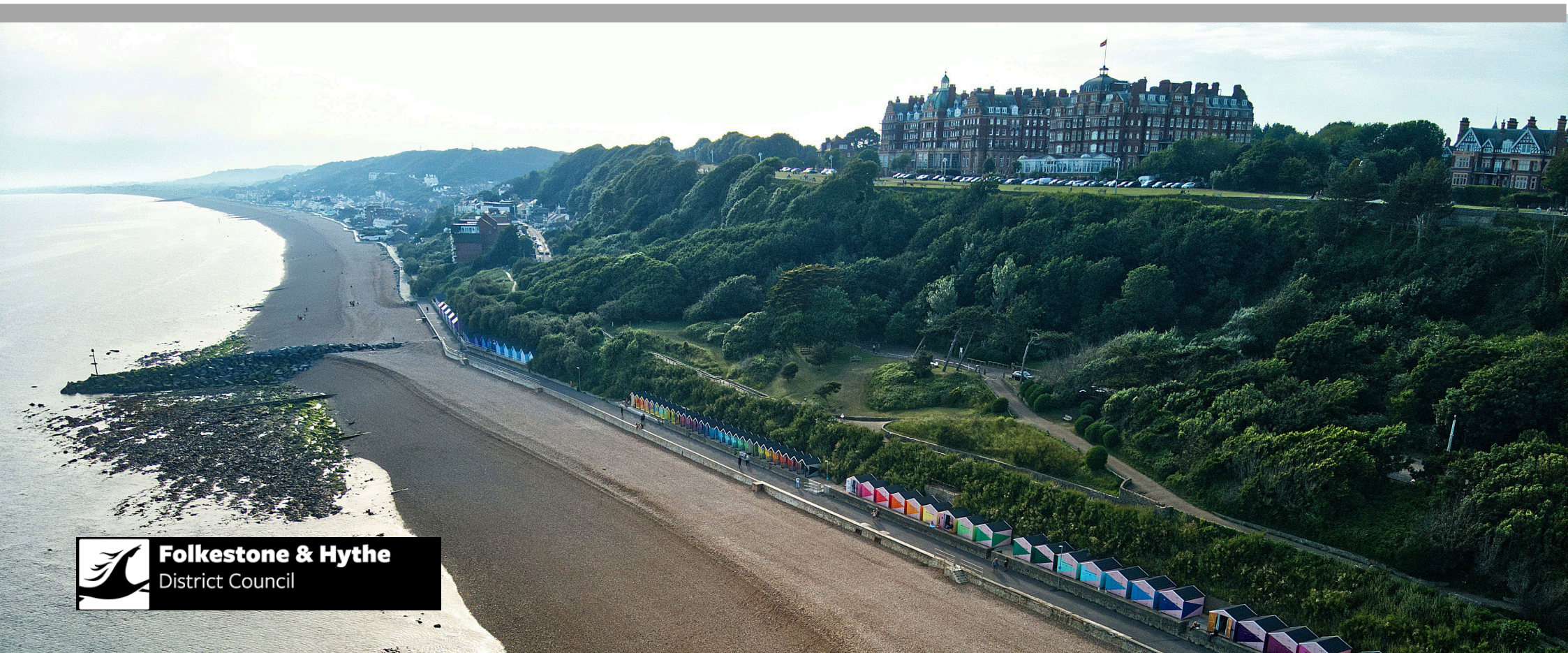


Folkestone and Hythe District Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Priorities and Opportunities Summary

September 2022





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Front cover - Folkestone



Dungeness

Introduction

About this Strategy

This is the summary document of the main report and has been created for the council's consultation on the identified priorities and opportunities. It summarises the main report, which sets out the district's strategic network of green and blue infrastructure and provides an assessment of the needs and opportunities, strategic priorities and future actions. The strategy provides evidence to support spatial planning in the district.

The strategy is ambitious and not all actions can be delivered by Folkestone and Hythe District Council. 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.

Five evidence areas are described and assessed - biodiversity, trees and woodlands; access, recreation and active travel; health and wellbeing; blue infrastructure and the coast and landscape

character and heritage. Strategic priorities (see next page) are set out for each of these themes. There are also priorities set out for three spatial areas – Folkestone town, Hythe and Saltwood, Romney Marsh and the North Downs.

What is Green and Blue Infrastructure?

Many environmental features make up green infrastructure 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, including recreation, biodiversity, health, climate change mitigation and adaptation and water quality. When planned, designed and managed as a network, these benefits are maximised. 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.

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.

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

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

(ref. BTW 1)

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

(ref. BTW 2)

Link people and nature.

(ref. BTW 2)

Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts.

(ref. BTW 4)

Ensure development is sustainable.

(ref. BTW 5)

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

(ref. AR 1)

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

(ref. AR 2)

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. (ref. AR 3)

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

(ref. HW 1)

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

(ref. HW 2)

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

(ref. HW 3)

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

(ref. BIC 1)

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

(ref. BIC 2)

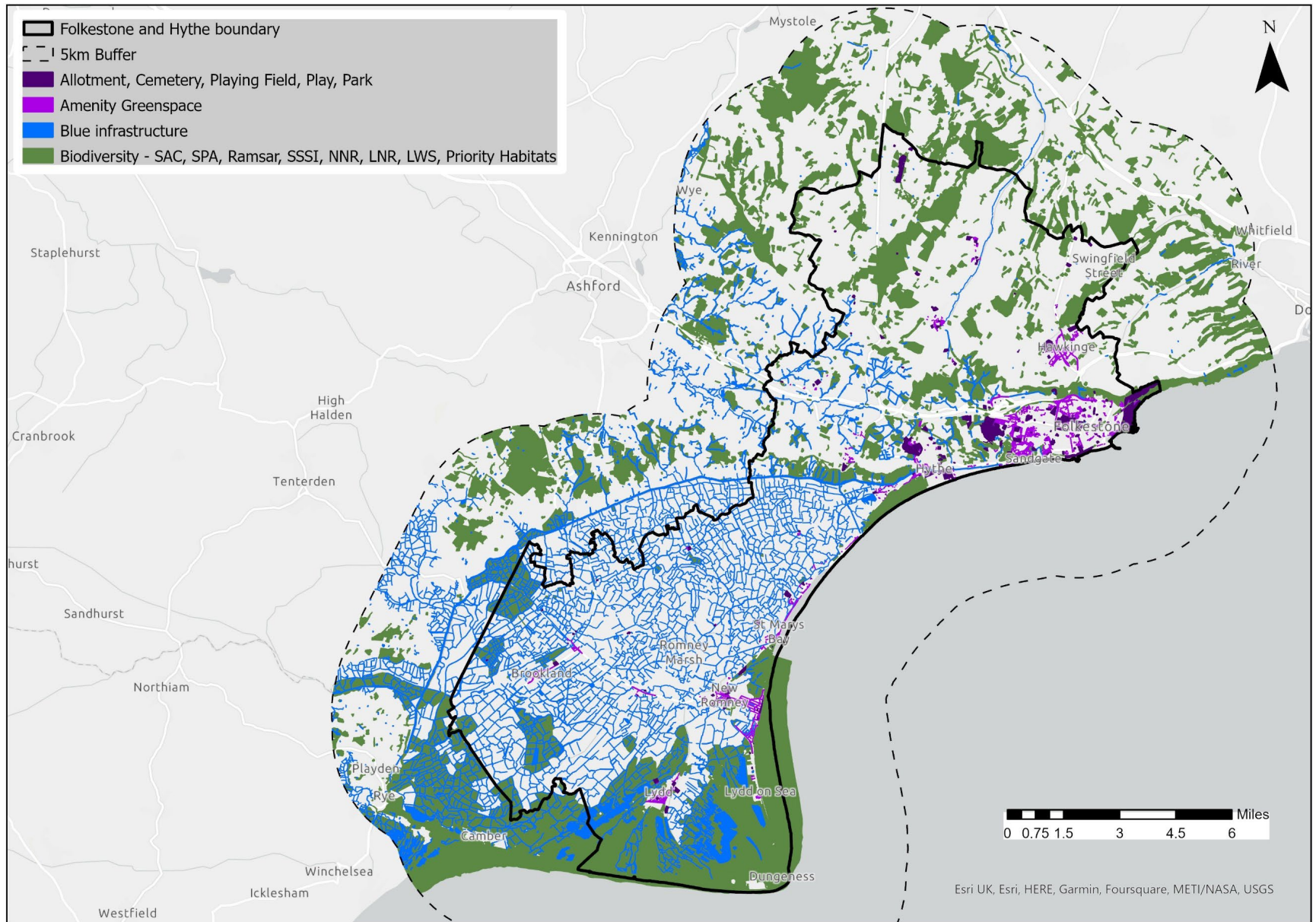
Strengthen and reinforce landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character.

