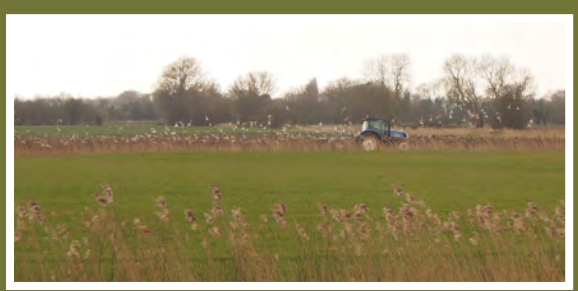


ROMNEY MARSH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

For The
Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership
and
Shepway District Council

FINAL REPORT
April 2016

Prepared by
Fiona Fyfe Associates

FIONA FYFE Associates Ltd.

www.fionafyfe.co.uk

Folkestone Hythe & Romney Marsh Shepway District Council

Kent wildlife Trust

Far away, in the south-east corner of Kent is the Romney Marsh. A flat, sheep-nibbled kingdom with oak posts and rails, and windswept salty churches.

John Betjeman

A note on terminology:

There are actually a number of marshes within the Landscape Partnership Scheme area, including Walland Marsh in the west, Denge Marsh in the south and Romney Marsh in the east. Romney Marsh has given its name to the wider area. In this report, the term 'Romney Marsh' should be taken to include the entire area. The local names to distinguish smaller areas of marsh are reflected in the names of Landscape Character Areas, one of which is 'Romney Marsh Proper'.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Brian Harper for preparing the maps in this report, and Robin Lines for his assistance with the fieldwork. Thanks are also due to the client team at Kent Wildlife Trust and Shepway Council for their advice and support throughout the project.

All photos in this report have been taken by Fiona Fyfe

CONTENTS

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

CONTENTS Continued

LIST OF MAPS

Fig. 1: Ploughing near Snargate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Romney Marsh Landscape Character Assessment* was commissioned by Kent Wildlife Trust (for the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership) and Shepway District Council in February 2016. It was carried out by Fiona Fyfe Associates between February and April 2016, and will inform both the Fifth Continent *Landscape Conservation Action Plan* and Shepway's forthcoming *Places and Policies Local Plan.*

The Landscape Partnership Scheme area includes Dungeness and the coastal settlements, as well as extensive areas of drained farmland and several marshland villages. The northern and western boundaries follow the Royal Military Canal and the River Rother, and the southern and eastern boundaries follow the high water mark along the coast. The majority of land within the Landscape Partnership boundary is within Shepway District (Kent), but it also includes land within Ashford District (Kent) and Rother District (Sussex).

Romney Marsh is a unique landscape with a very strong sense of place. It has been (and continues to be) shaped by both dynamic natural coastal process and human attempts to control the coastal environment. The character of today's landscape reflects different phases of coastal reclamation from Saxon times until the 20th Century, summarised in Part 1 of this document. Romney Marsh is a flat, expansive, wind-swept landscape with big skies and constantly changing patterns of light. The distinctive church towers form landmarks on the horizon, along with more recent features such as lighthouses and Dungeness nuclear power station. The landscape contains features from its rich history of land reclamation and drainage, sheep farming, military innovation and defence, power generation, settlement, trade and tourism.

Dungeness is recognised as being internationally-important for its extensive shingle habitats and the rare plant and bird species which it supports. This is reflected in the concentration of designations which cover the Dungeness area. Other national designations include a large SSSI covering much of the surviving grazing marsh, and a series of Scheduled Monuments, many of which are military sites from the 19th and 20th Centuries. A small part of Romney Marsh is included within the boundary of the Kent Downs AONB.

Great changes have taken place on the Romney Marsh landscape in recent decades, the most noticeable being the ploughing of vast areas of sheep pasture for arable agriculture during and following WW2. Some unprotected landscape features (for example lookers' (i.e. shepherds') huts) are now being lost at a rapid rate, often through simple neglect. The Landscape Partnership aims to redress this through a series of projects aimed at raising local awareness of the importance and value of the local landscape, and providing practical means for its enhancement. Through the planning system, Shepway District Council also aims to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscapes of Romney Marsh.

This Landscape Character Assessment has been carried out in line with current best practise guidance from Natural England: *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*, 2014. The starting point for the assessment was the *Landscape Assessment of Kent* (Jacobs Babtie, 2004) which is an adopted planning document. After extensive desk studies and fieldwork, the Kent Landscape Character Area (LCA) boundaries were amended to reflect landscape changes which have taken place since 2004; Kent LCAs which were too large for the required scale of assessment were sub-divided, and Kent LCAs were merged where a single LCA was found to be more appropriate. The Kent LCA boundaries were extended into Sussex, and one new LCA was identified within the Sussex part of the area.

Eight Landscape Character Areas were identified within the Landscape Partnership Scheme area, reflecting the various phases of land reclamation, and the distinctive natural, cultural and perceptual qualities of the landscape. These are described in a series of profiles within Part 2 of this document.

Fig. 2: Dungeness

Fig. 3: Fairfield Church, with photography group

PART 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Commissioning and Objectives

1.1.1 This project was commissioned in February 2016 by Kent Wildlife Trust (as co-ordinators of the *Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership*) and Shepway District Council. It was completed between February and April 2016 by Fiona Fyfe Associates, with assistance from Robin Lines. The project has two purposes. Firstly it will inform the *Fifth Continent Landscape and Conservation Action Plan* to be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme Second Round funding application. Secondly it will form part of the Evidence Base for the forthcoming Shepway District *Places and Policies Local Plan*.

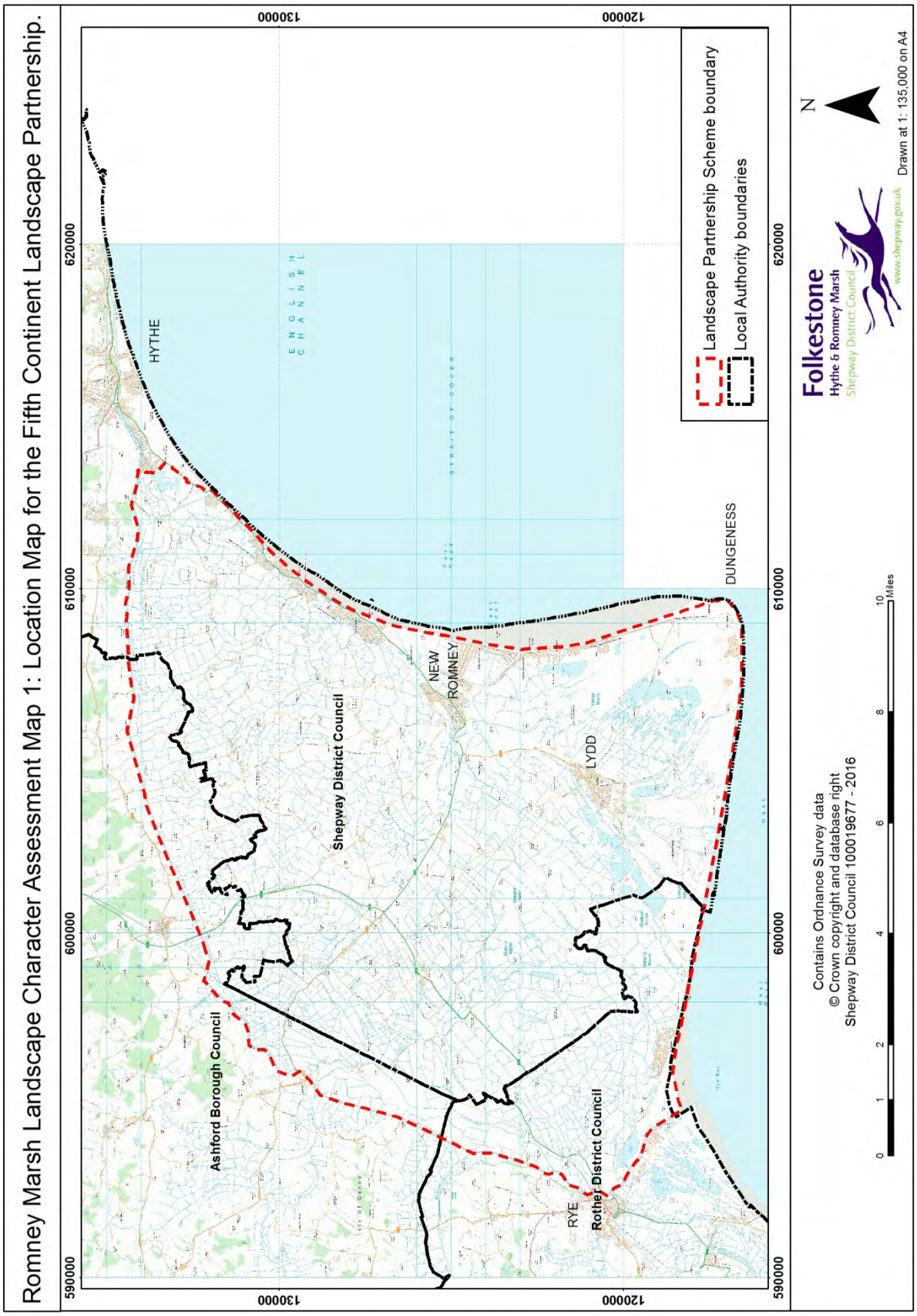
1.2 Format of Report

1.2.1 The report is set out in two parts. Following this introductory section, Part 1 describes the story of the Romney Marsh landscape, the landscape designations within the area, and the forces for change which are affecting the landscape. Part 2 contains the Landscape Character Assessment. This begins with a summary of the landscape character context and the methodology used for this study. The results of the landscape character assessment process are presented as a map, and a series of profiles (one for each of the eight Landscape Character Areas). Each profile contains a section on location and context, summary description, key characteristics, natural and cultural influences and sites, visual and perceptual qualities, forces for change and recommendations for landscape enhancement. Appendix A contains a list of acronyms used in this report. Appendix B contains references and sources of further information, and Appendix C contains relevant extracts from the 2004 Landscape Assessment of Kent.

1.3 The Study Area

1.3.1 Romney Marsh is a unique and very distinctive place. Its flat landform and huge skies give the feel of 'a world apart'. This was summed-up by the Rev. R. Barham, writing as Thomas Ingoldsby, when he wrote '*The World, according to the best geographers, is divided into Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Romney Marsh*' (from *The Ingoldby Legends, 1840s).* Since then, Romney Marsh has been referred to as 'The Fifth Continent'. It is a rich historic, cultural and natural environment, which has evolved out of people's attempts to control a dynamic coastal environment over several centuries. However, huge changes have taken place on Romney Marsh in recent decades, and traditional features of the landscape which contribute to its character are under threat from a wide range of factors.

1.3.2 The boundaries of the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) enclose an area of 242km^2. The northern and western boundaries follow the Royal Military Canal and the river Rother, and the southern and eastern boundaries follow the high water mark along the coast. The area includes Dungeness and the coastal settlements, as well as extensive areas of drained farmland. The majority of land within the Landscape Partnership boundary is within Shepway District, but it also includes land within Ashford District (Kent) and Rother District (Sussex). The LPS boundary and the District boundaries are shown on *Map 1.*



Map 1: Location Map for the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership.

1.4 Approach and European Context

1.4.1 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) was ratified by the UK in 2006. It defines 'landscape' as *An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors.* An holistic approach to landscape is a key principle of the thinking behind the ELC, which acknowledges:

- That landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity...
- That landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures...
- That the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality.
- That developments...planning...and infrastructure are in many cases accelerating the transformation of landscapes.
- That the landscape is a key element of individual and social wellbeing and that its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone...

1.4.2 This holistic approach to landscape, encompassing its natural, cultural and perceptual factors is reflected in this document, and in the way that Landscape Character Areas have been assessed and described. As well as being in accordance with the European Landscape Convention, this document is also in line with Best Practice Guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment, namely:

- *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002)
- *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment,* (Natural England, Oct. 2014)

1.4.3 Further detail on the approach and methodology used in this Landscape Character Assessment is provided in Section 5.0.

Fig. 4: Brief history of Dungeness Lighthouses, by Andy Holyer

Reproduced from Life on Marsh by Andy Holyer and Niko Miaoulis (2008), p.51.

2.0 THE STORY OF THE ROMNEY MARSH LANDSCAPE

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The story of the Romney Marsh landscape is one of interaction between people and a changing natural environment, over several thousand years. Natural dynamics such as shingle movement, sea level changes and severe storms have all had big impacts on the formation of today's landscape. Sometimes these natural changes have aided people's attempts to exploit and control their environment, and at other times they have hindered it. This section outlines the natural processes, and people's actions to control their environment, which have helped to shape the landscape which we see today.

2.2 Geological Origins and Coastal Processes

2.2.1 Fundamental to the existence of Romney Marsh was (and remains) a supply of shingle. This shingle has its origins in the last ice age, when chalk bedrock was alternately warmed and frozen, causing it to break up and release the flint nodules within it. These were then washed down hillsides by rivers and melting snow, and eventually ended up on the bed of the English Channel. From here they were carried by the sea, and formed into mobile barriers along the coast. Such shingle barriers have three key phases of development. In the case of Romney Marsh, the first phase (in the prehistoric period) was the rapid evolution of a shingle barrier which stretched from near Fairlight (on the western side of Rye Bay) to Dymchurch. In the second phase, (in the medieval period) the shingle was consolidated and the shingle promontory and 'sink' of Dungeness began to develop. The ridges of shingle which can be seen clearly at Dungeness represent former beaches which have been fossilised in the landscape. We are currently in the third stage, where shingle is no longer being replenished and the barrier has been breached in several locations, necessitating the construction of artificial sea walls. At the same time, the shingle ness and surviving sections of the shingle barrier remain dynamic features, with waves transporting shingle along the coast by the process of longshore drift.

2.2.2 The presence of the first phase shingle barrier enabled a sheltered tidal lagoon to develop on the landward side. A gradual process of silting took place as sedimentary material was deposited by the sea. Eventually, a sufficient thickness of sediment had accumulated for salt marsh to form around the edges of the lagoon.

2.2.3 In the river valleys (such as the Rother), rising sea levels meant that rivers could no longer drain properly, and the valleys became waterlogged. Fen carr vegetation developed (dominated by alder trees) and was present for approx. 3000 years. Accumulations of decayed vegetation formed peat deposits, and were subsequently 'sealed' by sediments layers laid down above them. The waterlogged conditions excluded air so the peat deposits survived.

Fig. 5: Ongoing movement of shingle at Dungeness

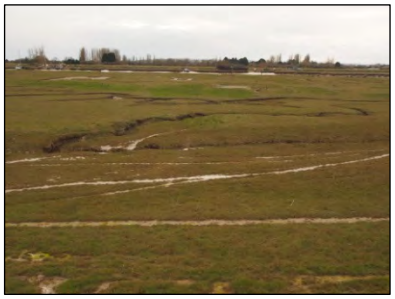


Fig. 6: Salt marsh along the margins of the River Rother

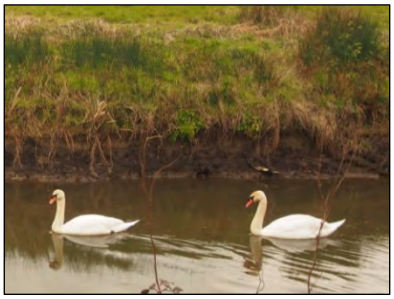


Fig. 7: Peat deposits revealed in a water channel

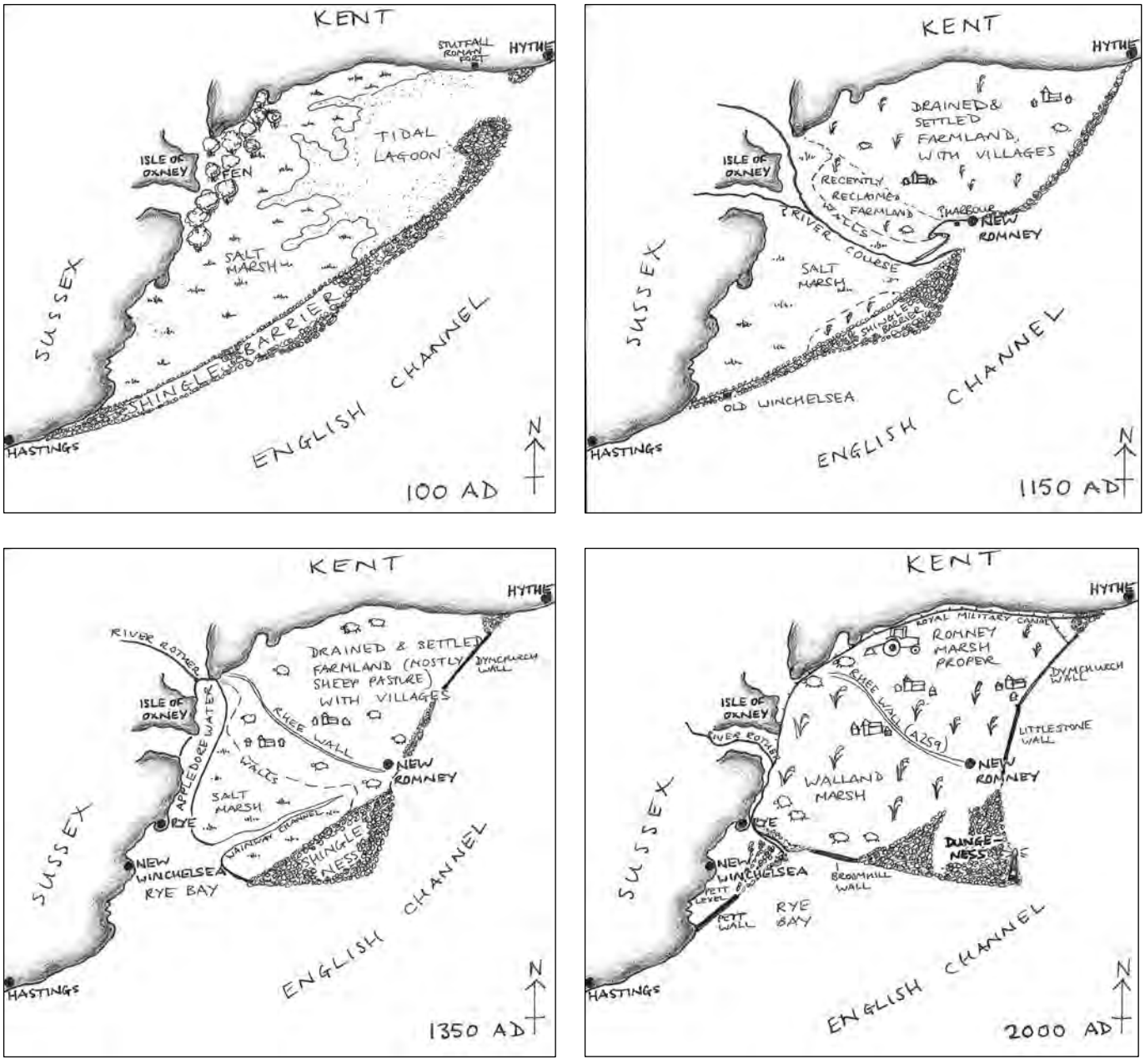


Fig. 8: Indicative sketch maps showing likely changes in coastal features, and phases of enclosure of Romney Marsh Cartography by Fiona Fyfe

2.3 Prehistoric and Roman

2.3.1 At this time, the shingle barrier stretched from Fairlight to roughly where Dymchurch is today. Inland of the barrier was a tidal lagoon of sand and mud flats, surrounded by salt marsh. Fen vegetation occurred in the river valleys at the western end of the area. The shoreline was located near the present day escarpment, with the scarp forming the coastal cliffs.

