



England Coast Path Stretch: Isle of Sheppey

Report IOS 4: Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park

Part 4.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap (Grid reference 599411 172629)
End Point:	Palm Trees Holiday Park (Grid reference 600334 172964)
Relevant Maps:	IOS 4a

4.1.1 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 on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent.

4.1.2 This report covers length IOS 4 of the stretch, which is the coast between Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap and Palm Trees Holiday Park. 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.

4.1.3 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.

4.1.4 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 4.2: Proposals Narrative

The trail:

4.2.1 Follows some existing walked routes and has good views of the Thames estuary along part of this length.

4.2.2 Includes 6 sections of new path at Eastchurch Gap and within Palm Trees Holiday Park. See map IOS 4a and associated tables below for details.

4.2.3 Follows a significant inland route to take the trail past a wide, steep sided valley at Hen's Brook, and a residential area at Eastchurch Gap (sections IOS-4-S001 to IOS-4-S004).

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.

4.2.4 The following designated sites affect this length of coast (see Overview Maps C1):

- Outer Thames Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Sheppey Cliffs and Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

4.2.5 We consider that the coastal environment, including features of the sites listed above, along this length of coast is unlikely to be sensitive to the improvements to coastal access envisaged and that no special measures are needed in respect of our proposals.

4.2.6 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:

4.2.7 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 or bare soil along the cliff top and uneven surfaces along tracks.
- It will be necessary to install a new bridge across Hen's Brook. Some steps to the bridge may be necessary if ramps prove unsuited to the location.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

4.2.8 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 4.3.1 below.

4.2.9 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 4.3.1. 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 4.3.1) 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.

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

Restriction of access along North Sheppey coast (near Swanley Farm)

4.2.11 Dogs are to be kept to leads all year round on the alignment of the trail (route section IOS-4-S004) in the Swanley Farm field west of Palm Trees Holiday Park, under Section 24 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) for land management purposes. This restriction has no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply. See Direction Map IOS 4A.

4.2.12 Along the north coast of Sheppey, the trail passes through multiple small fields and landholdings that lie between residential areas and a number of popular caravan parks. The fields have a variety of uses, including hay production, grazing and some arable, with management in any one field often varying from year to year (this Swanley Farm field is used for hay). Landowners have raised concerns regarding contamination of hay and arable crops, given the proximity of significant residential populations and the likelihood of local dog walkers regularly using these fields. Dogs are already required to be kept on a lead at all times in the vicinity of stock, however given the small size of the fields here and the unique mix of different land management systems that walkers will encounter as they pass from one field to the next, we considered it necessary to establish a single approach to access management throughout these areas to allow the continuation of the current land management and provide walkers with a clear and consistent message about dog control.

Restriction of access at Palm Trees Holiday Park

4.2.13 Dogs are to be kept to leads all year round on the alignment of the trail (route sections IOS-4-S005 to IOS-4-S009) through the holiday park under Section 24 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) for land management purposes. This restriction will have no legal effect on land where coastal access rights do not apply. Regulated caravan parks are excepted land under Schedule 1 to the CROW Act, but Natural England can propose the alignment of the trail on an access strip through such sites. The trail will be aligned for the most part, on an access strip through the holiday park, utilising the access roads used by residents. Dogs are required to be kept on a lead at all times on the trail here to replicate the existing management policy of the park, which is in place to ensure the control of dogs and minimise dog fouling. See Directions Map IOS 4A.

4.2.14 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.

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

4.2.15 Other factors affecting access: At route sections IOS-4-S006 to IOS-4-S008, within the Palm Trees Holiday Park, public access may be interrupted from time to time for short periods to allow the movement of caravans. This arrangement would continue without any local restriction on the new access rights to give effect to it formally.

4.2.16 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.

4.2.17 Column 4 of table 4.3.1 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 map IOS 4a as the proposed route of the trail.

4.2.18 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.

Other future change:

4.2.19 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:

4.2.20 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.

4.2.21 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is £8,389.25 and is informed by:

4 England Coast Path | Isle of Sheppey | IOS 4: Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park

- information already held by the access authority, Kent County Council, in relation to the management of 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.

