

Isle of Wight Area of
Outstanding Natural Beauty

Nature Recovery Plan



A Colchester Declaration Commitment



Isle of Wight
area of outstanding
natural beauty

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WIGHT AONB
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Introduction

In July 2019 the Colchester Declaration was agreed by all AONBs at their national conference in Essex. This included a commitment that all AONBs would produce a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB designated area.

The Isle of Wight AONB Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) is written in the light of the revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018), the Government's 25 year Plan: A Green Future (2018), The Agriculture Act (2018), the Environment Bill (in process), IWAONB Management Plan (2019), the Isle of Wight Climate and Environment Strategy (2021) and the Island Planning Strategy (2021) as well as the completion of the second IW SINCs condition assessment.

These plans are linked with the priority habitats and species described in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and complement the series of Isle of Wight Habitat Action Plans which were revised in 2019/20 to provide a framework for action to conserve and enhance the Island's biodiversity.

In the majority of cases, the actions proposed in the Nature Recovery Plan will also meet the requirements of the species associated with them.

The IWAONB Nature Recovery Plan will include the relevant key habitats found within the IWAONB boundary:

a) Woodland

b) Lowland Meadows

c) Lowland Heath and Acid Grassland

d) Lowland Calcareous Grassland

e) Maritime Cliffs and Slopes

f) Wetlands

g) Farmland (includes priority habitats)

h) Solent Coast (includes priority habitats)

For each habitat there will be the following :

- Objectives and Targets
- Proposed actions

The objectives are based on the following principles:

- Ensure no further loss or degradation of the habitat
- Increase the extent of the habitat
- Improve the quality of the habitat
- Ensure the needs of the species associated with the habitat are met
- Raising awareness

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These principles are supported by the Government's desire to see biodiversity net-gain delivered through the planning system and the adoption of Local Ecological Networks (NERC 2006). These principles are being translated into local policy through the HIW Local Nature Partnership.

The progress of the IWAONB NRP will be monitored in three-year increments and reported to the Steering Group. The IWAONB NRP will be reviewed and revised as appropriate and will be integrated into future iterations of the IWAONB Management Plan.

The Isle of Wight AONB Nature Recovery Plan is a working document and will be subject to change, particularly as new information becomes available. Further revisions will be produced as necessary.

Acknowledgements

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Environment Agency

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Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Nature Partnership

Isle of Wight AONB

Isle of Wight Council – Local Environmental Records Centre

Isle of Wight Estuaries Project

Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society

Isle of Wight Ornithological Group

Isle of Wight Woodland Forum

Marine Management Organisation

National Farmers' Union

National Trust

Natural England

Natural Enterprise

Peoples' Trust for Endangered Species

RSPB

Wight Nature Fund

As well as acknowledged individual experts.

Table 1: Priority Habitat Resource in Isle of Wight AONB

| HABITAT (NERC) | BROAD HABITAT | AREA IN AONB (HA) | % OF IW TOTAL |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Maritime cliffs and slopes | Maritime grassland | 34 | 100 |
| Lowland calcareous grassland | Calcareous grassland | 626 | 95 |
| Lowland heath & acid grassland | Heathland | 148 | 77 |
| Solent Coast | Coastal habitats | 426 | 74 |
| Lowland meadows | Unimproved grassland | 223 | 53 |
| Woodland | Broadleaved woodland | 871 | 53 |
| Farmland | | 13567 | 54 |
| Wetlands | Wetlands | 294 | 45 |

A Green Future : Government 25 Year Plan for the Environment



2

In 2018 the Government produced its 25 year plan for the environment setting out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health in light of the withdrawal from the European Union. It included the intention to use and manage land sustainably; recover nature and enhance the beauty of landscapes; connect people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing; increase resource efficiency and reduce pollution and waste; secure clean, healthy seas and protect the global environment.



In terms of nature recovery, legislation would be introduced to allow the establishment of a new Environmental Land Management (ELM) system; the creation of Local Nature Recovery Plans as part of a national Nature Recovery Network; mandatory Biodiversity Net-gain for development and targets on habitats and species including :

- Restoring 75% of the 1million ha of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites into favourable condition
- Creating or restoring 500,000 ha wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected sites network, focusing on priority habitats
- Take action to recover threatened, iconic or economically important species of animals, plants and fungi
- Increase woodland in England by 180,000 ha by end 2042

National Legislative and Policy Framework



3

This plan must be seen in the context of a myriad of laws, plans and policies affecting the countryside, wildlife and rural life. The withdrawal from the European Union has meant changes in agri-environment subsidies with the removal of Basic Payment Scheme and the development of ELM. Looking to diversify their income for the future farmers and landowners are being asked to adopt 'public funds for public goods' and these may include using farm land for nature recovery, climate change mitigation, flood protection, water quality improvements, recreation and access as well as food and fuel production.



