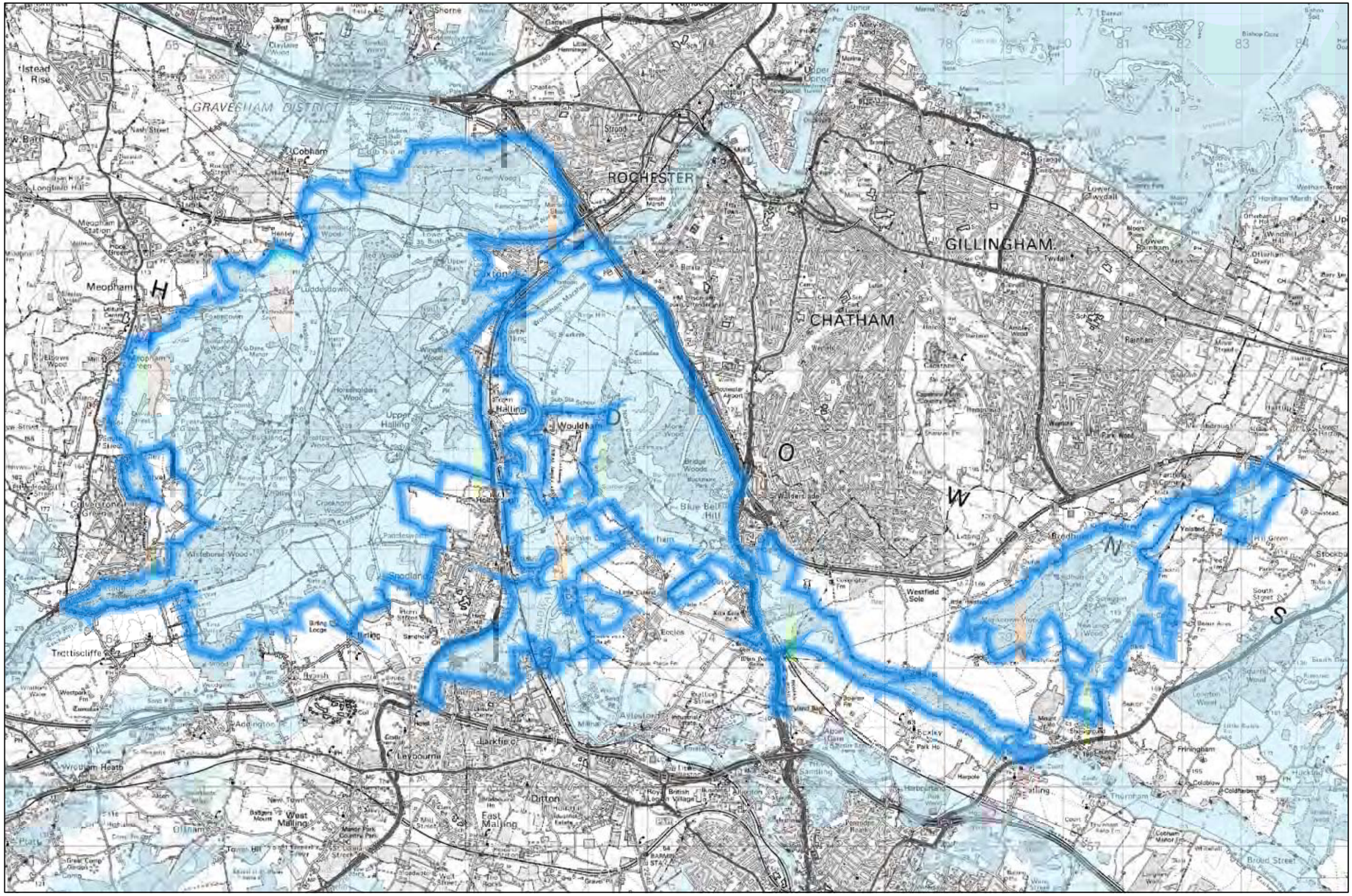
Appendix C:
BOA Maps and Statements relevant to Swale
(Kent Biodiversity Partnership 2009)

