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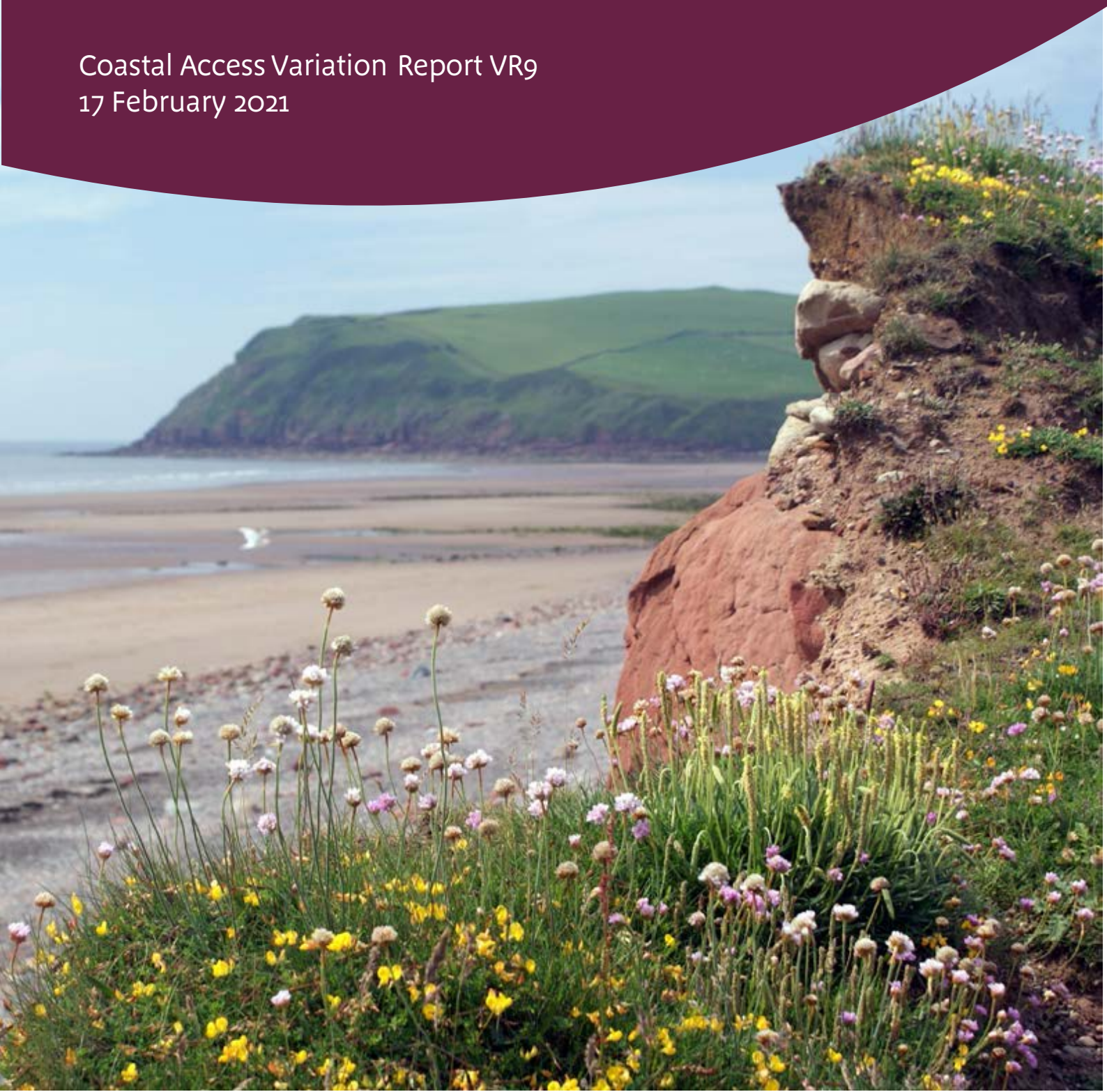
NATURAL
ENGLAND

Proposed changes to the England
Coast Path at

Calder viaduct to Seascale promenade, Cumbria

Natural England's Variation Report to the Secretary of
State

Coastal Access Variation Report VR9
17 February 2021



Part 1: Purpose of this report

1.1.1 Natural England has a statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to improve access to the English coast. The duty is in two parts: one relating to securing a long-distance walking route around the coast; the other to creating an associated “margin” of land for the public to enjoy, either in conjunction with their access along the route line, or otherwise.

1.1.2 On 28 September 2015 the Secretary of State approved Natural England’s proposals for the Whitehaven to Silecroft stretch, including Chapter 2 which included the section of coast covered by this Variation Report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-whitehaven-to-silecroft>). The coastal access rights on this stretch are due to commence in 2021. Since the approval of the report, it has become clear that a change is necessary to the England Coast Path. This report contains Natural England’s proposals relating to that change, which is at the location shown on the Variation Location Map below.

