

Norfolk Coast National Landscape

State of the Norfolk Coast National Landscape Report 2025

Final report

Prepared by LUC
September 2025



Norfolk Coast National Landscape

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Norfolk Coast National Landscape

The Norfolk Coast National Landscape (NCNL) has three component parts: in the west, it stretches from The Wash to Sandringham Estate, along the North Norfolk Coast; it runs from Holme-next-the-Sea to Paston; and in the east, from Sea Palling to Winterton-On-Sea (as shown in **Figure 1.1**). In total, the NCNL covers 453 km² of land area and has 90.8 km of coastline.

The Norfolk coast was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in April 1968. In November 2023, all designated AONBs in England and Wales became known as National Landscapes¹.

The underlying geology varies from Cretaceous chalk and carrstone in the west to glacial deposits in the east. Past glaciation and current coast processes make the geology both nationally and internationally important. The Cromer Ridge is a terminal moraine, which marks the furthest extent of a glacier advance.

Habitats in the NCNL range from coastal and intertidal habitats that support iconic coastal birds such as the marsh harrier, to inland farmland, which provides important habitat for threatened birds such as the corn bunting. Many national and international nature designations are situated within, or partially within, the NCNL, including five Special Protection Areas (SPA), eight Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), 28 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and four Ramsar sites. The North Norfolk Coast SPA and Ramsar, and The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC cover much of the coast in the west of the NCNL. The priority features of the SPA, SAC and Ramsar include coastal lagoon habitat, the most notable located at Blakeney Spit Pools, which is known to support the lagoonal mysid shrimp (*Paramysis nouveli*), a nationally rare species.

The NCNL is rich in archaeological heritage and historic environment features; there are 61 Scheduled Monuments, seven Registered Parks and Gardens, 45 Conservation Areas and 849 listed buildings. Additionally, the North Norfolk Heritage Coast was defined in 1975 by Local Authorities; a non-statutory designation recognising the large stretch of undeveloped coastline between Holme-next-the-Sea and Weybourne.

Much of the undeveloped coast has a wilderness quality that is rare in lowland England. The NCNL is known for the quality of its night skies and lack of light pollution, and the inland parts of the NCNL are also known for relative remoteness and tranquillity.

The NCNL has a strong rural character with agriculture, in particular arable farmland, comprising by far the largest land use. The NCNL has a dispersed pattern of rural settlements with old fishing and farming communities; however, fishing and agriculture still play a key role in the area's character.

