



Agenda

Meeting: **Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group**
Date: **20 April 2022**
Time: **11.00 am**
Place: **Remote Meeting**

To: Councillors Gary Fuller, Anthony Hills, Connor McConville, Ian Meyers, Lesley Whybrow (Chair) and David Wimble

The committee will consider the matters, listed below, at the date and time shown above. **The meeting will not be open to the press and public.**

Members of the committee, who wish to have information on any matter arising on the agenda, which is not fully covered in these papers, are requested to give notice, prior to the meeting, to the Chairman or appropriate officer.

1. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members of the committee should declare any interests which fall under the following categories:

- a) disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI);
- b) other significant interests (OSI);
- c) voluntary announcements of other interests.

3. **Minutes**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021.

4. **Draft Net Zero Toolkit**

Presentation to be given by Thomas Levevre (Etude Consultants)

Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?

Contact: Kate Clark – Tel: 01303 853267
Email: committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or download from our
website www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

5. **Joint working with White Cliffs Partnership**

Presentation to members by Richard Haynes (White Cliffs Partnership)

6. **Kent and Medway Climate Adaption Programme**

Presentation by Tom Henderson (Kent County Council)

7. **Green Infrastructure Strategy**

This report introduces the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy, its findings and recommendations. It is a local plan evidence document that will provide further detail to development plan policies as well as providing information for the consideration of planning applications. It could also form the basis for a future Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide additional clarity for decision-making.

Presentation to be given by Sharon Bayne (Blackwood Bayne Consultants) and Irene Seijo (Seijo Associates Ltd)

8. **Update on trial to reduce use of pesticides**

Alastair Clifford – FHDC Operations Lead Specialist will give a presentation.

9. **Update on current consultations from Government and Kent County Council**

The attached paper summarises three current consultations for the Working Group's information and for comment as necessary. The update will be given by Adrian Tofts, FHDC Strategy, Policy and Performance Lead Specialist.

10. **Update on Carbon Action Plan**

Update to be given by Olu Fatoken – FHDC Low Carbon Senior Specialist.

Minutes

Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group

Held at:	Remote meeting
Date	Monday, 13 December 2021
Present	Councillors Gary Fuller, Anthony Hills, Connor McConville* and Lesley Whybrow (Chair)
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Ian Meyers
Officers Present:	Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Olu Fatokun (Low Carbon Senior Specialist), Katharine Harvey (Chief Economic Development Officer), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist)
Others Present:	None

(* joined the meeting from minute number 4)

1. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 were agreed. The Chair's signature will be added electronically.

Prior to moving onto the main agenda items, Councillor Tony Hills, mentioned lamp post EV charging points. KCC had encountered technical issues with proposed installation. Councillor Hills will update members further about this issue.

3. **UK 100 Membership**

The briefing note provided information on UK100, a network of local authorities who have pledged to take action on climate change.

The Working Group was therefore asked to provide a recommendation to the Leader on whether to join the UK100 network.

The Chair asked members and it was **unanimously agreed that recommendation is given to the Leader to join this network.**

Councillor Connor McConville joined the meeting.

4. **Proposed Green Business Grant Scheme**

The report put forward a proposal for a green business grant scheme to support businesses that are located, or seeking to locate in the district, with implementing carbon reduction measures.

Dr Katharine Harvey, Chief Economic Development Officer, presented the report, members commented as follows:

- It was noted the Dover District Council concentrate on small businesses, however as the Folkestone & Hythe district does not contain many large businesses, a limit has not been applied.
- Impact of funding against carbon reduction? Dr Harvey advised this would be considered, ie value for money and carbon reduction criteria.
- Any data availability from Dover District Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council on their grant schemes? Dr Harvey will return to members with further information.

Members thanked Dr Harvey for the report.

It was suggested, and agreed by all members, that the recommendation to Cabinet includes reference to the working group's agreement to this proposal.

5. **District Wide Strategy**

The report outlined the proposed structure for the District-wide Carbon Plan and proposal for consultation in response to the Climate & Ecological Emergency Declaration Resolution; *to develop a strategy for Folkestone & Hythe District Council to play a leadership role in community, public and business partnerships for our Carbon Neutral 2030 commitment throughout the district.*

Mr Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist, presented the report and pointed out the priority areas consisting of five pillars.

Turning to the four appendices in the report, members were asked to comment,

Appendix 1 – District Wide Carbon Action Plan – Draft Proposed Structure.

- Ensure a clear project plan and outcome.
- What effect can the Council have? Ensure close working with KCC to reduce car usage; use of public right of ways (PROWS) as potential cycle paths; community transport.

- Policy updates, for example planning policies, how can these be improved? Design codes, the Council has applied to be part of the Government's pilot scheme, funding may be available.
- Transport – KCC are updating their Local Transport Plan to incorporate green credentials, as a Council we could influence this.
- Ecology and biodiversity references.

Appendix 2 – District-wide Carbon Plan – Draft Proposed Engagement Strategy.

Mr Tofts spoke about this proposal and how a steering group of stakeholders would collaborate and discuss the drive to net zero carbon. The suggested name was the 'Carbon Innovation Lab' and the proposal drew on experience of a similar approach at the London Borough of Hounslow, which had proved successful. It would be an informal, self-elected forum which would be chaired by the Council. There may be a need for the group to split into Task & Finish Groups.

Members raised the following points:

- Steering group selection? Details will be looked at, also need to consider the level of interest and who wants to become engaged, ie schools, charities, green industry businesses.
- Frequency? Possibly quarterly with the Council preparing agendas and minutes.
- Numbers? Possibly 20 to 30 attendees with half a dozen taking an active role.
- A suggestion that the Council should support the group, rather than lead it.
- Ensure the report to Cabinet captures the views of the working group.

Appendix 3 – District Wide Carbon Plan – Proposed Draft Project Plan and Timetable.

Mr Tofts said this is a high level plan incorporating a formal consultation. Communications are key.

Appendix 4 – District Wide Carbon Plan – Draft Proposed High Level Actions

Members considered this a good starting point with the idea to identify where emissions originate from and ask the Steering Group to decide on the actions required.

The Chair asked about the budget, looking at consultation costs, physical staff resources will be needed especially if the Council considers working with schools.

Further actions subsequent to this meeting – redraft strategy taking on board the working group's comments; draw up a list of participants; and present to Cabinet for approval.

6. **Briefing Note on the Government's 'Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener'**

The report summarised the Government's recently published Net Zero Strategy, 'Build Back Greener', for the Working Group's information. It provided a snapshot to members of the published document.

Members referred to the document as highly aspirational and thanked officers for the briefing.

7. **Update on the Carbon Action Plan**

Ms Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist, gave members a progress report on the Carbon Action Plan, which included:

- Mandatory training now complete for all officers and members.
- Climate impact statement on Cabinet reports – six month trial continues.
- Climate Change Champions – making good progress with new ideas and regular updates.
- New waste bins in the Civic Centre to further ensure efficient waste streams.

Members suggested that a facts and figures update would be useful compared to six months ago, maybe presented as an infographic to show progress and further understanding. Also, a suggestion for possible internal allocated funding to take ideas forward and encourage innovation, which could then be promoted through comms.

8. **Future of the Working Group**

Members' suggestions and comments follow:

- Large amount of hard work undertaken by the working group.
- Suggest continuing regular working group meetings and also six monthly all member briefings.
- Ensure meetings are flexible to ensure regular member attendance or appoint substitutes. Terms of reference will need to be checked with regard to substitutes.
- Climate Change budget – ensure value for money.
- Keep momentum of ideas coming forward to the working group. Councillor Hills suggested; adaptation of changing environment; more resilience and planning; widening of drainage systems on Romney Marsh; working closely with Environment Agency; surface water flooding and flood resistance.

The Chair, Cllr Whybrow referred to a publication entitled 'Natural Solutions to Climate Change in Kent' produced by KCC. Cllr Hills will endeavour to provide a link to this resource to members.

Cllr Whybrow will also provide links to the Southern Water presentation, held at a meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee in November, and the Net Zero Carbon toolkit produced by Cotswold District Council.

All members joined in congratulating Cllr Whybrow on chairing this working group, ensuring cross-party teamwork. Officers were also recognised for their knowledge and hard work.

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To: Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group

Date: 20th April 2022

From: Hazel Sargent - Planning Policy Specialist

SUBJECT: Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy

SUMMARY: This report introduces the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy, its findings and recommendations. It is a local plan evidence document that will provide further detail to development plan policies as well as providing information for the consideration of planning applications. It could also form the basis for a future Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide additional clarity for decision-making.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Consultants Blackwood Bayne were commissioned to work on an update of the 2011 Green Infrastructure Plan. They have carried out a comprehensive evidence gathering exercise which was followed by analysis of mapped datasets and a review of documents and strategies, from both Folkestone & Hythe District Council and other organisations. Drafts of the document have been shared with officers and teams across the council as the work has progressed. Workshops and meetings to explore green and blue infrastructure priorities were held virtually with stakeholders, local councils and elected councillors between February and April 2021. The findings from the workshops and the consultation responses have been taken into account in this strategy.
- 1.2. The draft Green Infrastructure Strategy is included as **Appendix 1** to this report. Completion of the Green Infrastructure Strategy would meet the service ambitions of the Corporate Plan 2021-30: Creating Tomorrow Together, particularly 'A thriving environment' and 'Positive community leadership', as well as the Corporate Plan's guiding principles 'Greener Folkestone and Hythe', 'Locally distinctive' and 'Working effectively with partners'.
- 1.3. It would also help to deliver the three-year ambitions of the Corporate Action Plan 2021-24, including 'Ensure a clean, attractive and safe environment for residents, visitors and businesses', 'Improving cycling and walking routes', 'Take positive measures to encourage biodiversity' and 'Ensure the Garden Town is developed in a sustainable way in line with the agreed Otterpool Park Charter'.
- 1.4. The production of the Green Infrastructure Strategy fulfils action 33 in the Carbon Action Plan. It will also provide natural solutions to meeting the challenges of climate change.

2. SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGY

- 2.1. The strategy takes a multi-functional and cross-boundary approach to green infrastructure planning. Although this evidence base is presented in themes, an important aspect of green infrastructure planning is to take a multidisciplinary approach and to seek opportunities which address issues across many areas. The strategy is in three parts.
- 2.2. In Part 1 of the strategy five evidence areas are described and assessed. Each area includes a section on 'Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats' followed by a section on 'Needs, Opportunities and Priorities'. These sections set out the projects and opportunities which apply across the whole district and which are not confined to a particular geographic area. The evidence areas are:
- Biodiversity, trees and woodlands;
 - Access, recreation and active travel;
 - Health and wellbeing;
 - Blue infrastructure and the coast; and
 - Landscape character and heritage.
- 2.3. In Part 2 three broad areas of the district are described in more detail, alongside priorities and actions: Folkestone town, Romney Marsh and the North Downs.
- 2.4. Part 3 is concerned with delivery. At the moment it is relatively brief as it deals with delivery at a high level. However it is clear that delivering the strategy will require partnerships between a number of organisations and individuals. As the strategy states:
- "The aims in this strategy are not all within the remit of Folkestone and Hythe Council to deliver but are considered important in order to set out an ambition for Folkestone and Hythe."
- The council has already engaged in partnership working with multiple organisations, individuals and teams through its work in delivering the Dungeness Sustainable Access and Recreational Management Strategy (SARMS).
- 2.5. It is proposed that an action plan will be produced that sets out projects at a more detailed level, including delivery partners and associated costings. It is also proposed that the action plan is the subject of focussed consultation with expert and community organisations who are likely to have projects or would be instrumental in delivering projects (see Section 8 below).
- 2.6. Each component part of green infrastructure has the potential to deliver wider benefits (functions), including recreation, biodiversity, health, climate change mitigation and adaptation and water quality (termed 'multi-functionality'). When planned, designed and managed as a network, these benefits are maximised. Green and blue infrastructure networks cross local authority boundaries and the strategy considers biodiversity, strategic access routes, watercourses and other green and blue infrastructure across neighbouring authority boundaries.

3. NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

3.1. Positive planning for green infrastructure is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out that strategic planning policies should:

“set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for ... d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

As well as enabling the council to meet the requirements of the NPPF, the strategy will assist the council in meeting the requirements of new legislation. The development of Green Infrastructure Standards was a core commitment of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. Natural England are developing a National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards with the aim to roll these out in 2022. Mandatory biodiversity net gain, as set out in the 2021 Environment Act, will be applied in England through amending the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA). This part of the 2021 Act is planned to become a mandatory requirement in 2023.

3.2. A range of green infrastructure priorities have been identified in the Core Strategy Review (2022) and the Places and Policies Local Plan (2020). In the Core Strategy Review these policies are principally: Policy CSD4 - Green Infrastructure of Natural Networks, Open Spaces and Recreation and Policy CSD5 - Water and Coastal Environmental Management. In the Places and Policies Local Plan relevant policies include: Policy NE1 - Enhancing and Managing Access to the Natural Environment; Policy NE2 - Biodiversity; and Policy NE3 - Protecting the District's Landscapes and Countryside. These can be summarised as:

- Provision of green infrastructure corridors for access and wildlife;
- Adapting to and managing impacts of climate change;
- The identification of strategic green infrastructure opportunities;
- Access management, especially in relation to Natura and sensitive sites;
- Avoiding the fragmentation of habitats;
- Increasing the multi-functionality of green spaces, including potential enhancements to public open spaces and sports green spaces;
- Identifying network and qualitative deficiencies in the most accessible, ecologically or visually important green infrastructure;
- Improving the green infrastructure fringe zones identified in the Core Strategy Review, including access, biodiversity and landscape improvements and linking corridors;
- Targeting biodiversity enhancements;
- Dealing with the impact of development on nutrient enrichment in the Stodmarsh system of protected sites north east of Canterbury; and
- Setting out a framework for biodiversity net gain.

3.3. Green infrastructure is also fundamental to the proposed new garden town which is recognised by the Core Strategy Review in Policy SS7 New Garden Settlement – Place Shaping Principles and Policy SS8 New Garden Settlement – Sustainability and Healthy New Town Principles. The consultants who have produced the Green Infrastructure Strategy have fed into the process of producing the planning application on the issue of green infrastructure, having provided a ‘critical friend’ analysis of the approach to green infrastructure by the Otterpool Park Limited Liability Partnership.

4. FINDINGS AND IMPORTANCE OF THE DISTRICT'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR BIODIVERSITY

4.1. Due to the variety and extent of important habitats the district supports many specialised and rare species. Below are examples of species identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy for which the district is important:

- **Turtle Doves:** The Turtle Dove, a Kent Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, is the UK's fastest declining bird species and is threatened with global extinction. The RSPB has identified 'Turtle Dove Friendly Zones' (TDFZs) and works with Natural England and local farmers to provide feeding habitat and supplementary feeding. Two TDFZs are within Folkestone & Hythe District.
- **Medicinal Leeches:** By the beginning of the 20th century, the medicinal leech was declared extinct in the British Isles. However, since 1970, populations have been found scattered across the British Isles, including in the Romney Marsh.
- **Chalk Grassland Orchids:** The outstanding chalk grasslands of Folkestone and Hythe are home to several rare orchids, including monkey orchid, late spider orchid, early spider-orchid, musk orchid, lady orchid and burnt orchid.

4.2. Green infrastructure is important in supporting a landscape-scale or 'nature network' approach, through securing biodiversity value in a planned way. Green infrastructure also helps to bring nature into urban centres, which also connects people with wildlife.

4.3. Overall, Folkestone & Hythe's tree canopy is around 8 per cent of its area, less than half the Kent average of 17 per cent. There is a distinct north-south divide in the district: the highest coverage is in Hythe at 19 per cent; Romney Marsh ward was reported as having the lowest level of canopy, at 1.1 per cent. However given the history and low-lying agricultural character of the area this is to be expected. Any increase in tree and woodland cover, should therefore follow the principles of 'right tree, right place'. Trees should be planted where this fits with the landscape character. The wide range of woodlands in Folkestone & Hythe all have value for wildlife. Around 1,320 hectares, or 57 per cent, of Folkestone & Hythe's woodland is ancient. Ash dieback could result in profound changes to wildlife and landscape, due to the high proportion of ash in many of the district's woodlands.

4.4. Natural England has developed a climate change vulnerability model to assess the vulnerability of priority habitats. The model uses four measurements which, when combined, provide an overall assessment of vulnerability to climate change. (As the model only includes priority habitats some important habitat areas which are not in Natural England's dataset are not included.) The mapping shows that the fragmented, wetland and low-lying habitats around Romney Marsh are highly vulnerable. The chalk stream in the Elham Valley and the Royal Military Canal are also noticeable as vulnerable.

5. ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE DISTRICT

5.1. At the end of each evidence area in the strategy, there is a section that sets out the drivers of change, pressures and threats. The following points are particularly notable:

- Climate change impacts compounded by other threats to habitats and species;
- Lack of resources to manage some nature conservation sites sustainably and in the long term;

- Development has been identified as the greatest pressure on Kent habitats, through loss of land and increased population. This pressure can be mitigated in part through obligations on developers to deliver biodiversity net gain;
- The location of new development, especially larger developments, will increase recreational use in new areas of the district;
- The transport corridor of the M20/A20, railway line and Channel Tunnel Rail Link is a significant barrier to access for Folkestone and other settlements to the south;
- Woodland which is small, fragmented and not managed;
- Increase in invasive non-native species, pests and diseases particularly ash dieback;
- Safety is an important consideration for users. Overgrown areas, poor sight lines, vandalism and litter can increase perceptions of lack of safety;
- There are deficiencies of accessible green space¹ in parts of the district, namely Lympne, Sellindge, Brookland and Brenzett;
- Some areas of poor health also have low levels of greenspace such as Brenzett and St Mary in the Marsh;
- Evidence shows that spending time in nature is also good for mental wellbeing. Folkestone & Hythe has a range of good green spaces. Examples include Lower Leas Coastal Park and the Warren: these should be invested in for the future;
- Folkestone & Hythe is at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams, ditches and the coast;
- Summer droughts are also likely to be more frequent, alongside an increased risk of flooding. This combined with increased demand from development requires an active approach to the management of both risks through the planning system;
- Parts of the Landscape Character of the district are much more affected by nearby development than others. In the eastern part, around Folkestone, views from the scarp are affected by developments around Folkestone and associated with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link; and
- The landscape is sensitive to the impacts of development and infrastructure within and beyond the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) boundary.

6. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

6.1. The strategy sets out strategic priorities in the 'Needs, Opportunities and Priorities' section for each evidence area; these are broken down into further priorities. The section sets out the projects and opportunities which apply across the whole district and which are not confined to a particular geographic area. The strategic priorities are:

1. Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species;
2. Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change;

¹ Accessible green space: places available for public access, usually free of charge and without time restrictions.

3. Link people and nature;
4. Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts;
5. Ensure development is sustainable;
6. Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Folkestone & Hythe's future residents;
7. Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes;
8. Maximise the benefits of recreation and access to Folkestone & Hythe's unique landscapes and green spaces, whilst ensuring that this does not have a negative impact on them or their biodiversity;
9. Provide access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all;
10. Support people in taking healthy exercise and engaging in nature for both their physical and mental health;
11. Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups;
12. Incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into new development and retrofit into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues;
13. Protect water resources and protect and enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats;
14. Strengthen and reinforce landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character; and
15. Ensure heritage is recognised in green infrastructure planning, interpretation, and tourism.

6.2. Examples of lower level priorities include to:

- Develop a tree and woodland strategy to ensure tree planting follows principle of 'right tree, right place';
- Promote sustainable woodland management;
- Plan for the effects of ash dieback;
- Increase the overall tree canopy of Folkestone & Hythe, and designate more Local Nature Reserves to increase the hectare provision per 1,000 people with a more even distribution across the district.

7. STRATEGIC AND SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

7.1. The district has been divided into three broad areas, in which the priorities and actions are examined in more detail. The three areas align with the Core Strategy Review and are:

- Folkestone town, Hythe and Saltwood;
- Romney Marsh; and
- North Downs.

- 7.2. There are several actions and recommendations which relate to green and blue infrastructure, including: creating unified public spaces, public realm greening and new public spaces; wayfinding and enhancing the cycling and walking experience, creating better connections; planting and landscaping for biodiversity, sustainable drainage and carbon sequestration. These should be prioritised as part of any regeneration of the town centre. Access for residents out of Folkestone to the north is severely restricted by the severing effect of transport infrastructure corridors. The railway to the south also limits access choices for these residents. The strategy focuses on the undeveloped land west of Folkestone from Shorncliffe and St Martin's Plain and north of Hythe and Saltwood. It is bounded to the north by the transport infrastructure of the A20 and railway line. Most of this area is within the Kent Downs AONB.
- 7.3. There are threats to this landscape. Although it is well-treed, the woodland blocks and hedgerows are threatened by ash dieback. Climate change is likely to lead to hotter drier summers, and warmer, wetter winters. The area is surrounded by urban areas to the east and south, with Otterpool Park planned along the western edge. This is an important area for recreation for current and future residents, particularly as there are only two access points across the transport corridor in the north. A large, and growing, local population will put pressure on recreation facilities within the landscape, such as public footpaths, which can result in erosion and damage. Providing high quality, well managed multi-functional paths to recreational spaces that can accommodate high levels of use, will help to protect more fragile elements of the landscape from indiscriminate use. These should be managed to direct visitors away from vulnerable 'honeypot' areas and to disperse recreational pressure.
- 7.4. One of the priorities for this area is to take a holistic view and develop a plan for biodiversity, landscape, blue infrastructure and access in the Saltwood and Hythe area. This should include interactions with urban fringe and accommodate the new Otterpool Park development in a way that takes account of the issues mentioned.

Romney Marsh

- 7.5. There is the need to strike a continual balance in an area that is internationally important for geomorphology and wildlife, but where local communities make a living and enjoy the natural assets on their doorstep. One of these is Coast Drive Car Park. This area is under-utilised, dilapidated, and provides little benefit to the community. It is adjacent to designated wildlife sites and therefore it is imperative that assessments and mitigation measures are agreed in advance - the project is being planned and designed with this in mind
- 7.6. A priority for this area would be to consider a new cycle path from Lydd to New Romney to take traffic off the road and give families who haven't any other way of travelling, a chance to explore areas nearby. Many people in this area are unable to have holidays as it is a deprived area. This would help them with mental and physical wellbeing. Employees of the Dungeness Power Station would also benefit if a cycle path was put in situ along Dungeness Road, again taking traffic off the roads.
- 7.7. Another priority would be to plan strategically to ensure destination green spaces such as Dungeness RSPB, Dungeness Point, the Royal Military Canal, Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway and the coast are connected through promotional routes.

The North Downs

- 7.8. Most of this area is within the Kent Downs AONB. Woodlands are a prominent feature of the landscape and chalk grassland is particularly notable. The Open Spaces Strategy showed that in the North Downs some areas are currently below the quantity standard, for example Sellindge. Plans for new open spaces in Otterpool Park will help to alleviate this deficit and good access into them from these areas should be encouraged in the master planning process. Between Lyminge, through Elham and Wingmore is the course of the Nailbourne, a chalk 'bourne' which only flows at some times of the year.
- 7.9. Priorities include to protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views for future generations. Working in partnership with the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit to identify management opportunities in accordance with their management plans. Another priority that was identified through the workshops was a project to address the current lack of biodiversity and flooding problems associated with the Nailbourne.

8. PROPOSED NEXT STAGES

- 8.1 The Green Infrastructure Strategy (see **Appendix 1**) is referenced in the Places and Policies Local Plan and the Core Strategy Review. It provides important evidence to enable the implementation of the policies in the two local plans. To ensure that it carries weight in decisions on planning applications, it would need to be adopted in some form - we would suggest as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Green Infrastructure, of which the main body could form the basis to provide guidance to developers.
- 8.2 The document has the potential to be wider than planning in terms of potential actions. However those actions would meet other objectives such as contributing to the Corporate Plan and Carbon Action Plan. The proposed Action Plan would make clear what partnerships are required for delivery (like the SARMS). Those actions that would fall within the council's responsibility would require monitoring either separately or through the Authority Monitoring Report (a monitoring document on the development plan that is published annually).
- 8.3 The consultants have produced an initial draft action plan of projects at a more detailed level (see **Appendix 2**). This draft action plan identifies priorities and needs, not all of which are within the direct control of the council, or which can be delivered by the council alone. The actions are therefore colour-coded to reflect this. As well as details of the projects it is intended to include information about partnerships delivering the projects and estimated costings. This would be similar to the action plan previously produced for the SARMS. It is proposed that the strategy and action plan are the subject of a focussed consultation with expert and local environmental organisations to ensure accuracy and relevance. This would also help to identify projects for inclusion in the plan. Again it is suggested that this would follow a similar process to the one undertaken for the SARMS, which was subject to a four-week focussed consultation.
- 8.4 Canterbury City Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy that was produced in 2018 was subject to a period of public consultation. Very little of the document was changed as a result but it was felt that the consultation helped to foster a sense of public ownership of the document. Consultation in the form of workshops was undertaken with environmental groups, expert organisations, Parish Councils, council officers and Members to understand the issues with the area. For the Folkestone & Hythe Green Infrastructure Strategy, it is suggested that rather than consulting on the entire

strategy, public comment is invited on the final version of the action plan. This may identify more opportunities and enable the consultation to be more focussed, as well giving the public a sense of ownership.

- 8.5 A presentation on the Green Infrastructure Strategy work was given to the Climate & Ecological Emergency Working Group and then to all members as part of an event to inform all members of the work. It is suggested that following the two periods of consultation the Green Infrastructure Strategy, the action plan and results of the consultations are presented to Cabinet.

Hazel Sargent

Planning Policy Specialist

Appendix 1: Folkestone & Hythe Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (third draft April 2022)

Appendix 2: Folkestone & Hythe Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy – Draft Action Plan (April 2022)

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Folkestone and Hythe Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Page 19



Folkestone & Hythe
District Council

Third Draft April 2022



Contents

Introduction 1

 About this Strategy 2

 What is Green and Blue Infrastructure? 3

 National and Local Policy 4

 Climate Change..... 9

 The Challenges and Impacts of Climate Change 9

 The Role of Green and Blue Infrastructure 9

 Climate Change and Folkestone and Hythe District..... 11

 Overview of Folkestone and Hythe’s Green and Blue Infrastructure Network 12

Part 1: Folkestone and Hythe’s Green and Blue Infrastructure..... 13

 Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands..... 14

 Access, Recreation and Active Travel 41

 Health and Wellbeing..... 61

 Blue Infrastructure and the Coast..... 70

 Landscape Character and Heritage 80

Part 2: Strategic and Spatial Priorities 96

 Strategic and Spatial Opportunities..... 97

Part 3: Delivery 118

Delivery 119

Glossary 120

Bibliography 121

References 123

Authors

Sharon Bayne BSc (Hons) MSc LLM CEnv MCIEEM www.blackwoodbayne.co.uk
 Irene Seijo BA (Hons) Landscape Architecture, MA Public Art & Design
 Suggested citation S. Bayne and I. Seijo. (2022). *Folkestone and Hythe District Council Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy*. Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

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Front cover: Folkestone Warren credit Zoltan Tasi (Unsplash)
 p1 New Romney Zoltan Tasi (Unsplash); p15 and p 17 Dungeness credit Kai Bossom (Unsplash);
 p18 Folkestone Warren, credit Diamond Geezer under Creative Commons; p 19 Sugar Loaf Hill, Folkestone, credit Residents_parking under Creative Commons; p21 Turtle Dove credit Andy Morffew under Creative Commons; p22 Burnt Tip Orchid credit David Evans under Creative Commons; p25 Land sailing at Greatstone credit Ian Davis under Creative Commons; p35 Dungeness Romney Marsh credit Kai Bossom (Unsplash); p41 Lower Sandgate Park below Leas Cliff Pavilion credit grassrootsgroundswell under Creative Commons; p42 Martello Tower, East Cliff credit Loz Pycock under Creative Commons; p43 Interpretation Board at Brockhill Country Park credit Sharon Bayne; p49 Sustrans National Cycle Route Way Post at Hythe credit Nigel Small (Unsplash); p70 Royal Military Canal at Hythe credit Angus Kirk under Creative Commons; p71 Romney Marsh credit James Stieger under Creative Commons; p 72 RSPB Reserve at Dungeness credit Loz Pycock under Creative Commons and Boardwalk to protect shingle vegetation, Lade beach credit Paul Horsefield under Creative Commons; p78 SuDs scheme integrated into green infrastructure in a residential scheme in Leicestershire (credit Susdrain.org); p82 Dungeness credit James Hollingworth (Unsplash); p83 St Thomas à Becket, Fairfield, Romney Marsh credit Alexander Andrews (Unsplash); p88 Hythe Church credit Martin Drew (Unsplash); p90 Folkestone Harbour credit Zoltan Tasi (Unsplash); p92 Sound Mirrors, Lade credit Tom Lee under Creative Commons; p96 Folkestone Leas credit Zoltan Tasi (Unsplash); p109 Dungeness credit siandmelsgaff under Creative Commons; p114 Elham credit kmspicias under Creative Commons; p116 Monkey Orchid at Parkgate Down SAC credit Tony Morris under Creative Commons; p 118 Elham Valleycredit kmspicias under Creative Commons.

Introduction



About this Strategy

Folkestone and Hythe's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy sets out Folkestone and Hythe's strategic network of green and blue infrastructure. It provides an assessment of the needs and opportunities, strategic priorities and future actions.

The strategy takes a multi-functional and cross-boundary approach to green infrastructure planning. Although this evidence base is presented in themes, an important aspect of green infrastructure planning is to take a multidisciplinary approach and to seek opportunities which address issues across many areas. In Part 1 of the strategy five evidence areas are described and assessed. These are:

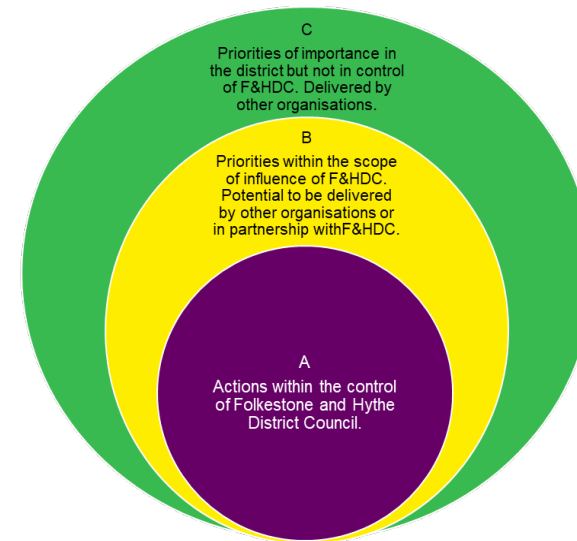
- Biodiversity, trees and woodlands;
- Access, recreation and active travel;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Blue infrastructure and the coast;
- Landscape character and heritage.

The areas of the district are also described in more detail:

- Folkestone town;
- Romney Marsh; and
- The North Downs.

Workshops and meetings to explore green and blue infrastructure priorities with stakeholders, local councils and elected councillors were held between February and April 2021. The findings from the workshops and the consultation responses have been taken into account in this strategy.

Although this is a document produced by Folkestone and Hythe District Council, improving green and blue infrastructure will require actions being taken forward by many different organisations, groups, communities and individuals. The strategic priorities, needs and opportunities set out a broad ambition to improve green and blue infrastructure in Folkestone and Hythe district. Some of these can be delivered by Folkestone and Hythe District Council. However, many will need to be delivered in partnership or by other organisations, and many will require additional funding.



What is Green and Blue Infrastructure?

Many environmental features make up green infrastructure (see below), including water environments (termed 'blue infrastructure'). A key feature of green infrastructure is that networks are strategically planned and that spaces and places are connected. Some green infrastructure is publicly accessible, but it does not need to be accessible to be valuable.

Each component part of green infrastructure has the potential to deliver wider benefits (functions), including recreation, biodiversity, health, climate change mitigation and adaptation and water quality (termed 'multi-functionality'). When planned, designed and managed as a network, these benefits are maximised.

Green and blue infrastructure networks cross local authority boundaries and this Strategy considers biodiversity, strategic access routes, watercourses and other green and blue infrastructure across neighbouring authority boundaries.

What is Green Infrastructure?

- Natural and semi-natural rural and urban green spaces – including woodland, scrub, grassland, heath, wetland and open and running water (blue infrastructure), brownfield sites, coasts;
- Parks and gardens – urban parks, country parks, formal and private gardens, institutional grounds (e.g. schools and hospitals);
- Amenity green space –recreation spaces, play areas, outdoor sports facilities, community and roof gardens, village greens, commons, hedges, civic spaces, highway trees and verges;
- Allotments, city farms, orchards and farmland;
- Cemeteries and churchyards;
- Green corridors – rivers, canals, road verges, rail embankments, cycling routes, rights of way;
- Nature conservation sites – Designated sites and statutory and non-statutory Nature Reserves;
- Green space designations (selected for historic significance, beauty, recreation, wildlife, or tranquillity);
- Archaeological and historic sites;
- Functional green space such as sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS) and flood storage areas;
- Built structures – living roofs and walls, bird and bat boxes, roost sites.

Abridged from: Town & Country Planning Association and The Wildlife Trusts (2012), *Planning for a Healthy Environment – Good Practice Guidance for Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity*.

National and Local Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

Positive planning for green infrastructure is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out that strategic planning policies should:

“set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for ... d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

Furthermore, green and blue infrastructure planning should:

“ ... take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.” (paragraph 175).¹

The NPPF also sets out that green and blue infrastructure planning should include delivery of measures to address local health and wellbeing needs, climate change adaptation and air quality issues.²

Environment Bill 2020

The emerging Environment Bill (yet to be passed into legislation) covers targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment across a wide range of areas including, environmental reporting, air quality, water, nature and biodiversity and conservation covenants.

The bill will bring in a raft of new requirements for planners and decision-makers in councils in relation to nature and biodiversity. The changes of greatest significance to this Strategy are detailed.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Government announced it would mandate net gains for biodiversity in 2019. Mandatory biodiversity net gain, as set out in the Environment Bill, will be applied in England through amending the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA). It is planned to become law in 2023.

The Environment Bill sets out the following key components to mandatory biodiversity net gain:

- Minimum 10% gain required calculated using Biodiversity Metric and approval of net gain plan;
- Habitat secured for at least 30 years via obligations / conservation covenants;
- Habitat can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity credits;
- There will be a national register for net gain delivery sites;
- The mitigation hierarchy - avoidance, mitigation and compensation for biodiversity loss - still applies.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of spatial strategies for nature. These will identify the opportunities and priorities for enhancing biodiversity and supporting wider objectives such as mitigating or adapting to climate change in an area. Kent, including Folkestone and Hythe, is currently developing a county Local Nature Recovery Strategy through the Kent Nature Partnership. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy will:

- Map the most valuable existing habitat for nature
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environment goals; and
- Agree priorities for nature's recovery.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies will guide delivery of biodiversity net gain and other nature recovery measures by helping developers and planning authorities avoid the most valuable existing habitat and focus habitat creation or improvement where it will achieve the best outcomes.

Species Conservation and Protected Site Strategies

A Species Conservation Strategy is a new mechanism to safeguard the future of particular species at greatest risk, building on the existing district level licensing approach for great crested newts. A Protected Site Strategy will seek to achieve a similar purpose in respect of protected sites.

These strategies intend to provide a strategic approach to protecting and restoring species and habitats. The measures will place a new duty on local planning authorities to cooperate with Natural England and other local planning authorities and public bodies to establish and implement the strategies, will link to Local Nature Recovery Strategies and will complement plans for biodiversity net gain.

Strengthened Biodiversity Duty

It is proposed that the current duty on public authorities³ to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity is amended. This will create an expectation that authorities will look strategically at their policies and operations at least every 5 years and assess what action they can take 'to further' the conservation and

enhancement of biodiversity. They must also have regard to the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Sites Strategies and should produce a Biodiversity Report.

Duty to Consult – Trees

This intends to introduce a duty on local highway authorities to consult with local communities before felling street trees, unless the trees qualify for certain exemptions. This will give communities an opportunity to understand why a tree is being felled in their local area and to raise concerns to the local highway authority. This will increase transparency around decisions over these green assets.

Other Relevant National Policy

England Trees Action Plan (2021) – Sets out the Government’s long-term vision for trees, woodlands and forests in England. The plan sets out a 12% woodland cover target by mid-century.

Environmental Land Management Schemes – These schemes are being revised following the UK’s exit from the Common. These schemes include ‘Farming in Protected Landscapes’ through which landowners get funding to support and improve Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

25 Year Environment Plan (2018) – This sets out the Government’s intended actions to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in cities and rural

landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. Chapter 3, ‘Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing’, sets out ambitions for green infrastructure:

- Creating more green infrastructure
- Focus on accessible green infrastructure and links to communities and health and well-being
- Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards
- Local authorities to assess green infrastructure against new standards
- Accessible greenspaces in areas which lack greenspace
- Incorporate 25 Year Environment Plan into national planning guidance and policy

Green Infrastructure Standards – The development of Green Infrastructure Standards was a core commitment of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Natural England are developing a National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards with the aim to roll these out in 2022.

Folkestone and Hythe Corporate Plan – Creating Tomorrow Together Corporate Plan 2021-30

Service Ambition 2: A Thriving Environment

*“ We will be recognised as an outstanding place and known as a green exemplar council. Across the district, we will ensure excellent accessible open spaces for all. We will have invested in green infrastructure to enhance our superb natural environment and the council itself will generate net zero carbon emissions”.*⁴

Folkestone and Hythe District Council recognises that the district is an exceptional place, but also acknowledges that more can be done. The corporate plan commits to improved access to green space and more opportunities for active travel. It also recognises the connection between a quality environment and health and wellbeing (both mental and physical) of residents. The council intends to embed this in service provision and planning by providing more opportunities for active travel and recreation, improving cycling and walking routes and working with colleagues in the health and the voluntary sectors. The council will also take positive measures to encourage biodiversity, both by adapting existing practices and by ensuring net biodiversity gain in new developments.⁵

In addition, the council recognises the district’s unique ‘sense of place’ - unique towns, distinctive villages, breath-taking countryside and heritage. The council will harness what is unique

to each area and develop plans to further enhance these opportunities, for example to encourage eco-tourism.⁶

Folkestone And Hythe Core Strategy Review - Submission Draft 2020

The emerging Core Strategy is a long-term plan bringing together the aims and actions of the government, local councils, residents, businesses and voluntary groups, by managing development. When it is finalised it will replace the current Core Strategy which was adopted in 2013.

It sets out strategic needs for sustainable development. this includes addressing climate change strategically; monitoring and managing air quality; the sensitivity of habitats and landscapes; precious water resources; and preventing undesirable coastal and countryside change (including growing flood risks); allied with further sustainable and positive management of the district's distinctive set of natural environments and historic features.⁷

Emerging policies relevant to this strategy include:

Policy CSD3 - Rural and Tourism Development - The district's rural areas offer a range of attractions from the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) through to Dungeness. The high-quality natural environment can help to support 'footloose' enterprises, existing tourist accommodation and opportunities for new small-scale high-quality accommodation and marketing of local food, drink, craft and natural produce.⁸

Policy CSD4 - Green Infrastructure of Natural Networks, Open Spaces and Recreation - Sets out how green infrastructure protection, enhancement and improvement in the district will be actively encouraged along with an increase in the quantity of green infrastructure. This includes pursuing opportunities to secure net gains in biodiversity and positive management of areas of high landscape quality or high coastal/recreational potential.⁹

Policy CSD5 - Water and Coastal Environmental Management - Highlights that the objectives of efficient water management and measures such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) need to be balanced with long-term coastal management and planning decisions. Water reserves and the coastal environment will also be maintained and enhanced through the council working with partners to manage development and upgrade water infrastructure and quality, and through green infrastructure provisions.¹⁰

Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP) 2020

The Places and Policies Local Plan sits below the Core Strategy and has two functions:

- To allocate enough land for future development to meet the requirements set out in the Core Strategy for residential, employment, community and other needs; and

- To provide development management policies that will be used to assess planning applications and guide future development.

The policies in the plan will ensure that new developments are sustainable, the natural and historic environment is maintained, and that people's quality of life is improved and healthy lifestyles are encouraged.

The policies below predominately apply to this Strategy.

- Policy NE1 - Enhancing and Managing Access to the Natural Environment;
- Policy NE2 - Biodiversity;
- Policy NE3 - Protecting the District's Landscapes and Countryside;
- Policy NE8 - Integrated Coastal Zone Management;
- Policy CC3 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);
- Policy HW3 - Development That Supports Healthy, Fulfilling and Active Lifestyles;
- Policy HW4 - Promoting Active Travel.

Climate Change

The Challenges and Impacts of Climate Change

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges being faced by society. The impacts of climate change are already evident, and these will become more severe and widespread as global temperatures rise. How great the impacts will become depends upon how successfully society reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Due to Kent's geographical location, long coastline and population density means that it is likely to suffer from some of the severest impacts of climate change in the United Kingdom.¹ The Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway (CCRIA) provides detailed projections of climate change to 2100. Under a high emissions scenario, this suggest that in Kent there will be:

- Hotter summers with an increase in average summer temperature of 2-3°C by 2040 and 5- 6°C by 2080;
- Warmer winters with an increase in average winter temperature of 1-2°C by 2040 and 3-4°C by 2080;
- Drier summers with a reduction in average precipitation of 20-30% by 2040 and 30-50% by 2080;

- Wetter winters with an increase in average precipitation of 10-20% by 2040 and 20-30% by 2080;
- Increases in sea-level rise by up to 0.3m by 2040 and 0.8m by 2080.

The Kent and Medway CCRIA also provides a detailed assessment of the county's current and future risks, opportunities, and impacts of climate change. It prioritises these to identify the risks of most importance. The climate risks with the greatest potential impact on Kent are increase in average temperature, heatwaves, drought, sea-level rise, heavy rainfall, flooding and soil destabilisation and landslides.

The Role of Green and Blue Infrastructure

Green and blue infrastructure can help to tackle climate change both through adaptation and mitigation (see right). It is an essential tool and often provides solutions which are more cost effective than engineered approaches. Green and blue infrastructure also provides additional benefits, such as spaces for recreation. Fundamentally, healthy and well-functioning natural systems will be essential as the climate changes

The graphic on the next page shows ways that green and blue infrastructure can help to tackle climate change.

¹ <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning->

[policies/environmental-policies/climate-change/kents-changing-climate](https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environmental-policies/climate-change/kents-changing-climate)



Managing surface water – green and blue infrastructure can help to manage surface water and sewer flooding by reducing the rate and volume of water runoff; intercepting water, allowing it to infiltrate into the ground and providing permanent or temporary storage areas.



Managing high temperatures – particularly in urban areas, where evaporative cooling and shading provided by green infrastructure can ensure that towns and cities are attractive and comfortable places to live, work, visit and invest.



Carbon storage and sequestration – storing carbon in soils and vegetation.



Material substitution – replacing materials such as concrete and steel (which involve high fossil fuel consumption in their production) with sustainably managed wood and other natural materials.



Providing low carbon fuels – replacing fossil fuels with lower carbon alternatives, including bio-energy, wind and hydro.



Reducing the need to travel by car – providing local recreation areas and green travel routes to encourage walking and cycling.



Helping species adapt – providing a more vegetated and permeable landscape through which species can move northwards to new 'climate spaces'.



Reducing soil erosion – using vegetation to stabilise soils that many be vulnerable to increasing erosion



Managing water resources – green and blue infrastructure can provide places to store water, allows water to infiltrate into the ground sustaining aquifers and river flows, and can catch sediment and remove pollutants from the water, thereby ensuring that water quantity and quality is maintained.



Food production – providing environmentally sustainable food production that delivers food security.



Managing flooding – green infrastructure and blue infrastructure can provide water storage and retention areas, reducing and slowing down peak flows and helping to alleviate river and coastal flooding.