2.3.2 A hoard of early Bronze-Age axe heads where found in a quarry near Lydd during extraction works. The axe heads are of a type which originated in Ireland, and have also been found in mainland Europe. Therefore it is possible that the shingle spit was a trading post on a sea-trade route between Britain and the Continent.

2.3.3 The quarries have also revealed flint axe heads, evidence of hearths and flint tool making/ repair, and pottery dating to 2000BC. The evidence suggests temporary hunting camps on the landward side of the shingle barrier, presumably associated with hunting on adjacent marshes. Evidence of Iron-Age occupation has also been found nearby, including pottery, evidence of timber structures and butchered whale remains.

2.3.4 Evidence for early-Roman salt-working and occupation has also been found behind the shingle barrier in the Lydd quarries, as well as around Dymchurch. Roman material has also been found around the edges of the tidal lagoon behind the shingle barrier, which would have been a good location for salt production. Roman finds include pottery, rubbish, a glass cremation urn and lots of fragile pottery known as briquetage which is part of the salt-making process. Again, the evidence suggests seasonal camps rather than permanent settlement, and they appear to have been inundated by rising sea levels by the end of the 2nd Century AD.

2.3.5 The Roman Fort at Stutfall, on the escarpment behind Romney Marsh, was one of the 'Saxon Shore' forts, commanded by the 'Court of the Saxon Shore'. When it was constructed it would have been on the coast, but is now approx. 1.5 miles from the sea. It was constructed between 270-280AD, and abandoned c. 250AD. It has subsequently been largely destroyed by landslips.

2.4 Saxon and Early Medieval

2.4.1 Rising sea levels in late Roman times led to the tidal lagoon and salt marshes behind the shingle barrier being swamped by the sea. The sea deposited layers of fertile sediment which accumulated, causing the level of the 'land' to gradually rise. It gradually became salt marsh, crossed by sinuous creeks, which was only covered by the highest tides. Eventually it became vegetated and suitable for summer grazing. The shallow tidal creeks silted up and the land became suitable for year-round occupation.

2.4.2 This natural process of land rising and drying-out was assisted by human interventions. To drain coastal land (a process known locally as 'inning') it is necessary to prevent sea water getting in, and also to enable the fresh water to escape to the sea. The natural creeks were a key part of this process. They were cleared and used as freshwater drainage channels, with vegetation and soil dug out from the creek deposited on the adjacent banks to create a dam against the sea. The banks (known as 'walls') were used as causeways to cross the wet marsh, and have eventually become today's tarmacked roads with their convoluted shapes. A network of smaller ditches drained the fields and ran into the larger channels (known as 'sewers') controlled by sluices. The drained area

gradually extended, with walls remaining even though they were no longer acting as sea walls. By the Domesday survey in 1086, most of Romney Marsh Proper (east of the Rhee Wall) was permanently occupied, most of the present-day villages were established, and large settlements existed at New Romney and Lydd.

2.4.3 Because the main drainage channels were difficult to cross, they also became the property boundaries of the Saxon estates which owned land on the Marsh. Surviving documentary records show that some of the estates were owned by religious establishments, and others by manors which already owned land elsewhere. In the 9th Century many of these estate boundaries became the parish boundaries, and each estate paid its tithes to its parish priest. The process of parish formation is still apparent in today's regularly-spaced villages and winding parish boundaries. Churches were constructed roughly in the centre of each parish, initially of wood and later rebuilt in stone. The churches are generally constructed on 'islands' of higher land, and surrounded by a ring ditch. The churches remain prominent and distinctive features in today's landscape.

2.4.4 Other Saxon documents describe battles and raids which refer to 'The Marsh' as a well-known land area. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes a Viking raid in 838 when '*Herebryht the alderman was killed by heathen men and many men with him in the Marsh*.'

Fig. 9: Stutfall Castle Roman Fort, as seen from Botolph's Bridge

Fig. 10: Sinuous curves on Ham Mill Lane, which also forms part of the parish boundary between Brenzett and Warehorne, and the boundary between Shepway and Ashford Districts

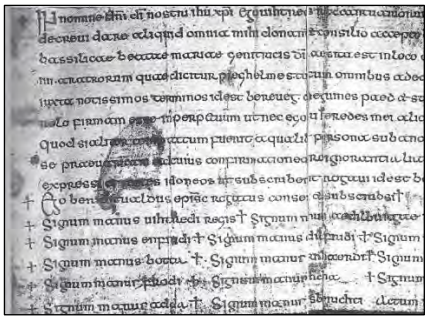


Fig. 11: The Rumining Seta charter of c.696. Whitred King of Kent gives an area of pasture near Dymchurch to a minster church at Lyminge. Reproduced from Eddison (2000) p. 55

2.4.5 Coastal processes continued, and by 791AD the shingle barrier had been breached to the east of New Romney. This allowed an inlet to flow up to New Romney and the town developed first as a fishing village and then as a port. New Romney became a Cinque Port, and had its own mint. Following the Battle of Hastings, William the Conqueror secured New Romney on his way to Dover.

2.4.6 By 1100AD the area known as Romney Marsh Proper was already densely settled and prosperous. The density of settlement is reflected in the relative proximity of the villages, density of the road network and small sizes of the fields. This was a time of population expansion, and it became necessary to increase the area of drained marsh to support the growing population. This process took place around the edges of the marsh, to the south of Romney Marsh Proper, and also around Lydd and at Broomhill near Camber. The process of inning was systematic, creating a series of straight ditches with parallel roads leading down towards the marsh. At the marsh end, a series of sea walls were constructed, which connected together to become the 'Great Wall'. Some new

parishes (e.g. Brookland and Fairfield) were established, but generally the land was divided in 'slices' between existing parishes. Linear parish boundaries provided each parish with a share of farmland and marshland resources. The regular, linear patterns created can still be seen in today's landscape around Brookland. The similar enclosures around Broomhill and Lydd were subsequently lost when the area was inundated by the sea, but evidence for them has been found through archaeological excavation.

2.4.7 In the early 12th Century, the tidal inlet which served the harbour at New Romney began to silt up. In order to try and save the harbour, the Rhee Wall watercourse was constructed. This earthwork carried water (controlled by sluices) across the Marsh in order to scour the harbour. It was a major engineering project, but was not successful. The inlet gradually silted up, becoming a shallow bay, and New Romney became stranded inland. The Rhee Wall is now followed by the A2070 for much of its length, and it remains a major feature in the landscape.

Fig. 12: Earthworks of the Rhee wall near Appledore Station

Fig. 13: The Rhee Wall followed by the A2070

Fig. 14: New Romney church doorway, reflecting the wealth of the town in the 12th Century.

2.5 The Great Storm of 1287 and its Aftermath

2.5.1 The Great Storm of 1287 was one of several extreme weather events in the 13th Century where high spring tides combined with onshore gales. Sea water percolating through the shingle barrier caused a number of breaches to occur, resulting in sea water flooding large areas of the Marsh.

2.5.2 The most dramatic event was the breaking down of the barrier across Rye Bay. This process had been taking place for some time, as the town of Old Winchelsea, which had been located on the barrier, was abandoned and replaced with the hilltop town of New Winchelsea before the Great Storm struck. Following the Great Storm of 1287, Walland Marsh was flooded up to the Great Wall, and the Wainway Channel, which had flowed from west to east across Walland Marsh changed direction and started to flow from east to west, into the River Rother. Following the storm, most of the area to the south and west of the Great Wall remained tidal.

2.5.3 A further breach occurred near Dymchurch, where the shingle barrier was so disintegrated that it became necessary to supplement it with artificial sea defences. The Dymchurch Wall was first constructed in 1288, following the Great Storm. It was initially constructed of stakes, brushwood and clay, and was faced with stone in the 19th Century and then concrete in the 21st Century.

2.5.4 Following the need for artificial sea defences, a co-operative system was devised to pay for them. This was written down as '*the Laws and Customs of Romney Marsh'*, and was subsequently copied in other low-lying areas of Britain. Payment was required in 'scots', with the number of scots payable dependent on the area of land owned.

Fig. 15: The Midley Wall (part of the Great Wall) looking north-west. On the right is the regular linear pattern of the 11th Century extension to the drained area. On the left is the former salt marsh of Walland Marsh. The sea is likely to have reached this point in 1287. The ground is higher on the left due to silt which accumulated whilst this area was tidal until its reclamation in the 15th Century.

2.6 The Late Medieval and Post-Medieval Periods

2.6.1 Following the Great Storm of 1287, it is likely that the area suffered from the population decline which appears to have occurred across the country, caused by a series of weather-related poor harvests and exacerbated by the Black Death. Consequently, land lost in the 13th Century storms was not reclaimed quickly, and the reduced population meant that much of Romney Marsh was allowed to grass over and become sheep pasture (which it remained until the mid – 20th Century). However, despite the loss of population, payment of scots, and maintenance of the Dymchurch Wall continued. Most of the villages remained, although some, including Broomhill and Midley, were lost. The tower of Midley church remains.

2.6.2 When the process of land reclamation started again in the 15th Century, land was reclaimed as pasture rather than arable land or for settlement. It was inned using the old technique of utilising salt marsh creeks as drainage channels, creating large, irregular-shaped fields. It was a gradual process, with some land gained, lost and reclaimed, but by about 1600, walls were constructed and the sea was shut out from most of Walland Marsh.

Fig. 16: Midley church remains a feature in the landscape

Fig. 17: Traditional cottage near Brookland

Fig. 18: Extract from a map of 1572 showing ships anchored in 'channel up toward Broomhill called the Camber'. Reproduced from Eddison (2000) p. 126

2.6.3 In the 14th and 15th Centuries, The River Rother and the Wainway channel were used as anchorages for shipping, including ships massing ready to cross the channel in the 100 Years War. Rye rose to prominence as a port in the 16th Century, but lost most of its trade following loss of English control over French cities in northern France. The Rye area was also important for shipbuilding, with Henry VIII's warships constructed in the Rother valley north of the Isle of Oxney, and floated down Appledore Water (A wide tidal inlet which extended between Appledore and the coast). Up until the early 16th Century, the river Rother flowed to the north of the Isle of Oxney. However, in 1635 the dam which held the river's course was intentionally breached, and the river Rother flowed south of the Isle of Oxney, through Wintersham Level.

2.6.4 In the 1620s, attempts were made to drain the low-lying area known as 'The Dowels' between Appledore, Snargate and Fairfield. One elaborate scheme involved 5.5 miles of walls, artificial drainage channels and an access road. Written records of the project survive, but the scheme was abandoned after storms in 1627. Part of the problem of draining this area of the Marsh was the presence of peat close to the surface. Once exposed or saturated it swelled and rose, blocking drainage channels and sluices.

2.7 The Nineteenth Century

2.7.1 Sheep farming remained the main land use across Romney Marsh throughout the 19th Century, and the settlement pattern remained largely unchanged.

2.7.2 The start of the 19th Century saw an increased threat of invasion from Napoleon, and Romney Marsh was particularly vulnerable. A range of defences were constructed, including Lade Fort (on the coast near Lydd-on-Sea), a series of Martello Towers, and the Royal Military Canal. The Martello Towers were circular defensive structures with rooftop mountings for cannon. The Royal Military Canal (constructed between 1804-1806) was a sequence of banks, ditches, roads and towpath (see fig. X). It presented an obstacle to invading armies, but was also an improvement to the drainage system for the area. Water could be pumped 'backwards' into the canal, and then taken to the sea. Initial pumping was by windmills, followed by steam pumps, and (in the 20th Century) diesel and electric pumps. The Royal Military Canal enabled the drainage of the final wet areas of marsh around the Dowels and Appledore Water. Ordnance survey maps from 1820 show that these former wetland areas have been drained by this date. Older pumps and water control structures still survive across Romney Marsh, and many of them are considered by the Romney Marshes Internal Drainage Board to be heritage assets.

2.7.3 In the Mid-19th Century, the railway between Ashford and Hastings via Rye was constructed across the drained wetland on a brushwood raft.

Fig. 19: Martello Tower, Dymchurch

Fig. 20: The Royal Military Canal near Lympne

Fig. 21: Railway line across Romney Marsh

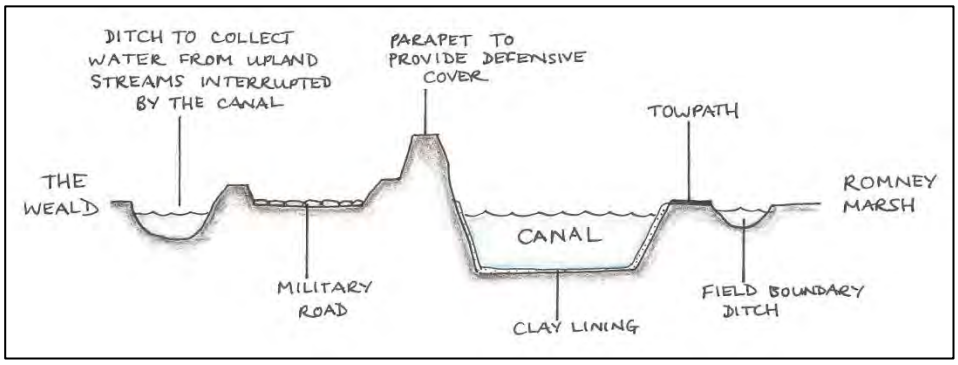


Fig. 22: Cross section of the Royal Military Canal, as constructed. Most of the banks and the military road have now been lost through ploughing.

2.7.4 Coastal processes continued, including the movement of shingle. The ness at Dungeness continued to accumulate shingle and expand eastwards, and the crescent-shaped ridges of stones extending inland are the locations of former beach lines. As the natural coastal protection offered by the shingle barrier diminished, sea walls were constructed and strengthened, including stone-facing of the Dymchurch Wall. Sand movement by wave and wind action also continued, particularly in Rye Bay, where dune systems formed at Camber, and the width of the river mouth decreased. Further inland, the Wainway channel gradually silted up.

2.8 The Twentieth Century Onwards

2.8.1 Coastal defences continued to be constructed in the early 20th Century, including a new section of sea wall which joined Littlestone and Greatstone, across the mouth of the sandy bay which was all that remained of the tidal inlet which had served Romney harbour. This area then became the site of the new Edwardian seaside town. In 1904 a new lighthouse was constructed on Dungeness to replace the earlier *Samuel Wyatt's Tower*. The circular accommodation for lighthouse keepers, which ringed *Samuel Wyatt's Tower* remains. The 1904 lighthouse is still standing, but is now 0.3 miles from the sea due to build-up of shingle, and was replaced by the current lighthouse in 1961. As well as lighthouses, the 19th and early 20th Centuries saw construction of coastguard cottages and lifeboat stations. The sea fishing industry has undergone major changes during this time, declining considerably in the second half of the 20th Century. Several fishing boats and associated equipment such as winches, net boiling ketches and net sheds are abandoned on the shingle beaches.

2.8.2 The isolation of the Dungeness area made it ideal for military activities. Lydd Barracks was established in 1880, and parts of Dungeness remain an active military range. The area is associated with a number of military innovations, including development of Lyddite (a forerunner to dynamite). In the 1920s, pre-radar, 'Sound Mirrors' to detect approaching aircraft were constructed on Dungeness. Dungeness was requisitioned in WW2 and was the location for the PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) project to supply fuel to Allied forces in France. Some of the bungalows in Dungeness were constructed to disguise military installations. A floating 'Mulberry Harbour', used to supply Allied troops in the D-Day landings may be seen off Littlestone-on-Sea at low tide. During WW2, Romney Marsh was in the front line for invasion and many pill boxes remain in the landscape, along with an underground operations base, various gun emplacements and other wartime installations. There are also remains of airfields, including a large hangar on Walland Marsh.

