

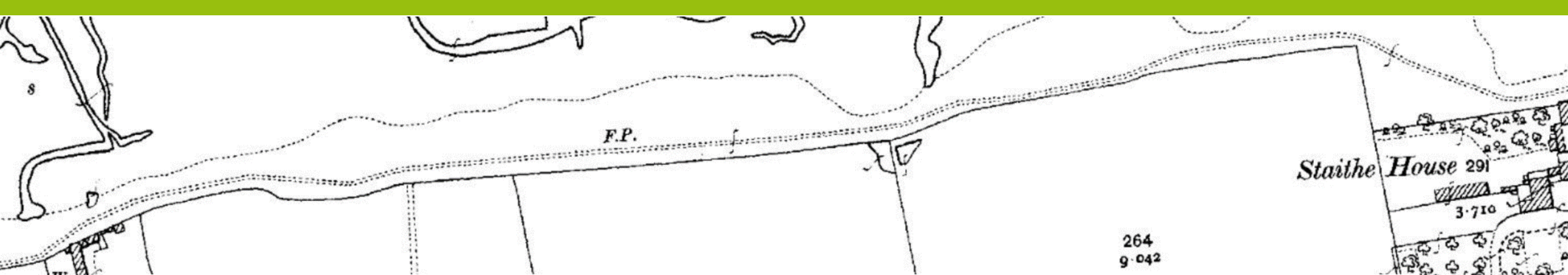
NATIONAL TRAIL



Norfolk Coast Path

Information Pack:
Brancaster Footpath 5 – Replacement Boardwalk





Brancaster Footpath 5 - Public Right of Way

The boardwalk, between Harbour Way and Butchers Drove, serves the public right of way named Brancaster Footpath 5. This in turn is part of the National Trail Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path and soon to be part of the new King Charles III England Coast Path.

The public have a right of access to the common, but the presence of Footpath 5 means the public have additional rights that are protected and invested in the Local Highway Authority. We, Norfolk County Council, have a statutory duty to ensure the public have the right to pass and repass along the extent of highway. This includes maintenance to ensure the surface does not act as an obstruction to the public exercising their right.

Because this route passes through a protected landscape, it is even more important that we make the route clear, accessible and as strong as possible within the setting. Due to the popularity of the area this boardwalk serves as a mitigation measure for the protected landscape. A well maintained surface keeps the public on a designated line and prevents 'braiding' and deterioration of the surround landscape and habitat.

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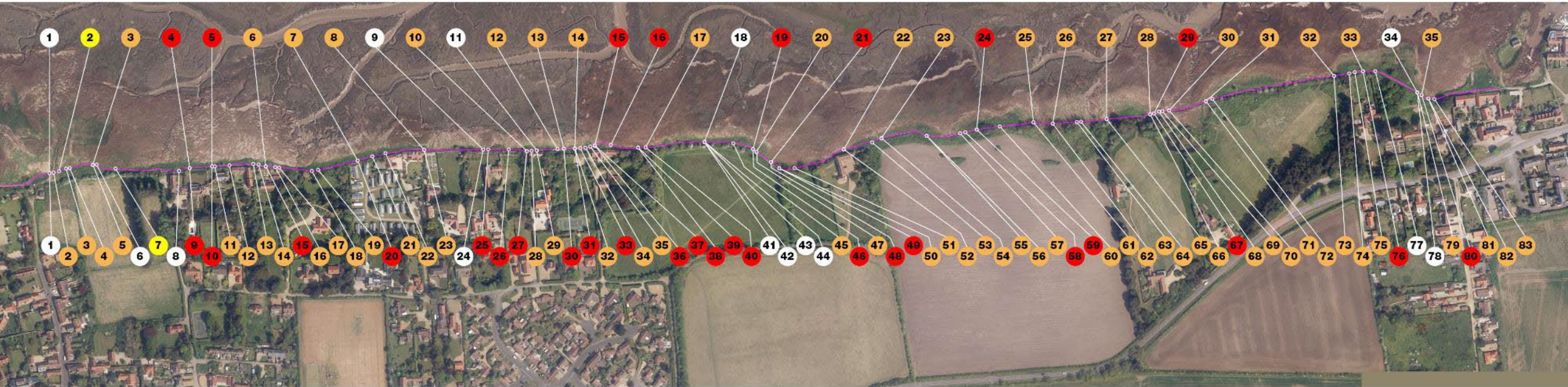
Section 1 - Reason for boardwalk closure

- The boardwalk along Brancaster Footpath 5 has been closed since June 2022.
- A National Trail routine inspection in March 2022 found 35 defects along the boardwalk. The boardwalk had to be closed for health and safety reasons while we applied for funding to carry out maintenance and repair work.
- A second inspection in September 2022 recorded 83 defects, indicating the boardwalk was rapidly deteriorating.
- The planks on the top of the boardwalk and the lower supporting structure were found to contain severe and widespread rot, meaning the structure could collapse at any time. This presented a huge risk to members of the public as it could lead to serious injury.
- The planned boardwalk repairs were no longer possible. Instead, a full boardwalk replacement was required. This significantly increased the scale of the project, meaning planning permission and additional funding would be needed.
- Due to serious health and safety concerns, Norfolk County Council were required to put a long-term closure on this section of the boardwalk.

