

# Folkestone and Hythe District Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Main Report



**Folkestone & Hythe**  
District Council

July 2023

FINAL



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# Introduction

New Romney



## About this Report

This report sets out the strategic network of green and blue infrastructure Folkestone and Hythe district. It presents an evidence base and provides an assessment of the needs and opportunities, strategic priorities and future actions. An additional Priorities and Opportunities document provides a summary and a collation of priorities, opportunities and actions.

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

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

In Part 2, the strategic priorities are set out and areas of the district are described in more detail:

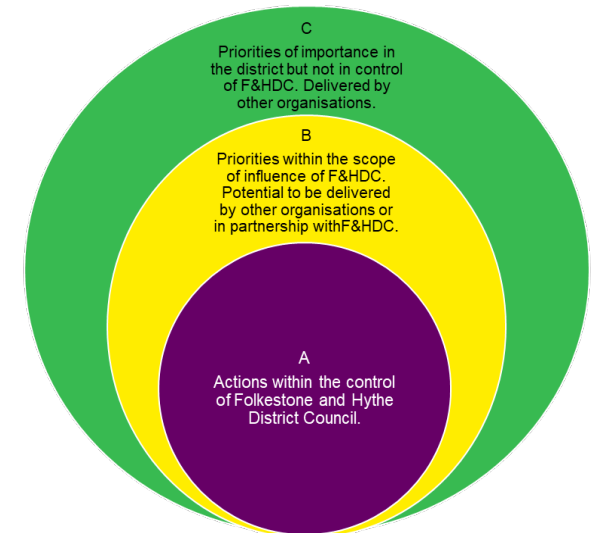
- Folkestone town, Hythe and Saltwood;
- Romney Marsh; and
- The North Downs.

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

Although this is a document produced by Folkestone and Hythe District Council, improving green and blue infrastructure will require action by many different organisations, groups, communities and individuals. The priorities and actions set out a broad ambition to improve green and blue

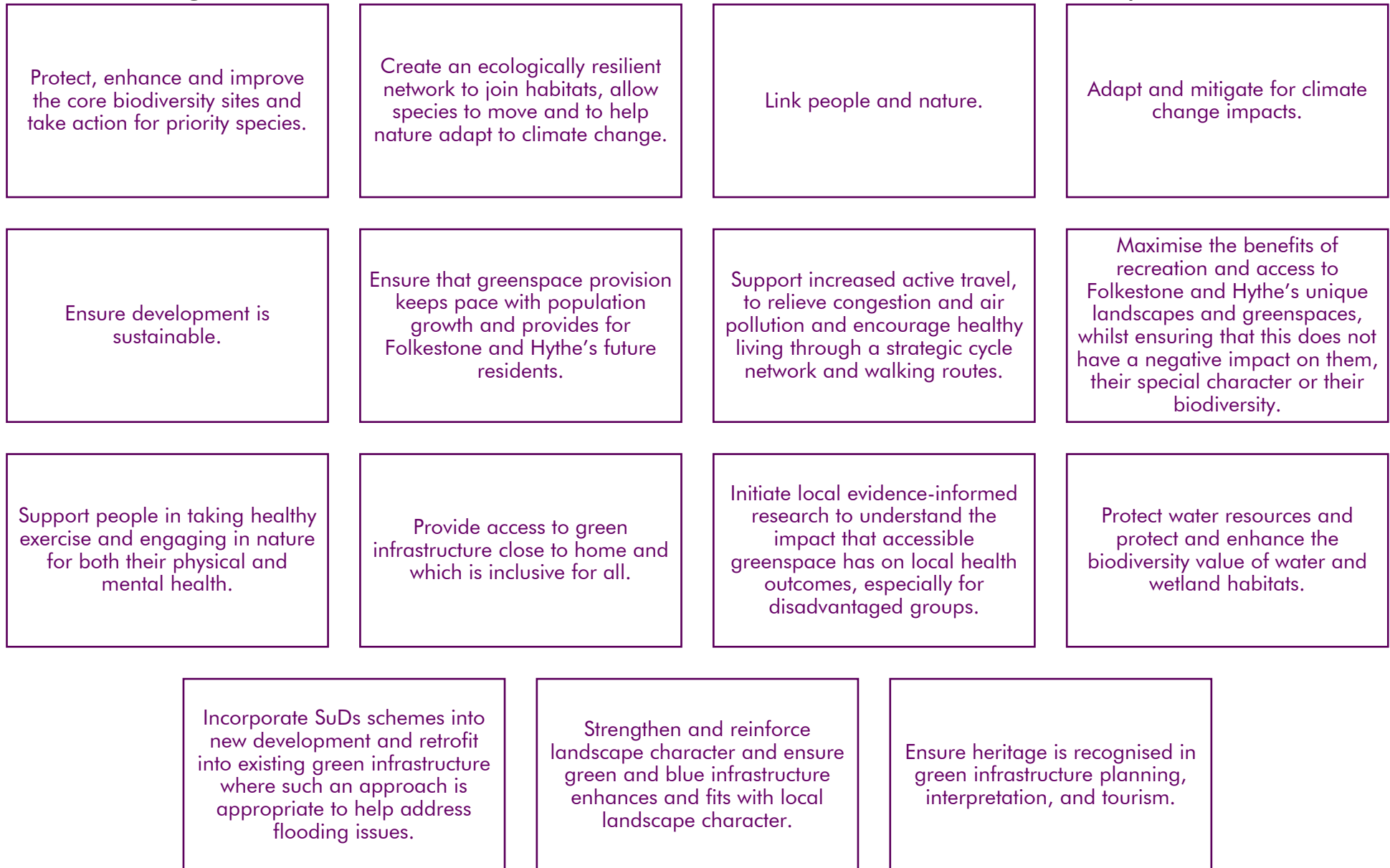
infrastructure in Folkestone and Hythe district. Some of these can be delivered by Folkestone and Hythe District Council. However, many will need to be delivered in partnership or by other organisations, and many will require additional funding.

There are currently many significant developments taking place around green and blue infrastructure and climate change. Therefore this strategy should be reviewed no later than five years from its publication and amended accordingly. A rolling action plan will be produced to guide implementation.





## Strategic Priorities for Green and Blue Infrastructure in Folkestone and Hythe District



## What is Green and Blue Infrastructure?

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

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

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

### What is Green Infrastructure?

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

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

## National and Local Policy

### National Planning Policy Framework 2021

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

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

Furthermore, green and blue infrastructure planning should:

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

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

### Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act covers targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment across a wide range of areas including, environmental reporting, air quality, water, nature and biodiversity and conservation covenants.

The legislation brings in a raft of new requirements for planners and decision-makers in councils in relation to nature and biodiversity. The changes of greatest significance to this strategy are detailed.

#### Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain is a mechanism through which development leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. The government announced it would mandate net gains for biodiversity in 2019. Mandatory biodiversity net gain, as set out in the Environment Act 2021, will be applied in England in 2023 through secondary legislation and amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) following a two year implementation period.



The Environment Act 2021 sets out the following components to mandatory biodiversity net gain:

- Minimum 10% gain<sup>3</sup> is required calculated using Defra's Biodiversity Metric and approval of net gain plan;
- Habitat secured for at least 30 years via obligations / conservation covenants;
- Habitat can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity credits;
- There will be a national register for net gain delivery sites;
- The mitigation hierarchy - avoidance, mitigation and compensation for biodiversity loss - still applies.

## The Nature Recovery Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is an initiative to create a national network of wildlife-rich places. It is a commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and enacted by the Environment Act 2021. The NRN is intended to help to address the biggest challenges faced around biodiversity loss, climate change and wellbeing.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) will be an integral way of developing the NRN. These are a new system of spatial strategies for nature. They must identify the opportunities and priorities for enhancing biodiversity and supporting wider objectives such as mitigating or adapting to climate change in an area.

As spatial strategies, LNRS will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. Secondary legislation and statutory guidance, yet to be published, will contain the detail, but at a minimum each LNRS will include:

- Agreed priorities for nature's recovery;
- A map of the most valuable existing areas for nature;
- A map of proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature;
- Inclusion of wider environmental goals.

Kent, including Folkestone and Hythe, is currently developing a county Local Nature Recovery Strategy through the Kent Nature Partnership. Kent's Nature Recovery Strategy aims to:

- Channel investment into local priorities for protection and enhancement, such as the Environment Land Management scheme;
- Map specific opportunities for the use of 'nature-based solutions' to wider environmental problems like flooding, climate change mitigation and adaptation or poor water quality;
- Guide mandatory biodiversity net gain investments;
- Provide a source of evidence for local planning authorities to prepare their Local Plans, helping these authorities understand locations important for conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

## Species Conservation and Protected Site Strategies

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

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

## Strengthened Biodiversity Duty

This creates an expectation that authorities will look strategically at their policies and operations at least every 5 years and assess what action they can take 'to further' the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, furthering the existing duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. They must also have regard to the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Sites Strategies and should produce a Biodiversity Report.

## Duty to Consult – Trees

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

## Other Relevant National Policy

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

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

25 Year Environment Plan (2018) – This sets out the government’s intended actions to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. Chapter 3, ‘Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing’, sets out ambitions for green infrastructure:

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

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

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

### Service Ambition 2: A Thriving Environment

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

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

In addition, the council recognises the district’s unique ‘sense of place’ - unique towns, distinctive villages, breath-taking



countryside and heritage. The council will harness what is unique to each area and develop plans to further enhance these opportunities, for example to encourage eco-tourism.<sup>6</sup>

## Folkestone and Hythe Core Strategy Review 2022

The adopted Core Strategy is a long-term plan bringing together the aims and actions of the government, local councils, residents, businesses and voluntary groups, by managing development.

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

Policies relevant to this strategy include:

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

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

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

## Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP) 2020

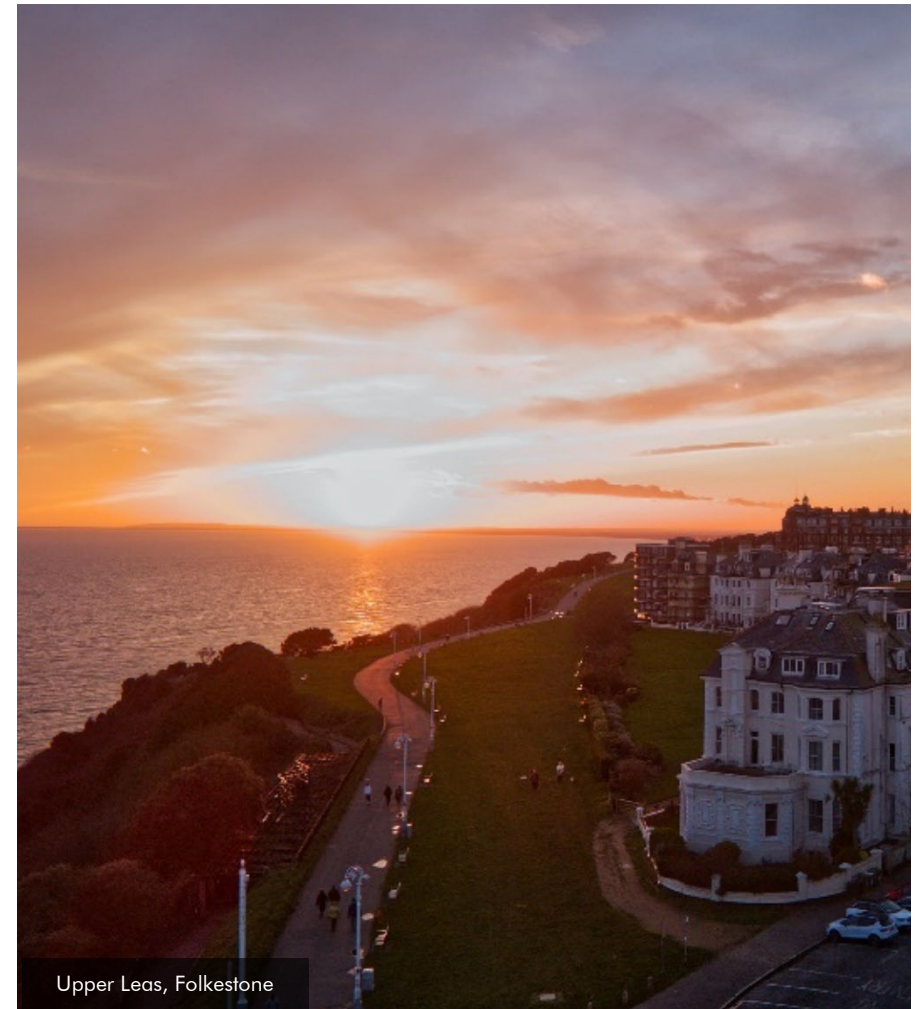
The Places and Policies Local Plan sits below the Core Strategy and has two functions:

- To allocate enough land for future development to meet the requirements set out in the Core Strategy for residential, employment, community and other needs; and
- To provide development management policies that will be used to assess planning applications and guide future development.

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

Below are the main strategies applicable this strategy:

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



Upper Leas, Folkestone

# Climate Change

## The Challenges and Impacts of Climate Change

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

Kent's geographical location, long coastline and its population density means that it is likely to suffer from some of the severest impacts of climate change in the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> The Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway (CCRIA) provides detailed projections of climate change to 2100. Under a high emissions scenario, this suggests that in Kent there will be:

- Hotter summers with an increase in average summer temperature of 2-3°C by 2040 and 5- 6°C by 2080;
- Warmer winters with an increase in average winter temperature of 1-2°C by 2040 and 3-4°C by 2080;
- Drier summers with a reduction in average precipitation of 20-30% by 2040 and 30-50% by 2080;
- Wetter winters with an increase in average precipitation of 10-20% by 2040 and 20-30% by 2080;
- Increases in sea-level rise by up to 0.3m by 2040 and 0.8m by 2080.

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

## The Role of Green and Blue Infrastructure

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

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





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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

## Climate Change and Folkestone and Hythe District

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

In 2021 the council published its Carbon Action Plan. This Carbon Action Plan sits alongside the council's Corporate Plan 2021-30.

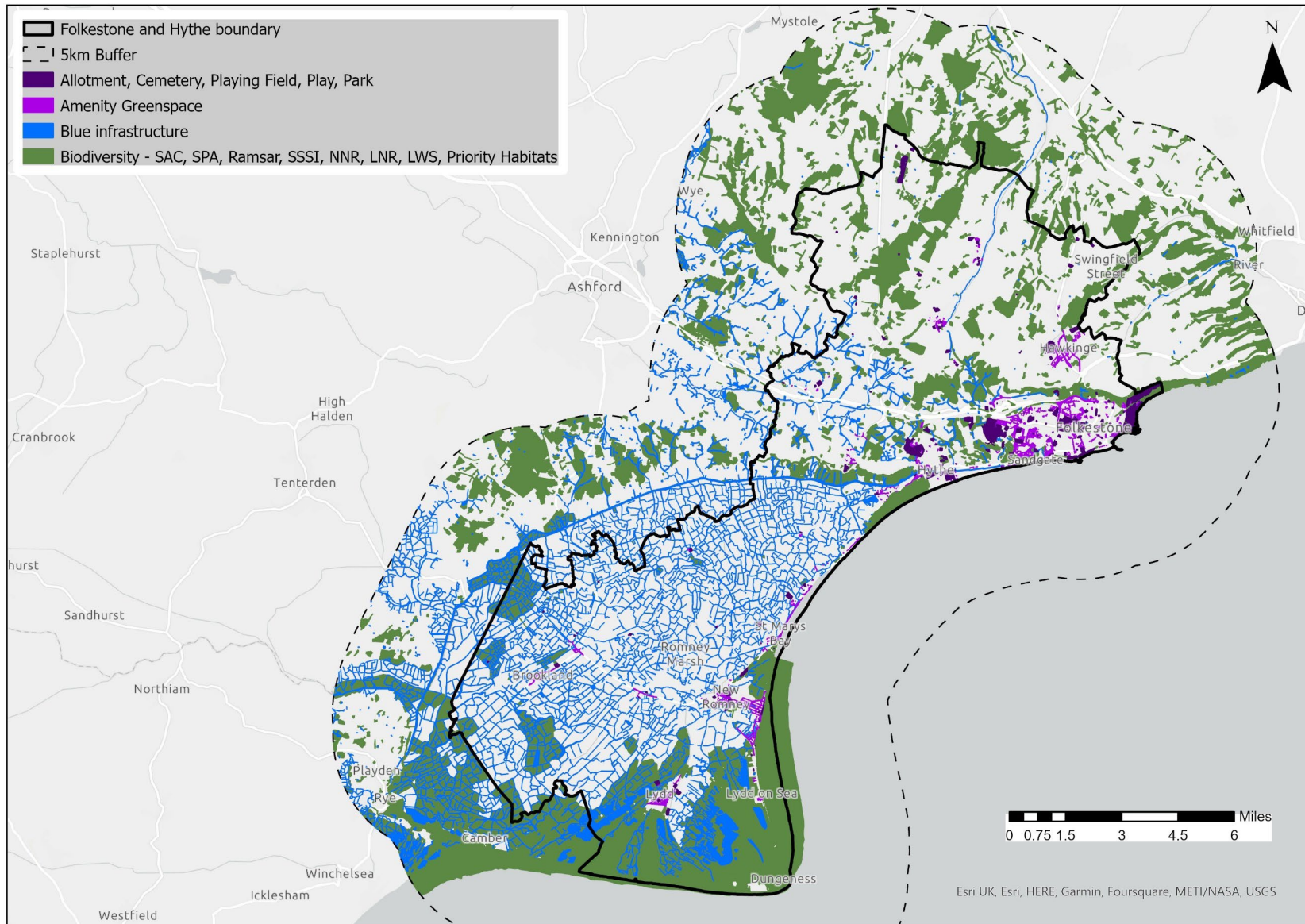
Some of the achievements to tackle climate change so far include:

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

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

- Review the use of peat, redesign mowing regimes and support adaptation measures such as tree planting for carbon sequestration and 'cooling-off' benefits;
- Use council-owned land to increase biodiversity and carry out tree planting;
- Continue to work with Environment Agency, Kent County Council, business organisations and community groups to develop appropriate flood mitigation measures and tree planting schemes across the district;
- Ensure that the Local Plan continues to develop and implement policies that will deliver improved net zero carbon building standards - subject to national policy;
- This strategy is also listed as an action and as an important supporting strategy to meeting ambitions to address climate change.

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





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

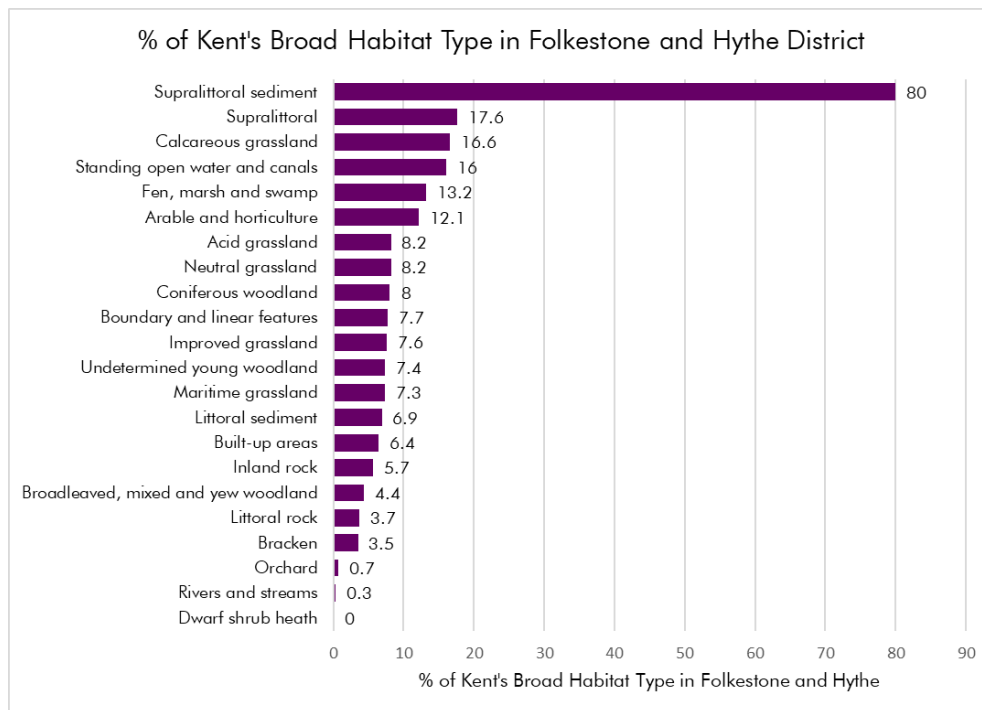




# Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands

## Introduction

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



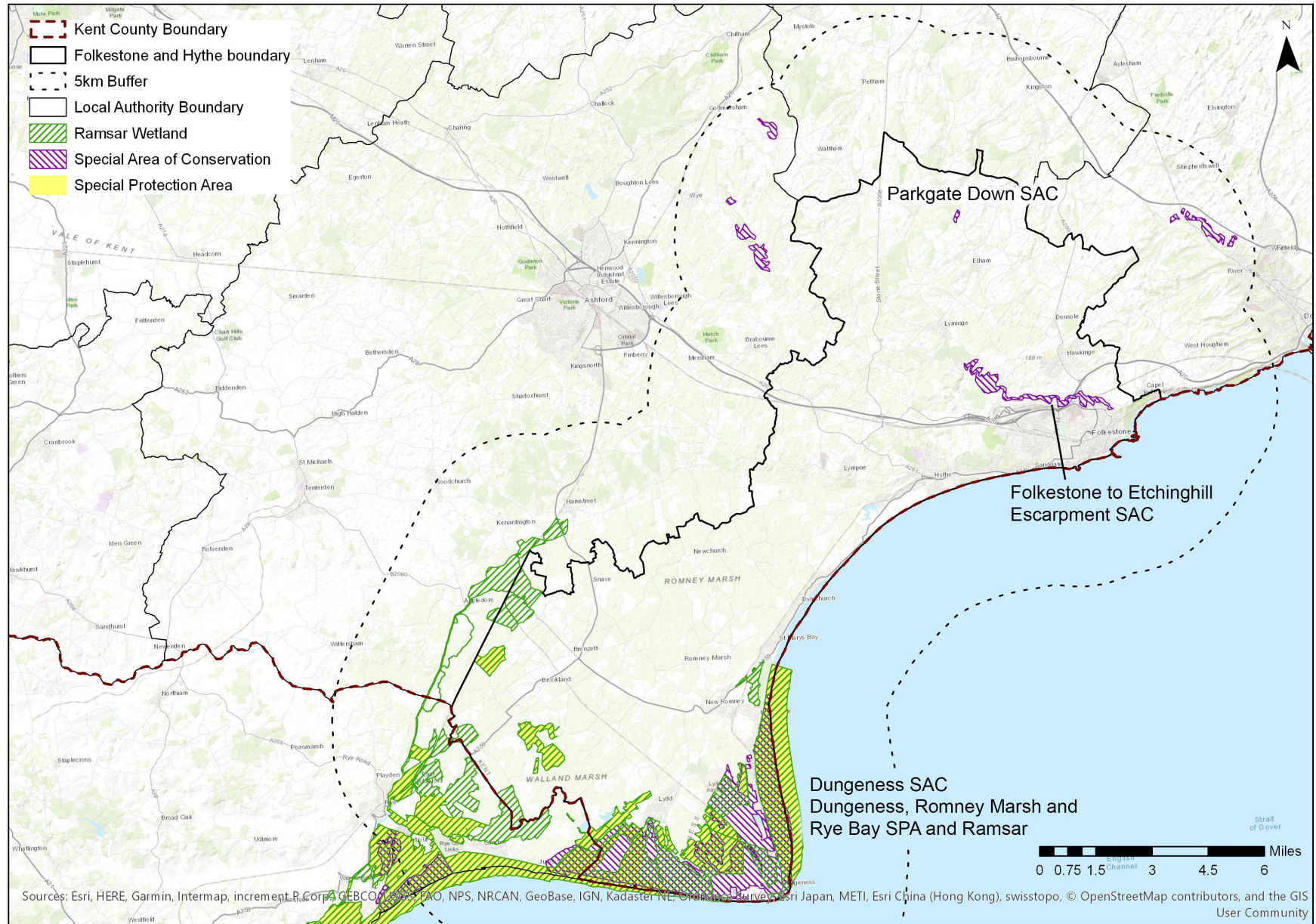
## Folkestone and Hythe's Protected Wildlife Sites

Around 16% of Folkestone and Hythe's area, including inshore areas, is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. There are also several designations for the district's international importance for nature.<sup>12</sup> These designated areas overlap in many cases, with areas falling under several designations (see Plans 1 and 2).

*Table 1: Nature Conservation Designations*

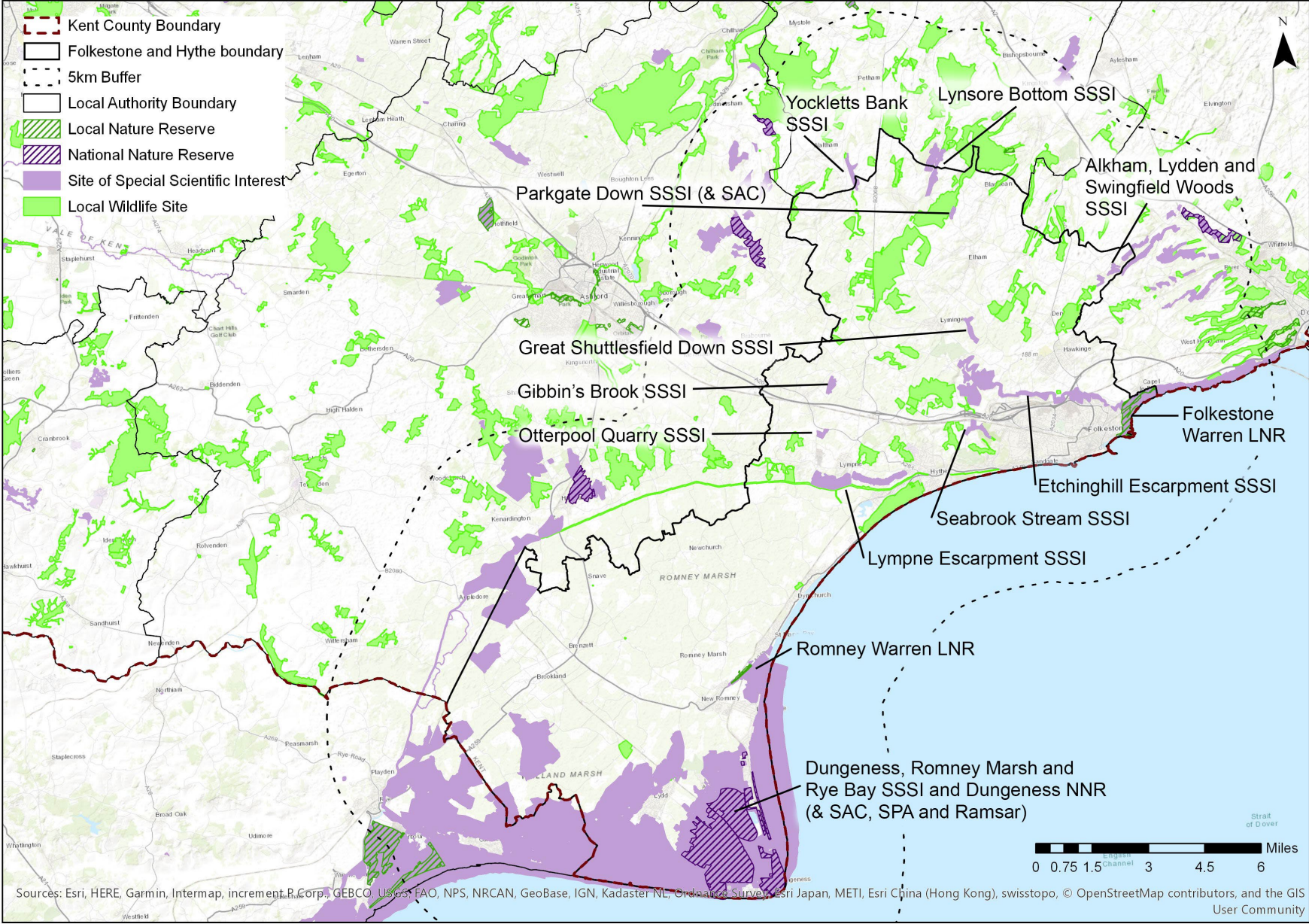
Designated Sites <sup>13</sup>	Area (sq. km)
<b>International</b>	
Special Protection Areas (for birds) <sup>14</sup>	18.70
Special Areas of Conservation (for habitats) <sup>15</sup>	27.93
Ramsar wetlands <sup>16</sup>	31.54
<b>National</b>	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest <sup>17</sup>	57.80
National Nature Reserves	10.27
<b>Local and Kent</b>	
Local Nature Reserves <sup>18</sup>	0.94
Local Wildlife Sites	17.9

Plan 1: Designated Nature Conservation Sites – International Importance





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







## Folkestone and Hythe's Outstanding Habitats and Species

### A Unique and Diverse Coastline

One of the district's most renowned areas, which is both nationally and internationally important, is the expanse of vegetated shingle at Dungeness. This extensive area is the largest cusplate foreland in Britain and is the most diverse and extensive area of stable vegetated shingle in Europe. In Kent, 94% of the county's vegetated shingle habitat is found in Folkestone and Hythe district.<sup>19</sup> There is a stark wild beauty and distinctive character unique to Dungeness.

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

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

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

Dungeness receives many hundreds of thousands of visitors each year from across the South East and further afield, drawn to this unique and special place. Shingle habitats are particularly sensitive to damage through trampling or other activities which disturb the surface, such as vehicles, taking many years to recover. Over-wintering waterfowl can also be disturbed by recreational activities such as dog walking or watersports. To protect the sensitive sites, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, alongside Rother District Council, has adopted a Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS).<sup>20</sup> This sets out a comprehensive range of actions to protect Dungeness and the wider complex of protected sites at the Romney and Lade foreshore as well as Camber, Rye Harbour and the Pett Levels in Rother district.

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

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



Folkestone Warren



## Glorious Grasslands

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

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

The pastures and ditches of the Romney Marsh support a wide range of wildlife. There are also reedbeds, a Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat.<sup>21</sup> These features make the Marsh especially important for water voles, a species which has declined severely in recent years. The Marsh also supports waterfowl, which use both the coast and inland areas, and birds of prey such as the rare marsh harrier. The area is also home to several species of farmland birds, which have become increasingly rare.

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

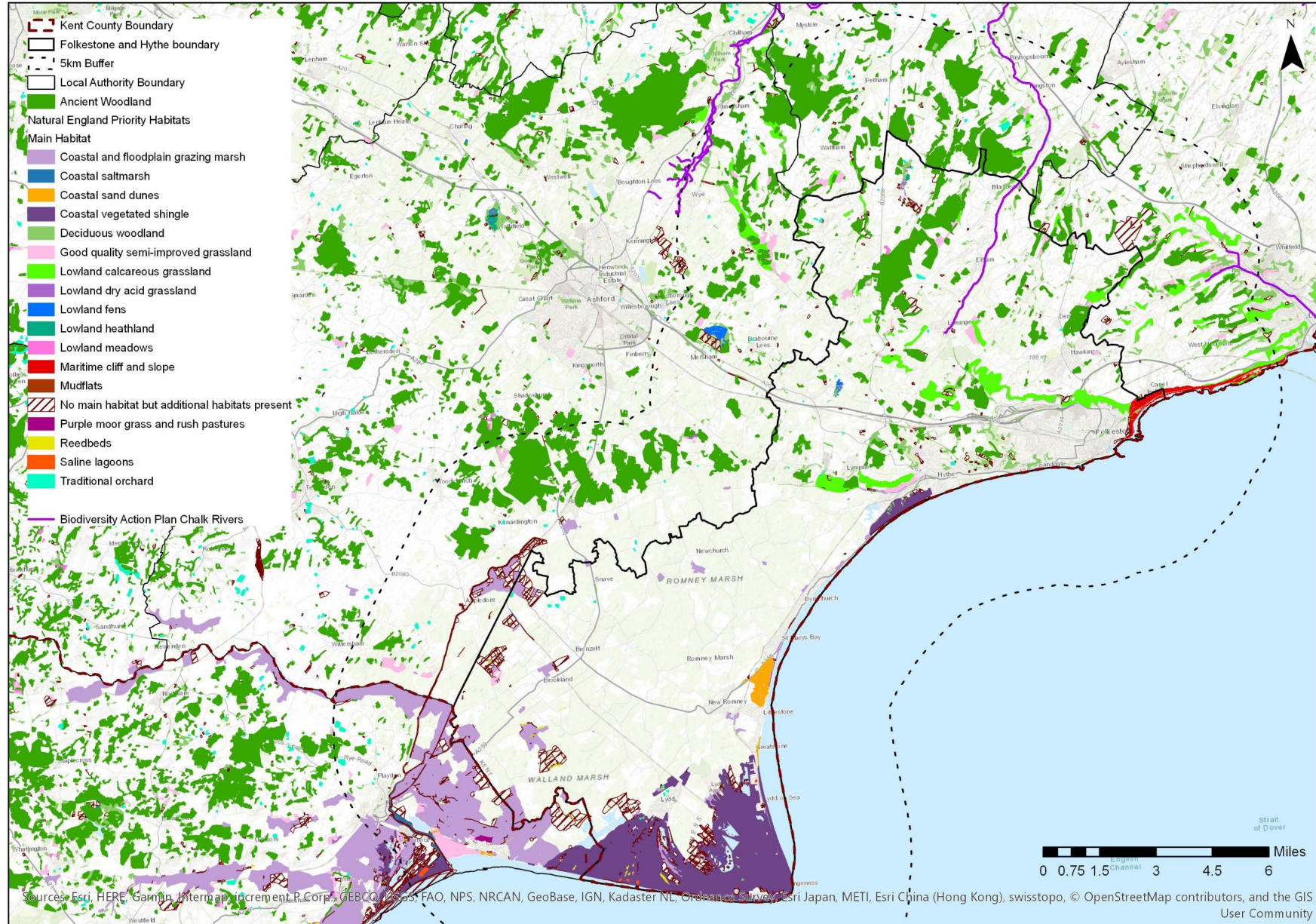
Chalk grassland is largely confined to the chalk hills of southern England it can be very floristically diverse. It also supports a range of insects including rare and beautiful butterflies. There remain areas of chalk grassland in Folkestone and Hythe along the Kent Downs, much of which is designated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



Sugar Loaf Hill, Folkestone



Plan 3: Priority Habitats (Natural England)



## Notable Species

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

### Rare Moths

The very rare Sussex Emerald Moth (*Thalera fimbrialis*) is only found in areas of coastal vegetated shingle. Until 2006 it was restricted only to Dungeness but has also now colonised two small areas in east Kent. It's main food plant is wild carrot. Across Dungeness and Rye Harbour there are efforts to secure the precious population of this moth. The Marsh Mallow Moth (*Hydraecia osseola hucherardi*) is also present at Dungeness. A National Lottery Heritage Fund project (2021-2024) - Kent's Magnificent Moths – is being led by Butterfly Conservation. This is focusing on helping to save and celebrate some of the UK rarest and most beautiful moths that are still present in East Kent.

### Short-haired Bumblebee (*Bombus subterraneus*)

This bumblebee was once widespread across southern England but its population declined severely from the 1950's onwards. It was last recorded at Dungeness in 1988 but was declared extinct in 2000. A project, run by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust,<sup>22</sup> has been providing advice to farmers and landowners on managing and creating flower-rich meadows in the Romney Marsh and Dungeness following the reintroduction of the species



in 2009. Unfortunately, the reintroduction appears to have been unsuccessful (as of 2022). Monitoring has shown that several species of rare bumblebees<sup>23</sup> have increased due to the project. On nature reserves, rare bumblebees have increased eight-fold with advice and planting and away from reserves rare bees have increased three-fold.

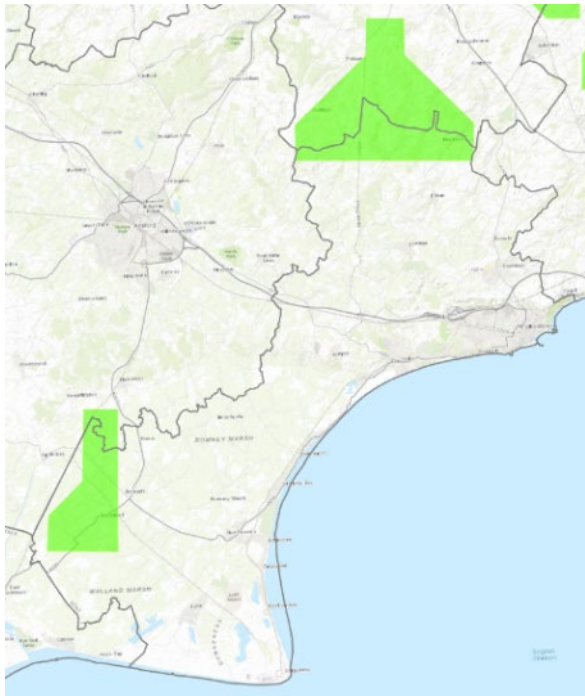
### Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) and other Farmland Birds

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



The Turtle Dove occurs on arable and mixed farmland that offers suitable nesting habitat and is largely confined to southern and eastern England. A continuous supply of weed and crop seed is needed from late April until the end of August. The presence of tall mature hedgerows, areas of scrub or woodland edges with a thick shrub layer for nesting are also beneficial.

Figure 1: RSPB Turtle Dove Friendly Zones



The RSPB has identified 'Turtle Dove Friendly Zones' (TDFZs) where it focusses work with Natural England and local farmers to provide feeding habitat and supplementary feeding. Two TDFZs are within Folkestone and Hythe district, see left, but Turtle Doves are to be present in other areas.

The Romney Marsh is also important for other farmland birds. The RSPB's Romney Marsh farmland bird project<sup>24</sup> is working alongside farmers and landowners to increase a range of farmland bird populations, including grey partridges, corn buntings, tree sparrows, yellow wagtails, lapwings, skylarks, yellowhammers and linnets.



#### Medicinal Leeches (*Hirudo medicinalis*)

The medicinal leech is the only British leech capable of sucking blood from humans. Millions of leeches were harvested to be used for phlebotomy (bloodletting) and by the beginning of the 20th century the medicinal leech was declared extinct in the British Isles. However, since 1970, scattered populations have been found including in the Romney Marsh. A survey across the area revealed the species was present in 85 locations on the Marsh, mainly on grazing marsh and in gravel pits and ponds at Dungeness.<sup>25</sup>

## Chalk Grassland Orchids

The outstanding chalk grasslands of Folkestone and Hythe are home to several rare orchids, including monkey orchid (*Orchis simia*), late spider orchid (*Ophrys fuciflora*), early spider-orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*), musk orchid (*Herminium monorchis*), lady orchid (*Orchis purpurea*) and burnt orchid (*Orchis ustulata*).

## Trees and Woodlands

Street trees, woodland trees and trees in parks or private gardens together form the tree canopy. Kent County Council carried out a remote canopy survey in 2020 which provides an estimate of the extent of Folkestone and Hythe's total 'urban and rural forest'. The council is also consulting on a 'Kent Plan Tree'<sup>26</sup> which sets out objectives and principles for tree establishment across the county, including an ambition that the county will have an average canopy cover of 19% by 2050 and that 1.5 million trees will be planted.

Overall, Folkestone and Hythe's tree canopy is around 8% of its area,<sup>27</sup> less than half of the Kent average of 17%. Romney Marsh ward was reported as having the lowest level of canopy, at 1.1%. The highest was Hythe at 19%. There is a distinct north-south divide in the district.

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

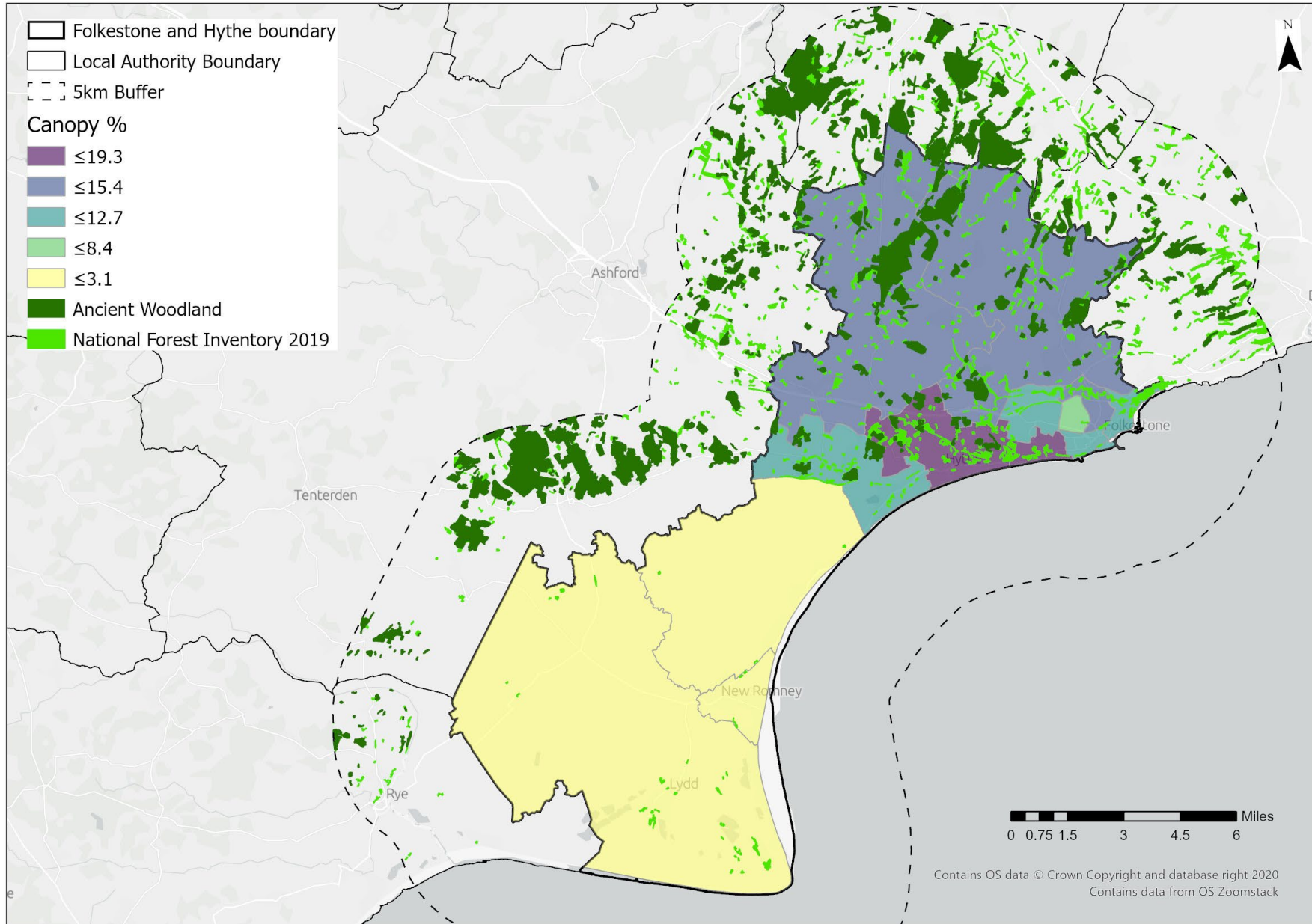
Woodland is not evenly spread across Folkestone and Hythe and there is a wide variation in woodland cover. Almost all woodland is concentrated in the north eastern area of the district.

The wide range of woodlands in Folkestone and Hythe all have value for wildlife. Around 1320 hectares, or 57%, of Folkestone and Hythe's woodland is ancient.<sup>28</sup> This is woodland which has been in existence since at least 1600 AD. These woodlands can be especially important for wildlife with a rich array of species associated with them. Ancient woodland is classed as 'irreplaceable' under the National Planning Policy Framework.

One of the more publicised diseases which is seriously affecting trees in Folkestone and Hythe district and across east Kent is ash dieback. This is a fungal infection of native, and some non-native, ash trees. Due to the way the disease spreads, through dead leaves on the ground, it can seriously affect ash in woodland settings. However, trees growing in urban landscapes may be less susceptible to infection. The Ash Project<sup>29</sup> was a response to the devastating effects of ash dieback in the Kent Downs, celebrating the cultural, natural and social history of the ash tree. Ash dieback could result in profound changes to wildlife and landscape, due to the high proportion of ash in many of the district's woodlands.

Opportunities to increase woodland and trees across the district should be sought. Opportunities for increasing tree cover are possible on both publicly owned land and private land. Local authorities, private individuals, landowners, businesses and industrial estates all have a role to play in increasing tree cover across Folkestone and Hythe.

Plan 4: Woodland, Ancient Woodland and Canopy Cover % by Ward <sup>30</sup>





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

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

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

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



Land sailing at Greatstone

## Biodiversity Networks

The review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network, 'Making Space for Nature',<sup>31</sup> concluded that biodiversity habitats do not form a coherent and resilient ecological network capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and other pressures. Strategic planning for nature conservation at a landscape scale is needed to manage pressures and to restore functioning ecological networks.

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

- Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management;
- Increase the size of current wildlife sites;
- Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors or through 'stepping stones';
- Create new sites; and
- Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering<sup>32</sup> wildlife sites.

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

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

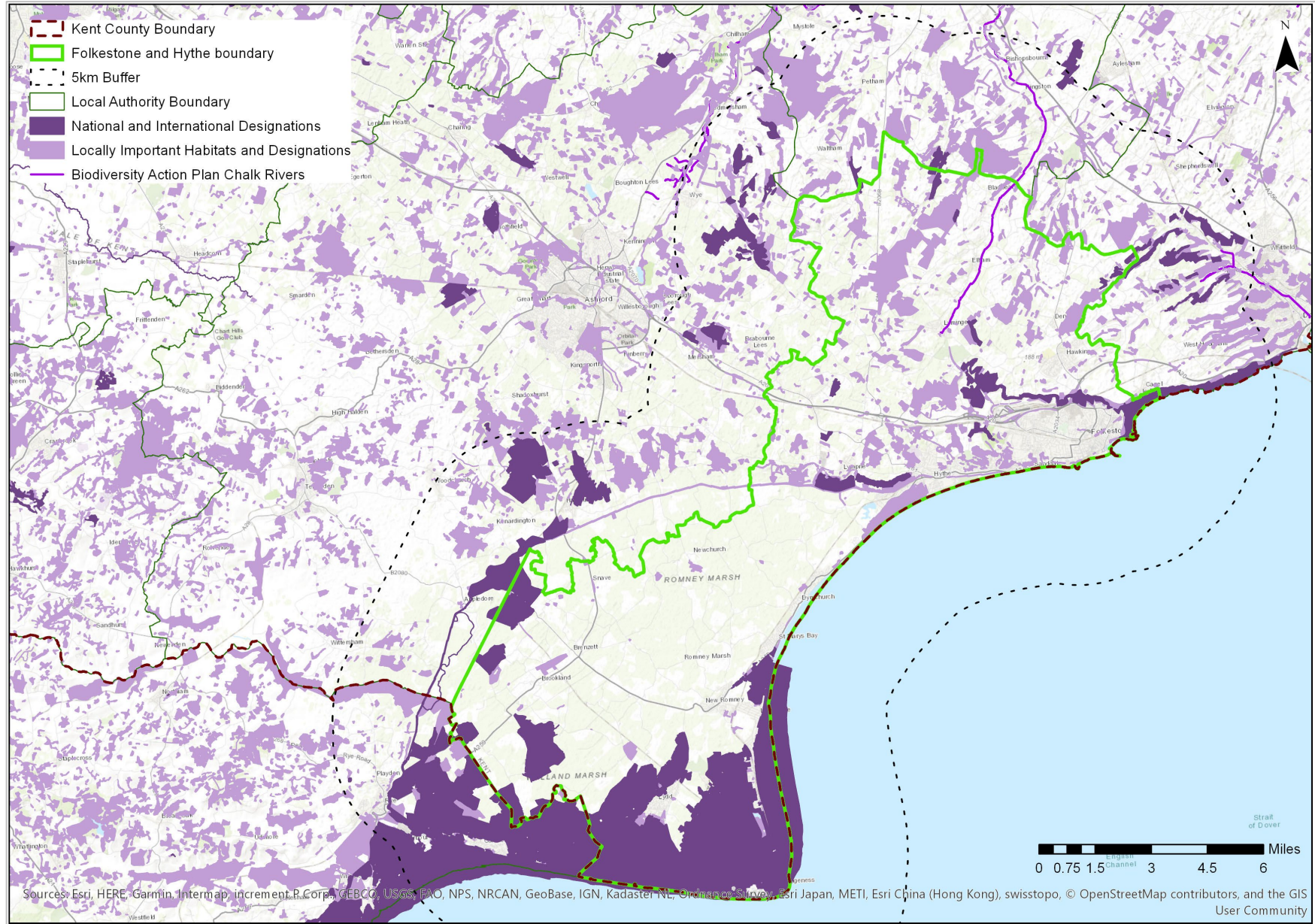
Folkestone and Hythe's core biodiversity network is shown in Plan 5.

Tier 1 sites are those designated for their international or national importance (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

Tier 2 includes sites which are designated for their local or county biodiversity importance or are managed for nature conservation (Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Natural England mapped priority habitats). Some of these sites may be managed for nature conservation; some may not.



### Plan 5: Folkestone and Hythe's Core Biodiversity Network





Biodiversity Opportunity Areas also reflect the concentration of nature conservation assets, setting out spatial areas in which to improve nature as a priority, see Plan 6 and Table 5.<sup>33</sup> Natural England habitat network mapping<sup>34</sup> highlights restoration and creation opportunities in the vicinity of priority habitats but does not include other sites with potential for improvement, especially in

urban areas, for example parks, or sites which are only mapped on local datasets, see Plan 8. This mapping does not highlight connections across parts of the Romney Marsh as no priority habitats have been mapped. This does not mean, however, that there is not a need and opportunity for connecting habitats across this area.

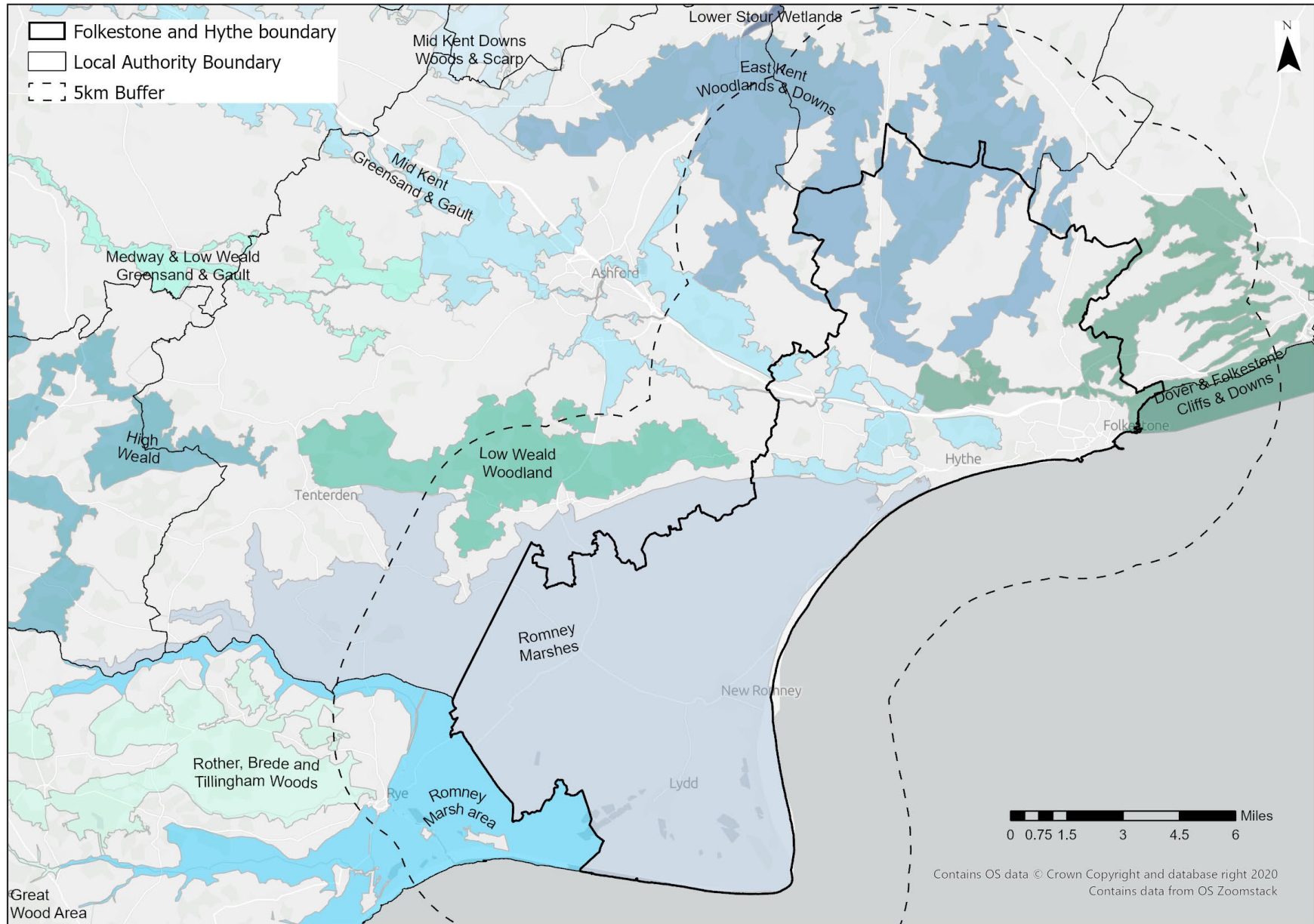
Table 5: Biodiversity Opportunity Area Descriptions and Targets<sup>35</sup>

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

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

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

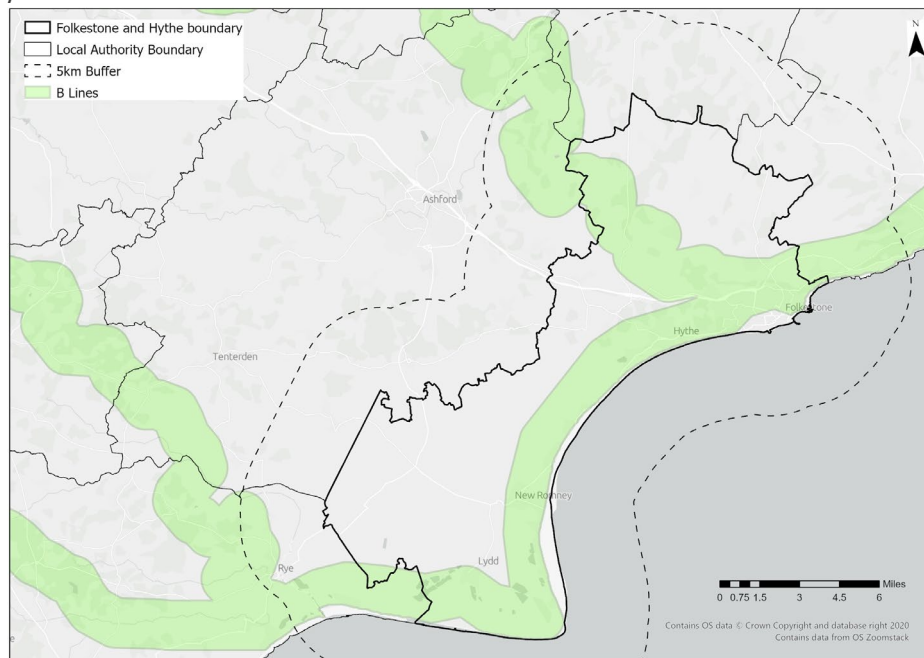
Plan 6: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas



There are other approaches, for example B-Lines, developed by Buglife,<sup>36</sup> (Plan 7) which show insect 'pathways' through town and countryside. Natural England has also developed habitat network mapping based on priority habitats, see Plan 8.

