

## Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership Position Statement (December 2018): England Coast Path

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# The England Coast Path in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and additional project area

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## Introduction

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by Central Government for the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty in some of England and Wales' finest landscapes.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Position Statement, which has been endorsed by the AONB Partnership, is to provide clarity for local planning authorities, landowners and other interested parties on the view of AONB Partnership on the England Coast Path where it is routed through the AONB and associated additional project area.

## The England Coast Path

Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009<sup>1</sup> aims to improve public access to, and enjoyment of, the English coastline by creating clear and consistent public rights along the English coast for open-air recreation on foot. It allows existing coastal access to be secured and improved and new access to be created in coastal places where it did not already exist.

## National & Local Policy Context

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000<sup>2</sup> places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities requiring them to have regard to the statutory purpose of AONBs when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to or affecting land within these areas.

Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009<sup>1</sup> has the first objective to provide a route for the whole of the English coast which:

- (a) consists of one or more long-distance routes along which the public are enabled to make recreational journeys on foot or by ferry, and*
- (b) (except to the extent that it is completed by ferry) passes over land which is accessible to the public.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/part/9>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85>

It is noted that the guidance notes that the route may go to the first permanent foot crossing of any rivers or estuaries.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2018 23<sup>3</sup> has the following Management Plan objective:

*EtA5: The development of the England Coast Path is aligned to the purposes of the AONB and does not detract from its natural beauty or special qualities*

## Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership Position

The AONB Partnership recognises the statutory duty placed on Natural England to develop the England Coast Path. It welcomes the securing and improvement of existing rights and creation of new access to the nationally designated AONB where:

- Natural England clearly demonstrates how they have paid regard to the purposes of the AONB and its natural beauty and special qualities as defined in the *Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding natural beauty (AONB) Natural Beauty and Special Qualities v1.8 21 November 2016*<sup>4</sup> document when developing the proposals.
- The implementation of the path, including practical works such as materials used, signage, structures and information pay regard to the AONB (as above) and its status as a nationally designated landscape.
- It does not have a significant negative impact on the purposes of the AONB designation, particularly the conservation of natural beauty, including relative tranquillity (a factor in the reasons for designation of AONBs).
- It does not have an adverse impact on Natural Heritage features such as wildlife, geological or geomorphological features which are a factors of the AONB designation.
- It does not have an adverse impact on built heritage features or archaeological interests.
- It does not have a significant negative impact on the residents, businesses and agricultural operations associated with the social, economic and environmental well-being of the AONB.
- Once opened, the requirements to enhance the public enjoyment of the coast, engage with local communities and support the delivery of a local sustainable economy should be reported.
- The AONB will work in consultation with the Access Authority with regards to route signage, signage and access concerns related to mitigation activities, in particular the ambition to raise the profile of the nationally designated landscape where the England Coast passes through it.
- The AONB team will seek to raise concerns or issues it may have with Natural England and the Access Authority in relation to the England Coast Path.

For further information contact the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB staff team on 01394 445225 or via [schaonb@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:schaonb@suffolk.gov.uk)

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/about-us/aonb-management-plan/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Planning/V1.8-Natural-Beauty-and-Special-Qualities-of-SCH-AONB.pdf>