- Calder viaduct to Seascale promenade

1.1.3 In order for these proposed changes to come into force they must be approved by the Secretary of State.

1.1.4 The original stretch [Overview](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360622/whitehaven-silecroft-overview.PDF) (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360622/whitehaven-silecroft-overview.PDF) provides vital context to the proposal set out in this Variation Report.



Part 2: Proposed variation between the Calder viaduct and Seascale promenade

Start Point:	Calder viaduct (Grid reference: NY 0250 0268)
End Point:	Seascale promenade (Grid reference: NY 0360 0111)
Relevant Original Proposal Maps:	Report maps 2f and 2g

Reason for variation:

2.1.1 Chapter 2 of the original Whitehaven to Silecroft coastal access report contains a section of England Coast Path which is aligned on a tarmac cycle track between the Calder viaduct near Sellafield, and Seascale village, running seaward of the coastal railway through a strip of dune which is widest at the north end adjacent to the viaduct.

2.1.2 At the time of proposal, there was a large area of land to the seaward side of the trail (aerial mapping suggests up to 20 metres) and, as the England Coast Path was proposed to follow an existing tarmac cycle track on which the England Coast Path, close to a railway and nuclear site, it was deemed both unlikely to erode significantly in the next twenty years or so, and likely to be maintained by the various parties with an interest in the existing track and land. However, coastal erosion to this area has increased dramatically in more recent years, with the northern end of the tarmac track, adjacent to the mouth of the River Calder, being significantly damaged. The top of the foreshore now lies much closer to the railway than was previously the case. Sea level rise projections also show this area being highly vulnerable over the next decade, and further threats to the trail between here and Seascale looking likely within the first half of this century, with seasonal flooding events posing an even more significant impact.

2.1.3 Access on foot is now only possible by using the foreshore, when the tide allows, and is not considered safe or convenient. Walkers currently aiming to follow Hadrian's Cycleway here are now forced inland or to scramble up steep banks. The area between the approved trail/tarmac track and the railway is also a natterjack toad nature reserve managed by the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC), fenced off due to the sensitivity of these European Protected Species (EPS) to public, dog and cycle access.

2.1.4 Plans for the realignment of the cycleway are still in discussion, the outcomes of which - both route and infrastructure-wise - are likely to be an important consideration in terms of the long-term alignment of England Coast Path.

2.1.5 Given this, and the ecological complexity of the site, we are not yet in a position to confirm a final, sustainable route for the trail. As such, we believe that applying rollback status to the trail between the Calder viaduct and Seascale will provide the most efficient and sustainable way of responding to ongoing coastal change and fulfilling the legislation's requirement for continuity and ease of use, without relying on numerous Variation Reports. In the meantime, a suitable temporary diversion will be identified with the landowners and ARC to prevent any delay to the overall stretch opening.

Proposed variation:

2.2.1 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 8 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.

2.2.2 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 8 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.

2.2.3 This variation report proposes that roll back is applied to route sections WHS-2-S064 to WHS-2-S069 inclusive. Refer to maps 2f and 2g in Chapter 2 of the original report for Whitehaven to Silecroft.

2.2.4 On all of these sections a more complex situation exists and consideration must be given to how roll back may happen in relation to excepted land or a protected site etc. Table 2.3.1 below sets out our likely approach to implementing roll back on these trail sections.

2.3.1 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Maps 2f (River Ehen to Newmill Beck) and Map 2g (Newmill Beck to Seascale promenade)

Map(s)	New route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
2f and 2g	WHS-2-S064 to WHS-2-S069	European Protected Species (EPS) in the natterjack toad reserve; Local Wildlife Site seaward of the railway	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the natterjack toad nature reserve, where these protected species 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) pass through or alongside the site, if appropriate or (b) if necessary, be routed landward of it.
2f and 2g	WHS-2-S064 to WHS-2-S069	Excepted land: golf course	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified golf course, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with all relevant interests, either (a) to pass through the site/course (using existing public footpaths or future cycle paths if appropriate), 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.
2f and 2g	WHS-2-S064 to WHS-2-S069	Excepted land: railway and nuclear decommissioning site	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified excepted land (e.g. railway, buildings and curtilage etc.), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers.
2f and 2g	WHS-2-S064 to WHS-2-S069	Future development associated with Sustrans cycle route	If rollback must necessarily occur before the new cycle route plans are finalised and works carried out, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with the relevant experts to ensure there is no conflict between works and route for the two projects.

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