

Coastal Access

Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle, Portland

Access and Sensitive Features Appraisals



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Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal: West Dorset

Programme	Coastal Access
Proposal title	Coastal Access Lyme Regis to Portland (Rufus Castle)
Aim and location	Appraisal of access proposals for the Sidmouth to West Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the West Dorset Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
Report Status	Final
Date	12.02.2015
TRIM reference	
Access Case Officer	Jane Beech
Site Responsible Officer	Richard Warren

Section 1: SITE MAP(S) AND OVERVIEW OF NEW ACCESS PROPOSAL/ CONSIDERATION

See Annex A for maps showing:

- Extent of Sidmouth to West Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Extent of West Dorset Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Proposed new access provisions

The coastal access project team intends to make the following relevant proposals for the length of coast in Dorset between Lyme Regis and Rufus Castle, Portland. We will be making proposals for the stretch of coast west from Lyme Regis at a later date and these will be separately assessed.

Our proposals for improved coastal access are fully described in Natural England's Report to the Secretary of State, for the Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle length of coast (July 2015).

Route proposal

The coastal access project team intends to propose to the Secretary of State that the centre of the line shown in blue on the maps in Annex A should be the England Coast Path for this length of coast. Our proposed route follows the existing South West Coast Path National Trail other than:

- Between Cobb Gate Jetty, Lyme Regis and Charmouth Road Car Park, Lyme Regis as indicated on the maps. The proposed route brings the trail much closer to the sea by utilising the new promenade along the sea wall and a newly constructed path up the cliff;
- Between Fern Hill Coppice and Charmouth Beach Footbridge as indicated on the maps. The trail follows an entirely new route, addressing the long inland road diversion of the South West Coast Path here due to landslips. The proposed route between Lyme Regis Golf Club and Charmouth brings the trail nearer to the sea by utilising a new path around the boundary of the Golf Club and a combination of footpaths and residential streets through Charmouth.
- Between Charmouth and Cain's Folly as indicated on the maps. The proposed route avoids areas of active landslip and erosion but is much closer to the sea.

There would be some limited physical improvements to the existing Coast Path to make it more convenient to walk on in particular places. Works required may be subject to any necessary consents being obtained. There may also be limited improvements to directional signs in places where the project team judges this would be beneficial to clarify the route.

Coastal margin

Under the legislation the following land would become part of the coastal margin by default as a consequence of the route proposal:


- a Land within 2 metres of the route to either side
- b All other land seaward of the route as far as the furthest extremity of the foreshore.

The coastal margin described above would be subject to public rights of access on foot, except any parts of it that fall into categories of excepted land defined by the legislation. This would include:

- Any land covered by buildings or the curtilage of buildings;
- Any land used as a park or garden;
- Arable land so long as it is cultivated or otherwise disturbed at least every 12 months; and
- The Lyme Regis Golf course (other than in places where the proposed route crosses it)

Section 2: PREDICTED CHANGE IN PUBLIC USE OF AREA

[For completion only if the Responsible Officer has initial concerns about the potential impact of the new access proposal on our conservation objectives]

Access case officer		
Signed: 	Name: Jane Beech	Date: 5/5/15

Section 3: POTENTIAL IMPACT ON FEATURES FROM NEW ACCESS PROPOSAL

Designated site name(s): Sidmouth to West Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) & West Dorset Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest

	SPA	p/SPA	SAC	p/SAC	Ramsar	p/Ramsar	SSSI
Designation types present (show boundaries on map)			X				X

Potential concern about new access proposal (summary)

Out of the 23 notified features and the 7 broad habitats within West Dorset Coast SSSI the provision of a public footpath will have very limited impact on any notified features of the SSSI or SAC notified features. Therefore, I have no concerns with this proposal in relation to the direct impact of the proposed route of the coastal path.

There might be minor 'in combination effects' or associated problems, such as nutrient enrichment of the grasslands through walkers not picking up after their dogs, which in extreme cases at hot spot sites i.e. by car parks, can cause habitat plant composition to shift towards improved grassland which is very detrimental and difficult to reverse. This can be overcome by appropriate signage, bin provision, dog wardening and other such controls.

Trampling of particularly rare plants species may have limited impacts, along with trampling of ground nesting rare bees and wasps that may also occur. Whilst this is not desirable in terms of the site conservation objectives it is imagined that none of the above threats pose significant risks to cause long term damaging effects to the SSSI and SAC.

Disturbance to nesting birds by walkers and dogs is an additional potential effect; however birds are not the primary reason this site was notified and subsequently do not appear on the citation as a notified feature for the SSSI.

■ **Sidmouth to West Bay SAC**, site code UK0019864 notified features listed below.

■ **West Dorset Coast SSSI** broad habitats listed below.

Concerns about existing public use and action already taken to address this (summary)

No concerns with existing public access or this proposal in relation to the direct impact of the proposed route.

Key sensitive features relevant to site (detail)

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
SAC Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:		
1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts	Limited sensitivity to this case	No
9180 Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines * Priority feature	This mosaic of habitats makes this site rich in invertebrates, especially bees and wasps, such as <i>Ectemnius ruficornis</i> , <i>Andrena simillima</i> and <i>Nomada fulvicornis</i> . The woodland has a hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> understorey and a ground-flora dominated by ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> (with numerous ivy broomrape <i>Orobanche hederarum</i>) and hart's-tongue <i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i> , with abundant dog's mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> and tutsan <i>Hypericum androsaemum</i> . The Red Data Book lichen <i>Parmelia quercina</i> occurs on ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> trees. Visitors straying off the paths could inadvertently trample sensitive plants and invertebrate colonies.	Minor limited, No likely significant effect
SAC Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:		
1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines	None	None
SSSI broad habitats		
ACID GRASSLAND - Lowland	None	None
BROADLEAVED, MIXED AND YEW WOODLAND - Lowland	None	None
CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND - Lowland	None	None
DWARF SHRUB HEATH - Lowland	None	None
EARTH HERITAGE	None	None
NEUTRAL GRASSLAND - Lowland	None	None
SUPRALITTORAL ROCK	None	None

Section 4: FINAL CONCLUSIONS

4A: FINAL CONCLUSION - EUROPEAN SITE

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – alone

In relation to the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, taken alone, Natural England has concluded on the best available evidence and information that:

- A. **It can be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have any effect** on any of the features listed in section 3 above for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:
- B. While it cannot be excluded that the new access proposal taken alone will have an effect, **it is not considered that the effect is likely to be significant**, for the following reasons:
- C. **It cannot be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have a significant effect** on the following feature(s) for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – in combination

Other relevant plan or project	Is each other plan or project clear and specific enough for a judgement to be made at this stage about the probability or risk of its having any similar effect on the features in question?	<p>Where the answer in Column 2 is Yes, what effect is it considered the other plan or project is likely to have in its own right on the features in question? Enter <u>one</u> of the following values, with brief reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No effect ■ A non-significant effect ■ A significant effect <p>Where the answer in Column 2 is No, enter “Not applicable” in this column.</p>

Conclusions of screening in combination

Having considered the best available evidence and information on any other qualifying plans or projects that might operate in combination with the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, Natural England has concluded that **it can be excluded** that the new access proposal, in combination with any such qualifying plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any of the features for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

Overall Screening Decision for European site/features

Accordingly, taking into account the preceding screening both alone and, where appropriate, in combination, Natural England has concluded:

- No likely significant effect** – the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified, subject to any separate considerations in relation to SSSI features etc (see below);
- OR
- Likely significant effect** - appropriate assessment is required to consider whether the new access proposal may proceed.

PART 4B: FINAL CONCLUSION – SSSI

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in section 3, Natural England has concluded that the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2:

- complies with NE’s duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of the SSSI, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions¹ - 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 for the new proposal should not be given, for the following reasons:

PART 4C: FINAL CONCLUSION - Other features about which concerns have been expressed

Conclusion


In the light of the analysis in section 3, Natural England has concluded that:

- the appropriate balance has been struck by the new access proposal between NE’s conservation and access objectives, duties and purposes - and accordingly the new access proposal should proceed as finally specified in this template

OR

- the appropriate balance referred to above has not been struck – and accordingly the new access proposal should not proceed in the form specified in this template, for the following reasons:

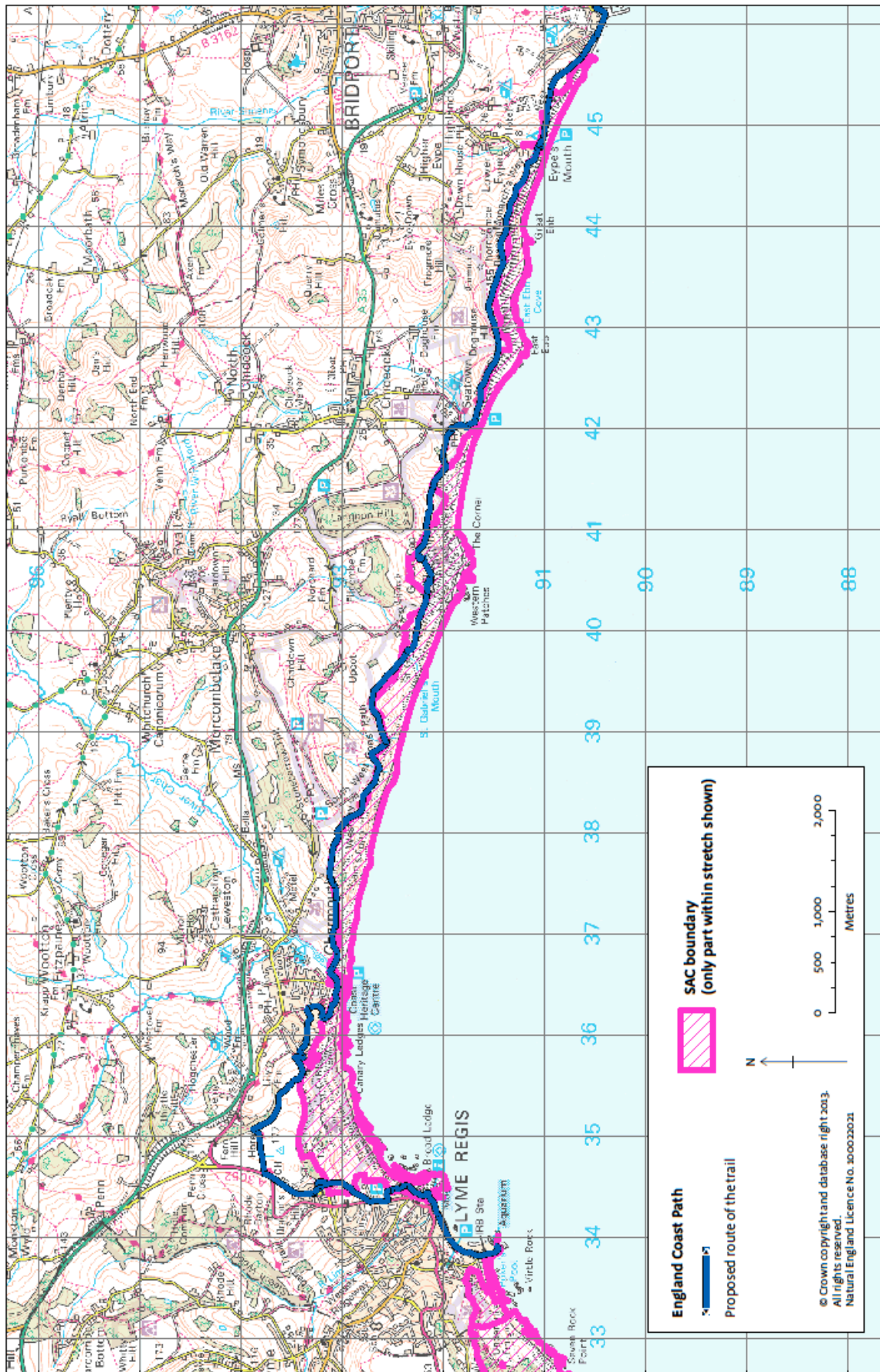
SIGNATURE COVERING THE WHOLE OF PART 4:

Responsible officer		
Name: Richard Warren	Signed: 	Date: 01/05/15

¹ The reference in (a) above to Natural England’s functions includes its balanced general purposes 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 has agreed with Defra.

Annex A: West Dorset, maps of designated site boundaries

Extent of Sidmouth to West Bay Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)



Extent of West Dorset Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

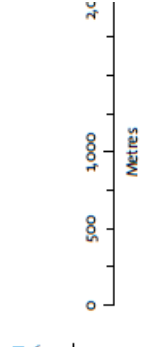


England Coast Path

Proposed route of the trail

Extent of SSSI

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Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal: Chesil and the Fleet

Programme	Coastal Access
Proposal title	Coastal Access Lyme Regis to Portland (Rufus Castle)
Aim and location	Appraisal of access proposals for Chesil and the Fleet SSSI and SAC, Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA and Ramsar
Report Status	Final
Date	25.6.2015
TRIM reference	
Access Case Officer	Andrew Chester
Site Responsible Officer	Ruth Carpenter

Section 1: OVERVIEW OF NEW ACCESS PROPOSAL/ CONSIDERATION

Note on maps for reference

Report maps (published separately)

This appraisal is published alongside Natural England's report to the Secretary of State, which includes more detailed maps illustrating each chapter of the report. The detailed maps that accompany each chapter are those to which the text in the appraisal refers. They are numbered according to the chapter of the report they relate to. For example, map 8b is the second map in the series relating to chapter 8 of the formal proposals.

