

## Chapter 3:

# Westgate Bay to Reculver

Coastal Access: Ramsgate to Whitstable - Natural England's Proposals

## Part 3.1: Introduction

<b>Start Point:</b>	<b>Westgate Bay</b> (grid reference: TR31717001)
<b>End Point:</b>	<b>Reculver</b> (grid reference: TR22646931)
<b>Relevant Maps:</b>	<b>3a to 3f</b>

### Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

#### The Trail:

- 3.1.1 Follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way, along all of this length.
- 3.1.2 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea.
- 3.1.3 Follows a route similar to the existing Thanet Coastal Path and the Viking Coastal Trail cycle way.
- 3.1.4 This part of the coast includes the following sites, designated for nature conservation or heritage preservation (See map C of the Overview):
  - Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Special Protection Area (SPA).
  - Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Ramsar site.
  - Thanet Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
  - Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its geological /wildlife interest.
  - Reculver Saxon Shore fort, Anglo-Saxon monastery and associated remains Scheduled Monument.

We have assessed the potential impacts of access along the proposed route (and over the associated spreading room described below) on the features for which the affected land is designated and on any which are protected in their own right.

- 3.1.5 After advice from specialists we have concluded that our proposals would not be likely to have any significant impact on these features. In reaching this conclusion we have identified that it would be necessary to expand the number of existing information notices that highlight the sensitivity of turnstone when they are at roost near the shore. These small information notices will be attached to new sign posts and aim to reduce the likelihood of disturbing turnstone during the winter months. Additional interpretation is required along the Northern Sea Wall where turnstones use two discrete areas of shingle that are accessible from the trail. A short section of fencing will help to manage

access away from these roost areas. This proposal is explained further in parts 5 & 9 of the Overview.

In relation to those nature conservation sites listed above, refer to our published Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal for more information.

**See part 5b of the Overview - 'Natural environment' - for more information.**

### Accessibility

3.1.6 Generally, there are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, which makes use of existing surfaced paths and promenades wherever these meet the criteria in the Coastal Access Scheme.

However, there are places where it may not be entirely suitable for people with reduced mobility because:

- The trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path along the cliff top;
- There are places where it would be necessary to ascend/descend a slope to continue along the coast.

**See part 5a of the Overview - 'Recreational issues' - for more information.**

### Where we have proposed exercising our discretion:

The discretions referred to below are explained in more detail in part 5 of the Overview.

3.1.7 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 3.2.1 below.

3.1.8 In some places, we have used our discretion to propose the inclusion of additional, more extensive landward areas within the coastal margin, to secure or enhance public enjoyment of this part of the coast. The owner of the land is content for us to propose this area.

**See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an 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. See also Annex C of the Overview - 'Excepted land categories'.**

3.1.9 Restrictions and/or exclusions: Access rights to the spreading room would be subject to the national restrictions on coastal access rights listed in Annex D of the Overview. These restrictions would not apply to public rights of way.

**See part 9 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for details.**

3.1.10 Optional alternative route: at route sections RGW-3-S003 to RGW-3-S014 and part of RGW-3-S015 (maps 3a and 3b), between Epple Bay and Birchington, public access may not be possible for short periods to during stormy weather, where water may cover the promenade.

3.1.11 We therefore propose that an optional alternative route would follow route sections RGW-3-A001 to RGW-3-A011 (maps 3a and 3b) alongside residential roads on the cliff top, from the top of the Epple Bay access ramp to the promenade steps near Minnis Road, Birchington. The route follows part of the existing route of the Thanet Coastal Path and would be advertised by signs at the Epple Bay access ramp and near the promenade steps at the east end of Minnis Bay, Birchington.

3.1.12 The optional alternative route would not have the effect of creating any additional spreading room on either the seaward or the landward side.

3.1.13 Establishment: There are no additional measures that we consider necessary to improve the safety

or convenience of the trail on this length of coast.

