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NATURAL  
ENGLAND

Proposed changes to the England  
Coast Path at

## Headon Warren, Isle of Wight

Natural England's Variation Report to the Secretary of State

Coastal Access Variation Report VR1  
March 2023



## Part 1: Purpose of this report

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.

1.2 On 06/04/2022 the Secretary of State approved Natural England’s proposals relating to IOW 5: Chilton Chine to Colwell Chine which formed part of our proposals for the Isle of Wight stretch <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-isle-of-wight>. Whilst the proposals have been approved, Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council are currently working to prepare the trail for public use and as such the coastal access rights for this stretch have yet to commence.

1.3 Since the approval of the report, it has become clear that a change is necessary to the route of the England Coast Path. This report contains Natural England’s proposals relating to that change at Headon Warren, Totland Bay, which is at the location shown on the Variation Location Map below.

1.4 In order for this proposed change to come into force it must be approved by the Secretary of State.

1.5 The original stretch [Overview](#) provides vital context to the proposal set out in this VR.

**VR1 - Overview map**  
**Location of variation proposals on Isle of Wight coast**

- 1** Headon Warren, Totland Bay
- Approved route



## Part 2: Proposed variation at Headon Warren

<b>Start Point:</b>	<b>Grid reference: SZ 31606 86064</b>
<b>End Point:</b>	<b>Grid reference: SZ 31834 86293</b>
<b>Relevant Original Proposal Map:</b>	<b>Map IOW 5i: Headon Warren to Widdick Chine</b>

### 2.1 Introduction

#### Reason for variation:

2.1.1 The Isle of Wight Council submitted a representation regarding our proposals at Headon Warren, stating that there had been a coastal landslip and that the proposed route was no longer viable. At that point, Natural England proposed to the Secretary of State a modification to our original proposals. An alignment inland of the originally proposed route, through IOW-5-S059 and IOW-5-S061 was approved by the Secretary of State on 06 April 2022. Since the proposals have been approved, a landowner who was not identified in the modification proposals stated they owned a hedge into which we planned to install a gate, allowing access to the paddock. They did not support the installation of this new infrastructure. It transpired that one of the landowners with which we negotiated the modification was mistaken in their belief that they owned the hedge. We have now negotiated a new, more favourable, alignment for the ECP which has the agreement of the affected landowners.

#### Proposed variation:

2.1.2 The approved route of the England Coast Path (ECP) is aligned on the T17 Public Right of Way (PRoW). It then cuts through into a paddock, following the eastern edge of the field before cutting through heathland to re-join with the T16 PRoW.

2.1.3 The varied route would follow the T16 PRoW, before cutting through a hedge into a private paddock, following the northern edge of the field before passing through an alternative section of heathland to re-join with the existing route and the T16 PRoW.

2.1.4 As a consequence of these proposed changes, the extent of the seaward coastal margin will be much reduced, including over the paddock. The vast majority of the paddock will not now be subject to public access rights.

2.1.5 Although there are no sea views, the variation will mean the public are closer to the sea and it will be more pleasant to walk as this path will not be fenced in.

#### Considering the options:

2.1.6 We have worked closely with the affected landowners, the access authority and have also held discussions with the neighbouring landowner. Our development work included discussions with other organisations that we are required by legislation to consult. Part 4 of the Overview explains the process that we follow in more detail.

2.1.7 Below we set out the alignment options that we considered:

- Option 1 – To align the trail along the T17 PRoW and create a new entry point into the field on the bend by Warren Cottage. We would replace the fence (retaining corner posts as boundary markers) and move it seaward by 1m between the boundary of the field and the T17 PRoW to increase the width of the path to improve surface conditions in the winter months. The trail would then follow the periphery of the south side of the field, to connect with the approved route which follows the eastern

edge of the field before cutting through heathland to re-join with the T16 PRoW. This was deemed acceptable by both the field owner and the landowner of the T17 PRoW. However, both Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council Rights of Way Team believe that it could increase the likelihood of the public taking shortcuts across the field.

- Option 2 – To align the trail along the T17 PRoW and create a new entry point into the field on the bend by Warren Cottage. We would replace the fence (retaining corner posts as boundary markers) and move it seaward by 1m between the boundary of the field and the T17 PRoW to increase the width of the path to improve surface conditions in the winter months. The trail would then cut diagonally across the field, to connect with the existing proposal which cuts through heathland to re-join with the T16 PRoW. Although Natural England felt that this would be the quickest route across the field, the owner of the field had concerns that the public would roam across his land.
- Option 3 – To align the trail along the T16 PRoW and create a new entry point into the field on the western boundary. The trail would then follow the periphery of the north side of the field and upon reaching the horse stable, it would then cut through into the heathland to connect with the existing proposal to re-join with the T16 PRoW. This will be more direct for walkers and fulfil the ECP requirements for being close to the coast. This was the best viable option and as such we have proposed it in this variation report. This alignment is currently in use by the public as a temporary informal route of the ECP on a permissive basis. It will remain open on this basis until such time that the Secretary of State approves a new, formal alignment in the area.

