



Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal

Coastal Access Programme

Programme	Coastal Access
Appraisal title	North Norfolk Coast
Reason for consideration	Alignment of the coast path and associated areas of spreading room
Location of affected area	The Wash & North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC), North Norfolk Coast SAC, North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area (SPA), North Norfolk Coast Ramsar and North Norfolk Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
Report Status	Final
Date	January 2018
Access Case Officer	Diana Curtis
Site Responsible Officers	John Ebbage & Michael Rooney

Our Approach

Natural England's approach to ensuring the protection of sensitive nature conservation features under the Coastal Access Programme is set out in section 4.9 Coastal Access: Natural England's Approved Scheme 2013¹. We call our internal processes to support this approach 'Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal' (ASFA) and this document is a record of our conclusions. The appraisal includes our Habitats Regulations Assessment wherever relevant to the site in question.

Our final published proposal for a stretch of England Coast Path is preceded by detailed local consideration of options for route alignment, the extent of the coastal margin and any requirement for restrictions, exclusions or seasonal alternative routes. The proposals are thoroughly considered before being finalised and initial ideas may be modified or rejected during the iterative design process, drawing on the range of relevant expertise available within Natural England.

Evidence is also gathered as appropriate from a range of other sources which can include information and data held locally by external partners or from the experience of local land owners and occupiers. The approach includes looking at any current visitor management practices, either informal or formal. It also involves discussing our emerging conclusions as appropriate with key local interests such as land owners or occupiers, conservation organisations or the local access authority. In these ways, any nature conservation concerns are discussed early and constructive solutions identified as necessary.

The conclusions of our appraisal are certified by both the member of staff responsible for developing the access proposal and the person responsible for considering any environmental impacts. This ensures appropriate separation of duties within Natural England.

Where our proposals for the England Coast Path and associated Coastal Margin are relevant to a Natura 2000 site, this appraisal fulfils our duty under the Habitats Regulations 2010 to assess their potential implications in order to ensure no likely significant effect on the site. The formal conclusions relating to this are recorded in Part 7 of the document.

Map

See Annex A for maps showing:

- Extent of The Wash & North Norfolk Coast SAC
- Extent of the North Norfolk Coast SAC
- Extent of the North Norfolk Coast SPA
- Extent of the North Norfolk Coast Ramsar
- Extent of the North Norfolk Coast SSSI for its geological/wildlife interest

This Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal is published alongside Natural England's Report to the Secretary of State, which sets out for approval by the Secretary of State our proposals for the England Coast Path and associated Coastal Margin on this stretch of coast.

Natural England's Report to the Secretary of State is published on our web pages as a series of seven separate documents, the Overview Report and Chapters 1 to 6.

Overview Report

The Overview Report explains the overall content for the report and includes background information which is helpful in understanding our proposals. It also provides key information concerning specific aspects of our proposals, including roll-back and access restrictions or exclusions.

A further series of maps is included in the Overview, detailing the location and extent of various restrictions and exclusions that have been proposed, often in connection with the conclusions of this appraisal.

Proposals

Chapters 1 to 6 are called the proposals. These set out and explain the access provisions we propose for each length of coast to which they relate.

Each chapter is accompanied by detailed maps of the relevant length of coast. The maps are numbered according to the part of the chapter to which they relate. For example, maps 1a to 1e illustrate the proposals in chapter 1.

Where this document refers to trail sections (e.g. WBH-1-S001), please refer to the maps in the chapters of Natural England's Report to the Secretary of State for the locations of these trail sections.

Proposed new access provisions

The Coastal Access project team intends to make the following relevant proposals for the length of coast in Norfolk between Weybourne and Hunstanton.

Our proposals for improved coastal access are fully described in Natural England's Report to the Secretary of State, for the Weybourne to Hunstanton length of coast (March 2018).

This appraisal makes reference to some of the chapters (1-6) and associated detailed maps which can be found within the report at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-veybourne-to-hunstanton

Route Proposal

The Coastal Access project team intends to propose to the Secretary of State that the centre of the line shown in our proposals chapters 1 to 6 should be the England Coast Path for this length of coast. Our proposed route follows the existing route of the Norfolk Coast Path National Trail (NCP) other than:

- at Morston Downs. The proposed route will utilise an existing walked route and bridleway to avoid a set of steps (See chapter 2, map 2b).
- at Morston. The proposed route will utilise a public byway and other existing walked route to enhance visitor management of the site (See Chapter 2, map 2c).
- between Stiffkey Greens and Stiffkey Sluices. The proposed route will utilise a field edge providing a firmer surface for walkers (See chapter 2, map 2d).
- between Brancaster and Thornham. The proposed route utilises a combination of existing walked routes, footpaths and highways as well as sections of newly created access, resulting in a trail closer to the sea in comparison to the existing NCP (See chapter 5, maps 5a to 5c).
- Flaxley. The proposed route utilises a public footpath landward of the mapped NCP (see chapter 5, map 5e).

Roll Back Proposal

The proposed route along this stretch of coast would in the future be able to roll back to a new alignment in response to coastal erosion and other geomorphological processes. Where sections of the approved route need to change for these reasons in order to remain viable, the new route will be determined by Natural England without any requirement for further reference to the Secretary of State. In exercising this power we will take account of the criteria set out in part B of the Coastal Access Scheme, including the protection of sensitive features.

Coastal Margin

Landward boundary of the coastal margin

Under the legislation the following land would become part of the coastal margin by default as a consequence of the route proposal:

- land within 2 metres of the route to either side
- all other land seaward of the route as far as the furthest extremity of the foreshore

In places the project team proposes that a suitable physical feature should form the landward boundary of the coastal margin instead of the default boundary 2m landward of the route. This is in order to provide clarity where practicable about the extent of access rights. Typically the boundary in such cases would be a fence, wall, hedge or ditch adjacent to the route.

The effects are not visible on all report maps, but are detailed in the chapters that explain the access proposals for the whole coast between Weybourne and Hunstanton.

Default landward margin

Under the legislation certain specific coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail, resulting in the coastal margin extending some distance inland of the trail.

Such land types include foreshore, shingle and dunes, as well as section 15 and other mapped access land which either touches the foreshore itself at some point, or connects indirectly with it by touching another part of the coastal margin that itself touches the foreshore at some point.

These locations are mainly visible within the report maps and include the following locations:

- The Quag to Cley Eye. The project team proposes the landward boundary of the coastal margin will correspond with the fence line landward of the proposed trail (see Chapter 1, maps 1a to 1d).
- Holkham Meals and Holkham West Sands. The project team proposes the landward boundary of the coastal margin will correspond with the fence line and track landward of the default land type (see Chapter 3, maps 3a to 3d).
- Staithes Lane to Flaxley. The project team proposes the landward boundary of the coastal margin will correspond with fence lines and the landward edge of Broadwater Road (see Chapter 5, maps 5d & 5e).
- Flaxley to Hunstanton Golf Links. The project team proposes the landward boundary of the coastal margin will correspond to the various fence lines seaward of the Golf Links and properties (see Chapter 6, maps 6a & 6b).

The above proposals will secure currently established access.

Additional landward margin to secure or enhance public enjoyment of the coast

The following additional areas that lie landward of the trail have been included within our proposals to secure and enhance public enjoyment of the coast to areas with established access:

- Sewage Pumping Fields Station Blakeney, (See Chapter 2, map 2b)
- Brancaster Staithe. The project team proposes the landward boundary of the coastal margin will correspond with various fence lines landward of the proposed trail (see report Chapter 4, map 4d).
- Rack Hill including Branodunum Roman Fort (Scheduled Ancient Monument) (See Chapter 4, map 4e)
- Hunstanton (See Chapter 6, map 6c)

Unless the project team proposes informal management proposals or access restrictions or exclusions (see below); or the land falls within the categories of excepted land as defined at Figure 1 of the approved Coastal Access Scheme, the coastal margin described above would be subject to public rights of access on foot, with the exception of section WBH-2-S020 (See Chapter 2, map 2d) where higher user rights of cycling are also proposed.

Directions to exclude access

Access to salt marsh and mudflats

Under the legislation land which is coastal margin, consisting of salt marsh or flat may, by direction, exclude or restrict access because the land or any part of the land is deemed unsuitable for public access. This principle has been applied with minimal use along this stretch due to the established recreational access of salt marsh and flat in the area.

In consultation with the coast guards and Senior Trails officer, the project team have identified the following two locations as unsuitable for public access:

- salt marsh north of Stone Meal Creek, Wells-next-the-Sea including Warham and Wells Salt Marshes, East Fleet and Lodge Marsh
- salt marsh and flats at Overy Marsh, Burnham Overy Staithe

See annex B Maps G & J for extent of exclusions.

Since public access to these areas would be excluded, the project team have not considered possible impacts on the sensitive features in these areas. If at any time in the future these exclusions are revoked there will be a need to consider possible impacts to the associated sensitive features. The above proposal will not affect existing commoners' rights in the area.

Direction to exclude access

Much of the North Norfolk Coast is already accessible to the public except in some areas including Blakeney Point (part of Blakeney National Nature Reserve), Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve, Holkham National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Holme Dunes NNR, where access is carefully managed and limited to protect sensitive wildlife. Our proposals will avoid undermining these existing measures by formally restricting new access to these areas of the coastal margin. Formalising restrictions will support site managers in the day to day management of visitors to their sites.

As a result of the project additional formal restrictions and other informal management measures have been identified and proposed. These will have the effect of further enhancing existing conservation objectives along the North Norfolk Coast.

Blakeney Point - part of Blakeney National Nature Reserve (see Chapter 1)

The site is generally open to the public but with access to certain areas limited at sensitive times. We propose that public access to these established exclusion zones is formally excluded and/or restricted by direction as indicated in the maps at Annex B maps E & F and listed below:

- i. no access to cordoned off areas along the beach at Blakeney Point from 1st April until 15th August
- ii. visitors with dogs are not allowed in parts of the Nature Reserve managed by the National Trust from 1st April until 15th August
- iii. visitors with dogs must keep them on a short lead from 1st April until 15th August north east of Old Far Point
- iv. no access for visitors at any time to the area north of Simpool Head
- v. no access for visitors between 25th October and 25th January to the area adjacent to iv) above.

These measures are designed to complement existing visitor management on-site which includes temporary signage advertising the excluded and restricted zones and wardening.

Wells-next-the-Sea (Warham Greens - landward of Stonemeal Creek) (see chapter 2)

This area of saltmarsh has some existing informal access which is not wardened unlike the adjacent areas of marsh managed by the National Trust. The area is popular for overwintering birds and provides a breeding and feeding area for many bird species.

Due to formalising public access to Warham Salt Marshes, there is potential for a small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals causing a negative impact on the bird species present.

We propose that public access to this area is formally excluded by direction as indicated at Annex B map G and listed below:

- no access to the spreading room seaward of the trail – all year

Signs will be installed at entry points advertising the exclusion.

Holkham Bay & Gunhill - part of Holkham National Nature Reserve (see chapter 3)

Holkham National Nature Reserve is generally open to the public but with certain areas at Holkham Bay and Gunhill cordoned off and wardened to protect ringed plover and nesting little tern.

We propose that public access to these established exclusion zones is formally excluded. In addition we propose a further area at Holkham Bay is excluded as indicated at annex B maps H & I and listed below:

- no access to cordoned off areas along the beach at Holkham Bay from 1st April until 15th August
- no access to cordoned off areas at Gunhill from 1st April until 15th August

Signs will be installed advertising the exclusions. Non-electric sheep net fencing will be purchased for use at Holkham Bay and Gun Hill.

These measures are designed to complement existing visitor management on-site which includes fencing and wardening.

We propose management measures to protect the embryonic salt marsh by the installation of information boards highlighting nature conservation interests of the embryonic saltmarsh, and the official access routes to encourage responsible behaviour. This will complement existing fencing work to manage trampling pressure.

Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve (see chapter 5)

The site is generally open daily to the public, however to avoid disturbance to the bird interest, including marsh harrier, existing management measures require visitors with dogs to keep to the public right of way leading from the road to the beach on the west side of the reserve. Visitors to the site without dogs are permitted to follow a network of permanent and seasonal routes.

From 1st April until 31st August each year areas of the beach are cordoned off to protect ground nesting birds by direction under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW).

We propose that public access is formally excluded as indicated in at Annex B map K and listed below:

- dog exclusion at all times of the year to the coastal margin at Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve
- people to keep at all times of the year to promoted marked routes through the reserve
- no access to cordoned off areas along the beach at Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve from 1st April until 31st August each year

These measures are designed to complement existing visitor management on-site which includes signage advertising the exclusion and restricted routes together with wardening.

Holme Dunes National Nature Reserve (see chapter 5)

The site is open all year (except Christmas Day). Existing management measures require all visitors to obtain a ticket to enter the reserve. A Section 24 Land Management exclusion under CRow restricts access to an area landward of the existing NCP. Access is by permit only along promoted routes with some sections cordoned off. The area is wardened.

Access to certain areas seaward of the proposed trail is limited at sensitive times with areas cordoned off to protect ground nesting birds.

We propose that public access to these established exclusion zones is formally excluded by directions as indicated in the map at Annex B map L and listed below:

- access restricted by permit only along promoted routes landward of the trail
- no access to cordoned off areas along the beach from 1st April to 15th August

Signs will be installed at entry points advertising the exclusions.

These measures are designed to complement existing visitor management on-site which includes temporary signs being installed advertising the excluded zones and wardening.

If at any time in the future the restrictions above are revoked there will be a need to consider possible impacts to the sensitive features within the area.

Existing management measures

No changes are proposed to the existing management measures in place to protect sensitive wildlife at the following locations:

- Cley Marshes Nature Reserve - fencing
- Scolt Head Island - from April to August annually there is no public access to the tern breeding area at the western end of the island; the area is cordoned off and wardened; dogs are excluded annually from April to August; signage and 24 hour wardening is in place
- Brancaster – fencing
- Gun Hill – fencing, signage and wardening
- Holkham Bay – fencing, signage and wardening
- Holkham Estate- a booking system for horse riders

Establishment works

Enhanced way marking between Holkham Meals and Overy Marshes (see maps 3b to 3d).

Information notices will be installed highlighting nature conservation interests and to encourage responsible behaviour at:

- Holkham adjacent to the trail at sections WBH-3-S007 & WBH-3-S008
- Burnham Overy Staithe
- Holme National Nature reserve – access points from the trail to the beach and along the eastern end

Signage will be installed at the crossing points to Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve (map 5b). These works are outside of the designations described.

Kissing gates will replace existing fences and gates at Wells-next-the-Sea (see map 2h) and Brancaster (see map 4e).

A number of new signs will be installed where the proposed route differs from that of the existing NCP.

Any outdated signs or information boards along the existing NCP will either be updated or removed.

Signs will be installed advising of the saltmarsh and flats exclusions.

The initial purchase and installation costs for these measures would be met by Natural England's Coastal Access project team. Establishment will be undertaken by the Access Authority at Norfolk County Council who will secure any associated assents prior to establishment. The Access Authority will have responsibility for maintaining the trail in line with the national standards that apply to all National Trails.

The purchase of the fencing for use during the restriction periods at Holkham National Nature Reserve would be met by Natural England's Coastal Access project with installation, maintenance and monitoring responsibilities met by the site managers.

This assessment is undertaken on best existing information and evidence available. If in the future there are any subsequent changes in local circumstances the legislation is such that the need for restrictions or realignment can be considered in the future.

The Norfolk Coast Path National Trail was established 30 years ago. It's been widely promoted and is already a well-known and popular route with walkers. It is possible that once it becomes part of the England Coast Path this will increase the profile of the route and could attract additional walkers to the area. However, we do not anticipate this would result in any significant changes in visitor behaviour or patterns of access from that already being experienced on the site in the longer term other than at those locations referenced below.

1. Kelling Hard and Blakeney Chapel (Chapter 1 of our report)

Existing use

The NCP is a well-established route for walkers and the nature reserve at Cley is a promoted destination for visitors. Many of the visitors to the area are attracted by the wildlife interest and the area is particularly popular with birdwatchers. The area is a popular destination for visitors throughout the year and becomes particularly busy during national holidays and at weekends, with the coast road and settlements of Weybourne, Salthouse and Cley becoming congested. Formal car parking is provided at Weybourne, Salthouse and Cley. A coast-hopper bus provides public transport along this stretch of coast.

How is the new access proposal likely to affect use of this site by the public?

Overall for this area, our proposals described in the previous section are unlikely to cause a significant change in the level and patterns of visits.

No route changes are proposed for this section and the extent of access rights would be broadly consistent with those currently available including recommendations at Blakeney Point which mirror current access management measures as well.

2. Blakeney Chapel and Wells Lifeboat Station (Chapter 2 of our report)

Existing use

The NCP is a well-established route for walkers and extends along the coastline in this area. Blakeney Point National Nature Reserve is a promoted destination for visitors who are attracted by the wildlife interest particularly the seal colony at Blakeney Point (accessible on foot from Cley Eye - see Chapter 1 map 1e). Boat trips to visit the seal colony are organised from Blakeney and Morston.

The area is a popular destination throughout the year, becoming particularly busy at peak periods including national holidays and at weekends, with the coast road and settlements of Blakeney, Morston and Wells-next-the-Sea becoming congested. Formal car parking is provided at Blakeney, Morstons, Muckledyke and at Wells-next-the-Sea. A coast-hopper bus provides public transport along this stretch of coast.

There are large areas of saltmarsh along this stretch. Visitors to the marshes include local wildfowlers, bait diggers and fishermen as well as the general public mainly along walked routes. The area includes National Trust 24 hour access at Stiffkey.

