

**Assessment of Coastal Access Proposals between
Gosport to Portsmouth (GPM)
on sites and features of nature conservation concern**



Nature Conservation Assessment for Coastal Access Proposals between Gosport to Portsmouth

About this document

This document should be read in conjunction with the published Reports for the Gosport to Portsmouth Stretch and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for:

Special Protection Areas (SPAs):

- Solent and Southampton Water SPA
- Portsmouth Harbour SPA Solent
- Dorset Coast SPA (pSPA)

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs):

- Solent and Isle Of Wight Lagoons SAC

Ramsar Sites:

- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar
- Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-gosport-to-portsmouth>

A HRA is required for European sites (SPA, pSPA, SAC and Ramsar sites). The HRA is published alongside the Coastal Access Reports.

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

The NCA is arranged site by site. Map A shows designated sites along this stretch of coast.

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



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Introduction

Natural England has been asked by government to make proposals for a National Trail that will be a continuous walking route around the coast of England. This report concerns the potential impacts on nature conservation of establishing the new route for the stretch of the Hampshire coast between Gosport and Portsmouth. We describe the conclusions of our appraisal and how we have modified our proposals to take account of potential impacts.

This report aims to assess the potential environmental impacts on designated features which are not examined through the HRA process. This allows for a comprehensive overview of the features in relation to the coastal access plans.

Natural England's approach to ensuring the protection of sensitive nature conservation features under the Coastal Access Programme is set out in section 4.9 Coastal Access: Natural England's Approved Scheme 2013.

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, environmental consultants and occupiers. The approach includes looking at any current visitor management practices, either informal or formal. It also involves discussing our emerging conclusions as appropriate with key local interests such as land owners or occupiers, conservation organisations or the local access authority. In these ways, any nature conservation concerns are discussed early and constructive solutions identified as necessary.



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Assessment of coastal access proposals on:

Browndown SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? No

This assessment will cover the features of Browndown SSSI which are listed below:

Table 1: Notified features to be assessed for the Browndown SSSI

Combinations of species - Lichens
H1 - Calluna vulgaris - Festuca ovina heath
H2 - Calluna vulgaris - Ulex minor heath
Invertebrate assemblage
SD1 - Rumex crispus - Glaucium flavum shingle community
SD17 - Potentilla anserina - Carex nigra dune-slack community
U1e - Festuca ovina - Agrostis capillaris - Rumex acetosella lowland acid grassland
U3 - Agrostis curtisii grassland
Vascular plant assemblage

Current situation

Browndown SSSI is subject to military byelaws which means that it is considered Excepted Land. As such our proposed alignment is along the road north of Browndown, outside of the SSSI. As the site is excepted, there will be no associated Coastal Access rights for this area and in addition, as this area is related to military use, the area will have no coastal margin depiction on any Ordnance Survey maps.

The Solent Way used to run close to the shoreline but has since had the permissive rights removed and has now been rerouted behind the Browndown Site, along Portsmouth and Privett Road.

There are several car parks, cafes and residential areas close to the site which when combined means this is a relatively highly accessed area. Browndown operates a flag-system and during the times of inactivity by the military it is believed to be well accessed.



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When condition assessed in 2012, it was found that recreational trampling was an issue for the vascular plant assemblage. However, the MOD have installed fencing which has ‘shown a notable increase in vegetated substrate compared to outside the enclosures’ (Natural England, 2012) These fences have also helped to guide users through the area, therefore reducing trampling on the vegetated shingle. This management has been successful at reducing the impact of the access route.

Risk analysis

These feature groups listed, particularly strandline and vegetated shingle communities can be sensitive to concentrated trampling. Localised impacts could occur if changes in access lead to more frequent trampling of vegetation in sensitive areas. Increased use of an area by dog walkers could also have an impact on vegetated shingle as a result of eutrophication from dog fouling.

There will be no interaction with these features based on our proposal as Browndown SSSI is MoD land which is protected under a bye law. Our proposed route does not go through the SSSI, routing instead around Hampshire County Council-owned fields. This means we are directing people away from the sensitivities of the vegetated shingle and features of Browndown SSSI and there will be a distinct lack of interaction with these sensitive features. Therefore our proposals will not have a significant impact on the integrity of the site or its features.

