



England Coast Path Stretch: Aust to Brean Down

Report ABD 1: Severn Bridge to New Passage

Part 1.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Severn Bridge (Grid reference: ST 5662 8976)
End Point:	New Passage (Grid reference: ST 5446 8642)
Relevant Maps:	ABD 1a to ABD 1c

1.1.1 This is one of a series of linked but legally separate reports published by Natural England under section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which make proposals to the Secretary of State for improved public access along and to this stretch of coast between Aust and Brean Down.

1.1.2 This report covers length ABD1 of the stretch, which is the coast between Severn Bridge and New Passage. It makes free-standing statutory proposals for this part of the stretch, and seeks approval for them by the Secretary of State in their own right under section 52 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

1.1.3 The report explains how we propose to implement the England Coast Path (“the trail”) on this part of the stretch, and details the likely consequences in terms of the wider ‘Coastal Margin’ that will be created if our proposals are approved by the Secretary of State. Our report also sets out:

- any proposals we think are necessary for restricting or excluding coastal access rights to address particular issues, in line with the powers in the legislation; and
- any proposed powers for the trail to be capable of being relocated on particular sections (“roll-back”), if this proves necessary in the future because of coastal change.

1.1.4 There is also a single Overview document for the whole of this stretch of coast, explaining common principles and background. **This and the other individual reports relating to the stretch should be read in conjunction with the Overview. The Overview explains, among other things, how we have considered any potential environmental impacts of improving public access to this part of the coast, and this report, and other separately published assessments we refer to, then provides more detail on these aspects where appropriate.**

Part 1.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

1.2.1 Starts at the Severn Bridge, where there is a foot and cycle crossing to Wales linking to the Wales Coast Path.

1.2.2 Follows the existing route of the Severn Way (a promoted route between Bristol and the source of the River Severn in Wales) except as described in paragraphs 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 below.

1.2.3 Between the Severn Bridge foot and cycle crossing (ABD-1-S001) and New Passage Road (ABD-1-S014) follows a new route as shown as the trail on map ABD 1a, utilising an existing metaled access track from the bridge to the cliff top and crossing farmland to New Passage Road. This is a more direct route which brings the trail closer to the sea and allows sea views.

1.2.4 At Cake Pill Gout (ABD-1-S017 to ABD-1-S018) follows another existing walked route across the sluice shown as the trail on map ABD 1b. This is a more direct route which brings the trail closer to the sea.

1.2.5 Our proposals would not affect the status of the existing public rights of way. See table 1.3.1 below for details of the proposed route and table 1.3.2 for a more detailed explanation of the other route options we considered.

Protection of the environment:

1.2.6 In this part of the report, we explain how we have taken account of environmental protection objectives in developing our proposals for improved coastal access.

1.2.7 The following designated sites affect this length of coast:

- Severn Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Severn Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Severn Estuary Ramsar site
- Aust Cliff SSSI

Map C in the Overview shows the extent of designated areas listed.

1.2.8 The following table brings together design features included in our access proposals to help to protect the environment along this length of the coast.

1.2.9. Measures to protect the environment

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
ABD 1b	ABD-1-S017 to ABD-1-S019	The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: Coastal access rights would be excluded over the lower saltmarsh	To reduce disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds feeding and roosting in this area by recreational users.

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
		<p>and flats seaward of the trail (see paragraph 1.2.17)</p> <p>In addition we propose to install a notice at either end of this part of the path to promote the area seaward of the path as a refuge for waterbirds and ask people to remain on the path in these areas and to keep their dogs on the path with them, using a lead if necessary.</p>	<p>The waterbirds are sensitive to disturbance and are part of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area for birds.</p>
ABD 1b/c	ABD-1-S021 to ABD-1-S027	<p>The following design features are described elsewhere in this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coastal access rights would be excluded over the lower saltmarsh and flats seaward of the trail (see paragraph 1.2.17) <p>In addition we propose to install a notice at either end of this part of the path to promote the area seaward of the path as a refuge for waterbirds and ask people to remain on the path in these areas and to keep their dogs on the path with them, using a lead if necessary</p> <p>We will also install 3 smaller notices at intervals along the path to serve as reminders.</p>	<p>To reduce disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds feeding and roosting in this area by recreational users.</p> <p>The waterbirds are sensitive to disturbance and are part of the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area for birds.</p>

1.2.10 Natural England is satisfied that the proposals for coastal access in this report are made in accordance with relevant environmental protection legislation. For more information about how we came to this conclusion; see the following assessments of the access proposals that we have published separately:

- A Habitats Regulations Assessment relating to any potential impact on the conservation objectives of European sites.
- Our Nature Conservation Assessment, in which we document our conclusions in relation to other potential impacts on nature conservation.

