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# Habitats Regulation Assessment of England Coast Path proposals between **Wootton Bridge and East Cowes Ferry Terminal, Isle of Wight** on **sites of European importance for nature conservation**

NATURAL ENGLAND

# Contents:

**List of tables in this report**

**Assessment of Coastal Access proposals under regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('Habitats Regulations Assessment')**

# Summary

## I) Introduction

This is a record of the Habitats Regulations Assessment ('HRA') undertaken by Natural England (in its role of competent authority) in accordance with the assessment and review provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the Habitats Regulations').

Natural England has a statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to improve access to the English coast. This assessment considers the potential impacts of our detailed proposals for coastal access from Wootton to East Cowes on the following sites of international importance for wildlife:

- Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar
- Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation
- South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation
- Isle of Wight Downs Special Area of Conservation
- Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area
- Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons Special Area of Conservation
- Briddlesford Copses Special Area of Conservation

**Natural England's proposals for the Isle of Wight (IOW) are being submitted to the Secretary of State in two tranches. This assessment concerns the first tranche of Reports (IOW2 to IOW10) and the associated Overview. The assessment should be read alongside these documents that between them fully describe and explain the access proposals for the section of coast clockwise between Wootton Bridge to the East Cowes Ferry Terminal as a whole. The Overview explains common principles and background and the reports explain how we propose to implement coastal access along each of the constituent lengths.**

**Note that, a further Habitats Regulations Assessment will be carried for Natural England's coastal access proposals for the length of Isle of Wight coast between The East Cowes Ferry Terminal and Wootton Bridge.**

## II) Background

The main wildlife interests for this part of the Isle of Wight coast are summarised in Table 1 (see Table 3 for a full list of qualifying features)

*Table 1: Main Wildlife Features*

| Interest | Description |
|---|---|
| Non-breeding water birds | During the winter months Solent and Southampton Water SPA supports an internationally recognised population of non-breeding water birds. The extensive areas of soft mud exposed at low tide are the main feeding areas and these birds need suitable undisturbed places to roost at high tide |
| Breeding terns and gulls | During the summer months Solent and Southampton Water SPA supports an internationally recognised population of breeding seabirds. These include four species of tern (little, common, roseate and Sandwich) and the Mediterranean gull. Shingle banks within and outside of nature reserves are the main potential nesting areas and these birds need undisturbed access between nesting and foraging areas. |
| Foraging terns | The Solent and Dorset Coast SPA is designated primarily for tern species who forage in marine areas beyond the extent of the current SPA boundaries. Foraging terns use subtidal areas and inland water bodies to forage during nesting season. These birds require undisturbed foraging sites to ensure that breeding is successful and chick survival rates aren't impacted. |
| Intertidal Habitat | The northern side of the Isle of Wight has many harbours and estuary inlets which consist of mudflats, sandflats and saltmarsh which help to support the wading bird interest within important SPA sites such as Newtown Harbour. |
| Vegetated shingle | Annual vegetation of drift lines and perennial vegetation of stony banks are designated within Solent and Maritime SAC. These features make up a rare habitat within the UK and play an important role within the transition between intertidal and terrestrial habitat. These communities are found within Thorness Bay and Newtown Harbour. |
| Chalk Grassland | This mosaic of habitat hosts a number of species including large populations of early gentian *Gentianella anglica* on the south coast of the Isle of Wight. Large extents are found on Tennyson Down and West High Down. |
| Vegetated Maritime Cliffs | This habitat occupies the cliff tops and faces on the southern side of the Isle of Wight and supports maritime influenced plant communities. |
| Assemblage of wetland plants and invertebrates | The Solent and Southampton water Ramsar site supports assemblages of plants and invertebrates that are nationally scarce, rare and/or declining. Most of these species are associated with saltmarshes, grazing marshes and their ditches, or other brackish coastal habitats such as the lagoons and foldings behind sea defences. |

## III) Our approach

Natural England's approach to ensuring the protection of sensitive nature conservation features under the Coastal Access Programme is set out in the Coastal Access Scheme [Ref 1]. Note that, following a ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union (Case C-323/17 – usually cited as People over Wind), we

have issued a technical memorandum concerning the application of this methodology where assessment under the Habitats Regulations is required.

Our final published proposal for the 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 proposal is 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.

The conclusions of this assessment are approved by a member of Natural England staff who is not a member of coastal access programme team and who has responsibility for protected sites. This ensures appropriate separation of duties within Natural England.

## IV) Aim and objectives for the design of our proposals

The new national arrangements for coastal access will establish a continuous well-maintained walking route around the coast and clarify where people can access the foreshore and other parts of the coastal margin. These changes will influence how people use the coast for recreation and our aim in designing our detailed proposals has been to secure and enhance opportunities for people to enjoy their visit whilst ensuring appropriate protection for affected European sites.

A key consideration in developing coastal access proposals has been the possible impact of disturbance on non-breeding water birds as a result of recreational activities, particularly visitors with dogs.

Objectives for design of our detailed local proposals have been to:

- Avoid exacerbating issues at sensitive locations by making use of established coastal paths
- Work with local partners to design detailed proposals that take account of and complement efforts to manage access in sensitive locations
- Where practical, incorporate opportunities to raise awareness of the importance of this part of the coast for wildlife and how people can help efforts to protect it.

## V) Conclusion

We have considered whether our detailed proposals for coastal access between Wootton Creek and East Cowes might have an impact on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar, Solent and Dorset Coast SPA, Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC, South Wight Maritime SAC, Isle of Wight Downs SAC, Briddlesford Copses SAC. In Part C of this assessment we identify some possible risks to the relevant qualifying features and conclude that proposals for coastal access, without incorporated mitigation, may have a significant effect on some of these sites (assuming there is LSE). In Part D we consider these risks in more detail, taking account of avoidance and mitigation measures incorporated into our access proposal, and conclude that there will not be an adverse effect on the integrity any of these sites. These measures are summarised in Table 2 below.

*Table 2: Summary of risks and consequent mitigation built in to our proposals*

| Risk to conservation objectives | Relevant design features of the access proposals |
|---|---|
| Repeated disturbance to feeding and resting non-breeding waterbirds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposals, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site. | <u>Route Alignment: Newtown Harbour</u><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP and PRoW where possible<br>• A land management restriction (Section 24) has been placed between 1st August and 30th September at Western Haven, closing the route (Trail Sections IOW-7-S025 to IOW-7-S037). Alternative route inland open during closure<br>• A section 26 nature conservation restriction will close the route from 1st October until 1st March<br>• Routed inland at Walters Copse, Aunt Emmy's Creek, Western Haven during crucial winter months to reduce disturbance<br>• 100m of stock fencing seaward of route at Upper Hamstead Plantation<br>• New interpretation panels will inform people of the restrictions in place and educate walkers on the sensitivities at key locations to encourage responsible behaviour.<br>• A S26 dogs to leads restriction at Western Haven will be in place from 2nd March to 31st July, when the main route is open<br>• Vegetative screening will be applied however temporary willow screening will be erected whilst waiting for vegetation to establish as functional screening<br>• Removal of current bridge at Aunt Emmys Creek<br>• All year round S26 nature conservation restriction on Harts Farm fields<br>• Local Authority and contractors will adhere to the mitigation measures set out in D3.1 of this assessment when constructing access management infrastructure<br><br><u>Coastal Margin: Newtown Harbour</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access<br>• Section 26 nature conservation restriction will be applied to the shingle spits at Hamstead Dover, along the shoreline at Western Haven<br><br><u>Route Alignment: Medina</u><br>• Following existing cycle way and PRoW<br>• Two interpretation panels on each side of the medina will be installed to make walkers aware of the bird sensitivities |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Specifically routed away from fields used as support habitat<br><br><u>Coastal Margin: Medina</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access<br><br><u>Route Alignment: Thorness Bay</u><br>• Routing along PRoW at the top of beach<br>• Routing into a field to take people away from beach<br>• Interpretation panels will be installed at each end of the beach to inform walkers about wildlife sensitivities<br><br><u>Coastal Margin: Thorness Bay</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access |
| Disturbance to breeding birds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduction in the abundance and distribution of the qualifying features within the site, resulting in a reduction in the population of non-breeding birds. | <u>Route Alignment</u><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP and PRoW<br>• Section 26 Nature Conservation restriction on shingle spits at Newtown Harbour<br>• Interpretation panels in specific locations to these features to educate walkers on the sensitivities<br><br><u>Coastal Margin</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access due to hazardous and unsafe terrain. |
| Repeated disturbance to breeding Mediterranean gull and tern species following changes in recreational activities as a result of access proposals lead to a reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site | <u>Route alignment: Newtown Harbour</u><br>• Aligning along the existing IOWCP or PRoW<br>• Interpretation panels in specific locations to these features to educate walkers on the sensitivities<br>• Willow screening will be erected next to the hide<br>• Section 26 Nature Conservation restriction on shingle spits at Newtown Harbour (see directions map IOW 7A)<br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access |

| | |
|---|---|
| Repeated disturbance to foraging terns following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposals, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in populations and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site | <u>Bembridge Lagoon</u><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP, lagoons are landward of this separated by boatyard and vegetative screening<br>• Interpretation panel on Helen Duver to inform walkers of the wildlife sensitivities<br><br><u>River Yar</u><br>• Routed along a fenced public highway which is the existing IOWCP<br><br><u>Newtown Lagoons</u><br>• Routes along an existing promoted route<br>• Information panels will be installed on observation hide<br><br><u>Coastal Margin</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access due to hazardous and unsafe terrain. |
| Trampling following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal leads to the reduction in the extent and distribution of qualifying and supporting habitats | <u>Vegetated shingle:</u><br>• Aligning along existing walked coast path and PRoW at Thorness Bay<br>• Specifically routing off of Thorness beach and into a pasture field<br>• Interpretation panels strategically placed at either end of Thorness Beach, Hamstead Point and Hamstead Dover to inform walkers of sensitivities and discourage access on to habitat.<br>• Way marking clearly to ensure walkers stick to the path,<br><br><u>Sand Dunes</u><br>• Following existing IOWCP – therefore not promoting a 'there and back route' on to the dunes<br>• Interpretation panels strategically placed where the route meets the PRoW on to the dunes to inform walkers of sensitivities and discourage access on to habitat.<br>• Way marking clearly to ensure walkers stick to the path,<br><br><u>Saltmarsh</u> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Routed further inland at Walters Copse so walkers aren't trampling saltmarsh<br>• New boardwalk at Hamstead Quay will take walkers off of the already damaged saltmarsh<br>• Aunt Emmy's creek crossing moved further inland to reduce infrastructure impacts from new boardwalk and trampling of saltmarsh<br>• Interpretation panels strategically placed at Hamstead Quay, Western Haven and Walters Copse to inform walkers of sensitivities and discourage access on to habitat.<br><br><u>Chalk Grassland</u><br><br>• using existing IOWCP on Tennyson Down and West high down as opposed to cliff top worn routes<br><br>• Way marking clearly to ensure walkers stick to the path<br><br><u>Wetland Invertebrate and plant assemblage</u><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP and PRoW where possible<br>• Information provided on interpretation panels where appropriate on the route<br>• Way marking will be used to encourage people to stay on the route of the coast path away from sensitive habitats.<br><br><u>Coastal Margin</u><br><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access due to hazardous and unsafe terrain. |
| The installation of access management infrastructure may lead to the reduction in the extent and distribution of qualifying and supporting habitat | Proposed works include surface improvements, boardwalks, bridges and interpretation panels.<br><br>• Where possible existing infrastructure has been used to add way markers<br>• Where possible select locations for infrastructure where there is little nature conservation value i.e. bare ground<br>• When boardwalks need replacing the piles will be left in the ground as it is more damaging and disturbing to the substrate if taken out and replaced |

| | |
|---|---|
| The nature, scale, timing and duration of construction works could result in bird disturbance sufficient to disrupt normal behaviours and/or distribution of birds within the site. | Local Authority and contractors will adhere to the mitigation measure set out Table 5 section D3.1 of this assessment |

## VI) Implementation

Once a route for the trail has been confirmed by the Secretary of State, we will work with Isle of Wight Council to ensure any works on the ground are carried out with due regard to the conclusions of this appraisal and relevant statutory requirements.

## VII) Thanks

The development of our proposals has been informed by input from people with relevant expertise within Natural England and other key organisations. The proposals have been thoroughly considered before being finalised and our initial ideas were modified during an iterative design process. We are particularly grateful to Hampshire Wildlife Trust and the RSPB, National Trust and to other organisations and local experts whose contributions and advice have helped inform the development of our proposals.

**Assessment of Coastal Access proposals under regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('Habitats Regulations Assessment')**

# PART A: Introduction and information about the England Coast Path

## A1. Introduction

Natural England has a statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to improve access to the English coast. The duty is in two parts: one relating to securing a long-distance walking route around the whole coast: we call this the England Coast Path; the other relating to a margin of coastal land associated with the route where in appropriate places people will be able to spread out and explore, rest or picnic.

To secure these objectives, we must submit reports to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recommending where the route should be and identifying the associated coastal margin. The reports must follow the approach set out in our methodology (the Coastal Access Scheme), which – as the legislation requires – has been approved by the Secretary of State for this purpose.

Where implementation of a Coastal Access Report could impact on a site designated for its international importance for wildlife, called a 'European site[1]', a Habitats Regulations Assessment must be carried out.

The conclusions of this assessment are approved by a member of Natural England staff who is not a member of coastal access programme team and who has responsibility for protected sites. This ensures appropriate separation of duties within Natural England.

Natural England's approach to ensuring the protection of sensitive nature conservation features under the Coastal Access Programme is set out in the Coastal Access Scheme [Ref 1]. Note that, following a ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union (Case C-323/17 – usually cited as People over Wind), we have issued a technical memorandum concerning the application of this methodology where assessment under the Habitats Regulations is required.

## A2. Details of the plan or project

This assessment considers Natural England's proposals for coastal access along the coast of the Isle of Wight clockwise from Wootton Bridge to East Cowes Ferry Terminal. Our proposals to the Secretary of State are presented in a series of reports that explain how we propose to implement coastal access along each of the constituent lengths. These comprise an Overview, which explains common principles and background, and Report which explain how we propose to implement coastal access along each of the constituent lengths (IOW2 to IOW10)l Within this assessment we consider each of the relevant reports, both separately and as an overall access proposal.

Our proposals for coastal access have two main components:

- alignment of the England Coast Path; and,
- Identification of coastal margin.

[1] Ramsar sites and proposed Ramsar sites; potential Special Protection Areas (pSPA); candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC); and sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites are treated in the same way by UK government policy

**England Coast Path**

A continuous walking route around the coast – the England Coast Path National Trail - will be established by joining up existing coastal paths and creating new sections of path where necessary. The route will be established and maintained to National Trail quality standards. The coastal path will be able to 'roll back' as the coast erodes or where there is significant encroachment by the sea such as occurs in the case of a deliberate breach of sea defences.

**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.

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

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

Of particular relevance to this assessment is that most areas of saltmarsh and mudflat within on the northern coastline of the Isle of Wight is considered unsuitable for public access and will be excluded from the new coastal access rights at all times regardless of any other considerations. As above, this will not affect other forms of established use, such as wildfowling.

**Promotion of the England Coast Path**

The Coast Path will be promoted as part of the family of National Trails. On the ground, the path will be easy to follow, with distinctive signposting at key intersections and places people can join the route. Directional way markers incorporating the National Trail acorn symbol will be used to guide people along the route. The coastal margin will not normally be marked on the ground, except where signage is necessary to highlight dangers that might not be obvious to visitors, or clarify to the scope and/or extent of coastal access rights.

Information about the Coast Path will be available on-line, including via the established National Trails website that has a range of useful information, including things for users to be aware of, such as temporary closures and diversions. The route is depicted on Ordnance Survey maps using the acorn symbol. The extent of the coastal margin is also depicted, together with an explanation about coastal access, where they do and don't apply and how to find out about local restrictions or exclusions.

**Maintenance of the England Coast Path**

The access proposals provide for the permanent establishment of a path and associated infrastructure, including additional mitigation measures referred to in this assessment and described in the access proposals. The England Coast Path will be part of the National Trails family of routes, for which there are

national quality standards. Delivery is by local partnerships and there is regular reporting and scrutiny of key performance indicators, including the condition of the trail.

**Responding to future change**

The legal framework that underpins coastal access allows for adaptation in light of future change. In such circumstances Natural England has powers to change the route of the trail and limit access rights over the coastal margin in ways that were not originally envisaged. These new powers can be used, as necessary, alongside informal management techniques and other measures to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained in light of unforeseen future change.

**Establishment of the trail**

Establishment works to make the trail fit for use and prepare for opening, including any special measures that have been identified as necessary to protect the environment will be carried out before the new public rights come into force on this stretch. Details of the works to be carried out and the estimated cost are provided in the access proposals. The cost of establishment works will be met by Natural England works on the ground to implement the proposals will be carried out by Isle of Wight Council, subject to any further necessary consents being obtained, including to undertake operations on a SSSI. Natural England will provide further advice to the local authority carrying out the work as necessary.

Assessment of Coastal Access proposals under regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('Habitats Regulations Assessment')

# Natura 2000 Designations

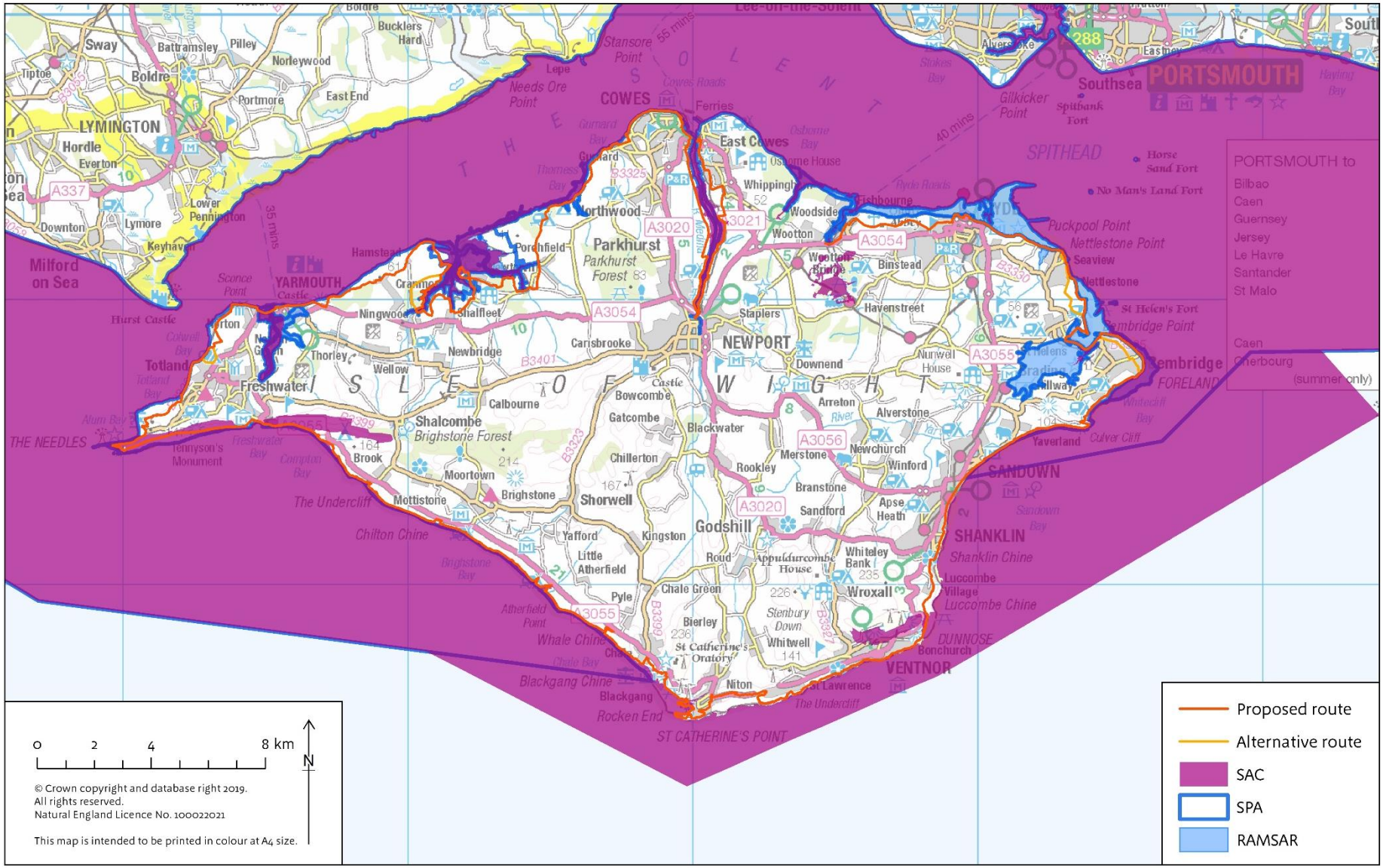


*Figure 1: Map to show Natura 2000 designations on the Isle of Wight*

# PART B: Information about the European Site(s) which could be affected

## B1. Brief description of the European Sites(s) and their Qualifying Features

### Solent and Southampton Water SPA & Ramsar site

Located in one of the only major sheltered channels in Europe, lying between the Isle of Wight and the mainland on the south coast of England. It stretches from Hurst Spit to Hill Head and on the North Coast of the Isle of Wight from Yarmouth to Whitecliff Bay. It is composed of extensive intertidal mudflats and sandbanks, saltmarsh, coastal lagoons shingle banks and grazing marsh. The estuarine sediments support rich populations of invertebrates which provide an important food source for overwintering birds. The shingle banks also provide important breeding ground for terns. This also supports approximately 10% of the world's dark-bellied brent geese. This species will use the mudflats and grazing marsh to feed but also make use of farmland and grassland outside of the SPA boundaries.

### Solent and Dorset Coast SPA

This recently designated area includes the subtidal areas not currently encompassed in the Solent and Southampton Water SPA which is designated for breeding terns (Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA, the Solent and Southampton Water SPA, Pagham Harbour SPA and Poole Harbour SPA). The new SPA will cover the area that the breeding terns use for foraging during April-September. The seaward boundary of the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA partially encompasses the coastline of the Isle of Wight. The boundary extends clockwise around the Isle of Wight coast from Blackgang Chine, near the southern tip of the island, around the whole of the northern shore of the island and round to the southeast side at Sandown. As stretches of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA already occupy sections of the Isle of Wight coastline, the SPA boundary correspondingly extends to either Mean Low Water to abut the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA or to Mean High Water where the coastline is not existing SPA.

### Solent Maritime SAC

This site has the largest number of small estuaries in the tightest cluster anywhere in Great Britain. Sediment habitats within the site include extensive areas of intertidal mudflats and sandflats, often supporting eelgrass (*Zostera* species), subtidal sandbanks, saltmarsh and natural shoreline transitions such as drift line vegetation. The SAC is of particular interest as it is the only site to support all four species of cordgrass (*Spartina*) found in the UK, including the rare native small cordgrass (*Spartina maritima*). The SAC also supports a population of the rare Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*).

### Isle of Wight Downs SAC

This SAC is located at either end of the east- west running chalk spine on the Island. In the west there are notably exposed white chalk cliffs which support grassland communities, particularly Tennyson Downs and the Needles Headland and also Ventnor Downs towards the east. Chalk grassland is the dominant habitat supporting rare species such as Early Gentian.

### Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC

Encompasses fourteen coastal lagoons (eight along the Solent coast and four on the Isle of Wight), each with its own unique conditions and recognised for both nationally scarce species and high species diversity. The four Bembridge Harbour lagoons are located behind a sea wall, the sea water enters by percolation and man-made culverts. It supports a high species diversity including the nationally scarce starlet sea anemone.

### Briddlesford Copses SAC

Species rich area of ancient broadleaved woodland. Hosting a number of species such as ash, hazel, pedunculated oak and sessile oak. Woodland rides and railway verges support species rich neutral to acidic grassland. This site supports a breeding population of Bechsteins's bat *Myotis bechsteini.* The bats use crevices in mature trees for roosting and connecting woodlands for feeding.

### South Wight Maritime SAC

This designated site is located along the south coast of the Island. The west side is dominated by exposed bedrock, chalk cliffs and reefs whereas the eastern side is more sheltered with areas of limestone and sandstone. The reef systems support a diverse range of seaweeds and sponges. The Needles, Freshwater Bay and Bembridge represent some of the best areas in Britain for chalk cliffs and limestones ledges.

### Bird Aware Solent

The Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy, or more commonly known by its public facing name *Bird Aware Solent*, aims to reduce disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds from recreational activities by encouraging people to enjoy their visits to the coast in a responsible manner. The strategy has been put in place to mitigate possible impacts of planned new homes in the Solent area. Implementation of the strategy is delivered by the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership and funded by contributions from developers. The strategy comprises a series of management measures including employment of wardens to ensure responsible use of the site and to inform and educate the public.

### Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy

The strategy is a non-statutory document presenting evidence, analysis and recommendations to inform decisions relating to strategic planning as well as individual development proposals. The strategy relates to international important Brent Goose and wading bird populations within and around the Special Protection Areas and Ramsar wetlands of the Solent Coast. The underlying principle of the Strategy is to wherever possible conserve extant sites, and to create new sites, enhancing the quality and extent of the feeding and roosting resource.

The following table provides a complete list of the qualifying features of the European Sites which could be affected by the access proposals.

### *Table 3: Qualifying Features*

| Avian Qualifying feature | Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar | Solent and Southampton Water SPA | Solent and Dorset Coast SPA |
|---|---|---|---|
| A156 Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica* (non-breeding) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| A046a Dark-bellied brent geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* (non-breeding) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| A137 Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (non-breeding) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| A052 Teal *Anas crecca (non-breeding)* | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Waterbird assemblage[1] (non-breeding) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| A193 Common tern *Sterna hirundo*[3] | ✓B | ✓B | ✓F |
| A195 Little tern *Sterna albifrons*[3] | ✓B | ✓B | ✓F |
| A176 Mediterranean gull *Larus melanocephalus*[3] | | ✓B | |
| A192 Roseate tern *Sterna dougallii*[3] | ✓B | ✓B | |
| A191 Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*[3] | ✓B | ✓B | ✓F |

| Non Avian Qualifying feature | Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar | Solent Maritime SAC | Isle of Wight Downs SAC | Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC | Briddlesford Copses SAC | South Wight Maritime SAC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wetland invertebrate assemblage[4] | ✓ | | | | | |
| H1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time[2] | | ✓ | | | | |
| H1130 Estuaries[2] | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide[2] | | ✓ | | | | |
| H1150 Coastal lagoons | | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines | | ✓ | | | | |
| H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks | | ✓ | | | | |
| H1310 *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand | | ✓ | | | | |
| H1320 *Spartina* swards (*Spartinion maritimae*) | | ✓ | | | | |
| H1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) | | ✓ | | | | |
| H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ('White dunes') | | ✓ | | | | |
| S1016 Desmoulin's whorl snail, *Vertigo moulinsiana* | | ✓ | | | | |
| H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts | | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| H4030 European dry heaths | | | ✓ | | | |
| H6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*), (note that this includes the priority feature "important orchid rich sites") | | | ✓ | | | |
| S1654 Early gentian, *Gentianella anglica* | | | ✓ | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1323 Bechstein's bat, *Myotis bechsteini* | | | | | ✓ | |
| Wetland plant assemblage[4] | ✓ | | | | | |
| Sheltered Channel between island/mainland | ✓ | | | | | |
| Reefs | | | | | | ✓ |
| Submerged or partially submerged sea caves | | | | | | ✓ |

Notes:

[1] A waterbird assemblage is a qualifying feature of both the SPA and Ramsar sites. When classifying a waterbird assemblage as an SPA qualifying feature, the Ramsar Conventions Strategic Framework definition of 'waterbird' is used and as such we consider the two qualifying features synonymous. 'Main component species' of an assemblage are those which regularly occur on the site in internationally or nationally important numbers or regularly exceed 2,000 individuals. The main component species are: dark-bellied brent geese; teal; ringed plover; black tailed godwit; dunlin; great crested grebe; grey plover; lapwing; little egret; ; pintail; turnstone; shovler; whimbrel; wigeon and greenshank.

