

# Chichester Harbour **Site Management Plan**

## A Working Document **2023-2030**

### **North Common and Saltmarsh**



Enjoying, Protecting, Enhancing



CHICHESTER  
HARBOUR  
CONSERVANCY

# Chichester Harbour

## Site Management Plan 2023-30

### North Common and Saltmarsh

North Common is within Chichester Harbour AONB and is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The saltmarsh and adjacent mudland is also part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Special Protection Area (SPA), and the Ramsar Site. The site gives fantastic views across Sweare Deep to the extensive mudflats and saltmarsh to the east and north, and then onto Emsworth and Thorney Island. It is a great place to view the birdlife of the Harbour.

North Common is part of Northney Village, which is supported by North East Hayling Residents Association (NEHRA). According to the Landscape Character Assessment (2007), the settlement of North Hayling was first documented as 'Heglingaigaen' in 956AD, and in 1256AD as 'Northeneye'. The parish church of St Peter dates to the 12th Century with the early settlement shown predominantly to the north of the church.

In 1996, the development of Spinnaker Grange consisted of 31 new red brick dwellings, which remain prominent on the landscape today. It is the largest single housing development to take place in the AONB since it was designated in 1964. Spinnaker Grange is directly adjacent to North Common, as are Northney Marina, Langstone Quays Resort and a number of residential properties along Northney Road.

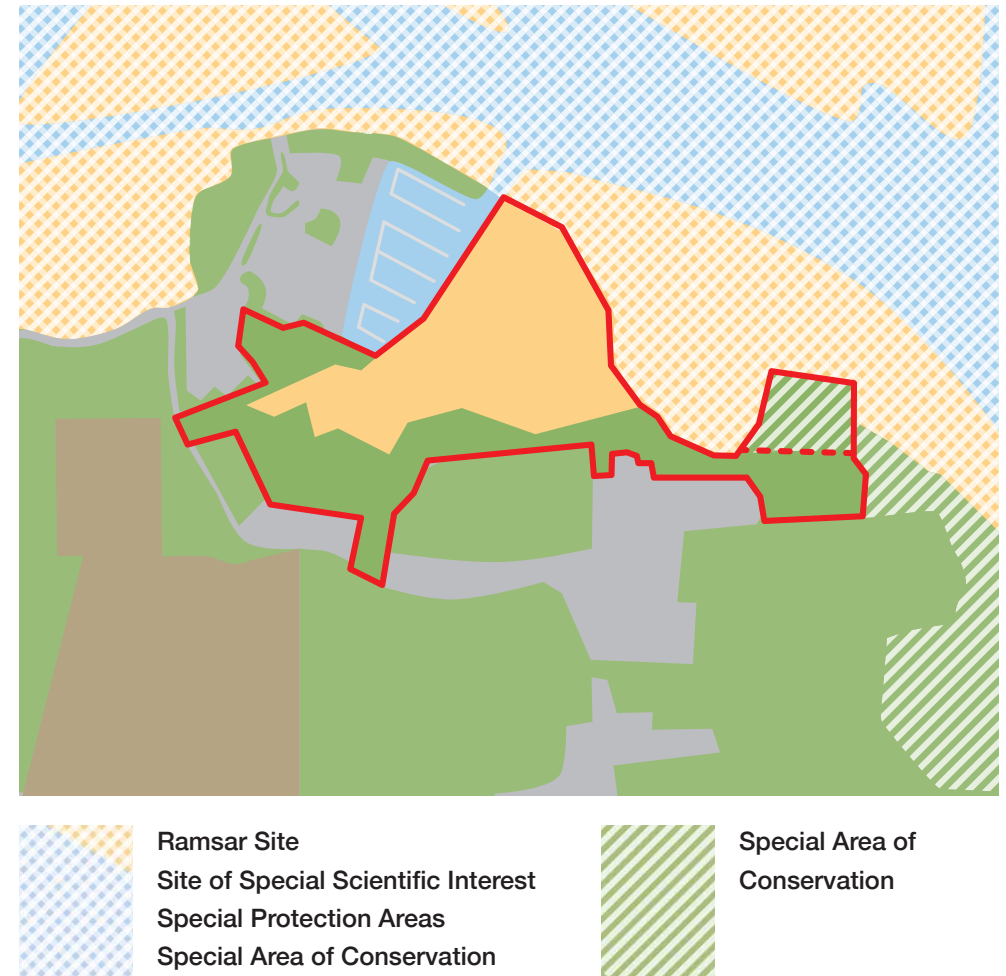
North Common is owned by Havant Borough Council. Although a Permissive Path runs through North Common, it is not an official Public Right of Way. To the western side of North Common is an unofficial footpath which connects the open space to Langstone Quays Resort. Residents of Spinnaker Grange can access North Common via two metal gates, which are not open to the public. The eastern side of North Common abuts Northney Farm, with no public access available from this direction.

