

Draft Long Rock Management Plan

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
Special Protected Area (SPA)

2024 to 2029



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ACRONYMS

CCC	Canterbury City Council
KSCP	Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership
KWT	Kent Wildlife Trust
EA	Environment Agency
NE	Natural England
SAMMS	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
ORNEC	Operations Requiring Natural England's Consent
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
SPA	Special Protection Area (relating to vulnerable and migratory birds)
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation (relating to special habitats or species)
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological Site
Ramsar	Wetlands of international importance ¹
PROW	Public Rights of Way
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
PSPO	Public Spaces Protection Orders

¹ Not actually an acronym as it relates to the city in Iran where the treaty was signed in 1971. However, context is necessary.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Name:	Long Rock (CT5 2PB)
District:	Canterbury
Grid Reference:	TR 136 676
Tenure:	Owned by Canterbury City Council
Area:	37.0 ha (91.4 acres)
Perimeter:	2,642.5m
Vehicle Access:	Access via locked gate at promenade
Geology/Soils:	London clay and heavy soils with naturally high groundwater
Habitats:	Saltmarsh, Brackish tidal beds Shingle Grassland Mudflats Brook Ponds Scrapes Scrub

Important Species:	Turnstone, <i>Arenaria interpres</i> Brent geese, <i>Branta Bernicla</i> Ringed Plover, <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> Sanderling, <i>Calidris Alba</i> Grey Plover, <i>Pluvialis Squatarola</i> Kestrel, <i>Falco Tinnunculus</i> Oystercatcher, <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> Water Vole, <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> Lapwing, <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> Fisher's Estuarine Moth, <i>Gortyna borelii lunata</i> Shrill Carder Bee, <i>Bombus sylvarum</i> Sea Aster Mining bee, <i>Colletes halophilus</i> <i>Agonopterix putridella</i> Hog's fennel, <i>Peucedanum palustre</i>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Long Rock is a true asset to the district of Canterbury, underpinned by a variety of both national and international land based designations, including the Thanet Coast SSSI and the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA. However, this is sometimes undervalued and overlooked which can threaten the site's biodiversity. The site itself, and its wildlife, continue to face significant human induced threats yet up to this point a robust management plan has not existed to mitigate against such influences. Therefore, Canterbury City Council has developed this plan to inform a comprehensive approach to management, with detailed instruction and proposals for effective oversight which aim to protect the significance of this internationally recognised site.

When considering the complexity of Long Rock it becomes clear why the site holds so much value. It consists of a variety of habitats including: shingle beach, brackish tidal beds, marsh, scrub, woodland, scrapes, freshwater and brackish ditches. The reserve is important for birds as the shingle beach provides roosting opportunities for wintering waders and possible nesting opportunities for species such as Little tern and Ringed plover. The scrape and scrub is rich in a variety of passerines, waterfowl and some wading species.



Turnstone



2. MANAGEMENT PLAN AIMS

This site management plan aims to:

- Promote the importance of Long Rock by raising awareness of its various land based designations, and to ensure Canterbury City Council positively manage, conserve and enhance the special features of the SSSI.
- Implement a balanced approach to the management of both recreational and semi-natural areas at Long Rock. This will be achieved by outlining the human induced threats and developing ways in which they can be reduced, whilst enabling visitors to continue enjoying the site.
- Highlight and promote the common objectives between CCC and other organisations that play a role in the management of Long Rock, and to provide clear information to local residents so they are able to contribute to the decision making process.
- Clearly outline the specific and routine management practices that should be undertaken on site and in doing so coordinate the roles of other organisations that work in partnership with CCC
- Increase both species and habitat resilience at Long Rock by providing guidance which informs a proactive approach to natural challenges and threats such as climate change, landform changes and footfall pressures.



3. SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1. Location

Long Rock is located in Whitstable in the coastal ward of Swalecliffe along the North Kent Coastline. The boundary of the site can broadly be characterised by the mapping of the SSSI as this designation has largely informed management practices up to this point. The boundary extends offshore and includes areas up to the The Cackle Shell Caravan site in the east, the playing field and beach huts in the south and then stretches out to sea in the west.

3.2. Site History

Long Rock's formation has largely been down to natural influences of longshore drift which over time has formed a spit in the westerly direction. Due to this process a series of shingle ridges have also formed creating marsh and freshwater within. This array of habitats now hosts a variety of important plants and therefore home to roosting and nesting birds and other animals and invertebrates. The site also holds geographical and historical significance from the last Ice Age where fossils of the Mammoth and Woolly rhinoceros have been found, as well as flint implements and ancient pottery. In more recent history, the site has been used as both a waste facility

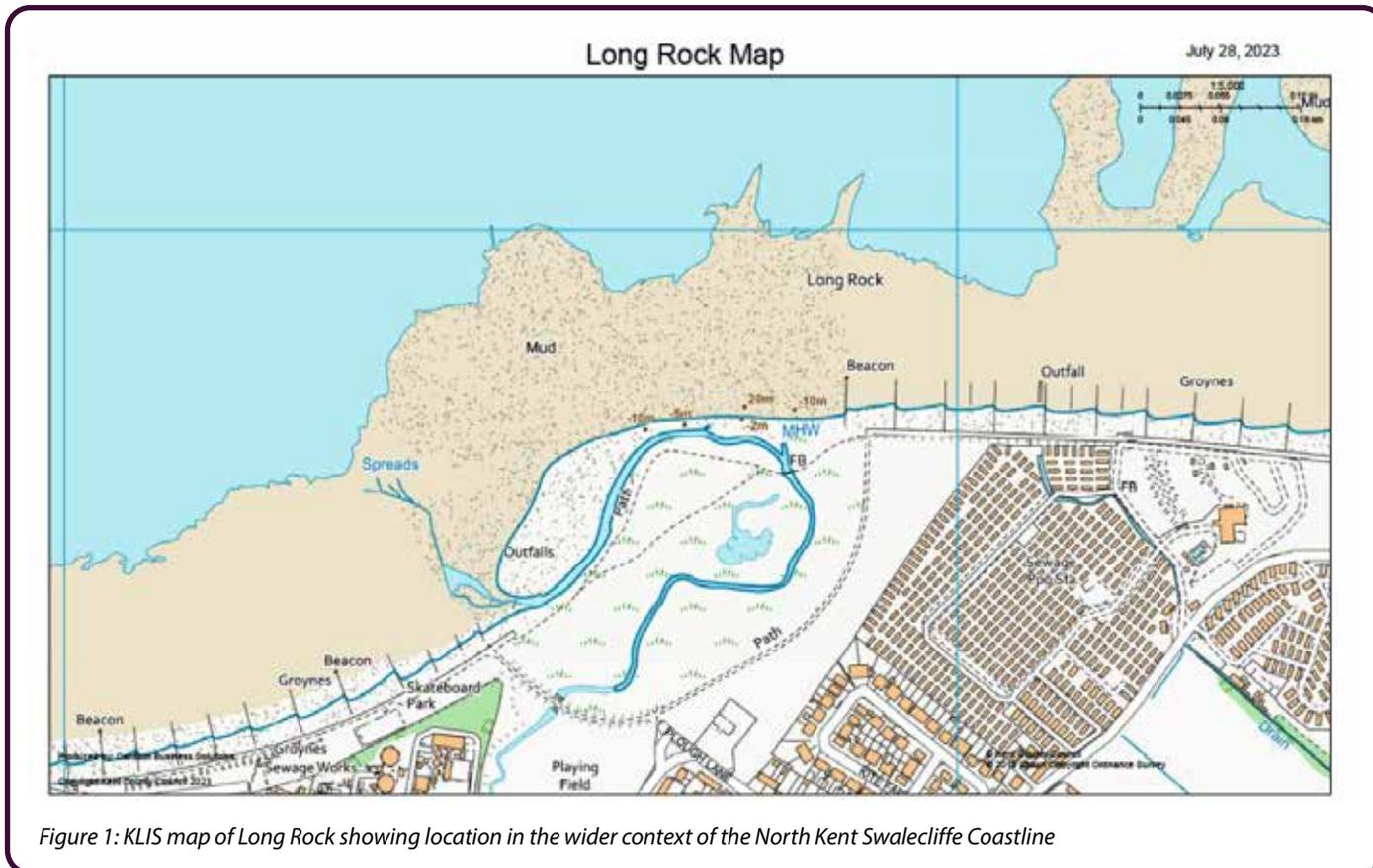


Figure 1: KLIS map of Long Rock showing location in the wider context of the North Kent Swalecliffe Coastline

and a brick works. Highlight how former industrial sites can become rich in wildlife once operations cease, instilling confidence that Long Rock can see increases in dwindling species with the right approach to management.

To this day, the site is extremely popular with local residents and visitors accessing Long Rock through

a variety of PROW and national trails. This includes two cycling and walking trails (the Viking Coastal Trail and the Whitstable Oyster Trail). Both trails wrap around the Southeastern perimeter as cycling is not permitted through the centre of the site (Fig. 2). There are also several informal paths winding their way through the grass, shingle and waterways which pose the most significant threat to wildlife on site.

3.3. Current Management

Long Rock is owned by Canterbury City Council and managed with various partners as and when needed including: Foreshore Services, Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, Kent Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and Birdwise East Kent. Areas of grassland within the SSSI are under various maintenance regimes including meadow and conservation cuts, there is also more extensive grassland that is not routinely managed and is important for ground nesting birds. Within the area of scrub, multiple organisations have undertaken works over the years.

