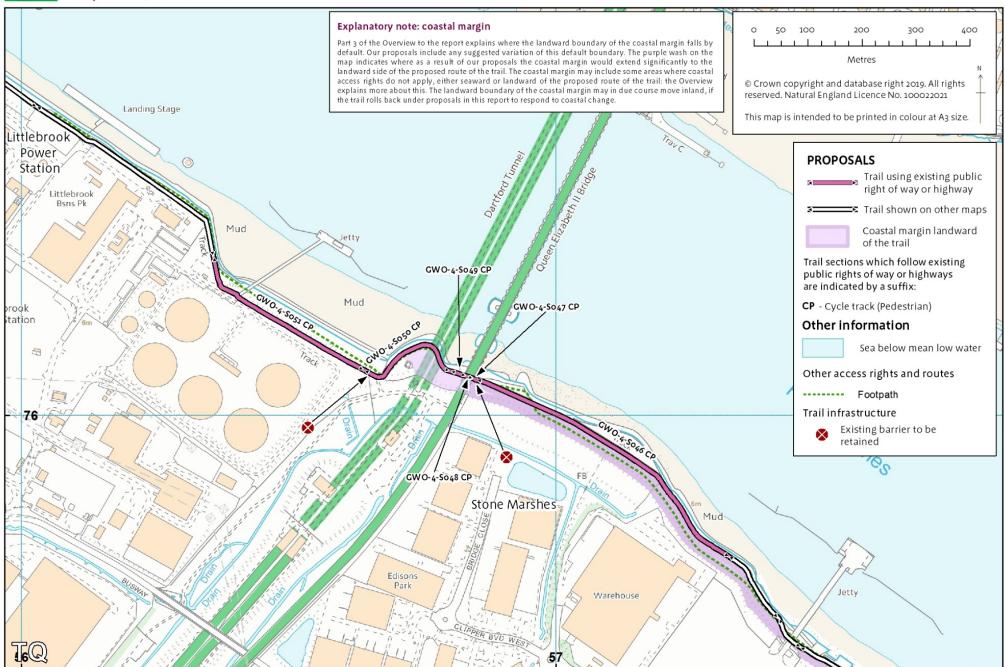
Map GWO 4c: Greenhithe to Stone Marshes





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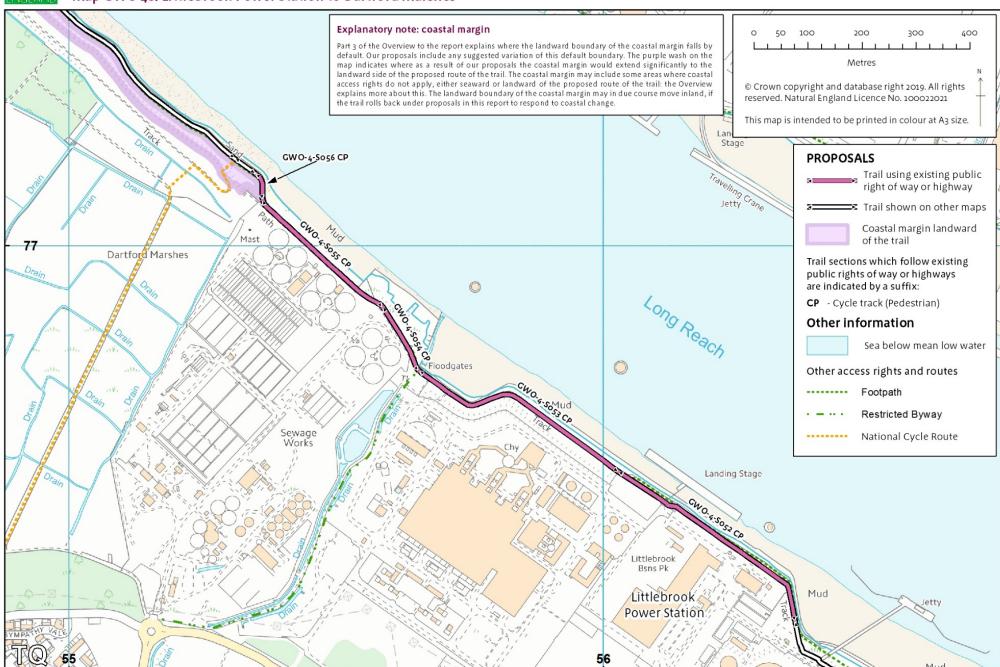
Map GWO 4d: Stone Marshes to Littlebrook Power Station





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Map GWO 4e: Littlebrook Power Station to Dartford Marshes

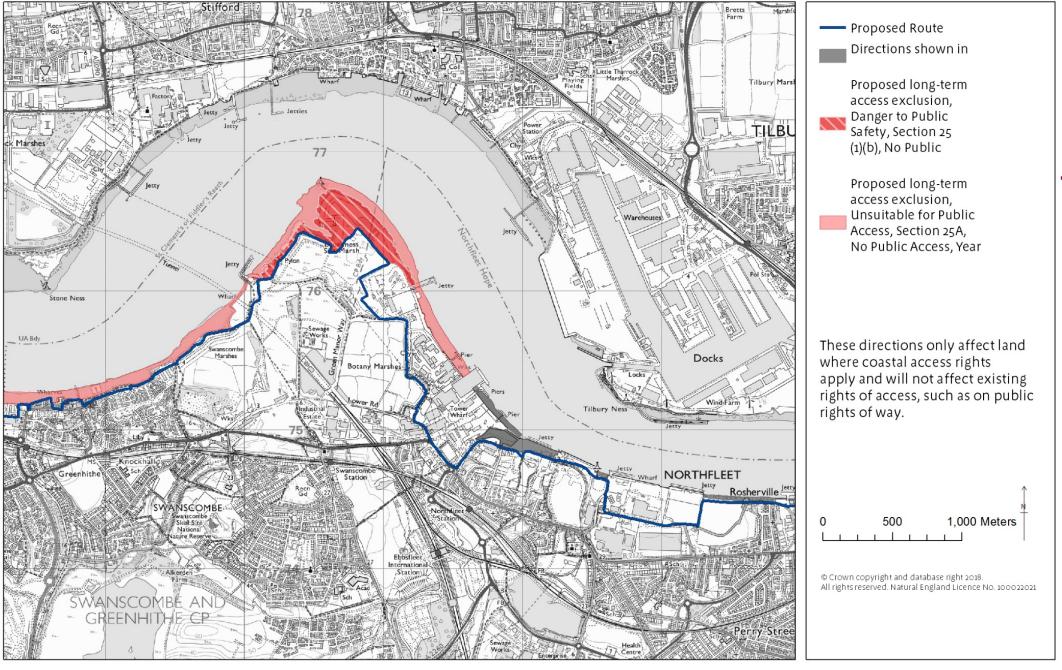




Coastal Access - Grain to Woolwich - Natural England's Proposals

Report GWO 4: Botany Marshes to Dartford Marshes

Directions Map GWO 4A





Coastal Access - Grain to Woolwich - Natural England's Proposals

Report GWO 5: Dartford Marshes to Erith Saltings

Directions Map GWO 5A

