

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

## **Supporting Document 4 – Visitor Assessment**

Prepared for Shepway District Council and Rother District Council

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# Introduction

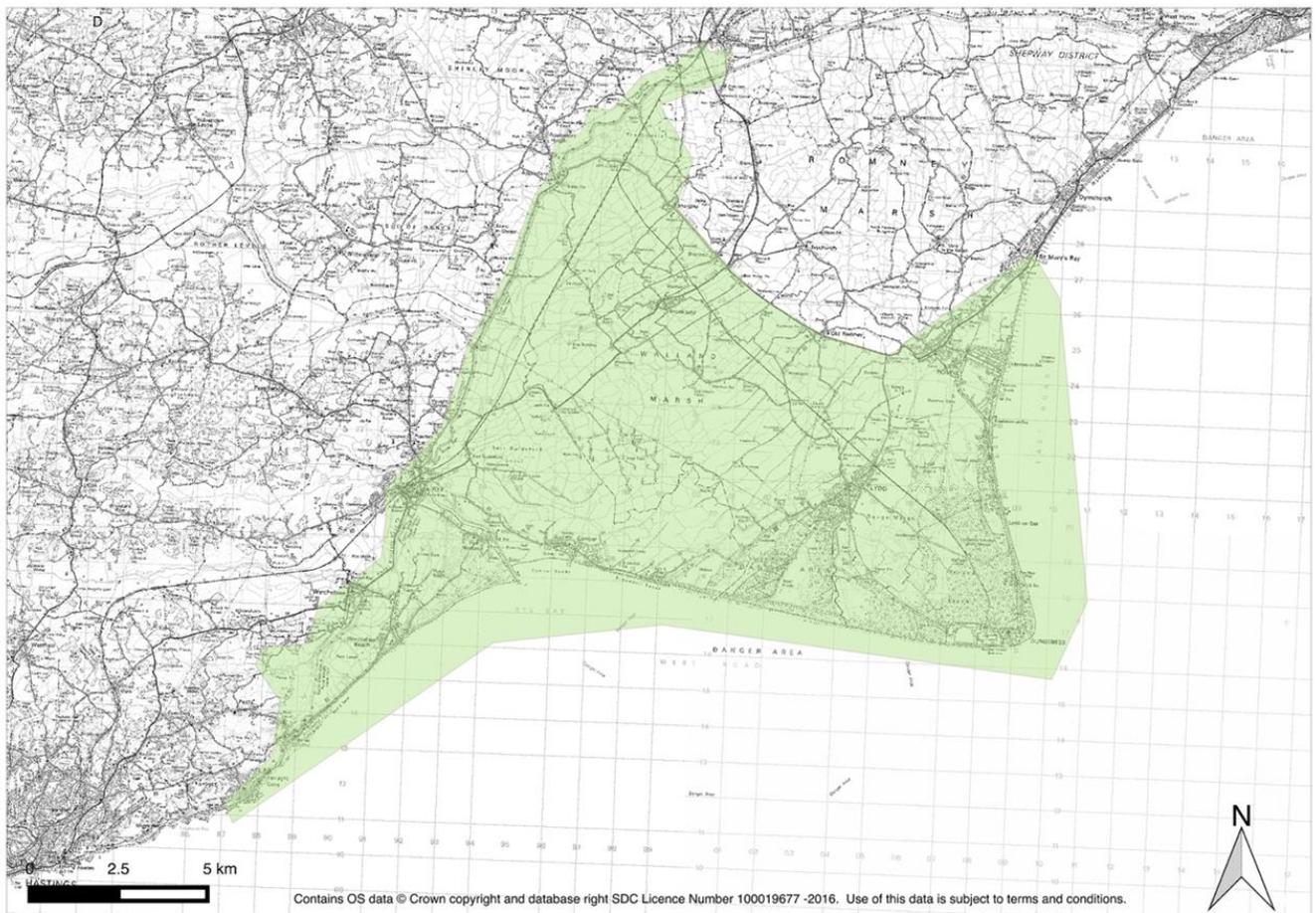
## About this Report

This document is one of a suite of documents which together form the Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS) for the Dungeness complex of protected sites. This document is an assessment of trends in outdoor recreation which are relevant to the strategy area, visitor data, activities and patterns within the Strategy area (see Plan 1) and methods to manage visitors.

The documents which form the complete SARMS are:

- Main Report – this report brings together the findings, draws conclusions and sets out an action plan;
- Supporting document 1 - Nature Conservation Background and Assessment
- Supporting document 2 - Access and Recreation Assessment
- Supporting document 3 - Policy, Visitor Economy and Strategic Initiatives
- **Supporting document 4 (this report) - Visitor Assessment**

### *Plan 1: The Strategy Area*



## Trends in Recreation

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### Introduction

The Strategy Area offers a wide variety of landscapes and experiences; both coastal and inland. A better understanding of why people visit, and what they like to do, will help in developing a strategy for the management of visitors in the designated sites of the Strategy Area. It is also important to understand the trends in visiting, so that plans may accommodate potential future changes.

Overall, levels of outdoor recreation are increasing. The demographic and other changes behind this increase include a greater interest in health and fitness and being outdoors, and more older people interested in being active - and with more leisure time. The growth areas include adventure sports - including watersports – and recreational activities enjoyed by older age groups, such as walking. The coast is a very popular destination for a range of activities, for local visitors, regular visitors, day-trippers and holiday-makers. Protected areas have also become an important factor in the supply of outdoor recreation.

### Trends in Visiting

In the south-east, more people make a day visit to the coast than in other parts of the country<sup>1</sup>; and 28% of day visitors in the south-east travel over 40 miles for their day out. Visitors to the Kent and East Sussex coast travel great distances, attracted by the wide sandy beaches and surrounding countryside.

There were an estimated 2.93 billion visits to the natural environment by the adult population in England between March 2013 and February 2014<sup>2</sup>, **with a statistically significant increase in visit frequency over a five-year study period<sup>3</sup>, indicating a potential trend towards increasing visits.**

Between March 2014 and February 2015 44% of the population had visited the outdoors in the last seven days. **This was a marked increase on the previous years.**

In terms of motivation for visiting the outdoors, health and exercise are the most frequently cited, and walking a dog was cited by almost a half of people visiting the outdoors.

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<sup>1</sup> The GB Day Visitor Statistics report for 2015 (GBDVS 2015 is jointly sponsored by the statutory tourist boards of England and Scotland and Visit Wales) provides the results of the 2015 survey of day visits to destinations in GB by residents of England, Scotland and Wales. Only 8% of day visits in England have the seaside/coast as the main destination; but this increases to 14% for the south-east region.

<sup>2</sup> Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (MENE) (Natural England, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> 2009 to 2014

## Trends in Recreation Sectors

### Watersports

The Watersports Participation Survey report (Arkenford, 2013) shows leisure time spent at the beach at the highest level since the start of the survey in 2002; and participation in watersports at its highest level since 2007. The 2014 survey<sup>4</sup> examines the trends of boating and watersports activities by UK adult residents over a 13 year period. Headlines from the report include:

- Female participation is increasing, and the volume increase in participation by the 55+ age group is 66% since 2002;
- The most popular activities are coastal walking (8.9% of UK adult residents), leisure time at the beach (14.9% and the highest of all activities), and outdoor swimming (9.3%); (N.B. Kitesurfing 0.2% and Angling 2.1%);
- Participation by southern England residents is at higher levels than the rest of the country;
- Power sports are dominated by 35-54 year olds; and manual sports by 16-34 year olds.

The coast is an ideal destination for watersports – according to a NCTA report<sup>5</sup>, after walking, cycling and swimming, watersports are the most popular recreational activities at the seaside. Most take part mainly in the summer months (although surfers are an exception). The NCTA report identifies watersports as making an important contribution to the economy of an area, and providing an opportunity to generate additional ‘shoulder season’ business. The growing popularity of some watersports, together with the tourism industry’s promotion, could have implications regarding the use of some sites during the periods of the year when the potential for (bird) disturbance is greatest.

### Angling

- A report on the benefits of angling<sup>6</sup> stated that ‘although estimates vary, recreational angling in the UK has millions of participants and therefore must be acknowledged as making a valuable contribution to getting people active in outdoor settings’.
- There are few figures available which might support recent trends in participation in angling. However, the report of the 2012 National Angling Survey<sup>7</sup> found that the respondents to the survey were 97% male with a mean average age of 51, and 95% white. At that time 65% were employed or self-employed and 23% retired.

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.rya.org.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/sportsdevelopment/Watersports\\_Survey\\_2014\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rya.org.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/sportsdevelopment/Watersports_Survey_2014_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> National Coastal Tourism Academy (NCTA) - Market Intelligence article

<sup>6</sup> Fishing for Answers: Final Report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project - Section 1: Angling and Sports Participation - Dr Adam Brown, Dr Natalie Djohari, Dr Paul Stolk - January 2012

<sup>7</sup> The National Angling Survey 2012 Survey Report by Dr Adam Brown November 2012. There were 29000 responses to the survey.

- The EA Public Attitudes to Angling (2010) report<sup>8</sup> said that 9% of the population over 12 years of age in England and Wales (equivalent to 4.2 million people) had been fishing in the last year;
- Sales of the EA Rod Licence (a legal requirement for anyone fishing in freshwater in England and Wales) increased by 35% from 2000/01 to 1,431,981 in 2011;
- Sport England estimates<sup>9</sup> that the numbers taking part in angling once per week stand at 134,000 with 980,000 taking part once per month. This makes angling the 16th highest participation sport in England in terms of weekly participation and 16th in monthly participation;
- Duration of activity is typically much longer (though less frequent) than other sports;
- Angling has a very large infrastructure of clubs which help develop participation, manage waters, skills and competitions and generate social value to individuals and communities.

## Walking

- Coastal walking and Leisure time at the beach are participated in mostly by the 35-54 age group<sup>10</sup>;
- The seaside is traditionally a popular place for walking, amongst both staying visitors and day trippers. In 2012, 30% of staying visits and 17% of day visits to the seaside included a short walk, while 20% of staying visits and 12% of day visits included a longer walk or ramble.
- The NCTA's document 'How to attract more: Customers travelling with dogs' states:
  - 24% of UK households have a dog;
  - 72% of dog owners would take more holidays if there was a better attitude towards dogs;
  - 30% of dog owning holiday makers said their entire holiday choice is based on how suitable it is for their pet.

## Cycling

- In England in 2014/15 10% of the population made a recreation cycling trip at least once per month<sup>11</sup> and 5.4% if the population at least once per week. When considering adults, in the same period 15% of adults in England cycled at least once per month;<sup>12</sup>
- Around 3.5 million cycles were sold in Great Britain in 2015;
- Cycle use is increasing in Britain, and has been increasing every year since 2008.

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<sup>8</sup> Simpson, D. and Mawle, G.W. (2010). Public Attitudes to Angling 2010. Environment Agency, Bristol

<sup>9</sup> Fishing for Answers: Final Report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project - Section 1: Angling and Sports Participation by Dr Adam Brown, Dr Natalie Djohari, Dr Paul Stolk - January 2012

<sup>10</sup> NCTA document - 'Visitor Profile: Walking at the seaside'

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.cyclinguk.org/resources/cycling-uk-cycling-statistics#Is cycle use increasing in Britain?](http://www.cyclinguk.org/resources/cycling-uk-cycling-statistics#Is%20cycle%20use%20increasing%20in%20Britain?)

<sup>12</sup> Government's 'Active People Survey' <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/walking-and-cycling-statistics>

## Protected Areas and Outdoor Recreation

A study into protected areas<sup>13</sup> reports *inter alia* on how parts of the British countryside are now viewed as a ‘refuge from modern, urban pressures’ and how the last three decades have seen ‘a dramatic growth of participation in outdoor recreation and tourism activities’, resulting in ‘a large increase in the volume of people demanding access to the countryside and places considerable pressure on the environment’. The report goes on to say how, in an era of rapid growth of demand for outdoor activities and links being made between health and outdoor recreation, **protected areas have become an important factor in the supply of outdoor recreation.**

**This work has relevance to this current study, as the Strategy Area is witnessing the growth in demand for outdoor recreation, with the potential for conflict between recreational uses and the environmental aims of the area.**

## Factors Influencing the Demand for Outdoor Recreation

There are many factors influencing people’s decision to participate in outdoor recreation. A Natural England-sponsored study<sup>14</sup> assessed the main factors that would influence the future of outdoor recreation. The research aimed to develop an understanding of changing demand for outdoor recreation, and identified the key underlying themes driving change in outdoor recreation to be:

- Social;
- Technological;
- Economic;
- Environmental;
- Political;
- Organisational;

### Social

Changes in demographic groups, including the rise of child-free households and the over 50s market; the decrease in traditional households; increasing ethnic diversity; changing working patterns; changing lifestyles of children and young people; a perceived time and energy deficit and a corresponding rise in spending money to save time (convenience culture); a rise in the experience economy; declining health outcomes and the drive to greater physical activity and health.

<sup>13</sup> Protected areas: origins, criticisms and contemporary issues for outdoor recreation - Jenny Smith Formerly of the Birmingham School of the Built Environment, Birmingham City University - Working Paper Series, no. 15 2013 - ISBN 978-1-904839-65-1

<sup>14</sup> A series of discussion papers by The Henley Centre in 2005 to inform NE’s draft strategy for outdoor recreation in England to 2015

**Technological**

A more networked society, meaning that people can find out about their activity of choice and where they can participate in it; and they can make their decisions about visits and destinations quickly and at the last minute.

**Economic**

An increasingly affluent society, with an increased willingness to travel and increasing spend on leisure; exclusion from participation due to low levels of income; priorities in public spending and the effects on outdoor recreation provision.

**Environmental**

Climate change/global warming; integration of conservation with recreation; greater awareness of environmental concerns.

**Political**

Priorities in public spending; drive to greater physical activity and health and tackling specific issues such as obesity and other declining public health outcomes; social inclusion.

**Organisational**

Fragmentation of leisure provision; increasing access; high levels of use of personal transport; increased availability of information (due to the internet and ease of access).

## Implications for the Strategy Area

Increasing affluence leads to:

- Increased demand for outdoor recreation;
- An increased desire for more diverse and more intense activities;
- Greater thirst for experience;
- Potential conflict between different uses of the outdoor environment.

Health and well-being and a greater awareness of the need for exercise leads to:

- People making health a priority in their lives;
- Outdoor recreation is seen as a means of retreating from the clamour and pace people perceive in their lives.

An ageing population is leading to:

- Increased participation in outdoor recreation amongst older people, with a greater number of retired people with leisure time on their hands;
- Demand for greater diversity of activities;

Increased availability of information leads to:

- The potential to increase participation in outdoor recreation by communicating to the public which areas are accessible and what activities are available; empowering consumers to try new activities.

Efforts to support social inclusion could lead to:

- The potential for a greater range of income groups and ethnic groups using the outdoors;
- A greater variety of user groups may lead to greater conflicts with landowners.

Convenience culture leads to:

- Demand for outdoor recreation could increase for those that perceive it as a flexible means of exercising, as it fits any timescale;
- People are developing a mindset of trying to fit a variety of different activities into their day; this will require good marketing.



# Recreational Activity and Visitors to the Strategy Area

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## Introduction

Visitors are attracted to the Strategy Area for a variety of reasons, including the landscape, the peace and quiet of the rural areas, the ease of access by road, the suitability for walking and cycling, and the wealth of areas for wildlife watching. But, in particular, visitors are drawn to this area by the coast, with its long, sandy beaches such as those at Camber Sands, Dymchurch and Greatstone, which are a magnet for holidaymakers and day-trippers.

To better understand the type of recreational activity taking place at the designated sites, a survey of visitors was carried out. On-site, face to face surveys took place at key visitor sites along the Kent and East Sussex coast within the SPA, over the period of a year. In addition, an online survey was targeted at more specialist users who may not be present at the sites at the times the on-site surveys took place. The results of these surveys were reported<sup>15</sup>. However, to better understand the recreational pressures on the designated sites, their habitats and species, the survey results have been re-analysed and presented here.

From the results of the Phase One Visitor Survey we know that:

- The beaches and sea in this area are also ideally suited to specialist pastimes including on and off-shore angling, kite-surfing, beach buggying and land yachting;
- Sea angling and beach fishing are very important at Dungeness and along the Strategy Area coast, and lake fishing is also important at several sites in the Strategy Area;
- Watersports such as kite-surfing and other water-based activities are popular, particularly at Broomhill on the south coast and at Greatstone along the east coast. Greatstone is also a well-known venue for sand-buggying and land-yachting;
- The area also attracts large numbers of birdwatchers at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' (RSPB's) Dungeness Nature Reserve, along the coast and - to a lesser extent<sup>16</sup> - at Rye Harbour Reserve.<sup>17</sup>

The visitor surveys cannot provide information on the overall number of visitors to the area, but they are an indicator of both the type and volume of recreational use at the survey sites within the designated areas. This information, together with data on the condition of habitats and species at the sites will help identify where recreational pressures may be impacting on the sensitive sites.

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<sup>15</sup> Rye Harbour, Camber, Dungeness and Shepway Visitor Surveys 2014 – 2015 by S. Bayne and V. Hyland

Report 1: On-Site Surveys; Report 2: Sports and Recreational Users Survey: Executive Summary and Activities;

Report 3: Sports and Recreational Users Survey: Site Reports; Report 4: Discussion

<sup>16</sup> Based on responses of on-site Phase One Visitor Survey 2014-2015

<sup>17</sup> Other activities which take place on privately-owned sites (such as golf) are considered as 'attractions' in Report 3: Tourism and Economic Development.

A great deal of information was gained from the Phase One visitor and online surveys. However, these surveys only account for part of the strategy area, and in particular they miss out some of the inland areas, towns and villages. Information on visitor numbers has been gathered for some car parks in the strategy area, but only for some of those which collect fees through parking machines. Information has been sought for other areas and facilities; limited information was available on visitors to the Royal Military Canal and there was no information on cyclists on the Sustrans routes.

## Key findings from the Phase One On-Site Visitor Survey

Phase One Visitor Surveys were carried out from 2014 to 2015. Face-to-face surveys were carried out at eight different sites on eight different dates, collecting 1099 results. In order to capture more specialist sports and recreational site users an online survey was also arranged during the period. This yielded 343 returned surveys. The results of the Phase One Visitor Surveys are important in understanding the pattern of visitor usage at sites in the Strategy Area.

The key activities of surveyed visitors to the area include:

- Beach activities (e.g. swimming, angling, sand-yachting);
- Water sports (e.g. kite-surfing, boating, jet-skiing, fishing from a boat);
- Other coastal activities (e.g. walking with or without a dog, cycling, wildlife watching);
- Other inland activities (e.g. lake fishing, cycling, walking with or without a dog, wildlife watching).