Part 6b of the Overview includes some contextual information about protecting the environment along this length of coast.

Accessibility:

1.2.11 The natural coastal terrain is often challenging for people with reduced mobility and this is the case where it follows an uneven grass or bare soil path:

- along the clifftop fields or sea bank between the Severn Bridge and Old Passage (map ABD 1a)
- along the sea bank between Cake Pill Gout and New Passage

1.2.12 There are no significant artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route:

- At ABD-1-S003, the existing barrier will be removed, so as to make the route accessible. We envisage this happening as part of the physical establishment work described in part 7 of the Overview.
- Along Aust Cliff (ABD-1-S005 to ABD-1-S013) several new gates will be required at field boundaries. These will be pedestrian gates suitable for use by those with reduced mobility as standard.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

1.2.13 **Estuary:** This report proposes that the trail should contain sections aligned on the estuary of the River Severn, extending upstream from the open coast. Natural England proposes to exercise its functions as if the sea included the estuarial waters of that river as far as M48 Severn Bridge, as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map A2.

See part 5 of the Overview for a detailed analysis of the options considered for the Severn Estuary and our resulting proposals

1.2.14 **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 1.3.1 below.

1.2.15 The Proposals Tables show where we are proposing to alter the default landward boundary of the coastal margin. These proposals are set out in columns 5b and 5c of table 1.3.1. Where these columns are left blank, we are making no such proposals, so the default landward boundary applies. See the note relating to Columns 5b & 5c [above Table 1.3.1] explaining what this means in practice.

See also part 3 of the Overview - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for a more detailed 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.

1.2.16 **Restrictions and/or exclusions:** We have proposed to exclude access by direction under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) along this section of coast.

Exclusion of access to lower saltmarsh and flat

1.2.17 Access to the lower saltmarsh and mud in the coastal margin seaward of route sections ABD-1-S001 to ABD-1-S027 will be excluded all year round. This is proposed under section 25A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) because we are satisfied that the land is unsuitable for public access. The exclusion does not affect the route and will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply. See Directions Map ABD 1A for further detail.

1.2.18 The Severn estuary has the largest tidal range in the UK of up to 15 metres, exposing a significant extent of soft mud at low tide which becomes rapidly inundated when the tide rises. The mud and the lower areas of saltmarsh on the edge of the mud do not provide a safe walking surface and are subject to frequent tidal inundation.

1.2.19 **Coastal erosion:** Natural England is able to propose that the route of the trail would be able to change in the future, without further approval from the Secretary of State, in response to coastal change. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll-back' set out in part 7 of the Overview. Natural England may only propose the use of this roll-back power:

- as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea, or
- in order to link with other parts of the route that need to roll back in direct in response to such changes.

1.2.20 Column 4 of table 1.3.1 indicates where roll-back has been proposed in relation to a route section. Where this is the case, the route, as initially determined at the time the report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps ABD 1a to ABD 1c as the proposed route of the trail.

1.2.21 If at any time in the future any part of a route section upon which roll-back has been specified needs, in Natural England's view, to change 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 7 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.

1.2.22 Before any new route is so determined, on this length of coast, we will conduct a Habitats Regulations Assessment and acquire SSSI assent as necessary in order to comply with our statutory obligations with respect to the designated sites listed in paragraph 1.2.7 above.

1.2.23 We would use roll-back in order to adjust the route as necessary to fit with changes to coastal footpaths arising from planned improvements to the flood defence embankments along this length of coast.

1.2.24 On sections for which roll-back is not proposed in table 1.3.1 the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps ABD 1a to ABD 1c as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

1.2.25 At this point we do not foresee any other need for future changes to the access provisions that we have proposed within this report.

See parts 7 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

Establishment of the trail:

1.2.26 Below we summarise how our proposed route for the trail would be physically established to make it ready for public use before any new rights come into force.

1.2.27 Establishment works will only start on this length of coast once these proposals have been approved by the Secretary of State. The works may therefore either precede or follow the start of establishment works on other lengths of coast within the stretch, and detailed in their separate reports.

