

ECC27

**INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE NOTE:
INTERIM APPROACH TO AVOID AND MITIGATE RECREATION
PRESSURE IN WIRRAL**

MAY 2022

VERSION 2

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Interim Approach to Avoid and Mitigate Recreation Pressure in Wirral
2022**

1. Background

- 1.1 The six local authorities¹ within the Liverpool City Region (LCR) along with West Lancashire Council are jointly preparing a Recreation Mitigation Strategy (LCR RMS) that will enable the local authorities to meet their legal duties to protect European wildlife sites from the impacts of recreation associated with housing development and tourism. The LCR RMS will take a wider strategic approach to visitor and recreation pressure management for the internationally important nature sites in the LCR and will govern how the local authorities plan to mitigate against harm from recreation pressure for the internationally important designated sites.
- 1.2 The LCR RMS will not be completed until June 2023 because new survey evidence needs to be gathered. The timetable has unavoidably been impacted by Covid-19 . However, the work to date on the emerging RMS demonstrates that:
- The issues relating to the in-combination effects of recreation are complex;
 - It is currently time consuming to undertake project-level HRA to meet the legislative requirements in the absence of a strategic approach and agreed assessment method;
 - Additional evidence gathering will need to be commissioned and this is set out within the LCR RMS Evidence Base Report²;
 - The effectiveness of project-level mitigation is challenging to evidence; therefore
 - Resolving these complex issues needs a strategic approach that will enable individual development proposals to come forward without undertaking a lengthy and onerous individual assessment of recreation pressure. It will also require co-ordinated activity across administrative boundaries in the LCR but that remains an objective for the future.
- 1.3 Given that both direct and indirect recreation impacts and European sites themselves cross administrative boundaries, the most effective way of dealing with this is to adopt a strategic approach across the LCR through an integrated package of avoidance and mitigation measures. That is what the emerging RMS is seeking to achieve to comply with the Habitats Regulations and support implementation of the Local Plans. An LCR-wide RMS, based on all the relevant evidence and which includes strategic mitigation measures, once completed and implemented, would therefore have the following benefits:
- Provide developers, planners and other stakeholders with a robust opt-in mitigation tariff. The opt-in approach will provide significant risk management, time and cost savings compared to developers commissioning consultants to undertake their own project-level assessments, Local Planning Authorities assessing these assessments and crucially for developers who would otherwise have to implement any identified mitigation measures;
 - Identify clear project-level avoidance and mitigation requirements and reduce delays in the planning process;
 - Support implementation, monitoring and review of Local Plans.

¹ The Liverpool Combined Authority brings together the six local authorities of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

² [Towards a Liverpool City Region European Sites Recreation Mitigation & Avoidance Strategy - Evidence Report \(Version 24\) July 2021](#)

- Improve the overall quality of place for each of the Local Authorities as it may improve land and site management and quality of green, blue and open spaces through integration with other Local Authority plans and strategies such as Green and Blue Infrastructure plans (e.g. emerging Wirral Green and Blue Infrastructure evidence base), Access Plans and Coastal Plans including implementation arrangements (e.g. Sefton Coast Plan).

2. The need for mitigation

- 2.1. The majority of the Wirral coastline is designated in recognition of its international importance for wildlife, in particular for wintering birds; and its notable habitat. These designations establish legal requirements for the protection of these special environments, and specific duties on local authorities, particularly with regards to planning.
- 2.2. The European designated sites within Wirral are: Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar; Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar; and Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar; Liverpool Bay SPA; and the Dee Estuary SAC. Sefton Coast SAC and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar do not lie within Wirral's administrative boundary but are of direct relevance to the Borough. All the European designated sites provide essential winter feeding and roosting grounds for birds that spend the winter here. Appendix 1 lists the European designated sites and Appendix 2 lists the interest features of these European designated sites.
- 2.3. The wide range of recreational activities that take place within these European designated sites can result in disturbance to the birds, albeit often unintentional. Human disturbance of the birds can have several impacts. Birds may be more alert, resulting in a reduction in the amount of food eaten, or they may move away from the disturbance. A bird which moves away forgoes valuable feeding time whilst in the air and also uses energy in flying – a double impact on the bird's energy reserves. If the disturbance is substantial, then food-rich areas may be little used by the birds or avoided altogether, leading to other areas hosting a higher density of birds and intensifying the competition for the available food. Ultimately, the consequence of human disturbance can be increased bird mortality or a reduction in the amount of energy which the individual bird has available at the end of the winter period to fly back to its breeding grounds. If as a consequence the birds are unable to complete their migratory journey or are not in sufficiently good condition to breed when they arrive, then this would lead to a reduction in the bird population.
- 2.4. The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) ensures the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species as well as rare and characteristic habitat types in a European context. The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) which originally came into force in 1979 protects rare and vulnerable birds, their eggs, nests and habitat. These pieces of legislation form the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. On a national level, the designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites is governed under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitats Regulations).
- 2.5. European sites have the benefit of the highest level of legislative protection for biodiversity. Public bodies, including Wirral Council as a local planning authority and Competent Authority, have specific duties in terms of avoiding deterioration of habitats and species for which sites are designated or classified. It is obligatory to assess the impacts of a proposed plan alone and also to investigate whether there might be 'in-combination' effects with other plans or projects proposing development in other

authorities surrounding a European protected site. For the purposes of assessment, direct and indirect effects would need to be determined including within the site boundaries and on functionally linked habitat to those European sites.

- 2.6. In 1976, the UK ratified the Ramsar Convention, which is a global convention to protect wetlands of international importance, especially those wetlands utilised as waterfowl habitat. In order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the convention, the UK Government expects all competent authorities to treat listed Ramsar sites as if they are part of the suite of designated European sites, as a matter of government policy, as set out in Paragraph 181 of the NPPF (July 2021). Most Ramsar sites are also SPA or SAC but the Ramsar features and boundary lines may vary from those for which the site is designated as SPA or SAC.
- 2.7. The overarching objective of the Habitats Regulations is to maintain sites and their interest features in an ecologically robust and viable state, able to sustain and thrive in the long term, with adequate resilience against natural influences. This requires the Council to adopt a proactive rather than reactive approach in order to comply with the Habitats Regulations and to put measures in place to prevent deterioration of European sites and not to wait until there is harm occurring to take restorative action.
- 2.8. Where Wirral Council as competent authority is undertaking or implementing a plan or project of its own, such as the Wirral Local Plan, or authorising others to do so, such as granting planning permission, the duties set out within the Habitats Regulations in relation to consideration of plans and projects are applicable. Wirral Council will therefore need to adhere to the requirements of the legislation and policy whilst planning for growth across the Borough.
- 2.9. The Habitats Regulations set out how Local Planning Authorities must deal with planning applications that have the potential to impact on SPAs and other European protected sites. As a matter of national policy, the Habitats Regulations also apply to Ramsar Sites. The legislation states that local planning authorities must not grant permission for a development that would, either alone or in-combination with other developments, have a likely significant effect on a European protected site.
- 2.10. The process for assessment of plans or projects is a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The Wirral Local Plan Regulation 19 HRA has identified Likely Significant Effects of the Local Plan's housing allocations on internationally important wildlife sites. A full Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken which concluded that subject to the provision of an Interim Approach for Wirral and the production and adoption of the Liverpool RMS (accepted by Natural England), the Wirral Local Plan will not lead to adverse effects on the Borough's European sites regarding recreational pressure.
- 2.11. The emerging Wirral Local Plan provides a potential supply of 17,750 new dwellings across the plan period 2021-2037 to meet a housing requirement of 13,360 dwellings. Cumulatively these new dwellings could have a considerable impact on SPAs, and Ramsar sites and the SAC, with each new home potentially contributing to that cumulative impact. Tourism growth is also a key consideration in relation to impact upon designated sites in Wirral. Research carried out as part of the LCR Evidence Report³ revealed that a range of activities were found to create disturbance, with dog walking the most common activity for local residents who account for the majority of recreational use around the coast. Research also identified a decline in the number of bird species across the 11 designated sites within the LCR due to disturbance.

³ [Towards a Liverpool City Region European Sites Mitigation & Avoidance Strategy - Evidence Report \(Version 24\) July 2021](#)

3. The aim of Wirral's Interim Approach

- 3.1 This Interim Approach (IA) sets out Wirral Council's approach to managing and mitigating the potential impact to the protected habitats and species within Wirral as a result of recreational disturbance associated with the housing growth proposed in the emerging Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037.
- 3.2 The following internationally designated sites are wholly or partly within Wirral Council's administrative boundary and therefore fall within the scope of this IA:
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
 - Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA
 - Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar
 - Liverpool Bay SPA
 - Dee Estuary SAC
- 3.3 The aim of this document is to enable Wirral Council to adequately protect European sites and to be compliant with its duties as a Competent Authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the requirements of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a result of the Local Plan's housing policies and site allocations. It is also to be used as guidance for developers and planning colleagues in assessing development proposals through the planning application process in Wirral.
- 3.4 This IA will be in place until the expected completion and approval for implementation in June 2023 of the LCR RMS.
- 3.5 It should be noted that this interim approach does not deal with any other impacts on the European sites such as loss of habitat, visual disturbance, increased noise (including from construction), effect on water quality, etc – which may arise from new housing, or the potential impact of other types of development such as new employment sites. In order to protect waders and waterfowl from disturbance and potential displacement from preferred foraging and roosting sites Policy WD3 of the Wirral Local Plan includes requirements in respect of construction practices and impact assessments.

4. Interim Approach – Wirral Local Plan Policy

- 4.1 The emerging Wirral Local Plan includes strategic Policy WS5.5 'Mitigating Recreational Disturbance on International Sites for Nature Conservation' which states:

'N. Following screening, developments that are deemed likely to have a significant adverse effect (either individually or in combination with other developments) on European Designated Sites for Nature Conservation must satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, determining site specific impacts and avoiding or mitigating significant adverse impacts where identified. A precautionary approach to each stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process must be taken.

'O. Where appropriate, contributions from developments will be secured towards mitigation measures identified in the LCR Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RMS) which will be completed during the early part of the plan period. It is intended that the RMS will be implemented via a Supplementary Planning Document in cooperation with all LCR authorities and Natural England and it will be

funded by developer contributions in respect of residential and tourism accommodation developments.'