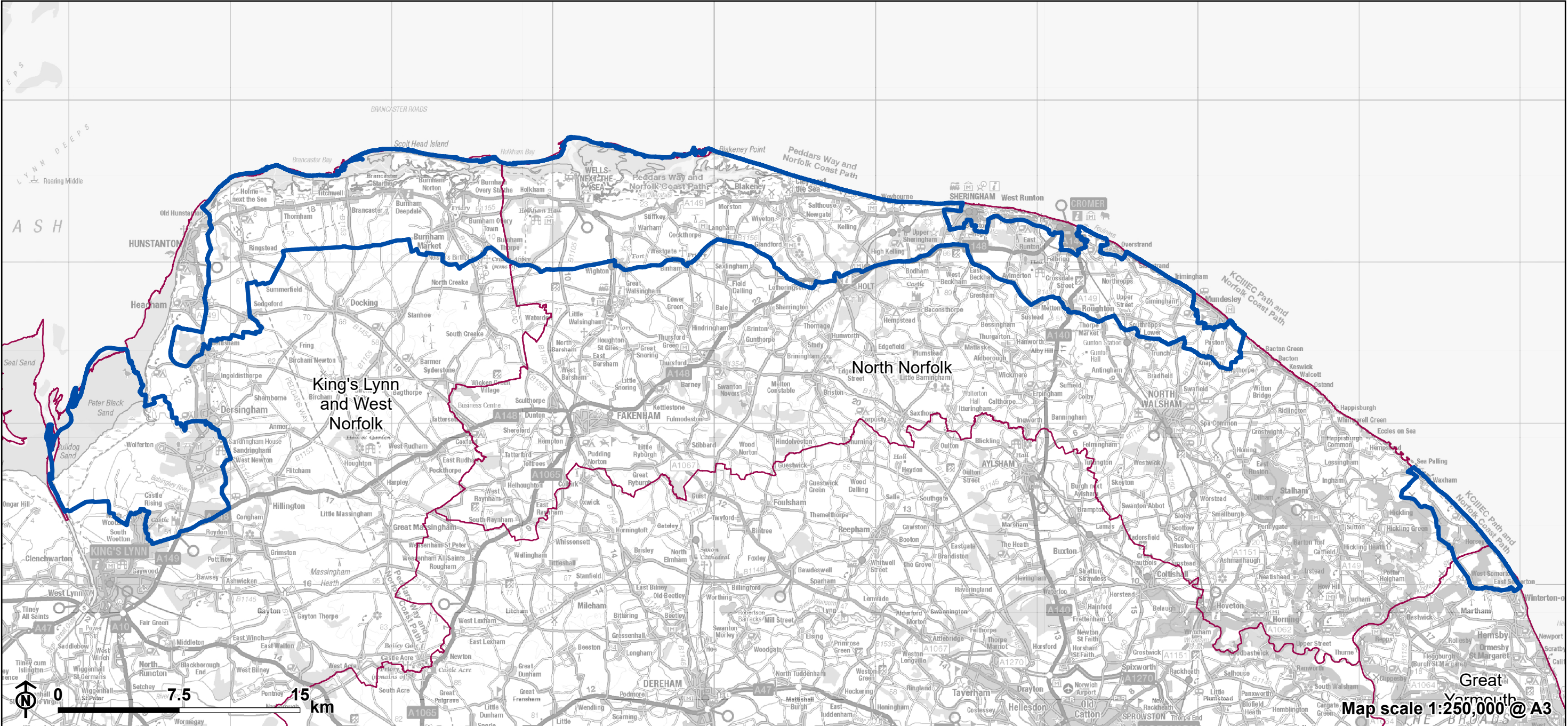
The NCNL sits within the wider Norfolk Coast Protected Landscape (NCPL), which also includes:

- The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Protected Area Network, managed by The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership.
- The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail, managed by the Norfolk National Trail Partnership.

¹ National Landscape Association [online] Available at: [National Landscapes - Welcome to National Landscapes](#)

Figure 1.1 Location and extent of the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- Local Authority boundary



Purpose of the State of the Norfolk Coast National Landscape Report

The State of the NCNL Report aims to provide an important evidence baseline against which to monitor future change, identify current and potential forces for change in the landscape, make informed recommendations for monitoring and management and form a robust evidence base to inform and underpin the Management Plan Policies for the NCNL. It is comprised of information from various available data sources. The report uses a repeatable methodology and standardised monitoring data to ensure that future monitoring will be able to identify and explore trends and changes within the NCNL. The report also makes recommendations for future monitoring where data is not currently available. The statutory NCNL Management Plan explains the strategy for the future conservation and enhancement of the NCNL and is reviewed on a five-yearly basis. The NCNL Management Plan 2025-30 is a target-driven, action focussed document that is more concise than previous versions. It is to be accompanied by various supporting documents, including supplementary guidance.

Report structure

This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the methodology used to produce the report;
- **Chapter 3** sets out the indicators for the **Landscape** theme;
- **Chapter 4** sets out the indicators for the **Norfolk Coast Partnership: Internal governance** theme;
- **Chapter 5** sets out the indicators for the **nature recovery** goals and targets;
- **Chapter 6** sets out the indicators for the **climate adaptation and mitigation** goals and targets;
- **Chapter 7** sets out the indicators for the **sustainable planning** goals and targets;
- **Chapter 8** sets out the indicators for the **sustainable tourism** goals and targets;
- **Chapter 9** sets out the indicators for the **dark skies** goals and targets;
- **Chapter 10** sets out the indicators for the **heritage** goals and targets;
- **Chapter 11** sets out the indicators for the **local communities (including businesses)** goals and targets;
- **Chapter 12** summarises the headlines from each chapter; and
- **Chapter 13** outlines the next steps for monitoring within the NCNL.