Legislation and policies relevant to this plan include the following :

National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 – established AONBs in UK

Habitats Regulations 2017 – designation and protection of European Sites (SPA and SAC)

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 – designation of SSSIs & protection of species

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 – protection of SSSIs and AONBs

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 – priority lists for habitats and species

Agriculture Act 2020 – allows UK Govt to award farming grants and subsidies

(Environment Bill 2021 – mandatory Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net-Gain)

Isle of Wight Climate and Environment Strategy (in prep 2021)

Isle of Wight Planning Strategy (in prep) – land use other than agriculture

Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan 2019-24 – management of the IW AONB

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan (revised 2020) – targets for biodiversity conservation on IW

This list is by no means exhaustive.

Colchester Declaration



4

In 2018 the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty national conference was held in Colchester in Essex. At this conference all AONBs in UK signed the Colchester Declaration committing these designated landscapes to a number of targets to contribute to nature recovery, climate change mitigation and access for health and well-being.

These targets are :

- a. To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs to make an emotional connection with nature

- b. To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB**

- c. To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans

- d. To ensure all AONB Management Plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net-Zero

- e. That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition

- f. That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected areas will have been created / restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals

- g. That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of right tree in the right place.

- h. That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to the AONB will be taken off the list by 2030.**

Objectives and Targets



5

a. Woodland

To develop objectives and actions for the range of local woodland biodiversity priorities the woodlands in the Isle of Wight AONB can be divided into six categories:

- **Ancient semi-natural woodland** with sites such as the Briddlesford Estate, Town Copse, Eaglehead Copse, Binstead, Great Wood & Cliff Copse and the copses at Rowridge
- **Ancient replanted woodland** (planted ancient woodland sites or PAWS) (including conifer plantations and non site-native broadleaves) with sites such as Mill Copse
- **Recent semi-natural woodland** includes sites on the Undercliff, Cranmore and the northern slopes of the chalk downs at West High Down and Arreton.
- **Recent plantation woodland** includes large areas at Bouldnor and Brighstone Forests as well as at Westover.
- **Parkland and wood pasture** are rare in the IWAONB with sites at Nunwell and relics at Borthwood and Newtown
- **Wet woodlands** including areas at Afton, the Wilderness and around Newchurch



| TARGETS FOR WOODLAND IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB | LEAD | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------|------|------|------|
| Maintain the current extent of ancient woodland (currently estimated as around 871 ha) | FC | ⇨ | | | |
| Achieve favourable condition or recovering condition of 352 ha of native woodland | FC | ⇨ | | | |
| Commence restoration of 399 ha of PAWS woodland | FC | ➡ | | | |
| Commence the production of 500 m ³ /year of wood products to markets inc wood fuel | AONB | ➡ | | | |
| Commence restoration of sites of derelict wood pasture/parkland | Nat Eng | ➡ | | | |
| Address fragmentation by expanding the current woodland resource by 130 ha on 'right tree, right place' principle | FC | ➡ | | | |
| Carry out survey work to assess the condition and extent of the wet woodland resource | Nat Ent | ➡ | ◆ | | |
| Update IW Ancient Tree Survey to develop a participatory approach to establishing a web-based list of concentrations of notable trees | All | | | ➡ | ◆ |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by

b. Lowland meadows

The definition of lowland meadows is wide-ranging and includes most forms of agriculturally unimproved grassland on neutral soils across the enclosed lowland landscapes of the UK. Whilst most grassland of this type conforms to NVC MG 5, even in the Isle of Wight AONB, there is considerable variation within this broad group of grasslands, relating to soil type and other environmental conditions. The main concentrations of lowland meadows are found in the north of the Island, associated with the poorly-draining clay and marl soils. These meadows occasionally form small complexes of fields, separated by species-rich hedges and patches of ancient woodland. It is this mosaic of habitats that are of particular biodiversity importance. Important sites include Newtown (Newtown NNR and Jersey Camp), Cranmore, Havenstreet, Wydcombe and assorted rural cemeteries.

| TARGETS FOR LOWLAND MEADOWS IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB | LEAD | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Maintain the existing extent of 119 ha of unimproved lowland meadows | AONB | ⇨ | | | |
| Ensure appropriate management to achieve favourable or recovering condition of 85% of unimproved lowland meadows | Nat Eng | ⇨ | | | |
| Enhance and restore the extent of 132 ha semi-improved lowland meadows | All | ➡ | | | |
| Co-operate with Environment Agency with consents and operations to assess impacts upon poorly-drained lowland meadows | EA | ➡ | | | |
| Increase the extent of semi-improved lowland meadows through partnership working – farmer cluster / co-operative farming | AONB / Nat Eng | ➡ | | | |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by

c. Lowland acid grasslands and heaths

Heathland is characterised by the presence of plants such as heather, dwarf gorse and cross-leaved heath and is generally found below 300 metres in altitude. Acid grassland occurs in a wide variety of different types, both in the UK and in the Isle of Wight AONB.