- Swalecliffe Brook is managed by the Environment Agency who have undertaken channel modifications in recent years; they also operate sluice gates on the southern perimeter of the site. After the 2000/1 flooding, the culvert at the sluice gates was enlarged to increase outflow and reduce flood risk to residents within the catchment. Siltation of the brook and natural influences of longshore drift on the shingle bar continue to contribute to water flow and quality issues. Hence, at the time of writing this management plan EA are seeking planning consents to build a second concrete sluice which would allow the continued outflow of the brook into the estuary, and reduce stagnation and eutrophication within the existing channels.

- The brook and general location of Long Rock is also more routinely monitored by Foreshore Services at Canterbury City Council who will respond to daily issues if appropriate. They also inspect Public Rescue Equipment, monitor water quality on site and respond to calls relating to stranded marine mammals.
- In 2011/12 Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership also undertook biodiversity improvements associated with the brook with South East Water funding. Two scrapes were created using excavators whilst also depositing protective bunds to provide new habitat for breeding and wintering birds and reduce disturbance on site. Interpretation signage was also installed as part of these works to raise awareness for visitors. KSCP also undertake more routine habitat management on site most notably for the preservation and benefit of Hog's fennel and the Fisher's Estuarine Moth.
- Butterfly Conservation have conducted surveys on site to better understand the distribution of pollinators such as the Fisher's estuarine moth. It is essential that both historic records are collected and surveys continue into the future.
- Local bird watchers also have played an extremely important role in recording data and tracking long term trends in bird populations. Records can be found in a variety of databases and publications including the British Trust for Ornithology Wetland Bird Survey and Birdtracker, eBird and Kent Ornithological Society's database.

In addition, Birdwise East Kent (SAMMS) provide their services to monitor bird disturbance on site, with regular fortnightly site visits during winter and as and when needed during the summer. The purpose of these visits are to engage with the public and report any significant findings to Canterbury City Council's enforcement and environment teams.

3.4. Planning consents

With reference to Canterbury City Council's Adopted 2017 Local Plan sites of scientific or nature conservation interest either as direct, indirect or cumulative sites designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will not normally be granted for development.

In the 2017 Local Plan, reference is made to the Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe area which highlights its SAC designation affords the highest level of protection. Furthermore, the area is a designated protected open space, further safeguarding the site from development if circumstances of the SSSI were to change. Canterbury City Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy also underpins the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and requires positive planning for green infrastructure.

The council also has an emerging Green Gap Improvement Plan for Chestfield and Herne Bay; Long Rock falls into this. The document aims to highlight where improvements can be made for environmental and recreational purposes.



3.5. Document history

This management plan serves as the first edition of any formalised document specifically aiming to inform the monitoring and management of Long Rock. The current Tankerton Coastal Park Management Plan (due to expire in 2024) makes minor references to the management of Long Rock, however, this focuses primarily on access improvements as well as two broad actions focused on the general retention of the SSSI status and work on the channel. Therefore, a comprehensive and localised plan is required.

3.6. Key features

Long Rock hosts significant ecological and geological features including assets such as the brook, shingle spit and marsh. However, the site also includes Whitstable Skate Park which underwent a comprehensive planning application in order to gain assent from Natural England. The PROW and trails also play a key role in the geography of the site, encouraging the influx of visitors and dog walkers. Moving forward it is important that local residents and visitors are engaged with to increase awareness of the site's international importance. Community understanding and collaboration will be key in ensuring that wildlife at Long Rock is protected.

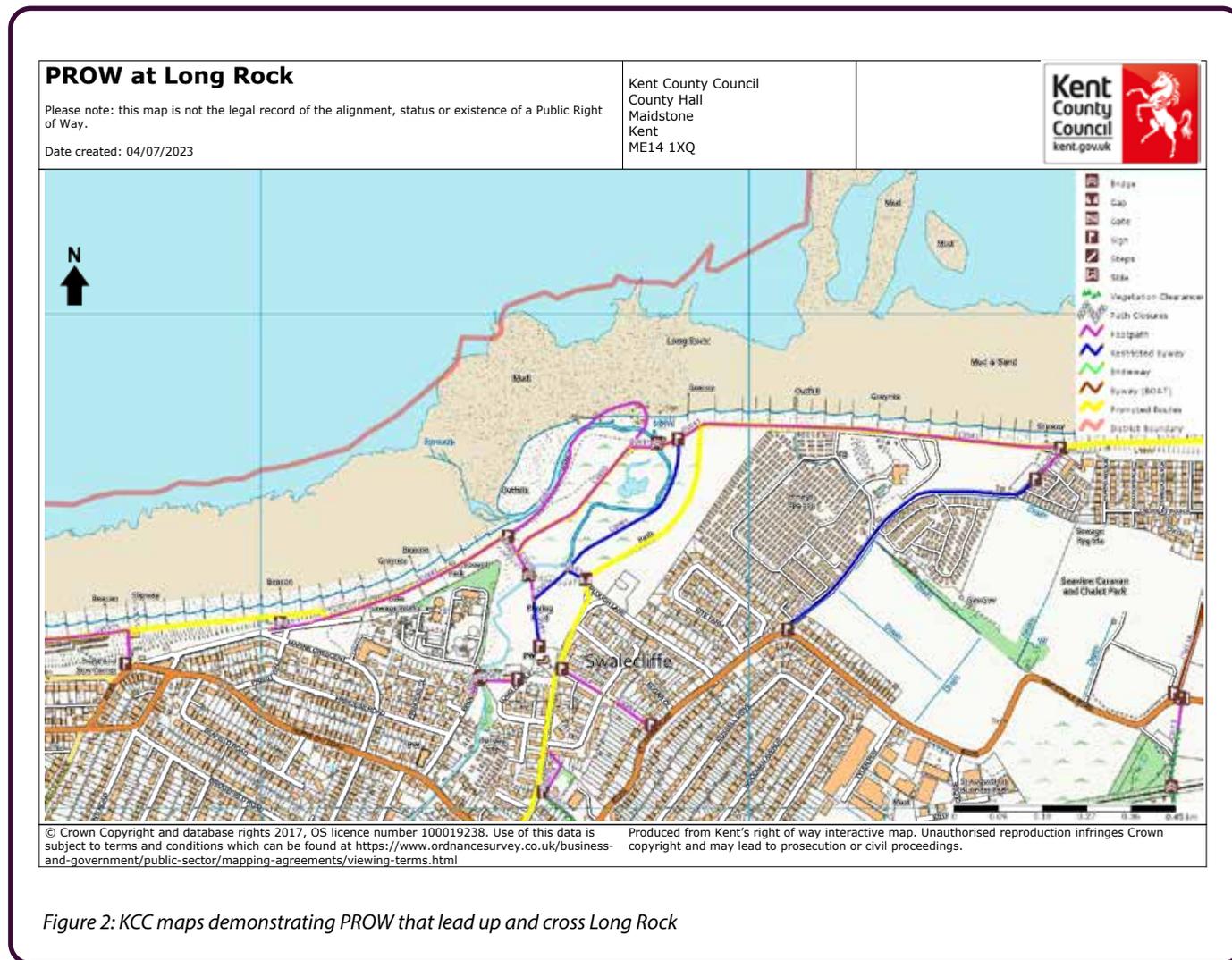


Figure 2: KCC maps demonstrating PROW that lead up and cross Long Rock

4. DESIGNATIONS

Long Rock hosts a variety of both statutory and non-statutory land and sea based designations. Such overlapping designations significantly highlight the importance of the site's wetland species interest, coastal birds and plant life.

4.1. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

SSSI are nationally important and a statutory UK designation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. They are designated by NE and are designed to protect some of the best sites for wildlife and biodiversity nationally. Such sites are afforded legislative protection in the planning process. NE uses its statutory power to protect SSSI meaning the landowner must be granted with assent by NE for any planning applications or non compliant management practices referenced on the ORNEC list.²

Some exceptions apply:

- If emergency works are required to be carried out. However, NE should be notified within 24 hours of entering the site and extra care should be given to avoid damage to special features.
- Operations with permission from a public body or local authority (however, the relevant body must have consulted with NE for you)
- A management practice which is not on the ORNEC list for that site.
- Operations can still be carried out without assent by a public body after consultation with NE if it is believed the conditions attached to an assent are unacceptable. This must be accompanied with 28 days notice before entering the site outlining that you have considered the advice, considered alternatives to reduce the impact of the required work and weighed the balance between conflicting interests.

If these conditions are not met then the body carrying out the works could be prosecuted.

Long Rock falls into the Thanet Coast SSSI (Fig. 3), a larger designation expanding across the Thanet Coast, hosting distinct features³ including but not limited to aggregations of breeding and non-breeding birds and coastal vegetated shingle. This compartment of the Thanet Coast SSSI is in favourable condition, however, certain species defined under aggregations of non-breeding birds are in an unfavourable condition and declining. Although Hog's fennel is found on site it is not cited under the Thanet Coast SSSI. However, the plant is a key feature of the Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe SAC (which includes Long Rock), as well as the Tankerton Slopes SSSI (only a short walk down the promenade). Therefore, Hog's fennel is still regarded as an important management feature at Long Rock and guidance is later given within this management plan. Management practices delivered here should be delivered to the same standards as those delivered at Tankerton Slopes.