Inspection Results

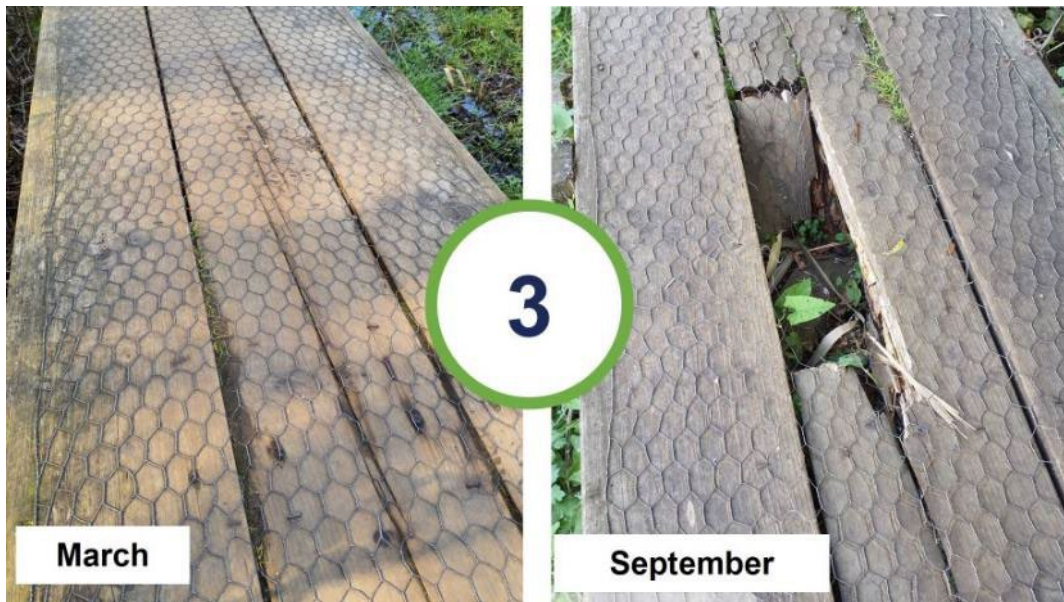
The image below shows where the defects were found during inspections in March 2022, and then in September 2022.

March 2022



September 2022

March to September: comparison of boardwalk defects



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Section 2 - Preliminary Scoping

- The boardwalk that serves Brancaster Footpath 5 is in one of Norfolk's most environmentally protected locations, as outlined on the next page. There are a number of statutory organisations that we are legally required to work with to get permission to replace the boardwalk.
- These organisations will advise us on what we are/are not permitted to do at this location.
- We discussed topics such as: appropriate construction materials and processes; appropriate width/colour of the boardwalk; impact on local wildlife; impact on historic features.

This location is a protected landscape because it is a...

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

RAMSAR (Wetlands of International Importance)

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)

Registered Common (CL124)

Public Right of Way (PROW)

Flood Plain

Key organisations we work with:

SHADCRA - Scolt Head and District Common Right Holders



**National
Trust**

Landowner Agreement



SSSI Assent to carry out work in a protected landscape

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



Planning Permission



Environment
Agency

Flood Risk Assessment Permit (FRAP)



Historic England

Consent to carry out work in a Scheduled Ancient Monument



Norfolk
County Council

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) & Highways

Why the area is protected – some example species



Great bittern



Pink-footed
goose



Dark-bellied
brent goose



Eurasian wigeon



Pied avocet



Montagu's harrier



Bearded tit



Bar tailed
godwit



Red knot



Marsh harrier



Garganey



Northern pintail



Otter



Little tern



Natterjack toad



Sandwich tern

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Section 3 - Design

Once we understood the limitations of the site, we were able to begin looking at different boardwalk options and planning the design. The design has to take into consideration:

- **Access for all:** it's important that the new boardwalk design considers The Equality Act 2010. Norfolk County Council is required to make reasonable adjustments to make sure that all people with or without disabilities can benefit from the proposed new boardwalk, wherever it is possible to do so.
- **Impact on wildlife:** we have a legal duty to determine whether or not the chosen design could negatively impact the landscapes and wildlife. Our preliminary discussions with key organisations have informed this.
- **Longevity and sustainability:** the lifespan of the boardwalk in a coastal landscape
- **Installation:** the machinery and techniques we are / are not allowed to use in a protected area
- **Aesthetics:** making sure the boardwalk is in keeping with the surrounding environment

