



The Kent Coast

Coastal Access Report

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The Kent Coast Coastal Access Report

A survey of the Kent coastline, identifying existing Public Rights of Way and issues in respect of the implementation of a continuous coastal route for the county of Kent and the unitary authority of Medway

Prepared by Ian Wild from the Kent Area of the Ramblers

This survey has been produced during the second half of 2010 from field observations, maps and other resources and is intended to inform on the current state of access as found to the Kent coast.

The observations were taken from Public Rights of Way, public access land or other land which at the time was not indicated as being private land or land from which the public were specifically excluded.

If any landowners, members of the public or any other persons have comments regarding the observations made within the survey they can be made to info@kentramblers.org.uk.

At no time should this survey be used or understood to indicate areas of public access or be used as a walking guide.

This survey of the Kent coast does not show a Ramblers proposed or preferred route for the proposed English Coastal Route and is not a response on behalf of the Ramblers to any proposals by Natural England or any other bodies.

This document is for presentation to officers of Natural England, Ramblers (GB), Kent County Council and Medway Council

31 December 2010

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1.0 Summary

1.1 The Coastline – Overview of Current Access

The Kent Coastline is approximately 345 km in total. Of the route walked, 49% was on PRowS, 30% had de facto access, 13% was excepted land and only 8% was inaccessible or the right of access was in doubt. Three sections were Military Land where access was severely limited. Of the 28 km that was inaccessible or doubtful, there were three short sections of beach where the residents claimed it was private and the remainder was sea defence bank protecting farmland that was fenced off.

Most of the access issues were in the Borough of Swale.

While there is a route around most of the Kent coast not all meets the CROW Act standard of having land two metres either side of the line of the route (as can be seen from the photos). Spreading room is more straightforward though there is excepted land between the route and the sea in places.

1.2 Access Issues

1.2.1 Dartford's Coast (page 20)

1.2.1.1 Greenhithe TQ581753 to TQ584751 0.4 km

This is an industrial area with wharves. It would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.1.2 Broadness Salt Marsh TQ601761 to TQ609766 1.5 km

There is an open area of reclaimed salt marsh where there was some industrialisation. There is no footpath as such.

1.2.2 Gravesham's Coast (page 26)

1.2.2.1 Northfleet TQ612762 to TQ633743 3 km

Much of this section is being redeveloped and the existing footpaths were closed. It may be that when the redevelopment is complete there will be some access to the river.

1.2.2.2 Royal Terrace Pier TQ651744 to TQ653744 0.2 km

There is a short deviation away from the river around the pier. This would appear to be excepted land

1.2.2.3 Milton TQ657743 to TQ667743 0.8 km

This is an industrial area with wharves. This would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.3 Medway's Coast (page45)

1.2.3.1 St Mary's Bay TQ792790 to TQ797790 0.6 km

The small sand beach here has been fenced off. It would appear to be to keep livestock off the beach where there is a lot of tidal debris. It is a remote area.

1.2.3.2 Dagnam Saltings TQ816784 to TQ831788 2 km

A ProW is shown on the map but it has fallen into disuse. Part of it has been eroded as this area of saltings is unprotected. It is possible to walk along the beach except at high tide.

1.2.3.3 Yantlett Firing Range TQ867798 to TQ875770 5.5 km

This range is used for firing ordnance rather than small arms. It was not possible to ascertain when firing was not taking place.

The path from the top of Yantlett Creek to West Lane is not a PRow and there are two locked gates. It does appear to be a quite well used route between Allhalows and Grain.

1.2.3.4 Thamesport Container Terminal TQ892747 to TQ856755 5 km

The third largest container terminal in the country. It is secure and would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.3.5 Kingsnorth Power Station TQ820740 to TQ807718 5 km

This is a coal fired power station with unloading jetty. It is a very secure area. Most would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.3.6 Upnor to Strood TQ770712 to TQ742693 7 km

There is access along the beach at Upnor for the first section except at high tide. There are two yacht clubs. It is part of the SSW. There are private woods above the high tide line. The route goes behind the Royal Engineers and Upnor Casle to rejoin the river bank briefly before cutting across Chatham Ness to Strood. Chatham Ness is a large industrial zone. There is some access to the river but no continuous path. Only part appears to be excepted land. There should be scope for a path through the woods.