The following maps and statements represent the broad Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) in Swale identified and developed by the Kent Biodiversity Partnership. The boundaries of these BOAs are very similar to the Biodiversity Opportunity Networks identified in this Landscape and Biodiversity Appraisal. However, whilst derived from the same habitat opportunity data, the BOA maps have been simplified by the Kent Biodiversity Partnership to produce more coherent regional-scale areas. Therefore minor boundary differences do occur between the two studies and this is recognised and accepted as a necessary difference between the regional and local scale of the mapping.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - Medway Gap & North Kent Downs



Kent Wildlife Trust 2009

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Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

Name: Medway Gap and North Kent Downs

Description: This area stretches from the Ash Downs near Meopham, across the lower Medway Valley, to the downland between Medway and Maidstone as far as Queendown Warren. It includes extensive patches of woodland such as Whitehorse Wood, Great Wood (both SSSIs), Walderslade and Bredhurst Woods (LWSs), various historic parklands including Cobham, and chalk grassland sites such as Burham Down, Boxley Warren, Queendown Warren and Wouldham.

Joint Character Area(s): North Downs

Landscape Types: It encompasses a large-scale, open, intensively farmed landscape with sparse remnant hedges leading up the steep chalk scarps to wooded ridges. It includes large areas of mixed woodland and historic parkland and some small pastures and scrub. The river itself is tidal with well-developed meanders, riverside marshes and reedbeds. Chalk soils on the scarp, at the base and in the dry valleys, support areas of high-quality unimproved chalk grassland. The following Landscape Character Areas are present: Ash Downs, Luddesdown: West Kent Downs; Cobham: West Kent Downs; Medway Valley Lower; Nashenden Valley: Mid Kent Downs; Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs.

Geology: mainly Upper Chalk capped with clay-with-flints or deposits of Head gravel; some areas of Thanet Beds; alluvial deposits along the Medway.

Biodiversity:

1 The area includes some very significant blocks of nationally and internationally important woodlands on a range of geologies from gravel to chalk, including areas of Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland.

2 The tidal Medway includes areas of intertidal mudflat, and there are associated areas of grazing marsh, reedbed and fen.

3 Chalk grassland exists as isolated fragments

4 There are a number of important brownfield sites, including disused quarries

5 This target area includes the county's most important site for arable weeds.

6 Key species include a number of important arable weed species, including corncockle, rough mallow and broad-leaved cudweed; chalk downland species including groundpine, man orchid, Kentish milkwort, meadow clary, and adonis blue butterfly.

Targets:

1 Maintain and enhance existing chalk grassland. Important opportunities exist to substantially extend areas of chalk grassland: within this target area, at least 10 hectares should be restored and 75ha created, by 2015. Pursue opportunities for:

- Additional chalk grassland creation where this would contribute to the county-wide target of 250ha by 2015; and
- Additional chalk grassland restoration to meet the county-wide target of 150ha by 2015.

1 Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.

2 Pursue opportunities for the restoration of creation of grazing marsh, fen and reedbed habitats within the floodplain of the River Medway, including restoration of at least 50ha of grazing marsh in the Medway Valley between Rochester and New Hythe.

3 Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites, particularly where these support priority species in the UK BAP.

4 Continue to conserve and enhance key populations of arable weeds, and maintain, enhance and extend the area of cereal field margins being positively managed for arable weeds.

5 Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 50ha on new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha by 2015.

6 Where appropriate, encourage and enhance public access, particularly from the Medway Towns.

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

How should Biodiversity Opportunity Area maps and statements be used?

1. The BOA maps can be seen as a spatial reflection of the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). They indicate where the delivery of Kent BAP targets should be focused in order to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits. The BOA maps also show where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation, as these areas offer the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks or wildlife habitats. As such, they will be useful to local planning authorities in the development and delivery of positive nature conservation policy in line with the South East Plan. The BOA statement documents will provide guidance on the conservation priorities which should be adopted in each area.

2. Information provided on the habitats and species associated with each BOA is not definitive. Rather, it identifies those priority habitats for which the areas is known to be most important, and provides a range of examples of priority species for which the area is known to be important. It is likely that each BOA will support additional habitats and species of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity, and reference should be made to the Kent Habitat Survey and the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre to support decision-making.

