

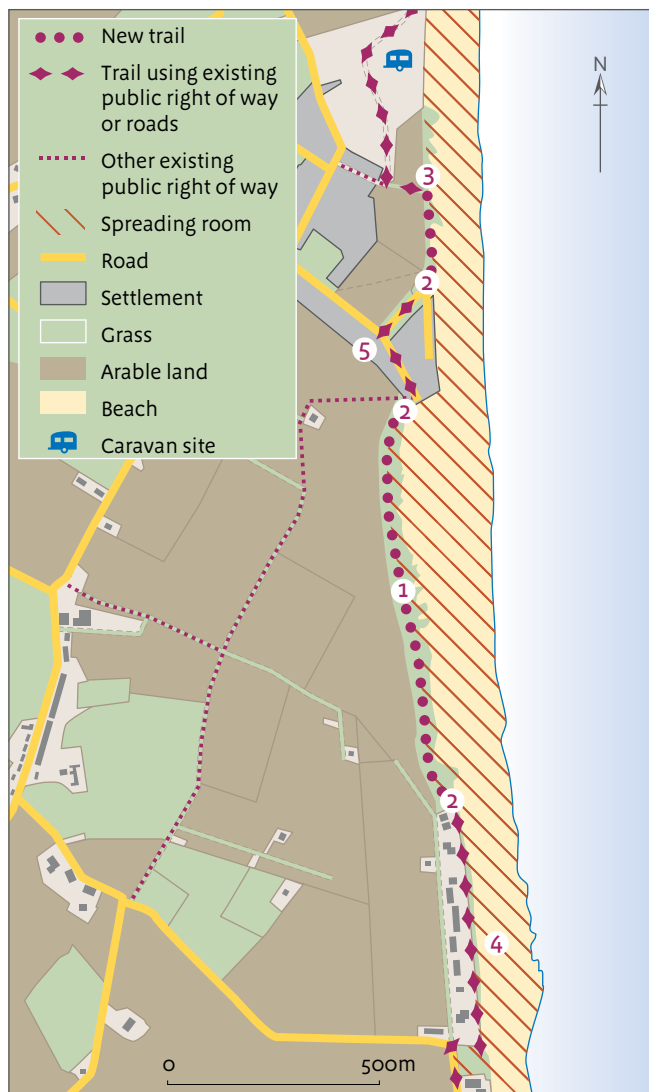
Chapter 9. Illustrated examples – open coast

The examples in this chapter are adapted from real sections of coast, but intended only to illustrate how new coastal access rights might be implemented in a range of situations. Each example features several of the common coastal scenarios discussed in chapters 7 and 8, to demonstrate the sort of approach we take in balancing the public and private interests in complex coastal situations.

Figure 23

Features: unenclosed arable land, cliff erosion, settlements, caravan site.

Figure 23 illustrates the trail passing along the seaward edge of unenclosed arable fields on an eroding cliff. All land seaward of the trail will be coastal margin, although some specific areas will be excepted land where new access rights will not apply. The trail occupies an uncultivated strip left by the farmer for operational safety reasons ①. In these sections, the trail will roll back as the cliff erodes without further reference to the Secretary of State, in accordance with the approved proposals in our coastal access report. The map shows its starting position.



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Signs at strategic locations explain to the public how the trail rolls back and give other useful information, such as beach access points ②.

The trail turns away from the coast ③ on an existing footpath, before passing through the caravan site on a convenient access road, by agreement with the site operator. The trail also passes along the seaward edge of one row of houses ④, but cuts inland round others because the gardens extend to the cliff edge ⑤. It may also be necessary for the trail to roll back in these sections, in order to link up with adjoining sections that need to roll back as a direct result of erosion.

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Figure 24

Features: enclosed and unenclosed arable land, cliff erosion, ravine.

