

Chapter 2:

Blakeney Chapel to Wells Lifeboat Station

England Coast Path: Weybourne to Hunstanton - Natural England's Proposals

Part 2.1: Introduction

Start Point:	Blakeney Chapel (grid reference: TG444 4492)
End Point:	Wells Lifeboat Station (grid reference: TF9147 4550)
Relevant Maps:	2a to 2i

Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps:

The Trail:

- 2.1.1 Generally follows existing walked routes, including public rights of way, along most of this length.
- 2.1.2 Mainly follows the coastline quite closely and maintains good views of the sea.
- 2.1.3 Follows a route similar to the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail but departs from this in places in order to:
 - avoid steps at Morston Downs;
 - provide a firmer surface for walking at Stiffkey & Morston Greens;
 - to facilitate improved visitor management at the National Trust Information Centre at Morston.
- 2.1.4 The Norfolk Coast Path National Trail generally follows the coast over this length and for the most part we propose adopting the walked line of this route as the line of the England Coast Path. However, there are places where we have proposed improvements to the existing route line and furthermore there may be places where the walked line differs slightly from the route originally approved by the Secretary of State, as the path has evolved over time to cope with coastal erosion and other processes. In both situations, as explained at part 6a of the Overview, assuming these proposals are approved we intend to submit a separate variation report to the Secretary of State to change the route of the existing trail to coincide with the approved line of the England Coast Path insofar as the two are different.

Protection of sensitive features

2.1.5 This part of the coast includes the following sites, designated for nature conservation or heritage preservation (See map C of the Overview):

- The Wash & North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area (SPA)
- North Norfolk Coast Ramsar site
- North Norfolk Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its wildlife interest
- Blakeney Chapel Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)

We have assessed the potential impacts of access along the proposed route (and over the associated spreading room described below) on the features for which the affected land is designated and on any which are protected in their own right.

2.1.6 With input from specialists, we have considered each of the sites involved and the relevant designations and concluded that for this section of the coast our proposals will not have a detrimental effect.

In reaching this conclusion we have identified that it would be necessary to propose the exclusion of access to some of the seaward margin using formal directions, as outlined in the formal proposals at paragraph 2.3.12.

In relation to those nature conservation sites listed above, refer to our published Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal for more information.

See part 6b of the Overview - 'Protection of sensitive features' for a description of our overall approach and a summary of our conclusions.

Accessibility

2.1.7 There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route which make use of existing surface paths wherever these meet the criteria in the Coastal Access Scheme.

However, there are places where it may not be entirely suitable for people with reduced mobility because:

- the trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path.

2.1.8 At Wells-next-the-Sea, an existing gate across the trail will be removed and replaced with a kissing gate to improve the convenience of the trail. We envisage this happening as part of the physical establishment work described in part 7 of the Overview.

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

Where we have proposed exercising our discretion

- 2.1.9 Estuary: This report proposes that the trail should include a route around the Stiffkey and Glaven Estuaries as well as the Burnham, Mow, Overy and Norton Estuaries, extending upstream from the open coast as far as the first crossing points for the rivers. The trail covered by this chapter includes part of the estuary route extending upstream from the open coast as far as Stiffkey Sluices (map 2d) which is the first public foot crossing point over the River Stiffkey.

See part 5 of the Overview. The trail covered by this chapter includes part of this estuary route.

- 2.1.10 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 2.2.1 below.
- 2.1.11 At Blakeney, adjacent to section WBH-2-S007 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.

See also part 3 of the Overview - '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. See also Annex C of the Overview - 'Excepted land categories'.

- 2.1.12 Restrictions and/or exclusions: We have proposed to exclude access by direction under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) in certain places along this section of coast. For details of these directions, see 2.3.12 in the Formal Proposals Section of this chapter and Part 10 of the Overview.
- 2.1.13 Access rights to the spreading room would be subject to the national restrictions on coastal access rights listed in Annex D of the Overview. These restrictions would not apply to public rights of way.

See part 10 of the Overview - 'Restrictions and exclusions' - for details.

Establishment and ongoing management of the trail

- 2.1.14 Some physical establishment of the trail would be necessary, in accordance with the general approach described in part 7 the Overview.