Information signs at Stiffkey encourage visitors to use the walked routes and also raise awareness of tides. There are no reports of significant rescues at the marsh by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

North of Stonemeal Creek near Wells, there are reported rescues by the RNLI resulting from people getting stranded in the area by the tides. Signs are in place at the lifeboat station warning of high tides in the area with patrol boats out during school holidays.

How is the new access proposal likely to affect use of this site/area by the public?

Our proposals described in the previous section are unlikely to cause a change in the level and patterns of visits to the area because the extent of access rights would be broadly consistent with those currently available for visitors with the exception of the salt marsh east of Wells-next-the-Sea.

There will be a localised change in patterns of use at the points identified below resulting from the proposed modification of the existing coast path there. However, these modifications are designed to reflect and consolidate existing patterns of use.

The main changes overall are likely to be:

- a reduction in walkers of the existing NCP in favour of the new sections proposed at Morston Downs and Morston (map 2b & 2c)
- a reduction in walkers and cyclists using the existing NCP, in favour of the new section of multi-user path proposed at Morston Greens (map 2d)
- visitors will not enter the marsh east of Wells-next-the-Sea, which will be restricted under our proposals on grounds that it is unsuitable for public access (map 2h)
- a reduction of visitors to Warham Salt Marshes (south of Stonemeal Creek) which will be restricted under our proposals to protect sensitive bird features

3. Wells Lifeboat Station and Burnham Overy Staithe (Chapter 3 of our report)

Existing use

The NCP extends along the coastline in this area and is a popular route with local walkers, day visitors and holiday makers.

Promoted destinations include the caravan park and camping site near Wells Lifeboat Station, Holkham NNR and Burnham Overy Staithe. Formal car parking is provided at Wells-next-the-Sea, Holkham Gap and Burnham Overy Staithe and a coast-hopper bus provides public transport along this stretch of coast. The sandy beaches at Wells and Holkham are particularly popular destinations. With horse riding promoted along the beach at Holkham. Walkers use a number of desire lines through the dune complex at Holkham and cycling occurs along the Sustrans route between Wells Lifeboat Station and Holkham Gap consistent with the waymarked coast path.

Scolt Head NNR is mapped as open access land. Access is promoted by ferry operating between April and September. Some people with local knowledge sometimes choose to access the island on foot along the eastern end using their local knowledge of routes, crossing points and tides.

How is the new access proposal likely to affect use of this site by the public?

Overall for this area our proposals described in the previous section are unlikely to cause a significant change in the level and patterns of visits, as the extent of access rights will be consistent with those currently available at Holkham NNR and mapped open access land.

There will be localised changes in patterns of use at the points identified below resulting from the proposed modification of the existing NCP there. However, these modifications are designed to reflect and consolidate existing patterns of use.

The main changes are likely to be:

- a reduction in walkers of the existing NCP in favour of the new section proposed at Holkham Gap (map 3b)
- a reduction in walkers to cordoned off areas at Holkham Bay between 1st April until 15th August (maps 3c and 3d)
- walkers will be more likely to stick to the path between Holkham Meals and Overy Marshes as a result of improved waymarking proposed (maps 3b to 3d) and interpretation

4. Burnham Overy Staithe and Brancaster (Chapter 4 of our report)

Existing use

The NCP extends along the coastline in this area and is a popular route with local walkers, day visitors and holiday makers. The area seaward of the NCP is mapped as open access land.

Promoted holiday destinations include Burnham Overy Staithe, Burnham Deepdale, Brancaster Staithe and Brancaster, with an activity centre and boating centre at Brancaster Staithe and a Camping site at Burnham Deepdale. The coast-hopper bus provides public transport along this stretch of coast.

Small boats sail along the many creeks found in this area.

How is the new access proposal likely to affect use of this site by the public?

Overall our proposals described in the previous section are unlikely to cause a significant change in the level and patterns of visits, as the extent of access rights would be broadly consistent with those currently available including areas of mapped open access land seaward of the trail.

There will be localised change in patterns of use at the points identified below resulting from the proposed modification of the existing NCP there. However, these modifications are designed to reflect and consolidate existing patterns of use.

The main changes are likely to be:

- a reduction in walkers of the existing NCP in favour of the new section proposed at Brancaster Staithe (map 4d)
- a small increase in visitors to Branodvnm Roman Fort (map 4e) due to this area being formally mapped as open access land

5. Brancaster and Flaxley (Chapter 5 of our report)

Existing use

The NCP extends along the coastline in this area and is a popular route with local walkers, day visitors and holiday makers. Some areas both seaward and landward of the trail are mapped as open access land.

The NCP deviates away from the coast between Brancaster and Thornham and sea views are compromised.

The settlements along the stretch are popular holiday destinations throughout the year. Promoted destinations include Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve and Holme Dunes NNR affording opportunities for bird watching with visitor centres and car parking facilities. These sites are generally open all year round with restrictions in place as described in section 1 to protect key sensitive features of the sites.

The sandy beaches at Brancaster, Holme and Flaxley are popular destinations particularly in summer with public car parks available at Brancaster and Flaxley.

There is some local use of existing public rights of way leading from the coast road, across the saltmarsh to the foreshore and beaches in the Titchwell area.

A coast-hopper bus provides public transport along this stretch of coast.

How is the new access proposal likely to affect use of this site by the public

The new access proposal described in the previous section are likely to cause a change in the level and patterns of visits between Brancaster and Thornham area, resulting from the proposed modification of the existing NCP there (maps 5a,b and c).

The main changes will be:

- access levels will increase along the public rights of way and footways between sections WBH-5-S002 to WBH-5-S004, WBH-5-S006 to WBH-5-S007, WBH-5-S013 to WBH-5-S018, WBH-5-S020 and WBH-5-S023 (Chapter 5 maps 5a,b &c)
- new access will be created at WBH-5-S005, WBH-5-S008 to WBH-5-S012, WBH-5-S019, WBH-5-S021 to WBH-5-S022 (Chapter 5 maps 5a & b)
- a reduction in walkers using the existing route of the NCP between Brancaster and Thornham in favour of the more direct route provided by the section proposed

Between Thornham and Flaxley (maps 5c, d & e) the new access proposal described in the previous section is unlikely to cause a change in the level and patterns of visits as the extent of access rights would be broadly consistent with those currently available.

At sections WBH-5-S036 and WBH-5-S037 (map 5e) the modifications proposed are designed to reflect and consolidate existing patterns of use from that originally mapped as the NCP.

The extent of access rights to the spreading room would be broadly consistent with that currently available as much of the area is mapped access land and/or sites managed for public access.

At Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve and Holme Dunes NNR, our proposals described in the previous section mirror current reserve policy with local formal restrictions in place.

6. Flaxley and Hunstanton (Chapter 6 of our report)

Existing use

The NCP extends along the coastline in this area and is a popular route with local walkers, day visitors and holiday makers.

Promoted holiday destinations include Old Hunstanton and Hunstanton. The coast-hopper bus provides public transport along this stretch of coast.

How is the new access proposal likely to affect use of this site by the public?

Overall our proposals are unlikely to cause any significant change in the level and patterns of visits as the extent of access rights would be broadly consistent with those currently available.

Access Senior Adviser

Signed:



Name:

Sally Fishwick

Date:

1st November 2017

Section 3: POTENTIAL IMPACT ON FEATURES FROM NEW ACCESS PROPOSAL

Designated site name(s): The Wash & North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC), North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area (SPA), North Norfolk Coast Ramsar site, North Norfolk Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Designation types present (show boundaries on map)	SPA	p/SPA	SAC	p/SAC	Ramsar	p/Ramsar	SSSI
	x		x		x		x

Potential concern about new access proposal (summary)

The North Norfolk Coast is a popular destination for visitors with good existing public access including the NCP. There are several promoted destinations for visitors including a number of National Nature Reserves. The balance between visitors to these sites and the conservation objectives require careful management to avoid potential conflicts to its conservation status.

The Norfolk Coast Path National Trail was established 30 years ago. It's been widely promoted and is already a well-known and popular route with walkers. It is possible that once it becomes part of the England Coast Path this will increase the profile of the route and could attract additional walkers to the area. However, we do not anticipate this would result in any significant changes in visitor behaviour or patterns of access from that already being experienced on the site in the longer term other than at those locations described above.

Status of European features

Note: The Habitats Regulations Guidance Note 6 states the following about prevailing environmental conditions and how they should be considered when undertaking an assessment:

It is important to bear in mind the prevailing environmental conditions in any decision or assessment we make. We have to consider that European sites are unlikely to be pristine, and our decision is therefore based upon its current condition. Factors affecting the site which are not anything to do with a plan/project they are influencing, count as current prevailing conditions. That is not to say that we should take these prevailing conditions as being acceptable, if the site does not have favourable conservation status.

Where a feature for which the site has been selected as being of European importance is already in unfavourable condition or critical thresholds are being exceeded (or is subject to effects which will lead to either of these being the case), any additional plan or project which, either alone or in combination, add to these levels is likely to have a significant effect on the European Site.

Of the 70 SSSI units which make up the North Norfolk Coast SAC and SPA, 3 units (units 3, 23, 58) are unfavourable-recovering. Within the SSSI 15 of the 70 units were last condition assessed in 2009, 44 units were last assessed in 2010, 10 units were last assessed in 2012, and one unit was last condition assessed in 2016. The condition of the SSSI is currently being reviewed to update our understanding. It is expected that the current condition ratings are inaccurate due to growing pressures, including increased recreational pressures.

Within the Site Improvement Plan for the North Norfolk Coast SAC and SPA, recreational pressure has been identified as a threat to the notified features and stakeholders on the coast are working together to try to understand and manage the impact of these pressures on the protected site features. A recent survey by Footprint Ecology (Panter et al. 2016) recorded during summer surveys an average of:

- 120.5 visitors and 29.7 dogs per hour at Lady Anne's Drive, Holkham NNR
- 79.8 visitors and 14.2 dogs per hours accessing West Sands from the carpark at Wells-next-the-Sea
- 63.6 visitors and 4.8 dogs per hour accessing the coastal path from the National Trust carpark in Morston
- 34.3 visitors and 11.1 dogs per hour at the Holme-next-the-sea beach carpark

In winter numbers are reduced but are still high, with the survey recording in winter an average of:

- 44.8 visitors and 4.5 dogs per hour accessing the NCP from the National Trust carpark in Morston
- 41.5 visitors and 13.9 dogs per hour at Lady Anne's Drive, Holkham NNR
- 20 visitors and 10.2 dogs per hour at the Holme-next-the-Sea beach carpark

At busy sites there are signs that high levels of recreation are beginning to impact on some protected features (as detailed below), suggesting the area has passed a critical threshold under current visitor management. Of particular concern are little tern and ringed plover which both nest on open sand and shingle habitats often putting these species in direct conflict with human recreational use of the coast and making them very sensitive to disturbance.

For example, little terns are designated feature of the North Norfolk Coast SPA which supported up to 400 pairs at the time of designation, representing 20% of the British breeding population (SPA citation 1996). Since designation, little tern numbers have declined 17% with a recent 10 year average of 333 pairs (2006-2015) with an average breeding success across the NNC of 0.3 chicks per pair, below the 0.67 chicks per pair required to maintain their population (NNNS, 2006-2015).

Ringed plover were not included as a feature when the North Norfolk Coast SPA was originally designated. However ringed plover were included as a proposed designation feature for the North Norfolk Coast in the 2001 JNCC SPA Review, with the North Norfolk Coast SPA supporting 2.6% of the British breeding population (based on 1998 count) (JNCC 2001 review). The total North Norfolk Coast population is currently around 120 pairs (NNNS, 2015) and shows a serious long term decline from c.435 pairs in 1984 and 283 pairs in 1993 (Rooney & Eve, 1993).

Dark-bellied brent geese and pintail, both wintering species on the North Norfolk Coast, have both also seen declines in their populations as discussed in section 3 below.

There are also some concerns about the impacts, through erosion, of increased recreation on the dune systems, vegetated shingle and some areas of saltmarsh, all of which are designated under the North Norfolk Coast SAC.

The main concerns for this appraisal have been to ensure that:

- proposals for coastal access should not undermine existing measures to protect the nature conservation interest of the North Norfolk Coast
- where localised changes in visits are anticipated as a result of the proposed changes to access arrangements, these do not impact on sensitive features
- that account is taken of the potential for any long term increase of visitors to the area ensuring any potential long-term increase do not impact on sensitive features
- that measures are put in place to address critical threshold levels on protected features with enhanced protective measure proposed

The above concerns were considered in association with presence of breeding ringed plover and redshank, although not a designated feature, these species comprises a sensitive feature for the site and are of current conservation concern.

- **Kelling Hard to Blakeney Chapel**

The area is already a key area visited by both locals and holiday makers, with the NCP a popular route for walkers and visitors. As a consequence there are existing management measures in place to protect the nature conservation interests including fencing along the shingle ridge. Proposals mirror existing access use in the area and do not undermine existing measures to protect the habitats and features of the SSSI/SPA/SAC. Restrictions will be formalised.

- **Blakeney Chapel to Wells Lifeboat Station**

The route mainly follows the line of the existing NCP or other walked routes. Proposals mirror existing access use in the area which does not pose a threat to the habitats and features of the SSSI/SPA/SAC.

Informal access is already established by locals and visitors to the area on the seaward side of the path. Formalising spreading room has potential to increase visitor numbers to the area. However, existing management measures in place of monitoring and wardening by the National Trust at Morston and Stiffkey Marshes reduces the risks of impacts to features.

The area south of Stonemeal Creek lacks the monitoring and wardening present on National Trust owned land and is therefore more sensitive to any potential increase in visitor numbers. The proposals include a recommendation to exclude public access to the area for the purposes to protect wintering bird assemblages and feeding breeding birds present.

Access north of Stonemeal Creek will be excluded as it is deemed unsuitable for public access. If in the future the exclusion is lifted, consideration to the potential disturbance to breeding terns, redshank and ringed plover in the area would need to be considered.

- **Wells Lifeboat Station to Burnham Overy Staithe**

The path between Wells Lifeboat Station and Burnham Overy Staithe mainly runs along the same line as the existing NCP.

The existing line of the NCP between the western end of the existing pine woodland and the boardwalk at the northern end of the Overy is not clear on the ground. Consequently a number of desire lines have been created through the dune complex, in places destructively. The proposed improved waymarking as part of establishment will reduce existing damage on the dunes in the immediate vicinity of the trail.

There already exists a moderate to high degree of informal visitor pressure in the spreading room between Wells Lifeboat Station and Burnham Overy Staithe. The area shows a full range of dynamic dune succession from accreting foredune, to mature grey dune and wet species-rich dune slacks. There is evidence of trampling from recreation, however this is manageable and in combination with rabbit grazing, is to an extent proving effective in maintaining sward structure.

There are areas of localised erosion within the proposed spreading room resulting from existing recreational use, specifically on an area of embryonic salt marsh at Holkham Gap where a high number of desire line paths have formed. Installation of additional signage will enhance protection of the embryonic salt marsh from these proposals and the effectiveness of the above measures will be monitored by existing wardens. Additional signs will be installed at entry points as part of the proposals raising greater awareness and encouraging further responsible use of the site by visitors.

Monitoring of sand dunes at Holkham Bay, including the Meals House to Burrow Gap, will be undertaken by site managers during summer 2017 and again in 2022 to assess effectiveness of above management proposals and access use.

Current data suggests existing recreational disturbance is having an impact on nesting little terns and ringed plover at Holkham Bay and Gun Hill despite current wardening, fencing and signage.

Proposals include formal restrictions to existing fenced off areas along with the provision of non-electric sheep net fencing for little tern colony at Holkham Bay and Gun Hill.

The above measure will address some existing disturbance and any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals and complements existing management measures in place including wardening.

- **Burnham Overy Staithe to Brancaster**

The new proposed access is already designated through the open access mechanism and the path is already part of the NCP. It is considered unlikely that the new access provision will lead to any increase in the number of people that visit this stretch and so the likelihood of disturbance or impact on the features is very low.

- **Brancaster to Flaxley**

A considerable length of the proposed trail is already part of the NCP.

Between Brancaster and Gypsy Lane, new access will be created at WBH-5-S005 linking to existing footpaths found either side. The overall effect will be to have access along the top of the sea wall along three sides overlooking Brancaster West Marsh. There is potential of disturbance to breeding and wintering birds on the fresh marsh landward of the proposals. Large drainage ditches prevent public access to the freshwater marshes and present a significant physical barrier between the public and the breeding and wintering birds. Gypsy Lane is already used as an access route and by bird watchers without significant evidence of disturbance. Therefore it is not anticipated that the increased numbers of visitors would have a significant effect on the breeding and wintering bird features.

Between Gypsy Lane and Titchwell Nature Reserve (map 5a), new access will be created at WBH-5-S009 overlapping part of the SSSI. However this area is adjacent to reed bed habitat which provides good cover for the breeding and wintering bird feature which use this habitat. It is not anticipated that an increase in numbers adjacent to this section of the extensive reed bed will have a significant effect on the sensitive features.

The proposed new sections WBH-5-S008, WBH-5-S010 to WBH-5-S011 are adjacent to the SSSI boundary alongside coastal salt marsh and reed beds. A creek prevents public access to these areas and presents a significant physical barrier between the public and the salt marsh and reed beds separating the feature. Therefore it is not anticipated that an increase in numbers adjacent to this section of the saltmarsh and reed bed will have a significant effect on the sensitive features.

