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England Coast Path Stretch: Aust to Brean Down



Report ABD 9: Uphill Beach to Brean Cross Sluice

Part 9.1: Introduction

Start Point: Uphill Beach car park (grid reference: ST 3116 5881)

End Point: Brean Cross Sluice (grid reference: ST 3086 5623)

Relevant Maps: ABD 9a to ABD 9b

9.1.1. 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 Aust to Brean Down.

9.1.2 This report covers length ABD 9 of the stretch, which is the coast between Uphill Beach and Brean Cross Sluice. 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.

9.1.3 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.

9.1.4 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 9.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

9.2.1 Follows existing walked routes including public rights of way and permissive paths except as described in paragraph 9.2.3 below.

9.2.2 Is aligned along the beach between Uphill Beach Car Park (ABD-9-S001) and the disused River Axe passenger ferry crossing point (ABD-9-S006). See map ABD 9a.

9.2.3 At Walborough Nature Reserve (ABD-9-S019) will comprise a new section of path connecting the multi-user route with the inner floodbank around Bleadon Levels. See map ADB 9a.

Protection of the environment:

9.2.4 In this part of the report, we explain how we have taken account of environmental protection objectives in developing our proposals for improved coastal access.

9.2.5 The following designated sites affect this length of coast:

- Severn Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Mendip Limestone Grasslands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Severn Estuary Ramsar site
- Severn Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Uphill Cliff SSSI
- Scheduled Monument: Bell barrow 650m south-west of Uphill Farm

The following table brings together design features included in our access proposals to help to protect the environment along this length of the coast.

9.2.6 Measures to protect the environment

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S001	Notice on the route, explaining sensitivity of roosting birds to disturbance and asking people to avoid exercising dogs on the beach at high tide during key periods.	To reduce disturbance to non- breeding waterbirds roosting on the beach by recreational users. The waterbirds are sensitive to disturbance and are part of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area for birds.

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S004 and ABD-9- S007	 The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: Coastal access rights would be excluded over the lower saltmarsh and flats (see paragraph 9.2.14 and Directions Map ABD 9A In addition, we will install notices on the route, explaining the sensitivity and asking people to keep to the path in those places and keep their dogs with them, using a lead if necessary. 	To reduce disturbance to non- breeding waterbirds feeding and roosting on the river by recreational users. The waterbirds are sensitive to disturbance and are part of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area for birds.
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S012 to ABD-9- S0016	 The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: The trail is aligned along the surfaced multi-user route landward of Walborough saltmarsh (see table 9.3.2 other options considered) Coastal access rights would be excluded over the lower saltmarsh and flats (see paragraph 9.2.14 and Directions Map ABD 9A. In addition, we will install a notice promoting Walborough saltmarsh as a refuge for waterbirds and discouraging people from entering the fenced enclosure. 	To avoid increased disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds feeding and roosting on the river by recreational users. The waterbirds are sensitive to disturbance and are part of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area for birds.
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S017 to ABD-9- S019	 The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: The trail is aligned along the surfaced multi-user route landward of Walborough Hill (see table 9.3.2 other options considered). In addition, we will replace the existing interpretation board beside 	To avoid increased footfall to the limestone grassland closer to the river. The grassland is sensitive to trampling and forms part of the Mendip Limestone Grasslands Special Area of Conservation.

Map(s) Route section number(s)		Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
		the route, which explains the conservation interest and sensitivity of the grassland.	
ABD 9b	ABD-9- S020 to ABD-9- S028	 The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: The trail is aligned landward of Bleadon Sewage Treatment Works (see table 9.3.2 other options considered) Coastal access rights would be excluded over the lower saltmarsh and flats (see paragraph 9.2.14 and map Directions Map ABD 9A. Coastal Access rights would be excluded from the section of riverbank that runs alongside the treatment works, for land management reasons (see paragraph 9.2.16 and Directions Map ABD 9A. In addition, we will install: Notices on route sections ABD-9-S020 and ABD-9-S023 to promote the saltmarsh closer to the river and the freshwater wetlands either side of the path as refuges for waterbirds and encourage people to behave in ways that avoid disturbance to them. There is already screening at Brean Cross Sluice which allows walkers to cross the river and view the birds at close quarters without disturbing them. 	To avoid increased disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds feeding and roosting on the river by recreational users. The waterbirds are sensitive to disturbance and are part of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area for birds.

