

Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA Condition Assessment



What is a Condition Assessment?

- Used to provide information on the condition of marine features for statutory and non-statutory reporting obligations (Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, OSPAR Convention, Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, Environmental Targets (Marine Protected Areas) Regulations 2022)
- Underpins advice on site management and casework.
- Alongside policy drivers - favourable condition of 70% of sites
- Complete approach
 - Builds and improves on [Common Standards Monitoring](#)
 - Clear, accessible results
 - Uses all available evidence

Summary of the Process

Attributes- Metrics used to describe condition of the feature. Tested against targets using a range of evidence, pass/fail. Principal and secondary attributes form the assessment. Each judgement needs a confidence score & rationale



Feature Wide Attribute Assessment - Mobile bird features,. E.g. Common tern, Sanderling, Ringed Plover. Attributes are collated and weighted, condition is then ascribed



Feature Level Assessment – Due to bird features mobile nature, feature wide attribute assessments are the final steps and are transferred over entirely to the feature level assessment.

[Guidance document](#)



@AllAboutBirds

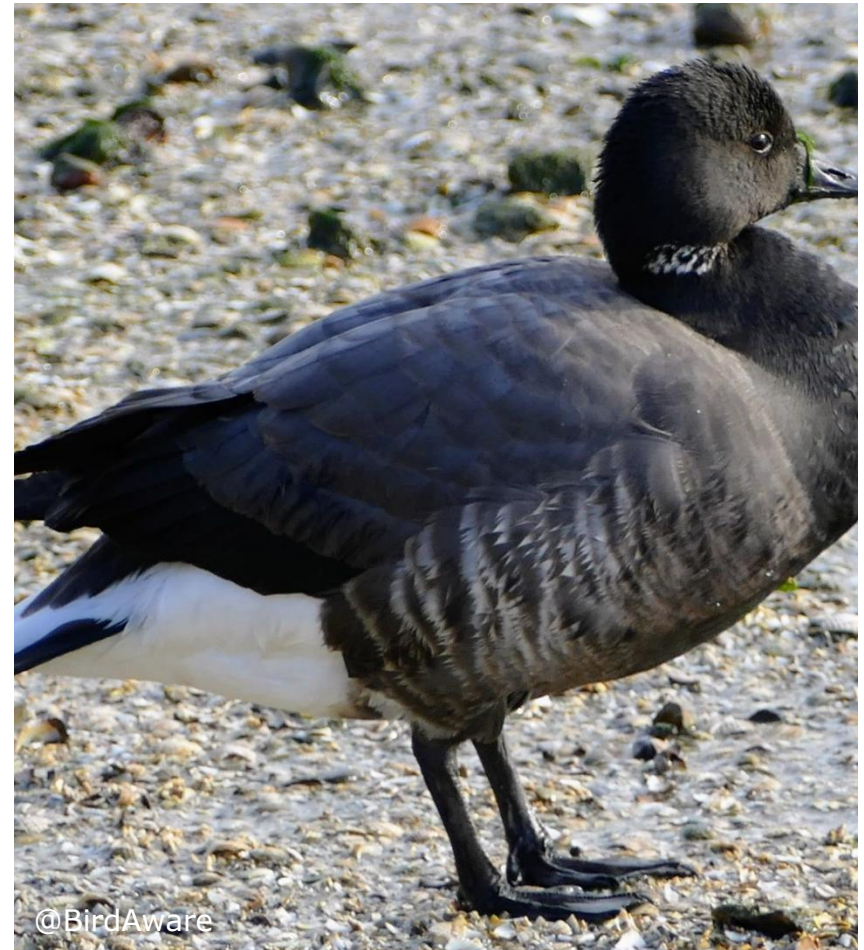
Favourable

- When a feature has passed both principal attributes:
 - Non-Breeding/Breeding population: Abundance
 - Supporting habitat: extent, distribution and availability of supporting habitat for the non-breeding season
- Case study: Pintail – reliant on stable habitats, abundance 19% increase above target

Summary of the process - Conditions

Unfavourable – Recovering

- When a feature has failed one principal attribute, but the feature is showing positive signs with regard to abundance numbers or other relevant targets
- Case study: Dark-bellied brent goose – habitat of seagrass failing, but abundance within natural fluctuation at 12% below target