4.2.22 There are three main elements to the overall cost:

- A number of waymarking signs would be needed and signs will also be installed to advise of farm operations sensitivities in the area.
- A new bridge with ramp/steps would be installed to cross Hen’s Brook;
- Self-closing gates will be installed at Palm Trees Holiday Park, and a cycle-chicane near Hen’s Brook

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	£1,595
Bridge and steps	£4,500
Gates / chicane	£1,200
Project management	£1,094.25
Total	£8,389.25 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

4.2.23 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, Kent County 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:

4.2.24 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).

4.2.25 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £755.84 (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 4.3: Proposals Tables

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

4.3.1 Section Details: IOS Map 4a - Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park

Key notes on table:

1. Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 4.3.2: 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
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S001*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Railings	Clarity and cohesion	New bridge with railings proposed
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S002*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S003*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Edge of track	Clarity and cohesion	

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
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S004	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S005	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S006 *	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S007 *	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Landward edge of road	Clarity and cohesion	
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S008 *	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S009	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			

4.3.2 Other options considered: IOS Map 4a - Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S001 to IOS-4-S003	We considered aligning the trail across Hen's Brook at a point further north and following the line of Hen's Brook public footpath, to join Surf Crescent near the coast.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ it follows a clearly defined track and avoids crossing the steep gully towards the seaward end of Hen's Brook ■ the line of the Hen's Brook public footpath is blocked due to the erosion of the cliff at the coast ■ the crossing point is located on more stable land, providing a long-term future for this bridge over Hen's Brook ■ 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
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S006 to IOS-4-S008	We considered aligning the trail along the cliff top grassland to the north of the holiday park	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ it follows a safer route, avoiding a narrow, unsafe, section of eroded cliff top grassland between the cliff edge and the holiday park fence ■ this proposal is made with the support of the landowner ■ there are some sea views from the trail within the holiday park ■ 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.

4.3.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: IOS Map 4a - Hen’s Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S001 to IOS-4 S003	Equine business premises, areas of excepted land	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the equine business and areas of excepted land (e.g. buildings, curtilage, gardens etc) we will choose a route landward of them, following discussions with owners and occupiers.
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S001 to IOS-4 S003	Residential area	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the areas of excepted land (e.g. buildings, curtilage, gardens etc) we will choose a route landward of them, following discussions with owners and occupiers.
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S005 to IOS-4-S009	Palm Trees Holiday Park	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified holiday park, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with all relevant interests, either (a) to pass through the site or (b) if this is not practicable, to pass somewhere on the landward side of it. In reaching this judgement we will have full regard to the need to seek a fair balance between the interests of potentially affected owners and occupiers and those of the public.
IOS 4a	IOS-4-S004 to IOS-4-S009	Designated site: Sheppey Cliffs and Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of a designated site (e.g. SSSI) whose designated features are sensitive to public access, or where the existing route already passing through such a site must be altered, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with the relevant experts and with any potentially affected owners or occupiers, which will either (a) continue to pass through the site, if appropriate or (b) if necessary, be routed landward of it.

In relation to all other sections where roll-back has been proposed, any later adjustment of the trail is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.

Part 4.4: Proposals Maps

4.4.1 Map Index

Map reference	Map title
IOS 4a	Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park
Directions Map IOS 4A	Directions for Report IOS 4: Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park

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

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

- BY** - Public byway
- CT** - Cycletrack (cycles only)
- CP** - Cycletrack (pedestrian)
- FP** - Public footpath
- FW** - Public footway (Pavement)
- BW** - Public bridleway
- KB** - 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 footpaths
- Public byways
- Public bridleways
- Restricted byways
- Sustrans national routes
- Existing access land