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

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



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

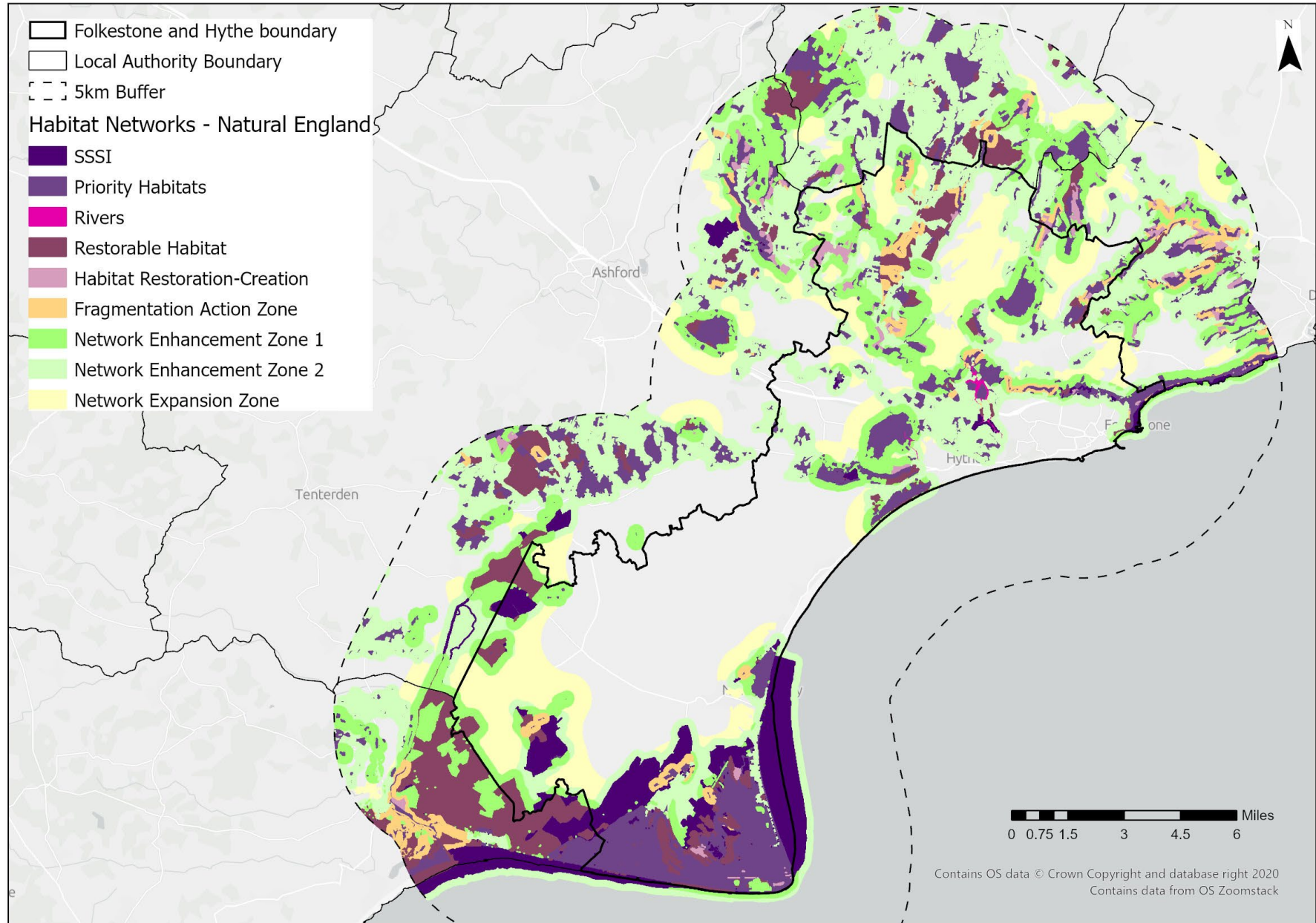
- Improve the biodiversity value of existing semi-natural sites as the core assets of the corridors, conserving and enhancing the nature within the sites and ensuring they are under appropriate management;
- Buffering and expanding these sites by creating hospitable areas for nature around them;
- Create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

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

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

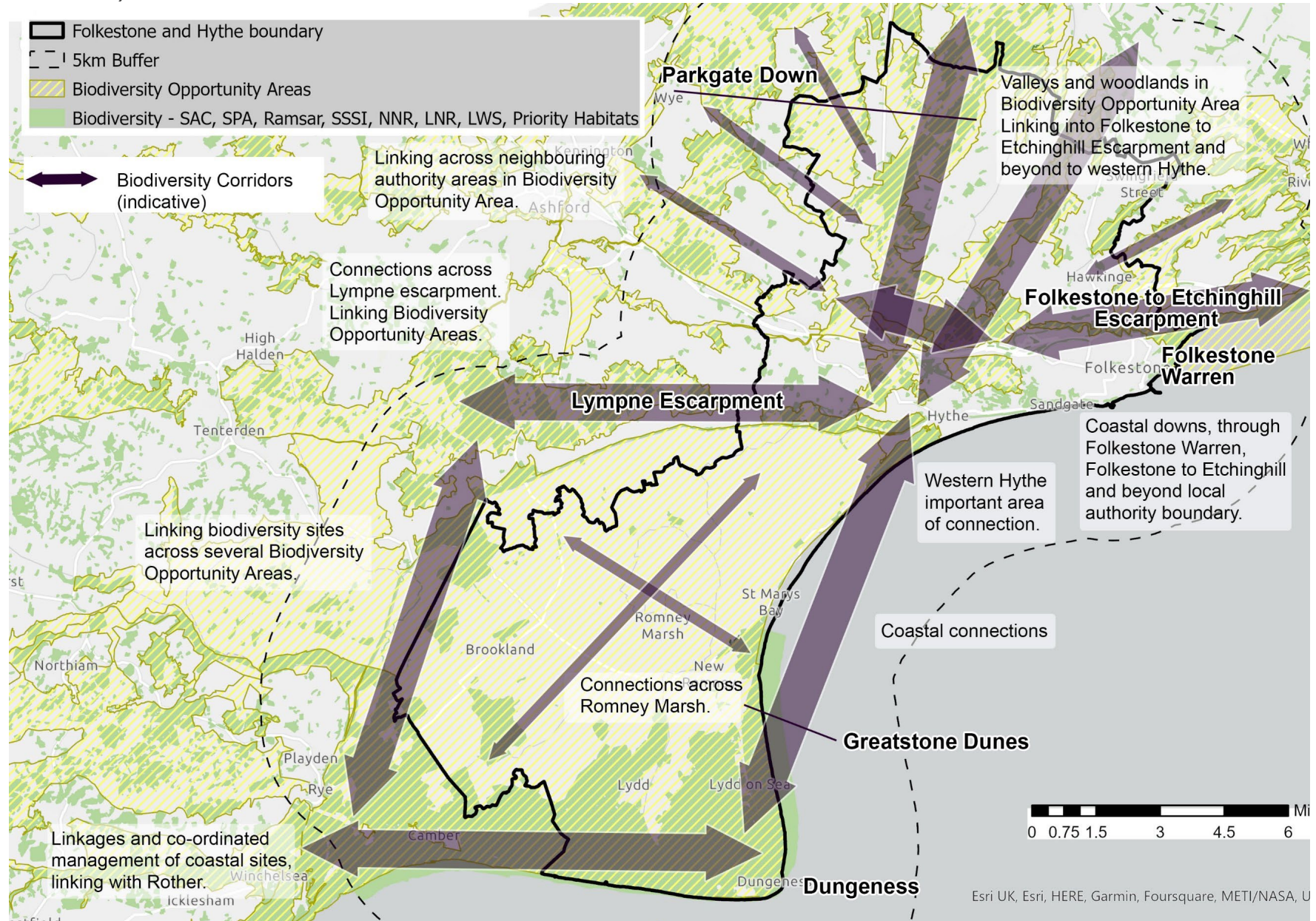


Plan 8: Natural England Habitat Connectivity Mapping





Plan 9: Biodiversity Connections





## Climate Change

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

Natural England has developed a climate change vulnerability model to assess the vulnerability of priority habitats. The model uses four measurements which, when combined, provide an overall assessment of vulnerability to climate change.<sup>37</sup>

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

The mapping shows that the fragmented, wetland and low-lying habitats around Romney Marsh are highly vulnerable. The chalk stream in the Elham Valley and the Royal Military Canal are also noticeable as vulnerable. Further investigation will be required to determine what measures could be taken to reduce vulnerability as the mapping only provides an indicator of areas which may be vulnerable.



Dungeness Romney Marsh

Plan 10: Climate Change Vulnerability - Priority Habitats

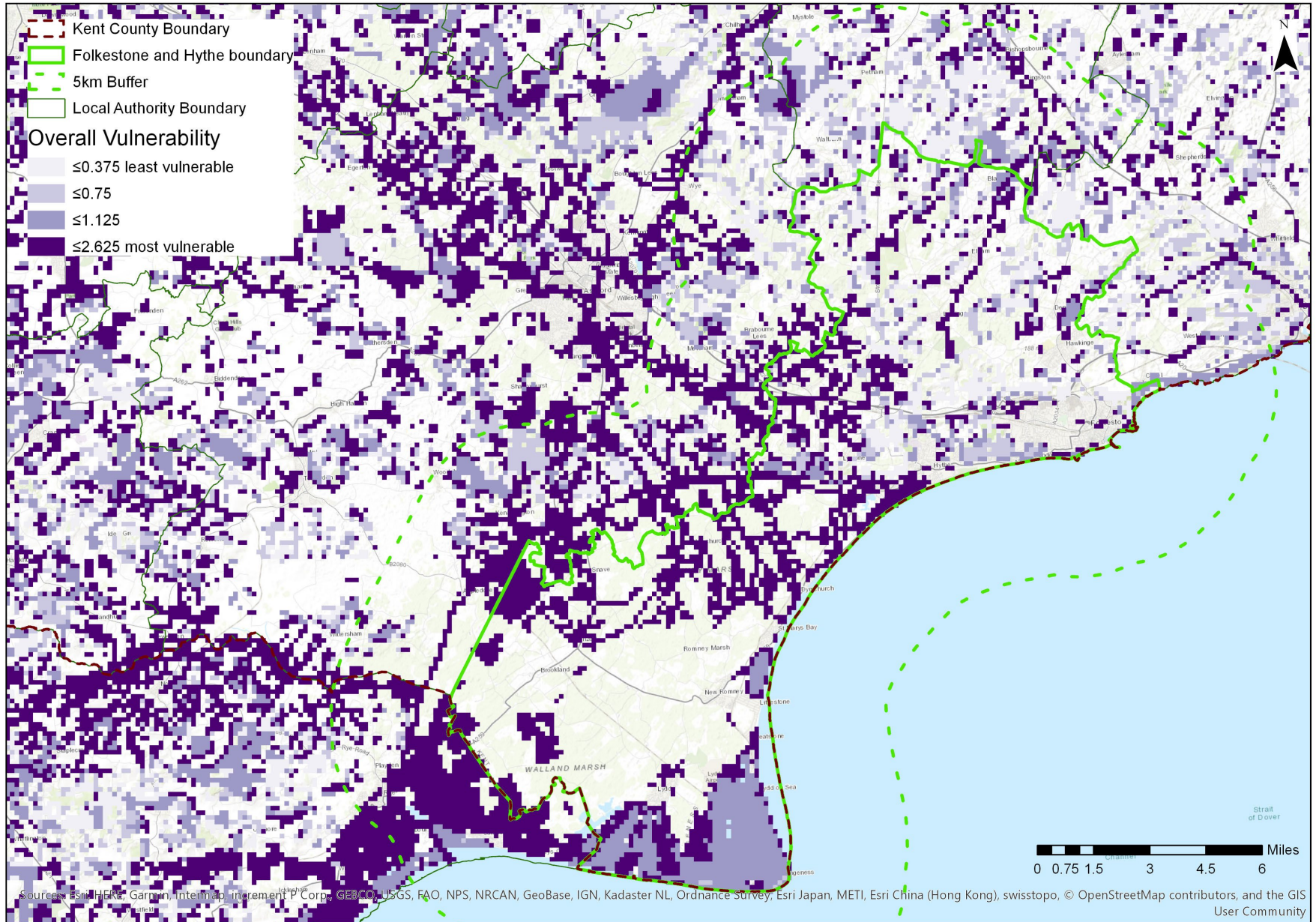




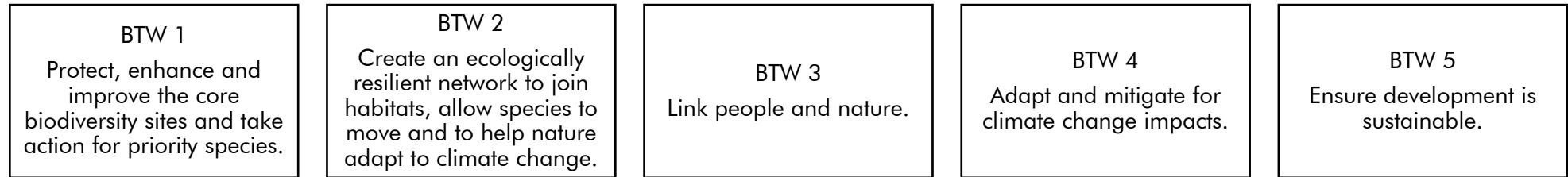
Table 6: Priority Habitat Climate Change Vulnerability – Summary

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

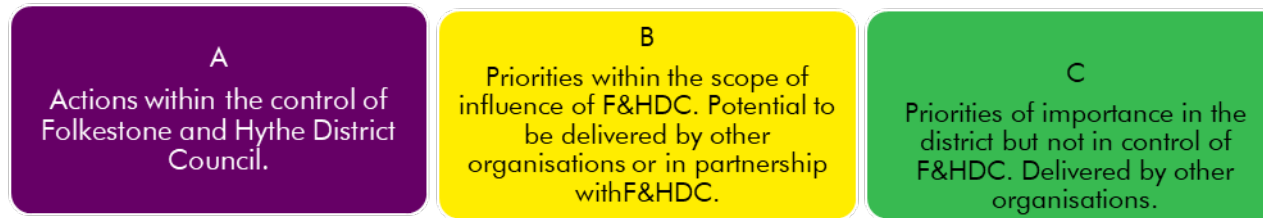
## Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- Climate change impacts compounded by other threats to habitats and species;
- Lack of resources to manage some nature conservation sites sustainably and in the long term;
- Small, fragmented and disconnected sites in some areas, particularly in urban areas;
- Development has been identified as a pressure on Kent habitats, through loss of land and increased population.<sup>38</sup> This pressure can be lessened through obligations on developers to deliver biodiversity net gain;
- Recreational pressure on sensitive sites can cause disturbance to wildlife. For the Dungeness Complex mitigation should be delivered through successful implementation of the Strategic Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS). Other sites, for example chalk grassland, may also be vulnerable to recreational pressure.
- Recreational pressure and anti-social behaviour can hinder the implementation of conservation management, e.g. grazing on urban sites, as well as causing direct damage;
- Farming has a significant impact on the fortunes of biodiversity and there is uncertainty around the future of farming and environment payments. 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' within the Kent Downs AONB may bring significant benefits to this part of Folkestone and Hythe;
- Woodland which is small, fragmented and not managed;
- Increase in invasive non-native species, pests and diseases particularly ash dieback;
- Some of the core biodiversity network sites are not in favourable management for biodiversity. Some Sites of Special Scientific Interest are in unfavourable condition. Some Local Wildlife Sites are not in favourable biodiversity management;
- A wide range of pollutants, from many sources with the most widespread current harm from excess nutrients (phosphate and compounds of nitrogen) in air and water. There has also been a rise in concern over plastics pollution, particularly in the water environment;
- Lack of information on some species and habitats;
- Some Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and other rare and specialist species are under threat and declining.<sup>39</sup>

## Strategic Priorities – Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands



## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands



	Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
BTW 1	Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species	
BTW 1.1	Protect and enhance the sites which form the core of the biodiversity network – those sites designated for nature conservation and those with known biodiversity value.	B
BTW 1.2	Ensure that Folkestone and Hythe-owned sites with nature conservation value are protected and their value enhanced, bringing declining sites into good condition and reducing sources of harm.	A
BTW 1.3	Protect, enhance and seek to expand areas of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats which are notable within Folkestone and Hythe - chalk grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.	B
BTW 1.4	Protect and seek to increase populations of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority species which are notable within Folkestone and Hythe	B
BTW 1.5	Work with Rother District Council and other partners to deliver measures set out in the 'SARMS' to ensure sustainable recreation across the Dungeness Complex.	B



	Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
BTW 2	Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change	
BTW 2.1	Reduce sources of harm to biodiversity sites.	B
BTW 2.2	Develop ecologically resilient and varied landscapes through conserving and enhancing local variation within sites and habitats and making space for the natural development of rivers and coasts.	B
BTW 2.3	Establish ecological networks through habitat protection, restoration and creation, joining up nature conservation sites across the landscape and joining woodlands and hedgerows.	B
BTW 2.4	Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation into conservation management, planning and practice.	B
BTW 2.5	Work with partners to deliver a resilient ecological network, including increasing biodiversity in cemeteries, privately own green and blue infrastructure assets, schools and businesses, and with neighbouring authorities to develop connections over local authority boundaries.	B
BTW 2.6	Seek to create mosaics and overall abundance of wildlife alongside the protection of specific habitats and species.	B
BTW 2.7	Work with the Kent Nature Partnership to develop and deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as part of the National Nature Recovery Network.	A
BTW 2.8	Sustain a healthy tree stock of council-owned trees and seeking an increase in trees and canopy cover overall on council-owned land.	A
BTW 2.9	Increase the number of wildflower verges.	B
BTW 3	Link people and nature	
BTW 3.1	Celebrate and raise awareness of Folkestone and Hythe's iconic species and habitats and the need to conserve them.	B
BTW 3.2	Get people involved in conservation activities, including action for pollinators, biodiversity improvements and tree planting.	B
BTW 3.3	Support local people, parish and town councils, businesses and community organisations in taking community action for nature.	B

	Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
BTW 3.4	Promote the action of residents and businesses to improve wildlife through, for example, gardening for wildlife, pollinator projects, wildflower meadows, connecting habitats, hedgehog highways and installing swift boxes.	B
BTW 3.5	Incorporate nature into Folkestone and Hythe-owned parks and amenity spaces so that people can experience nature close to where they live and create stepping stones for wildlife, for example through permanent wildlife areas such as wildflower meadows, or through initiatives such as 'No Mow May'.	A
BTW 3.6	Designate more Local Nature Reserves to increase the hectare provision per 1,000 people with a more even distribution across the district.	A
BTW 3.7	Improve school grounds, including tree planting, growing spaces and wildflower gardens.	B
BTW 3.8	Link green and blue infrastructure with the vibrant arts and cultural community in the district.	C
BTW 4	Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts	
BTW 4.1	Bring forward nature-based solutions as cost-effective, climate adapted and biodiversity-supporting alternatives to 'grey' engineering solutions.	B
BTW 4.2	Increase tree and woodland cover and increase canopy cover, following the 'right tree, right place' principle. Increase street trees in all urban areas.	B
BTW 4.3	Develop a tree and woodland strategy to ensure tree planting follows principle of 'right tree right place', to promote sustainable woodland management, to plan for the effects of ash dieback and to increase the overall canopy of Folkestone and Hythe.	A
BTW 4.4	Identify habitat areas within Folkestone and Hythe for protection as carbon sinks and wildlife habitats.	A
BTW 5	Ensure development is sustainable	
BTW 5.1	Deliver biodiversity net gain and investigate the viability of an uplift from the statutory 10%, subject to viability and soundness testing.	A
BTW 5.2	Incorporate biodiversity into housing developments, including hedgehog highways, swift boxes and biodiversity-friendly planting in streets and gardens.	A

# Access, Recreation and Active Travel

## Introduction

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

## Accessible Greenspaces

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

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



Lower Sandgate Park below Leas Cliff Pavilion



## Primary Public Open Spaces

These are the primary accessible open space sites in the district. Some of these attract a significant number of visitors from beyond Folkestone and Hythe district.

### Lower Leas Coastal Park

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

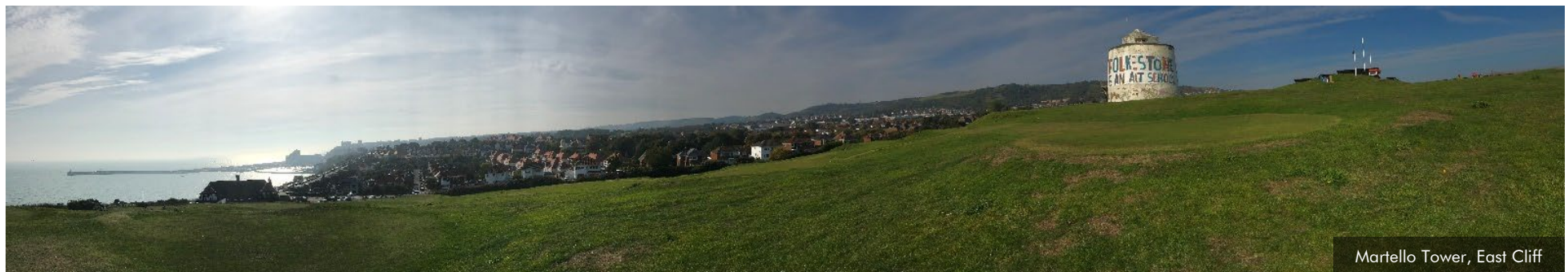
There is a fun zone in the centre of the park and the largest free play area in the South East. The play area is designed specifically for inclusive play and is wheelchair accessible. The Mermaid Cafe is situated close to the promenade and entertainment is provided throughout the summer across the park,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

The Upper Leas gardens at the top of the cliffs at Folkestone and the Lower Leas gardens along the foot of the cliffs were created in the late 19th century to attract Victorian holidaymakers. In 1921 Folkestone Council commissioned James Pulham and Son to create a new path – known as the Zigzag Path. The path is in five sections and covers a substantial vertical area of about 75 metres across and 50 metres high in the artificial rock known as Pulhamite. It incorporates steps, seats, plant pockets, low walls, and with tunnels, arches and caves at each turn. The rest of the park is the wild zone and is managed as a wildlife habitat.

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

### East Cliff and Warren

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



Martello Tower, East Cliff

In 1924, the land was gifted to the people of Folkestone and grazing animals were banned, allowing shrubs and trees to spread. There are still patches of flower-rich grassland and there are many rare insects recorded here. For example, this is the only site left in Kent where the grayling butterfly can be found. Areas of chalk grassland are kept clear of scrub for wildflowers and insects. Chalk grassland wildflowers grow alongside woodland plants, while the sea air promotes the growth of rock sea lavender, wild cabbage and rock samphire. Around 150 different species of birds can be found. It is of national importance for wildlife and geology and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserve.

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

The White Cliffs Countryside Project organises regular guided walks and children's activities at The Warren. This park and open space has at least one accessible route but otherwise is considered to be less suitable for visitors with pushchairs and/or wheelchairs. Access to the site needs to be in balance and not detrimental to its nature conservation interest.

The area of the East Cliff closest to the town centre has open lawns overlooking the cliffs with a playground, bowls club and pitch and putt golf course. Several relatively arduous walks lead along the

coast, including the Four Seasons Walk, which has a series of interpretation panels showing the effect of the seasons on wildlife.

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

### Brockhill Country Park

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

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

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

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

## Accessible Natural Greenspace

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

Defined by English Nature<sup>40</sup> in the early 1990's, Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) is a category of greenspace at which a "*feeling of naturalness predominates*".<sup>41</sup> The term 'accessible' has a specific meaning and means the site must always be available for the public to use and without charge.<sup>42</sup>

Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt), developed in 1996, provides a set of benchmarks for ensuring access to places near to where people live.<sup>43</sup>

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) gave the public the right of access to land mapped as 'open country' (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. Areas of chalk downland and common land in Folkestone and Hythe district are 'CROW Act Access Land' (see Plan 11). Much of the coastal margin created through the England Coast Path is also open access land.



Interpretation Board at Brockhill Country Park



## Folkestone and Hythe's Open Space Strategy

Folkestone and Hythe's Open Space Strategy 2017 provides an assessment of the quantity, accessibility, quality and value of open spaces in the district. The study primarily assessed accessible open spaces within or adjacent to the key settlements, along with significant natural and semi-natural greenspaces which are frequently used by residents. The study followed national guidance and reflects the methodology used for Green Flag Award Scheme assessments. The overall aims of the study were to:

- Provide a robust assessment of needs and deficiencies in open space in order to inform policies within the Folkestone and Hythe Core Strategy and Places and Policies Local Plan;
- Establish local provision standards and create an up-to-date evidence base which can be maintained to aid implementation of policies and the provision of open space;
- Evaluate the quantity, quality, value and accessibility of open space for all areas of the district;
- Identify any specific needs or deficiencies in the district now and in the future and determine the impact on deficiency of increasing population growth.<sup>44</sup>

Quantity standards were developed by assessing the existing quantity of each open space typology (see Tables 2 and 3) and reviewing these against national guidelines. Parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural urban greenspace typologies have been grouped together. The report recommends a quantity standard of

2.89 hectares per 1,000 head of population. The study also includes proposed accessibility, quality and value standards.

The Open Space Strategy states that projected population growth is likely to have a moderate impact on open space provision in Folkestone and Hythe and that the provision of new open spaces in areas of the greatest levels of deficiency should be considered.

In addition, efforts should be made to ensure existing open spaces are multifunctional and are of a good quality and high value. Improvements should also be made to ensure all sectors of the community are able to easily access open spaces through the removal of physical barriers and ensuring open spaces are appropriately promoted.

The Open Space Strategy calculates that the North Downs and Romney Marsh analysis areas are currently below the quantity standard and this is likely to be exacerbated to a small extent by 2031 if the population increases. Many of the area's residents are not within easy walking distance of publicly accessible open space due to lack of provision and high level of agricultural use.<sup>45</sup> Opportunities should be sought to ensure publicly accessible open spaces are provided within new developments in the vicinity of these areas.