- 3.1.14 Ongoing management: Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 of the Overview.

**See parts 6 - 'Physical establishment of the trail' and 7 - 'Maintenance of the trail' of the Overview for more information.**

### **Future Change**

- 3.1.15 Part of the route of the trail on this length of coast would be able to change without further approval from the Secretary of State in response to coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes, or encroachment by the sea. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll back' set out in part 8 of the Overview. See table 3.2.3 below for details of the sections likely to be affected in the foreseeable future.
- 3.1.16 There are also places on the length of coast described in this chapter where, at the time of preparing the report, we foresee the need for changes to the access provisions for coastal defence reasons. These are summarised at part 8 of the Overview.

**See parts 5e - 'Coastal processes' and 8 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.**

## Part 3.2: Commentary on Maps

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

### 3.2.1 Section Details – Maps 3a to 3f: Westgate Bay to Reculver

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (\*) against the route section number means see also table 3.2.2: Other options considered.

Column 5 – ‘Yes – normal’ means roll-back approach is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future.

Column 5 – ‘Yes – see table 3.2.3’ means refer to that table below about our likely approach to roll-back on this part of the route.

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 8 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 9 of Overview)
3a	RGW-3-S001*	Public Footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes – see table 3.2.3	Road	Clarity and cohesion	None
	RGW-3-S002*	Public Footpath	Tarmac/Cobbles	No	Fence	Clarity and cohesion	None
	RGW-3-S003* to RGW-3-S014*	Multi-use route	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of undercliff promenade (wall)	Both additional landward area & clarity and cohesion	None
3b 3c	RGW-3-S015*	Multi-use route	Tarmac	No	Various: landward edge of promenade (wall), wall, pavement, promenade (wall).	Both additional landward area & clarity and cohesion	None
3c	RGW-3-S016	Public Footpath /multi use route	Tarmac	No	Various: edge of track, edge of car park, road, fence	Additional landward margin	None
	RGW-3-S017 to RGW-3-S018	Public Footpath /multi use route	Tarmac	Yes – see table 3.2.3	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	None
3d and 3e	RGW-3-S019 to RGW-3-S025	Public Footpath /multi use route	Tarmac	Yes – see table 3.2.3	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	None
3f	RGW-3-S026 to RGW-3-S028	Public Footpath /multi use route	Tarmac	Yes – see table 3.2.3	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	None
	RGW-3-S029	Public Footpath /multi use route	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	None
	RGW-3-S030 to RGW-3-S031	Public Footpath	Tarmac	No	Landward edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	None

### 3.2.2 Other options considered: Maps 3a to 3f Westgate Bay to Reculver

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
3a	RGW-3-S001 and RGW-3-S002	<p>We considered aligning the trail along the short stretch of public footpath along the cliff top in Epple Bay. This alignment involves doubling back along the line of the sloped access to the Bay.</p> <p>We also considered aligning the trail on the metal steps at the east end of Epple Bay and along the undercliff promenade. There is a flight of metal steps providing access to the bay which are not suitable for those with restricted mobility and the undercliff promenade in this section is slippery and can get covered in water. The bay itself is also used in winter by roosting birds (turnstones).</p>	<p>We opted for the proposed route which utilises the main access slope between the bay and the road because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ it still maintains views of the sea</li> <li>■ it creates a more easily accessible and direct route than the footpath, and follows the existing Thanet Coastal Path.</li> <li>■ it utilises a gentle slope between the Bay and road to provide a safer route to access the undercliff promenade.</li> <li>■ it largely avoids an area used in winter by roosting birds.</li> <li>■ under our proposals, access to the public footpath, the promenade and steps, would be unaffected.</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>
3a and 3b	RGW-3-S002 to RGW-3-S015	<p>We considered aligning the trail along part of the existing Thanet Coastal Path which runs on top of the cliffs between Epple Bay and Birchington, to avoid the undercliff promenade during storms.</p> <p>The undercliff promenade is part of the existing Viking Coastal Trail cycleway, and is an established well used route which is available for the majority of the time.</p>	<p>We opted for the proposed route which follows the undercliff promenade because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ it is closer to the sea and maintains views of the sea.</li> <li>■ under our proposals, the cliff top route provides a more sheltered optional alternative route during any periods of storms, where access to the promenade is limited.</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>

