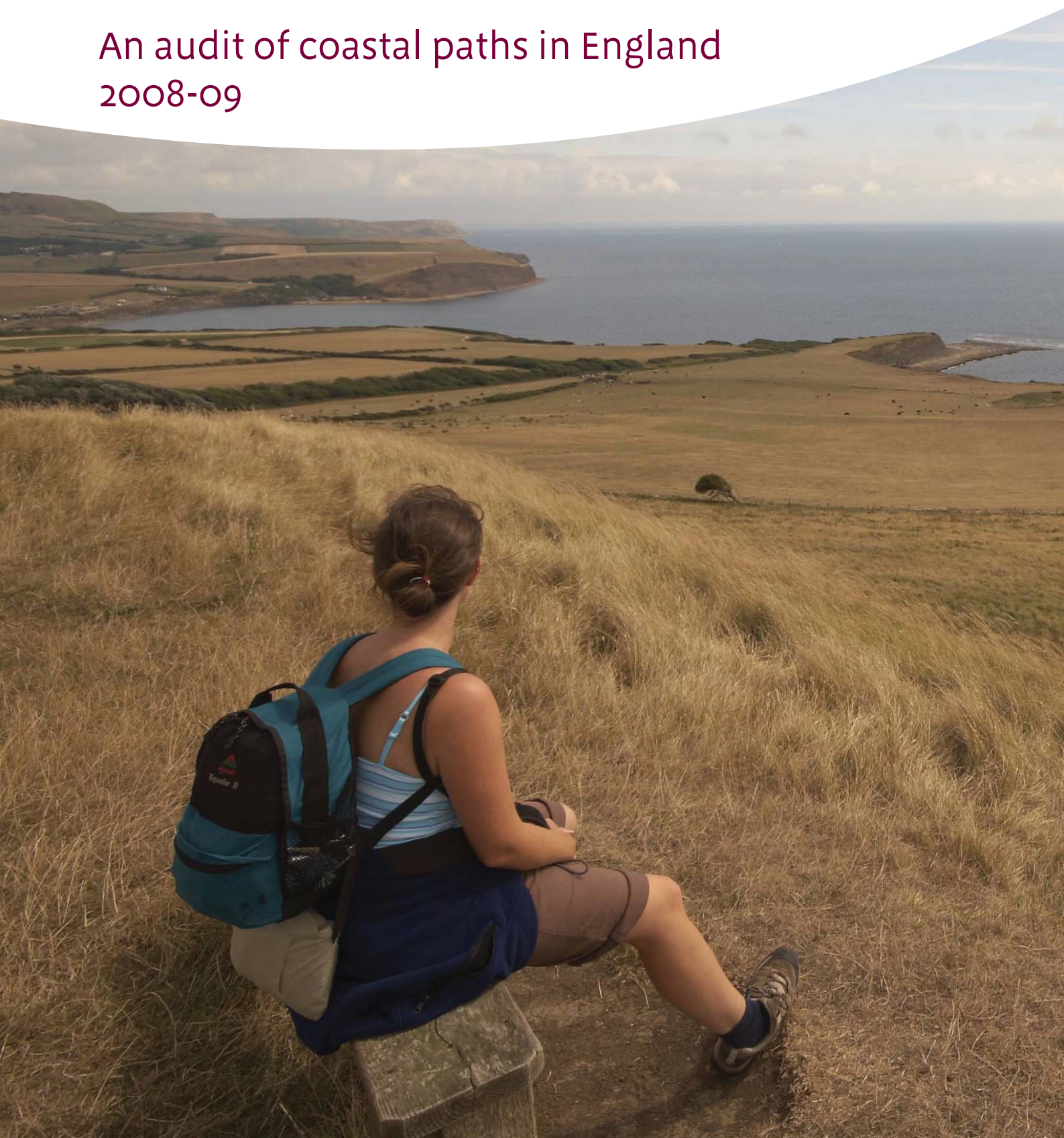


# Coastal access:

An audit of coastal paths in England  
2008-09



A summary of the findings of an audit of the existence and status of existing paths along the English coast.

Based on work carried out during 2008/09 by Natural England's coastal access team in collaboration with the 53 local access authorities in England with a coast.

Natural England gratefully acknowledges the contribution of all those who participated in this work.

## Executive Summary

A desk-based audit of the existence of a satisfactory, legally secure path along the English coast.

Based on the audit data the average length of satisfactory, legally secure path that can be walked before encountering a section with no legally secure path is 3.0 kilometres (1.9 miles).

In between such sections there may be no path at all, or paths that are purely permissive, or paths that are oppressively narrow or very difficult or dangerous to use, or available for only part of the time.

We want people to be able to arrive at the coast, turn in either direction and be confident that they will have the right to continue their walk, whether it is for an hour, a day, or longer.

74%<sup>1</sup> of the length of the satisfactory, legally secure path is on existing public rights of way<sup>2</sup> and 13% of this is along a coast that is eroding with the predicted loss of that right of way within an estimated 20 year period.

This highlights the point that the length and availability of current legally secure path is only going to decrease without the new provisions.

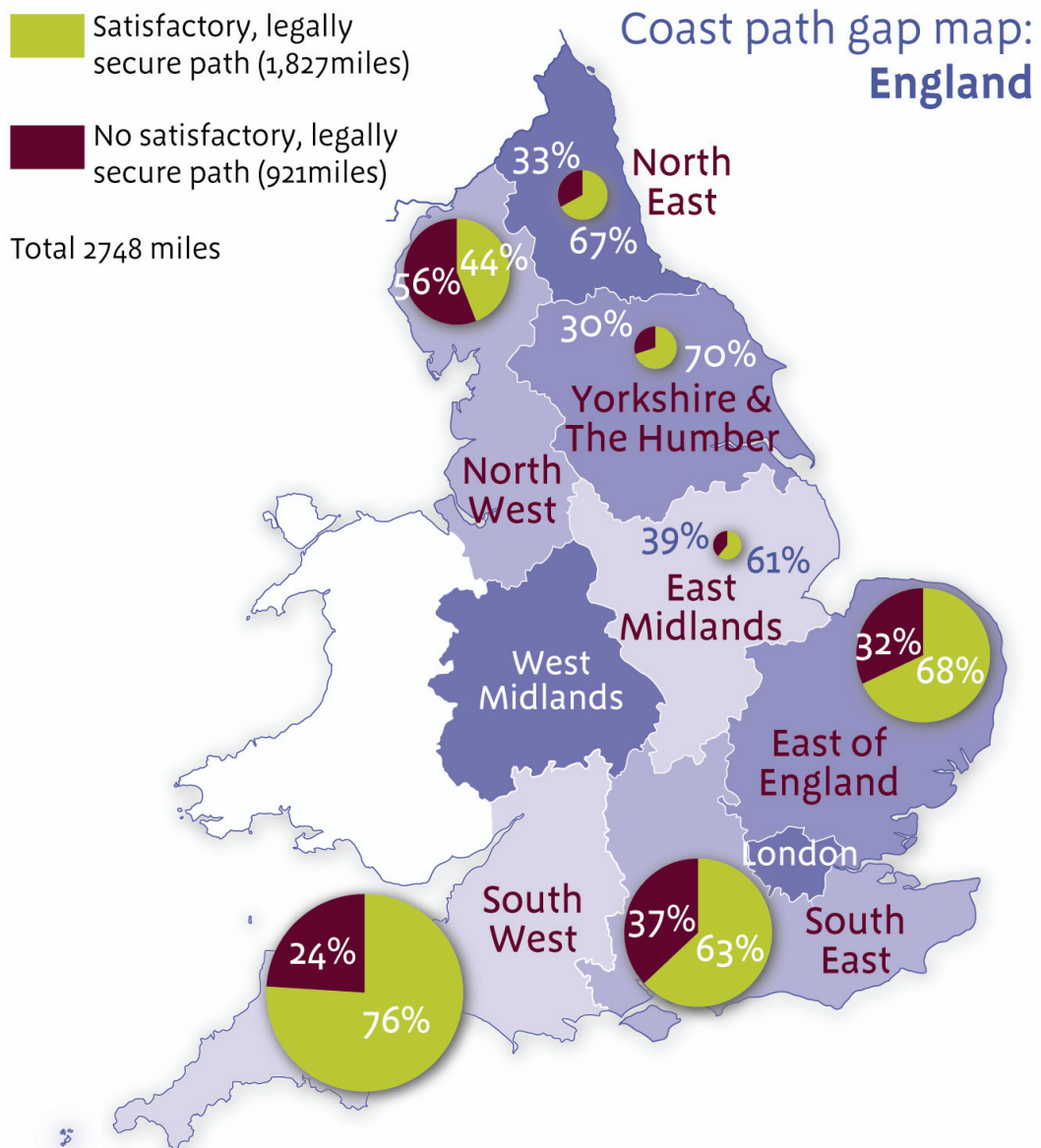
This audit information is being used to inform Natural England's planning for the delivery of our duty to create a continuous coastal trail around the coast of England, as required by the Marine & Coastal Access Bill.

It carries no weight in terms of the eventual alignment of that trail, which will be carried out in accordance with the Coastal Access Scheme, once that is approved by the Secretary of State.

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<sup>1</sup> this figure excludes other public roads and promenades

<sup>2</sup> Public footpath (70%) public bridleway (3%) byway open to all traffic (1%)



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- 2. Limitations of the approach**
- 3. Existing satisfactory, legally secure paths – an explanation**
- 4. Glossary of terms**



## 1 Background

Natural England has undertaken, with the 53 English access authorities with a coastline, a desk based audit of the extent to which legally secure paths currently exist around the English coast.

This work is purely indicative and was primarily intended to inform our implementation planning and resource estimates. It will carry no weight when we come to the formal alignment process once the legal powers are in place.

*The audit identifies:*

- Where there appears to be a legally secure and satisfactory coastal path.
- Where there is no path, or an existing path is not legally secure, or not satisfactory.
- Existing path infrastructure<sup>3</sup> and any *major* infrastructure (bridges and gates etc.) that may be required.

The audit has focused entirely on the existence or otherwise of a coastal path and has not considered the margin of land alongside it.

The audits were carried out on the basis of existing data on and knowledge of the coast. They did not include a detailed field assessment of the quality of the existing satisfactory access in terms of factors such as width or level of management – relying instead on the knowledge of the highway authority staff (see annex 1).

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<sup>3</sup> Gates, footbridges and other path furniture

## 2 Summary of findings

Length of coast audited **4,422 kilometres (2,748 miles)**.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path

- In our advice to Government in February 2007 we said that some 70% of the English coast had secure access rights present<sup>4</sup>.
- In the light of the audit data we estimate that 66% of the coast has an existing legally secure and satisfactory path along it.
- That the other 34% lacks such a path is exacerbated by the finding that even the sections with a secure and satisfactory path are regularly punctuated by sections without one.
- Based on the audit data we estimate that the average length of coast along which a secure and satisfactory path is available is 3.0 kilometres (1.9 miles).
- Without the Marine and Coastal Access Bill, this average length would steadily decrease over time as existing public rights of way are lost to erosion and other forms of coastal change, and not replaced. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back automatically as the coastline changes or, where necessary, to be freshly aligned using the processes in the legislation.

### Status of satisfactory, legally secure path

- Where an existing path has been rated secure and satisfactory:
  - A quarter consists of existing coastal national trails<sup>5</sup>.
  - 70% is on public footpaths.
  - 16% is on public roads, often through urban areas.
  - 8% is along promenades with established access rights, usually through built up areas.
- Our best estimate is that, including a significant proportion of the length of existing coastal national trails, some 46% of the English coastal trail will follow existing coastal footpaths, and 2% will follow existing coastal bridleways. As noted above, this proportion will decrease over time as existing rights of way are lost to coastal change.

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<sup>4</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis in 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective.

<sup>5</sup> Cleveland Way, South West Coast Path and North Norfolk Coast Path.

### 3 National data

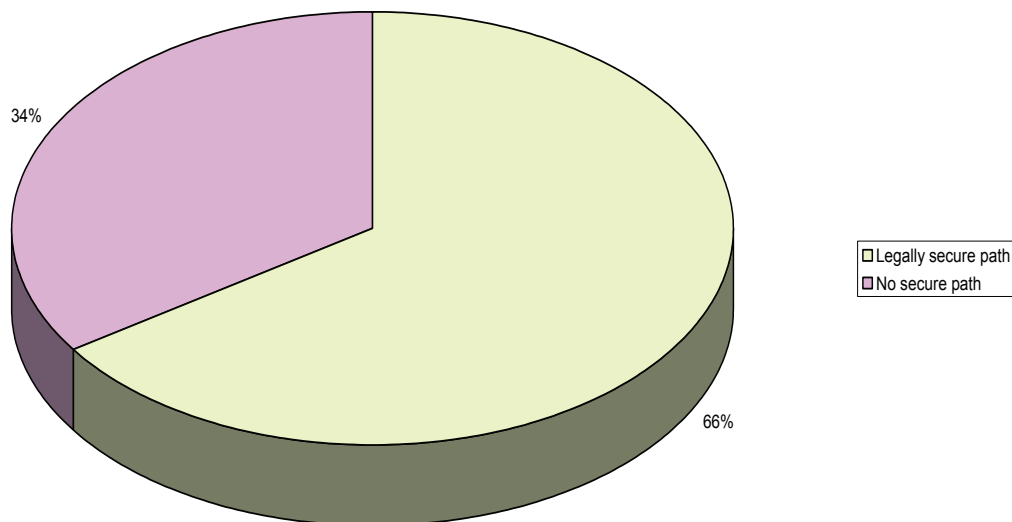
The charts in this report are derived from data taken from the audits of all those English local authority areas with a coastline.

#### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

**Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path**



- Overall 66% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 34% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.



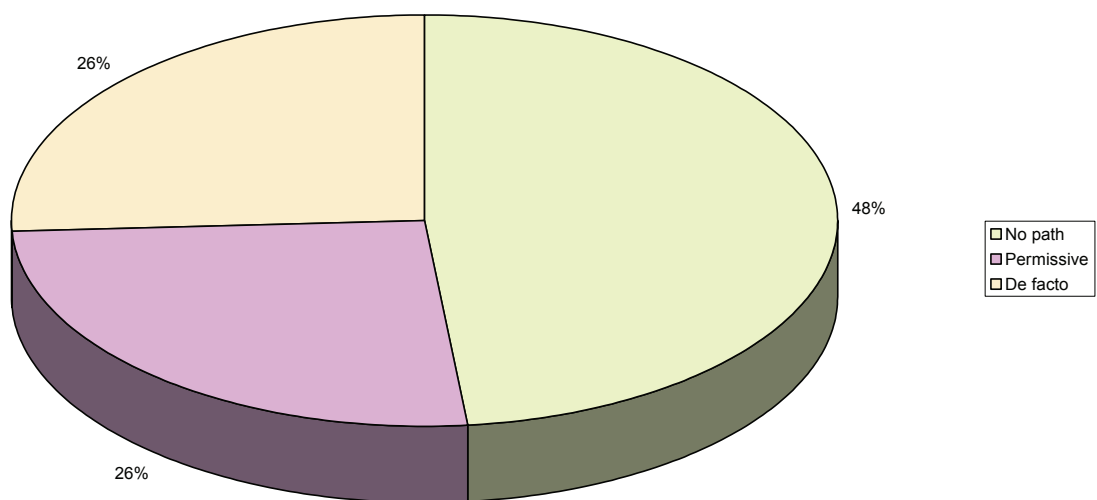
### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

34% of the coast has no satisfactory, legally secure path.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.

No satisfactory, legally secure path - a breakdown



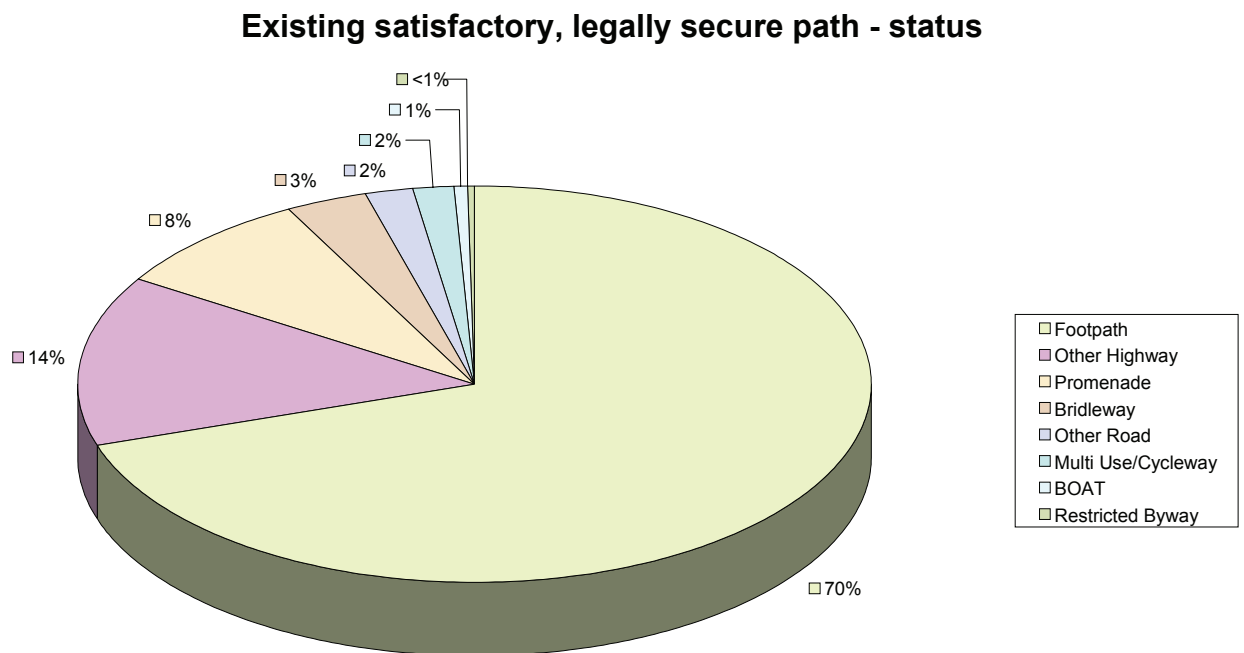
- 52% of the coast where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 48% of the coast where there is no satisfactory legally secure path has no walked path at present.

