

Chapter 5:

Brancaster to Flaxley

England Coast Path: Weybourne to Hunstanton - Natural England's Proposals

Part 5.1: Introduction

Start Point:	London Street, Brancaster (grid reference: TF7728 4420)
End Point:	Flaxley (grid reference: TF6964 4395)
Relevant Maps:	5a to 5e

Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

The Trail:

- 5.1.1 Generally follows the route currently managed as the Norfolk Coast Path National Trail, along most of this length.
- 5.1.2 Includes a section of new route between Brancaster and Thornham to create a more coastal route than the current Norfolk Coast Path National Trail. See maps 5a to 5c and associated tables below for details.
- 5.1.3 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely but extensive areas of saltmarsh seaward of the trail mean that the sea is often only seen at a distance.
- 5.1.4 The Norfolk Coast Path National Trail generally follows the coast over this length and for the most part we propose adopting the walked line of this route as the line of the England Coast Path. However, there are places where we have proposed improvements to the existing route line, and furthermore, there may be places where the walked line differs slightly from the route originally approved by the Secretary of State, as the path has evolved over time to cope with coastal erosion and other processes. In both situations, as explained at part 6a of the Overview, assuming these proposals are approved we intend to submit a separate variation report to the Secretary of State to change the route of the existing national trail to coincide with the approved line of the England Coast Path insofar as the two are different.

Protection of sensitive features

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

- The Wash & North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- 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) for its geological and wildlife interest

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

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

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

- align the route to avoid increased disturbance to nearby bird colonies at Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve;
- propose the exclusion and restriction of access to some of the seaward margin using formal directions as outlined in the formal proposals at paragraph 5.3.11.

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

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

Accessibility

5.1.7 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, which make use of existing surface paths wherever these meet the criteria in the Coastal Access Scheme.

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

- the trail would follow an uneven path either along field edges or along some areas of loose sand.

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

Where we have proposed exercising our discretion

5.1.8 Landward boundary of the coastal margin: We have used our discretion on some sections of the route to map the landward extent of the coastal margin to an adjacent physical boundary such as a fence line, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 5.2.1 below.

5.1.9 We have used our discretion on some sections of the route to limit the landward extent of the coastal margin in some areas of coastal sand dunes and mapped to an adjacent physical boundary such as a fence line or boardwalk. This has been the effect of reducing the amount of coastal margin that would have otherwise been available by default. This option provides the most clarity because:

- the physical features identified provide an easily identifiable boundary for access users

See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an explanation of the default extent of the coastal margin and how we may use our discretion to adjust the margin, either to add land or to provide clarity. See also Annex C of the Overview - 'Excepted land categories'.

5.1.10 Restrictions and/or exclusions: We have proposed to exclude and/or restrict access by direction under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) in certain places along this section of the coast. For details of these directions, see 5.3.11 in the Formal Proposals Section of this chapter and part 10 of the Overview.

5.1.11 Access rights to the spreading room would be subject to the national restrictions on coastal access rights listed in Annex D of the Overview. These restrictions would not apply to public rights of way.

See part 10 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for details.

Establishment and ongoing management of the trail

5.1.12 Some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary, in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 of the Overview including new waymarking between Titchwell and Thornham.

5.1.13 Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 8 of the Overview. The overall need for this is likely to be greater than on some other parts of the stretch, recognising that it will be necessary for the route to roll back from time to time in response to coastal processes, as described below.

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

Future Change

5.1.14 All of the route of the trail on this length of coast would be able to change without further approval from the Secretary of State in response to coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes, or encroachment by the sea. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll back' set out in part 9 of the Overview. See table 5.2.1 below for details of the sections likely to be affected in the foreseeable future.

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

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

Part 5.2: Commentary on Maps

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

5.2.1 Section Details – Maps 5a to 5e: Brancaster to Flaxley

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 5.2.2: Other options considered.