[2] The following are cited as contributing to the SAC estuaries feature, each of which are considered in the assessment that follows: intertidal seagrass beds; intertidal sand and muddy sand; intertidal mud; intertidal mixed sediments; intertidal coarse sediment, subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal mixed sediment; subtidal sand, subtidal seagrass beds. The same intertidal sub features are listed as components of the SAC mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide feature and the same subtidal sub features are listed as components of the sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time feature.

**[3]** all four tern species are qualifying features of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA for breeding. Little, Sandwich and common tern are designated for foraging within the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA. To differentiate between the two, **B** is for breeding and **F** is for foraging.

[4] Wetland plant assemblage is a qualifying feature of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA. Species included in the wetland plant assemblage as found on the Ramsar Information Sheet are: *Eleocharis parvula, Geranium purpureum forsteri, Lotus angustissimus, Ludwigia palustris, Orobanche purpurea, Lamprothamnium papulosum, Spartina maritima, Zostera marina.* It should be noted that Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar is a large site covering areas of the Isle of Wight and Hampshire. Therefore some of these species may not be found on the Isle of Wight or have gone extinct.
Wetland invertebrate assemblage is a qualifying feature of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA. Species included in the wetland invertebrate assemblage Ramsar Information Sheet are: *Gammarus insensibilis, Nematostella vectensis, Arctosa fulvolineata, Aulonia albimana, Anisodactylus poeciloides, Anthonomus rufus, Baris analis, Berosus, spinosus, Cantharis fusca, Drypta dentata, Leptura fulva, Meligethes bidentatus, Paracymusaeneus, Staphylinus caesareus, Aphrosylus mitis, Atylotus latistriatus, Dorycera graminum, Haematopoda grandis, Hippobosca equina, Linnaemya comta, Stratiomys longicornis, Syntormon mikii, Tetanocera freyi, Villa circumdata, Trachysphaera lobata, Paludinella littorina, Truncatellina cylindrica, Andrena alfkenella, Acleris lorquiniana, Elachista littoricola, Melissoblaptes zelleri, Platytes alpinella, Psamathrocrita argentella, Armandia cirrhosa.* It should be noted that Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar is a large site covering areas of the Isle of Wight and Hampshire. Therefore some of these species may not be found on the Isle of Wight or have gone extinct.

## B2. European Site Conservation Objectives (including supplementary advice)

Natural England provides advice about the Conservation Objectives for European Sites in England in its role as the statutory nature conservation body. These Objectives (including any Supplementary Advice which may be available) are the necessary context for all HRAs.

The overarching Conservation Objectives for every European Site in England are to ensure that the integrity of each site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and that each site contributes to achieving the aims of the Habitats Regulations, by either maintaining or restoring (as appropriate):

- The extent and distribution of their qualifying natural habitats,
- The structure and function (including typical species) of their qualifying natural habitats,
- The supporting processes on which their qualifying natural habitats rely,
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of their qualifying features rely,
- The population of each of their qualifying features, and
- The distribution of their qualifying features within the site.

Where Conservation Objectives Supplementary Advice is available, which provides further detail about the features' structure, function and supporting processes mentioned above, the implications of the plan or project on the specific attributes and targets listed in the advice will be taken into account in this assessment. The links below take you to the conservation objectives for each site:

Solent and Southampton Water SPA
Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC
Isle of Wight Downs SAC
Solent Maritime SAC
Briddlesford Copses SAC
South Wight Maritime SAC
Solent and Dorset Coast SPA

For Ramsar sites, a decision has been made by Defra and Natural England not to produce Conservation Advice packages, instead focussing on the production of Conservation Objectives. As the provisions on the Habitats Regulations relating to Habitat Regulations Assessments extend to Ramsar sites, Natural England considers the Conservation Advice packages for the overlapping European Marine Site designations to be, in most cases, sufficient to support the management of the Ramsar interests.

# PART C: Screening of the plan or project for appropriate assessment

## C1. Is the plan or project either directly connected with or necessary to the (conservation) management (of the European Site's qualifying features)?

The Coastal Access Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the European sites for nature conservation listed in B1 above.

**Conclusion:**

As the plan or project is not either directly connected or necessary to the management of all of the European site(s)'s qualifying features, and/or contains non-conservation elements, further Habitats Regulations assessment is required.

## C2. Is there a likelihood [or risk] of significant [adverse] effects ('LSE')?

This section details whether those constituent elements of the plan or project which are (a) not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the European Site(s) features and (b) could conceivably adversely affect a European site, would have a **likely significant effect,** either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, upon the European sites and which could undermine the achievement of the site's conservation objectives referred to in section B2.

In accordance with case law, this HRA has considered an effect to be 'likely' if it '*cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information'* and is 'significant' if it *'undermines the conservation objectives'*. In accordance with Defra guidance on the approach to be taken to this decision, in plain English, the test asks whether the plan or project '*may'* have a significant effect (i.e. there is a risk or a possibility of such an effect).

This assessment of risk therefore takes into account the precautionary principle (where there is scientific doubt) and **excludes**, at this stage, any measures proposed in the submitted details of the plan/project that are specifically intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on the European site(s).

Each of the project elements has been tested in view of the European Site Conservation Objectives and against each of the relevant European site qualifying features. An assessment of potential effects using best available evidence and information has been made.

## C2.1 Risk of Significant Effects Alone

The first step is to consider whether any elements of the project are likely to have a significant effect upon a European site 'alone' (that is when considered in the context of the prevailing environmental conditions at the site but in isolation of the combined effects of any other 'plans and projects'). Such effects do not include those deemed to be so insignificant as to be trivial or inconsequential.

In this section, we assess risks to qualifying features, taking account of their sensitivity to coastal walking and other recreational activities associated with coastal access proposals, and in view of each site's Conservation Objectives.

Some of the qualifying features considered in this assessment occupy similar ecological niches and share ways in which they might be sensitive to the access proposals. To avoid repetition and improve the clarity of this assessment we have grouped the qualifying features as shown in Table 4.

### *Table 4: Feature Groups*

*Note: Qualifying features are shown in bold text while sub features are shown in brackets*

| **Feature group** | **Qualifying feature(s)** |
|---|---|
| Terns | **Common, little, roseate and Sandwich tern** |
| Mediterranean gull | **Mediterranean gull** |
| Non-breeding waterbirds | **Black-tailed godwit; Ringed plover; Dark-bellied brent geese; Teal and, waterbird assemblage (all non-breeding)** |
| Bats | **Bechstein's bat, *Myotis bechsteini*** |
| Subtidal features | **Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time** (subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal mixed sediment, subtidal sand, subtidal seagrass beds) ; **Estuaries** (subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal mixed sediment; subtidal sand, subtidal seagrass beds); **sheltered channel between island/mainland** |
| Desmoulins whorl snail | **Desmoulins whorl snail, *Vertigo moulinsiana*** |
| Reefs | **Reefs** (circalittoral rock; infralittoral rock; intertidal rock; subtidal stony reef) |
| Coastal lagoons | **Coastal lagoons** |
| Wetland plants and invertebrates | **Wetland plant assemblage**<br>**Wetland invertebrate assemblage** |
| Intertidal habitats | **Estuaries** (intertidal seagrass beds; intertidal sand and muddy sand; intertidal mud; intertidal mixed sediments; intertidal coarse sediment)<br>***Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand*; Atlantic salt meadows; *Spartina* swards**<br>**Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide** (intertidal coarse sediment; intertidal mixed sediments; |

| | |
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| | intertidal mud; intertidal sand and muddy sand; intertidal seagrass beds); **Submerged or partially submerged sea caves** |
| Vegetated shingle | **Annual vegetation of drift lines**; **Perennial vegetation of stony banks** |
| Chalk grassland | **Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia), (note that this includes the priority feature "important orchid rich sites"); Early gentian**, **Gentianella anglica** |
| Dry heathland | **European dry heaths** |
| Sand dunes | **Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ('White dunes')** |
| Vegetated maritime cliffs | **Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts** |

The risk of significant effects alone is considered in the following table:

***Table 5: Assessment of likely significant effects alone***

| Feature group | Relevant pressure | Sensitivity to coastal access proposals | Assessment of risk to site conservation objectives | LSE alone? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Non-breeding waterbirds** | Disturbance from recreational activities outside the breeding season | Birds feeding on the foreshore or roosting in the vicinity of a coastal path may be disturbed by recreational activities including walking and walking with a dog. | Waterbirds are present in significant numbers in many locations on the northern coastline of the Isle of Wight so a significant effect is considered likely at this stage of the assessment. | Yes |
| **Non-breeding waterbirds** | Disturbance from recreational activities in the breeding season | Some over-wintering birds are resident all year round and breed within or near to the SPA, in the vicinity of the coastal path, represent a proportion of the designated non-breeding population. Teal, dark-bellied brent geese and black-tailed godwit are not know to breed on the Isle of Wight. Ringed plover are the only species of the noted qualifying features that are known to breed on the Isle of Wight This species- may be disturbed, or nests may be | The level of risk is higher where the breeding population of ringed plover significantly contributes to the non-breeding population and where access proposals are likely to place breeding ringed plover at risk from recreational activity | Yes |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | trampled by recreational activity. | | |
| **Non-breeding waterbirds** | Disturbance from construction works | Waterbirds may be disturbed by construction activities necessary for the physical establishment of the path. | Waterbirds are present in significant numbers in many locations on this part of the site so a significant effect is considered likely at this stage of the assessment. | Yes |
| **Non-breeding waterbirds** | Loss of supporting habitat through installation of access management infrastructure | The supporting habitats of the qualifying features may be permanently lost due to installation of new access management infrastructure | The level of risk is higher where there is a permanent and irreversible loss of the extent of supporting habitat which the birds depend on. | Yes |
| **Terns** | Disturbance to foraging terns | Foraging behaviour may be interrupted if birds are feeding close to places where recreational activities take place, including walking and walking with a dog. | Terns forage mainly off shore giving enough spatial separation between path users and the birds. The presence of people on the shore may discourage birds from feeding close to the shore at times when people are present but is unlikely to compromise foraging activity.<br>Terns occasionally make use of inland lagoons where the risk of significant disturbance is greater and therefore requires further assessment. | **Yes** |
| **Terns** | Disturbance to nesting birds and potential breeding sites | The qualifying features are colonial species and nest on shingle spits and islands, shallow scrapes in the sand or in low vegetation. Nesting birds are particularly vulnerable to disturbance as a result of recreational activities (including walking and walking with a dog) which can lead to direct trampling of nest sites and eggs as well as breeding pairs abandoning eggs and chicks that can lead to predation and exposure to the elements. | Tern species no longer breed on the Isle of Wight, however there is potential breeding habitat within Newtown Harbour for common, Sandwich and little tern, which the National Trust are consciously managing, to encourage them. As a result a significant effect is considered likely at this stage of the assessment. | **Yes** |

| | | | | |
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| **Mediterranean gull** | Disturbance to nesting and foraging birds | This species prefer to nest colonially in short to medium swards of vegetation, and sometimes on vegetated shingle islands. Nesting birds are particularly vulnerable to disturbance as a result of recreational activities (including walking and walking with a dog) which can lead to direct trampling of nest sites and eggs as well as breeding pairs abandoning eggs and chicks that can lead to predation and exposure to the elements. | Mediterranean Gull are known to breed at Newtown Harbour and will forage in the coastal waters in this area. An increase in recreational activity could increase levels of visual and noise disturbance. | **Yes** |
| **Bats** | Disturbance to roosting and foraging patterns | Bats are not generally vulnerable to disturbance from recreational activity on foot except when roosting or hibernating as they feed nocturnally. | No Risk. There will be no interaction between coastal path users and this species given the level of spatial separation from the woodland in which they roost and feed and the path (approx. 400m). Way marking will encourage users to stick to the path, away from the woodland. Flight lines and foraging patterns may extend beyond the SAC boundary however the route is aligned along a road in an urban environment and unlikely to impact on bats feeding as they feed nocturnally. | No |
| **Subtidal features** | None identified. | The access proposals are concerned with recreation on foot along the shore to which marine features are not sensitive | No Risk.<br>There is no interaction between users of the Coast path and these features as the majority are permanently submerged at all times. The partially submerged sea caves, designated within South Wight Maritime SAC are partially exposed however the conservation advice states there is no pressure on this feature from recreational activity. | No |
| **Desmoulins whorl snail** | Trampling of species and its supporting habitat | Could be vulnerable where the coast path creates or improves access to the banks of calcareous wetlands, streams | No appreciable risk. This feature is only found underwater in freshwater systems which the proposed coastal path is not routed in | No. |

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| | | and lakes which this species is restricted to. | close proximity to. Last surveyed in 2009/10 and not found on the Island. | |
| **Coastal lagoons** | Disturbance from walkers or dogs entering the lagoons | An increase in recreational activity could cause disturbance to lagoons if walkers or dogs enter them, disturbing the subtidal features within them. | No Risk.<br>SAC conservation advice states no risk from recreational activities on coastal lagoons. All lagoons at Bembridge, Newtown Harbour Quay and Yar Bridge are landward of the trail, and therefore not within the coastal margin. As a result there will be little or no interaction from coastal path users and this feature. | No. |
| **Wetland plants and invertebrates** | Trampling of sensitive vegetation and supporting habitat | The associated habitats of the qualifying features may be damaged due to trampling where people regularly walk away from established paths. | Low risk. Wetland plants and invertebrates occur within a number of habitats including intertidal mudflats, shingle beaches, coastal lagoons, saltmarsh, coastal cliffs, grassy banks, scrub vegetation, peatland and wooded areas. The level of risk is higher at places where the access proposals are likely to place wetland plants and the habitats that support wetland invertebrates at risk from repeated trampling. Significant effects cannot be ruled out at this stage of the assessment. | Yes |
| **Wetland plants and invertebrates** | Loss of features and supporting habitat through installation of access management infrastructure | Habitat may be lost due to the installation of new access management infrastructure. | Low risk. The level of risk is higher at places where there is a permanent and irreversible loss of wetland plants and the habitats that support wetland invertebrates. Significant effects cannot therefore be ruled out at this stage of the assessment. | Yes |
| **Intertidal habitats** | Trampling of sensitive species and habitats from recreational activities | Of the features in this group saltmarsh vegetation and sea grass beds are at greater risk as they can be more easily damaged or destroyed by people walking repeatedly over the same part of them. Bare areas may be created which make the surrounding habitat more vulnerable to erosion. | Saltmarsh and seagrass habitat exists in close proximity to the shore along the north coast of the Island, particularly in and around Newtown Harbourand the Medina. Intertidal habitats, such as saltmarsh may form part of the coastal margin and may be subject to new access rights. Significant effects cannot therefore be ruled out | Yes |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | at this stage of the assessment. | |
| **Intertidal habitats** | Loss of supporting habitat through installation of access management infrastructure | Installation of new access management infrastructure could lead to a permanent reduction in the extent of this habitat. | There will be a loss of saltmarsh and mudflat habitat due to the installation of boardwalk at Newtown Harbour. This will include installing new boardwalk and replacement of degraded boardwalk. | Yes |
| **Vegetated shingle** | Trampling of vegetation | Vegetated shingle can be damaged or destroyed by people walking repeatedly over the same part of it. | Areas of shingle may form part of the coastal margin and be subject to new coastal access rights. Significant effects on vegetated shingle cannot be ruled out at this stage of the assessment. | Yes |
| **Sand dunes** | Trampling of colonising vegetation | Vegetation colonising the dunes could be trampled by repeatedly walking on the same areas. This could be a result from an increase in recreational activities such as walking and dog walking. | Low risk. The proposed trail is routed away from the dune system at Norton Spit however the dunes are still within the coastal margin, with a PRoW across them. | Yes |
| **Chalk grassland** | Trampling of species | Could be sensitive if there were to be significant changes in recreational activities taking place within the site as a result of the access proposals. | Chalk grassland occurs on cliff tops and slopes along the south side of the Island. Much of this area is accessible to the public. Away from steeper slopes, the grassland is easy to walk over and there is a network of existing paths and tracks. Options for aligning the Coast Path will be considered further in Part D of this assessment. | Yes |
| **Chalk grassland** | Nutrient enrichment | Could be vulnerable to increase in eutrophication if there were significant changes in recreational activities taking place within the site as a result of access proposals. | Chalk grassland occurs on cliff tops and slopes along the south side of the Island. Much of this area is accessible to the public. Away from steeper slopes, the grassland is easy to walk over and there is a network of existing paths and tracks. Options for aligning the Coast Path will be considered further in Part D of this assessment. | Yes |
| **Chalk grassland** | Loss of habitat through installation of access | Installation of new access management infrastructure could lead to a permanent | Where the trail passes through this habitat it is aligned along existing promoted routes and as a result minimal new infrastructure is needed to | Yes |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | management infrastructure | reduction in the extent of this habitat. | guide walkers. A single new way marker post will be installed to manage access in this habitat. | |
| **Vegetated maritime cliffs** | Trampling of species on the cliff top | Could be vulnerable if there were to be significant changes in recreational activities taking place as a result of the access proposals. | Vegetated maritime cliff habitat occurs on cliff tops and cliff faces on the south side of the Island. Much of this area will fall within coastal margin as result significant effects cannot be ruled out at this stage. | Yes |
| **Vegetated maritime cliffs** | Loss of supporting habitat through installation of access management infrastructure | Installation of new access management infrastructure could lead to a permanent reduction in the extent of this habitat. | Where the trail passes through this habitat it is aligned along existing promoted routes and as a result minimal new infrastructure is needed to guide walkers. One kissing gate and one way marker post will be installed to manage access in these areas. | Yes |
| **Dry heathland** | Abrasion and physical disturbance | The vegetation of dry heaths can be damaged or destroyed by people repeatedly walking on it. This creates bare patches and localised soil erosion which make the surrounding vegetation more vulnerable to erosion. | The proposed route alignment will be following the promoted Isle of Wight Coastal Path (IOWCP) and other existing walked routes, with no new access proposed across this SAC habitat. Access levels are not anticipated to increase significantly along these routes. The heathland habitat occurs north of Ventnor which is landward of the trail by a significant distance as a result walkers following the proposed route are not interacting with this feature | No |
| **Reefs** | Trampling of species found on the rock surfaces within the reef structures | Subtidal rock sub-features will not be impacted by the coastal access proposals. Intertidal rock that is periodically exposed, located at Bembridge Ledges, falls within the coastal margin. Continuous trampling and climbing on these features from walkers and dogs could result in damage to both the rocky substrate itself and the algal communities that it supports. | No risk. The majority of this feature is subtidal. No interaction with subtidal reefs will occur from coastal path users. Bembridge Ledges, where the intertidal rock is exposed, already has existing access and is a popular place to go rock pooling. Here, the coastal path proposed alignment follows the existing IOWCP which runs along the top of a bank and off the beach which will encourage walkers to stick to the path. | No |

**Conclusion:**

The plan or project alone is likely to have a significant effect on the following qualifying features:

- **Non-breeding waterbirds** (dark-bellied brent geese; teal; ringed plover; black-tailed godwit; water bird assemblage) as a result of disturbance from recreational activities, loss of supporting habitat due to installation of access management infrastructure and disturbance from construction works
- **Non-breeding waterbirds (ringed plover)**
- **Terns** (breeding and foraging common, little, roseate and Sandwich terns) as a result of disturbance from recreational activities
- **Mediterranean gull** (breeding) as a result of disturbance from recreational activities
- **Wetland plants and invertebrates** (wetland plant and invertebrate assemblages) as a result of trampling and habitat loss from installation of access management infrastructure
- **Intertidal habitats** (estuaries - intertidal seagrass beds, intertidal sand and muddy sand, intertidal mud, intertidal mixed sediments, intertidal coarse sediment; *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand*;* Atlantic salt meadows; *Spartina* swards and mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide) as a result of habitat loss from installation of access management infrastructure
- **Intertidal habitats** *(*estuaries - intertidal seagrass beds, intertidal sand and muddy sand, intertidal mud, intertidal mixed sediments, intertidal coarse sediment *;Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows; *Spartina* swards) as a result of trampling
- **Vegetated shingle** (annual vegetation of drift lines; perennial vegetation of stony banks) as a result of trampling
- **Sand dunes** (shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* - 'White dunes') as a result of trampling
- **Chalk grassland** (semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*), (note that this includes the priority feature "important orchid rich sites"); Early gentian, *Gentianella anglica* as a result of trampling and habitat loss from installation of access management infrastructure
- **Vegetated maritime cliffs** (vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts) as a result of trampling and habitat loss from installation of access management infrastructure

The plan or project alone is unlikely to have a significant effect on the following qualifying features:

- **Bats** (Bechstein's bat, *Myotis bechsteini*)
- **Dry heathland** (European dry heaths)

- **Reefs**
- **Subtidal habitats** (sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time; estuaries - subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal mixed sediment; subtidal sand, subtidal seagrass beds; sheltered channel between island/mainland; submerged or partially submerged sea caves)
- **Coastal lagoons**
- **Desmoulins whorl snail**

(Any appreciable risks identified that are not significant alone are further considered in section C2.2)

## C2.2 Risk of Significant Effects in-combination with the effects from other plans and projects

The need for further assessment of the risk of in-combination effects is considered here.

Natural England considers that it is the appreciable risks of effects (from a proposed plan or project) that are not themselves considered to be significant alone which must be further assessed to determine whether they could have a combined effect significant enough to require an appropriate assessment.

In C2.1 the qualifying features on which the access proposals might have an effect alone are identified – these are considered further in Part D of this assessment. For all other features, no other appreciable risks arising from the access proposals were identified that have the potential to act in combination with similar risks from other proposed plans or projects to also become significant. It has therefore been excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the project is likely to have a significant effect in-combination with other proposed plans or projects.

## C3. Overall Screening Decision for the Plan/Project

On the basis of the details submitted, Natural England has considered the plan or project under Regulation 63(1)(a) of the Habitats Regulations and made an assessment of whether it will have a likely significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

**In light of sections C1 and C2 of this assessment above, Natural England has concluded:**

As the plan or project is likely to have significant effects (or *may* have significant effects) on some or all of the Qualifying Features of the European Site(s) ‘alone’, further appropriate assessment of the project ‘alone’ is required.

# PART D: Appropriate Assessment and Conclusions on Site Integrity

## D1. Scope of Appropriate Assessment

In light of the screening decision above in section C3, this section contains the Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the plan or project in view of the Conservation Objectives for the European Site(s) at risk.

The Sites and the Qualifying Feature for which significant effects (whether 'alone' or 'in combination') are likely or cannot be ruled out and which are initially relevant to this appropriate assessment are:

***Table 6 Scope of Appropriate Assessment***

| **Environmental pressure** | **Qualifying Feature(s) affected**<br><br>**(nb = non-breeding)** | **Risk to Conservation Objectives** |
|---|---|---|
| Disturbance of feeding or resting non-breeding waterbirds from recreational activities | ■ Black-tailed godwit (nb)<br>■ Ringed plover (nb)<br>■ Dark-bellied brent geese (nb)<br>■ Waterbird assemblage (nb)<br>■ Teal (nb) | Repeated disturbance to feeding or resting non-breeding waterbirds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site. |
| Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds | ■ Ringed Plover (nb) | Disturbance to breeding birds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduction in the abundance and distribution of the qualifying features within the site, resulting in a reduction in the population of non-breeding birds. |
| Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds from construction works | ■ Dark-bellied brent geese (nb)<br>■ Teal (nb)<br>■ Ringed plover (nb)<br>■ Black-tailed godwit (nb)<br>■ Waterbird assemblage (nb) | Undertaking works to install access management infrastructure disturbs qualifying features causing temporary or enduring effects on their population and/or distribution within the site. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Disturbance to breeding terns and gulls | ■ Common tern (b)<br>■ Little tern (b)<br>■ Roseate tern (b)<br>■ Sandwich tern (b)<br>■ Mediterranean gull (b) | Disturbance to terns and gulls at nesting site, or potential nesting sites following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduction in the abundance and distribution of the qualifying features within the site. |
| Disturbance to terns foraging | ■ Common tern<br>■ Little tern<br>■ Sandwich tern | Disturbance to foraging terns following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal could lead to reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site. |
| Trampling of sensitive species and habitat | ■ Annual vegetation of drift lines<br>■ Perennial vegetation of stony banks<br>■ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (White dunes)<br>■ Estuaries (intertidal seagrass beds, intertidal sand and muddy sand, intertidal mud, intertidal mixed sediments, intertidal coarse sediment)<br>■ Wetland invertebrate assemblage<br>■ Wetland plant assemblage<br>■ Atlantic salt meadows<br>■ *Spartina* Swards<br>■ *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand<br>■ Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts<br>■ Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*), (note that this includes the priority feature "important orchid rich sites");<br>■ Early gentian, *Gentianella anglica* | The trampling of designated features following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal leads to the reduction in the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of the qualifying species. |
| Loss of qualifying and supporting habitat through installation of access | ■ Dark-bellied brent geese (nb)<br>■ Teal (nb)<br>■ Ringed plover (nb) | New infrastructure is required and construction works will occur, disturbing qualifying features causing temporary or |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| management infrastructure | ■ Black-tailed godwit (nb)<br>■ Water bird assemblage (nb)<br>■ Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts<br>■ Estuaries (intertidal seagrass beds; intertidal sand and muddy sand; intertidal mud; intertidal mixed sediments; intertidal coarse sediment)<br>■ *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand<br>■ Atlantic salt meadows<br>■ *Spartina* Swards<br>■ Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*), (note that this includes the priority feature "important orchid rich sites"); Early gentian<br>■ Wetland invertebrate assemblage<br>■ Wetland plant assemblage | enduring effects on their population and/or distribution within the site. |

## D2. Contextual statement on the current status, influences, management and condition of the European Site and those qualifying features affected by the plan or project

**Disturbance of non-breeding waterbirds**

One of the factors we take into account when developing proposals for the alignment of the England Coast Path is the potential for disturbance to waterbirds, particularly when the birds are qualifying features of coastal SPAs and Ramsar sites. The Isle of Wight is situated in The Solent, which attracts approximately 90,000 waders annually. The Solent and Southampton Water SPA provides important foraging and nesting sites for over wintering birds. On the north coast of the Isle of Wight disturbance could potentially be problematic for overwintering birds if it occurs repeatedly. Disturbance as a result of recreational activities during wintering periods can affect the bird's energy expenditure, impacting on feeding and roosting.

