

Coastal Walk – 2 miles

East Head, Chichester Harbour

THE NATIONAL TRUST

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East Head is a natural, constantly evolving sand and shingle spit owned by the National Trust since 1966. The short walk around the Head neatly encapsulates the challenges faced by the Trust in managing a dynamic site under impact of sea level rise and the possibility of more frequent storms to retain the processes of evolution of the coast and access for people.

Getting there:

Road: B2179 to West Wittering from the A286 Chichester

Car parks: Privately managed by West Wittering Estates (WWE)

Foot: from public footpath in West Wittering village

Bus: (B=bus stop) West Wittering number 52 or 53 from Chichester

Rail: Chichester. For public transport information visit www.traveline.org.uk

Maps and start grid ref: OS Landranger 197 gr SZ768981, Explorer 120

Facilities available: W/C's, Shop/Café in WWE car park

Terrain: Easy, flat walking conditions in soft sand in places

Distance: 2 miles

Accessibility: Height gain of 4-5m over the walk. If on the beach beware of strong currents, don't swim at low tides and do not use inflatables.

Points of interest: Follow the path from the car park along the front of the beach keeping the sea on your left. Look out for the following features:

- 1 Notice the wooden groynes at regular intervals. Beach levels are higher on the east side as material is prevented from migrating along the beach. The groynes help prevent change, however, where they stop and erosion does take place the contrast between man made and natural coastline is dramatic
- 2 Here, the dune has receded revealing the layers of sand and shingle (sediment) which have been moved by the wind and sea to form the dunes
- 3 Since 1966 East Head has doubled in size- this area is growing or accreting sediment that has been eroded in other areas. In the summer ground nesting birds such as Ringed Plover nest above the high tide line.
- 4 Behind the shelter of East Head where there is little wave action salt marsh specialist communities of plants such as glasswort and sea plantain and invertebrates live providing food for many wader birds- redshank, curlew.
- 5 At the 'hinge' very little sediment is available as the groynes prevent new material getting here to help it build again. However, recently, changes have been made to the groyne structure, which may release more sediment on to East Head.

The National Trust's Policy on the Coast is at

http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-shifting_shores.pdf

Property contact details: West Sussex Downs Office 01243 814554

National Trust properties nearby: Bosham Quay Meadow, Harting Down