Designs Considered: Options 1, 2 and 3



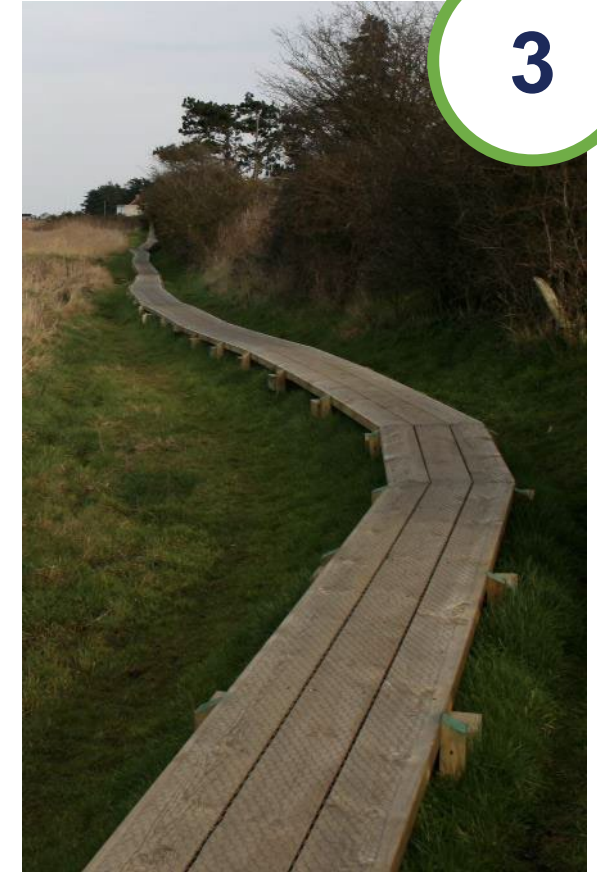
1

Remove boardwalk and leave natural



2

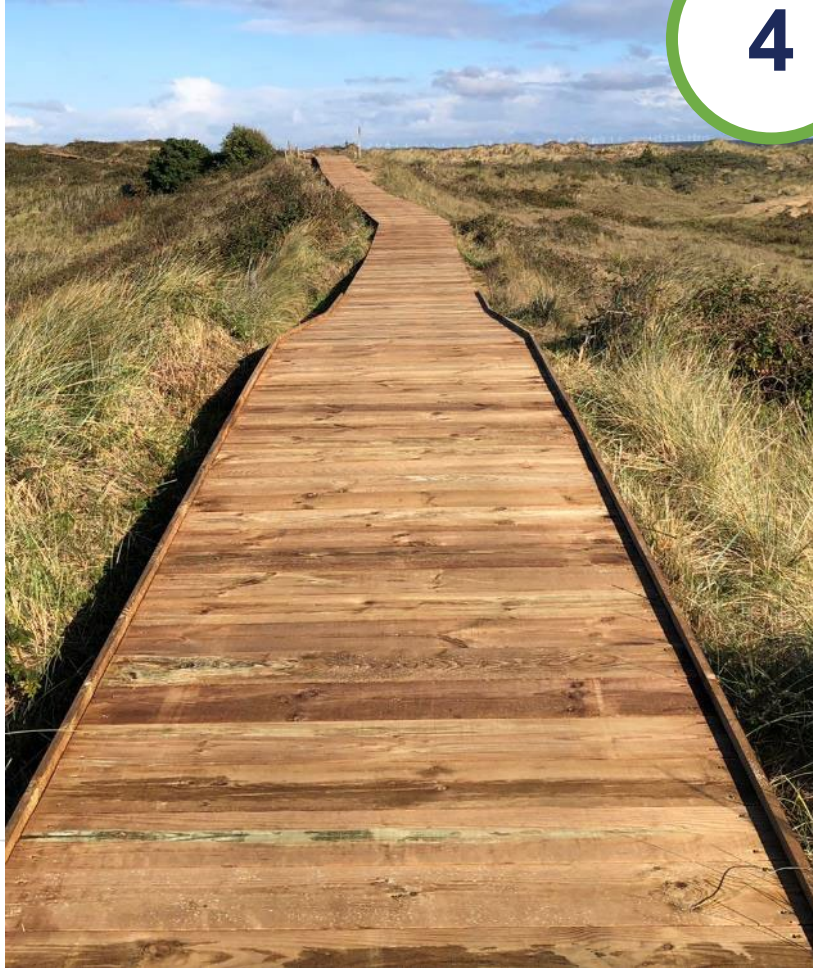
Aggregate path



3

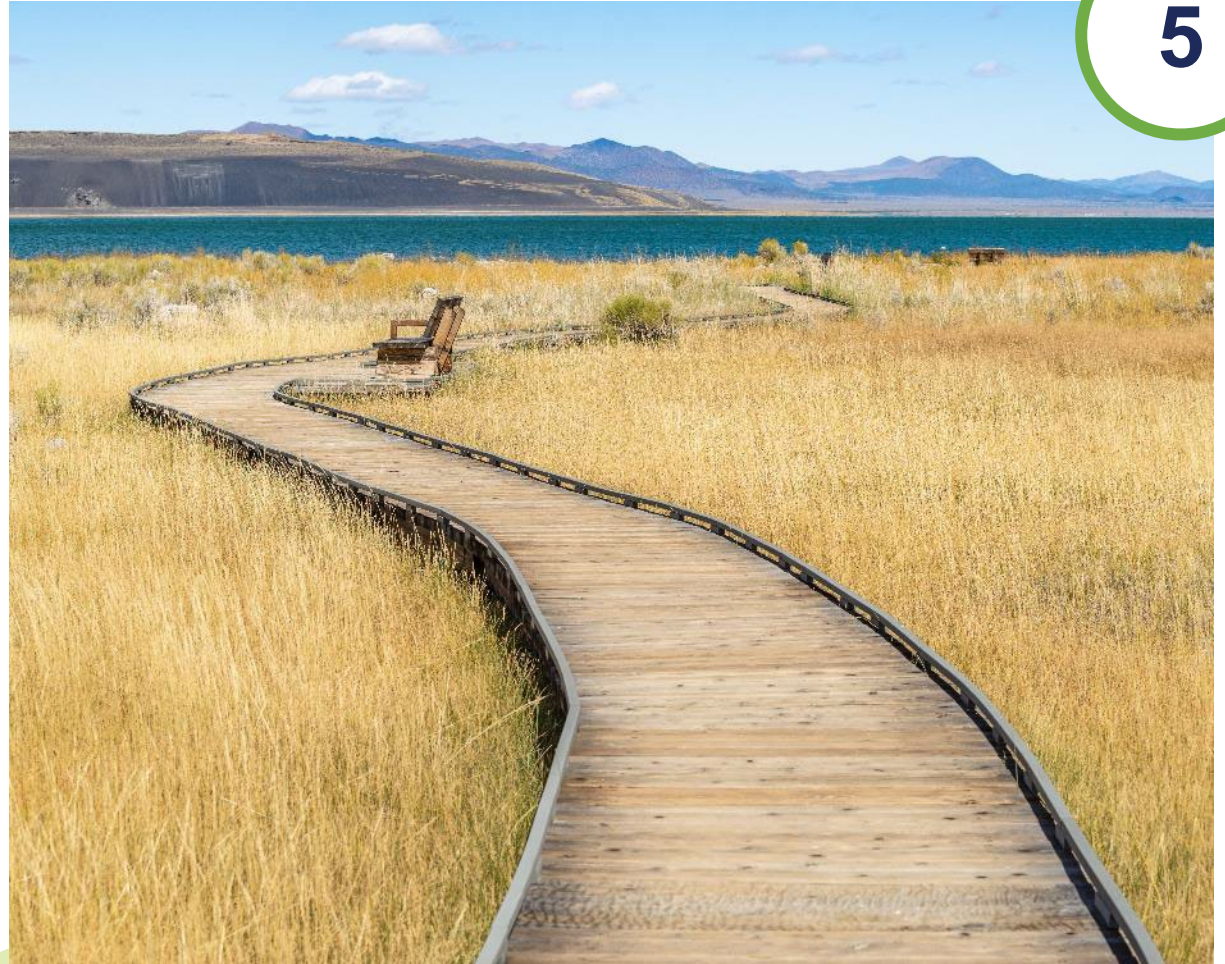
Replace like with like

Design Options Considered: 4 and 5



4

Traditional timber boardwalk



5

Bespoke design and materials

Analysis of Design Options

Analysing the design options helped us consider the positives and negatives of each idea, and understand how suitable each one would be for the area's unique landscape.

A **bespoke design and materials boardwalk** was chosen for several reasons:

- **Increased lifespan** – New, more sustainable materials are now available which can hugely increase the lifespan and durability of a boardwalk in a coastal environment.
- **Simple Installation** – The boardwalk can be installed without damaging or disturbing the surrounding landscape.
- **Accessibility** – A bespoke design offers features that will give better access for a wider range of audiences.
- **Aesthetics** – The use of innovative materials remains attractive and in keeping with the location.

Once the design option approach was agreed, we invited companies to submit applications to conduct the works. These were assessed against criteria including longevity, environmental impact, appearance and value for money.

The contract was awarded to **Plura Innovations** and their specialist product **POLYwalk™**, which is made from glass reinforced plastic (GRP).

Key Features



PLURA
INNOVATIONS
POLYDECK



**75+ Year
life expectancy**



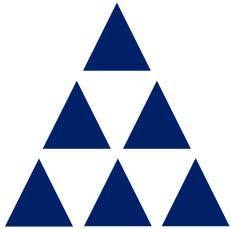
**Value for
money**



**Manufactured
in the UK**



**Recycled PET
bottle core**



Anti slip



**Aesthetic wood
effect finish**



Strength



Maintenance

About POLYwalk™

POLYwalk™ is ideal for natural environments including wetlands and forests. It provides a safe non-slip walkway that is superior to traditional wooden boardwalks. The lightweight substructure make it easy to install on site and installation is quick and simple. The finished boardwalk will provide many years of maintenance free use.