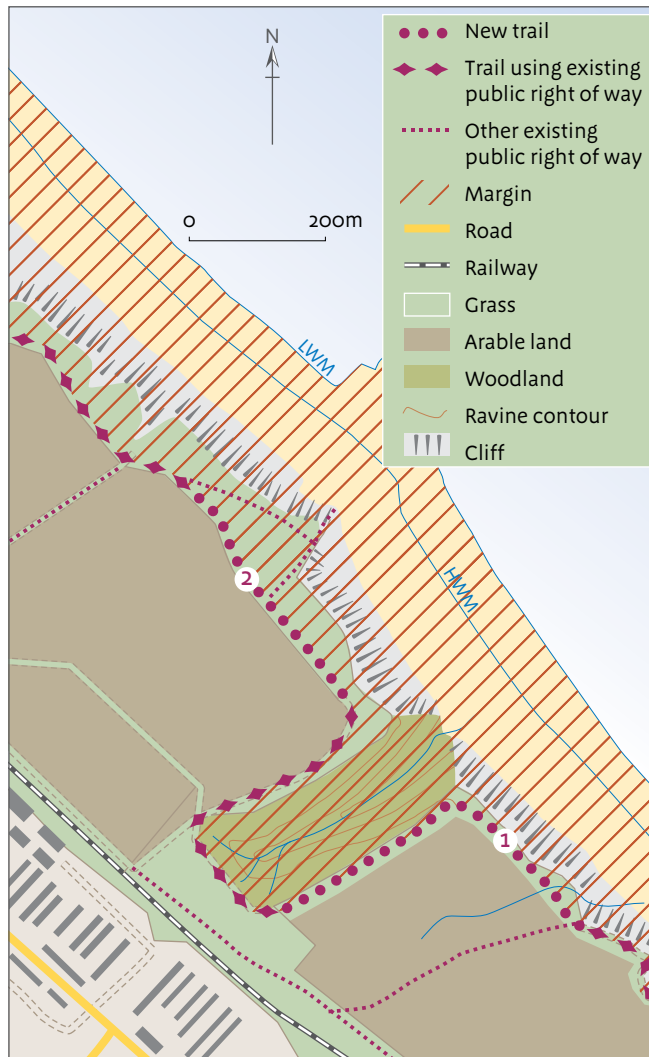
Figure 24 illustrates an eroding cliff interrupted by a steep ravine. The trail passes around the fenced edge of the ravine because this is the safest and most convenient route.

To the southeast of the ravine the trail follows the edge of an unenclosed arable field, overlooking the cliff ①. Here the trail will roll back as the cliff erodes without further reference to the Secretary of State, in accordance with a description in our report. The map shows its starting position.

To the northwest of the ravine, the trail is on grassland overlooking the cliff. The map shows its starting position, a fixed distance to the seaward side of a field wall ②. When the cliff erodes significantly, this route will no longer be safe for walking. At that stage the access authority will install signs indicating that the trail has moved to a safe route behind the wall.

The areas of rough grazing, cliff, rock and beach seaward of the trail will be coastal margin. We have not proposed the addition of any significant areas of land to the coastal margin, landwards of the trail.

If the valley sides were stable and less steep, we might instead align the trail across the valley.



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Figure 25

Features: cliff, enclosed pasture, coastal valley, coastal margin

Figure 25 illustrates cliff top fields interrupted by a coastal valley.

The trail crosses the valley near the sea avoiding an inland detour that would otherwise be necessary to avoid the steeper valley slopes to landward ①. Although the route is quite steep here, it is preferred to any inland alternative because it is more direct.

The trail broadly follows the cliff edge elsewhere along this section. It stays on the seaward side of field walls wherever a safe and convenient route can be found along the cliff top. Where this is not possible, gates allow people to enter enclosed fields and walk along them on the seaward edge, for example at ②.

A sign at the car park provides advice to walkers on how to behave around any livestock they encounter, in particular how to keep their dogs under effective control.

The areas of rough grazing, cliff, rock and beach seaward of the trail are coastal margin, together with rough grazing land landward of the trail up to the first field boundary.

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Figure 26

Features: cliff, private house, unenclosed fields, spreading room.

Figure 26 illustrates a large house with outbuildings and garden on a cliff top. There is a rocky shoreline below. The trail passes on the landward side of the house and garden ① because there is no safe or convenient route to seaward. The house and garden are excepted land, but the land seaward of them is accessible as spreading room.

To the south-east of the house, the trail returns to the cliff edge along an arable field edge ②. The land between the field edge and the sea is coastal margin.

To the north-west of the house, the trail follows the existing lane and public footpath some distance from the cliff edge ③. This is the most direct route and is preferred by those living in the house for reasons of privacy. The unenclosed pasture between the trail and the cliff edge is accessible as spreading room ④. A waymarker directs people to the beach along an existing right of way at the field edge a short distance from the house ⑤.