Fig. 23: 1904 lighthouse and earlier cottages, Dungeness. The power station is visible beyond

Fig. 24: Abandoned fishing boats on the beach at Dungeness

Fig. 25: Remains of WW2 hangar on Walland Marsh

2.8.3 WW2 also led to the greatest change in the Romney Marsh landscape for centuries- the ploughing of sheep pasture for arable use. In 1939, nine-tenths of the area was used to pasture approximately 200,000 sheep. The landscape had changed very little since the 15th Century. Fields of rough grass were separated by networks of ditches, crossed by plank bridges. Timber sheep fencing lined roads and sloped down the banks of drainage channels. The shepherds were known as 'lookers' and sheep folds and 'lookers' huts' (small buildings where shepherds could stay whilst minding the flocks) were dotted around the Marsh.

2.8.4 As part of the drive to reduce food imports, Romney Marsh farmers were encouraged to plough a proportion of their land. It was discovered that the soil was extremely fertile for growing crops, and over the following decades the vast majority of the sheep grazings were ploughed. Only in the wettest areas (the Dowels and parts of Walland Marsh) were large areas of pasture retained. Elsewhere, only pockets were left, and today only one tenth of Romney Marsh is pasture. The change from pastoral to arable farming has had major effects on the landscape and the local economy and population (fewer people are required for arable farming than sheep farming). Traditional skills associated with sheep farming have been lost in a couple of generations. The loss of rough pasture reduced the habitat of herb - rich grass, which impacted on populations of insects and birds. Ploughing also destroyed the buried archaeological record and surface earthworks. Large farm buildings were constructed to house machinery and harvested crops. Even in areas which have been retained as pasture, improvement of land through artificial fertiliser and drainage has impacted on biodiversity, particularly a reduction in the variety of herbs and grasses present.

Fig. 26: Reconstructed looker's hut, Romney Marsh Visitor Centre

Fig. 27: A rare traditional Romney Marsh scene near Fairfield Church

Fig. 28: Draining of pasture for arable use, 1950s. Photo taken at an exhibition in Ivychurch church

2.8.5 The 20th Century has seen many different types of development, particularly around the peripheries of the marsh. Tourism to the area began in the Edwardian period, with the construction of Littlestone-on-Sea. The planned settlement didn't take off as a rival to Eastbourne, but some of the

guesthouses survive, along with the distinctive tower, and some 'arts and crafts' influenced houses. In the Mid-20th Century, holiday bungalows were built along the coast, and holiday camps and caravan parks were constructed. Its sandy beaches, and attractions such as the Dymchurch amusement park, made (and continue to make) the area popular with summer visitors. Fishermen's huts at Dungeness were joined by informal holiday accommodation in the form of bungalows, caravans and old railway carriages. Today, Dungeness is a popular destination in its own right, with visitors enjoying the RSPB reserve, Derek Jarman's shingle garden, Lighthouse tours, and the unique feel of the area. The tourism industry was helped by the construction of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch steam railway in 1926, which links the coastal villages with Dungeness.

Fig. 29: Dymchurch Amusements


Fig. 30: Railway carriage cottage at Dungeness


Fig. 31: Romney Station on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway

2.8.6 The settlements, particularly those along the coast, have also expanded to accommodate an increased population. Housing estates have been constructed in coastal towns and villages, and several of the rural villages have a close of council-built houses. Many of these 20th Century houses are generic in design, and don't reflect the local building styles which can be seen in the older buildings.

2.8.7 Industrial development is concentrated around Dungeness, and includes Lydd airport (recently given permission to expand) and Dungeness A and B nuclear power stations. Other recent energy projects within the area include the Little Cheyne Court wind farm on Walland Marsh (constructed in 2008) and a solar farm near Old Romney.


Fig. 32: Dungeness Power Stations


Fig. 33: Little Cheyne Court wind farm


Fig. 34: Solar farm near Old Romney

2.8.8 The end of the 20th Century has also seen an appreciation of the importance of Romney Marsh's habitats, landscape and historic features. As a result, the area now contains a number of sites which are designated at a local, national or European level. These are set out in the following section, and are also referred-to in the relevant Landscape Character Area profiles (Part 2).

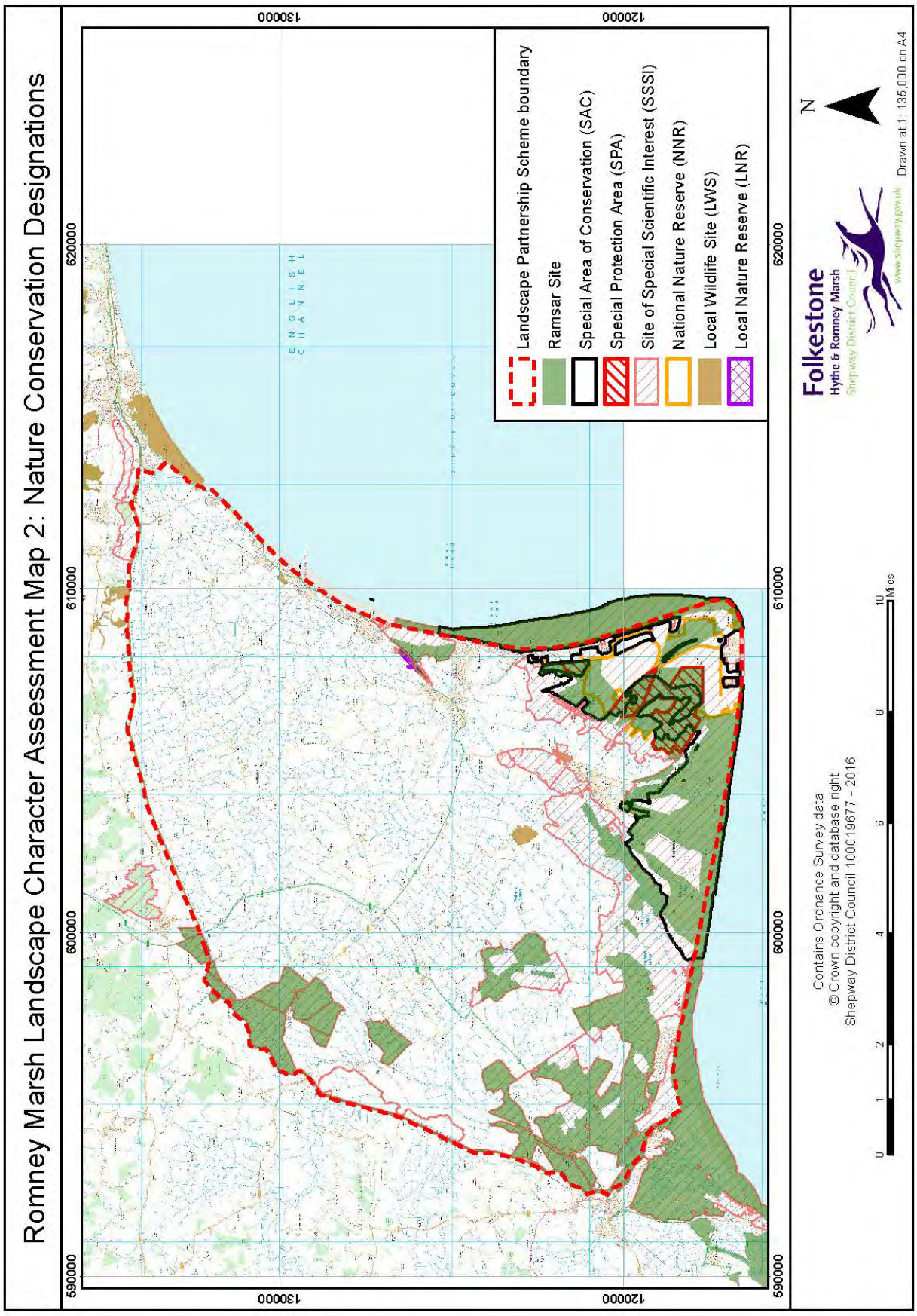
3.0 LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

3.1 Introduction

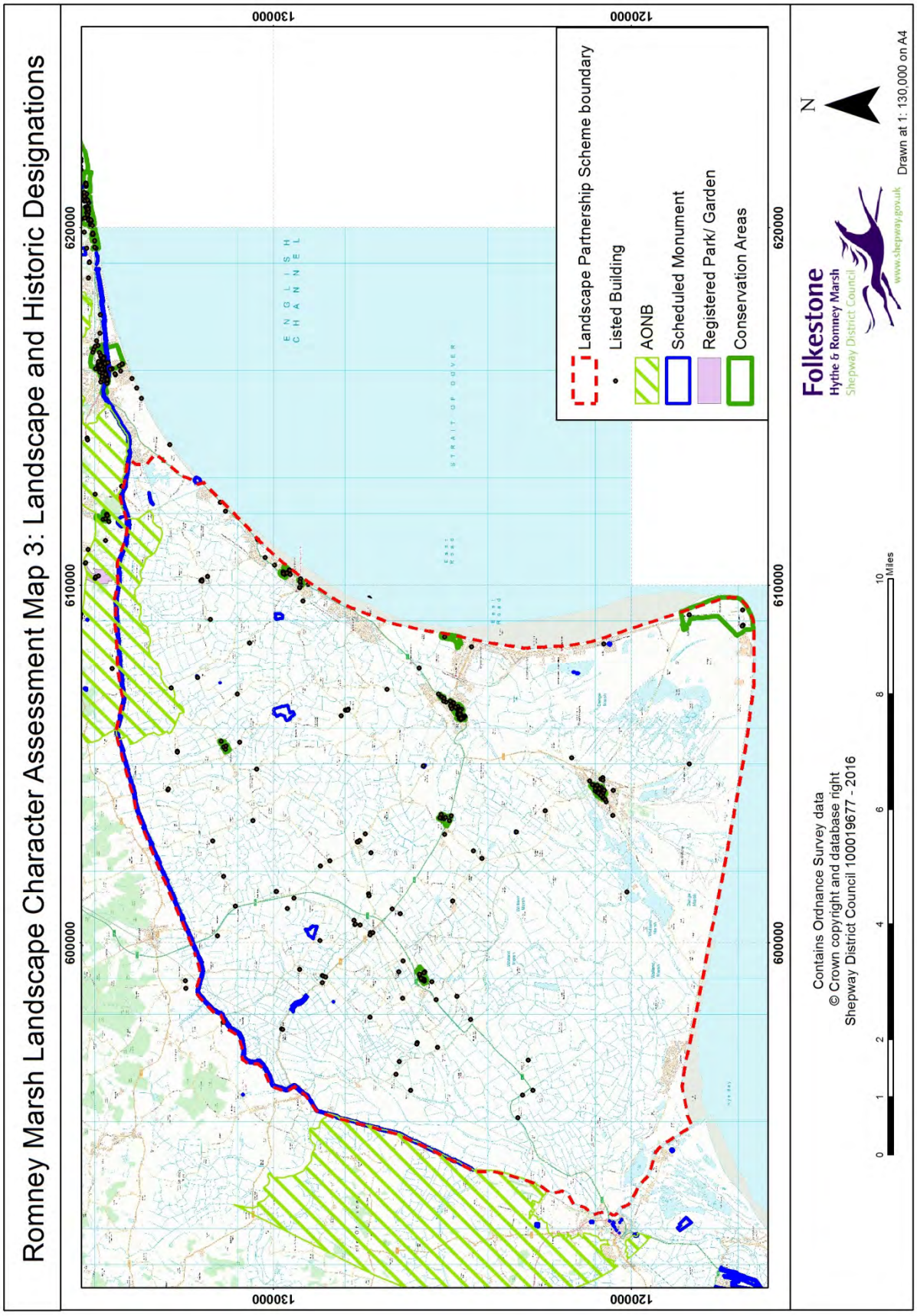
3.1.1 Romney Marsh contains a number of sites and areas which have been designated because of their nature conservation, landscape, historic or cultural importance. These are described in the tables below, and shown in *Maps 2 and 3.* Dungeness was the first RSPB nature reserve, established in 1931, but with a history of bird monitoring going back to 1905. The area has therefore played an important role in the development of nature conservation principles in the UK.

Nature Conservation Designations	
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Dungeness
Ramsar Site (Proposed)	Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Dungeness
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	Pasture, ditches and pond, Dymchurch
	Royal Military Canal
	Snave churchyard
	Lydd common and pastures
	Midley chapel pasture, Hawthorn Corner
	Ivychurch churchyard
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Romney warren

Landscape and Cultural Designations		
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Kent Downs AONB	
Scheduled Monuments (SM)	Remains of Hope All Saints Church	
	Eastbridge church	
	Abandoned medieval church and graveyard, Midley	
	Medieval Farmstead at Pilchers	
	Moated site and adjacent fields near Pickney Bush Farm	
	Moat and closes at Marshalls Bridge	
	Part of Rhee Wall near Snargate	
	Early medieval flood defence at Botolph's Bridge	
	Lade Fort	
	Dymchurch Martello Tower	
	Royal Military Canal	
	Three acoustic early warning devices (sound mirrors)	
	Phoenix Caisson off Littlestone-on-Sea	
	World War II underground operational base near Old Romney	
Conservation Areas	Brookland	Lydd Town Centre
	Dungeness	Newchurch
	Dymchurch Church Area	New Romney Cannon Street
	Dymchurch High Street	New Romney High Street
	Littlestone-on-Sea	Old Romney
Listed Buildings	Numerous, concentrated within settlements	



Map 2: Nature Conservation Designations



Map 3: Landscape and Historic Designations

4.0 FORCES FOR CHANGE

4.0.1 All landscapes are dynamic; natural processes and human actions continue to impact on the Romney Marsh landscape, and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future. This section outlines a selection of these processes and changes.

4.1 Coastal Processes

4.1.1 The process of longshore drift continues to move shingle along the coast. At Dungeness, shingle is being moved away from the southern shore and accumulating at the eastern side of the ness. This means that the power stations, which were constructed close to the southern shore, are vulnerable, and shingle has to be transported by lorry from the eastern point of the ness back to the southern beach. Elsewhere along the coast, shingle banks are artificially replenished to protect the development and sea walls behind.

4.1.2 Sand is also moving due to longshore drift and wind action. Groynes along the coast near Dymchurch are intended to reduce the movement of sand along the beach. Sand dune systems at Camber and Greatstone continue to accumulate. They are gradually colonised by grasses and other plants, and eventually stabilise.

4.1.3 Changes in sea levels have affected Romney Marsh over millennia. Rises and falls in sea level have resulted in alternate retreat and inundation by the sea. Sea levels are currently rising, which is a great concern given the existing need for sea defences and artificial land drainage.

4.2 Climate Change

4.2.1 If rising sea levels are exacerbated by climate change (as predicted), pressures on sea defences will increase, and the consequences of coastal flooding are likely to be more serious. Raised sea levels may also affect the ability to drain fresh water into the sea, potentially resulting in freshwater flooding.

4.2.2 Also predicted are increased frequency and intensity of storms, especially in winter. Many of the most dramatic floods on Romney Marsh have occurred in storm conditions, particularly when onshore winds combine with high spring tides. These conditions are predicted to occur more frequently, further increasing the risk of severe coastal flooding.

4.2.3 As well as increased winter rainfall, climate change is also predicted to result in hotter and drier summers. The associated drought conditions are likely to impact on trees and plants, particularly those adapted to wet ground conditions such as willows and alder. Loss of these species would impact on the landscape character of Romney Marsh, and also the area's biodiversity. Drier conditions are also likely to accelerate the process of peat shrinkage, resulting in lowering of land levels and greater difficulties of drainage.

4.2.4 Warmer climatic conditions may also enable new pests and diseases to thrive, potentially affecting a range of tree and plant species. It has also been suggested that a warmer climate would allow malaria-carrying mosquitos to live on the marsh, as they have done in previous centuries when malaria was known as the 'marsh ague.'

4.2.5 Climate change is also likely to affect farming and land management, for example through crop choice, and changing seasonality of growing patterns. This in turn will affect the appearance of the landscape, and potentially its biodiversity too.

4.3 Agriculture and Land Management

4.3.1 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. Examples of agricultural intensification techniques include increased use of artificial fertilizer (including on pasture) and other chemicals, loss of field margins and their associated wildlife habitats, and amalgamation of fields to create large 'prairie fields' which are better suited to large machinery. In order to survive in the current economic climate, many farms are amalgamating or diversifying. For example, turf growing is a relatively new land use on peaty soils.

4.3.2 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 or lack of management. Old brick-built bridges are vulnerable to damage by larger farm machinery, as parapets and headwalls are knocked by overhanging machinery as it crosses the bridge. Buried archaeology continues to be destroyed through plough damage. In many parts of Romney Marsh, ground surfaces are lowering as peat in soils is exposed to the air, desiccates and blows away. The lower ground requires further artificial drainage, and the problem becomes a vicious circle. The need for field drainage means that many ditches are dredged and their banks steepened, which reduces the wildlife habitats often associated with streams and wetlands. Use of fertilizer on pasture also changes the grass and wildflower species present, as many herbs and grasses only grow in nutrient-poor soils. This in turn affects the numbers and species of insects and birds which they can support.

4.3.3 A new system of agricultural grants known as the Countryside Stewardship Scheme is being introduced to replace the Environmental Stewardship Scheme. Changes in the eligibilities of sites for funding, and the categories of supported projects, are likely to have implications on future management of the landscape.

