



England Coast Path Stretch: Aust to Brean Down

Report ABD 4: Avonmouth Bridge to Portishead Marina

Part 4.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Avonmouth Bridge (grid reference: ST 5256 7765)
End Point:	Portishead Marina (grid reference: ST 4751 7728)
Relevant Maps:	ABD 4a to ABD 4e

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 between Aust and Brean Down.

4.1.2 This report covers length ABD 4 of the stretch, which is the coast between Avonmouth Bridge and Portishead Marina. 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 Generally follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way. See maps ABD 4a to ABD 4e and associated tables for details.

4.2.2 Includes sections of new path, between Sheepway Lane and Portbury Wharf. See map ABD 4d and associated tables for details.

4.2.3 Affords views of the sea from Avonmouth Bridge (map ABD 4a) and Portbury Wharf (map ABD 4e).

4.2.4 A significant inland diversion is necessary to take the trail past Royal Portbury Docks, for commercial and security reasons. (See Future Change, below and Part 8 of the Overview).

Protection of the environment:

4.2.5 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.

4.2.6 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

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

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

4.2.7 Measures to protect the environment

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Design features of the access proposals	Reason included
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S019 to ABD-4-S021	Continuous post and rail fence with mesh to prevent dogs from straying into the field adjoining the route.	To reduce the risk of disturbance or predation by dogs to water voles and great crested newts which live in ditches near the path.
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S025 and ABD-4-S026	The following design features are described elsewhere in this report: New path created further away from Chapel Pill than the existing one,	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>because waterbirds roost in the pill at high tide;</p> <p>Coastal access rights excluded over the lower saltmarsh and flats seaward of the trail (see paragraph 4.2.15)</p> <p>In addition on route section ABD-4-S026 we propose to install:</p> <p>A short length of guide fencing with wire mesh to discourage people and dogs from straying off the path;</p> <p>A notice to promote Chapel Pill as a refuge for waterbirds and asking people to remain on the path in this area and 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 4d	ABD-4-S027 and ABD-4-S029	<p>The following design features are described elsewhere in this report:</p> <p>Coastal access rights excluded over the lower saltmarsh and flats seaward of the trail (see paragraph 4.2.15)</p> <p>In addition on route section ABD-4-S029 we propose to install a notice asking people to remain on the path in this area and keep their dogs on the path with them, using a lead if necessary.</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>

4.2.8 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:

4.2.9 The natural coastal terrain is often challenging for people with reduced mobility and this is the case:

- between Sheepway Lane and Portbury Wharf on map ABD 4d, where it follows field edges that can become waterlogged in wet weather;
- at Portbury Wharf on maps ABD 4d and ABD 4e, where it would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path along the sea wall.

4.2.10 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route, but steps are necessary to ascend/descend the sea wall at Portbury Wharf on map ABD 4d.

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

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

4.2.11 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 this estuary and our resulting proposals

4.2.12 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 4.3.1 below.

4.2.13 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.

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

Exclusion of access to lower saltmarsh and flat

4.2.15 Access to the lower saltmarsh and mud in the coastal margin seaward of route sections ABD-4-S001 to ABD-4-S033 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 4A for further detail.

4.2.16 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.

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

4.2.17 **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.

4.2.18 Column 4 of tables 4.3.1 and 4.3.3 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 4c to ABD 4e as the proposed route of the trail.

4.2.19 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.

4.2.20 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 4.2.6 above.

4.2.21 On sections for which roll-back is not proposed in tables 4.3.1 or 4.3.3, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps ABD 4a to ABD 4d as the proposed route of the trail.

Other future change:

4.2.22 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:

4.2.23 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.

4.2.24 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.

4.2.25 Our estimate of the capital costs for physical establishment of the trail on the proposed route is £23,600 and is informed by:

- information already held by the access authority, North Somerset 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.

4.2.26 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
- Fences to discourage people and dogs from straying off the path in areas managed for nature conservation purposes.

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	£4,600
Access furniture and surfacing	£1,450
Fences	£15,400
Project management	£2,150
Total	£23,600 (Exclusive of any VAT payable)

4.2.27 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, North Somerset 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:

4.2.28 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).