4.2 Policy WS5.5 also states:

'P. Prior to the completion of the RMS, the Council will seek contributions as set out in the Wirral Recreational Management Interim Approach document, where appropriate, from residential proposals of 10 or more dwellings to deliver all measures identified (including strategic measures) through project level HRAs, or otherwise, to mitigate any recreational disturbance impacts in compliance with the Habitats Regulations and Habitats Directive.'

4.3 In addition to the requirements set out in Policy WS5.5, Policy WD3 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' supports the protection and enhancement of biodiverse and geodiverse assets, and ecological networks, and the provision of biodiversity net gain.

4.4 Policy WD3 states:

'A. Development which may result in a likely significant effect on an internationally important site must be accompanied by sufficient evidence to enable the Council to make a Habitats Regulations Assessment. Adverse effects should be avoided and/or mitigated to ensure that the integrity of internationally important sites is protected. Development which may adversely affect the integrity of internationally important sites will only be permitted where there are no alternative solutions, there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, suitable mitigation is in place and compensatory provision is secured. Such mitigation includes managing the impacts of construction. This also applies to functionally linked land, i.e. sites and habitats outside the designated boundaries that support species listed as being important in the designations of the internationally important sites.'

4.5 Policies WS5.5 and WD3 provide the necessary planning policy basis to protect the European designated sites from the quantum (in combination and alone) of housing development in the plan period to comply with the Habitats Regulations.

5. Core and Outer Zones

5.1 A spatial approach to recreation pressure avoidance and mitigation is a well-established approach. Two zones are commonly identified and justified by the evidence of frequency of coastal visits in other RMSs. For the emerging LCR RMS, two zones have also been identified:

- An inner **core zone** of up to 5km to the European site boundaries. Analysis of the evidence of frequency of coastal visits in the LCR is presented in the draft Evidence Report v.24⁴. This is generally 5km from European sites but then adjusted for local accessibility factors and is based on the best available visitor postcode data. These data indicate that 75% of LCR coastal visitors originate from the zone <5km from the accessible European site boundaries with visitors originating >5km from the coast equating to 25% of coastal visitors. The 5km has been adjusted according to local factors such as accessibility of the European site coast, e.g. in Halton the south bank of the Mersey Estuary is excluded because there is no public access to the designated sites;

⁴ MEAS (2021) Towards a Liverpool City Region European Sites Recreation Mitigation & Avoidance Strategy - Evidence Report (Version 24)

- An **outer zone** >5km from the European site boundaries where the frequency of coastal visit is less (e.g. recreation pressure from 1 dwelling at 2.5km of European coast is the equivalent to 9 dwellings at 7.5km⁵) and the impact of recreation pressure is one quarter of that within 5km.

5.2 Only a small parcel of land in mid Wirral is >5km from the coast and as this does not coincide with any proposed allocations in the emerging Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037 and is rural, it has been concluded that for the purposes of this IA 100% of the administrative area of Wirral is within the Core Zone.

6. Housing Provision in the Wirral Local Plan

6.1 The annual housing need for the Borough for the period 2021-2037 is 835 dwellings each year to ensure the Plan has a life of at least 15 years from adoption. This figure is based on 779 dwellings per annum arising from the Government's standard methodology for calculating housing need, plus an uplift of 6 dwellings per annum to support economic growth and an allowance of 50 dwellings per annum to account for anticipated demolitions.

6.2 Based on this annual delivery rate, the plan therefore must allocate at least 13,360 dwellings. However, the plan identifies a larger supply of over 17,700 dwellings to make allowances for sites not coming forward at the pace expected. The housing provision within each Regeneration Area will be achieved through a mix of specific site allocations on which delivery is expected to begin during the early years of the Plan period and an allowance for the housing provision which is developable in the later years of the plan period. The allowances for developable sites within the broad locations comprise brownfield sites on which there is a reasonable prospect of delivery from year 6 onwards of the Local Plan period. An adjustment of 10% has been applied to supply figures for Regeneration Areas and site allocations to account for potential delay or failure to deliver as anticipated. Of this supply figure, the new dwellings will be distributed on specific housing allocation sites, as well as within broad locations in the borough.

7. Qualifying Housing Development

7.1 This section sets out which sites fall within the scope of the IA and identifies which residential development qualifies for the assessment method. Residential care homes and nursing care home accommodation is excluded from the Wirral IA as it is considered that the residents' access to the European sites would be limited and unlikely to contribute to recreational disturbance.

7.2 The LCR local authorities have identified that it is overly onerous to use planning obligations for developments of less than 10 net additional units due to practical considerations including administrative and legal issues. 25% of the housing supply identified in the emerging Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037 is on small sites of less than 10 net additional units⁶. The mitigation tariff is weighted to cover the impact of development of less than 10 units by those of 10 or more units. Therefore, in Wirral

⁵ Liley, D., Panter, C., Marsh, P. & Roberts, J. (2017) Recreational Activity and Interactions with Birds within the SSSIs on the North-West Coast of England. Footprint Ecology/ Natural England.

⁶ Proportion of units on small sites as a % of all units. Small sites are defined as a combination of windfall sites which are not allocated and of sites of less than 10 net additional units which are also not allocated. .

only developments of 10 or more net additional units will qualify. This includes all houses, flats, houses in multiple occupation and supported living accommodation which come forward for planning consent irrespective of floor area, occupancy, number of bedrooms or tenure. Table 1 below shows the number of qualifying housing units within and outside the Core Zone in Wirral's administrative area.

Table 1 Qualifying Housing Units in Wirral

	Plan Period	Within Core Zone	Outside Core Zone	Total
Wirral	2021-2037	9,298 ⁷	0	9,298

7.3 The following table illustrates the mitigation charging schedule for each of the Zones as evidenced by the emerging LCR Recreational Mitigation Strategy and evidence, based on an April 2019 snapshot of anticipated qualifying dwelling units across the whole Liverpool City Region. The Mitigation (£s)/ Unit charges in the schedule will be adjusted each year in line with the Retail Price Index. As the sums relate to legal requirements under the Habitats Regulations they are not subject to viability considerations.

Table 2 LCR-Wide Mitigation Package RMS – 01/04/19 baseline

	LCR IA Update	
	(2019 base)	Mitigation (£s)/ Unit
SANG (£s)	£1,823,596	
SAMM (£s)	£1,913,281	
Mitigation Total (£s)	** £3,736,877	
* Qualifying Units (Core Zone)	10,346	£280.26
* Qualifying Units (Outer Zone)	12,200	£68.63
* Qualifying Units (Total)	22,445	

* Qualifying housing excludes completions/ committed housing supply/ care homes.

** Adjusted for Inflation 2% and Monitoring and Reporting embedded within Mitigation package contribution.

⁷ Wirral Local Plan Regeneration Areas and Settlement Areas (residual) allocations of 10 or more dwellings. Excludes 2,964 dwellings at Wirral Waters which form part of the East Float outline planning permission which has its own RMS through the S106 agreement (WLP allocations RES-RA6.2, 6.4, 6.6) and Northbank East 2 (WLP allocation RES-RA6.7) which has planning permission.

Table 3 Potential housing delivery between 2022/23 - 2023/24 from qualifying housing sites within the Core Zone in Wirral (10 or more net dwellings capacity) *

Ref	Site	Greenfield/ Previously Developed	Site Size (ha)	Total Site Capacity	Dwellings 2022/23 – 2023/24
RES-RA4.3	WGC Town Centre Plots I and J, North of Conway Park Station, Birkenhead	PDL	1.43	185	50
RES-RA6.3	Wirral Waters – Northbank East 1 (Peel/Urban Splash)	PDL	0.80	120	60
RES-RA10.2	Egerton Street Playground, New Brighton	PDL	0.13	13	13
RES-SA1.2	Gibson House, Seabank Road, Egremont	PDL	0.74	15	15
RES-SA1.5	Old Manor Club, Withens Lane, Liscard	PDL	0.18	10	10
RES-SA3.1	Former Gladstone Liberals, Dial Road, Tranmere	PDL	0.29	31	31
RES-SA3.2	Redcourt School, 7 Devonshire Place, Oxton	PDL	0.50	30	30
RES-SA3.3	Sevenoaks, Phase 2b, Chatham Road, Rock Ferry	PDL	0.76	43	43
RES-SA3.4	Atherton Hall, Westbourne Road, Birkenhead	PDL	0.09	15	15
RES-SA4.11	Unilever Research, Quarry Road East, Bebington	PDL	3.39	120	25
RES-SA5.1	Moreton Family Centre, Pasture Road	PDL	0.46	75	75
RES-SA5.8	Former Dodd's Builders Merchants, Bermuda Road, Moreton	PDL	0.09	14	14
RES-SA7.2	Former Heswall Gospel Hall, Pensby Road, Heswall	PDL	0.20	23	23
				694	404

*Table 3 excludes WLP allocation RES-RA6.4 at Wirral Waters that is projected to deliver dwellings between 2022-2024 because it forms part of the East Float outline planning permission which has its own RMS through the S106 agreement, and Northbank East 2 (WLP allocation RES-RA6.7) which has planning permission.

- 7.4 Based upon the potential housing delivery between 2022-2024 from the sites allocated in the emerging Wirral Local Plan for 10 or more dwellings shown in Table 3 above, Table 4 below shows the estimated potential funding for mitigation from the IA in 2022-2024 (following which it is anticipated the LCR RMS will be adopted). All the figures are at 2019 prices.

Table 4 Estimated Potential Fund Value from the Interim Approach in Wirral

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Fund value at start	0		
Estimated Money transferred in potential funding for estimated housing delivery			£113,225.04*

*Subject to rates of delivery, site capacity, site allocations within the Core Zone in Wirral.

