

# Folkestone and Hythe Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy



**Folkestone & Hythe**  
District Council

Third Draft April 2022



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# Introduction

New Romney

## 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:

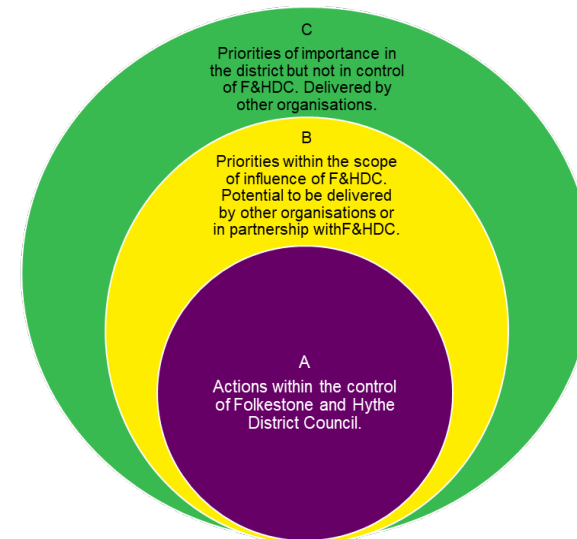
- Biodiversity, trees and woodlands;
- Access, recreation and active travel;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Blue infrastructure and the coast;
- Landscape character and heritage.

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).<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

### 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 authorities<sup>3</sup> 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”.*<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>

## 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup>

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> <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 may 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.

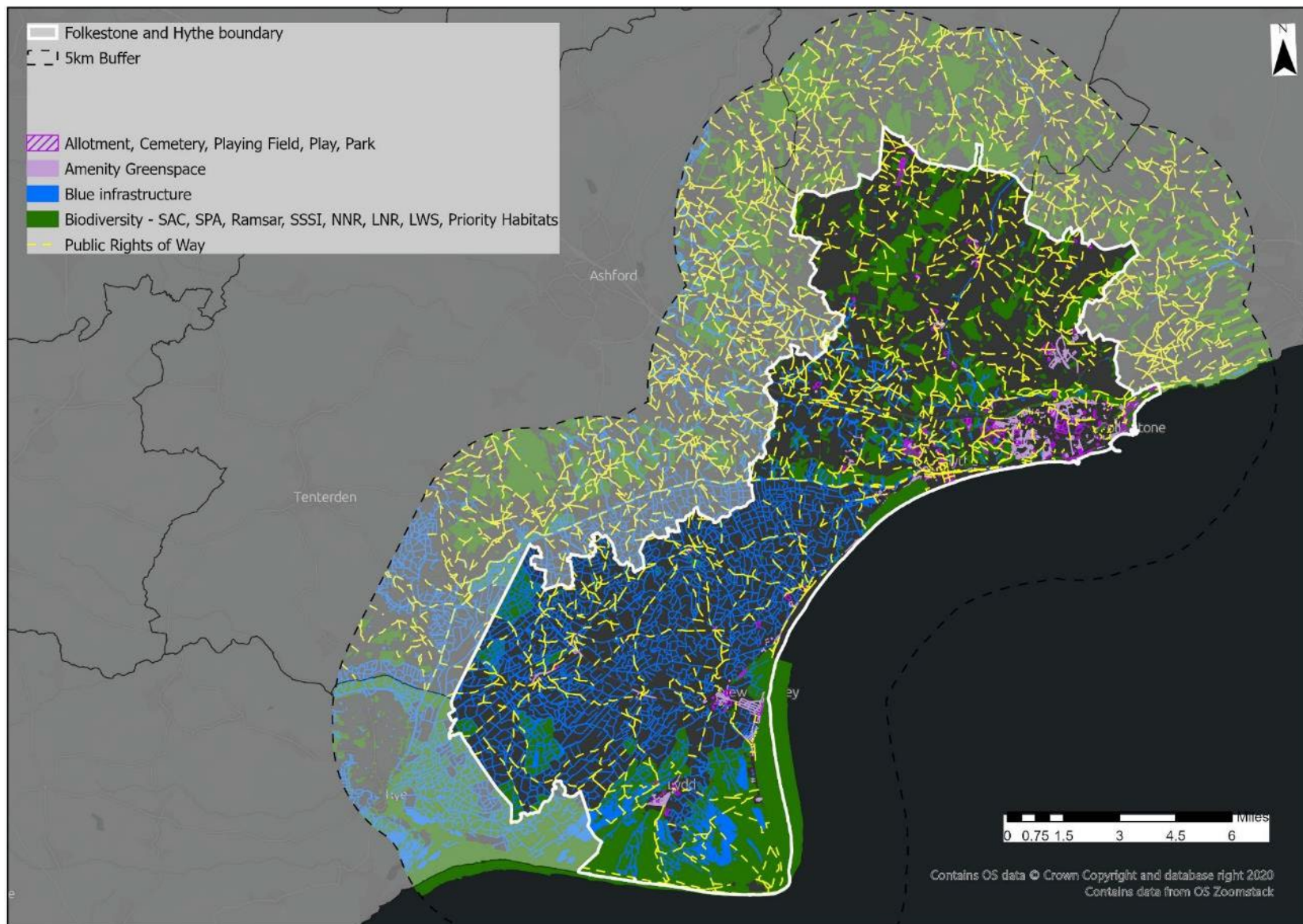
Some of the achievements to tackle climate change so far include:

- 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



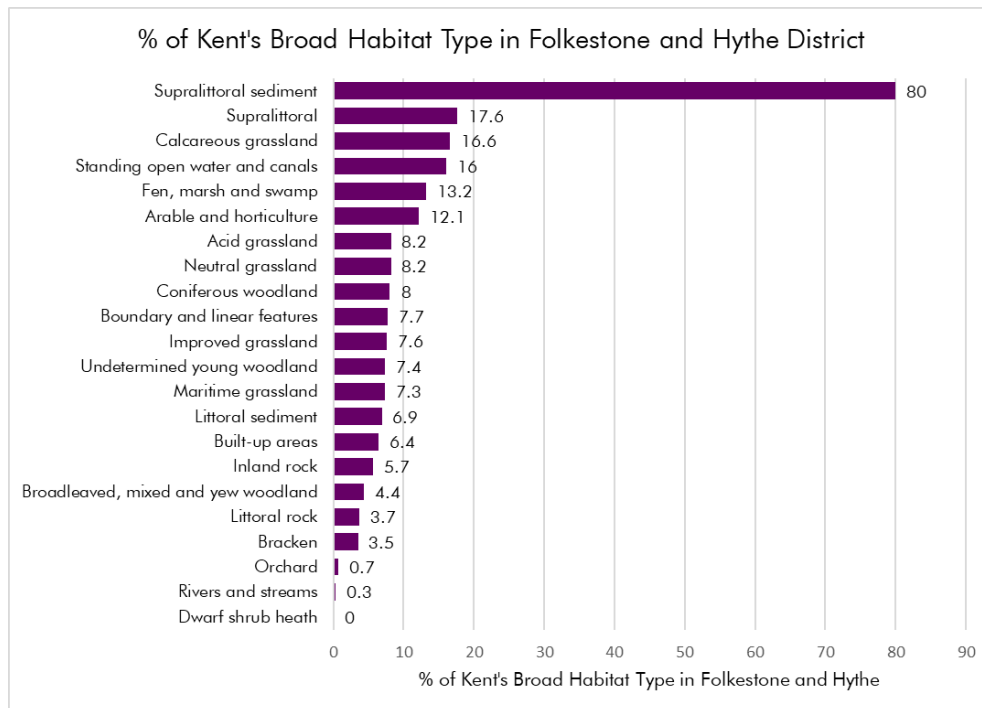
# Part 1: Folkestone and Hythe's Green and Blue Infrastructure



# 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

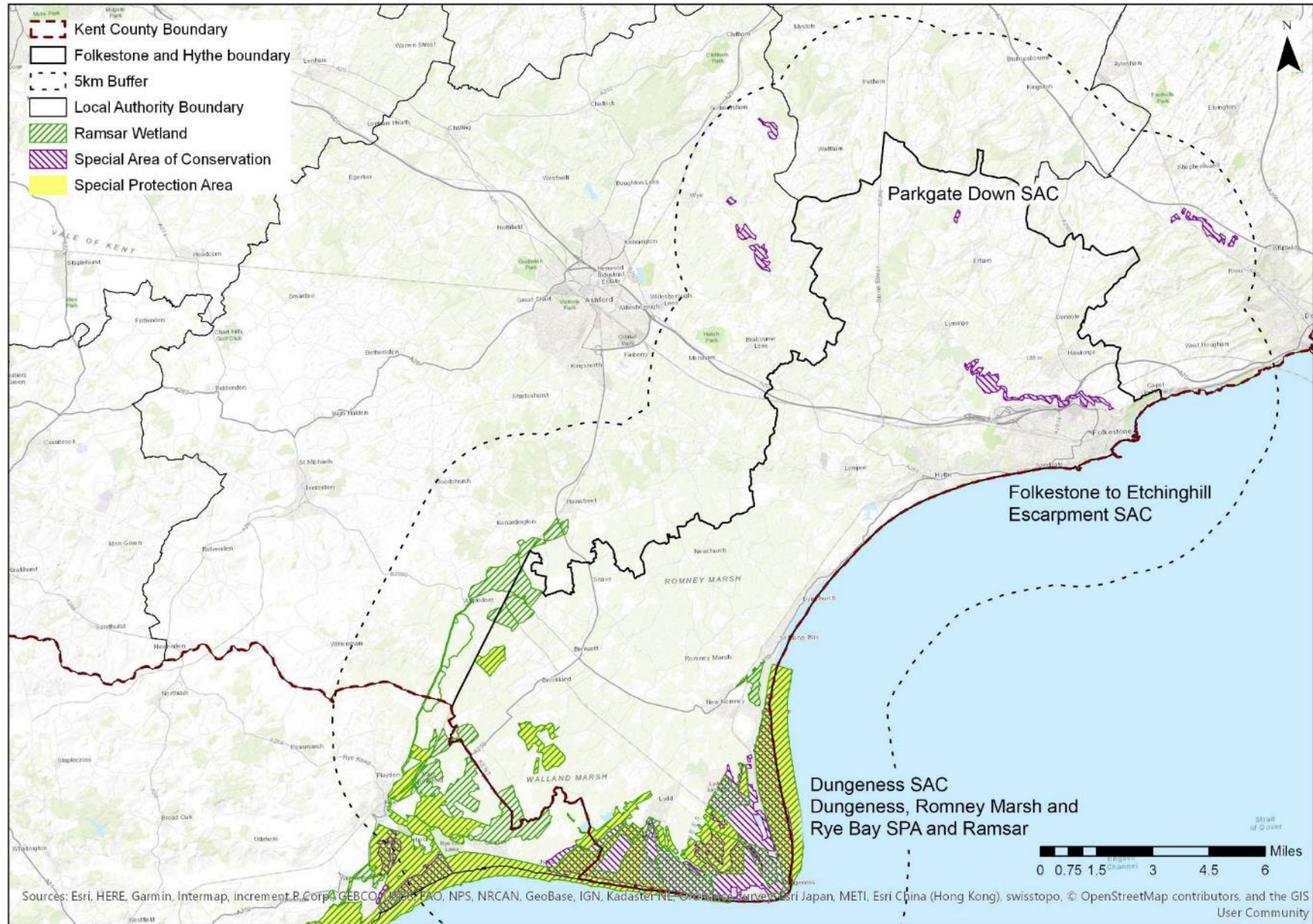
Around 16% of Folkestone and Hythe's area, including inshore areas, is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. There are also several designations for the district's international importance for nature. These designated areas overlap in many cases, with areas falling under several designations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

*Table 1: Nature Conservation Designations*

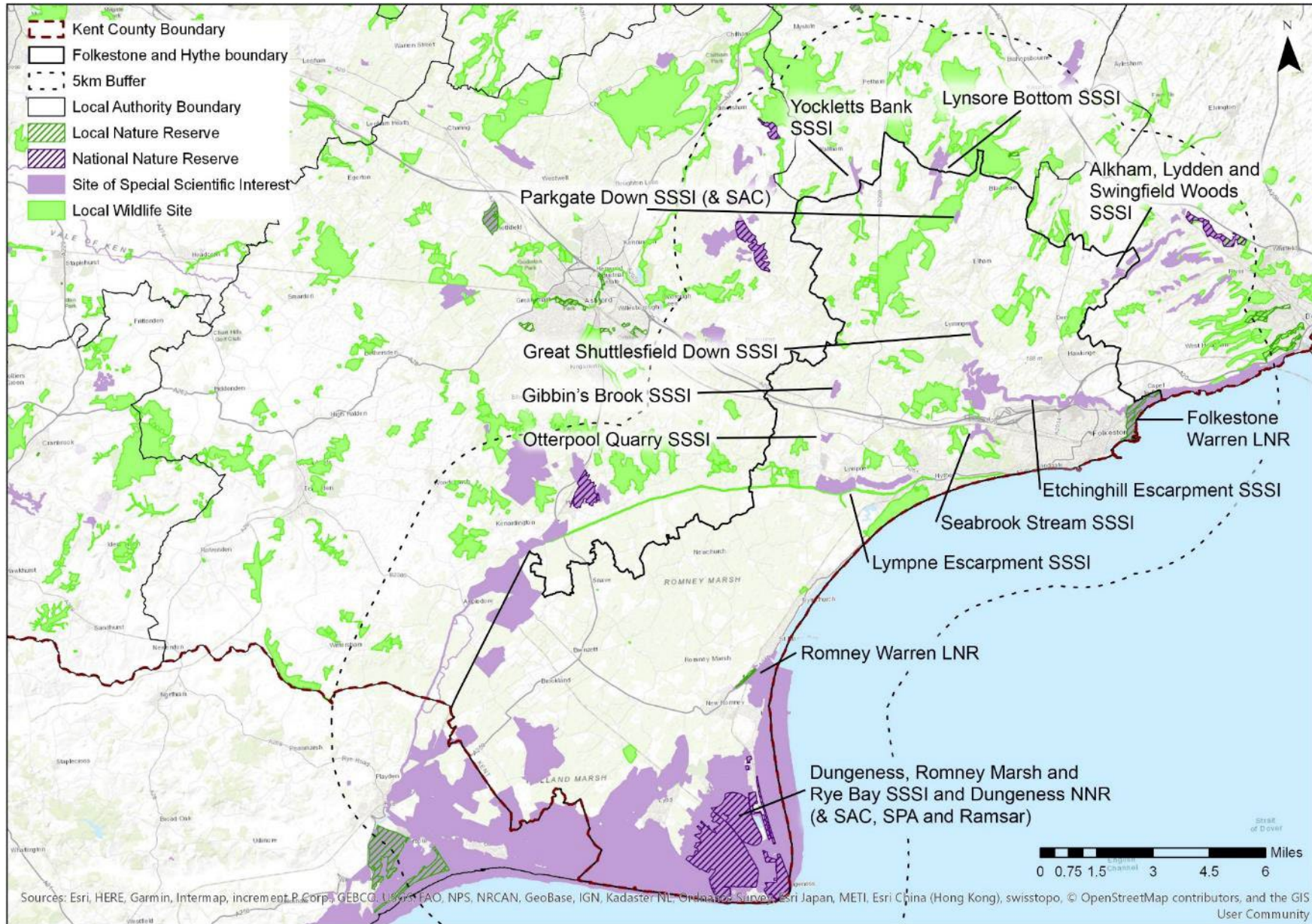
Designated Sites <sup>11</sup>	Area (sq km)
<b>International</b>	
Special Protection Areas (for birds) <sup>12</sup>	18.70
Special Areas of Conservation (for habitats) <sup>13</sup>	27.93
Ramsar wetlands <sup>14</sup>	31.54
<b>National</b>	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest <sup>15</sup>	57.80
National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



Plan 1: Designated Nature Conservation Sites – International Importance



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





## 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.<sup>17</sup> 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).<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.

