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England Coast Path Stretch: Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry



Report SGF 2: Embankment west of Orwell Bridge to Priory Park

Part 2.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Embankment west of Orwell Bridge (Grid reference TM1660 4112)
End Point:	Priory Park (Grid reference TM1940 4004)
Relevant Maps:	SGF 2a to SGF 2b

2.1.1 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 Shotley Gate and Felixstowe Ferry.

2.1.2 This report covers length SGF 2 of the stretch, which is the coast between the embankment west of Orwell Bridge to Priory Park. 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.

2.1.3 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 ("roll-back"), if this proves necessary in the future because of coastal change.

2.1.4 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 2.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

Generally follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way, along most of this length.

2.2.1 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea.

2.2.2 Includes 7 sections of new path, in Pond Hall Farm and western edge of Bridge Wood. See map/maps 2a and 2b and associated tables below for details.

2.2.3 Follows a route similar to the existing Stour and Orwell Walk but departs from this at;

- Pond Hall Farm in order to create a route that is further back from the eroding cliff
- Bridge Wood in order to create a route that continues southwards adjacent to the where the Stour and Orwell Walk turns inland

Protection of the environment:

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.

2.2.4 The following designated sites affect this length of coast:

- Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA
- Orwell Estuary SSSI
- Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar

Map C in the Overview shows the extent of designated areas listed

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

2.2.5 Measures to protect the environment

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
SGF 2a and 2b	SGF-2- S006 to SGF-2- S036	 The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: The trail at Pond Hall Farm is aligned further inland than the existing Stour and Orwell Walk and a new bridge installed approx. 10m inland from the current stream crossing point. A new bridge will be installed at the eastern end of Bridge Wood to create a route that is dry at all states of the tide, avoiding the often flooded existing walked 	To provide a future proof route away from the eroding cliff edge at Pond Hall Farm and Bridge Wood and has the benefit of encouraging walkers to use the path rather than the shore to prevent disturbance of breeding birds in the upper mudflats and saltmarsh by recreational users. To create a dry route for walkers (at all states of the tide) and has the added benefit of reducing the risk of damage to the saltmarsh.

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
		route on the shore and saltmarsh.	This also aids the recovery of saltmarsh plants and invertebrates being trampled by people walking along the shore at the eastern end of Bridge Wood.
SGF 2a and 2b	SGF-2-001 to SGF-2- 036	 The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: Coastal access rights would be excluded under S25A over the saltmarshes marshes and mudflat (see para 2.2.11 – 2.2.12 and Overview Map E). 	The coastal access rights restriction is primarily to protect the public from the inherently dangerous saltmarsh and flats of the area. This safety restriction has the added benefit of protecting the habitat and birds that use it from disturbance.

2.2.6 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; 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:

2.2.7 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:

- There are lengthy sets of steps in places where it would be necessary to access the Orwell Bridge, on either side of the bridge.
- There are a number of existing bridges and one new bridge south of Priory Park which have steps up onto the bridge platform. The steps and bridges are narrow.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

2.2.8 **Estuary**: This report proposes that the trail should contain sections aligned on the estuary of the River Orwell, 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 Orwell Bridge as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map SGF 2a to 2b and map A2 in Overview.

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

2.2.9 **Landward boundary of 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 2.3.1 below.

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.

Restrictions and exclusions

2.2.10 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 saltmarsh/flat at the Orwell Estuary.

2.2.11 Access to the saltmarsh/flat in the coastal margin seaward of route sections SGF-2-S001 to SGF-2-S036 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 map E in the Overview for further detail.

2.2.12 The S25A restriction is used where it is considered that saltmarsh and flats are unsuitable for public access, notwithstanding any locally tolerated access. Safety is considered as part of the assessment along with the nature of the terrain and any natural risks that exist such as soft mud, hidden channels, potential to be trapped by rising tides, and suitability for walking. The intention is to prevent those who may be unfamiliar with the risks from using such areas.

- The areas of saltmarsh subject to regular tidal inundation, and are generally uneven and wet underfoot, incised with creeks and channels, some of which would not be readily apparent to walkers.
- The areas of flat are predominantly soft mud at low tide that is difficult to walk on, which becomes inundated when the tide rises.

2.2.13 Whilst the flats are predominantly muddy, they are interspersed with firmer areas of shingle and sand. The flats can also have pockets of very soft mud where bait digging holes have refilled. Firmer areas along the shoreline that are traditionally used as beaches are not excluded under S25A:

- Upper parts of the shore from Pond Hall Farm to Bridge Wood
- Upper parts of the Shore from Priory Park to Shore Lane

2.2.14 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;
- 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.

2.2.15 The directions we give are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question in view of the hidden dangers to which new users of the land would be subject because of the local patterns of tidal inundation, extensive mudflats and areas of soft mud.

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

2.2.16 **Other factors affecting access**: At route sections SGF-2-S003 FW, The Orwell Bridge, public access may be interrupted from time to time for short periods during high winds when the Orwell Bridge is closed to all traffic. This arrangement would continue and be managed by the local Highways England teams.

Coastal erosion

2.2.17 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.

2.2.18 Column 4 of table 2.3.1 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 SGF 2a to SGF 2b as the proposed route of the trail.

2.2.19 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.

On sections for which roll-back is <u>not</u> proposed in tables 2.3.1, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on map SGF 2a as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

2.2.20 At the time of proposal there is existing pedestrian access on the Orwell Bridge, including the route of the promoted Stour and Orwell Walk. Should there be any change in the future and pedestrian access altered Natural England will work with Highways England and all other authorities to review its trail alignment and, if appropriate, will prepare a separate variation report to the Secretary of State to ensure an uninterrupted journey for this part of the coast.

