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Historic Environment Action Plan Northern Lowlands

**Isle of Wight County Archaeology
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HEAP for Northern Lowlands.

Introduction

The *Northern Lowlands* HEAP Area has been defined mainly on the basis of the historic enclosure processes and the woodland cover that have created the present landscape. However, urban and suburban settlement is also a key influence on character, as is the busy main road network linking the towns. These factors have created a less rural character in and around the Medina Valley and in the eastern part of the Area, whereas in the western part of the Area rural character is much more pronounced.

ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

Location, Geology and Topography

- Occupies 37% of the Isle of Wight land area
- Solent coastline and hinterland runs from Yarmouth to Seaview, punctuated by Western Yar Estuary, Newtown Estuary, Medina Estuary, Wootton Creek and other smaller inlets, with historic ports at Newport, Yarmouth and Cowes.
- Geology is mainly Oligocene clays and limestones overlain in places by Plateau Gravel and Gravel Terraces. Immediately north of the chalk there are narrow bands of Palaeocene and Eocene beds.
- Fairly low altitude, maximum 75m OD, but moderately hilly in places
- Soils are mainly heavy easily waterlogged clays, with lighter soils over gravels.

Defining Attributes and Principal HEAP Types

- Undeveloped coast has soft eroding cliffs in places.
 - Tidal inlets are characterised by mud flats and salt marsh.
 - Tourist beaches at Ryde and Cowes and also in more undeveloped areas e.g. Thorness.
- Most heavily wooded HEAP Area, having much of Island's surviving ancient woodland and replanted ancient woodland. Appears more heavily wooded than it is in places because of hedgerow trees, which are uncommon in most other HEAP Areas.
- Much of Area is occupied by *field patterns*.
- Many fields are under pasture with arable fields concentrated on gravel cappings and immediately north of chalk.
- Field sizes vary but, on average, are smaller than in most other HEAP Areas.
 - 23% of fields (by area) are small (under 3 hectares)
 - 44% small-medium (under 6 hectares)
 - 19% medium (6-12 hectares)
 - 14% large (over 12 hectares).
- Field patterns vary:
 - 61% of field patterns contain irregularly shaped fields. (In some cases irregularity may be due to boundary loss and the field patterns may not originally have been irregular in form).
 - 32% of field patterns are classified as semi-regular
 - 7% of field patterns are classified as regular.
- Much of the Island's urban settlement is concentrated within this Area at Newport, Ryde, Cowes and East Cowes. The much smaller settlements of Yarmouth and Seaview also have some urban characteristics.
- Wootton and Binstead, now suburban in character, were formerly rural settlements.
- Relatively few *nucleated villages* of medieval origin within this Area and these are of small size. *Dispersed farmsteads* are a significant part of the rural settlement pattern.
- Much of the Island's industry and business is concentrated in Newport, Cowes, East Cowes and Ryde, with busy roads serving these towns.

- To the north of Newport are the prisons of Parkhurst, Albany and Camp Hill, and also St Mary's Hospital, which serves the whole Island.
- Western part of this Area is much more rural in character
- Five of the Island's eight Parks of *special historic interest* are in this Area
- Several holiday parks lie within this Area e.g. at Thorness.
- This Area is the transport hub of the Island.
 - Car ferries to the mainland run from Fishbourne, East Cowes and Yarmouth.
 - High-speed services to the mainland operate from Ryde and Cowes.
 - Main bus station serving Island is based at Newport. The bus terminal at Ryde connects with high-speed services to mainland.
 - Train service runs from Ryde Pier-head to Brading, Sandown and Shanklin.
 - Busy main roads link major settlements and minor roads connect smaller settlements and farms
- Fewer rights of way within this HEAP Area (except to east of Wootton Creek) than in other Areas.
 - Reasons include extent of land within Parkhurst Forest, probable obliteration of rights of way on 19th century estates, e.g. Osborne and Northwood, and probable under-recording of rights of way within this Area when Definitive Map was prepared.