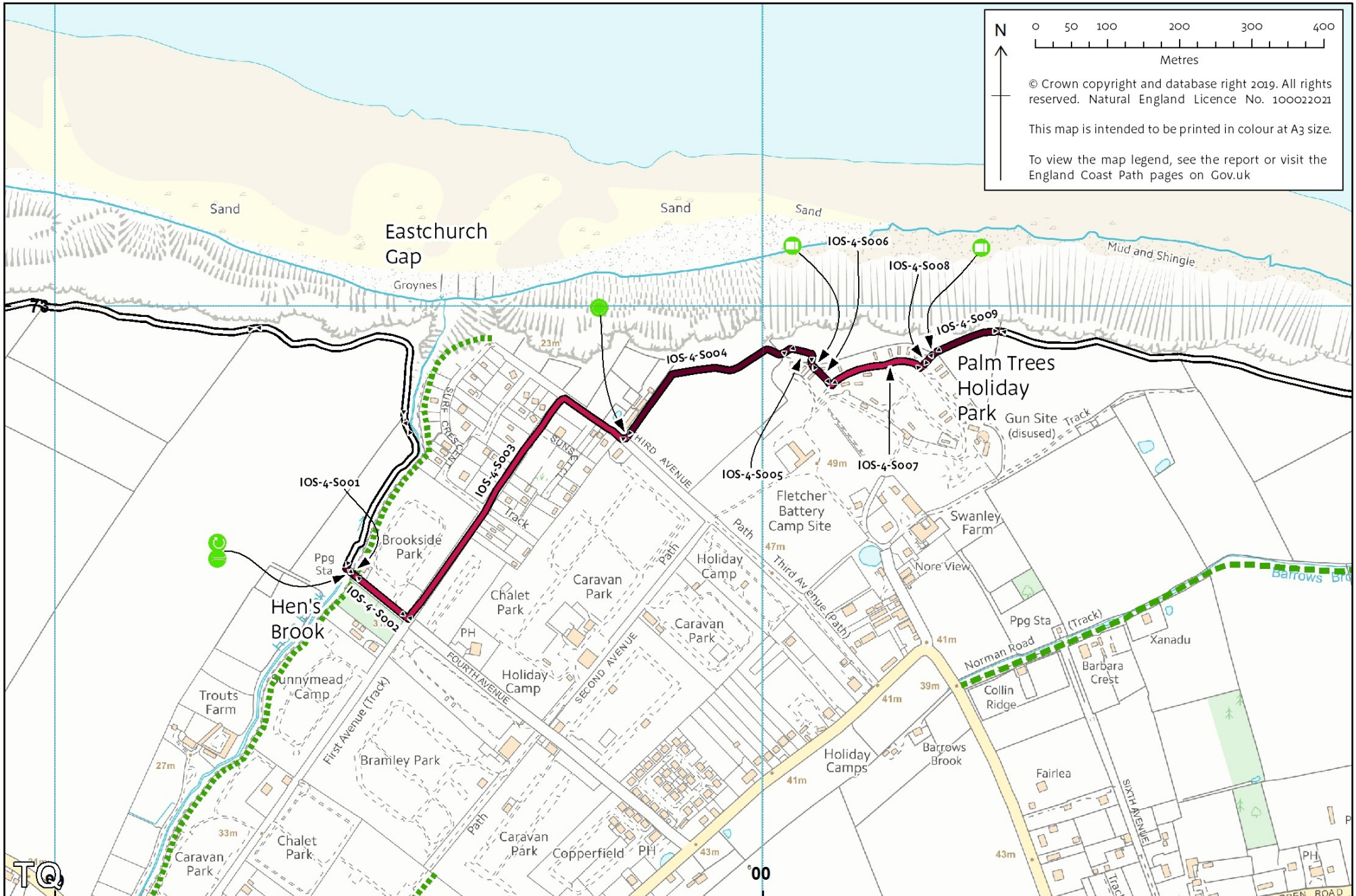
Infrastructure types (for status see below)

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| barrier | cycle chicane | hurdle |
| boardwalk | drainage | ramp |
| bollard | drop-kerb | revetment |
| clapper bridge | gap in fence | stepping stones |
| footbridge | Bristol gate | steps |
| quad bike bridge | field gate | ladder stile |
| sleeper bridge | kissing gate | lift-up stile |
| vehicle bridge | pedestrian gate | squeeze stile |
| cattle grid | wheelchair gate | step stile |
| culvert | gateway with no gate | stone stile |
| | | interpretation panel |

Infrastructure status

Infrastructure status will be indicated by one of three colours, as shown in the example below:

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



Directions Map IOS 4A

These directions only affect land where coastal access rights apply and will not affect existing rights of access, such as on public rights of way.