### 3.2.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Maps 3a to 3f: Westgate Bay to Reculver

Map(s)	Section numbers(s)	Feature or site potentially affected	How we will manage roll-back in relation to this feature or site
3a	RGW-3-S001	Sea Road near Epple Bay and the land behind (Westgate on Sea and Birchington Golf Course)	If the predicted slow coastal erosion here affects the main coast road (Sea Road) and 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 golf 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.
3c to 3f	RGW-3-S017 to RGW-3-S028	Agricultural land and fisheries	The trail is likely to be adjusted to follow the new flood bank when the existing one is breached/no longer viable as a walking route. We will hold detailed discussions with all relevant interests and 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, the trail is likely to be adjusted to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future.

## Part 3.3: Chapter 3 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 3a to 3f.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

### Formal Proposals – Westgate Bay to Reculver

#### Proposed route of the trail

- 3.3.1 In relation to route sections RGW-3-S002 to RGW-3-S016 and RGW-3-S029 to RGW-3-S031 the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 3a to 3c and 3f as the proposed route of the trail.
- 3.3.2 In relation to route sections RGW-3-S001 and RGW-3-S017 to RGW-3-S028, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on map 3a and 3c to 3f as the proposed route of the trail.
- 3.3.3 If at any time any part of a route section listed in the previous paragraph needs, in Natural England's view, to change as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea, 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 8 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.

