



Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal

Coastal Access Programme

This document records the conclusions of Natural England's appraisal of any potential for environmental impacts from our proposals to establish the England Coast Path (ECP) in the light of the requirements of the legislation affecting Natura 2000 sites, SSSIs, NNRs, protected species and Marine Conservation Zones.

South Bents to Amble

24th March 2017

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

1 Our approach

Natural England's approach to protection of sensitive features under the Coastal Access Programme is set out in section 4.9 Coastal Access: Natural England's Approved Scheme 2013¹. We call our internal processes to support this approach 'Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal' (ASFA) and this document is a record of our conclusions. The appraisal includes Habitats Regulation Assessment wherever relevant to the site in question.

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

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

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

Where our proposals for the England Coast Path and associated Coastal Margin are relevant to a Natura 2000 site, this appraisal fulfils our duty under the Habitats Regulations 2010 to assess their potential implications in order to ensure no likely significant effect on the site. The formal conclusions relating to this are recorded in Part 7 of the document.

2 Scope

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

2.1 Geographic extent

This appraisal covers the stretch of coast from South Bents; NZ4074 6122 to Amble; NU2669 0471. It covers all the sites designated for nature conservation.

- In section 3, the designated features and/or the designations are grouped by their ecological needs and potential response to changes in access.
- In sections 4 and 5, the stretch is sub-divided in the same way as for the coastal access report chapters.

2.2 Designated sites

[Northumberland Marine pSPA](#)

[Northumberland Marine pSPA consultation](#)

[Northumbria Coast SPA and pSPA](#)

[Northumbria Coast Reg 33 Conservation Advice](#)

[Northumbria Coast Ramsar](#)

[Durham Coast SAC](#)

[Durham Coast SSSI](#)

[Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice SSSI](#)

[Cresswell & Newbiggin Shores SSSI](#)

[Cresswell Ponds SSSI](#)

[Hadston Links SSSI](#)

[Low Hauxley Shore SSSI](#)

[Northumberland Shore SSSI](#)

[Coquet to St Marys MCZ](#)

2.3 Cross reference

Parts of the Northumbria Coast SPA, pSPA¹, Ramsar site; Northumberland Shore SSSI and Northumberland Marine pSPA also apply to the stretches 'Amble to Bamburgh' and 'Bamburgh to the Scottish border'. These two stretches are currently at stage 2, 'walk the course' of the ECP process.

Parts of the Durham Coast SAC and Durham Coast SSSI also cover the open North Gare to South Bents stretch of the ECP (England Coast Path).

¹ Northumbria Coast pSPA is a proposed amendment to the existing SPA which will propose additional features be added to the SPA

2.4 Designated features

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2 For the bird features: BR = breeding NBR = non-breeding	Durham Coast SSSI	Durham Coast SAC	Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice SSSI	Cresswell & Newbiggin Shores SSSI	Cresswell Ponds SSSI	Hadston Links SSSI	Low Huxley Shore SSSI	Northumbria Coast Ramsar	Northumbria Coast SPA and pSPA	Northumberland Shore SSSI	Northumberland Marine SPA	Coquet to St Mary's MCZ
	A191 <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> sandwich tern BR											
A192 <i>Sterna dougallii</i> roseate tern BR												
A193 <i>Sterna hirundo</i> common tern BR												
A194 <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> Arctic tern BR												
A195 <i>Sterna albifrons</i> little tern BR												
A199 <i>Uria aalge</i> common guillemot BR												
A204 <i>Fratercula arctica</i> Atlantic puffin BR												
Seabird assemblage BR												
A148 <i>Calidris maritima</i> purple sandpiper NBR												
A169 <i>Arenaria interpres</i> ruddy turnstone NBR												
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> BR												
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> BR												
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> BR												
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> NBR												
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> NBR												
Ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> NBR												
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> NBR												
CG2 <i>Festuca ovina</i> - <i>Avenula pratensis</i> lowland calcareous grassland												
EC - Marine Permian												
EC - Quaternary Of North-East England												
IA - Coastal Geomorphology												
IS - Quaternary Of North-East England												
M10 <i>Carex dioica</i> - <i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i> mire												
M22 <i>Juncus subnodulosus</i> - <i>Cirsium palustre</i> fen meadow												
MG5 <i>Cynosurus cristatus</i> - <i>Centaurea nigra</i> grassland												
SD4 <i>Elymus farctus</i> ssp. <i>Boreali-atlanticus</i> foredune community												
SD5 <i>Leymus arenarius</i> mobile dune community												
SD6 <i>Ammophila arenaria</i>												

Features – of the designated sites listed in 2.2 For the bird features: BR = breeding NBR = non-breeding	Durham Coast SSSI	Durham Coast SAC	Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice SSSI	Cresswell & Newbiggin Shores SSSI	Cresswell Ponds SSSI	Hadston Links SSSI	Low Huxley Shore SSSI	Northumbria Coast Ramsar	Northumbria Coast SPA and pSPA	Northumberland Shore SSSI	Northumberland Marine SPA	Coquet to St Mary's MCZ
	mobile dune community											
SD7 <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> - <i>Festuca rubra</i> semi-fixed dune community												
SD8 <i>Festuca rubra</i> - <i>Galium verum</i> fixed dune grassland												
SD9 <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> - <i>arrhenatherum elatius</i> dune grassland												
Vascular Plant Assemblage												
H1230. Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts												
Fixed dune grassland												
Humid dune slacks												
Sand dune; strandline, embryo and mobile dunes(SD1-6)												
Waterfringe fen (lowland)												
Geological (EC - Westphalian)												
Saline coastal lagoons												
Low energy intertidal rock												
Moderate energy intertidal rock												
High energy intertidal rock												
Intertidal mixed sediments												
Intertidal coarse sediment												
Intertidal sand and muddy sand												
Intertidal mud												
Intertidal underboulder communities												
Peat and clay exposures												
Moderate energy infralittoral rock												
High energy infralittoral rock												
Moderate energy circalittoral rock												
Subtidal coarse sediment												
Subtidal sand												
Subtidal mixed sediments												
Subtidal mud												

2.5 Other features about which concerns have been expressed

Feature	Conservation interest
None	

3 Baseline conditions and environmental sensitivities

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

3.1 Geological features

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group
<p>For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EC – Westphalian• EC - Quaternary Of North-East England• EC - Marine Permian• IA - Coastal Geomorphology• IS - Quaternary Of North-East England
Current conservation status and use of the site
<p>The features included in this group are notified geological features for the following SSSIs (for details see table 2.4 above):</p> <p>Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores - All 4 units assessed as favourable in 2012.</p> <p>Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice – All 6 units assessed as favourable in 2011.</p> <p>Low Hauxley Shore - All 2 units assessed as favourable in 2012.</p> <p>Durham Coast - All these units were assessed at favourable in 2013.</p> <p>These features are hard rock features forming cliffs and stacks as well as occurring on the foreshore along the coast and within the margin. They are subject to natural processes, particularly within the intertidal zone. The features are currently accessible and are used for recreational purposes, rock pooling for instance.</p>
Environmental sensitivities to changes in access
<p>The geological features identified above are not sensitive to people walking on them.</p> <p>Exposures containing fossils could be sensitive to un-managed specimen collection. This is not an issue at present along this stretch of coast and there is no reason to think it will become one as a result of our proposals.</p> <p>For these reasons, we have concluded that the geological features identified above are not sensitive to our proposals for England Coast Path.</p>

3.2 Breeding seabirds (terns)

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group
Sandwich tern, Arctic tern, common tern, little tern, roseate tern.

Current conservation status and use of the sites
<p>During the 2000 seabird census of little tern colonies, 43 ‘apparently occupied nests’ (AON) were recorded on the Northumberland Coast SSSI, SPA, Ramsar. However, these colonies were recorded outside the geographic scope of this appraisal, the numbers being recorded at the National trust managed nesting site at The Long Nanny, Beadnell.</p> <p>There are no established nesting tern sites on this stretch. However, there is the future potential for breeding tern colonies via ongoing measures at Chibburn Burn, near Druridge Country Park (section 4.6 and 5.6) which is being funded through the little tern LIFE partnership project.</p> <p>The offshore waters adjacent to the tern colonies are used for a wide range of activities. The boundary of the Northumberland Marine pSPA includes the main foraging areas for the tern species. Foraging terns, specifically Sandwich and common terns forage within the Blyth Estuary.</p> <p>Internationally and nationally important colonies of seabirds are present on Coquet Island and the Farne Islands. These offshore islands are outside the geographic scope of this access proposal and are not considered further in this appraisal.</p>
Environmental sensitivities to changes in access
<p>All breeding colonies of terns are sensitive to disturbance in their breeding season April through to July and the links between nesting and offshore foraging areas need to be maintained.</p> <p>The offshore marine components of the birds’ ecological requirements are not sensitive to disturbance from walkers/dogs using a coastal path and margin because there is sufficient spatial separation. These offshore functions (foraging) are not considered further in this appraisal.</p> <p>The Blyth estuary tern foraging area is considered in 4.3 and 4.4.</p> <p>With regards to the little terns mentioned in the Durham SSSI these are situated in the currently open stretch of the ECP and so can be ruled out of consideration for this stretch.</p> <p>The potential for interaction between our proposals for England Coast Path and the (potential) tern colony at Chibburn Burn is considered further in section 4.6 of this appraisal.</p>

3.3 Breeding seabirds (other than terns)

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group - where applicable
<p>Guillemot, puffin, kittiwake, fulmar, cormorant.</p>
Current conservation status and use of the site
<p>At the Durham Coast SSSI, the stacks at Marsden Bay are the main area for breeding kittiwake, fulmar and cormorant. During the 2013 condition assessment of the habitat features, these species were recorded as nesting on the cliffs and stacks, with the extent and availability of the bird habitat maintained.</p> <p>SMP figures for the Cliffs at Marsden bay show significant numbers for cormorant, fulmar and kittiwake using the cliffs for nesting.</p>

SMP nest counts for Marsden cliffs					
Species	Years				
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> BR	63	80	81		81
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> BR	145	185	86		107
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> BR	2388	3344	2568		2543

The offshore waters adjacent to the seabird colonies are used for a wide range of activities e.g. foraging and loafing. The boundary of the Northumberland Marine pSPA includes areas used for maintenance activities by the SPA auks; guillemot and puffin around Coquet Island and the Farne Islands where they nest.

Environmental sensitivities to changes in access

Seabirds that nest on steep and inaccessible cliffs and stacks are not generally sensitive to walkers/dogs using the coast path because of sufficient spatial separation. These colonies are potentially sensitive to disturbance from climbers using the cliffs or where people are able to scramble down less steep slopes during the breeding season.

The offshore marine components of the birds' ecological requirements are not sensitive to disturbance from walkers/dogs using a coastal path and margin because there is sufficient spatial separation.

These offshore functions (foraging and maintenance activities) are not considered further in this appraisal, apart from the potential for the proposal to amend the birds' ability to travel between nesting and foraging/maintenance areas.

Guillemot and puffin are therefore not considered further within this appraisal. There is no sensitivity to consider. The breeding colonies are on offshore islands and there is sufficient spatial separation between their maintenance and foraging activities and walkers / dogs on the coast path and margin. The potential for interaction between our proposals for England Coast Path and breeding cormorant, kittiwake, fulmar at Marsden is considered further in section 4.1 of this appraisal.