Climate Change and Folkestone and Hythe District

Folkestone and Hythe District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The council has allocated a budget to deliver initiatives which will help the council to meet a target of being operationally net-zero by 2030.

In 2021 the council published its Carbon Action Plan This Carbon Action Plan sits within the framework provided by the council's draft Corporate Plan 2021-30 and has been developed alongside it.

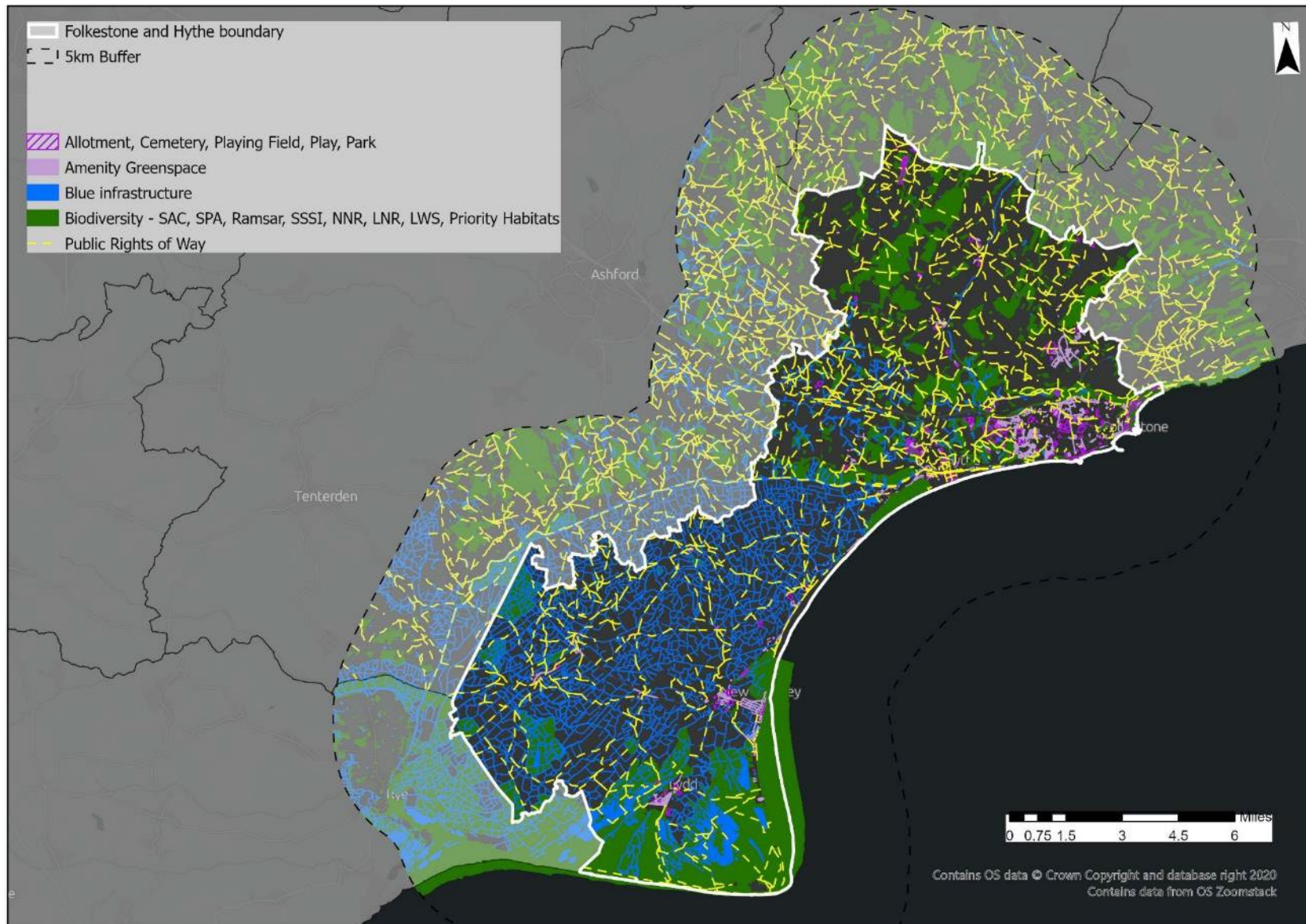
Some of the achievements to tackle climate change so far include:

- Planting around 100 semi-mature trees each year with a focus on broad canopy trees for carbon uptake;
- Securing improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure in Folkestone and Hythe through the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan;
- Planting wildflower meadows and managing land to promote biodiversity e.g. churchyards;
- Reducing strimmer and pesticide application around trees and obstacles where suitable;
- Following Full Council's resolution to move to being pesticide-free, officers have met with members prior to trialling alternatives to pesticides;
- Rural grass verges on the Marsh are now actively managed for wildlife, only being cut on one occasion per year.

There are also other measures listed in the action plan which are of direct relevant to this strategy:

- Review the use of peat, redesign mowing regimes and support adaptation measures such as tree planting for carbon sequestration and 'cooling-off' benefits;
- Use council-owned land to increase biodiversity and carry out tree planting where appropriate;
- Continue to work with Environment Agency, Kent County Council, business organisations and community groups to develop appropriate flood mitigation measures and tree planting schemes across the district.
- Ensure that the Local Plan continues to develop and implement policies that will deliver improved net zero carbon building standards - subject to national policy;
- Complete the comprehensive review of Green Infrastructure Strategy that will support both the Places and Policies Local Plan and the Core Strategy Review. The strategy will identify the needs and opportunities for the district and green infrastructure projects. It will contribute to ensuring strategic allocations and other development delivers green infrastructure requirements.

Overview of Folkestone and Hythe's Green and Blue Infrastructure Network



Part 1: Folkestone and Hythe's Green and Blue Infrastructure



Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands

Introduction

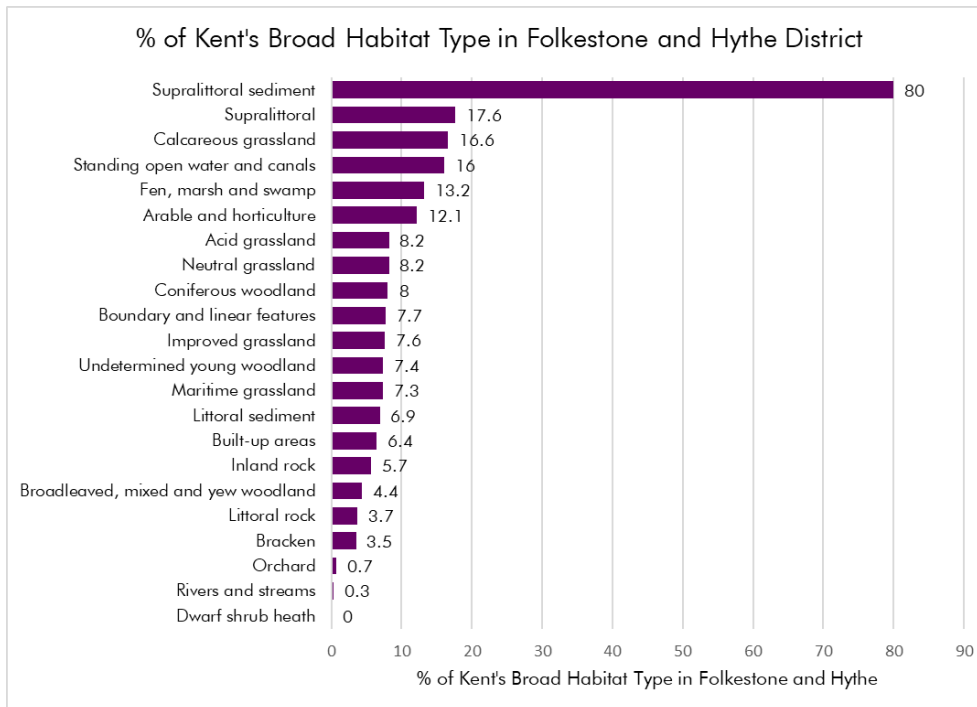
Folkestone and Hythe is home to outstanding biodiversity. Within the district are examples of many of Kent's important habitats – chalk grassland, ancient woodland, marshes and coastal cliffs and shingle. These expansive areas of nature conservation habitats in turn support a host of rare and important species.

Folkestone and Hythe's Protected Wildlife Sites

Around 16% of Folkestone and Hythe's area, including inshore areas, is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. There are also several designations for the district's international importance for nature. These designated areas overlap in many cases, with areas falling under several designations (see Plans 1 and 2).

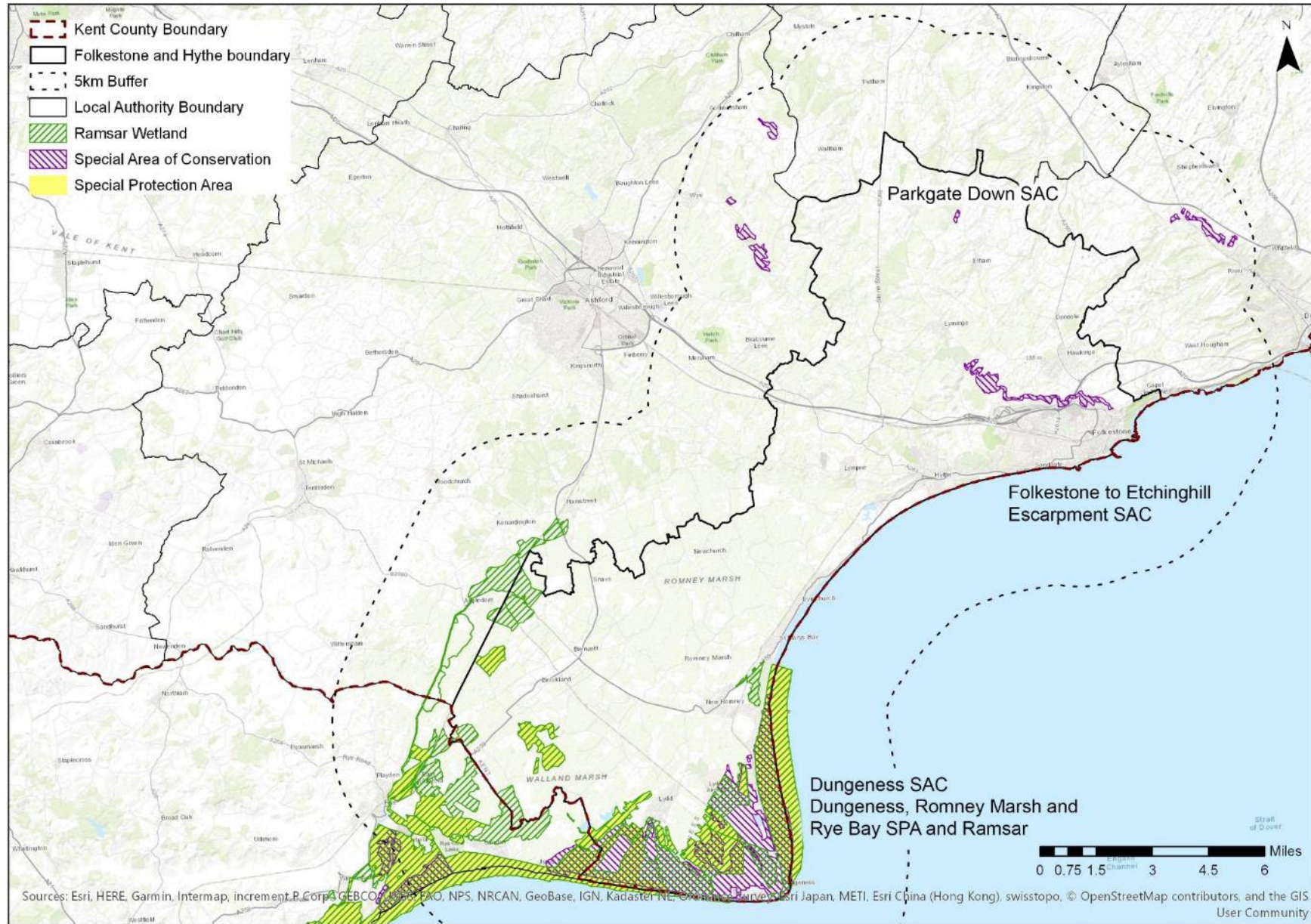
Table 1: Nature Conservation Designations

Designated Sites ¹¹	Area (sq km)
International	
Special Protection Areas (for birds) ¹²	18.70
Special Areas of Conservation (for habitats) ¹³	27.93
Ramsar wetlands ¹⁴	31.54
National	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest ¹⁵	57.80
National Nature Reserves	10.27
Local and Kent	
Local Nature Reserves ¹⁶	0.94
Local Wildlife Sites	17.9



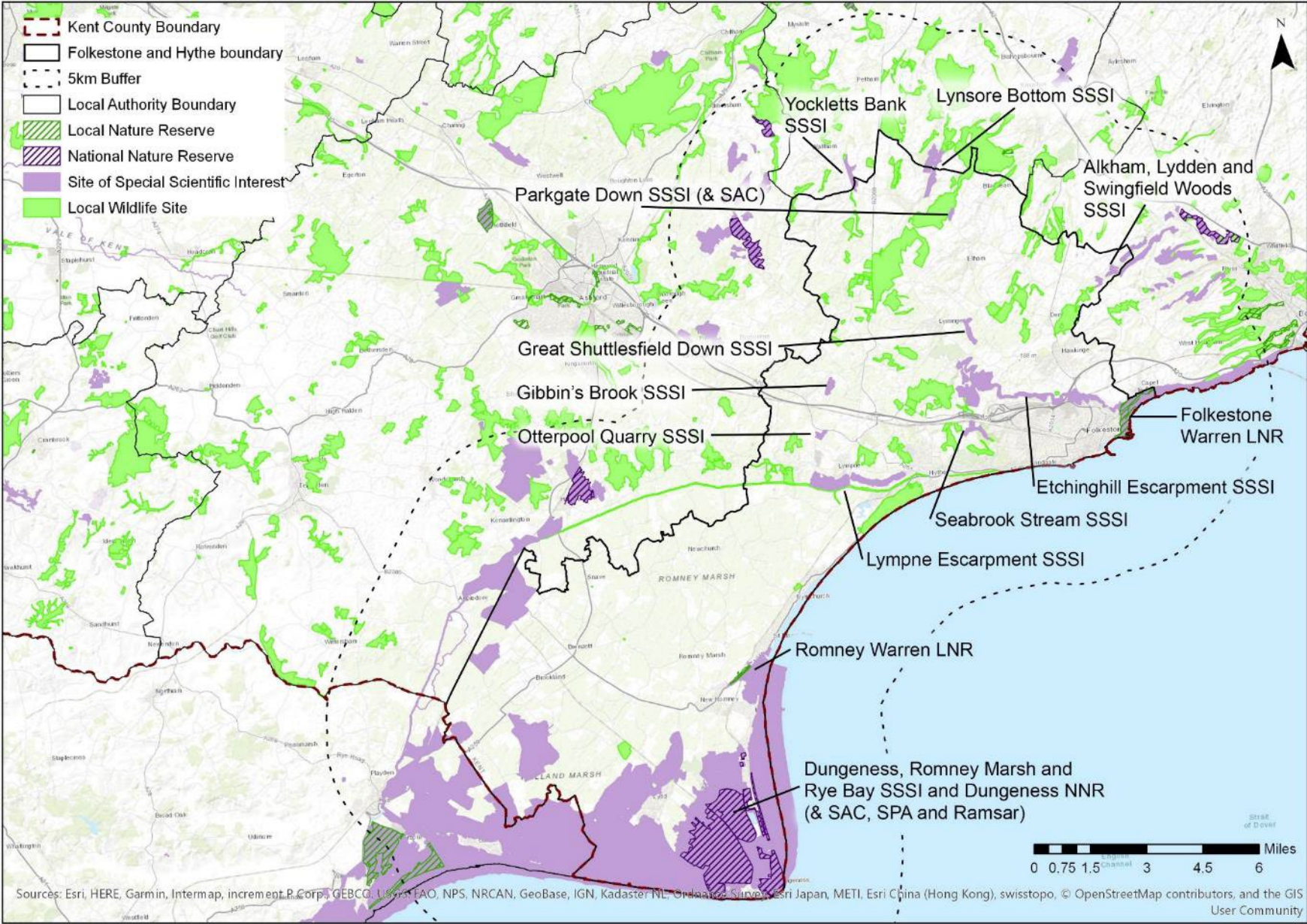
Plan 1: Designated Nature Conservation Sites – International Importance

Page 35



Plan 2: Designated Nature Conservation Sites – National and Local Importance

Page 36





Folkestone and Hythe's Outstanding Habitats and Species

A Unique and Diverse Coastline

One of the district's most renowned areas, which is both nationally and internationally important, is the expanse of vegetated shingle at Dungeness. This extensive area on the largest cusped foreland in Britain is the most diverse and extensive area of stable vegetated shingle in Europe. In Kent, 94% of the county's vegetated shingle habitat is found in Folkestone and Hythe district.¹⁷ There is a stark wild beauty and distinctive character unique to Dungeness.

Dungeness is an important ecological site with flora and fauna unique to its shingle. The area is highly designated with national and international nature conservation designations for habitats, species and birds, which overlap across the area. In the centre is a RSPB reserve which is home to 600 species of plants - a third of all plants found in the UK – as well as numerous birds.

There are also extensive flooded gravel pits with both brackish and fresh water, which provide habitats for migratory and coastal bird species. Saline lagoons are also an important and relatively scarce habitat due to the special conditions that are required for their formation. They support unique invertebrates, such as the lagoon cockle, and are important for waterfowl, marshland birds and seabirds.

It is also one of the best places in Britain to find insects such as moths, bees and beetles, and spiders. Many of these are very rare and unique to this habitat.

Dungeness receives many hundreds of thousands of visitors each year from across the South East and further afield, drawn to this unique and special place. Shingle habitats are particularly sensitive to damage through trampling or other activities which disturb the surface, such as vehicles, taking many years to recover. Over-wintering waterfowl can also be disturbed by recreational activities such as dog walking or watersports. To protect the sensitive sites, Folkestone and Hythe, alongside Rother District Council, has adopted a Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS).¹⁸ This sets out a comprehensive range of actions to protect Dungeness and the wider complex of protected sites at the Romney and Lade foreshore as well as Camber, Rye Harbour and the Pett Levels.

Dunes are also an important feature of the coast; 16.5% of Kent's coastal sand dunes are also in the district, second only to Dover. The narrow dune system of Greatstone Dunes extends around 1.5km along Greatstone-on-Sea frontage. There is a successional sequence of dune habitats from foredune to mobile dune and dune scrub. There are also areas of sea-buckthorn scrub and fixed dune grassland to the north where the dunes are wider. The transitions between vegetated shingle beach and foredune communities are also unique habitats. At Romney Warren there is a stable ness/cuspate foreland dune system which has developed over ancient shingle ridges, mainly at Littlestone Golf Course.

To the north of the district lies a coastline with a different aspect. The Warren, both a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Local Nature Reserve, is an area of the coastline that has been formed by slumped chalk cliffs. This has created an undulating undercliff area which is important for its wildlife. Chalk grassland wildflowers grow alongside woodland plants, and coastal specialist including rock sea lavender, wild cabbage and rock samphire. Around 150 different species of birds can be found in the Warren. It is also an exceptional site for its geological value and holds a wealth of fossils.



Folkestone Warren

Glorious Grasslands

Much of Folkestone and Hythe is grassland. Although a large proportion of this is improved for pasture, there are also some very special grasslands.

On flat land, across the low-lying Romney Marsh, lies coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. The district has 15.7% of Kent's coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. This land was generally reclaimed from wetter land and is criss-crossed with ditches, which control water levels. The sheep which graze the Marsh are a historic and iconic feature.

The pastures and ditches of the Romney Marsh support a wide range of wildlife. There are also reedbeds, another Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat.¹⁹ These features make the marsh especially important for water voles, a species which has declined severely in recent years. The marshes also support waterfowl, which use both the coast and inland areas, and birds of prey such as the rare marsh harrier. The area is also home to several species of farmland birds, which have become increasingly rare.

Chalk (calcareous) grassland is a scarce and specialised habitat for which the district is also important. Folkestone and Hythe district has 20.3% of Kent's lowland calcareous grassland, second only to Dover. It also contains 98.5% of the area of internationally important chalk grassland in the county.

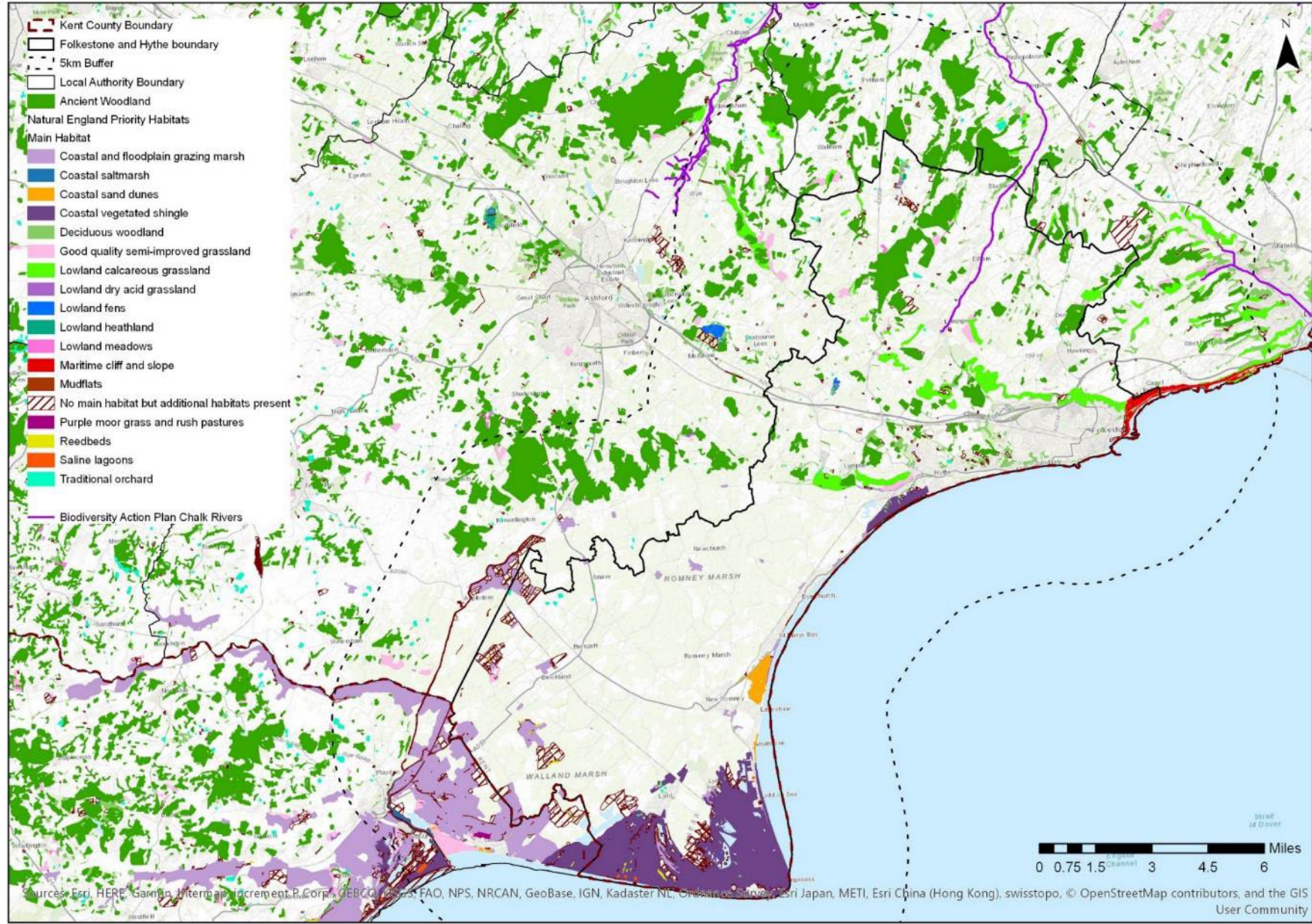
Chalk grassland is largely confined to the chalk hills of southern England it can be very floristically diverse. It also supports a range of insects including rare and beautiful butterflies. There remain areas of chalk grassland in Folkestone and Hythe along the Kent Downs, much of which is designated as Sites of Scientific Interest. This includes the internationally important Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment Special Conservation Area (SAC) and the smaller Parkgate Down (SAC).



Sugar Loaf Hill, Folkestone

Plan 3: Priority Habitats (Natural England)

Page 40



Notable Species

Due to the variety and extent of important habitats the district supports many specialised and rare species. It is not possible to detail all of these in this strategy, but below are some of species for which the district is important.

Sussex Emerald Moth (*Thalera fimbrialis*)

This very rare moth is only found in areas of coastal vegetated shingle. Until 2006 it was restricted only to Dungeness, but has also now colonised two small areas in east Kent. It's main food plant is wild carrot. Across Dungeness and Rye Harbour there are efforts to secure the precious population of this moth.

Short-haired Bumblebee (*Bombus subterraneus*)

This bumblebee was once widespread across southern England but its population declined severely from the 1950's onwards. It was last recorded at Dungeness in 1988 but was declared extinct in 2000. A project, run by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust,²⁰ has been providing advice to farmers and landowners on managing and creating flower-rich meadows in the Romney Marsh and Dungeness following the reintroduction of the species in 2009. Monitoring has shown that several species of rare bumblebees²¹ have increased due to the project. On nature reserves, rare bumblebees have increased 8-fold with advice and planting and away from reserves rare bees have increased threefold.



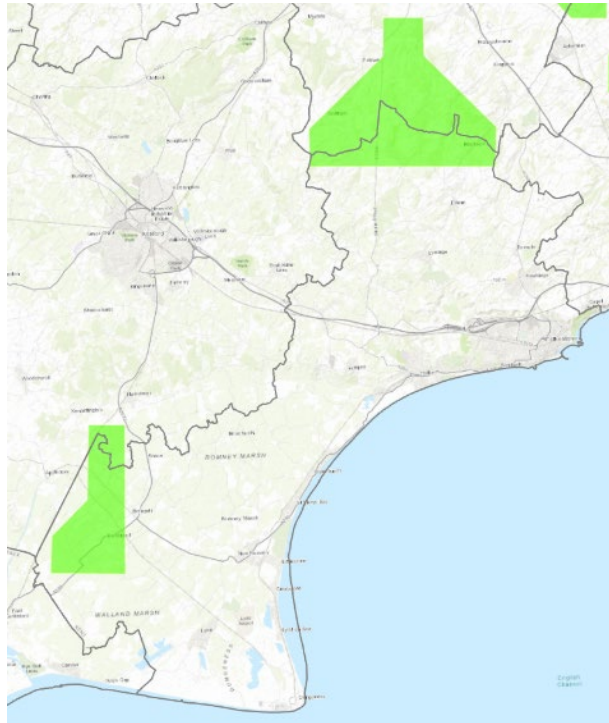
Turtle Dove

Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) and other Farmland Birds

The Turtle Dove, a Kent Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, is the UK's fastest declining bird species and is threatened with global extinction. Breeding populations have collapsed in recent decades and the decline is continuing. Breeding Bird Survey data shows a 93% fall in breeding abundance between 1995 and 2014.

The Turtle Dove occurs on arable and mixed farmland that offers suitable nesting habitat and is largely to southern and eastern England. A continuous supply of weed and crop seed is needed

from late April until the end of August. The presence of tall mature hedgerows, areas of scrub or woodland edges with a thick shrub layer for nesting are also beneficial.



The RSPB has identified 'Turtle Dove Friendly Zones' (TDFZs) and works with Natural England and local farmers to provide feeding habitat and supplementary feeding. Two TDFZs are within Folkestone and Hythe district the South East), see left.



Medicinal Leeches (*Hirudo medicinalis*)

The medicinal leech is the only British leech capable of sucking blood from humans. Millions of leeches were harvested to be used for phlebotomy (bloodletting). By the beginning of the 20th century, the medicinal leech was declared extinct in the British Isles. However, since 1970, populations have been found scattered across the British Isles, including in the Romney Marsh. A survey across the area revealed the species was present in 85 locations on the Marsh, mainly on grazing marsh and in gravel pits and ponds at Dungeness.²³

Chalk Grassland Orchids

The outstanding chalk grasslands of Folkestone and Hythe are home to several rare orchids, including monkey orchid (*Orchis simia*), late spider orchid (*Ophrys fuciflora*), early spider-orchid

The Romney Marsh is also important for other farmland birds. The RSPB's Romney Marsh farmland bird project²² is working alongside farmers and landowners to increase a range of farmland bird populations, including grey partridges, corn buntings, tree sparrows, yellow wagtails, lapwings, skylarks, yellowhammers and linnets.

(*Ophrys sphegodes*), musk orchid (*Herminium monorchis*), lady orchid (*Orchis purpurea*) and burnt orchid (*Orchis ustulata*).

Trees and Woodlands

Street trees, woodland trees and trees in parks or private gardens together form the tree canopy. Kent County Council carried out a remote canopy survey in 2020 which provides an estimate of the extent of Folkestone and Hythe's total 'urban and rural forest'.

Overall, Folkestone and Hythe's tree canopy is around 8% of its area,²⁴ less than half of the Kent average of 17%. Romney Marsh ward was reported as having the lowest level of canopy, at 1.1%. The highest was Hythe at 19%. There is a distinct north-south divide in the district.

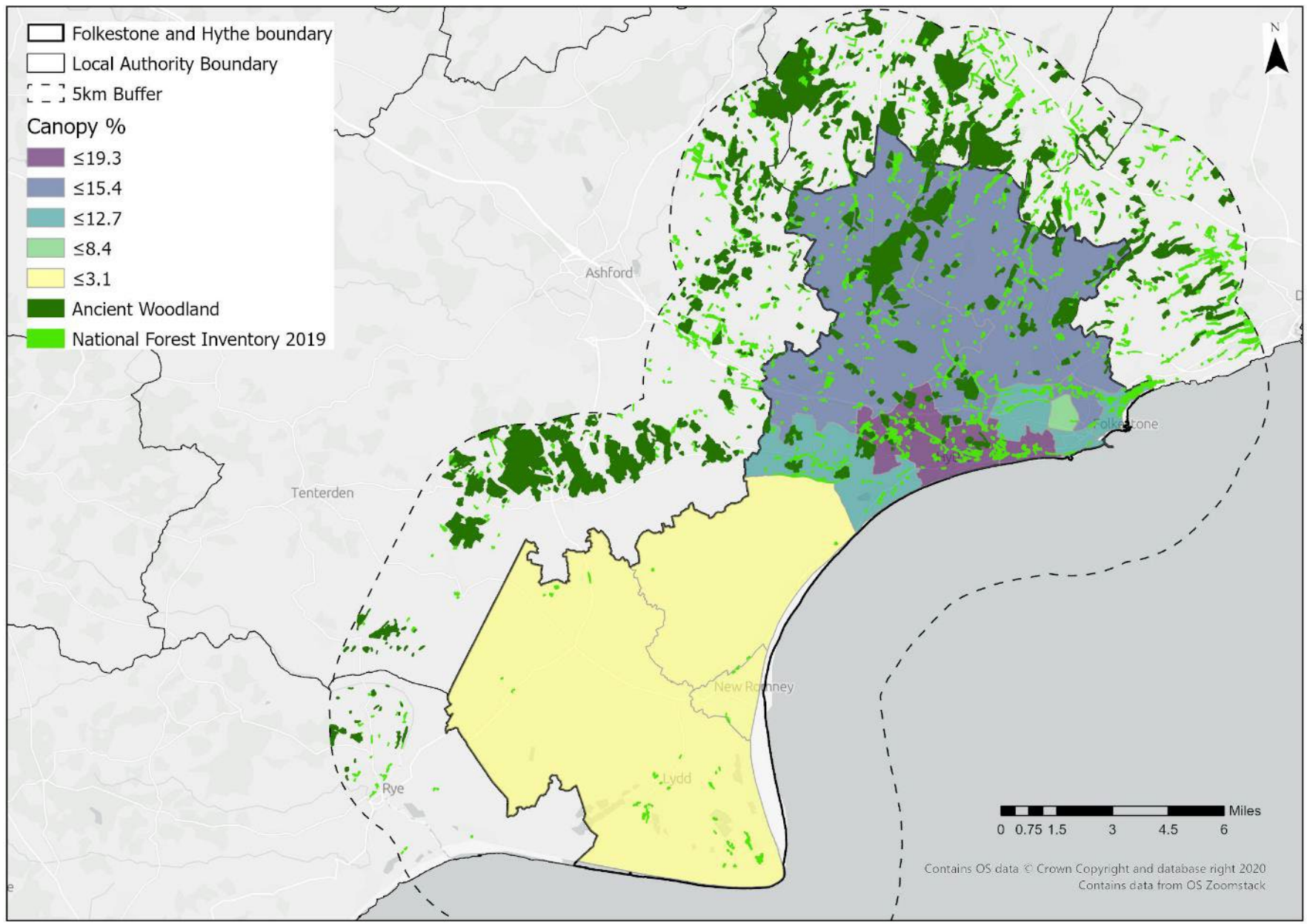
Folkestone and Hythe Council itself owns and is responsible for thousands of trees. In addition to this are many thousands more, which have never been counted, in woodlands, parks, country parks and other land which the council owns.

Woodland is not evenly spread across Folkestone and Hythe and there is a wide variation in woodland cover. Almost all woodland is concentrated in the north eastern area of the district.

The wide range of woodlands in Folkestone and Hythe all have value for wildlife. Around 1320 hectares, or 57%, of Folkestone and Hythe's woodland is ancient.²⁵ This is woodland which has been in existence since at least 1600 AD. These woodlands can be especially important for wildlife, with a rich array of species associated with them. Ancient woodland is classed as 'irreplaceable' under the National Planning Policy Framework.

One of the more publicised diseases which is seriously affecting trees in Folkestone and Hythe district and across east Kent is ash dieback. This is a fungal infection of native, and some non-native, ash trees. Due to the way the disease spreads, through dead leaves on the ground, it can seriously affect ash in woodland settings. However, trees growing in urban landscapes may be less susceptible to infection. The Ash Project²⁶ was a response to the devastating effects of ash dieback in the Kent Downs, celebrating the cultural, natural and social history of the ash tree. Ash dieback could result in profound changes to wildlife and landscape, due to the high proportion of ash in many of the district's woodlands.

Plan 4: Woodland, Ancient Woodland and Canopy Cover % by Ward



Dungeness Complex Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (2017) (SARMS)

This strategy covers an extensive stretch of coast between Rye Harbour in Sussex and Littlestone in Folkestone and Hythe district. The entire area is protected by several overlapping nature conservation designations and is particularly important for its coastal vegetated shingle and over-wintering bird populations. It is also a popular holiday and recreation area, with tourism an important component of the local economy.

The SARMS is a joint strategy with Rother District Council and is required to support their respective Local Plans. The strategy addresses recreational pressure and provides a strategic, cross-boundary approach to issues relating to disturbance, to ensure that any increases in access and recreational usage resulting from the planning policies of either council do not adversely impact on the integrity of these internationally important wildlife sites and proposes supporting actions to ensure sensitive management of recreation and access for the Dungeness complex of sites.

The strategy sets out measures which are necessary as mitigation for planning policies, including monitoring visitors and birds, provision of interpretation and signage, voluntary codes of conduct for recreational users and an oversight group to deliver the strategy. It also recommends a range of other actions which would support the necessary mitigation measures.



Land sailing at Greatstone

Biodiversity Networks

The review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network, 'Making Space for Nature',²⁷ concluded that biodiversity habitats do not form a coherent and resilient ecological network capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and other pressures. Strategic planning for nature conservation at the landscape scale is needed to manage pressures and to restore functioning ecological networks.

What is required to restore functioning ecological networks is action to:

- Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management;
- Increase the size of current wildlife sites;
- Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors or through 'stepping stones';
- Create new sites; and
- Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering²⁸ wildlife sites.

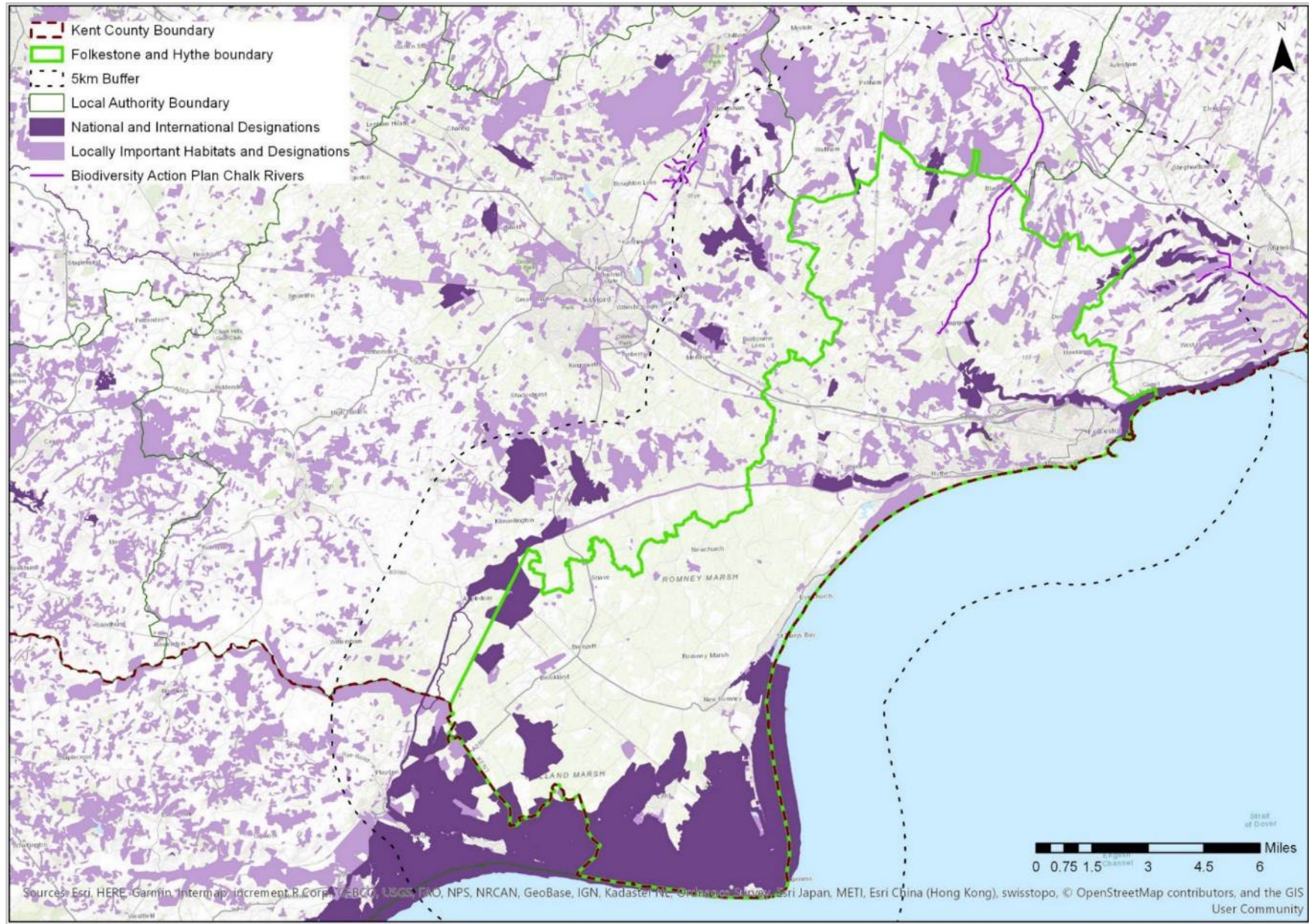
Summarised as: 'More, bigger, better and joined.'

Green infrastructure is important in supporting a landscape-scale or 'nature network' approach, through securing biodiversity value in a planned way. Green infrastructure also helps to bring nature into urban centres, which also connects people with wildlife.

Folkestone and Hythe's core biodiversity network is shown in Plan 5.

Tier 1 sites are those designated for their international or national importance (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest). Tier 2 includes sites which are designated for their local or county biodiversity importance or are managed for nature conservation (Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Natural England mapped priority habitats). Some of these sites may be managed for nature conservation; some may not.

Plan 5: Folkestone and Hythe's Core Biodiversity Network



Biodiversity Opportunity Areas also reflect the concentration of nature conservation assets, setting spatial areas in which to improve nature as a priority, see Plan 6 and Table 5.²⁹ Natural England habitat network mapping³⁰ highlights restoration and creation opportunities in the vicinity of priority habitats but does not include other sites with potential for improvement, especially in

urban areas, for example parks, or sites which are only mapped on local datasets, see Plan 5. This mapping does not highlight connections across parts of the Romney Marsh as no priority habitats have been mapped. This does not mean, however, that there is not a need and opportunity for connecting habitats across this area.

