

# DUNGENESS COMPLEX

## SUSTAINABLE ACCESS AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (SARMS)

**MAIN REPORT - OCTOBER 2017**

Prepared for Shepway District Council and Rother District Council



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**Acknowledgements:** This report would not have been possible without the input and support from people across the strategy area.

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**This strategy:**

- **Develops a cross-border agenda for action, with a supporting evidence base;**
- **Provides a framework for decision-making;**
- **Applies a consistent and joined up approach to the planning and management of the internationally designated sites, especially those that cross administrative boundaries;**
- **Provides a platform for bringing together a cross-sectoral partnership;**
- **Suggests ways of raising the profile of the natural environment and its role in attracting and guiding inward investment;**
- **Ensures that issues are considered at their appropriate scale;**
- **Supports sustainable development;**
- **Enables efficient and effective use of resources.**

## Introduction

The coast between Rye Bay and Littlestone, along with Dungeness Point and large parts of nearby Romney Marsh, are internationally important and protected for their wildlife and habitats. The beaches and countryside within this area are also much visited, and are an integral part of the visitor economy of the area.

### The Natura 2000 sites

The Dungeness Complex of Natura 2000 sites comprises three overlapping international designations - the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, and the Dungeness Special Area of Conservation.

The area is particularly important for its coastal vegetated shingle, providing a high proportion of the U.K's area of this habitat. Shingle ridges support numerous rare plants, invertebrates and other exceptional and unique biodiversity, for example rare saline lagoons.

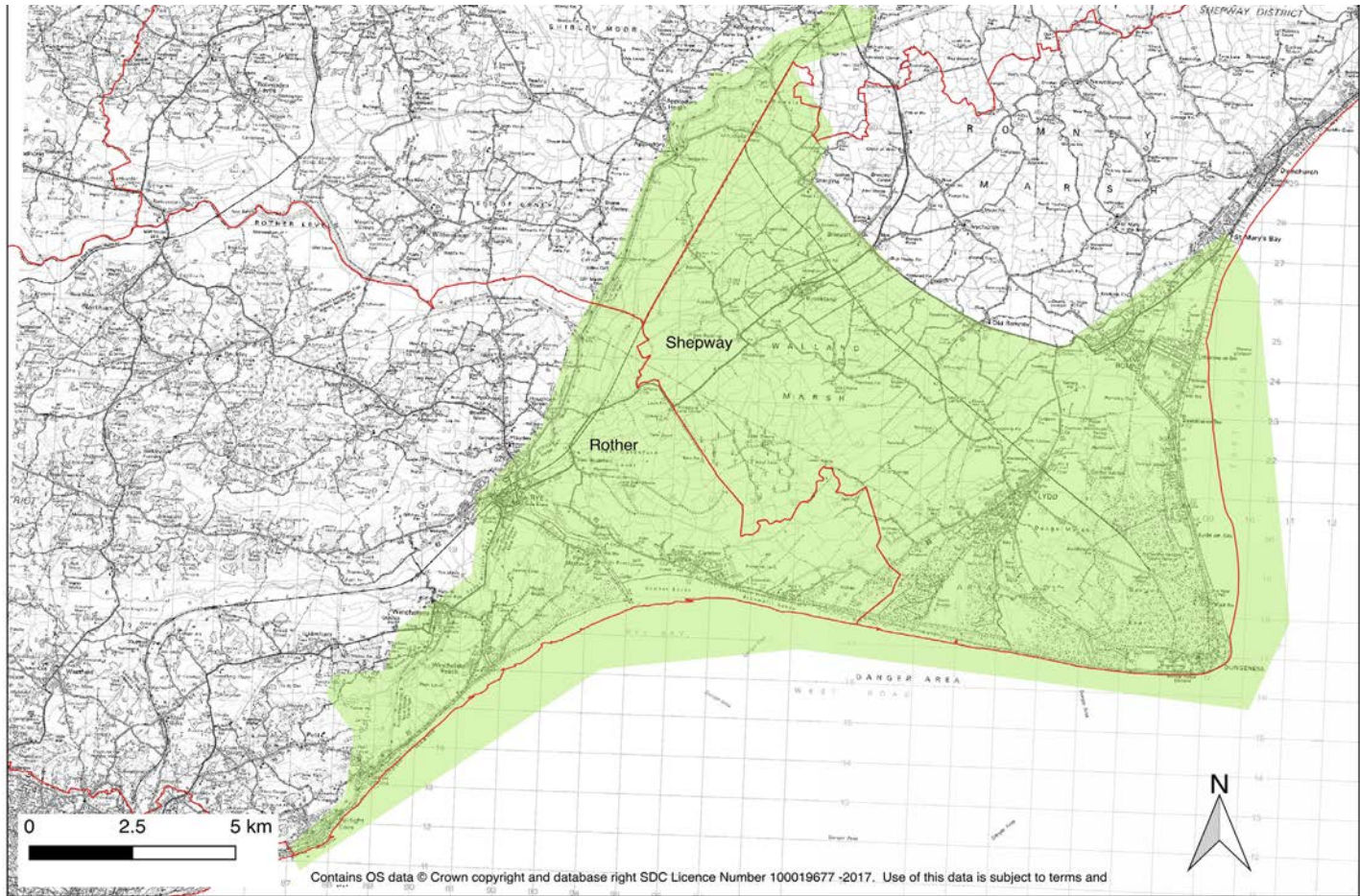
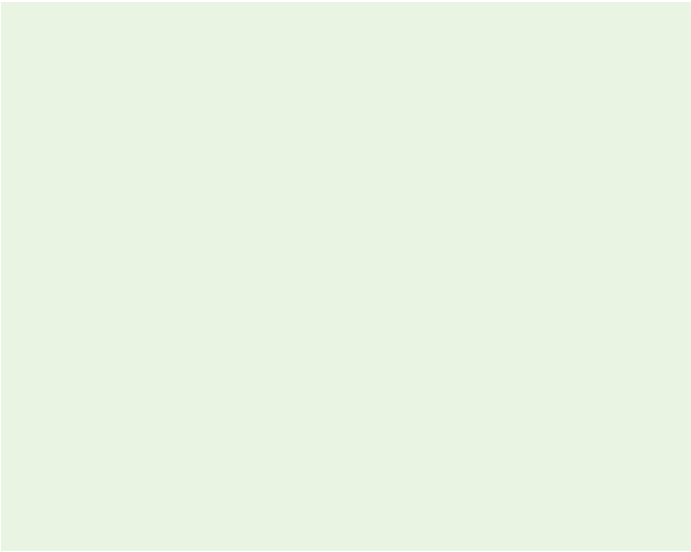
The area is also very important for birds. The water bodies, coastline and marshes provide important, interlinked areas for breeding and over-wintering birds. The diverse habitats also support many rare and vulnerable species, including great crested newt, water vole and wetland thread mosses.

## Purpose of this Strategy

The local plans for Rother and Shepway Councils set out commitments to prepare a “sustainable access strategy” for the Natura 2000 sites that straddle their areas. The need for this was identified within the two Councils’ Local Plan Core Strategies and supporting Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). This strategy addresses recreational pressure and provides a strategic, cross-boundary approach to issues relating to disturbance, to ensure that any increases in access and recreational usage resulting from the planning policies of either Council do not adversely impact on the integrity of these internationally important wildlife sites, and proposes supporting actions to ensure sensitive management of recreation and access for the Dungeness complex of sites.

### Scope

The strategy area - see Plan 1 - includes the Natura sites as well as a wider area of functional land which provides an important supporting role, particularly for birds.



### Plan 1 - The Strategy Area

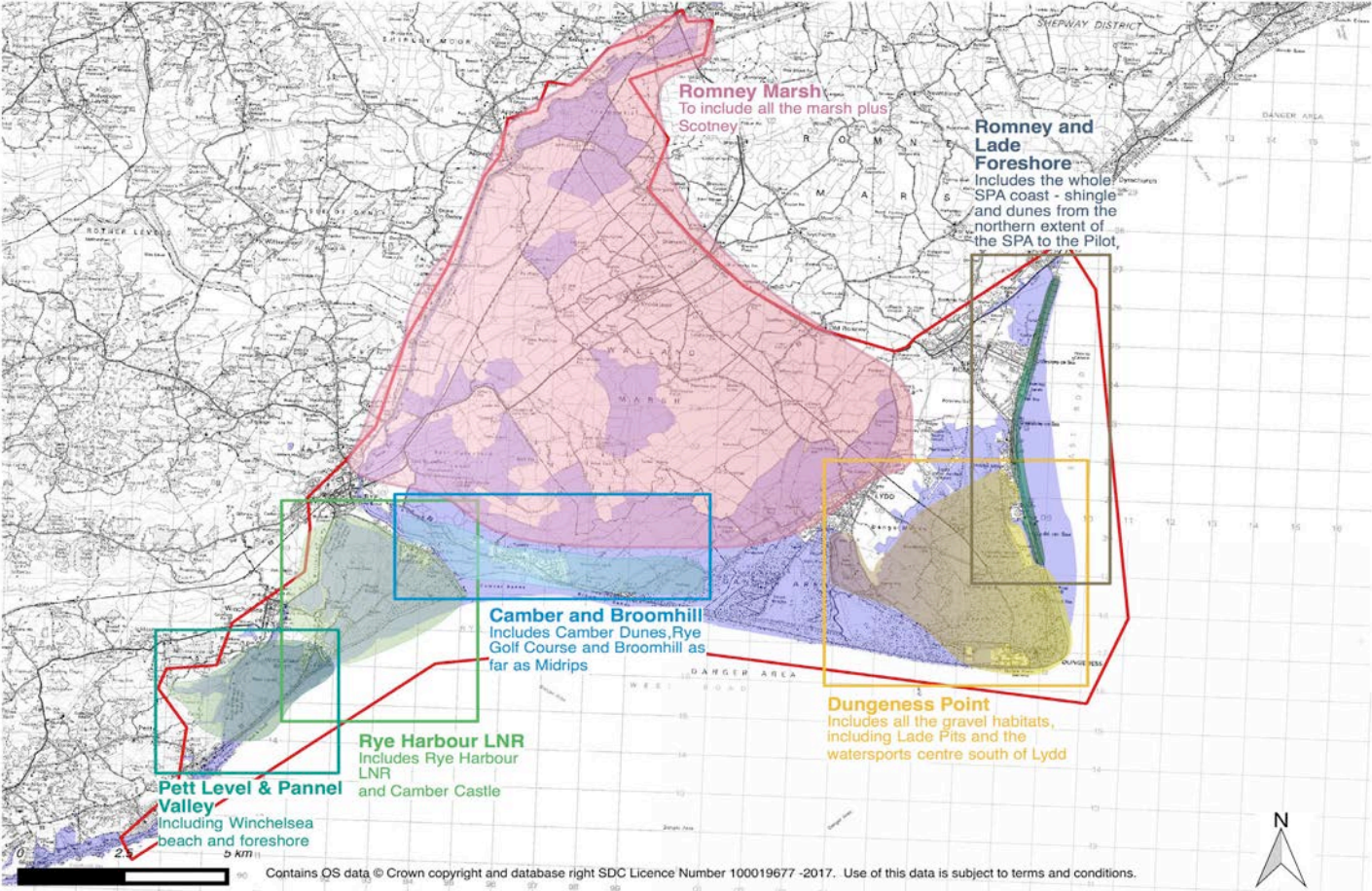
The area is divided into a number of sub-areas including those identified in the HRA as being of particular relevance concerning visitors. These are identified on Plan 2 and are:

1. Pett Level and Pannel Valley
2. Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve
3. Camber Sands and the Broomhill frontage
4. Dungeness Point and RSPB Reserve
5. Romney and Lade Foreshore (including Greatstone and Littlestone)
6. Romney Marsh

The Strategy report is supported by a set of documents which draw together the available evidence under four themes.

The Main Report (this report) - brings together the findings, draws conclusions and sets out an action plan. Appendix 1 of this report is the Evaluation Table which provides the commentary on potential actions or measures. This report draws on, and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Supporting document 1 - Nature Conservation Background and Assessment;
- Supporting document 2 - Access and Recreation Assessment;
- Supporting document 3 - Policy, Visitor Economy and Strategic Initiatives;
- Supporting document 4 - Visitor Assessment.



Plan 2 - The Sub Areas

## Approach and Methodology

The characteristics of visitors were identified in the Visitor Survey that formed Phase One of this strategy. This involved on-site surveys at various locations, as agreed between the Councils and Natural England; and an online survey of specialist site users, with input from a number of stakeholders.

A review of the Phase One Visitor Survey was carried out, together with further assessments of available evidence. In addition, discussions were held with local authorities, Natural England and the National Nature Reserve partnership group; and individual meetings with a number of landowners and land managers.

An evaluation of the measures required to deliver these recommendations has identified both area-wide and more site-specific actions for the targeted sub areas. Based on available evidence and applying a “precautionary principle”, a number of high priority actions are identified (as ‘A’ in the plan section of the report and in the Evaluation of Measures table - appended to this report). These are regarded as critical in providing essential mitigation, and thereby ensuring that the respective local plans of the two Councils fulfil their obligations in line with the HRA. Other actions necessary to develop the SARMS are identified as ‘B’ in the tables, and have also been taken forward into the proposed SARMS Plan.

Mitigation measures will need to be secured in perpetuity, and therefore there is a need for the strategy to look to the long-term. The plan should provide certainty that the interests of the Natura sites will be protected, but at the same time flexible enough to be reviewed and modified over time, in line with results indicated by further evidence and monitoring.

## Context

Monitoring of the SSSIs that make up the international designations shows them to be largely in 'favourable' condition or, in compartments where this is not the case, to be 'recovering'. Where the condition of some habitats is unfavourable, this can be attributed to factors unrelated to visitor pressure. However, there is considerable visitor activity within parts of the study area which, in certain locations, can have some adverse impacts on Natura 2000 features.

The visitor activity identified is quite diverse, ranging from holidaymakers (mainly to the coast), kite surfers, anglers, birdwatchers, sightseers and walkers, including for dog walking. Different activities are focused in different areas, with Camber being a particular focus for holidaymakers and Broomhill Sands for kite-surfers, while Dungeness Point is a focus for day-trippers, sightseers, anglers and photographers.

The impact of recreational activities depends on the areas in which they occur, the sensitivity of the habitats or species, and the intensity of recreational use; shingle habitats can be damaged by vehicles and trampling over the shingle, trampling also erodes dunes, while studies have shown that birds can be disturbed by recreational activities including dog walking. The presence of visitors in itself does not necessarily conflict with conserving the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, but impacts will depend on the specifics of the nature conservation interest, the activity and its management. For example, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve has substantial numbers of visitors, but their controlled access helps ensure that it continues to attract large numbers of breeding ground-nesting, migrating and over-wintering birds. Hence, most recommendations are specific to the sub-areas and particular activities.

Consideration is given to the likely visitor numbers in the future. Wider trends suggest that the number of people visiting the coast and countryside is increasing. The extent to which this is seen locally will be affected, in part, by the niche offer of particular destinations and associated growth of recreational activities (e.g. Broomhill and Greatstone beaches for kite surfing and other water and beach-based sports), but also by the level of accessibility to the study area. In large part, the relative tranquillity of much of the study area is a reflection of its generally poor accessibility from larger urban areas. However, regard needs to be given to a potential increase in visitors that may occur particularly if there is either significant improvement in transport infrastructure to the area or substantial population growth within its main catchment area as a result of plans and programmes. Also, given that regular users of the area, especially in the winter and "shoulder" months, are - according to currently available visitor data - mainly local people, consideration should also be given to measures to bring about a greater appreciation of the nature conservation imperatives and to manage such usage.

To address the potential growth of access and recreational visits in the future, a robust solution is required to ensure that such growth does not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites.



# Findings and Recommendations

## Area-wide:

A degree of disconnect between the tourism and natural environment sectors is identified. Raising the profile of the nature conservation value of the strategy area, through a focused partnership working towards a shared agenda, should benefit the visitor economy and move it in a more environmentally-aware and sustainable direction, which should prove mutually beneficial.

The two Councils, working alongside Natural England should provide a strategic oversight to ensure delivery of the SARMS; they should also work with existing groupings to develop and deliver a coordinated Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS).

This strategy should address the task of visitor education and the need for behaviour change in support of the habitats and species of the Natura sites. These requirements together with a recognition of the need to improve visitor information and interpretation lead to a recommendation for an area-wide Interpretation Plan; to include on-site interpretation panels supported by targeted activities and materials including leaflets. A review of existing signage has highlighted the need for a signage replacement programme, which will help to support other initiatives including interpretation, promotion, branding and enforcement.

Other wider actions include further monitoring of visitor usage, alongside monitoring of shingle habitats, bird numbers and bird disturbance events. This will inform the need for further actions that may be necessary, including any further access management and zoning.

In terms of planning, the Local Plans of the two Councils, and of other authorities that may materially impact on visitor activity in the study area, need to be coordinated for the longer-term benefit of its ecological interests.

Both Councils' Local Plans give support to tourism alongside respecting nature conservation objectives. Most recent emerging plans indicate that neither Council is proposing significant tourism developments which would directly conflict with the Natura 2000 sites; at the same time, in seeking to improve their tourism "offer", careful consideration should be given to any proposals that look to intensify existing activity. For example, extensions to holiday home parks, or their use as main residencies, may lead to increased visitor pressure on Natura 2000 features.

There are certain localities where active monitoring and management is found to be necessary to avoid harm to internationally important ecological features. These, and other advisory recommendations which form part of the SARMS approach are elaborated upon below.





## Site-specific:

### Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve

This reserve is a popular site with a wide range of visitors. Its controlled access helps to protect its key nature conservation features, allowing large numbers of visitors to enjoy the site. In addition to the area-wide review of signage and visitor interpretation, the current proposals to develop a new visitor centre and facilities at the site provide the opportunity to develop this site as a visitor 'hub' or gateway; a location where visitors may be attracted to find out more about the area, with a focus on the new facilities.

### Camber

Camber is a very popular tourism destination, and this underpins its local economy. As well as the substantial holiday parks in the village, beach use is effectively determined by the location, size and opening times of the car parks and paths crossing the dunes. The large western car park is currently not open in the winter months, which helps limit disturbance to birds on the foreshore. Information on visitor numbers, and bird numbers, on Camber western beach foreshore is needed to form a baseline to better enable an assessment of visitor impacts. Subject to the findings of these surveys, it may be appropriate to consider zoning or access restrictions.

The future usage of the western beach, and hence the habitat value, may also be impacted upon if proposals are brought forward, as identified in the Camber SPD, which reduce the number of parking spaces at the central car park and redevelop those on the former putting green site. Therefore, while the current limitations on access, locationally and seasonally, may be suitable, any such proposals that could increase use of the western foreshore in winter should be subject to a clear understanding of the nature conservation impacts (informed by this further baseline information) and any necessary resultant management measures. Separately, the report also includes advisory recommendations in relation to the management of the dunes at Camber. Area-wide recommendations above in relation to holiday homes apply to Camber, as do those relating to improved visitor information and awareness.

### Dungeness Point

Dungeness Point has a national profile and is well-visited by a range of people for a variety of activities. An overarching plan which provides a comprehensive approach to access control and management is needed to resolve some complex issues at this privately-owned site. In addition to the area-wide review of signage and visitor interpretation, an integrated parking management and enforcement programme is advised to tackle the vehicle access issues on the site, together with legal means of access control. Work is needed with specialist user groups to develop voluntary codes of and conduct to place controls on unauthorised and unwanted activities. Specific measures may also be required to protect damage to the areas of vegetated shingle, although further information is needed to support this action.



### Romney and Lade Foreshore

A suite of approaches is needed in this area, to help reduce the trampling of vegetated shingle and damage to the sand dunes. In addition to the area-wide review of signage and visitor interpretation, the location of the existing Romney Marsh Visitor Centre lends itself to development as a visitor 'hub' or gateway; a location where visitors may be attracted to find out more about the area. Other measures will include the monitoring of visitor numbers, bird numbers and disturbance events. These will form a baseline to better enable an assessment of visitor impacts. Subject to the findings of these surveys, it may be appropriate to consider zoning or access restrictions.

In addition, at Romney Sands an integrated approach to the management of parking is advised, together with the development of voluntary codes of conduct for water and beach-based sports.

A dunes management programme is also advised in this area, to take a comprehensive approach to addressing access routes, encroachment, signage and local awareness.

### Romney Marsh

Few measures are proposed for this tranquil and largely agricultural area. The area includes some Natura sites and important areas of functional land. It is advised that the relevant planning authorities consider the potential after-uses of the Scotney Lakes complex in regard to their contribution or impact on the Natura sites.

Also, although the quiet lanes and existing promoted routes make this area well-suited for leisure cycling and walking, any plans to enhance access and bring visitors close to the Natura sites should be carefully assessed.

### The SARMS Plan

Based on the evidence, the elements within the plan are categorised as:

- A. Clearly mitigation for planning policies or necessary to be confident of no adverse effect on integrity;
- B. Clearly linked to a current issue or required to rectify current problem;

Other measures identified from the review of evidence have been excluded from the plan, following evaluation. However, they may come forward in future for consideration in response to the gathering of further evidence. They are categorised as:

- C. Likely to make a positive and complementary contribution to overall aims, but more aspirational or less defined/insufficient evidence or not a proportionate response;
- D. Not suitable to be taken forward.

The summary of the SARMS Plan is set out below ( a more detailed description of the long list of the measures considered for inclusion in the SARMS Plan is set out in Appendix 1: Evaluation of Measures):

Using the above criteria, elements that are categorised as A are those that could form part of a clearly defined mitigation package; and those categorised as B, provide the other supporting and necessary elements of the plan.

Elements categorised C or D were evaluated and considered unsuitable for inclusion in the SARMS Plan, but are set out here for completeness.



Summary of Mitigation Elements of the SARMS Plan

Report Action ref	Type of Measure	Commentary	Lead Organisation	Notes
<b>SARMS plan: Mitigation measures (category 'A'): Priority Actions. Clearly mitigation for planning policies or necessary to be confident of no adverse effect on integrity</b>				
CB2, DP6, RL7,	<b>Data and Monitoring</b>	<b>Visitor surveys</b> of numbers and profile (including socio-economic data), activities and season of visit Site-specific programme of visitor surveys at the following sites:- Camber West – October to March; Camber and Broomhill watersports users – in Spring, Autumn and Winter (weather dependent); Romney Sands and Lade – October to March; Dungeness Point – all year;	RDC, SDC	
CB3, RL7, SA5.2		<b>Bird Surveys</b> and monitoring, to include feeding and roosting locations, numbers, seasonality and incidents and levels of bird disturbance at specific sites:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camber Western foreshore – October to March;</li> <li>• Romney Sands and Lade – October to March;</li> </ul>	RDC, SDC	
SA5.3		<b>WeBS bird monitoring:</b> Support full area coverage of monitoring of WeBS sectors	RDC, SDC, NE	Include SWT (B Yates) and local bird observers
DP6		<b>NE Shingle report:</b> Results to be reported and reviewed for potential inclusion into this strategy plan	NE	
SA6.4, DP2, RH2	<b>Visitor Education:</b>	<b>Interpretation Plan</b> for the strategy area	RDC, SDC	
SA6.2, PL1, CB4, RL1, RL2		<b>Signage review and replacement programme:</b> signage, its location and messages, including waymarkers and information signs at key locations:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greatstone and Lade foreshore;</li> <li>• Camber;</li> <li>• Pett Level/Pannel Valley and seafront</li> </ul>	RDC, SDC	

RL2	<b>Access Control and Enforcement</b>	<b>Voluntary Codes of Conduct:</b> to be developed for:- Greatstone beach specialist recreational users	SDC	To include specialist groups (eg kite surfers)
SA7.3	<b>Branding and Promotion</b>	<b>Promotion:</b> Review of websites to ensure that local promotional websites contain information on appropriate visitor behaviour at the Natura sites	RDC, SDC	
SA8.1	<b>Partnership Working</b>	A <b>SARMS Oversight Group</b> to ensure development and delivery of the SARMS, comprising reps from SDC, RDC and NE	RDC, SDC, NE	
SA8.2		Oversight Group to scope the potential for existing partnerships and initiatives to develop plans and deliver the SARMS across sectors and boundaries	As above	
SA9.1	<b>Planning measures</b>	Monitoring of the growth of mobile/ park homes sites in or near the N2K sites	RDC, SDC	
SA9.2		Ensure standards for open space provision are adhered to	RDC, SDC	
CB3		Assess any plans to develop or enhance recreation routes into the marsh from Camber Village;	RDC, SDC	

**SARMS Plan: Category 'B' measures: Essential to the SARMS, and clearly linked to a current issue or required to rectify current problem**

SA5.1, PL3	<b>Data and Monitoring</b>	<b>Visitors</b> - Develop a programme of visitor monitoring across the strategy area (in addition to category A sites – see Camber, Romney & Lade and Dungeness Point sub-area actions); strategy-area-wide including the use of the Royal Military Canal Path and Saxon Shore Way;	SDC, RDC	NB, for RMCP, potentially as part of planned enhancements
SA5.2		<b>Birds</b> - Monitoring of numbers and bird disturbance events across the strategy area (in addition to category A sites - see Camber and Romney & Lade sub-area actions)	SDC, RDC	
DP6		<b>Dungeness Point/Estate – Data and Monitoring:</b> Maintain the traffic counter at Dungeness Estate entrance and continue monitoring of numbers on an ongoing basis; Work with RHDR and SDC to more accurately assess visitors through the RHDR station route	EDF, RMCP	Include RHDR and SDC

RM1		<b>Romney Marsh – Data and Monitoring:</b> Improve the evidence base for the area by monitoring the download or sale of promoted leaflets	RMCP	
SA6.6, RL1	<b>Visitor Education:</b>	<b>Develop visitor ‘hubs’ or ‘gateway’ sites</b> to promote visitor awareness for the wider Dungeness Complex at:- Rye Harbour Reserve; Romney Marsh Visitor Centre	SWT,KWT	Essential to support monitoring, wardening and education programmes
RL1		Continue to produce the <b>RMCP’s Shingle Issue</b> publication for residents and local businesses	RMCP	Include EDF and NE
RH2		<b>Rye Harbour Reserve - Develop interpretation</b> to appeal to the site’s wide range of regular and infrequent visitors.	SWT	Planning element included in overall Interpretation Plan for Strategy area (A)
DP2		<b>Dungeness Point: Work with RHDR to install interpretive and education displays</b> in and outside the café;	EDF, RMCP, RHDR	
RM2		<b>Romney Marsh – Interpretation Programme:</b> Develop and implement interpretation in areas people visit and as an integral part of promoted routes and tours (eg churches) on the Marsh	SDC	Following development of overall Interpretation Plan (Mitigation or category ‘A’ measure)
CB4	<b>Visitor Education: Warden role</b>	<b>Camber - Introduce an Education Warden role</b> or include education in the role of beach patrol; Education campaign with caravan parks, making messages appropriate and attractive to visitor profile	RDC	
DP2		<b>Dungeness Estate - Extend Educational Wardening role</b> across the estate	EDF	
SA1.1, RL6	<b>Access Control and Enforcement</b>	<b>Revised Byelaws and Orders:</b> to provide a more consistent approach across the strategy area, with up to date, relevant and Strategy area-wide coverage of byelaws	RDC, SDC	
SA2.1		<b>Vehicle parking controls:</b> Introduce methods to count numbers of vehicles using public car parks in the area; and manage car parking sites and costs on a sub-area basis, to reduce recreational pressure and minimise displacement parking at other areas	RDC, SDC	In accordance with sub-area requirements and to be reviewed following ongoing monitoring
CB1		<b>Camber: Improved and coordinated management of dunes:-</b> Assess alternative and secure funding methods to deliver management; Ensure access management works are adequately funded and carried out annually	RDC	Include other landowners and/or managers (eg ESCC)
CB3		<b>Camber: Access restrictions</b> to be considered, depending on results of surveys (visitors and birds), e.g. winter dog controls	RDC	Pending results of visitor and bird monitoring, when this could become a mitigation (A) issue

RL3		<b>Romney and Lade: Rationalise car parking</b> – various measures	SDC	
RL4		<b>Romney and Lade:</b> Develop a comprehensive approach to the <b>management of Greatstone Dunes</b> – various measures	SDC, NE	
DP3		<b>Dungeness Point: A suite of measures to better manage visitor access</b> in the area (see page 71 for site-specific actions)	EDF, RMCP	Include EDF representative organisations (eg BNP Paribas)
DP4		<b>Dungeness Point: Develop actions to support access management</b> (see also DP5), to include consideration of*:- A parking enforcement system Voluntary Codes of Conduct for specialist users A PCSO or Warden (enforcement) with legal powers (* subject to landowner agreement)	EDF, RMCP, SDC	Include specialist users (eg anglers)
RL2		<b>Romney and Lade:</b> Depending on outcome of further investigation (see actions RL7) work with adventure sports operators and clubs to determine <b>activity zones</b> (for both summer and winter).	SDC	More evidence is needed to determine the extent and the seasonality
SA8.3	<b>Partnership Working</b>	<b>Delivering the SARMS: Develop cross-boundary working:</b> A SARMS Delivery grouping to take forward projects, and help build local support through events, activities and meetings; A SARMS Strategic grouping to draw partners together to plan, resource and commission joint activities in support of the local economy, communities and environment	RDC, SDC,	
SA8.4		<b>Develop awareness-raising activities</b> for senior officers and local politicians; and Identify champions to represent the work of the SARMS at a strategic level;	RDC, SDC	
PL2		<b>Pett Level/Pannel Valley and Rye Harbour: Incorporate these areas more fully into the Dungeness complex</b> and where possible, link to the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme	RDC, Fifth Continent Project	
DP5		<b>Dungeness Point – Partnership working arrangements to include:</b> an executive grouping of major landowners and interests; an estate partnership: with the above plus residential property owners, and local businesses and attractions including the RHDR, the Old Lighthouse, and The Britannia and Pilot pubs; a wider Estate Management Stakeholder group, including site users	EDF, RMCP	

RM4		<p><b>Work with the County highway authorities/PROW teams</b>, local authorities, countryside projects and others promoting access to ensure that all access plans are carefully assessed regarding their potential impact on the designated sites including:</p> <p>Through Natura sites;  The Royal Military Canal Path (PROW);  New access routes out of Camber Village, as they may be developed;</p> <p>Consideration be given to the installation of interpretation panels where existing or new promoted routes cross Natura sites;</p>	RDC, SDC	
RL5, RM4, SA4.1	<b>Planning measures</b>	<p>Planning Measures: Local authorities to:</p> <p>to investigate the potential provision of suitably robust open space recreation sites, close to the coast as part of the development of their Green Infrastructure plans;  Consider the after-uses of the CEMEX pits at Lydd-On-Sea;  Consider the potential for developing land for open space uses near New Romney Caravan Park and Holiday Village;  Work with providers of holiday park-type accommodation regarding plans which may affect levels of recreational pressure, and to develop on-site visitor education measures;  Consider the potential uses of the Scotney Lakes complex regarding their contribution or impact on the Natura sites;  Assess extension of season or area of operation of recreational activities to limit future impacts</p>	RDC, SDC	The results of the Phase One visitor survey indicated that alternative sites for recreation may need to be in a coastal location to be effective in deflecting visitors from sensitive sites
<p><b>Category 'C' measures: Not within the SARMS Plan. Likely to make a positive and complementary contribution to overall aims, but more aspirational or less defined/insufficient evidence or not a proportionate response</b></p>				
	<b>Access Control and Enforcement</b>	<p>Consideration of <b>extension or creation of legal orders*</b> to ensure that <b>dog controls are in place where required</b> for the winter months at coastal Natura sites</p> <p>(* Dog Control Orders have been superseded by Public Space Protection Orders. Work will be needed to ascertain the test(s) needed to introduce this order, or other relevant orders eg Community Protection Notices)</p>		The link between dogs and bird disturbance in the strategy area is not proven. Further evidence will be needed.
SA7.1	<b>Branding and Promotion</b>	Develop a <b>unifying brand for the Strategy area</b> ; potentially around the natural environment		

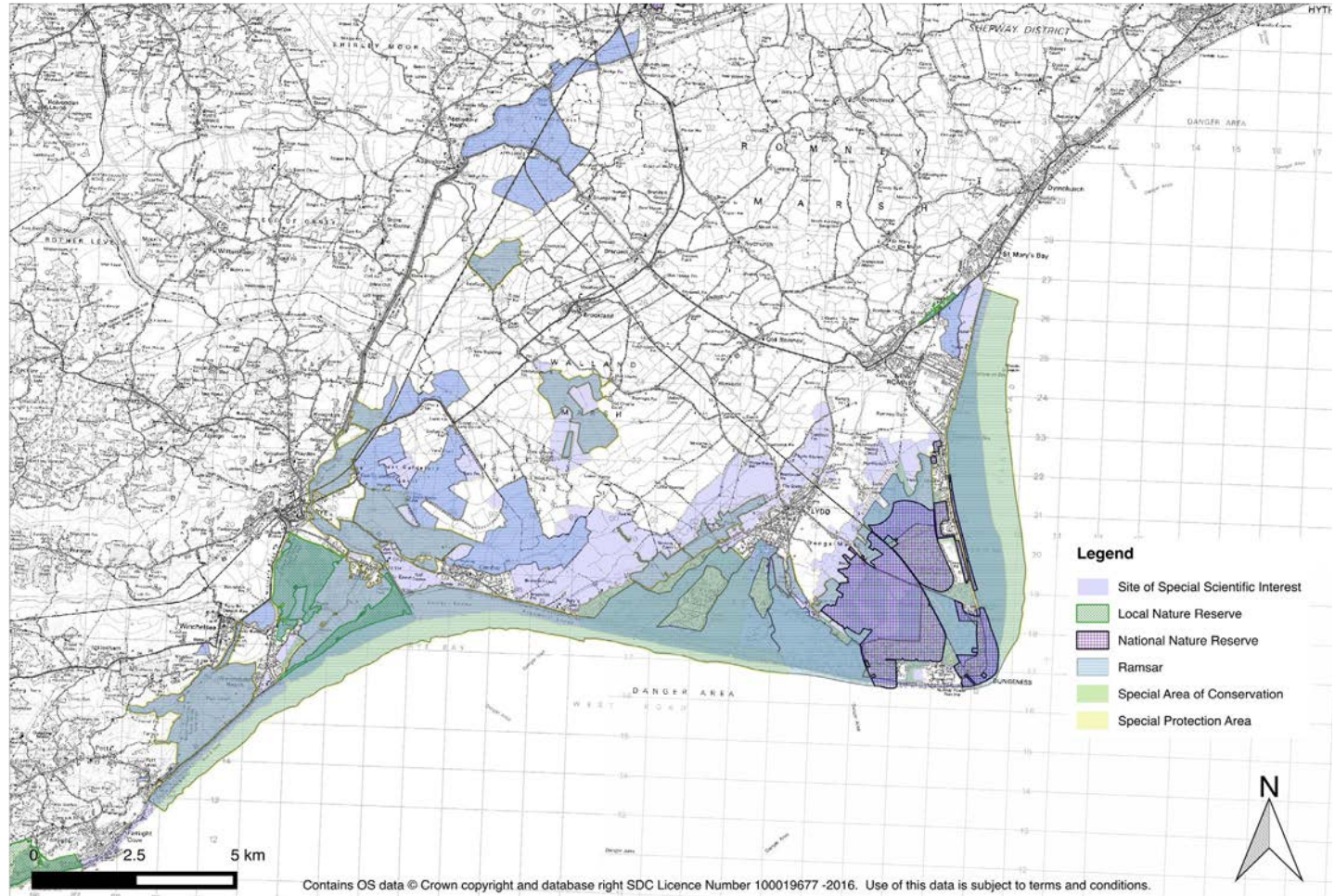
SA7.2		In a joined-up approach in partnership with the tourism sector to develop a <b>promotional strategy</b> for the Strategy area and its component sites, to include: <b>An official website</b> for the promotion of the area, or focus on enhancing existing official website(s) to support appropriate visitor behaviour/nature sensitivity; and taking a more consistent and appropriate approach to promotional messages		The development of an official website would help support the SARMS
RM3		Ensure that any <b>rebranding, promotion and repositioning of the Romney Marsh</b> fully includes consideration of the designated sites and conservation features and that messages around responsible recreation are central to this rebranding		
RH3	<b>Site-specific measures: Rye Harbour Reserve</b>	<b>Secure funding mechanisms for Rye Harbour reserve</b> to: Ensure continued high-quality visitor management; Deliver high quality interpretation; Ensure that the new visitor centre is self-sufficient and does not cause funding insecurity;  Also, to consider better integration with car park (as this largely serves the reserve), and investigate the potential of the reserve receiving a proportion of any future parking fee.		
RH4		Bring Rye Harbour reserve more fully into a <b>broader strategic planning and delivery partnership</b> which covers the wider Dungeness complex;		
RH5		With the agreement of landowners, consider <b>monitoring lake areas</b> just outside the reserve as potential functional areas for wildlife (notably birds);		
RH6		<b>Access promotion</b> should pay due regard to the designated areas, and provide information to visitors e.g. to keep dogs on leads in some areas;		
CB1	<b>Site-specific measures: Camber</b>	<b>Camber Dunes coordinated management:</b> Review and formulate new management plan for dunes which sets out detailed future and annual management requirements and costings required; Form management partnership for dunes for owners to properly implement habitat and recreation management		
DP3	<b>Site-specific measures: Dungeness Point/Estate</b>	<b>Review current on-line presence</b> of the Dungeness Estate, improve the official website, and consider improvements to streamline the user experience when searching for information e.g. driving online traffic and providing links to one official website		
Category 'D' measures: Not within the SARMS Plan. Not suitable to be taken forward				
		Potential to limit visitor numbers at some sites to minimise pressure on wildlife		



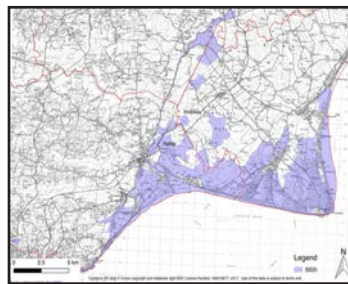
# THE OVERALL STRATEGY AREA

This strategy covers the 'Dungeness Complex' of designated sites: Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar, and Dungeness Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

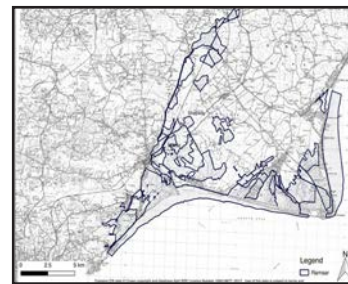
The strategy area also includes the wider 'functional land' beyond the designated sites, as this provides an important supporting function, particularly for birds.



