

England Coast Path takes a step forward in north Kent

- The 29 mile continuous walking route is the fourth section in Kent to open, bringing the total in the county to 173 miles.
- The north Kent Coast has some of the richest habitat in the UK; the salt marsh and mud flats supporting huge colonies of over wintering birds.
- This new section will form part of the 2,700 mile long England Coast Path, which will become the longest managed coastal walking route in the world.

This autumn sees another new walking trail for north Kent residents and visitors to enjoy. The newest section of the England Coast Path will help connect people with nature and provide a wealth of health and wellbeing opportunities. And as it is half term, many can take the opportunity to enjoy the new path this week.

This easy to follow walking route along the north Kent coast, through spectacular landscapes. From saltmarshes and mud flats teeming with birds, to sea forts, and historic towns with their nautical heritage, has been opened by Natural England today.

This route will eventually help connect the country's entire coastline into 1 long National Trail. The walk will take people through some of the finest landscapes in England. As well as the many coastal towns, cities and ports that have shaped this island nation.

Excitingly, for the first time in the history of public access, legal rights of public access will be secured to typical coastal land including beaches, dunes and cliffs. This allows walkers to access some places they've never been before.

Jim Seymour, Natural England Area Manager said:

This new trail has a spectacular landscape and captures how important the north Kent coastline has been over the ages with many interesting and historic sites.

At a time when the benefits of connecting with nature are clearer than ever, it's fabulous that we are opening up this 29-mile walking route on the north Kent coast for people to enjoy.

The nation wide promotion of the England Coast Path should also benefit the local economy. It will achieve this by bringing walkers past the many local businesses on this route, to shop, for refreshments and to stay.

This new stretch starts in Whitstable, a popular seaside town and famous for

its oysters since the Roman times. Walking from Whitstable Harbour, you'll see fishing vessels and market stalls as you head west along beach boardwalk and quiet roads towards Seasalter. On route you pass old Whitstable fishing huts, a mix of houses and modern beach huts looking over the wide shingle beach.

Whitstable Harbour is the starting point

At Seasalter, you can clearly see the Isle of Sheppey to the north, which sits in the Thames Estuary just off the Kent coast. Continuing your walk you enter the Swale, a strip of tidal waters between the Isle of Sheppey and the Kent mainland. Where the shingle beaches start to give way to saltmarsh and mudflats. The Swale estuary teems with wildlife, and in the winter months is swarming with thousands of wintering birds. Such as dark-bellied brent geese and dunlin, oyster catchers, curlew and ringed plover.

Walking inland along Faversham Creek, some 3 miles, you arrive at the historic town of Faversham. It is the oldest market town in Kent with hundreds of listed buildings and maritime history. The path takes you through boatyards, passing Standard Quay filled with historic barges and an array of shops before crossing the creek on the swing bridge.

Walking along the seawalls between Faversham and Oare, sailing barges and boats using the narrow creeks and the distant Swale estuary can be spotted. These settlements have a long history of boat building, and this tradition is reflected in the 17th century Shipwright's Arms, a pub perched on the seawall.

Walking north from Oare, you pass through Kent Wildlife Trust's Oare Marshes Nature Reserve. From the sea wall you can see grazing marsh with freshwater dykes, open water scrapes, reedbed and saltmarsh – another haven for wildlife. The area has a long history as part of the gunpowder industry, and you can see signs of this in remains of buildings and boats.

Iron Wharf, Faversham

As you continue on the path you enter Conyer Creek and pass a former 19th century brickworks site, a great place to spot wintering birds on the adjacent mudflats. The site is now all grown over and in spring you can hear nightingales singing in the scrub.

Once you have followed the creek back to the Swale estuary, large freight carriers and barges can often be seen. They are travelling to and from the industrial docks at nearby Ridham and further west in the Medway Estuary. You are now less than 1 mile away, across the Swale channel, from the Isle of Sheppey. Here you pass the remains of the old ferry terminal for the island, long disused, before reaching and crossing Milton Creek, near Sittingbourne.

The trail leaves the coast around the industrial complex and port at Ridham.

Before returning to the seawall towards Kingsferry Bridge near Iwade, close to Swale rail station where the trail ends.

Mike Hill, Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services said:

The opening of this section of the England Coast Path provides further opportunities for Kent residents and visitors to access the outdoors. And, connect with the wealth of nature and the heritage on their doorstep.

The north Kent Coast has some of the richest habitat in the UK; the salt marsh and mud flats supporting huge colonies of over wintering birds. It is a coast with a rich history in trade that supported the growth of towns such as Faversham and Whitstable. Now firm favourites with visitors to the area.

The commencement of access rights offers the chance to explore new areas of the coast. It boosts the local economy and contributes to the health and well-being of residents.

The 29 mile (45 Kilometres) route will become part of the [England Coast Path](#), the 2,700 mile long distance walking route and England's newest National Trail currently being developed around the entire English coast by Natural England. It is the fourth stretch in Kent to open, after Ramsgate to Folkestone, Folkestone to Camber, and Isle of Grain to Woolwich. Isle of Grain to Otterham Creek is due to open in April 2023, followed by Ramsgate to Whitstable.

Natural England worked on the stretch with a number of partners including Kent County Council, Swale Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Bird Wise North Kent and the Ramblers.

The route is easily accessed via public transport and there are plenty of locations along the trail for refreshments and with accommodation. See the [National Trails website map](#) to find out more:

Walkers can access maps of the route and any local diversions on the [National Trails Website](#) and check for any restrictions to access at [Natural England – Open Access maps](#)

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on the Secretary of State and Natural England to secure a long distance walking trail around the open coast of England. Together with public access rights to a wider area of land along the way for people to enjoy. Natural England is working on the entire coastal route. [See the map showing a timetable for the work.](#)

As well as new sections of the trail, there are improvements to existing access along the coastline which:

- identify a clear and continuous way marked walking route along this part

of the coast. Bringing some sections of the existing coastal footpath closer to the sea and linking some places together for the first time.

- allow the route to 'roll back' if the coastline erodes, shifts or slips, solving the long-standing difficulties of maintaining a continuous route along the coast.

For more information, see [England Coast Path: improving public access to the coast](#) and the [National Trails website](#).

The government announced in February 2022 that the England Coast Path will be fully walkable by the end of this Parliament – connecting communities from Northumberland to Cornwall.

The [Countryside Code](#), recently updated, is the official guide on how to enjoy nature and treat both it, and the people who live and work there, with respect.

Find out more about the this stretch of the England Coast Path and Natural England on our [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) pages. Search: #EnglandCoastPath