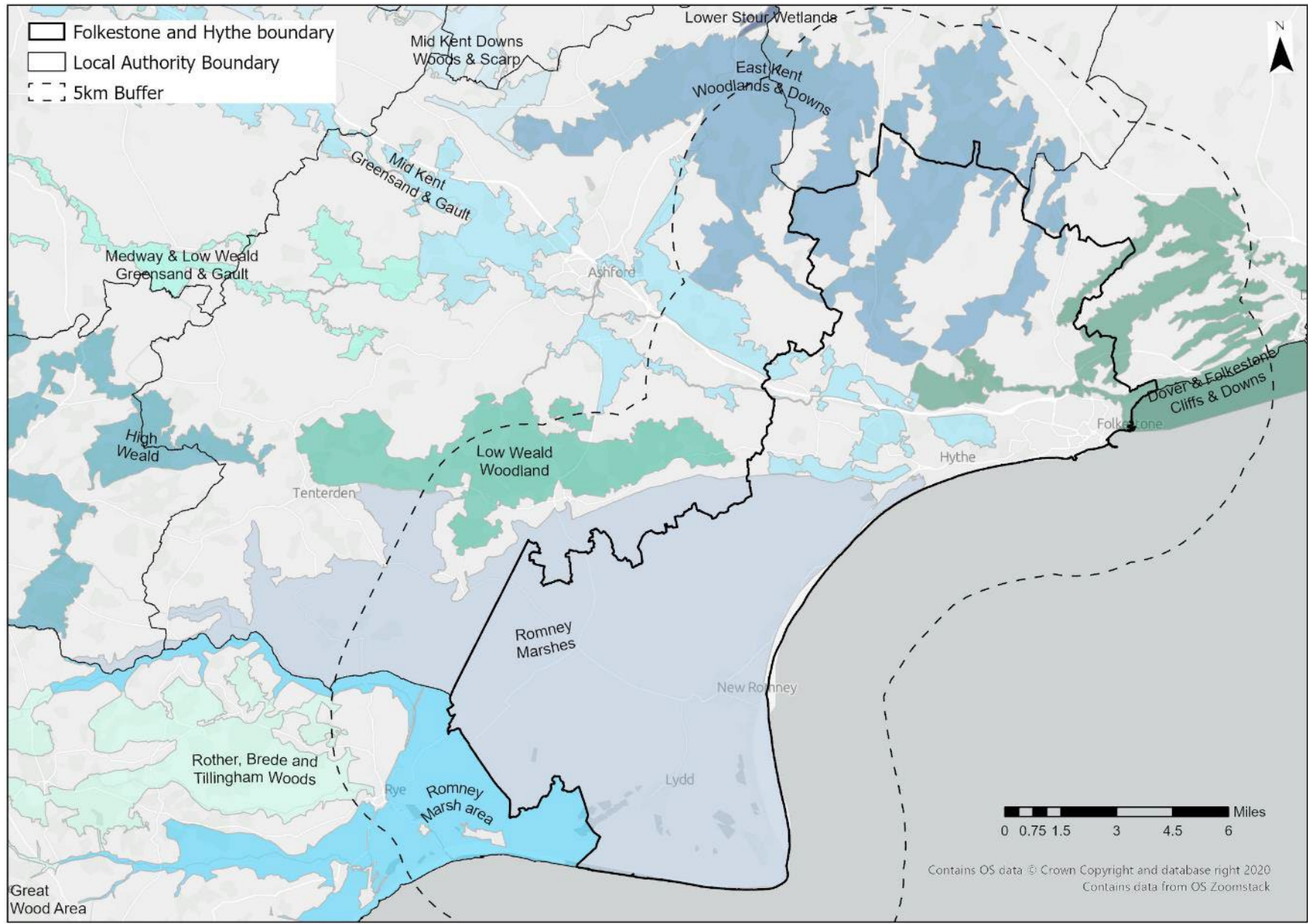
Table 5: Biodiversity Opportunity Area Descriptions and Targets³¹

Biodiversity Opportunity Area and Description	Biodiversity	Targets
<p>East Kent Woodlands and Downs A complex of woodland and grassland habitats, including several nationally and locally important sites, which includes some large blocks of woodland of importance for threatened butterflies. Acid grassland and more heathy habitats occur on the gravel exposures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented woodland and chalk grassland, including nationally important sites for both habitats, and internationally important chalk grassland; Important woodland, including wood pasture and beech and yew woodland, as well as much ancient woodland; Key species include woodland butterflies including and rare woodland flora. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chalk grassland creation, restoration and enhancement; Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland; Creation of species-rich neutral grassland.
<p>Mid Kent Greensand and Gault A predominantly farmed landscape at the scarp foot of the Downs, including rivers and their tributaries. This BOA stretches from north west of Maidstone to the outskirts of Folkestone and Hythe towns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally important acid grassland and heathland sites, as well as smaller acid grassland fragments; Scattered blocks of wood pasture and small, isolated woodlands; Key species include water vole, white-clawed crayfish and Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>, associated with river corridors. Some species associated with acid grassland and heath habitats are scarce or unknown elsewhere in Kent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation and restoration of acid grassland and heath; Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland; Improve ecological status of waterbodies; Recreate or restore wetland habitats along rivers and their tributaries;

Biodiversity Opportunity Area and Description	Biodiversity	Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure and manage important brownfield sites, particularly where these support Biodiversity Action Plan species; Avoid further fragmentation of habitats; Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.
<p>Romney Marshes and Rye Bay The Romney Marshes and Rye Bay area is one of the biggest opportunity areas in Kent and extends from Hythe through Rye and beyond into Sussex. The area is mainly highly productive arable land and pasture, but much is designated, including SSSIs which extend from the internationally rare vegetated shingle at Dungeness through Walland Marsh up towards Appledore. The BOA includes Hythe Bay recommended Marine Conservation Zone, which supports a very diverse assemblage of burrowing species in its subtidal-mud habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internationally important wetland and shingle habitats, most notably the vegetated shingle at Dungeness, which is important for biodiversity and geodiversity; Grazing marsh, and wet ditches and other water courses; Important species include brown hare, water vole, amphibians including great crested newt and common toad, medicinal leech, breeding and wintering wetland birds, rare plants such as greater water parsnip <i>Sium latifolium</i>, and invertebrates associated with shingle and wetland habitats. The area is important for bats, particularly serotine and soprano pipistrelle, and holds one of the few remaining tree sparrow populations in Kent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats and designated sites; Restore, recreate and enhance grazing marsh, fen, reedbed and other wetland habitats; Ensure no net loss and restore all coastal vegetated shingle to favourable or unfavourable recovering condition (subject to constraints arising from natural coastal changes); Conserve and enhance important intertidal and marine habitats; Create and enhance acid and species-rich neutral grassland; Provide guidelines on best practice for managing ditches to maximise biodiversity and work with landowners to restore management of 15% of ditches that are not part of the main drainage system; Identify how best to integrate a more natural functioning of the Dungeness coast; Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.

Biodiversity Opportunity Area and Description	Biodiversity	Targets
<p>Dover and Folkestone Cliffs and Downs</p> <p>A series of valleys around Dover and cliffs and cliff-top grassland, intertidal and subtidal chalk and the scarp slope of the North Downs. Much of the grassland is internationally important, with areas of locally and nationally important woodland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally important chalk grassland in dry valleys and on cliff tops; Coastal cliffs and slope including chalk cliff and soft cliffs, both with important foreshore and marine habitats, including nationally and internationally important areas of subtidal and intertidal chalk; <i>Sabellaria</i> reefs, both offshore and in some intertidal areas, providing important habitat for a wide range of species; Important woodlands on chalk and ragstone; Some vegetated shingle, wet woodland and fen habitats; Important species include plants and invertebrates associated with chalk cliff and chalk grassland habitats, including adder, silver-spotted skipper, small blue, Adonis blue, wild cabbage, and ox-tongue broomrape. Brown hare also an important species. White clawed crayfish is found in the area. Species of inshore waters include short-snouted seahorse and native oyster. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance important cliff, intertidal and marine habitats; Extend, reconnect, restore and enhance areas of chalk grassland; Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland; Create species-rich neutral grassland; Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.

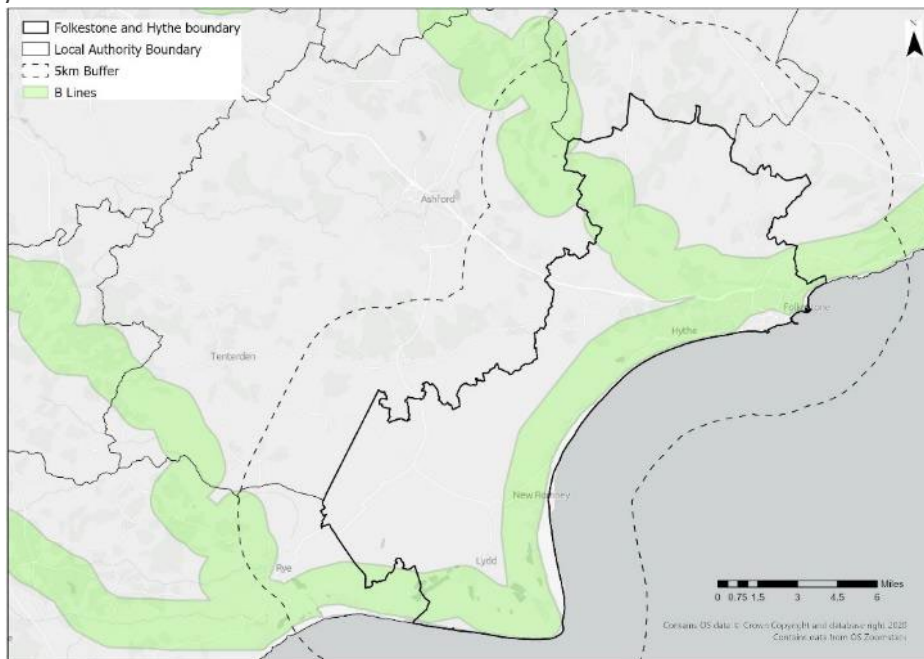
Plan 6: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas



There are other approaches, for example B-Lines, developed by Buglife,³² (Plan 7) which show insect 'pathways' through town and countryside. Natural England has also developed habitat network mapping based on priority habitats.

Mapping and approaches to restoring landscape scale ecologic networks should be reviewed and updated as necessary when the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been completed.

Plan 7: Buglife 'B-Lines' show opportunities to create corridors for pollinators



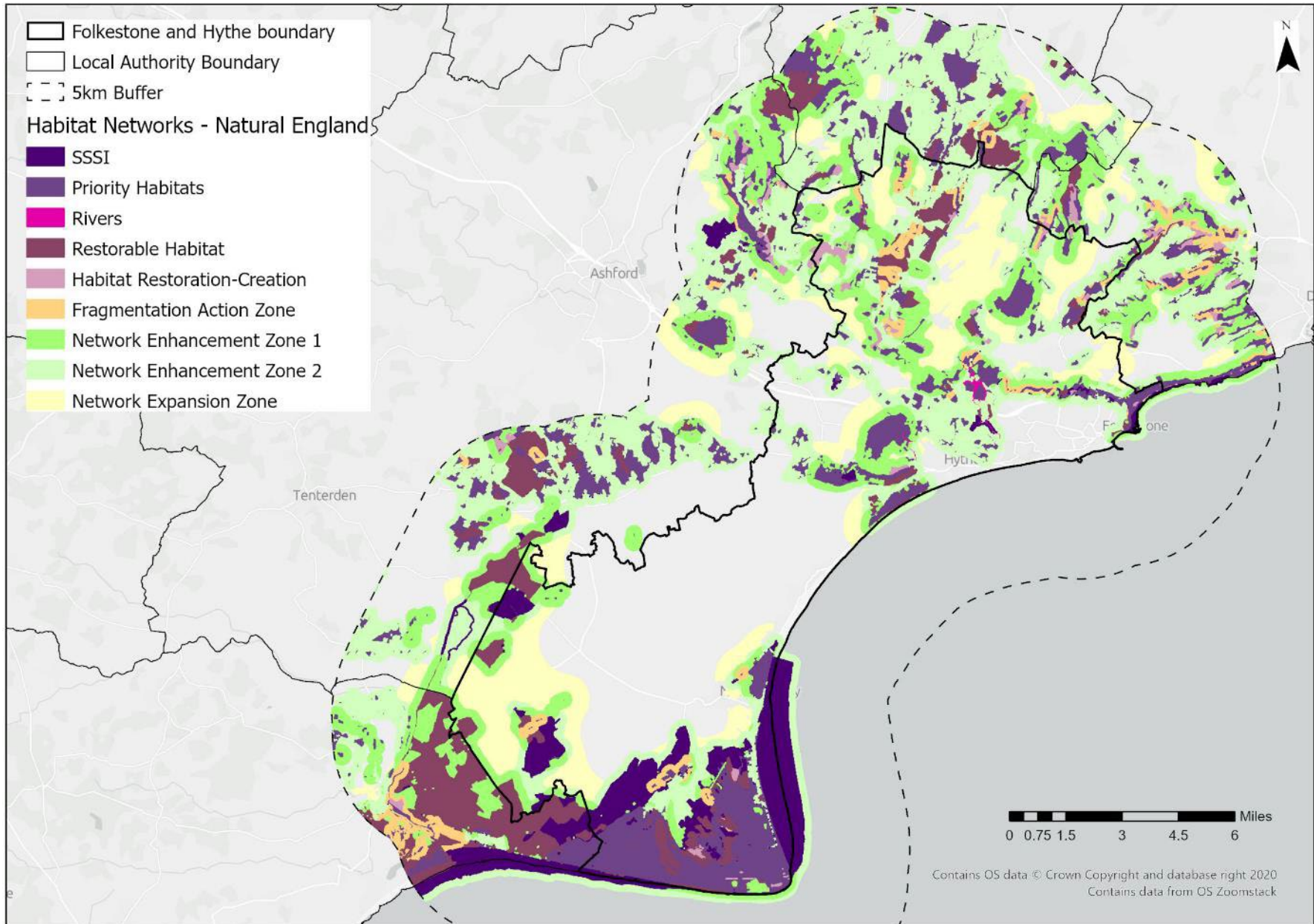
The following maps show priority areas in which to create functioning ecological networks. Within these areas priorities should be to:

- Improve the biodiversity value of existing semi-natural sites as the core assets of the corridors, conserving and enhancing the nature within the sites and ensuring they are under appropriate management;
- Buffering and expanding these sites by creating hospitable areas for nature around them;
- Create new sites for nature;
- Creating stepping stone sites within the corridors by making sites better for nature. This could include parks, urban greenspace and gardens.

However, the mapping of these areas does not mean that biodiversity improvements are only here. In the urban areas especially, there are discrete and important sites which are stepping stone sites for nature.

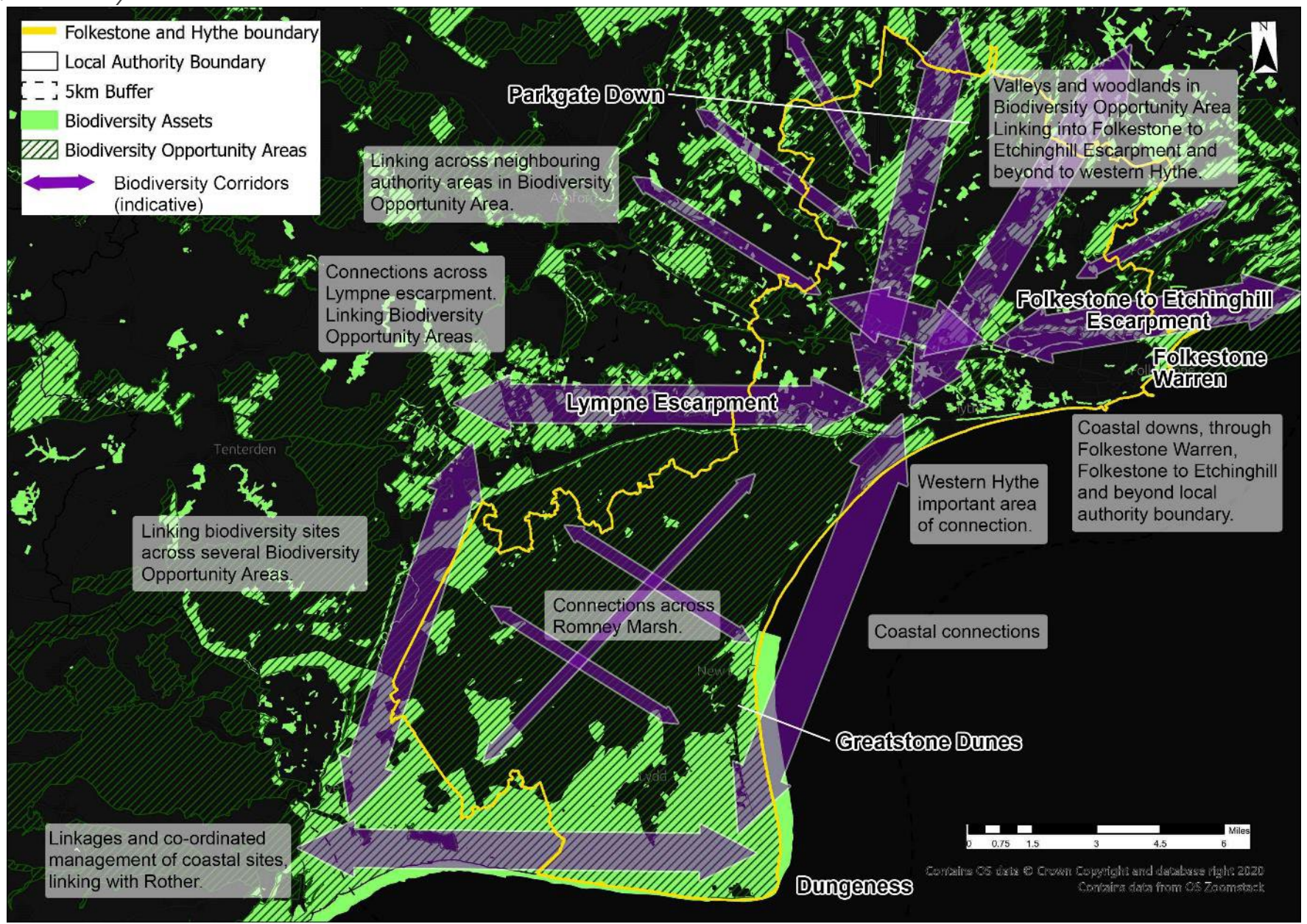
All development sites should seek biodiversity enhancement on site and ensure permeability for wildlife through the site as well as enhancements for wildlife, including hedgehog corridors and swift boxes. This is particularly important for sites within the corridors. Development must also seek biodiversity net gain in line with Local Plan policies.

Plan 8: Natural England Habitat Connectivity Mapping



Plan 9: Biodiversity Connections

Page 54



Climate Change

Climate change over coming decades will bring a range of direct and indirect pressures on biodiversity. Many species and habitats are strongly influenced by temperature and rainfall and the interactions between these.

Natural England has developed a climate change vulnerability model to assess the vulnerability of priority habitats. The model uses four measurements which, when combined, provide an overall assessment of vulnerability to climate change.³³

The overall vulnerability mapping for all priority habitats is shown in Plan 10. As the model only includes priority habitats some important habitat areas which are not in Natural England's dataset are not included. Habitats which have been assessed as being highly sensitive with low adaptive capacity score more highly (3 is the maximum, darker colour) and those habitats which have low sensitivity and high adaptive capacity are less vulnerable and score lower.

The mapping shows that the fragmented, wetland and low-lying habitats around Romney Marsh are highly vulnerable. The chalk stream in the Elham Valley and the Royal Military Canal are also noticeable as vulnerable.



Dungeness Romney Marsh

Plan 10: Climate Change Vulnerability - Priority Habitats

Page 56

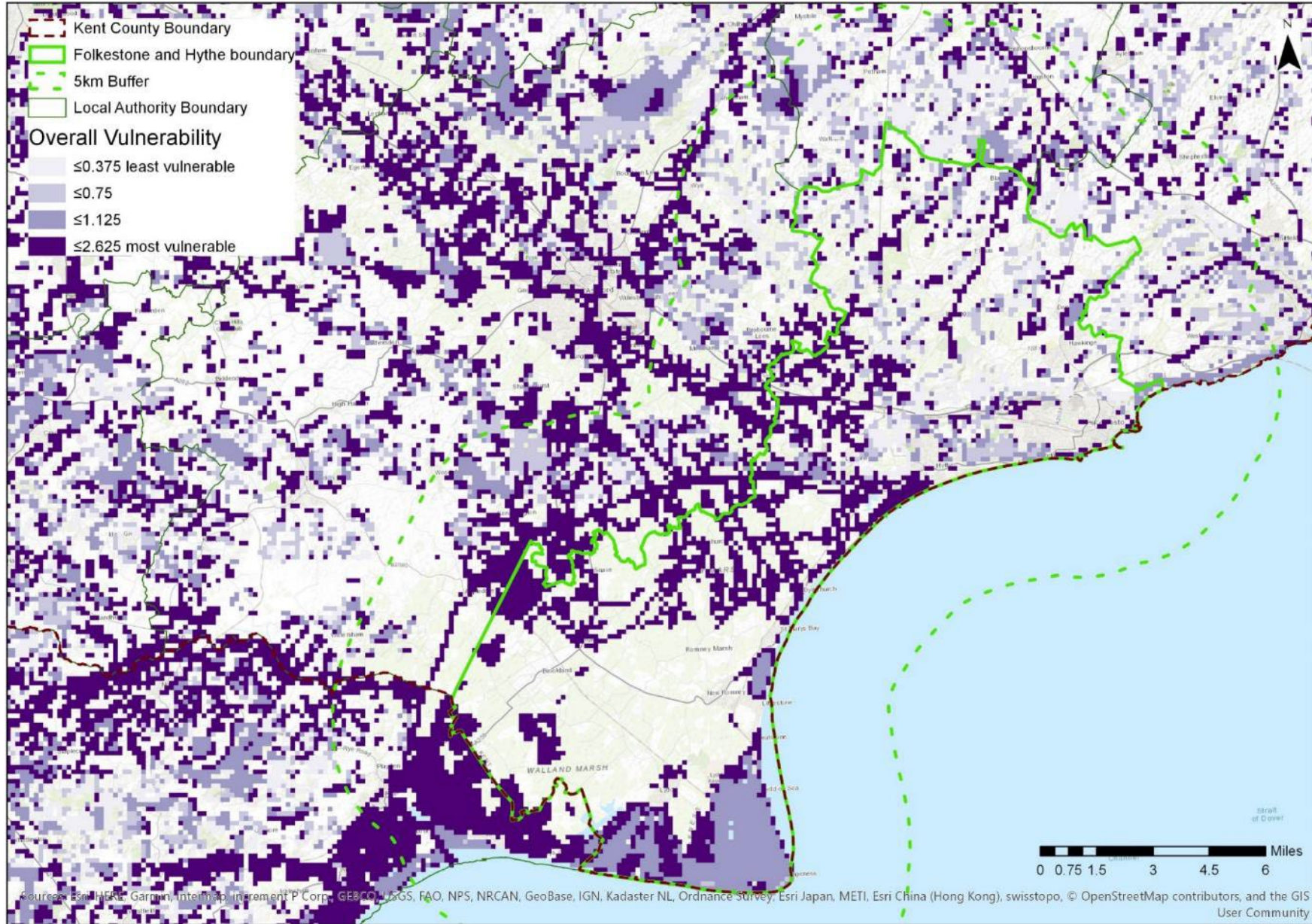


Table 6: Priority Habitat Climate Change Vulnerability – Summary

	Vulnerability	Area	Commentary
Highly vulnerable	Highly sensitive habitats with low adaptive capacity.	Rivers and watercourses on Romney Marsh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rivers and river valleys are moderately sensitive habitats and standing water is highly sensitive; Scores highly vulnerable for terrain; Doesn't meet management criteria (i.e. management not sufficiently in place to support adaptation to climate change).
		Areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, some in Folkestone and Hythe and also in neighbouring Rother district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scores highly due to sensitivity of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh habitat; Scores highly vulnerable for terrain; Doesn't meet management criteria (i.e. management not sufficiently in place to support adaptation to climate change).
		Nailbourne - chalk Biodiversity Action Plan river.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scores highly due to fragmentation of habitat; Doesn't meet management criteria (i.e. management not sufficiently in place to support adaptation to climate change); Intermittent waterbody dependant on rainfall and groundwater.
		Hythe Ranges - coastal vegetated shingle to west of Hythe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal vegetated shingle moderately sensitive habitat; Scores highly vulnerable for terrain; Doesn't meet management criteria (i.e. management not sufficiently in place to support adaptation to climate change).
Moderately vulnerable	Medium sensitivity and medium adaptive capacity or potentially low sensitivity but also low adaptive capacity.	Dungeness Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although moderate vulnerability overall, scores highly for vulnerability under terrain; Coastal vegetated shingle moderately sensitive habitat;
		Greatstone Dunes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal dunes moderately sensitive habitat; Although moderate vulnerability overall, scores highly for vulnerability under terrain;
		North east of the district mixed vulnerability – some areas are highly vulnerable, some less vulnerable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some due to fragmentation especially around edges of larger habitat blocks; Some due to terrain vulnerability, especially at the base of the scarp slope where there is less terrain variability.
Less vulnerable	Low sensitivity habitats and high adaptive capacity.	Woodlands in the north east of the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed habitats, but more deciduous woodland – this habitat least sensitive to climate change; Some areas do score highly vulnerable in the terrain parameter and in areas where there is fragmentation and smaller blocks or less connected blocks of habitat.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- Climate change impacts (see next page), compounded by other threats to habitats and species as listed below;
- Lack of resources to manage some nature conservation sites sustainably and in the long term;
- Small, fragmented and disconnected sites in some areas particularly in urban areas;
- Development has been identified as the greatest pressure on Kent habitats, through loss of land and increased population.³⁴ This pressure can be mitigated through obligations on developers to deliver biodiversity net gain;
- Recreational pressure on sensitive sites can cause disturbance to wildlife. For the Dungeness Complex mitigation should be delivered through successful implementation of the Strategic Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS). Other sites, for example chalk grassland, may also be vulnerable to recreational pressure.
- Recreational pressure and anti-social behaviour can hinder the implementation of conservation management, e.g. grazing on urban sites, as well as cause direct damage;
- Farming has a significant impact on biodiversity and there is uncertainty around the future of this and future farming and environment payments. 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' within the Kent Downs AONB may bring significant benefits to this part of Folkestone and Hythe;
- Woodland which is small, fragmented and not managed;
- Increase in invasive non-native species, pests and diseases particularly ash dieback;
- Some Sites of Special Scientific Interest are in unfavourable condition;
- A wide range of pollutants, from many sources with the most widespread current harm from excess nutrients (phosphate and compounds of nitrogen) in air and water. There has also been a rise in concern over plastics pollution, particularly in the water environment;
- Lack of information on some species and habitats;
- Some Kent Biodiversity Action Plan species under threat and declining.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

1. Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species

- 1.1. Protect and enhance the sites which form the core of the biodiversity network – those sites designated for nature conservation and those with known biodiversity value.
- 1.2. Ensure that Folkestone and Hythe-owned sites with nature conservation value are protected and their value enhanced, bringing declining sites into good condition and reducing sources of harm.
- 1.3. Protect, enhance and seek to expand areas of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats which are notable within Folkestone and Hythe - chalk grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.
- 1.4. Protect and seek to increase populations of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority species which are notable within Folkestone and Hythe.
- 1.5. Deliver measures set out in the 'SARMS' to ensure sustainable recreation across the Dungeness Complex.

2. Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change

- 2.1. Reduce sources of harm to existing biodiversity sites.
- 2.2. Develop ecologically resilient and varied landscapes through conserving and enhancing local variation within

sites and habitats and making space for the natural development of rivers and coasts.

- 2.3. Establish ecological networks through habitat protection, restoration and creation.
- 2.4. Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into conservation management, planning and practice.
- 2.5. Work with partners to deliver a resilient network and with neighbouring authorities to develop connections over local authority boundaries.
- 2.6. Seek to create mosaics and overall abundance of wildlife alongside the protection of specific habitats and species.
- 2.7. Work with the Kent Nature Partnership to develop and deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as part of the National Nature Recovery Network.
- 2.8. Sustain a healthy tree stock and ensure no net loss of trees, manage existing woodland estates and create and restore hedgerows.
- 2.9. Continue to increase the number of wildflower verges.
- 2.10. Increase habitats for pollinator species

3. Link people and nature

- 3.1. Celebrate and raise awareness of Folkestone and Hythe iconic species and habitats and the need to conserve them.
- 3.2. Get people involved in conservation activities and tree planting.

- 3.3. Support local people, parish and town councils and community organisations in taking community action for nature and greenspace.
- 3.4. Promote the action of residents to improve wildlife through gardening for wildlife, create hedgehog highways and install swift boxes.
- 3.5. Incorporate nature into Folkestone and Hythe-owned parks and amenity spaces so that people can experience nature close to where they live and create stepping stones for wildlife, for example through permanent wildlife areas such as wildflower meadows, or through initiatives such as 'No Mow May'.
- 3.6. Designate more Local Nature Reserves to increase the hectare provision per 1,000 people with a more even distribution across the district.
- 3.7. Improve school grounds, including tree planting, growing spaces and wildflower gardens;
- 3.8. Link with the vibrant arts and cultural community in the district to

4. Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts

- 4.1. Bring forward nature-based solutions as cost-effective, climate adapted and biodiversity-supporting alternatives to 'grey' engineering solutions.
- 4.2. Increase tree and woodland cover, ensuring that this follows the principles of 'right tree, right place'. Trees should be planted where this fits with the landscape character and should not be planted on sites with other biodiversity interest which would be lost through tree

planting. Urban trees should be fitting for the size and location of space.

- 4.3. Develop a tree and woodland strategy to ensure tree planting follows principle of 'right tree right place', to promote sustainable woodland management, to plan for the effects of ash dieback and to increase the overall canopy of Folkestone and Hythe.
- 4.4. Identify habitat areas within Folkestone and Hythe for protection as carbon sinks and wildlife habitats. This should include both terrestrial and marine habitats.

5. Ensure development is sustainable

- 5.1. Incorporate biodiversity into housing developments, including hedgehog highways, swift boxes and biodiversity-friendly planting in streets and gardens.

Access, Recreation and Active Travel

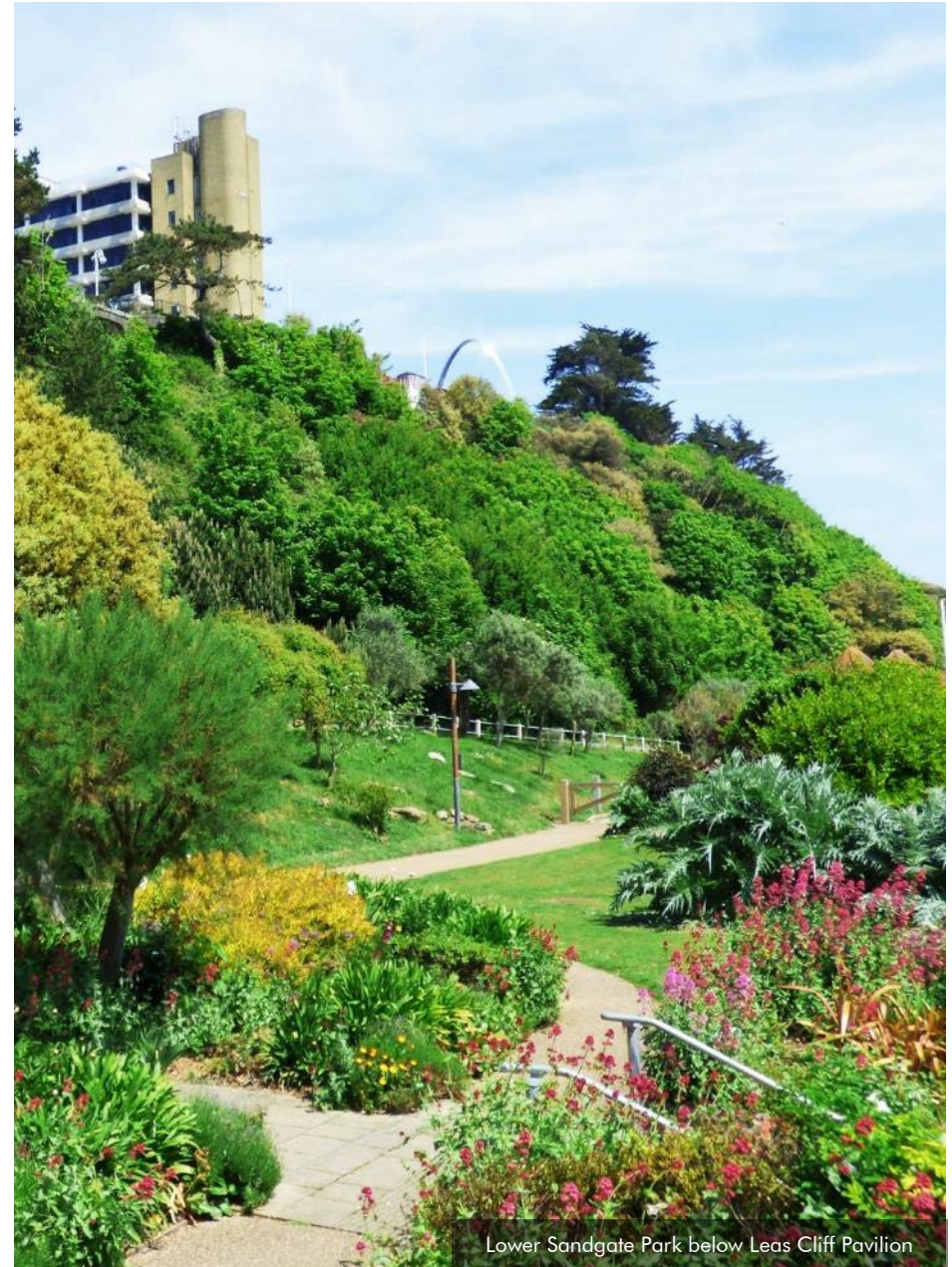
Introduction

Access to greenspace, the countryside and natural environments is important for health and both physical and mental wellbeing. Access networks can also support active travel through cycling and walking, which also supports health, as well as reducing congestion and pollution. Access to nature can also help people to connect to nature and become more involved and engaged in caring for it.

Accessible Greenspaces

Open spaces not only provide areas for recreation and access, but they can enhance the landscape and urban setting, help to mitigate against air pollution and provide nature conservation habitats. Ensuring that open spaces provide a range of these benefits is critical to green infrastructure planning.

There are a wide range of accessible greenspaces in Folkestone and Hythe, some of these are owned and managed by Folkestone and Hythe Council, but some valuable spaces are managed by other organisations. The provision of these spaces in Folkestone and Hythe is shown in Plan 11.



Lower Sandgate Park below Leas Cliff Pavilion

Sub Regional Open Spaces

Lower Leas Coastal Park

The area below the famous Leas at Folkestone was created in 1784 when a landslip produced a new strip of land between the beach and the new cliff line. The park has had Green Flag status since 2007, meaning it has been recognised as one of the best green spaces in the country.

There is a fun zone in the centre of the park, in addition to the largest free play area in the South East. The play area is designed specifically for inclusive play – it is wheelchair accessible, with low level play panels. The Mermaid Cafe is situated close to the promenade and entertainment is provided throughout the summer across the park, including storytelling, participative art, live music and guided walks.

The Upper Leas gardens at the top of the cliffs at Folkestone and the Lower Leas gardens along the foot of the cliffs were created in the late 19th century to attract Victorian holidaymakers. In 1921 Folkestone Council commissioned James Pulham and Son to

create a new path – known as the Zigzag Path. The path is in five sections and covers a substantial vertical area of about 75 metres across and 50 metres high in the artificial rock known as Pulhamite. It incorporates steps, seats, plant pockets, low walls, and with tunnels, arches and caves at each turn. The rest of the park is the wild zone and is managed as a wildlife habitat.

The park is open at all times. National Cycle Route 2 runs along the Lower Sandgate Road. It is a valuable and well used park which greatly adds to the urban fabric of Folkestone town.

East Cliff and Warren

Part of this site has been declared a Country Park and Local Nature Reserve. The Warren was once chalk grassland, and photographs show that around 1920 there were virtually no trees here.

In 1924, the land was gifted to the people of Folkestone and grazing animals were banned, allowing shrubs and trees to spread. There are still patches of flower-rich grassland and there are many rare insects recorded here. For example, this is the only



Martello Tower, East Cliff

site left in Kent where the grayling butterfly can be found. Areas of chalk grassland are kept clear of scrub for wildflowers and insects. Chalk grassland wildflowers grow alongside woodland plants, while the sea air promotes the growth of rock sea lavender, wild cabbage and rock samphire. Around 150 different species of birds can be found. It is of national importance for wildlife and geology and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserve.

The Warren is formed from a series of landslips that have taken place over the last 200 years. The last great landslip was in 1915, since when the sea defences to protect the Dover to Folkestone railway line have stabilised the coast. These landslips are of great interest to geomorphologists and the original description of the geology of the upper chalk was made here. The Warren is one of the best sites in Southern England to find fossils.

The area of the East Cliff closest to the town centre has open lawns overlooking the cliffs with a playground, bowls club and pitch and putt golf course. Several relatively arduous walks lead along the coast, including the Four Seasons Walk, which has a series of interpretation panels showing the effect of the seasons on wildlife.

There are three Martello Towers on the East Cliff which were built in 1804-9 to help defend Folkestone against the threatened invasion by the French led by Napoleon. These are of great historic importance.

The White Cliffs Countryside Project organises regular guided walks and children's activities at The Warren. This park and open space has at least one accessible route but otherwise is considered to be less suitable for visitors with pushchairs and/or wheelchairs.

Brockhill Country Park

Brockhill Country Park sits on the former Brockhill Park Estate, historically linked to Saltwood Castle. The estate was bought by Kent County Council in 1947 and opened to the public in 1986. It is managed by Kent County Council.

Once part of the estate of a Norman manor, Brockhill Park has a central lake, open grassland and meadows, a picnic area, a new play area and refreshments at Brockhill Café. The park is rich in wildlife and is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest.



Interpretation Board at Brockhill Country

Brockhill Park's location and the variety of its landscape make it a good place to walk. A circular walk starts at Brockhill and leads through and along local woods and country lanes, although the topography of the park makes parts of it less suitable for visitors with pushchairs and/or wheelchairs.

Brockhill has a fully equipped indoor classroom, an outdoor classroom, and a unique mixture of woodland, wetland and grassland habitats.

Accessible Natural Greenspace

The definition of what comprises natural and semi-natural greenspace varies. However, these greenspaces are generally recognised to be areas accessible to the public, free of charge, which are managed for nature or have a large proportion of semi-natural vegetation or habitats.

Defined by English Nature³⁵ in the early 1990's, Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) is a category of greenspace at which a "*feeling of naturalness predominates*".³⁶ The term 'accessible' has a specific meaning and means the site must always be available for the public to use and without charge.³⁷

Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt), developed in 1996, provides a set of benchmarks for ensuring access to places near to where people live.³⁸

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) gave the public the right of access to land mapped as 'open country'

(mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. Areas of chalk downland and common land in Folkestone and Hythe district are 'CROW Act Access Land' (see Plan 11). Much of the coastal margin created through the England Coast Path is also open access land.

Folkestone and Hythe's Open Space Strategy (June 2017)

This sets out quality, accessibility and quantity standards for open space provision. The quantity standards have been developed by assessing the existing quantity of each open space typology.

This was then reviewed against both national guidelines on open space provision. Rather than develop a quantity standard for each typology, parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural urban green space typologies have been grouped together. It recommends a quantity standard of 2.89 hectares per head of population. The study also includes proposed accessibility, quality and value standards. Sites outside of the parks and gardens and natural/ semi- natural green space typologies were not divided by hierarchy.

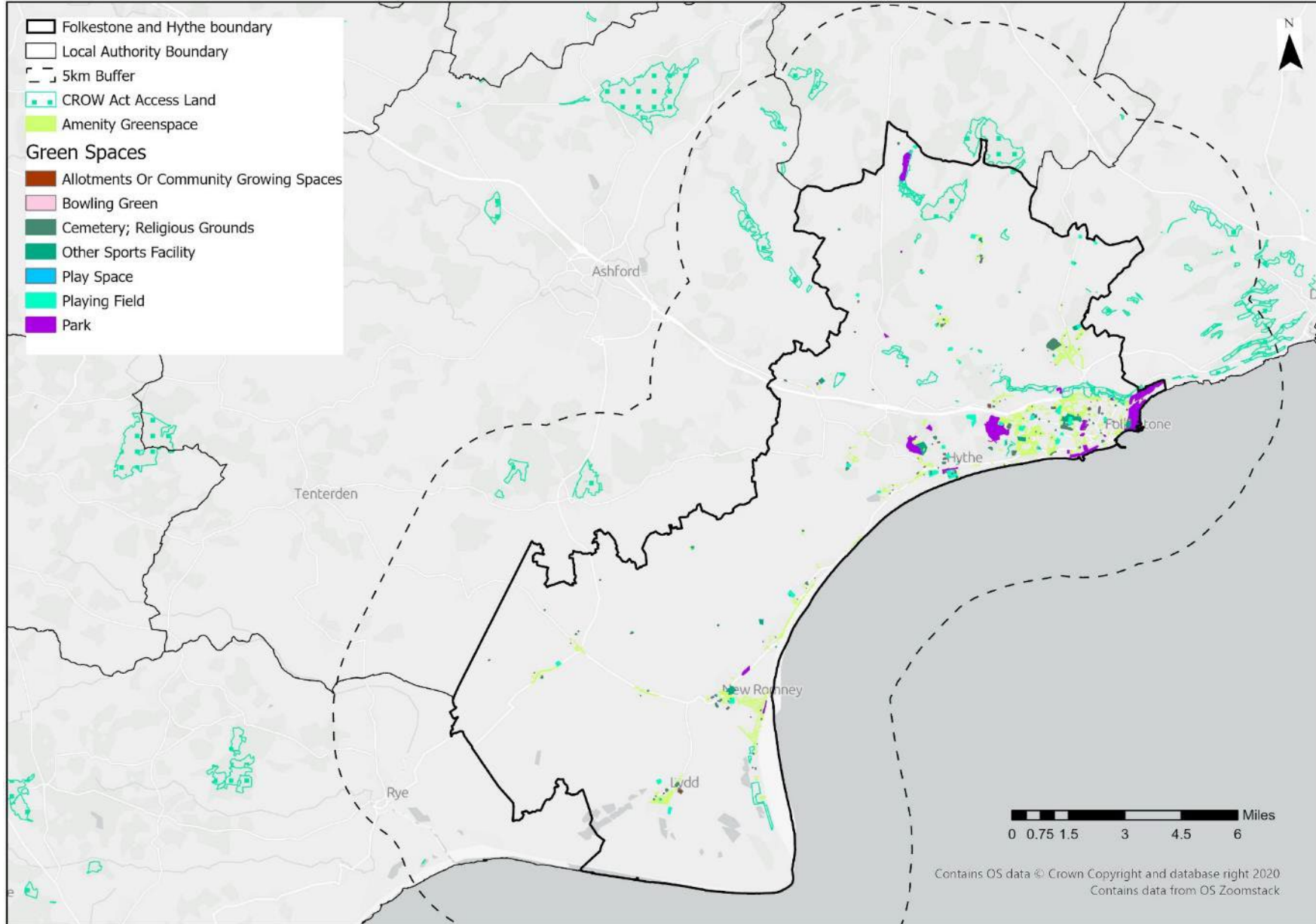
The Open Space Strategy shows that the North Downs and Romney Marsh area are currently below the quantity standard and this deficit is likely to increase to a small extent by 2031, if the population increases. There is access to larger spaces away from urban and residential areas, including West Wood and Park Wood and Dungeness. Projected population growth is likely to have a moderate negative impact on the quantity of open space provision in Folkestone and Hythe. Pockets of rural settlements with evident deficiencies include Lympne and Sellindge. Etchinghill Tunnel, a green corridor, requires potential enhancement and opportunities for improvements to the former railway line between Etchinghill and Lyminge are being explored.

Table 2: Current provision of open space by area³⁹

Primary typology	Urban / ha	North Downs / ha	Romney Marsh / ha	Total / ha
Parks and gardens	69.18	32.62	20.69	122.49
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	209.87	520.53	1054.12	1784.52
Green corridor	136.89	4.94	779.47	921.3
Amenity green space	112.51	46.34	46.25	205.1
Allotments	6.64	3.31	3.39	13.34
Cemeteries and churchyards	12.59	14.33	7.80	34.72
Provision for children and young people	1.47	1.75	0.60	3.82
Outdoor sports provision	193.47	124.93	200.03	518.43
All typologies	742.62	748.75	2112.35	3603.72

Significant publicly accessible woodlands managed by the Forestry Commission are found within this area, including West Wood and Park Wood. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a number of Local Wildlife Sites also encompass this area. There is the opportunity to work with the Forestry Commission to improve public access and public recreation within woodland areas.

Plan 11: Green Spaces



There are internationally designated wildlife habitats within the Romney Marsh / Dungeness area. These areas are popular destinations for visitors. However, Walland and Denge Marsh within the south of the district includes the settlements of Brookland and Brenzett which are deficient in access.

Many of the North Downs and Romney Marsh area's residents are not within easy walking distance of a publicly accessible open space due to the lack of local scale provision and the amount of open space that is not available for informal recreation - such as agricultural land, marshland or sports pitches with restricted public access. However, a large proportion of residents are within the catchment area of a sub-regional scale natural and semi-natural greenspace, although through site audits and consultation these areas tended to require further enhancement for site-based accessibility, quality and value.

Opportunities should be sought to ensure publicly accessible open spaces are provided within new developments in the vicinity of these areas. However, although the quiet lanes and existing promoted routes make this area well-suited for leisure cycling and walking, the SARMS report cautions that any plans to enhance access and bring visitors close to the Natura sites should be carefully assessed.⁴⁰

The communities which experience some of the greatest population densities are predominantly located within the urban areas, which also experiences high levels of deprivation. This area fortunately has a higher quantity of public open space in the district and has largely good sub-regional site access throughout with the exception of Hythe Rural Ward in the west.

The Open Space Strategy shows that the area around Hythe has the greatest level of deficiency. It recommends that existing green links and corridors should be strengthened including the extensive beaches, cliff-tops and the Royal Military Canal. The Folkestone and Sandgate "Green Chain" links urban and urban fringe sites including the Seabrook Valley, Folkestone Downs, Sandgate Escarpment, the Lower Leas Coastal Park and the East Cliff and The Warren. Future management should focus on enhancing the larger sub-regional open space sites such as The Warren. It should also seek to provide local scale open spaces particularly in areas which experience greatest levels of deprivation together with communities which do not have access to gardens or there is no access to other open spaces.