#### Landward boundary of coastal margin

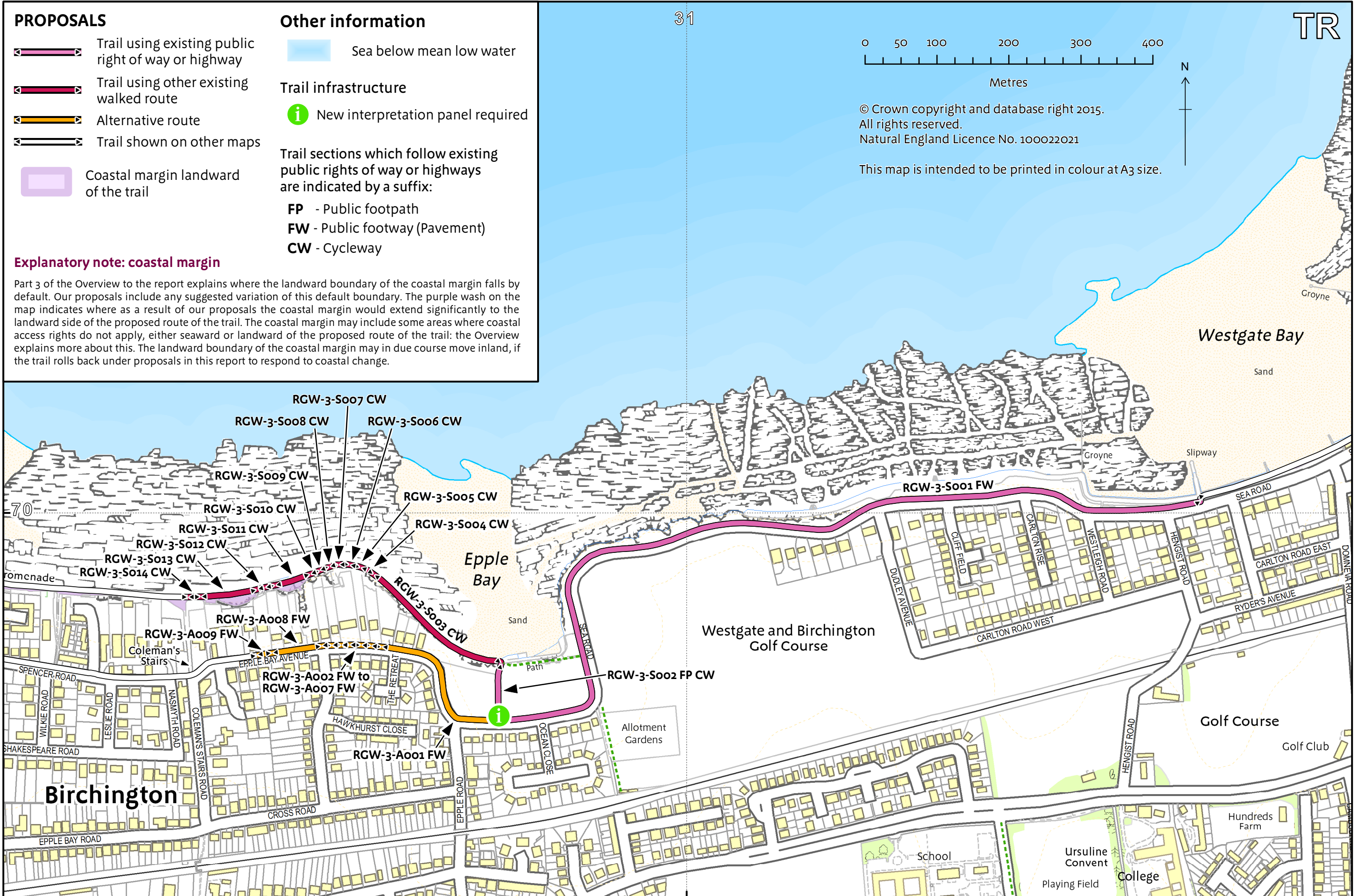
- 3.3.4 Adjacent to route sections RGW-3-S001 to RGW-3-S002 and RGW-3-S017 to RGW-3-S031 the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with landward edge of the pavement or track shown as the trail on maps 3a to 3f.
- 3.3.5 Adjacent to route sections RGW-3-S003 to RGW-3-S014 and RGW-3-S015 (part), the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward wall of the undercliff promenade which is landward of the trail shown on maps 3a and 3b.
- 3.3.6 Adjacent to route section RGW-3-S015 (part) and RGW-3-S016, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the extent of the cliff top grassland, marked by the residential boundary wall near Beresford Gap and Cliff Road pavement, as indicated on map 3b; and to the extent of grassland at Minnis Bay, marked by the edge of The Minnis public house car park, road and boundary fences, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 3c.