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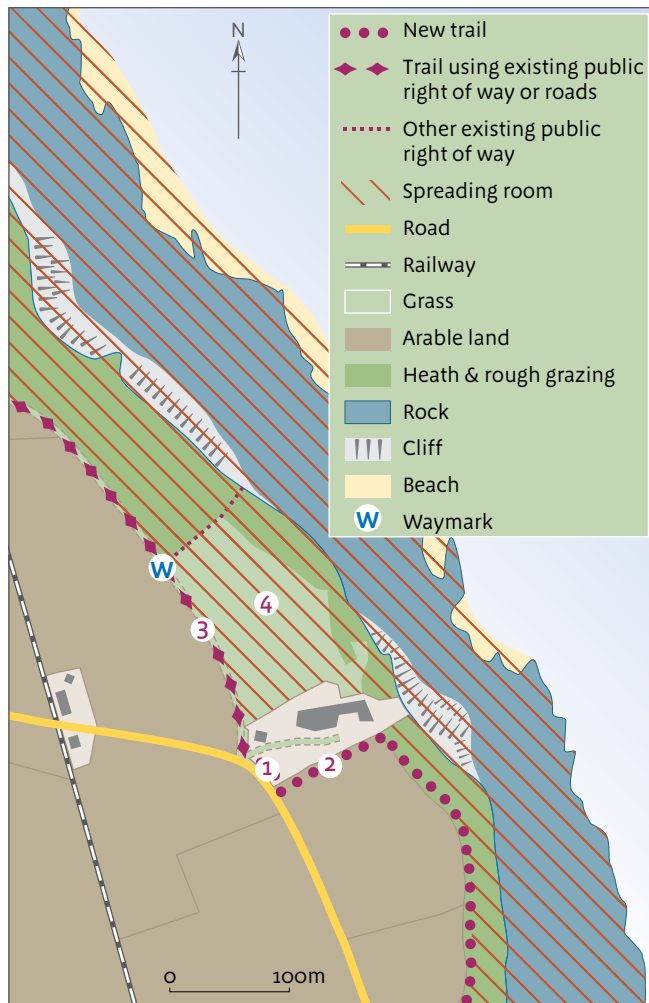
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Figure 27

Features: cliff slope, landslip, woodland, shooting, coastal margin, circular walks.

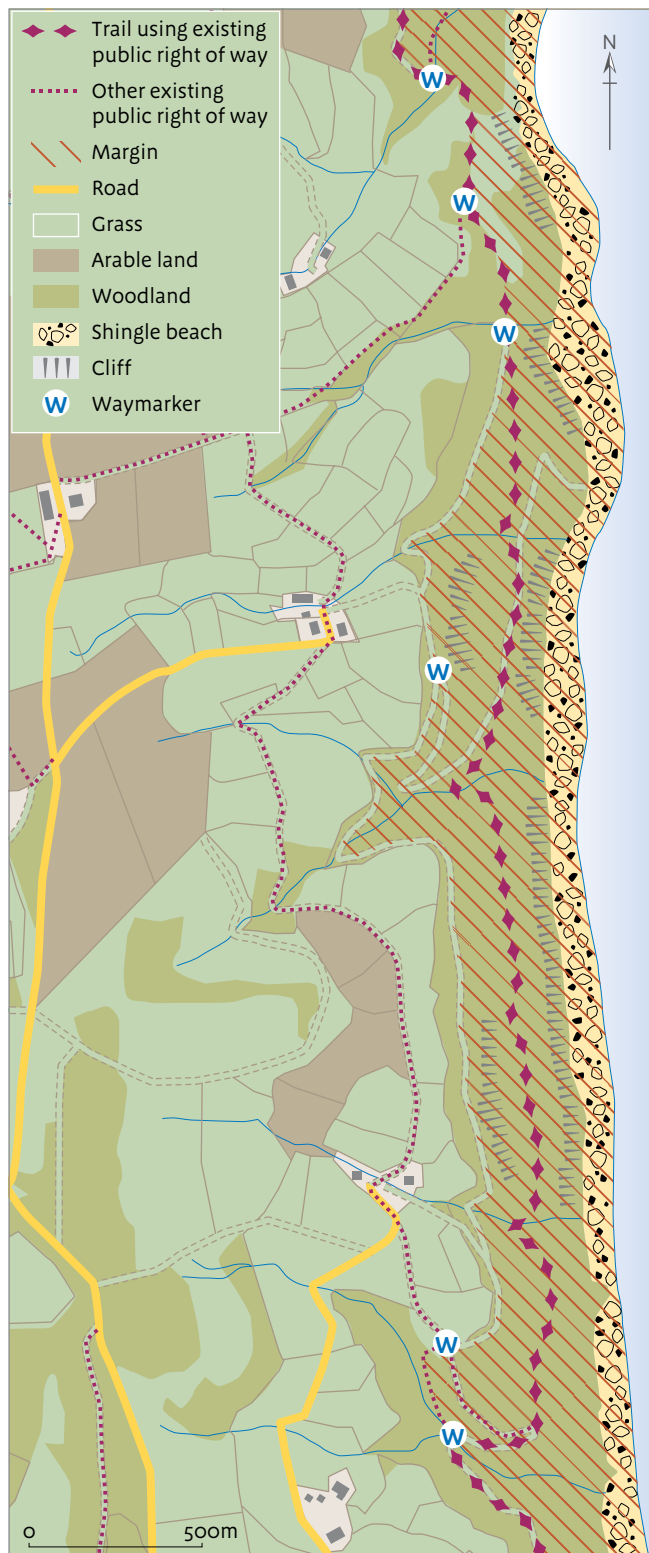
Figure 27 illustrates a woodland on a long section of sloping cliff with a shingle beach below. The shingle is difficult to walk on, so the trail passes through the woodland on the cliff slope above using an existing track offering better sea views than the alternatives inland.

