Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal

Coastal Access Programme

This document records the conclusions of Natural England's appraisal of any potential for environmental impacts from our proposals to establish the England Coast Path (ECP) in the light of the requirements of the legislation affecting Ramsar, Natura 2000 sites (Special Protection Areas – SPAs, and Special Areas of Conservation – SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs), protected species and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).

Portsmouth to South Hayling

17 July 2017

Contents

This appraisal should be read alongside Natural England's related Coastal Access Report in which the access proposal is fully described and explained

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-portsmouth-to-south-hayling

1. Our approach

Natural England's approach to ensuring the protection of sensitive nature conservation features under the Coastal Access Programme is set out in section 4.9 Coastal Access: Natural England's Approved Scheme 2013[1]. We call our internal processes to support this approach 'Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal' (ASFA) and this document is a record of our conclusions. The appraisal includes our Habitats Regulations Assessment wherever relevant to the site in question.

Our final published proposal for a stretch of England Coast Path is preceded by detailed local consideration of options for route alignment, the extent of the coastal margin and any requirement for restrictions, exclusions or seasonal alternative routes. The proposals are thoroughly considered before being finalised and initial ideas may be modified or rejected during the iterative design process, drawing on the range of relevant expertise available within Natural England.

Evidence is also gathered as appropriate from a range of other sources which can include information and data held locally by external partners or from the experience of local land owners and occupiers. The approach includes looking at any current visitor management practices, either informal or formal. It also involves discussing our emerging conclusions as appropriate with key local interests such as land owners or occupiers, conservation organisations or the local access authority. In these ways, any nature conservation concerns are discussed early and constructive solutions identified as necessary.

The conclusions of our appraisal are certified by both the member of staff responsible for developing the access proposal and the person responsible for considering any environmental impacts. This ensures appropriate separation of duties within Natural England.

Where our proposals for the England Coast Path and associated Coastal Margin are relevant to a Natura 2000 site, this appraisal fulfils our duty under the Habitats Regulations 2010 to assess their potential implications in order to ensure no likely significant effect on the site. The formal conclusions relating to this are recorded in Part 6 of the document.

2. Scope

In this part of the document we define the geographic extent for the appraisal and the features that are included. Note that this appraisal is concerned with ecological, geological and geomorphological features; any other possible sensitivities, including landscape and historic features, are discussed in our coastal access report.

2.1 Geographic extent

This stretch starts on the ramparts east of the Round Tower, by the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour in historic Old Portsmouth. It continues east following the coast along Southsea seafront and the Solent Way. Our proposed route then continues seaward at Eastney and around Langstone Harbour where there is a high level of existing access. The route continues along the seafront of south Hayling Island to the eastern extent of the Sinah Common SSSI.

From the Round Tower to the Hayling Island Ferry terminal in Eastney, and from the Hayling Island Ferry terminal in Hayling Island to the eastern extent of the Sinah Common SSSI the route is aligned along open coast. Between the two ferry terminals, the route follows Langstone Harbour.

We have divided this stretch of coast into three sections and these are referred to in Part 4 of this document:

- Old Portsmouth (Round Tower) to Eastney (where the esplanade ends at Eastney swimming pool on Henderson Rd);
- Eastney to Langstone (before the Langstone Bridge); and
- Langstone to South Hayling (eastern boundary of Sinah Common SSSI).

These sections correspond to chapters in our coastal access report.

For the purposes of this appraisal, the intertidal area of Langstone Harbour is treated as an additional section.

2.2 Designated sites

The following designated sites are considered in this appraisal:

Designated sites within the proposed coastal margin:

- Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar;
- Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA;
- Solent & Dorset Coast potential SPA (pSPA);
- Solent Maritime SAC;
- Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC;
- Langstone Harbour SSSI; and
- Sinah Common SSSI

Designated sites with mobile features (birds) that may enter the proposed coastal margin (non bird features have been screened out at this stage):

- Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar
- Portsmouth Harbour SPA
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar
- Solent and Southampton Water SPA
- Chichester Harbour SSSI
- Portsmouth Harbour SSSI
- Ryde Sands and Wooton Creek SSSI

2.3 Context

2.3.1 Multiple stretches affecting a Natura 2000 site

Where multiple stretches of the England Coast Path affect a Natura 2000 site we may need to consider if a combination of minor effects we identify for individual stretches alone could add up to an overall in combination effect that is significant at the European site level. We do this by treating each of the affected stretches as an independent project for the purposes of our Habitat Regulations Assessment and considering the in-combination assessment as part of the Likely Significant Effect screening stage of the Habitats Regulation Assessment in Part 7 of this document.

The following sites are affected by two or more stretch proposals:

Table 1: Natura 2000 sites affected by local England Coast Path proposals

Stretch	Solent and Southampton Water SPA	New Forest SPA	Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA	Portsmouth Harbour SPA	Pagham Harbour SPA	Solent and Dorset Coasts pSPA	Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar	New Forest Ramsar	Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar	Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar	Pagham Harbour Ramsar	Solent Maritime SAC	Solent & IOW Lagoon SAC	South Wight Maritime SAC	The New Forest SAC
Highcliffe to Calshot	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Calshot to Gosport	✓					✓				✓		✓			
Gosport to Portsmouth	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Portsmouth to South Hayling	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		

South Hayling to East Head			✓			✓			✓			✓			
East Head to Shoreham					✓	✓					✓				
Isle of Wight	✓					✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	

2.3.2 Bird Aware Solent

Bird Aware Solent (also known as the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership - SRMP) is a strategic collaboration between 15 local councils and other partners including Natural England, around the Solent to mitigate the impact of recreational disturbance due to planned house building. Plans to build 63,684 new homes between 2016 and 2034 within the 5.6 km Zone of Influence of the Solent SPAs will increase the number of recreational visits to the coast. Research has found that, without mitigation, this will have an impact on the Solent SPAs, and particularly the populations of waterbirds that depend on the estuaries and harbours during the winter months. The main concern is increased disturbance by people and their dogs to birds feeding on exposed intertidal mud, and birds roosting/feeding on coastal grazing marsh and other suitable habitats. The Partnership oversees delivery of long term measures to fully mitigate effects, funded by contributions from house builders. Their approach focusses on visitor management and aims to maintain public access, but with measures to ensure that access and nature conservation interests are not in conflict.

The Interim Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy was published in December 2014[2] and a full strategy is being developed by the partnership which is due to be adopted in December 2017.

Our programme to establish the England Coast Path is complementary to the Partnership's strategy; it seeks to promote responsible access to the Solent coast and inform visitors about the ecological sensitivities. Through meetings and a series of workshops we have developed our proposals in close liaison with Bird Aware Solent and have fully considered the Bird Aware Solent evidence base and both the interim and emerging definitive mitigation strategy. Both strategies rely heavily on coastal rangers educating and informing coastal visitors about the wintering bird sensitivities and how to enjoy the site whilst avoiding disturbing feeding and roosting birds. The emerging definitive strategy aims to widen the range of mitigation from the interim strategy through providing on-the-ground access management projects specific to each site, including measures such as interpretation panels. Although a definitive list of these projects has yet to be finalised, Bird Aware Solent and Natural England colleagues have liaised to identify the likely projects that would be effective to reduce recreational disturbance in the Solent based on evidence.

Representatives of the ECP team have provided updates on the proposals to Bird Aware Solent meetings. These sessions have generated useful feedback which we have used in developing our proposals. This document has been developed in consultation with Natural England's representative to Bird Aware Solent. Local officers of the RSPB have also provided content via personal communication.

2.3.3 Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust have published a strategy explaining the conservation need, and recommended policies for the brent goose and wader populations of the Solent. The initial Strategy was published in 2010, with updated maps now available up to 2015[3].

Taken from the 2010 strategy[3]

“The Strategy is the report of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy Steering Group. This steering group comprises a partnership of statutory and non-statutory bodies. The Strategy is a non-statutory document presenting evidence, analysis and recommendations to inform decisions relating to strategic planning as well as individual development proposals. The Strategy relates to internationally important Brent Goose and wading bird populations within, and around the Special Protection Areas and Ramsar wetlands of the Solent Coast (Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex). The underlying principle of the Strategy is to wherever possible conserve extant sites, and to create new sites, enhancing the quality and extent of the feeding and roosting resource.

“The datasets informing the Strategy relate to over 1000 survey sites within the urban matrix and the countryside surrounding the Solent. Surveys were undertaken by over 100 surveyors, mostly volunteers, over the three winters 2006-2009.

“All of the sites identified in the Strategy as being currently used by waders and/or brent geese are considered to be “important” as they all form part of the ecological network of sites used by birds. Sites that fell below the benchmarks were classified as “uncertain” to highlight them as needing further survey work to inform their assessment. Recommendations are set out for planning policy makers, site owners and those involved in managing land within the Solent area in order to protect the integrity of this network of important sites. “

We have used the dataset to assess whether the England Coast Path proposals will lead to a likely significant effect, through increased recreational disturbance, on the qualifying features outside of the boundaries of the Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites. Appendix A provides a full list of sites that are described as ‘important’, or ‘uncertain’ for brent geese and waders, where the ECP will either route through, or be located directly landward or seaward. Geographically proximate sites have been grouped, and following the precautionary principle, sites listed as uncertain have been included within our assessment.

2.4 Designated features

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA**	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar**	**Portsmouth Harbour SPA**	**Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar**	**Solent and Southampton Water SPA**	**Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar**	**Solent and Dorset pSPA**	**Solent Maritime SAC**	**Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC**	**Langstone Harbour SSSI**	**Chichester Harbour SSSI**	**Sinah Common SSSI**	**Portsmouth Harbour SSSI**	**Ryde Sands and Wooton Creek SSSI**
Bar-tailed godwit, *Limosa lapponica* - A157 (non-breeding)	✓									✓	✓			
Black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa islandica* – A616 (non-breeding)		✓	✓		✓	✓					✓		✓	
Common tern, *Sterna hirundo* - A193 (breeding)	✓				✓		✓			✓	✓			
Curlew, *Numenius arquata* - A160 (non-breeding)	✓									✓	✓			
Dark-bellied brent goose, *Branta bernicla bernicla* - A675 (non-breeding)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	
Dunlin, *Calidris alpina alpina* - A672 (non-breeding)	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓		✓	
Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia* (non-breeding)											✓			
Grey plover, *Pluvialis squatarola* - A141 (non-breeding)	✓	✓								✓	✓		✓	
Little tern, *Sterna albifrons* - A195 (breeding)	✓				✓		✓			✓	✓			