#### Local restrictions and exclusions

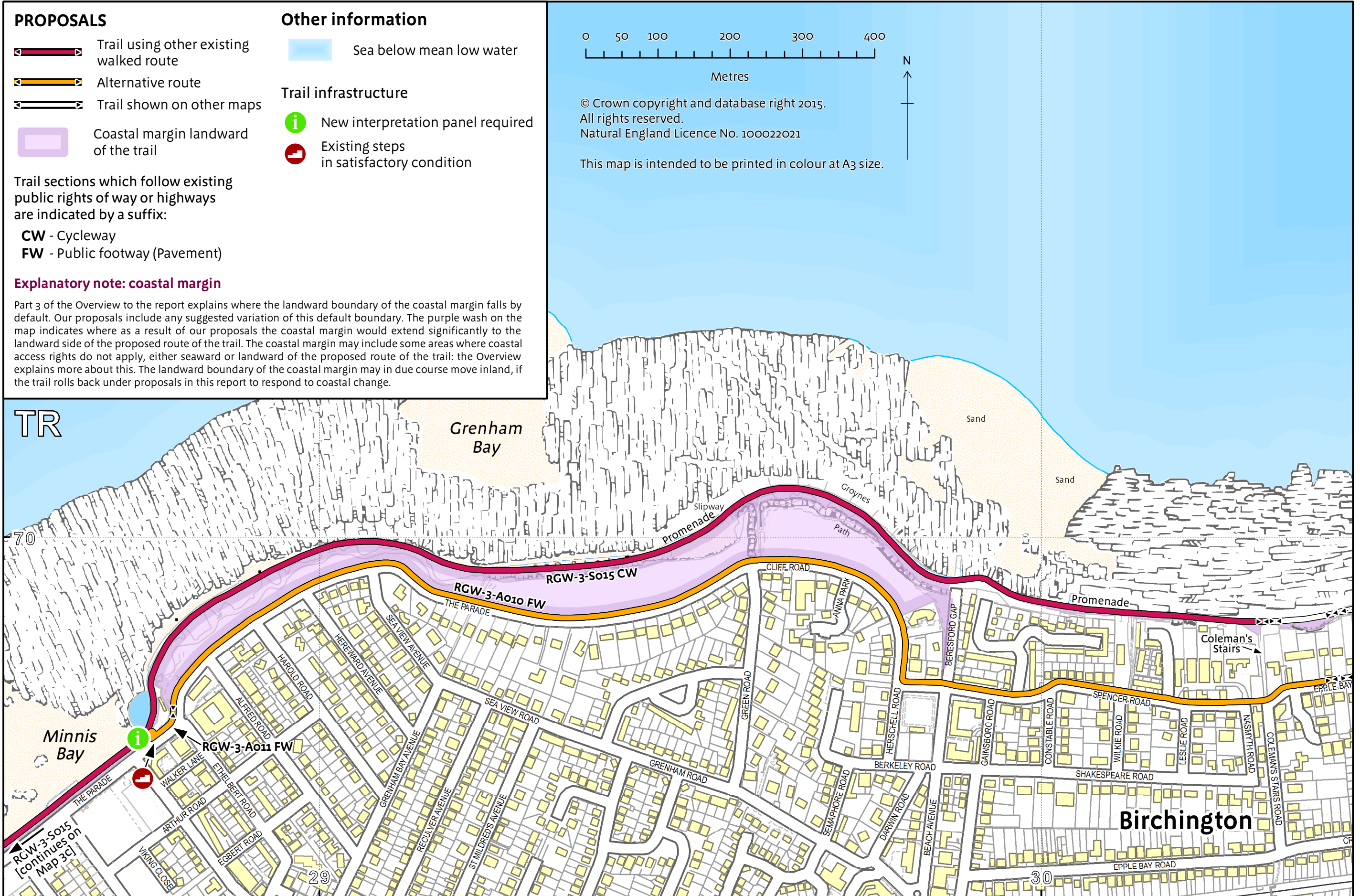
- 3.3.7 At the time of writing this report, there are no proposals for local restrictions or exclusions in relation to this length of coast.

#### Alternative routes

- 3.3.8 An optional alternative route between RGW-3-S002 and RGW-3-S015, is to operate during storms if the undercliff promenade is flooded. The optional alternative route is to be at the centre of the line shown as route sections RGW-3-A001 to RGW-3-A011 on maps 3a and 3b.
- 3.3.9 Adjacent to route sections RGW-3-A001 to RGW-3-A011:
- the landward boundary of the alternative route strip is to correspond with the landward edge of the pavement shown as the trail on maps 3a and 3b; and
  - the seaward boundary of the alternative route strip is to correspond with the seaward edge of the pavement shown as the trail on maps 3a and 3b.



