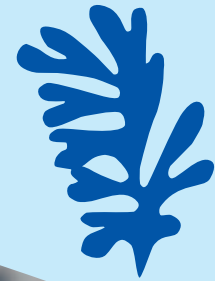


# Managing the North East Kent Coast

A summary of the North East Kent European  
Marine Sites Management Scheme



**Thanet Coast Project ... working with people for coastal wildlife**



# Working together...

## Thanet Coast Time Line ●●●

1998-2000

- Series of workshops to produce the 'Management Scheme'

2001

- Launch of Scheme
- Thanet Coast Project starts
- Thanet Coastal Codes workshops

## The North East Kent European Marine Sites Management Scheme



**This scheme is the most significant thing** that has happened for the nature conservation of this coast. The aim is to secure the future of the habitats and wildlife around the coast for this generation and for generations to follow.

The coast is well known for its internationally important chalk reefs, sea caves and Turnstone and Golden Plover bird populations. It comprises of a number of nature conservation designations:

- two Special Area of Conservation (Thanet Coast SAC and Sandwich Bay SAC to the high water mark)
- Special Protection Area (Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA)
- Ramsar site
- National Nature Reserve; and is all
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Nationally important environmental features include the cliff top chalk grassland supporting rare plants and insects, assemblages of waders and breeding birds, seals, sandbanks, and important geological features.

The scheme covers the coast from Herne Bay to



# to safeguard coastal birds and marine life

Deal, with a small separate area at Swalecliffe. It extends out to sea up to 2km around Thanet, and includes areas covered by the sea, either some or all of the time. This area is highly influenced by social and economic pressures from the key towns and tourist resorts of Whitstable, Herne Bay, Margate, Broadstairs, Ramsgate and Sandwich – which are all within the coastal fringe of the marine sites.

## Part of something bigger

**This coast, together with the best sites in the rest of Europe, forms a network of protected wildlife sites created under the Habitats Directive known as Natura 2000.**

## Management Scheme Aim

“To maintain the habitats and species found in the North East Kent European marine sites (NEKEMS) as a national and internationally important asset, whilst ensuring that its diverse human use is undertaken in ways which do not threaten the nature conservation interest, and wherever possible in ways which support it.”

## Relevant authorities who have responsibility for the Management Scheme

Canterbury City Council  
Dover District Council  
Environment Agency  
Kent County Council  
Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee  
Natural England  
Sandwich Port and Haven Commission  
Southern Water Services  
Thanet District Council as Harbour Authority  
Thanet District Council



### 2002

- Thanet Coast events commence
- Thanet Coastal Codes first produced
- First biennial Research Conference

### 2003

- North East Kent Coastal Scientific Advisory Group (NEKSCAG) formed
- SSSI Thanet Coast Site Management Statement agreed
- Turnstone awareness signs and posters



# Why do we need a Management Scheme?

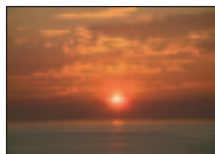


2004

- Twice yearly stakeholder meetings start
- First annual SeaART exhibition
- Education officer starts
- Thanet Coastal Warden scheme launched
- Research database set up within Biological Records Centre
- Conference - 'Making Connections'
- Research Code drawn up
- First local activity agreement (Kite-surfing)

## Growing pressures

**This coast is nationally and internationally important for its bird and marine life** and so it is worthy of the highest level of protection we can give it. But wildlife and habitats cannot be considered in isolation. This coast is also important for other reasons: many people live here and, along with thousands of visitors, use the coast for sport and relaxation; bait and shellfish are harvested; there is a port and several harbours; the cliffs and shore are managed for sea defence; and it faces pressures from new development and the disposal of treated waste water.



Each of these activities has an effect, and it is the purpose of the Management Scheme to consider what that is, whether or not it affects the bird and marine life, and what to do about it. This scheme ensures that these activities can continue in a sustainable way without causing harm to the habitats and wildlife.