## On-site Surveys – Summary of Key Findings

### Day visitors or holidaymakers

- 70% of those interviewed were making a visit from home of less than one day (day-trippers or local residents);
- 30% of visitors were on holiday; the lowest percentage of holiday makers was at Lade (12%) and the highest at Camber Central (50%);

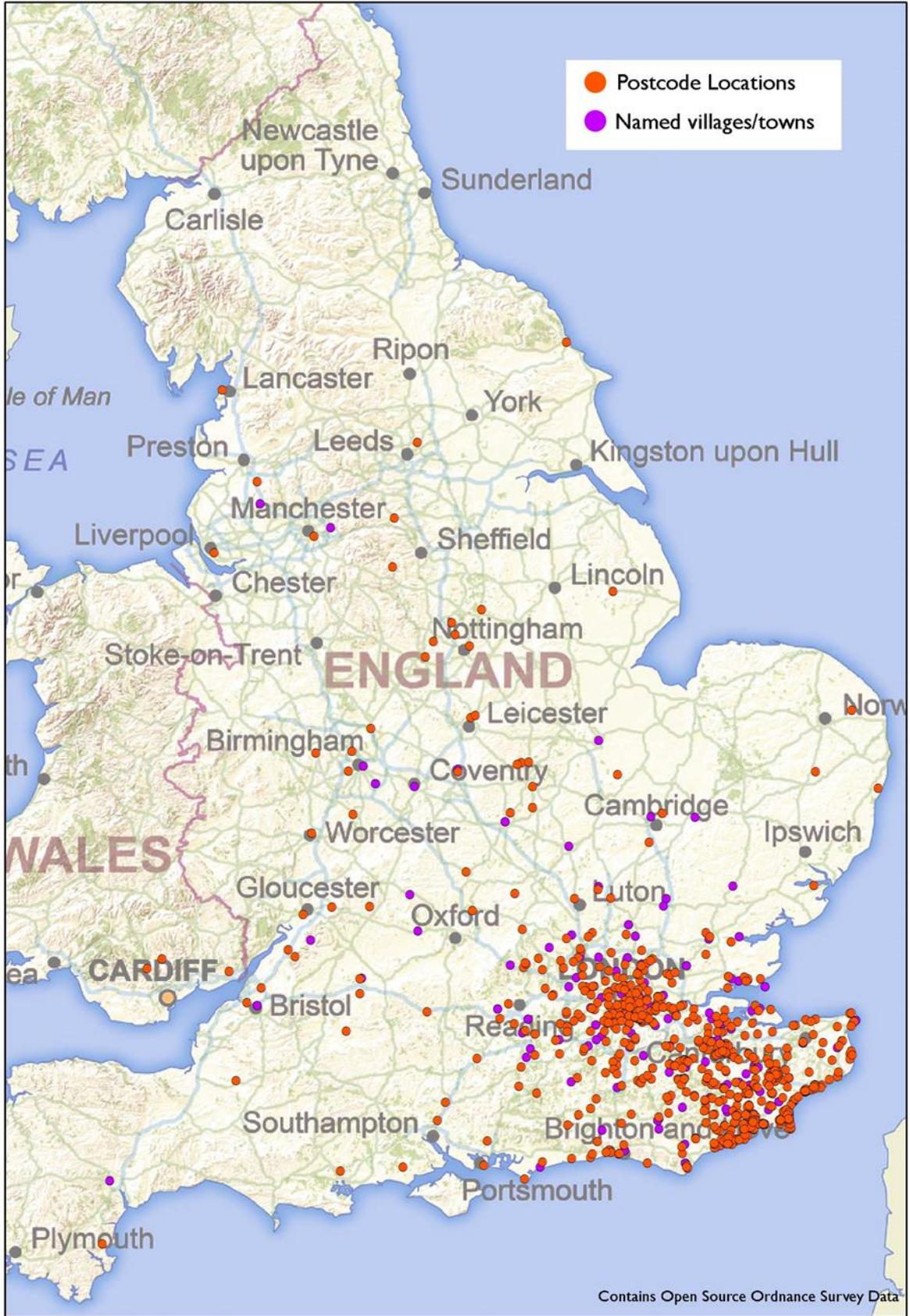
### Residents or visitors from elsewhere?

- Most regular visitors are local (see also section on Catchment Area) and Greatstone had the most local visitors.
- 43% of all visitors (and 25% of day trippers) travel more than 55km to the sites;

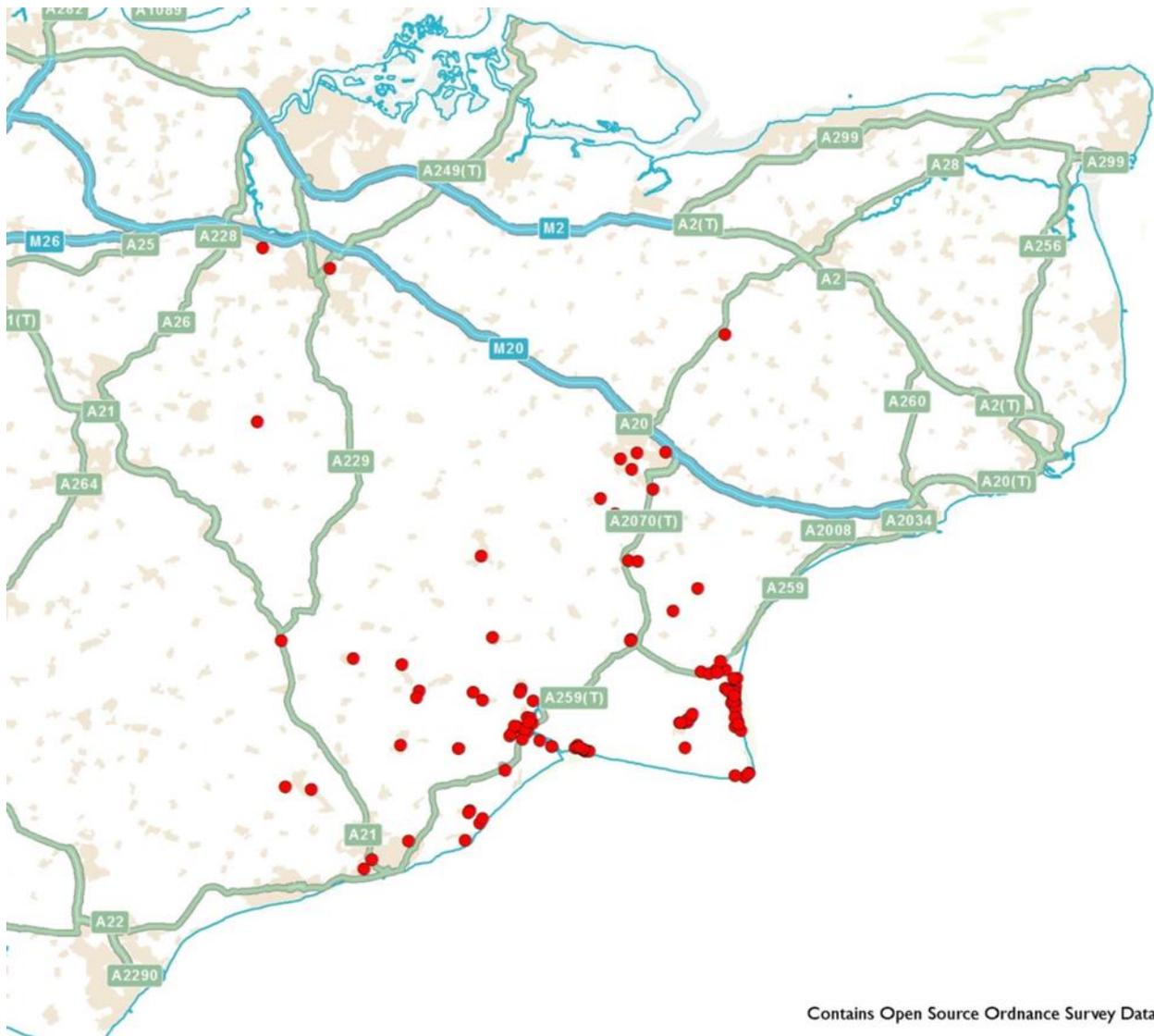
### The frequency of visits varied across the sites

- Camber Central had the highest percentage of first time visitors (44%), followed by Dungeness Point (40%);
- The highest percentage of daily visitors was at Greatstone (32%);
- In terms of frequency of visits, dog walkers formed the majority of visitors who visited once a week or more (total 41%).

Plan 2: Origin of visitors, all sites, all Phase One on-site surveys



*Plan 3: Origin of visitors, all Phase One on-site surveys, Frequency Once a Week or More (excluding holiday-makers)*



What time of year do people visit the area?

- Overall and for each of the sites, most visitors responded that they visited equally all year;
- A high percentage of visitors to Lade (59%) and Greatstone (62%) made visits equally all year;
- 156 respondents (14.2%) visit in the Summer;
- 60 respondents (5.4%) visit in the Winter.

### The site 'offer'

Each of the 8 sites has its own particular visitor offer and appeal, and this is reflected in the results of the surveys:

- Rye Harbour Reserve: appeals to a wide range of visitor; including wildlife enthusiasts, many of whom come to see the birds, also walkers with and without dogs, holiday-makers – some from the nearby holiday park - and day visitors.
- Camber Dunes: attracts beach enthusiasts, holiday-makers, but also has high numbers of dog walkers, many of them local. The busiest site in the survey.
- Camber Sands (Central): attracts mostly beach enthusiasts and holiday-makers – some from the two large holiday parks in the village - and day-trippers;
- Broomhill: by far the largest proportion of visitors are kite-surfers. The pebble beach and exposed coast do not attract those looking for a day out on the beach; and Camber offers a sandy beach within a short walk. This was the least busy site in the survey.
- The unique 'offer' of Dungeness: Dungeness Point is a unique area with a strong niche offer that attracts a wide range of visitors who come to explore the landscape, to walk and to fish at the beach. The volume of visitors, range of activities and relative freedom to explore the area with few access restrictions, combined with a resident population, could bring uses into conflict and exert pressure on more wildlife sensitive areas.
- The RSPB Dungeness Reserve is known nationally, and attracts wildlife enthusiasts from great distances.
- Greatstone is visited generally by local people who make regular visits all year, but is also situated opposite a holiday park and is a renowned kite-surfing and land yachting beach, and attracts these specialist interest visitors from great distances (though in smaller numbers than Broomhill).
- Lade attracts local people who make regular visits all year and – with easy to access and free car parking – it also attracts passing day-trippers and holiday-makers.

### Main Activities

- **Walking** (with and without a dog) was the most popular activity overall with a joint total of 51% indicating this was their main activity;
- **Walking with a dog** was the most popular single activity overall, with 29% of visitor groups stating it as their main reason for visiting; although there were differences across sites, with no dog walkers at Dungeness RSPB;
- In terms of volume, of the most popular main activities, **dog walkers visit more frequently** than visitors engaged in other activities, with nearly half visiting once a week or more, and in a far greater volume than other popular activities;
- The second most popular single activity overall was walking without a dog, at 22%. This was the main reason given at Dungeness Point and Rye Harbour;
- **Kite surfing** was the main activity for 5% of visitors. At Broomhill 44% of visitors stated kite-surfing as their main activity; the highest percentage for kite-surfing at any of the sites and the biggest by volume of visitors;

- Overall, the main activity in summer (Summer = 156 respondents) is 'going to the beach' (23.7%) followed closely by dog walking (23%);
- The main activity overall in winter (Winter = 60 respondents) is dog walking (48.3%).
- When asked why people chose the particular site, the highest numbers of responses were for the site as the best place for the activity the respondent wanted to do (14%) and because they wanted to visit the sea or coast (13%). However, there was variation across the sites, reflecting the different role each site plays.

#### Site by Site: Main Activity<sup>18</sup> (See Table 1)

- Rye Harbour – Walking without a dog (43%);
- Camber West (Dunes) – Walking with a dog (48%);
- Camber Central – Going to the beach (39%); when asked why they chose this site to visit, 'wanting to visit the sea or coast' featured prominently at this site (30%);
- Broomhill – Kite-surfing (44%); visitors were more activity motivated than the average; in addition, 35% stated they visit here because it is a good place for the activity they want to do;
- Dungeness Point – Walking without a dog (19%); in addition, when asked why they chose this site, the response 'to see the landscape of Dungeness' was the highest response for this site (30%);
- Dungeness RSPB – Wildlife watching (84%);
- Lade – Walking with a dog (39%);
- Greatstone - Walking with a dog (55%).

Activities with fewer than ten responses include picnicking, swimming, bait digging, horse-riding, sand yachting, jogging and fishing from a boat. However, due to the nature of these activities it may not have been practical for visitors involved in these activities to be surveyed. Additional responses for specific interest groups and activities were captured through the online survey.

**Table 1: Visitor numbers and activities – total number of visitors per survey site and highest number of main activity**

| Survey Site         | Commentary   | Total number of visitors surveyed at the site | Highest number of main activity |                 |  |  |
|---------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
|                     |  |   | No                              | % of site users | % of all users to all sites in that category | Main Activity at the site                          |
| Rye Harbour         | 55 dog walkers and 16 wildlife watchers                  | 158   | 67                              | 42.4%           | 27.5%  | Walking (243 total for all sites)                  |
| Camber West         | 45 walkers without a dog and 33 to enjoy the beach/coast | 185   | 89                              | 48.1%           | 27.8%  | Dog walking (320 total for all sites)              |
| Camber Central/Main | 45 dog walkers and 38 walkers without a dog              | 163   | 63                              | 38.6%           | 35.8%  | Beach and enjoying coast (176 total for all sites) |

<sup>18</sup> Respondents were asked to state their main activity at the site and other activities they would be engaging in.

|                 |   |     |     |       |       |   |
|-----------------|---|-----|-----|-------|-------|---|
| Broomhill       | Others were walkers, dog walkers and those coming to enjoy the coast                            | 88  | 39  | 44.3% | 83%   | Kite surfing (47 total for all sites)       |
| RSPB Reserve    |   | 128 | 108 | 84.3% | 82%   | Wildlife watching (132 total for all sites) |
| Dungeness Point | Fairly even spread of numbers across activities; train, scenery, photography, explore the coast | 154 | 30  | 19.4% | 12.3% | Walking (243 total for all sites)           |
| Lade            | 20 walkers without a dog  | 102 | 40  | 39.2% | 12.5% | Dog walking (320 total for all sites)       |
| Greatstone      |   | 121 | 67  | 55.3% | 21%   | Dog walking (320 total for all sites)       |

## Alternative Sites

- When asked whether there are any other places nearby that people visit regularly to do the same activity, **72% of visitor groups cited other coastal sites;**
- The most popular alternative site was Dungeness with 129 respondents, then Rye (86 respondents) and Camber (85 respondents), Rye Harbour was in fifth place (68 respondents).
- When asked what another site would need to have to make visitors go there instead, **54% said that nothing would make them go elsewhere;**
- When asked to list the features another site would need for the visitors to go there (in order to identify the features people value about the survey site), 21% said 'a good beach' - by far the most popular answer.

## Distribution of visitors across the survey sites

Table 2 shows the distribution of visitors across all the survey sites.

- Camber West was the busiest site, returning the highest number of responses (185) with Broomhill returning the fewest (88).

## Size of Party

- A group size of 2 adults was the most frequent of all group sizes recorded at all sites except Broomhill, where 40 respondents were in an adult 'group' size of 1;
- The number of visitor parties with children varied across the sites, with the most recorded at Camber West and the fewest at Broomhill.

## How far do Visitors Travel to the Sites?

- The overwhelming majority of visitors to the sites were from the UK<sup>19</sup>;
- UK holiday-makers travel more than 600km to the sites;
- The most popular sites for holiday-makers generally receive visitors from the greatest distances;
- Particular types of visitor also travel greater distances e.g. kite-surfers at Broomhill, holiday-makers to most sites, holiday-makers and day-trippers to Camber, visitors who want to explore Dungeness Point;
- Greatstone attracts visitors from a smaller catchment than other sites, with almost half (49%) of respondents travelling a distance of up to 5km;
- At Lade the highest percentage categories of visitors travel up to 5km and more than 55km (26% each);
- At the Dungeness RSPB reserve and Camber West the greatest percentage of visitors travel over 55km (44% of visitors to each of the sites);
- The majority of site visitors travel more than 55km to Dungeness Point (61%), Broomhill (52%) and Camber Central (60%);
- At Rye Harbour the situation is less clear-cut, with the largest percentage travelling more than 55km (29%) and 20% travelling between 15-25km;
- The average distances travelled to each site varied. For Day Trippers, the greatest average distance travelled was to Camber (84km) followed by Dungeness Point (82.6km); The smallest average distance travelled was to Greatstone (17.9km);
- The furthest distance travelled by day trippers was 227km recorded at Rye Harbour – although the respondents were in the area to visit Dungeness;
- The furthest distances travelled by holiday makers were 618km recorded at the RSPB reserve, followed by 428km recorded at Camber Central.

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<sup>19</sup> 99% of visitors were from the UK

**Table 2: Distribution and Numbers of Visitors and Distances Travelled by Survey Sites**

|                                | Broomhill | Camber Central | Camber West | Dungeness Point | Greatstone | Lade                              | RSPB     | Rye Harbour                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Visitors No (all)              | 88        | 163            | 185         | 154             | 121        | 102                               | 128      | 158                           |
| Male No                        | 56        | 77             | 72          | 73              | 53         | 62                                | 75       | 69                            |
| Female No                      | 32        | 86             | 104         | 56              | 65         | 40                                | 48       | 87                            |
| Day trip from home No          | 69        | 81             | 121         | 90              | 99         | 89                                | 102      | 117                           |
| On holiday No                  | 20        | 82             | 63          | 63              | 22         | 12                                | 25       | 40                            |
| Furthest distance (day trip)   | 114km     | 135km          | 186km       | 210km           | 88km       | 207km (filming trip to Dungeness) | 191km    | 227km (here to see Dungeness) |
| Furthest distance (on holiday) | 220km     | 428km          | 373km       | 381km           | 277km      | 268km                             | 618km    | 359km                         |
| Max no of adult party size     | 1 (40no)  | 2 (98no)       | 2 (43no)    | 2 (99no)        | 2 (63no)   | 2 (65no)                          | 2 (78no) | 2 (98no)                      |
| No of parties with children    | 12        | 47             | 63          | 51              | 13         | 13                                | 20       | 35                            |

## Visitors with Dogs

- 30% of respondents had dogs with them;
- 82% of respondents with dogs said they let their dogs off the lead;
- The highest number of visitor groups with dogs was recorded at Camber West (90), followed by 69 at Greatstone; and 55 at Rye Harbour.

