



FOLKSTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL PLAN AND STRATEGY REVIEW

District priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

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To note: The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, Environmental goals, have been used to categorize the district's environmental targets in this review.



SECTION 1: THREATS AND PRESSURES ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Water Stress

Folkestone and Hythe is an area of serious water stress as identified by the Environment Agency. South East Water and Affinity are the statutory water suppliers in Folkestone and Hythe district. There is a shared interest in the protection of groundwater supplies and water quality. An increased population will lead to demand for water. (GBI Main Report, 2023)

The district is one of the driest districts in England, and this is only likely to increase given the likely impacts of climate change. (Local Plan, 2020)

1.2 Flood Risk (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Areas in Folkestone and Hythe are at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams, ditches and the coast. Storm events and surges can also affect the district. For example, flooding along the Pent Stream is caused by poor urban drainage and high intensity storm events. There is also a risk of tide-locking in the future as a result of a rise in sea level. However, many areas benefit from the protection provided by a diverse range of flood defence infrastructure. Much of Folkestone and Hythe district is low-lying with approximately 55% lying within the Environment Agency Zone 3a Flood Risk78 (Plan 20). However, these areas benefit from the protection provided by a diverse range of flood defence infrastructure. Folkestone and Hythe topography varies significantly across the district, with the flat low lying Romney Marsh being below mean water level in many places.

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

1.3 Climate Change (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Current UK projections for future climate change indicate that there will be more frequent short duration high intensity rainfall and more frequent periods of long duration rainfall. Climate change is also expected to bring hotter, drier summers alongside wetter winters but not necessarily in tandem.

Summer droughts are also likely to be more frequent alongside an increased risk of flooding. This combined with increased demand from development requires a proactive approach to the management of these risks via the planning system.



Wetland biodiversity and habitats are at greater threat from climate change impacts than other habitats. Climate change impacts are compounded by other threats to habitats and species.

1.4 Development and recreation pressures (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Development has been identified as a pressure on Kent habitats, through loss of land and increased population. This pressure can be lessened through obligations on developers to deliver biodiversity net gain.

Small, fragmented and disconnected sites in some areas, particularly in urban areas.

Recreational pressure on sensitive sites can cause disturbance to wildlife. For the Dungeness Complex mitigation should be delivered through successful implementation of the Strategic Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS). Other sites, for example chalk grassland, may also be vulnerable to recreational pressure.

Recreational pressure and anti-social behaviour can hinder the implementation of conservation management, e.g. grazing on urban sites, as well as causing direct damage.

1.5 Pressures on Biodiversity (GBI Main Report, 2023)

- Lack of resources to manage some nature conservation sites sustainably and in the long term.
- Farming has a significant impact on the fortunes of biodiversity and there is uncertainty around the future of farming and environment payments. 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' within the Kent Downs AONB may bring significant benefits to this part of Folkestone and Hythe.
- Woodland which is small, fragmented and not managed.
- Increase in invasive non-native species, pests and diseases particularly ash dieback.
- Some of the core biodiversity network sites are not in favourable management for biodiversity. Some Sites of Special Scientific Interest are in unfavourable condition. Some Local Wildlife Sites are not in favourable biodiversity management.
- A wide range of pollutants, from many sources with the most widespread current harm from excess nutrients (phosphate and compounds of nitrogen) in air and water. There has also been a rise in concern over plastics pollution, particularly in the water environment.
- Lack of information on some species and habitats.
- Some Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and other rare and specialist species are under threat and declining.



SECTION 2: TARGETS AND PRIORITIES FOR NATURE RECOVERY (GOAL 1)

Unless otherwise stated, the following information in section 2 came from the Folkstone & Hythe Local Plan, 2020.

2.1 PROTECTING HABITATS

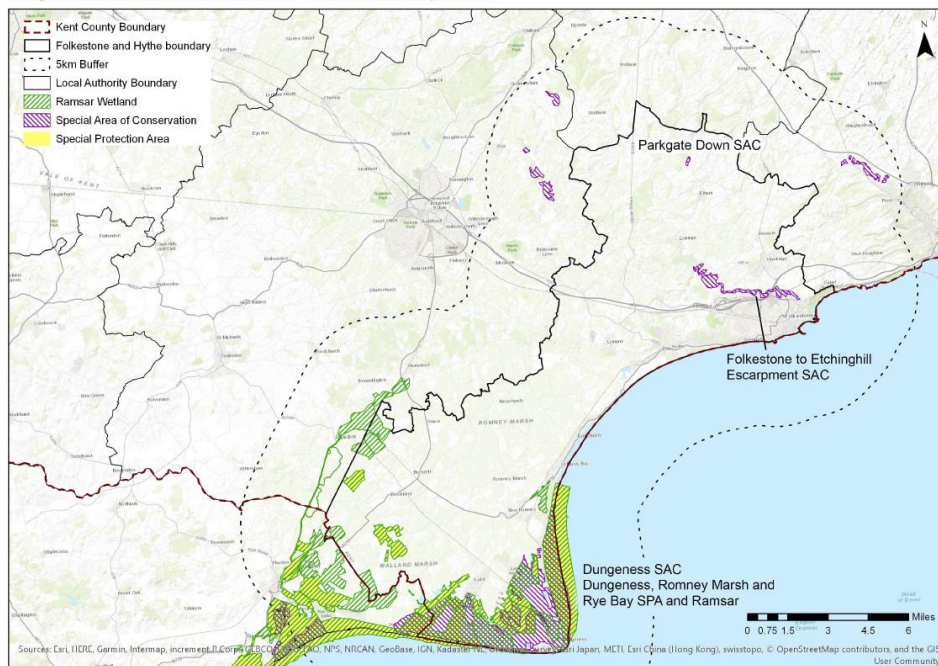
2.1.1 Site designations (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Table 1: Nature Conservation Designations

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

2.1.2 Internationally Designated Sites

Plan 1: Designated Nature Conservation Sites – International Importance



(GBI Main Report, 2023)

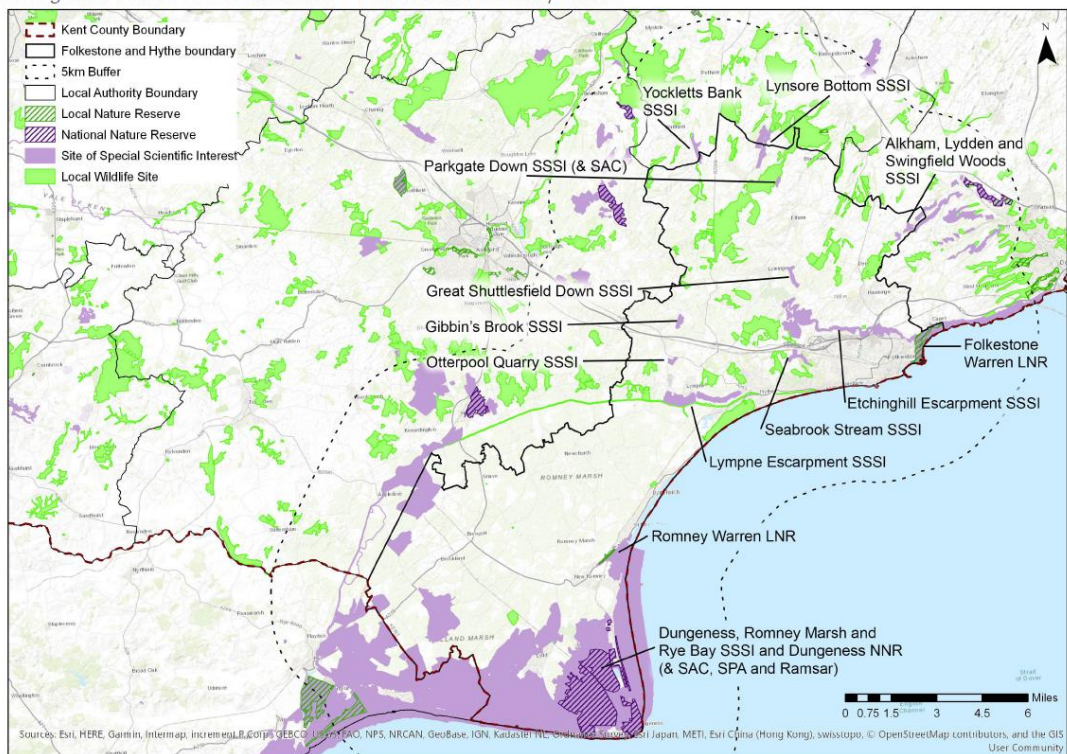


Policy NE2 Biodiversity

Development will safeguard and protect all sites of European and Global importance, designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar sites. Development must not result in significant adverse effects on these internationally important nature conservation sites, either alone or in combination with other projects and plans. The Council will expect development proposals to demonstrate and contribute to appropriate mitigation and management measures to maintain the ecological integrity of the relevant European site(s).

2.1.3 Nationally designated sites

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



(GBI Main Report, 2023)

Policy NE2 Biodiversity

For nationally important sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNR), where developments may have a significant impact, an ecological impact assessment will be required. For proposals where impacts cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated, these will be refused, unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.



Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (GBI Main Report, 2023)

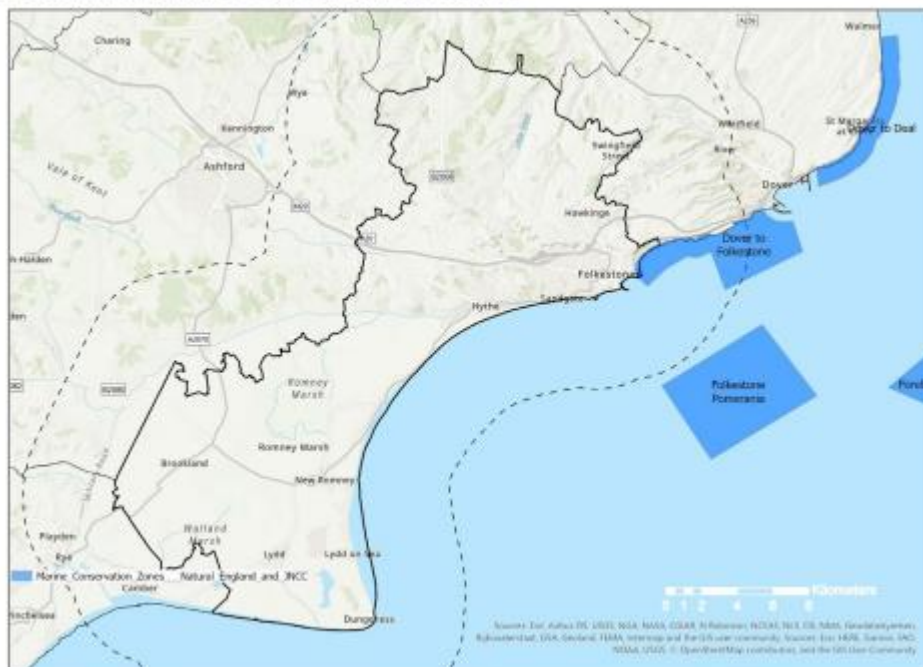
Around 16% of Folkestone and Hythe's area, including inshore areas, is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. There are also several designations for the district's international importance for nature. These designated areas overlap in many cases, with areas falling under several designations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

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) (GBI Main Report, 2023)

There are also Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in proximity to the district see Plan 17. The Dover to Folkestone MCZ was declared in January 2016. It is an inshore site covering the wavecut intertidal chalk platforms to the north of Folkestone and into Dover district. It is a highly diverse area with many habitats and features of interest. The chalk communities on the seashore are one of the best examples in the region, supporting a range of seaweeds and the animals that are associated with them. The diverse range of features includes rocky outcrops, ledges, boulder, sediments which support animals like sea slugs, long-clawed porcelain crabs, brittlestars and young lobsters.

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

Plan 17: Marine Conservation Zones



(GBI Main Report, 2023)



Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly known as Area of Outstanding National beauty)

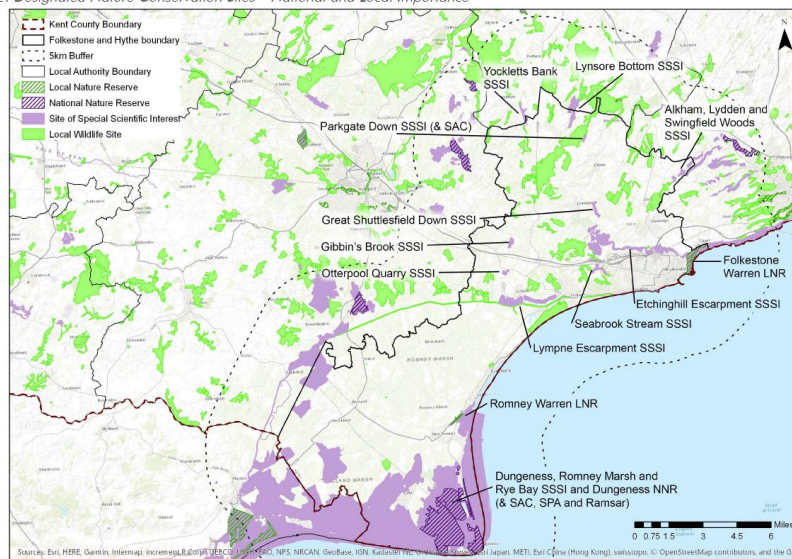
Policy NE3 Protecting the District's Landscapes and Countryside

The impact of individual proposals and their cumulative effect on the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and its setting will be carefully assessed. Planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that all the following criteria have been met:

- 1. The natural beauty and locally distinctive features of the AONB and its setting are conserved and enhanced;*
- 2. Proposals reinforce and respond to, rather than detract from, the distinctive character and special qualities including tranquillity of the AONB. The design scale, setting and materials of new development must be appropriate to the AONB;*
- 3. Either individually or cumulatively, development does not lead to actual or perceived coalescence of settlements or undermine the integrity of the predominantly open and undeveloped, rural character of the AONB and its setting;*
- 4. Development is appropriate to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area or is desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of the area (where this is consistent with the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty); and*
- 5. Development meets the policy aims of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and AONB Unit produced supporting design guidance.*

2.1.4 Locally designated sites

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



(GBI Main Report, 2023)

Policy NE2 Biodiversity

Local sites, including Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Key Wildlife Sites (KWS) and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) will



be safeguarded from development, unless the benefits of the development outweigh the nature conservation or scientific interest of the site. Where development is considered necessary, adequate mitigation measures or, exceptionally, compensatory measures, will be required, with the aim of providing an overall improvement in local biodiversity and/or geodiversity. Opportunities will be sought to access and enhance the value of such sites for educational purposes, particularly in relation to promoting public awareness and appreciation of their historic and aesthetic value.

