

# England Coast Path creates 150 miles of coastal trail in Essex

Half a million people in Essex are set to benefit from increased access to the coast as Natural England opens 85 miles of the England Coast Path today (13 July).

This new section of path, spans from Tilbury to Wallasea Island, via Southend-on-Sea and takes in varied landscapes of saltmarsh and vast grasslands. Now 50% of the Essex coastline – 150 miles in all – is accessible via the England Coast Path (ECP) which will provide more people with better opportunities to spend time outdoors and realise the health benefits of being in nature.

The newly opened trail will also provide an economic boost to the area – it's estimated that £350 million is spent during trips to coastal paths supporting local people and businesses. It is hoped path will encourage a surge in visitor numbers which will benefit coastal communities along the route.

Highlights of the stretch include:

- Varied views from the towering ships at Tilbury to industrial landscapes, quiet marshes and glimpses of the Hoo Peninsula in Kent
- Canvey Island where nature has reclaimed industry as you walk past an oil terminal where construction was abandoned in the 1970's oil crisis. The 7 square mile island includes diverse grassland habitats and is home to weevils (*Sitona cinerascens*), a ground beetle (*Scybalicus oblongiusculus*) and a moth (*Hecatera dysodea*) which were previously recorded as extinct in Britain
- Nature lovers can enjoy the RSPB Nature Reserve at Wallasea Island constructed using materials from the Crossrail project. Deliberate holes have been placed in the seawalls to let in the tides with dense flocks of birds providing an autumn and spring spectacle for visitors
- Two Tree Island Nature Reserve adjacent to the historic ruins of Hadleigh Castle which is renowned for its flocks of small waders and larger brent geese
- Southend-on-Sea which is home to the longest seaside pier in England, amusements and blue flag beaches
- The former artillery forts at Tilbury are now connected by the ECP, allowing visitors to traverse between each historic site

## **Lord Benyon, Minister for Rural Affairs said:**

We want to connect more people with nature – as outlined in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan – so I'm delighted to see this significant stretch of England's Coastal Path open today.

Essex has a dynamic and historic landscape and this path will

support sustainable tourism, giving an economic boost to many coastal businesses. I hope visitors will enjoy the rich contrasts of this stretch of path, from saltmarshes and mudflats to thriving seaside towns.

**Marian Spain, CEO of Natural England said:**

The England Coast Path will be the longest coastal walking route in the world once complete, accessible to all via public transport and walkable in all weathers and by people of all abilities. I'm thrilled that today Natural England is opening this latest section, which takes us another step closer to being able to walk all the way around England.

This stretch passes through areas rich in seaside heritage: industrial heartlands, coastal communities and nature reserves where precious wildlife, from flocks of wild geese to rare insects, thrive.

Running from Tilbury to Wallasea Island via Southend-on-Sea it will directly connect half a million people to the coast allowing many more people to experience the benefits of connecting with nature.

Natural England has worked closely with Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Borough Council to create a route which is accessible for all.

**Councillor Lee Scott, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance and Sustainable Transport said:**

This is fantastic news for Essex, and we are thrilled to see the launch of the two adjoining stretches of the England Coastal Path.

The new paths will offer an array of opportunities and benefits for the county. People will be able to enjoy walks along the stunning seaside and beaches in Essex which also have a vital role in helping to support the health and wellbeing of residents.

The new stretches of coast will also help to boost local tourism and connect people and communities with the natural environment and wildlife across the county. This is an exciting milestone for Essex, and we would encourage people to visit the new stretches of coastal path and discover the local environment.

**Cllr Carole Mulroney, deputy leader and cabinet member for environment, culture and tourism at Southend-On-Sea City Council**

**said:**

It's wonderful to see the opening of the two coastal paths connecting us directly to Tilbury and Wallasea Island. This is a huge benefit for Southend-on-Sea, one that will connect lots of visitors to the beauty of our coastline and to enjoy what the area has to offer, both now and for many years to come.

**Cllr Ben Maney, Thurrock Council Cabinet member for Highways and Transport, said:**

This path creates an opportunity for people to get out and enjoy the outdoors as they walk along our coast and take in the natural and historical wonders it holds.

In Thurrock alone the paths take in nature including country parks and nature reserves, history including Tilbury and Coalhouse Fort, and a glimpse of our future with the ever-developing Freeport across Port of Tilbury and London Gateway as well as two new beaches planned, all of which are the latest chapter in the borough's long history as we move to be the new City of London and the capital of U.K. ports. The path is a remarkable achievement and I am proud that Thurrock Council has been a key partner in creating this stretch of it.

The area is rich in history, Queen Elizabeth I gave a rousing speech to the troops at the approach of the Spanish Armada in the Tilbury area, it's also home to the remains of HMS Beagle which carried naturalist Charles Darwin around the world and Coalhouse Fort, used by Henry VIII to defend the Thames and London.

The opening of these stretches has created 28,000 football pitches worth of access to land between the line of trail and the mean low water. The trail secures these areas as a right in law for the first time, increasing the amount of access to the waterfront in the countryside and seaside towns in the area.

When completed the ECP will be the longest, continuous coastal walking route in the world. At over 2,700 miles long, this National Trail will offer the opportunity to traverse through the country's most recognised and dynamic landscapes.

It will ensure greater access to England's cherished coastlines, connect more people with nature and also provide a boost for coastal communities from sustainable tourism.

The opening of this section follows the opening of the Grain to Woolwich stretch in January 2022.

## Background:

- The newly opened stretches are easily accessed via public transport. There is also the option of using the Tilbury ferry from areas south of the river Thames to connect with London and Kent.
- Progress on the ECP can be found here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-overview-of-progress](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-overview-of-progress)
- For more information on open stretches of the England Coast Path and other National Trails, visit: [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)
- The [Countryside Code](#) is the official guide on how to enjoy nature and treat both it, and the people who live and work there, with respect.