Principal Historical Processes

- Coastal and estuarine zone was important from prehistoric times. Evidence from Wootton-Quarr area, Medina Estuary and Newtown (Loader and Tomalin 1999).
- Inland, this HEAP Area was a mosaic of woodland, damp clay heath and drier gravel heath in prehistoric times. Recent analysis of ancient pollen has revealed extensive human modification of woodland vegetation within Area during the Neolithic, leading to disappearance of Lime woodland (Scaife 2003, 25).
- This Area has been characterised as having, in general, low levels of settlement and less intensive agricultural use than other HEAP Areas in prehistoric and early historic times but recent developer-funded archaeological work has produced some additional evidence of prehistoric, Roman and medieval settlement and agriculture (Trott 2001, Trott 2004, Network Archaeology 2005).
- Land immediately north of the chalk may have formed a zone of 'sub-chalk arable' in Roman times (Cahill 1984) and also in Anglo-Saxon and medieval times, becoming the *core arable* land for settlements in the Northern Lowlands.
- Bembridge Limestone was commercially quarried and exported in Roman period.
- Gurnard Roman Villa was situated on coast (unlike other Island villas which were close to chalk) and may possibly have been involved in the export of Bembridge Limestone (Isle of Wight County Council 1992, 27).
 - A track from Gurnard Villa to Newport/Carisbrooke area may possibly have been partly on the line of Rew Street.
- Combley Roman Villa was built just to the north of the *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.
- Newport Roman Villa was built just to the north of the *West Wight Chalk Downland*, close to the lowest fording point of the River Medina.
- In Anglo-Saxon times it is thought that *mother parishes* ran across the Island from the Solent to the Channel coast.
 - Six *mother parishes* appear to have passed through the Northern Lowlands, these being Shalfleet, Calbourne, Carisbrooke, Arreton, Newchurch and Brading.
 - After the Norman Conquest additional parishes came into being, serving churches that had originated as manorial chapels. The territories of Northwood, Binstead and Whippingham lay entirely or almost entirely within the *Northern Lowlands* Yarmouth, Thorley, St Nicholas and St Helens lay partly within this Area.
- The Anglo-Saxon estate of Calbourne corresponded with the territory of the Calbourne *mother parish* and was held by the bishopric of Winchester from the later Anglo-Saxon period.

- The estate boundaries of Calbourne are recorded in a charter, allegedly of AD 826 (Margham 2005).
- A charter of AD 969 records the grant of an estate at Watchingwell to Wilton Abbey.
 - The territory of this estate largely corresponded to a detached part of Shalfleet Parish shown on the OS 1st Edition 6" map of 1866.
- Other 10th century charters discussed by Margham (2005; 2007) record grants of land within this Area at Ningwood, at Stathe (to the east of Wootton Creek) and at Meolodune (Ashey Down and land to the north of Ashey Down)
- Much of the *Northern Lowlands* was not a primary settlement area in early Anglo-Saxon times and was probably used initially for wood pasture and heathland grazing.
 - Additional settlements concentrated on the drier gravel-based soils may have become established as large estates fragmented in the Middle to Late Anglo-Saxon period, (Margham forthcoming).
- The Island's northern coastline was vulnerable to attack. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records Viking raids. French raids occurred in the 14th century.
- Domesday Book recorded churches within this Area at Calbourne, Shalfleet and Whippingham.
- Manors recorded in Domesday Book within this Area were Alvington, Ashey, Barnsley, Binstead, Calbourne, Hamstead, Luton Farm, Preston Farm, Puckpool, Shalfleet, Shide, Shoflet, Watchingwell, Whippingham, Wootton and Yarmouth.
- Wootton Church, of Norman origin, was originally a manorial chapel but became an independent parish church during the Middle Ages.
- Binstead Church, possibly built to serve workers at the nearby stone quarries in Norman times, was dependent on the bishops of Winchester in the medieval period.
- Northwood Church was a chapel of Carisbrooke during the Middle Age, becoming a parish church in the 16th century.
- Bembridge Limestone was exported to the mainland in Saxon times. After the Norman Conquest it was quarried in the Binstead area and used at Winchester Cathedral and various mainland churches (Lloyd and Pevsner 2006, 8)
- Cistercian foundation of Quarr (1135) was the Island's only medieval abbey.
 - Medieval Benedictine Priory of St Cross at Newport was within this HEAP Area, as was the Augustinian Barton Oratory, near Whippingham.
 - Quarr Abbey had granges in this Area at Newnham, Combley, Hamstead and Shalcombe. Beaulieu Abbey in the New Forest had a grange at East Shamlord (to north of Whippingham).
- Parkhurst Forest (partly wooded and partly heathland) was a defined landscape feature by the late Anglo-Saxon period (Chatters 1991).
- *Wood pasture* was present in Parkhurst Forest, at Quarr, and elsewhere in this HEAP Area during the Middle Ages. However, much woodland was enclosed and probably managed as *coppice*.
- A *deer park* had been established at Watchingwell by 1086 and is recorded in Domesday Book. The land within the deer park corresponded to a detached portion of the Parish of St Nicholas.
 - Several more deer parks were established in this Area during the Middle Ages (Basford 1989).
- Relatively little evidence for medieval *open fields* within the *Northern Lowlands*, distinguishing this Area from other HEAP Areas.
- From Anglo-Saxon times fields were enclosed from woodland (assarts) or from heath, waste and common. *Assarts* of medieval and later date survive around the edges of Parkhurst Forest, Combley Great Wood and elsewhere.
- In medieval and early post-medieval periods there were fairly large areas of unenclosed *common grazing* on clay or gravel heath e.g. Parkhurst Forest, Calbourne Heathfield, Stapers Heath, Wootton Common and Lynn Common.