Interestingly dog restrictions are in place at Camber (both sites) and Greatstone between 1st May to 30th September. The restricted areas cover part of the survey area for the survey sites of Greatstone, Camber Central and Camber West. Parties with dog walkers were recorded in these locations throughout the year, including during the restricted periods. At sites where dog restrictions apply the difference in the percentage of visitor parties walking with dogs during the unrestricted period in comparison with the restricted period is as follows:

- Camber West +10%;
- Camber Central +16%;
- Greatstone +18%;

The difference is smaller at sites with no restrictions with the exceptions of Lade (+16%) and Broomhill (+12%). However, both these sites are directly connected by the beach to other restricted sites e.g. Lade

beach is adjacent to Greatstone beach; and Broomhill beach is continuous with - and a short distance from - Camber beach.

The results indicate that it is the experience of walking by the sea and the perceived enjoyment of the pet which are the most important factors in the decision to walk at these sites. The highest scoring response was “my dog enjoys the sea/beach” at 34%, followed by “I can let my dog off the lead” at 31% and “I can go for a long walk” at 27%. In contrast, those questions which would indicate a lack of local dog walking facilities had a very low score. Only 2 respondents (0.6%) said there was nowhere else closer to home to walk their dog.

When asked if there were alternative sites they take their dog for walks, 186 (57%) said yes; with the most popular site being Dungeness (37 responses, 11.5%) followed by Camber (22 responses, 6.8%).

### How people find out about the sites

- Over half (51%) of respondents indicated they knew about the site already; and another popular response was ‘word of mouth’ (34%);
- Only 15% of visitors overall, and a third (33%) of first time visitors used websites, books or other resources.

### Regular Visitors

- **Regular visitors are those who visit at least once per week;**
- 1099 visitors (i.e. visitor groups) responded to the on-site survey, representing a total of 3075 visitors. Of the visitor groups **183 (16.7%) were regular visitors** (N.B. some respondents said they were regular visitors but were in fact holidaymakers who visited the site regularly while on holiday, so these were discounted);
- **Most regular visitors live close to the site; and the majority reside in Shepway or Rother district;**
- Most regular users would not choose to go to another site; but when they do visit another site for the same activity it is more likely to be a coastal site (although less likely than non-regular visitors);
- For activities which were made regularly (at least once per week), dog walking was the most popular activity (41%);
- The sites with the highest percentages of regular visitors were **Greatstone (55%) and Lade (31%)**. NB A high percentage of visitors to Lade (59%) and Greatstone (62%) made visits at any time of year;
- All respondents said they either knew about the site or found out by word of mouth.

Of the regular visitor groups:

- 122 are dog- walking (66%);
- 28 are walking without a dog (15.3%);
- 9 are here to watch wildlife (4.9%);
- 8 are here to kite-surf (4.4%);
- 7 visit in the Winter (3.8%) but the overwhelming majority (165) visit all year round (90%).

The reasons why regular visitors choose to visit the particular site:

- 49 because it's a good site for their chosen activity (26.8%)
- 30 because they wanted to visit the coast (16.4%)
- 76 because they always come here/ it's their regular place (41.5%)
- 142 because it's close to their home (77.5%)
- 20 for the convenient parking (11%)
- 24 came there to enjoy wildlife and nature (13%)
- 11 to see the landscape of Dungeness (6%)
- 31 for the 'naturalness' (16.9%)
- 17 came here for the birds (9.2%)
- 37 because it's quiet with fewer people (20%)
- 20 for the good parking (11%)

When asked about what other sites they would visit for the same activity:

- 124 respondents said there are other places nearby where they do the same activity (68%);
- of these, the primary places visited are coastal (86 responses - 47%) and inland sites (28 responses - 15.3%);
- 45 respondents said they don't go anywhere else nearby for their activity (24.6%);
- When asked what another site would need to have for the visitor to go there instead, 93 respondents (51%) said they would not go anywhere else, they would still come to this site.

## Regular Visitors with Dogs

- A high percentage of regular visitors are dog-walkers; 120 respondents had dogs with them (65.5%)
- Dog-walkers favour the coastal sites and the majority go to sites where they can let their dogs off the lead; Most dog walkers have the choice of other sites closer to home, but choose to come to this site;
- 101 said they let their dogs off the lead (84% of regular visitors with dogs) (only 19 respondents didn't);
- 79 went to the site because they could let the dog off the lead (66% of regular visitors with dogs);
- 71 came here because they could take their dog for a long walk (59% of regular visitors with dogs);
- 91 said they came there because the dog liked the beach (76% of regular visitors with dogs);
- 40 said the site was the closest place to their home to walk their dog (33% of regular visitors with dogs);
- Only 1 respondent said there was no other site closer to home where they could walk the dog.

## Key Findings from the on-line Surveys

The Phase One Visitor Survey included an on-line survey. The online surveys were aimed at those recreational visitors whose sport or pastime meant they were less likely to be on site at the times and places of our on-site survey. The sites visitors selected from were not quite the same as the on-site survey, as they included areas not surveyed on-site. The additional areas comprised Winchelsea, Dungeness Point coast and Lydd Beach to The Pilot (pub).

- 343 surveys were returned;
- 253 respondents chose one site that they visited for their activity;
- 90 respondents chose more than one site that they visited for their activity;

Activities included surfing (including wind and kite), fishing from land, shore or sea, photography, filming, bait digging, painting, sand yachting and others. The three activities with the highest number of responses as the main activity (i.e. main reason for visiting) were 'fishing from the beach/land/shore' (120 responses), 'wildlife watching/bird watching' (118 responses) and 'kite surfing' (99 responses). Table 3 shows the main activities by site for the on-line responses.

On average, the respondents visit the sites for their pastimes throughout the seasons i.e. equally all year. However, at Dungeness Point and Long Pits 15% of respondents visit in the Winter (the highest percentage of all the sites in the Winter); and at the Long Pits 18% of respondents visit in the Spring (the highest percentage of all the sites in the Spring).

**Table 3: Main Activities – On-line survey**

| Number of responses                | Total (responses) | Rye and Winchelsea | Camber and Broomhill | RSPB Reserve | Dungeness Point Coast | Dungeness Long Pits | Lydd Beach to The Pilot | Greatstone Dunes | Litlington | % (Total) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------|
| Fishing from the beach/ land/shore | 120               | 3%                 | 2%                   | 0%           | 73%                   | 31%                 | 23%                     | 0%               | 39%        | 25%       |
| Wildlife watching/bird watching    | 118               | 54%                | 0%                   | 85%          | 7%                    | 31%                 | 0%                      | 0%               | 0%         | 25%       |
| Kite surfing                       | 99                | 1%                 | 79%                  | 0%           | 2%                    | 0%                  | 15%                     | 64%              | 6%         | 21%       |
| Dog walking                        | 30                | 12%                | 4%                   | 0%           | 2%                    | 0%                  | 15%                     | 11%              | 17%        | 6%        |
| Walking - no dog                   | 27                | 8%                 | 2%                   | 3%           | 4%                    | 27%                 | 0%                      | 4%               | 6%         | 6%        |
| Cycling                            | 14                | 4%                 | 0%                   | 0%           | 2%                    | 0%                  | 0%                      | 4%               | 28%        | 3%        |

- Across all activities and responses, the most popular reason for visiting the site was because 'it's a good place for the activity I want to do' (20% of all responses). In other words, the site is best-suited to the needs of their sport or pastime;
- The most requested improvements to the visitor experience were (better) toilets, litter bins and car parking;

## Online Survey: Main Activity at Each Site

- Rye and Winchelsea Beach - Wildlife watching/bird watching (54% of respondents);
- Camber Dunes and Broomhill – Kite surfing (79% of respondents);
- RSPB reserve – wildlife watching/bird watching (85%);
- Dungeness Point - Fishing from the beach/land/shore (73%);
- Dungeness Long Pits - Wildlife watching/bird watching and Fishing from the beach/land/shore (31% each);
- Lydd Beach to The Pilot - Fishing from the beach/land/shore (23%); NB No visits by respondents in the Winter;
- Greatstone Dunes – Kite-surfing (64%); NB Only 2% of visits made in the Winter;
- Littlestone - Fishing from the beach/land/shore (39%).

## Fishing from the Land

- 79% visited Dungeness Point; 8% visit Dungeness Long Pits;
- 70% visit 1 – 3 times per month;
- Almost all stayed for a half or entire day;
- Mostly visit at no usual time, but some overnight (11%) and some before 9am (10%);
- Most fishing visitors do not use social media to keep in touch with their activity;
- The main means of communicating is through the tackle shops or word of mouth on site;
- The site they visit needs to be good for their activity (28%), but also natural, near the sea and quiet were also popular reasons for visiting the particular site;
- They would like more litter bins, less litter and others (anglers) to clear up their litter/mess; also, toilets and improved car parking;
- Anglers travel from as far as north London and the home counties to visit the sites.

## Wildlife Watching

- 72% of responses detailed visits to Rye Harbour and Winchelsea, with 21% detailing visits to Dungeness RSPB;
- Over half of wildlife watchers (54%) visited less than once a month (similar to the on-site survey results), with 34% visiting between once and 3 times a month;
- Around half use social media to keep in touch;
- Wildlife watchers would like improved toilet facilities (13%) and seating, refreshments and dog waste bins (all 8%);
- They find out about the sites through clubs or websites;
- Wildlife watchers come from the south-east mostly (Kent and East Sussex) with some travelling from London.

## Walkers and Dog Walkers

- Most in this category visit Rye Harbour and Winchelsea (45%), followed by Camber and Broomhill (18%) and Dungeness Point (14%);
- 11% visit daily;
- 18% visit 1 – 3 times per week;
- 33% visit less than once per month;
- Least connected of all the groups;
- They visit mostly for the naturalness of the area, for a place that's good for their activity and to visit the coast and wildlife;
- This group had few requirements;
- They tend to be local to Kent and East Sussex, with a few from areas closer to London.

## Kite-surfing

- Mostly visit 1 – 3 times per month (NB Compared with the on-site survey results of visits mostly less than once per month);
- Majority (85%) have no usual visiting time of year; but at Camber and Broomhill 16% of visitors visit in Spring and only 4% in the Winter. Also, visitors tend to stay for at least half a day.
- Well-networked on-line;
- The site they visit needs to be good for their activity (29%) and parking is also important to them;
- They would like better parking and toilets on-site, showers and a snack bar/café;
- Kite-surfers travel from as far as north London and the home counties to visit the sites.



## Use of Social Media

Respondents were asked if they used social media to keep in touch with other participants for their sport. Overall, 33% of responses indicated that the respondent did not use social media.

There was wide variation in the activity groups examined in this report. The use of social media by those fishing from shore, wildlife watchers and walkers without or with dogs was below average, accounting for just under half of responses. In contrast only 3% of kite surfers did not use any social media, and they also had a relatively high use of Facebook (72%), Twitter (12%) and Instagram (8%).

The on-line respondents also recorded the groups and forums they used to keep in touch with their activity and other users. The results indicated that Kite-surfers are generally well-connected into web-based groups and anglers also listed clubs and a local association.

The walkers and dog walkers were the least connected of the groups.



## Key Activities in the Strategy Area, their locations and relevant organisations

### Angling

Takes place at a number of locations in and around the Strategy Area. River, lake, shore-based and from a boat (at sea).

Along the boundary of the Strategy Area is the **Royal Military Canal**. Fishing is permitted for members of relevant angling clubs or by day permits. Fishing takes place at a number of stretches along the canal e.g. Winchelsea - joining the River Brede at Strand Bridge, Winchelsea; Bonnington to Ruckinge. Good for coarse fishing (<http://www.lintonangling.co.uk/>); Ruckinge to Kenardington; Church Lane to Appledore (<http://midkentfisheries.co.uk/>).

#### *Canal Stretch*

#### *Contact*

Seabrook to Giggers Green Road

[Cinque Ports Angling Society](#)

11 miles approx

Giggers Green Rd to Ruckinge

[Linton Angling Society](#)

3 miles approx

Ruckinge to Church Lane, Kenardington

Church Lane to Appledore

[Mid Kent Fisheries](#)

2 miles approx

**Jurys Gap Sewer, Camber. (Jurys Gap, Scotney Court)** – This site is promoted on the angling club website. A main drainage channel between Camber and Lydd. This water is known for its large bream to 8lbs+ and pike to 25lbs+. Also contains small roach, rudd, dace, perch and eels. Together with a number of difficult to catch common carp to 15lbs+. (<http://www.clivevaleac.co.uk/rivers/> )

### Lake angling

**The Nook (Rye Harbour)** 4 lakes over 100 acres. Day fishing.

**Saunders Gravel Pit (main and small lake), Rye Harbour** Clive Vale Angling Club. Limited to 30 anglers per day.

**North Point Lake** Also a watersports lake (Rye Watersports). Fishing managed by Rye and District Angling Society.

**Point field Pit** 3 areas. Open 1<sup>st</sup> June to 14<sup>th</sup> March. Managed by Clive Vale Angling Club.

**Dungeness Long Pits/Lakes** – Fishing is by Day Tickets from local tackle shops;

<http://www.seagullfishingtackle.com/> and <http://www.dungenessangling.co.uk/>

Closed season 15<sup>th</sup> March to 15<sup>th</sup> June. According to their website Dungeness Angling Association has taken on the Dungeness Site Manager's<sup>20</sup> former role in listing clubs wanting to fish the Point to avoid

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<sup>20</sup> Site Manager – formerly in a wider area role for RMCP

overcrowding. Their website states they are also involved in part-funding the local authority to carry out beach cleans in an effort to sort out the mess left behind by some anglers. They also state that they act in a bailiff role regarding the access gate at the Point, and assisting anglers on the beach. Membership of the Association buys anglers access to the access road to the beach. The Association website states that is has around a thousand members.

**Heron's Park Lake, Lydd;** Carp and tench, plus rudd and roach. Fished under the control of Lydd Angling Club. <http://www.lyddanglingclub.com/waters.html> Heron's Park water (main lake); north-west bank, north-east bank and west bank.

**Lydd Lakes;** Three lakes just west of Lydd town; Privately owned; no open public access; with Bailiff and fishery Manager; Managed by Mid Kent Fisheries; No close season – just some lake closures at times of fish spawning; (<http://midkentfisheries.co.uk/location/lydd-lake-2/>);

### Coast/Beach angling

There are a number of specific fishing 'marks' along the coast of the Strategy Area (<http://www.hagstone.net/hythe.html>):

**Jury's Gap:** a large, south-west facing storm beach located on Lydd Road at the western edge of Lydd Ranges (50.92761, 0.83090)

**Galloways:** another south-west facing storm beach that uncovers on spring tides. Good for cod in the winter. However, the mark is located on the foreshore adjoining Lydd Ranges south of Lydd.

**Denge Marsh:** a steep, wide shingle beach falling to a flat sand bed (very shallow at low tide) approached via a very rough road with convenient parking at the shore. Known as a winter mark and for summer fishing. A spot that is fished late into the night and near dawn.

**The Diamond:** named after a diamond-shaped day mark erected on the beach 200 yards east of the end of Dengemarsh Road (to the west of the power station).

**Dungeness Beach:** a peerless deep-water mark from which all local species are caught.

**The Outfall:** another popular deep-water mark is the power station cooling water outfall, locally known as the "Boils", (50.909847, 0.959831) where approximately 22 million gallons of cooling water are extracted and returned to the sea each hour after being heated 12° Celsius (22°F), disturbing the sea bed and releasing food and small dead fish (over 30 mm long) from the filter screens.

**The Walkway:** a wooden walkway (from 50.913424, 0.974267 to 50.912100, 0.975654) south of the (new) lighthouse gives easy access across the shingle beach.

**Back-of-the-Boats:** easier to fish in a south-westerly blow on a rising spring tide but don't get in the way of the working boats. Take the turning at 50.918618, 0.97680 on the Dungeness Road bearing right after 100 yards at 50.918164, 0.97804. Follow the road for 400 yards and park at 50.919861, 0.98088.

**The Pilot:** opposite the Pilot Inn, at the corner of Battery Road and Coast Drive (50.92909, 0.97391), Dungeness, Kent TN29 9NJ. A summer surf-bass mark, fishable over high water.

**Taylor Road:** similar to the Pilot - fish for bass on a rising tide over high water. Convenient parking at 50.94867, 0.96658.

**Littlestone Wall:** another high-water mark but with the advantage of convenient parking close to the fishing. All local species can be caught here in their season with eels to be caught in the summer after dark.

Pirate Springs: similar to Littlestone Wall but further north towards St Mary's Bay (51.0051, 0.9746). Like Littlestone Wall it also fishes after dark.

**Mulberry Harbour:** 986 metres (3,236 feet) off Littlestone beach measured from the junction of Coast Road, Blenheim Road and Marine Parade (50.983055, 0.983269 - TR 09494 24642) is an inshore bass mark. There is mention of the SSSI and the need to consult 'English Nature' (sic) regarding bait digging, and some cautionary notes regarding access to the foreshore near Lydd Ranges.

NB The Hagstone website also promotes bait-digging sites e.g. at Dungeness and the Rother estuary.

### Sea Fishing

According to The Romney Marsh website (<http://theromneymarsh.net/fishing>), Dungeness is the premier Cod fishery in the country. Cod fishing around the coast in this area is popular from September to the end of December. The deep water around Dungeness Point hosts a number of fish species and attracts anglers all year round, both from boats and from shore, around the Point.

Boats can be launched from a number of spots along the coast of the Strategy Area, notably Dymchurch (ref <http://www.dymchurch-angling.co.uk/index.php?content=boatangling>);

The fishing tackle shops in the area provide anglers with a useful point for exchange of information:  
 Seagull Fishing Tackle, 4 The Parade, Greatstone, Romney Marsh, Kent TN28 8NP, 01797 366837  
 Den's Tackle, 73 Dymchurch Road, Hythe, Kent CT21 6JN, 01303 267053  
 Mick's Tackle, 1 Thirlestane Terrace, Dymchurch Road, Hythe, Kent CT21 6LB, 01303 266334



## Watersports

In the Strategy area, there are a number of organisations and groups offering tuition in windsurfing, kayaking, sailing, stand up paddle boarding, kite surfing and sand buggying/yachting/land sailing, power boating, water skiing, jet skiing.

The Varne Water Sports & Supporters Club (affiliated to the RYA) (hosted by the Varne Boat & Social Club) (<http://www.varneboatclub.co.uk/index.php/sailing-windsurfing>) The Varne Club website lists some rules for jet skiers.

Rye Watersports <http://www.ryewatersports.co.uk/> is at Northpoint Water, New Lydd Road, Camber. Lessons in Kite-surfing (lessons located at Camber Sands and Greatstone), dinghy sailing, wind-surfing and stand-up paddle-boarding (lessons on the lake at Rye Watersports).

'Action Watersports' (ref <http://www.actionwatersports.co.uk/>) is located on a purpose built freshwater lake in Lydd on Romney Marsh (adjacent to Heron's Park Lake – see also 'lake angling' section above). As a British Water-ski Accredited Water-ski School and RYA Centre, they specialise in offering Water-Skiing, Wakeboarding, Jet Skiing, Stand-up Paddle Boards and FlyBoarding. They operate 7 days a week in the summer months, and at reduced hours at other times, although their website says they are 'flexible' in their opening times.

Greatstone Beach is reputed to be one of the finest land yachting sites in the UK, and a number of operators offer tuition at the beach. Land yachting at Greatstone <http://www.fishyslandyachts.co.uk/> and <http://www.landyachting.co.uk/>

Camber (Broomhill) Sands is a base for an official training school of the British Kitesurfing Association <http://www.thekitesurfcentre.com/> There is no dedicated club there. The site is very popular, and its use is made more flexible when considered in conjunction with Greatstone beach which faces eastwards, and can therefore offer kite-surfing cope in varying wind conditions and directions.

There is a kite-surfing zone along the coast at Winchelsea Beach near Pett Level, but no kite-surfing has been observed there and little is known about it.

## Cycling

The coast provides the most popular attractions for visitors, but there are also attractions inland on the marsh. The flat lands and quiet lanes attract cyclists. Efforts have been made to develop products for cycling visitors.

The Romney Marsh website (<http://theromneymarsh.net/cycling>) describes the range of recreation opportunities available for cycling, including promoted routes, circular tours, guided cycle tours and bicycles for hire. Sustrans national cycle route 2 runs through the Strategy Area, and is joined by route 11 on the marsh to the north-west of Lydd. Cycling activities are supported by the RMCP.

## Visitor data from other sources

Traffic counters and other methods are used to assess visitor numbers at some of the Phase One visitor survey sites (Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, RSPB Dungeness Reserve, Greatstone (Jolly Fisherman) car park, Camber West car park and Camber Main (Sands) car park).

The survey sites with no measured visitor numbers comprise Lade car park, Dungeness Point and Broomhill Sands car park. Of these, Dungeness Point has data on tickets issued for travellers on the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway who disembark at Dungeness Point.

Visitor data recorded and collected at sites in the Strategy Area include:

- Rye Harbour Reserve – currently receives 300k visitors per annum, with visitor numbers increasing; between 2013 to 2015 there was an increase of 20.5%
- Dungeness Point – users of the RHDR; this is estimated from ticket sales which indicate that around 130k visitors per annum visit Dungeness Point from the train.
- RSPB Dungeness Reserve – 26k visitors per annum
- Jolly Fisherman car park – 26.5k visitors in 2016; an increase of 39% between 2013 and 2016
- Camber (Central and Western) car parks – 201k visitors in 2016; an increase of 17% between 2013 and 2016

The visitor data used in this report provides a picture of visiting to particular sites; and the increases in car park numbers and attendance at some sites provide an insight into visitor trends. However, there is currently no other reliable data available on visitors to other sites, attractions, accommodation or to inland sites (where the Phase One survey provided no data). This gap in data should be addressed, and is an important omission in evidence.

## Summary - Sites and Recreational Activity

The visitor offer overall is varied. Each site across the strategy area has a different visitor offer and role which are reflected in the differing visitor activities and types of visit at each site. For example, some sites have a strong 'niche' offer and attract visitors from great distances, whilst others have a more local appeal.

### Visitors

#### Visitor profile:

The Phase One survey provided information on the age profile of visitors. However, information was not available on the socio-economic or other profile of visitors to the area.

Camber (Central and West) had the highest percentages of visitors under 16 years – probably explained by the popularity of these sites for holidays and fun on the beach. Dungeness RSPB Reserve has the lowest percentage of under 16s.

16-24 year olds were poorly represented at all the survey sites.

A third of visitors were aged over 55 years. This may be partly explained by the high numbers of wildlife watchers at some of the sites, but information is not available to fully explain the reasons.

**Visitor origins and catchment area:**

Visitors come from a very wide area to the sites, including London and the Home Counties.

Dungeness Point and Camber Sands attract visitors from the furthest distances, and have a national profile.

Specialist sites users will travel great distances for their sport or pastime.

70% of visitors were making a visit from home of less than one day (day-trippers or local residents), and 30% were on holiday.

Almost all regular visitors come from the districts of Rother or Shepway.

In calculating a catchment area for the Dungeness complex, it is evident that most regular visitors are local; and clusters of regular visitors can be seen (see Plan 4 for origins of 90% of regular visitors) to originate from Greatstone, Lade and Lydd-On-Sea, Rye and nearby, and Camber, with smaller clusters evident around New Romney and Littlestone, and Lydd.



## Activities

### Main activities, type and range of activities:

More generally, the Strategy area lends itself to some particular activities which, apparently, enjoy a high level of participation. The gravel workings in the area have left a legacy of freshwater and brackish lakes, some of which are used for angling. The rivers and the Royal Military Canal are also fished. There are numerous fishing points around the coast and a few areas – such as Dungeness Point – are well known by anglers, and sought out for their angling ‘offer’. Sea fishing is also enjoyed, and local boats take anglers out to sea.

The area has also developed a reputation for watersports. The coastal waters, lakes and beaches provide ideal conditions for kite-surfing and other extreme sports; and local businesses now include watersports experiences and training. The coast is a magnet for walkers – with and without dogs; and the level coast and flat marshland of the rural hinterland is ideal for cyclists.

The results of the Phase One visitor survey indicate a variation in main activities carried out by visitors across the survey sites. Some sites appeal to a narrow range of visitors e.g. Broomhill for kite-surfers; this is one of the best areas for kite-surfing in the country and attracts enthusiasts from London and beyond; but is not well-visited by other users. The RSPB Dungeness Reserve appeals mostly to wildlife enthusiasts. However, other sites attract visitors for a wider range of activities e.g. Dungeness Point attracts anglers, users of the RHDR railway, day-trippers to experience the landscape, visitors to the lighthouse or the power station and specialist interests (e.g. to view Prospect Cottage and garden; or for filming or photography). Rye Harbour attracts wildlife watchers, and walkers with and without dogs. Camber West attracts a lot of holiday-makers and day-trippers, but is also a popular site for dog walking. Greatstone and Lade attract walkers, many of them local.

Dog walking was the most popular reason for visiting overall; and walking (without a dog) was the second most popular reason. The main activity at the sites in the winter is dog walking.

Kite-surfing was the main activity for only 5% of visitors.



## Numbers of Visitors

The Phase One surveys did not assess visitor numbers. The results of a review of information sources providing visitor numbers is shown in Table 4 below.

There are significant gaps in visitor data available from other sites and sources across the strategy area.

*Table 4: Summary of visitor numbers to sub-areas and sites based on available data*

| Sub-Area                        | Site  | Visitor numbers        | Data source                           | Commentary  |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Pett Level and Pannel Valley | Winchelsea Beach<br>Pett Level<br>Pannel Valley | No data                | No data                               | Visitor numbers to the RMC and Saxon Shore Way paths in this area would be helpful, and numbers of visitors to the caravan parks in the vicinity;   |
| 2. Rye Harbour                  | Rye Harbour Reserve                             | 300k per annum in 2016 | Sussex Wildlife Trust - site managers | Visitor numbers are increasing;   |
| 3. Camber and Broomhill         | Camber West car park                            | 201k visitors in 2016  | From RDC car park data                | An increase of 17% (calculated across both car park sites) between 2013 and 2016;   |
|                                 | Camber Central car park                         |                        |                                       |   |
|                                 | Broomhill car park                              | No data                | No data                               | Phase One visitor data is available but no data on visitor numbers; and no data on kite-surfers at this key watersports site;   |
| 4. Dungeness Point              | RSPB Reserve                                    | 26k per annum in 2016  | RSPB - site managers                  | Collected from numbers of visitors accessing the main trail;  |
|                                 | Dungeness Point                                 | 130k per annum in 2016 | RHDR estimate                         | Based on annual ticket sales for train from Hythe (the start of the line);<br>No data on visitors to Dungeness Estate;<br>Visitor data from Phase One survey is available but does not provide total numbers; |
| 5. Romney Marsh                 | No data   | No data                | No data                               | No data   |
| 6. Romney and Lade              | Lade car park                                   | No data                | No data                               | No data   |
|                                 | Jolly Fisherman car park                        | 26.5k visitors in 2016 | From SDC car park data                | An increase of 39% between 2013 and 2016;   |
|                                 |   |                        |                                       | Phase One visitor data is available but no data on visitor numbers; and no data on kite-surfers, wind-surfers or sand yachting at Greatstone - a key site for watersports and beach sports;                   |

## General Points

### Conflicts of use

The range of site uses have the potential to compete for space and resources, and could lead to conflicts of use and increased pressure on the wildlife interests at the sites. For example, there may be some conflict between dog walkers and wildlife watchers at some sites; or specialist users who occupy extensive areas of beach or sea also used by other visitors. In addition, the national trends indicate the increasing popularity of outdoor recreation, and particular types of activity such as watersports are on the increase.

### The potential for displacement

When recreational pressure becomes difficult to manage at a site, there may be a temptation to introduce methods to divert visitors away from the site. However, this has the potential to divert visitors towards other sensitive sites which may also be vulnerable to recreational pressure. In considering methods of dealing with visitor pressure, a strategic approach will be required across the strategy area – and beyond – in order to assess the potential displacement of pressure to other (sensitive) sites, and to consider the ‘draw of the coast’.

### The draw of the coast

The coast has a particular attraction for all visitors. And when given the choice of visiting alternative sites, visitors tend to choose other coastal sites. A number of specialist site users need a coastal site for their activity, and a large number of visitors choose to go to the coastal sites even though it is not necessary for their activity (e.g. dog walking) and it may not be the closest site to their home. High numbers of dog walkers chose coastal sites in preference to other sites closer to home; and many of them cited the experience for their dog as their reason for their visit to the coastal site. After stating their main reason for visiting a site, 40% of visitors said that the experience of the coast was their second reason for visiting the site.

### Dogs

Dog walking was a recurring theme in the results of the Phase One survey. Dog walkers visit more frequently than those engaged in other activities, and in far greater volume than other popular activities. Regular visitors are more likely to be dog walkers and to visit sites all year round. They tend to live close to the sites they visit, and the majority are from Shepway or Rother districts.

At sites where dog restrictions apply the difference in the percentage of visitor parties walking with dogs during the unrestricted period in comparison with the restricted period is small. This may indicate poor compliance with the dog restriction orders.

Results indicate that dog walkers want to walk their dogs by the sea, even when another suitable site is closer to their home. The experience of the sea/coast is a key factor guiding their choice.

It is clear that dog walking features highly in site use across the area. Studies from elsewhere suggest a link between dogs and bird disturbance, but further work is needed to better understand any such link in the strategy area.

### Gaps in evidence

Further evidence is needed in a number of areas:  
 the socio-economic profile of visitors;  
 numbers of visitors, when they visit and their activities;  
 the possible link between dogs and bird disturbance.

## **Seasonality**

Results from the Phase One Survey indicate that overall, most visits are made to all sites all year round. In particular, there are few kite-surfing visitors in the winter. Notably, the sites that attracted visitors all year round – Greatstone and Lade – attracted the highest percentage of local visitors. However, the available data on the seasonality of visits to sites was limited to just the Phase One surveys; with no information from other sites in the strategy area. This gap in evidence is significant, and should be addressed, as the vulnerability of wildlife may increase at different times of year, depending on the species and habitats present.

## **Catchment Area**

It is important to understand the geographical area from which visitors originate. This is especially important for those areas where it is considered that new housing within the catchment area of a site could potentially have a significant impact on the interest features of a Natura 2000 site, for example through increases in recreational use. In such calculations, the geographical area within which the majority of visitors originate is called the ‘zone of influence’. Outside of this zone it is considered that significant effects on the European sites are unlikely.

It is understood that the outputs from the Phase One visitor survey have helped inform the assumption that recreational pressure on the Natura 2000 sites derive from visitors to the sites from a very wide catchment area, and as such, increased pressure as a result of housing growth in the catchment area was not considered.

To provide greater understanding about the origin of visitors to the sites, we have determined a potential catchment area (‘zone of influence’) based on the pattern of visitors and how far people travel to visit the sites.

There is no standardised method to determine a zone of influence, as each site and their surrounding physical features differ greatly. European site strategic mitigation schemes for recreational pressure have tended to use visitor surveys to define a zone of influence based on 90% of regular visitors (i.e. visits of at least one per week) or 75% of all visitors, to identify the core area from which visitors originate.

For this study, we have drawn on the results of the Phase One Visitor Survey to calculate both 90% of regular visitors and 75% of all visitors.

## 90% of all regular visitors

90% of the total number of responses to the on-site survey is 167 visitors (or visitor groups).

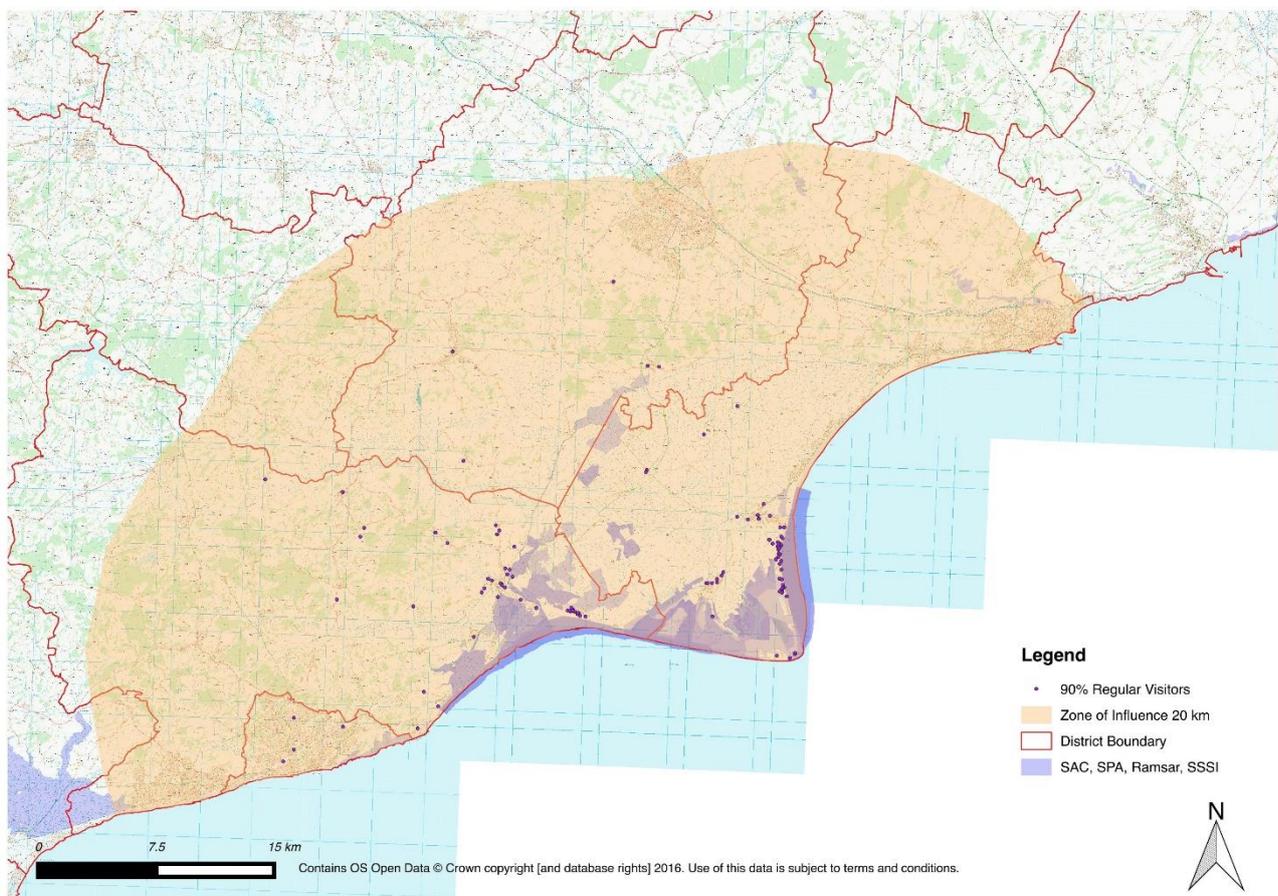
**The maximum distance travelled by 90% of regular visitors was 20km** (the map at Figure 1 shows the boundary of this indicative area based on a distance of 20km from the boundary of the SPA).

Of the 90% of regular visitors, **94.6%** (158 respondents) live in either Shepway or Rother districts.

The majority of the 90% of regular visitors are clustered in particular areas, most notably in and around:

- Greatstone, Lade and Lydd-On-Sea (33% of the total of 90% of regular visitors),
- Rye and nearby (16%)
- Camber (15%)
- New Romney and Littlestone (9%)
- Lydd (8.5%)
- Very few from Hastings

Plan 4 shows the clusters of visitor postcodes/home addresses of the 90% of regular visitors.



**Plan 4: 90% of all visitors**

90% of regular visitors: Reasons for visiting

- 81.5% (136) visitors said they came to the site because it was close to home
- 41% (69) visitors said it was their regular place
- Only 3 visitors said there was nowhere else nearby for them to do the same activity
- 66.5% (111) visitors said there are other places nearby where they regularly do the same activity; and of these 47% (78) were coastal sites;
- 51% (85) visitors would not go anywhere else<sup>21</sup>
- 26.3% (44) visitors said they came there because it's a good place for the activity they want to do; and 30 of those visitors were there to walk a dog;
- 29 visitors came to visit the sea/coast
- 9 visitors came to see the landscape of Dungeness

90% of regular visitors: Means of transport

- 54% (90) visitors travelled to the site on foot
- 42.5% (71) visitors came by car or van
- 4 visitors came by bicycle
- 17 visitors said they came to the site because it had good parking

90% of regular visitors: Activities

- 115 (69%) were there to walk a dog
- 97 (58%) visitors said they let their dog off the lead; and 76 (45.5%) visitors said it was their main reason for coming to the site
- 86 (51.5%) visitors said they come to the site because their dog enjoys the beach/sea
- 39 (23.3%) visitors said the site was the closest place to their home to walk their dog
- Only 1 visitor said there was nowhere else near their home to walk their dog
- 27 (16%) were there to walk (without a dog)
- 5 were there to kite surf
- 3 were bird-watching




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<sup>21</sup> When asked what another site would need to have to make them want to go there and not the site they chose

## 75% of all visitors

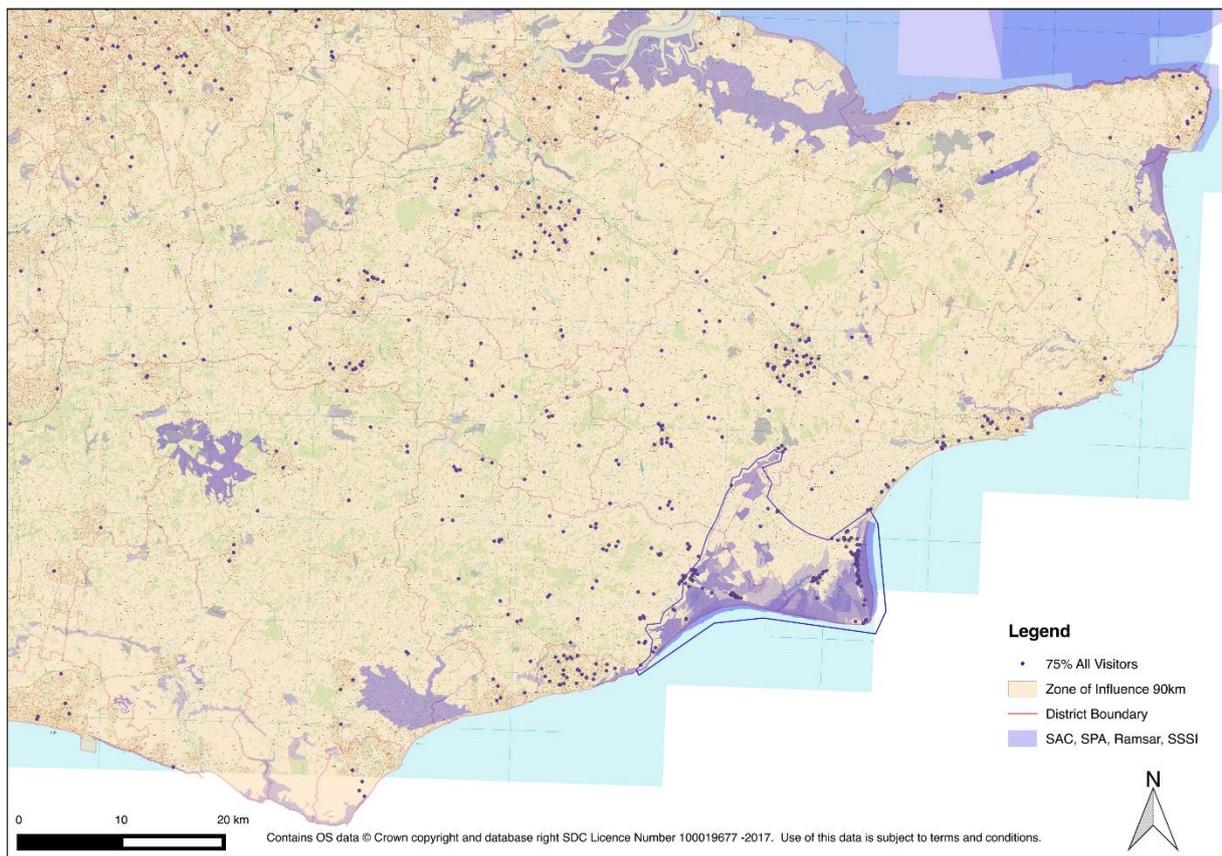
75% of the total number of responses to the on-site survey totals 822 visitors (or visitor groups).

The maximum distance travelled by 75% of all visitors was 90km. This may give the impression that the catchment area for the sites is 90km. However, the majority of the '75% of all visitors' are clustered in particular areas.

Map X shows the key clusters of visitor postcodes/home addresses of the 75% of all visitors; most notably:

- Around<sup>22</sup> Ashford (8.4%)
- the coastal area north of Dungeness<sup>23</sup> (7.7%),
- Maidstone (6.3%)
- Hastings/Bexhill (5.5%)
- Folkestone and Hythe (3.3%)
- around<sup>24</sup> London (17%)

### Plan 5: 75% of all visitors

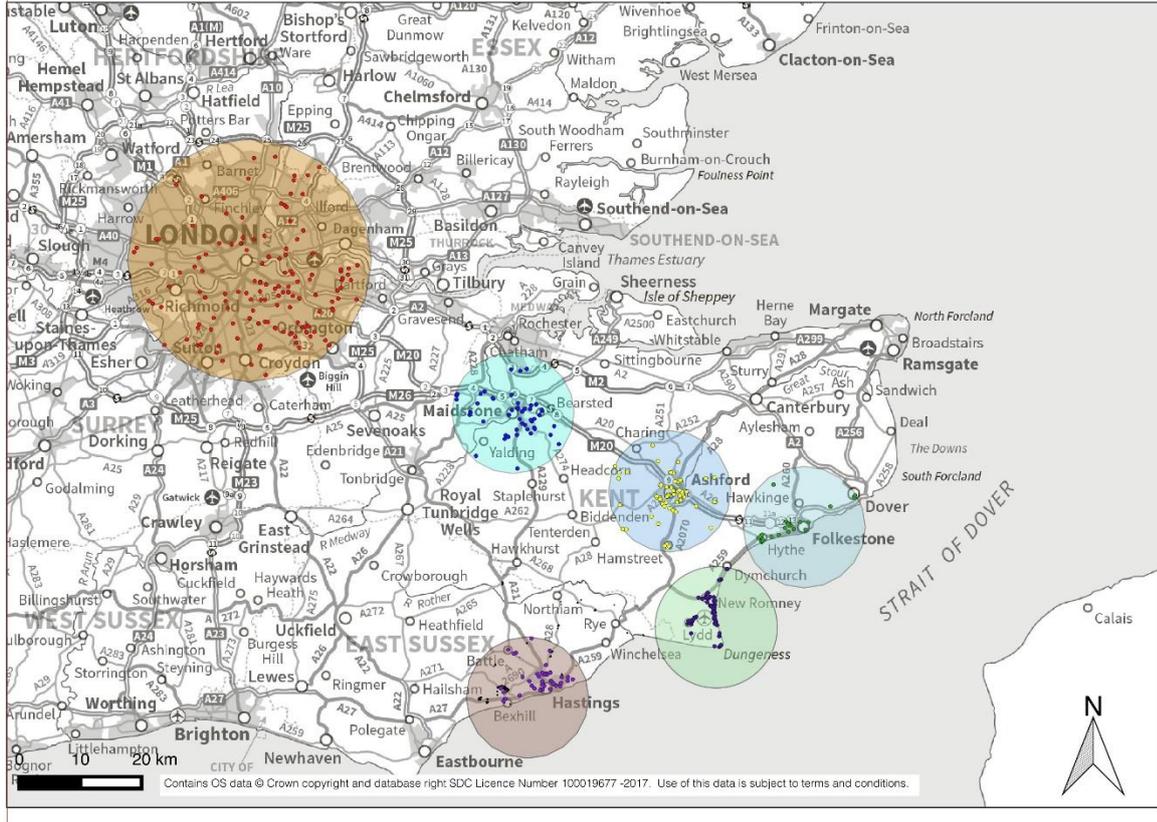


<sup>22</sup> Within a 10km buffer area

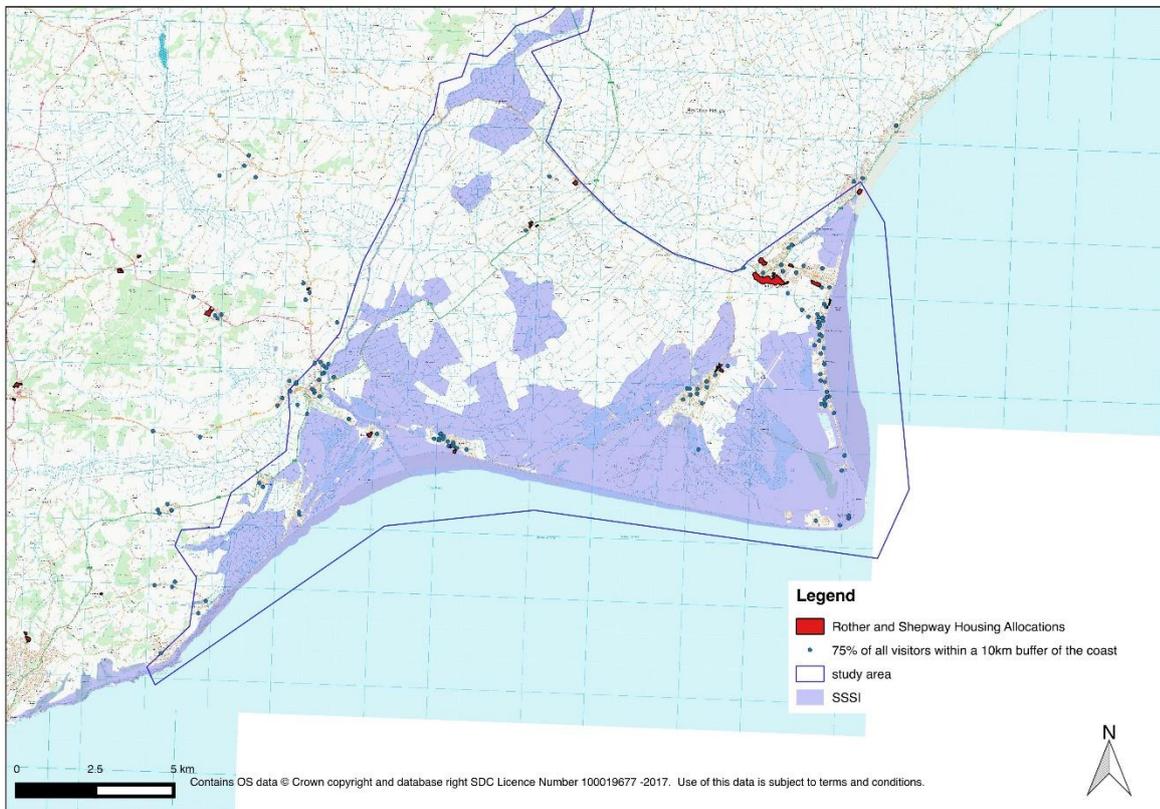
<sup>23</sup> A total of 63 visitors are from Greatstone, Lade and Lydd-On-Sea (notably 57 or 6.9% from Greatstone)

<sup>24</sup> Within a 20km buffer area

Plan 6: Cluster of visitors – from 75% of all visitors plus buffers (10km; London = 20km)



Plan 7: 75% of all visitors: strategy area plus housing allocations



## Key points and Conclusions

- The catchment calculations and mapping for both the '90% of regular visitors' and the '75% of all visitors' show clusters of visitors from a number of locations;
- Almost all the (90% of) regular visitors reside in Shepway or Rother districts. Very few visitors come from Hastings or nearby;
- More than two thirds (69%) of regular visitors came to walk a dog;
- Most of the regular visitors have other sites closer to their home, but they prefer to come regularly to these sites;
- Over half the regular visitors said that, given the choice of another place, they would rather come to this site;
- More than half the regular visitors travel to the sites on foot;
- Around one third of (75% of) all visitors come from Kent and East Sussex, from as far as Bexhill and Maidstone;
- A third of the (90% of) regular visitors and almost 8% of (75% of) all visitors come from the coastal area between Lydd-On-Sea and Greatstone;

It can be concluded from these results that

- Regular visitors prefer coastal sites;
- Regular visitors may not be persuaded to visit alternative sites not on the coast;
- Local visitors make up a sizable proportion of site visits.



## Awareness Levels of Visitors to the Strategy Area

### Summary

- The Strategy area attracts a very wide range of types of visitors to participate in a variety of activities;
- Regular visitors have a generally good awareness of the importance of the sites for wildlife and have seen the noticeboards, but have a poor understanding of what actions are needed to keep the area special for wildlife;
- Holiday-makers have less knowledge than other groups of the habitats or special features on the sites. This may indicate that signage and interpretation has limited impact;
- Specialist users have a greater understanding of measures needed to protect the wildlife interest of the sites;
- The exceptions are kite-surfers who have the poorest level of awareness and understanding.

### Results from on-site Surveys

- 76% of visitors were aware that the site was important for wildlife; respondents at Broomhill and Camber Central seemed generally less well informed;
- 48% said they had seen an information board regarding wildlife; the lowest at Camber Central at 15% and the highest at Rye Harbour at 84%; this may be due to the presence of boards in the car parks.
- 48% of visitor parties could name a relevant habitat, species or feature which made the area special for wildlife, without being given a multiple choice to select from, in the proportion 70% residents, 30% holiday makers, the same proportion as the overall survey;
- The highest percentages of visitors with awareness of protected features were recorded at Dungeness Point (72%), Rye Harbour (52%) and Dungeness RSPB (48%);
- The features which scored the highest percentages at all sites overall were migrating birds (23%), breeding birds (15%) and winter birdlife for feeding and roosting (14%); This indicates a general appreciation of the sites' importance for birdlife but overall little further knowledge.

When asked 'Can you think of any ways in which visitors can help to keep this place special for wildlife?' there were 985 different responses, mostly mentioning (in order of popularity) litter, dog mess, information, not trampling or disturbing wildlife, respect for the countryside and supporting conservation organisations. This contrasts with the results from regular visitors (see below).

## Results from Online Surveys

95% of respondents indicated that they did know about the wildlife designations. However, as in the report on the on-site surveys, respondents had a 50:50 chance of choosing the correct answer.

When asked to think of ways in which visitors could keep the site special for wildlife, kite surfers scored lowest in awareness of wildlife designations and offering suggestions for how visitors can protect the area. Unsurprisingly, wildlife watchers scored the highest.

In some areas, the on-line survey results mirrored those of the on-site surveys. Exceptions include suggestions for how to keep the area special for wildlife, where the wildlife watchers made useful and valid comments including keeping dogs on leads.

Rye Harbour wildlife watchers are well-connected into a social network so this may explain the high response rate from them.

Also, more people than captured in the on-site survey expressed that trampling, damaging or parking on the shingle or dunes would be detrimental to the area's conservation interest.

## Regular Visitors - Visitor Awareness

- Regular visitors have local knowledge of the sites;
- Most regular visitors are aware that the sites are important for wildlife, and have seen notice boards to that effect; but **there is a poor level of understanding of what actions they need to take to protect wildlife at the sites.**
- 18 respondents didn't know the site was important for wildlife (9.5%)
- 170 respondents did know the site was important for wildlife (90%)
- 56 respondents knew the site was important for winter birdlife for feeding and roosting (30%)
- 78 said they knew the site was important for migrating birds (41%)
- 39 said they knew the site was important for shingle habitat (21%)
- 49 said they knew the site was important for sand dunes (26%)

When asked 'Can you think of any ways in which visitors can help to keep this place special for wildlife?' there were 132 different responses, mostly mentioning litter, bins and dog mess. Only one response mentioned keeping of the shingle banks, and no responses related to actions which might reduce pressure on the species or habitats.

- 61 said they had not seen any information boards on wildlife importance (32%)
- 123 said they had seen information boards on wildlife importance (65.5%)
- 172 were from Rother or Shepway (91.5%)
- 15 were from other areas (8%)

## Finding out about the sites

In the Phase One visitor survey, high numbers of visitors were at the site for the first time and 54% of first time visitors said they found out about the site by 'word of mouth'. Almost all the kite surfers surveyed (97%) use social media, but around half of the anglers and wildlife watchers didn't use any. Walkers and dog walkers were the least 'connected' of all activity groups in terms of social media. These differences in types of visitors and their favoured methods of communicating and receiving information are important when considering the best method for conveying information.

A high number of visitors said they were aware that the sites were important for wildlife, yet relatively few people knew why, and only half of those surveyed had seen any of the information boards. Of those who did have some knowledge, most could only cite birds and the shingle as being important issues.

Perhaps more importantly, visitors seemed unaware of the damage to wildlife resulting from their actions e.g leaving litter and mess, trampling on sensitive vegetation, running their dogs off-lead.

There were also variable levels of awareness and understanding across the sites and types of visitors. A response is therefore required that is tailored to the users.



# Influencing Visitor Behaviour and Increasing Awareness

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## Introduction

The 'behaviour' of visitors is an important component in the management of the sites. The actions of visitors can have a direct impact on the health of wildlife. Trampling of vegetation, driving over shingle, breaking down sand-fencing, lighting fires, and allowing dogs to run over the sites – all these actions and more are reducing the health of the biodiversity at the sites. An essential element of a sustainable approach to the recreational use of the area will involve encouraging pro-environmental behaviour in the visitors who come to enjoy the area.

## Issues and Challenges

### Barriers to Engaging with the Natural Environment

The challenge for site managers is how to raise awareness in visitors, so that they appreciate the importance and value of wildlife at the sites and the natural environment; and to then move that awareness into positive actions. This process needs to start by identifying and addressing the barriers which visitors have to engaging with – and actively supporting – the natural environment.

Behaviour change is an extraordinarily complex issue. It is not just about change, it is also about consolidating and re-enforcing the 'good' (towards a desired direction and sustained over time) as well as addressing the 'bad'. Behaviours are often entrenched with many barriers to change exacerbated by a lack of incentives. Change relies on incentives and personal motivations including the 'feel-good' factor in taking positive action. Understanding and removing these barriers, and stimulating the correct incentives can result in change.

Many barriers to engaging with the environment have been identified, together with some potential approaches<sup>25</sup>:

- Existing values prevent learning:
  - Positive messages are needed about the natural environment; that it is varied and interesting;
- Existing knowledge contradicts environmental values:
  - The Phase One survey showed that when visitors were asked 'Can you think of any ways in which visitors can help to keep this place special for wildlife?' the most popular responses related to litter and dog mess. People's perception is that litter is one of the biggest threats to the natural environment – or at least their part of it. People are less aware of unseen issues such as habitat loss. This illustrates the need to provide clear, accessible information;

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<sup>25</sup> Adapted and abridged from: Rebecca Jefferson (2010), Communicating Marine Environmental Health: Connecting Science, Social and Policy Values, Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of Plymouth.

- Lack of knowledge (which also underpins some negative perceptions):
  - People may have a superficial awareness of issues but lack of depth of understanding, or a lack of knowledge about interactions between species and ecological concepts. Information and learning opportunities are required which encompass a breadth of issues and information – species, diversity, connectedness and impact of humans in general and of individuals (including themselves) in particular;
- Emotional blocking of environmental values and new knowledge:
  - People may have negative responses, general pessimism and feelings of helplessness; in particular those groups who rarely or never visit the countryside or coast. It is very important to use positive stories and positive experiences. Provide achievable goals (or small steps) and ensure participants and volunteers understand and are rewarded in other ways for their contribution to a greater whole;
- Internal barriers - existing values block emotional involvement, lack of environmental consciousness and lack of internal incentives:
  - People lacking concern over the environment and taking no action to improve it. This is difficult to address, but could involve self-referencing motivators, such as nostalgic associations with the coast, to gain attention;
- Embedded behaviour patterns and no feedback about negative behaviours:
  - This requires information on changes and why they are needed. Use peer group ‘pressure’; turn positive behaviours into a social norm and negative behaviours into things which are not societally acceptable;

Defra’s 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>26</sup> proposes a balanced approach to addressing barriers to change through the ‘4Es’

**Encouraging** (incentives and disincentives; giving the right signals) i.e. what measures are needed to be put in place to provide incentives to encourage and disincentives to discourage to ensure our target audience responds; this may include regulation and information;

**Enabling** (facilitating; making it easier) i.e. what type of infrastructure, services, skills, guidance, information and support is needed;

**Engaging** (getting people involved to influence underlying attitudes and motivations) i.e. what insights are needed to help understand those we are targeting? What type of partnerships, networks, communication and engagement methods are required;

**Exemplifying** (leading by example) i.e. what type of measures should be taken in order to demonstrate shared responsibility; this includes sharing the responsibility for action and taking leadership for hard decisions.

**This model could help to shape the approach needed to achieve more sustainable recreational use of the designated areas.**

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Securing the Future’ the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (Defra, 2005)

## Awareness

Awareness-raising may be approached by ensuring that people are well-informed, with the type and form of messages tailored to the range of visitors using the area. This usually includes signage and interpretation, and it is evident at some of the sites that managers already appreciate the need to support the messages on signs with other approaches including direct engagement (e.g. with local 'officers' or volunteers), and the use of displays, events and activities.

However, moving people from improved awareness towards positive actions or behaviours is a complex task and requires some understanding of what motivates people, together with an understanding of the barriers to engaging with the natural environment.

The results of the Phase One survey indicate that visitors generally have a good awareness of the importance of the sites for wildlife and have seen the noticeboards, but they have poor understanding of what actions are needed to keep the area special for wildlife;

There is a need to **activate visitors' values, relate to their personal experience, and increase the awareness of personal responsibility.**

## Activating Values and Communication

It is important for visitors to believe the messages they are being told; but more than that, they have to accept that the benefit of them changing their current 'behaviour' is greater than the value of the behaviour they are being asked to change. To put this more simply in an example, some dog walkers might continue to let their dogs off the lead even if they know (through signboards and other messages) that it's disturbing and harming the birds, because their dog enjoys it; and this is of greater value to them than adhering to messages about birds.

To move this forward requires the activating of people's values. There are two main types of value – intrinsic and extrinsic (see also Table 4).

Intrinsic values are strongly associated with behaviours that benefit the environment and society. These include:

- Self-Direction: 'Independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring'
- Benevolence: 'Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact'
- Universalism: 'Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature'

Conversely, extrinsic values relate to external reward or validation from others. When held strongly these values are likely to make people more self-interested and reduce their willingness to act on behalf of the environment. These include:

- Power: 'Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.'
- Achievement: 'Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social norms'.

Intrinsic values can be engaged through word choice, e.g. *'fairness'* and *'equality'* and make people more likely to volunteer. Words relating to extrinsic values such as *'wealth'* will suppress motivation. There are two very important points which relate to the use of language in communication and appealing to different sets of values:

- Appealing to extrinsic values will erode environmental concern;
- Appealing to both sets of values concurrently will lead to confusion (cognitive dissonance).<sup>27</sup>

This is significant for the Strategy area as there is a very wide range of visitor demographics. For example, the Phase One survey tells us that a proportion of visitors to Rye Harbour are more open to messages about wildlife message, while at Camber visitors are generally not so open. This is a useful insight, as it leads to the conclusion that messages and media need to have far broader appeal if they are to succeed in changing behaviours, and to some extent, may need to be tailored to each site.

**The methods of communication are a critical element of the success of interpretation; it requires a strategy for communicating, covering media choice and messaging in a holistic approach.**

Lack of knowledge about wildlife in the area is a critical a factor to overcome.

'Charismatic megafauna' are often the focus of campaigns as they clearly have the advantage of engaging people and attracting attention. By this, we mean a character which represents a particular species. The plight of specific species can usefully evoke emotional responses which raise concern. While the public may not have knowledge about the full range of species, focusing instead on the 'charismatic megafauna' and more visible species, people have an understanding that the interconnectedness of species in food chains and diversity of species is important, even if they do not know which species these are or the specific habitats they live in.<sup>28</sup> This almost inherent concept of 'diversity being important' is an aspect which can be built upon in conveying knowledge about wildlife at the sites.

Jefferson (2010) advocates the use of a suite of 'Spokes Species' (rather than 'spokes persons'); high profile species through which to champion the environment and convey messages about the importance of the diversity of wildlife. Species should be chosen which tap into peoples' curiosity and to 'tell a story'. e.g. Woody Woodpecker, Daffy Duck, Big Bird. Spokes Species can be used to promote knowledge and build on the understanding of interconnectedness already held by people. The use of cartoon-type characters could be effective at some sites, particularly those such as Camber and Greatstone that attract families, and sites where the audience may not have a good understanding of wildlife issues.



<sup>27</sup> Blackmore (2013). Cognitive dissonance is used to describe the feelings of discomfort that result from holding two conflicting beliefs. When there is a discrepancy between beliefs and behaviours, something must change in order to eliminate or reduce the dissonance (which may be abandoning the message the communication is trying to convey).

<sup>28</sup> Jefferson (2010).

Table 4: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Communication Frames<sup>29</sup>

| <i>Intrinsic Frames</i>   |  | <i>Extrinsic Frames</i>                                       |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Frames that relate to connections with other people and nature and creative or collective action. |  | Frames that relate to self-interest, wealth, power and threat |   |
| Connection with nature  | Shared experiences and connection to the natural world   | Transactions and consumers                                    | Commercial relationships and the public as 'consumers'  |
| Nature is beautiful   | The beauty of the natural world  | Utility and commodity   | Money as the main focus – as a means of valuation       |
| Discovery and exploration   | Exploring nature and the outdoors  | Defender and threat   | Powerful defenders protecting weak victims from threats |
| Working together  | Joint action and community co-operation  |   |   |
| <i>When Communicating about Conservation</i>  |  |   |   |
| Try to  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show how amazing nature is and share the experience of wildlife;</li> <li>• Talk about people, society and compassions as well as the natural world;</li> <li>• Explain where and why things are going wrong;</li> <li>• Encourage active participation: exploration, enjoyment and creativity;</li> <li>• Give people a positive role as individuals in protecting or nurturing that something.</li> </ul> |   |   |
| Avoid   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relying on messages that emphasise threat and loss;</li> <li>• Links to competition, status or money;</li> <li>• Economic frames;</li> <li>• Attempts to motivate people with conflicting values;</li> <li>• Segmenting audiences based on values.</li> </ul>   |   |   |

There are several other important principles to bear in mind when deciding how to communicate about the environment, particularly when communicating to people for whom there is not a solid base of understanding and familiarity with the subject area to fall back on, and they may not believe that their actions have a meaningful impact (both in positive and negative terms):<sup>30</sup>

- **Be positive** - reminders of the severity of environmental problems can provoke avoidance responses. Extinction of species or damage to nature can provoke strong and unpleasant emotions such as fear, grief and guilt. When feeling these emotions, people will often deploy strategies that direct their thoughts elsewhere, to avoid the disturbing information, to seek diversion in more immediate pleasures or deny there is a problem. Overwhelming threats are likely to induce a sense of impotence. It is important to make people aware that the solution is in them taking small steps.
- **Be clear on the aim of the communication** - the aim of any particular communication needs to be considered – is it to raise concern or provoke action? Threats focus our attention. Negative images

<sup>29</sup> After Blackmore (2013).

<sup>30</sup> Blackmore (2013) and Christmas (2013).

and messages make people more concerned, but the more overwhelmed and impotent they feel the less likely they are to act. More positive messages offering solutions may provoke a lower level of concern but will convey that there is more personal responsibility they can take and therefore make them more willing to act. A decision needs to be made over which takes priority: concern or willingness to act;

- ***Appeal to intrinsic rather than extrinsic values*** and in the language chosen - and don't mix the two;
- ***Give people a positive role*** as individuals in protecting or nurturing that something and create an admirable but achievable model of the kind of person who takes on this role;
- ***Identify something people either already value*** or will readily value – something that has emotional resonance rather than something people need reasons to care about.

### The Value-Action Gap

Research<sup>31</sup> shows that there is a considerable gap between the value attributed to the natural environment and the level of action taken to preserve it, particularly in relation to actions that require a higher investment of time or money. When asked about willingness to change lifestyles to protect the natural environment, those who undertook no actions or recycling only indicated least willingness to change their lifestyles, as did those under 35 years old, men, single people, those of White British ethnic origin, in the lower social grades, living in rental accommodation and those living in London. Around a fifth of the population indicated either a desire to change or a willingness to change if others were to do so. In these instances, a lack of understanding as to how to change their lifestyle, a perception that it is difficult to do so or a requirement to also perceive that others are making changes were the stated barriers to making a change.

**This is an interesting insight, as it tells us that some people are more likely to change a behaviour if others are doing so, or if they understand how they can make the change, or it is made easy for them to do so.**

### **Relating to personal experience**

Experience appears to facilitate stronger emotional connections to environments, which in turn generally increases the willingness of an individual to protect that environment. It follows, therefore, that personal experience of the environment at the sites will help to change values and behaviours.

People tend to associate the coastal environment of shores, shallow seas or the coast with comfortable feelings, such as nostalgia of childhood. There could, therefore, be clear advantages of drawing on the elements of nostalgia to foster engagement and this may be a crucial step towards people becoming more involved and taking action. It may also be a useful starting point for messages which relate to peoples' values and the things they hold dear, thereby making the message more acceptable and eliciting an

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<sup>31</sup> MENE Annual Report from the 2013-14 survey

emotional connection rather than an avoidance response due to the messages being distasteful or disturbing to them<sup>32</sup>

People behave in a certain way not only because they lack knowledge, but also as a result of lacking personal attachment to the environment and not having a perception of that individual's personal role in its conservation, as well as a deficit in a value set that creates motivation to change behaviour.<sup>33</sup>

**This approach may help to capture public imagination and provide a catalyst for pro-environmental behaviour change.**

### Increasing the awareness of personal responsibility

A particular issue in engaging people with the natural environment is how to generate 'citizenship' and a personal connection to the environment. In an example drawn from research into the marine environment, conservation practitioners related a need to generate personal responsibility.<sup>34</sup> They believed that the public "*generally do not think about the relationships between their lifestyles and the environment*", that they did not "*think that a lot of people are aware of the impacts that they have*" and that "*beyond a basic awareness, there is very little understanding of the issue.*"

Overall, marine practitioners believed there was a weak sense of societal responsibility for the marine environment. Suggestions for improving this included making the marine environment issues "*real for day to day life*" and through identifying "*small actions [they] can take*" in order to engender a heightened sense of responsibility.

**This example is a useful comparator to the Strategy area and its component sites, and helps in providing clues for an approach to developing interpretation at the sites.**

The tendency of visitors to underestimate the impact of their own actions on local wildlife is discussed in a French study into visitors' awareness of bird disturbance<sup>35</sup>, which concluded that 'the vast majority of the respondents (77.6 %) believed that their own presence had no adverse effects on the local bird population'. (A full version of the abstract is appended to this report)

Peer pressure can be a useful tool – The aim is for the 'good' behaviour to become the norm. To help achieve this, ambassadors could be selected from groupings of site users, to then take the message into their grouping and show by example. An example of where this can be effective is on sites where dog walkers have formed a group, and they 'self-police' to ensure that dogs are kept under control and owners clean up after them.

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<sup>32</sup> Jefferson *et al* (2015).

<sup>33</sup> Fletcher *et al* (2012).

<sup>34</sup> McKinley and Fletcher (2010).

<sup>35</sup> Wintering Waterbirds and Recreationists in Natural Areas: A Sociological Approach to the Awareness of Bird Disturbance by Le Corre, N., Peuziat, I., Brigand, L. et al. *Environmental Management* (2013) 52: 780. doi:10.1007/s00267-013-0118-5

## Interpretation

*'Interpretation enriches our lives through engaging emotions, enhancing experiences and deepening understanding of people, places, events and objects from past and present.'*<sup>36</sup>

Interpretation is an activity which is designed to engage the audience in a process of learning. It should provoke and not instruct. Interpretation can play a key role in helping visitors to learn more about the natural environment, to be aware of its needs, and to act with respect for it when visiting the sites.

In aiming to provoke a response – emotional, learning or behavioural (or preferably all three) – a site interpretation plan needs to address these elements, and set out a clear set of objectives for what it aims to achieve. It will need more than signs to develop interpretation fit for the purpose of increasing and deepening visitors' sense of connection with the natural environment of the sites, to:

- Increase engagement with the individual sites (bringing their history and natural environment to life);
- Encourage visitors to explore the wider areas of the site and beyond its boundaries, rather than just staying in the most visited areas near the car parks and visitor facilities;
- Assist with the provision of informal learning through interpretation;

### **Emotional Objectives (how we would like people to feel)**

- Inspire and develop the sense of affection and history that people feel about the area, so that they care personally about their future. The approach of relating to personal experience may be particularly relevant at coastal resorts that many older people used to visit when they were younger, and who now visit with their families. Feelings of nostalgia can be a strong driver; and may be especially useful for audiences with limited knowledge or appreciation of wildlife;
- Create a fulfilling experience, by embracing all aspects of visiting the site – including events, play, catering and activities – under engaging and consistent interpretive themes. Offering visitors a range of activities that make them feel good about being at the site, while at the same time reinforcing a set of messages;
- Generate a feeling that visitors, especially those returning regularly, are themselves a very important part of the site, closely linked with its long-term well-being. This is relevant to several of the sites which had a high proportion of local and regular visitors;
- Support and reinforce the confidence that the sites are safe and well-managed environments, especially for families with younger children. This is very important for sites that are visited infrequently, especially by families. Sites including Camber beach, Greatstone and Rye Harbour are located close to caravan sites and holiday parks, and these holiday-makers may not be familiar with the area or the wildlife interests at the sites.

### **Learning Objectives (what we would like people to know)**

- Ensure that all visitors are aware that the sites are important and highly valued for their recreational, education, heritage and natural environments;

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<sup>36</sup> The Association for heritage Interpretation <http://www.ahi.org.uk/www/about/>

- Introduce visitors to stories of life through the ages at the sites in a manner that is accessible, engaging and memorable;
- Highlight the importance and special qualities of the natural environment here, both today and through the ages;

#### **Behavioural Objectives (how we would like people to act)**

- Encourage extensive exploration of the wider site and areas beyond, with consequent benefits to physical health and emotional well-being. This will require support to help people to be more confident about exploring the area;
- Promote personal involvement in the work of the sites through opportunities to support and volunteer. This objective could be aimed at regular users – e.g. to build up a local support group – or less frequent but regular visitors who may holiday in the area, helping them to feel they are involved and investing in the site;
- Discourage activities that spoil the individual environments. The key aims of interpretation are to conserve and protect the wildlife interests at the sites, while helping people to better understand and appreciate it; so it is important to provide the information that helps people to acknowledge that actions have a consequence;
- Encourage dog walkers to enjoy their visits in ways that maintain the special nature of the place and support its appreciation by everyone. The visitor survey results showed that a high number of walkers with dogs are using the sites. Dog walkers need to be persuaded to acknowledge and take responsibility for the actions of their dogs. They may also need information on the effects their dogs can have which they – the owners – may not be aware of e.g. the disturbance of birds on the foreshore, particularly in the winter months when birds are feeding and roosting;

In terms of the sense of arrival and welcome the core objectives are to:

- Develop a much stronger sense of arrival and welcome at the entrances to the sites (this helps to inform visitors that they are visiting somewhere ‘special’).
- Create a positive first impression of the site.
- To provide visitors with a clear sense of the offer which is available within each site.
- Provide ‘direction’ to the specific offers at each site.

The aim is to build storytelling into a coherent, distinctive and captivating “spirit of place” for each site. The linkage of stories between all the subject venues can further encourage the visiting public to identify with, care about and spend more time in all the venues as a related group across the wider area.

The visitor journey starts before you arrive at the destination in terms of the online experience. It will be important that there is an element of interpretive information conveyed on the individual site websites – or area website.

Effective interpretation can help to build the sense of exploration and help to manage visitor flows at busy sites or at particularly busy times.

In the attractions sector and in particular the heritage sector, development in the use of digital technology to interpret and provide access to sites and their collections continues to accelerate. The possibilities for

methods of interpretation are numerous (such as audio guides and interactive digital interfaces). Visitors' expectations are continually rising with regard to the way information is communicated. The level of detail provided and methods of delivery will vary between market segments (different audiences), and should be tailored to not only the audience but to the capacity and suitability of the sites.

“Communicating ideas and feelings which help people understand more about themselves and their environment – the opportunity for each visitor to personally connect with a place”  
Interpretation Australia 2004

## On-site Information and Interpretation

### Audit of Interpretation

To better understand the current level of provision of visitor information – including interpretation - a sample audit of signage and interpretation was carried out in developing this strategy.

The Fifth Continent (HLF) Project has previously carried out an audit of interpretation panels. Their audit included Broomhill Sands car park, Dungeness Lighthouse, Dungeness NNR, RSPB Dungeness Reserve, Rye Harbour LNR, the Royal Military Canal, churches on the Marsh, and the towns of Lydd and New Romney. The results of their audit are relevant to this strategy, and are appended to this report.

### Findings from the Audit

There are many different types and formats of signs and interpretive panels in use at the public sites across the Strategy Area; and of varying size, materials, condition and quality. This situation has evolved over time and in response to site issues and the availability of resources. The differences in approach are also a result of the many organisations involved, and the types of message they are trying to convey, as well as the audiences they are trying to reach.

In some areas, there are so many signs in one place it is difficult to know which ones to read. Signage includes warnings, legal notices and restrictions, notifications of activities on site, directional signs, access information, site maps, wildlife and historical information. Signage is also used to establish the boundaries of particular areas e.g. Dungeness NNR signboards placed at prominent locations on the NNR site boundary.

The interpretive panels and sign boards in the Strategy area are rich in facts but low on activating people's value systems; and are either unclear on the expected behaviours of visitors or fail to provide the justification.

Specifically, the audit of interpretation found:

- There are some good examples of interpretation, but they are sporadic and inconsistent across the area;
- signage and interpretation boards are currently the primary means by which visitors to the Strategy Area are made aware of the protected areas. However, as the results from the Phase One visitor survey show, the success of this approach is limited;
- Many interpretive panels provide too much detailed information, and some are too small (for their purpose), cluttered, with too much text or with text that is too small to read;
- There is confusion between information and interpretation, with panels currently used to give a mixture of advice, warnings or instructions, information and educative messages. Any interpretation renewal programme should take a more comprehensive approach that considers the information provided to visitors at various locations; and not just the interpretive panels in isolation.
- Many panels are now out of date, faded or damaged; it is clear that interpretation takes place when there are funds available, but the funding does not appear to extend to replacements or renewals over time. This is possibly symptomatic of erratic or time-limited capital funding;
- The interpretation panels provide a lot of facts but pay little attention to the values of the visitor;
- There are no agreements on or coordination of the key messages across the area;
- There is little or no cross-promotion between the sites or other attractions, and missed opportunities to encourage further exploration of the area;
- There is no common or consistent approach across the area, with ‘families’ of panels evidently based around organisations, local authorities or other groupings;
- The Royal Military Canal is a ‘thread’ running around the boundary of the strategy area. A number of organisations have been involved in interpreting aspects of the RMC; The interpretation panels and messages of the canal need updating;

### **Fifth Continent Project - Interpretation Audit and Plan**

As part of the development stage for a Heritage Lottery Programme bid, the Fifth Continent Project commissioned an Interpretation Audit and Plan<sup>37</sup>. An earlier Preliminary Audience Study<sup>38</sup> reviewed the audiences currently visiting the area, and actions required to attract missing audiences. However, the audience study was carried out in 2010 so it is quite dated.

The Plan has direct relevance to the Strategy area, as its coverage includes areas beyond the boundary of the Fifth continent Project to include Rye Harbour LNR and Pett Level.

The Plan includes an audit of existing interpretation and how it helps to explain Romney Marsh. The audit assessed interpretation panels, visitor centres, websites, leaflets, activities and events, art installations and interpretation at nearby sites.

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<sup>37</sup> Romney Marsh Draft Interpretation Plan by Red Kite Environment in association with ARC Creative – January 2016

<sup>38</sup> Romney Marshes Living Landscape Scheme Preliminary Audience Study – Report compiled by Ali Short, Kent Wildlife Trust, July 2010.



The panels at Camber (Western and Central car parks and beach) vary in age, style, format and message (see photo panel above). They include warning and guidance signs by both East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council, information signs relating to the activity zones and dog control areas, and 'Welcome' signs which include (a lot of) text relating to the dunes, walking and cycling, and wildlife. There is no common style, or visual clues to the type of message, and there is often too much text in too small a font size. The most recent signs are the best ones, but even the Welcome sign is difficult to read and has too much text to capture visitor interest.

### Broomhill Sands Car Park

Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

(NB This audit was carried out during the EA sea defence works)

Panel provided by Rother DC.

The panel included places you can visit in Camber, walking and cycling, wildlife and tourist information. There was limited interpretation of the place and its features, and no mention of, or connection with, Dungeness NNR or other sites.

It was concluded this is a tourist information panel for Camber.

There was also an EA panel at this location, explaining the flood defence works at the coast. The opportunity was missed to explain the value of protecting the coast from flooding, and the special qualities of the landscape that it is protecting. There was no connection made with other sites.



## Lade car park

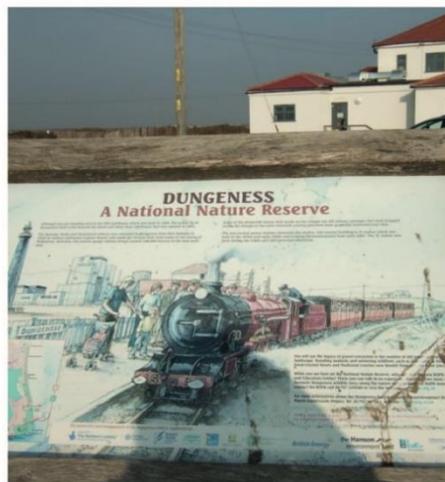
Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

One of a series of panels provided by RMCP. The panels welcome visitors to the NNR, and cover the themes of the shingle beach, wildlife, plants of the shore, the Sound mirrors, the legacy of gravel extraction, and suggest visiting the RSPB Reserve. The panels relate to the broader Romney Marsh area. Panels need cleaning but generally in good condition.



These panels are part of the NNR series. They are quite attractive, and there's a lot of text, but they don't engage the visitor or tell them anything about the area they are in and how they might treat it.

# Dungeness Point



The panels around Dungeness Point are an assortment of old and new; the main sign outside the RHDR station is headed 'Dungeness National Nature Reserve' and has a large picture of a train. It also faces towards the station, so is difficult to orientate against the landscape beyond. This is confusing for first time visitor. Other panels include the Restricted CROW land sign by NE, PROW waymarking signs and information/guidance signs from the Dungeness Estate (now EDF). This array of signage does little to help the visitor orientate themselves, or help them to understand the key points about the area. There are so many signs to read on that Dungeness Estate that they become part of the background scenery; and it is difficult for visitors to know which signs to concentrate on in a particular situation. The whole estate would benefit from a review of signage and interpretation as part of a 'visitor welcome' approach.

### Dungeness Lighthouse

Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

Panel provided by Dungeness Lighthouse.

This panel is in four languages. It covers the history of lighthouses on Dungeness.

There is a clear message about the lighthouse and its role in warning sailors of the dangers of the coast.

No link is made with other places or attractions in the area.



### **Dungeness NNR**

Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

Denge Marsh (ARC car park), near the RNDR Dungeness station, other sites with small panels

Panels provided by RMCP.

Some panels were difficult to read as there is no hierarchy of text and no subheadings.





## RSPB Reserve, Dungeness

Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

Panels provided by RSPB.

In the RSPB Visitor Centre the interpretation tells of the history of birdwatching on Dungeness, the life of a pebble on the beach, and provides photos of the Dungeness area. The stories told includes a century of birdwatching at Dungeness, the history of conservation of Dungeness, the early RSPB wardens and some of the birds that pass through the area.

There is little interpretation of the geography and ecology of Dungeness, and not enough about the wildlife of the reserve.

However, the centre does have information available – leaflets – for other places in the area.

### Dungeness Reserve Welcome signboard

Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

Very cluttered design. Too many individual panels. Too much text and no space. No margins around text and photos. It is not inviting to read.

## Greatstone and Littlestone

Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

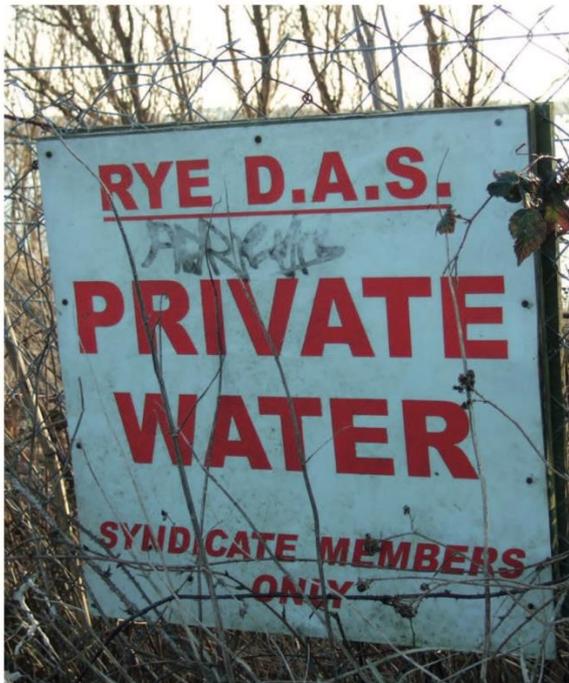
At Greatstone there is a collection of smaller interpretive panels. These panels tell stories about the largest area of shingle in Europe, respecting the privacy of local people, and the NNR has been notified as SSSI.

They are really information sign boards.



The photographs (above) show a wide range of signage in varying styles and formats. It is difficult for the visitor to differentiate between warnings, guidance, information and education messages. The Greatstone Shingle Trail signs are small, but they also have too much information and small text, making them hard to read.

### Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and Romney Marsh



The photos (above) are taken from various places near Rye, including Appledore bridge (top left and right), Northpoint Lake and the LNR. As with other parts of the strategy area, the signs and panels are provided by

a range of organisations (e.g. Sustrans, East Sussex CC, the local angling club) and the signs are in various states of repair. The signage does not appear to consider the visitor who will be reading the signs.

### Rye Harbour Reserve

The interpretation at Rye Harbour Reserve includes interpretive panels on the wildlife interest of the site at the Lime Kiln Cottage, the Car Park Information Kiosk and around the site. The quality of the signage and interpretation is variable. The focus is on wildlife and learning, and some of the panels – at the car park kiosk – are recent and in good condition. However, the site would benefit from an overall interpretive plan – potentially as part of the visitor centre development.

Rye Harbour LNR has the potential to be a visitor ‘hub’ in the area; providing improved visitor facilities at the new visitor centre, and a focus for a wide range of visitors to learn about the area, its wildlife and its heritage.

Fifth Continent interpretive audit findings:

Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Marine Heritage Trail panels.

The panels at the site describe the deposition of shingle, Rye Harbour NR wildlife, coastal defence, The Mary Stanford lifeboat tragedy, and how the salt marshes are ever changing.

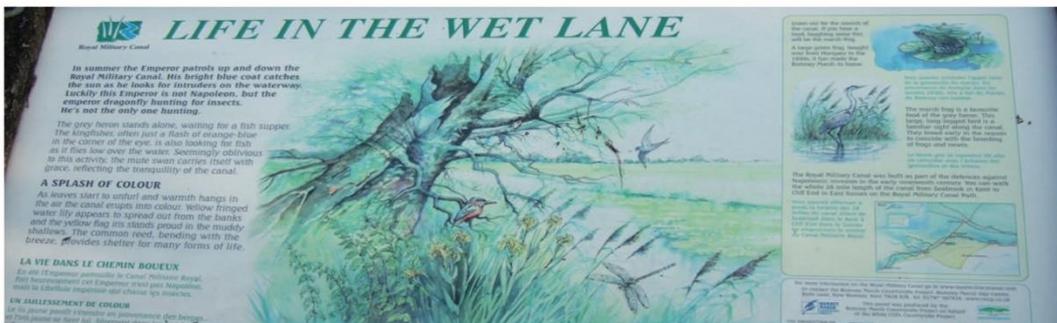
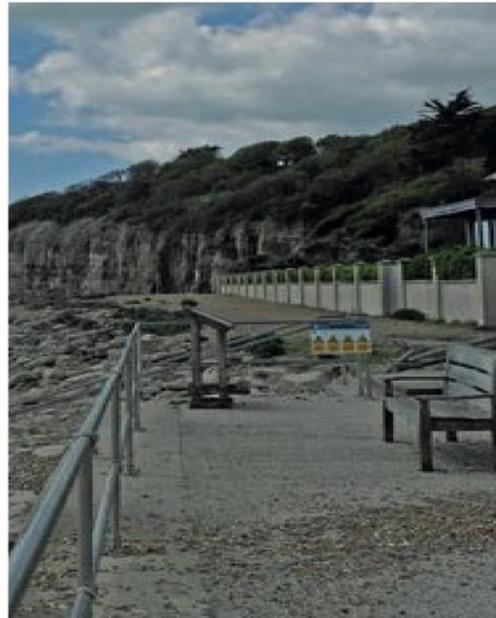
There are links to the wider Romney Marsh.

Other panels relevant to the strategy area included some of the churches on the marsh (All Saints Church near New Romney, Lydd Church), various Royal Military Canal panels (including Hythe Heritage Trail, Appledore Bridge, Iden Lock), Lydd Town Trail, panels about the acoustic ‘mirrors’ from World War I.





# Pett Level and Royal Military Canal



The panels along the Royal Military Canal tell the story of the construction of the canal and its 'Napoleonic' and World War II heritage, as well as panels providing interpretation on the wildlife of the canal. The panels

tell an interesting story, but, again, there is a lot of text to read, and it places the panels are dated, faded or damaged. The interpretation could benefit from a 'refresh' to update the signs and the messages.

There is little interpretation in the Pett Level and Winchelsea Beach areas. A very old interpretive panel has become detached from its frame at the western end of Winchelsea/Pett beach. There is little or no information on the importance of the area for wildlife. Several types of signage by different organisations e.g Rother DC, Pett Level Trust, Pett Parish. The quality and forms of message vary, although the information provided is clear; but there is no coordination or consistency in approach.



## Key Points – Visitor Awareness, Information and Interpretation

One of the key recommendations from the Phase One Visitor Survey was to address visitor information.

The same issues apply to information signage as they do to interpretive panels, in terms of their legibility, inconsistent size and format of signs and text, differences in approach between the different authorities, lack of consistency across sites and the need for a hierarchy of information.

On-site interpretation and signage must work harder to communicate sometimes complex messages to a wide range of types of visitors about the special nature conservation status of the Strategy Area, and the need to respect this.

Visitors need to be given much clearer messages about what is expected of them and the fragility of certain areas. Information should be divided into types e.g. warnings, instructions, information, education and promotion, with clear differences in style and format, to enable visitors to discern between signage.

Moreover, interpretation needs to do more than convey information; it needs to provoke an emotional, learning or behavioural response in visitors; and visitors need to be able to relate at a personal level with the area and its features.

Raising awareness is not enough to provoke positive action in visitors. More work is needed to relate wildlife conservation issues more closely to visitors' own beliefs, and to help them better understand - and feel good about - the direct benefits of their actions.

The target audiences should be as wide as possible, and include holiday-makers, first-time visitors and regular site users. It is important to convey key messages to visitors on holiday in the area; particularly those staying in holiday parks close to or within the designated sites.

Different audiences relate in different ways to interpretive messages. A range of different methods is needed to convey the appropriate messages and to reach a wider audience. The approach may vary according to the type of audience and the time of year; messages regarding bird disturbance should be reinforced during the winter months when the birds are present.

An interpretation plan is needed for each site, employing a range of approaches in addition to panels. As part of this approach, each site should develop its own 'story' for visitors, and develop it into a coherent, distinctive and captivating "spirit of place"; helping visitors to better understand the sites and what they can do to protect them.

Directional signage could help visitors to be guided to other activities and attractions e.g. signage from sites to the wider countryside for walk and cycle rides. A more comprehensive and strategic approach to informing and educating visitors, with a recognisable 'brand' would help to give the area an identity and reinforce particular key messages and information. This should take place at the same time as a review of all existing signage at the sites and leading to the sites.

This work could be drawn together and given shape across the Strategy area through a comprehensive visitor education programme, which will target hearts and minds to support and reinforce important messages, tailoring them to diverse types of visitors; and help make a connection with visitors, to change perceptions and behaviours.

An element of this work will be an interpretation programme, designed to inform, guide and educate but also to warn and enforce where necessary. On-site personnel should be employed on sites to support visitors and inform them about key issues – including how they can protect wildlife on the sites - and temporary or pop-up displays could be used to heighten awareness of seasonal issues. Interpretation development should take an area-wide approach, with appropriate promotion of other sites. The approach should include digital methods, social media and websites (important to engage some of the specialist site users), to cater for all types of visitors. Potential information centres or ‘hubs’ could be developed at places where visitors gather e.g. at RHDR stations and the Dungeness café, the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre and other cafes and accommodation centres. It will be important to tailor messages to the visitors in language that can be easily understood.

This coordinated, strategic and joined up approach to interpretation across the strategy area will involve a partnership of all relevant organisations to agree on how this might be taken forward in the future.



## How can Visitors be managed better?

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To propose effective methods of managing public access to the sites within the Strategy Area, a more unified, cross-boundary approach is necessary. In this way, a balance can be struck across the range of sites and an assessment can be made of the potential displacement effects of actions at each site. It will also be important to involve the land managers and owners in any potential changes to access arrangements, and to local businesses who rely on the custom of site users.

A more integrated and joined-up approach to managing visitors could assist in encouraging pro-environmental behaviour, and help protect sensitive sites from recreational impacts through consideration of a suite of approaches:

Resolving issues relating to the physical management of access onto and within sites by controlling and directing access:

- by physical barriers to access;
- restricting access to visitors at certain times of year;
- by limiting visitor numbers at sites;
- limiting the growth of particular activities;

Enabling actions to support visitors in making changes:

- reviewing parking arrangements or restricting car parking to particular areas;
- increasing or decreasing car parking charges to attract or deter visitors at particular times of year;
- formalising access or introducing zones for particular activities (where sites currently have open access);

Encouraging and supporting changes in visitor behaviours, through information and regulation:

- On-site signs;
- appropriate off-site promotion;
- Voluntary Codes of Conduct;
- Byelaws and local Orders;

Engaging visitors to influence attitudes and motivations through education and participation:

- On-site interpretation panels;
- Events, displays, activities and on-site staff presence;
- Partnerships, groupings, networks;

Exemplifying through:

- Shared responsibility;
- Taking leadership for decisions through a consistent approach to regulations;
- Taking enforcement action where necessary;

The options are described in more detail on the following pages.

## Controlling Access

Physical barriers to access could include temporary or permanent fencing to areas where access may need to be restricted for all or part of the year to protect wildlife. For example, the reduction of access to PROW-only status along stretches of Restricted CROW Act land could be reinforced with temporary fencing. Areas of unstable dunes could be fenced to protect their integrity and help direct visitors into more formalised routeways to reduce the spreading area. Temporary boundary treatment could be considered at Dungeness Point to support other initiatives to control and regulate access.

There is the question of whether it is necessary or desirable to limit visitor numbers to particular areas. The Dungeness RSPB Reserve currently receives 26k visitors per annum (based on visitor data from the Site Manager). The RSPB has previously indicated an intention to cap its visitor numbers once they reach 40k per annum. However, at the time of writing this report the visitor numbers had stabilised at around 26-27k per annum for the last four years; and the opinion of site managers was that visitor numbers were unlikely to reach the 40k maximum in the near future, with the reserve having the capacity to receive more visitors. With the exception of the RSPB Reserve, the other sites in the Strategy Area have free public access. On these sites, it is more difficult to place a limit on visitor numbers, and further data may be needed on the existing volumes of visits to the sites.