9.2.7 Natural England is satisfied that the proposals for coastal access in this report are made in accordance with relevant environmental protection legislation. In respect of cultural heritage, we have taken advice from Historic England and others before confirming this conclusion. For more information

about how we came to this conclusion; see the following assessments of the access proposals that we have published separately:

- A Habitats Regulations Assessment relating to any potential impact on the conservation objectives of European sites.
- 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:

9.2.8 The natural coastal terrain is often challenging for people with reduced mobility and this is the case on route sections ABD-9-S001 to ABD-9-S004 of our proposed route where the path passes over the beach.

9.2.9 Generally there are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route but there are steps on route section ABD-9-S022 where it would be necessary to ascend/descend to reach the path along the flood bank.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

9.2.10 **Estuary**: This report proposes that the trail should contain sections aligned on the estuary of the River Severn, 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 far as the M48 Severn Bridge, as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map A2.

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

9.2.11 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 fence line, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 9.3.1 below.

9.2.12 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 9.3.1. 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 9.3.1] 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.

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

Exclusion of access to the East side of the Axe.

9.2.14 Access to the mud in the coastal margin on the Axe estuary will be excluded all year round, seaward of route sections ABD-9-S004 to ABD-9-S018. This is proposed under section 25A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) because we are satisfied that the land is unsuitable for public access. The exclusion does not affect the route and will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply. See Directions Map ABD 9A for further detail.

9.2.15 The mud on the Axe estuary is soft and sinking. It does not provide a safe walking surface and is subject to frequent tidal inundation.

Exclusion of access at Bleadon Sewage Treatment Works

9.2.16 Access to the coastal margin around the water treatment works between Stroud Pill and the sluice on the east side of the River Axe will be excluded all year round, seaward of route sections ABD-9-S024 to ABD-9-S028. This replicates the existing restriction on permitted access use at this site, and is proposed under Section 24 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) to maintain the existing management of visitors to the site.

9.2.17 Bleadon Levels Nature Reserve is managed by Wessex Water, which promotes access along public rights of way and a permissive path around the reserve. The riverbank beside the water treatment works currently has access excluded from it to provide habitat for ground-nesting birds, which Wessex Water wish to retain with the introduction of coastal access rights. In seeking to strike a fair balance between the interests of the public in having a right of access over the margin within the reserve and the interests of the Wessex Water land over which coastal access rights would be conferred, we are proposing to exclude access from margin around the water treatment works to replicate the existing restriction on permitted access use at this site.

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

9.2.18 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.

9.2.19 Column 4 of tables 9.3.1 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 ABD 9a to ABD 9b as the proposed route of the trail.

9.2.20 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.

9.2.21 Before any new route is so determined, on this length of coast, we will conduct a Habitats Regulations Assessment and acquire SSSI assent as necessary in order to comply with our statutory obligations with respect to the designated sites listed in paragraph 9.2.5 above.

9.2.22 On sections for which roll-back is <u>not</u> proposed in table(s) 9.3.1, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps ABD 9a to ABD 9b as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

9.2.23 At this point we do not foresee any need for future changes to the access provisions that we have proposed within this report.

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

Establishment of the trail:

9.2.24 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.

9.2.25 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.

9.2.26 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is $\pounds 10,163$ and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority North Somerset Council.
- 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.

9.2.27 There are 2 main elements to the overall cost:

- Signs and notices to direct people along the route and explain any special considerations such as sensitive wildlife.
- Access furniture gates, steps and surface works to make the existing route more convenient for use

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 & notices	£8588
Access furniture and surfacing	£651
Project management	£924
Total	£10,163 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

9.2.28 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, North Somerset 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:

9.2.29 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).

9.2.30 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £2065 (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 9.3: Proposals Tables

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

9.3.1 Section Details - Maps ABD 9a to ABD 9b: Uphill Beach to Brean Cross sluice

Key notes on table:

- 1. Column 2 an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 9.3.2: Other options considered.
- 2. Column 4 'No' means no roll-back is proposed for this route section. 'Yes normal' means rollback 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 4 'Yes see table 9.3.3 means roll-back is proposed, but refer to that table below about our likely approach to implementing it for this route section. This is because a more complex situation exists in this case and consideration must be given to how roll-back may happen in relation to excepted land, a protected site etc.
- 4. 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.
- 5. 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)	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
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S001*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes- beach			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S002	Public footpath	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes – beach			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S003*	Public footpath	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes – dune			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S004*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes – dune			