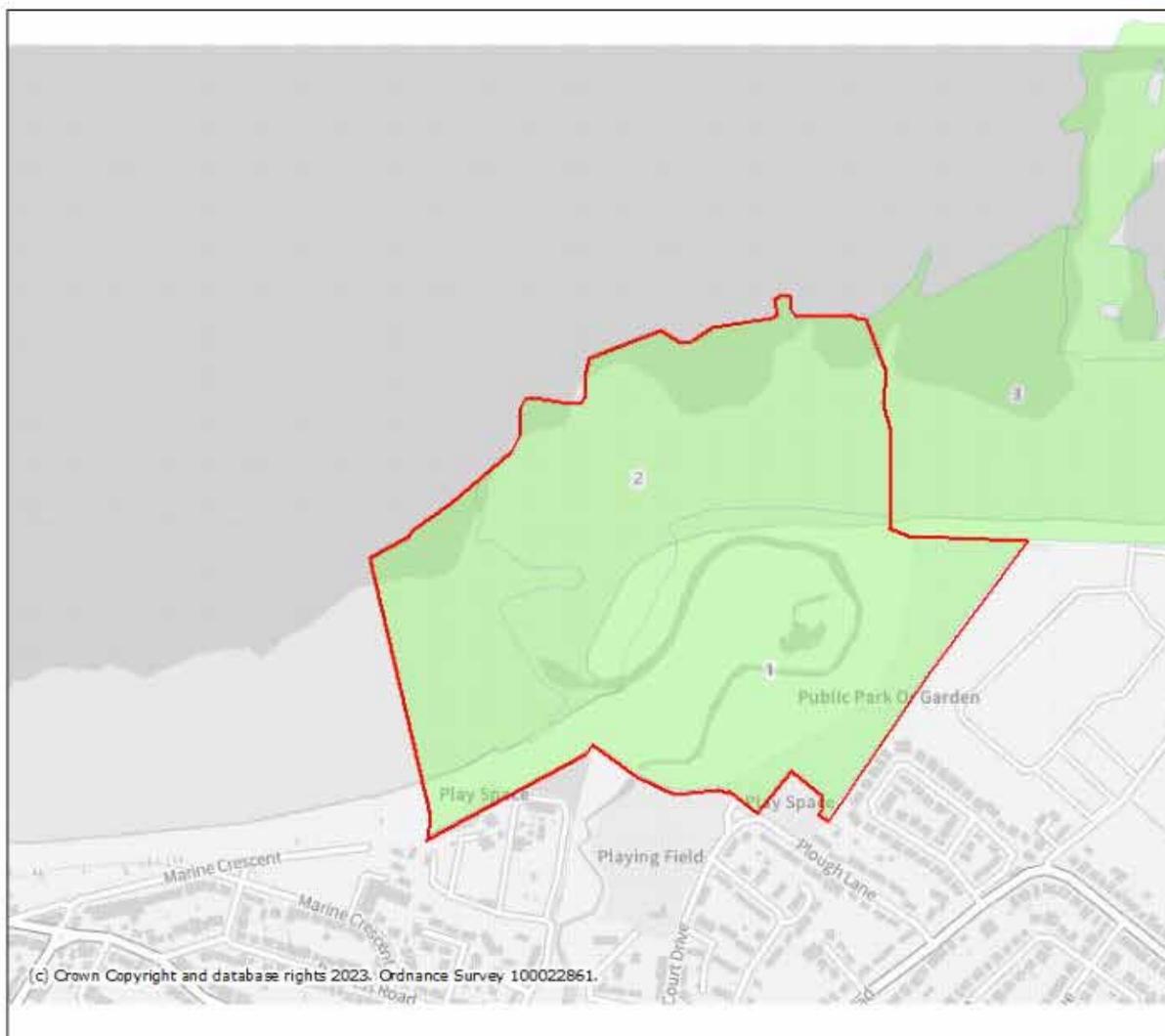
² Natural England (n.d.) 'Operations likely to damage the special interest', Available at: designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Consent/1003560.p

³ Natural England (n.d.) 'Designated Sites View: Thanet Coast, Kent SSSI' Available at: designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteFeatureCondition.aspx?SiteCode=S1003560&SiteName=Thanet%20Coast%20SSSI



MAGiC

SSSI Map of Long Rock

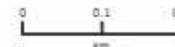


Legend

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

- Favourable Condition
- Unfavourable Recovering
- Unfavourable no change
- Unfavourable Declining
- Part Destroyed
- Destroyed
- Not Assessed

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 612100
 ymin = 167200
 xmax = 614800
 ymax = 168400



Map produced by MAGiC on 31 March, 2023.
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Figure 3: Boundary mapping of Long Rock bird zone within the Thanet Coast, Kent SSSI

4.2. Ramsar site

Long Rock also falls within the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Ramsar designation. This designation represents wetlands of international importance that are characterised by rare wetland types important for conserving ecological value. They are internationally recognised however there exists no dedicated legislation for their protection. Nevertheless, most Ramsar sites are designated as SSSI's in the UK enabling Ramsar considerations in statutory guidance. The Ramsar treaty also provides a comprehensive framework for the management and conservation of wetlands and their resources. The vision for sites on the Ramsar list is:

To develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services⁴

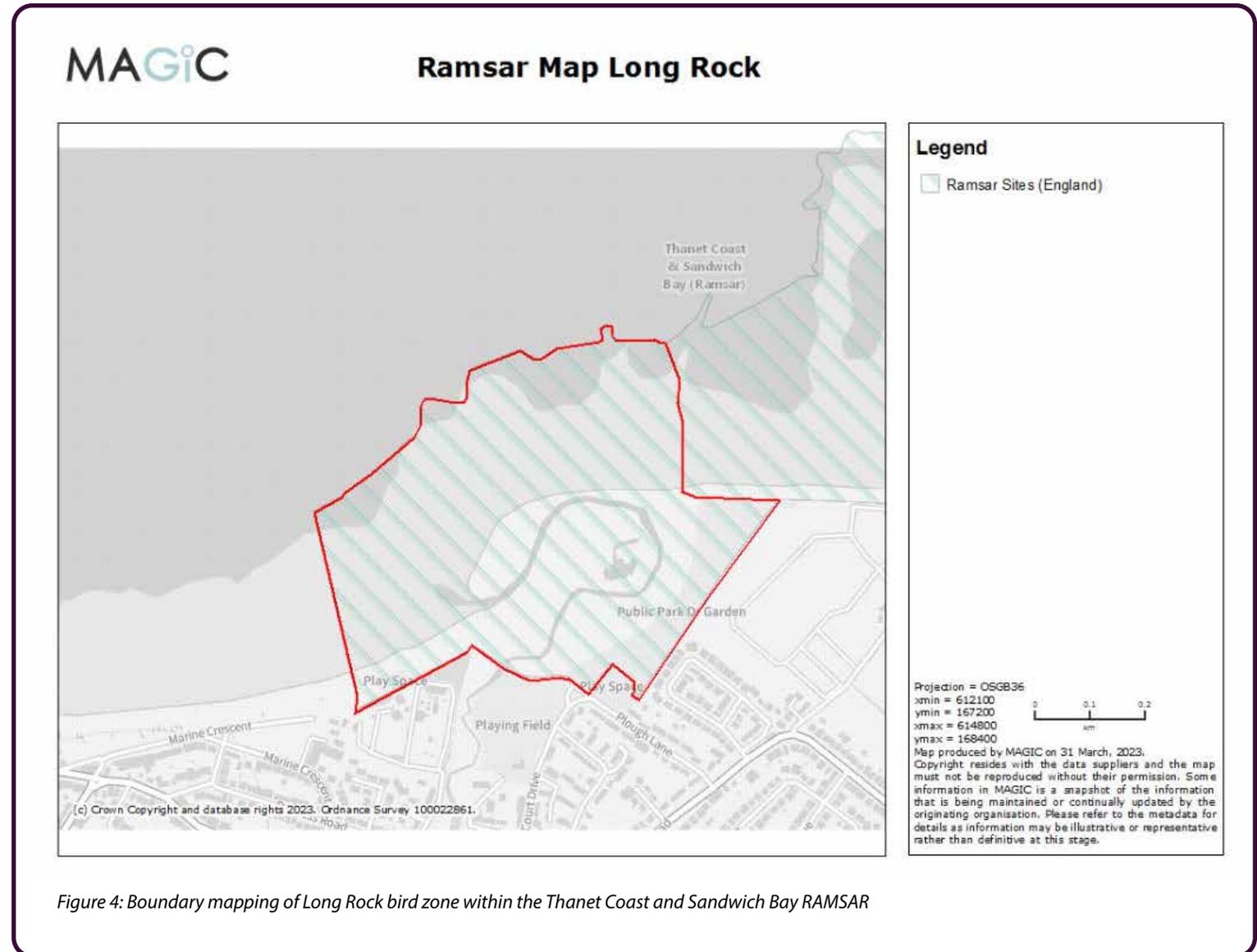


Figure 4: Boundary mapping of Long Rock bird zone within the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay RAMSAR

4 RAMSAR (2022) 'Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands'. Available at: rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/StatDoc/strategic_framework_en.pdf



4.3. Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS)

RIGS are non-statutory Earth Science sites designated by locally based RIGS Groups. They are selected for their geology, geomorphology and soils and are considered important for their educational, research, historical or recreational value. This again is often complemented by a SSSI designation signposting that Local Planning Authorities should protect geodiversity features as well as those outlined by NE on the SSSI list of conditions.

