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Assessment of England Coast Path proposals on the Isle of Sheppey on sites and features of nature conservation concern



About this document

This document should be read in conjunction with the published Reports for the Isle of Sheppey Stretch and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

The Coastal Access Reports contain a full description of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures that have been included. These Reports can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-on-the-isle-of-sheppey-comment-on-proposals>

A HRA is required for European sites (SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites). The HRA is published alongside the Coastal Access Reports and can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-on-the-isle-of-sheppey-comment-on-proposals>

This document, the Nature Conservation Assessment (NCA), covers all other aspects (including SSSIs, MCZs and undesignated but locally important sites and features) **in so far as any HRA does not already address the issue for the sites and feature(s) in question.**

The Nature Conservation Assessment covers the area of coast around the Isle of Sheppey (Kent). The Isle of Sheppey stretch has been divided into ten reports as follows:

IOS 1: Kingsferry Bridge to Alsager Avenue, Rushenden (Maps IOS 1a to IOS 1b)

IOS 2: Alsager Avenue, Rushenden to Oak Lane, Minster (Maps IOS 2a to IOS 2f)

IOS 3: Oak Lane, Minster to Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap (Maps IOS 3a to IOS 3b)

IOS 4: Hen's Brook, Eastchurch Gap to Palm Trees Holiday Park (Map IOS 4a)

IOS 5: Palm Trees Holiday Park to Warden Road, Warden Point (Map IOS 5a)

IOS 6: Warden Road, Warden Point to Isle of Harty (east) (Maps IOS 6a to IOS 6g)

IOS 7: Isle of Harty (east) to Mocketts, Isle of Harty (west) (Maps IOS 7a to IOS 7b)

IOS 8: Mocketts, Isle of Harty (west) to Windmill Creek (Maps IOS 8a to IOS 8c)

IOS 9: Windmill Creek to Ferry Road (Maps IOS 9a to IOS 9f)

IOS 10: Ferry Road to Swale Station via Kingsferry Bridge (Map IOS 10a)

The NCA is arranged site by site. Nature Conservation Assessment Sites Map shows designated sites along this stretch of coast.

Evidence has been gathered 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, environmental consultants 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.

See Annex 1 for an index to designated sites and features for this stretch of coast, including features that have been considered within any HRA.

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Assessment of coastal access proposals on The Swale Estuary SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? Yes

Note that notified features of the SSSI that are also qualifying features of the European site are omitted from this assessment.

The Swale Estuary SSSI also contains two other nationally designated sites: Elmley and The Swale National Nature Reserves (NNR).

Risk analysis

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
Brackish lakes; Ditches; Floodplain fen (lowland); Ponds; SM4-28-Saltmarsh; Standing waters (and associated plant and invertebrate assemblages)	Kingsferry (See Report IOS 10, map IOS 10a)	Trampling and erosion of saltmarsh seaward of the trail, and the freshwater habitats near Neatscourt Marshes, on and landward of the trail - leading to direct loss of habitat and/or feeding and roosting sites for SSSI wildfowl and	Medium increase in levels of use – Trail Negligible change on the margin New access will be provided across the designated site, inland from the coast, near	On the coast, an existing public right of way (PROW) follows the seawall. Near Neatscourt Marshes some of the land along the proposed route is partly waterlogged.	The alignment along the seawall and inland towards Neatscourt Marshes will be clearly signed and easy to follow. Access will be excluded from the saltmarsh and mudflats by direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access. A new raised bridge / bund will provide an easy to follow dry route along the very edge of the wetland habitats near Neatscourt, minimising impact on adjacent wetland habitats. This route will also be fenced off from some of the	Low level impact on features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
		wading bird species.	Neatscourt Marshes.		<p>waterlogged fen / reedbed habitats to minimise trampling of adjacent habitats. See establishment section, below, for more information on its construction, including a bund and revetment).</p> <p>Construction materials used for these infrastructure items will sourced locally and in keeping with the surrounding environment.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.</p>	
	<p>Elmley NNR (See Report IOS 9, maps IOS 9a to IOS 9e)</p>	<p>Trampling and erosion of saltmarsh, grazing marsh, ditches and other fresh water habitats (on and adjacent to paths, and near facilities such as bird hides),</p>	<p>Medium increase in use (trail)</p> <p>Negligible change in use (margin)</p> <p>The NNR manager</p>	<p>Elmley NNR is a privately owned and managed reserve, where public access is well managed to an existing trail (and number of bird hides). This</p>	<p>The proposed path mainly follows the established, managed trail through Elmley NNR. One section of new access is proposed near Spitend, in the east – where the path follows dry grassland on the landward side of the seawall.</p> <p>The path will be aligned inland of Elmley Round Field and Elmley</p>	<p>No impact on features</p>

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
		<p>leading to direct loss of habitat and/or feeding and roosting sites for SSSI wildfowl and wading bird species.</p>	<p>considers that there will not be much change to the current access levels on site, due to remoteness and difficulties accessing the NNR from east or west.</p> <p>There is also some minor de-facto access along the top of seawalls from local workers / visitors.</p> <p>However, the proposals create an easier link from Harty (to the east of the</p>	<p>established NNR trail is located below the seawall and often adjacent to a borrow dykes or ditches – deterring access into adjacent land.</p> <p>There are existing PROWs into and across the site. However, it is a very long walk on PROWs, to access the NNR, as it is fairly remote from any large residential areas.</p> <p>Most visitors access the site by</p>	<p>Hills in the west, and coastal access rights will be excluded from these areas, by direction under Section 26(3)(a).</p> <p>The trail will be well signed, with information to highlight wildlife sensitivities and request keeping to the path / dogs under control.</p> <p>Access will be excluded from saltmarsh and mudflats by direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access; and from the seawalls, under Section 26(3)(a), on nature conservation grounds.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.</p>	

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
			<p>NNR), which would reduce the long walk required to get on to the reserve from that direction and may increase pedestrian traffic and accompanying dogs.</p>	<p>driving in and parking (there is no dog access on Elmley when entering via car). There is also a nominal charge for the reserve of £3 per car (voluntary). If using the PROW from the west, users can head inland on a bridleway or keep to the sea wall footpath. There are plenty of hides and screened view points within the reserve for users to view the many bird features on site. There is little</p>		

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				<p>access from the east side, at Spitend Marshes, as it is so remote.</p> <p>There is only one PROW entering the reserve from the east, at Spitend, and this requires a 5km walk from the nearest village (Eastchurch). Anyone wanting to get from the NNR to the Isle of Harty, further to the east, (officially) currently needs to walk a further 9km on PROWs/roads to reach the Ferry</p>		

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				Inn. The Inn is the only other place on this part of the Island with visitor facilities until Leysdown-on-Sea, further north-east.		