As part of the Supplementary Advice in Conservation Objectives for the SPA, Natural England has recently set targets for all qualifying features, in order to meet Conservation Objectives for the site. All the features also have a target to 'reduce disturbance caused by human activities'. These attributes within the Supplementary Advice are considered to be those which best describe the site's ecological integrity which if preserved will achieve the Conservation Objectives.

As part of the Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives for the Solent and Southampton European Marine Site [Ref 3], Natural England set targets to maintain the SPA waterbird features and their supporting habitats in favourable condition. Supporting habitats

in this context include intertidal feeding areas and high tide roosting areas on upper saltmarsh and nearby wet grassland and freshwater habitats. Waterbirds sometimes roost and feed on arable and pasture fields that are not part of the designated site. Where there is evidence that this takes place the land is treated as supporting habitat in this assessment.

The SPA supports 6,346 individuals (2009/10-2013/14) of the wintering Western European population of dark-bellied brent goose which has remained relatively stable [Ref 3]. These birds are generally found in significant numbers near Newtown Harbour and the Medina. The main food sources for dark-bellied Brent geese are the green algae (*Ulva spp.*) and seagrass beds growing on the intertidal sediments. They will also feed on pasture fields and coastal grazing marshes at high tide. Supplementary Advice states that this feature is in good condition and has a target to maintain population abundance.

The SPA supports 1,075 individuals (2009/10-2013/14) of black-tailed godwit. The key site for feeding and roosting on the island is in Newtown Harbour. This feature is in good condition, with a stable population and a target to maintain population abundance [Ref 3].

Non-breeding ringed plover designated within the SPA have declined since classification to 417 individuals (2009/10-2013/14) but remain in good condition with a target to maintain population abundance [Ref 3]. The reasons for decline are not clear but are in line with UK and regional trends. One of the roosting sites used on the Isle of Wight is located at Newtown Harbour. Some ringed plover are resident all year round and attempt to breed at Thorness Bay and Newtown Harbour.

Teal have seen relatively stable populations within the SPA with 5,554 individuals (2009/10-2013/14). Feeding on mudflats and saltmarsh within creeks and roosting on open water, these birds are found in significant numbers at Newtown Harbour which is an important feeding site. Bembridge harbour is noted as an important foraging site for teal. The feature is in good condition and has a target to maintain population abundance [Ref 3].

The non-breeding waterbird assemblage feature of the SPA has seen a decline in numbers, most recently averaging 43,897 individuals (2009/10-2013/14) but the feature is considered to remain in good condition and has a target to maintain the abundance and diversity of the assemblage [Ref 3]. It consists of all native species to the area. It is recognised that some constituent species contribute more towards the integrity of the overall assemblage than others and as such our assessment focuses on the abundance and diversity of the main component species (see notes under table 3) but considers the assemblage as a whole when assessing the impact of the proposals on water bird abundance and diversity.

Bird Aware Solent

Extensive research has been undertaken to assess the impact of recreational activity on wintering birds in The Solent in light of planned new housing. Further residential growth and the implications this has for management of recreational activities alongside the Solent SPAs has been addressed by local authorities as part of the planning process. The resulting mitigation strategy aims to reduce bird disturbance through a series of management measures which actively encourage coastal visitors to enjoy their visits in a responsible manner [Ref 5].

Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy

The Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS) is a non-statutory document presenting evidence, analysis and recommendations to inform decisions relating to strategic

planning as well as individual development proposals. The strategy relates to internationally important brent goose and wading bird populations within and around the SPAs and Ramsar wetlands of the Solent Coast. The underlying principle of the Strategy is to wherever possible conserve extant sites, and to create new sites, enhancing the quality and extent of the feeding and roosting resource.

A framework for guidance on mitigation and off-setting requirements has been prepared by the Strategy Steering Group to achieve the long-term protection of the wider dark-bellied brent goose and wader network of sites. This network is under pressure from the growth planned for the Solent and formal guidance was considered necessary to define an approach for the non-designated sites.

Maps of key sites that have been identified can be viewed from the Strategy's website here. Data on the individual species found at the key sites and counts can be requested via the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC). When referring to key sites these include Primary Core, Primary Support and SPA sites, definitions of these can be found in Appendix 1.

**Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds (breeding ringed plover)**

Where a breeding population of a species significantly contributes to the non-breeding population on the same site by being wholly or largely resident (or this cannot be ruled out), there is the potential for impacts of that breeding population to have consequences for the non-breeding population. Ringed plover is a non-breeding qualifying feature of the Southampton Water SPA that are known to breed on the Isle of Wight at Thorness Bay and Newtown Harbour.

Ringed plover have a preference for wide sandy or shingle beaches for breeding [Ref 12]. These types of beaches are also attractive for recreation and hence interaction with the coastal path proposals is more likely through trampling of eggs and nests and disturbance. Along this part of the coast ringed plover are known to breed in low numbers at Thorness Bay and Newtown Harbour.

**Disturbance of breeding terns and gulls**

Changes in coastal access arrangements may increase the interaction between Coast Path users and important nesting and feeding sites for terns and Mediterranean gull. Along this part of the coast there are a few key sites where Mediterranean gull nest. There is currently no confirmed breeding of terns on the Island, however management measures are in place to increase potential nesting sites. Newtown Harbour and Yarmouth are considered the most important sites for breeding Mediterranean gull and encouraging the return of nesting terns.

Little, common, Sandwich and roseate tern populations have declined across the SPA. Their recent 5 year peak means (2013-2017) are 11, 147, 95 and 2 pairs respectively. The reasons for decline are attributed to increased recreational disturbance to nesting sites, predation and coastal squeeze reducing the vegetated shingle habitat they require to nest. All tern species have a target to 'restore' the size of the breeding population across the SPA along with a target to reduce disturbance caused by human activity. On the island there are ongoing discussions between the National Trust and other local partners as to how terns can be encouraged to breed successfully again. The current thinking is around restoring the shingle banks on the western spit of Newtown Harbour (Natural England, internal comms 2019).

Breeding pairs of Mediterranean gull have increased across the SPA to 13 pairs (2013-2017). The feature is considered to be in good condition and has a target to 'maintain' the

size of the breeding population. This species also has a target to reduce disturbance caused by human activity.

EU LIFE+ Nature Little Tern Recovery Project & Roseate Tern LIFE Project

These two projects, funded through the EU LIFE programme, aim to improve the conservation status of the little tern and roseate tern in the UK through targeted action at the most important colonies. The main colonies identified in the Solent are Chichester and Langstone Harbours and Western Solent. The Little Tern Project finished in 2018 however the Roseate Tern Project has funding until 2020. Newtown Harbour has been mentioned as a key site in the Roseate Tern Project but it is predominantly focusing on the colonies near Lymington Harbour in the Western Solent [Ref 6].

**Disturbance to terns foraging in inland lagoons**

Terns have been designated in the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA for their foraging behaviours which abuts on to the existing SPA to widen area of protection. The Solent and Dorset Coast SPA covers deeper waters. The coastal margin extends to Mean Low Water (MLW), therefore interaction is minimal, as the boundaries for the SPA start from MLW. However terns are known to forage within inland lagoons, there are a number of these on the island specifically at Newtown Harbour, behind Bembridge causeway and adjacent to the River Yar. The potential coast path interaction at these locations will be assessed in section D3.2.

**SAC habitats and Ramsar features**

The Isle of Wight supports a significant area of rare habitats including vegetated shingle communities, intertidal habitats, sand dune systems, chalk grassland and vegetated cliff top habitats. These habitats have the potential to hosts a wetland invertebrate and wetland plant assemblage. These all form a substantial part of the coastal margin.

Sand Dunes

The Solent Maritime SAC Is designated, in part, for shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ('White dunes'). On the Isle of Wight the dunes are located at Norton Spit, Yarmouth. The risk associated with the proposal is the possible increase in repeated trampling where the Coast Path changes current access levels and patterns at sensitive sites. Whilst the path is not directly routed on the dunes, the dunes are within the coastal margin meaning new access rights will be created on them. The Supplementary Advice sets a target to maintain the distribution and continuity of this feature.

Vegetated Shingle

Annual vegetation of drift lines and perennial vegetation of stony banks are also designated features of the Solent Maritime SAC and can be found on the Isle of Wight at Thorness Bay and Hamstead within Newtown Harbour. The risk of repeated trampling is possible where the proposed route aligns close to these features or they're located within the coastal margin. The Supplementary Advice sets a target to maintain the range and continuity of this feature.

Estuaries (intertidal sub features)

The Solent Maritime SAC encompasses a major estuarine system on the south coast of England, including Newtown Harbour as well as coastal plain estuaries including Yar,

Medina and King's Quay. Habitats present within the Solent estuaries include intertidal mudflats and sandflats, seagrass and saltmarsh. Seagrass beds and saltmarsh are among the most sensitive. These habitats are found along the north coast of the Isle of Wight. They provide important food sources for over-wintering waterbirds. The Supplementary Advice sets a target to restore the total extent and spatial distribution of seagrass beds. A target has been set to restore the total extent of saltmarsh features.

*Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows and *Spartina* swards

These features are all designated within the Solent Maritime SAC. The SAC contains 3% of the region's Atlantic salt meadow habitat which can be found at various locations including Newtown Harbour and the Medina on the Isle of Wight. The Supplementary Advice sets a target of maintaining the extent and distribution of this feature. There is approximately 90ha of pioneer saltmarsh within the Solent. On the Isle of Wight *Salicornia* can be found in the River Yar, Medina Estuary and King's Quay Shore, with the Supplementary Advice target set to maintain the extent and distribution of this habitat. Certain species found within *Spartina* swards are wide spread throughout the Solent; small cord grass is restricted to Newtown Harbour, as a result the Supplementary Advice target is to restore the range of habitat.

Chalk grassland

The Isle of Wight Downs SAC is dominated by chalk grassland habitat that includes the locally abundant species Early Gentian. Tennyson Down, Ventnor Down are the larger areas of chalk grassland habitat. The Supplementary Advice states there should be no measurable reduction in the extent of Semi-natural dry grasslands but in some cases the full extent of the feature may need to be restored to approximately 518ha. There reported extent of grassland on the island is as follows;
1 Compton Down with 170ha
2 Mottistone Down with 16ha
3 Headon Warren & West High Down with 104ha
4 Ventnor Downs with 28ha

Early Gentian has a target to maintain its population abundance. In 2008 a survey was carried out by National Trust in several locations;
Tennyson Down: c10,000 plants
Ventnor Downs : 23 plants
These are the minimum standard for conservation and restoration measures to achieve.

Vegetated Maritime Cliffs

Designated in the Isle of Wight Downs SAC and South Wight Maritime SAC this habitat is a mosaic of maritime influenced plant communities. Located on both cliff faces and fringing cliff tops the habitat is maintained by grazing and natural factors such as erosion and periodic cliff falls. The supplementary Advice target for vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts is to maintain the total extent of the cliff system which is capable of supporting the habitat. This is difficult to measure due to natural changes beyond control or management.

Wetland plant and invertebrate assemblages

The Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site is designated, in part, for its wetland invertebrate and plant assemblages. Species are associated with grazing marsh and

saltmarsh, ditches, saline lagoons, shingle beaches and coastal cliffs. The risk associated with the coastal access proposal is the possible increase in repeated trampling where the coast path changes current access levels and patterns at sensitive sites and where infrastructure might be established causing a loss of supporting habitat.

**Permanent loss of habitat**

The installation of new access infrastructure as part of the ECP may result in the permanent loss of intertidal habitat, chalk grassland and maritime cliff vegetation which could have a knock on impact on the wetland invertebrate and plant assemblages that reply on these habitats.

The Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives has set a target of 'maintain' for Atlantic salt meadows; mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide and *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand. These features are grouped in the intertidal habitat feature group.

South Wight SAC and Isle of Wight Downs SAC's Supplementary Advice sets a target to maintain the spatial distribution for vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts.

Isle of Wight Downs SAC supplementary advice sets a target to maintain the extent of chalk grassland species.

## D3. Assessment of potential adverse effects considering the plan or project 'alone'

This section considers the risks identified at the screening stage in section C and assesses whether adverse effects arising from these risks can be ruled out, having regard to the detailed design of proposals for coastal access.

In reviewing the ability of any incorporated measures to avoid harmful effects, Natural England has considered their likely effectiveness, reliability, timeliness, certainty and duration over the full lifetime of the plan or project. A precautionary view has been taken where there is doubt or uncertainty regarding these measures.

## D3.1 Design of the access proposal to address possible risks

In this section of the assessment we describe our overall approach to address the potential impacts and risks from the access proposals. The key nature conservation issue for the north coast of the Isle of Wight is the protection of non-breeding water birds, which occur all along the SPA and Ramsar site on this part of the coast during the winter season. We will look at our approach on the conservation issues on trampling of sensitive habitats, particularly those designated in the southern island SACs and intertidal habitats. We will also describe our approach to the issue of small scale habitat loss from the installation of new infrastructure, potential disturbance to nesting birds, non-breeding water birds and trampling of sensitive features.

The Isle of Wight in 2011 had a population of approximately 138,300. The average age of an islander is between 44 and 46. The more populous urban areas on the island are to the north of the Island, particularly Ryde, Newport and Cowes. This is reflected in a map (appendix 2) produced as a result from the household surveys carried out as part of the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation project, which shows the predicted annual visits to the

coastal areas closest to the towns, with 716,000 to 1,265,000 at Cowes and east of Ryde and 524,000 to 716,000 towards St Helens and Bembridge [Ref 7]. There is an existing coast path on the Isle of Wight which is popular among locals and visitors. For the majority of the south coast we are following the existing route and upgrading the standard of the path. On the north coast of the Isle of Wight the proposals follow existing access and informal routes where possible, however; some new sections of path will be created.

Tourism is one of the major contributors to the economy on the Isle of Wight. Large numbers of visitors are attracted by the historic landscapes and heritage on the Island, recreational events such as the Walking Festival and Cowes Week and a number of music festivals such as the Isle of Wight Festival. A modelled estimate of current annual visits to the north coast of the Isle of Wight can be seen in Appendix 2. The map shows that the majority of current visits are in areas of existing access.

A key finding from the research underpinning the Solent Recreation and Mitigation Strategy for wintering waterbirds is that how people behave, and how access is managed at each location determines the extent of disturbance [Ref 8]. Our objective in designing proposals for coastal access has been to ensure they do not increase the disturbance pressure affecting the site and that where possible they contribute to wider efforts to manage existing and future demand for places for coastal recreation in ways that help to reduce disturbance to wintering birds. To achieve this on the Isle of Wight our proposals for coastal access:

- Where possible, make use of popular established paths where an increase in the level of use is unlikely to increase the disturbance pressure affecting the SPA. The majority of the proposed alignment for this part of the coast is following existing promoted routes such as the existing IOWCP.
- Do not create new coastal access rights over intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh that are used by feeding waterbirds. In practice, use of such intertidal areas for recreation is limited as they are unattractive, dangerous and inherently unsuitable for public access. A year round exclusion will be applied over the mudflats and saltmarsh along this part of the coast therefore not creating any new coastal access rights. Maps of excluded areas in linkage to report.
  Contribute to raising awareness and encouraging appropriate visitor behaviour close to areas used by wintering birds by installing new information panels at key access points along this part of the coast. These will reinforce Bird Aware messages and display information about sensitive features.
- Areas and locations have been identified where signs can be used to influence both existing and new users' behaviour positively by explaining the importance of the site with regard to wintering and migratory birds, the risks associated with disturbance and how to avoid them. More detail on the positioning of particular signs and the messages to be conveyed at a local level is set out in section D3.2 below.

A Section 25a restriction will be in place over the mudflats, seagrass beds and saltmarsh on the grounds that they are unsuitable for access, as the terrain is difficult and hazardous to walk on. These are important feeding grounds for many non-breeding and breeding waterbirds.

In addition to this, with the Section 25a not creating any new access rights over saltmarsh or seagrass beds it will also serve to reduce the risk of trampling to this habitat due to access being restricted.

There are areas on the foreshore which are not eligible for the Section 25a restriction but which are considered important for the conservation of waterbirds, such as vegetated shingle. These areas will be subject to a Section 26 nature conservation restriction and include the shingle banks within Newtown which are potential breeding sites for tern species and ringed plover.

Overall for this part of the coast, in addition to educational signage and the S25a exclusion the following factors will ensure that for the great majority of the route, the potential risks identified at the LSE screening stage will not materialise:

- Route alignment: the trail is aligned away from the shore where possible and where it is deemed the least impactful. A large proportion of the proposed trail is aligned along existing satisfactory public footpaths.
- Access assessment: the assessment of changes in access as a result of the ECP proposal is taken into account at every section, along with the specific sensitivities of that stage;
- The trail will be well maintained and easy to follow.

It should be reiterated here that the above inherent design features mean that there is the potential for ECP proposals to make a positive contribution by helping to address and manage wider issues of waterbird disturbance.

Breeding sites have been identified within Newtown Harbour for little, common and Sandwich tern, ringed plover and Mediterranean gull. These areas are in close proximity to the trail which is following the existing IOWCP and are also within the coastal margin however restrictions are put in place so no coastal access rights will be created over these areas.

Our proposals will include interpretation close to these key breeding sites at Hamstead Dover and Newtown Quay to inform people about the breeding birds and of the restrictions within the vicinity.

All tern species forage in deep waters but may choose to feed close to the shoreline. The key feeding area is within the Medina. Inland lagoons may be utilised by terns, these are all landward of the trail, and therefore no coastal access rights will be created over these areas. Interpretation will be established along the medina at intervals to inform people of tern feeding behaviours and notify them of the S25 restriction over the intertidal areas.

**Chalk grassland and vegetated maritime cliffs**

Chalk grassland and vegetated maritime cliff features are located on the south side of the island where there are a number of potential routes, particularly on Tennyson Down. The route alignment chosen along the south of the Island is following the existing IOWCP. The route down to St Catherine's point routes along an existing PRoW before re-joining the existing coast path. The reasoning for this is set out below:

Whilst increased use of the coastal margin could in theory result in increased damage to sensitive habitats, our detailed assessment concludes that in reality it will not, because most access users will follow the way marked route as it safer when walking on cliff tops and more enjoyable.

The initial route alignment proposed along Tennyson Down and West High Down was due to follow a PRoW close to cliff edge however it was noted that clear visible damage, already occurring from recreational activity on foot is occurring where the habitat is accessible via walked routes. Choosing an alignment on the existing IOWCP, would focus walkers on one specific trail, by clearly way marking we will be encouraging walkers to stick to the path.

Open access land on parts of Tennyson down and West High Down will have no new coastal access rights created on it. This has the potential for walkers to follow multiple desire

line paths, however by aligning along an existing well used and established coastal path that has a satisfactory surface it will make the route attractive to walk, as a result walkers will be encouraged to stick to the path. It has been concluded no adverse effect on the integrity of sites, no further assessment required.

Also considered is the potential trampling important habitat in specific locations and the impact this may have to wetland invertebrates and plants assemblages associated with cliff top habitats. As outlined above we have aligned the proposed route along the existing IOWCP and existing walked routes. As a result there is no appreciable risk to the wetland invertebrate and plant assemblages associated with chalk grassland and vegetated maritime cliffs.

Loss of habitat as a result of new infrastructure being installed has been identified as a potentially significant impact of the proposals. Method statements by the local authority managing the works will minimise the area affected, for example by stipulating safe routes for vehicle access and requiring the use of hand tools where more control is necessary.

There are a few places where, having considered all the circumstances, we have concluded that it is necessary to install new infrastructure within designated site boundaries (See Table 7). The dimensions have been taken from the Hampshire County Council Countryside Service design standard which were provided by the Isle of Wight Council [REF 13]. In some circumstances infrastructure or path surfaces may need replacing as they are considered to be unsatisfactory by National Trail standards or are in disrepair. In the event that replacement or resurfacing works are required we will replace the infrastructure with a like for like footprint so no additional habitat loss occurs. A list of infrastructure and path resurfacing can be found in appendix 3.

*Table 7: List of new infrastructure*

| | | Area of new infrastructure occurring within each European designations (items installed in overlapping designations) $m^2$ | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Location (trail section)** | **Infrastructure item & length** | **Solent Maritime SAC** | **Southampton and Solent Water SPA** | **Southampton and Solent Water RAMSAR** | **South Wight Maritime SAC** | **Isle of Wight Downs SAC** |
| IOW-4-S048 | New kissing gate where wall is | | | | 0.087 | |
| IOW-4-S085 | New interpretation panel for Glanville Fritillary butterfly | | | | 0.01 | |
| IOW-5-S035 | New multifinger post | | | | | 0.01 |
| IOW-7-S003 | Replace stile with kissing gate | 0.087 | 0.087 | 0.087 | | |
| IOW-6-S089 | Interpretation Panel for terns, ringed plover and vegetated shingle | | 0.01 | 0.01 | | |
| IOW-6-S086 | Information Panel for vegetated shingle | | 0.01 | 0.01 | | |
| IOW-7-S008 | New boardwalk (15m) | 3.81 | 3.81 | 3.81 | | |
| IOW-7-S009 | New boardwalk (10m) | 2.55 | 2.55 | 2.55 | | |
| IOW-7-S011 | New boardwalk (10m) | 2.55 | 2.55 | 2.55 | | |
| IOW-7-S013 | New boardwalk (38m) | 9.69 | 9.69 | 9.69 | | |
| IOW-7-S015 | New boardwalk (5m) | 1.26 | 1.26 | 1.26 | | |
| IOW-7-S016 | New boardwalk (25m) | 6.36 | 6.36 | 6.36 | | |
| IOW-7-S017 | New boardwalk (2m) | 0.51 | 0.51 | 0.51 | | |
| IOW-7-S021 | New surfacing – hogging (75m) | 52.5 | 52.5 | 52.5 | | |
| IOW-7-S035 | New stock fencing (100m) | 4.87 | 4.87 | 4.87 | | |
| IOW-7-S035 | New interpretation panel for saltmarsh and birds | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | | |
| IOW-7-S035 | New bridge crossing "Aunt Emmy's creek" (10m) | 0.09 | 0.09 | 0.09 | | |
| IOW-7-S080 | New grass bund (15m) | | 22.5 | | | |
| IOW-7-S086 | New willow screening (10m) | 1.02 | 1.02 | 1.02 | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IOW-7-S0-81 | New interpretation panel for birds | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | | |
| IOW-8-S001 | New interpretation panel for shingle and birds | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | | |
| IOW-8-S005 | New interpretation panel for shingle and birds | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 | | |
| IOW-8-S002 | Replace bridge with new bridge into field (13m) | | 15.6 | 15.6 | | |
| IOW-10-S030 | New boardwalk (35m) | 8.91 | | | | |
| IOW-10-S030 | New boardwalk (25m) | 6.36 | | | | |
| IOW-10-S030 | New boardwalk (10m) | 2.55 | | | | |
| IOW-10-S020 | New interpretation panel for birds | 0.01 | | | | |
| **Total loss $m^2$** | | 103.17 | 123.46 | 100.96 | 0.1 | 0.01 |

Consideration for permanent habitat loss on site integrity has been given for each new infrastructure item, location and habitat type is further assessed in Table 10. The England Coast Path proposal report maps show new infrastructure items, such as kissing gates, steps, footbridges and interpretation panels can be seen on the report proposal maps. Multi-finger posts and way markers are not indicated on the proposal report maps

**Impact of construction works on habitat and disturbance levels to non-breeding water birds**

Table 8 below summarises mitigation measures to reduce impact on habitats and disturbance to waterbirds during path construction works.

***Table 8 Establishment works-mitigation measures***

| | |
|---|---|
| Site design | ■ Operator to design access routes, storage areas and site facilities to minimise disturbance impacts.<br>■ Operator to conduct operations out of sight of roosting and feeding areas where possible. |
| Timing of works | ■ Local authority to plan schedule with Natural England to limit disturbance risk.<br>■ Natural England to specify a period of low sensitivity at each construction site, based on likely departure and arrival dates of waterbird species that use it.<br>■ At all other times, operator to work within 200 metres of, and visible to, a roost site will stop during the 2 hours before and after high tide.<br>■ Operator to limit construction activities to daylight hours at all times of year. |
| Method | ■ Operator to use hand tools where practicable.<br>■ Operator to avoid use of percussive machinery outside period of low sensitivity, or avoid use of machinery during the 2 hours before and after high tide. |

## D3.2 Design of the access proposal to address possible risks – at a local level

In this part of the assessment we have subdivided the coast of the Isle of Wight from Wootton Creek to East Cowes into a series of shorter lengths of coast, corresponding the Coastal Access Reports, where establishing the England Coast Path and associated coastal access rights might impact on qualifying features of a European site. Each length of coast is then considered in a separate subsection (3.2A, 3.2B etc.). In each subsection we explain how the detailed design of our proposals in the relevant report or reports takes account of possible risks.

A number of locations within the designated European sites have been identified as being potentially at risk to disturbance caused by the promotion of the England Coast Path. Using WeBS count data, Solent Wader Brent GooseStratergy (SWBGS) and Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives these locations were identified to accommodate significant numbers of non-breeding and breeding birds, their supporting habitat or SAC qualifying habitats.

The features occurring at each of these key locations are shown in the table below. To make it easier to cross-reference between this assessment and the corresponding Coastal Access Reports in which access proposals are made, the relationship between the geographic units in this assessment and the Coastal Access Reports is shown.