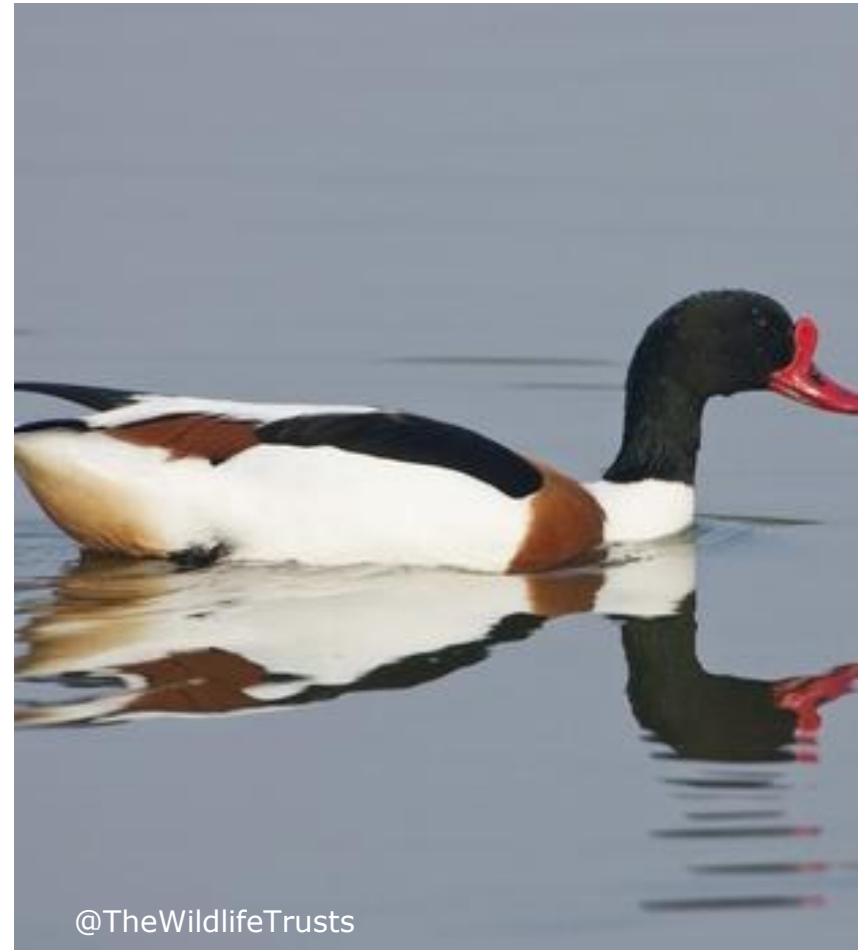
Unfavourable – No Change

- Where one or both attributes have failed and the feature is in stagnant decline, showing no signs of recovery
- Case study: Sanderling – 49% decline in abundance, borderline fail, reliance on saltmarsh means a fail, but also able to use sediment

Summary of the process - Conditions

Unfavourable – Declining

- When one or both principal attributes have failed and are declining significantly in comparison with the target
- Case Study: Shelduck – 82% decline in abundance below target, habitats key to roosting process failed



Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA

- 19 Bird Features as demonstrated below:

Non-Breeding (Overwintering)

Waterfowl

Dark-bellied brent
goose

Shelduck

Wigeon

Teal

Pintail

Shoveler

Red-breasted
merganser

Waders

Ringed plover

Grey plover

Sanderling

Dunlin

Bar-tailed godwit

Curlew

Redshank

Turnstone

Breeding (March – September)

