

England Coast Path takes a step forward in Hampshire2

- The nearly 52 mile continuous walking route takes you from Calshot to Portsmouth via Gosport.
- The Calshot to Gosport stretch and the Gosport to Portsmouth stretch are the first complete sections of the England Coast Path in Hampshire to open.
- These new sections, the 21 and 22 to open, will form part of the 2,700 mile long England Coast Path, which will become the longest walking route in the world.

Summer is here and there is a new trail for Hampshire residents and visitors to enjoy. The newest sections of the England Coast Path will help connect people with nature and provide a wealth of health and wellbeing opportunities.

This easy to follow walking route along the Solent coast, with its unspoiled countryside, busy marinas, industrial heritage, historic castles and wildlife conservation sites. Has been opened by Natural England today.

This route will eventually help connect the country's entire coastline into one long National Trail. The walk will take people through some of the finest landscapes in England. As well as the many coastal towns, cities and ports which have shaped this island nation.

Excitingly for the first time in the history of public access, legal rights of public access will be secured to typical coastal land. This includes beaches, dune and cliffs, allowing walkers to access places they've never been before.

Allison Potts, Natural England Area Manager, said:

This new trail covers a wealth of unique environments. It includes the unspoiled countryside with its abundance of wildlife. The industrial and bustling maritime Solent and beside 1 of the most densely populated areas on the south coast of England.

At a time when the benefits of connecting with nature are clearer than ever. It is fabulous that we are opening up this nearly 52 mile walking route on the banks of the Solent for people to enjoy.

Calshot to Gosport

This route starts at Calshot Spit, a popular beach and water sports location. It is also a natural shelter to the Calshot Nature Reserve where birds like oyster catchers and ringed plover can be seen.

Heading northwest towards Hythe, you have sight of the areas industrial heritage – the decommissioned Fawley Power Station and the Fawley Oil Refinery. Once at Hythe waterfront, a short hop on the Hythe Ferry will take you across to Southampton Town Quay, a busy international port with many historic sites.

Once you cross the River Itchen, you carry on the route through Woolston and Netley, where you might glimpse a 16th century castle and ruins of the 13th century Abbey. You then pass the Royal Victoria Country Park, which was once the home of the biggest military hospital in the Victorian Empire and a popular tourist attraction.

Continuing on to Hamble-le-Rice and through Hamble Common, there are more sites of historical and archaeological interest. There are remains of the 16th century St Andrews Castle, a 19th century gun battery and a second world war anti-aircraft gun emplacement.

A short ride on the Hamble-Warsash Ferry (also known as the 'Pink Ferry') takes you across the River Hamble. Then along the shore through the Hook-with-Warsash Local Nature Reserve. Many species of wading birds and wildfowl can be spotted here, including turnstones, linnets and skylarks. In the shingle you can also see plant species such as sea kale, sea beet and yellow thorned poppy.

The final part of the stretch takes you along the clifftop coast path to Meon Shore and Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve. Then down to the shoreline at Lee-on-the-Solent.

Gosport to Portsmouth

From Lee-on-the-Solent you pass through Stokes Bay, and inland around Browdown Military Training Area before heading to Gilkicker Point. This area includes the Browdown Site of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI) and the Gilkicker Lagoon SSSI. Although the lagoons saltiness creates a harsh environment where species have to adapt to survive, 5 species of mollusc of national rarity live in the lagoons.

The route then heads inland around Fort Monckton and back to the coast around Clayhall before reaching the Gosport Ferry. You pass the perimeter of the historic Royal Clarence Yard and Royal Naval Hospital. Then carrying on over Millennium Bridge, past Gosport Waterfront then on to Fareham, passing the marina and creek.

The path continues around the headland with views of Pewit Island Nature Reserve, where the whole of Portsmouth Harbour and its iconic Spinnaker Tower can be seen. These impressive sights continue up to Portchester Castle.