The proposed new section, WBH-5-S012, uses a track adjacent to arable fields and will not have any significant effect on the designations seaward of here.

The proposed new route west of here uses mainly field edges, pavement and highway and will not have any significant effect on the designations seaward of here.

Much of the habitat to the seaward side of the path is already designated under CRoW as open access land and as such spreading room does not represent a change from the status quo.

The access proposals mainly mirror existing management measures in place at Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve and Holme Dunes NNR and do not undermine existing measures to protect the habitats and features of the SPA/SAC/SSSI. Restrictions will be formalised.

- **Flaxley to Hunstanton**

There are no concerns as proposals mirror existing access use in the area and will not pose a threat to the habitats and features. It is unlikely access use will increase as it is already a key area visited by both locals and holiday makers on the Norfolk coastline.

Concerns about existing public use and action already taken to address this (summary)

Between Kelling Hard and Cley Eye there is a management objective to minimise the risk of nests being destroyed by trampling in shingle areas. Existing measures include:

- Extensive areas fenced off along the shingle ridge as well as stock fencing

At Blakeney Point there is a management objective to maintain 'quiet' areas for ground nesting birds and breeding common and grey seals. Existing measures include:

- visitors are not permitted to enter certain areas
- temporary fencing is erected
- site notices advising on restricted areas
- printed and online information
- a team of rangers and volunteers engage with visitors encouraging responsible behaviour

At Holkham Bay fencing, signage and wardening is in place to protect ground nesting birds. Wardens provide monitoring data. However, this current management is not proving effective as shown in the evidence presented.

At Gunhill existing management measures in place to protect ground nesting birds include fencing, signage and wardening. Wardens provide monitoring data.

To restore dune habitat, Holkham estate intend to cordon off areas within the spreading room.

At Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve throughout the year, bird assemblages are present. In particular, the reed beds have breeding marsh harrier and bittern, and roosting marsh harrier in winter. The coastal lagoons and reed beds provide important feeding sites for wintering and passage waders and waterfowl. To maintain quiet areas for the birds existing management measures include:

- visitors with dogs are only permitted on the public right of way leading from the road to the beach on the west side of the reserve
- visitors to the site without dogs are permitted to follow a network of permanent and seasonal routes
- site notices explain where visitors can go on the site
- a team of volunteers and wardens engage with visitors encouraging responsible behaviour

From April until August each year ringed plover nest on the beach at Titchwell. To prevent disturbance to the birds existing management measures include:

- formal direction to exclude access from areas of the margin on the beach during the breeding season
- above areas cordoned off each year during the breeding season
- temporary signs installed advertising the exclusion zone
- a team of rangers and volunteers engage with visitors encouraging responsible behaviour during the exclusion

At Scolt Head existing management measures in place to protect ground nesting birds include wardening, signage and fencing with public access to the breeding areas for terns prohibited during the nesting season.

At Holme Dunes there is a management objective to maintain “quiet areas” for ground nesting birds and other features. Existing measures include:

- temporary fencing erected with signage and wardening
- site notices explaining where visitors can go on the site
- printed and online information is available
- areas restricted by formal direction for land management purposes. Visitor access is by permit only. This land management measure in place has the additional benefit of protecting sensitive features in the area

At present, measures protecting nesting little terns across the North Norfolk Coast are funded in part by the EU LIFE Little Tern Recovery Project which is due to end in 2018. Wardening will be maintained post 2018 by site managers and volunteers. Natural England is committed to working with partners to ensure effective protection and enhancement of the species can be offered, including identifying opportunities to secure long term funding.

Key sensitive features relevant to site (detail)

