



Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper,¹ Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention,³ we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

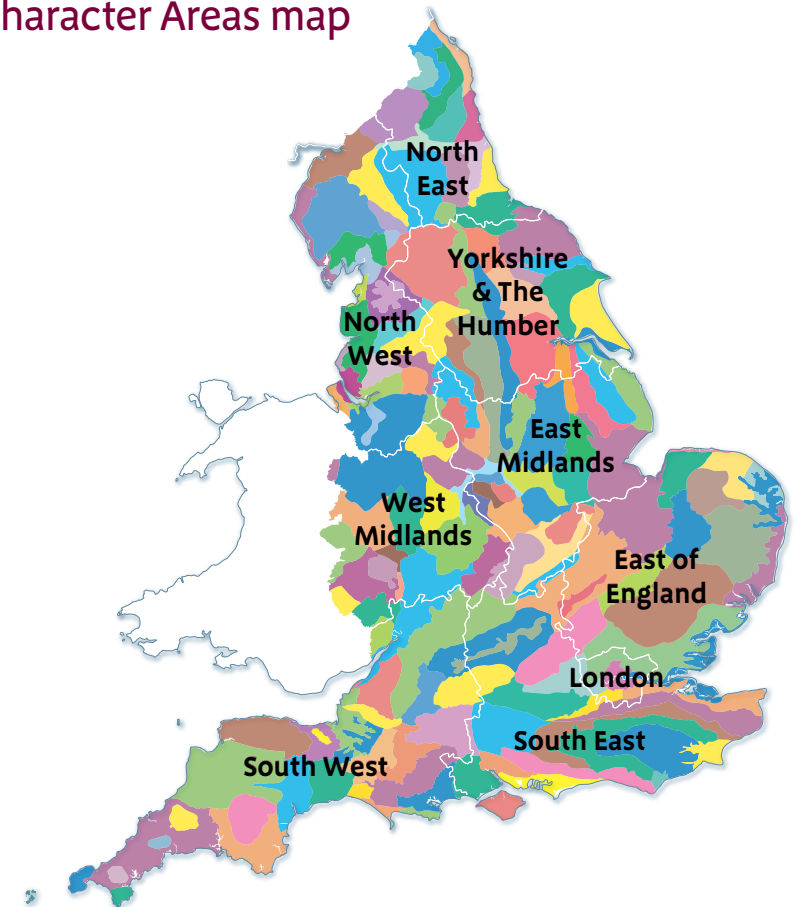
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk.

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The South Coast Plain National Character Area (NCA) is a flat, coastal landscape with an intricately indented shoreline lying between the dip slope of the South Downs and South Hampshire Lowlands and the waters of the English Channel, Solent and part of Southampton Water. The coastline includes several major inlets which have particularly distinctive local landscapes and intertidal habitats of international environmental importance for wildfowl and waders. Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies within the NCA and the foothills of the South Downs, along the northern boundary, fall within the South Downs National Park.

Some three per cent of the area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and there are four Special Protection Areas, two Special Areas of Conservation and four Ramsar sites: Chichester and Langstone Harbour, Pagham Harbour, The Solent and Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour.

The harbours and the Manhood Peninsula, a small triangular peninsula south of Chichester, are the last relatively undeveloped stretches of coastline within the NCA. Elsewhere, there is significant urban development, with settlements along the coast dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, trunk roads, suburban villages and an extensive string of seaside towns between Brighton and Southampton. Modern marinas and boatyards have also added to the harbour landscape. Although heavily developed and highly populated, there is a feeling of openness, particularly where sea views reveal wide expanses of sea and sky, with the Isle of Wight forming a backdrop in the west of the area. Long, linear shingle beaches and more locally, sand dunes, are important coastal features.

The area is generally very low lying and heavily defended against flooding and erosion with various schemes in place, including the country's first managed realignment on the open coast at Medmerry.

The economy is intricately linked to marine and recreational activities such as sailing, boat-building, fishing, heritage sites and recreational sports. Other commercial interests are mainly concentrated in the large urban centres such as Portsmouth and Gosport. The area also supports intensive arable farming and horticulture. Demand for residential and commercial property is ever increasing due to the NCA's attractive nature and strategic location for national and international trade.

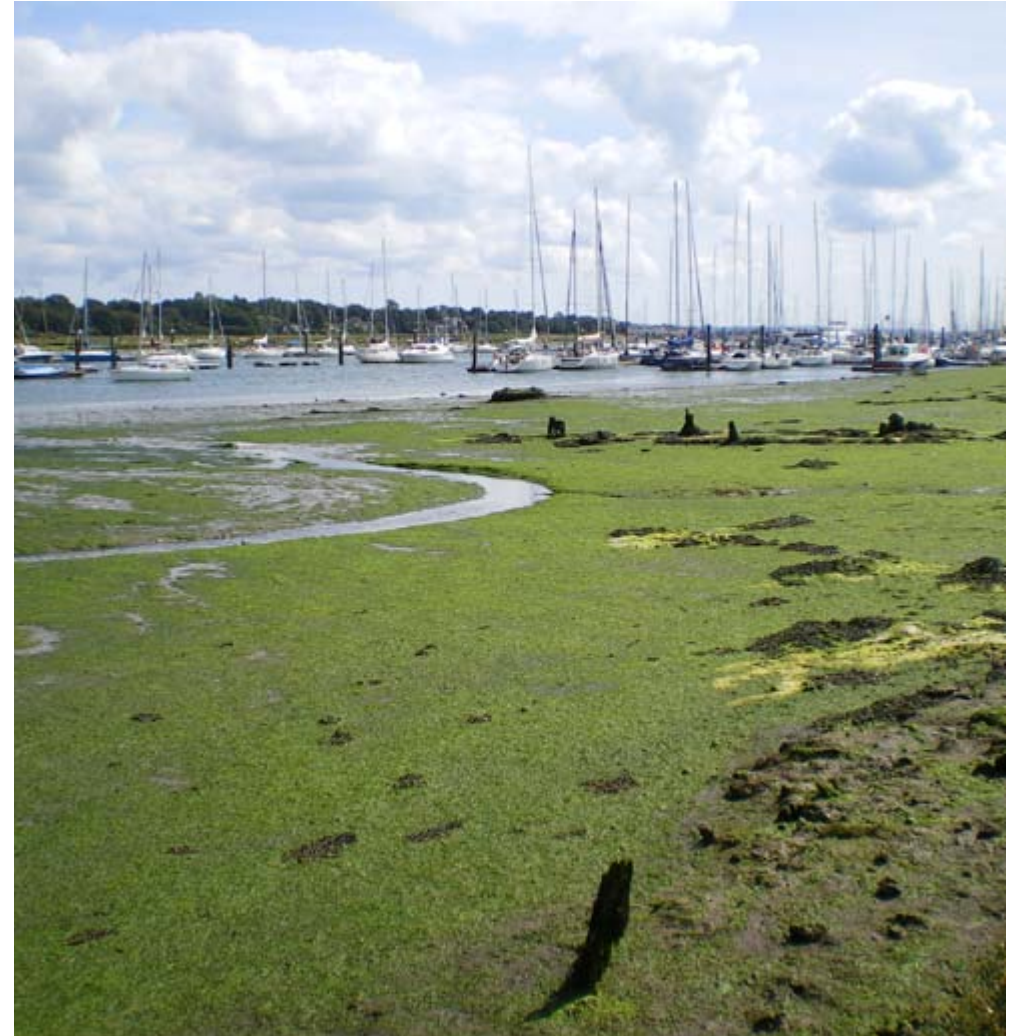
Future management of this NCA requires balancing the needs of often competing interests. Protection against flooding remains a priority to encourage growth and allow internationally important habitats and species to flourish, while also maintaining the productive landscape and historic and geological features of the area.

[Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce](#)

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Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

- **SEO 1:** Plan for and manage the effects of coastal change by allowing the operation of natural coastal processes and improving the sustainability of current management practices along the diverse coastline to successfully integrate the needs of the natural environment, landscape, local communities, agriculture, tourism and recreation amid significant urban stretches.
- **SEO 2:** Plan for the creation of a strong landscape framework within and around major settlements and identified growth areas, while managing and enhancing existing greenspace and access, and balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the natural environment.
- **SEO 3:** Manage and significantly enhance the area's rivers and chalk streams and their wetland valley habitats to provide resilience against climate change and improve flood protection and water quality, particularly in the internationally designated sites such as Chichester and Pagham harbours, for the benefit of local communities and wildlife.
- **SEO 4:** Manage the rich archaeological and historic resource and geological exposures within the farmed, coastal and peri-urban landscape, including the longstanding associations of horticultural and maritime industries and the military, enhancing a strong sense of place.



Hamble Estuary.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The South Coast Plain National Character Area (NCA) is a narrow strip running along the Hampshire and Sussex coast from the edge of Southampton in the west to Brighton and Hove in the east. The South Hampshire Lowlands NCA rises gently in the north until Portsmouth, after which the higher South Downs NCA forms the backdrop along the remaining northern boundary. The underlying geology is part of the Hampshire Basin which stretches to Dorset and the northern half of the Isle of Wight, within the chalk borders of the Purbeck Hills, Cranborne Chase, South Downs and Salisbury Plain.

The Arun, Adur, Hamble and Meon rivers drain south from the higher ground of the Downs, through this NCA to the coast, along with other smaller streams and rifies. Public water supply relies on surface water abstractions and groundwater from the Lower Greensand aquifer and the Worthing and Chichester chalk blocks. The Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) connect this coastline with the South Hampshire Lowlands NCA and New Forest NCA in the west and the Isle of Wight, to which it is also connected by Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC.

In the west, there are views to the Isle of Wight across the Solent and to the New Forest NCA across Southampton Water. East–west trunk roads define the northern boundary; the M27 starts at Portsmouth and runs west to the New

Forest NCA and the A27 runs east to Brighton and Hastings. The A3(M) cuts north through the Downs, linking this NCA with Surrey and London. The West Coastway Line railway runs between Southampton and Brighton and the port of Portsmouth provides international links.

The Manhood Peninsula is a small triangular peninsula south of Chichester and remote from the rest of the NCA. Its southern headland, Selsey Bill, is a prominent coastal deposition feature, which projects out into the Solent well beyond the line of the rest of the coast. It is one of the last, and largest, relatively undeveloped stretches of coastline between Newhaven and Southampton.

Distinct areas

- Manhood Peninsula.

Key characteristics

- The plain slopes gently southwards towards the coast. From the coastal plain edge there are long views towards the sea and the Isle of Wight beyond.
 - The underlying geology of flinty marine and valley gravels extends several miles inland to the dip slope of the South Downs and the South Hampshire Lowlands. This gives rise to deep and well-drained high-quality soils.
 - In places, streams and rivers flow south from the higher land of the Downs to the sea.
 - Coastal inlets and 'harbours' contain a diverse landscape of narrow tidal creeks, mudflats, shingle beaches, dunes, grazing marshes and paddocks. These include the internationally important Chichester, Langstone, Portsmouth and Pagham harbours, the Hamble Estuary and the recent coastal realignment site at Medmerry between Chichester Harbour and Selsey.
 - There are stretches of farmed land between developed areas, often with large arable fields defined by low hedges or ditches.
 - There are isolated remnants of coastal heath in the west.
 - Sand dune grasses and intertidal marsh communities are characteristic of the coastline, while small areas of species-rich meadow remain inland.
 - The coastline provides feeding grounds for internationally protected populations of overwintering waders and wildfowl and is also extensively used for recreation.
- Along the exposed, open coastal plain and shoreline, tree cover is limited to isolated wind-sculpted woodlands and shelterbelts.
 - The area has significant urban development, with settlements along the coastline dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, suburban villages and seaside towns including Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing linked by major road and rail systems.
 - Historic fortifications along the coast include the Roman fort at Portchester and 19th-century defences and later naval installations built to protect the Portsmouth naval dockyard.



Catamaran departing Portsmouth Harbour.

South Coast Plain today

The South Coast Plain NCA is broadly divided into the coastal margins which are heavily influenced by the sea; the expansive lower coastal plain which occupies most of the area; and the upper coastal plain which forms the transition between the lower plain and the chalk dip slopes of the South Downs and the South Hampshire Lowlands. Superficial deposits have given rise to a range of fertile soils which combine with the flat terrain and favourable climatic conditions to result in high-quality agricultural land. The east-west fold of chalk known as the Littlehampton anticline forms an isolated ridge to the north of Portsmouth, known as Portsdown, which forms a prominent setting to the harbour. Elsewhere, the Downs form a strong backdrop to the whole plain, while there are extensive views to the Isle of Wight.

The plain is crossed by rivers flowing south from the Downs to the sea, including the Meon, Hamble, Adur and Arun, which locally form wide alluvial flood plains. It is also cut by southward-facing chalk streams which each have dry headwater extensions over the upper plain and on into the dip slope of the South Downs. Flooded gravel pits, a legacy of historic extraction, make up some of the largest areas of freshwater in the region.

The lower coastal plain is heavily urbanised. In between development and transport links is a farmed landscape of large open fields with few trees or hedgerows. Drainage ditches, wire fences or low banks are more usual as field boundaries.

To the north and east of the area, the upper coastal plain comprises flat, regular patterns of large fields with the gentle forms and patterns, blending into the

openness of the lower dip slope of the South Downs with a small part of the South Downs National Park falling within the NCA. Here the landscape is varied, incorporating both open arable farmland and low-density settlements, with a more wooded and semi-enclosed (somewhat suburban) character locally, particularly to the west of Chichester. Along the north of the area there is a network of small- and medium-sized broadleaved woodlands, including ancient and semi-natural, well linked by hedgerows and garden exotics providing an enclosed field framework. Elsewhere tree cover varies. This is a fertile area that supports intensive arable farming and horticulture, particularly soft fruit. There are concentrations of glasshouses in some areas and increasing use of polytunnels. Areas where soils are shallow, stony and poorly drained – such as the Arun flood plain – often support good-quality permanent grassland. The thicker gravel deposits support a mixture of high- and medium-quality soils which are intensively farmed where the soils are flintier.