3.4 Seabird assemblage

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of assemblage

> 20,000 breeding individuals comprising various species of gulls, terns, auks, cormorant, shag, fulmar. Refer to the consultation documentation for the pSPA for more information [here](#)

Current conservation status and use of the sites

The Northumberland Marine pSPA is proposed to include off-shore foraging areas and areas used for maintenance activities by the seabird assemblage. Refer to the consultation documentation for the pSPA for more information [here](#)

Environmental sensitivities to changes in access

There are no ecological sensitivities as the seabird assemblage relates to breeding colonies on off-shore islands and the birds' use of the wider marine environment. These areas do not interact with this coastal access proposal and the seabird assemblage is not considered any further in this appraisal.

The offshore marine components of the birds' ecological requirements are not sensitive to disturbance from walkers/dogs using a coastal path and margin because there is sufficient spatial separation. These functions (foraging) are not considered further in this appraisal.

3.5 Non-breeding rocky shore waders

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group
Purple sandpiper, turnstone.
Current conservation status and use of the sites
<p>Purple sandpiper and turnstone are present principally between October and April on rocky shores all along the length of this stretch of coast.</p> <p>Along the Durham coast a number of discrete sections of intertidal rock with associated boulder and cobble beaches provide feeding areas for purple sandpiper at most stages of the tidal cycle. Artificial structures as at River Tyne South Pier are used as high tide roosts.</p> <p>Along the Northumberland coast, purple sandpiper feed almost exclusively on the extensive areas of intertidal rock platform. Flocks roost on man-made structures, the West Staithes and Blyth Pier regularly supporting over 250 birds.</p> <p>Turnstone; principally a rocky shore species, but it is distributed more widely than purple sandpiper, using other habitats for feeding, including strandlines on sandy beaches. Known roost sites are located at North Tyneside (SPA rocky habitat at Whitley Bay, Tynemouth, Cullercoats Bay), the cliff edges at St.Mary's Island and within Blyth Estuary (Mount Pleasant) and Cambois beach which is included in the stretch of the ECP.</p> <p>At the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar site, WeBS Alerts have been evaluated for these two species. Purple sandpiper declined by 39% during the ten year period up to 2009/10 and turnstone declined by 29% during the ten year period up to 2009/10 (Cook <i>et al.</i> 2013). A comparison of site, regional and national trends during the same time period shows these site declines are in line with national trends. This suggests the declines are a result of broad scale change, although this does not rule out any site specific drivers occurring as well, that potentially includes recreational disturbance.</p> <p>WeBS data for these sites/bird features can be seen at annex 1</p>
Environmental sensitivities to changes in access
<p>Purple sandpiper and turnstone could be sensitive to increased access to the rocky shore habitats they use for foraging (and roosting).</p> <p>There are purple sandpiper roost sites at Mount Pleasant in addition to manmade structures at Blyth pier, West Staithes and high tide roosting site at Mount Pleasant. Blyth Estuary also provides an important feeding and roosting habitat for turnstones and SSSI redshank.</p> <p>The potential for interaction with our proposals for England Coast Path is considered further in sections 4.1 to 4.6 of this appraisal.</p>

3.6 Widespread non-breeding waders

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group
Sanderling, golden plover, redshank, ringed plover.
Current conservation status and use of the sites
<p>Redshank is widespread within estuaries feeding on muddy intertidal areas. Important feeding habitat included in this stretch of the ECP includes Blyth Estuary, (4.3/4.4 and 5.3/5.4) River Tyne, and exposed rocks at St. Mary's Island (4.2).</p> <p>Large flocks of golden plover are found at North Tyneside feeding on the exposed rocks at low tide between Whitley Bay and St. Mary's Island.</p> <p>The area at Mount Pleasant Farm is an important roosting site for redshank and ringed plover. The area is not part of the Northumberland Shore SSSI however it provides a locally important resource for the SSSI birds and is currently under an agri-environment scheme and redshank are amongst the target species for this agreement.</p> <p>Sanderling, ringed plover, redshank and golden plover found feeding on the strandline and sandy beaches at low tide at Druridge Bay. Golden plover also roost/feed on agricultural land behind the sand dunes adjacent to Druridge Bay.</p> <p>Sanderling and ringed plover typically utilise the sandy beaches such as Blyth South Beach and Druridge Bay. Wintering redshank, occur in a wide range of coastal habitats and at various places also roost on nearby farmland. Golden plover make extensive, but intermittent use of many fields close to the foreshore in addition to their use of the inter-tidal area; however no agricultural land is included in the notified site. Along with other waders redshank and golden plover use the estuarine areas of the site.</p> <p>Durham Coast SSSI supports nationally important numbers of wintering sanderling. The units (1-10) that the route crosses are currently in favourable condition. However, the condition of the bird features of the SSSI is currently being re-assessed as part of the regular condition monitoring programme. The assessment has not been completed but initial analysis shows that sanderling (like purple sandpiper) has declined significantly. Recreational disturbance is one of the potential drivers of the decline, but further investigation is required.</p> <p>WeBS data for these sites/bird features can be seen at annex 1</p>
Environmental sensitivities to changes in access
<p>These non-breeding waders could be sensitive to increased access in areas used by feeding and roosting birds.</p> <p>The potential for interaction with our proposals for England Coast Path is considered further in sections 4.1 to 4.6 of this appraisal.</p>

3.7 Coastal vegetation

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group - where applicable
For the purposes of this appraisal the following features have been grouped together: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H1230. Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts• CG2 - Festuca ovina - Avenula pratensis lowland calcareous grassland• M10 - Carex dioica - Pinguicula vulgaris mire• M22 - Juncus subnodulosus - Cirsium palustre fen meadow• MG5 - Cynosurus cristatus - Centaurea nigra grassland• SD4 - Elymus farctus ssp. Boreali-atlanticus foredune community• SD5 - Leymus arenarius mobile dune community• SD6 - Ammophila arenaria mobile dune community• SD7 - Ammophila arenaria - Festuca rubra semi-fixed dune community• SD8 - Festuca rubra - Galium verum fixed dune grassland• SD9 - Ammophila arenaria - arrhenatherum elatius dune grassland• Fixed dune grassland• Humid dune slacks• Sand dune; strandline, embryo and mobile dunes (SD1-6)• Waterfringe fen (lowland)• Vascular Plant Assemblage
Current conservation status and use of the site
Magnesium limestone grassland communities occur on cliff tops along the Durham coast. All affected units within the Durham Coast SSSI containing this feature were assessed at favourable in 2013.
Environmental sensitivities to changes in access
Localised impacts could occur if changes in access lead to more frequent trampling of vegetation in sensitive areas. Potential interactions with our proposals for England Coast Path are considered further in section 4.1 of this document.

3.8 Saline Coastal Lagoons

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group - where applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saline coastal lagoons.
Current conservation status and use of the site
This feature occurs at one location on this stretch. The ECP will potentially cross unit 3 of this site, this will also be within the margin. However this is a key element to the site as it is the means by which saltwater enters the ponds to maintain its brackish nature. As at its 2009 survey the site was assessed as favourable; a total of twenty-three different lagoon invertebrate species were found during the survey with eighteen of them having been found in the previous survey in 1993. Isolating barrier, salinities, biotope, water extent and water depth were all found to be similar to that recorded during the previous survey and within the normal parameters for a thriving

lagoon habitat. Consequently it is considered that Cresswell Pond retains its favourable status with regard to the Conservation Objectives set out in the Condition Site Monitoring Statement.

Environmental sensitivities to changes in access

The inlet/outlet of the ponds is critical to its features and any ECP plans which disrupt this should and is not be part of our proposals and so can be ruled out of consideration for this stretch.

3.9 Intertidal habitats

[Link to designated features 2.3](#)

Composition of feature group - where applicable

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

Low energy intertidal rock	Intertidal sand and muddy sand
Moderate energy intertidal rock	Intertidal mud
High energy intertidal rock	Intertidal under boulder communities
Intertidal mixed sediments	Peat and clay exposures
Intertidal coarse sediment	

You can find detailed explanations of each feature at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4527>.

Current conservation status and use of the site

This site helps protect several different types of rock and various sediments on the shoreline and on the seabed. Some of the habitats in the site, such as intertidal sediment and mud, do not currently have enough protection in the region. Protecting these features in this site helps to fill gaps within the network of sites.

These complex habitats and communities also support mobile species such as starfish, sea urchins, crabs, and lobsters. When this site was surveyed, amongst the species recorded, is the first ever Arctic cushion star, a starfish, on the English coast.

The site also supports a range of intertidal habitats, which are above water at low tide and underwater at high tide. One of these habitats is intertidal underboulder communities. Boulders create shaded areas that provide a refuge to sea squirts, and sponges e.g. *Halichondria* sp. The undersides of the boulder provide a habitat for animals like sea slugs, long-clawed porcelain crabs and brittlestars, which shelter and feed in the damp shaded conditions. Crabs, fish and young lobsters also scavenge for food and seek shelter amongst the boulders.

Environmental sensitivities to changes in access

Potential impacts on the MCZ are in relation to intertidal rocky shore and various sediments exposed at low tide, and people venturing into the MCZ to explore the area, and undertake hand gathering and bait collection activities. Target spp. of hand gathering and bait collection activities include mussels (*Mytilus edulis*), winkles (*Littorina* spp.), lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) and various types of worms. The intertidal rocky reef and various sediments could be subject to trampling and other disturbance activities, accompanied by removal of species at low tide.

There is potential sensitivity to features that are found in intertidal areas that could be sensitive to activities that cause abrasion or disturbance to surface of the seabed, or harvesting or removal of species.

4 Potential for interaction

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

Our proposals for England Coast Path have two main components:

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

Trail

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

Coastal Margin

An area of land associated with the proposed trail will become coastal margin, including all land seawards of the trail down to mean low water. The full extent of the coastal margin along this section of coast is shown on map in Annex 10.2.

Coastal margin is typically subject to new coastal access rights, though there are some obvious exceptions to this. The nature and limitations of the new rights, and the key types of land excepted from them, are explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of our Coastal Access Scheme¹. Where there are already public or local rights to do other things, these are normally unaffected and will continue to exist in parallel to the new coastal access rights. The exception to this principle is any pre-existing open access rights under Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) over land falling within the coastal margin: the new coastal access rights will apply in place of these.