In addition

- a fence will be installed adjacent to WBH-2-S020 (map 2d).
- the gate at the eastern end of WBH-2-S040 (map 2h) will be removed and replaced with a kissing gate.

- 2.1.15 Ongoing management and maintenance would be necessary in accordance with the general approach described in part 8 of the Overview. The overall need for this is likely to be greater than on some other parts of the stretch, recognising that it will be necessary for the route to roll back from time to time in response to coastal processes, as described below.

See part 7 - 'Physical establishment of the trail' and part 8 - 'Maintenance of the trail' of the Overview for more information.

Future Change

- 2.1.16 All of the route of the trail on this length of coast would be able to change without further approval from the Secretary of State in response to coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes, or encroachment by the sea. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll back' set out in part 9 of the Overview. See table 2.2.1 below for details of the sections likely to be affected in the foreseeable future.
- 2.1.17 At the time of preparing the report, we do not foresee any other need for future changes to the access provisions proposed for the length of coast described in this chapter.

See part 6e - 'Coastal processes' and part 9 - 'Future changes' of the Overview for more information.

Part 2.2: Commentary on Maps

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

2.2.1 Section Details – Maps 2a to 2i: Blakeney Chapel to Wells Lifeboat Station

Notes on table:

Column 2 – an asterisk (*) against the route section number means see also table 2.2.2: Other options considered.

Column 5 – ‘Yes – normal’ means roll-back approach is likely to follow the current feature (e.g., cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future.

CORRECTION 29 August 2023: Map 2h Warham Greens to Wells-next-the-Sea, route sections WBH-2-S040 to WBH-2-S042 ‘current surface of the sections’ incorrectly recorded at time of publication as tarmac rather than aggregate.

1	2	3	4	5	6b	6c	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 9 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 10 of Overview)
2a	WBH-2-S001	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S002	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
2b	WBH-2-S003	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S004	Other existing walked route	Aggregate	Yes - normal	Wall	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S005	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S006	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S007	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Various field boundaries	Additional landward area	None
	WBH-2-S008	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S009*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S010*	Public bridleway	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
2c	WBH-2-S011	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S012*	Public byway	Gravel	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the track	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S013* to WBH-2-S014*	Other existing walked route	Gravel	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the track	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S015*	Other existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
2d	WBH-2-S016 to WBH-2-S017	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S018	Public byway	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S019*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S020*	Other existing walked route	Grass	Yes - normal	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S021*	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S022	Public byway	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	None

1	2	3	4	5	6b	6c	7
Map(s)	Route section number(s)	Current status of this section	Current surface of this section	Roll-back proposed? (See Part 9 of Overview)	Landward boundary of margin (See maps)	Reason for landward boundary discretion	Proposed exclusions or restrictions (see Part 10 of Overview)
2d	WBH-2-S023 to WBH-2-S024	Public byway	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the track	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S025	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S026 to WBH-2-S028	Public bridleway	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
2e	WBH-2-S029 to WBH-2-S031	Public bridleway	Grass	Yes - normal	Various	Clarity and cohesion	None
2f	WBH-2-S032	Public bridleway	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S033	Public bridleway	Gravel	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the track	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S034	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
2g	WBH-2-S035	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
2g & 2h	WBH-2-S036	Public footpath	Grass	Yes - normal	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
2h	WBH-2-S037	Other existing walked route	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-2-S038	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	Margin
	WBH-2-S039	Public footpath	Bare soil (compacted)	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S040	Public footpath	Aggregate	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S041 to WBH-2-S042	Public footpath	Aggregate	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
2i	WBH-2-S043 to WBH-2-S044	Public highway	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S045 to SBH-2-S046	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the pavement	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S047	Public highway	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S048	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the pavement	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S049	Public highway	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S050 to WBH-2-S051	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the pavement	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S052	Public highway	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S053	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the pavement	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S054	Public highway	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the trail	Not used	None
	WBH-2-S055 to WBH-2-S056	Public footway (pavement)	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the pavement	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S057	Other existing walked route	Tarmac	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None
	WBH-2-S058 to WBH-2-S059	Other existing walked route	Concrete	Yes - normal	Landward edge of the path	Clarity and cohesion	None

