

“Wainwright way” becomes England’s newest National Trail

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National Trail opening is culmination years of work by Natural England and partners alongside £5.5 million government investment for upgrade

- Long term future of iconic 190 mile Coast to Coast route first imagined by Alfred Wainwright now secure
- Path is now of National Trail standard with improved signage, better surfacing and improved accessibility in many sections

The 190-mile Coast to Coast Path has officially launched as England’s newest National Trail today (Thursday 26th March).

The Path starts at the beautiful St Bees Head on the Irish Sea, traverses three National Parks, before ending in the picture-postcard Robin Hood’s Bay – the route’s dramatic North Sea finish line.

A £5.5 million investment has seen Natural England and partners bring the route up to National Trail standard, with improved signage, better surfacing and opportunities for cyclists and horseriders across suitable sections. The route will also receive annual maintenance funding to keep it in excellent condition for generations to come, and to make sure that sections where there have been accessibility improvements, with resurfaced paths or new bridges, stay accessible.

The move comes than half a century after famous fell walker, Alfred Wainwright, first imagined the route in 1973. Wainwright is best known for his pictorial guides to walks around the Lake District. The Coast to Coast route described in his work became one of his most famous, and he described it effusively in his guide, saying that “the countryside is beautiful almost everywhere, yet extremely varied in character, with mountains and hills, valleys and rivers, heather moors and sea-cliffs combining in a pageant of colourful scenery.”

Upgrading the route to a National Trail has involved working with the challenges of climate change. This has been at its most extreme in the North York Moors, which last year experienced significant wildfires. Extensive recovery work of the Trail undertaken by a wide range of partners has ensured that the Coast to Coast Path was completed on time.

Marian Spain, Chief Executive of Natural England, said:

The Coast to Coast Path National Trail showcases some of Northern England’s most treasured landscapes and today marks the completion of four years of work to give this iconic route the status it deserves.

The Coast to Coast has inspired walkers since Wainwright first walked it over fifty years ago. As a National Trail with improved accessibility, paths and signage it will offer a new generation of walkers, wheelers and riders the chance to enjoy the route and bring new tourists to businesses along the way.

Access Minister Baroness Hayman said:

The Coast to Coast Path gives the public the opportunity to explore some of our country's most beautiful scenery. National Trail status will help give even more people the chance to experience the remarkable places along its route, with improved accessibility and restored paths.

I am incredibly proud to live in Cumbria, and I hope that the Coast to Coast Path helps to put our part of the world in the spotlight as people come to take on our newest National Trail.

This the latest step in our campaign to improve access to nature, including through the King Charles III England Coast Path and the Mersey Valley Way, the first of nine National River Walks.

The route takes walkers through some of England's most dramatic landscapes from the fells and lakes that define the Lake District, dramatic limestone scenery and tumbling waterfalls of the Yorkshire Dales, and the sweeping moorland and wooded river valleys of the North York Moors.

The Coast to Coast Path also passes through historical villages such as Bolton-on-Swale, Danby Wiske, and St Bees, helping to provide a boost to the visitor economy as visitors enjoy great local food and hospitality businesses along the route.

More than 6,000 people complete the full Coast to Coast every year, with thousands more enjoying shorter sections. Local communities feel the benefit of the trail's popularity, with a 2025 survey finding 99% of walkers used local food services during their journey, with 77% staying in local accommodation.*

Natural England has worked closely with partners in the Lake District to improve the accessibility of the path, including through the creation of an accessible lakeside route with new surfacing and bridges around Ennerdale Water, and initiatives such as Fix the Fells, which seeks to repair upland routes damaged by erosion. 5km of new flagstone path has also been laid to help walkers tackle Nine Standards Rigg and White Mossy Hill - one of the most remote and challenging stretches.

Walkers can also choose to extend their walk as the Coast to Coast intersects with the Cleveland Way and King Charles III England Coast Path at Robin Hood's Bay.

The official launch is being celebrated at an event at Reeth in North Yorkshire today, where a new stone marker will be unveiled. The marker will be permanently installed at Keld to mark the point that walkers are halfway between the North Sea and Irish Sea.

Notes to editors:

- *Statistics from the 2025 Coast to Coast Path National Trails Visitor Survey conducted by Natural England.
- Natural England worked closely with the North York Moors National Park Authority and North Yorkshire Council and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, to deliver infrastructure improvements along the route.

- The Coast to Coast Path is one of England's 17 National Trails. National Trails are long-distance routes for walking, cycling or horse riding through some of England's finest landscapes.
- Images and drone footage of the Coast to Coast Path, attributable to Natural England, can be found here: C2CP images + drone footage - Google Drive
- For more information about the Coast to Coast Path, please visit the National Trails website: Coast to Coast Path National Trail - National Trails

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/wainwright-way-becomes-englands-newest-national-trail>