

## **Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000**

### **PROPOSAL FOR A LONG TERM DIRECTION BY THE RELEVANT AUTHORITY**

#### **SUMMARY FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Prepared by Natural England

#### **1. INFORMATION ABOUT THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

<b>Case Reference Number:</b>	2016018022
<b>Name of site/land parcel:</b>	Delacroix, Suffolk Coast NNR Easting 641835, Northing 276054
<b>Access Authority:</b>	Suffolk County Council
<b>Relevant Authority:</b>	Natural England
<b>Local Access Forum:</b>	Suffolk Local Access Forum

Natural England proposes to give a direction on CROW access land that would last for longer than six months continuously. The Act requires us to consult publicly on all such proposals for 'long-term directions'.

#### **2. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT AUTHORITY PROPOSAL**

Natural England has recently dedicated land that it owns which is suitable for public access under Section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The land considered here is situated in the vicinity of Walberswick, and forms part of the Suffolk Coast National Nature Reserve (NNR). These new access rights will commence on 7 February 2015.

The Walberswick area of the National Nature Reserve forms a mosaic with farm land and stretches from the Blyth river in the north to Dunwich village in the south. The North Sea forms the eastern boundary and the B1125 road the western, this encompasses Reserve areas in Blythburgh, Westleton and Dunwich parishes.

As part of the process for dedication, Natural England's Project Officer sought advice from the NNR Senior Reserve Manager and Natural England's Responsible Officer to ensure that the introduction of new access rights would not have a detrimental impact on the nature conservation interests. There was a specific concern that access use would cause disturbance to breeding and wintering birds on part of the land being dedicated, which the proposed restriction seeks to address.

The area of land where the restriction is proposed is known locally as Delacroix, and consists of grazing marsh and reed beds, cattle grazed through summer and

autumn. Current access on this site is along a public footpath leading onto Delacroix from Tinker's House and around the Blyth river estuary.

There is a raised bank on the boundary of our land between Delacroix and Tinker's Marshes which on appearance would provide an attractive link from the footpath on the estuary back between the reedbeds and grazing marshes, then across the meadows towards the footpath at Tinker's House.

However, the grazing marshes adjacent to this raised bank on either side provide a crucial area for nesting and wintering avocet, and the proximity to the bank make the birds vulnerable to disturbance from people and dogs. The Senior Reserve Manager demonstrated that the birds are not habituated to human presence by walking along the bank during a site visit on 14 November 2014, from where a number of avocet immediately flew up and off.

The breeding and overwintering avocet on Delacroix and Tinker's Marshes are a notified feature under the Minsmere-Walberswick SSSI, SPA and Ramsar designations. Subsequently, the dedication of this land was approved by the Responsible Officer on the understanding that the new CROW access rights would not have a detrimental impact by creating disturbance to the breeding and wintering avocet.

To maintain the current management and protect avocet from disturbance, we propose to exclude CROW access rights from this bank.

The birds are present during the overwintering season from the beginning of October until the beginning of March, and during the breeding season from the beginning of March until end of July, so an exclusion is necessary for a minimum of 10 months of the year to avoid disturbance.

The bank provides an attractive prospect for access, naturally leading you away from the river back towards a public right of way. There is a history of low level trespass along this bank which led to a fence being installed as a barrier, with a sign stating that there was no right of access, to prevent informal access from becoming established. To ensure disturbance to the birds is avoided, and to give a consistent message to access users, we intend to give a year round restriction along this bank. The restriction will ensure that the current management is legitimately replicated when CROW access rights commence on 7 February 2016.

### **3. SUBMITTING COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROPOSED DIRECTION:**

If you wish to comment on the proposal for this direction then you must do so before 4 February 2016 directly to Sarah Haigh, email [sarah.haigh@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:sarah.haigh@naturalengland.org.uk). A map accompanies this notice and is

attached and can be seen on the [Consultation Pages](#) of the Government's Website<sup>1</sup>.

## **Using and sharing your consultation responses**

In line with Natural England's [Personal Information Charter](#), any comments you make, and any information you send in support of them, will help us to determine the application and / or determine if the restriction is still necessary in relation to the review or reassessment of a current direction.

We may wish to pass such comments or information to others in connection with our duties and powers under the open access legislation. This may mean for example passing information, including your name and contact details, to the Secretary of State or their appointees, the Planning Inspectorate or to the relevant access authority(s).

We do not plan to publish individual comments in full, but we may publish extracts from them when we report on our consultation(s).

There may also be circumstances in which we will be required to disclose your response to third parties, either as part of the statutory process for consideration of representations and objections about our decision, or in order to comply with our wider obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you do not want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information – to be publicly available, please explain clearly why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. However, we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be regarded as binding on Natural England.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?publication\\_filter\\_option=consultations](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?publication_filter_option=consultations). To access the consultation enter "Open Access" into the free text box titled "Contains" and then filter by "Natural England" in the Department drop down.