- At time of Domesday Book overall population density in *Northern Lowlands* appears to have been generally low compared to other HEAP Areas but with some pockets of higher density (Margham 1988).
- 1793 OS map shows a pattern of dispersed settlement (farmsteads and other rural dwellings) with a limited number of church-manor complexes/small villages. This may reflect the medieval settlement pattern in the *Northern Lowlands*.
- The hamlet of Havenstreet may have existed from medieval times but the hamlets of Porchfield and Newbridge appear to have developed around existing farmsteads in the 19th century.
- Planned medieval boroughs were established on tidal inlets at Newport, Yarmouth and Newtown in 12th and 13th centuries, to trade both locally and with mainland.
 - Medieval boroughs all suffered from French raids and competition with larger mainland ports. Newtown also suffered from isolated location and poor soils.
 - Newport was Island's chief settlement and became administrative centre in post-medieval times
 - Yarmouth and Newtown declined in later medieval and Tudor times but Yarmouth has retained its urban character, though small in size, whilst Newtown is now a tiny rural settlement.
- Salt-making took place on the coast in medieval and post-medieval times
- Reclamation of salt marsh and mudflats at Newtown in 17th or 18th century.
- Watermills of medieval and post-medieval origin on inland streams e.g. Calbourne, and *tide mills* on estuaries e.g. Yarmouth, Wootton, East and West Medina Mills.
- Tudor forts were built on the coast at Cowes, East Cowes and Yarmouth.
- Small trading port of Cowes was established in early 17th century with houses and shops in West Cowes and warehouses in East Cowes. 17th century trade was mainly in tobacco and 18th century trade was in rice from Carolina (Martin 2004c).
- From the 18th century ship building took place in East Cowes and West Cowes and in the 19th century these settlements became the Island's only industrial towns (Edwards1999d). Small terraced houses were built to house the workforce.
- In the 17th and 18th centuries this HEAP Area contained some large estates such as Swainston and Nunwell but most individual farms on these estates were fairly small.
 - 19th century planned farm estates are also significant in this Area including the Hamstead estate of John Nash, the Royal Osborne estate where Prince Albert played an important role, and Ashey Farm.
- Relatively few present-day *field patterns* are of medieval origin.
 - Many appear to derive from 16th to 18th century enclosure of common grazing, heathland and some woodland, modified to a considerable extent by later re-organisation and amalgamation.
 - Nearly all *enclosure* on the Island was by local agreement rather than by Act of Parliament.
- Parkhurst Forest was the only land within this HEAP Area to be enclosed by Act of Parliament (in 1812).
 - Forest Road and Whitehouse Lane were laid out as enclosure roads, roughly on line of earlier tracks through forest.
 - Land south of Forest Road and east of Whitehouse Lane was laid out as fields.
 - Land north of Forest Road was retained by Crown and planted with oaks. Some existing trees in forest date from this time and there are also some older trees.
 - Marks Corner, on northern edge of Parkhurst Forest, is a 19th century hamlet post-dating the enclosure of the forest, possibly a 'squatter settlement'.
 - Land had been taken out of Parkhurst Forest for Albany Barracks and the Isle of Wight Workhouse in late 18th century. Parkhurst Prison was established in 19th century (Jones and Jones 1987, Chapters 8 and 13).
- Majority of existing roads within HEAP Area are shown on OS 1793 map.