Fig. 35: Sea wall repairs near Camber

Fig. 36:Abandoned looker's hut

Fig. 37: Turf growing, Walland Marsh

4.4 Development Pressures and Incremental Changes

4.4.1 A variety of different development pressures are present on Romney Marsh. Changing agricultural practices often require the construction of large and/ or specialist buildings. Industrial, energy and infrastructure developments remain a potential force for change in the landscape, including the expansion of Lydd Airport and future plans for Dungeness Power Station following its decommissioning. There is a local demand for housing, and also for tourism-related development. Many types of development result in large structures being introduced into the landscape. Because Romney Marsh is so flat and open, these structures often appear in views over a wide area.

4.4.2 As well as large scale developments, the Romney Marsh landscape is also vulnerable to ad-hoc, incremental changes which can impact on its character. Examples are the demand for increasingly

large and sophisticated domestic buildings at Dungeness; signage and urbanisation along main roads and road junctions (Brenzett roundabout is an example) and loss of character of rural lanes if they are widened or straightened to accommodate larger vehicles.

4.4.3 The following paintings illustrate how Romney March appeared before the agricultural changes of the 1940s onwards.

Romney Marsh by Mary Stormont (1871-1962), Reproduced Courtesy of Rye Art Gallery

Romney Marsh by William Lionel Wyllie (1851-1931), Reproduced courtesy of Nottingham City Museums and Galleries. Note the masts of sailing ships on the horizon.

PART 2:

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT CONTEXT, METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

5.1 What is landscape character assessment?

5.1.1 As mentioned in section 1.4 above, the European Landscape Convention describes 'landscape' as *an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors.* This holistic approach encompasses natural landscape factors (e.g. geology, soils and ecology) cultural landscape factors (e.g. archaeology, settlement patterns, land uses etc.), and perceptual and aesthetic qualities of landscape (e.g. views, scale, and the feelings which the landscape evokes).

5.1.2 Landscape character can be described as a *distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*[1]. Landscape Character Assessment is a *tool for identifying and describing variation in landscape character*[2]. It highlights the unique combination of elements and features which make each Landscape Character Area (LCA) distinctive, and also provides information to assist in the management of landscape change.

5.2 National landscape character context

At a national scale, the entire area is included within National Character Area 123: Romney Marshes. The key characteristics of the Romney Marshes NCA are:

- Romney Marshes is a flat, open and agricultural landscape, with distinctive drainage dykes, marshes and open skies. The treeless, low-lying, reclaimed marshland is now maintained by man-made sea walls, drainage and river flood plain improvements.
- The majority of the land area is below high tide level, with the beach ridge, concrete sea walls and tidal embankments forming the main barriers to flooding by the sea.
- Internationally important for its geological and geomorphological features, the geology is dominated by coastal deposits of shingle. Dungeness and Rye Harbour comprise the largest cuspate foreland in Europe.
- Wind-blown sand has formed sand dunes and, behind the shingle beach, alluvial deposits have developed, giving rise to highly productive loamy and clayey soils with high groundwater.
- The diverse coastal landscape and hinterland host a number of habitats, including sand and shingle beaches, sand dunes, intertidal mud and sand, saline lagoons, natural freshwater pits and ditches, salt marsh, grazing marsh and reedbeds.
- Former sea cliffs, mainly of sandstone, mark the post-glacial shoreline and form a notable feature overlooking Romney Marshes at Lympne, Rye, Winchelsea, Hythe and Pett.
- The river valleys of the Rother and Brede are notable in the west, separated by sandstone ridges. The rivers Tillingham and Brede join the Rother Estuary at Rye.
- Low woodland cover features throughout, with clumps of trees and patches of woodland found on the higher ground and around settlements. The agricultural land of arable fields and the pasture land, predominantly grazed by sheep, are of high quality. Although much reduced in extent, some traditional wet grazing marsh is still present.

[1] An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (2014)
[2] An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (2014)

- The irregular small- and medium-sized fields are almost entirely bounded by a complex ditch network, which is critical for providing drainage and irrigation for the marsh as well as supporting a range of species.
- The area is home to several nationally scarce and rare species such as water voles, the medicinal leech, the hairy dragonfly and England's only remaining population of the Sussex emerald moth.
- Narrow, straight roads and winding lanes link the widely dispersed settlements, with their distinctive churches. The overall open character provides a sense of remoteness.
- Heritage assets include defensive structures such as the Royal Military Canal, Martello towers and more recent Second World War structures. Other historic features include old sea walls, medieval settlement sites and churches, including a high number of lost church sites. The ancient towns of Lydd, New Romney, Rye and Winchelsea have a rich heritage.
- Settlement predominantly consists of dispersed farmsteads, with a few small villages and hamlets. Larger settlements are present at Rye, New Romney and Lydd. There is some nucleated settlement on higher ground, including the Isle of Oxney and the raised area around Appledore.
- Brick is the predominant walling material across the area, and roofs are commonly plain clay tile. There are also some timber-framed buildings, with the framing clad in white-painted weatherboarding or hung tile.
- The 20th and 21st-century coastal developments include Dungeness Power Station, Little Cheyne Court Wind Farm and associated recreation amenities such as caravan sites, holiday parks and golf courses.

5.3 Existing Local Authority Landscape Character Assessments

5.3.1 The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme area is currently covered by four existing Landscape Character Assessments:

- *The Landscape Assessment of Kent* (Jacobs Babtie, October 2004)
- *Ashford Landscape Character Assessment* (Jacobs, 2007)
- *Kent Downs AONB Management Plan* (Kent Downs AONB, 2009)
- *East Sussex County Landscape Assessment* (East Sussex County Council, 2010)

5.3.2 Each of these assessments were undertaken at different scales, at different times, and include a slightly different range of information. The change in scale between assessments is particularly apparent at the Kent/ Sussex county boundary. Although these documents are Adopted for planning purposes, the older assessments are now slightly out of date. For example, they pre-date the construction of the wind farm at Little Cheyne Court, and extensions of gravel extraction sites around Lydd.

5.3.3 It has therefore been necessary to create a single Landscape Character Assessment which provides consistent and up-to-date information at an appropriate scale across the entire LPS area. The existing Landscape Character Assessments were referenced throughout the study, and each LCA profile contains a table showing which LCAs identified during previous assessments are contained within it.

5.4 Approach

5.4.1 The *Landscape Assessment of Kent* was taken as our starting point, because it covers the majority of the LPS area, and its boundaries are consistent with those in the Ashford District and AONB Assessments. Following desk studies and fieldwork, we then:

- Adjusted boundaries where the landscape has changed since the *Landscape Assessment of Kent* was undertaken (e.g. where gravel extraction quarries have expanded around Lydd).
- Spilt LCAs which were too large in scale for this level of assessment (e.g. Highknock channel and the Dowels are a single Kent LCA).
- Merged LCAs where there were no apparent differences between them on the ground (our LCA entitled 'Romney Marsh Proper' combines three LCAs from the Kent Assessment).
- Extended LCA boundaries into Sussex, and identified a new LCA within the Sussex part of the LPS area.

5.4.2 It is unusual for boundaries between LCAs to appear as abrupt changes on the ground. Most are gradual transitions in landscape character, and it is therefore necessary for the LCA boundary to follow a suitable line within this zone of transition. Given the complexity of the reclamation process of Romney Marsh, particularly between the 11th and 16th Centuries, it is very difficult to accurately pinpoint the extent of dry land at different periods. Therefore some of the boundaries (particularly those around the Brookland Farmlands LCA) are partly conjectural.

5.4.3 Views are often long and extend into neighbouring LCAs. When considering new developments or land management changes, it is therefore necessary to consider their potential impacts on surrounding LCAs as well as the LCA in which the site is located.

5.5 Stages of Work

5.5.1 The methodology for this landscape character assessment is in line with current best practice guidance[3]. The process of preparing this landscape character assessment has three key phases:

5.5.2 *Desk Study*

This stage involved the gathering and review of a wide variety of data sets and other sources of information, including GIS data sets, books, leaflets, historic maps, aerial photographs, information on designations, Historic Landscape Characterisation, web-based information and existing Landscape Character Assessments.

5.5.3 *Fieldwork*

A week was spent on site on Romney Marsh, enabling the consultants to get a good feel for the area's landscapes and sense of place. During the fieldwork the boundaries identified in the Landscape Assessment of Kent were checked and amended as necessary. Features and sites of historic or conservation interest were visited, and a photographic record taken of the landscape. Also recorded during the fieldwork stage were notes on landscape condition, forces for change, perceptual qualities of the landscape, and potential additional Landscape Partnership projects.

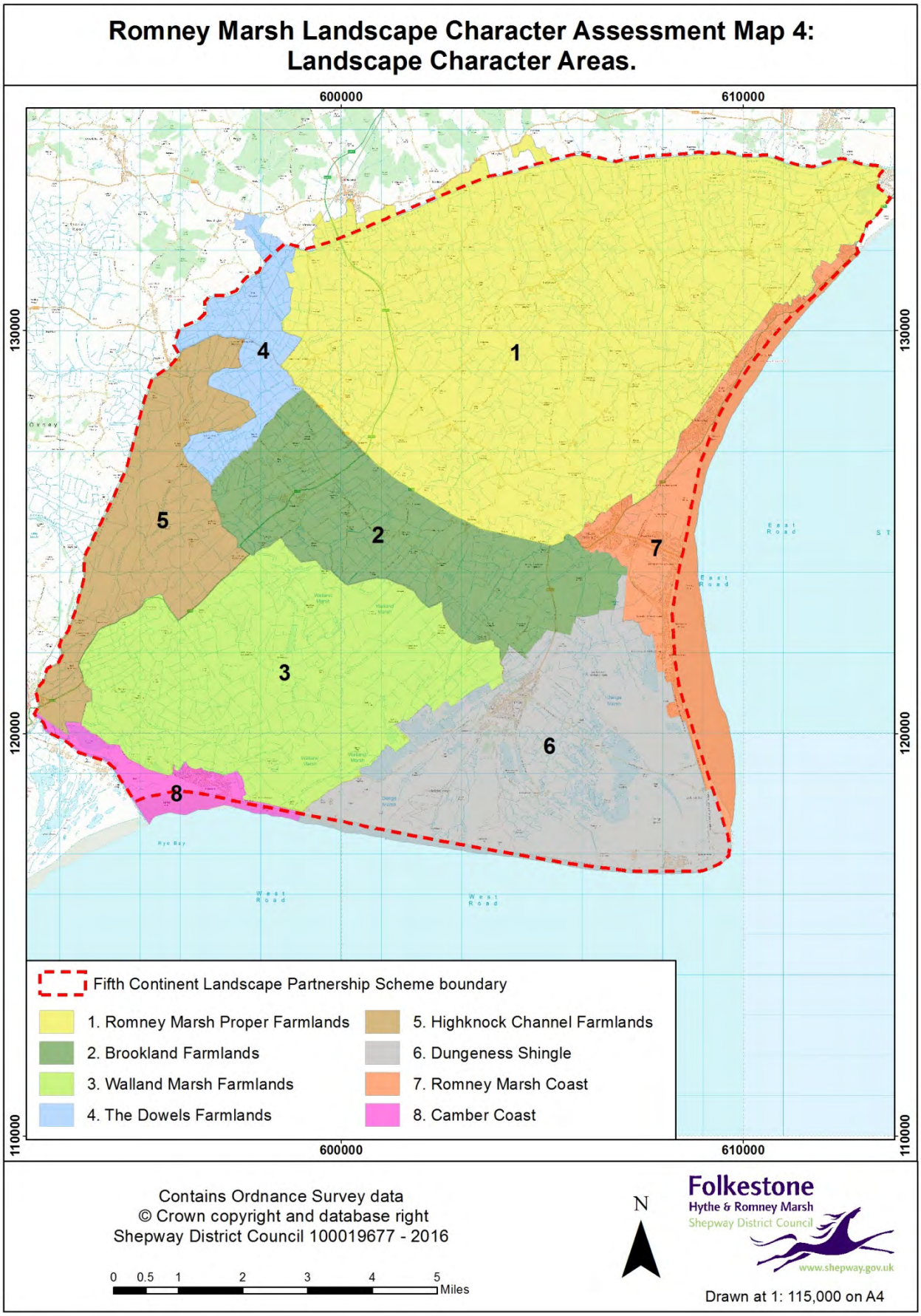
5.5.4 *Writing up*

The writing-up stage of the landscape character assessment involved capturing the essence of the landscape and its development through text, maps and photographs. The client team were consulted on the draft report, and their comments were incorporated into the final report.

5.6 Landscape character areas identified in this study

5.6.1 Following the process outlined above, eight Landscape Character Areas were identified within the Romney Marsh LPS area, as shown on Map 4, and described in the following profiles.

[3] An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (2014)



Map. 4: Landscape Character Areas

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 1: Romney Marsh Proper Farmlands

Location and Context

This extensive LCA is located in the north-eastern part of Romney Marsh. It is bounded on the northern side by the LPS boundary following the Royal Military Canal (although small extensions of the LCA continue beyond the Canal). To the west is The Dowels LCA, to the south-west (beyond the Rhee Wall) the Brookland Farms LCA, and to the east the Romney Marsh Coast LCA.

Several villages are contained within the LCA, including Snargate, Newchurch, Burmarsh, part of Brenzett, Ivychurch, St Mary in the Marsh and Old Romney.

Fig. 38: A typical scene within the Romney Marsh Proper LCA, near St Mary in the Marsh. The village, with its prominent church, is approached along a winding lane between arable fields and reed-fringed ditches.

Summary Description

This LCA comprises the area of Romney Marsh which was drained and settled by the end of the Saxon period, although in Roman times it comprised salt marsh surrounding a tidal lagoon. Today it is mainly arable farmland (with pockets of sheep pasture) but until recent years it had been used predominantly for grazing sheep. Fields are usually divided by a network of drainage diches, although there are some hedgerows alongside roads. The predominance of ditches (which are often not visible from roads and paths) as field boundaries creates an open feel to the landscape. Nevertheless it feels relatively settled, with evenly-spaced historic villages interspersed with farms. The towers of village churches are distinctive features within the landscape, and there are some trees, particularly around villages. The villages are connected by a network of distinctive narrow lanes. Many of these lanes are sinuous in form and raised above the surrounding fields, reflecting their origins as salt-marsh creeks which were embanked as part of the process of reclaiming land from the sea over a thousand years ago.

Key Characteristics

- A flat landform, with the Lympne Escarpment rising steeply beyond the inland edge of the LCA. Fertile soils originating in tidal conditions of lagoon and salt marsh.
- Drained by a network of winding freshwater ditches (sewers), with some straighter ditches. The Royal Military Canal runs along the northern boundary and also aids drainage. No open water except an artificial fishing lake at the eastern end of the LCA.
- Land use is mostly arable agriculture, with some pockets of sheep pasture, and some caravan parks along the eastern edge.
- Semi-natural habitats include ditches (often reed-lined) and areas of grazing land. There are a few trees (including pollarded willows) and hedgerows, particularly around villages and farms.
- Settlement comprises nucleated villages (fairly evenly spaced) and scattered farms. There are some domestic and agricultural vernacular buildings (constructed of brick, tile and weatherboarding) and more modern buildings.
- Roads take the form of winding, often sinuous lanes of ancient origin which are popular for cycling. The A2070, which cuts through the western side of the LCA, is of more recent construction.
- An ancient landscape with a sense of timelessness. The pattern of lanes, villages, fields, ditches and farms was established in the Saxon period.
- Churches are prominent historic features within the landscape, acting as landmarks and contributing to sense of place. Other historic buildings include houses, pubs and farms.
- Views are often long, across open fields. In the north of the LCA, the scarp dominates views. To the south, views seawards are blocked by the sea wall. There are excellent elevated views across the LCA from the adjacent scarp.
- An open landscape, but not as expansive as other LCAs. It feels settled, with farms and villages present in views. The landscape has an irregular pattern, and the winding lanes can be very disorientating.

Fig. 39: Church and pub in Burmarsh Village

Fig. 40: Earthworks of a medieval farmstead at Pitchers. Scheduled Monuments are retained as pasture to prevent damage

Fig. 41: View across Romney Marsh Proper from Lympne escarpment. Dungeness Power Station is visible on the horizon

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	Romney Marsh Settlements Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands Romney Marsh: Lympne
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands Royal Military Marshlands
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	Lympne: Romney Marsh
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	N/A

Natural influences and sites

- From approx. 2000BC until the end of the Roman period, this area was a horseshoe-shaped saltmarsh surrounding a tidal lagoon of sand and mudflats, sheltered by a bank of shingle on the seaward side. The shore was the present inland cliff line.
- From the late Roman period, the area was flooded by the sea, leading to an accumulation of silt and an eventual rise in the land area, which was subsequently drained and occupied.
- Drainage ditches contain wildlife habitats.
- Local Wildlife Sites include Royal Military Canal, Ivychurch churchyard & meadow near Dymchurch.
- Part of Romney Warren Local Nature Reserve is within this area.