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
	Great Bells Reserve (See Report IOS 8, map IOS 8c)	Trampling and erosion of saltmarsh, grazing marsh, ditches, reed beds and other fresh water habitats (on or either side of the path), leading to direct loss of habitat and/or feeding and roosting sites for SSSI wildfowl and wading bird species.	Medium increase in use (trail) Negligible change in use (margin)	There is an existing PROW through Great Bells Reserve. This path is separated from adjacent land and wetland systems by fencing or a substantial borrow dyke, which deters access into adjacent habitats, including reed beds (used by marsh harriers).	The proposed trail will be well signed and follow the existing PROW. Access will also be excluded by direction, from the Reserve and seawall on the seaward side of the proposed path, under Section 26(3)(a), on nature conservation grounds. Access will be excluded from the saltmarsh and mudflats here, by direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access. No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.	No impact on features
	Between Capel Fleet and Mocketts (Report IOS 8, maps IOS 8a)	Trampling and erosion of saltmarsh, ditches, reed beds and other fresh water	as above	The proposal is for a new path here, however there is some existing, minor,	The proposed path follows a dry bank above the shoreline, in the east, which includes the creation of a raised path, requiring some construction near the Ferry Inn	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
	and IOS 8b, and Report IOS 7, map IOS 7b)	SSSI habitats (both sides of the trail), leading to direct loss of habitat and/or feeding and roosting sites for SSSI wildfowl and wading bird species.		<p>de-facto access along the shoreline and seawalls from local workers and visitors from both Elmley NNR and The Ferry Inn.</p> <p>The seawall provides a clear and easy route for walkers to follow.</p> <p>There is an existing, substantial borrow dyke alongside the seawall which deters access to the inland wetland features and the multiple</p>	<p>(see Establishment works section below). In the west, the proposed path is aligned along the top of the seawall, minimising impacts on wetland features.</p> <p>Access will be excluded from the saltmarsh and mudflats by direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access.</p> <p>A dogs on lead direction has been added to the trail alignment here, under Section 26(3)(a) on nature conservation grounds.</p> <p>The trail will be well signed, with additional interpretation to highlight wildlife sensitivities and requirement to keep dogs on leads.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.</p>	

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				creeks deter access to the saltmarsh.		
	The Swale NNR (See Report IOS 6 and IOS 7)	Trampling and erosion of saltmarsh, ditches, reed beds and other fresh water SSSI habitats (both sides of the trail), leading to direct loss of habitat and/or feeding and roosting sites for SSSI wildfowl and wading bird species.	Medium increase in use (trail) Negligible change in use (margin)	There is an existing PROW along the seawall, through the NNR. An existing, substantial borrow dyke runs alongside the seawall, which deters access to the inland wetland features while the multiple creeks deter access to the saltmarsh. There is existing informal signage within the NNR,	The trail is aligned along the existing PROW through the NNR. Information about wildlife sensitivities will be increased in this area. Access will be excluded from the saltmarsh (as it is unsuitable for access) under S25A. No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				which explains wildlife sensitivities and encourages keeping dogs to lead.		
Intertidal mixed and coarse sediments (littoral sediments) and plant assemblages associated with shell beaches	<p>Swale SSSI intertidal zone and Shell Ness beach and spit</p> <p>See Reports IOS 6 maps IOS 6c to IOS 6g and Reports IOS 7 to IOS 10</p>	<p>Sandflat and mudflats are not sensitive to being walked on occasionally.</p> <p>Shell Ness beach and spit supports a rich plant assemblage which can be susceptible to trampling and erosion, leading to direct loss of habitat and /or breeding sites for SSSI bird species.</p>	<p>Medium increase in use (trail)</p> <p>Negligible change in use (margin)</p> <p>The trail follows existing PROW along raised flood defences, inland from these intertidal sand / shell habitats.</p>	<p>The sandy beaches along The Swale SSSI mostly have existing access.</p> <p>A permissive path provides access to the beach and Spit near Shell Ness.</p> <p>Shell Ness is part of The Swale NNR and access is managed to a trail along the spit, with areas</p>	<p>The proposed path will follow the seawall, situated significantly inland from Shell Ness beach and Shell Ness spit.</p> <p>Access will be excluded from the muddy sand flats by direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access.</p> <p>A dogs on lead direction has been proposed for the coastal margin at Shell Ness beach, and access is excluded from a fenced area of the spit, under Section 26(3)(a) on nature conservation grounds.</p> <p>Interpretation along the trail will highlight wildlife sensitivities and</p>	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				fenced off for breeding birds.	<p>requirements to keep dogs on leads.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.</p>	
Breeding bird species (pochard, and shoveler)	<p>Elmley NNR</p> <p>(See Report IOS 9, maps IOS 9a to IOS 9e)</p>	Birds could be disturbed by the presence of walkers.	<p>Medium increase in use (trail)</p> <p>Negligible change in use (margin)</p> <p>There is some, minor unofficial de-facto access</p>	<p>Access is currently well managed within the NNR, to an existing trail. The existing NNR trail is located landward and below the seawall and often adjacent to a</p>	<p>The proposed path mainly follows the established, managed trail through Elmley NNR. One section of new access is proposed near Spitend, in the east – where the path follows the landward side of the seawall.</p> <p>The path will be aligned inland of wetlands within Elmley Round Field and Elmley Hills in the west, and</p>	No impact on features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
			<p>along the seawalls.</p> <p>With minimal use predicted away from the trail on wetland habitats used by these species, impact should be negligible.</p>	<p>borrow dykes or ditches – deterring access into adjacent land.</p> <p>There are hides and screened view points within the reserve for users to view the many bird species on site.</p>	<p>coastal access rights will be excluded from these areas, by direction under Section 26(3)(a) for nature conservation reasons.</p> <p>The trail will be well signed, with information to highlight wildlife sensitivities and request keeping to the path / dogs under control.</p> <p>Access will be excluded from the saltmarsh and mudflats by direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access.</p> <p>No additional mitigation has been proposed.</p>	
	<p>Great Bells Reserve</p> <p>(See Report IOS 8, map IOS 8c)</p>	As above	As above	<p>There is an existing PROW through Great Bells Reserve. This path is separated from adjacent land and wetland systems</p>	<p>The proposed trail will be well signed and follow the existing PROW.</p> <p>Access will also be excluded by direction, from the Reserve and seawall on the seaward side of the proposed path, under Section</p>	No impact on features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				by fencing or a substantial borrow dyke, which deters access into adjacent habitats, which support breeding birds.	26(3)(a), on nature conservation grounds. Access will be excluded from the saltmarsh and mudflats here, by direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access. No additional mitigation has been proposed.	
	Area between Capel Fleet and Mocketts (Report IOS 8, maps IOS 8a and IOS 8b, and Report IOS 7, map IOS 7b)	As above	High increase in use (trail) Negligible change in use (margin) This new trail will follow the shoreline in the east (near The Ferry Inn). To the west the new trail will	There is an expansive salt marsh and creeks seaward of the trail and a substantial borrow dyke inland of it – deterring access away from the seawall into reedbeds and other wetland features that	The trail will follow the seawall along most of this stretch. The trail will be well signed, with additional interpretation to highlight wildlife sensitivities and requirement to keep dogs on leads. A dogs on lead direction has been added to the trail alignment here, under Section 26(3)(a) on nature conservation grounds. Access will also be excluded from the saltmarsh and mudflats by	No impact on features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
			<p>follow the top of seawall.</p> <p>This predicted 'high' increase is due to the very limited use of the area at the present.</p> <p>The proposal is for new access here, however there is some existing, minor, de-facto access along the shoreline and seawalls from local workers and visitors from both Elmley NNR and The Ferry Inn.</p>	these birds rely on.	<p>direction, under Section 25A, due to their unsuitability for access.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.</p>	