*Table 9 Summary of key locations*

| Location | Coastal Access Report | | Relevant risks<br><br>Links back to the assessment scope | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Disturbance of non-breeding waterbirds | Disturbance to non-breeding waterbird (ringed plover) | Disturbance of breeding terns and gulls | Disturbance to foraging terns | Trampling of sensitive species and supporting habitat | Loss of habitat from installation of infrastructure | Disturbance to birds from construction works |
| Thorness Bay | Report 8 (IOW-8-S001 to IOW-8-S005) | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| The Medina | Report 10 (IOW-10-S001 to IOW-10-SO95) | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Bembridge Harbour | Report 2 (IOW-2-S119 to IOW-2-S131) | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Newtown Harbour: Hamstead Dover/Hamstead Quay | Report 6 and 7 (IOW-6-S086 to IOW-7-S024) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Newtown Harbour: Western Haven | Report 7 (IOW-7-S025 to IOW-7-S037 and IOW-7-A001) | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Newtown Harbour: Shalfleet Fields to Fleetlands Farm | Report 7 (IOW-7-S046 to IOW-7-S067) | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Newtown Harbour: Newtown Quay to Harts Farm | Report 7 (IOW-7-S074 to IOW-7-S097) | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Newtown Harbour: Walters Copse/ Clamerkin | Report 7 (IOW-7-S093 to IOW-7-S098) | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | |
| Yarmouth – Norton Spit and Yar Lagoon | Report 6 (IOW-6-S028 to IOW-6-S033) | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Ryde Sands | | ✓ | | | | | | |

To inform our assessment of risk, we have reviewed how relevant sections of coast are currently used for recreation, how this might change as a result of known factors (such as planned housing), and how the established patterns and levels of access might be affected by our proposed improvement to access. The predictions we have made from this work are informed by available information, including reports commissioned to support development of the local plan, on-line mapping and aerial photography, travel and visitor information, site visits and input from local access managers. The findings of this work are incorporated into the assessments below

## D3.2A Thorness Bay

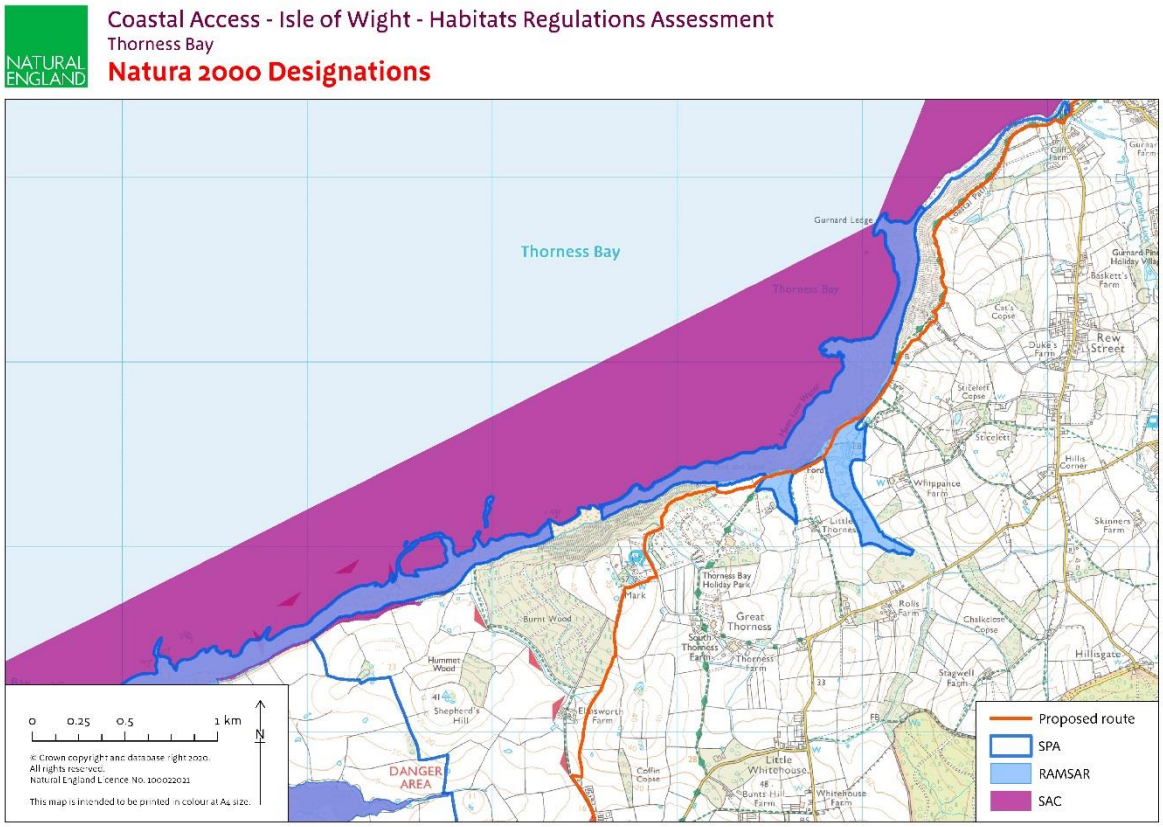


*Figure 2: Map of ECP proposals at Thorness Bay*

This location is being considered due to the vegetated shingle communities' present, use of the site by overwintering birds and annual breeding attempts by ringed plover. Due to its location and use by people and birds, the ECP proposal could have a potential impact on the distribution of vegetated shingle, as well as roosting, feeding and breeding waterbirds.

Further investigation of the nature of the location, the pattern of its use by waterbirds and the level of increase in use of the path as a result of its upgrade to the ECP, was undertaken as set out below.

### Access baseline

Thorness Beach is accessible through Thorness Bay Holiday Park. There is a car park on the western side of the beach for approximately 12 cars. It is regularly used for water sports

activities such as wind surfing, sailing and kayaking. The holiday park is open majority of the year with selective opening times during the winter.

The existing IOWCP runs along the shoreline at Thorness Beach. Several PRoW crisscross the fields and marshland immediately inland of the beach.

There is a passage which vehicles can drive on to the eastern side of the beach however it is advised no vehicles are allowed on the beach.

A small bridge is located at the back of Thorness Beach. This forms part of the current IOWCPto help walkers cross a section that is regularly inundated at high tide. However, the bridge requires regular replacement as a result of tidal erosion and is currently in disrepair.

**Environmental baseline**

The largest section of vegetated shingle communities on the Isle of Wight is found at this location and designated within the Solent Maritime SAC. The intertidal areas at Thorness Bay are within the SPA, Ramsar and Solent Maritime SAC designation.

At low tide mudflats are exposed and used for feeding by a variety of waterbirds. The most recent 5 year peak for the Thorness Bay WeBs sector recorded 157 dark-bellied brent geese; 1 black-tailed godwit ; 62 teal, 21 ringed plover, 3 great crested grebe, 6 grey plover, 7 lapwing, 4 little egret, 28 turnstone and 1 whimbrel. These species are within the SPA waterbird assemblage. In addition to this 3 common terns; 8 Sandwich terns; 64 Mediterranean gull have also been recorded. There are no known high tide roosts here.

One or two pairs of ringed plover make an annual attempt to breed on Thorness Beach, however this has not been successful in recent years due to the level of recreational disturbance on the beach causing adults to abandon their nests.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

Access provisions will be modified as a result of the promotion of the England Coast Path. The route is aligned on the existing IOWCP at the back of the beach, however this is cut off at high tide and as a result the route will be aligned into a field further inland. This will take walkers away from the intertidal area for approximately 200m and temporarily screen them from the beach.

The route through the field follows an existing PRoW along a strip of higher ground along the seaward edge. This field is functionally linked land for overwintering birds, being classified in the SWBGs as Secondary Support Habitat (field code IOW74). This category indicates a relatively infrequent level of use and as the field itself does not fall within the landward margin and is boggy and generally unattractive for walking we do not anticipate a significant impact from this part of the route.

The mudflats which birds utilise to feed will be restricted under S25A. Information will be included on the interpretation panels which will educate walkers as to the sensitivities of overwintering birds.

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds (ringed plover)**

The areas of beach which contain suitable habitat for breeding ringed plover are already heavily accessed by the public. The proposed route will take people off a section of beach and into a field further inland, along a current PRoW. This may help to reduce disturbance to those birds that attempt to breed here. Clear way marking will encourage walkers to stick to the path and educational interpretation will be placed on the route to inform walkers of the sensitivities to these birds. Given that ringed plover breeding at Thorness Bay has been unsuccessful for a number of years we do not anticipate that our proposal will have a significant impact on the designated non-breeding population.

- **Trampling of sensitive species and supporting habitats**

The route predominantly follows the existing IOWCP along the beach. On one section of the beach, the route will follow into a field behind the beach as the existing IOWCP gets inundated at high tide. The vegetated shingle communities fall within the coastal margin. The existing routes on the beach avoid the areas where the vegetated shingle occurs. Levels of access are not expected to change as a result of the England Coast Path given the high level of recreational use that already exists. To raise awareness to the sensitivities of the vegetated shingle, interpretation panels will be placed at each end of the route on this section of beach.

For plants and invertebrates from the assemblages associated with shingle and transitional habitats it can be concluded there is no appreciable risk, as mentioned above the route will be following the existing IOWCP along the top of the beach.

- **Loss of habitat from installation of access management infrastructure**

New access management infrastructure along this section of the route has been considered further in table 10. The installation method will be checked at establishment stage and further assessment under the Habitat Regulations will be made, as necessary, prior to works being carried out.

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds from construction works**

Due to the location of the new bridge and the small use of the field, in which the bridge will be crossing into there is potential to cause disturbance during construction. To avoid this measures have been set out in table 8 to ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum.

## D3.2B The Medina

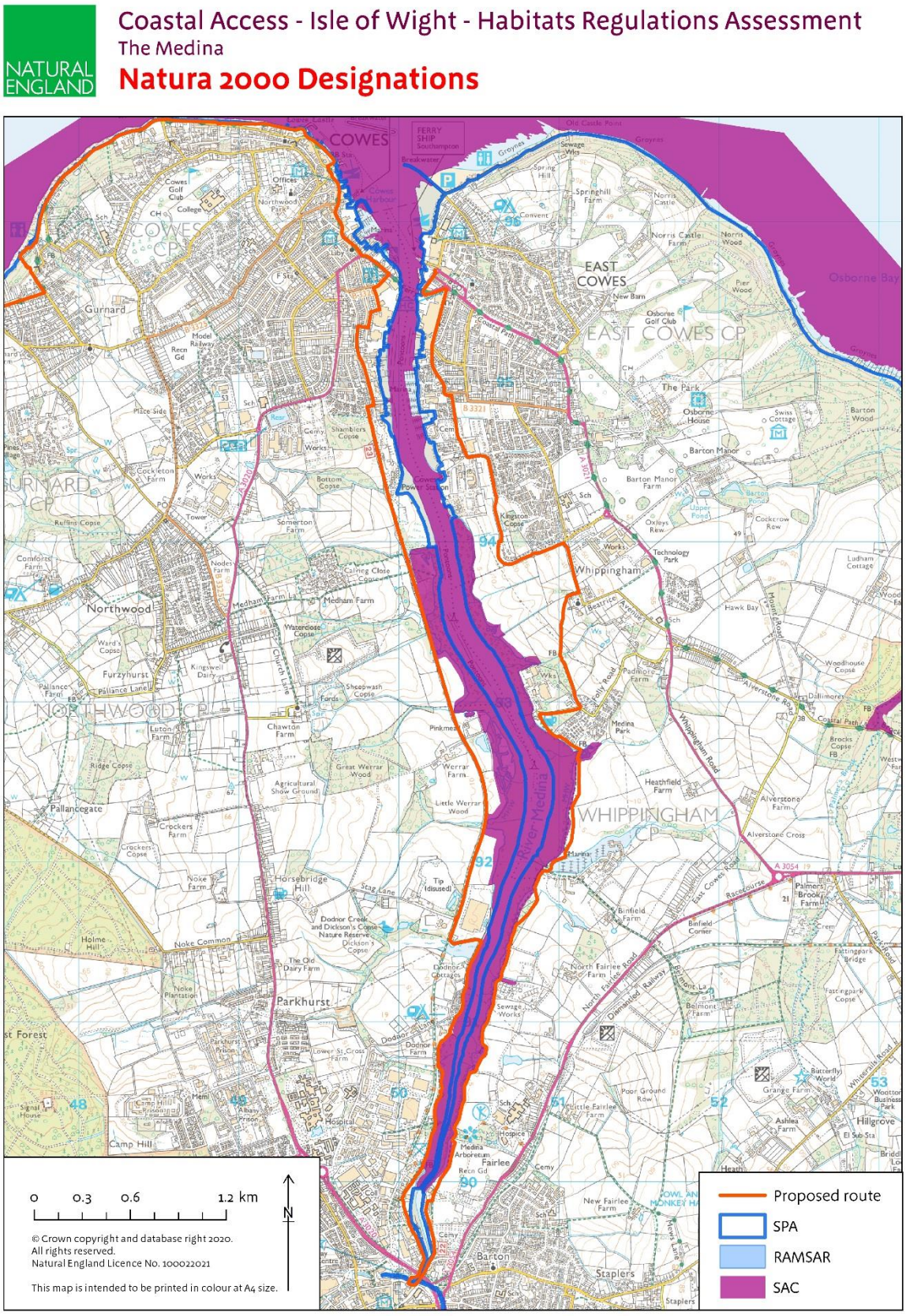


*Figure 3 Map of ECP proposals on the Medina*

This location is included as it is considered that the ECP proposal could impact on the distribution of roosting and feeding overwintering waterbirds, foraging terns, potential loss of habitat from access management infrastructure and disturbance from construction works

Further investigation of the nature of the location, the pattern of its use by waterbirds and the level of increase in use of the path as a result of its upgrade to the ECP, was undertaken as set out below.

**Access baseline**

The Medina, approximately 5 miles long, is a popular area for walking along the river, some of the route is also a cycle way. It is also popular for other recreational activities such as sailing and paddle boarding. With Cowes situated at the mouth of the Medina and Newport at the bottom of the Estuary it is one of the most densely populated areas on the Isle of Wight.

An area that has both commercial and industrial use with the edge of the estuary lined with docks, boatyard and Marinas it is popular with sailors and famously hosts Cowes week, a sailing event each year. Ferry services on the Medina include the chain ferry which allows pedestrians and cars to cross from one side of the other runs 7 days a week. The existing IOWCP uses the ferry so walkers can continue the route along the mouth of the estuary.

There are a number of car parks close to and along the Medina. Around East Cowes there is a 2 hour free car park at Maresfield Road with approx. 55 spaces. Over at West Cowes are pay and display car parks on Cross Street (70 spaces) and Brunswick Road (42 spaces). There are several pay and display car parks in the Newport area with the quay area alone having over 400 spaces within 300m of the proposed route.

There are a number of public rights of way along the estuary edge as well as a popular cycle track known as The Red Squirrel Trail which connects Cowes to Newport and then approximately a further 27 miles to Shanklin or Sandown. Cycle Hire is available at either end of the estuary.

The proposed alignment for the England Coast Path in this area will be following section of the Red Squirrel Trail cycle way to Vestas where it the routes along a PRoW to Newport. From Newport the route follows an existing PRoW to Whippingham where it follows a network of roads to East Cowes Marina. The route then follows the promenade to East Cowes ferry port.

**Environmental baseline**

The Medina Estuary comprises narrow tidal channels fringed by intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh. Despite the length of the estuary the mudflats are relatively narrow. These mudflats support a large number of species including shellfish which are important sources of food for bird populations.

There are a number of fields along both sides of the Medina sites classified under the SWBGs. One the West side, close to Pink Mead the fields are classified as primary core (see appendix 1 for further definition) areas and low use. These are important feeding areas for dark-bellied brent geese and black-tailed godwit and also important roosting areas for lapwing. On the eastern side two fields are classified as secondary support for dark-bellied

brent geese, curlew and dunlin, one close to Island Harbour Marina and north of the Folly Works and two fields are classified as low use. [Ref 9]

The most recent 5 year peak average for the Medina Estuary WeBs sector, recorded 198 dark-bellied brent geese, 25 teal, 10 ringed plover, 28 black tailed godwit, 35 dunlin, 1 great crested grebe, 9 grey plover, 50 lapwing, 12 little egret, 25 turnstone, 24 wigeon and 2 whimbrel, these species are within the SPA water bird assemblage. In addition, 6 Mediterranean gull and 3 Sandwich terns were also recorded.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

Dark-bellied brent geese utilise a large portion of the estuary, avoiding the mouth as it is used frequently by commercial boats, they will roost in the water of the estuary in the night close to feeding areas.

There are two sites on the Medina which are primary core areas for waders, these are located within the Pink Mead Estate. The estate itself is excepted land so no new rights of access will be created. The estate is already fenced with signs on the gates stating it is private land. The route is aligned landward of the estate on the existing cycle way which has vegetated screening meaning that our proposals are highly unlikely to result in increased disturbance of birds as there is no access to the foreshore and visibility of path users will be minimal.

There is an important roost site, highlighted in the SWGBs as a primary core area. It is located in the middle of the Medina Estuary between boat moorings, in front of the fields at Pink Mead Estate. This is used by black-tailed godwit, dunlin, grey plover, lapwing and turnstone which are component species of the SPA water bird assemblage

Waders and dark-bellied brent geese will utilise the mudflats at low tide and nearby fields to roost and feed at high tide. These fields as stated above have been classified by the SWBGs as core areas and support habitat. There is a WeBs alert set up for ringed plover as numbers are declining each year.

Teal are present in low numbers and will roost on open water at night and feed on the saltmarsh which lines the estuary.

As mentioned above the Coast Path proposals follow the existing Red Squirrel Trail cycle way and PRoW from the Vestas site to Newport. When following the cycle trail the majority of this is screened by vegetation to separate the track from the fields that are landward. The route will then follow a PRoW along the estuary edge where visual disturbance of birds using the estuary could be an issue. Two information panels will be placed along the west side of the Medina, one below the Vestas site as walkers cross the causeway, this is where the route opens up on the coast and the other at the end of Donor Lane before the sailing club. By displaying information on species found in the Medina on sections of the route that have open views of the estuary, walkers will be made aware of the sensitivities and will be encouraged to use of the route responsibly.

As the route passes in front of Donor Park there are a number of new boardwalks required due to inundation of the trail making the current path unusable. Construction works have the potential to cause disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds in the surrounding area. To avoid this measures have been set out in Table 8 to ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum.

In addition to this walkers will not be able to access the intertidal areas where birds are feeding and roosting as they are hazardous and unsafe to walk on. These areas will be restricted under S25A.

On the eastern side of the Medina, as stated above, the route follows existing PRoW, which some natural vegetation screening which will reduce visual disturbance to birds using the estuary. The route opens up to views of the Medina as you approach the marina close to Whippingham. There is an interpretation panel north of the marina which will be replaced with new information regarding the sensitivities of species using the Medina. Another new interpretation panel will be established along the trail in Seaclose Park to ensure walkers who use the route in both directions are aware of the sensitivities.

The route approaching The Folly Works is diverted inland as fields close by are secondary support sites for waders and dark-bellied brent geese. At this point up to East Cowes the route is inland away from areas that are used by non-breeding waterbirds which reduces the risk of interaction significantly. Between the Folly Works and Cowes Power Station, there are a number of fields that fall within the coastal margin which are used by dark-bellied brent geese as a high tide roost and occasionally for feeding. However these are arable fields and are therefore excepted under as categorised in section 2.3 of the Coastal Access Scheme [Ref 1].

Clear way marking along the proposed alignment of the trail along the Medina will encourage walkers to stay on the path.

- **Disturbance to foraging terns**

Terns can be seen foraging in the Medina on occasion, though their numbers are consistently low with only one or two common or Sandwich terns recorded in the last 2 years on the WeBs core counts.

Terns forage from the air over shallow water and are unlikely to be disturbed by walkers on the Coast Path. Information will be included on interpretation panels (see above for location information) which will educate walkers as to the sensitivities of foraging terns. Way markers will encourage walkers to stay on the established trail.

- **Loss of habitat from installation of access management infrastructure**

New access management infrastructure along this section of the route has been considered further in table 10. The installation method will be checked at establishment stage and further assessment under the Habitat Regulations will be made, as necessary, prior to works being carried out.

- **Disturbance to birds from construction works**

Establishment of infrastructure works close to the shoreline has the potential to cause disturbance during construction. To avoid this measures have been set out in table 8 to ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum.

## D3.2C Bembridge Harbour

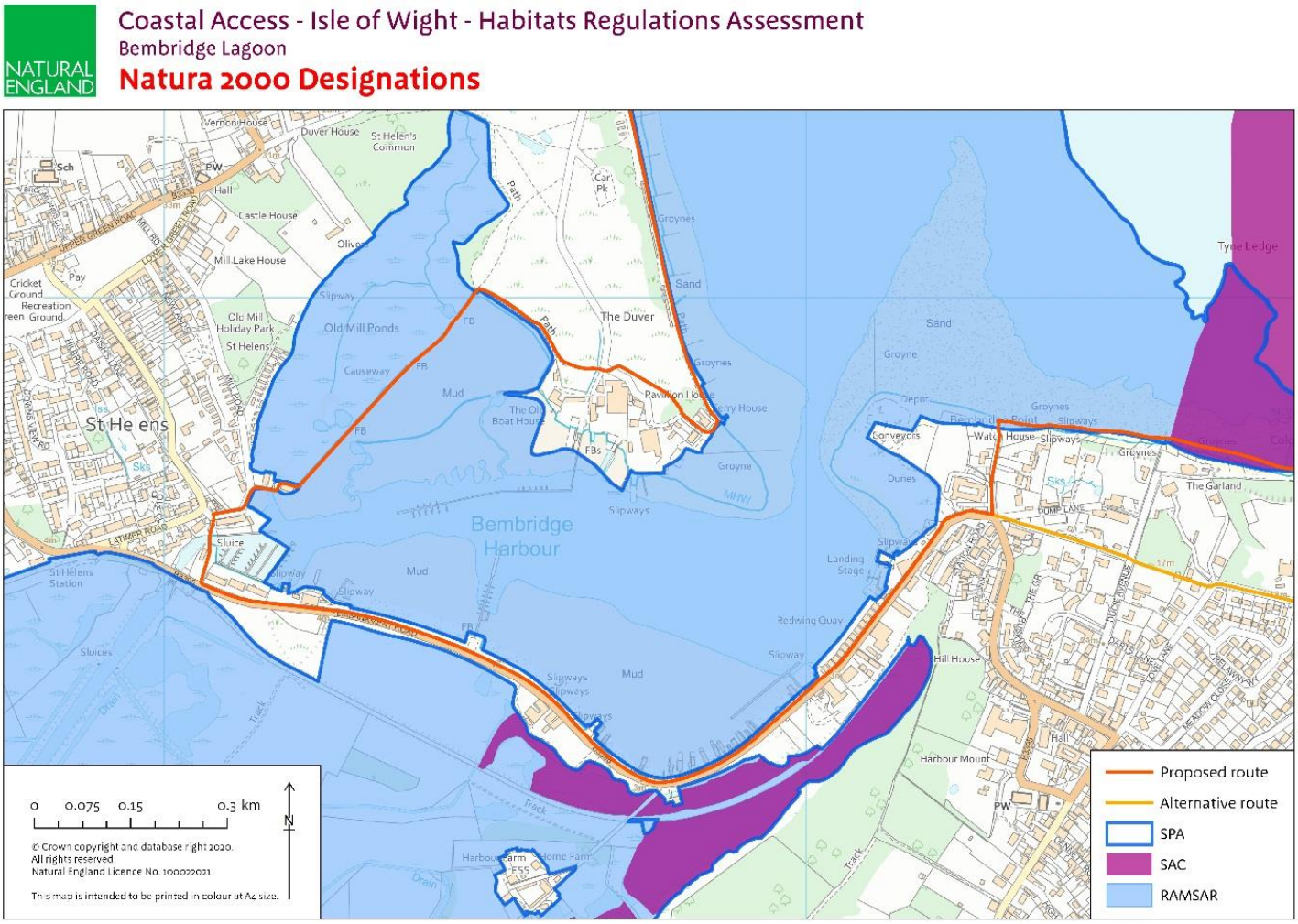


*Figure 4 ECP proposals around Bembridge Harbour*

This location has been chosen as the presence of inland lagoons where terns may forage. There will be construction works on the causeway crossing Old Mill Ponds to The Duver as an upgrade to the surface is required to meet National Trail standards which has potential to cause disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds who utilise areas close to the causeway. There is a high level of access throughout Bembridge, if this increases significantly there is the potential to increase the risk of disturbance to foraging terns and non-breeding waterbirds. A risk analysis has been carried out below.

### Access baseline

Bembridge is a popular area for visitors including families and walkers (with or without a dog), especially during the summer. At low tide the beach presents rocky ledges well known for their many rock pools.

The four designated lagoons are situated proposed trail, behind Embankment Road.

There are a number of car parks which allow you to access the area easily, located at Upper Green Road (32 spaces) and St Helens Duver (51 spaces) and Bembridge Point

There are a number of pathways around the Bembridge area however the most used route to get between Bembridge and St Helens Duver is via the causeway which is along the existing IOWCP. The IOWCP leads on through the sand dunes at The Duver and up towards Priory Woods. The Bembridge Trail is a promoted walking route that links Newport and Bembridge. This trail is adjacent to the lagoons.

**Environmental baseline**

Foraging terns are designated features of the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA which designated an area from MLW to deeper waters, however terns are known to forage within inland lagoons which are present at Bembridge.

The lagoons designated in the Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC are landward of the trail. The water body behind the causeway is within the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar as supporting habitat for over-wintering birds such as teal, black-tailed godwit and dark-bellied brent geese

The WeBs sector expands from the RSPB reserve of Brading Marshes to just beyond Bembridge Harbour entrance, this is also known as the Brading Marshes Nature Reserve. It includes the four designated lagoons within the SAC As a result 5 year peak average of the following species isn't representative of a specific location within Bembridge but of the sector as a whole. The most recent 5 year peak average recorded 555 dark-bellied brent geese; 365 teal; 34 ringed plover, 27 black-tailed godwit, 210 dunlin, 5 great crested grebe, 7 greenshank, 12 grey plover, 740 lapwing, 18 little egret, 3 pintail, 47 shovler, 2 turnstone, 646 wigeon and 1 whimbrel, all these species are components of the SPA waterbird assemblage. In addition to this 180 Mediterranean gulls and 7 sandwich terns were also recorded here.

There are several sites classified as SPA sites within the SWBGS (see appendix 1 for further definition). The saltmarsh landward of the causeway is utilised by redshank. There are a number of sites within the marshes landward of the harbour which are used by lapwing, dark-bellied brent geese and curlew for feeding, dark-bellied brent geese will also roost on the marshes. There are also two secondary support sites which are used by dark-bellied brent geese, lapwing, curlew sanderling for roosting.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

Teal, in low numbers, gadwall and little grebe are known to use the lagoons designated in the SAC behind Embankment Road. The lagoons are separated by vegetation screening, a boatyard and public highway. It can therefore be concluded that the England Coast Path proposals will not be interacting with this feature at this location.

Dark-bellied brent geese, teal, wigeon, black tailed godwit, curlew are utilise habitat within Brading Marshes Nature Reserve, which extends 2km landward of the route alignment, and includes Bembridge Harbour. The route is aligned along the existing IOWCP on Embankment road which along with industrial units and vegetated screening separating the route from the coastal grazing marshes of Brading Marshes. There may be some bird interest within these marshes however due to the distance from the proposed alignment it is not anticipated that there will be an interaction from walkers on the coast path. Bembridge harbour is used by waders for feeding, dark-bellied brent geese and black-tailed godwit are spotted in the harbour close to the causeway. As the harbour is frequently busy at high tide the birds will move elsewhere to roost, either further inland to Brading Marshes Nature

Reserve or other close by locations on the coast.

The route is making use of the existing IOWCP across the causeway, close to The Duver, the causeway is of a height and design that does not encourage users (or their dogs) to leave it, reducing the risk of dogs and walkers entering the harbour from the causeway causing disturbance to birds in the vicinity.

Walkers crossing the causeway are visible to birds using the intertidal. This PRoW is a popular route for walkers and the access levels as a result of the coast path proposals are unlikely to change significantly.

Three interpretation panels, one at either end of the causeway and one on the promenade between St Helens church and The Duver will be installed to address current disturbance issues. One will be established at Bembridge Point which will inform walkers of the sensitivities over wintering birds in the area to encourage responsible behaviour from walkers.