Feature (or group of features)	Consideration	Conclusion
Combinations of species - Lichens	Trampling from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
H1 - Calluna vulgaris - Festuca ovina heath	Trampling from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
H2 - Calluna vulgaris - Ulex minor heath	Trampling from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and



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		therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
Invertebrate assemblage	Trampling from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
SD1 - <i>Rumex crispus</i> - <i>Glaucium flavum</i> shingle community	Disturbance and trampling by recreational users	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
SD17 - <i>Potentilla anserina</i> - <i>Carex nigra</i> dune-slack community	Disturbance from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
U1e - <i>Festuca ovina</i> - <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> - <i>Rumex acetosella</i> lowland acid grassland	Trampling from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
U3 - <i>Agrostis curtisii</i> grassland	Trampling from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.
Vascular plant assemblage	Trampling from various activities at site	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as features are on excepted land, and therefore Coastal Access rights do not apply.



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Assessment of coastal access proposals on:

Gilkicker Lagoon SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? Yes

This assessment will cover the features of Gilkicker Lagoon SSSI which are listed below. Please note, Saline lagoons are a feature of this site, but are assessed under the HRA (Habitats Regulations Assessment):

Table 2: Notified features to be assessed for the Gilkicker Lagoon SSSI

Population of RDB stonewort - <i>Lamprothamnium papulosum</i> , Foxtail Stonewort
Population of Schedule 5 crustacean - <i>Gammarus insensibilis</i> , Lagoon Sand Shrimp
Population of Schedule 5 sea anemone - <i>Nematostella vectensis</i> , Starlet Sea Anemone

Current situation

Formed of two small linked lagoons and an outflow, both of these lagoons fall within the proposed coastal margin. The route is aligned along the existing promoted route; the Solent Way. The site itself is well accessed already and is mainly used for recreation (it forms part of a golf course).

Risk analysis

The lagoons at Gilkicker are located on one side of the proposed route. An increase in recreational activity could cause disturbance to the lagoons if walkers and dogs enter them, disturbing the subtidal features within them.

The proposed route follows the promoted, popular Solent Way, on a defined path with intermittent scrub along the edge, acting as a natural barrier to the lagoons. The lagoons themselves are located on a golf course which is excepted land and will therefore not be subject to new access rights within the coastal margin. There is also an information panel to the north of the lagoons on Fort Road providing educational information on wildlife features found in and around the lagoons.

The conservation advice package states recreational activities such as dog walking will not have an impact on these features because they are sub tidal and so there will be a distinct lack of interaction with these sensitive features. Therefore our proposals will not have a significant impact on the integrity of the site or its features.



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Feature (or group of features)	Consideration	Conclusion
Population of RDB stonewort - <i>Lamprothamnium papulosum</i> , Foxtail Stonewort	Disturbance to the species	No possible adverse effects from the access proposal have been identified as the sensitive feature is located in the lagoons, and a high level of access in the area already means an increased footfall is not likely to have a significant effect on the features of the site.
Population of Schedule 5 crustacean - <i>Gammarus insensibilis</i> , Lagoon Sand Shrimp	Disturbance to the species	Conservation advice states the lagoons are not at a direct threat of recreational disturbance. The lagoons are located on a golf course which is excepted land and will therefore not be subject to new access rights within the coastal margin. There is an information panel to the North of the lagoons on Fort Road providing educational information on wildlife features found in and around the lagoons.
Population of Schedule 5 sea anemone - <i>Nematostella vectensis</i> , Starlet Sea Anemone	Disturbance to the species	Conservation advice states the lagoons are not at a direct threat of recreational disturbance. The lagoons are located on a golf course which is excepted land and will therefore not be subject to new access rights within the coastal margin. There is an information panel to the North of the lagoons on Fort Road providing educational information on wildlife features found in and around the lagoons.



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Assessment of coastal access proposals on:

Portsmouth Harbour SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? Yes

Note that notified features of the SSSI that are also qualifying features of the European site are omitted from this assessment. This assessment will cover the features of Portsmouth Harbour SSSI which are listed below.