The cliffs and foreshore along the coast of Tankerton and Swalecliffe have a long history of research, with publications back to 1834. Both interglacial and glacial vertebrates have been identified at Long Rock, as well as forest bed from the post-glacial period and archaeological material ranging from early Acheulean flakes to Medieval Ceramics.

With geological, geomorphological and archaeological environments considered there is a need to ensure that future coastal work does not cause further damage.

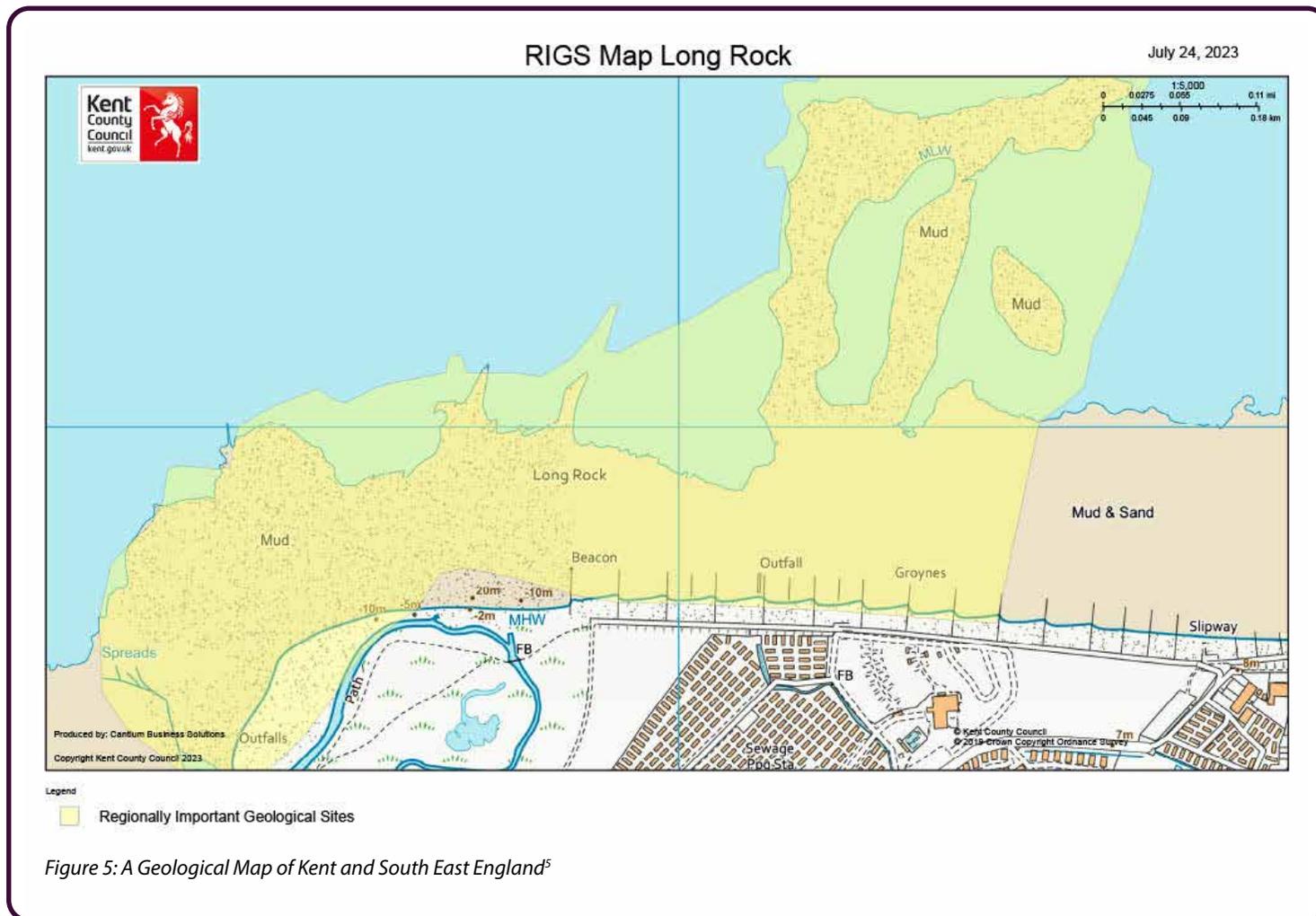


Figure 5: A Geological Map of Kent and South East England⁵

⁵ GeoConservation Kent (n.d.) 'Geological Map of Kent' Available at: www.geoconservationkent.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12:-geological-map-of-kent&catid=4:geology&Itemid=17

4.4. Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Both SPAs and SACs are designated under the European Union Directive. SPAs specifically relate to the Conservation of Wild Birds and SACs focus more broadly on habitats and/or species. In the UK, they are classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA

Long Rock marks the beginning of the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and its designation concerns the Golden plover, *Pluvialis apricaria*, Little tern, *Sterna albifrons* and Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*. The SPA also extends into the adjacent territorial sea (Fig. 6). Conservation advice is instructed by NE⁶.

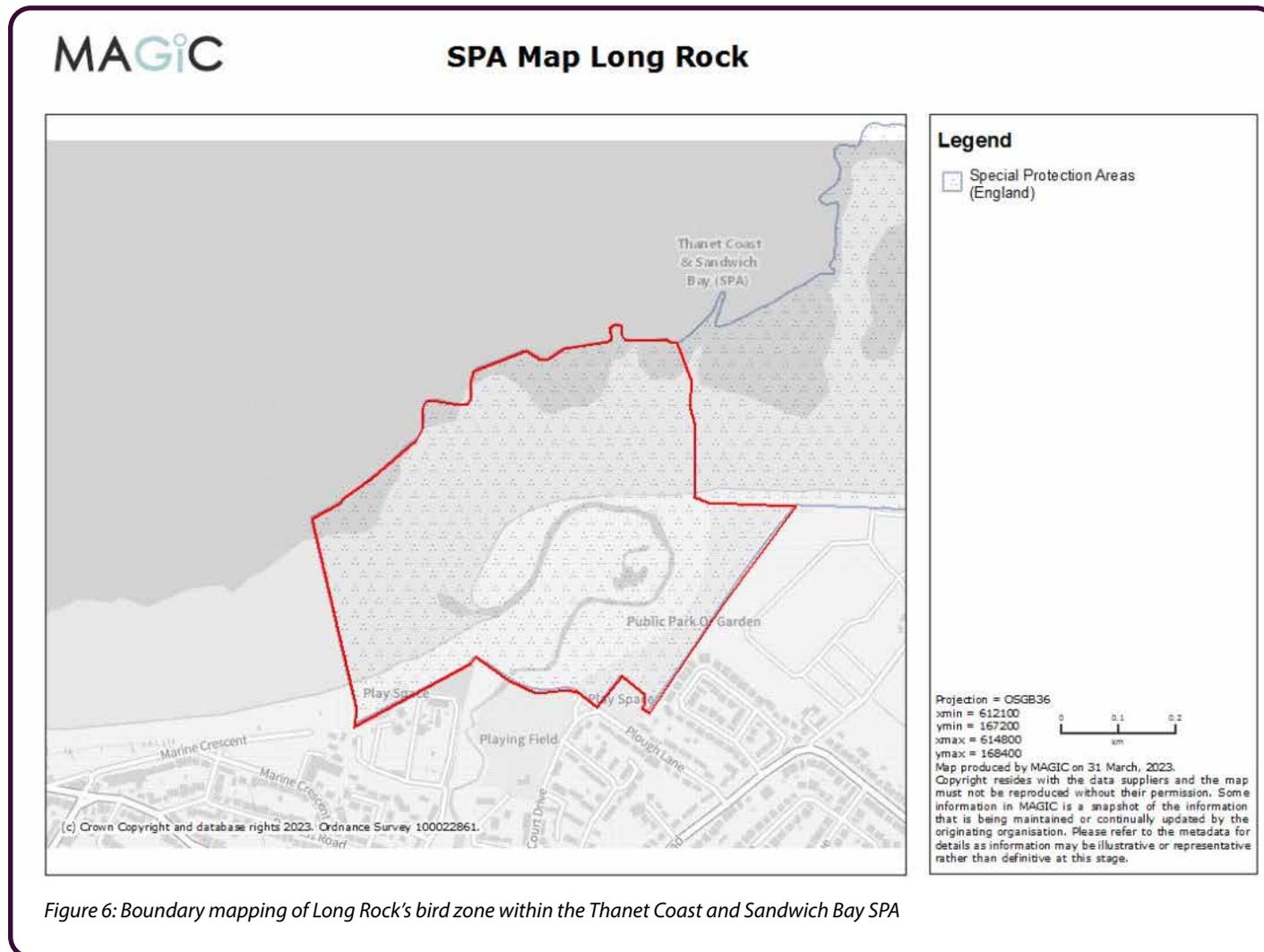


Figure 6: Boundary mapping of Long Rock's bird zone within the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA

6 Natural England (n.d.) 'Natural England Conservation Advice for Marine Protected Areas Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA'. Available at: designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/MarineSiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UK9012071&SiteName=thanet%20coast&SiteNameDisplay=Thanet%20Coast%20and%20Sandwich%20Bay%20SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAarea=&NumMarineSeasonality=3&HasCA=1



Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe SAC

In regard to the SAC designation, long rock is a considerable proportion of the Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe SAC and specifically concerns the Fisher's estuarine moth. Conservation advice can be found under the NE and European Site Conservation Objectives⁷ (Fig. 7).