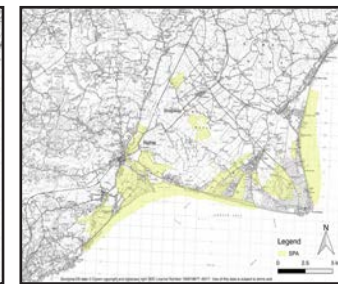
OVERLAY OF DESIGNATIONS



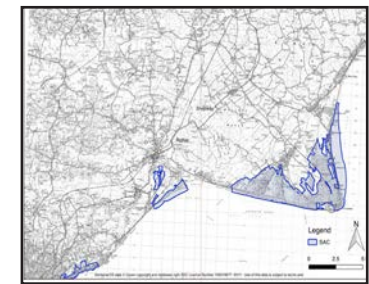
SSSI



RAMSAR



SPA



SAC

The strategy area is one of varied habitats and landscapes. It is particularly important for its coastal vegetated shingle, with a high proportion of the UK's total within this area.

The ancient shingle ridges, formed through the sea continually depositing shingle and creating new land, support numerous rare plants, invertebrates and other exceptional and unique biodiversity, for example rare saline lagoons.

The dynamic coast has also created two dune systems, themselves supporting rare and unique species.

## Biodiversity

Supporting Document 1 provides the detailed information on biodiversity in the strategy area.

In summary: the strategy area is very important for birds. While the extensive shingle provides breeding areas for ground-nesting birds, the coastline is important for a winter influx of thousands of water birds, the many pits, lakes and pools provide winter and breeding sites and the wet grazing grassland of the Romney Marsh provides habitat for geese, swans and raptors.

All of these areas are interlinked, with birds moving across the area at different times of day and year.

These diverse habitats also support many rare and vulnerable species, including great crested newt, water vole and wetland thread mosses.

There are many nature conservation designations across the strategy area, reflecting its importance. These include internationally important sites for nature conservation, known collectively as 'Natura 2000' sites; plus additional areas which help support the wildlife in the designated area. There are many overlapping designations, showing the exceptional importance of the strategy area for wildlife. The areas included in the Natura designations are the Special Protection Area (SPA) the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar wetland sites. Underlying these are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and two Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

### Local Nature Reserves (LNR) - locally important

Romney Warren LNR	Part of Romney Warren Country Park - dune grassland, mature trees and grazing pasture, important seasonal ponds with great crested newts, diving beetles and dragonflies.
Rye Harbour LNR	Vegetated shingle, saltmarsh, saline lagoons, reedbed and open water. Also of exceptional importance for breeding and over-wintering birds.

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – nationally important

Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI	A diverse coastal landscape with many habitats which has been shaped through a dynamic coast, forming extensive shingle barrier beaches, sand dunes, intertidal mud and sand flats. The site contains the largest and most diverse area of shingle beach in Britain, including nationally important saline lagoons, natural freshwater pits, basin fens and former pits from gravel extraction. North of the coast is Romney Marsh, an area of grazing marsh, arable farmland and reedbed with an extensive ditch network draining. It is also important for its geodiversity of shingle ridges.
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Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach SSSI	A small part of this SSSI covering the vegetated shingle of the coast lies within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA and Ramsar and therefore is included within the strategy.
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**National Nature Reserve (NNR) – of exceptional national importance**

Dungeness NNR	Dungeness NNR covers several parcels of land owned by the RSPB, Shepway Council, EDF and Natural England around Dungeness Point. All of the NNR is also SSSI.
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**Natura 2000 Network Designations – internationally important**

Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA Designated 1999 <sup>1</sup> , extended 2016	The site is a SPA under the Birds Directive as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of a range of Annex I birds, both over-wintering and breeding, also 1% or more of the biogeographical population of shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) and as holding an important waterbird assemblage, being used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds. An area of sea adjacent to the SPA is being considered as an extension to the SPA due to its importance as foraging grounds for the bird species of the SPA.
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Dungeness SAC Designated 2005	The site is a SAC under the Habitats Directive as it hosts the Annex I habitats: Annual vegetation of drift lines and perennial vegetation of stony banks (coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves), along with qualifying species Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i> , listed in Annex II.
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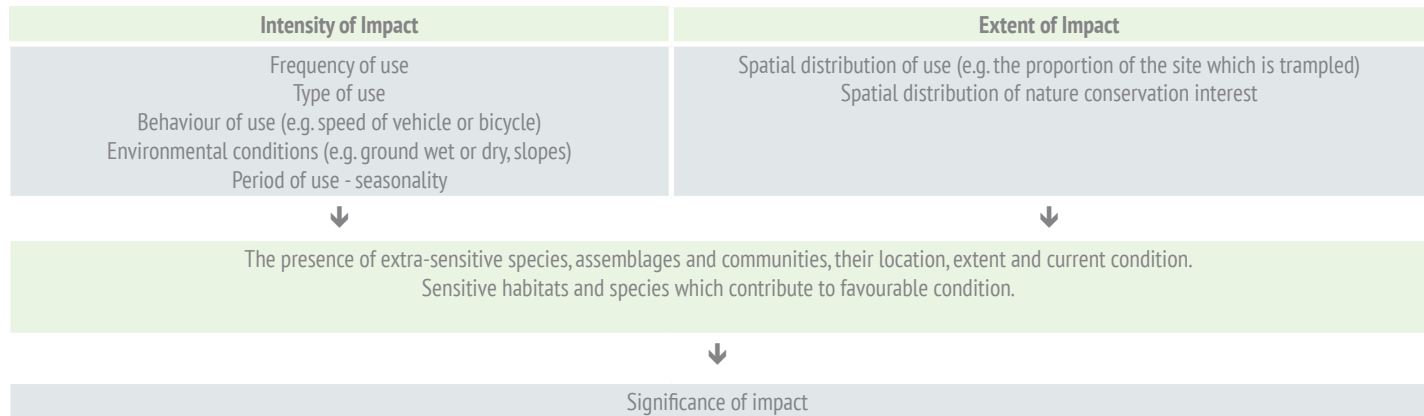
Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar Designated 2016	<p>The site is a Ramsar because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It contains representative, rare, or unique examples of natural or near-natural wetlands: annual vegetation of drift lines and the coastal fringes of perennial vegetation of stony banks and natural shingle wetlands, saline lagoons, freshwater pits and basin fens (Criterion 1);</li> <li>• It supports threatened ecological communities: the complex network of wetland habitats including saltmarsh, natural freshwater pits, fens, ponds, gravel pits and grazing marsh and ditches, which support a rich and diverse range of bryophytes, vascular plants and invertebrates that are rare, threatened or listed as priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Criterion 2);</li> <li>• It regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds (in the non-breeding season the site regularly supports 34,957 individual waterbirds) (Criterion 5);</li> <li>• It regularly supports 1% of the individuals of mute swan and shoveler (Criterion 6).</li> </ul>
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## Impacts of Recreation on Habitats and Species

The habitats and species have different vulnerability to recreational activity. It is not possible to draw generalised conclusions around the significance of these effects as the severity of impact will depend upon a range of site-specific and local factors. These relate to the combined extent and intensity of impacts and how these interact with species and habitats of the site. The habitats and species of the strategy area and their potential vulnerability to recreational activity have been considered against these criteria in drawing up this strategy (see Supporting Document 1 – Nature Conservation Background and Assessment).

### Intensity and Extent of Recreational Impacts:



Several habitats and species in the strategy area are potentially vulnerable to recreational impacts, depending on the factors listed above:

### Coastal Vegetated Shingle

All coastal vegetated shingle and the rare plants associated with it are potentially vulnerable to recreational pressure, but particularly vulnerable are lichen-rich coastal vegetated shingle communities which are easily damaged through trampling or vehicle pressure. Damage may take many years to reverse (if at all). This damage also affects the geodiversity of the site.

### Dunes

High levels of trampling increase bare ground, reduce vegetation and can destabilise the dune. Especially vulnerable are yellow marram dunes, shingle habitats, lichen-rich communities, wet areas in slacks, steep slopes used for access and foredunes. Recreational pressure may also affect the vegetation composition of the communities of fixed dunes.



### **Wintering Birds**

Whether human disturbance causes a detrimental impact on birds is complex, but effects can include behaviour changes such as flight from the threat, increased vigilance or reduced feeding. However, not all human activities cause disturbance to birds, and not all birds show an equal level of response to the same activity. Some of the potential issues highlighted in the Dungeness Natura Site Improvement Plan are disturbance of wintering birds on the foreshore by vehicles, people, walkers with dogs, sand yachting and other watersports.

### **Breeding Ground-Nesting Birds**

Several species of ground-nesting birds breed in the strategy area. These birds may be particularly vulnerable as human disturbance can lead to trampling of eggs and chicks, greater predation of chicks and eggs and reduced foraging by adults.

### **Fens, Saltmarsh, Mudflat, Saline Lagoons, Grazing Marsh/Marshy Grassland**

All of these habitats on wet soils can be more easily damaged by trampling than drier habitats and could be damaged if recreation levels are high. Some species associated with them, including breeding birds and water voles, may also be disturbed.

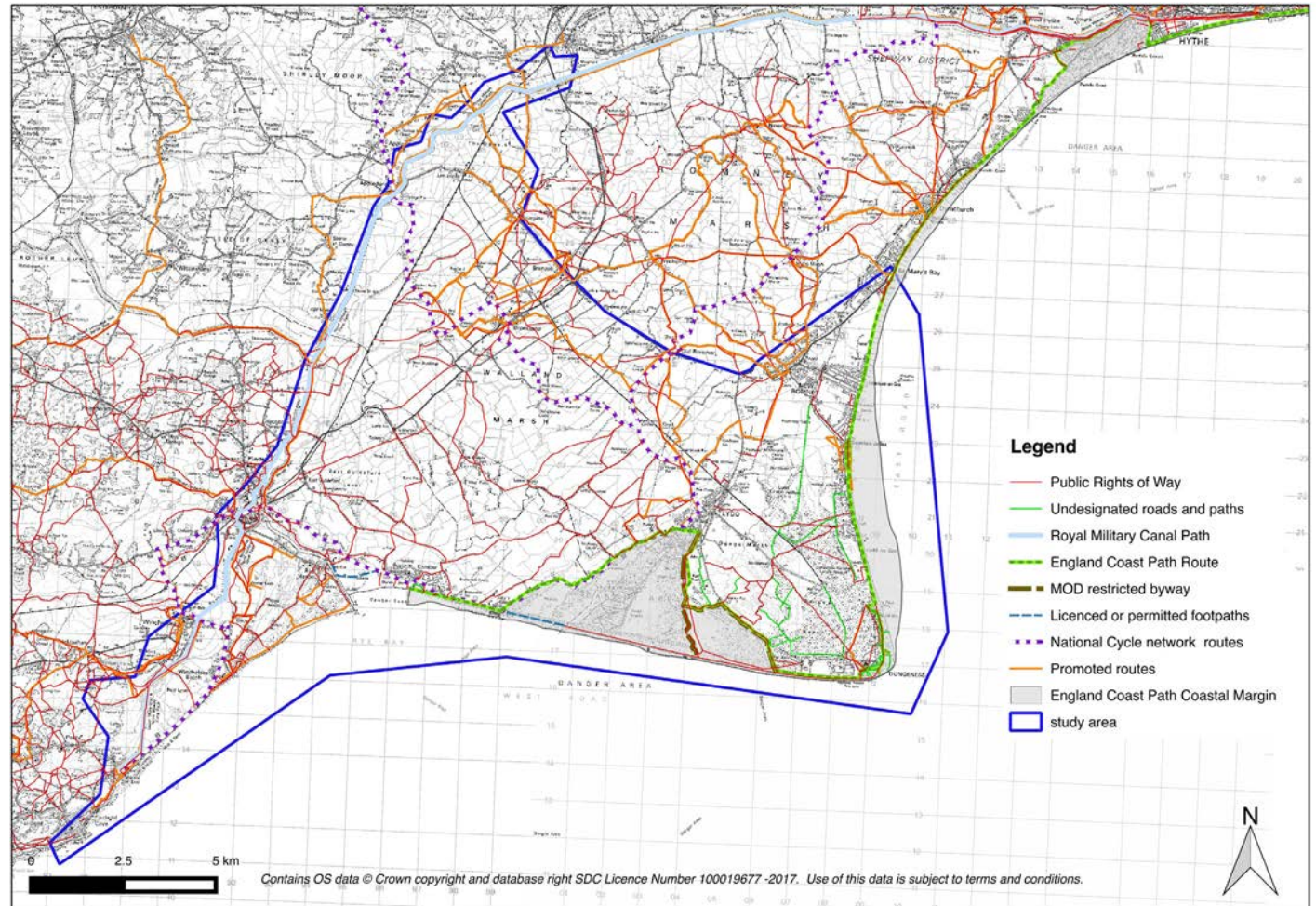
More detailed information on biodiversity is found in Supporting Document 1.



## Access and Recreation

The strategy area provides a substantial amount of public access; including areas of land and linear access through public rights of way (PROW) and other paths and routes.

Some nature reserves in the area also welcome visitors – notably the RSPB Dungeness Reserve and the Rye Harbour Reserve.

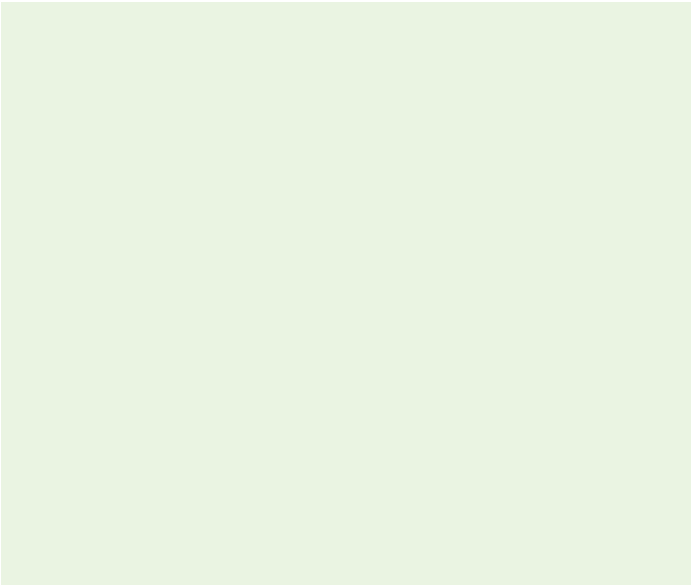


ACCESS DESIGNATIONS IN THE STRATEGY AREA

Supporting Document 2 provides the detailed information on access and recreation in the strategy area.

In summary, there is a good public rights of way network that runs through the strategy area and these are shown in red on the above plan. The coastal areas are, for the most part, well-served by local roads, and access is provided round the coast by the England Coast Path. In the more rural areas of the Marsh the PROW network provides the main means of access for walkers, with much of the land in agricultural use. The lanes here are fairly quiet and provide a useful network for cycling, and the National





Cycle Network has developed routes which provide links across the strategy area. Much of the coast is publicly accessible, and there is a wide range of beaches and resorts which are well-visited by residents, day-trippers and holiday-makers.

The linear stretches of open coastline, the ease of parking at many locations very near to the sites, and the close proximity of residential areas and holiday parks mean that visitors have easy access to the sensitive wildlife sites. The Dungeness Estate is privately owned, but visitors have enjoyed free access to large areas of the estate for many years. The high volume of visitors, range of activities and relative freedom to explore the area with few access restrictions, has resulted in some conflicts of use, and increasing visitor pressure on the sensitive wildlife. The development of the SARMS provides the opportunity to take a more strategic approach to resolving these issues and to regularising public access.

**Access issues across the Strategy Area include:**

- high levels of access to the sensitive sand dunes and areas of vegetated shingle;
- the location and use of vehicle parking areas and their effect on visitor pressure;
- inconsistent approaches to the control of access e.g. through byelaws;
- the potential for the provision of new or enhanced access to increase recreational pressure on the Natura 2000 areas;
- the lack of alternative recreation spaces to the sensitive sites – this is an issue in areas where there are currently few options for recreation other than the Natura sites;

A more integrated and joined-up approach to managing visitors will assist in protecting sensitive sites from recreational impacts; avoiding displacement to other sensitive sites, providing clarity to visitors, and providing better access controls.

More detailed information is provided on access and management arrangements in Supporting Document 2.



# Visitor Economy and Strategic Initiatives

Supporting Document 3 provides more detailed information on the visitor economy and strategic initiatives in the strategy area.

In summary, the visitor economy is a key economic driver for both Rother and Shepway; and the volume and economic value of visitors to both districts is increasing.

The rich and diverse landscape, coastline and historic towns and villages offer distinctive destinations, attracting different market sectors and providing opportunities for a diverse tourism offer.



The coast is the biggest attraction, but there are also historic towns and villages including Rye and Winchelsea. Inland, Romney Marsh has few visitor attractions, but its peaceful, flat and mostly agricultural landscape is ideal for walking and cycling. Visitors take advantage of the ease of travel to the area from London, the south-east and beyond, and are taking short breaks or making day trips.

On Romney Marsh the closure of one of the two nuclear power stations is a blow to a local economy with few large employers. The development of this otherwise rural, mostly agricultural area for tourism may appear to be an attractive option, particularly for rural or green tourism. This area's coastal resorts provide a venue for a wide range of visitors and recreational uses. Visitors come for the holiday parks, the sandy beaches and the sea. Dungeness Point provides an other-worldly experience for visitors who flock here from significant distances to see this nationally-promoted and iconic landscape. While in Rother the rich cultural heritage of Rye and the coastal charms of Camber are significant attractions for an area with a relatively weak economy. The local authorities are looking to ways of expanding their visitor offer and attracting more visitors to stay in the area. Local Plans and policies support the development of tourism and recreation, and recognise the need to grow this element of the local economy. Green tourism has been identified for its potential to offer employment opportunities throughout the year, with the suggestion of extending the traditional holiday season.

Changes in demographics and in society are resulting in changing trends in tourism and visits to the outdoors. Active leisure is a particular growth area; this includes a growth in 'experience' tourism and extreme sports, such as kite-surfing and land-yachting. The coastal areas, with their long stretches of beach and variety of seascapes, as well as the many lakes in the area, are ideal for these niche sports and other pastimes such as angling.

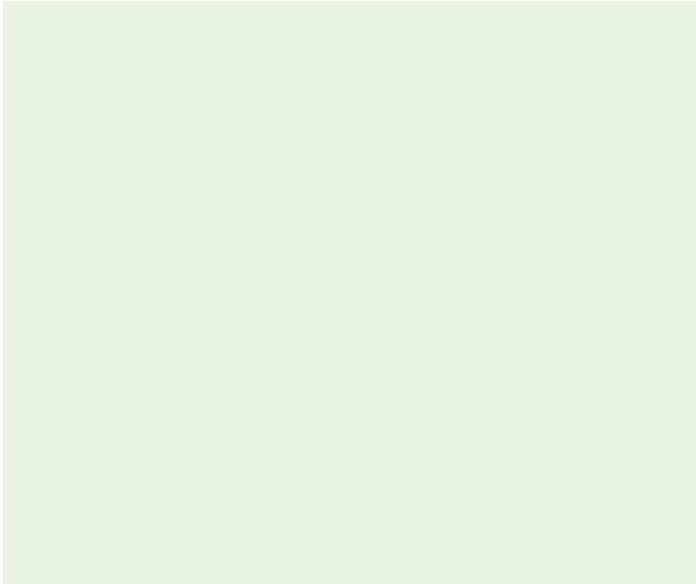
It is clear that tourism is an important component of the local economy. The different 'offer' provided to visitors by the wide range of resorts, villages and landscapes is key to the area's appeal.

But accommodating growth whilst ensuring that this does not conflict with the unique protected wildlife and habitats in the designated areas is a challenge.

The internationally important natural heritage is recognised by both district councils, but often as a separate issue; and in economic terms it can be regarded as both an opportunity and a constraint.

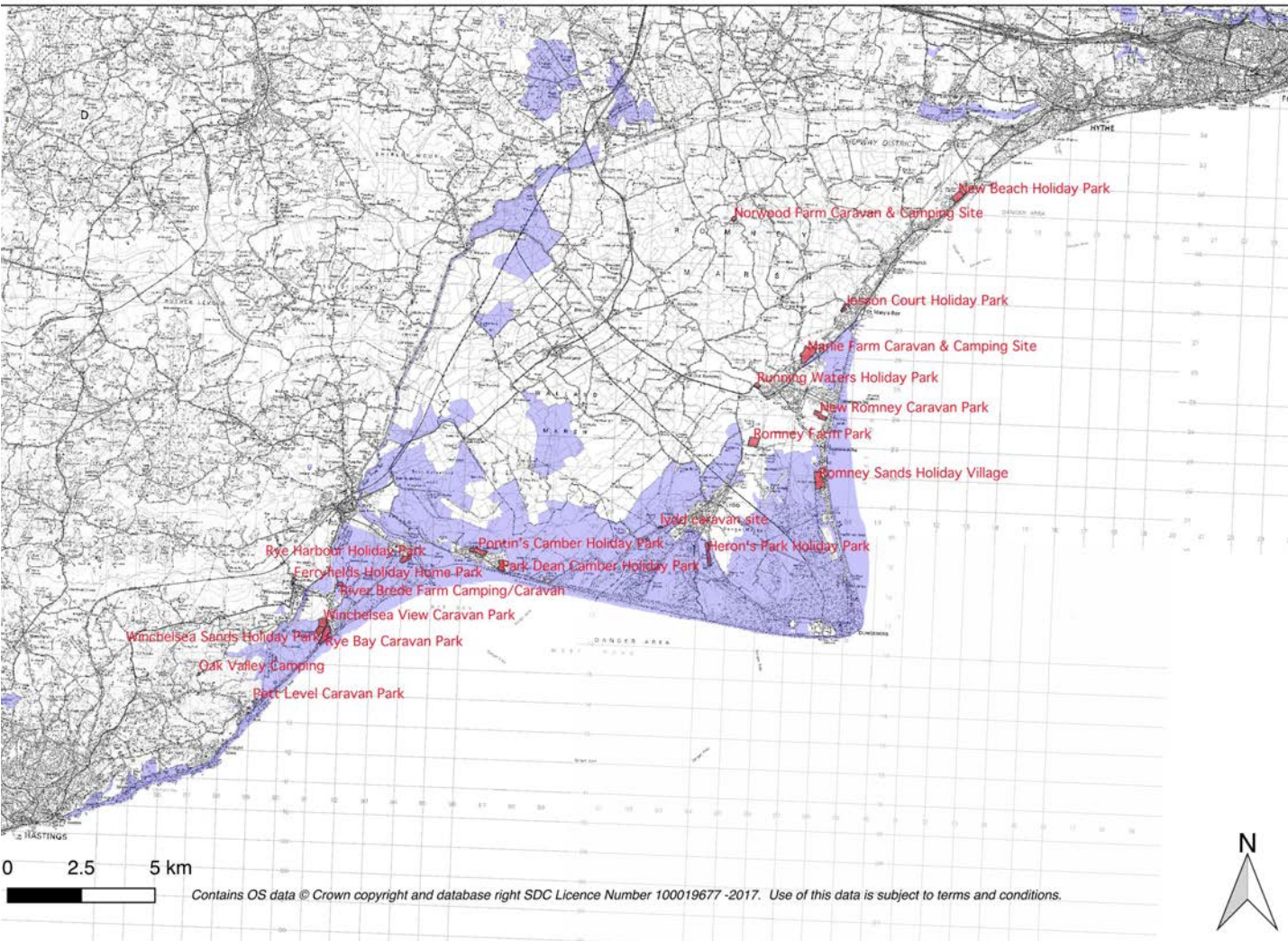
### **Visitor Accommodation**

Tourism accommodation varies across the area. However, there are a number of camping, caravanning and static van/mobile home sites around the coast, some of which are located very close to the Natura areas. In some cases, visitors staying at these sites have little option in nearby open space other than the Natura sites, placing direct pressure on these designated areas. In addition, some of the larger holiday parks are increasing their accommodation provision; and in some areas park homes are now





being sold for occupation beyond the usual holiday periods. The extension of the holiday season could have an impact on recreational pressure on the sensitive sites; in particular in the winter and early spring when over-wintering birds are present.



Location of Camping and Caravan sites and Holiday Parks

## Branding and Promotion

The way the strategy area is presented and promoted to visitors is of the utmost importance in terms of visitor management, as this could have a direct impact on the type and volume of visitors to the sites. The strategy area makes a very diverse offer to visitors and is promoted as a series of distinct 'areas' by the two district authorities and the key tourism organisations. However, there is confusion in the description of areas, and their branding. For example, the name Romney Marsh and tag line, The Fifth Continent, are widely used, but the area referred to can be vague; and the Rother part of the strategy area sits less comfortably with its surrounding 1066 Country heritage branding than other parts of the Rother district. The current approach to marketing and promotion in the strategy area is uncoordinated, with a lack of joined up delivery and patchy visitor information. This may be explained by the administrative arrangements in an area which straddles two district and two county authorities, making coordination difficult to achieve through existing mechanisms.

There is clearly a gap between the need for careful management of this sensitive area and its tourism promotion. Websites are an important source of information about the area. However, a quick review of current internet coverage reveals that messages and levels of promotion vary considerably. Camber and Dungeness for example, have gained a national profile, and are promoted widely across a variety of websites. The internet coverage tends to focus on the attractions of the area and visitor experiences. While the nature conservation interest of the sites is sometimes mentioned, the promotion does not include the behaviours required from visitors in order to conserve and protect the areas; demonstrating a lack of understanding or unwillingness to convey what may be regarded as negative messages.

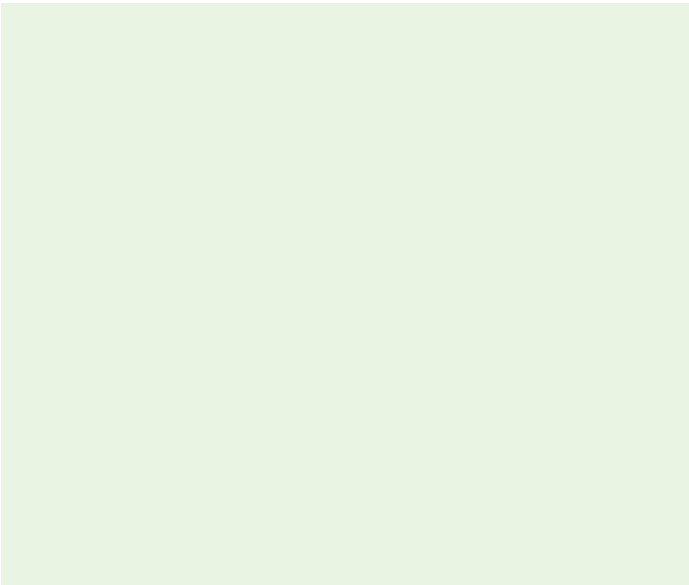
## Partnership Working

The location of the Strategy requires coordinated working across the political and administrative boundaries, and across economic and environmental sectors. The link between tourism and economic development in this area is very strong. A number of strategic initiatives and groupings are providing a good base of cross-sector support for economic development activity, as well as at the product development and delivery level. There may be potential for these organisations or groupings to extend their remit or area of operation and bring parties together to support the delivery of the SARMS into the future.

In Summary, issues to address include:-

- the extension of the tourism season into the winter months;
- the unmanaged growth of tourism businesses, leisure operators and attractions in areas where expansion or diversification may affect the levels of recreation pressure;
- the potential growth of rural tourism;
- the move towards residential ownership of properties in holiday parks;
- developing new walking and cycling routes or other activities which will attract greater numbers of visitors into sensitive areas;





There is a need to:

Minimise the recreational pressure on the designated areas and sensitive sites and at the same time support tourism and the local economy;

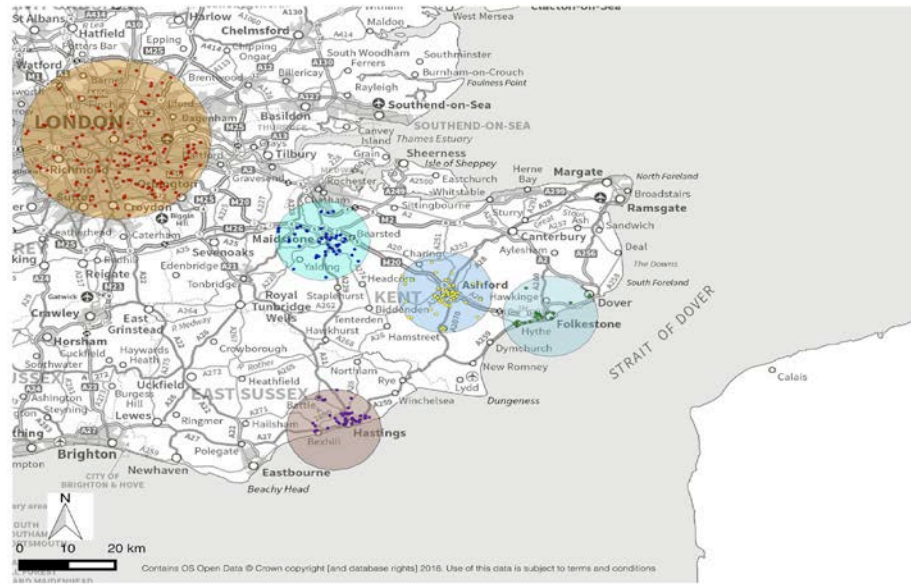
- Change perceptions regarding the wildlife interest of the area. The diversity of the area and the natural environment are positive assets that can boost the area, and should be welcomed by the tourism industry, but this will take work. This is essential, and should be central to tourism in all sectors, especially the business sector. For tourism to continue to develop and grow in this area, there needs to be a better understanding of the issues and possibilities. A cross-sector approach will help to develop a shared understanding, move ideas forward and find new ways to develop tourism.
- Strengthen the visitor offer of the area's 'natural assets' through a more coordinated, joined-up approach to promotion and marketing, working across boundaries and sectors, with neighbouring authorities, marketing organisations and other specialists;
- Consider a brand for the strategy area so that the (different) offer made by each visitor destination is distinct but part of an overall package that the area provides;
- Improve the visitor experience at the sites or attractions, by providing the visitor facilities and infrastructure necessary to support the key activities, within the site's 'natural' limits;
- Strengthen delivery through developing a more coordinated approach to planning and resourcing;
- Limit the impact of some activities – in particular those activities that may be gaining in popularity – by a range of methods e.g. on-site activity zoning, Codes of Conduct, limits on development and season of operation and - potentially - diversion to other suitable sites

More detailed information is provided on visitors and strategic initiatives in Supporting Document 3.

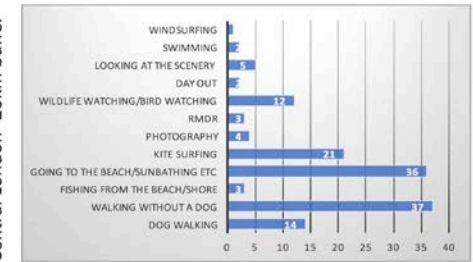


Visitors travel considerable distances to holiday in this area, or to participate in their favoured sport or activity. Most visitors travel from an area south-east of London and London itself, with some holiday-makers and specialist visitors travelling greater distances. The adjacent plan shows clusters and numbers for 75% of all visitors from the Phase 1 Visitor Survey.

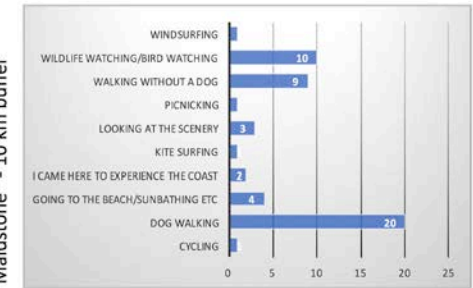
# Recreation and Visitors



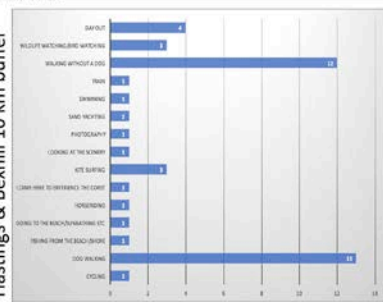
Central London -20km buffer



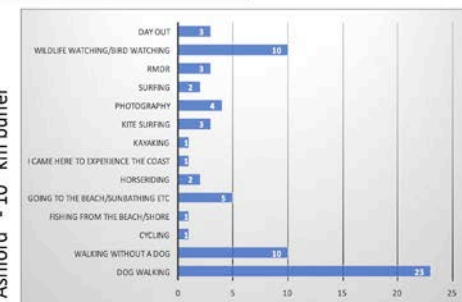
Maidstone - 10 km buffer



Hastings & Bexhill -10 km buffer



Ashford - 10 km buffer



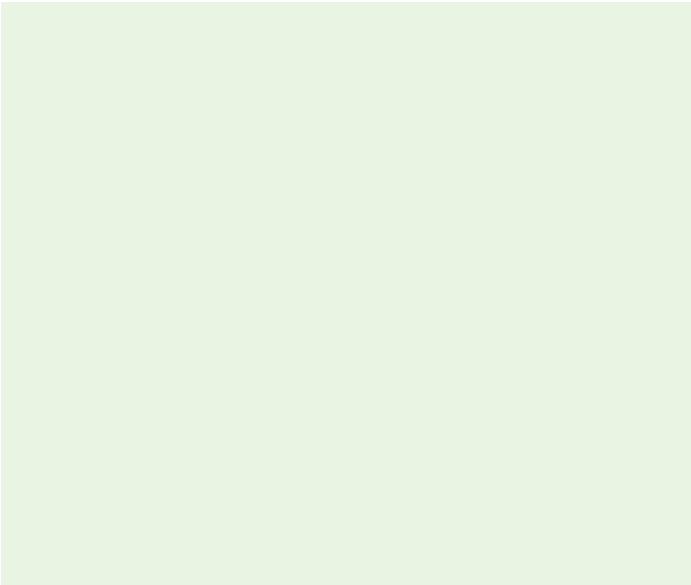
Folkestone - 10km buffer



75% OF ALL VISITORS (from Phase 1 Visitor Survey) MAIN MAP - CLUSTERS OF VISITORS ,GRAPHS - NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN ACTIVITIES PER CLUSTER AREA

Supporting Document 4 provides the detailed information on visitors and the Phase 1 visitor survey.

In summary, visitors to the sites comprise holiday makers, day trippers and local people, and include infrequent visitors and regular site users. Each site offers a different experience; this is reflected in the range of activities offered at each site. For example, the unique landscape of Dungeness attracts a very wide range of visitor types. Families arrive on the little Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch train; day-trippers come to see Prospect Cottage and its garden, or the Old Lighthouse, or to have lunch in one of the pubs on the site; anglers come to fish in the rich waters off the beach; bird-



watchers enjoy the array of bird-life on The Point or at the RSPB Reserve; and film crews and photographers come to make use of the wonderfully 'other worldly' backdrop that the site provides.

Camber, together with its neighbouring beach at Broomhill and Greatstone beach are nationally renowned hot-spots for action sports, especially kite surfing. Visitors travel great distances to enjoy a day kite-surfing or land-yachting; and activity sports businesses have set up along the coast and around nearby lakes, offering experiences and training in a range of water sports. Some of the sites have a limited visitor offer, appealing to more local visitors; whilst other sites - notably Camber and Dungeness - have a national profile, with regular articles in the national press and on many websites. This promotional profile has a significant effect on visitor numbers. The beaches at Camber with their vast stretches of sand and dunes attract thousands of visitors each year. Many of these visitors are on a day trip, but others are staying in the nearby holiday parks and camp sites which fringe the coast.

The coast is a particular draw, and not just for day-trippers or holiday-makers. Local people make regular visits to the coastal sites; and they will travel to the coast in preference to local sites. When given the choice of visiting other sites for their chosen activity, they generally expressed a preference for coastal sites.

The key activities of visitors to the area include:

- Beach activities (e.g. swimming, angling, sand-yachting);
- Water sports (e.g. kite-surfing, boating, jet-skiing, fishing from a boat);
- Other coastal activities (e.g. walking with or without a dog, cycling, wildlife watching);
- Other inland activities (e.g. lake fishing, cycling, walking with or without a dog, wildlife watching).

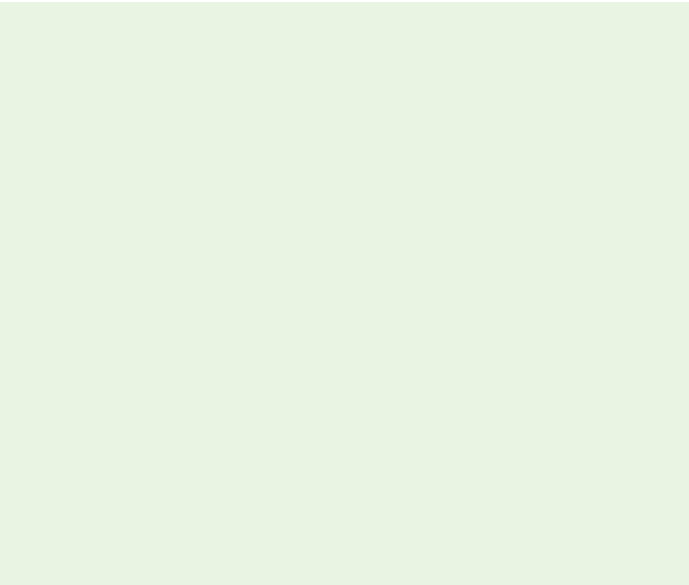
Nationally, levels of outdoor recreation are increasing, with a thirst for extreme sports, particularly watersports, and a growing interest in health and exercise.

Most regular visitors to the sites live in Shepway or Rother district, and a high proportion live within a distance of 20km. There is a particularly high proportion of dog-walkers among regular visitors. In line with the national trend the number of older visitors are increasing to the area. More leisure time and increased wealth are having a direct impact in boosting the demand for greater diversity of activities; and social media is playing a greater role in helping to connect people to sites which offer them their preferred activities.

All these factors may be contributing to an increase in the recreational pressure on sites in the strategy area. Visits to sites are affected to some extent by the seasons – particularly at coastal resorts including Camber – but generally visits are made all year round.

Many different types of activities take place on the sites. There may be one dominant activity (e.g. Broomhill for kite-surfers, Camber Sands for beach activities) or many activities taking place in the same area (e.g. Dungeness Point which attracts anglers, walkers, sightseers, bird-watchers, photographers).





Some activities known to be damaging to the sensitive features of the sites are continuing e.g. driving vehicles over the shingle and dunes and trampling over these areas, dumping rubbish, setting fires and barbecues and destroying the sand fencing that protects the integrity of the dunes and its vegetation.

In line with local and national trends, the numbers of people visiting the coast and the countryside are set to increase, with the potential for increasing pressure on the species and habitats.