Table 3: Notified features to be assessed for the Portsmouth Harbour SSSI *The Black-tailed Godwit, Brent Goose and Dunlin, are part of a European Site, so are assessed within the HRA, meaning they have been omitted from this assessment

Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Black-tailed Godwit, <i>Limosa islandica</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Brent Goose (Dark-bellied), <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Dunlin, <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Grey Plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
CG2 - <i>Festuca ovina</i> - <i>Avenula pratensis</i> lowland calcareous grassland
Population of Schedule 5 crustacean - <i>Gammarus insensibilis</i> , Lagoon Sand Shrimp
Population of Schedule 5 sea anemone - <i>Nematostella vectensis</i> , Starlet Sea Anemone
SM13a - <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> saltmarsh, <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> dominant sub-community
SM14 - <i>Atriplex portulacoides</i> saltmarsh
SM15 - <i>Juncus maritimus</i> - <i>Triglochin maritima</i> saltmarsh
SM16a - <i>Festuca rubra</i> saltmarsh <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> sub-community
SM6 - <i>Spartina anglica</i> saltmarsh
Vascular plant assemblage



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Current situation

The existing use of Portsmouth Harbour and adjacent areas is very high. Its main uses include activities by the Navy, commercial boating and regular ferry use to a range of destinations. Due to this, Portsmouth Harbour is a hub of activity with existing high levels of access. Of the areas that are accessible to the public, leisure uses include boating marinas, shopping centres, a golf course situated at Cams Hall, and recreation grounds. Tourism is another factor of use with sites such as Portchester Castle and long distance walking routes such as Allan King Way and Pilgrim's trail popular with visitors. There are currently coastal defence works being constructed which will produce a high sea wall. As well as providing defence against flooding it is also a barrier to stop dogs and walkers entering the foreshore, and will screen birds from line of sight disturbance. Works are to be completed in 2019.

The inland diversion along a main road (A27) (between Fort Brockhurst and Fleetlands) means there is little interaction with sensitive intertidal features due to the industrial and commercial land use in the area. When you reach the Hilsea roundabout and begin the existing Pilgrims Trail at Tipner there could be some interaction with a number of bird species who use the mudflats in this area to feed and roost.

Along the eastern shore of Tipner Lake, birds are known to use the foreshore for feeding and resting. This location in particular is well used by walkers as part of the Pilgrims trail. The landscaping of the wall development may encourage people to the area.

Horsea Island is formerly a landfill site and part of the MOD land which forms HMS Excellent and is currently inaccessible to the public. This area falls within the coastal margin of the route. It is included under the Portsmouth Harbour SSSI designation which is notified for its chalk grassland features.

As stated in the condition assessment, the habitat became scrubbed over and as a result a management plan was drawn up to reduce the scrub which has led to the site moving towards a favourable condition (Natural England, 2014). As these features are found specifically on Horsea Island and not the surrounding areas and our alignment is approx. 1 km away from this site, with no public access to it from there at present, there will be no interaction from our proposals due to the inaccessibility of the sites.

Due to the presence of grey plover using intertidal areas across the stretch (and other bird species) care has been taken to reduce potential disturbance due to increased use of the existing paths. It should be noted that WeBS Alerts have not been raised for Grey Plover which are experiencing slight declines but not significant enough to warrant an Alert.

Changes in visitor behaviour in sensitive areas can potentially cause increased disturbance to feeding and/or roosting wintering or passage water birds using the saltmarsh, mudflats, coastal grazing marsh and fields adjoining the coast. Disturbance events (those where the presence of human activity elicits a behavioural response from birds) can increase the energetic requirements of these species via reduced feeding rates or by birds taking flight. However it is to be expected that due to the restrictions placed on the saltmarsh areas (section 25A restriction) the impact on the birds in the area should be minimal.



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The SSSI includes two brackish lagoons adjoining Haslar Lake in the south-west of the Harbour. Brackish lagoons in which there is little rise or fall in water levels support a narrow range of species which are, however, highly specialist to these conditions. The fauna and flora of Little Anglesey Lake is the most diverse lagoons in south-east England. Cockle Pond has a less diverse fauna but includes, in common with Little Anglesey Lake, populations of both the starlet sea anemone *Nematostella vectensis* and the lagoon sand shrimp *Gammarus insensibilis*, which are specially protected by Section 9(5) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The starlet sea anemone and lagoon sand shrimp are located in units 2 and 3 of the SSSI, however the English Coast Path does not route near these lagoons, therefore the risk of interaction is minimal between these features and users of the path.

Risk analysis

Most of the current issues within the SSSI relate to water quality. In 2018, it was reported that 'it is unclear whether the nutrient status is adequate to substantially prevent the growth of dense macroalgae mats' however, this is a nutrient issue, and the result of wider issues in the catchments feeding into the harbour, which should not be affected by coastal access users.