The cliff slope is prone to small-scale landslips throughout this section. Here the trail route will roll back without further reference to the Secretary of State in accordance with the approved proposals in our report, with signs and other infrastructure put in place by the

access authority to direct the public. The map shows its starting position.

Coastal margin seaward of the route allows the public to explore other existing tracks which lead to the beach and other parts of the woodland, creating possibilities for circular walks.

Some of the land to the landward side of the trail is coastal in nature (see 4.8.8) and is therefore automatically included in the coastal margin. However, we have, with the consent of the owners, used our discretion to propose that the boundary should coincide with another existing woodland track. The owner preferred the western edge of the woodland not to be included, because pheasants are released there for shooting over the fields inland. Waymarkers in strategic places indicate the landward boundary of the spreading room (W).



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Figure 28

Features: flood banks, mudflat and salt marsh, sensitive wildlife, optional alternative route.

Figure 28 illustrates a section of low-lying, defended farmland coast fringed by a narrow belt of mudflat and salt marsh.

The trail follows the embankment (sea wall) in most places. The public are excluded from most land seaward of the trail, in line with our normal presumption to exclude the access rights from applying to areas of flat and salt marsh. The exclusion helps to minimise disturbance to birds which feed and roost there during the winter months. However, there are small areas of spreading room on flats and rock at either end of the section, which local people traditionally use as a beach and which are suitable for access.

On several sections, the sea can go over the sea wall on very high tides. We have created an optional alternative route along an older flood bank further away from the sea along this section. This is to be available for use by the public if the main route is flooded. Signs at trail access points explain how the optional alternative route operates and the reasons for it ①.

The fields between the alternative route and the main trail are not accessible as spreading room.