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

Establishment of the trail:

2.2.21 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.

2.2.22 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is $\pounds 11,646$ and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority, Suffolk County 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.

2.2.23 There are a few main elements to the overall cost:

- A significant 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 Suffolk Coast Path and Stour and Orwell Walk
- The surfaces and access furniture of the existing paths and footways on the proposed route are generally of a suitable standard for the trail, but there are some places where new steps and footbridges would enhance the convenience of the trail. More significant items of establishment works 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.

Item Signs & interpretation Steps Boardwalks Bridges Fencing Gates Clearance	Cost £2,446 £1,150 N/A £7,000 £150 N/A £900
	~~~~
Surfacing and traffic management	N/A

#### Table 1: Estimate of capital costs

#### Total

## £11,646 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

2.2.24 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, Suffolk 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:

2.2.25 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).

2.2.26 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £1,969.49 (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 2.3: Proposals Tables

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

# 2.3.1 Section Details – Map SGF 2a and SGF 2b Embankment west of Orwell Bridge to Priory Park

#### Key notes on table:

- 1. Column 2 an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 2.3.2: 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.
- Column 4 'Yes see table 2.3.3' 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
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S001	Other existing walked route	No	No			
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S002	Other existing walked route	No	No	Edge of steps (to replace existing steps)	Clarity and cohesion	New steps of long back filled steps and hand rail proposed.
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S003 FW	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	To seaward edge of safety	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
					barrier on pavement		
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S004	Other existing walked route	No	No	Edge of concrete steps	Clarity and cohesion	Width of existing flight of concrete steps
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S005 FP	Public footpath	Yes - Normal	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S006	Not an existing walked route	Yes Normal	No			
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S007	Not an existing walked route	Yes Normal	No			
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S008	Not an existing walked route	Yes Normal	No			
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S009	Not an existing walked route	Yes Normal	No	Width of bridge	Clarity and cohesion	New foot bridge with handrail to be installed
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S010	Not an existing walked route	Yes Normal	No			
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S011	Not an existing walked route	Yes Normal	No			

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
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S012	Other existing walked route	Yes – See table 2.3.3				
SGF 2a	SGF-2- S013	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3				
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S014	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S015	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S016	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S017	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S018	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S019	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S020	Other existing	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			

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					
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S021	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S022	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S023	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S024	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No			
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S025	Not an existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Ditch	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S026 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Ditch	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S027 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Ditch	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S028 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	To hand rail of bridge	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S029 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Ditch	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S030 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Ditch	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
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S031 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	To hand rail of bridge	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S032 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Ditch	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S033 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	To hand rail of bridge	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S034 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Ditch	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S035 FP	Public footpath	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	To hand rail of bridge	Clarity and cohesion	
SGF 2b	SGF-2- S036	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 2.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion and Additional Landward Area	

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
SGF 2a and 2b	SGF-2-S006 to Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry-1-S014	The existing Stour and Orwell Walk was considered at Pond Hall Farm for the alignment.	We opted for the proposed route because: The trail is aligned further inland than the existing Stour and Orwell Walk (which is very close to the eroding edge of the cliff). Ipswich Borough Council have already taken steps to move the walked line some metres inland for part of this section for safety reasons. It was agreed that the ECP proposal would use the new sections created by the Borough Council and create additional sections set back from the shore, from the Orwell Bridge to Bridge Wood. This future proofs the route away from the eroding cliff edge and encourages walkers to use the new path rather than the shore, which has the added benefit of preventing disturbance of birds in the upper mudflats and saltmarsh by recreational users. A new bridge will be installed approx. 10m inland from the current stream crossing point.
SGF 2b	SGF-2-S015 to SGF-2- S036	We considered aligning the trail along the existing Stour and Orwell Walk which uses lanes and roads inland through Nacton.	<ul> <li>We opted for the proposed route because:</li> <li>this proposal is made with the support of the landowner</li> <li>it is closer to the sea than the Stour and Orwell Walk and would afford better sea views</li> <li>It is safer than the Stour and Orwell Walk which uses narrow country lanes with no pavements</li> <li>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</li> </ul>

#### 2.3.2 Other options considered: Maps SGF 2a and 2b

Other option(s) considered

Reasons for not proposing this option

Man(s) Route

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.

#### 2.3.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Maps SGF 2a and 2b

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
SGF 2a and 2b	SGF-2- S0012 to SGF-2- S036	Bridge Wood, Priory Park and Orwell Park	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of Priory Park and across excepted land at Orwell Park (see Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry Report SGF 3) we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with all relevant interests. 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 2.4: Maps

# 2.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
SGF 2a	Embankment west of Orwell Bridge to Bridge Wood
SGF 2b	Bridge Wood to Priory Park



#### 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.



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
- CP Cycletrack (pedestrian)
- CT Cycletrack (cycles only)
- FP Public footpath
- FW Public footway (Pavement)
- **RB** Restricted byway
- 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:

 Existing steps to be retained
 New steps required
 Existing steps to be removed



Coastal Access - Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry - Natural England's Proposals Report 2. Embankment west of Orwell Bridge to Priory Park

#### Map SGF 2a: Embankment west of Orwell Bridge to Bridge Wood



Coastal Access - Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry - Natural England's Proposals Report 2. Embankment west of Orwell Bridge to Priory Park

Map SGF 2b: Bridge Wood to Priory Park