There were also some issues relating to the features of the site including direct disturbance and trampling on grassland and vascular plant features. The recreational use of the area was also highlighted in the 2014 report, as it was stated 'Anthropogenic impacts in this section of the harbour include bait digging and considerable assorted plastic and metal debris across the foreshore'. Our proposals should not cause any further adverse effects, as the intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh of the SSSI will be excluded from any new coastal access rights under a S25A Direction as it is unsuitable for access. There will be use of signage and scrubbing up of vegetation to discourage the public away from the sensitive areas.

Established saltmarsh is generally able to withstand people walking on it occasionally but localised damage could occur if there is repeated trampling. In areas regularly used by dogs there is a risk of eutrophication by dog fouling causing changes in vegetation composition. An increase in the number of visitors to the area could cause damage from excess trampling and soil compaction which will impact upon the future growth of the features.

Issues such as disturbance will be mitigated by the use of information boards to manage access and remind users of the sensitivity of the features. The proposed Coast Path route will use inland routes at high tides in certain sensitive locations (Hardway Slipway and Wicor Marina) to take users of the ECP away from the intertidal areas used by the birds.



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Feature (or group of features)	Consideration	Conclusion
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Grey Plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Disturbance to a species that trends show a decline in	The route will be sympathetic in terms of disturbance to areas where bird species as listed previously are found. This will help to mitigate against disturbance to the features by guiding walkers away from sensitive areas at high tide. S25a restrictions have been applied to restrict access to intertidal areas.
CG2 - <i>Festuca ovina</i> - <i>Avenula pratensis</i> lowland calcareous grassland	Trampling from various activities at site	This feature only occurs at the southern end of Horsea Island. There will be no interaction between ECP users and this feature, as the area is currently not open to public access. It is also approximately 1km away from the proposed route.
SM13a - <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> saltmarsh, <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> dominant sub-community	Disturbance to species who use the feature	The route will be sympathetic in terms of disturbance to areas this feature is found. This will help to mitigate against disturbance to the features by guiding walkers away from sensitive areas. S25a restrictions have been applied to intertidal area (an inherent part of the design of our proposals). Alongside this, inputting appropriate mitigation for sensitive areas.
SM15 - <i>Juncus maritimus</i> - <i>Triglochin maritima</i> saltmarsh	Disturbance to species who use the feature	The route will be sympathetic in terms of disturbance to areas this feature is found. This will help to mitigate against disturbance to the features by guiding walkers away from sensitive areas. S25a restrictions have been applied to intertidal area (an inherent part of the design of our proposals). Alongside this, inputting appropriate mitigation for sensitive areas.
SM16a - <i>Festuca rubra</i> saltmarsh <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> sub-community	Disturbance to species who use the feature	The route will be sympathetic in terms of disturbance to areas this feature is found. This will help to mitigate against disturbance to the features by guiding walkers away from sensitive areas. S25a restrictions have been applied to intertidal

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		area (an inherent part of the design of our proposals). Alongside this, inputting appropriate mitigation for sensitive areas.
SM6 - <i>Spartina anglica</i> saltmarsh	Disturbance to species who use the feature	The route will be sympathetic in terms of disturbance to areas this feature is found. This will help to mitigate against disturbance to the features by guiding walkers away from sensitive areas. S25a restrictions have been applied to intertidal area (an inherent part of the design of our proposals). Alongside this, inputting appropriate mitigation for sensitive areas.
Vascular plant assemblage	Trampling from various activities at site	The route will be sympathetic in terms of disturbance to areas this feature is found. This will help to mitigate against disturbance to the features by guiding walkers away from sensitive areas. S25a restrictions have been applied to intertidal area (an inherent part of the design of our proposals). Alongside this, inputting appropriate mitigation for sensitive areas.
Population of Schedule 5 crustacean - <i>Gammarus insensibilis</i> , Lagoon Sand Shrimp	Disturbance to species	Conservation advice states the lagoons are not at a direct threat of recreational disturbance. The lagoons are located on a golf course which is excepted land and will therefore not be subject to new access rights within the coastal margin. There is an information panel to the North of the lagoons on Fort Road providing educational information on wildlife features found in and around the lagoons.
Population of Schedule 5 sea anemone - <i>Nematostella vectensis</i> , Starlet Sea Anemone	Disturbance to species	Conservation advice states the lagoons are not at a direct threat of recreational disturbance. The lagoons are located on a golf course which is excepted land and will therefore not be subject to new access rights within the coastal margin. There is an information panel to the North of the lagoons on Fort Road providing educational information on wildlife features found in and around the lagoons.