(ref. LH 1)

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

(Ref. LH 2)

Overview of Folkestone and Hythe District's Green and Blue Infrastructure Network¹



The Challenges of Climate Change

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges being faced by society. The impacts of climate change are already evident and will become more severe and widespread as temperatures rise.

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.² Predictions suggest that in Kent there will be hotter and drier summers with more heatwaves and drought, and warmer and wetter winters with heavier rainfall and more flooding. There will also be a rise in sea-level changing coastal dynamics.

Climate change will also place pressures on biodiversity. Many species and habitats are strongly influenced by temperature and rainfall and the interactions between these. Evidence from Natural England shows that the fragmented, wetland and low-lying habitats of the Romney Marsh are vulnerable, as well as the Elham Valley chalk stream and the Royal Military Canal. Smaller, disconnected, habitats are also more vulnerable.

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



Managing surface water – help to manage surface water and sewer flooding by reducing the rate and volume of runoff, intercepting water, helping it to infiltrate into the ground and providing storage areas.



Managing high temperatures – particularly in urban areas. Evaporative cooling and shading can ensure that towns and cities are comfortable places.



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



Material substitution – replacing materials such as concrete and steel (which need fossil fuels 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 to adapt – providing a more vegetated and permeable landscape through which species can move northwards to new 'climate spaces'.



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



Managing water resources – provide places to store water, allow water to infiltrate into the ground sustaining aquifers and river flows, catch sediment and remove pollutants ensuring maintaining water quantity and quality.



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

Folkestone and Hythe District's Green and Blue Infrastructure

Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands

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

A unique
and
diverse
coastline

One of the district's most renowned areas, which is both nationally and internationally important, is the vegetated shingle at Dungeness. This, the largest cusped foreland in Britain, is the most diverse and extensive area of stable vegetated shingle in Europe. There is a stark wild beauty and distinctive character unique to Dungeness.

Dungeness supports unique flora and fauna. The area is highly protected by international and national nature conservation designations for habitats, birds and other species. In the centre is a RSPB reserve, itself home to 600 plant species, as well as birds. The flooded gravel pits and saline lagoons provide habitats for migratory and coastal birds and unique invertebrates such as the lagoon cockle.

Dunes are also an important coastal feature. At Greatstone-on-Sea there are a range of dune habitats, including mobile dunes, fixed

dunes and scrub. At Romney Warren there is a stable dune system which has developed over ancient shingle ridges.

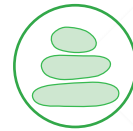
To the north of the district the coast has a different aspect. The Warren, both a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Local Nature Reserve, is formed by slumped chalk cliffs, creating an undulating undercliff which is important for wildlife. Chalk grassland wildflowers grow alongside woodland plants and coastal specialists and around 150 species of birds can be found here. It is also an exceptional site for its geology and holds a wealth of fossils.

Glorious grasslands

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

On flat land of the low-lying Romney Marsh lies coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. Much of this land has been reclaimed from wetter land and is criss-crossed with a 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 marshes support many rare species, including water voles, wetland birds and birds of prey, such as the marsh harrier.

Chalk grassland is a scarce habitat for which the district is also important. Chalk grasslands support a large range of flora, as well as many insects, including rare and beautiful butterflies. There is chalk grassland along the Kent Downs. Much of this is protected including the internationally important Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment Special Conservation Area (SAC) and the smaller Parkgate Down (SAC).



94% of Kent's coastal vegetated shingle is found in Folkestone and Hythe district, at Dungeness and nearby coastline.



16.5% of Kent's coastal sand dunes are also in the district, second only to Dover.



The district has 15.7% of Kent's coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.



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.



Overall, Folkestone and Hythe's tree canopy is around 8% of its area, less than half of the Kent average of 17%. Romney Marsh ward was reported as having the lowest level of canopy, at 1.1%.



57% of Folkestone and Hythe's woodland is ancient.

Special species

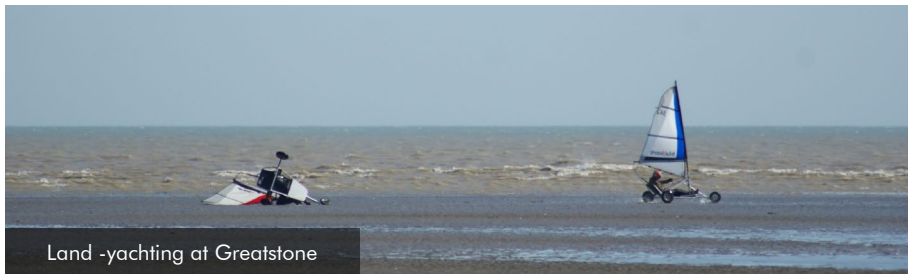
The variety of habitats in turn support special and rare species. It is not possible to list them all, but on the following page are some of species for which the district is important.

Dungeness Complex Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (2017) (SARMS)⁴

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 coastal vegetated shingle and over-wintering birds. It is also a popular holiday and recreation area, with tourism important to the local economy.

The SARMS is a joint strategy with Rother District Council, 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 increase in recreational use resulting from the planning policies of either council does not adversely impact the integrity of these internationally important wildlife sites.

The strategy sets out measures which are needed as mitigation for planning policies, including monitoring visitors and birds, signs, voluntary codes of conduct and an oversight group to deliver the strategy. It also recommends several other actions which would support the necessary mitigation measures.



Land-yachting at Greatstone

Special Species

Sussex Emerald Moth (*Thalera fimbrialis*)

This very rare moth is only found in coastal vegetated shingle with Dungeness a stronghold.

Short-haired Bumblebee (*Bombus subterraneus*)

This bumblebee was once widespread but it declined severely and declared extinct in 2000. A Bumblebee Conservation Trust project⁵ has helped landowners to provide flower-rich meadows around Romney Marsh and Dungeness, following reintroduction in 2009, and the species is making a comeback.

Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*)

The Turtle Dove is the UK's fastest declining bird species and is threatened with global extinction. The RSPB's 'Turtle Dove Friendly Zones' are areas where efforts are concentrated to help this species to survive, and there are two within Folkestone and Hythe district. The Romney Marsh is also important for other farmland birds.

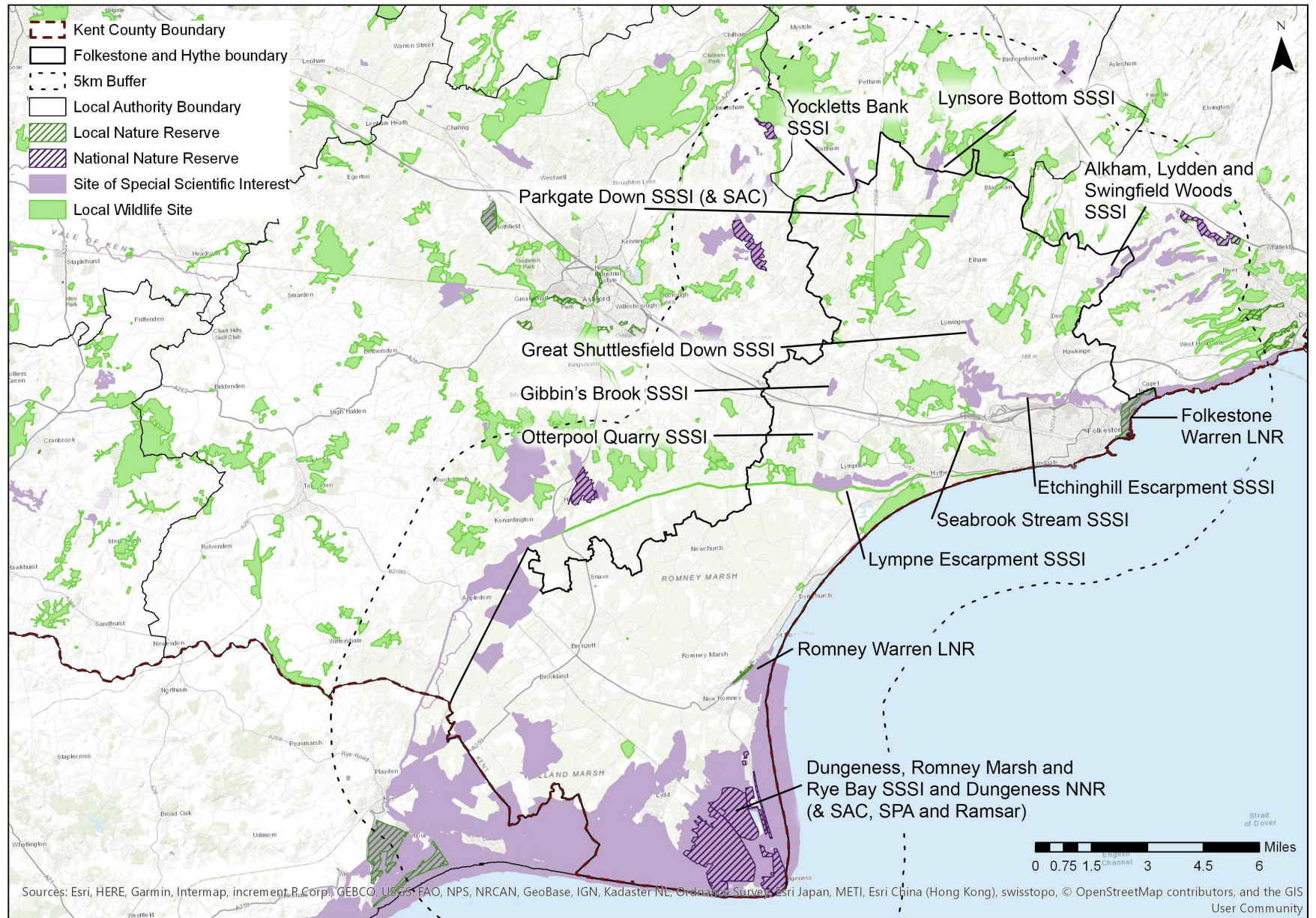
Medicinal Leeches (*Hirudo medicinalis*)

The medicinal leech is the only British leech capable of sucking blood from humans. Millions of leeches were harvested for phlebotomy (bloodletting) and by the beginning of the 20th century it was declared extinct in the British Isles. However scattered populations have been found including in the Romney Marsh.

Chalk Grassland Orchids

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

Plan 1:
Folkestone and
Hythe District's
Designated
Nature
Conservation
Sites - National
and Local
Importance



Trees and woodlands

Street trees, woodland trees and trees in parks or private gardens together form the tree canopy. Overall, Folkestone and Hythe has less than half the tree canopy cover of the average across Kent. Romney Marsh ward has the lowest level of canopy and Hythe the highest.⁶

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

Just over half of the woodland in the district (57%) is ancient.⁷ 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.

Opportunities to increase woodland and trees across the district should be sought.

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.

Restoring ecological networks

To restore nature and functioning ecological networks, nature needs to be supported at a large scale across the landscape.⁸ Green infrastructure is important in supporting a landscape-scale or 'nature network' approach, through securing biodiversity value in a planned way.

What is needed to restore functioning ecological networks is:

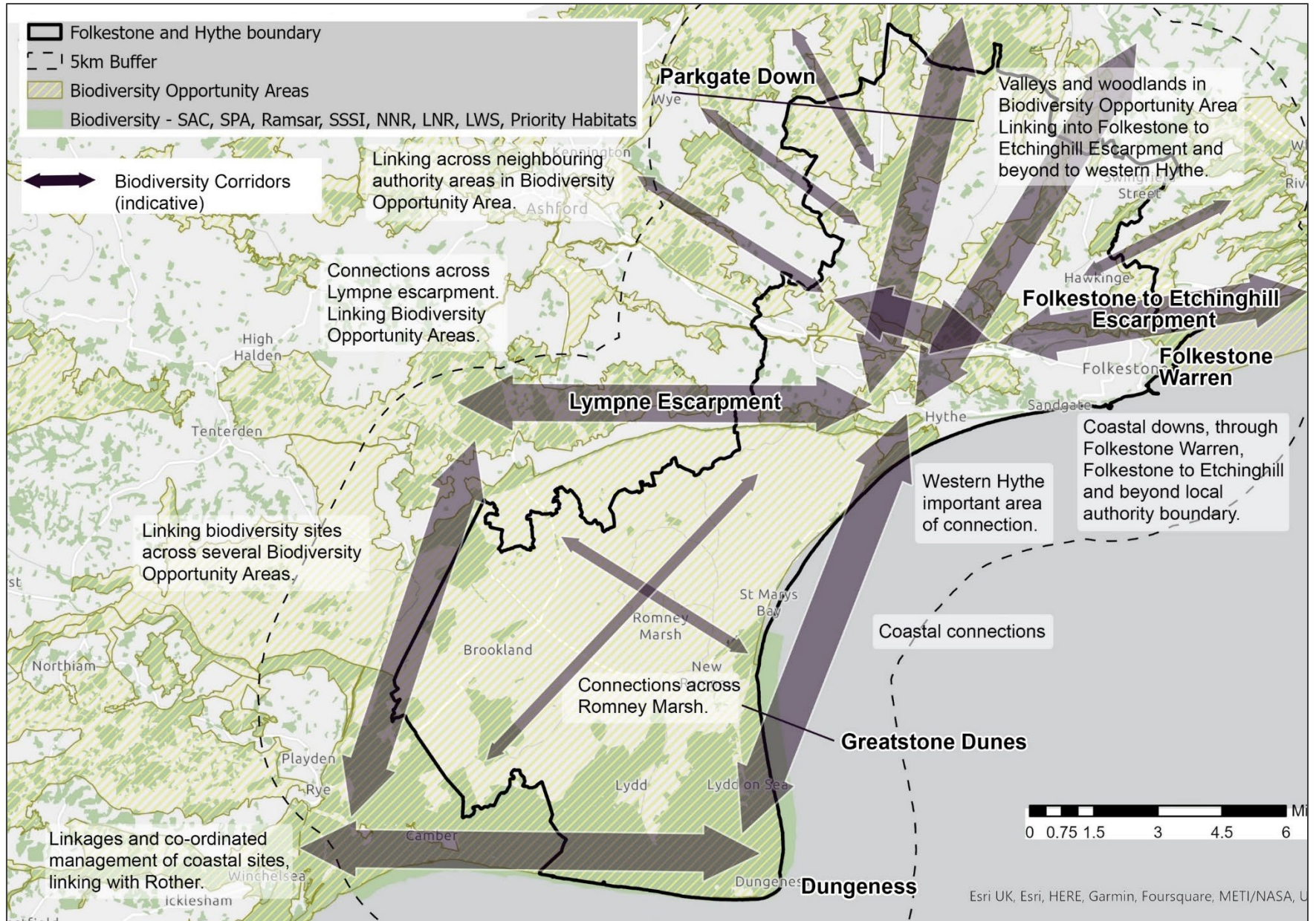
- Improving the quality of current sites by better habitat management;
- Increasing the size of current wildlife sites;
- Enhancing connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors or through 'stepping stones';
- Creating new sites; and
- Reducing the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering⁹ wildlife sites.

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

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas reflect areas where there are already nature conservation sites which could benefit nature through being improved and joined up. Kent Nature Partnership is also working on the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which will also reveal priority areas for conservation action in the district. Other organisations have also highlighted important areas, for example Buglife,¹⁰ which show insect 'pathways' through town and countryside.

Plan 2 shows some of the important biodiversity linkages.

Plan 2:
Connections
for Nature



Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands

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.

	Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
BTW 1	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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 the district.	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
BTW 2	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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.	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 network 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

Priority and Opportunities		Delivery
BTW 3	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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 and tree planting.	B
BTW 3.3	Support local people, parish and town councils and community organisations in taking community action for nature.	B
BTW 3.4	Promote the action of residents to improve wildlife through gardening for wildlife, for example through creating hedgehog highways and install 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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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 the canopy cover of the district, ensuring that this follows the principles of 'right tree, right place'. Trees should be planted where this fits with the landscape character and should not be planted on sites with other biodiversity interest which would be lost through tree planting. Urban trees should be fitting for the size and location of space.	B
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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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

Access to greenspaces supports health, wellbeing and quality of life

Access to greenspace, the countryside and the natural environment is important for health and both physical and mental wellbeing. Active travel, through cycling and walking, 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.

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. These include parks, semi-natural green spaces, amenity greenspace areas, play and sport areas. Green corridors are a key component of the open space network in Folkestone and Hythe, for example the Royal Military Canal.

Folkestone and Hythe's Open Space Strategy assesses the quantity, accessibility, quality and value of open spaces in the district. The report recommends a quantity standard of 2.89 hectares per 1,000 people. The assessment showed that there are high quality green spaces in the district, including three which have the prestigious Green Flag Award. It recommends that larger open spaces should be enhanced and that local scale open spaces are provided and improved, particularly in areas with high levels of deprivation and where communities do not have access to gardens or open spaces.

The area below the Leas at Folkestone was created in 1784 when a landslide produced a new strip of land between the beach and the new cliff line. The Upper Leas gardens on the cliff-top and the Lower Leas gardens along the foot were created in the late 19th century to attract Victorian holiday makers. There is a fun zone in the park and the largest free play area in the South East.

Lower Leas Coastal Park

The Warren was formed from landslips which took place over the last 200 years. In 1924 the land was gifted to the people of Folkestone. Scrub has developed over what was once bare land, but there remain areas of flower-rich grassland. Chalk grassland wildflowers grow alongside woodland plants, while the sea air promotes rock sea lavender and rock samphire. It is of national importance for wildlife and geology and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserve.

East Cliff and The Warren

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. 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 Country Park

Active travel

Active travel means walking or cycling as a means of transport rather than for leisure. Active travel allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives, bringing health and wellbeing benefits as well as saving money. It helps both the environment and health through reducing air pollution and 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.



Sustrans National Cycle Route Way Post at Hythe

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, concerns over safety and the speed and convenience of motorised transport all create 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.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council has developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Urban Folkestone and Hythe are the focus of the LCWIP as the main centres of population and the need for travel to work, school and other destinations. The LCWIPs sets out plans for a network plan for walking and cycling and infrastructure improvements to support this.

Public rights of way

The public rights of way network is also an important component of access to the countryside and green spaces.

There are in the district cover 578 km or 359 km of public rights of way in the district. There are more footpaths (for walking only) than other types of public rights of way.

There are many promoted routes which use public rights of way within the district, including the England Coastal Path, the Elham Valley Way, the North Downs Way, the Royal Military Canal, and the Saxon Shore Way.



Public footpath in Elham

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

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.

	Priority and Opportunities	Delivery
AR 1	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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
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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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

The benefits
of being
physically
active
outdoors

Being physically active is strongly linked to better health and wellbeing. It is well established that there is a link between physically inactive and many chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems. Physical activity in the natural environment also has a greater impact on mental health than exercising indoors, improving self-esteem, positive mood and anxiety levels.

Walking is one of the easiest, most accessible and cost effective ways for most people to increase their physical activity but gaining the physical and mental benefits of access to green space can take many forms. This can include gardening, creating art, feeding the birds, picnicking or enjoying the beach. The whole range of green and blue infrastructure is important and can support physical and mental health. Even just being able to view nature can be beneficial.

Health in Folkestone and Hythe

The health of people in Folkestone and Hythe is varied. Life expectancy for both men and women is similar to the England average, but in the most deprived areas life expectancy is 6.9 years lower for men and 5.4 years lower for women than in the least deprived areas.

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 some areas of poor health in rural areas where there is low access to greenspace. Here, public rights of way are important. However, it is also clear that some communities with poor health outcomes have very good access to greenspace, such as some urban areas of Folkestone.

Provision for people living with disability

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.

People living with disabilities also have specific access needs. This can be physical improvements or more information on how accessible places are. 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 underlined the importance of outdoor space for physical exercise and mental health. Many people benefitted from accessing greenspace during the pandemic and its social restrictions.

However, it also highlighted differences in levels of visiting greenspace in different socio-economic groups carried on through the pandemic. Those groups less likely to visit greenspaces (lower income groups), or those who lived further away, visited these spaces less than more advantaged groups.



Race for Life for Cancer research, Folkestone

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Health and Wellbeing

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
HW 1	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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
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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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

Priorities and Opportunities		Delivery
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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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

A blue district

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.

The Royal Military Canal stretches 28 miles from Seabrook near Hythe, through the Romney Marsh to Cliff End 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

Through Elham and Wingmore is the Nailbourne. For much of the year this 'watercourse' is dry. It is a chalk 'bourne' – a stream which only appears after successive seasons of high rainfall and when ground water levels are high enough. For centuries the belief that the nailbournes rose once every seven years and that their appearance would bring bad luck and disaster, give them the name 'woe waters'.

'Woe waters'

Boardwalk to protect shingle vegetation, Lade beach



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 13th Century. The ditches and sewers also provide rich habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including declining species such as water voles.

Romney Marsh

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. Some of the lakes are used for watersports.

Pools rich in wildlife

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 and 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.

Seabrook Stream SSSI

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

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. However, many areas benefit from the protection provided by a diverse range of flood defence infrastructure.

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.

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. Folkestone and Hythe is an area of serious water stress as identified by the Environment Agency.¹¹ 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.

Climate change will inevitably result in an increased risk of flooding from all sources due to an increased frequency of intense rainfall events due to climate change, combined with a drainage network that quickly reaches capacity. 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.¹²

Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) are a useful way to 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.



Folkestone beach

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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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
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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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

A landscape
of contrasts

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'. There are three main character areas in the district.

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation is testament to the scenic qualities and natural beauty of this character area (see Elham Valley, photo to left).¹³

Agriculture is important in forming the landscape, with mixed farming of 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.

North
Downs
Character
Area

Remote coombes in the scarp slope at Etchinghill overlook Asholt Wood, one of the best examples of ash coppice in Kent, although now significantly affected by ash dieback. At the base of the scarp springs emerge between the chalk and gault clay and feed streams which flow towards the coast.

The network of public rights of way includes ancient trackways along the ridge.

The Romney Marshes is an open landscape of reclaimed, low-lying marshland. This unique area has a character all of its own and contains a wealth of wildlife and geomorphological features.

Dungeness is of international importance for its geomorphology, plants, invertebrates and birds. Home to some of the UK's rarest species, it is protected by 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.

The Romney Marsh is one of the most fertile areas of Kent, with a particularly long growing season.¹⁴ Farming on Romney Marsh has changed greatly with a change from sheep pasture to arable land and intensification. As farming changes, traditional features are lost from the landscape, for example lookers' huts and hedgerows.

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.

Pressures of sea level rise and climate change will create coastal change. Much of the area is below the high tide level and at risk of flooding.

Romney Marsh Character Area



Romney Marsh

This character area runs parallel to the North Downs, between the downland and the Romney Marsh. The major transport corridor of the Channel Tunnel rail link passes through this area. Part of the Kent Downs AONB extends into this area around west Hythe.

Wealden
Greensand
Character
Area

A rich and
diverse
heritage

Folkestone and Hythe district has a remarkably rich and diverse heritage that is important in shaping the district's historic sense of place and distinct character. There is also a wealth of heritage highlighting the importance of the district for defence, tourism and trade.

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. Between these woodlands there are spectacular views across Romney Marsh and the English Channel. The Royal Military Canal, running along the base of the scarp, acts as the 'backbone' of the area.

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. There are opportunities to bring heritage and open space management together to benefit communities and visitors.



Royal Military Canal
at Hythe

Two Cinque Ports, Hythe and New Romney, lie within the district. Folkestone also has valuable heritage assets as a cross-channel port and 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.

By the end of the 19th century Folkestone, along with neighbouring Sandgate, had developed into a fashionable seaside resort, with luxurious hotels and seaside amenities. Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands also became popular destinations.

The district's proximity to the continent has continually placed it on the front line against foreign invasion. An outstanding legacy of defence is evident in the remains of fortifications along the coast and inland, representing the nation's responses to foreign threats and its defence strategies. The Napoleonic period defences are of outstanding importance. At various points Folkestone, Hythe and Lydd have 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.

The district also has several historic parks and gardens. Whilst reduced in size, the heritage of these parks, their buildings and gardens are distinctive. The archaeology of blue infrastructure – rivers, river valleys and the marine and coastal environment – is also an important feature of Folkestone and Hythe district. A religious heritage is evident in religious buildings and ruins.



St Thomas à Becket, Fairfield, Romney Marsh

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Landscape Character and Heritage

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
LH 1	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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
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	STRATEGIC PRIORITY: 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

Spatial Areas

Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

Parts of Folkestone are densely populated urban areas but there are also some larger areas of green and blue space, for example Radnor Park. Following the coast are the urban areas of Seabrook, Hythe and Saltwood.

The coastal beaches and parks are important for tourism and recreation. To the east is East Cliff and Warren Country Park and to the south of Folkestone is The Leas and Lower Leas Coastal Park. There is access along the coastal promenade and the beachfront. At Seabrook, near Princes Parade, the Royal Military Canal begins, with a cycling and walking route alongside.

There are several corridors of linked green infrastructure assets in Folkestone town. These corridors highlight opportunities to improve 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, highlighting the potential to improve area for pollinator species throughout urban Folkestone and Hythe.

Access out of Folkestone to the north is restricted by transport infrastructure. There are some access routes but these are limited.

There is, however, a 'green chain' around Folkestone and Hythe which could be improved and promoted.

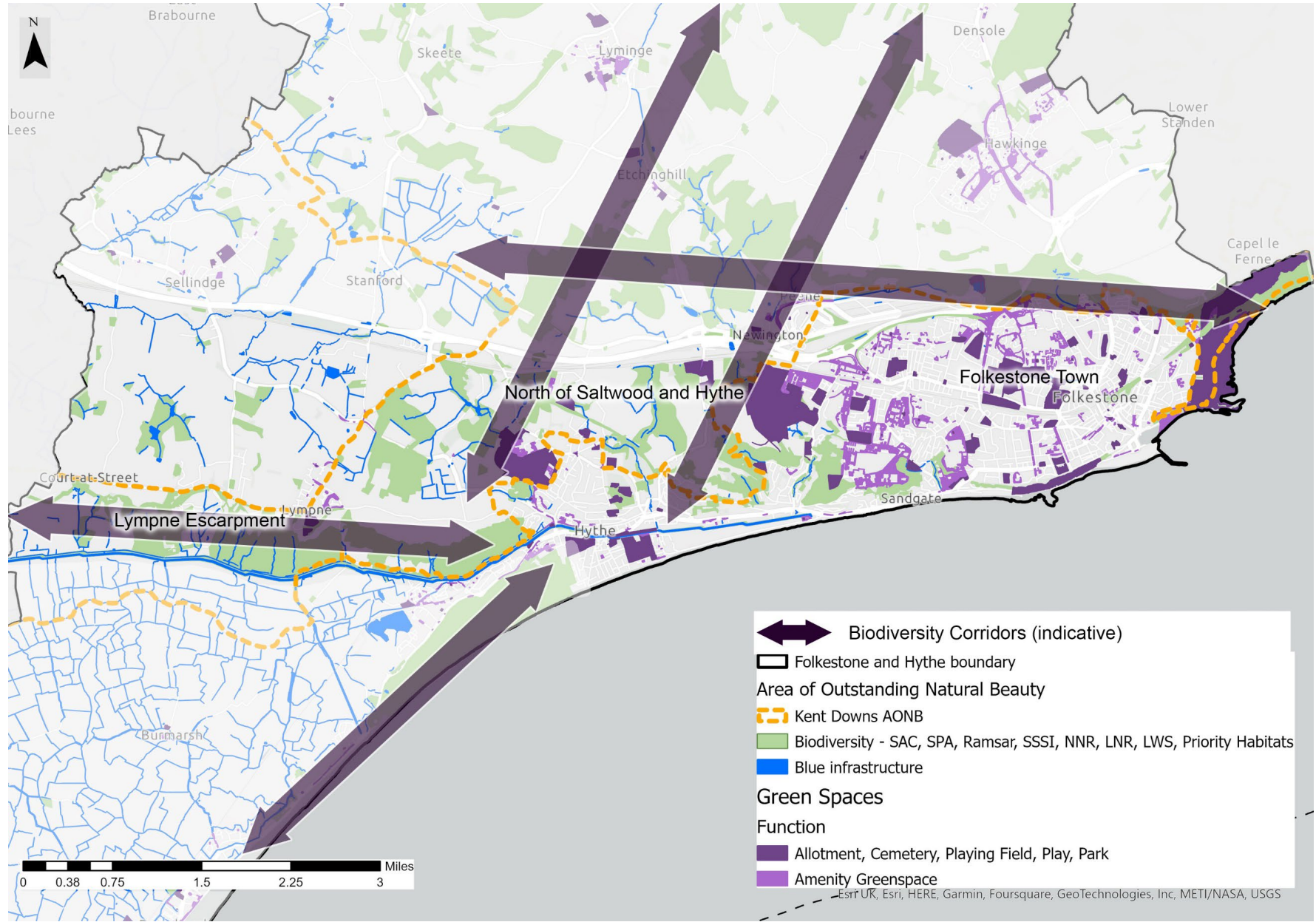
In the 2021 Folkestone Town Centre 'Place Plan' there are several green and blue infrastructure actions and recommendations which should be prioritised as part of any regeneration of the town centre.

On the western side of Folkestone the urban area gives way to an urban edge landscape with many areas of green infrastructure. This leads to an area to the north of Saltwood and Hythe, bounded 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 with historic elements which create a strong sense of place. Saltwood Castle stands in a tiny area of ornamental parkland on the edge of an unspoilt valley. It is also an important area for biodiversity corridors and most is within the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area, with links to other Opportunity Areas to the north and south.

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 could put pressure on recreation facilities within the landscape. Providing high quality, well managed multifunctional paths to recreational spaces such as Brockhill Country Park that can accommodate high levels of use will help to protect more fragile elements of the landscape.

Plan 3:
Folkestone
Town, Hythe
and Saltwood
Area



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

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
FHS 1	Focus Area north of Saltwood and Hythe	
	A range of access improvements:	
FHS 1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Good quality connections and investment in public rights of way, especially existing promoted routes and routes to Brockhill Country Park; – Increase accessibility of routes (remove stiles, improve surfaces); – Link to existing promoted routes (Royal Military Canal, Saxon Shore Way, Elham Valley Way); – Produce map to show network of public rights of way, cycling routes and quiet lanes to help users and minimise wandering off of public rights of way. Ensure good waymarking on public rights of way; – There are dead end routes truncated at railway – rationalise these. Seek east-west routes where these are lacking. 	B
FHS 1.2	Assess likely impact of ash dieback on woodlands and hedgerows and mitigate for this (linked to previous action on need for district-wide tree and woodland strategy).	A
FHS 1.3	Improve biodiversity connections across this area through hedgerows, pollinator corridors and other measures appropriate to the landscape character.	B
FHS 1.4	Ensure core biodiversity sites in good condition – Seabrook Stream SSSI, Lympne Escarpment SSSI, Saltwood Valley LWS, Paraker Wood and Seabrook Stream LWS and Folkswood LWS. Woodland as part of Shorncliffe.	B
FHS 1.5	Take a holistic view and develop a plan for biodiversity, landscape, blue infrastructure and access in the Saltwood and Hythe area. To include interface with urban fringe and to accommodate new Otterpool development.	A
FHS 2	Whole area – Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood	
FHS 2.1	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 2.2	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
FHS 2.3	Improve access across the barrier of the transport corridor north of Folkestone through ensuring safe and well-maintained routes and promotion.	B

Priorities and Opportunities		Delivery
FHS 2.4	Protect, enhance and expand the street trees of Folkestone – which are an important feature in some areas of the town – and increase the urban canopy to adapt to climate change impacts.	B
FHS 2.5	Incorporate biodiversity features in all parks in the urban area, including playing pitch areas, managed by Folkestone and Hythe District Council.	A
FHS 2.6	Encourage increases in biodiversity in the significant green infrastructure assets which are privately owned, or which are schools ground, playing fields or cemeteries – for example through tree planting, wildflower areas, linkages for wildlife movement, pollinator areas and other measures. Foster collaborative improvements between landowners in areas which are identified as green corridors.	B
FHS 2.7	Enthuse and engage residents to incorporate wildlife features into gardens, to install swift boxes and create hedgehog highways, and to appreciate value of wildflower and unmown areas within the urban fabric.	B
FHS 2.8	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 2.9	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 2.10	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 2.11	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 2.12	Develop urban walking routes to link open spaces and the coastal sites.	B
FHS 2.13	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 2.14	Produce and implement management plan for Folkestone Warren Local Nature Reserve to implement biodiversity management and sustainable recreation.	A
FHS 2.15	Investigate existing open space suitable to help alleviate surface water flooding in areas where it is a problem.	B
FHS 2.16	Engage with active community and environmental groups in this area to take forward projects and generate local ideas and increase environmental volunteering.	B
FHS 2.17	Develop a green schools programme to increase wildlife, plant trees to increase shade, wildflower meadows, bird and bat boxes, bug houses and growing food, to increase awareness and engagement in the natural world and special wildlife of the area.	C

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

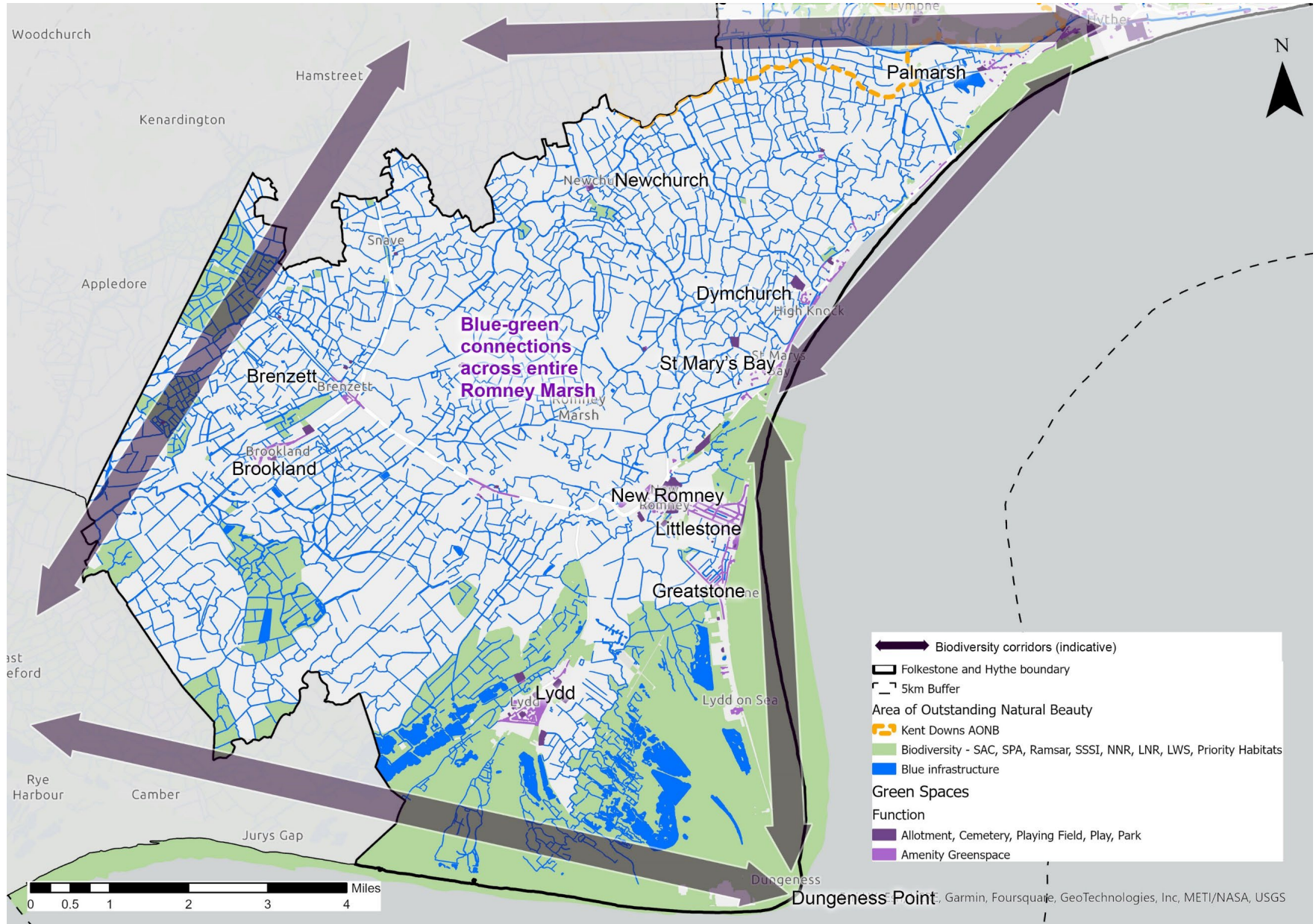
Farming on Romney Marsh has changed over past decades, both in terms of the type of farming (conversion of sheep pasture to arable land) but also its increased intensification. Nevertheless, the network of ditches and wetlands make this area important for wildlife.

The Open Spaces Strategy shows that some areas in the Romney Marsh area, including New Romney, are currently below the quantity standard. The Open Space Strategy recommends existing green links and corridors should be strengthened including the extensive beaches, cliff-tops and the Royal Military Canal.

There are also pockets of poor health in the Romney Marsh area, in New Romney, St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch.



Plan 4: Romney Marsh Area



Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – Romney Marsh Area

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.

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	Encourage healthy walking groups for the Marsh communities.	B
RM 5	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 6	Seek ways to continue legacy projects from the Fifth Continent scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoring vegetated shingle habitat across Dungeness foreland; 'Blue lanes' - creating optimal ditch conditions for wildlife through physical works and education; Green lanes for bumblebees through improved highway cutting regimes and engaging with the community and landowners. 	C
RM 7	Implement <i>The Cinque Ports Cycle Route</i> - to link Folkestone seafront to Lydd in line with LCWIP strategy.	A
RM 8	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
RM 9	Engage with local communities to take action for pollinators in the villages of the Marsh – on verges, gardens, churchyards and open spaces.	B
RM 10	Engage with local communities to continue to raise awareness of the unique and special nature of the area.	B
RM 11	Produce integrated management plan for Greatstone Dunes addressing issues and ensuring sustainable management.	A
RM 12	Work with golf courses to improve wildlife and pollinator habitats.	C
RM 13	Provide more information in tourism material on the biodiversity value of the area and raise awareness with tourism businesses.	B
RM 14	Work with Ministry of Defence to increase access biodiversity and potentially access, where these do not on land holdings.	C
RM 15	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.

