



News release

1 October 2020

For immediate release:

People encouraged to stay safe on our coast

A campaign has been launched today to remind East Suffolk residents and visitors about the importance of staying safe on the coast.

Throughout the Covid-19 restrictions, and particularly since early summer, East Suffolk Council's Coastal Management Team has received almost daily reports from concerned landowners, businesses and the community about people climbing eroding cliffs, climbing on top of sea defences and ignoring signs warning of potential dangers.

Launching today, Thursday 1 October, a new campaign encourages people to visit the coast and to enjoy all that there is to see and do but also aims to educate people to take care whilst they are there to ensure that their visit is enjoyable and safe. The campaign launches on social media and with posters and information in prominent local places.

Cllr David Ritchie, East Suffolk's cabinet member for Planning and Coastal Management said: "This is extremely concerning, and we are very worried that people are putting their own safety at risk. There are many miles of beautiful coastline in Suffolk to explore but this is also some of the fastest eroding coast in western Europe. Our cliffs are soft and sandy, and it is concerning that people are climbing on them or walking close to the base where they may come to harm.

"The Council, through Coastal Partnership East, maintain 36km of coast and manage over 600 coastal assets. These include important defences that protect communities from erosion. Climbing on these can damage the defences and it is also dangerous as defences may have sharp edges or areas where feet can become trapped.

More...

For further information, please contact the Communications Team:

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“Our messages focus on providing people with information so that they can make decisions that improve their visit. For example, we are suggesting checking the times of tides so that they can safely walk on beaches away from cliff edges; to follow set diversions which will keep them out of harm’s way and to take notice of any hazard warning signs. We really do want people to have a safe visit but also to go home safely too.”

An HM Coastguard spokesperson said: “It’s understandable that people want to explore the secret gems around our beautiful coastline, but it’s not worth risking your life for. We want people to make sure their experience is one to remember and not one they would rather forget. Don’t risk your safety by climbing down cliffs and remember that cliffs along the UK coastline are constantly eroding. We can’t stress enough how important it is to keep back from the edge.”

If you notice anything unusual or dangerous about cliffs or any coastal defences, please email coastalmanagement@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.

In an emergency always call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

ENDS.

Notes to editor

HM Coastguard has the following safety advice:

- Do not attempt to climb up or down cliffs unless you are properly equipped and trained to do so and do not attempt to climb cliffs as a short cut back to the top and again.
- Make sure that you are properly equipped for walking along coastal paths. Remember to wear sturdy shoes or boots and check the weather forecast and tidal times before you set out. Carry a fully charged mobile phone and tell someone where you are going and what time you will be home. Only use the designated paths, take notice of any warning signs and fences in place, be responsible and don’t take any unnecessary risks.
- Try and keep your dog on a lead near cliffs. If they pick up the scent of an animal or hear something on the coast below it doesn’t take much for them to follow their nose. Above all, if your dog does fall down a cliff or starts getting swept out to sea, please do not attempt to rescue it yourself. Nine times out of ten your dog will rescue itself and return to shore alive, but tragically some owners do not. Coastguards are trained in all types of rescue on the coast, including dog rescues.
- When standing at the bottom of a cliff, we would always advise people that they should not stand less than the height of the cliff away. That means that if the cliff is 25 metres high, don’t go closer than 25 metres towards it.