## 2.2 Proposals Narrative

### The Trail:

#### 2.2.1 The proposed variation to the approved trail:

- Consists of a relatively flat path with a combination of compacted bare soil and grass surfaces
- Follows the Isle of Wight Coast Path, including T16 public rights of way along section IOW-VR1-S001 and IOW-VR1-S002
- Includes three sections of new path, along section IOW-VR1-S003 to IOW-VR1-S005
- Follows the coastline quite closely
- Is aligned through existing access land along IOW-VR1-S001 to IOW-VR1-S003 and IOW-VR1-S005
- Is aligned through heath vegetation along IOW-VR1-S001 to IOW-VR1-S003 and IOW-VR1-S005
- Is aligned through a paddock along section IOW-VR1-S004

### Protection of the environment:

2.2.2 In this part of the report, we explain how we have taken account of environmental protection objectives in developing our proposals to vary the line of the trail.

2.2.3 The section of trail affected by this variation passes through an area of coastal heathland.

2.2.4 The following designated sites affect this length of coast:

- Headon Warren and West High Down SSSI
- Tennyson Heritage Coast
- Isle of Wight AONB

Map VR1 – Headon Warren - Key Statutory Environmental Designations - shows the extent of these designated sites in relation to the proposal.

2.2.5 The Isle of Wight Council Rights of Way Team were granted SSSI assent for the infrastructure works for the approved route. Although the varied proposal will now be aligned through the SSSI at IOW-VR1-S001 to IOW-VR1-S003, it will be using the existing PRoW access which was signed off by the Natural England SSSI Reserve Officer in our original March 2020 proposal prior to the landslip. The Council will be applying for a further assent for the additional infrastructure (riser steps) on IOW-VR1-S005. Natural England is satisfied that the proposals for coastal access in this variation report are made in accordance with relevant environmental protection legislation.

### **Accessibility:**

2.2.6 The proposed trail consists of a relatively flat path with a soil and grass surface; however, it is likely to be unsuitable for some people with reduced mobility because of the nature of the terrain on the adjacent sections of approved route which are steep, narrow and there are steps present. Furthermore, there is a slope on IOW-VR1-S005 which has required us to install riser steps next to the kissing gate. We had considered using pedestrian gates instead of kissing gates to access in and out of the paddock on the varied route, however, this could present problems in the future for control of grazing livestock. The National Trust has plans to introduce sheep on the west side of Headon Warren and the landowner of the field may want horses in the future. In addition, there are no suitable egress and ingress points for parking for wheelchair users from the Needles to Widdick Chine.

### **Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:**

2.2.7 **Landward boundary of the coastal margin:** We have used our discretion on some sections of the varied 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 2.3.1: Map VR1 – Headon Warren below.

2.2.8 In some places, we have used our discretion to propose the inclusion of additional, more extensive landward areas within the coastal margin, to secure or enhance public enjoyment of this part of the coast. The owner of this land is content for us to propose this.

2.2.9 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 2.3.1.

**See part 3 of the Overview to the original report - ‘Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps’, for an 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.**

2.2.10 **Restrictions and/or exclusions:** Access rights to the seaward margin would be subject to the excepted land rules and the national restrictions on coastal access rights.

2.2.11 **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.

2.2.12 Column 4 of tables 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 indicates where the roll-back power has been proposed in relation to a newly proposed route section. Where this is the case, the route, as initially determined at the time this report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on map VR1 as the proposed route of the trail.

2.2.13 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.

### **Establishment of the trail:**

2.2.14 Below we summarise how our proposed route for the repositioned part of the trail would be physically established to make it ready for public use before any new rights come into force along it.

2.2.15 Our estimate of the capital costs for these works is £7,050. This would have the effect of increasing the overall establishment cost for the approved route by £5,160. These estimates are informed by information already held by the access authority, Isle of Wight Council.

2.2.16 There are four main elements to the overall capital costs:

- Kissing gates - £1500
- Vegetation clearance - £4,560
- Signage - £390
- Riser steps - £600

2.2.17 Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council have liaised with the affected landowners about the establishment works and installation of new signs that are needed on their land. All necessary permissions, authorisations and assents have been obtained. A further assent will be applied for by the Council for the additional riser steps needed on IOW-VR1-S005. All such works will conform to the published standards for National Trails and the other criteria described in our Coastal Access Scheme.

### **Maintenance of the trail:**

2.2.18 Ongoing maintenance of the varied sections of trail would be necessary from time to time. This variation would make no significant change to the annual costs associated with maintaining the approved route as set out in our original report.

