



The Sizewell C Project

6.3 Volume 2, Chapter 15 Appendix 15I of the Environmental Statement: Rights of Way and Access Strategy

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1 RIGHTS OF WAY AND ACCESS STRATEGY

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Sizewell C Project would have an impact on various public rights of way (PRoW), including temporary and permanent closures and diversions. SZC Co. has therefore developed an access strategy as described in this Appendix. This strategy is expected to inform the relevant **Footpath Implementation Plan** which will be prepared by SZC Co. and submitted to the highway authority for agreement pursuant to the **Draft Development Consent Order (DCO)** [[APP-059](#)].

1.1.2 The strategy is illustrated on the following Figures:

- **Figure 15I.1** Existing Rights of Way and Access;
- **Figure 15I.2** Construction Phase; and
- **Figure 15I.3** Operational Phase.

1.1.3 The Suffolk Coast Path, the future England Coast Path and Sandlings Walk might need to be diverted inland for temporary periods during the construction phase. The following Figures show the existing and proposed alignments of the Suffolk Coast Path, the future England Coast Path and Sandlings Walk overlaid on the construction phase plan, should temporary diversions be necessary.

- **Figure 15I.4** Suffolk Coast Path and Future England Coast Path Diversions – Construction Phase; and
- **Figure 15I.5** Sandlings Walk Diversions – Construction Phase.

1.1.4 It is not anticipated that the Suffolk Coast Path, the future England Coast Path or Sandlings Walk would need to be diverted inland during the operational phase.

1.1.5 The strategy comprises two parts summarised as follows:

Construction phase:

- to minimise as far as possible any physical disruption or any other reductions in amenity on existing PRoW, permissive footpaths, access

land, promoted cycle routes and all other pre-existing linear and area access, on the coast and inland;

- to minimise as far as possible any reductions in connectivity in and around the development, especially north-south;
- to, in particular, minimise any reductions in accessibility and amenity to the Suffolk Coast Path, Sandlings Walk and the future England Coast Path;
- to comply with the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in terms of temporary access infrastructure and management, by ensuring that there are no physical barriers to access without lawful authority and that reasonable adjustments are made to facilitate participation by all;
- to ensure that all new linear surfaces are easy to use;
- to minimise the need for temporary path closures and diversions, and where these are unavoidable, to provide and maintain alternative routes so as to reduce to a minimum any disruption or loss of amenity;
- to minimise road crossing points and, where unavoidable, to carry out relevant road safety audits and implement recommendations to ensure user safety;
- to apply and maintain best practice in terms of on-site signage and other information provision, and to enhance visitor enjoyment and safety; and
- to justify, manage and agree temporary closures in advance and to publicise closures to members of the public, as required.

Operation phase:

- to restore to at least their original standard any PRow, permissive footpaths, access land, promoted cycle routes and all other pre-existing linear and area access, on the coast and inland affected by the development, where practicable;
- to comply with the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in terms of any new or existing access infrastructure and management, by ensuring that there are no barriers without lawful authority and that reasonable adjustments are made to facilitate access to all;

- to ensure that all new linear surfaces are easy to use; and
- to apply and maintain best practice in terms of on-site signage and other information provision, and to enhance visitor enjoyment and safety.

1.1.6 This access strategy includes descriptions of the main temporary and permanent rights of way closures and diversions. There would also be further local short-term temporary closures and diversions during, for example, construction of roads or other works that cross PRoWs which have, where they are currently known, been shown indicatively on the detailed **Rights of Way plans in Book 2** (Doc Ref. 2.4(C)). There might also be further local short-term temporary closures and diversions which are not known at this stage, which would be developed in consultation with the relevant authorities should development consent be granted. Any such closures or diversions would be for the minimum time possible and would be communicated to the public in advance, as required.

1.1.7 This strategy has been informed by observation and questionnaire surveys of existing users of recreational resources within the vicinity of the main development site, and by consultation with stakeholders including Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council (ESC) (formerly Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC)), Natural England, the Suffolk Local Access Forum, the Ramblers Association and the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Beauty Partnership.

1.2 Rights of way and proposed improvements

a) Existing rights of way

1.2.1 A number of existing rights of way extend across the EDF Energy Estate, including the main development site. The existing rights of way are illustrated on **Figure 15I.1**.

