

Natural England's Variation Report to the Secretary of State

Coastal Access Variation Report WBH-VR32
February 2026

Part 1: Purpose of this report

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

1.2 On 9 July 2025 the Secretary of State approved Natural England's proposals relating to *WBH5: Brancaster to Flaxley* which formed part of our proposals for the [Weybourne and Hunstanton](#) stretch. Whilst the proposals have been approved, Natural England and Norfolk County Council are currently working to prepare the trail for public use and as such the coastal access rights for this stretch have yet to commence.

1.3 Since the approval of the report, it has become clear that changes are necessary to the route of the King Charles III England Coast Path. This report contains Natural England's proposals relating to a change near to Briarfields Hotel, Titchwell, and a change north of St Mary's Church, Titchwell, both of which are at the location shown on the WBH-VR32 Variation Location Map below.

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

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



Part 2: Proposed variation near to Briarfields Hotel, Titchwell

Start Point: Track leading off Main Road (A149)	Grid reference: TF75827 43831
End Point: Main Road (A149)	Grid reference: TF75665 43706
Relevant Original Proposal Map: WBH 5b	

2.1 Introduction

Reason for variation:

2.1.1 Subsequent to the publication of Natural England's proposals between Brancaster and Flaxley on 21st March 2018 and the Secretary of State's approval on 9th July 2025, land ownership has changed and part of the route along the track adjacent to the Briarfields Hotel now has approved planning permission for a built extension. Following consultation with the landowner and Norfolk County Council, Natural England now proposes a varied route around the planned extension.

2.1.2 Natural England believes that moving the trail away from its existing alignment along the roadside and track onto the grounds of Briarfields Hotel presents an opportunity for a more pleasant walking experience in a meadow, along a mown grass path, already used by hotel visitors. This route also means that walkers will be away from road traffic along Main Road for a longer distance.

Proposed variation:

2.1.3 The approved trail on route sections WBH-5-S012 and WBH-5-S013 is along a track adjacent to the Briarfields Hotel and on the pavement on the northern side of Main Road (A149) in the village of Titchwell. The proposed variation would remove some of route sections WBH-5-S012 and WBH-5-S013 and would instead follow the edge of a meadow, on a mown path north and west of the hotel as well as a short section adjacent to a play area. See Variation Location Map VR32d below.

2.1.4 As a consequence of the proposed change, the majority of a grass field will be removed from the coastal margin because it now falls landward of the proposed route.

Considering the options:

2.1.5 We worked closely with the landowner and Norfolk County Council to develop our proposal for the variation.

2.1.6 We considered aligning the trail along a short section of a neighbouring landowner's field. We discounted this option because it is likely that the trail surface would not have been of adequate quality and the landowner did not support this option.

2.2 Proposals Narrative

The Trail:

2.2.1 The proposed variation to the approved trail:

- Is aligned mostly on mown grass along its length.
- Avoids a longer section of busy A road.
- Will be nearer to the coast.

Protection of the environment:

2.2.2 There are no national or international nature conservation or heritage designations present in this area.

2.2.3 Natural England is satisfied that the proposal for coastal access in this variation report is made in accordance with relevant environmental protection legislation.

Accessibility:

2.2.4 The proposed trail consists of a path largely on mown grass that has been used in recent years as a permissive path by the hotel guests. It is unlikely to become waterlogged in wet weather and should remain suitable for people with reduced mobility all year round.

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

2.2.5 Landward boundary of the coastal margin: We have used our discretion on some sections of the varied route to map the landward extent of the coastal margin to an adjacent physical boundary such as a fence line, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 2.3.1 below.

2.2.6 The Proposals Tables show where we are proposing to alter the default landward boundary of the coastal margin. These proposals are set out in columns 5b and 5c of table 2.3.1.

See part 3 of the Overview to the original report - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an explanation of the default extent of the coastal margin and how we may use our discretion to adjust the margin, either to add land or to provide clarity.

2.2.7 **Restrictions and/or exclusions:** Access rights to the seaward margin would be subject to the excepted land rules and the national restrictions on coastal access rights. We do not propose any additional local restrictions or exclusions.