East of Chichester the exposed shoreline is an open, linear landscape of shingle and sand. To the west, the coastline is deeply indented by three natural harbours separated by the Portsmouth and Hayling Island peninsulas. Here broad expanses of sheltered water are edged by an attractive mix of mudflats, marshes, wetland scrub and low-lying fields occasionally interrupted by creeks. Chichester Harbour, for example, is one of the largest natural harbours along the south coast with a diverse landscape of numerous inlets interspersed with fairly open agricultural peninsulas and wind-sculpted woodlands. It is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and one of four Ramsar sites and two SPA in this NCA, designated primarily for internationally important numbers of wildfowl and waders, including Brent

geese and dunlin. There are also two SAC – Solent Maritime and Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons. Along the coastline itself, the vegetation is typified by a scant covering of low-growing, often mat-forming, specialised plants which can tolerate the saline conditions and mineral substrate. On the newly formed ground of the mudflats in the inlets, pioneering intertidal marsh communities have colonised and these demonstrate a well-defined succession of plant types and species towards the land.

Generally the impression is of an overwhelmingly urban landscape, dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, the city of Chichester and suburban villages, including a few traditional flint hamlets and farm buildings and fragmented by trunk roads and infrastructure. The west is dominated by historic fortifications and marine infrastructure from all periods, reflecting the enduring importance of Portsmouth as the home of the Royal Navy. Portsmouth Harbour has a heavily developed shoreline with docks and associated industrial development dominating the landscape. East along the coast, extensive seaside towns form one of the most concentrated stretches of shoreline ribbon development in Britain. Each coastal town or village has developed almost to the high water mark and there are also caravan parks between some settlements. The harbours and the Manhood Peninsula are the only relatively undeveloped sections. Picturesque harbourside settlements are typically clustered around small boatyards and marinas while moored sailing boats dot the harbour edge. Some inlets, such as Pagham Harbour, still retain an overriding sense of remoteness contrasting with Portsmouth Harbour and the bustling Solent, constantly busy with sailing boats, cross-channel ferries and naval warships and the influence of seaside activities and recreational sailing all along the coast.

The long history of intervention to reduce the risk of flooding and erosion means that the shoreline is generally in a highly modified form and realignment schemes protect the coast, including the country's first managed realignment on the open coast at Medmerry.



Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve.

The landscape through time

Structurally, the South Coast Plain is part of the larger Hampshire Basin formed when the underlying chalk rocks were folded and faulted by the Alpine Orogeny (mountain-building episode) approximately 15 million years ago. The landform is dominated by the low relief of Tertiary sands, silts and clays that overlie the chalk. An initial fall in sea level, approximately 54–51 million years ago, saw the deposition of the Lambeth Group sands and clays. These are exposed on the shore at Felpham, east of Bognor Regis, and contain a unique diversity of fossil flora. A rise in sea level led to the deposition of the London Clay, a sequence of dark marine clays rich in fossil plants typical of a subtropical rainforest, yielding many type specimens of fossil birds, insects, fish and plants, particularly at Bognor Reef. The overlying Bracklesham Group of sediments were then deposited in alternating intertidal and offshore environments.

Earth movements, associated with the Alpine Orogeny, folded this sequence of rocks, producing the Littlehampton chalk ridge and a parallel ridge to the south, remnants of which now form the Isle of Wight chalk downs. The ancient Solent River flowed between these two ridges until rising sea levels eventually isolated the Isle of Wight from the mainland. Terrace gravels marking the historic shore of the Solent River contain vertebrate remains associated with warmer phases between ice ages, known as interglacials, during the Pleistocene Period 350,000–125,000 years ago. These gravels – exposed on the coast at Lee-on-the-Solent, Bracklesham Bay and Selsey – contain important Pleistocene vertebrate remains and Palaeolithic artefacts. The remains of a nomadic hunter-gatherer ('Boxgrove Man') found in the gravel deposits of a raised beach represent the earliest known human occupation of the British Isles.

The sand and shingle beaches have been shaped by successive processes of erosion and deposition since the last major change in sea level, forming spits across river mouths and inlets.

Neolithic clearance of woodland first opened up the landscape to allow farming of the fertile soils and evidence shows continuous and increasing occupation during the Bronze and Iron ages. The Romans established Chichester as an important new market town and military centre within 20 years of invading, and evidence of continued occupation is reflected by the Roman Palace at Fishbourne, villa and farmstead sites, a temple on Hayling Island and Portchester Castle, developed as one of the Saxon Shore forts.

The coastal plain continued to be densely settled in the Saxon and medieval periods as market towns increased. Some Saxon towns such as Littlehampton developed detached ports. Important examples of Anglo-Saxon architecture survive at sites such as Titchfield Church. In the west, distinctly urban settlements developed during the medieval period. Richard I ordered the construction of a dockyard at Portsmouth and granted the town its first charter in 1194. Havant, Emsworth, Fareham, Gosport and Titchfield developed into market towns and a string of fishing villages developed along the coast.

Portsmouth's strategic location on the south coast of England, protected by the natural defence of the Isle of Wight, made it an ideal base for England's (and later Britain's) Navy. Defensive structures were built to protect the area from the 14th century onwards in response to French raids. Most visible is the 19th-century ring of forts that extend onto Portsdown in the South Hampshire Lowlands NCA. Non-military operation – such as passenger

steamers, fishing and recreational sailing – also flourished, and maritime and associated industries continue to dominate the landscape and economy.

The coastal plain's fertile soils, along with grazing on the adjacent Downs and timber and stock rearing on the Weald, allowed the economy to diversify and the number of market towns to expand.

The agriculture of the area was stimulated by demand from the dockyard and its victualling yard at Gosport, a town which also developed around its military barracks, hospitals and ordnance depots. The area was also important for market gardening. Soft fruits have been harvested in the Hamble Valley for over 150 years, giving it the title of the 'Strawberry Coast'. The thin, stony soils suited shallow-rooted strawberries and the warm prevailing wind coming over the Solent reduced the risk of early frosts. Railways enabled fruit to be delivered across the country on 'strawberry specials' from the mid 1800s.

The coast continued to be of strategic importance during the 20th century. Fortifications were increased during both the First and Second World Wars, such as anti-tank beach block defences at Eastney and pillboxes. Military air bases were established in the First World War and played a significant role in national defence during the Second World War, for example the Battle of Britain airfield at Tangmere, now marked by its control tower and museum. Portsmouth remains the home of the Royal Navy and its historic dockyard and attractions such as HMS Victory and the Mary Rose entice thousands of visitors to the area every year.

This is an area of competing pressures for land. The rich arable lands combined with access to local urban markets and London allowed many farmers to re-build their farmsteads, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries. As a result there are very few pre-1750 farm buildings. During the 19th and 20th centuries, medieval towns expanded to the extent that few areas of countryside remain near the Hampshire coast. To the east, development of seaside resorts also resulted in the spread of urban areas such as Worthing, particularly after the coming of the railways in the 19th century. The depression of the interwar years, disease, higher wages for agricultural workers and competition from abroad forced many fruit growers out of business during the 20th century, while cheap imports and improved storage and transportation systems also led to a decline in local cereal production and sheep grazing. By the 1980s much of the land previously covered by the vast strawberry fields was developed for housing.

The high rate of urbanisation, coupled with a continued reduction of agriculture and grasslands and combined with coastal squeeze, has led to increasing fragmentation of semi-natural habitats. Farlington Marshes, for example, is surrounded by motorways and housing on three sides while threatened by the rising sea on the other.

In 2005, the 170-metre Spinnaker Tower opened as part of the redevelopment of Portsmouth Harbour. It is visible from miles around, including from the Manhood Peninsula and Isle of Wight.

Realignment schemes, such as at Medmerry and Cobnor Point, continue to alter the coastline and provide opportunities for habitat creation and recreational provision as well as flood protection.

Ecosystem services

The South Coast Plain NCA provides a wide range of benefits to society. Each is derived from the attributes and processes within the area. These benefits are known collectively as 'ecosystem services'. The predominant services are summarised below. Further information on ecosystem services provided in the South Coast Plain NCA is contained in the 'Analysis' section of this document.

Provisioning services (food, fibre and water supply)

- **Food provision:** The fertile soils of the lower plain support intensive arable farming and horticulture, with some dairy, beef and poultry. Permanent grassland is a feature of the poorer quality land. Mixed farming occurs on the thicker gravel deposits.

Fish are an important food source. Shellfish are harvested from the harbour areas and fish landed from the open sea. During the oyster fishing season of 2012/13, 60 tons of oysters were harvested from Chichester Harbour.⁴ The harbours are also vital nursery areas for species including bass, bream, mullet, sole and plaice.
- **Water availability:** Public water supply relies on surface water abstraction and groundwater from the Lower Greensand aquifer and the Worthing and Chichester chalk blocks. Water supply is under pressure throughout the area.
- **Genetic diversity:** The Home Farm of the Goodwood Estate favours rare breeds such as pedigree Southdown sheep, continuing a tradition long held by the dukes of Richmond.

⁴ Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (URL: www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/)

Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)

- **Climate regulation:** The soils in this NCA predominantly have low levels of soil carbon (0–5 per cent). However, there are some very small patches, in the west, that reach carbon levels of up to 20–50 per cent. The relatively large areas of flood plain grazing marsh have additional locked-up carbon stores, as do the small areas of woodland.
- **Regulating soil erosion:** Lighter soils make up just under half of the NCA and exposed soils are at risk of erosion on sloping land, exacerbated where organic matter levels are low after continuous arable cultivation or where soils are compacted. Sand dune soils are very unstable, with the extent of erosion depending on the degree to which vegetation has stabilised the dune system.
- **Regulating water quality:** There are three main sources of groundwater pollution within the NCA – agricultural activities, saline intrusion and urban-related activities such as sewage leakage, road run-off and weed control. All the area's rivers are subject to diffuse pollution arising from outside the NCA, including the catchment of Chichester and Pagham harbours, which is of particular concern given their international designations. There are a number of ongoing initiatives to improve water quality in this area.⁵
- **Regulating water flow:** Much of the flood storage capacity has been lost through drainage of marshlands and conversion to intensive agriculture or development both within and upstream of this NCA, particularly affecting the Arun's wide flood plain. Many settlements within the NCA are protected by flood banks.

⁵ Downs and Harbours Clean Water Partnership (www.cleanwaterpartnership.co.uk/here.html)

Policies to reduce flood risk include the storage of water within the Adur catchment on the South Downs (outside this NCA), as well as encouraging the creation of sustainable urban drainage systems and the River Lavant Flood Alleviation Scheme.

- **Pollination:** Nearly 2,000 ha of grassland provides important sources of nectar for pollinating insects, along with hedges, which are vital for the success of many of the area's horticultural crops.
- **Regulating coastal flooding and erosion:** Large lengths of this complex stretch of coastline are in an unnatural form. Much of the coastal frontage has been developed so only limited sections of the shoreline are free to erode naturally, meaning little sediment material goes into the coastal system. As a result of higher water levels, 'coastal squeeze' will occur. This will lead to beaches, intertidal areas and amenity value being reduced or lost. Defences are in place to protect the vulnerable clay headland of Selsey Bill from erosion though not necessarily trying to lock the feature into its present size, shape and orientation.

Reclamation of former coastal lowland for development has produced many areas where the shoreline is artificially seaward of its natural position. Rising sea levels will increase the probability of flooding for low-lying areas. The relevant Shoreline Management Plans are pursuing an overall policy of 'holding the line' and 'managed realignment' such as at the scheme at Medmerry which was the first of its kind on the open coast.

Cultural services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

- **Sense of place/inspiration:** Views of the sea and maritime and seaside influences generally have inspired artists from Oscar Wilde to Eric Coates, who was inspired to write 'Sleepy Lagoon' (the theme tune for BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs) while watching the sea from Selsey.



Sea wall at Southsea, Portsmouth.

- **Sense of history:** The area is rich in historical evidence from all ages including the internationally important Fishbourne Roman Palace. Chichester has enjoyed continuous occupation since it was founded by the Romans as Noviomagus Reginorum, and is dominated by its medieval cathedral, described by Pevsner as ‘the most typical English cathedral’.⁶ The area has a long history of maritime activity. Portsmouth’s historic dockyard, with attractions including Nelson’s flagship HMS Victory and the Mary Rose, entices thousands of visitors to the area every year. Further east, a string of fishing villages grew into popular seaside towns from the Georgian period and include Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing.
- **Tranquillity:** Tranquillity is a scarce but greatly prized resource within this heavily urbanised NCA. Only 7 per cent of area is classed as undisturbed, while 35 per cent of the area is classified as urban. Pockets of tranquillity are associated with the central rural areas, the Manhood Peninsula and undeveloped harbours, including Chichester Harbour AONB.
- **Recreation:** Coastal and water-borne activities are popular in this NCA and are an important contributor to the local economy. Chichester Harbour alone has over 5,200 moorings and marina berths and 16 sailing clubs. Chichester Harbour AONB has approximately 1.5 million visitors each year. Walkers, cyclists, artists and birdwatchers all enjoy the area. Many just sit and enjoy the view. East Head is one of the most popular recreation sites in the South East. Along the coast, tourism is also vital to the economies of seaside towns such as Worthing and Littlehampton.

- **Biodiversity:** Three per cent (1,700 ha) of the area is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and there are four Special Protection Areas (SPA, two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC and four Ramsar sites. Priority habitats include around 2,000 ha of coastal and flood plain grazing marsh and 1,000 ha of reedbeds.

Chichester Harbour has been designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention (1971) as it regularly holds 20,000 or more wildfowl and waders in winter. It has the third largest population of dark-bellied Brent goose in the country⁷ and supports internationally important populations of dunlin and black-tailed godwit. It also has a small resident harbour seal population. Pagham, Langstone and Portsmouth harbours also have wildfowl numbers of national or international importance and the whole area is important for breeding terns.

A survey of the fish population of Chichester Harbour carried out in 2004 by the University of Portsmouth recorded 32 species, with sand goby, painted goby and black bream the most abundant. Also numerous at some sites were bass, ballan wrasse and corkwing wrasse. Twenty-two species were identified in 2012. The harbours are also vital nursery areas for species such as bass, bream, mullet, sole and plaice which make use of the seagrass beds.

- **Geodiversity:** This NCA includes the site of the remains of Homo heidelbergensis, the world-famous ‘Boxgrove Man’, found in river gravels overlying chalk in a gravel pit just outside Chichester. Terrace gravels marking the historic shore of the Solent River contain important Pleistocene vertebrate remains and Palaeolithic (Early Stone Age) artefacts.

⁶ The Buildings of England: Sussex, N Pevsner and I Nairn (1965)

⁷ Wetland Bird Survey data ([URL: www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs/data](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs/data))

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Plan for and manage the effects of coastal change by allowing the operation of natural coastal processes and improving the sustainability of current management practices along the diverse coastline to successfully integrate the needs of the natural environment, landscape, local communities, agriculture and recreation amid significant urban stretches.