Annex 1 maps

The maps in Annex 1 to this appraisal illustrate access proposals between Abbotsbury in the west and Ferrybridge in the east where there is a concentration of nature conservation sensitivities. These maps are intended to provide an initial orientatation for those reading the appraisal but are not referenced in the text.

Annex 2 maps

Annex 2 to the appraisal includes large scale maps of the designated areas for reference purposes (in the order they appear):

- Chesil and the Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest,
- Chesil and the Fleet Special Area of Conservation;
- Chesil Beach and the Fleet Special Protection Area
- Chesil And the Fleet RAMSAR

These maps also show the proposed route but are not referred to in the appraisal.

Proposed new access provisions

The coastal access project team ("the project team") proposes the new access provisions described below. The proposals are in 7 parts, of which the first 4 would be subject to Secretary of State approval:

- 1 a long-distance walking route to form part of the England Coast Path (see maps 4a-b, 5a-e, 6a-g, 7a-d, 8a-c, 9a-b)
- 2 a landward boundary for the coastal margin (not shown on the maps)
- 3 a direction to exclude access to areas of Chesil Bank, the Fleet and adjoining fields along the West Fleet (see maps 6a-g, 7a-d, 8a-c, 9a)
- 4 a winter diversion along part of the West Fleet' (see maps 6a-g)
- 5 physical barriers to discourage access to land adjoining the route in certain places (see maps 6b-6e)

- 6 public information boards or notices in certain places (not shown on maps)
- 7 monitoring of visitor use at key points on the route behind West Fleet (not shown on maps)

1. Route proposal (England Coast Path)

The coastal access project team proposes that the centre of the line shown in blue on the relevant maps should be the English Coast Path for this length of coast. This proposal includes:

- a temporary diversion at Chickerell Range which would operate as at present when firing takes place (see map 8a); and
- an alternative route at the western end of the Fleet which would operate during the winter to prevent increased disturbance to wintering birds - see (4) below.

In places the proposed route would in the future be able to roll back to a new alignment in response to coastal erosion and other geomorphological processes. If this is necessary, a new route would be chosen by a Natural England access officer after detailed discussions with the relevant experts and with any potentially affected owners or occupiers. This appraisal does not assess the potential impacts on the designated site of such future route options; where there is a risk of impacts on the site, Natural England would assess them according to the circumstances at the time and subject them to the same tests under the Habitats Regulations etc as the initial proposals. However, Secretary of State approval is not required for changes made using rollback. The places where use of the roll back provision is proposed are:

- West Bay (map 4a) to Abbotsbury beach car park (map 5e)
- Rodden Hive (map 7a) to Chickerill Hive Point (map 7d)
- selected places along the low cliffs from RE Bridging Hard to Ferrybridge

Any other changes to the route for other reasons in these places, and changes in places where rollback is not proposed, would require approval from the Secretary of State – see part 8 of the Overview to Natural England’s report to the Secretary of State.

This proposed route is the same route as that currently managed as the South West Coast Path with the following exceptions (west to east):

- Cogden Beach (see map 5b)

Here the proposed route follows a well-worn path across the shingle beach that the majority of walkers are using in preference to the route currently managed as the South West Coast Path. The existing South West Coast Path is landward of Burton Mere. Both would be available for public use but only the proposed route would be promoted as a long-distance walking route.

- West Bexington (see map 5c)

Here a branch of the South West Coast Path called the South Dorset Ridgeway leaves the coast and provides an inland route to Osmington Mills on Weymouth Bay. This inland route would not be affected by our proposals.

- Abbotsbury Swannery (see map 6a)

Here the proposed route provides a more direct route to the Swannery entrance from the west. The route currently managed as the South West Coast Path would be available for public use but only the proposed route would be promoted as a National Trail.

- Horsepool Farm to Rodden Hive (see maps 6b-e)

Here the proposed route would pass significantly closer to Chesil and the Fleet than the route currently managed as the South West Coast Path. Access to this part of the proposed route would be excluded during the winter for nature conservation reasons, at which time the existing South West Coast Path route would operate as an official alternative route - see 4 below.

- Littlesea Holiday Park (see map 8b)

Here the proposed route would follow other existing walked routes that are landward of the Fleet and do not form part of the designated site.

- Pirates Cove (see map 8c)

Here the route currently managed as the South West Coast Path crosses the beach within the designated site. The proposed route would pass over land behind the beach that is not part of the designated site. This part of the route currently managed as the South West Coast Path would be subject to the direction described in (3) below.

In all the above cases there would be new access infrastructure to facilitate public access along parts of the route that do not form part of the route currently managed as the South West Coast Path, as indicated on the relevant maps. There would also be some limited physical improvements to the existing coast path:

- to make it more convenient to walk on in particular places; and
- to direct people along it in places where the project team judges this would be beneficial to clarify the existing route (e.g. at Gore Cove, Herbury Point).

The initial purchase and installation costs for signs and infrastructure that would be met by Natural England's coastal access project team as part of the establishment works to prepare the route for use. The local authority would maintain them in line with national standards that apply to all National Trails.

2. Landward boundary of the coastal margin

Under the legislation the following land would become part of the coastal margin by default as a consequence of the route proposal:

- a land within 2 metres of the route to either side
- b all other land seaward of the route as far as the furthest extremity of the foreshore (mean low water on the seaward side of Chesil Bank)

In places the project team proposes that a suitable physical feature should form the landward boundary of the coastal margin instead of the default boundary 2m landward of the route. This is in order to provide clarity where practicable about the extent of access rights. Typically the boundary in such cases would be a fence, wall, hedge or ditch adjacent to the route.

Landward boundary proposals would not, on the length of coast here under consideration, extend the coastal margin any significant distance landward of the route. Such effects are not visible on any of the available maps but are detailed in the chapters that explain the access proposals for the whole coast between Lyme Regis and Rufus Castle, Portland.

Unless the project team proposes access restrictions or exclusions (see 3 below), the coastal margin described above would be subject to public rights of access on foot, except any parts of it that fall into categories of excepted land defined by the legislation. Excepted land would include:

- any land covered by buildings or the curtilage of buildings, including the Bridging Hard (see map 8c) and the huts etc on Chesil Bank used by fisherman;
- arable land at Herbury (see map 7b), so long as it is cultivated or otherwise disturbed at least every 12 months; and
- the firing range at Chickerill (see map 8a), which is subject to military byelaws, but there would continue to be a public right of way along the proposed route across the Chickerill range when firing is not taking place and an alternative route to landward (also marked as a route proposal on map 8a) would be accessible by right during firing.

3. Direction to exclude access (Chesil Bank and Fleet)

The coastal margin includes parts of Chesil and the Fleet Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Chesil Beach and the Fleet Special Protection Area (SPA and Ramsar), which are protected areas for natural features of international importance, some of which are known to be sensitive to public access.

The project team therefore proposes that public access rights to parts of the coastal margin where these features occur is excluded by direction, as indicated by the relevant exclusion zone shown on the maps which accompany chapters 6 to 9 of the report. At West Fleet, this zone would include agricultural land between the Fleet and the proposed route of the trail, as indicated on maps 6a-e, in order to provide a buffer zone between the trail where people would be walking and the boundary of the protected site.

Under the terms of this direction there would be no new access rights to any part of the Chesil and the Fleet Special Protection Area or RAMSAR (including the inner side of Chesil Bank facing the Fleet, the crest of Chesil Bank, and the Fleet itself) except as follows:

- access rights to the outer side of Chesil Bank (facing the sea) would be limited to the period from September 1st to March 31st each year, as indicated by the relevant exclusion zone shown on maps which accompany chapters 6 to 8 of the report. However, people would not have rights to walk along the crest of the bank during this period, in order to reduce the risk of increased disturbance to birds on the inner bank and the Fleet itself.
- the direction would not affect arrangements for people to access boats moored on the Fleet land shore or to use those boats to access parts of the Fleet or Chesil Bank that would be otherwise excluded by direction.
- access to the part of the bank falling within the Chickerell Range (map 8a) would continue to be subject to military byelaws and controlled by the armed forces when firing is taking place.
- existing access rights to the Chesil Bank between Ferrybridge and Littlesea (maps 8b-c and 9a) are not subject to Natural England's direction-making powers and would remain in force.

4. Winter route diversion (West Fleet)

At the western end of the Fleet, the project team proposes to exclude access to part of the ordinary route during the winter to reduce the risk of disturbance to birds, in particular dark-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*), wintering on the Fleet and fields adjoining the Fleet. This exclusion would operate between 1st October and 28th February each year (the months when records show that this species is present in significant numbers).

The exclusion would affect the route between the new gate by Tiny Coppice (at the junction with New Barn Road) and the gate at the junction with the existing South West Coast Path at Rodden Hive (route sections LRR-6-S011 to LRR-6-S026 as shown on maps 6b-e). In the interests of clarity and cohesion the project team further proposes that access to the land between this part of the route and the buffer zone described in proposal 4 should be excluded during the same period, as indicated by the relevant exclusion zone on maps 6b and 6c.

An alternative route would operate when this exclusion is in operation between Horsepool Farm (map 6b) and Rodden Hive (map 6e) as indicated by the orange line on maps 6f and 6g. Fingerposts at Horsepool Farm and Rodden Hive would be changed at the beginning and end of the exclusion period to direct people along the route in operation at the time. The initial purchase and installation costs for these signs would be met by Natural England's coastal access project team as part of the establishment works to prepare the route for use. The local authority would maintain them in line with national standards that apply to all National Trails.

The winter diversion arrangement described above is a precautionary approach which would be subject to review if new evidence should emerge concerning the distribution of the geese on the site and/or their sensitivity to public access on foot. Review is a statutory requirement for all directions that would exclude access annually for any period of more than five years and in this case would entail a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

5. Physical barriers to access

The route described in (1) above is wherever practicable landward of an existing field boundary such as a fence or hedge, which would discourage people from approaching the areas of sensitivity more closely and would prevent their dogs from doing so.

Some sections of the proposed route are not separated from the excluded areas by field boundaries. In these places the project team proposes to erect new post and wire fences designed to achieve the same purpose. These are shown on maps 6c and d. These fences would be fitted with sheep netting and a single (top) strand of barbed wire to prevent dogs from crossing them.

Existing boundaries would be strengthened in specific places, in order to further discourage people leaving the proposed route at these points:

- new fence and vehicle gate at the junction of route sections LRR-6-S020 and LRR-6-S021 across the track leading past South Slight Coppice to the landing stage on West Fleet below it (see map 6d of the Annex);
- repairs to existing wall and hedgerow to strengthen those boundaries at the junction of route sections LRR-6-S017 and LRR-6-S018 where the proposed route would enter Berry Coppice from the south.

At times when the winter route diversion described in (4) is in operation, gates at Tiny Coppice and Rodden Hive would be padlocked to discourage unauthorised access along excluded sections of the route.

The initial purchase and installation costs for these measures that would be met by Natural England's coastal access project team as part of the establishment works to prepare the route for use. The local authority would maintain them in line with national standards that apply to all National Trails.

6. Public information

People are more likely to support and observe the new access arrangements if they are clearly explained and justified. To this end the project team proposes that there should be information boards in places along the route where people join the trail and/or arrive at the Fleet, to make them aware of the extent of their rights, the nature conservation interests and how to further the conservation effort. Where existing information boards are satisfactory for this purpose they would be retained. Where they are not, new ones would be provided as part of the England Coast Path establishment works.

The project team also proposes to post shorter, smaller notices in places along the route between Horsepool Farm and Rodden Hive where there are private access routes into areas that would be excluded to the public (see 3 above) such as field gates, horse jumps and the track to the landing stage at Morkham Lake. These notices would remind the public of the extent of their rights and, in particular, when the winter diversion described in (4) is in operation.

The exact location of the boards and notices would be determined in consultation with Dorset County Council, land managers and other local interests.

Some information at other key points in the wider coastal margin may also be beneficial for the same reason – for example to explain access arrangements at the Boundary Stone on Chesil Bank, where the warden reports that the existing information is inadequate. The project team would discuss this with the warden and other interests in due course.

The project team further proposes to provide information about the local access arrangements to local accommodation providers and other people and organisations that promote the reserve as a destination to the general public, so that they and their customers are aware of the new access arrangements and limitations. The project team would discuss with local information providers how best to provide this information.

The initial purchase and installation costs for signs and notices would be met by Natural England's coastal access project team as part of the establishment works to prepare the route for use. The local authority would maintain them in line with national standards that apply to all National Trails.

7. Monitoring

The project team proposes that visitor use should be monitored at particular places along the route between Horsepool Road and Rodden Hive.

The purpose of the monitoring would be to:

- make a baseline assessment of access to the land before access rights are introduced; and
- measure change following the introduction of rights.

Doing so would help assess the public benefit from the introduction of new access arrangements and inform future statutory review of the access exclusions described in proposals 3 and 4 above.

The places where monitoring is conducted would be decided in discussion with Natural England's responsible officer and representatives of the land owner. Our working assumption is to install beam counters in places along both the proposed route and the proposed alternative route (winter diversion).

We would expect this monitoring to continue for an initial period of 2 years, with the option to extend subject to the views of interested parties. Costs would be met by the Natural England's coastal access project team.

Section 2: PREDICTED CHANGE IN PUBLIC USE OF AREA

[For completion only if the Responsible Officer has initial concerns about the potential impact of the new access proposal on our conservation objectives]

How do visitors already use the site?