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA**	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar**	**Portsmouth Harbour SPA**	**Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar**	**Solent and Southampton Water SPA**	**Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar**	**Solent and Dorset pSPA**	**Solent Maritime SAC**	**Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC**	**Langstone Harbour SSSI**	**Chichester Harbour SSSI**	**Sinah Common SSSI**	**Portsmouth Harbour SSSI**	**Ryde Sands and Wooton Creek SSSI**
Mediterranean gull – *Larus melanocephalus* – A176 (breeding)					✓									
Pintail, *Anas acuta* - A054 (non-breeding)	✓									✓				
Red-breasted merganser, *Mergus serrator* - A069 (non-breeding)	✓		✓							✓				
Redshank, *Tringa totanus* - A162 (non-breeding)	✓	✓								✓	✓			
Ringed plover, *Charadrius hiaticula* - A137 (non-breeding)	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓	✓			
Roseate tern, *Sterna dougallii* – A192 (breeding)					✓									
Sanderling, *Calidris alba* - A144 (non-breeding)	✓									✓	✓			✓
Sandwich tern, *Sterna sandvicensis* - A191 (breeding)	✓				✓		✓			✓	✓			
Shelduck, *Tadorna tadorna* - A048 (non-breeding)	✓	✓								✓	✓			
Shoveler, *Anas clypeata* - A056 (non-breeding)	✓									✓				
Teal, *Anas crecca* - A704 (non-breeding)	✓				✓	✓				✓	✓			

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA**	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar**	**Portsmouth Harbour SPA**	**Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar**	**Solent and Southampton Water SPA**	**Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar**	**Solent and Dorset pSPA**	**Solent Maritime SAC**	**Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC**	**Langstone Harbour SSSI**	**Chichester Harbour SSSI**	**Sinah Common SSSI**	**Portsmouth Harbour SSSI**	**Ryde Sands and Wooton Creek SSSI**
Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres* - A169 (non-breeding)	✓									✓				
Wigeon, *Anas penelope* - A050 (non-breeding)	✓									✓				
Assemblages of international importance of waterfowl species with peak counts in winter.	✓	✓		✓		✓					✓			
H1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time								✓						
H1130 Estuaries		✓						✓						
H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide		✓						✓		✓				
H1150 Coastal lagoons								✓	✓	✓				
H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines								✓		✓		✓		
H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks								✓				✓		
H1310 *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand								✓		✓				
H1320 *Spartina* swards (*Spartinion maritimae*)								✓		✓				

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA**	**Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar**	**Portsmouth Harbour SPA**	**Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar**	**Solent and Southampton Water SPA**	**Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar**	**Solent and Dorset pSPA**	**Solent Maritime SAC**	**Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC**	**Langstone Harbour SSSI**	**Chichester Harbour SSSI**	**Sinah Common SSSI**	**Portsmouth Harbour SSSI**	**Ryde Sands and Wooton Creek SSSI**
H1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)								✓		✓		✓		
H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*								✓				✓		
S1016 Desmoulins whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*								✓						
Invertebrate assemblage (M311 saltmarsh and transitional brackish marsh)										✓				
Maritime grassland												✓		
Vascular plant assemblage										✓				
Coastal grazing marsh										✓				

3. Baseline conditions and environmental sensitivities

In this part of the document we identify any of the features mentioned above that are potentially sensitive to changes in access, and rule out from further consideration those that are not.

3.1 Breeding terns and gulls

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- Common tern;
- little tern;
- roseate tern;
- sandwich tern; and
- Mediterranean gull

Current conservation status and use of site by features

Breeding terns are present during summer months, usually April to September, utilising the shingle beaches, and islands of Langstone Harbour. Specific breeding locations within Langstone Harbour are at the West Hayling Nature Reserve (Oysterbeds) and on the RSPB islands within the Harbour. Success rates for nesting terns fluctuate year on year (tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Number of breeding pairs at RSPB Islands[4]

	Sandwich Tern	Common Tern	Little Tern
2014	66	21	31
2013	6	12	23
2012	45	74	39
2011	161	57	56
2010	205	81	60

Table 4. Number of breeding pairs at West Hayling Nature Reserve (Oysterbeds)[4].

	Sandwich Tern	Common Tern	Little Tern
2014	0	96	0
2013	0	73	3
2012	1	49	1
2011	15	135	3
2010	?	69	1

The following is taken from the Breeding Tern and Mediterranean Gull report for the Solent Estuaries report[4]

"With regards to feeding areas, terns feed throughout the harbour and wider Solent but are most commonly

seen in the following areas:
Little Terns:
Adjacent to Bakers Island and South Binness Island.
Within the enclosed seascape & channels surrounded by North Binness, Long Island, the Round Nap, South Binness and Bakers Island.
Adjacent to Farlington Marshes, especially on the eastern side.
Along the channels and mudflats reaching south of Farlington marshes, Bakers Island and South Binness (especially at low tide).
The sea directly west of the West Hayling Local Nature Reserve.
Common Terns:
Throughout the entire harbour, harbour mouth and approaches varying with the tide and current. Large feeding groups form at high tide to the east and south of South Binness as the current works through the harbour bringing small fish with it.
Sandwich Terns:
As above but with a stronger tendency towards the harbour mouth."

A number of designated sites, including Chichester and Portsmouth harbours, Southampton Water, and Ryde Sands are functionally linked to Langstone Harbour. For example, Mediterranean gulls, and roseate terns are a designated feature of the nearby Solent and Southampton Water SPA, but are known to utilise the same sites within Langstone Harbour. Similarly terns from Thorney Island, Eastern Chichester Harbour and areas around south east Hayling also support colonies in Langstone Harbour, and vice versa. Therefore effects in one site must be considered to affect all sites.

Sandwich, common and little terns are currently protected during the breeding season, as Annex 1 species under the Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA. Tern species, and Mediterranean gulls have the same protection within the Solent and Southampton Water SPA. A potential SPA, The Solent and Dorset Coast, will cover the area used for foraging between April and September.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Breeding tern and gull colonies are potentially sensitive to the presence of walkers and dogs. This will depend on the amount of spatial separation between the colony and the people, along with the type of access management measures present.

Direct effects are possible via accidental trampling of nests and eggs. Indirect effects can occur where adult birds are disturbed off eggs or away from chicks, leaving them more vulnerable to predation or chilling.

Terns and gulls forage throughout the harbour and the open coast, returning to breeding colonies to feed adult partners or chicks. Connectivity between breeding areas and foraging areas is also potentially sensitive in that the presence of walkers/dogs in certain locations may disrupt or change normal flight routes.

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.2 Non-breeding dabbling ducks

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- Pintail;
- shoveler;
- teal; and
- wigeon.

Current conservation status and use of site by features

These dabbling duck species use a variety of habitats for feeding and roosting; including saltmarsh, open mudflats, freshwater wetlands and estuarine/marine waters.

They are widely distributed across Langstone Harbour. WeBs core count data up to 2014/15[5] (table 5) indicates that all species are most often sighted at Farlington Marshes, and Langstone RSPB Reserve. Wigeon, and shoveler are also recorded at West Hayling Island, and North Hayling Oysterbeds. Teal have been recorded in all previously listed sites, as well as regularly in Portsea Island[5]. These species are predominantly over wintering, with monthly counts at their highest between September and March.

Low tide maps generally show higher counts in the intertidal north of the harbour[6], however not all sectors are counted every year. Dabbling ducks often feed at night, either in the harbour, or on grasslands, particularly Farlington Marshes[6].

Table 5. WeBs peak high tide counts for Langstone Harbour and Chichester Harbour[5]

Species	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Five year mean of peaks
Pintail	297	530	421	338	457	315	409
Wigeon	4905	4078	3680	4884	4257	4248	4364
Shoveler	157	30	28	7	72	61	40
Teal	1986	2387	1689	1129	1962	1316	1704

WeBS Alerts[7] show that pintail are declining moderately over a short term period (5 years to 2009/10) and a long term period (up to 25 years to 2009/10), although the numbers are highly variable making interpretation difficult.

Shoveler and wigeon are both showing stable population trends after previous increases during the 1980s and 1990s.

Numbers of teal have been declining moderately over the short, medium and long terms. This is in contrast with the regional and national trends during these time periods; suggestive that the influences on this decline emanate from within the site, rather than at broader scale.

The WeBS Alerts trends described above apply to the entire SPA which includes Chichester Harbour as well as Langstone Harbour. Designated sites within the wider Solent are functionally linked, as birds are known to move between the sites. Therefore effects in one site must be considered to affect all sites.

The described WeBS Alerts trends represent the best available evidence about species' population trends at SPA level.

Sensitivities to changes in access

These species are potentially sensitive to changes in access. With a widespread distribution across different habitats, this sensitivity is generally more spread over a large area, generally being sites to the north and east of the harbour and not restricted to specific localities (although they do regularly occur in dense groups in some places especially when feeding). These species can rest on the water at times of high tide some distance from the shoreline, although they can also gather at high tide roost sites on dry land or at the edges of intertidal areas, closer to the shoreline. Feeding groups of several hundred birds will regularly gather close to the shoreline (especially during the winter months) and are sensitive to the presence of humans and dogs on the foreshore[8].

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.3 Non-breeding waders and shelduck

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- bar-tailed godwit;
- black-tailed godwit;
- curlew;
- dunlin;
- greenshank;
- grey plover;
- redshank;
- ringed plover;
- sanderling;
- shelduck; and
- turnstone.

Current conservation status and use of site by features

The current WeBS Alerts (for Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA) can be summarised as follows. Declining species are ringed plover, grey plover, dunlin, bar-tailed godwit, black-tailed godwit and shelduck. Those showing stable population trends are sanderling, curlew, and redshank[7]. Turnstone and greenshank were not evaluated via this methodology, although analysis of the core counts (table 6) up to 2014/15 suggest turnstone are generally declining, while greenshank are more stable[5].

Table 6: WeBs peak high tide counts for Langstone Harbour and Chichester Harbour[5]

Species	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Five year mean of peaks
Bar-tailed godwit	936	1072	1330	1823	487	852	1139
Black tailed godwit	1411	1531	737	926	1051	1638	1210
Curlew	3649	4708	3719	4675	3283	2589	3816
Dunlin	32509	37395	40140	45434	39376	31236	39460
Greenshank	114	188	125	118	154	111	139.2
Grey plover	2374	3153	2254	2348	2742	3330	2673
Redshank	3070	3238	3030	2857	3380	3033	3101
Ringed plover	512	781	1213	741	1080	684	849
Sanderling	226	212	314	232	232	136	229
Shelduck	1217	1478	1466	877	1089	692	1145
Turnstone	811	833	754	669	671	892	768

The WeBS Alerts trends described above apply to the entire SPA which includes Chichester Harbour as well as Langstone Harbour. Designated sites within the wider Solent are functionally linked, as birds are known to move between the sites. Therefore effects in one site must be considered to affect all sites.
The described WeBS Alerts trends represent the best available evidence about species' population trends at SPA level, although they are only relevant up to 2009/10. Intertidal mudflats host a range of invertebrates which provide the feeding resource for these wader species.

Key sites for feeding and resting have been mapped as part of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3]. These include the grazing marshes and playing fields that may not be designated, but provide essential supporting habitat. Important and uncertain sites which may interact with the proposals include The Esplanade, Eastney Beach, Fraser Range, Eastney Lake, Milton Common, Salterns Quay, Eastern Rd Bridge, Farlington Marshes, Broadmarsh, Southmoor, Langstone Bridge, West Hayling Nature Reserve, the Hayling Billy Line, the Pony Paddocks, The Kench, and Sinah Common and Beach.