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

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

4.1 South Bents to Shields Ferry

Outline of changes in access
<p>The proposed route for the England Coast Path follows existing public rights of way through a mixture of paved and unpaved footpaths.</p> <p>The area of land that would become coastal margin as a result of our proposals can already be accessed by the public and is being used for recreational purposes.</p>
Potential for interaction (or lack of it)
<p>Several feature groups that could be sensitive to changes in access occur along this section of the coast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breeding seabirds (all species).• Non-breeding rocky shore waders.• Widespread non-breeding waders.• Coastal vegetation. <p>The route follows existing formal routes so there is no additional footprint on notified habitat/features or supporting habitat. As described above, there is not predicted to be any significant increase in access to an already intensely visited area, so there is unlikely to be any increased damage from 'off-route' access, therefore significant interaction with coastal vegetation can be ruled out at this stage.</p> <p>WeBS data shows significant numbers of (wading bird features) purple sandpiper and some turnstone on section of the proposals, therefore there is potential for interaction with these features. Sanderling, golden plover, redshank and ringed plover are in low numbers or absent, therefore minimal potential for interaction. The use of sandier substrates for feeding means there is the potential for more regular interaction between walkers/dogs and the birds on the beaches.</p> <p>In such a highly access area any potential increase in access is not envisaged. However any increase will risk disturbance of birds (both breeding and non-breeding) and is considered further in 5.1.</p>

4.2 Shields Ferry to Old Hartley

Outline of changes in access
<p>The site, where this appraisal is concerned is very well accessed by locals and tourists alike with attractions at Souter Lighthouse, the promenade attractions at The Bents and Bents Park, and Whitburn Country Park. These bring vast numbers of people to the area.</p> <p>The site is also very well serviced with public rights of way for walkers, however higher rights (horse riders and cyclists) users also use the area with no objections to their use.</p> <p>The proposed route follows existing public rights of way through a mixture of paved and unpaved footpaths. The resulting spreading room is all currently accessible and there will be no change to this.</p>
Potential for interaction (or lack of it)
<p>Several feature groups that could be sensitive to changes in access occur along this section of the coast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-breeding rocky shore waders.• Widespread non-breeding waders.• Intertidal habitats. <p>WeBS data shows significant numbers of all the wading bird features on this section of the proposals,</p>

therefore there is potential for interaction with these features. The use of sandier substrates for feeding means there is the potential for more regular interaction between walkers/dogs and the birds on the beaches.

Coquet to St. Mary's MCZ landwards boundary is to Mean High Water. The proposed route adjacent to the MCZ rarely abuts the mean high water line, with a margin between the proposed path and the mean high water line. Along this section of the coast, our proposed route for the England Coast Path will not pass over any intertidal areas.

People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for example walking and walking with dogs, and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals. Popular destinations include Duridge Bay, St Mary's island, Cresswell and Newbiggin Bay. Such access on foot to the foreshore is not considered harmful to intertidal habitats.

Harvesting or removal of species could have an impact and is a possible concern, however; no new rights to do this are created by our proposals. Neither will what we are proposing interfere with ongoing work to investigate the possible impacts of hand gathering and bait collecting activities on MCZ features or measures to manage these activities.

Therefore we have concluded there is no potential for interaction along this section of coast.

4.3 Old Hartley to Kitty Brewster Bridge

Outline of changes in access

The proposed route follows existing public rights of way through a mixture of paved and unpaved footpaths. The resulting spreading room is either all currently accessible and there will be no change to this, or it will be excepted land in and around Blyth.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Several feature groups that could be sensitive to changes in access occur along this section of the coast:

- Breeding seabirds (terns).
- Non-breeding rocky shore waders.
- Widespread non-breeding waders.
- Intertidal habitats.

[WeBS data](#) shows significant numbers of (wading bird features) ringed plover and some redshank on section of the proposals, therefore there is potential for interaction with these features. Sanderling, golden plover, turnstone and purple sandpiper are in low numbers or absent, therefore minimal potential for interaction. . The use of sandier substrates for feeding means there is the potential for more regular interaction between walkers/dogs and the birds on the beaches.

Coquet to St. Mary's MCZ landwards boundary is to Mean High Water. The proposed route adjacent to the MCZ rarely abuts the mean high water line, with a margin between the proposed path and the mean high water line. Along this section of the coast, our proposed route for the England Coast Path will not pass over any intertidal areas.

People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for example walking and walking with dogs, and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals. Popular destinations include Duridge Bay, St Mary's island, Cresswell and Newbiggin Bay. Such access on foot to the foreshore is not considered harmful to intertidal habitats.

Harvesting or removal of species could have an impact and is a possible concern, however; no new rights to do this are created by our proposals. Neither will what we are proposing interfere with ongoing work to investigate the possible impacts of hand gathering and bait collecting activities on MCZ features or measures to manage these activities.

Terns are using the river Blyth for foraging currently at the same time people are using existing PROW network. In practice, there is no reason to predict this pattern of foraging would change in future as the PROW becomes the coast path. From the point of view of foraging terns, there will be no change in presence of people/dogs, so no reason to predict change in their behaviour. Interaction with this feature is therefore ruled out at this stage.

There is no further potential of interaction.

4.4 Kitty Brewster Bridge to Spital Point

Outline of changes in access

The proposed route follows existing public rights of way through a mixture of paved and unpaved footpaths. The resulting spreading room is currently accessible and there will be no change to this. At Mount Pleasant Point on the north of the Blyth estuary an area of farmland will become spreading room, this will create new access rights.

It is also proposed that the Wansbeck Weir will become the crossing point over the river Wansbeck, this will formalise a currently informal crossing point.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Several feature groups that could be sensitive to changes in access occur along this section of the coast:

- Breeding seabirds (all species).
- Non-breeding rocky shore waders.
- Widespread non-breeding waders.
- Intertidal habitats.

[WeBS data](#) shows significant numbers of (wading bird features) ringed plover and some redshank on section of the proposals, therefore there is potential for interaction with these features. Sanderling, golden plover, turnstone and purple sandpiper are in low numbers or absent, therefore minimal potential for interaction. The use of sandier substrates for feeding means there is the potential for more regular interaction between walkers/dogs and the birds on the beaches.

Coquet to St. Mary's MCZ landwards boundary is to Mean High Water. The proposed route adjacent to the MCZ rarely abuts the mean high water line, with a margin between the proposed path and the mean high water line. Along this section of the coast, our proposed route for the England Coast Path will not pass over any intertidal areas.

People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for example walking and walking with dogs, and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals. Popular destinations include Duridge Bay, St Mary's island, Cresswell and Newbiggin Bay. Such access on foot to the foreshore is not considered harmful to intertidal habitats.

Harvesting or removal of species could have an impact and is a possible concern, however; no new rights to do this are created by our proposals. Neither will what we are proposing interfere with ongoing work to investigate the possible impacts of hand gathering and bait collecting activities on MCZ features or

measures to manage these activities.

Terns are using the river Blyth for foraging currently at the same time people are using existing PROW network. In practice, there is no reason to predict this pattern of foraging would change in future as the PROW becomes the coast path. From the point of view of foraging terns, there will be no change in presence of people/dogs, so no reason to predict change in their behaviour. Interaction with this feature is therefore ruled out at this stage.

There is no further potential of interaction.

4.5 Spital Point to Cresswell

Outline of changes in access

The proposed route follows existing public rights of way through a mixture of paved and informal unpaved footpaths with no legal status. The resulting spreading room is currently accessible and there will be no change to this.

The proposals will formalise the access route from/to Lynemouth Burn to Newbiggin along the coast and implement measures to deter the antisocial motorbike activities here. These activities have no known impact on sensitive features.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Several feature groups that could be sensitive to changes in access occur along this section of the coast:

- Non-breeding rocky shore waders
- Widespread non-breeding waders
- Intertidal habitats

[WeBS data](#) shows significant numbers of (wading bird features) purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling and some golden and ringed plover on section of the proposals, therefore there is potential for interaction with these features. redshank is in low numbers or absent, therefore minimal potential for interaction. The use of sandier substrates for feeding means there is the potential for more regular interaction between walkers/dogs and the birds on the beaches.

Coquet to St. Mary's MCZ landwards boundary is to Mean High Water. The proposed route adjacent to the MCZ rarely abuts the mean high water line, with a margin between the proposed path and the mean high water line. Along this section of the coast, our proposed route for the England Coast Path will not pass over any intertidal areas.

People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for example walking and walking with dogs, and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals. Popular destinations include Duridge Bay, St Mary's island, Cresswell and Newbiggin Bay. Such access on foot to the foreshore is not considered harmful to intertidal habitats.

Harvesting or removal of species could have an impact and is a possible concern, however; no new rights to do this are created by our proposals. Neither will what we are proposing interfere with ongoing work to investigate the possible impacts of hand gathering and bait collecting activities on MCZ features or measures to manage these activities.

There is no further potential of interaction.

4.6 Cresswell to Leazes Street (Amble)

Outline of changes in access

The proposed route largely follows existing promoted public rights of way; these are the Northumberland Coast Path and the National Cycle Network route 1. An exception to this is between Cresswell and Druridge Farm.

The area of land that would become coastal margin as a result of our proposals can already be accessed by the public and is being used for recreational purposes.

Potential for interaction (or lack of it)

Several feature groups that could be sensitive to changes in access occur along this section of the coast:

- Breeding seabirds (terns).
- Non-breeding rocky shore waders.
- Widespread non-breeding waders.
- Coastal vegetation.
- Marine habitats.

There is potential for interaction with the little tern nesting site LIFE project at Chibburn Burn. Connectivity aspects can be ruled out for the following reasons;

There are many tern breeding colonies located around the English coastline where current public access exists. It is a common occurrence that terns commute between protected nesting areas and foraging areas, over publicly accessible areas and in the presence of walkers and their dogs.

Assuming the management measures described result in a new tern colony establishing at Chibburn, there is no reason to predict that the necessary degree of connectivity between the colony and foraging areas will be inhibited by this proposal.

The potential colony is seaward of the route alignment and so the route of the ECP will not bisect the potential commuting routes.

[WeBS data](#) shows significant numbers of (wading bird features) sanderling on section of the proposals, therefore there is potential for interaction with these features. Other wading bird features are in low numbers or absent, therefore minimal potential for interaction. The use of sandier substrates for feeding means there is the potential for more regular interaction between walkers/dogs and the birds on the beaches.

The dunes at Hadston Links are known to be sensitive to visitor pressure.

Coquet to St. Mary's MCZ landwards boundary is to Mean High Water. The proposed route adjacent to the MCZ rarely abuts the mean high water line, with a margin between the proposed path and the mean high water line. Along this section of the coast, our proposed route for the England Coast Path will not pass over any intertidal areas.

People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for example walking and walking with dogs, and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals. Popular destinations include Duridge Bay, St Mary's island, Cresswell and Newbiggin Bay. Such access on foot to the foreshore is not considered harmful to intertidal habitats.

Harvesting or removal of species could have an impact and is a possible concern, however; no new rights to do this are created by our proposals. Neither will what we are proposing interfere with ongoing work to investigate the possible impacts of hand gathering and bait collecting activities on MCZ features or measures to manage these activities.

There is no further potential of interaction.

5 Assessment of any possible adverse impacts and mitigation measures

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

5.1 South Bents to Shields Ferry

5.1.1 Environmental sensitivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breeding seabirds (kittiwake, cormorant, fulmar): principally on the cliffs and stacks around Marsden Bay. • Non-breeding waders (sanderling, turnstone, purple sandpiper): using the intertidal along the entire stretch, with a particular concentration around Whitburn. • Vegetation (a mosaic of communities, principally on cliff top/slope).