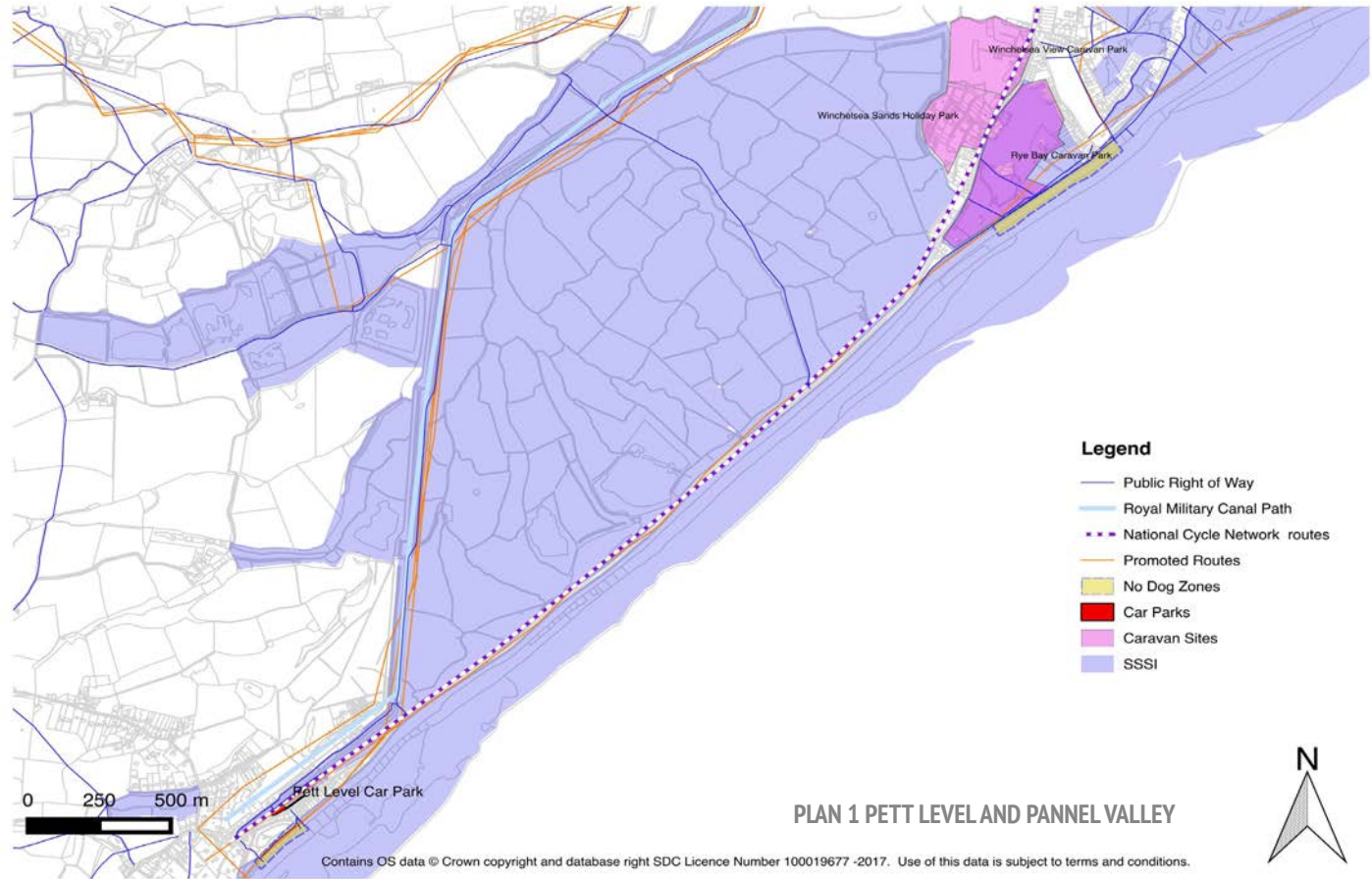
**A range of robust measures is required to address the recreational pressures. To deal with site-specific issues in more detail, the area has been divided into six sub areas including those identified in the HRA as being of particular relevance concerning visitors.**

**The reports and recommendations on each of the sub-areas follow in the next section.**

Pett Level is an area of grazing marsh extending across the low-lying land north of the coast between Pett Level and Winchelsea Beach. The Pannel Valley is a small valley running east – west from Wickham Cliff to Pannel Bridge.



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## Biodiversity

### Overview and Importance

This area is important for a range of overwintering birds with the 4th highest number of birds recorded in the latest WeBS five-year mean. There is full 5 year WeBS data.<sup>1</sup> The marshy grassland of Pett Level area attracts large flocks of wildfowl, feeding waders, birds of prey and evening roosts of starlings. Reedbeds around the pools and in the Pannel Valley attract bearded tit, Cetti's warbler, water rail, barn owl and harriers. In autumn the levels attract great flocks of wagtails, martins and swallows. The foreshore has some areas of vegetated shingle and is also important for birds.

<sup>1</sup> The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK.

## Features potentially vulnerable to recreational impacts

Feature	Natura Feature	Comments
Breeding (ground-nesting) birds <sup>1</sup>	✓	Low visitor numbers across marsh area.
Wintering birds (individual species and assemblage) <sup>2</sup>	✓	Low visitor numbers across marsh area.
Coastal vegetated shingle	✓	At some risk from trampling, as noted in SSSI condition assessment.
Grazing marsh	✗	Low visitor numbers across marsh area.
Water vole	✓	Low visitor numbers across marsh area.

### Known Pressures

The SSSI condition assessment notes some evidence of trampling of the annual vegetation of drift lines and perennial vegetation of stony banks. Wildfowling takes place.

## Access and Management

### Site Ownership and Management

The Pett Level Preservation Trust (PLPT) manages 18 acres near Cliff End village with the remainder of the Level owned and managed by farmers who graze the area. The Pannel Valley is managed as a nature reserve by a local charity, which also owns the Colonel Body Lakes within the Level.

### Byelaws, Site Rules and Codes of Conduct

- There are Rother District byelaws for Fairlight, Pett and Icklesham which include no launching or landing of boats or 'personal water craft' along the seashore;
- Dog restrictions are in force on the beach only from May to September. These restrictions are not well-signed on site;
- There are activity zones along the Winchelsea coast, including a kite-surfing zone. The level of kite-surfing activity has not been assessed and has not been observed during the period of this study.

<sup>2</sup> Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right - little tern<sup>SPA</sup> - avocet<sup>SPA</sup> - Mediterranean gull<sup>SPA</sup>. Also occasional bittern<sup>SPA</sup> (not ground nesting).

<sup>3</sup> Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right. NB, species indicated as SSSI (along with other species not listed) will also form part of the SPA/Ramsar winter assemblage qualifying feature and are therefore also Natura qualifying features in this regard - mute Swan<sup>RAMSAR</sup> - ruff<sup>SPA</sup> - shoveler<sup>SPA</sup> - golden plover<sup>SPA</sup> - coot<sup>SSSI</sup> - cormorant<sup>SSSI</sup> - gadwall<sup>SSSI</sup> - garganey<sup>SSSI</sup> - great crested grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - little grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - pochard<sup>SSSI</sup> - teal<sup>SSSI</sup> - tufted duck<sup>SSSI</sup> - water rail<sup>SSSI</sup> - whimbrel<sup>SSSI</sup> - wigeon<sup>SSSI</sup>. Sector important for lapwing.



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### Access Points and Routes

The area can be accessed from the coast road and National Cycle Route (NCR) 2 runs along the coast road. Access across Pett Level is limited to PROW. Romney Marsh Countryside Project promoted route number 10 (The Cliff End) runs around the northern edge of Pett Level. The Royal Military Canal regionally promoted walking route runs around the boundary of this sub-area, joining a section of the Saxon Shore Way.

### Areas of Unrestricted Access

Access is limited to rights of way. Few people access the Level and wandering from the rights of way is limited due to the presence of numerous ditches. Access to the foreshore and seawall is unrestricted.

### Parking

There is a very small free of charge car park in Pett village, but visitors park along the side of the coastal road next to the sea defence, which provides easy access over the sea wall to the beach.

## Visitors

### Visitor Numbers

There is no record of the number of visitors to this sub-area. Discussion with PLPT and residents indicates that visitor numbers on the Level itself are low, with more visitors to the coast.

### Visitor Profile, Origin and Seasonality

There is no evidence on the profile of visitors, although there are several caravan and mobile home sites in the area and this type of accommodation is particularly attractive to families. It would be useful to gather data on the volume and seasonality of visitors to these sites, potentially from discussion with the few accommodation providers and attractions in the area. There is no data on visitor origin or seasonality (this site was not surveyed in the Phase 1 survey). The nearby caravan sites are open from March to October, but there are growing numbers of privately-owned mobile homes in the area, potentially increasing visitor numbers at other times of the year.

### Activities

The main activities are walking with and without dogs on the Level and the coast, some horse riding at low tide and cycling along the coast road on NCR 2. Most people visit the coast and beach rather than the Level. Birdwatchers view the Level from the seawall. Access across the Level is restricted to rights of way and residents indicate that the many ditches deter people from wandering.



Tim Hodson

## Visitor Information and Awareness.

### Promotion

This area lies at the edge of East Sussex County and Rother District and is part of Rother District Council's '1066 Country' tourism promotion area. However, there appears to be very little promotion of this area either on or off-site. There are few other nearby attractions, helping to keep the place special and quiet, with the main attractors being the coast and the natural beauty of the Level.

### Information Sources

The main sources of information are walking and cycling leaflets from the RMCP and some websites. There is no apparent coordination of effort regarding the promotion of this area e.g. as part of a suite of destinations. This is helpful in terms of the conservation of the sensitive wildlife areas as it is not promoted as a destination.

### On-Site Information

There is little interpretation. A very old interpretive panel at the western end of Winchelsea/Pett beach has information on the submerged ancient forest. There is little or no information on the importance of the area for wildlife, and no information to raise awareness of visitor activity which could be harmful to wildlife. There are several types of signs by different organisations e.g. Rother DC, Pett Level Trust and Pett Parish. The quality and forms of message vary and there is no coordination or consistency in approach.

### Visitor Awareness and Behaviour

No data.

## Visitor Facilities

### Visitor Facilities

There are few visitor facilities in this area. There is a club/pub at the back of the beach at Pett Village and a pub close to the beach. The lack of facilities may help to keep this area quiet. However, the market for caravanning, motorhomes and mobile holiday homes appears very buoyant, with some large caravan parks. These parks offer their own on-site facilities. Further growth of caravan parks would bring more visitors to the area and, potentially, more recreational pressure.

### Visitor Accommodation

There are three caravanning/camping sites in the sub-area, very close to the coast: Winchelsea Sands Holiday Park, Winchelsea View Caravan Park and Rye Bay Caravan Park. All are open March to October and accommodate touring caravans and



motorhomes, static caravans and mobile homes. They also sell mobile homes to private buyers who may then use/occupy the homes for many months of the year.

### Local Attractions

No attractions in this sub-area. Rye Harbour LNR is to the east and can be reached on foot or cycle along a permissive route through the LNR. There is some heritage interest from defensive installations from the Napoleonic War and WW2 on the Royal Military Canal path.

## Future Plans and Projects

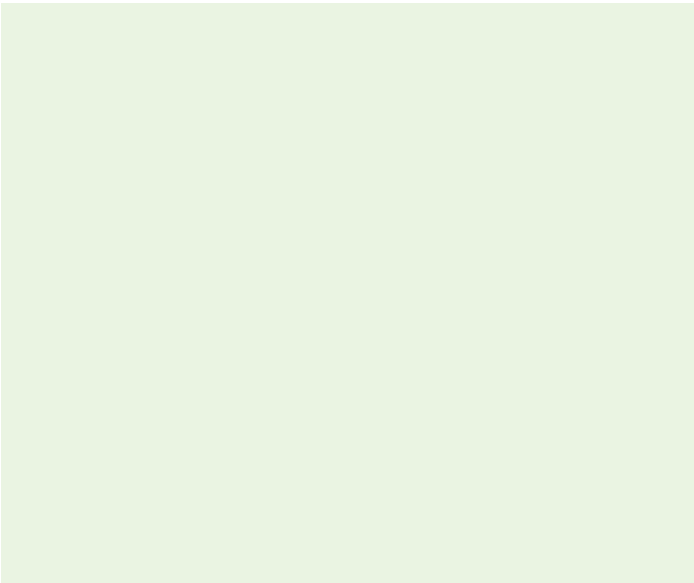
None known.

## Conclusions and Actions

The coast and beach appear to be the main attractors to this sub-area, although there are no visitor attractions or facilities and limited parking, so it remains one of the quieter sections of coast in the strategy area. The lack of PRow across the Level, along with the presence of many ditches, limits access. The Royal Military Canal Path (also the Saxon Shore Way at this point) forms the northern boundary of the Level. Any future plans to upgrade this route to cycling and to increase visitors to this quiet part of the strategy area should be carefully assessed.

Several large caravan parks are located adjacent to the designated areas at Winchelsea beach, along with a smaller park at Pett. This is clearly a popular location for caravans. There may be pressure for these sites to increase their capacity; and some park-home sites may be selling mobile homes to private owners. The result could be an increase in the number of visitors staying close to the sensitive sites, and beyond the usual holiday periods. This could increase recreational pressure at the times of year when wildlife may be more sensitive to disturbance e.g. when over-wintering birds are present.

This area is somewhat detached from the rest of the Dungeness complex. However, it is an important area and supports key features and species and should, therefore, be included more fully in a co-ordinated approach. This sub-area (together with Rye Harbour) is located outside the Fifth Continent (HLF) Landscape Partnership Scheme area. It would be beneficial to include these sub-areas in some Fifth Continent project-related work (e.g. interpretation and potentially a joint approach to branding), even if the area remained outside the HLF project boundary.



There is very little information overall on visitor numbers in this sub-area. Anecdotally it is understood that there are low numbers of visitors in the winter, but there is no data. There are also reports of kitesurfing taking place at Winchelsea Beach. This situation should be monitored. The caravan sites at the eastern end of Winchelsea Beach are located right at the boundary of the SSSI.

There is also an area of houses (The Ridge) that is surrounded by the SSSI. Any intensification of recreational use will need to be assessed.

The lack of open space apart from the beach and rights of way may place additional pressure on other sites for recreation.

### Actions

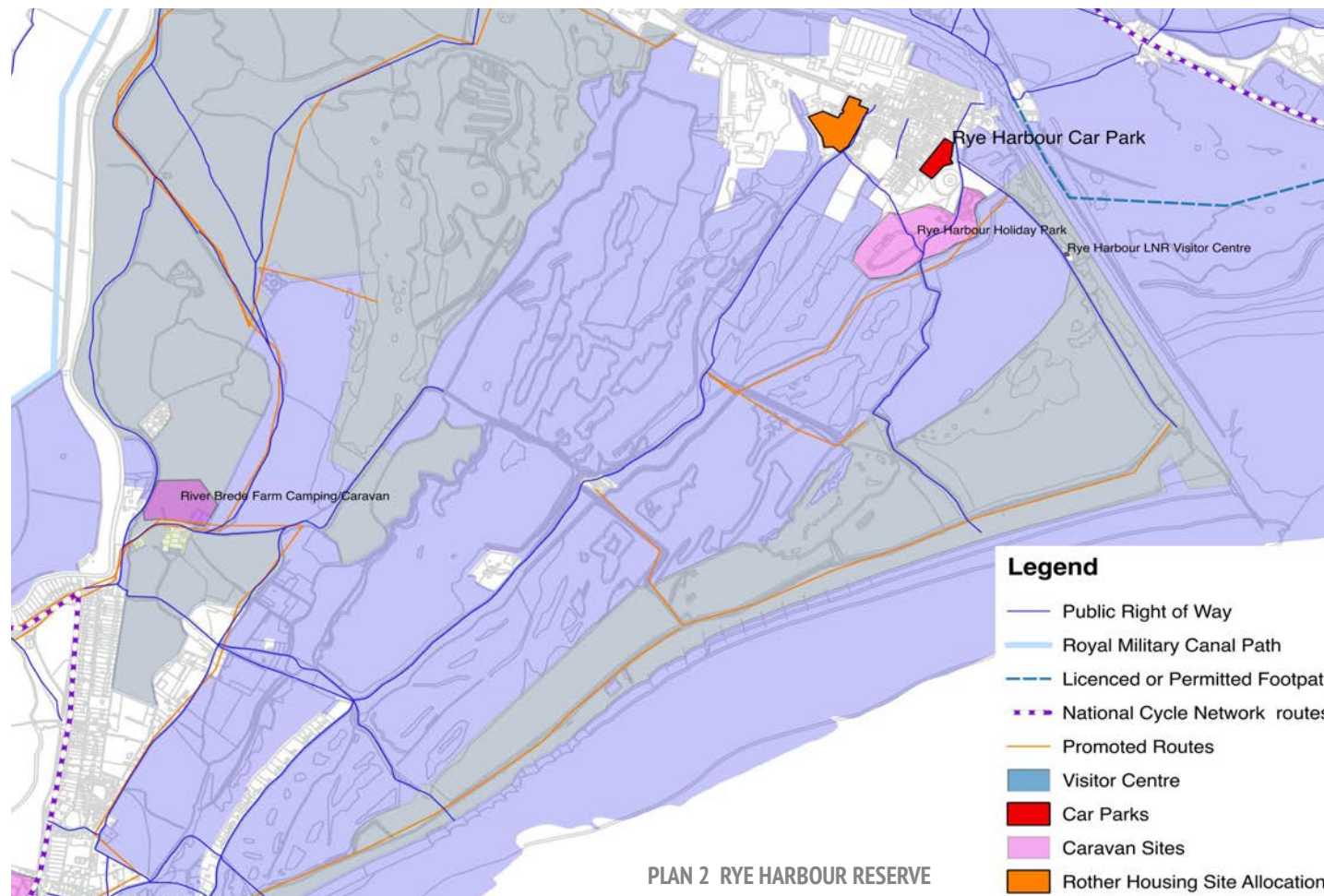
PL1	Raise awareness of visitors about the nature conservation interest and sensitivities of the area	PL1.1	Include caravan parks in this area in a wider information campaign to raise awareness of sensitive wildlife features.
		PL1.2	Install signs on seawall and other areas to inform visitors of nature conservation interest.
PL2	Incorporate this area more fully into the Dungeness complex	PL2.1	Consider how this area could be linked to the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme.
		PL2.2	Incorporate this area into future partnership working.
PL3	Monitoring	PL3.1	Develop a programme of monitoring of visitors, including the use of the Royal Military Canal Path and Saxon Shore Way;
		PL3.2	Develop a programme of monitoring of bird disturbance;



This sub-area includes Rye Harbour Reserve, the marshy grassland around Camber Castle and the land in between these two areas known as The Nook. The eastern boundary is the River Rother and the northern boundary the A259



Creative Commons Paul Englefield



## Biodiversity

### Overview and Importance

This area is very important for a wide range of overwintering birds. It is the primary location in the strategy area for ground nesting breeding Little Tern, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern and Mediterranean Gull as well as several species of breeding duck and wader. This area had the highest number of birds recorded in the latest WeBS 5-year mean.<sup>1</sup> It provides day and night roosting areas for many species, with some evidence that it is an important refuge area for birds disturbed from other nearby areas, including Winchelsea and Camber.

<sup>1</sup> Previously the highest was the Walland Marsh sector but no recent data exists for this sector, see Supporting Document 1.

The shingle ridges include areas of coastal vegetated shingle. Other habitats include saltmarsh, saline lagoons, reedbed and open water. The site has ten species of breeding seabirds, five breeding waders, abundant sea pea, sea heath and sea kale. Bittern reliably appear at Castle Water with this area also hosting large flocks of lapwing, golden plover and oystercatcher. The site is also important for vegetated shingle, with ephemeral vegetation near the coast with more established shingle vegetation inland. There is good biodiversity data, with a recent full 5 year WeBS data and biodiversity information gathered by Sussex Wildlife Trust.

### Features potentially vulnerable to recreational impacts:

Feature	Natura Feature	Comments
Breeding (ground-nesting) birds <sup>2</sup>	✓	Largely protected due to controlled visitor access, clear waymarking, designated paths and fenced areas.
Wintering birds (individual species and assemblage) <sup>3</sup>	✓	
Vegetated shingle inland and coastal – geomorphological and vegetation features	✓	
Saltmarsh	✓	Along River Rother although access to the riverside is limited. Potentially one area more accessible near to Lime Kiln Cottage.
Saline lagoons	✓	Largely inaccessible (within fenced areas).
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	✗	Lower visitor numbers across grassland areas.

### Known Pressures

There are visible signs of trampling around the visitor centre (Lime Kiln Cottage). Although there are high levels of visitors, extensive areas of the reserve are not accessible due to electrified fencing. This protects the more sensitive areas from visitor pressure, as well as from dogs and predators.

<sup>2</sup> Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right - little tern<sup>SPA</sup> – Sandwich tern<sup>SPA</sup> – common tern<sup>SPA</sup> – avocet<sup>SPA</sup> - Mediterranean gull<sup>SPA</sup>. Also bittern<sup>SPA</sup> (not ground nesting).

<sup>3</sup> Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right. NB, species indicated as SSSI (along with other species not listed) will also form part of the SPA/Ramsar winter assemblage qualifying feature and are therefore also Natura qualifying features in this regard - mute swan<sup>RAMSAR</sup> - ruff<sup>SPA</sup> - shoveler<sup>SPA</sup> – golden plover<sup>SPA</sup> - common sandpiper<sup>SSSI</sup> - coot<sup>SSSI</sup> - cormorant<sup>SSSI</sup> – gadwal<sup>SSSI</sup> - garganey<sup>SSSI</sup> - great crested grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> – little grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> – pochard<sup>SSSI</sup> – sanderling<sup>SSSI</sup> - teal<sup>SSSI</sup> – tufted duck<sup>SSSI</sup> – water rail<sup>SSSI</sup> – whimbrel<sup>SSSI</sup> - wigeon<sup>SSSI</sup> – white-fronted goose (European)<sup>SSSI</sup>.



Shirokazan

# Access and Management

## Site Ownership and Management

Rye Harbour Reserve and areas managed by Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) form most of this sub-area. The water at Rye Harbour Reserve is managed by Romney Marshes Area IDB ( Internal Drainage Board) SWT manages two distinct areas, separated by land outside the reserve (but within the SSSI, SPA and Ramsar) which is in multiple ownership. The southern area of reserve is owned by the Environment Agency and leased to and managed by SWT. The northern area (Castle Farm) is in private ownership (with several landowners) and managed by SWT through management agreements (465Ha). SWT own Castle Water. The historic Camber Castle is in this area and is owned and managed by Historic England. SWT has an on-site Reserve Manager and a detailed management plan covering 2012 - 2021. There is also a Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve group which has been operating since 1973, which, amongst other things, fundraises for the reserve. The Environment Agency is responsible for sea defences, moving large volumes of shingle across the site, in order to manage the sea defences. This results in periods of movement of heavy lorries through parts of the site.

## Byelaws, Site Rules and Codes of Conduct

There is a comprehensive list of byelaws produced by East Sussex County Council (ESCC ) which apply to Rye Harbour LNR. However, they do not apply to those areas outside of the LNR (the privately owned central section) Rye Harbour – There are byelaws relating to vessels entering, using or leaving the Harbour of Rye, these are produced by the Environment Agency as part of the Access to the Countryside Policy.

## Access Points and Routes

Access to the reserve is from Rye, Rye Harbour and Winchelsea Beach from four main access points:

- The Main car park at the end of Harbour Road;
- Winchelsea Beach;
- The track from Ternery Pools;
- Rye Harbour Caravan Park.

Public access is permitted in much of the site, with permissive and promoted routes in and around the reserve, as well as PRow. These are connected to other promoted routes leading to Rye and the Royal Military Canal. RMCP promoted route No 9 'Man the Castle' runs through the reserve, as does the Saxon Shore Way and the Winchelsea Walk. National Cycle Route (NCR) 2 passes close to the site. Cyclists may ride along Harbour Road and along a Sustrans-supported path through the reserve site to Winchelsea Beach under a permissive arrangement with the reserve. No horse riding is permitted. Access is not permitted within fenced areas.



LNR Alastair Cambell

### Areas of Unrestricted Access

Within the LNR areas outside of the footpaths are fenced. Only the footpaths are accessible to visitors. The beach area is accessible to visitors.

### Parking

There is a large public car park with 180 spaces. Parking is currently free, although the Parish Council took over management responsibility in 2016 and ask for voluntary contributions. They may levy charges in future.

## Visitors

### Visitor Numbers

Rye Harbour reserve receives around 300k visitors each year. Numbers of car parked are recorded and periodically numbers of visitors at four access points. Most people access the reserve from the main car park:

- 64.8% of visitors enter from the car park along the main track (also a cycle route);
- 15.7% of visitors enter from Winchelsea Beach;
- 13.9% of visitors enter from the track from Corner Pools (north of Ternery Pool);
- 5.6% of visitors enter from Rye Harbour Caravan site entrance.

Car parking data indicate that visitor numbers are increasing. Numbers were fairly stable between 2001 and 2010, with a gradual rise to 2013. Numbers increased sharply between 2013 to 2015, with a 20.5% increase in numbers. Further data on visitors is available in the site management plan and in the car park data summary report 2001 – 2015.

### Visitor Profile,

Rye Harbour car park was a survey location in Phase 1. Rye Harbour reserve attracts a mixture of visitors: wildlife watchers, holiday-makers, day-trippers, residents, walkers and dog walkers, families and cyclists. The on-site Phase 1 survey showed:

- 75% of visitors were on a day trip and 25% were on holiday;
- 50% of visitors were over 50 years old.

### Visitor Origin and Catchment Area

The Phase 1 survey showed that 96% of visitors travel to the site by car. The site attracts visitors from a wide area; with 29% of visitors travelling more than 55km to the site.

Just over half the visitors in the on-site Phase 1 survey indicated they visited the site equally all year. The reserve attracts infrequent visits, with 60% of visitors either first time visitors, or who visit the site less than once a month.



Leonard Bentley



### Activities

Wildlife watching is popular: in the Phase 1 online survey, 72% of those who visited the Dungeness sites for wildlife watching went to Rye Harbour and Winchelsea. The Phase I surveys showed walking as the main activity at Rye Harbour reserve (43% on-site visitor survey; 45% on-line survey) and that over a third of visitors (36%) walked the linear route from the car park to the sea and back. Fishing takes place on the lakes immediately adjacent to the reserve.

## Visitor Information and Awareness

### Promotion

Information is available on and off-site. The reserve is promoted on several websites: Wild Rye; Sussex Wildlife Trust; rxwildlife; rye-harbour; visit 1066 country. SWT produces leaflets and runs events. Walk leaflets are available in the local shop, holiday park and Rye town. The site does not link to any specific brand and although promoted as a nature reserve, the appeal of the reserve is very broad. Events are run at Rye Harbour reserve, particularly in the school holidays.

The site does not link to any specific brand; and although promoted as a nature reserve, the appeal of the reserve is very broad. Moreover, the reserve is clearly part of a wider 'nature and recreation' offer which could include other parts of the Romney Marsh (that is to say the rest of the strategy area) in a more sustainable approach to nature tourism. In profile terms, the sub-area falls between the Romney Marsh, The High Weald AONB and '1066 Country' as promoted by Rother DC. However, it could be more effectively branded as part of Dungeness complex.

### On-Site Information

Interpretive panels detailing wildlife interest are at Lime Kiln Cottage, the car park information kiosk and around the site. The quality of signage and interpretation is variable. The focus is on wildlife and learning and some of the panels (e.g. at the car park kiosk) are recent and in good condition. However, the site would benefit from an overall interpretive plan, potentially as part of the visitor centre development (see later).

### Visitor Awareness and Behaviour

In the Phase 1 survey awareness of wildlife interest was good:

- 85% of visitors knew the site was important for wildlife;
- Over half (52%) of visitors could give at least one example of a protected feature of the site (mostly birds);
- 84% of visitors had seen an information board;
- When asked how visitors can help to protect wildlife, a number of visitors gave a response relating to the protection of wildlife. Although most responses related to litter, dog control and dog mess.



Tom Lee

## Visitor Facilities

### Visitor Facilities

There is a good network of paths, mostly flat and well-surfaced, as well as bird watching hides, benches and bins. Site information is available at the visitor building at Lime Kiln Cottage. There are no public toilets but these are available near the main car park. A shop, pub and café are located near the car park. In the Phase 1 survey more seats and dog waste bins were requested by visitors.

### Visitor Accommodation

Rye Harbour Holiday Park is located near the boundary of the reserve, providing static caravans and touring pitches for caravans and motorhomes. It is a large site, with visitor facilities, and is open March to October. The reserve provides the closest recreational site for park residents. The park permits dogs.

### Local Attractions

Camber Castle is within the sub-area. Rye Nook Fishery is based at Rye Harbour on the land between the areas of reserve. The fishery comprises four gravel pit lakes and covers 100 acres. Rye historic town is nearby. Winchelsea Beach and Pett Level are accessible at the western end of the reserve.

## Future Plans and Projects

### Development

Rother DC's Local Plan (2011-2028) proposes at least 10,000sqm of employment floorspace at Rye Harbour Road industrial estate and up to 400 new dwellings in the Rye and Rye Harbour village area. The 2013 SHLAA identifies the potential for 40 dwellings in Rye Harbour village up to 2028 to contribute to the 400 required new dwellings. Rother DC's DASA<sup>4</sup> seeks to retain and extend the 'gap' between Rye citadel, Harbour Road and Rye Harbour and include the 'sensitive riverside margin'.

### New Visitor Centre

There are plans to develop a new, larger visitor centre on the site of the existing centre at Lime Kiln Cottage, with greatly enhanced visitor facilities. This will attract more visitors to the reserve and enable more schools and other educational visits to take place.

<sup>4</sup> Rother District Council Development and Site Allocations Local Plan – Options and Preferred Options for public consultation December 20



# Conclusions and Actions

The reserve is also very popular as a recreational area and attracts high numbers of visitors. Although a wildlife reserve, its appeal is not confined to wildlife watchers, with walkers, cyclists and families regularly visiting. The access track is level and flat, making this an easily accessible route to the sea.

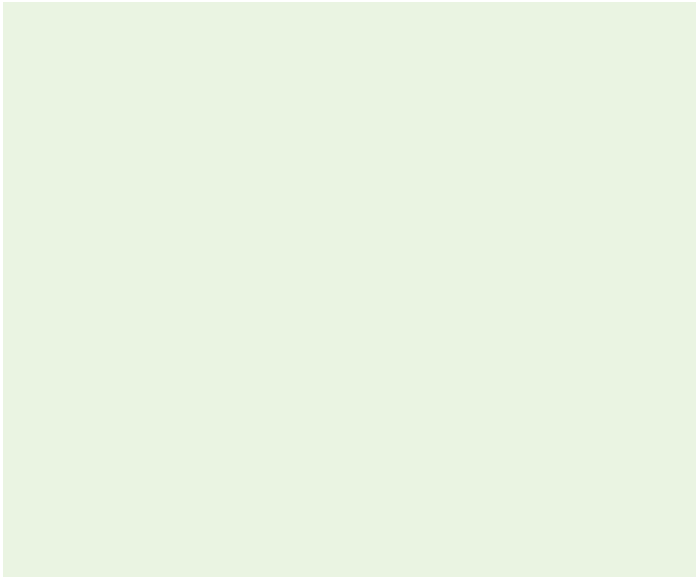
Despite the presence of sensitive habitats and species the existing visitor management, and in particular fenced-off areas, mean that these are largely protected. The site management plan indicates that the reserve can accommodate more visitors. The ability for the site to do this without harming the sensitive biodiversity relies on the current visitor management continuing and this will require continued capital and revenue funding. The plan to develop a visitor centre on the site of Lime Kiln Cottage is likely to attract more visitors, widen audiences and broaden the scope of the educational and recreational offer. This has great potential to make the reserve a valuable gateway site, to raise visitor awareness at this site and to benefit other sites in the Dungeness complex. However, Rye Harbour reserve is not currently part of any wider initiative or grouping e.g. it is not part of the Fifth Continent (HLF) Landscape Partnership Scheme; and although the Site Manager attends meetings informally, it does not fall under the umbrella of the Dungeness NNR partnership. The Fifth Continent Project LPS is developing proposals for branding and marketing of the wider Romney Marsh and Dungeness area. The inclusion of Rye Harbour reserve, although not within the LPS area, could benefit from this initiative.

Although there was a high level of awareness of the wildlife value of the site, visitors were not necessarily aware of what actions they need to take to protect the wildlife interest. Messages need to appeal not only to wildlife enthusiasts, but also to the site's wider range of existing and future visitors.

### Actions:

RH1	Position Rye Harbour as a gateway site for the wider Dungeness Complex		Rye Harbour to be included in a strategy area-wide approach to visitor management; to include visitor 'hubs' or 'gateway' sites, where visitors may enjoy facilities and be invited to find out more about the range of sites in the area.
RH2	Develop interpretation for wide audiences	RH2.1	Develop and implement a programme to appeal to the site's mostly infrequent visitors.

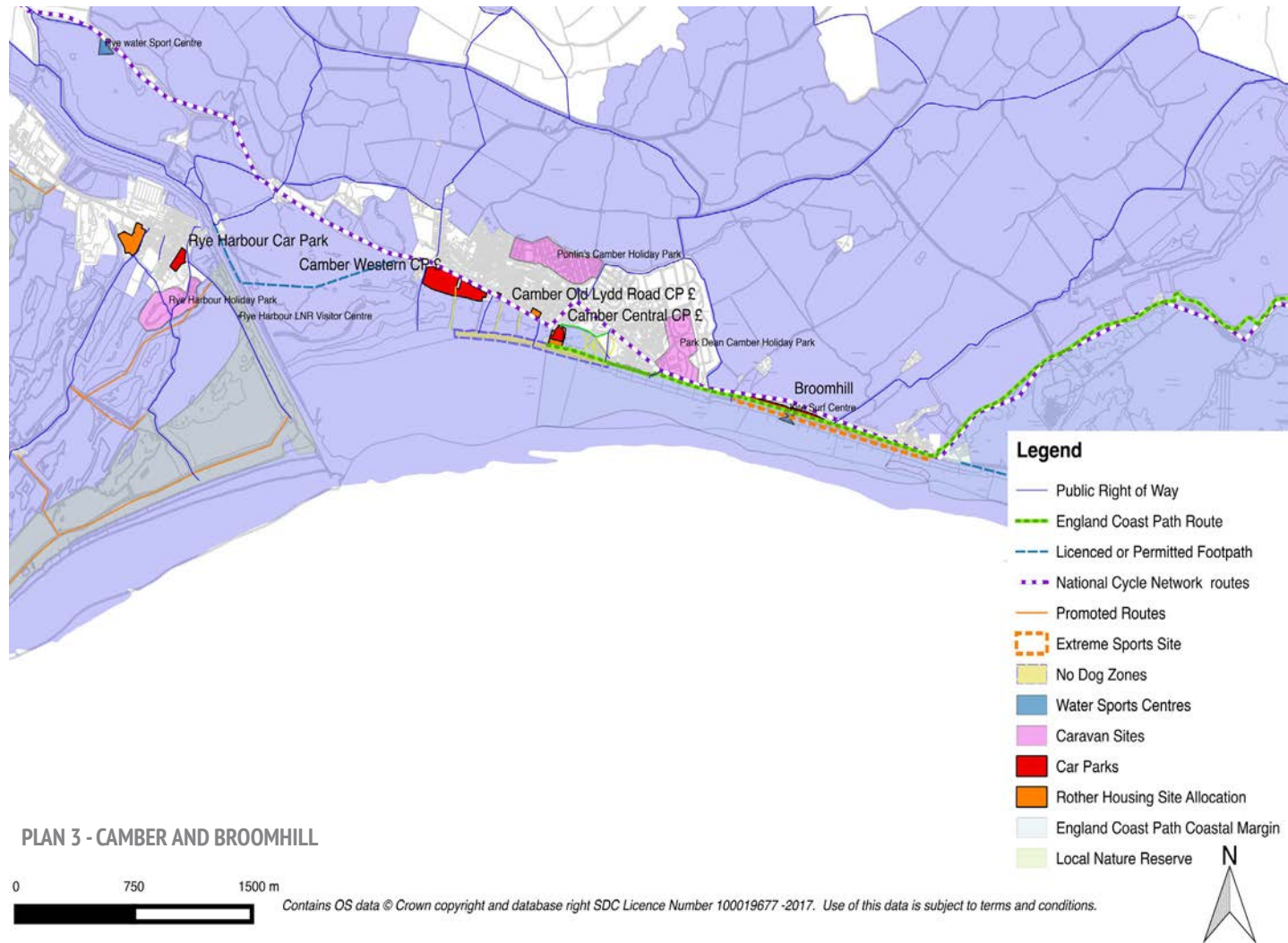




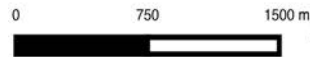
RH3	Secure funding mechanisms for Rye Harbour reserve to ensure continued high-quality visitor management	RH3.1	Seek additional funding if necessary to deliver high quality interpretation.
		RH3.2	Ensure that visitor centre is self-sufficient and does not cause funding insecurity.
		RH3.3	Consider better integration with the car park (as this largely serves the reserve), and investigate the potential of the reserve receiving a proportion of any future parking fee.
RH4	Bring Rye Harbour reserve more fully into Dungeness Complex partnership working	RH4.1	Bring Rye Harbour reserve more fully into a broader strategic planning and delivery partnership which covers the wider Dungeness complex (see also action RH4.2)
		RH4.2	Assess opportunities to link with and benefit from the Fifth Continent LPS.
RH5	Non-reserve area outside the LNR designated area	RH5.1	With the agreement of landowners, consider monitoring lake areas just outside the reserve as potential functional areas for wildlife (notably birds).
RH6	Access Promotion	RH6.1	Access promotion should pay due regard to the designated areas, and provide information to visitors e.g. to keep dogs on leads in some areas, if necessary.

This area covers the coast and coastal margin east of the River Rother between Rye and Jury's Gap, including Rye Watersports, Camber beach, dunes and village and Broomhill Sands. The area immediately to the north of the coastal margin is included in the Romney Marsh sub-area.

Camber is one of the more deprived communities in Rother, being geographically and economically isolated and dependent on a highly seasonal tourist trade. It attracts thousands of holiday-makers each year, drawn by its wide stretches of sandy beaches. The shingle beach at Broomhill is nationally renowned as a kite-surfing venue.



PLAN 3 - CAMBER AND BROOMHILL



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## Biodiversity

### Overview and Importance

- Rye Harbour Farm, Rye Saltings and Camber Road Pits: The saltmarsh, former gravel pits and farmland bordering the River Rother contain saltmarsh and mudflat habitat and are part of the SPA and Ramsar. Intertidal areas are grazed by sheep and are used as feeding and roosting habitat by a wide range of waterbirds;
- Camber Dunes: There are two distinct sections to the Camber Dunes system. To the north is Rye Golf Course on the stabilised dunes. To the east are the less stable dunes that run along the back of the beach at Camber. The dunes themselves are

mainly covered by the SSSI designation, with only a small part falling within the SPA and Ramsar. This is an important dune system in southern England and supports many scarce plants;

- Camber to Broomhill Foreshore: The beach to the foot of the dunes is within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA. Camber Sands is included within the Rye Bay WeBS count sector but the short section of foreshore to the east at Broomhill Sands is not subject to any regular bird surveys. The entire foreshore provides suitable feeding habitat at low tide for wading birds such as oystercatcher, ringed plover, sanderling, dunlin and curlew.

