



England Coast Path Stretch: Iwade to Grain

Report IGR 11: Stoke Creek Crossing to Grain Crossing

Part 11.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Stoke Creek Crossing (Grid reference 582723 174728)
End Point:	Grain Crossing (Grid reference 586252 175300)
Relevant Maps:	IGR 11a to IGR 11c

11.1.1 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 Iwade in Kent, and Grain in Medway.

11.1.2 This report covers length IGR 11 of the stretch, which is the coast between Stoke Creek Crossing and Grain Crossing in Medway. 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.

11.1.3 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.

11.1.4 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 11.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

11.2.1 Follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way, along most of this length.

11.2.2 Follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of Stoke Saltings and the Medway Estuary.

11.2.3 Includes two sections of new path, adjacent to the A228 Grain Road. See map IGR 11c and associated tables below for details.

11.2.4 An inland diversion is necessary from section IGR-10-S006 onwards to take the trail past industrial sites at Grain (map IGR 11c).

Protection of the environment:

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.

11.2.5 The following designated sites affect this length of coast (see Overview Map C):

- Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA
- Medway Estuary and Marshes Ramsar site
- Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI
- Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone

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

11.2.6 Measures to protect the environment

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
IGR 11b	IGR-11-S004	The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ We will install an interpretation panel at the A228 Grain Road layby near Middle Stoke explaining the sensitivity of the site for wintering and breeding birds, asking people to keep to the path and observe the requirement to keep dogs under effective control.	To prevent disturbance, by recreational users, of breeding and non-breeding birds at Stoke Marshes and Saltings.
IGR 11c	IGR-11-S007	Prior to construction works, reptile and water vole surveys will be	To avoid impact on protected species present within the walkway construction / works area.

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
		carried out to inform any necessary methodology	

11.2.7 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 in respect of the natural environment; 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:

11.2.8 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route. However, the natural coastal terrain is often challenging for people with reduced mobility and this is the case on sections of our proposed route because:

- The trail would follow an uneven grass path along seawalls;

11.2.9 Along the seawall (maps IGR11a, IGR 11b and IGR 11c), existing stiles will be replaced with new pedestrian gates which will provide enough space for large mobility scooters and pushchairs, as well as making the trail easier to use. When creating new access over a seawall at IGR-11-S006 and IGR-11-S007, a ramp will be installed to improve accessibility for those with reduced mobility. A new wider path will be created at IGR-11-S007 to make it safer to use given the proximity of a busy highway. We envisage this happening as part of the physical establishment work described below.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

11.2.10 **Estuary:** This report proposes that the trail should contain sections aligned on the estuary of the River Medway. Natural England proposes to exercise its functions as if the sea included the estuarial waters of that river as far as Rochester Bridge, as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on Overview Map A2

11.2.11 The Medway Estuary empties into both The Swale and the Thames estuaries. Alignment along these estuaries also formed part of our proposals made for Whitstable to Iwade and Grain to Woolwich stretches, submitted to the Secretary of State on 27 June 2017 and 5 June 2019, respectively.

See part 5 of the Overview for a detailed analysis of the options considered for this estuary and our resulting proposals.

11.2.12 **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 11.3.1 below.

11.2.13 At Middle Stoke (section IGR-11-S002) we have used this discretion to limit the landward extent of the coastal margin to a fence line near the top of the seawall. This has had the effect of reducing the amount of coastal margin that would have otherwise been available by default. This option provides the most clarity as it is an easily identifiable boundary that also separates walkers from the Microlite Airstrip.

11.2.14 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 11.3.1. 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 11.3.1) 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.

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

Exclusion of access to the saltmarsh/flat at Stoke (Medway Estuary)

11.2.16 Access to the mudflat and saltmarsh in the coastal margin seaward of route sections IGR-11-S001 to IGR-11-S008 is to be excluded all year round by direction under Section 25A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as it is unsuitable for public access. The exclusion does not affect the route itself and will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply. See Directions Map IGR 11A.

11.2.17 The mudflat in this location is soft and sinking. It does not provide a safe walking surface and is subject to frequent tidal inundation. RNLI and Coastguard data indicates incidents of people being rescued from the mud in the Medway Estuary. Areas of saltmarsh have deep channels and creeks, some of which would not be readily apparent to walkers and can pose a significant risk.

11.2.18 These directions will not prevent or affect:

- any existing local use of the land by right: such use is not covered by coastal access rights;
- any other use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner, or by informal permission or traditional toleration; or
- use of any registered rights of common or any rights at common law or by Royal Charter etc.