5.1.2 Proposed improvements to accessibility
ECP signage and small repairs/upgrades to existing infrastructure.

5.1.3 Access assessment	
Current situation	Predicted change
<p>This part of the proposals is semi urban in nature with high levels of local use, from dog walkers and those traveling north south by foot or bicycle. Recreational use is also high with horse riding as well as pedestrian and bicycle use. Tourist attractions are notable at the National Trust property at Souther Lighthouse and the seaside attractions at the South Shields Promenade. The attractive coastline with sandy beaches and impressive cliffs also attracts visitors, as does the seabird colony at Marsden Bay. Tyne Mouth South Pier is currently accessible by the public, however this is managed by the Port of Tyne and the pier is closed in bad weather. This management will continue following our proposals.</p>	<p>Changes (increase) in access due to ECP are not expected to be significant in this already highly accessed area.</p> <p>Access to Marsden Bay is unrestricted at present and high numbers of visitors use the area. The ECP proposals will change the legal status (in access terms) of this area, but it is not expected to increase numbers of visitors.</p> <p>There is no predicted change in use foreseen in either the route or spreading room as the ECP will not create access to any new features or attractions. The spreading room created is all currently fully accessible. Any new users brought to the area through ECP would be negligible in comparison to current users of the beaches and foreshore.</p>

5.1.4 Possible adverse impacts
The route follows existing formal routes so there is no additional footprint on notified habitat/features or supporting habitat. As described above, there is not predicted to be any noticeable increase in access to an

already intensely visited area, so there is unlikely to be any increased damage from 'off-route' access.

There is no predicted adverse impact to the breeding cormorant, kittiwake and fulmar using Marsden Cliffs, for the following reasons. The cliffs and stacks are steep and inaccessible. This is not a popular or regular area for climbers and the steep nature means people do not generally attempt to clamber down. There is no reason to predict that visitor behaviour will change as a result of this proposal, even if there is a small increase in numbers of people using this stretch. In effect, the breeding species are effectively protected by the geography of the cliffs.

However, as described above, there is not predicted to be any noticeable increase in access to what is an already intensely visited area. Breeding seabird numbers have not been analysed yet, so it is not clear whether there have been any recent changes in numbers, but there do not appear to have been such major changes as for non-breeding waterbirds. Nevertheless, if future analysis does suggest that recreational access is an issue then strategic management will be required (which could involve seasonal restrictions to the coastal margin).

[WeBS data](#) is showing purple sandpiper, turnstone and redshank are present here in locally significant numbers. These species' of wader has a widespread distribution in this sub-section, with suitable rocky shore and sandy shore present throughout.

No change is predicted in access usage on this highly urbanised stretch of coast. Our proposals will not impede existing visitor management measures or limit or restrict any future action or remedy that might be required to manage visitors in a different way.

5.1.5 Mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address any possible impacts

None proposed.

5.1.6 Conclusion

We do not expect there will be a noticeable change in the levels or pattern of access as a result of our proposals. Our proposed alignment for the trail follows an existing and well managed coastal path is already a well-known and popular route, used by both locals and visitors to the area. The extent of the associated access rights within the coastal margin is in keeping with the already established use along this section of the coast. There is no reason to suppose that our proposals will have a detrimental impact. Where necessary, the access arrangements we have proposed can be adjusted in the light of unforeseen changes that arise in the future.

5.2 Shields Ferry to Old Hartley

5.2.1 Environmental sensitivity

There are no known breeding colonies of bird features in this chapter however purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover, ringed plover and redshank do use the area as seen in the [WeBS data](#) for St Mary's Island and Tyne Estuary at Annex 10.1. Therefore disturbance of these features could be an issue.

5.2.2 Proposed improvements to accessibility

ECP signage and small repairs/upgrades to existing infrastructure.

5.2.3 Access assessment	
Current situation	Predicted change
<p>Semi-urban or urban in nature the coast here is developed up to the coast with only the coast road separating mostly residential properties from the cliff edge or promenade. As such the area is highly accessed and access is managed. For example much of the sandy beach areas; King Edwards bay, Long Sands, Cullercoats and Whitley Bay have dog control orders in place throughout the holiday seasons.</p> <p>Rocky outcrops, notably the one on which St Mary's lighthouse sits, separate the sandy beaches mentioned above. These are less popular than the beaches but still very well accessed. St Mary's forms a particular attraction year round although greater numbers are seen in the holiday season. The line of the ECP from the ferry will travel east towards the coast through the Fish Quay and beyond to the Collingwood Monument. Then turning north following the promenade for much of this stretch. Spreading room will include the sandy beaches and rocky outcrops mentioned above with little in the form of excepted land.</p>	<p>The proposals will create no new opportunities for access.</p> <p>There is no predicted change in use foreseen in either the route or spreading room as the ECP will not create access to any new features or attractions.</p> <p>The spreading room created is all currently fully accessible. Any new users brought to the area through ECP would be negligible in comparison to current users of the beaches and foreshore.</p>

5.2.4 Possible adverse impacts
<p>The route follows existing formal routes so there is no additional footprint on notified habitat/features or supporting habitat. As described above, there is not predicted to be any significant increase in access to an already intensely visited area, so there is unlikely to be any increased damage from 'off-route' access.</p> <p>WeBS data is showing high numbers of all wading bird features except redshank at St Mary's Island. Elsewhere in this section redshank only are recorded in medium numbers on the Tyne estuary, and High Numbers of purple sandpiper are recorded at Whitley Bay. St Mary's Island is an important feeding and roost site for these features.</p> <p>The rocky headland at Cullercoats, Whitley Bay, Tynemouth and St. Mary's is an important roost sites for turnstone and purple sandpiper. The sandy beaches between Whitley Bay, Hartley and Tynemouth, Cullercoats are well used by public & dog walkers which lead to existing disturbance. This stretch of coastline is currently well used by people; the coastal path will have little or no impact on this use.</p> <p>SSSI birds; turnstone, redshank feed along the beach from Whitely Bay to Hartley. This beach is already well used by the public. This widespread distribution means that any small increases in potential disturbance effects is dissipated across a large area. As above the area is currently well used by people, the coastal path will have little or no impact on this use.</p> <p>No change is predicted in access usage on this highly urbanised stretch of coast. Our proposals will not impede existing visitor management measures or limit or restrict any future action or remedy that might be</p>

required to manage visitors in a different way.

5.2.5 Mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address any possible impacts

None proposed.

5.2.6 Conclusion

No noticeable change in access is expected here; therefore no impacts are predicted on non-breeding waders from ECP proposals.

5.3 Old Hartley to Kitty Brewster Bridge

5.3.1 Environmental sensitivity

There are no known breeding colonies of bird features in this chapter however purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover, ringed plover and redshank do use the area as seen in the WeBS data for Seaton Sluice to Blyth estuary (Excl) at Annex 10.1. It should be noted that the features do not use this area in as high numbers as surrounding areas, however disturbance of these features could be an issue.

5.3.2 Proposed improvements to accessibility

ECP signage and small repairs/upgrades to existing infrastructure.

5.3.3 Access assessment

Current situation	Predicted change
<p>In this chapter the coast becomes much more sparsely populated. Collywell Bay at Seaton Sluice is very rocky in nature and at high tide is inaccessible thus less popular than surrounding beaches. Hartley Links however is popular, as it forms a long sandy beach and dunes behind the beach, stretching from Seaton Sluice to South Blyth. The dunes carry the very popular National Cycle Network route one (NCN1), which forms a useful active travel link from/to Blyth. Hartley Links are popular with local dog walkers and tourists alike which ensure year round use, with clear peaks in the summer. Sea anglers also use this beach.</p>	<p>The ECP proposed follows rights of way, NCN1 or public foot paths throughout this chapter and the proposed spreading room is currently accessible as described opposite.</p> <p>As the proposed route goes through Blyth much of the margin will be excepted land and so does not create spreading room. The route itself follows NCN1 for the most part and footpaths elsewhere.</p> <p>As in the first two chapters, we do not expect there will be a noticeable change in the levels or pattern of access as a result of our proposals.</p> <p>The Blyth Estuary contains areas of salt flat and mud which will have a section 25A (unsuitable for access) restriction proposed for the area.</p>

5.3.4 Possible adverse impacts

Purple sandpiper, turnstone and redshank are present here in locally significant numbers. These species' of wader has a widespread distribution in this sub-section, with suitable rocky shore and sandy shore present throughout. These features have roosting sites within this stretch are at Blyth west Staithes – Blyth pier, Blyth Estuary and Mount Pleasant. These areas are included in the coastal margin although the pier and

Staithe are virtually inaccessible to the public.

This widespread distribution means that the small predicted increase in potential disturbance effects (assuming it is small increase in visitors predicted) is dissipated across a large area. It follows that only a small proportion of the SPA SSSI population will be affected at any one disturbance event and cumulatively these will not add up to a significant effect. Possible adverse impacts are therefore inconsequential for the SSSI SPA population as a whole.

The route follows existing formal routes so there is no additional footprint on notified habitat/features or supporting habitat. As described above, there is not predicted to be any significant increase in access to an already intensely visited area, so there is unlikely to be any increased damage from 'off-route' access.

No change is predicted in access usage on this highly urbanised stretch of coast. Our proposals will not impede existing visitor management measures or limit or restrict any future action or remedy that might be required to manage visitors in a different way.

5.3.5 Mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address any possible impacts

None proposed.

5.3.6 Conclusion

No noticeable change in access is expected here; therefore no impacts are predicted on non-breeding waders from ECP proposals.

5.4 Kitty Brewster Bridge to Spital Point

5.4.1 Environmental sensitivity

There are no known breeding colonies of wading bird features in this chapter however ringed plover and redshank do use the area in significant numbers. These are features of the Northumberland Shore SSSI. Purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover are recorded in very low numbers, as seen in the [WeBS data](#) for Blyth estuary at Annex 10.1. An area of farmland at Mount Pleasant is known to be important to redshank as a roosting site and is currently in a Countryside Stewardship Scheme and sown to grass to enhance and protect the value of this site for redshank amongst other species. Indicators of success for this agreement read as follows;

There should be Lapwing / Redshank / Snipe / Curlew present between 1 March and 30 June and their behaviour should indicate that they are breeding and, in most years, successfully fledging young.

The land would most probably be arable without this management scheme.

5.4.2 Proposed improvements to accessibility

Signage and improvement to infrastructure will guide ECP users away from the roosting site. New infrastructure and signage will clearly define the preferred route past Mount Pleasant. New infrastructure will make this route a preferable option for walkers. We do not predict any changes in current access patterns on the ground.