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

1	2	3	4	5	6b	6c	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 9 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 10 of Overview)
5a	WBH-5-S001	Public footpath	Grass/bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Various	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-5-S002*	Byway	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S003*	Other existing walked route	Grass/bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-5-S004*	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-5-S005*	Not an existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S006*	Public footpath	Grass/bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S007*	Byway	Grass	Yes - normal	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S008*	Not an existing walked route	Grass/ scrub	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	Margin
	WBH-5-S009* to WBH-5-S010*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	Margin
	WBH-5-S011*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
5b	WBH-5-S012*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S013*	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the pavement	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S014*	Public highway (road)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	Margin
	WBH-5-S015*	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the pavement	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S016*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	Margin
	WBH-5-S017*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	Margin
	WBH-5-S018*	Public highway (road)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	Margin
	WBH-5-S019*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S020*	Public byway	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S021*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-5-S022*	Not an existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Flint wall	Clarity and cohesion	None

1	2	3	4	5	6b	6c	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 9 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 10 of Overview)
5c	WBH-5-S023*	Public highway (road)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S024*	Other existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S025*	Public footpath	Bare soil	Yes - normal	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-5-S026	Public footpath	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S027	Public footpath	Stone: aggregate	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
5d	WBH-5-S028	Public footpath	Stone: aggregate	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S029 to WBH-5-S031	Public footpath	Boardwalk	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the boardwalk	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-5-S032	Public footpath	Boardwalk	Yes - normal	Fence	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-5-S033	Public footpath	Sand	Yes - normal	Fence	Clarity and cohesion	None
5e	WBH-5-S034	Public footpath	Sand	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the road	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S035	Public footpath	Boardwalk	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the road	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S036	Public footpath	Stone: aggregate	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the road	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S037	Other existing walked route	Stone: aggregate	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the road	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-5-S038	Other existing walked route	Stone: aggregate	Yes - normal	Fence	Not used	Margin
	WBH-5-S039	Other existing walked route	Sand	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-5-S040	Public footpath	Gravel	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None

5.2.2 Other options considered: Maps 5a to 5e: Brancaster to Flaxley

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
5a	WBH-5-S002 WBH-5-S003	We considered going seaward of the properties which are currently seaward of WBH-5-S002	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The public byway is an existing walked route. ■ The option would be costly to create and would not bring significant additional benefits to the user beyond those already offered by the existing public byway. ■ We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme.
5a to 5c	WBH-5-S002 to WBH-5-S023	We considered retaining the current route of the Norfolk Coast Path National Trail between Brancaster and Thornham.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It is a lot closer to the sea and so gives a better experience of the coastal environment ■ It is more direct and convenient for walkers. ■ We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme.
5a to 5b	WBH-5-S011 to WBH-5-S020	We considered a route that is seaward of the proposed route using field edges, woodland and pathway linking to a car park and service road at Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Part of the area is designated as SSSI, SPA and SAC for nature conservation and accordingly has been subject to an access and sensitive features appraisal. The outcome of the appraisal concluded a likely significant impact on the features for which the land is designated and on species present there which are protected in their own right.
5b	WBH-5-S013 to WBH-5-S018	We considered a route that is seaward of the proposed route using field edges, a track and a storage area seaward of the coast road.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It's more direct and convenient for walkers. ■ It avoids entering a relatively small field where horses are kept, so limiting the interaction of walkers/dogs and horses. ■ We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme.
	WBH-5-S016 to WBH-5-S022	We considered a route along the existing walked path adjacent to and landward of the coast road.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The high cost of upgrading the existing walked path to make it safe for walkers was felt to exceed the public benefit of doing so when other suitable route options are available.
	WBH-5-S018 to WBH-5-S022	We considered a route landward of the A149 coast road along seaward field edges.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It's more direct and convenient for walkers. ■ Views of the sea would be lost because the route is behind a high hedge. ■ We concluded that overall the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme.
5c	WBH-5-S023	We considered use of the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail landward of the proposed route.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It's more direct and convenient for walkers.
	WBH-5-S023 to WBH-5-S025	We considered use of the track, public footpath and path seaward of the proposed route.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It's more direct and convenient for walkers and offers views of the coast. ■ Under our proposals, the public right of way would remain available for people to use as part of the spreading room but would not form part of the designated trail.