For example, by:

- Supporting the adaptability of coastal features and habitats to sea level rise and enhancing/creating opportunities for natural adaptation and/or migration where appropriate, to aid the long-term alleviation of coastal flooding in accordance with the strategies of the Shoreline Management Plans.⁸
- Conserving coastal geomorphological features (and the natural processes needed to sustain them).
- Enhancing the area's internationally important natural coastal landscapes, namely Chichester and Langstone harbours, Pagham Harbour, Solent and Southampton Water, and Portsmouth Harbour Special Areas of Protection (SPA), significantly restoring and expanding their coastal habitats – including intertidal mudflats, coastal salt marsh, saline lagoons and coastal grazing marsh – to improve resilience to climate change while aiding flood alleviation and contributing significantly to biodiversity.
- Where existing flood defences are reinforced, working with partners to limit adverse impacts on biodiversity, public access and historic interest.
- Maintaining sites of geomorphological importance and coastal exposures of Lower Tertiary deposits with diverse fossil assemblages, such as at Felpham, Bognor Reef and Bracklesham Bay.
- Identifying further opportunities to create compensation habitats for those lost to 'coastal squeeze', aiming to ensure no net loss of habitat, benefiting biodiversity and the regulation of coastal erosion and flooding.
- Working in partnership to monitor the impact of erosion, particularly at East Head, and responding to change, for example by developing a strategy for managing coastal footpaths at risk from rising sea levels and failing sea defences.
- Promoting access opportunities which educate people about the vulnerability of the coastal habitats in the National Character Area (NCA) and encourage visits of a low-impact nature that avoid any adverse impacts on agricultural management, landscape, habitats and wildlife.
- Improving access to the coast for walking, cycling and disabled people and encouraging reduced car use; and securing opportunities for the public to enjoy the natural environment through the implementation of the England Coast Path while ensuring appropriate protection of sensitive sites.

⁸ South East Coastal Group Shoreline Management Plans (URL: www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk/bh-to-sb-2006/); North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (URL: www.northsolentsmp.co.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6554&articleaction=nthslnt&CFID=8104695&CFTOKEN=57030621)

SEO 2: Plan for the creation of a strong landscape framework within and around major settlements and identified growth areas, while managing and enhancing existing greenspace and access, and balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the natural environment.

For example, by:

- Developing a comprehensive framework of green infrastructure throughout the NCA and the creation/improvement of other green spaces that link into the heart of urban areas and contribute to urban greening, meeting Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) where possible.
- Working in partnership with local authorities to develop effective solutions to address negative impacts of recreational pressure on bird populations as identified by the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project.⁹
- Seeking potential compensation sites and ensuring that adequate mitigation is provided for development that will cause significant adverse impact upon the area's internationally important bird populations.
- Ensuring that all coastal development and access provision respects the area's particular sensitivity to bird disturbance issues.
- Creating new areas of multifunctional greenspace within and surrounding identified growth areas, including community food gardens and significant areas of new saline and freshwater wetlands forming sustainable urban drainage systems to improve water quality, provide a local recreational resource, enhance landscape setting and aid flood alleviation.
- Working with local groups such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, Chichester Harbour Conservancy, local planning authorities and individual businesses to take a strategic view of commercial opportunities that can be delivered in a way that supports the natural environment.
- Engaging early in the scoping of new developments to ensure that they maximise their contribution to sustainable development.
- Seeking to maintain and enhance areas of open countryside in this heavily urbanised NCA, to preserve the distinct settlement pattern and ensure that local communities have access to greenspace for their wellbeing and enjoyment.
- Encouraging a strategic approach to the planning of land use around Chichester and Langstone harbours and the Manhood Peninsula to address the pressures of climate change and development, ensuring that natural processes continue to function and the comparatively wild and tranquil character is retained.
- Ensuring that development and its associated infrastructure (including light, noise and air pollution) does not intrude on the special qualities of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the South Downs National Park; and ensuring that the landscape character within these areas and their settings is conserved, restored, reinforced or created as appropriate to reflect the ambitions of their respective management plans.
- Promoting and enhancing the rights of way network throughout the area, especially along the coast and linking to the South Downs, while developing new permissive access that links towns and settlements to quality greenspace and other areas of interest as part of a cohesive network of inspiring access provision for all.

⁹ Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (URL: www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Natural_Environment_Group/Disturbance_and_Mitigation_Project/)

SEO 3: Manage and significantly enhance the area's rivers and chalk streams and their wetland valley habitats to provide resilience against climate change and improve flood protection and water quality, particularly in the internationally designated sites such as Chichester and Pagham harbours, for the benefit of local communities and wildlife.

For example, by:

- Working with the Solent Water Quality Association and other partners to achieve the highest water quality and the aims of the Water Framework Directive.
- Promoting the installation of holding tanks for recreational vessels and seeking to provide the necessary infrastructure to pump out holding tanks; ensuring that there are adequate reception facilities for vessel-landed waste and maintaining a Maritime and Coastguard Agency-compliant Port Waste Management Plan.
- Reducing the amount of nutrients entering the harbours from domestic and industrial sources by engaging with the planning process to ensure that new developments incorporate the best possible waste reduction measures, including sustainable urban drainage systems.
- Reducing the amount of nutrients entering the harbours from agricultural sources by continuing with catchment initiatives that engage with and challenge farmers to reduce nutrient leaching, pesticide contamination and soil erosion, especially by establishing buffers of permanent grassland alongside watercourses.
- Seeking opportunities to increase capacity and improve the level of treatment for waste water treatment works discharging into the harbours.
- Expanding and re-linking lowland meadows, flood plain grazing marsh, saline lagoons and other wetland habitats found on the flood plains of the rivers Meon, Adur and Arun and the chalk streams, to enhance adaptation to climate change, increase flood storage capacity, improve water quality and provide wildlife corridors for biodiversity.
- Seeking opportunities to restore natural river geomorphology, bringing rivers back into continuity with their flood plains and re-creating backwaters as a refuge for aquatic species in times of drought.
- Creating wide grassland buffer strips running across slopes and alongside watercourses in areas of arable production, especially within the Arun priority catchment, to provide a buffer to soil erosion and nutrient run-off thereby further helping to improve river water quality.
- Minimising the risk of spreading non-native invasive species to new sites through human activity, for example by promotion of the 'Check, Clean, Dry' campaign¹⁰ and working with partners to co-ordinate and promote control measures for non-native invasive species.
- Working to improve and protect the area's chalk streams, for example by reviewing ecological designations and expanding areas of semi-natural habitat in chalk stream flood plains, within the NCA and upstream. This will to act as pollution filtration while also providing biodiversity benefits and information about chalk stream ecology and the negative impacts of unsustainable water use.

¹⁰ The Check, Clean Dry campaign, Environment Agency (URL: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/wildlife/129217.aspx>)

Continued from previous page

- Targeted expansion of woodland on steeper slopes and adjacent to watercourses to reduce soil erosion, especially within the catchments of the Arun and Meon and the Pagham and Chichester harbours, which may also provide a local source of wood fuel where managed by coppicing.
- Restoring hedgerow boundaries, where they will help to impede cross-land flows within the catchments of the Arun and Meon. This will aid improvements in water quality and provide food sources for pollinating insects, as well as restoring the character of native hedgerows and traditional field patterns – especially where lost in peri-urban areas.
- Seeking appropriate levels of commercial use of the harbours, balancing the need to maintain a vigorous tourism industry with preserving the natural beauty and ecology of the areas; working with partners to educate groups using the water bodies on the needs of others and to give guidance on behaviour and good practice; and supporting changes which encourage users to enjoy congested areas such as Chichester Harbour outside peak times.
- Engaging with local communities and schools to increase appreciation and understanding of their local rivers and water resources.



Portsmouth Harbour and Spinnaker Tower.

SEO 4: Manage the rich archaeological and historic resource and geological exposures within the farmed, coastal and peri-urban landscape, including the longstanding associations of horticultural and maritime industries and the military, enhancing a strong sense of place.

For example, by:

- Promoting the heritage of the urban areas, including the strong maritime and military associations; and engaging communities with their local history and strengthening the physical links with the important historic landscapes that surround them.
- Promoting and protecting the historic environment along the coast – notably Portchester Castle and military remains, including the Napoleonic coastal fortification – and recording heritage features at risk of sea level rise.
- Providing educational opportunities and interpretation of historic and geological features to improve understanding and enjoyment.
- Restoring the traditional field patterns of the rural peninsulas, such as Chichester Harbour AONB and the Manhood Peninsula, through the replacement of lost hedgerows and improvement in the condition of existing hedgerows through replanting gaps.
- Supporting the use of traditional breeds and varieties to provide distinct quality produce to encourage marketing initiatives.
- Working with partners and local interest groups to promote an appreciation and understanding of the geodiversity of the NCA and connecting communities with their local heritage.
- Considering reversion of arable to pasture and scrub clearance where current land cover threatens the integrity of earthworks and monuments, including numerous Roman and medieval remains.
- Maintaining the setting of the cathedral city of Chichester and long views to its prominent cathedral spire, viewed from the Chichester Harbour AONB to the south and the South Downs National Park to the north, and wider views out over the sea.
- Maintaining important inland geology exposed in pits and quarries, for example Downend Chalk Pit Site of Special Scientific Interest, helping to promote an appreciation and understanding of the geodiversity of the NCA and connecting communities with their local heritage.
- Encouraging the use of traditional building materials (such as timber frame, flint, cob and thatch) in conservation projects and promoting the use of the Chichester Harbour AONB design guidance for replacement dwellings in the AONB.
- Supporting the work of partners including Chichester Harbour Conservancy and environmental education groups to establish closer links between the education service and the local farming community, sustainable schools, healthy eating programmes and community services.

Supporting document 1: Key facts and data

South Coast Plain National
Character Area (NCA): 52,245 ha

1. Landscape and nature conservation designations

Eight per cent (4,186 ha) of the NCA falls within the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

■ www.conservation.co.uk

Source: Natural England (2011)

1.1 Designated nature conservation sites

The NCA includes the following statutory nature conservation designations:

Tier	Designation	Designated site(s)	Area (ha)	% of NCA
International	Ramsar sites	Chichester and Langstone Harbours; Pagham Harbour; Solent and Southampton Water; Portsmouth Harbour	1,288	2
European	Special Protection Area (SPA)	Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA; Pagham Harbour SPA; Solent and Southampton Water SPA; Portsmouth Harbour SPA	1,271	2
	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Solent Maritime SAC; Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC	238	<1
National	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Titchfield Haven NNR	120	<1
National	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A total of 22 sites wholly or partly within the NCA	1,688	3

Source: Natural England (2011)

Please note: (i) Designated areas may overlap (ii) all figures are cut to Mean High Water Line, designations that span coastal areas/views below this line will not be included.

There are 253 local sites in South Coast Plain covering 2,827 ha, which is 5 per cent of the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at: <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>
- Details of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) can be searched at: http://www.lnr.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/lnr/lnr_search.asp
- Maps showing locations of Statutory sites can be found at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select 'Rural Designations Statutory'

1.1.1 Condition of designated sites

Condition category	Area (ha)	% of SSSI land in category condition
Unfavourable declining	65	4
Favourable	1,056	63
Unfavourable no change	73	4
Unfavourable recovering	476	29

Source: Natural England (March 2011)

- Details of SSSI condition can be searched at: <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/reportIndex.cfm>

2. Landform, geology and soils

2.1 Elevation

Elevation ranges from below sea level (areas by the coast) to a maximum of 99 m across the plain slopes. The average elevation of the landscape is 12 m above sea level.

Source: Natural England 2010, South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description

2.2 Landform and process

Landform is dominated by the low relief of Tertiary sands, silts and clays that overlie the Chalk. The east-west fold of Chalk known as the Littlehampton anticline forms an isolated ridge to the north of Portsmouth known as Portsdown Hill. This rises from near sea level to over 100 m and creates a dramatic backdrop to Portsmouth Harbour.

Source: South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description

2.3 Bedrock geology

Structurally, the South Coast Plain is part of the larger Hampshire Basin which was formed when the underlying chalk rocks were folded and faulted by the Alpine Orogeny (mountain-building episode). The Littlehampton anticline, an east-west fold of chalk, forms an isolated ridge called Portsdown Hill to the north of Portsmouth.

During the Tertiary, sediments of the Thanet Sands Formation and Lambeth Group sands and clays were deposited onto the Chalk in a shallow marine setting. As sea levels rose and the sea deepened, the fossiliferous London Clay was laid down. Subsequently, as the sea became shallower again, the Bracklesham Group of clays, silts and sands were deposited in an intertidal

and offshore environment on a large coastal plain. Bracklesham Bay is the type locality for these deposits, and together with the foreshore deposits of this type near Gosport they have yielded fossil fish, bird and plant remains.

Source: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands Natural Area Profile, South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description, British Geological Survey maps

2.4 Superficial deposits

Terrace gravels marking the historic shore of the Solent River contain vertebrate remains associated with warmer phases between ice ages, known as interglacials, during the Pleistocene period, 350,000 to 125,000 years ago. These gravels, exposed on the coast at Lee-on-the-Solent, Bracklesham Bay and Selsey contain important Pleistocene vertebrate remains and Palaeolithic (Early Stone Age) artefacts.

The entrances to Chichester, Langstone and Pagham Harbours and the Hamble estuary are guarded by classic sand dune and shingle spit features. At Browndown, west of Gosport, and at other points along the coast, shingle deposits form well developed shingle features, those at Browndown showing clearly defined apposition ridges that have been deposited over many centuries. Further sand dune formations occur at Climping, west of Bognor Regis, where the dunes have formed at the mouth of the River Arun. The estuaries within the area also contain many important examples of salt marshes of differing age and state of evolution. The area provides classic examples of coastal features and valuable opportunities to study modern coastal processes at work.

Source: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands Natural Area Profile, South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description, British Geological Survey maps

2.5 Designated geological sites

Designation	Number
Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	5
Mixed interest SSSI	4

There are no Local Geological Sites within the NCA

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at: <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>



Chichester Harbour AONB.

2.6 Soils and Agricultural Land Classification

Over the superficial gravel lie deep and well-drained brown earths which occur widely over much of the area. Chalky thinner soils have formed over the chalk outlier of Highdown Hill. The range of fertile soils throughout the area combined with the flat terrain and favourable climatic conditions result in high quality agricultural land. Grade 1 land is found predominantly through a central strip, east of Chichester Harbour. Grade 2 is found predominantly east of Chichester Harbour. Grade 3 and 4 land is found in patches mainly to the east of the NCA.