# How was the scheme developed?

## Stakeholder dialogue

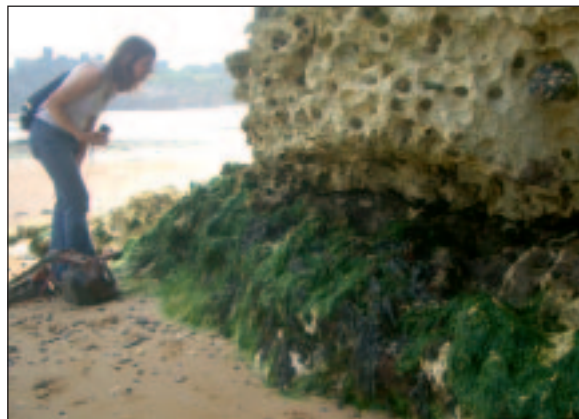
“**The foundation of the scheme** was laid at a series of workshops during the 1990s. These workshops were based on the belief that where people are affected by a set of decisions, they should be involved in making those decisions themselves. These people have a stake in the outcome and so are called stakeholders. Many stakeholders were invited to participate and over 90 people representing around 70 different organisations were involved. Authorities and other stakeholders sat down to explore the issues and agree the solutions together, before anything was written.

At the start of the workshops people thought that there might be a clash between human activities and the needs of the bird and marine life. But by the end of the workshops it became apparent that the coast is **An Asset for All – for wildlife and humans!**

The **scheme** (2001-07) was launched in 2001, and **reviewed** during 2006, using a similar stakeholder process, taking the opportunity to adopt a more

holistic approach. This involved using the **ecosystem approach principles** to go beyond the designated site features and include other wildlife and habitats, ecosystem functions and human interactions from the area.

The revised **scheme** and **action plan (2007-12)** was launched in April 2007.



### 2005

- Annual Coastal Warden training programme starts
- Review of Thanet Coastal Codes
- Development of Community coastal events and activities

### 2006

- Review of Management Scheme
- Research Conference on Marine and Coastal issues
- SeaART workshops start



# Why is this coast so special?

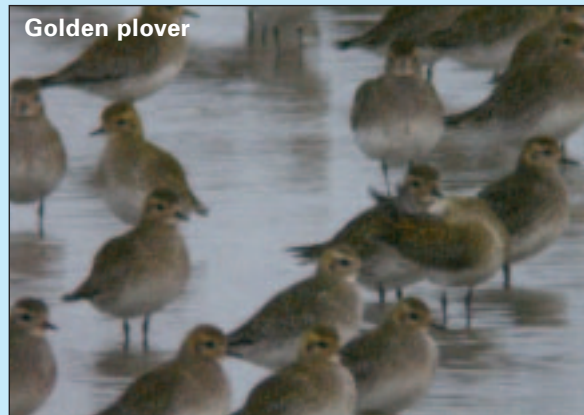
## Internationally important numbers of wintering birds

**This stretch of coast is an important feeding and resting ground** for many different birds that migrate to spend the winter here. Of all the wintering birds the turnstone and golden plover come in numbers that are of international importance.

**Turnstone** feed along the rocky shores, hunting for crabs, shrimps and shellfish by turning over loose stones and seaweed with their bills. They come from arctic Canada to spend the winter here, and the same birds return to the same bay year after year. At night and when the tide is in they rest in groups within the bay or on man-made structures.

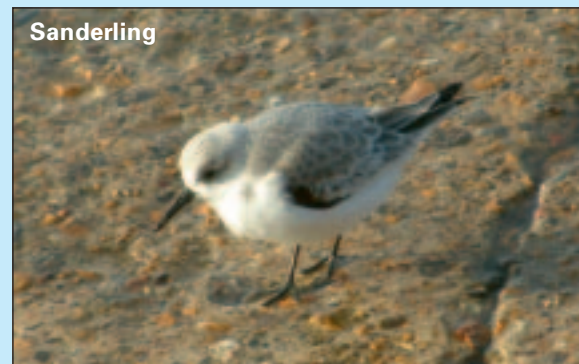
To survive cold weather and prepare for the migration back to Canada they have to build up their body weight. If they are disturbed from their feeding grounds they cannot do this and their chances of survival are affected.