3. Biodiversity targets identified in the statement documents incorporate, where appropriate, targets in the Kent BAP. However, not all targets in the Kent BAP are easily spatially defined, and the BOA maps and statements should be read alongside relevant Habitat Action Plans in the Kent BAP.

4. The BOA maps should not be seen as planning constraint maps. It is not intended or proposed that nature conservation becomes the primary land-use within the target areas, so long as the targets and objectives for each area can be met, and development of any kind is not precluded. However, consideration might in some cases need to be given to ensuring that development within a BOA did not significantly increase the fragmentation of wildlife habitats within target areas or neutralize significant opportunities for habitat restoration or recreation.

5. BOA boundaries are not absolute. They have been drawn to follow mapped boundaries wherever possible in order to facilitate spatial planning and decision-making. However, a project immediately outside the mapped boundary should not be immediately dismissed if it would help to deliver the targets identified for the BOA concerned. It is also not the case that all land within a BOA offers the same opportunities for habitat restoration or recreation, and reference should be made to the Habitat Opportunity maps on the Kent Landscape Information System (KLIS) to support detailed decision-making.

6. The areas outside the identified BOAs still have substantial biodiversity interest, and include a number of nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodlands and other areas of habitats. Although the focus of any biodiversity action should be on the BOAs, it will still be necessary to maintain, enhance, buffer and extend areas of wildlife habitat outside the mapped areas in order to maintain the wildlife interest and richness of the wider countryside.

7. Some biodiversity interest is not well served by the BOA mapping process, and action for ponds, traditional orchards, wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of Kent and Medway and not just within identified Opportunity Areas.

8. While the primary purpose of the BOAs is to direct positive action for nature conservation, information on landscape has been included in the target documents. Reference should be made to AONB management plans or other landscape policy documents in drawing up proposals for habitat restoration or recreation in order to maximize the positive benefits for landscape and avoid conflict with features of landscape importance.

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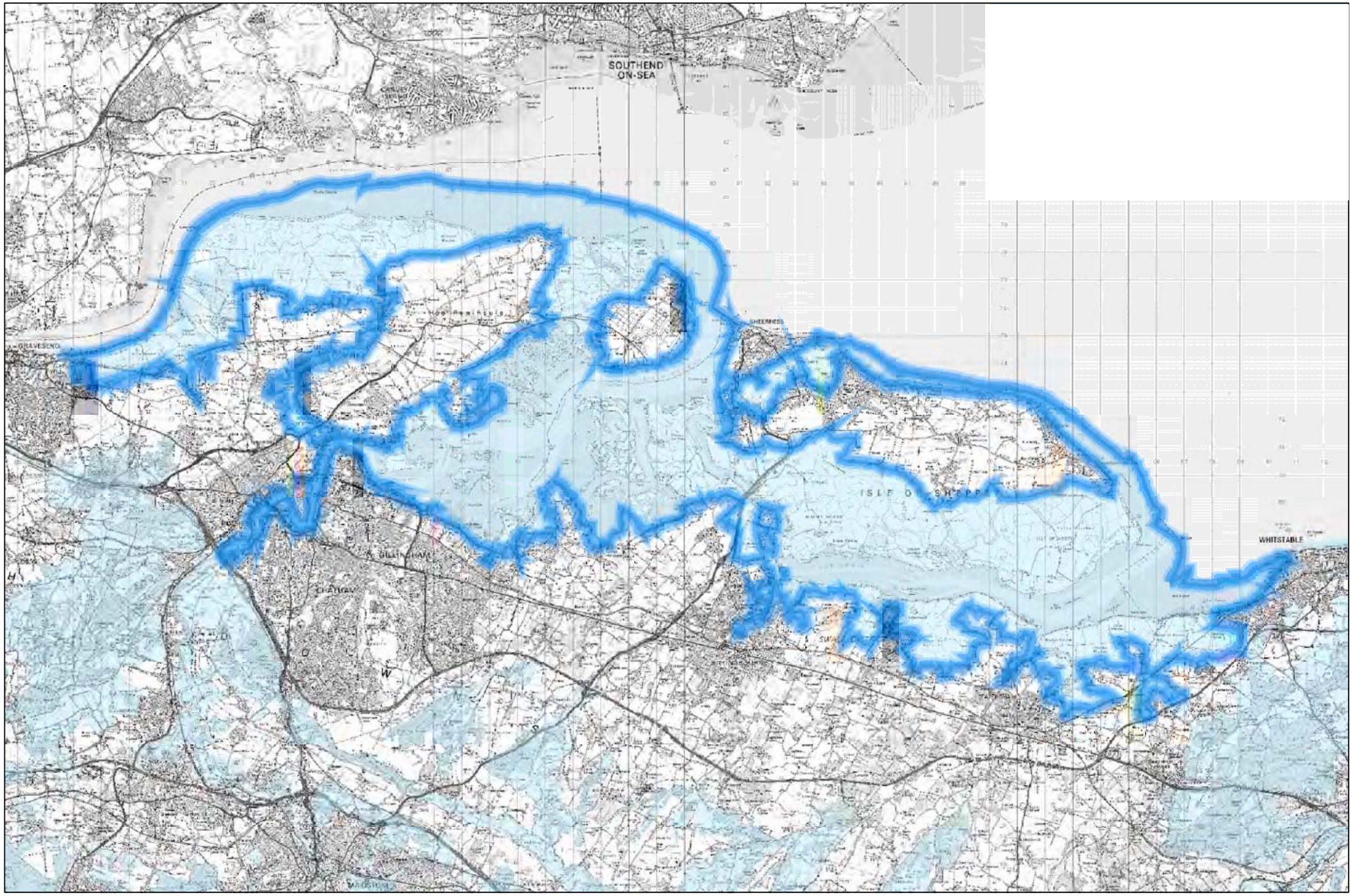
Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre – www.kmbrc.org.uk