Chapter 2

Method

Stage 1: Identifying monitoring indicators

The State of the NCNL Report commenced with the collation of all available and up-to-date datasets, including information from the NCNL Management Plan, National Character Area profiles, and publications from the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Natural England and other sources. These datasets were used as the framework for informing the indicators for each chapter of the report.

Data with the greatest likelihood of being updated regularly was chosen to underpin each indicator, to enable comparison between datasets in the future. Indicators were selected using the most recent available data.

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 set out the indicators.

Stage 2: Obtaining and processing available data and information

This stage of the method involved compiling the relevant data from various sources. A variety of GIS data, documents and survey data were used to inform the reporting. The datasets used are referenced at the end of each theme section.

The State of the NCNL Report identifies current baselines to allow for future comparisons and identification of trends, as well as the exploration of reasons behind any changes. Where possible, data from past studies was incorporated into the report, to allow comparisons and look at changes within the NCNL. Where there were differences in methodologies in comparative datasets, these have been identified to ensure changes are not misinterpreted.

On 31 January 2024, Defra published the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF)², which defines how Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) should contribute to three of the goals outlined in the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023:

- Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife
- Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural landscape

Protected Landscape Partnerships will need to embed targets for their Protected Landscape area in their future Management Plans. Where possible, data supplied as part of the PLTOF was incorporated into this report.

Stage 3: Analysing and reporting

Where possible in the report, data has been compared to historically available datasets to identify trends, such as comparing the current and past condition of features. However, it should be noted that this report makes little comparison with past data and does not identify trends. Rather, this report is to serve as a baseline information, for future reporting. The results of the data analysis are presented using maps and charts in addition to explanatory text.

² Defra (2024) Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework>

The different indicators identified within the report are grouped into chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on monitoring the landscape and performance of the Norfolk Coast Partnership. Chapter 5 – 11 align with the NCNL Management Plan priority areas.

Table 2.1 Monitoring indicators for the Landscape theme and Norfolk Coast Partnership: Internal governance theme

Theme	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
Landscape	Landscape and Seascape Character	Natural England Landscape Change Atlas (2015 - 2019) G1a: Changes in landscape character of National Character Areas (NCAs) in England (LUC) LUC North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Study Norfolk Coast AONB Integrated Landscape Guidance	Coverage of different classifications
	Land use: Patterns of agricultural use and farm types	Defra June Agricultural Survey 2023 Agricultural Land Classification Grades 1 to 5 (Natural England)	Types of land use and patterns of and agriculture use
	Livestock numbers and types	Defra June Agricultural Survey 2023	Change in livestock types and numbers by year
	Numbers employed in agriculture	Defra June Agricultural Survey 2023	Numbers employed in agriculture
	Areas under agri-environment schemes	Natural England PLTOF data Natural England GIS data	Area within NCNL managed as part of agri-environment schemes
	Areas under woodland management schemes	Natural England PLTOF data	Areas of woodland under active management
Norfolk Coast Partnership: Internal governance	Events held/facilitated	Data collected by the NCPL team	Change in number of events held/facilitated Change in attendance numbers at events
	Number of projects delivered Norfolk Coast Partnership income	Data collected by the NCPL team	Measure leverage of National Landscape partnership projects – average return on each £1 spend on projects

Theme	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
	Norfolk Coast Partnership impact		
	Number of Full-Time Equivalent staff	Data collected by the NCPL team	Change in number of Full-Time Equivalent staff

Table 2.2 Monitoring Indicators aligned with priority areas of the State of Norfolk Coast National Landscape Report

Priority areas ³	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
Nature recovery	Extent and condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Natural England	Percentage/total area of SSSIs in each condition category (Unit)
	Biodiversity designation extent (international, national, local designations)	Data collated/held by NCPL team Natural England Wildlife Trust	Total area covered by biodiversity designations, including: Ramsar Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Special Protection Areas (SPAs) SSSI National Nature Reserves (NNRs) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) RSPB Sites Wildlife Trust Sites Ancient woodlands
	Priority habitat coverage	Natural England GIS data Priority Habitat data	Total Biodiversity Action Plan Priority habitat coverage in the NCNL

³ The priority areas relate to those defined in the NCNL Management Plan 2025-30.