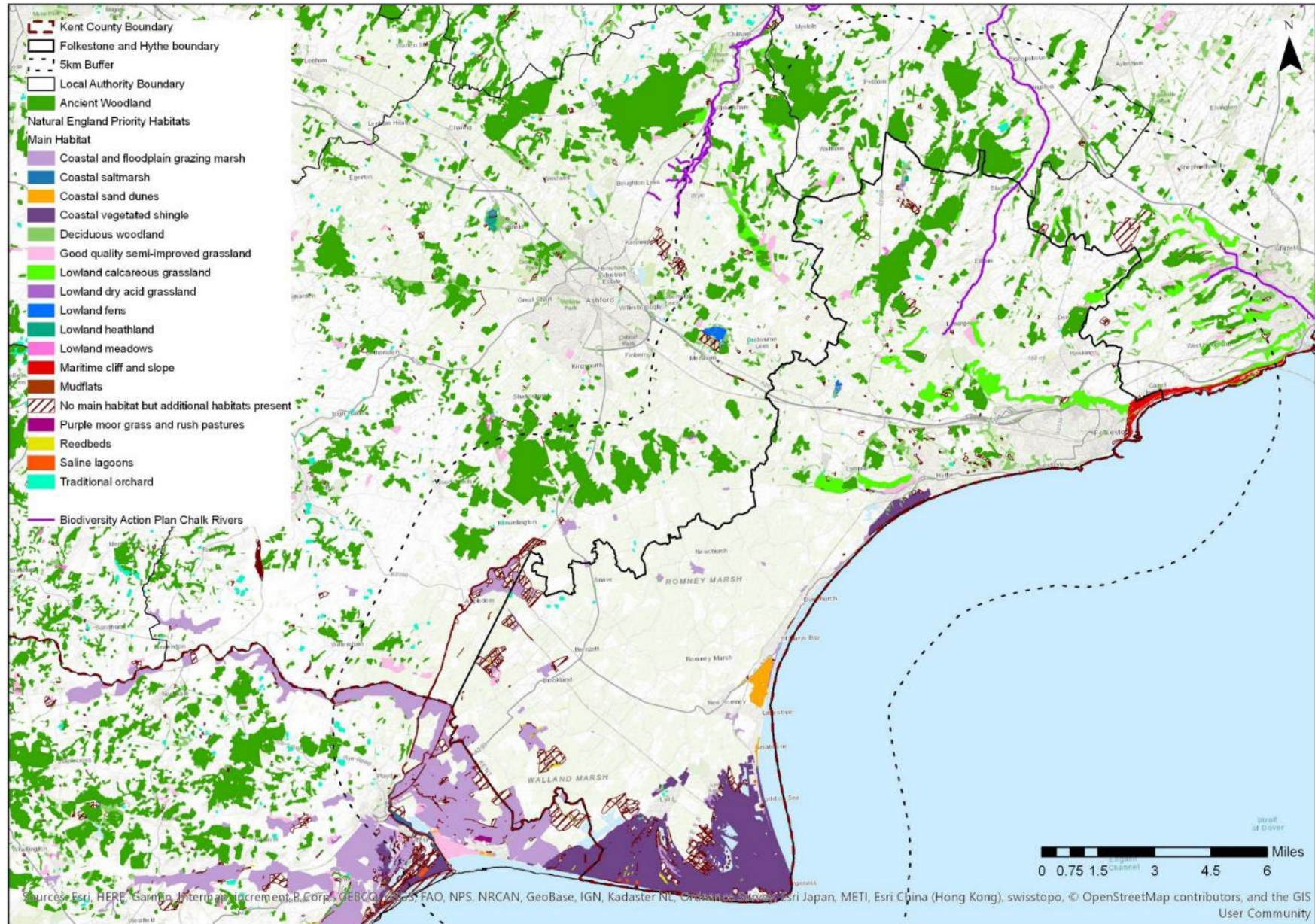
Chalk (calcareous) grassland is a scarce and specialised habitat for which the district is also important. Folkestone and Hythe district has 20.3% of Kent's lowland calcareous grassland, second only to Dover. It also contains 98.5% of the area of internationally important chalk grassland in the county.

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)



## 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,<sup>20</sup> 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 bumblebees<sup>21</sup> 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.



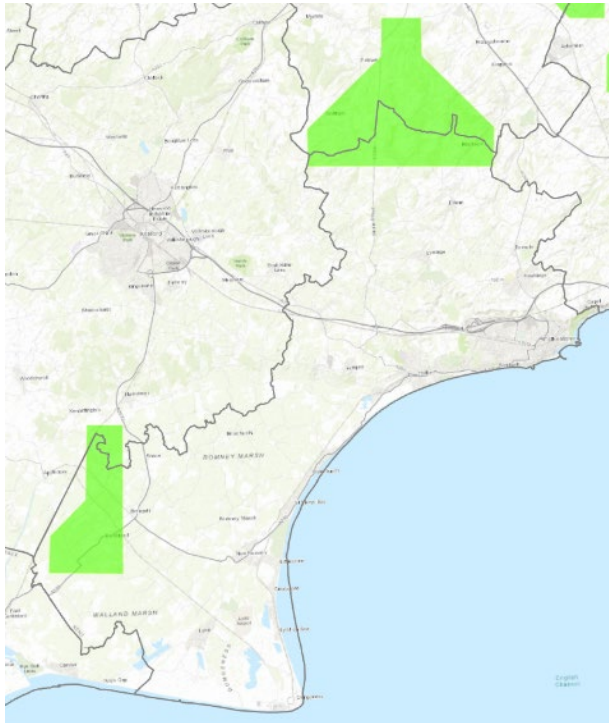
Turtle Dove

### 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.

The Romney Marsh is also important for other farmland birds. The RSPB's Romney Marsh farmland bird project<sup>22</sup> 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.



#### 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.<sup>23</sup>

#### 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



(*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,<sup>24</sup> 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.

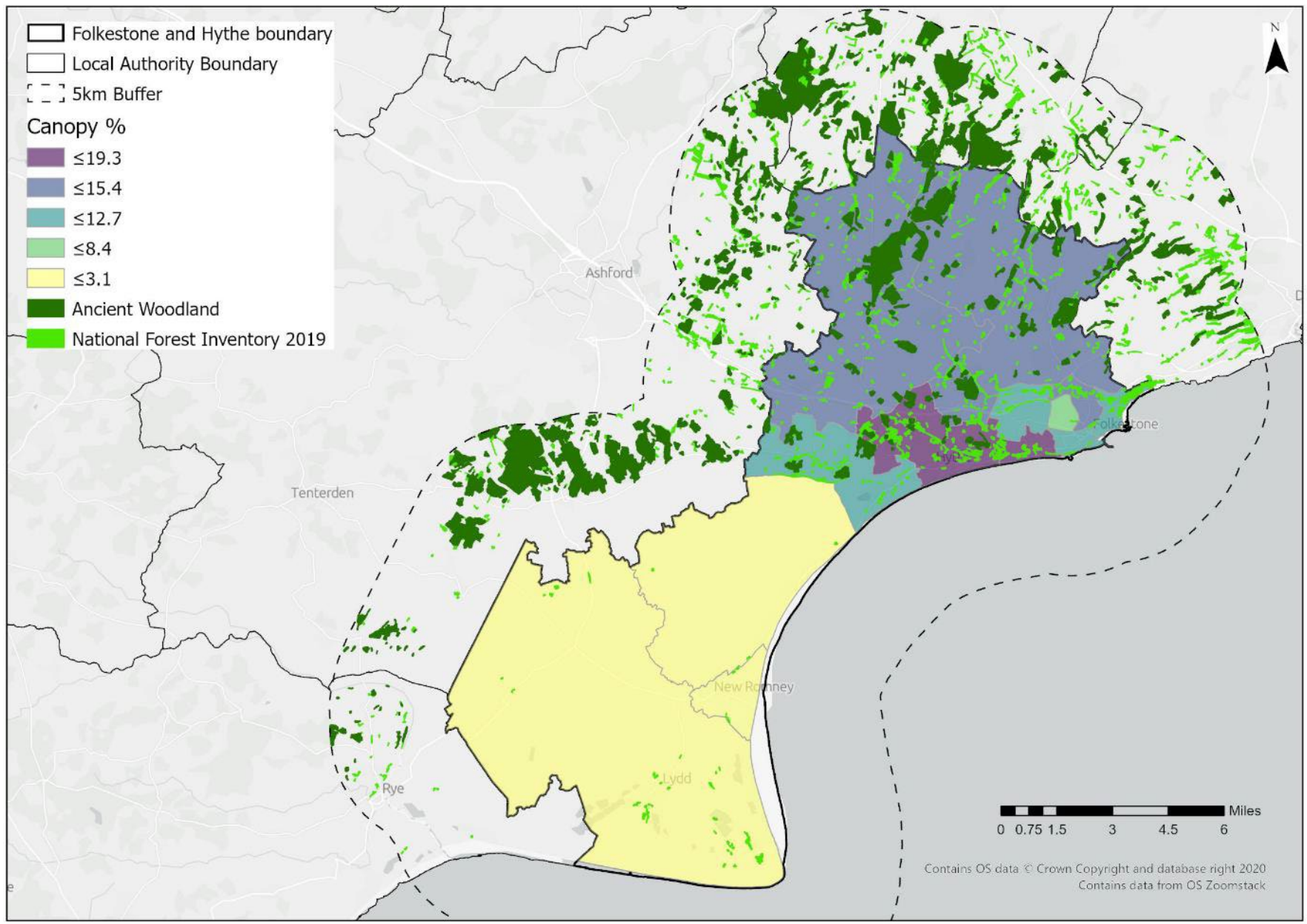
Folkestone and Hythe Council itself owns and is responsible for thousands of trees. In addition to this are many thousands more, which have never been counted, in woodlands, parks, country parks and other land which the council owns.

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.<sup>25</sup> 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 Project<sup>26</sup> 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',<sup>27</sup> 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 buffering<sup>28</sup> wildlife sites.

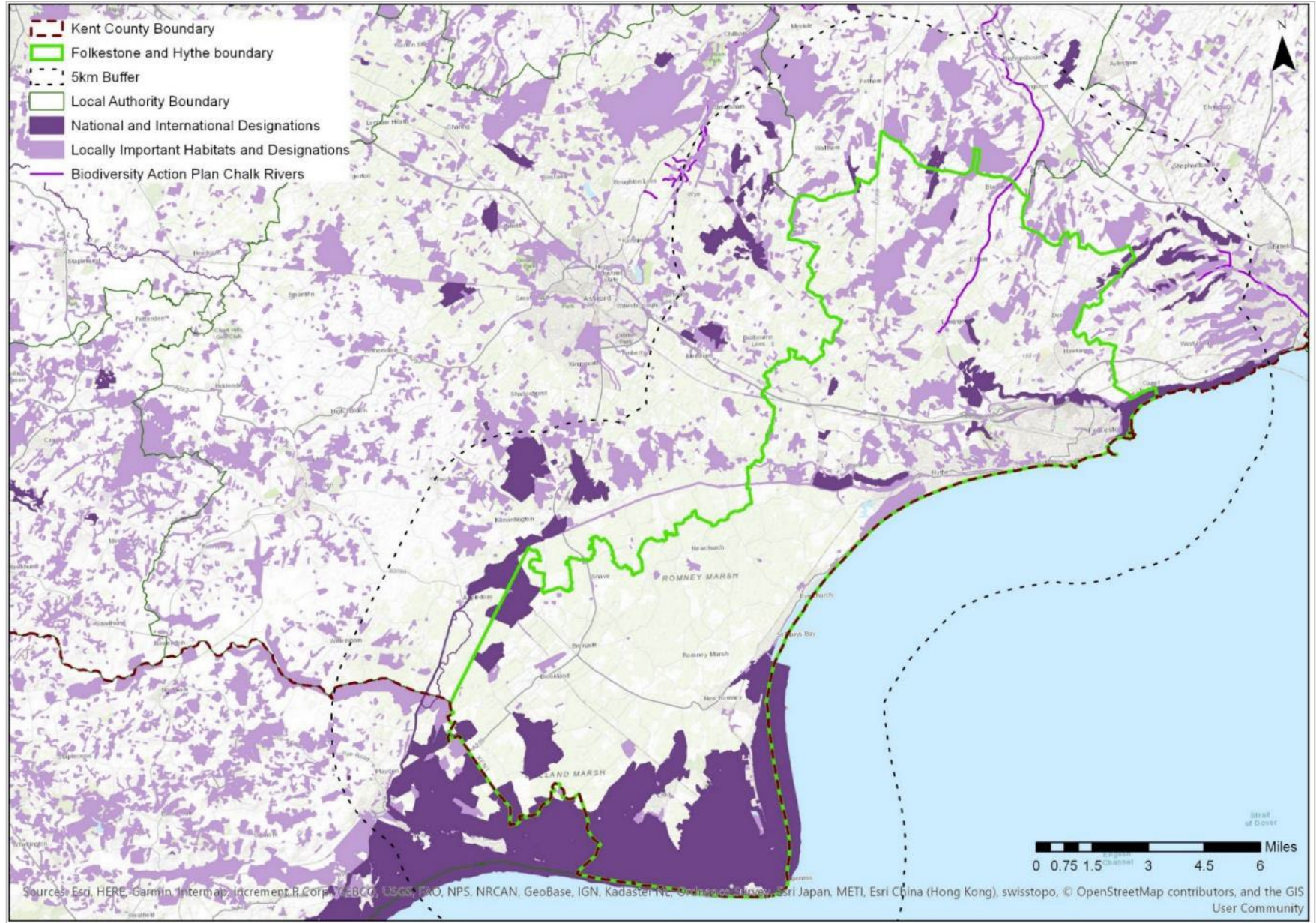
Summarised as: 'More, bigger, better and joined.'

