



## Representations with Natural England’s comments

**November 2021**

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### 1. Introduction

This document records the representations Natural England has received on the proposals in length report BBS3 from persons or bodies. It also sets out any Natural England comments on these representations.

Where representations were made that relate to the entire stretch for Bamburgh to the Scottish Border they are included here in so far as they are relevant to length BBS3 only.

### 2. Background

Natural England’s compendium of reports setting out its proposals for improved access to the coast from Bamburgh to the Scottish Border, comprising an overview and four separate length reports, was submitted to the Secretary of State on 15 January 2020. This began an eight-week period during which representations and objections about each constituent report could be made.

In total, Natural England received three representations pertaining to length report BBS3, of which one was made by organisations or individuals whose representations must be sent in full to the Secretary of State in accordance with paragraph 8(1)(a) of Schedule 1A to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. This ‘full’ representations is reproduced in Section 3 in its entirety, together with Natural England’s comments. Also included in Section 3 is a summary of the two representations made by other individuals or organisations, referred to as ‘other’

representations. Section 4 contains the supporting documents referenced against the representations.

### 3. Representations and Natural England's comments on them

## Overview

### *Other representations*

**Representation ID:**

MCA/Overview/R/1/BBS0552

**Organisation/ person making representation:**

(Lichfields on behalf of Bourne Leisure)

**Name of site:**

Overview document with reference to BBS-4-S009

**Report map reference:**

N/A

**Route sections on or adjacent to the land:**

N/A

**Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates**

N/A

**Summary of representation:**

**Background**

In March 2017 Natural England engaged with Lichfields (with Lichfields acting as planning agent, representing the interests of Bourne Leisure Limited, the owner of Berwick Holiday Park). The proposals in the vicinity of Berwick Holiday Park were discussed on site, and Bourne Leisure endorsed the proposed route. The proposed route lies outside but adjacent to Berwick Holiday Park.

**Rollback**

In relation to the matter of 'rollback', the Overview report states on page 27 that in determining the new route, Natural England will take into account "any views expressed by people with a relevant interest in affected land" but does not specifically state that Natural England will contact and consult with landowners.

On behalf of Bourne Leisure, we request that the Overview report is amended to specifically state that Natural England will contact and consult with owners and occupiers in relation to any rollback – including where the trail is being adjusted to follow the current feature, e.g. the beach or foreshore. This is important in order to ensure that relevant landowners are kept informed, so that any issues can be raised

with Natural England and that landowners' views on any revised routes are taken into account if rollback needs to take place.

Subject to the comment above being addressed, the proposed route, as currently proposed, is endorsed.

**Natural England's comment:**

The detail in the Shoreline Management plan and the Environment Agencies estimated shoreline retreat distance is that at this point the shore (cliff) will retreat in a time period of 20 to 50 years or 'medium term'. At which point it could start encroaching on Bourne Leisure's land.

Given those timescales we would not normally discuss detailed roll back plans with potentially affected landowners at this stage. However when the time comes Natural England will, as stated in the Overview, take into account "any views expressed by people with a relevant interest in affected land".

For the purposes of coastal access establishment and maintenance, the term 'relevant interest' legally includes those who are 'in lawful occupation of the land' (see the marine and coastal access at 2009 section 297(4).

At present the proposed route is seaward of Bourne Leisure's land holding. If the path were required to roll back onto their land holding at any time, we will consult with them about the new location of the route as the landowner and 'relevant interest'.

We would therefore not propose to amend the wording on page 27 of the Overview as suggested.

**Relevant appended documents (see section 4):**

NE map.

## **Length Report BBS3**

*Full representations*

**Representation number:**

MCA/BBS3/R/2/BBS0554

**Organisation/ person making representation:**

The Ramblers / [redacted]

**Route section(s) specific to this representation**

All sections

**Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:**

N/A

**Representation in full**

The Ramblers fully supports Natural England's proposals for the England Coast Path between Beal and Berwick-upon-Tweed.

**Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcome the positive comments from the Ramblers about our proposed route here

**Relevant appended documents (see section 4):**

N/A

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**Representation ID:**

MCA/BBS3/R/1/BBS0008

**Organisation/ person making representation:**

Disabled Ramblers / [redacted]

**Name of site:**

All route sections

**Report map reference:**

Maps BBS 3a – 3i

**Route sections on or adjacent to the land:**

N/A

**Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates**

N/A

**Summary of representation:**

Paragraph 3.2.8 of the Report states:

*There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route.*

Disabled Ramblers has concerns with this statement as there are there are known instances where access furniture along the trail is not of a suitable standard for those who use all-terrain mobility vehicles and push chairs.

The Disabled Ramblers is concerned that Natural England has not recognised that there is a significant and steadily increasing number of people with reduced mobility who use all-terrain mobility scooters and other mobility vehicles to enjoy routes on rugged terrain in the countryside, including uneven grass, bare soil or rocky paths, foreshore areas and some sea walls and beaches. Slopes of 1:4, obstacles 6" high, water to a depth of 8" are all challenges that users of all-terrain mobility scooters are used to managing.

These people have the same legitimate rights to access that walkers do, so Natural England should ensure that, unless the natural terrain itself prevents access, any existing or new infrastructure along the Coast Path does not present a barrier to their ability to progress along the Coast Path.

The Disabled Ramblers has identified many instances where Natural England's maps show they propose to retain structures or introduce new ones which are, or may well be, barriers to legitimate access along the Coast Path for those with limited mobility, particularly on mobility scooters.

Disabled Ramblers requests that Natural England

- address with the necessary parties involved, the issue of existing man-made structures that are a barrier to those who use mobility vehicles, and enable changes to be made to allow people who use these vehicles to enjoy the England Coast Path in this area.
- ensure that all existing and proposed new structures along the Coast Path are suitable for those who use large mobility vehicles, changing infrastructure as needed, and complying with *British Standard BS5709: 2018 Gaps Gates and Stiles*.
- comply with the Equality Act 2010 (and the Public Sector Equality Duty within this act)
- comply with the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000
- follow the advice in the attached document *Disabled Ramblers Notes on Infrastructure* which gives general notes with regard to access for users of mobility vehicles.

Berwick Bridge

The Disabled Ramblers consider that Natural England has not taken into consideration the significant and steadily increasing number of people with reduced mobility who use mobility scooters and other mobility vehicles as this group of people are unable to cross the River Tweed at Berwick Bridge on the proposed route. Berwick Bridge is altogether narrow, with narrow footways on either side, both of which are too narrow for use by mobility vehicles, and it would be unsafe to use the roadway.

To enable users of mobility vehicles to cross the River Tweed there should be a signed diversion from the proposed Coast Path trail over the Royal Tweed Bridge which is a little further to the north of the proposed route. The diversion would additionally benefit those with pushchairs.

Diversion for mobility vehicles:

Part way along section BBS-3-S043, mobility vehicles will need to cross Main street to the western footway (safe crossing point to be provided, with dropped kerbs). At the point where Main Street meets Union Brae, cross Union Brae to footpath on the north side, then follow west along Union Brae, north along Prince Edward Road, onto Pudding Lane and over the Royal Tweed Bridge.

NB. At this point the diversion and the Coast Path route move onto **Report BBS 4: Berwick-upon-Tweed to Marshall Meadows**, map BBS 4a Berwick-upon-Tweed to Fisherman's Haven. (See representation *Disabled Ramblers Representation 4, Bamburgh to Scottish Border Report 4.*)

#### **Natural England's comment:**

We have worked to the guidelines set out in the Coastal Access Scheme at paragraphs 4.3.8 to 4.3.11.

We are aware of British Standard BS5709: 2018 Gaps Gates and Stiles. In designing our proposed route we have tried to make the route available to as wide a group of users as is reasonably possible. We have avoided creating any unnecessary new barriers to access by choosing infrastructure that will have the least restrictive impact. There are no stiles proposed on this route. Gaps have been used where appropriate however in this agricultural landscape livestock grazing is a common land use. This limits the use of gaps where and when livestock are present. Pedestrian gates are favoured above kissing gates on most of the route and we will ensure the fastenings and latches are suitable simple operation.