You pass through Port Solent Marina and eventually follow the seawall using the Pilgrims' trail with views of Whale Island. Home to HMS Excellent, the oldest shore training establishment within the Royal Navy, and its headquarters. The route continues past the Continental Ferry Port and beside HMS Nelson.

Approaching Portsmouth you pass by the Historic Dockyard, home to HMS Victory, HMS Warrior and the Mary Rose Museum. Then through Gunwharf Quays, a vibrant waterside shopping and dining location. The route passes the impressive Round Tower site at the mouth of the Harbour. Originally ordered to be built in wood by Henry V in 1418, the tower was rebuilt in stone by Henry VIII. The route concludes at the Historic Old Portsmouth home to a small fishing fleet and fish market at Camber docks.

Councillor Russell Oppenheimer, Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs at Hampshire County Council, said:

The completion of this stretch of the England Coast Path is really great news for local residents and visitors to the area.

It will provide easier access to Hampshire's spectacular and diverse coastline, helping to connect people with nature.

We are delighted that it will provide an uninterrupted link for the first time between a number of fantastic outdoor attractions managed by the county council. Including Royal Victoria Country Park, Calshot and Hook with Warsash Nature Reserve.

Councillor Lisa Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Housing and the Green Environment at Southampton City Council, said:

We're honoured to be part of this national quest to make England's coastline more accessible.

Southampton has a fantastic mix of coastline, green spaces and the city centre, so forming part of the national England Coast Path project is something we're very proud of.

We look forward to welcoming more people to enjoy the path and explore Southampton at the same time.

Councillor Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation at Portsmouth City Council, said:

We fully support this great way of encouraging more people to explore our coastline on foot, and we welcome the new walkers this will bring to our city.

Portsmouth is a fantastic city to walk around or explore however you can, with streets full of history, and surprises round every corner. It's also mostly flat, so good for people of all abilities.

Professor Gavin Parker, Chair of the New Forest National Park Authority, said:

We're pleased to have played a part in the establishment of this landmark route along the outstanding coast of the New Forest.

Particularly by ensuring the signs in the National Park are all made with sustainably harvested New Forest oak and were installed by local contractors.

Many thanks to the landowners and other stakeholders who have helped make this happen.

Further information

You can find images for sections of the stretch [here](#). Please credit Natural England.

The nearly 52 mile (83.5 kilometre) route will become part of the [England Coast Path](#). The 2,700 mile long distance walking route and England's newest National Trail currently being developed around the entire English coast by Natural England.

Our proposals for the Calshot to Gosport stretch (23.3 miles / 37.5 kilometres) were submitted to government in November 2019 and were approved in November 2021.

Our proposals for the Gosport to Portsmouth stretch (28.69 miles / 46.7 kilometres) were submitted to government in June 2019 and were approved in March 2022.

Natural England worked on the 2 stretches, which form a continuous walking route, with a wide range of partners and landowners. The Calshot to Gosport stretch: New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA), Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council. The Gosport to Portsmouth stretch: Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council.

The route is easily accessed via public transport and there are plenty of locations along the trail for refreshments and with accommodation.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on the Secretary of State and Natural England to secure a long-distance walking trail around the open coast of England. This together with public access rights to a wider area of land along the way for people to enjoy.

Natural England is working on the entire coastal route. [See the map showing a timetable for the work](#).

As well as new sections of the trail, there are improvements to existing access along the coastline which:

- identify a clear and continuous way marked walking route along this part of the coast. Bringing some sections of the existing coastal footpath closer to the sea and linking some places together for the first time.

- allow the route to 'roll back' if the coastline erodes, shifts or slips, solving the long-standing difficulties of maintaining a continuous route along the coast.

[See more information](#) and www.nationaltrail.co.uk.

The [CountrysideCode](#) recently updated, is the official guide on how to enjoy nature and treat both it, and the people who live and work there, with respect.

Find out more about the this stretch of the England Coast Path and Natural England on our social media channels: twitter.com/naturalengland