These species can be present during Spring and Autumn 'passage' periods (especially ringed plover and redshank) and also through the winter. The largest wintering numbers are generally present between October and March, although numbers of ringed plover can peak in other months.

Shelduck are included in this group as a species that forages at times of low tide on exposed mudflats. Roost sites are less restricted and can include resting on the open water.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Changes in visitor behaviour in sensitive areas can potentially cause increased disturbance to feeding and/or roosting wintering or passage waterbirds using the saltmarsh, mudflats, coastal grazing marsh and fields adjoining the coast. Disturbance events (those where the presence of human activity elicits a behavioural response from birds) can increase the energetic requirements of these species via reduced feeding rates or by birds taking flight. These responses do not necessarily mean that the birds are adversely

impacted in terms of increased likelihood of mortality or reduced fitness. However, the potential for adverse impacts cannot be ruled out at this stage of the appraisal.

Recent work based on Southampton Water, which was also scaled up to whole Solent scale, investigated the relationship between disturbance and wader survival. This work produced predictions of survival rates of waders under different housing scenarios, using a population modelling methodology. Disturbance from visitors from current housing was predicted to reduce the survival of dunlin, ringed plover, oystercatcher and curlew, as compared to a 'no disturbance' scenario. Disturbance via increased housing and visitors was predicted to further reduce the survival of ringed plover and dunlin[9].

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.4 Non-breeding dark-bellied brent goose

Current conservation status and use of site by features

The current WeBS core count (counted around high tide) five year peak mean for dark-bellied brent goose shown in table 7 using Chichester and Langstone Harbours is 19,056 individuals (2010/11 to 2014/15)[5]. The geese start arriving in September, with the larger numbers present between October and March.

The population trend is stable over the short term (five years to 2009/10) and medium term (10 years to 2009/10); although a long-term decline of dark-bellied brent goose (up to 25 years to 2009/10) has occurred at Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA[7]. The trend on the site appears to be similar to that occurring regionally and nationally, suggesting some level of influence on the trend from wider-scale factors than those operating within or around the harbour.

The WeBS Alerts trends described above apply to the entire SPA which includes Chichester Harbour as well as Langstone Harbour. The described WeBS Alerts trends represent the best available evidence about species' population trends at SPA level, although they are only relevant up to 2009/10.

Table 7: WeBs peak high tide counts for Langstone Harbour and Chichester Harbour[5]

Species	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Five year mean of peaks
Dark-bellied brent goose	14673	17260	16981	18157	19060	23311	19056

The mudflats support beds of algae, especially *Ulva* species and eelgrasses *Zostera* spp which are grazed by dark-bellied brent geese, at times when the habitat is exposed. Low tide feeding distribution maps show dark-bellied brent geese have been spotted most often on the intertidal around Farlington Marshes and the northern harbour, but there are many counts in the southern intertidal particularly next to the Hayling Billy Line.

Dark-bellied brent geese also use surrounding land for feeding and maintenance behaviours such as resting and preening. Research by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust[10] mapped feeding areas and described habitats

used around Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA. A range of inland habitats are used including arable crops, recreation grounds and permanent pasture. Birds are generally site faithful. Farlington Marshes, Sinah Common, various recreational/amenity grasslands and some of the arable fields on West Hayling are all identified in this report as feeding areas.

Key sites for feeding and resting have been mapped as part of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3]. These include the grazing marshes and playing fields that may not be designated, but provide essential supporting habitat. Important and uncertain sites which may interact with the proposals include The Esplanade, Eastney Beach, Fraser Range, Eastney Lake, Milton Common, Salterns Quay, Eastern Rd Bridge, Farlington Marshes, Broadmarsh, Southmoor, Langstone Bridge, West Hayling Nature Reserve, the Hayling Billy Line, the Pony Paddocks, The Kench, and Sinah Common and Beach.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Dark-bellied brent geese are small migratory geese that spend the winter along the coasts of western Europe and breed in northern Siberia. They prefer natural and semi-natural habitats, ranging from intertidal mudflats to saltmarshes and in more recent decades they also frequent agricultural fields for foraging.

Brent geese often come into contact with human activity and their responses can be variable. On occasions, they can apparently tolerate human presence and at other times they can appear to be more wary; stopping feeding, showing alertness and taking flight. Given this variability in behavioural responses to human activity, the starting point for this appraisal is that dark-bellied brent geese have the potential to be adversely affected by any changes in access patterns in sensitive areas, during the time they are present.

Predictions about brent goose survival were made for Phase II of the Bird Aware Solent partnership work. Although a population model could not be built in the same way as it was for waders, comparisons with the wader responses and wider studies predicted that the potential for adverse disturbance-related impacts via visitors extended to both intertidal areas (albeit with lower likelihood for overlap between birds and people on muddy intertidal areas) and terrestrial feeding areas[9].

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.5 Non-breeding red-breasted merganser

Current conservation status and use of site by features

Numbers of red-breasted merganser have increased over the long-term (up to 25 years to 2009/10) although the more recent population trend across the short-term and medium term can be described as stable[7].

Table 8: WeBs peak high tide counts for Langstone Harbour and Chichester Harbour[5]

Species	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Five year mean of peaks
Red-breasted merganser	420	442	415	486	572	401	470

The highest core counts (table 8) are from Farlington Marshes, Langstone Harbour Islands, the Hayling Billy Line, and Portsea Island[5]. Low tide counts are recorded, but locations are not available.
These species generally use deeper waters for both feeding and maintenance behaviours (resting, preening) and they rarely venture on to dry land.

Sensitivities to changes in access

As a species with a more marine component to their ecology, the spatial separation between their use of the site and walkers/dogs is such that the sensitivities to a coastal path proposal are much reduced.

Red-breasted merganser are not sensitive to the proposals and are screened out of further assessment.

3.6 Subtidal/aquatic features

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- H1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time;
- H1150 Coastal lagoons;
- H1130 Estuaries; and
- S1016 Desmoulins whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana.*

Current conservation status and use of site by features

The Solent Maritime SAC is a complex site encompassing a major estuarine system on the south coast of England. The Solent and its inlets are unique in Britain and Europe for their unusual tidal regime, including double tides and long periods of tidal stand at high and low tide. As a result, the Solent Maritime SAC is a unique suite of functionally linked estuaries and dynamic marine and estuarine habitats.

The site has the largest number of small estuaries in the tightest cluster anywhere in Great Britain, with examples of coastal plain estuaries, including Langstone Harbour. It is located in one of the only major sheltered channels in Europe, lying between a substantial island (the Isle of Wight) and the mainland. Sediment habitats within the site include subtidal sandbanks.

The Solent Maritime SAC also includes two coastal lagoons but both of these are located on the Isle of Wight and so are scoped out of this assessment as implementation of this stretch of the ECP will not affect them. The Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC contains the lagoon Shut Lake, located within Farlington Marshes. Shut Lake is an isolated lagoon in marsh pasture that, although separated from the sea by a sea-wall, receives sea water during spring tides. The lagoon holds a well-developed low-medium salinity insect-

dominated fauna, providing a feeding resource for several bird species The Solent Maritime SAC also supports a population of the rare Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) but this feature is only located at the very top of Fishbourne Channel in Chichester Harbour so will not be affected by the implementation of this stretch of the ECP, and has therefore been scoped out of any further assessment in this report.

The condition of all relevant units within the Langstone Harbour SSSI has recently been downgraded to Unfavourable – no change, due to water quality issues.

Sensitivities to changes in access

These features are potentially sensitive to littering caused by increased use. Birds feeding in the lagoon may be disturbed by an increase in human interaction. Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in Part 4 of this document.

Desmoulins whorl snail does not occur in the part of the site affected by the access proposal, therefore is screened out of further assessment.

3.7 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; and
- Sheltered muddy shores (including estuarine muds).

Current conservation status and use of site by features

Sediment habitats within the site include extensive areas of intertidal mudflats and sandflats. Seagrass (*Zostera*) communities are also located in the intertidal region. These habitats host a huge number of invertebrate species, which provide a feeding resource for a number of bird species.

The condition of all intertidal units within the Langstone Harbour SSSI is either Unfavourable - recovering or Unfavourable – no change.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Mudflats and sandflat are not sensitive to being walked on occasionally having high resilience to abrasion and disturbance[11]. The sensitivity of feeding birds to the presence of people is considered in sections 3.1 to 3.5.

This feature is therefore screen out of further assessment.

3.8 Vegetated shingle

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines;
- H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks;
- SD1 – *Rumex crispus – Glaucium flavum* shingle community;
- SD2 – *Cakile maritima - Honkenya peploides* strandline community; and
- MC6 – *Atriplex prostrate – Beta vulgaris ssp.* maritime sea-bird cliff community.

Current conservation status and use of site by features

Sediment habitats within the stretch include natural shoreline transitions such as drift line vegetation. A survey of vegetated shingle[12] found that the main areas of vegetated shingle found on this stretch are located in Eastney Beach and Sinah Beach.

Vegetated shingle habitat within the Langstone Harbour SSSI is only present within unit 9, which is currently assessed as Unfavourable - recovering. In Sinah Common, both units are also assessed as Unfavourable – recovering. Eastney Beach is not within the SAC, SPA, Ramsar or SSSI designations, but as coastal vegetated shingle is a priority habitat, it is also included in this assessment.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Localised impacts could occur if changes in access lead to more frequent trampling of vegetation in sensitive areas. Increased use of an area by dog walkers could also have an impact on vegetated shingle as a result of eutrophication from dog faeces.

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.9 Saltmarsh and seagrass

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- H1310 *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand;
- H1320 *Spartina* swards (*Spartinion maritimae*);
- H1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*);
- Invertebrate assemblage (M311 saltmarsh and transitional brackish marsh);
- SM4 – *Spartina maritima;*
- SM6 – *Spartina anglica* saltmarsh;
- SM7 – *Sarcocornia perennis;*
- SM8 – Annual *Salicornia* saltmarsh;
- SM9 – *Suaeda maritime* saltmarsh;
- SM14 – *Atriplex portulacoides* saltmarsh;
- SM16a – *Festuca rubra* saltmarsh *Puccinellia maritima* sub-community;

- SM16b – *Festuca rubra* saltmarsh *Juncus gerardii* sub-community;
- SM18 – *Juncus maritimus* saltmarsh;
- SM23 – *Spergularia marina* – *Puccinellia distans* saltmarsh;
- SM24 – *Elytrigia atherica* saltmarsh; and
- M1 – *Zostera* communities

Current conservation status and use of site by features

Sediment habitats within the stretch include saltmarsh. The Solent Maritime SAC is the only site in the UK where smooth cord-grass *Spartina alterniflora* is present and is one of the only two sites where significant amounts of small cord-grass *S. maritima* are found. It is also one of the few remaining sites for Townsend's cord-grass *S. x townsendii* and holds extensive areas of common cord-grass *Spartina anglica*, all four taxa thus occurring here in close proximity. It has additional historical and scientific interest as the site where *S. alterniflora* was first recorded in the UK (1829) and where *S. x townsendii* and later, *S. anglica* first occurred. However, only *Spartina anglica* is present in Langstone Harbour.

