England Coast Path Stretch: Isle of Sheppey



Report IOS 10: Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge

Part 10.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Ferry Road (Grid reference 591640 169303)
End Point:	Swale Station (Grid reference 591302 169241)
Relevant Maps:	IOS 10a

- 10.1.1 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 this stretch of coast of the Isle of Sheppey, Kent.
- 10.1.2 This report covers length IOS 10 of the stretch, which is between Ferry Road, on the south coast of the Isle of Sheppey and Swale Station, on the north Kent mainland. 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.
- 10.1.3 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.
- 10.1.4 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 10.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

- 10.2.1 Has some good views of The Swale Estuary, especially from Kingsferry Bridge.
- 10.2.2 Includes five sections of new path near Neatscourt Marshes and six sections of new path near Swale Station. See map IOS 10a and associated tables below for details.
- 10.2.3 An inland diversion is necessary on the Isle of Sheppey, between Ferry Marshes and South Marshes, to take the trail over a railway line. This diversion also provides access to Kingsferry Bridge the pedestrian crossing between Sheppey and the Kent mainland. Another inland diversion is necessary near Swale Station (on the mainland), to link the trail to the south coast of The Swale Estuary.

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.

10.2.4 The following designated sites affect this length of coast (see Overview maps C1 and C2):

- The Swale Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)
- The Swale Estuary Ramsar site
- The Swale Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- The Swale Estuary Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)
- The Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA
- The Medway Estuary and Marshes Ramsar site
- The Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI
- The Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone

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

10.2.6 Measures to protect the environment

Мар	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S004 to IOS-10-S007	 The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: The trail is aligned along the western boundary edge of Neatscourt Marshes, part of a designated site. Stock fencing will separate a new bund/bridge construction (at section IOS-10-S007), from the grazing marsh at Neatscourt 	■ To prevent disturbance, by recreational users and dogs, of overwintering and breeding birds that use the reed beds and grazing marsh adjacent to the trail.
		grazing marsh at Neatscourt Marshes. Prior to construction works, great crested newt and watervole surveys will be carried out to inform any methodologies necessary to safeguard wildlife.	

10.2.6 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 in respect of the natural environment; 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:

10.2.7 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route. However, the natural coastal terrain is often challenging for some 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 along the seawall of Ferry Marshes and north towards Sheppey Way, and also west of Swale Station.
- Two sets of steps are necessary as part of the new route between Ferry Road and Sheppey Way, near Neatscourt Marshes on the Isle of Sheppey (see map IOS 10a), to ascend/descend both the Sheppey Way embankment and another slope. Physical and wildlife constraints prevent the creation of more accessible ramps here. A signed route along Ferry Road and Sheppey Way will avoid these steps, however it is approximately 2km long.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

10.2.8 **Landward boundary of the coastal margin:** We have used our discretion on some sections of the route to map the landward extent of the coastal margin to an adjacent physical boundary such as a fence line, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 10.3.1 below.

10.2.9 Near the pipeline, on Neatscourt Marshes, we have used this discretion to limit the landward extent of the coastal margin along a new bank/bund to a fence line. This has had the effect of reducing the amount of coastal margin that would have otherwise been available by default. This option provides the most clarity because:

■ The base of the bank may be under water and therefore there is no clear feature that could mark the boundary of the coastal margin, and the fence provides an easily identifiable boundary for access users.

10.2.10 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 10.3.1. 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 10.3.1) 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.

10.2.11 **Restrictions and/or exclusions:** We have proposed to exclude and restrict 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/flats at Ferry Reach

10.2.12 Access to the saltmarsh/flat in the coastal margin seaward of route sections IOS-10-S001 to IOS-10-S014 is to be excluded all year-round by direction under Section 25A 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 Map IOS 10A.

10.2.13 The mudflat in this area is soft and sinking. It does not provide a safe walking surface and is subject to frequent tidal inundation. Areas of saltmarsh have deep channels and creeks, some of which would not be readily apparent to walkers and can pose a significant risk. The mudflat and saltmarsh on the southern shore of Ferry Reach is also unsuitable for public access and proposals to exclude this area are included in the published Iwade to Grain report. For further information, please refer to this report.

10.2.14 These directions will not prevent or affect:

- any existing local use of the land by right, as 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.

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

10.2.15 **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.

10.2.16 Column 4 of tables 10.3.1 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 map IOS 10a as the proposed route of the trail.

10.2.17 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 not proposed in table 10.3.1 the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on map IOS 10a as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

10.2.18 There are also places described in this report where we foresee the need for future changes to the proposed access provisions for particular reasons.

10.2.19 At the time of preparing the report, we are aware that plans for boating facilities are being developed near the old slipway, at the south end of Ferry Road, Isle of Sheppey. There is currently no definitive timescale. If permission is granted for a development that affects the alignment of the trail, Natural England would be required to prepare a separate variation report to the Secretary of State.

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

Establishment of the trail:

10.2.20 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.