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
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S005* and ABD-9- S006*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes – dune			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S007	Public footpath	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes – bank			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S008	Public footpath	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes – bank			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S009	Public footpath	Yes – see table 9.3.3	Yes – bank			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S010	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S011 * to ABD-9- S013*	Public footpath	No	No	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S014*	Public footpath	No	No	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S015* to ABD-9- S018*	Cycle track (pedestrian)	No	No	Edge of surfaced path	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S019*	Not an existing walked route	No	No			
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S020*	Public footpath	No	No	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S021	Other existing walked route	No	Yes – bank	Fence line	Additional landward area	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S022*	Other existing	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
		walked route					
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S023*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S024*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Ditch	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S025*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S026*	Public bridleway	No	No	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S027* and ABD-9- S028*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Edge of surfaced path	Clarity and cohesion	

9.3.2 Other options considered: Map ABD 9a Huckers Bow to Middle Hope

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
ABD 9a	ABD-9-S001	We considered aligning the trail along the existing public footpath between Links Road and Slimeridge Farm	 We opted for the proposed route because: it offers better sea views and is closer to the sea it is comparable, in terms of the safety and convenience of walkers and: Under our proposals, the public footpath would remain available for people to use but would not form part of the designated trail.
ABD 9a	ABD-9-S003 to ABD-9- S006	We considered aligning the trail along the route of the existing public footpath through the dunes	 We opted for the proposed route because: it is the de-facto route currently used by the public along the beach there would be a significant scrub clearance and maintenance requirement to create a usable path along the route of the public footpath it offers better sea views and is closer to the sea
ABD 9a	ABD-9-S011 to ABD-9- S019	We considered aligning the trail along the route of the existing public footpaths through the boat yard and along the flood bank	 We opted for the proposed route because: it offers a safer and more convenient route with a newly created tarmac surface which is accessible to all. it avoids passing through the working area of the boat yard. the surface of the existing footpath along the flood bank is uneven and often waterlogged. Waterbirds sometimes feed in the creek, and would be disturbed more often if the coast path were along the creek Under our proposals, the public footpaths would remain available for people to use but would not form part of the designated trail.

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
ABD 9a	ABD-9-S017 to ABD-9-S020	We considered aligning the trail along the route of the existing public footpath on the cliff edge around the western edge of Walborough Hill.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it avoids increased footfall on the fragile limestone grassland flora on Walborough Hill. it is comparable, in terms of the safety and convenience of walkers. Under our proposals, the public footpath would remain available for people to use but would not form part of the designated trail.
ABD 9a	ABD-9-S022 to ABD-9- S028	We considered aligning the trail along the flood bank seaward of Bleadon Sewage Treatment Works	 We opted for the proposed route because: it avoids increased disturbance to waterbirds which roost on the banks of the River Axe at high tide and: it is comparable, in terms of the safety and convenience of walkers

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.

9.3.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: ABD 9a to ABD 9b: Uphill Beach to Brean Cross sluice

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
ABD 9a	ABD-9- S001 to ABD-9- S009	Weston Golf Club	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the golf course, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with all relevant interests, either (a) to pass through the site / course, or (b) if this is not practicable, to pass somewhere on the landward side of it. 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.

In relation to all other sections where roll-back has been proposed, any later adjustment of the trail is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.

Part 9.4: Proposals Maps

9.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
ABD 9a	Uphill to Walborough
ABD 9b	Walborough to Brean Cross Sluice
Directions Map ABD 9A	Proposed exclusions: Uphill Beach Carpark to Brean Down



Coastal Access - Natural England's Proposals

Legend for all maps

PROPOSALS

Trail Sections



Maps that show sections of the trail that follow the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed use the following trail categories. Information on the existing status and infrastructure is not shown.



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Trail using existing South West Coast Path

Alternative or optional alternative route using existing South West Coast Path

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

- **BW** Public bridleway
- **BY** Public byway
- СР - Cycletrack (pedestrian)
- **CT** Cycletrack (cycles only)
- **FP** Public footpath
- **FW** Public footway (Pavement)
- Restricted byway RB
- **RD** Public road

Coastal Margin

Explanatory note

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.



