

C8 Zone 8: Calshot Spit

Calshot Spit is a shingle bank extending out into the southern end of Southampton Water, backed by marshes that are of great interest for nature conservation. It is of much historical significance as the site of one of Henry VIII's defensive batteries (Calshot Castle) and because of its prominent role in marine warfare during both World Wars. Today, it is used primarily for recreation; the Activity Centre in the hangers provides a unique venue for coast-related sports and other activities.

Features and interest

Description

- C8.1 This zone extends from the Bourne Gap south-west of Calshot Spit to include the whole of the Spit, adjoining scattered development at Hillhead and Calshot, and the grassland and marshes to the north-west. It is a flat, open landscape, and most of it is included in the eastern extremity of the South Hampshire Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are now proposals to include this AONB and indeed the whole of Calshot in the New Forest National Park. The coast offers panoramic views of the Solent, Southampton Water and the Isle of Wight, but is dominated visually by the Fawley Power Station to the north-west (see Zone 9). Access is via the B3053 from Fawley. The neck of the Spit, which is owned and maintained by the District Council, carries a narrow access road to the Activity Centre, with a row of privately owned beach huts along its seaward side. At the eastern end of the Spit there is a cluster of buildings that include Calshot Castle, the Coastguards radar tower, and the former seaplane hangers and other associated buildings that are now occupied by the Calshot Activity Centre. The Activity Centre and surrounding land is owned by the Crown Estate Commissioners and leased to Hampshire County Council.
- C8.2 There is an amenity car park at Hillhead; further parking is available on the Spit itself and at the Activity Centre. There are public conveniences in the amenity car park and serving the beach huts. There are two public slipways available at a charge within the Activity Centre; small portable craft can also be launched free of charge from a point on the beach close to the Activity Centre entrance.

Coast protection

- C8.3 The SMP's preferred options for the stretch of coastline from Bourne Gap to Hillhead is to 'retreat the line'. From Hillhead to and including, Calshot Spit and extending to the Fawley Power Station the policy is to 'hold the line' to protect properties, valuable recreation facilities and the important coastal habitats. These strategic coastal defence policy options and their possible interactions and environmental implications will be reviewed as part of the Western Solent Coastal Defence Strategy Study.



Beach huts at Calshot

- C8.4 Calshot Spit is a shingle spit overlying saltmarsh deposits, formed and maintained in a similar manner to Hurst Spit by an eastward littoral drift. It is not subject to the same degree of wave attack as Hurst and consequently it is relatively stable; however, it is still subject to sufficient erosion to warrant protection. A timber revetment along the back of the beach protects a low shingle ridge on which the beach huts have been built. Short zigzag groynes retain a steep shingle beach. The revetment and groynes are a mixture of hardwood and softwood with a lifespan of about 10 years; those in front of the beach huts are repaired and replaced on a rolling programme of maintenance. The groynes have been kept short to prevent interference with sailing activities. The County Council is responsible for coast protection works around the Activity Centre; the District Council is responsible for the remainder of the Spit.

Nature conservation

- C8.5 The Spit protects extensive saltmarshes of great wildlife interest that have developed in its lee, in front of the Fawley power station. These are included in the Hythe - Calshot Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). They are also within the Calshot Marshes Local Nature Reserve, which is managed by Hampshire County Council. The foreshore of the Spit extending westwards into Stanswood Bay is of regional nature conservation importance because of the eelgrass beds it supports, which are the largest along the south coast. These are included in the North Solent SSSI. These SSSIs are in the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site. They are also in the Solent and Southampton Water candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC). In addition, there are several proposed Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) within this zone.

History and archaeology

- C8.6 This zone contains a number of features of historic and archaeological interest. Calshot Castle is a 16th century Battery built by Henry VIII as part of the Solent defences. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and is in the care of English Heritage. Many of the remaining buildings on the site were constructed for military flying boat operations, dating from 1918, and three hangers are listed as buildings of architectural and historic interest. As the lessee of these buildings, Hampshire County Council is responsible for their maintenance.

Recreation

- C8.7 The Calshot Activities Centre is one of the UK's leading outdoor activity centres, with a wide range of land and water based facilities. An extensive range of indoor sports facilities includes a dry ski slope and cycle track. The Centre also caters for the whole range of water sports, in particular sailing, canoeing and boardsailing. It provides sheltered water for junior sailing and sailing tuition, and safe moorings in the channel between the Spit and the saltmarsh for a number of sailing boats. The coastal waters around the Spit are popular with, and indeed suitable for users of personal watercraft. With three public launch sites, there is good coastal access for sailing and other specialist water sports; the Spit also offers easy access to the beach for disabled people.
- C8.8 The beaches at Lepe and Calshot have received Solent Water Quality Awards as the water quality complies consistently with the EC Bathing Water Quality standards. Associated British Ports, as the port authority for Southampton, control recreational sailing around Calshot Spit.