- Ryde developed as a town from late 18th century, following the laying out of Union Street and sale of building plots by the Lord of the Manor (Whitehurst and Murray-Smith 2003).
- Dedicated ferry service across Solent from Ryde to Portsmouth started in 1796, from Cowes to Southampton in 1820 and from Yarmouth to Lymington in 1830.
- Cowes and Ryde were bathing resorts from later 18th century. Regattas began at Cowes in 1812 and the important social and sporting event of Cowes Week developed with the benefit of wealthy and royal patronage.
- Late 18th century *landscape parks* were created on existing estates at Swainston, Westover, Nunwell and Osborne and on new sites (e.g. Fernhill, near Wootton).
- Grand houses set in parkland were built around Cowes and East Cowes in late 18th and early 19th centuries e.g. Norris Castle (designed by James Wyatt) East Cowes Castle (designed by John Nash as his own country house) and Northwood House.
 - Osborne House purchased and rebuilt by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert from 1845. Parkland extended, estate buildings erected, Whippingham Church rebuilt.
 - Fashionable properties on fringes of Cowes and East Cowes contrasted with artisan housing of shipyard workers and industrial character of these towns.
- Seaview became significant as an upper class coastal resort in 19th century.
- Richly decorated villas and elaborate piers were significant features of the affluent resorts of Cowes, Ryde and Seaview from early 19th century.
- Development of railway lines in the 1860s and 1870s contributed to the development of mass-market tourism on the Island and included routes from Cowes to Newport, Ryde to Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor, and Ryde to Newport.
- Ryde became a destination for day trips from mainland in 20th century.
- Newport to Freshwater railway line opened in 1880s and served rural communities as well as providing access to the small West Wight seaside resorts.
- Gurnard village appears to have been planned as a villa estate for the well-to-do and developed from 1851 (Caws 1992).
 - Ryde experienced much suburban expansion at Elmfield, Haylands and Oakfield from later 19th century. These suburban houses were much more modest than the early 19th century villas on western side of town.
 - Newport also expanded in 19th century and became the seat of the new County Council from 1890 (Isle of Wight County Council 1990).
 - Brickworks sprang up throughout Northern Lowlands in 19th century, utilising the local clay and providing for urban and suburban expansion.
- In the 20th century the north-eastern part of the Island containing Cowes, East Cowes, Newport and Ryde became the Isle of Wight's most heavily developed zone, containing much of its economic and social infrastructure, light industry and commerce.
- Other 20th and early 21st century developments include the following:
 - Establishment of modern Benedictine Abbey at Quarr from 1907
 - *Plotlands* development at Cranmore in early 20th century (Hardy and Ward 2003))
 - Establishment of extensive coniferous plantations by Forestry Commission, many on ancient woodland site.
 - Building of large public housing estates in main towns from 1930s to 1950s
 - Development of holiday centres after 2nd World War and of Robin Hill Country and Adventure Park from 1960s
 - Closure of Newport-Freshwater Railway Line in 1953 and of Cowes-Newport and Newport-Ryde Lines in 1966
 - Opening of Havenstreet Steam Railway on part of Newport-Ryde Line
 - Breach of sea wall and flooding of grazing marsh at Newtown in 1954
 - Acquisition of Newtown Estate by National Trust in 1965
 - Construction of Camp Hill Prison in 1912 and of Albany Prison on site of Albany Barracks in 1960s
 - Decline in ship-building and heavy industry in Cowes and East Cowes, from 1960s
 - Development of Newport Industrial Estate beside River Medina from 1970s

- Later industrial and business park developments at Ryde, at Somerton in Cowes and at St Cross to north of Newport.
- Construction of out-of-town superstore between Ryde and Brading in 1980s.
- Construction of new St Mary's Hospital in 1990s, retaining some earlier buildings including former workhouse.

Archaeology and Built Environment (details in HER)

- Trackways, fish traps, other structures and artefacts of prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and later date recorded from inter-tidal zone on coast.
- Buried Mesolithic/Neolithic sites recorded from Medina Estuary and Newtown Creek.
- Prehistoric worked flint and prehistoric and Roman artefacts from eroding cliffs.
- Newport Roman Villa is preserved under a 20th century cover building.
- Gurnard Roman Villa recorded in 19th century but now lost to coastal erosion.
- Remains of Combley Roman Villa lie buried in Robin Hill Adventure Park.
- Roman building material recorded recently from Northwood (Trott 2004).
- Medieval churches at Shalfleet, Calbourne, Northwood, Wootton and Binstead.
- Remains of medieval manor house built for bishops of Winchester at episcopal manor of Swainston (Lloyd and Pevsner 2006, 278-280).
- Medieval town plans at Newport Yarmouth and Newtown.
- Evidence of Newtown's former open fields in the form of enclosed *open-field* strips and remnants of medieval *ridge and furrow*.
- Limited evidence of medieval *ridge and furrow* elsewhere in this HEAP Area.
- Some evidence of post-medieval *ridge and furrow* in and around Newtown.
- Remains of medieval Quarr Abbey, including 14th century defensive wall.
- A few settlement earthworks of medieval date e.g. East Ashey and West Nunwell.
- Medieval stone quarry pits around Binstead.
- Remains of post-medieval *salterns* at Newtown and elsewhere on Solent coast.
- Yarmouth Castle and remains of Cowes Castle (incorporated in Royal Yacht Squadron) are of Tudor date.
- Built environment encompasses vernacular and designed architecture from 17th century onwards in both rural and urban locations, 18th and 19th century town architecture, 19th century industrial structures (including industrial housing), tourist related structures and 20th century suburban development.
 - Older 17th century and 18th century rural buildings are constructed of coursed stone rubble with thatch, tile and slate roofs, particularly in west of Area around Calbourne and Newbridge, and many are Listed Buildings.
 - 18th century town buildings, particularly in Newport, are of variegated red and grey brick produced locally. Regency architecture exhibits stuccoed decoration in Ryde.
 - Former Isle of Wight Workhouse, dating from 1774
 - 19th century brick terraced housing for industrial workforce and artisans in Cowes, East Cowes, Newport and Ryde.
 - Prison estate at Parkhurst includes late 18th and 19th century listed buildings.
 - Some surviving remains of 19th century Medina Cement Works.
 - Osborne Estate contains fine examples of Victorian farmsteads and domestic buildings, and the exotic Whippingham Church.
- Puckpool Battery, built from 1863, survives in a municipal park. The 20th century remains of Bouldnor Battery lie in a forestry plantation.