### Features Potentially Vulnerable to Recreational Impacts

Feature	Natura Feature	Comments
Breeding (ground-nesting) birds	✓	In The Midrips but limited accessibility.
Wintering birds (individual species and assemblage) <sup>1</sup>	✓	Along foreshore, on grazing marshes and adjacent to River Rother and in Northpoint Pit (Rye watersports). Recreational activity in all areas but intensity varies (see text).
Vegetated shingle inland and coastal – geomorphological and vegetation features	✓	Vegetated shingle at Broomhill Sands, around Jury's Gut and in The Midrips but limited accessibility.
Rare or vulnerable species	✗	Plants of sand dunes.
Saltmarsh	✓	Along River Rother; although there is footpath access the level of visitors is currently low (parking and access is difficult).
Mobile dunes (higher vulnerability), fixed dunes	✗	Erosion caused by recreation evident and severe in places in mobile dunes. Access to fixed dunes (Rye Golf Course) is limited and well controlled.
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	✗	Currently low visitor numbers across grassland areas.

### Known Pressures

Recreation is a known cause of dune erosion: “The main factor contributing to dune deflation at Camber is the large numbers of recreational visitors that enter the dunes each summer. Currently, there is no control on where visitors can access the dune

<sup>1</sup> Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right. NB, species indicated as SSSI (along with other species not listed) will also form part of the SPA/Ramsar winter assemblage qualifying feature and are therefore also Natura qualifying features in this regard - mute swan<sup>RAMSAR</sup> - ruff<sup>SPA</sup> - shoveler<sup>SPA</sup> (low numbers) – golden plover<sup>SPA</sup> common sandpiper<sup>SSSI</sup> - coot<sup>SSSI</sup> - cormorant<sup>SSSI</sup> – gadwall<sup>SSSI</sup> - great crested grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> – little grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> – pochard<sup>SSSI</sup> (low numbers) – sanderling<sup>SSSI</sup> - teal<sup>SSSI</sup> – tufted duck<sup>SSSI</sup> (low numbers) – whimbrel<sup>SSSI</sup> - wigeon<sup>SSSI</sup>. Also winter hen harrier<sup>SPA</sup> roost and breeding avocet<sup>SPA</sup> in The Midrips.



Split the Kipper

system, resulting in large-scale trampling and loss of the dune vegetation which is essential for dune stabilisation.”<sup>2</sup> Deflation is currently greatest around the Camber Central Car Park. This unit of the SSSI is in unfavourable recovering condition due to dune erosion.

There are areas of saltmarsh and bird feeding and roosting areas on the eastern bank of the River Rother which are potentially sensitive, but access to these areas is difficult and levels of visitors are currently low.

## Access

### Site Ownership and Management

The eastern part of Camber Beach and dunes is owned by Rother District Council and the middle section is owned by East Sussex County Council. The western end is owned by Rye Golf Course. The saltmarsh and land adjoining the River Rother is in multi ownership, including Rother District Council and the Environment Agency. Rother District Council owns Broomhill Sands.

Rother District Council, employs two full-time Coast Control Officers (east and west) who are based at Central Car Park, Camber park from 1st April 2017 to 30th October. The busy sections of the foreshore are patrolled by additional seasonal staff during July and August. There is now Lifeguard presence from the end of May to 1st October, and a Beach Patrol in the school summer holiday period. East Sussex County Council do not have an on-site staff presence but periodically visit the site to address issues and carry out low level routine maintenance.

### Byelaws, Site Rules and Codes of Conduct

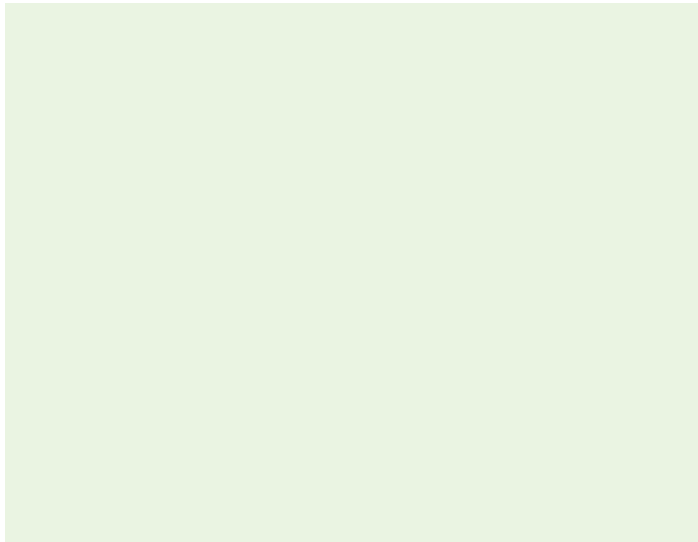
Rother DC sign boards detail the site ‘rules’ at Camber beaches, which interpret the (legal) byelaws. These include information on the activity ‘zones’ along the coast and rules for horse riding, barbeques, parties, tents/camping and sports; including kite sports which are restricted from Easter holidays to October. Dogs are not permitted in zoned areas between 1 May and 30 September. Rother DC’s website provides information<sup>3</sup>, advising that barbeques are not permitted in the dunes and should only take place at the western end of the beach. It is unclear whether these rules are enforced.

### Access Points and Routes

There are several access points across the dunes to the beach; three PRowS and two permitted routes. The England Coastal Path is open as far as the main Camber car park, with work to begin the next section of route (which will pass the dunes) due to begin in 2017/18. There is a private road to the riverside/saltings and Harbour Master’s Office and from here there is a permissive footpath across the golf course (these are not promoted and are mainly used by local people). There are rights of way following the River Rother. National Cycle Route 2 links Rye with Camber.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Haskoning for Natural England. (2010). Camber Sands Dunes Management. Natural England.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rother.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4481>



### Areas of Unrestricted Access

There is a lot of unauthorised access across the dunes at various locations along the coast i.e. not on the PROW. This use has become established over time, and broadly follows the routes that visitors use from the car parking areas, holiday parks and residential areas (see map on page 10)

Authorised routes need to be improved, reinforced and better-signposted.

### Parking

- Camber Western – this pay and display car park is open April to October with variable opening times from October to April. There is a main tarmacked car park and grassed overflow area, a café and toilets;
- Camber Central – this pay and display car park is tarmacked and open all year and has toilets, a café and shops. It is a very busy site in the summer in particular;
- Broomhill Sands – this free car park was improved in 2015 as part of Environment Agency flood improvement works. It is a stone-surfaced car park with no facilities. A commercial kite-surfing cabin operates at weekends and holidays.

### Visitor Numbers

Camber beach is a highly visited area, particularly in the summer when numbers can reach 25k visitors per day. There are four car parks along the coast in this sub-area, offering a total of approximately 1300 parking places. Visitors to the Camber (central and Western) car parks totalled 201k in 2016; an increase of 17% between 2013 and 2016.

The car parks were included in the Phase 1 on-site surveys:

- Camber Western was the busiest (of all the 8 survey sites) with the highest number of surveys recorded across all the survey sites (185) and the greatest number of visitor parties with children;
- Broomhill was the least busy site (88 surveys) and the fewest visitor parties with children;
- The highest number of visitor groups (of all 8 survey sites) with dogs was recorded at Camber Western (90);
- Camber is also cited as the third most popular alternative site by visitors (in preference to other sites visited by respondents to the Phase One on-site survey).
- Car park ticket purchases are logged for Camber Western and Central car parks.
- There is no other available visitor data. It would be helpful to have data on holiday-makers to local attractions and holiday parks, but this information is not currently available.

### Visitor Profile, Origin and Seasonality

In the Phase 1 on-site survey Camber Central had the highest percentage of first time visitors (44%) and the highest number of visitors on holiday (82 visitor parties), reflecting the area's national profile as a destination for both day-trippers and holiday makers who come to enjoy the sea and the sands. Some visitors travel long distances, e.g. kite-surfers to Broomhill and holidaymakers and day-trippers to Camber: in the Phase 1 survey 44% of visitors to Camber Western and 60% of visitors to Camber Central travelled more than 55km. The greatest distance travelled by day-trippers to Camber was 186km, with holiday-



Carol Brazel



makers travelling up to 428km. The area is a popular day trip destination for visitors from London and the south-east.

The Phase 1 survey showed that a substantial proportion of visitors to Camber and Broomhill visit all year, with increased numbers in the summer. Only a few kite-surfers visit in winter (1% of those surveyed on-site at Broomhill and 4% of online respondents).

### Activities

Popular activities include walking with and without dogs, enjoying the beach and swimming, barbeques, extreme sports including kite-surfing and windsurfing (both on the beach and at Rye Watersports lake), horse riding on Camber beach<sup>4</sup>, cycling and angling at North Point Lake and Point Field Pit. The eastern end of Camber beach (adjoining Broomhill Sands) has become increasingly popular for extreme sports, particularly kite-surfing.

The main activities recorded in the on-site Phase 1 survey were:

- Camber Central - 'going to the beach' (39% of responses);
- Broomhill Sands - kite-surfing (44% on site and 79% of responses on-line survey);
- Camber Western - 'walking with a dog' (48% of responses). The highest number of visitor groups with dogs was recorded at Camber Western (90). Both Camber Western and Camber Central have summer dog restrictions, but parties with dogs were present throughout the year.

## Visitor Information and Awareness

### Promotion

In the Phase 1 survey Camber sites attracted visitors from the furthest distances<sup>5</sup>. Camber has a national profile and is promoted on London-based websites and in the press as an easy-to-reach day out from London. In terms of brand, Camber has its own distinctive offer as a seaside destination with fabulous sandy beaches. Similarly, Broomhill is gaining a following as an important kite-surfing destination. Camber and Broomhill are part of Rother's tourism offer, but they have little in common with the main 1066 Country brand offer, or the (emerging) Romney Marsh brand.

Across Camber sites most visitors knew the site already or found out about the site through word of mouth.

A very small proportion (15%) of respondents used websites or other resources. However, there are some notable variations among the different user groups: use of social media to find out about their activity was below average amongst shore anglers,

<sup>4</sup> At specific times and within a defined zone.

<sup>5</sup> Camber Sands and Dungeness Point



Miles Sabin

wildlife watchers and walkers with or without dogs (the lowest use), whereas 97% of kite-surfers use social media to find out about their activity.

### **On-Site Information**

There is very little interpretation. There is a sign board in Camber Western car park with some information on Camber and the dunes, but interpretive and educative messages are generally lacking. There are several sign boards on the Camber beaches detailing a list of permitted and prohibited actions at different times of year and location. The signboards attempt to convey a lot of information, but the messages do not appear to be reinforced by other means (e.g. leaflets available in the cafes and shops, reminder signboards or officers on site).

The Camber SPD (see later under 'Future Plans') proposes improvements to signage, interpretation, education and rights of way as well as the creation of 'gateways' at each end of the village to reinforce the sense of 'arrival' at Camber. Given the awareness levels of visitors to this area (see next) it will be important to take a strategic approach to interpretation and signage and consider different and innovative methods to engage with and provide educational messages to the wide range of visitors to the area.

### **Visitor Awareness and Behaviour**

The Phase 1 survey indicated that visitors to Broomhill and Camber Central seemed generally less well informed about the sites' importance for wildlife. Only 15% of visitors to Camber Central car park said they had seen an information board regarding wildlife; the lowest percentage of all surveyed sites.

## **Visitor Facilities**

### **Visitor Facilities**

Around Camber Central car park are toilets, the Coastal Officer's base (office), cafes and gift shops and Camber Western car park has toilets and a café. These facilities, though basic, appear to provide adequately for visitors except on the busiest days. In summer months there are beach patrols and the Coastal Officer and car park kiosk staff present. At Camber Central car park the visitor facilities are sometimes blighted by the influx of sand from the dunes and the beach.

Broomhill Sands has no facilities, but there is a container unit from which the kite-surf centre and shop operates at weekends and holidays. Car park resurfacing works have been recently completed as part of the EA's flood management works, resulting in improvement to the stone surface. In the Phase 1 survey visitors requested more seating, litter bins and dog waste bins at Camber and at Broomhill the (mostly kite-surfing) visitors requested toilets, showering facilities and refreshments.

### **Visitor Accommodation**

There are three holiday parks in this sub-area: Pontins Camber, Park Dean (Camber) and Rye Harbour Holiday Parks (see Rye Harbour sub-area). These are large sites with lots of visitor facilities and accommodation including caravans, mobile homes,



apartments and bungalows and rented, owner owned and tourer pitches. The parks cater mostly for the summer holidays, but they are open all year. All parks have recently invested in their visitor facilities. It is not known if the holiday parks intend to expand their visitor accommodation capacity.

### Local Attractions

The main attraction is the beach, but historic Rye, Rye Golf course and a water sports centre are nearby, taking some visitor pressure from the beach. In addition, some of the holiday parks are now open to day visitors.

## Future Plans and Projects

### Development and Supporting the Visitor Economy

Rother Council's Corporate Plan includes actions to develop Camber as a premier south-east tourism destination and to increase visitors. It also includes a 'conservation and biodiversity' outcome including support for nature conservation and biodiversity.

The Camber SPD<sup>6</sup> provides a long-term strategy for Camber village, setting out proposals to support the local economy. These include seeking to extend the visitor season, develop a 'glamping' site on the edge of the village, new beach huts at the Camber and Broomhill car parks and walking and cycling routes.

The SPD also proposes to redevelop the Central car park and Former Putting Green car park as a mixed development with holiday accommodation. A proposal for 20 new homes (10 on each site) is taken forward in Rother DC's DASA and there may be a consequential loss of facilities<sup>7</sup>. The reduction in car park capacity in the east of Camber village could result in more visitors to the Camber Western car park, with the potential to apply increased recreational pressure to the western extent of Camber foreshore. If the car park opening hours are extended into the winter as a consequence of the loss of the year-round car parks to the east of the village, this will increase the numbers of visitors and potentially increase the level of disturbance to the foreshore birds of the SPA. There is already some anecdotal evidence that there is an increase in winter visitors at the western end of the Camber Beach. The WeBS core count data covers the wider Camber area and East Guldeford and there is no specific information on bird numbers or levels of disturbance on the foreshore. An improved evidence base is therefore required regarding the numbers of visitors and the disturbance of birds on the foreshore.

Rother DC's Local Plan includes provisions for supporting tourism facilities. Specifically, there is mention of support for water-based recreation along the coast near Camber Sands, which should have 'due regard to environmental considerations'. The Camber SPD also recommends the improvement of the car park at Broomhill and the introduction of charges. Improvements

<sup>6</sup> Camber Village Supplementary Planning Document September 2014 – Allies and Morrison

<sup>7</sup> Rother District Council Development and Site Allocations Local Plan – Options and Preferred Options for public consultation December 2016



Carol Brazel

to visitor facilities were requested by respondents in the Phase 1 visitor survey and car park charges could help fund these improvements. The effect of both of these increases on visitor numbers, especially in the winter and 'shoulder' months (spring and autumn) should be monitored.

The Camber SPD also proposes promoted walking routes north of Camber Village and improvements to cycle links, in particular to Rye, and the introduction of cycle parking and hire. The development of low impact/sustainable access and a shift towards environmental tourism is to be welcomed, but this could increase the number of visitors to this quiet area of Romney Marsh (see also Romney Marsh sub-area). Any potential additional recreational impacts in this area should be carefully assessed.

### England Coast Path

The England Coast Path is a long-distance National Trail which will follow the coastline of England. It is being implemented by Natural England and is expected to be completed by 2020. The stretch from Ramsgate to Camber is now open. Work on the next stretch (Camber to Eastbourne) is estimated to start this year or in 2018. That is stages 2 and 3 (develop and propose) will start. The exact route is not yet known, but it could increase visitors along the western end of the foreshore and potentially into the dunes depending on the route. It may also increase access to the eastern bank of the Rother which is currently not very accessible.

## Conclusions and Actions

### Evidence Base

There are gaps in data, with critical gaps in evidence on birds on the foreshore and visitors, particularly in the winter months. A baseline of data needs to be gathered and ongoing monitoring implemented, especially in relation to changes which may occur as a result of the Camber SPD and Rother DASA. In particular, visitor numbers, bird numbers and disturbance levels should be monitored at the western foreshore. For example, there may be the potential for an in-combination impact of the ECP and increase in the number of visitors to the Western Car Park. The level of winter kitesurfing and preferred locations should also be monitored, as well as in the 'shoulder' season, as some winter birds will still be present and migratory birds will be passing through. This information is essential to support future decisions around the need for and implementation of any access control or restriction measures.

### Communication, Education and Interpretation

The Camber and Broomhill sub-area is very popular for tourism and activities including water sports. Most outdoor visitor activities take place within or close to sensitive sites in the SSSI. The area attracts a wide spectrum of visitors, including day-trippers and holiday-makers, local walkers and dog walkers with a wide range of interests and reasons for visiting. This will make communicating effectively with visitors more challenging, as the same approaches, messages and media will not be successful for all types of visitors.



*Camber Sands*  
1969

This sub-area is part of the Fifth Continent Project area and work is ongoing to develop a brand for the area together with a strategic approach to interpretation. A partnership approach to this work will be essential to ensure that messages and branding are consistent.

### **Access**

The development of new or enhanced walking and cycling routes beyond the village will need to be carefully assessed for potential impacts on the sensitive areas. Any intensification of recreational use will need to be assessed.

### **Codes of Conduct and Byelaws**

Byelaws and management operations are in place to guide and protect visitors but they do not necessarily protect the environment. For example, there are dog controls in place on stretches of beach in the summer months for the benefit of visitors, but no controls for the winter months when over-wintering birds may be vulnerable to disturbance. There are activity zones which allocate areas for specific activities, and restrict their use outside these areas. These zones appear to be effective and could be extended for the winter months to protect the birds from disturbance.

A multi-faceted approach is therefore needed: on-site signing, visitor education and information, reinforced by messages appropriate to the visitor, supported by on-site personnel conveying education messages. New or extended byelaws or orders, and the extension of activity zoning to control activities. These actions should be backed up with on-site wardening and enforcement where necessary.

### **The Dunes, Funding and Coordinated Management**

There is clear evidence that the pressure of many thousands of visitors causes damage to the dunes, causing erosion and leading to 'blowouts'. If visitors can easily follow the existing paths, do not create new paths and do not wander through the dunes, this helps to limit damage. An effective way to achieve this is to clear the paths each spring to make them easier to use than wandering through the dune. It is also important that they are discouraged as far as possible from creating 'sun traps' and 'sand slides' by physically containing the number of paths through the dunes, keeping these areas well-maintained and supporting the changes with signage and education/wardening to encourage compliance and behaviour change in visitors.

The proposals for closure and redevelopment of the Central Car Park may help to support the integrity of the dunes in that area by reducing visitor pressure. However, visitors from holiday parks and the overflow car park are likely to continue to use the routes through the dunes. It is proposed that the routes are retained but the 'spreading space' is minimised, and interventions including stabilising vegetation and sand fencing are used to make it easy for users to stick to the path.

The need for greater coordination between the owners of the dunes is of critical importance. The publicly accessible areas have several owners, with varying levels of funding for their management. The EA no longer provides funding (from Defra) as the dunes are of a sufficient size to pose minimal risk in terms of sea defence. However, the dunes are accreting in this area and



Chris Parfitt

the paths need to be cleared annually. This management is critical to ensure that visitors use existing paths and do not create additional routes, as previously described, but the exercise is becoming more costly. There is currently a lack of coordination and partnership working concerning the management of the dunes, both in terms of the physical management on the ground and the overall approach to income-generation and financial viability. The management plan of 2010<sup>8</sup> led to some works taking place around Camber Central car park including reinforcing the dunes with sand fencing and new vegetation, but the plan has not been updated and is now not being implemented. A balance needs to be struck between stabilising the dunes to prevent sand inundation in Camber village, allowing the natural succession of dune habitats to support biodiversity interest and managing recreation and this requires a clear and costed management plan, with agreed responsibilities and to ensure this is implemented. Consideration of the effects of strandline cleaning (where the tide comes in) should also be incorporated in an integrated visitor management and nature conservation approach. The local authorities have certain obligations relating to SSSI condition and recreation and habitat management must be adequately funded and delivered. The future delivery of this management should be delivered through a partnership of all the landowners and managers.

### Visitor Economy

The south-east accounts for 17% of all seaside holidays (second only to the south-west at 23%)<sup>9</sup>. Camping and caravanning (including holiday parks) are more important to seaside destinations than to other areas (representing 44% of holidays to the seaside). Aside from going to the beach, seaside trips are more likely than average to involve outdoor activities.

Coastal resorts in the UK have suffered a decline over the last few decades. In recent years Government-sponsored studies<sup>10</sup> have highlighted the economic potential of seaside resorts and their potential target markets, including the over 55s, the development potential of the health and wellness market, under 35s and overseas visitors. Studies have also highlighted the dominance of SMEs in coastal businesses and how coordination and support are necessary. The desire to be fit and healthy is driving an increase in active leisure trips. Visits for 'experience' activities such as kite-surfing and other watersports are on the increase.<sup>11</sup>

There are ambitions to regenerate the local economy through the diversification and further development of tourism. These ambitions need to be balanced with the sensitive natural environment upon which much of the area's attractions depend. The Camber SPD proposal to develop as a centre for environmental tourism could help to reposition the offer and brand of this sub-area, while also helping to promote key messages regarding the conservation of its wildlife and sensitive features.

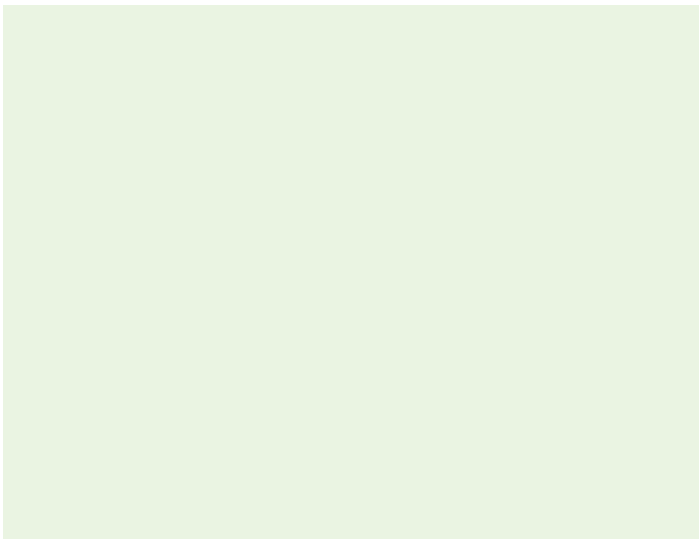
A strategic, integrated approach to visitor facility provision and development is needed in this sub-area, including any changes to car park opening or charging, in order to help assess the potential for displacement of visitors and possible effects on the sensitive wildlife. Any developments should be supported by robust evidence on visitors and wildlife. In particular, the impact

8 Royal Haskoning for Natural England. (2010). Camber Sands Dunes Management. Natural England.

9 Visit England – Domestic Seaside Tourism 2014 report

10 National Coastal Tourism Academy (NCTA) reports

11 Visit England – Domestic Leisure Tourism Trends for the Next Decade 2013



of developing the two car parking areas should be carefully assessed in terms of potential recreational pressure on the dunes and foreshore at Camber, including the potential for displacement to other sites. The Western Car Park is currently open for the summer months and school holidays and is not open over the winter months. If the open times are extended and use increases due to the loss of central village car parks, there is potential for increased recreational pressure on the sensitive dunes in this area and on the birds of the foreshore.

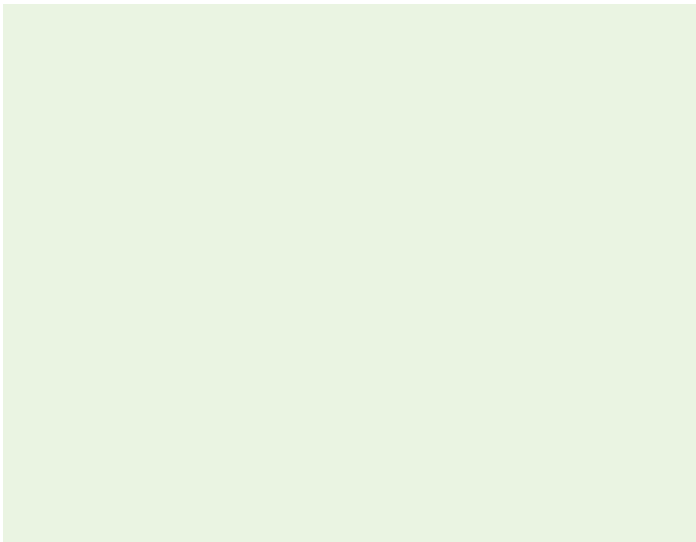
There is currently no data available to provide a baseline to assess the impact of these proposed changes.

Another proposal is to extend walking into the marsh to the north of Camber village. This, along with the new section of the England Coastal path could also increase access to the eastern bank of the River Rother and important saltmarsh and bird feeding and roosting areas, which currently have low levels of visitors. New routes in this area would bring new recreation into what is currently a relatively undisturbed area of the Natura sites and should be done with due regard to the biodiversity features. Education and awareness raising needs to be implemented alongside any new routes.

### Visitor Facilities

Visitor facilities are needed to support existing activities, e.g. the water sports visitors to Broomhill Sands have no toilet or showering facilities and very limited options for refreshments. The Phase 1 survey from all three survey points included requests for more seating and bins (including dog waste bins). These results are a useful indicator of the type of facilities currently needed, and at Broomhill they could help to inform the development of a business plan to encourage private sector investment in an area with few facilities and clear demand. The Camber SPD proposes the introduction of car parking charges at Broomhill which could fund visitor facilities. However, any such plans would need to be carefully assessed against the potential effects on the natural environment. Broomhill is already one of the best locations in the country for kite-surfing and participation is likely to increase. Any plans for the expansion or intensification of the current water sports operations in the area would need to be carefully assessed. It is suggested that the evidence base in support of such assessments should be developed with immediate effect. This is likely to include data on bird numbers and movements, as well as ongoing monitoring of visitors.





### Actions

CB1	Improved and co-ordinated management of dunes	CB1.1	Review and formulate new management plan for dunes which sets out detailed future and annual management requirements and costings required.
		CB1.2	Form management partnership for dunes for owners to properly implement habitat and recreation management, including Rother DC, East Sussex DC, Rye Golf Course, NE, EA
		CB1.3	Assess alternative and secure funding methods to deliver management, including potentially from car parking charges, grant aid, developer contributions.
		CB1.4	Ensure access management works are adequately funded and carried out annually, including removing sand from the five existing paths, closing any additional paths created by visitors, installing sand fencing to control access as necessary.
CB2	Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features	CB2.1	Assess levels of visitors and disturbance on western Camber beach foreshore in winter months to form a baseline.
		CB2.2	Assess the levels of winter and 'shoulder season' (spring and autumn) kite surfing and locations to determine whether levels are as low as Phase 1 surveys suggest.
CB3	Ensure the expansion and repositioning of the visitor economy does not cause negative impact on conservation features	CB3.1	Carefully assess the impact of displacement of visitors to the Camber Western car park through developing a baseline on birds and visitors. Provide education and interpretation.
		CB3.2	Carefully consider new recreation routes into the marsh
		CB3.3	Consider zoning or access restrictions, depending on results of surveys (visitors and birds), e.g. winter dog controls, kite surfing zones.
		CB3.4	Raise profile and pride in Camber as an eco-destination and the value of the natural environment to SME and tourist providers e.g. through guided walks, leaflets, information which can be put on their websites.



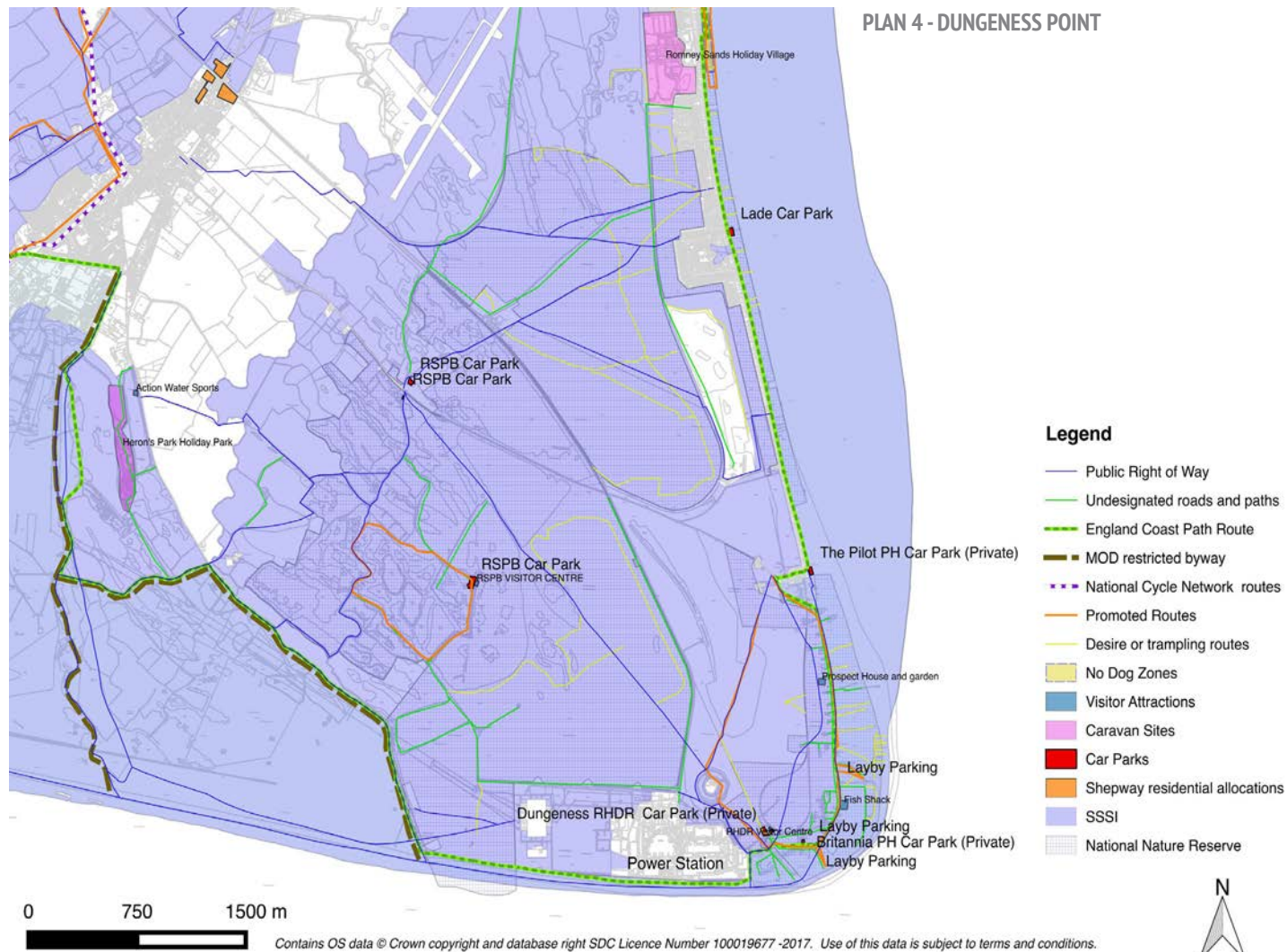
CB4	Education	CB4.1	Some interpretation boards at path entrances.
		CB4.2	Include education in the role of beach patrol and include interaction with visitors within the dunes if necessary as part of a new multi-organisation partnership approach.
		CB4.3	Education campaign with caravan parks, making messages appropriate and attractive to visitor profile. Provide leaflets and information on websites (also linked to CB3.4) and take an integrated approach so that the message is reinforced at various points in the visit.

# SUB AREA 4 - DUNGENESS

This sub-area includes gravel habitats and the watersports centre south of Lydd. It includes the RSPB reserve and the Dungeness Estate. It also includes part of the Lydd (military firing) Ranges.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) owns much of the Ranges, with the exception of an area of land that lies within this sub-area which is leased by the MoD from the RSPB.

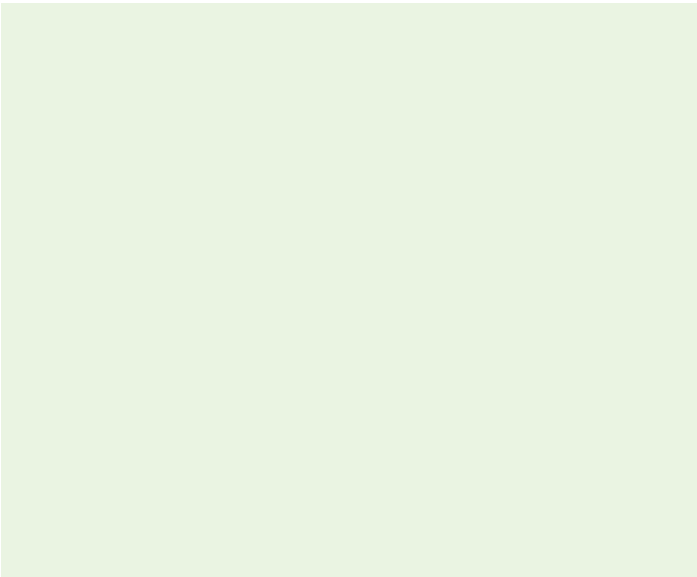
However, this site is largely inaccessible to the public and is therefore excluded from this study.



## Biodiversity

### Overview and Importance

Dungeness Point is an exceptional and internationally important example of coastal vegetated shingle. The area supports some very rare plants and fauna. Highly vulnerable vegetation communities are located here, including a succession of vegetation from strandline vegetation back inland to grassland and scrub. Lichen vegetation is particularly sensitive and is widespread throughout this sub-area.



There are sensitive shingle communities throughout, including the area behind the houses at Lydd-On-Sea and near the sound mirrors at Lade Pits Lakes.

The area also includes pits and hollows which are either gravel workings, saline lagoons or natural freshwater lagoons. These areas are important for newts and water voles as well as birds. The saline lagoons in the RSPB Reserve are very rare, but they are difficult to access. The area's flooded, former gravel workings form a complex of water bird habitat in this sub-area, and are important sites for winter assemblage.<sup>1</sup>All the pits are interrelated as birds are constantly moving around the area, for example birds go to Lade Pits for roosting and when disturbed from the coast. Other sites include Heron's Park, Action Watersports and Long Pits. The RSPB Dungeness Reserve is a very important area, both for birds and habitats.

### Features Potentially Vulnerable to Recreational Impacts

Feature	Natura Feature	Comments
Breeding (ground-nesting) birds <sup>2</sup>	✓	Largely in RSPB Reserve.
Wintering birds (individual species and assemblage) <sup>3</sup>	✓	Throughout, especially on pits and lakes.
Vegetated shingle inland and coastal – geomorphological and vegetation features	✓	Throughout and known to be under pressure.
Saline lagoons	✓	Largely inaccessible within RSPB Reserve.



Alan Harris

### Known Pressures

The areas with the highest trampling pressure are around the old lighthouse, café and Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway (RHDR) car park, on the Point and The Pilot at the entrance to the Estate. There is damage elsewhere, from angling access and other access, some is ongoing and some is historic. Around Lydd-on-Sea and Lade Pits there are only two areas where people can recreate and exercise their dogs, and both these areas are sensitive. While there is not yet published evidence to support damage to vegetation in this area, and no local data on visitor numbers, there is visible evidence of trampling. Also evidence of damage to vegetation not all related to recreational pressure e.g. where fishing fleet is located.

1 bittern<sup>SPA</sup> - mute swan<sup>RAMSAR</sup> - ruff<sup>SPA</sup> - shoveler<sup>SPA</sup> - golden plover<sup>SPA</sup> - common sandpiper<sup>SSSI</sup> - coot<sup>SSSI</sup> - cormorant<sup>SSSI</sup> - gadwall<sup>SSSI</sup> - garganey<sup>SSSI</sup> - great crested grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - little grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - pochard<sup>SSSI</sup> - sanderling<sup>SSSI</sup> - teal<sup>SSSI</sup> - tufted duck<sup>SSSI</sup> - water rail<sup>SSSI</sup> - whimbrel<sup>SSSI</sup> - wigeon<sup>SSSI</sup> - white-fronted goose (European)<sup>SSSI</sup>

2 Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right - little tern<sup>SPA</sup> - Sandwich tern<sup>SPA</sup> - common tern<sup>SPA</sup> - avocet<sup>SPA</sup> - Mediterranean gull<sup>SPA</sup>. Also bittern<sup>SPA</sup> (not ground nesting).

3 Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right. NB, species indicated as SSSI (along with other species not listed) will also form part of the SPA/Ramsar winter assemblage qualifying feature and are therefore also Natura qualifying features in this regard - mute swan<sup>RAMSAR</sup> - ruff<sup>SPA</sup> - shoveler<sup>SPA</sup> - golden plover<sup>SPA</sup> - common sandpiper<sup>SSSI</sup> - coot<sup>SSSI</sup> - cormorant<sup>SSSI</sup> - gadwall<sup>SSSI</sup> - garganey<sup>SSSI</sup> - great crested grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - little grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - pochard<sup>SSSI</sup> - sanderling<sup>SSSI</sup> - teal<sup>SSSI</sup> - tufted duck<sup>SSSI</sup> - water rail<sup>SSSI</sup> - whimbrel<sup>SSSI</sup> - wigeon<sup>SSSI</sup> - white-fronted goose (European)<sup>SSSI</sup>.

# Access

## Site Ownership and Management

This sub area is in multi ownership. EDF owns the Dungeness Estate (the area on the Point) within which there are several privately-owned properties, including residential properties, pubs and businesses, the old lighthouse and the small area of land occupied by the railway station and café which is owned by the RHDR. Magnox owns the Dungeness B nuclear power station. Most of the beach area is owned by Shepway DC.

Surrounding the Estate, CEMEX owns the working gravel quarry (Denge Quarry) and the RSPB owns the Dungeness Reserve and part of the Lydd Ranges, the latter of which is leased to the MoD. The MoD owns the rest of the Lydd Ranges. Natural England owns areas of Restricted Access CROW Act Land. The RSPB area now includes the Lade Pits and Sound Mirrors.

There are management plans for the RSPB Dungeness Reserve and a plan for the rest of the NNR, produced by Natural England. There is a management plan for the Lydd Ranges, produced by the MoD, which is shared with Natural England.

Dungeness Estate is managed for EDF by BNP Paribas who have an appointed site manager. Day to day management is by two on-site staff from Romney Marsh Countryside Project (RMCP) funded by EDF. The RMCP staff also cover the Long Pits area. The Lade Pits area is managed by the RSPB from their Dungeness Reserve team.

## Byelaws, Site Rules, Codes of Conduct

On Dungeness Estate EDF is responsible for what are in effect, the publicly accessible areas down to the high-water mark on the beach, which are owned by Shepway. There are no specific site byelaws, but EDF posts extensive site 'rules' for visitors on noticeboards and sign boards around the site, with a prominent sign board at the main entrance installed in 2016.

There are no local codes of conduct but anglers should adhere to the national Code of Conduct for Angling.