The Open Space Strategy concluded that, as a general district-wide theme, analysis of site benchmarking highlights a notable proportion of low value parks, natural and semi-natural green space and green corridors across the district that could benefit from investment to improve their functionality.⁴¹

The key strengths and issues (relevant to this study) identified during the open space audits are summarised below:

- The quality and value of publicly accessible open space across Folkestone and Hythe is relatively good, there are three Green Flag Award sites. However there are sites across all typologies which experience issues with condition and functionality. (Warren??)
- Approximately 4.3% of open spaces audited in the assessment fall within the parks and gardens typology and 121.64 ha are publicly accessible.
- Natural and semi-natural greenspace is the largest typology of open spaces in Folkestone and Hythe. These sites form approximately 61.98% of the total quantity of open space covering a publicly accessible area of 1754.18ha.
- There are large expanses of open space within Folkestone and Hythe which have a number of environmental designations and considerations and are well used by Folkestone and Hythe residents and surrounding districts. There are internationally designated wildlife habitats within the Romney Marsh/Dungeness area.
- The limited provision of larger open spaces in Folkestone and Hythe particularly within the centre of the district and

to the south-west highlights the significance of the network of smaller sites to residents. These smaller open spaces should therefore support a range of facilities and be able to withstand challenges from increased use and a changing climate.

- 47 open spaces fall within the natural and semi-natural greenspace typology. However open spaces within other typologies including linear open spaces/ green corridors and churchyards and cemeteries contribute significantly to the district's biodiversity.
- Green corridors are a key component of the open space network in Folkestone and Hythe. These sites are predominantly linked to the waterways and coastal areas which have shaped the gradual evolution of the district. As well as contributing to local character, these sites provide opportunities for recreation, sustainable travel for people, and nature conservation.⁴²

Active Travel

Active travel means walking or cycling as a means of transport rather than for leisure purposes. It can be undertaken for a whole journey or parts of it.

Active travel allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives, bringing health and wellbeing benefits as well as saving money and reducing the need to find additional time for exercise. It helps both the environment and health through reducing air pollution and outputs of climate change gases. It can not only help reduce congestion, in urban areas it may also provide a quicker journey than by motor vehicle. Investment in active travel also makes economic sense, with a high benefit to cost ratio for many schemes.

A well-designed, accessible environment can encourage people to walk or cycle. People cycle more when there is cycle infrastructure and separation from traffic. Conversely, a lack of routes, poor information about routes, concerns over safety and the speed and convenience of motorised transport all act as barriers to people choosing active travel. The desire to cycle and walk is influenced not only by distance, but also by the quality of the experience.

A report by the Department for Transport, Walking and Cycling Statistics: England 2018 reported that Folkestone and Hythe has currently around 74.5% of adults walking at least once a week, which is marginally higher than the county average of 71.5%. Some 17.3% of adults reported to cycle at least once a week, which is above the county average of 11.1%. Cycling levels in the

district are around the mid-point for Kent, and the propensity to cycle within the district is reasonable. This suggests it is possible that improved cycling facilities and encouragement of cycling will lead to a greater uptake.



Sustrans National Cycle Route Way Post at Hythe

Folkestone and Hythe Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

The Department for Transport (DfT) launched the national *Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy* in April 2017, which aims to increase cycling and walking for journeys. Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) provide a new strategic approach to identifying the cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. They enable a long-term approach to

developing local cycling and walking networks, ideally over a 10-year period, and form a vital part of the Government's strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle.

The key outputs of LCWIPs are:

- A network plan for walking and cycling which identifies preferred routes and core zones for further development;
- A prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment;
- A report which sets out the underlying analysis carried out and provides a narrative which supports the identified improvements and network.

The Folkestone and Hythe LCWIP has been prepared in consultation with Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Highway Authority and KCC will be responsible for implementing the actions within the LCWIP⁴³.

The urban centres of Folkestone and Hythe are the focus of the LCWIP due to the concentration of population and the need for travel to work, school and other destinations. A comprehensive, high quality and well used walking and cycling network will support and enable the growth aspirations of the district and shall reduce total vehicle trips from existing areas of the district.

Several routes are being modelled based on the Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT) and Route Selection Tool (RST). This will help the council understand and define which areas of the walking and cycling network are likely to be most popular to attract growing usage in future.

Cycling Route Map

The main promotional tool in Folkestone and Hythe to support cycling is a Cycle Route Map, launched in October 2019 (Plan 12). This has been developed by Explore Kent and partners and is regularly reviewed and updated when new routes are built. It is available in paper form from outlets in the town centre and online from Explore Kent.⁴⁴ Explore Kent also has a good website that details walking and cycling routes with downloadable and informative maps and guides. There is also the Kent Connected webpage which gives personalised travel planning options.⁴⁵

Network Plan for Walking

Many of the benefits of cycling and walking are shared and very often improvements for one will affect the other as large parts of the two networks overlap. The Walking Audit Tool assesses routes using five core design outputs - attractiveness comfort, directness, safety and coherence of a route and recommendations have been made to improve the Folkestone and Hythe walking routes.

The Local Plan provides an opportunity to plan for new growth with active travel as a key principle. This, and all subsequent reviews of the Local Plan and its associated documents will include the role of active travel in enabling the growth in population and jobs. It should also be dovetailed with planned improvements to green / blue infrastructure.

Public Rights of Way

Public rights of way in the district cover 578 km or 359 miles. There are more footpaths (for walking only) than other types of rights of way, and there is a higher concentration of public bridleways in the north of the district (plan 13).

There are many promoted routes using rights of way within the Folkestone and Hythe district (see Plans 14 & 15 and Table 3).

Longer distance routes include the England Coastal Path, the Elham Valley Way, the North Downs Way, the Coast to Cathedral – Dover to Canterbury, the Royal Military Canal, Sandwich in Kent to Rye in East Sussex, the Elham Valley Way and the Saxon Shore Way.

Kent County Council actively publicises many ‘promoted routes’, all of which are available on the Explore Kent website.

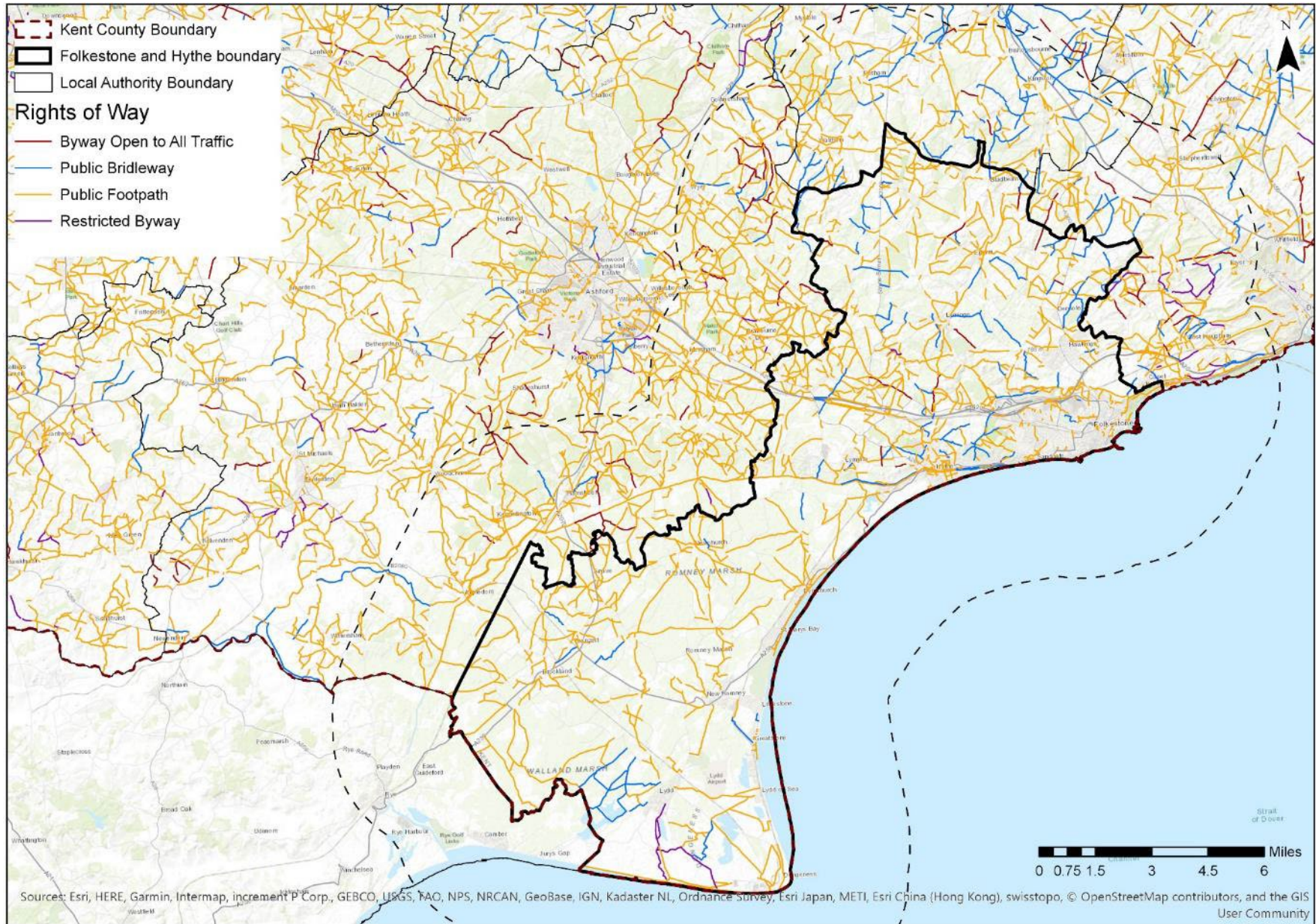
These provide many miles of promoted routes, with significant sections traffic-free. There are also many shorter walking, cycling and riding routes.

Opportunities to join up PROW to create new promoted routes or healthy walks should be considered.

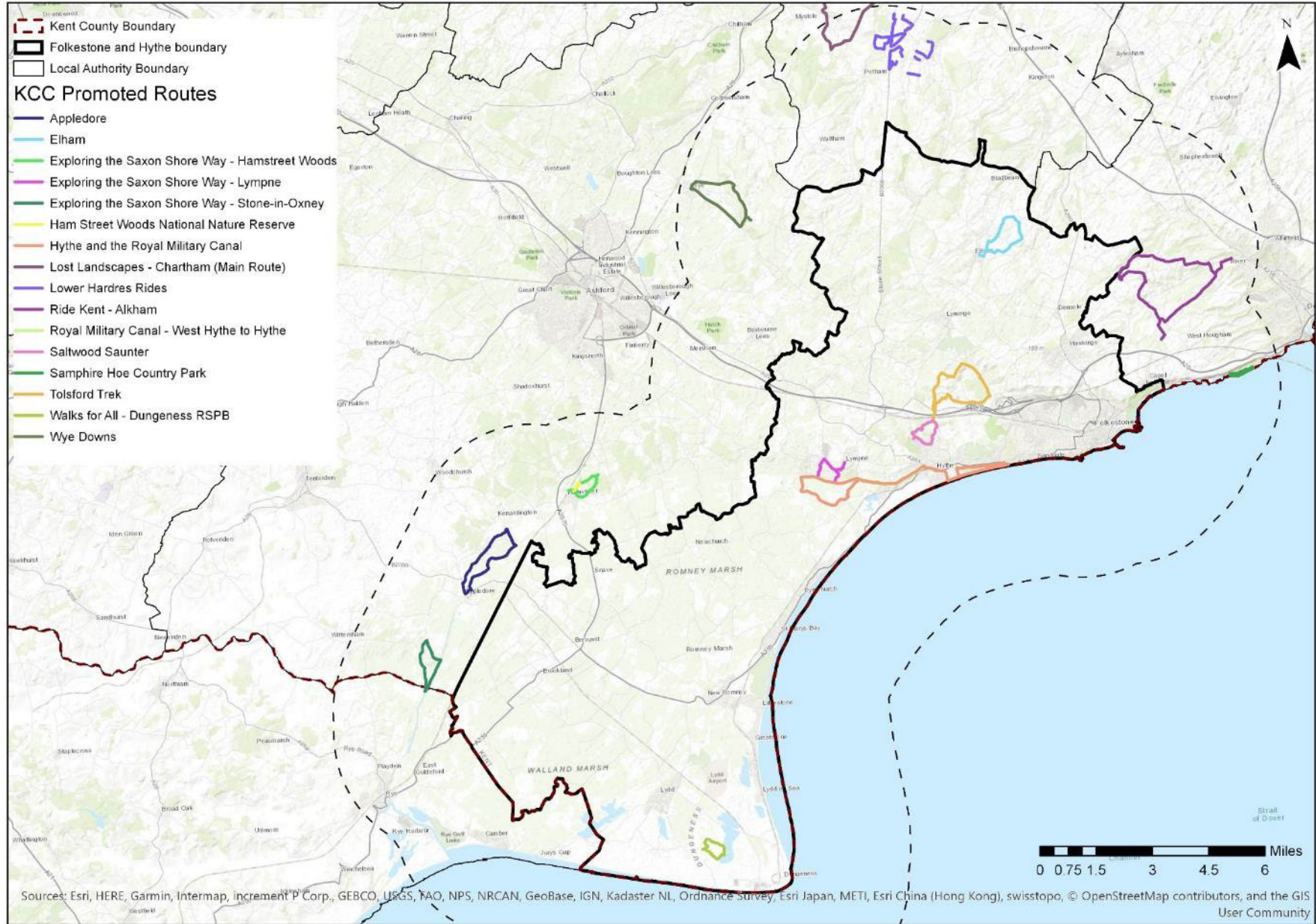
Table 3: Promoted Routes (Explore Kent)

Name	Type	Circular/Linear	Length
Elham	Walk	Circular	3.7 miles (5.9 km)
Hythe and the Royal Military Canal	Cycle	Linear	13 miles (20.9km)
Tolsford Trek	Walk	Circular	7.8 miles (12.5 km)
Sandwich in Kent to Rye in East Sussex	Cycle	Linear	54 miles (87 km)
Saltwood Saunter	Walk	Circular	2.1 miles (3.3 km)
Exploring the Saxon Shore Way - Lympe	Walk	Circular	2.5 miles (4 km)
Royal Military Canal - West Hythe to Hythe	Easy access walk	Linear	1.9 miles (3 km) or 4 miles (6.4 km)
Elham Valley Way	Walk	Linear	22.5 miles (36.2 km)
Walks for All - Dungeness RSPB	Easy access walk	Circular	1.8 miles (2.9 km)

Plan 13: Public Rights of Way



Plan 15: Shorter Promoted Routes (Explore Kent)



Countryside recreation is a fundamental component of the economy. According to The Volume and Value of Walking and Cycling in the South East Region report by Tourism South East, there are estimated to be nearly 143 million walking trips for leisure made annually in South East England. The expenditure associated with these trips is in the region of £2.7 billion. The same report estimates that nearly 18 million cycling trips are made in South East England, generating an estimated £345 million.

When visitors are in Kent, the landscape is fundamental factor in choosing the type of activities they like to do, with 46% saying they enjoy walking, 9% cycling, 42% visiting a country pub and 19% trying local produce. Research into visitors to the Kent Downs AONB and High Weald AONB show that the main reason they choose to come is to walk in the countryside.⁴⁶

The rights of way network also supports sustainable and 'active' travel modes. The rights of way and greenspace networks provide an immense free resource across the county and, largely, there is no need for special training or equipment.

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Kent County Council has prepared a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).⁴⁷ These plans must assess the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, as well as the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and leisure. They must also assess the accessibility of public rights of way to blind or partially-sighted people and others with mobility problems.

The rights of way network forms a fundamental component of the green infrastructure network and improvement and expansion of the network as set out in Kent's Rights of Way Improvement Plan would significantly support the aims of green infrastructure strategies.

The Kent County Council ROWIP aims *"To provide a high quality, well-maintained Public Rights of Way network, that is well used and enjoyed. The use of the network will support the Kent economy, encourage active lifestyles and sustainable travel choices that support health and wellbeing, and contribute to making Kent a great place to live, work and visit"*.⁴⁸

The plan has six key themes for improvements:

- Active lifestyles - to contribute towards tackling health issues and inequalities through improving access to the natural environment and green spaces and to promote use particularly in deprived areas where existing access is low and where there are poor health outcomes
- Evolution of the network - the PROW network is required to evolve to provide a high quality facility to encourage a modal shift to walking and cycling to get people out of their cars to take on more active travel.
- Knowing what's out there – to provide good quality information and encourage new users to the network as well as increasing current use, through targeting information, improving signage and improving provision around key leisure and recreational facilities.

- A well-maintained network - to improve and increase the current maintenance of the network through targeted vegetation clearance, signage and surfacing to encourage and increase use. Maintenance on locally important strategic routes will be prioritised
- Rights with responsibilities - to continue to promote responsible use by the public when exercising their rights.
- Efficient delivery - provide access to new information and advances in available technology to help build on the significant and innovative developments already made by the PROW and Access Service⁴⁹.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- The Covid-19 pandemic increased recreational visits to green spaces, public rights of way and the countryside. In some instances this caused conflict with nature conservation due to high numbers of people and increased maintenance requirements. It is likely that the use of open spaces and the countryside will remain altered, although at this stage it is not clear in what way and whether more people will visit the countryside;
- An increase in population in the district will mean that more people will wish to visit open spaces, public rights of way and the countryside;
- The location of new development, especially larger developments, will increase recreational use in new areas of the district;
- The transport corridor of the M20/A20, rail line and Channel Tunnel Rail Link is a significant barrier to access for Folkestone and other settlements to the south;
- There remains pressure on resources for greenspace and public rights of way maintenance due to ongoing strain on local government resources. Lack of maintenance, alongside obvious vandalism and neglect have been shown to deter people from using open spaces;
- Safety is an important consideration for users. Overgrown areas, poor sight lines, vandalism and litter can increase perceptions of lack of safety;
- There are deficiencies of greenspace in parts of the district, namely Lympne, Sellindge, Brookland and Brenzett;
- The Open Space Strategy also shows that there are deficiencies around Hythe and recommends that existing green links and corridors should be strengthened including the extensive beaches, cliff-tops and the Royal Military Canal;
- The limited provision of larger open spaces in Folkestone and Hythe particularly within the centre of the district and to the south-west highlights the significance of the network of smaller sites and the coast to residents. These smaller open spaces should therefore support a range of facilities and be able to withstand challenges from increased use and a changing climate;
- More active travel will be required to support actions to address climate change. An increase in walking and cycling throughout the district is required;
- Some of the highly visited sites and areas are also sensitive biodiversity sites, the features of which are known to be vulnerable to recreational pressure through trampling or disturbance. Increases in visitors may increase these pressures unless effective management is in place;
- Recreation, the outstanding landscape and biodiversity of the district, its public rights of way network and promoted routes and flagship parks such as the Lower Leas Coastal Park are an important component of the tourism offer of the district. Promotion and capitalising on these assets must also go hand in hand with protecting them.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

1. Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Folkestone and Hythe's future residents.

- 1.1. Ensure that greenspace provision meets the standards set out in Folkestone and Hythe's Local Plan and that development delivers greenspace provision to meet the needs of new residents (no net loss).
- 1.2. Manage greenspaces to ensure that they can accommodate high levels of visits, and potentially increased visits, providing infrastructure and maintenance to meet high demand.
- 1.3. Seek new greenspace in areas where there is a deficit.
- 1.4. Where development is taking place, ensure that public rights of way are improved and, where possible, provide multi-user and traffic-free routes and new connections.
- 1.5. Invest in public rights of way, particularly those linking town and countryside, to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people.
- 1.6. Ensure potential spill over recreation impacts of development are properly assessed and mitigated.
- 1.7. Plan strategically to ensure accessible greenspace, cycle routes, walkable spaces and public rights of way are connected, especially in areas of development, so that opportunities are not lost and gains are delivered.
- 1.8. Improve access across the barrier of the transport corridor north of Folkestone through ensuring safe and well-maintained routes and promotion.

2. Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.

- 2.1. Make civic spaces more accessible and welcoming to encourage people to walk and cycle.
- 2.2. The LCWIP will identify new routes for walking and cycling for active travel and where possible these might be dovetailed with opportunities for leisure routes and access to greenspace.
- 2.3. Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from flytipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.
- 2.4. Implement more cycling routes in line with LCWIP strategy.
- 2.5. Develop urban promoted walking trails.

3. Maximise the benefits of recreation and access to Folkestone and Hythe's unique landscapes and green spaces, whilst ensuring that this does not have a negative impact on them or their biodiversity.

- 3.1. Use the district's outstanding landscape, heritage and biodiversity to promote sustainable tourism.
- 3.2. Ensure that any increases in recreation on sensitive biodiversity sites is managed to avoid negative impacts (e.g. through the delivery of the SARMS).
- 3.3. Ensure that promotional materials and tourism promotion includes information for visitors on how to minimise the impact of their visit.

- 3.4. Use access to these spaces as a catalyst for more community engagement in their care and knowledge of their uniqueness.
- 3.5. The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme is successfully delivering a broad range of exciting physical and community engagement projects across Romney Marsh. Their interpretation programme will provide a range of new information hubs, panels, leaflets, trails and audio apps to help residents and tourists get to know and learn more about the Landscape, Wildlife and Heritage of Romney Marsh. Legacy projects from this scheme should be supported to ensure that it continues to actively promote and celebrate success and participation in the landscape of these areas.

Health and Wellbeing

Introduction

Poor health not only has a negative impact on individuals, it also incurs a cost to society. This is through both the direct costs of health care and in reduced economic outputs due to, for example, lower employee productivity, higher absence rates and early mortality.

Being physically active is strongly linked to better health and wellbeing. There is an established causal link between physical activity and many chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems. Walking in particular has been described as "*the nearest activity to perfect exercise*",⁵⁰ being the easiest, most accessible and cost effective way for most people to increase their physical activity.

Access to and physical activity in the natural environment also has a greater impact on mental health, with exercise in all types of green environment bringing improvements in self-esteem, positive mood and anxiety levels.

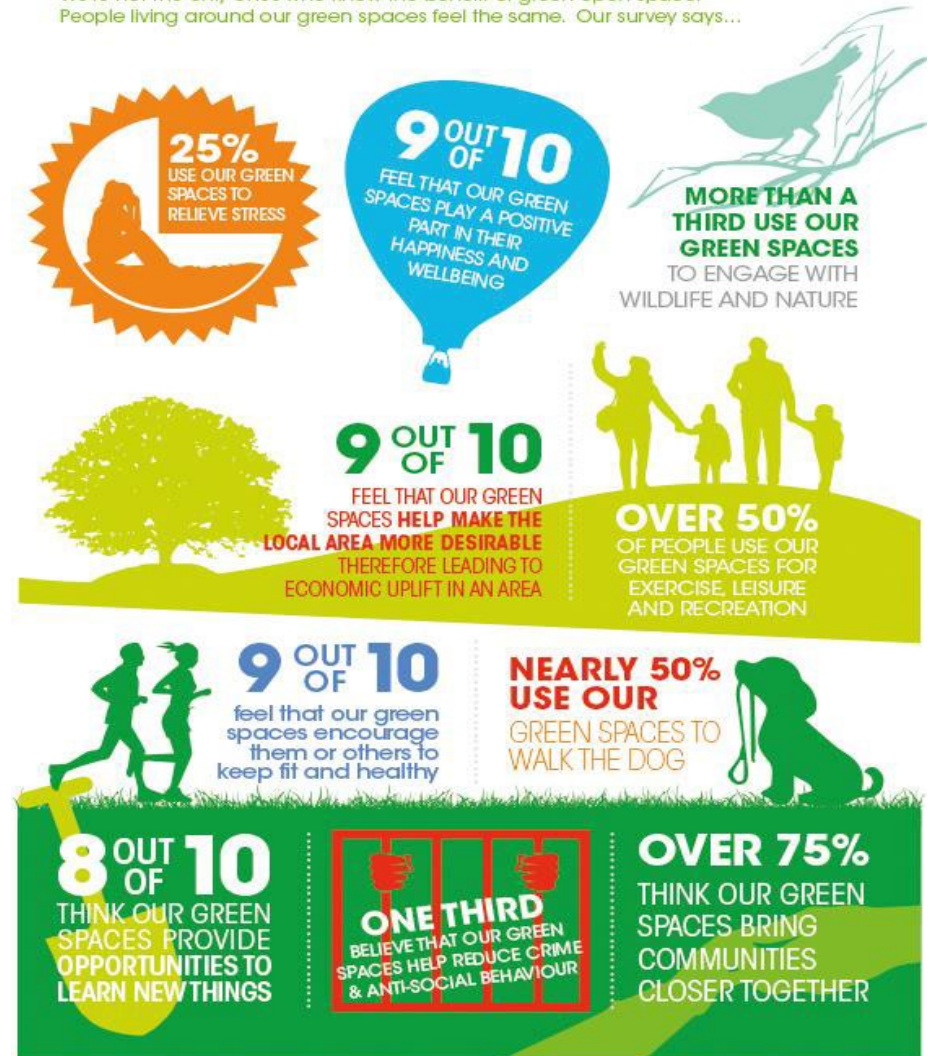
Some recent valuations have estimated that:

- £2.1 billion in annual health costs could be if everyone in England had good access to greenspace, due to increased physical activity in those spaces;



Green Spaces... THE BENEFITS

We're not the only ones who know the benefit of green open space. People living around our green spaces feel the same. Our survey says...



- In Birmingham, the annual benefit of their parks and greenspace is nearly £600 million, including £192 million in health benefits;
- In Sheffield, every £1 spent on maintaining parks brings £34 in health cost savings.⁵¹

The Marmot Review⁵² states that the fair distribution of health, wellbeing and sustainability are important social goals. These are influenced by a wide range of factors, one of which is the environment. The review recognises the importance of good quality greenspace in tackling health inequality. However, the availability and quality of access to greenspace is not evenly distributed, with those in deprived urban areas often having less access. In addition, health and wellbeing have historically been poorly integrated with spatial planning.⁵³ This leads to the creation of places which do not support people in improving their health through regular activity, or places which contribute to poor health through high levels of road pollution.

Folkestone and Hythe's Health and Social Wellbeing

A review of the current Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data reveals Folkestone Central, Folkestone Harbour, East Folkestone, and Walland and Denge Marsh wards have the highest levels of Living Environment Deprivation in the District. This criterion measures both the indoor living environment (quality of housing) and the outdoor living environment (levels of road accidents and air quality). These areas also show higher levels of deprivation.

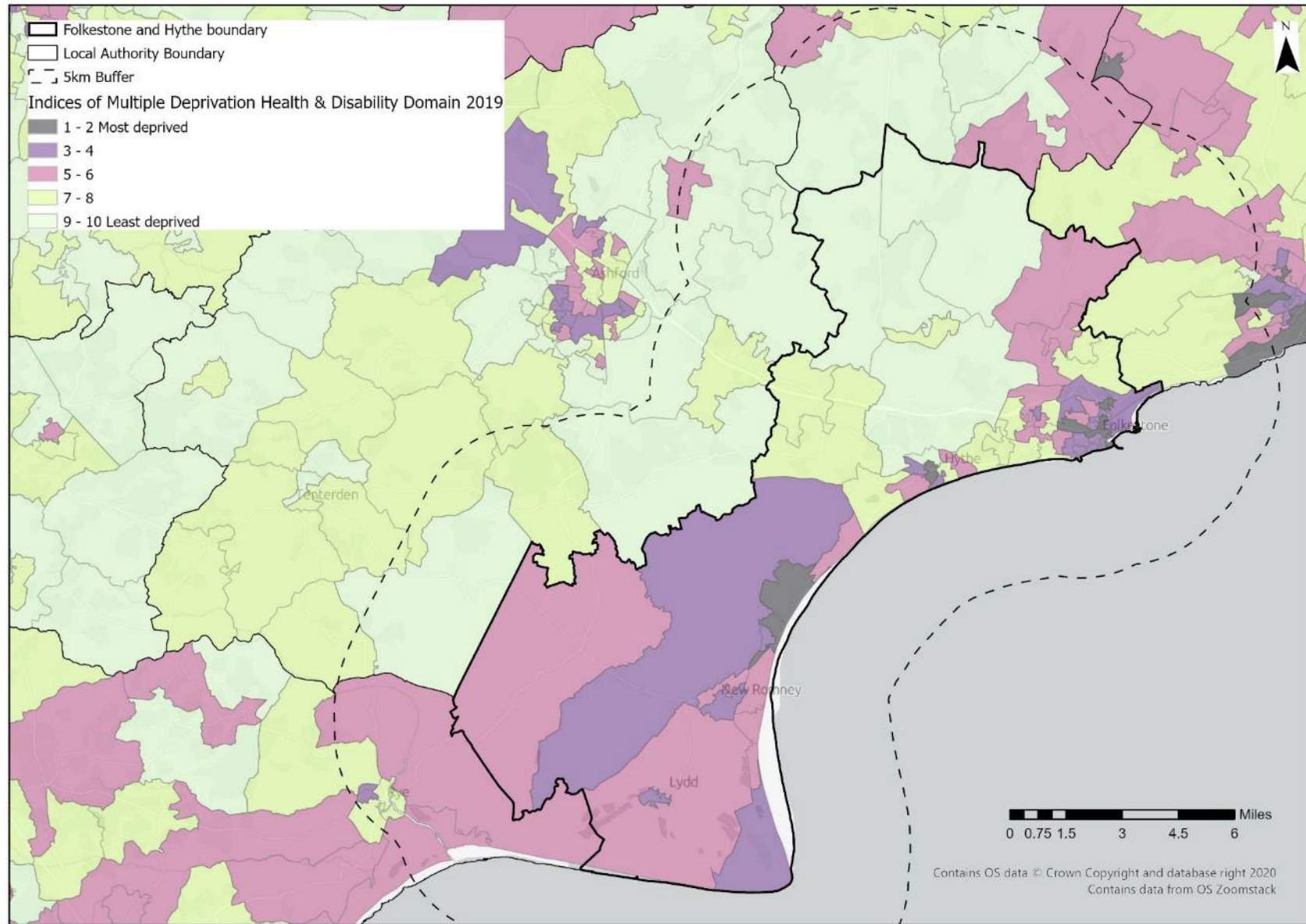
There are a few pockets of high Health Deprivation and Disability Domain Deprivation particularly in Folkestone Central, East Folkestone and Hythe wards. Levels are lower than those found in surrounding districts, including in areas to the north-east in Dover.⁵⁴

Health and Wellbeing in Folkestone and Hythe

- The health of people in Folkestone and Hythe is varied compared with the England average. Life expectancy for both men and women is similar to the England average;
- Life expectancy is 6.9 years lower for men and 5.4 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Folkestone and Hythe than in the least deprived areas;
- In Year 6, 21.0% of children are classified as obese;
- 62% of adults classified as obese - similar to the England average;
- About 20.2% of children live in low income families, higher than the national average.

Health and disability deprivation is shown in Plan 16. Levels of access to open space vary considerably across Folkestone and Hythe. There are several areas of poor health where there is also low greenspace. Whilst many are clustered in urban areas, there are significant areas of poor health in rural areas where there is low access to multifunctional greenspace. Here, public rights of way perform an additional important function.

Plan 16: Indices of Multiple Deprivation Health and Disability Domain 2019 National Rank



Air Quality in Folkestone and Hythe

The impact of air quality upon health is unquestionable. Long and short term exposure to poor air quality can have health impacts ranging from premature death due to cardiovascular disease and lung cancer, aggravation of asthma and other allergic illnesses, and reduced quality of life.⁵⁵

Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas.

The main source of pollution within the district is from road traffic emissions originating from major roads including the M20, A20, A259, A260 and A2034 that pass through the district. The majority of the vehicles do not start nor end their journeys within Folkestone and Hythe. Other pollution sources including commercial, industrial and domestic sources also contribute to pollutant concentrations within the district.

Local Air Quality Annual Status Reports are carried out annually in fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. Folkestone and Hythe Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020 shows that, as in previous years, there has never been any exceedances of the annual mean objective for Nitrogen dioxide, or NO₂, (a gaseous air pollutant composed of nitrogen and oxygen NO₂ forms when

fossil fuels such as coal, oil, gas or diesel are burned at high temperatures). As a result, no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have ever been declared within Folkestone and Hythe. However, the council has continued to develop and implement specific measures related to the control and mitigation of air pollution sources, such as the Click2cycle bike sharing service in Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe. The service was launched in June 2018 and continues to be endorsed. The scheme aims to replicate notable cycle sharing schemes often found in large metropolitan areas. The Click2cycle scheme aims to promote alternative forms of travel to help its residents lead active lifestyles. In July 2020 click2cycle have relaunched a bespoke app to allow for easy hiring of bikes.

The council has also started ensuring appropriate engagement with developers at the planning stage to help encourage the installation of electric charging points or the consideration of suitable infrastructure to allow for future cost efficient installation.

Moreover, carefully positioned green infrastructure that incorporates the right type of vegetation, separates people from pollution by introducing barriers and extends the distance between the pollution source and individuals, should be put in place where the opportunities arise.

Where possible road and pavement layouts, should incorporate urban greening schemes, and providing active travel routes through greenspace all help reduce exposure to air pollution and improve health.

Green Infrastructure to Support Health and Wellbeing

Active Travel and Healthy Lifestyles

As previously outlined, active travel allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives, bringing health and wellbeing, environmental, air quality and congestion benefits. A well-designed, accessible environment can encourage people to walk or cycle, and people cycle more when there is cycle infrastructure and separation from traffic. The LWCIP will assess the best routes for walking at cycling and these should be joined up with new green infrastructure where possible. They should also aim to be more welcoming for all users with seating areas, plants, cycle parking or other community facilities.

On the right is an extract from the Places and Polices Local Plan September 2020.

Policy HW3

Development That Supports Healthy, Fulfilling and Active Lifestyles

To increase, create and safeguard opportunities for healthy, fulfilling and active lifestyles and to reduce the environmental impact of importing food, development proposals should:

1. Incorporate productive landscapes in the design and layout of buildings and landscaping of all major developments;
2. Not result in the net loss of existing allotments; and
3. Not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) unless there is a compelling and overriding planning reason to do so and mitigation is provided through the provision of productive landscapes on-site or in the locality.

Policy HW4

Promoting Active Travel

Planning permission will be granted for development likely to give rise to increased travel demands, where the site has (or will attain) sufficient integration and accessibility by walking and cycling including, where appropriate, through:

1. The provision of new cycle and walking routes that connect to existing networks, including the wider public rights of way network, to strengthen connections between settlements and the wider countryside;
2. The protection and improvement of existing cycle and walking routes, including the public rights of way network, to ensure the effectiveness and amenity of these routes is maintained, including through maintenance, crossings, signposting and way-marking, and, where appropriate, widening and lighting;
3. The provision of safe, direct routes within permeable layouts that facilitate and encourage short distance trips by walking and cycling between home and nearby centres of attraction, and to bus stops or railway stations, to provide real travel choice for some or all of the journey; and
4. The provision of, or contributions towards, new cycle and walking routes identified in adopted strategic documents.

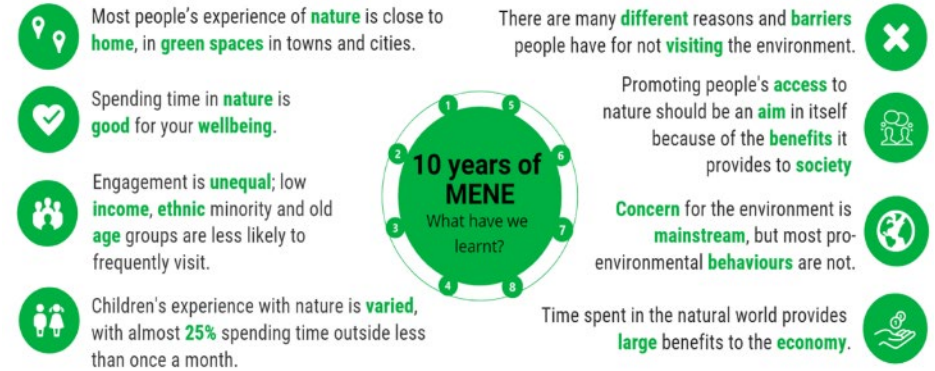
Access to Greenspace

From 2009 to 2019, Natural England ran the Monitor of Engagement of the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. It collected data about outdoor recreation, pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes towards and engagement with the natural environment (right).⁵⁶ Good access to greenspace have enormous benefits to health and wellbeing as well as many other benefits.

Some areas in Folkestone and Hythe are deficient in green space and linkages to greenspace. However, it is also apparent that some communities with poor health outcomes have very good access to greenspace, such as the urban areas of Folkestone. There may be a need to drill deeper into local circumstances in these areas, as strongly recommended in a recent Public Health England report:

*“Develop persuasive, evidence-informed case studies that highlight the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes”, and to “Support meaningful engagement across local government functions and the community to understand the actual and potential local benefits of greenspace and reveal the complex and diverse ways greenspace is thought about and used.”*⁵⁷

People living with disabilities also have access needs. This can be physical improvements, such as additional seating or handrails, or more information on how accessible places are. Disability will affect many people during their lifetime. Only 17% of disabled



people were born with their impairment. The majority of disabled people acquire their disability later in life, with 44% of pension age adults being disabled.⁵⁸ It is important that open spaces and public rights of way are made as accessible as possible to that people can benefit from the health and wellbeing gains from being outdoors, throughout their lives and no matter what form of disability they may be living with.

Allotments and Community Growing Spaces

Allotments not only provide green havens, often in urban areas, they provide important greenspaces for accessing nature and healthy exercise.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council is currently responsible for one allotment garden in the district.

Other types of community growing space provide greenspace and a place to bring communities together. There is a growing interest

in community orchards. The Kent Biodiversity Strategy has the target to increase traditional orchards by 67 hectares across Kent. This could be through restoring orchards or planting new ones, potentially through new development.

Greener environments are also associated with better mental health and wellbeing outcomes including reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and fatigue, and enhanced quality of life for both children and adults. The 25-year plan to improve the environment acknowledges the essential role that the natural environment and greenspace play in people's physical and mental health and aims to improve population health and wellbeing by forging a closer connection between people and the natural environment.

In their report - Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020. Public Health England states that *"Poor mental health is estimated to incur an economic and social cost of £105 billion a year in England, with treatment costs expected to double in the next 20. In addition to these costs there are incalculable costs to individuals, families and communities due to lost potential and limited life chances."*

This report also acknowledges several systematic reviews which have found positive associations between a greener living environment and mental wellbeing outcomes in children and young people, this includes: emotional wellbeing, reduced stress and improved resilience, and higher health-related quality of life. Also, greener environments have been shown to reduce levels of depression, anxiety, and fatigue. The beneficial effects are greatest for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, with inequality in

mental wellbeing narrower in deprived groups with good access to greenspace, compared to those with less access.

Green Social Prescribing

Public Health England recommends working with health professionals to promote the role greenspace plays in both individual and population health outcomes. This will support the health service's ambition to take more action to prevent poor health and to use green assets, through initiatives such as social prescribing, as part of the overall plan to achieve this aim. They further advise establishing interventions, such as green social prescribing initiatives, that will support people who do not use greenspace to begin using it.

Programmes to support social engagement or to facilitate participation in activities coupled with improvements to the physical environment, are an effective approach to enable people to start using these spaces and to continue to use them⁵⁹.

Healthy Walks in Folkestone

Hythe Town Health Walks - This is a very popular walk with regular attendances of between 40 - 70 people.

Creteway Downs Health Walk - This walk meets every Tuesday at Folkestone Baptist for a 60 minute walk

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- Some areas of poor health also have low levels of greenspace such as Brenzett and St Mary in the Marsh.
- There is generally a good supply of greenspace across Folkestone and Hythe but not all of this space is accessible. Access to some spaces is limited due to terrain (e.g. The Warren).
- The Open Space Strategy recommends the 'Low Quality / High Value' open spaces be upgraded to improve perceptions of safety – such as the Open Space adjacent to Horn Street and The Rype, Walland and Denge Marsh.
- Folkestone and Hythe, in line with the rest of England, has an ageing population. This will mean more people have health needs, mobility issues and will be living with disability;
- Evidence shows that spending time in nature is also good for mental wellbeing. Folkestone and Hythe has a range of good green spaces. Examples include Lower Leas Coastal Park and the Warren, these should be invested in for the future.
- Investing in green and blue Infrastructure will ensure that the health and wellbeing challenges faced in Folkestone and Hythe can be better supported.
- Folkestone Town Council reports that estimates the wait time for allotments is about 5 years. Opportunities to create more sites should be encouraged where possible
- The 25 year Environment Plan acknowledges the essential role that the natural environment and greenspace play in

people's physical and mental health and aims to improve population health and wellbeing by forging a closer connection between people and the natural environment.

- Mental health and wellbeing have also been found to improve when access to natural greenspace is improved.
- Green social prescribing - for volunteering and other physical activities is likely to increase in future years.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

1. Provide access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.

- 1.1. Plan strategically for a reduced car Folkestone and Hythe – planning strategically to link public rights of way, cycle routes and greenspaces.
- 1.2. Ensure that greenspace is provided through new development so that everyone has access to greenspace close to home.
- 1.3. Use green infrastructure in civic spaces and urban streets to make these places more attractive for walking and cycling, improving health and reducing car travel.
- 1.4. Make routes and spaces as accessible as possible.
- 1.5. Link town with countryside through improved routes and public rights of way and to overcome M20/rail barrier out of Folkestone.
- 1.6. Prioritise routes as specified in the LCWIP.

2. Support people in taking healthy exercise and engaging in nature for both their physical and mental health.

- 2.1. Update and revise promoted routes using public rights of way in both urban and rural areas, providing more information on accessibility.
- 2.2. Improve routes which are used by Walking for Health.
- 2.3. Through green social prescribing, encourage local NHS partnerships to initiate more 'walking for health' groups, as well as activities for those suffering from social isolation and anxiety

- 2.4. Work with partners to understand better the specific needs of those with mobility or other disabilities.
- 2.5. Create more spaces to support community growing – allotment facilities, gardens, edible trails and green walls and educate and support residents in utilising these. Food growing also helps to encourage healthy eating and better weight management.
- 2.6. Recent analysis of data from the MENE survey indicates that adults who had 2 hours of recreational activity per week in greenspace are more likely to have better self-reported health and wellbeing than those who do not. Evidence based research might help to understand individual motivation (or lack of it)
- 2.7. Health professionals should be encouraged to establish green social prescribing interventions, which could be done by linking to Fifth Continent Legacy Project.

3. Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.

- 3.1. Support meaningful engagement to understand why some communities do not use greenspace, even when it is relatively close, to reveal the complex and diverse ways greenspace is thought about and used.
- 3.2. Monitor and evaluate local changes in access to greenspace, in conjunction with health data over time, to understanding of what works, for whom and how.
- 3.3. Establish interventions, such as green social prescribing – link to Fifth Continent Legacy Project.

Blue Infrastructure and the Coast

Introduction

Blue infrastructure in its many forms is an important feature of Folkestone and Hythe. There are a range of blue infrastructure features including the extensive ditches and wetlands of the Romney Marsh, the Nailbourne chalk stream, and saline lagoons and larger pools around Dungeness and Lydd.

Royal Military Canal

The Royal Military Canal stretches 28 miles from Seabrook near Hythe, through the Romney Marsh to Cliff End near Hastings in East Sussex. After Hadrian's Wall and Offa's Dyke, it is the third-longest defensive structure in the UK. It was constructed between 1804 to 1809. Part of the canal is a Scheduled Monument for its heritage value. The Royal Military Canal is also an important recreational feature. A path runs alongside the canal and it is possible to walk the entire length and to cycle along some sections.



Royal Military Canal at Hythe

Rivers and Streams

The East Stour River rises near Postling and flows below the Kent Downs across the Wealden Greensand to Ashford where it joins the Great Stour.