Relationships with Other HEAP Areas

- Contiguous to *Freshwater Isle*, to *Thorley/Wellow Plain* and to *Brading Haven & Bembridge Isle*, with which Areas it shares a position north of the *West Wight Chalk Downland* and *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.

Time-Depth

- Origins of early roads and tracks are difficult to date but some may be related to Anglo-Saxon or earlier exploitation of the landscape.
- Vestiges of Anglo-Saxon estate boundaries and medieval parish boundaries are preserved as field boundaries.
- Surviving boundaries partially preserve outline of 11th century Watching Park.
- Surviving boundary of medieval origin preserves northern outline of Parkhurst Forest.
- Surviving rights of way (e.g. Petticoat Lane) and field boundaries preserve outline of Parkhurst's southern boundary
- Some surviving woods preserve their medieval profile
- Some surviving field boundaries preserve outlines of medieval cultivation units, e.g. enclosed *open-field strips* at Newtown, *assarts* around Parkhurst Forest.
- Later field boundaries illustrate gradual process of enclosure from heath, waste and *common* which continued into 19th century
- Some existing farms are of medieval origin but others are post-medieval. Further study needed on links between farms and land enclosed in post-medieval period.
- Medieval town plans survive at Newtown, Newport and Yarmouth.
- Historic *landscape parks* survive at Westover, Swainston, Norris, Osborne, Nunwell and elsewhere, although not all parkland is maintained.
- Northwood Park is a public park incorporating the pleasure grounds of the 19th century Northwood House (Basford 1994).
- Other significant public parks and gardens with historic origins include Puckpool Park, Ryde, Appley Park, Ryde, Vernon Square, Ryde, Church Litten (Newport) and Princes Green (Cowes).
- Historic 19th century and early 20th century cemeteries at Cowes, East Cowes, Newport (Fairlee Road and St Paul's), Binstead, Asheys and Ryde (IWGT 2000).

Contribution of Historic Landscape to Present Landscape Character

- Anglo-Saxon estate and parish boundaries are some of the earliest historic landscape features that have helped to shape present landscape character in this HEAP Area. Ancient Woodland and Replanted Ancient Woodland also contribute significantly to present landscape character, as do field patterns originating mainly from the 16th to 18th centuries but with good examples of medieval and 19th century date. Historic town plans, rural settlements of medieval and post-medieval date, historic buildings and historic parkland also contribute to the present landscape in this Area.

Values, Perceptions and Associations

- Undeveloped coastline is not accessible at all points but certain places are valued and well-visited, especially Newtown which is accessible by land and sea
- Solent coast and estuaries are valued as wildlife habitats and for yachting and sailing activities. These activities contribute to local character and give rise to the internationally famous Cowes Week and to the Yarmouth 'Old Gaffers' Week.
- East Cowes Area is particularly associated with the Osborne Estate
- Cowes, Yarmouth, and the smaller settlement of Seaview are seaside resorts that exhibit a strong built form and are valued for their distinctive character and as tourist destinations. However, there has been some loss of built seafront character at Cowes.
- Urban fabric and seafront of Ryde has been perceived to be in decline in recent years, despite the significance of its Regency and Victorian buildings. However, this issue is being addressed through a regeneration project and through local action.
- Main roads linking Cowes and East Cowes to Newport, and Newport to Ryde have attracted ribbon development which may give a false impression of a predominantly urban character to visitors.
- Outside coastal zone and main roads, the rural hinterland of this HEAP Area may not be as well-known or explored by visitors as other HEAP Areas.