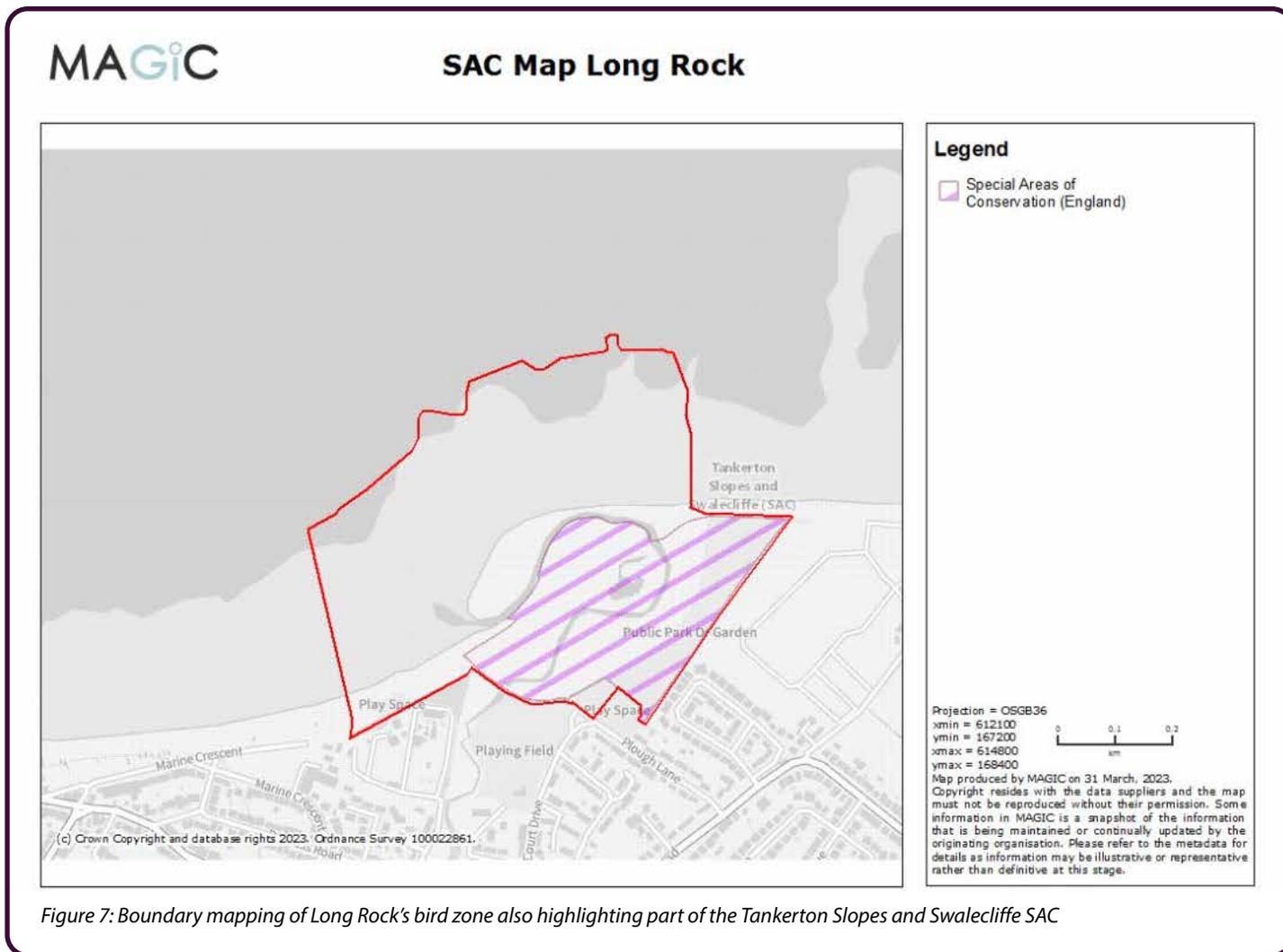


Figure 7: Boundary mapping of Long Rock's bird zone also highlighting part of the Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe SAC

7 Natural England (2019)' European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe Special Area of Conservation (SAC): Available at: designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/TerrestrialAdvicePDFs/UK0030378.pdf

5. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

5.1. Geology

Swalecliffe is placed on top of low lying London Clay geology which began forming during the Eocene Epoch, 56 to 33 million years ago as sea levels rose and deposited sediment. This is now overlain with poorly draining heavy soils presenting challenges to farming throughout the local area. The area now known as Long Rock is due to the formation of a shingle spit developing as a consequence of longshore drift and shingle transportation and deposition. At low tide the surrounding North Kent areas also expose mudflats rich in nutrients from decomposing organic matter and minerals, providing important feeding grounds for wading birds.

5.2. Habitat Description

Due to the previously mentioned geology and tidal processes important habitats have developed throughout the Long Rock landscape, including an area of saltmarsh, brackish tidal beds, scrapes (shallow depressions seasonally holding water during wetter periods) and priority habitat coastal grazing marsh, as well as scattered trees and bushes (Fig. 8). The shingle and shell beaches support distinctive flora and a variety of birds, mammals and invertebrates.

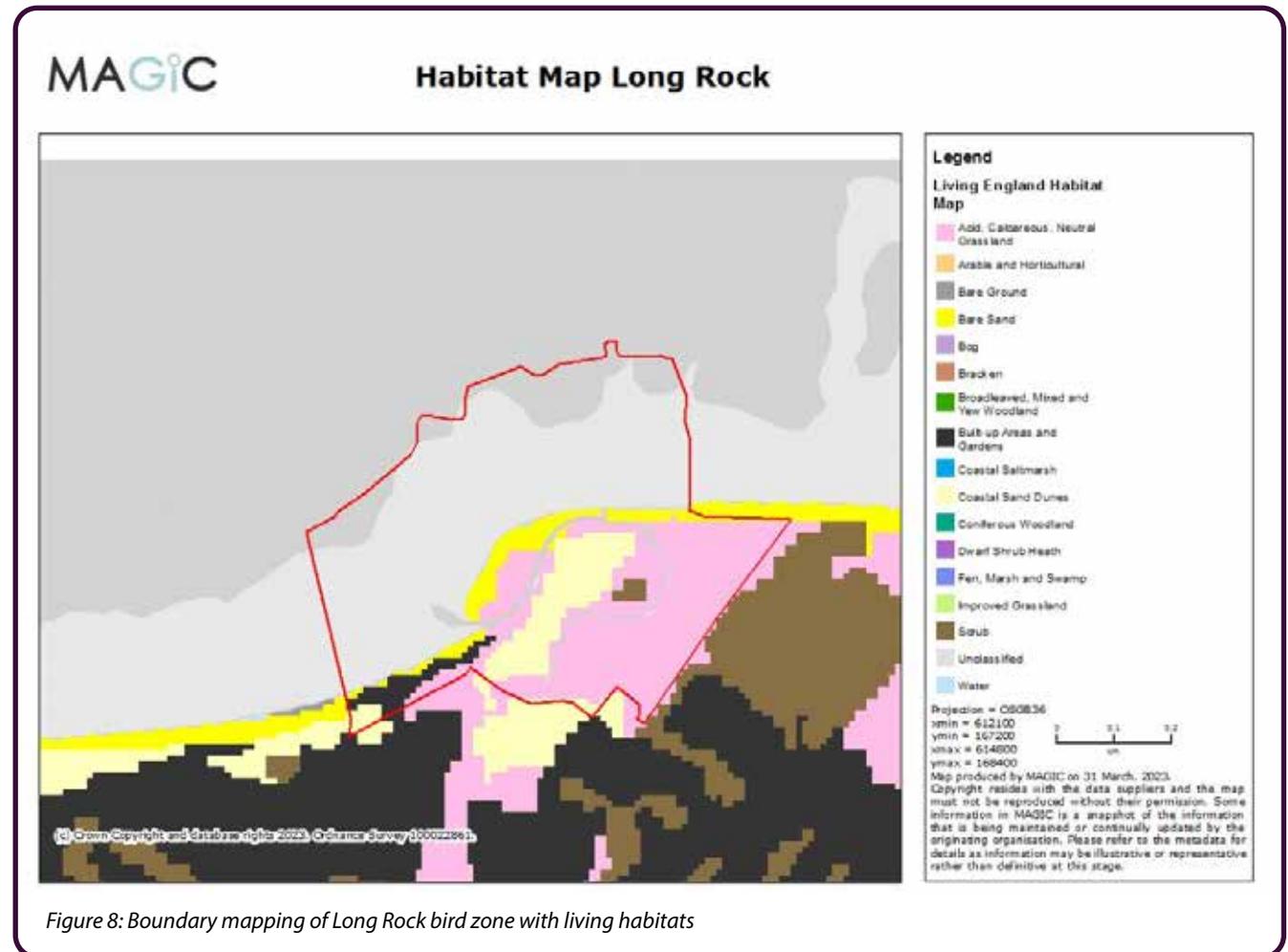


Figure 8: Boundary mapping of Long Rock bird zone with living habitats

5.3. Ecological Value

Given the existence of important habitats, Long Rock exhibits significant ecological value both for flora and fauna. The landscape here is notable for its assemblage of marine and terrestrial plant species as well as coastal birds. The shingle beach supports plants such as yellow-horned poppy, sea kale, sea holly, sea clover, the nationally rare species Hog's fennel (confined to a few coastal localities in south east England) and the willow leaf lettuce *Lactuca saligna*. The reserve is also important for roosting, feeding, summer nesting and wintering birds. The shingle beach provides roosting opportunities for wintering waders. The scrape and scrub is rich in a variety of passerines, birds of prey, waterfowl and some wading species.

