

ENGLISH COAST PATH CONSULTATION RESPONSE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to submit representations to Natural England in response to their current consultation on the England Coast Path Stretch: Calshot to Gosport (closing date: 11 September 2019). As part of developing the route, Natural England have engaged with all landowners (including this Council), whose land the proposal crosses.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Natural England has a statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to improve access to the English coast. The Act places a duty on Natural England to secure a long-distance walking route around the whole coast, including a margin of coastal land associated with this route which, in appropriate places, the public will also have access to (the term “Spreading Room” is used to describe any land, other than the trail itself, which would form part of the coastal margin and would have public rights of access).
- 2.2 On 17 July 2019, Natural England submitted a collection of reports to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which explains how they propose to implement the England Coast Path between Calshot and Gosport. The full collection of reports can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-calshot-to-gosport-comment-on-proposals> .

3 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The proposals form part of a Natural England programme to establish a continuous walking route around England’s coastline with 62 stretches to be completed over five years.
- 3.2 The proposals for the Calshot to Gosport stretch is divided into three lengths of coast, with only length CCG 1 (Calshot to Itchen Bridge) being relevant to this Council’s interests as a landowner and as a local authority:
- CCG 1: Calshot to Itchen Bridge
 - CCG 2: Itchen Bridge to Hamble Warsash Ferry (Pink Ferry)
 - CCG 3: Hamble Warsash Ferry (Pink Ferry) to Fareham/Gosport Borough Council Boundary.
- 3.3 The CCG 1: Calshot to Itchen Bridge part of the stretch follows existing walked routes (e.g. the Solent Way), including public rights of way, along most of its length (see Appendix 1: Map). It begins on Calshot Spit along a permissive footpath heading northwest towards the former Fawley Power Station, with an optional alternative route available in case of waterlogging along the main path.

- 3.4 The alignment continues to Ashlett before turning landwards around the Fawley Oil Refinery then along Shore Road into Hythe. The route then incorporates the use of the ferry at Hythe to Town Quay, Southampton, to cross Southampton Water.
- 3.5 Natural England's proposals identify which parts of the trail may need to be repositioned in the future, in direct response to coastal erosion or other coastal processes ("roll-back"). Where roll-back has been proposed and becomes necessary, the new route will be determined by Natural England without any requirement for further reference to the Secretary of State.
- 3.6 Other changes to the route of the trail may also be needed in the future in response to new build development. At the time of preparing these proposals, Natural England was aware that the proposed redevelopment at the former Fawley Power Station would potentially require changes to the coastal access provisions between Calshot and Fawley Power Station. The normal procedure to make a change to the route of the trail, in this case, would be to submit a variation report seeking approval from the Secretary of State. Such changes would be subject to the same procedures for consultation, representations and objections as the initial reports.
- 3.7 Finally, Natural England proposes to exclude access all year-round to all areas of intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh between Calshot and the Itchen Bridge, as the land is unsuitable for public access and potentially dangerous.

4 CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 4.1 The Council has worked with Natural England on the proposals for the route that directly affect its land ownership. As a landowner, the Council does not have any objections to the proposals.
- 4.2 As a local authority, the Council is keen to encourage the walk so long as it does not have an adverse impact on its residents or any key sensitive features and sites on the stretch (Solent and Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar site, Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Dorset Coast SPA or New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site). Natural England's proposals for coastal access from Calshot to Gosport has been subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment which concludes that the proposals will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of European sites (either alone or in combination with other plans and projects).
- 4.3 The Council's recreational mitigation strategy was adopted in 2014 in order to comply with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and is in the process of being updated (*Mitigation for Recreational Impacts – Supplementary Planning Document*, published in draft form for public consultation in July 2018). The strategy provides a means for developers to mitigate against the impact of recreational activity from new residential on the special European sites. Any proposals for the path must not provide a conflict with this strategy and the Council will work closely with Natural England to ensure this is the case.

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Objections and representations are forwarded for consideration by an independent planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. The inspector will make recommendations to the Secretary of State, who will in turn consider both representations and objections and then make a decision as to whether to approve Natural England's proposals.

- 5.2 Natural England may not make any further changes to the report as a result of the representations and objections, but will make comments about them for consideration by the Secretary of State and, in the case of objections, the appointed person (an inspector from the Planning Inspectorate).
- 5.3 Once the Secretary of State has approved the report, Natural England will start work with Hampshire County Council, the New Forest National Park and Southampton City Council on preparing the route for public use.
- 5.4 The first step will be to contact owners and occupiers of the affected land to discuss the design and location of any new infrastructure which is required such as signs and gates.
- 5.5 When preparations are complete, the new access rights will be brought into force by order on a date decided by the Secretary of State. Natural England will publicise the commencement of the rights to ensure that they are known about and understood locally.
- 5.6 Once approved and established, this part of the England Coast Path (Calshot to Gosport) will be managed as part of the family of National Trails.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications for this Council as part of this project. Any maintenance issues will fall to Hampshire County Council as the authority responsible for maintaining public rights of way.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Once completed the aim is to provide a continuous walking route around England's coastline. The Council will work closely with Natural England to ensure that the aims of this path do not conflict with those of the Council's Recreational Mitigation Strategy which looks to mitigate against any adverse effects of recreation on the special European designations within the District.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None

9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is recommended that the response attached at Appendix 2 of this report is approved to be submitted to Natural England.