Source: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands Natural Area Profile, South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description

The main grades of agricultural land in the NCA are broken down as follows (as a proportion of total land area):

Agricultural Land Classification	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Grade 1	6,911	13
Grade 2	12,832	25
Grade 3	10,798	21
Grade 4	1,866	4
Grade 5	40	<1
Non-agricultural	3,781	7
Urban	15,370	29

Source: Natural England (2010)

- Maps showing locations of statutory sites can be found at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> - Select 'Landscape' (shows ALC and 27 types of soils)

3. Key water bodies and catchments

3.1 Major rivers/canals

The following major rivers/canals (by length) have been identified in this NCA.

Name	Length in NCA (km)
Chichester Canal	6
River Arun	3
River Meon	6

Source: Natural England (2010)

Please note: other significant rivers (by volume) may also occur. These are not listed where the length within the NCA is short.

The rivers crossing the plain locally form wide alluvial flood plains. Southward facing streams, that are locally referred to as 'rifes', cut through the lower plain. Flooded gravel pits comprise some of the largest areas of freshwater in the region.

3.2 Water quality

The total area of Nitrate Vulnerable Zone is 37,784 ha, or 72 per cent of the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2010)

3.3 Water Framework Directive

Maps are available from the Environment Agency showing current and projected future status of water bodies at: http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?ep=maptopics&lang=_e



Saltmarsh at East Head.

4. Trees and woodlands

4.1 Total woodland cover

The NCA contains 2,633 ha of woodland (where woodlands are over 2 ha in size), covering 5 per cent of the NCA and including 780 ha of ancient woodland.

Source: Natural England (2010), Forestry Commission (2011)

4.2 Distribution and size of woodland and trees in the landscape

There is a strong network of small and medium sized broadleaf woodlands throughout the upper coastal plain. The landscape pattern comprises some ancient woodland, coniferous plantations and small fields, hedgerows and woods. In contrast, the lower coastal plain is relatively treeless and entails a typically homogenous landscape of large fields with few hedgerows or trees. Small areas of wind-sculpted woodland persist on some coastal fringes, particularly around the sheltered inlets.

Source: Natural England (2010)

4.3 Woodland types

A statistical breakdown of the area and type of woodland found across the NCA is detailed below.

Area and proportion of different woodland types in the NCA (over 2 ha).

Woodland type	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Broadleaved	2,241	4
Coniferous	139	<1
Mixed	68	<1
Other	185	<1

Source: Forestry Commission (2011)

Area and proportion of Ancient Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland within the NCA:

Type	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Ancient semi-natural woodland	620	1
Ancient re-planted woodland (PAWS)	160	<1

Source: Natural England (2004)

5. Boundary features and patterns

5.1 Boundary features

The lower coastal plain has few trees or hedgerows and drainage ditches, wire fences or low banks are more usual as field boundaries. In contrast the upper coastal plain is more wooded and well linked by hedgerows.

Source: South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

5.2 Field patterns

Fields throughout the lower coastal plain tend to be large and arable. In contrast, the upper coastal plain typically has smaller fields. The fields largely appear to have been created through a process of enclosure by agreement, with some small areas of more regular enclosure. Typically the fields surrounding settlements are small.

Source: South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

6. Agriculture

The following data has been taken from the Agricultural Census linked to this NCA.

6.1 Farm type

Horticulture is the most common farm type in terms of number of holdings (89), followed by cereals (73) and then grazing livestock (55). Between 2000 and 2009 horticulture lost the most number of holdings, falling by 73 holdings or 45 per cent. Both cereals and grazing livestock gained holdings, by 7 and 8 respectively. Most other farm types lost holdings, including mixed farms (9 holdings), general cropping (6) and dairy (2).

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.2 Farm size

The small farm sizes are most numerous in terms of numbers of holdings, with 78 holdings under 5 ha and 97 holdings between 5 ha and 20 ha, although together these account for just 6 per cent of the farmed area. There are 67 holdings over 100 ha size, which by contrast make up 70 per cent of the farmed area. Farms under 5 ha declined dramatically, losing 74 holdings or around 50 per cent. Farms of over 100 ha also declined by 8 holdings. Farms sized between 20 ha and 50 ha gained the most number of holdings (18), while farms sized between 50 ha and 100 ha also increased by 10 holdings.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.3 Farm ownership

2009: Total farm area = 19,824 ha; owned land = 12,007 ha

2000: Total farm area = 22,194 ha; owned land = 14,292 ha

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.4 Land use

Cereals and grassland dominate this area in roughly equal proportions, with cereals covering 6,950 ha (35 per cent of the farmed area) and grass and uncropped land covering 6,681 ha (34 per cent). Other arable crops cover 1,642 ha (8 per cent). There are also significant areas of vegetables (1,555 ha or 8 per cent) and oilseeds (1,433 ha or 7 per cent). The most significant change between 2000 and 2009 was the decline in cereals, which reduced by 2,506 ha or 26 per cent. Other arable crops also declined by 368 ha. Grass and uncropped land by contrast increased slightly by 274 ha, as did oilseeds which increased by 309 ha.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.5 Livestock numbers

Sheep are the most numerous of the livestock (7,100) followed by cattle (5,700) and then pigs (407). All types of livestock fell in numbers between 2000 and 2009, with pigs becoming near absent, falling by 10,500 or 96 per cent. Sheep numbers fell by 3,100 (30 per cent) and cattle numbers by 1,300 (18 per cent).

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.6 Farm labour

The figures suggest that the majority of holdings are run by principal farmers (440) compared with salaried managers (228). There are more full-time workers (824) than part-time workers (157). There are also 1,050 casual/gang workers. Trends between 2000 and 2009 show a decrease in the number of principal farmers by 148 and an increase in salaried managers by 6. Full-time worker and part-time worker numbers both decreased (by 374 and 285 respectively), while the number of casual/gang workers remained roughly constant (increased by 8).

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

Please note: (i) Some of the Census data is estimated by Defra so will not be accurate for every holding (ii) Data refers to Commercial Holdings only (iii) Data includes land outside of the NCA belonging to holdings whose centre point is within the NCA listed.

7. Key habitats and species

7.1 Habitat distribution/coverage

There is a scanty covering of low growing, saline tolerant plants along the coastline. Sand dunes and shingle beaches are found along the shoreline. The most extensive and well developed occur at the mouths of the main harbours such as shingle beaches at Pagham Harbour and sand dunes at East Head at the entrance of Chichester Harbour.

Saline lagoons are found in areas along the coast, including within Pagham Harbour, Birdham Pool in the north-eastern edge of Chichester Harbour and the entrance of Portsmouth Harbour. Salt marshes occur along the harbours and estuaries, particularly within Chichester Harbour. Scrub and small areas of wind-sculpted woodland occur on some coastal fringes. There are a small number of isolated coastal heaths and woodlands on the open plain. A network of broadleaved woodlands, including ancient woodland, is present in the upper coastal plain. Areas of medium quality agricultural land support good quality grassland such as in the Arun flood plain. In addition the NCA contains important arable habitats. These support nationally important assemblages of arable birds.

Source: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands Natural Area Profile

7.2 Priority habitats

The Government's new strategy for biodiversity in England, Biodiversity 2020, replaces the previous Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) led approach. Priority habitats and species are identified in Biodiversity 2020, but references to BAP priority habitats and species, and previous national targets have been removed. Biodiversity Action Plans remain a useful source of guidance and information. More information about Biodiversity 2020 can be found at;

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/englandsbiodiversitystrategy2011.aspx>

The NCA contains the following areas of mapped priority habitats (as mapped by National Inventories). Footnotes denote local/expert interpretation. This will be used to inform future national inventory updates.

Priority habitat	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Coastal and flood plain grazing marsh	2,085	4
Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland (broad habitat)	1,462	3
Reedbeds	274	1
Lowland meadows	188	<1
Coastal vegetated shingle	122	<1
Coastal sand dunes	108	<1
Fens	98	<1
Saline lagoons	64	<1
Lowland dry acid grassland	64	<1
Mudflats	48	<1
Lowland heathland	45	<1
Lowland calcareous Grassland	38	<1
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	1	<1

Source: Natural England (2011)

Maps showing locations of priority habitats are available at

- <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> select 'Habitat Inventories'

7.3 Key species and assemblages of species

- Maps showing locations of priority habitats are available at:

<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/>

- Maps showing locations of S41 species are available at: <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>

8. Settlement and development patterns

8.1 Settlement pattern

The lower coastal plain is dominated by suburban villages and extensive seaside towns between Brighton and the edge of Southampton. Smallholdings and bungalows are scattered along Southampton Water, but merge with the suburban outreaches of Fareham towards the Solent. East of Chichester numerous villages form a fairly continuous sprawl, including some farm buildings and traditional flint hamlets. Settlement is more dispersed to the north of the chalk dip slope.

Source: South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

8.2 Main settlements

Main towns/cities within and adjacent to the NCA (with populations recorded in 2001) are; Southampton (304,400), Fareham/Portchester (56,160), Gosport (69,348), Havant (45,435), Portsmouth (187,056), Chichester (27,477), Bognor Regis (62,141), Littlehampton (55,716), Worthing (96,964), Brighton (134,293), and Hove (72,335). The total estimated population for this NCA (derived from ONS 2001 census data) is: 505,822.

Source: ONS 2001 Census, Natural England (2012)

8.3 Local vernacular and building materials

Building materials within the coastal margins traditionally reflect the proximity of the sea for importing raw materials, such as timber frames, thatch, flint and cob. Timber framing was widely used for houses until after the 17th century, after which brick was a more common option. The medieval churches around the harbours are made of flint and stone. Many of the villages have retained

their medieval core and are often arranged round a market or green area. The varied vernacular architecture reflects strong ties with its region.

Source: South Coast Plain Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)



View of harbour and Old Portsmouth from fortifications.

9. Key historic sites and features

9.1 Origin of historic features

Evidence of Mesolithic people has been discovered from the mud of areas such as Langstone Harbour. Settlements, such as the palace at Fishbourne and civitas capital of Chichester, reflect that the coastal landscape was well occupied in the Roman period. There are still some existing examples of Anglo-Saxon work, such as in Portchester and Titchfield church. The strategic importance of the area has resulted in significant defence works along the coast. Portchester Castle dates from the Roman period but from the 14th century onwards measures to defend the important naval base of Portsmouth have been constructed, most visibly the 19th century ring of forts that extend onto Portsdown in the South Hampshire Lowlands character area. Other military features include several hospitals and First and Second World War airfields at Tangmere and Shoreham.

Source: Countryside Quality Counts Draft Historic Profile, Countryside Character Area description

9.2 Designated historic assets

This NCA has the following historic designations:

- 10 Registered Parks and Gardens covering 427 ha
- No Registered Battlefields
- 99 Scheduled Monuments
- 3,619 Listed Buildings

Source: Natural England (2010)

- More information is available at the following address:
www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/
- www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/

10. Recreation and access

10.1 Public access

- Three per cent of the NCA ha is classified as being publically accessible.
- There are 673 km of public rights of way at a density of 1.3 km per km².
- There are no National Trails within the South Coast Plain NCA.

Source: Natural England (2010)

The following table shows the breakdown of land which is publically accessible in perpetuity:

Access designation	Area (ha)	% of NCA
National Trust (Accessible all year)	120	<1
Common Land	61	<1
Country Parks	83	<1
CROW Access Land (Section 4 and 16)	232	<1
CROW Section 15	95	<1
Village Greens	29	<1
Doorstep Greens	0	0
Forestry Commission Walkers Welcome Grants	629	1
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	933	2
Millennium Greens	0	0
Accessible National Nature Reserves (NNR)	120	<1
Agri-environment Scheme Access	0	0
Woods for People	416	<1

Sources: Natural England (2011)

Please note: Common Land refers to land included in the 1965 commons register; CROW = Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; OC and RCL = Open Country and Registered Common Land.

11. Experiential qualities

11.1 Tranquillity

Based on the CPRE map of tranquillity (2006) it appears that the lowest scores for tranquillity are associated with the major urban areas, particularly along the coast from Portsmouth and Southampton to Brighton. The highest scores for tranquillity are associated with land north of Selsey.

A breakdown of tranquillity values for this NCA are detailed in the table below:

Category of tranquillity	Score
Highest	35
Lowest	-105
Mean	-21

Sources: CPRE (2006)

More information is available at the following address: www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside/tranquil-places/in-depth/item/1688-how-we-mapped-tranquillity

11.2 Intrusion

The 2007 Intrusion Map (CPRE) shows the extent to which rural landscapes are 'intruded on' from urban development, noise (primarily traffic noise), and other sources of visual and auditory intrusion. This shows that there is very little undisturbed land within the NCA as it covers the large urban areas of Southampton and Portsmouth and the arterial route of the A/M27 runs the length of it. A breakdown of intrusion values for this NCA is detailed in the following table:

Intrusion category	1960s (%)	1990s (%)	2007 (%)	Percentage change (1960s-2007)
Disturbed	44	58	58	14
Undisturbed	28	11	7	-21
Urban	23	24	35	12

Sources: CPRE (2007)

Notable trends from the 1960s to 2007 are the dramatic loss of undisturbed areas (a loss of 21 per cent).

- More information is available at the following address:
www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places



Worthing seafront.

12. Data sources

- British Geological Survey (2006)
- Natural Area Profiles, Natural England (published by English Nature 1993-1998)
- Countryside Character Descriptions, Natural England (regional volumes published by Countryside Commission/Countryside Agency 1998/1999)
- Joint Character Area GIS boundaries, Natural England (data created 2001)
- National Parks and AONBs GIS boundaries, Natural England (2006)
- Heritage Coast Boundaries, Natural England (2006)
- Agricultural Census June Survey, Defra (2000,2009)
- National Forest Inventory, Forestry Commission (2011)
- Countryside Quality Counts Draft Historic Profiles, English Heritage (2004)*
- Ancient Woodland Inventory, Natural England (2003)
- Priority Habitats GIS data, Natural England (March 2011)
- Special Areas of Conservation data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Special Protection Areas data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Ramsar sites data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Detailed River Network, Environment Agency (2008)
- Source protection zones, Environment Agency (2005)
- Registered Common Land GIS data, Natural England (2004)
- Open Country GIS data, Natural England (2004)
- Public Rights of Way Density, Defra (2011)
- National Trails, Natural England (2006)
- National Tranquillity Mapping data, CPRE (2007)
- Intrusion map data, CPRE (2007)
- Registered Battlefields, English Heritage (2005)
- Record of Scheduled Monuments, English Heritage (2006)
- Registered Parks and Gardens, English Heritage (2006)
- World Heritage Sites, English Heritage (2006)
- Incorporates Historic Landscape Characterisation and work for preliminary Historic Farmstead Character Statements (English Heritage/Countryside Agency 2006)

Please note all figures contained within the report have been rounded to the nearest unit. For this reason proportion figures will not (in all) cases add up to 100 per cent. The convention <1 has been used to denote values less than a whole unit.