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
	Park Farm, Isle of Harty (See Report IOS 7 maps IOS 7a and IOS 7b)	There may be some minor disturbance to waterfowl and waders that utilise the ponds directly accessible from the trail.	Medium increase in use (trail) Negligible change in use (margin)	There is an existing PROW through Park Farm, which is open to the field and ponds on the seaward side.	The trail will be clearly signed aligned along the existing public right of way. Access will be excluded by direction, from the land seaward of the trail, under Section 26(3)(a), on nature conservation grounds. No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.	No impact on features
	The Swale NNR (See Reports IOS 6, maps IOS 6e–6g and IOS 7 maps IOS 7a–7b)	Birds could be disturbed by the presence of increased walkers.	No increase in use (trail) Negligible change in use (margin)	There is an existing PROW along the seawall, through the NNR. There is existing informal signage within the NNR, which encourages keeping dogs to lead.	The trail is aligned along the existing PROW through the NNR. Information about wildlife sensitivities will be increased in this area. Access will be excluded from the saltmarsh (as it is unsuitable for access) under S25A.	No impact on features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
					No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.	
Non-breeding bird species (Gadwall, Little Stint, Great crested grebe, Black-tailed godwit, Pintail Ruff, European white-fronted goose, Shoveler, Hen harrier (no known roosts)	Elmley Great Bells Park Farm, Isle of Harty Area between Capel Fleet and Mocketts Swale NNR	Please refer to table above for these five sites	Please refer to table above for these five sites	Please refer to table above for these five sites	Please refer to table above for these five sites	Please refer to table above for these five sites
	Shell Ness beach and spit (part of The Swale NNR) (See Report IOS6 map IOS 6e)	Disturbance could affect some roosting birds along the beach and spit.	Negligible change in use (margin) Shell Ness beach and Shell Ness spit lie wholly within the coastal margin.	This is part of The Swale NNR and the current access management regime will continue.	The trail is aligned on an existing PROW, some distance inland from Shell Ness beach and spit. Interpretation will be improved to explain the wildlife sensitivities and access arrangements in this area. The existing fence on the spit will be bolstered, and access will be	No impact on features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use in the Key Area	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
<p>Marsh harrier (see HRA)</p> <p>Bearded tit</p>				<p>There is existing public use of Shell Ness Beach, with walkers accessing this remote beach via a permissive path leading off the coastal PROW.</p> <p>There are areas of the spit that are already fenced off from public access due to the presence of breeding birds, and there is NNR signage explaining the sensitivities of the site for wildlife.</p>	<p>excluded from this fenced area by direction, under Section 26(3)(a) for nature conservation reasons.</p> <p>A dogs on lead direction has been added to Shell Ness beach, under Section 26(3)(a) on nature conservation grounds.</p> <p>Access to the muddy intertidal sandflats adjacent to the beach and spit will be excluded by direction under S25A, due to its unsuitability of access.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.</p>	

Assessment of coastal access proposals on The Sheppey Cliffs and Foreshore SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? No