2.1 Chesil Bank and the Fleet are iconic features of the internationally famous Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, are partly situated within the West Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and lie close to the resort town of Weymouth and its suburbs. Part is managed as a nature reserve with restricted access arrangements in places where there are no statutory rights. In terms of current recreational activity this part of the appraisal divides the site into three sections:

- the inland shore of the Mid and East Fleet, from Ferrybridge to Rodden Hive;
- the inland shore of the West Fleet from Rodden Hive to Abbotsbury;
- Chesil Bank, from Chiswell Cove to West Bay

Fleet shoreline, Ferrybridge to Rodden Hive

2.2 By car, the only promoted public access point to this part of the Fleet shoreline is the car park at Ferrybridge at the southeastern end of Chesil Bank (map 9a), where there is a visitor centre promoting the wildlife interest of the reserve. It is also possible to park quite close to the inland shore of the Fleet in various places between Ferrybridge and Rodden Hive, but these are not promoted as public access points to the Fleet.

2.3 Land adjoining the Fleet is readily accessible on foot along public rights of way leading from the southwestern suburbs of Weymouth and outlying villages, and from the many nearby camping and caravan sites and other tourist accommodation including the Moonfleet Manor Hotel (map 7c).

2.4 The South West Coast Path provides managed and promoted year round access on foot along this part of the Fleet. A temporary diversion operates at Chickerell range (Tidmoor point) when the firing range is in use (see map 8a).

- 2.5 The visitor count at Rodden Hive averaged 13,006 annually between 2009 and 2012. Approximately 75% of visits occurred between April and September inclusive. There is no direct comparison available for other locations between these years, but counts at five monitored locations on the West Dorset stretch of the coast path in 2007 ranged from 13995 (at Langton Hive) to 716,444 (at Charmouth bridge). Visit levels along the Fleet probably vary according to ease of access but remain at the lower end of this range. Rodden Hive counts also show considerable seasonal variation typical of the coast path with monthly counts ranging from 1247 to 2157 during April to September and from 280 to 932 during October to March (2009-2012 figures courtesy of Dorset County Council).
- 2.6 Access closer to the shoreline and to the water itself (seaward of the Coast Path) is generally discouraged with information boards at main arrival points and notices all along the shore to Rodden Hive. Campsites and other accommodation providers in the area appear to market the Fleet as a nature area on their websites and do not encourage people to walk off the Coast Path.
- 2.7 The reserve manager reports that:
- access to moored boats is tolerated, mainly as a means for people to cross the Fleet to Chesil Bank to fish;
 - shore-angling in the Fleet is poor, which probably limits visits to the Fleet for this purpose;
 - shore-angling and bait-digging in the Fleet are tolerated in particular places but not others;
 - various other unauthorised activities - chiefly walking and dog walking, both on and off lead - nevertheless occur on some parts of the shoreline;
 - the frequency of such activities is higher in places where access to the shore is a short distance from a road, track, path, hotel or campsite, and highest of all on the East Fleet closest to Weymouth;
 - the highest reported frequency of such activities is between 100 and 200 a month, on the East Fleet, at Pirates Cove;
 - The Fleet is attractive as a place for people to bring dogs to swim and exercise, but not as a place for people to swim.

A full breakdown of these observations and estimates is given on page 27 of an unpublished 2014 report.

West Fleet shoreline, Abbotsbury to Rodden Hive

- 2.8 There is no public means of access to the Fleet shoreline between Abbotsbury and Rodden Hive. Those interested in visiting this part of the Fleet are invited to apply to the warden's office on the nature reserve website.
- 2.9 From the east, at Rodden Hive the Coast Path cuts inland over a kilometre from the shoreline before returning to the open coast at the western end of the Fleet near Abbotsbury and continuing westwards in the direction of West Bay.
- 2.10 At Abbotsbury there is a car park within walking distance of the western end of the Fleet, but access to the lagoon is restricted to paying visitors to the Swannery or by prior arrangement with the reserve. There is a short promoted circular walk from Abbotsbury to St Catherine's Chapel, which is on the other side of the coast path from the Fleet.
- 2.11 On this part of the Fleet shoreline, where there is no statutory or permitted access, the reserve manager reports that unauthorised access occurs less than 10 times a month. At Brook East (adjacent to Rodden Hive on map 7a), the nearest point at which the South West Coast Path runs adjacent to the Fleet shoreline, he reports that it occurs between 10 and 49 times a month.

Chesil Bank, Chiswell Cove to West Bay

- 2.12 The southeastern end of Chesil Bank from Chiswell Cove on Portland to the Boundary Stone opposite Littlesea (see maps 8b-c and 9a-b) is a registered common which is accessible by right on foot. During the bird breeding season visitors may be asked to avoid areas of the inner (Fleet) face of the bank where birds are nesting. This part of Chesil bank is readily accessible from the Visitor Centre carpark at Ferrybridge and is more visited, in particular by bird watchers and anglers. However, the physical challenges of walking along the shingle bank act as a natural deterrent to public use which increases with distance from the access points at either end.
- 2.13 From the Boundary Stone westwards to Abbotsbury (see maps 6a-e, 7a-d and 8a) there is no access to the inner part of Chesil Bank at any time, other than for personal safety, or by people crossing the Fleet by boat to fish on the outer bank). Those interested in visiting this part of the Bank are invited to apply to the warden's office on the nature reserve website. Access along the outer (seaward) face of the bank is permitted between September 1st and 30th April. These arrangements are advertised at the Boundary Stone. There are fencing and signs at the west (Abbotsbury) end of Chesil Bank discouraging trespass and the reserve and swannery staff actively enforce these arrangements.
- 2.14 The reserve manager reports that:
- people making authorised use of the outer bank are generally fishing or walking the whole bank from Portland to Abbotsbury;
 - between 20 and 50 unauthorised visits to Chesil Bank occur each year, typically people seeking shelter or easier walking from the outer bank;
 - organised and commercial activities occur, generally by prior arrangement with the reserve management.
- 2.15 From Abbotsbury westwards to West Bay, which is the western end of the Chesil and the Fleet SSSI and SAC, the South West Coast Path runs along the shingle beach or on low cliffs just above it (see maps 4a-b and 5a-e), providing ready access to the beach and foreshore for locals and holiday makers. There are car parks at Abbotsbury (see map 5e), West Bexington (map 5c) Hive Beach And Cogden Beach (map 5a), and West Bay (map 4a) and holiday accommodation within walking distance of the beach in these and other places, including Freshwater Beach Holiday Park (see maps 4a-b).

Sources: Draft 5 – Chesil Bank and the Fleet Lagoon – Coastal Access: Unpublished Report by Don Moxom (Warden, Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve) October 2014

How is the new access proposal likely to affect use of this site by the public?

- 2.16 The area is already promoted by a number of voluntary bodies and businesses on the web. Whilst the west end of Chesil Beach between Abbotsbury and West Bay is marketed as a traditional tourist destination, local tourist providers trade on the image of the Fleet as a tranquil and sensitive natural environment. There is no reason to suppose that this image would be undermined by our proposals and it can be reinforced through carefully targeted additional public information (proposal 6 in section A).

Fleet shoreline, Ferrybridge to Rodden Hive

- 2.17 The project team confidently expects no significant change in the levels or patterns of public access on the inner shore of the Fleet, but there may be, as a result of limited physical improvements to the Coast Path, be a modest decrease in unauthorised activity on the intertidal areas of this part of the lagoon which would be beneficial to nature conservation interests. The reasons for this judgement are explained below.
- 2.18 The extent of access rights would be broadly consistent with those currently available. There would be access rights along the Coast Path and to limited areas between the Coast Path and the lagoon at

Littlesea Holiday Park – see map 8b – and Ferry Bridge – see maps 8c and 9a, but access to the foreshore and open water of the Fleet would be excluded (see Section A, proposal 3). The coast path would be unchanged except for minor alterations at Littlesea and Pirates Cove (see Section A, proposal 1).

2.19 We expect that, in spite of the exclusion, unauthorised access to the foreshore would continue in places where it is easy to reach from the Coast Path because it would continue to be attractive in places as a walking route when the tide is out and as a place for dogs to swim and exercise. We would expect modest localised decrease in such activity as a result of:

- the new section of path on the low cliffs above Pirates Cove (see map 8c and proposal 1 in section A), which we expect most people to favour over the current beach route, in particular at high tides;
- improvements to directional signs along the coast path (proposal 1 in section A), for example at Gore Cove (see map 7b), which aim to discourage people mistakenly following other existing walked routes that pass more closely to parts of the foreshore used by birds for roosting and feeding;
- carefully targeted public information explaining the nature conservation value and sensitivity of the lagoon (proposal 6 in section A);
- improvements to the surface of the coast path planned as part of the physical establishment of the route (proposal 1 in section A), which would make it more convenient and therefore attractive to walk on than the foreshore in places where it is improved.

West Fleet shoreline, Rodden Hive to Abbotsbury

2.20 The project team expects an increase in numbers of people visiting this part of the Fleet as a result of our proposals following opening of the new route. The reasons for this judgement are explained below.

2.22 The new coast path route between Rodden Hive and Abbotsbury would be closer to the lagoon, but still a minimum of one field's width from the shoreline. We would expect an initial increase in the frequency of visits as local people explore the new route and enthusiasts from other places return to the area to sample it. We would expect this increase to peak between April 1st and September 30th of the first year of operation and tail off in subsequent years as the new route becomes better known and established.

2.23 The new coast path route would give significantly better views of the lagoon, Chesil beach and the sea. In addition it would form, in conjunction with the underlying public rights of way which the South West Coast Path currently follows between Horsepool Farm and Rodden Hive, a potential circular route may attract local people and tourists looking for day walks – but only between April 1st and September 30th, when both routes would be available for use (see Section A, proposal 4). There is a car park at Abbotsbury and more limited, unadvertised parking places at Langton Herring and along New Barn Lane (east of Horsepool Farm) from which to start such a walk. There are no plans to promote the circular route. We would therefore expect an increase in the frequency of visits in the medium to long-term as people discover this possibility by word of mouth, social media etc. There is no reliable means to predict the scale of the increases described above, but local authority staff agree with the project team that any overall increase in visitor numbers is very unlikely to exceed twenty percent of recent visitor numbers (see paragraph 2.5 for recent figures).

2.24 The majority of visitors are expected to be relatively well-organised, able and experienced walkers because such a walk involves a commitment of several hours and because there are shorter circular walks from both Abbotsbury and Langton Herring that would be more attractive to less able or experienced walkers. There are other parts of the Fleet and neighbouring coastlines that are more readily accessible in relation to car parks and holiday accommodation. These places are more attractive in general to people less willing to walk for more than an hour or so such as families and local people who wish to exercise their dog. The quiet waters of the Fleet are a potentially attractive destination to people with canoes and paddleboards. However, we would not expect such people to be attracted by the proposed new section of route between Abbotsbury and Rodden Hive

because there are other places closer to car parks further east along the Fleet from which to launch. The project team is confident in these assumptions on the basis of professional knowledge and experience and views expressed by local authority officers with professional knowledge of the area.

- 2.25 The project team does not expect long-distance and day walkers to stray off the path as frequently as people seeking a shorter walk or walking primarily to exercise their dogs. Nevertheless people walking along the new route may be tempted to take a short detour, for example to view the lagoon from close quarters, to watch birds or to let their dogs bathe or drink particularly on hot days. Dogs running off lead may approach the Fleet even while the people they are with stick to the marked route. The factors most likely to influence this behaviour are in our analysis the distance between the path and the open water, visible/established private access routes to and from the shoreline, presence/absence of physical barriers or impediments to access such as field boundaries and gates, wet ground or dense vegetation cover. The project team is confident in these assumptions on the basis of professional knowledge and experience and views expressed by local authority officers with professional knowledge of the area.
- 2.26 In order to prevent adverse effects on protected sites and features that might result from more access from the coast path in the direction of the Fleet, the project team proposes measures to deter unauthorised access in that direction, including statutory exclusions, physical barriers in places where it is most likely and public information to explain the reasons for these measures (see proposals 3, 5 and 6 in section A). In winter a path diversion will operate between Rodden Hive and Horsepool Farm along the existing route of the South West Coast Path (see Section A, proposal 4).
- 2.27 These measures are not expected to eliminate unauthorised access. They are designed to prevent any significant increase in the overall levels of access – taking into account access for purposes authorised by the land owner – to the sensitive areas as a result of the new route. Better information may result in a modest reduction in unauthorised access as public understanding of the protection measures increases.

Chesil Bank

- 2.28 The project team confidently expects no significant change in the levels or patterns of public access on Chesil Bank as a result of its proposals. There may be, as a result of any improvements to public information about the access arrangements that apply (see Section A, proposal 5), be a slight decrease in unauthorised activity on the most sensitive part of the bank between Abbotsbury Beach car park (map 6a) and the Boundary Stone (map 8b). The reasons for this judgement are explained below.
- 2.29 Physical access to the beach would not be improved. It is already readily accessible from several places between West Bay and Abbotsbury car park, challenging between Abbotsbury car park and Ferrybridge and easily accessible between Ferrybridge and Chiswell Cove on Portland.
- 2.30 Existing access rights to the urban common at the east end of the bank would be unaffected.
- 2.31 Access rights to the outer bank between Abbotsbury and the Boundary Stone would mirror current reserve policy. There would be no new access rights to the inner bank (see Section A, proposal 2).
- 2.32 There is likely to be a modest increase in the number of visitors walking along Cogden Beach as a result of the proposed modification to the existing coast path there. However, the modification is designed to reflect and consolidate existing patterns of use.

