



# Coastal Access – Bawdsey to Adleburgh - BSA1, BSA2, BSA4, BSA5

## Representations with Natural England’s comments

August 2024

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## **1. Introduction**

This document records the representations Natural England has received on the proposals in all length reports between Bawdsey to Adleburgh 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 Bawdsey to Adleburgh they are included here.

## **2. Background**

Natural England's compendium of reports setting out its proposals for improved access to the coast from Bawdsey to Adleburgh, comprising an overview and twelve separate length reports, was submitted to the Secretary of State on 3 February 2021. This began an eight-week period during which representations and objections about each constituent report could be made.

In total, Natural England received 39 representations pertaining to all length reports, of which 9 were 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. These

'full' representations are reproduced in Section 4 in their entirety, together with Natural England's comments. Also included in Section 4 is a summary of the 27 representations made by other individuals or organisations, referred to as 'other' representations.

## **3. Layout**

The representations and Natural England's comments on them are separated below into the lengths against which they were submitted. Each length below contains the 'full' and 'other' representations submitted against it, together with Natural England's comments. Where representations refer to two or more lengths, they and Natural England's comments will appear in duplicate under each relevant length. Note that although a representation may appear within multiple lengths, Natural England's responses may include length-specific comments which are not duplicated across all lengths in which the representation appears.

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

### Length Report BSA1 - Bawdsey Quay car park to Butley Ferry crossing (west side)

#### *Full representations*

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/3/BSA0419
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S017
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	Reports BSA 2, 3, 4 and 5

#### **Representation in full**

##### **Note 1 - Representation on BSA sections BSA1 to BSA5 Bawdsey to Aldeburgh**

This representation is made on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers, and are attached to the general representation form for the whole section.

All of this section was surveyed by members of Suffolk Area Ramblers during 2017 and early 2018, and meetings were held with the relevant Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Officers. Following further discussion with interested members of the Ramblers in the area, maps of the Ramblers suggested route, together with a detailed report of why we were recommending this route, and what works we considered to be necessary, were then submitted to Natural England in April 2018.

Subsequently I have been in regular contact with the Natural England representatives for this section, and have made some further visits to the proposed section of path as changes in the situation occur. Also, I have been appraised regularly of the differences between our initial suggestions and the Natural England preferred route, all of which changes have been explained and the reasons for alternative routes discussed.

Finally, the Report published on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 was reported on at the Suffolk Area Ramblers AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> February, and has been made available to all interested parties in the Ramblers and local area groups. The responses from those consulted have been generally favourable, and any comments I have felt worthwhile in passing on to you for consideration, are on the accompanying notes 2, 3 and 4, and in particular note 5.

With the exception of BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023, as referred to in note 5, I would therefore, on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers, like to commend the proposed route for this section of the England Coast Path, and we look forward eagerly to the path being made available on the ground along the full length, and open to public use.

## **Note 2 - Representations on section BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S008**

The Ramblers wish to express concern regarding the section of the route BSA-1-S001 where it is proposed to run along a very busy narrow country road. When the Ramblers were informed of this possible alignment, the plan as we understood it was to create a new path along the field edges to the south side of the road. We now find that this has not been done.

As an alternative, the Ramblers would like to see, as a bare minimum, the creation of a cut verge, permanently maintained, along the southern side of this public road. This would at least provide a refuge for walkers from vehicles moving at speed along a fairly straight section of highway, which is only just sufficiently wide enough to allow two vehicles to pass, and does not have any extra room for vehicles to pass by pedestrians. Ideally, a hardened surface to provide an all-weather footway alongside the surfaced road would be recommended.

The Ramblers would like to commend the route BSA-1-S002 to East Lane, Bawdsey (BSA-1-S017) as a major improvement over the initially suggested inland route using a public highway. We welcome the fact that this proposed route is now all off road.

Notes 3 (on Report 2), 4 (Report 4) and 5 (Report 5) will be included in those documents

## **Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the support for the route, particularly on sections BSA-1-S002 to BSA-1-S017.

**Note 2 - Representations on section BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S008**

NE considered several options for the route at BSA-1-S001 including a field-edge path. Upon careful consideration NE did not propose a field edge path as there are times when it becomes waterlogged, and it would not be possible to enhance this route to a good standard. NE anticipates that walkers would continue to use the road and verge which is currently part of the long-distance Suffolk Coast Path. Improvement works are proposed including cutting back trees, removing scrub and mowing the verge to allow its use. The proposed route along the road was assessed by a highways engineer who considered it as being suitable for use as the ECP when taking into consideration that the road is straight affording good visibility of and from vehicles and in part has a 30-mph speed limit. Available accident data between 2011 and 2020 shows no accidents involving pedestrians. In addition, standard highways 'pedestrians in the carriageway' warning signs have been included as part of the implementation works.

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/4/BSA0425
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	RSPB
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	Maps 1e and 1f (covering RSPB Hollesley) BSA-1-S067 to BSA-1-S070  and Map 1g (covering RSPB Boyton) BSA-1-S073
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	N/A
<b>Representation in full</b>	

Overall, we are happy with the route proposed through our land holdings at RSPB Hollesley and RSPB Boyton. We also agree that the saltmarsh area looks correctly mapped and that we are happy with its exclusion, however, we note that a number of shingle “islands” have not been incorporated into the area excluded as the exclusions are for public safety reasons.

Given the importance of these areas for nature conservation, we request that the saltmarsh and shingle area is excluded under s26 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) (nature conservation) to give additional protection to these shingle areas and avoid impacts should access restrictions for public safety purposes be lifted for any reason in future.

At RSPB Hollesley, a kink in the footpath appears on OS maps which does not exist on the ground (from the northern end of BSA-1-SO68 FP re-joining the proposed coast path route at BSA-1-SO71). The presence of ditches etc. mean that most footpath users continue to walk on the wall along the proposed new route. We welcome that the proposals create a new path following the existing line of use along the walls on this stretch rather than the route previously marked on maps as this would have caused disturbance to birds on the Hollesley lagoons. We request that the old footpath is closed to avoid any confusion or future disturbance once the new route is formalised.

We note the proposals for replacement of the stile on the river wall at RSPB Boyton (within section BSA-1-SO73 FP). We respectfully request that consideration is given to moving this stile to the southern end of our boundary (to TM39484640) to facilitate easier management of grazing if this stile is to be replaced for other reasons.

We are also concerned about the effectiveness of mitigation measures, particularly in relation to excluded areas and where signage is used to encourage walkers to avoid sensitive areas for wildlife. Whilst we understand that the increase in the numbers of walkers and changes to the patterns of access are likely to be small, we consider it is essential that excluded areas are clearly marked on the ground and that signage is carefully located. We recommend that monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce these restrictions.

Monitoring of the impacts of the path and the effectiveness of mitigation measures will be required and would welcome discussions with the RO to review the results of this. We wish to note, however, that while we carry out our own monitoring in line with our reserve management plans, we do not have sufficient resource to carry out the additional monitoring needed in relation to the new coast path.

#### **Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the support of the RSPB for the route that has been proposed and for the suggested exclusion of access rights to the saltmarsh and mudflat.

### Request for additional restrictions

The RSPB has requested that the shingle areas outside the boundary of the S25A exclusion have coastal access rights excluded for the purpose of nature conservation. The Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Nature Conservation Assessment assessed the coastal access proposal on the feature of nature conservation interest but did not conclude additional restrictions were necessary here. NE notes that in their comments, RSPB do not refer to specific features in this area. Should vulnerable species be present in these areas in future then NE would consider the need for a further restriction at that time.

The RSPB has requested that NE places a S26 (nature conservation) exclusion on 'saltmarsh and shingle'. Because the coastal access rights are excluded on saltmarsh under S25A, there is no need to additionally restrict or exclude the same access rights under S26(3)(a). NE will have acknowledged any relevant sensitive features that will be protected by a S25A exclusion in the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Nature Conservation Assessment. If in the future there was a proposal to remove or relax a Section 25A exclusion, NE would then reappraise the effects of those changes on sensitive features and determine whether a new S26(3)(a) is necessary.

### Footpath closure and replacement stile

Natural England does not have a role in deciding or influencing the rights of way network in relation to its work on delivering the England Coast Path. NE cannot therefore close the footpath that is inland of the ECP between BSA-1-S068 FP and BSA-1-S071. Landowners can apply to the local authority to have public rights of ways closed.

In line with duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and also the extra responsibilities conferred by the Public Sector Equality Duty, under the former NE wants to make the trail as easy to use as it reasonably can be for disabled people and others with reduced mobility. NE is willing to discuss moving the existing stile and whether it can be replaced by a gate to give better access. At the implementation phase Suffolk County Council will contact landowners to discuss infrastructure and as part of this process will review if structures are still required to control livestock.

### Monitoring

Natural England notes the comment from RSPB that additional monitoring should be undertaken to check that the proposals do not lead to substantial changes in access at Hollesley and Boyton that could have an adverse effect on wildlife.

NE sometimes attaches specific monitoring conditions to the proposals, however in this situation, where the proposed ECP is already a public footpath and route of the Suffolk Coast Path and the proposals for the Coast Path will not substantially alter the present access situation, NE sees no need for additional monitoring.

With respect to the Coast Path, the route will benefit by being managed to National Trail quality

standards, that include regular monitoring of trail condition and associated signage or other new infrastructure. Should wider circumstances affecting the site change at any time in the future, Coast Path management can be adapted as necessary to avoid or reduce any

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA Stretch/R/2/BSA0435
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S073
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	BSA Reports 2, 3, 4 and 5
<b>Representation in full</b>	
<p>Suffolk County Council strongly supports the use of the estuary discretion in proposing an alignment of the National Trail around the Alde &amp; Ore Estuary Complex, including the Butley River, using the first crossing point on the Alde at Snape bridge. (Option 1)</p> <p>Much of the estuary is well served by public rights of way, but there are significant gaps which these reports will address, enabling walkers to avoid walking on the road between Bawdsey Manor (BSA-1-S002 to BSA-1-S018, and connecting the cul de sac public footpath on the east side of the Butley River to Gedgrave (BSA-2-S027 to BSA-2-S035).</p> <p>The proposals in the 5 reports are welcomed and supported; they will provide a route that is available all year and continuous along the Suffolk coastline.</p> <p>The County Council is concerned as to the future and allocation of the maintenance funding for National Trails.</p> <p>The County Council would like to see those works proposed as mitigation to fulfil the objectives of the Habitat Regulations, included in the National Trail maintenance funding formula.</p> <p>In addition, we would like to see those sections of the trail which are immediately adjacent to SSSIs and not just within the boundary, included in the uplift. It seems particularly unfortunate the funding formula neither recognises the necessity of ongoing funding for the mitigation works that enable the trail to be opened nor the proximity of the SSSI and SPA which requires those additional works. This is particularly pertinent as the proposed trail is immediately adjacent to the Alde &amp; Ore Estuary SSSI for most of its length (BSA-1-SO23 to BSA-4-SO59)</p> <p>As a public body the County Council must have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity (NERC Act 2006), so this will result in disproportionate pressure on the use of the maintenance funding for this stretch.</p> <p>Overall, the County Council believes that the proposals for improving coastal access on this</p>	



stretch of the coast strikes the appropriate balance between public and private interests and recreational and environmental objectives as required by the approved coastal access scheme.

**Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the support of Suffolk County Council in the use of estuary discretion for the proposals and the alignment in this Report at Bawdsey that improves the current access provision.

In relation to the comments regarding a financial uplift for those sections of the trail that run immediately adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), NE acknowledges that Suffolk County Council has concerns in this area. As noted, the current uplift applies only where the trail runs directly through a SSSI. This is to recognise the potential for additional maintenance costs to be incurred and this element of the current funding formula was originally agreed by a stakeholder group representing all the established National Trails in England following a review of funding that was completed in 2013. A subsequent review by a group representing all the trails was carried out in 2015. It is NE's intention to undertake a further review of the funding formula as the England Coast Path (ECP) is completed so that NE can, with the Trail and ECP reps who are joining this current review, assess whether any adjustments are required. This process will begin later this year and will be carried out with the involvement of ECP managers. Suffolk County Council's constructive input will be welcomed as part of this process although NE is not making any assumptions at this time as to how this review may change the existing formula.

### ***Other representations with common points***

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/7/BSA0735
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	BAWDSEY PARISH COUNCIL
<b>Name of site:</b>	The soft cliff southwards from Martello Tower W (East Lane) to where the path diverts to join the roadway at the north edge of Bawdsey Manor Estate land
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps BSA 1a to 1b
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S017 covering Bawdsey Quay to East Lane
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

### **Summary of representation:**

Bawdsey Parish Council believes that the coastal route does not recognise the inherent danger arising from the extreme instability of the cliffs between East Lane (Martello W) and the northern end of Bawdsey Manor Estate land. Recent experience during easing of lockdown restrictions is that families clamber about on the cliffs without realising the risk of cliff fall, injury, suffocation etc.

The rate of erosion has been so extreme that the existing County footpath has been closed for some while, and the sign closing it has itself become the victim of a cliff fall.

It seems to the Parish Council quite unreasonable to insist on a route close to the sea which will have to be constantly monitored, repaired, set back etc – it cannot be in any way environmentally sustainable or worth the considerable expense for such a short length of path with sea views, when a stable and safe section of pathway on agricultural land, with views towards the sea, near the B1083 has been offered. This would be a simple agricultural/woodland walk within the sound of the sea, a realistic alternative, accepting as 1.2.8 states ‘natural coastal terrain is challenging’.

### **Natural England’s comment:**

Natural England notes that the Parish Council is concerned about current activities as ‘*families clamber about on the cliffs*’ while on the beach. Such activities currently occur, and this is not because of the England Coast Path and it is highly unlikely that these activities would alter in any way because of the proposed opening of the ECP. However, by virtue of the proposed cliff top route or any other more inland route alignment, the beach and cliffs would fall within the seaward spreading room and coastal access rights would apply to these areas of land.

Most people already understand that the coast can be a dangerous environment and are aware of many of the inherent risks. One of the key principles of coastal access rights is that visitors should take primary responsibility for their own safety when visiting the coast and for the safety of any children or other people in their care, and should be able to decide for themselves the level of personal risk they wish to take.

As coastal access rights apply to this area the landowners are protected by the low level of public liability which is lower than that they currently owe to current users and trespassers.