In addition, important invertebrates include the only population of nationally rare isopod *Eluma purpurascens* and the Hog's Fennel reliant Fisher's Estuarine moth, *Gortyna borellii lunata*. The larvae of the Fisher's Estuarine moth are stem-borers and feed within the stems of Hog's Fennel from April through to June and then below ground within the plant's rootstock during July and August. Further down the coastline Tankerton Slopes LWS is designated as a SSSI for its population of Hog's Fennel indicating the importance of preserving this species when it rears at Long Rock. In accordance with this, Bramble and other shrubbery has to be carefully managed in order to prevent encroachment on areas of Hog's Fennel. Other important invertebrates found on site include the micro moth, *Agonopterix putridella*, also only found on Hogs fennel, the Shrill Carder Bee and the Sea aster mining bee, both nationally rare species.

The Water vole also inhabits Long Rock, a species listed as endangered on both the Great Britain and the England Red List for Mammals. Accordingly, they are a UK Biodiversity Framework species and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, meaning it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or possess dead or alive. Hence, special care should be taken with vehicular access on site not to kill, injure or disturb habitat. Any activities in breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 should be immediately reported to the police.

Furthermore, ecological interest is recognised across the area through numerous designations including; the Thanet Coast SSSI (also designated for its geological features), the Outer Thames Estuary SPA, the Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe Marine SAC and the Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay Ramsar Site.



Yellow Horned Poppy



Sea Holly



Agonopterix putridella



Shrill Carder Bee



Sea Aster Mining Bee



Water Vole

Images: Andy Taylor

6. ECOLOGICAL SURVEY DATA

In order to understand the full ecological significance of Long Rock and the human stressors at play a brief background is given here to represent how the populations of most notable species have declined over time. Focusing primarily on bird populations and the Fisher's Estuarine Moth, but also touching on the Fiery Clearwing Moth.

6.1. Bird Populations

Bird watchers and surveyors have noticed a significant decline in bird populations and the number of species over the last 30 years. While it could be argued that these observations reflect wider trends, it has been noted that certain local species are no longer using the site at all. Furthermore, wildlife populations are becoming increasingly isolated with a limited network of green corridors, preventing movement between areas and the recolonisation of lost species.

Wintering waders with recent high counts in brackets:

- Turnstone (c200)
- Ringed Plover (c150)
- Dunlin (c50)
- Sanderling (c200)
- Oystercatcher (c30)
- Redshank (c30)
- Curlew (c60)

Up to 700 Golden plover once regularly roosted on the beach but their numbers have fallen to 10 or less in recent years. The marsh pool and grassland also hold numbers of wintering Common Snipe (c40) and a small number of Jack Snipe. Up to 20 Little Egrets can be present in late Summer and some winters a few Lapwing roost in the Marsh. A single Purple Sandpiper sometimes winters. Apart from Little Egret and Sanderling counts, which have increased in comparison to records in the 1990s / early 2000s, numbers have reduced by 50%-75% in most cases, with Golden Plover, Grey plover & Purple Sandpiper down 95-99% into single figures.



Red Throated Diver



Turnstone

Images: Andy Taylor



Sanderling (top) and Lone Ringed Plover (bottom)



Dark Bellied Brent Geese



Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Ringed Plover (left to right)



Great Northern Diver

Other wintering species

Offshore there is a regular wintering flock of Red breasted Merganser as well as 100's of Red Throated Divers. Several individuals of Great Northern Divers can also be seen with Black-throated Divers on occasion. It is possible to see all three Diver species at the same time. Dark-bellied Brent also winter, once visiting in the several hundreds but now down to 80-100.

Other wintering birds include Meadow Pipit, Stonechat, Kingfisher and Water Rail - all in single figure numbers. During winter months, the site has also previously hosted Short Eared Owl, Snow Bunting, Shore Lark, Black Redstart and Lapland Bunting, however, none of these species have overwintered in the last five years.

Up until 2010, Long Rock had a regular small flock of Corn Bunting with counts of up to 90 recorded in the 1990s. Reed bunting would winter in double figures yet these are now only irregular passage migrants. Skylark would winter in varying numbers up until 2008. In the last two decades the site has lost all ground nesting birds, ringed Plover on the shingle and beach, Skylark, Meadow Pipit & Reed Bunting due to the increase in human disturbance.

Spring and summer

In spring and summer varying numbers of Sandwich Tern and Common Tern fish offshore. Up until 2010 the Little Tern was also a regular visitor, however, sightings have become rare. The Arctic Tern and Black Tern can be seen moving through on passage. As far as records go no species of Tern have ever bred on site. The shingle ridge and beach would be suitable for breeding terns, however, given the increase in disturbance, the large numbers of Carrion Crow, Herring Gulls and the presence of the fox, successful breeding is unlikely to occur.

All the remaining breeding species utilise the scrub and trees within the grassland, the churchyard and the perimeter planting of the water treatment works. These are also important areas for passage migrants. Among the species still breeding in these areas are Cetti's Warbler, Common & Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff Greenfinch & Linnet.

Mallard and Moorhen attempt to breed in and around the Brook with various levels of success each year. The area of scrub also hosts some of the largest roosts of House Sparrow and Starling in the county. Over the last few years Kestrels have bred in the box placed on the Telegraph pole within the marsh and have successfully raised up to four young in the past. Their most recent attempt in 2022 failed due to a very cold spring. Sparrowhawks still breed in the sewage works.

Over 250 species have been observed on site, notable sightings over the years include:

- Brown Booby first sighting for UK in August 2019
- Fan tailed Warbler - one of only eight British records
- Trumpeter Finch one of only sixteen British records (Tankerton)

This information was taken from a report written by Andy Taylor, private entomologist (2023)

6.2. The Fisher's Estuarine Moth and Hog's Fennel

The Fisher's Estuarine Moth, *Gortyna borelii lunata*, is extremely rare, highly threatened and a Schedule 5 protected British species, therefore, affording a high conservation priority. It is also the only UK breeding moth to have additional protection as a European Protected Species (under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) due to the species' decline across its entire global range.

The moth is wholly reliant on Hog's fennel, *Peucedanum officinale*, as the larvae feed only on the plant itself. This plant species, which is also threatened, is sometimes mistaken for Alexanders, *Smyrniium olusatrum*, which is an invasive species and threatens the distribution of Hog's fennel. It is now known in detail the prevalence of the moth



at Long Rock due to recent surveys conducted in 2021 by Rebecca Levey, Conservation Officer at Butterfly Conservation, as part of the Kent's Magnificent Moths Project. However, neither the moth nor the plant are designated as a key feature at Long Rock and the site is instead underpinned by the wider Thanet Coast SSSI features. This questions whether Long Rock should be given an independent SSSI designation with these key features, distinguishing it from the Thanet Coast SSSI and providing more protection for both the Fisher's Estuarine Moth and the Hog's Fennel.

Signs of the moth can be found on the Hog's Fennel, as the larvae bore into the stem they create 'volcanoes' at the base of the plant. In a detailed survey, 73% of 111 plants on site showed presence of the larvae. There was a greater presence to the north of the brook, likely because bramble is not encroaching on the Hog's fennel. The greatest threat here concerns potential flooding and increased trampling of grassland by walkers. To the south of the Brook a lot more bramble is found, indicating greater encroachment of Hog's fennel.

This information was taken from a report written by Dave Clarke, Team Leader, Invertebrates & Fish, Zoological Society of London and based on a survey conducted by Rebecca Levey, Conservation Officer, Butterfly Conservation (2021)



Figure 9: Satellite image showing the distribution of Hog's fennel occupied plants and the moth by sex

A note on management⁸:

Evidently the Fisher's Estuarine Moth is reliant on areas of rough grassland where Hog's fennel grows. In addition to this, long coarse grasses are required to enable the moth to lay eggs. Where both are found in abundance, the moth stands the best chance of survival. The most favourable density is one Hog's Fennel plant per square metre. Further to this, Hog's fennel must also remain at a height that allows the continued growth of neighbouring coarse grasses. Too low and it will reduce the chances of freshly hatched larvae migrating to a Hog's fennel plant.

6.3. Fiery Clearwing

The Fiery Clearwing, *Pyropteron chrysidiformis*, is a rare species in the Red Data Book, a Schedule 5 species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and therefore, fully protected. It can be identified by its flame red coloured wings as well as transparent sections. The species is now only found in a small number of coastal sites, however, from data gathered over a number of years it is clear to see

that the North Kent population is now expanding rapidly away from its former coastal locations. Such findings are represented at Long Rock, where the number of eggs identified have fallen from 470+ in 2012 to only 38 in 2021.