Dry heathland, such as that found at Headon Warren, Ventnor Downs and Shanklin Downs conform to the NVC H3 community, which is the typical dry heathland community of the Hampshire Basin and the New Forest. The wet heath, such as that found at Cridmore, occurs in a few small and isolated patches, may be assigned to the NVC M16 type.

An unusual version of species-rich heathland also develops on acid clay soils in Cranmore and at Bouldnor, where heathers and dwarf gorse grow in a complex mosaic with species-rich neutral grassland.

In other places, areas of heathland occur in a remarkable mosaic with chalk grassland where superficial deposits of clay or gravel cap the downs. In these relatively small areas, heathers and other acid loving plants grow with typical chalk grassland or calcicole species. This heathland type is known as chalk heath.

Acid grassland types on the Island have also been poorly surveyed and little is known of the range of NVC communities present although examples of both NVC U1 and U4 are known. Within these broad community types, there are also likely to be several sub-communities although these have yet to be identified. Elsewhere on the Island there are also interesting examples of bristle bent grassland (NVC U3), at Head Down and Ventnor Downs.

Acid grassland also occurs in association with dense stands of bracken where it can support several woodland plants, most notably stands of bluebells. However, the examples of this habitat on exposures of ferruginous sandstone that appear to have more in common with similar examples found on the cliffs of the south west of England and may not have been derived from woodland clearance as is commonly believed.

| TARGETS FOR HEATHLAND AND ACID GRASSLAND IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB | LEAD | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Maintain the existing extent of 148 ha of heathland and dry acid grassland | NT | ⇨ | | | |
| Ensure appropriate management to achieve favourable or recovering condition of 85% of heathland and dry acid grassland | Nat Eng | ⇨ | | | |
| Enhance and restore 15 ha of degraded or neglected heathland and dry acid grassland habitat | FC / Agg Industries | ➡ | | | |
| Increase the extent of lowland heathland and acid grassland by 45 ha | Agg Industries | ➡ | | | |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by

d. Lowland calcareous grassland

Chalk hills are a characteristic feature of the Isle of Wight AONB. Chalk forms the backbone of the Island extending from the famous chalk stacks of the Needles in the west to the chalk cliffs at Culver in the east.

Most of the Isle of Wight AONB's chalk downs are capped with deposits of clay with flints or angular flint gravels and have acid soils that are in sharp contrast to the nearby calcareous chalk soils. These naturally support gorse scrub, acid grassland and heathland vegetation. Small areas of calcareous grasslands are established on limestone outcrops and, on the coast, there are also many exposures of Bembridge marls on the maritime cliffs, which support calcareous grassland. Inland of the coast

there are also some calcareous grasslands associated with the Bembridge marls, such as those at Brickfields and Elmsworth Farm bordering Newtown Harbour.

Using the National Vegetation Classification (NVC), a range of calcareous grassland types including CG 1, CG2, CG3 and CG 6. The Isle of Wight has SAC designated chalk grasslands for the populations of the endemic early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) and collectively the chalk grasslands in the Isle of Wight AONB are some of the finest in the UK.

| TARGETS FOR LOWLAND CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB | Lead | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Maintain and restore the existing extent of 626 ha of lowland calcareous grassland | AONB | ⇨ | | | |
| Ensure appropriate management to achieve favourable or recovering condition of 85% of lowland calcareous grassland | Nat Eng | ⇨ | | | |
| Increase the extent of lowland calcareous grassland on the Isle of Wight by re-establishing 190 ha of permanent grassland on chalk | HIWWT / Nat Eng | ➡ | | | |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by



e. Maritime cliffs and slopes

Maritime cliffs are some of the most dramatic and widely appreciated landscape features of the Isle of Wight. They fall into two distinct groups, hard cliffs formed by chalk and soft cliffs formed by sandstones and clays. They are home to a rich and highly adapted diversity of wildlife and provide unique opportunities to view extensive and spectacular geological exposures. They are a rich scientific and educational resource of national and international importance.