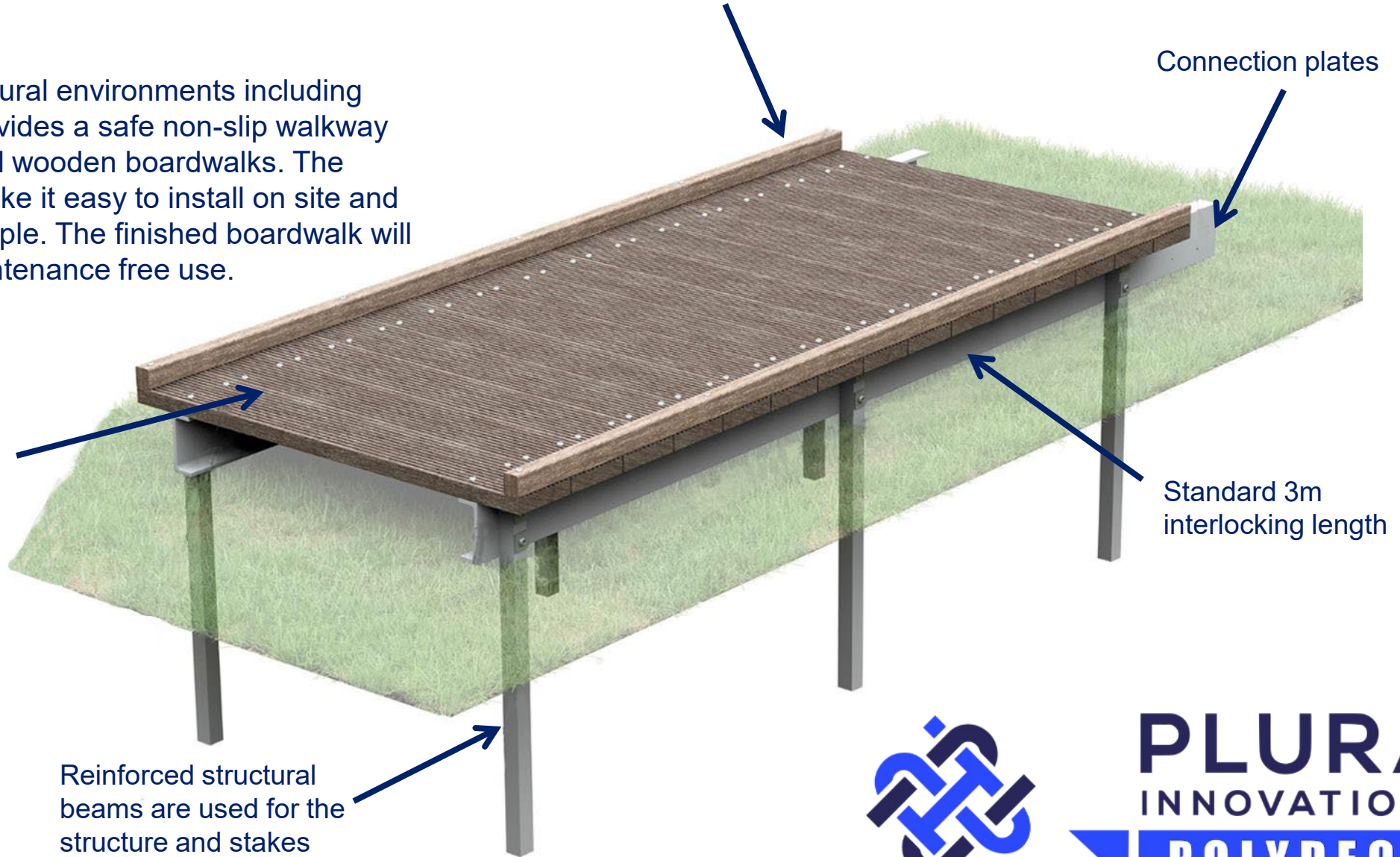
Deck planks are 20cm wide, with a hardwearing and non-slip surface. Planks come in wood-effect finishes and a range of colours.

Reinforced structural beams are used for the structure and stakes

Edging rails for wheelchair safety

Connection plates

Standard 3m interlocking length



PLURA
INNOVATIONS
POLYDECK

The design – emphasis on accessibility



1400mm boardwalk width to accommodate both wheelchairs and pushchairs.



Passing places at recommended width, length and distancing for wheelchairs to pass



High contrast bumper strip to improve accessibility for people living with dementia.



Viewing points and rest spots – providing better access to nature and relaxation for all abilities.



Strategically positioned hand rails for safety, where there are water courses or higher drops.



Non-slip surface – extra grip compared to traditional wooden boardwalks.



Addition of the National Trust's accessible wide-berth kissing gates.



Public footpath – not for cycling / equestrian or motorised vehicles.

Design Materials – An example plank in situ

Bumper strip, non-slip, extra grip.