The only public access point is therefore through a small car park off Northney Road. The car park has a height limit of 2 metres and can accommodate around 10 cars. An access gate can be opened with a standard radar key, for users of wheelchairs/mobility scooters. The main path has been upgraded to be accessible for wheelchairs/mobility scooters. Other forms of transport, such as cycling and quad bikes, are not permitted. There are two posts for securing bicycles in the car park. There are several benches placed at appropriate viewpoints across the water. A network of unofficial paths run throughout North Common which are popular with hikers and dog walkers.



Address	Northney Road, Hayling Island, PO11 0ND
Grid Reference	SU728037
Size	North Common 9 hectares, Saltmarsh 17 hectares
Local Authorities	Havant Borough Council, Hampshire County Council
Landowner	Havant Borough Council
Management	All works must be approved by Havant Borough Council
Designations	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - Partial Special Protection Area (SPA) - Partial Ramsar Site - Partial

## Location Maps



## Management

**North Common is entirely within the Amenity Area of Chichester Harbour Conservancy. It is likely that Havant Borough Council will manage the site so as to maximise its biodiversity net gain (BNG) value in years to come. BNG is a strategy to develop land and contribute to the recovery of nature. It is a way of making sure the habitats for wildlife within the Borough will be in a better state as development takes place over the coming years.**

## Steering Group

The North Common Steering Group will meet on an annual basis. The attendees will be Chichester Harbour Conservancy, Coastal Partners, the Friends of Chichester Harbour, Hampshire County Council, Havant Borough Council, Havant Tree Wardens, and the North East Hayling Residents Association.

## Access

With permission from Havant Borough Council, Chichester Harbour Conservancy will cut the verge alongside to the footpath at least twice per year during the spring and summer to maintain access. Views from the benches across the water will be maintained.



## Habitats

North Common is a mosaic of scrub, grassland, and occasional mature trees, adjacent to an intertidal bay made up of mudflat, tidal creek and saltmarsh. All the habitats are ecologically important, and due to the location of the site, it's undeveloped nature provides an important 'corridor' for many species to move around the harbour.

### Saltmarsh

High quality saltmarsh can be found to the north of North Common. This semi-natural feature acts as a sea defence helping to break and disperse wave energy. It is also a carbon sink, locking decomposed organic matter away under the saltmarsh rather than releasing it into the atmosphere. This habitat is important feeding ground for a variety of fish at high tide, and shoreline birds at low tide.

The saltmarsh has a varied topography, giving the area a high degree of complexity within a small area. The remains of the old seawall is now an important roost for waders at high water, particularly redshank.

### Mudland

To the north of the saltmarsh is Sweare Deep, which has access to Northney Marina at all states of the tide. The mudland supports large populations of marine worms, crustacean and shellfish and provides feeding grounds for several species of birds including waders and wildfowl in the autumn and winter.

### Scrub

Scrub is one of the most familiar habitats at North Common. It is made up of blackthorn, hawthorn, elder, ash, oak, elm and dogwood with areas of gorse, sallow, sycamore alongside dense patches of bramble. It is often unfortunately thought of as an eyesore and uninviting due to its thorny nature. However, it is valuable habitat providing food and shelter for a range of invertebrates and small mammals, and supports a range of resident and migrant birds – cetti's

warbler, whitethroats, blackcaps, blackbirds, dunnocks and robins all breed, and redwings and fieldfares visit in the winter.

Occasional scrub clearance work will take place led by Chichester Harbour Conservancy with support from the Friends of Chichester Harbour Conservation Work Parties. Small areas of scrub will be cut and removed annually on a rotation to ensure a diverse structure across the site and to ensure the grassland areas remain open. This intervention is sufficient to control the bramble.

### Wildflower Meadow

North Common has a site for a stunning wildflower meadow, which includes orchids, north of the Harbourside dwellings of Spinnaker Grange. They are traditional habitat of the coastal plain, beautiful to look at and fantastic for pollinators and other wildlife. The continued success of the wildflower meadow is dependent on an appropriate cutting regime:

- Cutting is only to take place between September and December.
- All the cuttings to be removed from the site, otherwise they will decompose, and the meadow will lose its botanical diversity.

All works must be permitted by Havant Borough Council.

### Trees

When Spinnaker Grange was built in the mid-1990s, the development was designed to be completely screened by trees so the red-brick dwellings would not be visible from the water. Historically, attempts to plant new trees have been resisted by residents for this very reason – to protect views out across the water. The remaining trees are valuable and any new saplings that are planted must be looked after. The trees across the whole of North Common are a natural feature of the area. They help to strengthen the soil structure, provide a habitat for wildlife, and can act as a windbreak for the nearby dwellings. Therefore the trimming of trees is not permitted.



## Shoreline Defences

The eastern end and middle of North Common are on high ground, and the chances of the shoreline defence being overtopped before 2030, the duration of this Site Management Plan, is low. The western end is on lower ground and defended by a mud bund wall that requires maintenance to avoid overtopping in the event of a spring tide coinciding with inclement weather.

The primary shoreline defence is natural saltmarsh, with a secondary defence provided by concrete blocks. To a large extent, over the past decades these blocks have been grown over by native plants. Although some of the blocks are no longer visible, they remain in place and continue to serve their purpose.