The condition of all units where saltmarsh is present within the Langstone Harbour SSSI is either Unfavourable - recovering or Unfavourable – no change, where the main risks relate to coastal squeeze, particularly with regard to rising water levels, and water quality due to raised nutrient levels.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Established saltmarsh is generally able withstand people walking on it occasionally, having a low sensitivity to abrasion and disturbance[11] but localised damage could occur if there is repeated trampling. In areas regularly used by dogs there is a risk of eutrophication causing changes in vegetation composition. Saltmarsh features are listed within the Conservation Advice package for Solent Maritime SAC as sensitive to organic enrichment. Seagrass has a medium sensitivity to abrasion and disturbance[11] although exposure is limited by tides.

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.10 Sand dunes

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*;
- Fixed dune grassland;
- SD6 – *Ammophila arenaria* mobile dune community; and
- SD7 – *Ammophila arenaria* – *Festuca rubra* semi-fixed dune community

Current conservation status and use of site by features

On this stretch of the ECP, sand dunes occur on the open coast at Sinah Common. Two units of the Sinah Common SSSI have dune features and these are currently assessed as being in unfavourable-recovering

condition. Management actions are being undertaken to return the dunes to favourable condition.

Sensitivities to changes in access

Localised impacts could occur if changes in access lead to more frequent trampling of vegetation in sensitive areas. Dunes may also be sensitive to eutrophication from dog faeces, leading to changes in vegetation composition. Where management actions are being taken, these could be compromised by changes in access arrangements.

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are therefore considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.11 Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- MG11 *Festuca rubra – Agrostis stolonifera – Potentilla anserine* grassland
- U1a – *Festuca ovina - Agrostis capillaris – Rumex acetosella* grassland
- U1b,c,d,f – *Festuca ovina – Agrostis capillaris - Rumex*
- MG13 – *Agrostis stolonifera – Alopecurus geniculatus* grassland
- MG5 – *Cynosurus cristatus – Centaurea nigra* grassland
- S26 – *Phragmites australis – Urtica dioica* tall-herb fen
- S4 – *Phragmites australis* swamp and reed-beds

Current conservation status and use of site by features

Grazing marsh communities are present within the Farlington Marshes and Southmoor units of the Langstone Harbour SSSI. The condition of all of these units is currently Unfavourable – no chance, generally because of water quality issues.

Sensitivities to changes in access

In areas regularly used by dogs there is a risk of eutrophication causing changes in vegetation composition. A significant increase in usage by people and dogs may result in trampling.

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are therefore considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.12 Maritime grassland and dune heath

Composition of feature group

For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:

- Population of Schedule 8 plant – *Petrorhagia nanteulli*, Childing pink
- Vascular plant assemblage (*Silene nutens*, *Poa bulbous*, *Vulpia ciliate* ssp *ambigia*, *Vulpia fasciailata*, *Trifolium suffocatum*, *Hypochaeris glabra*, *Geranium purpureum*, *Carex puncata*, *Puccinella rupestris*, *Crassula tillaea*, *Medicago polymorpha*)
- H11 – *Calluna vulgaris – Carex arenaria* heath
- MC5 – *Armeria maritime – Cerastium diffusum ssp. diffusum* maritime therophyte community
- MC8 – *Festuca rubra – Armeria maritime* maritime grassland

Current conservation status and use of site by features

These features are found within the Sinah Common SSSI, which is currently described as being in Unfavourable – recovering condition.

Sensitivities to changes in access

In areas regularly used by dogs there is a risk of eutrophication causing changes in vegetation composition. A significant increase in usage by people and dogs may result in trampling.

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are therefore considered further in Part 4 of this document.

3.13 Other vegetation

Composition of feature group

Vascular plant assemblage (*Geranium purpureum forsteri*, *Trifolium squamosum*, *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, *Puccinellia fasciculata*, *Puccinellia rupestris*, *Alopecurus bulbosus*, *Polypogon monspeliensis*, *Parapholis incurva*, *Ranunculus baudotii*, *Inula crithmoides*, *Zostera marina*, *Zostera noltii*).

Current conservation status and use of site by features

These features are found within all intertidal and saltmarsh units of the Langstone Harbour SSSI, which is all but Farlington Marshes, and the Hayling Billy Line.

The most recent condition assessments describe these units as either Unfavourable – no change, or Unfavourable – recovering.

Sensitivities to changes in access

In areas regularly used by dogs there is a risk of eutrophication causing changes in vegetation composition. A significant increase in usage by people and dogs may result in trampling.

Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are therefore considered further in Part 4 of this document.

4. Potential for interaction

In this part of the document we identify places where sensitive features are present *and* whether there could, or will not, be an interaction with proposed changes in access. Where we conclude there is potential for interaction between sensitive features and our proposals for England Coast Path at a particular location, in Part 5 of this document we consider the circumstances in more detail, including current access provision, how this will be affected by our coastal access proposals, and how use of the site for recreation might change as a consequence.

Our proposals for England Coast Path have two main components:

- Identification and physical establishment of a trail; and,
- Identification of an associated coastal margin.

Trail

A continuous walking trail – the England Coast Path National Trail - will be established by joining up existing coastal routes and creating new sections of path where necessary.

Coastal Margin

An area of land associated with the proposed trail will become coastal margin, including all land seawards of the trail down to mean low water. The full extent of the coastal margin along this section of coast is shown on map A of the Overview.

Coastal margin is typically subject to new coastal access rights, though there are some obvious exceptions to this. The nature and limitations of the new rights, and the key types of land excepted from them, are explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of our Coastal Access Scheme[1]. Where there are already public or local rights to do other things, these are normally unaffected and will continue to exist in parallel to the new coastal access rights. The exception to this principle is any pre-existing open access rights under Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) over land falling within the coastal margin: the new coastal access rights will apply in place of these.

Where public access on foot already takes place on land within the margin without any legal right for people to use the land in this way, the new coastal access rights will secure this existing use legally. Access secured in this way is subject to various national restrictions. It remains open to the owner of the land, should they wish, to continue tolerating other types of established public use not provided for by coastal access rights.

Natural England has powers that mean that we can, where necessary, impose local restrictions or exclusions on the new coastal access rights on grounds set out in the legislation. Such restrictions or exclusions do not apply to public rights of way, or to other types of pre-existing access right other than CROW rights (see above).

4.1 Criteria for assessment

We have designed our proposals for England Coast Path around the Solent to complement the Bird Aware Solent initiative. The main way that our proposal will influence patterns and levels of recreational visits along this stretch is by the alignment we choose for the path. Where possible, we propose to align the England Coast Path along existing, regularly used routes. The benefits of this for managing visitor access are:

- Paths will be maintained to National Trail quality standard[i]
- Providing a high quality access route is a tried and tested technique for managing use of a site by visitors
- Altering existing access routes - or imposing new limitation on access - could cause displacement of existing use to more sensitive locations. This risk is reduced by adopting established routes.

People and birds in close proximity is a recognised feature of the Solent coast. We have also considered whether there is a risk of an impact on non-breeding waterbirds from increased use of established, regularly used paths. We know that routes like the Hayling Billy and Langstone Harbour Walk, in places pass close to areas that are used by feeding and resting waterbirds, including Dark-bellied Brent geese and waders. There are several factors to consider:

- the degree to which use of the path might increase
- how those new users might behave
- whether any change in use might interfere with birds use of adjacent habitat
- whether this might have an adverse impact on those SPA features

We know that at popular and easily accessible locations, the majority of visits to a National Trails are made by people that live or are staying nearby. A survey of visitors to National Trails carried out in 2014 found that 74% of visitors interviewed on a National Trail were either local residents or visitors staying nearby[14] Similarly, local visitor and household surveys for the Solent area have established that the main determining factor for the pattern and level of visits to coastal locations is proximity to where people live and convenience. Across the Solent area, it was found that just over half (52%) of visitors travel by car and that half of these journeys are less than 9.5km. 39% of visits were made by foot and half of these visitors lived within 1km of the site[15].

Another important consideration is whether the behaviour of people using the path might be altered by our proposals. The risk of an impact on wildfowl could be increased if our proposals were to cause a change that led people's behaviour whilst visiting to be more disturbing, for example people leaving the path and walking through places where feeding birds are present. We believe that this is unlikely to happen where we adopt an existing, regularly used path because in this situation, any new visitors attracted by the England Coast Path designation are likely to be first time or infrequent visitors that have come to the area intent on walking the Coast Path and following the waymarked trail provided. This trail will, in many areas, be better waymarked than is currently the case, making it even easier to stick to the path.

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[i] This means:

- Structures are always safe, comfortable, easy and convenient to use
- Surfaces are in good condition and appropriate to the geology and soils over which the trail passes
- The route is easy to follow with consistent, accurate, unobtrusive way marking and destination signage
- Consistent high quality design, style and use of materials to suit the character of the local landscape with historical features maintained where possible
- Readily passable routes free from undergrowth and overhanging vegetation

(Extract from the National Trail Quality Standards[13])

Where England Coast Path follows an existing route, it is reasonable to assume that any increase in disturbance to birds using surrounding habitat will be limited to an extent, or in some cases avoided, by some or all of the following considerations: birds in that location are already accustomed to some disturbance and may be de-sensitised to some degree and the ECP trail improvements, way-marking, signage and in some cases, screening, will encourage many users (and particularly new visitors) to stick to the path where they are less likely to generate disturbance.

We have not applied a hard and fast rule to defining when a path is established and regularly used. As a guide, in the context of the Solent, we have considered paths to be 'established' where routes are publicised locally, paths have been clearly surfaced, and/or there is regular signposting/waymarking; and to be 'regularly used' based on the advice of local site managers and consultation with Bird Aware Solent. Where the information is not available or there is doubt about the level of current use, we have erred on the site of caution.

In addition, where the level of risk is greater we have gone on to make a more detailed assessment in Part 5 of the document. We have done this in situations where an existing route passes close to a sensitive area and:

- The existing route is in poor condition as an access route and is not regularly used; our proposals would substantially enhance the route and make it available to wider use and in a place where it could interact.
- That area has been identified as a target for action or there are already management measures in place.

4.2 Old Portsmouth to Eastney

Outline of changes in access
The route passes through a built up area and uses existing surfaced paths including a seafront promenade at Southsea. Our proposed route follows that of the existing Solent Way for all of this section. No improvements to the route are proposed. Existing signage and waymarking will be retained. Etched paving will be added to the existing Millennium Promenade chain motif during sea defence upgrades, to show that the route is part of the England Coast Path. The coastal margin along this section of the route comprises a shingle beach that is currently readily accessed from the seafront.
Potential for interaction (or lack of it)
Southsea is a popular destination for visitors and there are many public facilities along this section of coast, including parking, toilets, amenities and other attractions. Our proposals for the England Coast Path involve minimal changes and we do not expect there will be a noticeable difference in the overall level or pattern of access as a result of our proposals. Therefore, we have concluded that there will be no likely significant effect from the ECP access proposal on the nature conservation features identified in Part 3 within this section of the path.