In considering route options NE believes it adhered to the requirements for aligning the route as laid out in the Approved Coastal Access Scheme 2013:

*4.5.1 The route should normally be close to the sea otherwise it would fail in its primary purpose to enable people to enjoy the coast of England. This is in line with the principle in*

*section 297(2) of the 2009 Act that it is desirable that the route should adhere to “the periphery of the coast”.*

*4.6.1 The trail should normally offer views of the sea, because they are a key part of many people’s enjoyment of the coast.*

*7.1.3 Where there is a cliff, the trail should normally be aligned along it wherever practicable, because it normally provides the best views of the sea: On sheer cliffs, the trail will normally be on the cliff top, a safe distance from the edge. On gently-sloping cliff faces, the trail may be aligned closer to the sea, provided a route can be found which is sufficiently stable and convenient.*

*8.1.3 On cliff tops and cliff slopes which are subject to significant erosion or landslip, the trail will normally roll back when erosion or landslip takes place without further reference to the Secretary of State, in accordance with the approved proposals in our coastal access report*

Rollback is a significant advantage of the Coastal Access legislation compared to public rights of way legislation, in that Coastal Access can maintain routes open and available for public use if the original line is lost. As the Parish Council has noted, the existing public right of way on the beach has been closed as it has been made unusable due to a change in beach level and resulting frequent tidal coverage.

The ability to easily rollback the ECP creates a permanently open and safe path for users. It is likely that any roll back in this area will for the time being occur with reference to the cliff top, which is already buffered by the land manager to reduce the risks to themselves when using heavy machinery. The cost of realigning the path is therefore minimal.

The Council suggested an inland alignment as a longer lasting route. That alignment would create an area of publicly accessible land stretching from the inland route to the mean low water mark. It would therefore also create coastal access rights on the clifftop and any farmed land not in arable production. As the public currently access the cliff top, the expectation is that they would continue to do so even if the trail was not established there. If the trail is aligned further inland this clifftop access would continue unmanaged.

Creating the England Coast Path close to the cliff top best meets the alignment criteria set out in the legislation. Given that any roll back that might be required here, seems for the time-being likely to be simple in nature, it is not yet necessary to move the path a significant way inland as suggested in the representation.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Stretch/R/1/BSA0607
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 1a to 1g
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S073
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 2, 3, 4 and 5

### **Summary of representation:**

The British Horse Society founded in 1947, is the largest and most influential equestrian charity in the UK with over 117,000 members. Two of the Society's objectives are: to promote community participation in healthy recreation involving the horse and to promote and secure the provision, protection and preservation of rights of way and of access for ridden and driven horses over public roads, highways, footpaths, bridleways, carriage ways, public paths and other land.

According to the Suffolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan, only 18% of Public Rights of Way are accessible to horse riders, forcing them onto busy, fast roads. Road safety is of particular concern to equestrians, who are vulnerable road users.: 'This rights of way network provides off-road access to services, links between settlements, and access into the countryside. The importance of rights of way, quality greenspaces, greenways and corridors, for an effective non-motorised urban transport network threading through urban areas and linking to more rural areas is recognised.' We would suggest this is included in the plans for the England Coast Path from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh which could show a trail blazing attitude to access throughout Suffolk.

The ECP from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh presents an opportunity to improve coastal access in Suffolk with benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors, promoting health and wellbeing. Suffolk County Council should be requesting permissive access for equestrians for the entire stretch providing a safe off-road route for vulnerable users resolving a number of anomalies where bridleways become dead ends at the coast.

The BHS encourages Natural England and Suffolk County Council to ensure any surfacing works future proof the route to enable equestrian access, foreseeing landowners granting permission for equestrian access, therefore routes should be surfaced as appropriate for the horse and rider. A natural surface, where well drained and free of excess vegetation, is ideal for horse and rider. Maintenance to surfaces must consider appropriate surface materials to avoid risk of injury caused by slippery materials e.g. tarmac, sharp stone and boggy or deeply rutted ground.

**Natural England's comment:**

Natural England acknowledges the desirability of creating routes for horse-riders.

Natural England's duty under Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 is to create clear and consistent public rights along the English coast for open-air recreation on foot. On some sections of coast, existing rights will apply as well as or instead of coastal access rights, such as the right to ride a horse or bicycle on a bridleway or along a permissive route permitted by the landowner. However, NE's core remit is to propose the creation of a walking route.

Natural England can investigate the potential to create higher rights on the England Coast Path in locations identified by stakeholders at the outset of the project. However, NE can only secure these where landowners are willing to offer them. In this instance NE was not approached by any stakeholders seeking higher rights at the outset of the stretch project and no landowners asked to consider proposing higher rights in discussions with them.

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

- a. Advice on Surfaces for horses in England and Wales
- b. Advice on Gates on routes used by riders in England and Wales
- c. Advice on Non-motorised user routes in England and Wales
- d. Advice on Width, area and height in England and Wales

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/6/BSA0712
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	DISABLED RAMBLERS - [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 1a to 1g
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S073

<p><b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b></p>	<p>General Comment also for Report 3</p>
<p><b>Summary of representation:</b></p> <p><u>Comment 1</u></p> <p><i>Report BSA 1: Accessibility statement at 1.2.8 and all route sections generally.</i></p> <p>Paragraph 1.2.8 of the Report states:</p> <p><i>There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route. However, the natural coastal terrain is often challenging and this is the case on sections of our proposed route because:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>The trail would follow an uneven grass or bare soil path along the cliff top and seawall;</i></li> <li><i>There are steps where it would be necessary to link the track from the car park at BSA-1- S018 to the seawall at BSA-1-S021 (map BSA 1b);</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>The trail is on shingle for short stretches.</i></li> </ul> <p>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 banks 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. Modern batteries are now available that allow a range of up to 60 miles on one charge.</p> <p>Disabled Ramblers is concerned in particular that Natural England has not taken into consideration that this group of people may want to access sea banks where they are of sufficient width (mobility vehicles being up to 85cm wide and often 173cm in length), so to enable them to do this Disabled Ramblers requests that slopes/ramps are provided either instead of, or alongside, steps where the height of the sea bank is not prohibitive (in which case an alternative access point should be identified where possible to enable these users to progress along the route).</p> <p>Modern mobility vehicles are large, and many man-made barriers that will allow access to a manual wheelchair are not large enough for some mobility vehicles and prevent legitimate access even though users of mobility vehicles have the same rights of access that walkers do.</p>	

Wherever possible man-made infrastructure should be replaced or adapted. Suitability of all structures should always be considered with the assumption that a person with reduced mobility will be going out without more-mobile helpers, so will need to operate the structure on their own, seated on their mobility vehicle.

Disabled Ramblers requests

- that new structures to be installed should be suitable for those who use large mobility vehicles, and should comply with British Standard BS5709: 2018 Gaps Gates and Stiles.
- that where existing man-made structures are a barrier to those who use mobility vehicles, these should be reviewed, and where necessary removed and replaced.
  - compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (and the Public Sector Equality Duty within this act)
  - compliance with the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000
- adherence to the advice from Disabled Ramblers in the attached document Man-made Barriers and Least Restrictive Access.

Comment 2 - Map BSA 1a and Map BSA 1b: Route sections BSA-1-S002 to BSA-1-S024 The ECP route in Maps BSA 1a and BSA 1b has coastal views and historical interest. The terrain is suitable for all-terrain mobility vehicles, enabling people with limited mobility to enjoy this area. Additionally, there are access points to the ECP for all-terrain mobility vehicles from car parks at Bawdsey Quay, Bawdsey Radar Museum, and the East Lane.

The trail between sections BSA-1-S003 and BSA-1-S015 does not use an existing walking route. Disabled Ramblers requests that the width of the new route should be sufficient for all-terrain mobility vehicles, and that proposed sleeper bridges should be sufficiently wide, with ramps at either end (not steps). Additionally, the clear gap in the proposed gaps in fences, and gateways with no gate, should be at least 1.1m.

Comment 3 - Map BSA 1b: Route section BSA-1-S018

It is proposed that the ECP route uses the existing steps from the car park. Paragraph 1.2.8 states: *'There are few artificial barriers to accessibility on the proposed route. However, the natural coastal terrain is often challenging and this is the case on sections of our proposed route because:*

*There are steps where it would be necessary to link the track from the car park at BSA-1-S018 to the seawall at BSA-1-S021 (map BSA 1b)*

As these steps constitute a barrier which excludes those using all-terrain mobility vehicles from progressing along the ECP, Disabled Ramblers requests that the adjacent sloping path



should alternatively, or additionally, be included in the ECP route, allowing access to all.

Comment 4 - Map BSA 1d: Route section BSA-1-S062

Disabled Ramblers welcomes the removal of the kissing gate at BSA-1-S062 and requests that Natural England ensure that the resulting clear gap is at least 1.1m wide which allows access to all-terrain mobility vehicles.

**Natural England's comment:**

Response to Comment 1: Report BSA 1; Accessibility statement at 3.2.7 and all route sections generally

Natural England acknowledges its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and also the extra responsibilities conferred by the Public Sector Equality Duty, under the former. Section 4.3.8 of the Scheme outlines that NE follows the principles set out in the publication "By All Reasonable Means" to make the trail as easy to use as reasonably can be achieved for disabled people and others with reduced mobility, whilst accepting that such opportunities will often be constrained by practical limitations, such as the rugged nature of the terrain or the availability of visitor transport and facilities.

An important element of equality law is that the needs of those with constrained or restricted mobility are considered throughout the planning, design and implementation processes, and that they are not simply treated as an 'add on'. NE has endeavoured to achieve this while proposals have been developed for the Bawdsey to Aldeburgh stretch, and, if the proposals are approved, will continue to do so through the implementation phase, working alongside Suffolk County Council, which shares the same responsibilities and duties.

NE also recognises the importance of satisfying the relevant British Standards, and the desirability of complying with the advice contained in the *Disabled Ramblers Notes on Infrastructure* and will also be focusing on these documents as it works with the access authorities.

Response to Comment 2 - Map BSA 1a and Map BSA 1b: Route sections BSA-1-S002 to BSA-1-S024

Natural England accepts the Disabled Ramblers' comment about the width of the bridge and gaps and, should the Secretary of State approve the proposals Natural England would be

happy to work to those standards.

Response to Comment 3 - Map BSA 1b: Route section BSA-1-S018

Natural England notes the Disabled Ramblers' comment that the steps will cause problems for users of large all-terrain mobility vehicles. The Disabled Ramblers has suggested an adjacent sloping path should alternatively, or additionally, be included in the ECP route, allowing access to all. NE did not include the slope as it is not the most direct route and while coastal access legislation enables proposal of 'official' alternative routes for certain purposes, NE is unable to propose an alternative route solely for the use of those with reduced mobility. There is however already a maintained accessible route that gives access up the slope to the top of the bank. This will continue to be available to facilitate access to the ECP.

Response to Comment 4 - Map BSA 1d: Route section BSA-1-S062

Natural England thanks the Disabled Ramblers for their suggestion for the width of the route. NE will ask Suffolk County Council for a 1.1m width and monitor for possible misuse of the public footpath e.g. bicycles and motorcycles as the access is straight off a public road.

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

e. Man-made Barriers and Least Restrictive Access

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/1/BSA0450
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	HOLLESLEY PARISH COUNCIL
<b>Name of site:</b>	Saltmarsh land
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 1a to 1g
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	Parish Council covers route sections BSA-1-S058 to BSA-1-S072
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

**Summary of representation:**

Hollesley Parish Council fully supports the effort to create a new public coastal path with access to the coastal margin between the path and the sea. It supports the suggested route, but it views the proposal to restrict access to the coastal margin in the local area is problematic. While the Council understands the motivation to restrict access to coastal saltmarsh for safety purposes, it believes that it is highly unlikely that a few signs will in any way enhance safety beyond the obvious visible hazard of the saltmarsh. The Council hopes that no effort or money will be spent on erecting “restrictive and unsightly” fences.

The Council is concerned about the practicality of trying to restrict access to individual plots of saltmarsh, while allowing access to small areas of shingle, sand or other area of better standing. Members of the public are unlikely to refer to a GPS and a detailed map of the restricted areas and signage or fencing will be utterly impractical at indicating the boundaries between islands of permitted and restricted access. Many of the suggested open access areas are in fact unreachable without traversing through other areas which are to be categorised as restricted.

The Council notes there is a historic use of the coast, river, and saltmarsh. While this right is exercised by only a small proportion of the population, the Council would not want to see the ability to launch or pull up a boat (or other recreational watercraft) or the harvest from the water margin removed.

Given the considerations discussed above the Council suggests that saltmarsh and mudflats are not restricted from becoming part of the open access coastal margin.

**Natural England’s comment:**

Natural England welcomes the support of Hollesley Parish Council for the route.

Natural England can confirm that no fencing will be erected in connection with the saltmarsh exclusion.

Where Natural England decides it is necessary to exclude new coastal access rights from saltmarsh and flats, a map indicating those areas must be included in the report to the Secretary of State. Natural England acknowledge that, whilst every effort has been made to draw an accurate boundary for exclusions, coastal processes may change the characteristics of the land. However, these maps will not go up on site. Most usually, exclusions on saltmarsh and flat will be indicated by using a roundel symbol installed at suitable intervals along the trail (symbol attached, measures approximately 75 mm wide). Where there is an information board about coastal access rights, information may also be added about any local exclusions.

Some areas of unrestricted land may fall seaward of saltmarsh but there is no requirement to provide access to such areas that are separated from the trail by saltmarsh or other restricted land.

The Council wishes to protect the historic use of coastal areas. Natural England can confirm it is not trying to stop the existing use of the saltmarsh. The directions that are given are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question. Local users will often have experience of the pattern of tidal inundation or the hidden dangers posed by creeks etc in the saltmarsh. ECP users visiting the area may not be as aware of the dangers and it is therefore appropriate to exclude them from the area.

