

Chapter 4:

Gibraltar Point to Skegness Pier

England Coast Path: Sutton Bridge to Skegness - Natural England's Proposals

Part 4.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Gibraltar Point, sluice on west bank of river Steeping (grid reference: TF5533 5812)
End Point:	Skegness Pier (grid reference: TF5710 6338)
Relevant Maps:	4a to 4e

Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

The Trail:

- 4.1.1 Follows a mixture of existing walked routes along the Skegness seafront and through parts of Gibraltar Point NNR and new routes across dunes and saltmarsh.
- 4.1.2 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely with good views of the sea at many points, following an inner line of dunes through the Gibraltar Point reserve to avoid areas which are frequently inundated by tidal floodwaters.
- 4.1.3 Includes two significant sections of new path on and adjacent to the dunes between Gibraltar Point and Skegness and connecting to the River Steeping footbridge crossing. See maps 4a to 4d and associated tables below for details.
- 4.1.4 Is aligned on saltmarsh adjacent to the River Steeping between the main car park at Gibraltar point visitor centre and the footbridge at Burgh Sluice. Alternative routes to reach the footbridge, which is the only available crossing point of the Steeping, would have resulted in unacceptable disturbance to protected wildfowl and wader species on the Jackson's Marsh area of the reserve (see the Access and Sensitive Features Assessment for further details). There will be a very small proportion of time around the highest spring tides of the year when the route is not available for a short period but this is estimated to be on no more than 10 occasions per year in the daytime when visitors could be expected.
- 4.1.5 Follows existing waymarked routes through the Gibraltar Point reserve north from the main visitor car park for just over one kilometre. Beyond this the route proposed at first follows the top of a dune ridge where the scrub removal required is minimal, and then descends to follow the base of the dune ridge towards Skegness.

Protection of sensitive features:

4.1.6 This part of the coast includes the following sites, designated for nature conservation or heritage preservation (See maps C of the Overview):

- Gibraltar Point Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Gibraltar Point Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Greater Wash (proposed SPA)
- Gibraltar Point Ramsar site
- Gibraltar Point Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its geological /wildlife interest
- Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve.

We have assessed the potential impacts of our proposals 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.

4.1.7 With input from specialists we have considered each of the sites involved and the relevant designations and concluded that for this section of the coast our proposals will not have a detrimental effect.

In reaching this conclusion we have identified that it would be necessary to:

- Use a route on saltmarsh beside the River Steeping to reach the Burgh Sluice footbridge. This has the effect of using the seabank as screening to prevent disturbance to waders and wildfowl that are often concentrated on the scrapes and lagoons within the Jackson's Marsh area of the reserve
- Follow a route at the base of the dune ridge, where scrub has been cut in a 2m strip, for part of the section north to Skegness. This makes available a drier pathway on the dune edge, to avoid damage from poaching to the upper saltmarsh vegetation in the dune slack that could otherwise occur in wet conditions.

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

See part 6b of the Overview - 'Protection of sensitive features' for a description of our overall approach and a summary of our conclusions

Accessibility:

4.1.8 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, which makes use of existing surface paths 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:

- crosses a short section of saltmarsh (SBS-4-S005 to SBS-4-S009) which may in some places be wet and uneven.
- would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path along a ridge of dunes (SBS-4-S014 to SBS-4-S020)

Although the sections involved will be cut periodically to reduce vegetation cover it is not possible to further improve the surface of these sections as the works required would adversely affect these habitats which are features of the protected site.

See part 6a 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 section 5 of the Overview.

- 4.1.9 Estuary: This report proposes that the trail should include a route around the estuary of the River Steeping, extending upstream from the open coast as far as the footbridge at Burgh Sluice, which is the first foot crossing point over the river and which would be subject to a new public right of access across it under our proposals. See part 5f of the Overview. The trail covered by this chapter includes this estuary route.
- 4.1.10 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 4.2.1 below.

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'.