Cultural influences and sites

- Buried evidence for Roman salt working on areas of former salt marsh.
- Roman 'Saxon Shore' fort at Stutfall, on the scarp (former cliff line) to the north of the LCA.
- During the Saxon period, the land was drained and occupied. Creeks within the salt marsh were dug out and used as freshwater drainage channels. Material dug out from the creeks was used to raise the adjacent banks to keep seawater out. These raised banks (known as 'walls') became causeways across the marsh, and eventually today's tarmacked roads.
- Walls also became the boundaries of the large landowning estates (often ecclesiastical). In the 9th Century, these evolved into parish boundaries. Churches were established on islands of raised land, roughly in the centre of each parish. All church sites (except Snave and Snargate) were present by 1100AD.
- Following depopulation in the 14th Century, the area was put down to sheep pasture, and remained so until the 1940s.
- The Marsh is still drained by a network of sewers, which drain into the sea at low tide through sluices in the sea wall. Associated with the watercourses are numerous historic structures such as sluices, pumps and bridges.
- Numerous historic villages and farms contain several listed buildings.
- Villages of Old Romney and Newchurch are Conservation Areas.
- Several Scheduled Monuments, including surviving earthworks of medieval sites and farmsteads, ruined churches of Eastbridge and Hope All Saints, early medieval flood defences at St Botolph's Bridge, and the Royal Military Canal.
- The north-eastern part of the LCA is within the Kent Downs AONB, and of national importance for its scenic quality.
- Visitor attractions include the Romney Marsh Visitors Centre, Romney Marsh Wartime Collection, Air Light beacon near Ivychurch, historic churches, and cycle routes along country lanes.
- Children's Author Edith Nesbit is buried in St Mary's in the Marsh churchyard.
- HLC shows 'small, irregular enclosures' are unique to this LCA.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- An open landscape, but not as expansive as some other LCAs due to the presence of the scarp to the north, and the slightly smaller scale of fields.
- A settled landscape with a strong sense of time-depth.
- Views within the LCA are long, with low horizons, and are strongly affected by skies, light and weather conditions.
- An irregular pattern of roads and fields which can lead to a sense of disorientation.
- Church towers are focal points on the horizons, and contribute to orientation and sense of place.

Forces for change in the landscape

- Until WW2, this LCA was almost entirely sheep pasture. Since then it has been progressively ploughed, and drainage has been improved to enable intensive arable use. This has had a major impact on the landscape, and has also resulted in loss/ damage of buried archaeological sites (particularly evidence of the medieval landscape). Traditional bridges are at risk of damage from wide farm machinery. Biodiversity has been affected, particularly plants, insects and birds, and it has also led to drying out and shrinkage of soils and resulting lowering of the land surface.
- The scale of new buildings is increasing, particularly agricultural and industrial buildings, which can be very prominent within the landscape.
- Village extensions are not always well screened or integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Climate change is likely to result in sea-level rise and a greater frequency and intensity of storm events, making flooding of the area more likely. It may also affect crop choices, the seasonal cycle of farming, and the presence of tree pests and diseases, all of which will affect the landscape.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- Historical sites and buildings and their settings. Consider improved interpretation for Scheduled Monuments, particularly those adjacent to footpaths and cycle routes.
- Historic structures associated with water management where possible.
- Wildlife sites, avoiding development in these locations.
- Historic lanes, ensuring that their rural character is not eroded by insensitive highways improvements or urbanising features such as signage.

Manage

- Farmland, promoting agri-environment schemes to enhance biodiversity, for example encouraging unploughed field margins to act as wildlife corridors.
- Watercourses, combining effective drainage with wildlife habitat (for example through creating stepped-profile banks) in accordance with IDB byelaws.
- Existing trees and hedgerows around villages and farms, continuing management of pollarded willows. Consider replanting over-mature willow and thorn trees (with regard to IDB byelaws) so they remain a feature in the landscape around villages and farms.

Plan

- To retain the rural character of villages, ensuring that any new development is sensitively sited and screened with native trees to minimise its impact in views. Materials should be carefully chosen to blend with the existing built environment, and to minimise the visual intrusion of large structures.
- To ensure that new development is of an appropriate scale and massing, so that existing vernacular buildings are not dwarfed.
- To protect the settings of historic sites and buildings, paying particular attention to the visual impacts of structures which appear on the horizon in views.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
- *Green Lanes for Bumblebees* project, promoting positive management of field margins to provide bumblebee habitats. This LCA has extensive areas of arable farmland for this project.
- *Sentinels on the Marsh* project focussing on churches and their landscape settings. This is particularly relevant for this LCA, where there are several village churches in landscape settings.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features. Trails could be established around the LCA.
- *Heritage, Geomorphology and Land Use* project to field walk ploughed fields, looking for small archaeological finds.
- Additional project to record surviving Lookers' huts.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 2: Brookland Farmlands

Location and Context

This LCA is located in the centre of Romney Marsh. To the north-east (beyond the Rhee Wall/ A259) is the Romney Marsh Proper LCA, and to the south (beyond the medieval sea walls which mark the southern boundary of the LCA) are the Highknock Farmlands and Walland Marsh Farmlands LCAs. To the west, the landscape merges into the Dowels LCA, and to the east there is a gradual transition into the Romney Coast and Dungeness LCAs.

The village of Brookland is within this LCA.

Fig. 42: A typical scene in the Brookland Farmlands LCA, looking south along King Street, near Brookland. A straight lane follows a tree-lined watercourse through farmland. The parish boundary runs parallel.

Summary Description

The boundaries of this LCA broadly follow an area of marsh which was reclaimed from the sea and settled in the early medieval period. This process was undertaken systematically, creating a strongly linear landscape, with parallel lanes and field boundaries, although the pattern is stronger at the western end of the LCA. The historic pattern of strip-shaped parish boundaries also shows how the reclaimed land was divided between existing parishes located in Romney Marsh Proper. The only village within this LCA is Brookland, although there are scattered farms (mostly along roads) and the ruin of Midley church. This is the most densely-treed LCA, and parallel lines of trees (mostly willow) and hedgerows are a distinctive feature of this LCA, particularly in the western part. Land use is predominantly arable, although there are some small areas of surviving sheep pasture.

Key Characteristics

- A flat landform with fertile soils, increasingly peaty towards the west.
- Land is drained by a series of parallel ditches, running north-east to south-west. The ditches are straighter than those in other LCAs, reflecting their different origins.
- Land use is predominantly arable agriculture, with some pasture, particularly at the eastern and western ends of the LCA. Fields are generally bounded by ditches, with some hedgerows/ trees along roads and near settlements.
- Semi-natural habitats include remnant areas of grazing pasture, verges and ditches. There are also more trees than in other LCAs, usually straight lines of willow or thorn.
- Settlement is limited to the village of Brookland, and part of Brenzett, with scattered farms of varying sizes. The sparse settlement pattern reflects the LCA's origins as expansion farmland for existing neighbouring parishes.
- Railway line to Dungeness runs through the area, but there are no stations.
- Roads comprise narrow lanes and tracks. Those running north-east to south-west are much straighter than those found in other LCAs. The A259 follows the northern boundary along the Rhee Wall. The lanes forming the southern boundary are more convoluted, following former sea walls constructed along existing watercourses.
- A remarkably intact medieval landscape, retaining its distinctive pattern of lanes, tracks, ditches, villages and farms which have been in place since the medieval period.
- Other surviving historic features include Brookland church (with its detached steeple), the isolated remains of Midley church, the Rhee wall and embanked roads along former sea walls.
- Views are often channelled along lanes and tracks. In the west of the LCA they are relatively contained by trees and vegetation, but in the east they are more expansive. Midley church ruin is a focal point.
- Although it is sparsely settled, Much of this LCA has a strong sense of orientation, and a regular pattern, particularly in the west.

Fig. 43: Sheep pasture near Midley (Local Wildlife Site) containing remains of wartime structures. Midley ruined church is visible beyond

Fig. 44: Elevated lane along the Hook Wall, a medieval sea wall at the southern boundary of the LCA

Fig. 45: Brookland church, with its distinctive detached shingle steeple

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	Brookland Farms
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	N/A
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	N/A
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	N/A

Natural influences and sites

- Until c. 1100 AD, this was an area of saltmarsh, regularly inundated by the sea. Sediment deposited by the sea before its reclamation has resulted in fertile soils and productive farmland.
- A small area at the eastern end of the LCA is part of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh & Rye Bay SSSI.
- Surviving sheep pasture near Hawthorn Corner is a Local Wildlife Site.

Cultural influences and sites

- The LCA contains a largely intact medieval landscape, representing systematic expansion of the drained marsh area between 1100-1300AD. At this time, salt marsh was reclaimed from the sea for use as farmland in response to population pressure.
- The method of reclamation created a regular pattern of parallel lanes, tracks and watercourses. Parish boundaries are also parallel, providing each parish with resources of farmland and marsh. Some parishes within the LCA were new, but many are extensions of parishes already existing on Romney Marsh proper. The regular landscape pattern is particularly marked in the west of the LCA.
- Medieval sea walls surviving as earthworks in the landscape, often topped by lanes, including the southern boundary of the LCA, which follows the Midley Wall, Hook Wall and Great Wall.
- The Rhee Wall (forming the northern boundary of the LCA) was constructed as a channel to carry water to scour out the silted harbour at New Romney.
- Scheduled Monument at Midley Church, now an isolated ruin standing within a large arable field.
- Extensive pottery scatters on the surface of ploughed fields.
- Conservation Area at Brookland includes Brookland Church with its detached shingle steeple.
- Historic structures associated with watercourses, e.g. sluices and bridges.
- Concentration of Listed Buildings at Brookland, with some outlying Listed Buildings, mostly farms. Many of these buildings display vernacular features including hung tiles and hipped roofs. Most are constructed of brick and tile, with some rendered or weatherboarded.
- HLC shows a high proportion of regular enclosures within this LCA.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- A relatively regular and small-scale landscape compared to other LCAs within Romney Marsh, partly because of the greater number of trees.
- A strong sense of orientation due to the linear pattern of the landscape, particularly in the west.
- A tranquil and quiet landscape, with little movement away from main roads.
- Midley church appears as a landscape feature in the east of the LCA. The Little Cheyne Court Windfarm is visible in views towards Walland Marsh LCA.

Fig. 46: Bridge over Tore Petty Sewer, near Midley Church

Forces for change in the landscape

- Conversion of sheep pasture to intensive arable use since the 1940s, affecting the character and appearance of the landscape, loss of historic features and damaging biodiversity and archaeology.
- Traditional bridges are at risk of damage from wide farm machinery.
- Upgrading of main roads, and the construction of the Brookland bypass which introduces a curved main road into a landscape of straight lanes.
- Urbanisation along main roads, particularly around the Brenzett roundabout.
- Construction of solar farm between Millbush Lane and Beggars Bank Lane.
- Little Cheyne Court Wind Farm (in the Walland Marsh LCA) visible on the horizon.
- Extensions to villages, and to farm complexes, which can be very prominent within the landscape.
- Climate change, particularly impacts of rising sea levels and increased rainfall and storm events, is likely to increase flood risk. Warmer weather conditions could also stress trees, particularly in times of summer drought, and allow new tree pests and diseases to thrive.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- Historical sites and landscape features (both designated and non-designated-e.g. WW2 military structures and features associated with water management), providing appropriate interpretation.
- The settings of Scheduled Monuments (Midley Church) and Listed Buildings.
- The pattern and rural character of lanes, avoiding suburbanisation through unnecessary signage and other visual clutter.

Manage

- Farmland, retaining remaining pasture, and using agri-environment schemes to promote positive conservation management of features such as field verges.
- Existing hedgerows and lines of trees (specifically willow and thorn) alongside roads and field boundaries, replacing trees where they are over mature or lost from the landscape. Note- any tree planting alongside adopted watercourses must have regard to IDB byelaws.
- Watercourses, where possible combining habitat creation with drainage functions (e.g. stepping of bank profiles) in accordance with IDB byelaws.
- Designated nature conservation sites, in accordance with their Management Plans. Where possible, increase their biodiversity value whilst enhancing landscape patterns and features (for example planting and pollarding of lines of willow trees). Again, have regard to IDB byelaws.

Plan

- To take into account the linear landscape pattern and traditional tree species when integrating any new development into the landscape.
- To enhance village edges, filtering views and minimising hard development edges.
- To ensure that farm expansion/ diversification projects are of a suitable scale within the landscape, and that they respect existing historic farm buildings.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
- *Green Lanes for Bumblebees* project, promoting positive management of field margins to provide bumblebee habitats.
- *Sentinels on the Marsh* project focussing on churches and their landscape settings. Brookland and Midley churches are within this LCA.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features.
- *Heritage, Geomorphology and Land Use* project to field walk ploughed fields, looking for small archaeological finds.
- Additional project to record surviving Lookers' huts.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 3: Walland Marsh Farmlands

Location and Context

This relatively large LCA is located in the south-west of Romney Marsh. To the north-east (beyond medieval banks topped by winding lanes) is the Brookland Farmlands LCA, and to the north-west (beyond the A259 and Camber Road) is the Highknock Channel Farmlands LCA. Camber Road, the edge of development in Camber and part of Lydd Road form the southern boundary with the Camber Coast LCA. To the south-east is Dungeness LCA, with the boundary following the edge of the gravel quarries along Lydd Road.

East Guldeford (located at the western edge of Walland Marsh) is the only village within the LCA.

Fig. 47: A typical scene on Walland Marsh, looking across East Guldeford Level from Camber Road. The area of sheep pasture in the foreground is designated SSSI. Little Cheyne Court windfarm is on the horizon.

Summary Description

This LCA approximates to an area of salt marsh which was reclaimed for use as grazing land in the 15th and 16th Centuries. Some parts of the area (particularly around its edges) had previously been reclaimed but subsequently lost to the sea. The few farms are accessed by tracks (there are no public roads apart from at the peripheries of the LCA) and the only village within the LCA is Guldeford, at the western edge. Large parts of the LCA are still used as sheep pasture, particularly in the south, although arable crops and turf growing also occur. The lack of settlement and the large scale of the irregular fields give the LCA an exceptionally open and expansive feel with low horizons and big skies. In the parts which are still under pasture it is possible to have a glimpse of what most of Romney Marsh must have looked like until it was ploughed in recent decades. The Little Cheyne Court windfarm was constructed in 2008, and is now a prominent feature in views across Walland Marsh.

Key Characteristics

- A flat landscape of reclaimed salt marsh, including some of the lowest-lying land on Romney Marsh.
- Drained by a network of ditches, many sinuous in form, but with some straight channels. Reservoirs form occasional areas of open water.
- Land use is a mixture of arable and pastoral farmland, with irregular fields bounded by ditches. Walland Marsh has some of the most extensive surviving areas of sheep pasture. Some land is used for turf growing.
- Semi-natural habitats include extensive areas of grazing marsh, and occasional wetland areas. Reed-lined watercourses also offer some habitat. Trees and hedgerows are rare, and generally planted for shelter around farms and along tracks.
- Settlement is very limited, and comprises widely-spaced farms constructed on 'islands' of higher ground. The village of East Guldeford is at the western edge of the LCA.
- A distinctive lack of roads within the LCA. Many tracks (some of which are Public Rights of Way) cross Walland Marsh and provide access to isolated farms. National Cycle Route 2 runs along the southern edge of the LCA.
- A landscape which with a complex history of reclamation and loss over several centuries. Evidence of various phases of drainage can be seen in the landscape in the form of ditches, sluices and earth banks.
- Various WW2 military structures, including pill boxes, and a large hanger at Old Cheyne Court.
- Little Cheyne Court wind turbines are prominent vertical features in views across the marsh, together with pylons from Dungeness Power Station, and overhead wires to farms.
- Views are exceptionally long and uninterrupted. It is a large-scale, very open and exposed landscape with low horizons and large skies, and changing patterns of light.
- The lack of roads and settlement mean that this is a peaceful and relatively empty landscape, although the wind turbines are large and dynamic features.

Fig. 48: East Guldeford Church

Fig. 49: Walland Marsh scene near Wainway Wall. Note the surface water and traditional sheep fencing

Fig. 50: Nature reserve area near the Woolpack Inn. The photo is taken from the medieval Great Wall, which runs into the distance

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	Walland Marsh Farmlands
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	N/A
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	N/A
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	Rye - Winchelsea Area

Natural influences and sites

- Soil analysis shows that the area around Cheyne was a raised bog before being inundated by the sea.
- Historically, this was an area of salt marsh, and the sinuous patterns of the salt marsh creeks can still be seen in the courses of some watercourses. The Wainway channel crossed the area east-west and was used as an anchorage. Initially it flowed eastwards towards New Romney, but following the great storm of 1287, it changed course and flowed south-west to enter the sea near Broomhill. It has now silted up and disappeared, but can be traced through the soil record and documentary evidence.
- Parts of the area (those still under sheep pasture) are within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI.
- A slightly smaller area (focussed on the Guldeford and Broomhill Levels, and the wetland areas in the north of the LCA) are also a designated Ramsar site for their wetland habitats.
- The Romney Marsh private nature reserve in the north of the LCA is an area of farmland now managed as a wetland for wildlife.

Cultural influences and sites

- The open landscape and lack of buildings or roads reflects the fact that the area was reclaimed for use as pasture, rather than for settlement. Sheepfolds (some with associated buildings) can be seen across the southern and western parts of the LCA.
- A complex history of drainage, reclamation and loss to the sea over several centuries, but the entire area was only finally successfully reclaimed in 1585. Many of the earth walls and drainage channels associated with different phases of reclamation survive in the landscape, although some have been lost by ploughing in the 1990s. Often, salt marsh creeks were embanked and used as the freshwater drains, so many of the watercourses are sinuous in form. Others were artificially cut and have straighter courses. Some watercourses have associated historic structures such as bridges and sluices.
- Listed Buildings at Stones and Scotney Court.
- Buried remains of Broomhill Church (in use until the 16th Century) north of Camber. This area appears to have been protected from the sea until c. 1500, but by 1535 records report that the protecting shingle barrier had been breached, and tides were flowing up to the Kent Wall.
- WW2 military structures including pill boxes, and a large hanger at Old Cheyne Court.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- A very sparsely settled landscape, which feels empty and remote.
- The lack of roads within the LCA means it is physically very inaccessible and feels isolated.
- A large-scale landscape, with big skies and an exceptional sense of openness due to the flat landform and lack of vegetation or settlement. There is little shelter, and the land feels very exposed to wind and weather.
- A strongly horizontal landscape, in which vertical features (e.g. pylons) are very prominent.
- The Little Cheyne Court wind farm is prominent in views. It introduces large and dynamic vertical elements into the landscape, which affect views, landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Long-distance views out to Lydd church tower, Rye and Dungeness Power Station provide a sense of orientation.
- Extensive areas of sheep pasture are smooth in texture, and the ditch field boundaries are difficult to see, so fields appear to merge into each other.

Forces for change in the landscape

- Ploughing of sheep pasture in the 1990s has resulted in loss/ damage of historic landscape features such as earth banks and traditional bridges, and has also affected the appearance of the landscape.
- Addition of fertilizer to sheep pasture, reducing its ability to support wild flowers, grasses, insects and birds.
- Soil desiccation, shrinkage and loss following ploughing of peaty soils.
- Turf growing (a relatively new land use).
- Construction of large houses and farm buildings.
- Construction of Little Cheyne Court wind farm (2008).
- Visual impacts of development in Camber village (in adjacent LCA).
- Climate change and associated sea level rise is likely to lead to increased flooding and vulnerability from the sea.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- Surviving historical features within the landscape, including earth banks, lookers' huts & WW2 sites.
- Surviving historic features associated with water management and access where possible.
- Investigate options for the future use and maintenance of the WW2 hanger at Old Cheyne Court.

Manage

- Pastoral farmland, keeping sheep fencing, sheepfolds, bridges etc. in good repair, and retaining its biodiversity value. Manage designated sites in accordance with their Management Plans.
- Arable farmland, encouraging features such as field margins and verges along tracks to act as wildlife corridors and habitats for farmland birds.
- Water channels and wetland areas, enhancing biodiversity value whilst retaining functionality for drainage (e.g. by introducing stepped profiles to the channels), in accordance with IDB byelaws.
- Promote public access to the private nature reserve in the north of the LCA (this would require landowner consent and co-operation).
- Public Rights of Way, keeping them passable, and improving waymarking where necessary.

Plan

- To ensure that the visual impacts of large or vertical structures are carefully considered in planning decisions.
- To encourage any new farm buildings to be of sympathetic design, materials and location (e.g. clustered with other agricultural buildings), but respect the setting of Listed Buildings.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
- *Green Lanes for Bumblebees* project, promoting positive management of field margins to provide bumblebee habitats.
- *Sentinels on the Marsh* project focussing on churches and their landscape settings. East Guldeford church is within this LCA, and the LCA also contributes to the landscape setting of Lydd church.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features. In this LCA, trails could take the form of circular walks/ cycle routes from Camber and Lydd which tell the story of the history of Walland Marsh.
- *Heritage, Geomorphology and Land Use* project to field walk ploughed fields, looking for small archaeological finds.
- Additional project to record surviving Lookers' huts.
- Additional project to survey surviving earthworks, and potentially match them with documentary records (identified as a potential project by the Romney Marsh Research Group).
- Additional project to involve local communities in the management of wetland areas (this would require landowner co-operation).

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 4: The Dowels Farmlands

Location and Context

This LCA is located in the north-west of Romney Marsh. Much of its northern boundary follows the Royal Military Canal, although there is a small northward extension of the LCA along the Horsemarsh Sewer towards Kenardington. The eastern borders of the LCA are gradual transitions into the Romney Marsh Proper and Brookland Farmlands LCAs rather than sudden changes in landscape character. The boundaries follow lanes and footpaths within these transitions. The south-western boundary (with the Highknock Channel LCA) follows the B2080, lanes and watercourses, and marks a change in field size and enclosure pattern.

There are no villages within this LCA.

Fig. 51: A typical scene in the Dowels, near Thrift Cottage. A drainage ditch separating pastoral fields is crossed by a traditional plank bridge. The scarp of the Low Weald can be seen on the horizon.

Summary Description

The majority of this LCA was not drained successfully until the construction of the Royal Military Canal in the early Nineteenth Century, and required artificial drainage using windmills, and later pumps. Its soils are peaty, and often waterlogged and boggy, creating rough grazing land predominantly used as sheep pasture. The resulting rushes and reeds create distinctive textures and colours within the landscape. The area contains the greatest density of freshwater channels, and is also characterised by the close proximity of the scarp to the north and west. Settlement is limited to occasional farms (along the B2080) and the hamlet around Appledore Station. This is an open, quiet and largely inaccessibly landscape with many relics of sheep farming, including sheepfolds, looker's huts, sheep fencing and plank bridges across drainage ditches. Fairfield church, (near the southern boundary with the Brookland Farms LCA) is a picturesque spot, with the church isolated within its setting of sheep pasture.

Key Characteristics

- An exceptionally low-lying part of Romney Marsh, parts of which are only 1m above sea level. The landform rises steeply to the north of the LCA, to form the Low Weald scarp.
- Former fen vegetation created a deep layer of peat. Peat soils are fertile, but cause difficulties with drainage.
- A dense network of drainage channels cover the area. Water is pumped from drainage channels into larger watercourses, including the Royal Military Canal.
- A large proportion of the area remains sheep pasture, although there is some arable land use, particularly around the peripheries of the LCA. Fields are bounded by ditches, and there is some traditional sheep fencing.
- Semi-natural habitats include wetlands, freshwater watercourses and wet pasture. The area is nationally and internationally designated for its wetlands. Hedgerows and trees occur along lanes and around farms.
- Settlement is limited to scattered cottages and farms along roads (often at the edges of the LCA) and the hamlet around Appledore Station.
- Roads comprise rural lanes, but some parts of the LCA are not accessible by road. A track following the Military Road associated with the Royal Military Canal runs along its northern bank. The Ashford to Hastings railway line runs through the area, with a station at Appledore.
- This not a particularly ancient landscape, but it nevertheless has a strong sense of timelessness. This is largely because of the proportion of surviving pasture, and the features associated with sheep farming.
- Other surviving historic features include Fairfield Church, a well-preserved section of the Rhee Wall, the Royal Military Canal and a WW2 underground operations base.
- A tranquil and peaceful landscape, with little modern development. The landscape feels open, and areas of wetland and wet pasture give it a variety of textures and colours.
- Fairfield church is a popular viewpoint, and photogenic spot.
- Views north and west are towards the Low Weald scarp, and the area is also visible in views from the scarp.

Fig. 52: Fairfield Church in its landscape setting

Fig. 53: Sheep pens

Fig. 54: Traditional shelter in sheep pasture, probably a looker's hut.

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	Highknock Channel and Dowels
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	The Dowels Marshland Pasture
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	N/A
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	N/A

Natural influences and sites

- An exceptionally low-lying area, which was not effectively drained until the early 19th century. Freshwater carried down by streams from the scarp exacerbates drainage problems, and water naturally collects in this area.
- The Dowels contain a relatively dense pattern of freshwater ditches, and there are some wetland areas. Much of the area is designated SSSI (part of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI) and is also a designated Ramsar site- representing wetlands of international importance.
- A deep layer of peat accumulated in this area when it was fen carr (wet woodland) for several thousand years. Subsequently little sediment was deposited above the peat because of the area's distance from the sea. Therefore the peat is close to the surface, and is visible in ditch banks. It causes problems for drainage as it swells when wet, blocking channels and sluices.

Cultural influences and sites

- Various attempts to drain this low-lying and peaty area have left their marks on the landscape. In the 1620s an attempt was made to drain 200 acres of marsh between Appledore, Snargate and Fairfield. It was a major scheme, involving 3.5 miles of walls, new channels and access roads. It failed in storms and was abandoned in 1627.
- In c. 1620 no scots were paid on the Dowels, which were described as '*certain wet lands...which always in winter or summer lie drowned*.'
- The area was not successfully drained until construction of the Royal Military Canal enabled water to be pumped into it and away. Power for pumping was initially supplied by windmills, then steam, diesel and finally electric pumps.
- A range of Scheduled Monuments, including well-preserved earthworks of the Rhee Wall, the Royal Military Canal, and a WW2 underground operations base near Bentley Bridge.
- Occasional Listed Buildings, mostly farmhouses located along roads at the periphery of the LCA.
- Fairfield Church (A listed building) is one of the most photographed spots on Romney Marsh. The church stands isolated on a low rise amidst sheep pasture and ditches.
- There are also non-designated historic features within the landscape, including banks, drainage ditches, and traditional sheep-farming features, such as plank bridges, sheep fencing, lookers' huts, sheepfolds etc. Much of the LCA remains as pasture, so these features have survived. There are also surviving historic features associated with water management and drainage, such as sluices and pumps.
- HLC shows a high proportion of small, regular enclosures within this LCA.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- This is a relatively inaccessible area, with few roads or public rights of way. It feels tranquil, and has a strong sense of timelessness, particularly in areas which remain as sheep pasture. It also has the feel of a working landscape.
- The wetland vegetation, occasional hedges, and views towards the more wooded scarp give the landscape a textured quality. Its pattern is smaller in scale than the adjacent Highknock Channel LCA, and its pattern is less regular than the Brookland Farmlands LCA.
- Fairfield church is a popular viewpoint.
- Views north and west are stopped by the Low Weald scarp, which creates a relatively high horizon, and reduces in the sense of openness in views north and west.
- The area forms the foreground in views to the Low Weald scarp, and is also visible in elevated views from the scarp.

Forces for change in the landscape

- Ploughing of former sheep pasture has taken place in some parts of the LCA, particularly at the edges. Movement of farm machinery over wet soils causes problems of scarring, and many gateways are deeply rutted and muddy.
- Ploughing of peat soils causes exposed peat to dry out and shrink, lowering land levels and increasing the need for artificial drainage.
- Management of farmland varies within the LCA. There are occasional pockets of fly tipping, burning etc. The landscape (and the historic features it contains) are vulnerable to incremental change and neglect.
- Damage/ neglect of interpretation panels along the adjacent to the Royal Military Canal.
- Climate change, particularly rising sea levels and increased rainfall, is likely to mean that flooding becomes in increasing problem.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- Scheduled Monuments and their settings, and the structure and setting of Fairfield Church.
- Surviving features of sheep farming, trying to avoid their incremental loss through neglect.
- Surviving features associated with water management, drainage and access where possible.

Manage

- Pastoral farmland, retaining traditional features where possible, whilst allowing livestock farming to modernise and remain profitable.
- Areas which have been converted to arable use, encouraging promotion of field margin habitats.
- Wetlands and watercourses, combining enhancement of habits with drainage functions, in accordance with IDB byelaws.
- Hedgerows and trees alongside roads and within the wider landscape.
- Designated nature conservation sites in accordance with their Management Plans.

Plan

- To retain the area's strong sense of place and timelessness.
- To take into account when making planning decisions the relatively small scale of the existing buildings within the area, the relatively undeveloped feel of the area, and its importance in views from the scarp.
- To retain the character of rural lanes, resisting insensitive highways measures such as road widening and unnecessary signage.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
- *Green Lanes for Bumblebees* project, promoting positive management of field margins to provide bumblebee habitats.
- *Sentinels on the Marsh* project focussing on churches and their landscape settings. Within this LCA, Fairfield Church is a key landscape feature.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features. In this LCA, this could include replacing interpretation panels along the Royal Military Canal, and trails along lanes and footpaths from Appledore Station.
- *New Lookers* project to involve local people in reporting heritage crime could also be used to report incidences of fly tipping.
- Additional project to record surviving Lookers' huts.
- Additional project to enable occasional public access to the WW2 underground operations base.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 5: Highknock Channel

Location and Context

This LCA is located at the western edge of Romney Marsh. Its western boundary follows the Royal Military Canal. The eastern boundary mostly follows roads and watercourses. It borders the Dowels, Brookland Farmlands, Walland Farmlands and Camber Coast LCAs, and is distinguished from them by a change in field size and landscape scale. In some cases the change between adjacent LCAs is abrupt, whilst in others it is more transitional.

There are no villages within the Highknock Channel LCA, although there are some farms located along roads around the edge of the LCA.

Fig. 55: A typical scene in the Highknock Channel LCA. The Five Watering Sewer flows between large arable fields. The Isle of Oxney (part of the High Weald AONB) forms the horizon in this view looking south-west.

Summary Description

This LCA was one of the last areas of Romney Marsh to be drained. It is within the valley of the former course of the river Rother, now known as the Highknock Channel. It was flooded periodically until the early Nineteenth Century, and is shown on early maps as 'Appledore Water.' Most of the LCA comprises large, exceptionally flat and featureless arable fields with rich dark brown peaty soils, divided by ditches. Settlement is limited to occasional farms, often with large farm buildings. Towards the south of the LCA, the scale of the landscape becomes slightly smaller, and there is some sheep pasture. The scarp of the High Weald AONB provides a backdrop in views towards the west, and in the southern part of the LCA, the elevated town of Rye is visible on the horizon.

Key Characteristics

- A flat landscape (a former flooded valley) which rises abruptly beyond its western boundary to form the steep slopes of the Isle of Oxney.
- Historically a broad tidal inlet (known as Appledore Water) and part of the valley of the River Rother. This is now reduced to the narrow and winding Highknock Channel. A number of straight drainage channels run through the area, many of which discharge via pumps into the Royal Military Canal.
- Exceptionally fertile soils comprising a thick layer of peat overlain with accumulations of silt.
- Land use is primarily arable agriculture in very large fields divided by ditches. In the south of the area the scale of the landscape is slightly smaller and there is some sheep pasture.
- Semi-natural habitats are limited to watercourses and occasional lines of trees. In the south of the LCA there is some improved grassland habitat.
- Settlement is very sparse, comprising scattered (and often large) farms, mostly located around the edges of the LCA.
- Few roads or footpaths within the LCA, although lanes, the Royal Military Road and the A259 run along the periphery. The Ashford - Hastings railway line runs through the LCA.
- Its relatively recent reclamation for agriculture means that there are few roads, settlements or historic features within the landscape.
- Royal Military Canal (Scheduled Monument) runs along the western edge of the area.
- A relatively featureless landscape, large in scale with uninterrupted and expansive views dominated by big skies.
- A strong sense of remoteness and isolation in central parts of the LCA.
- Views westwards are dominated by the Low Weald scarp, the Isle of Oxney and the hilltop town of Rye. To the south, Little Cheyne Court windfarm, power lines and Dungeness Power Station can be seen on the horizon.

Fig. 56: The Highknock Channel near Stone Bridge; all that remains of Appledore Water, along which Henry VIII's warships were floated

Fig. 57: The Royal Military Canal (and associated earthworks) at Appledore, looking south. A WW2 pillbox is on the right bank

Fig. 58: Looker's hut at Buss Barn. The fireplace can be seen in situ through the window.

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	Highknock Channel and Dowels
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	Highknock Arable Marshlands
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	N/A
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	Rye-Winchelsea Area

Natural influences and sites

- A deep layer of peat which accumulated in fen carr (wet woodland) conditions, overlain with sediment-rich soils laid down by rivers and tidal inlets. The soils here are therefore exceptionally fertile.
- Historically, the area was a tidal inlet known as Appledore Water, part of the channel of the river Rother in its former course to the north and east of the Isle of Oxney. In 1635 the course of the river Rother was diverted so it flowed south of the Isle of Oxney, through Wintersham Level. The narrow and winding Highknock channel is all that remains of the natural watercourse.
- Much of the area was not effectively drained until the Royal Military Canal was built, and water could be pumped into the canal.
- Some watercourses, and areas which remain under pasture in the south of the LCA, are within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI.

Cultural influences and sites

- In the 15th century, Appledore Water provided access to shipbuilding centres in the Rother valley at Hythe and Reading. In 1490, Henry VIII's warship *The Regent* was floated down Appledore Water following its construction at Reading.
- A well-preserved section of the Royal Military Canal runs between Appledore and Rye (Scheduled Monument).
- Occasional Listed Buildings, usually farmhouses around the edges of the area.
- Surviving but dilapidated looker's hut (with interior fittings) at Buss Barn.
- Structures such as sluices and pumping stations associated with drainage and water management.
- The High Weald AONB, of national importance for its scenic quality, is adjacent to the western edge of the LCA.
- HLC shows a high proportion of large enclosures within this LCA.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- Fields are of a huge scale, and relatively featureless. Because of its comparatively recent reclamation and arable use, there is little sense of time depth.
- Relatively inaccessible, with few roads or footpaths within the LCA. Away from roads, the LCA feels remote and peaceful.
- The scale of the landscape is slightly smaller in the southern part of the LCA, where there are pockets of sheep pasture.
- An exposed and empty landscape, with little shelter. Changes in skies, weather and light can be dramatic.
- The scarp to the west on the Isle of Oxney catches the eye and is a feature in views, contributing to sense of place. The hilltop town of Rye is visible on the horizon in the southern part of the LCA.
- The Little Cheyne Court windfarm, power lines and Dungeness power station can be seen in views to the south.
- The LCA forms the foreground to views towards the High Weald AONB, and is also important in elevated views from it.

Forces for change in the landscape

- In recent years a number of large farm buildings have been constructed which are prominent features within the LCA.
- Intensive arable agriculture has resulted in a loss of habitats. Ploughing also leads to drying and shrinkage of peat, leading to a lowering of the ground surface, and increasing difficulty in drainage.
- Loss of traditional pastoral buildings and features (e.g. sheepfolds and lookers' huts) through neglect because they are no longer needed.
- Risk of damage to historic bridges etc. by large farm machinery.
- Fly tipping along main roads.
- Climate change is likely to lead to increased flood risk as a result of rising sea levels, increased rainfall and increased intensity and frequency of storm events. It may also affect farmers' future choices of crops and the seasonal patterns of farming practices.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- Surviving historic features associated with traditional land uses, urgently recording structures (such as lookers' huts) which are in advanced stages of neglect and disrepair.
- Structures associated with historic water and drainage management, such as bridges, pumps and sluices, where possible.
- Views which contribute to the setting of the High Weald AONB.
- Remaining pasture.