- Coastal zone and urban centres are most highly valued parts of this Area in terms of designations.
- Only about one third of HEAP Area lies within the AONB and there may be a tendency to under-value the area outside the AONB

Research and Documentation

- Historic Environment Record is basic resource for archaeology, built environment and historic landscape character (includes HLC layer).
- Archaeological study of Wootton-Quarr coastal zone (Tomalin et al forthcoming).
- Archaeological Audit of Medina Valley (IWCAHES 2007) and Medina Estuary Marine Archaeology Report (HWTMT 2006).
- Medina Estuary Management Plan, written in 1997 and revised in 2000.
http://www.iwight.com/living_here/environment/estuaries/Estuary_Management/default.asp
- West Wight Landscape Assessment (LUC 2005)
<http://www.westwight.org/West%20Wight%20LCA%20Final%20Report%20September%202005.pdf>
- Historic landscape assessment and management study of National Trust land at Newtown (Currie 2000).
- Archaeological Assessments of Newport, Newtown, Yarmouth and Cowes (Edwards 1999).
- Character Assessment of Ryde prepared for Ryde Development Trust and Isle of Wight Council (Whitehurst and Murray-Smith 2003).
- Character Appraisals completed for the Conservation Areas of Cowes, East Cowes (Centre), East Cowes (Esplanade), Newport, Seaview and Whippingham Church.
- Studies of Anglo-Saxon settlement, place-names and charter boundaries (Margham 2003, Margham 2005, Margham 2007 and Margham forthcoming).
- Study of Parkhurst Forest's historical ecology (Chatters 1991).
- Historic parks and gardens study includes sites within this Area (Basford 1989).
- Studies of individual estates such as Swainston and Northwood (Jones 1991, Jones 2003, Basford 1994).
- Scope for future academic studies relating to 19th century hamlets of Porchfield, Newbridge and Marks Corner.

Amenity and Education

- The coastline is an important amenity in this Area, including beaches at Thorness, Cowes, East Cowes and Ryde (most important tourist beach in this Area).
- Historic quays and harbours at Yarmouth, Newtown, Newport, Cowes and Wootton provide a focus for sailing, cultural and leisure activities
- Varied and locally distinctive towns provide visually attractive and historically significant urban environments for residents and visitors despite elements that detract from historic character and visual amenity.
- Osborne House and Park, managed by English Heritage, is a major tourist attraction.
- Newport Roman Villa is maintained by the Isle of Wight Council and open to the public.
- Locally distinctive buildings in rural settlements contribute to visual amenity.
- Forestry Commission Woods at Parkhurst, Firestone Copse and Great Combley Wood provide important recreational amenities and offer great potential for interpretation of historic landscape character.
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust manage nature reserves within this Area at Ningwood Common and Swanpond Copse.
- Potential for greater public access to significant historic landscapes close to main population centres, for example to west of Newport between Carisbrooke and Parkhurst Forest.
- Archaeological knowledge of coastal zone provides opportunities for locally distinctive education on coastal change from prehistoric times.

- Good examples of enclosure processes, historic woodland, historic town plans and designed landscapes within this HEAP Area offer opportunities for outdoor education in local historic landscape character, both for children and adults.

Features of Particular Significance within this HEAP Area

- Undeveloped coastline is an important multi-period archaeological resource.
- Woodland is of ecological and historic landscape significance.
- Evidence for extent of forest and woodland in medieval period is important, whether in form of surviving woodland edge boundaries or of 'ghost' boundaries preserved by tracks or hedgerows, as on southern edge of Parkhurst Forest.
- Early estate boundaries are of significance and require further study
- Some *field patterns* of medieval and early post-medieval origin of particular significance e.g. enclosed *open-field strips* at Newtown and *assarts* around Parkhurst Forest, including Kitbridge and Hunny Hill *assarts*.
- Most field boundaries are post-medieval but external boundaries may preserve significant evidence of earlier landscapes
- Some post-medieval field patterns are of particular significance e.g. *Parliamentary Enclosure* fields south of Parkhurst
- Some post-medieval agricultural estate landscapes are of particular significance e.g. Hamstead, Swainston, Osborne, Nunwell and Ashley
- Preserved medieval town plan at Newtown is of national importance and medieval town plans at Newport and Yarmouth are significant
- Post-medieval built environment, although diverse, is a significant factor contributing to the local identity of small settlements (e.g. Shalfleet, Newtown, Calbourne, Binstead, Seaview) and to the towns of Newport, Cowes, Ryde and Yarmouth.
- *Landscape parks* and gardens at Osborne, Westover, Swainston, Norris and Nunwell are of national significance and those of Northwood Park, Woodlands Vale, Springhill and St Cecilia's Abbey are of recognised local significance.

VULNERABILITY

Rarity and typicality

- Individual elements within this HEAP Area are rare nationally or locally but Area as a whole contains components typical of English lowland landscape.
- Surviving estate and woodland boundaries of Anglo-Saxon and medieval date (e.g. the northern boundary of Parkhurst Forest) are not that common in national terms.
- The excellent preservation of the town plan within the failed medieval town of Newtown (with streets, *burgage plots* and *open-field strips* surviving) is rare.
- Medieval and post-medieval *assarts* south of Parkhurst Forest, around Combley Great Wood and elsewhere are good examples of an enclosure process not generally visible in other parts of Island
- Early 19th century field patterns around Parkhurst Forest are products of *Parliamentary Enclosure* which is rare on Isle of Wight.
- Typical features of Area (distinguishing it from other HEAP Areas on the Island) are the generally small and small-medium fields, the well-wooded landscape, the variety of historic towns and other settlements, the long coastline, and access to the sea from the Area's hinterland via tidal inlets.

Coherence

- Main HEAP types within this Area still have an overall coherence in that farmland, woodland, roads, etc can be related to farming settlements and towns, whilst ferries, and infrastructure can be seen both to serve these and to provide links with the mainland. However, this coherence is increasingly vulnerable to development, the decline of agriculture and coastal change.

Condition and fragility

- Coastal landscape and archaeology is affected by erosion and sea-level rise.
- In some places field patterns have been affected negatively by lack of boundary management.
- Some woodland has been affected by decline of traditional management.
- Osborne Park is fully maintained by English Heritage but some parkland and estate landscapes are now in agricultural or other uses that do not sustain their historic character.
- Northwood House, Puckpool Battery and the medieval remains at Quarr Abbey are on the English Heritage Register of Buildings at Risk.
- Historic character of East Cowes has been eroded by piecemeal industrial and transport developments in past but local residents have campaigned for local heritage features to be retained as part of East Cowes Waterfront Development Scheme and this scheme offers potential for improvements to townscape.
- In 2006 the IWC secured an HLF grant for the restoration of Ryde Cemetery. The Friends of East Cowes Cemetery have received a Local Heritage Initiative grant. Similar projects for the cemeteries of Cowes and Newport would be beneficial.
- Quarr Abbey has received an HLF Project Planning Grant (March 2007) for the production of a conservation management plan to support a funding bid for large-scale repairs, restoration and improved public accessibility.

Overall Survival

- Essential historic character of this HEAP Area has survived to a large extent although it has been subjected to major change in the last century including the growth of urban areas and changes in agricultural and forestry practises

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Forces for Change

- Sea-level rise and climate change will affect several HEAP Types.
- Decline in dairying and cattle production within this Area.
- Forthcoming Island Plan is likely to identify the Medina Valley (encompassing the towns of Newport, Cowes and East Cowes) and Ryde as main areas for future growth.
- Cowes Waterfront SPG was published by Isle of Wight Council in 2003 to guide redevelopment in Medina Valley, including Newport, Cowes and East Cowes.
- Large scale redevelopment in and around East Cowes has already started and will have a major impact on town and surrounding countryside.
- A heritage lottery and SRB funded regeneration scheme at Ryde (Project Ryde) aims to improve the townscape and public realm. It includes the Townscape Heritage Initiative and a new transport interchange on Ryde seafront to house hovercraft, rail, bus and taxi services.
- A major new housing estate at Pan, on the edge of Newport will see the development of 800-1,200 new homes from 2009. This will be one of the largest development schemes to be built on the Isle of Wight.
- Future growth around Newport could affect the significant historic landscape on the southern edge of Parkhurst Forest.
- If successful in attracting a Stage 2 HLF grant (still awaiting decision at February 2008) the West Wight Landscape Partnership could support local projects in line with its Landscape Strategy Action Plan (2007).

Management Issues

- Scale and pace of change within this HEAP Area presents challenges for sustainable management of historic environment.
- Recent commercial and economic growth in and around Newport and increasing car use has created traffic congestion and development pressures in historic town centre (a distinctive network of streets first laid out in 12th century).
- There are difficulties in continuing to provide for commercial activity on the Island and achieving required warehouse and industrial developments without impacting on local distinctiveness and historic character of Newport.
- Need to prevent further erosion of historic built character along Cowes seafront.
- Insufficient evidence regarding the condition of the built environment.
 - From 1974 to 1995 there was less of a focus on identifying and recognising nationally important historic buildings through Listing in the former Medina Borough Council area (i.e the east section of this Area)
 - Some Conservation Areas do not yet have Character Appraisals.
 - A few of the smaller historic settlements have not yet been assessed for possible Conservation Area designation e.g. Binstead.
- Deterioration of urban-edge countryside e.g. to south of Parkhurst Forest.
- Decline in dairying and cattle production has affected this HEAP Area more than others and has led to a decline in management of some field boundaries and to redundancy of vernacular farm buildings, which are now under threat from decay and inappropriate conversion.
- Lack of AONB Designation within a large part of this Area may affect perceptions of its historic landscape value and lead to inappropriate changes.
- Some rural land uses such as horse-keeping and barn conversions may have an adverse affect on the historic environment if inappropriately carried out without reference to planning guidelines.
- Proposals for woodland management have been set out in documents forming part of Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan (Cox 2003a; Cox 2003 b). Proposed actions are designed for ecological benefits but may also benefit historic character.
- Sites for new woodland planting need to be carefully chosen in order to reinforce rather than detract from historic landscape character.
- Formal gardens and parkland at Osborne have been restored by English Heritage and are actively managed but economic pressures will lead to further decline of other historic parks and their surrounding estate landscapes unless sustainable management plans are developed for these sites
 - Need to find a sustainable future for the historic Grade II* listed Northwood House and its surrounding public parkland.