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>A021 <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>; great bittern (breeding) SPA , SSSI</p>	<p>Bittern breed at a number of locations along the Norfolk coastline, notably at Holme, Titchwell, Burnham Overy/Norton, Cley and Salthouse. In any given year, around four pairs are present and attempt to breed.</p> <p>Bittern favour extensive stands of reed bed, though can be found in much smaller reedy areas on occasion. Juvenile bitterns often frequent other nearby reed beds away from the natal site. Tidal reed beds may be used for feeding, particularly in winter.</p> <p>Breeding bitterns are sensitive to disturbance but as nest sites are in large stands of inaccessible wet reed bed then the potential is very low. Feeding birds generally utilise dense reed beds but will also frequent reedy freshwater ditches. They are sensitive to disturbance but again, the potential for this is low.</p>	<p>Bitterns are a secretive and reclusive species. Tidal reed beds are included in spreading room but are not used for nesting and are not known to be important feeding areas for breeding birds.</p> <p>Freshwater reed beds and marshes found within the spreading room are subject to restrictions at those locations that are identified as being sensitive.</p> <p>The coastal access proposals will not have any effect on the population because of the nature of the dense and wet reed bed habitat and spatial separation of walkers/dogs and the habitat used by bitterns.</p>
<p>A081 <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>; Eurasian marsh harrier (breeding) SPA, SSSI</p>	<p>There are 20-30 pairs of marsh harrier which breed in or near to the North Norfolk Coast, generally utilizing reed bed as a nesting resource or occasionally other tall herb cover (North Norfolk Coast site manager's pers. Comm.). Virtually all freshwater reed beds along the coast now support breeding pairs. Tidal reed beds are only very rarely used for nesting attempts.</p> <p>Foraging occurs across a wide area and virtually all coastal habitats are used including, reed bed and ditches, grazing marshes, saltmarsh, sand dune and the arable hinterland.</p> <p>Nesting birds are sensitive to disturbance near the nest site. Foraging birds are not considered particularly sensitive as they are very wide-ranging.</p>	<p>Alignment has allowed for adequate spatial separation of walkers/dogs and the birds. Freshwater reed beds are subject to restrictions within the spreading room where they are identified as being sensitive. No impact is considered likely.</p> <p>While foraging, harriers will cover extensive areas of habitat and are readily mobile. There are no concerns that marsh harriers will be negatively affected by the access proposals. Hence, it can be concluded that the proposals will not have any effect on this population.</p>
<p>A084 <i>Circus pygargus</i>; Montagu's harrier (breeding) SPA</p>	<p>Montagu's harrier last bred on the North Norfolk Coast at Titchwell in 1972 and has not been found breeding within the designated site since. Changes in their breeding habits now see them nesting on the arable land within North Norfolk, although the potential exists for them to return at some point in the future as suitable habitat still remains.</p>	<p>There are no breeding birds on the North Norfolk Coast at present so there is no impact likely from the proposal at present</p> <p>It seems unlikely that Montagu's harrier will return the North Norfolk Coast SPA, however if they did return, the reed beds at RSPB Titchwell (their former breeding site) still have restricted access and the England Coast Path will not increase current level of disturbance.</p> <p>Hence, it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on Montagu's harrier.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>A132 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>; pied avocet (breeding) SPA, SSSI</p>	<p>The North Norfolk Coast supports a breeding population of between 200-300 pairs (Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society (NNNS), 2014 & 2015). Predominantly a summer visitor, some birds may be present year round.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the population of avocet over the past 30 years (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016), though predation remains as a problem and puts pressure on breeding birds. Avocet nest on freshwater grazing marshes and pools at Holme, Titchwell, Burnham Norton, Burnham Overy, Holkham, Blakeney Freshes, and Cley. They also nest adjacent to saline lagoons at Salthouse and on saltmarsh at Blakeney Point.</p> <p>Key feeding areas are scrapes and shallow pools within the freshwater marsh and intertidal mud in saltmarsh creeks, especially where adjacent to freshwater marshes.</p> <p>Breeding avocets are sensitive to disturbance in the nesting areas. Human disturbance can prevent the birds from incubating, leaving eggs exposed to chilling and more vulnerable to predation.</p>	<p>The route of the England Coast Path largely follows the existing NCP and any new sections of path avoid key sensitive locations for avocet.</p> <p>The majority of breeding locations are not adjacent to the path or excluded from the coastal margin being landward of the proposals such as at Cley. The Titchwell and Blakeney Point locations have restrictions in place.</p> <p>It is unlikely that feeding birds will be subject to any significant additional disturbance resulting from the coastal access proposals.</p> <p>Avocet breeding numbers have increased under current recreation levels and taking the above into account, it is not felt that a small potential increase in visitor numbers will impact on breeding avocet.</p> <p>Hence, it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on breeding avocet.</p>
<p>A191 <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>; sandwich tern (breeding) SPA, SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>There are two colonies on the North Norfolk Coast - Scolt Head Island and Blakeney Point. Numbers using each site vary from year to year, sometimes all at Scolt Head, sometimes all at Blakeney, sometimes half at each. The total population varies but in the region of 3500-4000 pairs nest annually (NNNS, 2010-2015) – this is approximately 25% of the UK total (Mitchell <i>et al.</i>, 2004). Both these sites have resident wardens and public access to the breeding areas is prohibited during the nesting season. The species is very sensitive to disturbance at the breeding colony.</p> <p>Foraging is done offshore, often at a considerable distance out to sea.</p>	<p>Both colonies are remote and being separated from the mainland by intertidal mud/sand and extensive saltmarshes, they are difficult to access.</p> <p>Existing management measures in place at both sites include wardening and public access to the breeding areas is prohibited during the nesting season. Proposals include a formal restriction at Blakeney Point. Access to Scolt Head is unlikely to increase as a Section 25A exclusion on the mudflats at Overy Creek and Overy Marsh is included within the proposals.</p> <p>Hence, it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on this population.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>A193 <i>Sterna hirundo</i>; common tern (breeding) SPA, SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>The two largest colonies are at Scolt Head Island and Blakeney Point with additional small colonies at Gun Hill (Burnham Overy), Wells Outer Harbour/Bob Hall's Sand and Stiffkey Binks. North Norfolk Coast populations have been in serious long-term decline over the last 50 years, decreasing from just under 2000 pairs in the early 1970s (Mitchell <i>et al.</i>, 2004) to 313 pairs in 2015 (NNNS, 2015). Numbers have varied a bit over the last 10 years but the average is just over 300 pairs (NNNS, 2006-2015), the vast majority at the two main colonies. The species is very sensitive to disturbance at the breeding colonies.</p> <p>Foraging is mainly out to sea but occasionally in the harbours at Brancaster, Wells and Blakeney.</p>	<p>The two main colonies are protected as described above for sandwich tern, and the other colonies are fenced off and signed. The Gun Hill site will have seasonal access restrictions to cordon off areas and will benefit from improved non-electric sheep net fencing, in addition to the existing signage and wardening.</p> <p>The only colony adjacent to the proposed England Coast Path is at Wells Outer Harbour. The proposals include an exclusion to this area, being unsuitable for public access. The area is fenced off by the Wells Harbour Commissioners.</p> <p>Hence, it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on this population.</p>
<p>A195 <i>Sterna albifrons</i>; little tern (breeding) SPA, SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>Current colonies are at Holme, Scolt Head Island, Gun Hill (Burnham Overy), Holkham Bay, Wells Outer Harbour/Bob Hall's Sand, Stiffkey Binks, Blakeney Point and Stiffkey Meals. Formerly, there were also colonies at Titchwell and Brancaster Beach. These have not been occupied in recent years, although recolonisation is possible. The total population fluctuates annually. The average over the last 10 years is 333 pairs (NNNS, 2006-2015). The largest colonies are at Scolt Head and Blakeney with approximately 100 pairs each (NNNS, 2006-2015).</p> <p>Foraging occurs at sea (but usually close inshore) and in the harbours at Brancaster, Wells and Blakeney. Occasional foraging on freshwater marshes in rough weather.</p>	<p>All colonies are fenced and signed and those at Scolt Head, Gun Hill, Holkham Bay, Blakeney point and Holme are wardened.</p> <p>Comments for the previous two species also generally apply here. -The colonies at Holme, Gun Hill and Holkham Bay are close to the existing NCP identified for alignment of the England Coast Path.</p> <p>The Holme colony is now very small. It is unlikely the existing NCP becoming the England Coast Path and associated spreading room will lead to any additional pressures on this colony given the presence of fencing and wardening. Signage advertising the restriction and</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
		<p>encouraging responsible use of the site along with a formal restriction is proposed to address existing disturbance and any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals.</p> <p>The Gun Hill colony is important at around 30 pairs most years and lies a little way off the NCP route. Colonies at the site are currently fenced with limited wardening present which appears to have been ineffective with only 21 chicks fledged from 97 nesting pairs between 2014-16 (Unpublished NE monitoring). The site is popular with walkers providing a short circular addition to the existing NCP and at high tide walkers are brought very close to the tern colony.</p> <p>The proposed plan includes a formal seasonal restriction to cordon off areas on Gun Hill between 1st April and 15th August, the provision of improved non-electric sheep net fencing, and signage to raise visitor awareness of the sensitivities in the area and to change visitor behaviour. This proposal will also address any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals and complements existing management measures in place including wardening.</p> <p>The Holkham Bay colony is perhaps the most likely to be impacted. It lies adjacent to the existing NCP which is the proposed alignment of the England Coast Path. It is important at around 30 pairs. The area is already popular with visitors and current measures have failed to prevent disturbance to the colony with no chicks fledged from 74 nesting pairs over the last three years (2014-2016) (unpublished NE monitoring).</p> <p>The proposal includes seasonal restrictions to cordon off areas, formalising the current restrictions in place and the provision of non-electric sheep net fencing. This will enhance the existing management measures in place including the presence of wardening. The proposals will address any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals as well as contributing to management of existing disturbance issues.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
		<p>The two largest colonies at Blakeney Point and Scolt Head have existing management measures in place including wardening and public access to the breeding areas is prohibited during the nesting season. Proposals include a formal restriction at Blakeney Point. Access to Scolt Head is unlikely to increase as a Section 25A exclusion on the mudflats east of Scolt Head is included within the proposals.</p> <p>Much of the wardening for little tern colonies is provided under EU LIFE funding from the little tern recovery project which comes to an end in 2018. The project management group which consists of a number of partners has committed to continue the wardening of current sites and is seeking further funds, but concedes that the wardening effort may need to be reduced. In the long term, Natural England will work with site managers and local partners to help identify and resolve issues for these sites.</p> <p>If in the future, site managers report levels and patterns of use change as a result of monitoring, other management measures such as restrictions can be implemented.</p> <p>It is worth noting that the North Norfolk Coast is a dynamic landscape and suitable nesting sites could be destroyed or created by future natural events. Therefore restrictions will need to be reviewed and reconsidered periodically to ensure continued protection.</p> <p>The proposal, in combination with current and ongoing management plans, will help provide better protection for little tern colonies at specific sites on the North Norfolk Coast in addition to reducing any impact from a potential small increase in visitor numbers as a result of the proposal. Proposals include local restrictions. Therefore it can be concluded the proposal will have no likely significant effect on breeding little tern.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p><i>Panurus biarmicus</i>; bearded tit (breeding) SSSI</p>	<p>The population is confined to the freshwater reed beds (tidal reed beds are used regularly outside the breeding season). Breeds at Holme, Titchwell, Burnham Norton, Burnham Overy, Blakeney Freshes, Cley and Salthouse.</p> <p>The population is not accurately monitored every year but surveys suggest the population is in the region of 20-40 pairs (NNNS, 2015)</p>	<p>Freshwater reed beds found within the spreading room are subject to restrictions where they are identified as being sensitive.</p> <p>Habitat also inaccessible to the casual visitor.</p> <p>No likely significant effect</p>
<p><i>Anas querquedula</i>; garganey (breeding) SSSI</p>	<p>The occasional pair nest in some years on freshwater marshes. Sites used in the past include Brancaster West Marsh, Burnham Norton Grazing Marsh, Holkham Grazing Marsh and Cley.</p>	<p>The preference for freshwater marshes will preclude any likelihood of impact from the coastal access proposals due to the spatial separation of the users and the habitat, along with inaccessibility of freshwater reed beds</p> <p>No likely significant effect</p>
<p>A040 <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>; pink-footed goose (non-breeding) SPA, SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>Pink-footed goose numbers have increased dramatically over the last 30 years or so, with peak counts of over 100,000 in 2003/4 and 2004/5, and regularly over 50,000 in recent years with a 5 year peak between 2010 and 2015 of 53,220 individuals (Frost <i>et al.</i> 2016). Birds start to arrive in September and peak during December.</p> <p>Along the coast, birds feed on freshwater grazing marshes at Holme, Burnham Deepdale/Norton, Burnham Overy and Holkham with the greatest concentrations at the latter two sites. They also feed extensively on arable farmland.</p> <p>Large nocturnal roosts are formed on the sand/mud flats at the west end of Scolt Head, on Bob Hall's Sand east of Wells and on the freshwater grazing marshes at Overy/Holkham. Smaller roosts are sometimes occupied on the outer flats at Thornham Harbour and the fresh marshes at Burnham Deepdale/Norton. Both feeding and roosting flocks are sensitive to disturbance.</p>	<p>None of the important grazing marsh feeding/roosting areas are included in spreading room and it is unlikely that the coastal access proposals will have any additional impact.</p> <p>The intertidal roost sites are remote and difficult to access. The proposals include an exclusion to the Wells site as being unsuitable for public access. The Scolt Head roost is included as spreading room but an exclusion to the mud flats along the east is proposed as being unsuitable for public access.</p> <p>The roost sites are used during the night, with birds arriving at dusk and leaving at dawn. These are times, during the winter months, when very low numbers of users to the coast path will be present, particularly given the inaccessible geography of the location of the main roost sites.</p> <p>Hence, it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on this population.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>A046a <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>; dark-bellied brent goose (non-breeding) SPA, SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>A common winter visitor to the Norfolk Coast, with birds arriving from September through to December. Once birds become established in winter quarters, a high degree of site fidelity is observed, with individuals and groups of birds remaining in the same general area.</p> <p>The current five year peak mean is 5910 (2010/11 to 2014/15) (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016). This compares to 9000 individuals present around the time of SPA classification (1996).</p> <p>Birds feed all along the coast utilising intertidal flats, saltmarsh and freshwater grazing marsh.</p> <p>Nocturnal roosts are occupied in Thornham, Brancaster, Wells and Blakeney Harbours.</p> <p>Feeding and roosting birds are sensitive to disturbance. Brent goose is subject to a WeBS High Alert on this site having undergone a decline of 41% over the 10 year period to 2009/10 (Cook <i>et al.</i> 2013) There is no more recent WeBS Alerts assessment available.</p> <p>The decline on this site will be influenced by a number of factors. Wintering numbers are affected by productivity on Arctic breeding grounds (Nolet <i>et al.</i> 2013) as well as more local wintering site based factors such as food availability and recreational activities. There is also evidence that suggests an increasingly higher proportion of the North-West European population is using wintering areas situated along the west coast of France (Ebbinge <i>et al.</i> 2013).</p> <p>It is not known the extent by which these different factors are operating at site level on the North Norfolk Coast dark-bellied brent goose population.</p>	<p>Under the proposals a significant proportion of the saltmarsh on the North Norfolk Coast will be excluded from spreading room for public safety reasons. In addition, an area south of Stone Meal Creek on Warham Marshes, which is not currently formally public access, will be excluded to provide additional refuge and feeding areas (Warham Marshes supports 13% of the total protected site population (five year peak mean 2010/11 – 2014/15) (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016)). Together this totals about a third of the saltmarsh being excluded from spreading room. In addition, as part of the proposal, signage will be installed at key access points detailing exclusions, which is likely to reduce some of the current levels of informal access.</p> <p>The vast majority of the remaining saltmarsh is already open to public access. Any small increase in visitors on these open access saltmarshes is likely to be minimal due to saltmarsh creeks and nature of the terrain.</p> <p>The intertidal flats feeding sites used by the brent geese are difficult to access and therefore are unlikely to be impacted by the proposal. In addition, the freshwater grazing marshes along the coast are mostly excluded from spreading room being landward of the path and inaccessible due to fencing and large drainage ditches. The roost sites are used during the night, with birds arriving at dusk and leaving at dawn. These are times, during the winter months, when very low numbers of users to the proposed England Cost Path will be present, particularly given the inaccessible geography of the location of the main roost sites.</p> <p>While there is some potential for feeding birds to be disturbed as a result of the proposal, these impacts are likely to be minor and very localised.</p> <p>Overall it can therefore be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on brent geese from the proposal.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>A050 <i>Anas penelope</i>; Eurasian wigeon (non-breeding) SPA, Ramsar</p>	<p>The overwintering population of wigeon on the North Norfolk Coast builds from September, reaching a peak of approximately 10,000 birds in mid-winter and drops sharply in March (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016).</p> <p>The current five year peak mean is 9990 (2010/11 to 2014/15) (Frost <i>et al.</i> 2016). This compares to 5600 individuals present around the time of SPA classification (1996).</p> <p>Wigeon usually occur in large flocks and feed on aquatic plants as well as grasses and rhizomes. Key feeding areas are coastal grazing marsh and saltmarsh. The most important sites are grazing marshes at Burnham Norton, Burnham Overy and Holkham along with saltmarshes at Brancaster Harbour and Blakeney Harbour. Despite an overall increase since 1996, this species is subject to a WeBS High Alert having declined by 55% over the 10 year period to 2009/10 (Cook <i>et al.</i> 2013) . There are no more recent WeBS Alerts assessments available.</p> <p>The decline noted above will be influenced by a number of factors occurring both on site and off site. Of note is the importance that winter grazing quality and quantity plays in influencing abundance and distribution of wintering wigeon on sites (Dalby <i>et al.</i> 2013)</p> <p>Comparison with national data indicates that this decline may be driven by site-specific pressures (Cook <i>et al.</i> 2013).</p> <p>Wigeon are sensitive to disturbance</p>	<p>The route of the England Coast Path follows the existing NCP and any new sections of path avoid key sensitive locations for wigeon.</p> <p>Away from the path, the risk of significant additional disturbance to wigeon is low as there is limited spreading room on freshwater coastal grazing marsh with the majority of marsh adjacent to the path inaccessible due to fencing and large drainage ditches presenting a physical barrier.</p> <p>Wigeon may be susceptible to disturbance on the various large expanses of saltmarsh though the likelihood of any significant impact is very low. Under the proposals a significant proportion of the saltmarsh on the North Norfolk Coast will be excluded from spreading room for public safety reasons. In addition, an area south of Stone Meal Creek on Warham Marshes, which is not currently formally public access, will be excluded to provide additional refuge and feeding areas. Together this totals about one third of the saltmarsh being excluded from spreading room.</p> <p>No likely significant effect on the population.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>A143 <i>Calidris canutus</i>; red knot (non-breeding) SPA, Ramsar</p>	<p>A species which can occur in great numbers on the Norfolk coast in winter, with thousands of individuals observed on migration or during summer.</p> <p>These birds feed and roost almost exclusively on sand bars, mudflats and saltmarsh. The main wintering flock occurs on the Wells/Warham/Stiffkey mudflats but huge roosts form at Holme (Gore Point) and sometimes Titchwell on large spring tides in the autumn when birds are unable to roost on The Wash, these can vary from 20,000 to 70,000 birds (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016).</p> <p>The current 5YPM is 34,866 individuals (2010/11 to 2014/15) (Frost <i>et al.</i> 2016). This compares to 6000 present around the time of SPA classification (1996). In recent years summer (June) concentrations of non-breeding birds have occurred at Titchwell and Scolt Head Island, totalling up to 10,000 birds</p> <p>The WeBS Alerts assessment shows that the population has increased by 44% over the 10 year period to 2009/10 (Cook <i>et al.</i> 2013). No more recent WeBS Alerts assessments are available.</p> <p>Sensitive to disturbance.</p>	<p>The habitat occupied by the wintering flock is remote, difficult to access and largely excluded from the spreading room provision.</p> <p>The roost site at Titchwell is protected by restrictions in place by RSPB.</p> <p>The roost site at Holme is already subject to some disturbance but it is not thought that the coastal access proposals will increase this as the site is away from the route of the path.</p> <p>The summer flocks are the ones potentially most likely to suffer from human disturbance. Given the remote nature of Scolt Head island and existing visitor management at Titchwell and Scolt Head, the potential for any increase in visitor pressure at these sites in June will not materialise.</p> <p>Hence, it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on this population.</p>
<p>A132 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>; pied avocet (winter) SSSI</p>	<p>For most of the winter, avocet are only present in very small numbers, mainly at Titchwell and Cley. However, breeding birds return very early (Feb/March) and the high counts in March technically qualify as winter concentrations. Numbers peak at around 600 birds (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016) spread along the coast at the larger freshwater pools at Holme, Titchwell, Burnham Norton, Holkham and Cley.</p> <p>Moderately sensitive to disturbance.</p>	<p>Restrictions are in place at Titchwell and locations at Cley are landward of the proposals.</p> <p>No likely significant effect</p>
<p><i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i>; European white-fronted goose (winter) SSSI</p>	<p>On the North Norfolk Coast, this species is only regular at Holkham Grazing Marshes where an annual wintering flock numbers around 200 birds (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016).</p> <p>Sensitive to disturbance.</p>	<p>Holkham Grazing Marshes are landward of the proposals and do not form part of the coastal margin. No likely significant effect is anticipated from the coastal access proposals due to the spatial separation of users of the path and the population.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p><i>Anas acuta</i>; northern pintail (winter) Ramsar</p>	<p>A relatively scarce winter visitor, the North Norfolk Coast population does not generally exceed 500 birds (Frost <i>et al.</i>, 2016). The main locations are Titchwell freshwater marsh, Scolt Head Island, Burnham Norton Grazing Marsh, Blakeney Harbour and Cley.</p> <p>The current five year peak mean is 402 individuals (2010/11 to 2014/15) (Frost <i>et al.</i> 2016).</p> <p>Pintails utilise both freshwater and saltwater habitats.</p> <p>The species is currently subject to a WeBS High Alert, having declined by 58 % over the 10 year period to 2009/10 (Cook <i>et al.</i> 2013). No more recent WeBS Alerts assessments are available.</p> <p>The decline of pintail at this site will be influenced by a number of factors, occurring both on site and off site. It is not known exactly what is driving the decline in pintail both at this site and at national level. Sensitive to disturbance.</p>	<p>The main freshwater locations for pintail on the North Norfolk Coast are inaccessible to the public and the proposal includes no plans to make these sites more accessible to the public. The freshwater marsh at RSPB Titchwell is inaccessible and wardened by the RSPB. Scolt Head island is remote and difficult to access and therefore it is unlikely the proposal will lead to a significant increase in visitors. The freshwater marshes at Burnham Norton and Cley are landward of the proposed path and therefore excluded from spreading room, and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust manage visitors at Cley Marshes.</p> <p>In intertidal habitats, the birds utilise remote areas that are largely free from disturbance where the coastal access proposals will not result in any increase in visitor use.</p> <p>Hence, it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect on this population.</p>
<p>Assemblage of over 10,000 non-breeding waterbirds. The main component species are:-</p> <p>a) <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>, pink-footed goose: <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>, dark-bellied brent goose: <i>Anas Penelope</i>, Eurasian wigeon: <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, pied avocet: <i>Calidris canutus</i> , red knot</p> <p>b) <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i>, European white-fronted goose: <i>Anas acuta</i>, northern Pintail</p>	<p>a) These species are present in internationally important numbers and are SPA/Ramsar features in their own right. They have already been assessed earlier in the table.</p> <p>b) European white-fronted goose is an individual SSSI feature and northern pintail is an individual Ramsar feature. They have already been assessed earlier in this table.</p>	<p>a) See previous conclusions</p> <p>b) See previous conclusions</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>c) <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, shelduck: <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>, grey plover: <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>, ringed plover: <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>, oystercatcher: <i>Tringa tetanus</i>, redshank</p> <p>d) <i>Anas strepera</i>, gadwall: <i>Anas crecca</i>, teal: <i>Anas clypeata</i>, shoveler: <i>Melanitta nigra</i>, common Scoter: <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>, cormorant: <i>Egretta garzetta</i>, little egret: <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>, golden plover: <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>, lapwing: <i>Numenius arquata</i>, curlew: <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>, black-tailed godwit: <i>Limosa lapponica</i>, bar-tailed godwit: <i>Arenaria interpres</i>, turnstone: <i>Calidris alba</i>, sanderling: <i>Calidris alpina</i>, dunlin.</p> <p>SPA, Ramsar</p> <p>The Assemblage of over 10,000 waterfowl in winter SPA, Ramsar</p>	<p>c) These species are listed in the SPA citation as being present in nationally important numbers. All these species occur throughout the site on intertidal mud and sand. Redshank also occurs on saltmarsh throughout the site with the most important concentration at Wells/Warham saltmarshes. For the other species, the most important sites are Thornham Harbour, Scolt Head/Brancaster Harbour, Wells/Warham/Stiffkey mudflats and Blakeney Harbour.</p> <p>d) In addition to the main component species already listed and assessed above, the assemblage will also include a number of additional species which are present in Nationally Important numbers or numbers at or above 2,000 individuals. The list of these species will change over time as numbers naturally fluctuate above and below the criterion level. The component species currently in these categories that have not been considered in a) to c) above, are listed in the left adjacent column.</p> <p>Combining the assessments described above in a) to d) for the component species provides an overall assessment of the SPA/Ramsar waterbird Assemblage</p>	<p>c) Although all these species are sensitive to disturbance on both feeding and roosting sites, the most important areas for feeding and roosting birds are all remote and difficult to access and part of the Wells/Warham saltmarsh is the subject of a S25A exclusion. Given that the proposed England Coast Path follows the existing NCP at all the key locations and that the coastal access proposals are not considered likely to lead to any significant increase in visitor pressure in these areas (see Section 2 above), then no resulting impact is likely from implementation of the proposals.</p> <p>d) Any additional species included in the Assemblage either occupy the same habitats as the main component species or occupy excluded habitats inland from the coastal path route. They also share the same sensitivity to visitor pressures. One species – Common Scoter – is only present on the sea and is thus spatially separated from the route alignment and coastal margin. As the coastal access proposals follow the existing NCP route and are considered unlikely to result in significant increases in visitor numbers or changes in behaviour, then it is possible to conclude that there will be no likely significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar waterbird Assemblage.</p> <p>Summarising the assessments of potential impacts on assemblage main component species above - there is little or no change predicted in visitor numbers or behaviour as a consequence of implementing the coastal access proposals; the most ecologically sensitive areas are remote</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
		and largely inaccessible by visitors; there is a S25A exclusion covering much of the Wells/Warham saltmarsh; other important habitats are excluded as they lie inland from the route alignment; and one species is spatially separated from the route alignment.
<p>Aggregations of non-breeding birds</p> <p><i>Eremophila alpestris</i>, shorelark: <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>, snow bunting <i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>, twite</p> <p>SSSI</p>	<p>Wintering passerines utilising coastal driftline and developing saltmarsh habitats. Shorelark are less than annual and numbers can vary from 2-3 to 20 birds (NNNS, 2006- 2015), with larger numbers in exceptional years. Most regular site is Holkham Bay but may also occur at Holme, Titchwell, Scolt Head Island and Blakeney Point.</p> <p>Snow bunting occurs at the same sites but also at Cley/Salthouse. It occurs annually, there is no structured monitoring and some double counting takes place as flocks can be very mobile. Current numbers are thought to be in the region of 200 (NNNS, 2015). Has declined in recent years, it is possible that disturbance from walkers and dogs could have played a part in this.</p> <p>Twite are mostly a bird of saltmarshes, especially areas with concentrations of annual plants. It has undergone a marked decline in recent years, largely as a result of declines in breeding areas. Most regular locations for small wintering flocks are Holme/Titchwell, Brancaster Harbour and Blakeney Harbour.</p>	<p>For the most part, these species occupy remote and difficult to access habitats in winter where there is very little likelihood of human disturbance.</p> <p>The most important sites for wintering snow bunting are at Blakeney Point and the shingle at Cley/Salthouse. Blakeney Point is remote and difficult to access and the shingle ridge at Cley has a significant area fenced off from access, as such there is not likely to be an impact from the proposal on snow bunting.</p> <p>Twite are mostly a bird of saltmarshes, especially areas with concentrations of annual plants. Due to the inaccessible nature of this habitat it is unlikely that feeding birds will be subject to any significant additional disturbance resulting from the coastal access proposals.</p> <p>The main concerns revolve around the flocks of shorelark at the busy sites at Holkham Bay where an area of embryonic saltmarsh is an important feeding area and disturbance levels are high.</p> <p>Available data (as per NNNS, 2006-2015), suggests that shorelark numbers (which naturally fluctuate year on year) have remained stable at Holkham bay despite the currently high levels of disturbance. In addition signage being installed as part of the proposal should complement existing measures at the site to reduce pressure on the saltmarsh. As such, it is not anticipated that the very small potential increase in visitors from the proposal would impact on shorelark numbers.</p> <p>Taking into account the proposed management at Holkham Bay it can be concluded that there will be no likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>H2110 Embryonic shifting dunes</p> <p>SAC</p> <p>Including plant communities –</p> <p><i>SD2 Honkenya peploides-Cakile maritime</i>; annual vegetation of drift lines (strandline vegetation) and</p> <p><i>SD4 Elymus farctus ssp. Boreali-atlanticus</i> foredune community; embryonic shifting dunes (shifting dunes)</p> <p>SSSI</p>	<p>Extensive dune systems are present at Wells, Blakeney, Holkham, Burnham Overy (including Gun Hill), Scolt Head Island and Holme. All dune systems contain a range of dune types, communities, vegetation structure and associated species.</p> <p>Embryonic shifting dunes generally occur on the seaward edges of dune systems. They are fragile habitats and are more vulnerable to trampling disturbance than older fixed dunes.</p> <p>SD2 is already absent from busier stretches of beach due to erosion from human activity and is a cause for some concern.</p> <p>These features are very sensitive to damage from erosion through human recreational activity.</p>	<p>The proposed England Coast Path follows the existing NCP through or adjacent to the main dune systems. Dune systems are included in spreading room but the majority of areas are already open access. In addition, the dunes at Blakeney Point, Scolt Head, and north of Wells, Warham and Stiffkey Marshes are remote and not easily accessible.</p> <p>The features show evidence of trampling from recreation however this is currently believed to be at a manageable level and is contributing to maintaining sward structure.</p> <p>Formalisation and way marking of the coastal path route from Holkham Bay towards Gun Hill is expected to reduce recreational pressure on the dunes, reducing the number of desire line routes which have formed due to unclear way marking.</p> <p>Surveys will be undertaken in 2017 and again in 2022 by the Natural England area team to assess the effects of the way marking, and if any impacts on the dunes are still recorded, we will work with partners to deliver further appropriate management to mitigate impacts.</p> <p>These proposals will address any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals as well as contributing to the management of existing disturbance.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>H2120 "Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes")"</p> <p>SAC</p> <p>Including plant community SD6 <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ; shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i></p>	<p>Extensive dune systems are present at Wells, Blakeney, Holkham, Burnham Overy (including Gun Hill), Scolt Head Island and Holme. All dune systems contain a range of dune types, communities, vegetation structure and associated species.</p> <p>Shifting dunes form a major component of all the main dune systems along the North Norfolk Coast. Totalling over 100ha, this represents some 8% of this habitat type in Britain.</p> <p>The feature is very sensitive to damage resulting from human recreational pressure but is dynamic in nature and has the capacity for recovery if the damage is not severe.</p>	<p>The proposed coastal path route follows the existing NCP route through or adjacent to the main dune systems. Dune systems are included in spreading room but the majority of these areas are already open access. In addition, the dunes at Blakeney Point and north of Wells, Warham and Stiffkey Marshes, are remote and not easily accessible.</p> <p>The features show evidence of trampling from recreation however this is currently believed to be at a manageable level and is maintaining sward structure.</p> <p>Formalisation and way marking of the England Coast Path from Holkham Bay towards Gun Hill is expected to reduce recreational pressure on the dunes, reducing the number of desire line routes which have formed due to unclear way marking.</p> <p>Surveys will be undertaken in 2017 and again in 2022 by the Natural England area team to assess the effects of the way marking, and if any impacts on the dunes are still recorded we will work with partners to deliver further appropriate management to mitigate impacts.</p> <p>These proposals will address any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals as well as contributing to the management of existing disturbance.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>H2130 "Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")"</p> <p>SAC</p> <p>Including plant communities – SD7 <i>Ammophila arenaria-Festuca rubra</i>; fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (Fixed dune grassland) SD8 <i>Festuca rubra-Galium verum</i>; fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (Fixed dune grassland) SD9 <i>Ammophila arenaria-arrhenatherum elatius</i>; fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (Fixed dune grassland) SD10 <i>Carex arenaria</i>; fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (Fixed dune grassland) SD11 <i>Carex arenaria-Cornicularia aculeate</i>; fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (Fixed dune grassland)</p> <p>SSSI</p>	<p>Extensive dune systems are present at Wells, Blakeney, Holkham, Burnham Overy (including Gun Hill), Scolt Head Island and Holme. All dune systems contain a range of dune types, communities, vegetation structure and associated species.</p> <p>The best example of this habitat occurs on Burnham Overy dunes but it is also present at Blakeney Point, Wells East Hills, Scolt Head Island and Holme.</p> <p>Many of the swards are rich in lichens and dune annual plants. SD11, a lichen community, is very susceptible to damage from human activity. The lichens are fragile especially in dry conditions when the imprint of a human foot will remain visible for weeks.</p> <p>More generally, damage also already occurs along paths and desire lines and around the tops of higher dunes where repeated trampling has worn away the vegetation to leave bare sand.</p> <p>Grey dunes are thus considered to be sensitive to visitors.</p>	<p>The proposed coastal path route follows the existing NCP through or adjacent to the main dune systems. Dune systems are included in spreading room but the majority of areas are already open access. In addition, the dunes at Blakeney Point, Scolt Head, and north of Wells, Warham and Stiffkey Marshes, are remote and not easily accessible.</p> <p>The features show evidence of trampling from recreation however this is currently believed to be at a manageable level and is maintaining sward structure.</p> <p>Formalisation and way marking of the England Coast Path from Holkham Bay towards Gun Hill is expected to reduce recreational pressure on the dunes, reducing the number of desire line routes which have formed due to unclear way marking.</p> <p>These proposals will address any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposals as well as contributing to the management of existing disturbance.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>H2190 Humid dune slacks</p> <p>SAC</p> <p>Including plant communities – SD16 <i>Salix repens</i>-<i>Holcus lanatus</i>; humid dune slacks</p>	<p>Extensive dune systems are present at Wells, Blakeney, Holkham, Burnham Overy (including Gun Hill), Scolt Head Island and Holme.</p> <p>All dune systems contain humid slacks within fixed dunes though variable in character. The slacks are calcareous and often support good populations of orchid species. The best examples occur at Holme and Burnham Overy Dunes.</p> <p>The feature itself is vulnerable to trampling and may support additional sensitive species features that are also vulnerable, for example Natterjack Toad at both Holme and Burnham Overy.</p>	<p>The proposed England Coast Path follows the existing NCP through or adjacent to the main dune systems. Dune systems are included in spreading room but these areas are already open access.</p> <p>Some of the important dune slacks at Burnham Overy dunes lie within the coastal margin and already have informal access restrictions in place. The existing NCP and proposed England Coast Path crosses one large dune slack in this system. The existing boardwalk and finger post is proving effective in guiding people in the right direction. Areas within the lower valley seaward of the existing trail may need fencing off in the future to protect orchids from grazing rabbits. Such management measures would be implemented by the site manager if required.</p> <p>Monitoring of existing access on the grey dunes is in place by the site manager. If in the future any changes in levels of access arise additional signage could be installed.</p> <p>It can be concluded there will be no likely significant effect.</p>
<p>H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks</p> <p>SAC</p> <p>Including plant community SD1 <i>Rumex crispus</i>-<i>Glaucium flavum</i>; vegetated shingle</p>	<p>The vegetated shingle along the North Norfolk Coast is found mainly at Cley and Salthouse and along Blakeney Point. It can be vulnerable to trampling in areas where walking pressure is high. This usually occurs around concentrated areas such as car parks, buildings, services or visitor hot spots.</p>	<p>Cley and Salthouse are the most vulnerable to disturbance although the route of the proposed England Coast Path along this stretch is on the same route as the existing path and it is not expected that visitor pressure will increase to any significant degree.</p> <p>Fencing on the shingle ridge at Cley prevents access to a significant proportion of the shingle ridge, preventing recreational damage to the new vegetated shingle forming. Blakeney Point is more remote and therefore the vast majority of the vegetated shingle will not be disturbed by the proposed England Coast Path. The National Trust already have some restrictions in place here which will be formalised as part of the proposals.</p> <p>Effective wardening organised by the reserve managers at these locations is likely to identify and minimise any potential impact both in the short and long-term. No likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>H1150. Coastal lagoons* SAC/SSSI</p>	<p>Coastal lagoons occur mainly along the landward edge of the shingle ridge at Cley and Salthouse with additional examples at Abraham's Bosom, Wells and Salts Hole, Holkham falling mainly landward of the coastal access proposals.</p> <p>Some pools contain rare and vulnerable species such as the starlet sea anemone and the nationally rare lagoon shrimp, <i>Paramysis nouveli</i>, which are particularly vulnerable to disturbance around the lagoon margins and by people and dogs entering the lagoon pools.</p>	<p>Given that the proposals in these locations are consistent with the existing NCP and informal permissive access to the fence line landward of the trail it is not thought that there will be any further pressure as a result of the proposals.</p> <p>The saline lagoons at Cley are landward of the proposed England Coast Path and are not included in the spreading room.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>
<p>H1140. Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Intertidal mudflats and sandflats SAC</p>	<p>These features are extensive, robust, dynamic and largely remote and inaccessible habitats. Although sensitive to damage from trampling and harvesting (e.g. bait digging), exposure to these activities is very low.</p>	<p>Mud and sandflats are remote and largely inaccessible.</p> <p>No likely significant effect envisaged.</p>
<p>H1310. <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Glasswort and other annuals colonising mud and sand SAC Including SM6 <i>Spartina anglica</i> saltmarsh, SM8 Annual <i>Salicornia</i> saltmarsh and SM9 <i>Suaeda maritima</i> saltmarsh plant communities. SSSI</p>	<p>The North Norfolk saltmarshes are recognised as being of the highest quality in the UK and among the finest in Europe.</p> <p>Areas of developing saltmarsh can found at Holme, Thornham, Titchwell/Brancaster, Scolt Head/Burnham Overy, Wells, Warham, Stiffkey and Blakeney Harbour. The largest areas of this habitat occur at the outer (seaward) edges of saltmarshes, in sheltered accreting bays behind the barrier dune/shingle ridge (as at Scolt Head, Holkham Bay and Blakeney Point) and along the edges of larger creeks throughout the saltmarsh systems.</p> <p>Developing saltmarsh plant communities comprising annual colonising plants are very sensitive to damage by trampling and sensitive to harvesting (e.g. <i>Salicornia</i>)</p>	<p>The majority of saltmarsh west of Wells is existing CRoW access land and there is no evidence of a negative impact to the associated salt marsh in the area. Access patterns and levels are unlikely to change from these proposals due to existing public access available, consequently it can be concluded no likely significant effect from these proposals in this area.</p> <p>The saltmarshes east of Wells at Stiffkey, Morston and Blakeney Harbour are owned by the National Trust and already have 24hr access granted. While there are existing paths and desire lines, it is not anticipated that this access proposal will lead to a significant increase in visitor pressure in this habitat. These marshes are managed by the National Trust with wardening and informal monitoring of visitor pressure ongoing at these locations. Current trampling damage at these sites is localised and the habitat is in Favourable condition.</p> <p>Wells saltmarshes and Warham marshes currently have no formal public access, but are accessed informally. The proposal includes exclusions of these marshes on safety grounds and an area south of Stonemeal Creek on</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
		<p>conservation grounds. It is anticipated this could reduce some of the current recreational pressure on these marshes.</p> <p>At some locations, for example Holkham Bay or Thornham saltmarsh, long standing and obvious desire lines have formed as a result of human traffic. At Thornham the saltmarshes are extensive and the damage that has occurred is localised and the habitat is in favourable condition. At Holkham Bay, the pressure appears to be more severe and these plant communities have already been seriously damaged and even locally destroyed by heavy trampling.</p> <p>The embryonic saltmarsh at Holkham Bay is already open access and the current damage has been caused by the large number of visitors accessing the beach from Lady Anne's Drive. Proposed alignment of the England Coast Path is consistent with the NCP in this area which is already widely used. It is not anticipated the proposal will lead to any significant increase in visitors to this stretch of path. Any additional impact on the saltmarsh from the proposal would be from a very small number of additional coastal path users leaving the path.</p> <p>Some areas of fencing have been installed at the site under current management to address the existing recreational pressure. Provision and installation of information boards and signage at Holkham as part of the proposal will help visitor behaviour and raise awareness of the saltmarsh encouraging more responsible and appropriate use of the access routes whilst allowing for other areas to recover.</p> <p>These proposals will address existing visitor pressures as well as negate any impact from any potential small increase in visitors resulting from the proposal.</p> <p>It can be concluded there will be no likely significant effect on the habitat from the proposal.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>Atlantic saltmeadow</p> <p>SAC</p> <p>Including the following low-mid saltmarsh plant communities –</p> <p>SM10 Transitional low marsh vegetation with <i>Puccinellia maritima</i>, annual <i>Salicornia</i> species and <i>Suaeda maritima</i>.</p> <p>SM11 <i>Aster tripolium</i> var. <i>discooides</i> saltmarsh</p> <p>SM13a <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> saltmarsh, <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> dominant sub-community</p> <p>SM13b <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> saltmarsh, <i>Glaux maritima</i> sub-community</p> <p>SM13c <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> saltmarsh, <i>Limonium vulgare</i>-<i>Armeria maritima</i> sub-community</p> <p>SM14 <i>Atriplex portulacoides</i> saltmarsh</p> <p>SSSI</p> <p>And the following mid-upper saltmarsh plant communities-</p> <p>SM15 <i>Juncus maritimus</i> – <i>Triglochin maritima</i> saltmarsh</p> <p>SM16a <i>Festuca rubra</i> saltmarsh <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> sub-community</p> <p>SM17 <i>Artemisia maritima</i> saltmarsh</p> <p>SSSI</p>	<p>The North Norfolk saltmarshes are recognised as being of the highest quality in the UK and among the finest in Europe.</p> <p>Extensive areas of Saltmarsh are found at Thornham, Titchwell/Brancaster, Scolt Head/Burnham Overy, Wells, Warham, Stiffkey and Blakeney Harbour.</p> <p>The dominant plant communities are SM13 and SM14 which occur in an intricate matrix over much of the saltmarsh area.</p> <p>All saltmarsh plant communities are sensitive to damage from trampling.</p>	<p>The majority of saltmarsh west of Wells is existing CRoW access land and there is no evidence of a negative impact to the associated salt marsh in the area. Access patterns and levels are unlikely to change from these proposals due to existing public access available, consequently it can be concluded no likely significant effect from these proposals in this area.</p> <p>Of the saltmarshes east of Wells, Stiffkey, Morston and Blakeney Harbour are owned by the National Trust and already have 24hr access granted. While there are existing paths and desire lines it is not anticipated that this access proposal will lead to a significant increase in visitor pressure in this habitat. These marshes are managed by the National Trust with wardening and informal monitoring ongoing. Current trampling damage at these sites is localised and the habitat is in Favourable condition.</p> <p>Wells saltmarshes and Warham marshes currently have no formal public access, but are accessed informally. The proposal includes exclusions of these marshes on safety grounds and an area south of Stonemeal Creek on conservation grounds. It is anticipated this could reduce some of the current recreational pressure on these marshes.</p> <p>While there are existing paths and desire lines, much of the habitat is difficult and potentially dangerous to access keeping damage localised, it is thus anticipated that the coastal access proposals will not actually lead to a significant increase in visitor pressure in this habitat.</p> <p>Informal monitoring of visitor pressure is ongoing at these locations.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>H1420. Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrub (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i>); Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub</p> <p>SAC Including SM21 <i>Suaeda vera</i>-<i>Limonium binervosum</i> plant community and SM25 <i>Suaeda vera</i> driftline plant community SSSI Also including vascular plant assemblage <i>Frankenia leavis</i>, <i>Limonium bellidifolium</i>, <i>Limonium binervosum</i> ssp. <i>Anglicum</i> and <i>Suaeda vera</i>.</p> <p>SSSI</p>	<p>This plant community is often found at the interface of saltmarsh and sand dune/shingle habitats and along the landward boundary of saltmarshes, but can also occur within saltmarshes where the topography and substrate allows.</p> <p>SM25 is scarce nationally but is particularly well represented along the North Norfolk Coast where it occurs throughout the saltmarshes but with extensive stands in some areas e.g. Scolt Head/Brancaster Harbour and Warham. Although sensitive to damage by trampling, it is a robust community and structurally difficult for people to enter.</p> <p>SM21 is endemic to Great Britain and includes matted sea lavender (<i>Limonium bellidifolium</i>) which is only found on the North Norfolk Coast and at Gibraltar Point. This plant community is scarce even within the North Norfolk Coast and is generally found on flat areas with a high shingle component in the substrate in the driftline zone. Particularly good examples are found on Scolt Head Island. SM21 is very sensitive to damage by trampling.</p>	<p>Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub lies adjacent to the coastal access route for much of its length to the east of Wells. However, it is dominated by waist-high, dense woody shrubs which are difficult to penetrate. As the proposed alignment of the England Coast Path is already part of NCP it is not likely that the coastal access proposals will lead to any increase in people trying to enter this habitat.</p> <p>The component community SM21 is rare, endemic and sensitive but most of its locations are remote from the proposed route of the England Coast Path (although included in spreading room) and the likelihood of coastal access leading to increased trampling pressure is extremely low.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>
<p>SM24 <i>Elymus pycnanthus</i>; saltmarsh community</p> <p>SSSI</p>	<p>A sea couch (<i>Elymus pycnanthus</i>) plant community that occurs sporadically within the driftline zone on the (usually seaward) saltmarsh edge in a number of locations along the North Norfolk Coast.</p> <p>Sensitive to damage by trampling.</p>	<p>Much of the SM24 community is difficult and potentially dangerous to access due to creek systems in the saltmarsh. In addition approximately one third of the saltmarsh is excluded from open access under the proposals.</p> <p>It is not considered that the coastal access proposals will increase the likelihood of damage to this feature.</p>
<p>S21 <i>Scirpus maritimus</i>; swamp</p> <p>SSSI/RAMSAR</p>	<p>Brackish areas and upper saltmarsh. Sensitive to trampling</p>	<p>Inhospitable nature of habitat likely to deter visitors therefore no likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
S26 <i>Phragmites australis-Urtica dioica</i> ; tall-herb fen SSSI/RAMSAR	In freshwater marsh in wettest areas. Only sensitive to extreme trampling.	Remote locations and inhospitable nature of habitat likely to deter visitors therefore no likely significant effect
Fen, Marsh and Swamp S4 <i>Phragmites australis</i> ; swamp and reed bed SSSI/RAMSAR	Found in areas of fresh marsh and upper saltmarsh with freshwater input. Only sensitive to extreme trampling.	Remote locations and inaccessible nature of habitat likely to deter visitors therefore no likely significant effect.
S1355. <i>Lutra lutra</i> ; otter SAC, SSSI	Formal records of otter on the Norfolk Coast are relatively few but are increasing annually. There is now evidence that otters are now present along the whole North Norfolk Coast and use all wetland habitats, both freshwater and saltwater. Otters are largely nocturnal and avoid human interaction so may be considered as not particularly sensitive in this context	While otters can be vulnerable to disturbance, the vast areas of marine and freshwater habitats, combined with the secretive nature and crepuscular/nocturnal habits of otter make it unlikely that the proposed access will have any effect. No likely significant effect.
<i>Phoca vitulin</i> ; common seal SAC/RAMSAR	May occur throughout on foreshore but main colony is on the end of Blakeney Point. There is also a very small population in Titchwell Creek. Sensitive to disturbance at Blakeney Point colony.	Potential risk of disturbance from visitors, in particular those with dogs off leads mainly during moulting and pupping seasons. The National Trust has restrictions in place. No likely significant effects from coastal access proposals as populations are well away from the actual path route.
<i>Bufo calamit</i> ; natterjack toad SSSI/RAMSAR	Dunes and dry grassland at Holme and Burnham Overy.	At Burnham Overy, the breeding ponds lie landward of the coastal margin and have access restrictions in place. Outside the breeding period, animals occur throughout the dune system, although this is included in the spreading room provision, it is not thought that the coastal access proposals will lead to any significant increase in visitor pressure. At Holme, the breeding ponds lie within the proposed spreading room area. Access to the area is restricted to permit only with breeding ponds fenced off and signed. These measures will remain in place. No likely significant effect.