5.4.3 Access assessment	
Current situation	Predicted change
<p>A public footpath travels to the most south easterly point of Mount Pleasant. This is not well used and in four site visits no users have been noted.</p> <p>The area in question has no attractors other than the bird life. There are no area-wide access rights, or informal area-wide use.</p>	<p>At this point the ECP proposals have taken users inland to cross the Kitty Brewster Bridge. Once north of the bridge the proposals make use of existing public rights of way and will make some improvements to the infrastructure. It is reasonable to believe that use of the linear route will increase in terms of local and long distance walkers, due to way marking and better access furniture.</p> <p>The margin that is created will change the legal status of the area in terms of it becoming coastal margin. It will be spreading room as it currently carries no excepted features. The area has a public right of way traveling to the 'point' of Mount Pleasant which forms a cul-de-sac. There are no 'attractors' for people to visit this area, it is therefore reasonable to assume it will not be well used.</p> <p>Signage and improvement to infrastructure will guide ECP users away from the roosting site; long distance walkers are likely to avoid using the spreading room as it would add considerable distance to their walk. Local users are unlikely to use the spreading room, as it does not form a circular route which is favoured by most recreational or dog walkers.</p>

5.4.4 Possible adverse impacts
<p>Purple sandpiper, turnstone and redshank are present here in locally significant numbers. These species' of wader has a widespread distribution in this sub-section, with suitable rocky shore and sandy shore present throughout. These features have roosting sites within this stretch are at Blyth west Staithes – Blyth pier, Blyth Estuary and Mount Pleasant. These areas are included in the coastal margin although the pier and Staithes are virtually inaccessible to the public.</p> <p>This widespread distribution means that the small predicted increase in potential disturbance effects (assuming it is small increase in visitors predicted) is dissipated across a large area. It follows that only a small proportion of the SPA SSSI population will be affected at any one disturbance event and cumulatively these will not add up to a significant effect. Possible adverse impacts are therefore inconsequential for the SSSI SPA population as a whole.</p> <p>At Mount Pleasant evidence shows (WeBS) that the feature that could be most impacted upon is redshank and its grassland roost site. The ECP route proposed uses existing public rights of way that are inland and out of sight from the sensitive area. Some access furniture will be replaced and or repaired, and signage will be put in place to waymark the route.</p> <p>No change is predicted in access usage on this stretch of coast. There are concerns about current levels of recreational disturbance and our proposals will not impede existing visitor management measures or limit or restrict any future action or remedy that might be required to manage visitors in a different way.</p>

5.4.5 Mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address any possible impacts

At the public right of way that accesses the area of sensitivity no improvements are proposed to access the grassland of particular sensitivity at Mount Pleasant; signage will direct walkers away from the fields at Mount Pleasant Point. The grassland will become margin and spreading room the areas of mud in the Estuary (adjacent to the grass field roost site) are subject to a s25A salt marsh and flat access exclusion proposal. The area is currently serviced by a public right of way which will not form any part of the trail.

5.4.6 Conclusion

No noticeable change in access is expected here; therefore no impacts are predicted on non-breeding waders from ECP proposals.

5.5 Spital Point to Cresswell

5.5.1 Environmental sensitivity

There are no known breeding colonies of wading birds in this chapter however purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover, ringed plover and redshank are known to use the areas of rocky foreshore as seen in the WeBS data for Newbiggin to Cresswell at annex 10.2. Disturbance of these features could be an issue.

5.5.2 Proposed improvements to accessibility

ECP signage only.

5.5.3 Access assessment	
Current situation	Predicted change
<p>In this chapter ECP route proposals follow well used paths; however these paths are currently of an informal nature with no legal status for the most part. At points (Newbiggin promenade and the approach to Cresswell village) the route follows public paved footpaths and public highways. These areas are well used at present and the ECP will not significantly increase access here.</p> <p>Where the proposed route goes seaward of Newbiggin golf course the route is currently walked and used by locals who are aware of it. This is local knowledge that it is possible to pass seaward of Lynemouth power station to the north of the golf club. Therefore use by walkers is limited. The golf course itself runs very close to the coast line. At this point there is a human presence every day.</p> <p>Moving north past the power station and the</p>	<p>This chapter of the proposals could see some increase in use. The route chosen does follow current defacto informal access routes however these are only well known locally, therefore signage and promotion could increase use.</p> <p>Newbiggin is keen to promote the path once open, to help promote itself as a tourist destination.</p> <p>With the exception of Newbiggin Bay which is a popular sandy bay the rest of the spreading room formed here is much less attractive to visitors. This is in part due to its rocky nature and in part due to the presence of Lynemouth power station. These physical attributes coupled with the antisocial behaviour will have a subduing effect on non-local use of this stretch of ECP.</p>

<p>seaward access, this is used by locals who are aware of it, however it is also used by motorbikes, which is creating an antisocial behaviour issue. The police have been involved, to little effect. The motorcyclists are drawn to the sand dunes and the terrain that these create for their activity. The ECP proposal includes measures to reduce this problem by using access furniture that deters the motorbikes.</p> <p>The proposed route crosses Lynemouth burn on the coast road and continues on the dunes toward Cresswell. These dunes are not well used, but are used largely by motorcyclists and fly tippers/fly graziers. Local dog walkers do use the area but due to the antisocial issues, the recreational use is limited.</p>	
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<p>5.5.4 Possible adverse impacts</p> <p>Purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover and ringed plover are present here in locally significant numbers. These species' of wader has a widespread distribution in this sub-section, with suitable rocky shore and sandy shore present throughout.</p> <p>This widespread distribution means that the small predicted increase in potential disturbance effects (assuming it is small increase in visitors predicted) is dissipated across a large area. It follows that only a small proportion of the SPA SSSI population will be affected at any one disturbance event and cumulatively these will not add up to a significant effect. Possible adverse impacts are therefore inconsequential for the SSSI SPA population as a whole.</p> <p>No change is predicted in access usage on this stretch of coast. There are concerns about current levels of recreational disturbance and our proposals will not impede existing visitor management measures or limit or restrict any future action or remedy that might be required to manage visitors in a different way.</p>
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<p>5.5.5 Mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address any possible impacts</p> <p>None proposed.</p>

<p>5.5.6 Conclusion</p> <p>No noticeable change in access is expected here; therefore no impacts are predicted on non-breeding waders from ECP proposals.</p>
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5.6 Cresswell to Leazes Street (Amble)

<p>5.6.1 Environmental sensitivity</p> <p><u>Chibburn Burn LIFE project</u></p> <p>The potential little tern nesting site is an area on the beach at Chibburn mouth ; the site is being established with no success to date. Tern colonies need an undisturbed area for nesting.</p> <p><u>Non breeding waders</u></p>

Redshank, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover do feed along the strandline along the sandy beaches at Druridge Bay. People already commonly use the foreshore along this section of the coast for recreational purposes, for example walking and walking with dogs, and no new opportunities for access will be created by our proposals.

Sand dunes at Hadston Links

Hadston Links, situated on the north side of Druridge Bay, is a coastal dune ridge system important for the diverse plant communities associated with a complex of wet and dry dune hollows. Hollows in the dunes have been created both naturally, by wind erosion and drainage and by man, these often hold standing water. The dune vegetation is currently considered to be in favourable condition, however; coastal squeeze and increased use of the dune for recreation have been identified as potential future threats.

5.6.2 Proposed improvements to accessibility

ECP signage and some small infrastructure works along the dunes at Hemscott Links.

5.6.3 Access assessment

Current situation	Predicted change
<p>This section of the coast is much more expansive in nature. It is sparsely populated and is largely made up of the vast expanse of beach at Druridge Bay which stretches from Cresswell in the south to Low Hauxley in the North. This is a very popular destination for various recreational uses including horse riding, kite surfing, dog walking and sunbathing. Its use is made more attractive by the facilities that the Country Park of the same name, which provides parking, toilets, café and other facilities.</p> <p>The Country Park and beach at Druridge Bay is a particularly popular destination during the summer months. Moving north from this point the proposals follow NCN route 1 which is very popular with cyclists and walkers alike and also coincides with the Northumberland Coast Path. From Low Hauxley to Amble the proposals follow the current waymarked route of the Northumberland Coast Path.</p> <p>Access to the potential little tern nesting site at Chibburn Burn is managed using temporary fencing during the nesting season. Wardens will be used should the terns use the site.</p> <p>Hadston Links are currently traversed by visitors to the Druridge Bay Country Park to gain access to</p>	<p>The legal status of the area will change in terms of it becoming coastal margin. It will be spreading room as it carries no excepted features.</p> <p>The ECP proposals will have little effect other than the legal status of the access rights.</p> <p>The beach surrounding the little tern nesting site is fully accessible at present and is very similar in access terms to the site at Crimdon Dene on the open stretch of ECP in Durham. This site is fenced and warden put in place before and during the nesting season, as it is here, funded through the LIFE project. The ECP will pass to the west of the site along the established Northumberland Coast Path and NCN route one. The proposed route is screened from the nesting site by the dunes here.</p> <p>Any changes (increase) in access at this point on the margin will be minimal due to the existing high levels. Long distance walkers are expected to favour the line of the ECP as it provides an easier walking surface and will be the sign posted as the ECP route.</p> <p>Hadston Links will be included within the margin and spreading room of the ECP. Currently the links are traversed by visitors to the Druridge Bay Country Park to gain access to the beach.</p> <p>In such a highly-used area for recreational purposes</p>

<p>the beach. These desire lines run east west across the dunes, there is also evidence of north south use of the dunes, but to a much lesser extent. Fencing has been put in place as part of an HLS agreement to manage grazing of the dunes. This has the effect of channelling visitors to the beach at Duridge Bay along narrow routes through the dunes.</p>	<p>and with so little changes being made through ECP proposals, no measurable changes in access patterns are expected.</p>
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5.6.4 Possible adverse impacts

Chibburn Burn LIFE project

The shore bird nesting site is highly susceptible to disturbance. Increase in recreational use of the site and particular dogs (dog walking) would impact greatly on the successful breeding of features here. The line of the ECP passes to the west of this site and is hidden visually by dunes. This also creates a physical impediment to accessing the nesting site from the proposed trail. However the site is within the proposed spreading room. The LIFE project currently supports fencing of the nesting site as well as wardens placed on site to advise visitors to keep away from the area during the nesting season. This is a tried and tested method of managing similar sites such as those at Crimdon Dene on the Durham coast and the Long Nanny further north on the Northumberland coast, these are both successful at achieving breeding shorebirds, and are both in areas subject to comparable levels of access that are expected here at Chibburn mouth.

Non breeding waders

Although the whole suite of SPA and SSSI features is present here, sanderling is present in locally significant numbers. This species' of wader has a widespread distribution in this sub-section, with suitable rocky shore and sandy shore present throughout.

This widespread distribution means that the small predicted increase in potential disturbance effects (assuming it is small increase in visitors predicted) is dissipated across a large area. It follows that only a small proportion of the SPA SSSI population will be affected at any one disturbance event and cumulatively these will not add up to a significant effect. Possible adverse impacts are therefore inconsequential for the SSSI SPA population as a whole.

No change is predicted in access usage on this highly accessed stretch of coast. There are concerns about current levels of recreational disturbance and these proposals will not limit or restrict any future action or remedy that might be required to manage visitors in a different way.

Sand dunes at Hadston Links

At Hadston Links the Dunes are subject to an element of coastal squeeze due to the coast road which limits the natural processes of accretion. Increasing access on the Dune vegetation could interfere with the establishment of dune vegetation, and/or damage the vegetation leading to rapid erosion of the dune.

No change is predicted in access usage on this stretch of coast. There are concerns about current levels of recreational disturbance and our proposals will not impede existing visitor management measures or limit or restrict any future action or remedy that might be required to manage visitors in a different way.

5.6.5 Mitigation measures included in the access proposal to address any possible impacts

At Hadston Links we have adjusted our proposals to avoid taking the route of the trail through the dunes. No further mitigation measures are proposed.

5.6.6 Conclusion

Changes in access as a result of our proposals will be limited. Our proposed alignment for the trail avoids sensitive locations and will not interfere with existing conservation management measures. Therefore our proposals will not have a measureable impact on sensitive features at this location.

