

APPENDIX 8

National Character Area. 126 South Coast Plain

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on behalf of

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Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper,¹ Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention,³ we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

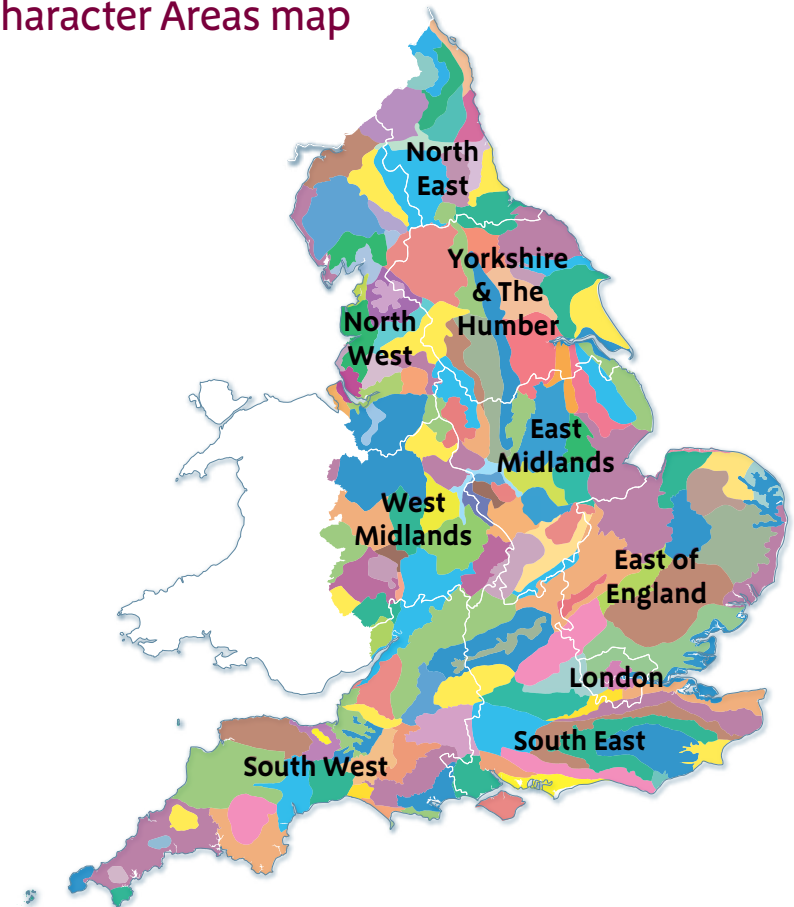
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk.

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The South Coast Plain National Character Area (NCA) is a flat, coastal landscape with an intricately indented shoreline lying between the dip slope of the South Downs and South Hampshire Lowlands and the waters of the English Channel, Solent and part of Southampton Water. The coastline includes several major inlets which have particularly distinctive local landscapes and intertidal habitats of international environmental importance for wildfowl and waders. Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies within the NCA and the foothills of the South Downs, along the northern boundary, fall within the South Downs National Park.

Some three per cent of the area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and there are four Special Protection Areas, two Special Areas of Conservation and four Ramsar sites: Chichester and Langstone Harbour, Pagham Harbour, The Solent and Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour.

The harbours and the Manhood Peninsula, a small triangular peninsula south of Chichester, are the last relatively undeveloped stretches of coastline within the NCA. Elsewhere, there is significant urban development, with settlements along the coast dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, trunk roads, suburban villages and an extensive string of seaside towns between Brighton and Southampton. Modern marinas and boatyards have also added to the harbour landscape. Although heavily developed and highly populated, there is a feeling of openness, particularly where sea views reveal wide expanses of sea and sky, with the Isle of Wight forming a backdrop in the west of the area. Long, linear shingle beaches and more locally, sand dunes, are important coastal features.

The area is generally very low lying and heavily defended against flooding and erosion with various schemes in place, including the country's first managed realignment on the open coast at Medmerry.

The economy is intricately linked to marine and recreational activities such as sailing, boat-building, fishing, heritage sites and recreational sports. Other commercial interests are mainly concentrated in the large urban centres such as Portsmouth and Gosport. The area also supports intensive arable farming and horticulture. Demand for residential and commercial property is ever increasing due to the NCA's attractive nature and strategic location for national and international trade.