- 7.5 Based on well-established practice elsewhere in the UK and the emerging LCR RMS, key components of any strategic approach comprise two elements to provide for mitigation:
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) – SANGs must be appropriately located, of sufficient scale and accessible to residents of existing and new development for them to be effective alternatives to visiting the coast.
 - On-European Site Access Management and Monitoring Measures (SAMMs). SAMM measures which are appropriate for Wirral and which can be targeted locally.
- 7.6 Across the LCR and in the short to medium terms (approximately 5 years) there is no reasonable likelihood that the provision of significant additional new greenspaces can be provided as SANG measures through the creation of entirely new parks, greenspaces or open spaces. In Wirral there is no space readily available or substantial funding in the short to medium term to enable it to provide SANGs in the way that this has been done in other parts of the country where extensive rural areas enable additional sites to be created for recreational activity away from protected sites. Accordingly, the Borough will use the potential of its existing green infrastructure and especially its most significant parks to provide additional recreation opportunity for residents.
- 7.7 Therefore, the SANG mitigation options in this IA focus on three aspects:
- Increasing the capacity and functionality of Wirral's existing green and open spaces for the purpose of delivering additional recreational capacity;
 - Creating an integrated network of SANGs through better linkage of smaller green and open spaces; and
 - Enhanced accessibility, awareness and promotion of SANG provision with residents as alternatives to recreation visits to European sites.
- 7.8 The On-European Site Access management and Monitoring Measures (SAMMs) will focus on :
- Raising awareness and encouraging behavioural change of visitors to the coast;
 - Implementing projects to better manage visitors and provide secure habitats for the birds; and
 - Providing and promoting new/ enhanced greenspaces in less sensitive areas as an alternative to visiting the coast.
- 7.9 Public access to the coast provides benefits including education, inspiration, and mental and physical well-being. Visitor access is also important in the management of the sites for nature conservation because people are more likely to want to be involved with and protect local sites if they have close links with them. So, by maintaining public access but with measures to ensure that recreational activity and nature conservation interests are not in conflict, the coast can be managed for the benefit of both wildlife and the public. Appendix 3 sets out a map of the beaches on the Wirral peninsula and details of the existing recreational uses at each of the beaches.

8. Package of mitigation measures in Wirral

8.1 Following on from the Wirral Local Plan HRA establishing the mitigation need, the following package relates to the mitigation necessary for the remaining residential development allocated in the emerging Local Plan over the 16 year plan period. These developments will come forward over time and therefore the mitigation measures also need to be phased over time. Measures are categorised into three phases:

- Short-term/ initial priority
- Mid-term, once initial priority measures in place
- Longer term/ more aspirational/ opportunistic

8.2 As an interim approach for each measure, costs are split between capital or one-off costs and annual costs. In order to work out the total cost of each measure, we have added the capital cost and the annual cost, multiplied by the number of years the measure applies to. It is important to note that not all measures will start immediately. There will be a rolling programme of implementation due to the availability of funds and furthermore some measures will take time to establish and get up and running.

8.3 Costs for many measures are estimates ensuring sufficient budget for delivery. A site schedule for the SANG site and proposed SAMM interventions can be found in Appendix 4 and 5 respectively.⁸

8.4 Costs for SANGs have been calculated based on delivery in-perpetuity. For this we have used 80 years, the minimum recommended by Natural England. SANGs costs are complex, as there are initial establishment costs, annual maintenance costs and cyclical replacement costs, plus staff costs. The costs used in the emerging LCR RMS have been based on two 80 ha SANGs the Land Trust is managing in southern England. These are sites that have had their budgets approved and both are to act as destinations.

8.5 Mitigation measures will comprise:

1. Communications, marketing and education initiatives

A. Targeted awareness raising at specific activities or user groups, e.g. dog walkers, drone pilots. This measure is most effective when supported by trained volunteers who often form part of a voluntary organisation. For example, Wirral Wildlife Group volunteers, Wirral RSPB Local Group, etc.

B. Increased Wirral Council Ranger staffing hours targeted on raising awareness and damage/ disturbance avoidance throughout the year including engaging with visitors to the coast, explaining the vulnerability of the birds and advising people how they can avoid bird disturbance. This will also include meeting with landowners and local stakeholders, hosting school visits, installing and maintaining signs and interpretation panels. Responsible Coastal User signage will be installed at main access gateways where they do not currently exist. The key coastal locations are:

⁸ An implementation plan for the SANG at Arrowe Park with specific costed measures is included in Appendix 4. Further details of the location of the specific SAMM measures included in Appendix 5 will be developed by the Council in consultation with Natural England and included in Appendix 5 when finalised by the Council.

- Parts of North Wirral Coastal Park - Leasowe Lighthouse and Bay;
- Rock Ferry shoreline;
- New Brighton Mersey shoreline;
- Derby Pool;
- Hoylake to Red Rocks;
- Red Rocks to West Kirby Marine Lake; and
- Thurstaston shore.

C. Installation of signage to SANGs including highway signage and targeted signage and waymarking from new housing developments, where appropriate, to the nearest SANGs with an emphasis on dog walking routes and new or enhanced cycling and walking links.

D. Provision of householder information packs for new housing developments, informing residents of the presence and importance of European protected sites and explaining how residents can avoid damage and disturbance to those sites, including the Responsible Coast User Code.

2. Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects

A. Signage and Interpretation that promotes general good behaviour and increases knowledge of coastal European Sites and issues associated with recreation.

B. Travel-related measures including those which manage capacity issues at key destinations such as car park capacity and promotion of less sensitive locations at the SANGs which will be communicated on the Council website and through social media.

C. Footfall counters to record visitor numbers at key sensitive coastal locations.

D. Infrastructure deployment and maintenance on or near the key coastal locations, e.g. path management and fencing to disperse visitor pressure and/or manage access desire routes.

E. Provision of bird refuge stations in partnership with appropriate voluntary organisations.

F. Creation of dog walking locations and routes.

G. Creation of circular trails within and between existing parks.

3. New/ enhanced strategic alternative greenspace – SANG

A. Arrowe Park will be the focus of enhancements in the short to medium term

B. Further consideration will be given to the potential for enhancements at the following locations:

- Ashton Park
- Birkenhead Park
- Central Park
- Mayer Park
- Royden Country Park
- Torr Park
- Vale Park, Wallasey
- Wirral Way targeted at coastal access locations

4. Monitoring to help adjust the mitigation measures as necessary

A. Monitoring data on recreation use and effectiveness of interventions.

- 8.6. The prioritisation of these mitigation measures will be agreed in consultation with Natural England and the other local authorities in the Liverpool City Region and West Lancashire Council to ensure the measures align with the emerging LCR RMS mitigation measures. For example, this will include a consistent approach to the production of signage to ensure consistent design and effective messaging. Similarly, a consistent approach will be applied for the use of footfall counters.

9. Interim Approach – Developer Applicant Opting Out

- 9.1 The Wirral IA encourages applicants and developers to 'opt in' to the interim approach and make a direct mitigation payment through legally binding planning obligations where on-development site mitigation is not possible. There are many efficiency, risk management, cost and certainty in delivery benefits for a developer to opt in. However, Wirral Council cannot compel applicants/ developers to adopt this approach.
- 9.2 Applicants/ developers who chose not to opt into the IA will nonetheless be required to use a method which uses the same principles as set out in the emerging LCR RMS. In all likelihood this will be less efficient, more costly and onerous for applicants. It also carries a probability that a mitigation payment will nonetheless still be required when the Council verifies the assessment as part of a project-level HRA prior to it being accepted.
- 9.3 It is also important to remember that any development can in principle choose to provide its own avoidance and mitigation measures. This is likely to be exceptional, as it will be very difficult for a project-level HRA to demonstrate that it can deliver a package of measures, and long-term monitoring and adaption of those measures over time, with the same level of certainty in effectiveness as this strategic approach, where measures are large scale and working together in an integrated way. It is anticipated that developers will recognise the cost efficiencies of the tariff in comparison to the cost of establishing and justifying a bespoke approach. As part of the audit trail, it would be necessary to keep an account of any development projects that successfully demonstrate no adverse effects on site integrity, and the subsequent monitoring and any adaptations put in place.

10. Reporting Implementation and Monitoring Framework

- 10.1 The Wirral IA monitoring framework in Table 4 below will be used to monitor the implementation of the mitigation measures. The framework will record the mitigation applied, how it relates to development pressure and whether it is effective. Where it is demonstrated that any of the measures implemented are not providing the mitigation solution required, then adjustments to the applicable measures will be made in consultation with Natural England to improve effectiveness. Monitoring of the implementation of mitigation measures in Wirral will be reported annually as an integral element of the annual monitoring of the Wirral Local Plan.

Table 5 Wirral IA Monitoring Framework

Indicator	Target	Reporting Period for Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report
Amount of qualifying new residential development (number of dwellings permitted and number of dwellings completed, by site/ location)	Amount of qualifying new residential development matches that expected in the planned annual housing delivery/ Local Plan housing trajectory	Annual
Amount of developer contributions sought for Recreational Management mitigation from qualifying developments (amount per development/ site)	Amount of contributions secured and received matches the amount required in accordance with the Charging Schedule	Annual
Changes in numbers of birds for different sections of the internationally designated sites of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar • Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA • Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar • Liverpool Bay SPA • Dee Estuary SAC 	No change in area of the internationally designated sites of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar • Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA • Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar • Liverpool Bay SPA • Dee Estuary SAC 	Every two years
Increased visitor numbers at each of the Strategic Alternative Natural Greenspace sites	Annual increase	Annual
Changes in visitor behaviour and awareness of recreational impacts	Visitor understanding and actions align with the objectives of the mitigation measures	Annual

Appendix 1 – European Designated Sites – Wirral

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar Site

The Mersey Estuary is a large sheltered and curved estuary with a narrow entrance and a narrow gap to landward where the river cuts through the sandstone ridges of the Runcorn Gap. To the south it is bounded for about half its length by the Manchester Ship Canal to landward and residential, industrial and commercial uses on the seaward end. To the north, the Liverpool Docks give way to residential, commercial and industrial use with agricultural fields and areas of scrub south of Liverpool airport and the settlements of Hale and Hale Bank. Parts of the northern bank in the middle and far inner estuary include the route of the Mersey Way footpath. Adjoining the south bank in the middle estuary there are extensive saltmarshes, parts of which are included within an RSPB reserve, but with extremely limited access. To the north, there are a number of protected areas and reserves and more fragmented saltmarsh with inter-tidal mud where the river flows closer to the northern shoreline.

The Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar extends along the south-eastern side of the Wirral peninsula. The Mersey Estuary was originally classified as an SPA in December 1995 for populations of five species of wintering wildfowl and seven species of wintering waders together with populations of two species of passage waders and for its wintering assemblage of 104,599 waterfowl (5-yr mean peak 1994/94-1997/98). The SPA was extended to include the New Ferry Foreshore in 2004. The site was also listed as a Ramsar site in December 1995 for two species of wintering wildfowl and one species of wintering wader, together with two species of passage wader and its wintering assemblage of 89,576 individual waterfowl (5-yr mean peak 1998/90 – 20002/03). The Estuary is also notified as a SSSI.

The latest available figures for the wintering assemblage of waterfowl (5-yr mean 2011/12 – 2015/16 for the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site is 87,954 which makes this the eleventh most important site in the UK for its wintering waterfowl.

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar Site

On the Wirral (to the south), the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral foreshore extends from the Seacombe Ferry Terminal on the southern bank of the entrance to the Mersey Estuary, bordering the Wirral Peninsula to the north around the Wirral foreshore to Hilbre Point at the mouth of the Dee Estuary where it meets the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The site contains extensive inter-tidal sand and mudflats, with embryonic saltmarsh. In Sefton, (to the North of the Mersey Mouth) a small area of the SPA contains man-made saline and freshwater lagoons at Seaforth Nature Reserve. This is managed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust however is within the operational area of the Port of Liverpool and currently has no public access.

The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral foreshore was originally classified as an SPA in July 2013 (updated December 2015) and as a Ramsar site in July 2013. Both classifications were for seven species of wintering wader, passage Little Gull and breeding and passage Common Tern. The breeding terns and foraging and roosting terns and gulls occur at Seaforth lagoons. The site was also classified for its wintering assemblage of 32,366 individual waterfowl (5-yr mean peak 2004/05 – 2008/09). The site includes the North Wirral Foreshore and Mersey Narrows SSSIs.

Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar Site, and Dee Estuary SAC

The Dee Estuary is a large funnel-shaped estuary important for wintering waterfowl and (on the Welsh side only) for breeding terns. The saltmarsh is expanding and changing in accordance with movements of the river channel, and there are substantial areas of intertidal sand and mudflats. The three sandstone islands of Hilbre are an important high tide roost, and the freshwater lagoons of the RSPB reserve at the Burton Mere Wetlands reserve (outside the Liverpool City Region) provide additional roosting and foraging areas for estuary birds. The north-eastern shoreline consists mainly of residential, recreational and agricultural land.

The Dee Estuary SPS and Ramsar borders the Wirral peninsula on its western side, extending on a north-south axis towards the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. The Dee Estuary was originally classified as an SPA in July 1995 and listed as a Ramsar site in July 1985 (updates in 2009 and 2017). Both designations include populations of three species of wintering wildfowl and eight species of wintering waders, and wintering Wigeon, Sanderling, Cormorant and Great Crested Grebe (Ramsar only), together with populations of passage Redshank, Sandwich Terns, (SPA & Ramsar) and Ringed Plover (Ramsar only). Two breeding species of tern (SPA and Ramsar) and breeding Redshank (Ramsar only) were also listed. The estuary was classified for its wintering assemblage of 120,726 individual waterfowl (5-yr mean peak 1991/92 – 1995/96). The Ramsar site was also listed for breeding Natterjack Toad in Red Rocks SSSI (and also Gronant Dunes and Talacre Warren SSSI in Wales where it was reintroduced).

The latest available figures for the wintering assemblage of waterfowl (5-yr mean 2011/12 – 2015/16) is 135,888 which makes the Dee Estuary the fifth most important site in the UK for its wintering waterfowl.

The Dee Estuary SAC partly overlaps with the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar but extends to the northern side of Wirral into the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. The Dee Estuary SAC is designated because of its size and biological interest. Features include extensive saltmarshes, intertidal mudflats and sandflats, also a small stretch of sea cliffs and sand dunes (drift line vegetation and Petalwort are features of the site in Wales). The site is also designated for Sea Lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* and River Lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, which migrate through the area.

The saltmarsh shows a range of stages of development from accreting mud and sand with *Salicornia* to old, well established communities. It is unusual in the north-west in that it is ungrazed and so supports species susceptible to grazing such as Sea Purslane *Atriplex portulacoides*. The sandstone cliffs of Hilbre Island, Little (Middle) Island and Little Eye are the only examples of vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts along the Wirral coast.

Liverpool Bay SPA

The Liverpool Bay SPA was classified in August 2010 and extended in November 2017. It now extends to some 252,757ha, stretching from just south of Fleetwood on the Lancashire coast to Anglesey in Wales. The SPA stretches along the northern coastline of Wirral and up the River Mersey towards Bebington. The site abuts the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and the Dee Estuary SPA on the landward side and also extends into the narrow neck of the Mersey Estuary where it abuts the Mersey Estuary SPA. Some 96% of the SPA is open sea, with some sand flats exposed at low tide.

The Liverpool Bay SPA has been classified for its wintering populations of Red-throated Diver, Common Scoter and passage Little Gull together with foraging Little Tern from the colony at Gronant in North Wales and foraging Common Tern from the colony at Seaforth. It has also been classified for a wintering assemblage of 69,687 waterfowl (5-yr mean peak 2004.05-2010/11) consisting largely (>80%) of Common Scoter.

Sefton Coast SAC

The Sefton Coast SAC stretches from the pier at Southport in the north to the boundary with the Port at Crosby in the south. Formby Channel forms an inlet and the River Alt flows through the site. It incorporates the Sefton Coast SSSI and includes the Birkdale Hills LNR, Ainsdale Sands and Hills LNR, Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR, Ravenmeols LNR, Cabin Hill NNR and Freshfield Dune Heath Lancashire Wildlife Trust reserve. The landward parts of Crosby Coastal Park are outside the SAC.

The SAC includes complete successions from fore dunes to fixed dune grassland and dune slacks and is designated for its dune and dune slack vegetation. The dunes at Formby Point have been eroding for over 100 years and are steep fronted. To the north and south, the dunes are accreting, and substantial areas are fronted by active shifting sands. There are extensive areas of open dune vegetation and also dune slacks dominated by Creeping Willow *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea*.

The site also supports substantial areas of intertidal mud and sandflats, which are integral to the geomorphological functioning of the site, some dune heath and a small amount of salt marsh. There is also an area of shingle flora on the exposed rubble of sea-defences. Part of the site supports a pine plantation and there are extensive areas of invasive scrub.

The Sefton Coast SAC is notified for the small liverwort Petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii* and Great-crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*. Pools in the slacks of fixed dunes support Greatcrested Newt while damp grassy areas around more recent slacks support Petalwort. Recent recording effort has revealed that this species is more abundant and widespread than previously thought, with five new sites found in 2017 (Fiona Sunners pers. comm.).

Other species of interest include Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* and Natterjack Toad *Bufo calamita* (both are listed under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive but are not designated features of the SAC - Natterjack Toad is however a designated feature of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site, which overlaps the Sefton Coast SAC). The site holds a number of priority or scarce species such as the Sandhill Rustic moth *Luperina nickerlii gueneei*, Dune Fescue *Vulpia fasciculata*, Grey Hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens* and the rare Long-leaved Thread Moss *Bryum neodamense*.

Overall, the geomorphological and successional functioning of the site is considered to be well-conserved. However, the pattern of urban development and infrastructure landward of the sand dunes along parts of Sefton's coast mean that the natural roll back of sand dunes in response to frontal dune erosion is limited resulting in squeeze and potential fragmentation of the habitat and will limit the movement of some important habitats and species over time. The presence of plantation woodland behind Formby Point exacerbates the challenge at this location. The plantation woodland is not a designated feature but does support a population of Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* a Species of Principal Importance and one which is of special visitor interest. Authorised parking on the beach at Ainsdale is interrupting the natural development of the beach in this area. Scrub encroachment and atmospheric nitrogen deposition (leading to a

loss of early successional dune communities) are also identified as issues in the Site Improvement Plan⁹.