Local Plan

- C8.9 The District Local Plan includes this zone in the countryside outside the New Forest, where development is restricted. It contains a policy for the Calshot Activity Centre, supporting the principle of rationalising and enhancing its recreational facilities, provided that amongst other things any scheme protects the character and setting of the listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monument, respects the prominent location of the site, and will not adversely affect nature conservation interests.

Issues

Environment

- C8.10 There are those who feel that the beach huts detract from the quality of the beach environment; however, they are a popular and traditional element of the coastal scene. The District Council has prepared Supplementary Planning Guidance on the design and location of beach huts.
- C8.11 Excluding the Activity Centre itself, there is public car parking provision for some 450 vehicles adjacent to the approach road. Given the very open character of the landscape, such extensive car parking can result in a significant visual intrusion into the landscape, and more could be done to soften its visual impact.
- C8.12 The area of grassland behind the Spit, adjoining the marshes (Tom Tiddler's Land) is in the same ownership as the power station. There have been negotiations in the past for it to be leased to either the County or the District Council, but these have never been completed. A small part of it, alongside the access road, is used by the District Council for temporary parking during the summer months. The remainder is overgrown and un-managed. Although it is not within the SSSI, it is of ecological interest, and is proposed to be included in a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The District Council considers that its management should be co-ordinated with that of the Local Nature Reserve in the adjoining marshes.
- C8.13 As part of its commitment to improving the environment the District Council is replacing the old existing café and toilets along the Spit. Works are expected to commence towards the end of 2003.

Access

- C8.14 The single-track access road along the Spit, and the narrow B3053 approach road, constrain the amount of traffic that can use the Spit. These limit the redevelopment potential of the Activity Centre. Works to widen them, or a scale of development that necessitated doing so, would be contrary to local plan policies of restraint on development in the countryside.

Recreation

- C8.15 Calshot Activities Centre is an important local and indeed national recreational resource. It has a unique position that is not fully utilised. It is the prime location for water sports within the District, and offers the opportunity to provide for activities such as jet-skiing and water-skiing which are difficult to accommodate in more sensitive locations elsewhere. It is of the greatest importance that the recreational use and potential of the Centre should be maintained and enhanced. The main issue is the extent to which this can be accomplished within environmental and access constraints as well as the needs of many other users. This may require a coordinated look at activity on the Spit as a whole.

Erosion and flooding

- C8.16 The variable state of coast protection and flood defence works around the Spit leads to occasional flooding, and to a degree of beach loss. This necessitates works such as timber groynes to limit the movement of shingle, and the use of shingle to replenish the beach. The Western Solent Coastal Defence Strategy Study will review the management requirements of all existing coastal defence work and will ensure that any proposed additional schemes are designed appropriately.
- C8.17 Large quantities of shingle accumulate around the main Activity Centre slipway. This material has been recycled on a regular, planned basis, replenishing the foreshores either on Calshot Spit, or onto the Lepe or Cadland beaches. A large forked shingle bank is branching away from the eastern side of the head of the Spit, which will eventually form a severe hazard to inshore navigation. To prevent this regular dredging may have to be undertaken in the future. Monitoring coastal processes, and hydrodynamic parameters is a key component of the sustainable management of the north-west Solent shore.

- C8.18 The concrete outfall to the watercourse flanking Tom Tiddler's Ground, and the associated concrete bagwork wall, are in very poor condition. Ownership of these structures is unknown but New Forest District Council has carried out minor maintenance works to the outfall from time to time. A new wall and outfall will be needed in the near future to protect the watercourse from flooding at high tides.
- C8.19 The SMP recommends a 'hold the line' strategy for all parts of this zone, e.g. from Hillhead to Calshot Spit, Calshot Spit itself, Tom Tiddler's Ground and the marshes in the lee of the Spit. The intention is primarily to maintain the role of the Spit in offering flood defence for the high-value infrastructure to the north (the power station and the oil refinery), and to protect and assist management of the marshes. These coastal defence policy options will be reviewed to provide a strategic framework of coastal management policies within the Western Solent Coastal Defence Strategy Study. The Study will encourage a high standard of design of coast protection works at Calshot and elsewhere on the north-west Solent shoreline.
- C8.20 For Calshot Spit the South East Regional Monitoring Programme includes a combination of remote sensing techniques, such as aerial photography, physical measurements on the shoreline (e.g. topographic and hydrographic surveys) and assessments of wind and wave climate. Data are used to analyse the morphological changes of the beaches and offshore. The outputs from the monitoring are incorporated into the Western Solent Coastal Defence Strategy Studies.

Historic buildings

- C8.21 The presence of the listed buildings and the ancient monument will constrain to some extent the potential for re-use and redevelopment of the Activities Centre. Policies in the District Local Plan seek to protect listed buildings, ancient monuments and their settings from development that would damage their special interest. In any re-use, or refurbishment, it will be important that interpretation facilities are included which describe the particular interest and historic value of the Spit and its buildings.