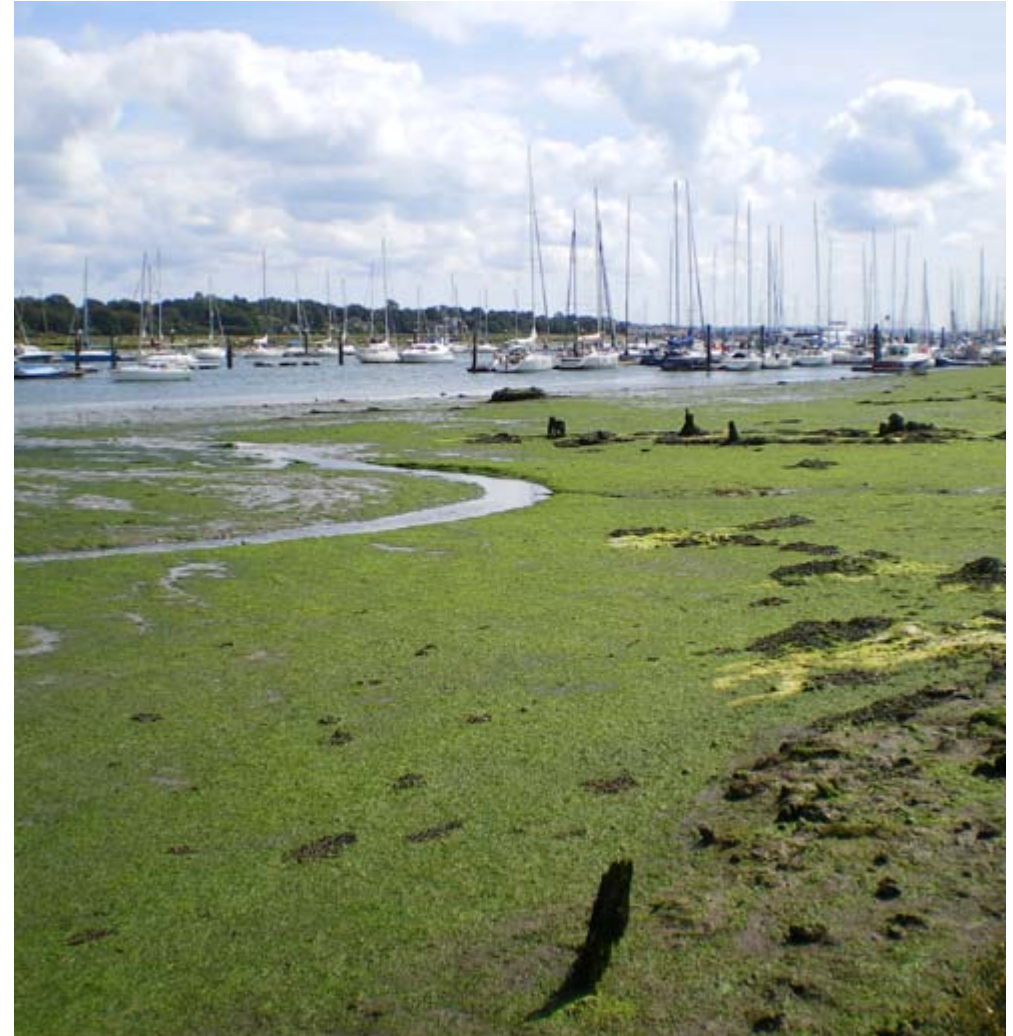
Future management of this NCA requires balancing the needs of often competing interests. Protection against flooding remains a priority to encourage growth and allow internationally important habitats and species to flourish, while also maintaining the productive landscape and historic and geological features of the area.

[Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce](#)

[Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce](#)

Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

- **SEO 1:** Plan for and manage the effects of coastal change by allowing the operation of natural coastal processes and improving the sustainability of current management practices along the diverse coastline to successfully integrate the needs of the natural environment, landscape, local communities, agriculture, tourism and recreation amid significant urban stretches.
- **SEO 2:** Plan for the creation of a strong landscape framework within and around major settlements and identified growth areas, while managing and enhancing existing greenspace and access, and balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the natural environment.
- **SEO 3:** Manage and significantly enhance the area's rivers and chalk streams and their wetland valley habitats to provide resilience against climate change and improve flood protection and water quality, particularly in the internationally designated sites such as Chichester and Pagham harbours, for the benefit of local communities and wildlife.
- **SEO 4:** Manage the rich archaeological and historic resource and geological exposures within the farmed, coastal and peri-urban landscape, including the longstanding associations of horticultural and maritime industries and the military, enhancing a strong sense of place.



Hamble Estuary.