This data was taken from 'Monitoring of Fiery Clearwing Pyropteron chrysidiformis in 2021'

A note on management⁹:

Optimal conditions for the Fiery Clearwing include open grassland with early successional vegetation and an abundance of caterpillar food plants such as Curled Dock or Common Sorrell.

- Any encroaching scrub should be cut back periodically to retain open sunny areas.
- Some periodic disturbance of the ground, such as scarification, may be required to encourage the foodplant.
- Avoid disturbance on shingle beaches unless there are signs of vegetation succession, in which case some rotational disturbance may be required.



Fisher's Estuarine Moth on Hog's Fennel



Hog's Fennel plant

⁸ butterfly-conservation.org/sites/default/files/fishers-estuarine-moth---bespoke-cs-guidance.pdf

⁹ https://butterfly-conservation.org/sites/default/files/fiery_clearwing-psf.pdf

7.

Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA Visitor and Bird Survey 2023 was conducted at Long Rock by Ecological Footprint in order to monitor the disturbance of wildlife and gather public opinion on the current management on site. This section draws on relevant data gathered from the survey as to how it may inform the future management of Long Rock.

In regard to all the coastal sites surveyed within the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA, the density of visitors and consequential wildlife disturbance at Long Rock exceeds all others. This is likely down to the accessibility of Long Rock, proximity of adjacent residential areas and a paucity of alternative open spaces in the Swalecliffe/Chestfield area. Within the survey, observations and interviews were conducted over a period of two hours. A total of 599 groups, 952 people and 389 dogs were observed, all of which exceed other locations. Most notably the total number of dogs observed was more than double the second highest total of 165 seen at Botany Bay.

Throughout the interviews, the highest referenced habitats or species identified by the public were nesting and wading birds, however, little reference was made to the fact the site is a SSSI signposting the need to increase awareness of this important designation.



Sandwich Bay



8. LONG ROCK SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Long Rock hosts both statutory and non-statutory designations which when combined provide legislative protection from planning, guidance for positive management and can help to build community awareness.</p> <p>Long rock is an extremely dynamic site with a mosaic of important habitat and influences from coastal processes such as longshore drift.</p> <p>The SSSI designation is Long Rock's greatest strength out of all the designations. Providing legislative protections for habitats and species.</p> <p>There exists a strong community surrounding Long Rock and in collaboration with organisations a balance between amenity and conservation can hopefully be achieved.</p>	<p>The site has poor wayfinding which has potentially led to the creation of informal pathways cutting through important habitats.</p> <p>Nutrient rich waters of the brook cause excessive algal growth and eutrophication which both impacts wildlife, human health and aesthetic of the location</p> <p>PSPOs relating to dogs on leads can be ambiguous leading to confusion over which areas dogs on leads are enforced and which are not.</p> <p>According to the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA Survey 2023 there appears to be little public awareness of the importance of a SSSI designation, despite signage. This may be a contributor to reduced populations of local and migratory birds.</p> <p>Longshore drift causes significant fluctuations in the course of the brook, increasing the possibility of flooding further upstream.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Improve community engagement through consultation and openness in the management of the site to help build awareness regarding the importance of a SSSI designation.</p> <p>Improving signage can increase clarity on PROW, where people can and cannot go and raise awareness of the wildlife inhabiting the site.</p> <p>Implementation of fencing to act as a physical and visual barrier to officially demarcate the PROWs. However, this was opposed during the 2021 public consultation.</p> <p>New signage to encourage both local users and visitors to absorb important ecological information about the site.</p> <p>Due to the strong community surround Long Rock there is opportunity to set up a 'Friends of' Group</p>	<p>Dogs off leads in areas of important wildlife habitat threaten the existence of local birds and return of migratory birds. Birds consider dogs to be predators even if not directly provoked; this is still considered bird disturbance.</p> <p>Agricultural and urban run-off have threatened nutrient neutrality and species reliant on Swalecliffe brook</p> <p>Important that sites such as long rock are protected to provide suitable habitat for current migratory birds and those altering migration routes due to climate change.</p> <p>If the 'Run Whitstable & Herne Bay' running event is not planned with the habitats of Long Rock in mind it may cause gradual degradation of landscape.</p>



9. OBJECTIVES AND GUIDANCE FOR MANAGEMENT

9.1. SMART Objectives

Habitat Management

- Continue to effectively control scrub and Alexanders to maintain a diverse community of flora whilst working with partners to allow for the expansion of Hog's fennel in current locations.
- Seek extension of grassland to amenity area adjacent to skatepark. Measure success by witnessing the return of Hog's fennel in this area by 2028.
- Aim for both the Fisher's Estuarine Moth and Hog's Fennel to be designated as key SSSI features at Long Rock 2025.

Community Engagement and Reducing Disturbance

- Raise public awareness and reduce disturbance by improving interpretation signage with clear and concise messaging about the significance of the site, its wildlife and human induced threats.
- Ensure access points and PROW within Long Rock are well demarcated and understood by public users to prevent disturbance in sensitive areas.
- In cases where current PROW and their use

continue to threaten wildlife habitats, CCC will seek and secure appropriate consent/permission from KCC to re-route or close PROW by 2026.

- Promote and continue to improve the Whitsable and Herne Bay Green Gap to alleviate recreational pressures at Long Rock.
- To increase awareness of the site and its management requirements, work with local conservation groups to put on at least one public event/talk on wildlife at Long Rock each year.
- Seek to improve community engagement at the site by establishing a 'Friends of Long Rock' group by 2025.

Monitoring

- Conduct surveys for the Fisher's Estuarine Moth annually and map Hog's Fennel every five years to assess distribution of the Fisher's Estuarine Moth and Hog's Fennel.
- Assess scrub and the distribution of Alexanders in June each year with the aim to have no encroachment of scrub and Alexanders on open grassland.
- Continue to liaise with partners who conduct visitor and bird disturbance surveys to determine

how successful disturbance reduction measures are/have been.

- Canterbury City Council to keep a record of complaints and incidents of PSPO and Dog Control Order breaches, with the aim of seeing a significant number of reduced reported incidents by 2028.
- Monitor water quality with logged assessments to determine how water quality within the brook has changed from 2023 to 2028.

9.2. Guidance for Management

Management practices for Long Rock are focused on the SSSI and SAC designations in order to improve habitats, species richness and visitor awareness. For some of the management practices described below please refer to section 5.1 for further details as consultation with NE may be required.

Habitats

As stated previously, five key features of Long Rock concern Hog's fennel, the Fisher's Estuarine moth, Golden plover, Little tern, and Turnstone. Although there are other notable species at Long Rock, with the current resources available unfortunately all cannot be prioritised, therefore, the features



mentioned above should be the focus of habitat management. Unmanaged scrub poses a significant threat to Hog's fennel and consequently routine scrub clearing is crucial in order to maintain Hog's fennel and other species contributing to the grassland community. Alexanders also need careful management as they quickly and easily invade grasslands, reducing the diversity and prevalence of other species. Scrub should amount to less than 20% of the total area of the site, and that which is retained should be isolated, low and dense, to provide protection for birds nesting and roosting within. A maximum scrub height of 1.8m should also be adhered to, in order to also encourage ground nesting birds throughout the site.

Multiple water bodies exist at Long Rock including, Swalecliffe Brook, ponds and scrapes. Projects should be considered that contribute to the health and value of such features. In regard to scrub and tree management, consideration should also be given to the potential impact on water bodies. For example, shading scrub and trees should be managed to increase light levels. Shingle areas should experience minimal disturbance to protect unique plant life and breeding birds. Water levels should also be monitored from March, with a view to maintain wet channels and muddy margins for lapwing chicks to feed. Litter should also be reported when discovered so foreshore services can then remove it.

Enforcement

To preserve the ecological value of Long Rock, appropriate enforcement is required to ensure reduced wildlife disturbance and robust environmental protections. This can be achieved through a variety of interventions and practices. Firstly, clear and precise signage is required and should be updated accordingly as the site's landscape character alters due to human induced influences. The signage and wayfinding should clearly demarcate national trails and PROW, as well as highlight where people and dogs are prohibited. There exists ambiguity when interpreting where dogs can and cannot go, so improved signage throughout is essential, and the introduction of zoning would be an effective approach.

The issue of poorly demarcated PROW is compounded by the fact informal paths have developed over time. In order to combat this, physical interventions should be introduced which deter people from using such paths. Previous interventions have been removed by the public, so future projects must be substantial enough to remain fixed in place. Regular patrols from both the police, Canterbury City Council enforcement officers and Bird Wise East Kent are also required. In order to support these interventions and provide evidence for their implementation, Bird Wise East Kent should also continue to monitor bird disturbances and highlight relevant issues that arise. Channels of

communication between Birdwise, Canterbury City Council and the Public must be improved to provide clarity over these approaches to enforcement.

Site Infrastructure

Managing enforcement directly links into the site's infrastructure. As mentioned above, signage is extremely important to instil confidence in the public as to where they can and cannot go. The clearer and better understood the enforcement messaging the fewer resources are needed in patrolling and monitoring the site for disturbance, allowing for greater focus on improving the biodiversity character of the landscape. Hence, when signage is worn or missing, it should be readily replaced. A review and update of the current signage should also be undertaken as current attempts at reducing disturbance are not wholly effective. This also infers that interpretation or educational signage should also be improved, with the latest information regarding the ecological status of the site. Therefore, when the ecological value of the site has substantially deteriorated, then this should be highlighted within signage text to increase awareness of the pressures at Long Rock.