### Satisfactory, legally secure path

Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public rights of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or areas over which access rights were created under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW).

Overall 66% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path. The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure path.

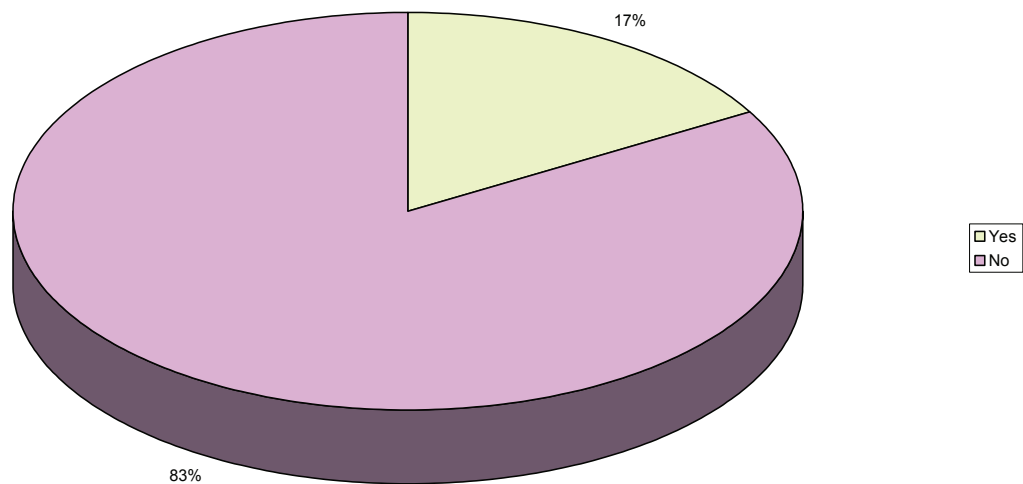


- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path 22% is on a public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 70% is on a public footpath.
- 5% is on a multi-user cycle path or public bridleway.

## Roll-back provision

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

Proportion of the path that may be subject to rollback provisions

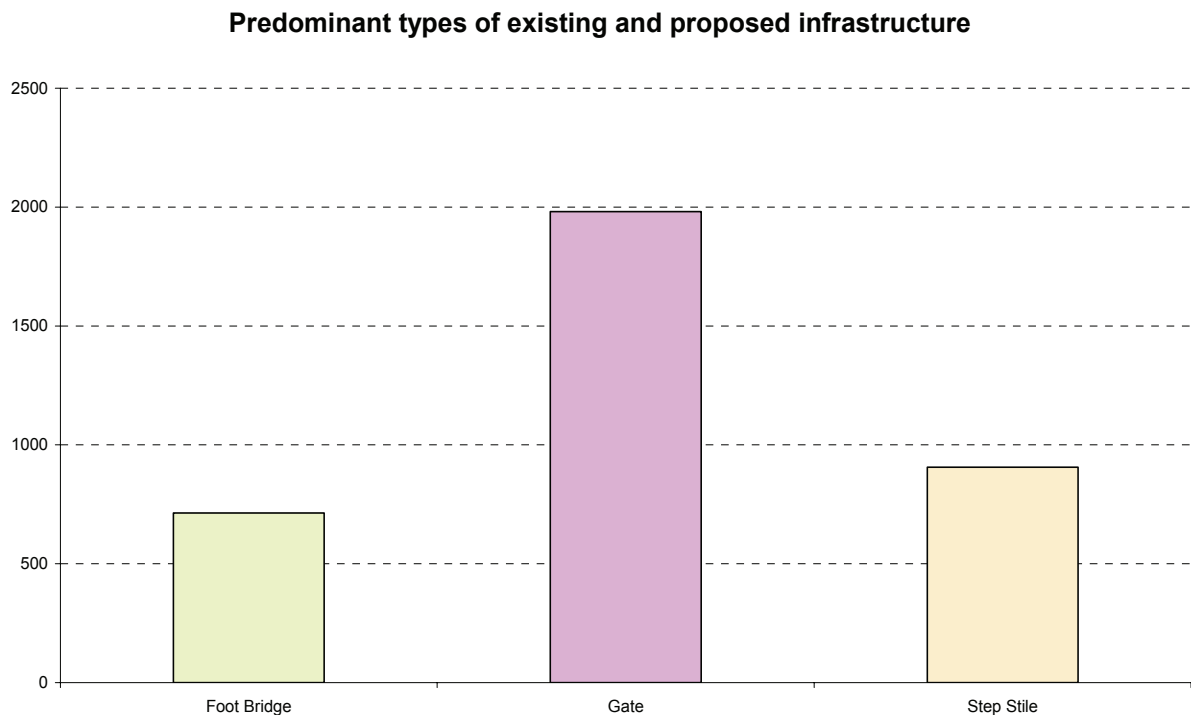


- Overall, 17% of the coast may require roll back provision within 20 years.
- In contrast, in Durham, an area with a fast eroding coast, that figure rises to 57%

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.



- There are 694 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 1270 gates are present on sections with a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- There are 208 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path, potentially making 714 in total.

## 4 The regional picture

### i - Summary of the North West findings

Length of coast audited **677 kilometres (421 miles)**; this represents 15% of the total national audited length.

#### **Proportion of existing satisfactory, legally secure path in the North West region**

- In our advice to government in February 2007 we said that nationally 70% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.<sup>6</sup>
- In the light of the audit data Natural England estimates that in the North West 44% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.

#### **Status of existing satisfactory, legally secure path**

- Where there is an existing satisfactory, legally secure path, 43% is on public roads or promenades, often through urban areas.
- 52% of the existing satisfactory, legally secure path is on public footpaths.
- 45% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal promoted routes; these sections already provide a continuous, good quality walking experience along substantial stretches of the coast.
- In total, some 52% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal footpaths, and 4% is likely to follow existing coastal bridleways. These rights will often only extend for short stretches before people encounter another gap in their ability to continue walking around the coast.
- Some 16% of the coastal trail is likely to follow promenades through built up areas along the coast.

Natural England estimates that 56% of the coast in the region does not have any secure path along it at present. As noted above, the impact of this on walkers can be greatly compounded by the way these sections regularly alternate with the existing sections of satisfactory legally secure path.

In addition, the amount of the route provided by existing rights of way will continue to fall year on year as such rights are lost to coastal erosion. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back with erosion, or where necessary to be freshly aligned using the processes in the Bill.

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<sup>6</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis in 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective

The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed. Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.





## North West data

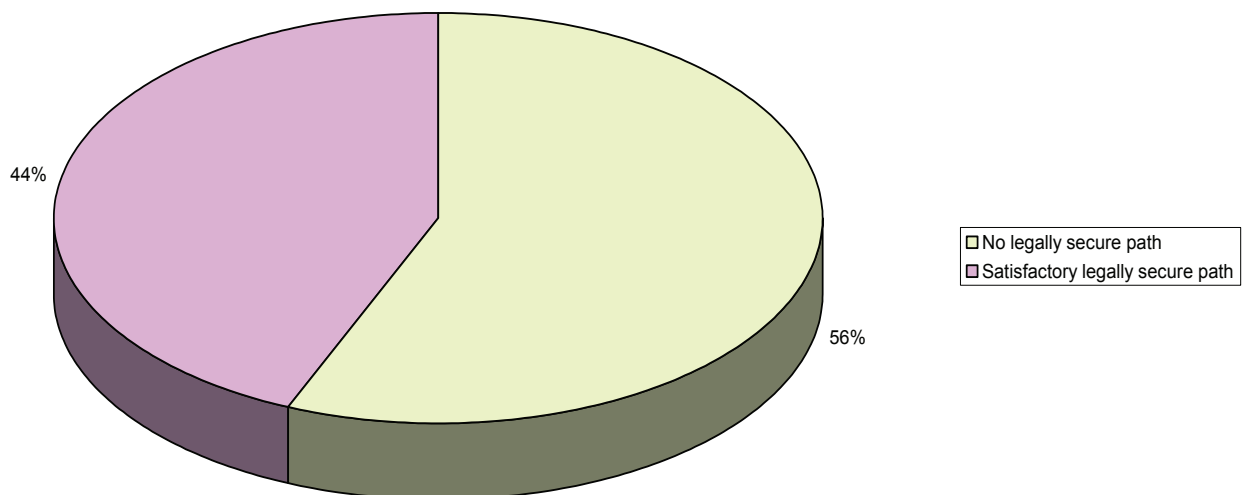
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The charts contained within this report are derived from data taken from the audits.

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory, legally secure access, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path



- In the North West, only 44% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 56% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.

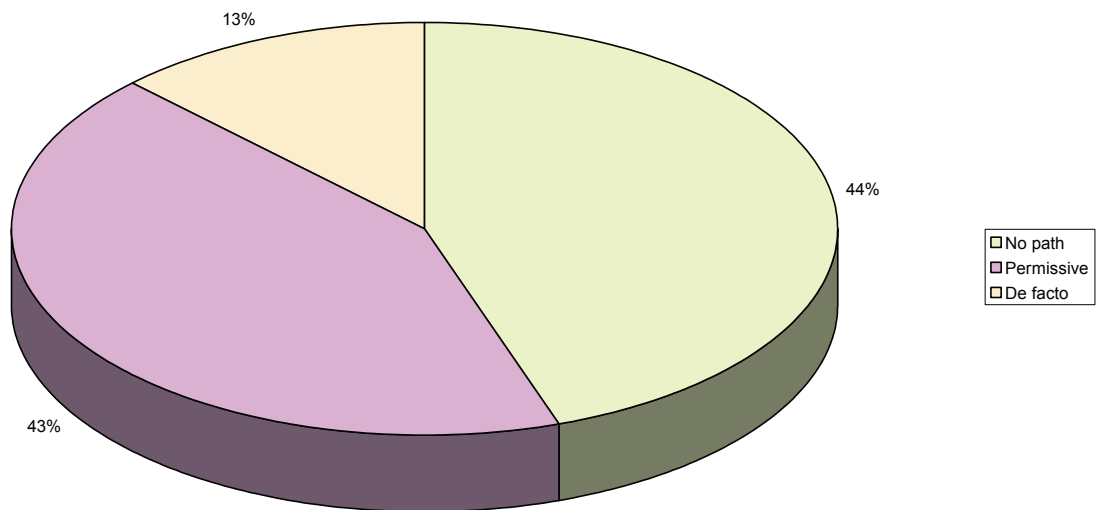
### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

56% of the coast in the region has no satisfactory, legally secure path.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.

No satisfactory, legally secure path - a breakdown



- 56% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 44% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has no walked path at present.

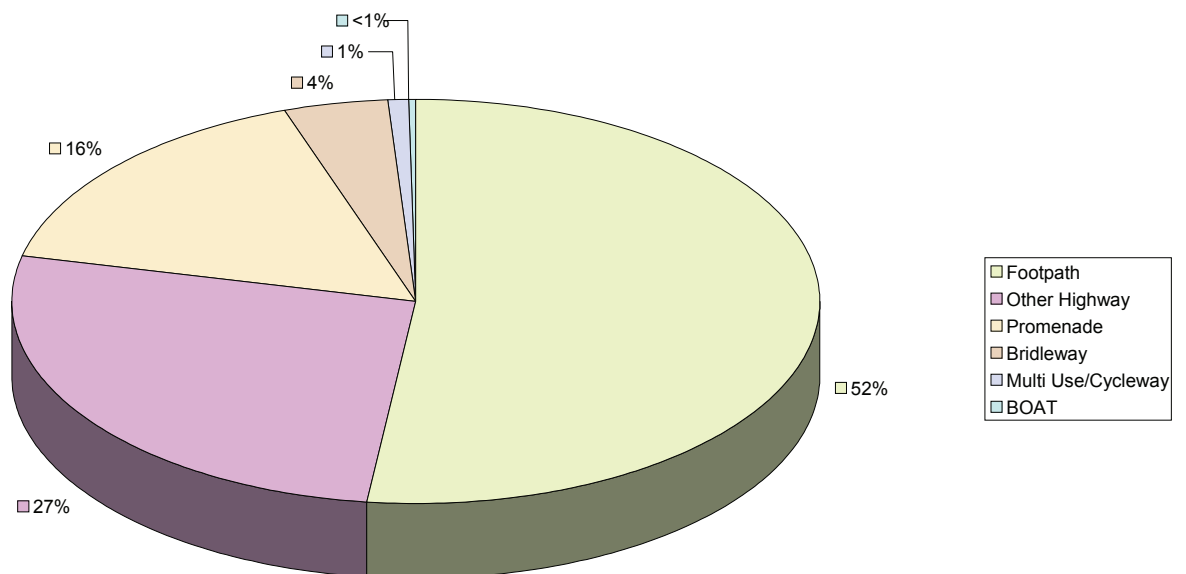
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path

Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public right of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or CRoW area access.

In the region 44% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path. The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure path.

**Existing satisfactory, legally secure path - status**

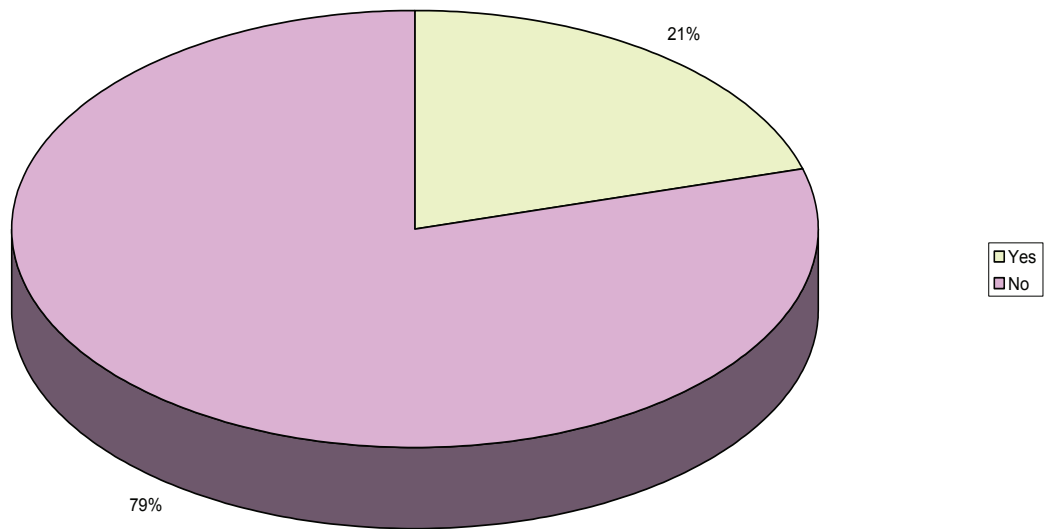


- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path, 43% is on existing public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 52% is public footpath.
- 1% is multi-user cycle path or public bridleway.