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Assessment of coastal access proposals on:

Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary SSSI

Is this site also part of a European site? Yes

Only a small proportion of this designated area overlaps with the beginning of the proposed Gosport to Portsmouth stretch. Therefore this assessment will only cover those SSSI features that occur within this limited section.

This assessment will cover the features of Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary SSSI which are listed below:

Table 4: Notified features to be assessed for the Lee-on-Solent to Itchen Estuary SSSI. Note that notified features of the SSSI that are also qualifying features of the European site (*) are omitted from this assessment.

Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Black-tailed Godwit, <i>Limosa islandica</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Brent Goose (Dark-bellied), <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Dunlin, <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Great crested Grebe, <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Grey Plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Redshank, <i>Tringa tetanus</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Ringed Plover, <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Teal, <i>Anas crecca</i> *
Aggregations of non-breeding birds - Wigeon, <i>Anas Penelope</i> *
Vascular plant assemblage
EC - Aves
EC - Mesozoic - Tertiary Fish/Amphibia
EC - Quaternary of South Central England



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Current situation

The relevant SSSI features of interest are the geological exposures on the foreshore. The vascular plant assemblage is not present in this stretch of SSSI.

These geological features include exposures, rich in fossils with an assemblage of avian, marine molluscs and diverse fish fauna including sharks unique to the area. When assessed in 2006, it was found that around 50% of the SSSI area was covered by shingle. To complete work to re-expose the foreshore would “require major work including the use of heavy machinery”. The lower foreshore is covered by sand/silt but would also be difficult to expose by hand as the opportunities for study would be restricted to very low tides, and the overlying sand/silt would need to be removed off site. Exposure of the geological interest using vehicles could damage the interest features. It was therefore concluded that the SSSI unit is in unfavourable condition as the practical re-exposure of the foreshore would require heavy machinery and therefore study has become restricted to times of very low tides and the use of machinery to expose the geological interest (Natural England, 2006).

The proposed route of the ECP will be in close proximity to the Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary SSSI. The foreshore area of Stokes Bay is included under this designation and the seaward margin will extend out to the designated area. The shingle beach here is a popular recreation site – typical activities include swimming, sailing and walking the route along the seafront which is part of the Solent Way.

Risk analysis

As the main threat to the geological features on the site are through coastal process, not recreation, the impact of the coastal path on these features is likely to be minimal.

Feature (or group of features)	Consideration	Conclusion
EC- Aves	The exposures and geology on the site may be susceptible to damage from recreation	The feature is mainly covered by shingle, The area is has high levels of public access and the exposures are only accessible at low tide. The impact on the feature can be considered as negligible as coastal processes were considered the only threat to the features. As recreation is not listed as a threat to these features, it can be ruled out as an impact from the coast path.

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<p>EC - Mesozoic - Tertiary Fish/Amphibia</p>	<p>The exposures and geology on the site may be susceptible to damage from recreation</p>	<p>The feature is mainly covered by shingle, The area is has high levels of public access and the exposures are only accessible at low tide. The impact on the feature can be considered as negligible as coastal processes were considered the only threat to the features. As recreation is not listed as a threat to these features, it can be ruled out as an impact from the coast path.</p>
<p>EC - Quaternary of South Central England</p>	<p>The exposures and geology on the site may be susceptible to damage from recreation</p>	<p>The feature is mainly covered by shingle, The area is has high levels of public access and the exposures are only accessible at low tide. The impact on the feature can be considered as negligible as coastal processes were considered the only threat to the features. As recreation is not listed as a threat to these features, it can be ruled out as an impact from the coast path.</p>



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Assessment of coastal access proposals on:

Gilkicker Weevil

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

Current situation

The Gilkicker Weevil, *Pachytychius haematocephalus*, is around 3-4mm in length, with a distinctive reddish body. Its main habitat includes areas where there common bird's-foot-trefoil is found, within vegetated areas of shingle beach. In the UK, its presence is currently confirmed only in Hampshire and this is expected to the most northern part of its range. In the South, the species is predominantly found between Browdown SSSI and Gilkicker Point. An action plan (the Gilkicker Weevil Species Action Plan) was created in 2003 to consider the management of the site for the species.