## Part 2.3: Proposals Tables

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

**Table 2.3.1: Map VR1 – Headon Warren**

Key notes on table:

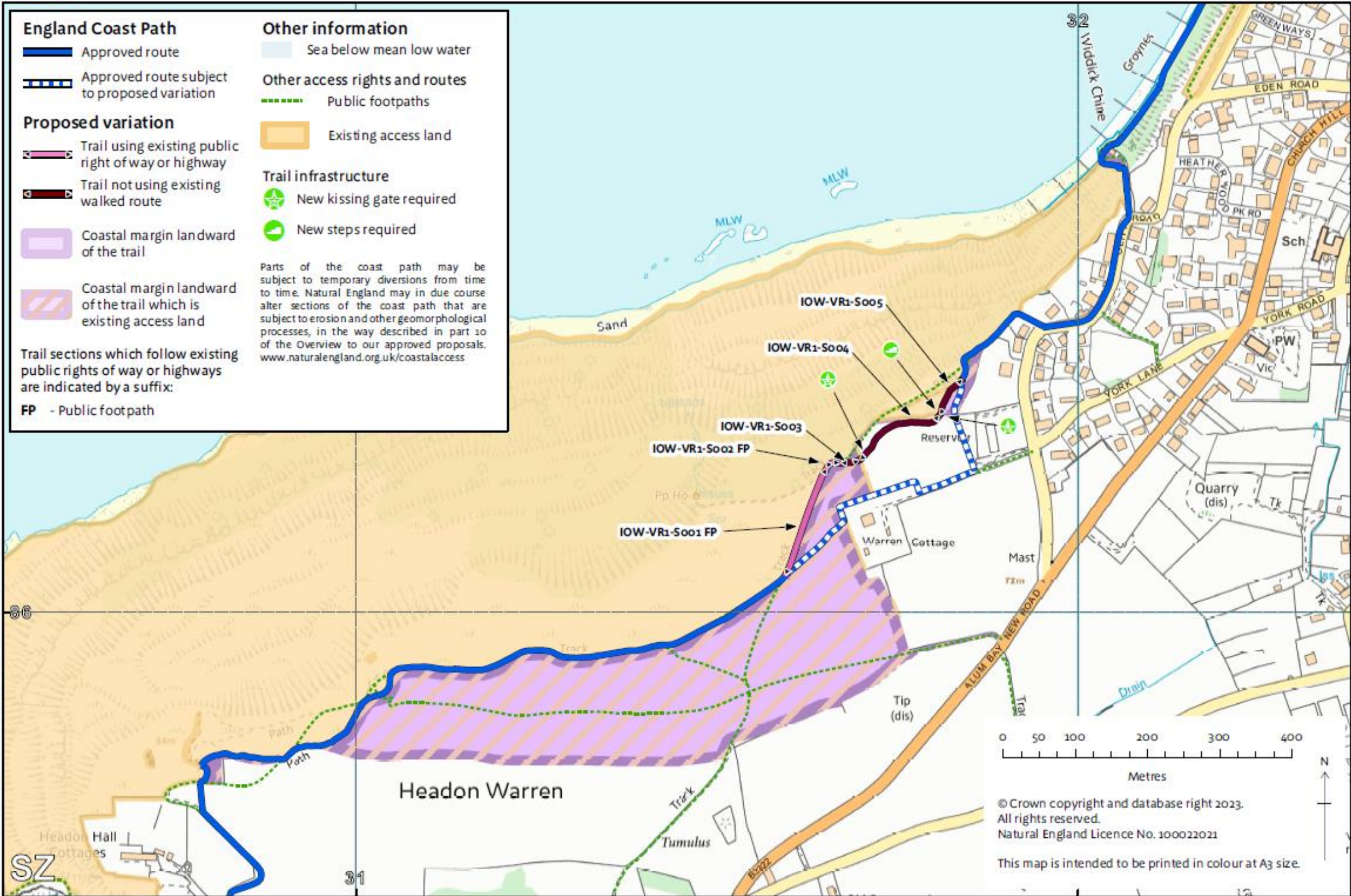
1. Column 4 – ‘Yes – see table 5.3.3’ means roll-back is proposed but refer to that table below about our likely approach to implementing it for this route section. This is because a more complex situation exists in this case and consideration must be given to how roll-back may happen in relation to excepted land, a protected site etc.
2. 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 in Annex B to the 2017 Overview) is shown in this column where appropriate. “No” means none present on this route section.
3. 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)	New route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See part 8 of 2020 report Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
VR1	IOW-VR1-S001 and IOW-VR1-S002	Public footpath	Yes – see table 5.3.3	No	Other	Additional landward area	Landward boundary is the edge of the CRoW open access land
VRI	IOW-VR1-S003	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 5.3.3	No	Other	Additional landward area	Landward boundary is the edge of the CRoW open access land
VR1	IOW-VR1-S004	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 5.3.3	No			
VR1	IOW-VR1-S005	Not an existing walked route	Yes – see table 5.3.3	No	Other	Additional landward area	Landward boundary is the edge of the CRoW open access land