Coastal margin landward of the trail



Coastal margin landward of the trail which is existing access land

Other Information

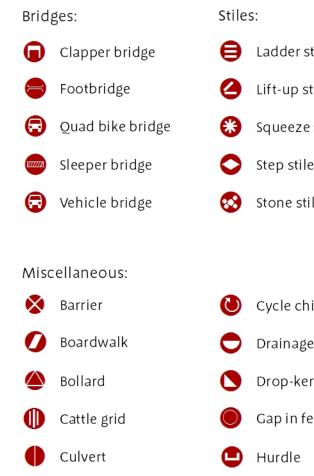
Other access rights and routes

	Public bridleways
+++	Public byways
	Public footpaths
. –	Restricted byways
	South West Coast Path
	Sustrans national routes

Existing access land

Infrastructure types

For status of each, where shown on map, see colour codes below



Infrastructure status

Each symbol shown on the map is colour coded as appropriate, as in this example for a set of steps:

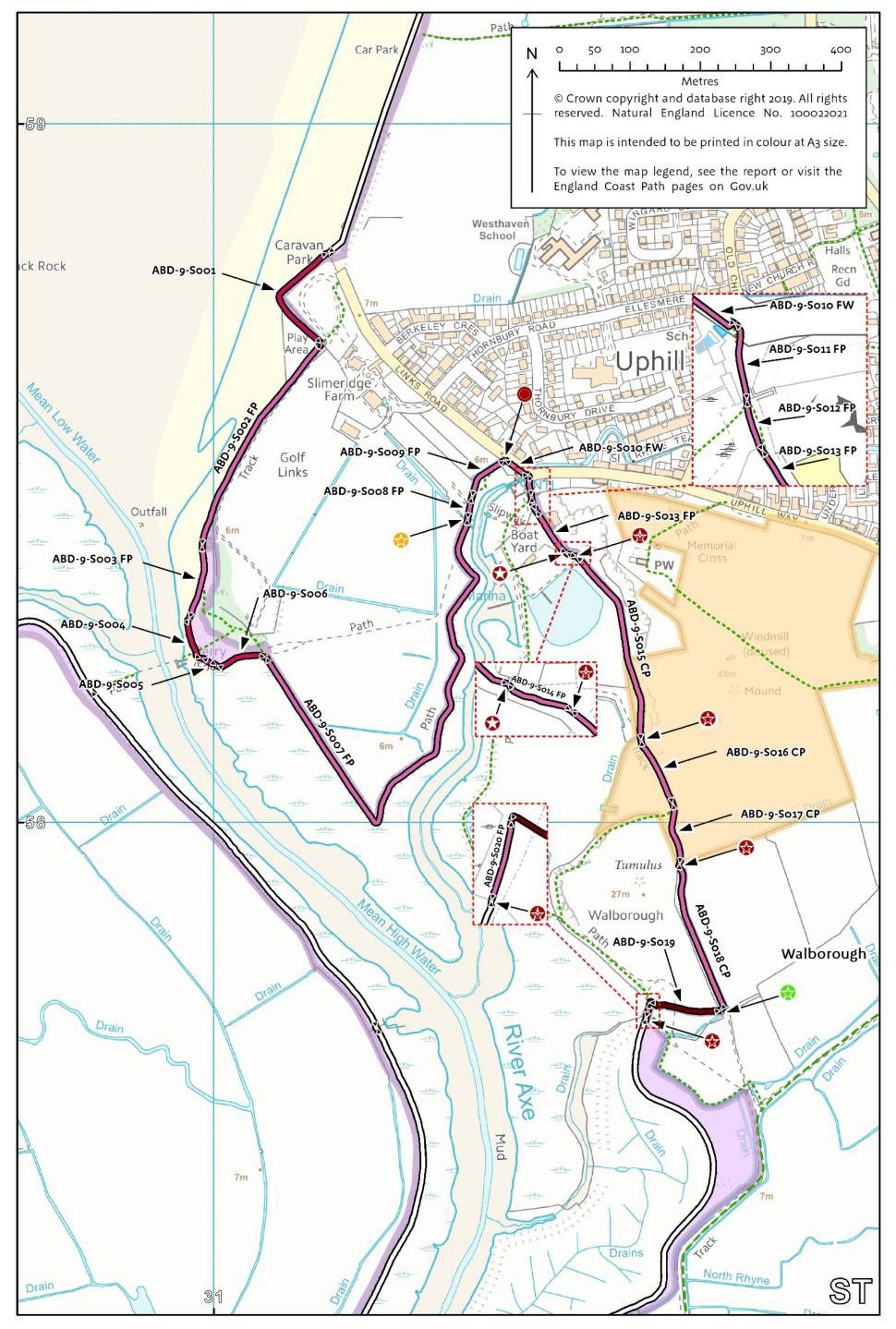


Gates:		
tile	0	Bristol gate
tile	٢	Field gate
stile	❶	Gateway with no gate
2	贪	Kissing gate
le		Pedestrian gate
	E	Wheelchair gate
icane	0	Interpretation panel
2		Ramp
rb	٥	Revetment
ence	•	Stepping stones
	٢	Steps