- 4.1.11 Restrictions and/or exclusions: We have proposed to exclude or restrict access by direction under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) in certain places along this section of coast. For details of these directions, see 4.3.6 in the Formal Proposals Section of this chapter and Part 10 of the Overview.
- 4.1.12 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 10 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for details.

- 4.1.13 Other factors affecting access: Adjacent to route section SBS-4-S028 in the seaward spreading room public access may be interrupted from time to time for short periods to allow events and activities connected with the seaside resort. This arrangement would continue without any local restriction on the new access rights to give effect to it formally.

Establishment and ongoing management of the trail

- 4.1.14 Some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary, in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 of the Overview.

- Refurbishment and improvements to the footbridge at Burgh Sluice to make this fully compliant with safety standards appropriate for the new public access (SBS-4-S004)
- Scrub removal from a strip at the base of the dune ridge from Gibraltar Point to the end of Seacroft Esplanade to provide a dry pathway removed from the sensitive habitat within the dune slack (SBS-4-S014 to SBS-4-S020)
- Waymarking and signs to raise awareness of sensitive habitats in the Gibraltar Point reserve and to encourage behaviours to avoid adverse effects on these - e.g. dog control, restriction on access to areas important for particularly sensitive species) (SBS-4-S014 to SBS-4-S020)

4.1.15 Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 8 of the Overview.

See parts 7 - 'Physical establishment of the trail' and 8 - 'Maintenance of the trail' of the Overview for more information.

Future Change:

4.1.16 At the time of preparing the report, we do not foresee any need for future changes to the access provisions proposed for the length of coast described in this chapter.

See parts 6e - 'Coastal processes' and 9 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

Part 4.2: Commentary on Maps

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

4.2.1 Section Details – Maps 4a to 4e: Gibraltar Point to Skegness Pier

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 4.2.2: 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 6a - certain specific coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail, or connect indirectly with it by touching another part of the coastal margin that itself touches the foreshore at some point.

Column 6b – an asterisk (*) means that the full extent of the mapped default landward coastal margin coincides exactly with the existing boundary feature described in this column.

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	6c	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 9 of Overview)	Default landward coastal margin?	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 10 of Overview)
4a	SBS-4-S001	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Yes - bank	Landward base of seabank	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S002	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Yes - bank	Landward base of seabank	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S003	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	Yes - bank	Landward base of seabank	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S004	Not an existing walked route	Bridge deck	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S005	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S006	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S007	Not an existing walked route	Grass	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S008	Not an existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S009	Not an existing walked route	Tarmac	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S010 RD	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S011 FW	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S012	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4a	SBS-4-S013	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4b	SBS-4-S014	Other existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4b	SBS-4-S015	Other existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4b	SBS-4-S016	Other existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin
4b	SBS-4-S017	Other existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	Margin

1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	6c	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 9 of Overview)	Default landward coastal margin?	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 10 of Overview)
4b	SBS-4-S018	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Yes - dune	Fenceline	Both	Margin
4c	SBS-4-S019	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Yes - dune	Fenceline	Both	Margin
4c	SBS-4-S020	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Yes - dune	Fenceline	Both	Margin
4c	SBS-4-S021	Other existing walked route	Sand	No	Yes - dune	Fenceline	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
4c	SBS-4-S022	Other existing walked route	Grass	No	Yes - dune	Fenceline	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
4d	SBS-4-S023 FW	Public footway (pavement)	Concrete	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	None
4d	SBS-4-S024 RD	Public highway	Tarmac	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
4d	SBS-4-S025	Other existing walked route	Bare soil: Compacted	No	Yes - dune	Fenceline	Clarity and cohesion	None
4d	SBS-4-S026 MU	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	Yes - dune	Fenceline	Clarity and cohesion	None
4d	SBS-4-S027	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	No	No	Landward edge of trail	Not used	None
4e	SBS-4-S028	Other existing walked route	Concrete	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	None