Priority areas ³	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
		Natural England, PLTOF data	Extent of wildlife rich habitat created or restored within the NCNL, outside of protected sites
	Geodiversity sites	Natural England	Number and area of geodiversity sites
	Nature friendly farming	Natural England	Percentage of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on a percentage of their land
	Water quality	Water Framework Directive Ecological Status	Percentage of water bodies meeting water quality targets
Climate adaptation and mitigation	Renewable Energy Development	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Renewable Energy Planning Database ⁴ Local Councils	Number of renewable energy developments given planning permission (by type) at the end of 2024 Number of renewable energy development planning applications in the system at the end of 2024
		Met Office Local Authority Climate Explorer	Renewable energy generation by installed capacity and type
	Flood risk and water quality	Natural England PLTOF data	Areas at risk of flooding
	Incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)	Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs)	Proportion of planning permissions for large residential and employment developments incorporating SuDS
	Greenhouse gas emissions within the NCNL		Per capita CO2 emissions
	Peatland restoration		Extent of peat under restoration in the NCNL
	Trees and woodland		Percentage change in total woodland cover

⁴ The Renewable Energy Planning Database (REPD) tracks the progress of UK renewable electricity projects over 150kW through the planning system.

Priority areas ³	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
			Percentage change within each type of woodland category
	Coastal erosion / coastal flooding		Length of public rights of way/paths within Short Term Coastal Erosion zones
Sustainable development: Planning	Number of planning applications consulted on in 2024	Data collected by NCPL team	Number of planning applications that Norfolk Coast Partnership was consulted on
	References to National Landscapes in Local Plans	Relevant Local Authorities	All Local Plans should contain a policy referencing the protection and enhancement of the special qualities of the NCNL
Sustainable development: Tourism	Number and type of dwellings	Census data Local Authority land and property gazetteer data	Number and type of dwellings in the NCNL
	Average house price	Data held by National Landscape teams Land Registry data	Average house prices within the NCNL
	Number and type of businesses	Natural England, PLTOF data	Number and types of businesses in the NCNL
	Value of tourism	Economic Impact of Tourism Reports (2023) Tourism Benefits & impact analysis in the NCNL	Change in total value of tourism in the NCNL
	Visitor numbers	Visitor numbers at specific sites from RSPB/National Trust/Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Change in number of visitors

Priority areas ³	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
	Total population and population density within the NCNL	Census data Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimates	Percentage/total number change of population and population density
	Public rights of way/Promoted Long Distance Routes	National Trail Borough/District/County Councils Public rights of way Improvement Plan Environment Agency National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping	Length of public rights of way
	Popular areas used for recreation e.g. using Strava data spatial information	Cycling Walking/running Water sports	Areas used for recreation Historical and cultural attractions
	Public transport and cycle route provision	Bus operators Council websites	Levels of bus usage/frequency Length of National Cycle Routes
	Accessibility	Defra Data collected by NCPL team	Number of accessible toilets and rest stops Number of disability accessible parking spaces Policies in place to ensure Norfolk Coast Partnership are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, partners and stakeholders
Sustainable development: Dark skies	Extent of relative tranquil areas	Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), The Countryside Charity, Tranquillity Maps (2007)	Percentage of NCNL recorded as tranquil

