

ACCESS NEWSLETTER

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Update on Marine and Coastal Access Bill

The Marine and Coastal Access (MCA) Bill completed its passage through the House of Commons committee stage on 14 July 2009. Overall, 14 amendments to the Bill were made by the Public Bill Committee. However, none of these related to Part 9 of the Bill – the part that contains provisions for improving access to the English coast.

Links to transcripts of Committee debates, a revised copy of the MCA Bill – as amended in the Commons – and other Parliamentary proceedings on the Bill can be viewed at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation/key-docs.htm>

Following the summer recess (Parliament reconvenes on 12 October), the MCA Bill will continue to the next stages of Report and Third Reading, where the House of Commons may make further amendments. The Bill will then return to the House of Lords for consideration of amendments made in the Commons. Once both Houses agree to the content of the Bill it may proceed to Royal Assent.

Public consultation on CROW section 3A Order

The new right of access to the coast proposed in the MCA Bill includes provision for an Order to be made to amend the CROW Act as it will apply to coastal land. We have already published a paper setting out what we are proposing to include in an Order. You can read the paper at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdf/access/ca-draft-sect3.pdf>

The Order will ensure that coastal land is included within the CROW Act's description of land to which the public has a right of access for the purposes of open-air recreation and proposes a number of other amendments – for example to the categories of excepted land at Schedule 1 and to the general restrictions at Schedule 2 to the Act.

We previously advised we would carry out a public consultation on the proposed amendments following Royal Assent. However, we have decided to bring this consultation forward and now intend to publish it in **early September**.

A further Access newsletter will be issued to confirm the exact launch date and provide information on how you can view the consultation document and provide a response.

If you have any queries on the above, please write to: coastal.access@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Natural England's Coastal Audit work

Natural England has recently completed an audit of existing coastal paths, working with all 53 English coastal access authorities. As part of the survey, a series of 'gap maps' have been produced illustrating the current level of fragmentation of paths along England's coastline. The results show that 66 per cent of the coast – 1,827 miles – is currently served by a satisfactory, legally secure path, while 34 per cent – 921 miles – has no satisfactory, legally secure path or only a permissive or de facto path.

The report, regional maps and further information can be viewed on the Natural England website at:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/coastalaccess/englandscoastpath/default.aspx>

