

# Nature Conservation Assessment: Thorns Marsh to Calshot (& the England Coast Path)







## Introduction

- Review the nature conservation designations and the qualifying habitats and species populations on this stretch of the New Forest coast.
- Excerpted from a larger assessment of effects of public access on features of nature conservation importance on the coast between Thorns Marsh & Calshot
- That Assessment was based on considerable amount of survey & assessment undertaken since May 2015 by Hampshire & IoW Wildlife Trust and myself that is still ongoing. This included:
  - Habitat mapping
  - Breeding bird surveys
  - Wintering bird surveys
  - Survey and assessment of effects of trampling on vegetated shingle habitats, saltmarsh, and coastal woodland
- Described how these features are represented in each section of the coast and considered the potential impacts of changes to public access provision on them.



**North Solent SSSI**

The map displays the North Solent SSSI area, which is outlined in pink. The area includes the River Test, the Solent, and various inland features such as Fawley, Blackfield, Exbury, and Lepe. The map is color-coded with green for land, blue for water, and pink for the SSSI boundary. Key locations include Fawley, Blackfield, Exbury, and Lepe. The map also shows the River Test and the Solent. The title 'North Solent SSSI' is in the top left corner.

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This is a detailed topographic map of the North Solent SSSI area. The map shows the coastline of the North Solent, with the River Test flowing into the Solent. Key locations labeled include Fawley, Blackfield, Exbury, and Lepe. The map is color-coded to show different types of land and water features. The North Solent SSSI area is highlighted in pink. The map also shows various land parcels, roads, and water bodies. The map is oriented with North at the top.