Access case officer

Signed: 	Name: Andrew Chester	Date: 25 June 2015
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Section 3: POTENTIAL IMPACT ON FEATURES FROM NEW ACCESS PROPOSAL

Designated site name(s): Chesil and the Fleet SSSI and SAC, Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA and Ramsar

	SPA	p/SPA	SAC	p/SAC	Ramsar	p/Ramsar	SSSI
Designation types present (show boundaries on map)	X		X		X		X

Potential concern about new access proposal (summary)

Any potential change to levels and patterns of access on this site raises particular concerns about the following potential effects on habitats and species known to be sensitive to public access on foot:

- Changes in the extent and distribution of lagoon flora and fauna on the Fleet, which evidence shows is vulnerable to trampling, abrasion, smothering and siltation that occurs when people or dogs enter the water.
- Changes in the extent and distribution of shingle vegetation along Chesil Bank between West Bay and Chiswell Cove, where evidence shows that existing levels and patterns of access have had a cumulative effect through trampling.
- Changes to the populations and distribution of ground-nesting birds along the inner (Fleet-facing) Chesil Bank between Abbotsbury and Ferrybridge, in respect of which evidence shows that any significant increase in public access may reduce breeding success, through repeated disturbance, or physical trampling.
- Changes to the populations and distribution of wintering birds on the Fleet, its shoreline and adjoining fields, in respect of which evidence shows the presence of people or dogs can cause disturbance, resulting in reduced feeding/resting time and/or loss of suitable available habitat for these activities.

Concerns about existing public use and action already taken to address this (summary)

Concerns over the effect of trampling on the extent and distribution of SAC vegetation communities and the disturbance of ground nesting birds on the shingle and wintering birds using the Fleet led the owners to the exclusion of access on the inner slope of the Chesil Bank from the Boundary Stone to Abbotsbury.

Temporary fencing, wardening and education are deployed to manage disturbance at the nesting colony site of the Little Terns but is dependent on sourcing funding. This is currently undertaken by a partnership project managed by RSPB with some paid seasonal wardens and volunteers.

The Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve maintains a wardening presence and monitors and deters unauthorised access to areas of foreshore along the Fleet where there are concerns over disturbance to roosting/feeding birds, fossil collection and trampling of sensitive vegetation.

Awareness raising events and measures are used by National Trust at Cogden and West Bexington to educate on the effects of dog faeces on the environment including on the grassland and shingle plants. The local authority dog warden has been active for similar reasons at the Bridging Hard and Pirates Cove area. Signage is used throughout the Nature Reserve to remind the public of the sensitivities of the area.

Key sensitive features relevant to site (detail)

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
Coastal lagoon H1150 SAC, SSSI, Ramsar	<p>The Fleet is the largest lagoon in England, and supports the greatest diversity of habitats and species of any lagoon in the UK (Bamber 1997), including a number that are nationally rare, scarce and protected. The Fleet supports 15 specialist lagoonal species, five nationally scarce wetland plants and ten nationally scarce wetland animals (Ramsar).</p> <p>The component features of the lagoon, particularly the areas of intertidal seagrass, shingle, mudflats and highly unusual and notable associated species (including Lagoon sand shrimp <i>Gammarus insensibilis</i>, and a number of lagoon molluscs are highly sensitive to removal, smothering, siltation, abrasion and nutrient / organic enrichment, which could be caused by visitors and dogs accessing the shore and entering the water.</p>	<p>The proposed year round exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank (proposal 3) in conjunction with the physical measures proposed to deter visitors from straying off the coast path (Section A, proposals 5 and 6) is expected to prevent any significant increase in damage to the lagoon's flora and fauna. At certain points (e.g. Herbury, Gore Cove) there may be slight increase in the level of protection as a result of changes to the route or improvements to signs.</p>
Annual vegetation of drift lines H1210 SAC	<p>Ephemeral vegetation composed of annual or short-lived perennial species found at or above mean high water spring tides. This vegetation's range includes any shingle beach which is stable and relatively undisturbed during the spring/summer months and has a nearby source of seed that can be trapped in organic material deposited on the tide line. The presence of the habitat is totally reliant on the natural processes that shape the beach. The maintenance of natural geomorphological structure and function and annual production of adequate seed are critical if the habitat is to be regularly renewed.</p> <p>This vegetation is found extensively along the inner shore of the Chesil Bank where the beach is most undisturbed and patchily in a narrow band or in a mosaic with saltmarsh along the landward shore. It appears to exist in a dynamic equilibrium with the Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrub community and replaces the scrub in areas subject to natural disturbance, and is in turn displaced by the scrub after natural disturbance ceases. Disturbance here means natural processes and both communities are sensitive to harvesting, trampling and abrasion by people.</p> <p>Human disturbance such as trampling, beach cleaning and recreational use are limiting the extent of this type of habitat in the UK.</p>	<p>Current access controls on the part of Chesil Bank adjoining the Fleet appear to offer protection from trampling on the annual vegetation there. This is suggested by the extent of this habitat at this location and a contrast can be easily observed on stretches of the beach with more access. This may also to some extent reflect the physical difficulty of reaching the well-vegetated areas.</p> <p>The proposed statutory exclusions (proposal 3) would mirror the existing controls and should therefore offer adequate protection in conjunction with physical measures at vulnerable points to deter unauthorised access (proposals 5 and 6).</p> <p>These physical measures include clearer route signs at Gore Cove and Herbury where there is evidence that people stray off the path into sensitive areas. These may slightly improve the level of protection to the vegetation.</p>
Perennial vegetation of stony banks H1220 SAC Including SD1 Rumex crispus – Glaucium flavum shingle community SSSI, Ramsar	<p>This classification includes vegetation of more stable shingle with a range of successional vegetation communities from short-lived perennials through to maritime grasslands and scrub communities. This vegetation is found extensively along the inner shore of the Chesil Bank where it runs along the lagoon. The restrictions that have been in place through its declaration as a nature reserve and the wardening that has been in place for decades mean that this area is relatively undisturbed and contains the most stable and diverse vegetation (including lichens on the pebbles) of this type along the beach. The vegetation continues along Chesil Bank to the east and west of the Fleet where at access hotspots it is noticeably sparser although maintains a good extent in areas more distant from car parks. This vegetation is sensitive to harvesting and abrasion from trampling, vehicular access, other recreational or commercial activities such as boat storage.</p>	<p>Current access restrictions along the part of Chesil Bank adjoining the Fleet would be mirrored by the proposals (Section A, proposal 3). Signs and notices would be updated which may slightly improve the situation leading to less trespass than currently experienced (proposals 1 and 6).</p> <p>On other parts of the beach to the east and west of the Fleet access on the existing route of the South West Coast Path is established with hot spots at points with car parking such as Chiswell Cove, Fleetsbridge, Abbotsbury, West Bexington, Burton Bradstock and West Bay. This is not expected to change significantly as a result of the access proposals.</p> <p>There is a change to the existing coast path route at Burton Mere/Cogden which reflects current public use of the back of the beach. The modest increase in levels of access and walkers predicted in paragraph 2.32 of the Appraisal is not likely to have a significant effect on the extent and distribution of the shingle vegetation.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
<p>Atlantic Salt Meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) H1330 SAC</p> <p>Including SM14 Halimione portulacoides salt-marsh community and SM8 Annual Glasswort Salicornia salt-marsh community SSSI</p>	<p>This vegetation type is found scattered or in a mosaic along the Fleet shore line, on the inner Chesil Bank and on the Fleet landward shore. It is sensitive to harvesting, trampling and abrasion.</p>	<p>Current access restrictions to the inner Chesil bank along the Fleet would be mirrored by proposal 3. Signage would be updated which may slightly improve the situation leading to less trespass than currently experienced (proposals 1 and 6).</p> <p>For the landward shore the extent of the proposed exclusions seaward of the route (proposal 3) offer adequate protection in conjunction with the proposed signs and physical barriers along the new West Fleet section of the route (proposals 5 and 6).</p>
<p>Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrub (Sarcocornetea fruticosi) H1420 SAC</p> <p>Including SM25 Suaeda vera drift-line community SSSI</p>	<p>This community forms a clear zone between the Fleet and the shingle vegetation particularly on the inner Chesil Bank but can also be found on the landward shore of the Fleet. It appears to exist in a dynamic equilibrium with the Annual Vegetation of driftlines. This replaces the scrub in areas subject to natural disturbance, and is in turn displaced by the scrub after natural disturbance ceases. Disturbance here means natural processes and both communities are sensitive to harvesting, trampling and abrasion.</p>	<p>Current access restrictions to the inner Chesil bank along the Fleet would be mirrored by proposal 3. Signs would be updated which may slightly improve the situation leading to less trespass than currently experienced (proposals 1 and 6).</p> <p>On the landward shore the proposed year round exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank (proposal 3) would offer adequate protection in conjunction with the proposed measures to deter visitors from straying off the path (proposals 5 and 6).</p>
<p>Little tern Sternula albifrons SPA, SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>The breeding colony of little tern at Chesil declined from a maximum of 100 pairs in 1997 to 10 pairs in 2008. A recovery project is in place and is increasing numbers again. The colony is currently site faithful to an area within the common land at the east of the Fleet Lagoon although they previously bred further west along the Chesil Bank.</p>	<p>The access proposals would not affect the current area of the colony within unit 2 which is already subject to open access rights and managed effectively by a partnership led by the RSPB in conjunction with volunteers.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact														
<p>Wintering population: dark-bellied brent goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i></p> <p>Ramsar</p>	<p>The wintering population of brent geese arrives in October. Most birds in recent years had left the area by the beginning of March. (Underhill-Day et al June 2014) They roost at night close to the Chesil visitor centre at the east end of the Fleet. During the day they move about the site foraging for sea grasses within the Fleet. They also graze arable crops and grassland on the Fleet Hinterland.</p> <p>Brent geese began overwintering on the site in increasing numbers in the late 1980s with consistently high numbers throughout the 1990s.</p> <p>The current conservation status of dark-bellied brent goose is of some concern. The last five years' peak counts from the WeBS count area known as 'Fleet and Wey' (BTO reference 12901) show the following:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="341 600 855 824"> <thead> <tr> <th>Winter season</th> <th>Peak count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2009/10</td> <td>2190</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010/11</td> <td>2416</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2011/12</td> <td>1999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012/13</td> <td>1582</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013/14</td> <td>1290</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Five year peak mean (5YPM)</td> <td>1895</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(Holt <i>et al.</i> 2015)</p> <p>This compares to the Favourable Condition Table (version, date) population abundance threshold of 2497 that is set to describe 'Favourable' condition for this feature.</p> <p>The dark-bellied brent goose population trend has been evaluated via the BTO's WeBS Alerts methodology for this SPA (Cook <i>et al.</i> 2013).</p> <p>This shows that the change in population abundance between 1984/85 and 2009/10 is +57% over the short-term (5 years), +54% over the medium term (10 years) and +225% over the long-term (up to 25 years).</p> <p>The population trend on the site appears to be similar to the national trend, at least during the period of the most recent WeBS alerts report, up to 2009/10.</p> <p>Concerns over current conservation status at this site are around the most recent three years only. This is not a long time scale for long-lived migratory waterbirds, whose population dynamics will be influenced by many factors.</p> <p>Yearly WeBS counts and the next WeBS Alert report, (due Spring 2016), will be used in future discussions over conservation status.</p> <p>A recent report (Liley <i>et al.</i>; May 2015) found that significant numbers of birds are using the West Fleet in particular between Langton Hive Point and Rodden Hive Point and adjacent fields between Rodden Hive and Morkhams Lake Landing Stage. Geese feeding in the fields were disturbed and tended to take flight when the observer approached within 300m, usually settling on the Fleet.</p> <p>A site specific disturbance study (Liley <i>et al.</i>; March 2015), showed that 33% of potential disturbance events invoked a response from brent geese. It also concluded that that the probability of a bird being disturbed declined with distance "such that at 150m the probability is around 0.05 (i.e. 1 in 20 observations predicted to cause disturbance)".</p> <p>It is not known whether geese become more tolerant of particular types of disturbance if they occur regularly in the same place.</p>	Winter season	Peak count	2009/10	2190	2010/11	2416	2011/12	1999	2012/13	1582	2013/14	1290	Five year peak mean (5YPM)	1895	<p>It is not possible to rule out the possibility of increased disturbance to feeding and roosting geese on the West Fleet and adjoining fields where they have been observed, from public use of the proposed route. Concerns centre on the potential for increased disturbance to geese on the fields between South Slight Coppice and Rodden Hive (maps 6d and 6e). There are also concerns about the potential for disturbance to geese in the fields between the Berry Knap and the Fleet (map 6d).</p> <p>The proposed winter diversion of this part of the route (proposal 4) fully addresses these concerns in conjunction with the physical measures (proposals 1 and 6) to discourage unauthorised access along the excluded part of the route during the affected period.</p>
Winter season	Peak count															
2009/10	2190															
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Five year peak mean (5YPM)	1895															

