

A historic opportunity to have your say... !

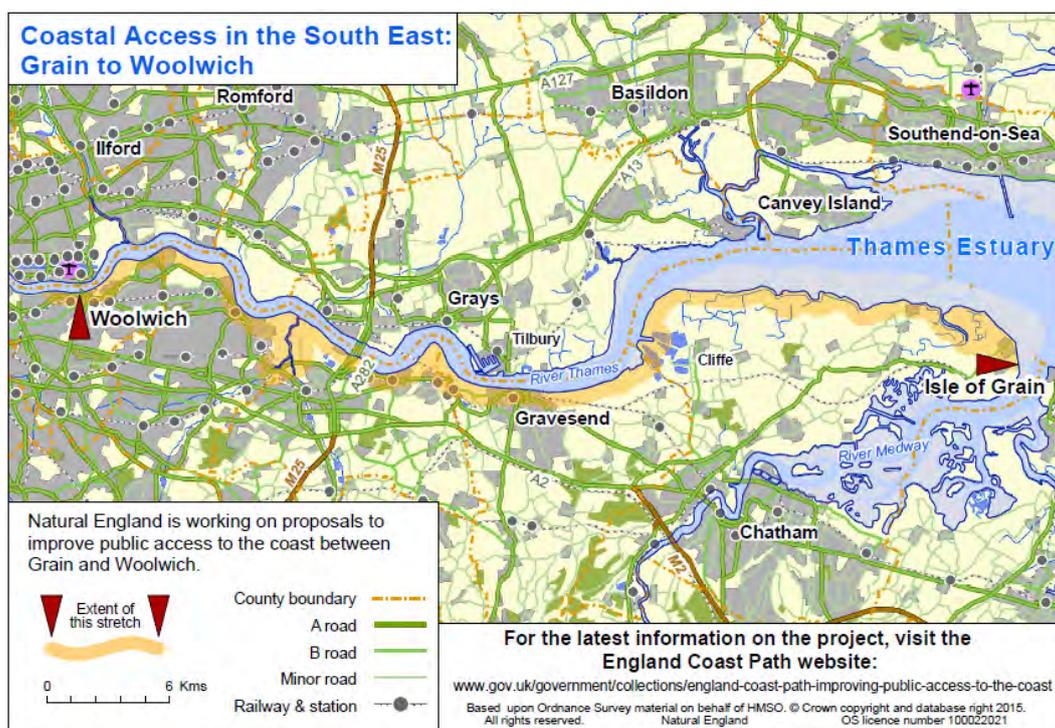
A new National Trail along the south bank of the River Thames called the England Coast Path is opening in 2020. How will it be branded? Does it already have a local identity? Join the conversation and share your views.

The England Coast Path, which will give walkers access to England's coast, is opening in sections and will be fully complete in 2020. When complete, at 2,700 miles, it will be one of the longest coastal walking routes in the world. One section of this new coastal trail will follow the south bank of the Thames linking to London at Woolwich, making the connection between our capital city and the sea.

The existing Thames Path National Trail, which starts at the source of the River Thames and currently ends at the Thames Barrier in Woolwich will now connect to the England Coast Path. This means that in 2020 we will finally complete the long aspired for 215 mile National Trail along the River Thames from its source to the sea.

Whilst the new National Trail will be created under the England Coast Path legislation, we recognise that the Thames Path already has a local identity. We want to find out from you whether you see this new National Trail as adding to that identity. Do you want the route to be referred to as the 'Thames Path' on signage, or would you like to celebrate the river's link to the sea by referencing the England Coast Path?

The Thames link to the sea is not always recognised. It is more than just a river. It's tidal. From the sea to Teddington it's an estuary, which means twice a day the sea flows into the river creating a marine habitat which is home to seahorses, seals and even dolphins. The river also has significant cultural importance. It has been described as "liquid history". It provides the life blood of London and has given birth to the capital which has been carved out on its banks. The rich history of London can be discovered both in the riverbed, as archaeological remains, and on the river's banks. This story and London's history has been developed due to the Thames connection with the sea.



We want to know what you think:

1. Would you like the new National Trail along the south bank of the Thames from Woolwich (London) to Grain (Kent) to be known and signposted as:
 - ❖ "Thames Path"
 - ❖ "Thames Path and England Coast Path"
 - ❖ "England Coast Path"
 - ❖ "Thames Path links to England Coast Path"
 - ❖ Why?



Example signs above that we could install along the route

The South West Coast Path commissioned artists to engage with the local community and design a sculpture to mark the start and finish of this iconic trail. Although no funding has been identified yet, the Thames Path could also mark the finish of the trail at the river's mouth/ sea (in Kent).

The source of the Thames and the start of our National Trail in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds is marked by an ancient Ash tree, a sign stating 'London Thames Barrier 184 miles' and a stone plaque installed by the River Thames Society many years ago. The statue of old Father Thames, who now watches over St Johns Lock – the first Lock on the Thames, once stood guard over the source! Legend has it that students from a local agricultural college would move him to other water meadows along the Thames and so it was decided to relocate him to his current home – but should he return to the source?



Do you have any ideas for a marker, a stone, a plaque that could be erected to mark the end of the National Trail on the River Thames?

The pictures below are examples of Cotswolds and North Downs Way.



2. Where do you think the exact "sea" endpoint of the path along the Thames should be e.g. Grain Coastal Park?

PLEASE SEND YOUR RESPONSES TO

SouthEastCoastalAccess@naturalengland.org.uk by 31 March 2018