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.<sup>29</sup> Natural England habitat network mapping<sup>30</sup> 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 Targets<sup>31</sup>

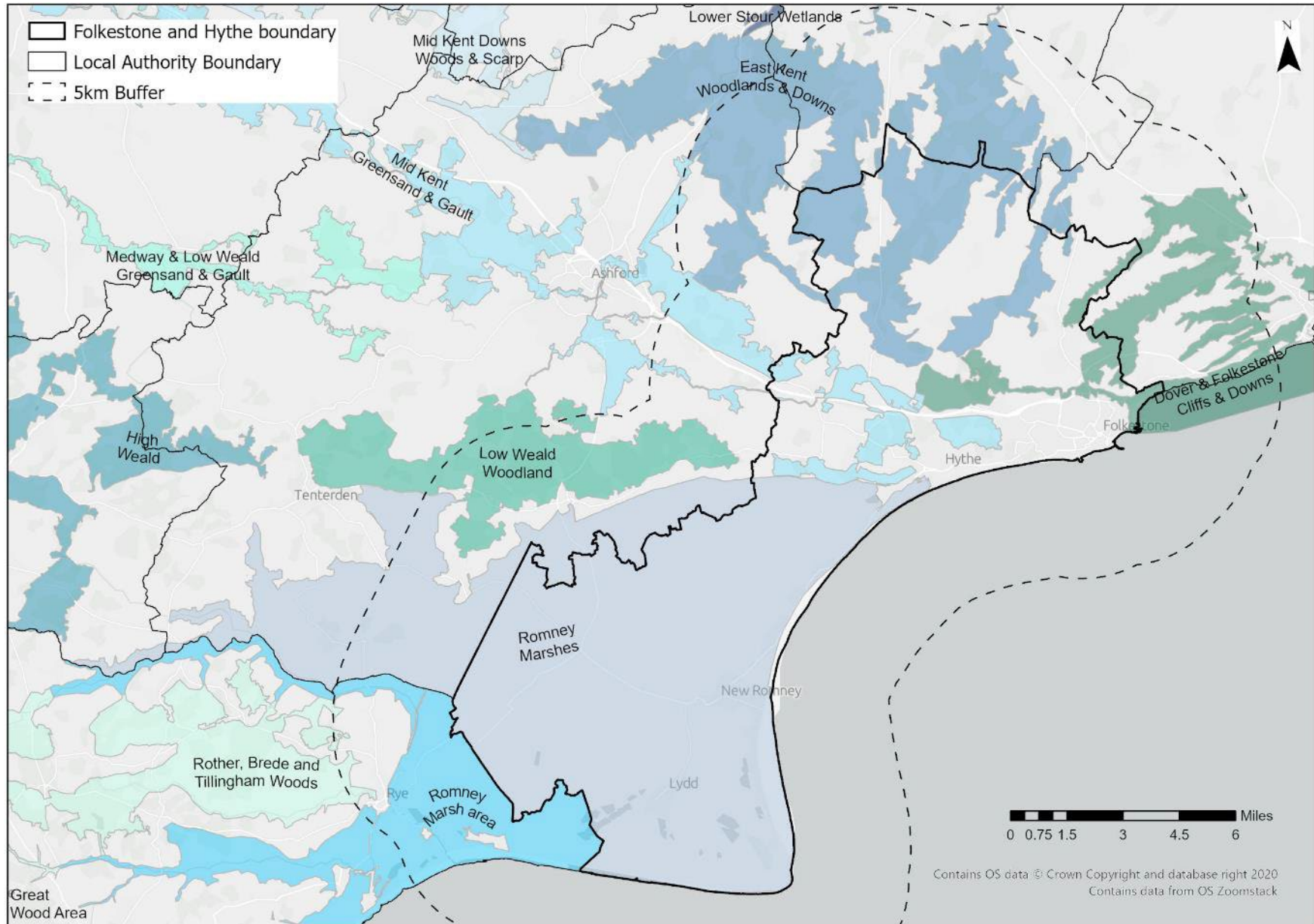
Biodiversity Opportunity Area and Description	Biodiversity	Targets
<p><b>East Kent Woodlands and Downs</b> A complex of woodland and grassland habitats, including several nationally and locally important sites, which includes some large blocks of woodland of importance for threatened butterflies. Acid grassland and more heathy habitats occur on the gravel exposures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented woodland and chalk grassland, including nationally important sites for both habitats, and internationally important chalk grassland;</li> <li>• Important woodland, including wood pasture and beech and yew woodland, as well as much ancient woodland;</li> <li>• Key species include woodland butterflies including and rare woodland flora.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chalk grassland creation, restoration and enhancement;</li> <li>• Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland;</li> <li>• Creation of species-rich neutral grassland.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mid Kent Greensand and Gault</b> 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"> <li>• Nationally important acid grassland and heathland sites, as well as smaller acid grassland fragments;</li> <li>• Scattered blocks of wood pasture and small, isolated woodlands;</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation and restoration of acid grassland and heath;</li> <li>• Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland;</li> <li>• Improve ecological status of waterbodies;</li> <li>• Recreate or restore wetland habitats along rivers and their tributaries;</li> </ul>

Biodiversity Opportunity Area and Description	Biodiversity	Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure and manage important brownfield sites, particularly where these support Biodiversity Action Plan species;</li> <li>• Avoid further fragmentation of habitats;</li> <li>• Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Romney Marshes and Rye Bay</b> 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"> <li>• Internationally important wetland and shingle habitats, most notably the vegetated shingle at Dungeness, which is important for biodiversity and geodiversity;</li> <li>• Grazing marsh, and wet ditches and other water courses;</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats and designated sites;</li> <li>• Restore, recreate and enhance grazing marsh, fen, reedbed and other wetland habitats;</li> <li>• Ensure no net loss and restore all coastal vegetated shingle to favourable or unfavourable recovering condition (subject to constraints arising from natural coastal changes);</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance important intertidal and marine habitats;</li> <li>• Create and enhance acid and species-rich neutral grassland;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Identify how best to integrate a more natural functioning of the Dungeness coast;</li> <li>• Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.</li> </ul>

Biodiversity Opportunity Area and Description	Biodiversity	Targets
<p><b>Dover and Folkestone Cliffs and Downs</b></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"> <li>• Nationally important chalk grassland in dry valleys and on cliff tops;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• <i>Sabellaria</i> reefs, both offshore and in some intertidal areas, providing important habitat for a wide range of species;</li> <li>• Important woodlands on chalk and ragstone;</li> <li>• Some vegetated shingle, wet woodland and fen habitats;</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve and enhance important cliff, intertidal and marine habitats;</li> <li>• Extend, reconnect, restore and enhance areas of chalk grassland;</li> <li>• Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland;</li> <li>• Create species-rich neutral grassland;</li> <li>• Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.</li> </ul>



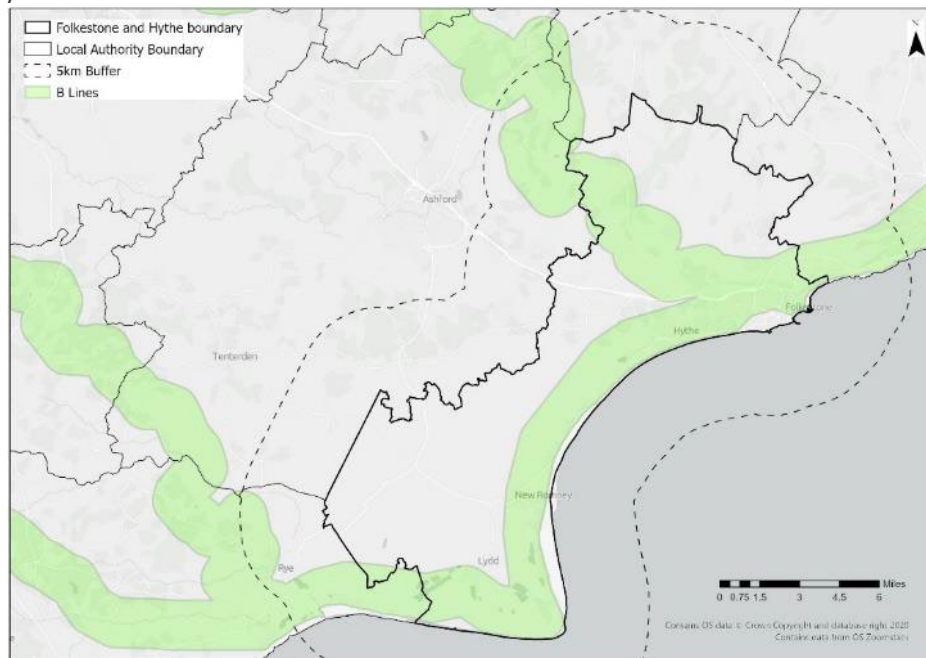
Plan 6: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas



There are other approaches, for example B-Lines, developed by Buglife,<sup>32</sup> (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*



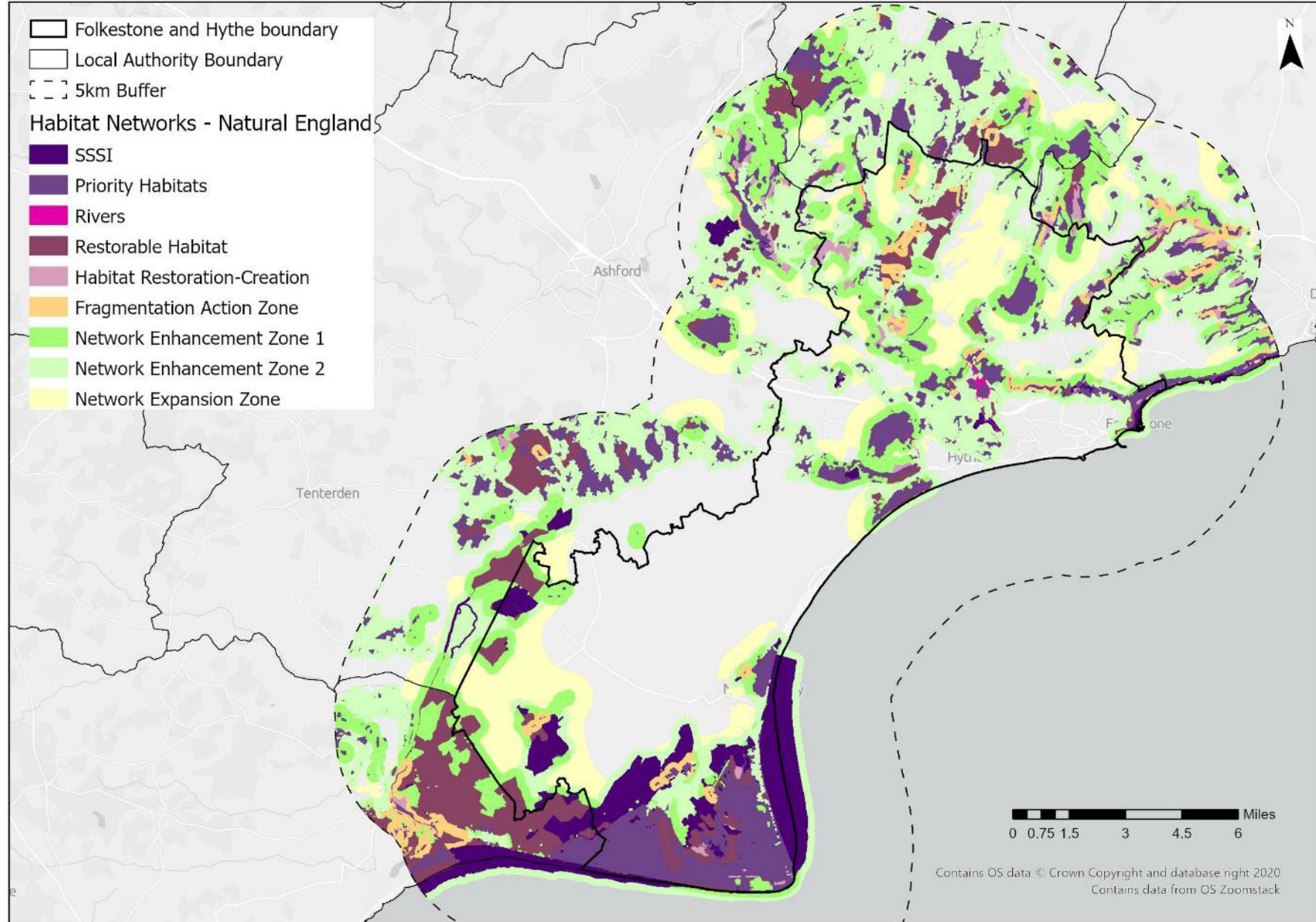
The following maps show priority areas in which to create functioning ecological networks. Within these areas priorities should be to:

- 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.

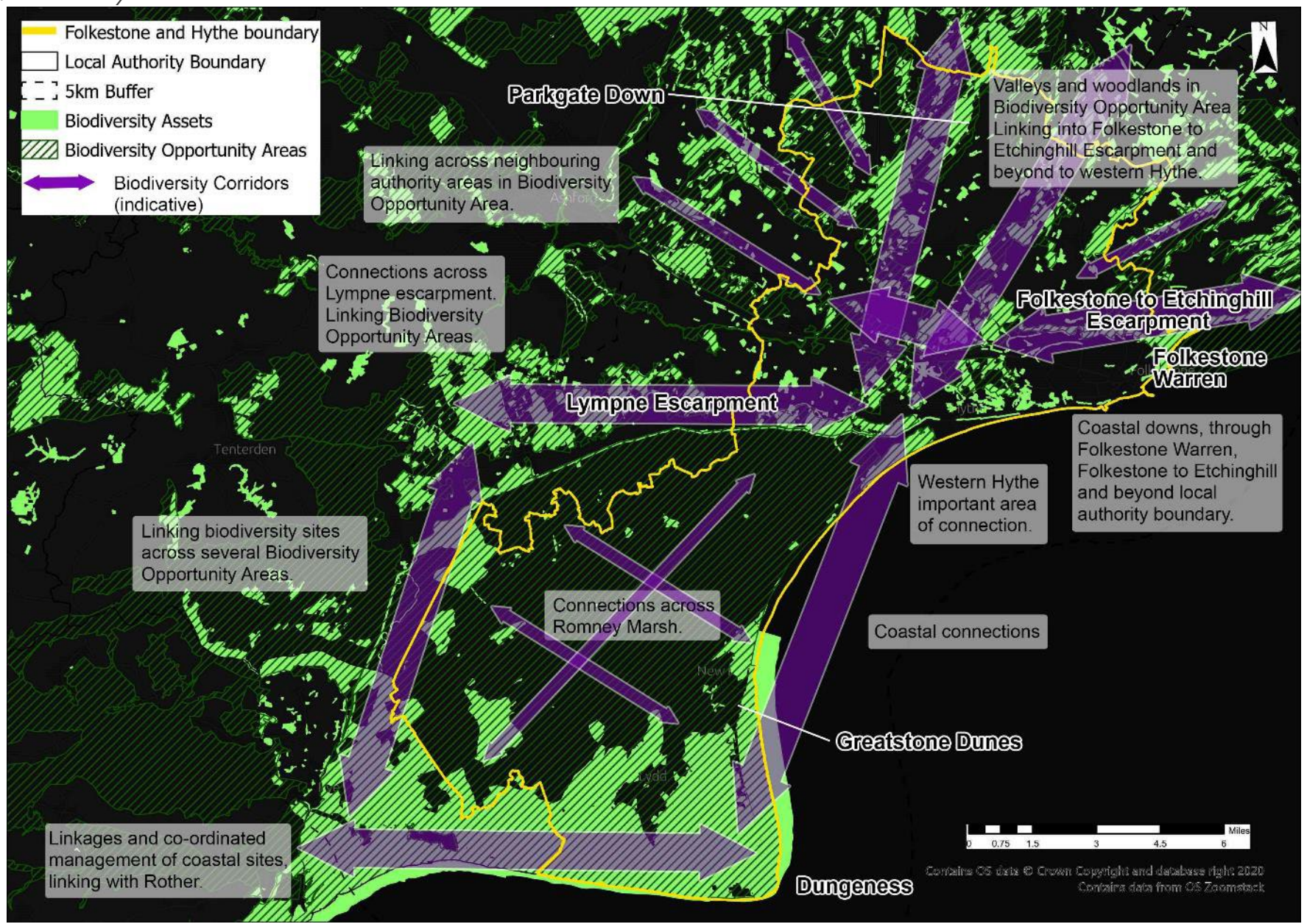
However, the mapping of these areas does not mean that biodiversity improvements are only here. In the urban areas especially, there are discrete and important sites which are stepping stone sites for nature.