1.2.2 Long distance walking routes passing through the main development site comprise:

- the Suffolk Coast Path and Sandlings Walk extend along the coast to the east of Sizewell A and B stations and the main development site, along definitive public right of way E-363/021/0; and
- the England Coast Path is being established by Natural England under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and is likely to follow the route of the Suffolk Coast Path and Sandlings Walk along the coast to the east of Sizewell A and B stations and the main development site. The

England Coast Path will likely be launched before or during construction of Sizewell C; it would include a wider area of ‘coastal margin’ either side of the path itself, giving greater statutory protection to the de facto access to the coast the public already enjoys in this area.

- 1.2.3 These long distance walking routes, referred to as the Coast Path, extend through a wider area of coastline with rights of public access, including the beach and foreshore.

b) Construction phase

- 1.2.4 The Coast Path, and the publicly accessible wider coastline, would be subject to temporary disruption and change as a result of the construction of new sea defences and cross-shore infrastructure during construction. Therefore, to ensure visitor safety and minimise any reductions in amenity, it is proposed that the Coast Path would be realigned during early stages of construction to the east and seaward of the existing low embankment, during the construction of new sea defences.
- 1.2.5 For the remainder of the construction phase, to ensure public safety and minimise disruption overall, the Coast Path would then be moved west a short distance to run parallel to a temporary sheet pile wall coastal defence and within a wider recreational corridor (refer to **Figure 15I.2**). The temporary sheet pile wall would help to screen lower-level construction works within the main development site from the coastline, and the recreational corridor in particular.
- 1.2.6 Once construction of the permanent coastal defences are complete the Coast Path would be diverted onto its permanent alignment parallel to and east of the hard coastal defence landform which would help to screen construction works within the main development site.
- 1.2.7 Area access to the wider coastline and beach would be retained as much as possible during the construction phase although some areas would require temporary closure.
- 1.2.8 The temporary and permanent diversions of PRow E-363/021/0, the Suffolk Coast Path, Sandlings Walk and England Coast Path along the coast would follow the same alignment and be designed to have the same accessibility as the current PRow and Coast Path. The route would have a suitable firm surface and the specification will be agreed with the Highways Authority in relation to the definitive right of way, in addition to Natural England in relation to the England Coast Path. All diversions would be above the Highest Astronomical Tide level.

- 1.2.9 A permanent beach landing facility (BLF) and a separate temporary BLF crossing the beach are proposed to enable boats to dock and deliver large items and bulky materials during construction. The PRoW and Coast Path would be kept open during the operation of the permanent and temporary BLFs.
- 1.2.10 The permanent BLF would be used to import Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) to Sizewell C by sea on barges, and would be accessed on the landward side via an access road from the main development site. When the permanent BLF is in use people walking along the coast would be able to use the PRoW and Coast Path across the access road, where a banksman would be present to ensure safe passage and minimise delay, or walk along the beach and pass under the deck of the permanent BLF. The deck would only be present during periods of BLF use.
- 1.2.11 The temporary BLF would be used for the delivery of bulk construction materials, or other materials, and would be in operation for approximately 8 years during the construction phase. A conveyor along the length of the temporary BLF deck would be the primary method of unloading material, passing over the Coast Path. The underside of the temporary BLF deck would be at least 3.7m above the ground level of the Coast Path, to allow equestrians to pass under the BLF without dismounting.
- 1.2.12 The PRoW and Coast Path would be redirected up and down the shoreline as necessary to facilitate construction of the permanent and temporary BLFs and removal of the temporary BLF. The PRoW and Coast Path would be kept open during the construction of the BLFs and the temporary and permanent sea defences except in rare circumstances where it is considered unsafe to do so. In such instances, use of the temporary inland diversion of the Coast Path would be necessary, as shown on **Figures 15I.4 and 15I.5**. The southern portion of the diverted Coast Path would extend along Sandy Lane. At the junction of Sandy Lane with Lover's Lane a crossing is proposed over the road to allow for the connection of the diverted paths via a new north-south (off-road) route. The route would be designated as a combined bridleway, cycleway and footpath. The route would extend parallel to Lover's Lane, and towards the B1122 to connect to the north. The proposed route includes provision for controlled and uncontrolled road crossings suitable for equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians. A level crossing would be provided in connection with the construction phase rail route. The level crossing would be removed following the construction of Sizewell C and the removal of the temporary rail line.

- 1.2.13 The phasing and programme for the construction of the new sea defences and BLFs has been carefully explored to minimise periods of closure and disruption to public access along the coastline. A banksman would be present when construction works and BLF use have the potential to disrupt public access, to enable access along the coast for the maximum time possible.
- 1.2.14 Necessary temporary diversions, closures and works to the PRoW and Coast Path would be justified, agreed in advance and managed with the relevant authority and publicised to members of the public.
- 1.2.15 The new off-road combined bridleway, cycleway and footpath (hereafter referred to as a bridleway) would extend from Sizewell Gap and King George's Avenue in the south to the accommodation campus in the north, up to the existing northern end of public right of way E-363/019/0 (bridleway 19). This would incorporate the potential diversions of the Suffolk Coast Path, Sandlings Walk and the England Coast Path described above, and include the temporary diversion of bridleway 19 and Sustrans regional cycle route 42.
- 1.2.16 In the south, the new bridleway would run within the edge of existing grass fields parallel to Lover's Lane, east of the existing roadside hedge and woodland to retain this vegetation and separate the route from the road. It would then cross Lover's Lane and continue west and north where it would run broadly parallel to roads, but mostly separated from them by existing hedgerows and proposed vegetation, with crossings provided as shown on **Figure 15I.2**.
- 1.2.17 Bridleway E-363/013/0, which runs along a section of Lover's Lane that would be re-aligned, would be permanently closed. The new off-road bridleway described above would be available as an alternative and cyclists and other users would still be able to use Lover's Lane.
- 1.2.18 The new off-road bridleway would be constructed prior to potential temporary closures of the Coast Path, temporary diversion of bridleway 19 and closure of bridleway E-363/013/0.
- 1.2.19 A further section of off-road bridleway would be constructed from Valley Road and the Land East of Eastlands Industrial Estate (LEEIE), connecting to the new off-road bridleway described above, allowing construction phase workers residing in the caravan site on the LEEIE to access the main site entrance by walking or cycling on the new off-road bridleway. This would also enable the public to access the new off-road route from Leiston via new Open

Access land within Aldhurst Farm or from Valley Road without having to go onto the B1122.

- 1.2.20 A crossing point on Lover's Lane and a permissive footpath connection would be provided from the new off-road bridleway within the northern field of Aldhurst Farm, to the retained section of bridleway 19 adjacent to Kenton Hills car park providing access to the permissive footpath network within Kenton Hills and the wider access network. The new route and crossing point would be made available after approximately two years from the commencement of the construction phase. The link would be designated as a permanent bridleway once the construction phase is complete. This is **Change 15** of the additional submission made in January 2021 (**Volume 1, Chapter 2** (Main Development Site) of the **ES Addendum** [\[AS-181\]](#)).
- 1.2.21 The proposed accommodation campus is to be built on the eastern side of Eastbridge Road, with the sports facilities located remotely from the accommodation campus, at a site adjacent to the existing leisure centre and Alde Valley School. Eastbridge Road would remain open during the construction phase, but with the addition of the off-road bridleway running parallel to it, west of the accommodation campus. The Sustrans cycle route would be permanently diverted from the carriageway onto the off-road route. This off-road route would allow for the temporary closure (for the minimum duration possible) and diversion of part of bridleway 19 during the construction phase.
- 1.2.22 Bridleway 19 currently extends through the main development site and would cross the site entrance road. Part of this bridleway would be temporarily closed during the construction phase. During this time the northern part of the route would be diverted along the proposed bridleway running parallel to, and separate from, Lover's Lane, the B1122 and Eastbridge Road.
- 1.2.23 The southern part of bridleway 19 would remain open to the public during the construction phase, enabling pedestrian and vehicular access to the existing Kenton Hills car park and the extensive permissive footpath network beyond, within and south of Kenton Hills. The southern section on Lover's Lane and Sandy Lane would also remain open enabling pedestrian, equestrian and cyclist access to Sizewell Gap and Sizewell village, and to the wider access network.
- 1.2.24 The existing car park serving Kenton Hills would be improved to provide up to 15 additional parking spaces and selective vegetation would be removed to make it less enclosed. The car park surfacing and the access road to it would be improved, and signage would be enhanced by replacing existing wayfinding and information boards adjacent to the car park and providing a

sign on Lover's Lane promoting the parking and walking facilities. Current access to the existing network of permissive footpaths in Kenton Hills from the car park and bridleway 19 is by an informal path and it is proposed that this route is formalised as a permissive footpath.

- 1.2.25 A short, normally gated, permissive footpath that connects bridleway 19 to Kenton Hills would be closed during the construction phase but re-opened following the completion of the construction phase of Sizewell C. Access from bridleway 19 into Kenton Hills would be available throughout the construction phase via the retained permissive footpath at Kenton Hills car park.
- 1.2.26 In addition, public access will be provided to specific areas of land within the Aldhurst Farm habitat creation area for informal recreation, from 2021. This will include a new five space car park, a surfaced footpath (which will be a new definitive PRow), and approximately 27 hectares of new open access land (which will be designated Open Access Land), including areas where dogs will be allowed to be exercised off-lead. This car park would be increased to 20 spaces early in the construction phase to allow for additional users of the recreational access network, and funding provision for this is to be included in the Section 106 Agreement. should this be necessary. The new habitat at Aldhurst Farm was created in accordance with planning permission granted by SCDC (now ESC) (planning application reference DC/14/4224/FUL). A condition of that planning permission required a plan setting out future public access arrangements across the site to be submitted for approval by SCDC; the application to discharge the condition was approved by ESC on 25 November 2019.
- 1.2.27 Sandlings Walk is a long distance pedestrian route that extends through the main development site, along definitive rights of way and permissive footpaths. The route extends along the coast and through Kenton Hills to connect to bridleway 19. A portion of Sandlings Walk that extends along a permissive footpath from the coast to Kenton Hills would be closed during the construction phase along with an additional permissive footpath loop at Goose Hill. Sandlings Walk would be diverted along the existing right of way E-363/020/0 further north, that extends from Minsmere sluice to Eastbridge, to reconnect inland with the existing route of Sandlings Walk running north-south (see **Figure 15I.5**).
- 1.2.28 The proposed construction phase includes the provision of a rail line into the main development site. This would temporarily sever three public footpaths to the west of the B1122. One footpath to the far west near Buckleswood Road would be reconnected by a new temporary level crossing. The two

PRoW more immediately west of the B1122 would be diverted parallel to the rail corridor and reconnect to PRoW at Abbey Lane, after crossing a proposed controlled level crossing on the B1122. These diversions would be off-road.

- 1.2.29 SZC Co. would prepare proposals to improve existing PRoW and other routes that are to receive diverted pedestrians, such as improvements to surfaces, gates, and signage, along with the removal of any stiles. The approach to rights of way improvement would be agreed with Suffolk County Council in the Footpath Implementation Plan.

c) Operational phase

- 1.2.30 The operational phase would allow all existing permissive footpaths and definitive PRoW to substantially revert to their original alignment and to at least their original condition. Improvements to PRoW and permissive footpaths, such as signage and surface improvements, would be provided in accordance with the improvement strategy in the Footpath Implementation Plan agreed with the relevant authorities.
- 1.2.31 New routes are also proposed as described below. It is proposed that the new north-south combined bridleway, cycleway and footpath from Sizewell Gap and St George's Avenue to the northern end of bridleway 19 on Eastbridge Road, the bridleway connection to the off-road bridleway from Valley Road, the bridleway connection between the off-road bridleway in Aldhurst Farm and bridleway 19 adjacent to Kenton Hills, and the southern section of the footpath created around the green rail route immediately west of Abbey Lane, are established as definitive PRoW and that all other new footpaths and bridleways are permissive status. All existing permissive footpaths would remain as permissive footpaths. Any new or re-instated definitive PRoW would be created to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority. Subject to safety and operational requirements, SZC Co. would seek to ensure all such permissive routes within the EDF Energy Estate have as much practical permanence as possible.
- 1.2.32 The Sandlings Walk would be reinstated on the majority of its original alignment, with sections in Goose Hill closed permanently. A portion of the Sandlings Walk located on a permissive route through the EDF Energy Estate at Goose Hill (in the vicinity of the proposed access road to Sizewell C and crossing over the Sizewell Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest), would be realigned to provide connectivity to the coast.
- 1.2.33 PRoW E-363/021/0 and the Coast Path would be retained on the realigned route fronting Sizewell C established during the construction phase, on the

new sea defences. The route would extend through a newly formed coastal grassland area. Coastal grassland habitat would be created in this area, with the majority created once the new sea defences are constructed during the first few years of the construction programme, with final restoration of all areas completed once temporary elements are removed at the end of the construction phase. PRoW E-363/021/0 and the Coast Path would have a suitable firm surface and the specification will be agreed with the Highways Authority in relation to the definitive right of way, in addition to Natural England in relation to the England Coast Path, and would be above the Highest Astronomical Tide level. Public access would be restored to the full beach and foreshore.