4.3 Eastney to Langstone

Outline of changes in access

The route generally follows a combination of the Solent Way and the Langstone Harbour Waterside Walk which are well-marked and well used routes. On these sections, we will retain existing surfacing and waymarking, adding extra signage to reduce any potential for straying from the route. The route will be maintained to the National Trail standard. Most of the seaward margin consists of a narrow strip of shingle easily accessible in several locations. Within the harbour, this shingle gives way to an extensive mudflat.

We have identified some specific locations where the above is not accurate, and these are listed below:

Eastney Beach

We propose to formalise the existing walked route along the grassy top of Eastney Beach, along the fence line of the holiday village. The coastal margin comprises a shingle beach that is currently accessible from the road.

Fraser Range and Fort Cumberland

We propose to create a new link route for walkers, seaward of the derelict Fraser Range site. The fencing will be moved inland to allow access along the top of the seawall, creating a coastal route from Eastney seawards of Fort Cumberland, using Southern Water's redeveloped sea defences. It will then rejoin the currently accessible shingle beach leading to the Langstone Channel, past the public slipway to the Hayling Ferry terminal at Eastney Point where it rejoins a public highway.

The coastal margin along this length of the route comprises of a narrow area of shingle below the sea wall that is currently accessible from the adjacent beaches at low water.

Eastney Lake

We propose that the ordinary route of the trail will follow the existing route around the shore of Eastney Lake promoted by the Langstone Harbour Board. At high tides, when this route is unavailable, we propose an optional alternative route around the back of adjoining residential properties.

Eastney Lake, as part of the wider Langstone Harbour intertidal mudflat, will become part of the coastal margin. It is currently accessible from existing paths at low tide.

Southmoor

The sea wall is in poor condition at Southmoor and the area has been identified for potential managed realignment of the sea defences. Our proposed England Coast Path alignment splits from the existing Solent Way that follows the sea wall, diverting inland along a permissive path, and a public right of way.

Parts of Southmoor will be included in the coastal margin. There is current access along the existing sea wall (Solent Way), however the land parcel north of the sea wall is owned privately, and fenced off.

Langstone Harbour intertidal area and RSPB islands

Note that changes in access affecting the intertidal mud and shingle islands of Langstone Harbour are

considered further in Section 4.4.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

There is potential for interaction between the access proposal and the nature conservation features identified in Part 3 at the following locations. Therefore, these sections are assessed further in Part 5 of this document.

- **Eastney Beach –** potential for interaction with non-breeding waders and shelduck (in winter), and vegetated shingle – see 5.1
- **Fraser Range and Fort Cumberland** – potential for interaction with breeding terns and gulls (in summer - while foraging), potential for interaction with non-breeding dark bellied brent goose (in winter), and non-breeding waders and shelduck (in winter) – see 5.2
- **Eastney Lake** – potential for interaction with non-breeding dark bellied brent goose (in winter), non-breeding waders and shelduck (in winter), non-breeding dabbling ducks (in winter), saltmarsh, and other vegetation – see 5.3
- **Southmoor** – potential for interaction with non-breeding dark bellied brent goose (in winter); non-breeding waders and shelduck (in winter), coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, and other vegetation – see 5.4

The remainder of this chapter has been screened out from further assessment. We will be adopting existing routes and do not require any improvements or alterations to the route. These areas are already well promoted locally, therefore we don't expect a noticeable change in local levels and patterns of use. There could be a small overall increase in people using the route due to its status as a National Trail, thereby attracting walkers from further afield. We consider that the route is already well managed and that the existing measures (clear waymarking, and well-maintained paths) are working.

See also potential for interaction with Langstone Harbour intertidal area and RSPB islands in part 4.4 below.

4.4 Langstone to South Hayling

Outline of changes in access

The route generally follows the Langstone Harbour Waterside Walk which is a well-marked and well used route. On these sections, we will retain existing surfacing and waymarking, adding extra signage to reduce any potential for straying from the route. The route will be maintained to the National Trail standard. Most access to the coastal margin is limited by a combination of fencing and vegetation. Within the harbour, the margin is predominantly mudflat.

We have identified some specific locations where the above is not accurate, and these are listed below:

<u>West Hayling Local Nature Reserve</u>
Our proposed alignment for the England Coast Path enters the West Hayling Local Nature Reserve, using the existing route of the Langstone Harbour Waterside Walk.

The shingle ridges of the old Oysterbeds within the West Hayling Local Nature Reserve that are connected to the mainland will be seaward of the trail and part of the coastal margin. There is currently good access to the reserve from an established trail branching off from the Hayling Billy Line.

The Kench Local Nature Reserve

Our proposed alignment for the trail is along Ferry Road. The Kench Local Nature Reserve will be seaward of the trail and part of the coastal margin. The intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh will be excluded from the ECP proposal. The Kench, a Local Nature Reserve, is well used, and easily accessed from points on Ferry Road.

Sinah Common and Beach

Our proposed alignment south from the Hayling Ferry terminal is past the car park and on to the shingle following the line of the fencing, seaward of the dunes and golf club. At West Town the route will go around the seaward edge of the car park, landward of the beach huts, then on to the grass next to the steam railway line, up to the boundary of the SSSI.

The seaward margin along this section of the route comprises shingle foreshore that is currently accessible from car parks and the seafront. The dunes are one of the default landward margin categories listed within the Coastal Access Approved Scheme, therefore will form part of the margin. These dunes are currently fenced off from public access.

Langstone Harbour intertidal areas and RSPB islands

Note that changes in access affecting the intertidal mud and shingle islands of Langstone Harbour are considered further in Section 4.4.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

There is potential for interaction between the access proposal and the nature conservation features identified in Part 3 at the following locations. Therefore, these sections are assessed further in Part 5 of this document.

- **West Hayling Nature Reserve** – potential for interaction with breeding terns and gulls, non-breeding dabbling ducks (in winter), non-breeding waders and shelduck (in winter), non-breeding dark bellied brent goose (in winter), vegetated shingle, and other vegetation – see 5.5
- **The Kench –** potential for interaction with non-breeding waders and shelduck (in winter), non-breeding dark bellied brent geese (in winter), vegetated shingle, and other vegetation – see 5.6.
- **Sinah Common** – potential for interaction with non-breeding waders and shelduck (in winter), non-breeding dark bellied brent geese (in winter), sand dunes, vegetated shingle, and maritime and dune heath grassland – see 5.7.

The remainder of this chapter has been screened out from further assessment. We will be adopting existing routes and do not require any improvements or alterations to the route. These areas are already well promoted locally, therefore we don't expect a noticeable change in local levels and patterns of use. There could be a small overall increase in people using the route due to its status as a National Trail, thereby attracting walkers from further afield. We consider that the route is already well managed and that the existing measures (clear waymarking, and well-maintained paths) are working.

See also potential for interaction with Langstone Harbour intertidal areas and RSPB islands in 4.4 below.

4.5 Langstone Harbour intertidal areas

Outline of changes in access

Mudflats and saltmarsh

The saltmarsh and mudflats of Langstone Harbour will become part of the coastal margin. Our proposed route for the England Coast Path around the Harbour uses existing paths and no new means of access to the intertidal will be created. Most of the intertidal area is dangerous to walk on and therefore unsuitable for public. In many places there are existing physical barriers such as rock armour or channels that make access from the ECP to the intertidal difficult. We propose to exclude access to the mudflats and saltmarshes as shown on Map D of the Overview, under S25A. Signage will be installed at the main possible access points to the intertidal to warn people about the dangers of walking on the mudflats. Where there are existing rights to use the intertidal area, they are unaffected by our proposals.

RSPB Islands and New Milton Fishery

North Binness and Long Island are connected to the east of Farlington Marshes at low tide. Islands are automatically included in the coastal margin under s300 of the MCA Act if it is possible to walk to the island from the mainland of England, or from another "accessible" island. We consider that the mudflats are unsuitable for public access and accordingly we will propose to exclude access to the mudflats and saltmarshes using a CROW S25A direction. For the purposes of 2009/s300, it is deemed not "possible to walk to" an island across the foreshore if we consider the whole of the relevant area of foreshore unsuitable for access, and because of this North Binness Island and Long Island do not form part of the coastal margin. South Binness and Bakers Island are separated from the shore at low tide by channels, and are therefore not included within the coastal margin.

New Milton Fishery is connected to the south of Farlington Marshes at low tide. For the same reasons as North Binness and Long Island, outlined above, New Milton Fishery does not form part of the coastal margin.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

The mudflats that are generally accessible from land will be excluded from the proposals. There is existing information in various key sites (West Hayling Nature Reserve, Farlington Marshes) to inform people about the wildlife interest alongside the route. Impacts on birds foraging on the mudflats adjacent to the trail are considered in Section 5.Because of the exclusion, we do not expect any change in use of the mudflats. This site is screened out of further assessment

The RSPB islands and New Milton Fishery are accessed infrequently, but as highly sensitive sites, any access is unwelcome. We are not proposing any new access, therefore there is no potential for interaction. These sites are screened out of further assessment.

5. Assessment of impact-risk and incorporated mitigation measures

In this part of the document we look in more detail at sections of coast where there could be an interaction between the access proposal and sensitive features. We discuss possible risks to sensitive features and explain how these have shaped the design of our proposals and/or led to the inclusion of any specific mitigation measures.

5.1 Eastney Beach

5.1.1 Environmental sensitivity

The beach at Eastney is shingle, with site visits (conducted as part of determination of the ECP alignment) confirming the presence of shingle vegetation, supported by the Solent Vegetation Survey[12] which lists Eastney as an important area for this habitat type.

The Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3] refers to Eastney beach (site reference P78) as 'uncertain' for brent geese, and 'important' for waders. The count data within the report indicates the site is used for roosting by several waders, including up to 400 dunlin, and 131 ringed plover. These species are predominantly overwintering birds.

5.1.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

The beach is a continuation of Portsea Island's southern shoreline, accessible to the public from the adjacent highway and routinely used for general recreation purposes. Existing interpretation panels provide information about vegetated shingle. An existing path, which has been adopted by the ECP proposals, runs along the grassy northern end of the beach, but is not signposted.

5.1.3 Access proposal

Trail

We propose to use the grassy landward edge of the beach, an existing walked route. England Coast Path plaques will be added to new and existing waymark posts.

Coastal Margin

Public access to the shingle will be secured by our proposals.

5.1.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

Trail – small increase

Local residents will continue to be the main users of Eastney Beach. This use will not be affected by our proposals. Overall, there may be a small increase in the level of use, as a result of its becoming part of the England Coast Path and attracting walkers from further afield, as outlined in Part 4.2.

Coastal margin – negligible change

The beach is currently accessible; however the trail provides an easier surface for walking therefore we would expect users to use the waymarked trail, and not go on to the beach any more than they already do.

5.1.5 Possible risks to sensitive features

We expect any increase in the use of this area to be limited to the trail, therefore expect minimal impact to sensitive birds, or shingle vegetation.

5.1.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal and how they address the possible risks

Existing interpretation explains the value of the vegetated shingle. We don't believe any additional mitigation is needed in this instance because our proposals will enhance the existing access management (through better waymarking) and there is minimal risk to sensitive features. However, the site presents an opportunity for the ECP to provide further interpretation, in collaboration with Bird Aware Solent, to ensure a joined up message about the bird use of the site.
Maintaining the proposed route to National Trail standards, with clear signposting and waymarking will also encourage users to remain on the preferred path.