Between Lyminge, through Elham and Wingmore is the course of the Nailbourne. For much of the year the route of this 'watercourse' is dry as it is a chalk 'bourne' – a chalk stream which only periodically appears, usually after successive seasons of high rainfall and when ground water levels are high enough. For centuries the popularly held belief was that the nailbournes rose once every seven years and that their appearance would bring bad luck and disaster, giving them the name 'woe waters'. The unpredictability of the nailbourne flows has always meant that land, roads and property in the valley is periodically flooded.

The Seabrook Stream to the west of Hythe is a SSSI. The stream flows through a valley rich in wildlife and a range of fen and wet woodland habitats. The area supports a nationally important range of craneflies. Brockhill Country Park lies in a similar valley, with wetland habitats modified in Victorian times to create a pleasure garden., This site also supports a wide range of craneflies and other invertebrates.

Romney Marsh

Much of the Romney Marsh lies below sea level, requiring a complex network of drainage structures to prevent the area from flooding. A network of streams, ditches, drains, cuts, dykes and main sewers cross the Marsh and empty into the sea or the Royal Military Canal. The history of land drainage on the Marsh stretches back to at least the 13th Century. The ditches and sewers also provide rich habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including declining species such as water voles.



Romney Marsh

Ponds and Pools

Around Dungeness, Lydd and Lade are a series of lakes. These pits and hollows are either flooded former gravel workings, saline lagoons or natural freshwater lagoons. These areas are important for newts and water voles as well as birds. There are saline lagoons across the area, including in the RSPB Reserve – a very rare habitat. These lakes form a complex of water bird habitats and are particularly important for over-wintering birds. All the pits are interrelated as birds are constantly moving around the area. Some of the lakes are used for watersports.



The Coast



The rich and varied coastline of Folkestone and Hythe is one of the The coastline from Hythe to Dungeness is lined with beaches which are popular with residents and visitors alike and are an important part of the economy of the district.

Most of the coastline is protected by sea defences in the form of seawalls and shingle beaches. These areas need to continue to be defended to protect settlements, some of which are low lying along. The shoreline along the eastern side of Dungeness Point and to the north is accreting with shingle which helps to naturally form a defence.

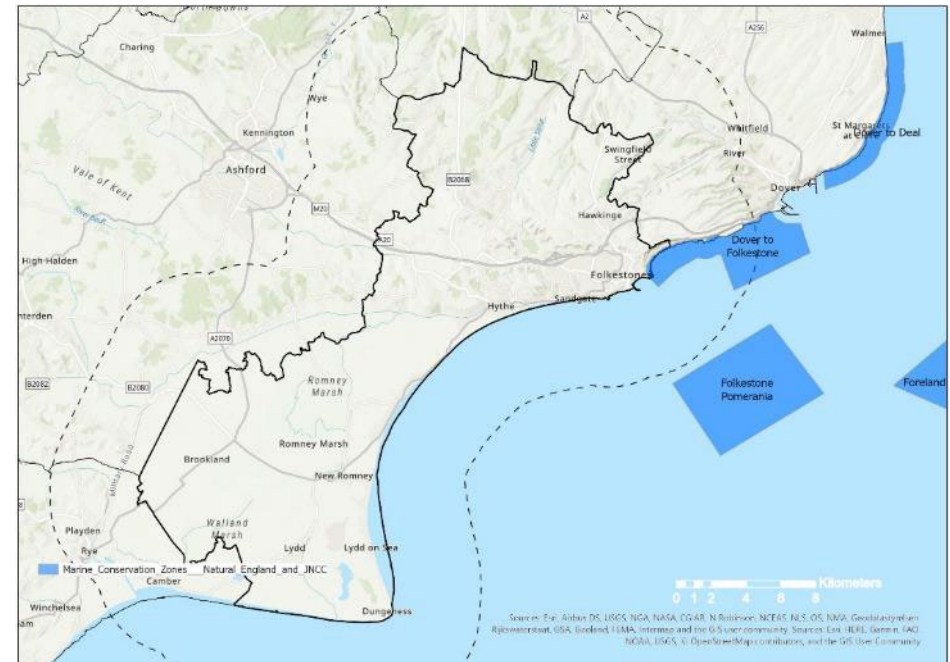
Ongoing sea level rise will result in a significant narrowing of intertidal areas ('coastal squeeze'), which has the potential to impact upon the nature conservation areas as well as the tourism economy, as beaches along this coastline are an important asset.

There are also Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in proximity to the district see Plan 17.

The Dover to Folkestone MCZ was declared in January 2016. It is an inshore site covering the wave-cut intertidal chalk platforms to the north of Folkestone and into Dover district. It is a highly diverse area with many habitats and features of interest. The chalk communities on the seashore are one of the best examples in the region, supporting a range of seaweeds and the animals that are associated with them. The diverse range of features includes rocky outcrops, ledges, boulder, sediments which support animals like sea slugs, long-clawed porcelain crabs and brittlestars, crabs and young lobsters.

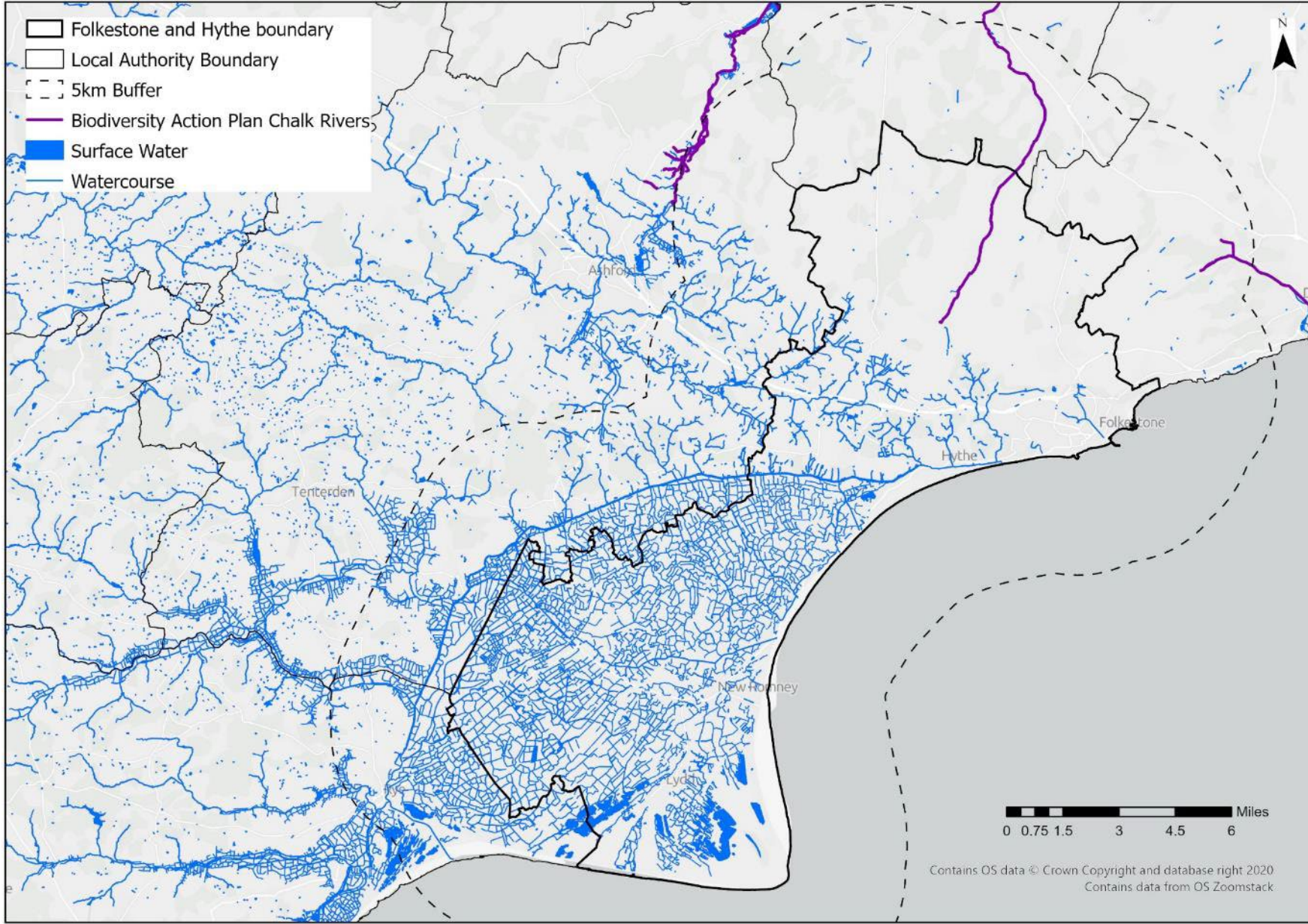
The Folkestone Pomerania lies further into the English Channel. Declared in 2013, this site protects six different habits of sediment and rock. The soft muddy areas within the MCZ support dense ross worm and honeycomb worm reefs, created from tubes of sediment and shell fragments.

Plan 17: Marine Conservation Zones



Plan 18: Blue Infrastructure

Page 94



Water Resources

Surface and groundwater water quality is vitally important for water supply, general amenity, recreation, fisheries and nature conservation supporting domestic, industrial and agricultural uses.

Three groundwater waterbodies lie under Folkestone and Hythe (Plan 17) - Kent Romney Marsh, Kent Greensand Eastern and the East Kent Chalk. All of these have poor chemical and quantitative status. Groundwater source protection extend across the aquifers, primarily across the chalk aquifer, to protect sources of water. These zones help to protect the precious aquifer from pollution, such as petrol or soakaways from septic tanks.

Folkestone and Hythe is an area of serious water stress as identified by the Environment Agency.⁶⁰ South East Water and Affinity are the statutory water suppliers in Folkestone and Hythe district. There is a shared interest in the protection of groundwater supplies and water quality.

Flood and Water Management

National planning policy requires Local Plans to account for water management via the consideration of flood risk, coastal change, climate change, water quality, water supply and wastewater. Current UK projections for future climate change indicate that there will be more frequent short duration high intensity rainfall and more frequent periods of long duration rainfall.

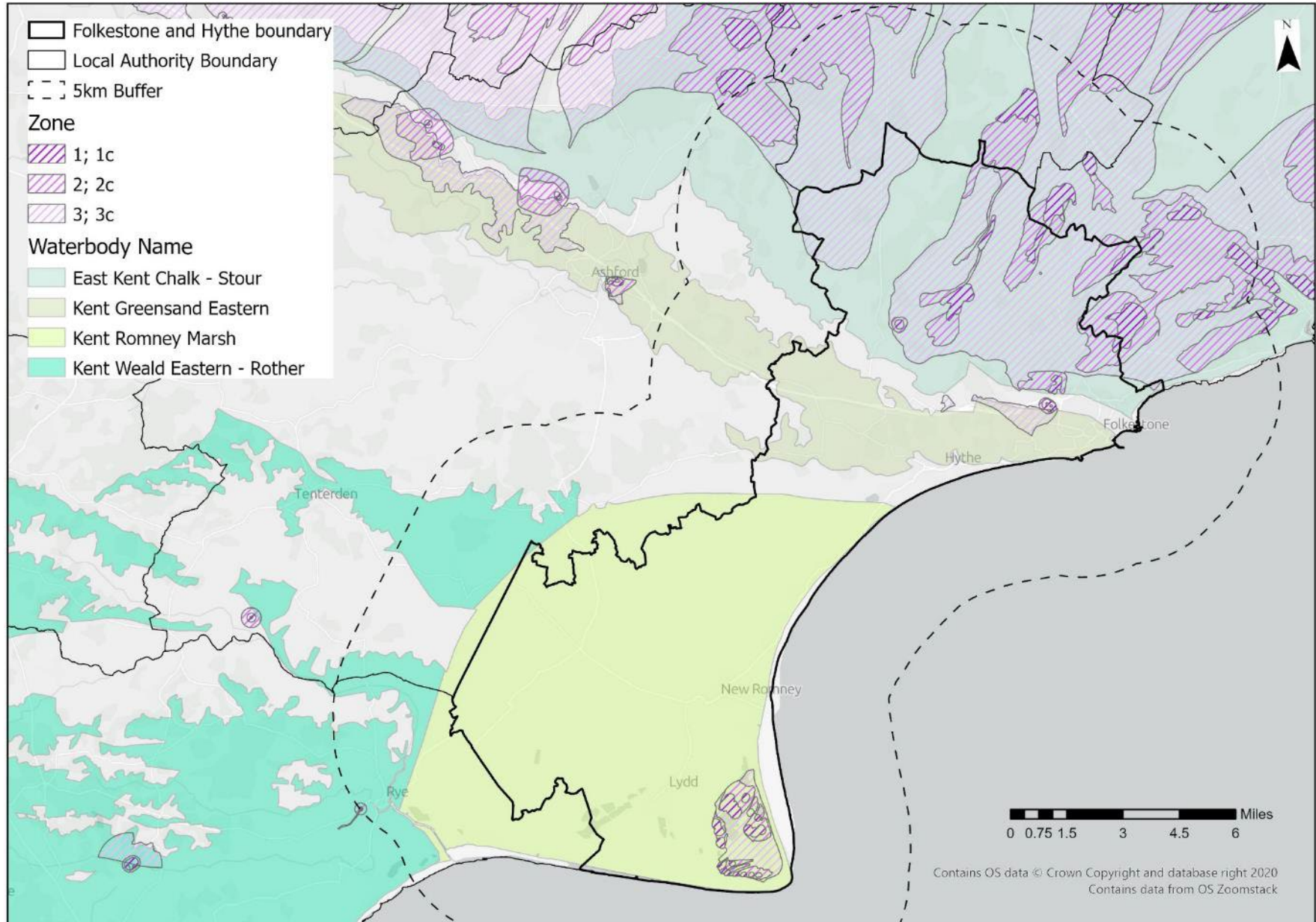
'Flood risk' is defined in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Flood and Coastal Change as *"a combination of the probability and the potential consequences of flooding from all sources – including from rivers and the sea, directly from rainfall on the ground surface and rising groundwater, overwhelmed sewers and drainage systems, and from reservoirs, canals and lakes and other artificial sources."*⁶¹

Areas in Folkestone and Hythe are at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams, ditches and the coast.

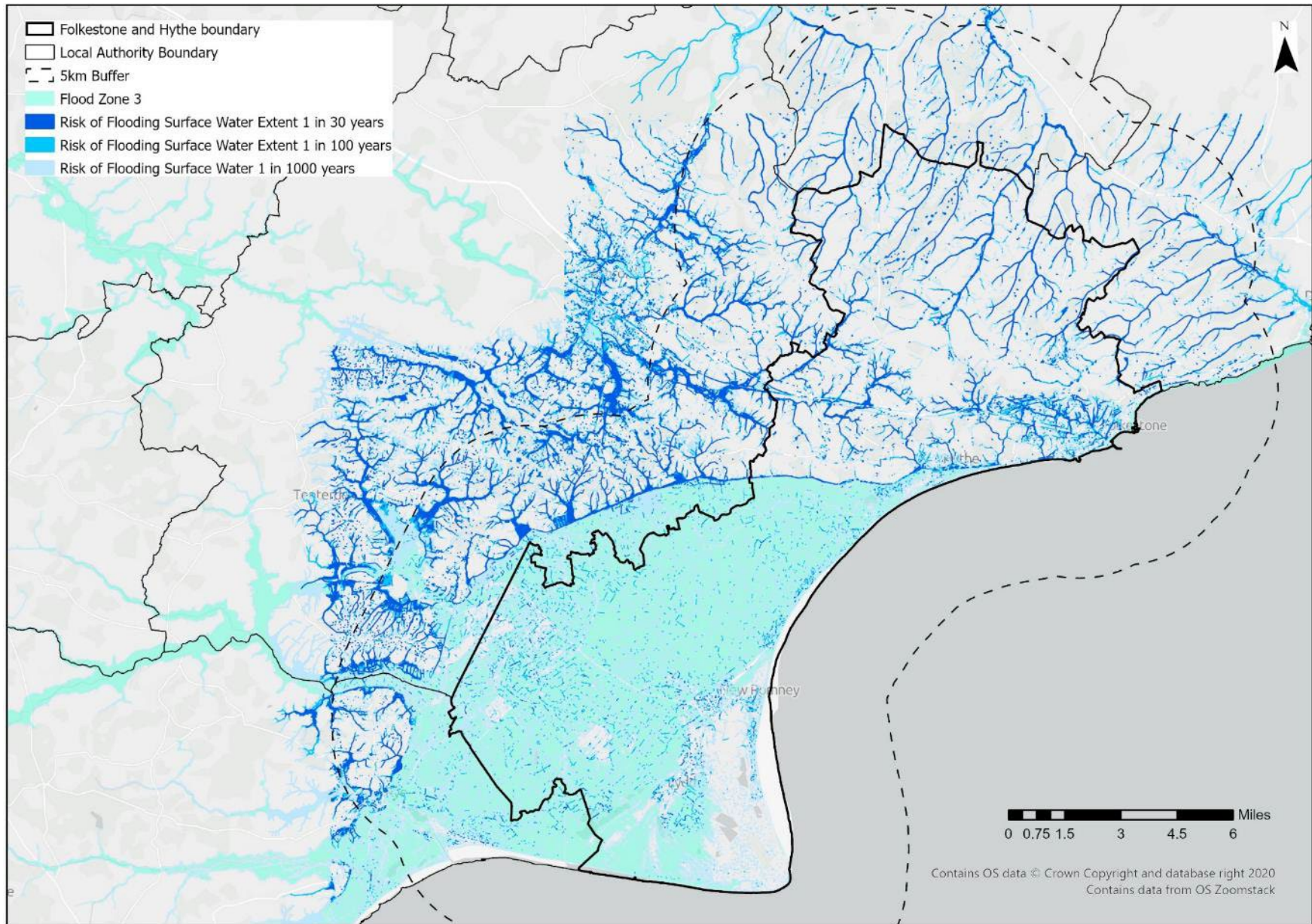
Much of Folkestone and Hythe District is low-lying with approximately 55% lying within the Environment Agency Zone 3a Flood Risk⁶² (Plan 20). However, these areas benefit from the protection provided by a diverse range of flood defence infrastructure. Folkestone and Hythe topography varies significantly across the district, with the flat low lying Romney Marsh being below mean water level in many places.⁶³

Climate change will inevitably result in an increased risk of flooding from all sources. The reliance on coastal flood defence infrastructure will increase over the next century. It is therefore necessary to ensure that new development is designed so that these residual risks are mitigated.⁶⁴

Plan 19: Groundwater Waterbodies and Source Protection Zones



Plan 20: Risk of Flooding from Surface Water and Flood Zone 3



Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS)

Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) can help to manage surface water flood risk. Natural features like swales, ponds, tree pits and rain gardens allow water to soak into the ground or be evaporated, reducing the need for traditional piped drainage. SuDS can also provide amenity value, reduce the impacts of climate change and create spaces for nature. Green infrastructure assets are important areas in which to implement or retrofit SuDS.

An increased frequency of intense rainfall events due to climate change, combined with a drainage network that quickly reaches capacity, will lead to more frequent flooding. Allowing surface water to bypass this network and discharge into green space helps to reduce the risk of flooding. SuDS are known to be more adaptable and flexible than traditional solutions, allowing future modification to cope with climate and other changes in urban areas.

Managing surface water in a sustainable manner, e.g. through of SuDS, can ensure that new development does not exacerbate flood risk on site or within the catchment.⁶⁵ New development could incorporate SuDS integrated into green infrastructure. Management and maintenance plans for these, properly implemented, help to improve water quality by removing pollutants and putting clean water back into the environment.⁶⁶ Plants and vegetation will help to provide essential wildlife habitats.

However, new development forms only a small part of the current urban areas. SuDS can also often be retrofitted into developed areas. Retrofitting SuDS can potentially help solve some of the flooding and water quality problems that may be faced in Folkestone and Hythe in the future. Such measures provide a more joined up approach to managing surface water across wider areas, supporting the water cycle as a whole, helping to green urban areas and generating multiple benefits in-line with an ecosystem's services approach.



Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- National Planning Policy expects Local Plans to account for water management via the consideration of flood risk, coastal change, climate change, water quality, water supply and wastewater.
- Folkestone and Hythe is at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams, ditches and the coast.
- Current UK projections for future climate change indicate that there will be more frequent short duration high intensity rainfall and more frequent periods of long duration rainfall. Climate change is also expected to bring hotter, drier summers alongside wetter winters but not necessarily in tandem.⁶⁷
- Summer droughts are also likely to be more frequent alongside an increased risk of flooding. This combined with increased demand from development requires a proactive approach to the management of these risks via the planning system.
- Wetland biodiversity and habitats are at greater threat from climate change impacts than other habitats.
- An increased population will lead to demand for water.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

1. **Incorporate SuDs schemes into new development and retrofit into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues.**

- 1.1. Integrate SuDS into the design of new green infrastructure rather than a separate feature and consider and include future maintenance of the system in the early stages of SuDS design.
- 1.2. SuDS should be designed to support biodiversity and amenity uses.
- 1.3. Look at ways in which SuDS can be retrofitted into existing open space can be retrofitted to alleviate surface water flooding in areas where it is a problem.
- 1.4. Community consultation should be undertaken when retrofitting SuDS.

2. **Protect water resources and protect and enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats.**

- 2.1. Enhance the biodiversity of wetland features of the Romney Marsh through working with partners and continuing the legacy of the Fifth Continent's 'Blue Lanes' project.
- 2.2. Ensure water recreation and biodiversity interest are balanced.
- 2.3. Engage people with Folkestone and Hythe's outstanding marine and coastal wildlife to increase knowledge and action to protect this environment.
- 2.4. Support actions to reduce water consumption.

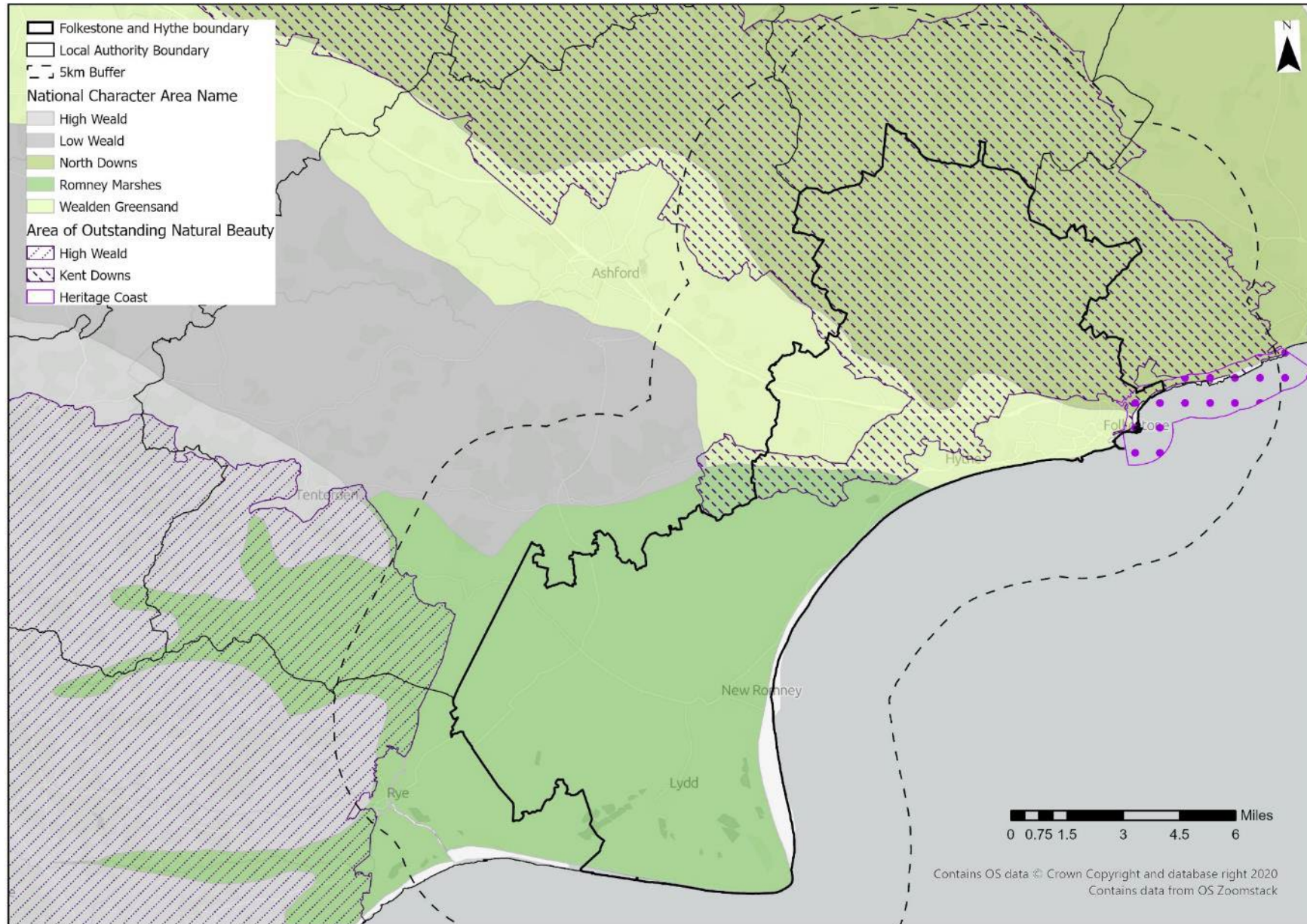
Landscape Character and Heritage

Introduction

Folkestone and Hythe District is the most southern local authority in Kent. It extends from the hills and valleys of the North Kent Downs in the north, through the Greensand Vale (an area that includes the Greensand Ridge and Holmesdale) and southwards onto the Romney Marsh and the Dungeness shingle spit. It is a coastal district edged by high white chalk cliffs and sandy beaches interspersed with a number of coastal towns and settlements including the former major port of entry at Folkestone.

The district has a remarkably rich and diverse landscape and heritage. This diverse landscape character underpins Folkestone and Hythe's green and blue infrastructure assets, providing its population a unique 'sense of place' in which to live, work and play. At a wider scale the district contains a range of historic landscapes moulded by natural and human processes that provide the distinct character that is valued by those who live, work in and visit the area. The heritage assets, from individual features to the wider landscapes, have all played a role in shaping the district's development and identity.

Plan 21: National Character Assessment Areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Landscape Character

Landscape character underpins green and blue infrastructure planning. Green infrastructure actions and new green infrastructure needs to take account of the landscape character of the surrounding area.

Three National Character Assessment Areas (NCAs) cover Folkestone and Hythe - the Romney Marshes (NCA 123), Wealden Greensand (NCA 120) and the North Downs (NCA119). (See Plan 21)

The Romney Marshes (NCA 123)

The Romney Marshes is an open landscape of reclaimed, low-lying marshland. The area is bounded to the south and east by the English Channel and to the north and west by the clearly recognisable ancient cliff-line, forming a backdrop to the marshes. It includes the vast sand and shingle beaches and flat marshland between Hythe in Kent and Pett in Sussex.

This unique area has a character all of its own and contains a wealth of wildlife and geomorphological features. Dungeness is an area of international importance for its geomorphology, plants, invertebrates and birds. Home to some of the UK's rarest species and is protected through a range of nature conservation designations. Dungeness and Rye Harbour comprise the largest cusped shingle foreland in Europe, one of the few such large examples in the world.



Dungeness

Scattered settlements are linked by long, straight, open roads and have a distinctive architectural character, including weatherboarding and hung tiles. Many have medieval churches at their core.

Around a quarter of the NCA is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and includes the valleys of the Rother and Brede. These form distinct areas which, radiating from the core of the marsh, act as corridors out into the adjoining High Weald NCA and have a unique character. They have a key role to play in connectivity of habitats and linkages to the wider marshland landscape.



St Thomas à Becket, Fairfield, Romney Marsh

The coast continues to evolve. At Dungeness longshore drift moves shingle from the southern shore and to eastern side of the ness where it accumulates. Elsewhere along the coast, shingle banks are artificially replenished to protect development and sea walls behind. Pressures of sea level rise and climate change will result in coastal change and informed decision making will be critical to help coastal communities and habitats to adapt to change. Much of the area is below the high tide level and is at risk of flooding.

Human land use has had a major role in fashioning the present landscape, through the drainage of marshes, military activity, gravel digging and the construction of sea walls, housing, tourist amenities, roads, a wind farm, an airport and Dungeness Power Station.

The land of Romney Marsh is one of the most fertile areas of Kent, with a particularly long growing season.⁶⁸ Farming on Romney Marsh has changed greatly with a change from sheep pasture to arable land and through intensification. As farming types and techniques change, traditional features are lost from the landscape: lookers' huts, hedgerows, sheep fencing etc. Many are not deliberately destroyed, but simply collapse out of neglect.

In many parts of Romney Marsh, ground surfaces are lowering as peat in soils is exposed to the air, desiccates and blows away. The need for field drainage means that many ditches are dredged and their banks steepened, reducing the wildlife habitats associated with streams and wetlands. Fertilising pasture also changes the grass and wildflower species present, as many only grow in nutrient-poor soils. This, in turn, affects the numbers and species of insects and birds which they support.⁶⁹

The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme, developed by the Romney Marsh Living Landscape Partnership, secured National Lottery Heritage Funding for habitat improvements, community engagement and training to benefit the people and wildlife of the Romney Marsh. The scheme began in 2017 and covers the area south of the Royal Military Canal, stretching from Camber to West Hythe. Kent Wildlife Trust is lead partner on behalf of multiple partner organisations.

The strategic aims of the Landscape Partnership Scheme are:

- Facilitate the restoration, recreation and enhancement of the built and natural heritage of the area;
- Put the communities and people of the Marsh back at the centre of their landscape and heritage and enhance opportunities for visitors and locals alike;
- Develop opportunities for learning and skills development.

The character of the Romney Marshes can be conserved for the future only if the demands on agriculture, commerce, recreation and conservation can be reconciled. A continual balance needs to be struck in an area that is internationally important for geomorphology and wildlife but where local communities strive to make a living and enjoy the natural assets on their doorstep and where industries seek to exploit the natural assets of the area for their economic value.

Environmental Opportunities

- Maintaining landscape character, tranquillity, sense of remoteness and connection to the maritime environment by sensitive planning of future land use, to maintain the open views and expansive skies and a sense of remoteness;
- Using understanding of the area's traditional and historic architecture and its distinct patterns of settlement to inform appropriate conservation and use of historic buildings;
- Carefully managing the introduction of any new vertical elements into the landscape, to maintain character and setting of the marshes;
- Protecting, promoting and celebrating the churches found on the marsh, benefiting sense of place and history and for their important contribution to cultural heritage;
- Protecting, conserving and enhancing the important archaeological and historic features (both scheduled and non-scheduled) within the landscape, including the Royal Military Canal, defensive coastline features, looker's huts – which provide important links to the past sheep industry;
- Taking steps to ensure that the planned changes in the coastal zone are considered holistically so that they provide sustainable use of the coastal environment, benefiting wildlife, tourism, access and recreation;⁷⁰
- Follow recommendations of the SARMS.

Wealden Greensand (NCA 120)

This character area forms a long, curved belt across Kent, parallel to the North Downs, and on through Surrey, alongside the Hampshire Downs and the South Downs.

Around a quarter of the character area is made up of extensive belts of woodland. In contrast, the area also features more open areas of heath, river valleys and mixed farming, including fruit growing.

A short coastal stretch extends from Folkestone to Hythe, with a heavily developed hinterland. As a result, most of the coastline is protected by coastal defences. The management of this coastal stretch between Folkestone and Hythe influences and is influenced by the coastal stretches in adjoining NCAs (North Downs and Romney Marsh).⁷¹ A small section is also part of the Dover–Folkestone Heritage Coast.

A major transport corridor runs through the character area in Folkestone and Hythe, including the Channel Tunnel rail link connecting Folkestone to London.

In this area the Wealden Greensand has a gentler and more open aspect than in the wooded west. There are a range of historic landscape features, including the Royal Military Canal. Historic parklands are a characteristic landscape feature. Sandling Park, a Grade II listed private park and garden set mainly in woodland which, once formed part of the medieval forest of Westenanger near Hythe in Kent.

The most southerly part of the Kent Downs AONB extends from Hythe west to Aldington. The Hythe scarp is highly visible from the flat marsh, forming a long hillside of rough grassland, dotted with scrub with arable fields on the lower slopes towards Aldington. Several large deciduous woodlands break up the sweep of the landform. From the areas between these woodlands, there are spectacular views across Romney Marsh and the English Channel. Further south, around the outskirts of Hythe, this landscape gives way to a more intimate countryside of steep stream valleys, small woodlands and pasture. In the west, around Pedlinge, estate landscapes include tracts of mixed woodland enclosing flat arable fields, which form the edge of a larger area of intensively cultivated farmland, extending beyond the AONB.

The Royal Military Canal, running along the base of the scarp, acts as the 'backbone' of the area. Originally built in the early 19th Century as a combined defence and drainage project, it is still important to the drainage of Romney Marsh and an important wildlife and recreational corridor.

There is development pressures in this character area with increasing demands on water resources, the landscape, biodiversity and sense of place. Well planned green infrastructure must play a critical role in both new and existing developments, to bring about a range of economic, social and environmental benefits. Where there are opportunities to strengthen networks of semi-natural habitats – particularly wetlands, woodlands and heathlands – they should be integrated into the mixed farmed landscape to reduce fragmentation.

Environmental Opportunities

- Maintaining and enhancing rights of way and open access and improving links to the North Downs Way;
- Developing new permissive access to historical sites and quality green space as part of a cohesive network of inspiring access provision;
- Promoting sustainable tourism initiatives where they can accommodate high visitor numbers whilst also managing the impact of increased visitor numbers to sensitive sites;
- Restoring and creating broadleaved woodlands surrounding major transport corridors and urban areas to help reduce noise, light and air pollution, and to maintain and enhance the pockets of tranquillity;
- Managing and enhancing the nationally important and locally characteristic geodiversity, including the undeveloped sea cliffs between Folkestone Warren and Hythe, and the ragstone exposures of the Lympne Escarpment in Kent;
- Planning a network of green spaces across the urban areas, urban fringe and adjacent countryside, which can result in multiple benefits for the environment and communities.⁷²

The North Downs (NCA 119)

The North Downs character area forms a chain of chalk hills extending from the Hog's Back in Surrey and ending dramatically at the White Cliffs of Dover. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations is testament to the scenic qualities and natural beauty of the area.⁷³ A small part of the coast in Folkestone lies within the Dover to Folkestone Heritage Coast around Folkestone Warren.

Agriculture is an important component of the landscape, with variations in soils supporting mixed farming practices where arable, livestock and horticulture have co-existed for centuries. The woodlands, many of which are ancient, are a prominent feature of the landscape and chalk grassland is particularly notable.

A series of remote coombes in the scarp towards Etchinghill overlook the coppiced ash woodlands of Asholt Wood, one of the best examples of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* coppice in Kent (part of the SAC), although now significantly affected by Ash Dieback.

Scrub extends up some of the lower scarp slopes and thick hedges draw attention to the route of the Pilgrims' Way along the scarp foot. At the base of the scarp, springs emerge between the chalk and Gault clay, and feed streams which cut through the underlying Greensand as they flow towards the coast.

The network of public rights of way includes ancient trackways along the ridge. Today these are part of the North Downs Way, Saxon Shore Way and the Elham Valley Way, which incorporates

part of the old railway line from Folkestone up the Elham Valley. There are modern transport links cutting through the area but also a network of narrow, winding lanes, which over centuries of use have hollowed-out the hillsides where they descend and climb the scarp.⁷⁴

Environmental Opportunities

- Conserving and appropriately managing ancient trackways such as the North Downs Way, and the Pilgrims' Way and strengthen the network through high quality interconnecting routes, increasing the benefits of these routes for biodiversity, health and local businesses by careful Green infrastructure planning;
- Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views for future generations;
- Working in partnership with Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to identify management opportunities in accordance with their management plans;
- Seeking to increase awareness and maximising the potential of the various historic, natural and cultural assets, improving access to and interpretation of sites and features, as a platform for enhanced education and to enthuse local communities, linking them with their local geology, wildlife and cultural and historic environments. At the same time there is a need to recognise and manage the impact of increased visitor numbers on sensitive sites.⁷⁵

Heritage

Folkestone and Hythe district has a remarkably rich and diverse heritage that plays a major role in the district's historic sense of place. At a wider scale the district contains a range of historic landscapes moulded by natural and human processes that provide the district's distinct character.⁷⁶

The geography of the district plays an important role in its heritage and history. The area has always been on the front line of potential invasion, and this has left a particularly rich defensive record, expressed clearly in the Napoleonic defences but also in a remarkable collection of heritage assets that span from Roman times to the Second World War.

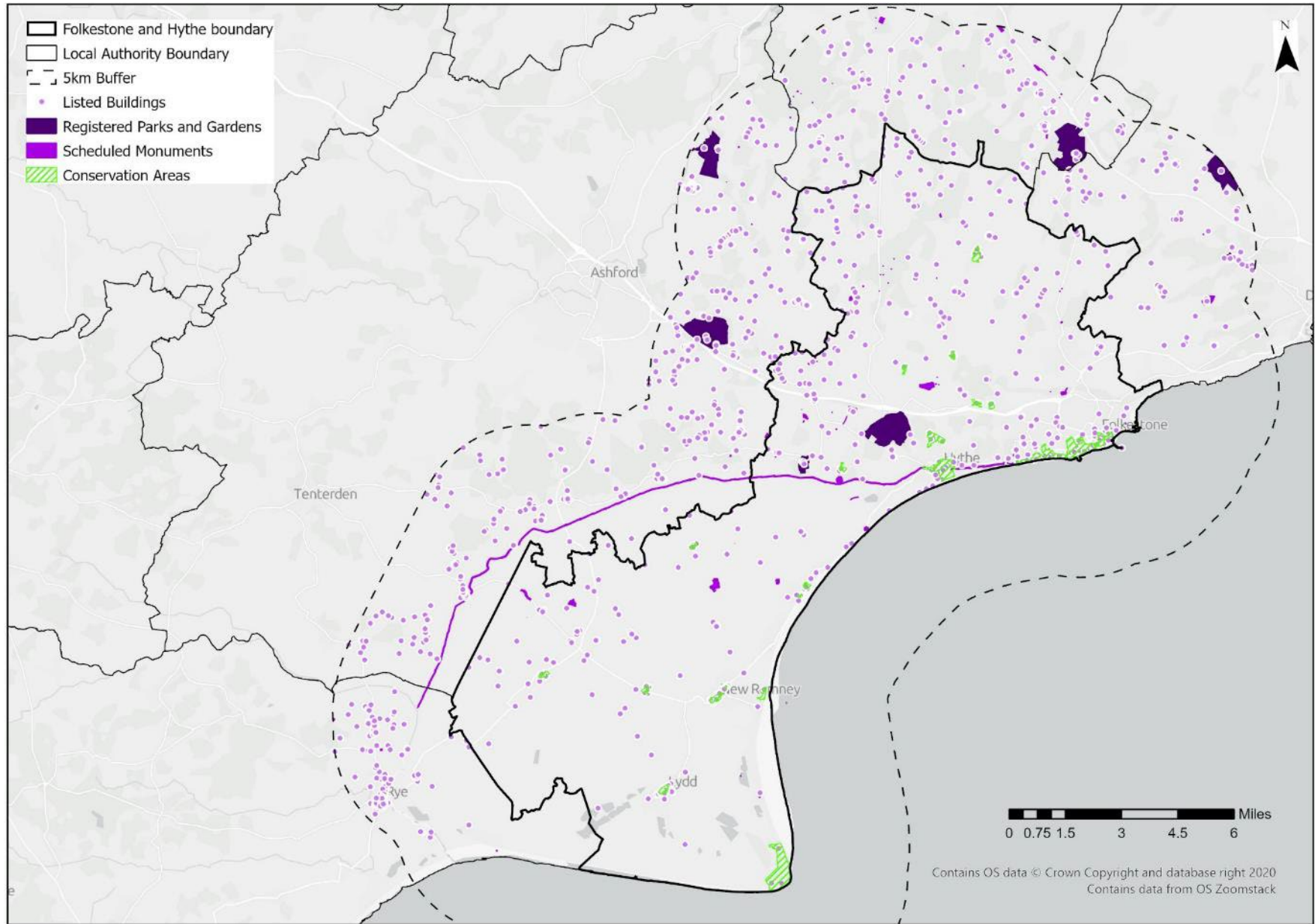
The district also contains an exceptionally rich and varied historic landscape which spans southward from the quintessential rolling Kentish chalk downland to the unique and vegetated shingles of Dungeness. In doing so it crosses the major coastal transport conduit of the Greensand Vale before dropping into the expansive Romney Marsh. The district's coastline, varying between the iconic White Cliffs and sand or shingle beaches with a seascape that includes views to France.⁷⁷

Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy, in taking a thematic approach, has considered those aspects that particularly contributed to local distinctiveness or have played an important role in shaping the character of the district. As might be expected landscape, coast (including harbours and seaside recreation) and defence heritage are significant themes. However, church,



settlement and farming, parks, transport and archaeology are also important in terms of bringing together a coherent and accessible story about the district's development and identity. Many of these are deemed outstanding in terms of their heritage significance.⁷⁸

Plan 22: Heritage



Landscape Heritage

The Coastline

Folkestone and Hythe District contains exceptional coastal landscapes of national and international importance. These landscapes are incredibly varied and range from the desolate shingle expanses of the Dungeness Peninsula to the dramatic white cliffs and open chalk grassland of the Folkestone Warren along the Heritage Coast. The many heritage assets along the coastline reflect significant historical events and human activities, primarily concerned with the district's military legacy as well as other local histories such as smuggling, fishing and religious heritage.

Marine, Harbours and the Seaside

The district's proximity to the continent has linked its history to the sea and maritime activity. The Cinque Ports were an arrangement of ports along the Kent and East Sussex coast that provided vital ship service to the Crown from the 11th to the 16th century. Two out of the five original Cinque Ports, Hythe and New Romney, lie within the district.



Folkestone Harbour

Folkestone also has valuable heritage assets relating to its status as a cross channel port. It also has a rich fishing heritage. The harbour itself has played essential roles during important historical events that include wartime, the arrival of the railway and the commencement of tourism. The district has a valuable collection of heritage assets relating to various means of transportation.

By the end of the 19th century Folkestone, along with neighbouring Sandgate, had developed into a fashionable seaside resort, with luxurious hotels and seaside amenities. Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands also became popular destinations. The growth in seaside tourism and leisure time during the 19th century resulted in a rise in coastal resort towns and by the 20th century Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands all had popular holiday camps. All of these areas are still popular seaside destinations as well as including valuable heritage assets relating to their history of smuggling, farming and coastal defence. As a coastal district, the area has played an important role in the formation of the 'coastal garden' seaside resort and has retained excellent examples of striking landscaped gardens and horticultural quality such as the Lower Leas Coastal Park, which contains a significant section of 'Pulhamite'.

The Romney Marsh

The Romney Marsh is a unique historic landscape that has evolved over thousands of years. Its long and complex natural history is primarily one of land reclamation. Distinctive features reflect a rich heritage centred on the battle for land drainage and coastal defence, alongside a rich agricultural and maritime heritage, wartime defences and the medieval churches of the Marsh. Its landscape, characterised by openness and wildness, is unique in the county.

The North Downs and Greensand Vale

This diverse and unique landscape has iconic features of the county, such the Folkestone Downs. It is also of national significance for nature and is an exceptionally rich historic environment, contributing to local character and sense of place, in particular the religious, farming and defence heritage of the area.

Dungeness

The historic landscape of Dungeness is a particularly distinctive part of the district and, indeed, the entire country. Its landscape is uniquely sparse and remains relatively undisturbed by development and human occupation. As a result, Dungeness is particularly attractive for its tranquillity and wildness with only a few buildings and dwellings which are distinctive and reflect a strong local heritage and uniquely strong local character.