An Article 4 Directive prohibits the placing of boundary fences or walls around any land holdings (without planning permission) to protect landscape character.

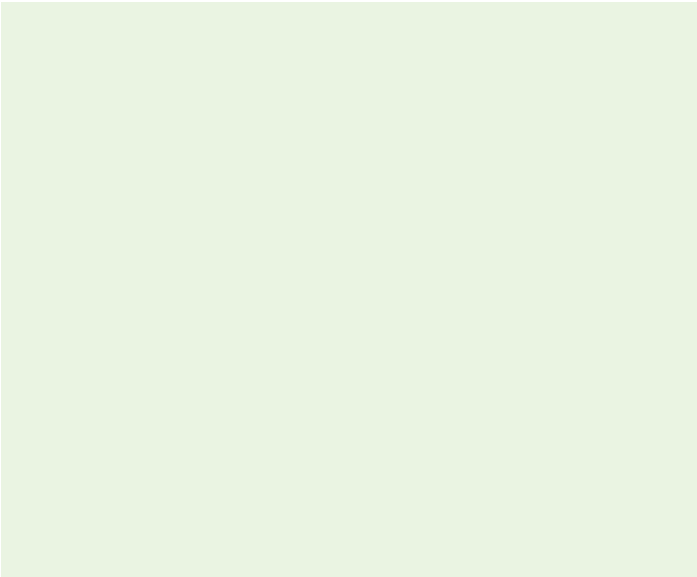
## Access Points and Routes

The main access to the Estate is from the public highway or PRow. Visitors can access on foot via the coastal path or from The Pilot. Visitors also arrive by the RHDR train which has its terminus here.

Anglers access the coast through a lockable barrier from the Estate road; also along Dengemarsh Road and The Galloways where there are informal parking areas.



Colin Smith



The RSPB Reserve is accessed from Dungeness Road by an unmade vehicle track to the visitor centre and main car park, with a small satellite car park at the road entrance and a further car park on the opposite side of Dungeness Road (ARC car park). There is a PRoW linking the RSPB Reserve to Dungeness Point.

The England Coastal Path follows the coast as far as the Lydd Ranges, where it diverts landward around the perimeter, before returning to the coast at Jury's Gap. There is restricted public access to the MOD Ranges but there is a permissive route along the site boundary which is closed during firing times.

There is access to the shingle inland from Lydd-on-Sea from the ends of several roads and through the Romney Sands Holiday Village, including into Lade Pits and the Sound Mirrors.

### Areas of Unrestricted Access

There is de facto unrestricted access across large areas of the Estate and the wider Point. The public only have the right of access to PRoW, to CROW Act Land (which in any case is now restricted to PRoW) and the beach areas owned by Shepway Council. However, with an open, unfenced landscape, there appears to be an assumption by the public that accessing the Point and the surrounding area is permitted anywhere. This has become established over many years. However, all the land is privately owned and the public does not have a right of access, apart from that previously listed. Access rights can only be granted by the landowners. Rights of access for residents and business customers are granted by EDF.

### Parking

On Dungeness Estate there is a small, free car park next to the RHDR and several small laybys. It is understood that the car park is rarely at capacity. There are three small car parks on the RSPB reserve. Both the Pilot and the Britannia Pubs have private car parks for patrons. There are areas of informal parking along the Dungeness Road.

## Visitors

### Visitor Numbers

The RSPB Reserve received 26,000 visitors in 2016:

- Estimates based on RHDR ticket sales indicate that 130,000 visitors travelled to Dungeness on the train in 2016 (estimated from overall ticket sales from the start of the line at Hythe);
- There is only anecdotal information regarding visitor numbers to the Dungeness Estate. However, it is understood that a traffic counter is to be installed at the estate main entrance to assess the number of vehicles accessing the site.



### Visitor Profile, Origin and Seasonality

The Dungeness Estate has a national profile and is a honeypot destination. In the Phase One visitor survey a third of visitors said they visited 'to see the landscape of Dungeness'. This was the highest response for the site, indicating that it is the special landscape which attracts many visitors to the area.

The survey found that 40% of visitors were there for the first time, 43% visit less than once per month and only 6% visit at least once per week. However, the surveys were carried out at the main car park areas and not at other areas where more local people might visit e.g. the shingle behind Lydd-on-Sea. There were a high number of visitors under 15 years (20%) would indicate family visits (mainly train passengers), or older groups (38% of visitors were over 55 years). As with most of the other survey sites the 16-24 age range was poorly represented. The proportion of holiday-makers to day-trippers is more even, with 59% on a day trip and 41% on holiday.

Most visitors (75%) arrive by vehicle and others by the RHDR (16%) or on foot (5%), with a few by bicycle. Most visitors (61%) had travelled more than 55km, with day-trippers travelling an average of 82.6km. This shows that Dungeness Point (Estate) is regarded as an attraction for visitors who will travel a significant distance.

Dungeness RSPB was also a Phase One survey site. This had the highest percentage of people arriving by car (96%); not surprising as the reserve is accessible along a long track. RSPB Reserves are regional, and sometimes national, wildlife attractions. The survey found that visitors made fairly infrequent visits to the reserve (23% of visitors were there for the first time, 44% visit less than once per month, 28% visit at least once per month and only 6% visit at least once per week), and they are prepared to travel significant distances (44% travelled more than 55km). Most visitors (60%) were aged over 55 years, in line with other wildlife watching sites and 80% of visitors were day-trippers (not holiday-makers). This site has a niche offer for visitors who are prepared to travel a significant distance.

Dungeness Point and the RSPB Reserve attract visitors outside of summer, presumably due to their particular visitor offer (wildlife watching, angling, sight-seeing). At Dungeness Point 34% of visitors visit all year and at RSPB, 52% of visitors visit all year. Anglers to inland sites visit during the open season (July - February) and to the Point for coastal fishing at any time of year. The winter months are popular for cod-fishing off the Point.

### Activities

#### From the Phase One surveys:

- Overall, the Dungeness Estate attracts visitors for a range of activities including walking (with or without a dog - 31% of visitors), sight-seeing, riding on the RHDR, visiting the pubs and café, filming and photography as well as angling;
- The Phase One online survey results showed that Dungeness Point is particularly popular with anglers; At the Long Pits the main activities are fishing and wildlife watching with 31% of respondents in each category;
- At the RSPB reserve the main activity is wildlife watching (88% of visitors).



Alan Harris

The sub-area includes lakes along Dengemarsh Road where Action Water Sports operates, offering water-skiing, wakeboarding, jet skiing, stand-up paddle boards and flyboarding. The facility is open 7 days a week in the summer months and at reduced hours or by appointment at other times.

Heron's Park Holiday Park is located next to Action Water Sports. This caravan and camping park offers touring sites and has 56 static vans for rent. It is open all year and permits dogs on leads. Angling also takes place at this lake, operated by the Lydd angling Club.

Photography and film-making are popular on the unique landscape of the Point. Permission must be sought from the land owner before any commercial activity takes place on the estate but it is understood that only a proportion of film shoots do this.

There are also other access activities which cause problems and potentially damage to the site, including 4x4 vehicles and quad bikes driving off-road, vehicles parking on - and getting stuck in - the shingle, fly-tipping and the depositing of fishing debris, and motor homes parking overnight.

## Visitor Information and Awareness

### Promotion

Dungeness has a high profile both locally and nationally. It is promoted on many websites both local and national (including Visit England), in many guide books and features on TV and in national press.

It is within the Fifth Continent Project area, which is reviewing branding for Romney Marsh. The Phase One visitor surveys indicate that most visitors knew about the site through word of mouth or, in the case of the RSPB, through the RSPB website. Very few visitors found out about the sites through other media. This indicates people just 'know' about Dungeness.

### On-Site Information

The Dungeness Estate has its own specific signage, comprising a list of site rules and instructions on signboards. There area also interpretive signs, England Coastal Path and PRoW way markers and CROW Access Restricted land signs.

Beyond the estate there are signs denoting the National Nature Reserve boundary. These signs are large, and they are part of the 'family' or 'brand' of NNR signage.

The RSPB reserve has its own branded signage and interpretive panels.



Stuart Chalmers

## Visitor Awareness and Behaviour

The Phase One visitor survey results show that this sub-area has the highest percentage of visitors with awareness of protected features, with 72% of visitors at Dungeness Point and 48% at the RSPB Reserve aware of at least one wildlife feature. This was the highest of all the sites surveyed, probably reflecting the attraction of the area to wildlife watchers and the (rather obvious) wildlife feature of shingle. Around two thirds of visitors had seen an information board (67% at RSPB and 66% at Dungeness Point).

Although the level of awareness wildlife was generally greater amongst visitors to this sub-area, the actions needed to protect and conserve the wildlife interests were similar to other sites in focusing on litter and keeping the area clean. Some responses mentioned keeping to paths or joining the RSPB, but there was little apparent understanding of how their actions or behaviour might need to be addressed.

## Visitor Facilities

### Visitor Facilities

The new café built by the RDHR is a welcome addition to the area, providing a high-quality facility for food and drink. The two pubs provide food and the 'Fish Hut Snack Shack' is gathering a 'foody' reputation for local fresh fish dishes.

Dungeness B power station has a visitor centre which can be visited by booking three weeks in advance, although it is not easy to find.

The following site improvements were recorded from the Phase One visitor survey:

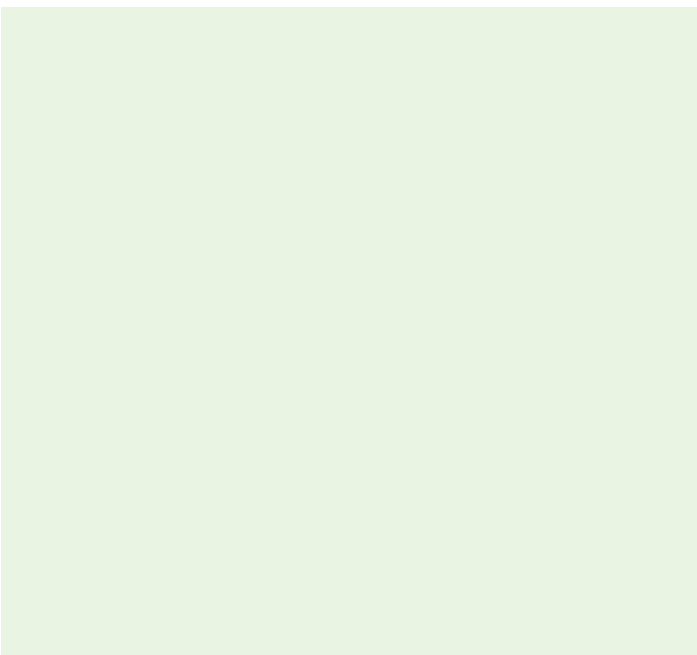
- RSPB - better surfaced paths (24% of visitors) and refreshments (17% of visitors);
- Dungeness Point - places to shelter (11%), better surfaced paths (10%) and toilets (open more often) (6%).

### Visitor Accommodation

The Heron's Park Holiday Park offers caravan and camping park as previously described. Heron's Park offers 30 owner-occupied static caravans, offered with 12 month occupancy and Royal Mail address, with 3 more plots coming available (to total four in total situated around a fishing lake) in the SPA. Several cottages on Dungeness Estate are available for holiday lets.

### Local attractions

Action Water Sports at Heron's Park lakes (see previously) and Kart Track, RHDR, Old Lighthouse.



**The Telegraph** ALL SECTIONS  
Lifestyle Food and drink More

08 Jun 2017  
Catch of the day: 20 best beachside spots for fresh seafood



**Dungeness Fish Hut Snack Shack, Dungeness**  
Two family-run beach shacks sit side-by-side on Dungeness Road, one selling just-out-of-the-sea-fresh fish, the other selling said fish cooked and served inside haps, rolls and in cake format.  
The lobster salad rolls are a thing of beauty, and will leave you with change from a tenner. Closed if the weather is bad.  
[Dungeness Road, Dungeness, Romney Marsh, Kent TN29 9NR; 07825 598921; dungenessfishhut.net](http://www.dungenessfishhut.net)  
[dungenesssnackshack.net](http://www.dungenesssnackshack.net)  
CREDIT: DUNGENESS FISH HUT SNACK SHACK



## Future Plans and Projects

### Dungeness Estate

EDF took over ownership of Dungeness Estate in 2015. Short term plans include installing new signage and entrance demarcation, plus a traffic counter at the main vehicular entrance.

### Lade Pits

RSPB are in the process of taking on management of Lade Pits and the Sound Mirrors.

### RHDR

The timetable for the RHDR is to be extended with more services operating for longer periods in the year. This could bring more visitors to the Point outside the usual holiday periods. The RHDR has already upgraded and expanded its café. Although limited by the capacity of the track, RHDR plans to increase its service with growth of up to 20% and to improve its visitor offer, with dining trains offering a train ride plus a meal in the café, with later operating times on some days.

### Heron's Park

Some enhancement of visitor facilities may be taking place at Heron's Park Holiday Park.

## Conclusions and Actions

### Evidence Base

A report on the condition of vegetated shingle has been commissioned by Natural England but has not been published and was not available for this strategy. This report will provide essential evidence for the actions in this strategy and to help further justify access management, including further understanding of areas of damage to the shingle, and should be shared with the strategy partners.

Given that recreation and high numbers of visitors is an identified impact pathway in the HRA and has been raised as an issue for many years, there is a lack of information on visitors. There are wide-ranging estimates of total numbers but none are verified. There is an urgent need to better understand the volume of visitors and seasonality. This is essential evidence to understand issues such as capacity, peak flows etc. and to implement any control measures. EDF has indicated that it will install a traffic counter for a year; this should be ongoing to ensure that trends can be determined. The RHDR could also assist through recording of tickets or people counters at the exit.



Alan Lomas

There is also no data on visitors to the wider sub-area, including the shingle behind Lydd-on-Sea and Lade Pits. This could be improved through future work when RSPB take over management of the area.

The inter-relationship between the pits and lakes for bird species should be recognised and better understood, and any intensification of recreational use on any part of the sub-area should be carefully assessed. This includes Heron's Park and Action Watersports - including the angling use and residential areas around the lake - Lade Pits and the Scotney and Lydd pits (in the Romney Marsh sub-area) where some recreation is known to occur.

### **Dungeness Estate**

The whole estate is in private ownership and yet it is assumed by its visitors to be publicly accessible. This situation has evolved over time and is, in effect, encouraged by an open landscape with no boundary fences or walls, few apparent access restrictions and little evidence of enforcement. There are signboards, but the wording is very detailed. Visitors generally follow the routes used by others or, if they are regular visitors, will be used to unrestricted access.

Tracks have been worn across the shingle, vehicles park along the estate road and on the shingle, sometimes requiring them to be towed out, and some vehicles drive over the shingle. Visitors on foot regularly approach Prospect Cottage (once owned by film director and artist Derek Jarman) and its garden and visitors also walk into the gardens of other residential dwellings. Although this is not 'authorised' access, Prospect Cottage along with some other buildings on the estate are heavily promoted on websites and other media and, in the absence of boundary fencing or clear instructions, visitors wander at will.

With many diverse activities, types of visitors and a range of unauthorised, intrusive and damaging activities, the area needs an integrated approach to control and regulate access. This includes access management, supported by education and enforcement. Numbers at Dungeness have increased and are likely to continue to increase – the profile of the site is so high and promoted in so many places that this can no longer be controlled. The landowners across the sub-area now need to collectively acknowledge this and respond to this more effectively by employing more robust visitor management, enforcement and messages.

**Access Management in Dungeness Estate** - The limited number of access points is helpful as it reduces the number of points for access interventions. At all entrance/arrival points it should be made clear (e.g. with gateways or other entrance features) to visitors that they are entering a special place. Upon entry to the estate, visitors should be provided with the information and instructions they need to further explore the area, as part of a staged approach. This should also include businesses, including The Pilot, The Britannia and the RHDR. Better signposting to key attractions would help visitors, especially first time visitors. Other unauthorised access may be explained by poor signposting and poor orientation at the site as it is not an easy site to navigate on foot.

There are residential and business interests in the area (the recent growth of on-site businesses can have the unintended consequence of causing further problems) and regular users including dog walkers and anglers. As such, any changes or



restrictions to access would need to involve all the parties with an interest in the estate in a partnership approach; to identify what's important to the consultees as well as the wildlife message. Further evidence is needed to support some actions, and to monitor the effectiveness of actions in the future.

The current boardwalk usefully provides a destination in an otherwise featureless area, and enables access to the beach which is where visitors want to go. By observation most boardwalk users tend to return the same way and it is not recommended that a circular route is promoted as this will be likely to cause further dispersed damage to the shingle.

### **Enforcement, Codes of Conduct and Byelaws**

The majority of land is privately owned and therefore the right to permit, or restrict, access is within the control of the landowner. This does not mean control is easy to achieve, but that the owners do have the right to control access onto their land. Currently enforcement is carried out by RMCP staff with no legal powers, relying on persuasion. Given the scale of the issues known at the Estate and the impact on both residents as well as the designated nature conservation features, more robust enforcement may be required. One such approach has been applied in the Kent Downs, in which a group of landowners collectively contribute to a Police Community Support Officer to tackle a range of anti-social behaviour issues and to prevent motor vehicles straying from rights of way. A comprehensive approach is needed to break the habits that have developed at the estate, and to demonstrate that the land owners are serious, backed up with positive messages about how these actions are helping to conserve the area. the growth of on-site businesses can have the unintended consequence of causing further problems

A Code of Conduct or other local agreement that must be signed in order to retain membership and access could be developed in partnership with anglers, local groups and clubs.

A comprehensive approach is needed to control vehicle access and movements. This could include the access road being designated a 'clearway' or 'no stopping' zone, so that visitors are not permitted to park anywhere except where marked. the growth of on-site businesses can have the unintended consequence of causing further problems This will require careful planning, for example instructions to not park on the access road will need clear instructions of where parking is permitted. The understanding of traffic flows and capacity in the car park are an essential first step before this could be progressed. Parking restrictions need to be supported by enforcement – possibly a licence plate recognition scheme or similar – and potentially physical restrictions (at least in the short-term) to reinforce the message.

### **Communication, Education and Interpretation**

All actions need to be supported through improved communication, interpretation and education.

There is a great deal of on-line information but this is often ambiguous or misleading, depending on the bias of the provider. There is very little concerning visitor behaviour in relation to the wildlife. The profile of Dungeness is now so extensive it is



John lord

out of the control of site managers; it would be impossible to contact all websites to ensure messages about appropriate visitor behaviour are included. However, it would be possible to ensure that partner websites, Visit Kent and other local promotional websites carried more information.

There is a high proportion of first time visitors so it is important to provide information on the key attractions, directions and quality of route (e.g. information on suitable routes for less able visitors), as well as other key messages clearly and quickly. Information to help site navigation is crucial for first time visitors and would help to reduce the number of visitors trampling over sensitive areas of flora. Current interpretive signage is useful and mostly informative but is dated and faded and needs replacement. The Fifth Continent Project is in the process of reviewing interpretation across the Romney Marsh area including Dungeness.

Signage across the sub-area needs to be reviewed to bring it up to date and to take a more 'visitor-focused' approach. Visitors cannot easily perceive (from a distance or driving past in a vehicle) which signs are giving instructions, warnings, advice or interesting information. The number of providers of signage and interpretation (including RSPB, NE, RHDR, EDF, RMCP and Magnox) presents a confusing picture to visitors and does not help visitors understand the area or its designations.

A high proportion of visitors to the Dungeness Estate arrive at the train station or the car park (at the train station and the café). Signage at this location is important as it helps to orientate visitors upon their arrival from the train station and the car park. The signage outside the café and in the car parking area currently faces away from the site, and there is an assortment of way-markers and other information. The RHDR could also be an important location for interpretation and education – pictures on the walls, or on menus, leaflets etc. could all be browsed during visitors' 'dwell time' in the café. Leaflets could also be handed out with tickets to read on the journey to Dungeness (and could also include information for those leaving at New Romney and Romney Sands).

New entrance gates at the road entrance to Dungeness Estate will help reinforce the sense of 'arrival'. A toll both has been investigated. A more formal entrance where visitors pass and are provided with information would ensure all visitors receive information.

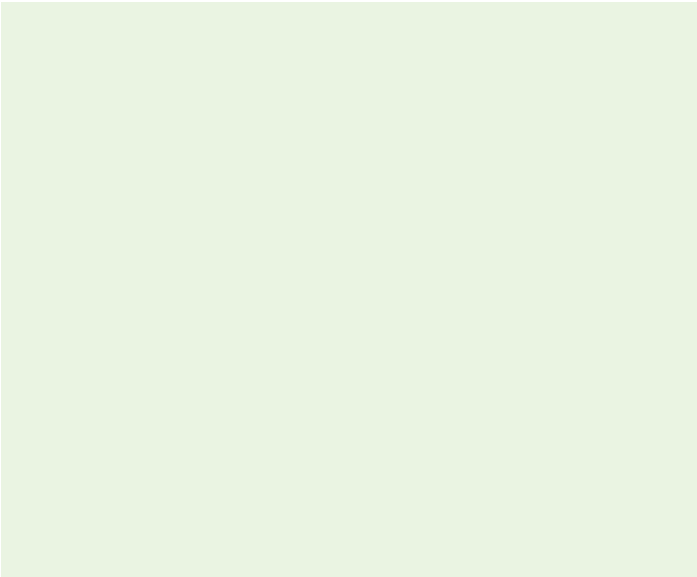
The area is also regularly used for filming and photographic shoots, for which permission should be sought from the estate, but in reality, a lot of activity is unauthorised. The on-line route to gain permission is via the Dungeness Estate website; but the popularity of the area is such that, for first-time users, appreciating the need for permission on what appears to be a publicly accessible area, and then navigating to the correct 'official' website may not be obvious.

### **Lydd-on-Sea and Lade Pits**

The sub-area also includes the shingle area behind Lydd-On-Sea and Lade, including Lade Pits. Emerging evidence from the vegetation survey report indicates this may be an area where damage is occurring to the shingle, but this needs to be confirmed



Amanda Slater



when the report is released. Less is known about visitors to this area, but it is assumed these are primarily local people from residential areas and potentially some visitors from Romney Sands Holiday Village. The residents here have little or no alternative recreation space apart from designated areas. Alternative areas for dog exercise should be sought (see Romney and Lade Foreshore sub-area). Consideration could be given to the potential for recreational uses at the CEMEX site post-gravel extraction.

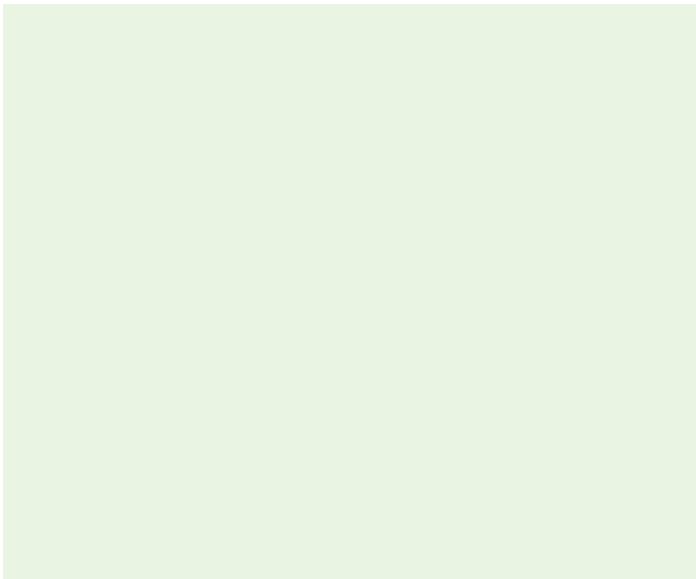
Lade Pits is important for overwintering birds. Future management should be better controlled through new management arrangements by RSPB.

**Actions**



Alan Harris

DP1	Raise awareness of the nature conservation interest and sensitivities of the area	DP1.1	Develop an information campaign to raise awareness of the sensitive wildlife features of the Dungeness Point Sub-Area, and promote to holiday accommodation including the Dungeness Estate and the commercial operators in and around the area (links with DP2) (NB overlaps with Romney and Lade)
DP2	Develop an interpretation programme for the Dungeness Complex: Dungeness Point Sub-Area	DP2.1	Develop and implement a programme of interpretation to appeal to and engage with the site's wide range of visitors
		DP2.2	In partnership with other organisations (see DP5) extend Wardening across the Dungeness Sub-Area Estate to a. support visitors and their understanding of the wildlife interests of the area, and b. support the enforcement of access controls and interventions
		DP2.3	Ensure that local promotional websites including Visit England, Visit Kent, Explore Kent and The Romney Marsh contain information on appropriate visitor behaviour at Dungeness.
		DP2.4	Work with RHDR to install interpretive and education displays in the café and ensure that visitors leaving the station can orientate themselves easily



John Lord

DP3	Introduce access controls to the Dungeness Estate (see also DP5)	DP3.1	Develop entrance 'gateways' at key entry points to the estate; to include posting of conditions of entry, site map, and clear waymarking, with timings for walkers to key destinations (links with DP2). The information should make clear the type of activities which are permitted and those that will require the granting of permission. Include leaflets and boards at The Pilot, The Britannia and RHDR.
		DP3.2	Assess the feasibility of the estate road to be designated a 'clearway' or 'no stopping' zone
		DP3.3	Undertake a strategic review of vehicle parking across the Dungeness Point Sub-Area, including a review of existing arrangements and consideration of alternative parking areas for visitors (e.g. at lifeboat station)
		DP3.4	Introduce (temporary) physical restrictions to vehicle parking. This may require planning permission
		DP3.5	Investigate potential options for controlling access that might be acceptable in planning terms.
		DP3.6	As part of an approach to improve visitor awareness of site rules and permissions, review current on-line presence of the Dungeness Estate, improve the official website, and consider improvements to streamline the user experience when searching for information e.g. driving online traffic and providing links to one official website.
DP4	Consider the introduction of legal and other actions to support access management: at Dungeness Estate (see also DP5)	DP4.1	Introduce a parking enforcement system (e.g. number plate recognition system)
		DP4.2	Introduce new Voluntary Codes of Conduct for users of the Dungeness Estate
		DP4.3	Investigate PCSO or enforcement staff with powers



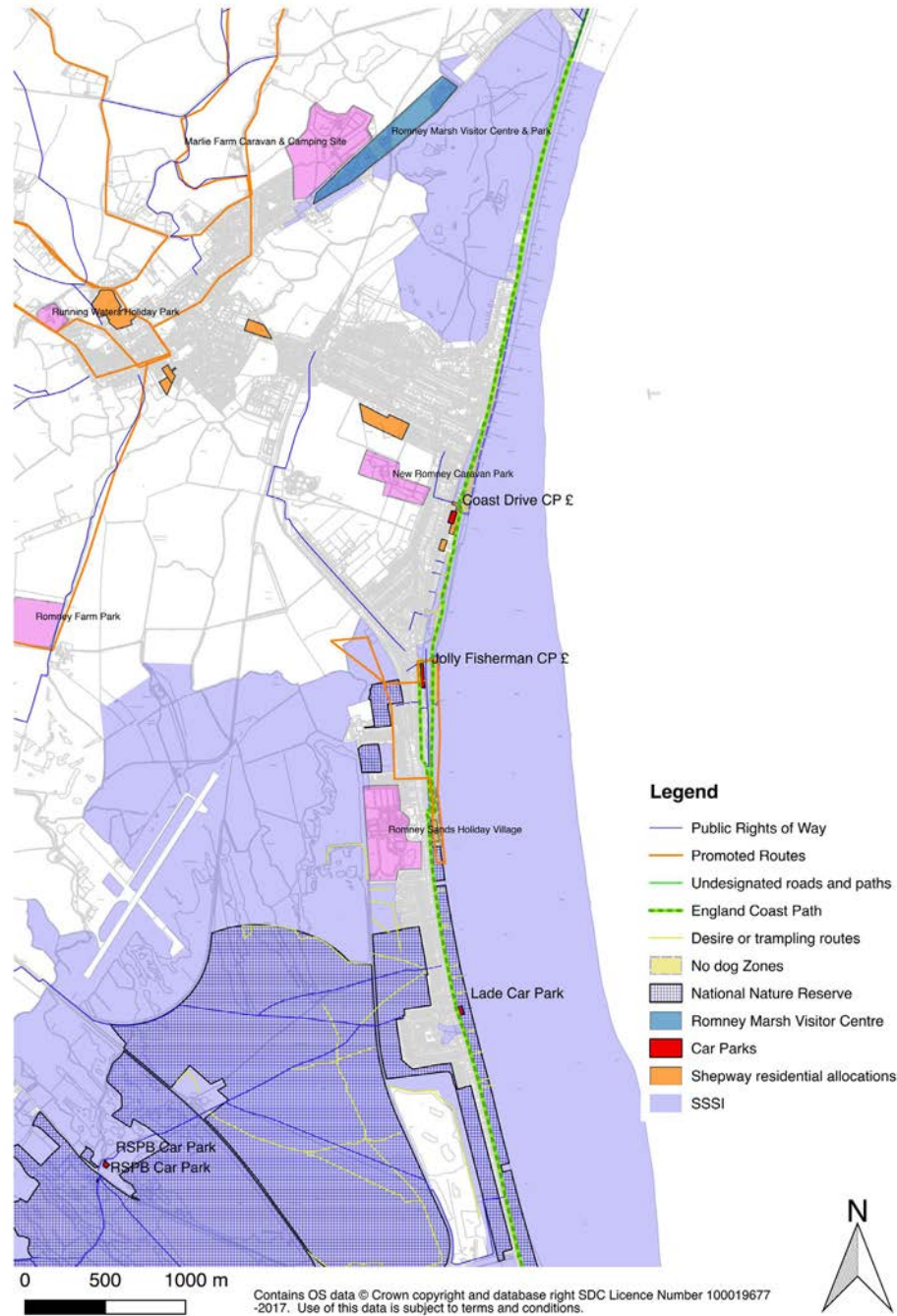
DP5	The need for joint working: Take a partnership approach to the development of access and recreation management measures at the Dungeness estate	DP5.1 Set up new, or work through existing partnership groupings, including the Dungeness NNR Landowners group, to consider and take forward access and recreation management initiatives: (i) a strategic/executive grouping of major landowners and interests: with EDF, Magnox, SDC, NE, RHDR, RSPB and RMCP; (ii) an estate partnership: with the above plus residential property owners, and local businesses and attractions including the Old Lighthouse, and The Britannia and Pilot pubs; (iii) a wider Estate Management Stakeholder group: to include representatives of site users (e.g. anglers, wildlife watchers, local dog walkers)
DP6	Address gaps in data requirements across the Dungeness Point Sub-Area	<p data-bbox="1359 585 2184 703">DP6.1 Develop a programme of monitoring that provides regular and consistent data on visitor numbers and other visitor data;</p> <p data-bbox="1359 708 2184 863">DP6.2 Maintain the traffic counter at Dungeness Estate entrance and continue monitoring of numbers on an ongoing basis. Work with RHDR to more accurately assess visitors through this route.</p> <p data-bbox="1359 868 2184 944">DP6.3 Ensure findings of vegetated shingle condition report are circulated to partners and incorporated into this strategy</p>

# SUB AREA 5 - ROMNEY & LADE FORESHORE

This area incorporates the coastal strip from The Pilot restaurant at Dungeness to the northern extend of the SPA at St Mary's Bay (the coast south of The Pilot and the inland areas are covered in the Dungeness Point section). It includes six holiday parks and camping sites.



Toby Charlton Taylor



ROMNEY AND LADE FORESHORE



# Biodiversity

## Overview and Importance

Lade Sands is particularly important for the SPA's population of Sanderling and Great Crested Grebe. Great Crested Grebes feed in the shallow waters over the intertidal zone at high tide, whilst Sanderling feed at low tide on the extensive intertidal mudflats and sandflats. However, numbers of Sanderling at Lade Sands have decreased in recent years. Lade Sands also has Oystercatcher, Curlew, Dunlin and Knot.

There is a high degree of interconnection between the foreshore and coast and the hinterland, with birds using different areas depending on tides and disturbance.<sup>1</sup> Most waders use the shingle ridge to roost at high tide but the location may depend on disturbance, moving to another temporarily quiet spot if disturbed. Some, including Oystercatchers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Plover, Knot and Redshank which will move towards Lade Pit and the surrounding shingle area. Therefore, although Dungeness Point is treated as a separate sub-section in this strategy, this connection in terms of responses to disturbance on the coast is important. Curlew will move to inland pasture fields on the north side of Dunes Road or all the way across to fields at Caldicot Lane, north of Lydd.

From Lade south to The Pilot the coastline is fringed with coastal vegetated shingle.

Greatstone Dunes demonstrate a successional sequence of dune habitats from foredune to mobile dune and dune scrub habitats. The transitions between vegetated shingle beach and foredune communities are important features, especially where the dunes meet shingle in the north and south.

There are two WeBS bird count sectors; Romney Sands and Lade Sands. The Romney Sands WeBS sector has not been recorded for several years. This lack of data for is a significant omission in the ongoing monitoring of the SPA features. There is also a significant gap in data on sanderling in the recent WeBS data, with only the three-year mean figures available. There is no information on bird disturbance – incidents or levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Mostly by general walkers/dog walkers, kite surfing and sand buggies on the mud/sand flats, pers comm Dungeness Bird Observatory and S. McMinn Marsh Environmental Ecological Consultants.

## Features Potentially Vulnerable to Recreational Impacts

Feature	Natura Feature	Comments
Wintering birds (individual species and assemblage) <sup>2</sup>	✓	Along entire foreshore.
Vegetated shingle inland and coastal – geomorphological and vegetation features	✓	South from Greatstone to The Pilot.
Dune habitats	✓	Both mobile and stabilised dunes, also dune to shingle transitions

There is a high density of paths across the dunes north of Greatstone, with a network of paths leading from the back of private properties. There is evidence of garden expansions and ‘land grab’ into the dunes area by residents whose homes back onto the dunes, plus some garden-waste fly-tipping. These activities appear to be uncontrolled, and such tacit ‘approval’ can only encourage further activity. There is some localised erosion around the Jolly Fisherman car park. Further south the dunes are more mobile, but access is more difficult due to the presence of sand fencing.

Birds may be disturbed on the foreshore; sanderling numbers are dropping, although the cause of this is not known. There is a high degree of interconnection between the foreshore and coast and the hinterland, with birds using different areas depending on tides and disturbance. Therefore bird movements and pressures need to be considered across the wider area.

## Access and Management

### Site Ownership and Management

Greatstone dunes and most of the coast in this sub-area designated as open space, are partly owned by SDC. Greatstone dunes are in a Higher Level Stewardship agreement with the White Cliffs Countryside Project (WCCP) with additional funding from Natural England. The WCCP, through its local project arm the Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership, work with volunteers, mainly to manage sea buckthorn, white poplar and alien garden plants and monitor rare plants and report back to Natural England. Shepway DC maintain the sand fencing on Greatstone Dunes through a Defra-funded EA grant for flood management

<sup>2</sup> Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right. NB, species indicated as SSSI (along with other species not listed) will also form part of the SPA/Ramsar winter assemblage qualifying feature and are therefore also Natura qualifying features in this regard - mute swan<sup>RAMSAR</sup> - ruff<sup>SPA</sup> - shoveler<sup>SPA</sup> - golden plover<sup>SPA</sup> - common sandpiper<sup>SSSI</sup> - coot<sup>SSSI</sup> - cormorant<sup>SSSI</sup> - gadwall<sup>SSSI</sup> - garganey<sup>SSSI</sup> - great crested grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - little grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - pochard<sup>SSSI</sup> - sanderling<sup>SSSI</sup> - teal<sup>SSSI</sup> - tufted duck<sup>SSSI</sup> - water rail<sup>SSSI</sup> - whimbrel<sup>SSSI</sup> - wigeon<sup>SSSI</sup> - white-fronted goose (European)<sup>SSSI</sup>.



purposes. This funding, and the cooperative approach between the parties (EA, SDC, WCCCP and RMCP) has been essential for the good management of the dunes. This needs to continue to preserve the stability and integrity of the dunes. Littlestone dunes are a golf course (Littlestone Golf Club) and there is no public access.

### **Byelaws, Site Rules and Codes of Conduct**

Shepway byelaws prohibit cars, motorbikes and quadbikes. Horses with carts are not permitted to access from the main access points but some do, illegally. Shepway DC byelaws are sometimes vague about activities allowed on the beaches and signage is patchy and uncoordinated. There are no Codes of Conduct in place.

Dog restrictions are in place at Greatstone between 1st May to 30th September. The restricted area covers part of the survey area.

### **Access Points and Routes**

There is access to the beaches and dunes from many points, with unrestricted access onto the beach (across the shingle) and from any point along The Parade/Coast Drive south of Greatstone. Unfettered access has become normalised over time with residents and visitors. There are rights of way, including the England Coastal Path (ECP) which runs through the dunes. At the Jolly Fisherman car park the ECP takes two routes, roadside or beachside, and there is a, now superfluous, right of way running parallel. Although there is unrestricted access to the dunes, most people keep to a limited number of paths through the mobile dunes (roughly south of the Jolly Fisherman), primarily because topography and sand fencing makes wandering difficult. However, there is a very high number of trampled paths and desire lines in the more stabilised dunes to the north of Greastone.

Water sports enthusiasts use several access points from the coast road to the sea. This may have been affected to some degree by the closure of the car park opposite the Romney Sands Holiday Village. The car park was used by water sports enthusiasts amongst others, and its closure means that many of these visitors now park along a long stretch on the coastal side of the coast road. This has the effect of encouraging direct access across the beach and across the shingle, potentially affecting an extensive area.

### **Areas of Unrestricted Access**

The foreshore at Lade Sands and Greatstone Dunes is largely open and unfenced and there is de facto unrestricted access across the entire area, with little information on where access might be restricted. The waymarking/signposting is visually uncoordinated and sometimes the route is ambiguous and could be improved to help visitor orientation.

Tracks across the beach may also be the result of routes taken by holiday-makers from the holiday village. Along the coast at Lydd-On-Sea, the tracks correspond with the ends of residential roads so they are probably the result of local use. Again, signs on the beach are very small, faded, and their message is lost.

Areas at The Pilot and the (now closed) car park opposite the Romney Sands Holiday Village show evidence of a wide trampling



Paul Pitman

channel to the beach, with vegetation almost completely denuded. Romney Sands Holiday Village is also located at the point of transition between dunes and shingle which is a highly specialised and rare habitat.

#### Parking:

There are three public car parks:

- Coast Drive, 400 spaces - this pay and display tarmacked car park is open all year and charges are the same all year;
- Jolly Fisherman, 130 spaces - this pay and display tarmacked car park is open all year and charges are the same all year;
- Lade car park – 50 spaces (free parking).

A (free) car park opposite the Holiday Park in Greatstone is now closed, and users seem to be parking along the coast road as a result. Car parking numbers at the Jolly Fisherman car park have increased by 39% since 2013 and are continuing to increase. Figures are not recorded at the other car parks, but as the Jolly Fisherman is a fee-paying car park, it is not unreasonable to assume that other car parks are also becoming busier.