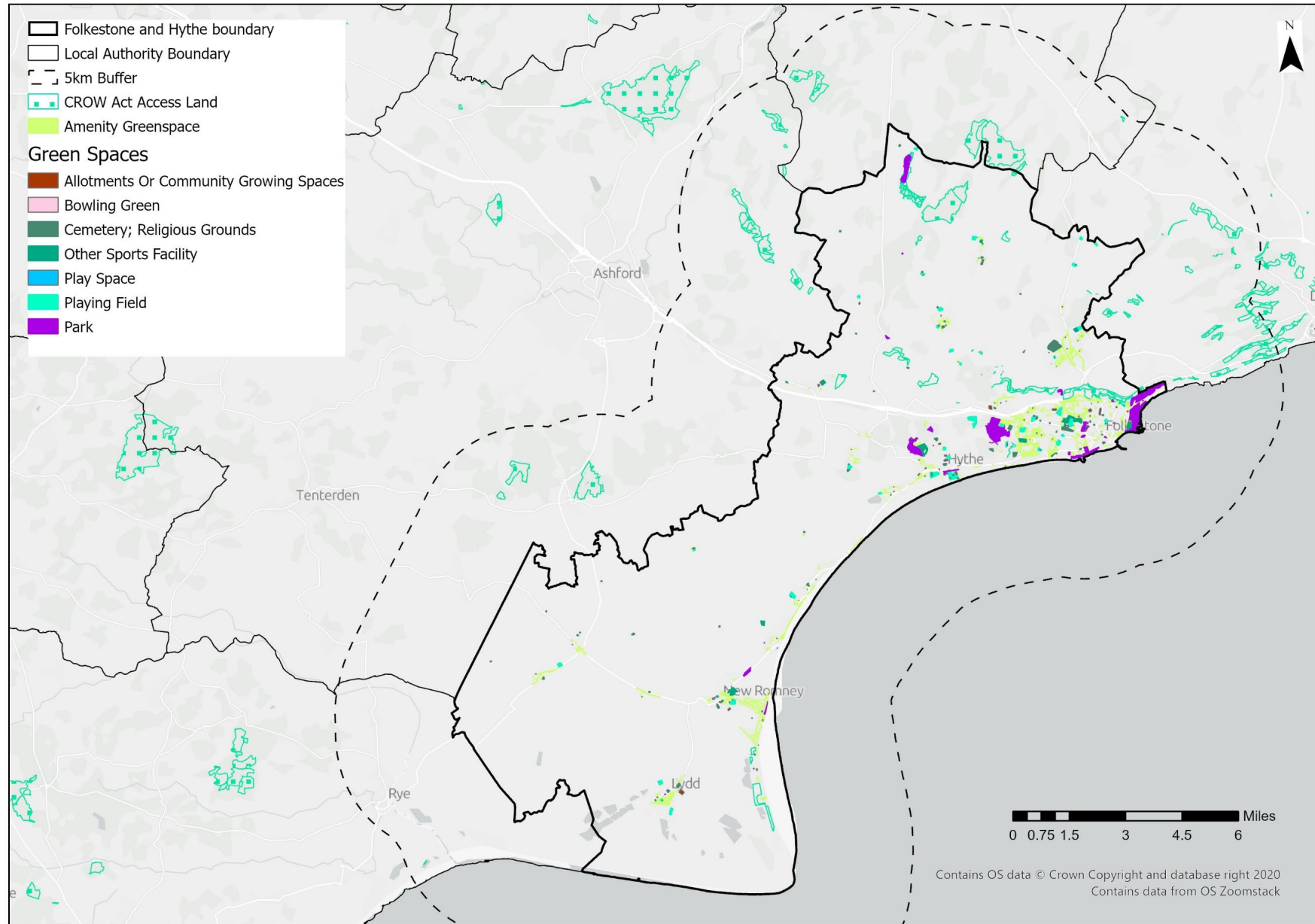
Table 2: Open Space Typology<sup>46</sup>

Type of Open Space	Primary Purpose
Parks and gardens	Accessible, high-quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events. More multi-functional than other open space, offering space for quiet relaxation as well as a range of amenities and activities for visitors. In particular parks and gardens often include children's play, youth and/or outdoor sports facilities.
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education awareness.
Green corridor	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration
Amenity greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work. Amenity Greenspaces provide a less formal greenspace experience than parks and gardens, and generally provides fewer habitats
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
Cemeteries and churchyards	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.
Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.
Outdoor sports provision	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics, or countryside and water sports.
Civic Space	Providing a setting for civic buildings and community events.

Table 3: Current provision of open space by area<sup>47</sup>

Primary typology	Urban / ha	North Downs / ha	Romney Marsh / ha	TOTAL / ha
<b>Population</b>	<b>65,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>105,000</b>
Parks and gardens	69.18	32.62	20.69	122.49
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	209.87	520.53	1054.12	1784.52
Green corridor	136.89	4.94	779.47	921.3
Amenity greenspace	112.51	46.34	46.25	205.1
Allotments	6.64	3.31	3.39	13.34
Cemeteries and churchyards	12.59	14.33	7.80	34.72
Provision for children and young people	1.47	1.75	0.60	3.82
Outdoor sports provision	193.47	124.93	200.03	518.43
All typologies	742.62	748.75	2112.35	3603.72

Plan 11: Greenspaces





There are internationally designated wildlife habitats within the Romney Marsh / Dungeness area. These areas are popular destinations for visitors. However, although the quiet lanes and existing promoted routes make this area well-suited for leisure cycling and walking, the SARMS report cautions that any plans to enhance access and bring visitors close to sites protected as part of the 'National Site Network', which are of international importance for their biodiversity, should be carefully assessed.<sup>48</sup> Access at some other sites also needs to be balanced with their outstanding nature conservation interest, for example at Folkestone Warren and other designated nature conservation sites.

The communities with the greatest population densities are mainly within the urban areas, which are also areas of higher deprivation compared with the rest of the district. These areas largely have a higher quantity of public open space and has largely good larger-sized accessible greenspaces.

Green corridors are a key component of the open space network in Folkestone and Hythe. These sites are predominantly linked to the waterways and coastal areas which have shaped the gradual evolution of the district. As well as contributing to local character, these corridors provide opportunities for recreation, sustainable travel for people and nature conservation.<sup>49</sup> The Open Space Strategy recommends that existing green links and corridors should be strengthened including the extensive beaches and cliff-tops and the Royal Military Canal. The Folkestone and Sandgate 'Green Chain' (see Plan 26) links urban and urban fringe sites including the Seabrook Valley, Folkestone Downs, Sandgate Escarpment, the Lower Leas Coastal Park and the East Cliff and The Warren.

The Open Space Strategy concluded that the quality and value of publicly accessible open space across Folkestone and Hythe is relatively good, with three Green Flag Award sites. However, a notable proportion of low value parks, natural and semi-natural greenspace and green corridors across the district could benefit from investment to improve their functionality.<sup>50</sup>

Future management should focus on enhancing the larger open spaces. It should also seek to provide local scale open spaces particularly in areas which experience greatest levels of deprivation together with communities which do not have access to gardens or there is no access to other open spaces.

The limited provision of larger open spaces in Folkestone and Hythe particularly within the centre of the district and to the south-west highlights the significance of the network of smaller sites to residents. These smaller open spaces should therefore support a range of facilities and be able to withstand challenges from increased use and a changing climate.

## Active Travel

Active travel means walking or cycling as a means of transport rather than for leisure purposes.

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

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

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



Sustrans National Cycle Route Way Post at Hythe

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

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

The Department for Transport (DfT) launched the national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy in April 2017, which aims to increase cycling and walking for journeys. Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) provide a new strategic approach to identifying the cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks, ideally over a 10-

year period, and form a vital part of the government's strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle.

The main outputs of LCWIPs are:

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

The Folkestone and Hythe LCWIP has been prepared in consultation with Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Highway Authority and KCC will be responsible for implementing the actions within the LCWIP.<sup>51</sup>

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

Several routes are being modelled. This will help the council understand and define which areas of the walking and cycling network are likely to be most popular to attract growing usage in future.

## Cycling Route Map

The main promotional tool in Folkestone and Hythe to support cycling is a Cycle Route Map, launched in October 2019 (Plan 12). This has been developed by Explore Kent and partners and is regularly reviewed and updated when new routes are built. It is available in paper form from outlets in the town centre and online from Explore Kent.<sup>52</sup> The Explore Kent website also details walking and cycling routes with downloadable and informative maps and guides. There is also the Kent Connected webpage which gives personalised travel planning options.<sup>53</sup>

## Network Plan for Walking

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

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



Plan 12: Explore Kent Mapping of Active Travel Routes



## Public Rights of Way

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

There are many promoted routes using public rights of way within the Folkestone and Hythe district (Plans 14 and 15 and Table 4).

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

Kent County Council actively publicises many 'promoted routes', all of which are available on the Explore Kent website. These provide many miles of promoted routes, with significant sections traffic-free. There are also many shorter walking, cycling and riding routes.

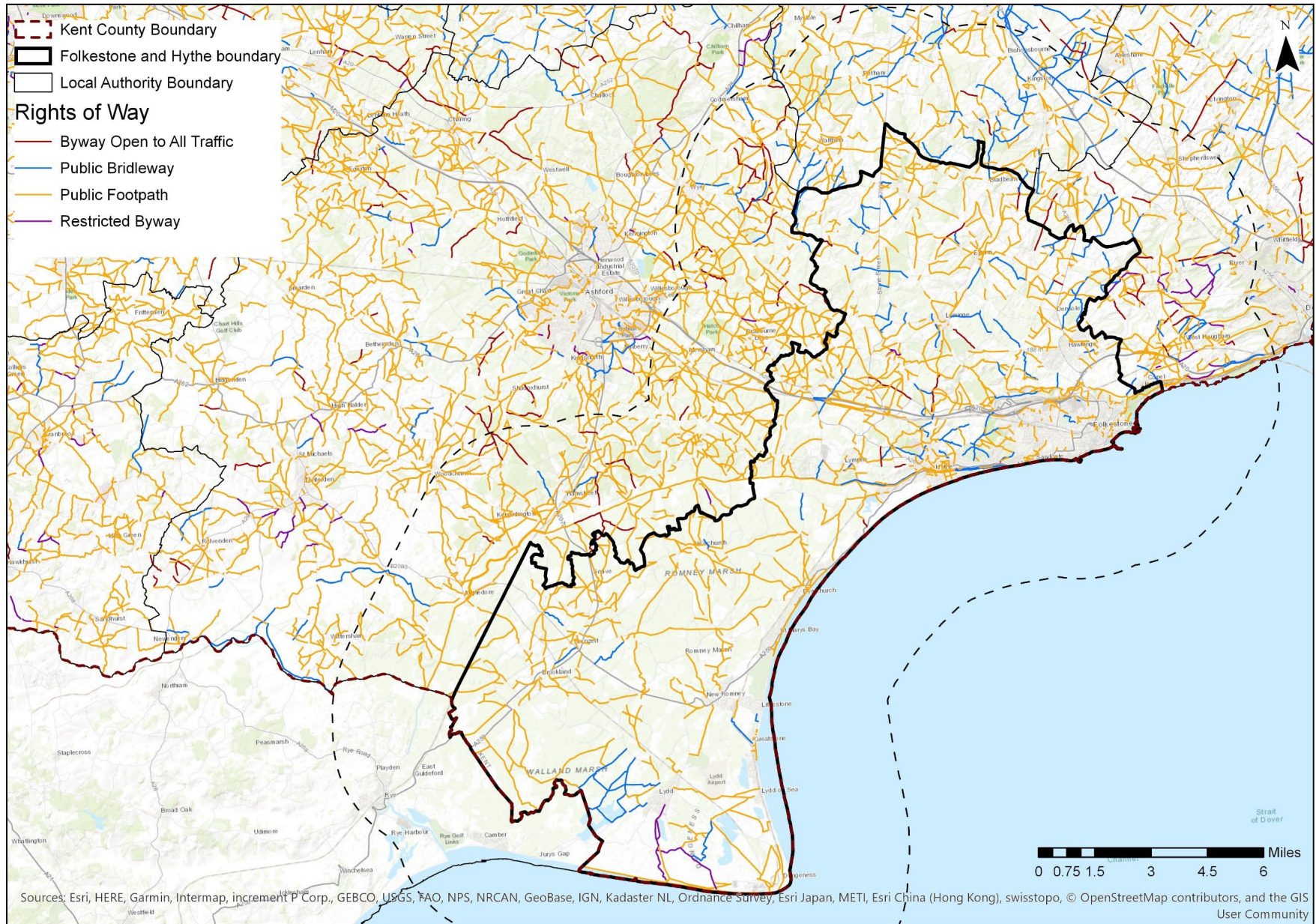
Opportunities to join up public rights of way to create new promoted routes or healthy walks should be considered.

Table 4: Promoted Routes (Explore Kent)

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

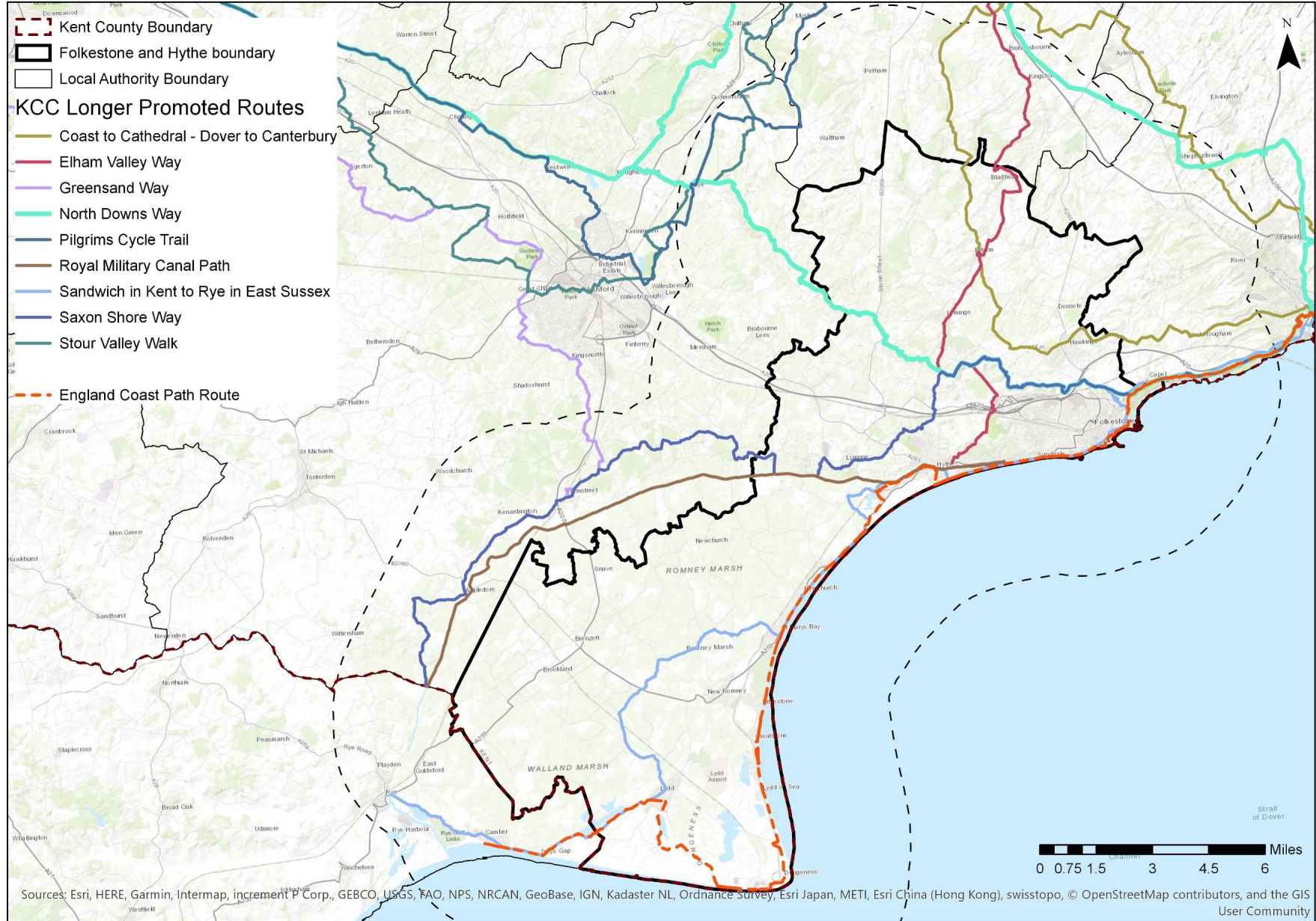


Plan 13: Public Rights of Way



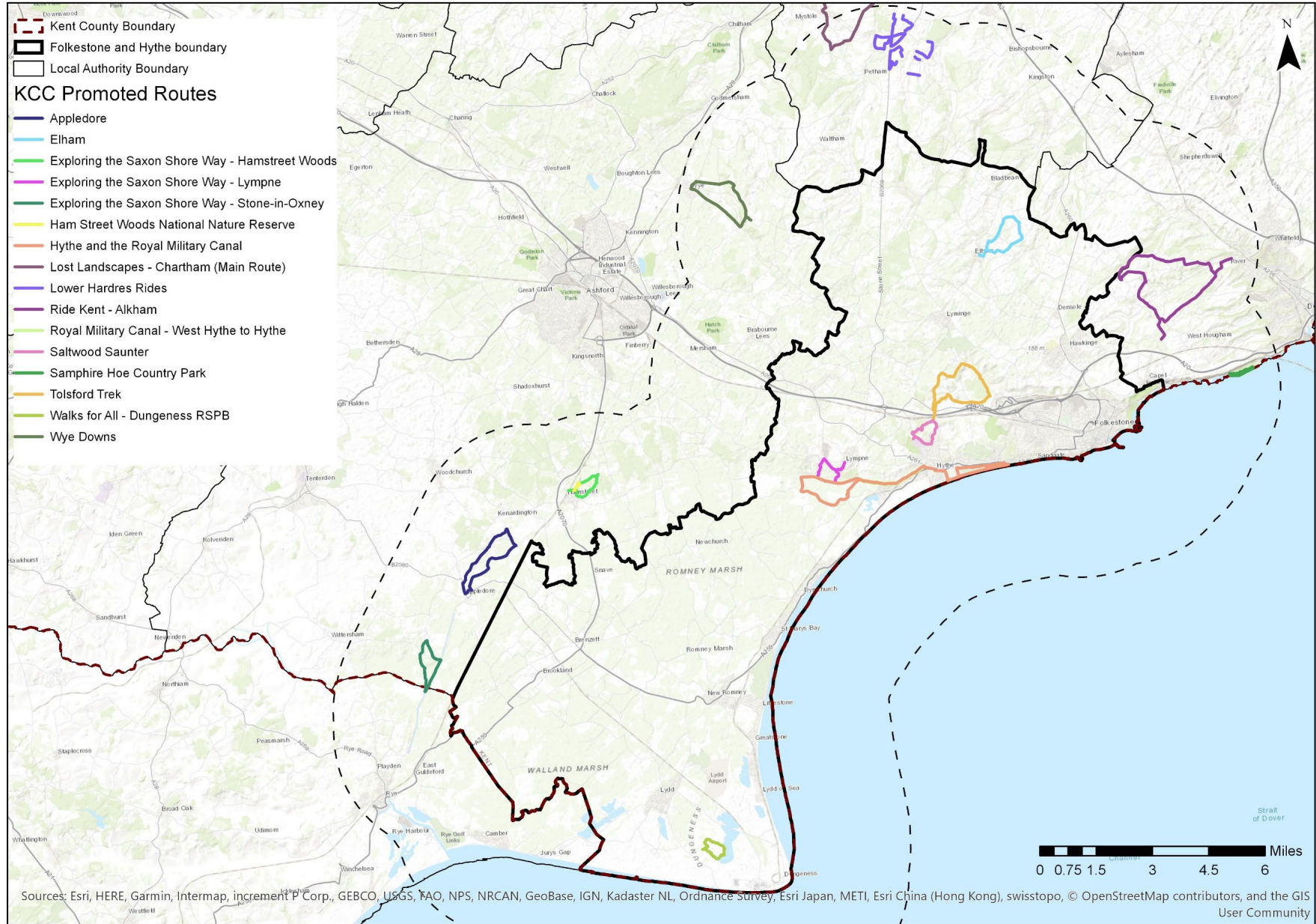


Plan 14: Longer Promoted Routes (Explore Kent)





Plan 15: Shorter Promoted Routes (Explore Kent)



Countryside recreation is a fundamental component of the economy. Research into visitors to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and High Weald AONB show that the main reason they choose to come is to walk in the countryside.<sup>54</sup> According to a Tourism South East report in 2006,<sup>55</sup> at that time there were an estimated 143 million walking trips for leisure made annually in South East England, with an associated expenditure in the region of £2.7 billion. The same report estimates nearly 18 million cycling trips, generating an estimated £345 million. The popularity of ‘stay-cations’ and the increased visitation and interest in visiting local countryside sites generated by the Covid-19 pandemic mean that countryside recreation is likely to increase, potentially bringing economic benefits to the district, along with challenges in managing these visits.

The rights of way network also supports sustainable and ‘active’ travel modes. The rights of way and greenspace networks provide a very valuable, free resource.

Kent County Council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)<sup>56</sup> assesses, across the county, the extent to which public rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, as well as the opportunities provided for exercise and leisure. The ROWIP also assesses the accessibility of public rights of way to blind or partially sighted people and those with mobility problems.

The public rights of way network is a fundamental component of the green infrastructure network and improvement and expansion of the network as set out in Kent’s ROWIP would support the aims of green infrastructure strategies.

The Kent County Council ROWIP aims “*To provide a high quality, well-maintained Public Rights of Way network, that is well used and enjoyed. The use of the network will support the Kent economy, encourage active lifestyles and sustainable travel choices that support health and wellbeing, and contribute to making Kent a great place to live, work and visit*”.<sup>57</sup>

The plan has six key themes for improvements:

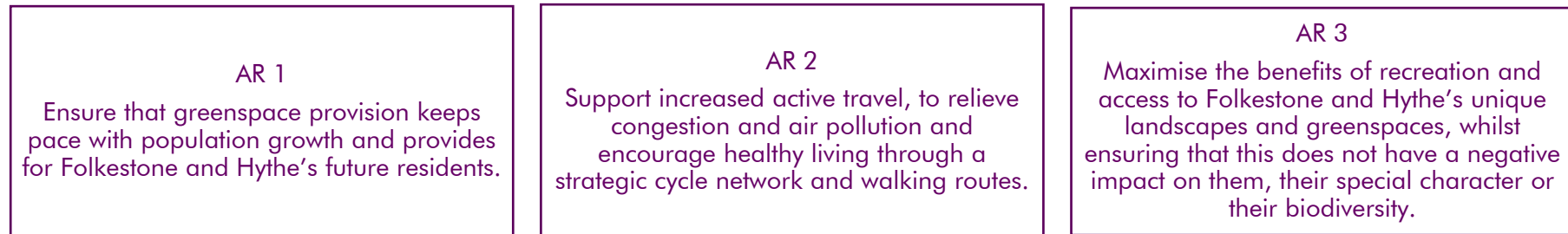
- Active lifestyles - contribute towards tackling health inequalities through improving access to the natural environment and greenspaces and to promote use particularly in deprived areas where existing access is low and where there are poor health outcomes;
- Evolution of the network - the PROW network must evolve to provide a high quality facility to encourage a shift to walking and cycling to increase active travel;
- Knowing what’s out there – to provide good quality information, support existing users and encourage new users, through improving signage and improving provision around leisure and recreational facilities.
- A well-maintained network - to improve maintenance of the network through vegetation clearance, signage and surfacing. Maintenance on locally important strategic routes will be prioritised
- Rights with responsibilities - to continue to promote responsible use by the public when exercising their rights.
- Efficient delivery – harness new information and technology to create an effective and efficient service.<sup>58</sup>



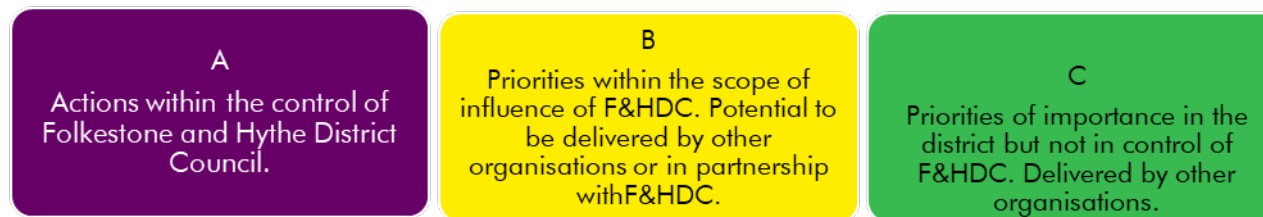
## Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

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

## Strategic Priorities – Access, Recreation and Active Travel



## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Access, Recreation and Active Travel



	Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
AR 1	Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Folkestone and Hythe’s future residents.	
AR 1.1	Ensure that greenspace provision meets the standards set out in Folkestone and Hythe’s Local Plan and that development delivers greenspace provision to meet the needs of new residents (no net loss).	A
AR 1.2	Manage greenspaces to ensure that they can accommodate high levels of visits, and the increased level of visits post-Covid 19 pandemic, providing infrastructure and maintenance to meet high demand.	B
AR 1.3	Seek new greenspace in areas where there is a deficit.	B
AR 1.4	Where development is taking place, ensure that public rights of way are improved and, where possible, provide multi-user and traffic-free routes and new connections.	A

	Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
AR 1.5	Invest in public rights of way, particularly those linking town and countryside, to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people.	B
AR 1.6	Plan strategically to ensure accessible greenspace, cycle routes, walkable spaces and public rights of way are connected, especially in areas of development, so that opportunities are not lost and gains are delivered.	B
AR 2	Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.	
AR 2.1	Make civic spaces and public realm more accessible, attractive and welcoming to encourage people to walk and cycle.	B
AR 2.2	The LCWIP will identify new routes for walking and cycling for active travel and where possible these might be dovetailed with opportunities for leisure routes and access to greenspace.	B
AR 2.3	Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from fly tipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.	B
AR 2.4	Develop urban promoted walking trails.	B
AR 3	Maximise the benefits of recreation and access to Folkestone and Hythe's unique landscapes and greenspaces, whilst ensuring that this does not have a negative impact on them, their special character or their biodiversity.	
AR 3.1	Use the district's outstanding landscape, heritage and biodiversity to promote tourism in a sustainable way, whilst avoiding damage and negative impacts on the environment, landscape and biodiversity sites (see also priority 1.5 – biodiversity, trees and woodlands re. implementation of the SARMS).	B
AR 3.2	Ensure that promotional materials and tourism promotion includes information for visitors on how to minimise the impact of their visit.	B
AR 3.3	Use access to green spaces as a catalyst for more community engagement in their care and knowledge of their uniqueness.	B



# Health and Wellbeing

## Introduction

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

Being physically active is strongly linked to better health and wellbeing. There is an established causal link between physical inactivity and many chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems. Walking in particular has been described as “*the nearest activity to perfect exercise*”,<sup>59</sup> being the easiest, most accessible and cost effective way for most people to increase their physical activity.

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

The government’s 25-year Environment Plan acknowledges the essential role that the natural environment and greenspace play in people’s physical and mental health and aims to improve population health and wellbeing by forging a closer connection between people and the natural environment.



## Green Spaces... THE BENEFITS

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



The Marmot Review<sup>60</sup> states that the fair distribution of health, wellbeing and sustainability are important social goals. These are influenced by a wide range of factors, one of which is the environment. The review recognises the importance of good quality greenspace in tackling health inequality. However, the availability and quality of access to greenspace is not evenly distributed, with those in deprived urban areas often having less access. In addition, health and wellbeing have historically been poorly integrated with spatial planning.<sup>61</sup> This leads to the creation of places which do not support people in improving their health through regular activity, or places which contribute to poor health through high levels of road pollution.