In our report NE explains that these directions will not prevent or affect:

any existing local use of the land by right: such use is not covered by coastal access rights,

any other use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner, or by informal permission or traditional toleration; or

use of any registered rights of common or any rights at common law or by Royal Charter etc.<sup>5</sup>

Any such use is not prohibited or limited by these arrangements.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/5/BSA0057
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST
<b>Name of site:</b>	RSPB reserves at Hollesley and Boyton
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 1e, 1f and 1g
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	Maps 1e and 1f (covering RSPB Hollesley) BSA-1-S067 to BSA-1-S070  and Map 1g (covering RSPB Boyton) BSA-1-S073
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

**Summary of representation:**

This section of the coastal path includes the RSPB landholdings at Hollesley and Boyton. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) recommends that the RSPB's representations are considered on this section as it is important that the mitigation measures in place are sufficient to safeguard the wildlife interest of these sites.

SWT recommends that monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce the restrictions. SWT is concerned about the effectiveness of excluded areas and signage to encourage walkers to avoid sensitive areas for wildlife. SWT understands that the increase in the numbers of walkers and changes to the patterns of access are likely to be small, SWT considers it is essential that excluded areas are clearly marked on the ground and that signage is carefully located. SWT recommends that monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce these restrictions.

**Natural England's comment:**

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust has submitted a representation in support of the RSPB's representation above. Please refer to Natural England's comments in relation to that representation.

NE will discuss appropriate levels of signage with SWT. NE can confirm that should wider circumstances affecting the site change at any time in the future, Coast Path management can be adapted as necessary to avoid or reduce any possible negative impacts on sensitive sites. A key feature of ongoing National Trail management is to work closely with relevant landowners and managers to identify and resolve any issues that might arise at an early stage.

draw an accurate boundary for exclusions, coastal processes may change the characteristics of the land. However, these maps will not go up on site. Most usually, exclusions on saltmarsh and flat will be indicated by using a roundel symbol installed at suitable intervals along the trail (symbol attached, measures approximately 75 mm wide). Where there is an information board about coastal access rights, information may also be added about any local exclusions.

Some areas of unrestricted land may fall seaward of saltmarsh but there is no requirement to provide access to such areas that are separated from the trail by saltmarsh or other restricted land.

The Council wishes to protect the historic use of coastal areas. Natural England can confirm it is not trying to stop the existing use of the saltmarsh. The directions that are given are intended to avoid any new public rights being created over the area in question. Local users will often have experience of the pattern of tidal inundation or the hidden dangers posed by creeks etc in the saltmarsh. ECP users visiting the area may not be as aware of the dangers and it is therefore appropriate to exclude them from the area.

In our report NE explains that these directions will not prevent or affect:

- any existing local use of the land by right: such use is not covered by coastal access rights,
- any other use people already make of the land locally by formal agreement with the landowner, or by informal permission or traditional toleration; or
- use of any registered rights of common or any rights at common law or by Royal Charter etc.<sup>5</sup>

Any such use is not prohibited or limited by these arrangements.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Whole Stretch/R/4/BSA0731
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	WATER MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	BSA 1-5
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 1a to 1g
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-1-S001 to BSA-1-S073
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 2, 3, 4 and 5 (with some Report-specific comments)

**Summary of representation:**

The Water Management Alliance note that the proposals are partly within the Internal Drainage District (IDD) of the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and therefore the Board's Byelaws apply. They specifically highlight that any works (including signage or path resurfacing) within 9 metres of the internal drainage system will normally require consent to relax Byelaw 10 (*no works within 9 metres of the edge of drainage or flood risk management infrastructure*). Any works directly within the watercourse will require consent under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

**Natural England's comment:**

Natural England appreciates the IDBs engagement in the development of our proposals and the reminder of the responsibilities associated with the IDB's work. NE will pass these comments on to Suffolk County Council to consider and obtain any necessary permissions as part of their works to establish the trail.

**Length Report BSA2 - Butley Ferry crossing (west side) to Orford Quay*****Full representations***

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA2/R/1/BSA0419
Organisation/ person making representation:	RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-2-S002 to BSA-2-S005 and BSA-2-S028
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	N/A
<b>Representation in full</b>	
<p>This representation is made on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers, and are attached to the general representation form for the whole section.</p> <p>All of this section was surveyed by members of Suffolk Area Ramblers during 2017 and early 2018, and meetings were held with the relevant Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Officers. Following further discussion with interested members of the Ramblers in the area, maps of the Ramblers suggested route, together with a detailed report of why we were recommending this route, and what works we considered to be necessary, were then submitted to Natural England in April 2018.</p> <p>Subsequently I have been in regular contact with the Natural England representatives for this section, and have made some further visits to the proposed section of path as changes in the situation occur. Also, I have been appraised regularly of the differences between our initial suggestions and the Natural England preferred route, all of which changes have been explained and the reasons for alternative routes discussed.</p>	

Finally, the Report published on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 was reported on at the Suffolk Area Ramblers AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> February, and has been made available to all interested parties in the Ramblers and local area groups. The responses from those consulted have been generally favourable, and any comments I have felt worthwhile in passing on to you for consideration, are on the accompanying notes 2, 3 and 4, and in particular note 5.

With the exception of BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023, as referred to in note 5, I would therefore, on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers, like to commend the proposed route for this section of the England Coast Path, and we look forward eagerly to the path being made available on the ground along the full length, and open to public use.

### **Note 3 – Representations on section BSA-2-S002 to BSA-2-S005 and BSA- 2-S028**

The Ramblers would like to commend in general the whole section of BSA-2-S002 and BSA-2-S003 as an enjoyable additional path to be available during the busiest parts of the year, April to August.

The Ramblers welcome the additional length of path being made available closer to the river edge.

The alternative route is a quite acceptable and pleasant inland route, which the Ramblers are happy to be used in order to protect wintering and passing wild birds.

The Ramblers also welcome the additional section of path BSA-2-S004 and BSA-2-S005, which had been suggested by members as a good route well away from Mill Lane and the busy farm tracks around Low Farm. Members had however been unable to recommend an appropriate line due to the lack of opportunity to survey all the private land around Sparrowhill Covert, and look forward to being able to use the whole of the proposed route from BSA-2-S004 to Mill Lane (BSA-2-S012).

The Ramblers also commend the inclusion of the whole route BSA-2-S028 to BSA-2-S035, and are very happy to accept the alternative route from Cook's Barn to The Fleet (BSA-2-S028) as a viable way of protecting wintering and passing birds during the quieter part of the year between September and April.

Notes 2, 4 and 5 refer to other Reports and will be included in those documents

### **Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the support of The Ramblers for the proposed routes around the Butley River.



<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA2/R/3/BSA0425
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	RSPB
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA 2 Butley Ferry to Orford Quay, Maps 2e, 2j, 2k, 2l
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	N/A
<b>Representation in full</b>	
<p>We welcome the proposals for an alternative route along the east and west sides of the Butley River between 1st September and 31st March to prevent disturbance to passage black-tailed godwit and other wintering wildfowl and waders.</p> <p>We are concerned about the effectiveness of mitigation measures, particularly in relation to excluded areas and where signage is used to encourage walkers to avoid sensitive areas for wildlife. Whilst we understand that the increase in the numbers of walkers and changes to the patterns of access are likely to be small, we consider it is essential that excluded areas are clearly marked on the ground and that signage is carefully located. We recommend that monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce these restrictions. With regard to the alternative route on the Butley River, we note that there may be a need for this alternative route to become permanent if disturbance to bird populations arises from use of the route closer to the river during the winter months despite the official diversion. The path on the eastern side of the river close to the river bend is of particular concern due to the proximity of key roosting areas.</p> <p>We agree that the saltmarsh area looks correctly mapped and that we are happy with its exclusion. Given the importance of these areas for nature conservation, we request that the saltmarsh and shingle area is excluded under s26 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) (nature conservation) to give additional protection to these shingle areas and avoid impacts should access restrictions for public safety purposes be lifted for any reason in future.</p> <p>Monitoring of the impacts of the path and the effectiveness of mitigation measures will be required and would welcome discussions with the RO to review the results of this. We wish to note, however, that while we carry out our own monitoring in line with our reserve management plans, we do not have sufficient resource to carry out the additional monitoring needed in relation to the new coast path.</p>	
<b>Natural England's comments</b>	

Natural England welcomes the support of the RSPB for the alternative routes on the Butley River.

NE can confirm that excluded areas will be clearly marked and NE is willing to discuss signage location with the RSPB.

The alternative route, as well as the main route will benefit by being managed to National Trail quality standards, that include regular monitoring of trail condition and associated signage or other new infrastructure. Should wider circumstances affecting the site change at any time in the future, Coast Path management can be adapted as necessary to avoid or reduce any possible negative impacts on sensitive sites. If needed NE would consider a change to the route. A key feature of ongoing National Trail management is to work closely with relevant landowners and site managers to identify and resolve any issues that might arise at an early stage.

Prior to opening the new trail, checks will be made to ensure that establishment works - including any special mitigation measures required at this stage - have been implemented. Once the Coast Path is open there will be regular ongoing monitoring of the condition of the trail and infrastructure.

Monitoring of the protected site will continue through established programmes including Natural England's Common Standards Monitoring protocols. Issues concerning achievement of conservation objectives for a site will usually be investigated through these arrangements. In the event that public access may be a contributing factor to any problems, coastal access provisions may need to be modified as part of the management response.

Common Standards Monitoring is the process by which the condition of all SSSIs are monitored at regular intervals, to assess the status of their notified features. This programme requires considerable NE resources. We welcome and do take full account of information from organisations or individuals. The Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) recorders will continue to monitor bird numbers and would alert NE if there was a dramatic change at specific locations. Of particular interest along this coastline is avian usage of areas near the Coast Path and if there are positive or negative impacts regarding walkers departing from the agreed path. Local observations of walkers' behaviour can be very valuable and NE hopes that RSPB staff would inform NE and Suffolk County Council in a spirit of partnership working if they observed behaviours that were causing concern. Should such observations reveal people commonly ignoring the Coast Path route and guidance then NE would review the situation, along with SCC.

Natural England is not proposing to put bespoke monitoring in place. Experience is that informal management techniques such as waymarks are effective ways to steer visitors to use a particular route.

The RSPB has requested that NE places a S26 (nature conservation) exclusion on 'saltmarsh and shingle'. NE has placed a S25A exclusion on coastal access rights on the saltmarsh and so there is no need to additionally restrict or exclude the same access rights under S26(3)(a). We tend to opt for S25A directions over conservation directions, because they are often more restrictive in terms of the times of year they apply to and the need for them is less vulnerable to change over time.

Much of the shingle cannot be accessed across the excluded saltmarsh. NE has acknowledged any relevant sensitive features that will be protected by a S25A exclusion in the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Nature Conservation Assessment. If in the future there is a proposal to remove or relax a Section 25A exclusion, NE would then reappraise the effects of those changes on sensitive features and determine whether a new S26(3)(a) is necessary.

The RSPB has requested that the shingle areas outside the boundary of the S25A exclusion have coastal access rights excluded for the purpose of nature conservation. The Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Nature Conservation Assessment assessed our coastal access proposal on the feature of nature conservation interest but did not conclude additional restrictions were necessary here. We note that in their comments, RSPB do not refer to specific features in this area. Should vulnerable species be present in these areas in future then we would consider the need for a further restriction at that time

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA Stretch/R/2/BSA0435
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-2-S001 to BSA-2-S045; BSA-2-A001 to BSA-2-A015
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	BSA Reports 1, 3, 4 and 5
<b>Representation in full</b>	

Suffolk County Council strongly supports the use of the estuary discretion in proposing an alignment of the National Trail around the Alde & Ore Estuary Complex, including the Butley River, using the first crossing point on the Alde at Snape bridge. (Option 1)

Much of the estuary is well served by public rights of way, but there are significant gaps which these reports will address, enabling walkers to avoid walking on the road between Bawdsey Manor (BSA-1-S002 to BSA-1-S018, and connecting the cul de sac public footpath on the east side of the Butley River to Gedgrave (BSA-2-S027 to BSA-2-S035).

The proposals in the 5 reports are welcomed and supported; they will provide a route that is available all year and continuous along the Suffolk coastline.

The County Council is concerned as to the future and allocation of the maintenance funding for National Trails.

The County Council would like to see those works proposed as mitigation to fulfil the objectives of the Habitat Regulations, included in the National Trail maintenance funding formula.

In addition, we would like to see those sections of the trail which are immediately adjacent to SSSIs and not just within the boundary, included in the uplift. It seems particularly unfortunate the funding formula neither recognises the necessity of ongoing funding for the mitigation works that enable the trail to be opened nor the proximity of the SSSI and SPA which requires those additional works. This is particularly pertinent as the proposed trail is immediately adjacent to the Alde & Ore Estuary SSSI for most of its length (BSA-1-S023 to BSA-4-S059)

As a public body the County Council must have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity (NERC Act 2006), so this will result in disproportionate pressure on the use of the maintenance funding for this stretch.

Overall, the County Council believes that the proposals for improving coastal access on this stretch of the coast strikes the appropriate balance between public and private interests and recreational and environmental objectives as required by the approved coastal access scheme.

#### **Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the support of Suffolk County Council in the use of estuary discretion for the proposals and the alignment around the Butley that improves the current RoW provision.

#### ***Other representations with common points***

**Representation ID:**

MCA/BSA Stretch/R/1/BSA0607

<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Whole length
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 2a to 2l
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-2-S001 to BSA-2-S045; BSA-2-A001 to A015
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 1, 3, 4 and 5

### **Summary of representation:**

The British Horse Society founded in 1947, is the largest and most influential equestrian charity in the UK with over 117,000 members. Two of the Society's objectives are: to promote community participation in healthy recreation involving the horse and to promote and secure the provision, protection and preservation of rights of way and of access for ridden and driven horses over public roads, highways, footpaths, bridleways, carriage ways, public paths and other land.

According to the Suffolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan, only 18% of Public Rights of Way are accessible to horse riders, forcing them onto busy, fast roads. Road safety is of particular concern to equestrians, who are vulnerable road users.: 'This rights of way network provides off-road access to services, links between settlements, and access into the countryside. The importance of rights of way, quality greenspaces, greenways and corridors, for an effective non-motorised urban transport network threading through urban areas and linking to more rural areas is recognised.' We would suggest this is included in the plans for the England Coast Path from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh which could show a trail blazing attitude to access throughout Suffolk.

The ECP from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh presents an opportunity to improve coastal access in Suffolk with benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors, promoting health and wellbeing. Suffolk County Council should be requesting permissive access for equestrians for the entire stretch providing a safe off-road route for vulnerable users resolving a number of anomalies where bridleways become dead ends at the coast.