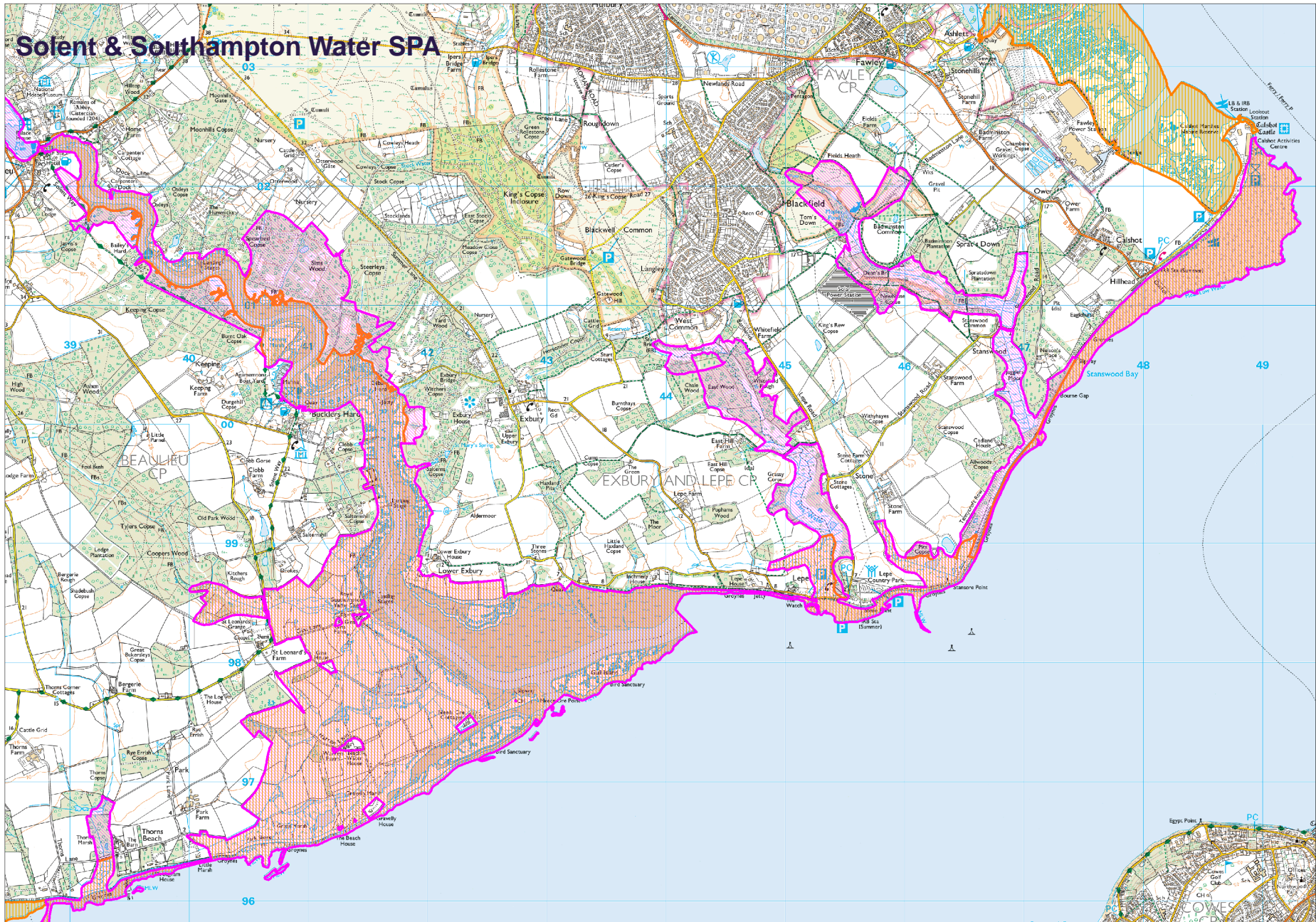
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