4.2.2 Other options considered: Map 4a to 4e: Gibraltar Point to Skegness Pier

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
4a	SBS-4-S005 to SBS-4-S009	We considered aligning the trail along either the top of the seabank or the access trackway to Burgh Sluice to reach the footbridge over the River Steeping as shown on the map 4a.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It avoids the frequent disturbance that would have resulted from the other route options where it was not possible to adequately screen the routes from the Jackson's Marsh area of the Gibraltar Point reserve which attracts large numbers of sensitive bird species. Some of these are designated features of the SPA, and the area is considered to be supporting habitat for them.
4c	SBS-4-S019 to SBS-4-S020	We considered continuing the route along the top of the dune ridge towards the end of Seacroft esplanade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The route along the top of the dune ridge would have required very substantial scrub removal both for creation and future maintenance over a distance of 1.5km incurring high costs and much disturbance to sensitive dune habitats A dune top ridge close to the boundary of the golf course could also have been a safety issue for users putting them at risk of golf ball strikes

Part 4.3: Chapter 4 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 4a to 4e.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

Formal Proposals – Gibraltar Point to Skegness Pier

Discretion to include an estuary

- 4.3.1 Natural England proposes to exercise its functions as if the sea included the estuarial waters of the River Steeping as far as the existing footbridge at Burgh Sluice as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map 4a.

Proposed route of the trail

- 4.3.2 The route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 4a to 4e as the proposed route of the trail.

Landward boundary of coastal margin

- 4.3.3 Adjacent to route sections SBS-4-S018 to SBS-4-S022 and SBS-4-S025 to SBS-4-S026MU, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the fenceline at the landward edge of the dunes.

Local restrictions and exclusions

- 4.3.4 Natural England proposes to restrict access relevant to this length of coast, as follows:

Local byelaws at Gibraltar Point require (1) dogs to be kept on leads all year round and (2) dogs to be excluded from the beach or foreshore between 1 April to 1 September each year. Local byelaws prevail over coastal access rights, so these restrictions will continue to apply.

Access to the zoned areas within the margin at Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve, seaward of sections SBS-4-S013 to SBS-4-S014, will be restricted as follows:

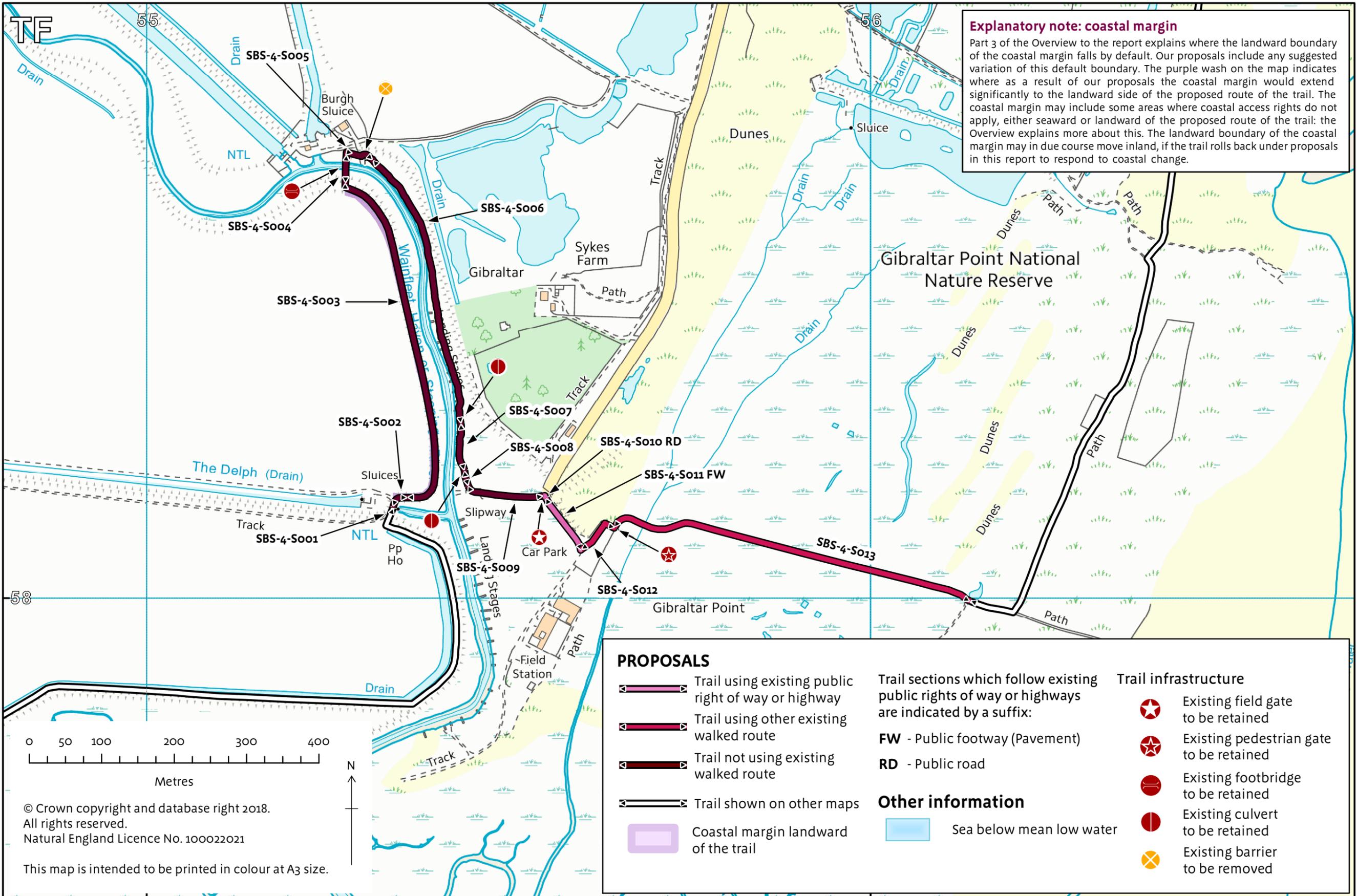
- Access will be excluded for the purpose of nature conservation, to protect breeding birds, particularly little terns, from trampling and disturbance between 1 April to 1 September each year on the land cross hatched in brown on Map L.
- Access will be excluded for the purpose of land management, to protect the bird observatory operation from disturbance year round on the land shaded in purple on Map J.

These restrictions replicate existing access management at Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve.