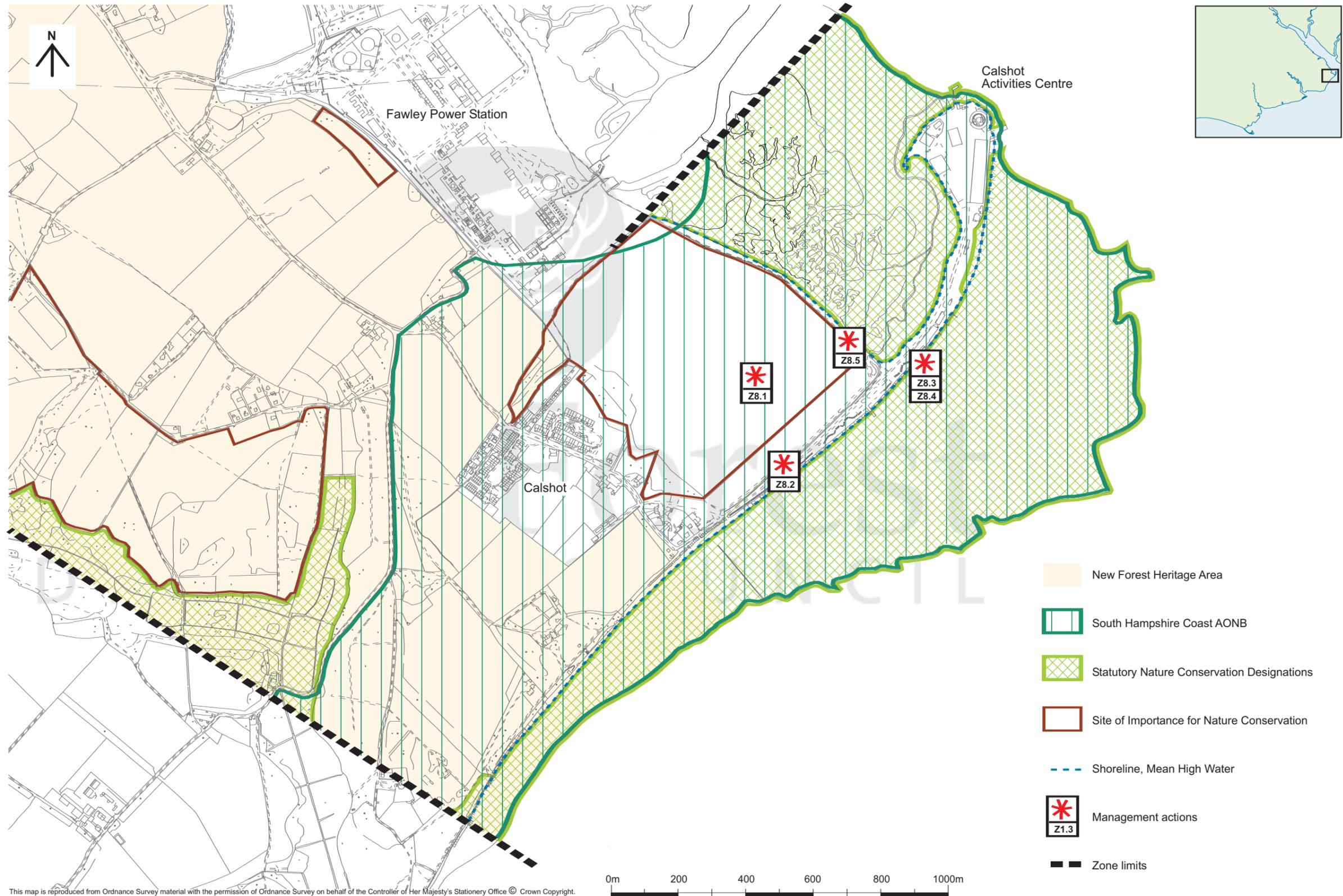
Administration

- C8.22 Responsibilities for the maintenance and management of the Spit are divided between the District Council and the County Council. Pre-scheme consultation and post-scheme feedback between local authorities, land owners and interested organisations often results in improved scheme design and effective communication, and provides a more integrated delivery of coastal management.

Actions

In Zone 8, the District Council will:

- Z8.1 **press for the management of "Tom Tiddler's Ground", including the area used for temporary car parking, to be co-ordinated with that of the Calshot Marshes Local Nature Reserve, and exploring the lease of the area to the public sector.**
- Z8.2 **Replace the public conveniences and café with particular consideration given to the sensitivity of the environment.**
- In the longer term the District Council will seek to:**
- Z8.3 **develop long term, durable coast protection measures within the framework of the Western Solent Coastal Defence Strategy.**
- Z8.4 **lead the development of a plan for the co-ordinated management of the whole Spit.**
- Z8.5 **determine ownership and improve the condition of the concrete outfall and bagwork structures flanking Tom Tiddler's Ground.**



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