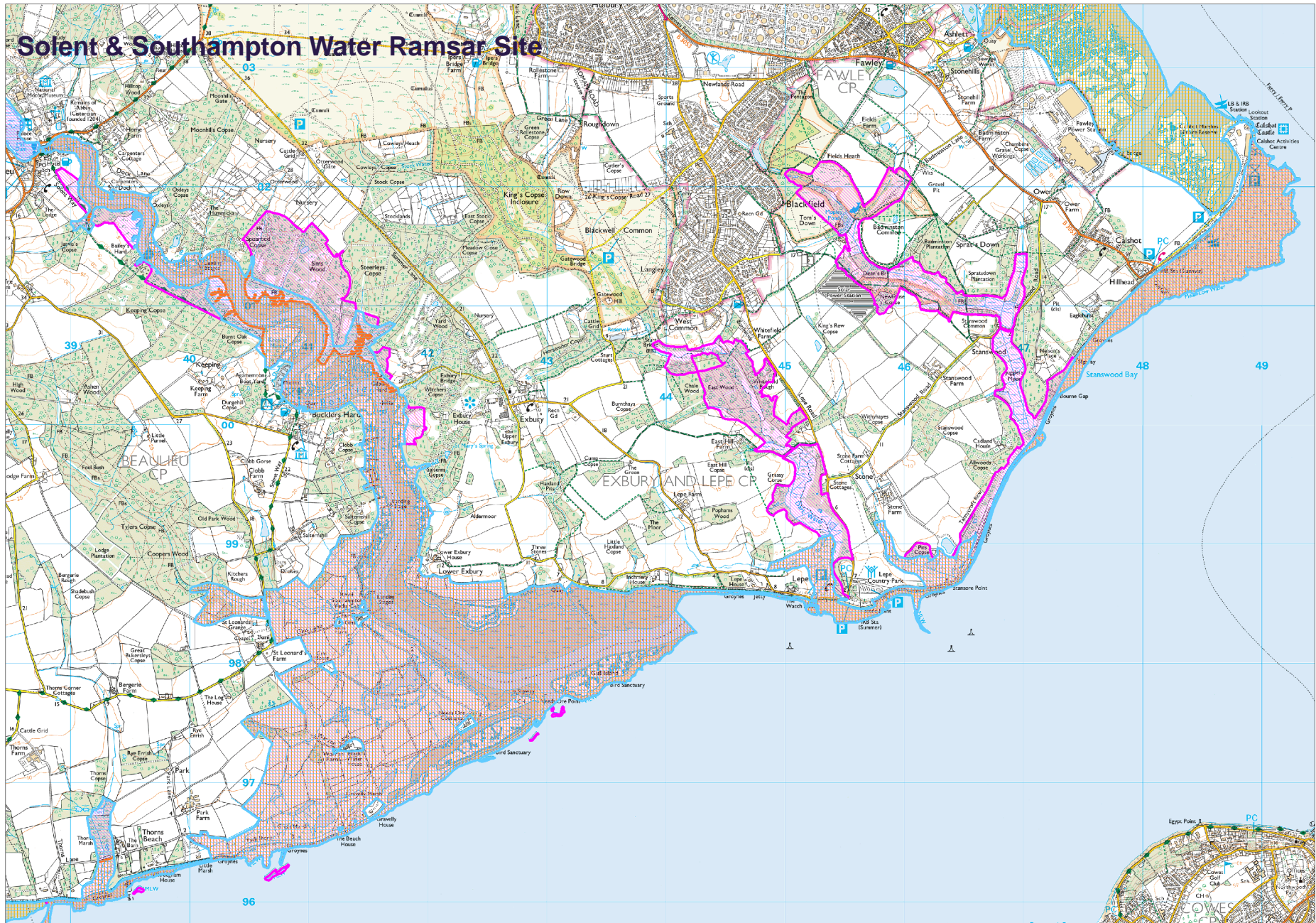