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar Site

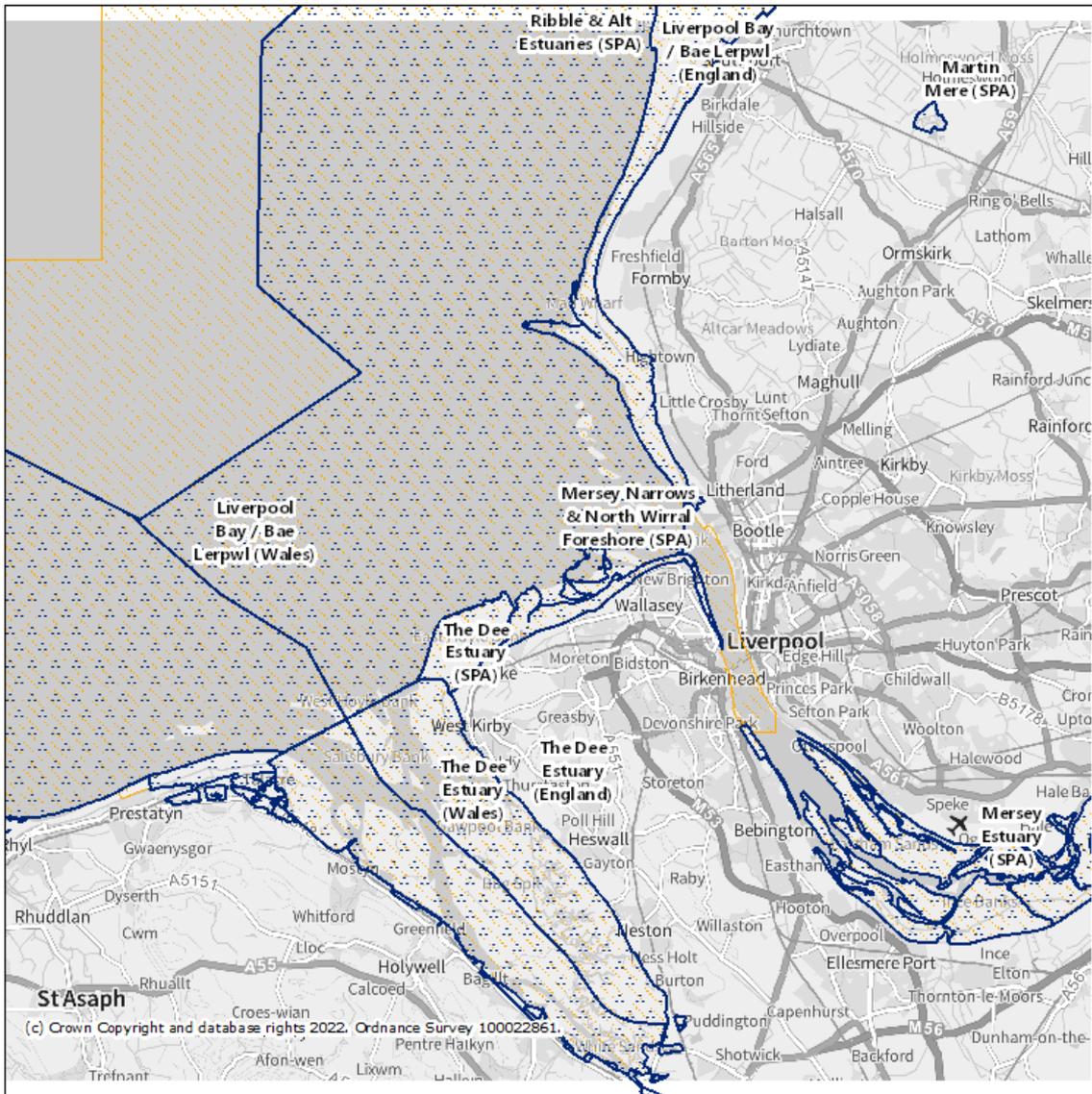
The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar sites include part of the Lancashire Fylde coast, and continues southwards across the Sefton borough boundary, including Marshside on the southern seaward edge of the estuary and then down the coast past Birkdale, Ainsdale and Formby Point to the boundary with the Port at Crosby on the northern edge of the Mersey estuary; a distance of about 40 kilometres. The northern part of the site consists of estuarine muds and sands with extensive saltmarshes at Banks Marsh in Lancashire and the Ribble Estuary NNR and recently designated Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). The RSPB Hesketh Outmarsh Reserve (in Lancashire) is an area of managed realignment that is currently outside but adjoining the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar but is now a functional part of the estuary. At Marshside, within Sefton, the site includes the RSPB wet grassland reserve behind the coastal road. The SPA boundary follows the edge of the coast, but the Ramsar boundary also includes the dunes at Cabin Hill and Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNRs and the LNRs at Ravenmeols Hills and Ainsdale and Birkdale. The landward parts of Crosby Coastal Park are outside the SPA/Ramsar site.

The SPA and Ramsar site encompasses two SSSIs, the Ribble Estuary SSSI and the Sefton Coast SSSI. This includes all the SPA foreshore. The SPA/Ramsar site also overlaps considerably with the Sefton Coast SAC.

The Ribble and Alt Estuaries were originally classified as an SPA in February 1995 (updated December 2015) for populations of nine species of wintering wildfowl and eleven species of wintering waders, together with populations of wintering Cormorants and four species of passage waders. Important populations of a breeding wader, two species of breeding gulls and a species of tern were also listed. It was listed as a Ramsar site in February 1995 for breeding and passage Lesser Black-backed Gull, for 8 species of passage waders, and for two species of wintering swans, Pink-footed Goose, four duck species and two species of wader. The site was classified as an SPA for its breeding assemblage of 29,236 individual seabirds (5-yr mean peak 1991/92 – 1995/96) and its wintering assemblage of 323,861 individual waterfowl (5-yr mean peak 1991/92 – 1995/96) and under Ramsar for a wintering assemblage of 222,038 individual waterfowl (5-yr peak mean 1998/99-2002/03). It was also listed as a Ramsar site for its population of Natterjack Toad as it supports up to 40% of the Great Britain population.

The latest available figures for the wintering assemblage of waterfowl (5-yr mean 2011/12 – 2015/16) for both estuaries are 267,388 and for the Ribble Estuary alone is 189,019. Despite this decline in numbers, this still makes the Ribble Estuary the second most important site in the UK for its wintering waterfowl.

⁹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096>



Legend

- Special Protection Areas (England)
- Special Protection Areas (Wales)

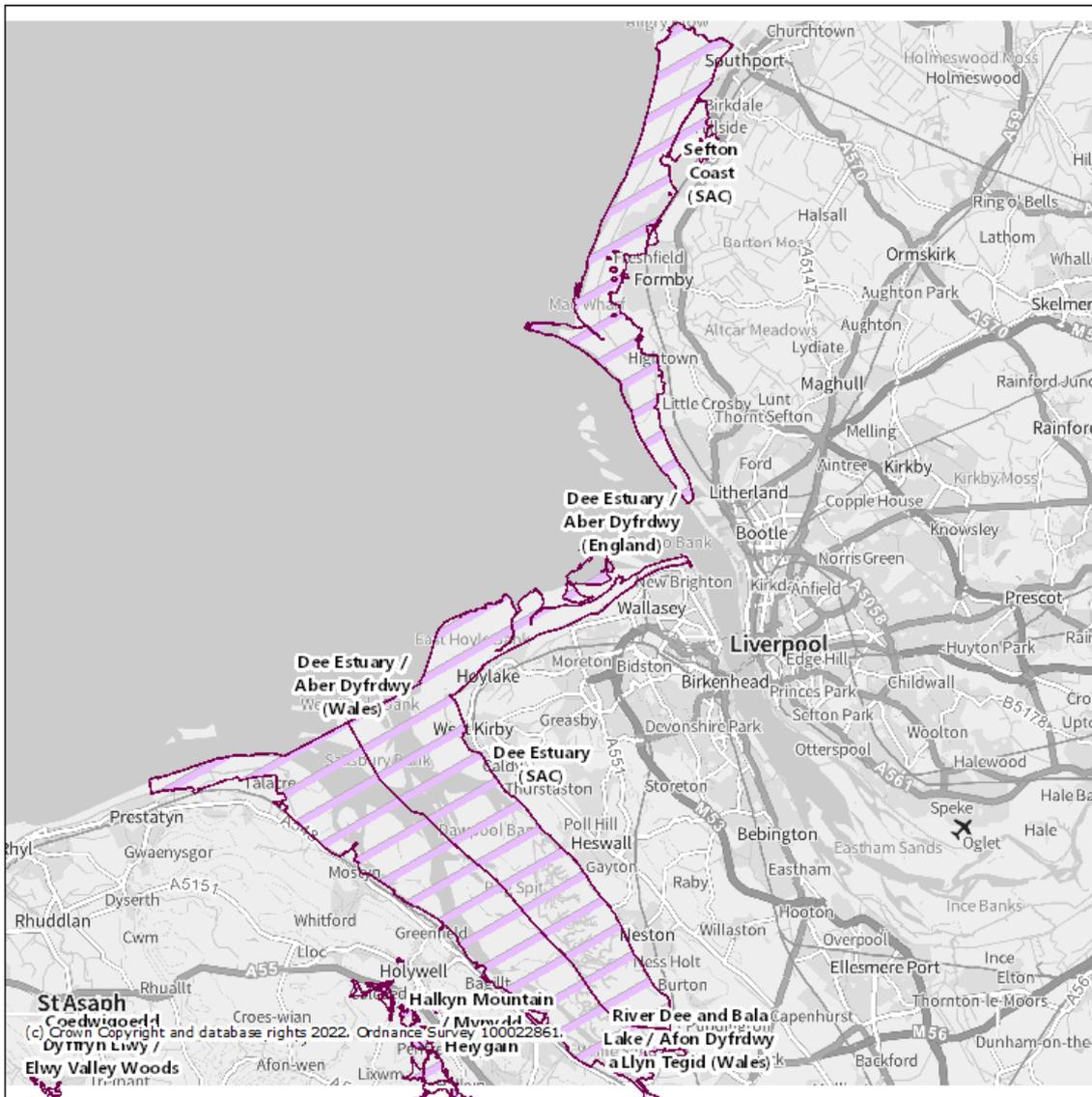
Special Protection Areas (Marine Components GB)

- Classified
- Potential

0 7.5 15
km

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 274700
 ymin = 370800
 xmax = 374900
 ymax = 419000

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Legend

- Special Areas of Conservation (England)
- Special Areas of Conservation (Wales)

0 7.5 15
km

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 274700
 ymin = 370800
 xmax = 374900
 ymax = 419000

Map produced by MAGiC on 19 April, 2022.
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Appendix 2 – European Designated Sites Interest Features

The table below summarises the relevant European sites included in IA. Links in the first column are to the Natural England website and the relevant conservation objectives (SPAs and SACs) and for Ramsar sites, the Ramsar citation. # indicates species/habitats where the UK has a special responsibility.