Maritime cliffs provide a constantly changing habitat depending on the degree of maritime exposure, substrate type, degree of slope and the time since the last cliff fall or slippage. Associated with this changing habitat is a huge diversity of plant and animal communities: pioneer plant communities colonising bare rock, communities of rock crevices and ledges, an amazing variety of grassland types, ponds, reed beds and other wetlands, scrub and woodland and, in places, even cliff face heathland and sand dunes.

The Isle of Wight AONB contains extensive areas of undercliff, the more sheltered environment that develops between the outer sea-washed cliffs and an inner cliff line which forms the rear wall of this land-slipped zone. It stretches between Blackgang and Bonchurch. Here, the habitat is extensive, partially urbanised and in parts dominated by secondary sycamore woodland. It has a distinctive sheltered, almost Mediterranean, climate. In most places, a maritime influence is apparent but may be reduced, particularly where the undercliff is wide.

| BIODIVERSITY ACTIONS FOR MARITIME CLIFFS AND SLOPES ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT | LEAD | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------|------|------|------|
| Maintain the existing 51 km of free functioning maritime cliff and slope resource (including cliff-top and slope habitat) | All | ⇨ | | | |
| Ensure no overall net loss of cliff and slope functionality as a result of coast protection or engineering works. | IWC | ⇨ | | | |
| Ensure LDF (Island Planning Strategy) policies do not allow development in areas at direct risk of coastal processes. | IWC | ◆ | | | |
| For developments at long term risk, introduce IPS (LDF) planning policy for time limited consents or legal agreements to remove structures when the risk of loss through coastal processes becomes too great. | IWC | ◆ | | | |
| Permanently reduce the cover of scrub on maritime cliffs and slope in the SSSI with maritime cliffs and slopes by 10% in targeted areas | NT | ➡ | | | |
| Monitor populations of the Glanville fritillary annually to determine extent and distribution. | HIWBC | ⇨ | | | |
| Ensure regular monitoring of BAP national priority invertebrates | Nat Eng | ➡ | | | |
| Instigate a research programme to assess the effectiveness of the 20m buffer strip in terms of conserving the nature conservation interest | Nat Eng | ➡ | | | |
| Monitor impacts of increased use of enhanced coastal path on biodiversity | IWC | ➡ | | | |
| Monitor the effects of coast protection on biodiversity and nature conservation value | Nat Eng | ➡ | | | |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by

f. Wetlands

The wetland habitats considered in this plan tend to be associated with rivers and their flood plains, or with springs and seepage lines. They include coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, fens, reedbeds, ponds, rivers and streams.

Coastal and flood plain grazing marsh

The most extensive wetland habitat in the Island AONB is coastal and flood plain grazing marsh. They are defined as periodically flooded pasture or meadow with ditches, containing brackish or fresh water that maintain the water levels. The ditches can be especially rich in plants and invertebrates. Almost all areas are grazed and some are cut for hay or silage. Not all of the grassland in flood plains and coastal grazing marshes is semi-natural, and much has been agriculturally improved. Examples are found in the eastern Yar valley between Newchurch and Alverstone.

Fens

Fens are peatlands that receive water and nutrients from the soil, rock and ground water as well as from rainfall. Fen vegetation is characteristically short, with a high proportion of sedges and mosses. Rich fen habitats were once widespread within Freshwater Marshes although much of this has now been transformed into reed bed. Other small examples of rich fen occur along spring lines flushes associated with the chalk, such as Compton Marsh or as cliff face flushes, such as those on Headon Warren and at Luccombe Chine. NVC communities mapped under the broad lowland fen category are: M1-M14, M19-M21, M27-M38; M22 and M24 in soligenous fens; and all S communities apart from S4 and S26.

Reed bed

The IWAONB reed beds have mostly evolved due to a lack of management of other wetland habitats within the flood plains and tributaries of the eastern and western Yar valleys. At King's Quay, reed beds occur as part of a natural transition to saltmarsh habitat with the reed beds being tidally inundated. Further reed beds occur on the spring fed slopes of the Islands soft rock cliffs.

Ponds

Ponds are an important freshwater habitat and play a key role in maintaining biodiversity at the landscape level. However, they are vulnerable to environmental degradation and there is evidence that, at a national level, pond quality is declining. The pond resource on the Island is inadequately known but includes farm ponds, transitory ponds developed on actively slumping ground and garden ponds. The majority of ponds on the Island are found north of the central chalk ridge.