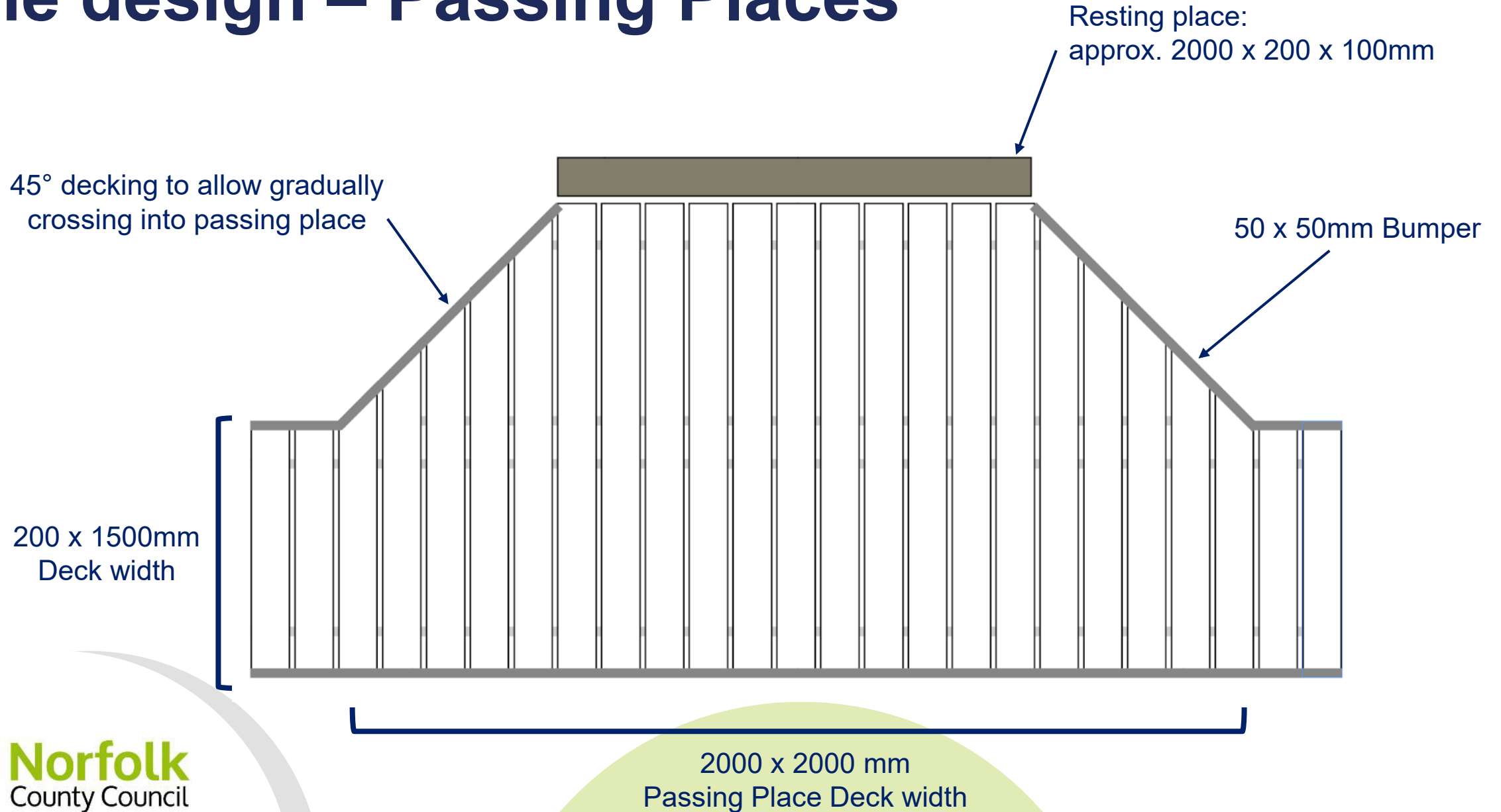
Appearance once 'walked on'.



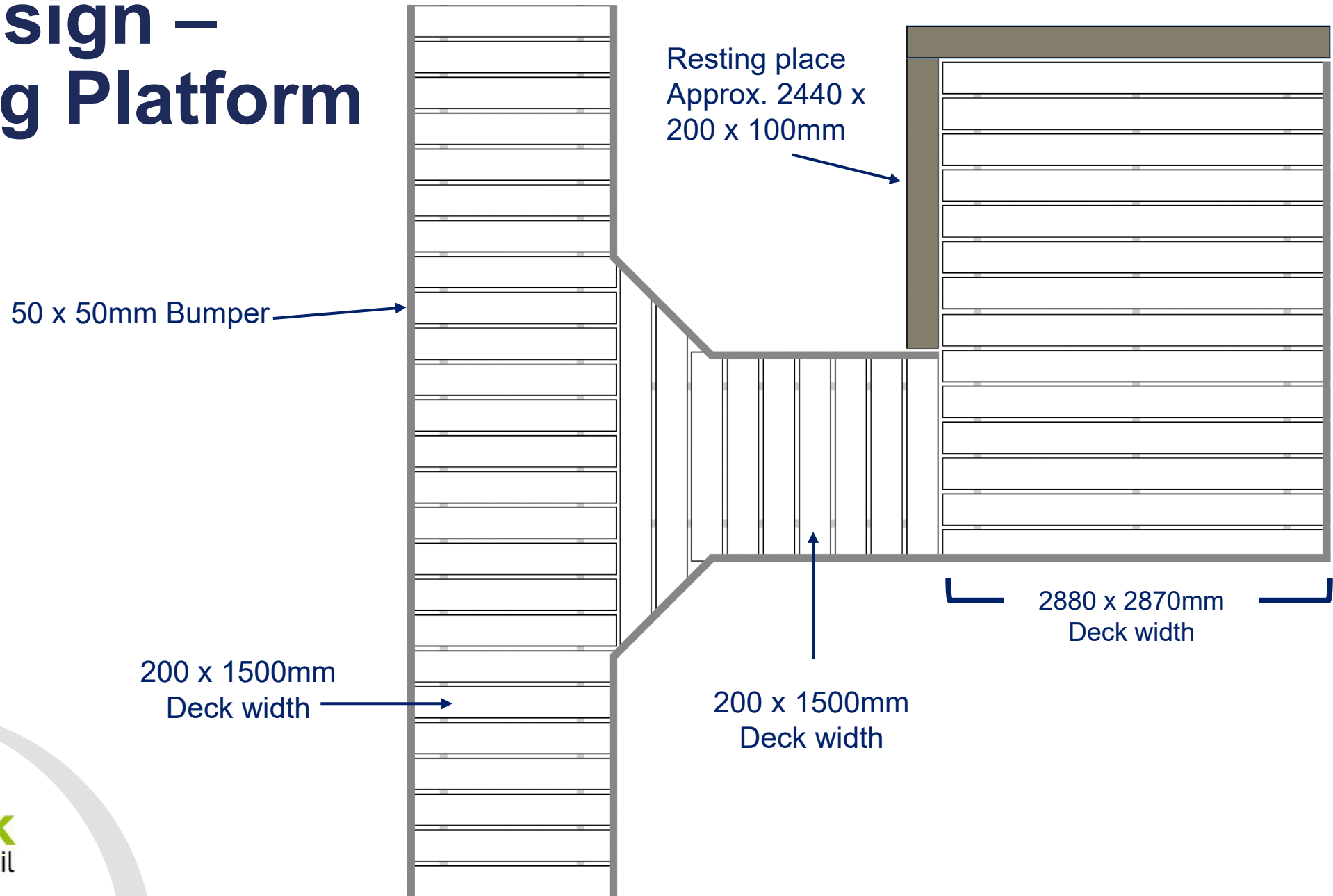
Contrasting wood-effect handrail.