1.2.3.7 Gashouse Point TQ742689 to TQ747688 1 km

There is a working quay but most of this area is being cleared for redevelopment at some time in the future.

1.2.3.8 Chatham High Street TQ750680 to TQ757683 1 km

The road bypasses the river front which is largely commercial with a couple of piers. There is access to the river in places but no riverside path. This would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.3.9 Chatham Historic Dockyard **TQ757687 to TQ761698** **2 km**

The Dockyard is a major tourist attraction and is pay-to-enter. There is access along most of the dockyard riverbank

1.2.3.10 St Mary's Island **TQ774705 to TQ771701** **1 km**

This is the east third of this manmade island which is industrial with a commercial dock. It would appear to be excepted land

1.2.3.11 Pier Road Gillingham **TQ769699 to TQ784694** **2 km**

This is the road that bypasses part of the Chatham docks, Gillingham Pier, Marina and Gas works. It would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.3.12 Motney Hill **TQ828686 to TQ830682** **2 km**

This is the sewage works which occupies the NE part of the Motney Hill promontory. It would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.3.13 Otterham Quay **TQ626674 to 829671** **0.5 km**

This is the old, now disused, quay at the head of Otterham Creek. It is now industrial units. This would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.4 Swale's Coast (page 76)

1.2.4.1 Horsham Marsh **TQ828671 to TQ849691** **4.3 km**

This does not appear to be excepted land. Apart from a wharf at TQ831678 there would appear to be a continuous sea defence bank around the peninsular. According to a local there used to be a continuous footpath around the coast. There should be unobstructed access.

1.2.4.2 Barksore Marshes **TQ863675 to TQ877680** **5.1 km**

This does not appear to be excepted land. There are security issues for the Yacht Club but no other obvious reasons why access is denied to the sea defence bank around the peninsular. There should be unobstructed access.

1.2.4.3 Bedlams Bottom **TQ889685 to TQ892690** **0.5 km**

This is not a particularly significant deviation from the coast. It just appears that this corner has become overgrown and it is easier to follow the road and Saxon Shore Way.

1.2.4.4 Chetney Marshes **TQ884699 to TQ894708** **7.8 km**

This does not appear to be excepted land. There are a profusion of signs implying it is a nature reserve and threatening prosecution of anyone disturbing the birds. It is securely fenced with barbed wire on the top of the gates. However, it does not

appear to be a recognised nature reserve and parts are not included in the Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI. There should be unobstructed access.

1.2.4.5 South Marshes and Rushenden Marshes TQ916695 to TQ898714 3.1 km

This is the sea defence bank from the Kings Ferry Bridge to Ladies Hole Point on Sheppey. It is not a PRow but may be de facto access. It is quite well used at the bridge end.

1.2.4.6 Queenborough TQ908719 to TQ906722 0.3 km

The PRow has been blocked at TQ908719 so access to Queenborough Creek is no longer possible. Kent County Council is aware of this problem. Most of this deviation from the coast would appear to be excepted land.

1.2.4.7 The Lappel and Sheerness TQ903730 to TQ910756 3.1 km

This would appear to be excepted land. The first part is a deviation around a huge car park for imported cars and the latter around the Port of Sheerness.

1.2.4.8 Round Hill to Warden TQ960736 to TR022721 6.8 km

The problem here is simply that a footpath does not exist along this part of the coast. Walking along the beach, below the London clay cliff, is heavy going and there is the risk of being cut off by the tide with no safe escape route. The cliffs are subsiding. The ideal solution would be a completely new coastal path along the top of the cliffs

1.2.4.9 Leysdown TR035708 to TR038705 0.4 km

This diversion is mainly around a mobile home holiday park. The possibility of continuous coastal access should be examined.

1.2.4.10 Shell Ness TR053682 to TR055679 0.4 km

This beach has been fenced off and there are notices indicating it is private above the high water mark. There should be unobstructed access.