Limits on the growth of particular recreational sports or activities could be considered, where they are found to be increasing recreational pressure on the sensitive wildlife sites.

## Enabling actions

Visitor access, to some extent, follows the siting of car parking areas. Visitors could be supported to make the necessary changes to access arrangements through reviewing parking arrangements or restricting car parking to particular areas. Also, increasing or decreasing car parking charges may be a useful device to attract or deter visitor access at particular times of year.

Another method of enabling changes to access is by introducing zones for particular activities. This is already employed off-coast to contain some watersports activities, and could be extended to other areas where evidence shows it may be necessary.

## Encouraging appropriate behaviours

A more joined up approach to supporting visitors to make changes in their actions could include providing on-site signs at appropriate locations, supported by off-site messages before they arrive at the sites, through leaflets, web-based information or at holiday accommodation.

The use of Voluntary Codes of Conduct can be effective when targeted at user groups, and should be considered for the Strategy area. Some groups already have Codes of Conduct but they may not be used actively.

'Self-regulation via the acceptance of responsibility for conserving landscapes and wildlife by sport or recreation participants themselves is one of the most effective conservation measures.... which works best when the rationale is clear and well justified, so that the individual is informed and aware and then accepts responsibility for their actions adhering to codes of practice for their particular sport.'<sup>39</sup>

The behaviour of specialist users could be targeted through **Codes of Conduct**.

Codes have been developed by the governing bodies of some activities including British Kitesports, the appointed National Governing Body for Kitesurfing and other kite sports in the UK

<http://www.britishkitesports.org/> or they may be developed locally. British Kitesports' Code of Conduct is appended to this report.

The British Federation of Sand and Land Yacht Clubs has produced Information for its members

[http://www.britishlandsailing.org.uk/uploads/1/0/2/9/10293636/information\\_for\\_associate\\_members.pdf](http://www.britishlandsailing.org.uk/uploads/1/0/2/9/10293636/information_for_associate_members.pdf) including a Code of Practice for Recreational Land Sailing. The members' information includes a list of suitable beaches, and lists Greatstone as 'Home of the Kent Land Yachting Club - no restrictions, anything goes'.

Participants in these 'action' sports are encouraged to join the national organisation for their sport, to receive training from a competent instructor and to take out insurance cover – but in the absence of regulation it is not compulsory.

The development of local clubs or groups of specialist users may help in addressing some of the local issues in relation to wildlife and other potential areas of conflict. It would also help to foster local ownership of – and responsibility for - the area upon which their sport depends.

An example is Whitstable Kitesurfing Legends based in Whitstable on the north Kent coast.

<http://www.britishkitesports.org/clubs/find-a-club/whitstable-kitesurfing-legends/> This is the nearest kitesurfing group to the Strategy area (affiliated to British Kitesports). The website shows the group also take responsibility for their local area through periodic beach cleans.

#### Specialist Users: Anglers and Fishing

With regard to fishing, there is a wide range of organisations involved; their roles vary from those which have legal powers and have a regulatory role, to those which promote the sport and aim to protect their (angling) members. The role of these organisations varies regarding the behaviour of anglers and their approach to the conservation of wildlife.

The Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) have byelaw making and enforcing powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (Section 155 to 166).

The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA) <http://www.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk/> and the Sussex IFCA <http://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/byelaws> have each produced byelaws for

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<sup>39</sup>Protected areas: origins, criticisms and contemporary issues for outdoor recreation - Jenny Smith Formerly of the Birmingham School of the Built Environment, Birmingham City University - Working Paper Series, no. 15 2013 - ISBN 978-1-904839-65-1

fishing in the Strategy area. These are covered in the Kent and Essex Areas A (Essex and Kent) and B (Kent boundary to Dungeness Old Lighthouse), and Sussex. The Byelaws relate to vessel size and engine power; closed seasons; dredging for scallops and mussels; oysters, shellfish, bivalve molluscs, crabs and lobsters, winkles, herring and other fish species, limitations on quantities to be removed and nets and fishing instruments. The IFCA's also issue voluntary Codes of Conduct for aspects of fishing, and they raise awareness and understanding of regulations.

The Sea Anglers Conservation Network has developed a Conservation Code for Sea Anglers;

The National Federation of Sea Anglers (NFSA) is the Governing Body for Sea Angling in England. It promotes sea angling and proposes rules to govern the sport. It has a club network with 32,000 members;

The Angling Trust represents anglers and angling in England and Wales. It has produced a 47 page Code of Conduct for Coarse Anglers;

Mid-Kent Fisheries manage a number of fishing lakes in the strategy area. Their website lists Fishery Rules <http://midkentfisheries.co.uk/fishery-rules/>. Other inland fishing clubs issue their own rules and guidelines.

Although national codes of conduct are useful, it may be more effective to develop local voluntary codes with the site users. In this way site users become part of the discussion and the solution.

#### **Case Study: The Thanet Coast Project (TCP)**

The Thanet coast is internationally important for its bird and marine life. The North East Kent Marine Protected Area (NEKEMPA) includes two SACs, a SPA, a Ramsar site and a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). The coast here is also important for many other reasons - thousands of people live here and many thousands more visit each year.

The TCP oversees the management of the NEKEMPA, and coordinates a range of activities; working with local stakeholders, coastal users and visitors.

The Thanet Coast Project (TCP) area includes the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA/Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Ramsar. The TCP has developed several Voluntary Codes (of Conduct) for activities in its area. The Codes were developed with stakeholders who identified the problems which their own activities may cause to wildlife and worked together to develop a way forward. Their agreed actions included the development of the Codes <http://thanetcoast.org.uk/factfile/thanet-coastal-codes/>

The TCP's Codes have been designed to support the internationally important wildlife of the Thanet Coast, and as such they may be directly applicable to some or all of the Strategy area.

The Codes include:

- Seashore Code
- Bait Digging & Collecting Code
- Dog Walking Code
- Field Trip Code
- Horse Riding Code
- Marine Wildlife Watching Code
- Powercraft Activities Code
- Shellfish Harvesting and Fixed Netting Code

- Shore Angling Code
- Wind powered activities

### Shore Angling Code

The TCP worked with stakeholders to develop the Shore Angling Code for its area

<http://thanetcoast.org.uk/factfile/thanet-coastal-codes/shore-angling-code/>

The Shore Angling Code:

Take care to avoid putting roosting or feeding wintering birds to flight especially when shore angling at high tide or at night

- Avoid shore angling along the shingle beaches adjacent to the lagoons between Reculver and Birchington as these are used by summer breeding birds and the shingle is the main winter roosts.
- Tread carefully on the rocky shore if fishing off the rocks at low tide
- Take all waste home and dispose of it safely including old hooks, line and tackle which can hurt birds and animals
- Take only as much bait as you need and return unused worms to the beach
- Follow the NFSA 'Conservation Code for Sea Anglers'  
These include taking measures to reduce tackle loss (eg lower breaking strain for hook length than main line) and use of 'catch & release' methods to help conserve fish stocks, returning the fish in a healthy condition
- Abide by the 'Recommended Retention Size Limits' - as endorsed by the NFSA. Help conserve fish stocks by returning undersized or surplus fish alive and healthy to the sea

Byelaws and local Orders are already in place in the Strategy area, but their use is patchy and inconsistent between local authorities. A more joined up approach and more consistent application would present a clearer picture to visitors. In particular, Dog Control Orders may need to be reviewed; partly to recognise the need to restrict or control dogs to some areas in the winter months where necessary, and partly as a result of legislative changes.

### Engaging visitors

Visitors may be better engaged through a more comprehensive approach to visitor education (outlined earlier), to include on-site interpretation panels, other media, direct engagement through on-site Wardens, and targeted activities for particular visitor groups. The development of a joined-up approach and replacement of existing interpretation cannot happen overnight, and will require a staged approach in partnership across the area.

## Exemplifying actions

This is about leading by example, and the type of measures needed to demonstrate shared responsibility. This could be demonstrated through setting up locally-based groups who can develop their own 'codes' and use peer pressure to maintain the 'rules'.

It also means taking leadership by making decisions and applying a consistent approach to regulations. This may include following through on site rules and notices - for example when engagement activities are not working - by taking enforcement action where necessary. On-site Enforcement Wardens or Coastal Officers with powers could ensure that byelaws and legal orders are being adhered to, and this would send a strong message to other visitors.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) could be considered for certain areas within the Strategy Area. This may be a consideration at Dungeness Point, where uncontrolled access has become the norm, necessitating a suite of actions to regularise and control access on the site; and where educative messages have to reach a very wide-ranging audience.



# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Example Code of Conduct

### British Kitesports' Code of Conduct:

<http://www.britishkitesports.org/join-british-kitesports/code-of-conduct/>

The codes of conduct are split into two sections:

#### 1. Kite flying

#### 2. Membership behaviour

##### Kite Flying

All forms of power kiting (including land-boarding, buggying, kitesurfing/kiteboarding, kite boating and snow-kiting) are extreme sports and are therefore potentially dangerous to both the participant and others. British Kitesports encourages responsible and considerate behaviour by all Members and participants. Although flying and riding locations differ and local considerations will apply, the guidelines below will be relevant and appropriate in most situations.

British Kitesports recommends that you hold third party insurance and have received thorough training from a qualified instructor, or, that you are competent to British Kitesports level 2 if a qualification exists for that sport. British Kitesports strongly discourages participants from attempting to teach themselves. By seeking qualified instruction you will: learn faster and with greater safety for yourself and those around; become competent and progress to a higher level more quickly; you will have more fun.

##### All Power Kitesports

- Be sure that you can handle the prevailing weather conditions and know the forecast.
- Select the correct kite size for the conditions and forecast. If you don't have an appropriately sized kite, don't take a risk with the wrong size.
- Kite with a buddy or, if that is not possible, tell someone where you are and when you will be back.
- Select a safe launch site. Find out about and observe local rules and restrictions. Treat other stakeholders in the places we fly with respect.
- If at all possible, avoid asking a non-kiter to assist with launching and landing. If you must ask for help, make sure they are carefully briefed and understand the risks of getting involved.
- Take extra care at busy locations. On occasions, it might be too busy to launch safely unless a specific launch area is in operation.
- Prevent kites from re-launching by weighting them with sand or other ballast; use a ballast bag to avoid damage to your kite.
- Keep your lines away from people, animals and craft on land or water. Wind up your lines if leaving your kite. Do not leave your equipment unattended on the beach for an extended period.
- It is recommended that a helmet or quality head protector that fits correctly is worn at all times while using kites
- Use of a protective helmet may reduce the risk of death or injury. Consider carefully the extra risk you may be taking if you decide not to wear one. – All children under the age of 8 years old must be supervised by a responsible adult

##### Specific guidelines for Powerkiting, Kite landboarding, Kite Buggying and Snowkiting

- Take extra care when selecting where and when to jump or perform tricks on land.
- Take care of other users of your kiting location; give them respect and respect their rights of way.
- Always give way to pedestrians or other users of your kiting location .

- Make sure the activity is allowed at the location used
- Take time to engage with other users of your kiting location; win friends for kitesports, not enemies!

#### **Kitesurfing and Kite Boating specific guidelines**

- British Kitesports recommend you are a competent swimmer. Never ride so far away from the shore that you cannot swim back in an emergency.
- Understand the tides/currents where you are about to sail.
- Observe beach and water zoning, navigation channels and similar.
- Unless dedicated rescue cover is available do not sail in offshore winds. If in doubt don't go out.
- All riders should be familiar with rescue signals and participants should regularly practice deep water pack downs and self-rescue. These techniques are taught by all qualified British Kitesports instructors and schools.

#### **Rights of way**

- Starboard tack (right hand forward) has right of way
- The rider on the port (left hand forward) tack gives way to the rider on starboard tack.
- The upwind rider gives way to the downwind rider.
- The overtaking rider keeps clear and should pass up-wind of the rider being passed. The upwind rider should fly their kite higher and clearly signal to the other rider that they intend to pass. The downwind rider should lower their kite where it is possible to do so safely.
- The rider leaving the beach has right of way over a rider returning to the beach from the water .
- Before jumping check behind and downwind of you and always maintain a safe distance from other riders or obstacles. If in doubt, don't jump!

#### **Equipment**

- Equipment manufacturer's instructions and safety guidelines must be read and followed. Understand the limitations of the equipment and practice use of all safety mechanisms until you are familiar with them.
- Equipment must be regularly checked for wear and tear and repaired or replaced before use if required. If in doubt seek advice from an authorised dealer, approved British Kitesports instructor or a more experienced local rider.
- Always use an effective kite leash and safety system so you can depower your kite instantly in the event of an emergency.

#### **General Safety Guidelines**

- Pay attention to your surroundings, your equipment and your fellow kites. Think about what you are doing and take your time; your brain is your most important piece of safety equipment, so use it!
- If you lose your kite or board whilst on the water or land, always report you are safe to the rescue services so they do not waste time and money looking for you.
- It is recommended that you write your name, address and contact number on all your equipment. If you are concerned about permanently marking your equipment, use spinnaker repair tape to write on and fix this to any equipment.
- If new or careless kites show up at your flying site, talk to them with your friends about what's at risk. Take the time to explain how to safely get into the sport and where to obtain qualified professional instruction.

All Kitesport participants are responsible for their own safety and that of bystanders. Just because we've taken the care to publish this Code of Conduct we cannot be held liable for your actions. This Code of Conduct will be updated regularly as a result of continued developments in safety and kitesports

equipment, consultation with local focus groups and other interested parties. This is by no means a final and definitive list of safety guidelines.

### **Member and participant behaviour**

No Member, and no person wishing to become a Member, shall:

- (a) Cause damage, harm, distress or serious inconvenience to any other users of locations where power kiting is carried on, or
- (b) Seek to exclude, limit or commercialise use of or access to any beach, offshore area or other location used for flying kites, or right of way to any such place or impose additional car parking or other charges for British Kitesports members unless the Member has disclosed the proposal to British Kitesports and to members of the relevant local Affiliated Club and has demonstrated that he/she either has the support of the majority of regular users of the location in question or the proposal has been approved by British Kitesports and the local British Kitesports Affiliated Club.

## **Appendix 2: Article on bird disturbance and visitor awareness**

Wintering Waterbirds and Recreationists in Natural Areas: A Sociological Approach to the Awareness of Bird Disturbance by Le Corre, N., Peuziat, I., Brigand, L. et al. *Environmental Management* (2013) 52: 780. doi:10.1007/s00267-013-0118-5

(Abstract) Disturbance to wintering birds by human recreational activities has become a major concern for managers of many natural areas. Few studies have examined how recreationists perceive their effects on birds, although this impacts their behavior on natural areas. We surveyed 312 users on two coastal ornithological sites in Brittany, France, to investigate their perception of the effects of human activities on wintering birds. The results show that the awareness of environmental issues and knowledge of bird disturbance depends on the socioeconomic characteristics of each user group, both between the two sites and within each site. Results also indicate that, whatever the site and the user group, the vast majority of the respondents (77.6 %) believed that their own presence had no adverse effects on the local bird population. Various arguments were put forward to justify the users' own harmlessness. Objective information on recreationists' awareness of environmental issues, and particularly on their own impact on birds, is important to guide managers in their choice of the most appropriate visitor educational programs. We recommend developing global but also specific educational information for each type of user to raise awareness of their own impact on birds.

## **Appendix 3: Key points from the Fifth Continent Project Interpretation Audit and Plan and Preliminary Audience Study**

- Although there are many interpretation panels in good condition and provide good interpretation there are many that are outdated and in poor condition. There is scope to update and replace these in existing locations.
- Interpretation panels vary in their provision of interpretation, often explaining local features but providing little explanation of the contexts of Romney Marsh as an entity.
- There is scope to add to the excellent website about Romney Marsh ([www.theromneymarsh.net](http://www.theromneymarsh.net)) and others that offer information about the area particularly for tourists, or to create a new site with links to others.

- There is one leaflet that provides an introduction to Romney Marsh and others that explain features of the area. None of the leaflets provides a comprehensive overview of Romney Marsh.
- Activities and events explain the features of the marshes and help people come together to share their experiences and knowledge of the area. There is scope to expand this programme.
- Although there is good interpretation of the resources of the area there is little interpretation of Romney Marsh as a whole.
- There is currently no digitally-based media for visits and trails.

The target audiences for interpretation of Romney Marsh should be:

- Existing visitors to nature reserves, countryside sites, the coast and cultural sites who would like to find out more about the area.
- Day visitors and people on short breaks.
- Specialist interest groups.
- Car travellers who are passing through the area.
- Active family explorers who are seeking fun and interesting activities.

The aim for the interpretation of Romney Marsh is:

To help people to understand and enjoy the significance of Romney Marsh, its origins, development over time and its environmental and historic resources.

To support this aim the plan presents a series of learning, behavioural and emotional Objectives; with themes and sub-themes. One of the sub-themes relates to the outstanding biodiversity.

Some of the conclusions and recommendations from the Preliminary Audience Study are also of relevance to the strategy area, and they include:

- The (Living Landscapes) partnership should consider promotion of the area, looking to raise the profile locally and nationally.
- The perceived 'remoteness' could be viewed as a feature of the area rather than a disadvantage.
- At present visitors target one or two well-known sites and do not travel within the rest of the project area.
- The study would recommend that interpretation and promotion of the visitor offer within Romney Marsh Living Landscapes area is improved to encourage visitors to access centres other than the 'high profile' sites.
- It is recommended that the RMLL partners work more closely with accommodation providers and hostels to raise awareness of opportunities for tourists in the area.
- The community tourism initiatives set up by Natural Economy East Kent, bringing local businesses and organisations together to raise the profile of both the area and their businesses, could be effective in developing green tourism in the Romney Marshes area.
- In order to establish the Romney Marshes as a successful destination for green tourism, transport issues into and within the area would need to be addressed, with significant investment in public transport required.
- The study recommends promoting activities within the Marshes that are accessible to the missing audience - the teenagers and young adults and disabled people.
- Provide accessible interpretation of the landscape features to raise the profile of the area.

- At present few sites across the RMLL have any interpretation of marshes landscape, its formation and history.
- Written interpretation is mainly in English and for sighted visitors only.
- Provide funds to cover transport costs for school educational visits enabling greater access for the younger generations, which are currently missing as an audience.
- Maps with good interpretation need to be available at tourist centres to accompany the brown signed 'countryside tour' across the Marshes, if it is to be utilised well.