- **Disturbance to foraging terns**

The Dorset and Solent Coast SPA boundary which designates areas of open water in which terns forage is from the Mean Low Water mark. As this is beyond the coastal margin boundary we do not envisage interaction between path users and feeding terns. However, terns are also known to use lagoon inlets to forage.

There will be no new access routes or permissions created as a result of these proposals in Bembridge Harbour. In part this is due to the section 25A direction to exclude access across the mudflats and saltmarshes here, as well as other more localised section 24 exclusions.

The route along Embankment Road is aligned along the seaward side of the Public Highway, landward of the lagoons. There is a boatyard and thick vegetation screening separating the route from the lagoons this will reduce visual disturbance to terns that forage in the lagoons.

An interpretation panel will be established at Bembridge Point which will inform walkers of the sensitivities around foraging terns and over wintering birds in the area to encourage responsible behaviour from walkers and their dogs.

- **Disturbance to birds from construction works**

Bembridge Harbour causeway has three water outlets. Two of these have been upgraded to wooden bridges. The proposals here outline to do the same to the remaining outlet.

The establishment of a bridge here will replace a series of steep steps. Provision of a bridge will ensure all of the route across the causeway is the same height and will reduce bottlenecking of people at either end of the steps.

The nature, scale, timing and duration of construction and or installation works could result in bird disturbance sufficient to disrupt normal behaviours and/or the distribution of birds within the site. See table 8 for guidelines we have set, that local authorities and contractors will have to adhere to when carrying out the works.

## D3.2D Newtown Harbour

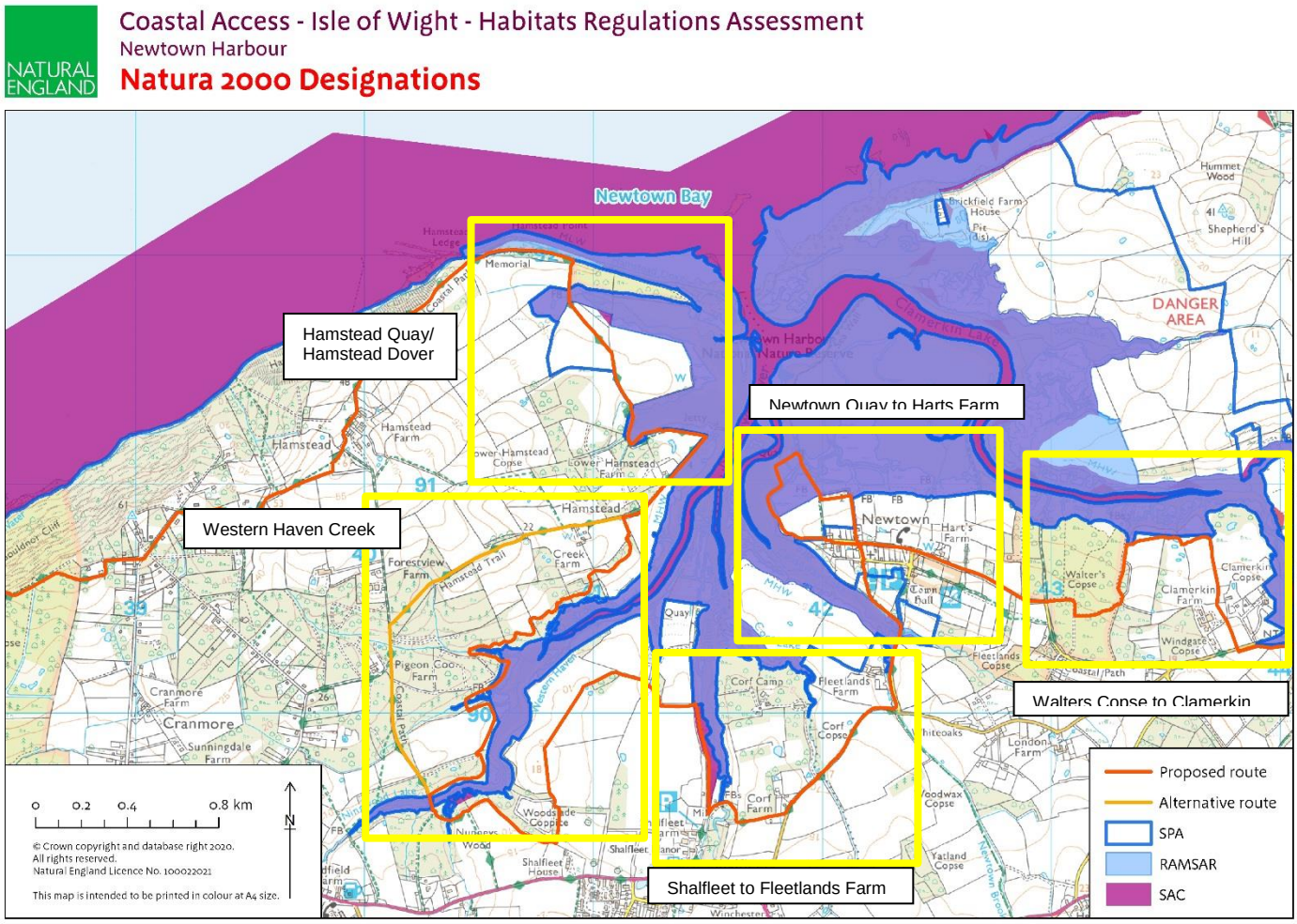


*Figure 5 Map of ECP proposals around Newtown Harbour – divided into subsections*

Newtown Harbour is a large, complex site with a number of creeks. It hosts considerable bird interest as well as a diverse range of intertidal habitats. The proposed route of the coast path around the Harbour includes creating some new sections of path on the western side of the harbour. No new access rights will be created over the intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh of Newtown harbour on the grounds they are unsuitable for public access.

Due to the scale of this site and the varying levels of access around the harbour this part of the assessment is subdivided into smaller sections with the risks assessed at each specific location;

- Hamstead Quay/Hamstead Dover Creek
- Western Haven
- Shalfleet fields to Fleetlands Farm
- Newtown Quay
- Walters Copse to Clamerkin Fields

The WeBs core count sector covers the entirety of the Newtown Harbour, including the creeks. The 5 year peak average between 2014 and 2019 for Newtown Harbour recorded 1772 dark-bellied brent geese, 1207 teal; 66 ringed plover and 109 black-tailed godwit, 955

dunlin, 6 great crested grebe, 5 greenshank, 78 grey plover, 569 lapwing, 31 little egret, 224 pintail, 2 shoveler,15 turnstone, 8 whimbrel and 1982 wigeon. All of these species are part of the non-breeding waterbird assemblage. In addition to this 258 Mediterranean gull, 16 common tern and 24 Sandwich tern were also recorded.

**Hamstead Quay/ Hamstead Dover Creek**

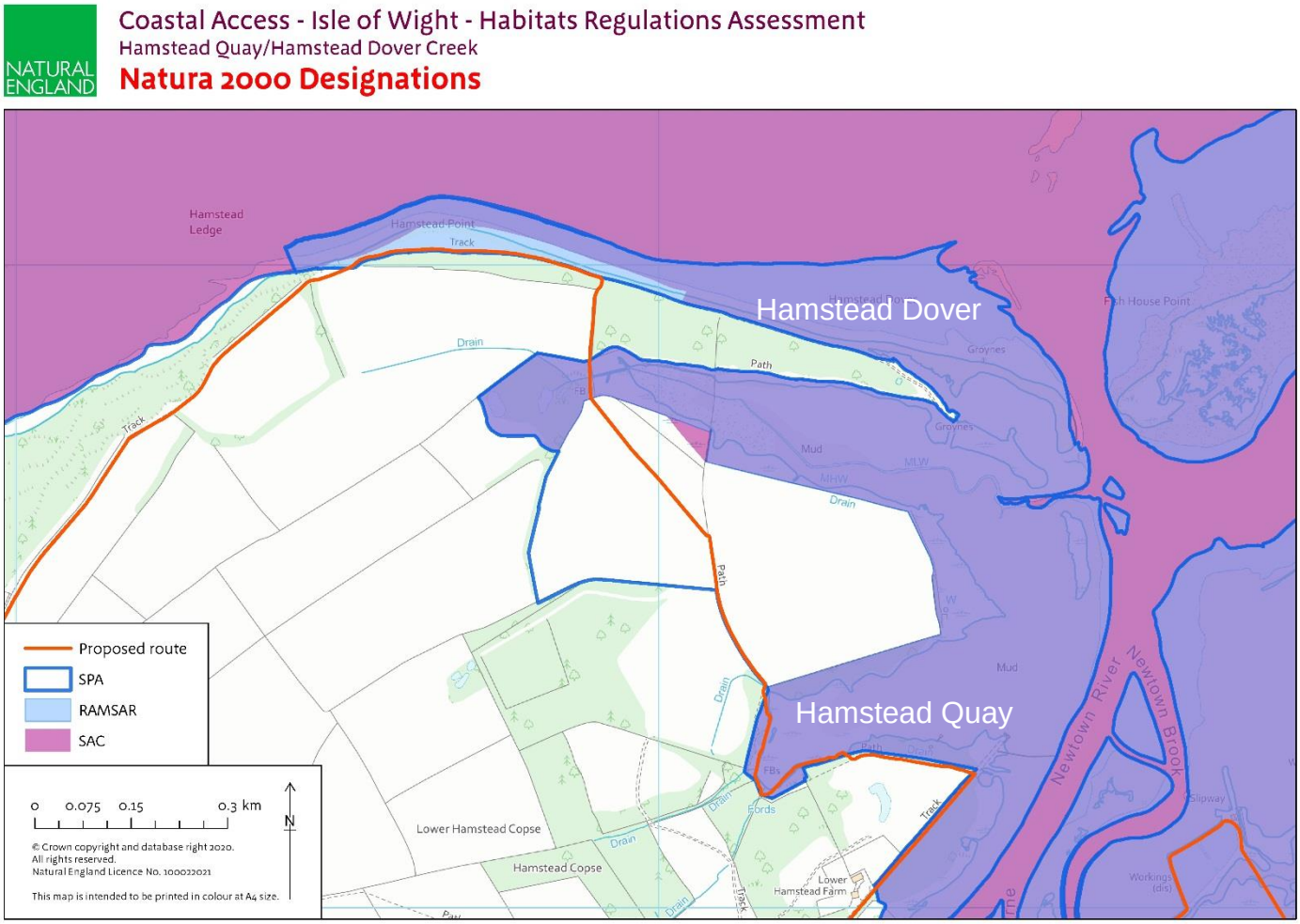


*Figure 6 Map of ECP proposals between Hamstead Dover and Hamstead Quay*

**Access Baseline**

The nearest car park is at Boulnor Viewpoint with approx. 30 spaces which is a 5km walking distance away from Hamstead Point. Newtown National Nature Reserve also has a carpark with approx. 20 spaces this is located over by Newtown Village on the other side of the harbour, approximately 8km walking distance from Hamstead Point.

The current IOWCP is routed between Hamstead Point and Hamstead Dover. The route then follows south over existing boardwalk into pasture fields north of Lower Hamstead Farm. The IOWCP bisects one of these fields and follows the edge of the field further south. The existing IOWCP then follows board walked areas along the edge of the creek towards Hamstead Quay. Walkers can access this part of the coast following the Hamstead Trail and existing IOW Coast Path route or from Hamstead Village. The Hamstead Trail is another

promoted walking route which starts at Hamstead and follows a trail for 7 miles to Brook Bay on the south side of the island.

The route close to Hamstead Quay aligns across several stretches of boardwalk, approximately 110 metres in length, to improve access where the terrain is wet or uneven. The boardwalk here is old and in poor condition, as a result evidence can be seen that walkers frequently stray off it and onto the surrounding habitat. There is another section of boardwalk, approximately 62 metres long, to cross a creek before reaching Hamstead Point. It is currently in disrepair and in need of replacement which will be incorporated in the Coast Path proposals. The proposed alignment will follow the existing IOWCP.

**Environmental Baseline**

Non-breeding waterbirds use the intertidal areas and creeks for feeding and roosting. The creeks provide saltmarsh habitat which is favoured by for some species when roosting. The WeBs sector information is noted above. There is a low tide count for birds using the intertidal around Hamstead Quay. The last count in 2008/09 recorded 133 dark-bellied brent geese and 46 teal. There were no black-tailed godwit or ringed plover recorded.

Dark-bellied brent geese are known to roost in pasture fields north of Hamstead Quay, other waterbirds will regularly use the eastern field when the tide if high.

Three to four pairs of ringed plover attempt to breed on this shingle spit annually. There are fenced pens and signage present all year round on the spit to highlight breeding sites for ringed plover implemented and maintained by the National Trust. There are currently two information panels in place on the shingle spit to inform walkers that terns may breed here.

The shingle spit at Hamstead Dover was once utilised by tern colonies which currently do not breed here due to an increase in disturbance from recreational activities, including the launching of watercraft. There are multiple groups, including The National Trust and RSPB, involved in the conservation management of terns in the area. The National Trust Harbour Master hands out leaflets to boat users who visit and stay within the harbour. Signs stating ‘No Landing’ have been erected at multiple points within the harbour, there is a small area designated for mooring however this is often busy and as a result visitors will haul out and moor up where there is space. Newtown is popular with canoeists, the National Trust have created a guide that highlights safe places to launch and land without causing impacts on the wildlife. There are preliminary discussions with wildlife groups (National Trust, MOD, RSPB and Natural England) with regards to recharging the shingle spit which would enhance breeding habitat and encourage terns back to breed. There are two floating tern rafts managed and maintained by National Trust within the northern and central areas of Newtown Harbour to encourage breeding activities.

Vegetated shingle communities fringe the north of the harbour between Hamstead Point and Hamstead Dover which falls within the coastal margin. The National Trust have cordoned off areas of vegetated shingle from the public to reduce trampling impacts and deter access during breeding season. These are the same areas which are cordoned off for breeding ringed plover.

**Risk Analysis**

The access proposal along this section is to:

- Follow the route of the established IOWCP
- Improve signage and way marking e.g. add disks/ replace/ new

- Replace existing board walks, including at Hampstead Quay
- A new bridge close to Hamstead Quay (IOW-7-S006)
- Install new information boards at Hamstead point, on the boardwalk at Hamstead Quay and on the approach to Hamstead Dover
- Make directions to restrict access at Hamstead Dover Spit
- No new coastal access rights will be created over much of the salt marsh and mud flat of Newton Harbour

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

Non-breeding waterbirds will utilise the intertidal within the harbour to feed and be pushed further inland during high tide to roost. There are several large fields, north of Hamstead Quay designated within the SPA. The field, particularly further east and north east, is used as a high tide roost for birds, particularly dark-bellied brent geese. The proposed route for the coast path follows the already established IOWCP along this section. Additional way marking will be installed along the route to ensure walkers follow the set path. The fields provide a buffer between walkers and more sensitive intertidal areas.

The route is following the existing IOWCP when crossing boardwalks around Hamstead Quay. The existing walked route will be enhanced to ensure walkers and their dogs keep to the walked route as the route is close to the shoreline. In addition an interpretation panel will be installed on a section of the boardwalk to inform walkers of the bird interest within this area.

A year round Section 26 Nature Conservation restriction will be implemented on the shingle spit at Hamstead Dover, to exclude access, in order to reduce disturbance to overwintering birds using the wider harbour, a S25a exclusion will restrict access to the intertidal around the shingle spit.

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds (ringed plover)**

There are permanent fenced pens on the shingle spit to highlight the breeding areas. There are signs explaining the breeding sensitivities and reasons for the fencing when approaching the spit, these signs cannot be read from the proposed route. To further restrict access and disturbance to birds breeding, a year round section 26 Nature Conservation restriction will be implemented on the shingle spit at Hamstead Dover, S25a exclusion will restrict access to the intertidal around the shingle spit. An information panel will be installed beside the trail at Hamstead Point which will include detail on species and their sensitivities as well as information regarding restrictions within the area and a map to show where they are in effect.

- **Disturbance to breeding terns**

Although terns no longer breed on the Isle of Wight, the shingle spit at Hamstead Dover provides suitable habitat. The National Trust are making conservation efforts to encourage terns to breed as mentioned in the environmental baseline. It is possible to walk to the shingle spit from Hamstead Point, in order to reinforce current access management, which includes an existing sign which highlights the area we have restricted, on potential breeding habitat a year round section 26 Nature and Conservation restriction will be implemented on the shingle spit at Hamstead Dover, S25a exclusion will restrict access to the intertidal around the shingle spit. An information panel will be installed beside the trail at Hamstead Point which will include detail on species and their sensitivities as well as information regarding restrictions within the area and a map to show where they are in effect. This location has been chosen as this is where walkers are able to access the shingle spit.

- **Trampling of sensitive species and supporting habitat**

Vegetated shingle communities are present along the shingle at Hamstead Dover, the route alignment is proposed to follow the existing IOWCP. The route specifically turns away from the shingle spit taking pressure away from trampling vegetated shingle that is located outward towards the spit.

Two interpretation panels will be established with information regarding sensitivities to vegetated shingle. One as you approach Hamstead Point from Hamstead Village and the other as you approach Hamstead Dover. This will ensure walkers coming from both directions are aware of the sensitive features.

At Hamstead Quay saltmarsh forms, for the most part, at the edge of the creek. The route is aligned through saltmarsh. There are some boardwalks in place to raise people off the saltmarsh however due to the poor condition of the boardwalks walkers are choosing to walk off the boardwalks which has caused a trampling impact on the surrounding saltmarsh (as shown in appendix 4). Replacing the existing boardwalk will provide a satisfactory surface for walkers and reduce trampling of saltmarsh and provide opportunity for the habitat to recover. Handrails will be added to the boardwalk to discourage people leaving the trail and passing places will be established at intervals to ensure walkers aren't forced to step into surrounding intertidal habitat.

A new bridge will be established along the shoreline from Hamstead Quay, this is due to the path becoming waterlogged which has caused the surface to become unsatisfactory. This will reduce the risk of salt marsh species being trampled by people and dogs walking along the shore and enable recovery of the damaged vegetation next to the path.

An interpretation panel will be established on the boardwalk at Hamstead Quay which will inform walkers of the health and safety restriction put on the saltmarsh and intertidal area, importance of staying on the board walked areas and sensitivities to birds.

For the plants and invertebrates associated with saltmarsh and transitional habitats it can be concluded there is no appreciable risk. As outlined above where the route passes through saltmarsh, boardwalks will be installed and replaced. This will remove risk of trampling on habitat that supports these assemblages.

- **Loss of habitat from installation of access management infrastructure**

The current boardwalk at Hamstead Quay is in poor condition, the planks have rotted over time and a number of planks have broken making the route unsatisfactory to walk on. As a result walkers are walking off and around the boardwalks which is causing damage to the surrounding saltmarsh habitat. These boardwalks will be replaced with new boards which will be exactly the same width, passing places will be added at various intervals which will cause shadowing impact on saltmarsh. The piles of the existing boardwalk will be left in the ground as this is less damaging than removing them and putting in new ones.

Hamstead Dover Creek has a raised board walk, with hand rails on the west side, it is raised from the mudflat below and approximately 60 meters in length. This will be replaced as the current boardwalk is in disrepair and unsatisfactory to walk on. The piles of the existing boardwalk will be left in the ground as this is less damaging than removing them and putting in new ones. New boards and hand rails on both sides will be placed on top of the piles, the dimensions will remain the same to ensure no additional footprint.

The replacement of boardwalks has been considered further in table 10. The installation method will be checked at establishment stage and further assessment under the Habitat Regulations will be made, as necessary, prior to works being carried out.

Based on the 2014 Environment agency data, the Saltmarsh extent in the Solent Maritime SAC was 9908000 sq.m, by replacing and inputting new boardwalk within this section would result in 0.004122ha loss of saltmarsh habitat which is less than 0.1% loss of the entire saltmarsh feature. See table 10 for further consideration of habitat loss in this location.

- **Disturbance to birds from construction works**

Establishment of infrastructure works close to the shoreline has the potential to cause disturbance during construction. To avoid this measures have been set out in table 8 to ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum.

- **Other route alignment options considered**

During the course of developing proposals the option of aligning the path along Hamstead Dover was considered. This option was rejected in part because of sensitivities to breeding terns, ringed plover and vegetated shingle.

**Western Haven creek**

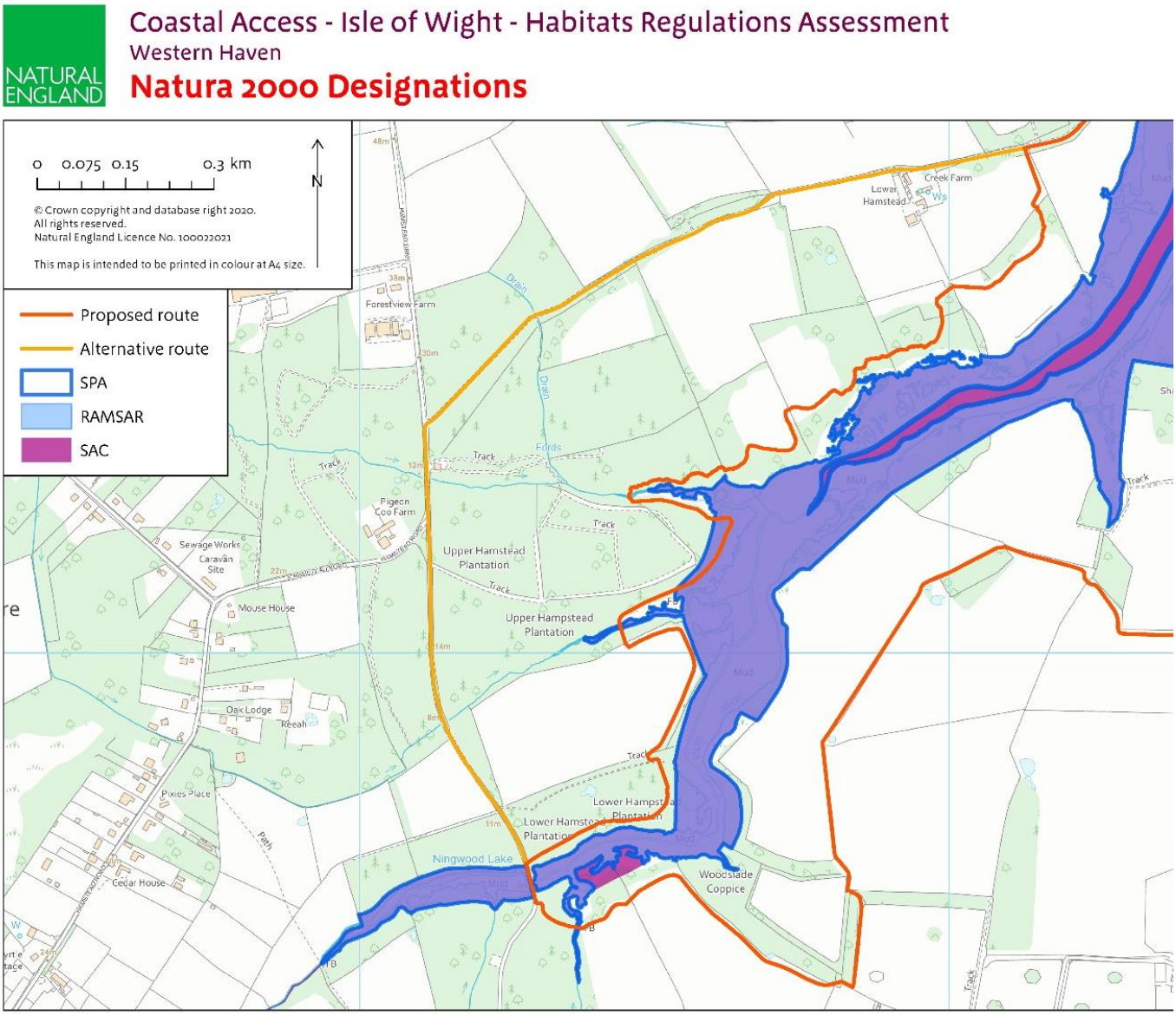


*Figure 7 Map of ECP proposals at Western Haven*

**Access Baseline**

The nearest car park is Newtown National Nature Reserve with approx. 20 spaces. There is a free car park further out at Bouldnor Viewpoint with approx. 30 spaces. The area is currently accessible from Nunneys Wood where the existing IOWCP is routed. The path then follows the Hamstead Trail/IOWCP towards Lower Hamstead Farm.

**Environmental Baseline**

The West Haven creek is fringed with saltmarsh and at low tide provides intertidal mudflats which are popular for waders to feed on. There are a number of small creeks that interject with Western Haven creek which can provide more secluded saltmarsh for roosting and feeding away from the main part of the harbour. WeBs low tide counts suggest teal and dark-bellied brent geese may be seen utilising the intertidal area during the wintering period however it is not as popular with the non-breeding waterbirds as other areas of Newtown

Harbour. The WeBs 2018/19 core counts for Newtown Harbour recorded dark-bellied brent geese, black-tailed godwit, lapwing, little egret, teal and whimbrel are present in the harbour during months outside of the overwintering period.

The land above the shoreline is mainly woodland with a number fields used as plantations. There are a number of pheasant pens within the fields at Pigeon Coo Farm and Upper Hamstead Plantation.

**Risk Analysis**

The access proposal along this section is to:

- Follow the existing IOWCP from Lower Hamstead Plantation to Creek Farm
- Create a new section of path close to the coast from Lower Hamstead Plantation to Creek Farm
- The new section of path will be closed from 1st August to 1st March for land management and nature conservation reasons
- Walkers will be directed along an alternative route (the existing IOWCP) at times when the main route is closed
- Kissing gates will be installed at either end of the alternative route which will be locked when the main route if closed
- Information boards will also be installed to make walkers aware of restrictions in place, timings of route closure and the sensitivities to the overwintering birds in the area and across the harbour
- No new coastal access rights will be created over much of the salt marsh and mud flat of Newton Harbour
- Along the newly created sections of path, people will be required to keep dogs on a lead, a direction will be implemented when the main route is open
- Some new fencing will be installed to ensure people stick to the marked trail
- An existing footbridge will be replaced at Aunt Emmy's Creek and a new footbridge installed further inland on the creek.
- Directional signage and way marking will be installed

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

Non-breeding waterbirds use the intertidal and saltmarsh areas within the creeks for feeding and resting. The main route will be aligned closely to the coast from Lower Hamstead Plantation towards Creek Farm. The route is set back within the treeline along this entire length to reduce visual disturbance to birds feeding on the intertidal and roosting on the saltmarsh.

For part of the year the land here is used for a commercial pheasant shoot. The main shoot area is within Pigeon Coo Farm however the surrounding fields have pheasant pens in place. A section 24 land management restriction will result in closure of the main route between 1st August and 30th September along the western edge of Western Haven, from IOW-7-S025 to IOW-7-S037. Walkers will be directed to use an alternative route following the existing IOWCP during this period. Kissing gates will be installed at either end of the alternative route which will be locked when the main route if closed. A section 26 nature conservation restriction will ensure the main route is closed 1st October until 1st March. This will keep disturbance to a minimum during the overwintering period. Walkers will be directed further inland away from the foreshore and sensitive areas.  An interpretation panel will be

established at either end of the alternative route to make walkers aware of restrictions in place, timings of route closure and the sensitivities to the overwintering birds in the area and across the harbour.