We work with Northumberland County Council to establish the trail, so we will discuss accessibility with them when we plan our schedule of works. In particular with reference to the Disabled Ramblers note on infrastructure we note that whilst not currently feasible the EA owned combined sluice gate and pedestrian bridge at North Low could be made more accessible. Any future maintenance/replacement plans will take this into account.

The representation also makes specific mention of Berwick Bridge and the suitability of this bridge for mobility scooters and other mobility aids. In recent communications with NCC they are talking to the Highways Department (roads) to confirm if Berwick Bridge is to be pedestrianised. Currently the historic bridge is open to one-way traffic only. If pedestrianisation is not planned, NCC will explore the options to make the bridge more accessible to all users.

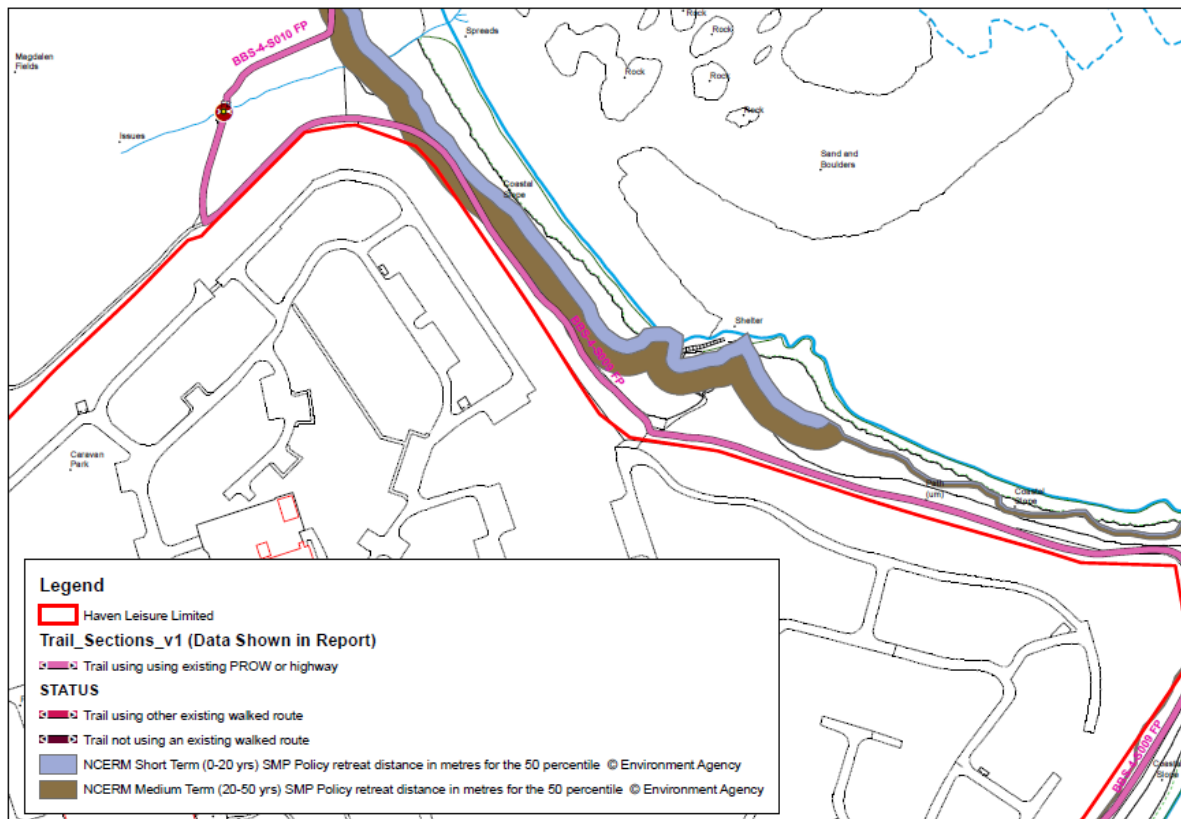
#### **Relevant appended documents (see Section 4):**