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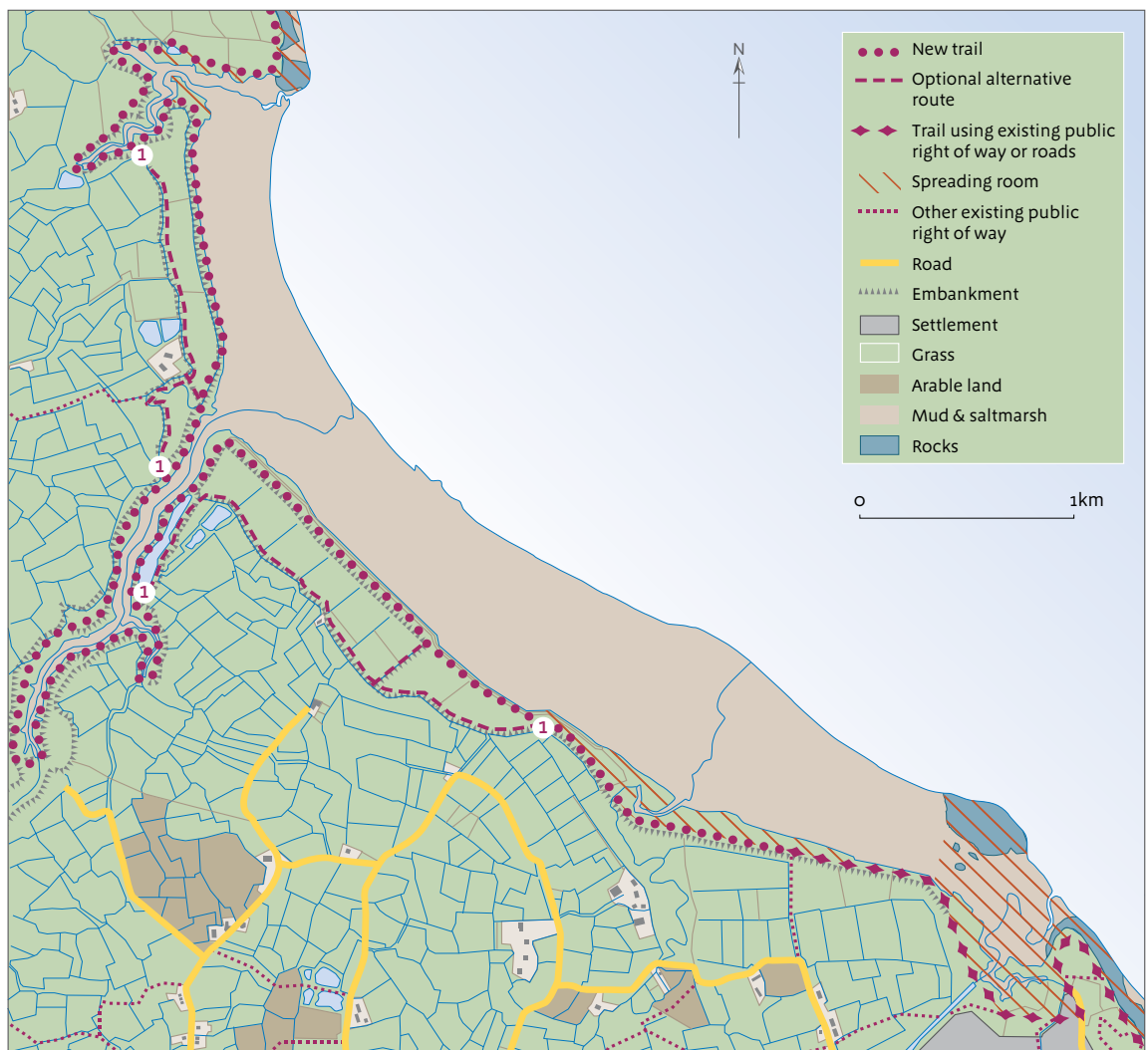
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Figure 29

Features: shingle beach, coastal margin, circular walks, sensitive wildlife.

Figure 29 illustrates a shingle beach backed by wetland. The wetland is fringed by gently sloping ground with a mixed cover of heath, rough grass, woodland and enclosed fields. The shingle is difficult to walk on. It is also prone to flooding during storm conditions and is not actively maintained for flood defence. The route chosen for the trail follows higher, firmer, drier ground, crossing the wetland on an embankment ①. This is a less direct route along the coast than the beach, but it is a more convenient and reliable walking surface for the long-term. It offers fine views of the sea and surrounding wetland landscape and wildlife.

Land seaward of the trail is accessible as spreading room, enabling people to walk along the shingle beach if they wish to. This creates possibilities for circular coastal walks. Way-markers at strategic points ② point out the main route and the alternative along the beach.

We have used our discretion to add further land to the coastal margin, including heath and rough grassland landward of the trail, with the consent of the owners. In these places, the inland boundary of the coastal margin coincides with an existing boundary, in this case the boundaries of adjoining woodland and wetland areas.