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact														
<p>Aggregations of non-breeding birds: wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>The overwintering population of wigeon in the Fleet builds from September, reaching a peak in mid-winter and drops sharply in March. (Underhill-Day et al June 2014)</p> <p>The current conservation status of wigeon is unlikely to be of concern on this site. The last five years' peak counts from the WeBS count area known as 'Fleet and Wey' (BTO reference 12901) show the following:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="325 421 1059 645"> <thead> <tr> <th>Winter season</th> <th>Peak count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2009/10</td> <td>5131</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010/11</td> <td>8244</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2011/12</td> <td>2813</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012/13</td> <td>1886</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013/14</td> <td>2810</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Five year peak mean (5YPM)</td> <td>4177</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(Holt et al. 2015)</p> <p>This compares to the Favourable Condition Table (version, date) population abundance threshold of 2000 that is set to describe 'Favourable' condition for this feature. However, the counts from the area of 'Fleet and Wey' do include areas outside the designated site. At the time of any formal condition assessment, this would need to be taken into account.</p> <p>The wigeon population trend has not been evaluated via the BTO's WeBS Alerts methodology for this SPA (Cook et al. 2013).</p> <p>Wigeon feed on aquatic plants as well as grasses and rhizomes. The species is susceptible to recreational disturbance, including people walking (Mathers et al. 2000 – Birdlife.org).</p> <p>The recent survey report (Liley et al., March 2015) indicates that the West Fleet can hold a high proportion of the wigeon for The Fleet as a whole on occasion with most birds counted on the outer (south-western) shore of the Fleet behind Chesil Bank suggesting that they roost here and possibly fly out at night to feed on grassland to the east.</p> <p>Liley et al (May 2015) noted that wigeon were not easily disturbed in this area.</p> <p>Moxom (2014 and pers.comm.) also reports use by wigeon of the fields adjoining the route between Rodden Hive and Berry Coppice. It is not known with what frequency this occurs.</p>	Winter season	Peak count	2009/10	5131	2010/11	8244	2011/12	2813	2012/13	1886	2013/14	2810	Five year peak mean (5YPM)	4177	<p>There is already a risk of occasional disturbance to wigeon on the outer shore of the Fleet from unauthorised access there. Moxom (2014) estimates numbers of these events at 20 to 50 a year, which is not thought sufficient to cause a significant effect. This is 318m from the proposed route at its closest point (Berry Knap), which evidence suggests is a sufficient distance to avoid disturbance to birds at this location (Liley et al, May 2015).</p> <p>Given anecdotal evidence of wigeon feeding or roosting on the fields adjoining the route, there is also a possibility of increased disturbance from public use of the proposed route. Evidence suggests that the route would be close enough for people using it to cause disturbance to wigeon on these fields unless screened (Underhill-Day, May 2015; Liley et al, May 2015).</p> <p>Concerns have also been raised that disturbance at both locations would leave birds fewer options for safe feeding, resulting in a loss of energy that might be significant, particularly in severe weather.</p> <p>The proposed winter diversion of this part of the route (proposal 4) fully addresses these concerns in conjunction with the physical measures (proposals 1 and 6) to discourage unauthorised access along the excluded part of the route during the affected period.</p>
Winter season	Peak count															
2009/10	5131															
2010/11	8244															
2011/12	2813															
2012/13	1886															
2013/14	2810															
Five year peak mean (5YPM)	4177															
<p>Breeding population and aggregations of non-breeding birds: mute swan <i>Cygnus olor</i> SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>The Fleet is of national and international importance for the wintering mute swan population and national importance for the breeding population.</p> <p>The Abbotsbury Swannery is the base for breeding birds where they are fed although some individual pairs nest along the West Fleet land and Chesil shores.</p> <p>Concerns have been raised that at breeding and moulting times swans are vulnerable to disturbance or attack by dogs because they cannot fly away. Moulting swans can be encountered anywhere along the Fleet shoreline but they are known to favour Morkhams Lake (Moxom 2014).</p> <p>Non breeding birds forage in the west and mid Fleet on the sea grasses. 80% of the wintering population is dependent on the Abbotsbury to Rodden Hive section. (Underhill-Day et al June 2014). The swans will drink freshwater at stream outlets along the shore for example at Rodden Hive. (Moxom 2014) In harsh winters when natural foodstuff is not available the swans are artificially fed at Clouds Hill.</p>	<p>The proposed exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank, would offer adequate protection along with the proposed fencing and gates to act as physical barriers between the path, where people may be accompanied by dogs, and the Fleet shoreline.</p> <p>Current access restrictions to the inner Chesil bank along the Fleet would be mirrored by proposal 3 offering protection to any swans nesting or moulting on the Chesil shore. Signs may be updated where necessary which may slightly improve the situation leading to less trespass than currently experienced (proposals 1 and 6).</p>														

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
Aggregations of breeding birds: ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> SSSI	<p>Ringed plover are known to nest on bare or sparsely vegetated areas of muddy sand or shingle along the shore of the lagoon particularly on the Chesil Bank and in recent years some within or adjacent to the little tern colony fenced area. Since designation breeding pairs have been in substantial decline (a trend found at other sites and reflected in a national decline).</p> <p>As a beach nester, this species is highly sensitive to the presence of visitors that can lead to disturbance, trampling of nests and/or eggs, and chick mortality. Most ringed plovers in southern and eastern England now breed in protected areas due to human usage of other suitable nesting sites (Underhill-Day et al, 2014).</p>	<p>Current access restrictions year round to the inner Chesil bank and in spring/summer to the outer bank would be mirrored by proposal 3 in section A offering protection to any ringed plover nesting on the Chesil shore and signage would be updated. It is thought unlikely that current levels of access would increase under this proposal, because there is no proposal to promote access along Chesil Bank and in addition the physical difficulties of walking on the shingle bank deter the majority of people.</p> <p>It is not thought that ringed plover nest on the Fleet landward shore, but in that event the proposed year round exclusion between the route and the crest of Chesil Bank (proposal 3 in section A) would offer adequate protection along with the proposed measures to deter visitors from straying off the path (proposals 5 and 6).</p>
Assemblages of breeding birds: lowland open waters and their margins SSSI	<p>These birds utilise the areas of sediment along the shore and in shallow water, as well as the lagoon and adjacent fen, marsh and swamp habitat (mainly reedbeds), vegetated shingle, saltmarsh and wet woodland as supporting habitat.</p> <p>At notification the scoring species were mute swan, shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>, gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>, water rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>, moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>, coot <i>Fulica atra</i>, oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>, lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>, ringed plover, redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>, common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>, little tern, grey heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>, cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>, bearded tit (bearded parrotbill) <i>Panarus biarmicus</i>, Cetti's warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>, sedge warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>, reed warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>, marsh warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>, grasshopper warbler <i>Locustella naevia</i> and reed bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>. The diversity of the assemblage and supporting habitats are sensitive to disturbance and trampling caused by an increase in human and canine access.</p>	<p>The year round exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank (proposal 3 in section A), would offer adequate protection along with the proposed measures to deter visitors and dogs from straying off the path (proposals 5 and 6).</p>
Population of RDB cricket – <i>Pseudomogoplistes squamiger</i>¹ scaly cricket SSSI and Ramsar	<p>This small flightless cricket lives amongst shingle, under rocks and beach debris above the high water mark. It emerges at night and probably feeds on decaying animal and plant material on the strandline. <i>Pseudomogoplistes</i> is known to be abundant under coarse shingle at the eastern end of the beach (Timmins, 1997) but may well be more widespread along the beach. Colonies are sensitive to human disturbance and marine pollution.</p>	<p>The proposal would not cause any significant increase in visit levels along parts of the shingle bank where this species is known to be present, which are common land with open access.</p>
Invertebrate Assemblage W531, F11, F111 SSSI, Ramsar	<p>At notification these assemblages were scored</p> <p>F111 unshaded early successional mosaic (sand and chalk)</p> <p>F112 open short sward</p> <p>M311 saltmarsh and transition brackish marsh.</p> <p>Conservation measures are targeted to maintaining the habitats which are sensitive to trampling and abrasion.</p>	<p>The proposed exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank (proposal 3 in section A), would offer adequate protection along with the proposed measures to deter visitors from straying off the path.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
<p>Vascular Plant Assemblages SSSI, Ramsar</p>	<p>At notification the relevant nationally rare and scarce species were Supralittoral sediment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Allium ampeloprasum</i> var. <i>babingtonii</i> Babington's Leek ■ <i>Lathyrus japonicus</i> Sea Pea ■ <i>Limonium dodartiforme</i> Rock Sea-lavender ■ <i>Polycarpon tetraphyllum</i> Four-leaved Allseed ■ <i>Sarcocornia perennis</i> Perennial Glasswort ■ <i>Suaeda vera</i> Shrubby Seablite ■ <i>Trifolium squamosum</i> Sea Clover <p>Littoral sediment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Ruppia cirrhosa</i> Spiral Tassleweed ■ <i>Zostera noltii</i> Dwarf Eelgrass <p>'Open droughty grassland' (undercliffs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Lathyrus aphaca</i> Yellow Vetchling ■ <i>Lathyrus bithynica</i> Bithynian Vetch ■ <i>Vicia parviflora</i> Slender Tare <p>Wet grassland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Alopecurus bulbosus</i> Bulbous Foxtail ■ <i>Althaea officinalis</i> Marsh Mallow ■ <i>Carex divisa</i> Divided Sedge <p>These species are distributed throughout the site. Many of these species are sensitive to gathering, trampling and abrasion</p>	<p>The proposed year round exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank (Section A, proposal 3) in conjunction with the physical measures proposed to deter visitors from straying off the coast path (proposals 5 and 6) is expected to prevent any significant increase in damage.</p>
<p>Calcareous Grasslands CG2 and CG4 SSSI</p>	<p>Lowland calcareous grassland is characterised by vegetation dominated by grasses and herbs on shallow, well-drained soils which are base-rich. The grasslands support a very rich flora including many nationally rare and scarce species and a diverse invertebrate fauna as well as bird species such as skylarks and meadow pipits which are ground-nesters; and hares. The feature is sensitive to trampling and nutrient enrichment from dogs whilst the birds and hares are sensitive to disturbance from dogs in particular.</p> <p>Units supporting this feature are scattered along the proposed route.</p> <p>Bridging Hard Field unit 36 (to the SW of Wyke Regis this unit is already subject to a high number of local dog walkers coming from the urban area. The unit is in unfavourable condition due to nutrient enrichment from dogs as well as near abandonment.)</p> <p>Tidmoor Point unit 33 contains this feature within the active MoD training range.</p> <p>Chesters Hill unit 19 east of Shipmoor Point</p> <p>West Bexington field unit 12 west of the Reserve</p> <p>Cogden Slope unit 14 west of Burton Mere</p>	<p>The current proposal includes changes to the current path provision at Pirates Cove to the east of an area of this habitat which includes Bridging Hard field. Whilst there are concerns that existing access is contributing to the unfavourable condition of the designated features in this field, the present proposal would not result in any significant change to access levels or patterns in the designated area.</p> <p>At Tidmoor Point there is no change from existing access on the SW coast path and restrictions are in place during firing periods on the range when the path diverts around the back of the camp. The current path cuts through impenetrable scrub keeping walkers on the route.</p> <p>At Chesters Hill the proposed route is well away from the SSSI unit which is within the excluded area (Section A, proposal 3).</p> <p>At West Bexington the proposed route follows the SW coast path which bypasses West Bexington Field (Mere Field) but where adjoining footpaths at each end of the field are linked with footbridges. These appear to be well used as does a desire line between the two paths. There is no evidence that current usage has had an impact on the grassland.</p> <p>At Cogden Slope the proposed route follows the existing path at the bottom edge of the unit. However this intersects with a path and a track down through the unit from a National Trust car park and this is well used by local dog-walkers in particular. The National Trust has regular campaigns highlighting the need to pick up after dogs and a team of volunteer wardens.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
<p>Geological features; Callovian, Bathonian, Kimmeridgian, Oxfordian, Coastal geomorphology SSSI</p>	<p>Chesil Beach is one of the three major shingle structures in Britain and is of international importance for coastal geomorphology. The fossil-rich and stratigraphically important sequence of Jurassic strata exposed along the landward side of the Fleet adds further value to the site.</p> <p>The bank and low cliffs along the landward edge of the Fleet provide nationally important exposures of Middle and Upper Jurassic rocks. Bathonian rocks (Middle Jurassic) are exposed between Shipmoor Point and Butterstreet Cove including very fossiliferous Beds. Tidmoor Point, where part of the Middle Oxford Clay (of Callovian age) occurs, is famous for its fossils, particularly for pyritised ammonites, and is the definitive locality for some of the species present. Nationally important exposures of Oxfordian (Upper Jurassic) rocks occur at Lynch Cove, the definitive locality for the 'Red Nodule Bed'.</p> <p>Kimmeridgian rocks are well exposed between East Fleet and Small Mouth and important as the source of ammonites of the genus <i>Rasenia</i> and in the sub-division of the cymodoce Zone.</p> <p>The main sensitivity is from restriction of the geomorphological processes and from unsustainable fossil collecting.</p>	<p>The route proposal 1 in section A allows for roll back of the coast path where erosion and other coastal processes occur. This would enable the path to move back in response to movement of the shingle beach landward, keeping the path to the very back of the shingle and allowing geomorphological processes. This may be necessary west from Abbotsbury except where unsuitable habitat abuts the beach ie reedbed and swamp.</p> <p>The main concern would be from an increase in unauthorised access to the Fleet shoreline by unconsented fossil collectors. Currently fossil collectors are able to apply to the warden for access to areas normally excluded to the public and it is expected that these permissive arrangements would continue. This will help to remove the temptation that might otherwise exist to access such areas without permission.</p> <p>In addition, the proposed year round exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank (Section A, proposal 3) in conjunction with the physical measures proposed to deter visitors from straying off the coast path (proposals 5 and 6) is expected to prevent any significant increase in unauthorised access</p> <p>At the eastern part of the Fleet there is no change to current provision bar some improvements to encourage less access to the foreshore at places like Gore Cove and Herbury.</p>
<p>Non notified features: Woodland, scrub are supporting habitat for features listed above</p>	<p>The scrub and woodland are of importance to many species of bird and insect for shelter, breeding and food (SSSI citation).</p> <p>Berry Coppice is a willow carr wood with one compartment of previously coppiced ash with a ground flora which includes <i>Carex pendula</i> (Pendulous sedge) and <i>Oenanthe crocata</i> (Hemlock Water-dropwort). From condition assessment 2008 "the woods have good levels of dead wood habitat, and provide sanctuaries and nesting sites for birds of woodland and scrub amongst the surrounding open fields." Berry Coppice contains a large pheasant rearing pen.</p> <p>A recent report (Gartshore and Underhill-Day 2014) concluded "the inner edge of The Fleet could be part of an important migration route in autumn for birds moving along the coast from west to east. Reference to The Dorset Bird Reports suggests that the coast from Abbotsbury to Portland is an important migration route for scrub warblers in both spring and autumn, although observations specifically from Chesil are few with the exception of Abbotsbury.</p> <p>Scrub birds are unlikely to be disturbed as their habitat is dense, but disturbance to birds feeding on open ground adjacent to the shoreline could affect their ability to feed optimally when they need to build up fat reserves for migration.</p>	<p>The proposed route passes through Berry Coppice. The path would require a boardwalk as the wood is wet. The physical difficulty of walking elsewhere in the wood would deter people from straying off the path. It is not considered that there would be any significant effects from the proposal on migratory or breeding birds in the woodland. However, signs may be beneficial at the wood entrances to ask for people to keep dogs on the boardwalk, using leads if necessary.</p> <p>The proposed year round exclusion between the proposed route and the crest of Chesil Bank (Section A, proposal 3) in conjunction with the physical measures proposed to deter visitors from straying off the coast path (proposals 5 and 6) is expected to prevent any significant increase in disturbance to migrating birds.</p>