Any such use is not prohibited or limited by these arrangements.

11.2.19 The directions we give are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question in view of the hidden dangers of mudflat and saltmarsh.

See part 8 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for a summary for the entire stretch.

11.2.20 **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 response to such changes.

11.2.21 We have chosen not to make any such proposal in this report. Accordingly the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps IGR 11a to IGR 11c as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

11.2.22 At this point we do not foresee any 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:

11.2.23 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.

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.

11.2.24 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is £117,258 and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority, Medway Council, in relation to the management of the existing public rights of way;
- 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.

11.2.25 There are four main elements to the overall cost:

- A significant number of new signs would be needed on the trail, including new road safety signage relating to a road crossing near Grain Crossing, as well as a new interpretation panel that will be installed to explain about the wildlife sensitivities of Stoke Marshes and Saltings.
- Pedestrian gates will replace existing stiles along the seawall.
- A new ramp is required to ascend/descend the seawall.
- A new footway will be constructed alongside A228 Grain Road to join two existing footpaths. Half of this cost will be met by Natural England and half by Medway Council.

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 & interpretation	£3,887
Pedestrian gates	£2,599
Ramp	£2,000
Construction of new footway	£100,000
Project management	£8,772
Total	£117,258 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

11.2.26 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, Medway 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:

11.2.27 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).

11.2.28 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £3,406 (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 11.3: Proposals Tables

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

11.3.1 Section Details: Maps IGR 11a to IGR 11c – Stoke Creek Crossing to Grain Crossing

Key notes on table:

1. Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 11.3.2: 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
IGR 11a	IGR-11-S001*	Public footpath	No	Yes - bank			
IGR 11a	IGR-11-S002*	Public footpath	No	Yes - bank	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	The fence line provides a clearer boundary than the landward edge of the flood bank
IGR 11a to IGR 11c	IGR-11-S003* to IGR-11-S005*	Public footpath	No	Yes - bank			

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
IGR 11c	IGR-11-S006*	Not an existing walked route	No	Yes - bank		Clarity and cohesion	
IGR 11c	IGR-11-S007*	Not an existing walked route	No	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	
IGR 11c	IGR-11-S008*	Public footway (pavement)	No	No	Landward edge of pavement	Clarity and cohesion	

11.3.2 Other options considered: Maps IGR 11a to IGR 11c – Stoke Creek Crossing to Grain Crossing

Maps	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
IGR 11a to IGR 11c and IGR 12a to IGR 12b See also Map A in the Overview	IGR-11-S001 to IGR-11-S008 and on to Report IGR 12 Grain Crossing to Grain Esplanade (sections IGR-12-S001 to IGR-12-S007).	We considered a number of options to align the trail towards Grain, in light of some physical constraints near Grain Bridge (IGR-11-S006 and IGR-11-S007), including a railway line and a busy road with no verge, as well as secure industrial facilities and sensitive wildlife sites to the north of the railway line. These options included aligning the trail from near the A228 layby (map IGR 11b), to cross over Grain Road and the railway line. Then:	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ it remains closer to the sea, maintaining a view of the Medway Estuary, at Stoke Saltings, as well as further east at Grain Village (see Report GWO 12) ■ there is no viable way to cross the railway line near to Grain Bridge (IGR-11-S006) ■ it provides a new, safe off-road pedestrian route along the A228 Grain Road near Grain Bridge (IGR-11-S007) which will create a continuous path between Grain village and the Medway coast at Stoke Saltings, for the first time ■ it avoids security concerns surrounding access in the vicinity of the Grain LNG, National Grid facility

Maps	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ east along a track and field edge adjacent to the railway line, to the Grain LNG (National Grid), then north on a farm track around the LNG facilities, to re-join the proposed trail on the B2001, north east of Wallend (see Report IGR12, map IGR 12b). <p>Bypassing the Isle of Grain by aligning north along a track (the line of a disused railway) towards Allhallows, then either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ north to join the proposed Grain to Woolwich trail at Allhallows-on-Sea (on the Thames Estuary); ■ or to join the existing public footpaths east from Allhallows to meet the proposed Grain to Woolwich trail alongside Yantlet Creek. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ it avoids disturbance to the sensitive, designated wildlife sites north of the railway line and Stoke Great Fleet (maps IGR 11b and IGR 11c) ■ it significantly reduces the extent of coastal margin across the Isle of Grain ■ 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