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
EC- Aves	Geological interest found on foreshore exposures	Impacted by trampling	Negligible change	Current access between Minster and Leysdown along the shoreline	The trail is aligned above the cliff providing a clearly marked route between Minster and Leydown. No additional mitigation measures are considered necessary.	No impact on these features
EC- Mesozoic-Tertiary Fish/Amphibia	Foreshore and waters surrounding the SSSI	Disturbance to fossils from recreational use.	Negligible change	Current access between Minster and Leysdown along the shoreline	The trail is aligned above the cliff providing a clearly marked route between Minster and Leydown. No additional mitigation measures are considered necessary.	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
EC- Tertiary Palaeobotany	Cliffs and foreshore	Fossil collecting	Negligible change	<p>Current access between Minster and Leydown</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence suggests that fossil hunters commercially collect in the area but during high tide fossils are also washed out to sea naturally.</p>	<p>The trail is aligned above the cliff providing a clearly marked route between Minster and Leydown.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are considered necessary.</p>	No impact on these features
EC- Tertiary Reptilia	Cliffs and foreshore	Fossil collecting	Negligible change	<p>Current access between Minster and</p>	<p>The trail is aligned above the cliff providing a clearly marked route</p>	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				<p>Leysdown, along the shoreline.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence suggests that fossil hunters commercially collect in the area but during high tide fossils are also washed out to sea naturally.</p>	<p>between Minster and Leydown.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are considered necessary.</p>	
IA-Mass Movement	Cliffs and foreshore	Trampling	Negligible change	Current access between Minster and Leysdown,	N/A	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				along the shoreline.		
Nationally rare plant-	Cliffs and foreshore	Trampling and picking	Negligible change	Current access between Minster and Leysdown, along the shoreline.	N/A. Whilst the vetch here is scarce it is often found in areas that are vulnerable to slippage anyway.	No impact on these features
Dragon's-teeth <i>Tetragonolobus maritimus</i>	Cliffs and foreshore	Trampling and picking	Negligible change	Current access between Minster and Leysdown	N/A Whilst Dragons teeth is rare it is not a species of concern.	No impact on these features
EARTH HERITAGE	Cliffs and foreshore	Trampling	Negligible change	Current access between Minster and Leysdown	N/A	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
SUPRALITTORAL SEDIMENT	Cliffs and foreshore	Trampling	Negligible change	Current access between Minster and Leysdown	N/A	No impact on these features

Assessment of coastal access proposals on The Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? Yes

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
Lowland wetland including basic fen, valley fen, floodplain fen, water fringe fen, spring/flush fen and raised bog and associated plant and invertebrate assemblages	These wetland features are not found in the vicinity of this part of the trail on the Isle of Sheppey.	N/A	No change in access to coastal margin The alignment along this SSSI coastline will be along raised seawall and existing tracks as well as along the promenade at Queenborough and inland of the Port of Sheerness.	N/A	N/A	No impact on features
SM4-28 Saltmarsh and associated	Rushenden: Loading Hope Reach (between	Trampling and erosion, leading to direct loss of habitat.	Medium increase on trial	There is some low level informal, de-	The proposed trail will be clearly signed, along the existing track.	No impact on features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
plant and invertebrate assemblages	Ladies Hole Point and the pier) (See Report IOS 1, map IOS 1b)		Negligible change in access to coastal margin	facto access here, along a track, landward of the saltmarsh.	Access to the saltmarsh and mud flats will be excluded, by direction under S25A due to its unsuitability for access. No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.	
Ditches and associated plant and invertebrate assemblages	Rushenden Marshes (See Report IOS 1, map IOS 1a)	Trampling and erosion, leading to direct loss of habitat and/or associated plant or invertebrate assemblages.	No change in access to coastal margin or landward of the trail	Existing access occurs along the raised tracks in this stretch. A wide borrow dyke separates the trail from inland wetland habitats	The trail is clearly signed, along raised seawall / tracks. No additional mitigation measures are proposed in relation to these attributes.	No impact on these features.

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				along the eastern part of Rushenden Marshes.		
Breeding Little tern and avocet	No locations on this stretch	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No impacts

Assessment of coastal access proposals on The Medway Estuary and The Swale Estuary Marine Conservation Zones

Is this site also part of a European site? Yes

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s) use	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
Tentacled lagoon worm <i>Alkmaria romijni</i> (within The Medway Estuary MCZ)	Intertidal habitat	Tentacled lagoon worms are not sensitive to surface abrasion to mudflats by trampling as they are generally found closer to the lower reaches of the intertidal zone and are therefore less vulnerable to walkers	No change in access to coastal margin	N/A	All of the foreshore is unsuitable for public access and will be excluded by direction S25A.	No impact on these features
Intertidal sand and muddy sand Estuarine rocky habitats Intertidal mixed sediments Low energy intertidal rock (within both MCZs)	Intertidal habitat	The intertidal rock, mud and sand habitats are not sensitive to being walked on occasionally.	No change in access to coastal margin	N/A	All of the foreshore is unsuitable for public access and will be excluded by S25A direction	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s) use	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
Peat and clay exposures (within The Medway Estuary MCZ) Intertidal coarse sediment (within The Swale MCZ)						
Subtidal coarse sediment Subtidal mud Subtidal sand Smelt <i>Osmerus eperlanus</i> (within The Medway Estuary MCZ)	Subtidal areas	Coastal access rights will not affect subtidal habitats	N/A	N/A	N/A	No impact

Assessment of coastal access proposals on other feature about which concern has been expressed¹

Is this site or feature also part of a European site? No

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
Water voles	<p>Wetlands of south of Sheppey</p> <p>The south of Sheppey is a stronghold for water voles and evidence has suggested that populations are high at Great Bells, Elmley (there are mink traps used for predator control)</p>	Disturbance could impact natural behaviour of these species.	<p>No increase in use (trail)</p> <p>Negligible change in use (margin)</p> <p>Habitats mainly remote from the trail.</p>	<p>There are existing PROWs along most of the south coast, with some new access along/adjacent to seawalls.</p> <p>Substantial borrow dykes separate the trail from inland wetland features, and deter access into landward wetland features.</p>	<p>The proposed trail will be well signed, along existing PROWs and/or well-trodden routes in this area.</p> <p>Areas of margin that may support wolveroles (eg Great Bells) are excluded from access by direction, under s26(3)(a) for nature conservation purposes.</p>	No impact on these features

¹ The features considered below have not already been covered in the Habitats Regulation Assessment or elsewhere in the Nature Conservation Assessment. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), all birds' nests and eggs are protected and it is an offence to intentionally damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird. Therefore, any works involving vegetation clearance will be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (April to July inclusive).