The following published sources are referenced in the table above:

A study of the impact of human disturbance on Wigeon *Anas penelope* and Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* on an Irish sea loch.

Mathers, R. G.; Watson, S.; Stone, R.; Montgomery, W. I. 2000: *Wildfowl* 51: 67-81.

Wetland Bird Survey Alerts 2009/2010: Changes in numbers of wintering waterbirds in the Constituent Countries of the United Kingdom, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Cook A.S.C.P., Barimore C., Holt C.A., Read W.J. & Austin G.E. 2013: BTO Research Report 641. BTO, Thetford.
<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs/publications/webs-annual-report>

Waterbirds in the UK 2013/14: The Wetland Bird Survey.

Holt C.A., Austin G.E., Calbrade N.A., Mellan H.J., Hearn R.D., Stroud D.A., Wotton S.R. and Musgrove A.J. 2015. BTO/RSPB/JNCC. Thetford.
<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs/publications/webs-annual-report>

The following unpublished sources are referenced in the table above:

Assessment of the probability of bird disturbance from a new Coastal path at The Fleet, Chesil (May 2015).

Underhill-Day, J: A report by Footprint Ecology to Natural England

Establishing patterns of usage by over-wintering birds within the West Fleet, Chesil Fleet and assessing potential impacts of future bird disturbance (May 2015)

Liley, D., Underhill-Day, J., Gartshore, N: A report by Footprint Ecology to Natural England

Bird Disturbance Survey of the Fleet (March 2015)

Liley, D., Underhill-Day, J., Gartshore, N: A report by Footprint Ecology to Natural England

Chesil Bank and the Fleet Lagoon – Coastal Access (October 2014)

D.Moxom

A brief assessment of visible migration at The Fleet, Chesil (September 2014)

Gartshore, N., & Underhill-Day, J: A report by Footprint Ecology to Natural England

A literature review of the birds of Chesil Fleet between Abbotsbury and Rodden Hive (June 2014)

Underhill-Day, J., Pickess, B., & Lake, S: A report by Footprint Ecology to Natural England

Section 4: FINAL CONCLUSIONS

4A: FINAL CONCLUSION - EUROPEAN SITE

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – alone

In relation to the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, taken alone, Natural England has concluded on the best available evidence and information that:

- A. **It can be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have any effect** on any of the features listed in section 3 above for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:
- B. While it cannot be excluded that the new access proposal taken alone will have an effect, **it is not considered that the effect is likely to be significant**, for the following reasons:
- C. **It cannot be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have a significant effect** on the following feature(s) for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – in combination

Other relevant plan or project	Is each other plan or project clear and specific enough for a judgement to be made at this stage about the probability or risk of its having any similar effect on the features in question?	Where the answer in Column 2 is Yes, what effect is it considered the other plan or project is likely to have in its own right on the features in question? Enter <u>one</u> of the following values, with brief reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No effect ■ A non-significant effect ■ A significant effect Where the answer in Column 2 is No, enter “Not applicable” in this column.

Conclusions of screening in combination

Having considered the best available evidence and information on any other qualifying plans or projects that might operate in combination with the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, Natural England has concluded that **it can/cannot be excluded** [delete as appropriate] that the new access proposal, in combination with any such qualifying plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any of the features for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

Overall Screening Decision for European site/features

Accordingly, taking into account the preceding screening both alone and, where appropriate, in combination, Natural England has concluded:

- No likely significant effect** – the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified, subject to any separate considerations in relation to SSSI features etc (see below);
- OR
- Likely significant effect** - appropriate assessment is required to consider whether the new access proposal may proceed.

PART 4B: FINAL CONCLUSION – SSSI

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in section 3, Natural England has concluded that the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2:

complies with NE's duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of the SSSI, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions¹ - 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 for the new proposal should not be given, for the following reasons:

PART 4C: FINAL CONCLUSION - Other features about which concerns have been expressed

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in section 3, Natural England has concluded that:

the appropriate balance has been struck by the new access proposal between NE's conservation and access objectives, duties and purposes - and accordingly the new access proposal should proceed as finally specified in this template

OR

the appropriate balance referred to above has not been struck – and accordingly the new access proposal should not proceed in the form specified in this template, for the following reasons:

SIGNATURE COVERING THE WHOLE OF PART 4:

Responsible officer

Name: Ruth Carpenter

Signed:



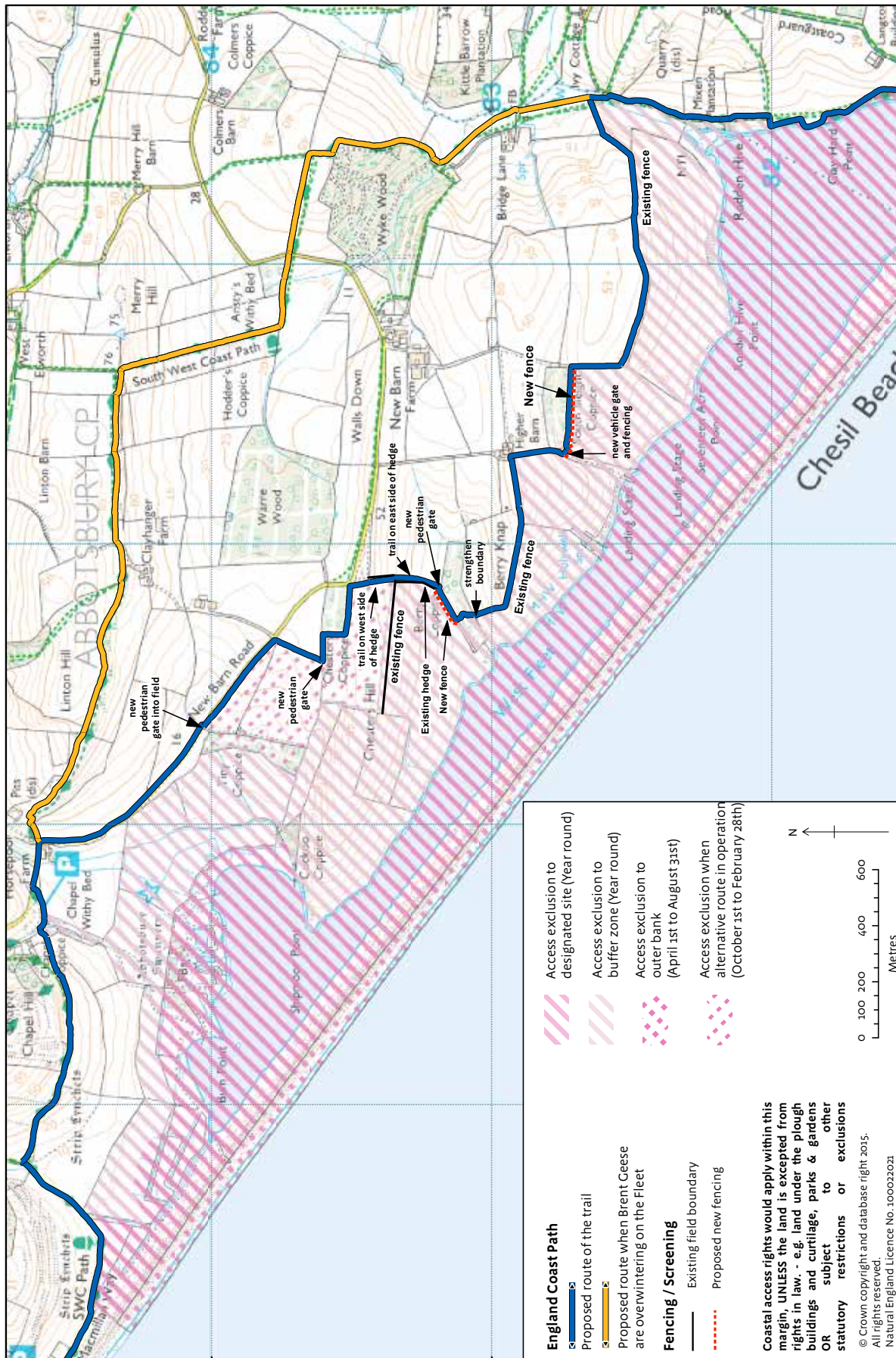
Date: 21/05/2015

1 Note that this species is now named *Pseudomogoplistes vicentae*, distinct from *P. squamiger* of the Mediterranean (Gorochov, 1996).

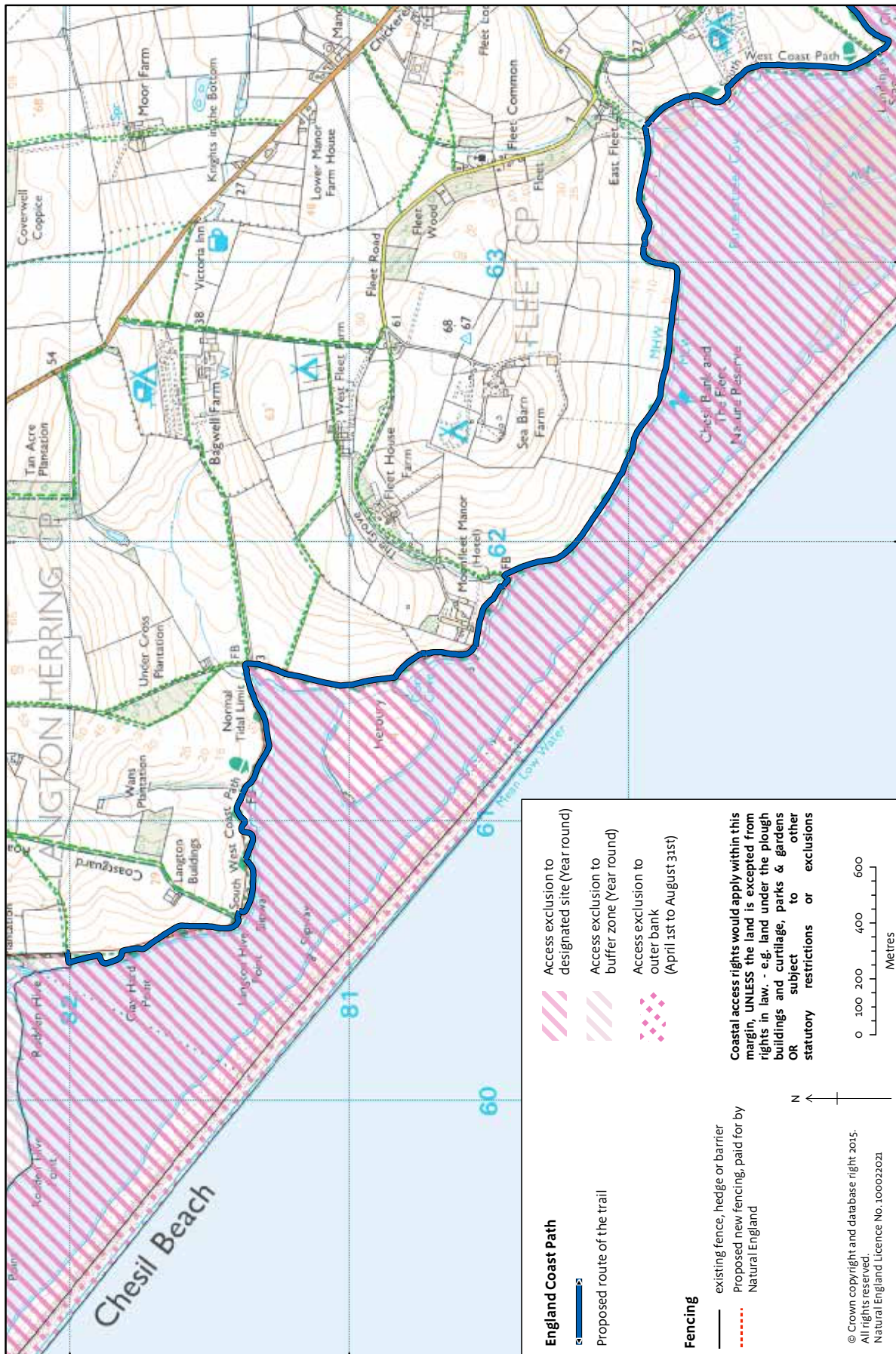
2 The reference in (a) above to Natural England's functions includes its balanced general purposes under the NERC Act 2006, any specific statutory duties it may have to deliver specific improvements to public access, and the access-related policies and priorities it has agreed with Defra.