Coastal Access - Aust to Brean Down - Natural England's Proposals Report ABD 9: Uphill to Brean Cross Sluice

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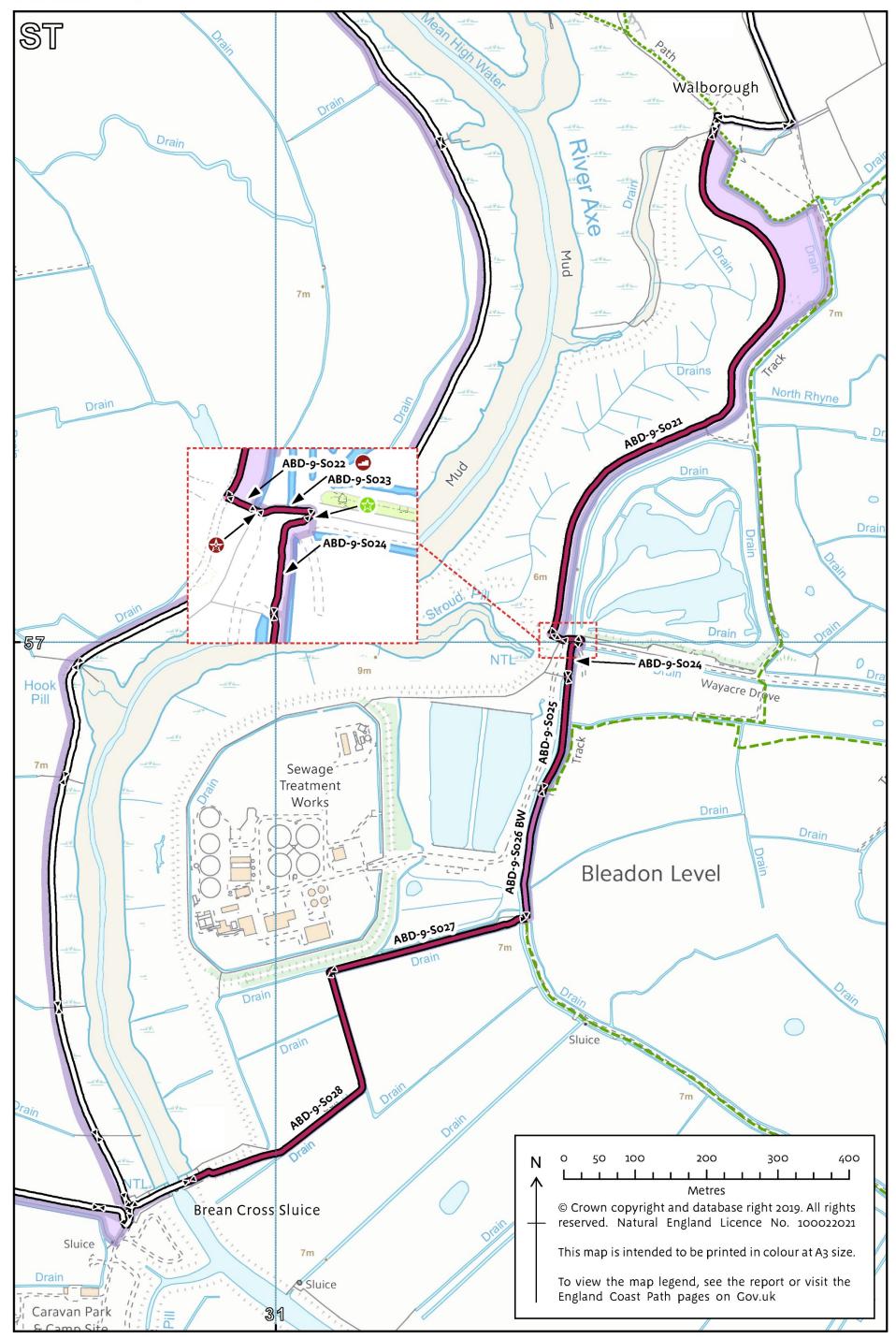
Map ABD 9a Uphill to Walborough



Map ABD 9a Uphill to Walborough

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Coastal Access - Aust to Brean Down - Natural England's Proposals Report ABD 9: Uphill to Brean Cross Sluice Map ABD 9b Walborough to Brean Cross Sluice





Coastal Access - Aust to Brean Down - Natural England's Proposals Report ABD 9: Uphill Beach Carpark to Brean Down

Directions Map ABD 9A