The design – Passing Places



The design – Viewing Platform



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Section 4 - Planning and Formal Applications

A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is being produced for the Brancaster Footpath 5 Boardwalk location. The assessment is important because it checks whether the proposed site development could have a negative effect on the site's habitat and wildlife population, and if so how the risks can be lessened. The HRA document will support all formal applications and plans for the boardwalk development work in this area.

Other organisations will also carry out and support with important assessments and applications of the Brancaster site. These include, but not exclusive to:

- ✓ Natural England's '*Notice of proposal to carry out an operation affecting a site of special scientific interest (SSSI)*'.
- ✓ King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council '*Planning Application*' (SPA, SAC, Ramsar, Heritage, Highway etc).
- ✓ Environment Agency's '*Flood Risk Assessment Permit (FRAP)*'.
- ✓ Historic England's '*Application for Scheduled Monument Consent*'.
- ✓ National Trust's '*Landowner Agreement*' (Section 38)
- ✓ SHADCRA's '*Common Right Holders License*'

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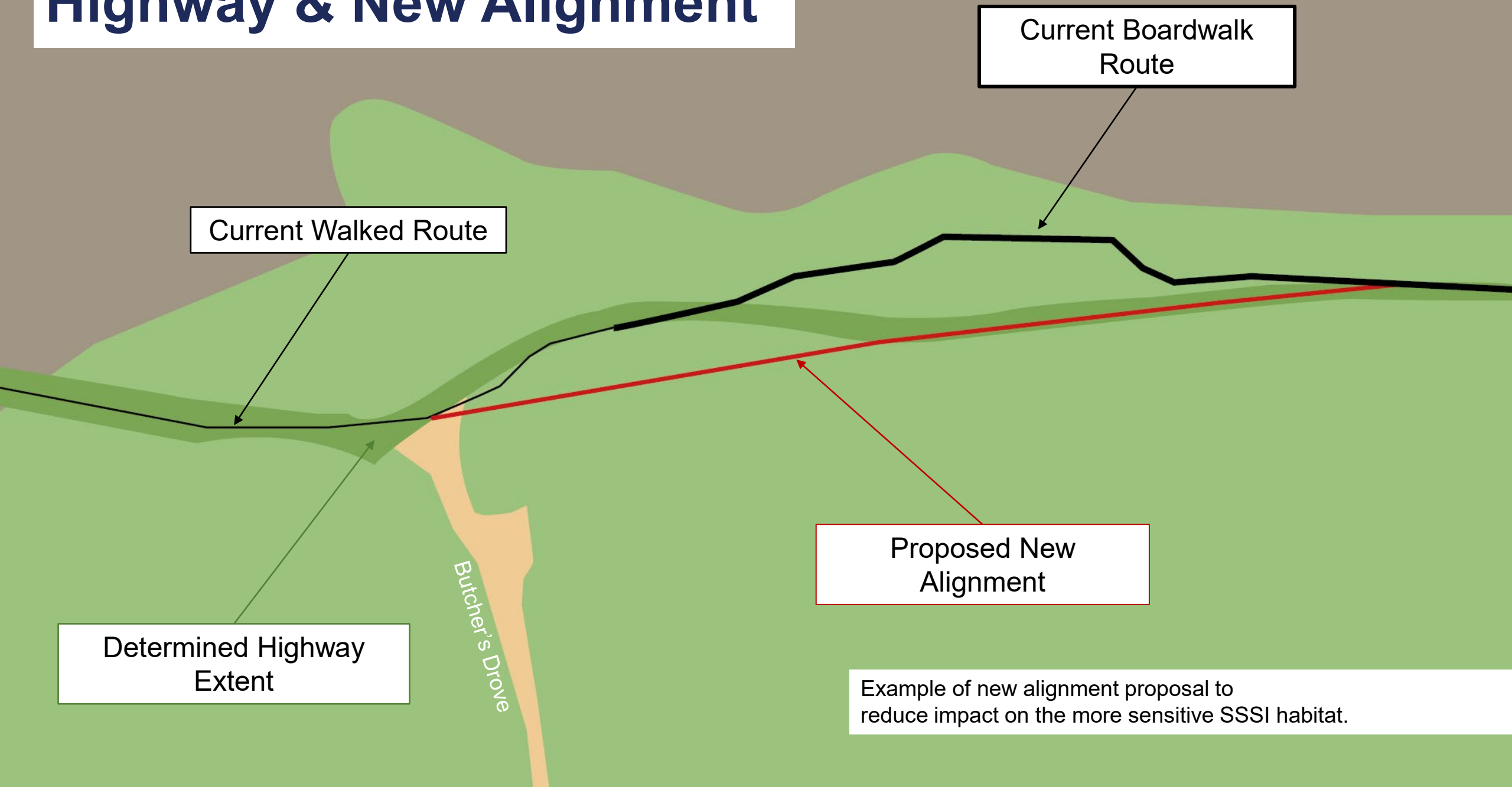
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Section 5 - Delivery