Annex A: Access proposals between Abbotsbury and Ferrybridge (the Fleet)

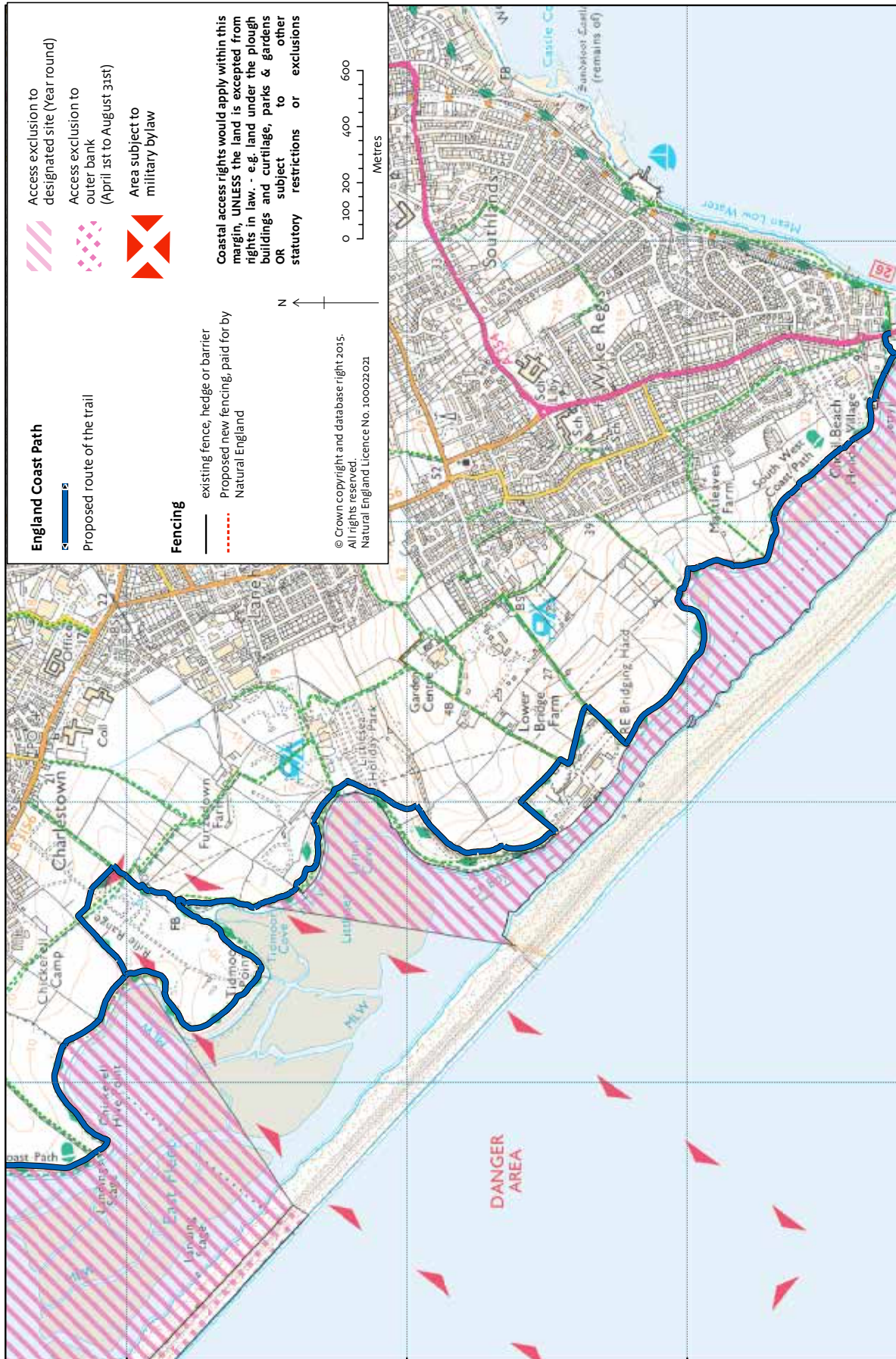
West Fleet, Abbotsbury to Rodden Hive



Mid Fleet, Rodden Hive to Chickerill Hive Point



Mid/East Fleet, Chickerill Hive Point to Chesil Beach Holiday Village



East Fleet, Lower Bridge Farm to Ferry Bridge

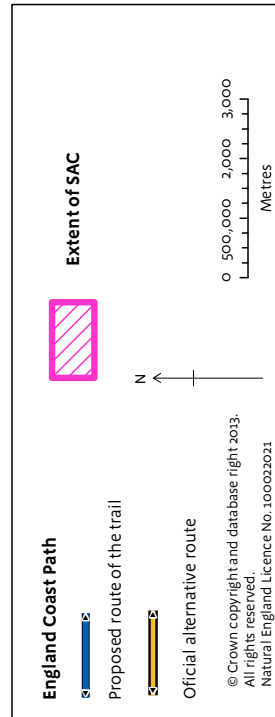
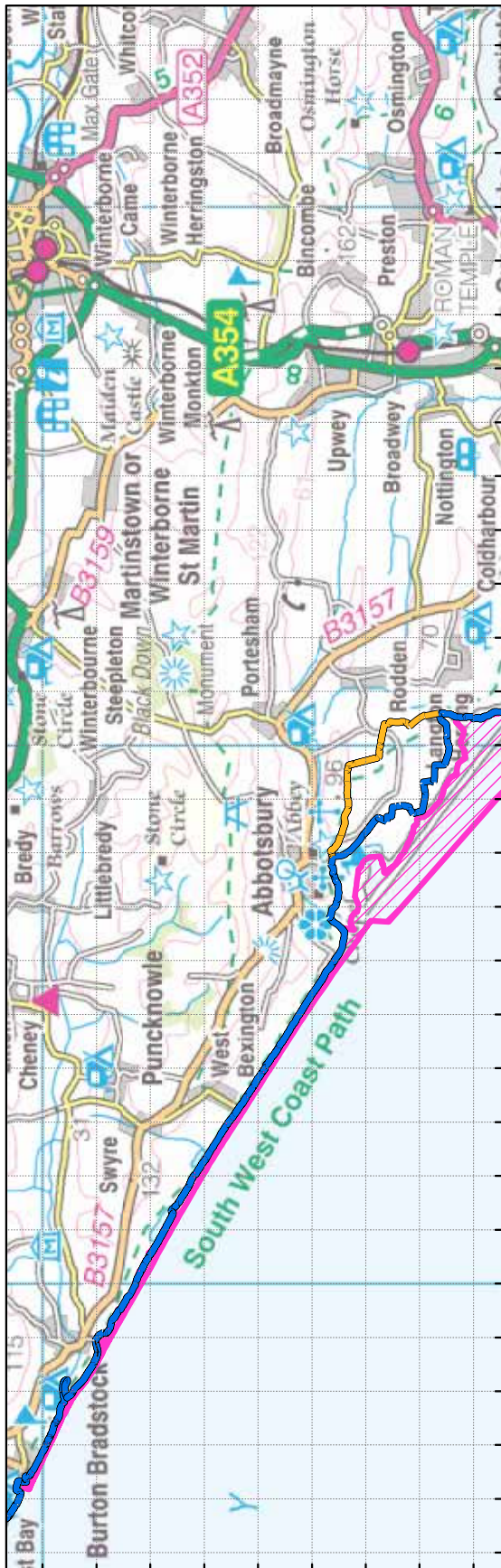


Annex B: Chesil and the Fleet, maps of designated site boundaries

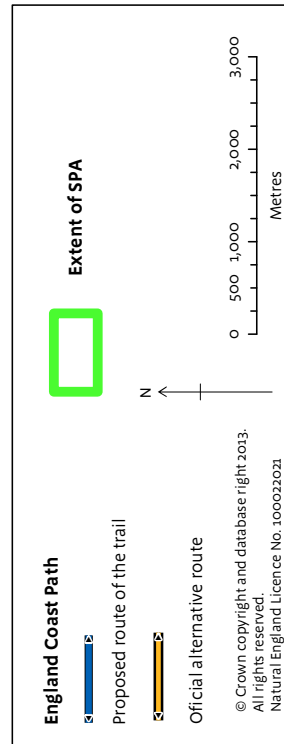
Map: Chesil and the Fleet SSSI



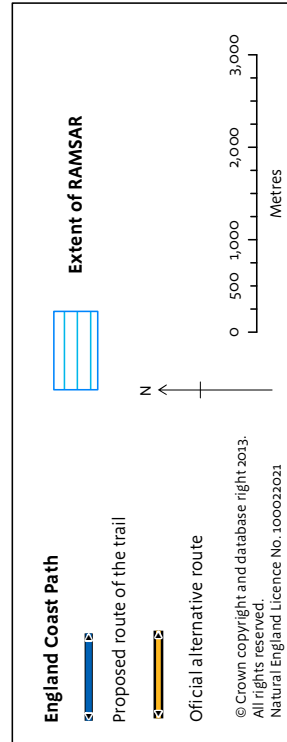
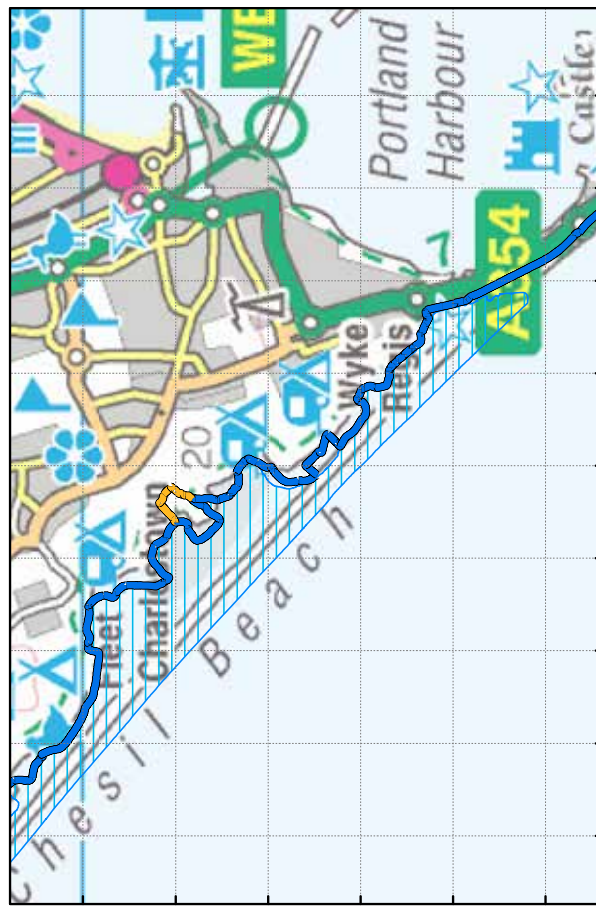
Chesil and the Fleet SAC



Chesil Beach and the Fleet SPA



Chesil Beach and the Fleet Ramsar



Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal: Portland

Programme	Coastal Access
Proposal title	Coastal Access Lyme Regis to Portland (Rufus Castle)
Aim and location	Appraisal of access proposals for the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Isle of Portland Site of Special Scientific Interest
Report Status	Final
Date	20.05.2015
TRIM reference	
Access Case Officer	Jane Beech
Site Responsible Officer	Ruth Carpenter

Section 1: SITE MAP(S) AND OVERVIEW OF NEW ACCESS PROPOSAL/ CONSIDERATION

See Annex A for maps showing:

- Extent of Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Extent of Isle of Portland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Proposed new access provisions

The coastal access project team intends to make the following relevant proposals for the length of coast in Dorset between Lyme Regis and Rufus Castle, Portland.

Our proposals for improved coastal access are fully described in Natural England's Report to the Secretary of State, for the Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle length of coast (July 2015).

Route proposal

The coastal access project team intends to propose to the Secretary of State that the centre of the line shown in blue on the maps in Annex A should be the England Coast Path for this length of coast. Our proposed route follows the existing South West Coast Path National Trail, other than:

- At Portland Bill. Here the trail follows a different existing walked route across existing access land to bring the trail closer to the sea and enable better sea views;
- At Cheyne Weare, east of Southwell Road. Here the trail follows a new route, to bring the trail away from Southwell Road, closer to the sea and to enable better sea views.