There is some road parking available, with casual laybys at Coast Drive, Littlestone Wall, Marine Parade and Clark Drive. The section of coast road from Lydd-On-Sea (i.e. just north of Dungeness Estate) as far as the Romney Sands Holiday Park (between Lade and Greatstone) has parking restrictions (double yellow lines) on the landward side and a single white line on the coast side (except areas opposite road entrances where there are short sections of double yellow lines). Cars are often parked on the sections of white-lined road along the coastal side. North of Romney Sands Holiday Village there are parking restrictions (double yellow lines) on both sides of the road and these continue for some distance.

#### Visitor Numbers

Data from the Jolly Fisherman car park indicates that this car park received 26.5k visitors in 2016; with an increase in visitor numbers of 39% between 2013 and 2016. This will be an under-estimate as visitors access from all along the coast. There is no visitor data available from the other car parks or any other sources in the sub-area.

#### Visitor Profile, Origin and Seasonality

This sub-area includes two survey points in the Phase One Visitor Survey – Greatstone (Jolly Fisherman car park) and Lade car park. These indicate that Greatstone attracts visitors from a smaller catchment than the other sites in the Phase One survey, with almost half (49%) of respondents travelling less than 5km. Greatstone also had the smallest average distance travelled by day-trippers (17.9km).

The sites with the highest percentages of regular visitors were Greatstone (55%) and Lade (31%);

- The highest percentage by far of those who visit each day was at Greatstone (32%). This may reflect the proximity of housing to the sites and the ease of access to the beach;
- At Lade more visitors travel less than 5km and more than 55km (26% each) than in other distance categories;



Oandu

The smallest proportion of visitors travelling by car was recorded at Greatstone, at 48%. Greatstone is situated close to a residential area, and many of its visitors walk to the site;

Although Lade car park is close to Greatstone car park, a high percentage of visitors to Lade travel there by car (81%). It may be relevant that the car park at Greatstone levies a charge, whereas parking at Lade is free. This could attract local use and visitors, many of which it was observed visit to use the free toilets;

The smallest proportion of holiday-makers was found at Lade (12% of visitors) and the second lowest was Greatstone (18% of visitors);

Greatstone had the greatest number of local visitors compared to the other seven survey sites (60 respondents);

- 45% of visitors to Lade and 34% of visitors to Greatstone were aged over 55 years, which may be partly explained by the profile of local residents, and other regular users;
- 24% of visitors to Greatstone were under 15. This may be explained by the sandy beach – which is a draw for families - and the proximity to holiday parks;
- A high percentage of visitors to Lade (59%) and Greatstone (62%) made visits equally all year; again, this may follow the pattern of largely local use.

European site strategic mitigation schemes for recreational pressure have tended to define a catchment area (also called a Zone of Influence) based on 90% of regular visitors (i.e. visits of at least one per week) or 75% of all visitors, to identify the core area from which visitors originate. The coastal sites in this sub-area attract high numbers of regular visitors and seemed to have a higher proportion of local visitors than the other survey sites. Accordingly, it may be appropriate to consider 90% of regular visitors for these areas. The majority of the '90% of regular visitors' are clustered in particular areas, most notably around Greatstone, Lade and Lydd-On-Sea (33% of the total of '90% of regular visitors' in the Phase One survey). The plan on the following page shows the clusters of visitor origins from 90% of regular visitors.

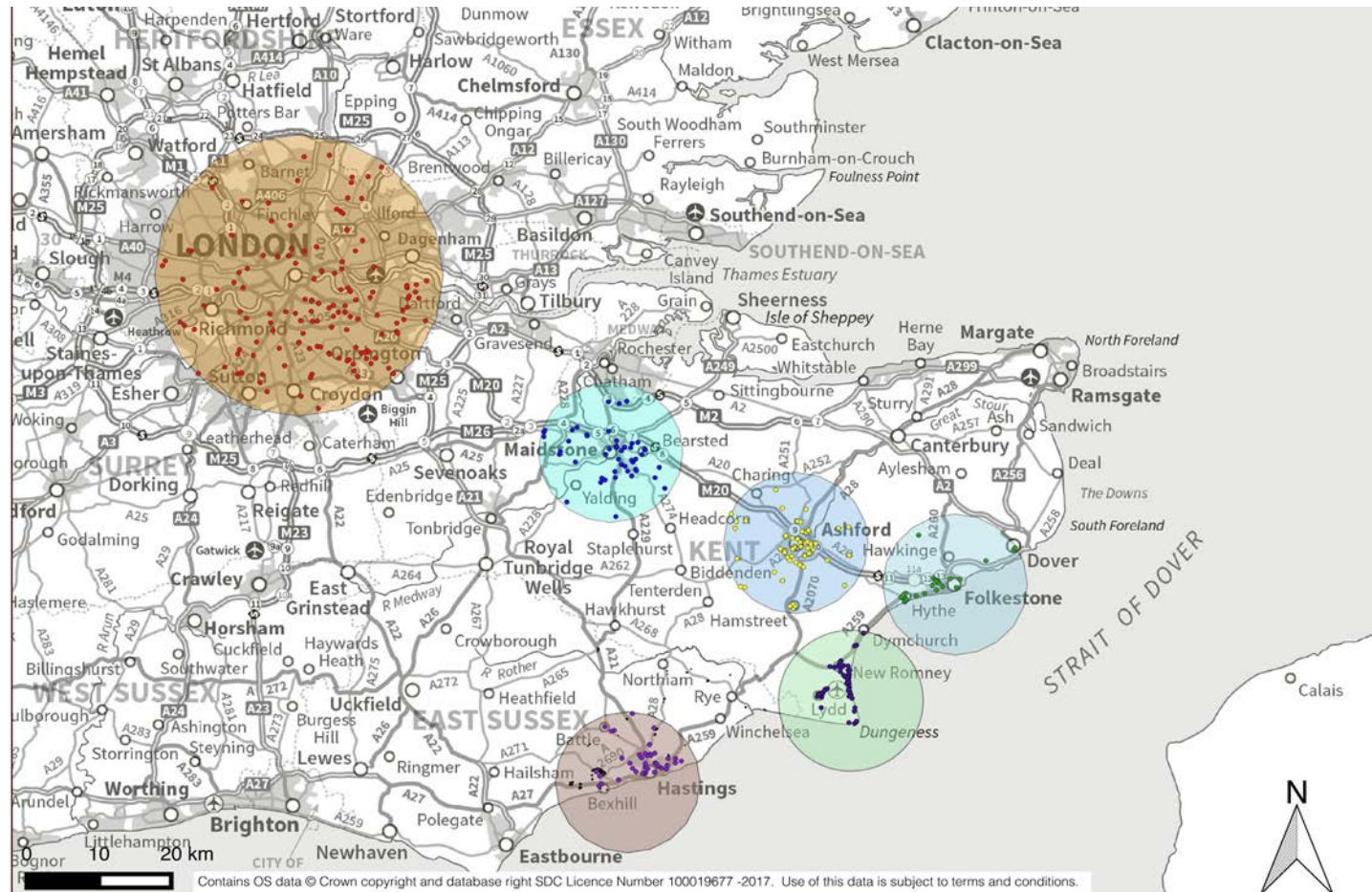
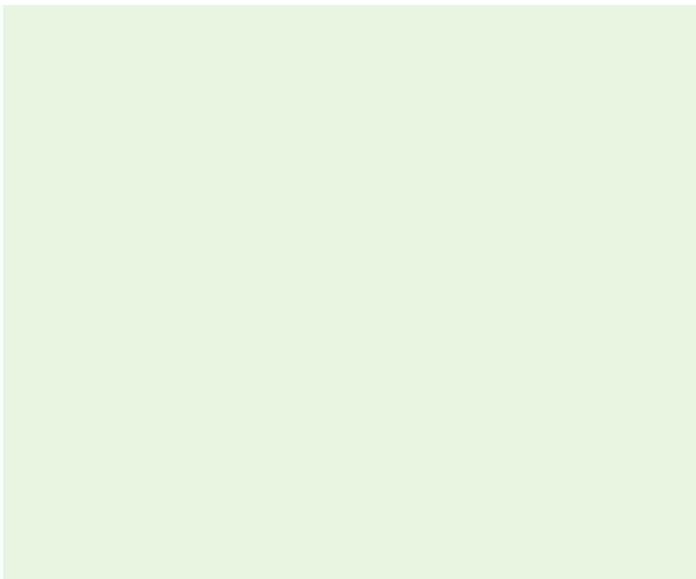
### Activities

In the Phase One survey the main activity at Lade and Greatstone was walking with a dog (39% at Lade and 55% at Greatstone). Across all the eight survey locations, a fifth (21%) of dog walking took place at Greatstone, which also recorded the second highest number of visitor groups with dogs (69 visitor groups). Dog-walkers said they favoured the coastal sites and the majority go to sites where they can let their dogs off the lead. Parties with dogs were recorded at Greatstone throughout the year, including during the restricted periods. The difference in the percentage of visitor parties walking with dogs during the unrestricted period compared with the restricted period is +18% at Greatstone. At Lade there are no dog restrictions, and the difference is slightly less at +16%. However, Lade beach is directly connected to the restricted part of Greatstone beach.

The Phase One online survey showed that Greatstone is one of two popular kite-surfing beaches in the strategy area, with 64% of kite-surfers responding to the survey visiting Greatstone (and 79% Camber and Broomhill). Only 2% of the kite-surfers visit Greatstone in the winter. The interest in outdoor recreation and extreme sports, including kite-surfing, is growing.



Leonard Bentley



CLUSTERS OF VISITOR ORIGINS OF 90% OF REGULAR VISITORS FROM THE STAGE 1 VISITOR SURVEY - 2015 -2016

## Visitor Information and Awareness

### Promotion

The sub-area appears to have a low tourism 'profile' in Shepway, with the focus on the main holiday parks rather than the locality. However, Greatstone beach is known as a good site for kite-surfing amongst enthusiasts, many of whom rely on social media to find out about their activity.

### On-Site Information

There is a wide range of signage in varying styles and formats. It is difficult for the visitor to differentiate between warnings, guidance, information and educative messages. The Greatstone Shingle Trail signs are small, but they also have too much information and small text, making them hard to read. The signage of routes around the dunes is poor and the signage of the England Coastal Path is also poor and uncoordinated.

There is a good example of an interpretive panel at Lade, which is from a series of interpretive panels provided by RMCP. The panels welcome visitors to the NNR and cover a range of themes (the themes of the shingle beach, wildlife, plants of the shore, the Sound Mirrors and the legacy of gravel extraction). The wording includes a suggested visit to the RSPB Reserve and relates to the broader Romney Marsh area. The panel needs cleaning but is generally in good condition.

### Visitor Awareness and Behaviour

In the Phase One survey the majority of visitors to Lade (70%) and Greatstone (67%) knew about the site because they were local, with 'word of mouth' indicated as the source of information by almost all non-local visitors.

A high proportion of visitors to Lade and Greatstone were aware of the area's importance for wildlife. However, this only translated into knowledge of protected features in less than half of visitors surveyed (46% at each site). A high percentage of visitors to Lade (72%) had seen an information board, but at Greatstone the figure was only 43%. This may be partly due to the location of sign boards in relation to where visitors access and dwell at the sites.

## Visitor Facilities

The visitor facilities are largely centred around the holiday parks and some small parades of shops. Leisure facilities are available in the larger town of New Romney. The exception is the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre.. Facilities on public sites are limited. The local visitor economy seems focused largely on the holiday parks.

When asked what facilities visitors would like at the sites, visitors to Greatstone wanted showers (the site is popular with kite-surfers and wind-surfers), more car parking for kite-surfers and, similar to other sites including Lade, more seats, litter bins and dog waste bins.

### Visitor Accommodation

There are two coastal holiday parks and four more parks located away from the coast: Jesson Court Holiday Park, St Mary's Bay, Marlie Farm Caravan and Camping Site, on the edge of New Romney, Running Waters Holiday Park, New Romney, New Romney Caravan Park (coastal site), Littlestone, Romney Farm Park and Romney Sands Holiday Village (coastal site). These are medium to



small sized sites with lots of visitor facilities and accommodation including caravans, mobile homes, apartments and bungalows and rented, owner owned and tourer pitches. Many permit dogs. The parks cater mostly for the summer holidays, some are open all year, smaller sites close in November. It is not known if these holiday parks intend to expand their visitor accommodation capacity.

Both of the coastal sites (New Romney Caravan Park and Romney Sands Holiday Village) offer the option of owning a caravan, which potentially could be occupied for most of the year. Caravans are also available for lettings or visitors can bring their own tent, motorhome or touring caravan. Both parks describe themselves as pet friendly and with a dog-friendly beach opposite:

#### **Local Attractions**

Local attractions include the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre, the RHDR (stations near New Romney and at Dungeness), the golf course and the RSPB reserve.

## **Future Plans and Projects**

#### **Development**

There are residential allocated sites in New Romney.

#### **Extension of Holiday Parks**

Holiday visitors – Some holiday parks offer accommodation for sale. The ownership of caravans or properties has the potential to adversely affect levels of recreation pressure on the sensitive wildlife areas outside of the summer months, particularly during the winter months.

#### **Cinque Ports Cycleway**

There is a recent proposal by Cycle Shepway for a 'Cinque Ports Cycleway' route, a 20-mile seafront cycleway from Folkestone Harbour to Dungeness, with the potential to link up with the existing National Cycle Network at places including Lydd and the cycle route sections of the Royal Military Canal path, with routes inland to Ashford and the Elham Valley.





# Conclusions and Actions

## Evidence Base

There are gaps in evidence which should be addressed, these include:

- A. Birds:
  - (i) The gap in the Romney Sands WeBS sector;
  - (ii) WeBS data on Sanderling;
  - (iii) Information on bird disturbance – incidents and levels;
- B. Levels and types of recreation on the coast including during the winter months, to better understand the pressures on the coastal vegetation and the dunes;
- C. Usage of all public car parks;

## Communication, Education and Interpretation

Signage and interpretation boards are currently the primary means by which visitors are made aware of the protected areas. However, as the results from the Phase One visitor survey show, the success of this approach is limited in raising visitor awareness:

- Regular visitors had good awareness of the importance of the sites for wildlife and had seen the noticeboards, but had a poor understanding of what actions are needed to keep the area special for wildlife;
- Holiday-makers in particular had less knowledge than other groups of the habitats or special features on the sites. This may indicate that signage and interpretation has limited impact;
- Specialist users had a greater understanding of measures needed to protect the wildlife interest of the sites;
- The exception was kite-surfers who had the poorest level of awareness and understanding.

Signage in this sub-area is visually uncoordinated and in some places inadequate; providing confused messages and poor guidance for users. Signage and waymarking for routes, in particular the ECP, needs improvement and messages are needed to urge people to stick to the paths. A coordinated approach to signage is needed to help regulate access.

The type and form of messages need to be tailored to the range of visitors using the area i.e. locals may not respond to signage (that they see regularly), and some reinforcement of these messages may be needed by a local 'officer' and through educational/informative displays or events. Occasional visitors may respond to signage, although care needs to be taken to ensure that language and graphics on signage are visible as well as engaging.



A programme of information and interpretation should be developed to target the wide range of visitors - regular and local visitors, holiday-makers and adventure sports visitors. Consideration should be given to the use of social media as part of an interpretive programme, as this may be an effective approach to kite-surfers. The Romney Marsh Visitor Centre could be developed as a visitor 'hub' or 'gateway' to inform and education visitors, appealing to a wider audience.

### Access Management

Apart from the summer Dog Control Areas there is no zoning of activities. Activity zoning could help to gather particular site users in a smaller number of areas, rather than spread recreational pressure over a wider area. Designated activity zones could also help prevent putting shoreline birds to flight, particularly in the winter months. However further information is needed to better understand birds' winter roosting and feeding areas, as well as the needs of adventure sport users.

It is clear that car parking areas are a collecting point for visitors, and this can result in focusing areas of trampling. Vehicle parking along the coast road may exacerbate the spread of trampling across a wide area along the beach, whereas focusing parking into fewer, larger areas may help to concentrate the impacts. Parking charges may also influence usage and activities. Lade is more attractive as it's free, but one of the key roosting areas for sanderling is at the end of the board walk at Lade. The beach is open to the road in this area, with no fencing or boundary, making it easy to access. Several trampled routes are evident across the beach to the sea; these may result from holiday-makers taking a route to the sea from the Park, residents walking from their homes (some of the routes line-up with the entrances to side-roads into the residential area) or boat users who drag boats across the beach to the sea. Quiet areas of the coastline are needed for the birds, where they won't be disturbed. Parking restrictions and zoning may help both limit trampling of vegetation and bird disturbance.

Further data is needed on bird numbers and bird disturbance, plus some outreach/user consultation to find out why some visitors park and visit particular areas. Depending on the results of this work there may be a need for a winter sports activity zone further north (towards Greatstone), and some consideration of the need to issue permits for (sport and activities) organisations operating in this area. In the interim, it may be better to focus parking along this coast at the Jolly Fisherman Car park and provide some incentives to do so; concentrating visitors in a few areas to protect sensitive areas further along the coast.

The high percentage of visitors with dogs to the coastal sites could be an issue in regard to bird disturbance. There is no evidence on the level of disturbance of over-wintering birds in this area; although there is anecdotal evidence of bird disturbance and concerns raised at the workshop. However, the high level of local and regular use, together with the close proximity of residential areas and a holiday park, mean that evidence is needed to better understand the use of the sites (by dog walkers and other visitors) all year round; plus, the recording and monitoring of bird disturbance events. There may also be a need for residents' surveys to understand where dog walkers come from and better understand the pressures. This is important in terms of the future growth of recreation and, potentially, the growth of housing in the catchment area of these sites. A lack of alternative open space sites in the sub-area, and particularly along the coast, means that residents currently have little choice but to use sensitive sites for recreation (see also later).



Access management on the ground is needed to help contain erosion of the dunes, including sand fencing which both stabilises the dunes and limits the creation of additional access routes, improvements to waymarking, plus information circulated to the local area and the holiday park. The aim should be to limit the number of routes and make them clearer and easier to follow than the alternatives. The truncated right of way running north-south at Greatstone serves no purpose and has been superseded by the ECP, although it is kept clear by Shepway Council. It may be advantageous to legally close this route.

### **Codes of Conduct and Byelaws**

There are seasonal dog restriction areas just on the beach and not the dunes (which is confusing for site users); also signs on the beach regarding the use of jet skis and other activities, but not apparent in the local byelaws. A variety of activities take place in the water and on the beach, but there are few controls and no activity zones and no apparent enforcement as there is no coastal officer. There is insufficient data about the birds in this area to identify where the activity zones should be and how much of an issue it is in the area (as previously discussed). More data is also needed on the type and seasonal pattern of activities including kite-surfing and land-yachting, in particular in the winter months when over-wintering birds are present.

### **Alternative open spaces**

There are limited opportunities for access to open spaces on non-sensitive sites for both regular local site users and the seasonal influx of holiday-makers to the holiday parks. Local site users often prefer to visit coastal sites in preference to the closest recreational open spaces to their home. It may be necessary to identify alternative, robust open spaces to attempt to relieve recreational pressure on the sensitive coastal sites that both regular local users and holiday makers are known to visit. This would need to be in place alongside any restrictions in dog access to the beaches in winter as currently many residents have no alternative.

## Actions

RL1	Improve visitor awareness of the sensitive features of the designated sites	RL1.1	Develop and implement a programme of interpretation to appeal to a range of visitors; notably for local, regular visitors, and infrequent visitors, on holiday in the area. To include interpretation boards at Greatstone, clearer signing and waymarking at Greatstone Dunes; larger signs for the length of beach that fronts the coast road near housing, aimed at local users, encouraging actions to protect wildlife; interpretive leaflets to holiday parks, and continue to produce the RMCP's Shingle Issue publication for residents and local businesses
		RL1.2	Develop the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre as a visitor 'hub' or 'gateway' to the area to promote visitor awareness for the wider Dungeness Complex.
		RL1.3	Raise awareness of sensitive wildlife, behaviours to prevent disturbance and the Code of Conduct (see RL3.1) amongst adventure sport users through clubs, operators and use of social media to capture visitors from further afield.
RL2	Access Management	RL2.1	Develop Codes of Conduct in partnership with adventure sports operators and clubs.
		RL2.2	Improve signing of paths, including the ECP. Install signs at existing desire lines e.g. opposite Romney Sands Holiday Village and at the ends of road junctions.
		RL2.3	Depending on outcome of further investigation (see actions RL7) work with adventure sports operators and clubs to determine activity zones (for both summer and winter).

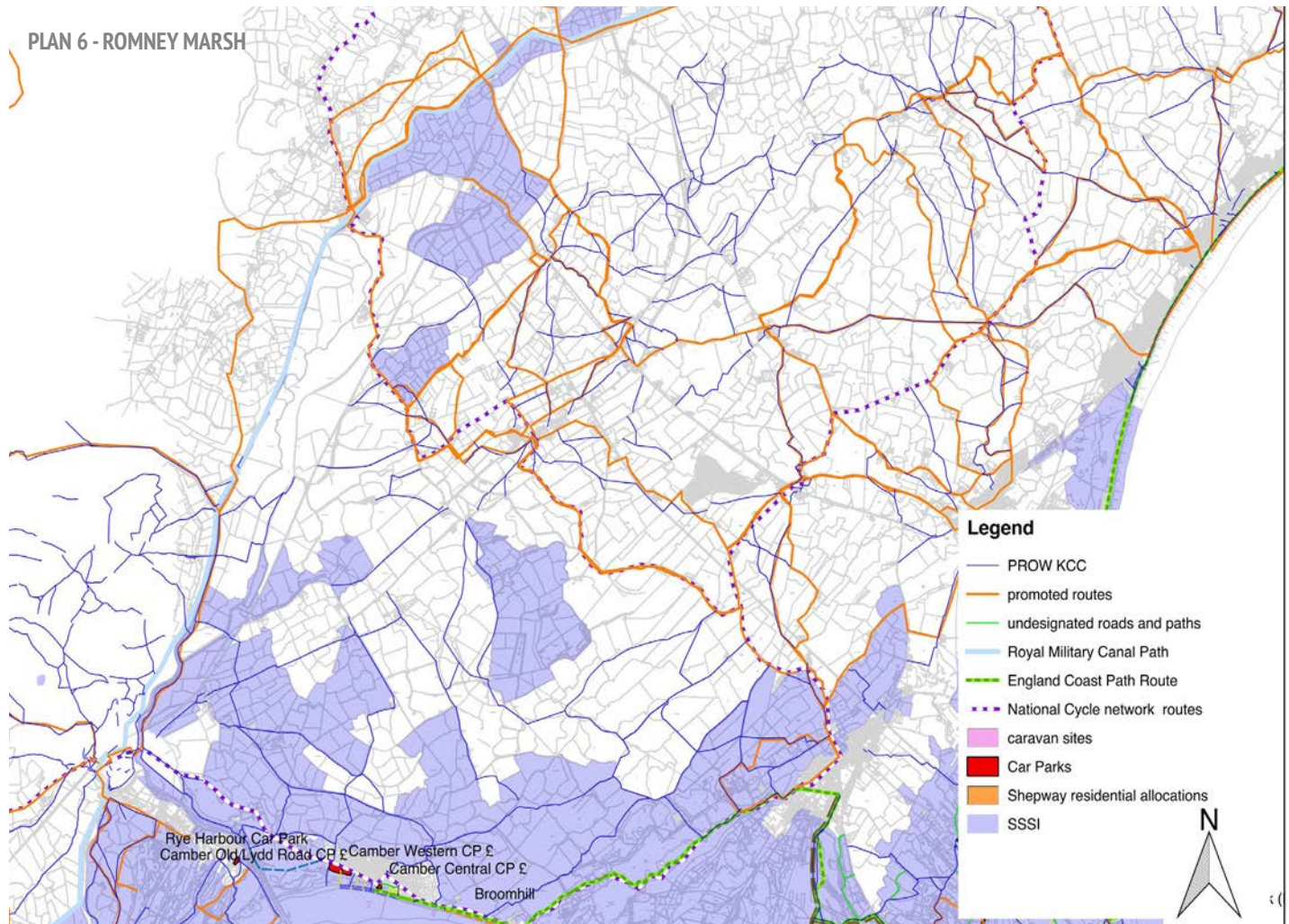
RL3	Rationalise car parking	RL3.1	Consider the introduction of no parking areas along the coastal side of the coast road between Lade and Greatstone, in conjunction with RL3.3.
		RL3.2	Introduce methods to assess numbers of vehicles using public car parks in the area (See also SA5.4)
		RL3.3	Consider reduced or no charge of the existing car park at The Jolly Fisherman in the winter months to encourage use of the car park rather than on-road parking on the seafront.
		RL3.4	Investigate the potential for re-opening the car park opposite the Romney Sands Holiday Village, for public use.
RL4	Extend the good practice of management on Greatstone dunes to the rest of the dunes complex, in a comprehensive approach to dunes management	RL4.1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Secure the longer-term management and resourcing of the dunes in a partnership including SDC, NE, EA, RMCP/WCCP and KCC PRoW;</li> <li>2. (Repair and replace sand fencing;</li> <li>3. (Review and replace way-marking and signage as part of a comprehensive approach across the strategy area;</li> <li>4. Rationalise routes through the coastal dunes;</li> <li>5. Investigate legal closure of right of way running north-south through Greatstone dunes.</li> <li>6. Address encroachment and points of access from adjacent private properties;</li> <li>7. Develop an awareness-raising campaign, targeting the local residential areas and holiday parks;</li> </ol>
RL5	Relieve recreational pressure on sensitive areas of open space	RL5.1	Actively seek provision of alternative local areas of public open space for residents and visitors to local holiday parks, particularly for dog walkers.
		RL5.2	Work with providers of local holiday park-type accommodation to review times of opening and future plans which may affect levels of recreational pressure, and seek to work with the providers to develop on-site visitor education measures.

RL6	Extend and/or modify byelaws and control orders	RL6.1	Ensure byelaws support new Codes of Conduct, and are adequately displayed and understandable
RL7	Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features	RL7.1	Support local BTO volunteers to encourage provision of a recorder for the Romney Sands WeBS sector and to ensure complete WeBS counts each year.
		RL7.2	Carry out monitoring of winter birds, with particular regards to sanderling, to better understand feeding and roosting locations, numbers, seasonality and incidents and levels of bird disturbance.
		RL7.3	Monitor numbers, locations and types of visitors and recreational activities, in particular during the winter months.
		RL7.4	Monitor incidents of bird disturbance events

This area covers the inland Romney Marsh area, including the designated areas around East Guldeford, Fairfield, Cheyne Court, Walland Marsh, The Dowels and Snargate, Warehorne, the Royal Military Canal and the Lydd/Scotney Lakes, as well as the 'functional' land surrounding the designated sites.



Barry Marsh



## Biodiversity

### Overview and Importance

This area is a landscape of grazing marsh, wetlands, reedbeds, pools and other waterbodies, criss-crossed with ditches and streams. Romney Marsh, both within and outside of the designated areas, provides important functional land for several birds species, which move across the entire SPA area for feeding and roosting on a daily basis. Birds also move over a longer time period, as areas become more or less favourable to them. This is evident in the movement of duck and waterbirds species between the pools and waterbodies in this area and those in other sub-areas of this report, including Lade Pits, Dungeness RSPB and the waterbodies outside of the reserve and the pools around Camber and Guldeford. The area is of prime importance for the

geese, swans, lapwing and golden plover populations of the SSSI in particular.

### Features Potentially Vulnerable to Recreational Impacts

Feature	Natura Feature	Comments
Breeding (ground-nesting) birds		Possible avocet
Wintering birds (individual species and assemblage) <sup>1</sup>		Very important area, both due to extensive wet grassland and pits and lakes.
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh		Lower visitor numbers across grassland areas.

### Known Pressures

There is no data on numbers of visitors, but visitor numbers are believed to be low.<sup>2</sup> The Marsh is in close proximity to Lydd Town, especially Scotney and Lydd Lakes, with few other accessible areas close by. However, there is no recorded information on local use including walking and dog walking.

Some wildfowling (shooting)<sup>3</sup> takes place close to the Scotney Lakes. There is fishing on the three lakes just west of Lydd town (Lydd Lakes – managed by Mid-Kent Fisheries). The rest of the Scotney Lakes complex of lakes and pits is currently leased to and managed by Brett Aggregates. No public access is permitted, and no recreational activities currently take place on the lakes.

The Marsh is closely interconnected with the other areas, providing feeding, roosting and refuge areas. If pressure is applied in one area of the Dungeness Complex it will cause an affect in another. This is supported by anecdotal information from local bird recorders, however the Silver Fields Project should be able to provide further information in due course.



Richard Szejkowski

1 Superscript indicates the designation for which this is a qualifying species in its own right. NB, species indicated as SSSI (along with other species not listed) will also form part of the SPA/Ramsar winter assemblage qualifying feature and are therefore also Natura qualifying features in this regard - mute swan<sup>RAMSAR</sup> - ruff<sup>SPA</sup> - shoveler<sup>SPA</sup> - golden plover<sup>SPA</sup> - common sandpiper<sup>SSSI</sup> - coot<sup>SSSI</sup> - cormorant<sup>SSSI</sup> - gadwall<sup>SSSI</sup> - garganey<sup>SSSI</sup> - great crested grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - little grebe<sup>SSSI</sup> - pochard<sup>SSSI</sup> - sanderling<sup>SSSI</sup> - teal<sup>SSSI</sup> - tufted duck<sup>SSSI</sup> - water rail<sup>SSSI</sup> - whimbrel<sup>SSSI</sup> - wigeon<sup>SSSI</sup> - white-fronted goose (European)<sup>SSSI</sup>.

2 From discussion with local site managers and bird watchers.

3 Reported at Bird Workshop held on 21st February 2017 at RSPB Dungeness Reserve



# Access and Management

## Site Ownership and Management

The whole of the Marsh is privately-owned. A large part of this area is farmland, with grazing the predominant activity.

The lakes in the Lydd/Scotney complex are privately-owned and leased to Brett Aggregates as part of the Scotney Lakes complex of gravel pits.

## Byelaws, Site Rules and Codes of Conduct

The Angling Trust produces a national Code of Conduct for Coarse Anglers (updated in 2010), which provides advice to coarse anglers on how their actions could affect the environment and guidance for fishery owners and managers. The IFCA<sup>4</sup> for Kent and Essex and for Sussex produce 'Byelaws for Fishing' and voluntary codes of conduct for types of fishing (see Visitors Report for details).

## Access points and Routes

There are very few access points into the marsh. The area has few major roads, and access includes small lanes and tracks, PROW and other paths. Access to the Scotney Lakes complex is via PROW only or private, controlled access to the fishing lakes. The Royal Military Canal Path is the main promoted route which runs around the boundary of the area from west to the north-east. This route is only partly cyclable although there are plans to upgrade the route (see Access Report for details). From Warehorne the route enters the Ramsar area (The Dowels and Warehorne to Appledore) and the rest of the route is within the Ramsar and SSSI. There is also permitted angling along various stretches of the RMCP.

NCR Route 2 runs through the area and the Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership promotes several cycle and walking routes. Some promoted routes run along the boundary of or through the SSSI/Ramsar sites. There are currently no routes through or near Walland Marsh and it is recommended that no access developments are permitted in the future. However most promoted routes on the Marsh are not within the designated areas.

## Areas of Unrestricted Access

Access is provided through PROW or on highways. There is little or no publicly accessible land.

**User conflicts** – We are not aware of any user conflicts.

## Parking

There are no official car parks except in the villages, although there is some evidence of unauthorised parking across the area.



John Lord

<sup>4</sup> Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

## Visitors

### Visitor Numbers

Some visitor data is collected on the Royal Military Canal Path, but only on the sections near to Hythe where some improvements have taken place (outside of this sub-area). It is understood that visitor numbers have increased along the sections where visitor counters are in place, although there is little earlier data to compare it with (see Access section above). There is no other available visitor data.

### Visitor Profile, Origin and Seasonality

There is very little known about visitors to this sub-area as there are so few accommodation providers and attractions. There are few settlements and, as a result, limited opportunities for visitors to spend money. Anglers may visit inland areas at any time of year during the non-closed season (March to July – dates vary).

### Activities

There is no dominant activity. The marsh has few visitor attractions, but its peaceful, flat and mostly agricultural landscape is ideal for walking and cycling. Driving and angling also take place and some wildfowling.

## Visitor Information and Awareness

### Promotion

This sub-area is within the Fifth Continent Project area. The project has just completed a review of tourism/marketing branding. This area is also within Rother's 1066 Country promotion and includes the edge of Rye. There is very little promotion of the area, and really only through the Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership and websites. The sub-area straddles the district and county boundaries, and as a result falls between the different promotional activities of the local authorities. There is potential for The Fifth Continent to develop a strong coherent brand profile. However, the lack of promotion in this area can also be beneficial - for the wildlife at least - as it helps to keep the area special and quiet, and this is part of its charm.

There is no available information on what sources visitors use, however, the main promotion is walking and cycling leaflets from the RMCP and some websites:

- Magic of the Marsh – promoted walks 5,6,7 & 8 and Romney Marsh Meanders – cycle routes no 2,3 4 & 5.
- Explore Kent Appledore Walk along the RMCP.
- [www.theromneymarsh.net](http://www.theromneymarsh.net) is a particularly useful website, with comprehensive information about the area. Its sub-title of 'The Fifth Continent' also links it helpfully with the HLF-funded Landscape Partnership Project.



Richard Szejkowski

### **On-Site Information**

The Royal Military Canal has interpretive panels and in some areas sculptures relating to the canal's Napoleonic era development. The Sustrans route has signs and sculptures. There are some areas where a plethora of signage from different sources presents a confusing picture to the visitor and other areas where there is not enough information for the visitor to navigate their route, or to understand what is required of them. Interpretation and signage is to be reviewed by The Fifth Continent Project.

### **Visitor Awareness and Behaviour**

There is no information on visitor awareness and behaviour.

## **Visitor Facilities**

### **Visitor Facilities**

There are few visitor facilities in this sub-area. The towns of Lydd and New Romney are the main service centres.

Audience Development work carried out 2010 (background report for the Fifth Continent Project) indicated that the main barriers to visitors to Romney Marsh are the remoteness of the Marshes area, the road network and lack of public transport to and within the area. The same report listed the potential barriers to visitors as lack of awareness of the attractions of the Romney Marshes both nationally and locally, the perception of the area (by more affluent visitors) as 'socially deprived', and the perception of a barren, windswept marshland.

### **Visitor Accommodation**

There are no caravan parks or holiday parks of note in this area. Small sites may be present.

### **Local Attractions**

There are only small attractions dotted across the area.

## **Future Plans and Projects**

### **Growing Green Tourism**

From the strategic level of the South East LEP to the Romney Marsh Partnership and the local district authorities, sustainable or green tourism is highlighted as an area for potential development. Research suggests that rural tourism may see an increase because of increasingly urban lifestyles and the health and activity trend.<sup>5</sup> New trends continue to develop in caravanning and camping, with 'glamping' attracting different markets.

<sup>5</sup> Visit England – Domestic Leisure Tourism Trends for the Next Decade 2013



Norman Slater

### **Royal Military Canal**

This route is only partly cyclable although there are plans to upgrade the route. From Warehorne the route enters the Ramsar area (The Dowels and Warehorne to Appledore) and the rest of the route is within the Ramsar and SSSI. The potential impacts of a cycle route and other plans which may increase the number of visitors should therefore be carefully assessed with regard to the conservation features of the designated sites. Interpretation should also be considered alongside these plans to address the wildlife interest of this area and visitor behaviour.

### **Camber SPD**

The Camber SPD recommends the development of walking routes north out of Camber Village. At present, there is limited access to the western Marsh; the area of the Marsh with the highest proportion of land under nature conservation designations. Careful consideration should be given to expanding access in this area to ensure that the Natura sites and areas of functional land are not disturbed by additional recreational pressure.

### **Walking and Cycling Strategy**

East Sussex CC are in the process of carrying out a walking and cycling strategy for the county. It is suggested that this work should be developed with regard to this strategy.

## **Conclusions and Actions**

### **Supporting the Visitor Economy and Green Tourism**

Green tourism is regarded as an important way to help support local economies that are either weak or reliant on a few industries and as a means of extending the current tourist season in tourism areas. The perceived 'remoteness' of the Marsh and its rich wildlife could provide the basis for re-presenting the area as an eco-tourism destination. This potential should be planned and taken forward with due regard to the potential effects on the sensitive wildlife in the area. Any extension of the tourism season, for example, could have effects on the over-wintering birds/assemblages in the area. There are some small-scale developments of camping and caravanning in the area. It is important to monitor such developments to better understand the trend, the potential cumulative effects and secondary effects through increased recreation on the sensitive wildlife sites. There is also potential for water-based recreation to increase in this area. Some of these activities could result in pressure on wildlife, particularly during the winter months when over-wintering birds may be present.

There is potential for the development of green tourism to have a positive effect on wildlife and, if incorporated into planning approaches, to bring in resources to support the conservation and management of the area for wildlife. Examples from other areas show how the presentation and 'packaging' of an area for wildlife can reap benefits. Visitor payback schemes attracting



Simon Cope

additional funding resources by involving visitors in the landscape they are visiting (see Supporting document 3 - Policy, Visitor Economy and Strategic Initiatives for details).

### **Access Promotion**

There are several plans for future increased access promotion in this quiet area, including through the Camber SPD and upgrading the Royal Military Canal. The implementation of these proposals should give due regard to the designated areas and provide information to visitors e.g. potentially to keep dogs on leads in some areas, to keep to the paths and information around the sensitivity of the nature conservation interest. As this area crosses two district and two county authorities, coordination is needed to ensure consistent messages. The installation of interpretation where existing or new promoted routes cross Natura sites should be considered (e.g. existing routes across Fairfield, The Dowels and Warehorne).

The development of visitor attractions including promoted walking and cycling routes, and accommodation such as caravan and camping sites could result in increased pressure on the area.

The development of tourism, recreation or access should take account of the sensitivity of the wildlife sites, but also the potential for the rich wildlife of the area to make a positive contribution to the perception and positioning of the area.

Measures could be taken to improve the experience of visitors, including investment in signage and interpretation, education relating to the wildlife heritage, and a broader spectrum of accommodation provision.

### **Lakes**

The lakes and their surrounding land at Scotney are important areas for birds, but the future of these lakes is not secure. When gravel extraction has ended these lakes have the potential to be very important to ensuring the SPA continues to support bird populations (as functional areas). However, they could be vulnerable to increased recreational pressure.

Future uses (e.g. for watersports) should be assessed in regard to their contribution or impact on the Natura sites, alongside any contribution they may make to tourism and the local economy.

