

Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

NOTICE OF RELEVANT AUTHORITY DECISION FOLLOWING REVIEW OF DIRECTIONS RESTRICTING CROW ACCESS RIGHTS

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Access Authority: Norfolk County Council
Relevant Authority: Natural England
Local Access Forum: Norfolk LAF

Land Parcel Name	Direction Reference	Details of restriction on original direction
Laburnham Caravan Park	2014117440	Directions given under Section 24 of the CROW Act for the purpose of land management, restricting dogs to leads on the Norfolk Coast Path all year round from 11 December 2014 until 11 December 2020, to replicate existing caravan park policy to keep dogs on leads whilst on site.
Beeston Regis Caravan & Camping Site		
Sandy Gulls Caravan Park	2014117438	
Trimingham House Caravan Park		

Natural England has now decided how to proceed following its review of the above mentioned long-term directions to restrict open access rights on this land. A consultation was held between 11 August and 11 September 2019 with statutory consultees and the general public.

Natural England's decision is to leave the original directions unchanged in the way it was originally proposed and extend the end date for a further six years, restricting dogs to leads until **11 December 2026**.

Background information

Each caravan park on the Norfolk coast listed above has an established policy of restricting accompanied dogs to leads whilst on site. To replicate this management with the introduction of new coastal access rights on 11 December 2014, directions were given to restrict dogs to leads on the Norfolk Coast Path all year round on each of the sites.

Prior to the consultation, we were advised by the Trail Officer that the circumstances remain the same since the directions were originally given, and that the restriction is still appropriate. We have also had direct confirmation from Sandy Gulls Caravan Park and Laburnham Caravan Park of the unchanged circumstances on site, and confirmation that they wish the restriction to continue.

During consultation we received some queries from the Kennel Club about the period of the restriction, the extent of restricted areas, and signage.

The period of the restriction: All of the sites on this stretch are closed for some of the year, with a varied period of closure between sites ranging from 6 weeks to about 4

months (the closure period can vary each year). When deciding the period of the restriction, all of the managers on the sites were concerned about the introduction of new coastal access rights, and asked for the restriction to be made year round to provide greater clarity for all access users. In seeking to find a balance between the interests of the public in having a right of access and the interests of the businesses on these sites, we decided it was reasonable to apply a year round exclusion on all five sites, providing consistency and clarity for access users.

The extent of the restriction: Overall, we have applied the restriction to the areas that were previously managed with dogs on leads restrictions, regardless of whether the land has visitors staying on all of it. This replicates existing management, and provides a reasonable balance between public and business interests.

Following on from our discussion with the Kennel Club we received these comments:

“As the Kennel Club is very supportive of Natural England’s least restrictive approach, and is thus also keen not to set precedent contrary to that (e.g. in terms of having closures left in place when not needed for convenience of messaging), in this particular case we are happy on balance to support continuing the restriction on the basis that:

1. all the caravan sites are dog-friendly and thus provide a useful facility for dog owners more widely;
2. the special treatment caravan sites attract given their excepted land status;
3. the unique history of access to these sites and the goodwill extended by the owners in the past in terms of allowing permissive access;
4. signage will be improved, as discussed, to make it clear to walkers when they are leaving the on-lead restricted areas. For example, some clear wording on the rear of the ‘put dogs on leads’ signs to the effect of: “you are now leaving the on-lead area – please still always have your dog under control. Thank you for your help.” We are happy to look at, and endorse, any draft signage if it helps.”

The trail officer has agreed to install some signage at appropriate locations when leaving restricted areas, incorporating the wording suggested by the Kennel Club.

Details of the restrictions can be found on the relevant map of access land on the Open Access website - www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk.

Where a direction restricts access indefinitely, for more than five years, for part of every year, or for part of at least six consecutive years, we have a statutory duty to review it within five years of the date of its issue.

Date review completed: 3 December 2019