### Roll-back provision

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the likely future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

Proportion of the path that may be subject to rollback provisions



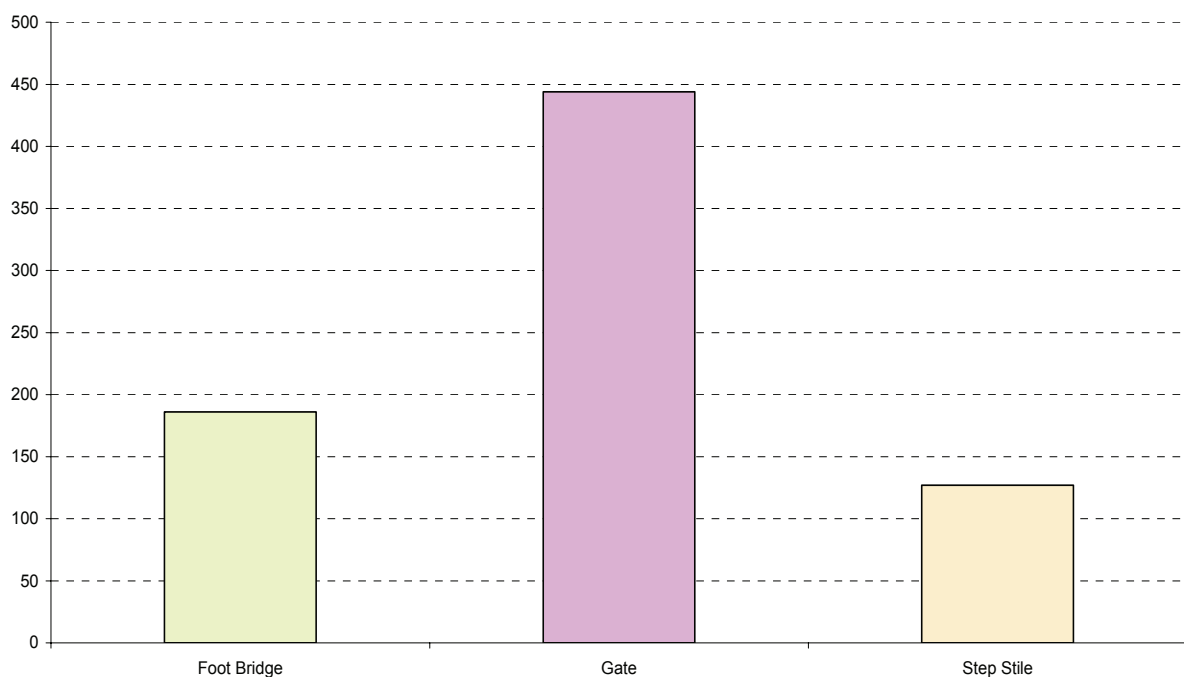
- In the North West region, 21% of the coast may require roll back provision within 20 years.

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.

**Predominant types of existing and proposed infrastructure**



- In the region there are 297 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 146 gates are present on sections with an existing satisfactory legally secure path.
- There are 125 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path potentially making 186 in total.

## ii - Summary of the North East findings

Length of coast audited **294 kilometres (183 miles)**; this represents **7%** of the total national audited length of the coast.

### **Proportion of existing satisfactory, legally secure path in the North East region**

- In our advice to government in February 2007 we said that nationally 70% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.<sup>7</sup>
- In the light of the audit data Natural England estimates that in the North East 67% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.

### **Status of existing satisfactory, legally secure path**

- Where there is an existing satisfactory, legally secure path, 41% is on public roads or promenades, often through urban areas.
- 38% of the existing satisfactory, legally secure path is on public footpaths.
- 33% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal promoted routes including the Cleveland Way national trail; these sections already provide a continuous, good quality walking experience along substantial stretches of the coast.
- In total, and including a significant proportion of the length of the Cleveland Way national trail, some 38% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal footpaths, and 5% is likely to follow existing coastal bridleways. These rights will often only extend for short stretches before people encounter another gap in their ability to continue walking around the coast.
- 7% of the coastal trail is likely to follow promenades through built up areas along the coast.

Natural England estimates that 33% of the coast in the region does not have any secure path along it at present. As noted above, the impact of this on walkers is greatly compounded by the way these sections regularly alternate with the existing sections of secure access.

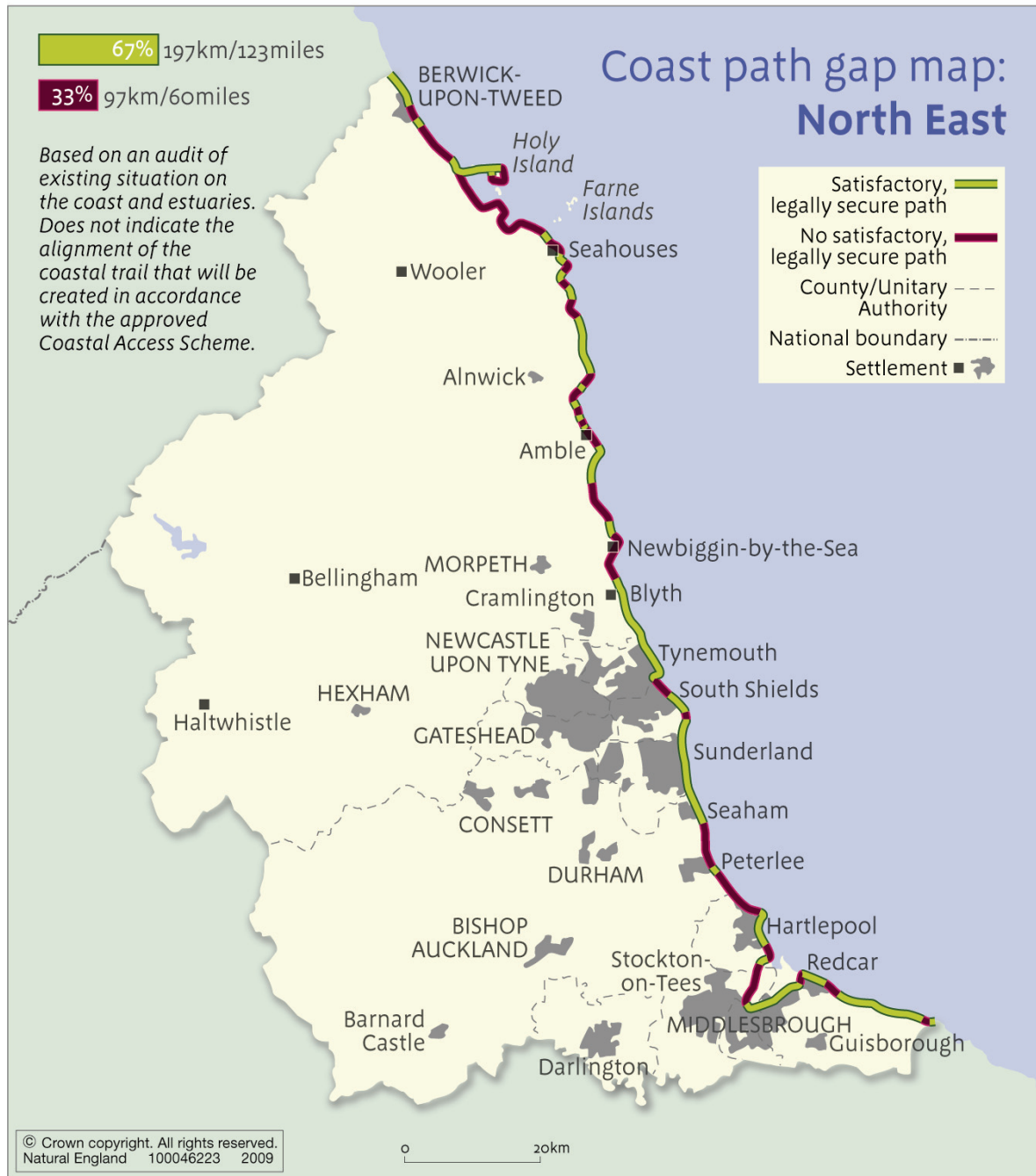
In addition, the amount of the path provided by existing rights of way will continue to fall year on year as such rights are lost to coastal erosion. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back with erosion, or where necessary to be freshly aligned using the processes in the Bill.

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<sup>7</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis done during 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective



The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed. Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.



## North East data

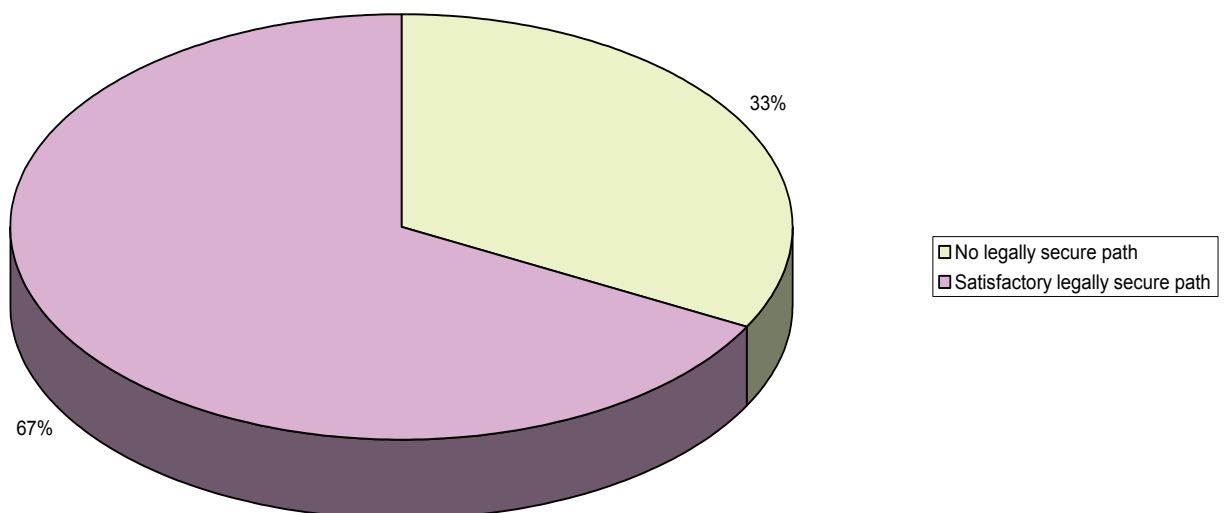
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The charts contained within this report are derived from data taken from the audits.

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory, legally secure access, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

### Proportion of satisfactory legally secure path



- In the North East, 67% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 33% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.

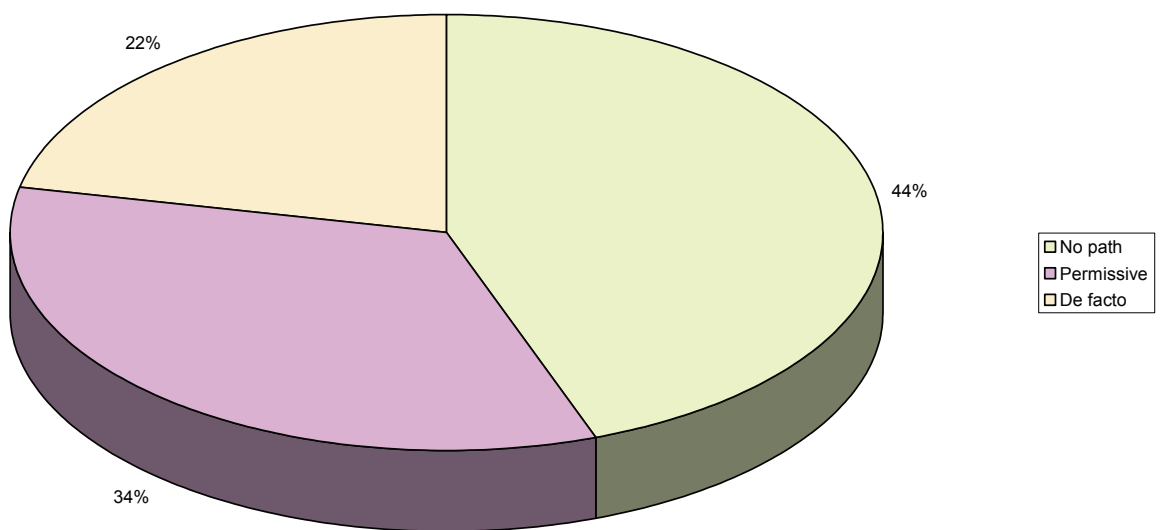
### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

34% of the coast in the North East region has no satisfactory, legally secure path.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.

**No satisfactory, legally secure path - a breakdown**



- 78% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 44% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has no walked path at present.

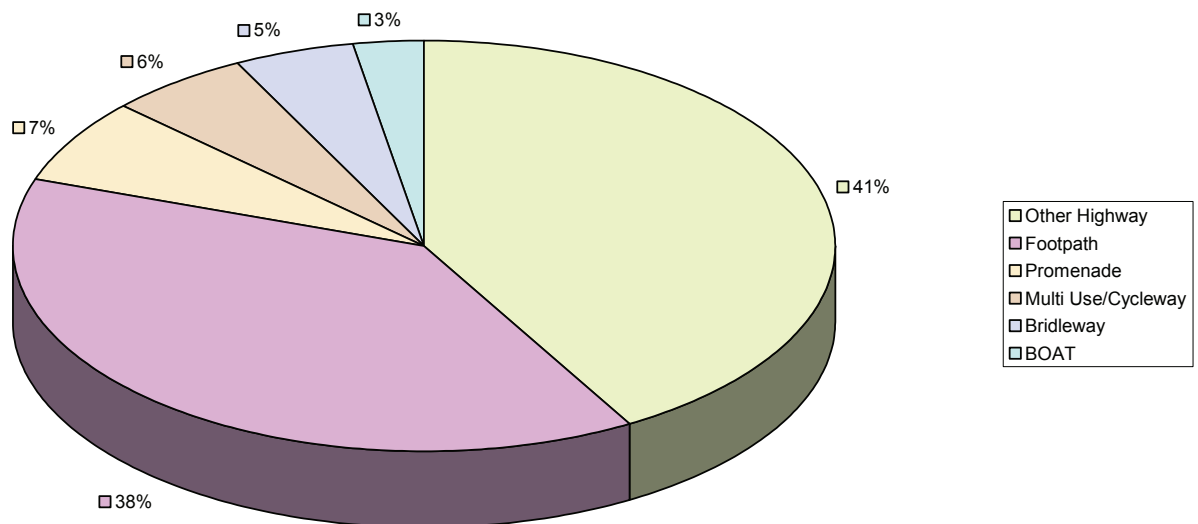
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path

Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public right of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or CRoW area access.

In the region 44% of the coast has satisfactory, legally secure path. The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure paths.

**Existing satisfactory, legally secure path - status**

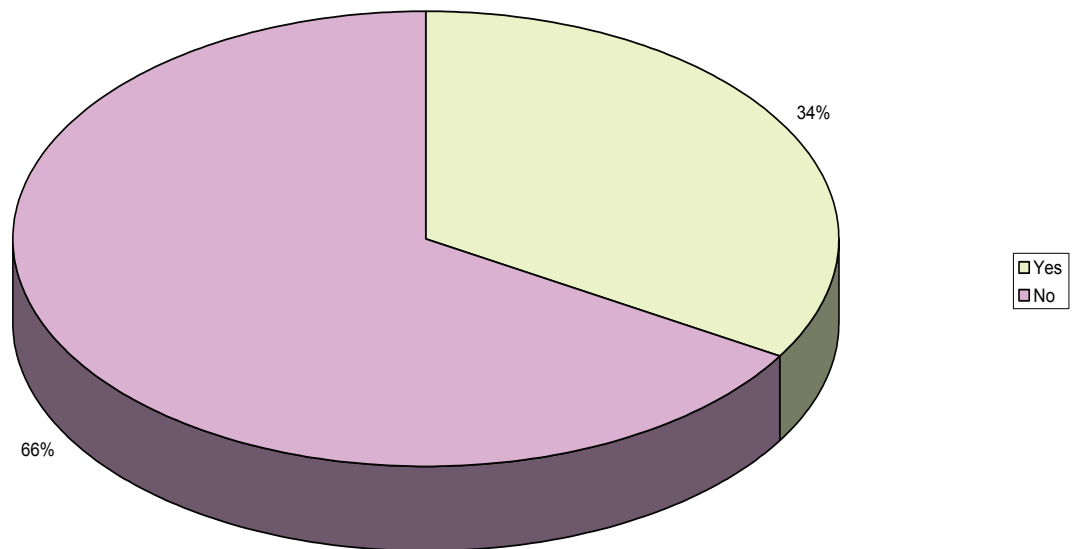


- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path 48% is on existing public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 38% is public footpath.
- 11% is multi-user cycle path or public bridleway.