Supporting document 2: Landscape change

Recent changes and trends

Trees and woodlands

- An increase in Woodland Grant Schemes suggests that the character of the area's woodlands is probably being maintained. Both the restoration of existing woodlands and coppice management have been identified as being of high priority within the area, as well as the high potential for the creation of new woodlands.
- Dutch elm disease and storm events have also had a significant visual impact, with the loss of many of the characteristic, wind-shaped trees and woodlands.

Boundary features

- Between 1999 and 2003, Environmental Stewardship capital agreements for linear features included fencing (14 km), hedge management (4 km), hedge planting and restoration (21 km) and restored boundary protection (8 km). The estimated boundary length for the NCA is 1,347 km. Total length of agreements between 1999 and 2003 is equivalent to about 4 per cent of this total.
- By 2011 a further 200 km of hedges had been brought into management through Environmental Stewardship.
- Many hedgerows are in need of restoration.

Agriculture

- According to Countryside Quality Counts data there has been a continued reduction in agricultural area and extent of grasslands between 1990 and 2003 suggesting that the erosion of agricultural character (coupled with that of boundary features) was ongoing, albeit at a reduced rate.
- Hampshire Fare is a successful campaign championing local produce established in 1991.
- Goodwood Farm achieved full organic status in 2004, becoming the largest lowland organic farm in the UK.
- Uptake of agri-environment schemes has been good within the AONB since 2005 with 11 farms and 998 ha within Entry Level (including organic), five farms and 592 ha within the Higher Level tier (including organic) and 1,023 ha with older schemes such as Countryside Stewardship.

Settlement and development

- The area has a high rate of change to urban, with most of the larger settlements showing evidence of extension of urban and fringe into peri-urban. However, extent of new development beyond the peri-urban is limited and so overall character has probably been maintained.
- The South East Plan originally identified significant areas of growth throughout and surrounding the NCA.

- The Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project¹¹ has produced evidence regarding visitor access patterns from current and future housing around the coast and how their activities and the distances and time for which different bird species respond to different activities.
- The realignment scheme at Medmerry will create footpaths, bridleways and viewpoints to enjoy, which will be an asset for the local community and local tourism.

Semi-natural habitat

- The extent of agri-environment agreements for management of grazing marshes is limited. Littoral sediment SSSI are mostly in favourable or recovering condition. Character of the resource has probably been maintained.
- The coastal realignment scheme at Medmerry will create 183 ha of new intertidal habitat and up to 300 ha of other wetland habitats. This will make a significant contribution to intertidal habitat gains in the Solent. The site will be managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds under a management plan.
- The scheme removes the need to manage shingle defences. This will allow the Medmerry beach to develop and evolve naturally with coastal processes and form a more sustainable and valuable vegetated shingle habitat.

Historic features

- In 1918 about 2 per cent of the NCA was historic parkland. By 1995 it is estimated that 53 per cent had been lost. About 28 per cent of the remaining parkland is covered by a Historic Parkland Grant, and about 15 per cent is included within an agri-environment scheme.
- About 68 per cent of historic farm buildings remain unconverted. About 93 per cent are intact structurally. These data suggest that important aspects of the historic landscape remain neglected.
- The remains of *Homo heidelbergensis* were first found at Boxgrove in 1994, comprising the partial tibia of a male. In 1996 two incisor teeth from another individual were found. In 2003 English Heritage announced it would buy the remains of the quarry to ensure the preservation of the site complex.
- The historic dockyard in Portsmouth Harbour was restored as one of the Millennium Projects and there are a number of other projects planned within the area, including the establishment of a research and teaching centre for maritime heritage studies.
- Significant archaeological discoveries at the Medmerry site may revise traditional views regarding the historical development of the area. Investigation of the medieval fish weir is increasing understanding of how this structure was used to corral fish and a bronze-age cremation area is also being excavated and researched.

¹¹ Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (URL: www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Natural_Environment_Group/Disturbance_and_Mitigation_Project/)

- The Heritage Lottery funded 2004 Archaeological Research Framework and accompanying 2007 Research Synthesis provide a comprehensive baseline of the archaeological resource of the AONB. The HLF programme developed a strong archaeology partnership through a steering group that continues to oversee research.

Coast and rivers

- The Medmerry managed realignment scheme between Chichester Harbour and Selsey Bill was the first of its kind on the open coast and one of the most significant flood management achievements on the south coast to date in terms of climate change adaptation and managing the effects of coastal change. It involved the realignment of the coastline to a newly constructed floodwall several kilometres long and one kilometre inland, providing flood protection for over 300 homes, the local water treatment works and the only road in to Selsey. It also created over 183 ha of new intertidal habitat and over 300 ha of new terrestrial wetland habitats.
- Medmerry will create important new wildlife habitats and open up new footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. There is another habitat creation project at Cobnor Point.
- There is limited uptake of management agreements for coastal and riverine habitats. The biological river water quality in 1995 was predominantly good and it has been maintained. The chemical water quality in 1995 was predominantly very good and it has been maintained.
- In 2008, a £29m nitrogen removal scheme to improve the quality of treated wastewater at Peel Common Treatment Works at Fareham was completed.
- 2009 saw the launch of the Downs and Harbours Clean Water Partnership set up to tackle diffuse water pollution issues affecting the quality of ground, surface and coastal waters in West Sussex and East Hampshire.¹²
- Preparation work for major dredging of Portsmouth Harbour to allow passage of the Royal Navy's 65,000-tonne aircraft carriers has begun.
- The Arun and Rother Connections project (ARC), is a HLF funded collaborative project involving all interested partners to improve water quality and flow in the catchments and encourage local people to appreciate the services provided by these rivers. It involves major works to ease fish passage, river and chalk stream restoration, surveys and removal of non-native invasive aquatic plant species, wetland habitat and heathland restoration as well as engaging communities and landowners and improving access and interpretation.

Minerals

- Lidsey Oil Field has been in production since 2008. Lidsey has one vertical producing well in the Jurassic, Great Oolite reservoir.

¹² Downs and Harbours Clean Water Partnership (URL: www.cleanwaterpartnership.co.uk/here.html)

Drivers of change

Climate change

- As a low-lying coastal area in south-east England, this NCA is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly sea level rise, increased severity and frequency of storm events and drought.
- The coastline is particularly vulnerable to sea level rise, with flooding a major issue for the future of the urban-dominated area. Accurate measurements from the tidal gauge at Portsmouth show that since 1991, sea level has risen by 10 cm, an increase of 6.6 mm a year. Sea level rise is inevitably worrying in a landscape where ground height differences are measured in only a few metres. Relatively small increases in sea level will have an impact on the coastal communities, habitats and the species they support and how people currently use and manage the land.
- North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) aims to identify sustainable coastal defence options based upon economic criteria, while having an overview of both the natural environment and the human and built environment.
- Important semi-natural habitats, including those of the designated natural harbours of Chichester and Langstone, may suffer. Mudflats, salt marsh and shingle habitats may be adversely affected by coastal squeeze where flood defences prevent migration. There may also be loss of coastal grazing marsh, reedbeds and saline lagoons where coastal realignment is permitted. Further realignments are required to ensure that losses of intertidal habitat in the Solent between 2025 and 2100 are offset. Finding and implementing further sizable opportunities in the Solent is a considerable challenge.
- Flooding due to increased autumn/winter rainfall and more frequent, more intense storm events could also potentially affect stretches of the area's rivers, including the Arun, Adur, Meon and Hamble, while hotter, drier summers could lead to summer drought, exacerbated by increased demand for irrigation with a resulting deterioration of semi-natural wetland habitats along the flood plain, including species-rich meadows and field ponds, as well as remnant areas of heath along the coast.
- A longer growing season with increasing temperatures may encourage the introduction of novel crops such as sunflowers, navy beans and soya and different crop timings into the arable-dominated landscape, altering its character.
- The composition of the semi-natural woodlands of the upper coastal plain may be affected by increased storminess, periods of drought and the prevalence of pests and diseases. Rising sea levels and coastal erosion may also lead to the loss of coastal oaks.
- The south coast generally is liable to be first point of entry for new species moving north from the continent.
- Most of the area's coastal footpath network is located along existing sea defences, embankments or the foreshore itself. Options will need to be sought to relocate footpaths and other recreational resources inland if significant change seems likely.

Other key drivers

- The Solent coastline provides feeding grounds for internationally protected populations of overwintering waders and wildfowl and is also extensively used for recreation. The Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project resulted in comprehensive research to assess human activity on bird populations and there is support for a mitigation and avoidance plan to minimise impact.
- Portsmouth is identified as a centre of significant change, a regional hub and an international gateway, and is expected to accommodate around 20 per cent of the new dwellings planned for the South Hampshire sub-region as a whole by 2026.



The area supports internationally important populations of bird species including the black-tailed godwit.

- An urban extension is planned at Chichester, with over 7,000 new dwellings to be accommodated, while significant growth is also planned for the coastal settlements that dominate the east, including Worthing, Shoreham (a growth point) and Brighton and Hove (lying just outside the boundary).
- A strategic development area (SDA) will be allocated within Fareham Borough, north of the NCA, to comprise 10,000 new dwellings, with significant employment land to be provided on greenfield sites.
- Just outside the NCA in the South Hampshire Lowlands, the city of Southampton is identified as a regional hub and centre of significant change.
- There are various discharges of waste into the NCA from urban populations, roads, industry and through dispersed inputs such as agricultural run-off. The area includes part of one of the world's busiest shipping lanes and there are resulting problems with litter disposal as well as the constant danger of serious pollution incidents (and the 'clean-up' operations which follow them which may also be damaging) all of which can threaten the fragile ecology of the designated sites
- Most of the NCA is densely populated and includes what amounts to a linear conurbation which is under constant pressure for further development.
- There is likely to be further pressure for solar arrays in this area due to its geographical location.

Supporting document 3: Analysis supporting Statements of Environmental Opportunity

The following analysis section focuses on a selection of the key provisioning, regulating and cultural ecosystem goods and services for this NCA. These are underpinned by supporting services such as photosynthesis, nutrient cycling, soil formation and evapo-transpiration. Supporting services perform an essential role in ensuring the availability of all ecosystem services.

Biodiversity and geodiversity are crucial in supporting the full range of ecosystem services provided by this landscape. Wildlife and geologically-rich landscapes are also of cultural value and are included in this section of the analysis. This analysis shows the projected impact of Statements of Environmental Opportunity on the value of nominated ecosystem services within this landscape.



Sailing in Chichester Harbour AONB.

Statement of Environmental Opportunity	Ecosystem Service																		
	Food provision	Timber provision	Water availability	Genetic diversity	Biomass provision	Climate regulation	Regulating water quality	Regulating water flow	Regulating soil quality	Regulating soil erosion	Pollination	Pest regulation	Regulating coastal erosion	Sense of place / Inspiration	Sense of history	Tranquillity	Recreation	Biodiversity	Geodiversity
SEO 1: Plan for and manage the effects of coastal change by allowing the operation of natural coastal processes and improving the sustainability of current management practices along the diverse coastline to successfully integrate the needs of the natural environment, landscape, local communities, agriculture, tourism and recreation amid significant urban stretches.	↗*	↔**	↔**	○*	↔***	↑***	↗**	↑***	↑**	↑***	↗*	↗**	↑***	↑***	↗**	↗*	↑***	↑**	↗**
SEO 2: Plan for the creation of a strong landscape framework within and around major settlements and identified growth areas, while managing and enhancing existing greenspace and access, and balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the natural environment.	↗*	↗***	↔**	↗*	↔**	↗**	↗***	↗***	↗**	↗**	↗***	↗***	↑***	↑***	↗**	↗**	↑***	↑***	↔*
SEO 3: Manage and significantly enhance the area's rivers and chalk streams and their wetland valley habitats to provide resilience against climate change and improve flood protection and water quality, particularly in the internationally designated sites such as Chichester and Pagham harbours, for the benefit of local communities and wildlife.	↗**	↔**	↗***	↗***	↗***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↗***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↑***	↔***
SEO 4: Manage the rich archaeological and historic resource and geological exposures within the farmed, coastal and peri-urban landscape, including the longstanding associations of horticultural and maritime industries and the military, enhancing a strong sense of place.	↗***	↔***	↔***	↑***	↔***	↗***	↗***	↔***	↗***	↗***	↗***	↗***	↔***	↑***	↑***	↗***	↑***	↗***	↑***

Note: Arrows shown in the table above indicate anticipated impact on service delivery: ↑ = Increase ↗ = Slight Increase ↔ = No change ↘ = Slight Decrease ↓ = Decrease. Asterisks denote confidence in projection (*low **medium***high) ° symbol denotes where insufficient information on the likely impact is available.

■ National Importance; ■ Regional Importance; ■ Local Importance

Landscape attributes

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
Coastal inlets and 'harbours' contain a diverse landscape of narrow tidal creeks, mudflats, shingle beaches, dunes, grazing marshes and paddocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Internationally designated wetland and coastal habitats. ■ Picturesque harbourside settlements. ■ The coastal area (particularly in and around Langstone Harbour) has extensive palaeoenvironmental evidence. ■ Future changes in sea level may become an important issue given that the South Coast Plain is flat and low-lying. ■ Pressures for recreational uses and marina/harbour developments along the coast. ■ The conservation of wetlands, including those of the intertidal zone, is important to the area.
Major urban development including Portsmouth and Worthing linked by the A27/M27 corridor dominate much of the South Coast Plain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small villages engulfed by the expansion of urban coastal developments with many locally valued 'strategic gaps'. ■ Ribbon development of seaside towns and caravan parks. ■ Pressures for recreational uses and marina/harbour developments along the coast. ■ Major east-west road and rail routes.
Fertile soils support a prosperous market garden and horticultural trade reflecting the relatively warm temperatures and long growing season.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concentrations of large modern glasshouses and small but increasing use of polytunnels. ■ Historically associated with fruit growing, especially strawberries for London, the passenger steamer trade and the Royal Navy. ■ Successful schemes to boost local produce. ■ Loss of hedges and hedgerow trees owing to field enlargement. ■ Areas of medium-quality agricultural land where soils are shallow, stony and poorly drained often support good quality permanent grassland.
The Plain is crossed by several rivers in places forming wide alluvial flood plains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The lower plain is cut by southward-flowing streams, locally termed 'rifes', each of which have dry headwater extensions over the upper plain. ■ Many chalk streams. ■ Some projects to improve water quality such as ARC (Arun and Rother Connections). ■ The chalk rivers of the NCA are of importance for several key wetland and aquatic species.
The landscape is part of a broad plain of flinty marine and valley gravels extending several miles inland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historic mineral extraction, landfill and flooded gravel pits. ■ Flooded gravel pits make up some of the largest areas of freshwater in the region.
Open and exposed coastal landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Views to the Isle of Wight. ■ Rock islands as coastal protection measures immediately off the coast have a major visual influence.