Part 5.3: Chapter 5 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 5a to 5e.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

Formal Proposals - Brancaster to Flaxley

Proposed route of the trail

- 5.3.1 In relation to route sections WBH-5-S001 to WBH-5-S040, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 5a to 5e as the proposed route of the trail.
- 5.3.2 If at any time, any part of a route section listed in the previous paragraph needs, in Natural England's view, to change:
- as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea;
 - in order to link with other parts of the route that need to roll back in direct response to such changes;

in order for the overall route to remain viable, the new route for the part in question will be determined by Natural England without further reference to the Secretary of State. This will be done in accordance with the criteria and procedures described under the title 'Roll-back' in part 9 of the Overview and section 4.10 of the Coastal Access Scheme. If this happens, the new route will become the approved route for that section for the purposes of the Order which determines where coastal access rights apply.

Landward boundary of coastal margin

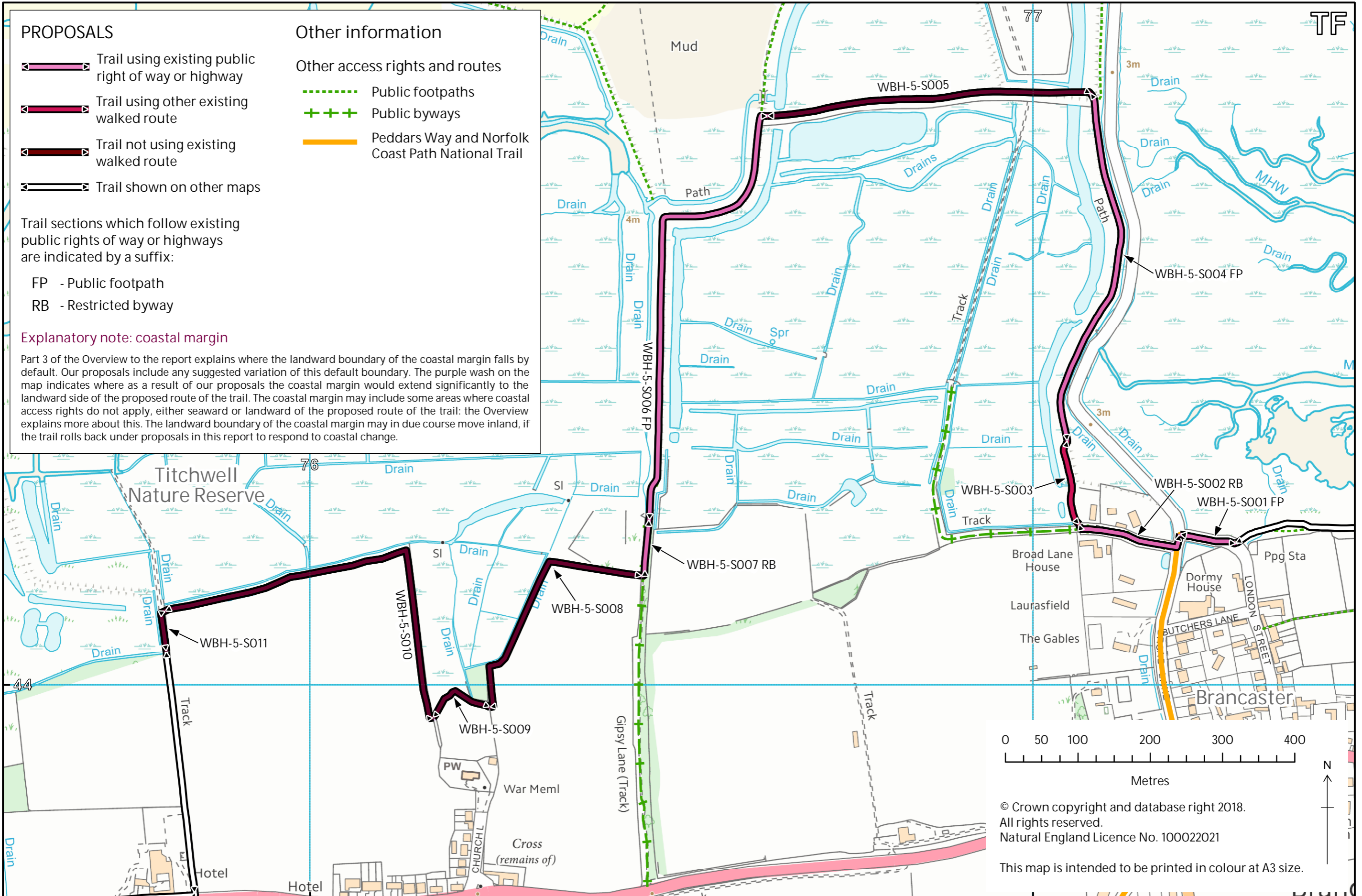
- 5.3.3 Adjacent to route section WBH-5-S001, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with various boundaries which are landward of the public right of way shown as the trail on map 5a.
- 5.3.4 Adjacent to route sections WBH-5-S006, WBH-5-S007, WBH-5-S011, WBH-5-S012, WBH-5-S019, WBH-5-S021 and WBH-5-S025, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the hedge which, at the time of writing this report, is landward of the route shown as the trail on maps 5a to 5c.
- 5.3.5 Adjacent to route sections WBH-5-S013 and WBH-5-S015, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the pavement shown as the trail on map 5b.
- 5.3.6 Adjacent to route sections WBH-5-S003 and WBH-5-S004, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the path shown as the trail on map 5a.
- 5.3.7 Adjacent to route section WBH-5-S022, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the flint wall shown as the route on map 5b.