### Roll-back provision

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the likely future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

Proportion of the path that may be subject to rollback provisions



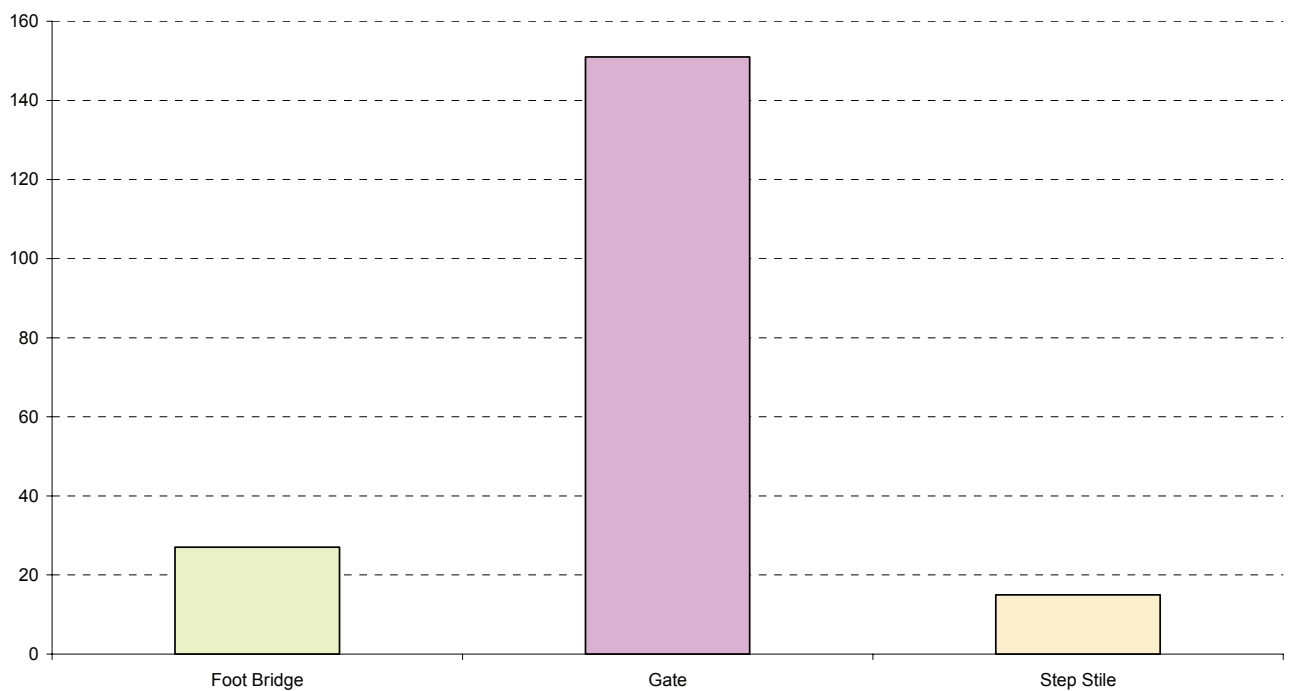
- In the North East region, 34% of the coast may require roll back provision within 20 years.

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.

**Predominant types of existing and proposed infrastructure**



- In the region there are 78 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 73 gates are present on sections with an existing satisfactory legally secure path.
- There are 10 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path potentially making 27 in total.



### **iii - Summary of the Yorkshire and the Humber regional findings**

Length of coast audited **281 kilometres (175 miles)**; this represents **6%** of the total national audited length.

#### **Proportion of existing satisfactory, legally secure path in the Yorkshire and the Humber region**

- In our advice to government in February 2007 we said that nationally 70% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.<sup>8</sup>
- In the light of the audit data Natural England estimates that in Yorkshire and Humber 70% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.

#### **Status of existing satisfactory, legally secure path**

- Where there is an existing satisfactory, legally secure path 27% is on public roads or promenades, often through urban areas.
- 67% of the existing satisfactory, legally secure path is on public footpaths.
- 11% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal promoted routes including the Cleveland Way national trail; these sections already provide a continuous, good quality walking experience along substantial stretches of the coast.
- In total, and including a significant proportion of the length of the Cleveland Way national trail, some 67% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal footpaths, and 5% is likely to follow existing coastal bridleways. These rights will often only extend for short stretches before people encounter another gap in their ability to continue walking around the coast.
- Some 10% of the coastal trail is likely to follow promenades through built up areas along the coast.

Natural England estimates that 30% of the coast in the regional has no secure path along it at all at present. As noted above, the impact of this on walkers can be greatly compounded by the way these sections regularly alternate with the existing sections of secure access.

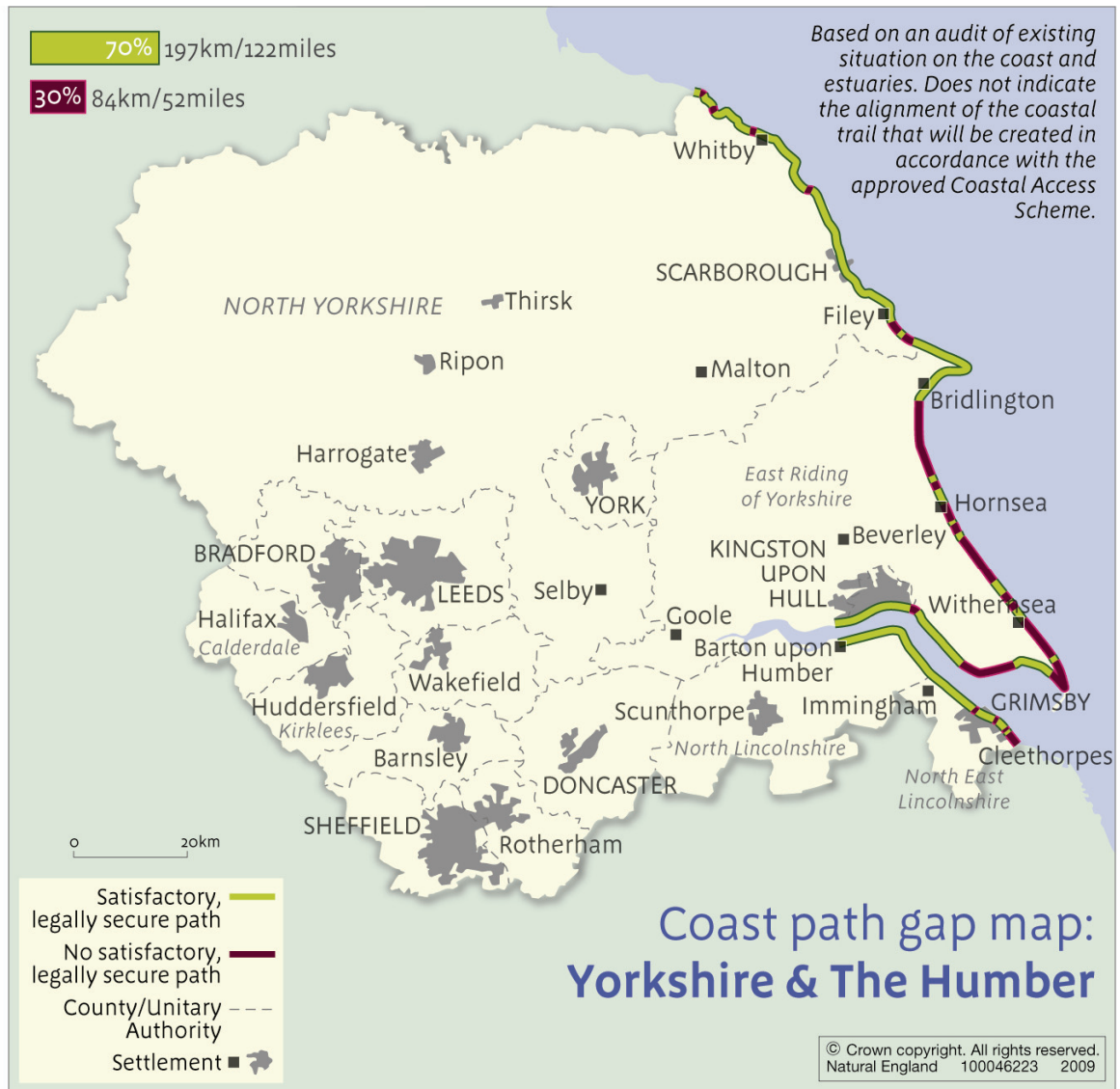
In addition, the amount of the route provided by existing rights of way will continue to fall year on year as such rights are lost to coastal erosion. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back with erosion, or where necessary to be freshly aligned using the processes in the Bill.

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<sup>8</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis in 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective

## Coastal access: an audit of coastal paths in England 2008-09

The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed.  
Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.



## Yorkshire and Humber regional data

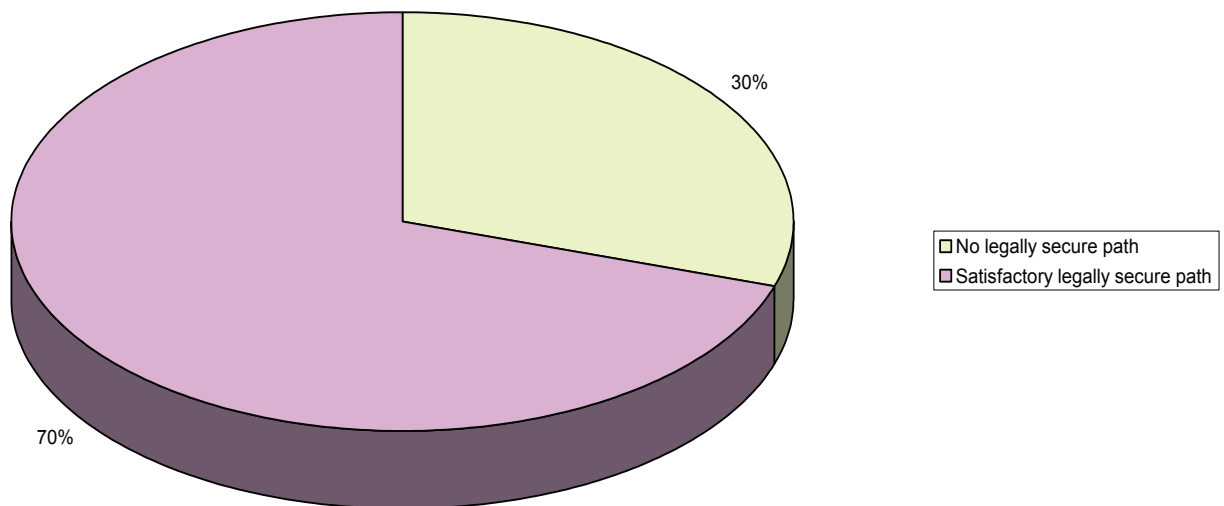
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The charts contained within this report are derived from data taken from the audits.

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory, legally secure access, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path



- In the Yorkshire and Humber region, 70% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 30% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.

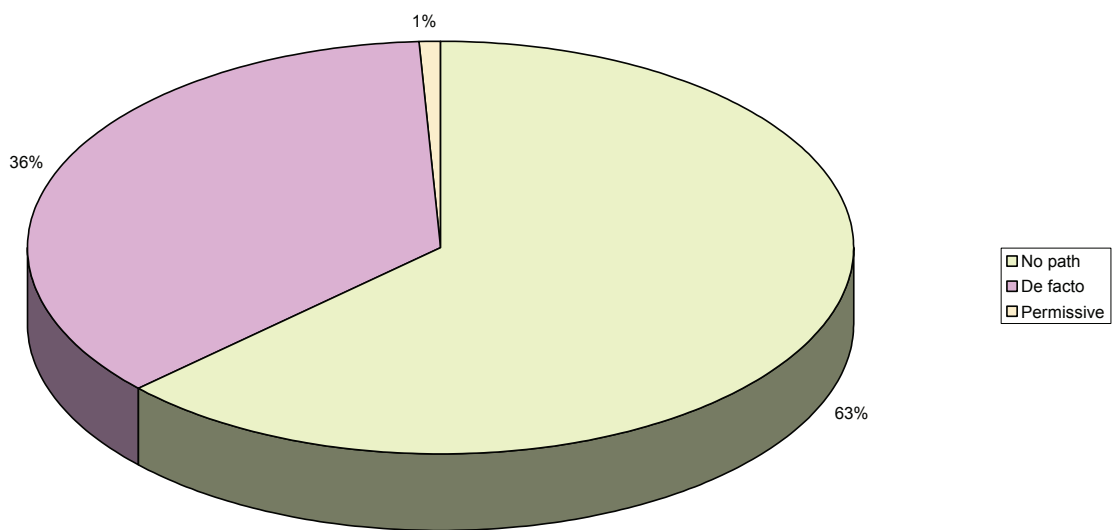
### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

30% of the coast in the Yorkshire and Humber region has no satisfactory, legally secure path.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.

**No satisfactory, legally secure path - a breakdown**



- 37% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 63% of the coast where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has no walked path at present.

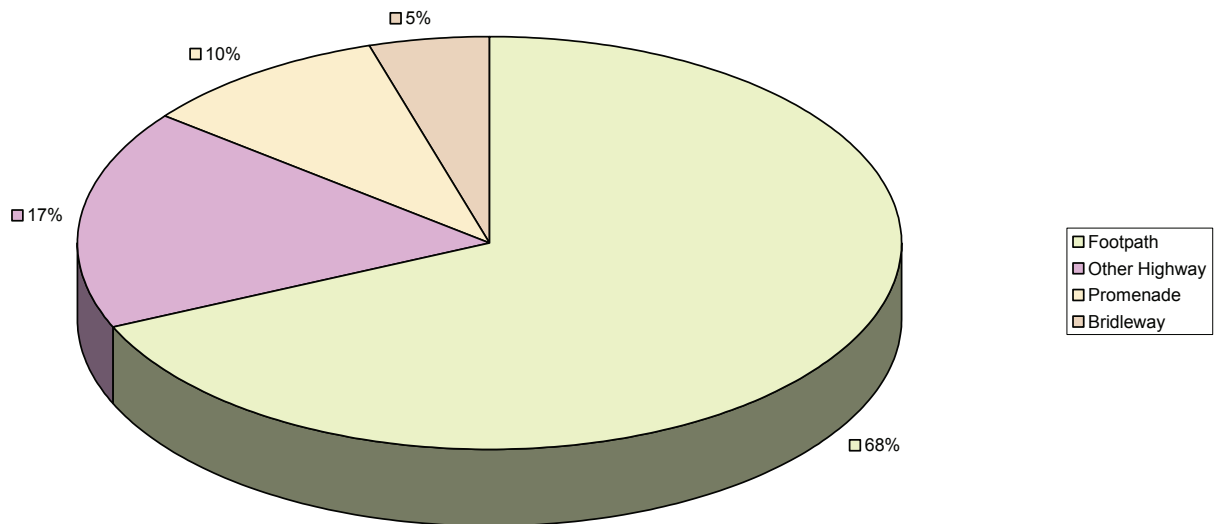
### Existing satisfactory access

Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public right of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or CRoW area access.

In the region 63% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path. The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure path.

**Existing satisfactory, legally secure path - status**

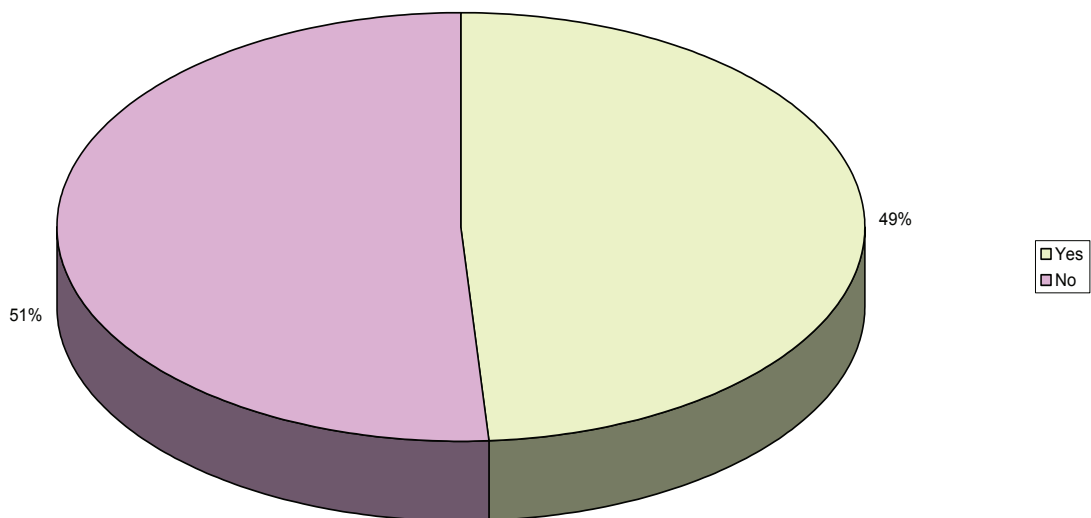


- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path, 27% is on existing public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 67% is public footpath.
- 5% is multi-user cycle path or public bridleway.