Special Landscape Areas

Policy NE3 Protecting the District's Landscapes and Countryside

Special Landscape Areas Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are defined as follows and shown on the Policies Map: North Downs (including the scarp and crest); Old Romney Shoreline; and Dungeness. Proposals should protect or enhance the natural beauty of the Special Landscape Area. The Council will not permit development proposals that are inconsistent with this objective unless the need to secure economic and social wellbeing outweighs the need to protect the SLAs' county-wide landscape significance.

Local Landscape Areas

Policy NE3 Protecting the District's Landscapes and Countryside

Local Landscape Areas are defined as follows and illustrated on the Policies Map: Romney Marsh; Sandgate Escarpment and Seabrook Valley; Eaton Lands; Cooling Lane and Enbrook Valley; and Mill Lease Valley. Proposals should protect or enhance the landscape character and functioning of Local Landscape Areas. The Council will not permit development proposals that are inconsistent with this objective, unless the need to secure economic and social wellbeing outweighs the need to protect the area's local landscape importance

Landscape Character Areas

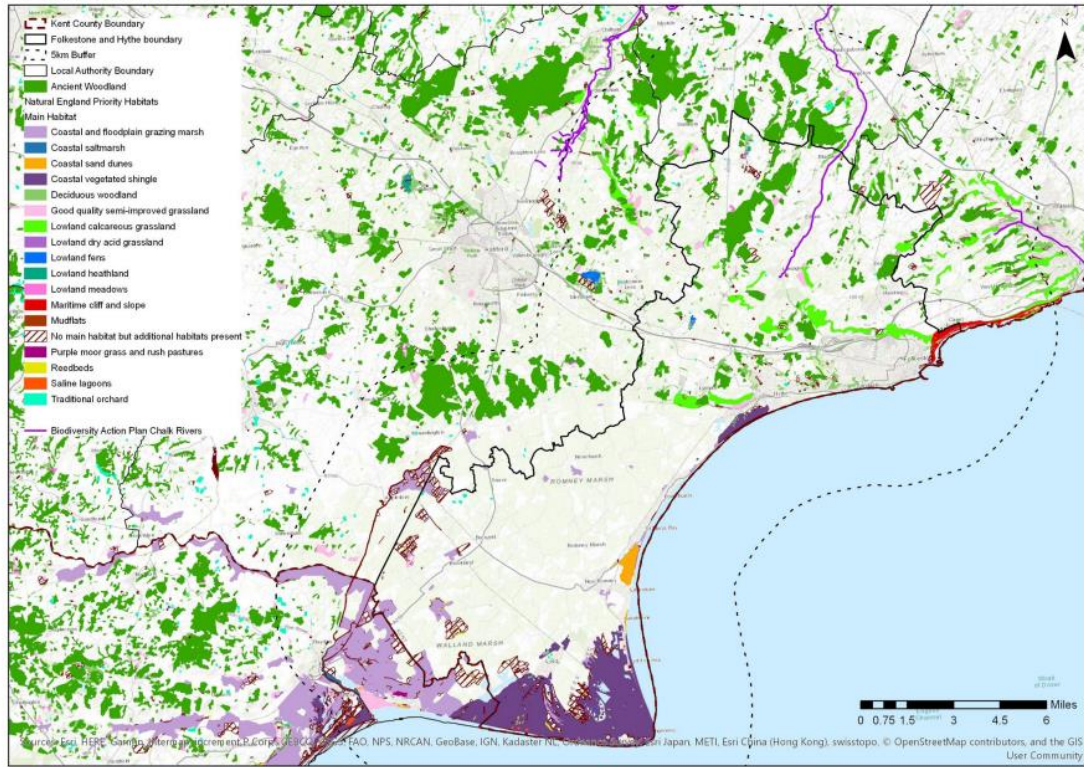
Policy NE3 Protecting the District's Landscapes and Countryside

Proposals should demonstrate that their siting and design are compatible with the pattern of natural and man-made features of the Landscape Character Areas, including their cultural and historical associations. Opportunities for remediation and improvement of damaged landscapes will be taken as they arise



2.1.5 Priority Habitats (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Plan 3: Priority Habitats (Natural England)



Plan 10: Climate Change Vulnerability - Priority Habitats

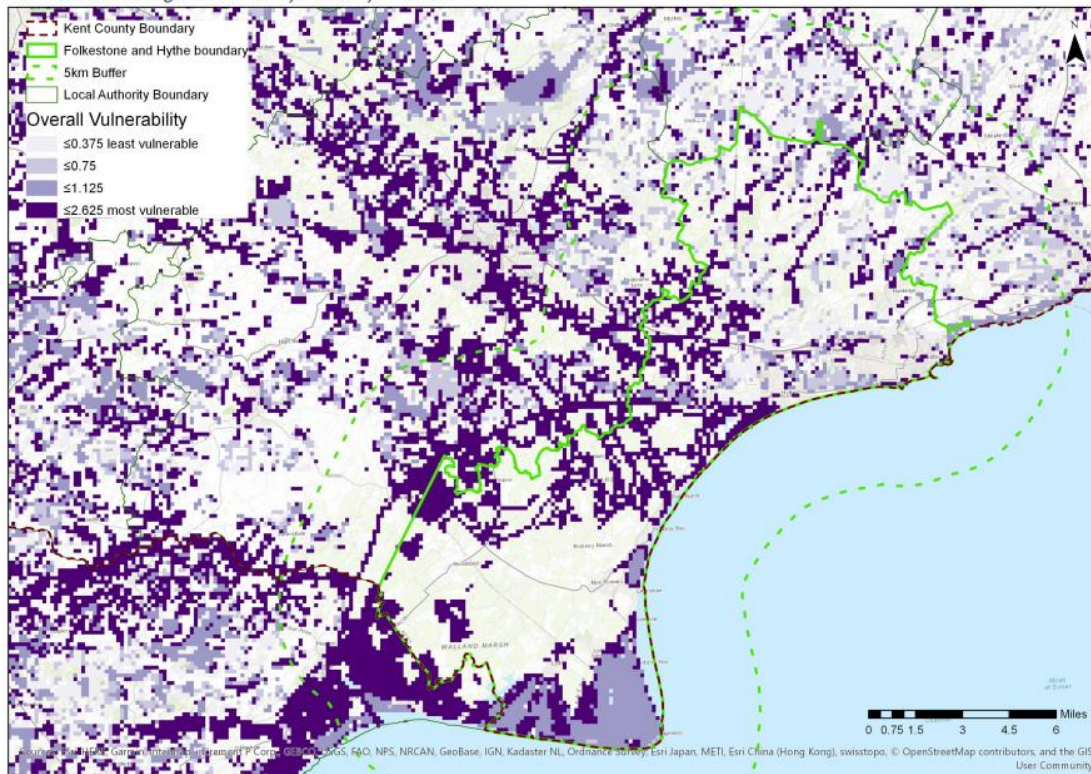


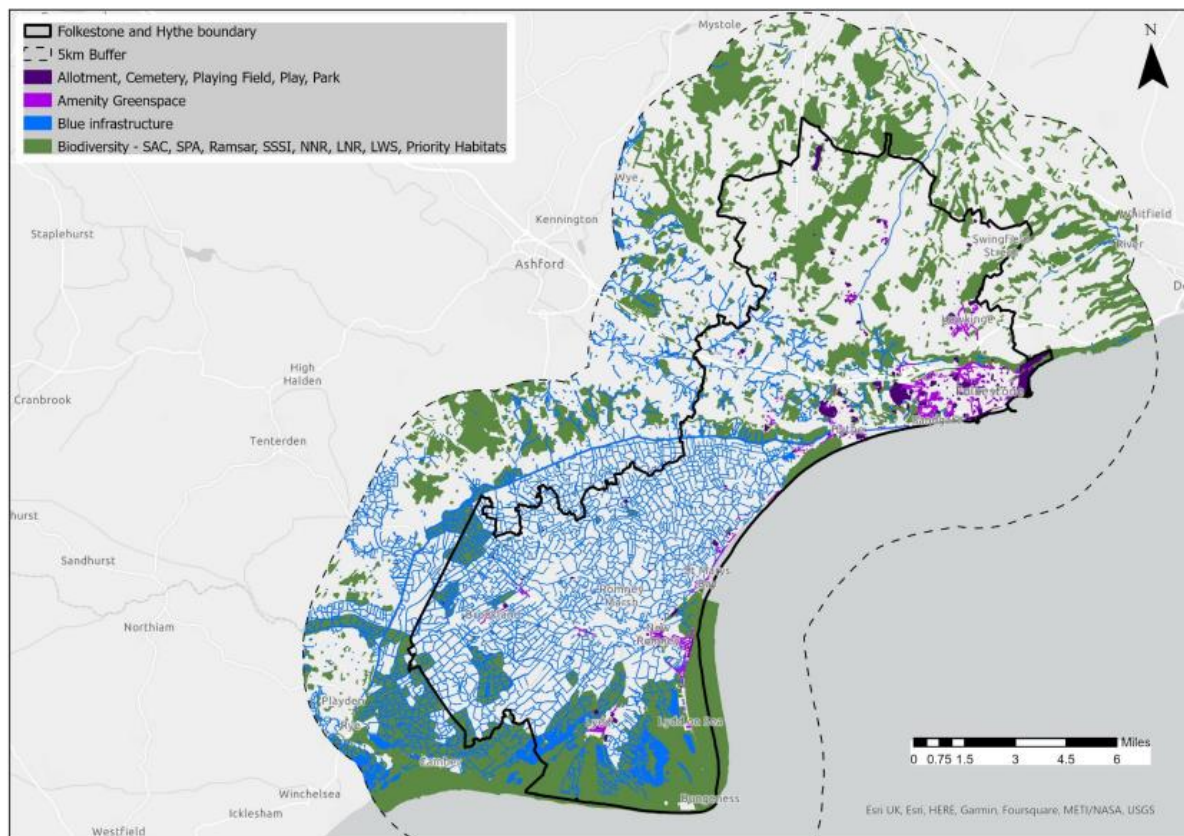


Table 6: Priority Habitat Climate Change Vulnerability – Summary

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

2.1.6 Green Infrastructure Network (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Overview of Folkstone & Hythe's Green and blue Infrastructure Network





GBI Priorities

Strategic Priority: BTW 1 Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species

BTW 1.1 Protect and enhance the sites which form the core of the biodiversity network – those sites designated for nature conservation and those with known biodiversity value.

BTW 1.2 Ensure that Folkestone and Hythe-owned sites with nature conservation value are protected and their value enhanced, bringing declining sites into good condition and reducing sources of harm.

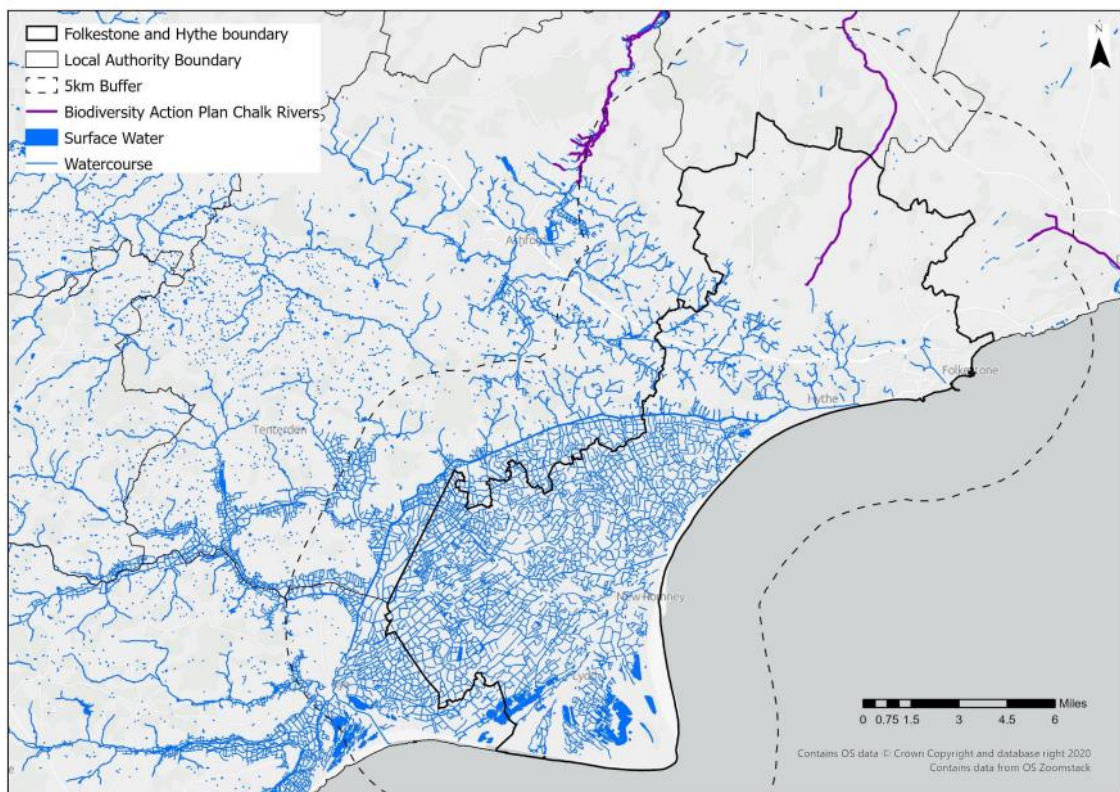
BTW 1.3 Protect, enhance and seek to expand areas of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats which are notable within Folkestone and Hythe - chalk grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.