1.2.4.11 Sayes Court TR031662 to TR 016659 1.4 km

This does not appear to be excepted land. There is a locked gate and notice at the start saying "Wildlife Sanctuary No Entry Please". Otherwise there does not seem to be a problem providing better coastal access.

1.2.4.12 Ferry Inn to Windmill Creek TR015659 to TQ982674 4.6 km

This does not appear to be excepted land. Access at the start is difficult if the tide is up as it is through scrub and there are "Keep Out" notices. There should be unobstructed access.

1.2.4.13 Windmill Creek to Elmley Hills **TQ982674 to TQ927678** **10.0 km**

There are PRoWs set some way back from the coast. This is an RSPB reserve and there are notices, in places, asking people to keep to the permissive paths below and on the landward side of the sea defence bank. Hides have been provided. However, this is a very monotonous walk without a view.

1.2.4.14 Kings Ferry Bridge **TQ915694**

The problem here is that progress along the coast is blocked by the railway line. It is a 3 km diversion inland to the first crossing point. A pedestrian crossing of some form needs to be provided

1.2.4.15 Ridham Dock **TQ920688 to TQ922687** **0.1 km**

This appears to be excepted land. The entrance to the dock is no great distance but the diversion around the industrial area is significant.

1.2.4.16 Conyer **TQ958646 to TQ966655** **2.4 km**

The first part is around the marina and through the village and would appear to be excepted land. The second part follows the coast through a disused brick works. There is no PRoW but there does seem to be de facto access.

1.2.4.17 Oare **TR007628 to TR016633** **0.8 km**

The route is around the marina which extends along the creek bank.

1.2.4.18 Favesham – Site of Pollock’s Ship Yard **TR021620 to TR017619** **0.3 km**

A housing development has been built on this site and the tow path blocked off. There is a creek side path in front of the houses that should be opened at both ends.

1.2.4.19 Faversham – Pent Sluice to Iron Wharf **TR015618 to TR020620** **0.6 km**

Considerable recent redevelopment has taken place and a number of housing developments have a creek side walkway. However, it appears that no consideration was given at the planning stages to maintaining the continuous path along the creek. This would be an attractive feature of the town and the possibility of reinstating it should be considered.

1.2.4.20 Nagden **TR031633** **0.1 km**

Here the Saxon Shore Way has recently been diverted away from the creek around a field where a house has been built. The diversion does not appear on the current OS map. There is no obvious reason why this should have been allowed since the PRoW was there before the house. Consideration should be given to reinstating the path.

1.2.5 Canterbury's Coast (page 87)

1.2.5.1 The Spotsman Beach TR060648 to TR062648 0.2 km

There are signs and a fence claiming the beach is private. The Saxon Shore Way currently follows the sea defence bank behind this small estate of huts and chalets. There are no gardens or fences between the properties. The solution would be to designate the area between the Saxon Shore Way and high water mark as Access Land.

1.2.5.2 Faversham Road TR0745645 to TR082651 0.7 km

The Saxon Shore Way currently follows the road which does not have a pavement. There is a firm shingle beach between the chalet/bungalow gardens and high water mark. There is no indication that the beach is private.

1.2.5.3 Preston Parade TR082651 to TR091653 0.9 km

Although the Saxon Shore Way goes through the private estate, there are signs indicating the beach is private. Again, the solution would be to designate the land between the Saxon Shore Way and high water mark as Access Land.

1.2.5.4 Beach below Joy Lane TR091653 to TR097657 0.4 km

This beach is reasonably new in that new breakwaters have been put in and additional shingle added. This provides a good walking surface albeit that there are low breakwaters. There is no indication that the beach is private.

1.2.6 Thanet's Coast (page100)

1.2.6.1 Kingsgate Castle TR395707 to TR399702 0.7 km

This would appear to be excepted land. The Castle, which is now private apartments, is built right up to the cliff edge. There are private houses and gardens on the other side.

