

Coastal Access Programme

Statement by Natural England

We are pressing on with our plans to implement Coastal Access. The first stretch of the new All-England Coast Path, at Weymouth Bay in Dorset, will open in time for the Olympic and Paralympics sailing events there in 2012. Roll out in five further areas of England's coast will begin in 2011. The availability of future funding for wider roll out of Coastal Access is being considered as part of the current Comprehensive Spending Review.

The All-England Coast Path is possible because of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. For the first time people will have the right of access around all of England's open coast, including – where appropriate – 'spreading room' along the way where they can rest, relax or admire the view. Local people, including owners and occupiers of coastal land, local access forums and key interest groups, will be fully consulted about the new access arrangements.

Opening up in this way many miles of coastline for all to enjoy will help support local economies from increased visitor spending where additional visits are made – offering a vital lifeline to local services and providing local jobs.

The Marine and Coastal Act also means that for the first time, where existing paths erode into the sea, a replacement route can be quickly put in place – securing people's right to walk around the coast forever.

The new rights are not yet in force and will be brought into effect in stages around the coast, starting with the Weymouth stretch.

Working with local access forums on implementation

Local access forums have an important strategic role to play during Coastal Access rollout. We will consult the relevant local access forum(s) when we start work on each stretch of the coast, and again when we publish our draft recommendations for the stretch. On publication of our final report, we will invite representations from the local access forum(s) on the affected stretch, as required by law. These will be sent in full to the Secretary of State for consideration alongside our recommendations. We hope that LAFs will recognise the opportunities that coastal access will bring, and fully engage in the implementation process. We will be working closely with the England Access Forum to help ensure that LAFs are in a position to do this.

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