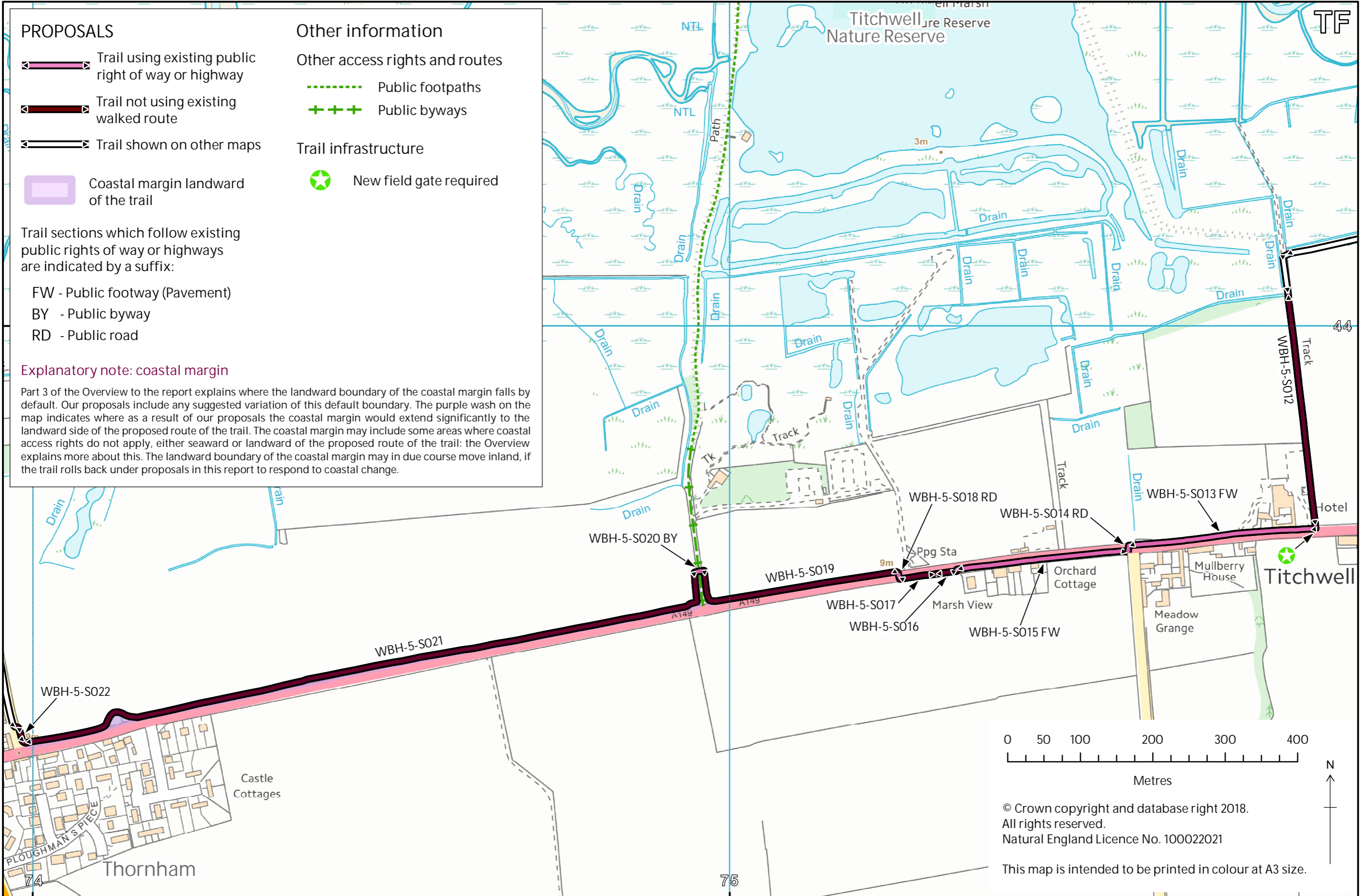
- 5.3.8 Adjacent to route sections WBH-5-S029 to WBH-5-S031, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the boardwalk shown as the trail on map 5d.
- 5.3.9 Adjacent to route sections WBH-5-S032 and WBH-5-S033, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with various fences, which at the time of writing, are landward of the route shown as the trail on map 5d.
- 5.3.10 Adjacent to route sections WBH-5-S034 to WBH-5-S037, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the road as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 5e.

