

New South Cumbria stretch of the England Coast Path opens

The latest section of the 2,700 mile England Coast Path National Trail will be opened today (9 February) by Natural England, taking in parts of the Lake District National Park and Duddon Estuary.

The new path stretches 11 miles, beginning in Silecroft and finishing at Green Road Railway Station on the western side of the estuary. It completes the Copeland section of the trail, following the opening of the Whitehaven to Silecroft stretch in West Cumbria in 2021.

The newly opened section showcases an incredibly varied landscape, which offers fabulous, uninterrupted views out across the Irish Sea. Visitors can walk through extensive beaches and dunes, taking in the golden Duddon sands, vast areas of wildlife-rich saltmarsh, and the historic town of Millom. The famous Lake District mountains are also visible from the route, whilst the distinctive pudding-bowl fell of Black Combe keeps a close watch over the whole stretch.

Visitor highlights of the 11-mile stretch include:

- Shaw Meadow and Sea Pasture SSSI at Silecroft, part of the Lake District National Park and the UK's most northerly lowland heath famous for its summer orchids.
- A brand-new section of trail between Silecroft and Haverigg.
- Hodbarrow Lagoon RSPB Reserve, a former iron mine famous for its rare nesting seabirds and sea wall walk.
- Millom town, with its industrial, architectural and literature heritage – the poet Norman Nicholson lived in Millom and Wordsworth's Duddon Sonnets include the area.
- The coastal railway, enabling linear walks along this stretch and much of the existing Cumbrian England Coast Path.
- Increased accessibility for all-terrain wheelchairs and walkers with reduced mobility, thanks to improvements in infrastructure.

The Silecroft to Green Road stretch joins Allonby to Silecroft and Walney Island, bringing the total length of England Coast Path in Cumbria to 81 miles.

Mark Hesketh, Deputy Area Manager for Cumbria at Natural England said:

It is with real pride that we open up this 11-mile section of the England Coast Path today – a welcome addition to the West Cumbrian trail. The new section vastly improves accessibility to this part of the coast for many users”.

There is strong evidence that shows opening up access to the coast attracts more visitors, supports the local economy and brings increased health, wellbeing and nature connections. And what could be better than taking in some of UK's most impressive countryside visitor hotspots?

Connecting people with nature is a fundamental part of the Government's 25-year Environment Plan, which the England Coast Path is happy to be a part of.

Minister for Rural Affairs, Lord Benyon, said:

The England Coast Path is greatly improving access to our cherished coastlines, whilst also protecting rare wildlife and habitats. It's all part of our 25 Year Environment Plan to help connect people across the country with nature.

For the people of Cumbria, as well as the thousands of people who visit this wonderful county every year, I hope this new route will encourage them to venture outdoors and explore the stunning Copeland coastline.

Gill Haigh, Cumbria Tourism's Managing Director said:

The opening of this latest 11-mile stretch of the England Coast Path is wonderful news for all those who want to experience the stunning beauty of Cumbria's coastline. Many visitors to our county miss out on all that the coastal areas have to offer by heading straight towards the popular central Lake District locations. This new path will encourage more people to get out and enjoy the wonderfully varied and beautiful landscapes around Millom and the Duddon Estuary.

This section of England Coast Path is funded through grant in aid by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and delivered by Natural England. Establishment works have been carried out by Cumbria County Council.

Once complete it will create a new National Trail all around England's coast, which at 2,700 miles will be the longest continuous coastal walking route in the world.

In addition, a new video will be launched at 7.30pm on Wednesday 2nd March, where Natural England's North West England Coast Path team will share highlights of the new stretch alongside the Whitehaven to Silecroft celebration event held in St Bees in September.

To sign up for the livestreamed premiere and social media discussion with the team, please email northwest.coastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk.