

# HOLME-NEXT-THE-SEA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## EVIDENCE GATHERING: OUR ENVIRONMENT - PROTECTED SITES

The majority of respondents to the Questionnaire Survey expressed concerns about the possibility of damage to our environment as a result of inappropriate development. Respondents also made clear that they were strongly in favour of a Neighbourhood Plan that actively promotes environmental management and preserves the special features of the Parish for future generations.

Posters presented at the May 2016 consultation showed that almost 50% of the Parish consists of landscape and wildlife that is protected by international treaty (RAMSAR) and EU legislation (SAC - the Habitats Directive and SPA - the Birds Directive). Much of this protection is translated into UK law under the umbrella of the SSSI designation and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations of 1994 (as amended) alongside The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

Current legislation requires that any plan or project either alone, or in combination with other existing plans and projects, that might impact on a European Protected Site must be screened to determine whether that impact is likely to be 'significant'. If it is, then (i) an Environmental Report must be created as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment of what the impacts might be and whether they can be avoided or mitigated and (ii) a Habitats Regulations Assessment will then be required to determine whether the project or plan threatens the integrity of the site(s) in question and whether it can proceed.

This poster shows the work so far done on the screening process. As required by current guidance it focuses on establishing what the conservation objectives of the protected sites are so that any impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan can be tested against these objectives. This work will make a key contribution to the Evidence Base required in order to demonstrate that our plan can proceed and deliver the demands of the Parish for effective environmental management.

Pintail, Bittern, Garganey, Wigeon

Shore Lark, Snow Bunting

**SAND DUNE SYSTEMS**  
Three types of dunes are mentioned as primary reasons for the SAC designation - embryonic shifting dunes, shifting (white) dunes and fixed (grey) dunes. Couch and Marram grasses (*Elytrigia juncea*, *Ammophila arenaria*) play a key role in stabilising the dunes which display a complex pattern of erosion and development. Groyne have been installed along part of the complex to encourage dune development but significant erosion also occurs during storms. The dunes form part of Holme's sea defences and the Shoreline Management Plan has a policy of 'managed retreat'. In the event of a major breach new defences would be installed to protect the village - but the protected sites behind the dunes would be left to the sea.

**COASTAL LAGOONS**  
Coastal Lagoons are a particularly important ('priority') feature of the SAC. The largest area occurs behind Blakeney spit but those at Holme are also notable for their form and biodiversity. Broadwater Lake is a long established feature in a relic meander of the now canalised River Hun. Its reed beds support a number of important species. New lagoons appear to be forming to the north of the golf course.

Common Tern, Knot, Mediterranean Gull, Ringed Plover

**BEACH AND INTERTIDAL ZONE**  
Whilst not specifically referred to as a qualifying feature for the SAC this area constitutes one of the best beaches in the region and is central to supporting very large populations of shoreline birds - both resident and migratory. Areas of peat from a relic forest are clearly visible along parts of the beach and evidence of previous settlement has been found in the form of Holme's SeaHenges.

Natterjack toad

**HUMID DUNE SLACKS**  
These form in the depressions between dunes. They are often very close to the water table. Whilst naturally they are poor in nutrients they provide a specialised environment which can become species rich. Transient pools are a feature of wet weather and these can provide excellent breeding sites for Natterjack Toads. Re-introduction of the Natterjack is a major success story for the conservation managers at Holme Dunes and they have now spread throughout the village.

**PERENNIAL VEGETATION OF STONY BANKS**  
The SAC boasts spectacular shingle banks at Salthouse and Blakeney. At Holme these features are not so developed - but nevertheless there are raised areas of relatively fine shingle. These often tend to be mixed with sand/silt and rapidly become vegetated. Nevertheless they succeed in supporting a small population of Little Terns (*Sterna Albibifrons*).

Twite, Avocet, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit

**MEDITERRANEAN & THERMO-ATLANTIC HALOPHILOUS SHRUBS**  
The SAC represents one of the best examples of this saltmarsh assemblage of plants in the UK with a particularly diverse set of characteristic plant species including shrubby sea blite (*Suaeda vera*), sea purslane (*Atriplex portulacaoides*) and perennial glasswort (*Sarcocornia perennis*). Sea lavender (*Limonium vulgare*) is a spectacular feature of the marshes in summer and the entire vegetation assemblage provides excellent cover and feeding grounds for a very wide spectrum of both resident and migratory birds. The mudflats and creeks that dissect the marshes support a wide variety of waders.

Little Tern, Roseate Tern, Sandwich Tern

**COASTAL GRAZING MARSHES AND DITCHES**  
Whilst not specifically referred to as a qualifying feature for the SAC the marshes and drainage ditches are a key habitat for a variety of species which are qualifying features for the SPA. These include both raptors and geese which form an essential feature of the local skies and fields. All of these species rely on effective management of this habitat for their future. They also rely on adjacent grassland, copses and arable farmland as a source of shelter and food.

Hen Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Pink Footed Goose

Golden Plover, White Fronted Goose

In the display above the large photographs show the habitats that are qualifying features for the SAC or essential habitats for the birds protected by the SPA. Conservation of these qualifying features is the key objective for the protected sites. The Parish only contains a part of the protected sites but it is clear from the photographs that all of the key habitats are present - and furthermore Holme contains particularly rich and important examples of some of them. Similarly, the birds that are qualifying features for the SPA are shown in the small photographs. Many of the species rely on multiple features of the SAC for their success but their photographs have been linked to the habitats where they are most likely to be seen. Conservation of these particular birds is the priority objective for the SPA.

The table presents a consolidated list of all the birds and mammals which are qualifying features for the protected sites. Using data provided by the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) checks have been made to see how many of these species are present at Holme. The results show that almost all of them have been observed here since 2010. A question mark indicates very small numbers or unconfirmed sightings.

Strategic Environmental Screening of the Neighbourhood Plan must focus on this list of species and habitats. The last evaluation of site status by English Nature appears to have taken place over five years ago. It concluded that overall they were in 'favourable condition'. The plan team are now using NBIS and other data to establish an up to date, baseline 'state of the environment' for the protected areas in the Parish so that any impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed. The findings presented here suggest that the sites are still in good condition but a number of very clear threats to maintaining that status need to be considered for the future. These include Water Quality deterioration, Air Quality Issues and visitor pressures.

Common name	Latin name	Reported at Holme in last 5 years	Common name	Latin name	Reported at Holme in last 5 years
1 Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓	16 Pink Footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	✓
2 Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	✓	17 Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓
3 Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	✓	18 Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓
4 Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	✓	19 Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓
5 Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓	20 Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougalli</i>	x
6 Brent Goose (dark bellied)	<i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>	✓	21 Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	✓
7 Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓	22 Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	✓
8 Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	?	23 Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	?
9 Golden Plover	<i>Pufulialis apricaria</i>	✓	24 Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	✓
10 Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	✓	25 Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	✓
11 Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	✓	26 White Fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i>	✓
12 Little Tern	<i>Sterna albibifrons</i>	✓	27 Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	✓
13 Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓			
14 Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	✓	28 Natterjack Toad	<i>Bufo calamita</i>	✓
15 Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	?	29 Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	?