The BHS encourages Natural England and Suffolk County Council to ensure any surfacing works future proof the route to enable equestrian access, foreseeing landowners granting permission for equestrian access, therefore routes should be surfaced as appropriate for the horse and rider. A natural surface, where well drained and free of excess vegetation, is ideal for horse and rider. Maintenance to surfaces must consider appropriate surface materials to avoid risk of injury caused by slippery materials e.g. tarmac, sharp stone and boggy or deeply rutted ground.

**Natural England's comment:**

We acknowledge the desirability of creating routes for horse-riders.

Natural England's duty under Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 is to create clear and consistent public rights along the English coast for open-air recreation on foot. On some sections of coast, existing rights will apply as well as or instead of coastal access rights, such as the right to ride a horse or bicycle on a bridleway or along a permissive route permitted by the landowner. However, our core remit is to propose the creation of a walking route.

Natural England can investigate the potential to create higher rights on the England Coast Path in locations identified by stakeholders at the outset of the project. However, we can only secure these where landowners are willing to offer them on a voluntary basis. In this instance we were not approached by any stakeholders seeking higher rights at the outset of the stretch project and no landowners asked us to consider proposing higher rights in our discussions with them.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/5/BSA0057
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST
<b>Name of site:</b>	Butley River
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps 2e, 2j, 2k, 2l
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-2-S001 to BSA-2-S045 BSA-2-A001 to BSA-2-A015
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

**Summary of representation:**

Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) welcomes the proposals for an alternative route along the Butley River between 1st September and 31st March to prevent disturbance to passage black-tailed godwit and other wintering wildfowl and waders.

Due to the risk of disturbance along this stretch of the coastal path, SWT recommends that monitoring of the effectiveness of the mitigation measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce the restrictions. SWT is concerned about the effectiveness of excluded areas and signage to encourage walkers to avoid sensitive areas for wildlife. Whilst SWT understands that the increase in the numbers of walkers and changes to the patterns of access are likely to be small, SWT considers it is essential that excluded areas are clearly marked on the ground and that signage is carefully located. We recommend that monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce these restrictions.

SWT recommends that collaboration with the Suffolk Disturbance Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB should be sought for the employment of 'educators' at parking areas near to sensitive areas within the section to inform users of the importance of the area for wildlife and the behaviour that is required to ensure that there is no disturbance.

**Natural England's comment:**

Natural England welcomes the support of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust for the alternative routes on the Butley River.

NE can confirm that excluded areas will be clearly marked and NE is willing to discuss signage location with SWT.

The alternative route, as well as the main route will benefit by being managed to National Trail quality standards, that include regular monitoring of trail condition and associated signage or other new infrastructure. Should wider circumstances affecting the site change at any time in the future, Coast Path management can be adapted as necessary to avoid or reduce any possible negative impacts on sensitive sites. If needed NE would consider a change to the route. A key feature of ongoing National Trail management is to work closely with relevant landowners and site managers to identify and resolve any issues that might arise at an early stage.

Prior to opening the new trail, checks will be made to ensure that establishment works - including any special mitigation measures required at this stage - have been implemented. Once the Coast Path is open there will be regular ongoing monitoring of the condition of the trail and infrastructure.

Monitoring of the protected site will continue through established programmes including Natural England's Common Standards Monitoring protocols. Issues concerning achievement of conservation objectives for a site will usually be investigated through these arrangements. In the event that public access may be a contributing factor to any problems, coastal access provisions may need to be modified as part of the management response.

Common Standards Monitoring is the process by which the condition of all SSSIs are monitored at regular intervals, to assess the status of their notified features. This programme requires considerable NE resources. We welcome and do take full account of information from organisations or individuals. The Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) recorders will continue to monitor bird numbers and would alert NE if there was a dramatic change at specific locations. Of particular interest along this coastline is avian usage of areas near the Coast Path and if there are positive or negative impacts regarding walkers departing from the agreed path. Local observations of walkers' behaviour can be very valuable and NE hopes that SWT staff would inform NE and Suffolk County Council in a spirit of partnership working if they observed behaviours that were causing concern. Should such observations reveal people commonly ignoring the Coast Path route and guidance then NE would review the situation, along with SCC.

Natural England is not proposing to put bespoke monitoring in place. Experience is that informal management techniques such as waymarks are effective ways to steer visitors to use a particular route.

Natural England would welcome the involvement of the Suffolk Disturbance Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB in helping people understand the special character of the area.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA2/R/16/BSA0741
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	[redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Butley River
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 2a to 2l
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-2-S001 to BSA-2-S039 BSA-2-A001 to BSA-2-A015



<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A
<b>Summary of representation</b>  I am really very pleased with the proposal to allow access along the sea wall along the Butley River from the Butley ferry to Chillesford and back down the opposite bank. I can't wait to walk along it. Well done to the negotiating team for achieving this. I wish it success.	
<b>Natural England's comment:</b>  Natural England welcomes [redacted] support for the route proposals.	

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Whole Stretch/R/4/BSA0731
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	WATER MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Whole length
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 2a to 2l
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-2-S001 to BSA-2-S045; BSA-2-A001 to BSA-2-A015
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 1, 3, 4 and 5

<b>Summary of representation:</b>  Reminder that the proposals are partly within the Internal Drainage District (IDD) of the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and therefore the Board's Byelaws apply and can be found on their website, along with maps of the IDD. The maps also show which watercourses have been designated as 'Adopted Watercourses'. The adoption of a watercourse is an acknowledgement by the Board that the water- course is of arterial importance to the IDD and as such will normally receive maintenance from the IDB.  The currently proposed route will be close to Board drainage infrastructure including multiple Adopted watercourses (listed). Any works within 9 metres of said infrastructure (including signage or path resurfacing) will normally require consent to relax Byelaw 10 (no works within 9 metres of the edge of drainage or flood risk management infrastructure).	
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While no evidence in the current plans, should the proposal require any works to alter a watercourse (adopted or riparian), through culverting, in-filling or similar, consent will be required under the Land Drainage Act 1991 (and byelaw 4).

While the IDB is not the regulator, it does actively manage higher water levels in Iken, Chillesford and Butley in order to maximise biodiversity and encourage and maintain wildlife function. The IDB is concerned that public access to some of these sites (which are all very close to SSSIs, RAMSAR, SPA and SAC sites) may be detrimental to their efforts and would be happy to provide Natural England with any input in order to reduce said impact.

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

Natural England appreciates the IDBs engagement in the development of our proposals and the reminder of the responsibilities associated with the IDB's work. We will pass these comments on to Suffolk County Council to consider and obtain any necessary permissions as part of their works to establish the trail.

Natural England thank the IDB for their work in maximising the environmental benefits from the drainage system. We have carefully considered the impacts of promoting enhanced public access through the England Coast Path on both the international and domestically protected sites in the area through two documents that supported the publication. These being the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the international sites and the Nature Conservation Assessment (NCA) for the domestic sites. The NCA also considered any adverse interactions with wildlife more generally. Through these two documents developed with the support of wildlife specialists and enthusiasts we believe we have balanced Natural England's public commitments to wildlife and public access.

## **Length Report BSA4 - Ferry Lane (track) to Hazlewood Marshes car park**

### ***Full representations***

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA4/R/11/BSA0419
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-4-S004 to BSA-4-S015 BSA-4-S060 to BSA-4-S068
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	N/A
<b>Representation in full</b>	

### **Note 1**

This representation is made on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers and are attached to the general representation form for the whole section.

All of this section was surveyed by members of Suffolk Area Ramblers during 2017 and early 2018, and meetings were held with the relevant Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Officers.

Following further discussion with interested members of the Ramblers in the area, maps of the Ramblers suggested route, together with a detailed report of why we were recommending this route, and what works we considered to be necessary, were then submitted to Natural England in April 2018.

Subsequently I have been in regular contact with the Natural England representatives for this section, and have made some further visits to the proposed section of path as changes in the situation occur. Also, I have been appraised regularly of the differences between our initial suggestions and the Natural England preferred route, all of which changes have been explained and the reasons for alternative routes discussed.

Finally, the Report published on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 was reported on at the Suffolk Area Ramblers AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> February and has been made available to all interested parties in the Ramblers and local area groups. The responses from those consulted have been generally favourable, and any comments I have felt worthwhile in passing on to you for consideration, are on the accompanying notes 2, 3 and 4, and in particular note 5.

With the exception of BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023, as referred to in note 5, I would therefore, on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers, like to commend the proposed route for this section of the England Coast Path, and we look forward eagerly to the path being made available on the ground along the full length, and open to public use.

### **Note 4- Representation on sections BSA-4-S004 to BSA-4-S015 and BSA-4-S060 to BSA-4-S068**

The Ramblers are disappointed not to be able to use the river wall alongside the river for any of the section from the footbridge at Short Reach round to Iken (BSA-4-S004 to BSA-4-S015). The inland route proposed is a very long way from the coast, and whereas the S24 and S26 restrictions are understood, and there is also a possibility of a managed retreat over the marsh area flood plain, such restrictions do not affect existing public rights of way, and there is an existing permissive path round much of the river wall.

The Ramblers were anticipating the possibility of the coastal path being proposed all the way round this section, and only having to use the inland highway as an alternative route between September and March. We would recommend that this option be reconsidered and investigated further.

The Ramblers are also disappointed that a route could not be found south of Snape Warren, using the existing public right of way from BSA-4-S059 around the edge of Snape Warren, and behind New England Farm to re-join the 'Sailors Path' at Black Heath Wood (in the region of BSA-4-S068). Again, we were anticipating the possibility of the coastal path being proposed all the way round this section, and only having to use the inland highway as an alternative route between September and March. We would further recommend that this option also be reconsidered and investigated further.

(Notes 2, 3 and 5 refer to other Reports and will be included in those documents)

### **Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the Ramblers Association support for most of the proposed route.

Natural England welcomes the understanding of the Ramblers Association about the reasons bank-top access could not be proposed. The Ramblers Association has said that there is permissive access along much of the sea bank however the Ramblers Association has clarified that this relates to a single event where owners gave permission to an organised walk by members of a local organisation

The representation references that the restrictions do not apply to public rights of way which is correct. Natural England observes that there are no rights of way in this area.

The Ramblers Association was anticipating a seasonal alternative route and recommended that this option be reconsidered and investigated further. The bank top route looks over designated sites that were considered as part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). As a result of that assessment it was not possible to use the bank top route because of the possibility of disturbance from walkers and dogs. A nature conservation restriction [S26(3)(a)] has therefore been proposed to prevent disturbance of breeding and passage birds. When a section of ECP is proposed it needs to link with available sections of path on both sides and at Iken a complicated situation of exclusions and restrictions (described in Report 4.2.14 and table 4.3.2) meant that a bank top route could not form part of the final proposals for any part of the year. An alternative route was therefore not required and Natural England does not propose to reconsider the route alignment.

The Ramblers Association was disappointed that a route could not be found seaward of Snape Warren. Natural England considered options in that area but the requirement of a year-round exclusion for nature conservation reasons (Report 4.2.14) meant it was not possible. Routes further inland, through Snape Warren were also not possible because of an increased risk of bird disturbance (Report table 4.3.2) as assessed in the HRA. The proposed route is supported by the RSPB who manage the site as a reserve. Natural England therefore does not propose to reconsider the route alignment.

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA4/R/20/BSA0425
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	RSPB
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	Maps BSA 4a-h BSA-4-S001 to BSA-4-S088
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	N/A

#### **Representation in full**

We are content with the route proposed through RSPB Snape Warren.

We welcome the s26(3)(a) restrictions proposed for the river bank at Iken and the marshes at Stanny Farm due to the high usage of this part of the estuary by wildfowl and waders. We support the concerns of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, that there are remaining sensitive areas around Short Reach which may need consideration of a further inland diversion to avoid disturbance. We are also concerned about the effectiveness of mitigation measures, particularly in relation to excluded areas and where signage is used to encourage walkers to avoid sensitive areas for wildlife. Whilst we understand that the increase in the numbers of walkers and changes to the patterns of access are

likely to be small, we consider it is essential that excluded areas are clearly marked on the ground and that signage is carefully located. We recommend that monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce these restrictions.

Monitoring of the impacts of the path and the effectiveness of mitigation measures will be required and would welcome discussions with the RO to review the results of this. We wish to note, however, that while we carry out our own monitoring in line with our reserve management plans, we do not have sufficient resource to carry out the additional monitoring needed in relation to the new coast path.

We agree that the saltmarsh area looks correctly mapped and that we are happy with its exclusion. Given the importance of these areas for nature conservation, we request that the saltmarsh is also excluded under s26 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) (nature conservation) to avoid impacts should access restrictions for public safety purposes be lifted for any reason in future.

### **Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the support of the RSPB for its route proposals through Snape Warren reserve and the nature conservation restrictions at Stanny Farm.

NE can confirm that excluded areas will be clearly marked and NE is willing to discuss signage location.

The RSPB has said it supports the concerns of Suffolk Wildlife Trust for the route at Stanny House Farm (Short Reach) and this point is considered in full in their own representation below.

The alternative route, as well as the main route will benefit by being managed to National Trail quality standards, that include regular monitoring of trail condition and associated signage or other new infrastructure. Should wider circumstances affecting the site change at any time in the future, Coast Path management can be adapted as necessary to avoid or reduce any possible negative impacts on sensitive sites. If needed NE would consider a change to the route. A key feature of ongoing National Trail management is to work closely with relevant landowners and site managers to identify and resolve any issues that might arise at an early stage.

Prior to opening the new trail, checks will be made to ensure that establishment works -including any special mitigation measures required at this stage - have been implemented. Once the Coast Path is open there will be regular ongoing monitoring of the condition of the trail and infrastructure.

Monitoring of the protected site will continue through established programmes including Natural England's Common Standards Monitoring protocols. Issues concerning achievement of conservation objectives for a site will usually be investigated through these arrangements. In the event that public access may be a contributing factor to any problems, coastal access provisions may need to be modified as part of the management response.