Local restrictions and exclusions

- 5.3.11 Natural England proposes to exclude and/or restrict access relevant to this length of coast as follows:
- i) Access to the margin within Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve, seaward of route sections WBH-5-S006 to WBH-5-S019, will be restricted to protect sensitive wildlife. See Overview Map K.
 - access will be excluded from fenced areas around breeding birds on the beach from 1 April to 31 August each year on the land cross-hatched in brown of Overview map K.
 - people with dogs will be excluded all year on the land shaded in brown of Overview map K.
 - people will be restricted to marked routes all year on the land shaded in brown of Overview map K.
 - ii) Access to the margin at Holme Dunes seaward of route sections WBH-5-S034 to WBH-5-S038 will be restricted to protect sensitive wildlife. See Overview map L.
 - access will be excluded from fenced areas around breeding birds on the beach from 1 April to 15 August each year on the land cross hatched in brown. See Overview map L.
 - ii) Access to the margin at Holme Dunes landward of route sections WBH-5-S034 to WBH-5-S036, will be excluded for land management purposes.
 - access will be excluded to manage visitors and allow admission charges to continue on the land shaded in pink. See Overview map L.

Please refer to part 10 of the Overview for further details.





PROPOSALS

- Trail using existing public right of way or highway
- Trail not using existing walked route
- Trail shown on other maps
- Coastal margin landward of the trail

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

- FW - Public footway (Pavement)
- BY - Public byway
- RD - Public road

Explanatory note: coastal margin

Part 3 of the Overview to the report explains where the landward boundary of the coastal margin falls by default. Our proposals include any suggested variation of this default boundary. The purple wash on the map indicates where as a result of our proposals the coastal margin would extend significantly to the landward side of the proposed route of the trail. The coastal margin may include some areas where coastal access rights do not apply, either seaward or landward of the proposed route of the trail: the Overview explains more about this. The landward boundary of the coastal margin may in due course move inland, if the trail rolls back under proposals in this report to respond to coastal change.

Other information

- Other access rights and routes
- Public footpaths
- Public byways
- Trail infrastructure
- New field gate required