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>S 1395 Petalophyllum ralfsii; <u>petalwort</u></p> <p>SAC, SSSI</p>	<p>Found only at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve at Holme. This species occurs in low numbers within grey dune systems. It is in part at least dependent on the provision of disturbed ground.</p> <p>Sensitive to trampling.</p>	<p>Negative effects on petalwort is considered unlikely, in part due to fact that some habitat disturbance is valuable to this species and in part, as an increased level of access in the vicinity of the plants is not anticipated. Wardening is undertaken at this location. Therefore no likely effect.</p> <p>Petalwort is located within the restricted area although in recent years it has not been sighted. Species benefits from some habitat disturbance. No likely significant effect.</p>
<p>Vascular Plant Assemblage:</p> <p>Jersey cudweed <i>Gnaphalium luteoalbum</i> – a Schedule 8 Plant</p> <p>Grey hair-grass <i>Corynephorus canescens</i></p> <p>Creeping ladies tresses <i>Goodvera repens</i></p> <p>SSSI/RAMSAR</p>	<p>Jersey cudweed occurs on Burnham Overy dunes and is nationally rare. The locations lie outside the spreading room boundary and access is already restricted. Grey hair grass occurs at Blakeney Point.</p> <p>Creeping ladies tresses occurs in the pinewoods at Holkham and Wells. Populations are small, localised and very hard to find.</p> <p>All could be regarded as sensitive to trampling damage but likely exposure is minimal.</p>	<p>Jersey cudweed locations are inaccessible with the populations fenced off and outside the spreading room. Grey hair grass occurs at Blakeney Point in remote locations and therefore is unlikely to be impacted by the proposal</p> <p>Creeping ladies tresses is within the spreading room but is within inaccessible areas of the pinewoods, and are incredibly difficult to locate.</p> <p>No likely impact envisaged.</p>
<p>Vascular plant assemblage: Common eel grass <i>Zostera marina</i> SAC</p>	<p>Small populations on intertidal mud at Brancaster Harbour, Wells, Stiffkey and Blakeney, occur alongside the much commoner <i>Zostera noltii</i>.</p>	<p>No likely impact due to isolated and maritime habitat characteristics.</p>
<p>Active Process Geomorphological Sites (IA) Coastal geomorphology Saltmarsh geomorphology</p> <p>SSSI, GCR</p>	<p>Found throughout.</p>	<p>Given that the NCP is already well known and promoted as a National Trail the proposals are unlikely to attract significant levels of additional visitors or lead to any changes in visitor behaviour on site even in the longer term.</p> <p>Any small increase in visitors does not have the potential to significantly affect the active geomorphological processes on the coast.</p> <p>No likely impact</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p>Although not a designated feature, the following breeding bird species is a sensitive feature of the site and of current conservation concern. It has been added for consideration as an advisory additional feature. Breeding ringed plover was included as a proposed designation feature for the North Norfolk Coast in the 2001 JNCC SPA Review.</p>		
<p><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>; ringed plover (Breeding)</p>	<p>This species breeds on open sand and shingle habitats all along the coast between Holme and Salhouse. Scolt Head Island supports the largest concentration in England with 45-70 pairs (NNNS, 2011-2015). Smaller concentrations occur at Holme, Holkham and Blakeney Point with very small numbers now present on other beaches. The total population is currently around 120 pairs (NNNS, 2015) and shows a serious long-term decline from c.435 pairs in 1984 and 283 pairs in 1993 (Rooney & Eve, 1993).</p> <p>Because of the habitat occupied, this species is often in direct conflict with human recreational use of the coast and is very sensitive to disturbance. Nests are also subject to direct destruction from trampling and chicks are known to have been killed by dogs.</p>	<p>The main stretches where the proposed England Coastal Path route may potentially affect ringed plovers are at Cley/Salhouse, Blakeney Point, Holkham Bay, Burnham Overy Dunes, Scolt Head Island and Holme.</p> <p>At Cley/Salhouse the route follows that of the existing NCP with landward spreading room consistent with informal public access to the first fence line. The fencing on the shingle ridge at Cley is allowing an area of suitable nesting habitat for ringed plover to form, with fencing reducing disturbance.</p> <p>Blakeney Point is included in spreading room but has restrictions in place during the bird breeding season.</p> <p>At Holkham Bay/Overy Dunes management measures and wardening are in place to protect ringed plover nests. In addition, the proposal will formalise seasonal restrictions (1st April to 15th August) to fenced off areas during breeding season, including signage. In addition, the proposal also includes a seasonal restriction to cordoned off areas at Gun Hill from 1st April to 15th August.</p> <p>Although included in spreading room, it is not anticipated that additional visitors will access Scolt Head which is remote and difficult to access; there are also management measures to protect nests.</p> <p>At Holme, ringed plover habitat is included in spreading room but it is not thought that the coastal access proposals will result in additional pressures. Breeding areas are cordoned off during breeding season. Formal restrictions and signage proposed.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact?
<p><i>Tringa tetanus</i>; redshank (breeding)</p>	<p>Redshank are not a SPA feature, however they were identified within the 2001 SPA review, with the North Norfolk Coast supporting 700 pairs (count as at 1998) .</p> <p>On the North Norfolk Coast redshank breed on freshwater grazing marsh and on the coastal saltmarshes.</p> <p>The UK population of saltmarsh breeding redshank decreased by 23% between 1985 and 1996 (Brindley et al. 1998).</p>	<p>The risk of significant disturbance from the proposal on redshank breeding on freshwater grazing marsh is low. There is limited spreading room on freshwater coastal grazing marsh with the majority of marsh adjacent to the path inaccessible due to fencing and large drainage ditches presenting a physical barrier.</p> <p>The salt marshes of the North Norfolk Coast are also important breeding and feeding area for redshank. Under the proposals a significant proportion of the saltmarsh on the North Norfolk Coast will be excluded from spreading room for public safety reasons. In addition an area south of Stone Meal Creek on Warham Marshes, which is not currently formally public access, will be excluded to provide additional refuge and feeding. Together this totals about one third of the saltmarsh being excluded from spreading room. In addition, as part of the proposal, signage will be installed at key access points detailing exclusions which are likely to reduce some of the current levels of informal access. These areas will provide refuge areas for feeding and breeding redshank and will benefit many other feeding and breeding bird species.</p> <p>No likely significant effect.</p>