European Site	Interest Features
Mersey Estuary SPA	A052(NB) <i>Anas crecca</i> : Eurasian teal A048(NB) <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> : Common shelduck A054(NB) <i>Anas acuta</i> : Northern pintail A140(NB) <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> : European golden plover A156(NB) <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> : Black-tailed godwit A162(NB) <i>Tringa totanus</i> : Common redshank A149(NB) <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> : Dunlin
Mersey Estuary Ramsar site	Criterion 5: Waterbird assemblage of international importance Criterion 6: Regularly supports 1% population of: Common shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus totanus</i> Eurasian teal <i>Anas crecca</i> Northern pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>
Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA	A177(NB) <i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i> : Little gull A143(NB) <i>Calidris canutus</i> : Knot A193(B) <i>Sterna hirundo</i> : Common tern A193(NB) <i>Sterna hirundo</i> : Common tern Waterbird assemblage A157(NB) <i>Limosa lapponica</i> : Bar-tailed godwit
Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site	Criterion 4: critical stage in life cycle/refuge: Little Gull <i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i> Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> Criterion 5: Waterbird assemblage of international importance Criterion 6: Regularly supports 1% population of: Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> Knot <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i>
Dee Estuary SAC	H1130 Estuaries H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts H1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand S1395 <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> : Petalwort [Wales] S1095 <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> : Sea lamprey S1099 <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> : River lamprey H1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>)

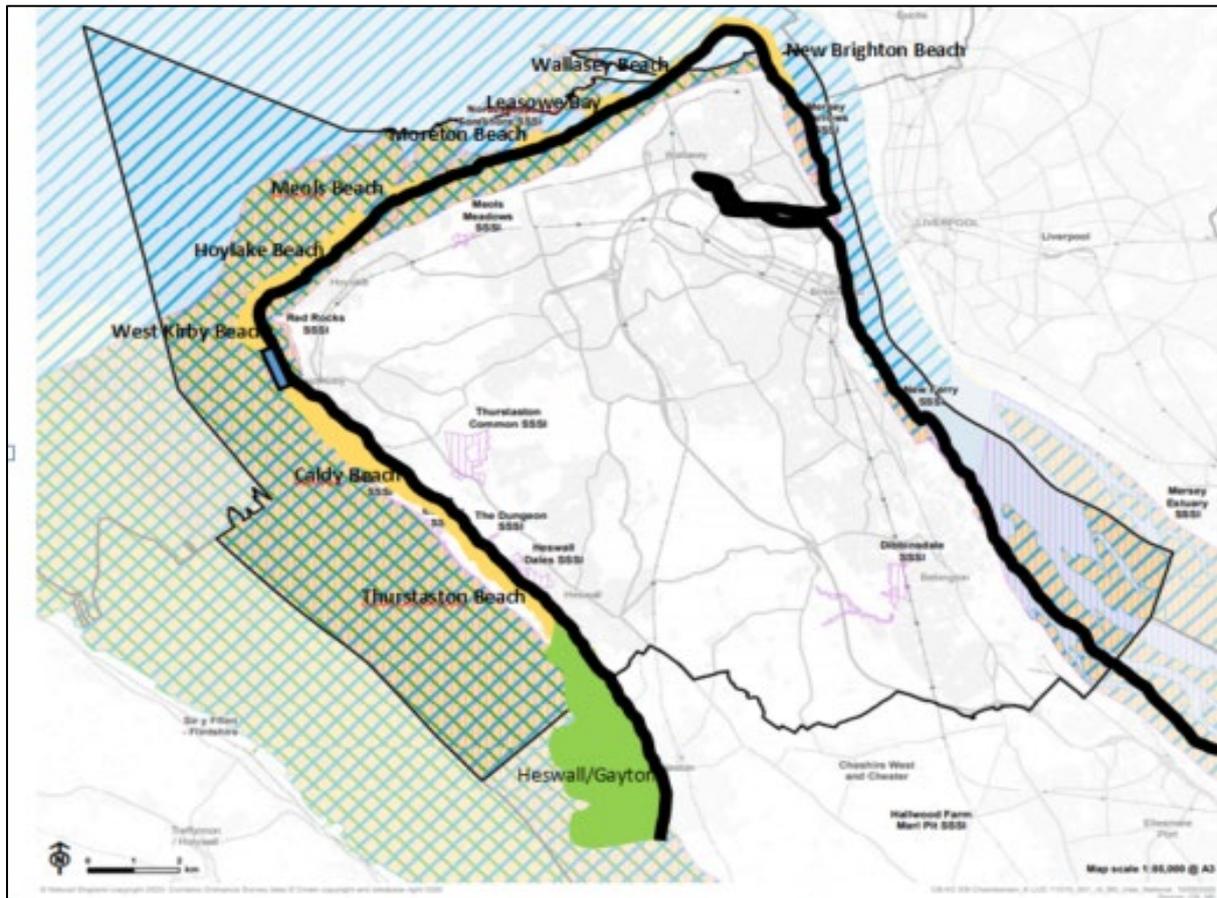
European Site	Interest Features
	H2110 Embryonic shifting dunes H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes") H2130# Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes") H2190 Humid dune slacks
Dee Estuary SPA	Waterbird assemblage A048(NB) <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> : Common shelduck A052(NB) <i>Anas crecca</i> : Eurasian teal A054(NB) <i>Anas acuta</i> : Northern pintail A130(NB) <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> : Eurasian oystercatcher A141(NB) <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> : Grey plover A143(NB) <i>Calidris canutus</i> : Red knot A149(NB) <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> : Dunlin A156(NB) <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> : Black-tailed godwit A157(NB) <i>Limosa lapponica</i> : Bar-tailed godwit A160(NB) <i>Numenius arquata</i> : Eurasian curlew A162(NB) <i>Tringa totanus</i> : Common redshank A191(NB) <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> : Sandwich tern A193(B) <i>Sterna hirundo</i> : Common tern A195(B) <i>Sterna albifrons</i> : Little tern
Dee Estuary Ramsar site	Criterion 1: Extensive intertidal mud and sandflats, saltmarsh (see Dee SAC for Annex 1 habitats) Criterion 2: Breeding Natterjack Toad <i>Epidalea calamita</i> Criterion 5: Waterbird assemblage of international importance Criterion 6: Regularly supports 1% population of: <i>Tringa totanus</i> Common redshank <i>Anas crecca</i> Eurasian teal <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> Common shelduck <i>Numenius arquata</i> Eurasian curlew <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> Eurasian oystercatcher <i>Anas acuta</i> Northern pintail <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> Grey plover <i>Calidris canutus</i> Knot <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> Dunlin <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> Bar-tailed godwit
Liverpool Bay SPA	A001(NB) <i>Gavia stellata</i> : Red-throated Diver A065(NB) <i>Melanitta nigra</i> : Black (common) scoter Waterbird assemblage A001(NB) <i>Gavia stellata</i> : Red-throated Diver A065(NB) <i>Melanitta nigra</i> : Black (common) scoter
Sefton Coast	H2130# Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes") H2150# Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>)

European Site	Interest Features
	<p>H2170 Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) H2110 Embryonic shifting dunes H2190 Humid dune slacks H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes") S1166 <i>Triturus cristatus</i>: Great-crested newt S1395 <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>: Petalwort</p>
<p>Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA</p>	<p>A156(NB) <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>: Black-tailed godwit A048(NB) <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>: Common shelduck A143(NB) <i>Calidris canutus</i>: Red knot A183(B) <i>Larus fuscus</i>: Lesser black-backed gull A137(NB) <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>: Ringed plover A157(NB) <i>Limosa lapponica</i>: Bar-tailed godwit A050(NB) <i>Anas penelope</i>: Eurasian wigeon A144(NB) <i>Calidris alba</i>: Sanderling A038(NB) <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>: Whooper swan A140(NB) <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>: European golden plover A149(NB) <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin A193(B) <i>Sterna hirundo</i>: Common tern A040(NB) <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>: Pink-footed goose A050(NB)* <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>: Bewick swan A162(NB) <i>Tringa totanus</i>: Common redshank A141(NB) <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>: Grey plover A151(B) <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>: Ruff A052(NB) <i>Anas crecca</i>: Eurasian teal A130(NB) <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>: Eurasian oystercatcher A037(NB) <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>: Bewick swan A054(NB) <i>Anas acuta</i>: Northern pintail Seabird assemblage Waterbird assemblage</p>
<p>Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site</p>	<p>Criterion 2: Supports Natterjack Toad <i>Epidalea calamita</i> Criterion 5: Waterbird assemblage of international importance Criterion 6: Regularly supports 1% population of: <i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i> Lesser black-backed gull <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> Ringed plover <i>Calidris canutus</i>: Red knot <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> Grey plover <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> Dunlin <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> Black-tailed godwit <i>Calidris alba</i> Sanderling <i>Larus fuscus</i> Lesser black-backed gull <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> Bewick swan</p>

European Site	Interest Features
	<p> Cygnus Cygnus Whooper swan Anser brachyrhynchus Pink-footed goose <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>: Common shelduck <i>Anas crecca</i>: Eurasian teal Anas Penelope Wigeon <i>Anas acuta</i>: Northern pintail <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>: Eurasian oystercatcher <i>Limosa lapponica</i>: Bar-tailed godwit </p>

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Appendix 3 – Existing Recreational Uses at Wirral Peninsula Beaches



Thurstaston Beach

Located on the Dee coastline, within the Dee Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in addition to the European designations. Popular with horse riders and designated launch/ landing site for North Wales Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club. Extremely popular as adjacent to Wirral Country Park Visitor Centre/ cafes /toilets. Circular walks. Commercial cockle fishing site and Dee Sailing Club boat moorings and competitions.

Caldy Beach

Located on the Dee coastline, within the Dee Estuary SSSI, in addition to the European designations. Popular with horse riders with good access from the Wirral Way. Popular with dog walkers along with the adjacent Cubbins Green.

West Kirby Beach

Located on the Dee coastline, within the Dee Estuary SSSI, in addition to the European designations. Very popular designated 'Bathing Beach' with adjacent West Kirby, train station, access to the Hilbre Islands. Large area of sandy foreshore and popular wind/ kite surfing. Patrolled at high water during winter months by Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens re bird disturbance. Lifeguards during summer.

Hoylake Beach

Hoylake Beach is located on the northwest of the Wirral Peninsula and is classified under the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SSSI in addition to the European designations. The SSSI status was assigned in 1986 in order to protect a range of non-breeding wading birds which roost on the beach such as the Bar-Tailed Godwit and Dunlin species. This is an internationally recognised Special Area for Conservation also which has been designated to protect intertidal sands, mudflats and saltmarsh.

The beach is well used by dog walkers, for cycling and walking on the wide promenade and families who picnic in the warmer months. There are also some activities which take place including bird watching, wetlands surveys and land yacht racing. It is important to monitor any such events in order not to disturb the wildlife and there are event agreements and notices on the slipways for guidance. The RNLI also have a launch from their station RNLI Hoylake.

An ongoing programme for the management of the beach is underway in order to study and consult with the residents for the future Beach Management Plan.

Meols Beach

Meols Beach is located on the North Wirral coast and lies within the SSSI of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore in addition to the European designations. This begins at the edge of Hoylake Beach and the Meols Parade Gardens Park with various activities available including crown green bowling, tennis and a football court, with the beach creating a continuous coastline to Moreton, encompassing the Western side of the North Wirral Coastal Park.

Meols Beach is a bathing beach with an "Excellent" bathing rating and attracts activities such as walkers, joggers, dog walking and horse riding in particular. The front of the beach has a promenade for cyclists to ride on the flat surface and the 1.5 mile stretch allows for parking all along the front for instant access to the man-made defence walls and to the sandy beach.