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



## 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.<sup>33</sup>

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

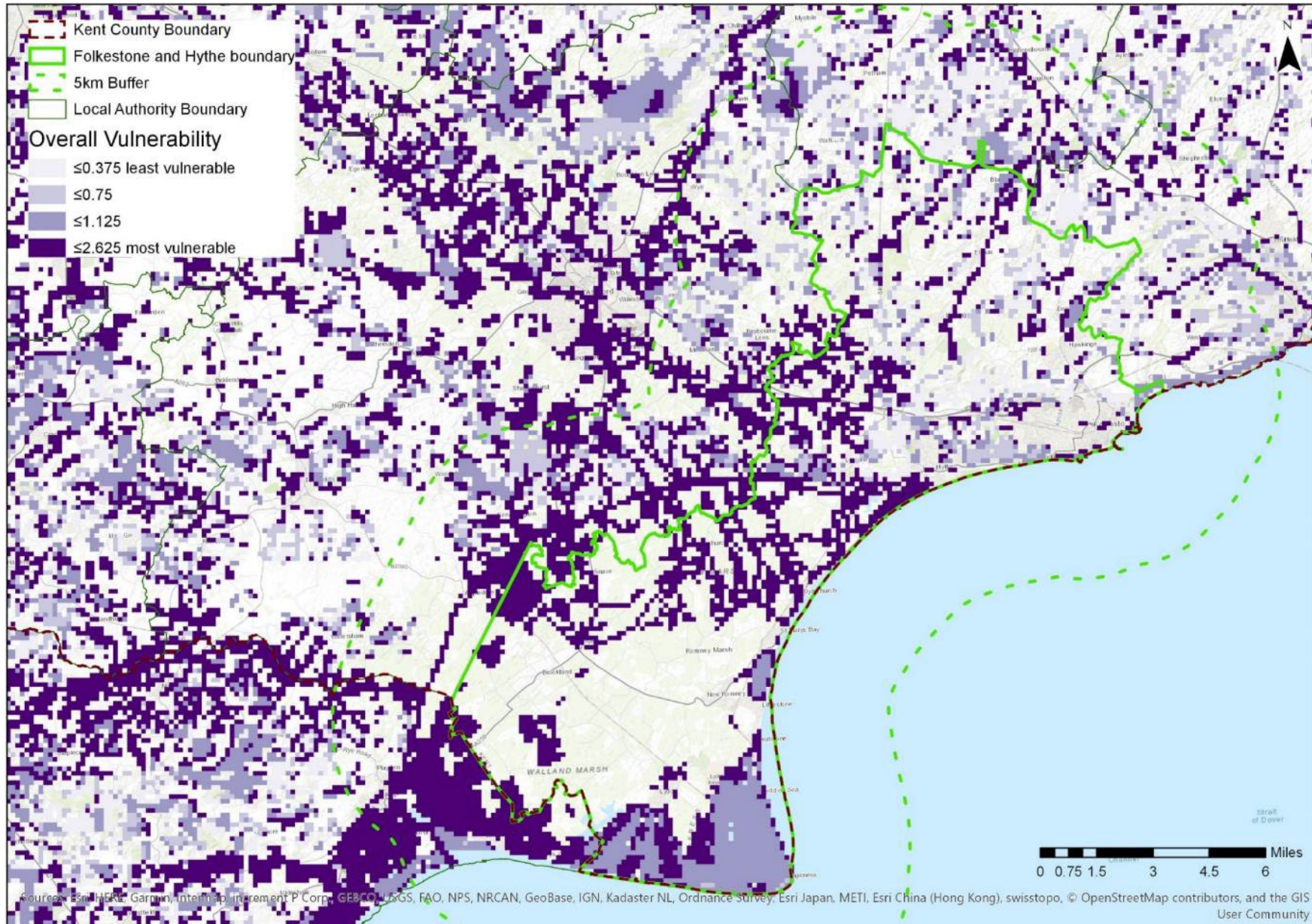


Table 6: Priority Habitat Climate Change Vulnerability – Summary

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

## 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.<sup>34</sup> 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

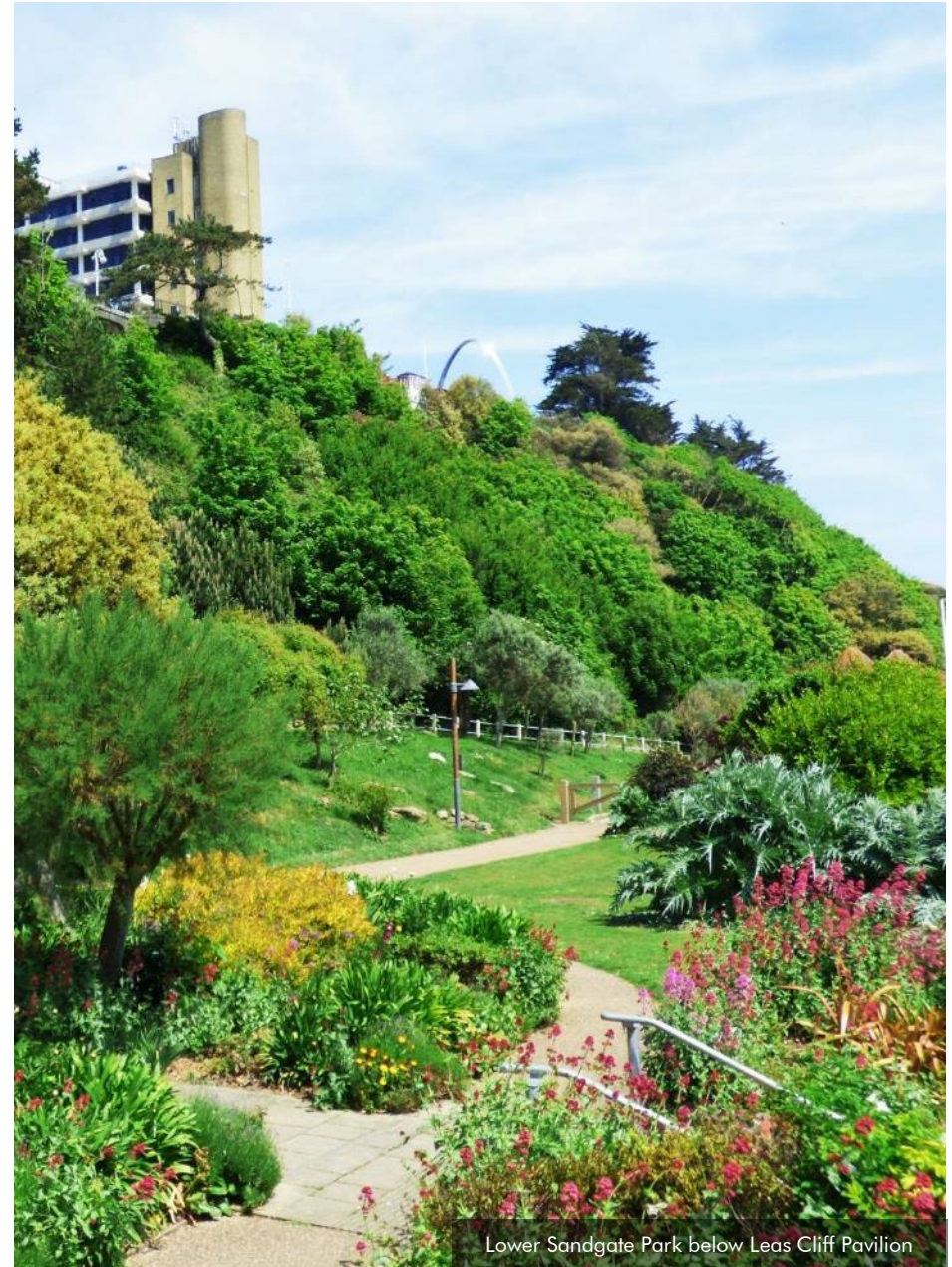
## Introduction

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 Nature<sup>35</sup> in the early 1990's, Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) is a category of greenspace at which a "*feeling of naturalness predominates*".<sup>36</sup> The term 'accessible' has a specific meaning and means the site must always be available for the public to use and without charge.<sup>37</sup>

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.<sup>38</sup>

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.

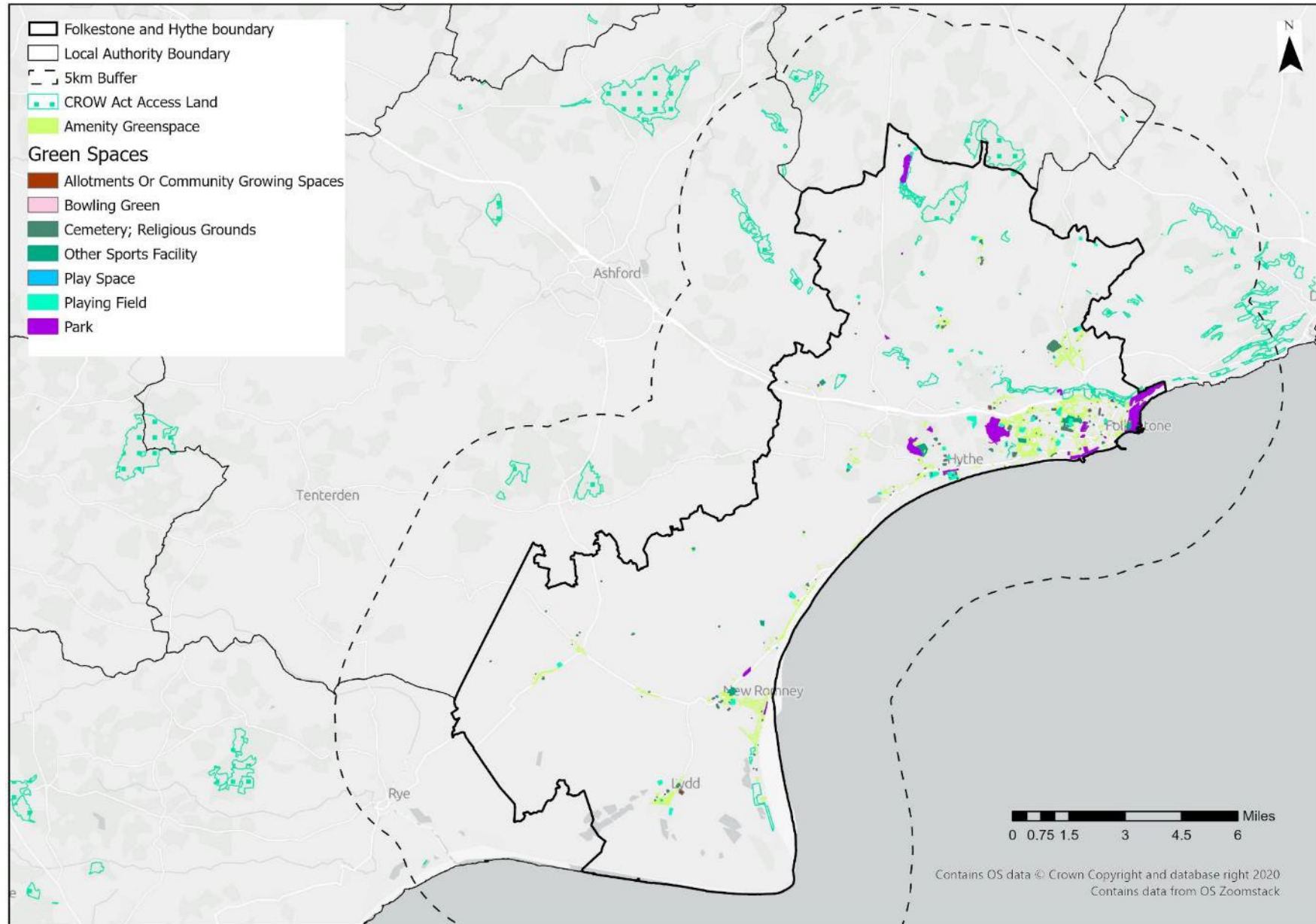
The Open Space Strategy shows that the North Downs and Romney Marsh area are currently below the quantity standard and this deficit is likely to increase to a small extent by 2031, if the population increases. There is access to larger spaces away from urban and residential areas, including West Wood 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 Lympe 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 area<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup>

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.<sup>41</sup>

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.<sup>42</sup>

## 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 LCWIP<sup>43</sup>.

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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

## 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.

# Plan 12: Explore Kent Mapping of Active Travel Routes



## 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.

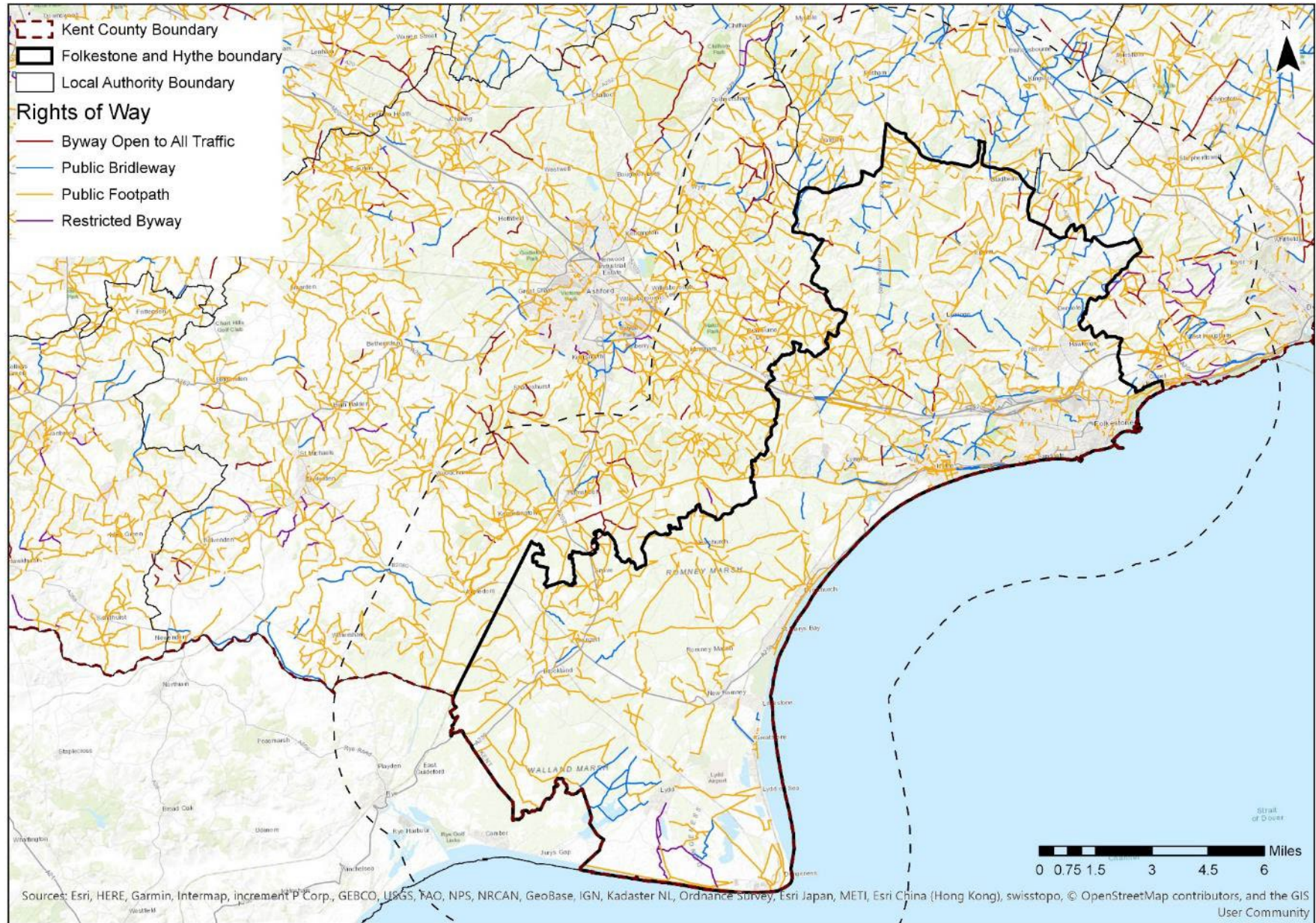
These provide many miles of promoted routes, with significant sections traffic-free. There are also many shorter walking, cycling and riding routes.