Common Standards Monitoring is the process by which the condition of all SSSIs are monitored at regular intervals, to assess the status of their notified features. This programme requires considerable NE resources. We welcome and do take full account of information from organisations or individuals. The Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) recorders will continue to monitor bird numbers and would alert NE if there was a dramatic change at specific locations. Of particular interest along this coastline is avian usage of areas near the Coast Path and if there are positive or negative

impacts regarding walkers departing from the agreed path. Local observations of walkers' behaviour can be very valuable and NE hopes that RSPB staff would inform NE and Suffolk County Council in a spirit of partnership working if they observed behaviours that were causing concern. Should such observations reveal people commonly ignoring the Coast Path route and guidance then NE would review the situation, along with SCC.

Natural England is not proposing to put bespoke monitoring in place. Experience is that informal management techniques such as waymarks are effective ways to steer visitors to use a particular route.

The RSPB has requested that NE places a S26 (nature conservation) exclusion on 'saltmarsh and shingle'. NE has placed a S25A exclusion on coastal access rights on the saltmarsh and so there is no need to additionally restrict or exclude the same access rights under S26(3)(a). We tend to opt for S25A directions over conservation directions, because they are often more restrictive in terms of the times of year they apply to and the need for them is less vulnerable to change over time. If in the future there is a proposal to remove or relax a Section 25A exclusion, NE would then reappraise the effects of those changes on sensitive features and determine whether a new S26(3)(a) is necessary.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Stretch/R/28/BSA0435
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
<b>Name of site:</b>	Whole report
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 4a to 4h
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-4-S001 to BSA-4-S088
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 1, 2, 3 and 5

Suffolk County Council strongly supports the use of the estuary discretion in proposing an alignment of the National Trail around the Alde & Ore Estuary Complex, including the Butley River, using the first crossing point on the Alde at Snape bridge. (Option 1)

Much of the estuary is well served by public rights of way, but there are significant gaps which these reports will address, enabling walkers to avoid walking on the road between Bawdsey Manor (BSA-1-S002 to BSA-1-S018, and connecting the cul de sac public footpath on the east side of the Butley River to Gedgrave (BSA-2-S027 to BSA-2-S035).

The proposals in the 5 reports are welcomed and supported; they will provide a route that is available all year and continuous along the Suffolk coastline.

The County Council is concerned as to the future and allocation of the maintenance funding for National Trails.

The County Council would like to see those works proposed as mitigation to fulfil the objectives of the Habitat Regulations, included in the National Trail maintenance funding formula.

In addition, we would like to see those sections of the trail which are immediately adjacent to SSSIs

and not just within the boundary, included in the uplift. It seems particularly unfortunate the funding formula neither recognises the necessity of ongoing funding for the mitigation works that enable the trail to be opened nor the proximity of the SSSI and SPA which requires those additional works. This is particularly pertinent as the proposed trail is immediately adjacent to the Alde & Ore Estuary SSSI for most of its length (BSA-1-SO23 to BSA-4-SO59)

As a public body the County Council must have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity (NERC Act 2006), so this will result in disproportionate pressure on the use of the maintenance funding for this stretch.

Overall, the County Council believes that the proposals for improving coastal access on this stretch of the coast strikes the appropriate balance between public and private interests and recreational and environmental objectives as required by the approved coastal access scheme.

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

Natural England welcomes the support of Suffolk County Council in the use of estuary discretion for the proposals. Many of the location mentioned by SCC in its representation refer to other reports. NE has dealt with those specific points in our comments relating to those reports

In relation to the comments regarding a financial uplift for those sections of the trail that run immediately adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), NE acknowledge that Suffolk County Council has concerns in this area. As noted, the current uplift applies only where the trail runs directly through a SSSI. This is to recognise the potential for additional maintenance costs to be incurred and this element of the current funding formula was originally agreed by a stakeholder group representing all the established National Trails in England following a review of funding that was completed in 2013. A subsequent review by a group representing all the trails was carried out in 2015. It is NE's intention to undertake a further review of the funding formula as the England Coast Path (ECP) is completed so that NE can look to see if there are any changes that should be made. This process will begin later this year and will be carried out with the involvement of ECP managers. Suffolk Council's constructive input will be welcomed as part of this process although NE is not making any assumptions at this time as to how this review may change the existing formula.

#### ***Other representations with common points***

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Stretch/R/8/BSA0607
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Entire report
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 4a to 4h
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-4-S001 to BSA-4-S088
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 1, 2, 3 and 5

## **Summary of representation:**

The British Horse Society founded in 1947, is the largest and most influential equestrian charity in the UK with over 117,000 members. Two of the Society's objectives are: to promote community participation in healthy recreation involving the horse and to promote and secure the provision, protection and preservation of rights of way and of access for ridden and driven horses over public roads, highways, footpaths, bridleways, carriage ways, public paths and other land.

According to the Suffolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan, only 18% of Public Rights of Way are accessible to horse riders, forcing them onto busy, fast roads. Road safety is of particular concern to equestrians, who are vulnerable road users.: 'This rights of way network provides off-road access to services, links between settlements, and access into the countryside. The importance of rights of way, quality greenspaces, greenways and corridors, for an effective non-motorised urban transport network threading through urban areas and linking to more rural areas is recognised.' We would suggest this is included in the plans for the England Coast Path from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh which could show a trail blazing attitude to access throughout Suffolk.

The ECP from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh presents an opportunity to improve coastal access in Suffolk with benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors, promoting health and wellbeing. Suffolk County Council should be requesting permissive access for equestrians for the entire stretch providing a safe off-road route for vulnerable users resolving a number of anomalies where bridleways become dead ends at the coast.

The BHS encourages Natural England and Suffolk County Council to ensure any surfacing works future proof the route to enable equestrian access, foreseeing landowners granting permission for equestrian access, therefore routes should be surfaced as appropriate for the horse and rider. A natural surface, where well drained and free of excess vegetation, is ideal for horse and rider. Maintenance to surfaces must consider appropriate surface materials to avoid risk of injury caused by slippery materials e.g. tarmac, sharp stone and boggy or deeply rutted ground.

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

We acknowledge the desirability of creating routes for horse-riders.

Natural England's duty under Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 is to create clear and consistent public rights along the English coast for open-air recreation on foot. On some sections of coast, existing rights will apply as well as or instead of coastal access rights, such as the right to ride a horse or bicycle on a bridleway or along a permissive route permitted by the landowner. However, our core remit is to propose the creation of a walking route.

Natural England can investigate the potential to create higher rights on the England Coast Path in locations identified by stakeholders at the outset of the project. However, we can only secure these where landowners are willing to offer them on a voluntary basis. In this instance we were not approached by any stakeholders seeking higher rights at the outset of the stretch project and no landowners asked us to consider proposing higher rights in our discussions with them.



<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA4/R/24/BSA0057
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST (1 <sup>st</sup> Representation)
<b>Name of site:</b>	Stanny House, Iken
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps BSA 4a and BSA 4b
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-4-S001 to BSA-4-S012
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

#### **Summary of representation:**

Suffolk Wildlife Trust is concerned that the proposals will cause disturbance to breeding marsh harrier, as well as other breeding and wintering birds. SWT has been supplied with records from this area of breeding marsh harrier, a qualifying feature of the Alde-Ore Marshes Special Protected Area (SPA) and listed as a species of national importance within the Alde-Ore Estuary Ramsar citation by the local landowner. Further records from the landowner include the use of the site by other species including avocet (a qualifying feature of the SPA and Ramsar), redshank (a qualifying feature of the SPA and Ramsar) and barn owl (mentioned within the SPA citation). There are also records of other species including curlew, black tailed godwit and bittern from Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS). The records are very close to the proposed route and so there is a high risk of disturbance from pedestrians and dogs. SWT is concerned that, whilst it is considered only a small increase, there has the potential to be a rise in footfall in this area and so therefore a high risk of potential disturbance to qualifying species of the SPA and Ramsar as well as other sensitive wildlife.

SWT welcomes the exclusion of access onto Stanny Marshes under Section 26(3)(a) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) between points BSA-4-S004 to BSA-4-S014. SWT is concerned that the breeding areas are also inland of the marshes and so this measure does not offer enough protection. SWT is also concerned about the effectiveness of the erection of information boards and signage as a deterrent to prevent people from accessing the bank, leaving the path and disturbing wildlife sensitive areas. Therefore, in order to prevent disturbance, SWT proposes that a different route which diverts inland at BSA-4-S001, following the track to Cowton House before following a route back towards the coast and re-joining the proposed coastal path around High Street. SWT is happy to discuss this matter further with Natural England following the conclusion of the consultation period. SWT also requests that the current Public Right of Way along the coast at this section route is removed, to prevent disturbance to the breeding and wintering birds.

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

SWT is concerned about the potential disturbance to marsh harrier, avocet and redshank; Natural England assessed the potential impact on these species as part of the published HRA and concluded there was no significant impact. There are currently no access rights on to Iken Marsh at Stanny House Farm and this will remain unchanged. Natural England is proposing restrictions for nature conservation (CROW s26(3)(a)) on all areas of the Marsh (including the bank) seaward of

the route and also for saltmarsh (s25A). These are detailed in Report 4 and shown on Map E4. At this point the proposed alignment is some way inland and the coastal margin includes the northern Marsh as well as land that is excepted due to it being arable fields. It has been suggested to Natural England that future management changes will include screening near the public footpath and positioning of new habitat scrapes away from it and so the presence of the public footpath is being included in future plans.

Natural England note that there is a concern regarding increased footfall along the proposed route. This route is a public right of way and currently available for use. It would remain available even if a different route alignment was established as this would not automatically extinguish the public right of way. Natural England note that the land use for a section of the proposed route cuts through the coastal grazing marshes, before connecting with the arable land for the western section.



SWT has expressed concern about disturbance to barn owls. In general barn owls are not too sensitive to walkers, often hunting for food within 100-200m. The Coast Path route follows an existing right of way (or the existing nearly walked route that is used) for BSA-4-S001 to the road at BSA-4-S014 and so barn owls will be used to seeing the path being used and there will be some habituation to walkers.

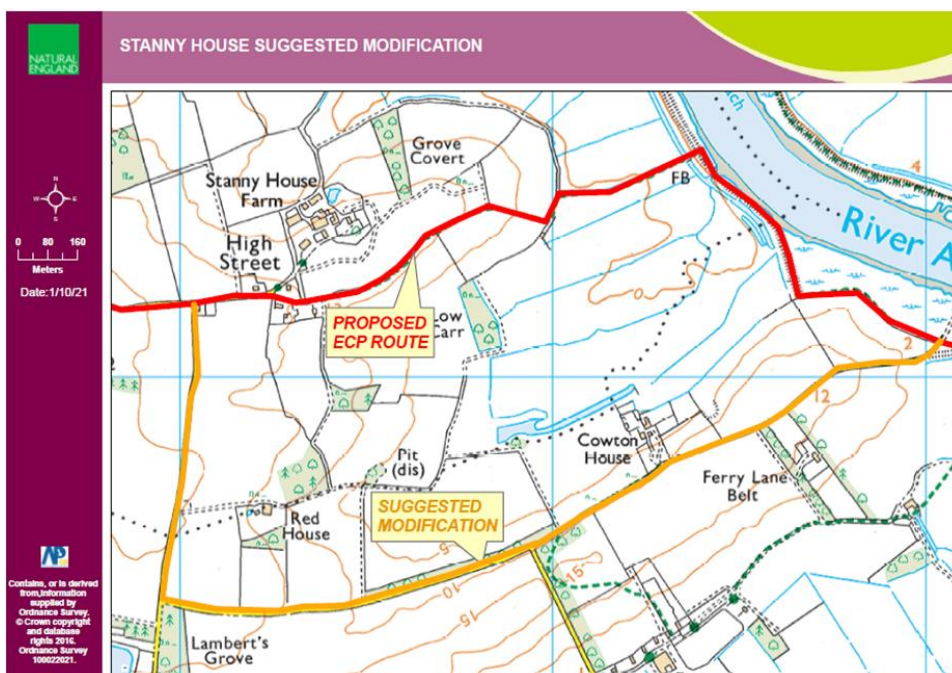
SWT expresses concern that bird breeding areas are also inland of the marshes. The area between the marshes and proposed ECP route is mainly arable and the Scheme (Figure 1) says that any land in the coastal margin that has been disturbed by ploughing or drilling in the previous

12 months is excepted from coastal access rights. Areas landward of the ECP that may be used by marsh harriers are unaffected by ECP proposals and do not have access rights.

The large area of suitable habitat (so that birds do not need to be near the ECP), combined with the s25A and s26(3)(a) year-round access restrictions to prevent access to the river wall and marshes will reduce the potential for bird disturbance and therefore the HRA concluded there is no significant risk.

SWT is concerned about access on to the bank and has a concern about the ineffective deterrent value of information boards and signage. NE notes there is currently no right of access on to the bank and no new right of access will be created by the ECP because the area will be subject to an access exclusion for nature conservation reasons. The landowners can continue to prevent access to the marshlands and bank by locked gates or other suitable means. Information boards that have been proposed in the HRA will explain the importance of the estuary and adjacent habitats, such as wet grassland, and seek to gain compliance with the restrictions on areas without access by explaining why the margin is restricted.

SWT has expressed concern over the route proposal at Stanny House Farm and has proposed that the ECP route is moved to a more southerly public footpath. SWT has said it is happy to discuss this matter further but the published route in this location, along with the suggested change is the subject of an objection by the landowner. However, such a change would mean BSA-4-S001 to BSA-4-S003 would not be alongside the river and so would create a longer inland section. A key principle in the Scheme (4.5.1) is that *'the route should normally be close to the sea otherwise it would fail in its primary purpose'* and 4.7.1 to use existing clearly used routes. The proposed route has a longer length that is closer to the sea which is a better fit with the statutory criteria and reduces the amount of seaward coastal margin. The proposed route uses a public footpath overlooking the estuary and the inland sections BSA-4-S005 to BSA-4-S014 are also mainly on a public footpath and NE believes it best fulfils the criteria in the Scheme. NE anticipates only a small increase in use of the Coast Path along this section because of its remoteness from services (e.g. 9km from Orford and 4km from the nearest public car park at Iken Cliff).



SWT also wants closure of the public footpath that is the proposed route of the ECP. Natural England does not have a role in modifying the rights of way network. NE cannot therefore close the footpath, but the landowner can apply to the local authority to have it closed (though NE notes this same option has been available to the current owners, but has not been pursued to date).