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Section 4: FINAL CONCLUSIONS

4A: FINAL CONCLUSION - EUROPEAN SITE

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – alone

In relation to the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, taken alone, Natural England has concluded on the best available evidence and information that:

[Mark one box with an X only, and complete that entry as shown]

A. **It can be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have any effect** on any of the features listed in section 3 above for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

B. While it cannot be excluded that the new access proposal taken alone will have an effect, **it is not considered that the effect is likely to be significant**, for the following reasons:

- Existing visitor management measures that help to protect sensitive features will be retained and reinforced by these proposals.
- The route of the England Coast Path largely follows the established NCP and the limited new sections of path proposed avoid key sensitive locations.
- Key factors that affect the popularity of a stretch of coast are the weather over the summer holiday period and number of people living or staying nearby. The quality of access provision can also be a factor and in the long term there may be a slight to modest increase in the number of visitors attracted to the area as a result of these proposals. However, there is no reason to believe new patterns of visits to the site will develop as a result of these proposals that would be detrimental to the conservation objectives of the site.
- The access proposals put forward can be refined and adjusted in the future should circumstances change.

C. **It cannot be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have a significant effect** on the following feature(s) for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

[Specify relevant feature(s) here and summarise reasons]

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – in combination *(See Notes below on Completion)*

Other relevant plan or project	Is each other plan or project clear and specific enough for a judgement to be made at this stage about the probability or risk of it having any <i>similar</i> effect on the features in question? (see notes)	Where the answer in Column 2 is Yes, what effect is it considered the other plan or project is likely to have in its own right on the features in question? Enter <u>one</u> of the following values, with brief reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No effect • A non-significant effect • A significant effect Where the answer in Column 2 is No, enter “Not applicable” in this column.
New developments in Norfolk leading to a 9% increase in visitors to the North Norfolk Coast (Panter <i>et al.</i> 2016)	Yes	<p>Within Norfolk, the local councils have targets for the number of houses required to meet local growth and these are allocated within their local plans. Norfolk County Council commissioned Footprint Ecology to undertake visitor surveys at European protected sites across Norfolk during 2015 and 2016, including the North Norfolk Coast (Panter <i>et al.</i> 2016). This report models the increase in visitor numbers from allocated housing development within Norfolk with the aim of providing accurate information for mitigation planning. The report concludes there will be a 9% increase in visitors to the North Norfolk Coast.</p> <p>The allocations of new housing are presented in district councils Local Plans which are subject to their own HRAs. Of the local district councils both Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council have adopted strategic mitigation plans as part of their Local Plan. These councils charge a levy per house developed to fund recreational mitigation on protected sites. Natural England and partners on the North Norfolk Coast are working closely with these councils to ensure appropriate mitigation projects are funded. These plans should mitigate increase from development in these districts, and at sites with little visitor management at present, could improve the current pressures.</p> <p>North Norfolk District Council are currently developing a new Local Plan for 2016 – 2036 and are engaging with Natural England and partners to develop suitable mitigation plans. It is anticipated this will be in the form a strategic mitigation plan similar in structure to the above plans on neighbouring councils.</p> <p>In addition Natural England are working with the local councils to encourage a joined up and co-ordinated approach to mitigation of increased recreational pressure on the North Norfolk Coast. It is anticipated these mitigation plans will suitably mitigate increased recreational pressure from the developments, and in some areas could additionally reduce current pressures. The mitigation included in the coast path proposal is likely to be complimentary to the council’s strategic mitigation projects.</p> <p>Therefore, in combination the proposals will have a non-significant effect.</p>

Other relevant plan or project	Is each other plan or project clear and specific enough for a judgement to be made at this stage about the probability or risk of it having any <i>similar</i> effect on the features in question? (see notes)	Where the answer in Column 2 is Yes, what effect is it considered the other plan or project is likely to have in its own right on the features in question? Enter <u>one</u> of the following values, with brief reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No effect • A non-significant effect • A significant effect Where the answer in Column 2 is No, enter “Not applicable” in this column.
Orientation centre – Holkham Estate	Yes	<p>Plans to build an orientation centre including café and toilet facilities at Lady Anne’s drive on the Holkham have been approved by the North Norfolk District Council and construction of the centre is underway.</p> <p>The orientation centre plan includes mitigation including maintaining fencing around little tern and ringed plover nesting areas, additional wardening, and visitor interpretation within the centre itself.</p> <p>The mitigation included in the coast path proposal is likely to be complimentary to the mitigation included within the approved orientation centres plan. Therefore, in combination the proposals will have a non-significant effect.</p>
New RNLI centre wells	Yes	<p>Proposal for a new life boat station at Wells situated on the right hand of the beach public entrance.</p> <p>The proposal is within close proximity to The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC, North Norfolk Coast Ramsar and North Norfolk Coast SPA. There is a possibility of disturbance to little terns and two seal species during construction period only. Potential impacts and mitigation are being scoped by Royal Haskoning and will be detailed in the EIA.</p> <p>In combination proposals are predicted to have a non-significant effect</p>
Hornsea Round 3 Windfarm landfall	Yes	<p>Proposal for the landfall of power lines in Weybourne from Hornsea Round 3 Windfarm.</p> <p>The proposal is outside of the North Norfolk SSSI, SPA and SAC. During the construction period, there is the possibility for localised disturbance and potential sediment movement. However it is unlikely that these will impact on the features of the North Norfolk Coast, Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>Therefore, in combination the proposals will have a non-significant effect.</p>

Other relevant plan or project	Is each other plan or project clear and specific enough for a judgement to be made at this stage about the probability or risk of it having any <i>similar</i> effect on the features in question? (see notes)	Where the answer in Column 2 is Yes, what effect is it considered the other plan or project is likely to have in its own right on the features in question? Enter <u>one</u> of the following values, with brief reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No effect • A non-significant effect • A significant effect Where the answer in Column 2 is No, enter “Not applicable” in this column.
Vattenfall Windfarm Landfall	Yes	Landfall of power lines in Happisburgh from Vattenfall Windfarm. Proposed landfall is approximately 35km from the boundary of the North Norfolk Coast SSSI, SAC, SPA. No mechanism to impact on terrestrial features. No effect.
Bacton Sand engine	Yes	Proposal to fortify sea defences of Bacton Gas terminal by recharging beach at Bacton. Proposal is approximately 20km away from the boundary of the North Norfolk Coast SSSI, SAC, SPA. The proposal has the potential to impact on sediment transfer along the coast. However, this impact is likely to be minimal. Therefore, in combination the proposals will have a non-significant effect.
Management Hunstanton Cliffs	No	Not applicable

Conclusions of screening in combination

Having considered the best available evidence and information on any other qualifying plans or projects that might operate in combination with the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, Natural England has concluded that **it can be excluded** that the new access proposal, in combination with any such qualifying plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any of the features for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the reasons summarised above.:

Overall Screening Decision for European site/features

Accordingly, taking into account the preceding screening both alone and, where appropriate, in combination, Natural England has concluded:

[Mark with an X as appropriate]

A. No likely significant effect – the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified, subject to any separate considerations in relation to SSSI features etc. (see below);

OR

B. Likely significant effect - appropriate assessment is required to consider whether the new access proposal may proceed.

[Continued]

PART 4B: FINAL CONCLUSION – SSSI

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in section 3, and based on best available evidence and information, Natural England has concluded that the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2:

[Mark one box with an X only below]

X

A. complies with NE's duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of the SSSI, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions¹ - and accordingly the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified in this template

OR

B. would not comply with the duty referred to in (a) – and accordingly permission/ authorisation/ assent for the new proposal should not be given, for the following reasons:

The proposals as detailed in sections 1 & 2 do not prevent the ongoing management to protect the designated feature of the North Norfolk Coast. The proposals contain provisions which will mitigate any effects on the protected features from the potential small increase in coastal path users as described in section 3. These mitigation measures complement current ongoing management measures, and at some sites will deliver improvements to the current visitor management, potential decreasing existing recreational pressures.

¹The reference in (a) above to Natural England's functions includes its balanced general purposes under the NERC Act 2006, any specific statutory duties it may have to deliver specific improvements to public access, and the access-related policies and priorities it has agreed with Defra.

[Continued]

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in section 3, Natural England has concluded that:



A. the appropriate balance has been struck by the new access proposal between NE's conservation and access objectives, duties and purposes - and accordingly the new access proposal should proceed as finally specified in this template

OR



B. the appropriate balance referred to above has not been struck – and accordingly the new access proposal should not proceed in the form specified in this template, for the following reasons:

The proposals as detailed in sections 1 & 2 do not prevent the ongoing management to protect the designated feature of the North Norfolk Coast. The proposals contain provisions which will mitigate any effects on the protected features from the potential small increase in coastal path users as described in section 3. These mitigation measures complement current ongoing management measures, and at some sites will deliver improvements to the current visitor management, potential decreasing existing recreational pressures.