2.2.2 Other options considered: Maps 2a to 2i Blakeney Chapel to Wells Lifeboat Station

Map(s)	Section number(s)	Option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option as the route
2b	WBH-2-S009 to WBH-2-S010	We considered aligning the trail along the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail that runs seaward of the proposed route	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The proposed route is more accessible for people with reduced mobility because it avoids using the steps which occur on the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail.
2c	WBH-2-S012 to WBH-2-S015	We considered aligning the trail along the full length of the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The proposed route will enable better visitor management at the National Trust Information Centre at Morston which is a busy site. It also mainly utilises gravelled surfaced paths.
2d	WBH-2-S019 to WBH-2-S021	We considered aligning the trail along the existing Norfolk Coast Path National Trail that runs seaward of the proposed route	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The proposed route provides a firmer surface for walkers utilising a grassed field edge.

Part 2.3: Chapter 2 - Formal Proposals

- Below are our formal proposals to the Secretary of State for the length of coast shown on maps 2a to 2i.
- They should be read in conjunction with the relevant maps.
- The commentary above explains the practical effect of these proposals.

Formal Proposals – Blakeney Chapel to Wells Lifeboat Station

Discretion to include an estuary

- 2.3.1 Natural England proposes to exercise its functions as if the sea included the estuarial waters of the River Stiffkey as far as Stiffkey Sluices as indicated by the extent of the trail shown on map 2d.

Proposed route of the trail

- 2.3.2 In relation to route sections WBH-2-S001 to WBH-2-S059, the route is to be at the centre of the line shown on maps 2a to 2i as the proposed route of the trail.
- 2.3.3 If at any time, any part of a route section listed in the previous paragraph needs, in Natural England's view, to change:
- as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea;
 - in order to link with other parts of the route that need to roll back in direct response to such changes;

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 9 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.

Landward boundary of coastal margin

- 2.3.4 Adjacent to route sections WBH-2-S001 to S002, S006, S008 to S014, S016 to S017, S023 to S028, S033 to S035, S037 to S039 and S057 to S059, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the path or track shown as the trail on maps 2a to 2i.
- 2.3.5 Adjacent to route section WBH-2-S003, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the fence line shown as the trail on map 2b.
- 2.3.6 Adjacent to route section WBH-2-S004, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the wall which at the time of writing this report is landward of the public footpath shown as the trail on map 2b.

- 2.3.7 Adjacent to route section WBH-2-S007, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the field boundaries surrounding the grass field, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 2b.
- 2.3.8 Adjacent to route sections WBH-2-S018 to WBH-2-S019 and WBH-2-S021 to WBH-2-S022 and WBH-2-S036 the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the hedgerow, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on maps 2d, 2g and 2h.
- 2.3.9 Adjacent to route section WBH-2-S020, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the fence line which will be installed at establishment and will be landward of the trail on map 2d.
- 2.3.10 Adjacent to route sections WBH-2-S029 to WBH-2-S031, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the various boundaries, as indicated by the coastal margin landward of the trail on map 2e.
- 2.3.11 Adjacent to route sections WBH-2-S045, WBH-2-S046, WBH-2-S048, WBH-2-S050, WBH-2-S051, WBH-2-S053, WBH-2-S055 and WBH-2-S056, the landward boundary of the coastal margin is to coincide with the landward edge of the pavement shown as the trail on map 2i.

Local restrictions and exclusions

- 2.3.12 Natural England proposes to exclude access relevant to the seaward coastal margin for this length of coast, as follows:
- access to saltmarsh will be excluded at Wells-next-the-Sea, north of Stonemeal Creek, seaward of route section WBH-2-S036, because we are satisfied that the land is unsuitable for public access. See Overview map G.
 - access will be excluded all year round at Wells-next-the-Sea, south of Stonemeal Creek, seaward of route sections WBH-2-S035 to WBH-2-S038, to limit the potential disturbance of overwintering and breeding birds by both people and accompanying dogs. See Overview map G.

Please refer to Part 10 of the Overview for further details.

