BTW 1.4 Protect and seek to increase populations of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority species which are notable within Folkestone and Hythe

BTW 1.5 Work with Rother District Council and other partners to deliver measures set out in the 'SARMS' to ensure sustainable recreation across the Dungeness Complex.

2.1.7 Blue Infrastructure Network (GBI Main Report, 2023)

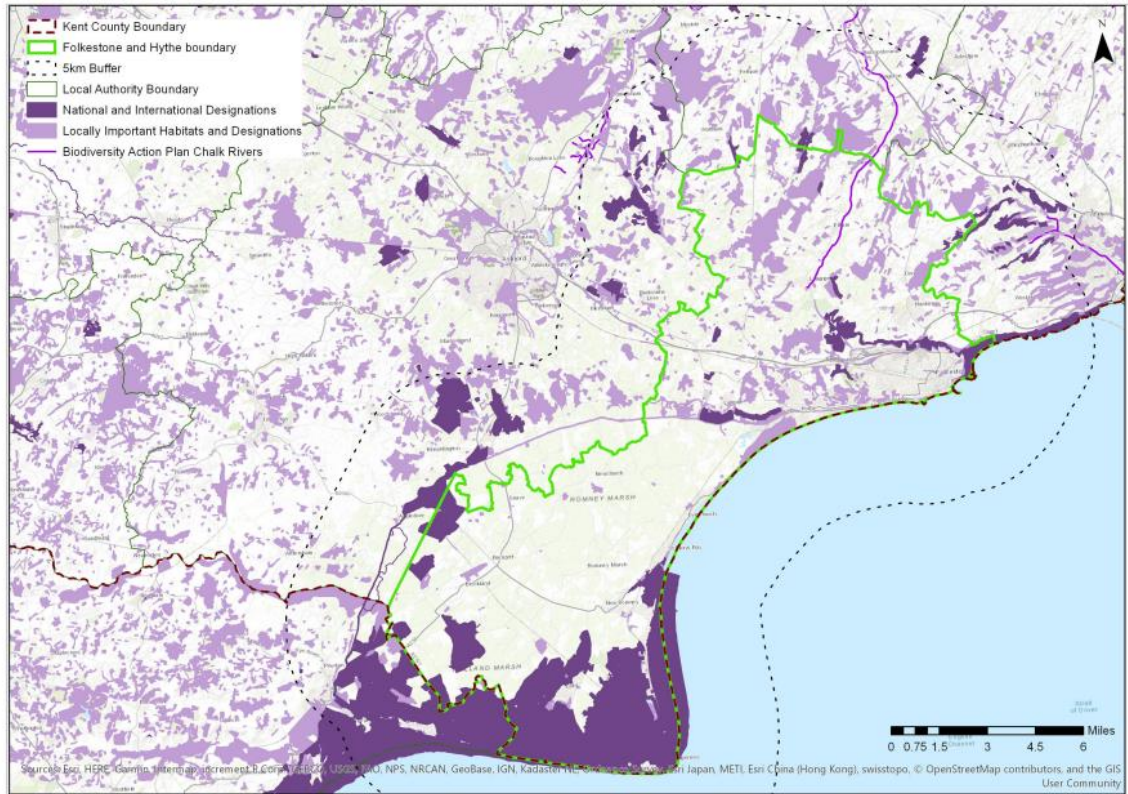
Plan 18: Blue Infrastructure



There are a range of blue infrastructure features including the extensive ditches and wetlands of the Romney Marsh, the Nailbourne chalk stream, and saline lagoons and larger pools around Dungeness and Lydd.

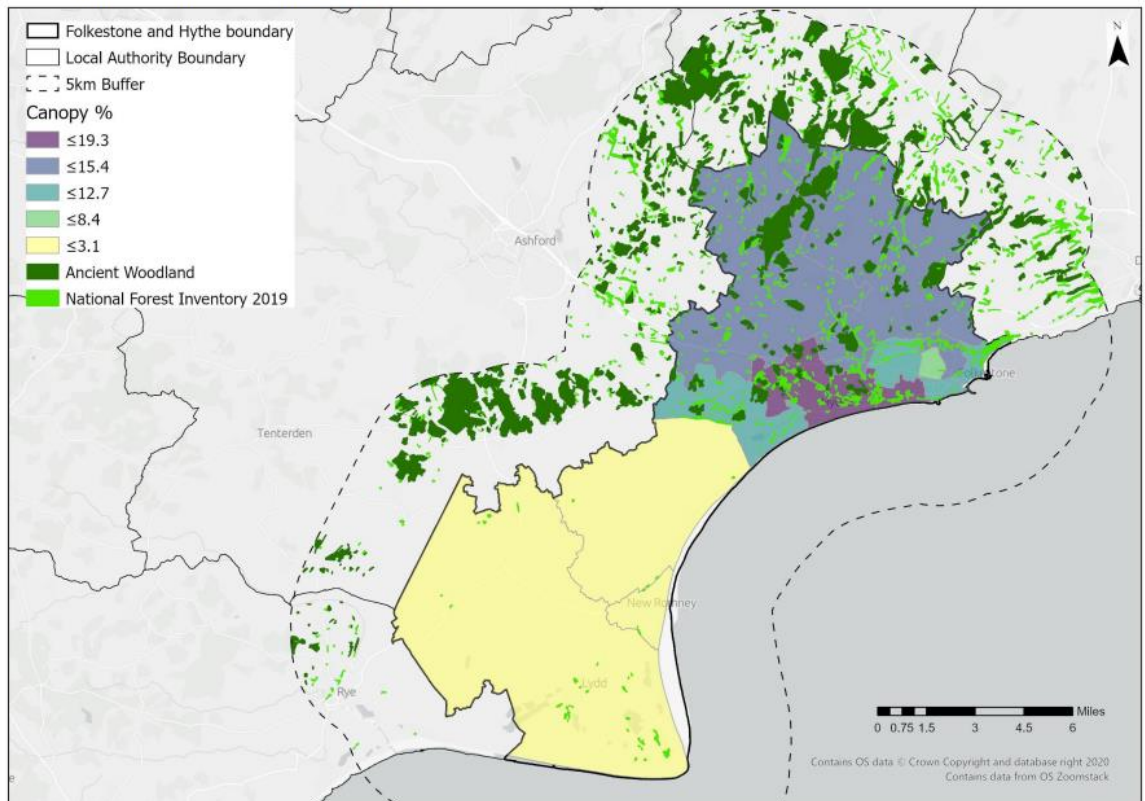
2.1.8 Core Biodiversity Network (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Plan 5: Folkstone and Hythe's Core Biodiversity Network



2.1.9 Trees and Woodland (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Plan 4: Woodland, Ancient Woodland and Canopy Cover % by Ward³⁰





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

One of the more publicised diseases which is seriously affecting trees in Folkestone and Hythe district and across east Kent is ash dieback.

2.1.10 Coastline

Dungeness Complex Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (2017) (SARMS) (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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

The strategy addresses recreational pressure and provides a strategic, cross-boundary approach to issues relating to disturbance, to ensure that any increases in access and recreational usage resulting from the planning policies of either council do not adversely impact on the integrity of these internationally important wildlife sites.

The strategy sets out measures which are necessary as mitigation for planning policies, including monitoring visitors and birds, provision of interpretation and signage, voluntary codes of conduct for recreational users and an oversight group to deliver the strategy. It also recommends a range of other actions which would support the necessary mitigation measure. (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Policy NE8 Integrated Coastal Zone Management

Development in coastal areas should complement the aims and objectives of the Shoreline Management Plan and the emerging Marine Plan. The Council will promote with partners Integrated Coastal Zone Management, including the preparation of a comprehensive management plan for the coast.

Proposals and initiatives will be supported that promote the following general objectives:

- 1. Facilitate the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the area, including the proper consideration of marine wildlife;*
- 2. Address proposals for the coastline and coastal communities set out in Coastal Defence Strategies and Shoreline Management Plans;*
- 3. Contribute to greater safeguarding of property from flooding or erosion and/or enable the area and pattern of development to adapt to change, including the relocation of current settlement areas, and vulnerable facilities*



and infrastructure that might be directly affected by the consequences of climate change;

4. Provide resources to improve the process of harbour and coastal management, incorporating and integrating social, recreational, economic, physical and environmental issues and actions; and

5. Improve infrastructure to support sustainable modes of transport, especially cycleways, bridleways and footpaths, including the England Coast Path National Trail

Policy NE9 Development Around The Coast

The Council will give long term protection to the Folkestone and Dover Heritage Coast and to the areas of undeveloped coast shown on the Policies Map. Within these areas development will not be permitted unless proposals preserve and enhance natural beauty, landscape, heritage, scientific and nature conservation value (consistent with any agreed management plan). Planning permission will be granted for development in the coastal area, outside of settlement boundaries, where it can be demonstrated that all the following criteria have been met:

1. There are no harmful effects on or net loss of nature conservation or areas of geological importance;

2. The development provides recreational opportunities that do not adversely affect the character, environment and appearance of the coast;

3. Regard has been shown to the high quality and inclusive design of new buildings in coastal locations in accordance with other relevant design and historic environment policies;

4. There are measures for mitigation of any detrimental effects including, where appropriate, the improvement of existing landscapes relating to the proposal;

5. Where appropriate, opportunities have been taken to upgrade existing footpaths and cyclepaths, enhance and protect the England Coast Path National Trail and ensure that public access is retained and provided to connect existing paths along the waterfront;

6. The development would not be detrimental to infrastructure for, and quality of, water-based recreation, or be detrimental to the safety of navigation; and

7. Development should be informed by and complement the distinctive characteristics of the Seascape Character Areas and types identified in the Kent Seascape Character Assessment.

The Council will safeguard a minimum of a 15m strip of land immediately behind the landward edge of the existing or proposed sea defence or coast protection works to facilitate access for plant and materials used in connection with their maintenance or repair.

The Council will safeguard a minimum of a 25m strip of land, measured from the landward edge of the existing or proposed sea defence or coast protection works, in harsh marine environment areas in order to prevent storm damage to buildings. Planning permission will be granted for a replacement dwelling unless there is past evidence that the existing or demolished property has



been damaged as a result of the harsh marine environment. Repeat applications for replacement dwellings will be refused unless the applicant can demonstrate that no future harm will occur.

*The following Heritage Coast is shown on the Policies Map: Folkestone/Dover
Other undeveloped coast sites are shown on the Policies Map: West Hythe;
Dymchurch; St Mary's Bay; and Dungeness.*

2.1.11 Protection from the negative impacts of development and infrastructure

Policy NE2 Biodiversity

Protected Species

Development proposals that would adversely affect European Protected Species (EPS) or Nationally Protected Species will not be supported, unless appropriate safeguarding measures can be provided (which may include brownfield or previously developed land (PDL) that can support priority habitats and/or be of value to protected species).

Development and the Natural Environment

All new development will be required to conserve and enhance the natural environment, including all sites of biodiversity or geodiversity value (whether or not they have statutory protection) and all legally protected or priority habitats and species.

The Council will support development that:

- i. Enhances, retains and protects existing sites and features of nature conservation value including wildlife corridors, ancient woodland and geological exposure that contribute to the priorities established through the Biodiversity Action Plan and the Green Infrastructure Plan;*
- ii. Does not reduce, and where feasible, improves species' ability to move through the environment in response to predicted climate change, and to prevent isolation of significant populations of species; and*
- iii. Incorporates features that enhance biodiversity as part of good design and sustainable development, including the creation of new pollinator habitat suitable to the scale of development.*

The District has a number of undesignated sites, which may nevertheless host rare species or valuable habitats. Where a site is indicated to have such an interest, the applicant should observe the precautionary principle and the Council will seek to ensure that the intrinsic value of the site for biodiversity and any community interest is enhanced or, at least, maintained.

Where an impact cannot be avoided or mitigated (including post-development management and monitoring), compensatory measures will be sought. The Council may, in exceptional circumstances, allow for biodiversity offsets, to prevent loss of biodiversity at the district level. Such compensation will be



directed to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) within the district or projects identified in the Council's Green Infrastructure Plan.

2.2 RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITATS

2.2.1 Green Infrastructure (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Strategic Priority: BTW 2 Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change

BTW 2.1 Reduce sources of harm to biodiversity sites.

BTW 2.2 Develop ecologically resilient and varied landscapes through conserving and enhancing local variation within sites and habitats and making space for the natural development of rivers and coasts.

BTW 2.3 Establish ecological networks through habitat protection, restoration and creation, joining up nature conservation sites across the landscape and joining woodlands and hedgerows.