In 2000, hand searching identified the presence of a single weevil approximately 250m west of Fort Gilkicker, while portable suction sampling along the stretch of coast between Browdown SSSI and Gilkicker point identified the species as occurring within the area. This study concluded that 'although the distribution of the species at Gilkicker Point and Browdown is wider than was originally thought, the species is still extremely local and protection of its fragile habitat should be a prime objective of any future conservation work' (Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership, 2003) ¹ A new survey carried out in 2018 by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust suggested that minimal numbers of the Gilkicker Weevil were found in Browdown SSSI (7 overall) and Gilkicker Point (2) (HIWWT, 2018) ²

Risk analysis

When assessing the risks on the Gilkicker Weevil, it is important to note the already high disturbance and footfall on the area. Also the fact that the MoD use the site for military activity suggests that there has been a range of disturbance over time. The route is using existing access, therefore the effects would not be as significantly disturbing as if creating new access in to areas where the weevil is known to be found. There will be minimal infrastructure at this location, so path establishment would also be unlikely to cause any disturbance. The species action plan also helps to support the continuing research into the species.

When assessing the locations of the individuals found in the most recent survey, there is no real evidence to suggest that that the coast path would have a negative impact on the species. As previously-discussed, the Coast Path will not transect Browdown, and the site will not have any coastal access rights created over it, which excludes impacts on one of this species' key sites.

¹ HAMPSHIRE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP(2013) Gilkicker Management Plan, Accessed 08/05/2019 Available here: <http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/pdf/PublishedPlans/GilkWeevilSAPfinal.pdf>

²HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT WILDLIFE TRUST(2018) Gilkicker Weevil Monitoring Report, Accessed 08/05/2019 Available here: <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-11/180725%20-%20Monitoring%20report%20for%20Gilkicker%20Weevil%20-%20web.pdf>



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We are following existing access, in a very well accessed area, using appropriate way marking to guide walkers along existing paths as well as signage to explain the importance of this feature. The most recent survey found only two individuals at Gilkicker Point, approximately 50 metres from the existing access path that will be the intended ECP route. Therefore it is unlikely that our proposals would have an effect on the species.

Feature (or group of features)	Consideration	Conclusion
Gilkicker Weevil	Disturbance could be an issue affecting the area where the Gilkicker Weevil is found. Due to the scarcity of the species, it is important to assess the impacts suitably.	The creation of the England Coast Path in this area is not expected to increase disturbance to the area upon that already present. We do not propose any new access and infrastructure that would affect the species or its habitat, and instead propose to align along the existing access route.



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Conclusion

We, Natural England, are satisfied that our proposals to improve access to the English coast between Gosport to Portsmouth are fully compatible with our duty to further the conservation and enhancement of the notified features of Browdown, Gilkicker Lagoon, Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary and Portsmouth Harbour SSSIs, consistent with the proper exercise of our functions³.

In respect of the Gilkicker Weevil we are satisfied that in developing the new access proposals the appropriate balance has been struck between Natural England's conservation and access objectives, duties and purposes.

See also, where relevant, the conclusions of the separate HRA relating to common features.

The conclusions of this assessment have been checked by:

Tilly Bellinger 	10.0.2019	On behalf of the Coastal Access Programme Team
Graham Horton 	10.06.2019	Senior Officer with responsibility for protected sites

³ 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.

Map A: SSSI Gosport to Portsmouth



Extent of proposals 

Motorways 

A road 

B road 

Minor road 

Railway & station 

o 0.75 1.5 Kilometres

o 0.5 1 Miles

Key

 Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI]

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Lagoon sand shrimp <i>Gammarus insensibilis</i>											ü
SM6 - <i>Spartina anglica</i> saltmarsh											ü
SM13a - <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> saltmarsh, <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> dominant sub-community											ü
SM14 - <i>Atriplex portulacoides</i> saltmarsh											ü
SM15 - <i>Juncus maritimus</i> - <i>Triglochin maritima</i> saltmarsh											ü
SM16a - <i>Festuca rubra</i> saltmarsh <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> sub-community											ü
CG2 - <i>Festuca ovina</i> - <i>Avenula pratensis</i> lowland calcareous grassland											ü
Yellow vetch <i>Vicia lutea</i>											ü
Yellow vetchling <i>Lathyrus aphaca</i>											ü
Vascular plant assemblage								ü	ü		ü
EC - Aves								ü			
EC - Mesozoic - Tertiary Fish/Amphibia								ü			
EC - Quaternary of South Central England								ü			

Other features about which concerns have been expressed- where applicable

Feature	Location
Gilkicker Weevil	Areas within Fort Gilkicker and Browndown SSSI (see survey source for exact location)