5.7 Future changes

The access proposals in this document are designed to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features, taking account of any mitigation measures that are included. The coast is a dynamic environment and we have taken account of changes predicted by the Environment Agency as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes in the design of the access proposals. Should it be necessary in the future to identify a new alignment for the ECP in line with 'roll back' proposals in the stretch report, due care will be taken at that stage to minimise any potential impacts of this change on sensitive features. The same will be true if any unforeseen other changes arise in the future that may require a variation of the access arrangements described in these proposals, following due procedures.

6 Establishing and maintaining the England Coast Path

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

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

6.1 Establishment

6.1.1 Works on the ground

Once approval for a coastal access report is received from the Secretary of State, works can be carried out on the ground to make the ECP fit for use and prepare for opening. In this case, works on the ground would be carried out by South Tyneside Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council.

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

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

We have held preliminary discussions with South Tyneside Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council about the works required and believe that it is feasible for them to be carried out without adverse effect on the designated sites considered in this appraisal.

South Tyneside Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council will instigate the SSSI assent process by writing to us to confirm the timing of works and how operations are to be undertaken in line with these conditions. Natural England will provide further ecological advice as necessary.

6.1.2 Implementation of mitigation measure

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

Measure	Implementation
N/A	N/A

6.1.3 Local restrictions or exclusions

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

6.2 Maintenance

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

6.3 Monitoring

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

6.4 Future changes

The access proposals in this document are designed to ensure appropriate protection of sensitive features, taking account of any mitigation measures that are included. The coast is a dynamic environment and in designing the access proposals we have taken account of any changes predicted by the Environment Agency as a result of coastal erosion or other geomorphological processes. Should it be necessary in the future to identify a new alignment for the trail in line with 'roll back' proposals in the stretch report, due care will be taken at that stage to minimise any potential impacts of this change on sensitive features. The same will be true if any unforeseen other changes arise in the future that may require us to propose a variation of the access arrangements described in these proposals, following due procedures.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Overall conclusion – Natura 2000/Ramsar sites

7.1.1 Population level effects

Feature - or feature group	Conclusion
Breeding seabirds (terns) (Sandwich tern, Arctic tern, common tern, little tern and roseate tern)	No adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account existing access levels and any proposed mitigation measure's) have been identified.
Breeding seabirds (other than terns) (Guillemot, puffin, kittiwake, fulmar & cormorant)	No adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account existing access levels) have been identified.
Sea Bird Assemblage	No adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account existing access levels) have been identified.
Non-breeding rocky shore waders (Purple sandpiper, turnstone)	No adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account existing access levels) have been identified.
Widespread non-breeding waders (Sanderling, golden plover, redshank, ringed plover)	No adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account existing access levels) have been identified.
Durham Coast SAC, Magnesian Limestone Grassland	No adverse effects from the access proposal (taking into account existing access levels) have been identified.

7.1.2 In combination assessment – where applicable

At the time of carrying out this appraisal, Natural England is not aware of any other live plans or projects with similar non-significant risks to those we have identified for the access proposal.

7.1.3 Overall screening decision

X	No likely significant effect - as the new access proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on Northumberland Marine pSPA, Northumbria Coast SPA and pSPA, Northumbria Coast Ramsar and Durham Coast SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, (taking into account any proposed mitigation measures) no further Habitats Regulations assessment is required;
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OR

	Likely significant effect - as the new access proposal is likely to have a significant effect on Northumberland Marine pSPA, Northumbria Coast SPA and pSPA, Northumbria Coast Ramsar and
--	--

Durham Coast SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects (despite any proposed mitigation measures), appropriate assessment is required to consider whether the new access proposal may proceed.

7.2 Overall conclusion - SSSI

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

complies with Natural England's duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of the SSSI, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions² - and accordingly the new access proposal may proceed as finally specified in this template

OR

would not comply with the duty referred to in (a) – and accordingly permission/ authorisation/ assent should not be given for the new access proposal in the form finally specified in this template, for the following reasons:

Reasons (where second box is ticked):

7.3 Overall conclusion: Marine Conservation Zone

In respect of any duties that may arise under section 125 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Natural England has concluded for Coquet to St Mary's MCZ that:

(Mark one box only with an X below)

The access proposal (including any special measures specified in this appraisal) is the one that, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions under section 296 of the same Act, is least likely to hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives for the Marine Conservation Zone - and accordingly may proceed

OR


The above test is not met, and accordingly the access proposal should not be taken forward in this form, for the following reasons:

Reasons (where second box is ticked):

² The reference in 7.2 above to Natural England's functions includes its balanced general purposes for access, nature conservation and landscape under the NERC Act 2006, any specific statutory duties it may have to deliver specific improvements to public access, and the access-related policies and priorities it periodically agrees with Defra.

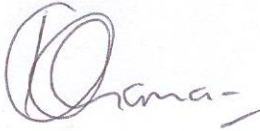
8 Certification


8.1 Certification – access proposal

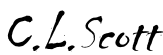
I certify that the details of the access proposal are correct		
Signed: 	Name: Jim Milner	Date: 16/12/2016

8.2 Certification – environmental impacts

I certify the conclusions of this appraisal with regard to environmental impacts		
Name: Katie Finkill Combe	Signed: 	Date: 08/03/2017

I certify the conclusions of this appraisal with regard to environmental impacts		
Name: Tom Charman	Signed: 	Date: 08/03/2017

I certify the conclusions of this appraisal with regard to environmental impacts		
Name: Steve Pullan	Signed: 	Date: 14/03/2017

I certify the conclusions of this appraisal with regard to environmental impacts		
Name: Catherine Scott	Signed: 	Date: 14/03/2017

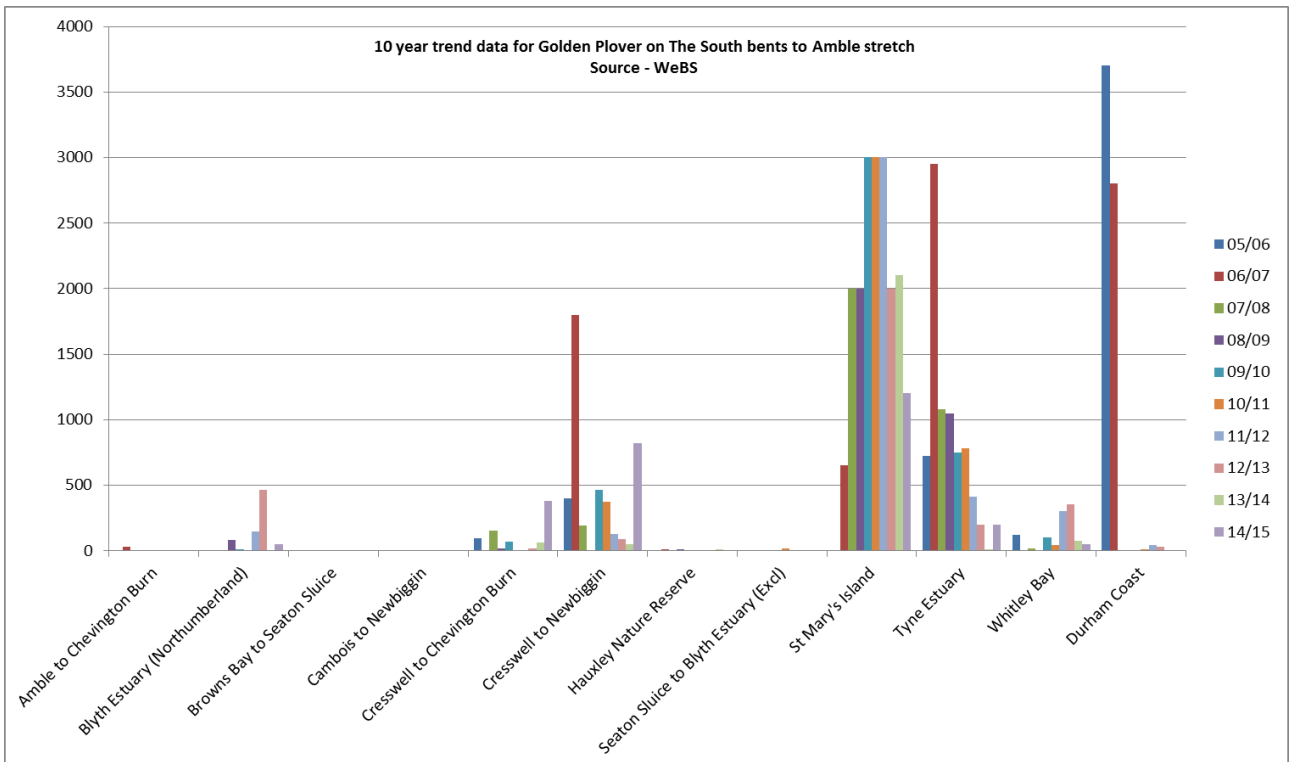
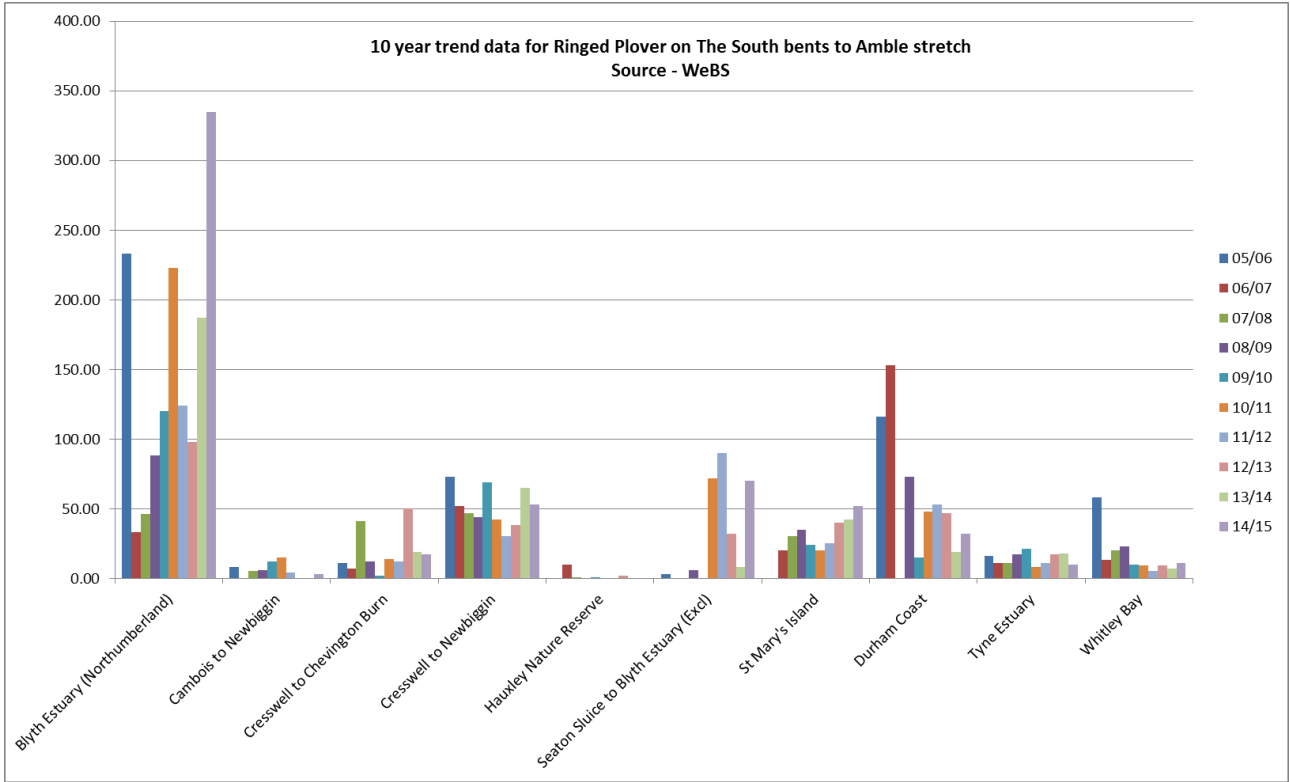
9 References