The route will benefit by being managed to National Trail quality standards that include regular monitoring of trail condition and associated signage or other new infrastructure.

Should wider circumstances affecting the site change at any time in the future, Coast Path management can be adapted as necessary to avoid or reduce any possible negative impacts on sensitive sites. Should new evidence be made available of the impact of the ECP then new restrictions or ultimately a new alignment could be considered.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA4/R/25/BSA0057
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST (2nd Representation)
<b>Name of site:</b>	Iken Cliffs
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps BSA 4d and 4e
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-4-S027, BSA-4-S029, BSA-4-S037
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

#### **Summary of representation:**

Suffolk Wildlife Trust welcomes the proposed placement of brash piles to act as barriers at Iken Cliffs to protect the reedbeds that are between the footpath and the saltmarsh. SWT also welcomes the s26(3)(a) restrictions proposed for the riverbank at Iken.

Due to the risk of disturbance along this stretch of the coastal path, SWT recommends that monitoring of the effectiveness of the mitigation measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce the restrictions. SWT is concerned about the effectiveness of excluded areas and signage to encourage walkers to avoid sensitive areas for wildlife. SWT understands that the increase in the numbers of walkers and changes to the patterns of access are likely to be small, and considers it is essential that excluded areas are clearly marked on the ground and that signage is carefully located. SWT recommends that monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures is carried out and consider that further mitigation may be needed if mapping and signage are not sufficient to enforce these restrictions.

SWT recommends that collaboration with the Suffolk Disturbance Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB should be sought for the employment of 'educators' at parking areas near to sensitive areas within the section to inform users of the

importance of the area for wildlife and the behaviour that is required to ensure that there is no disturbance.

**Natural England's comment:**

Natural England welcomes the support of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust in the work NE is doing to protect the reedbeds.

The proposed ECP is already a public footpath, route of the Suffolk Coast Path and a popular walk between Snape Maltings and Iken church.

NE can confirm that excluded areas will be clearly marked and NE is willing to discuss signage location.

The route will benefit by being managed to National Trail quality standards, that include regular monitoring of trail condition and associated signage or other new infrastructure. Should wider circumstances affecting the site change at any time in the future, Coast Path management can be adapted as necessary to avoid or reduce any possible negative impacts on sensitive sites. If needed NE would consider a change to the route. A key feature of ongoing National Trail management is to work closely with relevant landowners and site managers to identify and resolve any issues that might arise at an early stage.

Monitoring of the protected site will continue through established programmes including Natural England's Common Standards Monitoring protocols. Issues concerning achievement of conservation objectives for a site will usually be investigated through these arrangements. In the event that public access may be a contributing factor to any problems, coastal access provisions may need to be modified as part of the management response.

Common Standards Monitoring is the process by which the condition of all SSSIs are monitored at regular intervals, to assess the status of their notified features. This programme requires considerable NE resources. We welcome and do take full account of information from organisations or individuals. The Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) recorders will continue to monitor bird numbers and would alert NE if there was a dramatic change at specific locations. Of particular interest along this coastline is avian usage of areas near the Coast Path and if there are positive or negative impacts regarding walkers departing from the agreed path. Local observations of walkers' behaviour can be very valuable and NE hopes that RSPB staff would inform NE and Suffolk County Council in a spirit of partnership working if they observed behaviours that were causing concern. Should such observations reveal people commonly ignoring the Coast Path route and guidance then NE would review the situation, along with SCC.

NE agrees with SWT that the proposals for the Coast Path will not substantially alter the present access situation and so sees no need for additional monitoring. Experience is that informal management techniques such as waymarks are effective ways to steer visitors to use a particular route.

Natural England would welcome the involvement of the Suffolk Disturbance Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB in helping people understand the

special character of the area.



<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA4/R/5/BSA0191
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	[redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Iken Cliffs
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Map BSA 4d
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-4-S019
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

### Summary of representation:

[redacted] would like formally to object (and has completed a separate objection form about the issues he refers to in this representation) to the proposed Route Section BSA-4-S019 of the Coastal Path through Iken, but not other sections passing through his land.

Overall, he is very supportive of the Coastal Path and the principle of better public access to the coast. With this in mind he suggested to Natural England that they could consider using a different route for the Coast Path on his land than the existing public footpath close to the river.

He now understands that the ECP process does not close the existing public footpath and so there will be two parallel paths over the same section which he says will be double the work for him including litter picking and general management.

[redacted] hoped to divert the public footpath on to the line of the ECP but has found it is likely to be difficult to achieve and he would have to pay the costs. The process is open to public consultation and can attract objections. The County Council is not unhappy that the proposed alignment of the ECP is moved to the same alignment as the public footpath.

When [redacted] was considering an objection, Natural England advised that the creation of the England Coast Path is separate to any changes to the public footpath network and so it does not have a role in supporting a change to an existing footpath.

For the reasons above [redacted] objects to the proposed route of Section BSA-4-S019, that he initially offered and asks that it follows the line of the existing public right of way.

[redacted] also suggests that brash wood is used (similar to that proposed for Iken Cliff) to prevent disturbance to the birds in Church Marshes. He says that it might also be helpful to ask for dogs to be on a lead for this section so as not to stray into the marshes and alarm the birds.

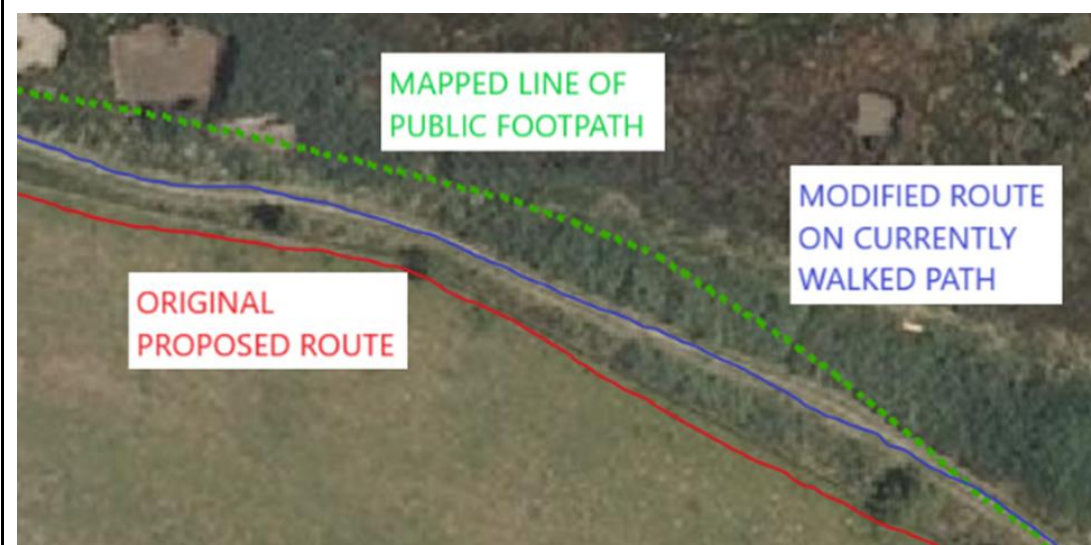
### Natural England's comment:

[redacted] has worked closely with NE during the alignment process, for which we are grateful. Since learning of the misunderstanding regarding the existing PRoW, NE is minded to agree with [redacted] proposed change to the line of the ECP and ask that the Secretary of State approves the following modified proposals to align the ECP on a public footpath that is seaward of the route offered by [redacted].

Suffolk County Council is content with the change to the public footpath.



The published mapping shows there are some places along Iken Cliffs where the currently walked route is slightly different to the mapped line of the public footpath and so for those sections the alignment is shown as ‘Other existing walked route’ though users would not realise they are off the line of the footpath.



[redacted] suggests that brash is used to prevent disturbance to the birds by dogs, but the area he suggests is open saltmarsh, rather than the gaps mentioned in the report that have been created in reedbeds that can be ‘plugged’ by brash.

[redacted] also suggests that dogs should be on a lead and this message has already been identified in the HRA as being a point in the proposed information boards to promote positive visitor behaviours requesting that dogs are not permitted to enter the water or to chase bird interest.

Modified proposals for Iken Cliffs resulting from objection

BSA 4d	BSA-4-S019a	Public footpath	Yes - See table 4.3.4	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
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BSA 4d	BSA-4-S019b	Other existing walked route	Yes - See table 4.3.4	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
BSA 4d	BSA-4-S019c	Public footpath	Yes - See table 4.3.4	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA4/R/7/BSA0543
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	[redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Entire report
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps BSA 4a to 4h
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	<p>Ferry Lane to Hazlewood car park - BSA-4-S001 to BSA-4-S088</p> <p>Stanny to Church Farm Corner (The Anchorage) - BSA-4-S015</p> <p>Blackheath - BSA-4-S060 to S080</p>
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

### Summary of representation:

[redacted] notes that it is deeply disappointing that in this report no improved access is proposed and points out that walkers will continue to walk the 4 kms of existing path and that the other 7kms of the route does not even have a view of the estuary. He says it is an egregious outcome for the 5 or so years work by Natural England and is sorely disappointing to walkers. He says it represents an appalling return on the investment of public money into finding improved access.

[redacted] urges the Secretary of State to reject the proposals for this report and insist new proposals are brought forward which actually represent an “improvement in access”.

### Comparison with the proposals for the Butley River

[redacted] notes that proposals for the Butley River bring a significant improvement in access, to about half the total length of the river, in contrast to the proposals in this report.

### Heavy Traffic makes route too dangerous

[redacted] is shocked at the proposals for a route along 2km of single-track lane from Stanny to Church Farm Corner which almost no one presently walks because of the dangers of the very heavy (and usually speeding) agricultural vehicles during summer and autumn months. He says walkers normally miss that stretch out and start/ finish walks at either Iken Church or Stanny.

The weight of traffic along the lane is remarkably heavy at high season when the path is at its busiest because it is fed by the long tributary farm tracks that feed into this lane along the 5 kms of lane from Orford to Iken.

If permission is given to upgrade the Iken river walls (expected later in 2021) then up to 35,000 clay lorry deliveries will be using this stretch of lane making it lethal. Matters are made even worse by the absence along parts of the lane of any verges on which walkers can stand to allow the heavy farm machinery (and any future clay deliveries) to pass not to speak of all the other vehicular traffic coming from Orford (the lane is a favourite "back route"). As a parent he would be most worried about any teenagers and children walking along the stretches unaccompanied by a supervising adult. In short, the proposals, as far as Iken is concerned, are actually very dangerous.

Natural England should be taking account of the dangers this road poses and needs to consider how they can be ameliorated which probably means re-evaluating the river walls route in high summer.

#### Excuse of birds used to avoid proposing river wall route

[redacted] is puzzled that preliminary proposals were for the path to run along the river walls for two months in the summer and says it is disappointing that the final proposal no longer includes the summer route along the river walls which would have been a stunning path to walk and a considerable improvement in access. He says that no reason has been given for why Natural England has backed down on the summer route.

#### Unambitious proposal around Blackheath

On the Blackheath side of the river the route runs along the Sailors Path for some 3km in woodland with absolutely no view of the river is. There is only one house, Blackheath House, which might need to be circumvented so the proposed route can only be described as unambitious.

[redacted] urges the Secretary of State to reject the routes on this stretch and insist Natural England comes up with an improved proposal.

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

[redacted] is disappointed that no 'improved' access has been created in Report 4. Natural England uses the most appropriate route, following the key ECP criteria of the Scheme and for most of report 4 has proposed existing access as the best route. There are many other considerations than creating new access when determining a route alignment and certain land uses and wildlife interests may push an alignment some way from those features in order to develop a continuous route alignment. Even where public rights of way have been used, the access has been improved through the enhancements to National Trail standard, the creating of spreading room to the seaward side and the ability for rollback of the trail so that a route will always stay open, unlike a public right of way.

#### Comparison with Butley

When aligning the ECP, each stretch of coastline is considered on its own merits, taking into account unique land uses and landforms. It is not possible to compare one section to another as everywhere is different.

### Traffic

The road route has been assessed by a highways engineer from Suffolk County Council who noted good visibility and available places so walkers could step off the road. He did not have any concerns about using the proposed route as the ECP. As part of implementation process 'pedestrians in the road' signs will be installed. [redacted] states that most of the traffic is farm vehicles in which case their repeated use of the route will mean they become aware of the possibility of walkers.

[redacted] is concerned about future lorry movements connected with improvements to the sea bank. If there is a large increase in heavy traffic, NE can consider whether mitigation measures are necessary. One of the options that could be considered is the creation of a temporary route away from the road (Scheme figure 17) while the work takes place.

### Birds

[redacted] notes that the NE initial proposals had the route on the bank for two months in the year. He says that '*no reason*' is given but NE refers to report section 4.2.14 that states the reasons for the various restrictions and exclusions in the area.

In the proposals report Natural England wrote (table 4.3.2) that it had considered aligning on the route that [redacted] suggests. The bank top route looks over designated sites that were considered as part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). As a result of that assessment it was not possible to use the bank top route because of the possibility of disturbance from walkers and dogs. A nature conservation restriction [S26(3)(a)] has therefore been proposed to prevent disturbance of breeding and passage birds.

When a section of ECP is proposed it needs to link with available sections of path on both sides and at Iken a complicated situation of year-round exclusions and restrictions either side meant that in the end a bank top route could not be proposed for any part of the year.

### Blackheath

[redacted] describes the route as 'unimpressive' and NE refers to Report section 4.2.14 and table 4.3.2 that give the reasons why a riverside route between BSA-4-S060 and BSA-4-S080 was not possible.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA4/R/15/BSA0741
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	[redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	High Street to Iken
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps BSA 4b and 4c
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-4-S004 to BSA-4-S015
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

**Summary of representation:**

[redacted] is disappointed that the sea wall path along the South of the Alde estuary goes inland, along the road to pass Stanny House Farm to re-join the sea wall at Iken. He cannot understand why this section of the sea wall has been omitted. He has noticed the Alde Mudflats Nature Reserve, but the boat club on the opposite bank and small sailing boats on the estuary would cause far more disturbance than walkers. He says that walkers are denied a pleasant circular walk.