# Solent & Southampton Water SPA



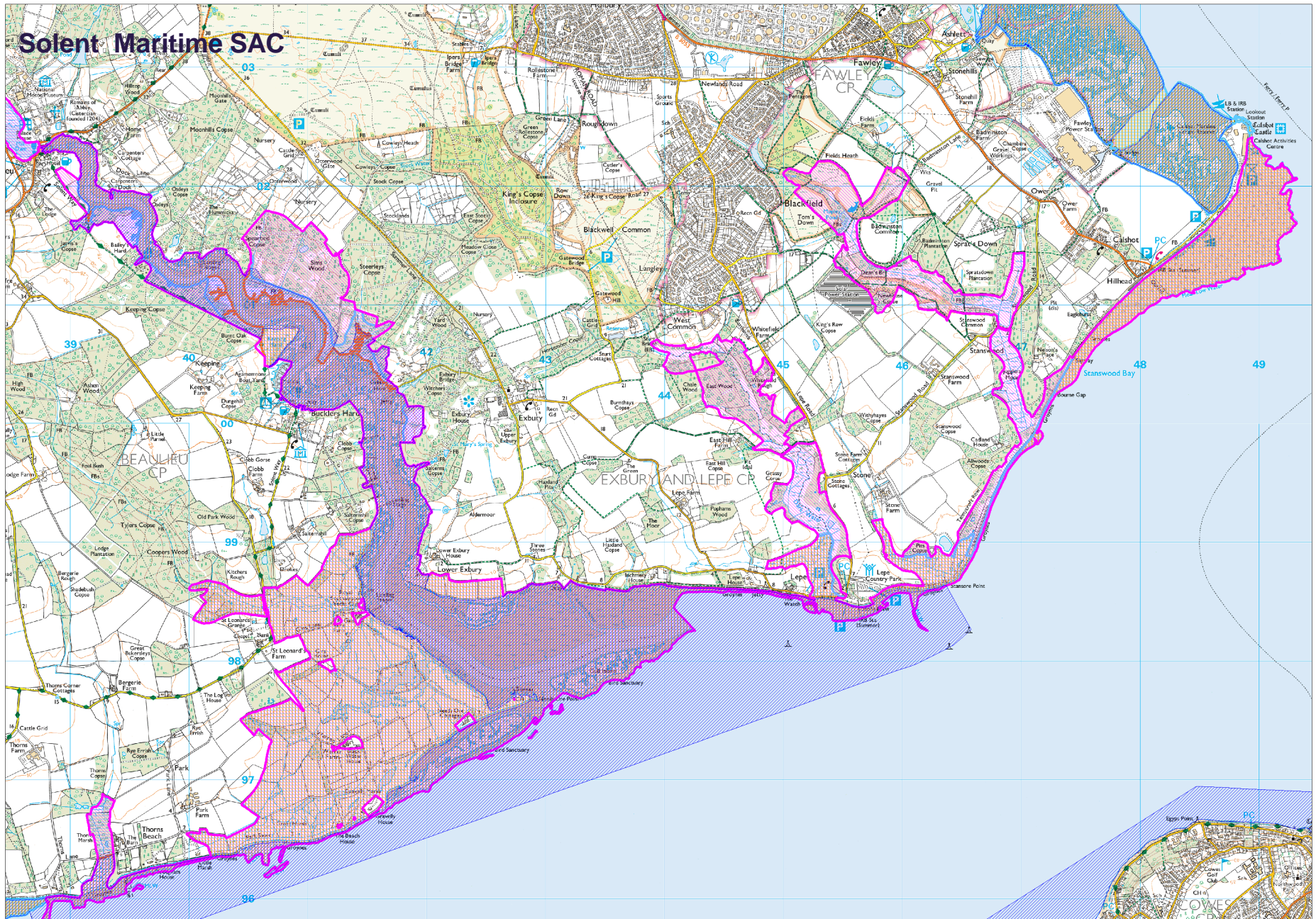


# Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar Site



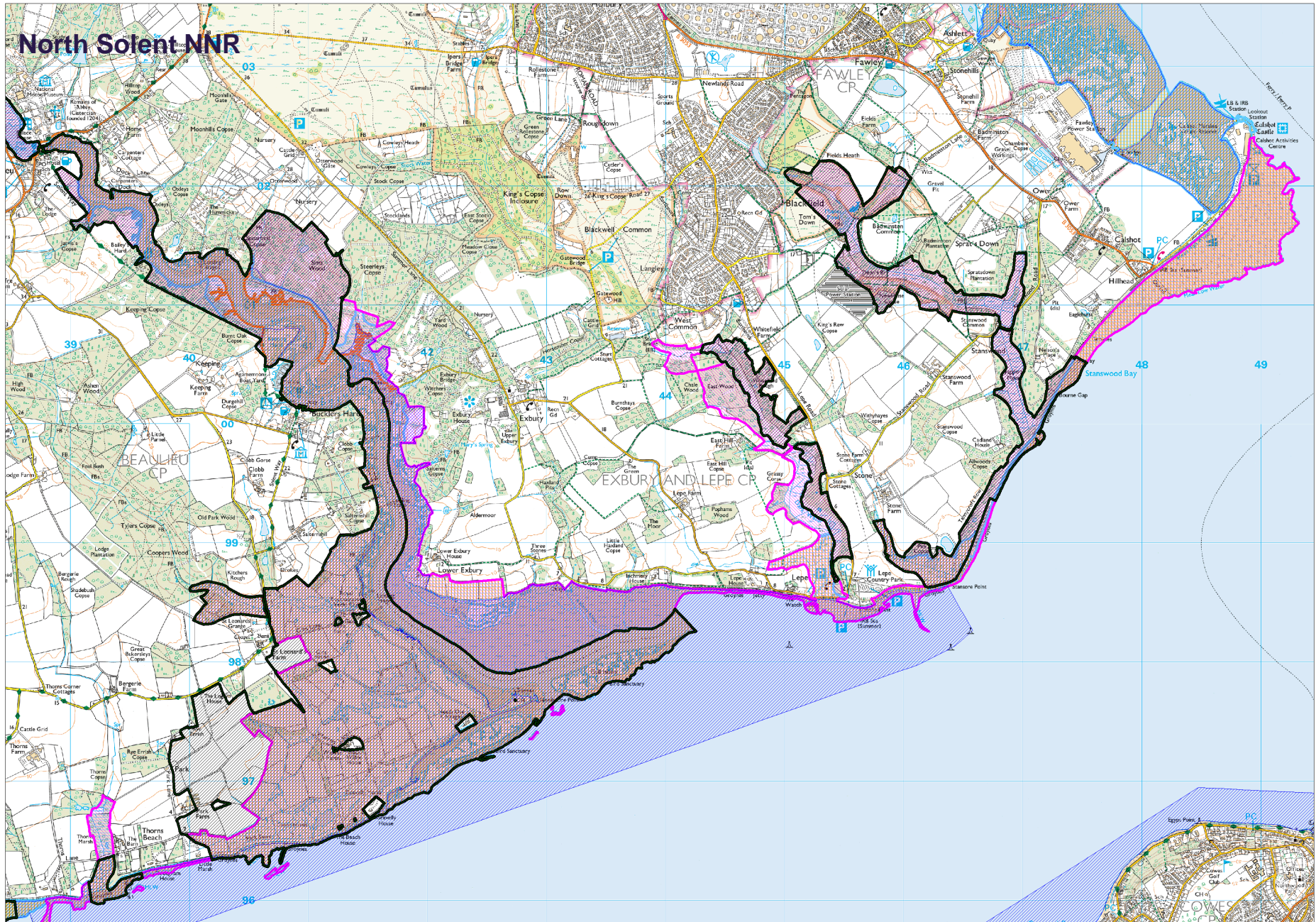


# Solent Maritime SAC



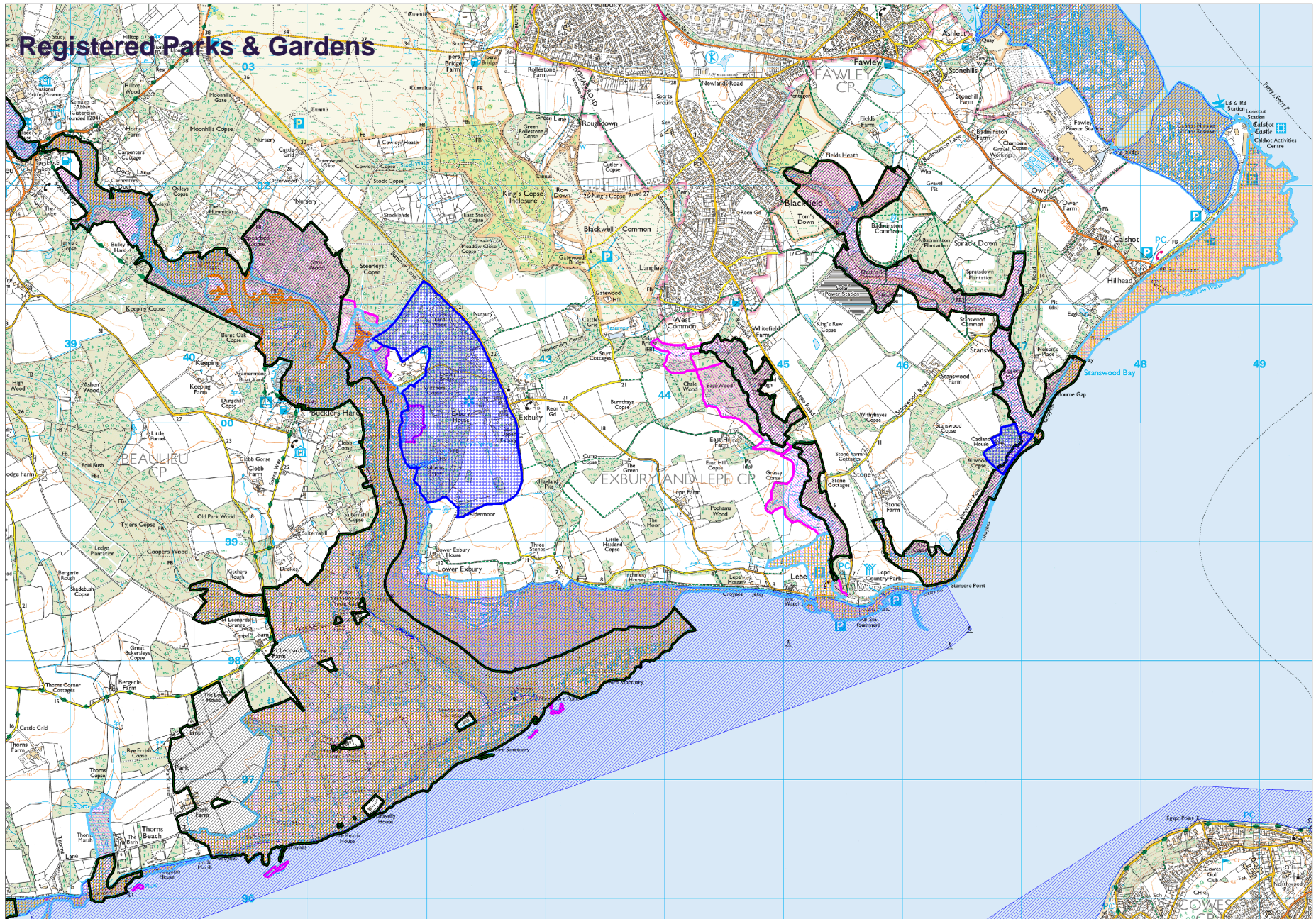


# North Solent NNR





# Registered Parks & Gardens





# Nature Conservation Features

## North Solent SSSI

- Mudflats and saltmarshes,
- Shingle beaches and spits,
- Fresh and brackish marshland and pools
- Maritime grassland
- Ancient semi-natural woodlands.
- Rich flora including many locally distributed, rare or diminishing species.
- International importance for its populations of over wintering and migratory birds
- National importance for its populations of breeding gulls and waders.



# Nature Conservation Features

## Solent & Southampton Water SPA

This SPA qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Birds Directive supporting breeding populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

- Common Tern
- Little Tern
- Mediterranean Gull
- Roseate Tern
- Sandwich Tern

The SPA also qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

- Black-tailed Godwit
- Dark-bellied Brent
- Ringed Plover
- Teal

The SPA also qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl (Internationally important waterfowl assemblage).