Rivers and streams

The Isle of Wight AONB has numerous small rivers and streams. The largest are the eastern Yar and Medina. Although rising from the chalk in the south, these rivers run for most of their length through the heavily cultivated sandy soils of the lower greensand. The main rivers are biologically impoverished, due to a combination of factors including damaged structure, caused by drainage engineering; poor water quality resulting from suspended sediment; high levels of phosphate; and low flows, resulting from abstraction, Smaller rivers that drain from gravel aquifers over the Tertiary clays in the north are less heavily modified by drainage engineering, but they suffer from water quality problems associated with natural seasonal low flows and locally due to waste water discharges and agricultural run-off. Despite this, some sections of these streams are quite natural, especially where they flow through ancient woodlands or through chimes.

| TARGETS FOR WETLANDS IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB | LEAD | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------|------|------|------|
| Maintain the current extent of 294 ha wetland habitats: Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, rush pasture, fens and reedbeds | IR | ⇨ | | | |
| Ensure appropriate management and water level control to achieve favourable or recovering condition or recovering condition of all wetland habitats within designated sites | IR | ⇨ | | | |
| Promote wetland habitat continuity by restoring degraded wetland habitats | IR | ⇨ | | | |
| Carry out improvements to sites where eel migration issues have been identified. Priority will be given to structures on the River Medina & Eastern Yar | IR | ➡ | | | |
| Actively contribute to improving rivers and wetlands, aiming to achieve good status under the Water Framework Directive. | IR | ⇨ | | | |
| Reduce the effects of agricultural run-off through the Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative | AONB | ⇨ | | | |
| Explore opportunities to create large scale flood plain restoration to cater for integrated approaches to land management | HIWWT / RSPB | ➡ | | | |
| Identify locally important pond areas using evidence base and modelling tools | IWC | ➡ | | | |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by

g. Farmland

Farmland contains a mosaic of different habitat types which collectively can be of high biodiversity and nature conservation importance. A total of four broad habitat types are found predominantly on farmland:-

- Arable and horticulture
- Improved grassland
- Boundary and linear features
- Standing open water

These broad habitat types contain two priority habitats;

- Ancient and species rich hedgerows
- Cereal field margins

The broad habitat types and in particular the cereal field margin habitat support a number of national priority Section 41 species and species of national conservation concern as well as others listed as nationally rare and scarce. Arable and horticultural habitats and, in particular, cereal field margins provide an important habitat for a number of plant species, however, farmland is of far greater value to biodiversity and supports populations of many other species including birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles, insects and several other important plant species associated with other farmland habitats.

Whereas many of these other species may be largely associated with a specific farmland habitat, such as farm ponds or hedgerows, it is the mosaic of different farmland habitats and the wider functioning of the farm that is most important for their survival. Many of these are continually changing both in time and space in response to the pattern of farm management.

Farms can also contain many other habitats of importance for biodiversity including lowland meadows, calcareous grasslands, floodplain grazing marshes and reedbeds. Whereas the conservation of these habitats can depend upon farming activity, these habitats have been considered in separate sections of this Plan.

| TARGETS FOR FARMLAND IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB | LEAD | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------|------|------|------|
| Support the implementation of the Isle of Wight Catchment Sensitive Farming and Farmer Cluster initiatives | AONB | ⇨ | | | |
| Promote the agri-environment grant schemes to farmers and landowners | Nat Eng | ⇨ | | | |
| Co-ordinate and implement Compton Bay and Downs Project | NT | ⇨ | | | |
| Encourage positive management and retention of significant hedgerows | IWC | ⇨ | | | |
| Encourage positive management and retention of farm ponds | IWC | ⇨ | | | |
| Work with farmers and farm advisors to implement ELM and transition after withdrawal from EU | AONB | ➡ | | | |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by

h. Solent coast

Estuaries and their associated habitats are a very important feature of the Isle of Wight AONB's coastal biodiversity. They are varied in character, but all depend on a balance between sediment supply, the input of fresh and saline water and the tidal regime to maintain the specialist groups of plants and animals associated with them. The habitats are described under the following headings: coastal saltmarsh, coastal vegetated shingle, coastal sand dunes, seagrass beds and saline lagoons.

Coastal saltmarsh

These intertidal or tidally-influenced vegetated habitats that develop along soft, sheltered coasts with shallow shores, generally within estuaries are concentrated in two sites, the western Yar Estuary and Newtown Harbour. Mixed saltmarsh is a particularly valuable resource and those in the Solent are notable for their concentration of nationally scarce flowering plant species. Although many saltmarshes in the Solent are of recent origin (generally less than 120 years old), some on the Island, principally in parts of the Newtown estuary, are believed to be much older, and they are not dominated by common cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*). The native, small cord-grass (*S. maritima*) is a component of mixed salt marshes in the Newtown estuary, its only remaining location on the south coast of England. The Island's saltmarshes contribute to the international importance of the Solent as an important resource for wading birds and wildfowl. They act as high tide refuges for birds feeding on adjacent mudflats, as breeding sites for waders and gulls and as a source of food for passerine birds particularly in autumn and winter.