Some of the **golden plover** migrating from Scandinavia come to spend the winter in this area, especially at Pegwell Bay and Swalecliffe. They use parts of the shore to roost on when they are not feeding in the nearby fields.

Other winter visitors found in nationally important numbers include sanderling, ringed plover and grey plover.



The Thanet coast is special because it is internationally important for its bird life and the marine life associated with the chalk reefs, caves and sandy bays.



# Why is this coast so special?

## Internationally important chalk reef and cave habitats

**The coastal chalk reef and cave habitats** around Thanet are very unusual. Whilst there is very little coastal chalk in Europe, the UK has most of it and 20% of this can be found at Thanet. These shores are the longest continuous stretch of coastal chalk in Britain. The chalk here is softer than other coastal chalk, and with other muddy sediments often makes the water very cloudy. Marine plants and animals are found in unexpected combinations with some rarities amongst them. Marine life such as piddocks can bore into the rocks, creating a honeycomb of tubes that other animals can then use to live in.

**Chalk sea caves** Thanet's many sea caves form the second most extensive chalk sea caves in Britain. They are a habitat for microscopic marine algal plants which form distinct velvety orange, brown or black bands around high water mark. Some of these are only found on the shaded damp walls and ceilings of the caves and so far have not been found anywhere else in the world.

**Sands and mud flats** The sand and muds around Sandwich Bay are a vital raw material for the development and growth of the internationally important sand dune habitats. During rough seas, mud and sand is thrown up onto the beach. Winds then blow the sand inland to form the next set of dunes behind the beach.



# Chalk reefs and caves



**Chalk reefs** The reefs of Thanet are the chalk rocks that extend out to sea and are encrusted with marine plants and animals. They extend to over 250 hectares. The soft chalk and cloudy water means that marine plants and animals are found in combinations that are not found elsewhere: kelp seaweeds with rock boring marine shellfish and worms, red seaweed turfs, and microscopic marine plants and lichens which form velvety bands on the chalk cliff.

Only 25% of the length of cliff around Thanet remains in a natural state. The rest is covered by man-made sea defences. The natural profiles are vitally important because it is only here that the full sequence of natural marine chalk habitats can be found: from the reef under the sea, up on the shore, to the splash zone on the natural chalk cliffs.



The Thanet coast is nationally important for many other species of birds, animals and plants, as well as for its unique coastal geology and fossils, including the Upper Chalk, Reculver Silts and Thanet Sands.



# Thanet Coast – Working with people for coas



2007

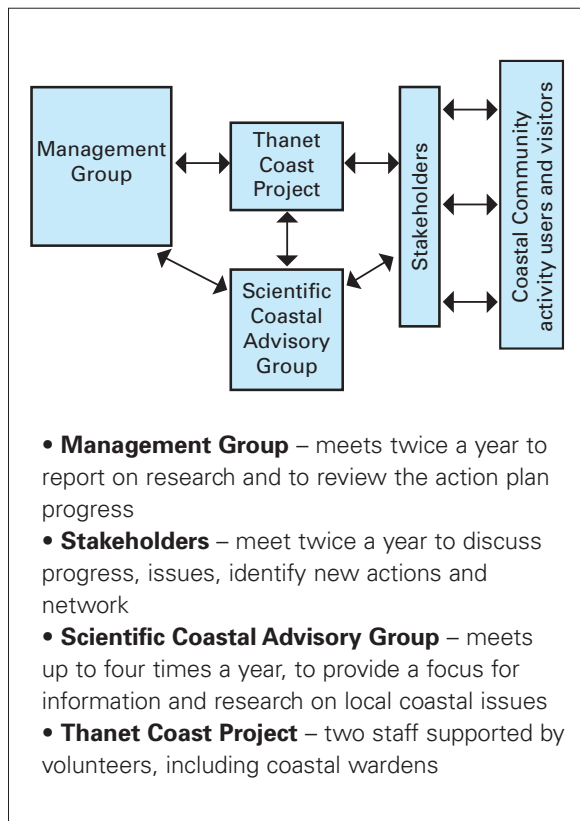
- Launch of NEKEMS Management Scheme and Action Plan
- Local Shoreline Management Plan (Isle of Grain to South Foreland) consultation completed
- Margate and Broadstairs' new £80M inland wastewater treatment operational
- First Kent Coastal Week
- Thanet Coast volunteers win Pride of Thanet Award
- Local bait-digging agreement (Pegwell Bay)

## Working together

The overall management system for the North East Kent European marine sites strives to include everyone, and involves a Management Group, the Thanet Coast Project, the North East Kent Scientific Coastal Advisory Group and local people – the stakeholders.

Ten relevant authorities – with legal responsibilities around the coast – form the Management Group (see page 3). They are committed to implementing the actions agreed in the Management Scheme. But they cannot do this alone, and so depend on the support of stakeholders and volunteers, along with the groups and interests that they represent.

Deciding together and pursuing voluntary measures wherever possible underpin the philosophy of the scheme, but it is working together to carry out the actions that makes the real difference for the wildlife around this coast.



## Thanet Coast Project

Local people identified the need for a project to take forward many of the wildlife related actions that had been agreed within the Management Scheme.

The **Thanet Coast Project** aims are to:

- **Raise awareness of the important marine and bird life** and how to avoid damaging them
- **Work with local people to safeguard coastal wildlife** and implement the Management Scheme action
- **Encourage and run wildlife related events** and make links with wildlife, green tourism, coastscape and the arts
- **Be a focal point for enquiries and gathering information** on coastal wildlife and environmental issues
- **Keep everyone informed of progress** through various means, including newsletters, articles and stakeholder workshops.

The project is supported by partnership funding, grants, business sponsorship and public donations.



Paul Keene, Avico Ltd

2008

- Ramsgate's Sea Garden launched (for drought tolerant plants)
- Thanet Coast Project's first Business Plan 2008-12
- New Bay Information Signs include Coastal Codes
- Start of 3 year Beach Play scheme for 5-18s
- Fourth Research Conference with Art and Fisheries Debate



# Protecting this special coast



2009

- Coastal Arts consultation
- Launch of Water Safety DVD for schools
- Development of a) Fossil and b) Marine Wildlife Watching policy and codes
- Launch of carrying capacity study for Sandwich and Pegwell NNR
- Broadstairs displays new daily predictions for bathing water quality
- New Turnstone awareness campaign

To protect this special coast, we need to avoid –

- **physical damage to chalk caves, cliffs or structure of the reef**
- **anything that prevents the natural movement of sands, muds and the build up of new dunes**
- **disturbing our bird or animal life – which prevents them from resting or feeding**
- **anything that affects the marine life or bird feeding grounds eg pollution and over-harvesting of shellfish**

and help –

- **promote the voluntary Thanet Coastal Codes**
- **follow local signs, and agreements, for activities to reduce wildlife disturbance**
- **get involved with practical tasks or volunteer opportunities to look after the coast**
- **promote better understanding of our coastal wildlife**



# Thanet Coastal Codes

## The Thanet Coastal Codes

**Stakeholders agreed that the best way forward** was for some recreation activities, and the harvesting of bait or shellfish, to have their own codes of conduct, so people could avoid unintentional harm to birds and marine life.

Representatives from the activities worked with the Thanet Coast Project to write the codes and produce a leaflet. It was agreed that the codes should be voluntary and self-regulated. Clubs can help to build support for these codes amongst their members, and surveys will check whether they are working. It is only if the codes fail and the bird or marine life is affected that other measures such as new nature conservation orders may have to be considered.

**Please support the codes – by working together, we can all help make the Thanet coast a better place to enjoy.**



## The Thanet Coastal Codes

- 1 Seashore code**
- 2 Horse riding**
- 3 Dog walking**
- 4 Power craft activities**
- 5 Wind-powered activities**
- 6 Shellfish harvesting and fixed netting**
- 7 Shore angling**
- 8 Bait digging and collecting**
- 9 Field trips**

In addition, there are codes or draft codes for **Research; Marine Wildlife Watching, and Fossils**

2010

- Review of Thanet Coastal Codes
- Development of Coastal Access Project





# Management Scheme progress

## Reviewing the scheme

The review took a more holistic view than the original scheme by taking into account how nature and habitats all link together. It incorporated a set of principles based on the Ecosystem Approach that aims to integrate the conservation and sustainable management of land, water and living resources in a more equal way.

The review involved three stakeholder workshops to help identify what had worked well, what needed to change, the activities and management issues, and to find solutions and actions. Information was gradually included within Subject Assessment Tables which formed the core of the revised scheme. These detailed tables helped identify the proposed items for the Action Plan 2007-12.

The Scheme, Action Plan, progress reports, supporting tables and documents, can be viewed at **[www.thanetcoast.org.uk](http://www.thanetcoast.org.uk)**

1990-2012

NEKEMS Management Group

Determining policy (1990s):  
Approach and principles of stakeholder  
dialogue and voluntary measures

NEKEMS Stakeholders workshops

- Identifying issues
  - Clarification of objectives
  - Identification solutions
- Agree action  
Management Scheme 2001-06

Implementation of Action Plan 2001-06  
Launch coast project and advisory group

Review of Management Scheme through  
stakeholder dialogue workshops (2006)  
using 'ecosystem approach' principles  
NEKEMS Management Scheme 2007-12

- Subject/activity tables
- Actions, research and monitoring
- Action Plan 2007-12

Implementation of actions  
TCP Business Plan 2008-12  
Monitoring and review

Towards NEKEMS aims and objectives  
Review of Scheme



2011-12

- Second review of  
Management  
Scheme





## Action Plan (2007-12) some key actions

Activity	Priority Action
Shoreline Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local implementation of the Shoreline Management Plan.</li> </ul>
Fishing and Harvesting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research into impacts of shell fish harvesting on reefs.</li> </ul>
Shore-based Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extension of Coastal Codes of Conduct</li> <li>Motorised vehicle management.</li> </ul>
Water-based Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing integrated recreational management for Sandwich and Bay area.</li> </ul>
Air-based Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management of kite propelled activities.</li> </ul>
Research and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research into possible impacts from increased visitors eg associated with rock-pooling.</li> </ul>
Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of the land-based Waste Water Treatment Works for Margate and Broadstairs.</li> </ul>
Species Management and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploring methods of control of non-native invasive species.</li> </ul>
Extraction of Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative management of fossil extraction.</li> </ul>
Issue	Priority Action
Climate Change and Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determining the predicted changes to the local shoreline.</li> </ul>
Level Rise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse possible effects to tourism and coastal uses.</li> </ul>
Fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find out more about the role of fishing within the natural system and the reef.</li> </ul>
Proposed Natural Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feasibility study into a possible Natural Zone.</li> </ul>
Proposed Arts Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore possibility of a public coastal art project that promotes wildlife.</li> </ul>

2013

• New Management Scheme 2013-18





# Managing the North East Kent Coast



## Thanet Coast Project

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01843 577672

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**www.thanetcoast.org.uk**



working with people  
for coastal wildlife

**The Thanet coast together with Pegwell Bay** is an internationally important asset for wintering birds, the marine life associated with the chalk cliffs, caves and reefs and sandy bays known as the North East Kent European Marine Sites.

## Keeping Informed

Further information about the North East Kent European marine sites and Thanet Coast Project, including coastal events and activities, can be found at [www.thanetcoast.org.uk](http://www.thanetcoast.org.uk) or within leaflets such as:

- **Thanet Coast newsletters**
- **Thanet Coastal Codes** and
- **Volunteering on the Thanet Coast**

All are available from visitor centres, libraries or from the project.

## Representing the coastal interests

Stakeholders groups involved in producing the Management Scheme are listed on the website. If you would like to represent coastal users and organisations, or get involved with volunteering on the North East Kent Coast, then please contact the Project.