1.2.28 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is £29,450 and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority, South Gloucestershire Council.
- the conclusions of our deliberations in relation to potential impacts on the environment; and
- information gathered while visiting affected land and talking to the people who own and manage it about the options for the route.

1.2.29 There are 3 main elements to the overall cost:

- Signs and notices - to direct people along the route and explain any special considerations such as sensitive wildlife.
- Access furniture – gates, steps and surface works to make the existing route more convenient for use.
- New fences and hedge planting on Aust Cliff to help manage the new access alongside existing uses of the land.

Table 1 shows our estimate of the capital cost for each of the main elements of physical establishment described above.

Table 1: Estimate of capital costs

Item	Cost
Signs & notices	£4150
Access furniture	£9350
Fences and hedge planting	£13250
Project management	£2700
Total	£29,450 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

1.2.30 Once the Secretary of State's decision on our report has been notified, and further to our conversations with land managers during the route planning stage, South Gloucestershire Council will liaise with affected land owners and occupiers about relevant aspects of the design, installation and maintenance of the new signs and infrastructure that are needed on their land. Prior to works being carried out on the ground, all necessary permissions, authorisations and consents will be obtained. All such works would conform to the published standards for National Trails and the other criteria described in our Coastal Access Scheme.

Maintenance of the trail:

1.2.31 Because the trail on this length of coast will form part of the National Trail being created around the whole coast of England called the England Coast Path, we envisage that it will be maintained to the same high quality standards as other National Trails in England (see The New Deal; Management of National Trails in England from April 2013: details at Annex A of the Overview).

1.2.32 The new section of path on the cliff top between the Severn Bridge and Old Passage will require regular mowing to clarify the route and some tree aftercare while the hedge planting establishes.

1.2.33 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £2675 (exclusive of any VAT payable). In developing this estimate we have taken account of the formula used to calculate Natural England's contribution to the maintenance of other National Trails.

Part 1.3: Proposals Tables

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

1.3.1 Section Details – Maps ABD 1a to ABD 1c – Severn Bridge to New Passage

Key notes on table:

1. Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 1.3.2: Other options considered.
2. Column 4 – ‘No’ means no roll-back is proposed for this route section. ‘Yes – normal’ means roll-back is proposed and is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.
3. Column 5a - Certain coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail if they touch it at some point. The relevant land type (foreshore, cliff, bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or section 15 land – see Glossary) is shown in this column where appropriate. “No” means none present on this route section.
4. Columns 5b and 5c – Any entry in these columns means we are proposing to align the landward boundary of the coastal margin on this route section with the physical feature(s) shown in 5b, for the reason in 5c. No text here means that for this route section the landward edge of the margin would be that of the trail itself - or if any default coastal land type is shown in 5a, that would be its landward boundary instead.

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S001	Other existing walked route	No	No	Safety barrier	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S002	Other existing walked route	No	No	Concrete kerb at edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S003*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No	Concrete kerb at edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S004*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No	Landward edge of path	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S005*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S006*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S007*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S008*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S009*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S010*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S011*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S012*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S013*	Not an existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S014*	Public Highway (road)	No	No	Landward edge of road	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S015*	Public Footway (pavement)	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S016*	Public Highway (road)	No	No	Landward edge of road	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 1b	ABD-1-S017*	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 7 of Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
ABD 1b	ABD-1-S018*	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	No			
ABD 1b	ABD-1-S019	Public Footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1b	ABD-1-S020	Public Footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1b	ABD-1-S021	Public Footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1c	ABD-1-S022	Public Footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1c	ABD-1-S023	Public Footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1c	ABD-1-S024	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1c	ABD-1-S025	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1c	ABD-1-S026	Other existing walked route	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			
ABD 1c	ABD-1-S027	Public Footpath	Yes - Normal	Yes - bank			

1.3.2 Other options considered: Map ABD 1a: Severn Bridge to Cake Pill Gout to Map ABD 1b: Cake Pill Gout to Northwick Warth

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S003 to ABD-1-S013	We considered aligning the trail along the existing route of the Severn Way as shown on the map.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It is a more direct route than the existing Severn Way ■ It is closer to the sea and affords good views of the estuary, the two bridges and the coast of Wales, whereas the corresponding part of existing Severn Way has no sea views. ■ It minimises the amount of farmland within the coastal margin. ■ It also lessens the length of road walking by 515 m. <p>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</p>
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S008 to ABD-1-S016	We considered constructing a new staircase from the cliff top to the causeway at the foot of the cliff, then aligning the trail along the existing side road past the old Aust Ferry pier to the junction of route sections ABD-1-S015 / ABD-1-S016, avoiding the vicinity of Cliff Farm.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The estimated cost supplied by South Gloucestershire Council for steps up the side of Aust Cliff was prohibitively expensive (more than £100k) and on balance not cost effective. ■ The steps would not be suitable for people with reduced mobility. <p>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.</p>