1.2.6.2 North Foreland Private Estate TR402690 to TR399688 0.3 km

The Viking Way continues along the top of the cliff top road through the first part of this estate. Access is blocked at TR400671, the entrance to a building site. This deviation is around a number of cliff top houses and gardens. It may well be that it is all excepted land.

1.2.6.3 Ramsgate Harbour/Marina TR381645

This is just a misleading "No pedestrian access" signpost on the road around the bottom of the cliff. Apparently locals ignore it. The Saxon Shore Way follows the cliff top road from Ramsgate Harbour which probably has better views. The bottom road is closer to the sea and leads to the Western Undercliff.

1.2.6.4 Pegwell **TR366640 to TR363642** **0.3 km**

There is a deviation away from the coast around the Pegwell Bay Caravan Park, a pub and hotel.

1.2.6.5 Pegwell Bay **TR354644 to TR341622** **2.5 km**

Coastal access could be improved here. There is access across the old hovercraft terminal and there could be access across a short stretch of saltmarsh to the path leading to the Pegwell Bay Country Park. This gives access to the Stonelees Nature Reserve where the Thanet Coast ends.

1.2.7 Dover's Coast (page119)

1.2.7.1 Mouth of the River Stour **TR341622** **0.1 km**

The mouth of the Stour is only about 100m wide but there is no crossing. Currently the only option is to follow the road from the Stonelees Nature Reserve to the road bridge at Sandwich, some 5 km inland, and then back by PRowS to the coast at TR355560. It is then a 3 km walk back north along the coast to the mouth of the river. The river meanders considerably and it would be 7.5 km following the river bank.

The road to Sandwich is busy and it is not a pleasant walk. It is set some way back from the river bank which is heavily industrialised. It is a secure area and access to the river is not allowed. The Pfizers site is noticeably secure. There does appear to be a path along part of the bank and consideration should be given to reopening it.

The west bank of the river does not appear to be excepted land. Much of it is arable farmland and there is no obvious reason why there should not be a riverside path along at least part of it. There is some saltmarsh towards the mouth of the river. It is part of the Kent Wildlife Trust's Sandwich & Pegwell Bay NNRA.

The ideal solution would be a footbridge across the mouth of the river.

1.2.7.2 Royal St George's Golf Course **TR357591 to TR360587** **0.5 km**

For some reason the PRowS deviate inland significantly. There are no obstacles to continuing along the coast and it may well be defacto access. The position needs to be clarified.

1.2.7.3 Kingsdown Butts **TR380478 to TR380472** **0.7 km**

This is a disused MOD rifle range at the bottom of the cliff. There is a PRow along the landward side which comes to a dead end. The range is fenced with warning notices preventing access to the sea. One gate was unlocked and there was a hole in the fence at the end.

Consideration should be given to opening this area up as spreading room

1.2.7.4 St Margarets at Cliffe **TR368445 to TR367441** **0.4 km**

There is no option but to follow roads inland from the beach back up to the top of the cliff.

1.2.7.5 South Foreland TR364435 to TR360432 0.5 km

This deviation away from the cliff top is around three houses with extensive grounds. Part of these grounds are fields and may not be excepted land.

1.2.7.6 Gateway to the White Cliffs Coastal Park TR337421 to TR331419 0.6 km

This is a relatively minor issue. There are a number of paths through the park and the lower one, nearest the sea, comes to a dead end. There is no indication of this It would not be too difficult to have steps at the end up to the PRow,

1.2.8 Shepway's Coast (page 131)

1.2.8.1 Copt Point TR2431 to TR239363 1 km

This is not really a problem but consideration should be given to the best route across this area and improved waymarking.

1.2.8.2 Hythe Ranges TR156338 to TR130321 3 km

Access obviously needs to be limited to when firing is not taking place but notices indicating when access is possible would help. Also, a gate in the security fence at the Dymchurch Redoubt end is needed.

1.2.8.3 Lydd Ranges TR065166 to TR007177 6 km

As above for Hythe Ranges. However, there is an information board at the far end at Jury's Gap at TQ 991179.