## Green and Blue Infrastructure and Mental Health

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

There is increasingly strong evidence of the benefits of access to nature on mental health. The positive effects include improvements to depression and anxiety, improvements to sleep and increased happiness and reduced negative emotions. Physical activity in the natural environment also improves mental health more than physical activity alone.<sup>62</sup> All types of exercise in green environment show improvements in self-esteem,<sup>63</sup> positive and negative mood,

anxiety levels and feelings of calmness and comfort.<sup>64</sup> Viewing nature can also help recovery from an acute stressor.<sup>65</sup> Often activity takes place with family, friends or in a group, increasing the mental health benefits gained through social interaction. Being in green environments boosts various aspects of thinking, including attention, memory and creativity. It reduces ADHD symptoms, improves pain control and the immune system. Accessing greenspaces can also be a social activity, generating benefits from social interaction.

Nature-based activities to improve mental health take many forms, not just walking. They can include gardening, creating art, feeding the birds or tending animals, picnicking or enjoying the beach. The whole range of green and blue infrastructure is important and can support mental health. Even just being able to view of nature can be beneficial.

Many people benefitted from these positive features of accessing greenspace during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated social restrictions (see next) but anxiety levels have increased and happiness levels decreased overall from a 2019 baseline.<sup>66</sup>

## Folkestone and Hythe's Health and Social Wellbeing

From the Indices of Multiple Deprivation data, Folkestone Central, Folkestone Harbour, East Folkestone, and Walland and Denge Marsh wards have the highest levels of deprivation under the living environment domain in the district. This criterion measures both the indoor living environment (quality of housing) and the outdoor



living environment (levels of road accidents and air quality). These areas also show higher levels of overall deprivation. There are a few pockets of high health deprivation and disability domain particularly in Folkestone Central, East Folkestone and Hythe wards. Levels are lower than those found in surrounding districts, including in areas to the north-east in Dover.<sup>67</sup>

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

### Health and Wellbeing in Folkestone and Hythe

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



Folkestone Half Marathon Passes the Metropole Building, Upper Leas





# Green Infrastructure to Support Health and Wellbeing

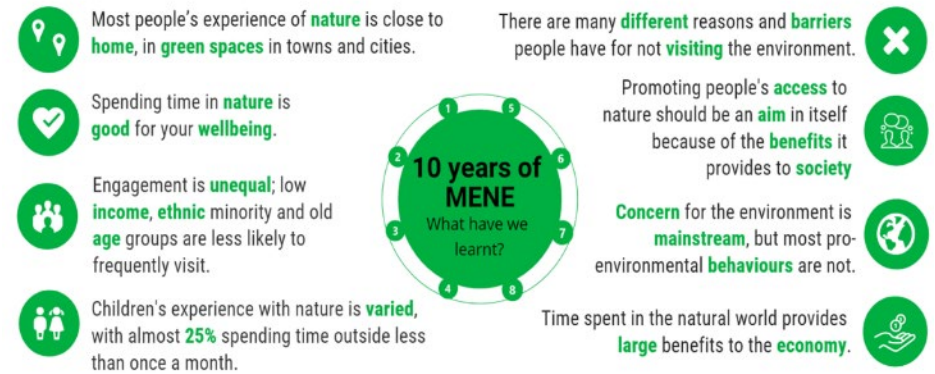
## Active Travel and Healthy Lifestyles

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

## Access to Greenspace

From 2009 to 2019, Natural England ran the Monitor of Engagement of the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. It collected data about outdoor recreation, pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes towards and engagement with the natural environment (right).<sup>68</sup> Good access to greenspace has enormous benefits to health and wellbeing as well as many other benefits.

Some areas in Folkestone and Hythe are deficient in greenspace and linkages to greenspace. However, it is also apparent that some communities with poor health outcomes have very good



access to greenspace, such as the urban areas of Folkestone. There may be a need to understand further the local circumstances in these areas, as strongly recommended in a recent Public Health England report:

*“Develop persuasive, evidence-informed case studies that highlight the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes”, and to “Support meaningful engagement across local government functions and the community to understand the actual and potential local benefits of greenspace and reveal the complex and diverse ways greenspace is thought about and used.”<sup>69</sup>*

People living with disabilities also have specific access needs. This can be physical improvements, such as additional seating or handrails, or more information on how accessible places are. Disability will affect many people during their lifetime. Only 17% of disabled people were born with their impairment and most disabled people acquire their disability later in life, with 44% of

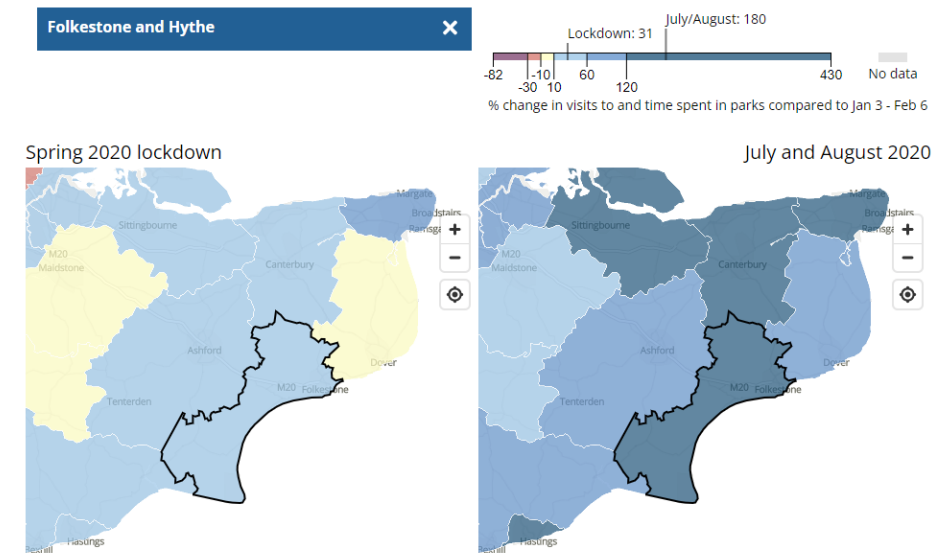
pension age adults being disabled.<sup>70</sup> It is important that open spaces and public rights of way are made as accessible as possible to that people can benefit from the health and wellbeing gains from being outdoors, throughout their lives and no matter what form of disability they may be living with.

## Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic, beginning around February 2020, and the associated restrictions placed on society resulted in many more people visiting greenspaces and the outdoors.

During the spring lockdown in 2020 there was a moderate increase (31%) in time spent in Folkestone and Hythe's parks compared to January to February 2020 (see right).<sup>71</sup> However, when lockdown restrictions eased, there was an increase of 180%. This was the second highest in Kent, just slightly behind Thanet district (185% increase). This trend was witnessed in other parts of the country where tourism visits are important. There was a substantial rise in the summer, at least partly driven by domestic tourism. This increase in visitors was reported anecdotally by several of the land managing organisations in the district who reported significant increases in visitors during 2020.<sup>72</sup> At times, this increase caused difficulties in managing greenspaces.

Figure 2: Visiting Open Spaces During 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic



During the lockdowns, isolation, along with other factors, contributed to a decline in mental health. However, there is evidence that the natural environment has helped some people to cope with negative feelings such as increased anxiety. Around 9 in 10 people surveyed by Natural England in May 2020 agreed that natural spaces are good for mental health and wellbeing. More than 40% noticed that nature, wildlife, and visiting local green and natural spaces had been more important to their wellbeing since the coronavirus restrictions began. Green and outdoor spaces also appear to have played an important role in becoming a space which allowed people to see their loved ones during periods of isolation.



However, not everyone had equal access to the greenspace and there is a clear connection between how people have been using the outdoors under coronavirus restrictions and the distance between their home and greenspaces. In lockdown, those living closer to their nearest public greenspace were more likely to visit than those living further away. High-income households increased the time they spent keeping fit during lockdown, while low-income households did not.

Some of the interest in nature recorded in spring and summer 2020 waned during winter 2020 / 2021, although this might be due to colder weather. It is possible that those most likely to maintain increased exercise and visits to greenspaces are those whose circumstances most allow them to, such as those whose workplaces decide to offer homeworking permanently.

The pandemic has underlined the importance of outdoor space for physical exercise and mental health. It has also highlighted that existing inequalities in provision and differences in levels of visiting greenspace in different socio-economic groups persisted through the pandemic. Those groups less likely to visit greenspaces (lower income groups), or those who lived further away, continued to visit these spaces less than other more advantaged groups.

## Green Social Prescribing

Public Health England recommends working with health professionals to promote the role greenspace plays in both individual and population health outcomes. This will support the health service's ambition to take more action to prevent poor

health and to use green assets, through initiatives such as social prescribing, as part of the overall plan to achieve this aim. They further advise establishing interventions, such as green social prescribing initiatives, that will support people who do not use greenspace to begin using it.

Programmes to support social engagement or to facilitate participation in activities coupled with improvements to the physical environment, are an effective approach to enable people to start using these spaces and to continue to use them.<sup>73</sup>

## Allotments and Community Growing Spaces

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

Folkestone and Hythe District Council is currently responsible for one allotment garden in the district, with 17 allotments provided by four of the town councils in the district.

Other types of community growing space provide greenspace and a place to bring communities together. There is a growing interest in community orchards and the Kent Biodiversity Strategy has the target to increase traditional orchards by 67 hectares across Kent. This could be through restoring orchards or planting new ones, potentially through new development.

## Air Quality in Folkestone and Hythe

The impact of air quality upon health is unquestionable. Long and short term exposure to poor air quality can have health impacts ranging from premature death due to cardiovascular disease and lung cancer, aggravation of asthma and other allergic illnesses, and reduced quality of life.<sup>74</sup>

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

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

Local Air Quality Annual Status Reports are carried out annually in fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. Folkestone and Hythe Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020 shows that, as in previous years, there has never been any exceedances of the annual mean objective for Nitrogen dioxide, or NO<sub>2</sub>, (a gaseous air pollutant composed of nitrogen and oxygen NO<sub>2</sub> forms when

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

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

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

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

## Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

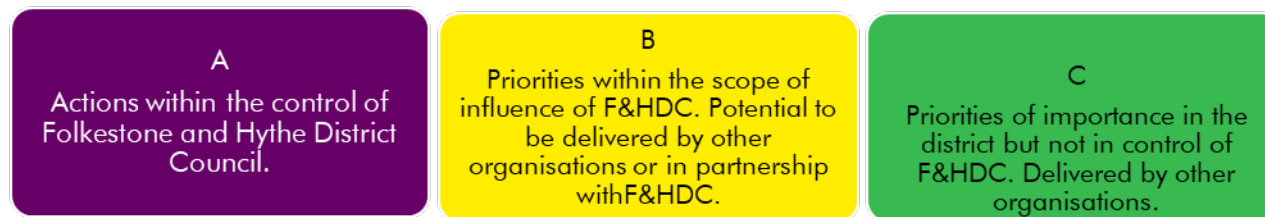
- Some areas of poor health also have low levels of greenspace, for example Brenzett and St Mary in the Marsh.
- There is generally a good supply of greenspace across Folkestone and Hythe but not all of this space is accessible. Access to some spaces is limited due to terrain (e.g. Folkestone Warren).
- The Open Space Strategy recommends the 'Low Quality / High Value ' open spaces be upgraded to improve perceptions of safety – such as the 'Open Space adjacent to Horn Street' and The Rype.
- Folkestone and Hythe, in line with the rest of England, has an ageing population. This will mean more people have health needs, mobility issues and will be living with disability.
- Evidence shows that spending time in nature is also good for mental wellbeing. Folkestone and Hythe has a range of good greenspaces. Examples include Lower Leas Coastal Park and Folkestone Warren; these should be invested in for the future.
- There has been an increase in use of greenspace to support physical and mental health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has brought new users to greenspaces. Usage is likely to remain higher than prior to the pandemic which may result in improved facilities being needed, information provision and good site management to prevent negative impacts.
- Investing in green and blue Infrastructure will ensure that the health and wellbeing challenges faced in Folkestone and Hythe can be better supported.
- Folkestone Town Council reports estimate the wait time for allotments is about 5 years. Opportunities to create more sites should be encouraged where possible
- The 25 year Environment Plan acknowledges the essential role that the natural environment and greenspace play in people's physical and mental health and aims to improve population health and wellbeing by forging a closer connection between people and the natural environment.
- Mental health and wellbeing have also been found to improve when access to natural greenspace is improved.
- Green social prescribing - for volunteering and other physical activities is likely to increase in future years.



## Strategic Priorities – Health and Wellbeing

<p>HW 1</p> <p>Support people in taking healthy exercise and engaging in nature for both their physical and mental health.</p>	<p>HW 2</p> <p>Provide access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.</p>	<p>HW 3</p> <p>Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.</p>
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## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Health and Wellbeing



Priorities and Opportunities		Delivery
HW 1	Support people in taking healthy exercise and engaging in nature for both their physical and mental health.	
HW 1.1	Update and revise promoted routes using public rights of way in both urban and rural areas, providing more information on accessibility.	B
HW 1.2	Improve the accessibility, facilities and quality of Folkestone and Hythe owned parks and greenspaces and the public realm for those with mobility impairments and other disabilities.	A
HW 1.3	Through green social prescribing, encourage local NHS partnerships to develop healthy walking groups, as well as outdoor activities for those suffering from other conditions for example social isolation and anxiety.	B
HW 1.4	Provide information on accessibility to greenspaces so that those with mobility impairments or other disabilities feel confident to access more spaces, routes and parks.	A

	Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
HW 1.5	Use the interest and increased visitation generated through the Covid-19 pandemic to provide more information to people on where they can visit and how to visit responsibly.	B
HW 1.6	Create more spaces to support community growing – allotment facilities, gardens, edible trails and green walls and educate and support residents in utilising these.	B
HW 1.7	Create new promoted routes and circular routes near areas with new development to access the countryside and natural environment so that new populations can actively enjoy the outdoors.	B
HW 1.8	Improve the urban/rural interface and routes to the countryside improving accessibility of urban edge routes, e.g. removing stiles, installing handrails, improve surface.	B
HW 1.9	Ensure new development includes good quality and well-managed greenspaces, sports and play facilities to cater for the increase in population.	A
HW 2	Provide access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.	
HW 2.1	Plan for a reduced car Folkestone and Hythe – planning strategically to link public rights of way, cycle routes and greenspaces.	B
HW 2.2	Ensure that high quality greenspace and green infrastructure is provided through new development so that everyone has access to greenspace close to home.	A
HW 2.3	Use green infrastructure in civic spaces and urban streets to make these places more attractive for walking and cycling, improving health and reducing car travel.	B
HW 2.4	Make routes and spaces as accessible as possible so they are available to a wide range of people with different abilities.	B
HW 3	Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.	
HW 3.1	Support meaningful engagement to understand why some communities do not use greenspace, even when it is relatively close, to reveal the complex and diverse ways greenspace is thought about and used.	B
HW 3.2	Monitor and evaluate local changes in access to greenspace, in conjunction with health data over time, to understanding of what works, for whom and how.	B

# Blue Infrastructure and the Coast

## Introduction

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

## Royal Military Canal

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



Royal Military Canal at Hythe



## Rivers and Streams

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

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

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

## Romney Marsh

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



Romney Marsh

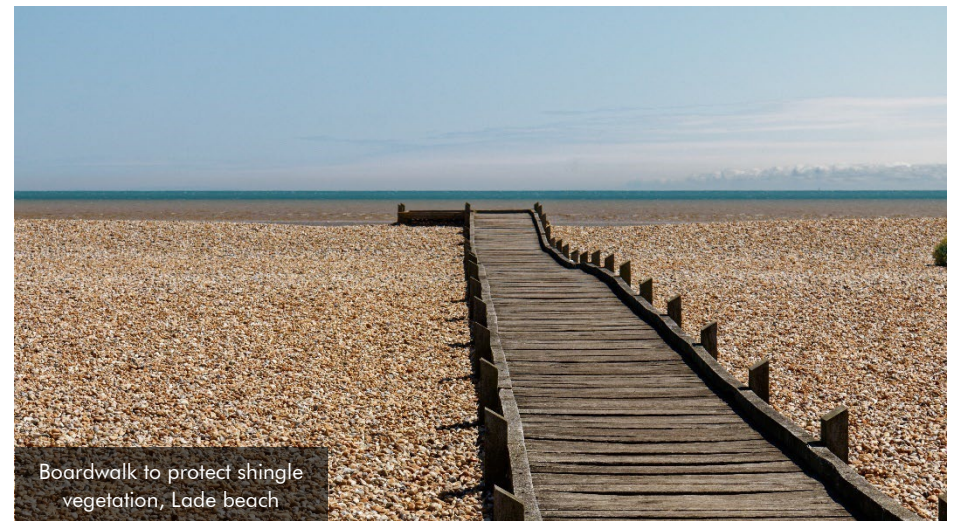
## Ponds and Pools

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



RSPB Reserve at Dungeness

## The Coast



Boardwalk to protect shingle vegetation, Lade beach

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

Bathing waters are monitored for quality at Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe, Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Littlestone.<sup>75</sup> The results for the years 2018 – 2022 (excluding 2020) are shown in Table 5. The sampling points around Folkestone and Hythe are consistently excellent or good. However St Mary's Bay has recently been of poor quality. The water at this sampling point derives from marsh river drainage from a large catchment, which includes diffuse agricultural runoff and private sewage effluents. During periods of heavy rainfall, the risk of contamination from this stream is increased.

★★★★ Excellent, ★★★ Good, ★ Sufficient, ■ Poor

Table 5: Bathing Water Quality

Sampling Point	2018	2019	2021	2022
Folkestone	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★
Sandgate	★★	★★	★★	★★
Hythe	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Dymchurch	★★	★★	★★	★★
St Mary's Bay	★★	★	★	■
Littlestone	★★	★★	★★	★★

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

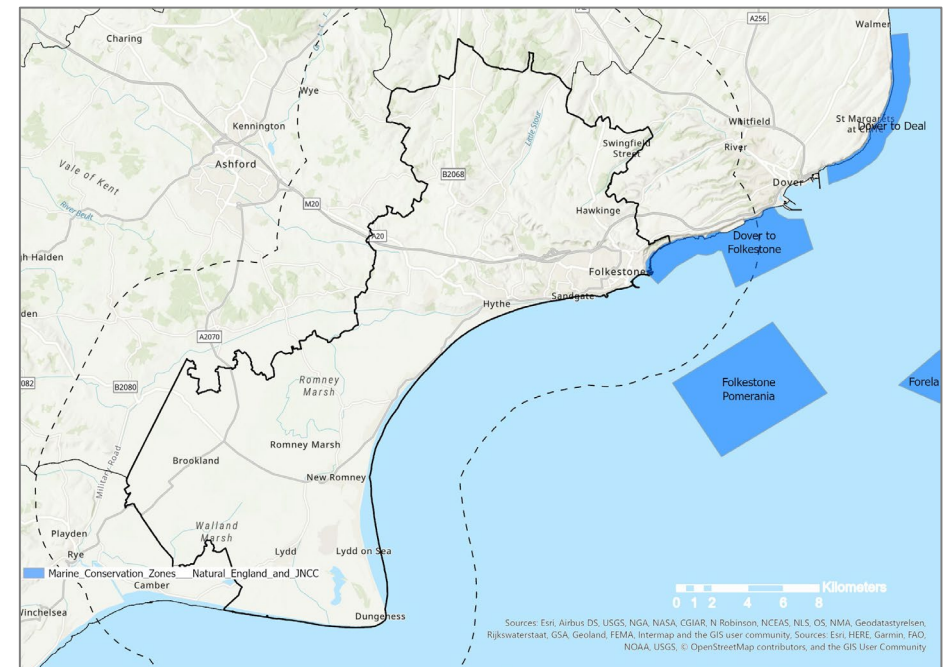
Ongoing sea level rise will result in a significant narrowing of intertidal areas ('coastal squeeze'), which has the potential to have an impact upon the nature conservation areas as well as the tourism economy, as beaches along this coastline are an important asset.

There are also Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in proximity to the district see Plan 17. The Dover to Folkestone MCZ was declared in January 2016. It is an inshore site covering the wave-cut intertidal chalk platforms to the north of Folkestone and into Dover district. It is a highly diverse area with many habitats and

features of interest. The chalk communities on the seashore are one of the best examples in the region, supporting a range of seaweeds and the animals that are associated with them. The diverse range of features includes rocky outcrops, ledges, boulder, sediments which support animals like sea slugs, long-clawed porcelain crabs, brittlestars and young lobsters.

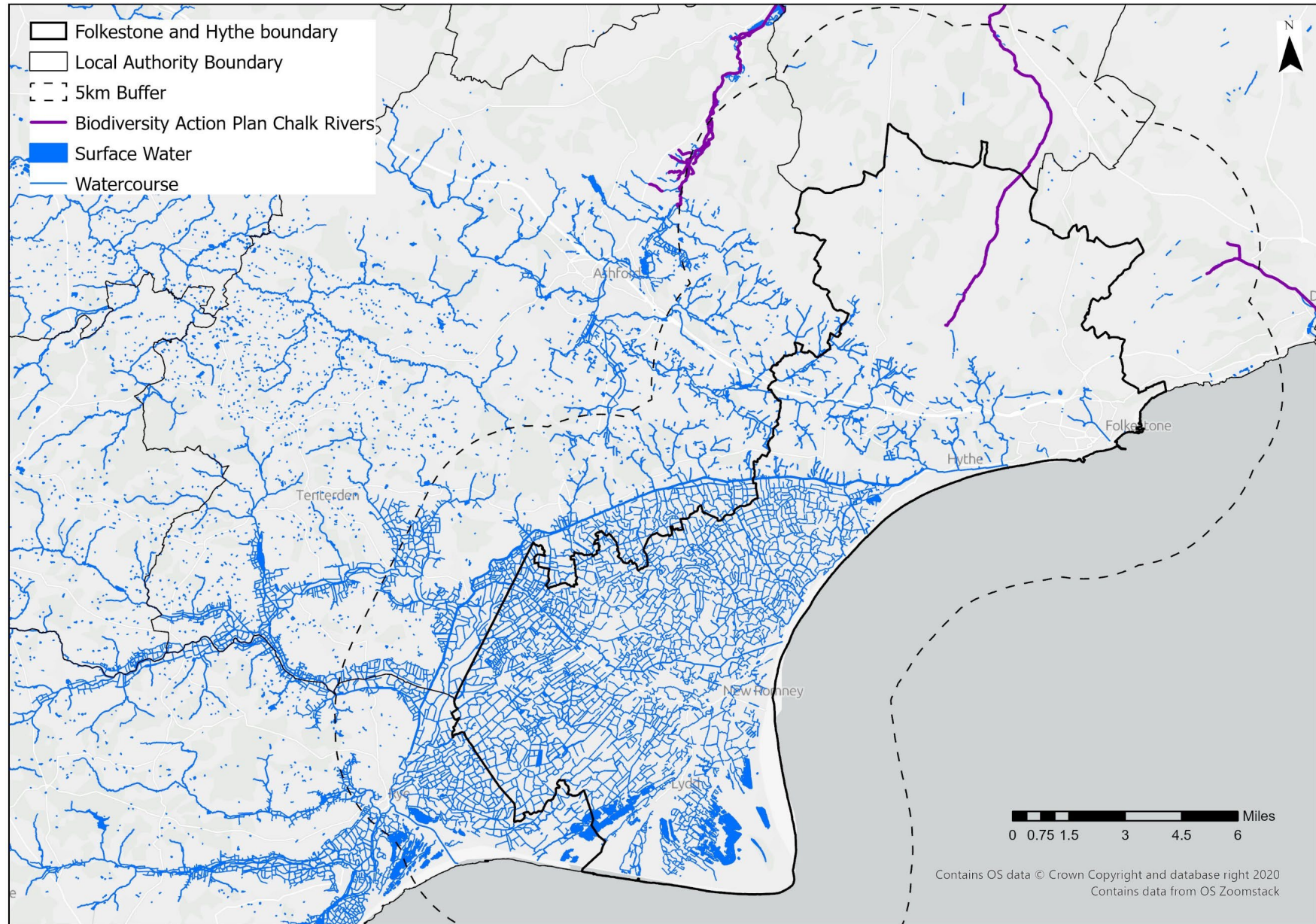
The Folkestone Pomerania lies further into the English Channel. Declared in 2013, this site protects six different habits of sediment and rock. The soft, muddy areas within the MCZ support dense ross worm and honeycomb worm reefs, created from tubes of sediment and shell fragments.

Plan 17: Marine Conservation Zones





Plan 18: Blue Infrastructure



## Water Resources

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

Three groundwater waterbodies lie under Folkestone and Hythe (Plan 19) - Kent Romney Marsh, Kent Greensand Eastern and the East Kent Chalk. All of these have poor chemical and quantitative status. Salt water intrusion is an area of concern for the Denge aquifer. Groundwater source protection zones extend across the aquifers, primarily across the chalk aquifer, to protect sources of water. These zones help to protect the precious aquifer from pollution, such as petrol or soakaways from septic tanks.

Folkestone and Hythe is an area of serious water stress as identified by the Environment Agency.<sup>76</sup> South East Water and Affinity are the statutory water suppliers in Folkestone and Hythe district. There is a shared interest in the protection of groundwater supplies and water quality.

## Flood and Water Management

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

'Flood risk' is defined in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Flood and Coastal Change as *"a combination of the probability and the potential consequences of flooding from all sources – including from rivers and the sea, directly from rainfall on the ground surface and rising groundwater, overwhelmed sewers and drainage systems, and from reservoirs, canals and lakes and other artificial sources."*<sup>77</sup>

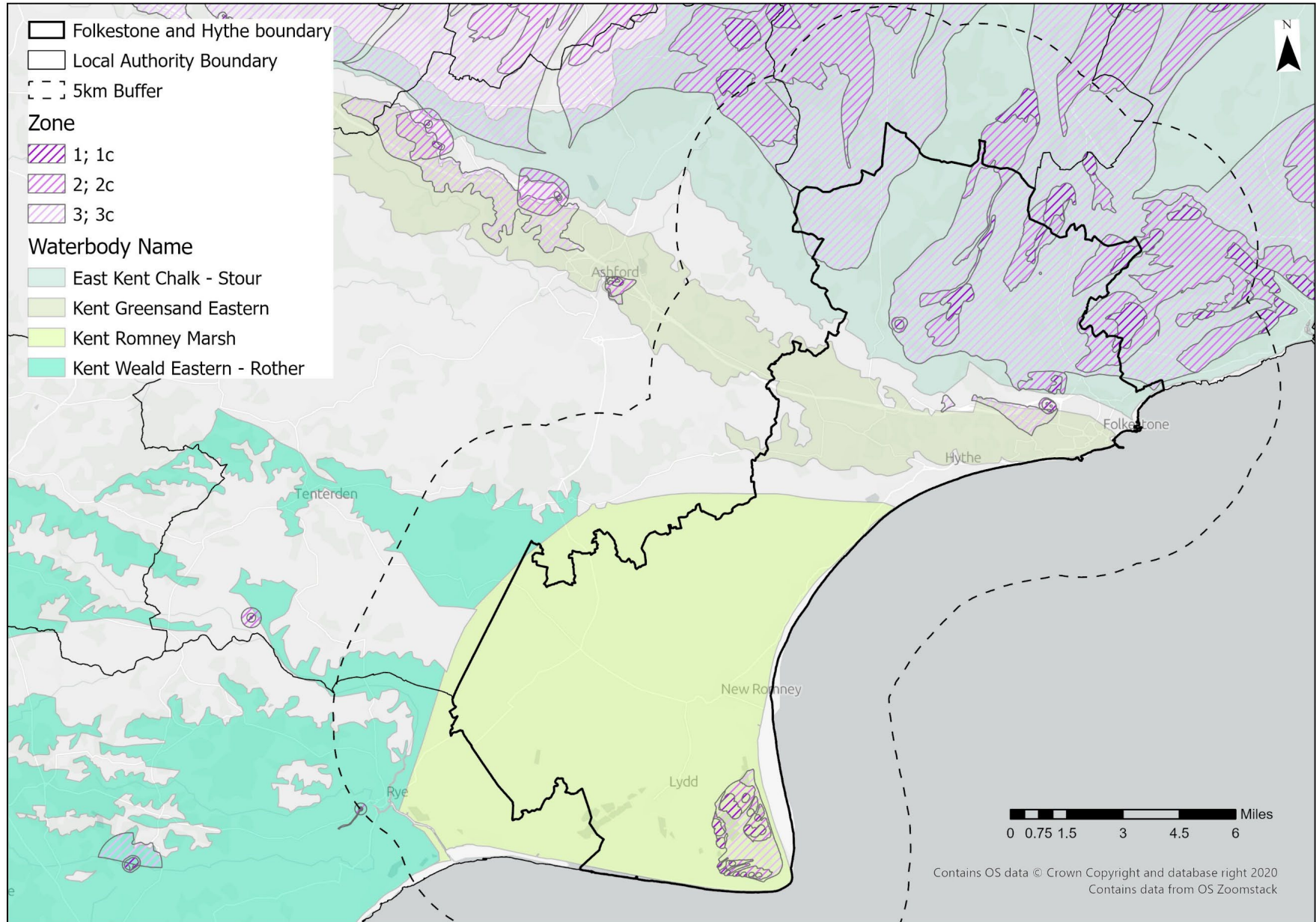
Areas in Folkestone and Hythe are at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams, ditches and the coast. Storm events and surges can also affect the district. For example, flooding along the Pent Stream is caused by poor urban drainage and high intensity storm events. There is also a risk of tide-locking in the future as a result of a rise in sea level. However, many areas benefit from the protection provided by a diverse range of flood defence infrastructure.