In addition at West Weares, the proposed route will follow the existing temporary diversion of the South West Coast Path at Tout Quarry.

There would be some limited physical improvements to the existing Coast Path to make it more convenient to walk on in particular places. There may also be limited improvements to directional signs in places where the project team judges this would be beneficial to clarify the route.

Coastal margin

Under the legislation the following land would become part of the coastal margin by default as a consequence of the route proposal:

- a Land within 2 metres of the route to either side
- b All other land seaward of the route as far as the furthest extremity of the foreshore.

The coastal margin described above would be subject to public rights of access on foot, except any parts of it that fall into categories of excepted land defined by the legislation. This would include:


- Any land covered by buildings or the curtilage of buildings;
- Any land used as a park or garden;
- Arable land so long as it is cultivated or otherwise disturbed at least every 12 months;
- Land the use of which is regulated by military byelaws
- Land covered by works used for the purposes of a statutory undertaking or the curtilage of such land.

Voluntary climbing restrictions

Voluntary climbing restrictions are in place to protect nesting birds at Blacknor North and Central, Cheyne Cliffs, Wallsend Cove: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/Search.aspx?r=33&s=40&t=&open=-1&banned=-1&restricted=-1>

Section 2: PREDICTED CHANGE IN PUBLIC USE OF AREA

[For completion only if the Responsible Officer has initial concerns about the potential impact of the new access proposal on our conservation objectives]

Access case officer		
Signed:		Name: Jane Beech
		Date: 20/5/15

Section 3: POTENTIAL IMPACT ON FEATURES FROM NEW ACCESS PROPOSAL

Designated site name(s): Isle of Portland Site of Special Scientific Interest, Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs Special Area of Conservation

	SPA	p/SPA	SAC	p/SAC	Ramsar	p/Ramsar	SSSI
Designation types present (show boundaries on map)			X				X

Potential concern about new access proposal (summary)

The access proposal could conflict with the conservation objectives for maintenance of the extent and distribution of the habitats of interest and the species and assemblages which they support.

Concerns about existing public use and action already taken to address this (summary)

There has been some considerable erosion of maritime grass communities around Portland Bill and area heavily visited by walkers on the South West Coast path as well as tourists and day trippers attracted to the point, the Obelisk and Lighthouse as well as the café. Management measures in the form of roped enclosures have been used to direct visitors and reduce trampling with good results.

Key sensitive features relevant to site (detail)

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
<p>SAC</p> <p>*Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia)</p> <p>*Early Gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i></p> <p>SSSI</p> <p>*Lowland calcareous grassland CG, CG2, CG3, CG4</p> <p>*Rock Sea-lavender <i>Limonium recurvum</i> & Portland Sea-lavender <i>Limonium portlandicum</i></p> <p>*Vascular Plant Assemblage</p>	<p>These grasslands and the associated plants are found in the designated areas all around the isle primarily on flat cliff top areas and in old quarries.</p> <p>Calcareous grasslands can be sensitive to trampling as they are generally of low productivity and here are often on very thin soils leading to erosion. Nutrient enrichment from dog faeces can result in a reduction in number and abundance of plant species in the sward and stimulates growth of competitive species (grasses) at the expense of other plants notably broad leaved herbs.</p>	<p>The route proposed will, in the main, use existing established paths of the South West Coast Path route and these grasslands are not likely to be significantly affected by a modest increase in the use of the paths.</p> <p>The exception to this is the section to the north of Portland Bill to the Old Higher Lighthouse where the route differs from the SWCP. The route will follow a de facto path across the Common. This route is already established on access land and takes walkers away from early gentian locations. It is not likely to have any significant effect on the grassland.</p>
<p>SAC</p> <p>*Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</p> <p>SSSI</p> <p>*Hard maritime cliff and slope communities MC1, MC5, MC8, MC11, W21, W22</p> <p>*Combinations of species: Lichens on lowland rocks (Special Habitat 31) and maritime cliffs and slopes (Special habitat 33)</p> <p>* Combinations of species – Bryophytes of disturbed open lowland calcareous grassland; coastal habitats; and quarries and pits</p>	<p>The cliffs and slopes round the isle support a mosaic of grassland and scrub communities, bryophyte communities, internationally important lichen communities and elements of the vascular plant assemblage. Coastal interests are often dependent upon the continuation of natural processes including erosion but it is necessary to prevent accelerated erosion caused by human pressures.</p>	<p>The route proposed will, in the main, use existing established paths of the South West Coast Path route and these communities are not likely to be significantly affected by a modest increase in the use of the paths. However, management in the form of further roped enclosures at Portland Bill would restore habitat lost as a result of existing levels and patterns of access and improve the overall experience for visitors. The coast path project team has in principle agreed to offer match funding for this work, subject to partners coming forward with contributions to the work and confirmation of available funds from the national budget for path establishment.</p>

Feature	Any potential sensitivity to visitors	Any likely impact
<p>SSSI</p> <p>*Invertebrate Assemblages</p> <p>F11 Unshaded early successional mosaic</p> <p>F21 Grassland and scrub matrix</p> <p>*Population of Nationally Scarce butterfly Adonis Blue <i>Lysandra bellargus</i></p> <p>*Population of Nationally Scarce butterfly Silver-studded Blue <i>Plebejus argus f. cretaceous</i></p> <p>*Active quarries and pits (EA) Portlandian – Berriasian</p> <p>* Coastal cliffs and foreshore (EC) Portlandian – Berriasian; Jurassic – Cretaceous Reptilia; Mesozoic Palaeobotany</p> <p>* Static (fossil) geomorphological (IS); Quaternary of south central England</p> <p>* Active process geomorphological (IA); Mass Movement; Boulders and screens</p>	<p>The mosaic of scrub, long and short grass, bare ground, rock and scree on the cliffs, slopes and old quarry workings is vital in the life cycle of these invertebrates.</p> <p>Uncontrolled fossil specimen collecting may damage the features of interest.</p>	<p>The route proposed will, in the main, use existing established paths of the South West Coast Path route and these features are not likely to be significantly affected by a modest increase in the use of the paths.</p> <p>The cliffs are already open access under CROW Act 2000 and there is no evidence that collection of specimens is having any impact on the designated site</p>
<p>Non-designated features</p> <p>*Cliff nesting seabirds</p> <p>*Peregrine falcon</p> <p>Birds, nests and eggs protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 from intentional and reckless disturbance.</p>	<p>Seabirds nest around Portland Bill. Peregrine falcons nest on cliffs around the island.</p> <p>Could be disturbed by climbers on the cliffs. Portland is a well-established climbing and bouldering destination.</p>	<p>The cliffs are open access under CROW Act 2000. Climbing activities are unregulated however the BMC have a voluntary code of practice including closing climbs that may impact on these birds which it is understood is, in the main, effective.</p>

Section 4: FINAL CONCLUSIONS

4A: FINAL CONCLUSION - EUROPEAN SITE

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – alone

In relation to the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, taken alone, Natural England has concluded on the best available evidence and information that:

- A. **It can be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have any effect** on any of the features listed in section 3 above for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:
- B. While it cannot be excluded that the new access proposal taken alone will have an effect, **it is not considered that the effect is likely to be significant**, for the following reasons:
- C. **It cannot be excluded that the new access proposal, taken alone, will have a significant effect** on the following feature(s) for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

Screening for Likely Significant Effect under Habitats Regulations – in combination

Other relevant plan or project	Is each other plan or project clear and specific enough for a judgement to be made at this stage about the probability or risk of its having any similar effect on the features in question?	Where the answer in Column 2 is Yes, what effect is it considered the other plan or project is likely to have in its own right on the features in question? Enter <u>one</u> of the following values, with brief reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No effect ■ A non-significant effect ■ A significant effect Where the answer in Column 2 is No, enter “Not applicable” in this column.

Conclusions of screening in combination

Having considered the best available evidence and information on any other qualifying plans or projects that might operate in combination with the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2, Natural England has concluded that **it can/cannot be excluded** that the new access proposal, in combination with any such qualifying plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any of the features for which the European site has been designated or classified, for the following reasons:

Overall Screening Decision for European site/features

Accordingly, taking into account the preceding screening both alone and, where appropriate, in combination, Natural England has concluded:

- No likely significant effect** – the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified, subject to any separate considerations in relation to SSSI features etc (see below);
- OR
- Likely significant effect** - appropriate assessment is required to consider whether the new access proposal may proceed.

PART 4B: FINAL CONCLUSION – SSSI

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in section 3, Natural England has concluded that the new access proposal detailed in sections 1 and 2:

complies with NE’s duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of the SSSI, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions¹ - 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 for the new proposal should not be given, for the following reasons:

PART 4C: FINAL CONCLUSION - Other features about which concerns have been expressed

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in section 3, Natural England has concluded that:

the appropriate balance has been struck by the new access proposal between NE’s conservation and access objectives, duties and purposes - and accordingly the new access proposal should proceed as finally specified in this template

OR

the appropriate balance referred to above has not been struck – and accordingly the new access proposal should not proceed in the form specified in this template, for the following reasons:

SIGNATURE COVERING THE WHOLE OF PART 4:

Responsible officer

Name: Ruth Carpenter

Signed:



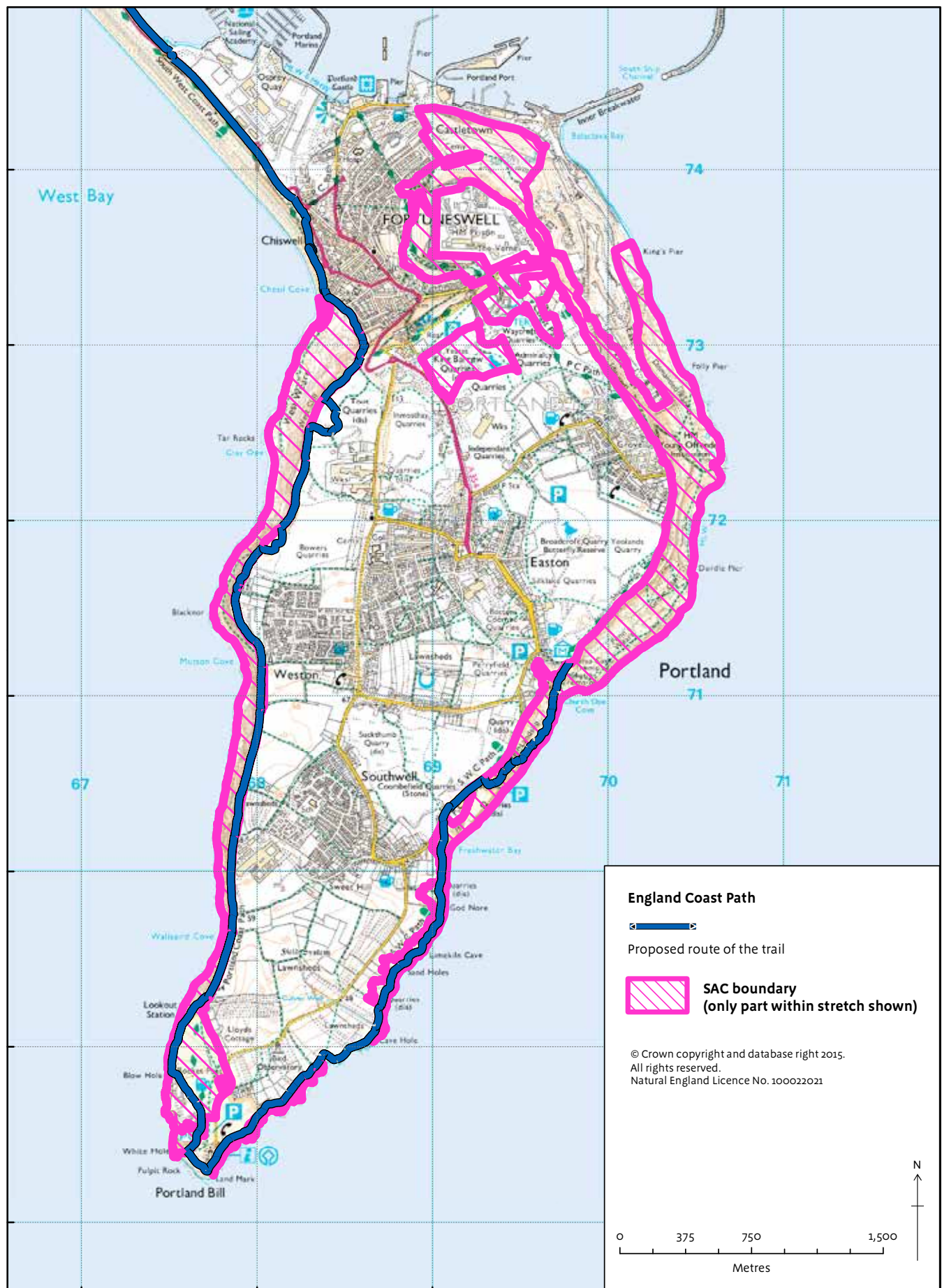
Date: 21/05/2015

Annex A: Portland, maps of designated sites

Extent of Isle of Portland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)



Extent of Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs Special Area of Conservation (SAC)



Enquiries about the proposals should be addressed to:

Coastal Access Delivery Team – Somerset, Avon and Dorset

Natural England

Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol BS1 6DG

Telephone: 0300 060 3900

Email: westcoastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk



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