Stock fencing approximately 100 metre long will be established seaward of the route, on the corner by Upper Hamstead Plantation. There is natural vegetation screening at this location however it isn't as thick as other areas of the route and would benefit from an extra barrier of stock fencing to ensure dogs and walkers don't access the intertidal and disturb birds that are feeding and roosting.

As the route will only be open from 2nd March to 31st July, the main wintering period will be avoided. Some overwintering species have been recorded in months either side of the wintering period. To ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum the coastal route will be subject to a dogs-on-lead Section 26(3)a direction from 2nd March to 31st July.

As part of this new access an existing private footbridge will be replaced at Pigeon Coo Creek and a new footbridge will be installed at Aunt Emmys Creek. The new bridge at Pigeon Coo Creek is set back deep within the treeline outside of all Natura 2000 designations. The new crossing point is in woodland and pedestrians using it are screened from birds feeding further down the creek. The existing bridge will then be removed to ensure walkers follow the proposed trail.

On the approach to Aunt Emmys creek walkers will be kept within the treeline which will provide natural screening to birds using the foreshore further east.

Way marking and information panels will be provided at the start and end of the seasonal route, as well as spaced out along the length. These will include maps of the area to show restricted areas and closure timings.

The route has been aligned specifically to make the most of existing dense screening through Upper and Lower Hamstead Plantation woods and those close to Creek Farm this will ensure visual disturbance to the foreshore is kept to a minimum.

The proposed route on the Eastern side of Western Haven is set back from the shoreline, along the perimeter of National Trust fields. The fields are within the coastal margin, should walkers choose to walk closer to the shoreline they are still screened by the treeline. The route follows away from the coast and along a track adjacent to Shafleet Lake. Initially the route was to follow the northern edge of the fields at Shalfleet Quay however these are used as high tide roosts, as a result the proposed route follows along the southern edge of the fields.

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds from construction works**

The proposals here include the addition of two bridges and the removal of a bridge. The nature, scale, timing and duration of construction and or installation works could result in bird disturbance sufficient to disrupt normal behaviours and/or distribution of birds within the site. See table 8 for guidelines we have set, that local authorities and contractors will have to adhere to when carrying out the works.

- **Loss of habitat from installation of access management infrastructure**

New access management infrastructure along this section of the route has been considered further in table 10. The installation method will be checked at establishment stage and

further assessment under the Habitat Regulations will be made, as necessary, prior to works being carried out.

- **Other route alignment options considered**

During the course of developing proposals the option of aligning the path along the shoreline of the creek was considered. This option was rejected in part because of the trampling impacts on saltmarsh and the visual disturbance to waterbirds using the creek and wider harbour. On the eastern side of Western Haven an option of aligning the path along the creek shoreline was rejected to increase spatial separation from walkers and the intertidal area where waterbirds are feeding.

## Shalfleet fields to Fleetlands Farm

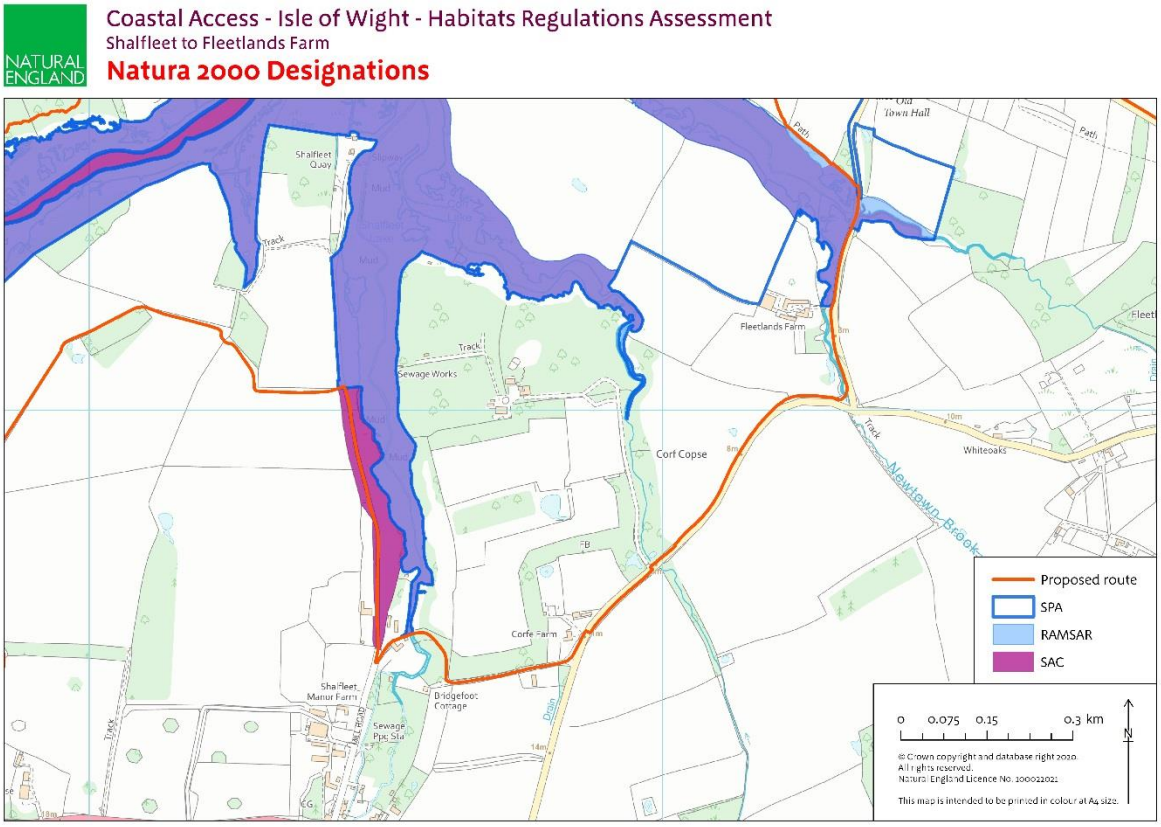


*Figure 8 Map of ECP proposals from Shalfleet fields to Fleetlands Farm*

### Access Baseline

Shalfleet is a small village, on the southern edge of Newtown Harbour. Shalfleet Manor is a big attraction, as part of the designated National Nature Reserve it is popular for birdwatching as well as water sports such as canoeing and paddle boarding.

This area is accessible to visitors who park at Newtown and walk round the harbour. The existing IOWCP runs through Nunneys Wood on the western side of Shalfleet, along the main road and then up the eastern side of Shalfleet, past the manor. The coastline can be assessed using this trail, a PRoW does continue up the western side of Shalfleet Lake to the Quay, creating a linear route.

Between Shalfleet Lake and Corfe Lake there is a small peninsular which has Corf Scout Camp located on the edge. This facility is closed between 1st December and 1st April. The IOWCP follows the road south of the scout camp and up the eastern side of Fleetlands Farm

### Environmental Baseline

Shalfleet Lake and Corf Lake are small creeks off of the main harbour estuary, intertidal mudflats are exposed at low tide which are fringed with saltmarsh. The intertidal area is important for feeding and is popular with large flocks of dark-bellied brent geese and black-tailed godwit. Teal will roost on the subtidal water.

During high tide dark-bellied brent geese roost in the pasture fields close to the intertidal areas.

The Newtown Nature Reserve north of Shalfleet had a number of pasture fields which are managed by the National Trust.

A number of key areas have been identified in the SWBGS as SPA sites or sites of low use along this stretch of coast [Ref 9]. A small field close to Shalfleet Quay has recorded high numbers of dunlin feeding. Areas of the intertidal just north of Corf Scout Camp are utilised by high numbers of dark-bellied brent geese and lapwing. Black-tailed godwit feed here in lower numbers. Lapwing will also roost in these areas.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

The proposed route is aligned further inland to increase spatial separation from walkers and the intertidal areas where birds are feeding and reduced visual disturbance. By routing along the south of the fields we are encouraging walkers to follow a clearly way marked route, drawing attention away from the PRoW which can direct walkers towards open views of the harbour next to Shalfleet Quay.

Three alignment options for the trail close to Corf Camp.

- route within the treeline on the eastern bank of Shalfleet Lake, along the southern boundary of Corf Scout Camp and to the main road on the Corf Scout Camp access track.
- route within the treeline on the eastern bank of Shalfleet Lake, east along boundary of Corf Farm fields and to the main road on the Corf Scout Camp access track.
- route the trail to follow the shoreline on the north side of Corf Lake and south side of Causeway Lake.

However these route alignment options would increase visual disturbance to the birds using the intertidal within Shalfleet Lake and using the fields as high tide roosts around Corf Scout Camp As a result the route follows the existing IOWCP which is set back within the treeline on the western side of Shalfleet Lake and follows a road to Fleetlands Farm.

- **Other route alignment options considered**

During the course of developing proposals the option of aligning the path along the shoreline of the creek was considered. This option was rejected in part because of visual disturbance this would cause to birds using the intertidal. Another alignment option was to route along the edge of the northern fields and diagonally cut across the fields to join with the PRoW that aligns along the western edge of Shalfleet Lake. This option was rejected in part because the fields are used as high tide roosts.

## Newtown Quay to Harts Farms

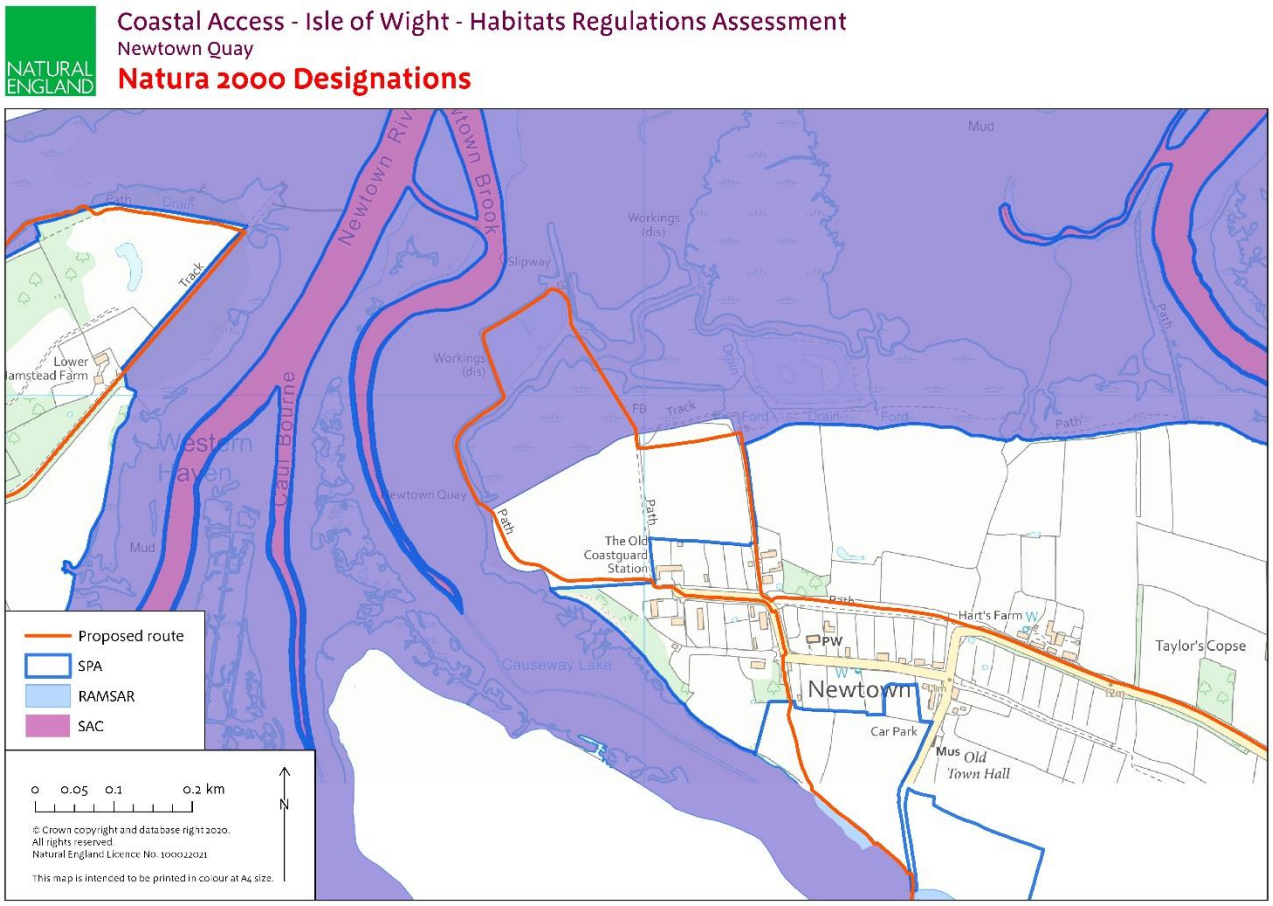


*Figure 9: ECP proposals from Newtown Quay to Harts Harm*

### Access Baseline

The nearest car park is Newtown National Nature Reserve with approx. 20 spaces. There is a free car par further out at Bouldnor Viewpoint with approx. 30 spaces. There is an observation point with a double hide for visitors to look out across the harbour. This is accessible via a PRoW. This is a popular area with walkers and has numerous permissive paths and PRoW.

Harts Farm is located seaward of Town Lane. The farm has a number of pasture fields which extend to the coast. There is a PRoW along the most eastern edge of the fields which takes walkers to a bird hide on the coast, the PRoW follows the coast a short way to the West. Newtown Quay is popular with birdwatchers as it gives the best view of the entire harbour.

### Environmental Baseline

Mediterranean gull are known to breed on the small islands approximately 100 meters seaward of the trail from the observation hides. The small islands are surrounded by water and saltmarsh and not accessible to walkers.

The SWBGs has classified a number of areas close to Newtown Quay as SPA sites [Ref 9]. Ringed plover are known to roost on the saltmarsh within the harbour, directly in front of the

lagoons. There is an important dunlin and grey plover roost approximately 500m north of Newtown Quay. There is a primary core area within the intertidal which is an important dunlin and grey plover roost spot.

Teal will roost on the water during the night and use the saltmarsh and intertidal mud for feeding.

There are two small lagoons with a raised bund along the edge which is a popular walked route. Terns may forage in these lagoons.

The pasture fields seaward of Harts farm are frequently used as high tide roosts for dark-bellied brent geese.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

The proposed route is follow existing PRoW around the Quay. Walkers will be visual to birds using the harbour. As this area is National Trust managed there are already dogs to leads restrictions in place.

Willow screening will be erected on either side of the double hide which will provide screening to the intertidal area directly in front reducing visual disturbance.

Interpretation panels will be added to the hide to provide further information on the sensitivities of the non-breeding features. Another interpretation panel will be established next to the lagoons to inform walkers on sensitivities to the birds using Newtown Harbour.

The route follows inland along Towns Lane, past Harts Farm. Route alignments were initially considered through the pasture fields at Harts Farm to the shoreline and then follow the shoreline east. However as these fields are important high tide roosts for over-wintering birds such as dark-bellied brent geese, the route is aligned along the road landward of Harts Farm before entering Walters Copse. As the fields are landward of the trail they do fall within coastal margin. As a result, an all year round nature conservation restriction has been place on them so they are not accessible to walkers.

Information on these restrictions will be on the information panels at the double hide in Newtown Quay.

- **Disturbance to breeding Mediterranean gull**

Mediterranean gulls often congregate close to the quayside at Newtown Village where the National Trust have created a scrape and other habitat suitable for breeding black-headed gulls and Mediterranean gulls. This area will be subject to a section 25A exclusion and as a result no new access will be introduced here.

The proposed route will be following a PRoW which passes the hide. Willow screening will be erected on either side of the double hide (approximately 5 metres each side) to provide screening from birds using the intertidal in front of the hide. This will also provide screening to the area in which Mediterranean gulls are known to breed. This will discourage people to access the shoreline and intertidal as it will act as a barrier.

Interpretation panels will be added to the hide to provide further information on the sensitivities of the breeding and non-breeding features.

There is currently management already implemented by the National Trust for dogs to leads in this area. Signs will be added to way markers to help reinforce this throughout the route here.

- **Disturbance to foraging terns**

The Solent and Dorset Coast SPA boundary which designates areas of open water in which terns use to forage is from the MLW mark. As this is beyond the coastal margin boundary we do not envisage interaction between path users and feeding terns. However, terns are known to use lagoon inlets to forage.

There will be no new access routes or permissions created as a result of these proposals around Newtown Quay where the lagoons are located. Information panels will be installed on the observation hide, close by with information regarding foraging terns.

There is currently management already implemented by the National Trust for dogs to leads in this area.

- **Other route alignment options considered**

During the course of developing proposals the option of aligning the path through the pasture fields at Harts Farm was considered. This option was rejected in part because the fields are important high tide roosts for over wintering birds including dark-bellied brent geese.

## Walters Copse to Clamerkin Fields

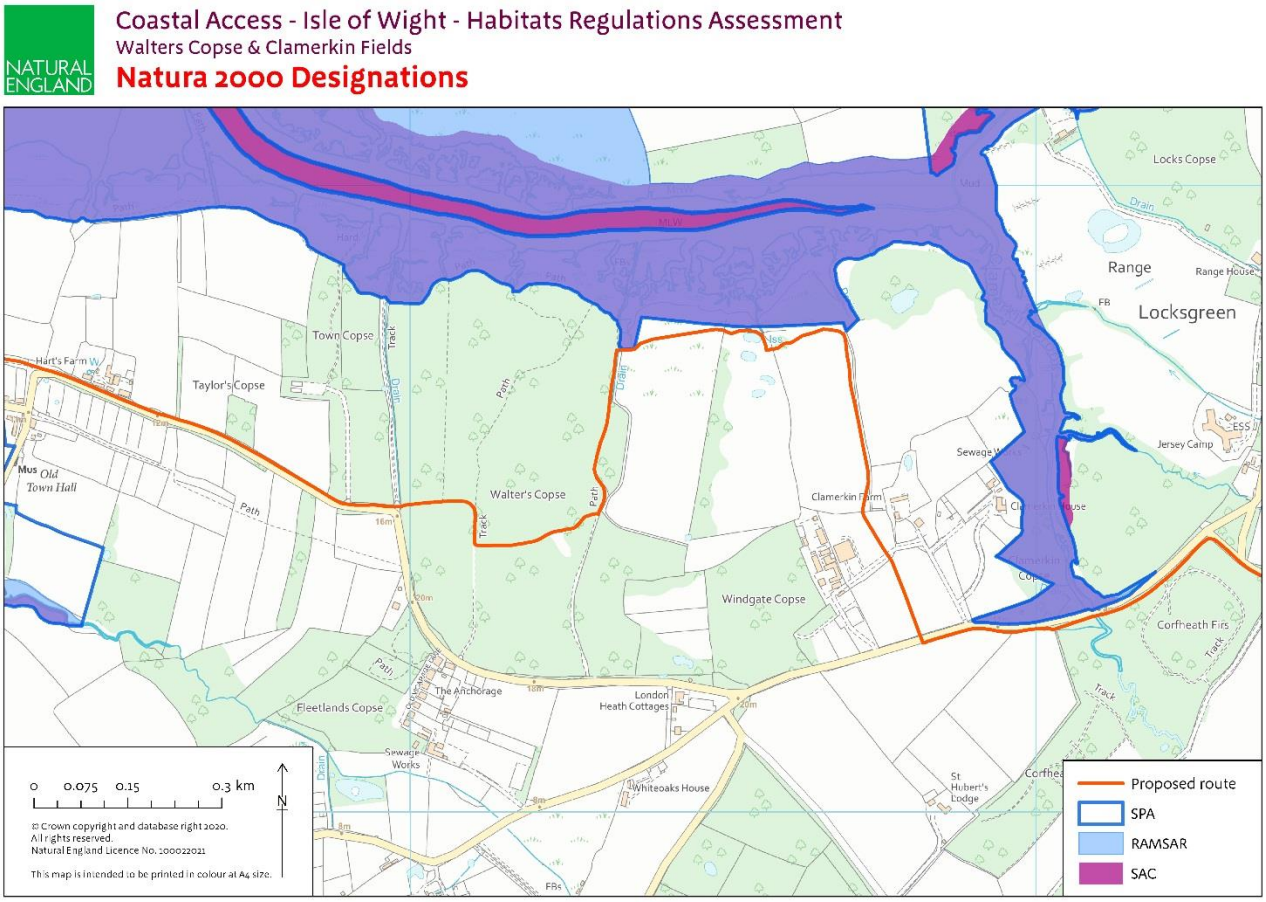


*Figure 10 Map of ECP proposals at Walters Copse and Clamerkin fields*

### Access Baseline

The nearest car park is Newtown National Nature Reserve with approx. 20 spaces. There is a free car par further out at Bouldnor Viewpoint with approx. 30 spaces. There are numerous walked routes through Walters Copse.

The existing IOWCP follows Porchfield Road along the bottom of Walters Copse and Clamerkin. You can access the coast by following a number of tracks through Walters Copse or via a signed permissive route along the eastern field at Clamerkin.

### Environmental Baseline

Walters Copse is a woodland area managed by the National Trust. There a number of path ways within the woodland which are regularly used by walkers. The shoreline of Walters Copse is fringed with saltmarsh which opens up to a narrow creek known as Clamerkin Brook. When the tide is in the saltmarsh areas can become inundated making the route along the edge of Walters Copse boggy and hazardous to walk on.

The saltmarsh provides teal and brent geese with feeding grounds. Black-tailed godwit will feed on the mud at low tide within Clamerkin Brook. A low tide WeBs count for the section of creek at Clamerkin in 2009/09 recorded 58 dark- bellied brent geese; 3 black-tailed godwit and 400 teal. The SWBGS has identified an SPA site [Ref 9] across from the shoreline at

Waters Copse. This site is used as important roosting site for dunlin, grey plover and lapwing also roost here. These species are components of the SPA waterbird assemblage.

The saltmarsh on the creek edge shows signs of trampling, where it becomes boggy there is evidence that walkers choose to walk off the clear path and onto the surrounding saltmarsh.

The fields at Clamerkin are open pasture with a mixed sward height. The seaward edges of the fields are formed of thick hedgerows. The middle field can become boggy and has a number of small ponds. The fields closest to Clamerkin Farm are owned by the National Trust. Seaward of the hedgerow is Clamerkin Brook which at low tide reveals intertidal mud flats. The creek is fringed with saltmarsh which is widely used by teal.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

The proposed route is aligned deep within Walters Copse approximately 300 metres away from the shoreline and it is considered that this will provide enough spatial separation that walkers won't divert to the coast and noise disturbance is avoided. The proposed route follows a permissive path along a field edge keeping walkers away from the shoreline of the creek, avoiding visual disturbance.

Between Walters Copse and Clamerkin Bridge the route passes behind a treeline providing a natural screen to the foreshore. The majority of the screening is quite dense however there are patches located at Walters Copse and the middle field at Clamerkin, approximately 10 meters wide that require additional natural screening. Vegetative screening will be applied here, while this may take time to establish as a functioning screen, temporary willow screening will be erected and maintained to fulfil this function.

We will also install a length of sheep fencing and a locked gate to prevent access onto the intertidal. This will ensure walkers and dogs are not able to get out to the intertidal where there would be visual disturbance.

The route has been routed away from Clamerkin hide, managed by the National Trust, the reason for this is that the corner of Clamerkin Brook is widely used by over-wintering birds, there is also a small lake which is used by teal. By routing away from the coast walkers and dogs are screened within a treeline, reducing visible disturbance risk to birds using the intertidal.

There is currently management already implemented by the National Trust for dogs to leads in this area within Walters Copse. An interpretation panel will be installed at Clamerkin/ Walter Copse to inform walkers of the sensitivities of birds utilising the creek and to remind walkers to keep dogs on leads as informed by the National Trust.

- **Trampling of sensitive vegetation and supporting habitat**

The route has been specifically aligned inland in this area, deep within Walters Copse. By moving the route inland it greatly reduces the risk of walkers further damaging the saltmarsh and will allow the habitat to recover. The proposed route follows a permissive path along a field edge keeping walkers off the sensitive intertidal areas.

The saltmarsh habitat will be within the coastal margin however access is restricted due to S25a restriction.  Way markers will ensure walkers follow the route inland and away from the shoreline.

An interpretation panel will be installed at Clamerkin/ Walter Copse to inform walkers of the saltmarsh sensitivities and the restrictions in place.

For the plants and invertebrates associated with saltmarsh and transitional habitats it can be concluded there is no appreciable risk. As outlined above the route has been moved further inland to avoid areas of saltmarsh thus removing the risk of interaction with invertebrates and plants associated with these habitats.

- **Other route alignment options considered**

During the course of developing proposals the option of aligning the path along the shoreline on the edge of Clamerkin Brook was considered. This option was rejected in part of the visual disturbance this would cause to over wintering birds, particularly dunlin, using the creek. Another option to align the route to follow a National Trust permissive path to the hide, through Clamerkin Copse and down to the main road to pick up the existing IOWCP was considered however this was rejected as the intertidal is widely used by teal and would be too disturbing.