Moreton Beach

Moreton Beach is located on the North Wirral coast and sits in the SSSI of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore in addition to the European designations. This beach lies between Meols and Leasowe Bay. Running along the Moreton coastline is the North Wirral Coastal Park. The beach can be quite popular with bathers who enjoy the "Excellent" classification water as awarded by UK Government and there is a lifeguard service on duty during the summer months.

This area attracts many families and couples having picnics either on the beach or in the coastal park. There are two large car parks which allows for ample parking. Leasowe Lighthouse is a prominent feature measuring over 100 feet in height.

Other facilities adjoining the beach are the Green Hut Café, public conveniences and bridle way walk with a bird watch station at the nearby pond.

Leasowe Bay

Leasowe Bay is located on the North Wirral coast within the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SSSI, in addition to the European designations. It is located near to the busy town and attractions of New Brighton. The beach encompasses the Eastern side of the North Wirral Coastal Park and has various car parking, including a very popular sea facing parking arrangement. The area allows views over to New Brighton and Liverpool especially when on the front or on top of the sand dunes. The front area is known as the Gun Site due to the previous location of the anti-aircraft battery during World War 2.

This beach is very popular for dog walkers who use the beach and the adjoining paths through the park. The activity of walking and jogging is also attractive due to the gravel pathway which leads straight from the front car park which goes along the winding bay and past the golf course. This site would be also used by visitors staying at Leasowe Castle Hotel which is based on the sea front. There are also bird watchers who visit to view the likes of Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin and Common Redshank and there are donation benches on the raised area to enjoy the magnificent views.

Beaches at Fort Perch rock/ Wallasey Beach

The beaches stretch from the Tower grounds area right down to the chip & put at the Wallasey beach end of the promenade, this then leads onto the Leasowe Bay end of the sea front. They incorporate the Fort Perch rock lighthouse and the fairground at New Brighton. They are within the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SSSI in addition to the European designations.

The beaches are well used by dog walkers and for cycling and walking on the wide promenade and families who picnic on the dips (wide grass areas) in the warmer months. There are also some activities which take place like Kite Boarding (very popular at Wallasey beach).

The RNLI also use the slipway at New Brighton to launch their craft to carry out rescues.

Appendix 4 – SANG Site Mitigation Proforma

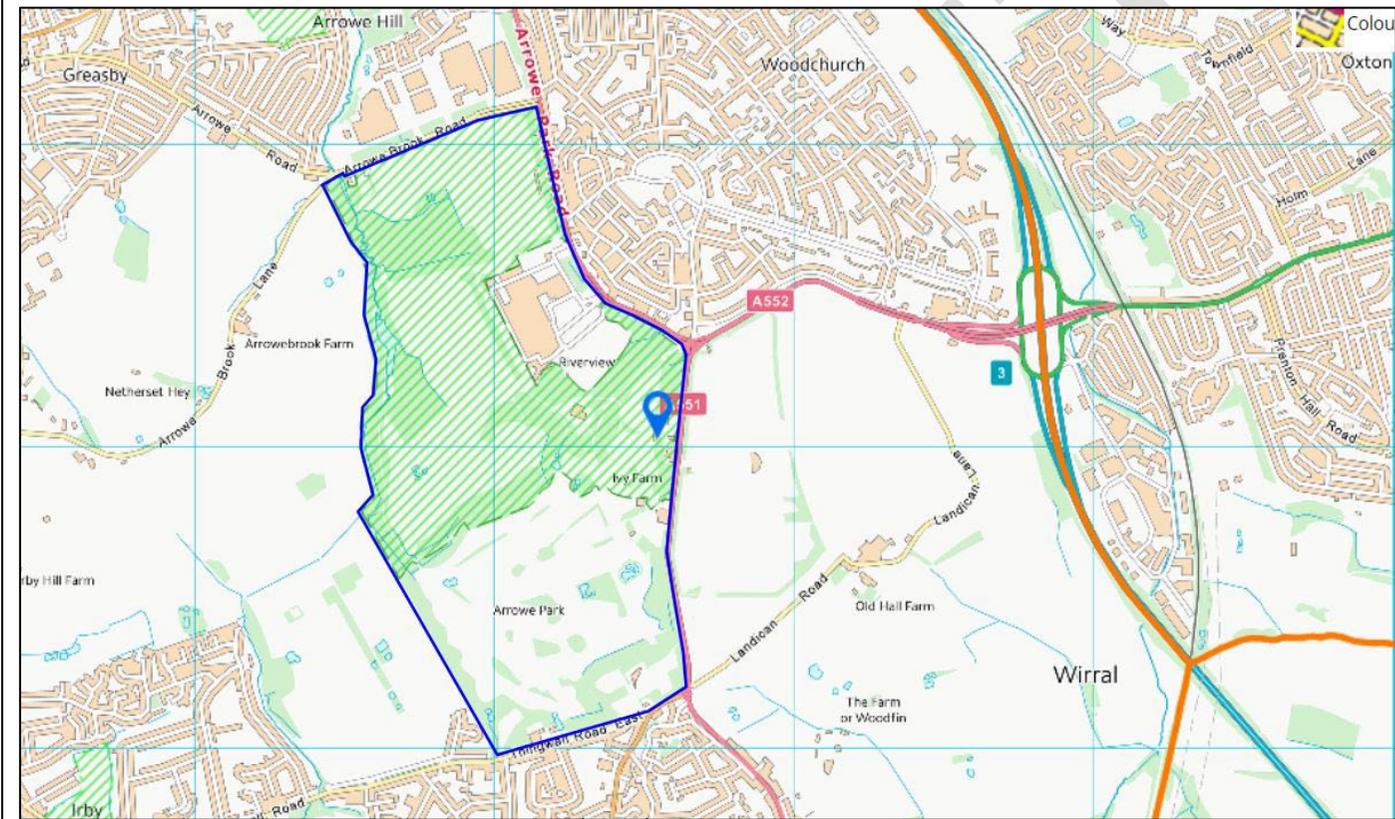
Each of the proposed SANGs fulfil the following locational criteria

- ✓ A wholly new site or an enhancement of existing public open space if the site is currently underused and has substantial capacity to accommodate recreational activity or could be expanded, taking into account the availability of land and its potential for improvement;
- ✓ Be in a location where it will divert visitors especially dog walkers away from sections of SPA which are sensitive to additional human disturbance and where a significant increase in visitors due to the increase in potential housing development is anticipated;
- ✓ Be located where it will attract visitors who would otherwise have gone to those sections of the Estuary;
- ✓ Be large enough to include a variety of paths which enable at least one circular walk of at least 3 km (approx. a 60 min walk);
- ✓ Be in a location where a SANG would be acceptable in terms of planning policy and traffic generation, and would not have an unacceptable impact on biodiversity e.g. a nature conservation site protected under a national designation;
- ✓ Has views of the Estuary which are not too distant or include a sizeable water feature;
- ✓ Has a varied topography with some gentle slopes, a mix of open and wooded areas, and a focal point such as a viewpoint, monument, etc;
- ✓ Designed so that the SANG is perceived by users as a cohesive semi-natural space which is safe and easily navigable;
- ✓ Paths must be clearly discernible, well signposted/ waymarked and have firm, level, well drained surfaces (albeit unsealed to avoid any 'urban feel') in order to be useable throughout the winter;
- ✓ Dogs are welcome and the majority of the sites are suitable for safe off-lead dog exercise.
- ✓ Dog waste bins are planned/ provided.

Appendix 4 – SANG Site 1: Arrowe Country Park Strategic Alternative Natural Greenspace

Arrowe Country Park has been identified by Wirral Council as a Strategic Alternative Natural Greenspace. The SANG site enhancements set out in the schedule below will be implemented at the Arrowe Country Park SANG.

Arrowe Country Park SANG Location Map



Arrowe Country Park is a large country park in Woodchurch, Wirral, England.

Grid Reference: SJ326970, 386260

Size: 97.56 hectares

The shape of Arrowe Country Park as we know it today really began in 1800 when the then Mayor of Liverpool, John Shaw bought the land. He had made his fortune from supplying his ships for the slave trade. He passed it to his Great Nephew John Ralph Shaw who was responsible for landscaping the park and building Arrowe Hall in 1835. Future owners were Captain Willian Shaw J.P., Major Dermont McAlmont, and the estate of Lord Leverhulme until it was purchased by the Corporation of Birkenhead on 20th August 1926 and formerly opened to the public on 2nd August 1928. In 1974 Local Government re-organisation gave ownership to the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, which retains responsibility to this day.

Arrowe Country Park is the largest area of parkland in Wirral with areas of formal and informal parkland areas, mature deciduous woodland, lake with waterfall feature and brook, ponds, playing fields, football pitches, play area, amenity, and meadow grassland.

A site of Biological Importance (SBI) lies within the park and covers Nicholson's plantation, Arrowe Brook and lake and Gorse Covert. More recently the SBI has been extended to include the Golf Course, Hay Meadow, and trees around Arrowe Hall to include bat roosts.