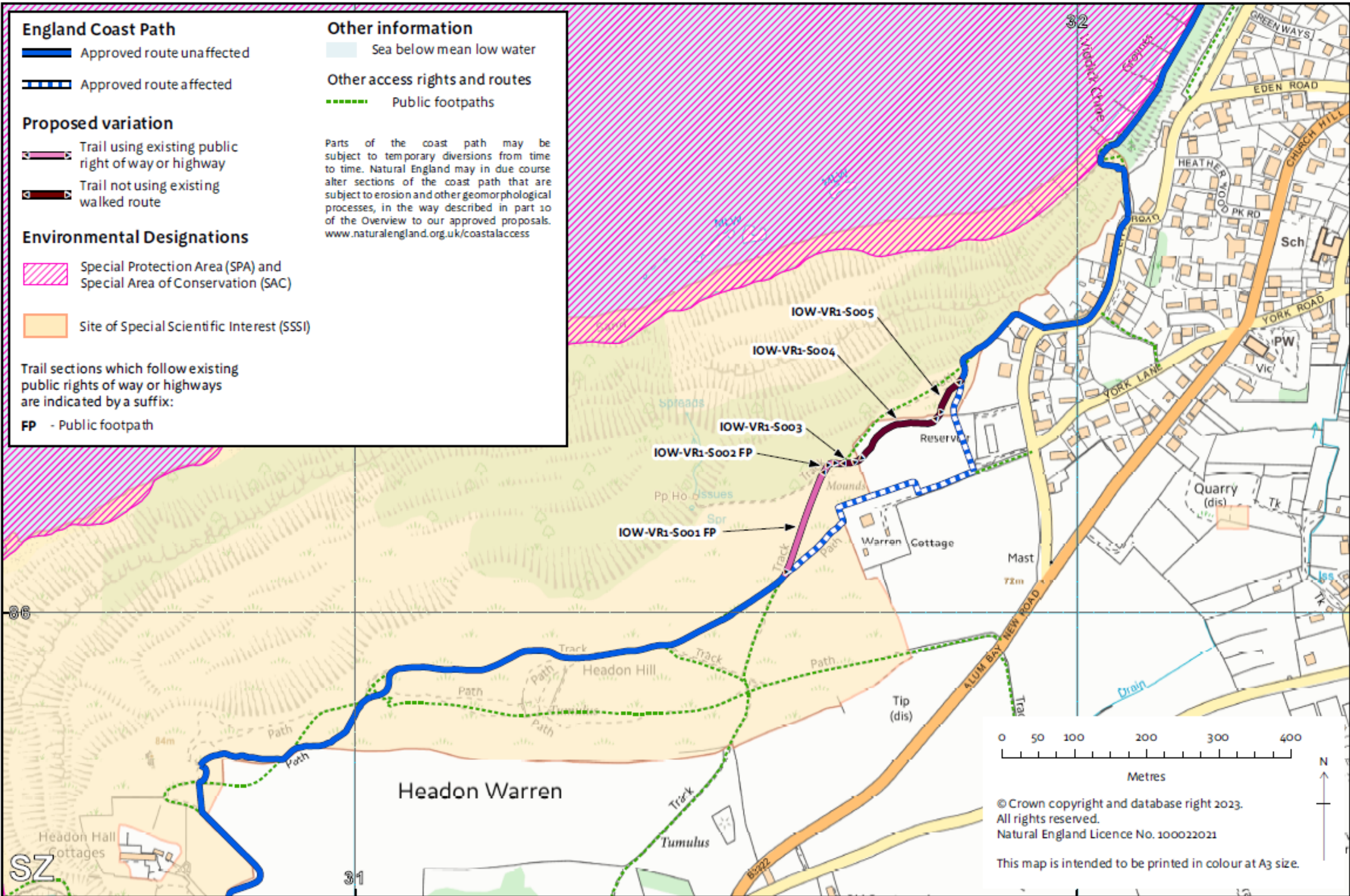


### 2.3.2 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Map VR1 - Headon Warren

Map(s)	New route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
VR1	IOW-VR1-S001 to IOW-VR1-S005	Headon Warren and West High Down SSSI	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of a designated site 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
VR1	IOW-VR1-S001 to IOW-VR1-S005	Warren Cottage and Totland residential buildings and curtilage	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified excepted land (e.g., buildings, curtilage, gardens etc), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers



Map VR1 - Headon Warren



Map VR1 - Headon Warren - Key Statutory Environmental Designations

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Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, **where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.**



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