## D3.2E Norton Spit and Yarmouth Lagoon

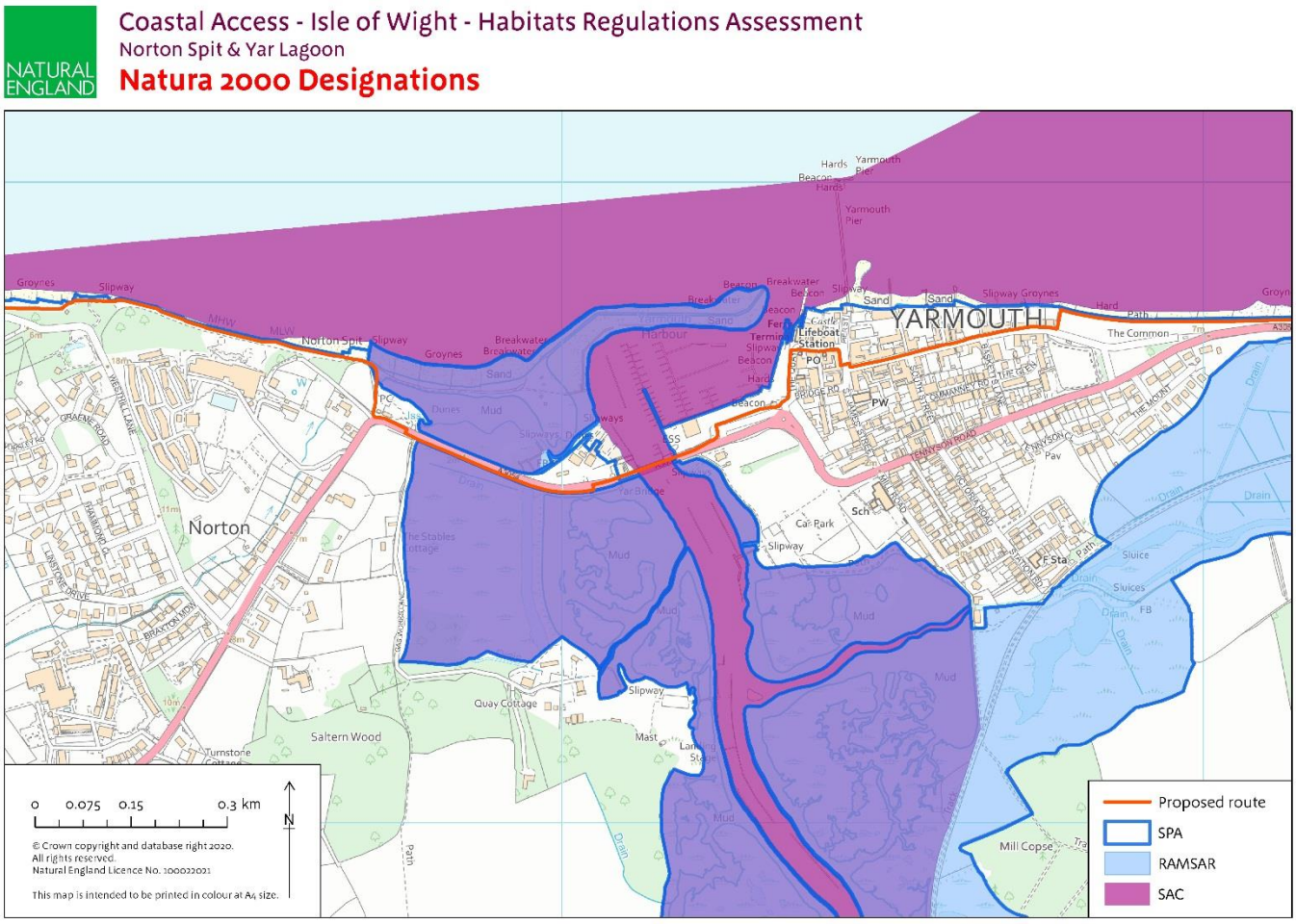


*Figure 11 ECP proposals at Yarmouth and Norton spit*

This location has been chosen as the presence of inland lagoons where terns may forage and sensitive habitats which may be subject to trampling. There is a high level of access within this location, if this increases significantly there is the potential to increase the risk of disturbance to foraging terns and increase pressure on sensitive habitats. A risk analysis has been carried out below.

### Access Baseline

Yarmouth is a popular town with tourists as well as locals. It provides a ferry link to the mainland at Lymington, in the New Forest.

It is a popular area for walkers, the existing IOWCP follows the road bridge over the estuary and is just a short distance away from Fort Victoria Country Park.

There is a PRoW that runs from Yarmouth to Freshwater Bay called the Freshwater Way which connects walkers to the north and south coast on the Isle of Wight. There is another PRoW which routes out on to Norton Spit, this is a there and back route.

There are two pay and display car parks in Yarmourth, one at the Pier which holds 30 spaces and another on River Road with 250 spaces. There is a free car park available further afield at Bouldnor view point.

**Environmental Baseline**

Within the Yar Estuary there are intertidal areas comprising of saltmarsh and mudflat which are important feeding and roosting habitats for birds.
Landward of the road bridge there is a large expanse of reedbeds and long narrow lagoon. The lagoon is designated within the Solent Maritime SAC for rare invertebrate species. Foraging terns are known to use inland lagoons, and as the Yar lagoon is close to the coast there is a possibility for terns to feed here.

At low tide, on the seaward side of the road bridge, an area of mudflat is exposed. Abutting the edge of the estuary is Norton Spit with sand dunes and small amounts of saltmarsh.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to foraging terns**

Terns will often forage in deeper coastal waters however they can use inland lagoons for feeding. The Yar lagoon is long and narrow, approximately 20 metre wide. It is landward of the proposed trail which follows the route of the existing IOWCP along a public road. Walkers on this section will follow the pavement which is lined with a fence and a vegetated barrier. Establishment of the England Coast Path is unlikely to change the level of vehicle use and recreational use. As a result, the proposed route is not going to have a significant effect on foraging terns.

- **Trampling of sensitive vegetation and supporting habitat**

The dune system located on Norton Spit is not part of the official route alignment however it will fall within the coastal margin. There is currently a ‘there and back’ path out on to the dunes which is often used by locals. The proposed route alignment follows the existing IOWCP, this path is in good condition and way markers will encourage walkers to follow the established trail. There are no fences or gates in place to stop walkers going onto the dunes and restrictions do not apply here as there is an established PRoW.

For the plants and invertebrates associated with saltmarsh and transitional habitats it can be concluded there is no appreciable risk. As outlined above the route will not be passing through habitats associated with the wetland plant or invertebrate assemblage. They may appear within the coastal margin however there is a PRoW across the dunes and the proposed route is choosing to route away from the dune area, greatly reducing the risk of trampling on habitat that supports these assemblages.

To inform walkers of the sensitivities of sand dunes an interpretation panel will be installed at the decision point.

## D3.2F Ryde Sands

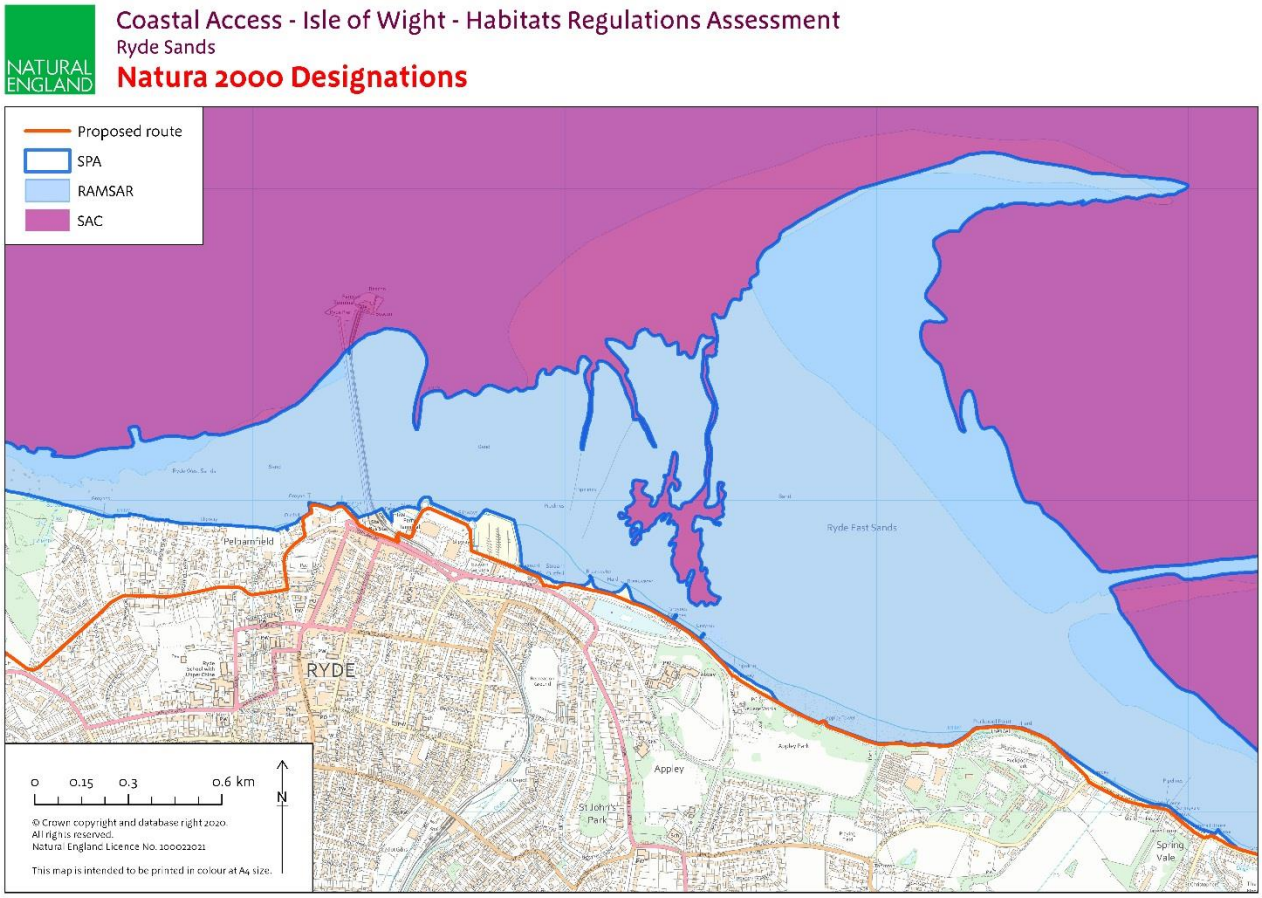


*Figure 12 ECP proposals at Ryde Sands*

This location has been chosen as the presence of waterbirds on the sandflats. There is a high level of access within this location, if this increases significantly there is the potential to increase the risk of disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds. A risk analysis has been carried out below.

### Access Baseline

Ryde town is a popular destination for tourism and Ryde Pier is used as the port of the foot passenger ferry, which runs to and from Portsmouth.

Ryde Sands beach is well used by walkers and dog walkers, the majority of dog walkers being observed on the eastern sands, near Puckpool Park and Appley Park. The existing IOWCP follows the esplanade and promenade on a satisfactory surface. Kite surfers occasionally use the water and horse riders have been observed using the beach at low tide. Access points to the east sands are more numerous and convenient. The west sands have limited and inconspicuous access and the beach is covered at high tide up to the sea wall.

Dogs are excluded from the public beach at Ryde between 1st May and 30th September. The dog exclusion zone extends 100m from the sea wall and covers the area east from the harbour to Appley Tower [Ref 14]. Horse riders are permitted to use the beach, although beach riding is discouraged during the summer between 10am and 6pm.

Bird Aware Solent commissioned Walk Unlimited to prepare an access management assessment of Ryde Sands, which details a number of access recommendations to reduce disturbance to overwintering birds, including the zonation of the beach. This information has been submitted to Ryde Town Council and the Isle of Wight Council who are considering the recommendations outlined [Ref 11].

**Environmental Baseline**

The predominant habitat on the intertidal are large extents of sandflats which host intertidal seagrass beds which are important food source for over wintering birds such as dark-bellied brent geese.

The WeBs core count sector extends from Ryde Pier to Puckland Point. The 5 year peak average between 2014 and 2019 for Ryde recorded 7 black-tailed godwit, 469 dark-bellied brent geese, 8 dunlin, 6 great crested grebe, 60 ringed plover and 4 wigeon. All these species are within the SPA non-breeding water bird assemblage.

The SWBGS has identified key SPA sites [Ref 9] and a site of low use along this part of coastline. The sandflats are widely used by turnstone and large numbers of brent geese who will feed on the seagrass beds on the west side if the pier. The sandflats on the eastern side of the pier are used for feeding by dunlin, ringed plover and dark-bellied brent geese. Under the pier which is a recognised as a low use site, dark-bellied brent geese can be seen in low numbers feeding.

**Risk Analysis**

- **Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds**

Based on current access and popularity of the area we expect a negligible increase in access to the coastal margin, as the trail is set back from the foreshore and follows an established concrete path that is easy to follow. The birds within the SPA assemblage will be seen using the intertidal, dark-bellied brent geese will utilise the seagrass beds that are expose at low tide. Dunlin, black-tailed godwit and ringed plover will feed close to the water's edge at low tide.

Our proposals for this section of coast are following the existing IOWCP and as access is already high in this area, we feel that the conservations efforts being proposed by Bird Aware are substantial enough to reduce the risk of disturbance within the coastal margin at Ryde Sands.

- **Trampling of sensitive vegetation and supporting habitat**

There are estuarine and intertidal features located within the coastal margin. Sandflats and seagrass beds predominantly make up the habitat type along this section of coast. The proposed route follows the existing IOWCP along the promenade at the back of the beach. Way markers will encourage walkers to stick to the path. The beach is popular with locals and tourists, it is therefore not predicted to significantly increase the number of visits along this section of the coast.

**D3.2G Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss**

Consideration of the impact of permanent habitat loss on site integrity has been given for each new infrastructure item, location and habitat type within the combinations of designated sites below. The report maps associated with this proposal show larger items of new infrastructure including kissing gates, footbridges, boardwalks and interpretation panels.

Multi-finger posts and way markers are not shown on maps. Dimensions of infrastructure items can be found using Ref 13. Resurfacing and replacement of infrastructure is listed in Appendix 3. Where the path requires resurfacing or replacement of steps there is already a path in place or infrastructure in place that is in need of upgrading, as such this is a like for like replacement which won't result in habitat loss.

*Table 10 Consideration of new infratructure, re-surfacing and permenant habitat loss*

| Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site - Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Report map reference** | **Item** | **Quantity** | **Area ($m^2$)** | **Habitat** | **Consideration** | **Conclusion** |
| IOW 4c | Kissing gate | 1 | 4.5 | Maritime cliff vegetation | The kissing gate is to be installed along route near Niton, within the existing wall line – there is already a defined gap where the gate will go so the footprint of the gate will take place where the wall once was. | The positioning of the gate within existing boundaries will not affect the integrity of the maritime cliff and slope habitat and the scale of loss can be regarded as 'inconsequential' in the context of the conservation objectives for the feature, and the nature of the works will not adversely affect the continuity and functioning of the habitat as a whole. |
| IOW 4g | Interpretation panel | 1 | 0.01 | Maritime cliff and slope | New interpretation panel to inform walkers on sensitivities of Glanville fritillary a SSSI feature at Shepherds Chine (see the Nature Conservation Assessment for further info on this species) | The surface type in which the interpretation panel will be established is bare/compacted mud and considered to be in an area of permanently-modified vegetation of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 5g | Multi finger post | 1 | 0.01 | Chalk grassland | Fingerpost to be installed on Tennyson Down as there are a number of possible routes at this point, it is needed to encourage walkers to stay on routed path | Where possible extra way marking has been added to existing infrastructure. As there are a number of desire line paths in this area, to avoid impact on the habitat, one post equal to $0.01m^2$ will not contribute to an adverse effect of integrity to this site. |

| Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site - Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Report map reference** | **Item** | **Quantity** | **Area ($m^2$)** | **Habitat** | **Consideration** | **Conclusion** |
| IOW 6b | Interpretation panel | 1 | 0.01 | No Priority habitat identified | New interpretation panel to inform walkers on sensitivities of sand dunes to be established close to route at Norton Spit. | The surface type in which the interpretation panel will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 7a | New Boardwalk | 65m in total | 14.85 | Coastal saltmarsh | Boardwalk at Hamstead Quay is required here as the area is boggy and subject to trampling. Currently the area is facing a decline in favourable saltmarsh due to destruction from trampling. By installing boardwalk and raising it approximately 1ft from the ground it will allow the saltmarsh to recover as the boardwalk provides a satisfactory surface for walkers. Two passing places will be installed within the new boardwalk to ensure walkers stay on the boardwalk. It will reduce the risk of further trampling to saltmarsh as walkers and dogs will be kept on the new satisfactory surface with space to pass one another. | The saltmarsh in-between the boardwalk is currently in poor condition from trampling. By installing boardwalk and raising people off the saltmarsh it will provide opportunity for the saltmarsh to recover due to reduction in trampling. The habitat loss is 0.0015ha which is 0.02% loss of the entire saltmarsh extents in the Solent Maritime SAC. When installing the boardwalk contractors will have to follow specific mitigation guidelines highlighted in table 8 to avoid further disturbance |
| IOW 7a | Replacement of boardwalk | 93m in total | 7.14 | Coastal Saltmarsh | The current boardwalk at Hamstead Quay is in need of replacing as it is in disrepair and could cause people to walk off them causing trampling effects on the saltmarsh. The boardwalk width will be kept the same however three passing places will be | There is likely to be a small increase in shadowing of saltmarsh from establishment of passing places. Existing bridges will be used where possible as passing places as this will limit saltmarsh exposure to shadowing as habitat is predominantly mudflat. The piles from |

| Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site - Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Report map reference** | **Item** | **Quantity** | **Area ($m^2$)** | **Habitat** | **Consideration** | **Conclusion** |
| | | | | | established at regular intervals which could result in a small shadowing impact on saltmarsh. By providing passing places for walkers and dogs it will ensure walkers are not forced off the boardwalk and onto the saltmarsh. | previous boardwalk will be left in the ground as removing them can cause more disturbance to the substrate beneath. The decking will be replaced. As this is a replacement like for like with small possible increase in shadowing this will not adversely affect the continuity and functioning of the habitat as a whole. Mitigation guidelines set out in table 8 will be implemented to ensure no further disturbance during construction. |
| IOW 7a | Resurfacing with hogging | 177m | 128.66 | Bare soil/scrub | Surface currently unsatisfactory at Hamstead Quay. Some scrub will be cut to allow for aggregate to be administered to the route. By applying light aggregate it will allow flora to grow on the perimeter of the path which benefits from trampling. Two passing places will be established at regular intervals. By providing passing places for walkers and dogs it will ensure walkers are not forced off onto the surrounding habitat. | The surface type in which the aggregate will be applied is bare/compacted mud and scrub which is considered to be in an area of permanently-modified vegetation of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 7b | Stock Fencing | 100m in total | 4.87 | No priority habitat identified | Placed seaward of the trail, at Western Haven, to stop dogs getting out on the saltmarsh and intertidal where it is utilised by overwintering birds. Fencing is set back within the treeline along the trail | Location in which fencing will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |

| Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site - Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Report map reference** | **Item** | **Quantity** | **Area ($m^2$)** | **Habitat** | **Consideration** | **Conclusion** |
| IOW 7b | Interpretation Panel | 1 | 0.01 | No priority habitat identified | New interpretation panel to inform walkers on sensitivities of saltmarsh and over-wintering birds to be established along the route at Western haven. | The surface type in which the interpretation panel will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 7b | Foot bridge | 1 | 18.21 | Saltmarsh/creek | Initially, to cross Aunt Emmy's Creek at Western Haven, the route was to make use of and replace the existing footbridge and install a raised boardwalk to cross the saltmarsh however the saltmarsh is in good quality and undisturbed by walkers. As a result a new bridge will be installed further inland, where the creek narrows and saltmarsh is less dense due to tree cover and shade. | Location of this footbridge will provide the least habitat loss. Saltmarsh species are sparse in this area due to the thick tree cover and shade from the woodland. The posts will more than likely be entering into bare ground than within the saltmarsh. The scale of loss can be regarded as 'inconsequential' in the context of the conservation objectives for the feature, and the nature of the works will not adversely affect the continuity and functioning of the habitat as a whole. |
| IOW 7d | Grass bund | 1 | 15m | Lowland meadows | The route alignment, next to the Newtown Salt Works, in this field gets boggy and not safe to walk on as slippery. Putting this in will allow walkers to cross this area safely. | This area of land is within SPA boundary, there will be no long term impact to the grassland, and it will be temporarily displaced. The scale of loss can be regarded as 'inconsequential' in the context of the conservation objectives for the feature, and the nature of the works will not adversely affect the continuity and functioning of the habitat as a whole. |

| Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site - Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Report map reference** | **Item** | **Quantity** | **Area ($m^2$)** | **Habitat** | **Consideration** | **Conclusion** |
| IOW 7d | Willow screening | 1 (10m – 5m each side) | 1.02 | Lowland meadow and saltmarsh | The hide is exposed on the edge of Newtown Harbour, the route alignment is along a PRoW which passes the hide, to reduce visual disturbance will be established to keep people from entering out into the harbour | The screening will be erected next to the hide which is considered to be in an area of permanently-modified vegetation of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 7d | Interpretation panel | 1 | 0.01 | Bare ground | The interpretation panel is beside proposed route alignment at Newtown Quay. It will display information about birds utilising the harbour and the sensitivities to them. It is within SAC, SPA and Ramsar boundary | In this location the panel is considered to be in an area of permanently-modified vegetation of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 8a | Interpretation panel | 1 | 0.01 | Shingle/ bare ground | The interpretation panel is beside the existing public right of way outside of the SAC boundary at Thorness Bay. It is within SPA and Ramsar boundary. | In this location the panel is considered to be in an area of permanently-modified vegetation of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 8a | Interpretation Panel | 1 | 0.01 | Shingle/bare ground | The interpretation panel is located within the designated car park at Thorness Bay with shingle/bare ground that has been permanently-modified vegetation of little or no nature conservation value | Although the panel is within SPA and Ramsar boundaries the panel is not being established on priority habitat - and the nature of the works will not adversely affect the continuity and functioning of the habitat as a whole. |
| IOW 8a | Sleeper bridge | 1 | 15.6 | Reedbed | There is a naturally eroding beach system at Thorness Bay, by putting in the bridge further back we are allowing the natural processes to continue. | In this location there is a degraded metal bridge on the shingle, this is to be upgraded and moved further back off the important shingle habitat. This makes accessing the existing PRoW easier, by upgrading the bridge. A small amount of |

| Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site - Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss | | | | | | |
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| **Report map reference** | **Item** | **Quantity** | **Area ($m^2$)** | **Habitat** | **Consideration** | **Conclusion** |
| | | | | | | reed bed will be lost which may contain wetland invert species however this loss can be regarded as 'inconsequential' in the context of the conservation objectives for the feature, and the nature of the works will not adversely affect the continuity and functioning of the habitat as a whole. |
| IOW 10c | Interpretation panel | 1 | 0.01 | No priority habitat identified | The interpretation panel is beside the existing public right of way just within the Ramsar boundary, west of the Medina causeway. This will inform walkers on the overwintering bird species that use the Medina. | The surface type in which the interpretation panel will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 10d | New boardwalk | 1 | 8.91 | Compacted mud | This part of the PRoW, along the Medina, is prone to becoming muddy making the surface slippery and hard to walk on. By implementing boardwalk the walkers will have a safer route. | The surface type in which the boardwalk will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 10d | New Boardwalk | 1 | 6.36 | Compacted mud | This part of the PRoW, along the Medina, is prone to becoming muddy making the surface slippery and hard to walk on, by implementing boardwalk, walker have a safer route. | The surface type in which the boardwalk will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 10d | New Boardwalk | 1 | 2.55 | Compacted mud/bare ground | This part of the PRoW, along the Medina, is prone to becoming muddy making the surface slippery and hard to walk on, by implementing boardwalk, walker have a safer route. | The surface type in which the boardwalk will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and |

| Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site - Consideration for new infrastructure and permanent habitat loss | | | | | | |
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| **Report map reference** | **Item** | **Quantity** | **Area ($m^2$)** | **Habitat** | **Consideration** | **Conclusion** |
| | | | | | | therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |
| IOW 10d | Interpretation panel | 1 | 0.01 | No priority habitat | The interpretation panel, located along the Medina, is beside the existing public right of way just within the Ramsar boundary. This will inform walkers on the overwintering bird species that use the Medina. | The surface type in which the interpretation panel will be established is not within priority habitat and considered to be in an area of little or no nature conservation value and therefore will not contribute to an adverse effect to the site integrity. |

## D3.3 Assessment of potentially adverse effects (taking account of any additional mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the access proposal) alone

***Table 11 Assessment of adverse effect on integrity alone***

| **Risk to conservation objectives** | **Relevant design features of the access proposal** | **Can 'no adverse effect' on site integrity be ascertained?**<br><br>**(Yes/No) Give reasons.** | **Residual effects?** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Repeated disturbance to feeding and resting non-breeding waterbirds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposals, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site. | <u>Route Alignment: Newtown Harbour</u><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP and PRoW where possible<br>• A land management restriction (Section 24) has been placed between 1st August and 30th September at Western Haven, closing the route (Trail Sections IOW-7-S025 to IOW-7-S037). Alternative route inland open during closure<br>• A section 26 nature conservation restriction will close the route from 1st October until 1st March<br>• Routed inland at Walters Copse, Aunt Emmy's Creek, Western Haven during crucial winter months to reduce disturbance<br>• 100m of stock fencing seaward of route at Upper Hamstead Plantation<br>• New interpretation panels will inform people of the restrictions in place and educate walkers on the sensitivities at key locations to encourage responsible behaviour.<br>• A S26 dogs to leads restriction at Western Haven will be in place from 2nd March to 31st July, when the main route is open | **Yes**<br>The SPA waterbirds move around areas on the Isle of Wight utilising intertidal mudflat, saltmarsh and arable fields for feeding opportunities.<br><br>These areas along the coast are popular for recreational activities, therefore interaction with over-wintering birds is likely. This can result in minor behavioural responses such as increased alertness and short flights.<br><br>Our proposals are designed to facilitate responsible reaction in ways that keep disturbance to a minimum. There is a natural segregation from where birds feed on the mudflats which are unsuitable for access and where walkers use the paths. Coastal access rights will exclude these areas unsuitable for access<br><br>There is currently a lot of existing access along PRoW and promoted routes such as the IOWCP as well as a number of locally promoted routes by the council. The route alignment uses these existing routes where possible to manage visitor numbers.<br><br>The new access route at Western Haven is routed along the shoreline | **Yes** |

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| | • vegetative screening will be applied however temporary willow screening will be erected whilst waiting for vegetation to establish as functional screening<br>• Removal of current bridge at Aunt Emmys Creek<br>• All year round S26 nature conservation restriction on Harts Farm fields<br>• Local Authority and contractors will adhere to the mitigation measures set out in D3.1 of this assessment when constructing access management infrastructure<br><br><u>Coastal Margin: Newtown Harbour</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access<br><br>• Section 26 nature conservation restriction will be applied to the shingle spits at Hamstead Dover, along the shoreline at Western Haven<br><br><u>Route Alignment: Medina</u><br>• Following existing cycle way and PRoW<br>• Two interpretation panels on each side of the medina will be installed to make walkers aware of the bird sensitivities<br>• Specifically routed away from fields used as support habitat<br><br><u>Coastal Margin: Medina</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It | however a land management and nature conservation restriction will be enforced during the wintering months (1st August to 1st March) which are crucial for waders and wintering waterfowl and a seasonal route will be opened inland along the existing IOWCP. This will reduce the disturbance during critical months. The additional dogs to leads restriction will help prevent additional disturbance to wildlife when the main route is open.<br><br>The promotion of the path will encourage users (both existing and new) to keep on the England Coast Path through effective signposting.<br><br>A number of interpretation panels will be installed throughout the route. These will inform walkers of the bird species found in the area, their sensitivities and what restrictions are in place to ensure disturbance is kept to a minimum.<br><br>The environmental conditions within the Solent as a whole, including within Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar and Solent Maritime SAC are dynamic and influenced by a number of human activities. It is possible there are other plans and projects currently in development that could, in combination with the coast path, lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the site.<br>In light of this uncertainty, and in order to ensure that the implementation of coastal access in this area does not lead to adverse effects on integrity in combination with other planned initiatives, we have carried out a further in-combination assessment below. | |