5.1.7 Conclusion

Taking account of proposed mitigation measures, we consider that the risk of our proposals having an impact on sensitive features at this location are minimal. Non-significant effects are considered further in Part 6.

5.2 Fraser Range and Fort Cumberland

5.2.1 Environmental sensitivity

Fraser Range is a disused military site, which is in the process of being sold for private redevelopment into housing.

The Solent Estuaries Breeding Tern Report[4] identifies the marine area adjacent to Fraser Range as a foraging site for breeding terns. The Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3] lists a site next to Fort Cumberland (site reference P178) as 'uncertain' for brent geese, and for waders. It is not clear how the birds use the site, although it is a grassland site, so this is likely to be feeding and roosting. This site is landward of our proposals

There is no WeBs data available, as the site is outside of the SPA/Ramsar designated wetland. However a survey carried out by Southern Water[16] noted that waterbirds use the adjacent harbour for feeding. There was no use by waterbirds recorded for the sea wall or shingle.

5.2.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

Approximately 150 m of the seawall at Fraser Range is fenced off, so it is not possible to walk continuously seaward of the site, except at low tide when the shingle is exposed. It is the intention of the developers to open the seawall to public access. The part of the seawall west of the fencing is used informally by naturists. Site reference P178 (of the Solent Brent Goose and Waders Strategy[3]) is landward of the proposed margin, and fenced off from public access, as it is part of the Southern Water site.

5.2.3 Access proposal

Trail

We propose new access seaward of Fraser Range, so that the route of the trail will follow the seawall. We have agreed with the owners to relocate the fencing approximately 5 meters landward to make room for the ECP. England Coast Path plaques will be added to new safety fencing along the bank of the seawall.

Coastal Margin

Public access to the shingle will be secured by our proposals.

5.2.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

Trail – large increase

We expect a large increase in the level of use of the seawall as a result of its offering a continuous coastal route around the Eastney peninsula. The route along the seawall will have been previously inaccessible to local residents, who are more likely to walk with dogs. Part of this increase will be a result of becoming part of the England Coast Path and attracting walkers from further afield, as outlined in Part 4.2.

Coastal margin – negligible change

The intertidal area is currently accessible from the beach, however the trail will offer a safer and more convenient alternative at all times, so access will probably decrease.

5.2.5 Possible risks to sensitive features

Increased use of the seawall could interrupt terns foraging in the harbour mouth. However the Fort Cumberland Coastal Defence Renewal Scheme report states that terns did not exhibit disturbance behaviour, even when flying close to the shore[16]. The site described within the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy is fenced off, and landward of our proposed coastal margin.

5.2.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal and how they address the possible risks

No additional mitigation measures are required.

5.2.7 Conclusion

We consider that the risk of our proposals having an impact on sensitive features at this location are minimal. Non-significant effects are considered further in Part 6.

5.3 Eastney Lake

5.3.1 Environmental sensitivity

Eastney Lake is a small area of intertidal saltmarsh and mud. At times when the mud is exposed, it is used by non-breeding waders, and dark bellied brent geese for feeding.

The Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3] identifies two shingle areas within the lake. Site P103 is listed as 'uncertain' for brent geese, and for waders, while P82 is listed as 'uncertain' for use by brent geese

and 'important' for waders. P82, known locally as 'The Glory Hole' is used by a number of waders for both roosting and feeding, including up to 66 redshank. These species are predominantly overwintering birds.

5.3.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

Eastney Lake is in a built up area and the route around the shore is a popular walk for local residents. The route is promoted by the Langstone Harbour Board and is signposted and waymarked, and described online as part of the Langstone Harbour Waterside Walk. Large sections of the route are covered at high tides, and as intertidal, the surface can be difficult to walk on even at low water. As with the rest of the Langstone Harbour mudflats, access to most of the intertidal area is limited, because the soft mud makes it difficult to walk there. The area is sometimes used by bait diggers, accessing the intertidal from the existing paths. Around the fringes of Eastney Lake there are small areas of saltmarsh where the ground is generally firm and worn paths exist. There are existing signs requesting that dogs should be kept on a lead.

5.3.3 Access proposal

Trail

We propose that the ordinary route of the trail will follow the existing route around the shore of Eastney Lake promoted by the Langstone Harbour Board. At high tides, when this route is unavailable, we propose an optional alternative route using the existing Solent Way. England Coast Path plaques will be added to existing fingerposts. An information board will be installed at either end of the lakeside walk, where the optional alternative route meets the ordinary route of the trail. We are not proposing any new infrastructure to facilitate easier access to the intertidal mudflats.

Coastal Margin

The mudflats and saltmarsh will become part of the coastal margin, however; no new access rights will be created as we consider the area is unsuitable for public access (see map E of the Overview). Information about the dangers of walking on the intertidal mudflats will be included on the information boards, reinstating that there are no new access rights.

5.3.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

Trail – small increase

Local residents will continue to be the main users of the Langstone Harbour Waterside Walk. This use will not be affected by our proposals. Overall, there may be a small increase in the level of use, as a result of its becoming part of the England Coast Path and attracting walkers from further afield, as outlined in Part 4.2. Improved signage will encourage people to use the inland route at high tides.

Coastal margin – negligible change

The intertidal area is readily accessed from the existing path. Established local use of the intertidal area, for example by bait diggers, will probably not be affected by our proposals. Casual use of the area by walkers, particularly by new or occasional visitors, is likely to be discouraged by the new signage and information proposed highlighting the dangers of walking on the intertidal area.

5.3.5 Possible risks to sensitive features

Increased use of trail could interrupt birds feeding in the immediately adjacent intertidal. The path is already popular and there are some existing measures to manage visitors, including encouraging people to

keep their dogs on a lead at sensitive times. Our proposals will complement these existing measures by (a) improving the waymarking of the path and encouraging people to stick to it, (b) highlighting the dangers of walking on the intertidal mud and not creating any new access rights, and (c) providing a clearly marked alternative route at high tide. These measures will enhance management of access at this location and minimise the risk of an impact.

5.3.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal and how they address the possible risks

The following measures will be included in our proposals to help manage visitors to Eastney Lake:

- Additional information will be added to the new information boards we propose to install (see 5.3.3), explaining about the wildlife interest and need to minimise disturbance at sensitive times, including encouraging dog walkers to keep dogs on leads.
- Maintaining the proposed route to National Trail standards, with clear signposting and waymarking, will also encourage users to remain on the preferred path.

5.3.7 Conclusion

Taking account of the proposed mitigation measures, we consider that the risk of our proposals having an impact on sensitive features at this location are minimal. Non-significant effects are considered further in Part 6.

5.4 Southmoor

5.4.1 Environmental sensitivity

The entirety of the Southmoor (H28A-C, H29, H90) is listed as either 'important' or 'uncertain' for brent geese and for waders, within the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3]. These species are predominantly overwintering birds, using the site as for feeding and resting.

Southmoor is one of the two locations for coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, within the Langstone Harbour SSSI. These types of vegetation are vulnerable to potential eutrophication, from increased dog fouling, and by trampling in extreme cases.

5.4.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

The Solent Way crosses Southmoor via the seawall. This is in poor condition, and there no plans for it to be repaired. There are alternative existing routes through Southmoor including combination of a well surfaced, well-screened, and clearly signposted public right of way, and de facto route. This inland route is not currently as well used as the seawall, however we expect it becoming used more frequently as the condition of the seawall deteriorates.

5.4.3 Access proposal

<u>Trail</u>

Our proposed alignment for the England Coast Path diverts from the Solent Way, using the combination of an existing de facto route, and a public right of way, which provide a safer, long-term route.

Margin

The southern fields of Southmoor, seaward of the trail, will become part of the coastal margin. These are currently fenced off and privately managed, not accessed by the public The northern fields are not separated from the trail, however they are not included within the landward margin.

5.4.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

Trail – small increase

Local residents will continue to be the main users of the paths in this area. This use will not be affected by our proposals. Overall, there may be a small increase in the level of use, as a result of its becoming part of the England Coast Path and attracting walkers from further afield, as outlined in Part 4.2.

Margin – negligible increase

The existing Solent Way will remain open, and an option for users as long as it is in suitable condition. The fields are fenced off from both the Solent Way, and the proposed ECP trail.

5.4.5 Possible risks to sensitive features

A small increase in access as a result of the trail on an already well used site, is unlikely to affect roosting birds. Walkers and dogs using an existing public right of way are unlikely to cause damage to sensitive vegetation. Access to the margin is limited by existing management (fencing).

5.4.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal and how they address the possible risks

Maintaining the proposed route to National Trail standards, with clear signposting and waymarking will also encourage users to remain on the preferred path.

5.4.7 Conclusion

Taking account of the proposed mitigation measures, we consider that the risk of our proposals having an impact on sensitive features at this location are minimal. Non-significant effects are considered further in Part 6.

5.5 West Hayling Nature Reserve

5.5.1 Environmental sensitivity

West Hayling Nature Reserve is the site of old oysterbeds, consisting of shingle ridges, saline lagoon, and mudflats. The entirety of the shingle ridges (H73A-B) are listed as either 'important' or 'uncertain' for brent geese and waders, within the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3]. These species are predominantly overwintering birds, using the site as a high tide roost. The Solent Estuaries Breeding Tern Report[4] identifies the shingle 'islands' within the site as vital nesting grounds for breeding terns during summer. The intertidal sectors adjacent to West Hayling Nature Reserve, account for WeBs low tide counts for many bird species in Langstone Harbour[5] though it is not clear exactly how far from shore these sightings were. The Langstone Harbour SSSI Favourable Condition Table lists the West Hayling (Oysterbeds) unit of the SSSI as hosting vegetated shingle features.

5.5.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

The site is a local nature reserve, owned by Hampshire County Council, and managed by the RSPB. The site is used by local people as an area for recreation, particularly dog walking, and ornithology. RSPB work within the summer months to protect the shingle ridges used for nesting, which are somewhat protected at high tide. Although most users stick to trails, the existing use by dog walkers is considered a problem, as off-lead dogs have been seen running close to the shingle ridges. Parking is available a short walk away both to the north and south.

5.5.3 Access proposal

Trail

Our proposed alignment is to follow the existing Langstone Harbour Waterside Walk along the West Hayling Nature Reserve shoreline.

Margin

The shingle ridges are connected to the land on the west of Hayling. For the same reasons as North Binness, Long Island, and New Milton Fishery, outlined in part 4.5 above, the shingle ridges do not form part of the coastal margin.

5.5.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

Trail – small increase

Local residents and bird watchers will continue to be the main users of the path. This use will not be affected by our proposals. Overall, there may be a small increase in the level of use, as a result of its becoming part of the England Coast Path and attracting walkers from further afield, as outlined in Part 4.2.

Margin – negligible increase

Public access to the margin will be secured, the main users being bird-watchers and dog walkers. As described above, we do not propose to include the shingle ridges in the coastal margin, and therefore would not expect any increase in use.