**Natural England's comment:**

In the proposals report Natural England wrote (table 4.3.2) that it had considered aligning on the route that [redacted] suggests. The bank top route looks over designated sites that were considered as part of the HRA and, as a result of that assessment a S26(3)(a) nature conservation restriction has been proposed to prevent disturbance by walkers (and dogs) of breeding and passage birds by movement against the skyline. It was therefore not possible to use the bank top route near Iken.

While boats can occasionally cause disturbance to birds, it is generally less pronounced than disturbance caused by walkers, particularly if accompanied by dogs off the lead. Both beach-nesting birds and roosting waders and wildfowl are likely to be seriously disturbed by a nearby walker or dog off the lead, whereas a passing boat would generally cause less concern (in a similar way that birds often won't be disturbed by a car, until the driver gets out). The passage of a boat is also usually more predictable, usually not coming very close to the shore, whereas a dog off the lead could run widely over a shore area, and potentially some distance inland also.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Whole Stretch/R/3/BSA0731
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	WATER MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Whole stretch
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 4a to 4h
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-4-S001 to BSA-4-S088
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 1, 2, 3 and 5

**Summary of representation:**

The Water Management Alliance note that the proposals are partly within the Internal Drainage District (IDD) of the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and therefore the Board's Byelaws apply. They specifically highlight that any works (including signage or path resurfacing) within 9 metres of the internal drainage system will normally require consent to relax Byelaw 10 (*no works within 9 metres of the edge of drainage or flood risk management infrastructure*). Any works directly within the watercourse will require consent under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

The IDB note that some of the watercourses they maintain are held with a high-water level to maximise the environmental benefits and are concerned that public access in the area may be detrimental to these benefits.

**Natural England's comment:**

Natural England appreciates the IDBs engagement in the development of our proposals and the reminder of the responsibilities associated with the IDB's work. We will pass these comments on to Suffolk County Council to consider and obtain any necessary permissions as part of their works to establish the trail.

Natural England thanks the IDB for their work in maximising the environmental benefits from the drainage system. NE has carefully considered the impacts of promoting enhanced public access through the England Coast Path on both the international and domestically protected sites in the area through two documents that supported the publication. These being the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the international sites and the Nature Conservation Assessment (NCA) for the domestic sites. The NCA also considered any adverse interactions with wildlife more generally. Through these two documents developed with the support of wildlife specialists and enthusiasts NE believes it has balanced its public commitments to wildlife and public access.

## **Length Report BSA5 - Hazlewood Marshes car park to Aldeburgh**

### ***Full representations***

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA1/R/12/BSA0419
Organisation/ person making representation:	RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	N/A
<b>Representation in full</b>	
<p>This representation is made on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers, and are attached to the general representation form for the whole section.</p> <p>All of this section was surveyed by members of Suffolk Area Ramblers during 2017 and early 2018, and meetings were held with the relevant Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Officers. Following further discussion with interested members of the Ramblers in the area, maps of the Ramblers suggested route, together with a detailed report of why we were recommending this route, and what works we considered to be necessary, were then submitted to Natural England in April 2018.</p>	

Subsequently I have been in regular contact with the Natural England representatives for this section, and have made some further visits to the proposed section of path as changes in the situation occur. Also, I have been appraised regularly of the differences between our initial suggestions and the Natural England preferred route, all of which changes have been explained and the reasons for alternative routes discussed.

Finally, the Report published on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 was reported on at the Suffolk Area Ramblers AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> February, and has been made available to all interested parties in the Ramblers and local area groups. The responses from those consulted have been generally favourable, and any comments I have felt worthwhile in passing on to you for consideration, are on the accompanying notes 2, 3 and 4, and in particular note 5.

With the exception of BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023, as referred to in note 5, I would therefore, on behalf of Suffolk Area Ramblers, like to commend the proposed route for this section of the England Coast Path, and we look forward eagerly to the path being made available on the ground along the full length, and open to public use.

### **Note 5 - Representations on section BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023**

The Ramblers are particularly concerned about the proposal to route a 'coastal' path right through the middle of Aldeburgh Town, using a narrow footway alongside an extremely busy major road. We consider this to be a health and safety hazard, as well as a practically unacceptable route.

There is a clear and well used path from the main A1094 highway, at Map Ref 4523 5738, known as Brickfields Road, which leads down to a short track in line with the disused Jetty and then turns left along the river wall to join the existing public right of way at BSA-5-S025 (Map Ref 4507 5660). This is an existing well used path, and the route proposed by the Ramblers. Further, public use of the existing route has already been secured by a planning condition attached to the development permission granted by Suffolk Coastal District Council on 15th January 2014 (ref c/12/2573).

Natural England say that the land is only 'regarded' as excepted land, and it is therefore not a requirement to avoid it. Also, the NE statement that 'the route would lead to land covered by the farm buildings and shops in their curtilage' is completely false, the farm buildings and shops are on a different route through farmland behind Old Hall, not on the route proposed by the Ramblers.

The Ramblers do not consider the NE message in an e-mail to us that 'the change in volume of use and effect on privacy of people living there' as a justifiable reason for diverting the 'coast' path for an extra distance of over 2km inland. Further the proposed inland route from the Aldeburgh Town Centre back down to the river wall at BSA-5-S025 is predominantly already an existing public right of way, and would be no gain for users of the coastal path at all.

Comments made by members include references to the EN comment that 'the private road is not wide enough for walkers and traffic', which is blatantly untrue, the road is very quiet and serves only a few houses, wide enough for two vehicles, there is plenty of room for a vehicle to pass pedestrians, and there is also ample room beyond the kerbs if required.

The Ramblers strongly recommend that the proposed section of coastal path from BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023 is not used, and is replaced by the route originally surveyed and proposed by the Ramblers.

This section of the proposed route has had more 'complaints' about from members of the Ramblers than all the rest of the Suffolk length of the coastal path put together. It is the only section that people feel really strongly about, and whilst members are generally happy with, and are willing to accept, all other proposals, we would ask that this small section must be reconsidered, and that 'common sense' will prevail in this case.

Notes 2, 3 and 4 refer to other Reports and are included in those documents

### **Natural England's comments**

Natural England thanks the Ramblers Association for its help in developing the England Coast Path between Bawdsey and Aldeburgh. NE notes that it has expressed concern about the proposed route along Saxmundham Road rather than using a path through a housing development called 'Brickfields'.

The Association has raised issues relating to the suitability of the proposed route, the planning situation and effect on privacy. Natural England received several representations about the possible use of the Brickfields route and the Ramblers Association points are discussed in detail below in the 'Summary of any similar or identical points'. It also references two route options that the Association suggests are wrongly described in the report. These issues have all been raised by other representations, so NE has set out its comments about each point in the 'Summary of any similar or identical points' section below.

The Association has commented that the proposed route is already a public right of way and so there would be 'no gain'. It is not always possible or necessary to deliver new public access in an area. However, where possible the proposals should look to provide enhanced enjoyment of the coastal environment for the public whilst balancing against landowner needs. The Approved Scheme lays out the expectations on Natural England to provide this balance. It also described how NE needs to consider land uses, the availability of existing rights of access and the needs to protect privacy. NE has explained its approach in its published report and through comments on other representations in this area and NE further notes that route would benefit by being managed to National Trail quality standards that include regular monitoring of trail condition and associated signage or other new infrastructure.

The Association requested that route sections BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023 are reconsidered but currently there is no new evidence that would prompt NE to propose an amendment to the route.

<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA Stretch/R/28/BSA0435
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL (Rep 1)
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-5-S001 to BSA-2-S038
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	BSA Reports 1, 2, 3 and 4
<b>Representation in full</b>	

Suffolk County Council strongly supports the use of the estuary discretion in proposing an alignment of the National Trail around the Alde & Ore Estuary Complex, including the Butley River, using the first crossing point on the Alde at Snape bridge. (Option 1)

Much of the estuary is well served by public rights of way, but there are significant gaps which these reports will address, enabling walkers to avoid walking on the road between Bawdsey Manor (BSA-1-S002 to BSA-1-S018, and connecting the cul de sac public footpath on the east side of the Butley River to Gedgrave (BSA-2-S027 to BSA-2-S035).

The proposals in the 5 reports are welcomed and supported; they will provide a route that is available all year and continuous along the Suffolk coastline.

The County Council is concerned as to the future and allocation of the maintenance funding for National Trails.

The County Council would like to see those works proposed as mitigation to fulfil the objectives of the Habitat Regulations, included in the National Trail maintenance funding formula.

In addition, we would like to see those sections of the trail which are immediately adjacent to SSSIs and not just within the boundary, included in the uplift. It seems particularly unfortunate the funding formula neither recognises the necessity of ongoing funding for the mitigation works that enable the trail to be opened nor the proximity of the SSSI and SPA which requires those additional works.

This is particularly pertinent as the proposed trail is immediately adjacent to the Alde & Ore Estuary SSSI for most of its length (BSA-1-S023 to BSA-4-S059)

As a public body the County Council must have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity (NERC Act 2006), so this will result in disproportionate pressure on the use of the maintenance funding for this stretch.

Overall, the County Council believes that the proposals for improving coastal access on this stretch of the coast strikes the appropriate balance between public and private interests and recreational and environmental objectives as required by the approved coastal access scheme.

#### **Natural England's comments**

Natural England welcomes the support of Suffolk County Council in the use of estuary discretion for the proposals. Many of the location mentioned by SCC in its representation refer to other reports. NE has dealt with those specific points in its comments relating to those reports.

In relation to the comments regarding a financial uplift for those sections of the trail that run immediately adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), NE acknowledge that Suffolk County Council has concerns in this area. As noted, the current uplift applies only where the trail runs directly through a SSSI. This is to recognise the potential for additional maintenance costs to be incurred and this element of the current funding formula was originally agreed by a stakeholder group representing all the established National Trails in England following a review of funding that was completed in 2013. A subsequent review by a group representing all the trails was carried out in 2015. It is NE's intention to undertake a further review of the funding formula as the England Coast Path (ECP) is completed so that NE can look to see if there are any changes that should be made. This process will begin later in 2021 and will be carried out with the involvement of ECP managers. Suffolk Council's constructive input will be welcomed as part of this process, although NE is not making any assumptions at this time as to how this review may change the existing formula.



<b>Representation number:</b>	MCA/BSA5/R/27/BSA0435
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL (Rep 2)
<b>Route section(s) specific to this representation:</b>	BSA-5-S013 to BSA-5-S023
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:</b>	N/A
<b>Representation in full</b>	
<p>The County Council is disappointed that the existing public access from the A1094, Saxmundham Road through the Brickfields development to the river wall, has not been proposed. This would have enabled a shorter direct link from the A1094 to the river wall avoiding the use of the public footpath across the Aldeburgh Marshes, which is invariably wet at certain times of year. The County Council do however understand and appreciate the efforts of Natural England in considering the route options at Brickfields.</p>	
<b>Natural England's comments</b>	
<p>Natural England is aware that SCC, in its response to the Brickfields planning application commented '<i>Providing a public right of way between Saxmundham Road and the jetty would provide access for the public to the River Alde, offering riverside views, but more importantly opening up the potential for future access improvements along the river to connect with Aldeburgh Footpath 13</i>'. The Council is aware the planning condition for the path at the rear of Brickfields properties required that 'public access' should be created rather than stipulating that 'a public footpath' should be created and subsequently Suffolk County Council has not been able to enshrine this access as a public footpath in law.</p> <p>Natural England considered the Brickfields path but concluded not to propose it because of the increase in levels of use from a locally known route to a National Trail and the resulting impact on privacy for the house holders at Brickfields. The issues raised here are discussed further in Section 4 below.</p>	

### ***Other representations with common points***

<b>Representations containing similar or identical points</b>	
<b>Representation ID</b>	<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>
MCA/BSA5/R/6/BSA0740	[redacted]

MCA/BSA5/R/32/BSA0743	[redacted]
MCA/BSA5/R/34/BSA0744	[redacted]
MCA/BSA5/R/31/BSA0670	[REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] (Councillors at time of submitting representation but now resigned).
MCA/BSA5/R/21/BSA0742	[redacted]
MCA/BSA5/R/4/BSA0739	[redacted]
MCA/BSA5/R/14/BSA0417	[redacted] and [redacted]
MCA/BSA5/R/13/BSA0679	[redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Brickfields, off Saxmundham Road Aldeburgh
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps 5a and 5b
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	HSB-5-S013 to HSB-5-S024
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

**Summary of representations on using Saxmundham Road and the public rights of way across Aldeburgh Marshes rather than a route alignment through Brickfields.**

Many representations suggest Natural England should have pursued a route alignment through the Brickfields housing development that joins Saxmundham Road with the seawall. There is a strong theme that the England Coast Path should be aligned on currently-available access through the Brickfield development.

There are various representations on this theme that make one or more of the following points:

- The proposed route is not coastal

- It is unsafe and along a busy road

- NE's proposals are unfairly balanced between the interests of the house occupants and the public, removing the ability to enjoy spectacular views across the estuary.

- The proposed route is longer than one that may utilise a path through the Brickfield development

- The route crosses dangerous junctions that are the access to shop car parks on Saxmundham Road and also uses the access to King's Field.

- The route across Aldeburgh Marshes is low lying, frequently flooded and very soft going underfoot.

- There was concern the ECP alignment would mean the closure of the existing route through Brickfields.

- There are errors in the proposals report that wrongly identify other routes that were considered

**NE response**

Natural England investigated a significant number of options for the route alignment in this area. NE has been guided by the principles laid out within the England Coast Path Approved Scheme and

covers much of the thought process that arrived at the proposed alignment in section 5.3.2 of the published proposals in report Bawdsey to Aldeburgh BSA5: Hazlewood Marshes car park to Aldeburgh.

The Approved Scheme details many elements Natural England should consider when proposing an alignment and how NE should strive to achieve a fair balance for the interests of the users and the landowners. Natural England believes it has delivered this fair balance.

Several representations were received that suggested a route through the Brickfields housing development seaward of BSA-5-S013 and then alongside the estuary to meet the current proposed route at BSA-5-S024. Natural England understands that as part of a planning condition public access was to be made available through the development on a surfaced track. The presence of existing access can be part of a wider balance of considerations for Natural England when proposing the England Coast Path but is not the only consideration. When reviewing the option to pass through Brickfields Natural England is compelled to also consider the privacy of those properties the trail may pass. (Scheme 5.4.3: *We will also consider ... how our proposals may affect the privacy of people in the immediate vicinity of houses, hotels or other residences, and aim to strike a fair balance between these concerns and the interests of the public in having rights of access.*)

NE believes aligning the trail through the Brickfields Estate would not strike a fair balance as it would have a significant impact on upon the privacy of its residents. The route would be close-to and on eye-level with property balconies and would look down into all parts of the gardens.