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| | has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access<br><br><u>Route Alignment: Thorness Bay</u><br>• Routing along PRoW at the top of beach<br>• Routing into a field to take people away from beach<br>• Interpretation panels will be installed at each end of the beach to inform walkers about wildlife sensitivities<br><br><u>Coastal Margin: Thorness Bay</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access | | |
| Disturbance to breeding birds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduction in the abundance and distribution of the qualifying features within the site, resulting in a reduction in the population of non-breeding birds. | <u>Route Alignment</u><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP and PRoW<br>• Section 26 Nature Conservation restriction on shingle spits at Newtown Harbour<br>• Interpretation panels in specific locations to these features to educate walkers on the sensitivities<br><br><u>Coastal Margin</u><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access due to hazardous and unsafe terrain. | **Yes**<br><br>The key sites where ringed plover are known to breed do fall within the coastal margin. A nature conservation direction will restrict access to the breeding area within Newtown Harbour which will accompany the National Trust's conservation efforts already in place. These include fencing of certain areas on the Hamstead Dover spit and signage throughout the harbour.<br><br>Our proposals follow the existing IOWCP along sections of coast where ringed plover attempt to breed. The path and areas known for breeding are separated from these areas by section 25a restriction creating a great spatial separation between walkers and breeding ringed plover.<br><br>We will install interpretation boards to educate walkers and users of the area | **No** |

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| | | on sensitivities to the breeding gulls. This will also include information regarding restrictions. | |
| Repeated disturbance to breeding Mediterranean gull and tern species following changes in recreational activities as a result of access proposals lead to a reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site | <u>Route alignment: Newtown Harbour</u><br>• Aligning along the existing IOWCP or PRoW<br>• Interpretation panels in specific locations to these features to educate walkers on the sensitivities<br>• Willow screening will be erected next to the hide<br>• Section 26 Nature Conservation restriction on shingle spits at Newtown Harbour (see directions map IOW 7A)<br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access | **Yes**<br><br>The key site for breeding Mediterranean Gull on the Isle of Wight that is within close proximity to the route of the coast path is within Newtown Harbour. The route in this location is along an existing PRoW. Appropriate way marking along this part of the route will encourage people to remain on the path.<br><br>Willow screening will be erected next to the hide to reduce line of sight disturbance to where the gulls breed. This will discourage access down on to the shoreline.<br><br>We will install interpretation boards to educate walkers and users of the area on sensitivities to the breeding gulls. This will also include information regarding restrictions.<br><br>A section 25 restriction will be applied across Newtown Harbour restricting access on mudflats and saltmarsh. This will ensure walkers are not able to reach areas in which Mediterranean gull area known to breed.<br><br>The key site known for breeding terns is in Newtown Harbour, specifically on the shingle spit on Hamstead Dover.<br><br>The Newtown Harbour management plan [Ref 2] states there are currently no breeding terns on the Island. They have been known to breed in this location previously.<br><br>The National Trust have installed fencing on Hamstead Dover spit as well as ‘no landing signs’ There are | **No** |

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| | | interpretation signs currently on the spit with information on terns.<br>An additional interpretation panel will be installed as the route approached the coast at Hamstead Dover to inform walkers of tern breeding areas and the restrictions in place to stop access.<br><br>Conservation measures are being discussed with various wildlife groups to increase the chances of terns returning to the area to breed. The design of the route offers separation of ideal nesting habitat and breeding sites from the route.<br><br>The restrictions put in place will exclude access to the areas which terns and gulls nest and breed. Section 26 restriction is being placed on the shingle spit at Hamstead Dover. | |
| Repeated disturbance to foraging terns following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposals, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in populations and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying features within the site | <u>Bembridge Lagoon</u><br><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP, lagoons are landward of this separated by boatyard and vegetative screening<br>• Interpretation panel on Helen Duver to inform walkers of the wildlife sensitivities<br><br><u>River Yar</u><br><br>• Routed along a fenced public highway which is the existing IOWCP<br><br><u>Newtown Lagoons</u><br><br>• Routes along an existing promoted route<br>• Information panels will be installed on observation hide | **Yes**<br><br>Terns are known to forage in deeper waters and coastal areas, the coastal access rights within the margin extend to MLW. Restrictions to the mudflats and saltmarsh will increase spatial proximity between walkers and intertidal areas. Where terns may forage at inland lagoons, there is already current access and the coast path proposals are seaward so no coastal access rights are created in close proximity. There is adequate vegetative screening between Bembridge Lagoons and Yar Lagoon.<br><br>Interpretation panels will make walkers aware of terns foraging in these areas and what restrictions are applied.<br><br>The number of visitors is not anticipated to increase significantly in | **No** |

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| | Coastal Margin<br><br>• Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access due to hazardous and unsafe terrain. | these areas as a result there is no adverse of integrity. | |
| Trampling following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal leads to the reduction in the extent and distribution of qualifying and supporting habitats | Vegetated shingle:<br>• Aligning along existing walked coast path and PRoW at Thorness Bay<br>• Specifically routing off of Thorness beach and into a pasture field<br>• Interpretation panels strategically placed at either end of Thorness Beach, Hamstead Point and Hamstead Dover to inform walkers of sensitivities and discourage access on to habitat.<br>• Way marking clearly to ensure walkers stick to the path,<br><br>Sand Dunes<br>• Following existing IOWCP – therefore not promoting a there and back route on to the dunes<br>• Interpretation panels strategically placed where the route meets the PRoW on to the dunes to inform walkers of sensitivities and discourage access on to habitat.<br>• Way marking clearly to ensure walkers stick to the path,<br><br>Saltmarsh | **Yes**<br><br>The intertidal habitat that would be in the coastal margin is predominantly covered by Section 25A restrictions as it is unsuitable for public access. This will reduce the risk of trampling to intertidal habitats, and have an added benefit of reducing the risk of sensitive plants and invertebrates within the assemblage from being trampled on.<br><br>No new access routes are being created in areas where these features occur. The path is following the existing IOWCP or other promoted routes.<br><br>Where the route was proposed to be routed on saltmarsh, it had been routed further inland or access management infrastructure is proposed to take walkers off the saltmarsh allowing it a chance to recover.<br><br>At Norton spit there is a PRoW through the dunes which is likely to be used continually by locals, however we are encouraging people away from the dune feature, which is within the coastal margin, using clear way marking. An interpretation panel will be erected close to the path here to inform path users of the dune feature sensitivities. | **No** |

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| | • Routed further inland at Walters Copse so walkers aren't trampling saltmarsh<br>• New boardwalk at Hamstead Quay will take walkers off of the already damaged saltmarsh<br>• Aunt Emmy's creek crossing moved further inland to reduce infrastructure impacts from new boardwalk and trampling of saltmarsh<br>• Interpretation panels strategically placed at Hamstead Quay, Western Haven and Walters Copse to inform walkers of sensitivities and discourage access on to habitat.<br><br><u>Chalk Grassland</u><br><br>• using existing IOWCP on Tennyson Down and West high down as opposed to cliff top worn routes<br><br>• Way marking clearly to ensure walkers stick to the path<br><br><u>Wetland Invertebrate and plant assemblage</u><br>• Aligning along existing IOWCP and PRoW where possible<br>• Information provided on interpretation panels where appropriate on the route<br>• Way marking will be used to encourage people to stay on the route of the coast path away from sensitive habitats.<br><br><u>Coastal Margin</u> | At Hamstead Dover the route is following the existing IOWCP, the route will specifically deter walkers from entering out on to Hamstead spit by clearly way marking the route. Interpretation panels will make walkers aware of the sensitivities and encourage responsible use of the path.<br><br>Access is being modified at Thorness Bay, the route is following the existing coast path however deviates inland via a small bridge into a pasture field. This route alignment directs people away from the vegetated shingle feature and reduces the risk of trampling. . The vegetated shingle feature will be within the coastal margin however as the route is well established here the usage of the site is not predicted to change.<br><br>West High Down and Tennyson down have Open Access rights currently. The Coast Path proposals will not create any additional access rights. By installing way markers, walkers will be encouraged to focus on the main path, reducing pressure on desire lines. | |

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| | • Under s25 of CROW access will be excluded to the vast majority of the saltmarsh and mudflat. It has been established that these areas are unsuitable for public access due to hazardous and unsafe terrain. | | |
| The installation of access management infrastructure may lead to the reduction in the extent and distribution of qualifying and supporting habitat | Proposed works include surface improvements, boardwalks, bridges and interpretation panels.<br>• Where possible existing infrastructure has been used to add way markers<br>• Where possible select locations for infrastructure where there is little nature conservation value i.e. bare ground<br>• When boardwalks need replacing the piles will be left in the ground as it is more damaging and disturbing to the substrate if taken out and replaced | **Yes**<br>The access management infrastructure will be located within the established path corridor and will help ensure the route is easy for walkers to use and follow, which in turn will reduce or limit trampling pressure away from the designated path. In particular at Hamstead Quay where a large area of saltmarsh is damaged due to trampling. By restoring the boardwalks and adding additional boardwalks, walkers will be raised off the habitat allowing it to recover.<br>The total loss of designated habitats can be viewed in table 10. After assessing the locations, this loss is considered not to be a risk to site conservation objectives. The scale of loss can be regarded as 'trivial' in the context of the conservation objectives for the features, and the nature of works will not adversely affect the continuity and functioning of the habitat types or their transitions.<br>The precise location of the infrastructure and installation method will be finalised at the establishment stage. Assessment of possible impacts on the European site will need to be checked and confirmed as part of the SSSI assenting process prior to works being carried out. | **No** |
| The nature, scale, timing and duration of construction works could result in bird disturbance sufficient to | • Local Authority and contractors will adhere to the mitigation measure set out Table | Installation methods will be checked at establishment stage and further assessment under the Habitats Regulations made, as necessary, prior to works being carried out. | **No** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| disrupt normal behaviours and/or distribution of birds within the site. | | 5 section D3.1 of this assessment | | |

**Conclusion:**

The following risks to achieving the conservation objectives identified in D1 are effectively addressed by the proposals and no adverse effect on site integrity (taking into account any incorporated mitigation measures) can be concluded:

- Trampling of habitat and species following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposals leads to the reduction in the extent and distribution of qualifying and supporting habitats.
- Loss of species and habitat through installation of access management infrastructure may lead to the reduction in the extent and distribution of the qualifying natural habitats and habitats of the qualifying species
- Disturbance to forging behaviours, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduction in the abundance and distribution of the qualifying features within the site.
- Disturbance to breeding birds at their nesting site, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduction in the abundance and distribution of the qualifying features within the site.
- Disturbance to non-breeding waterbirds with a breeding population, which following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying feature within the site.

The following risks to achieving the conservation objectives identified in D1 are effectively addressed by the proposals and no adverse effect on site integrity (taking into account any incorporated mitigation measures) can be concluded, although there is some residual risk of insignificant impacts which will be considered further in combination with other plans and projects:

- Disturbance to feeding and roosting non-breeding waterbirds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of qualifying feature within the site.

## D4 Assessment of potentially adverse effects considering the project 'in-combination' with other plans and projects

The need for further assessment of the risk of in-combination effects is considered here.

Natural England considers that it is the appreciable effects (from a proposed plan or project) that are not themselves considered to be adverse alone which must be further assessed to

determine whether they could have a combined effect significant enough to result in an adverse effect on site integrity.

### Residual risk of insignificant impacts from the access proposals

Natural England considers that in this case the potential for adverse effects from the access proposals has not been wholly avoided by the incorporated or additional mitigation measures outlined in section D3. It is therefore considered that there are residual and appreciable effects likely to arise from this project which have the potential to act in-combination with those from other proposed plans or projects. These are:

*Table 12 Residual risk of insignificant impacts from the access proposals*

| Residual risk | Qualifying features affected |
|---|---|
| Disturbance to feeding and roosting non-breeding waterbirds, following changes in recreational activities as a result of the access proposal, leads to reduced fitness and reduction in population and/or contraction in the distribution of Qualifying Feature within the site. | ■ Dark-bellied brent geese (nb)<br>■ Teal (nb)<br>■ Black tailed godwit (nb)<br>■ Ringed plover (nb)<br>■ Waterbird assemblage (nb) |

### Combinable risks arising from other live plans or projects

In this section we consider other live plans or projects we are aware of, that might interact with the access proposals, to identify any insignificant and combinable effects that have been highlighted in corresponding Habitats Regulations Assessments.

*Table 13 Review of other live plans and projects*

| Competent Authority | Plan or project | Have any insignificant and combinable effects been identified? |
|---|---|---|
| Isle of Wight Council | Isle of Wight local Plan 2012 - 2027 | **No**. The Appropriate Assessment associated with the plan considers the risk of recreational pressure to qualifying features of all European sites. The plan concludes that is avoidance and mitigation measures are implemented successfully there will be no likely significant effects on the European sites. The current and emerging local plan has a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy which has been developed and will be implemented over the planning period. It is designed to avoid effects of increased visitors and urbanisation which arise from additional housing near a European site. As a result, the Appropriate Assessment concludes no adverse effect alone or in combination. |
| Environment Agency | Shoreline Management Plan (2010) | **No.** Findings determined the IOW SMP2 will have an adverse effect of integrity within the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar Site at Yarmouth Mill and Thorley of 31 ha in total. |

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| | | Compensatory habitat creation was necessary to comply with the Habitats Regulations. In light of this, no significant or combinable effects from the plan have been identified. |
| Isle of Wight Council 19/00193/HOU | Demolition and replacement of slipway, Seaview | **No.** it was determined that an Appropriate Assessment is not required. Providing works are carried out in as described in the application there is no likely significant effect or combinable affects from the plan have been identified. |
| Isle of Wight Council 19/00923/FUL | Construction of 13 holiday lodges at Roebeck Country Park | **No**. This development will adopt the SRMP policy of providing financial contribution towards mitigation impact from recreational use. As a result we conclude no adverse effect alone or in-combination. |
| Isle of Wight Council 19/01205/OUT | New commercial and leisure Park, Sandown | **No**. As per ecological report, carried out by Isle of Wight Council, the site offers limited value for wildlife and sensitive landscaping will ensure negative impacts can be avoided. |
| Isle of Wight Council 19/00922/OUT | Community hub and business park, Ryde | **No**. Conclusion from Ecological report is that no adverse effect on designated sites and therefore no adverse effect of in-combination has been identified. |
| Isle of Wight Council 19/00804/OUT | Outline for residential development for 165 dwelling, East Cowes | **No.** Environmental Impact Assessment may be required, Natural England have advised based on material submitted to date the proposed development is not likely to significantly affect the notified features. It is likely that this development will adopt the SRMP policy of providing financial contribution towards mitigation impact from recreational use. As a result we conclude no adverse effect in-combination with England Coast Path proposals. |
| Isle of Wight Council P/00637/14 | 13 dwellings and shower facilities, Embankment Road, Bembridge | **No.** The development is in close proximity to our proposed route and still awaiting a decision. No new access routes are being created as a result of the England Coast Path proposals. Majority of the coastal margin in this area is excluded from coastal access right by a S25A Direction.<br>It is likely that the development will enter into the SRMP policy of providing financial contribution towards mitigation impact from recreational use. Natural England have advised further mitigation in addition to this. If this mitigation is agreed there will be no in-combination effect |
| Isle of Wight Council TCP/01419/U, P/00102/14 | Folly Works<br>14 business units and 99 dwellings, East Cowes | **No**. The application approval letter states no adverse effect of integrity in N2K sites if mitigation package suggested from the environmental assessment are agreed and applied. This includes: |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | • Habitat creation which mimics other areas on the Medina such as Pinkmead which important to birds<br>• 'bird island' will be re-profiled to provide bird roosts<br>• Management company will provide warden/ranger functions within the community to engage with public and residents on season restrictions<br>• Welcome packs will be provided to residents to engage them with wildlife interests<br>• Interpretation centre will be built with a bird hide included which will be accessible at all times and manned by site managers<br>• No construction was to commence until a detailed methodology of construction has been submitted.<br>As a result no adverse effect of in-combination is identified. |
| Natural England | Implementation of coastal access from Highcliffe to Calshot | **Yes.** The Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal for this stretch has identified the following insignificant and combinable risks:<br>• Possible small increase in disturbance to breeding water birds. |
| | Implementation of coastal access from Calshot to Gosport | **Yes.** The HRA for this stretch has identified the following insignificant and combinable risks:<br>• Possible small increase in disturbance to breeding water birds. |
| | Implementation of coastal access from Gosport to Portsmouth | **No.** Our proposals for coastal access between Gosport and Portsmouth may also affect designated sites on this stretch. We have previously made an assessment of our proposals for this stretch and no significant and combinable risks were identified in that assessment. |
| | Implementation of coastal access from Portsmouth to South Hayling | **Yes.**<br>Natural England's HRA (published as part of the Access and Sensitive Features Appraisal) of coastal access proposal for Portsmouth to South Hayling recognised that parts of this stretch may be used by bird features of Solent and Southampton Water SPA. It was concluded that a small increase in disturbance to breeding terns & gulls and non-breeding waterbirds from recreational activities was possible as a result of these proposals, and that this could have residual and appreciable effects on site conservation objectives for Solent and Southampton Water SPA. |
| | Implementation of coastal access from | **No.** There is no overlap with designated sites between this stretch and the Isle of Wight proposals. The |

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| | South Hayling to East Head | SPA/Ramsar is not mentioned in the HRA. As a result no in-combination impacts have been identified. |

In light of this review, we have identified insignificant and combinable effects are likely to arise from the following projects that have the potential to act in-combination with the access proposals:

*Table 14 Insignificant and combinable effects from other projects*

| Risk | Qualifying features affected<br><br>(nb = non-breeding) |
|---|---|
| Higher frequency of interactions between people using the coast path and non-breeding waterbirds causing disturbance to feeding and roosting patterns | ■ Waterbird assemblage (nb)<br>■ Dark-bellied brent geese (nb)<br>■ Black-tailed godwit (nb)<br>■ Teal (nb)<br>■ Ringed plover (nb) |

**Assessment of in-combination effects**

In light of the conclusions above, we have made an assessment of the risk of in combination effects. The results of this risk assessment, taking account of each qualifying feature of each site and in view of each site's Conservation Objectives, are as follows:

*Table 15 Risk of in-combination effects*

| Residual risk | In-combination pressure | Assessment of risk to site conservation objectives | Adverse effect in-comb? |
|---|---|---|---|
| A higher frequency of interactions between people using the coast path and non-breeding water birds feeding and roosting close to the shore. | Increased use of the coast path is expected as a result of improvements to the quality of the path and its promotion as part of the England Coast Path. Other plans or projects that would increase local demand for recreational routes could similarly increase use of coastal paths and lead to more frequent disturbance events. | The proposals for coastal access between Highcliffe and Calshot, and Calshot to Gosport and Portsmouth to South Hayling has been designed to complement the Bird Aware Solent initiative. The stretch proposals are aligned along existing, well-used coastal access routes in order to limit changes to access levels and patterns around sensitive sites. Both projects also propose measures to complement the existing Bird Aware Solent initiative and other local level management techniques. The main risk to the conservation objectives from recreation is where people go on site and how they behave, | No |

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| | | rather than fluctuations in the numbers of people using the coastal path. We consider that both projects will make a positive contribution to managing recreational use of the site, in line with the management plan and conservation objectives.<br><br>Where new sections of path are proposed, they have been carefully designed to avoid/minimise disturbance. | |

The possibility of adverse effects arising in combination with other plans and projects is thus ruled out.

## D5. Conclusions on Site Integrity

Because the plan/project is not wholly directly connected with or necessary to the management of the European site and is likely to have a significant effect on that site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), Natural England carried out an Appropriate Assessment as required under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations to ascertain whether or not it is possible to conclude that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of a European Site(s).

**Natural England has concluded that:**

It can be ascertained, in view of site conservation objectives, that the access proposal (taking into account any incorporated avoidance and mitigation measures) will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar**,** Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation; South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation; Isle of Wight Downs Special Area of Conservation; Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons Special Area of Conservation; Briddlesford Copses Special Area of Conservation and Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

**Assessment of Coastal Access proposals under regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('Habitats Regulations Assessment')**

# PART E: Permission decision with respect to European Sites

Natural England has a statutory duty under section 296 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to improve access to the English coast. To fulfil this duty, Natural England is required to make proposals to the Secretary of State under section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. In making proposals, Natural England, as the relevant competent authority, is required to carry out a HRA under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations.

| |
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| We, Natural England, are satisfied that our proposals to improve access to the English coast between Wootton Creek and East Cowes are fully compatible with the relevant European site conservation objectives.<br><br>It is open to the Secretary of State to consider these proposals and make a decision about whether to approve them, with or without modifications. If the Secretary of State is minded to modify our proposals, further assessment under the Habitats Regulations may be needed before approval is given. |

## Certification

HRA prepared by:

| | |
|---|---|
| Name: Lindsey Hollingsworth  | Date: 16/3/2020 |

HRA approved by:

| | |
|---|---|
| Name: Graham Horton  | Date: 9/3/2020 |

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# Appendix 1: Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy Classification List and Definitions

The following list defines the terms used to classify fields across the Solent under the in-preparation 2018 SWBGS (HIOWWT, 2018). As the strategy is still being prepared the below terms and definitions are subject to change.

**Core Sites:** These are considered essential to the continued function of the Solent Wader and Brent Goose ecological network and have the strongest functionally-linkage to the designated Solent SPAs in terms of their frequency and continuity of use by SPA features.

**Primary Support Sites:** Contain land that, when in suitable management, make an important contribution to the function of the Solent Wader and Brent Goose ecological network.

**Secondary Support Sites:** Offer a supporting function to the Core and Primary Support ecological network, but are generally used less frequently by significant numbers of SPA geese and waders. These sites become important when wader or brent goose populations are higher or when the habitat is in suitable management.

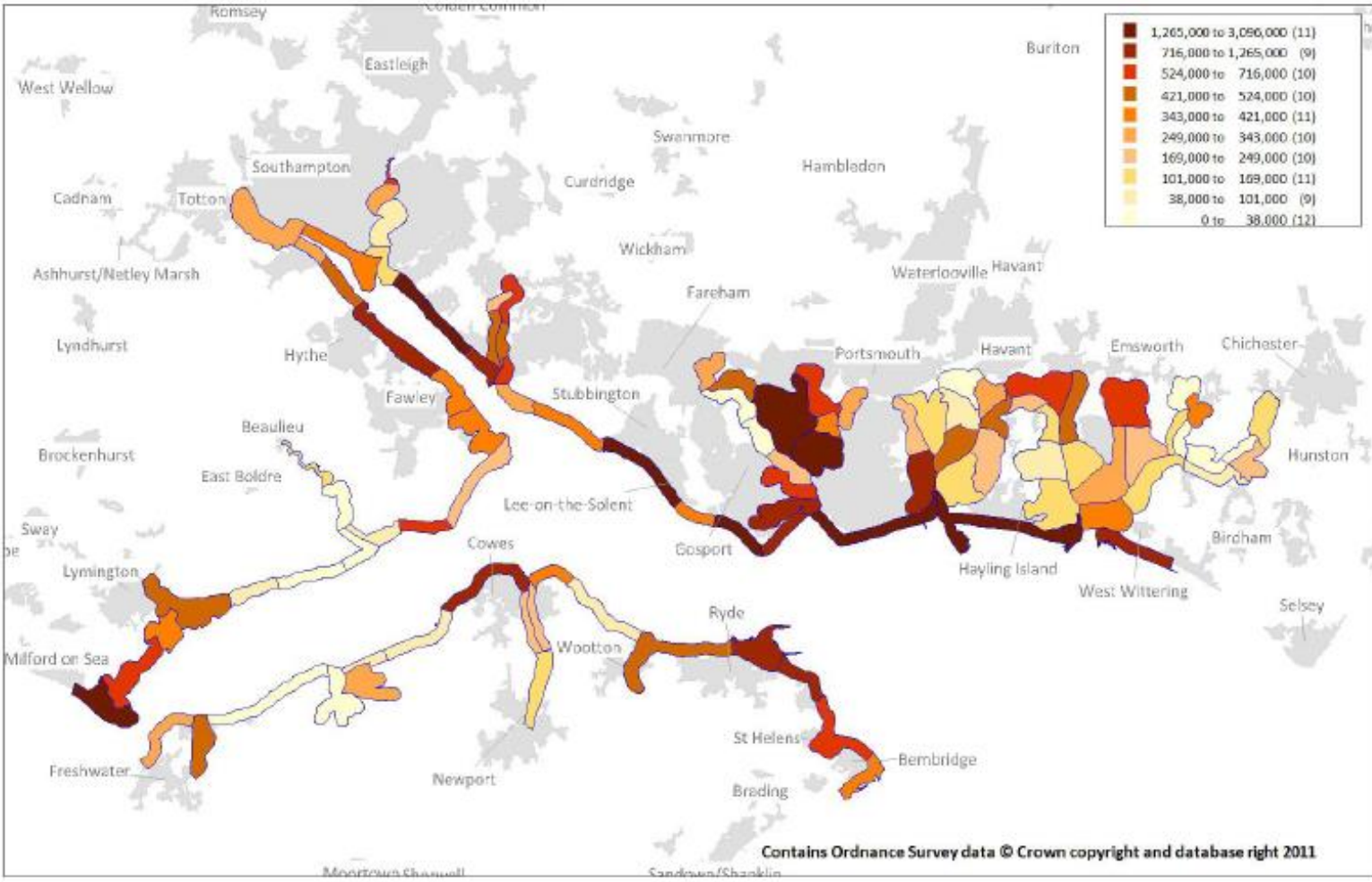
**Low Use Sites:** sites have the potential to be used by waders or brent geese. These sites have the potential to support the existing network and provide alternative options and resilience for the future network.

**Candidate Sites:** Sites that have records of high numbers of birds (max count equal to or greater than 100) and/or a total score equal to or greater than 3 but have less than 3 records in total

**SPA Sites:** sites within the SPA area that have bird records and form part of the ecological network

# Appendix 2: Predicted annual number of visits to each section of coast in the Solent

## Map 5: Predicted annual number of visits to each coastal section



# Appendix 3: Replacement infrastructure within SAC/SPA or Ramsar

| Location | Infrastructure item & length | SAC/SPA/Ramsar |
|---|---|---|
| Bembridge causeway | bridge upgrade | SPA & Ramsar |
| Luccombe landslip | Surface works - aggregate/stabilised gravel | SAC |
| Luccombe landslip | Replace exiting stone steps with stone steps | SAC |
| Luccombe landslip | Surface works - aggregate/stabilised gravel | SAC |
| Luccombe landslip | Surface works - aggregate/stabilised gravel | SAC |
| Niton, Sandrock Road | replace existing steps with timber retaining steps | SAC |
| Chale Bay | Replace existing wooden footbridge (5m) | SAC |
| Shepherd's Chine | replace existing steps with timber retaining steps | SAC |
| Shepherd's Chine | replace existing steps with timber retaining steps | SAC |
| Hamstead Dover | replace high boardwalk (65m) | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Dover | replace stile with kissing gate | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Quay | Replace boardwalk (4m) | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Quay | Replace boardwalk (30m) | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Quay | Replace boardwalk (20m) | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Quay | Replace boardwalk (2.5m) | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Quay | Replace boardwalk (39m) | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Quay | Surface works - aggregate/stabilised gravel | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Hamstead Quay | Surface works - aggregate/stabilised gravel | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Western Haven | Removal of old bridge | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Newtown Salt Works | Surface works - aggregate/stabilised gravel | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| Thorness Bay | replace bridge with new bridge into field (13m) | SPA & Ramsar |
| The Medina | Replace footbridge (5m) like for like | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |
| The Medina | Replace steps (5m) like for like | SAC & SPA & Ramsar |

# Appendix 4 Photos of Hamstead Quay