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

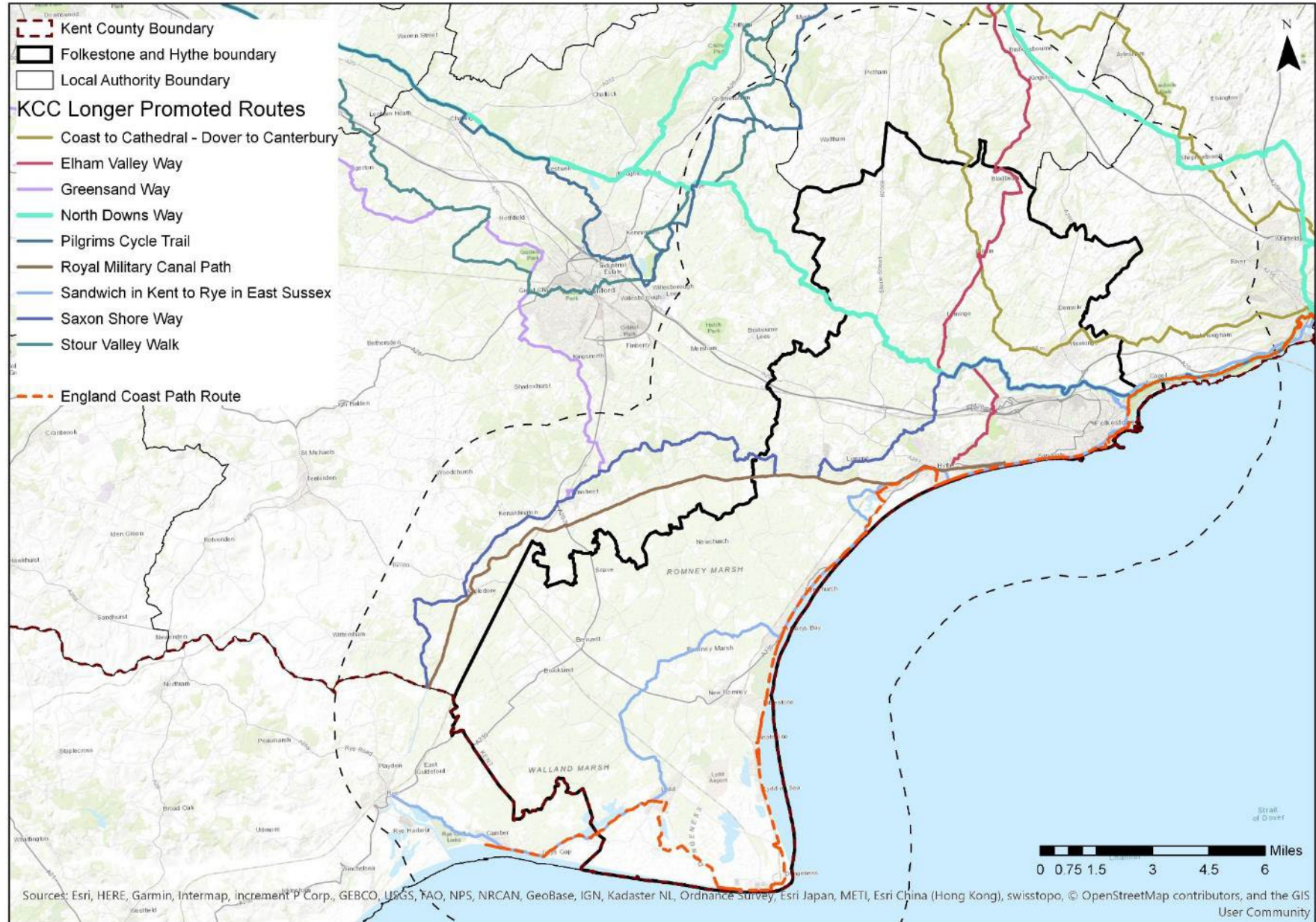
Table 3: Promoted Routes (Explore Kent)

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 - Lympne	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

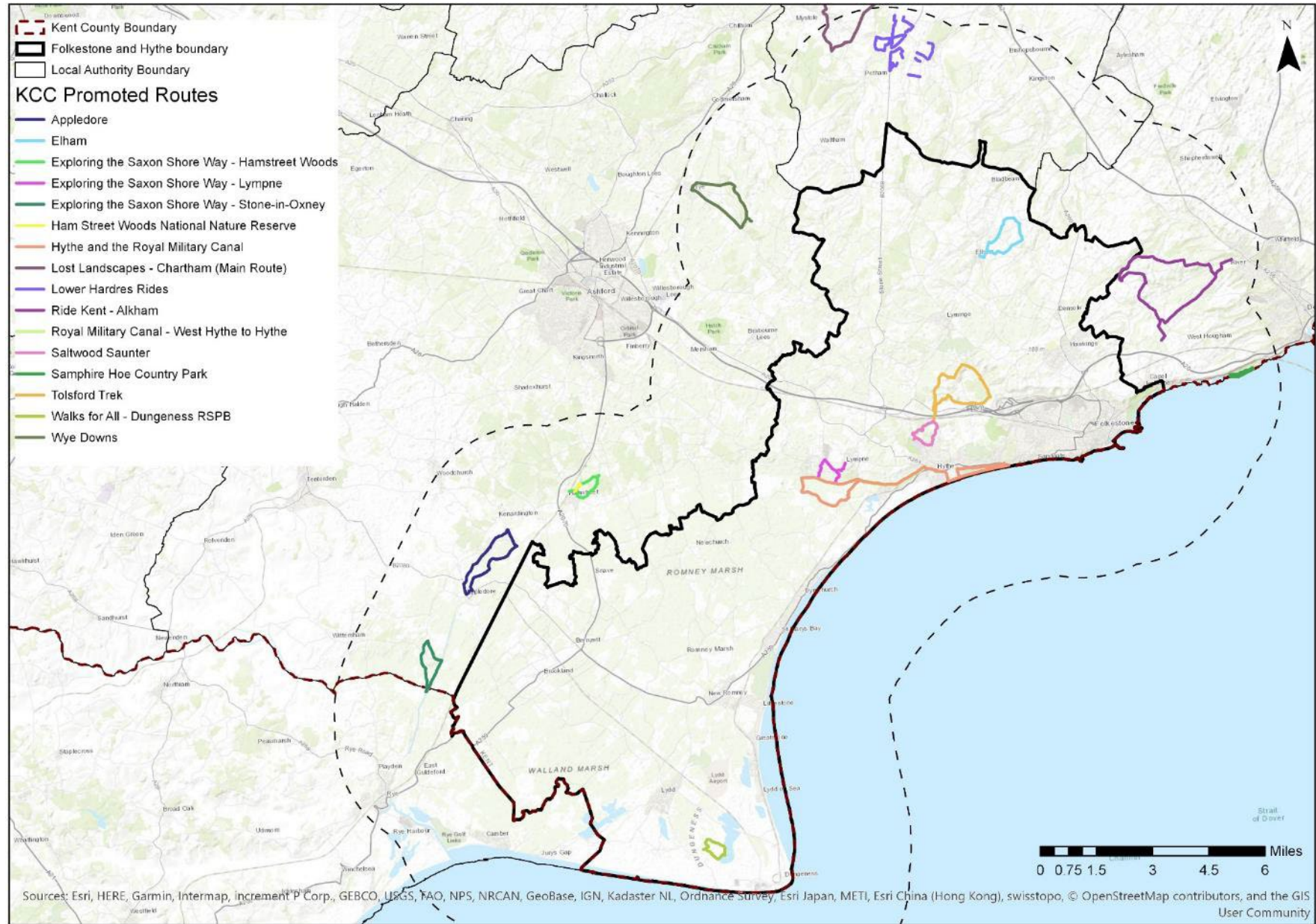


Plan 14: Longer Promoted Routes (Explore Kent)





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.<sup>46</sup>

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).<sup>47</sup> 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"*.<sup>48</sup>

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 Service<sup>49</sup>.

## 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*",<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

The Marmot Review<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup>

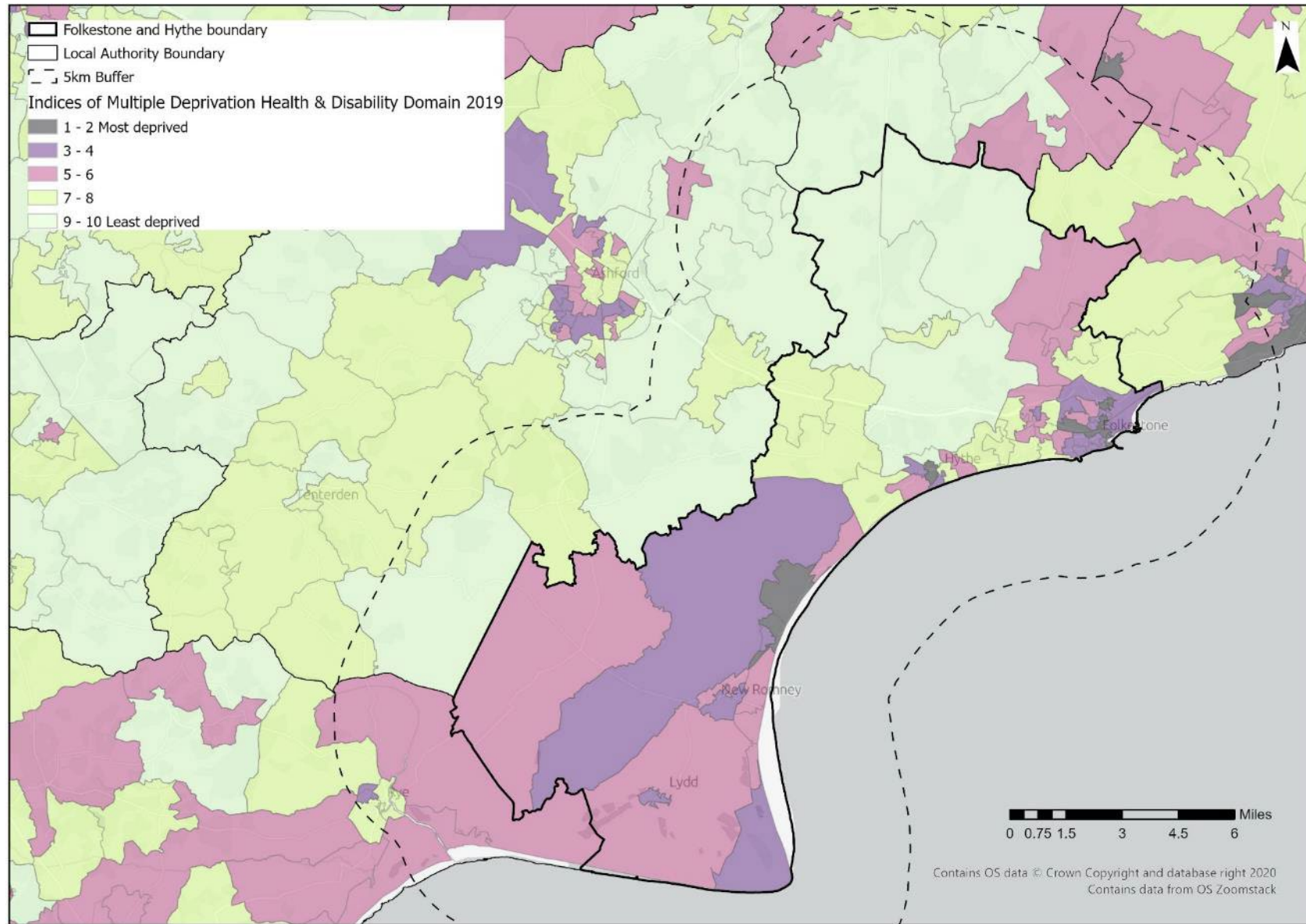
### Health and Wellbeing in Folkestone and Hythe

- 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.<sup>55</sup>

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 NO<sub>2</sub>, (a gaseous air pollutant composed of nitrogen and oxygen NO<sub>2</sub> 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.

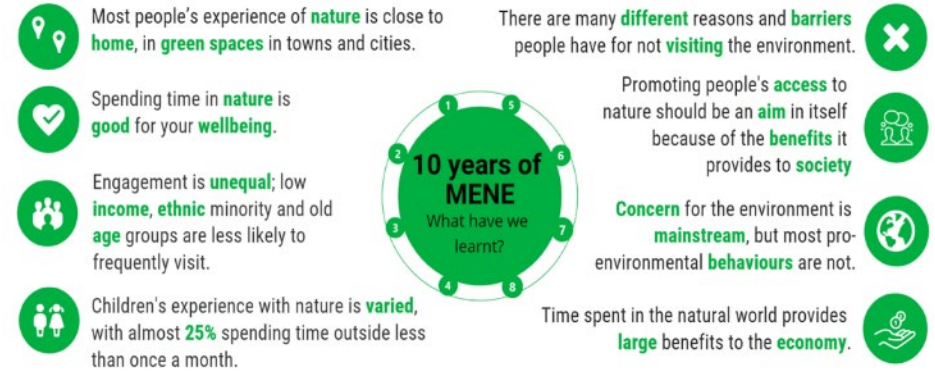
## Access to Greenspace

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).<sup>56</sup> 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.”<sup>57</sup>*

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.<sup>58</sup> 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 them<sup>59</sup>.