Defence

The district's proximity to the continent has continually placed it on the front line against foreign invasion. A strong legacy of coastal defence is evident in the remains of fortifications along the coastline and inland. They form an outstanding collection of assets representing the nation's responses to foreign threats and the defence strategies. The collection of Napoleonic period defences are of outstanding importance. During both 20th century World Wars, Folkestone Harbour was an important departure and arrival point for soldiers. At various points throughout their history

Folkestone, Hythe and Lydd have played an important military role and become major garrison towns. The district contains a wide collection of Second World War heritage assets, including sites associated with air defence, coastal defence, troop support and supply, anti-invasion works, and civil defence.

Settlements, Farming, Parks and Churches

The settlement pattern of the district is a response to its varied landscapes and farming heritage. Various farming practices are represented including sheep farming on the Romney Marsh and arable farming highlighted by surviving windmills and other arable-based farmsteads.

The district also has several valuable parks and gardens. Whilst the current estates are smaller parts of once much larger landholdings, the heritage of these parklands and their associated buildings and gardens demonstrate the distinctive manorial and agricultural experience of Kent. Two of the parks are listed on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and there are many more that, whilst not listed, are in excellent condition and are integral to the identity of the district.

The district has a rich religious heritage highlighted in a range of religious buildings, ruins and archaeological remains. These assets reflect the long and often dramatic history of Christianity in East Kent.⁷⁹

Tourism

There is a wide variety of tourist attractions within the district including numerous heritage assets, expansive wild landscapes; and initiatives such as the Creative Quarter in Folkestone. The tourism offer is an important aspect of the district's economy.

The Heritage Strategy has identified opportunities to use the district's heritage assets as part of its tourism offer. The district is rich in heritage and its strength lies in the cumulative nature of its heritage assets. Outstanding examples include Napoleonic defences, Martello Towers, the Royal Military Canal and the unique landscapes of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- Human land use has had a major role in fashioning the landscape, through the drainage of marshes, military activity, construction of sea walls, housing, tourist amenities and roads.
- Parts of the Landscape Character of the district are much more affected by nearby development than others. In the eastern part, around Folkestone, views from the scarp are affected by developments around Folkestone and associated with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.
- A small number of south-facing arable fields within the Posting Scarp and Vale LCA have recently been replanted with vines. Changes in land use affect the appearance and character of the landscape and are often apparent over a wide area.
- The landscape is sensitive to the impacts of development and infrastructure within and beyond the AONB boundary.
- The presence of a large and growing local population can also put pressure on recreation facilities within the landscape, such as public footpaths, which can result in erosion and damage.
- Climate change may result in changes to the type of crops which are grown and changes in land management in response to climate change, potentially having an impact on biodiversity and landscape character.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

1. Strengthen and reinforce landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character.

- 1.1. Manage woodland, aiming for a linked network of woodland, shaws and hedgerows, and replace dead ash with alternative species as appropriate. Restore characteristic landscape features such as hedgerows, and beech stands on the hill tops. Ensure new tree establishment associated with climate mitigation respects and enhances landscape character and qualities.
- 1.2. Support the co-ordinated management of the landscape and habitats within the AONB to promote wildlife value and enable access for recreation where appropriate.
- 1.3. Strengthen and reinforce natural features like watercourses as accessible green corridors linking built up areas with the wider countryside.
- 1.4. Develop strategies for partnership working, for example for woodland and farmland management.
- 1.5. Strengthen and reinforce landscape structure in urban–rural fringe areas. Ensure that the edges of new and

existing urban and rural settlements blend comfortably with the surrounding countryside.

- 1.6. Protect and enhance views and high quality landscapes in the AONB.

2. Ensure heritage is recognised in green infrastructure planning, interpretation, and tourism.

- 2.1. Promote and enhance cultural heritage assets.
- 2.2. Improve accessibility of cultural heritage sites through sustainable transport links and enhanced interpretation (where appropriate) and community engagement.
- 2.3. Identify heritage and local distinctiveness which can be used to guide future development.
- 2.4. Identify and protect important viewpoints of heritage assets and ensure that the historic natural environment is respected and interpreted through new development.
- 2.5. Heritage themes could be developed to support tourism. Key themes could include Napoleonic Defences, Folkestone and the First World War, church or pilgrimage network, Victorian and Edwardian Folkestone, Romney Marsh and Dungeness (linking with natural heritage).

Part 2: Strategic and Spatial Priorities



Strategic and Spatial Opportunities

Introduction

In this section the opportunities and potential actions and priorities are set out. The first section sets out the projects and opportunities which apply across the whole district and which are not confined to a particular geographic area.

The district has then been divided into three areas, in which the priorities and actions are examined in more detail. The three areas align with the Core Strategy and are:

- Folkestone town, Hythe and Saltwood;
- Romney Marsh;
- North Downs.

Strategic Priorities

Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species.

Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change.

Link people and nature.

Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts.

Ensure development is sustainable.

Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Folkestone and Hythe's future residents.

Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.

Maximise the benefits of recreation and access to Folkestone and Hythe's unique landscapes and green spaces, whilst ensuring that this does not have a negative impact on them or their biodiversity.

Provide access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.

Support people in taking healthy exercise and engaging in nature for both their physical and mental health.

Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.

Incorporate SuDs schemes into new development and retrofit into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues.

Protect water resources and protect and enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats.

Strengthen and reinforce landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character.

Ensure heritage is recognised in green infrastructure planning, interpretation, and tourism.

Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

This area includes Folkestone town, Hythe and Saltwood. It is bounded to the north by the transport corridor of the A20 and the transport infrastructure of the Channel Tunnel. To the east lies Folkestone Warren Local Nature Reserve and SSSI. North of the A20 lies Folkestone to Etchinghill SAC and the North Downs Way National Trail (Plan 23).

Parts of Folkestone are densely populated urban areas but there are significant areas of greenspace. Radnor Park is located near Folkestone town centre with other green spaces at Morehall Recreation Ground, Cheriton Recreation Area and Sandgate Recreation Area. There are also several schools and sports areas which add to the green infrastructure fabric of the town.

In 2021 consultants produced a "Place Plan" for Folkestone Town Centre. The town centre boundary as defined by Folkestone and Hythe District Council encompasses the historic, cultural and economic hub of the town. The Place Plan area extends beyond the town centre, including some opportunity sites recognised in the Local Plan to include the town centre's wider context.

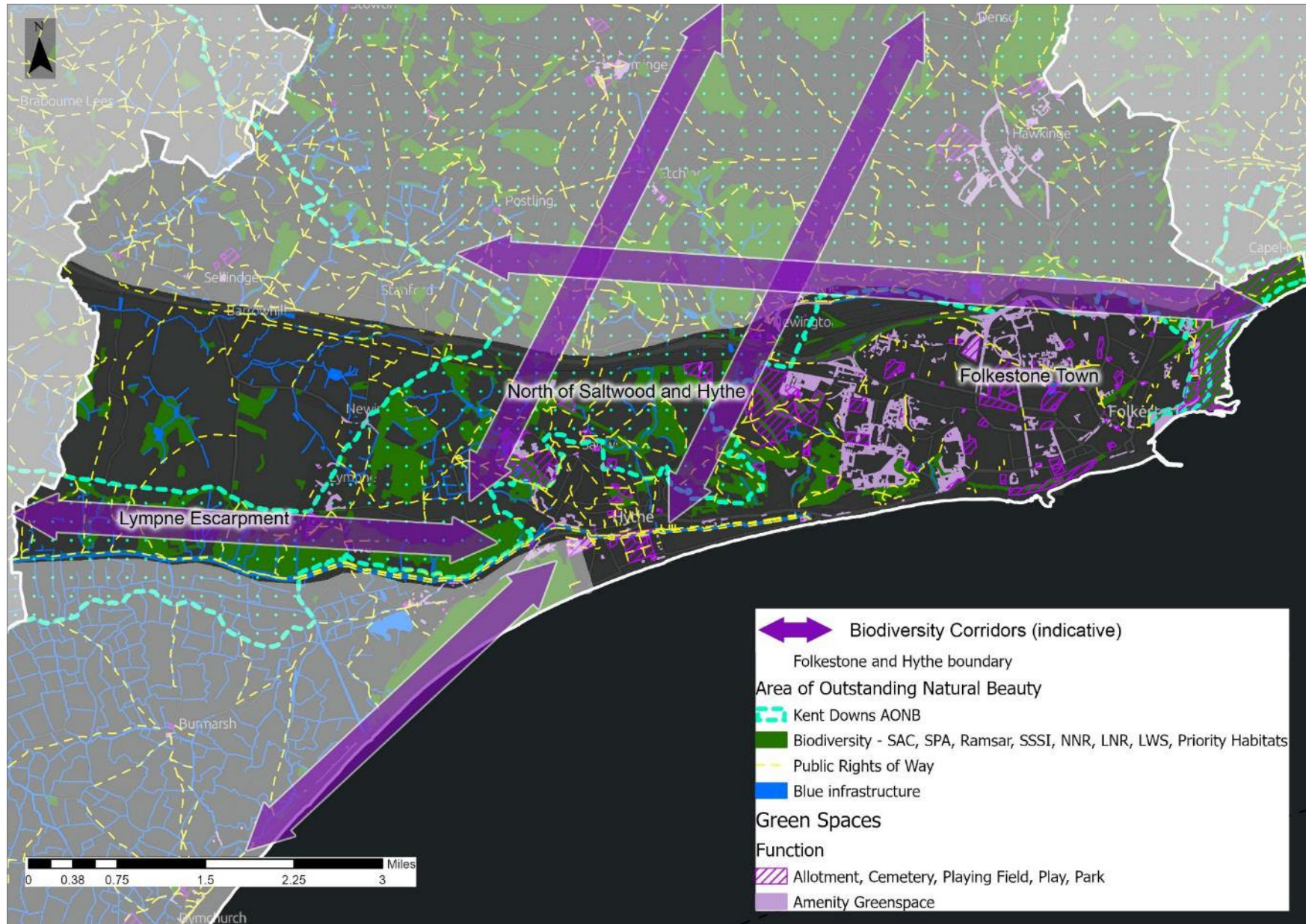
There are several actions and recommendations which relate to green and blue infrastructure including creating unified public spaces, public realm greening and new public spaces; wayfinding and enhancing the cycling and walking experience, creating better connections; planting and landscaping for biodiversity, sustainable drainage and carbon sequestration. These should be prioritised as part of any regeneration of the town centre.

Access out of Folkestone to the north is severely restricted by transport infrastructure. The Kent Downs can be accessed from the western side of Folkestone town, through Folkestone Warren, along the England Coast Path or cycle route up Smallpox Hill. There are other, but limited, crossing and access points between here and Shearway Business Park (Caesar's Way) including public right of way HF7 and various points along Churchill Avenue to access Sugar Loaf Hill. However, from Shearway Business Park there is no access until public right of way HE255 south of Newington. This effectively cuts off the Kent Downs from people living in Cheriton. The railway to the south also limits access choices for these residents.

The coastal beaches and parks are important for tourism and recreation as well as being important green and blue infrastructure features. To the east is East Cliff and Warren Country Park and to the south of the town is The Leas and Lower Leas Coastal Park. There is access along the coast on the promenade and the continuous beachfront. At Seabrook, near Princes Parade, the Royal Military Canal begins, with a cycling and walking route alongside. This continues along the southern edge of the Lympe escarpment.

Plan 23: Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood Area

Page 120



On the western side of Folkestone the urban area gives way to an urban edge landscape with many areas of green infrastructure. Extensive military landholdings at Shorncliffe include woodland between West Road and Seabrook / Horn Street. To the north lies St Martin's Plain an area of greenspace and woodland. Seabrook Stream SSSI follows a wooded valley crossing this area. To the south is Sene Valley Golf Course. Beyond, to the west, the land then crosses agricultural land and woodland within the Kent Downs AONB. This area is an important green area on the urban fringe which will, in time, be bounded on the eastern side by Otterpool Park. This area is considered in more detail under the subsection 'North of Saltwood and Hythe'.

Following the coast are the urban areas of Seabrook, Hythe and Saltwood. Brockhill Country Park lies to the west of Saltwood, and beyond is Sandling Park, a Registered Park. To the south of the area lies the Lympe Escarpment SSSI. The land here dips steeply to the Romney Marsh.

The health of communities in the eastern areas of Folkestone is generally poorer than in the west with some areas showing high levels of health deprivation.

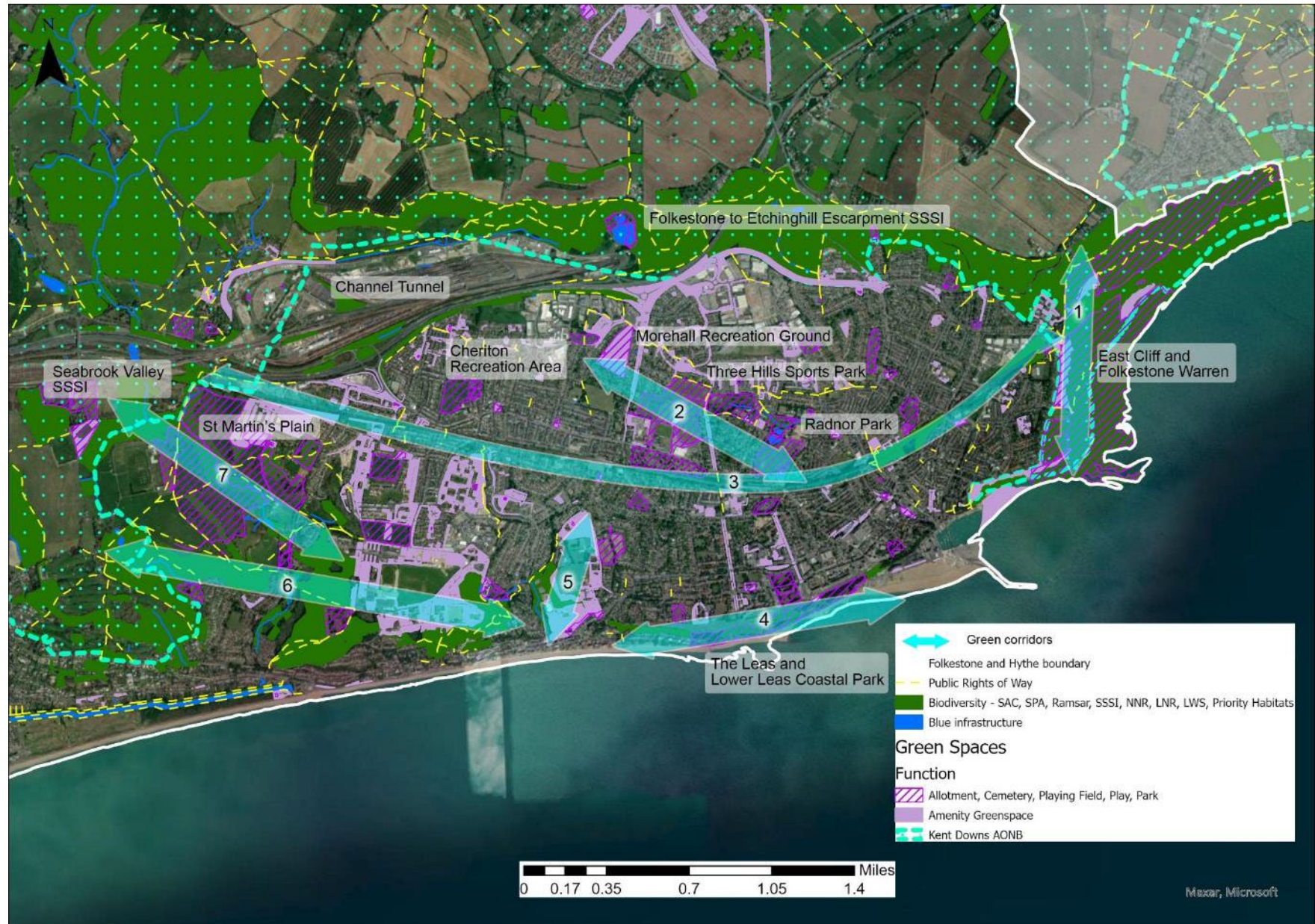
There are several corridors of linked green infrastructure assets in Folkestone town, see Plan 23. The whole of the town is also covered by a 'B-Line' highlighting potential importance for pollinator species. There is potential to improve spaces for pollinator species throughout the urban fabric of Folkestone.

Corridors (Plan 24)

- 1 East Cliff and Folkestone Warren link beyond Folkestone and Hythe into Dover District and to the Kent Downs to the north.
- 2 There is a green corridor from Shearway Business Park through Morehall Recreation Ground, Three Hills Sports Park green area next to Cornwallis Avenue and linking through to Radnor Park and Stella Maris Catholic Primary School. Not all of these spaces are publicly accessible but together they form a string of green infrastructure spaces in the urban area.
- 3 The railway line, although not accessible and forming a barrier, does also provide a linear corridor for wildlife, if suitably managed.
- 4 The Leas and Lower Leas Coastal Park are an extensive area of green space for recreation. The Leas is managed on a tradition regime of close mowing and seasonal bedding. There are opportunities to incorporate pollinator species and more wildflowers, in keeping with the location, to enhance this area. This approach could be encouraged in the communal gardens which are a feature of some of the residential blocks adjacent to The Leas.
- 5, 6 There is a series of green infrastructure assets linking Sandgate Primary School, Folkestone School for Girls and the Saga Group offices. These link through to woodlands around Shorncliffe, Sene Valley Golf Club and beyond to the area north of Hythe. Most of these green infrastructure assets are not publicly accessible but there are public rights of way. Nonetheless they form an important series of linked green infrastructure spaces.
- 7 St Martin's Plain links through the Seabrook Valley SSSI to the area north of Hythe.

Plan 24: Green Infrastructure Corridors - Folkestone Town

Page 122



Focus Area - North of Saltwood and Hythe

This area is the undeveloped land west of Folkestone from Shorncliffe and St Martin's Plain and north of Hythe and Saltwood. It is bounded to the north by the transport infrastructure of the A20 and railway line. Most of this area is within the Kent Downs AONB.

The landscape is intimate and enclosed; a mixed arable and pastoral landscape strongly influenced by estate planting, with blocks of deciduous woodland. This historic landscape has unique elements which create a strong sense of place. Saltwood Castle, with its distinctive towered gatehouse, stands in a tiny area of ornamental parkland on the edge of a typical unspoilt valley. These little valleys bring valuable pockets of rural landscape up the very edge of the town. To the west of Saltwood, the historic landscape of Sandling Park (a registered historic park and garden) comprises parkland, woodland, agricultural land and estate buildings. Further designed landscape has been incorporated into Brockhill Country Park. It is an important area for biodiversity corridors. Most of the area is within the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area, but the area also links other Opportunity Areas to the north and south.

There are some threats to this landscape. Although it well-treed, the woodland blocks and hedgerows are threatened by ash dieback. Climate change is likely to lead to hotter drier summers, and warmer, wetter winters. This will affect soil conditions (both drought and flooding) and the types of trees, crops and habitats

which can be supported. Historic parkland management plans should make detailed recommendations for parkland management and ensuring that the parkland remains a feature of the landscape in the future. There has been some localised loss of field boundaries. The proximity to urban areas means that it is vulnerable to anti-social behaviour such as fly tipping and littering.

The area is surrounded by urban areas to the east and south, with Otterpool planned along the western edge. This is an important area for recreation for current and future residents, particularly as there are only two access points across the transport corridor in the north. A large, and growing, local population will put pressure on recreation facilities within the landscape, such as public footpaths, which can result in erosion and damage. Brockhill Country Park is currently a popular recreation resource. Providing high quality, well managed multifunctional paths to recreational spaces that can accommodate high levels of use, will help to protect more fragile elements of the landscape from indiscriminate use. These should be managed to direct visitors away from vulnerable 'honeypot' areas and to disperse recreational pressure.

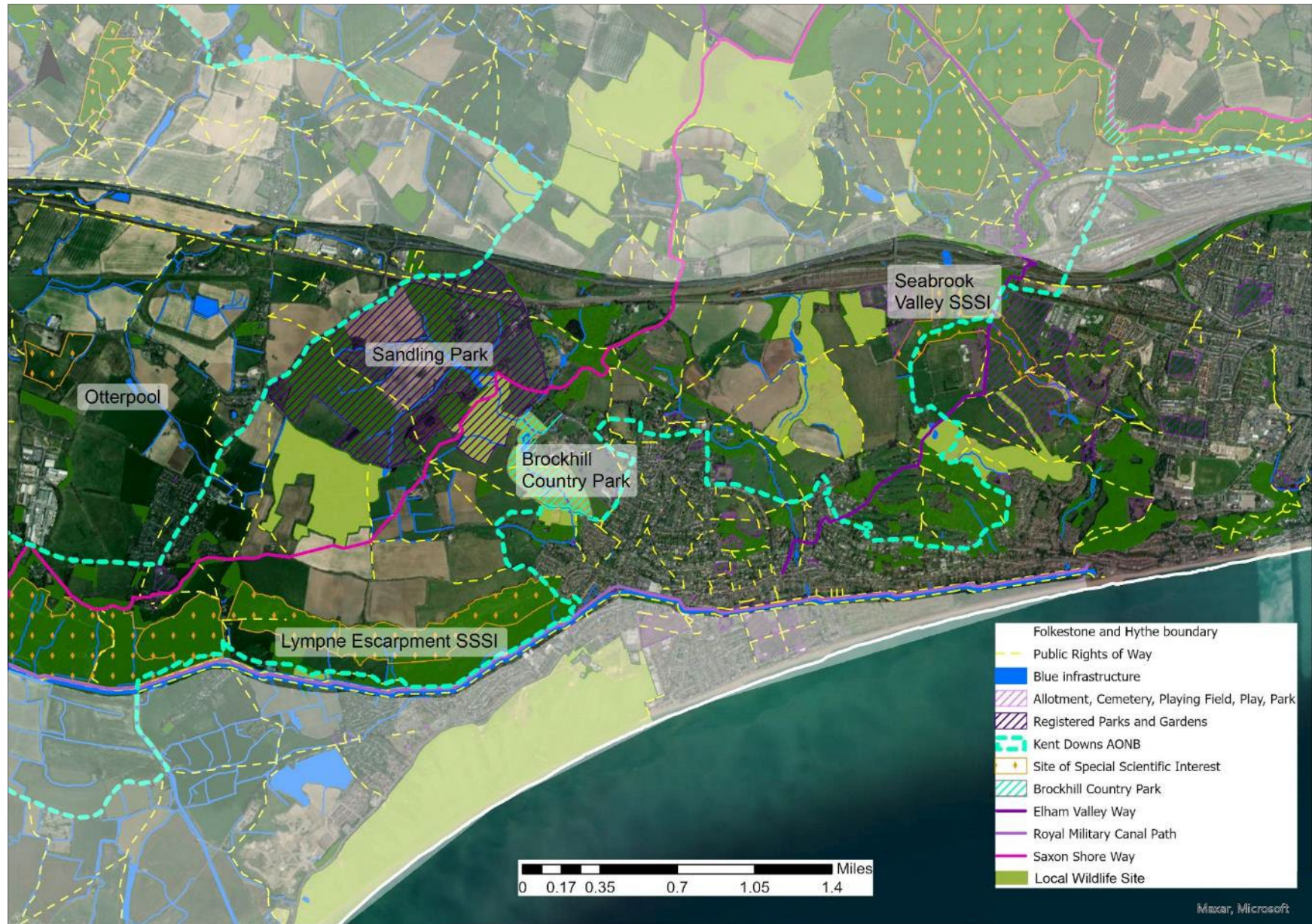
Actions to draw together across this area:

- Urban edge landscape – soften and protect the landscape at the urban edges and address urban edge pressures;
- A range of access improvements:
 - Good quality connections and investment in public rights of way, especially existing promoted routes and routes to Brockhill Country Park;

- Increase accessibility of routes (remove stiles, improve surfaces);
 - Link to existing promoted routes (Royal Military Canal, Saxon Shore Way, Elham Valley Way);
 - Produce map to show network of public rights of way, cycling routes and quiet lanes to help users and minimise wandering off of public rights of way. Ensure good waymarking on public rights of way;
 - There are dead end routes truncated at railway – rationalise these. Seek east-west routes where these are lacking;
- Assess likely impact of ash dieback on woodlands and hedgerows and mitigate for this;
 - Improve biodiversity connections across this area through hedgerows, pollinator corridors and other measures appropriate to the landscape character;
 - Ensure core biodiversity sites in good condition – Seabrook Stream SSSI, Lympne Escarpment SSSI, Saltwood Valley LWS, Paraker Wood and Seabrook Stream LWS and Folkswood LWS. Woodland as part of Shorncliffe
 - Lympne Green (Otterpool Park) create bee friendly wildflower areas where possible

Plan 25: Focus Area - North of Saltwood and Hythe

Page 125



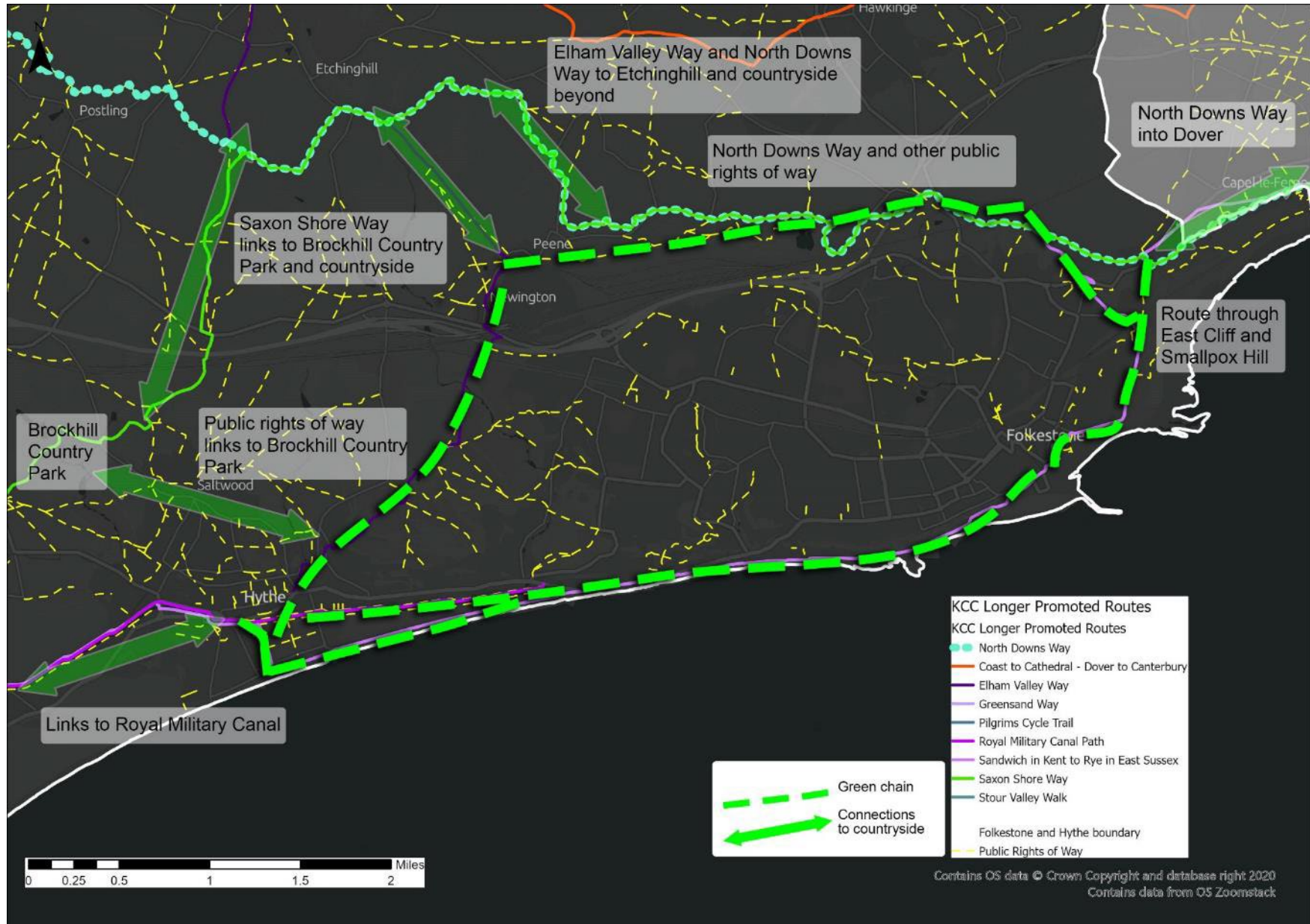
Priorities for Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

- Take a holistic view and develop a plan for biodiversity, landscape, blue infrastructure and access in the Saltwood and Hythe area. To include interface with urban fringe and to accommodate new Otterpool development, incorporating the main points in previous section.
- Develop a 'Bees Please for Folkestone' project – improvements across the town to create an urban pollinator haven. Projects to increase wildflowers and pollinators would also help other wildlife. Such a project would engage residents and raise awareness and would help to support and raise awareness of work already underway in the Romney Marsh. Potential to link with arts. More wildflowers could be incorporated into the many close mown areas in Folkestone, including parks, sports areas, The Leas, road verges and the communal gardens of apartments. Use as a visitor economy USP. (some already happening?)
- Street trees are a feature of some parts of Folkestone – and these are managed by Kent County Council. Folkestone town centre regeneration through the Place Plan should incorporate the recommended green and blue infrastructure elements to improve the green infrastructure of the public realm and make spaces more attractive. Bringing green features into the urban fabric will encourage more people to walk through these spaces.
- Incorporate biodiversity features in all parks, including playing pitch areas, managed by Folkestone and Hythe District Council.
- Increase biodiversity in the significant green infrastructure assets which are privately owned, or which are schools ground, playing fields or cemeteries – for example through tree planting, wildflower areas, linkages for wildlife movement and other measures. Foster collaborative improvements between landowners in areas which are identified as green corridors.
- Maximise diversity of amenity grassland, road verges and other close mown area throughout the town to diversify these and improve for pollinators.
- Enthuse and engage residents to incorporate wildlife features into gardens, to install swift boxes and create hedgehog highways, and to appreciate value of wildflower and unmown areas within the urban fabric.
- Ensure infill development incorporates biodiversity. Ensure the biodiversity value of brownfield sites is recognised.
- Are there issues with recreational pressure at Sugar Loaf?
- Ensure that the woodland at Shorncliffe development is entered into sustainable management for recreation and wildlife and designate as a Local Nature Reserve?
- Cheriton area has poor access out of urban area to countryside areas beyond and low provision of green space, although it does have large areas of amenity grassland. Invest in access and biodiversity at Cheriton Recreation Area Cheriton. Improve quality of amenity green spaces for wildlife and recreation.
- Promote a 'green chain' of access routes around Folkestone (Plan 26) and promote access to these sites. Invest in public rights of way linking town and countryside to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people.

- Ensure recreation is sustainable and does not damage sensitive biodiversity features through installing interpretation and including information in promotional materials.
- Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from flytipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.
- Develop urban walking routes to link open spaces and the coastal sites.
- Connect with Folkestone's arts community to bring alive the unique and special wildlife, habitats and heritage of the area, e.g. through artwork, events, installations, festivals.
- Produce and implement management plan for Folkestone Warren Local Nature Reserve to implement biodiversity management and sustainable recreation.
- Investigate which existing open space can be retrofitted to alleviate surface water flooding in areas where it is a problem (identified from Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Extent 1:30 3.3 percent annual chance). There are potentially several sites within corridor 2 which could incorporate SuDS features to slow and intercept the flow of water to the town centre (e.g. Morehall Recreation Ground, Radnor Park, Three Hills Sports Park). The potential of this should be investigated further.
- Deliver actions identified in the forthcoming LCWIP to increase walking and cycling for everyday journeys.
- Engage with active community and environmental groups in this area to take forward projects and generate local ideas and increase environmental volunteering.
- Develop a green schools programme to increase wildlife, plant trees to increase shade, wildflower meadows, bird and bat boxes, bug houses and growing food, to increase awareness and engagement in the natural world and special wildlife of the area.

Plan 26: Folkestone 'Green Chain'

Page 128



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Romney Marsh

This unique area has a character all its own, and a unique historic landscape that has evolved over thousands of years. Its long and complex natural history is primarily one of land reclamation.

Dungeness is undoubtedly the jewel in the crown for biodiversity in this area. This unique and highly sensitive area is home to highly specialist flora and fauna and is of international importance for its wildlife and geomorphology. There are over 600 types of plant and is one of the best places in the UK for invertebrates, including several species which can only be found here or a few other places.

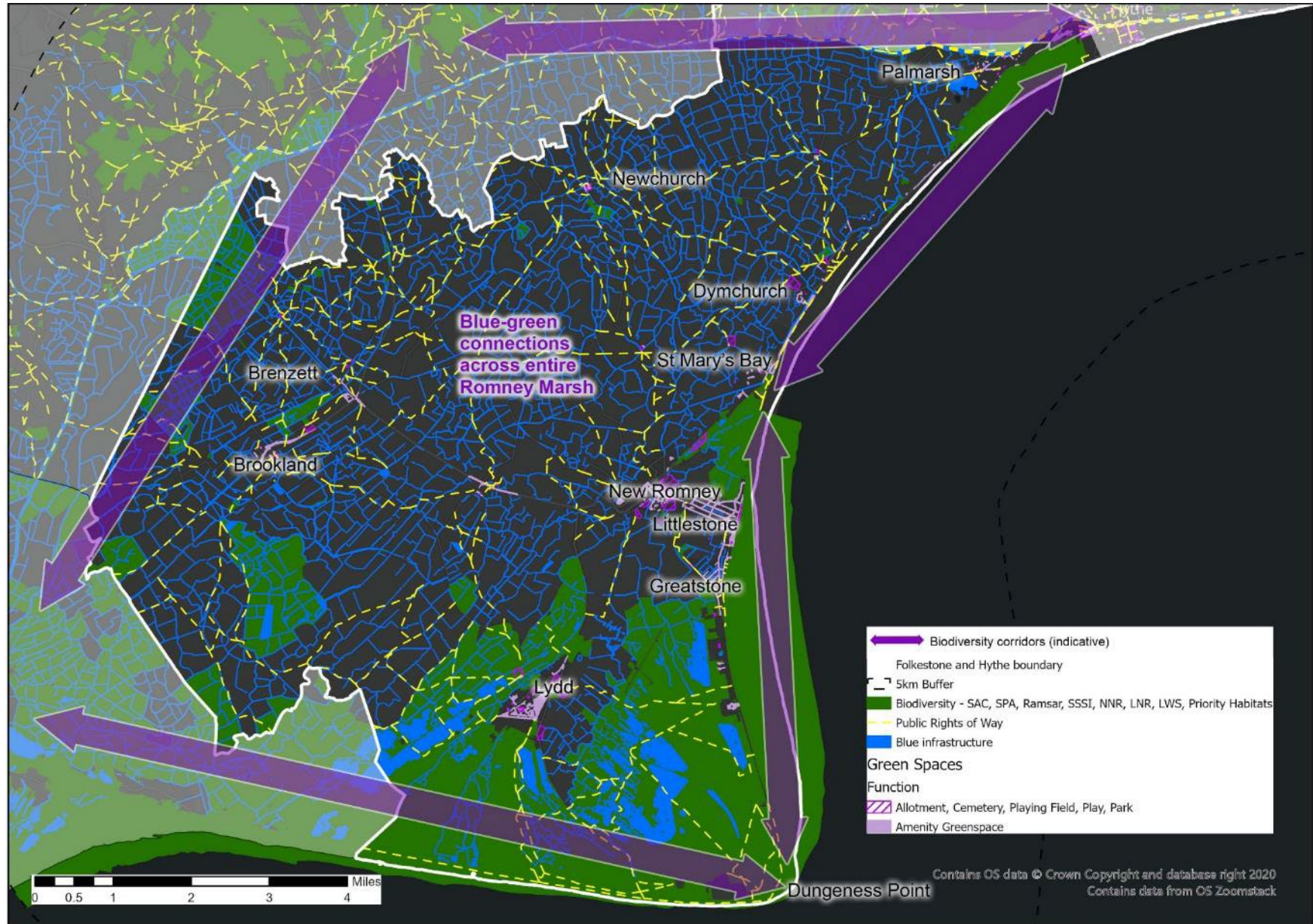
Human land use has had a major role in fashioning the present landscape, through the drainage of marshes, military activity, gravel digging and the construction of sea walls, housing and tourist amenities. Scattered settlements are linked by long, straight, open roads and have a distinctive architectural character, including weatherboarding and hung tiles. Many have medieval churches at their core. New Romney (incorporating Littlestone-on-Sea) is the key market town in Romney Marsh.

Farming on Romney Marsh has changed dramatically over past decades, both in terms of the type of farming (conversion of sheep pasture to arable land) but also its increased intensification. Nevertheless, the network of ditches and wetlands make this area important for wildlife.



Plan 27: Romney Marsh Area

Page 130



A continual balance needs to be struck in an area that is internationally important for geomorphology and wildlife but where local communities strive to make a living and enjoy the natural assets on their doorstep. Pressures from visitors on these areas are addressed through the delivery of the Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS).

To relieve visitor pressure at sites such as the Greatstone dunes and Dungeness Estate where visitor numbers are particularly high, the council has been reviewing options and sites to create alternative, more robust 'destination areas' which can better accommodate visitor pressure. One of these is Coast Drive Car Park. This area is under-utilised, dilapidated, and provides little benefit to the community. It is adjacent to designated wildlife sites and therefore it is imperative that assessments and mitigation measures are agreed prior in advance - the project is being planned and designed with this in mind.



Proposals at Coast Drive Romney Marsh Coastal Destination Beach Chalet Project

The Heritage Strategy also identifies opportunities to use the district's rich heritage in its tourism offer. Outstanding examples include the Napoleonic defences, the Martello Towers, the Royal Military Canal and the unique landscapes of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness.

The Open Spaces Strategy shows that some areas in the Romney Marsh area, including New Romney, are currently below the quantity standard. However, there is access to larger spaces away from the urban and residential context including Dungeness, a popular destination for local visitors and visitors from across the county who value its natural beauty. However, although the quiet lanes and existing promoted routes make this area well-suited for leisure cycling and walking, the SARMS report cautions that any plans to enhance access and bring visitors close to the Natura sites should be carefully assessed.

The Open Space Strategy recommends existing green links and corridors should be strengthened including the extensive beaches, cliff-tops and the Royal Military Canal.

The Cinque Ports Cycle Route, proposed in the LCWIP, would link Folkestone seafront to Lydd, link to National Cycle Route (NCR) 2 and improve cycle links between smaller coastal towns and Folkestone, the Royal Military Canal and Romney Marsh. The proposed route, along with the quiet lanes of the Marsh, would allow cyclists to make a variety of circular tours, which are more popular with leisure cyclists than 'out and back' trips.

There are pockets of poor health in the Romney Marsh area, in New Romney, St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch. Public Health England's recent report "*Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020*" recommends working with health professionals to promote the role greenspace plays in both individual and population health outcomes. This will support the health service's ambition to take more preventative action against poor health and to use green assets through initiatives such as social prescribing.

The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme⁸⁰ National Lottery Heritage Fund project (NLHF) has delivered a range of habitat improvements, community engagement and training to benefit the people and wildlife of the Romney Marsh area.

Continuing the legacy of the Fifth Continent Scheme is an important priority for the Romney Marsh area. Projects include:

- Restoring vegetated shingle habitat across Dungeness foreland;
- 'Blue lanes' - creating optimal ditch conditions for wildlife through physical works and education;
- Green lanes for bumblebees through improved highway cutting regimes and engaging with the community and landowners;
- A range of other projects centred around churches, the arts oral history and sustainable tourism.⁸¹

Priorities for this Area

- Consider new cycle path from Lydd to New Romney to take traffic off the road and give families who haven't any other way of travelling, a chance to explore areas nearby. Many people in this area are unable to have holidays as it is a deprived area. This would help them with mental and physical wellbeing. Employees of the Dungeness Power Station would also benefit if a cycle path was put in situ along Dungeness Road, again taking traffic off the roads.
- Provide a range of promotional materials for walking and cycling to promote sustainable tourism. Highlight the outstanding heritage and biodiversity assets.
- In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.
- Extend Walking for Health to marsh communities.
- Plan strategically to ensure destination green spaces such as Dungeness RSPB, Dungeness Point, the Royal Military Canal, Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway and the coast are connected through promotional routes.
- Continue with legacy projects of the Fifth Continent scheme:
 - Restoring vegetated shingle habitat across Dungeness foreland;
 - 'Blue lanes' - creating optimal ditch conditions for wildlife through physical works and education;

- Green lanes for bumblebees through improved highway cutting regimes and engaging with the community and landowners;
- A range of other projects centred around churches, the arts oral history and sustainable tourism.
- Implement *The Cinque Ports Cycle Route* - to link Folkestone seafront to Lydd in line with LCWIP strategy.
- Ensure that the SARMS is delivered to ensure recreation is not detrimental to the areas outstanding biodiversity.
- Maximise access to the coast, as this has the potential to provide a level and attractive linear route for all abilities, while also considering the recommendations in the SARMS.
- Engage with local communities to take action for pollinators in the villages of the marsh – on verges, gardens, churchyards and open spaces.
- Engage with local communities to continue to raise awareness of the unique and special nature of the area.
- Produce integrated management plan for Greatstone Dunes addressing issues and ensuring sustainable management.
- Work with golf courses to improve wildlife and pollinator habitats.
- Provide more information incorporated into tourism material on the biodiversity value of the area and raise awareness with tourism businesses.
- Upgrade the The Rype, Open Space – at Lydd
- Quarry restoration after use?
- Work with Ministry of Defence to increase access and biodiversity on land holdings (PC comment).
- Work with neighbouring authorities and partners to extend the Royal Military Canal cycle route to benefit over visitor offer for the area (PC comment).

The North Downs

To the north of Folkestone is the North Downs area. Most of this area is within the Kent Downs AONB.

Agriculture shapes the landscape, with variations in soils giving rise to a patchwork of arable, livestock and horticulture which have co-existed for centuries. Churches, villages, parkland and heritage features are important, bringing together a coherent and accessible story about the area's development and identity. Many of these are outstanding in terms of their heritage significance.

Woodlands, many of which are ancient, are a prominent feature of the landscape and chalk grassland is particularly notable. Many of the chalk grasslands are SACs, designated for their international importance, and support rare wildlife. There are also many Local Wildlife Sites which add to a network of biodiversity sites.

Public rights of way criss-cross the area, including ancient trackways along the ridge. Today these are part of the North Downs Way, Saxon Shore Way and the Elham Valley Way. Networks of narrow, winding lanes have hollowed-out the hillsides where they descend and climb the scarp during centuries of use.⁸²



Plan 28: North Downs Area



There are also large publicly accessible woodlands managed by the Forestry Commission, including West Wood and Park Wood. There is the opportunity to work with the Forestry Commission to improve public access and public recreation within woodland areas.

The Open Spaces Strategy shows that in the North Downs some areas are currently below the quantity standard, for example Sellindge. Plans for new open spaces in Otterpool will help to alleviate this deficit and good access into them from these areas should be encouraged in the master planning process.

Although health is generally good, there are small pockets of poor health. Circular walks using good quality public rights of way and better connections to natural greenspace should be considered.

Between Lyminge, through Elham and Wingmore is the course of the Nailbourne, a chalk 'bourne' which only flows at some times of the year.