Other measures should include improving the pathways, not just the signage that delineates them. Official paving such as gravel may assist in achieving this, clearly demarcated paths will encourage people to use them and further prevent the loss of grassland. This is the current case



where pathway edges are ambiguous. Options for fencing should also be explored to more accurately define the boundary between grassland and PROW. Community engagement on such projects should also be conducted to ensure measures are supported by the public and meet the needs of local users. Any damage both explicit (criminal damage) and implicit (due to density of visitors) to infrastructure that is also accrued should be reported to the police or Canterbury City Council so swift action can be taken in ensuring the site is safe for both visitors and inhabiting wildlife.

Various community events such as the Park Run and community festivals have also been identified as a potential cause of some of the damage to PROWs. In the planning for such events, organisers should liaise with the site manager and consider the impact they may have on the essence of the SSSI. Those engaging in events should also be briefed to increase the awareness and any potential environmental impacts that may occur.

Likewise, during the spring and summer growing season it is important that those responsible for site maintenance consider the balance between amenity and semi-natural areas. Hence, the path network should be well maintained to prevent PROW encroachment from vegetation.

Surveying

Surveillance of the site can take many forms. In line with the maintenance of infrastructure, weekly wardening visits should be carried out to combine monitoring work and inspection of the site's infrastructural integrity. It also remains crucially important to complete surveys of visitor and bird disturbance to gain a better understanding of the site's stresses, so all other management practices can take an informed approach. Organisations completing such surveys should inform all partners to ensure there is a wide reaching understanding of the development and character of the site.

In order to understand how the character of the landscape has changed over time, various partners should be consulted to bring together historical wildlife records. In doing so, clarity may be provided as to how current wildlife populations have been impacted by the site's stressors. In line with this, historical images should also be gathered of the site, again to better understand how the site has changed over time.

With greater understanding of historical context large scale ecological surveys should also be conducted in order to fully understand the species richness of the site in its current state. These will need to be undertaken by various organisations across the district specialising in site specific species such as water voles, birds, invertebrates and plants.

Monitoring

Wildlife surveys should continue to be carried. Most importantly on bird populations and the Fisher's Estuarine Moth. Liaise with Andy Taylor and Rebecca Levey, respectively, to better understand how reduced disturbance is increasing species populations.

All damage and criminal activity is to be logged and reported to the Police as well as Canterbury City Council. Furthermore, the SSSI designation infers that any activity which may impact upon the designation itself should be reported to the land owner, Canterbury City Council.

Work which is completed on site, especially that which requires assent from NE, should be recorded so other partners are clear on current management and there exists a historic record which may be useful to future interventions on site.

All water pollution incidents are to be logged and reported to the Environment Agency.

With the introduction of this management plan, a fixed point photography program should also commence in order to record changes to the reserve. Such images will be useful when reviewing the management plan at the end of its tenure.



9.3. Detailed Summary of Management

Please note: Activities with (*) require consultation with NE

Activity	Location within site	Guidance for work to be carried out	Purpose of work	Timing	Deadline	Lead
Scrub Management*	Throughout the grassland areas	<p>Routine scrub clearing.</p> <p>Scrub should be cut by hand outside of the bird nesting season.</p> <p>Brash should be removed from the site.</p> <p>Scrub cover should be kept to less than 20% of total site area with a focus on areas where Hog’s fennel is being smothered.</p> <p>Scrub should be isolated, low and dense.</p> <p>A maximum scrub height of 1.8m.</p>	<p>To prevent encroachment of Hog’s Fennel and general overgrowth.</p> <p>To maintain the welcoming aesthetic of Long Rock.</p> <p>Clearance to allow for Hog’s fennel germination.</p> <p>To provide protection for nesting and roosting birds.</p> <p>To encourage ground nesting birds.</p>	October - March	On-going	CCC Environment Team/Sub-contractors
Scrub management for water course*	Swalecliffe Brook and associated water bodies	<p>Shading scrub and trees should be managed if all light is blocked. A balance of both shade and light is important.</p> <p>Such felling should be considered with in line with general management, and not managed separately.</p>		October - March	On-going	CCC Environment Team/Sub-contractors



Activity	Location within site	Guidance for work to be carried out	Purpose of work	Timing	Deadline	Lead
Management of Alexanders*	Where necessary	Should be hand pulled and removed from the site to prevent re-seeding. Cutting back twice a year Any work on Alexanders which requires machinery or anything other than hand pulling will need assent from NE.	To prevent Alexanders from taking over and reducing plant diversity.	Before seed ripening in June.	On-going	CCC Environment Team/Sub-contractors
Extend grassland and introduce Hog's Fennel into the area.	Where appropriate	Collect seeds from existing Hog's Fennel plants late September / early october. Sow into small patches of bare ground with coarse grasses. Alternatively, sow the collected seeds in pots in the autumn. Grow and plant out the following autumn for better establishment rate. Alternative option can be more easily achieved if 'Friends of' can be established.	To increase habitat for Fisher's Estuarine Moth.	September / early october Or Autumn	2026	Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership and volunteers/Friends of Long Rock (if established)
Water monitoring	Swalecliffe Brook and associated water bodies	Water levels should also be monitored from March. Litter should be reported to Foreshore Services or Canterbury City Council for removal.	To ensure wet channels and muddy margins provide feeding ground for bird species. To prevent contaminants and pollutants entering the water course and oceans.	March - September When necessary	On-going On-going	Environment Agency Foreshore Services/ CCC Environment Team

Activity	Location within site	Guidance for work to be carried out	Purpose of work	Timing	Deadline	Lead
Mowing of conservation grass	Around the south easterly perimeters of the site	Regular conservation grass regime. Removal of cuttings. Extra effort should be taken to cut Alexanders.	To achieve greater plant diversity. To help tackle the invasion of Alexanders.	April + June	On-going	CCC Contracts
Mowing of footpath	PROW forming part of Oyster Trail (Plough Lane plot 206)	An area of no more than 1 metre may be cut either side of footpaths. Any Hog's Fennel Plants encroaching on the footpaths should be left and care must be taken to protect these plants during the mowing.	To provide clear and accessible routes. To allow the important Hog's fennel to flourish and support the Fisher's Estuarine moth.	April + June	On-going	CCC Contracts
Installation of fencing*	PROW forming part of Oyster Trail (Plough Lane plot 206)	Affordable opportunities for fencing should be explored. If appropriate, fencing to be installed along the shoreside of the pathway.	To act as a physical and visual barrier for visitors to protect wildlife within.	N/A	April 2024	CCC Environment Team/CCC Contracts
Monitoring of infrastructure	Throughout the site along PROW	Ensure signage is intact and enforcement messaging is up to date. Replace when necessary. Ensure all infrastructure has not been vandalised. Monitor bridges, pathways and other infrastructure used by the public for damages.	To allow for clear public interpretation PROWs and prohibited areas for both people and dogs. To improve the welcoming aesthetic of the site. To ensure public safety.	Monthly	On-going	Foreshore Services/ Birdwise East Kent/ CCC Environment Team
Review and update signage	Throughout the site along PROW	Review and update all signage including educational text on interpretation signage, as well enforcement and PROW signage.	To ensure education information regarding ecology / geology of site is up to date for public interpretation.	N/A	November 2023	CCC Environment Team/CCC Contracts



Activity	Location within site	Guidance for work to be carried out	Purpose of work	Timing	Deadline	Lead
Patrols	Throughout the site	Regular surveillance to ensure PSPOs and PROWs are followed.	To ensure bird disturbance is reduced and the site remains safe for the public.	Weekly	On-going	Bird Wise East Kent/ Police
Paving improvements*	Throughout the site	Improve paving where needed.	To ensure safety for visitors and to better highlight official routes.	N/A	2028	CCC Environment Team
Liaising with organisers of community events	N/A	Liaise with groups such as the coastal run and any prospective festival organisers planning to operate in locality.	To ensure the right measures are taken to protect wildlife on site.	When necessary	On-going	CCC Environment
Establish a 'Friends of Long Rock' group	N/A	Increase community engagement and seek possible members. Share information on how to create a 'Friends of' group. Once established, create a memorandum of understanding.	To strengthen the community and ensure local residents are given the tools to effectively protect and take care of the important features of the site.	N/A	2025	CCC Environment Team / Members of public
Comprehensive wildlife Surveys	Throughout the site	Contact local nature groups to conduct wildlife surveys regarding species of significance.	To develop a better understanding of the wildlife on site and potential stressors / solutions.	N/A	On-going	Local conservation groups/ organisations
Monitoring and reporting scheduled maintenance	N/A	Keep logs and records of any work.	For clarity on historic works completed on site, which may help guide future management.	N/A	On-going	CCC Environment Team
Fixed point photography program	All of site	Set up cameras year round at fixed points.	To track any natural/human induced changes that occur.	Bi-annually	On-going	CCC Environment Team/Bird Wise East Kent



10. MONITORING, REPORT AND REVIEW

The effectiveness of this management plan can be determined through a review of the SMART objectives and whether they have been achieved or not. If the objectives are not met, such a review will aim to inform a more robust approach for the next instalment post 2028.



Plover