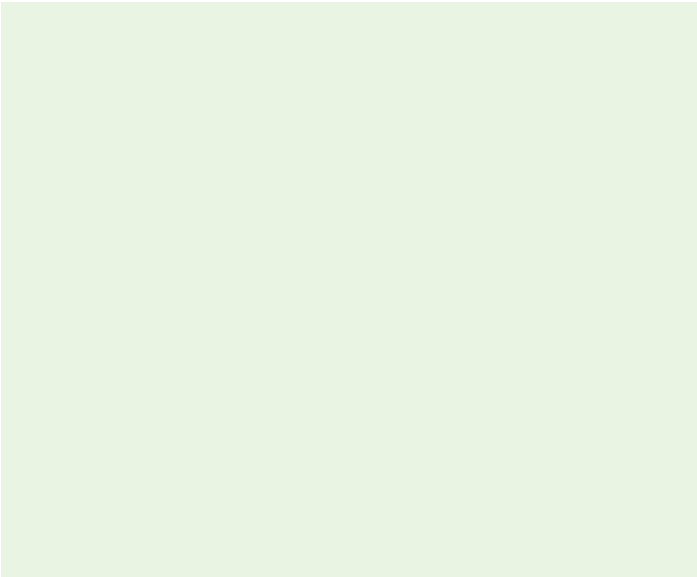
This area is on the boundary of Kent and East Sussex counties and Shepway and Rother district authorities. The after-use of the lakes is currently dealt with by the two County Councils as a county planning matter. There needs to be a cross-county approach to consider these issues and future uses in regard to the whole complex of lakes in this area.

At all lakes and inland waters where angling takes place, voluntary Codes of Conduct should be strengthened and enforced to help regulate the use of some activities in order to safeguard wildlife interests at some locations e.g. angling debris and litter at wetland areas.

### **Gaps in Data**

Data gaps to be addressed include significant gaps in data in the Walland Marsh WeBS Core Count Sector (no counts for five years) along with missing data for Fairfield. There is a need for better understanding of the interconnectedness of sites which support birds and other wildlife and the importance of functional land. The Silver Fields Project is in development by NE



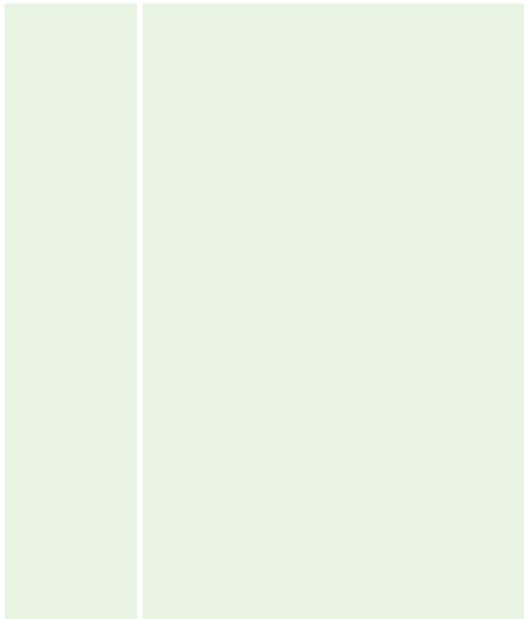
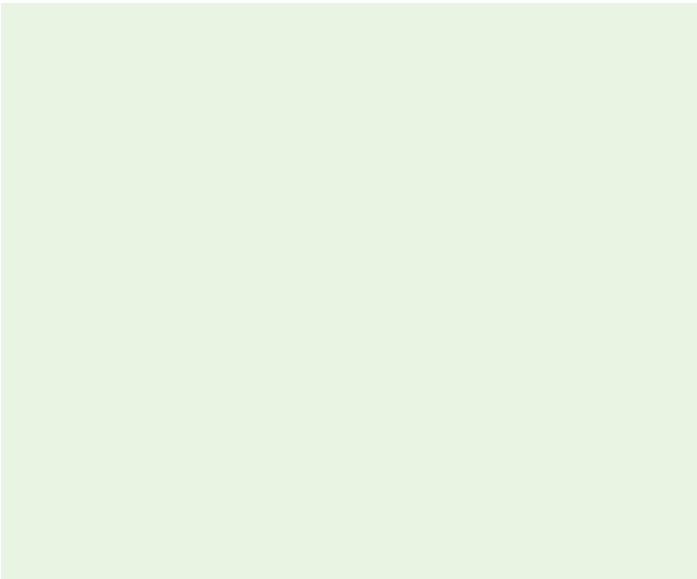


regarding bird movements across the area, and its results should be linked in with this work.

**Actions**

RM1	Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features	RM1.1	Improve information on bird species across the sub-area, including ensuring (as far as possible) no gaps in WeBS core counts (particularly but not only Walland Marsh), continue work to understand bird movements and the importance of functional land.
		RM1.2	Improve the evidence base for the area by monitoring the download or sale of promoted leaflets.
RM2	Measures to improve the experience of visitors to the Romney Marsh	RM2.1	Develop and implement interpretation in areas people visit and as an integral part of promoted routes; for example, routes which pass through designated sites including Fairfield and The Dowels and Snargate. Ensure messages are accessible to a wide range of audiences and visitors.
RM3	Ensure the rebranding and potential repositioning of the area does not cause negative impact on conservation features	RM3.1	Ensure that any rebranding, promotion and repositioning of the Romney Marsh fully includes consideration of the designated sites and conservation features and that messages around responsible recreation are central to this rebranding.
RM4	The need for joint working	RM4.1	Explore the feasibility of the Romney Marsh Partnership and Fifth Continent Project to take forward the strategic development and delivery of access and recreation management initiatives, including those actions identified in the SARMS.
		RM4.2	The County Planning authorities consider the potential uses of the Scotney Lakes complex in regard to their contribution or impact on the Natura sites.





RM4.3

(See also SA4.1 and SA4.2) Work with the County highway authorities/PROW teams, local authorities, countryside projects and others promoting access to ensure that:

- no new access provision is made through SSSI/Ramsar sites including Walland Marsh;
- any visitor data relating to use of the Royal Military Canal Path is made available in support of the SARMS now and in the future;
- the potential upgrade of the Royal Military Canal Path be carefully assessed with regard to the conservation features of the designated sites; and interpretation be considered alongside these plans to address the wildlife interest of this area and visitor behaviour;
- the development of new access routes out of Camber Village be similarly carefully assessed;



Access to the countryside and coast is important and brings many benefits.

The overall aim is to maintain a recreation experience and not to put recreation and wildlife into conflict.

The area attracts a wide range of types of visitors - holiday-makers and short-break stayers, day-trippers, local and regular visitors - which is vital to the local economy.

The coast has a particular attraction, and visitors will travel there in preference to sites closer to home.

The previous chapter identified site-specific recreational impacts and a range of potential actions needed to address them. In addition, some recreational impacts need to be addressed on a strategy area-wide basis, as set out below:

## Access and Management

A multi-faceted approach is needed at the sites. A suite of options should include on-site signing, visitor education and information, reinforced by messages appropriate to the visitor, and supported by on-site personnel conveying education messages. New or extended byelaws or orders, Codes of Conduct for some recreational activities and the extension of activity zoning should be considered to improve the management and control of activities.

### Byelaws and Legal Orders

Byelaws and legal orders are a useful means to deter and control visitor actions. There are byelaws currently in place across the strategy area. However, the byelaws are not consistently applied across the area, different approaches are taken to signage relating to the byelaws, and the degree to which they are enforced is not known.

A review of byelaws and legal orders is recommended, with the aim of providing a more consistent approach across the strategy area, to enable better understanding by visitors, with up to date, relevant and Strategy area-wide coverage of byelaws to protect the natural environment. This recommendation to be taken forward with a programme to review and replace signage.

### Codes of Conduct

As part of an integrated approach to management, Voluntary Codes of Conduct should be developed for a range of recreational activities. Signing-up to the Code could be made a condition of membership for some recreational groups, clubs or associations, and they could be developed in partnership with anglers, local groups and clubs.

### Vehicle Parking

There is an apparent link between parking areas and visitor access points to the sites. By managing car parking and taking a more flexible approach to car parking charges, it may be possible to better control access points and reduce recreational pressure in some areas.

It is recommended that all public car parks in the area are equipped with vehicle counters. Also, a review of the location of car parks in relation to access points at sensitive sites, and the charges levied in particular in the winter months. This recommendation should be approached on a site by site basis as appropriate.



### **Dog Controls**

There is a body of evidence to suggest that the presence of dogs – and particularly dogs off leads – is a key source of bird disturbance. Coastal Natura 2000 areas are important for overwintering birds. The beaches may already have restrictions on dogs for the summer month, but this may be extended to the times of year when overwintering birds are present. This should be dealt with at the site level.

The restriction of access by dogs to some sites during the winter months should be considered. Local decisions on the control of dogs should be based on up to date evidence on visitors, bird numbers and bird disturbance events. Dog Control Orders have been superseded by Public Space Protection Orders. Work will be needed to ascertain the test(s) needed to introduce this order, or other relevant orders eg Community Protection Notices.

## **Visitors**

The Strategy area has a lot to offer to visitors, and the local economy depends on the continuing success of its tourism offer.

The term ‘visitors’ includes everyone who comes to the Strategy area for recreation, including holiday-makers, day-trippers and local people. The Phase One visitor survey showed that visitors come mainly from the south-east area including East Sussex, Kent and London. Day-trippers to sites offering specialist activities and holiday makers to resorts travel the furthest. A significant proportion of regular visitors come from more local areas, and a lot of them walk dogs at the sites. Holiday-makers and holiday home-owners at camp sites and holiday parks use the surrounding areas for recreation including dog walking.

Trends in outdoor recreation and tourism influence the number of visitors and the times of year they choose to visit the area, with resulting pressure on the wildlife sites. The key trends that are influencing recreation in the area include the growing popularity of extreme sports, notably water sports; changes to trends in ‘staying’ visiting e.g. ‘glamping’, and other changes in activity-based stays; the expanded visitor offer of the attractions and coastal holiday parks.

### **Limiting visitor numbers**

One potential method to manage visitors and reduce recreational impacts may be to limit the number of visitors to the sites. However, this would be difficult to action in practical terms, as most sites have several access points. Also, there were no reports from site managers to suggest that high numbers of visitors were a problem in all but a few cases e.g. some days in the summer at Camber.

### **Visitor Education: Interpretation Plan**

The quality and quantity of on-site information and interpretation varies considerably over the entire strategy area. At some sites, the interpretation focuses on the wildlife interests, and at other sites – such as Camber where the management of visitors predominates – the focus of signage is on-site information and rules relating to activities; with some nature-focused messages either lost in the range of other information, or too small to read. There have been successful attempts at bringing key messages forward on the sensitive wildlife areas, but lack of funds for replacements or repair have clearly hampered efforts.

Visitor information and interpretation at the sites does not appear to be tailored to the visitor – the exceptions are the RSPB Reserve visitor centre, where some messages are clearly aimed at children, and Rye Harbour Reserve. Attempts are made to reach and engage different visitor audiences through programmes of events at some sites; and efforts are made to engage with local communities (e.g. the RSPB consultation with local people regarding the future use of Lade Pits and the Sound Mirrors; the RMCP's 'Shingle Issue' publication); but more work may be needed to fully engage the broad range of visitors to the sites, a proportion of whom will be first-time visitors. Visitors need to be better informed – and better guided – about the area and its special qualities and sensitivities. This will need a partnership approach of the various promoters and site managers.

For interpretation to succeed, it needs to provoke an emotional, learning or behavioural response in visitors (or preferably all three). Visitors need to be able to relate at a personal level with the area and its features. More work is needed to relate wildlife conservation issues more closely to visitors' own beliefs, and to help them better understand the direct effects of their actions. This may require some re-evaluation of the target audiences and the methods currently used.

Methods other than signboards or interpretive panels should be considered to reach a wider audience; This may be achieved through events, activities and displays, the use of digital platforms, and by direct engagement with visitors on site. Engagement will help to target infrequent or first-time visitors, and holiday-makers in particular who may be unaware of the wildlife issues at the sites; also, visitors present at times of year that are particularly sensitive for some wildlife (e.g. at nesting time, or when over-wintering birds are present).

It is recommended that Visitor Interpretation be reviewed and planned across the strategy area for all visited sites, to include the appropriate cross- promotion of sites, in a wide partnership of all relevant organisations; Suitably robust and well-located sites should be identified within the Strategy area, to operate as visitor 'hubs' or 'gateways' where visitors are offered a range of facilities; where they can find information, educational and promotional materials and other visitor facilities, and from where they can explore the local area.

### **Visitor Education: Signage Review**

The Phase One visitor survey found that signboards are not always read, and their messages are not well-understood or related to visitors' behaviour. Relatively few visitors know about the wildlife interests of the sites, or the actions they need to take to ensure their conservation.

In addition to interpretive data, signs include warnings, legal notices and restrictions, notifications of activities on site, directional signs, maps and access information, and they can be used to define site boundaries. A sample audit of interpretation found an array of types and sizes of signs, in a variety of formats, styles and colours, and in varying condition. Some signs were provided by private groups and organisations, and others by the site managers or their agents, or the highways authorities. This variation in the quality and provision of visitor information and interpretation across the Strategy area highlights issues of lack of clarity, poor and inconsistent messages, inappropriate or inadequate quality interpretation and signage, with resulting low levels of visitor awareness.

A more joined-up and consistent approach is needed to signage and interpretation across the Strategy area; putting the visitor first, and providing information that is helpful and relevant to their visit, with directional signs, waymarkers and maps located at entry points, path junctions and parking areas. A consistent approach to visitor information will also support enforcement activity.

A review and replacement programme of signage and its messages across the strategy area, including waymarkers and information signs at key access points and junctions.

## Branding and Promotion

The strategy area makes a very diverse offer to visitors and is promoted as a series of distinct 'areas' by the two district authorities and the key tourism organisations: Romney Marsh and Coastal Kent are two of Shepway's promoted areas, and the Rother part of the area is promoted under the '1066 Country' promotional brand – although this may not be helpful in branding the visitor offer in this part of Rother. Within these areas there are places which have a strong, national profile and are promoted as destinations in their own right e.g. Dungeness and Camber.

The image of the area and the perception of its visitors are key to positioning the area as a destination, and being clear about what it has to offer. The current perceptions of the area are mixed; there is no unifying brand; and there is a lack of clarity around what the area has to offer visitors.

There is growing support for a single visitor brand for some or all of the Strategy area. This is currently being developed in a partnership between the Romney Marsh Partnership and the Fifth Continent Project. It is important to maintain the identity of the special places in the landscape by recognising, celebrating and capitalising on their qualities - natural and cultural. For example, one of the unique aspects of the Romney Marsh is its remote and isolated quality.

Although the area covered by the Fifth Continent Project currently excludes the Rother part of the Strategy area, it is understood that this area could be included in plans to develop branding and interpretation; bringing the planning and development of these issues together for the Strategy area.

The development of a unifying brand for the Strategy area is recommended; focused potentially around the natural environment.

The approach to promotion of the area is inconsistent and uncoordinated, both in hard copy print and on the internet. Levels and types of promotion vary enormously, from local leaflets to national web-based campaigns. This variation results in some sites – such as Dungeness Point – receiving thousands of visitors to what are sensitive wildlife sites.

There is a lack of understanding regarding the sensitivity of the areas by some of the promoters.

The promotion of the different tourism destinations is uncoordinated, and a plethora of websites promotes various aspects of the area.

Although little can be done to control the messages of external websites, an official website for the area, supported by high level partners, would help to draw 'traffic' and could present a coordinated message. Other forms of promotion and the availability of promotional materials within the Strategy area are similarly uncoordinated, and need to be drawn together through cross-sector and cross-boundary partnership working.

The development of a promotional strategy is recommended for the strategy area with stakeholders including tourism partners; to include the development of an official website for the promotion of the area, or improving existing official website(s) to include messages relating to appropriate visitor behaviour/nature sensitivity.

## Partnership Working

The location of the Strategy area straddling the border between two counties and two district authorities makes administration more challenging; it also splits responsibility and accountability, making joined up working and decision-making more difficult. Although a number of organisations are active in the management and promotion of these areas, activities are not necessarily joined up. Improved partnership working would help support the wider management of sites, and the development of more holistic management solutions, helping to address the disconnect between the tourism and natural environment sectors, for example.

This could bring mutual benefits; raising the profile of the natural environment, bringing together and sharing knowledge and skills, working to a shared agenda, connecting the needs of visitors and showing how the natural environment can bring benefits to the visitor economy.

To take forward the recommendations of the SARMS, a broad range of economic and environmental groupings will need to work together on areas of shared interest; involving more cross-sectoral and cross-boundary working, with a clear route to decision-making and resourcing. Decisions will be needed on strategic issues, development plans, resourcing and on-site delivery, as well as the development of methods to involve local communities to ensure local 'ownership' of future strategies and actions. This strongly confirms the need for the SARMS partners and stakeholders to work together, across the Strategy area, to provide leadership and advocacy, share resources and improve deliverability at the sites.

The existing partnerships and organisations, with their established networks and local knowledge may be ideally placed to plan, develop and deliver initiatives, and become part of a SARMS network.

The diversity of the area and the natural environment are positive assets that can boost the area, and should be welcomed by the tourism sector and local businesses. For tourism to continue to develop and grow in this area, there needs to be a better understanding of the issues and possibilities; and for opportunities to be seized.

There is a need to improve the current low levels of interrelated working across sectors and administrative boundaries. There are good examples of cooperative, joined-up working e.g. Dungeness NNR partnership, which brings partners together around shared objectives; but these need to be extended across the area. Further, more joined-up approaches could help to support learning and enable the sharing of resources.

Also, decision-making needs a clear route from strategy to delivery; with clarity on responsibility and accountability.

A SARMS Oversight grouping should be set up, comprising the two local authorities and NE, to ensure development and delivery of the SARMS, including governance arrangements; with key roles to review existing groupings and initiatives (see below), and the coordination and resourcing of activities. This group will:

Review existing groups and partnerships to assess the extent to which they may be suitable vehicles to support the delivery of the SARMS. A cross-sector approach will also help to develop a shared understanding, move ideas forward and find new ways to develop tourism for example. Actions could include a widening of current group memberships to be cross-sectoral and bring new skills and ideas to the table; or by linking the groupings more closely into a SARMS delivery structure.

Bring together the stakeholders involved in the planning and management of the wider area to develop shared objectives, gain support for implementation and ensure delivery of the SARMS; and depending on the results of the above review:

- Develop a cross-boundary SARMS Delivery grouping could help build local support through events, activities and promotions, as well as addressing potential joint approaches to site management; and to ensure liaison between local authority

- groupings to deliver aspects of the SARMS, to include Shepway, Rother and Ashford;
- The development of a cross-boundary SARMS Strategic grouping to draw partners together to develop joint activities in support of the local economy, communities and environment;

There is a need to change negative perceptions of the natural environment as a constraint on development. The significance and value of the natural environment will not be fully recognised or appreciated by decision-makers unless and until it attracts champions who can make the case at senior levels, and who understand the local and wider social and economic benefits.

It is recommended that awareness-raising activities are developed with senior officers and Councillors across authorities, to improve understanding of the value of the natural environment to the local economy. Also, that champions are identified who can help raise awareness of these issues at strategic levels, to raise the profile of this work, and attract the resources to deliver the actions required.

## Data Requirements

Information about visitors to the area is patchy, with only a few sites collecting visitor numbers.

The only source of information available on visitor profile and activities is the Phase One visitor survey report. This tells us that visitors mostly travel from the South East and London, with some holiday-makers and specialist visitors travelling greater distances.

The location of the sites in relation to the transport network appears to affect the site choice of some visitors; the rail network is not well-connected in this area, and the origins of visitors seem to relate to some extent to the major road network. Most regular visitors (who visit once a week or more) live in Shepway or Rother district. There is a particularly high proportion of dog-walkers among these visitors.

The season that visits area made to the sites is important as different species and habitats may be affected at different time of the year. Generally, recreational visits are made all year round, with summer peaks for the coastal sites such as Camber, as would be expected. The extent to which activities may be damaging depends on the area where they are taking place and the time of year. Over-wintering birds can be susceptible to disturbance when feeding or roosting; areas of vegetated shingle and sand dune vegetation are susceptible to trampling at any time of year; and in the case of sand dunes, prolonged exposure to trampling over wide areas will destabilise the structure of the dunes, leading to 'blow-outs' as are seen at Camber.

More information is required on numbers of visitors to the Strategy area, their profile - including socio-economic data - activities and season of visit. It is recommended that information collection should be ongoing in order to provide a consistent data set

that can be compared over time to identify trends. This robust evidence base will help inform further interventions and actions.

Survey data on the numbers of qualifying species of over-wintering and ground-nesting birds at the SPA are an essential part of the strategy, as they provide data to better understand trends of bird numbers. This should include regular WeBS (wetland bird survey) counts for all sectors in the strategy area. The WeBS surveys are coordinated by the BTO and carried out by their volunteers, so coordinated working will be required.

An annual programme of surveys of bird numbers and disturbance events should be carried out across the strategy area. The areas of survey coverage to include functional land areas not included in WeBS surveys, plus coastal areas of the SPA used for recreation.

In addition, the recording of disturbance events will help to better understand the role played by visitors – including dog walking and water sports – in bird disturbance; and this in turn will inform further actions as the SARMS develops. Relevant organisations should work with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) to ensure full coverage of monitoring of WeBS sectors across the strategy area.

## Planning Measures

### **The Draw of the Coast**

The coast is a particular attraction. In addition to its offer of sand and sea, and the many activities that can be enjoyed, there is also a phenomenon termed ‘the draw of the coast’. The Phase One visitor survey showed that visitors travel to coastal sites in preference to local sites and, when given the choice of visiting other sites for their chosen activity, they generally expressed a preference for coastal sites.

The ‘draw of the coast’ has implications for the consideration of alternative sites for recreation, to reduce pressure on the sensitive sites. If optional sites fail to offer a similar experience, visitors will continue to visit the coastal sites. High levels of use during the summer months, the displacement effect of existing dog controls to other parts of the beach and the dunes, and high levels of local use, mean that provision of greenspace close to the coast could in reality deflect a proportion of coastal visits.

There is a need to identify potential sites which may be suitable for recreation purposes, in the longer-term, in close proximity to the coast in the strategy area. These sites would need to be robust and suited to recreational uses including dog walking, and to offer the visitor a coastal experience where possible. The CEMEX gravel extraction site at Lydd-On-Sea is surrounded by, but

excluded from, the Natura sites. In the longer-term, and when the site is no longer an active gravel working, it may be a suitable site for consideration as an open space recreation site. Similarly, robust sites may be suitable for open space uses close to the Romney Sands Holiday Park, an area where the options for recreation outside of Natura sites are limited.

It is recommended that local standards for open space provision should be adhered to. Also, local authorities should investigate the provision of suitably robust open space recreation sites close to the coast as part of the development of their Green Infrastructure plans; and  
Investigate sites - including existing gravel workings - for longer-term use as recreational open spaces.

The sector of visitor accommodation of particular interest to the development of this Strategy is camping, caravanning and holiday parks. These sites tend to be located in the rural areas or near the coast, and a number of sites are located in close proximity to the sensitive sites. These sites also tend to attract more families, especially in the school holidays. Some holiday parks are open for most or all the year, and some include 'residential' properties. The activities of users of these sites could have an effect on the recreational pressure on the sensitive sites.

The expansion of the holiday parks has already been mentioned. In addition, park homes are being offered for sale at sites near the coast, with the potential for extended occupation beyond usual holiday periods. These trends and developments should be carefully monitored and assessed for their potential impact on the sensitive wildlife sites.

It is recommended that local authorities take actions to limit the growth of park homes in or near the Natura sites.

Recreational activities such as water sports and beach sports are gaining in popularity. These activities are operated by a number of providers across the strategy area, at beaches and around lakes. There are currently no controls on the growth of these activities. Although activities are currently focused on the summer months, in future there may be pressure to extend their season of operation. As these activities take place at sites where wildlife is present, the activities should be assessed for their potential to cause disturbance to wildlife in the Natura areas.

It is recommended that local authorities take actions to limit the development and season of operation of water and beach based sports activities.

The following table sets out the strategy area wide actions:



### Strategy Area-wide Actions

SA1	Enforcement	SA1.1	Revised Byelaws and Orders
		SA1.2	Restrictions on dogs: Coastal Natura 2000 areas are important for overwintering birds. The beaches may already have restrictions on dogs for the summer month, but restrictions may be extended to the times of year when overwintering birds are present.
SA2	Vehicle Parking	SA2.1	Consider management of car parking costs to minimise displacement parking at other areas
SA3	Access Monitoring	SA3.1	Monitor and assess access enhancements (see also RM4.3)
		SA3.2	Avoid the siting of new routes close to sensitive sites (see also RM4.3)
SA4	Respond to trends and changes	SA4.1	Assess recreational activities to limit future impacts
SA5	Data Requirements	SA5.1	Develop a programme of regular, on-going monitoring of visitor numbers and profile (including socio-economic data), activities and season of visit; to include specialist site users including kite-surfers and visitors to sites in the vicinity of outdoor Park-home type accommodation (including mobile homes and static caravans)
		SA5.2	Monitoring of bird numbers and bird disturbance events
		SA5.3	Full coverage of monitoring of WeBS sectors

SA6	Education	SA6.1	Develop new or revised Voluntary Codes of Conduct for developed in partnership with local groups – see site-specific actions
		SA6.2	A review of signage and its messages, including waymarkers and information signs at key access points and junctions
		SA6.3	Wardening (education) – see site-specific actions
		SA6.4	Develop an area-wide Visitor Interpretation Plan, including site by site development of a coherent set of interpretive messages and Activities (NB Potential expansion of Fifth Continent Programme)
		SA6.5	Outreach staff or trained volunteers E.g. at key visitor sites and holiday parks in the summer months
		SA6.6	Develop visitor ‘hubs’ or ‘gateways’ to focus visitors towards more robust sites which offer a range of visitor facilities, and where visitors may find out more about the area and the wildlife e.g. Rye Harbour Reserve
SA7	Branding and Promotion	SA7.1	Develop a unifying brand for the Strategy area; potentially around the natural environment
		SA7.2	Develop and agree a promotional strategy with stakeholders including tourism partners, for the Strategy area and its component sites
		SA7.3	Review of websites to ensure that local promotional websites contain information on appropriate visitor behaviour at the Natura sites

SA8	Partnership Working	SA8.1	<p>A SARMS Oversight Group to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop delivery and governance arrangements and plan resourcing of the SARMS Local Authority Officer Groupings to consider elements of the SARMS;</li> <li>2. Scope the potential for existing partnerships and initiatives to develop plans and deliver the SARMS across sectors and boundaries;</li> <li>3. Set up local authority groupings to deliver aspects of the SARMS, to include Shepway, Rother and Ashford;</li> <li>4. Develop awareness-raising activities for senior officers and local politicians;</li> <li>5. Site Management Joint Working Group for all site managers of N2K sites across the Strategy area;</li> </ol>
SA9	Planning Measures	SA9.1	Assessment and monitoring of the growth of park homes in or near the N2K sites
		SA9.2	<p>Local authorities to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure standards for open space provision are adhered to; and</li> <li>2. To investigate the potential provision of suitably robust open space recreation sites close to the coast as part of the development of their Green Infrastructure plans;</li> <li>3. Consider the after-uses of mineral working sites;</li> <li>4. Consider the potential for developing land as recreational open space</li> </ol>

A range of measures may be employed to deliver the recommendations as outlined, and address the impacts of recreational disturbance.

These can include access management, education programmes, engagement with site visitors, enforcement action and both on and off-site measures.

Not all of these measures will be suitable, effective and therefore applicable in all scenarios.

## Evaluation of Potential Measures and Suitability

The review of the sites and the overall strategy area led to the development of a long-list of potential measures that could be included in the SARMS Plan. This list was evaluated – as shown in the table at Appendix 1 – and refined to a short list of measures which are proposed as the SARMS Plan. The proposed SARMS Plan measures are set out in this section (see also table on page 11 for the SARMS Plan Summary).

The intention is to set out a single SARMS Plan that addresses the wide issue of recreational disturbance from visitors. The measures which form the Plan are based on evidence to justify their need, appropriateness and likely effectiveness. A distinction has been made between the measures needed to mitigate the relevant planning policies (Category A measures) and other issues considered important for the delivery of the SARMS (Category B measures).

### Elements of the Plan

#### Monitoring and Data

- Visitor Surveys
- Bird Surveys
- Data gaps

#### Education

- Wardening roles (Education and Enforcement roles)
- Visitor Interpretation Plan
- Signage review and replacement programme where necessary to guide access and support better understanding of site interests
- Visitor 'Hubs' or 'Gateways' providing visitor information and other facilities, and from where visitors may be supported in exploring the wider area
- Interpretation installations and activities
- Publications

#### Enforcement and Access Management

- Review of byelaws and legal orders
- Development of Voluntary Codes of Conduct for some recreation activities
- Access Management – site-specific actions including physical access controls, changes to parking arrangements, and the assessment of new routes and recreational activities;
- Vehicle Parking Controls
- Activity Zoning
- Dunes Management

#### Partnership Actions

- SARMS Oversight Group
- Development of a SARMS delivery network, to ensure a cross-sectoral and cross-boundary approach, and provision for the planning, development, resourcing and implementation of the SARMS

#### Planning Measures

- Identification of new coastal sites for recreation
- Monitoring the growth of caravan and static/Park home sites
- Assessing the potential effects of the growth of recreational activities

#### **Site-specific Actions**

#### **Evaluation**

A number of proposed measures will require further evidence to refine aspects of their delivery e.g. area of coverage, time of year. This situation should be reviewed once evidence is provided i.e. the results of surveys and monitoring.

The proposals will require changes to working arrangements including cross-sectoral and cross-boundary working, and the development of new groupings.

#### **Monitoring and Data**

Visitors, activities and qualifying species:

The review of evidence found some gaps in the evidence base, making it more difficult to justify and recommend some actions in support of the SARMS at this time. In addition, the strategy area, its sensitive areas of vegetation, the number and distribution of birds, visitor access patterns and other factors may change over time. As a result, the SARMS Plan needs to include the monitoring and evaluation of changes and be flexible and adaptive in responding to these changes. Accordingly, ongoing surveys of visitors, bird populations and vegetation monitoring will be carried out at regular intervals in order to provide baseline information, and to help measure the benefits of actions.

#### Visitor Surveys

The SARMS model assumes that ongoing visitor surveys of the strategy area at regular intervals will be necessary to provide essential baseline data, and to monitor trends in recreation and changes in visitor numbers over time. Further information is needed on the seasonal pattern of visits, and particularly visits in the winter months e.g. by kite-surfers. A visitor survey early in the SARMS project would help support baseline data. Accordingly, it is proposed that the programme of visitor surveys starts in 2018 and is repeated every four years to assess changes.

Priority (category A) sites are Camber, Broomhill, Romney Sands, Lade and Dungeness Point.  
 Dog walking in particular should be monitored over the winter at Lade and Camber.  
 Local visitor use needs to be assessed (as the Phase One Survey may have missed a proportion of local use).  
 The use of key recreation routes (e.g. Royal Military Canal Path and sections of Saxon Shore Way) should also be monitored.  
 Visitor perceptions should be assessed, and monitored to check how well messages are reaching visitors.  
 Car park counters should be installed at all sites to assess visitor volumes.

Report Actions ref	Measure: Data and Monitoring	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
SA5.1	Visitor monitoring programme - area wide, in addition to Category A measures. Develop a programme of ongoing monitoring of visitor numbers and profile (including socio-economic data), activities and season of visit; to include specialist site users including kite- surfers and visitors to sites in the vicinity of outdoor Park-home type accommodation (including mobile homes and static caravans)	B	SDC, RDC	
CB2	Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess levels of visitors, and bird disturbance on western Camber beach foreshore in winter months to form a baseline</li> <li>Assess the levels of winter and 'shoulder season' (spring and autumn) kite surfing and other water sports to determine whether levels are as low as Phase 1 surveys suggest, at Camber, Broomhill, Romney Sands and Lade beaches.</li> </ul>	A	RDC	
CB3	Carefully assess the impact of potential displacement of visitors to the Camber Western car park through developing a baseline on visitors to Western Camber foreshore.  Carefully consider any plans to develop or enhance recreation routes into the marsh.	A	RDC	

RL7	Monitor numbers, locations and types of visitor and recreational activities,, in particular during the winter months.  Carefully consider any plans to develop or enhance recreation routes into the marsh.	A	SDC	
DP6	Develop a programme of all-year-round monitoring at Dungeness Point that provides regular and consistent data on visitors.	A	EDF	NE, RMCP
SA5.1	Car park traffic counters to monitor visitor numbers and season of use at all public car parks serving the area.	B		

### Bird Surveys

Annual surveys of the qualifying species of over-wintering birds at the SPA are an essential part of the strategy, as they provide information and trends on bird numbers and evident disturbance. Surveys should include disturbance events. Surveys should be carried out at key times i.e. when overwintering birds are present, and at breeding times for ground-nesting birds. Areas of coverage to comprise functional land areas not included in WeBS surveys, plus coastal areas of the SPA used for recreation.

Gaps in WeBS data should also be filled in order to provide a more complete picture across the area. It is understood that volunteers currently carry out the WeBS surveys. The volunteers are coordinated by the BTO.

### Bird monitoring programme

SA5.2	Monitoring of bird numbers and bird disturbance events across the strategy area.	A		
SA5.3	Full coverage of monitoring of WeBS sectors	B	BTO	SDC, RDC, NE
RL7	Carry out monitoring of winter birds – at Romney Sands and Lade - with particular regard to sanderling, to better understand feeding and roosting locations, numbers, seasonality and incidents and levels of bird disturbance.	A		NE, RMCP
CB3	Carefully assess the impact of potential displacement of visitors to the Camber Western car park through developing a baseline on birds.	A	RDC	

## Data Gaps: Vegetation Monitoring

The developing report into the condition of vegetated shingle for the Dungeness NNR should be completed and made available.

### Vegetation monitoring

DP6	Ensure findings of vegetated shingle condition report are circulated to partners and incorporated into this strategy.	A	EDF	NE, RMPC
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### Education

#### Wardening

Recreational pressure on species and habitats can result in impacts at any time of year. The winter months are the most crucial time for over-wintering birds; ground-nesting birds are at their most vulnerable at breeding time; and vegetated shingle and dunes may be susceptible to trampling and damage at any time of year.

The wardening roles will have a focus on either visitor education or enforcement. Enforcement roles should, ideally, be supported by an education role to ensure longer-term compliance.

The wardening will provide a positive, friendly presence, to educate and inform visitors, but also to provide an enforcement role in terms of local Byelaws, Legal Orders, Voluntary Codes of Conduct and Activity Zones in relation to the protection of the Natura areas.

There are already personnel working on the ground at some of the sites, who are fulfilling elements of these roles for some or all of the year. The wardening roles should aim to supplement current staffing, to provide complete coverage of specified areas at key times of the year.

Although the evidence base is not complete, it is considered that there is sufficient evidence to support the need for an educational wardening role at Camber Sands (see site-specific initiatives below); and at Dungeness Point an extended educational role plus an enforcement role.

- Warden roles to supplement existing roles, to be employed by a local authority or other organisation with experience in the sector, and the authority to enforce legal orders and local byelaws;
- May be required in a part-time capacity for part of the year or on a temporary basis whilst new access arrangements become established.



### Responsibilities will include:

- Education and awareness role, to reduce the risk of disturbance, promote voluntary codes of conduct, improve signage and interpretation and oversee access management and other minor works relating to the protection of the designated sites;
- Potential development and management of a volunteer scheme, to further the educative role at the sites and support monitoring activities;
- Management of bird survey monitoring;
- Enforcement of any legal orders and byelaws relating to the strategy area;
- The Wardens will be required to work in liaison with the local authorities, other relevant organisations (e.g. RMCP, SWT/Rye Harbour Reserve, RSPB, NE and others), visitors and the local community.

Report Actions ref	Measure: Wardening	Priority	See Site-specific actions
DP2.2	At Dungeness Point an educational role is needed to support visitors and their understanding of the wildlife interests of the area;	B	
RL2.2 and DP4.3	At Dungeness Point an enforcement role with legal powers is needed to support access controls and vehicle parking management, to reinforce changes in visitor behaviour. This may be necessary on a temporary basis.	B	
CB4.2	At Camber Sands direct engagement through an educational role is vital in reinforcing messages and visitor behaviour on-site; and particularly important with such a wide range of visitors.	B	

### Coordination Role

Management and supervision of the wardens will be required, including directing the wardens to priority locations and co-ordinating activities throughout the year. This role would not only manage the wardens' activities but also support the delivery of the other elements of the plan. It is assumed that, as the wardening roles will be at few locations, the coordination and management functions would be absorbed by the employing organisations.

### Interpretation Plan

A strategy area-wide Interpretation Plan will draw the partners together in planning interpretive activities for the sites, and set objectives that will be shared across the area; ensuring that consistent and appropriate messages are conveyed to the diverse types of visitors, and to provide a means of cross-promotion of sites. As set out in Supporting Document 4 – Visitor Assessment,

in developing an Interpretive Plan, there is a need to activate visitors' values, relate to their personal experience, and increase the awareness of personal responsibility.

The Interpretation Plan will consider the review of interpretative signs already carried out as part of the development of this work, together with the recent audit by the Fifth Continent Project. This will set the base from which the Plan will develop. The interpretive plan should include on-site signing at key entrance points, at junctions and within visitor facilities; self-guided trails, leaflets, displays – both permanent and temporary 'pop-ups' – direct engagement and outreach, including the development of volunteering; events and activities programmes.

The Plan will also include the development of visitor 'hubs' at gateway sites for the wider Dungeness complex, at the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre and at Rye Harbour Reserve's proposed new Visitor Centre.

Targeted information campaigns will include caravan and park home sites, and holiday villages.

The interpretive planning will be phased over a period to allow for some sites to retain existing interpretive materials where they have been recently installed.

Report Actions ref	Measure: Interpretation	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
SA6.4	Plan an area-wide Visitor Interpretation programme for the area, including site by site proposals for coherent interpretive messages and activities	A (Mitigation action)	SDC, RDC	NE, RMCP, SWT and other sites managers
RH2	Develop interpretation for wide audiences at Rye Harbour Reserve – and as part of the new visitor centre proposal: planning stage	B	See Site-specific actions	
DP2	An Interpretation Plan for Dungeness Point to appeal to and engage with the site's wide range of visitors	A		
RM2	Develop interpretation in areas of Romney Marsh that people visit and as an integral part of promoted routes e.g. Fairfield, The Dowels and Snargate: planning stage	B		
RM4	Interpretation on Romney Marsh for routes across Natura sites: planning stage	B		
SA6.6	Develop visitor 'hubs' or 'gateways'; to focus visitors towards more robust sites which offer a range of visitor facilities, where visitors may find out more about the area and the wildlife, and from where they may explore the area e.g. Rye Harbour Reserve and Romney Marsh Visitor Centre near New Romney	B		

## Signage Review and Replacement Programme

As part of the comprehensive approach to interpretation, a visitor signage review and replacement programme will be targeted at key locations, to provide a consistent approach to visitor information, with directional signs, waymarkers and maps located at entry points, path junctions and parking areas.