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
Important historical sites from all periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defensive structures demonstrating the area's long association with the military (especially Royal Navy) and strategic importance. ■ Many significant Roman sites including Fishbourne Roman Palace. ■ Medieval buildings including Chichester Cathedral. ■ Bosham is traditionally the place where King Canute demonstrated that he was unable to hold back the sea. ■ Surviving field barns are an important remnant of a once widespread building type. ■ Dovecotes are found on some high status farms.
Areas of remnant heathland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Once a common and widespread feature of the landscape in the Hampshire Basin and now confined to small isolated fragments within the NCA such as Hamble Common. ■ Remaining sites offer considerable potential for heathland restoration.
Large flocks of wildfowl.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Solent coastline provides feeding grounds for overwintering waders and wildfowl and is also extensively used for recreation. ■ Internationally important numbers of several overwintering species including dark-bellied Brent geese, black-tailed godwit and dunlin. ■ Also significant breeding area for many species, such as terns. ■ The southern tip of the Manhood Peninsula is a favoured migratory point for many species of birds and insects.



Arable fields in the South Coast Plain with the South Downs in the background.

Landscape opportunities

- Manage the coastal habitats and features that include intertidal sand and mud, coastal salt marsh, coastal sand dunes coastal vegetated shingle, coastal heathland, beaches, coastal and flood plain grazing marsh and saline lagoons including areas of international importance, promoting opportunities for natural regeneration/migration where appropriate or possible and/or creating compensation habitats in areas of managed realignment to ensure no net loss of habitats such as salt marsh and mudflats.
- Manage and improve the productive agricultural landscape, including the creation of arable field margins, restoration of hedgerows and conservation headlands that help to support the area's farmland bird populations and pollinators.
- Promote and enhance the area's surviving historic environment that includes important Roman remains across the area, as well as the significant military and maritime heritage assets, historic parkland and traditional buildings.
- Plan for the creation of significant new landscapes that provide a framework for new and existing development and its associated infrastructure.
- Ensure realignment site management allows intertidal habitats to develop and expand effectively to support and enhance the biodiversity interest and characteristic landscape.



Coastal realignment at Medmerry.

Ecosystem service analysis

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Food provision	<p>Soils</p> <p>Climate – relatively high temperatures and long growing season</p> <p>Market gardening</p> <p>Dairy, sheep and pigs</p> <p>Arable</p> <p>Vineyards</p> <p>Poultry</p> <p>Fish</p>	<p>High proportion (38 per cent) of Grade 1 and 2 land in between large urban centres.</p> <p>This is a fertile area which supports intensive arable farming and horticulture, with some dairy, beef and poultry. Areas of medium-quality agricultural land where soils are shallow, stony and poorly drained often support good quality permanent grassland such as on the Arun flood plain.</p> <p>Fish, and particularly shellfish, are widely harvested from the harbour areas. The Selsey crab is a particular delicacy.</p>	Regional	<p>The western part of the NCA falls into an area known as ‘highlight zone’ – south-facing landscape reflecting light off Solent and protected by Isle of Wight creates ideal conditions, particularly for fruit. Vineyards are increasing in popularity and there have been experiments with other more exotic crops such as olives.</p> <p>County food group Hampshire Fare is a not-for-profit community interest company established in 1991, representing around 200 producers, hospitality venues, shops and cookery schools, which campaigns to heighten the awareness and consumption of Hampshire’s quality produce.</p> <p>Goodwood Farm achieved full organic status in 2004, becoming the largest lowland organic farm in the UK. Milk and cream from the Dairy Shorthorn herd are processed at the farm, including being made into traditional cheeses. Produce is sold locally or used in facilities on site or during events.</p> <p>During the oyster fishing season of 2007/08, 58 tons of oysters were harvested from Chichester Harbour.</p> <p>Seven charter fishing boats operate within Chichester Harbour. Deterioration in water quality in the harbours would threaten this service.</p>	<p>Support safeguarding high-quality agricultural land and encourage land management practices which protect soil assets and the benefits they provide.</p> <p>Manage the agricultural landscape in sustainable ways to improve soil and water regulation and improve long-term viability of agriculture and yields, protecting the natural assets of the area.</p> <p>There is a need to safeguard soils and high quality agricultural land when planning development.</p> <p>Crop diversity within the farming system could also be beneficial for maintaining soil quality.</p> <p>Opportunities to enhance the agricultural landscape through creation of habitat mosaics where forage and nesting sites are provided for pollinators such as conservation headlands, arable field margins and wildflower mixes.</p> <p>Support measures to protect and improve water quality to the harbours such as modifications to water treatment works and control of agricultural run-off through the catchment sensitive farming scheme to allow the harvesting of seafood to continue.</p> <p>Support sustainable harvest of native oysters.</p>	<p>Food provision</p> <p>Regulating soil quality</p> <p>Regulating water flow</p> <p>Regulating water quality</p> <p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Sense of place/ inspiration</p>

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Timber provision	Parkland Woodland	Woodland cover for this NCA is 5 per cent, covering a strong network of small and medium sized broadleaf woodlands	Local	This NCA is sparsely wooded and there are few suitable locations to extend woodland.	There are limited opportunities to improve management of broadleaf woodlands in this NCA to produce more timber.	Timber provision
Water availability	Chichester aquifer Rivers Chalk streams	<p>Public water supply relies upon surface water abstractions and groundwater from the Lower Greensand aquifer and the Worthing and Chichester chalk blocks.</p> <p>Most of the area overlies post-Carboniferous rock, although there are small areas to the east that overlie an important chalk aquifer.</p> <p>Water supply is under pressure throughout the area, with the River Meon in the west mostly classed as over-abstracted, and most of the remaining area classed as over-licensed or no water available (including the groundwater units around Portsmouth and North Hayling).</p> <p>The Chichester chalk aquifer supports baseflows to spring fed rivers such as the rivers Ems and Lavant.</p>	Regional	<p>The main abstractions in the Arun and West Sussex Streams are for public water supply followed by industry and agriculture while in the west, it is for public water supply followed by fish farming and watercress growth. Consequently, summer flows are naturally low.</p> <p>Exploitation of the aquifer to supply potable water is seriously threatening this natural resource of chalk rivers and spring fed fens and fen-grasslands that are dependent upon the continual supply of unpolluted chalk spring water. This is likely to be an increasing problem as drought caused by climate change and increasing population put extra pressure on water supply.</p>	<p>Action to reduce demand would ease pressure on supplies that, in some case, are already fully exploited in dry years.</p> <p>Encourage the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems into all new developments.</p> <p>Ensure that sufficient water levels are maintained in ecologically sensitive and important streams and rivers.</p> <p>Seek opportunities to restore natural river geomorphology, bringing rivers back into continuity with their flood plains and re-creating backwaters as a refuge for aquatic species in times of drought.</p> <p>Encourage cultivation practices that reduce demand for water for irrigation of crops.</p>	<p>Water availability</p> <p>Regulating water quality</p> <p>Regulating soil quality</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Genetic diversity	Traditional breeds Local varieties	The Home Farm of the Goodwood Estate favours rare breeds such as Dairy Shorthorn and Sussex cattle, Southdown sheep and Tamworth and Saddleworth pigs.	Regional	The pedigree Southdown sheep are also shown locally, continuing a tradition long held by the dukes of Richmond.	Opportunities exist to build on the Hampshire Fare campaign to promote more use of traditional breeds to produce high-quality produce.	Genetic diversity Food production Sense of history Sense of place/inspiration
Biomass energy	Fertile soils Woodland	5 per cent of the area is woodland and biomass from existing woodland sources will be limited.	Local	Potential miscanthus yield is predominantly high as a result of the fertility of the soil, with areas of low/medium potential around Portsmouth and Chichester harbours and the urban areas to the east, while short rotation coppice yields may be restricted close to the coast due to prevailing salt laden winds. For information on the potential landscape impacts of biomass plantings within the NCA, refer to the tables on the Natural England website. ¹³	There are potential opportunities for both short rotation coppice and miscanthus to be accommodated but these would need to be located appropriately within the landscape.	Biomass energy
Climate regulation	Soils Wetlands, including grazing marsh Woodland	The soils in this NCA predominantly have low levels of soil carbon (0–5 per cent). However, there are some very small patches, in the west, that reach carbon levels of up to 20–50 per cent. 2,000 ha of grazing marsh contribute significantly to carbon sequestration.	Regional	The relatively large areas of flood plain grazing marsh have additional locked up carbon stores, as do the small areas of woodland. Realignment schemes, such as Medmerry, can increase the extent of wetland habitats which will help compensate for the effects of climate change.	Where habitats are lost to coastal squeeze, compensation habitats have to be sought where natural regeneration is not possible or practical. There is potential to increase organic matter levels on arable land. Improvements in soil structure will also help improve water quality.	Climate regulation Regulating soil quality Regulating water quality Regulating soil erosion

¹³ URL: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/ecs/sitings/areas/default.aspx

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
<p>Regulating water quality</p> <p><i>continued on next page</i></p>	<p>Rivers and chalk streams</p> <p>Estuaries</p> <p>Aquifers</p> <p>Treatment works</p>	<p>72 per cent of the area is a nitrate vulnerable zone.</p> <p>All the area's rivers are subject to diffuse pollution arising from outside the NCA.¹⁴</p> <p>There are three main sources of groundwater pollution within the unit: agricultural activities, saline intrusion and urban related activities (sewage leakage, road run-off, weed control etc.). Potentially polluting agricultural activities include the application of organic and inorganic fertilisers and the use of pesticides and herbicides. The pollution risks from agricultural sources are locally a real threat to groundwater quality due to the large expanses of arable land and the nature of the chalk aquifer and soils which allow rapid leaching of pollutants.</p> <p>Where groundwater quality has been assessed it is generally good with an area of poor quality in the centre of the NCA. The ecological quality of the area's rivers is more varied, with stretches classed as either moderate or bad towards the east but good in the west.</p>	Regional	<p>The area is heavily urbanised and intensive agriculture, recreational activities and transport systems all add to pressures on water quality. These are likely to increase with further planned development and effects of climate change such as drought causing low flows and more frequent storm events leading in increased run-off.</p> <p>As well as recreational sailing in the harbours, the area includes part of one of the world's busiest shipping lanes and there are resulting problems with litter disposal as well as the constant danger of serious pollution incidents (and the 'clean-up' operations which follow them and may also be damaging) all of which can impact upon water quality and threaten the fragile ecology of the designated sites.</p> <p>The River Arun suffers from the effects of diffuse agricultural pollution largely arising in the wider catchment outside this NCA, forming part of the Arun and Western Rother Defra Priority Catchment. Equally the River Meon and the catchments of Chichester and Pagham harbours are vulnerable to diffuse agricultural pollution arising from outside the NCA. This is of particular concern given the international designations of these harbours as SPAs.</p> <p>Many of the rivers are heavily modified.</p> <p>In 2008, a £29m nitrogen removal scheme to improve the quality of the treated wastewater returned to the environment at Peel Common was completed.</p>	<p>Work with water companies to investigate and implement innovative solutions to point source pollution and untreated waste water.</p> <p>Consider reviewing ecological designations for the area's chalk streams.</p> <p>Work with partners to expand areas of semi-natural habitat in chalk stream flood plains, within the NCA and upstream, to act as pollution filtration.</p> <p>Provide information about chalk stream ecology and the negative impacts of unsustainable water use.</p> <p>Reduce the amount of nutrients entering the harbours from domestic and industrial sources by engaging with the planning process to ensure that new developments incorporate the best possible measures for reducing problems from waste, including sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).</p> <p>Promote the installation of holding tanks for recreational vessels and seek to provide the necessary infrastructure to pump out holding tanks. Ensure adequate reception facilities for vessel landed waste and maintain a Maritime and Coastguard Agency-compliant Port Waste Management Plan.</p> <p>Increase the amount of farmland in and upstream of this NCA managed under principles established by the Catchment Sensitive Farming Programme or its water company equivalent.</p>	<p>Regulating water quality</p> <p>Regulating soil quality</p> <p>Regulating soil erosion</p> <p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Recreation</p>

¹⁴ Defra catchment priorities identified under the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Project

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
<p>Regulating water quality</p> <p><i>continued from previous page</i></p>				<p>Serious concerns have been raised at the ability of waste water treatment facilities to cope with current and future housing development.</p> <p>The quality of water in Chichester Harbour is not statutorily assessed as bathing water and is not therefore monitored in accordance with the EC Bathing Water Directive by the regulator. However, the discharge of sewage into the Harbour may have environmental health implications particularly for people enjoying activities on the water such as sailing and kayaking.</p> <p>There have been a number of efforts to improve water quality in this area including Portsmouth Water's Downs and Harbours Clean Water Partnership</p> <p>The Arun and Rother Connections project (ARC), is a HLF funded project to improve water quality and flow in the catchments and encourage local people to appreciate the services provided by their river. It involves major works to ease fish passage, river and chalk stream restoration, surveys and removal of non-native invasive aquatic plant species, wetland habitat restoration (fen, reedbed, species rich flood plain meadow and wet woodland) and heath restoration as well as engaging communities and landowners and improving access and interpretation.</p>	<p>Buffer watercourses with semi-natural vegetation – permanent grassland, scrub, woodland – to intercept diffuse pollution by sediment run-off and nutrients, particularly upstream beyond the borders of the NCA.</p> <p>Seek opportunities to restore natural river geomorphology, bringing rivers back into continuity with their flood plains.</p> <p>Expand and link lowland meadows, flood plain grazing marsh and other wetland habitats found on the flood plains of the rivers and chalk streams.</p> <p>Work with the Solent Water Quality Association and other partners to achieve the highest water quality and achieve the aims of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Control the amount of nutrients entering the harbours from agricultural sources by encouraging catchment initiatives that engage and challenge farmers to reduce nutrient leaching, pesticide contamination and soil erosion.</p>	

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating water flow	Rivers	The Arun has a wide flood plain with slow river flows, although much of this flood storage capacity has been lost through drainage of marshlands and conversion to intensive agriculture both within and upstream of this NCA.	Regional	Significant flood events have occurred several times in the last 40 years in the Arun and Western streams catchments and river banks need repair and maintenance. The River Lavant Flood Alleviation Scheme is designed to divert flows away from Chichester and then safely discharge them into Pagham Harbour.	Explore and where appropriate implement water retention measures to help maintain water levels in rivers during periods of drought.	Regulating water flow
	Flood plains	The Meon runs over chalk, rainfall soaks into the ground here instead of running off into the river. A tidal sluice on the Lower Meon maintains the freshwater marsh of Titchfield Haven, with storage of water identified as being important to both long-term flood alleviation and wetland conservation.		Policies to reduce flood risk in Worthing, Shoreham and Brighton include the storage of water within the Adur catchment on the South Downs (outside this NCA) and encouraging the adoption of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.	Seek opportunities to restore natural river geomorphology, bringing rivers back into continuity with their flood plains and re-creating backwaters as a refuge for aquatic species in times of drought.	
	Wetland					
	Harbours					
	Coast	There are also several chalk fed streams that run in this NCA such as the Lavant and the Bosham stream. Settlements within the NCA, such as Arundel and Littlehampton, are protected by flood banks. The River Lavant has a long history of flooding in Chichester.		Major dredging work has begun in Portsmouth Harbour to enable it to accommodate new 65,000-tonne aircraft carriers.	Incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in all new development, including features such as porous surfaces, swales, green roofs and more green space.	Biodiversity
					Plan for and manage for the effects of coastal change by allowing the operation of natural coastal processes and the creation of new habitats to reduce flooding to built-up areas.	
					Ensure that realignments are managed so that intertidal habitats can develop and expand effectively.	