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
	and on the Swale NNR.				No additional measures have been proposed.	
<p>Grey and Harbour Seals</p> <p>ZSL have carried out population surveys from 2013 which have highlighted that harbour seals tend to be more prevalent than grey seal</p> <p>One breeding survey was carried out in 2018 that suggested 2 harbour seal pups were successfully born. It is important to note that the entire Greater Thames</p>	<p>Sharfleet Creek, Elmley and The Swale NNR</p> <p>On average 40 plus harbour seals are seen annually around the Isle with the highest number being recorded in 2019 (47 individuals). and one grey seal in 2014) particularly towards the SE of the Isle.</p> <p>In addition, anecdotal</p>	Disturbance could impact natural behaviour of these species	<p>No increase in use (trail)</p> <p>Negligible change in use (margin)</p>	<p>Public access on existing PROWs and other walked routes near the coast.</p> <p>Intertidal habitats are muddy and deter public access.</p>	<p>The proposed path will be well signed along existing PROWs and some new routes.</p> <p>Access will be excluded from mud and sand flats and salt marsh by direction under S25A, due to their unsuitability for access.</p> <p>No additional measures are considered necessary.</p>	No impact on features.

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
Estuary is surveyed only once each year so these surveys do carry limitations with them and can't/shouldn't be used in isolation.	sightings of grey seals at Sharfleet Creek, Elmley and on the coast of the Swale NNR.					
Migrant birds (Nightingale, Turtle dove)	Particularly wooded, scrubby and arable areas of the Isle These species can be found anywhere including very rarely on the trail itself.	Potential flushing and general disturbance leading to the change in behaviour	No increase in use (trail) Negligible change in use (margin)	Existing access along coastal PROWs. Substantial borrow dykes often separate and deter access into habitats landward of the trail.	The trail follows mainly existing walked routes. The proposed trail does not pass through prime habitat that attracts these species, where all the necessary requirements including particular arable weeds, hedgerows/scrub and water are. No	No impact on these features

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
					additional measures have been included.	
<p>Shore birds Common tern, Ringed plover, Little tern and Oystercatcher (breeding)</p>	<p>Shell Ness (Swale NNR)</p> <p>Shell Ness beach, within The Swale NNR, provides suitable habitat for these nesting shore birds. The only other site for these breeding shore birds is a small area on the other side of The Swale estuary.</p> <p>(See Report IOS 6 map IOS 6e)</p>	<p>Breeding shorebirds are sensitive to disturbance before and during breeding, by people and dogs off leads, and the well camouflaged nests and eggs can easily be trampled and destroyed. Disturbance of little terns can lead to failure of breeding.</p>	<p>No increase in use (trail)</p> <p>Negligible change in use (margin)</p> <p>Shell Ness beach and spit lie wholly within the coastal margin.</p>	<p>This is part of The Swale NNR and the current access management regime will continue.</p> <p>There is existing public use of Shell Ness Beach, with walkers accessing this remote beach via a permissive path leading off the coastal PROW.</p> <p>There are areas of the spit that are already fenced off from public access due to the presence of breeding birds, and there is NNR</p>	<p>The trail is aligned on an existing PROW, some distance inland from Shell Ness beach and spit.</p> <p>Interpretation will be improved to explain the wildlife sensitivities and access arrangements in this area.</p> <p>The existing fence protecting nesting areas on the spit will be bolstered, and access will be excluded from this fenced area by direction, under Section 26(3)(a) for</p>	<p>No impact on these features, with existing site management enhanced</p>

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
				<p>signage explaining the sensitivities of the site for wildlife.</p>	<p>nature conservation reasons.</p> <p>A dogs on lead direction has been added to Shell Ness beach, under Section 26(3)(a) on nature conservation grounds.</p> <p>Access to the muddy intertidal sandflats adjacent to the beach and spit and the saltmarsh landward of it, will be excluded by direction under S25A, due to their unsuitability of access.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures are proposed in</p>	

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
					relation to these attributes	
<p>Breeding waders The South Sheppey grazing marshes support the greatest abundance of breeding waders in North Kent, notably lapwing and redshank, and represents an important source from which other areas can be populated in the face of national declines. 60% of lapwing and 61% of redshank in North Kent now breed on the island. Of the 470-525 pairs of lapwing on</p>	<p>Habitat creation on <u>undesigned</u> HLS permanent grassland between Mocketts and Capel Fleet (See Report IOS 8, map IOS 8a)</p>	<p>Waders could be flushed from disturbance but this is not envisaged to have a detrimental impact on the qualifying features.</p>	<p>Medium increase in use (trail) Negligible change in use (margin)</p>	<p>There is unofficial de-facto access along these seawalls.</p> <p>A substantial borrow-dyke separates the trail from inland wetland habitats, deterring access landward of the seawall.</p> <p>At one site along the borrow dyke, an existing scrape aims to enhance breeding waders' usage (NB this site is not considered an area of land functionally</p>	<p>The trail will follow the walkable seawall along this stretch.</p> <p>The trail will be well signed, with additional (Birdwise) interpretation to highlight wildlife sensitivities and requirement to keep dogs on leads.</p> <p>A dogs on lead direction has been added to the trail alignment here, under Section 26(3)(a) on nature conservation grounds.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures</p>	<p>Minimal disturbance -low level impact</p>

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
Sheppey, 16% can be found on the Swale NNR.				linked to the adjacent SPA).	are proposed in relation to these attributes. If in the future if more scrapes were to be proposed in this area, Natural England would encourage this to take effect further away from the trail. This is quite a large field and there is ample scope to locate any further scrapes at least 150m from the ECP route (and thus minimise any disturbance).	
Short-eared owl (wintering and occasionally breeding)	Hunts in the rough tussocky and scrubby grassland all along the south	Disturbance to the usual behaviour of the short-eared owl and other raptors.	Although the introduction of the coast path will create some new formal access between The	There is currently a mixture of formal and non-formal	The proposed path will be well signed with Birdwise information (as above)	No impact on features and no interaction

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
South Sheppey supports significant numbers of over-wintering short-eared owl due to the mix of wetlands, coastal marshes, rough grassland and scrub.	coast of Sheppey from Elmley NNR in the west to The Swale NNR in the east. May very occasionally breed at some of these locations in either grassland or arable fields.		<p>Ferry Inn and Great Bells, the number of visits is expected to be very low due to the relative remoteness of the location.</p> <p>The nearest access point to this stretch of the seawall is from the Ferry Inn car park which is between 1km (Mocketts Farm) and 3km (Capel Fleet) away to the east. It is unlikely that many people will venture far from the inn as there is no obvious destination along the seawall, other than Elmley NNR's Spitend hide which is 7km away or the reserve car park which is over</p>	<p>access along some of the seawalls.</p> <p>The main activity for this species occurs in the evening and in the winter, when we envisage the numbers of walkers to be low.</p>	<p>and will follow the top of the seawall.</p> <p>Near the Ferry Inn, the trail is aligned close to the shoreline, where owl activity has been known on the landward side. These populations will be shielded from walkers by a rising bank of hawthorn scrub.</p> <p>A dogs on lead direction has been added to the trail alignment between the Ferry Inn and Capel Fleet, under Section 26(3)(a) on nature conservation grounds.</p>	with walkers.