Report Actions ref	Measure: Signage review and replacement programme	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
SA6.2	As part of the overall Interpretation Plan, a review and replacement programme of signage and its messages, including waymarkers and information signs at key access points and junctions	A	SDC, RDC	Fifth Continent Project, RMCP,
PL1	Install signs at Pett Level/Pannel Valley on seawall and other areas to inform visitors of nature conservation interest.	A	Site-specific actions; Depending on the findings of the overall signage review	
CB4	Install interpretation boards at Camber path entrances and key visitor access points	A		
RL1 RL2	Signage review and replacement at Romney/Lade to include interpretation boards at Greatstone, clearer signing and waymarking at Greatstone Dunes; larger signs for the length of beach that fronts the coast road near housing; signing of paths, including the dunes and the ECP	A		

## Enforcement and Access Management

### Byelaws and Legal Orders

The review and revision of relevant Byelaws and Legal Orders, in a cross-boundary and cross-authority approach, to ensure a consistent approach across both authority areas. This should be applied across the strategy area.

Report Actions ref	Measure: Byelaws and Legal Orders	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisation
SA1.1 (RL6)	Strategy area-wide review of Byelaws. Also to support new Codes of Conduct where developed	B	RDC, SDC	Parishes

The enforcement actions will not be effective unless they are accompanied by efforts to change visitor behaviour. It is essential to provide a pro-active approach to informing and engaging both occasional and regular visitors in order to provide a coherent, consistent set of messages in relation to the sensitivity and responsible use of the SPA. This will include a programme of interpretation and signage.

Birds can be disturbed by the presence of dogs. This may be a problem in the winter months when over-wintering birds are at the sites. Dog Control Orders (or similar) can be put in place to control the presence of dogs at certain times of the year, or to require them to be kept on leads. However, at this time there is insufficient evidence to show that the presence of dogs is affecting the populations of birds at the sites.

Limiting visitor numbers has been suggested as a possible option to reduce recreational pressure. However, the number of access points – and open access areas – means that this is not easy measure to put in place. In addition, none of the site managers reported problems with visitor numbers exceeding site capacity.

#### Voluntary Codes of Conduct

Alongside the strengthening of legal orders, voluntary codes of conduct will provide guidance for a range of activities in order to convey clear messages and have a supporting role, although they are not enforceable. Voluntary codes of conduct for a range of recreational uses have been drawn up by the Thanet Coast Project. These codes may need to be amended and strengthened as required, in order to present a consistent approach and message to site users. They should be developed with operators, clubs and governing bodies representing: Anglers, Kite-surfers and other water and beach-based sports;

Report Actions ref	Measure: Voluntary Codes of Conduct	Priority	See Site-specific actions
DP4	Introduce new Voluntary Codes of Conduct for specialist users of the Dungeness Estate e.g. anglers	B	
RL2	Develop Codes of Conduct for Greatstone in partnership with adventure sports operators and clubs	A	

#### Access management

Access management and control measures are mostly site specific; aimed to resolve issues in particular locations. They may require working with local landowners and managers, rights of way officers and other relevant stakeholders, and they form either individual projects or part of a site-specific programme of measures (see below). They include:

Reviewing byelaws; developing Voluntary Codes of Conduct for some recreational activities; Path management – realignment or rationalising;

Restricting access at particular locations, such as sand dunes (through temporary fencing or vehicle barriers); Vehicle parking initiatives; and activity zoning.

### Vehicle Parking

A high proportion of overall visitors visit by car, and therefore visitor patterns may be sensitive to changes in parking regimes. Area-based approaches around car parking known to be linked to activity areas should minimise displacement to other areas. Although a number of areas may benefit from some changes to parking arrangement, at Greatstone the issues are clear and interlinked. Here, a combination of parking restrictions, consideration of parking charges at certain times of year, and targeting a privately-owned car park for potential public use are all needed to work together to reduce the recreational impact along the coast. Parking arrangements should also be reviewed at Dungeness Point, as part of a wider approach to access management and control. See site-specific initiatives for details.

Changes to parking may be unpopular with some users, so will need to be undertaken carefully and considerately. It is anticipated that, as long as all the connected and inter-dependent elements of the project are carried out, this should not result in displacement to other sensitive sites

### Activity Zoning

Zoning is particularly relevant to watersports and there are local examples where watersport zones have been established e.g. Camber Beach and Winchelsea Beach. Zoning creates a dedicated space for users, but their development requires consultation with local site users and specialist recreational user groups to determine activity zones (for both summer and winter) at sites where a range of activities takes place.

Activity Zoning of watersports areas should be developed for Greatstone and Lade, and refined following the results of surveys/ monitoring of birds, and the pattern and seasonality of watersports use and dog walking. Activity Zones could be included within the new or revised Byelaws. (See site-specific actions below for details).

On-site physical access controls - such as fencing, and the re-routing of access paths - and parking restrictions and changes to parking charges, should be considered on a site by site basis (see Site Specific Actions below).

Proposals for new or enhanced routes and recreational activities should be carefully assessed for their potential effects on the designated sites; in particular an assessment of the impact of proposed developments at Camber Village and the removal of the Main Car Park.

### Partnership Actions

Mechanisms should be set up to ensure that key partnerships and groupings are involved in the planning, development, delivery and promotion of the SARMS from across sectors (e.g. tourism, business, environment) and across both the district areas, to ensure broad representation.

New SARMS groupings should be set up which build on existing networks, to ensure continuity and stability whilst minimising additional staff resourcing.

Existing groupings (key tourism, socio-economic and environmental partnerships/groups) should be encouraged to work closely with the SARMS groups in taking forward and delivering the SARMS (e.g. Romney Marsh Partnership, The Fifth Continent Project, the Shepway DMP Steering Group, the Romney Marsh Countryside Project, the Dungeness NNR Partnership).

In considering the range of activities required from the SARMS it is clear that a coordinating role or organisation is also required. Initially a Coordination and Oversight grouping should be set up between the two District authorities and NE to oversee the development of the SARMS and put the necessary structures and arrangements in place. This group will support the local authorities in their Duty to Cooperate; ensure the SARMS is implemented; and consider the reporting lines and key links with other groupings that will support the planning and delivery of the SARMS.

### Planning Measures

The provision of new open space sites is not essential for mitigation, but it does play a significant role in the development of the SARMS overall, and should be a long-term aim.

A number of holiday parks and other popular visitor areas along the coast are located either within or near to Natura sites, providing few options for recreation in more suitable and robust areas. In addition, results from the Phase One visitor survey indicated visitors' preference for coastal sites, even when other sites were closer to their home. Opportunities for the delivery of open space sites for recreation, close to the coast may come forward through the early identification of suitable privately-owned sites which could be acquired over time and enhanced. This could be reinforced in the future green infrastructure plans of the local authorities.

Report Actions ref	Measure: Planning Measures	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
SA9.1	Assessment and monitoring of the growth and seasons of operation of mobile/ park homes in or near the N2K sites	A	SDC, RDC	
SA9.2	Local authorities to: (i) ensure standards for open space provision are adhered to; (ii) to investigate the potential provision of suitably robust open space recreation sites, close to the coast as part of the development of their Green Infrastructure plans; (iii) Consider the after-uses of the CEMEX pits at Lydd-On-Sea; and (iv) Consider the potential for developing land for open space uses near New Romney Caravan Park and Holiday Village.	A		

SA4.1	Monitor the growth of recreational activities to limit future impacts; Some water and beach-based sports activity businesses may wish to extend their season or area of operation. All activities should be assessed for their potential to cause disturbance to wildlife in the N2K areas.	B	SDC, RDC	
RM4	The County Planning authorities consider the potential uses of the Scotney Lakes complex regarding their contribution or impact on the Natura sites.	B	SDC, RDC	ESCC, KCC, Brett Aggregates

### Site-specific Actions

A range of additional site-specific actions are proposed, some of which will be part of broader area-wide approaches (e.g. visitor education programme) and some to be developed locally. Where actions are proposed as part of a broader area programme they are referenced to the topics set out previously.

Local projects are listed in the following section:

### Pett Level and Pannel Valley Sub-Area:

Report Actions ref	Measure: Site-specific actions for Pett Level and Pannel Valley	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
PL1	Raise awareness of visitors about the nature conservation interest and sensitivities of the area - Install signs on seawall and other areas to inform visitors of nature conservation interest.	A Part of the overall signage programme	RDC, Parish	Fifth Continent Project, SWT
PL2	Incorporate this area more fully into the Dungeness complex - Consider how this area could be linked to the Fifth Continent Project.	B		
PL3	Monitoring - Develop a programme of monitoring of visitors, including the use of the Royal Military Canal Path and Saxon Shore Way;	B Part of overall area-wide monitoring Low numbers of visitors currently		

**Romney and Lade Sub-Area:**

Report Actions ref	Measure: Site-specific actions for Romney and Lade	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
RL1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a programme of signage review and replacement to support understanding of the area, notably for local, regular visitors, and infrequent visitors, on holiday in the area. To include interpretation boards at Greatstone, clearer signing and waymarking at Greatstone Dunes; larger signs for the length of beach that fronts the coast road near housing, aimed at local users, encouraging actions to protect wildlife;</li> <li>• Develop the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre as a visitor ‘hub’ or ‘gateway’ to the area to promote visitor awareness for the wider Dungeness Complex.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of sensitive wildlife, and behaviours to prevent disturbance by continuing to produce the RMCP’s Shingle Issue publication for residents and local businesses.</li> </ul>	A Part of overall signage programme	SDC	Fifth Continent Project, RMCP



RL2	Develop Codes of Conduct for Greatstone in partnership with adventure sports operators and clubs.	A	SDC	WCCP/RMCP
	Improve signing of paths, including the ECP. Install signs at existing desire lines e.g. opposite Romney Sands Holiday Village and at the ends of road junctions.	A Part of overall signage programme		
	Zoning is most usually considered in relation to watersports. Depending on outcome of further investigation (see actions RL7) work with adventure sports operators and clubs to determine activity zones (for both summer and winter).	B More evidence is needed to determine the extent and the seasonality		
	Develop Codes of Conduct for Greatstone in partnership with adventure sports operators and clubs.	A Part of overall signage programme		
	Improve signing of paths, including the ECP. Install signs at existing desire lines e.g. opposite Romney Sands Holiday Village and at the ends of road junctions.	A		
	Zoning is most usually considered in relation to watersports. Depending on outcome of further investigation (see actions RL7) work with adventure sports operators and clubs to determine activity zones (for both summer and winter).	B More evidence is needed to determine the extent and the seasonality		

RL3	<p>Rationalise car parking:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the introduction of parking restrictions along the coastal side of the coast road between Lade and Greatstone.</li> <li>• Introduce methods to assess numbers of vehicles using public car parks in the area.</li> <li>• Consider reduced or no charge of the existing car park at The Jolly Fisherman in the winter months to encourage use of the car park rather than on-road parking on the seafront.</li> <li>• Investigate the potential for re-opening the privately-owned car park opposite the Romney Sands Holiday Village, for public use.</li> </ul>	B Effects to be monitored by ongoing visitor surveys		
RL4	<p>Dune Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the good practice of management on Greatstone dunes to the rest of the dunes complex, in a comprehensive approach to dunes management:-</li> <li>• Secure the longer-term management and resourcing of the dunes in a partnership including SDC, EA, RMCP/WCCP and KCC PRoW;</li> <li>• Repair and replace sand fencing;</li> <li>• Review and replace way-marking and signage as part of a comprehensive approach across the strategy area;</li> <li>• Rationalise routes through the coastal dunes;</li> <li>• Investigate legal closure of right of way running north-south through Greatstone dunes.</li> <li>• Address encroachment and points of access from adjacent private properties;</li> <li>• Develop an awareness-raising campaign, targeting the local residential areas and holiday parks;</li> </ul>	B		
RL6	<p>Ensure byelaws support new Codes of Conduct, and are adequately displayed and understandable.</p>	B As part of strategy area-wide review		

RL7	<p>Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitoring of winter birds, with particular regard to sanderling, to better understand feeding and roosting locations, numbers, seasonality and incidents and levels of bird disturbance;</li> <li>• numbers, locations and types of visitors and recreational activities, in particular during the winter months.</li> </ul>	A		
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**Camber and Broomhill Sub-Area:**

Report Actions ref	Measure: Site-specific actions for Camber and Broomhill	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
CB1	<p>Works programme to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduction of spreading space of routes through the dunes,</li> <li>• installing sand fencing to control access as necessary,</li> <li>• planting stabilising vegetation,</li> <li>• review of strand-line cleaning and its effects on the stability of the dunes and their flora;</li> <li>• signage (N.B. part of area-wide signage programme);</li> <li>• Form management partnership for dunes for owners to properly implement habitat and recreation management;</li> </ul> <p>Assess alternative and secure funding methods to deliver management, including potentially from car parking charges, grant aid, developer contributions;</p>	B		
CB2	<p>Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess levels of visitors and disturbance on western Camber beach foreshore in winter months to form a baseline.</li> <li>• Assess the levels of winter and 'shoulder season' (spring and autumn) kite surfing and locations to determine whether levels are as low as Phase 1 surveys suggest.</li> </ul>	A As part of overall strategy area-wide monitoring programmes		

CB3	Carefully assess the impact of potential displacement of visitors to the Camber Western car park through developing a baseline on birds and visitors.	A		
	Carefully consider any plans to develop or enhance recreation routes into the marsh.			
	Consider access restrictions, depending on results of surveys (visitors and birds), e.g. winter dog controls.	B Pending results of visitor and bird monitoring, when this could become a mitigation (A) issue		
CB4	Education: At Camber Sands direct engagement is vital in reinforcing messages and visitor behaviour on-site; and particularly important with such a wide range of visitors:- Some interpretation boards at path entrances and key visitor access points.	A As part of overall signage programme	RDC	Fifth Continent Project,
	Introduce an Education Warden role or include education in the role of beach patrol.	B		
	Education campaign with caravan parks, making messages appropriate and attractive to visitor profile. Provide leaflets and information on websites (also linked to CB3.4) and take an integrated approach so that the message is reinforced at various points in the visit.	B		

A multi-organisation partnership approach to the management of Camber; to include an assessment of proposals for Camber and their potential effects on the sensitive areas e.g the dunes;  
Camber is identified as an area where monitoring of visitors and birds is necessary as a mitigation issue. Depending on the results of the monitoring, access controls may be required in future.

### Dungeness Point:

Report Actions ref	Measure: Site-specific actions for Dungeness Point	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
DP3	A comprehensive access control and management programme for Dungeness Point; To include:-	B		
DP4	Develop entrance points ('gateways') to the estate where visitors are welcomed into the site, and provided with essential information on accessibility and conduct required on the estate - to include posting of conditions of entry, site map, and clear waymarking, with timings for walkers to key destinations (links with DP2). The information should make clear the type of activities which are permitted and those that will require the granting of permission. Include interpretative materials at The Pilot, The Britannia and RHDR. NB This may be unpopular with residents and businesses on the Dungeness Estate, and careful consultation will be necessary;	B		
	Review vehicle parking across the Dungeness Point Sub-Area, and stop-up access to informal parking areas as necessary; and consideration of alternative parking areas for visitors (e.g. at lifeboat station)	B		
DP2.2 and DP4.3	Introduce (temporary) physical restrictions to vehicle parking. This may require planning permission	B		
	Investigate with the planning authority, potential design options for fencing around/preventing public access to some areas of the Point, that might be acceptable in landscape terms	B		
	Introduce a parking enforcement system (e.g. number plate recognition system)	B		
	Introduce new Voluntary Codes of Conduct for specialist users of the Dungeness Estate e.g. anglers	B	EDF	RMCP, NE

	Investigate PCSO or Warden (enforcement) with powers - an enforcement role with legal powers is needed to support access controls and vehicle parking management, to reinforce changes in visitor behaviour. This may be necessary on a temporary basis.	B		
DP2	Develop an Interpretation Plan to appeal to and engage with the site's wide range of visitors – as part of an overall strategy-area wide approach.	A As part of the overall strategy area-wide Interpretation Plan		
	Work with RHDR to install interpretive and education displays in the café and ensure that visitors leaving the station can more easily orientate themselves.	B		
DP2.2	An educational (Warden) role is needed to support visitors and their understanding of the wildlife interests of the area; it may be possible to work with and extend existing roles at the site.	B		
DP5	The need for joint working: Take a partnership approach and set up arrangements to consider and take forward access and recreation management initiatives:- (i) an executive grouping of major landowners and interests: EDF, Magnox, NE, RHDR, RSPB and RMCP; (ii) an estate partnership: with the above plus residential property owners, and local businesses and attractions including the Old Lighthouse, and The Britannia and Pilot pubs; (iii) a wider Estate Management Stakeholder group: to include representatives of site users (e.g. anglers, wildlife watchers, local dog walkers).	B		
DP6	Address gaps in data requirements across the Dungeness Point Sub-Area:- Develop a programme of monitoring that provides regular and consistent data on visitors, as part of the overall strategy area-wide programme of monitoring;	A		

DP6	Maintain the traffic counter at Dungeness Estate entrance and continue monitoring of numbers on an ongoing basis. Work with RHDR to more accurately assess visitors through this route.	B		
	Ensure findings of vegetated shingle condition report are circulated to partners and incorporated into this strategy	A		

**Rye Harbour Reserve:**

Report Actions ref	Measure: Site-specific actions for Rye Harbour Reserve	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
RH1	Position Rye Harbour as a visitor 'hub' or 'gateway' site, where visitors may enjoy facilities and be invited to find out more about the range of sites in the area. (Proposals to be included as part of their new visitor centre development)	B	SWT	
RH2	Develop interpretation for wide audiences based on the strategy area-wide Interpretation Plan. Implement a programme to appeal to the site's wide range of regular and infrequent visitors.	B	SWT	

### Romney Marsh and Scotney Sub-Area:

Report Actions ref	Measure: Site-specific actions for Romney Marsh and Scotney	Priority	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations
RM1	Improve information on bird species across the sub-area, including ensuring (as far as possible) no gaps in WeBS core counts (particularly but not only Walland Marsh), continue work to understand bird movements and the importance of functional land. Support local BTO volunteers to encourage provision of a recorder for the Romney Sands WeBS sector and to ensure complete WeBS counts each year.	B Not in the 'gift' of the local planning authority and reliant on the support of the BTO		
	Improve the evidence base for the area by monitoring the download or sale of promoted leaflets.	B		
RM2	Develop and implement interpretation in areas people visit and as an integral part of promoted routes; for example, routes which pass through designated sites including Fairfield and The Dowels and Snargate. Ensure messages are accessible to a wide range of audiences and visitors.	B Planning as part of overall Interpretation Plan (A)		
RM4	Explore the feasibility of the Romney Marsh Partnership and Fifth Continent Project to take forward the strategic development and delivery of access and recreation management initiatives, including those actions identified in the SARMS.	B		
	The County Planning authorities consider the potential uses of the Scotney Lakes complex in regard to their contribution or impact on the Natura sites.			



RM4	<p>Work with the County highway authorities/PROW teams, local authorities, countryside projects and others promoting access to ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. no new access provision is made through SSSI/Ramsar sites including Walland Marsh;</li> <li>2. any visitor data relating to use of the Royal Military Canal Path is made available in support of the SARMS now and in the future;</li> <li>3. the potential upgrade of the Royal Military Canal Path be carefully assessed with regard to the conservation features of the designated sites; and interpretation be considered alongside these plans to address the wildlife interest of this area and visitor behaviour;</li> <li>4. the development of new access routes out of Camber Village be similarly carefully assessed;</li> <li>5. consideration be given to the installation of interpretation panels where existing or new promoted routes cross Natura sites.</li> <li>6. work with RHDR to more accurately assess visitors through the Dungeness station route.</li> </ol>			
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RM4	Explore the feasibility of the Romney Marsh Partnership and Fifth Continent Project to take forward the strategic development and delivery of access and recreation management initiatives, including those actions identified in the SARMS.	B		
	The County Planning authorities consider the potential uses of the Scotney Lakes complex in regard to their contribution or impact on the Natura sites.	B		
	<p>Work with the County highway authorities/PROW teams, local authorities, countryside projects and others promoting access to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) no new access provision is made through SSSI/Ramsar sites including Walland Marsh;</li> <li>(ii) any visitor data relating to use of the Royal Military Canal Path is made available in support of the SARMS now and in the future;</li> <li>(iii) the potential upgrade of the Royal Military Canal Path be carefully assessed with regard to the conservation features of the designated sites; and interpretation be considered alongside these plans to address the wildlife interest of this area and visitor behaviour;</li> <li>(iv) the development of new access routes out of Camber Village be similarly carefully assessed;</li> <li>(v) consideration be given to the installation of interpretation panels where existing or new promoted routes cross Natura sites.</li> <li>(vi) work with RHDR to more accurately assess visitors through the Dungeness station route</li> </ul>	B		

## Dungeness Complex - Sustainable Access and Recreation management Strategy (SARMS)

### Appendix 1 of main report: Evaluation of potential measures and their suitability

D. Not suitable to be taken forward	C. Likely to make a positive and complementary contribution to overall aims, but more aspirational or less defined/ insufficient evidence or not a proportionate response, therefore not a measure within this strategy at this time	B. Essential to the SARMS, and clearly linked to a current issue or required to rectify current problem.	A. Priority Actions. Clearly mitigation for planning policies or necessary to be confident of no adverse effect on integrity.
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Report Actions ref	Examples of Measures	Commentary	Mitigation Actions	Suitability/ Actions
<b>STRATEGY AREA-WIDE</b>				
SA1.1	Revised Byelaws and Orders	To provide a more consistent approach across the strategy area, with up to date, relevant and Strategy area-wide coverage of byelaws		B Essential to support the SARMS approach
	Consideration of extension of dog controls for the winter months	Coastal Natura 2000 areas are important for overwintering birds. The beaches may already have restrictions on dogs for the summer month, but this may be extended to the times of year when overwintering birds are present.		C The link between dogs and bird disturbance in the strategy area is not proven. Further evidence will be needed.
SA2.1	Vehicle parking controls	Introduce methods to count numbers of vehicles using public car parks in the area; Consider management of car parking sites and costs on a sub-area basis, to reduce recreational pressure and minimise displacement parking at other areas		B In accordance with sub-area requirements and to be reviewed following ongoing monitoring
SA3.3	Limit visitor numbers	Potential to 'cap' visitor numbers at some sites to minimise pressure on wildlife		D No evidence to support this measure
SA4.1	Assess the growth of recreational activities to limit future impacts	Some water and beach-based sports activities may wish to extend their season or area of operation. All activities should be assessed for their potential to cause disturbance to wildlife in the N2K areas		B

SA5.1	Develop a programme of visitor monitoring across the strategy area (in addition to category A sites – see Camber, Romney & Lade and Dungeness Point sub-area actions)	On-going surveys of visitor numbers and profile (including socio-economic data), activities and season of visit; to include all site visitors, including specialist site users including kite-surfers and visitors to sites in the vicinity of outdoor Park-home type accommodation (including mobile homes and static caravans)		B To support the SARMS approach
SA5.2	Monitoring of bird numbers and bird disturbance events across the strategy area (in addition to category A sites - see Camber and Romney & Lade sub-area actions)	Monitoring of bird numbers and bird disturbance events		B
SA5.3	Full coverage of monitoring of WeBS sectors	Work with the BTO to ensure full coverage of monitoring of WeBS sectors	Yes	A
SA6.2	As part of an area-wide Visitor Interpretation programme (see SA6.4 below), carry out a review and replacement programme of signage and its messages, including waymarkers and information signs at key access points and junctions	An improvement in information and other signs across the area will help to clarify and strengthen messages to visitors, and help visitors to better navigate the sites. <b>The Fifth Continent Project has audited signage across part of the area, and a joint approach would be a more efficient way forward</b>	Yes	A
SA6.4	Plan an area-wide Visitor Interpretation programme for the area, including site by site proposals for coherent interpretive messages and activities, and other signing and waymarking (see report action SA6.2 above)	To be developed for the whole Strategy area, to include site by site development of a coherent set of interpretive messages and activities	Yes	A Interpretation Planning is essential to improve visitor awareness and education
SA6.6	Develop visitor ‘hubs’ or ‘gateway’ sites	Focus visitors towards more robust sites which offer a range of visitor facilities, where visitors may find out more about the area and the wildlife, and from where they may explore the area e.g. Rye Harbour Reserve and Romney Marsh Visitor Centre		B Essential to support monitoring, wardening and education programmes.
SA7.1	Develop a unifying brand for the Strategy area; potentially around the natural environment	This work is important in supporting the SARMS. However, the Fifth Continent project and the Romney Marsh Partnership are in the process of developing new branding guidelines. This work could be developed to include an extended area that brings in Rye Harbour, Pett Level and Pannel Valley, as part of an overall unified approach		C Work with the Fifth Continent project in an extended area approach; a key element of the SARMS

SA7.2	Develop and agree a promotional strategy with stakeholders including tourism partners, for the Strategy area and its component sites; to include the development of an official website for the strategy area	A more joined-up approach in partnership with the tourism sector to: develop an official website for the promotion of the area, or focus on improving existing official website(s) to include messages relating to appropriate visitor behaviour/nature sensitivity; and taking a more consistent and appropriate approach to promotional messages		C The development of an official website would help support the SARMS
SA7.3	Review of websites	Ensure that local promotional websites including Visit England, Visit Kent, Explore Kent and The Romney Marsh contain information on appropriate visitor behaviour at the Natura sites.	Yes	A
SA8.1	A SARMS Oversight Group to be set up, comprising reps from SDC, RDC and NE	To ensure development and delivery of the SARMS; comprising reps from SDC, RDC and NE	Yes	A
SA8.2	Oversight Group to scope the potential for existing partnerships and initiatives to develop plans and deliver the SARMS across sectors and boundaries;	There is a need to assess the potential for existing partnerships and initiatives to deliver the SARMS; and strengthen these groups to ensure their representation is cross-sectoral and cross-boundary.	Yes	A
SA8.3	Develop a cross-boundary SARMS Delivery grouping Develop a cross-boundary SARMS Strategic grouping	The many landowners, site managers, project partners and other stakeholders need to be brought together to develop shared objectives, and to gain support for implementation. A local delivery grouping could take forward projects, and help build local support through events, activities and meetings; and a strategic grouping could draw partners together to plan, resource and commission joint activities in support of the local economy, communities and environment.		B
SA8.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop awareness-raising activities for senior officers and local politicians;</li> <li>Identify champions to represent the work of the SARMS at a strategic level;</li> </ul>	Work is needed at senior levels and across authorities, to improve understanding of the issues, and identify champions. To raise the profile of this work, and attract the resources to deliver the actions required, this work needs to link to senior, strategic levels, potentially to SELEP level.		B

SA9.1	Assessment and monitoring of the growth of mobile/park homes in or near the N2K sites	Holiday parks and camp sites are developing and selling on-site mobile homes and static caravans for owner-occupancy for extended periods or all-year-round use. This growing trend could increase visitor pressure on sensitive sites; overwintering birds could be vulnerable in the winter months	Yes	A
SA9.2	Local authorities to: ensure standards for open space provision are adhered to		Yes	A
SA9.2	Local authorities to: investigate the potential provision of suitably robust open space recreation sites close to the coast as part of the development of their Green Infrastructure plans; consider the after-uses of the CEMEX pits at Lydd-On-Sea; and consider the potential for developing land for open space uses near New Romney Caravan Park and Holiday Village.	The results of the Phase One visitor survey indicated that regular visitors to coastal sites would choose other coastal sites if asked to consider an alternative site to visit. This indicates that alternative sites for recreation may need to be in a coastal location to be effective in deflecting visitors from sensitive sites		B

## SITE-SPECIFIC MEASURES

### Pett Level and Pannel Valley

PL1	Raise awareness of visitors about the nature conservation interest and sensitivities of the area	Install signs on seawall and other areas to inform visitors of nature conservation interest.	Yes	A Part of the overall signage programme
PL2	Incorporate this area more fully into the Dungeness complex	Consider how this area could be linked to the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme		B
PL3	Monitoring	Develop a programme of monitoring of visitors, including the use of the Royal Military Canal Path and Saxon Shore Way;		B Low numbers of visitors currently

## Rye Harbour Reserve

RH1	Position Rye Harbour as a gateway site for the wider Dungeness Complex (along with the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre at New Romney)	Rye Harbour to be included in a strategy area-wide approach to visitor management; to include visitor 'hubs' or 'gateway' sites, where visitors may enjoy facilities and be invited to find out more about the range of sites in the area.		B
RH2	Develop interpretation for wide audiences	Develop and implement a programme to appeal to the site's wide range of regular and infrequent visitors.		B Planning element as part of overall Interpretation Plan for Strategy area (A)
RH3	Secure funding mechanisms for Rye Harbour reserve to ensure continued high-quality visitor management	Seek additional funding if necessary to deliver high quality interpretation. Ensure that visitor centre is self-sufficient and does not cause funding insecurity. Consider better integration with car park (as this largely serves the reserve), and investigate the potential of the reserve receiving a proportion of any future parking fee.		C Suggest as part of SWT's programme to develop the new visitor centre
RH4	Bring Rye Harbour reserve more fully into Dungeness Complex partnership working	Bring Rye Harbour reserve more fully into a broader strategic planning and delivery partnership which covers the wider Dungeness complex.		C
RH5	Monitor the non-reserve area outside the LNR designated area	With the agreement of landowners, consider monitoring lake areas just outside the reserve as potential functional areas for wildlife (notably birds).		C
RH6	Access promotion	Access promotion should pay due regard to the designated areas, and provide information to visitors e.g. to keep dogs on leads in some areas.		C

### Camber Sands and Broomhill Frontage

CB1	Improved and co-ordinated management of dunes	Review and formulate new management plan for dunes which sets out detailed future and annual management requirements and costings required.		C
		Form management partnership for dunes for owners to properly implement habitat and recreation management.		C
		Assess alternative and secure funding methods to deliver management, including potentially from car parking charges, grant aid, developer contributions.		B
		Ensure access management works are adequately funded and carried out annually, including removing sand from the five existing paths, closing any additional paths created by visitors, installing sand fencing to control access as necessary.		B
CB2	Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features	Assess levels of visitors and disturbance on western Camber beach foreshore in winter months to form a baseline. Assess the levels of winter and 'shoulder season' (spring and autumn) kite surfing and locations to determine whether levels are as low as Phase 1 surveys suggest.	Yes	A As part of strategy monitoring programmes
CB3	Ensure the expansion and repositioning of the visitor economy does not cause negative impact on conservation features	Carefully assess the impact of potential displacement of visitors to the Camber Western car park through developing a baseline on birds and visitors. Carefully consider any plans to develop or enhance recreation routes into the marsh.		
		Consider access restrictions, depending on results of surveys (visitors and birds), e.g. winter dog controls.		B Pending results of visitor and bird monitoring, when this could become a mitigation (A) issue



CB4	Education	Some interpretation boards at path entrances and key visitor access points.	Yes	A As part of overall signage programme
		Introduce an Education Warden role or include education in the role of beach patrol.		B
		Education campaign with caravan parks, making messages appropriate and attractive to visitor profile. Provide leaflets and information on websites (also linked to CB3.4) and take an integrated approach so that the message is reinforced at various points in the visit.		B

### Dungeness Point

DP1	Develop an interpretation plan for the Dungeness Complex: Dungeness Point Sub-Area	Develop an Interpretation Plan to appeal to and engage with the site's wide range of visitors – as part of an overall strategy-area wide approach.	Yes	A As part of the overall Interpretation Plan
		Work with RHDR to install interpretive and education displays in the café and ensure that visitors leaving the station can more easily orientate themselves.		B
		Extend the educational (Wardening) across the Dungeness Estate to support visitors and their understanding of the wildlife interests of the area.		B

DP2	Introduce access controls to the Dungeness Estate (see also DP5)	Develop entrance points ('gateways') to the estate where visitors are welcomed into the site, and provided with essential information on accessibility and conduct required on the estate.		B
		Review vehicle parking areas and stop-up access to informal parking areas as necessary;		B
		Introduce (temporary) physical restrictions to vehicle parking. This may require planning permission		B
		Investigate with the planning authority, potential design options for fencing around/preventing public access to areas, that might be acceptable in landscape terms		B
		As part of an approach to improve visitor awareness of site rules and permissions, review current on-line presence of the Dungeness Estate, improve the official website, and consider improvements to streamline the user experience when searching for information e.g. driving online traffic and providing links to one official website.		C
DP3	Consider the introduction of legal and other actions to support access management: at Dungeness Estate (see also DP5)	Introduce a parking enforcement system (e.g. number plate recognition system)		B
		Introduce new Voluntary Codes of Conduct for specialist users of the Dungeness Estate e.g. anglers		B
		Investigate PCSO or Warden (enforcement) with powers		B
DP4	The need for joint working: Take a partnership approach to the development of access and recreation management measures at the Dungeness estate	Set up arrangements to consider and take forward access and recreation management initiatives: (i) an executive grouping of major landowners and interests: EDF, Magnox, NE, RHDR, RSPB and RMCP; (ii) an estate partnership: with the above plus residential property owners, and local businesses and attractions including the Old Lighthouse, and The Britannia and Pilot pubs; (iii) a wider Estate Management Stakeholder group: to include representatives of site users (e.g. anglers, wildlife watchers, local dog walkers)		B

DP5	Address gaps in data requirements across the Dungeness Point Sub-Area Review the Dungeness Point actions following the completion of the NE report	Develop a programme of monitoring that provides regular and consistent data on visitors, as part of the overall strategy area-wide programme of monitoring	Yes	A
		Maintain the traffic counter at Dungeness Estate entrance and continue monitoring of numbers on an ongoing basis		B
		Work with RHDR to more accurately assess visitors through the train station route		B
		Ensure findings of vegetated shingle condition report are circulated to partners and incorporated into this strategy		A
		The findings of the NE report into the condition of vegetated shingle at Dungeness NNR is essential information for the development of the SARMS. However, at the time of writing the SARMS this report was not available	Yes	A

### Romney and Lade Foreshore

RL1	Improve visitor awareness of the sensitive features of the designated sites	Develop and implement a programme of signage review and replacement to support understanding of the area, notably for local, regular visitors, and infrequent visitors, on holiday in the area. To include interpretation boards at Greatstone, clearer signing and waymarking at Greatstone Dunes; larger signs for the length of beach that fronts the coast road near housing, aimed at local users, encouraging actions to protect wildlife;	Yes	A
		Develop the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre as a visitor 'hub' or 'gateway' to the area to promote visitor awareness for the wider Dungeness Complex.		B
		Raise awareness of sensitive wildlife, and behaviours to prevent disturbance by continuing to produce the RMCP's Shingle Issue publication for residents and local businesses.		B

RL2	Access Management (see also “Byelaws”)	Develop Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Greatstone in partnership with adventure sports operators and clubs.	Yes	A
		Improve signing of paths, including the ECP. Install signs at existing desire lines e.g. opposite Romney Sands Holiday Village and at the ends of road junctions.	Yes	A Part of signage programme
		Zoning is most usually considered in relation to watersports. Depending on outcome of further investigation (see actions RL7) work with adventure sports operators and clubs to determine activity zones (for both summer and winter).		B More evidence is needed to determine the extent and the seasonality
RL3	Rationalise car parking	Consider the introduction of no parking areas along the coastal side of the coast road between Lade and Greatstone.		B Effects to be monitored by ongoing visitor surveys
		Consider reduced or no charge of the existing car park at The Jolly Fisherman in the winter months to encourage use of the car park rather than on-road parking on the seafront.		B
		Investigate the potential for re-opening the privately-owned car park opposite the Romney Sands Holiday Village, for public use.		B
RL4	Extend the good practice of management on Greatstone dunes to the rest of the dunes complex, in a comprehensive approach to dunes management	(i) Secure the longer-term management and resourcing of the dunes in a partnership including SDC, EA, RMCP/WCCP and KCC PRoW; (ii) Repair and replace sand fencing as required; (iii) Review and replace way-marking and signage as part of a comprehensive approach across the strategy area; (iv) Rationalise routes through the coastal dunes; (v) Investigate legal closure of right of way running north-south through Greatstone dunes. (vi) Address encroachment and points of access from adjacent private properties; (vii) Develop an awareness-raising campaign, targeting the local residential areas and holiday parks;		B

RL5	Relieve recreational pressure on sensitive areas of open space	Actively seek provision of alternative local areas of public open space for residents and visitors to local holiday parks, particularly for dog walkers (see also Strategy area-wide section).		B
		Work with providers of local holiday park-type accommodation to review times of opening and future plans which may affect levels of recreational pressure, and seek to work with the providers to develop on-site visitor education measures.		B
RL6	Extend and/or modify byelaws and control orders	Ensure byelaws support new Codes of Conduct, and are adequately displayed and understandable.		B As part of strategy area-wide review
RL7	Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features	Carry out monitoring of winter birds, with particular regard to sanderling, to better understand feeding and roosting locations, numbers, seasonality and incidents and levels of bird disturbance.	Yes	A
		Monitor numbers, locations and types of visitors and recreational activities, in particular during the winter months.	Yes	A

### Romney Marsh

RM1	Improve evidence base to enable assessment of visitor impacts on conservation features	Improve information on bird species across the sub-area, including ensuring (as far as possible) no gaps in WeBS core counts (particularly but not only Walland Marsh), continue work to understand bird movements and the importance of functional land.		A However, not in the 'gift' of the local planning authority and reliant on the support of the BTO
		Support local BTO volunteers to encourage provision of a recorder for the Romney Sands WeBS sector and to ensure complete WeBS counts each year.		B
		Improve the evidence base for the area by monitoring the download or sale of promoted leaflets.		B

RM2	Measures to improve the experience of visitors to the Romney Marsh	Develop and implement interpretation in areas people visit and as an integral part of promoted routes; for example, routes which pass through designated sites including Fairfield and The Dowels and Snargate. Ensure messages are accessible to a wide range of audiences and visitors.		B Planning as part of overall Interpretation Plan (A)
RM3	Ensure the rebranding and potential repositioning of the area does not cause negative impact on conservation features	Ensure that any rebranding, promotion and repositioning of the Romney Marsh fully includes consideration of the designated sites and conservation features and that messages around responsible recreation are central to this rebranding.		C
RM4	The need for joint working	Explore the feasibility of the Romney Marsh Partnership and Fifth Continent Project to take forward the strategic development and delivery of access and recreation management initiatives, including those actions identified in the SARMS.		B
		The County Planning authorities consider the potential uses of the Scotney Lakes complex in regard to their contribution or impact on the Natura sites.		B
		Work with the County highway authorities/PROW teams, local authorities, countryside projects and others promoting access to ensure that:		B
		(i) no new access provision is made through SSSI/Ramsar sites including Walland Marsh;		B
		(ii) any visitor data relating to use of the Royal Military Canal Path is made available in support of the SARMS now and in the future;		B
		(iii) the potential upgrade of the Royal Military Canal Path be carefully assessed with regard to the conservation features of the designated sites; and interpretation be considered alongside these plans to address the wildlife interest of this area and visitor behaviour;		B
		(iv) the development of new access routes out of Camber Village be similarly carefully assessed;		B