

Upgrade of Wainwright's Coast to Coast Path to a National Trail

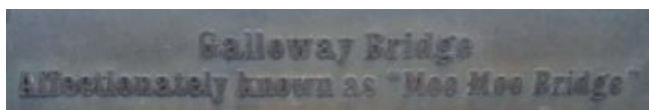
Work on enabling the upgrade of Wainwright's Coast to Coast Path to a National Trail continues. The formal upgrade project ends in March 2026 when the present Defra funding comes to an end, and so the countdown to project conclusion has commenced.

The objectives sought by the upgrade to a National Trail are:

- **Define the route**
 - In addition to using footpaths and bridleways, Wainwright's route sometimes opted for sections across open access land or land without formal Rights of Way and there has been work underway to address 'gaps'
 - In some locations there've been additional opportunities to slightly tweak things (such as utilising the Jubilee and Broadmoor paths for the Coast to Coast Path, neither of which were in existence when Wainwright described it 50 years ago)
- **Targeted practical work**
 - Improvement to some sections of the trail, with some areas becoming accessible for people using mobility aids, and to include provision for broad audiences including All-Terrain-Wheelchairs, and those on horseback or bicycle
 - High quality signage & waymarking to include National Trail acorn and AW monogram (in Alfred Wainwright's distinctive handwriting)
- **Deliver/realise wider benefits**
 - Offer circular loop walks for audiences who might not undertake the whole length of the journey between St Bees and Robin Hood's Bay

Following its establishment as a National Trail, the circa 200 mile Coast to Coast Path route will be maintained on an ongoing basis through a National Trail maintenance budget (not funded at the same level as the present 'establishment phase').

The task of seeking establishment of a Right of Way over Dent Fell remains complex and is currently unresolved. In addition to the route advocated by Wainwright over Dent Fell a new proposed braid will take people out of Cleator via Wath Bridge, up Nannycatch Road and into the Lake District National Park before (re) joining the established route at Nannycatch Beck. Additionally, the braid will offer the benefit of maintaining access during any forestry operations. In recognition of the braided route Natural England requested works were undertaken to improve drainage on the existing bridleway south of Flat Fell, and this was completed ahead of the Northern Traverse race which starts in St Bees and ends at Robin Hood's Bay. In wet weather the bridleway here should drain more readily, and hopefully encourage people to stick to the path (minimising the erosive impact of footfall on the surrounding landscape).



In Ennerdale valley itself, Forestry England bridge engineers have kindly led on enabling the replacement of the existing Moo Moo (Galloway) Bridge over

Woundell Beck. The current bridleway bridge is made entirely from wood and has been identified to be suffering from deterioration. Given its significance as a key element of the forest loop route, Natural England generously agreed to fund the replacement of this particular bridge so that the availability of the forest loop can be protected for Miles Without Stiles users, pedestrians, horseriders and cyclists.

Forestry England ran a tender process to identify the most competitive contractor and Metcalfe's are due to start work in June 2025 to replace the existing bridge with a version that will incorporate steel beams for longevity. Please refer to local signage for guidance on any periods of necessitated closure (a diversion will be in place for pedestrians). Apologies for any inconvenience, and thank you for your patience whilst this work is completed.

Other activities associated with the upgrade in the vicinity of Ennerdale Bridge will become available in due course. Further details will be given within the newsletter, via the Parish Council, and some drop-in sessions at The Gather. Presently replacing Memorial Bridge (blown from its footings by Storm Éowyn) remains out-of-scope for the project.

Eagle-eyed regular visitors to Bowness Knott will have observed a compound area has been re-established to allow some resurfacing of the exit from Bowness Knott Car Park onto the Forest Road.

The present uneven surface at this location was highlighted as an access issue within a Natural England commissioned audit visit in Feb 2024. David Burdus, a Leonard Cheshire access consultant, was obstructed from using the main pedestrian exit in his power chair due to lack of ground clearance (his chair has a locking pin underneath to allow independent driving). The exit won't be radically re-modelled, but will offer an improved surface with fewer protruding stones.



Image above is the pedestrian exit from Bowness Knott Car Park onto the Forest Track



The image on far left depicts a typical pin arrangement for adapted wheelchairs that allows the user to lock into their vehicle for driving

Fix the Fells teams continue to undertake work on the upland sections in support of the Coast to Coast Path upgrade project, including repairing and improving the section alongside Loft Beck (beyond Black Sail hut). We're already well into the 2025 Coast to Coast season, and many visitors are engaging with local residents, Wild Ennerdale Volunteers, Fix the Fells folk, project teams and contractors as they journey through the valley, across the wider Lake District & beyond...

The upgrade to a National Trail project is being led by Natural England, funded by Defra, supported by each of the authorities along the route: Cumberland Council, Lake District National Park Authority, Westmorland and Furness Council, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, North Yorkshire County Council, and North York Moors National Park Authority.

For further information on the Coast to Coast upgrade project for the Lake District, please visit the Lake District National Park Authority's website:

<https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/projects/upgrade-of-wainwrights-coast-to-coast-to-national-trail>

And interactive map of the route is available on the Natural England National Trail website https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/coast-to-coast/trail-information/



Lake District
National Park