Access to the wetland seaward of the trail is excluded to prevent disturbance to wetland birds ②, though the public may walk through it along an existing right of way if they wish to. There are small fenced sections on the shingle which are used by nesting birds ③, but these do not prevent the public from walking past. Signs here explain the need for people to prevent their dogs from approaching birds or nests.

In the northeast of the map, the trail follows a river bank inland for a short distance, before crossing it at the first pedestrian bridge ④ and returning to the open coast.

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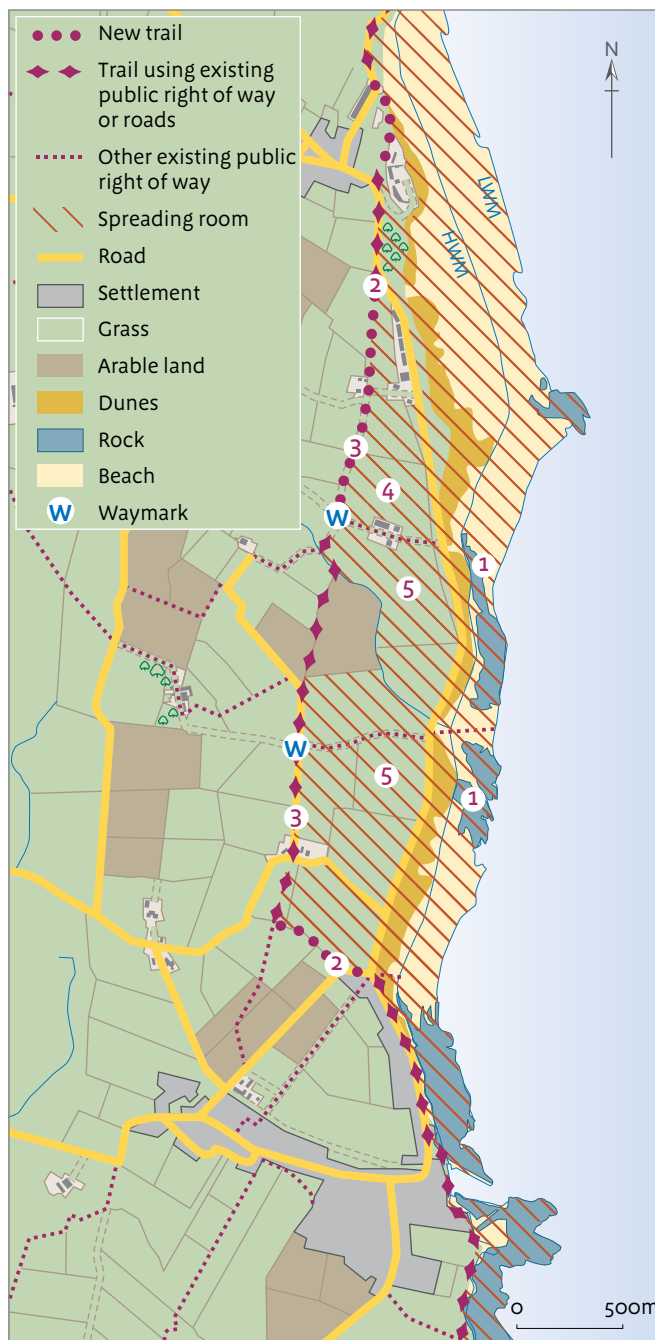
Figure 30
Features: beach with dunes, spreading room, livestock.

Figure 30 illustrates a stretch of coast between two coastal settlements. Parts of the beach are impassable at high tide ① and the dunes behind shift, making it difficult to establish a convenient walking route through them. Behind the dunes there is a busy road with no view of the sea; behind the road there is gently sloping enclosed pasture.

The trail therefore heads inland from both settlements to maintain sea views and avoid the busy road ②, following existing tracks and a quiet lane with no through traffic ③.

The land seaward of the trail is coastal margin and mostly accessible as spreading room, including several enclosed pastures. Waymarkers direct people from the trail to the beach along existing tracks and public footpaths in preference to field edges (W). This creates possibilities for circular walks at low tides, and ensures that any access to the pasture is low-key.

The public are excluded from a field adjacent to the trail at times when a bull is kept there ④. Dogs are excluded from other adjacent fields during periods when cattle are calving ⑤. Access along the trail and public rights of way is not affected by these directions.



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