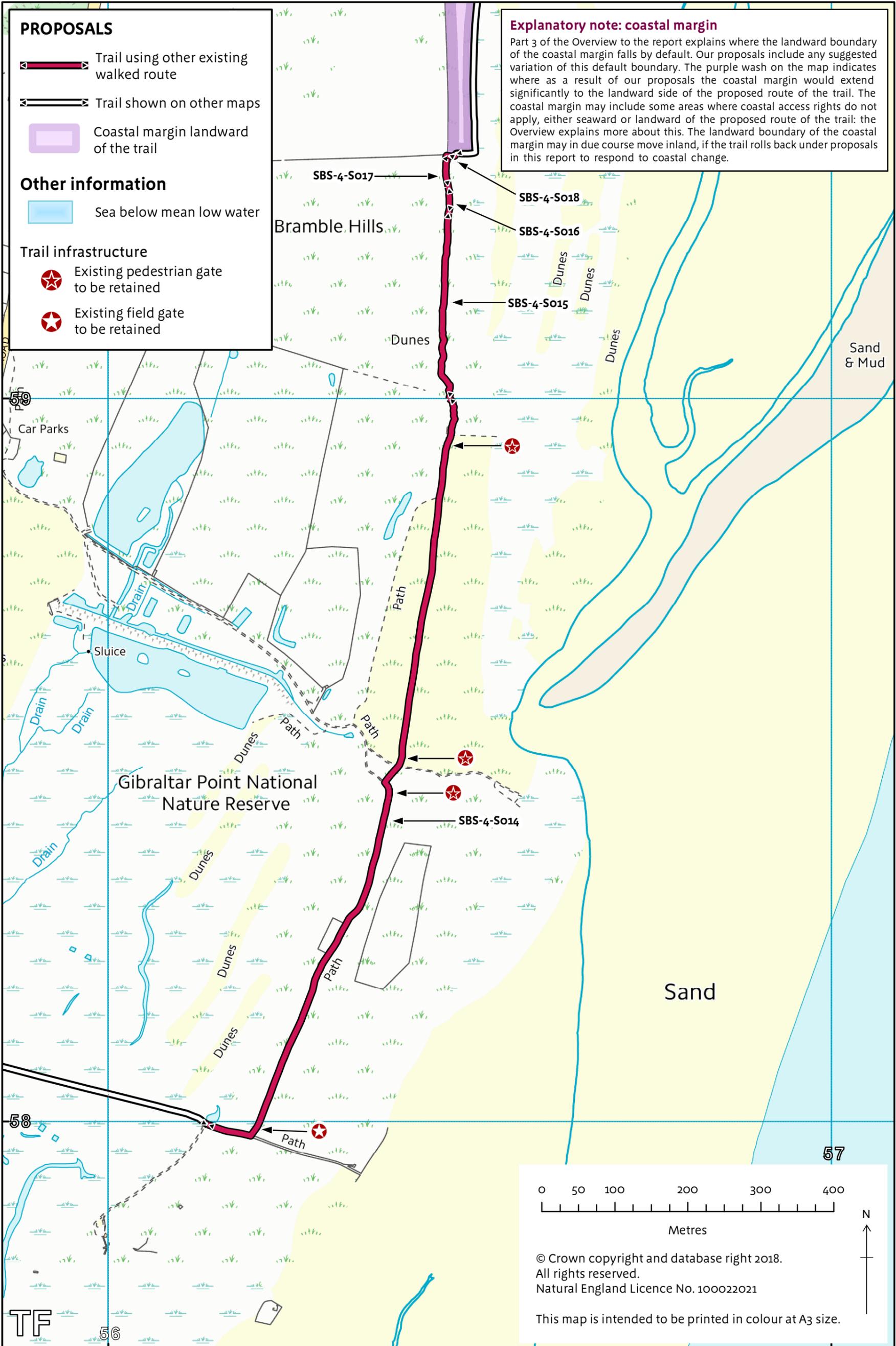
On the east side of the River Steeping the trail will follow an existing walked route across the saltmarsh along route sections SBS-4-S005 to SBS-4-S009. Access to the adjacent saltmarsh will be excluded.

Access to the saltmarsh in the margin will also be excluded year round seaward of route sections SBS-4-S001 to SBS-4-S020 on the land shaded in red on Map I, because we are satisfied that the land is unsuitable for public access.

Please refer to Part 10 of the Overview and see maps D, I, J and L for further details.