Common Tern

Little Tern

Sandwich Tern

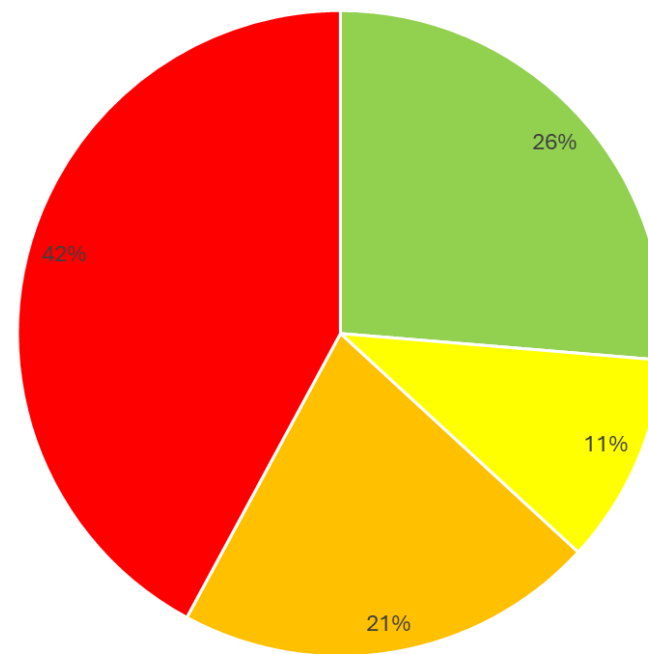
Aggregations

All non-breeding
waterbird assemblage
qualifying features



Results – Summary of Feature Level Assessment

Favourable	Unfavourable - declining
Pintail	Shelduck
Red-breasted merganser	Teal
Curlew	Grey plover
Redshank	Dunlin
Turnstone	Bar-tailed godwit
Unfavourable - recovering	Little tern
Dark-bellied brent goose	Ringed Plover
Wigeon	Waterbird assemblage
Unfavourable – no change	Total: 5 features
Sanderling	favourable, 2 features
Shoveler	unfavourable recovering, 4
Sandwich tern	features unfavourable no
Common tern	change and 8 features
	unfavourable declining



■ Favourable ■ Unfavourable - recovering
■ Unfavourable - no change ■ Unfavourable - declining

Adverse Condition Drivers



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Several reasons for unfavourable status:

- **Abundance declines;**
- **Decrease in extent of key habitats, including saltmarsh and seagrass;**
- **Elevated nutrient levels;**
- **Recreational Disturbance**

Abundance



- 10 of 19 features failed abundance (including assemblage feature and one breeding feature)
- Climactic factors an issue for some features – but uncertainty around site-specific pressure
- Issues: WeBS Alerts outdated, pandemic counts

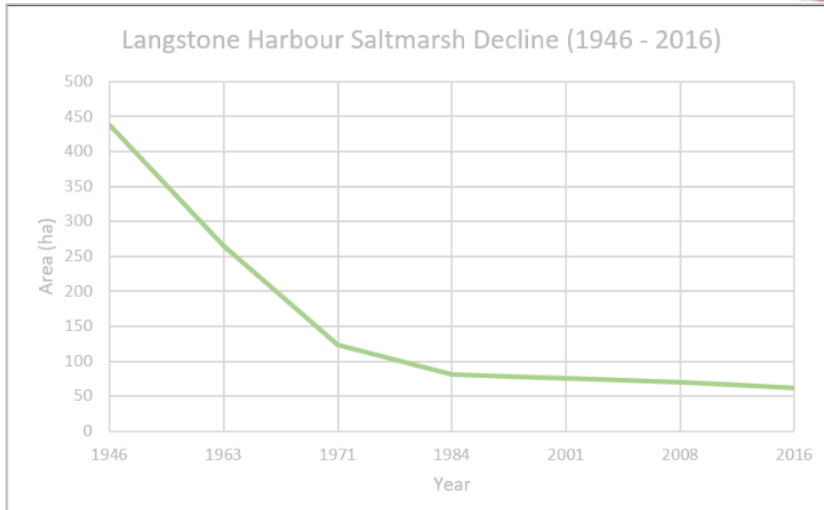
WeBS alerts: tracks abundance from baseline winter (1984/85) to the reference winter (2017/18) - >50% decline is a fail

Comparison between the highest latest count in the latest five-year period (2017/18 – 2021/22) and the lowest earliest count in the five-year period prior to designation (1982/83 – 1986/87) – highest latest < lowest earliest is a fail

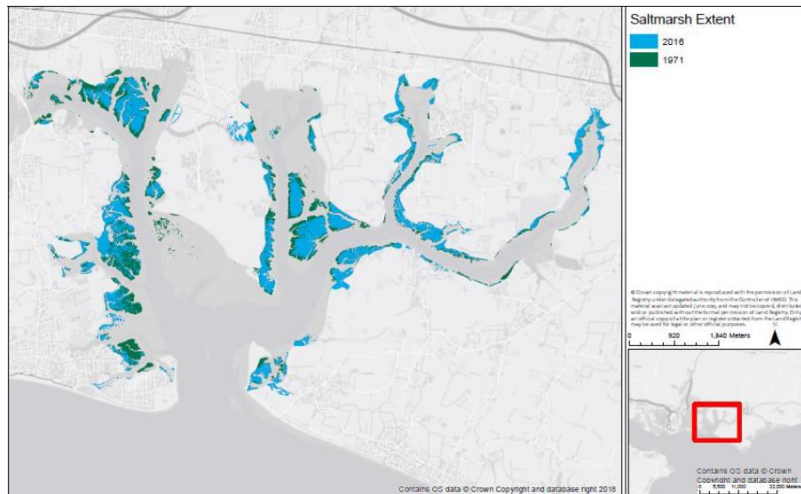
Comparison between the baseline five-year peak mean (1982/83 – 1986/87) and the most recent five-year peak mean (2017/18 – 2021/22) - >50% decline is a fail