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - North Kent Marshes



Kent Wildlife Trust 2009

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Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

Name: North Kent Marshes

Description: The North Kent Marshes are designated, almost in their entirety, as SSSI, SPA and/or Ramsar, and are of national and international importance for breeding and overwintering bird populations. The opportunity area also includes a few LWSs such as the Diggs and Sheppey Court Marshes near Queenborough, Graveney Dykes and Pasture, Minster Marshes and Minster Cliffs.

Joint Character Area(s): Greater Thames Estuary

Landscape Types: A flat open landscape of grazing marsh and intertidal mudflats stretching from the River Thames estuary in the west to the Swale Estuary in the east. Saltmarsh extends inland along creeks and drainage dykes and in places grazing marsh has been converted to arable cultivation. The area includes the following Landscape Character Areas: Eastern Thames Marshes, Hoo Peninsula, Medway Marshes, Swale Marshes, North Sheppey and Eastern Swale Marshes.

Geology: Thanet beds and London Clay, with alluvial deposits.

Biodiversity:

1 Internationally important grazing marsh, saltmarsh and mudflats.

2 Coastal habitats, freshwater wetlands and flower-rich grassland, as well as less common shingle, saline lagoon and soft-cliff habitats.

3 Nationally important woodlands occur at Chattenden and Northward Hill.

4 The area is important for a large number of breeding and wintering birds, including marsh harrier, redshank, reed bunting, grey plover, dunlin, avocet and brent goose. Other key species include least lettuce, brown hare, water vole, great crested newt, shrill carder bumblebee, and important assemblages of water beetles. Common seals are present in the estuary and haul out on mudbanks and islands. The Hoo Peninsula is an important area for serotine bats, and there is a localized population of adders at Riverside Country Park.

Targets:

1 Protect and enhance existing habitats. Coastal defence projects and managed realignment should contribute to maintenance, enhancement, or extension of coastal habitats, with no net loss of habitats of existing importance.

2 Recreate grazing marsh on arable land and improved grassland in order to extend and connect existing habitats. This should include restoration or recreation of at least 200ha of grazing marsh on the Hoo Peninsula, adjoining the South Thames estuary and Marshes SSSI, and restoration or recreation of at least 100ha of grazing marsh on the Swale, adjoining The Swale SSSI.