Disabled Ramblers Notes on Infrastructure  
Disabled Ramblers - Map BBS 3i, route section BBS-3-S043

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## **4. Supporting documents**

## MCA/Overview/R/1/BBS0552: NE map



**MCA/BBS3/R/1/BBS0008:** Disabled Ramblers notes on infrastructure and Map BBS 3i, route section BBS-3-S043.

## DISABLED RAMBLERS NOTES ON INFRASTRUCTURE

### Useful figures

- **Mobility Vehicles**
- **Legal Maximum Width of Category 3 mobility vehicles: 85cm** Same width is needed all the way up to pass through any kind of barrier to allow for handlebars, armrests and other bodywork.
- **Length:** Mobility vehicles vary in length, but **173cm is a guide minimum length.**
- **Gaps** should be 1.1 minimum width on a footpath (BS5709:2018)
- **Pedestrian gates** The minimum clear width should be 1.1m (BS5709:2018)
- **Manoeuvring space** One-way opening gates need more manoeuvring space than two-way opening ones and some mobility vehicles may need a three metre diameter space.
- **The ground** before, through and after any gap or barrier must be flat otherwise the resulting tilt effectively reduces the width

### Infrastructure

Infrastructure on the route of the England Coast Path should be assessed by Natural England for suitability for those with limited mobility, and particularly for those riding large or all-terrain mobility vehicles. The assumption should always be that these individuals will be alone, and will need to stay sitting on their mobility vehicle, ie they will not be accompanied by someone who could open a gate and hold it open for them. The principle of the least restrictive option should always be applied.

- **New infrastructure** New infrastructure should comply with Bristol Standard with BS 5709: 2018 Gaps, Gates and Stiles.
- **Existing infrastructure** The creation of the England Coast Path provides a perfect opportunity to improve the trail to make it as accessible as possible. Unsuitable existing infrastructure could be removed now and, where necessary, replaced with new, appropriate infrastructure in line with BS 5709: 2018 Gaps, Gates and Stiles.

### **Gaps**

A Gap is always the preferred solution for access, and the least restrictive option (BS 5709:2018). The minimum clear width of gaps on footpaths should be 1.1metres (BS 5709:2018).

### **Bollards**

On a footpath, these should be placed to allow a minimum gap of 1.1metres through which large mobility vehicles can pass.

**Pedestrian gates** A two-way, self-closing gate closing gate with trombone handle and Centrewire EASY LATCH is the easiest to use – if well maintained, and if a simple gap is unacceptable. Yellow handles and EASY LATCH allow greater visibility and assist those with impaired sight too. <https://centrewire.com/products/easy-latch-for-2-way-gate/> One-way opening gates need more manoeuvring space than two-way and some mobility vehicles may need a three metre diameter space to manoeuvre around a one-way gate. The minimum clear width of pedestrian gates should be 1.1metres (BS 5709:2018).

### **Field gates**

Field gates (sometimes used across roads) are too large and heavy for those with limited mobility to use, so should always be paired with an alternative such as a gap, or pedestrian gate. However if this is not possible, a York 2 in 1 Gate <https://centrewire.com/products/york-2-in-1/> could be an alternative, with a self-closing, two-way opening and yellow handles and EASY LATCH.

### **Bristol gates**

(Step-over metal gate within a larger gate.) These are a barrier to mobility vehicles, as well as to pushchairs, so should be replaced with an appropriate structure. If space is limited, and a pedestrian gate not possible, a York 2 in 1 Gate <https://centrewire.com/products/york-2-in-1/> could be an alternative, with a self-closing, two way opening, and yellow handle and EASY LATCH for the public access part of the gate.

### **Kissing gates**

A two-way, self-closing gate is hugely preferable to a kissing gate, but in certain situations a kissing gate might be needed. Many kissing gates can be used by smaller pushchairs and small wheelchairs, but are impassable by mobility scooters and other mobility vehicles. Unless an existing kissing gate has been specifically designed for access by large mobility vehicles, it should be replaced, if possible with



a suitable gate (see above). If a kissing gate really must be used, Disabled Ramblers recommend the Centrewire Woodstock Large Mobility kissing gate, fitted with a RADAR lock, which can be used by those riding mobility vehicles. NB this is the only type kissing gate that is large enough to be used by all-terrain and large mobility vehicles.