### Roll-back provision

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the likely future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

Proportion of the path that may be subject to rollback provisions



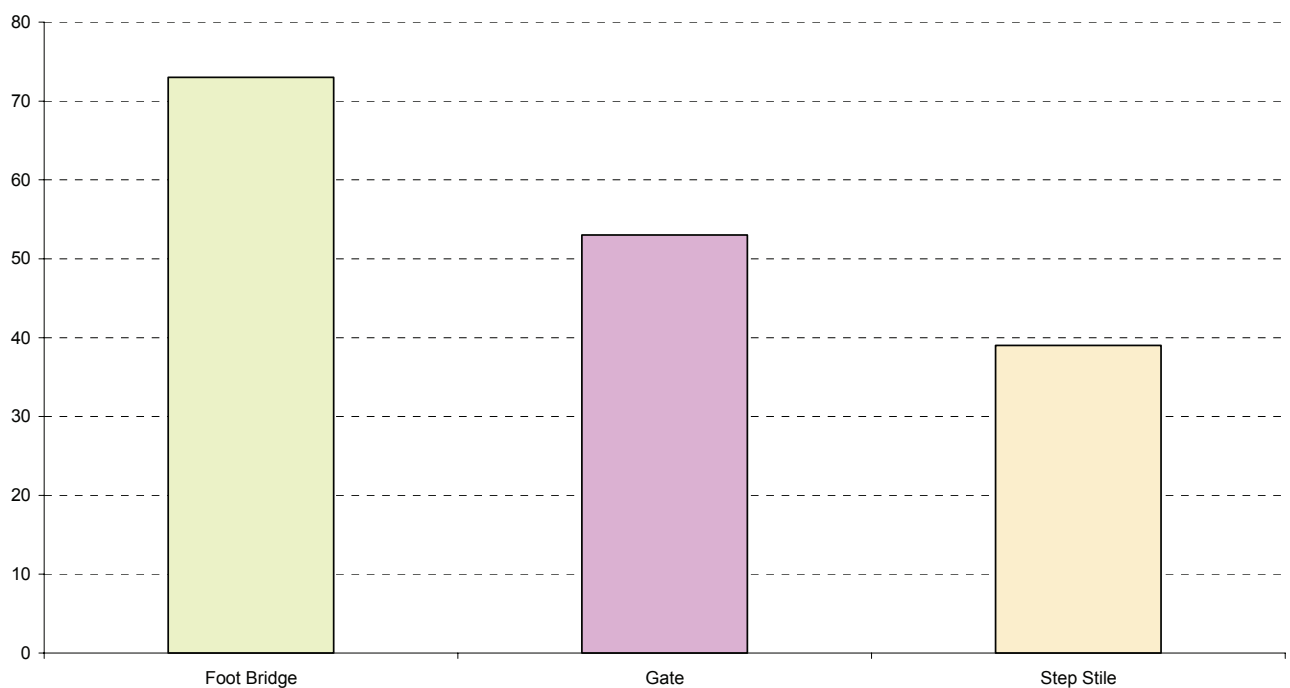
- In the region 49% of the coast may require roll back provision within 20 years.

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.

**Predominant types of existing and proposed infrastructure**



- In the region there are 18 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 53 gates are present on sections with an existing satisfactory legally secure path.
- There are 32 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path potentially making 73 in total.

## **iv- Summary of the East Midlands findings**

Length of coast audited **156 kilometres (97 miles)**; this represents **4%** of the total audited length of the coast.

### **Proportion of existing satisfactory, legally secure path in the East Midlands region**

- In our advice to government in February 2007 we said that nationally 70% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.<sup>9</sup>
- In the light of the audit data Natural England estimates that in the East Midlands 61% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.

### **Status of satisfactory legally secure path**

- Where there is an existing satisfactory, legally secure path, 41% is on public roads or promenades, often through urban areas.
- 54% of the existing satisfactory access is on public footpaths.
- 17% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal promoted routes; these sections already provide a continuous, good quality walking experience along substantial stretches of the coast.
- In total, some 54% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal footpaths and 21% is likely to follow existing coastal bridleways. These rights will often only extend for short stretches before people encounter another gap in their ability to continue walking around the coast.
- 13% of the coastal trail is likely to follow promenades through built up areas along the coast.

Natural England estimates that 39% of the coastline in the region does not have any secure path along it at present. As noted above, the impact of this on walkers is greatly compounded by the way these sections regularly alternate with the existing sections of secure access.

In addition, the amount of the route provided by existing rights of way will continue to fall year on year as such rights are lost to coastal erosion. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back with erosion, or where necessary to be freshly aligned using the processes in the Bill.

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<sup>9</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis in 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective



The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed. Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.



## East Midlands data

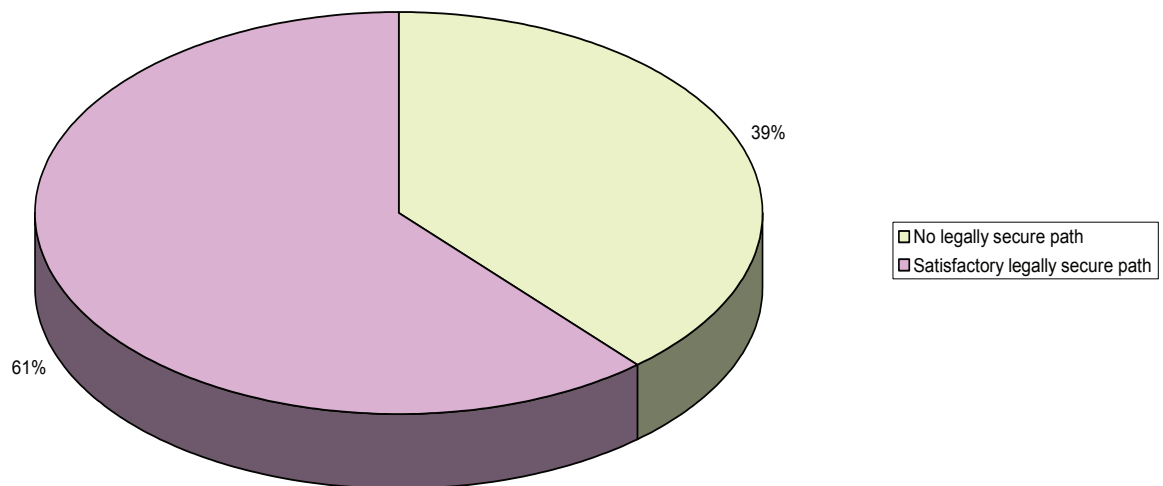
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The charts contained within this report are derived from data taken from the audits.

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory legally secure path, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path



- In the East Midlands, 61% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 39% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.

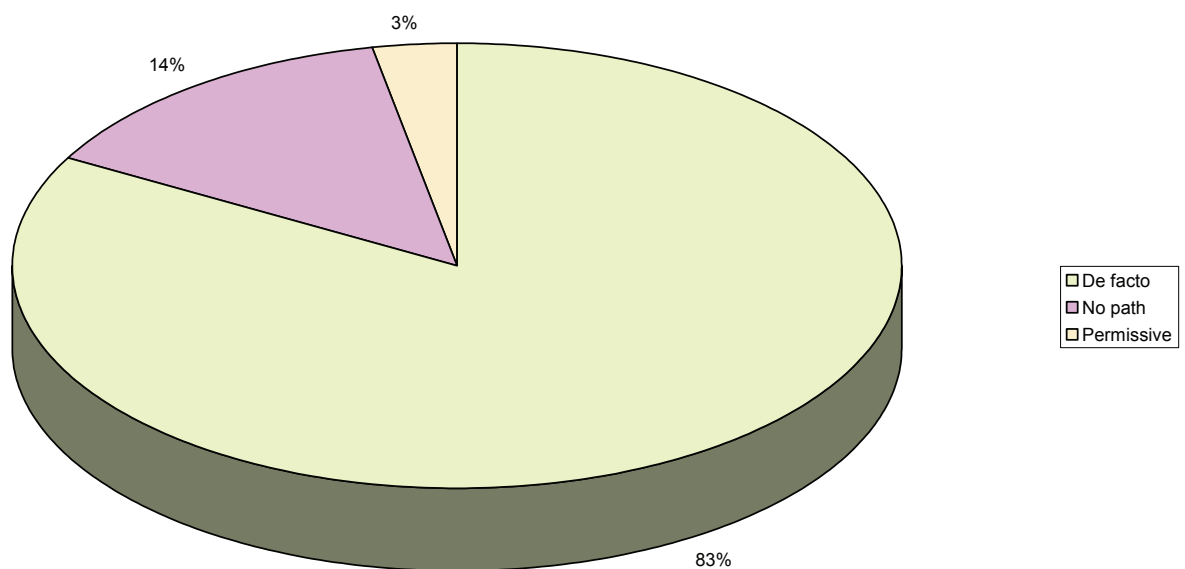
### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

39% of the coast in the East Midlands region has no satisfactory, legally secure path.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.

**No satisfactory, legally secure path - a breakdown**



- 86% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 14% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has no walked path at present.

### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path

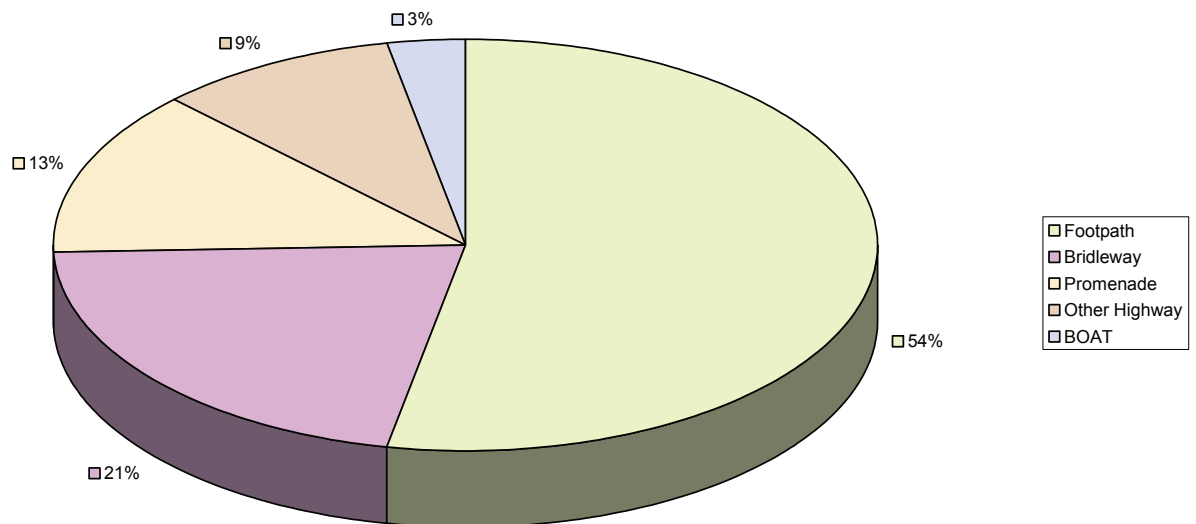
Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public rights of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or CRoW area access.

In the East Midlands region, 61% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.

The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure path.

**Existing satisfactory, legally secure path - status**



- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path 22% is on existing public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 54% is public footpath.
- 21% is on public bridleway.

### **Roll-back provision**

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

The selection of rollback as an option is normally confined to soft eroding cliff top paths. This type of coast is not present in the East Midlands region.

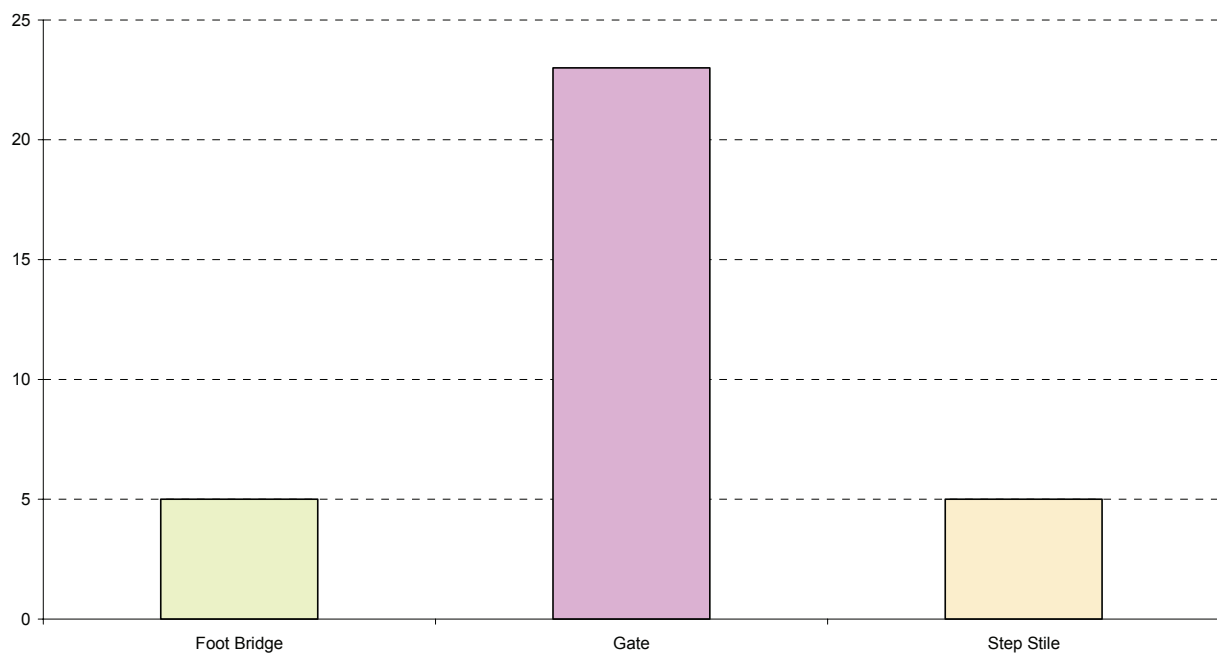
- In the East Midlands region none of the coast will require roll back provision.

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.

**Predominant types of existing and proposed infrastructure**



- In the region there are 10 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 13 gates are present on sections with an existing satisfactory legally secure path.
- There are 2 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path, potentially making 5 in total.

## **v - Summary of the East of England findings**

Length of coast audited **859 kilometres (534 miles)**; this represents 19% of the total national audited length.

### **Proportion of existing satisfactory, legally secure path in the East of England region**

- In our advice to government in February 2007 we said that nationally 70% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.<sup>10</sup>
- In the light of the audit data, Natural England estimates that in the East of England, 68% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.

### **Status of existing satisfactory, legally secure path.**

- Where there is an existing satisfactory, legally secure path 19% is on public roads or promenades, often through urban areas.
- 77% of the existing satisfactory access is on public footpaths.
- 26% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal promoted routes including the North Norfolk Coast Path national trail; these sections already provide a continuous, good quality walking experience along substantial stretches of the coast.
- In total, and including a significant proportion of the length of the North Norfolk Coast Path national trail, some 77% of the route is likely to follow existing coastal footpaths and 2% is likely to follow existing coastal bridleways. These rights will often only extend for short stretches before people encounter another gap in their ability to continue walking around the coast.
- Some 16% of the coastal trail is likely to follow promenades through built up areas along the coast.

Natural England estimates that 32% of the coast in the region does not have any secure path along it at present. As noted above, the impact of this on walkers is greatly compounded by the way these sections regularly alternate with the existing sections of secure access.

In addition, the amount of the route provided by existing rights of way will continue to fall year on year as such rights are lost to coastal erosion. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back with erosion, or where necessary to be freshly aligned using the processes in the Bill.

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<sup>10</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis done during 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective

## Coastal access: an audit of coastal paths in England 2008-09

The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed. Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.





## East of England data

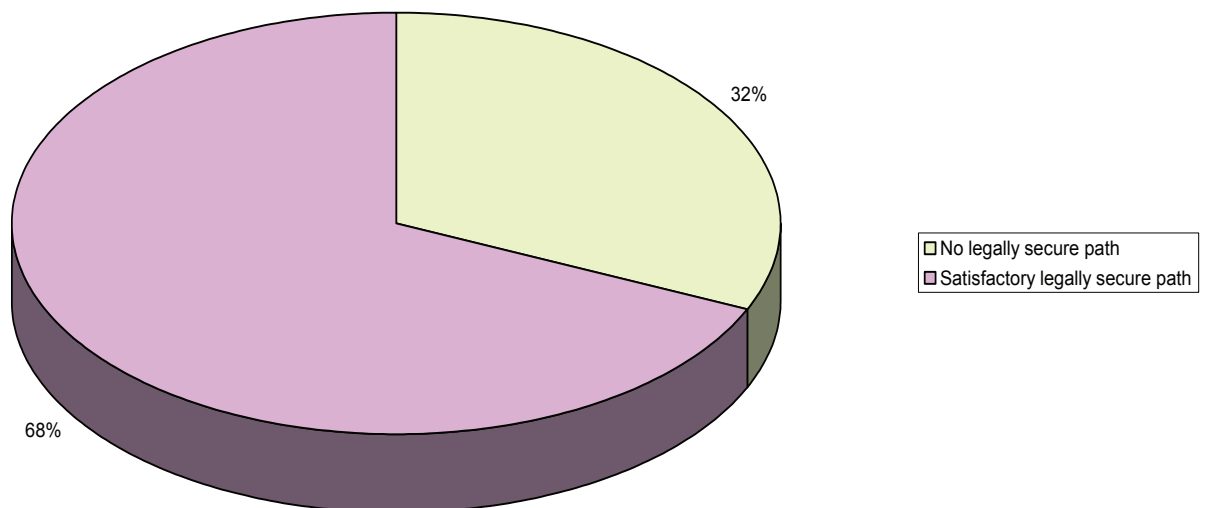
The charts contained within this report are derived from data taken from the audits.

### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory, legally secure access, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path



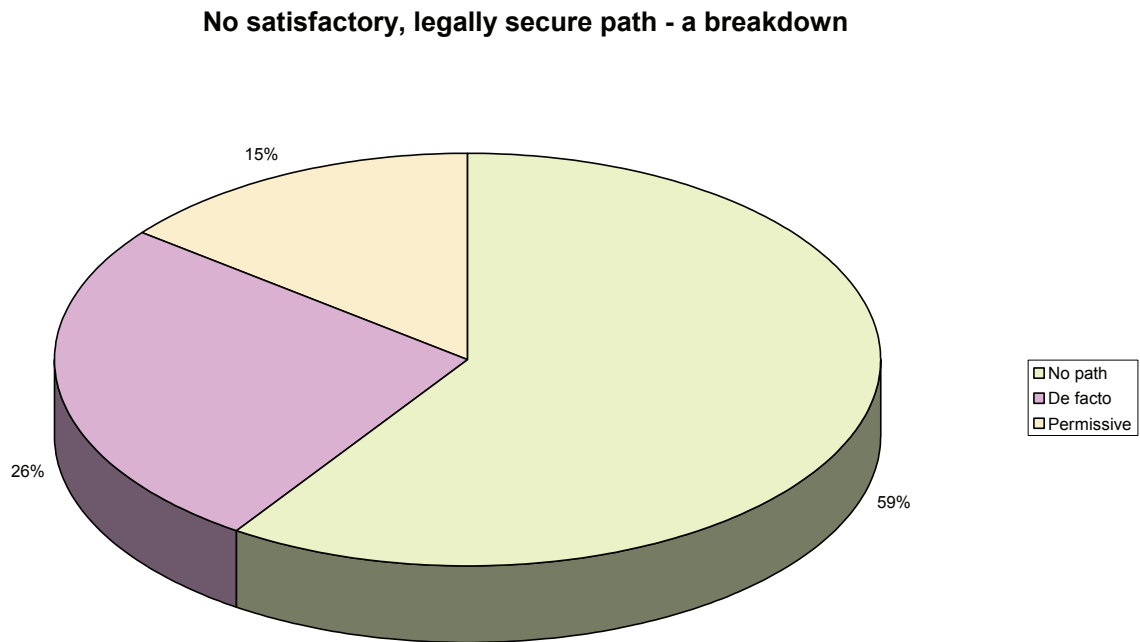
- In the East of England, 68% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 32% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.

### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

56% of the coast in the East of England region has no existing satisfactory access.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.



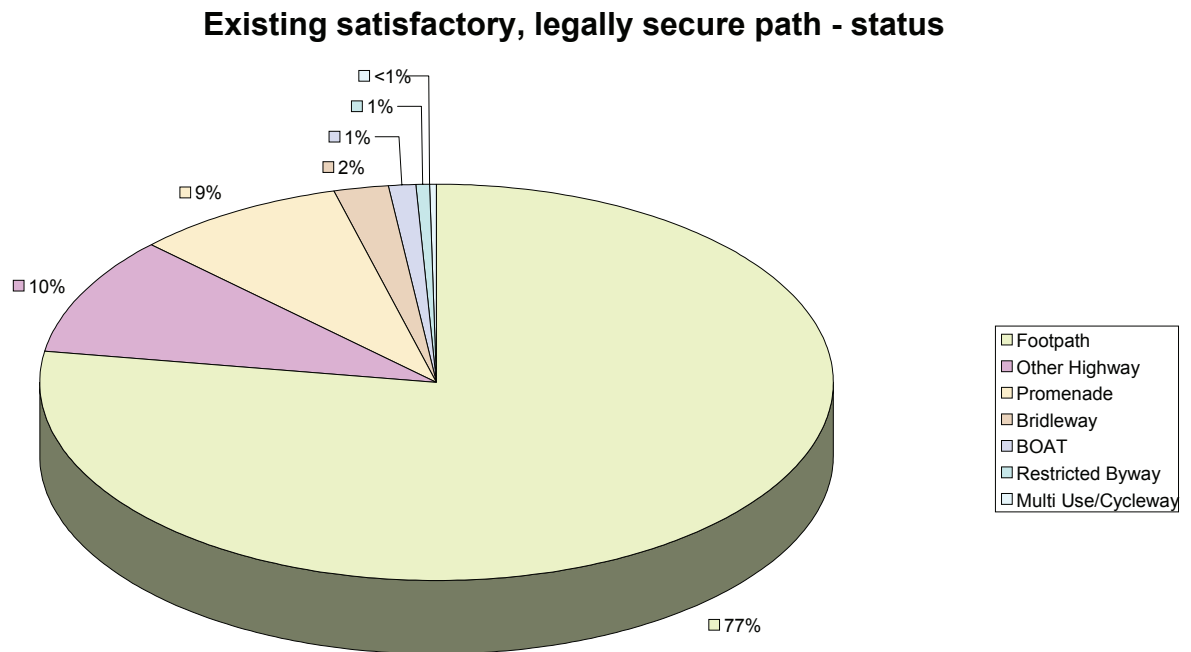
- 41% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 59% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has no walked path at present.

### Satisfactory, legally secure path

Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public right of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or CRoW area access.

68% of the coast in the region has existing satisfactory access. The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure access.

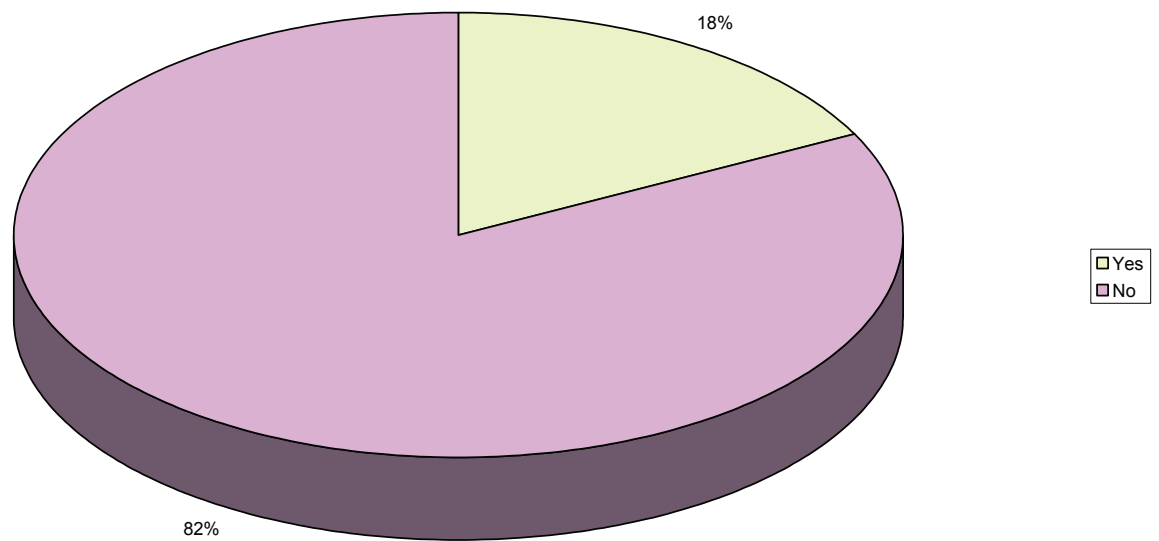


- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path 19% is on existing public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 77% is public footpath.
- 2% is multi-user cycle path or public bridleway.

### Roll-back provision

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the likely future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

**Proportion of the path that may be subject to rollback provisions**

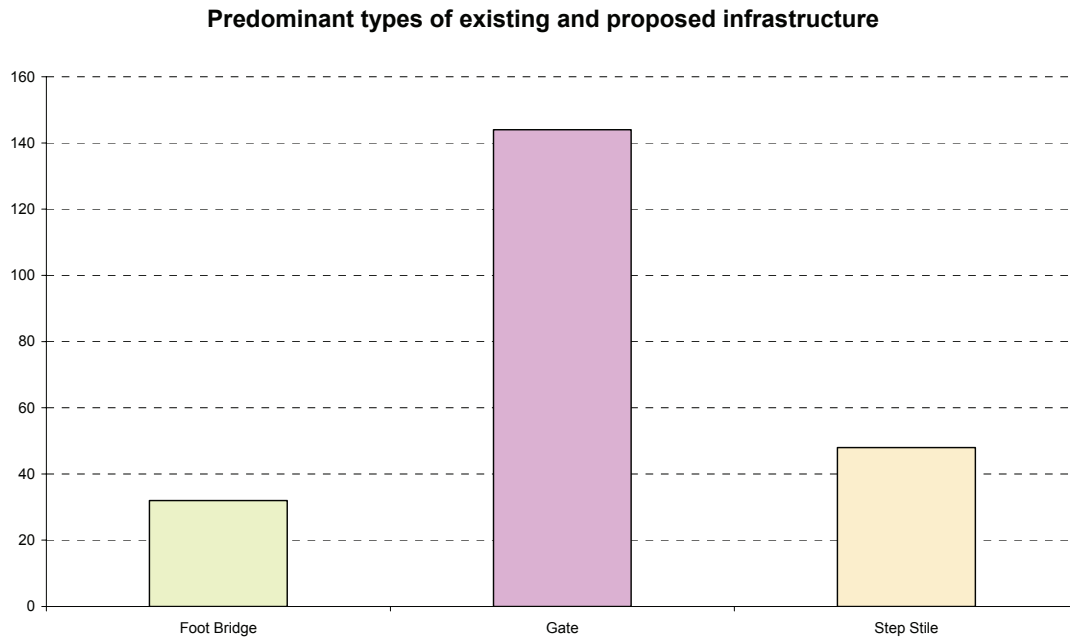


- In the region 18% of the coast may require roll back provision within 20 years.

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.



- In the region there are 40 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 104 gates are present on sections with an existing satisfactory legally secure path.
- There are 14 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path, potentially making 32 in total.

## Vi - Summary of the South East findings

Length of coast audited **917 kilometres (570 miles)**; this represents 21% of the total national audited length.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path in the South East

- In our advice to government in February 2007 we said that nationally there was 70% of the coast where there was an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.<sup>11</sup>
- In the light of the audit data Natural England estimate that in South East 63% of the coast has existing satisfactory access.

### Status of existing satisfactory, legally secure path

- Where there is an existing satisfactory, legally secure path 19% is on public roads or promenades, often through urban areas.
- 67% of the existing satisfactory, legally secure path is on public footpaths.
- 33% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal promoted routes including the South Downs Way national trail: these sections already provide a continuous, good quality walking experience along substantial stretches of the coast.
- In total, and including a proportion of the length of the South Downs Way national trail, some 67% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal footpaths, and 1% is likely to follow existing coastal bridleways. These rights will often only extend for short stretches before people encounter another gap in their ability to continue walking around the coast.
- Some 8% of the coastal trail is likely to follow promenades through built up areas along the coast.

Natural England estimates that 37% of the coast in the region does not have any secure path along it at all at present. As noted above, the impact of this on walkers is greatly compounded by the way these sections regularly alternate with the existing sections of secure access.

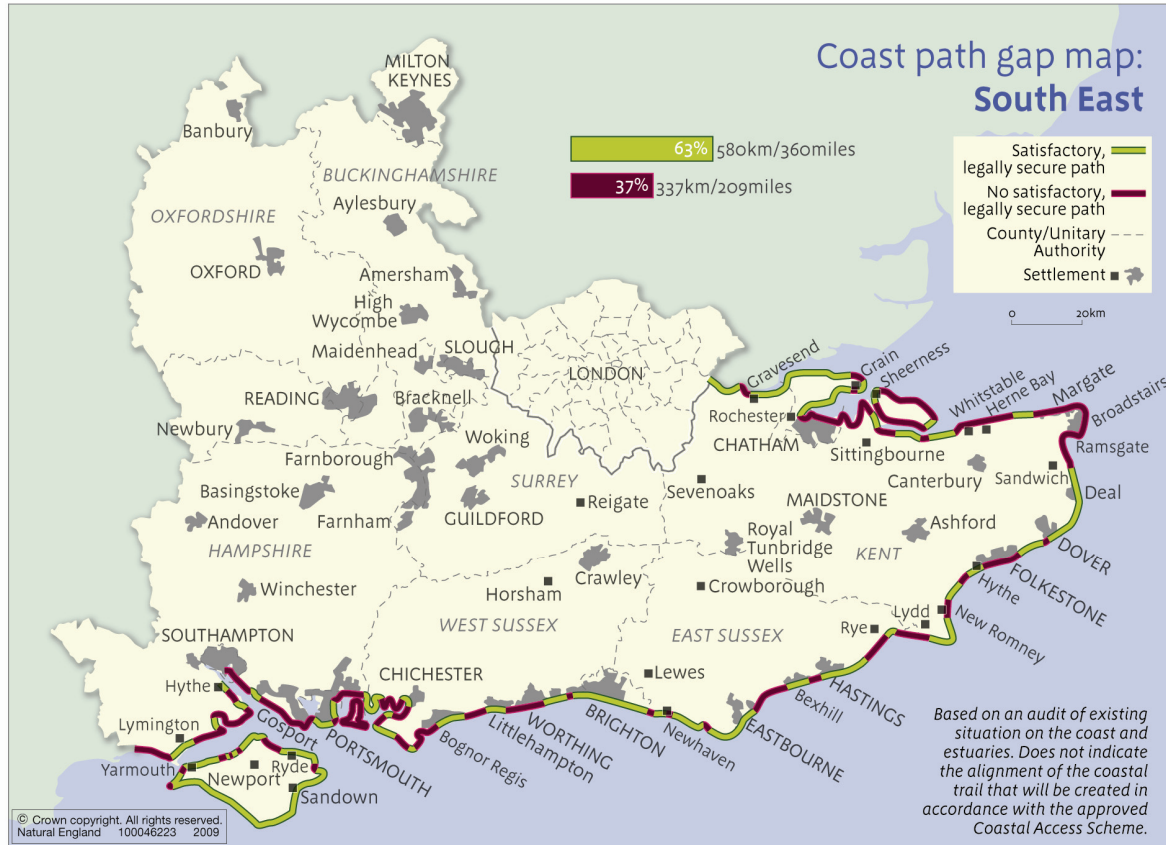
In addition, the amount of the route provided by existing rights of way will continue to fall year on year as such rights are lost to coastal erosion. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back with erosion, or where necessary to be freshly aligned using the processes in the Bill.

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<sup>11</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis in 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective

## Coastal access: an audit of coastal paths in England 2008-09

The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed. Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.



## South East data

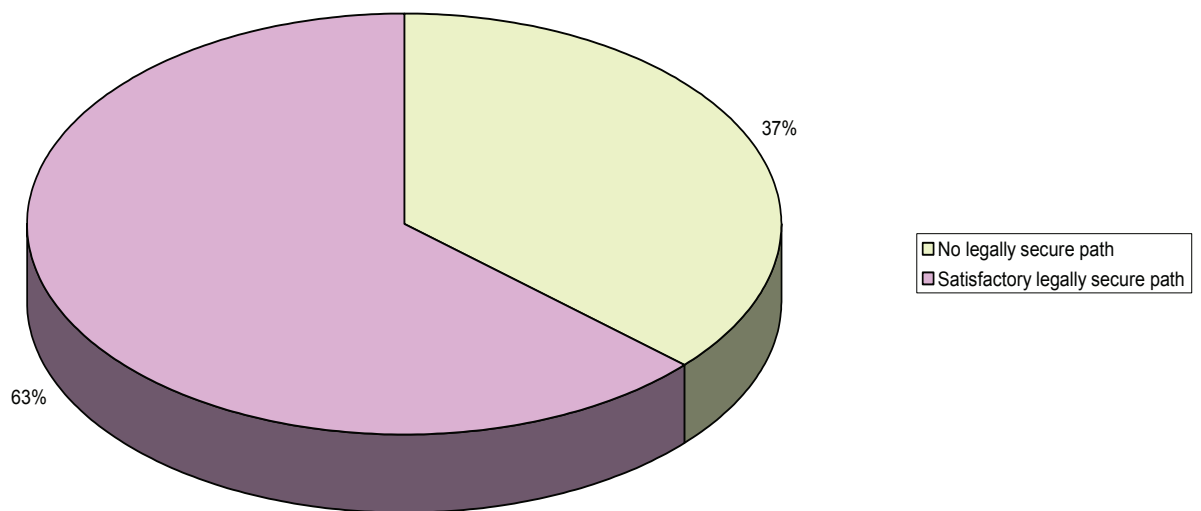
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The charts contained within this report are derived from data taken from the audits.

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory, legally secure access, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path



- In the South East, 63% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 37% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.



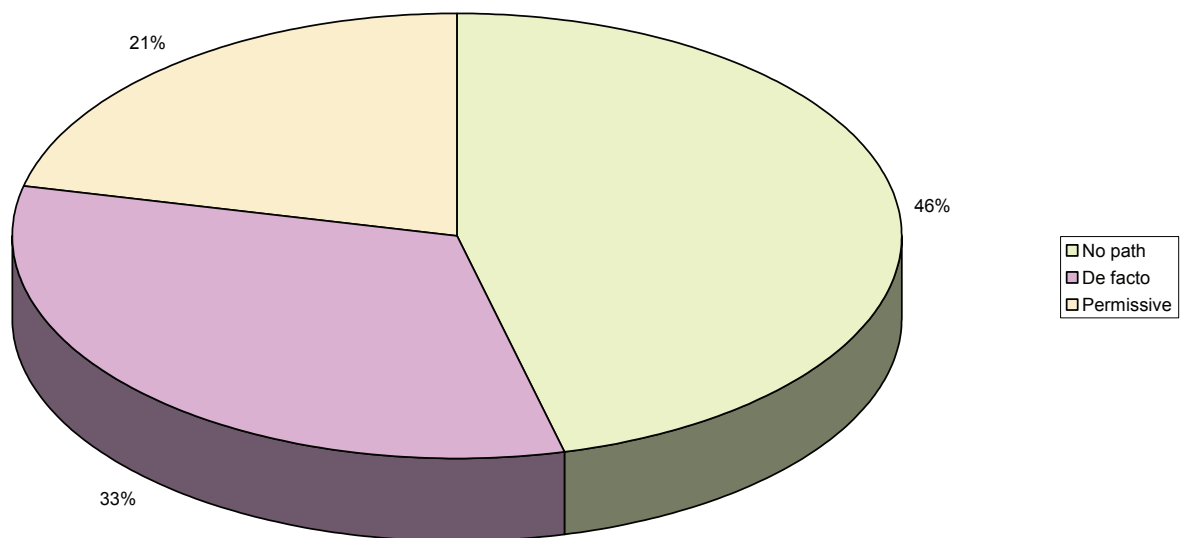
### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

37% of the coast in the South East region has no satisfactory, legally secure path.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.