Coastal vegetated shingle

Vegetation will establish on shingle beaches when the structure is stable and there is a matrix of finer material such as sand or silt. The extent and location of the vegetation depends upon the naturally occurring processes of erosion and accretion of the substrate. Mobility is an over-riding consideration and colonising species are able to withstand periodic disturbance, which may involve the total removal of the surface by storms. Sites are restricted to the north coast and are contained within SSSIs and within the Solent and Southampton Waters SAC. The best examples are the spits at the entrance of Newtown Harbour. Other sites occur King's Quay and the foreshores at Thorness Bay and Quarr.

Coastal sand dunes

These are windblown sand formations that may be stable or shifting, together with their associated slacks, grassland and scrub. Sand dunes are a scarce resource on the Island's coast and indeed along much of the English Channel coast. There are examples of spit dunes on the sandy promontories at the entrance to Western Yar. The seaward edges of these dunes are artificially constrained and as a result, much of the habitat is stabilised. A small, but remarkable perched sand dune occurs on a cliff top at Ladder Chine on the south-west coast

Seagrass Beds

Seagrass beds develop in intertidal and shallow subtidal areas on sands and muds. They may be found in marine inlets and bays but also in other areas such as lagoons and channels. The root systems of seagrass species stabilise and encourage accretion of the sediment on which they grow. These plants are an important source of organic matter and provide shelter and attachment sites for other plants and animals, allowing interesting marine communities to develop.

Seagrass is an important food source for overwintering Brent goose populations. Seagrass beds are largely on the north coast, including some Newtown and Yarmouth. These extend into the sublittoral and are included within the Solent Maritime SAC.

Saline Lagoons

Saline lagoons are pond- or lake-like, virtually tideless, shallow brackish or saline bodies of water separated or partly separated from the sea by a beach, spit or seawall, which allows only limited influx of seawater. The IWAONB has saline lagoons on the western Yar and at Newtown.

High Tide Roosts

High tide roosts are not so much a habitat type as an area used by waterbirds as a safe refuge at high tide. Undisturbed upper saltmarsh and coastal shingle are important high tide roosts but, in addition, some fields adjoining the Solent coast and offering uninterrupted sight-lines serve as high tide roosts for waders and waterfowl. They are an essential component of the land required by these species to maintain the Solent SPA in favourable condition.

| TARGETS FOR COASTAL HABITATS IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT AONB | LEAD | 2021 | 2024 | 2027 | 2030 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Maintain current extent 426 ha of coastal habitats: sand dune, coastal shingle, mudflats, saltmarsh and saline lagoons | IWC | ⇨ | | | |
| Enhance and restore 15 ha coastal habitats | All | ➡ | | | |
| Acquire and manage buffer zones between agriculture and coast | NT | ⇨ | | | |

◆ Complete by ⇨ Ongoing ➡ Start by



Key to organisations mentioned above

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Agg Industries | Aggregate Industries | IWNHAS | Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society |
| AONB | Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit | IWCG | Isle of Wight Coppice Group |
| EA | Environment Agency | IR | IW Catchment Partnership |
| FC | Forestry Commission / Forestry England | Nat Eng | Natural England |
| HIWWT | Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust | Nat Ent | Natural Enterprise |
| IWC | Isle of Wight Council (Archaeology / Planning / Coastal / RoW / Estuary Project) | NT | National Trust |
| HIW BC | Butterfly Conservation (Hants & IW branch) | RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |

Flagship Species



6

The Isle of Wight AONB Nature Recovery Plan will seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the landscape through actions to benefit the habitats listed above. However, it is recognised that certain species are seen as iconic, flagship species which embody the importance of both habitats and species conservation.

The Isle of Wight AONB has two species which exist within the designated landscape and nowhere else is Britain. These are :

Reddish Buff Moth - lowland meadows

Wood calamint - woodlands

And these will be adopted as our commitment to the Colchester Declaration.



However a number of other species are special to the Isle of Wight and include :

Water vole - wetlands

Early gentian - chalk grasslands

Small cordgrass - Solent coast

Nightjar - acid grass and heaths

Barn owl - farmland

Glanville fritillary - maritime cliffs and slopes

Designated Sites for Nature Conservation



7

There are 24 Sites of Special Scientific Interest on the Isle of Wight (including both Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) in the Isle of Wight AONB designation.