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Regulating soil quality	Soils Rivers Coastal salt marshes Harbours	<p>High proportion (38 per cent) of Grade 1 and 2 land in between large urban centres.</p> <p>There are nine main soilscape types in this NCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils, covering 43 per cent of the NCA. ■ Loamy soils with naturally high groundwater (33 per cent). ■ Loamy and clayey soils of coastal flats with naturally high groundwater (7 per cent). ■ Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (7 per cent) ■ Loamy and clayey flood plain soils with naturally high groundwater (2 per cent). ■ Shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone (1 per cent). ■ Sand dune soils (1 per cent). ■ Freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soils (1 per cent). ■ Freely draining very acid sandy and loamy soils (1 per cent). 	Regional	<p>The freely draining slightly acid loamy soils may be valuable for aquifer recharge, requiring the maintenance of good structural conditions to aid water infiltration and requiring the matching of nutrients to needs to prevent pollution of the underlying aquifer.</p> <p>The loamy soils with naturally high groundwater have a low bearing strength where groundwater remains high and are therefore at increased risk of soil compaction from mechanised operations, stock grazing or recreational use in wetter conditions.</p> <p>Diffuse pollution (such as from applied manures and very fine sediments) is also possible as a result of run-off due to persistently high groundwater levels or from local flooding. Both of these soils may have potential, especially under arable cropping, for increased organic matter levels through management interventions.</p> <p>The large urban centres and transport links surrounding agricultural land mean that pollution of soils via run-off from roads is a constant problem.</p> <p>Maintaining quality of soils will help safeguard future yields and wider ecosystem service provision.</p>	<p>Continue to apply the principles and best practices employed through initiatives such as Catchment Sensitive Farming.</p> <p>Identify areas where soils are most at risk of damage from cultivation and work with landowners and farmers to adopt sensitive soil management practices as appropriate.</p> <p>Work to improve treatment of waste water and prevent run-off from roads by promoting measures such as extending verges and hedgerows.</p> <p>Maintain salt marsh and other intertidal habitats as a buffer between the sea and agricultural land and to protect against saline intrusion.</p> <p>Seek to keep the highest quality soils in agricultural production.</p>	<p>Regulating soil quality</p> <p>Food provision</p> <p>Regulating soil erosion</p> <p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Regulating water quality</p>

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating soil erosion	Soils Rivers	<p>The River Arun forms part of the Arun and Western Rother Defra Priority Catchment under the England Catchment Sensitive farming and suffers from sedimentation largely as a result of soil erosion higher in the catchment outside this NCA.</p> <p>Many parts of the area are susceptible to flooding.</p>	Local	<p>The lighter soils make up just under half of the NCA (dominated by freely draining slightly acid loams), and have enhanced risk of soil erosion on moderately or steeply sloping land where cultivated or bare soil is exposed, often exacerbated where organic matter levels are low after continuous arable cultivation or where soils are compacted.</p> <p>There is also the potential for wind erosion on some coarse textured cultivated variants of the freely draining slightly acid loams. Sand dune soils are very droughty and unstable, with the extent of erosion depending on the degree to which vegetation has stabilised the dune system.</p> <p>A few of the component soils of the freely draining base-rich soils (just 1 per cent of the NCA) may be susceptible to capping and slaking, increasing the risk of soil erosion, and these soils need to be managed carefully to reduce risks with careful timing of cultivations and maintenance of vegetation cover. The remaining soils have a low risk of soil erosion, except where coarser textured variants of loamy soils with naturally high groundwater occur on sloping or uneven ground.</p> <p>The light soils of the coastal plain may be susceptible to wind erosion in the future under climate change.</p> <p>Coastal flooding can damage soils and cause erosion.</p>	<p>Continue to apply and extend the reach of tried and tested techniques for reducing soil erosion resulting from agriculture that are being promoted among the farming community by projects such as Catchment Sensitive Farming.</p> <p>Opportunity to create areas of semi-natural habitat and low-input grasslands (including grassland buffer strips) to minimise soil compaction, allow dense vegetation to improve water retention to minimise soil run-off and improve water quality.</p> <p>Promote the retention of mudflats, coastal salt marshes and sand dunes to provide a cost effective defence against soil erosion and prevent saline intrusion from damaging soils.</p>	<p>Regulating soil erosion</p> <p>Regulating water quality</p> <p>Regulating soil quality</p> <p>Regulating water flow</p>

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Pollination	Grassland parks and gardens Hedges Heathland	With nearly 2,000 ha of grassland, this area provides important sources of nectar for pollinating insects. Gardens and allotments within urban areas also provide food sources for pollinating insects	Regional	<p>In a productive agricultural area, including soft fruit, pollinators are critical for the future of insect dependent crops and increases in this service may be required in order to provide greater options for future cropping.</p> <p>This service could be increased by restoration of wetland habitats, and the creation of conservation headlands and arable field margins. This could have a beneficial impact on biodiversity by linking habitats and creating network of habitats in close proximity.</p>	<p>Opportunities to enhance the agricultural landscape through creation of habitat mosaics where forage and nesting sites are provided for pollinators such as conservation headlands, arable field margins and wildflower mixes providing additional environmental benefits.</p> <p>Seek opportunities to increase field margins, species-rich hedgerows and beetle banks to encourage a network of habitats and food sources for pollinating insects close to areas of agricultural production.</p>	<p>Pollination</p> <p>Food production</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>
Pest regulation	Grassland Wetland Woods Rivers Field margins Parks and gardens	The semi-natural habitats adjacent to arable farmland support populations of pest regulating invertebrate, bird and mammal species.	Local	<p>This service could be increased by restoration of wetland habitats, verges, conservation headlands and arable field margins creating connecting networks of habitats.</p>	<p>Opportunities for a landscape scale approach which provides the necessary connectivity and extent of habitats to sustain populations of predators and enable them to move between sites.</p> <p>Manage semi-natural habitats to increase diversity of structure and composition and increase populations of pest-regulating species.</p> <p>Seek opportunities to increase field margins, species-rich hedgerows and beetle banks to encourage a network of habitats for pest regulating species close to areas of agricultural production.</p>	<p>Pest regulation</p> <p>Food production</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating coastal erosion and flooding	<p>Coastal vegetated shingle</p> <p>Intertidal sand and mudflats</p> <p>Coastal sand dunes</p> <p>Shingle beaches</p> <p>Hard sea defences</p> <p>Estuaries</p>	<p>A complex stretch of coastline including river estuaries and shingle beaches. Much of the coastal frontage is developed, with the major settlements including Portsmouth, Worthing and Bognor Regis.</p> <p>Large lengths of this shoreline are in an unnatural form and the reclamation of extensive areas of former coastal lowland for development has produced many areas where the shoreline is artificially seaward of its natural position.</p> <p>The clay headland of Selsey Bill shelters the coastline to the immediate east from the predominant south-westerly storms; sea defences are in place to protect the vulnerable cliffs from erosion.</p>	Regional	<p>The relevant shoreline management plans are pursuing an overall policy of 'holding the line' and 'managed realignment'¹⁵ such as the scheme at Medmerry which was the first of its kind on the open coast.¹⁶</p> <p>Some of the coastal features are highly valued for their geodiversity and the rare plants and animals they support. Because it is highly developed, limited sections of the shoreline are free to erode naturally meaning that there is little material going into the system.</p> <p>Changing climatic patterns are likely to result in increased weathering of coastal cliffs and more extreme weather events, which will test coastal defences. As a result of higher water levels 'coastal squeeze' will occur. This will lead to beaches, intertidal areas and amenity value being reduced or lost. This is particularly threatening to low lying tidal mudflats and salt marshes in areas of conservation importance, especially Chichester and Pagham harbours that are internationally designated as an SPA and Ramsar site, supporting bird populations that are highly dependent on the habitats provided by the intertidal areas.</p> <p>An issue of special interest to local residents and boat owners in the AONB is the continued erosion of East Head.</p> <p>Proposals for the medium to long-term management of East Head are contained within the Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy.¹⁷ This is a complex problem as any major defence works would undermine the area's character and the reasons for its nature conservation designations. The Strategy proposes a scheme of Adaptive Management that seeks to respond to change and to preserve the social, economic, environmental and amenity value of East Head for the 100-year life of the Strategy. The emphasis will not necessarily be on trying to lock the feature into its present size, shape and orientation.</p>	<p>Opportunities to create compensation habitats for those lost to 'coastal squeeze', aiming to ensure no net loss of habitat, benefiting biodiversity and the regulation of coastal erosion and flooding.</p> <p>Ensure that realignment sites are managed to develop their full potential to support and enhance the biodiversity interest and characteristic landscape.</p>	<p>Regulating coastal erosion and flooding</p> <p>Recreation</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

¹⁵ South Downs Shoreline Management Plan, South Downs Coastal Group (URL: www.sdcdg.org.uk/)

¹⁶ Medmerry managed realignment scheme (URL: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/109062.aspx)

¹⁷ Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy, Environment Agency (2009; URL: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Leisure/PEHCDS_STAR_v5_Final_-_compressed.pdf)

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Sense of place/ inspiration	Coastal landscape Harbours Views of Isle of Wight and the South Downs	Sense of place is provided by the sea and intricately indented shoreline of the exposed coastal landscape, and notably the natural harbours of Chichester and Pagham. Across the Solent, the Isle of Wight forms a distinctive backdrop. There are also a few surviving traditional settlements displaying a unifying local vernacular of timber frame, flint, cob and thatch. This is further supported by the pattern of large rectilinear fields enclosed by drainage ditches, remnant tracts of valley meadow and coastal heath.	Regional	In such an urban area, sense of place is achieved primarily by views of the sea, which are possible from most places within the NCA. Eric Coates was inspired to write 'Sleepy Lagoon', the theme tune for Desert Island Discs, while watching the sea from Selsey. Portsmouth, with its importance as a major route to the continent and military connections, was a frequent inspiration to artists and writers during the 19th century. In Jane Austen's novel Mansfield Park, Portsmouth is the hometown of the main character Fanny Price, Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby joins a theatre troupe in the town and Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore is set in the harbour. Oscar Wilde wrote The Importance of Being Earnest during a visit to Worthing. Spinnaker Tower is a 170-metre tower opened in 2005 as part of the redevelopment of Portsmouth harbour. It is visible from miles around and affords 360-degree views of the surrounding area, including from the Manhood Peninsula and Isle of Wight.	Encourage a strategic approach to the planning of land use around Chichester and Langstone harbours and the Manhood Peninsula to address the pressures of climate change and development, ensuring that natural processes continue to function and the comparatively wild and tranquil character is retained. Ensure that realignment sites are managed to develop their full potential to support and enhance the characteristic landscape.	Sense of place/ inspiration Tranquillity Sense of history Biodiversity

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Sense of history	<p>Roman sites</p> <p>Historic buildings</p> <p>Naval defences</p> <p>Harbour settlements</p> <p>Traditional buildings</p> <p>Parkland</p>	<p>Several important Roman sites and medieval buildings.</p> <p>Small flint villages, isolated dwellings and farm buildings.</p> <p>Military sites and structures from all periods.</p> <p>About 68 per cent of historic farm buildings remain unconverted. About 93 per cent are intact structurally.</p> <p>The Heritage Lottery Funded 2004 Archaeological Research Framework and accompanying 2007 research synthesis provide a comprehensive baseline of the archaeological resource of the AONB.</p> <p>There are 10 registered parks and gardens within the NCA covering 427 ha.</p>	International	<p>Archaeological and historical features include Roman villa sites such as Fishbourne Roman Palace, Chichester cathedral set within the historic city of Chichester and a post-medieval abbey at Titchfield. Picturesque harbourside settlements such as Bosham and isolated hamlets in rural areas provide additional historic context. There are also numerous historic naval associations at Portsmouth including Napoleonic fortifications such as the distinctive line of round Napoleonic forts that march out across the Solent guarding its eastern entrance and the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, locally known as Palmerston's Follies.</p> <p>The area also has strong associations with aerial combat, with Goodwood Aerodrome, Shoreham Airport and Lee-on-Solent still operational. The former First World War, Second World War and Cold War airfield at Tangmere now houses an aviation museum. Displays include the aircraft in which world air speed records were achieved in 1946 and 1953 along the coast at Littlehampton. Shoreham is the oldest licensed airfield in the UK and has a Grade II* listed Art Deco style terminal building.</p> <p>The rich arable lands combined with access to local urban markets and London allowed many farmers to re-build their farmsteads, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries. This re-building means that there are very few pre-1750 farm buildings.</p> <p>Buildings for cattle are predominantly 19th century. Earlier cattle buildings would be considered important.</p> <p>Traditional building materials are of timber frame, flint, cob and thatch that all contribute to the area's sense of place. Many villages have retained their attractive medieval and late medieval core.</p> <p>A number of historic settlements and heritage assets now subsumed into the larger conurbation are considered at risk of losing their identity and historical context.</p> <p>The HLF programme developed a strong archaeology partnership through a steering group that continues to oversee research within the AONB which informs engagement with local schools, visitors, landowners and residents within the AONB to help develop a wider understanding and appreciation of the historical value.</p>	<p>Opportunities should be sought to enhance the setting, interpretation and condition of the remaining assets.</p> <p>The restoration and conversion of vernacular buildings should be sympathetic to local distinctiveness and use local materials where possible.</p> <p>Encourage partners to use the results of the Archaeological Framework when prioritising and commissioning research both within and around the AONB, to guide the management of the historic environment.</p> <p>Encourage and support communities to seek funding to develop local heritage projects and initiatives.</p> <p>Encourage interpretation to improve understanding of the area's heritage including internationally recognised assets such as Portsmouth historic dockyard, Fishbourne Roman Villa and Chichester Cathedral. Support initiatives to improve sustainable transport links between these sites.</p>	<p>Sense of history</p> <p>Recreation</p> <p>Sense of place/ inspiration</p>