Much of Folkestone and Hythe district is low-lying with approximately 55% lying within the Environment Agency Zone 3a Flood Risk<sup>78</sup> (Plan 20). However, these areas benefit from the protection provided by a diverse range of flood defence infrastructure. Folkestone and Hythe topography varies significantly across the district, with the flat low lying Romney Marsh being below mean water level in many places.<sup>79</sup>

Climate change will inevitably result in an increased risk of flooding from all sources. The reliance on coastal flood defence infrastructure will increase over the next century. It is therefore necessary to ensure that new development is designed so that these residual risks are mitigated.<sup>80</sup>

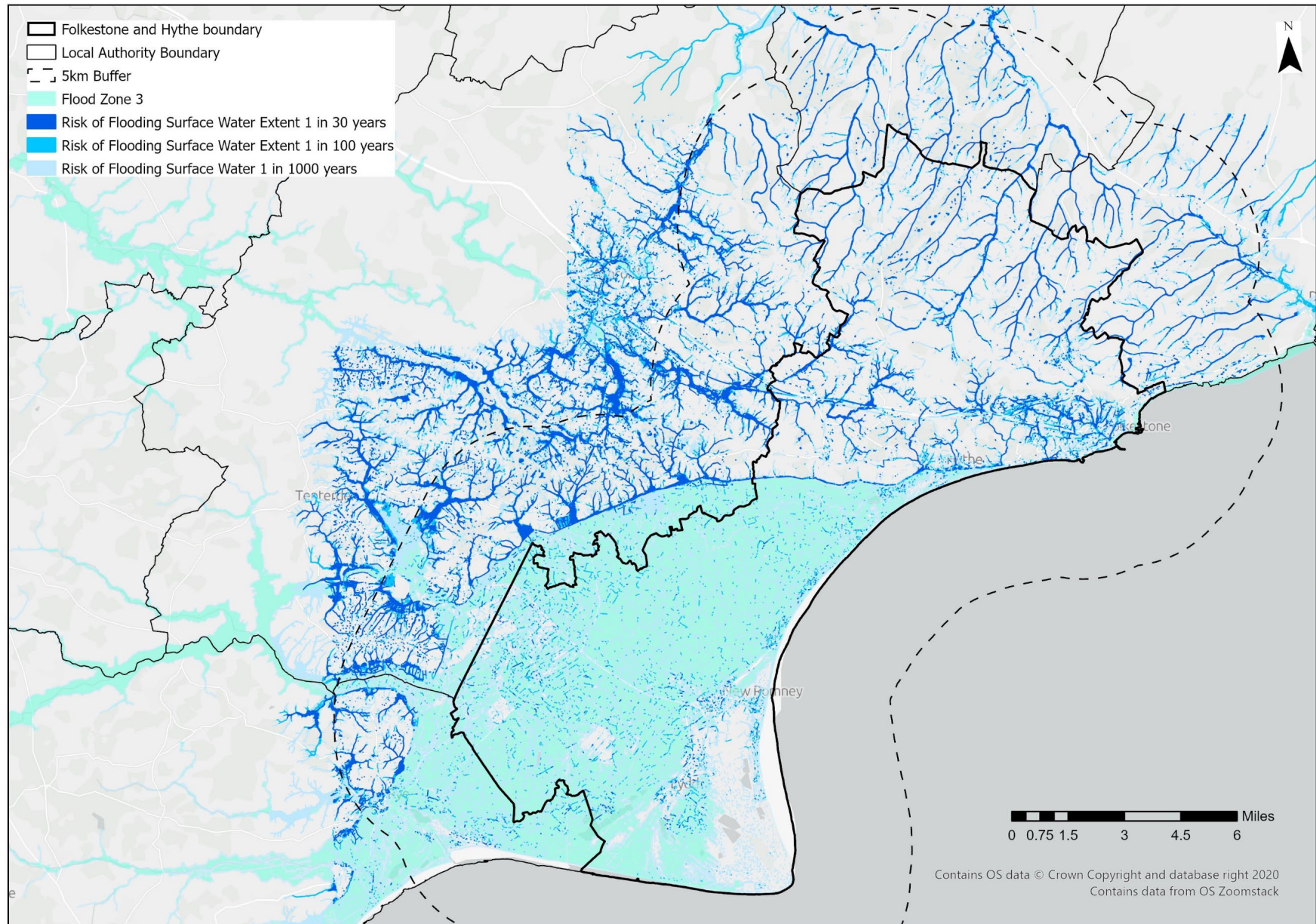


Plan 19: Groundwater Waterbodies and Source Protection Zones





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



There are opportunities for greater use of nature-based solutions to water quality and management issues, working with partners, including Southern Water<sup>81</sup> and Kent County Council to take forward new approaches and solutions.

New development and private dwellings can be designed to improve water management and quality. Actions which could help include:

- Rainwater for new developments not being connected to the existing foul/combined sewer system;
- Encouraging property owners to disconnect rainwater at source from foul water system;
- Increase the amount of urban green space to reduce rainwater runoff that causes flooding and discharges from storm overflows to protect homes and businesses and local rivers and the sea;
- Developers include green roofs and water saving measures to create sustainable homes.

## Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS)

Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS)<sup>82</sup> can help to manage surface water flood risk. Natural features like swales, ponds, tree pits and rain gardens allow water to soak into the ground or be evaporated, reducing the need for traditional piped drainage. SuDS can also provide amenity value, reduce the impacts of climate change and create spaces for nature. Green infrastructure assets are important areas in which to implement or retrofit SuDS. They can also be retrofitted into urban and developed areas through the use of solutions such as rain gardens, specialised tree pits and permeable paved surfaces.

An increased frequency of intense rainfall events due to climate change will lead to more rapid and more frequent overloading of the drainage network and localised flooding. Allowing surface water to bypass this network and discharge into greenspace helps to reduce flood risk. SuDS are known to be more adaptable and flexible than traditional solutions, allowing future modification to cope with climate and other changes in urban areas.

Managing surface water in a sustainable manner, e.g. through SuDS, can ensure that new development does not exacerbate flood risk on site or within the catchment.<sup>83</sup> New development could incorporate SuDS integrated into green infrastructure. Management and maintenance plans for these, properly implemented, help to improve water quality by removing pollutants and putting clean water back into the environment.<sup>84</sup> Plants and vegetation will help to provide wildlife habitats. However, new development forms only a small part of the current urban areas. SuDS can also often be retrofitted into areas. Retrofitting SuDS can potentially help solve some of the flooding and water quality problems that may be faced in Folkestone and Hythe district in the future. Such measures provide a more joined up approach to managing surface water across wider areas, supporting the water cycle as a whole, helping to green urban areas and generating multiple benefits in-line with an ecosystem services approach.

Care is needed to ensure that SuDS features do not damage biodiversity, landscape or heritage features. Direct damage can occur, or indirect damage through changes to soil moisture, soil processes, particularly to heritage features.





## Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- National planning policy expects Local Plans to account for water management via the consideration of flood risk, coastal change, climate change, water quality, water supply and wastewater.
- Folkestone and Hythe is at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams, ditches and the coast. Storm water surges are a particular threat around the coast.
- Current UK projections for future climate change indicate that there will be more frequent short duration high intensity rainfall and more frequent periods of long duration rainfall. Climate change is also expected to bring hotter, drier summers alongside wetter winters but not necessarily in tandem.<sup>85</sup>
- Summer droughts are also likely to be more frequent alongside an increased risk of flooding. This combined with increased demand from development requires a proactive approach to the management of these risks via the planning system.
- Wetland biodiversity and habitats are at greater threat from climate change impacts than other habitats.
- An increased population will lead to demand for water.
- Some blue infrastructure are also important heritage assets. This should be taken into account and assessed prior to implementing projects.



## Strategic Priorities – Blue Infrastructure and the Coast

### BIC 1

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

### BIC 2

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

## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Blue Infrastructure and the Coast

### A

Actions within the control of Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

### B

Priorities within the scope of influence of F&HDC. Potential to be delivered by other organisations or in partnership with F&HDC.

### C

Priorities of importance in the district but not in control of F&HDC. Delivered by other organisations.

	Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
BIC 1	Protect water resources and protect and enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats.	
BIC 1.1	Raise awareness of the outstanding water, wetland, coastal and marine habitats of the district, both to residents and organisations, and promote ways in which everyone can help to conserve and protect them.	B
BIC 1.2	Support actions to reduce water consumption.	C
BIC 1.3	Achieve good status for watercourses. This includes a range of actions - improve fish passage, naturalise hard engineered riverbanks, reduce silt and enrichment from agriculture, improve highway runoff.	C
BIC 1.4	Ensure measures are taken to mitigate, where possible, against the impact of climate change on habitats, including coastal squeeze.	B

	Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
BIC 1.5	Encourage the installation of low water input planting in open spaces and parks and in new development (in both shared greenspaces).	B
BIC 1.6	Ensure water-based recreation and wildlife interests are in balance – ensure biodiversity interests are properly taken into account and protected.	B
BIC 2	Incorporate SuDS schemes into new development and retrofit into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues.	
BIC 2.1	Integrate SuDS into the design of new green infrastructure rather than a separate feature e.g. tree pits with water storage capacity and consider and include future maintenance of the system in the early stages of SuDS design. SuDS should be designed to support biodiversity and amenity uses.	A
BIC 2.2	Support efforts to tackle diffuse pollution from urban centres and industrial areas e.g. through the implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).	B
BIC 2.3	Incorporate SuDS into new development where appropriate and ensure maintenance.	A
BIC 2.4	Utilise existing greenspace to incorporate SuDS scheme where these can address a need to control flooding.	B

# Landscape Character and Heritage

## Introduction

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

The district has a remarkably rich and diverse landscape and heritage. This landscape character underpins Folkestone and Hythe's green and blue infrastructure assets, providing a unique 'sense of place'.

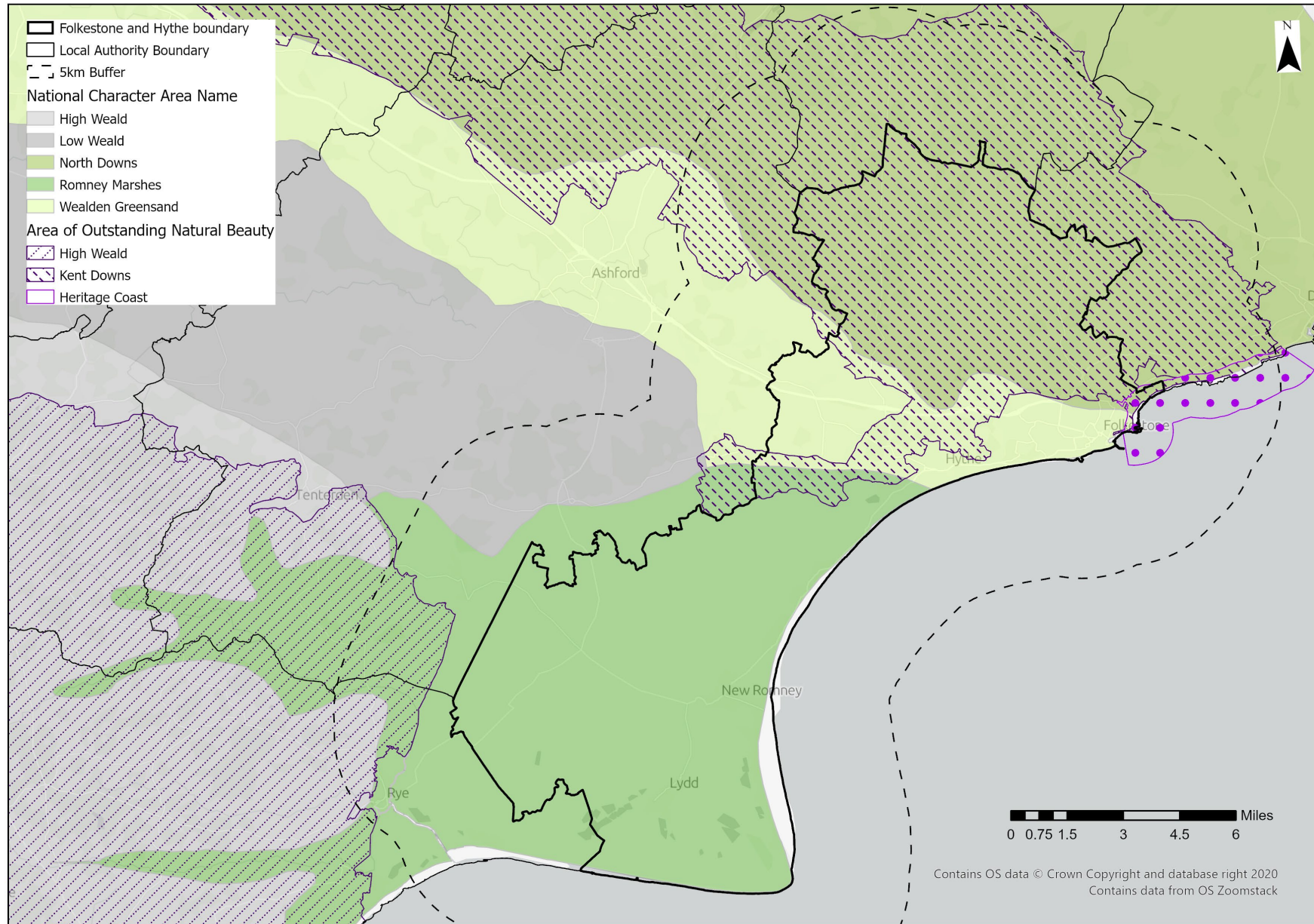
The district also contains many important heritage assets, from individual features to the wider landscapes, which have all played a role in shaping the district's development and identity.



Botolph's Bridge, Canal Cutting and Romney Marsh from the Lympne Escarpment



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



## Landscape Character

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

Three National Character Assessment Areas (NCAs) covering Folkestone and Hythe district are: the Romney Marshes (NCA 123), Wealden Greensand (NCA 120) and the North Downs (NCA119) (see Plan 21).

### The Romney Marshes (NCA 123)

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

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





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

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



St Thomas à Becket, Fairfield, Romney Marsh



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

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

The land of Romney Marsh is one of the most fertile areas of Kent, with a particularly long growing season.<sup>86</sup> Farming on Romney Marsh has changed greatly with a change from sheep pasture to arable land and through intensification. As farming types and techniques change, traditional features are lost from the landscape: lookers' huts, hedgerows, sheep fencing etc. Many are not deliberately destroyed, but simply collapse out of neglect.

In many parts of Romney Marsh, ground surfaces are lowering as peat in soils is exposed to the air, desiccates and blows away. The need for field drainage means that many ditches are dredged and their banks steepened, reducing the wildlife habitats associated with streams and wetlands. Fertilising pasture also changes the grass and wildflower species present, as many only grow in nutrient-poor soils. This, in turn, affects the numbers and species of insects and birds which they support.<sup>87</sup>

### The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme, developed by the Romney Marsh Living Landscape Partnership, secured National Lottery Heritage Funding for habitat improvements, community engagement and training to benefit the people and wildlife of the Romney Marsh. The scheme began in 2017 and ended in 2022. It covered the area south of the Royal Military Canal, stretching from Camber to West Hythe. Kent Wildlife Trust was lead partner on behalf of multiple partner organisations.

The strategic aims of the Landscape Partnership Scheme were to:

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

The character of the Romney Marshes can be conserved for the future only if the demands on agriculture, commerce, recreation and conservation can be reconciled. A continual balance needs to be struck in an area that is internationally important for geomorphology, heritage and wildlife, but where local communities strive to make a living and enjoy the natural assets on their doorstep and where industries seek to exploit the natural assets of the area for their economic value. The Fifth Continent furthered these aims and there is an important element of legacy to be taken forward following the end of this project.

## Environmental Opportunities

- Maintaining landscape character, tranquillity, sense of remoteness and connection to the maritime environment by sensitive planning of future land use, to maintain the open views and expansive skies and a sense of remoteness;
- Using understanding of the area's traditional and historic architecture and its distinct patterns of settlement to inform appropriate conservation and use of historic buildings;
- Carefully managing the introduction of any new vertical elements into the landscape, to maintain character and setting of the Marsh;
- Protecting, promoting and celebrating the churches found on the Marsh, benefiting sense of place and history and for their important contribution to cultural heritage;
- Protecting, conserving and enhancing the important archaeological and historic features (both scheduled and non-scheduled) within the landscape, including the Royal Military Canal, defensive coastline features, looker's huts – which provide important links to the past sheep industry;
- Ensure that the planned changes in the coastal zone are considered holistically so that they provide sustainable use of the coastal environment, benefiting wildlife, tourism, access and recreation;<sup>88</sup>
- Follow recommendations of the SARMS.

## Wealden Greensand (NCA 120)

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

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

A short coastal stretch extends from Folkestone to Hythe, with a heavily developed hinterland. As a result, most of the coastline is protected by coastal defences. The management of this coastal stretch between Folkestone and Hythe influences and is influenced by the coastal stretches in adjoining NCAs (North Downs and Romney Marsh).<sup>89</sup> A small section is also part of the Dover–Folkestone Heritage Coast.

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

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

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

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

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

### Environmental Opportunities

- Maintaining and enhancing rights of way and open access and improving links to the North Downs Way;
- Developing new permissive access to historical sites and quality greenspace as part of a cohesive network of inspiring access provision;
- Promoting sustainable tourism initiatives where they can accommodate high visitor numbers whilst also managing the impact of increased visitor numbers to sensitive sites;
- Restoring and creating broadleaved woodlands surrounding major transport corridors and urban areas to help reduce noise, light and air pollution, and to maintain and enhance the pockets of tranquillity;
- Managing and enhancing the nationally important and locally characteristic geodiversity and biodiversity, including the undeveloped sea cliffs between Folkestone Warren and Hythe, and the ragstone exposures of the Lympne Escarpment in Kent;
- Planning a network of greenspaces across the urban areas, urban fringe and adjacent countryside, which can result in multiple benefits for the environment and communities.<sup>90</sup>



## The North Downs (NCA 119)

The North Downs character area forms a chain of chalk hills extending from the Hog's Back in Surrey and ending dramatically at the White Cliffs of Dover. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation is testament to the scenic qualities and natural beauty of the area.<sup>91</sup> A small part of the coast around Folkestone Warren lies within the Dover to Folkestone Heritage Coast.

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

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

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

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

part of the old railway line from Folkestone up the Elham Valley. There are modern transport links cutting through the area but also a network of narrow, winding lanes, which over centuries of use have hollowed-out the hillsides where they descend and climb the scarp.<sup>92</sup>

### Environmental Opportunities

- Conserving and appropriately managing ancient trackways such as the North Downs Way and the Pilgrims' Way and strengthening the network through high quality interconnecting routes, increasing the benefits of these routes for biodiversity, health and local businesses by careful green infrastructure planning;
- Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views;
- Working in partnership with the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit to identify management opportunities in accordance with the management plan;
- Seeking to increase awareness and maximising the potential of the various historic, natural and cultural assets, improving access to and interpretation of sites and features, as a platform for enhanced education and to enthuse local communities, linking them with their local geology, wildlife and cultural and historic environments. At the same time there is a need to recognise and manage the impact of increased visitor numbers on sensitive sites.<sup>93</sup>

## Heritage

Folkestone and Hythe district has a remarkably rich and diverse heritage that plays a key role in the district's historic sense of place. At a wider scale, the district contains a range of historic landscapes moulded by natural and human processes that provide the district's distinct character.<sup>94</sup>

Heritage can provide strong social and health benefits through improving quality of life and activities that encourage physical and mental health and well-being, reduce social exclusion and crime. Heritage can also provide a valuable educational resource that can contribute local context to curriculums at all stages and an available and accessible resource for local schools and colleges.

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

The district also contains an exceptionally rich and varied historic landscape which spans southward from the quintessential rolling Kentish chalk downland to the unique and vegetated shingles of Dungeness. In doing so it crosses the major coastal transport conduit of the Greensand Vale before dropping into the expansive Romney Marsh. The district's coastline, varying between the iconic White Cliffs and sand or shingle beaches with a seascape that includes views to France.<sup>95</sup>

There are some notable green and blue spaces which are important green and blue infrastructure assets and heritage features, for example the Royal Military Canal. Opportunities should be sought to bring heritage and open space

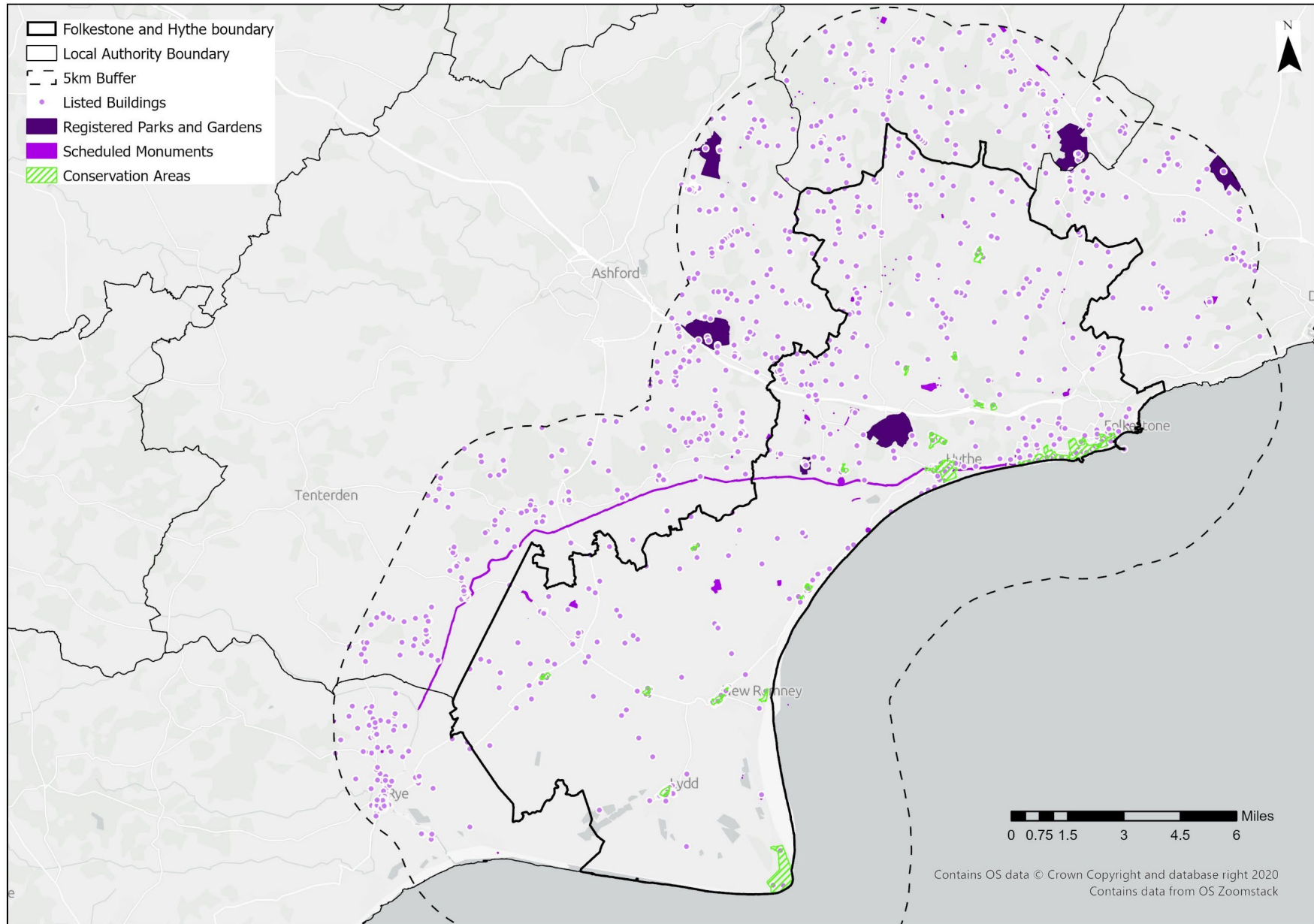


Hythe Church

management together to benefit communities and visitors. There is also a wealth of coastal heritage showcasing the importance of the district for defence, tourism and trade. The archaeology of blue infrastructure – rivers, river valleys and the marine and coastal environment – is an important feature of Folkestone and Hythe district.

Folkestone and Hythe district's Heritage Strategy takes a thematic approach and has considered those aspects that particularly contribute to local distinctiveness or have been important in shaping the character of the district. Landscape, coast and defence heritage are significant themes. Churches, settlements and farming, parks, transport and archaeology are also important, creating a coherent and accessible story about the district's development and identity. Many of these are outstanding in terms of their heritage significance.<sup>96</sup>

Plan 22: Heritage





## Landscape Heritage

### The Coastline

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

### Marine, Harbours and the Seaside

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

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



Folkestone Harbour

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Folkestone, along with neighbouring Sandgate, had developed into a fashionable seaside resort, with luxurious hotels and seaside amenities. Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands also became popular destinations. The growth in seaside tourism and leisure time during the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in a rise in coastal resort towns and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands all had popular holiday camps. All of these areas are still popular seaside destinations as well as including valuable heritage assets relating to their history of smuggling, farming and coastal defence. As a coastal district, the area has played an important role in the

formation of the 'coastal garden' seaside resort and has retained excellent examples of striking landscaped gardens and horticultural quality such as the Lower Leas Coastal Park, which contains a significant section of 'Pulhamite'.

### The Romney Marsh

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

### The North Downs and Greensand Vale

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

### Dungeness

The historic landscape of Dungeness is a particularly distinctive part of the district and, indeed, the entire country. Dungeness is particularly attractive for its wildness. The few buildings and dwellings are distinctive and reflect a strong local heritage and uniquely strong local character.