[Continued]

SIGNATURE COVERING THE WHOLE OF PART 4:

Responsible officer		
Name: Andy Millar Senior Adviser	Signed: 	Date: 17 TH November 2017

Part 5: Certification:

Certification – access proposal

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that the final access proposal, incorporating any mitigation measures, is the least restrictive option necessary to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features.		
Signed: 	Name: Sally Fishwick	Date: 30/1/18

Certification – environmental impacts

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that the final access proposal, incorporating any mitigation measures, is the least restrictive option necessary to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features.		
Signed: 	Name: Andy Miller	Date: 30/1/18

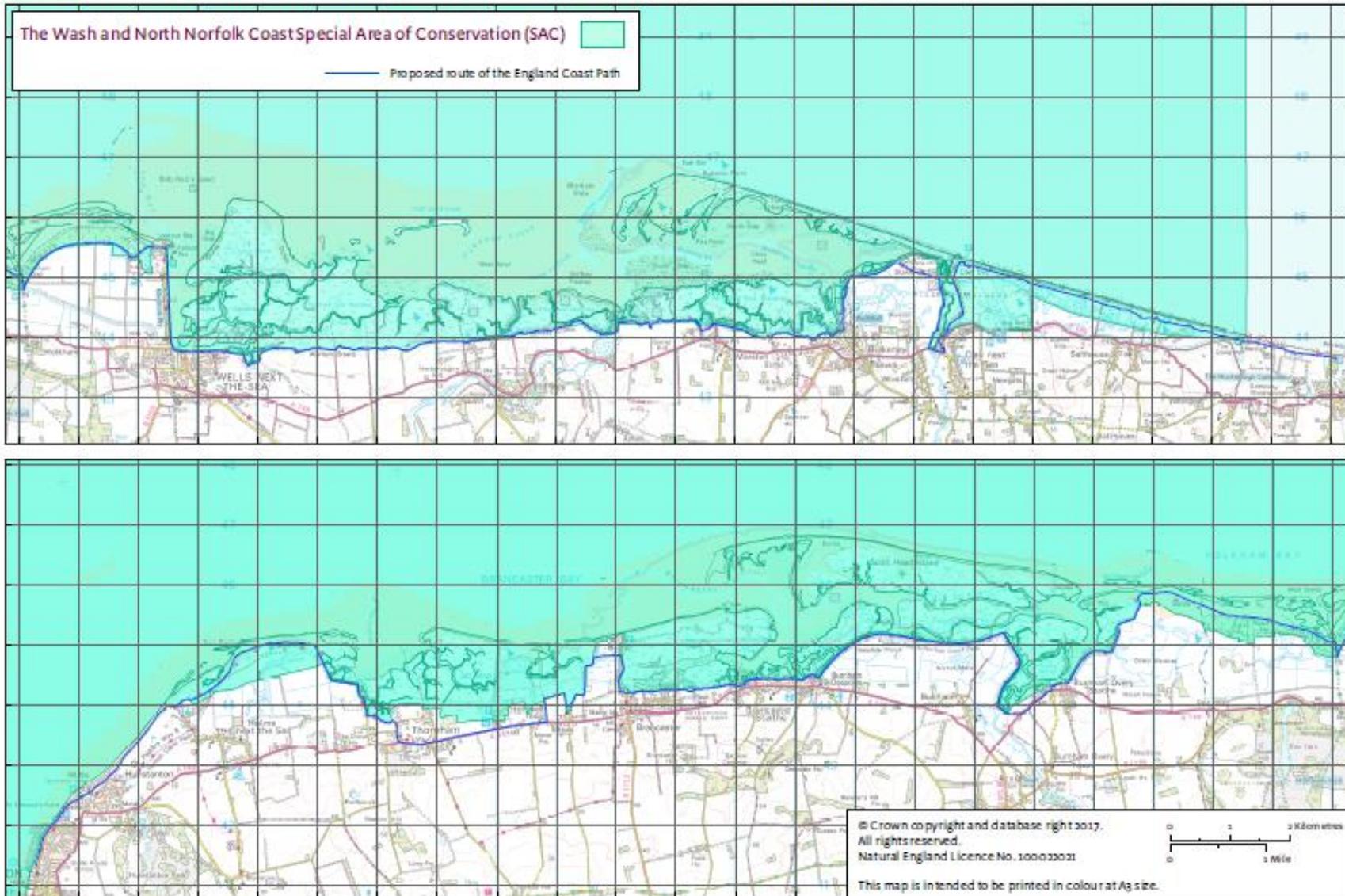
Annex A



Coastal Access - Weybourne to Hunstanton - Natural England's Proposals

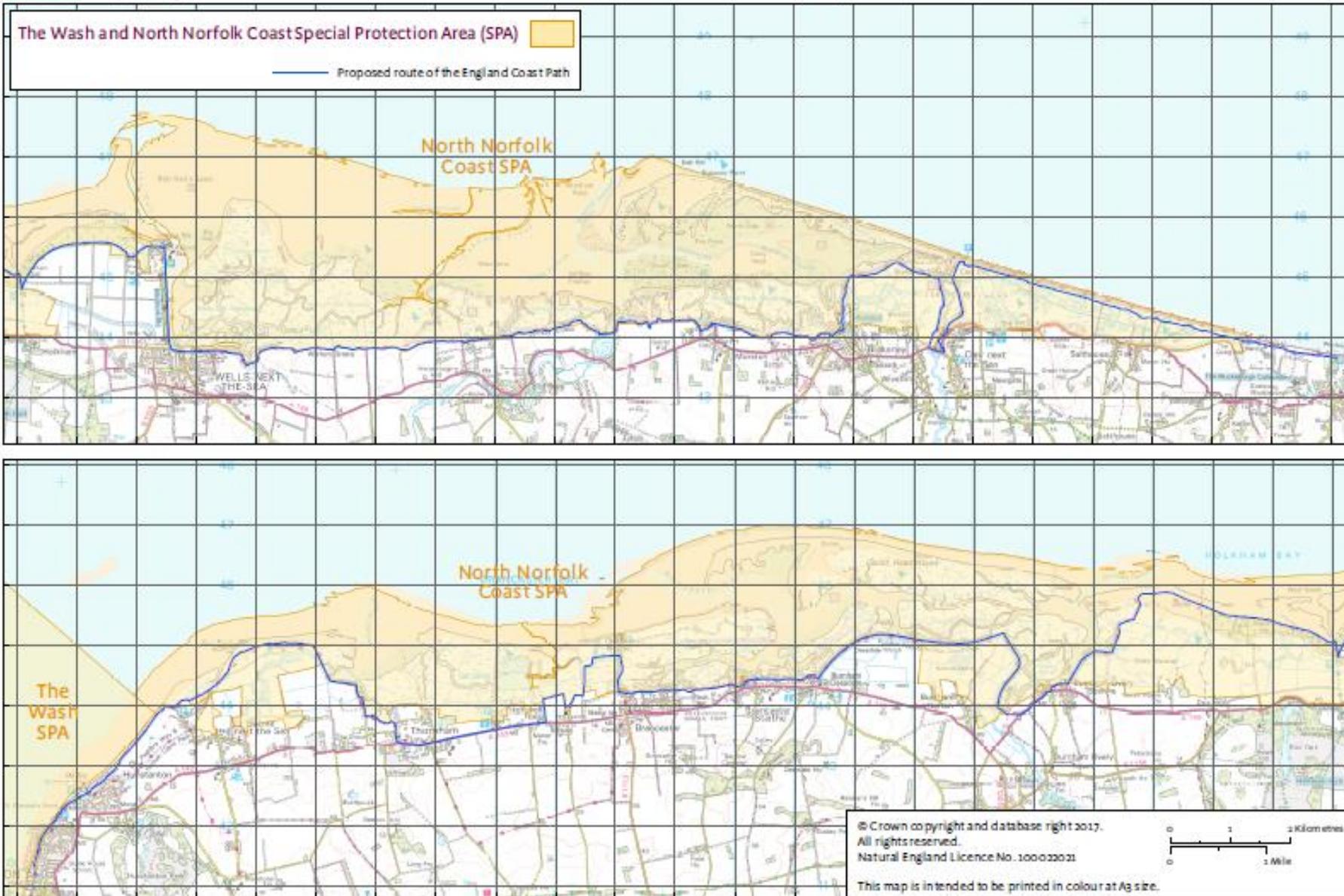
Coastal Access: Emerging access proposals

Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)



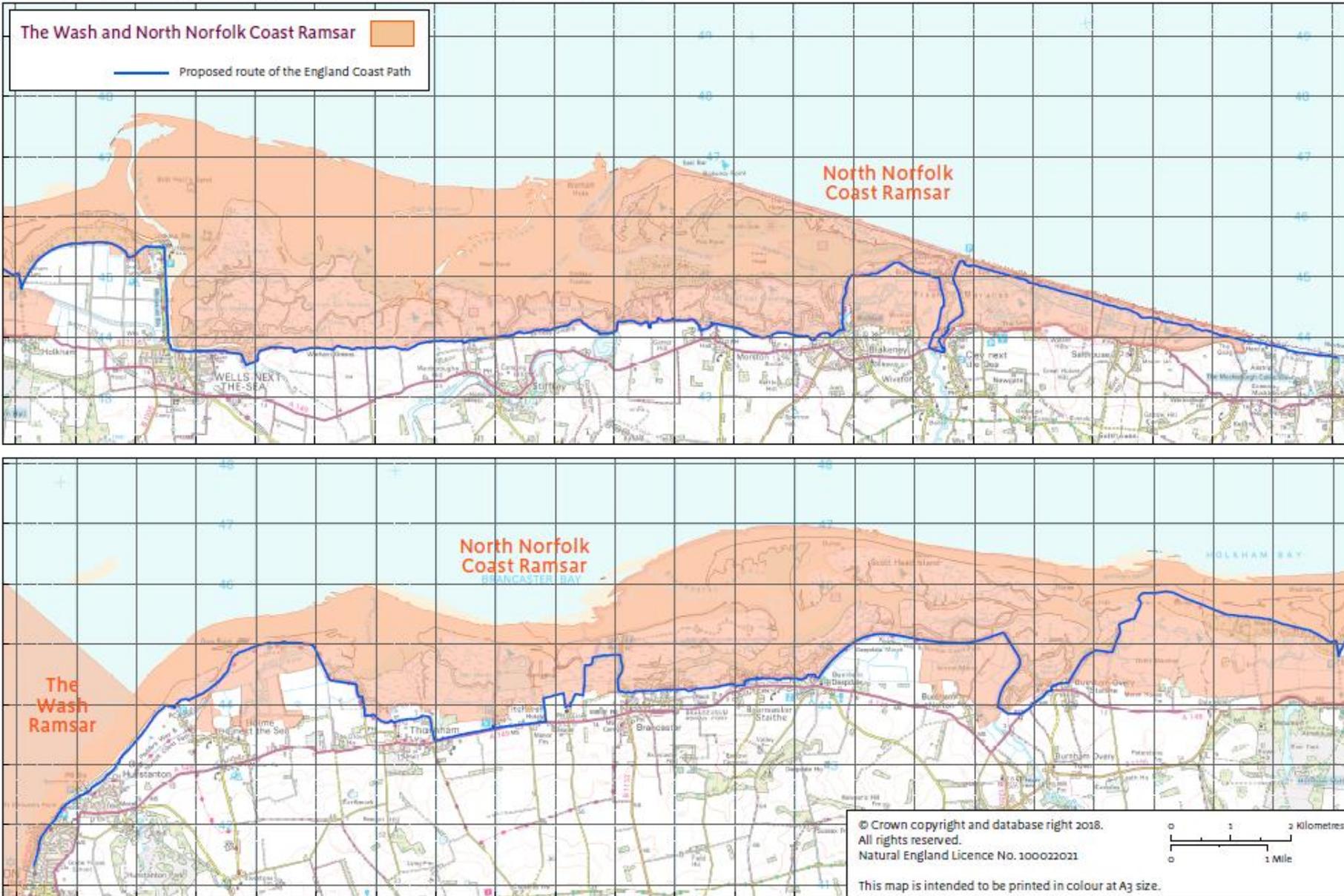
Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area (SPA)



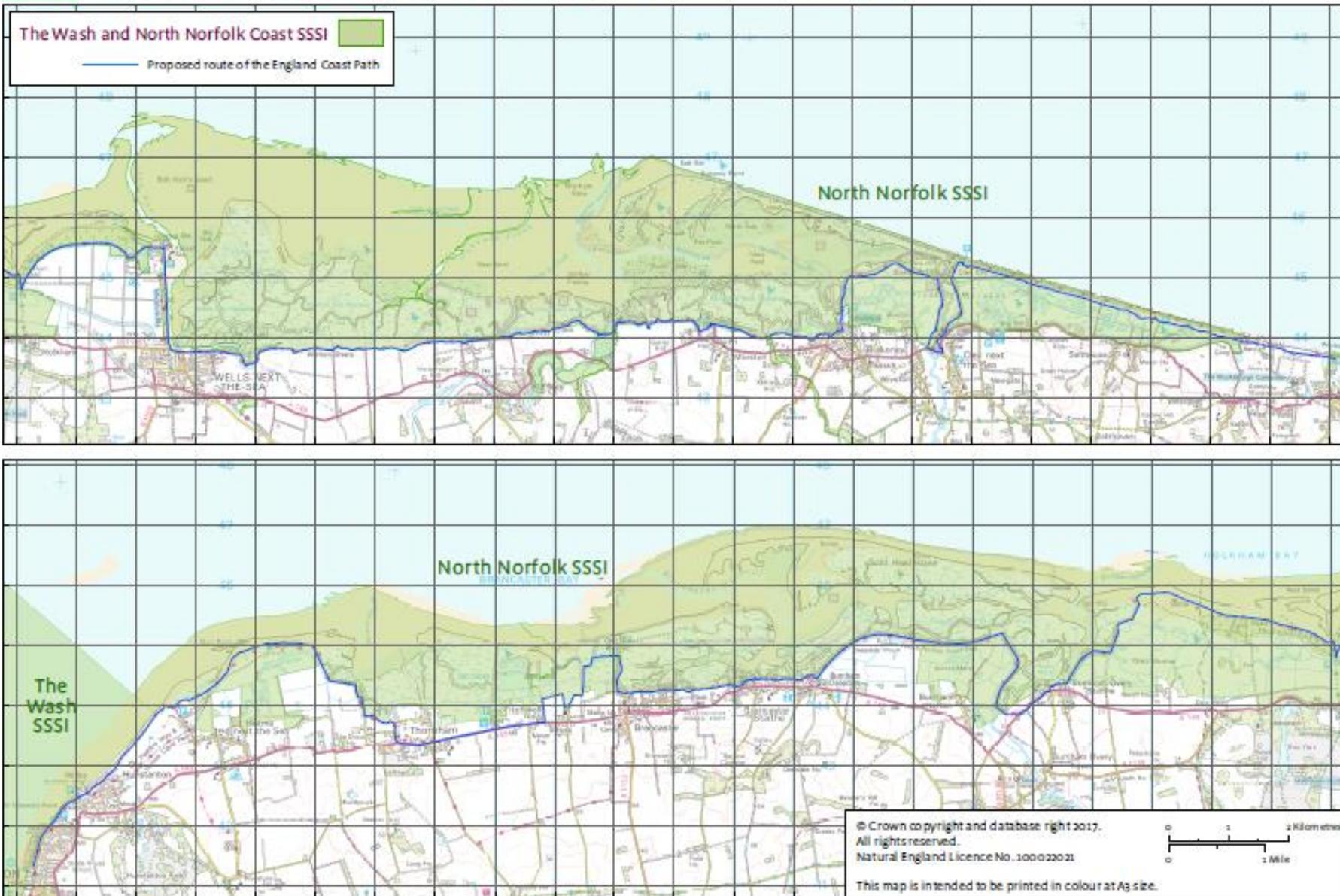
Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area (SPA)

Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Ramsar



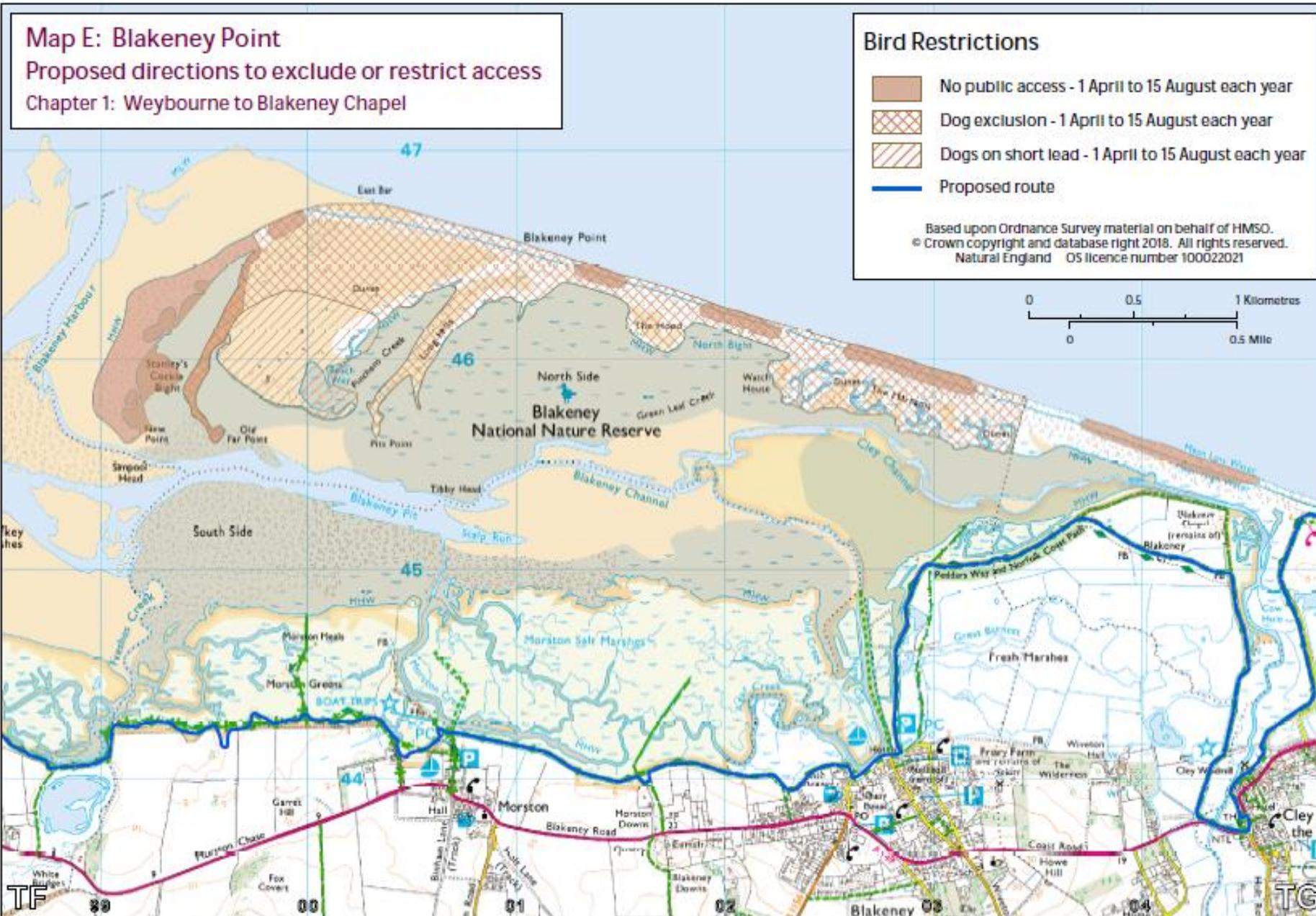
Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Ramsar

Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)



Key designation - The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Annex B



Map F: Blakeney Point

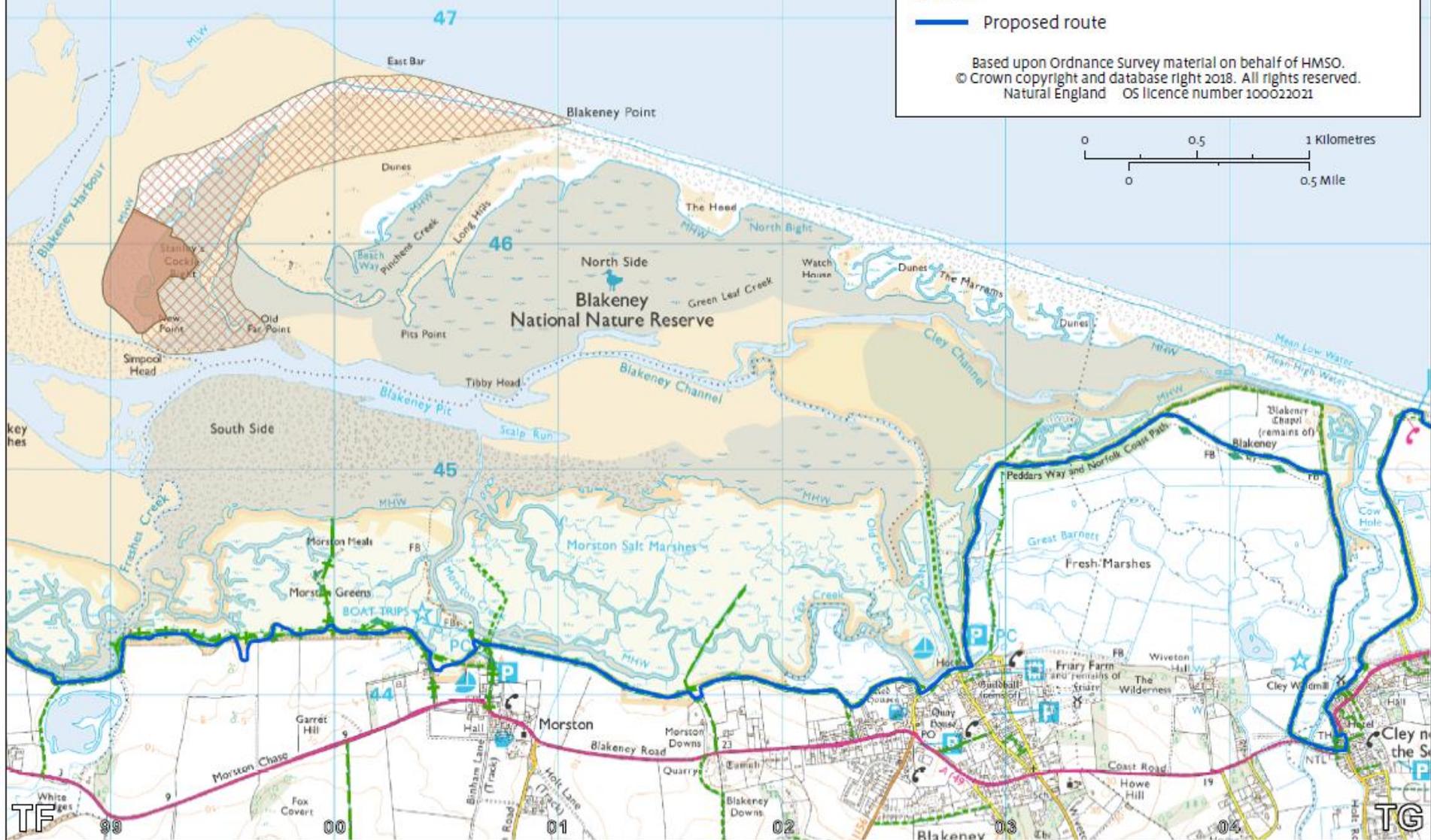
Proposed directions to exclude access

Chapter 1: Weybourne to Blakeney Chapel

Seal Restrictions

-  No public access - all year
-  No public access - 25 October to 25 January each year
-  Proposed route

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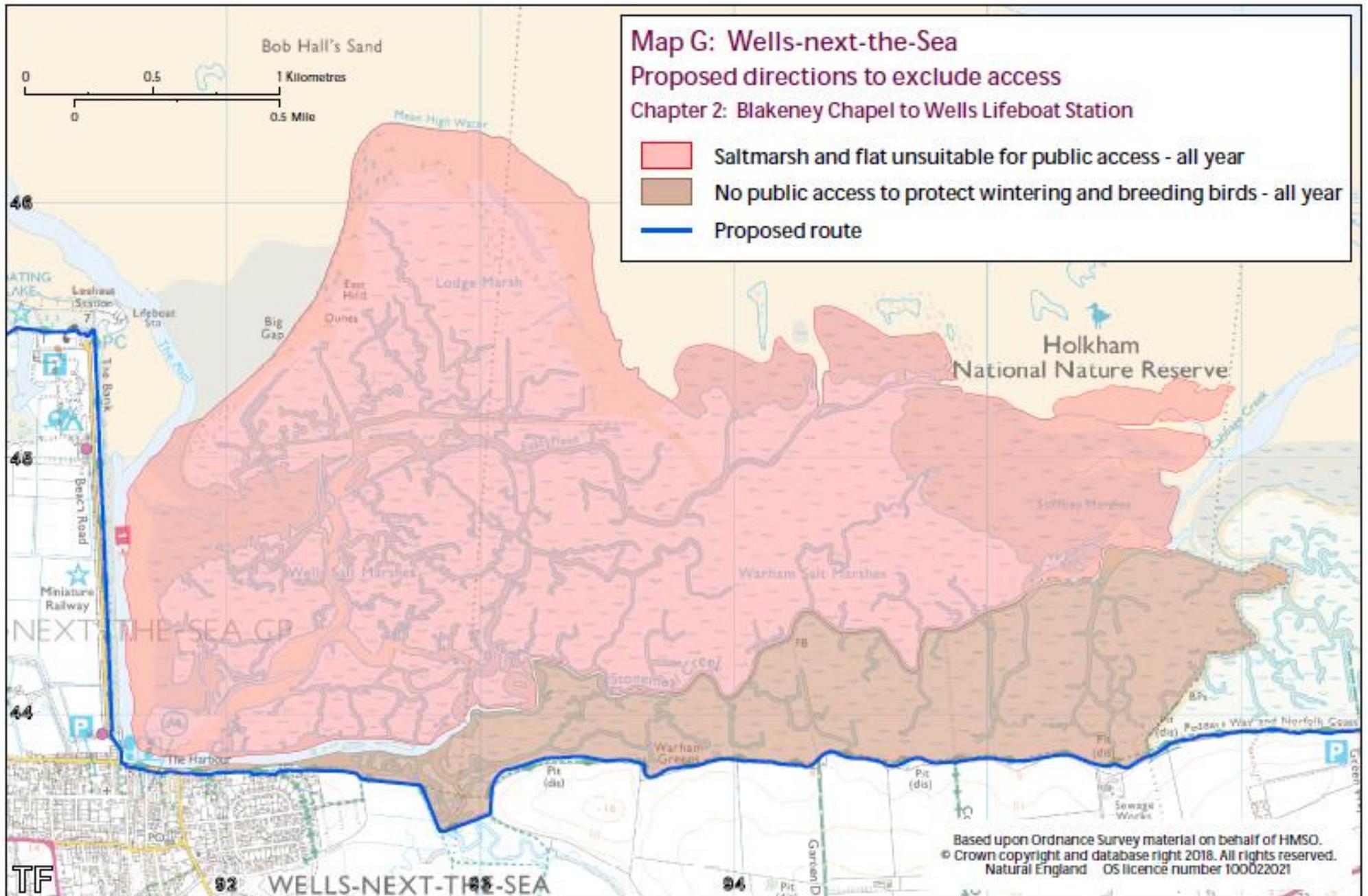


Map G: Wells-next-the-Sea

Proposed directions to exclude access

Chapter 2: Blakeney Chapel to Wells Lifeboat Station

- Saltmarsh and flat unsuitable for public access - all year
- No public access to protect wintering and breeding birds - all year
- Proposed route



Map H: Holkham Bay

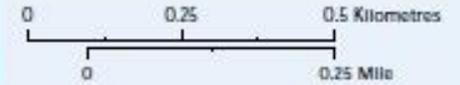
Proposed direction to exclude access

Chapter 3: Wells Lifeboat Station to Burnham Overy Staithe

 No public access to protect nesting birds on the beach
- 1 April to 15 August each year

 Proposed route

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Holkham Bay



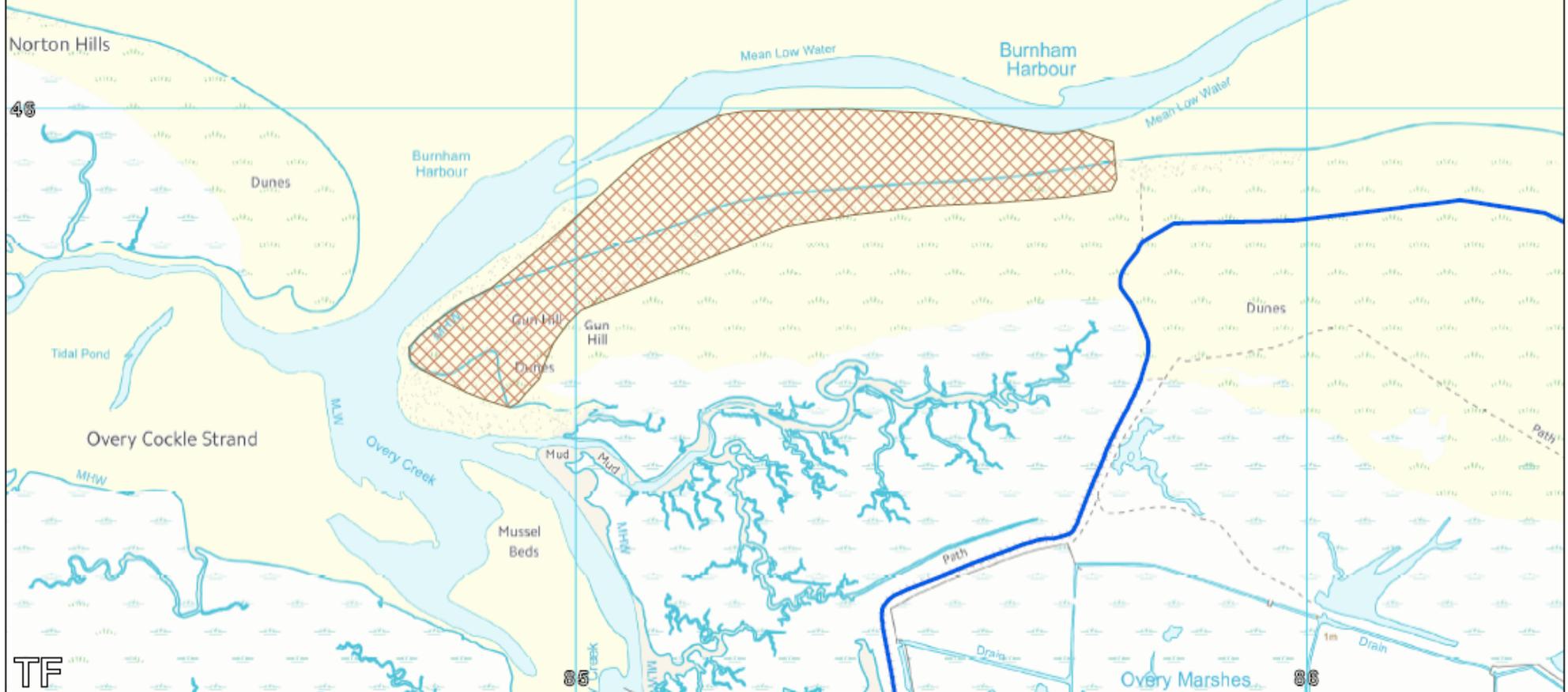
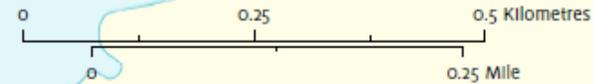
Map I: Gun Hill

Proposed direction to exclude access

Chapter 3: Wells Lifeboat Station to Burnham Overy Staithe

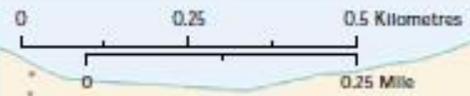
-  No public access to protect nesting birds on the beach - 1 April to 15 August each year
-  Proposed route

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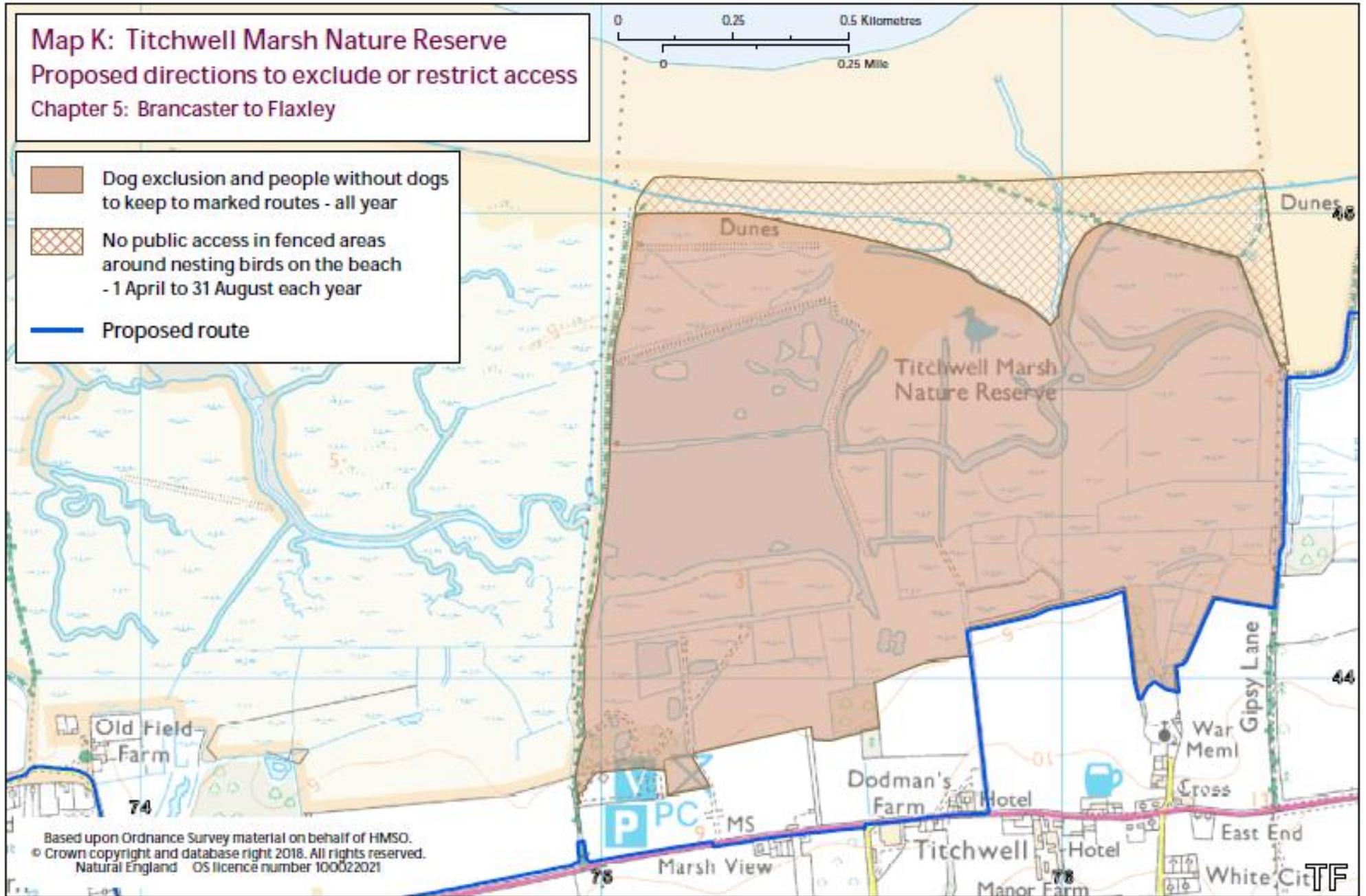


TF

Map K: Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve
Proposed directions to exclude or restrict access
Chapter 5: Brancaster to Flaxley



-  Dog exclusion and people without dogs to keep to marked routes - all year
-  No public access in fenced areas around nesting birds on the beach - 1 April to 31 August each year
-  Proposed route



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Map L: Holme Dunes

Proposed directions to exclude access

Chapter 5: Brancaster to Flaxley

Chapter 6: Flaxley to Hunstanton

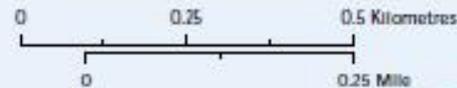
Land Management Restriction

 No public access - all year

Bird Restriction

 No public access in fenced areas around nesting birds on the beach - 1 April to 15 August each year

 Proposed route



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