4.2.29 We estimate that the annual cost to maintain the trail will be £2350 (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 – Maps ABD 4a to ABD 4e: Avonmouth Bridge to Portishead Marina

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 4 – ‘Yes – see table 4.3.3 means roll-back is proposed, but refer to that table below about our likely approach to implementing it for this route section. This is because a more complex situation exists in this case and consideration must be given to how roll-back may happen in relation to excepted land, a protected site etc.
4. 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.
5. 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 4a	ABD-4-S001	Cycleway	No	No	Safety barrier	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4b	ABD-4-S002*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4b	ABD-4-S003*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4b	ABD-4-S004	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4b	ABD-4-S005 to ABD-4-S007*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4b	ABD-4-S008*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of tunnel	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
ABD 4b	ABD-4-S009*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4c	ABD-4-S010*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4c	ABD-4-S011*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4c	ABD-4-S012* and ABD-4-S013*	Cycleway	No	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4c	ABD-4-S014	Public Footway	No	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4c	ABD-4-S015*	Public Footpath	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Edge of surfaced track	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4c	ABD-4-S016*	Public Footpath	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S017*	Public Footpath	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S018*	Public Footpath	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S019*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Hedge	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S020*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S021*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S022*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S023*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No	Fence	Clarity and cohesion	
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S024*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	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 4d	ABD-4-S025*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S026*	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	No			
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S027*	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	Yes – bank			
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S028*	Public Footpath	Yes – see table 4.3.3	Yes – bank			
ABD 4e	ABD-4-S029	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table 4.3.3	Yes – bank			
ABD 4e	ABD-4-S030 and ABD-4-S031	Other existing walked route	No	No			
ABD 4e	ABD-4-S032 and ABD-4-S033	Other existing walked route	No	Yes - bank			

4.3.2 Other options considered: **Maps ABD 4b Avonmouth Bridge to ABD 4d Portbury Wharf**

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
ABD 4b	ABD-4-S002 and ABD-4-S003	We considered aligning the trail along other existing walked routes that pass under the motorway closer to the river.	We opted for the proposed route because it is much more direct.
ABD 4b/4c	ABD-4-S006 to ABD-4-S013 inclusive	We considered aligning the trail along another existing walked route further inland via the motorway service area at Junction 19 and footpaths to the south of the motorway on map ABD 4c, then over the motorway on a footbridge leading to Station Road.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ it is more direct and minimises the land that would be incorporated into the coastal margin. ■ The more inland route may be promoted as a pleasant and interesting alternative to the official route by the parish council and local access authority.
ABD 4c/4d	ABD-4-S015 to ABD-4-S028 inclusive	We considered aligning the trail along Sheepway and Wharf Lane and one of the several existing walked routes between Wharf Lane and the coast.	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It avoids the road called Sheepway, which includes sections where there is no pavement. This is a 40mph road with several bends restricting drivers' sight lines. We therefore consider it unsuitable for a National Trail; ■ It takes in more of the coast at Portbury Wharf; ■ It minimises the area of land that would be incorporated into the coastal margin; and ■ The owner of Shipway Farm preferred it.
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S019 to ABD-4-S022 inclusive	We considered aligning the trail along an existing permissive path skirting the security fence around the docks	We opted for the proposed route because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the path beside the security fence is narrow in places and difficult to maintain; ■ the proposed route is reasonably direct and more pleasant to walk along; and <p>The port company preferred the proposed route for security reasons.</p>

Map(s)	Route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S021 to ABD-4-S028 inclusive	We considered aligning the trail inland of the nature reserve at Portbury Wharf.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ it is closer to the sea and affords views of it; ■ the organisations managing the affected land were concerned about how wildlife might be affected.
ABD 4d	ABD-4-S021 to ABD-4-S028 inclusive	We considered aligning the trail between the nature reserve and the treatment works.	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A substantial bridge would have been necessary to cross the drainage ditch to reach the sea wall; and ■ If the sea wall were breached or damaged, there is no guarantee that it would be repaired. <p>Overall therefore, we concluded that the significant cost to build and maintain the bridge was an unwise investment.</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.

4.3.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: **Maps ABD 4c to ABD 4e : Royal Portbury Dock to Portishead Marina**

Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
ABD 4c, ABD 4d and ABD 4e	ABD-4-S015 to ABD-4-S031 inclusive	Sea wall	If the sea wall breaches and is not repaired, we will choose a route further inland, following discussions with relevant interests.