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
			<p>12km away. In either case a very lengthy return trip.</p> <p>The access assessment predicts a medium to high increase in access levels. This is a relative increase and is due to the very limited access at present. It's possible that birdwatchers will visit the new scrape(s) near Capel Fleet but Elmley NNR is more accessible with a number of viewing hides and will be a far stronger attraction in terms of both regular wetland bird species, which are present in very large numbers,</p>		No additional measures are included.	

Risk				Consideration		Conclusion
Attribute affected	Key Area	Possible impact(s)	Predicted changes in pattern and/or level of use	Existing factors	Relevant features of the access proposals, including any additional mitigation measures	
			often including rarities. The RSPB Capel Fleet Raptor Viewpoint just off the Harty Ferry Road, 3km from the main road through the island between Eastchurch and Leysdown, is also far more accessible for viewing marsh harriers and other raptors, given that the marsh harrier winter roost at the other end of Capel Fleet behind the seawall is a 6km return walk from the Ferry Inn.			

Establishment works

Is SSSI assent needed to implement any specific proposals for establishment works? Yes, and please note these areas also form part of the SPA and Ramsar designations (see Habitats Regulations Assessment for Isle of Sheppey published alongside this report). Where necessary, Kent County 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 the conditions below. Natural England will provide further advice as necessary.

Raised bund/bridge installation at Neatscourt Marshes (The Swale SSSI):

In order to have the least impact on birdlife we envisage installing a combination of a bund and sleeper bridge outside of the overwintering and breeding months.

The footpath would be constructed on a (Tensar type) Geo-grid supporting membrane laid on top of the existing ground surface (following the normal removal of any topsoil layer) which will stabilise the formation layer and prevent ingress of granular material into the sub-soil during the compaction process. The footpath bund construction would comprise of three separate layers, the base being laid directly on top of the geo-grid using 100-275mm Cambrian Gabion Stone (approx. 0.7m) with a layer of type 3 granular fill (approx. 0.2m) and 6mm to dust crushed limestone surface (approx. 0.1m). Timber edgings would support the bund on either side of the embankment to ensure stability and to pin the geo-grid in place.

To ensure that the bund construction does not itself act as dam, it's recommended that the 200mm porous pipes are installed at 5 metre intervals along the length of the construction to allow water flow beneath the footpath, to either side of the bund.

On either side of the bund there will be stock proof fencing to ensure walkers cannot access the adjacent land. A sleeper bridge will then join the bund.

Please note that the works here are on the boundary of the SSSI (SPA/Ramsar).

Prior to construction works, great crested newt and water vole surveys will be carried out near Neatscourt Marshes to inform any methodologies necessary to safeguard wildlife, prior to any construction.

Revetment installation near Neatscourt Marshes (The Swale SSSI):

In order to have the least impact on birdlife we envisage installing the revetment outside of the main overwintering and breeding months.

A level path at the bottom of the embankment (IOS-10-S005) is planned with a handrail installed. This area is often waterlogged and the revetment will ensure walkers can walk safely in this area. Please note that the works here are on the boundary of the SSSI (SPA/Ramsar).

Revetment works and path creation near The Ferry Inn (The Swale SSSI):

In order to have the least impact on birdlife we envisage installing the revetment outside of the main overwintering and breeding months.

Selective scrub clearance will occur at on the dry, rising land near to the Ferry Inn with the support of a revetment to stabilise the bank in places. Infrastructure by the Ferry Inn will be kept to a minimum and all surfaces will remain natural. Please note that the works here are within boundary of the SSSI (SPA/Ramsar).