**No satisfactory, legally secure path - a breakdown**



- 54% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 46% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has no walked path at present.

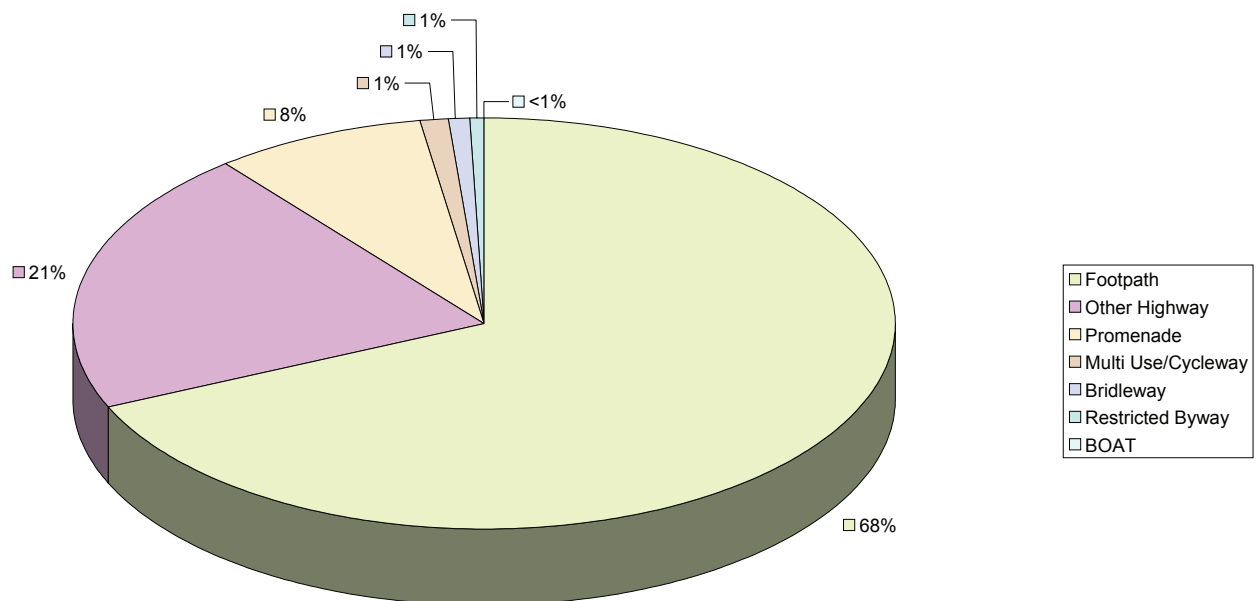
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path

Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public right of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or CRoW area access.

In the region 63% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path. The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure path.

**Existing satisfactory, legally secure path - status**

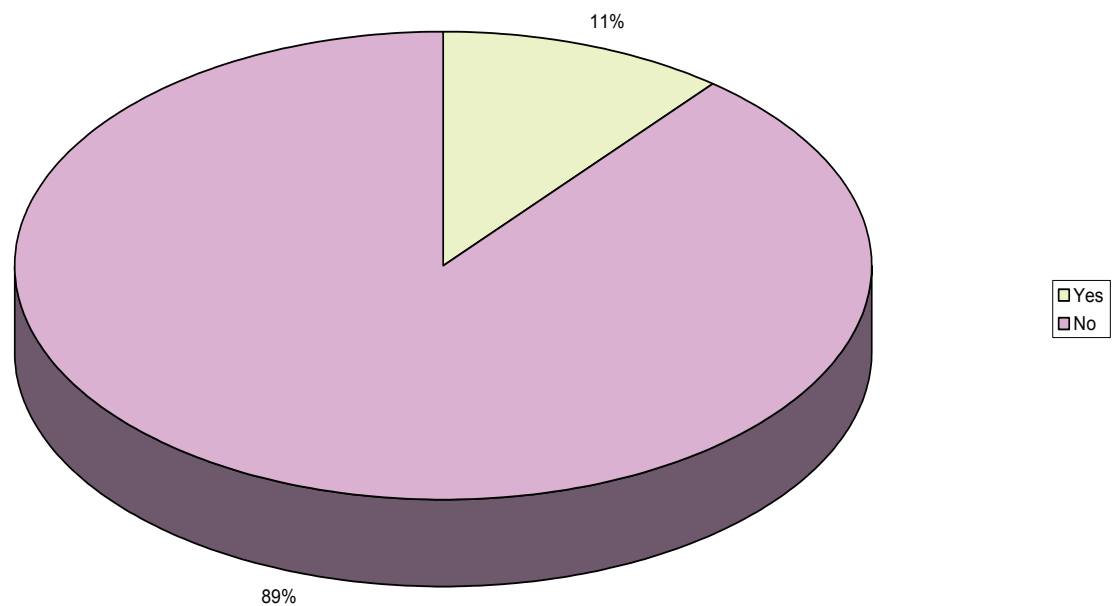


- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path, 28% is on existing public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 68% is public footpath.
- 2% is multi-user cycle path or public bridleway.

### Roll-back provision

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the likely future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

Proportion of the path that may be subject to rollback provisions

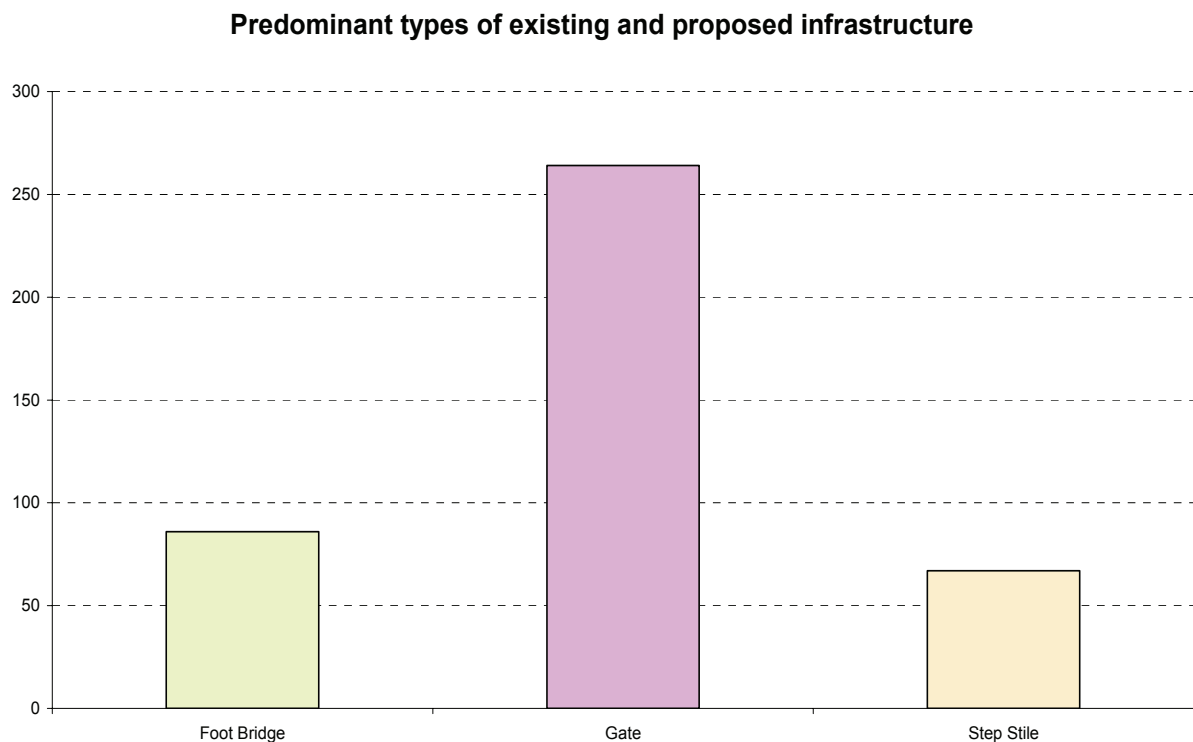


- In the region 11% of the coast may require roll back provision within 20 years.

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.



- In the region there are 107 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 141 gates are present on sections with an existing satisfactory legally secure path.
- There are 17 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path, potentially making 86 in total.

## Vii - Summary of the South West findings

Length of coastal alignment audited **1236 kilometres (768 miles)**; this represents 28% of the total national audited length.

### **Proportion of existing satisfactory, legally secure path in the South West region**

- In our advice to government in February 2007 we said that nationally 70% of the coast has an existing satisfactory, legally secure path.<sup>12</sup>
- In the light of the audit data Natural England estimates that in the South West 76% of the coast has existing satisfactory access.

### **Status of existing satisfactory, legally secure path**

- Where there is an existing satisfactory, legally secure path, 11% is on public roads or promenades, often through urban areas.
- 80% of the existing satisfactory, legally secure path is on public footpaths.
- 80% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal promoted routes including the South West Coast Path national trail; these sections already provide a continuous, good quality walking experience along substantial stretches of the coast.
- In total, and including a significant proportion of the length of the South West Coast Path national trail, some 80% of the coastal trail is likely to follow existing coastal footpaths, and 2% is likely to follow existing coastal bridleways. These rights will often only extend for short stretches before people encounter another gap in their ability to continue walking around the coast.
- Some 5% of the coastal trail is likely to follow promenades through built up areas along the coast.

Natural England estimates that 24% of the coast in the region has no satisfactory legally secure path along it at all at present. As noted above, the impact of this on walkers can be greatly compounded by the way these sections regularly alternate with the existing sections of satisfactory legally secure path.

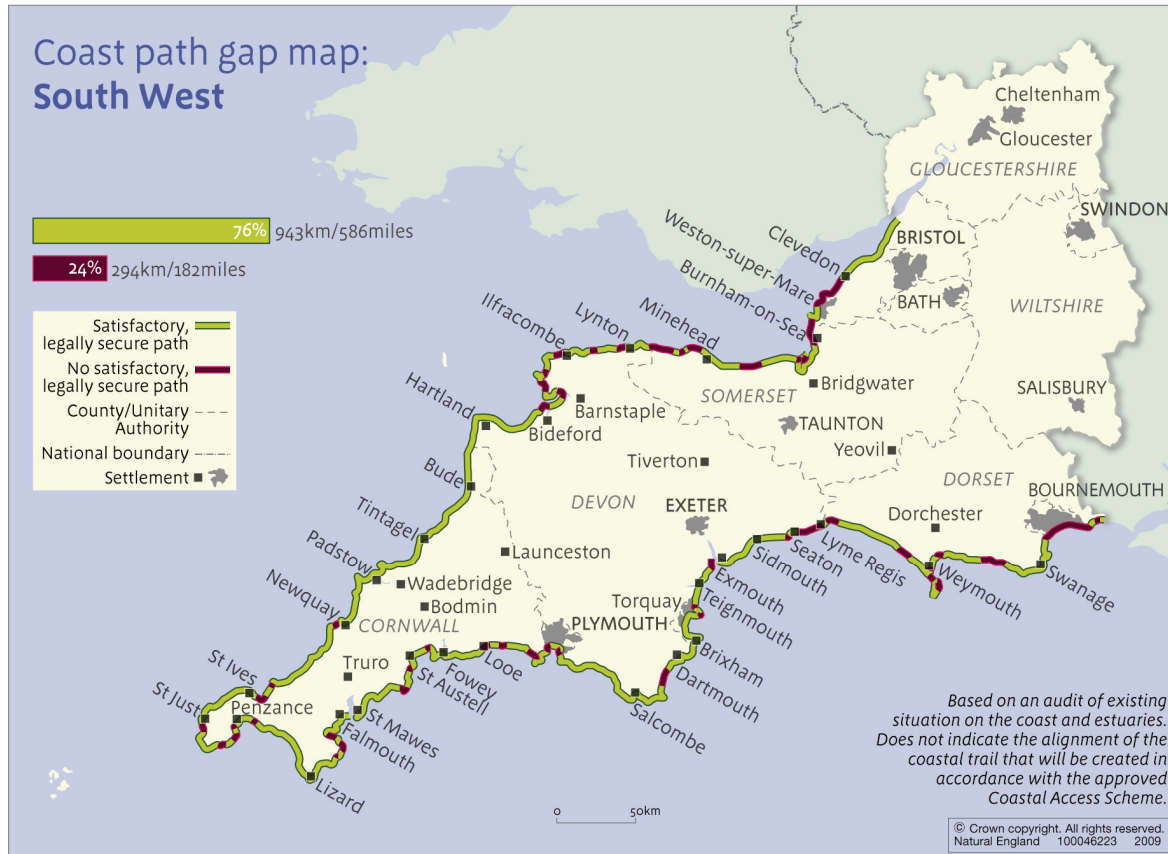
In addition, the amount of the route provided by existing rights of way will continue to fall year on year as such rights are lost to coastal erosion. The new arrangements will enable the walking route to roll back with erosion, or where necessary to be freshly aligned using the processes in the Bill.

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<sup>12</sup> This figure was based on an initial desk based analysis in 2006 for our advice to Government in February 2007. A 200 metre buffer zone was used as a proxy device to allow objective measurement. Without it, judgements on what constituted the coast for this purpose would have been inherently subjective

## Coastal access: an audit of coastal paths in England 2008-09

The scale of the map limits the detail that can be displayed. Some shorter sections on the coast will not be evident.



## South West data

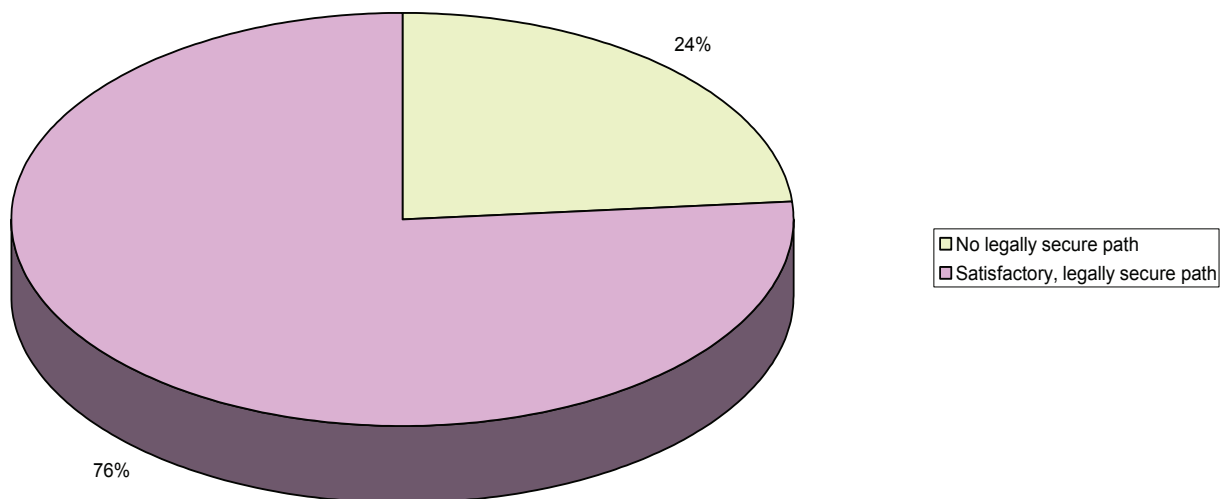
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path and no legally secure path

The charts contained within this report are derived from data taken from the audits.

The chart below shows the split between:

- Existing satisfactory, legally secure path that is a public right of way or other highway.
- Where there is no satisfactory, legally secure access, this is either no path at all or a path with only permissive access or existing de-facto use.

### Proportion of satisfactory, legally secure path



- In the South West, 76% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 24% has no satisfactory, legally secure path, although some of this will be an existing de-facto or permissive route.