BTW 2.4 Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation into conservation management, planning and practice.

BTW 2.5 Work with partners to deliver a resilient ecological network, including increasing biodiversity in cemeteries, privately own green and blue infrastructure assets, schools and businesses, and with neighbouring authorities to develop connections over local authority boundaries.

BTW 2.6 Seek to create mosaics and overall abundance of wildlife alongside the protection of specific habitats and species.

BTW 2.7 Work with the Kent Nature Partnership to develop and deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as part of the National Nature Recovery Network.

BTW 2.8 Sustain a healthy tree stock of council-owned trees and seeking an increase in trees and canopy cover overall on council-owned land.

BTW 2.9 Increase the number of wildflower verges.

2.2.2 Blue Infrastructure (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Strategic Priority: BIC 1 Protect water resources and protect and enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats.

BIC 1.1 Raise awareness of the outstanding water, wetland, coastal and marine habitats of the district, both to residents and organisations, and promote ways in which everyone can help to conserve and protect them.

BIC 1.2 Support actions to reduce water consumption.



- Important woodland, including wood pasture and beech and yew woodland, as well as much ancient woodland;
- Key species include woodland butterflies including and rare woodland flora.

Targets:

- Chalk grassland creation, restoration and enhancement;
- Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland;
- Creation of species-rich neutral grassland.

Mid Kent Greensand and Gault

A predominantly farmed landscape at the scarp foot of the Kent Downs, including rivers and their tributaries. This BOA stretches from north west of Maidstone to the outskirts of Folkestone and Hythe towns.

Biodiversity:

- Nationally important acid grassland and heathland sites, as well as smaller acid grassland fragments;
- Scattered blocks of wood pasture and small, isolated woodlands;
- Key species include water vole, whiteclawed crayfish and Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*, associated with river corridors. Some species associated with acid grassland and heath habitats are scarce or unknown elsewhere in Kent.

Targets:

- Creation and restoration of acid grassland and heath;
- Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland;
- Improve ecological status of waterbodies;
- Recreate or restore wetland habitats along rivers and their tributaries;
- Secure and manage important brownfield sites, particularly where these support Biodiversity Action Plan species;
- Avoid further fragmentation of habitats;
- Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.

Romney Marshes and Rye Bay

The Romney Marshes and Rye Bay area is one of the biggest opportunity areas in Kent and extends from Hythe through Rye and beyond into Sussex. The area is mainly highly productive arable land and pasture, but much is designated, including SSSIs which extend from the internationally rare vegetated shingle at Dungeness through Walland Marsh up towards Appledore. The BOA includes Hythe Bay recommended Marine Conservation Zone, which supports a very diverse assemblage of burrowing species in its subtidal-mud habitat.

Biodiversity:



- Internationally important wetland and shingle habitats, most notably the vegetated shingle at Dungeness, which is important for biodiversity and geodiversity;
- Grazing marsh, and wet ditches and other water courses;
- Important species include brown hare, water vole, amphibians including great crested newt and common toad, medicinal leech, breeding and wintering wetland birds, rare plants such as greater water parsnip *Sium latifolium*, and invertebrates associated with shingle and wetland habitats. The area is important for bats, particularly serotine and soprano pipistrelle, and holds one of the few remaining tree sparrow populations in Kent.

Targets:

- Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats and designated sites;
- Restore, recreate and enhance grazing marsh, fen, reedbed and other wetland habitats;
- Ensure no net loss and restore all coastal vegetated shingle to favourable or unfavourable recovering condition (subject to constraints arising from natural coastal changes);
- Conserve and enhance important intertidal and marine habitats;
- Create and enhance acid and species-rich neutral grassland;
- Provide guidelines on best practice for managing ditches to maximise biodiversity and work with landowners to restore management of 15% of ditches that are not part of the main drainage system;
- Identify how best to integrate a more natural functioning of the Dungeness coast;
- Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.

Dover and Folkestone Cliffs and Downs

A series of valleys around Dover and cliffs and cliff-top grassland, intertidal and subtidal chalk and the scarp slope of the Kent Downs. Much of the grassland is internationally important, with areas of locally and nationally important woodland.

Biodiversity:

- Nationally important chalk grassland in dry valleys and on cliff tops;
- Coastal cliffs and slope including chalk cliff and soft cliffs, both with important foreshore and marine habitats, including nationally and internationally important areas of subtidal and intertidal chalk;
- Sabellaria reefs, both offshore and in some intertidal areas, providing important habitat for a wide range of species;
- Important woodlands on chalk and ragstone;
- Some vegetated shingle, wet woodland and fen habitats;
- Important species include plants and invertebrates associated with chalk cliff and chalk grassland habitats, including adder, silver-spotted skipper, small blue, Adonis blue, wild cabbage, and oxtongue broomrape. Brown hare also



an important species. White clawed crayfish is found in the area. Species of inshore waters include short-snouted seahorse and native oyster.

Targets:

- Conserve and enhance important cliff, intertidal and marine habitats;
- Extend, reconnect, restore and enhance areas of chalk grassland;
- Enhance or reinstate woodland management, restore plantation on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and reconnect fragmented woodland;
- Create species-rich neutral grassland;
- Action to enhance widely dispersed habitats, such as ponds, across the whole area.

2.2.4 Trees and woodlands (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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

2.2.5 Connectivity (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Buglife B-Lines

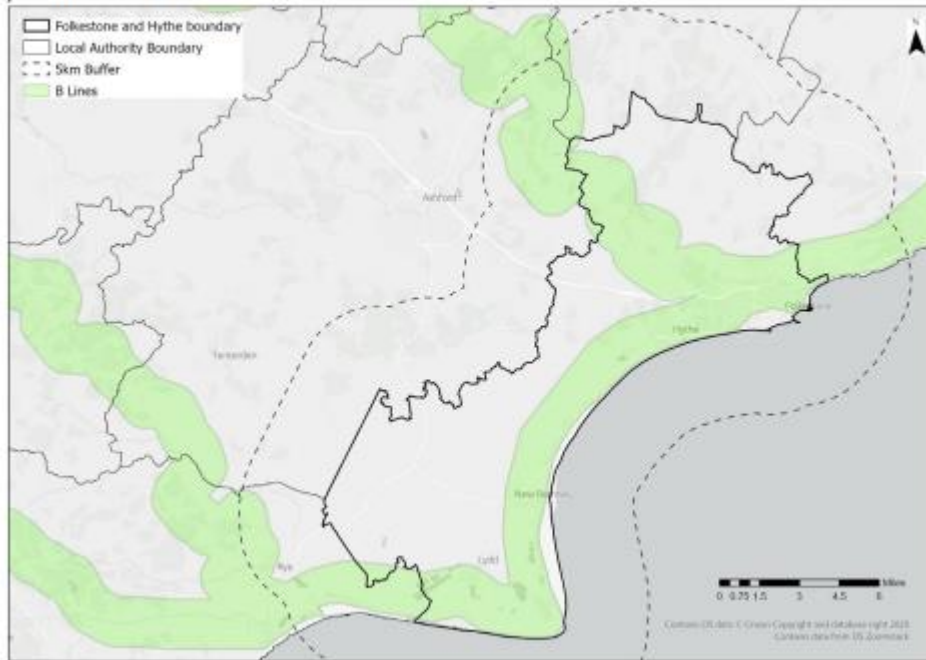
The following maps show priority areas in which to create functioning ecological networks. Within these areas priorities should be to:

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

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

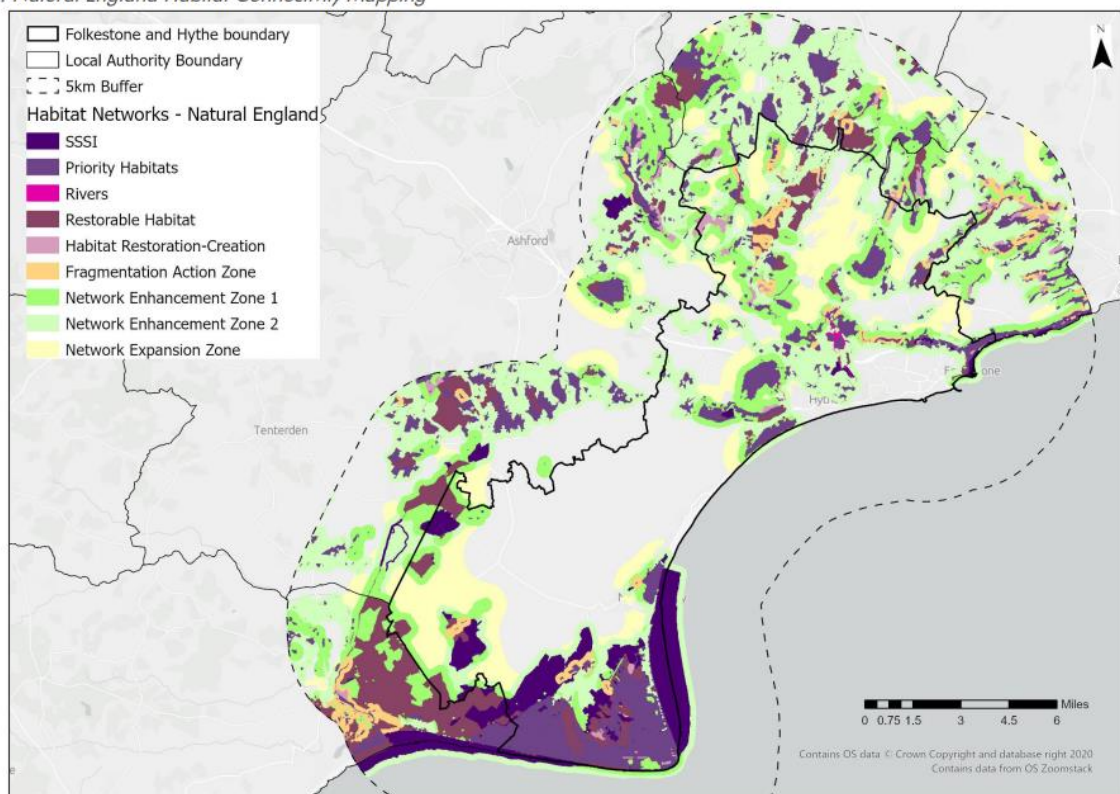


Plan 7: Buglife 'B-Lines' show opportunities to create corridors for pollinators



Habitat Connectivity mapping

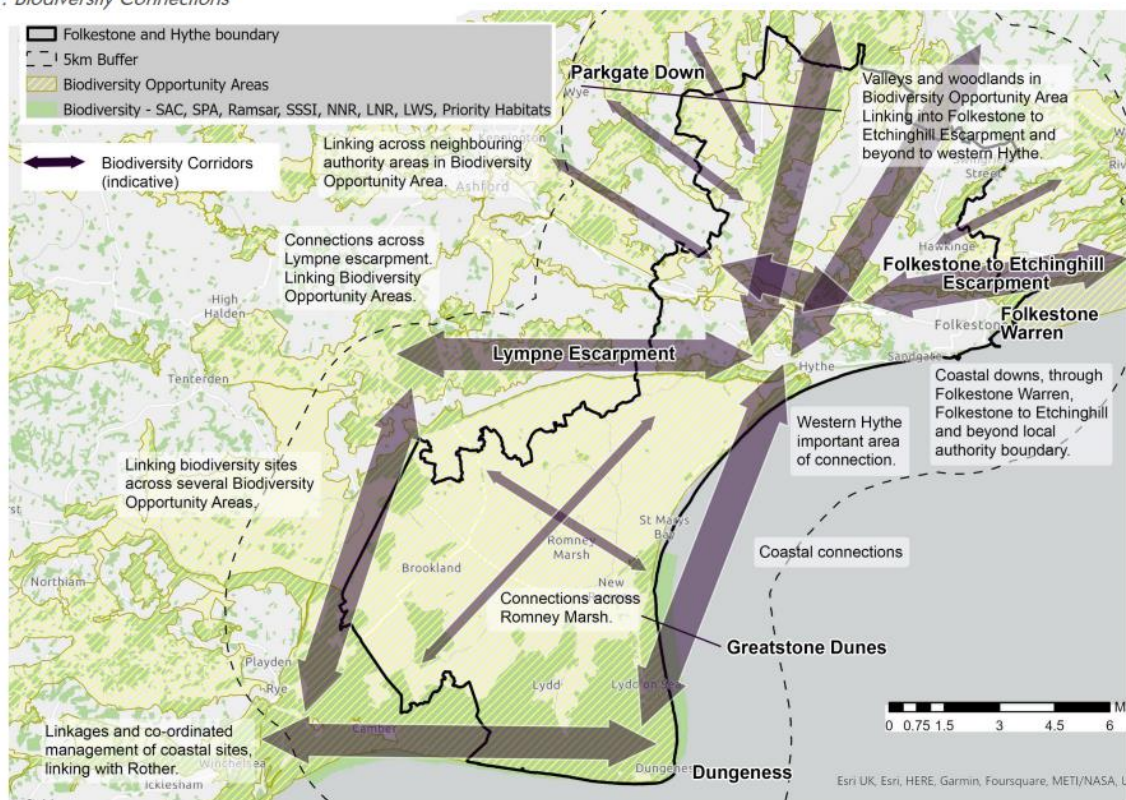
Plan 8: Natural England Habitat Connectivity Mapping





Biodiversity Connections

Plan 9: Biodiversity Connections

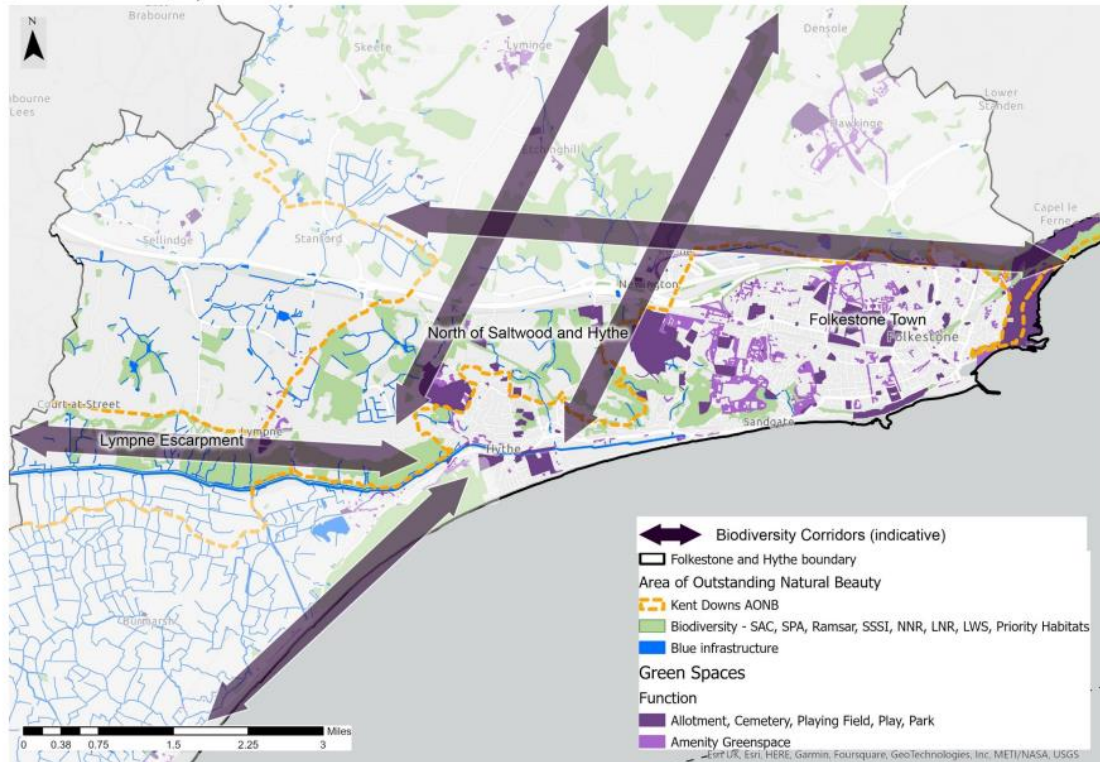


2.3 HABITAT CREATION

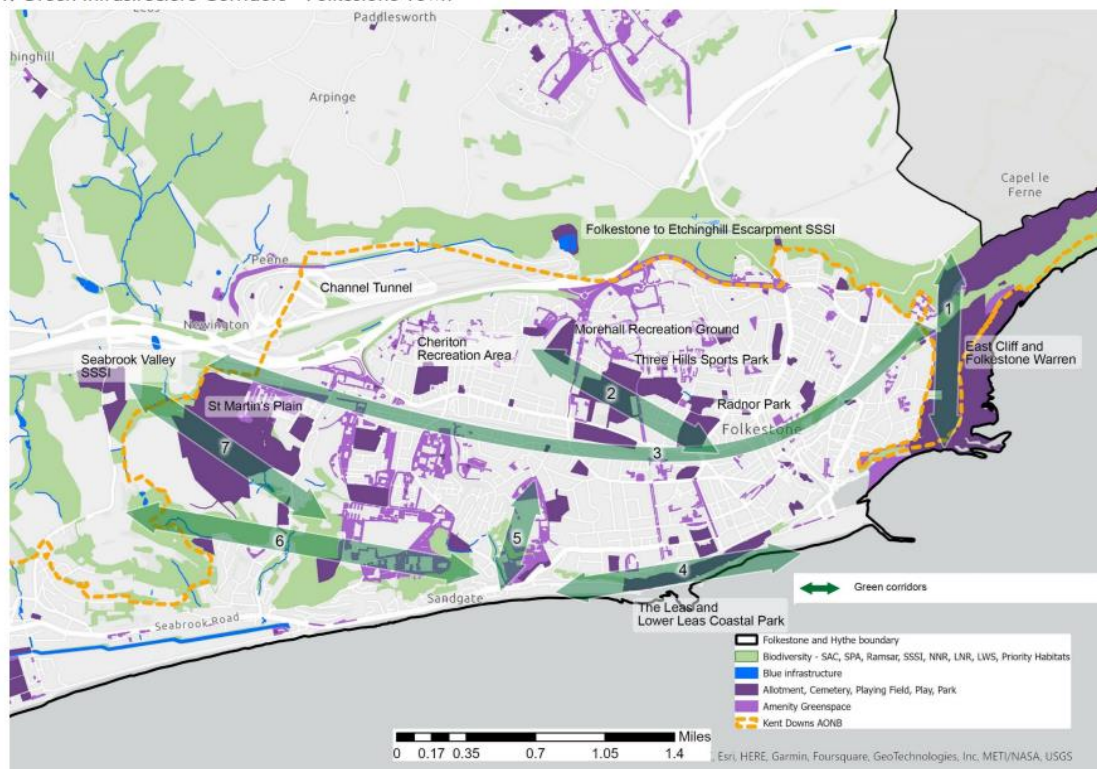
2.3.1 Biodiversity Corridors (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Folkstone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

Plan 23: Folkstone Town, Hythe and Saltwood Area

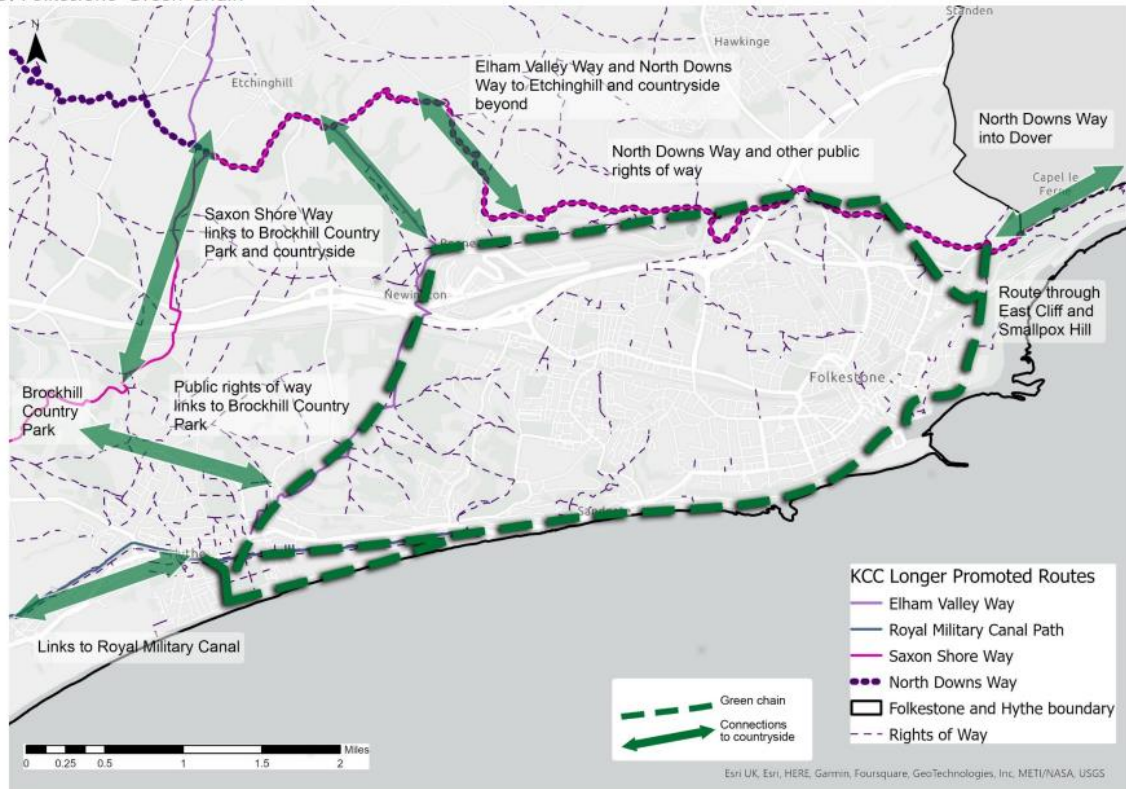


Plan 24: Green Infrastructure Corridors - Folkstone Town





Plan 26: Folkestone 'Green Chain'



GBI Needs, Opportunities and Priorities - Folkestone Town, Hythe and Saltwood

FHS 1 Take a holistic view and develop a plan for biodiversity, landscape, blue infrastructure and access in the Focus Area north of Saltwood and Hythe. To include interface with urban fringe and to accommodate new Otterpool development. To encompass: – Good quality connections and investment in public rights of way, especially existing promoted routes and routes to Brockhill Country Park; – Increase accessibility of routes (remove stiles, improve surfaces); – Link to existing promoted routes (Royal Military Canal, Saxon Shore Way, Elham Valley Way); – Produce map to show network of public rights of way, cycling routes and quiet lanes to help users and minimise wandering off of public rights of way. Ensure good waymarking on public rights of way; – Rationalise dead end routes. Seek east-west routes where these are lacking; – Assess likely impact of ash dieback on woodlands and hedgerows and mitigate for this; – Improve biodiversity connections across this area through hedgerows, pollinator corridors and other measures appropriate to the landscape character.

FHS 2 Develop a 'Bees Please for Folkestone' project – improvements across the town and beyond to create an urban pollinator haven. Projects to increase wildflowers and pollinators would also help other wildlife. Use the project to engage residents and raise awareness. Potential to link with arts. More wildflowers could be incorporated into the many close mown areas in Folkestone, including parks, sports



areas, amenity grassland, The Leas, road verges and the communal gardens of apartments. Use as a visitor economy unique selling point.

FHS 3 Folkestone town centre regeneration through the Place Plan should incorporate the recommended green and blue infrastructure elements to improve the public realm and make spaces more attractive.

FHS 4 Improve access across the barrier of the transport corridor north of Folkestone through ensuring safe and wellmaintained routes and promotion.

FHS 5 Ensure that the woodland at Shorncliffe development is entered into sustainable management for recreation and wildlife and consider designating as a Local Nature Reserve.

FHS 6 Cheriton area has poor access out of urban area to countryside areas beyond and low provision of green space, although it does have large areas of amenity grassland. Invest in access and biodiversity at Cheriton Recreation Area as a significant area of greenspace. Improve quality of amenity green spaces in the area for wildlife and recreation.

FHS 7 Promote a 'green chain' of access routes around Folkestone and promote access to these sites. Invest in public rights of way linking town and countryside to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people. Ensure recreation is sustainable and does not damage sensitive biodiversity features, through monitoring and management measures as necessary, e.g. through installing interpretation and including information in promotional materials.

FHS 8 Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from fly tipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.

FHS 9 Develop urban walking routes to link open spaces and the coastal sites.

FHS 10 Connect with Folkestone's arts community to bring alive the unique and special wildlife, habitats and heritage of the area, e.g. through artwork, events, installations, festivals.

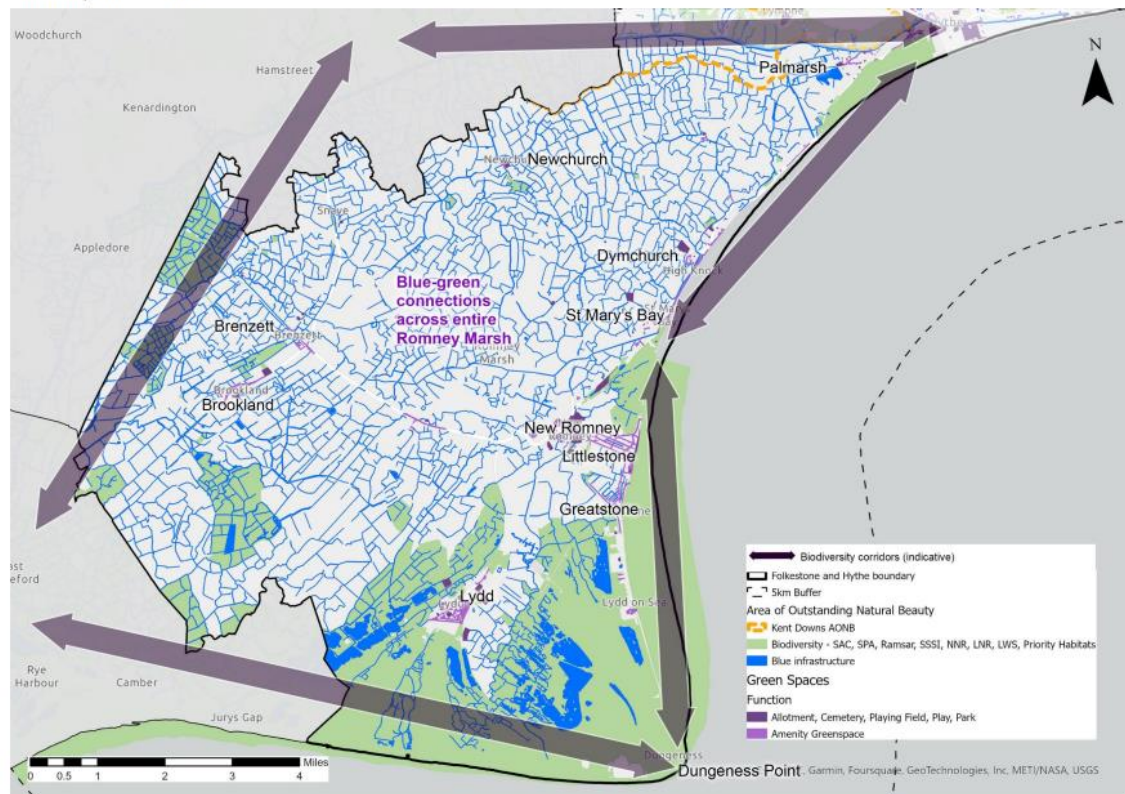
FHS 11 Produce and implement management plan for Folkestone Warren Local Nature Reserve to implement biodiversity management and sustainable recreation.

FHS 12 Investigate the potential for existing open space and the provision of new SuDS suitable to help alleviate surface water flooding in areas where it is a problem, such as along the Pent Stream.



Romney Marsh

Plan 27: Romney Marsh Area



GBI Needs, Opportunities and Priorities - Romney Marsh

RM 1 Consider new cycle path from Lydd to New Romney to take traffic off the road and create a family-friendly route. Employees of the Dungeness Power Station would also benefit if a cycle path was installed along Dungeness Road.

RM 2 Provide a range of promotional materials for walking and cycling to promote sustainable tourism. Highlight the area's outstanding heritage and biodiversity assets.

RM 3 In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.

RM 4 Plan strategically to ensure destination green spaces such as Dungeness RSPB, Dungeness Point, the Royal Military Canal, Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway and the coast are connected through promotional routes.

RM 5 Seek ways to continue legacy projects from the Fifth Continent scheme:

- Restoring vegetated shingle habitat across Dungeness foreland;
- 'Blue lanes' - creating optimal ditch conditions for wildlife through physical works and education; – Green lanes for bumblebees through improved highway cutting regimes and engaging with the community and landowners.



RM 6 Implement The Cinque Ports Cycle Route - to link Folkestone seafront to Lydd in line with LCWIP strategy.

RM 7 Support access and recreation to the coast to benefit communities, the economy and health and wellbeing, while also taking full account of the recommendations in the SARMS.

RM 8 Produce integrated management plan for Greatstone Dunes addressing issues and ensuring sustainable management.

RM 9 Work with golf courses to improve wildlife and pollinator habitats.

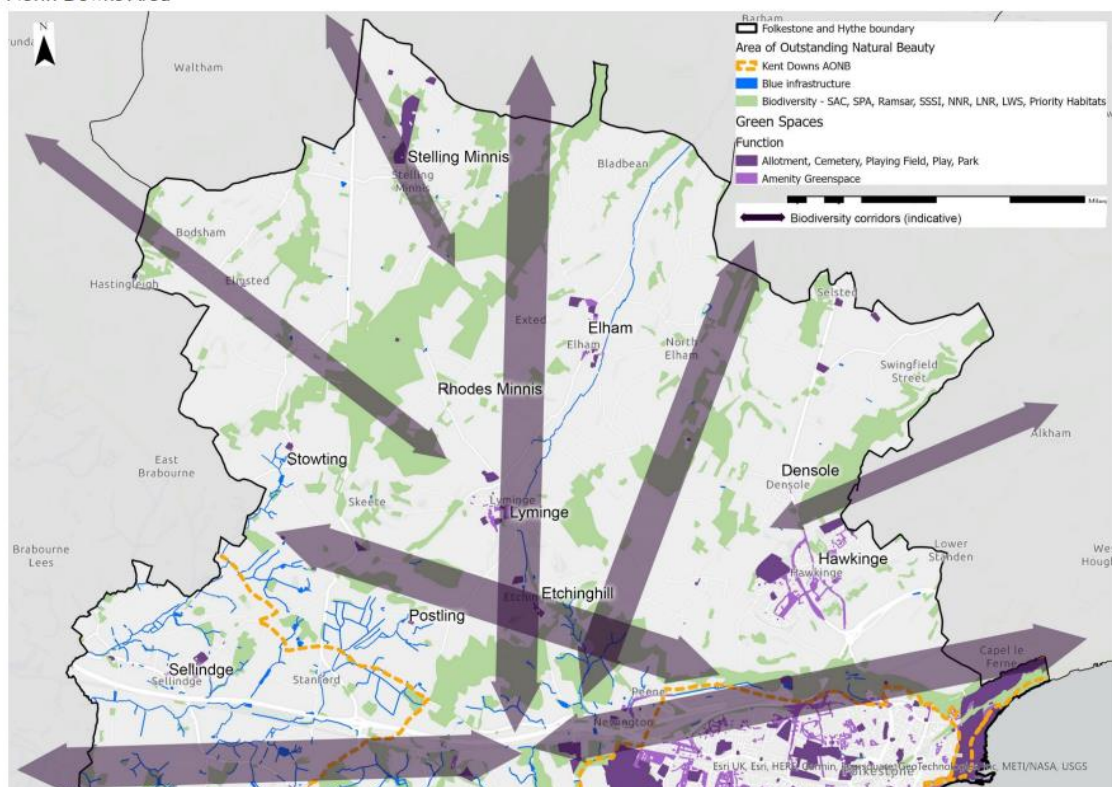
RM 10 Provide more information in tourism material on the biodiversity value of the area and raise awareness of the biodiversity interest and sensitivity of the area with tourism businesses.

RM 11 Work with Ministry of Defence to increase access biodiversity and potentially access, where these do not on land holdings.

RM 12 Work with neighbouring authorities and partners to extend the Royal Military

North Downs Area

Plan 28: North Downs Area





GBI Needs, Opportunities and Priorities - North Downs Area

ND 1 Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views for future generations. Working in partnership with the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit to identify management opportunities in accordance with the management plan.

ND 2 Explore potential opportunities to work with the Forestry Commission and Ministry of Defence to improve public access and public recreation within woodland areas.

ND 3 Conserve and appropriately manage ancient trackways such as the North Downs Way and the Pilgrims' Way and strengthen the network through high quality interconnecting routes, increasing the benefits of these routes for biodiversity, health and local businesses.

ND 4 Recognise and manage the impact of increased visitor numbers on sensitive sites.

ND 5 In many areas public rights of way are the main areas for recreation. Invest in these and promote them for tourism, recreation and health benefits. Improve accessibility of public rights of way to support health and wellbeing.

ND 6 Develop measures to address the lack of biodiversity and flooding problems associated with the Nailbourne.

ND 7 Assess the impact of ash dieback on the landscape and nature conservation interests and, working with local communities, take steps to mitigate impacts.

ND 8 Investigate natural solutions to flood management, where there are problems within the North Downs area and where watercourses in the North Downs lead to flooding downstream, such as along the Pent Stream which flows through Folkestone

2.3.2 Within development and infrastructure

Biodiversity Enhancement

Corporate Plan Priorities: Service ambition 2: A thriving environment

Ensure an excellent environment for everyone - We will take positive measures to encourage biodiversity, both by adapting existing practices (e.g. in relation to grass cutting) and by ensuring a net biodiversity gain in new developments. (Corporate Plan, 2021)

All development sites should seek biodiversity enhancement on site and ensure permeability for wildlife through the site as well as enhancements for wildlife, including hedgehog corridors and swift boxes. This is particularly important for sites within the corridors. Development must also seek biodiversity net gain in line with Local Plan policies. (GBI Main Report, 2023)



Sustainable development

GBI Strategic Priority: BTW 5 Ensure development is sustainable

BTW 5.1 Deliver biodiversity net gain and investigate the viability of an uplift from the statutory 10%, subject to viability and soundness testing.

BTW 5.2 Incorporate biodiversity into housing developments, including hedgehog highways, swift boxes and biodiversity-friendly planting in streets and gardens.

(GBI Main Report, 2023)

Policy CC2- Sustainable Design and Construction

Proposals for all new dwellings or for new non-domestic buildings will be permitted where:

- 1. All new build housing is built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations so as to achieve a maximum use of 110 litres per person per day including external water use where technically feasible and viable. Proposals should demonstrate that water efficiency and water re-use measures have been maximised;*
- 2. For non-residential development, the development achieves BREEAM 'Very Good' standard including addressing maximum water efficiencies under the mandatory water credits, where technically feasible and viable;*
- 3. The development minimises energy demand through passive design and layout and landscape mitigation measures with an aspiration for new major residential developments to achieve zero carbon homes;*
- 4. The development is accessible to all and is designed to be flexible towards future adaptation in response to changing life needs;*
- 5. The development includes measures to adapt to climate change, such as the provision of green infrastructure, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in accordance with Policy CC3, suitable shading of pedestrian routes and open spaces and drought resistant landscaping; and*
- 6. The development provides discretely designed and accessible storage for waste, recycling and composting.*

The standards achieved as detailed above may be a matter for negotiation at the time of the planning application, having regard to abnormal costs, economic viability, the feasibility of meeting the standards on a specific site and other requirements associated with the development. This should be based on quantitative financial evidence. Planning applications for extensions to commercial buildings should include sustainable design measures when



applicants apply for planning permission, unless the improvements are not viable.

Nature-based Solutions (GBI Main Report, 2023):

There are opportunities for greater use of nature-based solutions to water quality and management issues, working with partners, including Southern Water and Kent County Council to take forward new approaches and solutions. New development and private dwellings can be designed to improve water management and quality.

Actions which could help include:

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

Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS)

Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) can help to manage surface water flood risk. Natural features like swales, ponds, tree pits and rain gardens allow water to soak into the ground or be evaporated, reducing the need for traditional piped drainage. SuDS can also provide amenity value, reduce the impacts of climate change and create spaces for nature. Green infrastructure assets are important areas in which to implement or retrofit SuDS. They can also be retrofitted into urban and developed areas through the use of solutions such as rain gardens, specialised tree pits and permeable paved surfaces. (GBI Main Report, 2023)

GBI Strategic Priority: BIC 2 Incorporate SuDS schemes into new development and retrofit into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues.

BIC 2.1 Integrate SuDS into the design of new green infrastructure rather than a separate feature e.g. tree pits with water storage capacity and consider and include future maintenance of the system in the early stages of SuDS design. SuDS should be designed to support biodiversity and amenity uses.

BIC 2.2 Support efforts to tackle diffuse pollution from urban centres and industrial areas e.g. through the implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

BIC 2.3 Incorporate SuDS into new development where appropriate and ensure maintenance.



BIC 2.4 Utilise existing greenspace to incorporate SuDS scheme where these can address a need to control flooding.

(GBI Main Report, 2023)

Policy CC3 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Development will be permitted where:

- 1. Surface water is managed close to its source and on the surface where reasonably practicable to do so;*
- 2. Priority is given to the use of 'ecosystem services' as defined in the Planning Practice Guidance;*
- 3. Water is seen as a resource and is reused where practicable, offsetting potable water demand, and that a water sensitive approach is taken to the design of the development;*
- 4. The features that manage surface water are commensurate with the design of the development in terms of size, form and materials and make an active contribution to place-making;*
- 5. Surface water management features are multi-functional wherever possible in their land use;*
- 6. There is no discharge from the developed site for rainfall depths up to 5mm of any rainfall event;*
- 7. The run-off from all hard surfaces receives an appropriate level of treatment in accordance with Sustainable Drainage Systems guidelines, SuDS Manual (CIRIA C753), to minimise the risk of pollution;*
- 8. Major development accords with Kent County Council's Drainage and Planning Policy Statement 2017 or successor document;*
- 9. Development adjacent to a water body actively seeks to enhance the water body in terms of its hydromorphology, biodiversity potential and setting; and*
- 10. All hard surfaces are permeable surfaces where reasonably practicable.*

The district is one of the driest districts in England, and this is only likely to increase given the likely impacts of climate change. Mechanisms to ensure the effective collection and reuse of water should be designed into any surface water drainage system. Any development should also ensure the drainage design is resilient to these future changes.



2.4 SPECIES SPECIFIC

2.4.1 Rare Moths (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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

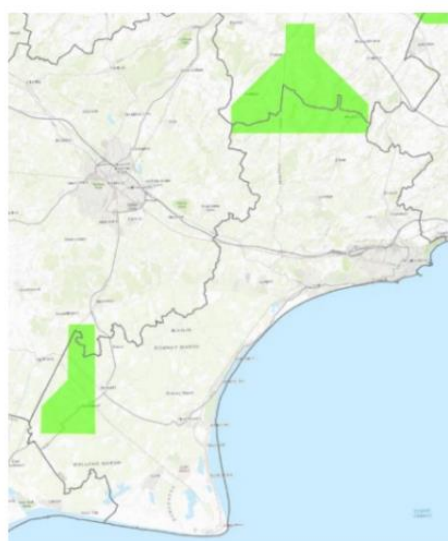
2.4.2 Short-haired Bumblebee (*Bombus subterraneus*) (GBI Main Report, 2023)

This bumblebee was once widespread across southern England but its population declined severely from the 1950's onwards. It was last recorded at Dungeness in 1988 but was declared extinct in 2000. A project, run by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, has been providing advice to farmers and landowners on managing and creating flower-rich meadows in the Romney Marsh and Dungeness following the reintroduction of the species in 2009. Unfortunately, the reintroduction appears to have been unsuccessful (as of 2022). Monitoring has shown that several species of rare bumblebees²³ have increased due to the project. On nature reserves, rare bumblebees have increased eight-fold with advice and planting and away from reserves rare bees have increased three-fold.

2.4.3 Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) and other Farmland Birds (GBI Main Report, 2023)

The Turtle Dove, a Kent Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, is the UK's fastest declining bird species and is threatened with global extinction. Breeding populations have collapsed in recent decades and the decline is continuing. Breeding Bird Survey data shows a 93% fall in breeding abundance between 1995 and 2014. Turtle Dove²⁴ The Turtle Dove occurs on arable and mixed farmland that offers suitable nesting habitat and is largely confined to southern and eastern England. A continuous supply of weed and crop seed is needed from late April until the end of August. The presence of tall mature hedgerows, areas of scrub or woodland edges with a thick shrub layer for nesting are also

Figure 1: RSPB Turtle Dove Friendly Zones





beneficial.

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

The Romney Marsh is also important for other farmland birds. The RSPB's Romney Marsh farmland bird project²⁴ is working alongside farmers and landowners to increase a range of farmland bird populations, including grey partridges, corn buntings, tree sparrows, yellow wagtails, lapwings, skylarks, yellowhammers and linnets.

2.4.4 Medicinal Leeches (*Hirudo medicinalis*) (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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

2.4.5 Chalk Grassland Orchids (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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

2.4.6 Water voles

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

2.4.7 Craneflies and other invertebrates

The Seabrook Stream to the west of Hythe is a SSSI. The stream flows through a valley rich in wildlife and a range of fen and wet woodland habitats. The area supports a nationally important range of craneflies. Brockhill Country Park lies in a



similar valley, with wetland habitats modified in Victorian times to create a pleasure garden., This site also supports a wide range of craneflies and other invertebrates.

2.4.8 Over-wintering birds

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



SECTION 3: WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

3.1 GOAL 2: AIR QUALITY (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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

Folkestone and Hythe Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020 shows that, as in previous years, there has never been any exceedances of the annual mean objective for Nitrogen dioxide, or NO₂, (a gaseous air pollutant composed of nitrogen and oxygen NO₂ forms when fossil fuels such as coal, oil, gas or diesel are burned at high temperatures). As a result, no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have ever been declared within Folkestone and Hythe. However, the council has continued to develop and implement specific measures related to the control and mitigation of air pollution sources, such as the Click2cycle bike sharing service in Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe, launched in June 2018.

3.2 GOAL 3: CLEAN AND PLENTIFUL WATER (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Managing surface water in a sustainable manner, e.g. through SuDS, can ensure that new development does not exacerbate flood risk on site or within the catchment. New development could incorporate SuDS integrated into green infrastructure. Management and maintenance plans for these, properly implemented, help to improve water quality by removing pollutants and putting clean water back into the environment.

3.3 GOAL 4: MANAGING EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

3.4 GOAL 5: MAXIMISE OUR RESOURCES, MINIMISE OUR WASTE (Corporate Plan, 2021)

We will seek to drive up recycling rates and we will work with partners to highlight the benefits from reducing, rethinking, recycling and reusing materials. Education will be a vital part of this. We will work with schools and community groups to raise awareness of the many environmental challenges and we will take measures to raise pride in the district.



3.5 GOAL 6: USING RESOURCES FROM NATURE SUSTAINABLY

Policy CC4 Wind Turbine Development (Local Plan, 2020)

The creation of wind turbines at a community and commercial scale will be supported where proposals demonstrate that the development site is in an area allocated for wind energy development in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

Our long-term resilience will depend on our ability to encourage and create a more sustainable district, consuming fewer natural resources. We will embrace becoming a 'green exemplar council, embedding measures to reduce our carbon footprint, enabling active travel and enhancing the natural environment. We will also look to identify more sustainable options as we make new policy and service choices recognising that the actions we take in the next three years will have a long-term impact. We are already investigating a potential relocation of the council from the existing Civic Centre to reduce our carbon footprint, and we will explore this, and other ambitious options, further. Where there are cost challenges associated with securing more sustainable options, we will work with partners to secure external funding. We will balance the sustainable aspirations of the council with ensuring our financial resilience is maintained. (Corporate Plan, 2021)

3.6 GOAL 7: MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Folkestone and Hythe District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The council has allocated a budget to deliver initiatives which will help the council to meet a target of being operationally net-zero by 2030. In 2021 the council published its Carbon Action Plan. This Carbon Action Plan sits alongside the council's Corporate Plan 2021-30.

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

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

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

- Review the use of peat, redesign mowing regimes and support adaptation measures such as tree planting for carbon sequestration and 'cooling-off' benefits;



- Use council-owned land to increase biodiversity and carry out tree planting;
- Continue to work with Environment Agency, Kent County Council, business organisations and community groups to develop appropriate flood mitigation measures and tree planting schemes across the district;
- Ensure that the Local Plan continues to develop and implement policies that will deliver improved net zero carbon building standards - subject to national policy;
- This strategy is also listed as an action and as an important supporting strategy to meeting ambitions to address climate change
(GBI Main Report, 2023)

Strategic Priority: BTW 4 Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts (GBI Main Report, 2023)

BTW 4.1 Bring forward nature-based solutions as cost-effective, climate adapted and biodiversity-supporting alternatives to 'grey' engineering solutions.

BTW 4.2 Increase tree and woodland cover and increase canopy cover, following the 'right tree, right place' principle. Increase street trees in all urban areas.

BTW 4.3 Develop a tree and woodland strategy to ensure tree planting follows principle of 'right tree right place', to promote sustainable woodland management, to plan for the effects of ash dieback and to increase the overall canopy of Folkestone and Hythe.

BTW 4.4 Identify habitat areas within Folkestone and Hythe for protection as carbon sinks and wildlife habitats.

Corporate Priorities: Increase our resilience to climate change (Corporate Plan, 2021)

Internally, we will improve the council's energy and resource efficiency. We will reduce our use of electricity and gas (yielding a financial return to the council as well as an environmental benefit), we will reduce the impact of our fleet and where possible replace with electric vehicles as they become due for replacement, and we will encourage greater use of walking and cycling by our staff. Over the longer term, we will adapt our operating model to become increasingly environmentally sustainable.

Across the district as a whole, we will support higher sustainability standards in new developments including solar power, rainwater harvesting and electric vehicle charging points. Otterpool Park presents a unique opportunity to embrace sustainability principles. We will take advantage where possible of initiatives to retrofit energy efficiency measures in existing homes and commercial properties, and working with partners we will promote these actively.

3.7 GOAL 8: REDUCE RISK OF HARM FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

3.8 GOAL 9: ENHANCE BIOSECURITY



3.9 GOAL 10: ENHANCE BEAUTY, HERITAGE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

3.9.1 Heritage

GBI Strategic Priorities: LH 2 Ensure heritage is recognised in green and blue infrastructure planning, interpretation, and tourism. (GBI Main Report, 2023)

LH 2.1 Promote and enhance heritage assets.

LH 2.2 Improve accessibility of heritage sites through sustainable transport links and enhanced interpretation (where appropriate) and community engagement.

LH 2.3 Identify heritage and local distinctiveness which can be used to guide future development.

LH 2.4 Identify and protect important viewpoints of heritage assets and ensure that the historic natural environment is respected and interpreted through new development.

LH 2.5 Protect archaeological sites and promote public awareness, and access where possible.

Policy HE1 Heritage Assets (Local Plan, 2020)

The Council will grant permission for proposals which promote an appropriate and viable use of heritage assets, consistent with their conservation and their significance, particularly where these bring at risk or under-used heritage assets back into use or improve public accessibility to the asset.

3.9.2 Beauty (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Green corridors are a key component of the open space network in Folkestone and Hythe. These sites are predominantly linked to the waterways and coastal areas which have shaped the gradual evolution of the district. As well as contributing to local character, these corridors provide opportunities for recreation, sustainable travel for people and nature conservation.

GBI Strategic Priorities: LH 1 Strengthen and reinforce landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character.

LH 1.1 Manage woodland, aiming for a linked network of woodland, shaws and hedgerows, and replace dead ash with alternative species as appropriate. Restore characteristic landscape features such as hedgerows and woodlands. Ensure new tree establishment associated with climate mitigation respects and enhances landscape character and qualities.

LH 1.2 Protect and enhance the landscape and views in the Kent Downs AONB and its setting, support the co-ordinated management of the landscape and habitats,



promote wildlife value, enable and manage access for recreation, with reference to the Kent Downs AONB management plan and landscape character assessment.

LH 1.3 Strengthen and reinforce natural features like watercourses as accessible green corridors linking built up areas with the wider countryside.

LH 1.4 Develop strategies for partnership working to enhance the landscape, for example for woodland and farmland management.

LH 1.5 Strengthen and reinforce landscape structure in the urban–rural fringe areas. Ensure that the edges of new and existing urban and rural settlements blend comfortably with the surrounding countryside.

LH 1.6 Protect water resources, wetland habits, fen and reedbed, chalk grassland, traditional orchards and other heritage landscape features.

LH 1.7 Ensure that new development recognises landscape character in proposals and seeks to conserve and enhance landscape features and, where development is within or impacts on the Kent Downs AONB, have particular regard to the natural beauty of protected landscape.

LH 1.8 Protect the naturalness and landscape character of the districts unique and varied coastal landscapes

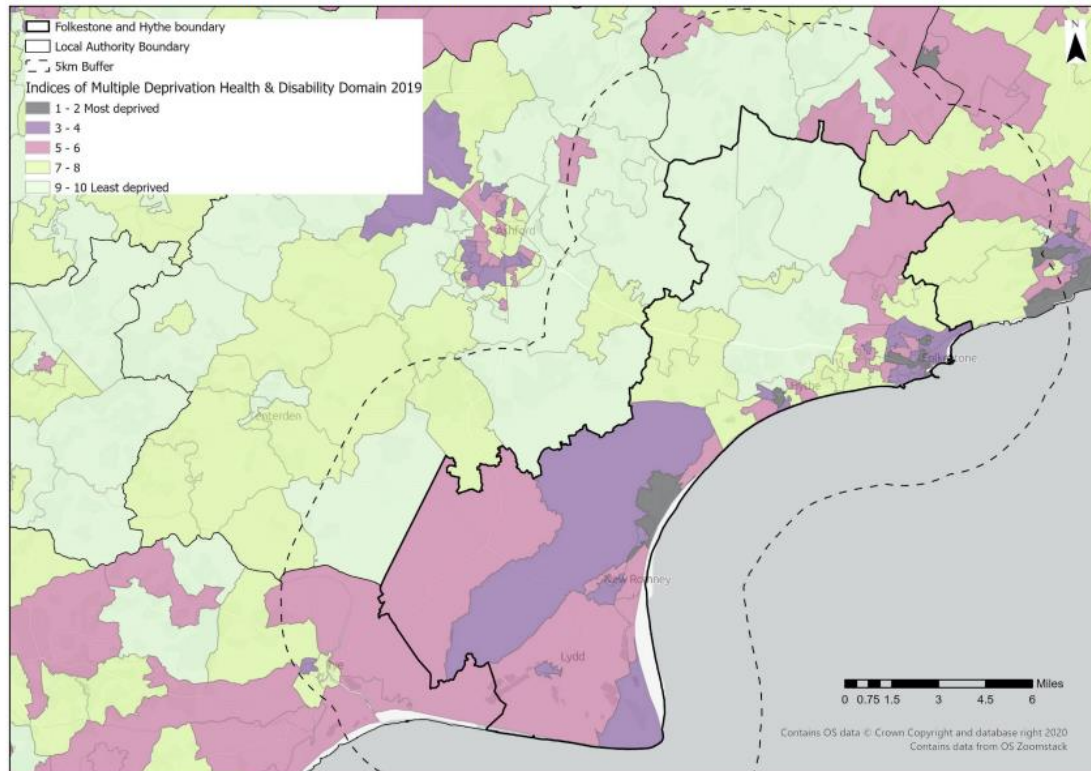
3.9.3 Health and wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing in Folkestone and Hythe (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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



Plan 16: Indices of Multiple Deprivation Health and Disability Domain 2019 National Rank



(GBI Main Report, 2023)

Green Social Prescribing (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Public Health England recommends working with health professionals to promote the role greenspace plays in both individual and population health outcomes. This will support the health service's ambition to take more action to prevent poor health and to use green assets, through initiatives such as social prescribing, as part of the overall plan to achieve this aim. They further advise establishing interventions, such as green social prescribing initiatives, that will support people who do not use greenspace to begin using it. Programmes to support social engagement or to facilitate participation in activities coupled with improvements to the physical environment, are an effective approach to enable people to start using these spaces and to continue to use them.

Allotments and Community Growing Spaces (GBI Main Report, 2023)

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

Strategic Priorities – Health and Wellbeing (GBI Main Report, 2023)

HW 1 Support people in taking healthy exercise and engaging in nature for both their physical and mental health.



HW 2 Provide access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.

HW 3 Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.

Corporate Priorities: Ensure an excellent environment for everyone (Corporate Plan, 2021)

We will ensure a clean, attractive and safe environment for residents, visitors and businesses. We recognise the connection between a quality environment and health and wellbeing (both mental and physical) and we will embed this in service provision and planning. That means providing more opportunities for active travel and recreation, improving cycling and walking routes and working with colleagues in the health and the voluntary sector to join up the benefits

3.9.4 Access to nature

Policy NE1 Enhancing and Managing Access to the Natural Environment (Local Plan, 2020)

To enhance access to the natural environment the Council will:

- 1. Target opportunities for improvements on routes and links from urban areas where access is currently poor, except where there would be an adverse impact on sensitive areas;*
- 2. Improve access to key open spaces identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy from all areas; and*
- 3. Manage access to Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas through the implementation of the Dungeness Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS) and identify or enhance land elsewhere to divert recreation activities away from those designations by the provision of enhanced facilities, such as at urban parks.*

Strategic Priorities – Access, Recreation and Active Travel (GBI Main Report, 2023)

AR 1 Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Folkestone and Hythe's future residents.