NE knows there is access to Brickfields as part of a planning condition but does not feel that this in itself is a strong enough reason to align the ECP there. The path through Brickfields is not a designated public footpath, nor does it appear on any maps of access routes. It is not signposted and is only known to a small number of local residents. National Trail status, and possible use as part of a circular walk is therefore likely to result in a large increase in usage of the path and resulting impact on the privacy of residents.

NE sought to achieve a more direct and coastal route, but it was not possible, and NE believes this is the best route available. The proposed route is about 1km longer than a route through Brickfields, not a significant difference within the length of a national path. This additional length (more than 50% on a manmade surface) gives significant access to services that are otherwise absent on the coast path in any direction for many kilometres. Both routes arrive at the seawall in close proximity to each other so just 330m of route with views of the estuarine waters are lost. The seawall would be in spreading room and therefore the short distance between would be available to users.

Views towards Brickfields properties from existing access:



It is noted that the proposed alignment along Saxmundham Road between Brickfields and the town centre (BSA-5-S013 [east] to BSA-5-S015) is a continuation of the pavement route that is already aligned on the north west section along this road (BSA-5-S001 to BSA-5-S013 [west]). The asphalt footway alongside Saxmundham Road varies in width and for most of its length has a grass verge upon which pedestrians can pass each other. The supermarkets are 'convenience-type' stores with a combined total of around 40 parking spaces. The road supermarket junctions have been approved through the normal planning process and so were not considered to be a key consideration in route selection.

The proposed route (BSA-5-S016), when it leaves Saxmundham Road, uses existing public rights of way and other already accessible areas. The public footpath is aligned along a service road used to access the community centre, public toilets, businesses, fire station, recreation ground and children's play area. There are three speed bumps with warning signs and so vehicle speed is likely to be very low and there is good visibility. The narrowest section has double yellow lines and so its width is unlikely to be affected by parked vehicles. It is already heavily used by pedestrians.

Some representations suggested the proposed route across the Marshes (BSA-5-S020 to S023) can be seasonally wet and Natural England recognises this. In 2021 the County Council has completed a range of improvement works including bridges and surfacing, after the ECP representation response deadline. NE also recognises the England Coast Path is a route that generally works with the existing terrain whether urban or in the countryside. The advantage of these public rights of way becoming part of the England Coast Path alignment is the funding that is available to bring the route to National Trails standards. The New Deal funding for future enhanced maintenance ensures enhanced local facilities from a national programme.

The proposed route, in crossing the coastal grazing marshes (BSA-5-S020 to S023) is a fairly unique experience for the England Coast Path around the eastern area of England to be within a classic coastal landscape rather than just offering views over it.

Representations expressed a concern that the current access through Brickfields will close when an ECP route opens. NE can confirm it does not have any role in the management or regulation of the current route at Brickfields and it will remain open unless East Suffolk Council decides otherwise.

#### **Route suggestions made by respondents**

It was suggested a higher boundary would overcome privacy concerns at Brickfields, but NE is aware that another planning condition regarding landscaping stated the rear boundary is maintained at 1.2m. It was also suggested the ECP could be aligned at the other side of the properties along a road, however this access road for the houses is within a residents-only locked gated area.

#### **Representations reporting errors in the report**

In Other Options Considered (5.3.2) one option was “*BSA-5-S012 to BSA-5-S025: We considered a route off the Saxmundham Road along a private road and then south across the adjacent land to the river wall. We opted for the proposed route because: the private road is not wide enough for walkers and traffic: there is insufficient room to easily enable walkers to step off the road to allow vehicles to pass*”

Representation comment: “the private road is not wide enough for walkers and traffic” is inaccurate. The road is very quiet serving relatively few, new houses.

#### **NE Response**

NE responds that the details are correct, the respondent has said the route serves ‘a few new houses’ and has therefore incorrectly identified the route option as being through Brickfields. NE accepts it could have better explained that the route being described would leave Saxmundham Road at section BSA-5-S012 and use the seaward private road and other land to join the riverbank near Brickfields.



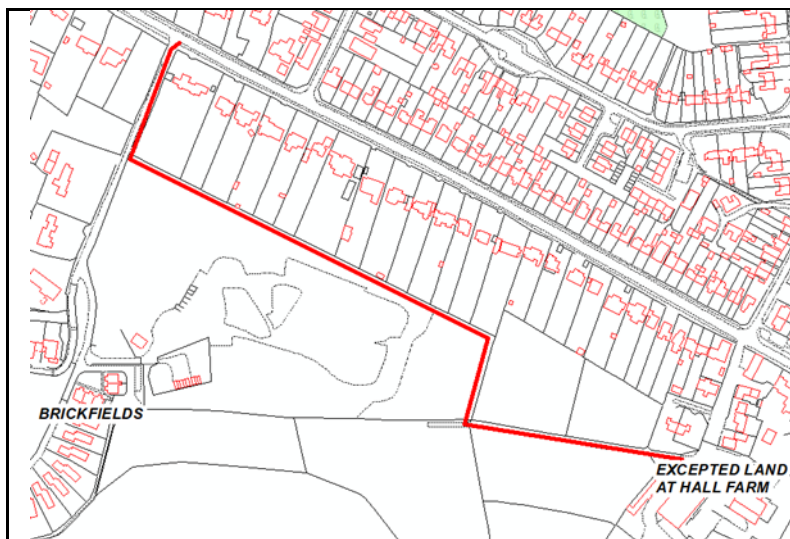
The map shows an area of the outskirts of Aldeburgh and a red route line which was referred to in 'other Options Considered'. The route goes from the main road to the riverside but is further out from Aldeburgh than Brickfields and uses a different route. It is not going through the Brickfields development.

In Other Options Considered (5.3.2) one option was "*We considered route options at the Works, the former brick pit near Brickfields and we opted for the proposed route because the route would lead to excepted land covered by the farm buildings and shops and their curtilage.*"

The respondent says that NE is confusing the route through the new housing development at the old brick works with the other considered route through farmland behind Old Hall. The farm buildings and shops are at the latter, a completely different location.

#### NE Response

NE responds that the details are correct but could have been better explained that the route being described is from Brickfields access road, east through the landward edge of the old pit area (at rear of properties on Saxmundham Road) and would then lead along an east-west track going to the excepted land curtilage at the farm shop.



The map shows an area of the outskirts of Aldeburgh near the Brickfields development, and a red route line which was referred to in 'other Options Considered'. It shows a route that is along the rear garden fence of properties towards Aldeburgh and does not go through the Brickfields development.

#### Representations containing similar or identical points

Representation ID	Organisation/ person making representation:
MCA/BSA5/R/21/BSA0742	[redacted]
MCA/BSA5/R/13/BSA0679	[redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Aldeburgh Golf Club to Brickfields, off Saxmundham Road Aldeburgh
<b>Report map reference:</b>	Maps 5a and 5b
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	HSB-5-S001, HSB-5-S008 to HSB-5-S024
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	N/A

#### Summary of points:

Routing this section for almost 2km down the main A1094 into Aldeburgh does not seem appropriate for a section of the national coastal trail.

#### Suggestion BSA-5-S001

Instead of using the public right of way BSA-4-S088 and verge BSA-5-S001 the suggestion is to



use the line marked 'Path' near White Cottage on Map BSA 5a.

Suggestion HSB-5-S008 to HSB-5-S024

Route should not use HSB-5-S008 to HSB-5-S024 but instead should use the proposed ECP route to the point marked BSA-5-S008 on map BSA 5a. From there the path could route along the side of the golf course and onto the river wall (shown in yellow on Supporting Information map below). The path could either go along the high-water mark on the marshes or on top of the river wall to re-join the proposed route at BSA-5-S025. The route would be passable on all but the highest tides.

The coastal margin rights will make the route walkable anyway and no doubt locals will take up that right, but it would be helpful if the excluded areas of salt marsh could be adjusted very slightly to leave a clear margin at the very top of the salt marsh so that it is clear there is a right of passage below the gardens, alongside the river.

Representations also suggested using a route through Brickfields that has been discussed above (and shown pink on Supporting Documents map below)

**Natural England's comment**

The proposed alignment follows the route of the existing Suffolk Coast Path. It is on wide grass verges or pavements and has been assessed as being suitable by a Highways Engineer from Suffolk County Council.

Suggestion BSA-5-S001

Ordnance Survey data for map BSA 5a shows this route as a Path but it does not exist as a route on the ground whereas the proposed alignment follows route of the existing Suffolk Coast Path, in part being a public footpath. NE decided to use an existing route.

Suggestion HSB-5-S008 to HSB-5-S024

The suggested alignment leaves the verge (near BSA-5-S008) and would be on excepted land that is part of Aldeburgh Golf Club's River Course. The Scheme says that the ECP can be aligned through golf courses on an access strip, but walkers here would be very close to tees and holes on three of the nine holes and so at risk from flying balls and disrupting play.

The suggested route would turn alongside the river, past a private boat house and through inter-tidal saltmarsh habitat or on the top of the bank that forms the adjacent garden boundaries. It was suggested that the mapped saltmarsh boundary is adjusted to leave a gap for walkers however the saltmarsh has been excluded as unsuitable for access. For these reasons the route was not proposed for the ECP.

As stated in the Report 5.2.13 the saltmarsh exclusions will not prevent or affect any local use by right, formal agreement with the landowner or informal permission or traditional toleration.

Pink route option

[redacted] suggested route through the Brickfield's development has been considered above.

**Relevant appended documents (see Section 6):**

Maps of suggested route changes



### ***Other representations with non-common points***

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Stretch/R/8/BSA0607
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Whole length
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 5a to 5c
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-5-S001 to BSA-5-S038
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 1, 2, 3 and 4

#### **Summary of representation:**

The British Horse Society founded in 1947, is the largest and most influential equestrian charity in the UK with over 117,000 members. Two of the Society's objectives are: to promote community participation in healthy recreation involving the horse and to promote and secure the provision, protection and preservation of rights of way and of access for ridden and driven horses over public roads, highways, footpaths, bridleways, carriage ways, public paths and other land.

According to the Suffolk Rights of Way Improvement Plan, only 18% of Public Rights of Way are accessible to horse riders, forcing them onto busy, fast roads. Road safety is of particular concern to equestrians, who are vulnerable road users.: 'This rights of way network provides off-road access to services, links between settlements, and access into the countryside. The importance of rights of way, quality greenspaces, greenways and corridors, for an effective non-motorised urban transport network threading through urban areas and linking to more rural areas is recognised.' We would suggest this is included in the plans for the England Coast Path from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh which could show a trail blazing attitude to access throughout Suffolk.

The ECP from Bawdsey to Aldeburgh presents an opportunity to improve coastal access in Suffolk with benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors, promoting health and wellbeing. Suffolk County Council should be requesting permissive access for equestrians for the entire stretch providing a safe off-road route for vulnerable users resolving a number of anomalies where bridleways become dead ends at the coast.

The BHS encourages Natural England and Suffolk County Council to ensure any surfacing works future proof the route to enable equestrian access, foreseeing landowners granting permission for equestrian access, therefore routes should be surfaced as appropriate for the horse and rider. A natural surface, where well drained and free of excess vegetation, is ideal for horse and rider. Maintenance to surfaces must consider appropriate surface materials to avoid risk of injury caused by slippery materials e.g. tarmac, sharp stone and boggy or deeply rutted ground.

**Natural England's comment:**

Natural England acknowledges the desirability of creating routes for horse-riders.

Natural England's duty under Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 is to create clear and consistent public rights along the English coast for open-air recreation on foot. On some sections of coast, existing rights will apply as well as or instead of coastal access rights, such as the right to ride a horse or bicycle on a bridleway or along a permissive route permitted by the landowner. However, the core remit is to propose the creation of a walking route.

Natural England can investigate the potential to create higher rights on the England Coast Path in locations identified by stakeholders at the outset of the project. However, NE can only secure these where landowners are willing to volunteer that higher rights are included in the proposals. In this instance NE was not approached by any stakeholders seeking higher rights at the outset of the stretch project and no landowners asked NE to consider proposing higher rights in discussions with them.

<b>Representation ID:</b>	MCA/BSA Whole Stretch/R/3/BSA0731
<b>Organisation/ person making representation:</b>	WATER MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE – [redacted]
<b>Name of site:</b>	Whole length
<b>Report map reference:</b>	BSA Maps 5a to 5c
<b>Route sections on or adjacent to the land:</b>	BSA-5-S001 to BSA-5-S038
<b>Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates</b>	BSA Reports 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Summary of representation:**

The Water Management Alliance note that the proposals are partly within the Internal Drainage District (IDD) of the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and therefore the Board's Byelaws apply. They specifically highlight that any works (including signage or path resurfacing) within 9 metres of the internal drainage system will normally require consent to relax Byelaw 10 (*no works within 9 metres of the edge of drainage or flood risk management infrastructure*). Any works directly within the watercourse will require consent under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

The IDB note that some of the watercourses they maintain are held with a high-water level to maximise the environmental benefits and are concerned that public access in the area may be detrimental to these benefits.

**Natural England's comment:**

Natural England appreciates the IDBs engagement in the development of our proposals and the reminder of the responsibilities associated with the IDB's work. NE will pass these comments on to Suffolk County Council to consider and obtain any necessary permissions as part of their works to establish the trail.

Natural England thanks the IDB for their work in maximising the environmental benefits from the drainage system. NE has carefully considered the impacts of promoting enhanced public access through the England Coast Path on both the international and domestically protected sites in the area through two documents that supported the publication. These being the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the international sites and the Nature Conservation Assessment (NCA) for the domestic sites. The NCA also considered any adverse interactions with wildlife more generally. Through these two documents developed with the support of wildlife specialists and enthusiasts NE believes it has balanced its public commitments to wildlife and public access.

## **5.Supporting documents**

Routes suggested by [redacted] and [redacted] (Representation with similar points)

Yellow – discussed above in their representation

Pink – route at Brickfields discussed within the Similar Points representations about Brickfields