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 11.4: Proposals Maps

11.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
IGR 11a	Stoke Creek Crossing to Middle Stoke
IGR 11b	Middle Stoke to Colemouth Creek
IGR 11c	Colemouth Creek to Grain Crossing
Directions Map IGR 11A	Directions for Report IGR 11: Stoke Creek Crossing to Grain Crossing

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:

- Clapper bridge
- Footbridge
- Quad bike bridge
- Sleeper bridge
- Vehicle bridge

Stiles:

- Ladder stile
- Lift-up stile
- Squeeze stile
- Step stile
- Stone stile

Gates:

- Bristol gate
- Field gate
- Gateway with no gate
- Kissing gate
- Pedestrian gate
- Wheelchair gate

Miscellaneous:

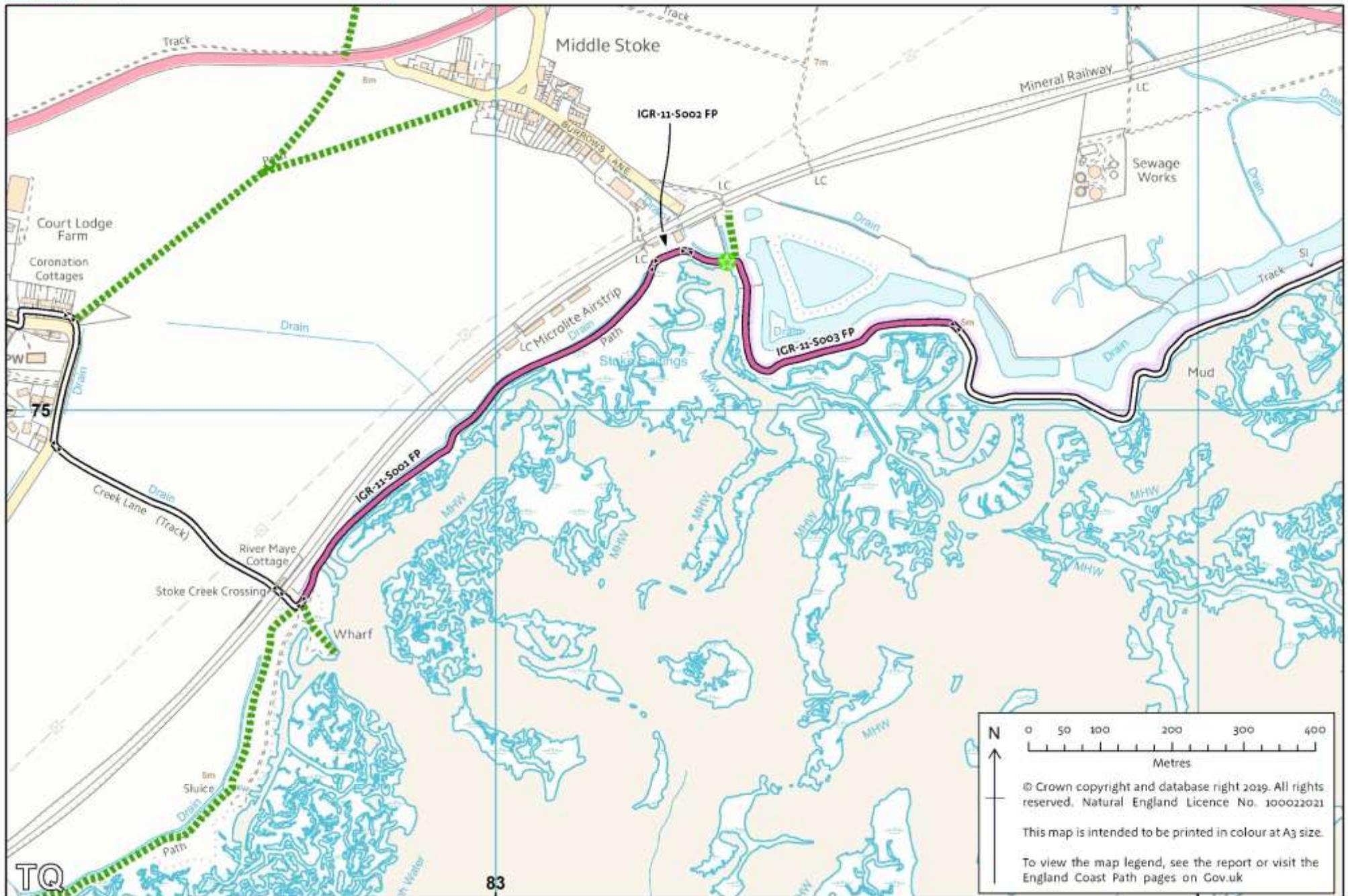
- Barrier
- Boardwalk
- Bollard
- Cattle grid
- Culvert
- Motorbike barrier
- Cycle chicane
- Drainage
- Drop-kerb
- Gap in fence
- Hurdle
- Roadside sign
- Interpretation panel
- Ramp
- Revetment
- Stepping stones
- Steps
- Advisory sign

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

* Please note that the items in this legend may not all be present on an individual map or report.