Conservation Designations

- About one third of this HEAP Area lies within the AONB.
- The Hamstead *Heritage Coast* occupies much of the north-west coastline.
- 15 *Scheduled Monuments* within Area including Roman villas at Combley and Newport, medieval remains at Quarr Abbey, medieval settlement and cultivation remains at Newtown and the 16th century Yarmouth Castle.
- Twelve *Conservation Areas* within HEAP Area, including urban Conservation Areas at Newport, Ryde, St Johns, Cowes, East Cowes, East Cowes Esplanade, Seaview and Yarmouth and rural Conservation Areas at Calbourne, Shalfleet, Newtown and Whippingham Church.
- Numerous *Listed Buildings*, reflecting the number of historic urban and rural settlements within Area. Grade I listed buildings include Norris Castle and Norris Castle Farm. Grade II* listed buildings include Grammar School, County Club and Guildhall at Newport, St Mary's Church and Northwood House at Cowes, the Royal Victoria Arcade at Ryde, Newtown Town Hall and the country houses of Nunwell, Swainston, Westover and Woodlands Vale

- Five sites in Area on *English Heritage Register* of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, these being Westover, Swainston, Nunwell, Osborne and Norris.
- Eight *parks and gardens of local interest* within this Area are listed in Unitary Development Plan, these being Northwood Park and Prince's Green at Cowes, Barton Manor and Springhill Estate at East Cowes, St Cecilia's Abbey, Vernon Square and Woodlands Vale in Ryde and Church Litten in Newport.
- The 'Solent Maritime' and 'Bridlesford Copses' SACS fall within this Area.
- The Solent and Southampton Water RAMSAR site includes coastal, estuarine and inter-tidal land of international importance within this Area.
- The Solent and Southampton Water SPA covers similar locations.
- Newtown is a *National Nature Reserve*.
- Dodnor Creek is a *Local Nature Reserve*.
- Seven SSSIs lie wholly within Area: Newtown Harbour, Thorness Bay, King's Quay Shores, Ryde Sands & Wootton Creek, Medina Estuary and Bridlesford Copses.
- HEAP Area contains numerous SINC's which focus especially on coastland, woodland and unimproved meadows

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

The *Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions* are generic and applicable to the whole Island but some will be particularly relevant to this Area. For instance HEAP Objective D2, to *ensure that the HER and HEAP are used to provide a character based understanding of the Island's historic environment and to guide planning policy, design of change, development control and land management*, is especially relevant because future planned development on the Island will be concentrated in this Area. Similarly, some HEAP Actions are particularly relevant to locations within this Area and the **table below** (following page) suggests how they might be applied. Other locations where HEAP Actions could be applied are suggested in the text above.

| Action | Description | Sites in this HEAP Area | Mechanism | Role of IWCAHES | Possible Partners |
|--------|--|--|--|---|--|
| A39 | Promote retention of significant historic field patterns | South of Parkhurst Forest | Grant-funded project working with landowners/ identification of land management grants | Facilitate | LEADER WW Landowners |
| A47 | Promote conservation of urban fringe land of historic value | Land to south of Parkhurst Forest | Land Allocations Policy | Liaise with Planning Policy Team | IWC Planning Policy Team |
| L11 | Encourage, support and help to identify funding for enhancement projects identified in Area HEAPS | Land to south of Parkhurst Forest | Interpretation Project to promote rights of way and historic landscape character | Encourage Facilitate Supply information | Newport Parish Council Island 2000 ROW Section |
| A43 | Support the restoration of wood-pasture where appropriate | Parkhurst Forest | Woodscape Project | Support Encourage | Forestry Commission BAP Partnership |
| A51 | Support conservation of historic parks, gardens and public open spaces including appropriate restoration schemes | Norris Castle Nunwell Westover Swainston Northwood House | Involve landowners in audits of buildings, parkland, wider estate and built features | Supply information | AONB EH (Gardens and Landscapes) IWGT |
| A49 | Support conservation of historic parks, gardens and public open spaces including appropriate restoration schemes | Town Cemeteries at Cowes, East Cowes Newport and Ryde | Grant funded local voluntary projects | Support | IWC Town Councils and Management Committees Ryde Social Heritage Group Friends of East Cowes Cemetery IWGT |