Map 4a West Bank of River Steeping to Gibraltar Point NNR



Explanatory note: coastal margin

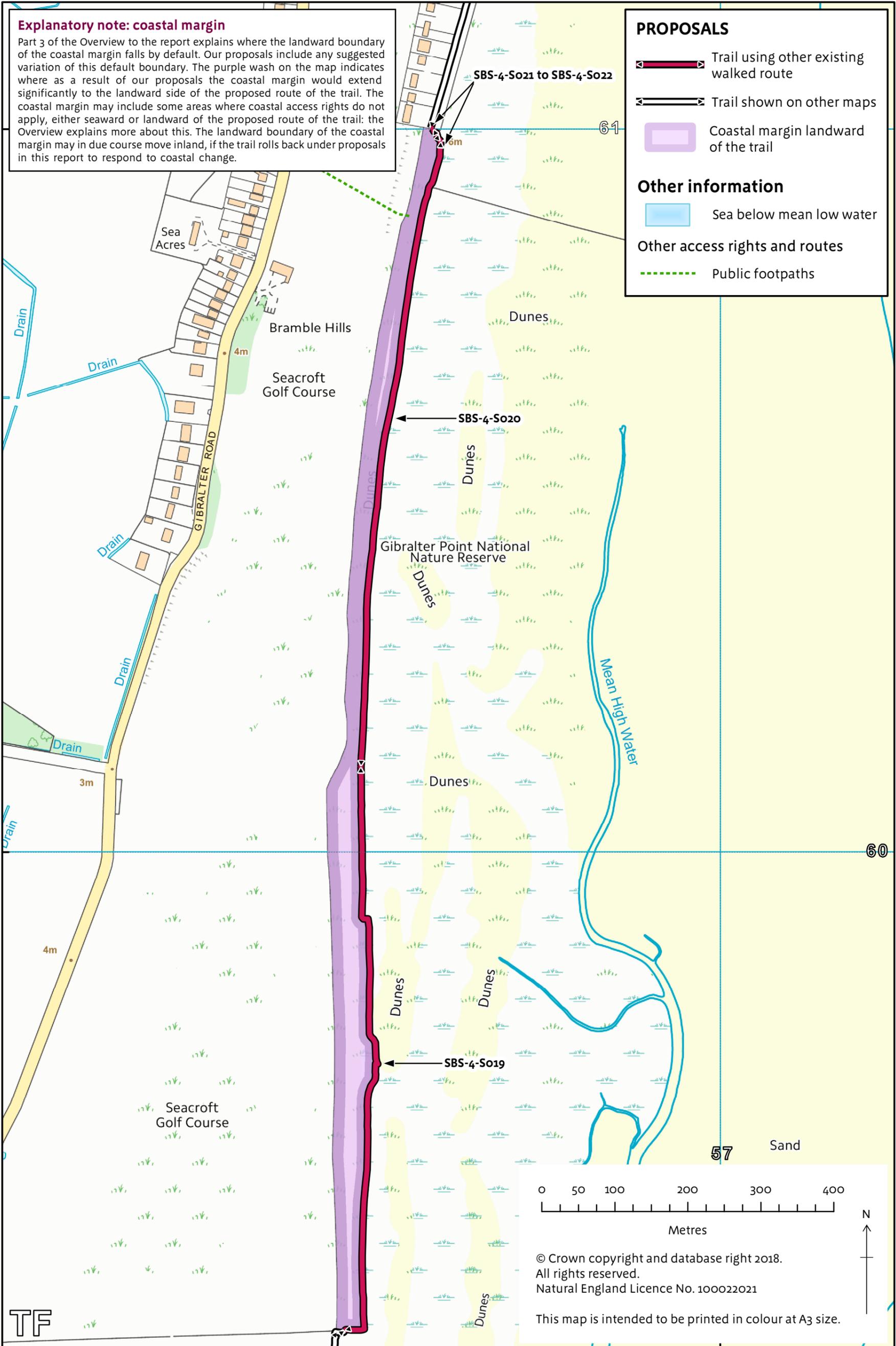
Part 3 of the Overview to the report explains where the landward boundary of the coastal margin falls by default. Our proposals include any suggested variation of this default boundary. The purple wash on the map indicates where as a result of our proposals the coastal margin would extend significantly 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.

PROPOSALS

-  Trail using other existing walked route
-  Trail shown on other maps
-  Coastal margin landward of the trail

Other information

-  Sea below mean low water
-  Public footpaths



Explanatory note: coastal margin
 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.

