

Press release: 44 mile public path opens up North East coastline

Natural England will today open the latest stretch of the [England Coast Path](#), giving walkers uninterrupted access to 44 miles of beautiful coastline between South Bents and Amble and providing a boost for the local economy.

With walking one of the most popular pastimes at the coast, Tyneside and Northumberland's first open section of the England Coast Path will enable people to explore the coast around the river Tyne and into Northumberland, linking the wild beaches and dunes of Druridge Bay to the resorts and ports further south.

Visitors and locals will find improved access and signposting along the route to allow them to enjoy numerous towns, villages and historic sites such as North Shields, Whitley Bay and Druridge Bay. Walkers will also be able to access [11 bathing waters](#), eight of which are rated as 'excellent' including Blyth's South Beach.

The South Tyneside, North Tyneside and Northumberland stretch is the tenth section of Natural England's flagship England Coast Path project to open and offers local shops, pubs and hotels the opportunity to benefit from the £381 million spent each year by visitors to English coastal paths.

It coincides with new data from Natural England, showing that over 29 million leisure walking trips took place on English coastal paths in 2017 – supporting over 6,000 full time jobs.

Rural Minister Lord Gardiner, who is attending today's event at Souter Lighthouse, said:

England's stunning coastline is a national treasure. The England Coast Path is already playing a significant role in opening up access to our most spectacular sites, ensuring sensitivity to the environment while making a valuable contribution to our rural economy.

With Northumberland home to some of the country's most breath-taking coastal scenery, the new path makes it easy for all to access this beautiful area.

Natural England Chairman Andrew Sells said:

The England Coast Path brings people closer to our magnificent wildlife, landscapes and seascapes. I am delighted that it has now

reached Northumberland – one of our most beautiful and unspoiled counties.

South Bents to Amble is the tenth stretch to open and a significant milestone in our ambition to create the longest continuous coastal walking route in the world.

The new path takes account of the area's important coastal habitats, and was designed to complement the existing trails and management in place, providing a clear, well maintained and high quality route, whilst ensuring that the area's important bird species are safeguarded. An example of this is on the north bank of the river Blyth where the route was designed to avoid sensitive roost areas.

Natural England is working to establish a 2,700-mile path around the entire English coastline and work is now under way on all of the route. When completed, it will be the longest continuous coastal walking route in the world. It will also become a National Trail – the nation's finest and most popular long-distance paths.

The England Coast Path plays a vital role in helping the government fulfil its aim to connect more people with the environment and nature, as outlined in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

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Press release: Blitz on drugs in prison underway

- Justice Secretary David Gauke announces £9 million pilot at HMP Holme House to tackle drugs in prison and help offenders stay clean for good
- Security bolstered by new body scanners and extra sniffer dogs while healthcare workers are drafted in to support recovering users
- Joint MoJ and NHS England pilot is already showing progress and good practice will be emulated by prisons across the country

The ground-breaking 'Drug Recovery Prison' (DRP) pilot at HMP Holme House, in County Durham, adopts a wide-ranging approach and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Justice and NHS England. It involves tightening security to stop drugs entering the prison in the first place, while helping offenders break their habit of substance abuse.

The increased security has seen investment in new drug detection equipment, including scanners and extra sniffer dogs, while specialist healthcare teams have been drafted in to help prisoners kick their habit.

The pilot which began in April 2017 is already showing progress – with a rise in drug seizures in the prison and an increase in the number of offenders in education and work.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Drugs fuel a cycle of violence and self-harm and prevent offenders from starting the process of rehabilitation that can ultimately lead to employment and a life free from crime.

To break that cycle we need an innovative approach, and that's what this pilot offers – not only stopping drugs getting into prison but helping offenders break the habit for good.

We do not underestimate the scale of the task, but our aim is to make prisons places of safety, security and decency where offenders have a genuine chance to turn their lives around.

Minister for Mental Health and Inequalities Jackie Doyle-Price said:

Too often offenders are stuck in a cycle of offending, fuelled by

drug addiction. The only way this will change is by improving the health of our offender population, supporting them to stop using drugs, both in and out of prison.

The support being provided through this pilot could change the course of someone's life, rehabilitate them back into society, reduce repeat offending – and ultimately make them turn their backs on crime for good. Holme House was earmarked as the most suitable choice to become a DRP as it previously had a drug recovery wing and a therapeutic community, as well as a stable population and a strong reputation as a reform prison.

Good practice and lessons learned from the pilot, which runs until 2020, will be shared among prisons across the estate.

The pilot has seen a number of measures introduced, including:

- The introduction of body scanners, extra sniffer dogs and a dedicated drug search team. Since these have been introduced, there has been an increase in drug finds, helping to rid the prison of the contraband that fuels violence behind bars.
- New health staff, including a specialist psychologist, to deliver enhanced substance misuse services, ensuring prisoners have the support they need to stop using drugs and turn their backs on crime for good.
- A 'Connecting Communities' team to help prisoners transition from custody to community by arranging appointments for drug and alcohol treatment, accommodation and financial advice, and aiding family engagement.

The recently formed Drugs Taskforce, which works across the prison estate, will use the experiences and evidence from the Holme House pilot to develop its plans for tackling drugs and gangs behind bars. The Taskforce works with law enforcement and health partners in government and is particularly focused on the prisons with the worst drug problems.

- The DRP pilot was agreed with joint funding and governance from MoJ and NHS England. The pilot will run for three financial years from 2017/18 to 2019/20.
 - We published a new National Partnership Agreement in April 2018 on prison healthcare in England, a joint working agreement between health and justice bodies, which will strengthen the commissioning and delivery of substance misuse services in prisons.
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Press release: UK supports US declaration condemning the illegal annexation of Crimea

UK supports US declaration condemning the illegal annexation of Crimea – GOV.UK

Following US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's reiteration of the US stance against Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea at the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee.



Foreign Office spokesperson said:

The UK echoes the United States' firm statement of opposition to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. The UK position is clear: we condemn Russia's continued breach of international law; Crimea is Ukrainian territory. We remain fully committed to upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

The UK also remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Crimea, where we have seen the systematic persecution of minority groups and of those who voice their opposition to Russia's illegal annexation of the territory. We call again for Russia to release all Ukrainian political prisoners held in Crimea and in Russia, and to allow unrestrained access for international human rights monitoring bodies to the peninsula.

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