Conclusion

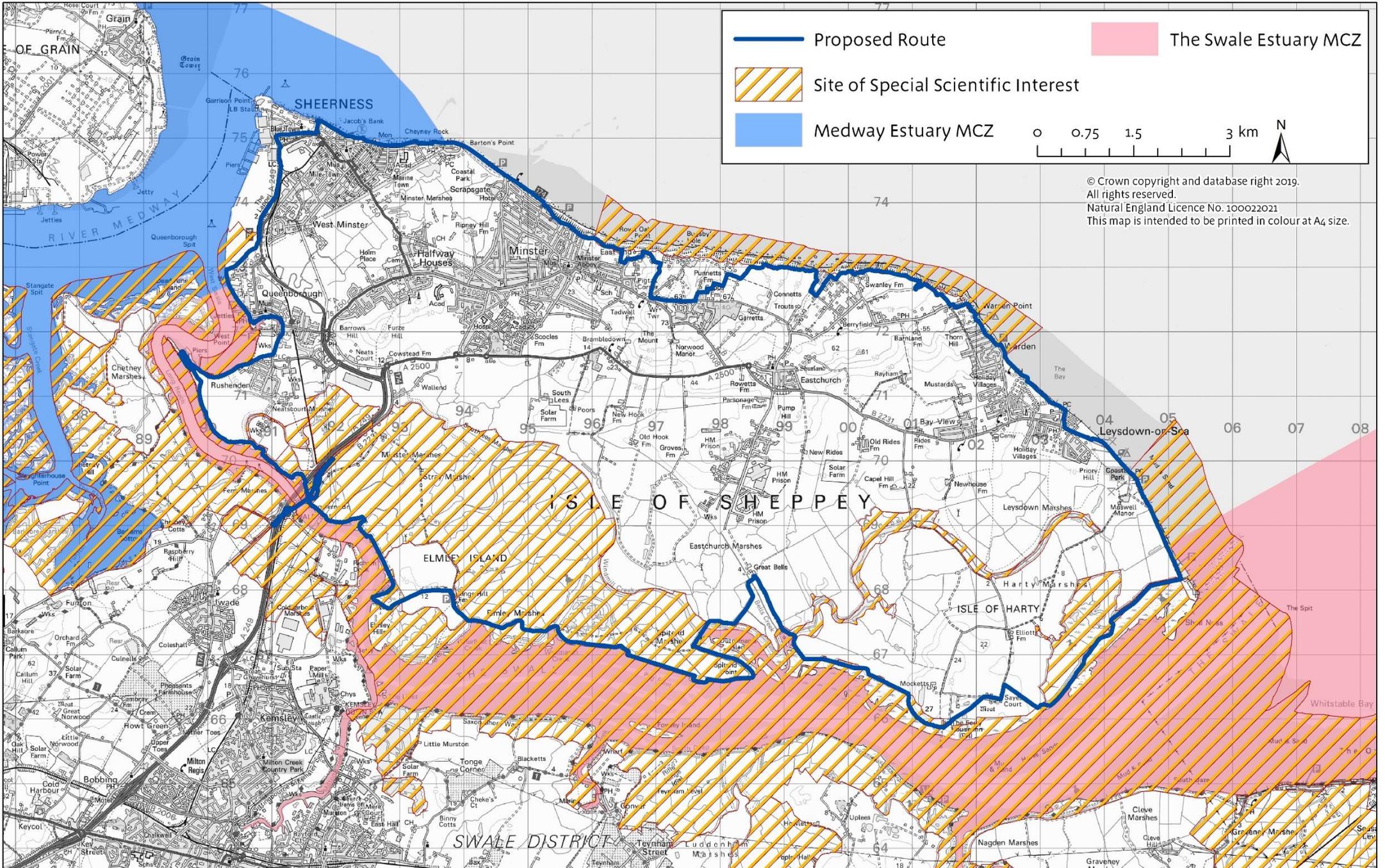
We, Natural England, are satisfied that our proposals to improve access to the English coast around the Isle Of Sheppey are fully compatible with our duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of The Swale SSSI, Sheppey Cliffs and Foreshore SSSI , The Swale and Medway Marine Conservation Zones and The Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI are consistent with the proper exercise of our functions².

In respect of important features at all these sites we are satisfied that in developing the new access proposals the appropriate balance has been struck between Natural England's conservation and access objectives, duties and purposes. **See also, where relevant, the conclusions of the separate HRA relating to common features.**

The conclusions of this assessment have been checked by:

Jenny Bowen	10 th January 2020	On behalf of the Coastal Access Programme Team
Kristoffer Hewitt	10 th January 2020	Senior Officer with responsibility for protected sites
Rob Carver	10 th January 2020	Lead Adviser for England Coast Path stretch

² 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.



Annex 1. Index to designated sites and features

Features – of the designated sites	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
The Swale				
A046a <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> , Dark-bellied brent goose; (non-breeding)	X	X	X	
A149 <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> , Dunlin; (non-breeding)	X	X	X	
<p><u>Breeding bird assemblage</u></p> <p>Including: <i>Anas crecca</i>, teal; <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>, mallard; <i>Anas strepera</i>, gadwall; <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, shelduck; <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>, moorhe; <i>Fulica atra</i>, coot; <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>, snipe; <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>, ringed plover; <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>, oystercatcher; <i>Tringa totanus</i>, redshank; <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>, lapwing; <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, avocet; <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>, marsh harrier; <i>Motacilla flava</i>, yellow wagtail; <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>, reed bunting and <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>, reed warbler; <i>Panurus biarmicus</i>, Bearded tit;</p> <p>Aggregations of breeding birds: <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, Avocet</p> <p><i>Anas strepera</i>, Gadwall</p> <p><i>Aythya farina</i>, Pochard</p> <p><i>Anas clypeata</i>, Shoveler</p>	<p>Associated with lowland damp grassland / grazing marshes</p> <p>As above</p>		<p>Associated with lowland fen habitat</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
Waterbird assemblage(wintering migratory waterfowl of mudflat and grazing marsh, non-breeding)				

Features – of the designated sites	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
<p><i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, avocet; <i>Limosa lapponica</i>, bar-tailed godwit; <i>Limosa limosa</i>, black-tailed godwit; <i>Numenius arquata</i>, curlew; <i>Egretta garzetta</i>, little egret; <i>Calidris alpina</i>, dunlin; <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>, ringed plover; <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>, golden plover; <i>Calidris canutus</i>, knot; <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>, lapwing; <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>, oystercatcher; <i>Calidris alba</i>, sanderling; <i>Tringa ochropus</i>, green sandpiper; <i>Tringa nebularia</i>, greenshank; <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>, ruff; <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>, grey plover; <i>Tringa totanus</i>, redshank; <i>Tringa erythropus</i>, spotted redshank; <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>, dark-bellied brent goose; <i>Anas acuta</i>, pintail; <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, shelduck; <i>Anas clypeata</i>, shoveler; <i>Anas crecca</i>, teal; <i>Anser albifrons</i>, European white-fronted goose and <i>Anas Penelope</i>, wigeon;</p>	<p>X</p> <p>All species</p>	<p>Species in bold only</p>	<p>X</p> <p>All species</p>	
<p>Aggregations of non-breeding species:</p> <p><i>Panurus biarmicus</i>, Bearded tit</p> <p><i>Circus cyaneus</i>, Hen harrier</p> <p><i>Circus aeruginosus</i>, Marsh harrier</p> <p><i>Calidris canutus</i>, Knot</p> <p><i>Tringa erythropus</i>, Spotted redshank</p> <p><i>Limosa limosa</i>, Black-tailed godwit</p> <p><i>Numenius arquata</i>, Curlew</p> <p><i>Anas strepera</i>, Gadwall</p>	<p>Part of the wintering assemblage</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	