- 1.2.34 The new sea defences would establish a naturalistic coastal grassland/dune setting, similar to that already experienced and include access rights to the sea defences up to a physical boundary, as part of the ‘coastal margin’ under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The extent of the ‘coastal margin’ inland of the England Coast Path will be defined by Natural England.
- 1.2.35 The crest heights of the sea defence on the coast and at the SSSI crossing may be raised during the lifetime of Sizewell C, as described in paragraphs 2.2.204 and 2.2.205 of **Volume 1, Chapter 2** (Main Development Site) of the **ES Addendum [AS-181]**. While the sea defence on the coast is being raised and new vegetation established public access to part of the ‘coastal margin’ would be temporarily closed. The PRoW and Coast Path would be realigned on the adapted sea defence, and the route identified when the adapted sea defence is designed in detail during the operational phase. The Coast Path, Sandlings Walk and the permissive footpath east of the SSSI crossing may need to be temporarily diverted short distances, or closed for short periods, during construction of the raised defences. A banksman would be present when construction has potential to disrupt public access, to minimise temporary closure and diversions.
- 1.2.36 The north-south combined bridleway, cycleway and footpath from Sizewell Gap and St George’s Avenue to the northern end of bridleway 19 on Eastbridge Road (approximately 4.5km long) created during the construction phase, would be retained for the operational phase. A short length of this bridleway in the north-east corner of the Aldhurst Farm habitat creation area would be re-aligned along the edge of the Aldhurst Farm site on removal of the water management zone. The remainder of the water management zone would be re-instated to its former condition as part of the larger area of lowland heath mosaic within the Aldhurst Farm habitat creation area. The footpath connection across Lover’s Lane between the off-road bridleway in Aldhurst Farm and bridleway 19 adjacent to Kenton Hills would be dedicated

as a permanent bridleway. The bridleway connection to the off-road bridleway from Valley Road created during the construction phase would be retained for the operational phase. These routes would be off-road with road crossings as required, and provide an overall improvement to the PRow network.

- 1.2.37** The southern section of the public right of way diversion around the green rail route immediately west of Abbey Road which would have been implemented during construction would be retained as a permanent definitive footpath.
- 1.2.38** The new linear and area public access created at Aldhurst Farm forming part of the planning permission for the construction of the new wetlands (reference DC/14/4224/FUL) would be permanent, including the expanded car park, definitive footpath and Open Access land.
- 1.2.39** The formalised permissive footpath from Kenton Hills car park, connecting to the extensive permissive network in the woodland and Sandlings Walk, would be retained for the operational phase as would other improvements to Kenton Hills involving additional car parking spaces, surface improvements, selective vegetation removal and improved signage. The permissive footpath connection to bridleway 19 would be reopened.
- 1.2.40** In summary, enhancements to the PRow and wider access network would include:
- enhanced north-south recreational routes through the creation of a 4.5km off-road multi-user bridleway for equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians. This includes off-road routes where existing rights of way and the Sustrans cycle route currently run along roads, and the creation of new routes where none exist at present;
 - a new off-road bridleway from Valley Road, connecting to the new off-road bridleway described above;
 - a new bridleway connection across Lover's Lane between the off-road bridleway within Aldhurst Farm and bridleway 19 adjacent to Kenton Hills;
 - the new linear and area public access created at Aldhurst Farm forming part of the planning permission for the construction of the new wetlands (reference DC/14/4224/FUL) would be permanent, including the expanded car park, a definitive footpath and Open Access land;

- a new formalised permissive footpath from Kenton Hills car park, connecting to the extensive permissive footpath network in the woodland and to the Sandlings Walk and the Coast Path;
- the provision of additional spaces at Kenton Hills car park, surface improvements, selective vegetation removal to create a more open environment and improvements to signage;
- a permanent new footpath north of Leiston connecting two existing PRow and Abbey Lane; and
- the creation of a naturalistic coastal grassland/dune setting to the Coast Path on and east of the new sea defences as part of the accessible 'coastal margin' which will be designated under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.