The landscape is a patchwork of arable, livestock and horticulture farming which have co-existed for centuries. Churches, villages, parkland and heritage features are important, telling the story about the area's development and identity.

Woodlands, many of which are ancient, are a prominent in the landscape and chalk grassland is particularly notable. There are also large publicly accessible woodlands managed by the Forestry

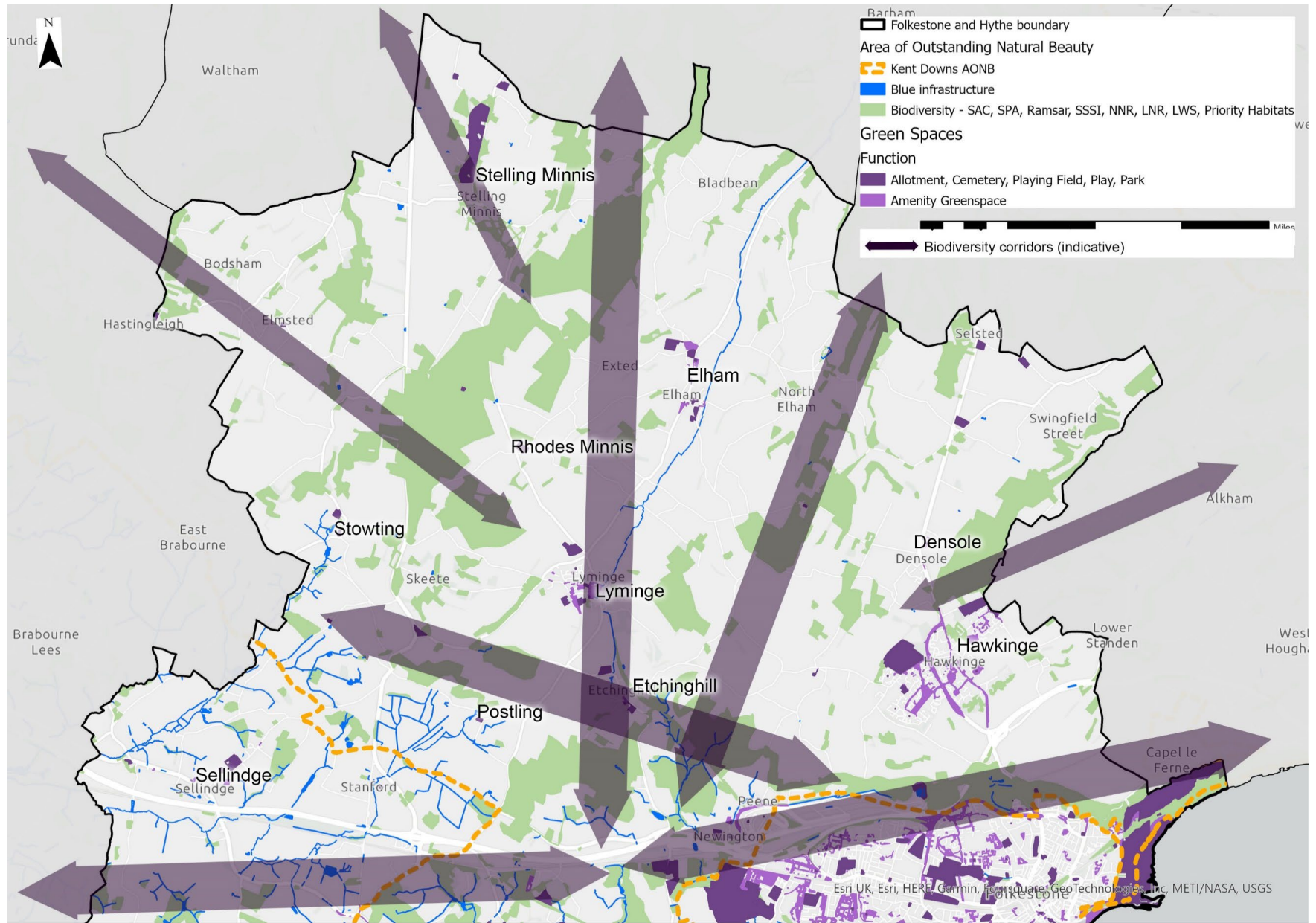
Commission. Some of the chalk grasslands are designated for their international importance and support rare wildlife.

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.^{xv}

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



Plan 5: North Downs Area



Needs, Opportunities and Priorities – North Downs Area

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.

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 Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to identify management opportunities in accordance with their management plans	B
ND 2	Join up woodlands and hedgerows across the landscape, strengthening landscape character and biodiversity networks.	C
ND 3	Seek opportunities to create biodiversity linkages within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, supporting local communities to take the lead to identify, plan and take forward improvements.	C
ND 4	Explore potential opportunities to work with the Forestry Commission and Ministry of Defence to improve public access and public recreation within woodland areas.	C
ND 5	Seek to increase awareness and maximising the potential of the area's outstanding historic, natural and cultural assets, improving access to and interpretation of sites and features, as a platform for enhanced education and to enthuse local communities.	B
ND 6	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 7	Support villages and parishes to develop ideas and plans for village-wide wildlife improvements – wildflower verges, hedgehog highways, swift boxes and other projects across the whole village or parish to connect wildlife habitats.	B
ND 8	Recognise and manage the impact of increased visitor numbers on sensitive sites.	B
ND 10	In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.	C
ND 11	Encourage healthy walking groups in the North Downs communities.	C
ND 13	Develop measures to address the lack of biodiversity and flooding problems associated with the Nailbourne.	A
ND 14	Investigate natural solutions to flood management.	C
ND 15	Assess the impact of ash dieback on the landscape and nature conservation interests and, working with local communities, take steps to mitigate impacts.	B

Endnotes

¹ SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest; NNR – National Nature Reserve; LNR – Local Nature Reserve; SAC – Special Area of Conservation; SPA – Special Protection Area; LWS – Local Wildlife Site; Ramsar – wetland designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance; Priority habitats – habitats identified as rare under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 section 41.

² <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/climate-change/kents-changing-climate>

³ Figures on habitat in this section from Kent Habitat Survey (2012).

⁴ Shepway District Council and Rother District Council. (2017). Dungeness Complex Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS).

⁵ <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/short-haired-bumblebee-reintroduction-project/>

⁶ Kent County Council. (2020). Canopy Cover Assessment - Kent Districts and Folkestone and Hythe. Kent Environment Strategy).

⁷ From National Forest Inventory and Natural England data. Total woodland calculated at approximately 2,210 hectares with ancient woodland approximately 1,320 hectares.

⁸ 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.

⁹ Sensitive management around sites to help protect them and increase biodiversity.

¹⁰ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>

¹¹ Environment Agency. (2021). Water Stressed Areas – Final Classification 2021.

¹² Folkestone and Hythe District Council. (2015). Folkestone and Hythe Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

¹³ Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 119 The North Downs.

¹⁴ Natural England. (2013). National Character Area Profile 123 The Romney Marshes.

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