Monkey Orchid at Parkgate Down SAC

Priorities for this Area

- Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views for future generations. Working in partnership with Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to identify management opportunities in accordance with their management plans.
- Join up woodlands and hedgerows across the landscape, strengthening landscape character and biodiversity networks.
- Seek opportunities to create biodiversity linkages within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, supporting local communities to take the lead to identify, plan and take forward improvements.
- There may be opportunity to work with the Forestry Commission and Ministry of Defence to improve public access and public recreation within woodland areas.
- Seek to increase awareness and maximising the potential of the area's outstanding historic, natural and cultural assets, improving access to and interpretation of sites and features, as a platform for enhanced education and to enthuse local communities.
- Conserving and appropriately managing ancient trackways such as the North Downs Way, and the Pilgrims' Way and strengthen the network through high quality interconnecting routes, increasing the benefits of these routes for biodiversity, health and local businesses.
- Support villages and parishes to develop ideas and plans for village-wide wildlife improvements – wildflower verges, hedgehog highways, swift boxes and other projects across the whole village or parish to connect wildlife habitats.
- Recognise and manage the impact of increased visitor numbers on sensitive sites.
- In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.
- Extend Walking for Health to North Downs communities.
- A project to address the current lack of biodiversity and flooding problems associated with the Nailbourne
- Include a project to create green corridors, within and through villages, and a project to enhance the Nailbourne.
- Assess the impact of ash dieback on the landscape and nature conservation interests and, working with local communities, take steps to mitigate impacts.

Part 3: Delivery

Elham Valley

Delivery

Delivering this strategy will require partnerships between many organisations and individuals and across many Folkestone and Hythe Council teams.

The aims in this strategy are not all within the remit of Folkestone and Hythe Council to deliver but are considered important in order to set out an ambition for Folkestone and Hythe. They will require funding, which will also entail working with partners, local communities and developers to secure; and new and innovative ways of working. Local communities, schools, universities, community organisations and individuals all have an important role to play in improving green and blue infrastructure.

Green and blue infrastructure is all around us and gardens too can make an important contribution to the health of urban areas, for example through providing habitat for pollinators, through water harvesting or the creation of drought gardens.

To achieve many of the objectives in this strategy requires partnership working, not only between local authorities and organisations, but with local communities as well. Local organisations and individuals are important in deciding how the objectives of this strategy can be taken forward locally, in helping to develop projects and in seeking funding. Local communities may wish to develop projects to green their local school or park, to carry out tree planting, clear out their local watercourse or provide more areas for pollinators - or may have other ideas and priorities to improve their local area. There are many active groups in

Folkestone and Hythe district which can assist with delivering this strategy.

Development

Green and blue infrastructure is an essential element in ensuring the delivery of sustainable development, as well as supporting the quality of life and health and wellbeing of residents, economic growth and the future prosperity of Folkestone and Hythe. Folkestone and Hythe Council will support the priorities of this Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework.

Development will be expected to contribute to the delivery of this strategy, which could include:

- Wildlife corridors and semi-natural green space
- Enhancement of biodiversity features
- Access corridors for pedestrians and cyclists
- Accessible green space
- Contribution to biodiversity and deliver of biodiversity 'net gain'
- Provision to ensure ongoing maintenance of green infrastructure
- Tree planting and retention of existing trees and woodland
- Sustainable drainage schemes
- Improvements to watercourses
- Green and blue infrastructure network improvements which link to features beyond the development boundary

Specific objectives and projects contained in this strategy and the Action Plan (to follow).

Glossary

Accessible green space: places available for public access, usually free of charge and without time restrictions.

Semi-natural green space: places that include semi-natural habitat, either forming the whole site or an element within a site.

Ancient woodland: an area which has been continuously wooded since at least 1600. These are often the richest woodlands in terms of biodiversity.

Biodiversity: the term used to describe the diverse forms of biological life.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP): a strategy prepared for a local area to provide a framework for conserving and enhancing biodiversity, identifying priority species and habitats and setting out the necessary actions to safeguard these.

Biodiversity 'net gain': Development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before.

Biodiversity offsetting: compensates for any adverse biodiversity impact that remains after appropriate prevention and mitigation measures have been taken in response to development.

Blue corridors: used to describe linear green infrastructure based around watercourses, including streams, rivers or canals.

Catchment management: the coordinated planning and management of a river catchment by a group of stakeholders.

Climate change adaptation: the changes that need to take place in an area, or that are naturally taking place, in response to changes in the climate.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): a levy on new development to be set by local planning authorities and used to pay for new infrastructure, such as schools, roads and green infrastructure.

Ecosystem: a system of physical and biological elements which function together as a unit.

Ecosystem services: the wide range of essential services and benefits that are derived from a functioning natural environment, including the management of basic resources such as water, food, fuel, air quality and recreation.

Greenways: traffic-free routes running through green spaces or other areas of green infrastructure, providing safe and attractive routes for walking and cycling.

Green corridor: linear green infrastructure which includes, amongst others, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. They can also support ecological connectivity.

Green infrastructure network: the linking together of areas of green infrastructure to create an interconnected network, providing opportunities for recreation, increasing ecological connectivity and enhancing the landscape.

Landscape-scale: a landscape-scale approach seeks to provide multiple benefits, taking a holistic approach which considers biodiversity alongside other issues such as

recreation, economics, agriculture and tourism, looking beyond protected areas and discrete wildlife sites to wider natural processes, functioning across the landscape.

Landscape character: the distinct and recognisable patterns and elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how people perceive these.

Multifunctional: the ability to provide more than one benefit or function on a piece of land or across a green infrastructure network.

Natural capital: The world's stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. It is from this natural capital that humans derive a wide range of services, often called ecosystem services, which make human life possible.

Secondary woodland: a woodland that has grown on land that was previously not woodland, either through planting or establishing naturally.

Section 106 (s106) Agreement: Negotiated contributions towards a range of infrastructure and services as part of a condition of planning consent, such as community facilities, public open space, transport improvements and/or affordable housing.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS): systems designed to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments on surface water drainage.

Wildlife corridors: areas of habitat through which species can move to other wildlife areas.

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¹ Paragraph 175 “Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”

² Paragraph 92 “Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which: ... c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.”

Paragraph 154 “New development should be planned for in ways that: a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure; ...”

Paragraph 186 “... Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement...”

³ Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

⁴ Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30 p14.

⁵ Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30 p15.

⁶ Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30 p27.

⁷ Core Strategy Review -Submission Draft – 2020 p35.

⁸ Core Strategy Review - Submission Draft – 2020 p125.

⁹ Core Strategy Review - Submission Draft – 2020 p129.

¹⁰ Core Strategy Review - Submission Draft – 2020 p135.

¹¹ Designations overlap so figures should not be totalled.

¹² Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA.

¹³ Dungeness SAC.

¹⁴ Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay (Ramsar).

¹⁵ SSSIs and National Nature Reserves in Folkestone and Hythe District: Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay, Lymgne Escarpment, Otterpool Quarry, Gibbins Brook, Seabrook Stream, Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment, Great Shuttlesfield Down, Parkgate Down, Lynsore Bottom (partly in Canterbury district), Yocketts Bank (partly in Canterbury district) and Dungeness National Nature Reserve.

¹⁶ Natural England recommends 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population. Folkestone and Hythe currently has 0.82 hectares per 1,000 people (population c112,600 people ONS mid year estimate 2018). A further c20 hectares are required to meet this standard. There are two Local Nature Reserves in Folkestone and Hythe District: Romney Warren and Folkestone Warren.

¹⁷ Kent Habitat Survey (2012).

¹⁸ Shepway District Council and Rother District Council. (2017). Dungeness Complex Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS).

¹⁹ The district has 12.2% of Kent’s reedbeds.

²⁰ <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/short-haired-bumblebee-reintroduction-project/>

²¹ The rare bumblebees most frequently encountered in the project area are *Bombus muscorum*, *Bombus humilis*, and *Bombus ruderatus*.

²² <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/romney-marsh-farmland-bird-project>

²³ <http://www.rmcp.co.uk/medicinal-leech-uk/>

²⁴ Kent County Council. (2020). Canopy Cover Assessment - Kent Districts and Folkestone and Hythe. Kent Environment Strategy).

²⁵ From National Forest Inventory and Natural England data. Total woodland calculated at approximately 2,210 hectares with ancient woodland approximately 1,320 hectares.

²⁶ <https://www.theashproject.org.uk/about/>

²⁷ Lawton, J.H., *et al* (2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network. Report to Defra. Natural England provides more detail on developing 'Nature Networks'. Natural England. (2020). *Nature Networks: Evidence Handbook*. NERR081; *Nature Networks: A Summary for Practitioners*. NERR082.

²⁸ Sensitive management around sites to help protect them and increase biodiversity.

²⁹ The Kent Nature Partnership is developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy which will set a new direction for landscape-scale nature conservation in Kent.

³⁰ Edwards J, Knight M, Taylor S and Crosher I. E. (May 2020). Habitat Networks Maps, User Guidance v.2. Natural England. Priority habitats are mapped in Natural England datasets.

³¹ Kent Nature Partnership, 2015.

³² <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>

³³ • Sensitivity to Change – classifies each priority habitat type as high, medium or low sensitivity based on scientific literature and expert judgement;

• Habitat Fragmentation – measures how isolated or aggregated areas of the same habitat are and how permeable the surrounding landscape is. Larger patches of habitat can support larger populations and are less susceptible to extremes; and better connections allow species to move in the landscape;

• Topographic Heterogeneity – incorporates variations in height and aspect, as less variation can increase vulnerability;

• Management and Condition – assesses habitat condition based on SSSI condition and negative impacts which are not linked to climate change, as these can increase vulnerability.

³⁴ Kent Nature Partnership. (2020). Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045.

³⁵ The predecessor organisation of Natural England.

³⁶ Natural England (2010), Nature Nearby, Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance. Difficulties in categorising any particular piece of land can arise when trying to determine the extent of 'naturalness' and whether this 'predominates'. Not all sites will fall neatly into this category and there is room for interpretation in decisions on the naturalness of a site. To support categorising greenspaces, Natural England developed a proxy measure based on four categories. Level 1 and Level 2 sites are considered as proxy indicators of natural greenspace and include, amongst others, nature conservation designated sites, woodland, open access land, country parks and unimproved grassland. 'Natural' does

not necessarily mean that the site must contain rare or notable nature or to be designated.

³⁷ Apart from being closed overnight, or a parking charge applying.

³⁸ Natural England recommends that people living in towns and cities should have:

- An accessible natural greenspace of at least two hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home;
- At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;
- One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home;
- One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home;
- A minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.

³⁹ Shepway Open Space Strategy - pp 29 – 30.

⁴⁰ SARMS report 2017 p10.

⁴¹ Shepway Open Space Strategy 2017 p76.

⁴² Shepway Open Space Strategy - 2017 p52.

⁴³ Folkestone and Hythe District Council - Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

⁴⁴ www.explorekent.org

⁴⁵ www.kentconnected.org

⁴⁶ Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028.

⁴⁷ Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028.

⁴⁸ Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028 p3.

⁴⁹ Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028 p6 and 7.

⁵⁰ Heron, C., and Bradshaw, G. (2010). Walk this Way - Recognising Value in Active Health Prevention. LGiU for Natural England.

⁵¹ Public Health England. (2020). Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020.

⁵² Marmot, M. (2010). Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review): Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010.

⁵³ Kent Public Health Observatory. (August 2016). Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Overview Report (Sustainability Chapter). Kent County Council and NHS.

⁵⁴ Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2017). Shepway Open Spaces Strategy. p13.

⁵⁵ In 2018, Public Health England estimated that between 2017 and 2025 the total cost to the NHS and social care system due to the health impacts of PM2.5 and NO2 in England will be £1.69 billion. This figure is for where there is robust evidence for an association between exposure and disease.

⁵⁶ 'Peoples Engagement with Nature - Reflecting on ten years of the Natural England MENE survey' is a Storymap produced by Natural England.
<https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/>

⁵⁷ Public Health England. (2020). Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020. P 13.

⁵⁸ Papworth Trust. (2018). Facts and Figures 2018 – Disability in the United Kingdom.

⁵⁹ PHE Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020 p14.

⁶⁰ Environment Agency. (2021). Water Stressed Areas – Final Classification 2021.

⁶¹ NPPG, Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 7-002-20140306

⁶² Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

⁶³ Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

⁶⁴ Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

⁶⁵ Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

⁶⁶ Under Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act, Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) - County Councils and Unitary Authorities - were to be required to establish SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs). This would have required Kent County Council

(KCC), as the LLFA in Kent, to approve and adopt SuDS for new developments. In December 2014, the Government announced that Schedule 3 would not be enacted and SuDS would be dealt with instead by strengthening existing planning policy. This change, which took effect on 6 April 2015, requires local planning authorities to ensure that SuDS are included as part of new developments. Places and Policies Local Plan Adopted September 2020.

⁶⁷ <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp/index>

⁶⁸ Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 123 The Romney Marshes.

⁶⁹ Fiona Fyfe Associates. (2016). Romney Marsh Landscape Character Assessment for The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership and Shepway District Council.

⁷⁰ Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 123 The Romney Marshes.

⁷¹ Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 120 Wealden Greensand.

⁷² Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 120 Wealden Greensand.

⁷³ Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 119 The North Downs.

⁷⁴ Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (Draft October 2019). Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update.

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⁷⁶ Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p5.

⁷⁷ Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p9.

⁷⁸ Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p22.

⁷⁹ Extracts from Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy - Appendix 1: Theme Papers.

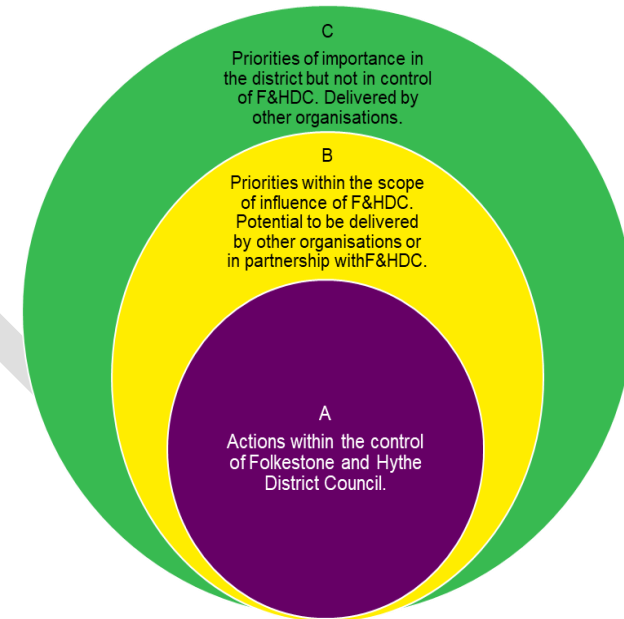
⁸⁰ <https://fifthcontinent.org.uk/>

⁸¹ <https://fifthcontinent.org.uk/projects/>

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DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Below is a summary of the needs, opportunities and priorities for the Green and Blue Strategy. This should be seen as an initial long list. As set out in the introduction, this strategy identifies priorities and needs, not all of which are within the direct control of the council, or which can be delivered by the council alone. The graphic on the right explains the colour coding in the chart for delivery.



Biodiversity Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

	Strategic Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
1	Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species	
1.1	Protect and enhance the sites which form the core of the biodiversity network – those sites designated for nature conservation and those with known biodiversity value.	B
1.2	Ensure that Folkestone & Hythe-owned sites with nature conservation value are protected and their value enhanced, bringing declining sites into good condition and reducing sources of harm.	A
1.3	Protect, enhance and seek to expand areas of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats which are notable within Folkestone & Hythe - chalk grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.	B
1.4	Protect and seek to increase populations of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority species which are notable within Folkestone & Hythe	B
2	Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change	
2.1	Reduce sources of harm to existing biodiversity sites.	B

	Strategic Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
2.2	Develop ecologically resilient and varied landscapes through conserving and enhancing local variation within sites and habitats and making space for the natural development of rivers and coasts.	B
2.3	Establish ecological networks through habitat protection, restoration and creation.	B
2.4	Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into conservation management, planning and practice.	B
2.5	Work with partners to deliver a resilient network and with neighbouring authorities to develop connections over local authority boundaries.	B
2.6	Seek to create mosaics and overall abundance of wildlife alongside the protection of specific habitats and species.	B
2.7	Work with the Kent Nature Partnership to develop and deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as part of the National Nature Recovery Network.	A
2.8	Sustain a healthy tree stock of council-owned trees and ensure no net loss of trees, manage and ensure no net loss of trees and manage existing woodland estates and create and restore hedgerows.	A
2.9	Continue to increase the number of wildflower verges.	B
3	Link people and nature	
3.1	Celebrate and raise awareness of Folkestone & Hythe iconic species and habitats and the need to conserve them.	B
3.2	Get people involved in conservation activities and tree planting.	B
3.3	Support local people, parish and town councils and community organisations in taking community action for nature and greenspace.	B
3.4	Promote the action of residents to improve wildlife through gardening for wildlife, create hedgehog highways and install swift boxes.	B
3.5	Incorporate nature into Folkestone & Hythe-owned parks and amenity spaces so that people can experience nature close to where they live and create stepping stones for wildlife, for example through permanent wildlife areas such as wildflower meadows, or through initiatives such as 'No Mow May'.	A
3.6	Designate more Local Nature Reserves to increase the hectare provision per 1,000 people with a more even distribution across the district.	A
3.7	Improve school grounds, including tree planting, growing spaces and wildflower gardens.	B

Strategic Priority and Opportunities		Delivery
3.8	Link green and blue infrastructure with the vibrant arts and cultural community in the district.	C
4.	Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts	
4.1	Bring forward nature-based solutions as cost-effective, climate adapted and biodiversity-supporting alternatives to 'grey' engineering solutions.	B
4.2	Increase tree and woodland cover, ensuring that this follows the principles of 'right tree, right place'. Trees should be planted where this fits with the landscape character and should not be planted on sites with other biodiversity interest which would be lost through tree planting. Urban trees should be fitting for the size and location of space.	B
4.3	Develop a tree and woodland strategy to ensure tree planting follows principle of 'right tree right place', to promote sustainable woodland management, to plan for the effects of ash dieback and to increase the overall canopy of Folkestone & Hythe.	A
4.4	Identify habitat areas within Folkestone & Hythe for protection as carbon sinks and wildlife habitats. This should include both terrestrial and marine habitats.	A
5.	Ensure development is sustainable	
5.1	Seek 20% (in line with KNP) Biodiversity Net Gain through development, subject to viability and soundness testing.	A
5.2	Incorporate biodiversity into housing developments, including hedgehog highways, swift boxes and biodiversity-friendly planting in streets and gardens.	A

Access, Recreation and Active Travel - Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

	Strategic Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
1	Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Folkestone and Hythe's future residents.	
1.1	Ensure that greenspace provision meets the standards set out in Folkestone & Hythe's Local Plan and that development delivers greenspace provision to meet the needs of new residents (no net loss)	A
1.2	Manage greenspaces to ensure that they can accommodate high levels of visits, and potentially increased visits, providing infrastructure and maintenance to meet high demand.	B
1.3	Seek new greenspace in areas where there is a deficit.	B
1.4	Where development is taking place, ensure that public rights of way are improved and, where possible, provide multi-user and traffic-free routes and new connections.	A
1.5	Invest in public rights of way, particularly those linking town and countryside, to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people.	B
1.6	Ensure potential spill over recreation impacts of development are properly assessed and mitigated.	A
1.7	Plan strategically to ensure accessible greenspace, cycle routes, walkable spaces and public rights of way are connected, especially in areas of development, so that opportunities are not lost and gains are delivered.	B
1.8	Improve access across the barrier of the transport corridor north of Folkestone through ensuring safe and well-maintained routes and promotion.	B
2	Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.	
2.1	Make civic spaces and public realm more accessible, attractive and welcoming to encourage people to walk and cycle.	B
2.2	The LCWIP will identify new routes for walking and cycling for active travel and where possible these might be dovetailed with opportunities for leisure routes and access to greenspace.	B
2.3	Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from fly-tipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.	B
2.4	Develop urban promoted walking trails.	B

	Strategic Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
3	Maximise the benefits of recreation and access to Folkestone and Hythe's unique landscapes and greenspaces, whilst ensuring that this does not have a negative impact on them or their biodiversity.	
3.1	Use the district's outstanding landscape, heritage and biodiversity to promote tourism in a sustainable way, minimising damage and negative impacts on the environment, landscape and biodiversity sites.	B
3.2	Ensure delivery of the SARMS to avoid any negative impacts of increases in recreation on sensitive biodiversity sites and ensure that recreation is managed.	A
3.3	Monitor increases in visitors to other sensitive biodiversity sites and manage recreation as appropriate.	B
3.4	Ensure that promotional materials and tourism promotion includes information for visitors on how to minimise the impact of their visit.	B
3.5	Use access to green spaces as a catalyst for more community engagement in their care and knowledge of their uniqueness.	B

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Health and Wellbeing - Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

	Strategic Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
1	Support physical activity and access to nature and increase access to greenspaces for mental and physical health and wellbeing.	
1.1	Update and revise promoted routes using public rights of way in both urban and rural areas, providing more information on accessibility.	B
1.2	Improve the accessibility, facilities and quality of Folkestone & Hythe-owned parks and greenspaces and the public realm for those with mobility impairments and other disabilities.	A
1.3	Improve routes which are used regularly by Walking for Health.	B
1.4	Through green social prescribing, encourage local NHS partnerships to initiate more 'walking for health' groups, as well as outdoor activities for those suffering from social isolation and anxiety.	B
1.5	Provide information on accessibility to greenspaces so that those with mobility impairments or other disabilities feel confident to access more spaces, routes and parks.	A
1.6	Use the interest and increased visitation generated through the Covid-19 pandemic to provide more information to people on where they can visit and how to visit responsibly.	B
1.7	Create more spaces to support community growing – allotment facilities, gardens, edible trails and green walls and educate and support residents in utilising these.	B
1.8	Create new promoted routes and circular routes near areas with new development to access the countryside and natural environment so that new populations can actively enjoy the outdoors.	B
1.9	Improve the urban/rural interface and routes to the countryside improving accessibility of urban edge routes, e.g. removing stiles, installing handrails, improve surface.	B
1.10	Ensure new development includes good quality and well-managed greenspaces, sports and play facilities to cater for the increase in population.	A
2	Provide access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.	
2.1	Plan strategically for a reduced car Folkestone & Hythe – planning strategically to link public rights of way, cycle routes and greenspaces.	B

	Strategic Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
2.2	Ensure that greenspace is provided through new development so that everyone has access to greenspace close to home	A
2.3	Use green infrastructure in civic spaces and urban streets to make these places more attractive for walking and cycling, improving health and reducing car travel.	B
2.4	Make routes and spaces as accessible as possible.	B
2.5	Prioritise routes as specified in the LCWIP.	A
3	Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.	
3.1	Support meaningful engagement to understand why some communities do not use greenspace, even when it is relatively close, to reveal the complex and diverse ways greenspace is thought about and used.	B
3.2	Monitor and evaluate local changes in access to greenspace, in conjunction with health data over time, to understanding of what works, for whom and how.	B

Blue Infrastructure and the Coast Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

	Strategic Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
1	Protect water resources and protect and enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats.	
1.1	Ensure water recreation and biodiversity interest are balanced through implementation of the SARMS.	A
1.2	Raise awareness of the outstanding water, wetland, coastal and marine habitats of the district, both to residents and organisations, and promote ways in which everyone can help to conserve and protect them.	B
1.3	Support actions to reduce water consumption.	C
1.4	Achieve good status for watercourses. This includes a range of actions - improve fish passage, naturalise hard engineered riverbanks, reduce silt and enrichment from agriculture, improve highway runoff.	C
1.5	Ensure measures are taken to mitigate, where possible, against the impact of climate change on habitats, including coastal squeeze.	B
2	Utilise green and blue infrastructure solutions to manage water flows, including incorporating SuDS into new development and retrofitting into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues.	
2.1	Integrate SuDS into the design of new green infrastructure rather than a separate feature e.g. tree pits with water storage capacity and consider and include future maintenance of the system in the early stages of SuDS design. SuDS should be designed to support biodiversity and amenity uses.	A
2.2	Support efforts to tackle diffuse pollution from urban centres and industrial areas e.g. through the implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).	B
2.3	Incorporate SuDS into new development where appropriate and ensure maintenance.	A
2.4	Utilise existing greenspace to incorporate SuDS scheme where these can address a need to control flooding.	B
2.5	Encourage the installation of low water input planting in open spaces and parks and in new development (in both shared greenspaces and gardens).	B

Landscape Character and Heritage Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

	Strategic Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
1	Strengthen and reinforce landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character.	
1.1	Manage woodland, aiming for a linked network of woodland, shaws and hedgerows, and replace dead ash with alternative species as appropriate. Restore characteristic landscape features such as hedgerows and woodlands. Ensure new tree establishment associated with climate mitigation respects and enhances landscape character and qualities.	C
1.2	Protect and enhance the landscape and views in the Kent Downs AONB, support the co-ordinated management of the landscape and habitats, promote wildlife value, enable and manage access for recreation, with reference to the Kent Downs AONB management plan and landscape character assessment.	B
1.3	Strengthen and reinforce natural features like watercourses as accessible green corridors linking built up areas with the wider countryside.	B
1.4	Develop strategies for partnership working to enhance the landscape, for example for woodland and farmland management.	C
1.5	Strengthen and reinforce landscape structure in the urban–rural fringe areas. Ensure that the edges of new and existing urban and rural settlements blend comfortably with the surrounding countryside.	B
1.6	Protect water resources, wetland habits, fen and reedbed, chalk grassland, traditional orchards and other heritage landscape features	B
1.7	Ensure that new development recognises landscape character in proposals and seeks to conserve and enhance landscape features and, where development is within the Kent Downs AONB, have particular regard to the natural beauty of protected landscape.	A
1.8	Protect the naturalness and landscape character of the districts unique and varied coastal landscapes.	B
2	Ensure heritage is recognised in green and blue infrastructure planning, interpretation, and tourism.	
2.1	Promote and enhance cultural heritage assets.	B
2.2	Improve accessibility of cultural heritage sites through sustainable transport links and enhanced interpretation (where appropriate) and community engagement.	B
2.3	Identify heritage and local distinctiveness which can be used to guide future development.	A

Strategic Priorities and Opportunities		Delivery
2.4	Identify and protect important viewpoints of heritage assets and ensure that the historic natural environment is respected and interpreted through new development.	A
2.5	Protect archaeological sites and promote public awareness, and access where possible.	B

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SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The district has then been divided into three areas, in which the priorities and actions are examined in more detail. The three areas align with the Core Strategy and are:

- Folkestone town, Hythe and Saltwood;
- Romney Marsh;
- North Downs.

Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

	Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood	Delivery
1.1	<p>A range of access improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Good quality connections and investment in public rights of way, especially existing promoted routes and routes to Brockhill Country Park; – Increase accessibility of routes (remove stiles, improve surfaces); – Link to existing promoted routes (Royal Military Canal, Saxon Shore Way, Elham Valley Way); – Produce map to show network of public rights of way, cycling routes and quiet lanes to help users and minimise wandering off of public rights of way. Ensure good waymarking on public rights of way; – There are dead end routes truncated at railway – rationalise these. Seek east-west routes where these are lacking. 	B
1.2	Assess likely impact of ash dieback on woodlands and hedgerows and mitigate for this (linked to previous action on need for district-wide tree and woodland strategy).	A
1.3	Improve biodiversity connections across this area through hedgerows, pollinator corridors and other measures appropriate to the landscape character.	B
1.4	Ensure core biodiversity sites in good condition – Seabrook Stream SSSI, Lympe Escarpment SSSI, Saltwood Valley LWS, Paraker Wood and Seabrook Stream LWS and Folkswold LWS. Woodland as part of Shorncliffe.	B
2.1	Take a holistic view and develop a plan for biodiversity, landscape, blue infrastructure and access in the Saltwood and Hythe area. To include interface with urban fringe and to accommodate new Otterpool development, incorporating the main points in previous section.	A

	Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood	Delivery
2.2	Develop a 'Bees Please for Folkestone' project – improvements across the town to create an urban pollinator haven. Projects to increase wildflowers and pollinators would also help other wildlife. Such a project would engage residents and raise awareness and would help to support and raise awareness of work already underway in the Romney Marsh. Potential to link with arts. More wildflowers could be incorporated into the many close mown areas in Folkestone, including parks, sports areas, The Leas, road verges and the communal gardens of apartments. Use as a visitor economy USP.	A
2.3	Folkestone town centre regeneration through the Place Plan should incorporate the recommended green and blue infrastructure elements to improve the green infrastructure of the public realm and make spaces more attractive. Bringing green features into the urban fabric will encourage more people to walk through these spaces.	A
2.4	Protect, enhance and expand the street trees of Folkestone – which are an important feature in some areas of the town (Kent County Council).	B
2.4	Incorporate biodiversity features in all parks, including playing pitch areas, managed by Folkestone & Hythe District Council.	A
2.5	Increase biodiversity in the significant green infrastructure assets which are privately owned, or which are schools ground, playing fields or cemeteries – for example through tree planting, wildflower areas, linkages for wildlife movement and other measures. Foster collaborative improvements between landowners in areas which are identified as green corridors.	B
2.6	Maximise diversity of amenity grassland, road verges and other close mown area throughout the town to diversify these and improve for pollinators.	B
2.7	Enthuse and engage residents to incorporate wildlife features into gardens, to install swift boxes and create hedgehog highways, and to appreciate value of wildflower and unmown areas within the urban fabric.	B
2.8	Ensure infill development incorporates biodiversity. Ensure the biodiversity value of brownfield sites is recognised.	A
2.10	Ensure that the woodland at Shornccliffe development is entered into sustainable management for recreation and wildlife and designate as a Local Nature Reserve.	A
2.11	Cheriton area has poor access out of urban area to countryside areas beyond and low provision of green space, although it does have large areas of amenity grassland. Invest in access and biodiversity at Cheriton Recreation Area Cheriton. Improve quality of amenity green spaces for wildlife and recreation.	A

	Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood	Delivery
2.12	Promote a 'green chain' of access routes around Folkestone (Plan 26) and promote access to these sites. Invest in public rights of way linking town and countryside to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people. Ensure recreation is sustainable and does not damage sensitive biodiversity features, through monitoring and management measures as necessary, e.g. through installing interpretation and including information in promotional materials.	B
2.13	Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from fly-tipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.	C
2.14	Develop urban walking routes to link open spaces and the coastal sites.	A
2.15	Connect with Folkestone's arts community to bring alive the unique and special wildlife, habitats and heritage of the area, e.g. through artwork, events, installations, festivals.	C
2.16	Produce and implement management plan for Folkestone Warren Local Nature Reserve to implement biodiversity management and sustainable recreation.	A
2.17	Investigate which existing open space can be retrofitted to alleviate surface water flooding in areas where it is a problem (identified from Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Extent 1:30 3.3 percent annual chance). There are potentially several sites within corridor 2 which could incorporate SuDS features to slow and intercept the flow of water to the town centre (e.g. Morehall Recreation Ground, Radnor Park, Three Hills Sports Park). The potential of this should be investigated further.	B
2.18	Deliver actions identified in the forthcoming LCWIP to increase walking and cycling for everyday journeys.	A
2.19	Engage with active community and environmental groups in this area to take forward projects and generate local ideas and increase environmental volunteering.	B
2.20	Develop a green schools programme to increase wildlife, plant trees to increase shade, wildflower meadows, bird and bat boxes, bug houses and growing food, to increase awareness and engagement in the natural world and special wildlife of the area.	C
2.21	Heritage themes could be developed to support tourism. Key themes could include Napoleonic Defences, Folkestone and the First World War, church or pilgrimage network, Victorian and Edwardian Folkestone, Romney Marsh and Dungeness (linking with natural heritage).	B
2.22	Link town with countryside through improved routes and public rights of way and to overcome M20/rail barrier out of Folkestone.	B
2.23	Lympne Green (Otterpool Park) create bee friendly wildflower areas where possible	A

Romney Marsh

	Romney Marsh	Delivery
1.1	Consider new cycle path from Lydd to New Romney to take traffic off the road and give families who haven't any other way of travelling, a chance to explore areas nearby. Many people in this area are unable to have holidays as it is a deprived area. This would help them with mental and physical wellbeing. Employees of the Dungeness Power Station would also benefit if a cycle path was put in situ along Dungeness Road, again taking traffic off the roads.	B
1.2	Provide a range of promotional materials for walking and cycling to promote sustainable tourism. Highlight the outstanding heritage and biodiversity assets. Link to businesses and priorities of the Romney Marsh Destination Management Plan to increase economic benefits.	B
1.3	In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.	C
1.4	Extend Walking for Health to marsh communities.	B
1.6	Plan strategically to ensure destination green spaces such as Dungeness RSPB, Dungeness Point, the Royal Military Canal, Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway and the coast are connected through promotional routes.	B
1.7	Continue with legacy projects of the Fifth Continent scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Restoring vegetated shingle habitat across Dungeness foreland; – 'Blue lanes' - creating optimal ditch conditions for wildlife through physical works and education; – Green lanes for bumblebees through improved highway cutting regimes and engaging with the community and landowners. 	B
1.8	Implement <i>The Cinque Ports Cycle Route</i> - to link Folkestone seafront to Lydd in line with LCWIP strategy.	A
1.9	Ensure that the SARMS is delivered to ensure recreation is not detrimental to the areas outstanding biodiversity.	A
2.1	Maximise access to the coast, as this has the potential to provide a level and attractive linear route for all abilities, while also considering the recommendations in the SARMS.	B
2.2	Engage with local communities to take action for pollinators in the villages of the marsh – on verges, gardens, churchyards and open spaces.	B
2.3	Engage with local communities to continue to raise awareness of the unique and special nature of the area.	B
2.4	Produce integrated management plan for Greatstone Dunes addressing issues and ensuring sustainable management.	A
2.5	Work with golf courses to improve wildlife and pollinator habitats.	C

	Romney Marsh	Delivery
2.6	Provide more information incorporated into tourism material on the biodiversity value of the area and raise awareness with tourism businesses.	B
2.7	Upgrade the The Rype, Open Space – at Lydd	A
2.8	Quarry restoration after use? (PC comment).	C
2.9	Work with Ministry of Defence to increase access and biodiversity on land holdings (PC comment).	C
2.10	Work with neighbouring authorities and partners to extend the Royal Military Canal cycle route to benefit over visitor offer for the area (PC comment).	B

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North Downs

	North Downs	Delivery
1.1	Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views for future generations. Working in partnership with Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to identify management opportunities in accordance with their management plans	B
1.2	Join up woodlands and hedgerows across the landscape, strengthening landscape character and biodiversity networks.	C
1.3	Seek opportunities to create biodiversity linkages within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, supporting local communities to take the lead to identify, plan and take forward improvements.	C
1.4	Explore potential opportunities to work with the Forestry Commission and Ministry of Defence to improve public access and public recreation within woodland areas.	C
1.6	Seek to increase awareness and maximising the potential of the area's outstanding historic, natural and cultural assets, improving access to and interpretation of sites and features, as a platform for enhanced education and to enthuse local communities.	B
1.7	Conserving and appropriately managing ancient trackways such as the North Downs Way, and the Pilgrims' Way and strengthen the network through high quality interconnecting routes, increasing the benefits of these routes for biodiversity, health and local businesses.	B
1.8	Support villages and parishes to develop ideas and plans for village-wide wildlife improvements – wildflower verges, hedgehog highways, swift boxes and other projects across the whole village or parish to connect wildlife habitats.	B
1.9	Recognise and manage the impact of increased visitor numbers on sensitive sites.	B
1.10	In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.	C
1.11	Extend Walking for Health to North Downs communities.	B
1.12	A project to address the current lack of biodiversity and flooding problems associated with the Nailbourne.	A
1.13	Investigate natural solutions to flood management.	C
1.14	Assess the impact of ash dieback on the landscape and nature conservation interests and, working with local communities, take steps to mitigate impacts.	B



To: Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group

Date: 20 April 2022

From: Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist

SUBJECT: Update on Current Consultations

SUMMARY: This paper summarises three current consultations for the Working Group's information and for comment as necessary.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Kent County Council is currently consulting on a tree establishment strategy, 'Plan Tree'. This is described in section 2 of this report and the full document is included in Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is currently consulting on two documents, on protected sites and species and on environmental targets. These are described in sections 3 and 4 of the report and links are provided to the consultation documents.

2. PLAN TREE – KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S TREE ESTABLISHMENT STRATEGY 2022-2032

- 2.1. Kent County Council (KCC) is currently consulting on 'Plan Tree: Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022-2032'. The consultation closes on 2 May 2022. Plan Tree is provided as **Appendix 1** to this report and can be viewed on the county council's website¹.
- 2.2. Plan Tree is a high level document, setting out principles for tree establishment and some broad actions. A ten-year strategic tree planting plan and a three-year delivery plan will follow.
- 2.3. The introduction states that trees currently cover around 17 per cent of Kent; the aim of the strategy is to increase this to 19 per cent by 2050, the target recommended by the Committee on Climate Change. At the very minimum, KCC will establish 28,600 trees on its own land, a tree for every person in its workforce. KCC members will have the opportunity to establish trees within their own divisions; with a target of 350 trees per division, this will account for another 28,350 trees.

¹ See: <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/plantree>

- 2.4. The strategy sets out the importance of trees to Kent. The county has a relatively large proportion of ancient woodland (particularly in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and a legacy of orchards, through Kent's history of fruit growing. The dangers of diseases are highlighted (including Ash dieback, chestnut gall wasp and sweet chestnut blight), as are the effects of climate change, invasive plants and mammal browsing.
- 2.5. Trees provide vital and multiple benefits including supporting wildlife, mitigating air pollution, reducing flood risk, improving soils, providing timber and other products and improving people's physical and mental health. It is estimated that Kent and Medway's woodlands store 367,374 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year.
- 2.6. The strategy sets out a number of objectives for tree establishment, including:
- Contributing to the county's net zero targets.
 - Reducing and reversing the trend of decline in nature and the loss of trees.
 - Tackling the multiple threats to the county's trees.
 - Delivering nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges, including: improved soil quality and integrity; improved air quality; reductions in surface water flooding; and providing urban cooling.
 - Providing enhanced opportunities for recreation and amenity, contributing to people's health and wellbeing.
 - Addressing the decline in trees outside woodlands, including the loss of urban trees.
 - Realising the economic benefits of trees, including timber, wood products and fruit and supporting leisure businesses.
 - Increasing our knowledge and providing better protection.
- 2.7. The strategy sets out four principles for tree establishment in Kent:
1. **Better management and protection of existing stock** - preventing the loss of trees, and where this is unavoidable, ensuring trees are replaced with greater numbers than are lost.
 2. **The right tree in the right place** - following guidelines of:
 - i. The right tree;
 - ii. In the right place;
 - iii. For the right reason; and
 - iv. With the right management.
 3. **Delivering multiple benefits** - including alleviating pollution, flooding and urban heat, benefitting people's health and wellbeing, enhancing biodiversity and expanding economic benefits, developing new markets and creating jobs.
 4. **Ensuring the biosecurity of new tree stock through the application of strict standards** – using UK grown trees of known provenance.

- 2.8. A high level action plan sets out five broad actions; as noted, a delivery plan and tree planting plan are to follow. The actions are to:
1. **Deliver against the tree establishment target** - including through: working with district councils and other partners; setting annual expansion targets; working with farmers to expand the hedgerow network; and working with parish and town councils to increase urban trees. KCC will work with partners to establish a resourced Kent Plan Tree Partnership to support coordinated action.
 2. **Exemplar provision of trees on the county council's estate** – reviewing policies across KCC's estate and identifying opportunities for woodland and tree planting, as well as working with KCC highways to see whether it is feasible to increase trees along the county's roads.
 3. **Improve protection to trees in Kent** – using the county council's planning functions to protect trees and working with districts and boroughs to ensure trees are considered in local plan policies and provided within new developments.
 4. **Improve our understanding of Kent's trees** – including ensuring that ancient woodlands and veteran trees are properly mapped and natural threats understood; landowners, businesses and the local community know how they can contribute; and an information hub is created to support the work.
 5. **Developing Kent's carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions** – increase the nature-based carbon offset market and identify opportunities on the county council's estate to offset carbon to deliver investment in tree planting and management.
- 2.9. Plan Tree closes with consideration of the partners who will need to contribute and potential sources of funding. A three-year delivery plan will be drafted which will identify targets and funding for that initial period.
- 3. DEFRA – NATURE RECOVERY GREEN PAPER: PROTECTED SITES AND SPECIES**
- 3.1. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is currently consulting on 'Nature recovery green paper: protected sites and species'. The consultation closes on 11 May 2022. The consultation paper can be viewed on Defra's website.²
 - 3.2. The foreword by the Rt. Hon. George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, highlights that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. The country's departure from the EU offers the opportunity to look again at how best to protect and restore nature, and whether existing regulations and designations are sufficient to meet the Government's ambitions.
 - 3.3. The foreword emphasises the complexity of existing multiple regulatory regimes. The Secretary of State suggests that a single type of designation, with different tiers of protection, might bring more consistency and help public understanding. The paper also considers how we can make space for nature in new areas and restore nature in depleted areas, rather than just trying to arrest its decline.

² See: https://consult.defra.gov.uk/nature-recovery-green-paper/nature-recovery-green-paper/supporting_documents/Nature%20Recovery%20Green%20Paper%20Consultation%20%20Protected%20Sites%20and%20Species.pdf

- 3.4. The introduction highlights the new framework of environmental targets set out in the Environment Act 2021, including the objective to halt the decline in nature by 2030. The Government has also committed to protect 30 per cent of our land and sea by 2030 ('30 by 30'), and to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This will be supported by recent legislation governing agriculture and fisheries, the sustainable farming incentive and Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery initiatives.
- 3.5. The 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) will follow the green paper, and will set out the Government's approach to nature recovery and how it intends to deliver the targets in the Environment Act. Reforms to the planning system are being developed in parallel with the green paper, and the consultation states that these reforms will play a crucial role in bringing about nature's recovery.

Protecting wildlife sites on land and at sea

- 3.6. This section of the consultation states that the UK's system of designated sites has developed in a piecemeal way over a number of decades, arising from UK law, EU legislation and international treaties. Important sites may be protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. (Within Folkestone & Hythe district the Dungeness peninsula is covered by a number of these designations, with different and overlapping boundaries; this is illustrated on the plan in **Appendix 2**.)
- 3.7. The green paper states that the Government wishes to consolidate the protected sites regime into a simpler legal structure. A new system could do more to promote nature recovery, the paper argues, as well as respond to climate change, ensure greater consistency, promote public understanding and make it easier to adopt a strategic approach to nature recovery, looking beyond the site boundaries to the wider landscape.
- 3.8. The consultation stresses that any review of legislation relating to protected sites will maintain current levels of protection for the network as a whole and its constituent sites, and be consistent with the UK's international commitments.
- 3.9. Three options are put forward for reform:
- A tiered approach, including the designation of 'highly protected sites', with stronger protections than currently applied to SACs and SPAs, and 'protected sites', managed for their national or international importance as SSSIs, SACs and SPAs are now.
 - Lighter touch reforms, which would streamline and merge existing site designations.
 - One single designation, with different levels of protection within the designation. This could offer scope to adapt sites more easily to accommodate the effects of climate change, where features may move into or out of a site in response to changing climatic conditions.

Similar options are put forward for marine areas.

- 3.10. A simpler and more ecologically coherent network of sites would ensure that duties and accountabilities are consistent and reside in the right place. Currently responsibilities for SSSIs lie with Natural England, whereas decisions on other designated sites are made by the Secretary of State.

- 3.11. While the existing regime may have stemmed decline, the paper argues that any new system must also look beyond designated sites and make space for nature in new areas and in wildlife corridors connecting sites. The Government intends to pursue this through creating a Nature Recovery Network with willing landowners, supported by a range of financial incentives. The consultation asks whether 'Nature Recovery Sites' could be formally identified to contribute to the network.
- 3.12. The consultation states that 'rewilding' has delivered significant successes, for example at the Knepp estate in West Sussex³; however, these approaches are not recognised by the existing regime of protections, because they rarely follow traditional conservation practices. A more flexible system is needed, as designating such sites under the current system could act as a constraint, as it would require them to be managed in conventional ways which could limit the ability of species to flourish.
- 3.13. Regarding assessment of the likely impact of proposals on designated sites, the consultation argues that the existing regimes of Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) have become process-driven and burdensome. Decision-makers are more concerned by potential legal challenges to their decisions than by the actual impact of the proposed activity, the consultation argues. Some of these processes may have unintended consequences; for example, afforestation projects, even in areas of relatively low environmental value, are required to seek approval under the EIA regulations, which can take considerable time and resources.
- 3.14. The Government wants to reform these processes to create a clearer decision-making framework, including earlier consideration of alternative ways to implement a plan or project and clearer expectations about the evidence needed. Where impacts are unavoidable, mitigation and compensation should be planned strategically across the protected sites network. The consultation states that in simplifying processes the same high level of protection should be maintained.