## 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

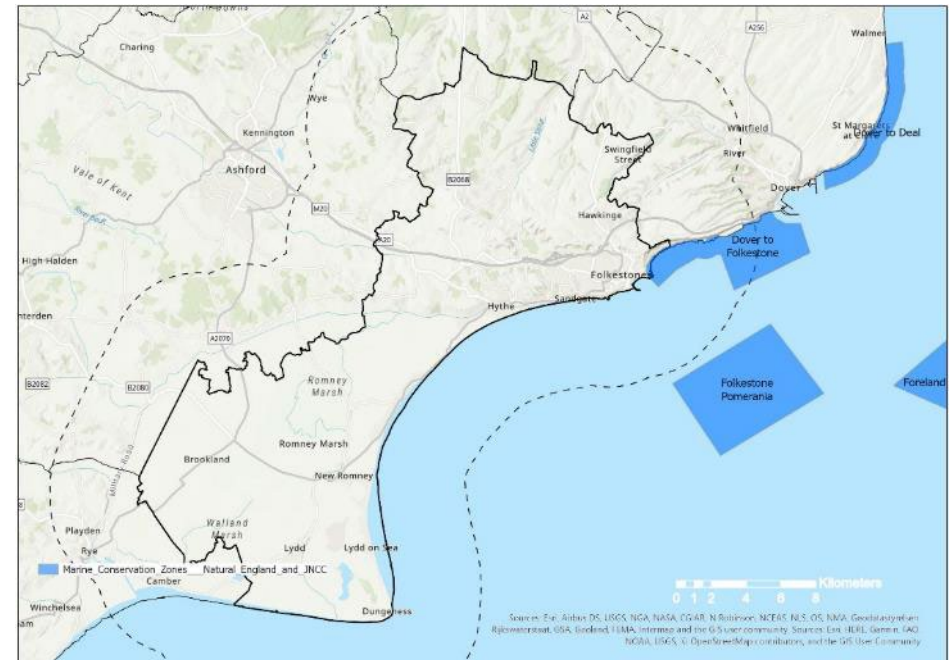
Ongoing sea level rise will result in a significant narrowing of intertidal areas ('coastal squeeze'), which has the potential to impact upon the nature conservation areas as well as the tourism economy, as beaches along this coastline are an important asset.

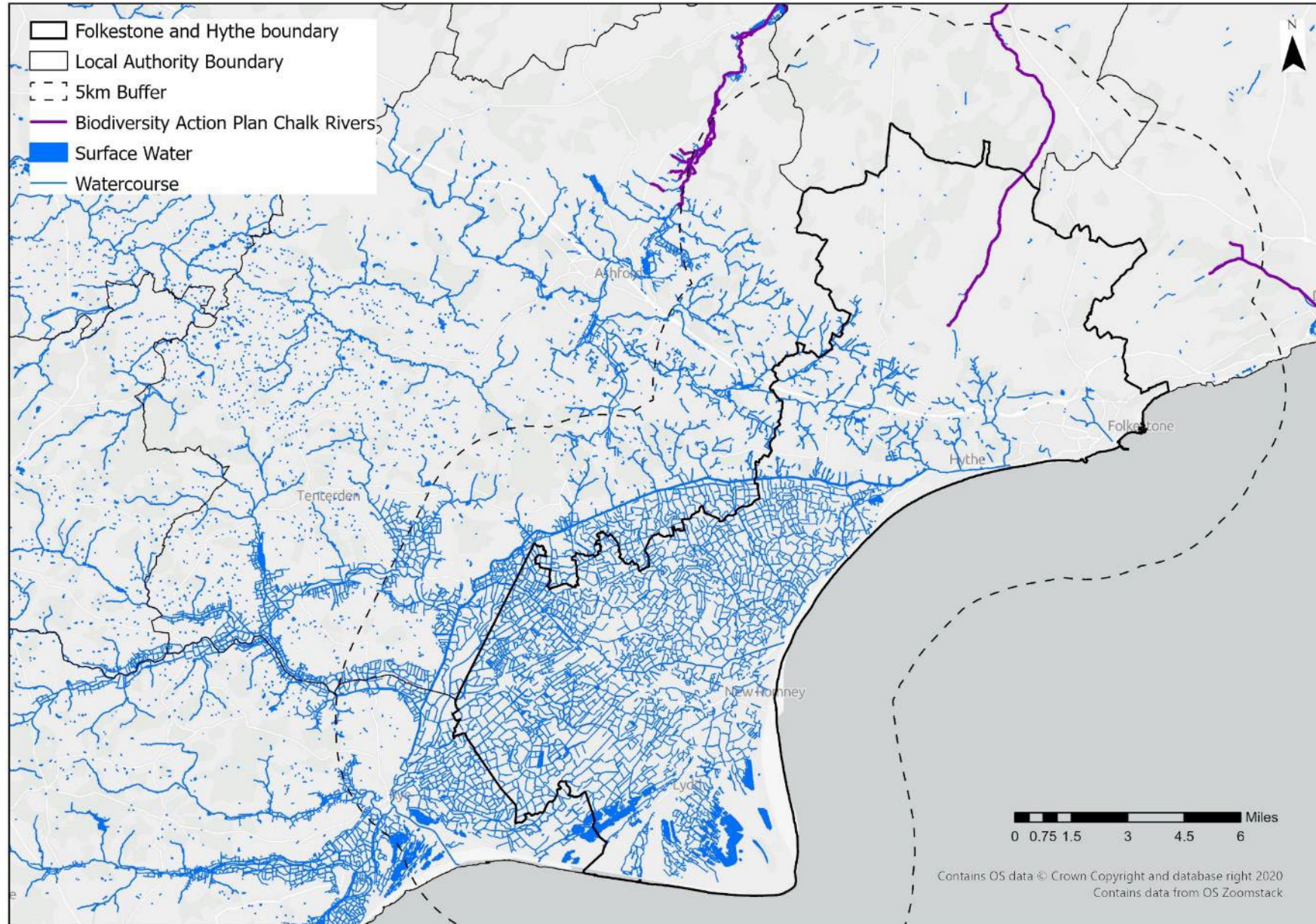
There are also Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in proximity to the district see Plan 17.

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*

## 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.<sup>60</sup> 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.

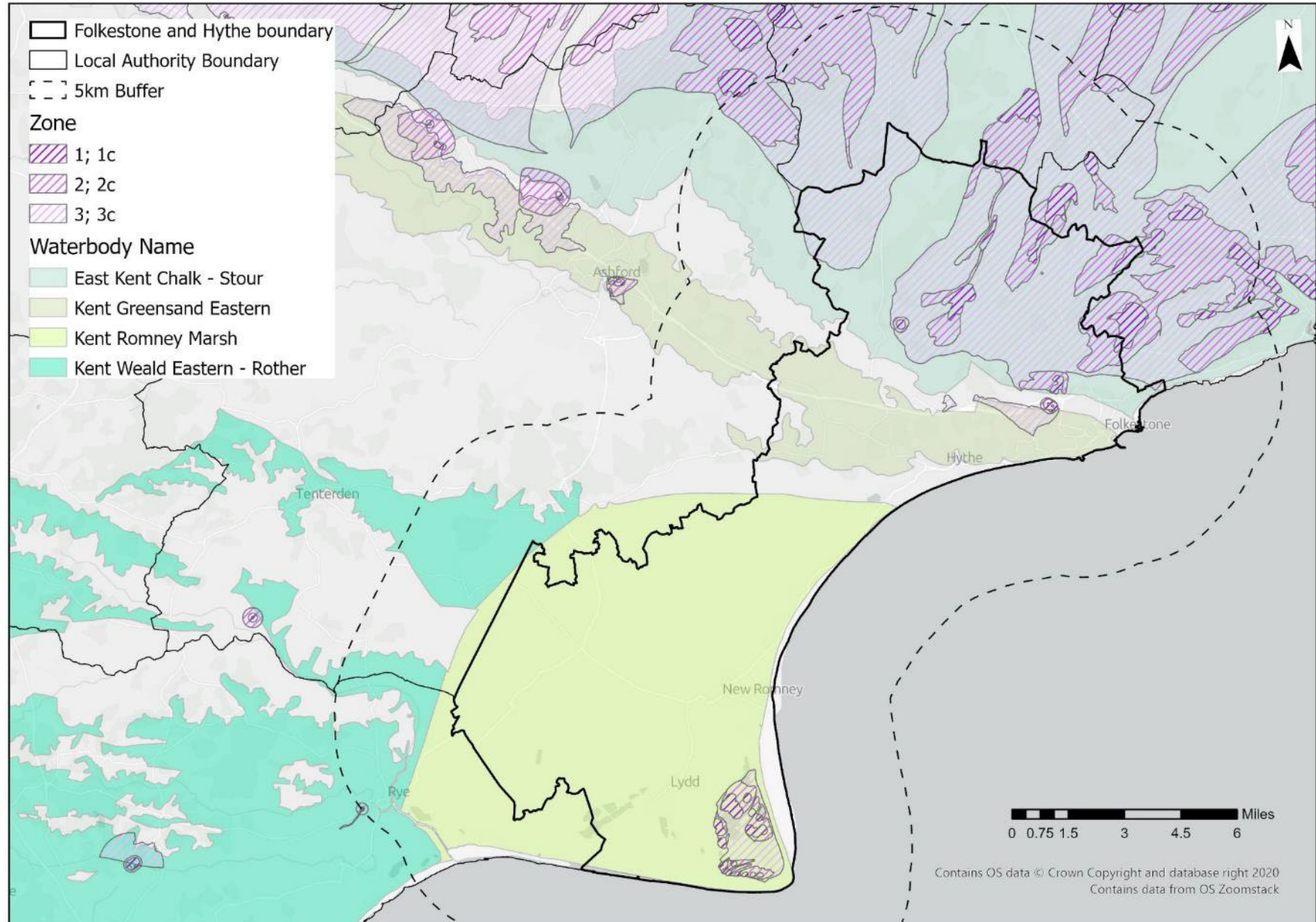
'Flood risk' is defined in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Flood and Coastal Change as *"a combination of the probability and the potential consequences of flooding from all sources – including from rivers and the sea, directly from rainfall on the ground surface and rising groundwater, overwhelmed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

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.

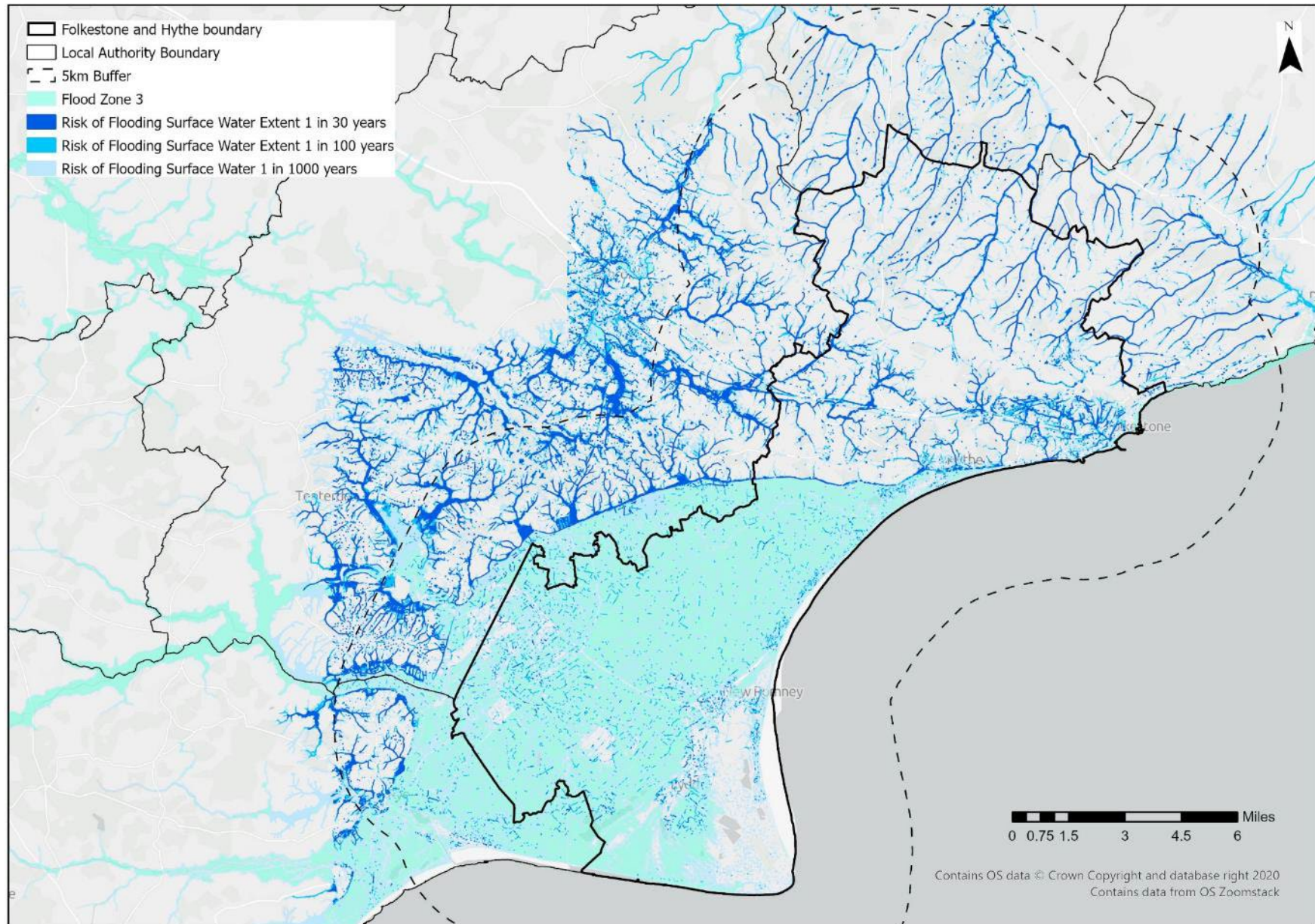
Much of Folkestone and Hythe District is low-lying with approximately 55% lying within the Environment Agency Zone 3a Flood Risk<sup>62</sup> (Plan 20). However, these areas benefit from the protection provided by a diverse range of flood defence infrastructure. Folkestone and Hythe topography varies significantly across the district, with the flat low lying Romney Marsh being below mean water level in many places.<sup>63</sup>

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.<sup>64</sup>

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.<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup>
- 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.