However, results are subject to assessors' discretion!

Seagrass and Saltmarsh Declines



- The SPA has seen a decrease of 45.16% in saltmarsh and 20.69% in seagrass in comparison with the target
- Threshold for passing is for decline to be within 5% of the target
- 13 of 19 features failed the primary attribute of Supporting Habitat: extent, distribution and availability of supporting habitat for the non-breeding/breeding season



Water Quality - Nutrients

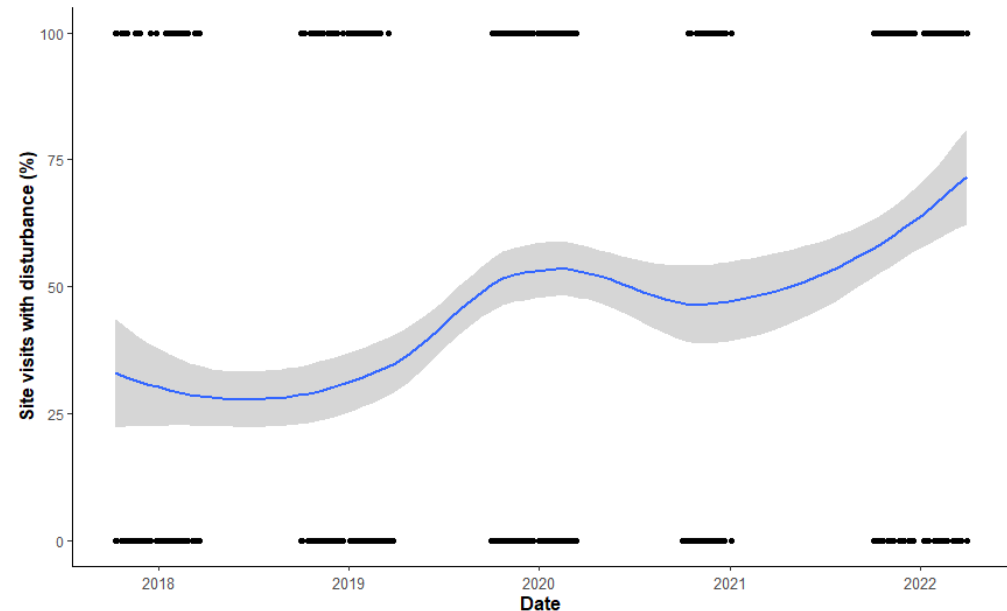


- Both harbours ecological status are rated as moderate by the Environment Agency (EA)
- Chichester is rated moderate for Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN), Langstone is rated good
- Eutrophication evident across both harbours through macroalgal bloom density data provided by the EA

All units	Total available intertidal sediment (AIS) in units (ha) (APEM, 2016)	25-50% cover in units (ha)	50-75% cover in units (ha)	75-100% cover in units (ha)	Total available sediment covered by macroalgae (25-100% coverage) (ha)
2009	1203.37	144.6 (12% of total intertidal sediment)	74.6 (6.2% of total intertidal sediment)	44.2 (3.6% of total intertidal sediment)	263.4 (21.8% of total intertidal sediment)
2011	1203.37	231.2 (19.2% of total intertidal sediment)	114.2 (9.4% of total intertidal sediment)	77.1 (6.5% of total intertidal sediment)	422.5 (35.1% of total intertidal sediment)
2014	1203.37	100.1 (8.2% of total intertidal sediment)	112.2 (9.3% of total intertidal sediment)	99.4 (8.3% of total intertidal sediment)	311.7 (25.8% of total intertidal sediment)
2018	1203.37	153.9 (12.8% of total intertidal sediment)	83.3 (6.9% of total intertidal sediment)	121.7 (10.1% of total intertidal sediment)	237.2 (29.8% of total intertidal sediment)
Green = Attribute Passed			Red = Attribute failed		
Assessment area name	Assessment area (ha)	Area of intertidal habitat (AIH)(ha)	Percentage coverage of AIH of opportunistic macroalgae 2011	Percentage coverage of AIH of opportunistic macroalgae 2014	Percentage coverage of AIH of opportunistic macroalgae 2018
Fishbourne Channel*	325.11	223.98	42.84	22.52	35.58
Bosham Channel*	208.39	146.85	62.21	32.23	42.46
Thorney Channel*	597.55	450.40	48.30	12.76	21.41
Emsworth Channel	510.89	382.42	52.70	17.16	29.44
Harbour East	246.94	146.52	39.94	15.58 (borderline)	21.27
Harbour West	447.57	359.55	32.39	7.29	15.17 (borderline)
Harbour Central (sandy)	572.03	333.36	15.12 (borderline)	5.91	6.47
Harbour Outer	371.28	44.92	0.24	0.05	0.43