Manage

- Farmland, improving its wildlife value where possible through creation of wildlife corridors and habitat mosaics. These could include schemes to enhance the wildlife value of field margins, planting of additional trees, etc.
- Watercourses, aiming for a balance between wildlife habitats and efficiency of drainage (e.g. consider creating stepped bank profiles, in accordance with IDB byelaws.
- Designated nature conservation sites in accordance with their Management Plans.

Plan

- To consider the visual impacts of large farm buildings when assessing planning applications. Such buildings should be sensitively sited (for example considering whether they appear on the skyline or against the scarp, and whether they are seen in conjunction with existing structures). The choice of materials, colours and finishes should also be carefully chosen.
- To protect the character of rural lanes, and to avoid suburbanisation and unnecessary signage along main roads.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
- *Green Lanes for Bumblebees* project, promoting positive management of field margins to provide bumblebee habitats.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features. In this LCA, trails could start from Appledore village and railway station. Interpretation could also be enhanced along the Royal Military Canal.
- *New Lookers* project to involve local people in reporting heritage crime could also be used to report incidences of fly tipping.
- Additional project to record surviving Lookers' huts. This LCA contains a particularly good example (with much of the interior intact) at Buss Barn, opposite Priory Farm.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 6: Dungeness Shingle

Location and Context

This triangular-shaped LCA is located in the south-west of Romney Marsh, and comprises a broad promontary which extends into the English Channel. It is open to the sea on the south and east sides. To the north-west are the Walland Farmland and Brookland Farmland LCAs, and to the north-east is the Romney Coast LCA.

The town of Lydd is within this LCA, as is the dispersed settlement of Dungeness, and associated industrial and military buildings.

Fig.59: A typical scene in Dungeness LCA, including vegetated shingle, scattered cottages and Power Station.

Summary Description

Dungeness is a unique environment within the UK, comprising extensive deposits of shingle, interspersed with smaller areas of farmland, wetland and settlement. Shingle ridges further inland are well-established, whilst those at the sea's edge are very mobile, and the landform is constantly evolving. The earliest evidence for settlement on Romney Marsh has been found here, including prehistoric tools and pottery associated with Roman salt production. The area is of international importance for its wildlife and habitats, including its bird life, and the rare and often colourful plants which colonise the shingle, including low-lying prostrate vegetation. Much of the area is a National Nature Reserve, and it is popular with visitors.

This is an extraordinarily evocative and powerful landscape, its mood constantly changing in response to light, weather and season. The landscape is dominated by a combination of natural shingle (and associated vegetation) with a strong horizontal form, and large man-made vertical structures including lighthouses, Dungeness nuclear power station, pylons, and sound mirrors. There are also structures associated with ongoing military use of the area. The historic town of Lydd has strong visual and cultural connections with Dungeness. On Dungeness itself, settlement comprises fishermen's huts, holiday cottages and temporary buildings, which give it a sense of impermanence, a quirky character and a very strong sense of place.

Key Characteristics

- Unique underlying geology of shingle ridges extend for several miles inland, and still evolving due to longshore movement of shingle
- Extensive areas of open water, mostly flooded aggregate extraction quarries, and wetlands associated with the RSPB reserve. The shingle also holds a large freshwater aquifer.
- Many different land uses on the shingle and associated areas, including nature reserve, nuclear power station, airport, farmland, military site, quarries and settlement.
- A wide range of natural and semi-natural habitats, many of which are nationally and internationally designated for their wildlife value. The extensive areas of vegetated shingle are exceptionally rare and contain unique flora. There are almost no trees except around Lydd.
- Settlement includes the historic town of Lydd (which has strong visual and cultural connections with Dungeness) and informal settlement of fishermen's huts and temporary structures at Dungeness itself.
- The informal and temporary nature of settlement at Dungeness gives it a quirky and very distinctive character. The wooden huts and bungalows have no property boundaries.
- Access is restricted within military and farmland areas, and around the power station, but much of the area is accessible as a nature reserve. It can be accessed by road or on the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch railway.
- An exceptionally rich historic and cultural environment, including prehistoric occupation sites, the Saxon town of Lydd, historic farms, lighthouses, military sites (including the 1920s sound mirrors and WW2 installations), fishing equipment and the famous shingle garden developed by Derek Jarman in the 1980s.
- A landscape of strongly horizontal natural shingle features, combined with large vertical man-made structures (power station, pylons, Lydd church tower, lighthouses etc.) which form focal points in views.
- A popular place for visitors, busy in summer but empty in winter.
- An evocative and exposed landscape, with strong seasonal changes created by the weather, the light, and the colours of plants growing on the shingle.
- Abandoned fishing boats on the beach create a sense of desolation, but also have a sculptural quality.

Fig. 60: View looking east, showing Nature Reserve (to left of road), power station, pylons, and military zone (to right of road).

Fig. 61: Sunset over sound mirrors. Two mirrors can be seen- a dome-shape and a curved wall. Lydd church tower is to the left.

Fig. 62: Derek Jarman's shingle garden at Prospect Cottage, Dungeness.

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	Dungeness Shingle
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	N/A
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	N/A
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	Rye- Winchelsea Area

Natural influences and sites

- A deep natural sink of shingle, forming the only designated desert in Western Europe. It is a strongly dynamic landscape, with longshore drift eroding the southern side of the ness and moving and depositing shingle eastwards. Inland, shingle ridges mark the locations of former coastlines.
- Almost the entire area is within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI. Much of it is also a designated Ramsar site (a wetland of international significance).
- Much of the LCA is also within the Dungeness SAC, internationally designated for its perennial vegetation on shingle banks (including low-growing horizontal shrubs) which comprises the most diverse and extensive examples of vegetated shingle in Europe. The fen communities in wetter areas between the banks are also of international importance.
- Part of the area (to the north-west of the Power Station) is an internationally-designated SPA for its bird populations. This area includes part of the National Nature Reserve managed by the RSPB.

Cultural influences and sites

- Evidence for prehistoric occupation has been found in quarries, including axe heads which were traded across Europe. Later evidence for Roman salt working has also been excavated.
- In early medieval times, Lydd was a thriving Corporate Cinque port, but was stranded inland when its harbour silted up. Lydd church contains Saxon stonework and its tall tower is a prominent feature across surrounding marshes. The town contains a concentration of Listed Buildings, and a Conservation Area. There are strong cultural links between Lydd and Dungeness, including farming on Denge marsh, and several centuries of smuggling activity.
- A strong history of military innovations following construction of Lydd Barracks in the 1880s. These include the development of Lyddite (forerunner to dynamite), experimentation with sound mirrors to detect approaching aircraft (these are now Scheduled Monuments) and the WW2 PLUTO (PipeLine Under The Ocean) project to supply piped fuel to allied forces in France. Some of the bungalows in Dungeness were constructed to hide PLUTO installations.
- Many structures associated with the coast and associated fishing industry, including sea walls, Dungeness lifeboat station, two lighthouses (the 1904 lighthouse is now some distance inland due to accretion of the shingle), fishing boats, winches, huts and net-boiling ketches on the beach.
- Informal settlement at Dungeness, including fishermen's huts, railway carriages and bungalows.
- Lydd Airport (London Ashford) was the first civil airport to be constructed in Britain after WW2, primarily serving wealthy clients crossing the channel. It has just been given permission to expand.
- Dungeness A nuclear power station constructed in the 1950s, followed by Dungeness B.
- Dungeness has become widely known through its use in films, and the publicity surrounding Derek Jarman's cottage, with its garden of shingle-loving plants and driftwood sculptures.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- A unique area with a very strong sense of place.
- The natural landscape of horizontal shingle ridges contrasts with the vertical man-made structures such as pylons, lighthouses and the power station.
- A strong presence of the sea and sky, and sense of being 'on the edge.' This is enhanced by changes in light, weather and season, which in turn affect the vivid colours of vegetation.
- Dungeness has an informal 'frontier' feel and is a working landscape. It is not pristine, but the abandoned and dilapidated fishing equipment has sculptural quality.
- Vast expanses of shingle feel remote and desolate, but other parts feel settled and busy.
- Views are long and expansive (partly due to lack of trees) with prominent vertical features.
- Landmarks include power stations, lighthouses and Lydd church tower.

Forces for change in the landscape

- Constant movement of shingle due to natural coastal process, resulting in erosion of the beach to the south of the power stations. This necessitates artificial replenishment of the beach using lorry loads of shingle transported from the eastern end of the ness.
- The conservation management of large parts of the LCA should be a positive change, enhancing both biodiversity and landscape character.
- Development pressure e.g. airport expansion, power station redevelopment, aggregate extraction, military uses, residential demand.
- Potential loss of character of settled areas due to new development which is not sympathetic in terms of its size, materials, design or siting. What is appropriate varies greatly depending on the location and type of new development. Expanding tourist facilities at Dungeness (e.g. lighting, car parks) would also undermine the area's character.
- Climate change is likely to impact on this exposed coast, particularly through sea level rise, and increased frequency and intensity of storm events. The types of plants and animal species inhabiting the area may also be affected by changes in environmental conditions.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- The unique character and ad-hoc feel of settlement on Dungeness, including (for example) through restricting building height, avoiding permanent structures and keeping properties open rather than fenced. At the same time, the expressions of individuality and spontaneity which are so important to the sense of place should be able to continue.
- Historic sites and their landscape settings, particularly those structures which are seen from a distance, e.g. the Sound Mirrors, Lighthouses and Lydd church tower.

Manage

- Nature conservation sites, in accordance with their management plans. Consider additional defined footpaths/ boardwalks so shingle vegetation is not damaged through trampling, and raise awareness of the importance of the shingle habitats.
- Farmland (especially areas which are not covered by environmental designations), enhancing their value for wildlife.
- Areas in military use, allowing occasional public access if appropriate.

Plan

- To protect the special character of Dungeness (See 'protect' note above) through the planning process, but without stifling individuality.
- When making planning decisions, consider the scale, form, materials and massing of existing buildings of that type. For example, very large scale industrial structures and small-scale domestic structures are both present. However, large scale domestic buildings would appear out of place.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
- *Green Lanes for Bumblebees* project, promoting positive management of field margins to provide bumblebee habitats. This will have limited application in this LCA, but there is some farmland on Denge Marsh and around the airport.
- *Sentinels on the Marsh* project focussing on churches and their landscape settings. Lydd church is a prominent feature in the landscape, seen from Dungeness and the surrounding Marsh.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features. In this LCA, projects could be focussed on encouraging visitors who come to Dungeness to explore the wider Romney Marsh area, as well as providing additional interpretation of wildlife and historic features within the LCA.
- Additional project focussed on public landscape art, perhaps working with local artists.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 7: Romney Marsh Coast

Location and Context

This long, narrow LCA is located at the eastern edge of the Study Area. It comprises the settlements along the east-facing coast between Dungeness and Hythe. Although the eastern LPS boundary stops at the high-tide line, the LCA continues to the low-tide line. The western (inland) boundary of the LCA follows either the line of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway, or the settlement edges.

There are several settlements within the LCA, although some merge into each other. Settlements within the LCA include Lydd-on-Sea, Greatstone-on-Sea, Littlestone-on-sea, New Romney, St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch

Fig. 63: The Dymchurch wall looking north. Note the cannon mounted on the Martello tower on the left.

Summary Description

This LCA comprises a strip of developed east-facing coastline, including associated shingle, sandy beaches and sand dunes. Settlements vary in age from the historic towns of New Romney (a planned Norman town and Cinque Port) and Dymchurch, through to the Edwardian development of Littlestone-on-Sea and 20th Century coastal bungalows, caravan parks and housing estates. Despite the developed nature of the settlements, the constant presence of the sea to the east and Romney Marsh to the west means that it retains its open and rural context. The settlements are connected by the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, and small-scale steam engines are a regular sight and sound.

This stretch of coastline needs constant defence from the sea, as much of the development and the marsh behind is at or below sea level. The Dymchurch wall was started in 1288 to supplement the protection provided by natural banks of shingle. Today, a sea wall runs for much of the length of the LCA, and in the northern part is a highly-engineered structure, defended on the seaward side with rock armour. As well as invasion from the sea, Romney Marsh has also been threatened with invasion by armies crossing the channel. Consequently, the coastline contains a number of defensive structures, including distinctive Martello Towers from the Napoleonic Wars. The area is a popular holiday destination, and contains many caravan parks and associated tourism development.

Key Characteristics

- Landform comprises a bank of shingle running north-east – south-west, with associated beaches and sand dune systems. Some settlements have expanded onto the drained marshland on the inland side.
- Several of the major drainage channels (sewers) draining the marsh discharge into the sea at low tide through sluices in the sea walls.
- Land use is primarily settlement and recreation, with occasional small pockets of farmland.
- Semi-natural habitats include extensive shingle, sandy beaches and sand dune systems, many of which are designated for their nature conservation importance.
- Settlement includes the Saxon settlements of Dymchurch and New Romney (later a Cinque Port) with medieval buildings and churches. Other settlement dates from the 20th Century and much is tourism-related.
- Tourism/ recreation development includes Edwardian guest houses at Littlestone, interwar seaside bungalows and caravan parks. There are also golf courses and amusement parks.
- The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch steam railway is a distinctive feature of the area.
- A259 runs through the northern part of the LCA (behind the sea wall) linking Hythe and New Romney. Southern part of the LCA is accessed by a straight road behind the shingle bank.
- Sea defences are essential to supplement the natural shingle barrier and prevent flooding of settlements and farmland. The Dymchurch wall has been maintained for over 800 years.
- A history of defence against cross-channel invasion, with surviving structures from the Napoleonic wars (including Martello Towers) and WW2.
- New Romney church tower and Littlestone Tower are landmarks in views. Many views from within the area include the sea or the marsh inland, so it retains a sense of openness.
- Seasonal variations in character increased by the seasonality of the tourist industry.
- A wide range of textures and colours, with sea walls, roads, beaches, groynes and buildings forming linear features in the landscape.
- Cultural associations with smuggling, made famous through the Dr Syn novels.

Fig. 64: Medieval buildings in New Romney

Fig. 65: Littlestone-on-Sea, with shingle beach, fishing boats, beach huts and Edwardian hotels

Fig. 66: Engines from the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway steam through Lydd-on-Sea

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	The Romney Coast
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	N/A
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	N/A
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	N/A

Natural influences and sites

- A dynamic natural environment, comprising mobile shingle and sand dunes. Historically, the LCA comprised a spit of shingle which protected the marshes behind from inundation by the sea. However, the mobile shingle can be breached in storms. The northern part of the shingle bank around Dymchurch has therefore been artificially strengthened since the 13th Century.
- Sediment movement also caused the silting of Romney harbour in the 13th Century.
- Beaches and shingle banks at the southern end of the LCA are designated SSSI, SAC and Ramsar for their nature conservation importance, specifically vegetated shingle and wetland habitats. The shingle is also within the Dungeness National Nature Reserve.
- Sand dune systems at Greatstone and Romney Warren, designated SSSI for their dune habitats and the grassland plant communities they support. Part of Romney Warren is a Local Nature Reserve.

Cultural influences and sites

- Long history of occupation, including Roman material (associated with salt working) found at Dymchurch. Dymchurch and New Romney were established by Domesday, and following the Battle of Hastings, William the Conqueror secured Romney on his way to Dover. New Romney expanded as a planned town and became a Cinque Port. Its harbour silted up in the 13th Century, and the Rhee Wall channel was constructed in an attempt to scour the harbour.
- A range of sea defences required to supplement the natural shingle barrier. The Dymchurch Wall was constructed in 1288, initially with a framework of staked thorn and brushwood capped with clay. Stone groynes were built into the sea to dissipate the wave action. The wall was stone-faced in the 19th century and is now concrete protected with rock armour.
- Early 20th Century coastal engineering included closure of the gap between Littlestone and Greatstone (a sandy bay which was all that remained of the New Romney harbour inlet).
- Defensive structures survive from the Napoleonic Wars (Lade Fort, Martello Towers) and WW2 (pill boxes, Mulberry Harbour off Littlestone on Sea). Several are designated Scheduled Monuments.
- The area developed as a tourist destination during the 20th Century, with the construction of Edwardian guest-houses at Littlestone, inter-war bungalows along the coast, caravan sites, holiday camps and associated entertainment sites. Beaches are popular for recreation, including sand-yachting at Greatstone.
- Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway constructed in 1927 as a project by an eccentric inventor and racing driver. It is a small-scale steam railway which runs public services, and its distinctive trains, track, stations, signals and bridges are important features within the landscape of the LCA.
- Conservation Areas in Dymchurch, New Romney and Littlestone-on-Sea.
- Numerous Listed Buildings, concentrated in older settlements (including several Martello Towers).
- A long history of smuggling within the LCA, made famous by the Dr Syn novels by Russell Thorndyke, set in Dymchurch.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- The narrow form of the development means that there are usually views out to sea and/ or across the marsh, so it still feels relatively rural. Littlestone Tower and New Romney church are landmarks.
- Strong seasonal changes in perceptions of the LCA - in winter it can feel quite bleak, exposed and abandoned, but in summer it is busy, colourful and bustling with tourists.
- The sights, sounds and smells of the steam railway contribute to sense of place.
- The sweep of the bay and presence of the Marsh create a sense of space. Sea, sand, shingle, dunes, concrete, groynes and buildings combine to give varied patterns and textures to the landscape.