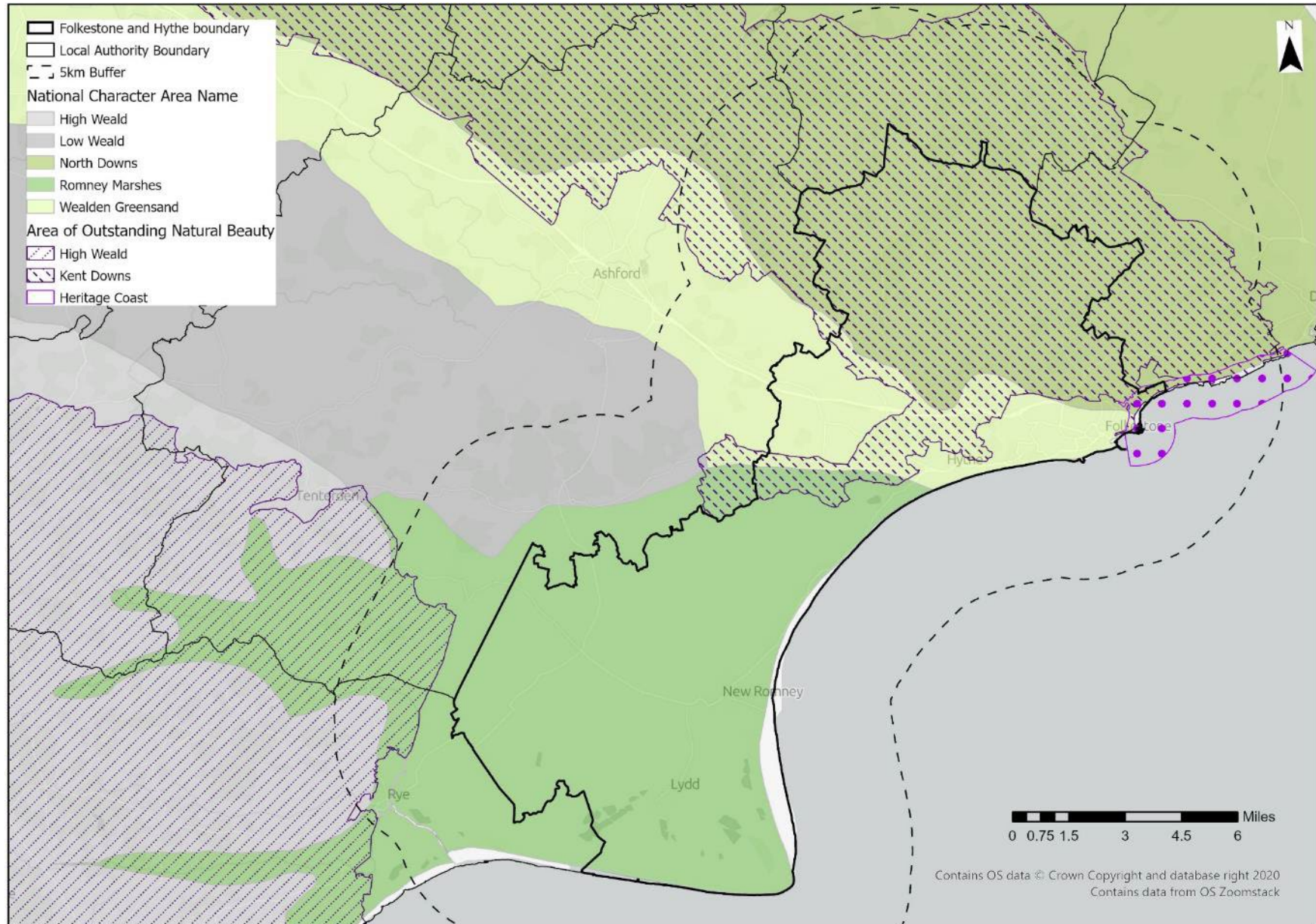
# Landscape Character and Heritage

## 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.



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.<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup>

### 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;<sup>70</sup>
- 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).<sup>71</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup>



## 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.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup>

### 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.<sup>75</sup>

## 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.<sup>76</sup>

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.

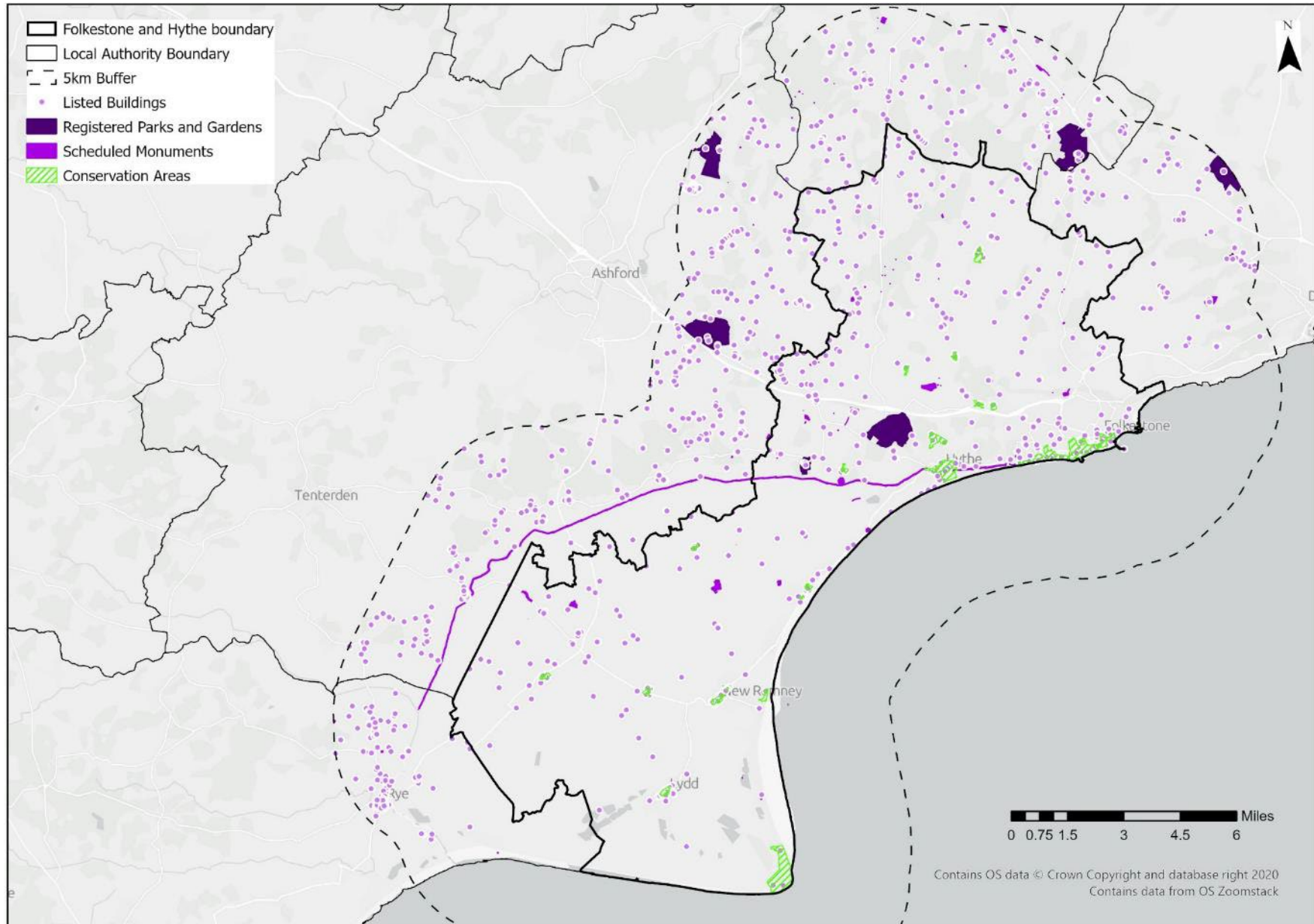
The district also contains an exceptionally rich and varied historic landscape which spans southward from the quintessential rolling Kentish chalk downland to the unique and vegetated shingles of Dungeness. In doing so it crosses the major coastal transport conduit of the Greensand Vale before dropping 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.<sup>77</sup>

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.<sup>78</sup>

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 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in a rise in coastal resort towns and by the 20<sup>th</sup> 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.



Sound Mirrors, Lade

## 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup>

## 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.

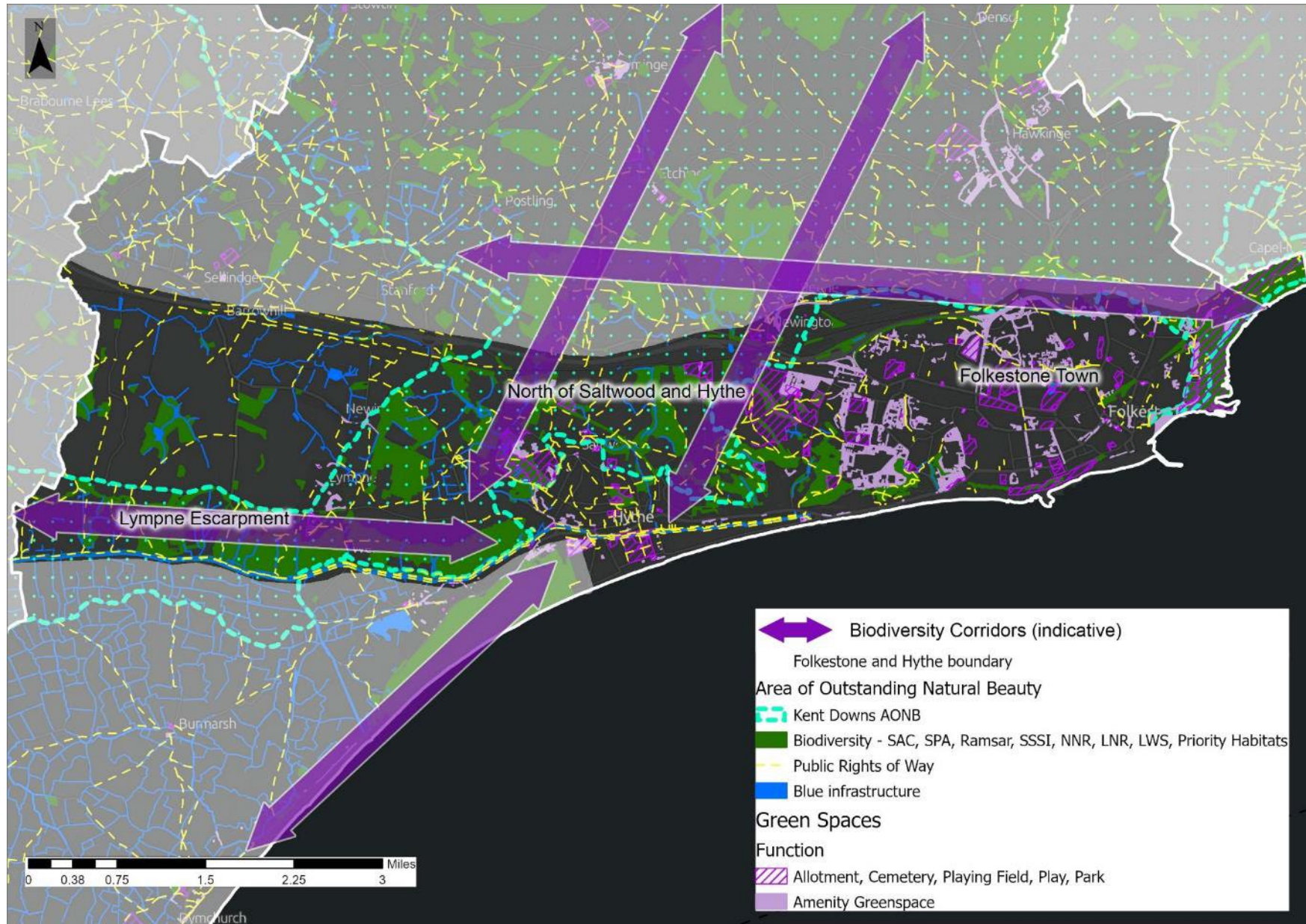
In 2021 consultants produced a "Place Plan" for Folkestone Town Centre. The town centre boundary as defined by Folkestone and Hythe District Council encompasses the historic, cultural and economic hub of the town. The Place Plan area extends beyond the town centre, including some opportunity sites recognised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



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.

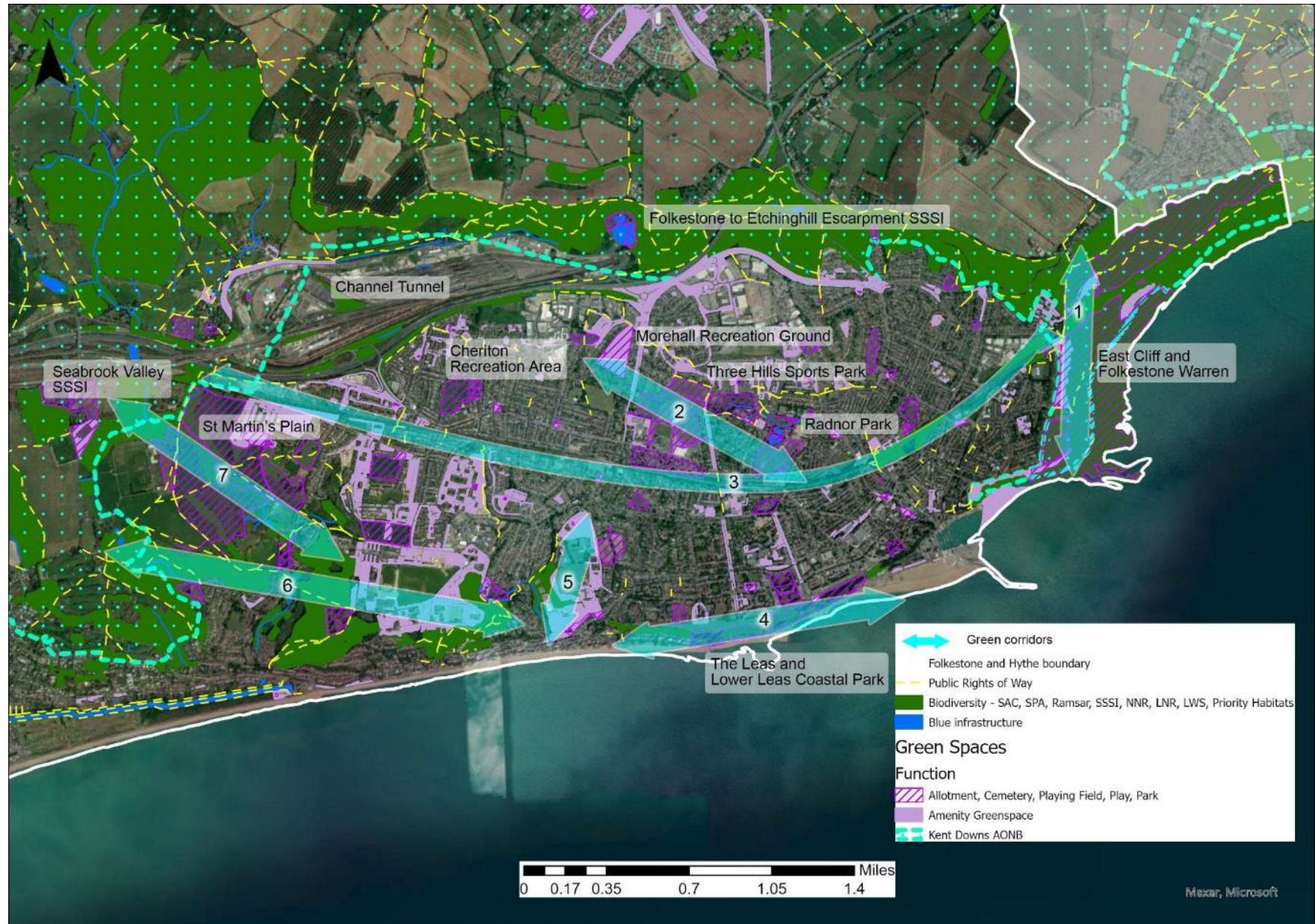
The health of communities in the eastern areas of Folkestone is generally poorer than in the west with some areas showing high levels of health deprivation.