In addition, there are 208 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs or Wildlife Sites) in the protected landscape. Many of the wildlife-rich habitats described above are found in these areas and the majority are owned and managed by sympathetic managers such as environmental non-government organisations (e NGOs).

It will be important for the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership to work closely with these organisations and the wider farming community if the objectives and targets outlined in this Plan are to be achieved.



Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain



8

The Environment Bill was introduced into UK parliamentary processes in 2020 and is currently undergoing due scrutiny and changes in Westminster. The Bill aims to introduce two important opportunities for nature recovery in AONBs.



Firstly it will require each local authority to draw up a Local Nature Recovery Strategy which will show how that local authority will bring about nature recovery in its area of jurisdiction. If we assume that in our case the Isle of Wight Council (as the single and Unitary council on the Isle of Wight) will author this document then we believe this plan, together with the revised Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan will be important documents for informing this new Island-wide policy.

The Bill also seeks to introduce mandatory Biodiversity Net-Gain which will be of benefit to the designated site if on-site mitigation for biodiversity cannot be found by developers. This may cause conflicts of interest for the AONB as damage to the designated site should be resisted in the first instance before mitigation is considered.

Landscapes for Nature (30 by 30)



9

On the Isle of Wight, a significant amount of land is owned and managed by a wide range of sympathetic landowners with a duty or remit to encourage and protect biodiversity. This includes a number of environmental non-government organisations (e NGOs), government agencies (Forestry Commission and Environment Agency) and smaller charities and organisations.

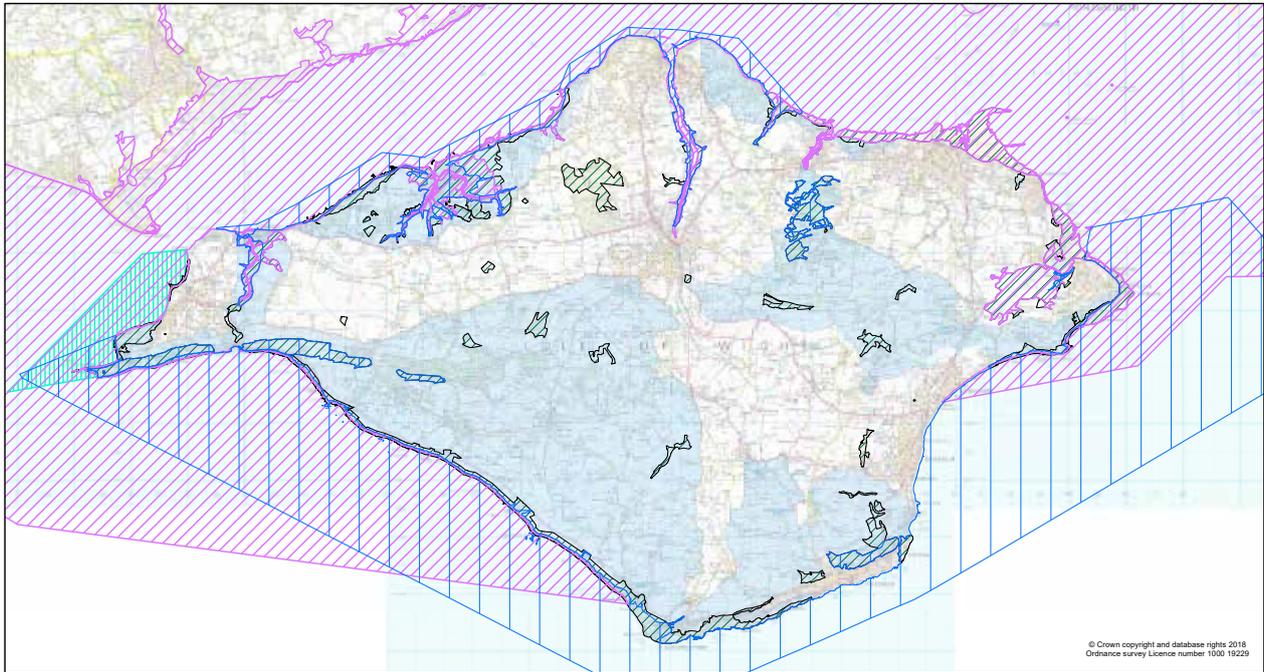


This land holding (approx. 4605 ha) represents 12% of the Island's land surface. We will refer to this landholding as the Countryside Estate. Sites designated for their nature conservation value (SSSIs and SINCs) outside the Countryside Estate cover a further 5010 ha, representing approx. 13% of the land. So, in total the land designated and managed for wildlife is currently around 25% of the Island. A further 1785 ha is required to meet the 30 by 30 target.