3 Create new intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh to help offset historical losses across the UK, this should include making a significant contribution to the UK target of creating 3,600 ha of intertidal sediment habitat by 2015; a more precise target is to be developed by the Kent Biodiversity Partnership.

4 Maintain total extent of coastal vegetated shingle habitat, in line with the UK target. This is a 'no net loss' target to take account of the dynamic nature of shingle, and includes the maintenance of transitions to other habitats landward and seaward.

5 Improve and manage access and environmental tourism from the Medway Towns and Swale.

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

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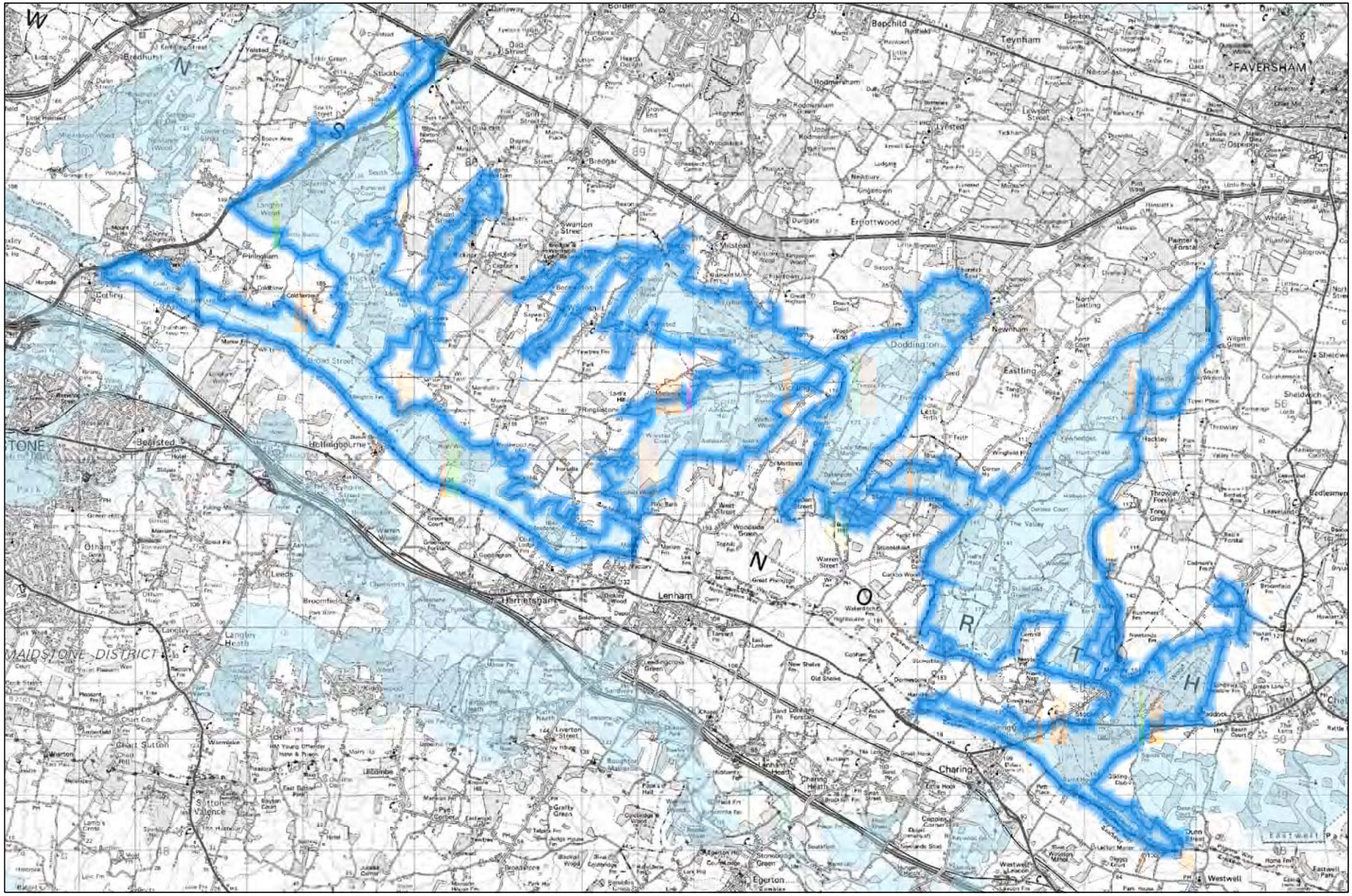
Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - Mid Kent Downs Woods & Scarp



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Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

Name: Mid Kent Downs, Woods and Scarp

Description: The Mid Kent Downs Woods and Scarp opportunity area stretches from Detling Hill through to Sheldwich and Charing. The area is within the Kent Downs AONB and contains over a high number of LWSs such as Gorham Woods and Wichling Wood and several SSSIs.