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





## 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.

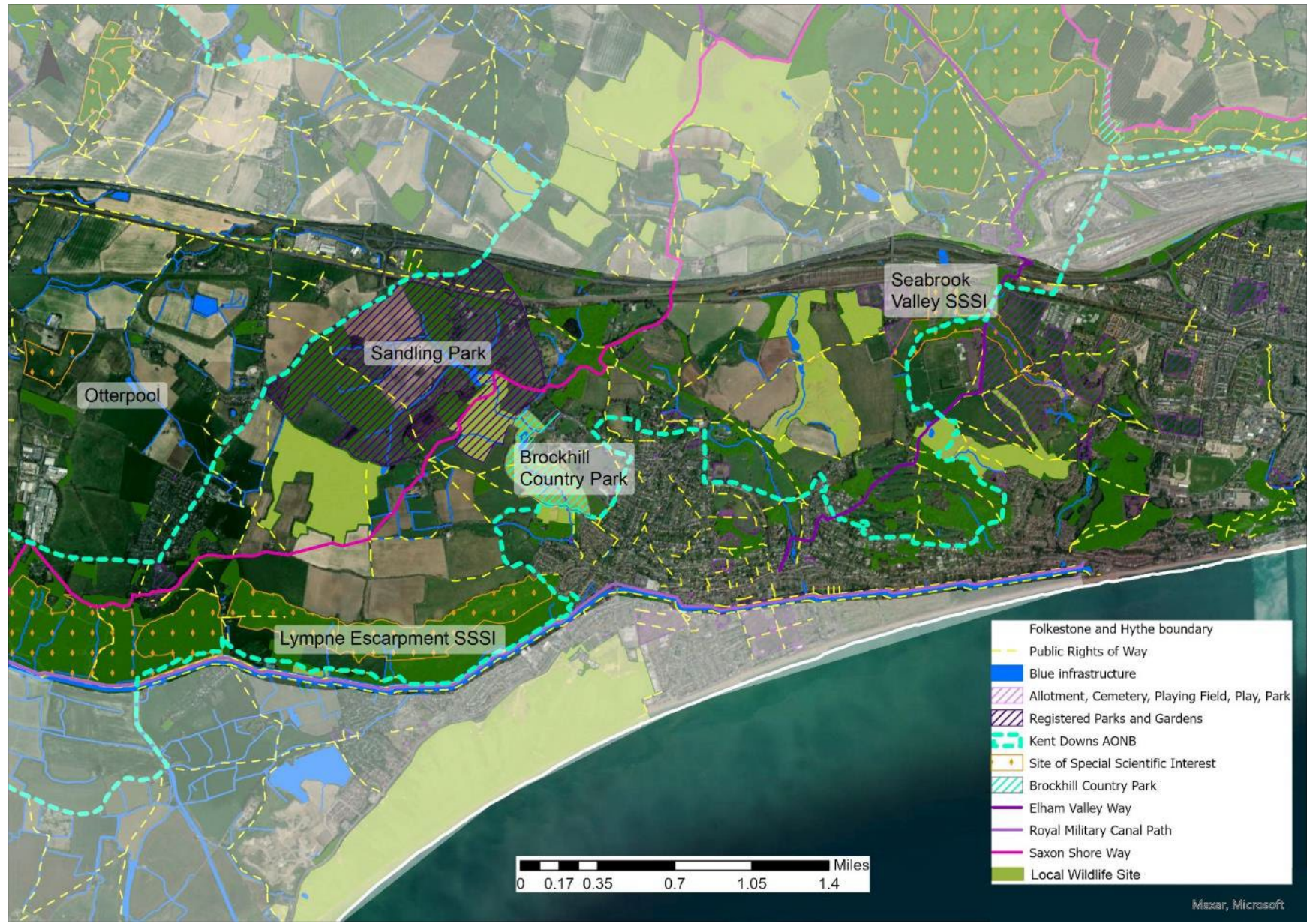
The area is surrounded by urban areas to the east and south, with Otterpool planned along the western edge. This is an important area for recreation for current and future residents, particularly as there are only two access points across the transport corridor in the north. A large, and growing, local 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

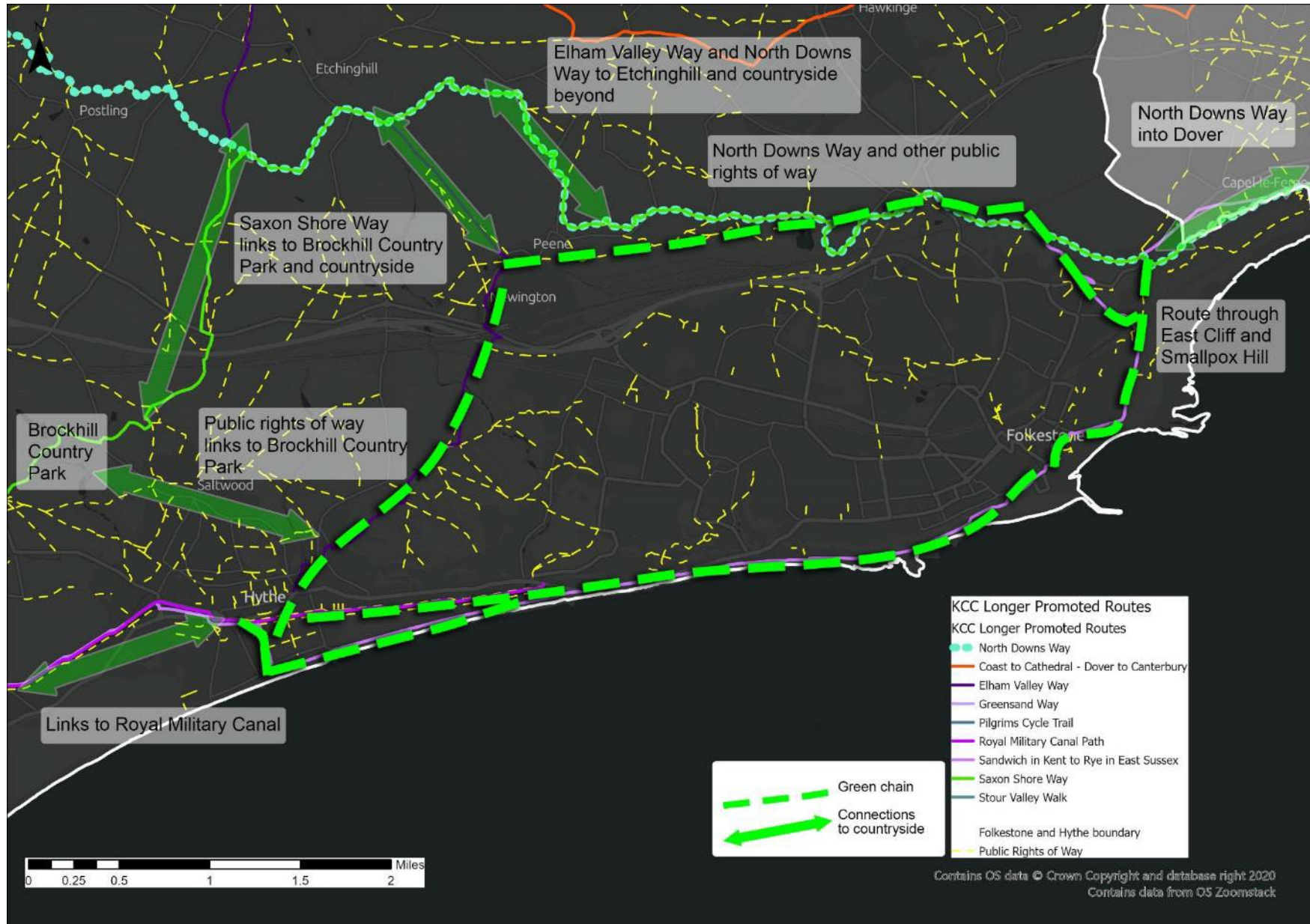


## Priorities for Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

- 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'



## 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.

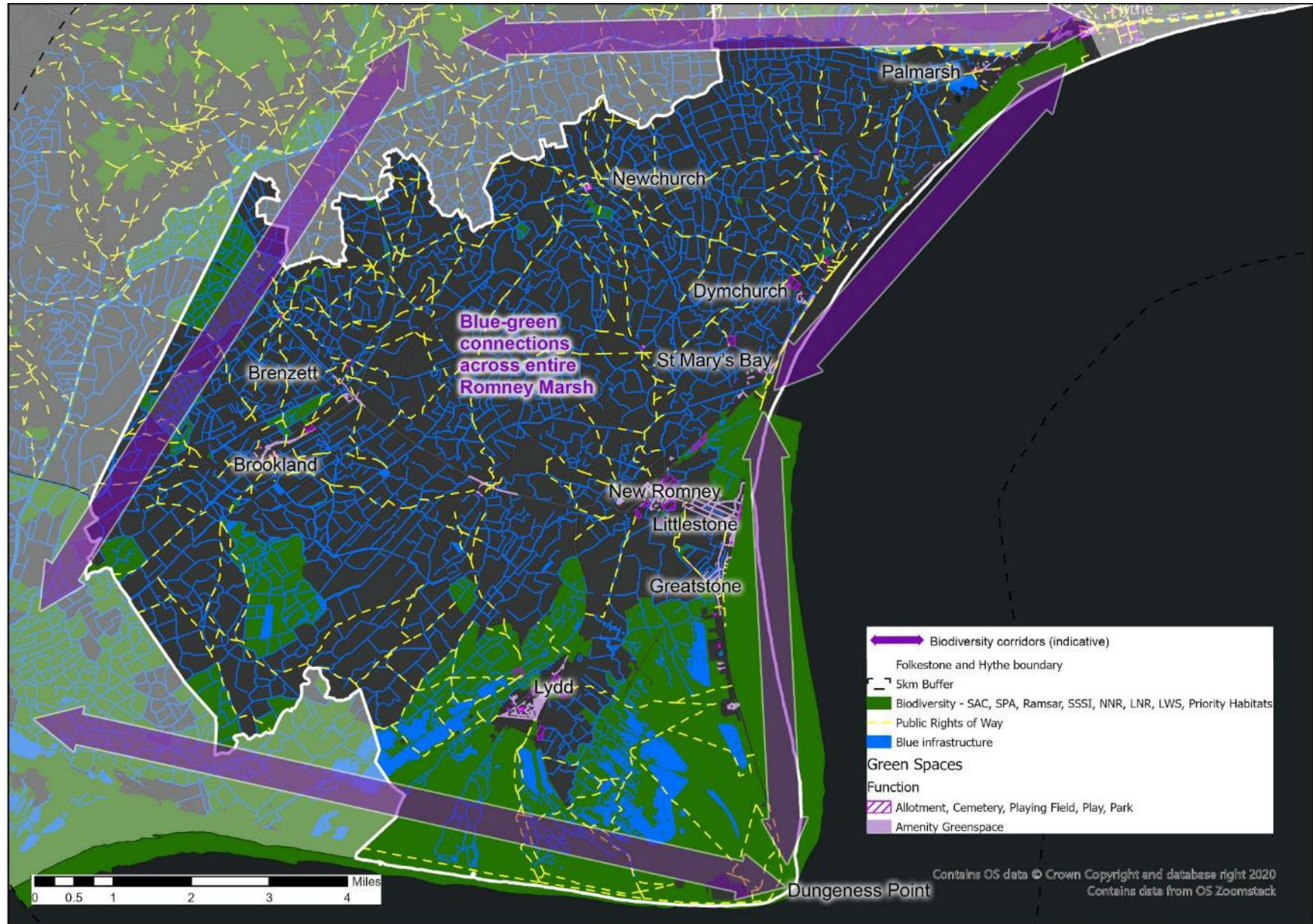
Human land use has had a major role in fashioning the present landscape, through the drainage of marshes, military activity, gravel digging and the construction of sea walls, housing and tourist amenities. Scattered settlements are linked by long, straight, open roads and have a distinctive architectural 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.



Dungeness

Plan 27: Romney Marsh Area





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 visitor's 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 Scheme<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

### 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.<sup>82</sup>



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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<sup>1</sup> 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.”

<sup>2</sup> 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...”

<sup>3</sup> Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30 p14.

<sup>5</sup> Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30 p15.

<sup>6</sup> Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30 p27.

<sup>7</sup> Core Strategy Review -Submission Draft – 2020 p35.

<sup>8</sup> Core Strategy Review - Submission Draft – 2020 p125.

<sup>9</sup> Core Strategy Review - Submission Draft – 2020 p129.

<sup>10</sup> Core Strategy Review - Submission Draft – 2020 p135.

<sup>11</sup> Designations overlap so figures should not be totalled.

<sup>12</sup> Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA.

<sup>13</sup> Dungeness SAC.

<sup>14</sup> Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay (Ramsar).

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> Kent Habitat Survey (2012).

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

<sup>19</sup> The district has 12.2% of Kent’s reedbeds.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> Sensitive management around sites to help protect them and increase biodiversity.

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

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> Kent Nature Partnership, 2015.

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

<sup>33</sup> • 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.

<sup>34</sup> Kent Nature Partnership. (2020). Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045.

<sup>35</sup> The predecessor organisation of Natural England.

<sup>36</sup> 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.

<sup>37</sup> Apart from being closed overnight, or a parking charge applying.

<sup>38</sup> 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.

<sup>39</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy - pp 29 – 30.

<sup>40</sup> SARMS report 2017 p10.

<sup>41</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy 2017 p76.

<sup>42</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy - 2017 p52.

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

<sup>44</sup> [www.explorekent.org](http://www.explorekent.org)

<sup>45</sup> [www.kentconnected.org](http://www.kentconnected.org)

<sup>46</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028.

<sup>47</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028.

<sup>48</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028 p3.

<sup>49</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028 p6 and 7.

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

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

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

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

<sup>54</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2017). Shepway Open Spaces Strategy. p13.

<sup>55</sup> 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.

<sup>56</sup> '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/>

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

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

<sup>59</sup> PHE Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020 p14.

<sup>60</sup> Environment Agency. (2021). Water Stressed Areas – Final Classification 2021.

<sup>61</sup> NPPG, Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 7-002-20140306

<sup>62</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

<sup>63</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

<sup>64</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

<sup>65</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

<sup>66</sup> 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.

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

<sup>68</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 123 The Romney Marshes.

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

<sup>70</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 123 The Romney Marshes.

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<sup>72</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 120 Wealden Greensand.

<sup>73</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 119 The North Downs.

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

<sup>75</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 119 The North Downs.

<sup>76</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p5.

<sup>77</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p9.

<sup>78</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p22.

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

<sup>80</sup> <https://fifthcontinent.org.uk/>

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