



Tidal Thames Environment and Heritage Conference

The River Users' perspective: Using the river to bring about improvements to the environment

31 January 2019

England Coast Path

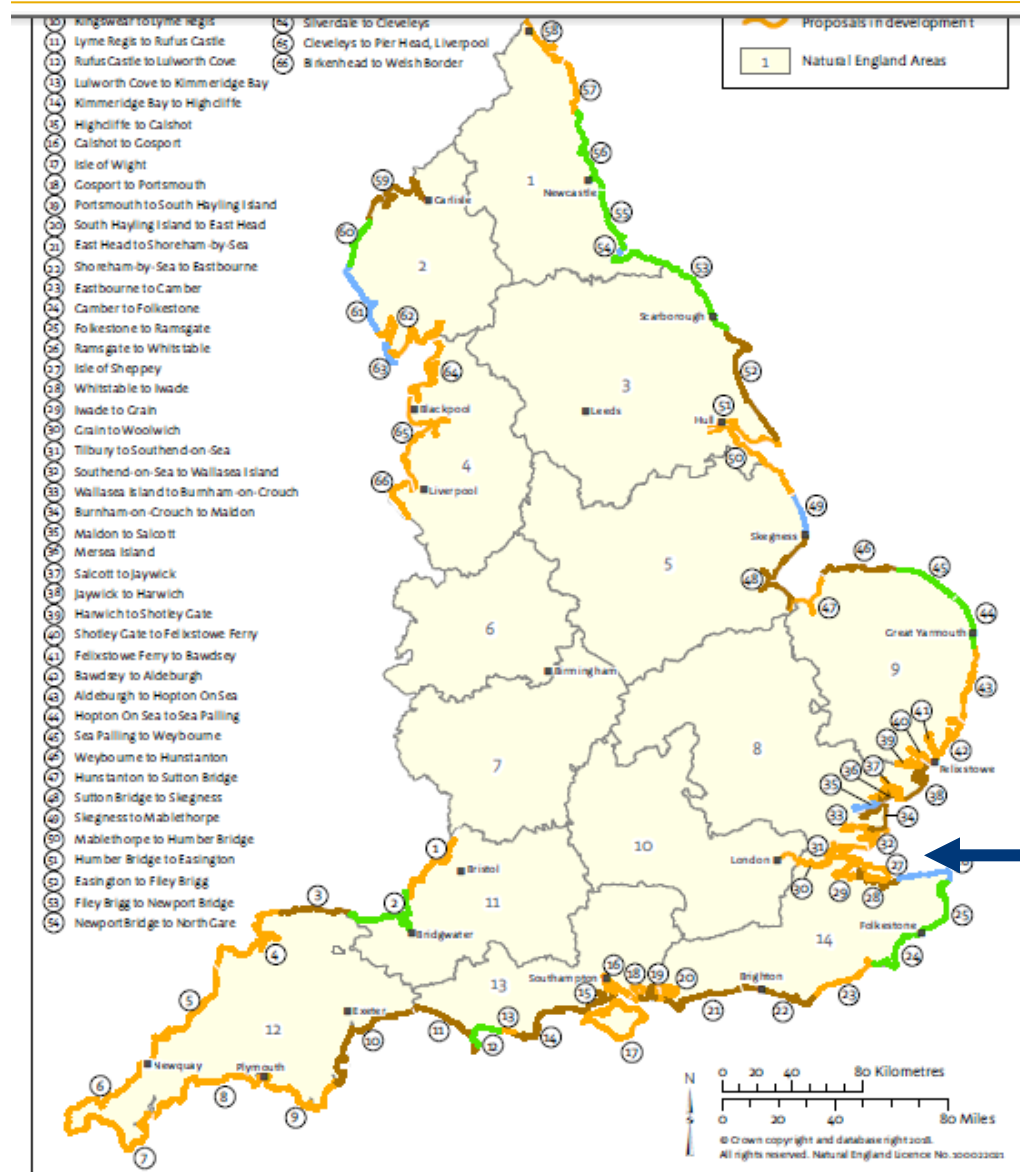
Francesca Sanchez, Natural England

England Coast Path – a new 2795 mile National Trail around the coast

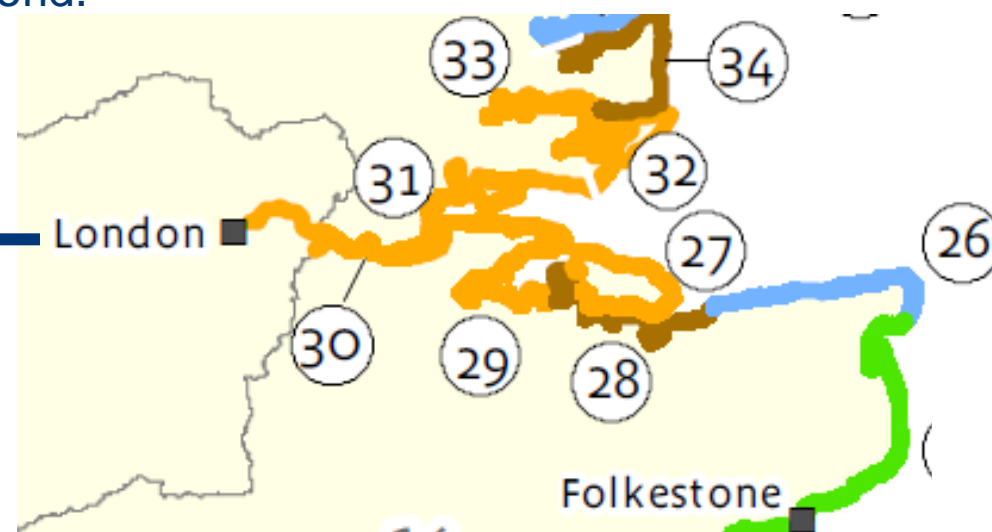


- The England Coast Path will be the **longest** managed and waymarked **coastal path in the world**
- It will give everyone a **legal right to explore our coast**, including beaches and cliff tops
- It will **boost economic growth**, generating millions of pounds for a fraction of investment
- It will **breathe new life into coastal communities**, some of which are amongst the most deprived in the country
- It will **connect people with their local environment**, helping people experience the natural world around them
- It will **improve health and wellbeing**, offering people new opportunities to unwind and get active

Progress Map of England Coast Path



- The latest updates on the progress of the England Coast Path can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast>
- The Wales Coast Path is open
- People in Scotland can already enjoy the entire Scottish coast, thanks to the Land Reform Act 2003.
- Once completed, the England Coast Path will connect with these coastlines to create a path like nowhere else in the world.



It's coming to the Thames...



- In **2019 Natural England will publish our proposals** to align the England Coast Path on the south bank of the Thames from:
- **Grain to Woolwich** connecting our capital city with the sea, and
- the north bank from **Tilbury to Southend.**

Thames Path – a national trail from its source to the sea



- The existing **Thames Path National Trail**, which starts at the source of the River Thames and currently ends at the Thames Barrier in Woolwich will now connect to the England Coast Path.
- This means that we will finally complete the long aspired for **215 mile National Trail along the River Thames from its source to the sea.**
- It will be **branded as Thames Path** on signs all the way to the sea



Coast Path will improve health and wellbeing – providing opportunities to unwind and get active