10.2.21 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is £41,584 and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority, Kent County Council, in relation to the management of 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.

10.2.22 There are four main elements to the overall cost:

- A significant number of new signs would be needed on the trail.
- Two sets of steps will be installed between Ferry Road and Sheppey Way, near Neatscourt Marshes.
- A new 90m footway will be constructed over wet ground near Neatscourt Marshes, to create a new, off-road link between Ferry Road and Sheppey Way. This will allow walkers to continue much more directly, along the south coast of the island. Significant works are required to establish the footway, including a revetment, a new pedestrian bridge, access gaps and new stock fencing.
- Vegetation clearance and the creation of new access gaps, to establish the route near Swale Station

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 Signs	Cost £1,830
Steps	£2,000
Footway	£29,080
Vegetation clearance & access gaps	£3,250
Project management	£5,424
Total	£41,584 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

10.2.23 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:

10.2.24 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).

10.2.25 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £1,142.43 (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 10.3: Proposals Tables

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

10.3.1 Section Details: Map IOS 10a - Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge

Key notes on table:

- 1. Column 2 an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 10.3.2: 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. Column 4 'Yes see table 10.3.3' 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.
- 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)	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landwar d margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S001*	Public Footpath	Yes – see table 10.3.3	Yes - bank			
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S002*	Public highway	Yes – see table 10.3.3	No	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S003*	Public highway	Yes – see table 10.3.3	No	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S004*	Not an existing	Yes – see table10.3.3	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)	Landwar d margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
		walked route					
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S005* to IOS-10-S006*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 10.3.3	No	Edge of path	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S007*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 10.3.3	Yes - bank	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	The landward extent of the bank is not clear
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S008*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 10.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
10S 10a	IOS-10-S009*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Edge of pavement	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S010*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Edge of pavement	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S011*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Edge of pavement	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S012*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Edge of pavement	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)	Landwar d margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S013	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Edge of pavement	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S014	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Edge of pavement	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S015* to IOS-10-S019*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Edge of pavement	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S020*	Other existing walked route	No	No	Edge of path	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S021* to IOS-10-S023*	Not an existing walked route	No	No			
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S024* to IOS-10-S026*	Not an existing walked route	No	No			

10.3.2 Other options considered: Map IOS 10a – Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S001 to IOS-10-S003	We considered aligning the trail landward of the pond on Ferry Marshes.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it is closer to the sea and maintains better views of the coast it follows an existing public footpath and road 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.
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S002 to IOS-10-S012	To connect the trail with the coast west of Kingsferry Bridge, we considered aligning the trail: west along the south Sheppey shoreline, on either the tidal foreshore, or by constructing a raised walkway under Kingsferry road/rail Bridge along the line of the public footpath.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it provides a safe and dry route that avoids the muddy conditions and tidal inundation under the bridge it avoids construction that could affect the integrity of the road/rail bridge or impact on tidal movements it avoids the footpath that has been permanently obstructed by the development of the road/railway 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.
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S004 to IOS-10-S008	We considered a range of options to create a new path between Ferry Road and Sheppey Way, which included: aligning the southern half of IOS-10-S004 closer to the water's edge of the pond continuing the trail north on Ferry Road before crossing towards Sheppey Way, parallel	 We opted for the proposed route because: the top of the embankment close to the pond (IOS-10-S004) offers longer reaching views towards the estuary. following the top of the embankment avoids fishing stations along the water's edge of the pond it is aligned on or near existing rail/road embankments and avoids the significant and more costly construction of a new raised walkway through the wet grassland / reedbed, parallel to the pipeline

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
	to the pipeline, and creating steps up the road embankment close		it has less of an impact on wetland habitats and associated wildlife, at Neatscourt Marshes
		to the railway line.	it provides a safe location to access the pavement on Sheppey Way, as advised by Kent County Council Highways
			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.
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S004 to IOS-10-S008	We also considered continuing the alignment inland, along Ferry Road, to join Sheppey Way north-	We opted for the proposed route because: ■ it is closer to the coast and avoids a significant 2.2km inland diversion
		east of Neatscourt Marshes, before returning south along the pavement to join IOS-10-S009.	it provides a much more direct route to continue on the coast path around Sheppey or to connect with the Kent mainland, across Kingsferry Bridge
			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.
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S015 to IOS-10-S026	To connect the Isle of Sheppey coast path with the path along the mainland Kent coast, at Ferry Reach (accessed at IOS-10-S026), we	 We opted for the proposed route because: it avoids impacting on the road safety of Sheppey Way and provides a safe place to cross the road (to Ridham Docks), as advised by Kent Highways we concluded that overall the proposed
	aligning the trail down the embankment from Sheppey Way, at IOS-10-S015, and across the road (to Ridham Docks) near IOS-10-S026.		route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme.
		Kent Highways raised concerns about creating a new gap within the existing road safety infrastructure along Sheppey Way, and also highlighted road safety issues relating to	

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
		traffic speed and pedestrian visibility on the road that leads to Ridham Docks.	
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S020 to IOS-10-S024	We considered aligning this part of the trail along the road (to Ridham Dock). Kent Highways raised road safety concerns relating to traffic speed and pedestrian visibility on the road that leads to Ridham Docks.	 We opted for the proposed route because: it provides a new path away from the busy road it provides a safe place to cross the road (to Ridham Docks), as advised by Kent Highways 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.