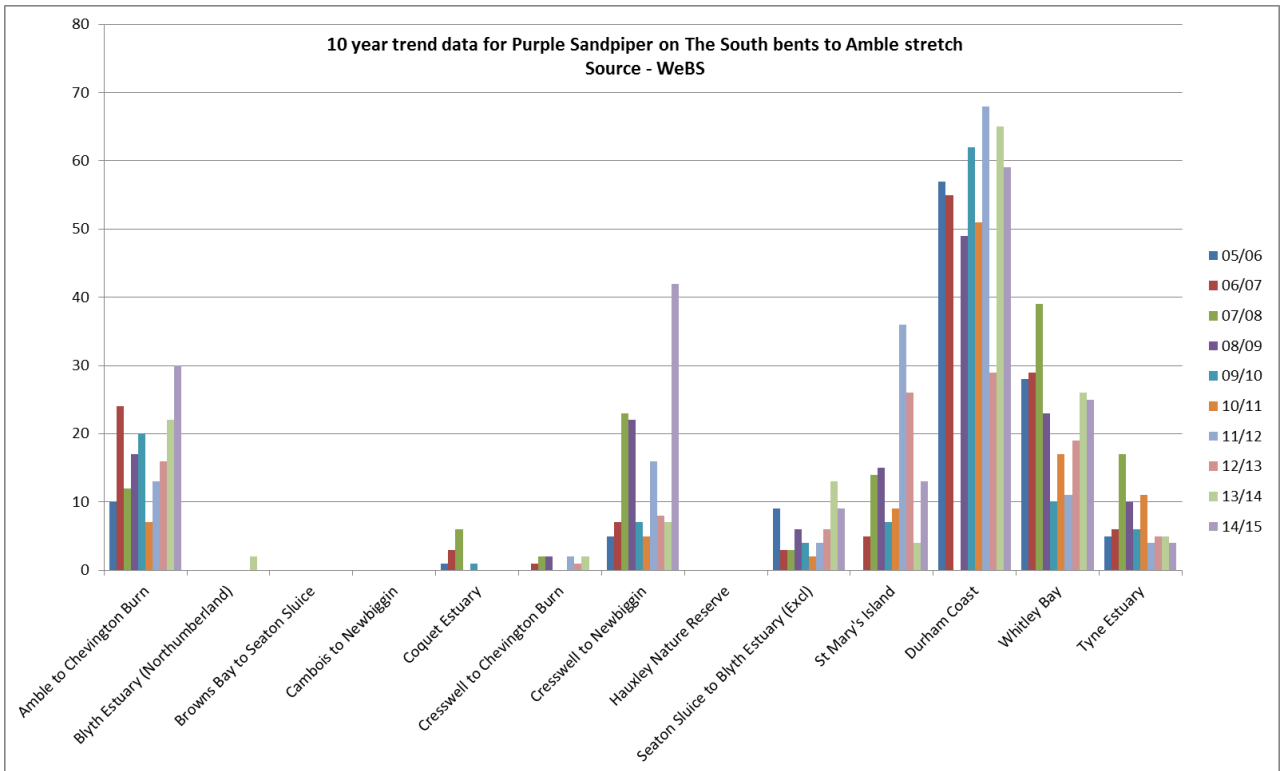
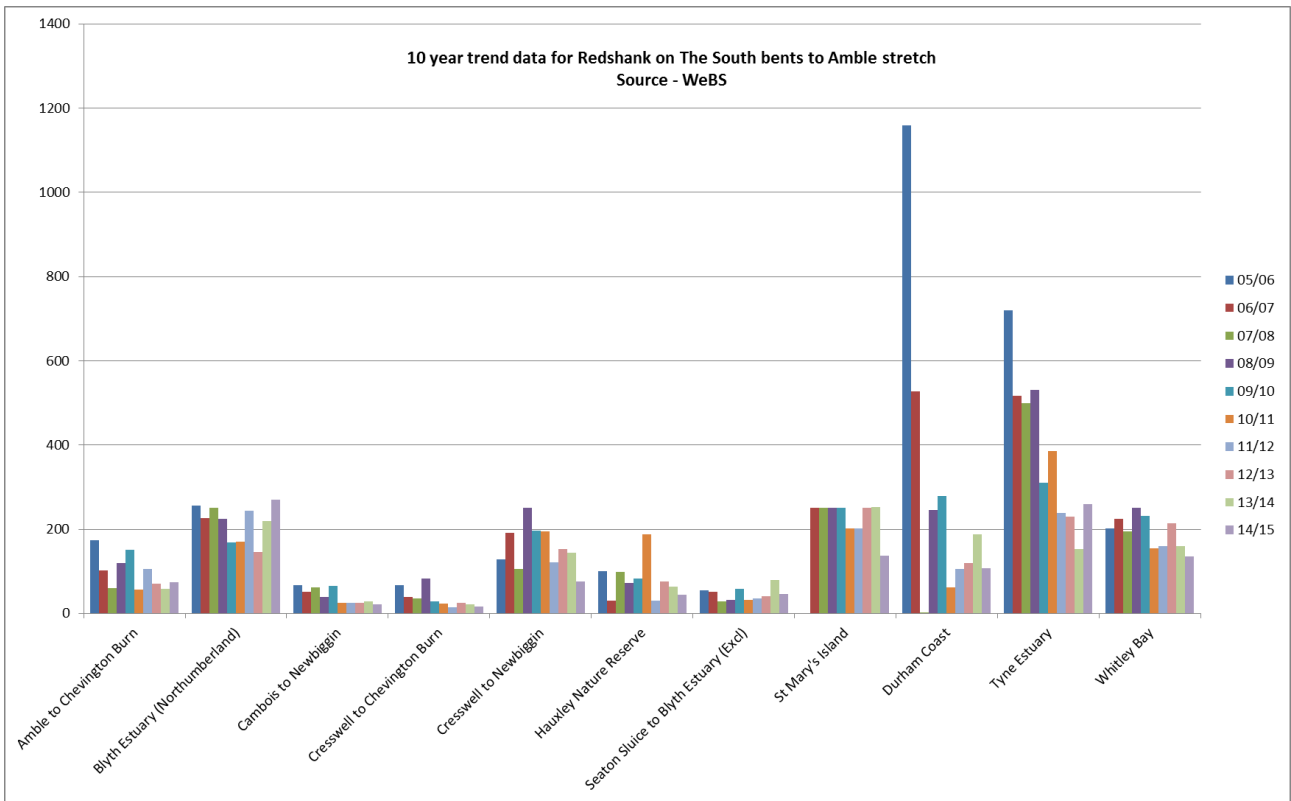
1. NATURAL ENGLAND. 2013. Coastal Access Natural England's Approved Scheme 2013. Published by Natural England Catalogue Code: NE446

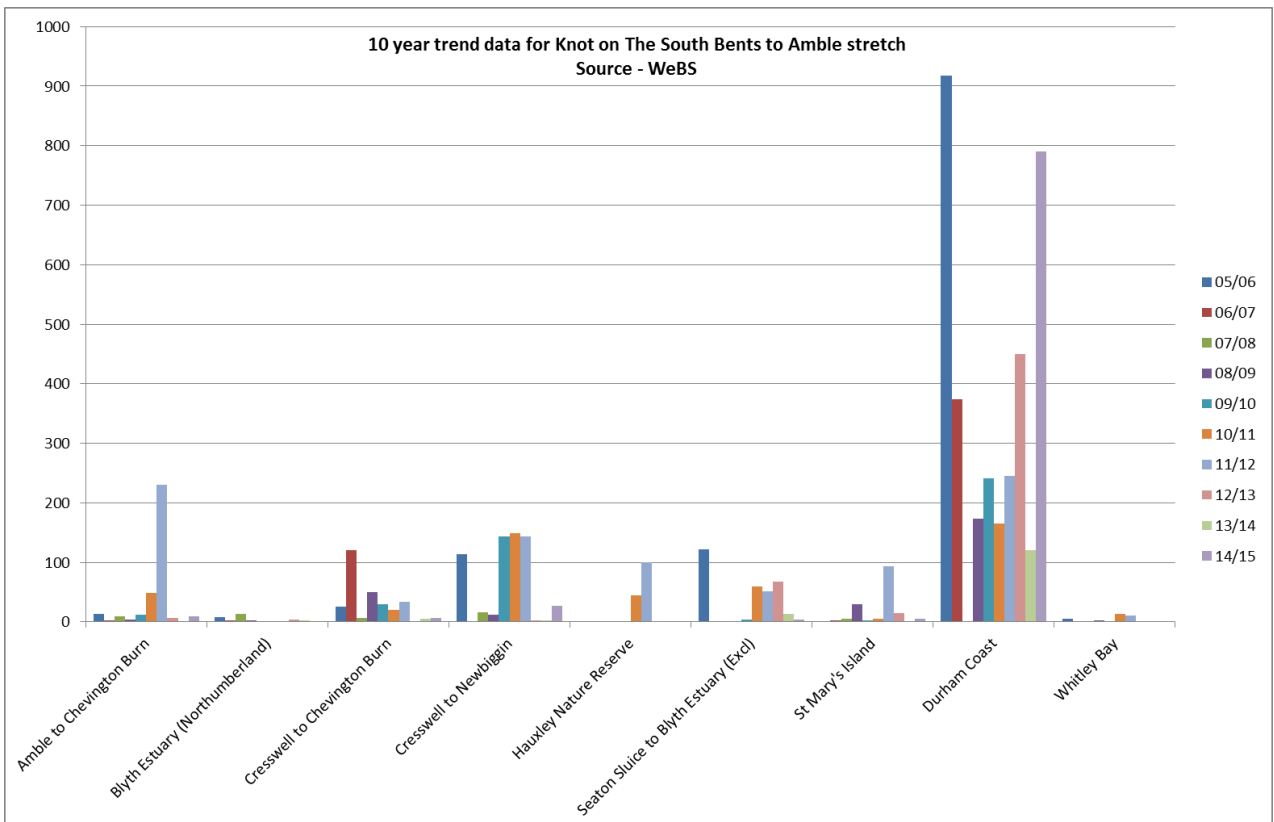
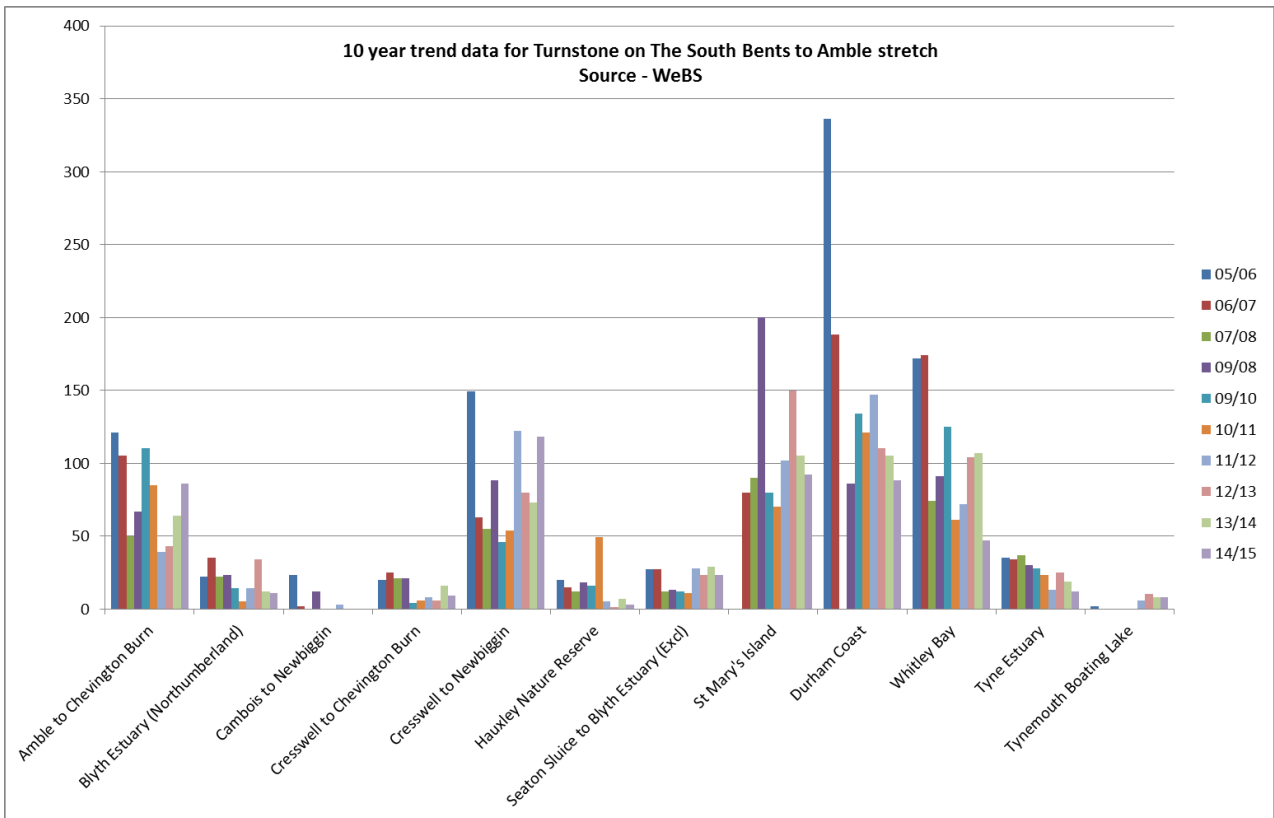
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5327964912746496?category=50007>