AR 2 Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.

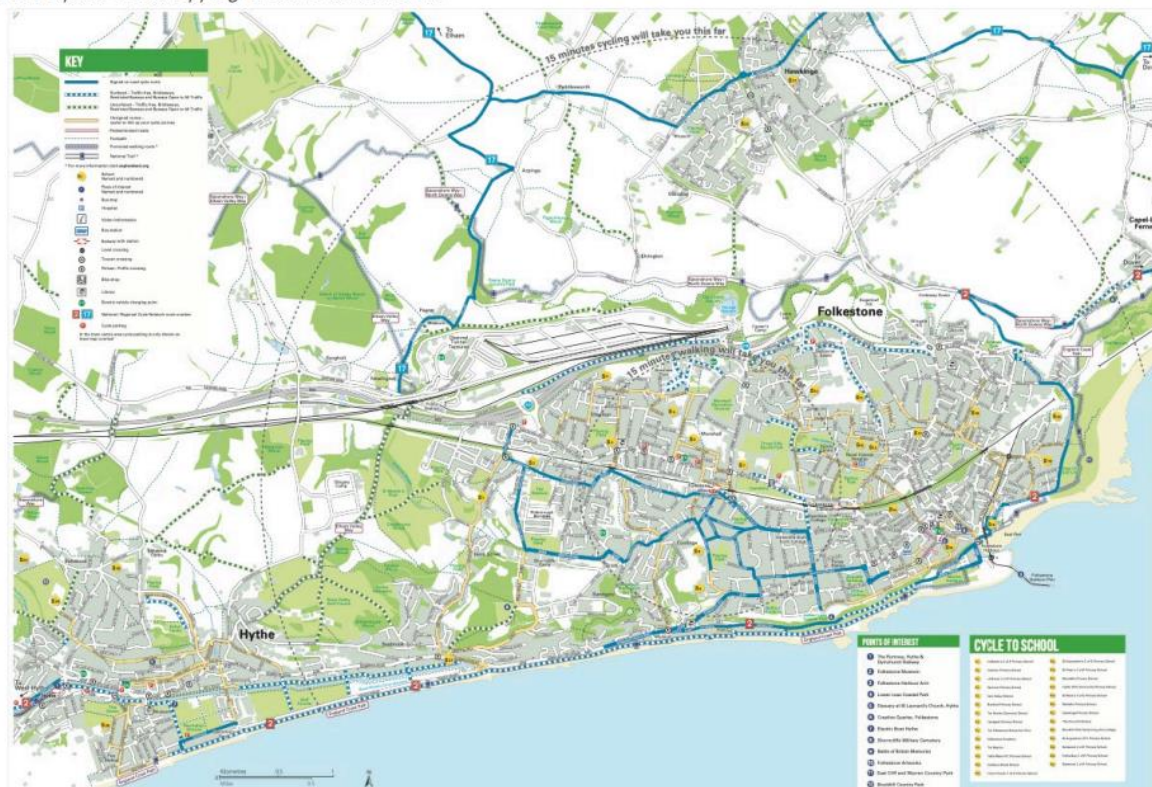
AR 3 Maximise the benefits of recreation and access to Folkestone and Hythe's unique landscapes and greenspaces, whilst ensuring that this does not have a negative impact on them, their special character or their biodiversity



Policy HW4 Promoting Active Travel (Local Plan, 2020)

Planning permission will be granted for development likely to give rise to increased travel demands, where the site has (or will attain) sufficient integration and accessibility by walking and cycling including, where appropriate, through: 1. The provision of new cycle and walking routes that connect to existing networks, including the wider public rights of way network, to strengthen connections between settlements and the wider countryside; 2. The protection and improvement of existing cycle and walking routes, including the public rights of way network, to ensure the effectiveness and amenity of these routes is maintained, including through maintenance, crossings, signposting and way-marking, and, where appropriate, widening and lighting; 3. The provision of safe, direct routes within permeable layouts that facilitate and encourage short distance trips by walking and cycling between home and nearby centres of attraction, and to bus stops or railway stations, to provide real travel choice for some or all of the journey; and 4. The provision of, or contributions towards, new cycle and walking routes identified in adopted strategic documents.

Plan 12: Explore Kent Mapping of Active Travel Routes





Folkestone and Hythe Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) (GBI Main Report, 2023)

The main outputs of LCWIPs are:

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

Public Rights of Way (GBI Main Report, 2023)

Public rights of way in the district cover 578 km or 359 miles. There are more footpaths (for walking only) than other types of public rights of way, and there is a higher concentration of public bridleways in the north of the district (Plan 13). There are many promoted routes using public rights of way within the Folkestone and Hythe district (Plans 14 and 15 and Table 4). Longer distance routes include the England Coastal Path, the Elham Valley Way, the North Downs Way, the Coast to Cathedral – Dover to Canterbury, the Royal Military Canal, Sandwich in Kent to Rye in East Sussex and the Saxon Shore Way.

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

3.9.5 Connection with nature

GBI Strategic Priority: BTW 3 Link people and nature (GBI Main Report, 2023)

BTW 3.1 Celebrate and raise awareness of Folkestone and Hythe's iconic species and habitats and the need to conserve them.

BTW 3.2 Get people involved in conservation activities, including action for pollinators, biodiversity improvements and tree planting.

BTW 3.3 Support local people, parish and town councils, businesses and community organisations in taking community action for nature.

BTW 3.4 Promote the action of residents and businesses to improve wildlife through, for example, gardening for wildlife, pollinator projects, wildflower meadows, connecting habitats, hedgehog highways and installing swift boxes.

BTW 3.5 Incorporate nature into Folkestone and Hythe-owned parks and amenity spaces so that people can experience nature close to where they live and create stepping stones for wildlife, for example through permanent wildlife areas such as wildflower meadows, or through initiatives such as 'No Mow May'.



BTW 3.6 Designate more Local Nature Reserves to increase the hectare provision per 1,000 people with a more even distribution across the district.

BTW 3.7 Improve school grounds, including tree planting, growing spaces and wildflower gardens.

BTW 3.8 Link green and blue infrastructure with the vibrant arts and cultural community in the district.

3.9.6 Open spaces and recreation

The Open Space Strategy (GBI Main Report, 2023)

The Open Space Strategy recommends that existing green links and corridors should be strengthened including the extensive beaches and cliff-tops and the Royal Military Canal. The Folkestone and Sandgate 'Green Chain' (see Plan 26) links urban and urban fringe sites including the Seabrook Valley, Folkestone Downs, Sandgate Escarpment, the Lower Leas Coastal Park and the East Cliff and The Warren.

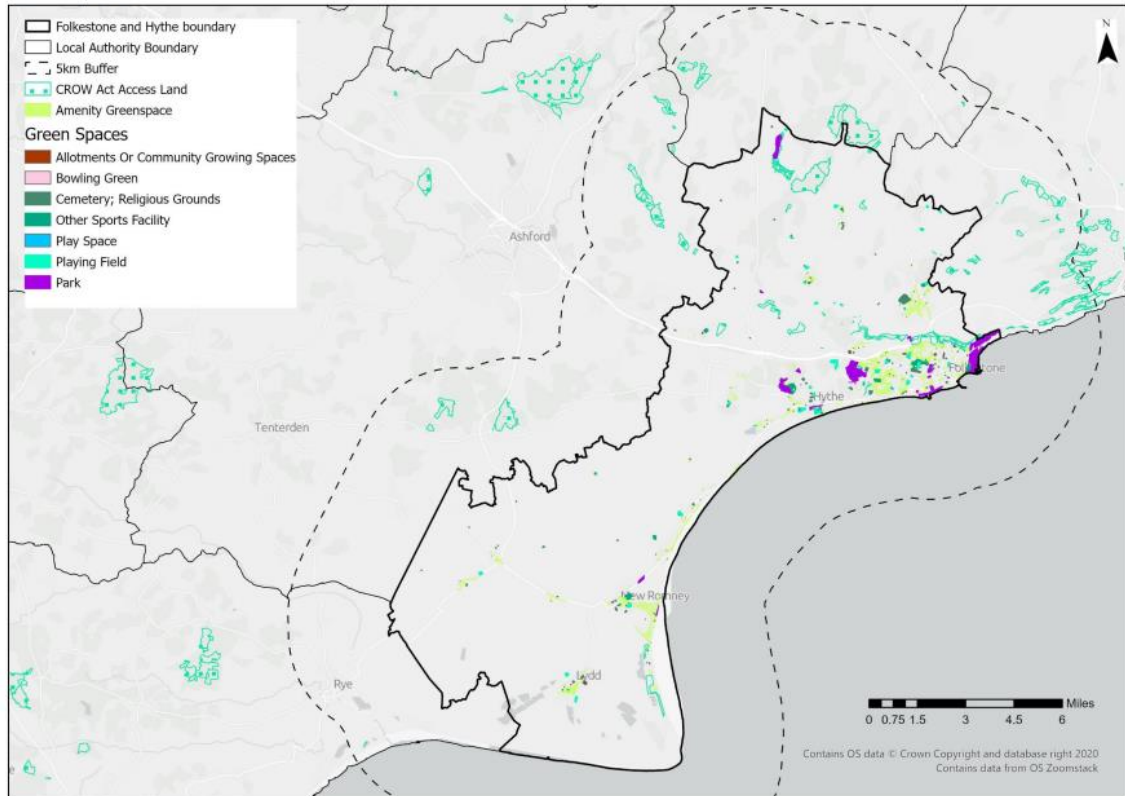
The Open Space Strategy concluded that the quality and value of publicly accessible open space across Folkestone and Hythe is relatively good, with three Green Flag Award sites. However, a notable proportion of low value parks, natural and semi-natural greenspace and green corridors across the district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

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

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



Plan 11: Greenspaces



Policy C3 Provision of Open Space (Local Plan, 2020)

To meet the additional need in open space generated by new residential developments the Council will require proposals of 20 or more dwellings to provide for open space in accordance with the standards in Table 12.1 above. Where full provision on-site would not be appropriate or desirable, or the proposed development is less than 20 dwellings, the space needed may be met by commuted sum payment towards the provision or improvement of open space nearby on a scale related to the size and scale of the development. This gross open space calculation may include provision of publicly available:

- i. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), provided they do not compromise the safety of open space users;*
- ii. Informal sports pitches; and*
- iii. Formal play spaces.*

Any new open space should be transferred to and maintained in perpetuity by a management company or, if agreed, the local Town or Parish Council, the District Council or appropriate community group or charity, subject to payment of a commuted sum. Existing open spaces, as defined on the Policies Map, will be safeguarded. Development proposals that would result in the loss of open spaces will be granted provided that:



- 1. An assessment has been undertaken which clearly identifies the open space is surplus to requirements; or*
- 2. The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of the standards in Table 12.1 above; or*
- 3. The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss*



SECTION 4: DISTRICT PROJECTS TO NOTE

4.1 Aspiring Cross-Channel UNESCO Global Geopark (Geopark)

The Cross-Channel Geopark is a celebration of the internationally significant geodiversity that can be found on either side of the Channel, including in Folkestone & Hythe. From the unique geological site of the Folkestone Warren to our stunning chalk downland landscape and even the incredible story of the Megaflood that created the Strait of Dover that separates us from France, we are surrounded by amazing geodiversity. The aim of the Cross-Channel Geopark project is for this geodiversity to be recognised as globally important by UNESCO and ultimately gain UNESCO Global Geopark status, which will bring significant sustainable tourism benefits to the district whilst also raising awareness of the unique geology of our area.

The Cross-Channel Geopark project is being led on the Kent side by the Kent Downs National Landscape, who are already delivering educational sessions for schools, community groups and the general public, as well as access and interpretation improvements at particular sites in the district, alongside lots of other activity. You can find out more and get involved here - <https://kentdowns.org.uk/geopark/>.

4.2 Grant Scheme Launched for Community Projects 2023/24 (Community Projects)

Community projects across Folkestone & Hythe are set to benefit from a pot of £90,000 grant funding.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council's member ward budget scheme gives each of its 30 councillors up to £3,000 to award to initiatives in the district.

Applications for 2023/24 are now being accepted. Previous recipients include Charivari, FHODS / The Tower Theatre, Folkestone Sea Sauna, Sandgate Scouts and Pevement Punders.

4.3 Otterpool Park (Biodiveristy)

The Otterpool Park development is being designed to protect, minimise and mitigate the impact of the project on the environment.

Half of the development will be green open space with existing habitats retained, protected and enhanced where possible. The scheme is being designed with landscape and green infrastructure fully integrated into the development and over half the area will be green open space. Green corridors will be built into the scheme to link spaces across the site, promote healthy lifestyles and protect and enhance habitats. A biodiversity action plan is also being developed to increase biodiversity on the site by 20%.



SECTION 5: SPECIFIC PRIORITIES WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

5.1 Available Plans - St Mary in Marsh Neighbourhood Plan

[st-mary-in-the-marsh-neighbourhood-plan-september-2018 \(folkestone-hythe.gov.uk\)](http://st-mary-in-the-marsh-neighbourhood-plan-september-2018.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)



SECTION 6: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND REFERENCED

Document reference	Link
GBI Main Report, 2023	Folkestone and Hythe Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Main Report FINAL July 2023.pdf
Local Plan, 2020	Adopted Plan pdf.pdf
Corporate Plan, 2021	creating-tomorrow-together-corporate-plan-2021-2030.pdf (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)
Community Projects	2023/24 Grant Scheme Launched for Community Projects - Folkestone and Hythe Liberal Democrats (fhld.uk)
Biodiversity	Biodiversity Folkestone & Hythe District Council (folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)