

England Coastal Path

Progress Update

February 2022

Background

Natural England is working towards opening the England Coast Path (ECP), a new National Trail around all of England's coast. Appendix A shows the progress of each stretch.

In the Solent there are seven path stretches in various stages of development. The approval for the final stretches are expected in 2023. These stretches of the ECP are between Highcliffe in the west to Shoreham in the east and includes the Isle of Wight.

The Solent Forum Natural Environment Group (NEG) provided a detailed update to its members in October 2020 [Microsoft Word - NEG 202011 Paper 2 England Coastal Path \(solentems.org.uk\)](#). At the time NEG wished to learn to what extent potential recreational impacts on designated and sensitive sites have been taken into account during the path development process.

This update follows a meeting with the NE South Hub ECP delivery team who are progressing towards the opening of the seven stretches within the South Hub along with the mechanisms in place to ensure that there is a feedback loop for any unexpected impacts on the designated sites, not foreseen by plans and mitigations.

These findings will be fed into the Solent Marine Sites Management Scheme which monitors the impacts from coastal walking on designated sites.

Progress on Solent Coastal Path Stretches

The following Table 1 shows that three of the Solent's seven stretches have now been partially approved. The remaining sites (apart from the stretch between East Cowes and Wootton) are at a stage where they are determined prior to approval. The dates below are indicative and can change should delays occur or in fact be brought forward.

Table 1 – Solent Stretches and Progress

Stretch name	Progress
Highcliffe to Calshot (HCS)	Stage 4: Determine Coastal Assessment conclude no likely significant affect. (Link to report documents) 14th March 2018, however HRA is currently being updated, post People over Wind. Planned opening late 2023/early 2024
Calshot to Gosport (CGG)	Stage 5: Approved Coastal Assessments made and HRA included mitigation (link to report documents) 17th July 2019. Scheduled opening 1 st August 2022

Stretch name	Progress
Isle of Wight - East Cowes to Wootton Bridge (IOW 1)	Stage 2 and 3: Develop and Propose Coastal Assessments made and HRA included mitigation. (Link to report documents) Expected publication of proposals late 2022/early 2023
Isle of Wight - Wootton Bridge to the Medina (IOW 2 to 10)	Stage 4: Determine Coastal Assessments made and HRA included mitigation (link to report documents) Expected 2022/23. However individual lengths of the ECP may progress to Stage 5 earlier pending examination by Defra and the Planning Inspectorate
Gosport to Portsmouth (GPM)	Stage 5: Approved Coastal Assessments made and HRA included mitigation (link to report documents) Scheduled to open 1/8/22 along with Calshot to Gosport
Portsmouth to South Hayling (PSH)	Stage 4: Determine. Nature Conservation Assessment concluded no likely significant affect (link to report documents) 19th July 2017 (although the HRA is currently being updated, post People over Wind (1).) Expected 2023
South Hayling to East Head (SHE)	Stage 4 and 5: Partially approved. Coastal Assessments made and HRA included mitigation (link to report documents) Expected 2022/23

(1) The Habitats Regulations Assessments (previously incorporated within the 'Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal') for Highcliffe to Calshot, and Portsmouth to South Hayling, are being updated due to the *People over Wind* case. When these have been updated, this information will be presented and available to view on the gov.uk web page for each stretch.

What happens when the paths open?

Path infrastructure currently paid for by Defra via a grant process, a condition of the grant process is that the infrastructure installed should last for a period of 5 years.

Once the ECP is open, they will be handed over to Natural England's National Trails team and managed thereafter by a National Trails Partnership.

This is overseen in the South by the team members Tess Jackson and Rob Morris.

It is envisaged that the ECP will be managed by a Trail Partnerships similar to the South Downs Trail Partnership.

These partnerships which will include Relevant Authorities and will be able to raise funding (75% Government 25% other) to maintain/improve the path.

There is no formal monitoring mechanism as to how paths will be used, and any disturbance affects, however it would be to the new trail partnership that organisations such as Bird Aware and Solent Forum could feedback any data on path usage that may vary from plans and assessment. Variation may include access to areas not planned and/or greater than envisaged disturbance to designated species/habitats. It is through this process that changes could be made if necessary to mitigate or to manage site access, if impacts to designated sites are greater than forecast.



England Coast Path - Stretch Progress

9th February 2022