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
ABD 4a	Avonmouth Bridge
ABD 4b	Avonmouth Bridge to Royal Portbury Dock Road
ABD 4c	Royal Portbury Dock Road to Sheepway
ABD 4d	Sheepway to Portbury Wharf
ADB 4e	Portbury Wharf to Portishead Marina
Directions Map ABD 4A	Proposed exclusions: Avon Bridge to Portishead Marina

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

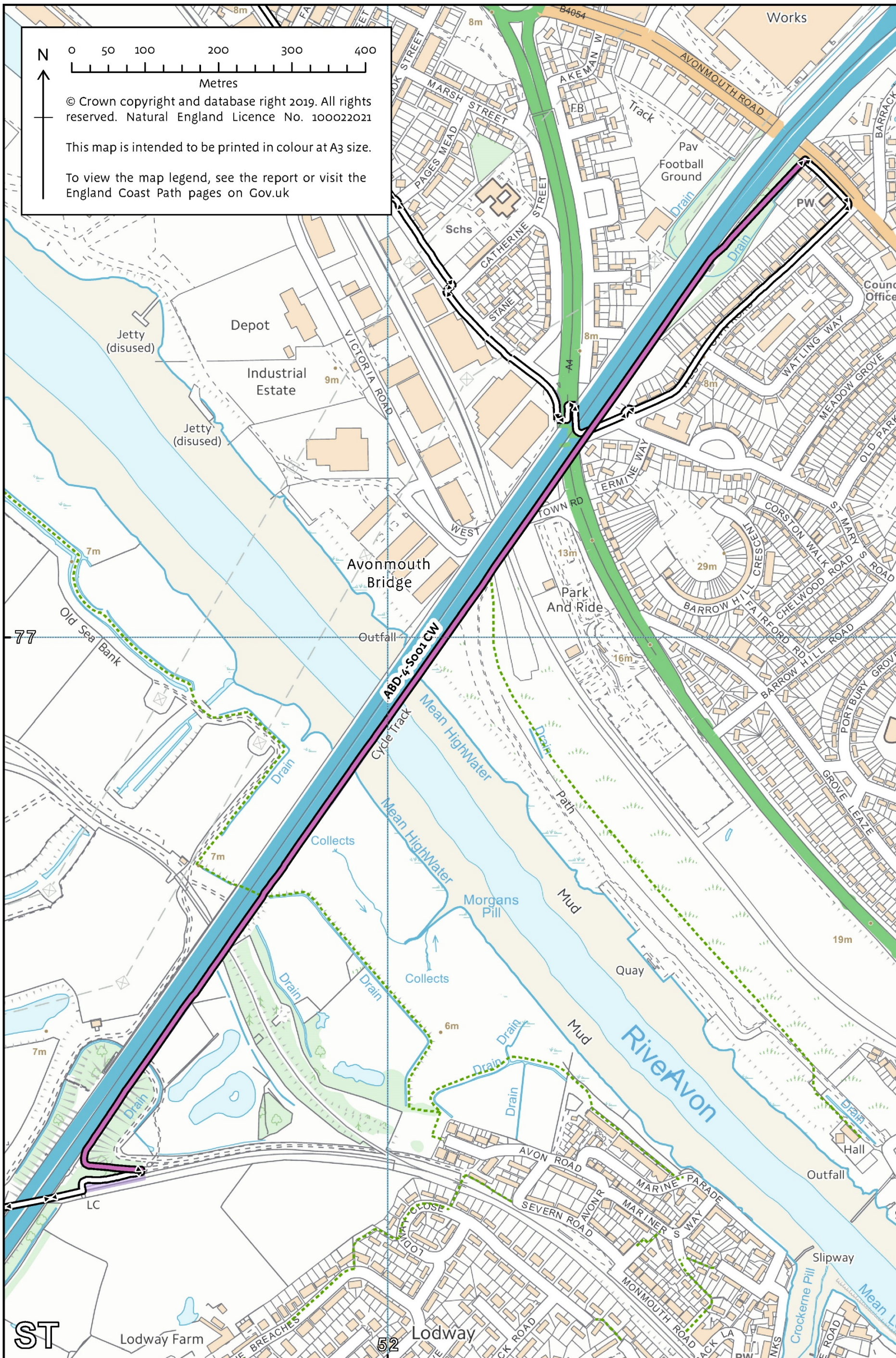
Miscellaneous:

- Barrier
- Boardwalk
- Bollard
- Cattle grid
- Culvert
- Cycle chicane
- Drainage
- Drop-kerb
- Gap in fence
- Hurdle
- Interpretation panel
- Ramp
- Revetment
- Stepping stones
- 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

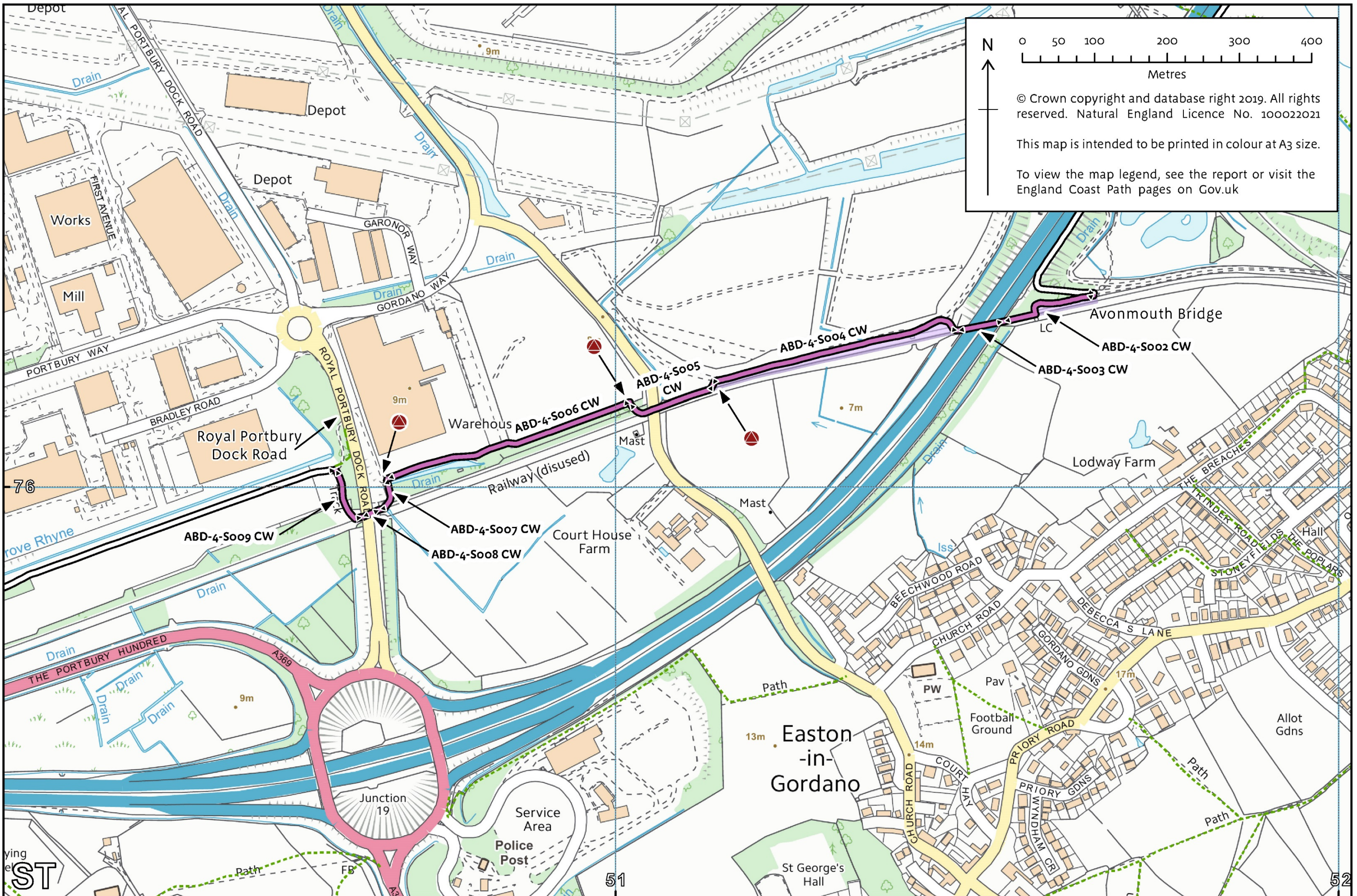


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To view the map legend, see the report or visit the England Coast Path pages on Gov.uk

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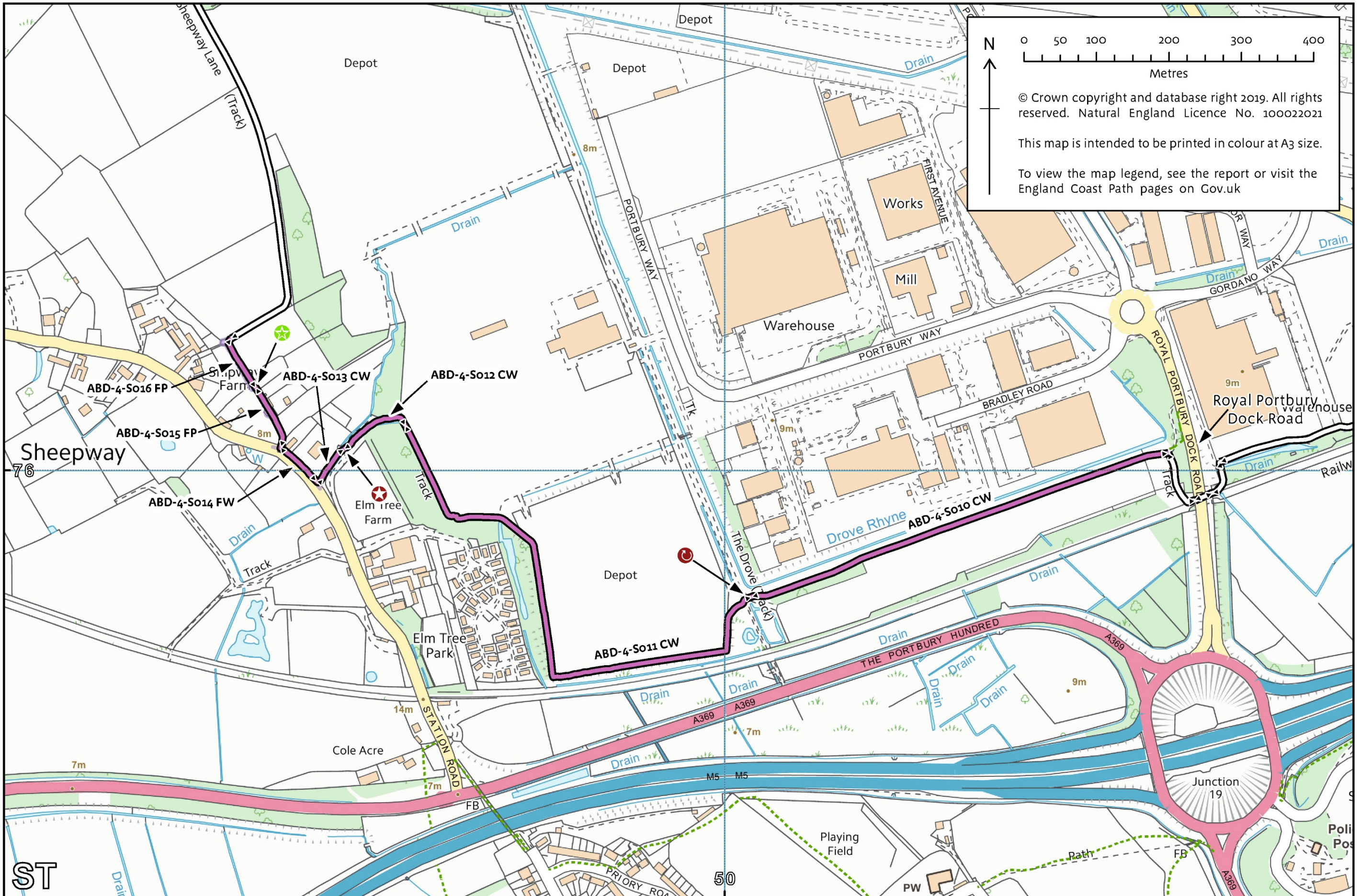
52