**Hampshire &  
Isle of Wight**  
Wildlife Trust

**Jonathan Cox Associates**  
ecological consultancy



# Nature Conservation Features

## Solent & Southampton Water SPA

Although the selection of the SPA is based on wintering bird populations, it should be noted that the SPA Review (Stroud et al, 2001) states:

*“Note that sites selected for waterbird species on the basis of their occurrence in the breeding, passage or winter periods also provide legal protection for these species when they occur at other times of the year.”*

Solent is important for several species that have been selected for their occurrence in winter that also occur at other times of year, for example;

- During periods of passage migration i.e. Black-tailed godwit, Ringed plover (April and early May and from July onwards)
- During the breeding season i.e Ringed plover, Shelduck (April to July)



# Nature Conservation Features

## Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar Site

**Criterion 1:** A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.

It includes many wetland habitats characteristic of the biogeographic region:

- Saline lagoons
- Saltmarshes,
- Estuaries
- Intertidal flats
- Shallow coastal waters
- Grazing marshes
- Reedbeds
- Coastal woodland
- *Rocky boulder reefs*





# Nature Conservation Features

## Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar Site

**Criterion 2:** A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities

- Important assemblage of rare plants and invertebrates.
- At least 33 British Red Data Book invertebrates
- At least eight British Red Data Book plants are represented on site

Three of these occur within the North Solent SSSI & NNR

- Little Robin *Geranium purpureum forsteri*,
- Dwarf spike-rush *Eleocharis parvula*
- Eelgrass *Zostera marina*





# Nature Conservation Features

## Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar Site

**Criterion 5:** A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds

**Criterion 6:** A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird:

➤ **Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:**

Ringed plover

➤ **Species with peak counts in winter:**

Dark-bellied brent goose

Eurasian teal

Black-tailed godwit



**Hampshire &  
Isle of Wight**

Wildlife Trust



# Nature Conservation Features

## Solent Maritime SAC

The SAC hosts ten habitats of European importance (listed on Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive).