Delivering '30 by 30'

- 3.15. The Nature Recovery Network will increase connections between sites, by creating and restoring additional habitat, including wildlife corridors and buffers around sites. This will be key to delivering the Government's '30 by 30' pledge.
- 3.16. In order to measure which areas of land are contributing to this target, the consultation states that the Government will develop a framework based on certain criteria; areas must:
 - Have a clear purpose of conserving biodiversity (although this may not be their primary purpose).
 - Have long-term protection and management measures in place to counter loss or actively improve biodiversity.
 - Deliver measurable biodiversity improvements.
- 3.17. The consultation suggests that sites under current national and international protections would contribute to the '30 by 30' target, as would areas under conservation covenants and land within National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty that is actively managed for biodiversity. Public woodlands and forests

³ See: <https://knepp.co.uk/home>

could also contribute if they are managed for biodiversity, and the Government is considering introducing a new duty for landowners to protect nature and enhance biodiversity in managing woodlands.

Protecting species

- 3.18. The consultation argues that, as with protections for habitats, species protections have developed in a piecemeal fashion through overlapping pieces of legislation. Protections are not always linked to a species' conservation status; for example, some invasive non-native wild birds have a similar, if not higher, level of protection than native species considered to be more vulnerable.
- 3.19. The consultation argues that the system of licensing for works which may affect protected species is complex, inconsistent and outdated, as are enforcement provisions and penalties for wildlife and poaching offences.
- 3.20. Secondary legislation could be used to modify lists of protected species to make the system more responsive to new evidence and environmental change. The consultation argues that a tiered approach to protecting species could provide clarity and complement the reform of protected sites (outlined above), reflect evidence more closely and respond to the effects of climate change on wildlife.
- 3.21. Three tiers are suggested:
 - **Tier 1 – Minimum management standards** - minimum welfare protections for wild animals, including, for example, certain prohibitions on trapping or trade.
 - **Tier 2 – Protected** – including tier 1 protections with additional, stricter controls on capture, possession, trade and disturbance.
 - **Tier 3 – Highly protected** – including tier 1 and 2 protections in addition to restrictions on the loss of habitats and dwelling places of species.

Delivering nature recovery

- 3.22. This section of the consultation discusses accountability and funding. Defra is underpinned by scientific, advisory and operational expertise provided by around 30 'Arm's length bodies' (ALBs), including the Forestry Commission, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England, Environment Agency, Marine Management Organisation and others. The consultation states that the regulatory landscape has become fragmented and complex and the Government wants to develop a new operating model which will reduce duplication and consolidate institutional and delivery arrangements.
- 3.23. The consultation also states that the Government is exploring how best to enable environmental regulators to recover more of the costs of regulation.
- 3.24. The final section of the consultation explores the potential for attracting more private finance to deliver nature recovery. The Government has set a target to raise at least £500 million in private finance to support nature recovery every year by 2027 in England, rising to more than £1 billion a year by 2030. A variety of funds and land management schemes are discussed which, it is argued, will help to meet these targets.

4. DEFRA – CONSULTATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS

- 4.1. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is currently consulting on a paper 'Consultation on environmental targets'. The consultation closes on 11 May 2022. The paper can be viewed on Defra's website.⁴
- 4.2. The Environment Act 2021 requires the Government to set at least one target in each of four priority areas: air; water; biodiversity; and resource efficiency and waste reduction. It also requires targets to be set for fine particulate matter and species abundance. These targets must be laid as draft Statutory Instruments by 31 October 2022 and will come into force once approved by Parliament.
- 4.3. The consultation sets out the proposed targets, which have been developed with the advice of expert groups.

Biodiversity

- 4.4. The proposed biodiversity targets include measures to increase species abundance, improve the England-level Red List Index for species extinction and create or restore in excess of 500,000 hectares of habitats outside protected sites. The proposed end date for these targets is 2042, and has been set to align with the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan goals.

Water quality and availability

- 4.5. The proposed water quality and availability targets include measures to: reduce pollution from abandoned mines; reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture to the water environment; reduce phosphorus pollution from treated wastewater; and reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population.
- 4.6. 2037 is proposed as the target date for these measures. Targets are expressed as percentage reductions against a baseline, with a target of 40 per cent reduction in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture by 2037 and a target of an 80 per cent reduction in phosphorus pollution from treated wastewater by the same date. It is proposed that water demand should be reduced by 20 per cent per head of population by 2037.

Woodland cover

- 4.7. The consultation proposes that a target should be set for an increase in tree canopy and woodland cover from 14.5 per cent of the total land area in England currently to 17.5 per cent by 2050.

Resource efficiency and waste reduction

- 4.8. A target is proposed to reduce residual waste, measured in kilogrammes per person, by 50 per cent by 2042 from 2019 levels. There is a separate Government commitment within the 25 Year Environment Plan to eliminate avoidable plastic waste by 2042.
- 4.9. The consultation discusses how resource efficiency could be measured and further work will be done on this target area. The consultation states that this target might be expressed as a ratio of economic output (gross domestic product) to raw material consumption by material weight.

⁴ See: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-environment-policy/consultation-on-environmental-targets/>

Air quality

- 4.10. Lastly the consultation sets out two proposed targets for air quality. One is for annual mean levels of pollution to be met across England by 2040. The second target is for a reduction in the population exposed to particulate matter pollution by 35 per cent compared to a base year of 2018.

Adrian Tofts

Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist

PLAN TREE

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S TREE ESTABLISHMENT STRATEGY 2022-2032

Page 171



CONSULTATION DOCUMENT MARCH 2022

Consultation closes 2 May 2022
www.kent.gov.uk/plantree



PLAN TREE

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND HAVE YOUR SAY

We want to hear your feedback on our proposed Tree Establishment Strategy for the county, which includes targets for increased trees and extended tree canopy cover in Kent and the principles that should underpin any tree establishment. The Strategy also outlines what objectives we want to deliver by extending tree cover in Kent and delivering Plan Tree. We have set out what action we will take over the next 10 years to realise these ambitions and objectives.

Your views are important in helping us to ensure we have set a suitably ambitious but achievable Strategy. We want a Strategy that results in woodlands and trees that are thriving with biodiversity and delivering services to help us to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies facing our county.

This consultation will be open from 8 March to 2 May 2022. Please visit www.kent.gov.uk/plantree to complete the online questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact PlanTree@kent.gov.uk

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Following the end of the consultation a full analysis and report will be completed and will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Environment before the Strategy is agreed, finalised and presented to the Council for adoption.

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language, please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call **03000 421553** (text relay service number: 18001 03000 421553). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

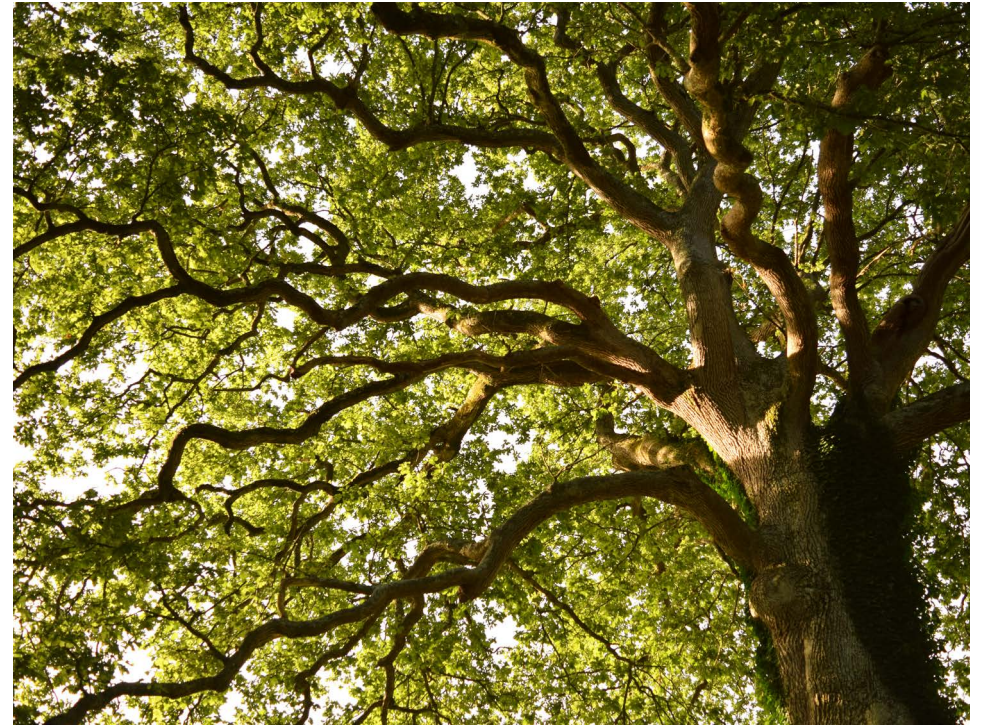


Photo: Quercus Robur (c) Luke Wallace

CONTENTS

Introduction to the ambitions of the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy	4
The importance of trees to Kent	5
Realising the value of trees in Kent – our objectives for tree establishment	8
Principles for tree establishment in Kent	12
Kent County Council action to date	15
Kent Tree Establishment Strategy – Kent County Council Action Plan	16
Partners and funding	18

INTRODUCTION TO THE AMBITIONS OF THE KENT TREE ESTABLISHMENT STRATEGY

Kent County Council has an ambition that the county's tree cover will be extended by 1.5 million, establishing one new tree for every resident living in the county. By 2050, Kent will have an average tree canopy cover of 19% , the target recommended by the Committee on Climate Change. The delivery of these new trees, alongside the protection and restoration of existing trees, hedgerows, and woodland, will support the recovery of wildlife, provide natural climate solutions, and enrich people's lives.

This will be delivered by working in partnership with (but not limited to) district and borough and town and parish councils, the Kent Downs and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Units, the county's Countryside Management Partnerships, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, and environmental charities. We will look to bring together local communities, schools, businesses, and landowners to collaborate on tree establishment projects.

In addition to this collaborative action, Kent County Council aims to contribute directly to this county target by establishing new trees across its own estate. Although our ambitions will be greater, at a very minimum we will establish 28,600 trees on land we own, manage or influence, representing a tree for every person in our own workforce. Further, Kent County Council members will have the opportunity to contribute by establishing trees within their own divisions across the four-year term; based on a target of 350 trees per division, this will account for another 28,350 trees within the county.

All trees established under our Tree Strategy will follow principles for tree establishment in Kent and the trees will be established by a combination of new stock and through managed natural regeneration. The establishment of new hedgerows will also contribute to the Strategy's target.

The Kent Tree Establishment Strategy has been prepared in reference to the Government's England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 (May 2021) and the

Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Plan for the UK (January 2020). It also supports the ambitions of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, the Kent Environment Strategy, the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and the management plans of the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In time the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy will also be linked to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, required under the Environment Bill.



¹ In line with the national and Woodland Trust Emergency Plan target of 19%; the target recommended by the Committee on Climate Change if the UK is to be carbon neutral by 2050.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES TO KENT

A recent tree canopy assessment (July 2020²) calculated the county had 64,751ha of tree cover, with an average tree canopy cover of 17% and an urban tree cover average also at 17% (above the England average of 16%). In terms of distribution across the county, west Kent districts have a far greater canopy cover (28-30%) than those in east Kent (4-9%).

Kent has 11% of England's ancient semi-natural woodland, with more ancient woodland than any other county in the UK; and in the south east, the county has 22.5% of the region's ancient woodland resource. Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland is the county's largest semi-natural habitat, covering 44,490ha and just over 11% of Kent³.

Our two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are heavily wooded – the High Weald has the most wooded landscape in the country with 28% woodland cover; and the Kent Downs has 23% and the majority of this is irreplaceable ancient woodland (70%).

Our history of fruit production has also left us with traditional orchards found in two main areas, the North Kent Fruit Belt (between Rochester and Faversham) and the Mid Kent Fruit Belt (in the central areas of the High and Low Weald and the Greensand). Many of these have been lost in the past half century and traditional orchards now only account for 0.4% of Kent's habitats; but this seemingly small resource is nationally important, comprising around 10% of the traditional orchard area in England⁴.

The great extent of Kent's woodland and tree cover tells a story of how we have used trees and the value of them to us. Today we not only value trees for the food, timber and fuel they provide but also for their recreation, wildlife, ecosystem services and carbon capture and storage benefits.

Kent's trees are not only at risk from land use change and development but also pests and diseases. Our landscape still features the scars of Dutch elm disease and is now impacted again by Ash dieback and other pests and diseases such as the Oriental chestnut gall wasp and sweet chestnut blight. The county is particularly vulnerable given its proximity to the continent, meaning Kent's tree population is often impacted by 'new' pests and diseases sooner than other parts of the country.



Photo: Orchard Blossom (Charles Orrell)



Photo: Ancient Woodland - Appledore

² https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/111360/Canopy-cover-report.pdf

³ Kent Habitat Survey, 2012

⁴ Kent Habitat Survey, 2012

THE VALUE OF TREES^{5,6}

Many different insect groups are excellent pollinators. The best known of them are bees, including bumblebees, solitary bees and the honey bee. But other wild insects are equally vital for pollination including wasps, hoverflies, moths and butterflies. And even some beetles, mosquitoes and ants have a pollinating role. Many plants have evolved to offer nectar to attract insects.



Page 176

Whilst insects are feeding on a flower's nectar or collecting pollen to feed to their young, pollen grains stick to the insects' bodies and transfer to the reproductive organs of the next flower they visit.



Trees and woodlands are valuable habitats to our county's wildlife. **OAK TREES** support more life than any other UK native tree – **they are a haven for a colossal 2,300 wildlife species**, providing vital spaces to eat, shelter and breed⁷.



Trees are very effective at mitigating the effects of air pollution and improving air quality by using their leaves and bark to primarily intercept airborne particulate matter but also by absorbing other pollutants from the air, such as sulphur dioxide, nitric acid, nitric oxide, and ammonia from the air.



Trees, especially large ones, can store significant amounts of carbon. Kent and Medway's forests store 367,374 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year⁸.

Within urban areas, people show a generally favourable attitude towards street trees, with the most highly rated benefit being visual attractiveness. In addition, evidence suggests that in urban areas the presence of trees can be used to deter crime and anti-social behaviour.



84%
of the UK public agree that more trees should be planted in response to climate change¹⁰.



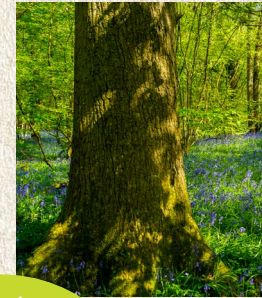
Trees provide hydrological benefits in the form of reduced runoff, flood alleviation and water quality enhancement. Conifers intercept between 25-45% of annual rainfall while broadleaves intercept between 10-25%⁹.



Trees improve soil and reduce soil erosion – decaying leaves and bark add a protective layer to the earth, which protects against evaporation from heat and retains water, keeping soil healthy.



Trees provide us with timber, fuel, fodder, fruit, nuts, berries, and biofuels.

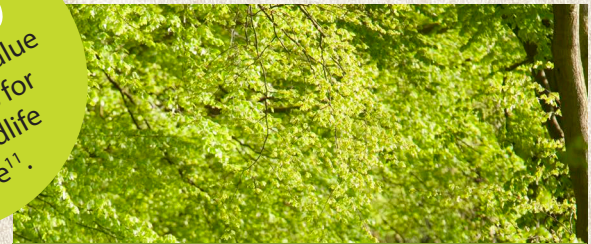


In terms of cultural services, trees are a fundamental part of the cultural landscape of Kent, providing character and local distinctiveness to many areas.

95%
of UK public value
woodlands for
their wildlife
value¹¹.



Commercial and urban areas with good tree cover tend to attract higher levels of inward investment¹³



There is strong and growing evidence linking exposure to trees with enhancements in both **physical and mental health** and wellbeing.



Broadleaved trees have also been shown to have a positive impact on property values ranging from 5-18%, with larger trees having a greater proportional value¹².

Trees provide shade, reducing summer air temperatures and the urban heat island effect.



⁸ Kent and Medway Emissions Analysis and Pathways to Net Zero report (December 2020)

⁹ Calder, I.R., Reid, I., Nisbet, T. and Green, J. C. (2003) Impact of lowland forests in England on water resources. Water Resources Research, 39: 1319 – 1328

¹⁰ Public opinion of forestry – climate change, Forest Research, www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/forestry-statistics-2018/uk-forests-and-climate-change/public-opinion-of-forestry-climate-change/

¹¹ www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/public-opinion-of-forestry/

¹² Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) Trees in Towns II. A new survey of urban trees in England and their condition and management.

¹³ Department of Environment (1997) Managing Urban Spaces in Town Centres – Good Practice Guide.

REALISING THE VALUE OF TREES IN KENT - OUR OBJECTIVES FOR TREE ESTABLISHMENT

Establishing the right trees in the right places will help deliver benefits for Kent's wildlife, people, and economy. Through extending tree cover in Kent and delivering this Strategy, we aim to deliver the following objectives.

CONTRIBUTE TO KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S, AND THE COUNTY'S, NET ZERO TARGETS

The UK has a net zero target of 2050. Kent County Council is working towards carbon neutrality for its own estate and services by 2030. We are also committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the whole county to net zero by 2050. In order to meet these ambitious but necessary targets to address climate change, not only must we reduce our emissions but we need to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

A new native woodland can capture 300-400 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per hectare by year 50; by 100 years this increases to 400-600 per hectare¹⁴ (typical densities range from 1000 to 2500 trees per hectare). Acting now to increase our tree stock across the county will make a significant contribution towards our targets for 2030 and 2050.

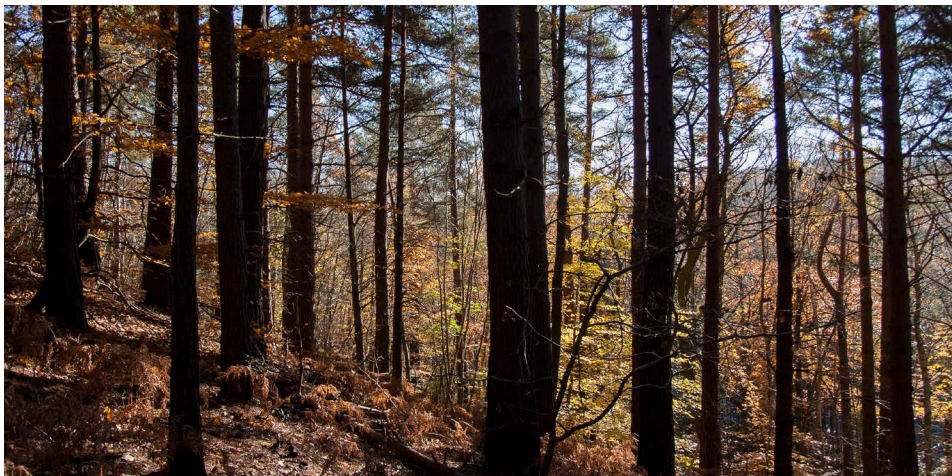


Photo: Oldbury Hill - Explore Kent

REDUCE AND REVERSE THE TREND OF DECLINE IN NATURE AND LOSS OF TREES

Existing native woodlands are isolated and in poor ecological condition. These factors, coupled with the widespread loss of 'trees outside woods' from the landscape, have contributed to a troubling decline in our biodiversity – 53% of UK woodland species are in decline¹⁵.



Photo: Hawfinch (c) Luke Wallace

Native broadleaved woodlands, managed to a semi-natural condition, can deliver exceptional biodiversity value because of the mosaic of habitats that can exist within. In woodlands with more natural systems, trees seed, grow and die at different times, creating a varied structure of tree maturity and species diversity as more light reaches below the canopy.

¹⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/689431/A5_Leaflet_WC_Carbon_Code_V4_Web.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf>



Photo: Standing Deadwood (c) Luke Wallace

Through improved and/or more appropriate management, natural regeneration, restoration of our traditional orchards, an increase in our native woodlands and improved connectivity between our woodlands, we can begin to address the decline in wildlife that depend on these habitats.

TACKLE THE MULTIPLE THREATS TO OUR TREES

Woods and trees are subject to a number of overlapping threats including direct loss, climate impacts, imported diseases, invasive plants, mammal browsing and air pollutants. These threats diminish the benefits of woods and trees for people and for wildlife.

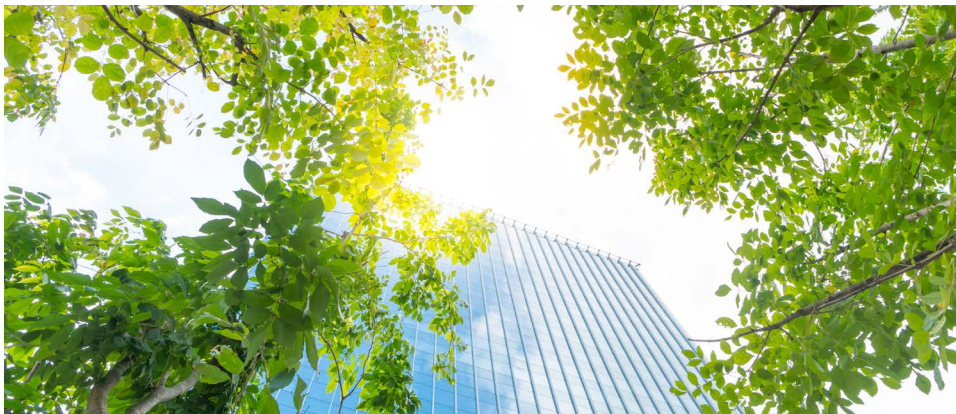
By better management and consideration of our tree stock, and care and attention paid to the establishment of new stock, we can develop a tree resource that has increased resilience to disease, climate change and natural hazards and ensures woodlands are better connected with each other and other priority habitats.

DELIVER NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS TO SOME OF THE COUNTY'S CHALLENGES

In addition to carbon sequestration, trees provide a wealth of services including:

- **Improved soil quality and integrity** - woodlands and well-established hedgerows produce high quality soil through increased organic content falling to the woodland floor. They also act as barriers, slowing water flow and preventing soil erosion.
- **Improved air quality** - trees and vegetation capture pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, nitric acid, nitric oxide, and ammonia, cleaning the air as they do. Broadleaved trees and hedges take up more pollution through their larger leaves and create turbulent air movement which contributes to increased pollutant uptake and pollutant dissipation.
- **Reduction in surface water flooding** - woodlands play a vital role in offsetting surface water flooding through water intake from the ground, preventing water saturation. Trees also intercept rainwater in their canopies which reduces the amount of water reaching the ground. Woodlands and hedgerows also slow the rate of surface water flow through their soils.
- **Urban cooling** - through increasing the tree canopy throughout urban areas, transpiration increases which helps to reduce air temperature and increase humidity, contributing to a cooling effect.

Careful planning and strategically placed trees can be used to deliver multiple benefits and through following the tree establishment principles we can ensure we realise the greatest value of our tree stock within the county.



PROVIDE ENHANCED AND IMPROVED RECREATION AND AMENITY

Woodland, and trees outside woodlands, provide many societal benefits including:

- Opportunities for recreation and education.
- Enhanced and quality outdoor experiences, include a connection with nature.
- Improvements to local amenity and distinctiveness.
- A contribution to people's health and wellbeing.

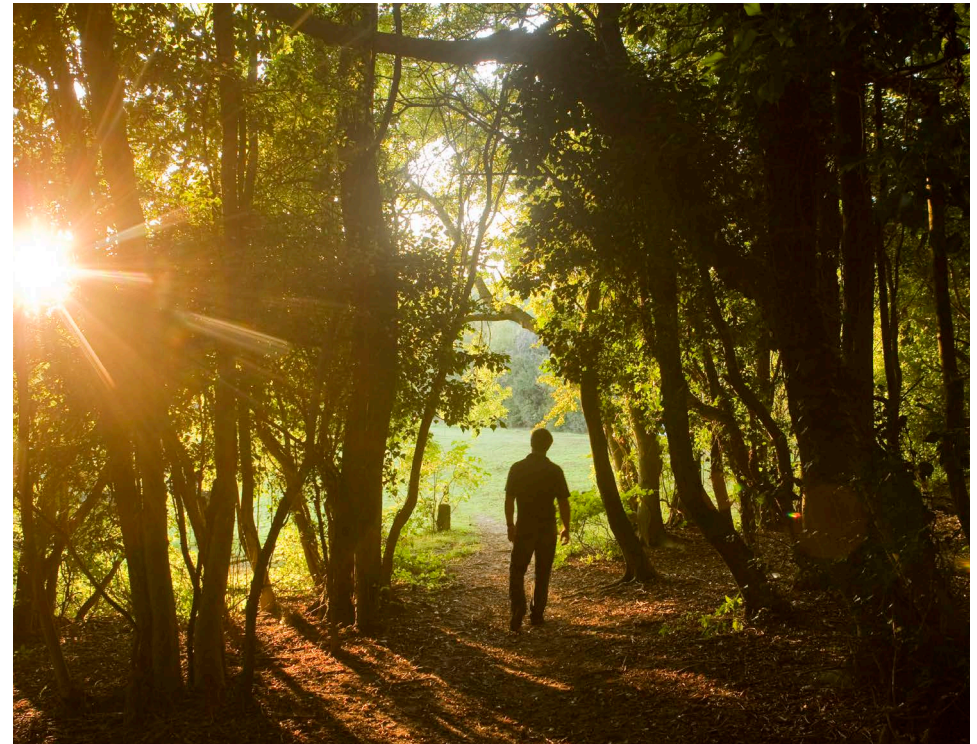


Photo: Caterham - Explore Kent

By increasing tree cover in the county and considering where this is most needed and/or where it would offer the greatest societal benefits, we can boost these benefits across Kent.

¹⁶ State of the UK's Woods and Trees - Woodland Trust

¹⁷ Tree cover outside woodlands in Great Britain - Statistical Report (forestresearch.gov.uk)

ADDRESS THE DECLINE IN TREES OUTSIDE WOODLAND AND DECLINE IN URBAN TREES

Trees outside of woodlands are among the most valuable to society; people place great value on trees and green spaces in their local communities. 19% of the UK's trees are outside woodland¹⁶, with non-woodland tree cover amounting to 11% of land in urban areas and 3% in rural¹⁷.

Urban trees have a huge value:

- Benefit mental and physical health
- Reduce surface water flooding
- Provide habitats and connectivity for wildlife
- Lower noise pollution and combat air pollution
- Increase property values
- Reduce temperatures in towns and cities

The strategy will look to tackle urban areas lacking in tree cover and reduce the loss of these important trees. We will work with our district and borough colleagues to ensure that trees are well provided for within Local Plans and are properly considered, with quality designed landscaping, within new development.



Photo: Golden Green - Explore Kent

REALISE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Trees and woodlands have a number of business uses, including timber and wood products, fruit, and fungi, as well as commercial leisure hire. Further to these, a developing market is using established tree stock, and/or land for tree establishment, to offer carbon offset for unavoidable emissions. Growing this market in Kent could deliver some of the investment we need to manage, expand, and connect our tree stock and woodlands.

Further, market development relating to the provision of Plant Healthy tree stock could enable additional jobs and revenue in the county.



Photo: Working Coppice - Debbie Bartlett

INCREASE OUR KNOWLEDGE AND PROVIDE BETTER PROTECTION

In order to ensure our trees have the protection they need, and to ensure efforts of establishment are targeted to where restoration is required or gaps exist, we need to improve our understanding of trees in the county and the benefits (value) they provide.

Kent's residents, business and landowners also need to be supported to assist in the tree establishment agenda with access to good information, professional and advice and accessible guidance.

PRINCIPLES FOR TREE ESTABLISHMENT IN KENT

In delivering our Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, the following principles for tree establishment will be followed.

1 Better management and protection of existing stock

The first step is to protect and restore the county's existing trees and native woodland. This includes ensuring that any loss of ancient woodland, aged and/or veteran trees will be wholly exceptional. For our broader woodland and tree stock, where tree loss is unavoidable these are replaced at a greater ratio to that lost. For any non-woodland tree removed, there should be the aim, where feasible, of a replacement tree (or more than one) in the new location or as close to the original location as possible and be the same type of planting¹⁸.



Photo: Beech Woodland (c) Sue Poyser

The right tree in the right place principle

Applying the four elements of the right tree in the right place principle, will result in constraints on how and where we deliver our establishment plan. The specifics of these constraints will be defined as part of the Strategy's implementation and will consider (but not be limited to):

- native and local provenance species
- species that deliver a specific service or function
- landscape biodiversity (e.g. grassland and woodland) and character, previous landscape patterns and historical context
- location
- archaeological implications
- soil functions
- habitat types that should be protected from tree/woodland establishment
- land uses
- woodland connectivity
- water recharge and availability
- local issues such as poor air quality or flood risks
- unintended consequences
- the purposes of the tree within that location
- the need for management to have minimal environmental impact (for instance no plastic use for tree guards and shield and water demand).

Our existing stock should also be secure from pests and disease; investment is required to support Kent's (and the South East's) tree nurseries to enable a rapid expansion of locally grown native trees to reduce disease risk of importing trees. Biosecurity of tree establishment should also be improved (see principle below). Further to this, we need to better understand and manage impacts from natural threats (such as deer, squirrels, and climate change) on tree stock.

Another way to ensure biosecurity is to ensure natural regeneration is a key part of the county's tree establishment plans, whereby through appropriate management we allow nature to take its course and provide additional tree cover.



Photo: Beaver

2 The right tree in the right place

Natural regeneration will need to be complemented by considered and well-planned establishment of new tree stock. Where we look to establish new trees, this must adhere to the following principles to ensure appropriate, successful, and sustainable tree establishment across the county:

- The right tree
- In the right place
- For the right reason
- With the right management

The right management includes, ideally, allowing a tree to run its full life cycle; that being not just to maturity, but from seed to 'snag' (decaying tree). Forests absorb carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and store the carbon in living biomass, dead wood, litter, and soil. Some soils can contain as much carbon as the trees; and some soil types can contain considerably more. Both standing and fallen dead wood is important for the health of our woodland.

Decomposition is a natural process involving the slow release of nitrogen and carbon storage with many positive impacts including nutrient cycling, natural regeneration and the formation of micro-habitats. As a tree starts to decompose its usefulness to wildlife is about to peak, with deadwood dependant organisms accounting for some 40% of all the wildlife species in woodland. Whilst Plan Tree is looking at how tree establishment can support our net zero targets, it is also about realising the other services trees can provide and therefore the intended life cycle within the management must be considered.



Photo: Hamstreet Woods - Explore Kent

3 Deliver multiple benefits

Investment of public money must demonstrate value and opportunities to deliver multiple benefits from tree establishment must be realised. This includes:

- Delivery of nature-based solutions, focussing tree establishment in areas of need such as those with high levels of pollution, flood risk and urban heat.
- Provision of amenity benefits, focussing establishment in areas of need such as those with low tree cover, low levels of quality green space, higher levels of deprivation and poor 'health and wellbeing' outcomes.
- Restore and improve biodiversity, addressing fragmentation through better connecting to other woodland and other priority habitat and establishing appropriate management to enable wildlife restoration.
- Delivery of economic benefits, such as the expansion of existing, and development of new markets for wood products and services; and the provision of new job opportunities.



Photo: Nightingale (c) Luke Wallace

4 Ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through application of strict standards

Biosecurity should be ensured by utilising UK grown stock of a known provenance, seeking to maximise genetic diversity of genus and species. All stock used should be from nurseries that have adopted the Plant Health Management Standard (PHMS) with Plant Healthy accreditation or equivalent.

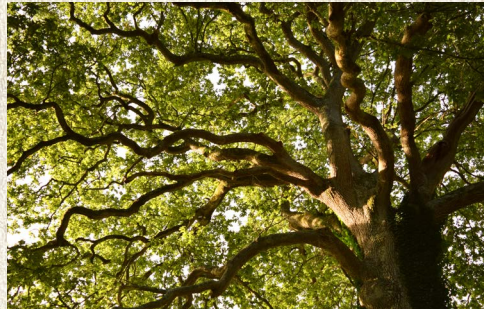
KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ACTION TO DATE

Since stating its ambitions in 2019 for 1.5 million new trees to be established in the county, Kent County Council has delivered the following:



36,895

trees planted by the Old Chalk New Downs project, with KCC and Heritage Lottery Funding (2019-21/22). All trees are a native species mix, with local stock sourced from Kent nurseries and the majority have been planted with biodegradable cardboard tree guards rather than plastic.



13,615 TREES PLANTED

by the Kent Downs AONB led Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme with KCC, EU and National Lottery Heritage Funding (2020-21).

£275,129

of funding from the Local Authority Treescape Fund, delivering 250 standard trees and 41,000 whips in Ashford and Swale.

£500,000

from the Shared Outcomes Fund, to deliver 3,588 trees and 6,408m² of natural regeneration through the Trees Outside Woodland project (2020-23).

16,000

trees and hedges planted by the county's Countryside Management Partnerships (2019)¹⁹.



The Kent Tree Establishment Strategy builds on this action and provides a more robust framework for tree establishment in Kent and the collaborative action needed to deliver on the 1.5 million trees ambition.

Average of 900 street trees planted per annum by Kent Highways (2019-21).



Appointment of a dedicated officer to oversee the delivery of the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy.

4,100

trees as part of a natural flood management project in a landscape partnership scheme with the Kent Downs AONB unit. Funded by DEFRA's Farming in Protected Landscapes grant and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

2,027 trees planted by KCC's arboriculture team during the 2020 and 2021 planting seasons. This includes 92 trees as part of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and 47 trees as part of the Queens Green Canopy.

¹⁹ Home - Kent Countryside Partnerships

KENT TREE ESTABLISHMENT STRATEGY - KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ACTION PLAN

In order to deliver on the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, the following actions will be delivered.

1 Deliver against the tree establishment target

- Develop a ten-year strategic tree planting plan²⁰, including a tree planting project pipeline. In association develop a three-year delivery plan, published to give visibility of schemes, with an investment plan to underpin this work.
- Establish a detailed definition of the “right tree in the right place”, identifying the specific constraints of tree, location, purpose, and management.
- Working with district councils and other partners, respond to central government calls for bids for tree planting, and other government support that will help implement the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, maximising funding investment for the county.
- Set annual expansion targets, with targets focussing on both quality and quantity. By measuring quality, we will ensure the expansion of trees in Kent also delivers recovery of nature, enriches people’s lives, sequesters, and stores carbon and delivers other nature-based solution benefits.
- With partners, identify creation, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on a broader county-wide scale.
- Work with individual farmers, land owners and managers to reinstate and expand the county’s hedgerow network, to benefit landscape and wildlife.
- Work with parish and town councils and other urban community groups to increase trees in urban areas.
- Develop an associated tree establishment monitoring and reporting approach against the county target.
- Work with partners across the county to establish a resourced Kent Plan Tree Partnership, with the capacity and capability to support joined-up action in the delivery of tree establishment in the county.

²⁰ The Strategy’s establishment targets and timeframe may need to be revised once the tree planting plan and opportunity mapping work is completed; only then will we understand if the 1.5 million is feasible/deliverable within the timeframe and in respect of available land.

2 Exemplar provision for trees on our own estate

- Identify creation, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on the KCC estate.
- Review whether further tree establishment on our Highways is a feasible route to help increase the volume of trees outside woodlands and in our urban areas.
- Ensure our wooded estate provides exemplary public value by integrating climate action with other nature-based solutions, high quality access and wildlife recovery.
- Review, and revise, if necessary, our tree establishment and replacement policies across the KCC estate and for land we manage/influence. Ensure the best standards are delivered through a renewed tree establishment (incl. protection and maintenance) and replacement policy.



Photo: Perry Wood - Explore Kent

3 Improve protection to trees in Kent

- Use our planning functions to ensure protection and regulated management of irreplaceable veteran trees and ancient woodland on or adjacent to development sites, with prevention of further loss or damage controlled through conditions and legal agreements as appropriate. There shall be a general presumption in favour of retention and enhancement of existing tree, woodland and hedgerow cover on planning application sites determined by the planning authority.
- Work with district and borough colleagues to ensure that trees are well provided for within Local Plans and are properly considered, with quality designed landscaping underpinned by the principles supporting safe and secure layouts, within new development. Consider the development of guidance for development to support this (e.g., Kent Design Guidance or Supplementary Planning Document).
- Develop sustainable and bio-secure supply-chains for local-provenance trees, seed, tree-guards, fencing and other materials, ensuring that Kent's nurseries and suppliers realise the opportunities presented by the development of this market.

4 Improve our understanding of Kent's trees

- Ensure we have a clear picture of KCC's, and in turn Kent's, tree stock, both woodlands and trees outside woodland, with areas lacking in tree cover identified.
- Ensure our ancient woodland inventory is up to date and undertake a veteran tree inventory.
- Assess the impact natural threats (for example deer, squirrels, climate change) on tree establishment across Kent to understand how such risks may impact the county's target and to ensure appropriate management/protection is put in place.
- Promote the importance of trees to landowners, businesses and the local community so that everyone understands the value of trees and woodlands, the important services they provide and the role they can play in helping to increase tree cover in Kent.
- Establish a hub of information that provides support to partners, landowners, businesses and the local community to identify, develop and deliver creation, restoration and protection opportunities.



Photo: Traditional Orchard



5 Develop Kent carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions

- Support work in the county to grow the nature-based carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions and identify opportunities on our estate to offset carbon and in turn deliver investment into our trees and the benefits they provide.

PARTNERS AND FUNDING

Collaboration and partnership working will be key to delivering on the ambition of 1.5 million trees established in Kent. It will be vital that work across the county is linked up and tree establishment is not delivered in a disparate manner – this will ensure that opportunities to connect new woodlands and trees are realised and that we have a network of tree cover in the county that supports the recovery of wildlife, provides natural climate solutions, and enriches people’s lives.

Partners will include (but are not limited to):

- District and Borough councils
- Town and Parish councils
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit
- High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit
- Kent’s Countryside Management Partnerships
- Kent Wildlife Trust
- Woodland Trust
- RSPB
- Country Land and Business Association
- National Farmers Union
- Kent Tree Warden Network
- Kent Association of Local Councils
- Rewilding Britain
- Community and volunteer groups, such as The Kent Men of the Trees



Photo: Oak Leaf (c) Luke Wallace

The Strategy’s three-year delivery plan will not only set out the tree establishment for that period but will also identify specific funding sources for the work. There are currently a number of tree grants financing options available which may be applicable and include (but are not limited to)²¹:

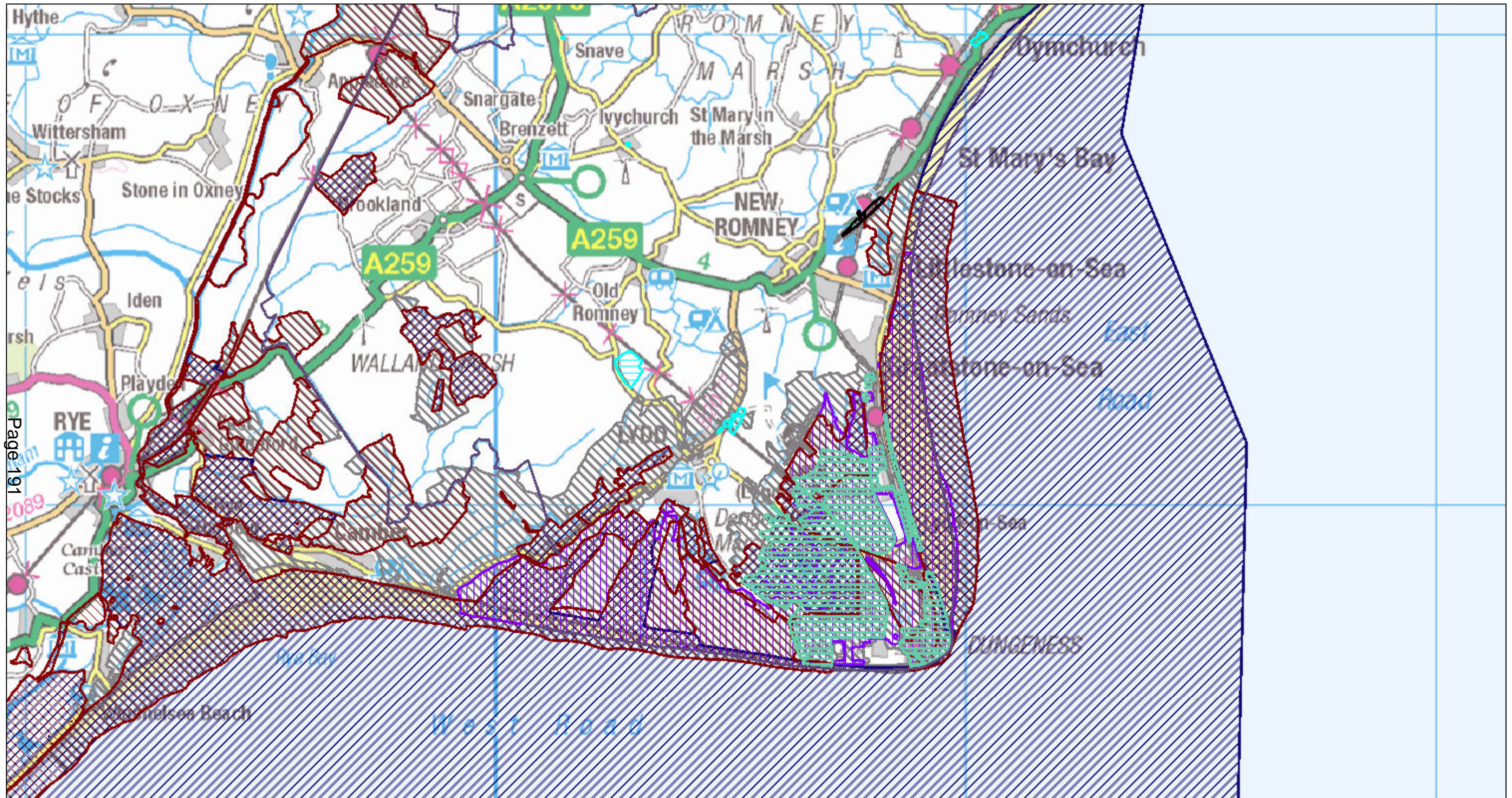
- Trees Call to Action Fund
- Woodland Creation Planning Grant
- HS2 Woodland Fund
- Urban Tree Challenge Fund
- Local Authority Treescapes Fund
- England Woodland Creation Offer
- Woodland Carbon Code
- Woodland Carbon Guarantee
- Woodland Management Planning (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Woodland Creation and Maintenance (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Woodland Tree Health (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Woodland Improvement (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Highways England Environment and Wellbeing Designated Fund Plan
- National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- NGO and charity tree funding schemes
- Corporate investment
- High net wealth individual investment interests
- Local nature-based carbon offset markets
- (in time) Environmental Land Management scheme
- (in time) Biodiversity Net Gain











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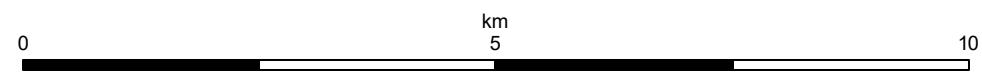
Environmental Designations in the Dungeness Area



Page 191

-  District Boundary
-  Local Nature Reserves
-  Local Wildlife Sites
-  National Nature Reserve
-  Ramsar
-  Special Areas of Conservation
-  Special Protection Areas
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest

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