Mitigation Measure Category

Category	Measure
1	Communications, marketing and education initiatives
2	Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects
3	New/ enhanced strategic greenspace – SANG
4	Monitoring to help adjust the mitigation measures as necessary

SANG Enhancements at Arrowe Country Park

Cost Estimate

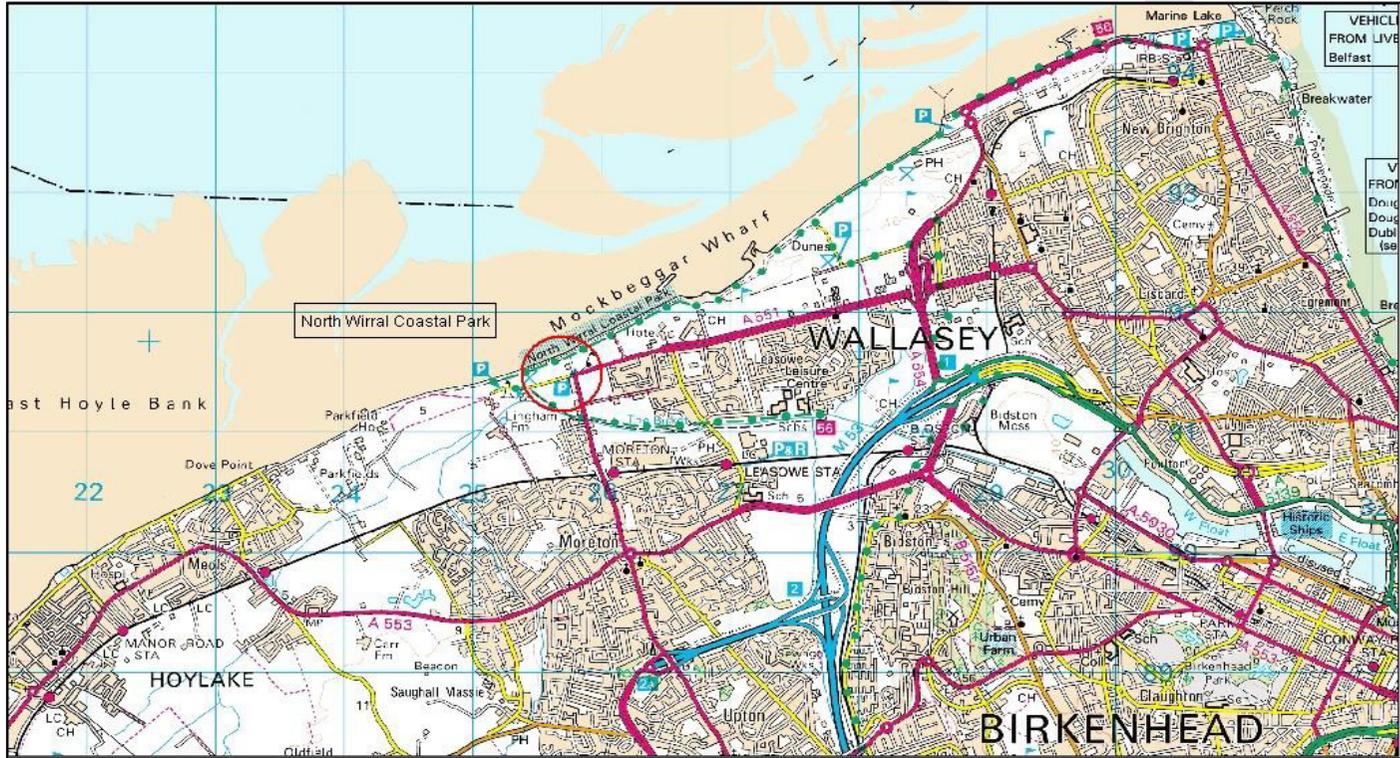
No	Item / Name	Proposed measure name and description	Capital / revenue	Timescale			Unit rate and Quantity for capital expenditure	Annual cost
				Short term	Medium term	Long term		
1	2 x FTE Wirral Council Ranger	Lead and deliver on the following measures: 1- Communications, marketing, and education initiatives 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects 3 – New/ enhanced strategic greenspace - SANG 4 - Monitoring to help adjust the mitigation measures as necessary 2 x FTE Band F Ranger posts (£30,814 per FTE 2021/22 pay award pending)	Revenue	✓	✓	✓	Nil	£61,628
2	Transport for Rangers Equipment – 1 x Berlingo type 2-seater van	Required for: - 1- Communications, marketing, and education initiatives 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects 3 – New/ enhanced strategic greenspace - SANG	Revenue Capital	✓	✓	✓	Vehicle running costs Vehicle purchase £30,000, to be replaced every 5 years	£5,000 £6,000 (£30,000 / 5 years)
3	Signage and Interpretation Boards including flora and fauna information	Required for: - 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects.	Revenue	✓			Signage and Interpretation boards @ £1,200 each. Will require 4.	£4,800

No	Item / Name	Proposed measure name and description	Capital / revenue	Timescale			Unit rate and Quantity for capital expenditure	Annual cost
				Short term	Medium term	Long term		
4	Restoring the existing Arrowe Park Lake, including de-silting the Lake, to further enhance the biodiversity and to improve water quality	Required for: - 2 – Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects. 3 – New/ enhanced strategic greenspace – SANG.	Capital			✓	£200,000	
5	Structural survey and report on the sandstone waterfall to include the repair and maintenance and refixing of dislodged stonework to existing Arrowe Park lake waterfall feature	Required for: 3 – New/ enhanced strategic greenspace – SANG.	Capital			✓	£100,000	Annual engineering inspection – cost to be confirmed
6	Surface improvement works to informal footpaths around the Arrowe Park lake including surface water drainage improvements	Required for: - 2 - Site specific visitor management and bird refuge projects. 3 – New/ enhanced strategic greenspace – SANG. Footpath surface improvement works, to excavate trenches under the steel railings to release surface water towards the lake and to lay and compact recycled footpath surface materials over the existing stone sub-base. Approx. 1000m2	Capital	✓			£40,000	

Appendix 5 – SAMM Implementation Schedule

The Site Access Management and Mitigation (SAMM) measures set out in the schedule below will be implemented at the North Wirral Coastal Park.

North Wirral Coastal Park



North Wirral Coastal Park is a linear park that is four miles in length embracing public open space, common land, coastal viewpoints and sand-dunes.

Grid reference: SJ 252 913

Size: 68.5 hectares

The North Wirral Coastal Park became established in 1986 with the appointment of a ranger to manage the site. The entire length of the park is bordered on its seaward side by a man-made embankment. An embankment of some description has been present on the north Wirral foreshore for some 250 years.

The remains of a forest can be found over much of the area including notably off the Meols foreshore and a recent publication 'Meols: The Archaeology of the North Wirral Coast' recognises the area as one of the most important archaeological sites in the country for the amount of metal work found here during the 19th Century; a catalogue of more than 4,000 items mainly dating from the medieval period.

Built in 1763 by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, Leasowe Lighthouse is the oldest brick built lighthouse in Britain. It stands one hundred and one feet (27 metres) tall on Leasowe Common in Wirral and was one of four lights on the North Wirral Foreshore, used to guide ships into the entrance to the Rock Channel and the port of Liverpool.

The lighthouse is believed to be the oldest brick-built lighthouse in the country and possibly the first building of its kind in the world to use cavity walls for insulation.

Now a site of public interest and a Grade II Listed monument, the Lighthouse features guided tours and special events with displays about Leasowe Lighthouse, the North Wirral Coastal Park and the Wirral coastline. The Friends of Leasowe Lighthouse formed in 1989.

North Wirral Coastal Park provides a wide range of activities including: Walking and dog walking, cycling, bird watching and natural history, viewing the sea from coastal car parks and other vantage points, visits to Leasowe Lighthouse and car parking and access to beaches.

There are two locally designated Sites of Biological Importance in the park: Leasowe Common and The Gunsite. These areas are managed for the conservation of their features of interest.

The park is adjacent to and provides access to the North Wirral Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), North Wirral Foreshore and Mersey Narrows Special Protection Area (SPA), and the Dee Estuary and North Wirral Foreshore Special Area of Conservation (SAC), also in the ownership of Wirral Council. The area attracts large numbers of overwintering and migrating wading birds. The North Wirral Coastal Park is possibly the best site on the UK mainland to see the Leach's storm petrel.

The Rangers provide information about the sensitivity of these national and international nature conservation sites through education materials and through their events programme. The Rangers work with Friends of North Wirral Coastal Park, the local Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Liverpool Museums, The charity Butterfly Conservation and Reaseheath College on various specific programmes aimed at conserving biodiversity in the park.

Mitigation Measure Category

Category	Measure
1	Communications, marketing and education initiatives
2	Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects
3	New/ enhanced strategic greenspace – SANG
4	Monitoring to help adjust the mitigation measures as necessary

SAMM Mitigation Measures

Cost Estimate

No	Item / Name	Proposed measure name and description	Capital / revenue	Timescale			Unit rate and Quantity for capital expenditure	Annual cost
				Short term	Medium term	Long term		
1	2 x FTE Wirral Council Ranger	Lead and deliver on the following measures: 1- Communications, marketing and education initiatives 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects 4 - Monitoring to help adjust the mitigation measures as necessary 2 x FTE Band F Ranger posts (£30,814 per FTE 2021/22 pay award pending)	Revenue	✓	✓	✓	Nil	£61,628
2	Transport for Rangers & Equipment – 1 x Berlingo type 2 seater van	Required for:- 1- Communications, marketing and education initiatives – items B, C 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects – items A, D, E	Revenue Capital	✓	✓	✓	Vehicle running costs Vehicle purchase £30,000, to be replaced every 5 years	£5,000 £6,000 (£30,000 / 5 years)
3	Signage and Interpretation Boards	Required for:- 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects – items A	Revenue	✓			Signage and Interpretation boards @ £1,200 each. Will require 10. Also other signage estimated as £3,000.	£15,000
4	Householder Pack Development	Required for:- 1- Communications, marketing and education initiatives – items D	Revenue	✓			To be developed by Rangers, 20 page High Gloss booklet estimate £20,000	£20,000

No	Item / Name	Proposed measure name and description	Capital / revenue	Timescale			Unit rate and Quantity for capital expenditure	Annual cost
				Short term	Medium term	Long term		
5	Footfall Counters	<p>Required for:- 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects – items C 4 - Monitoring to help adjust the mitigation measures as necessary – item A</p> <p>Footfall counters to record visitor numbers at key sensitive coastal locations. Current Traffic Monitoring is £370 per unit with approximately £2,000 per unit installation.</p>	Revenue	✓	✓	✓	<p>Traffic Monitoring:- £2,125 equipment £550 installation £370 software licence</p> <p>Person Counter:- £3,320 equipment £550 installation £370 software licence</p>	Dependant on number and type fitted
6	Infrastructure deployment and maintenance	<p>Required for:- 2 - Site-specific visitor management and bird refuge projects – items D</p> <p>Infrastructure deployment and maintenance e.g., path management and fencing</p>	Revenue	✓			Estimated cost subject to survey to confirm requirements and specification	£20,000
7	Installation of directional and wayfinding signage	<p>Required for:- 1- Communications, marketing and education initiatives – items C</p> <p>Directional and wayfinding signage on highways, cycleways and footpaths</p>	Revenue	✓	✓	✓	Signage estimated as £1,000 each x 15.	£15,000