The stages of the delivery process are as follows:

1. Site is secured and storage areas prepared.
2. Removal of old existing boardwalk.
3. Route of new boardwalk marked out identifying passing places and viewing platforms.
4. The contractor construction with expected delivery September to December 2023.*
5. A Formal Highway order will take place to divert the route away from Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

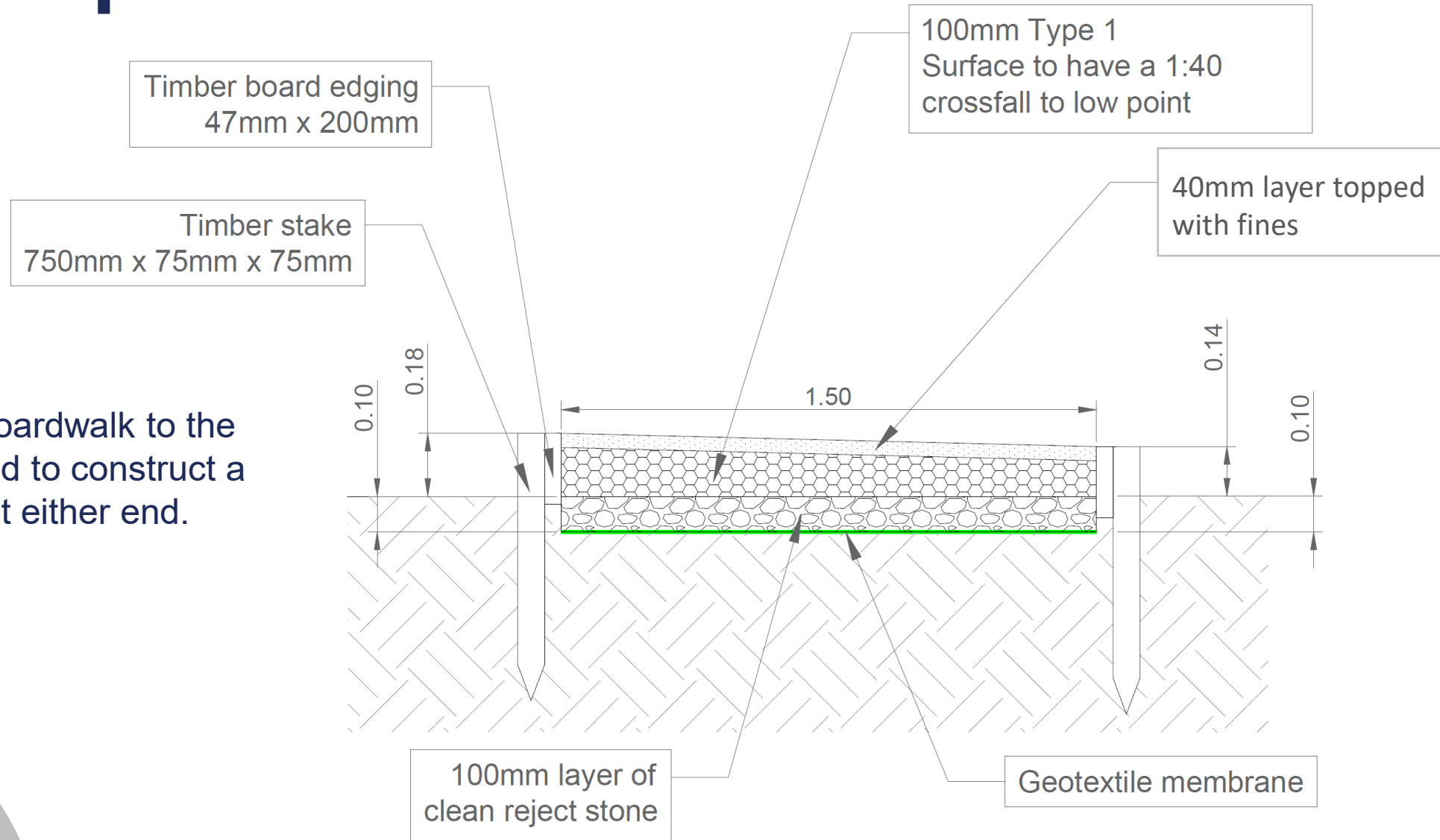
Highway & New Alignment



Example of new alignment proposal to reduce impact on the more sensitive SSSI habitat.

Aggregate path

To connect the new boardwalk to the wider network we need to construct a new aggregate path at either end.



Aggregate path (east)



Norfolk
County Council

Aggregate path (west)

Broad Lane



Norfolk
County Council

Further information



An Activity Log is being updated on the National Trails website at:

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/short-routes/brancaster-boardwalk-diversion/

Further details, including frequently asked questions, are also available at:

www.norfolk.gov.uk/pathclosures under 'Brancaster Footpath 5'



For enquiries, please contact nationaltrail@norfolk.gov.uk