Joint Character Area(s): North Downs

Landscape Types: This landscape has a pattern of wide fields contained by dense belts of woodland, which run along the upper slopes of steep-sided dry valleys. The continual down-wash of soil from the scarp, combined with the sheltered aspect of the resulting fields, produces a belt of very productive agricultural land at the foot of the scarp. Most of the area is within the Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs Landscape Character Area, but a small amount falls within the Hollingbourne Vale LCA to the south and the Challock: Mid Kent Downs LCA to the east.

Geology: Chalk, capped with clay-with-flints and gravel head on the ridges.

Biodiversity:

1 Important chalk grassland sites on the scarp and on the sides of dip slope valleys.

2 Important woodlands occur both on the chalk soils of the scarp and the deeper clay soils of the dip slope. There are some wood pasture sites, as at Belmont.

3 The dip slope woodlands support important bryophyte assemblages and remain important for woodland birds, including hawfinch. This is the only part of Kent known to support Bechstein's bat, a species closely associated with woodland.The area supports a large population of brown hares.

Targets:

1 Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats.

2 Restore and recreate chalk grassland to create large, continuous blocks on the scarp and on suitable soils in dip slope valleys. Pursue opportunities for:

- Chalk grassland creation where this would contribute to the county-wide target of 250ha by 2015; and
- Additional chalk grassland restoration to meet the county-wide target of 150ha by 2015.

3 Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented, dip-slope woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement. Ensure woodland management takes account of the needs of woodland bats.

4 Complement dip-slope woodlands by buffering with semi-natural habitats (e.g. woodland edge, semi-natural grassland). Management which would maintain or expand the population of brown hares will also be supported.