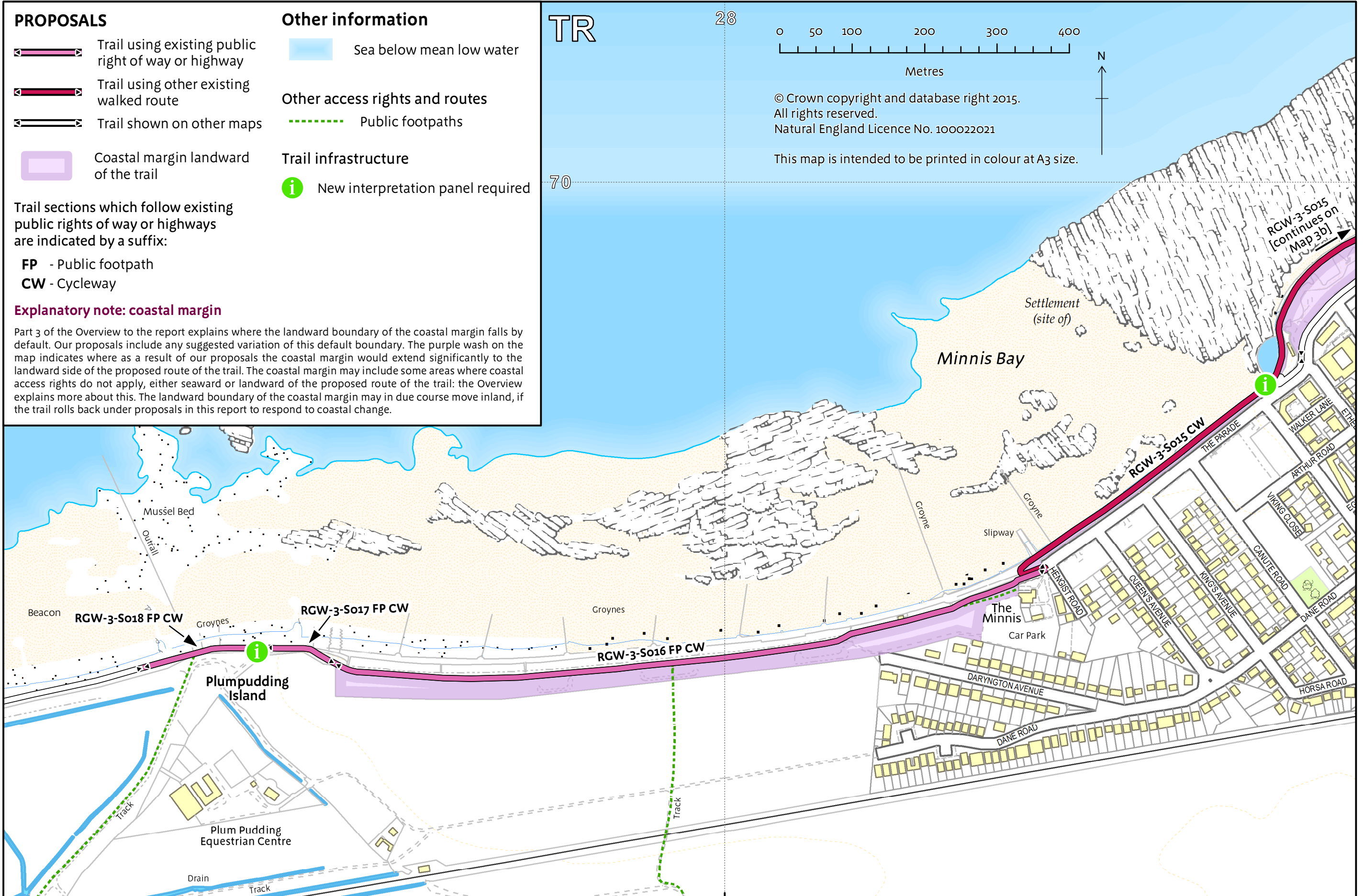
Map 3a Westgate Bay to Coleman's Stairs, Birchington