Note about RADAR locks on Kissing gates

Often mobility vehicle riders find RADAR locks difficult to use, so they should only be used if there is not a suitable alternative arrangement. Here are some of the reasons why:

- Rider cannot get off mobility vehicle to reach the lock
- Rider cannot reach lock from mobility vehicle (poor balance, lack of core strength etc)
- Position of lock is in a corner so mobility vehicle cannot come alongside lock to reach it, even at an angle
- RADAR lock has not been well maintained and no longer works properly.
- Not all disabled people realise that a RADAR key will open the lock, and don't know how these kissing gates work. There must be an appropriate, informative, label beside the lock.

### **Board walks, Footbridges, Quad bike bridges**

All of these structures should be designed to be appropriate for use by large mobility vehicles, be sufficiently wide and strong, and have toe boards (a deck level edge rail) as edge protection. On longer board walks there may also be a need to provide periodic passing places.

### **Sleeper bridges**

Sleeper bridges are very often 3 sleepers wide, but they need to be at least 4 sleepers wide to allow for use by mobility vehicles.

### **Steps**

Whenever possible, step free routes should be available to users of mobility vehicles. Existing steps could be replaced, or supplemented at the side, by a slope or ramp. Where this is not possible, an alternative route should be provided. Sometimes this might necessitate a short diversion, regaining the main route a little further on, and this diversion should be signed.

### **Cycle chicanes and staggered barriers**

Cycle chicanes are, in most instances, impassable by mobility vehicles, in which case they should be replaced with an appropriate structure. Other forms of staggered barriers, such as those used to slow people down before a road, are very often equally impassable, especially for large mobility vehicles.

### **Undefined barriers, Motorcycle barriers, A frames, K barriers etc.**

Motorcycle barriers are to be avoided. Often they form an intimidating, narrow gap. Frequently put in place to restrict the illegal access of motorcycle users, they should only ever be used after very careful consideration of the measured extent of the motorcycle problem, and after all other solutions have been considered. In some areas existing motorcycle barriers are no longer necessary as there is no longer a motorcycle problem: in these cases the barriers should be removed.

If no alternative is possible, the gap in the barrier should be adjusted to allow riders of large mobility vehicles to pass through. Mobility vehicles can legally be up to 85 cm wide so the gap should be at least this; and the same width should be allowed all the way up from the ground to enable room for handle bars, arm rests and other bodywork. The ground beneath should be level otherwise a greater width is needed. K barriers are often less intimidating and allow for various options to be chosen, such as a shallow squeeze plate which is positioned higher off the ground.  
<http://www.kbarriers.co.uk/>

### **Stepping stones**

Stepping stones are a barrier to users of mobility vehicles, walkers who are less agile, and families with pushchairs. They should be replaced with a suitable alternative such as a footbridge (which, if not flush with the ground should have appropriate slopes at either end, not steps). If there are good reasons to retain the stepping stones, such as historic reasons, a suitable alternative should be provided nearby, in addition to the stepping stones.

### **Stiles**

Stiles are a barrier to mobility vehicles, walkers who are less agile, and families with pushchairs. They should be replaced with suitable alternative infrastructure. If there are good reasons to retain the stile, such as historic reasons, an alternative to the stile, such as a pedestrian gate, should be provided nearby in addition to the stile.

### **Urban areas and Kerbs**

In urban areas people with reduced mobility may well be using pavement scooters which have low ground clearance. Where the trail follows a footway (eg pavement) it should be sufficiently wide for large mobility vehicles, and free of obstructions. The provision and correct positioning of dropped kerbs at suitable places along the footway is essential. Every time the trail passes over a kerb, a dropped kerb should be provided.

Disabled Ramblers March 2020

[Berwick Bridge]