The Isle of Wight was designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2019 in recognition of the fact that 75% of its land and surrounding seas were designated for its landscape, geology or biodiversity interest and that we have a long and distinguished history in maintaining the natural beauty of the Island's countryside

This Plan will help us encourage the landowners and land managers of areas high in nature conservation value to use the Biosphere designation and the 30 by 30 vision to provide high quality landscape for habitats and species well beyond the 2030 target.

Appendix I : Designated Areas in the Isle of Wight AONB



ISLE OF WIGHT
LOCAL RECORDS CENTRE

N
▲

1:150,000
Date: 22/07/2021

Key

-  SAC
-  SPA
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Marine Conservation Zones**
-  Designated
-  Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Appendix II : Priority Habitat Map for Isle of Wight AONB

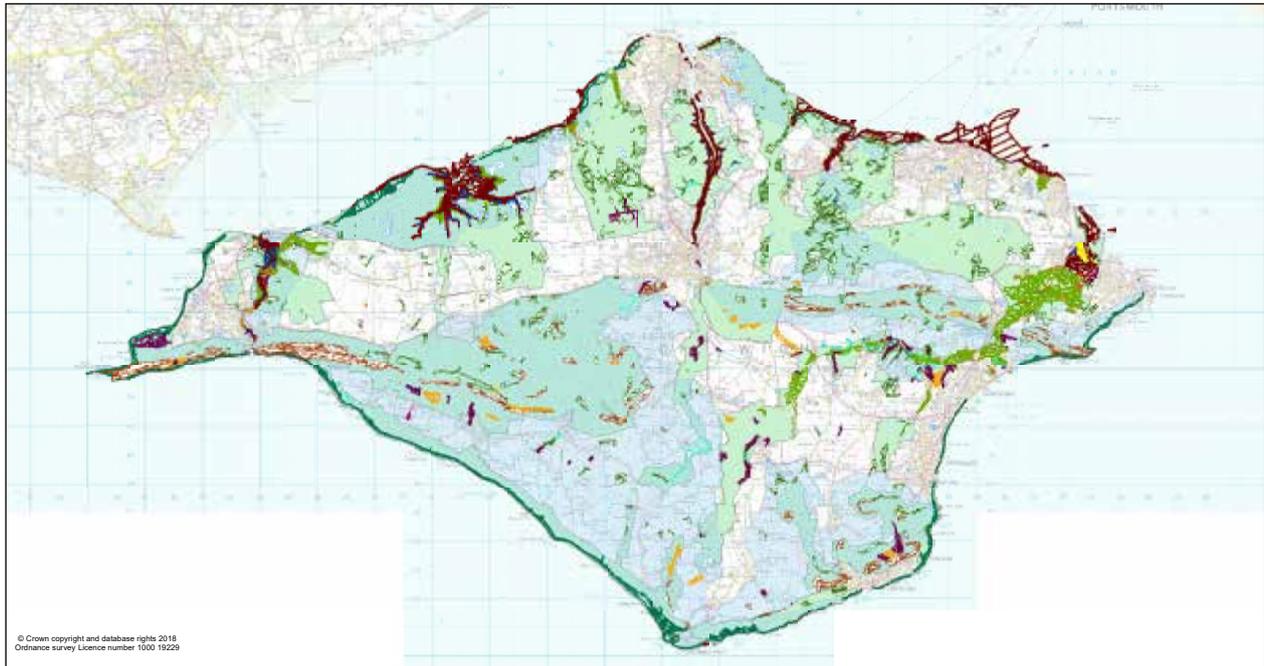


ISLE OF WIGHT
**LOCAL
RECORDS
CENTRE** N
1:150,000
Date: 22/07/2021

Key

- AONB Priority Habitat
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Appendix III : Potential Areas for Habitat Restoration and Creation



ISLE OF WIGHT
LOCAL
RECORDS
CENTRE



1:150,000

Date: 30/07/2021

Key

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Coastal Sand Dunes | Lowland Heathland |
| Coastal Vegetated Shingle | Lowland Meadows |
| Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh | Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland |
| Coastal saltmarsh | Maritime Cliff and Slopes |
| Intertidal chalk | Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures |
| Intertidal mudflats | Reedbeds |
| Lowland Calcareous Grassland | Saline lagoons |
| Lowland Dry Acid Grassland | Seagrass beds |
| Lowland Fens | Wet Woodland |
| | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| | Local_Ecological_Network |

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