Features – of the designated sites	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
<i>Pluvialis squatarol</i> , Grey plover		X	X	
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> , Ringed plover		X	X	
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> , Oystercatcher		X	X	
<i>Anas acuta</i> , Pintail			X	
<i>Tringa totanus</i> , Redshank		X	X	
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i> , Ruff			X	
<i>Calidris minuta</i> , Little stint			X	
<i>Anser albifrons</i> , European white-fronted goose			X	
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i> , Great crested grebe			X	
<i>Anas clypeata</i> , Shoveler			X	
<i>Tadorna tadorna</i> , Shelduck		X	X	
<i>Anas Penelope</i> , Wigeon		X	X	
<i>Anas crecca</i> , Teal		X	X	
<i>Circus cyaneus</i> , Hen harrier			X	
Habitat features: Brackish lakes Ditches Floodplain fen (lowland) M311 Invertebrate assemblage saltmarsh and transitional brackish marsh W211 Invertebrate assemblage open water in disturbed sediments W314 Invertebrate assemblage reed-fen and pools		Wetland Invertebrate assemblage	X All features	

Features – of the designated sites	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
Ponds SM4-28 Saltmarsh Standing waters Vascular Plant Assemblages		Wetland plant assemblage		

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
Sheppey Cliffs and Foreshore SSSI				
EC - Aves			X	
EC - Mesozoic - Tertiary Fish/Amphibia			X	
EC - Tertiary Palaeobotany			X	
EC - Tertiary Reptilia			X	
IA - Mass Movement			X	
Nationally rare plant - <i>Tetragonolobus maritimus</i> , Dragon's-teeth			X	
EARTH HERITAGE			X	
SUPRALITTORAL SEDIMENT			X	
Swale Estuary Marine Conservation Zone				
Estuarine rocky habitats				X
Intertidal mixed sediments				X
Intertidal coarse sediment				X
Intertidal sand and muddy sand				X
Low energy intertidal rock				X
Subtidal coarse sediment				X
Subtidal mixed sediments				X
Subtidal mud				X
Subtidal sand				X
Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone				
Estuarine rocky habitats				X
Intertidal mixed sediments				X
Intertidal sand and muddy sand				X

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
Low energy intertidal rock				X
Peat and clay exposures				X
<i>Osmerus eperlanus</i> ; Smelt				X
Subtidal coarse sediment				X
Subtidal mud				X
Subtidal sand				X
<i>Alkmaria romijni</i> ; Tentacled lagoon-worm				X
Medway Estuary & Marshes SSSI				
A132 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> , Avocet (breeding)	X			
A312 <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> , Avocet (non-breeding)	X		X	
A046a <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> , Dark-bellied Brent Goose (non-breeding)	X			
A149 <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> , Dunlin (non-breeding)	X	X	X	
A141 <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> , Grey Plover (non-breeding)	X		X	
A143 <i>Calidris canutus</i> , Knot (non-breeding)	X	X		
A195 <i>Sternula albifrons</i> , Knot (breeding)	X			
A054 <i>Anas acuta</i> , Pintail (non-breeding)	X	X	X	
A162 <i>Tringa totanus</i> , Redshank (non-breeding)	X	X	X	
A137 <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> , Ringed plover (non-breeding)	X	X	X	
A048 <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> , Shelduck (non-breeding)	X	X	X	

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
<p><u>Breeding bird assemblage</u></p> <p>(main component species: <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>, oystercatcher; <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>, lapwing; <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>, ringed plover; <i>Tringa totanus</i>, redshank; <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, shelduck; <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>, mallard; <i>Anas crecca</i>, teal; <i>Anas clypeata</i>, shoveler; <i>Aythya farina</i>, pochard; <i>Sterna hirundo</i>, common tern).</p> <p><u>Breeding species</u></p> <p><i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, Avocet</p> <p><i>Sterna albifrons</i>, Little tern</p>	<p>Associated with lowland damp grassland habitat/ grazing marshes</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>		<p>Associated with lowland fen habitat</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
<p>Waterbird assemblage, Non-breeding (including: <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>, dark-bellied brent geese; <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, shelduck; <i>Anas Penelope</i>, wigeon; <i>Anas crecca</i>, teal; <i>Anas acuta</i>, pintail; <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>, ringed plover; <i>Sternula albifrons</i>, grey plover; <i>Sternula albifrons</i>, knot; <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>, great crested grebe; <i>Anas clypeata</i>, shoveler; <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>, dunlin; <i>Limosa limosa</i>, black-tailed godwit; <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>, oystercatcher; <i>Numenius arquata</i>, curlew; <i>Tringa totanus</i>, redshank; <i>Tringa nebularia</i>, greenshank; <i>Arenaria interpres</i>, turnstone)</p>	<p>X</p> <p>All species</p>	<p>Species in bold only</p>		

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2	SPA	Ramsar	SSSI	MCZ
<p>Non-breeding species</p> <p><i>Limosa limosa</i>, Black-tailed godwit</p> <p><i>Numenius arquata</i>, Curlew</p> <p><i>Branta bernicla</i>, <i>bernicla</i>, Dark-bellied brent goose</p> <p><i>Podiceps cristatus</i>, Great crested grebe</p> <p><i>Tringa nebularia</i>, Greenshank</p> <p><i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>, Oystercatcher</p> <p><i>Anas clypeata</i>, Shoveler</p> <p><i>Tringa erythropus</i>, Spotted redshank</p> <p><i>Anas crecca</i>, Teal</p> <p><i>Arenaria interpres</i>, Turnstone</p> <p><i>Anser albifrons</i>, White-fronted goose</p> <p><i>Anas Penelope</i>, Wigeon</p>		<p>X</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p></p> <p>X</p> <p></p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
<p>Habitat features:</p> <p>Ditches</p> <p>Lowland wetland including basin fen, valley fen, floodplain fen, water fringe fen, spring/flush fen and raised bog lag</p> <p>SM4-28 – Saltmarsh</p> <p>Vascular plant assemblage</p> <p>Invertebrate assemblages</p>		<p>Wetland invertebrate assemblage</p> <p>Wetland plant assemblage</p>	<p>X</p> <p>All features</p>	

Front cover photo: Picture of Avocet standing in water

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