Map ABD 4b Avonmouth Bridge to Royal Portbury Dock Road



Map ABD 4b Avonmouth Bridge to Royal Portbury Dock Road

Map ABD 4c Royal Portbury Dock Road to Sheepway



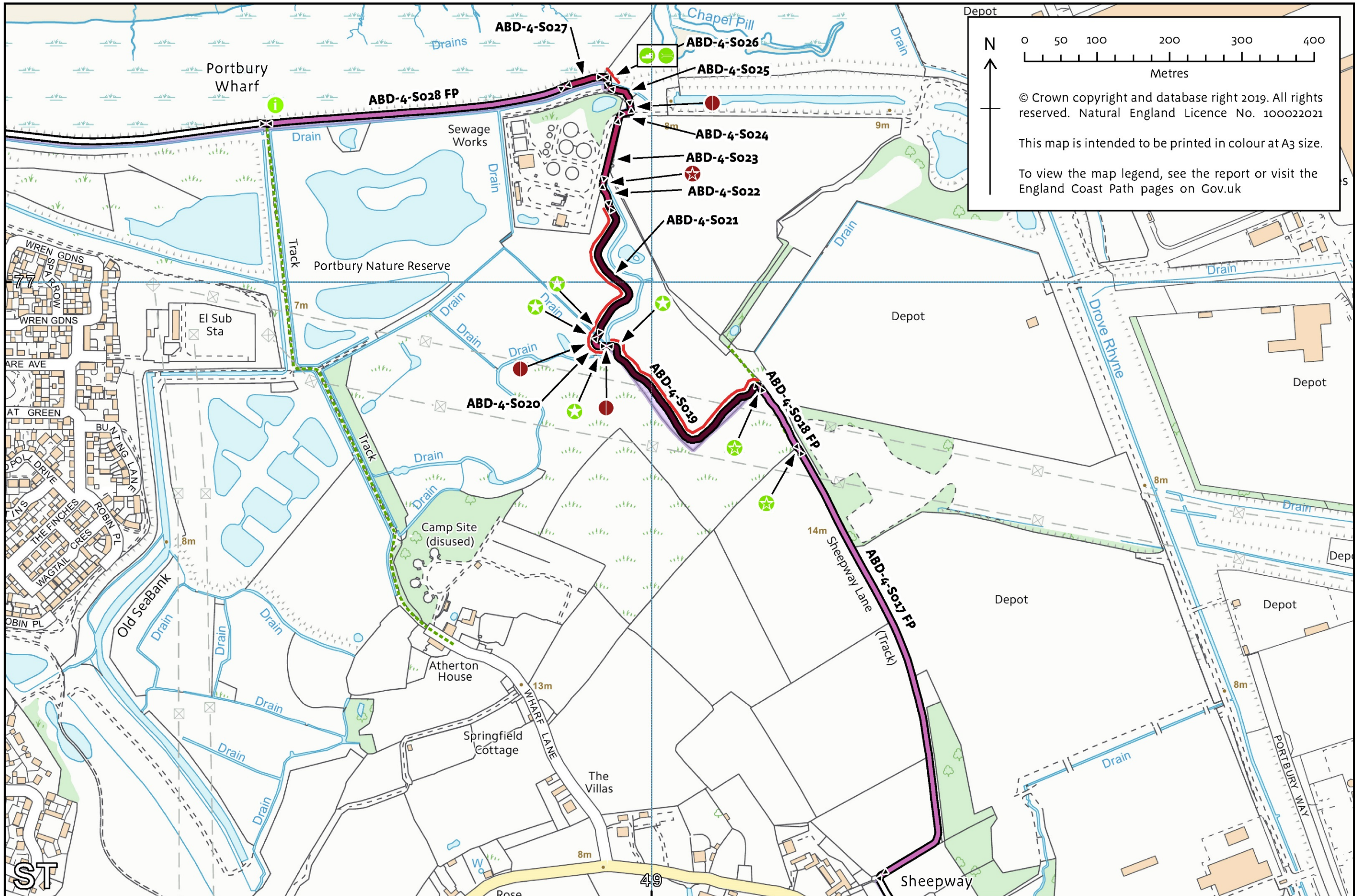
Map ABD 4c Royal Portbury Dock Road to Sheepway

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Map ABD 4e Portbury Wharf to Portishead Marina