Map IGR 11a: Stoke Creek Crossing to Middle Stoke

TQ

83

N

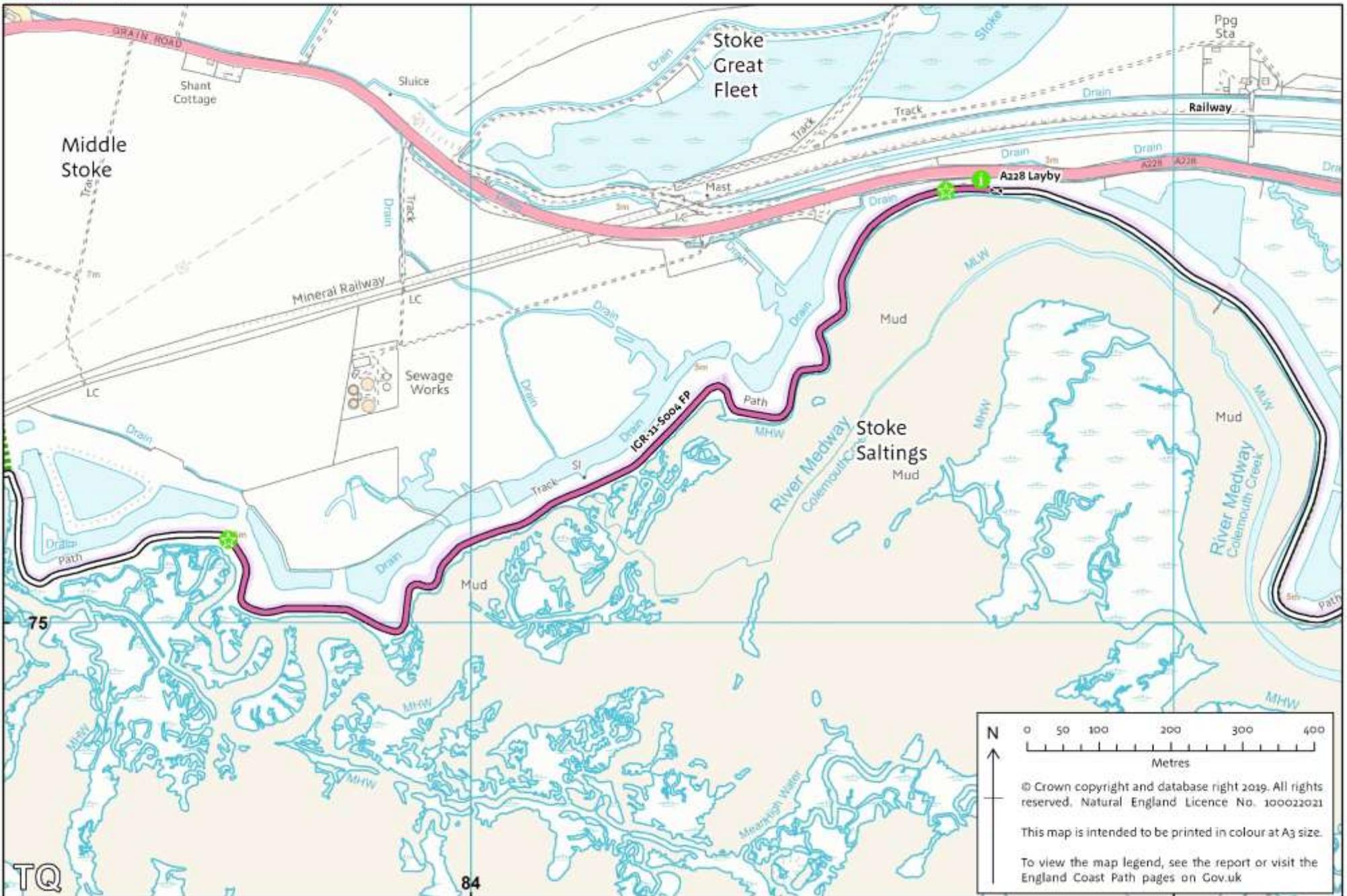
0 50 100 200 300 400

Metres

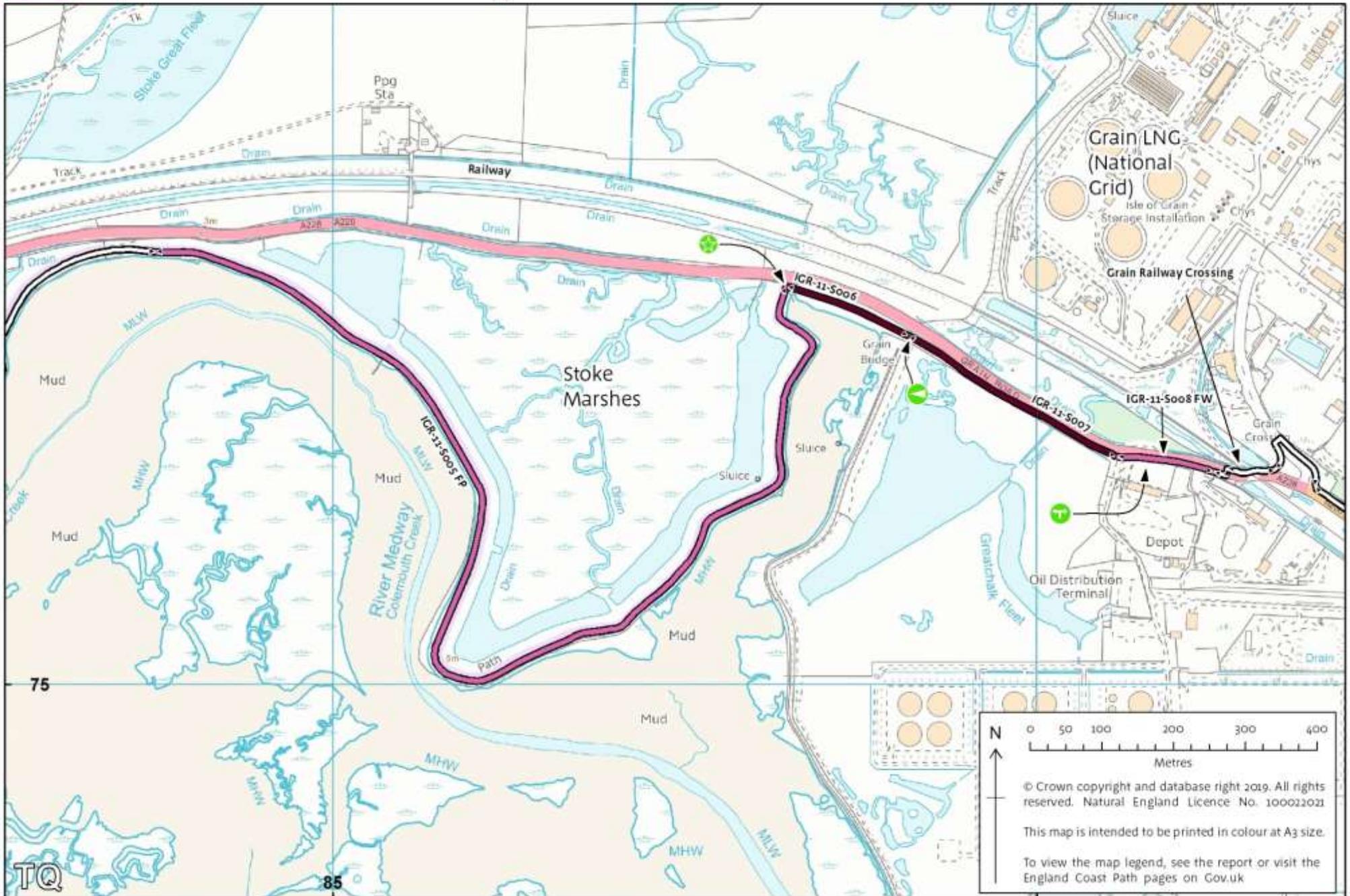
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This map is intended to be printed in colour at A3 size.

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



Map IGR 11b: Middle Stoke to Colemouth Creek



Map IGR 11c: Colemouth Creek to Grain Crossing

N
 0 50 100 200 300 400
 Metres
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