There is **abundant evidence** that **spending time in and enjoying the natural world is hugely important in improving health and wellbeing** and enhancing life for both urban and rural communities. The Thames Path National Trail runs two/three days per week of **volunteer tasks** with four to ten volunteers per day.

People are attracted by:



37%
Health
& exercise



36 %
Relaxing
& unwinding



34%
Fresh air &
pleasant weather



30%
Scenery

Source: MENE Years 1 to 6 (March 2009 to February 2015)

The positive outcomes:



55%
Enjoyment



37%
Appreciated
surroundings



36%
Calm & relaxed



36%
Refreshed
& revitalised

Source: MENE Years 1 to 6 (March 2009 to February 2015)

But we're currently witnessing a decline in visits to the coast by certain users – MENE research

Since 2009, visit numbers have not changed but how people are enjoying the coast and why is changing



Barriers to visiting the coast



- During six years of MENE surveys visits to the coast by the **25-34 year** old age group has **declined** by **16%** and **35-44 years** by **36%**. Only **2% of BME** population **engage** with the **natural environment**
- **One in nine children never visit a green space** over the course of a year, with children from **minority ethnic** backgrounds and **lower income** homes **less likely** to spend time **outdoors**
- **Over 40% of adults** also **visit** green spaces **infrequently** or **never**.

Source: MENE (2016) Visits to Coastal England (Commissioned Report 226)

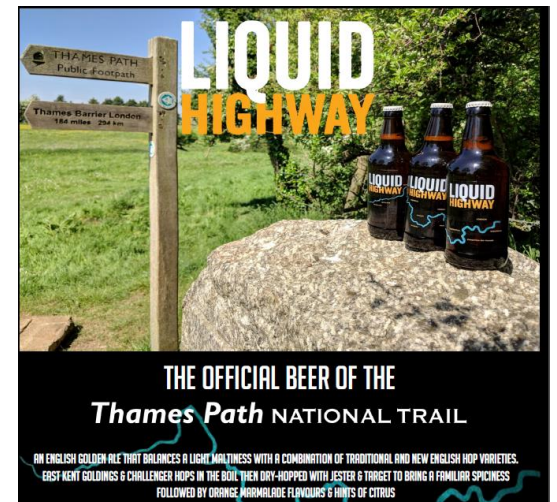
Living Coast Project: Using the England Coast Path to secure a better future for people and the environment.



The **Living Coast** aims to build on the **completion** of the **England Coast Path**. Main aims:

- to ensure **more people from all sectors of society** benefit from a nature-rich coastal environment
- to **leverage investment** from **business, tourism** and others to enhance coastal landscapes, contribute to healthy seas and improve the health and wellbeing of the people that live and visit there

We are currently running **3 pilots** across the country to better understand barriers to coastal access and how to get local business and the tourist sector better engaged.





Any questions?

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