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S003 to ABD-1-S016	We considered aligning the trail down the existing bridge maintenance steps from the Severn Bridge cycle path to the bridge plinth, then along the foreshore, causeway and existing side road to the junction of route sections ABD-1-S015 / ABD-1-S016.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The foreshore between the bridge plinth and the causeway is inundated at high tide. ■ There is no current means of access from the bridge plinth to the foreshore. It would be a significant challenge to design something suitable for general access in this location. ■ Use of the maintenance steps by the public is strictly prohibited for operational reasons. ■ The steps, which were originally installed for maintenance purposes rather than general access, would not be suitable for people with reduced mobility. <p>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.</p>
ABD 1a	ABD-1-S003 to ABD-1-S016	We considered aligning the trail upstream of the Severn bridge along the Severn Way to where it meets the foreshore, then back downstream along the foreshore and under the bridge to the causeway at the base of the cliff and from there to Old Passage.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Crossing under the bridge is unsafe at high tide, as the route is inundated. ■ The route along the foreshore north-east of the bridge is attractive but unsafe. It is inundated at high tide, the currents there can be fierce and the foreshore just north of the bridge is very muddy. ■ The cliff is unstable north of the bridge, with evidence of recent rock falls onto the foreshore. ■ There is no current means of access between the bridge plinth to the foreshore. It would be a significant challenge to design something suitable for general access in this location. ■ This option would add 2.1km on to the length of the stretch, when other more convenient routes are available.

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
			Natural England only has a discretion to propose that the trail should extend from the seaward limit as far as the bridge.
ABD 1b	ABD-1-S017 to ABD-1-S018	We considered aligning the trail along the existing route of the Severn Way as shown on the map.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It is a more direct route than the existing Severn Way. ■ It is closer to the sea and affords good views of the estuary. <p>The proposed route is already being used.</p>

Note: Any public rights of way not forming part of the proposed trail would remain available for people to use under their pre-existing rights.

Part 1.4: Proposals Maps

1.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
ABD 1a	Severn Bridge to Cake Pill Gout
ABD 1b	Cake Pill Gout to Northwick Warth
ABD 1c	Northwick Warth to New Passage
Directions Map ABD 1A	Proposed exclusions: Severn Bridge to New Passage

PROPOSALS

Trail Sections

- Trail using existing public right of way or highway
- Trail using other existing walked route
- Trail not using existing walked route
- Alternative route
- Trail shown on other maps
- Approved or open England Coast Path

Maps that show sections of the trail that follow the existing South West Coast Path as currently walked and managed use the following trail categories. Information on the existing status and infrastructure is not shown.

- Trail using existing South West Coast Path
- Alternative or optional alternative route using existing South West Coast Path

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

- BW** - Public bridleway
- BY** - Public byway
- CP** - Cycletrack (pedestrian)
- CT** - Cycletrack (cycles only)
- FP** - Public footpath
- FW** - Public footway (Pavement)
- RB** - Restricted byway
- RD** - Public road

Coastal Margin

Explanatory note

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.

- Coastal margin landward of the trail
- Coastal margin landward of the trail which is existing access land

Other Information

Other access rights and routes

- Public bridleways
- Public byways
- Public footpaths
- Restricted byways
- South West Coast Path
- Sustrans national routes
- Existing access land

Infrastructure types

For status of each, where shown on map, see colour codes below

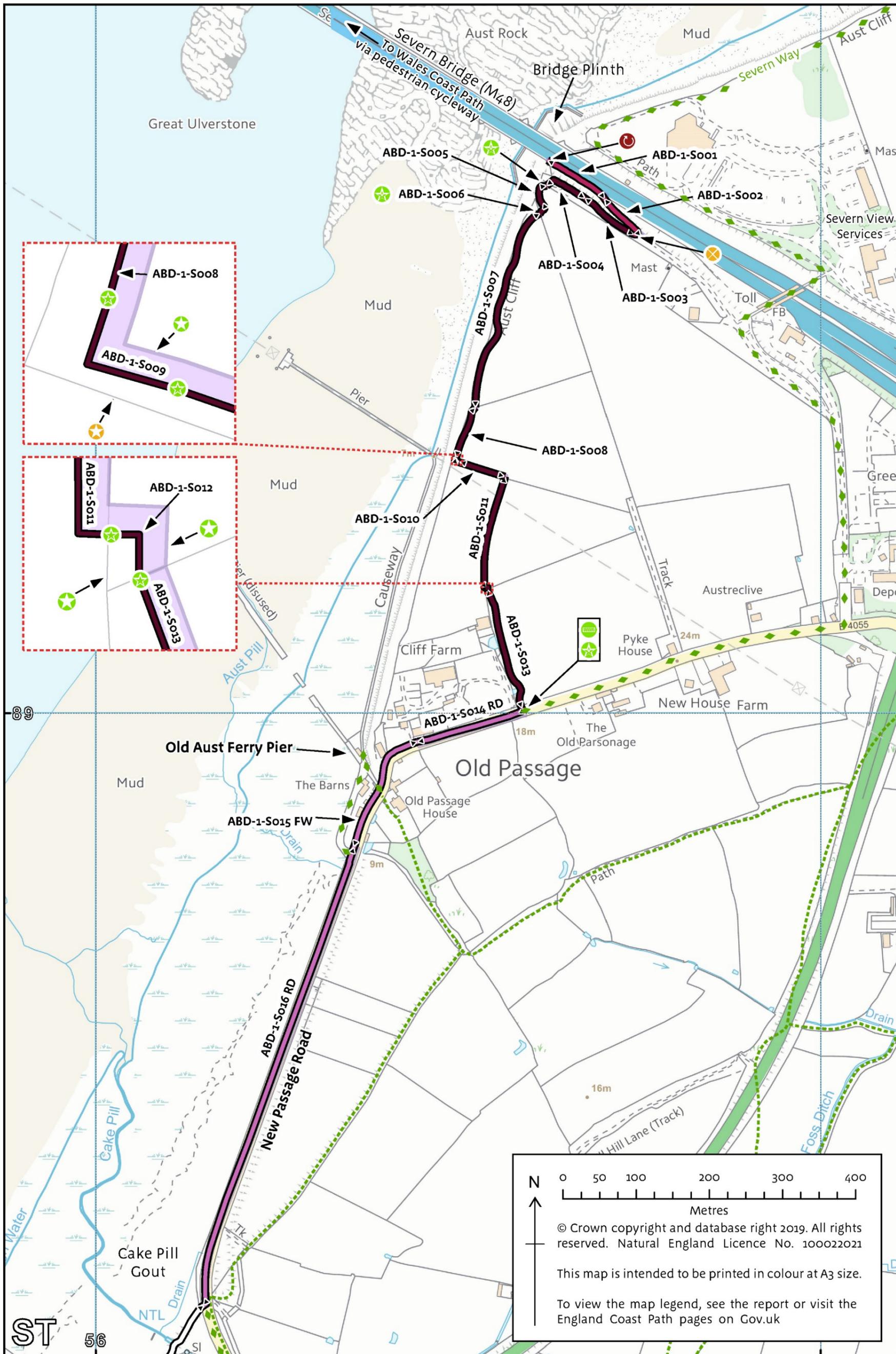
- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Bridges: | Stiles: | Gates: |
| Clapper bridge | Ladder stile | Bristol gate |
| Footbridge | Lift-up stile | Field gate |
| Quad bike bridge | Squeeze stile | Gateway with no gate |
| Sleeper bridge | Step stile | Kissing gate |
| Vehicle bridge | Stone stile | Pedestrian gate |
| | | Wheelchair gate |
| Miscellaneous: | | |
| Barrier | Cycle chicane | Interpretation panel |
| Boardwalk | Drainage | Ramp |
| Bollard | Drop-kerb | Revetment |
| Cattle grid | Gap in fence | Stepping stones |
| Culvert | Hurdle | Steps |

Infrastructure status

Each symbol shown on the map is colour coded as appropriate, as in this example for a set of steps:

- Existing steps to be retained
- New steps required
- Existing steps to be removed

Map ABD 1a Severn Bridge to Cake Pill Gout





N

0 50 100 200 300 400

Metres

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This map is intended to be printed in colour at A3 size.

To view the map legend, see the report or visit the England Coast Path pages on Gov.uk



N

0 50 100 200 300 400

Metres

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