5.5.5 Possible risks to sensitive features

A small increase in access as a result of the trail on an already well used site is unlikely to affect nesting and roosting birds. Some increase in use of the promoted route is unlikely to have any impact on sensitive features. Our main concern has been not to undermine existing management across the site and particularly to minimise disturbance to use of the shingle ridges. We believe that our proposals will help to reinforce current arrangements by providing a clearly defined path, and context for the choice of alignment in the form of interpretation.

5.5.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal and how they address the possible risks

The following measures will be included in our proposals to help manage visitors to the West Hayling Local Nature Reserve:

- New information boards will be installed with interpretation, in collaboration with Bird Aware Solent, to ensure a joined up message to visitors about the site, its sensitive wildlife, and the restrictions to access on the intertidal.

- New year-round guide fencing at the landward edge of the shingle spits to make it clear that the shingle banks are not part of the ECP and guide walkers away from these sensitive areas.
- Maintaining the proposed route to National Trail standards, with clear signposting and waymarking will also encourage users to remain on the preferred path.

5.5.7 Conclusion

Taking account of proposed mitigation measures, we consider that the risk of our proposals having an impact on sensitive features at this location are minimal. Non-significant effects are considered further in Part 6.

5.6 The Kench

5.6.1 Environmental sensitivity

The entirety of The Kench (H83-H85) is listed as either 'important' or 'uncertain' for brent geese and waders, within the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy[3]. These species are predominantly overwintering birds, using the site as a high tide roost.

The Kench is significant for its saltmarsh features, although these will be excluded from the ECP proposals due to the S25A restriction. The site's shingle vegetation would not be excluded, and would be sensitive to extreme increases in trampling. Eutrophication from dog fouling is a further risk.

5.6.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

The Kench is a Local Nature Reserve, and attracts local residents, and nature enthusiasts. There is path leading from Ferry Rd through the reserve, to the coast. There are existing interpretation panels describing the significance of the site, and its sensitive features.

5.6.3 Access proposal

Trail

Our proposed alignment for the England Coast Path follows the Langstone Harbour Waterside Walk along the public highway of Ferry Rd, not entering The Kench.

Margin

The Kench will become part of the coastal margin. The saltmarsh and mudflats that make up much of the reserve will be excluded from the margin by the S25A restriction.

5.6.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

Trail – small increase

Local residents and bird watchers will continue to be the main users of the path. This use will not be affected by our proposals. Overall, there may be a small increase in the level of use, as a result of its becoming part of the England Coast Path and attracting walkers from further afield, as outlined in Part 4.2.

Margin – negligible increase

The existing route into the Local Nature Reserve will remain open for use, therefore we expect existing

patterns of local use to remain unchanged. Waymarking will direct walkers along the proposed route, although it is possible that a few will explore the reserve.

5.6.5 Possible risks to sensitive features

A small increase in access as a result of the trail on a public highway is unlikely to affect roosting birds, and will be well away from any shingle vegetation. Although increased use of the margin is likely to be very small, the site's importance means that any increase could significantly disturb birds. We believe the existing interpretation should provide sufficient mitigation for this level of increased usage.

5.6.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal and how they address the possible risks

Maintaining the proposed route to National Trail standards, with clear signposting and waymarking will also encourage users to remain on the preferred path.

5.6.7 Conclusion

Taking account of proposed mitigation measures, we consider that the risk of our proposals having an impact on sensitive features at this location are minimal. Non-significant effects are considered further in Part 6.

5.7 Sinah Common and Beach

5.7.1 Environmental sensitivity

Sinah Common (site reference H30) is listed as 'uncertain' for brent geese and for waders within the Solent Waders and Brent Geese Strategy[3]. Sinah Common is also the site of notified dune features and maritime grassland. The upper beach is a major site for vegetated shingle, as described in the Solent Vegetation Survey[12].

5.7.2 Current access provisions and use of site for recreation

The Common itself is fenced off, and forms the Hayling Golf Club course, so is not accessed by the public. The popularity of South Hayling with visitors means that an open coast site such as Sinah beach is a draw for locals and day visitors. Restrictions are in place between May and September along the length of the beach, requesting dogs be kept on leads, or off the beach entirely in some areas. There are large car parks east and west of the beach, along with other facilities. South Hayling is particularly noted for recreation activities including windsurfing and kitesurfing.

The part of the dune seaward of the golf course fencing, has a perimeter of temporary fencing as part of a regeneration plan, although the fencing in some areas is in disrepair. On occasion, people have been observed by Havant Borough Council staff to breach the temporary fencing.

5.7.3 Access proposal

<u>Trail</u>

The proposal follows the golf course fence line, where there is, for the most part an established trail,

avoiding the shingle beach. At the eastern extent of the Common, the proposed trail routes landward of the beach huts, to provide screening, and to route users away from the shingle.

Margin

Sinah Beach would fall into the coastal margin. Dunes are defined within the Coastal Access Approved Scheme as a default landward margin type, which means they are included within the margin. However, in practice these dunes are fenced off from public access.

5.7.4 Predicted change in use of site for recreation

Trail – small increase

Local residents and day visitors to South Hayling will continue to be the main users of this section of trail.. Overall, there may be a small increase in the level of use, as a result of its becoming part of the England Coast Path and attracting walkers from further afield, as outlined in Part 4.2.

Margin – negligible increase

Access to the margin will be secured, however the proposed trail will provide an easier walked surface than the shingle within the margin.

5.7.5 Possible risks to sensitive features

We have chosen to route along the fence, which is an established grass path, rather than the shingle. It is likely that some local users will continue to access the vegetated shingle, however improvements in definition of the trail will likely benefit local, and new users. We do not anticipate any impacts to bird features, as there will be no new access to sensitive areas, including site reference H30 of the SWBGS.

5.7.6 Any mitigation measures included in the access proposal and how they address the possible risks

The following measures will be included in our proposals to help manage visitors to Sinah Common:

- New information boards will be installed with interpretation, in collaboration with the local council, to ensure a joined up message to visitors about the site, and sensitive wildlife and habitats.
- Dune fencing will be reinforced to prevent further breaches.
- A series of guide posts will be installed adjacent to the trail as an informal barrier to keep users on the proposed route.
- Maintaining the proposed route to National Trail standards, with clear signposting and waymarking will also encourage users to remain on the preferred path.

5.7.7 Conclusion

Taking account of proposed mitigation measures, we consider that the risk of our proposals having an impact on sensitive features at this location are minimal. Non-significant effects are considered further in Part 6.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Overall conclusion –Natura 2000 (European) sites

6.1.1 Likelihood of significant effects alone on sensitive features

In this section of the document, we present our conclusions about the likelihood of significant effects alone on sensitive features. We consider each of the qualifying features, or feature groups that include qualifying features, in turn. A complete list of the qualifying features of the European sites involved and explanation of how we have grouped them for purposes of this assessment see Table 2.4 and Part 3 of this document.

Our conclusions draw on the evidence and analysis presented earlier in the document, and take account of any modifications to our proposal described in Part 5. There is a degree of judgement involved in reaching this conclusion, and for some features it is not possible to entirely rule out that our proposals for the Coast Path could cause an effect. The nature of any leftover risks are described in the conclusion column of the Table below and these risks are further considered as part of the in-combination assessment in Section 6.1.2.

Feature - or feature group	**Conclusion**
Breeding terns and gulls (common tern, little tern, roseate tern, sandwich tern, and Mediterranean gull)	The following non-significant effect associated with the access proposal needs to be further considered alongside possible non-significant effects from other live plans or projects: possible small increase in disturbance to breeding and foraging birds.
Non-breeding dabbling ducks (pintail, shoveler, wigeon, teal)	The following non-significant effect associated with the access proposal needs to be further considered alongside possible non-significant effects from other live plans or projects: possible small increase in disturbance to feeding or roosting waterbirds.
Non-breeding waders and shelduck (bar-tailed godwit, black-tailed godwit, curlew, dunlin, greenshank, grey plover, redshank, ringed plover, sanderling, shelduck, and turnstone)	The following non-significant effect associated with the access proposal needs to be further considered alongside possible non-significant effects from other live plans or projects: possible small increase in disturbance to feeding or roosting waterbirds.
Non-breeding dark-bellied brent goose	The following non-significant effect associated with the access proposal needs to be further considered alongside possible non-significant effects from other live plans or projects: possible small increase in disturbance to feeding or roosting waterbirds.
Non-breeding red-breasted merganser	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
Subtidal/aquatic features (H1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time,	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.

H1150 Coastal lagoons, H1130 Estuaries, and S1016 Desmoulins whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*)	
H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
Vegetated shingle (H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines, and H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks)	The following non-significant effect associated with the access proposal needs to be further considered alongside possible non-significant effects from other live plans or projects: possible small increase in trampling damage.
Saltmarsh (H1310 *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand, H1320 *Spartina* swards (*Spartinion maritimae*), H1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.
H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) have been identified.

6.1.2 Likelihood of significant effects in combination on sensitive features

Table A - Other qualifying plans or projects

Competent Authority	Plan or project	Description
Portsmouth City Council/Marine Management Organisation	Eastney seawall upgrade	Work commenced in March 2017 to upgrade sea defences on a stretch of what will become the England Coast Path. Consent was given on the basis that work would be completed during non-sensitive periods. There are no significant effects anticipated during operation.
Portsmouth City Council/Marine Management Organisation	Southsea seafront upgrade	It is unlikely that a change in use will result, though this is difficult to predict accurately, as the plans are at an early stage. Habitats Regulation Assessment screening will identify and mitigate adverse effects.
Portsmouth City Council/Marine Management Organisation	Fraser Range housing and sea defence	It is likely that an increase in local residents will have some effect on sensitive features, though the extent is difficult to predict accurately, as the plans are at an early stage. As a housing development, the expectation is that mitigation will be provided via Bird Aware Solent and/or on a bespoke basis.

		Habitats Regulation Assessment screening will identify and mitigate adverse effects.
Portsmouth City Council	St James Hospital housing	It is likely that an increase in local residents will have some effect on sensitive features, though the extent is difficult to predict accurately, as the plans are at an early stage. As a housing development, the expectation is that mitigation will be provided via Bird Aware Solent and/or on a bespoke basis. Habitats Regulation Assessment screening will identify and mitigate adverse effects.
Havant Borough Council/Marine Management Organisation	Southmoor managed realignment	The intention of the project is to increase intertidal habitat, beneficial to sensitive features. Consent would likely be given on the basis that work would be completed during non-sensitive periods. Habitats Regulation Assessment screening will identify and mitigate adverse effect during operation.
Natural England	England Coast Path	Neighbouring stretches of the England Coast Path effecting designated sites listed within this assessment will be opened between 2017 and 2020. These include South Hayling to East Head, Gosport to Portsmouth, Calshot to Gosport, Highcliffe to Calshot, and the Isle of Wight. Each of these stretches may have similar potential non-significant effects as this stretch.
Havant Borough Council/Marine Management Organisation	Hayling Beach Management	An ongoing shingle recycling programme, subject to a detailed construction management programme considering environmental sensitivities. As such, work is completed during non-sensitive times, and vegetated shingle is surveyed annually.