### Defence

The district's proximity to the continent has continually placed it on the front line against foreign invasion. A strong legacy of coastal defence is evident in the remains of fortifications along the coastline and inland. They form an outstanding collection of assets representing the nation's responses to foreign threats and its defence strategies. The collection of Napoleonic period defences are of outstanding importance. During both 20<sup>th</sup> century World Wars, Folkestone Harbour was an important departure and arrival point for soldiers. At various points throughout their history Folkestone, Hythe and Lydd have played an important military role and become major garrison towns. The district contains a wide collection of Second World War heritage assets, including sites associated with air defence, coastal defence, troop support and supply, anti-invasion works, and civil defence.



Sound Mirrors, Lade

## Settlements, Farming, Parks and Churches

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

The district also has several valuable parks and gardens. Whilst the current estates are smaller parts of once much larger landholdings, the heritage of these parklands and their associated buildings and gardens demonstrate are distinctive. Two parks are listed on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and there are many unlisted parks that are in excellent condition and are integral to the identity of the district.

A rich religious heritage is evident in a range of religious buildings, ruins and archaeological remains. These reflect the long, sometimes dramatic, history of Christianity in East Kent.<sup>97</sup>

## Tourism

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

The Heritage Strategy has identified opportunities to use the district's heritage assets as part of its tourism offer. The district is rich in heritage and its strength lies in the cumulative nature of its

heritage assets. Outstanding examples include Napoleonic defences, Martello Towers, the Royal Military Canal and the unique landscapes of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness.

## Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

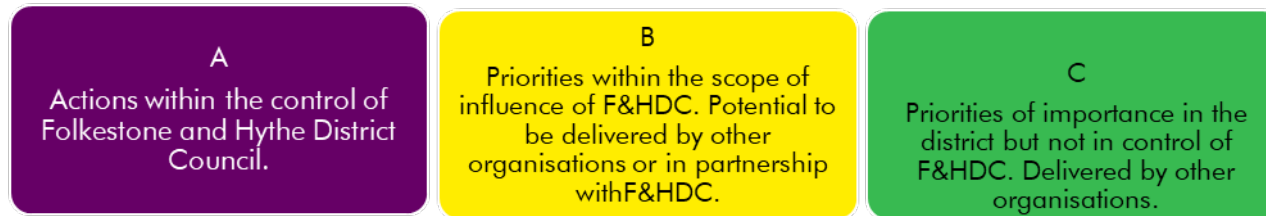
- Human land use has had a major role in fashioning the landscape, through the drainage of marshes, military activity, construction of sea walls, housing, tourist amenities and roads.
- Parts of the landscape character of the district are much more affected by nearby development than others. In the eastern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



## Strategic Priorities – Landscape Character and Heritage



## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Landscape Character and Heritage



	Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
LH 1	Strengthen and reinforce landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character.	
LH 1.1	Manage woodland, aiming for a linked network of woodland, shaws and hedgerows, and replace dead ash with alternative species as appropriate. Restore characteristic landscape features such as hedgerows and woodlands. Ensure new tree establishment associated with climate mitigation respects and enhances landscape character and qualities.	C
LH 1.2	Protect and enhance the landscape and views in the Kent Downs AONB and its setting, support the co-ordinated management of the landscape and habitats, promote wildlife value, enable and manage access for recreation, with reference to the Kent Downs AONB management plan and landscape character assessment.	B
LH 1.3	Strengthen and reinforce natural features like watercourses as accessible green corridors linking built up areas with the wider countryside.	B

	Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
LH 1.4	Develop strategies for partnership working to enhance the landscape, for example for woodland and farmland management.	C
LH 1.5	Strengthen and reinforce landscape structure in the urban–rural fringe areas. Ensure that the edges of new and existing urban and rural settlements blend comfortably with the surrounding countryside.	B
LH 1.6	Protect water resources, wetland habits, fen and reedbed, chalk grassland, traditional orchards and other heritage landscape features.	B
LH 1.7	Ensure that new development recognises landscape character in proposals and seeks to conserve and enhance landscape features and, where development is within or impacts on the Kent Downs AONB, have particular regard to the natural beauty of protected landscape.	A
LH 1.8	Protect the naturalness and landscape character of the districts unique and varied coastal landscapes.	B
LH 2	Ensure heritage is recognised in green and blue infrastructure planning, interpretation, and tourism.	
LH 2.1	Promote and enhance heritage assets.	B
LH 2.2	Improve accessibility of heritage sites through sustainable transport links and enhanced interpretation (where appropriate) and community engagement.	B
LH 2.3	Identify heritage and local distinctiveness which can be used to guide future development.	A
LH 2.4	Identify and protect important viewpoints of heritage assets and ensure that the historic natural environment is respected and interpreted through new development.	A
LH 2.5	Protect archaeological sites and promote public awareness, and access where possible.	B



# Part 2: Spatial Priorities



Folkestone Leas



# Spatial Opportunities

## Introduction

The three distinct areas within Folkestone and Hythe district are covered in this section. The North Downs makes up the northern part of the district and is mostly in the Kent Downs AONB. The main urban areas are Folkestone, Hythe and, in the future, Otterpool Park. To the south lie the marshes and coast of Romney Marsh and Dungeness. These areas align with the Core Strategy.

The actions in the spatial areas are of specific relevance to each area. They complement and add to the actions listed previously under the themes, which are also relevant to the spatial areas.

Community action at the local level is particularly important. Communities, businesses, parish and town councils and individuals all have a role to play in improving green and blue infrastructure in their local areas - in particular:

- Develop and implement plans for biodiversity, for example for pollinators, hedgehog highways, swift boxes, 'micro meadows' for wildflowers or tree and hedge planting;
- Improvements for biodiversity in all green and blue infrastructure, whether they are local authority-owned or are in schools, private gardens, businesses, cemeteries or elsewhere;
- Raise awareness and celebrate the outstanding local biodiversity, landscapes, heritage and cultural assets.



## Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

This area is bounded to the north by the transport corridor of the A20 and the transport infrastructure of the Channel Tunnel. To the east lies Folkestone Warren Local Nature Reserve and SSSI. North of the A20 lies Folkestone to Etchinghill SAC and the North Downs Way National Trail (Plan 24).

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

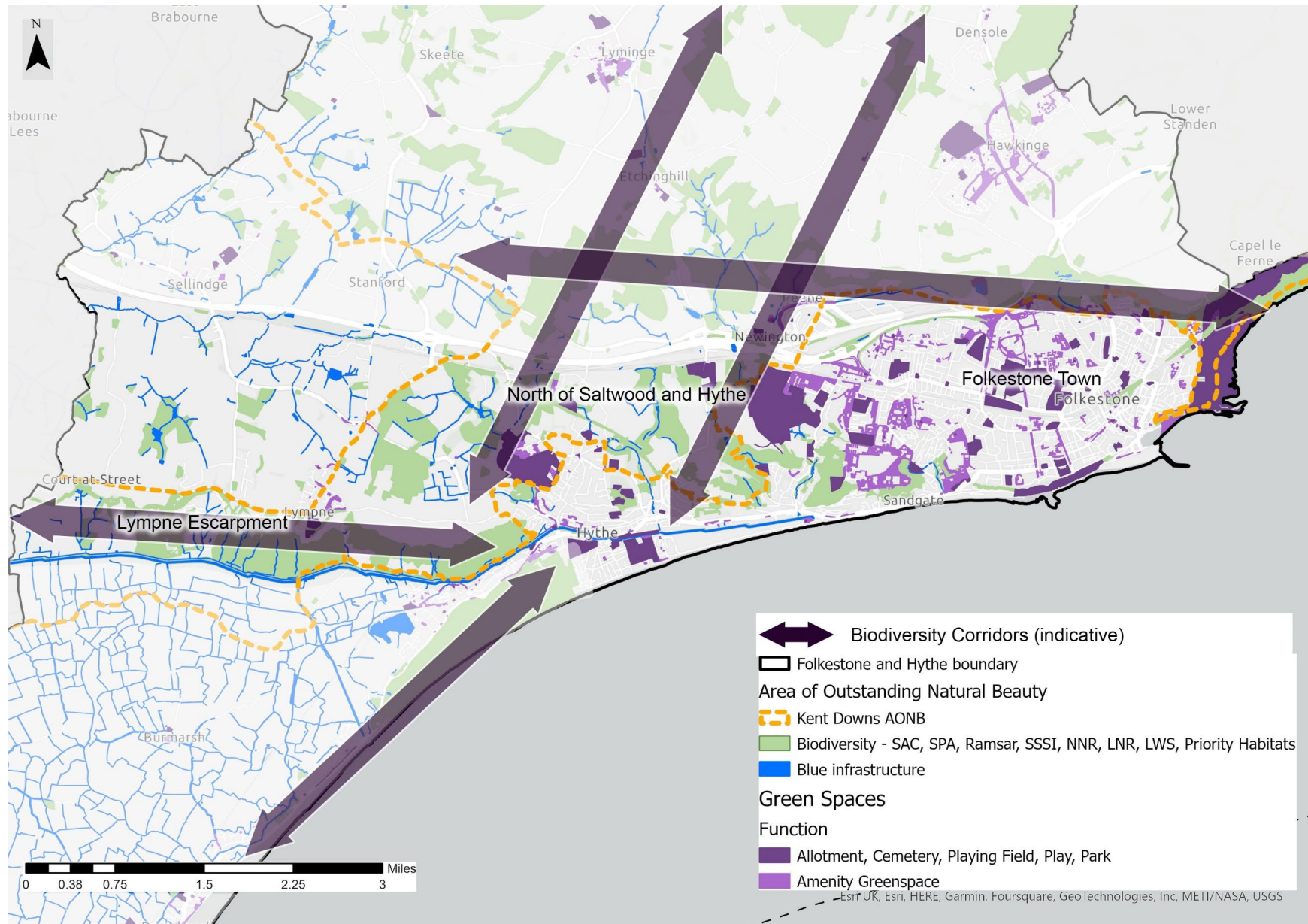
In the 2021 Folkestone Town Centre 'Place Plan' there are several actions and recommendations which relate to green and blue infrastructure. These include creating unified public spaces, public realm greening and new public spaces, wayfinding, enhancing the cycling and walking experience, creating better connections, planting and landscaping for biodiversity, sustainable drainage and carbon sequestration. These green and blue infrastructure improvements should be prioritised as part of any regeneration of the town centre.

Access out of Folkestone to the north is severely restricted by transport infrastructure. The Kent Downs can be accessed from the western side of Folkestone town, through Folkestone Warren, along the England Coast Path or cycle route up Smallpox Hill. There are other, but limited, crossing and access points between

here and Shearway Business Park (Caesar's Way) including public right of way HF7 and various points along Churchill Avenue to access Sugar Loaf Hill. However, from Shearway Business Park there is no access until public right of way HE255 south of Newington. This effectively cuts off the Kent Downs from people living in Cheriton. The railway to the south also limits access choices for these residents. There is, however, a 'green chain' around Folkestone and Hythe (see Plan 26) and these access points make important connections to this route.

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

Plan 23: Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood Area





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

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

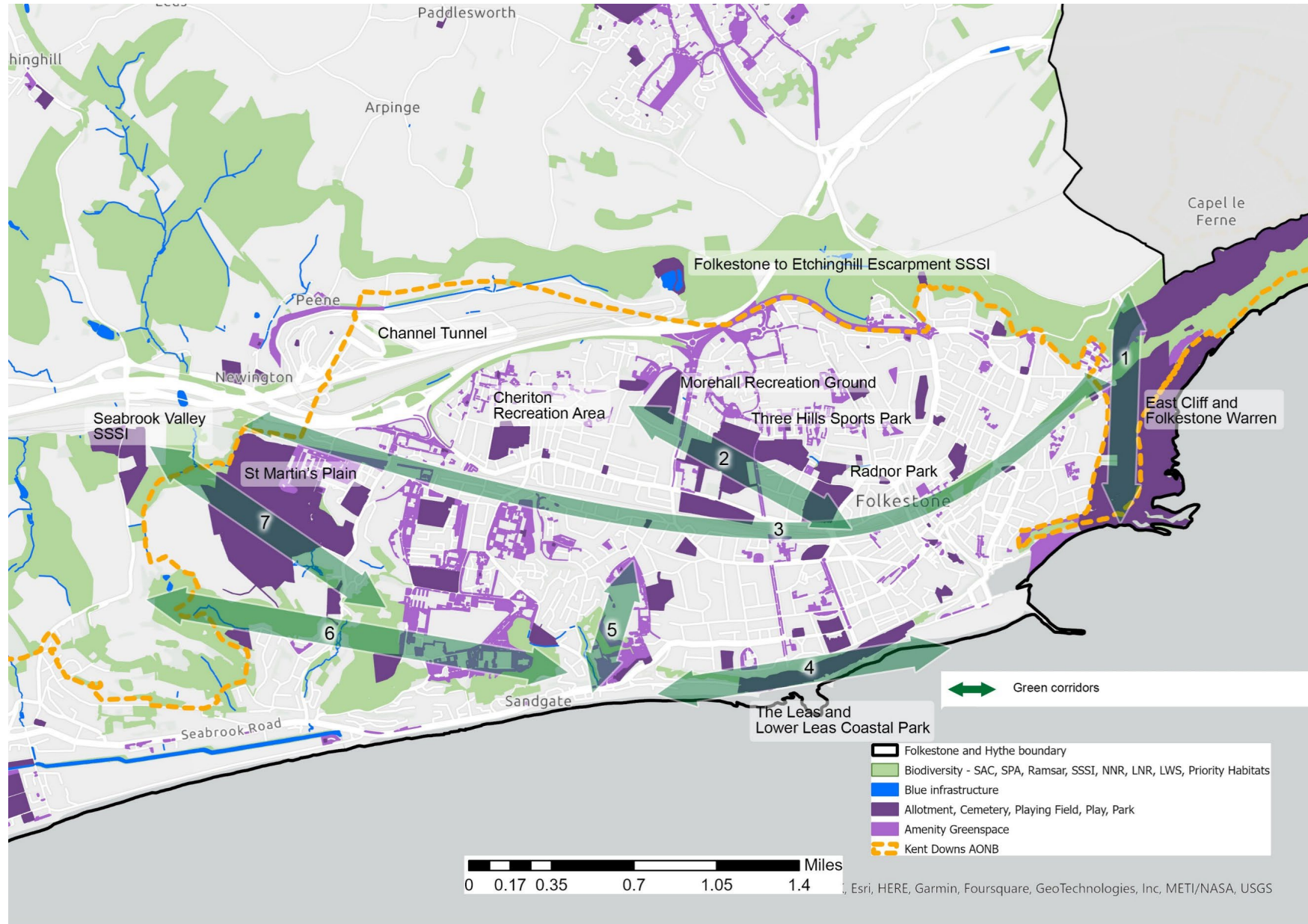
The health of communities in the eastern areas of Folkestone is generally poorer than in the west with some areas showing high levels of health deprivation.

There are several corridors of linked green infrastructure assets in Folkestone town, see Plan 24. These corridors simply highlight opportunities for improving linkages across the town, perhaps through sympathetic management, but improvements elsewhere in the urban area are not excluded. The whole of the town is also covered by a 'B-Line' highlighting potential importance for pollinator species. There is potential to improve spaces for pollinator species throughout urban Folkestone and Hythe.

### Corridors (Plan 24)

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

Plan 24: Green Infrastructure Corridors - Folkestone Town



### Focus Area - North of Saltwood and Hythe

This area is the area west of Folkestone from Shorncliffe and St Martin's Plain and north of Hythe and Saltwood. It is bounded to the north by the transport infrastructure of the A20 and railway line. The area is surrounded by urban areas to the east and south, with Otterpool planned along the western edge. Most of this area is within the Kent Downs AONB.

The landscape is intimate and enclosed; a mixed arable and pastoral landscape strongly influenced by estate planting, with blocks of deciduous woodland. This historic landscape has unique elements which create a strong sense of place. Saltwood Castle, with its distinctive towered gatehouse, stands in a tiny area of ornamental parkland on the edge of a typical unspoilt valley. These little valleys bring valuable pockets of rural landscape up to the very edge of the town. To the west of Saltwood, the historic landscape of Sandling Park (a Registered Park of Historic Interest) comprises parkland, woodland, agricultural land and estate buildings. Further designed landscape has been incorporated into Brockhill Country Park.

It is an important area for biodiversity corridors. Most of the area is within the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area, but the area also links other Opportunity Areas to the north and south.

There are some threats to this landscape. Although it well-treed, the woodland blocks and hedgerows are threatened by ash

dieback. Climate change is likely to lead to hotter drier summers, and warmer, wetter winters. This will affect soil conditions (both drought and flooding) and the types of trees, crops and habitats which can be supported. Historic parkland management plans should make detailed recommendations for parkland management and ensuring that the parkland remains a feature of the landscape in the future. There has been some localised loss of field boundaries. The proximity to urban areas means that it is vulnerable to anti-social behaviour such as fly tipping and littering.

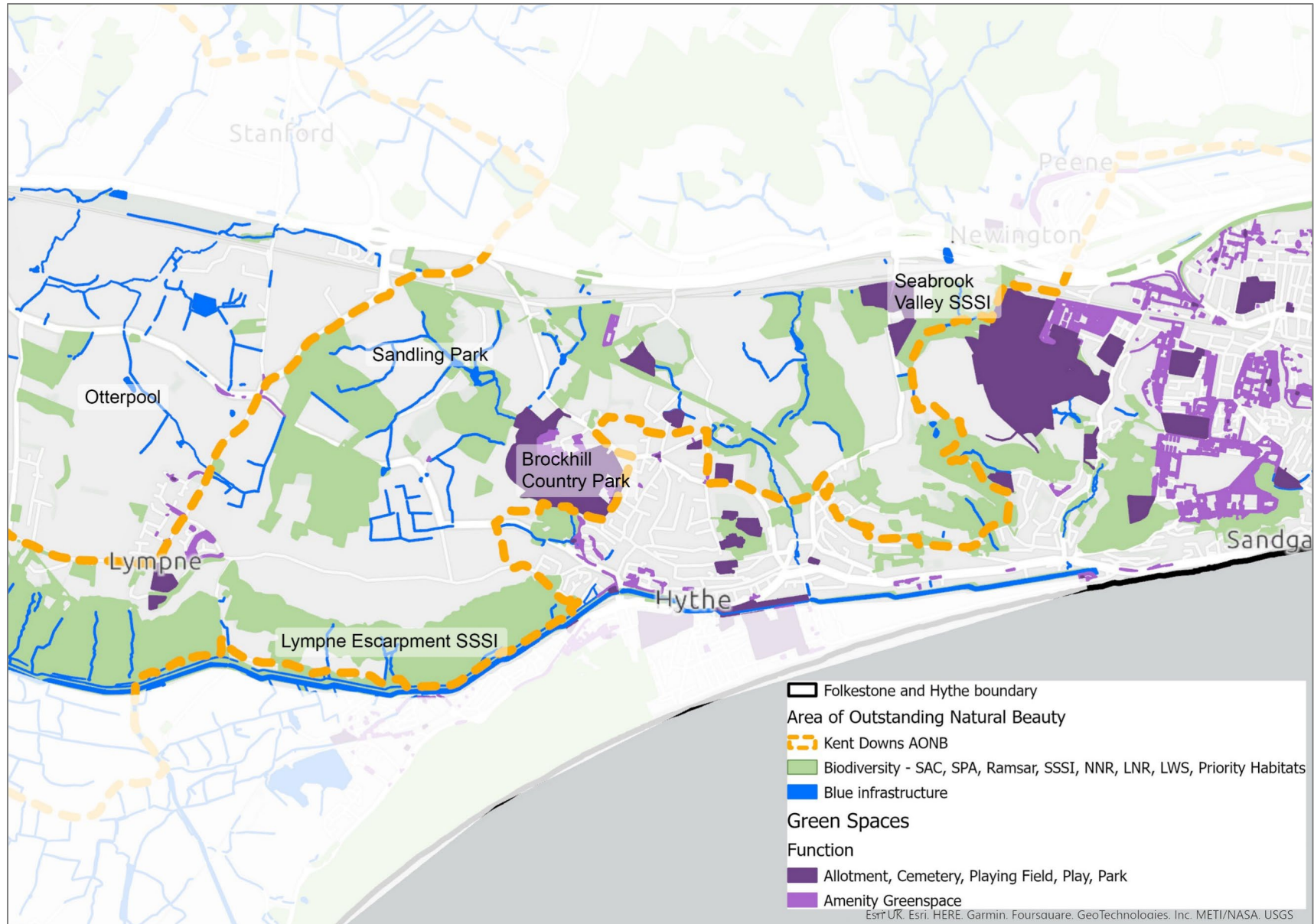
This is an important area for recreation for current and future residents, particularly as there are only two access points across the transport corridor in the north. A large, and growing, local population will put pressure on recreation facilities within the landscape, such as public footpaths, which can result in erosion and damage. Brockhill Country Park is a popular recreation attraction. Providing high quality, well managed multifunctional paths to recreational spaces that can accommodate high levels of use will help to protect more fragile elements of the landscape. These should be managed to direct visitors away from vulnerable 'honeypot' areas and to disperse recreational pressure. Well-maintained public rights of way can also spread recreational pressure and prevent damage.



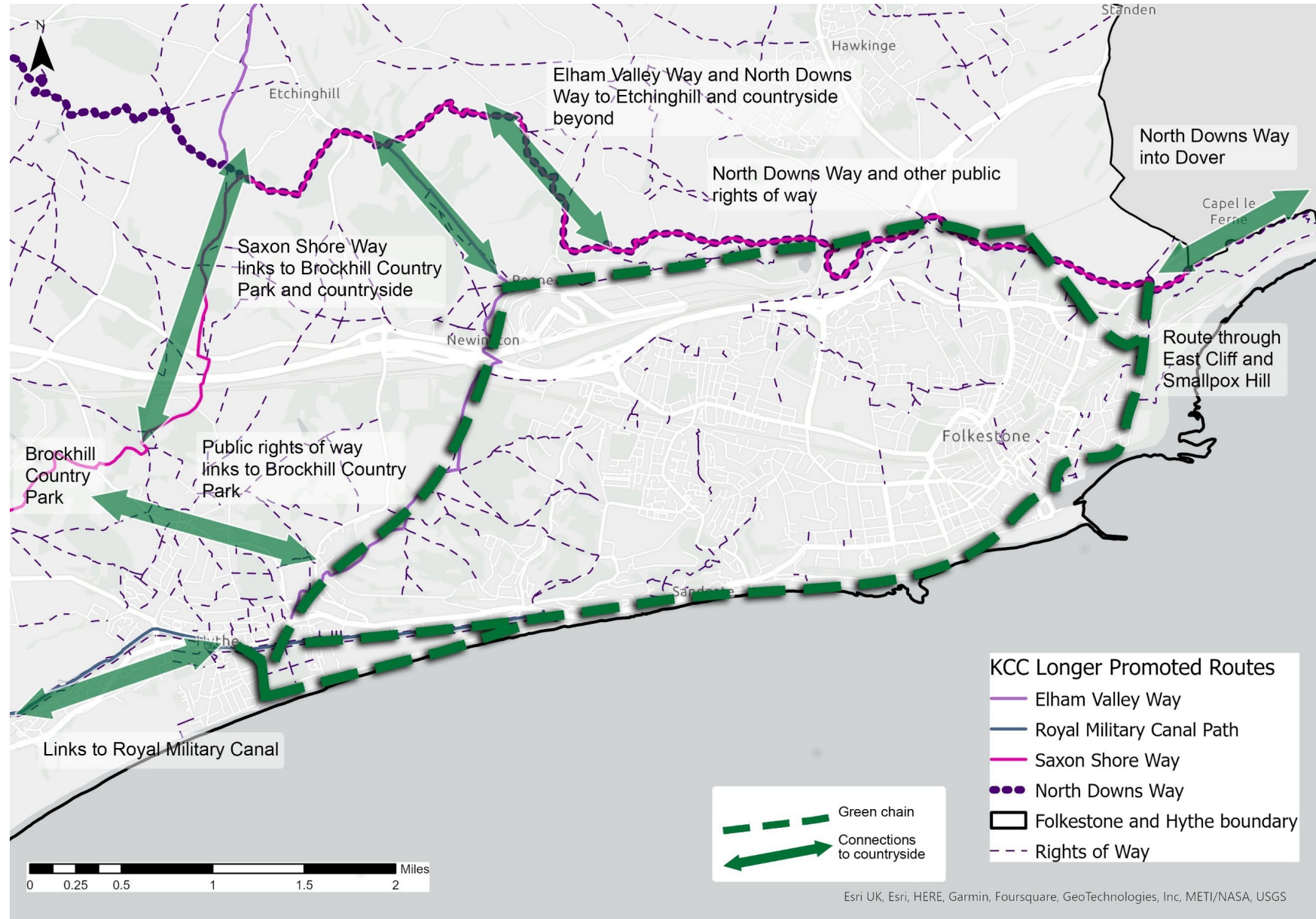
The following actions are needed to be drawn together across this area:

- Urban/rural edge landscape – the interface between the urban and rural landscape needs special attention. Protect the landscape character and address urban edge pressures to avoid landscape degradation and poorly managed and maintained areas;
- A range of access improvements:
  - Good quality connections and investment in public rights of way, especially existing promoted routes, routes to Brockhill Country Park and links from Otterpool Park;
  - Increase accessibility of routes (remove stiles, improve surfaces);
  - Link to existing promoted routes (Royal Military Canal, Saxon Shore Way, Elham Valley Way);
  - Produce maps and information to show network of public rights of way, cycling routes and quiet lanes to help users and minimise wandering off of public rights of way. Ensure good waymarking on public rights of way;
  - There are dead end routes truncated at railway – rationalise these. Seek east-west routes where these are lacking;
- Assess likely impact of ash dieback on woodlands and hedgerows and mitigate for this;
- Improve biodiversity connections across this area through hedgerows, pollinator corridors and other measures appropriate to the landscape character;
- Ensure core biodiversity sites in good condition – Seabrook Stream SSSI, Lymgne Escarpment SSSI, Saltwood Valley LWS, Paraker Wood and Seabrook Stream LWS and Folkswood LWS. Woodland as part of Shorncliffe
- Lymgne Green (Otterpool Park) create bee friendly wildflower areas.

Plan 25: Focus Area - North of Saltwood and Hythe



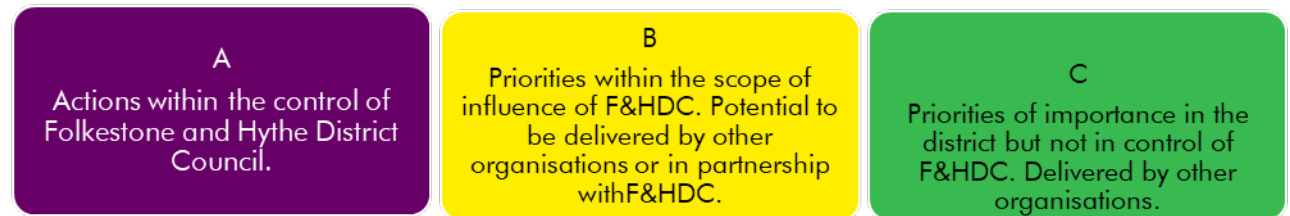
Plan 26: Folkestone 'Green Chain'





## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

See also actions listed under topic chapters.



	Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
FHS 1	Focus Area north of Saltwood and Hythe	
FHS 1	<p>Take a holistic view and develop a plan for biodiversity, landscape, blue infrastructure and access in the <b>Focus Area north of Saltwood and Hythe</b>. To include interface with urban fringe and to accommodate new Otterpool development. To encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Good quality connections and investment in public rights of way, especially existing promoted routes and routes to Brockhill Country Park;</li> <li>– Increase accessibility of routes (remove stiles, improve surfaces);</li> <li>– Link to existing promoted routes (Royal Military Canal, Saxon Shore Way, Elham Valley Way);</li> <li>– Produce map to show network of public rights of way, cycling routes and quiet lanes to help users and minimise wandering off of public rights of way. Ensure good waymarking on public rights of way;</li> <li>– Rationalise dead end routes. Seek east-west routes where these are lacking;</li> <li>– Assess likely impact of ash dieback on woodlands and hedgerows and mitigate for this;</li> <li>– Improve biodiversity connections across this area through hedgerows, pollinator corridors and other measures appropriate to the landscape character</li> </ul>	B
FHS 2	Develop a 'Bees Please for Folkestone' project – improvements across the town and beyond to create an urban pollinator haven. Projects to increase wildflowers and pollinators would also help other wildlife. Use the project to engage residents and raise awareness. Potential to link with arts. More wildflowers could be incorporated into the many close mown areas in Folkestone, including parks, sports areas, amenity grassland, The Leas, road verges and the communal gardens of apartments. Use as a visitor economy unique selling point.	A
FHS 3	Folkestone town centre regeneration through the Place Plan should incorporate the recommended green and blue infrastructure elements to improve the public realm and make spaces more attractive.	A

	Priorities and Opportunities	Delivery
FHS 4	Improve access across the barrier of the transport corridor north of Folkestone through ensuring safe and well-maintained routes and promotion.	B
FHS 5	Ensure that the woodland at Shorncliffe development is entered into sustainable management for recreation and wildlife and consider designating as a Local Nature Reserve.	A
FHS 6	Cheriton area has poor access out of urban area to countryside areas beyond and low provision of green space, although it does have large areas of amenity grassland. Invest in access and biodiversity at Cheriton Recreation Area as a significant area of greenspace. Improve quality of amenity green spaces in the area for wildlife and recreation.	A
FHS 7	Promote a 'green chain' of access routes around Folkestone and promote access to these sites. Invest in public rights of way linking town and countryside to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people. Ensure recreation is sustainable and does not damage sensitive biodiversity features, through monitoring and management measures as necessary, e.g. through installing interpretation and including information in promotional materials.	B
FHS 8	Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from fly tipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.	C
FHS 9	Develop urban walking routes to link open spaces and the coastal sites.	B
FHS 10	Connect with Folkestone's arts community to bring alive the unique and special wildlife, habitats and heritage of the area, e.g. through artwork, events, installations, festivals.	C
FHS 11	Produce and implement management plan for Folkestone Warren Local Nature Reserve to implement biodiversity management and sustainable recreation.	A
FHS 12	Investigate the potential for existing open space and the provision of new SuDS suitable to help alleviate surface water flooding in areas where it is a problem, such as along the Pent Stream.	B

## Romney Marsh

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

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

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

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

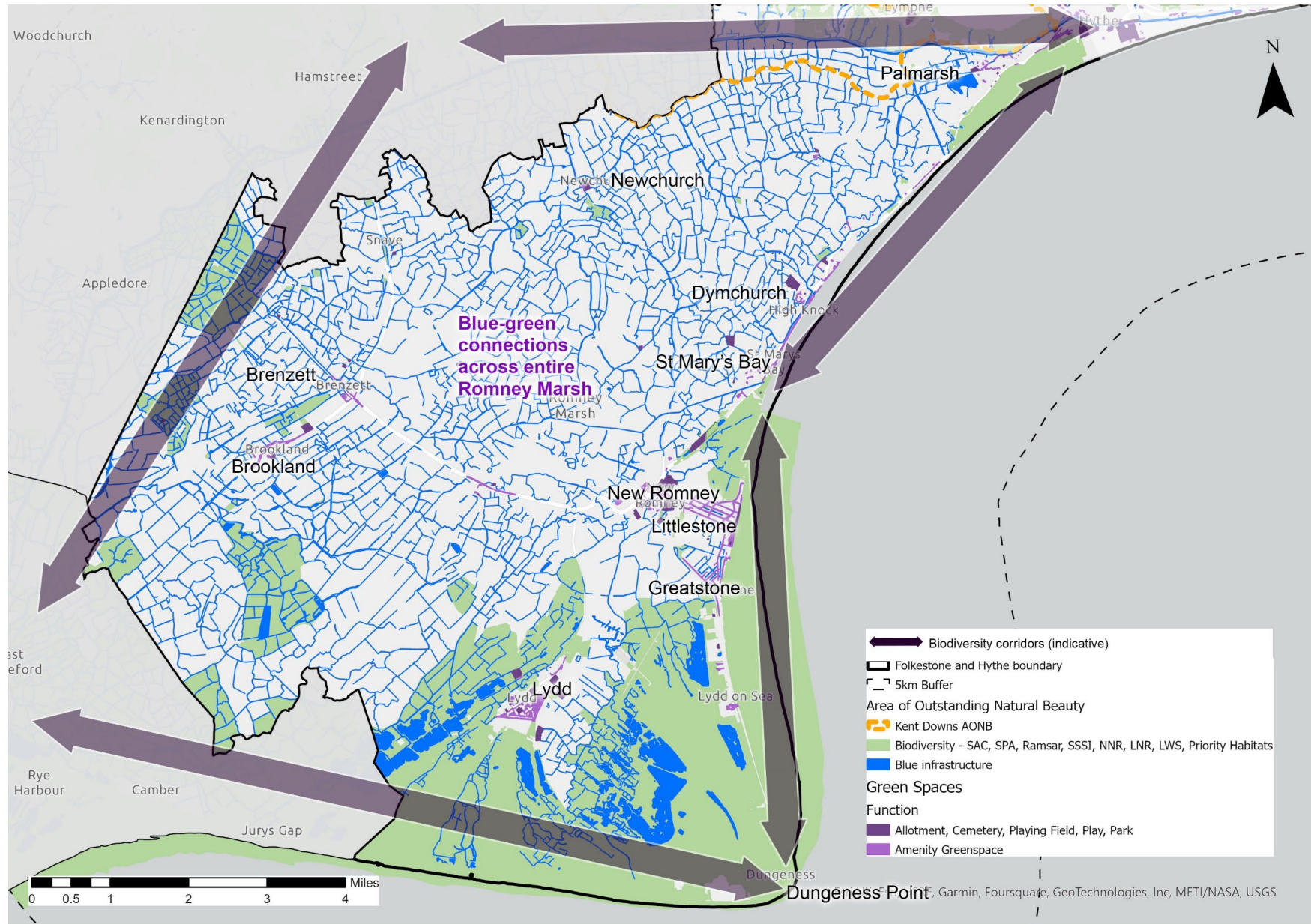


A continual balance needs to be struck in an area that is internationally important for geomorphology and wildlife but where local communities strive to make a living and enjoy the natural assets on their doorstep. Pressures from visitors on these areas are addressed this through the delivery of the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

To relieve visitor pressure at sites such as the Greatstone dunes and Dungeness Estate, where visitor numbers are particularly high, the council has been reviewing options and sites to create alternative, more robust 'destination areas' which can better accommodate visitor pressure.



Plan 27: Romney Marsh Area



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

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

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

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

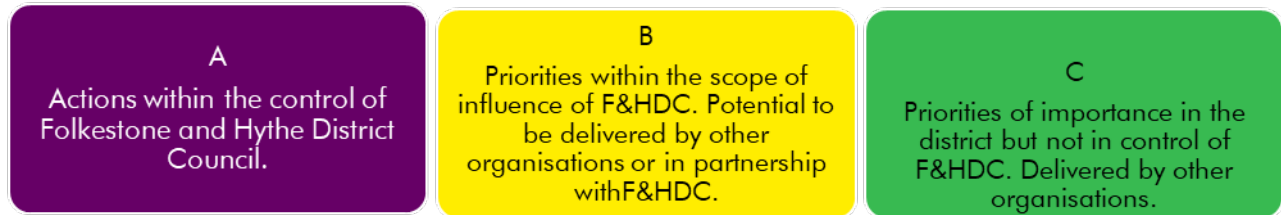
There are pockets of poor health in the Romney Marsh area, in New Romney, St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch. Public Health England's recent report '*Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020*' recommends working with health professionals to promote the role greenspace plays in both individual and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

The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme<sup>98</sup> National Lottery Heritage Fund project (NLHF) has delivered a range of habitat improvements, community engagement and training to benefit the people and wildlife of the Romney Marsh area. Continuing the legacy of the Fifth Continent Scheme is an important priority for the Romney Marsh area. Projects include:

- Restoring vegetated shingle habitat across Dungeness foreland;
- 'Blue lanes' - creating optimal ditch conditions for wildlife through physical works and education;
- Green lanes for bumblebees through improved highway cutting regimes and engaging with the community and landowners;
- A range of other projects centred around churches, the arts oral history and sustainable tourism.<sup>99</sup>

## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Romney Marsh

See also actions listed under topic chapters.



	Opportunities and Priorities	Delivery
RM 1	Consider new cycle path from Lydd to New Romney to take traffic off the road and create a family-friendly route. Employees of the Dungeness Power Station would also benefit if a cycle path was installed along Dungeness Road.	B
RM 2	Provide a range of promotional materials for walking and cycling to promote sustainable tourism. Highlight the area's outstanding heritage and biodiversity assets.	B
RM 3	In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.	C
RM 4	Plan strategically to ensure destination green spaces such as Dungeness RSPB, Dungeness Point, the Royal Military Canal, Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway and the coast are connected through promotional routes.	B
RM 5	Seek ways to continue legacy projects from the Fifth Continent scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoring vegetated shingle habitat across Dungeness foreland;</li> <li>'Blue lanes' - creating optimal ditch conditions for wildlife through physical works and education; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green lanes for bumblebees through improved highway cutting regimes and engaging with the community and landowners.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	C
RM 6	Implement <i>The Cinque Ports Cycle Route</i> - to link Folkestone seafront to Lydd in line with LCWIP strategy.	A
RM 7	Support access and recreation to the coast to benefit communities, the economy and health and wellbeing, while also taking full account of the recommendations in the SARMS.	B



	Opportunities and Priorities	Delivery
RM 8	Produce integrated management plan for Greatstone Dunes addressing issues and ensuring sustainable management.	A
RM 9	Work with golf courses to improve wildlife and pollinator habitats.	C
RM 10	Provide more information in tourism material on the biodiversity value of the area and raise awareness of the biodiversity interest and sensitivity of the area with tourism businesses.	B
RM 11	Work with Ministry of Defence to increase access biodiversity and potentially access, where these do not on land holdings.	C
RM 12	Work with neighbouring authorities and partners to extend the Royal Military Canal cycle route to benefit the overall visitor offer for the area, taking into account recommendations in the SARMS.	B

## The North Downs

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

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

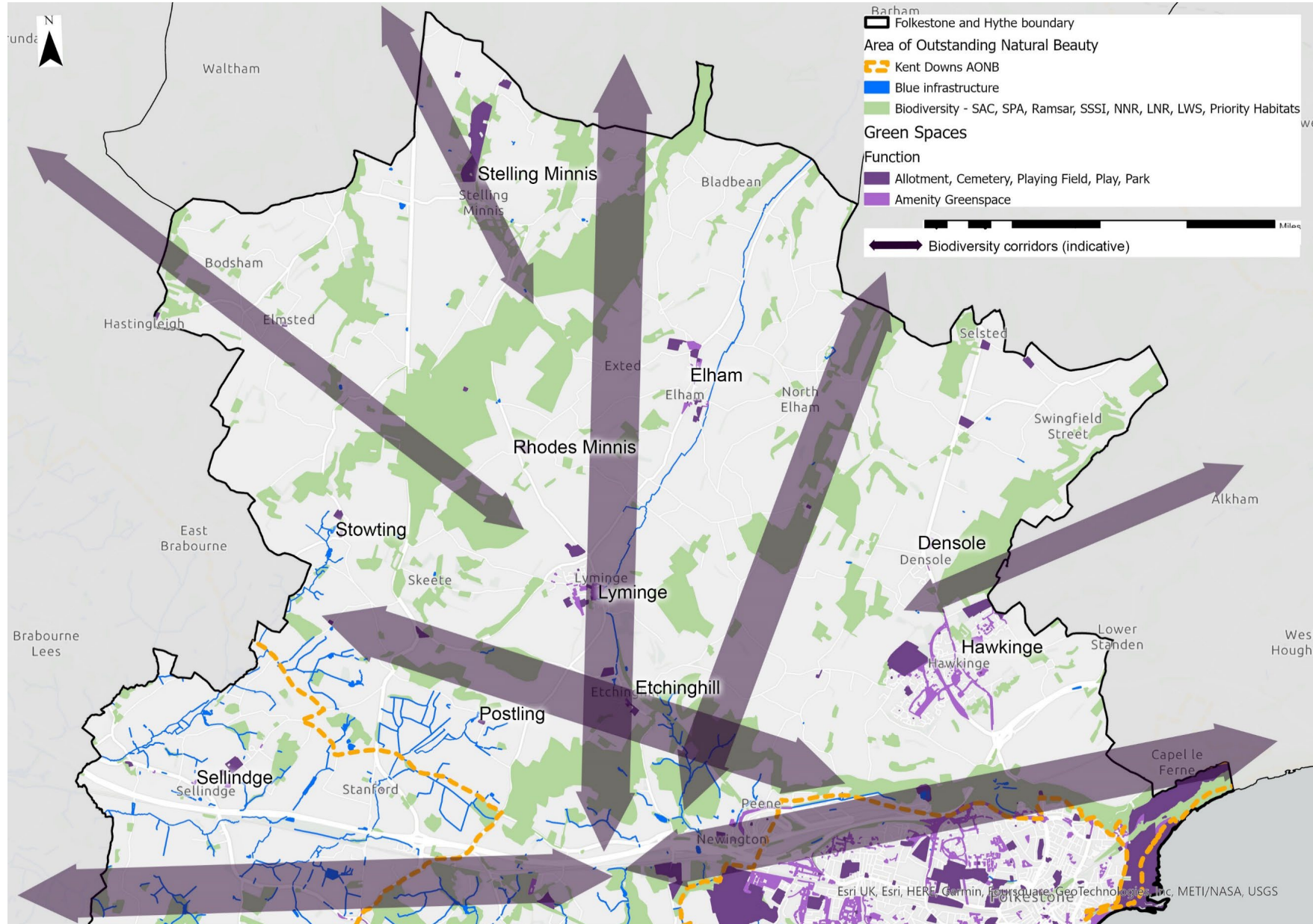
Woodlands, many of which are ancient, are a prominent feature of the landscape and chalk grassland is particularly notable. Some of the chalk grasslands are SACs, designated for their international importance, and support rare wildlife. There are also some Sites of Special Scientific Interest and extensive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

Public rights of way criss-cross the area, including ancient trackways. Promoted routes include the North Downs Way, Saxon Shore Way and the Elham Valley Way. Networks of narrow, winding lanes have hollowed-out the hillsides where they descend and climb the scarp during centuries of use.<sup>100</sup>





Plan 28: North Downs Area





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

The Open Spaces Strategy shows that in the North Downs some areas are currently below the quantity standard, for example Sellindge. Plans for new open spaces through the proposed Otterpool Park development should aim to help to alleviate this deficit. Good access into the development's open spaces from these areas should be encouraged in the master planning process.

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

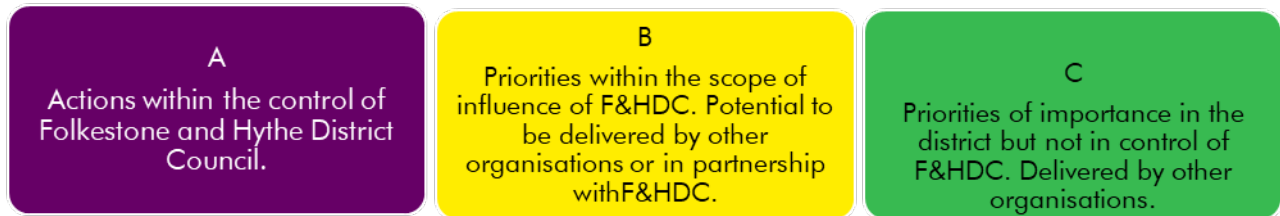
Between Lyminge, through Elham and Wingmore is the course of the Nailbourne, a chalk 'bourne' which only flows at some times of the year.



Monkey Orchid at Parkgate Down SAC

## Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – North Downs

See also actions listed under topic chapters.



	Opportunities and Priorities	Delivery
ND 1	Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views for future generations. Working in partnership with the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit to identify management opportunities in accordance with the management plan.	B
ND 2	Explore potential opportunities to work with the Forestry Commission and Ministry of Defence to improve public access and public recreation within woodland areas.	C
ND 3	Conserve and appropriately manage ancient trackways such as the North Downs Way and the Pilgrims' Way and strengthen the network through high quality interconnecting routes, increasing the benefits of these routes for biodiversity, health and local businesses.	C
ND 4	Recognise and manage the impact of increased visitor numbers on sensitive sites.	B
ND 5	In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.	C
ND 6	Develop measures to address the lack of biodiversity and flooding problems associated with the Nailbourne.	A
ND 7	Assess the impact of ash dieback on the landscape and nature conservation interests and, working with local communities, take steps to mitigate impacts.	B
ND 8	Investigate natural solutions to flood management, where there are problems within the North Downs area and where watercourses in the North Downs lead to flooding downstream, such as along the Pent Stream which flows through Folkestone.	B



# Part 3: Delivery





## Delivery

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

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

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

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

to improve their local area. There are many active groups in Folkestone and Hythe district who could assist with delivering this strategy.

## Development

Green and blue infrastructure is an essential element in ensuring the delivery of sustainable development, as well as supporting the quality of life and health and wellbeing of residents, economic growth and the future prosperity of Folkestone and Hythe district. Folkestone and Hythe District Council will need to ensure that development supports the priorities of this strategy. Development should contribute to delivering this strategy, which could include:

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

# Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> The Kent Nature Partnership is considering 20% net gain.

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

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

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

<sup>7</sup> Core Strategy Review 2022 p33.

<sup>8</sup> Core Strategy Review 2022 p129.

<sup>9</sup> Core Strategy Review 2022 p134.

<sup>10</sup> Core Strategy Review 2022 p140.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/climate-change/kents-changing-climate>

<sup>12</sup> These sites are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). These sites, collectively forming part of the ‘National Site Network’, are sites which are of international importance for their biodiversity.

<sup>13</sup> Designations overlap so figures should not be totalled.

<sup>14</sup> Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA.

<sup>15</sup> Dungeness SAC.

<sup>16</sup> Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay (Ramsar).

<sup>17</sup> SSSIs and National Nature Reserves in Folkestone and Hythe District: Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay, Lympne Escarpment, Otterpool Quarry, Gibbins Brook, Seabrook Stream, Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment, Great Shuttlesfield Down, Parkgate Down, Lynsore Bottom (partly in Canterbury district), Yockletts Bank (partly in Canterbury district) and Dungeness National Nature Reserve.

<sup>18</sup> Natural England recommends 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population. Folkestone and Hythe currently has 0.82 hectares per 1,000 people (population c112,600 people ONS mid year estimate 2018). A further c20 hectares are required to meet this standard. There are two Local Nature Reserves in Folkestone and Hythe District: Romney Warren and Folkestone Warren.

<sup>19</sup> Kent Habitat Survey (2012).

<sup>20</sup> Shepway District Council and Rother District Council. (2017). Dungeness Complex Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS).

<sup>21</sup> The district has 12.2% of Kent’s reedbeds.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/short-haired-bumblebee-reintroduction-project/>

<sup>23</sup> The rare bumblebees most frequently encountered in the project area are *Bombus muscorum*, *Bombus humilis*, and *Bombus ruderatus*.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/romney-marsh-farmland-bird-project>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.rmcp.co.uk/medicinal-leech-uk/>

<sup>26</sup> Kent County Council. (2022) (Consultation Draft). *Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022-2032*.

<sup>27</sup> Kent County Council. (2020). Canopy Cover Assessment - Kent Districts and Folkestone and Hythe. Kent Environment Strategy).

<sup>28</sup> From National Forest Inventory and Natural England data. Total woodland calculated at approximately 2,210 hectares with ancient woodland approximately 1,320 hectares.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.theashproject.org.uk/about/>

<sup>30</sup> Kent County Council. (2020). Canopy Cover Assessment - Kent Districts and Folkestone and Hythe. Kent Environment Strategy).

<sup>31</sup> Lawton, J.H., *et al* (2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network. Report to Defra. Natural England provides more detail on developing 'Nature Networks'. Natural England. (2020). *Nature Networks: Evidence Handbook*. NERR081; *Nature Networks: A Summary for Practitioners*. NERR082.

<sup>32</sup> Sensitive management around sites to help protect them and increase biodiversity.

<sup>33</sup> The Kent Nature Partnership is developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy which will set a new direction for landscape-scale nature conservation in Kent.

<sup>34</sup> Edwards J, Knight M, Taylor S and Crosher I. E. (May 2020). Habitat Networks Maps, User Guidance v.2. Natural England. Priority habitats are mapped in Natural England datasets.

<sup>35</sup> Kent Nature Partnership, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>

<sup>37</sup> • Sensitivity to Change – classifies each priority habitat type as high, medium or low sensitivity based on scientific literature and expert judgement;

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

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

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

<sup>38</sup> Kent Nature Partnership. (2020). Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045.

<sup>39</sup> The Kent State of Nature Report is being updated by the Kent Nature Partnership at the time of this report and will provide further information on the conservation status of species and habitats when it is published.

<sup>40</sup> The predecessor organisation of Natural England.

<sup>41</sup> Natural England (2010), Nature Nearby, Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance. Difficulties in categorising any particular piece of land can arise when trying to determine the extent of 'naturalness' and whether this 'predominates'. Not all sites will fall neatly into this category and there is room for interpretation in decisions on the naturalness of a site. To support categorising greenspaces, Natural England developed a proxy measure based on four categories. Level 1 and Level 2 sites are considered as proxy indicators of natural greenspace and include, amongst others, nature conservation designated sites, woodland, open access land, country parks and unimproved grassland. 'Natural' does not necessarily mean that the site must contain rare or notable nature or to be designated.

<sup>42</sup> Apart from being closed overnight, or a parking charge applying.

<sup>43</sup> Natural England recommends that people living in towns and cities should have:

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

<sup>44</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy 2017 p1.

<sup>45</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy 2017 p74.

<sup>46</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy - pp 29 – 30.

<sup>47</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy - pp 29 – 30.

<sup>48</sup> SARMS report 2017 p10.

<sup>49</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy - 2017 p52.



- <sup>50</sup> Shepway Open Space Strategy 2017, p76.
- <sup>51</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council - Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
- <sup>52</sup> [www.explorekent.org](http://www.explorekent.org)
- <sup>53</sup> [www.kentconnected.org](http://www.kentconnected.org)
- <sup>54</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028.
- <sup>55</sup> Tourism South East. (2006). The Volume and Value of Walking and Cycling in the South East Region.
- <sup>56</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028.
- <sup>57</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028 p3.
- <sup>58</sup> Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2018 – 2028 p6 and 7.
- <sup>59</sup> Heron, C., and Bradshaw, G. (2010). Walk this Way - Recognising Value in Active Health Prevention. LGiU for Natural England.
- <sup>60</sup> Marmot, M. (2010). Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review): Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010.
- <sup>61</sup> Kent Public Health Observatory. (August 2016). Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Overview Report (Sustainability Chapter). Kent County Council and NHS.
- <sup>62</sup> Pretty, J. e. (2005). *A countryside for health and well-being: the physical and mental health benefits of green exercise*. Sheffield: Countryside Recreation Network; Thompson Coon, J., Boddy, K., Stein, K., Whear, R., Barton, J., & Depledge, M. (2011). *Does Participating in Physical Activity in Outdoor Natural Environments Have a Greater Effect on Physical and Mental Wellbeing than Physical Activity Indoors? A Systematic Review*. Environmental Science and Technology, 45(5) pp1761-1772. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24933270-800-green-spaces-arent-just-for-nature-they-boost-our-mental-health-too/#ixzz7Hl2t9nyv>
- <sup>63</sup> Barton, J., Hine, R., & Pretty, J. (2009). *The health benefits of walking in greenspaces of high natural and heritage value*. Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences, 6(4) pp 261 - 278.
- <sup>64</sup> Rogerson, M., Brown, D., Sandercock, G., Wooller, J.-J., & Barton, J. (2016). *A comparison of four typical green exercise environments and prediction of psychological health outcomes*. Perspectives in Public Health, 136(3) pp 171-180; Barton, J., & Pretty, J. (2010). *What is the best dose of nature and green exercise for improving mental health? A multi-study analysis*. Environmental Science and Technology, 44 pp 3947-3955.
- <sup>65</sup> Brown, D., Barton, J., & Gladwell, V. (2013). *Viewing Nature Scenes Positively Affects Recovery of Autonomic Function Following Acute-Mental Stress*. Environmental Science and Technology, 47(11) pp 5562 - 5569.
- <sup>66</sup> <https://analytics.phe.gov.uk/apps/covid-19-indirect-effects/>
- <sup>67</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2017). Shepway Open Spaces Strategy. p13.
- <sup>68</sup> 'Peoples Engagement with Nature - Reflecting on ten years of the Natural England MENE survey' is a Storymap produced by Natural England. <https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/>
- <sup>69</sup> Public Health England. (2020). Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020 p13.
- <sup>70</sup> Papworth Trust. (2018). Facts and Figures 2018 – Disability in the United Kingdom.
- <sup>71</sup> Information in this section from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/howhaslockdownchangedourrelationshipwithnature/2021-04-26>
- <sup>72</sup> Pers. comm with land managers e.g. at coastal sites in Folkestone and Hythe and Dungeness.
- <sup>73</sup> PHE Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020 p14.
- <sup>74</sup> In 2018, Public Health England estimated that between 2017 and 2025 the total cost to the NHS and social care system due to the health impacts of PM2.5 and NO2 in England will be £1.69 billion. This figure is for where there is robust evidence for an association between exposure and disease.
- <sup>75</sup> <http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/>
- <sup>76</sup> Environment Agency. (2021). Water Stressed Areas – Final Classification 2021.
- <sup>77</sup> NPPG, Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 7-002-20140306
- <sup>78</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
- <sup>79</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

<sup>80</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

<sup>81</sup> See resources at

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-story/water-resources-management-plan/wrmp24-survey>

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/dwmp>

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-performance/storm-overflows>

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/our-performance/storm-overflows/pathfinder-projects>.

<sup>82</sup> [https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/23578/Masterplanning-for-SuDS.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/23578/Masterplanning-for-SuDS.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

<sup>84</sup> Under Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act, Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) - County Councils and Unitary Authorities - were to be required to establish SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs). This would have required Kent County Council (KCC), as the LLFA in Kent, to approve and adopt SuDS for new developments. In December 2014, the Government announced that Schedule 3 would not be enacted and SuDS would be dealt with instead by strengthening existing planning policy. This change, which took effect on 6 April 2015, requires local planning authorities to ensure that SuDS are included as part of new developments. Places and Policies Local Plan Adopted September 2020.

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp/index>

<sup>86</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 123 The Romney Marshes.

<sup>87</sup> Fiona Fyfe Associates. (2016). Romney Marsh Landscape Character Assessment for The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership and Shepway District Council.

<sup>88</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 123 The Romney Marshes.

<sup>89</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 120 Wealden Greensand.

<sup>90</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 120 Wealden Greensand.

<sup>91</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 119 The North Downs.

<sup>92</sup> Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (Draft October 2019). Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update.

<sup>93</sup> Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 119 The North Downs.

<sup>94</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p5.

<sup>95</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p9.

<sup>96</sup> Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy p22.

<sup>97</sup> Extracts from Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2019). Folkestone and Hythe District Heritage Strategy - Appendix 1: Theme Papers.

<sup>98</sup> <https://fifthcontinent.org.uk/>

<sup>99</sup> <https://fifthcontinent.org.uk/projects/>