PROPOSALS

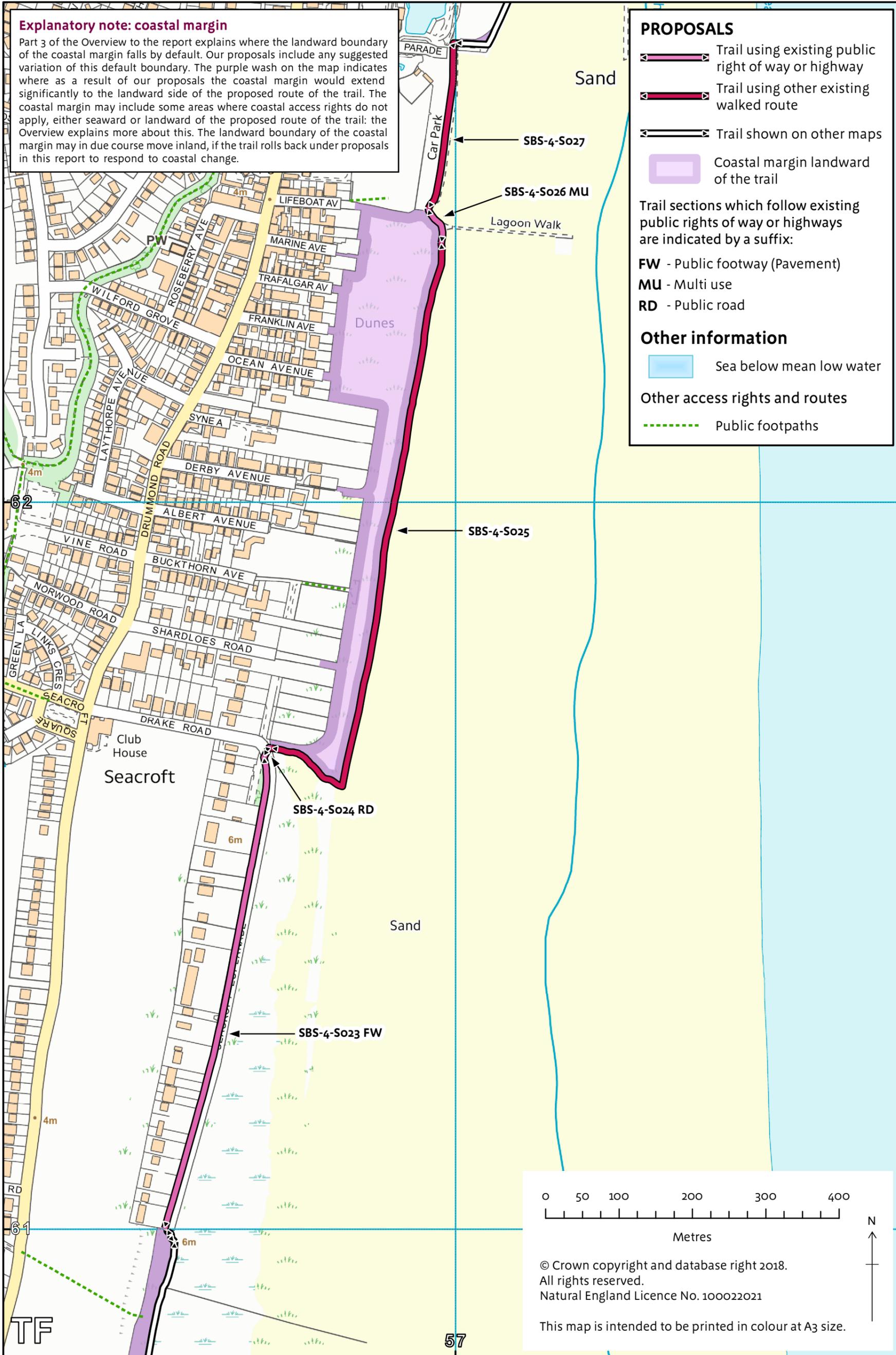
- Trail using existing public right of way or highway
- Trail using other existing walked route
- Trail shown on other maps
- Coastal margin landward of the trail

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

- FW** - Public footway (Pavement)
- MU** - Multi use
- RD** - Public road

Other information

- Sea below mean low water
- Other access rights and routes
- Public footpaths



TF

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