11 PORTFOLIO HOLDER ENDORSEMENT

I have agreed to the recommendation contained within paragraph 10.1 of this report.

Signed: CLLR E J HERON **Date:** 23/8/19

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Background Papers:

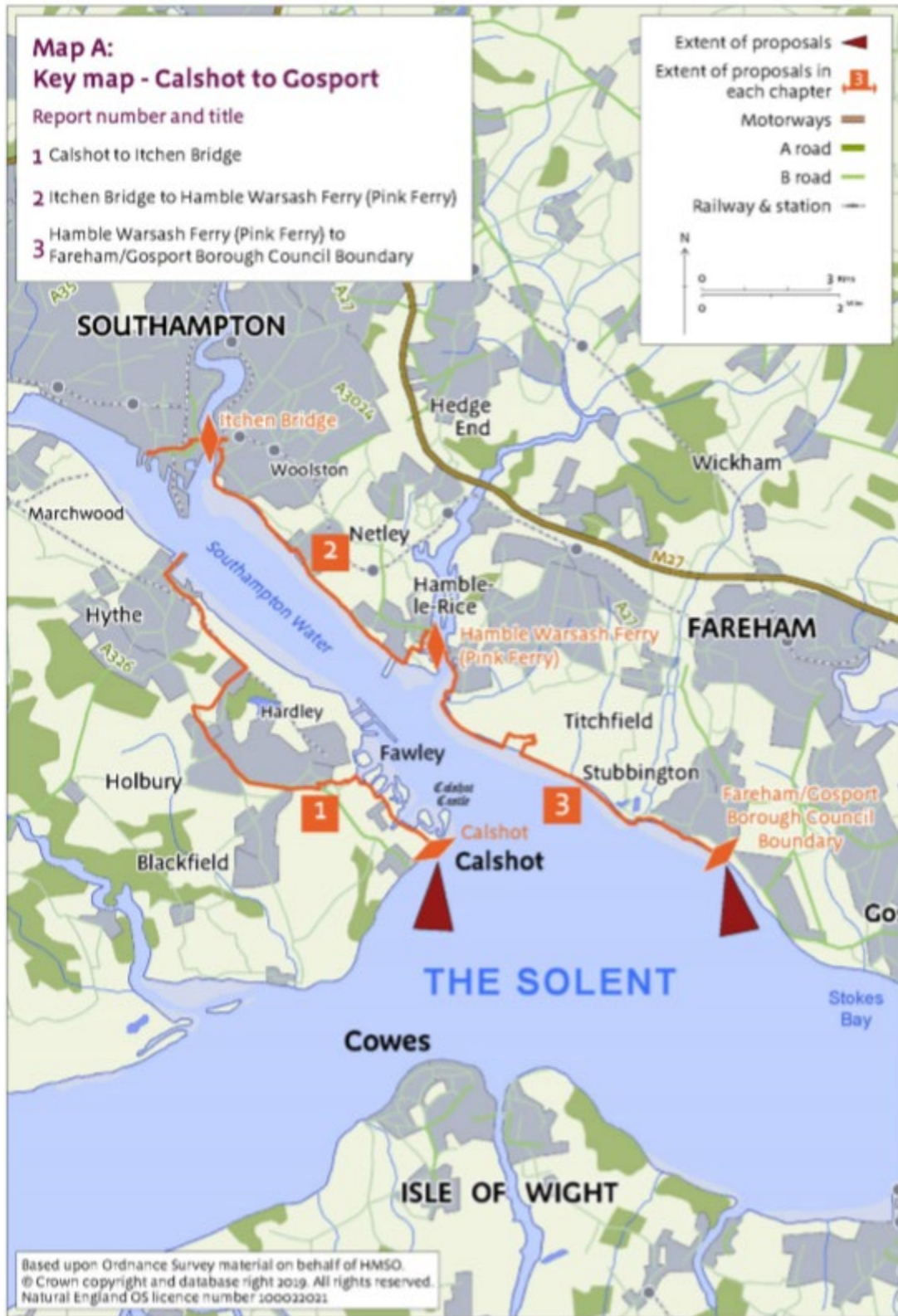
England Coast Path Stretch: Calshot to Gosport

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-from-calshot-to-gosport-comment-on-proposals>

Date on which notice of this Decision given - 23 August 2019

Last date for call-in - 2 September 2019

APPENDIX 1: MAP OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S PROPOSALS (CALSHOT TO GOSPORT)



APPENDIX 2: PROPOSED RESPONSE TO NATURAL ENGLAND

New Forest District thanks you for your inclusive approach to engaging with us during the development of a route for the Calshot to Gosport stretch of the England Coast Path (ECP). As you are aware, the Council has both an interest in the route as a landowner for some areas and as a planning authority, with some of the route for the ECP also being covered by our recreational mitigation strategy.

As a landowner, the District Council does not have any objections to the proposed route.

As a local authority, the District Council fully supports the inclusive and evidence-based approach taken by Natural England and the report's recommendations (Report CCG 1) for the implementation of the England Coast Path between Calshot and the Itchen Bridge. However, the Council does have concerns that the ECP will lead to a rise in the number of visitors to sensitive parts of this length of coast, thus causing increased disturbance to protected European sites. We duly note that environmental protection objectives were taken into account in the development of your proposals and that these have been subject to the HRA process.