Forces for change in the landscape

- Loss of open coast, particularly in the Mid-20th Century. Linear bungalows along the coast create a 'serrated' skyline. The problem is exacerbated by recent replacement of bungalows with houses.
- Coastal development has impacted on the settings of historic structures. Lydd Fort is now surrounded by houses, and the southern Martello Tower in Dymchurch is stranded in a carpark.
- The rise and subsequent fall of the tourism industry has affected the character of the area. There are caravan parks throughout the LCA, but also an abandoned holiday camp at St Mary's Bay.
- Many interpretation boards are in poor condition, suggesting a recent lack of funding.
- Litter, particularly in summer.
- Changes in the fishing industry affecting the economy and land uses within the LCA. Abandoned boats can be seen on the beach at Littlestone.
- Dymchurch sea wall is a hard feature in views from inland, physically and visually separating sea from land.
- The low-lying coastal settlements within this LCA are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels and storm damage associated with climate change.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- Historic buildings and their settings. Take opportunities which arise to enhance settings which have been damaged through insensitive development in the past.
- The remaining sections of undeveloped coast.
- Streetscapes, particularly in New Romney and Dymchurch Conservation Areas.

Manage

- Golf courses and sand dune systems to enhance their biodiversity value.
- Designed nature conservation sites, in accordance with their Management Plans.
- Existing interpretation boards etc., replacing those which have become dilapidated or illegible.

Plan

- To respect the scales of existing buildings. For example, don't replace bungalows with houses.
- To allow good quality modern design in appropriate locations, using materials, styles and scales which respect existing development in the vicinity.
- Consider opportunities to 'soften' the appearance of the back of the Dymchurch wall, for example using coir rolls to grow salt-tolerant plants.
- To ensure that screen-planting schemes associated with new development use native trees (e.g. thorn, willow and holly) rather than ornamental species such as Leylandii, which are visually intrusive and not in keeping with the character of the landscape.
- To protect the remaining sections of undeveloped open coast from development.
- To minimise visual impacts of development in views from the marsh.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands.
- *Sentinels on the Marsh* project focussing on churches and their landscape settings.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features. This is particularly important in this LCA, as the majority of residents and visitors stay here, but much of the interpretation is currently in poor condition. There is potential to develop circular walks and trails between railway halts, and to encourage local residents to understand and engage with the landscape on their doorstep.
- Additional project to build on the excellent community art projects already on display around New Romney, perhaps extending them to other settlements.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 8: Camber Coast

Location and Context

This relatively small LCA is located in the south-west of the Study Area. To the west is the River Rother, and to the south the sea (Rye Bay). Although the LPS boundary stops at the high water mark, the LCA boundary extends to the low water mark.

To the north are the Walland Farmlands LCA and Highknock Channel LCA, with the boundaries of the Camber Coast LCA following the river wall, roads and settlement edges.

The settlement of Camber is within this LCA.

Fig. 67: View east from sand dunes. Camber village is on the left of the photo. Camber Sands and beach-front development is on the right. Early-colonising grasses are establishing on newly-formed dunes.

Summary Description

This LCA is the most recently-settled within Romney Marsh, and comprises the south-facing coast of Camber Sands and the associated tourism and recreational development. This is a sandy landscape, with an extensive sandy beach at Camber Sands, and a mobile dune system to the north, much of which is used as a golf links. The village of Camber developed as a tourist resort associated with the beach in the Mid-20th Century, largely around the Pontins development. Also within this LCA are the former aggregate quarry at Northpoint (which is now a lake used for recreation and watersports) and the adjacent strip of salt marsh along the margin of the river Rother. The feel of the landscape varies greatly depending on weather and season. In the summer it is warm and bustling, but in winter it can feel very desolate. The Camber sand dunes reach over 10m high, and afford good views across Walland Marsh.

Key Characteristics

- A landscape dominated by both mobile and stabilised sand. An extensive ridge of sand dunes rises to over 10m in in height. The remainder of the LCA is flat and close to sea level.
- River Rother forms the western boundary of the LCA. Large area of open water at Northpoint Lake. Formerly an aggregate quarry and now used for recreation.
- Land use includes settlement and recreation, with extensive areas of semi-natural habitats.
- Semi-natural habitats include Camber Sands beach and dune system, saltmarsh along the river Rother, and open water at Northpoint Lake.
- Settlement dates from the Mid-20th Century onwards, and primarily comprises holiday development based around Pontins Holiday Park. There are also some permanently-occupied dwellings and new housing estates.
- Camber Road (between Rye and Lydd) runs through the LCA. It is followed by National Cycle Route 2 for much of its length. There are also residential streets, and tracks within caravan sites.
- A popular holiday and visitor destination, which has developed around the large sandy beach.
- The sand dunes form the highest land in the area, and provide excellent views across the surrounding marshes and Rye Bay. They also form the horizon in views seawards from Walland Marsh.
- Strong seasonal variations in character throughout the year, reflecting changes in weather, light, season and numbers of visitors.
- The bright and light colours of the holiday buildings and caravans mean that they stand out in the open landscape and contrast with the open marsh landscape behind.

Fig. 68: Pontin's, Camber

Fig. 69: Golf links on stable sand dune system, Rye Golf Club

Fig. 70: Saltmarsh habitat along the river Rother. Rye is visible on the horizon

Landscape Character Areas identified in existing Landscape Character Assessments within this LCA	
Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	N/A
Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)	N/A
Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment	N/A
East Sussex County Landscape Assessment	Rye-Winchelsea Area

Natural influences and sites

- A landscape which has seen great physical changes in past centuries. Prior to the 13th Century, the area was protected by the shingle barrier which connected Fairlight and Dungeness. This broke down in the 13th Century, allowing tides to flow inland through the breach, and creating a bay. Coastal processes of sand and shingle movement have re-orientated the beaches and allowed the headlands to advance towards each other, narrowing the bay and creating today's landform.
- A dynamic landscape strongly influenced by wind-blown sand. Camber sand dunes have accumulated since 1800 as a result of the interaction between wind, sand and plants, and are continuing to form on the seaward side.
- All of the undeveloped parts of the LCA are within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI.
- Camber Sands beach and part of Northpoint lake are also designated SPA for their importance as bird habitats.
- The foreshore, parts of the dunes, saltmarsh and Northpoint Lake are also designated Ramsar sites, representing wetlands of international significance.

Cultural influences and sites

- 16th Century maps show the Camber Channel being used as anchorage for ships. During the 100 Years War it was used for ships massing ready to cross the English Channel.
- The 1921 OS map shows a steam tramway connecting Rye and Camber, with a station on the east bank of the River Rother, near the golf links. There was also a ferry across the River Rother between Camber and Rye Harbour. The only buildings in Camber were farmhouses, cottages and an inn. Northpoint is shown as a beach rather than a lake.
- Broomhill Sea wall was built in the 1760s to replace the natural shingle barrier. Originally constructed of clay, it is now faced with concrete and protected by an artificial bank of shingle. Repairs to the wall are ongoing.

Visual and perceptual qualities

- Long, panoramic views from the tops of dunes across the LCA and over the surrounding marsh and sea. Dungeness is visible on the eastern horizon, and the Little Cheyne Court wind farm on Walland Marsh is also prominent in views. To the south there are views towards the Fairlight cliffs.
- A marked contrast between the built development (often brightly coloured or light in colour) within the LCA and the natural colours of the open marsh and coast beyond. Development associated with this LCA is very apparent in views from Walland Marsh, although the ridge of sand dunes forms a natural horizon behind it.
- Development is largely screened by sand dunes in views looking inland from the beach.
- Industrial land uses on the western bank of the river Rother impact on some views within the LCA.
- The LCA has a smaller size and scale than the surrounding LCAs.
- Sand dunes create strong textures and distinctive colours in the landscape.
- In summer, the LCA has a bustling, holiday atmosphere, but in the winter it can feel deserted and exposed.

Forces for change in the landscape

- Mobile sand - blowing across the LCA (particularly during onshore winds), and accumulating as sand dunes.
- Natural processes of coastal erosion damaging sea walls and necessitating ongoing maintenance.
- Litter, particularly along the strand line of the river Rother.
- Large-scale, urban style buildings which contrast with the rural character of the adjacent marsh.
- Recent housing developments on the western edge of the village, and continued demand for holiday accommodation, caravan parks etc.
- Climate change (particularly associated sea level rise, and increase in storm intensity) increases the flood risk, and the rate of coastal change.

Recommendations for landscape enhancement

Protect

- The undeveloped character of views looking inland from the beach. In these views, the sand dunes screen most of the development.

Manage

- Nature conservation sites (dunes, salt marshes, open water, wetlands and beaches) in accordance with their management plans.
- Recreation sites, to enhance their biodiversity and landscape value, as well as their recreation value. This will require partnership working with landowners.

Plan

- To ensure that any new development is well-designed and sited, and is sympathetic to its landscape context in terms of its materials, scale and design.
- To minimise the visual impacts of any new development, especially in views from the marsh. Ensure that any screening vegetation uses native species (e.g. thorn, willow and holly) rather than ornamental species.

Potential Landscape Partnership Scheme project opportunities

- *Blue Lanes* project promoting habitat management in watercourses and wetlands. Within this LCA, Northpoint Lake is the largest area of wetland and open water.
- *Rediscovering the 5th Continent* project, including guided trails, promotion of cycling, interpretation of historic sites and landscape features. This is important within this LCA, because there are opportunities to engage with residents and visitors. There are opportunities to promote trails and circular walks from Camber into Walland Marsh along existing Public Rights of Way.
- Additional project to record and map the changing positions and heights of sand dunes.
- Additional project to pick up litter, particularly along the strand line of the river Rother.

BLANK PAGE

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ELC	European Landscape Convention
GIS	Geographic Information System
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
IDB	[Romney Marshes Area] Internal Drainage Board
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LPS	Landscape Partnership Scheme
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
NNR	National Nature Reserve
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SM	Scheduled Monument
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
WW2	World War Two

APPENDIX B:
REFERENCES AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Published sources and websites

Ashford District *Landscape Character SPD* (Adopted April 2011)
http://www.ashford.gov.uk/landscape-character-spd

British Geological Survey *Geology of Britain Viewer* (solid and drift geology)
http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html

Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay- most recent designations of SPA and Ramsar site (April 1st 2016)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-protection-area-and-ramsar-site-dungeness-romney-marsh-and-rye-bay

East Sussex *County Landscape Assessment*
https://eastsussexgovuk.blob.core.windows.net/media/1974/the_levels.pdf

Eddison, J. (2000) *Romney Marsh: Survival on a Frontier* Tempus Publishing

Harmer, J. and Wemble, J. (2015) *Romney Marsh from the Air* Wealden Print

Holyer, A. and Miaoulis, N. (2008) *Life on Marsh* Bank House Books

Jacobs Babtie (for Kent County Council) (2004) *The Landscape Assessment of Kent*
http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/countryside-policies-and-reports/kents-landscape-assessment

Kent Downs AONB (2005) *Landscape Design Handbook*
http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/guidance-management-and-advice/landscape-design-handbook

Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation
http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/kent_hlc_2014/

Multi Agency Geographic Information on the Countryside (MAGIC). Maps of designations and links to designation citations:
http://www.magic.gov.uk/

Natural England *Romney Marshes National Character Area*
http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5701066775592960?category=587130

Royal Military Canal: http://www.royalmilitarycanal.com/pages/index.asp

Romney Marsh - Information on heritage, communities and things to do: http://theromneymarsh.net/

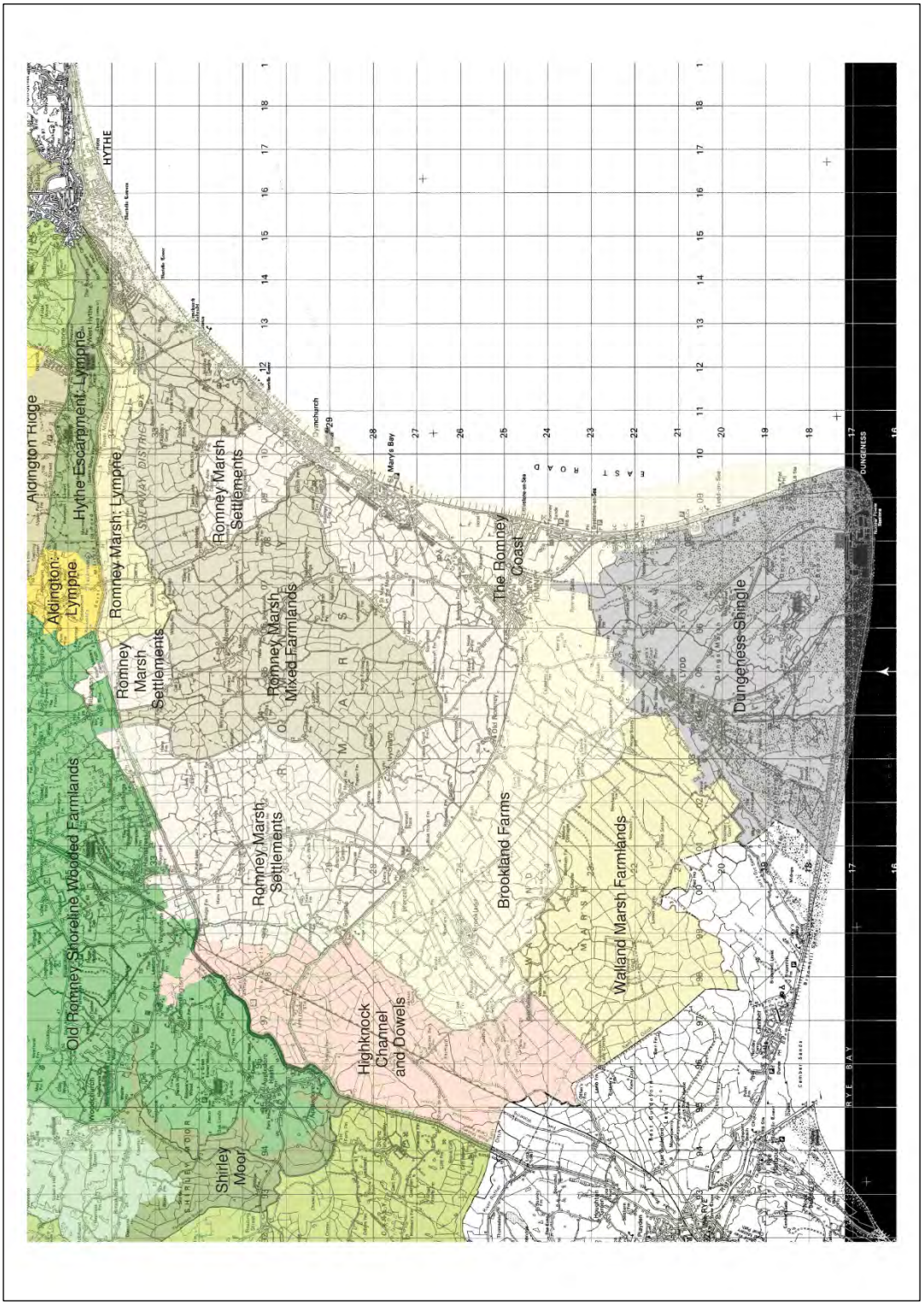
Romney Marsh Research Trust (large archive of research): http://rmrt.org.uk/

Maps

Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer Series sheets 125 and 138
Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger Series sheet 189
Cassini Historic Map set 189 (Ashford and Romney Marsh)

APPENDIX C:
EXTRACTS FROM THE *LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF KENT* (JACOBS BABTIE, 2004)

The following extracts are the summary **characteristic features** for each of the Kent Landscape Character Areas within the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme boundary. They are shown in the following map extract from the *Landscape Assessment of Kent*:



Brookland Farms

- Well-settled farmland with scattered farms, rural and historically rich.
- Flat, open, large embankments, historical sea defences and sunken pastures.
- WW2 buildings now used for farm buildings, some derelict.
- Wide views from top of sea wall.

Dungeness Shingle

- Dominant landform, flat with micro-relief of long shingle ridges.
- Remote, exposed coastal location, constant wind or breeze, extremes of climate.
- Specialized vegetation.
- Big skies and atmospheric quality of light.
- Few roads, very inaccessible.
- Scarce settlement, unusual buildings, few boundaries to dwellings.

Highknock Channel and Dowels

- Unenclosed, wide views, open landscape.
- Reedy floodplain, raised water channels and grassy embankments, wide drainage ditches.
- Monotone of grasses, little seasonal variation.
- Pastoral, ragged grasses and untidy agricultural furniture.
- Sheep and cattle.
- A very few large farms with historical locations, no other settlement.

Romney Marsh: Lympne

- Drainage ditches and canal. Reed vegetation.
- Flat, remote.
- Rich arable and pasture.
- Scrubby, with windblown trees around settlements.

Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands

- Flat, open, long views.
- Agricultural: arable crops, large agricultural buildings.
- Clusters of willow and poplar around settlements.
- Open, cleared ditches.

Romney Marsh Settlements

- Distinctive lowland with dominant flat landform and drainage ditches.
- Remnant willow pollards.
- Varied tree-lined distant enclosures with distinctive poplars.
- Narrow roads, ditches either side.
- Scattered farmhouses, small villages.
- Small bridges and sluices common.

The Romney Coast

- Sheltered linear 20th Century holiday development behind sea wall.
- Many temporary structures.
- Heritage structures such as Martello Towers.
- Dominant sea wall.
- Sand dunes and dune grasses. Mudflats and timber groynes on seaward side.

Walland Marsh Farmland

- Big skies, distant horizons, intensive light or weather conditions, very flat.
- Arable crops, large unenclosed fields, seasonal contracts in landcover.
- Very few settlements, no roads, inaccessible.
- Vestiges of military use – wire fences and concrete roads and fence posts. Some former military housing.