Recreational Disturbance

- Bird aware Solent Ranger visits show increases from around 30% in 2017/18 to 65% in 2021-2022
- Matches with population – 8.7% increase from 2011-2021 in East Hampshire
- ReMEDIES surveys showed prevalence of windsurfing, paddleboarding and kayak/canoe use in Langstone Harbour (17.1 vessel movements per survey)



Data Gaps

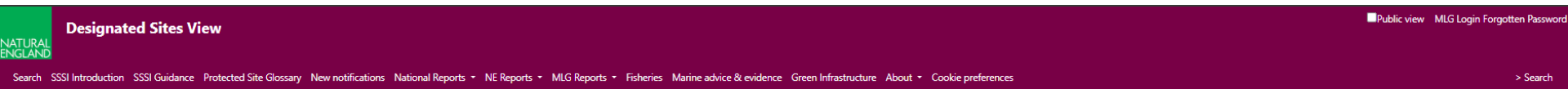
- No saltmarsh extent surveys at the SPA since 2016 – almost 10 years old
- No intertidal sediment survey since 2015, with potential signs of stressors cited in the last completed survey
- Latest Macroalgal mat data was in 2018
- Lack of shingle and coastal grazing marsh data



Where to Access the Condition Assessment



- Designated Sites View:
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx>
- Simple search tool



Search for designated site details

This page allows you to view detailed information about sites designated for their wildlife or geological interest

Feature Condition

In 2016, Natural England trialled and rolled out a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) condition assessment methodology that provides robust results and information on the condition of marine features designated within MPAs in England. With guidance from National teams and using all available evidence and condition monitoring data, Area Teams conduct these assessments following a standardised approach that assesses if the feature and sub feature conservation targets set for each MPA have been met.

To date, condition assessments have been completed for a number of features in a range of marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) by the National and Area Teams. Further marine habitat features in SACs and other MPAs will continue to be assessed in the future. The new method can now also be applied to complete habitat and species condition assessments for other MPAs in England, whilst still meeting the different processes in place to report on the results of condition of features in Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Different processes are currently in place to decide and report on the condition of non-marine habitat and species features of SACs.

The main part of the assessment process is directly undertaken and stored here on Natural England's Designated Sites View. [The details for the most recent assessments of this site can be found here.](#) available.

* If you know the name of a designated site and want to know more about it, you can search for it by typing all, or part of the name, below.

To view all the sites of a given designation (e.g. Local Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest etc.) you can select it using the 'Designation type' drop-down.

If you select a county (from the drop-down list), all the sites within that county will be displayed. (Note, that a standardised set of counties has been used rather than unitary authorities.)

You can also combine searches: for example, typing the word 'river' in 'Site name' and selecting 'Staffordshire' as a county will show all sites in Staffordshire with 'river' in the name. Selecting 'Norfolk' as a county and the Designation type 'Local Nature Reserve' will show all those Reserves in Norfolk.

For an interactive map that can be explored using various mapping tools that are included, please see the [MAGIC \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://defra.gov.uk/magic) website.

Please follow the links for information on seeking Natural England's advice to [public bodies](#) and to [owner/occupiers](#).

Conclusions

The Chichester and Langstone SPA condition assessment:

- Builds on other work in recent years to show the declining condition of designated species and the habitat upon which they rely across Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA
- Demonstrates the need for continuing data collection and new evidence
- Identifies site-specific issues
- Aids better management

Thank you! Any questions?

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