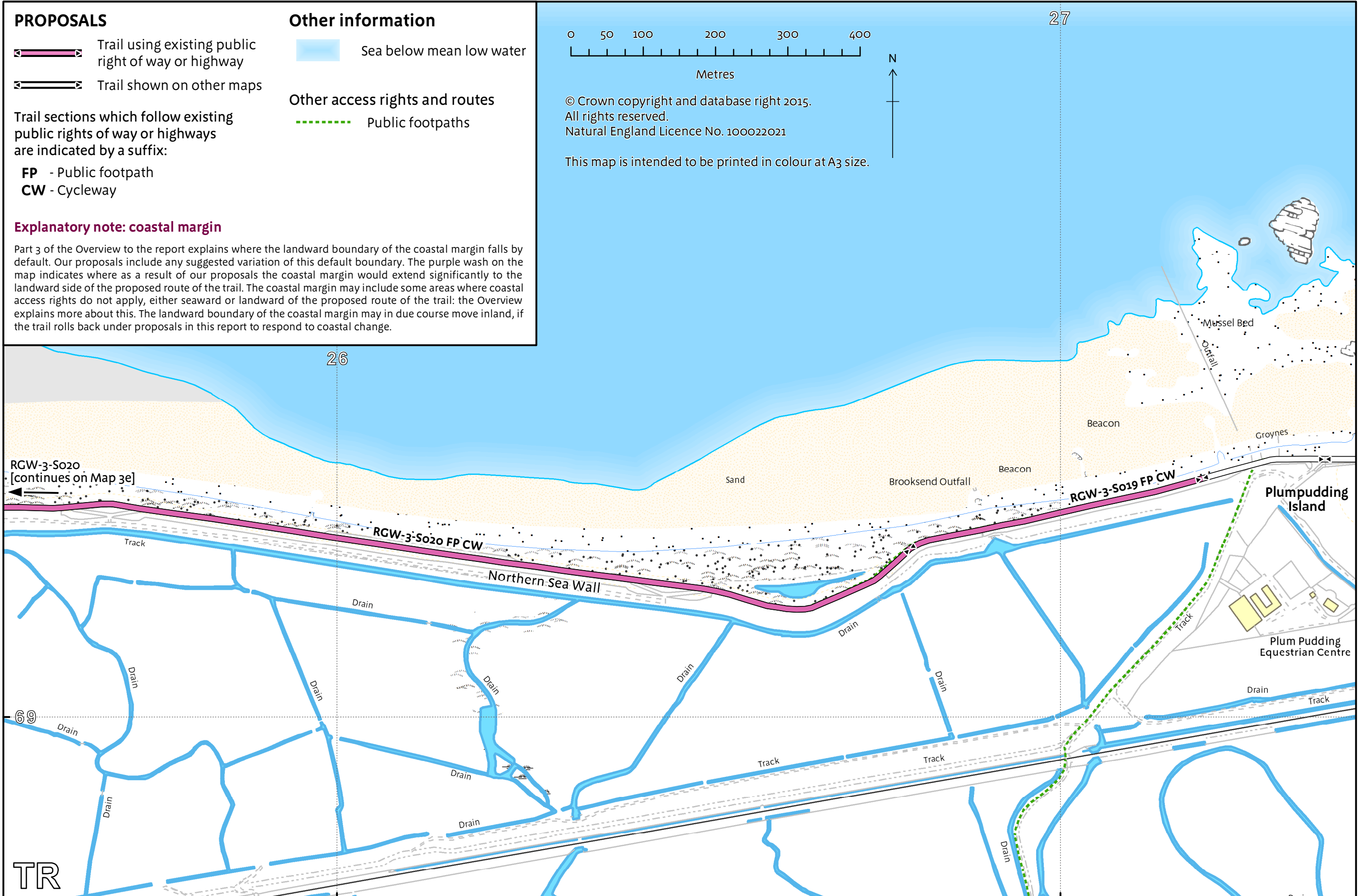
Map 3b Coleman's Stairs, Birchington to Minnis Bay



Map 3c Minnis Bay to Plum pudding Island



Map 3d Plumpudding Island to Northern Sea Wall (eastern section)



Map 3d Plumpudding Island to Northern Sea Wall (eastern section)