10.3.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Map IOS 10a - Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
IOS 10a	IOS-10-S001 to IOS-10-S008	Designated site: The Swale SPA, SSSI, Ramsar site	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of a designated site (e.g. SSSI, SPA, Ramsar) whose designated features are sensitive to public access, or where the existing route already passing through such a site must be altered, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with the relevant experts and with any potentially affected owners or occupiers, which will either (a) continue to pass through the site, if appropriate or (b) if necessary, be routed landward of it.

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.

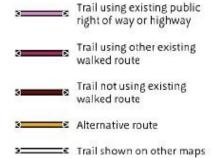
Part 10.4: Proposals Maps

10.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
IOS 10a	Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge
Direction Map IOS 10A	Directions for Report IOS 10: Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge

PROPOSALS

Trail Sections



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

BY - Public byway

CT - Cycletrack (cycles only)

CP - Cycletrack (pedestrian)

FP - Public footpath

FW - Public footway (Pavement)

BW - Public bridleway

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



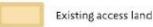
Coastal margin landward of the trail which is existing access land

Other Information

Other access rights and routes

Public footpaths Public byways Public bridleways Restricted byways

Sustrans national routes



Infrastructure types (for status see below)

barrier cycle chicane

drainage

footbridge

quad bike bridge

clapper bridge

boardwalk

bollard

sleeper bridge

vehicle bridge

cattle grid

culvert

drop-kerb

gap in fence

Bristol gate

field gate

kissing gate

pedestrian gate

wheelchair gate

gateway with no gate

hurdle

ramp

revetment

stepping stones

steps

ladder stile

lift-up stile

squeeze stile

step stile

stone stile

interpretation panel

Infrastructure status

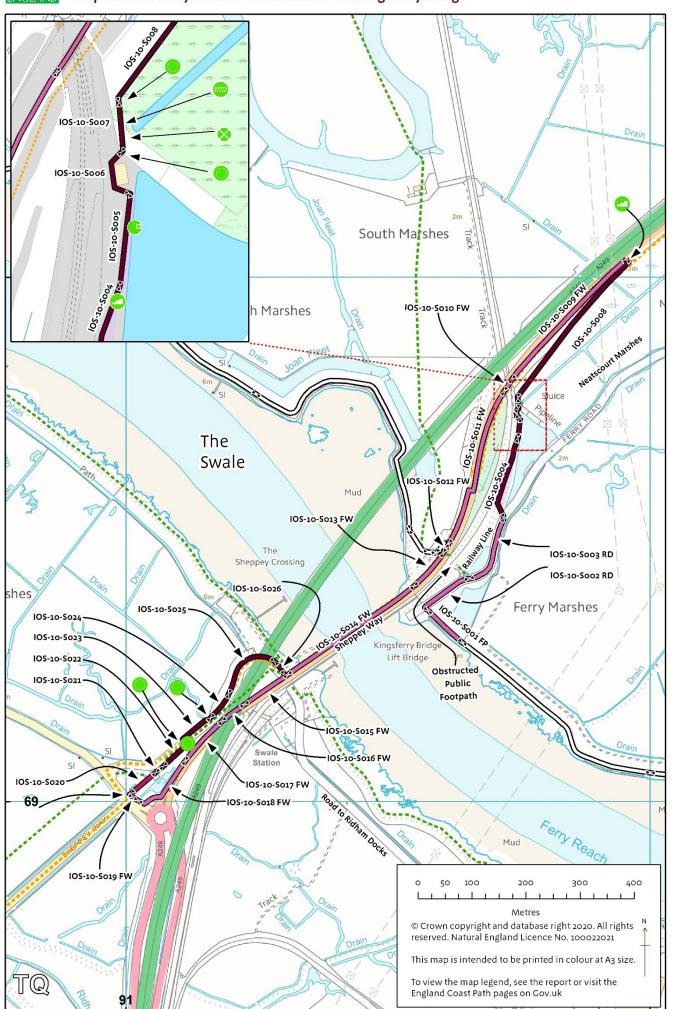
Infrastructure status will be indicated by one of three colours, as shown in the example below:

Existing steps to be retained

New steps required

Existing steps to be removed

Map IOS 10a: Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge



Coastal Access - Isle of Sheppey - Natural England's Proposals Report IOS 10 Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge

Directions Map IOS 10AThese directions only affect land where coastal access rights apply and will not affect existing rights of access, such as on public rights of way.