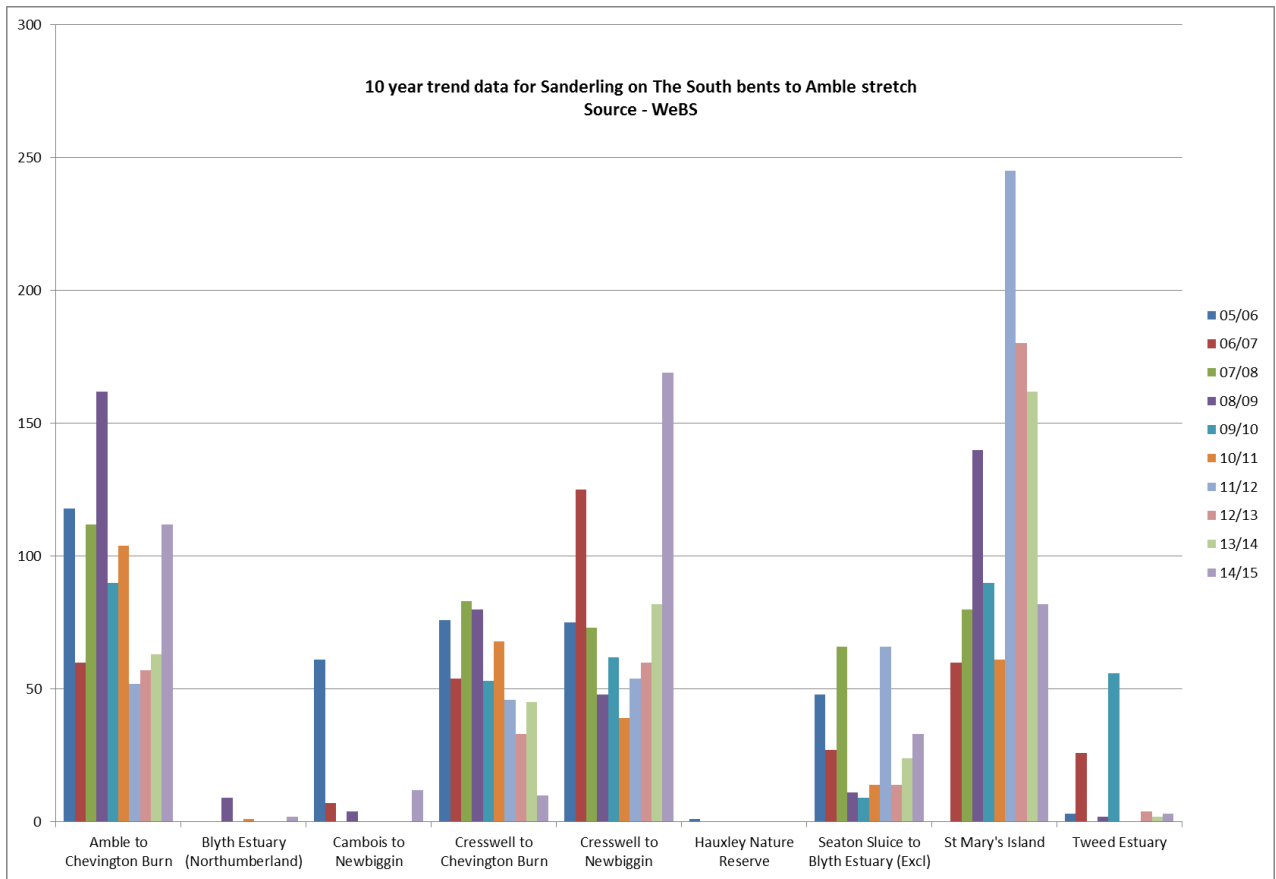
10 Annexes

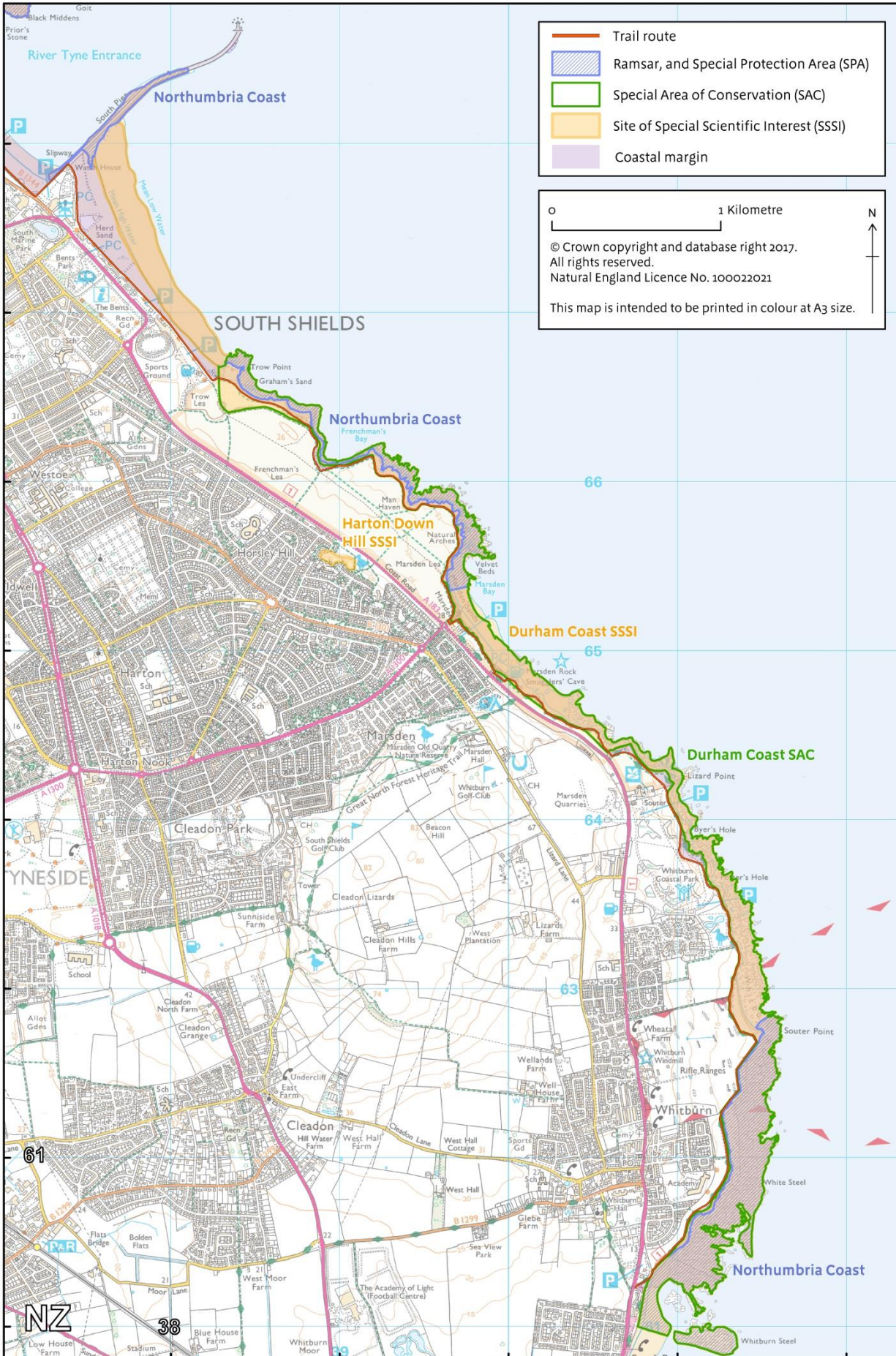
10.1 WeBS data











Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Durham Coast SAC and Durham Coast SSSI

Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Northumberland Shore SSSI, and Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice SSSI



Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Northumberland Shore SSSI, and Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice SSSI

Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, and Northumberland Shore SSSI



Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, and Northumberland Shore SSSI

Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI, and Northumberland Shore SSSI



Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI, and Northumberland Shore SSSI

Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Northumberland Shore SSSI, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI, and Cresswell Ponds SSSI



Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Northumberland Shore SSSI, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI, and Cresswell Ponds SSSI

Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Northumberland Shore SSSI, Hadston Links SSSI, Low Hauxley SSSI, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI, and Cresswell Ponds SSSI



Northumbria Coast Ramsar & SPA, Coquet to St Mary's MCZ, Northumberland Shore SSSI, Hadston Links SSSI, Low Hauxley SSSI, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI, and Cresswell Ponds SSSI