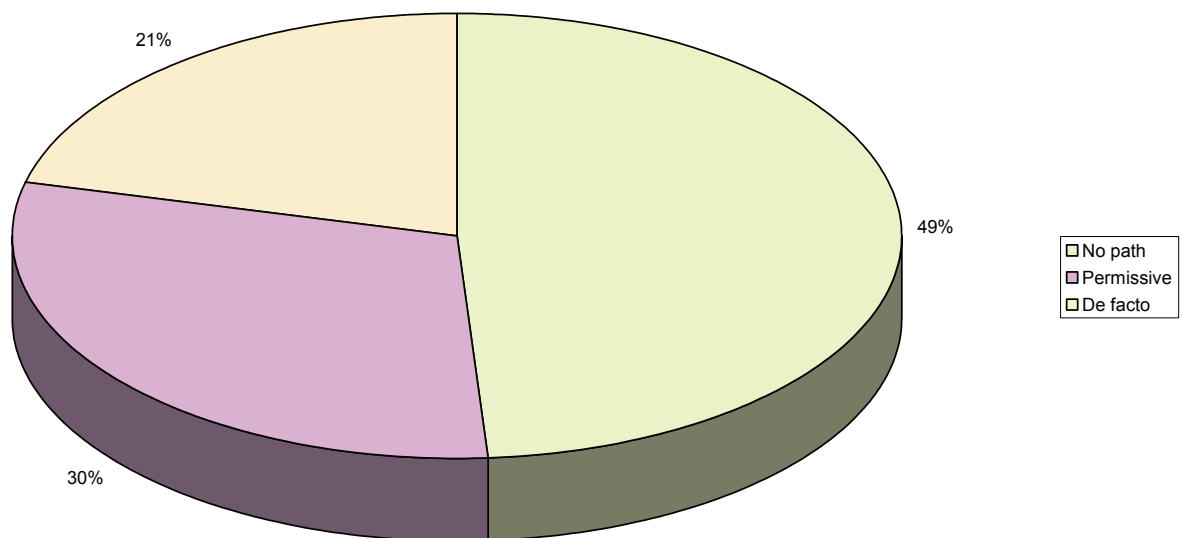
### How the gaps in legally secure paths break down

37% of the coast in the South West region has no satisfactory, legally secure path.

These gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path include both de-facto and permissive routes as well as sections where there is currently no walked path on the ground.

The chart below shows this split.

**No satisfactory, legally secure path - a breakdown**



- In the South West region, 51% of the coast where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has either de facto or permissive access.
- 49% of the coast in the region where there is no satisfactory, legally secure path has no walked path at present.



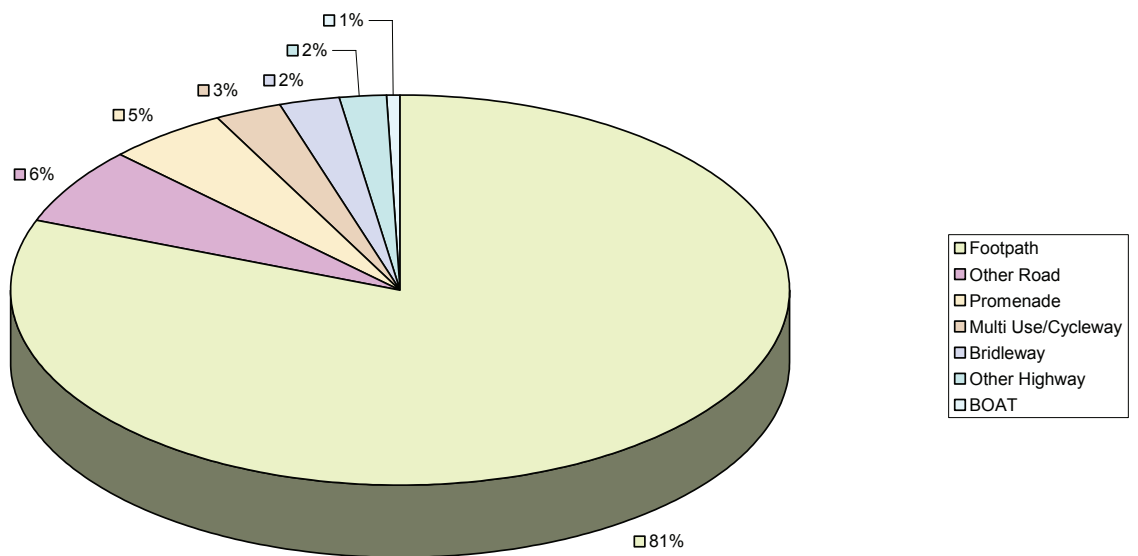
### Existing satisfactory, legally secure path

Satisfactory, legally secure path includes public right of way, urban roads, other highways and promenades.

It does not include de-facto access, permissive paths or CRoW area access.

In the region 63% of the coast has a satisfactory, legally secure path. The chart below shows how that figure is split between types of legally secure path.

Existing satisfactory legally secure path - status

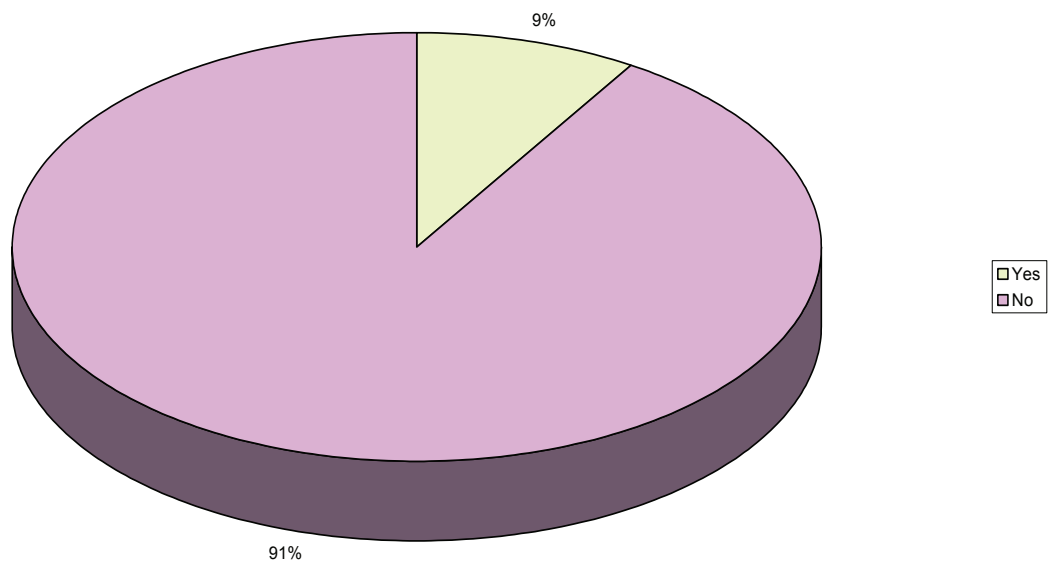


- Where there is a satisfactory, legally secure path 11% is on existing public road or promenade, often through urban areas.
- 80% is public footpath.
- 5% is multi-user cycle path or public bridleway.

### Roll-back provision

As part of the audit process each section of the coast has been looked at in terms of potential requirement for roll back provision. This records the likely future need for automatic roll back in the face of rapid coastal change.

Proportion of the path that may be subject to rollback provisions



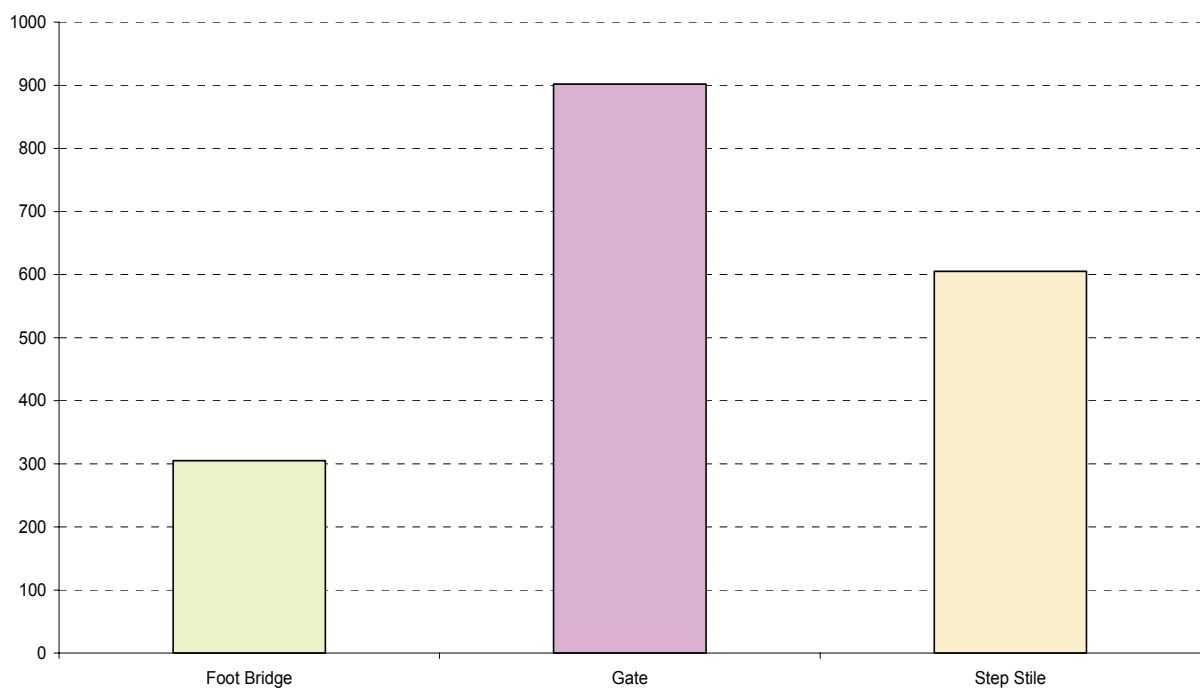
- In the South West region, 9% of the coast may require roll back provision within 20 years.

## Infrastructure types

Natural England will adopt the least restrictive option in relation to the installation of path infrastructure. New stiles will only be installed where there is a clear need. For example, where the path crosses a listed or historic landscape feature such as a hedge bank or wall.

The bar chart below shows the range of both existing and anticipated infrastructure on the line of the audit.

**Predominant types of existing and proposed infrastructure**



- In the region there are 144 possible new gates identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path.
- 758 gates are present on sections with an existing satisfactory legally secure path.
- There are 8 possible new foot bridges identified on the gaps in satisfactory, legally secure path potentially making 305 in total.

## **Annex 1**

### **The Audit Process**

The purpose of the audit was to identify on a paper map:

- Where there is an existing satisfactory legally secure path along the coast (annex 1)
- Where there are gaps in existing satisfactory legally secure paths along the coast and, in those gaps, provide an indicative line as a basis for the audit information
- Identification of any infrastructure (bridges and gates etc.) that may be required on the indicative audit line
- Identification of existing access infrastructure on the existing satisfactory legally secure path along the coast
- Where there may be constraints or opportunities for the linear access, for example from nature conservation, land use or landscape enhancements.

The audit has been done on the basis of existing data and knowledge of the coast and involved no fieldwork to validate the conclusions reached.

### **The meeting**

Normally two representatives from Natural England's coastal access team met with up to three officials from each access authority.

These officials were usually from the access team within each authority with some input from biodiversity or conservation officers. Each audit was allocated three working days although in most cases the audit was completed in two days.

A 1:10,000 scale base map was marked up in the following way:

### **Marking the map**

#### **The line data**

The first task was to mark up the existing paths and indicative coastal trail.

This line is drawn over:

- existing satisfactory legally secure paths
- existing satisfactory but not legally secure paths (such as a walked line with de facto access or permissive agreement)
- Gaps where there is no satisfactory legally secure path

### **Sections and Crossings**

#### **Sections**

A new section was started for any of the following reasons,

- A change of status from:

- Public right of way to de facto or permissive access
  - no satisfactory legally secure path to satisfactory legally secure path or
  - a change of class of public right (such as from footpath to bridleway)
- A major change of surface or management such as a change from tarmac to natural. In most cases this was also coincident with a change of public right.

We kept the number of sections to a minimum.

### ***Crossings***

In addition to the section data, we recorded the location on this line (section line) of any crossings (gates, bridges and stiles etc.).

Only when the map was marked with both the indicative line of the prospective coastal trail and the location of crossings along that line, did we then populate the database with attribute data for each section and each crossing and labelled the sections and crossings on the map with the correct references (see annex 2).

### ***Provisional Bridges***

If a bridge is needed to complete a section of indicative alignment or enhance an existing path the details were recorded as a crossing (proposed). If there was an alternative alignment that made use of an alternative route or bridge then this was also recorded.

### **Section and crossing numbers**

Each crossing and section was given a unique reference number. This was a combination of the local authority name in the database and the section or crossing number. On the map each section number was prefixed with an abbreviation of the authority name – for example LCC001.

### **Post audit processing.**

Once each audit was completed the hand marked maps were digitised and each unique section reference associated with the attribute data within the database. This then allowed spatial analysis of the attribute data.

The paper maps have been scanned and stored.



### **The use of the audit data**

When the coastal access team embarked on the local authority coastal access audit we realised from the outset that we would not get perfect information but an *informed opinion* based on local authority staff knowledge and that this level of knowledge would be variable both from authority to authority and on occasion within authorities.

Some of the questions asked during the course of the work carry a higher confidence rating than others and an assessment of this can be found at **Annex 2** in this report.

The data within this report is based on those questions that carry the highest confidence rating and as such focus on the status of existing access, the types of crossings present or required and the potential for the need for a roll back provision based on rates of observed coastal change.

The audit data has been used to refine the costings work that Natural England has undertaken. The data gathered during the course of the year has given the project team a much more detailed understanding of the current access situation on the coast of England and has enabled us to undertake implementation planning based on the best available knowledge.

## **Annex 2**

### **Limitations of the approach**

The audit process posed a set of questions for each of the sections recorded on the maps. These responses were recorded in a database.

These data are the attribute data associated with the sections of the indicative alignment of the audit line. The data was grouped into various sections within the database.

- Class of public right (e.g. footpath)
- Access management
- Environmental protection
- Environmental enhancement

The first two themes (class of public right and access management issues) are those that carry the greatest confidence as we always had access staff from the authority present at the audit. This data comprised the core purpose of the work.

The following is a critique of the final two themes, with comments on the reliability of the data and reasons for the caution.

#### **Environmental protection and environmental enhancement.**

The data collected for both of these fields was inconsistent, mainly due to the lack of expert knowledge during *some* of the audit meetings. Some authorities provided experts for some, or all of the meeting, some did not. The experts often had a narrow field of expertise (eg. invertebrates) rather than a general overview of the issues.

Few authorities had officers with expert knowledge of environmental enhancement potential.

Whilst the data cannot be used empirically, the meetings did provide reassurance for those with responsibility for environmental protection within authorities. Often the brief inputs from experts during the meetings indicated their general contentment that the process was robust and offered exciting opportunities for enhancement to the environment.

With more time for development of guidance and associated training the landscape assessment element may have been more easily used by any generalist.

Despite the issues with the quality, it is likely that analysis of the landscape data provide general reinforcement that those people engaged in the audit (from the access authorities) value their coast as an intrinsically good environment. We have not reproduced any of the data from these strands of the audit within the final report. The data does however provide some background context to the access elements of the audit.

### **Annex 3**

#### **Criteria for satisfactory, legally secure path**

*The path can be considered to be satisfactory if:*

- It follows in a direct and convenient way the broad lay of the coastline, without making significant and avoidable deviations inland;
- It is passable on foot at all states of the tide;
- It crosses any estuary by a safe, permanent crossing point;
- It is normally available on all days of the year and not subject to repeated closures or deviations;
- It is not unreasonably steep, constrained in width, oppressive or dangerous, having regard to the other potential ways around that section of coast;
- It maintains continuous or near-continuous views of the sea or shoreline, accepting that there may be unavoidable interruptions to the view from coastal vegetation, landforms, coastal defence structures or developments;
- It does not follow a public road used by motor vehicles unless no other reasonable option exists;

#### **The converse**

*A path can be considered to be not to be satisfactory if:*

- It does not follow in a direct and convenient way the broad lay of the coastline, it makes significant and avoidable deviations inland;
- It is not passable on foot at all states of the tide;
- It fails to cross any estuary by a safe, permanent crossing point;
- It is normally not available on all days of the year and is subject to repeated closures or deviations;
- It is unreasonably steep, constrained in width, oppressive or dangerous,
- It fails to maintain continuous or near-continuous views of the sea or shoreline, accepting that there may be unavoidable interruptions to the view from coastal vegetation, landforms, coastal defence structures or developments;
- It follows a public road used by motor vehicles where other reasonable options exists;



## **Annex 4**

### **Glossary of terms used during the audit process**

#### **Satisfactory, legally secure path is**

- public rights of way,
- urban roads and other highways,
- promenades.

#### *It does not include*

- de-facto access,
- permissive access or
- areas over which access rights were created under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

#### **Section**

This term is used to describe a length of audit line where the conditions, status or class of the path are similar. This is the basic sub-division of the audit line data.

#### **Crossing**

This term refers to any item of **infrastructure** either existing or proposed on the line of the prospective coastal trail including;

- Gates
- Stiles
- Footbridges

In this context the term infrastructure does not include way-marks or signage as no information concerning these was recorded during the audit process.

**Cover photograph:**

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