Havant Borough Council are responsible for the maintenance of the shoreline defences.

## Surface Water Drainage

There are some issues with surface water drainage at North Common, as shown on the map. This is caused when the land is saturated, alongside soil being deposited along the road and into the ditches and watercourses, adding to the detrimental effect. There are wider opportunities to allow greater surface water management at North Common. This could be achieved by regular ditch clearance, by restoring surface water storage areas, such as on-line and off-line scrapes, and restoring ponds watercourses across the Common, as shown on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map. These areas are still wet but have been largely lost though the current reeds are probably the main indicators of what was there.

Online scrapes are when water is temporarily stored within the river channel and its floodplain.





Offline scrapes are when the water is diverted from the river channel, stored in a separate area (which may be part of the floodplain) and subsequently released back to the river or to another watercourse.



1898 Ordnance Survey map



### Northney Surface Water Drainage Key

- Area for Ecology Survey 
- WFD Survey
- Watercourse 
- Ditch 
- Pond 

## Monitoring and Survey

A seasonal survey is carried out by the Conservancy's Ecologist to monitor the condition of the site.

## Other

- The public refuse bins are emptied by Havant Borough Council.
- A Sewage Pumping Station is located to the north-west of Spinnaker Grange. Access to the station will be maintained, from Spinnaker Grange.
- For the purposes of clarity, any off-site garden waste, or general household litter, illegally disposed of at North Common will be treated as fly-tipping and subject to prosecution. Green waste adds to the nitrate levels in the Harbour, which detrimentally affects water quality and coastal habitats.
- There are no plans to install additional benches.
- This Site Management Plan was subject to a public consultation between 8 January and 28 February 2022. It is a working guidance document without any statutory weight.



Hampshire  
County Council

**Havant**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



## Appendix

### North Common Steering Group - Terms of Reference

The North Common Steering Group convenes to support the management of North Common within Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is an advisory body to Havant Borough Council without any legal responsibilities.

### Frequency of Meetings

Meetings will be held on an annual basis. If such situation warrants, additional meetings may be convened at the discretion of the Chairman.

### Attendees

Organisations: Chichester Harbour Conservancy  
Coastal Partners  
The Friends of Chichester Harbour  
Hampshire County Council  
Havant Borough Council  
Havant Tree Wardens  
North East Hayling Residents Association

Quorum: Four of the above organisations.

### Term of Appointment

One year.

### Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The Steering Group shall appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairman on an annual basis.

The maximum term for a someone to serve as Chairman normally will be limited to three years (subject to annual appointment) but may in exceptional circumstances be extended by up to a further three years.

The maximum term for a someone to serve as Vice Chairman normally will be limited to three years (subject to annual appointment) but may in exceptional circumstances be extended by up to a further three years.

### Roles

- The role of the Chairman is to ensure that the Terms of Reference are adhered to.
- The Chairman is also to act as a first point of contact for the rest of the Steering Group.
- The Vice-Chairman will substitute for the Chairman in his or her absence; and act as a regular attendee at all other times.
- The Steering Group is to ensure that decisions adhere to the policies and ambitions in the Chichester Harbour Management Plan and subsequent iterations.
- The Steering Group is to act in an objective, fair, impartial and open-minded way, and in the best interests of the North Common.
- Minutes of the Steering Group meetings will be recorded by the North East Hayling Residents Association.

### Responsibilities

The Steering Group is to have regard to Section 21 of the Chichester Harbour Conservancy Act 1971, which lays down Chichester Harbour Conservancy's function as follows:

- (1) *It shall be the function of the Conservancy, subject to the provisions of this Act, to take such steps from time to time as to them seem meet for the conservancy, maintenance and improvement of:*
  - a) The harbour, for the use of pleasure craft and such other vessels as may seek to use the same;*
  - b) The amenity area, for the occupation of leisure and recreation and the conservation of nature:*

*and the facilities (including, in relation to the harbour, navigational facilities) afforded respectively therein or in connection therewith.*
- (2) *In the fulfilment of the function with which they are charged by subsection (1) of this section, the Conservancy shall have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside and of avoiding interference with fisheries.*

## Responsibilities continued

The Steering Group is to have regard for the primary purpose of AONB designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

The Steering Group is to have regard for other environmental designations in and around Chichester Harbour, as listed in the Management Plan (2019-2024).

## Conflicts of Interest

Individuals must declare at the start of the meeting any pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interest they may have in relation to items on the agenda, or at any time during the meeting if it becomes apparent that this may be required when the particular item or issue is considered, and which may affect his or her further participation in the meeting.

Any person who declares a pecuniary or prejudicial interest in any given item must withdraw from the meeting during discussion of that item and will not be permitted to comment nor vote on a related matter.

## Meetings in Public

Any member of the public may attend any meeting of the Steering Group as an observer. At the Chairman's discretion, a member of the public may be invited to participate in the meeting should they be able to provide matters of fact to inform the decision-making process.