At the time of carrying out this appraisal, Natural England is not aware of any other qualifying plans or projects that need to be considered.

Table B - Possible in combination effects

Non-significant effect – access proposal	**Non-significant effect – other plan or project**	**In combination conclusion**
Possible small increase in disturbance to feeding or roosting waterbirds Possible small increase in	Possible small increase in disturbance to feeding or roosting waterbirds from neighbouring England Coast Path stretches.	We do not consider it likely that there will be a significant effect in combination for the following reasons: 1) Our proposals for neighbouring

disturbance to breeding and foraging birds.	Possible small increase in disturbance to breeding and foraging birds from neighbouring England Coast Path stretches. [ii]	stretches are not yet finalised. They are being designed to minimise the risk of adverse effects on sensitive features. We will carry out a separate assessment for each of these access proposals once the details have been finalised, including considering the likelihood of possible in-combination effects. 2) By including features from neighbouring stretches within this assessment, suitable mitigation has been included within the proposals for this stretch.
Possible small increase in trampling damage to vegetated shingle.	None	None

6.1.3 Overall screening decision for Natura 2000 (European) Sites

In the light of this appraisal, Natural England has reached this conclusion about the new access proposal: (Mark one box only with an X as appropriate)

X	**No likely significant effect** - as the new access proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA, Solent and Dorset Coast pSPA, Portsmouth Harbour SPA, Solent & Southampton Water SPA, Solent Maritime SAC, or Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, (taking into account any incorporated mitigation measures) no appropriate assessment process under the Habitats Regulations assessment is required and the proposal may proceed;

OR

	Likely significant effect - as the new access proposal is likely to have a significant effect on Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA, Solent and Dorset Coast pSPA, Portsmouth Harbour SPA, Solent & Southampton Water SPA, Solent Maritime SAC, or Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC either alone or in combination with other plans or projects (despite any incorporated mitigation measures), appropriate assessment is required to before proceeding to ascertain that the new access proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

[ii] All other plans and projects listed above have been screened out because either they have no non-significant effects to combine, or because they are at an early stage of design and it is not possible to anticipate whether there will be any non-significant effects to combine.

6.2 Overall conclusion - SSSI

In the light of this appraisal, Natural England has concluded that the new access proposal:
(Mark one box only with an X below)

X	**complies** with Natural England's duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of the SSSI, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions[iii] - and accordingly the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified in this template
	OR
	would not comply with the duty referred to in (a) – and accordingly permission/ authorisation/ assent should not be given for the new access proposal in the form finally specified in this template, for the following reasons:

Reasons (where second box is ticked):

6.3 Certification

6.3.1 Certification – access proposal

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that the final access proposal, incorporating any mitigation measures, is the least restrictive option necessary to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features.		
Signed: 	Name: Tim Hall (Senior Advisor, England Coast Path South Hub	Date: 19 July 2017

[iii] The reference in 7.2 above to Natural England's functions includes its balanced general purposes for access, nature conservation and landscape under the NERC Act 2006, any specific statutory duties it may have to deliver specific improvements to public access, and the access-related policies and priorities it periodically agrees with Defra.

6.3.2 Certification – environmental impacts

I agree with the conclusions of this appraisal and am satisfied that potential environmental impacts of the access proposal on Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA, Solent and Dorset Coast pSPA, Portsmouth Harbour SPA, Solent & Southampton Water SPA, Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC Langstone Harbour SSSI, Sinah Common SSSI, Chichester Harbour SSSI, Portsmouth Harbour SSSI, and Ryde Sands and Wooton Creek SSSI have been fully addressed.		
Name: Alexandra Jenks (Responsible Officer, Sheltered Coasts Team)	Signed: 	Date: 19 July 2017

7. Establishing and maintaining the England Coast Path

In this part of the document we describe how the access proposal would be implemented and arrangements for ongoing management and maintenance once coastal access rights are in place.

Note that before the access proposal can be taken forward, the coastal access report must first be considered by the Secretary of State in light of any representations, any objections from affected owners or occupiers and the Appointed Person's recommendations as to how any objections should be determined.

7.1 Establishment

7.1.1 Works on the ground

Once approval for a coastal access report is received from the Secretary of State, any necessary works can be carried out on the ground to make the trail fit for use and prepare for opening. In this case, works on the ground would be carried out by Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council.

An estimate of the total cost of works needed to establish the trail is given in our coastal access report for the stretch. The cost of establishment works will be met by Natural England.

Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council are responsible for ensuring they take appropriate steps to protect sensitive features whilst works on the ground are carried out, in line with any recommendations or conditions agreed in advance.

We have held preliminary discussions with Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council about the works required and believe that it is feasible for them to be carried out without adverse effect on the designated sites considered in this appraisal. This is on the basis that the following special conditions are observed:

- Security fence relocation at Fraser Range be completed outside the over wintering bird period (which is considered to include October to March).
- Fencing at West Hayling Nature Reserve be completed outside of breeding terns season (which is considered to include March to August).
- Fencing at Sinah Common be completed outside of March to August.
- Fencing at Sinah Common be completed outside of 1.5 hours before, and 1 hour after high tide during October to March.

Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council will instigate the SSSI assent process by writing to us to confirm the timing of works and how operations to be undertaken in line with these conditions. Natural England will provide further advice as necessary.

7.1.2 Implementation of incorporated mitigation measures including local restrictions or exclusions

The mitigation measures described in Part 5 of this document (5.1.5 5.2.5 etc) will be implemented as follows:

Measure	Implementation
Interpretation panels at key access points	Installed by Hampshire County Council, or Portsmouth City Council
Interpretation panels at sensitive wildlife areas	Installed by Hampshire County Council or Portsmouth City Council, designed in collaboration with Bird Aware Solent
Improved fencing at access points to sensitive areas (shingle ridges and dunes)	Installed by Hampshire County Council
Guide posts	Installed by Hampshire County Council

Where specific restrictions or exclusions have been included in the proposal in order to avoid the risk of any potential significant effects and are approved by the Secretary of State, Natural England will give the necessary directions before public rights come into force to make the rights subject to those restrictions or exclusions.

7.2 Maintenance

Where there is a need for ongoing maintenance of any special measures proposed, this will become part of longer term arrangements for upkeep of the trail. An overall estimate of the ongoing cost of maintaining stretches of the England Coast Path is given in the relevant part of our report for the stretch.

7.3 Monitoring

Monitoring of the protected site will continue through established programmes including our common standards monitoring protocols. The access authority will be responsible for ongoing monitoring of trail condition. Natural England will be tracking general trends, including in the number of people using the path, as part of our evaluation of the coastal access programme nationally.

7.4 Future changes

The access proposals in this document are designed to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features, taking account of any mitigation measures that are included. The coast is a dynamic environment and in designing the access proposals we have taken account of any changes predicted by the Environment Agency as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes. Should it be necessary in the future to identify a new alignment for the trail in line with 'roll back' proposals in the stretch report, due

care will be taken at that stage to minimise any potential impacts of this change on sensitive features. The same will be true if any unforeseen other changes arise in the future that may require us to propose a variation of the access arrangements described in these proposals, following due procedures.

8. References

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http://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/sensitivity_rationale

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16. SOUTHERN WATER. 2015. Fort Cumberland Coastal Defence Renewal Scheme: Breeding Bird Survey Report

9. Appendix A – Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy Interaction Table

SWBGS site number name	ASFA Key site	Important for brent geese	Uncertain for brent geese	Important for waders	Uncertain for waders
P35	The Esplanade	Landward			
P115	The Esplanade				Route through and seaward
P32A	The Esplanade	Landward			
P32B	The Esplanade	Landward			Landward
P31	The Esplanade	Landward			
P78	Eastney Beach		Seaward	Seaward	
P82	Eastney Lake		Seaward	Seaward	
P103	Eastney Lake		Route through and seaward		Route through and seaward
P10A	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P10H	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P10L	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P10K	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P73	Farlington Marshes	Seaward		Seaward	
P10F	Farlington Marshes			Seaward	Seaward
P72	Farlington Marshes		Seaward	Seaward	
P10I	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P10J	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P10D	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P10E	Farlington Marshes	Landward		Landward	
P10B	Farlington Marshes	Landward			Landward
P10C	Farlington Marshes	Landward			Landward
P10G	Farlington Marshes	Landward			
H68	Farlington Marshes	Seaward		Seaward	

SWBGS site number name	ASFA Key site	Important for brent geese	Uncertain for brent geese	Important for waders	Uncertain for waders
H69	Farlington Marshes	Seaward		Seaward	
P127	Fraser Range and Fort Cumberland		Landward		Landward
H07A	Broadmarsh	Route through		Route through	
H07B	Broadmarsh		Route through		Route through
H07C	Broadmarsh			Route through	
H53A	Hayling Billy Line				Landward
H75	Hayling Billy Line		Seaward		Seaward
H48A	Hayling Billy Line		Landward		Landward
H48B	Hayling Billy Line				Landward
H48C	Hayling Billy Line	Landward		Landward	
H48D	Hayling Billy Line		Landward		Landward
H48E	Hayling Billy Line	Landward			
H48F	Hayling Billy Line	Landward			Landward
H48G	Hayling Billy Line	Route through			Route through
H34A	Hayling Billy Line		Seaward		
H34C	Hayling Billy Line	Seaward			
H34D	Hayling Billy Line				Landward
H34E	Hayling Billy Line	Landward			
H121	Langstone bridge				Seaward
P23B	Milton Common	Route through			Route through
P23A	Milton Common	Route through			Route through
P23R	Milton Common	Route through			Route through
P52	Milton Common	Landward		Landward	
H82	Pony Paddocks		Seaward	Seaward	
H31A	Pony Paddocks	Seaward			
P88	Eastern Rd bridge		Seaward	Seaward	
P87	Eastern Rd bridge		Landward		
P83	Salterns Quay		Seaward		
P19B	Salterns Quay		Landward		Landward
P19D	Salterns Quay		Landward		Landward
P19E	Salterns Quay				Landward
P19A	Salterns Quay		Landward		
P12	Salterns Quay	Landward			Landward
P84	Salterns Quay		Seaward		Seaward
P11	Salterns Quay	Route through			
H30	Sinah Common and Beach		Landward		Landward
H118	Sinah Common and Beach				Route through

SWBGS site number name	ASFA Key site	Important for brent geese	Uncertain for brent geese	Important for waders	Uncertain for waders
H104	Sinah Common and Beach				Seaward
H90	Southmoor		Landward	Landward	
H29	Southmoor		Route through		
H28A	Southmoor	Route through		Route through	
H28C	Southmoor		Seaward	Seaward	
H28B	Southmoor				Route through
H85	The Kench	Seaward		Seaward	
H84	The Kench	Seaward		Seaward	
H83	The Kench		Seaward		Seaward
H62A	West Hayling Nature Reserve		Landward		Landward
H73A	West Hayling Nature Reserve	Seaward			Seaward
H73B	West Hayling Nature Reserve	Seaward			Seaward
H61	West Hayling Nature Reserve		Landward		Landward
H100	West Hayling Nature Reserve	Seaward		Seaward	