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

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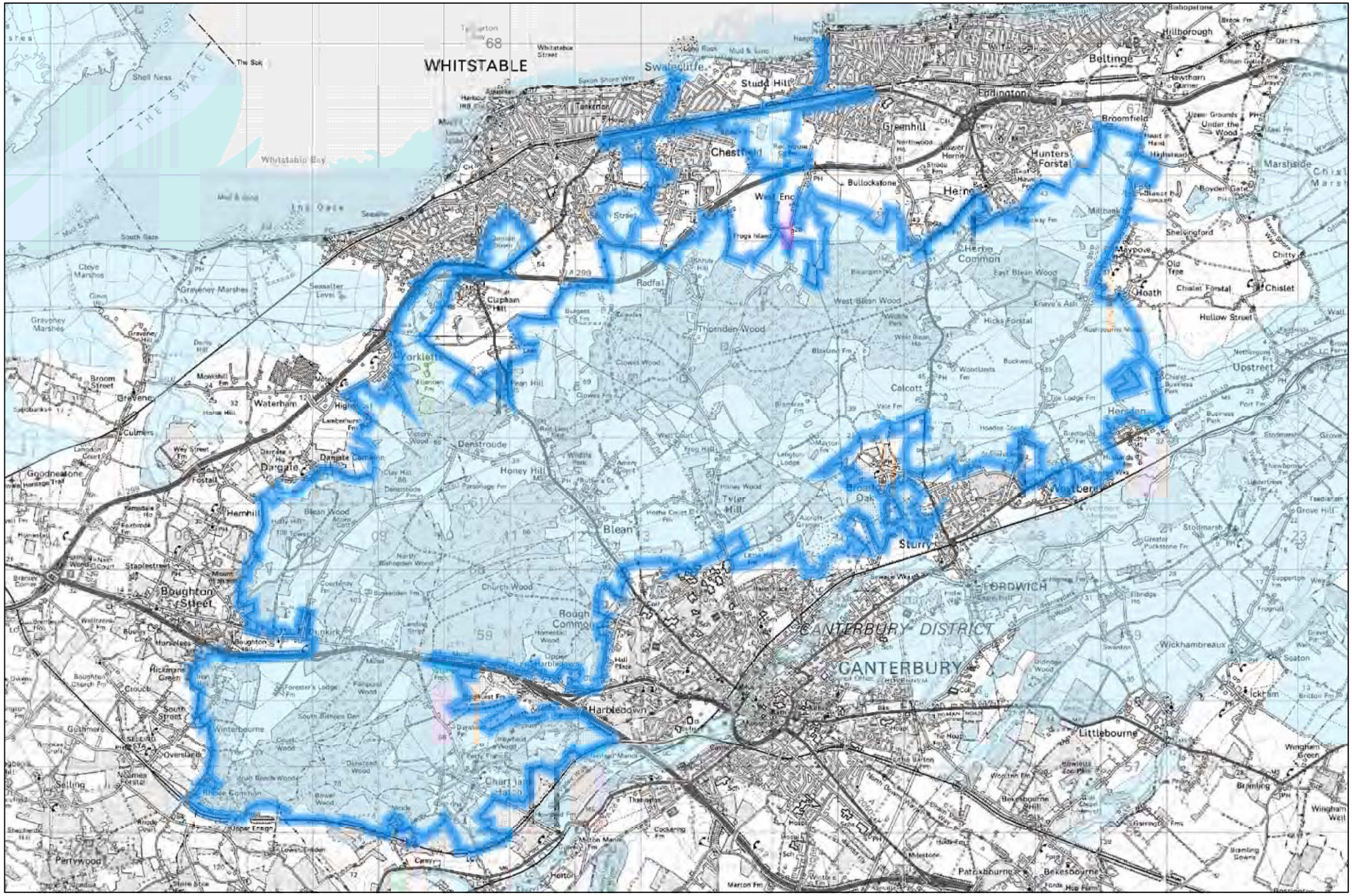
Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - The Blean



Kent Wildlife Trust 2009

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Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

Name: The Blean

Description: The Blean is one of the biggest complexes of ancient semi-natural woodland in England, with much of it designated as NNR, SSSI and LWS. It is of particular importance for birds and several threatened butterfly species, and harbours Kent's last few colonies of the rare Heath Fritillary. Much of this interest has been created and maintained by a long history of coppice management.

Joint Character Area(s): North Kent Plain

Landscape Types: The area known as 'The Blean' is dominated by ancient woodland or ancient replanted woodland. The most densely wooded landscapes correspond to poorer soil, although the perimeter areas have been cleared for agriculture. The acid soil conditions support a significant area of dense heathy woodland, much of which is managed as hornbeam and chestnut coppice. Other landscape features include small pastures within the woodland, wet-fenced pastures on the coastal strip and hedged farmland on the lower slopes. The landscape fits to a great extent within the Blean Landscape Character Area, although the outermost edges fall within the Eastern Fruit Belt LCA to the west and the East Kent Horticultural Belt LCA to the east.

Geology: Thanet beds and London Clay; some overlying drift deposits of Head gravel and Head brickearth.

Biodiversity:

1 One of Kent's most significant woodland areas, with substantial blocks of national and international importance.

2 Within the woodland matrix are important areas of heathland, acid grassland and bog, as well as small areas of neutral grassland.

3 The best known species is the heath fritillary butterfly, but the woods support a large assemblage of rare invertebrates, and are well known for their woodland bird populations. Bat populations are also important.

Targets:

1 Enhance and reconnect woodland to create a very extensive block of habitat, particularly through the maintenance and restoration of coppice management.

2 Restore conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites to suitable, wooded habitat.

3 By 2015, at least 50ha of heath and acid grassland (including grazed wooded heath) should be restored as part of the woodland matrix, in blocks of at least 2ha in extent. Additional opportunities should be pursued for creation of acid grassland and heathland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating up to 145ha.

4 Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 250ha of new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha by 2015.

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement

Biodiversity
Action for Kent's wildlife

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