- **Estuaries**
- **Spartina swards (*Spartinion maritimae*)**
- **Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)**
- **Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time**
- **Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide**
- **Coastal lagoons\* (Priority feature)**
- **Annual vegetation of drift lines**
- **Perennial vegetation of stony banks**
- ***Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand**
- **Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (`white dunes`)**



# Nature Conservation Features

## Selected Highlights

- **Area of Special Protection** Needs Ore Point, Gull Island and Warren Shore east of Gravelly House. The ASP order makes it an offence to enter this area and to disturb birds.
- **Avocet** Important breeding colonies within saline lagoons
- **Geranium purpureum forsteri “Little Robin”** The endemic population is sensitive to trampling. This is probably the largest population of this species in the World and listed as a qualifying species of the Ramsar Site.
- **Warren Lane to Buckler’s Hard** “The saltmarshes in the estuary support the highest recorded density of wading birds in this habitat in Britain.” – North Solent SSSI Notification, Confirmed 1991



# Potential Impact on Features of Nature Conservation Importance

## Likely impact of increased public access to the coast

- Damaging levels of trampling on vegetated shingle habitats, and adjacent saltmarsh, with erosion of woodland ground flora.
- Increased levels of disturbance would have adverse impacts on breeding waders and other ground nesting birds including nesting Ringed plover, Redshank, Lapwing and Avocet.
- Avocet and other waders and wildfowl nesting on lagoons inland of the coast would be vulnerable to disturbance, in particular from dogs.
- Impacts on nesting Ringed plover would have an adverse effect on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA & Ramsar Site for which this is a qualifying species.
- Wildfowl & waders feeding and breeding on grazing marshes, lagoons and improved grassland fields inland of the coast would be very vulnerable to disturbance from public access.





# Implications of Coast Path Route

## ■ Disturbance

- New – Non-historic Rights of Way
- Increased – Joining up of existing routes

## ■ Mitigation

- Funding only for signage, minor barriers
- No funding for parking infrastructure, or any other mitigation
- Exacerbate or invite new Verge Parking on the Park's more remote roads and lanes



# Implications of Coast Path Route

- Climate Change / Erosion
  - Mitigation is not structured for inland routes (provision to move inland from cliff tops)
  - Resulting in habitat pinched between route and advancing sea.
  - Even if argument is made to move path inland of habitat, no provision / funding to restore hard edge created by path.
- Concerns over NE role
  - Portsmouth to South Hayling route has no habitat exclusions under S26, this leads to glaring omissions



# Coast Path Spreading Room Coastal Margin

## ■ Poorly crafted in Legislation

- Default – Seaward side of Route to Waters edge
- Meant to encourage landowners to site path as close to water as possible
- Coastal habitats which ought to be excluded send route inland, and are therefore included in coastal margin
- Highcliffe to Calshot would create @3,500 acres of access land on protected habitats





# Coast Path Spreading Room Coastal Margin

## ■ Ordnance Survey Depiction

- Will show all potential spreading room in “Magenta Wash” – not depicting excluded areas separately.



Coastal margin

All land within the 'coastal margin' (where it already exists) is associated with the England Coast Path ([nationaltrail.co.uk/england-coast-path](http://nationaltrail.co.uk/england-coast-path)) and is by default access land, but in some areas it contains land not subject to access rights – for example cropped land, buildings and their curtilage, gardens and land subject to local restrictions including many areas of saltmarsh and flat that are not suitable for public access. The coastal margin is often steep, unstable and not readily accessible. Please take careful note of conditions and local signage on the ground.

The depiction of rights of access does not imply or express any warranty as to its accuracy or completeness. Observe local signs and follow the Countryside Code. Visit: [gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code](http://gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code)



Friends of the New Forest  
NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION



## Coastal Access Completion by 2020 - Provisional Timings and Stretches

South Hub Team - 6th March 2015