2.2.8 **Coastal erosion:** As with the original proposals on this section of coast Natural England is able to propose that the route of the trail would be able to change in the future, without further approval from the Secretary of State, in response to coastal change. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll-back' set out in part 9 of the [Overview](#).

Natural England may only propose the use of this roll-back power:

- as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea, or
- in order to link with other parts of the route that need to roll back in direct response to such changes.

2.2.9 Column 4 of Table 2.3.1 indicates where roll-back has been proposed in relation to a newly proposed route section. Where this is the case, the route, as initially determined at the time this report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on Map VR32d as the proposed route of the trail.

2.2.10 If at any time in the future any part of a route section upon which roll-back has been specified needs, in Natural England's view, to change in order for the overall route to remain viable, the new route for the part in question will be determined by Natural England without further reference to the Secretary of State. This will be done in accordance with the criteria and procedures described under the title 'Roll-back' in part 9 of the Overview and section 4.10 of the Coastal Access Scheme. If this happens, the new route will become the approved route for that section for the purposes of the Order which determines where coastal access rights apply.

Establishment of the trail:

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

2.2.11 Our estimate of the capital costs for these works is £3,000 This would have the effect of increasing the overall establishment cost for Report WBH 5: Weybourne to Hunstanton by approximately £2000. These estimates are informed by information from the access authority.

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

- Vegetation cut to create the route.
- Signage/ waymarking
- Fencing
- New Gate

Maintenance of the trail:

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

2.3 Proposals Tables

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

Table 2.3.1: Map WBH 5b Brancaster to Flaxley

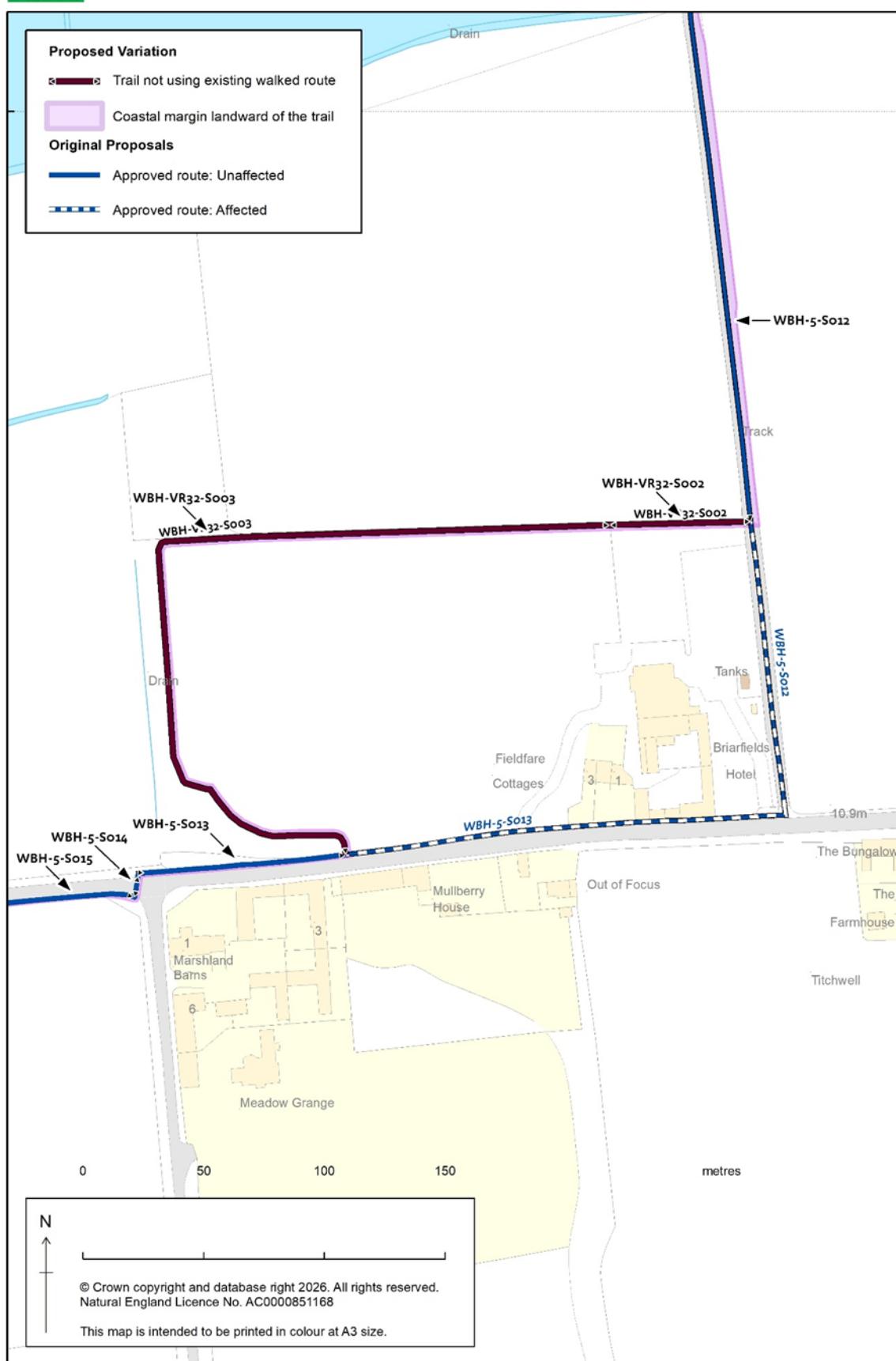
Key notes on table:

1. Column 4 – ‘No’ means no roll-back is proposed for this route section. ‘Yes – normal’ means roll-back is proposed and is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.
2. Column 4 – ‘Yes – see table 2.3.2’ means roll-back is proposed but refer to that table below about our likely approach to implementing it for this route section. This is because a more complex situation exists in this case and consideration must be given to how roll-back may happen in relation to excepted land, a protected site etc.
3. Column 5a - Certain coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail if they touch it at some point. The relevant land type (foreshore, cliff, bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or section 15 land – see Glossary in Annex B to the 2017 Overview) is shown in this column where appropriate. “No” means none present on this route section.
4. Columns 5b and 5c – Any entry in these columns means we are proposing to align the landward boundary of the coastal margin on this route section with the physical feature(s) shown in 5b, for the reason in 5c. No text here means that for this route section the landward edge of the margin would be that of the trail itself - or if any default coastal land type is shown in 5a, that would be its landward boundary instead.

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map	New route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See part 8 of report Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
VR32d	WBH-VR32-S002	Not an existing walked route	Yes – normal	No	Fence	Clarity and cohesion	
VR32d	WBH-VR32-S003	Other existing walked route	Yes – normal	No	Landward edge of the trail	Clarity and cohesion	



Map VR32d Titchwell



Part 3: Proposed variation north of St Mary's Church Titchwell

Start Point: North of St Mary's Church Titchwell	Grid reference: TF76249 43987
End Point: North of St Mary's Church Titchwell	Grid reference: TF76166 43969
Relevant Original Proposal Map: WBH 5b	

3.1 Introduction

Reason for variation:

3.1.1 Subsequent to the Secretary of State approval of Natural England's proposals between Brancaster and Flaxley, it has become apparent that a part of the route along a field edge directly north of St Mary's Church, Titchwell is likely to become waterlogged, particularly during winter months. Natural England and Norfolk County Council have now identified a varied route which the landowner has agreed to that is a shorter, more direct route, avoiding the edge of the field that tends to become wet in winter.

Proposed variation:

3.1.2 The approved trail on route section WBH-5-S009 is aligned through a grass field lying adjacent and to the north of St Marys church, Titchwell. The proposed variation would move the trail away from a part of the field that is most likely to become wet, particularly during winter months. See Variation Location Map VR32a below.

3.1.3 As a consequence of the proposed change, all land seaward of the trail would become part of the coastal margin. The change between the varied route and the approved route would create a minor increase in the size of the coastal margin.

Considering the options:

3.1.4 We worked closely with the landowner and Norfolk County Council to develop our proposal for the variation.

3.2.2 Proposals Narrative

The Trail:

3.2.1 The proposed variation to the approved trail:

- Is aligned on mown grass along its length.
- Avoids an area prone to becoming wet.