2.0 Terms of reference and scope

This report sets out to identify the sections of the Kent coast that are inaccessible to walkers either because they are excepted land or because access is discouraged or blocked.

It is a commentary and snapshot record of a walk in a clockwise direction around the Kent and Sheppey coastline in the second half of 2010. It starts at the boundary with London at the confluence of the River Darent with the River Thames (TQ541778) and the Kent County boundary with East Sussex 2 km east of Jury's Gap Sluice (TR007177).

The aim was to take account of the overriding principles of Coastal Access and keep as close to the coast as possible using Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and other de facto access. *There were a few sections where the right of public access to the route was in doubt and these are shown in the commentary in italics.*

The coast has been divided into stretches that coincide with local authority boundaries. These fit with the Ramblers Groups' boundaries. Each stretch is described in three parts – general description, route taken with photos (nearly all in the direction of travel) and access issues. Access issues are where the route deviated from the coast or where there were obvious problems. These are arguably the most important aspect of the report.

This report is a first stage. It is superficial in that it is based on one person's observations and opinion. It will date quite quickly as redevelopment takes place and sea defences change. It will be quite easy to revisit as Natural England announce their programme and look in more depth at each stretch. A more detailed report on each stretch, looking at the current access issues, spreading room and so on will not be difficult to produce.

Grid references have been used extensively and ideally the report needs to be followed using Memorymap or similar.

Glossary

De facto access: Access over land that is tolerated by the owner where a PRoW does not exist. In practice, most coastal land in this category is in public ownership.

Excepted land: Categories of land which will have no right of access, for example, land covered by buildings.

PRoW: Public Right of Way, that is, footpath, bridleway or byway open to everyone over private land.

The route: The route actually walked (shown in blue on the maps)

Saltings: Land regularly flooded by the tide.

Section: Part of a Stretch.

Spreading room: Public access land for quiet recreation on either side of the trail. Land on the seaward side of the trail will be spreading room.

SSW: The Saxon Shore Way

Stretch: A portion of the coast, which in this report, coinciding with local authority boundaries.

3.0 The Kent Coast - Description



At some 345 km long, the Kent coast is one of the longest and most varied county coastlines in the UK. It includes the Isle of Sheppey separated from the mainland by The Swale.

The majority of its length is reclaimed saltmarsh protected by stone faced sea defence bank or, in the more populated areas, promenade with or without a sea wall. There are extensive sections of chalk cliff around Thanet and from Kingsdown to Folkestone where there are no continuous sea defences. There is a substantial section of unprotected shingle beach at Dungeness.

Some sections are commercial/industrial areas particularly along the Thames and Medway. There are urban areas, holiday resorts and several working ports and harbours of varying sizes. Some sections are very remote.

Additionally there are three MOD ranges where access is severely limited and several large power generation plants one of which is nuclear.

There are a number of rivers and creeks which feed into the Thames, Swale and open sea. These confluences produce complex inlets, peninsulas and the large island of Sheppey connected to the mainland by two adjacent bridges. There are a number of uninhabited islands in the Medway which are not connected to the mainland.

There are three RSPB reserves, five Kent Wildlife Trust reserves and four SSSIs which abut directly on the coast.

The Kent coast is serviced by a number of promoted routes, most notably the Saxon Shore Way but also the Wantsum Walk, Thanet Coastal Path/Viking Way, Stour Valley Walk and White Cliffs Country Trail. There are also shorter riverside walks in the more urban areas.

There are a number of small areas of Access Land abutting the coast. There are also a number of coastal parks.

5.0 Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the comments, suggestions and encouragement given by Neville Machin, Chairman of Kent Area, and Justin Cooke, Senior Policy Officer of the Ramblers as I produced this report.

Its preparation has been made a lot easier thanks to the technology of Garmin, Google Earth, Memory Map and SatMap. I should also mention Traveline as most of my travelling was by public transport and was complicated at times.

I would also recommend the paperback "Walking the Kent Coast from End to End" by David Bathurst which helped me plan my work.

Ian Wild

Secretary, Canterbury Group of the Ramblers

31 December 2010