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Tranquillity	Harbours Coastline Woodland	<p>Only 7 per cent of the area is classed as undisturbed, down from 28 per cent in the 1960s; 35 per cent of the area is classified as urban.</p> <p>The main areas of low level tranquillity are around the major towns – Portsmouth, Chichester, Fareham, Bognor Regis and Worthing and along road corridors such as the A27, M27 and the M275.</p>	Local	<p>Tranquillity is a scarce resource within this heavily urbanised NCA. Pockets of tranquillity are associated with the central rural areas and undeveloped harbours, including parts of Chichester Harbour. Tranquillity is also associated with the edges of remoter ancient woodlands at the foothills of the South Downs.</p>	<p>Encourage a strategic approach to the planning of land use around Chichester and Langstone harbours and the Manhood Peninsula to address the pressures of climate change and development, ensuring that natural processes continue to function and the comparatively wild and tranquil character is retained.</p>	<p>Tranquillity</p> <p>Sense of place/inspiration</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Recreation <i>continued on next page</i>	Coastline Harbours Rights of way Open access land One National Nature Reserve (NNR) Parks and gardens Historic attractions Wildlife	<p>Recreation is dominated by the seaside resorts of the urban east (such as Worthing and Bognor Regis) as well as the caravan parks, ribbon development and harbourside tourism that characterise much of the rest of the coast. There is a 670 km rights of way network at a density of 1.29 km per km² and 230 ha of open access land, covering 0.45 per cent of the NCA.</p> <p>Titchfield Haven NNR is managed by Hampshire County Council.</p> <p>Water-borne recreation is popular in this NCA. Chichester Harbour with 28 km² of water, 27 km of well marked and lit channels and with easy access to the Solent is an ideal water recreation centre. The Harbour has over 5,200 moorings and marina berths, and 16 sailing clubs.</p> <p>Chichester Harbour AONB has approximately 1.5 million people visiting each year.</p> <p>The internationally designated wildlife sites make this a popular area for birdwatching.</p>	National	<p>With a low beach gradient and the lack of any obvious dangers such as rips or obstacles, East Wittering and the whole stretch of Bracklesham Bay is a favourite with surfers with one of the UK's longest running surf clubs, Shore Surf Club, founded in 1969.</p> <p>Most of the coastal footpath network is located along existing sea defences, embankments or the foreshore itself. Should significant changes appear likely, options will need to be sought to relocate footpaths and other recreational resources inland.</p> <p>Popular birdwatching areas outside the internationally designated sites include Titchfield Haven, which has a network of accessible routes and a hide.</p> <p>Chichester Harbour AONB is one of the most important areas for water recreation in the country. There is considerable congestion and overcrowding on the water, particularly at weekends in the summer and conflict between different types of harbour user. Chichester Canal is currently under-used</p> <p>Walkers, cyclists, artists and birdwatchers are among those who enjoy Chichester Harbour AONB. There are strong indications that the number of visitors will continue to increase. Continuing development within and adjacent to the AONB is likely to lead to increased population pressure. Visitor impact needs to be monitored and addressed to minimise the effect on the very resource people come to enjoy.</p>	<p>Secure the long-term future of the coastal footpaths, investigating managed realignment and permissive route options where possible. Develop a strategy for managing those at risk from rising sea levels and failing sea defences.</p> <p>Support the provision of a high-quality network of footpaths, cycle routes and wheelchair paths through the Rights of Way Improvement Plans and other initiatives.</p> <p>Promote the Solent Disturbance Mitigation Project as a basis for formulating coherent policies for minimising impact of increased development and recreation provision on internationally important bird populations.</p> <p>Work with partners to educate groups using the water bodies on the needs of others and to give guidance on behaviour and good practice and balance the demand for more and improved boating facilities with environmental considerations. Support changes which encourage users to enjoy congested areas such as Chichester Harbour outside peak times.</p> <p>Support the use of Chichester Canal to link Chichester to the AONB through the Chichester Canal Trust.</p>	<p>Recreation</p> <p>Sense of place/ inspiration</p> <p>Sense of history</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>

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Recreation <i>continued from previous page</i>		<p>In response to concerns over the impact of recreational pressure on birds within protected areas in the Solent, the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project was initiated to determine visitor access patterns around the coast and how their activities may influence the birds.</p>	National	<p>Much work has already been undertaken by Chichester Harbour Conservancy in association with Action in Rural Sussex, Age Concern and other local organisations to further the work of the Local Strategic Partnership group to reduce isolation among older people.</p> <p>Goodwood Estate runs an extensive education programme including forest schools and hands-on sessions at its farm.</p> <p>The peregrine falcon nest on the spire of Chichester Cathedral is widely viewed via a webcam each spring and receives great attention from local and national media.</p> <p>The Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (SDMP) provides evidence that recreational pressures from new development within 5.6 km of the Solent coastline may have an adverse affect on internationally protected birds.</p>	<p>Support the work of partners including Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Environmental Education Groups to establish closer links between the harbour education service and the local farming community, sustainable schools and healthy eating programmes and community services.</p> <p>Ensure that realignment sites are managed to develop their full potential to support and enhance access and interpretation where appropriate.</p> <p>Work with partners to develop a plan for avoidance and mitigation to minimise impact of recreational activities on internationally protected bird population.</p>	

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Biodiversity <i>continued on next page</i>	<p>Internationally designated sites</p> <p>SSSI</p> <p>One NNR</p> <p>Coastal habitats</p> <p>Grazing marsh</p> <p>Heathlands</p> <p>Meadows</p> <p>Woodlands</p> <p>Gardens</p>	<p>Some 3 per cent (1,700 ha) of the area is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and there are four Special Protection Areas (SPAs), two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and four Ramsar sites.</p> <p>The marine environment of Chichester Harbour AONB is afforded protection through the Solent Maritime SAC European designation.</p> <p>Horsea Island is one of the sites chosen by Butterfly Conservation for trials of disease resistant elms for the benefit of white-letter hairstreak butterfly since 2000.</p> <p>Relatively small fragments of coastal grazing marsh occur, with larger areas at Farlington Marshes and the marshes on the eastern side of Hayling Island.</p> <p>Heathland is no longer a significant habitat within the area, although pockets such as Hamble Common survive.</p>	International	<p>Chichester Harbour has been designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention (1971) as it regularly holds 20,000 or more wildfowl and waders in winter, has the third largest population of dark-bellied Brent geese in the country (with Pagham, Langstone and Portsmouth harbours also in the top 12) and has internationally significant populations of Dunlin and black-tailed godwit. It is also an important site for nesting terns. A subtidal survey of habitats and species within the harbour identified 200 maritime taxa including invertebrates, algae and fish. There is also a colony of harbour seals and water voles are regularly seen.</p> <p>In recent years Chichester Harbour has not regularly supported significant numbers of breeding terns, probably due to a combination of disturbance and erosion of historical breeding sites. However, the NCA as a whole is important for breeding terns.</p> <p>Between Shoreham and Bognor Regis the coastline supports fringing shingle beaches where pioneer plant communities survive in places. These contain characteristic plants such as yellow-horned poppy and sea kale as well as rarities such as starry clover.</p> <p>The relict dunes at Bognor Reef support the nationally rare chiding pink, as does Pagham Beach where the long-winged conehead, sand dart and Matthew's wainscot moth can also be found.</p> <p>The Hampshire Wildlife Trust reserve at Farlington Marshes and the marshes on the eastern side of Hayling Island provide some more extensive and well developed examples of coastal grazing marsh.</p>	<p>Ensure that realignments are managed so that intertidal habitats can develop and expand effectively.</p> <p>Where existing flood defences are reinforced, work with partners to limit adverse impacts on biodiversity.</p> <p>Improve water quality by reducing the amount of nutrients entering the harbours from domestic and industrial sources by engaging with the planning process to ensure that new developments incorporate the best possible measures for reducing problems from waste, including SUDS.</p> <p>Improve water quality by reducing the amount of nutrients entering the harbours from agricultural sources by continuing with catchment initiatives that engage and challenge farmers to reduce nutrient leaching, pesticide contamination and soil erosion.</p> <p>Seek to secure the future of breeding terns (particularly Little Terns) in the harbours.</p> <p>There are opportunities to extend and possibly link areas of coastal grazing marsh as part of flood defence measures.</p> <p>Preserve scarce areas of heathland and seek opportunities to improve and extend.</p>	<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Food production</p> <p>Regulating water quality</p> <p>Regulating water flow</p> <p>Regulating coastal erosion and flooding</p> <p>Recreation</p> <p>Sense of place/inspiration</p>

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Biodiversity <i>continued from previous page</i>		<p>European native oyster populations have experienced an acute decline since the 19th century due to the combination of over-fishing and associated habitat loss, combined with the anthropogenic and environmental pressures of pollution, disease and the presence of non-native species.</p>		<p>Historically heathland was much more extensive, linking with the hunting forests of Bere and Waltham Chase in south Hampshire so there may be opportunities to extend or re-create small areas.</p> <p>There is increasing concern at the disturbance caused to nature conservation interests by increased recreational pressure from housing development.</p> <p>IFCA identified 22 species of fish within Chichester Harbour. A survey carried out in 2004 by the University of Portsmouth recorded 32 species, with sand and painted gobies and black bream the most abundant. Also numerous at some sites were bass, ballan wrasse and corkwing wrasse. Several species, such as the bass, bream, mullet, sole and plaice use the harbour as a nursery area with a large percentage of juveniles making up the survey samples.¹⁸</p> <p>The Solent oyster population has declined in the last decade and shows no sign of broad scale recovery. The Chichester oysters are considered to be a component of this wider population. The native oyster fishery has been locally important in Chichester Harbour since at least Roman times.</p> <p>Closer scrutiny of the impact of activities, such as oyster dredging and bait digging, on the subtidal and intertidal biodiversity within the AONB may be required in future to determine the impact on favourable conservation status.</p>	<p>Support inclusion of high-quality greenspace within new and extended development for the wellbeing of local communities and to provide links between important biodiversity sites.</p> <p>Support the Sussex Sea Fisheries Committee in maintaining the bass nursery area.</p> <p>Support management of native oysters in Chichester Harbour, including implementation of temporary closure of fisheries to allow populations to recover when necessary.¹⁹</p> <p>Support the bait digging Code of Conduct and work within the SEMS Management Scheme to monitor the level and impact of bait digging.</p>	

¹⁸ A survey of the fish population of Chichester Harbour, P Farrell, University of Portsmouth (2005)

¹⁹ Chichester Harbour Oyster Partnership Initiative (URL: www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=132&Itemid=204)

Service	Assets/attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Geodiversity	Upper raised beach deposits Coastal exposures	Remains of Homo heidelbergensis were first found at Boxgrove in 1994, comprising the partial tibia of a male. In 1996 two incisor teeth from another individual were found. In 2003 English Heritage announced it would buy the remains of the quarry to ensure the preservation of the site complex.	International	<p>Boxgrove is a site of national archaeological importance because of the discovery in 1994 and 1995 of 500,000 year old human fossils of a nomadic hunter-gatherer ('Boxgrove Man' and associated artefacts), found in the gravel deposits of a raised beach which remain the oldest such fossils ever discovered in the UK. There were also animal bones which are the oldest found specimens of their species, such as the wing bone of the great auk found at the site in 1989.</p> <p>The coastal exposures of Lower Tertiary deposits reveal diverse fossil assemblages, such as at Felpham, Bognor Reef and Bracklesham Bay.</p> <p>Selsey is a key Quaternary site for a sequence of freshwater and estuarine deposits of Ipswichian Interglacial age. Mammal remains including rhinoceros, horse and hippopotamus have also been recorded from the deposits. Much potential exists for vertebrate research at this locality, particularly with regard to stratigraphy and pollen zonation.</p> <p>East of Langstone a low cliff line at high water mark exhibits a complex of Brickearth and Coombe Rock deposits and at East Head there is a sizeable sand dune and shingle system both of which are of geomorphological importance.</p> <p>Pagham Harbour is a key site for coastal geomorphology and also has an outstanding palaeobotanical site of great importance to studies of Tertiary floras.</p> <p>Generally a good place to study coastal processes at work.</p>	<p>Interpret and promote the Boxgrove site to encourage interest and understanding of the area's geodiversity.</p> <p>Maintain coastal exposures of Lower Tertiary deposits revealing diverse fossil assemblages, such as at Felpham, Bognor Reef and Bracklesham Bay.</p> <p>Maintain important inland geology exposed in pits and quarries, such as Downend Chalk Pit SSSI, helping to promote an appreciation and understanding of the geodiversity of the NCA and connecting communities with their local heritage.</p> <p>Conserve coastal geomorphological features (and the natural processes needed to sustain them) including sand dune systems, sand and shingle spits and banks (for example East Head).</p> <p>Encourage the use of traditional building materials in conservation projects (for example timber frame, flint, cob and thatch) and promoting the use of the Chichester Harbour AONB Design Guidance for replacement dwellings in the AONB.</p> <p>Continue to research, monitor and record geomorphological processes to inform management decisions.</p> <p>Provide access to sites of geological interest where appropriate and interpret the geological features and dynamic coastal processes to improve understanding and appreciation.</p> <p>Encourage research, monitoring and recording of geomorphological processes.</p>	<p>Geodiversity</p> <p>Recreation</p> <p>Sense of place/ inspiration</p> <p>Sense of history</p>

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