Protection of the environment:

3.2.2 The section of trail affected by this variation, passes through an area of grassland that lies within the North Norfolk Coast SPA, SSSI, SAC and RAMSAR. No environmental concerns were identified with the approved route. The proposed varied route is not significantly different from the approved route and is further away from the protected sites' notified features.

3.2.3 Natural England is satisfied that the proposal for coastal access in this variation report is made in accordance with relevant environmental protection legislation.

Accessibility:

3.2.4 The proposed trail consists of a path largely on mown grass. Although it is also on mown grass, the varied route offers an improvement as it is not prone to waterlogging and is likely to be available all year round, even to people with reduced mobility.

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

3.2.5 Landward boundary of the coastal margin: We have used our discretion on some sections of the varied route to map the landward extent of the coastal margin to an adjacent physical boundary such as a fence line, pavement or track to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. See Table 3.3.1 below.

3.2.6 The Proposals Tables show where we are proposing to alter the default landward boundary of the coastal margin. These proposals are set out in columns 5b and 5c of table 3.3.1.

See part 3 of the Overview to the original report - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an explanation of the default extent of the coastal margin and how we may use our discretion to adjust the margin, either to add land or to provide clarity.

3.2.7 Restrictions and/or exclusions: Access rights to the seaward margin would be subject to the excepted land rules and the national restrictions on coastal access rights. We do not propose any additional local restrictions or exclusions.

3.2.8 Coastal erosion: Natural England is able to propose that the route of the trail would be able to change in the future, without further approval from the Secretary of State, in response to coastal change. This would happen in accordance with the criteria and procedures for 'roll-back' set out in part 9 of the [Overview](#).

Natural England may only propose the use of this roll-back power:

- as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes or encroachment by the sea, or
- in order to link with other parts of the route that need to roll back in direct response to such changes.

3.2.9 Column 4 of Table 3.3.1 indicates where roll-back has been proposed in relation to a newly proposed route section. Where this is the case, the route, as initially determined at the time this report was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on Map VR32a - route to the north of St Mary's Church, Titchwell as the proposed route of the trail.

3.2.10 If at any time in the future any part of a route section upon which roll-back has been specified needs, in Natural England's view, to change in order for the overall route to remain viable, the new route for the part in question will be determined by Natural England without further reference to the Secretary of State. This will be done in accordance with the criteria and procedures described under the title 'Roll-back' in part 7 of the Overview and section 4.10 of the Coastal Access Scheme. If this happens, the new route will become the approved route for that section for the purposes of the Order which determines where coastal access rights apply.

Establishment of the trail:

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

3.2.11 Our estimate of the capital costs for these works is £1000. This would have the effect of increasing the overall establishment cost for Report WBH 5: Weybourne to Hunstanton by approximately £500. These estimates are informed by information from the access authority.

3.2.12 There are two main elements to the overall capital costs:

- Vegetation cut to create the route.
- Signage/ waymarking.

Maintenance of the trail:

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

3.3 Proposals Tables

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

Table 3.3.1: Map WBH 5b Brancaster to Flaxley

Key notes on table:

1. Column 4 – ‘No’ means no roll-back is proposed for this route section. ‘Yes – normal’ means roll-back is proposed and is likely to follow the current feature (e.g. cliff edge/beach) for the foreseeable future as any coastal change occurs.
2. Column 4 – ‘Yes – see table 3.3.2’ means roll-back is proposed but refer to that table below about our likely approach to implementing it for this route section. This is because a more complex situation exists in this case and consideration must be given to how roll-back may happen in relation to excepeted land, a protected site etc.
3. Column 5a - Certain coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail if they touch it at some point. The relevant land type (foreshore, cliff, bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or section 15 land – see Glossary in Annex B to the 2017 Overview) is shown in this column where appropriate. “No” means none present on this route section.
4. Columns 5b and 5c – Any entry in these columns means we are proposing to align the landward boundary of the coastal margin on this route section with the physical feature(s) shown in 5b, for the reason in 5c. No text here means that for this route section the landward edge of the margin would be that of the trail itself - or if any default coastal land type is shown in 5a, that would be its landward boundary instead.

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	New route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See part 8 of report Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
VR32a	WBH-VR32-S001	Not an existing walked route	Yes – normal	No	Landward edge of trail	Clarity and cohesion	

Map VR32a Titchwell