Priority areas ³	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
	Dark skies	CPRE, The Countryside Charity, Light Pollution and Dark Skies Maps (2016)	Percentage of NCNL recorded as having dark night skies Ranking of dark skies in NCNL Number of Dark Sky Sites in the NCNL
Sustainable development: Heritage	The Heritage Coast – planning applications within the Heritage Coast boundary	Data collected by NCPL team	Level of planning application approval in heritage coast
	Historic Landscape Character (HLC - nature and distribution of HLC types)	Norfolk's Historic Landscape Character: A report on the Norfolk Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project, Norfolk Landscape Archaeology/English Heritage, 2009	Extent of land in each HLC category (contextual)
	Number and extent of listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, scheduled monuments and any other designated heritage assets	Historic England GIS data	Number and extent of historic designations: World heritage Sites Battlefields Parks and gardens Monuments Listed buildings Conservation Areas
	Condition assessment of historic features	Community archaeology groups Historic England Heritage at Risk Register (2024)	Number and percentage of heritage assets that are 'at risk' including listed buildings at risk, registered parks and gardens and scheduled monuments
	Number and location of locally important archaeological	County Council Historic Environment Services	Percentage change (+/-) in number of archaeological features/sites listed in the Historic Environment Record

Priority areas ³	Monitoring Indicator	Data source	Key performance indicator
	sites/features listed on the Historic Environment Record		
Local communities (including businesses)	Levels of deprivation	Index of Multiple Deprivation	Levels of deprivation in the NCNL
	Second home ownership and holiday homes	Census data. Local Authority second home counts	Number of second homes
	Health and wellbeing of population	Public Health England Census data – age of population Census data – overall health	Age of population Percentage of people who are in ‘very good’ and ‘good’ health as defined by ONS data
	Local aspirations/values/perceptions of the NCNL	Data collected by NCPL team during Management Plan review	Percentage of population aware of NCNL designation
	Art: Art tourism Public art Art festivals Galleries	Local land and property gazetteer Ordnance Survey points of interest British Arts Festivals Association Visit England Arts Council England	Number of art-related activities, businesses and spaces
	Number and type of dwellings	Census data Local Authority land and property gazetteer data	Number and type of dwellings in the NCNL
	Average house price	Land Registry data	Average house prices within the NCNL
	Number and type of businesses	Natural England, PLTOF data	Number and types of businesses in the NCNL

Chapter 3 Landscape

Chapter overview

Selected indicators

The NCNL falls within six National Character Areas (NCAs). The NCNL has a strong rural character with agriculture, in particular arable farmland, comprising by far the largest component of land use. Effective land management within the NCNL is vital to its longevity. The indicators selected for landscape are:

- Landscape and seascape character (coverage of different classifications)
- Land use: Patterns of agriculture use and farm types
- Livestock numbers and types
- Numbers employed in agriculture
- Areas under agri-environmental schemes
- Areas under woodland management schemes

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- Defra April Agricultural Survey 2025
- Natural England, PLTOF May 2025 data
- Natural England PLTOF April 2024 Woodland Management Data
- Natural England NCA database
- Natural England PLTOF April 2024 Agri-Environment Schemes Data

Status of indicator: Landscape and seascape character (coverage of different classifications)

This indicator provides contextual information based on the existing landscape and seascape evidence, which is unlikely to change significantly over the next five years.

The NCNL falls within six National Character Areas (NCA): NCA 77: North Norfolk Coast, NCA 46: The Fens, NCA 76: North West Norfolk, NCA 78: Central North Norfolk, NCA 79: East Norfolk and Flegg and NCA 80: The Broads (**Figure 3.1**). Natural England⁵ describes the North Norfolk Coast NCA as having the following characteristics:

- Predominantly open, flat and dynamic coastal landscape;
- Scolt Head and Blakeney Point sand banks serve as coastal storm barriers and an integral part of the sediment transfer system;
- The rivers Glaven, Stiffkey and Burn are fast-flowing, ecologically-rich chalk streams;

⁵ Natural England [online] Available at: [North Norfolk Coast](#)

- Agricultural use is restricted by topography and proximity to the sea;
- Rich and abundant variety of internationally important marine and coastal habitats and species;
- Overall sense of wildness, remoteness and tranquillity, with general lack of development provides for long, sweeping views in all directions;
- Unwooded character overall, with very limited tree cover;
- Highly distinctive traditional architecture;
- Rich in archaeological heritage and historic environment; and
- Extensive public access via the The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail, which runs through the NCA.

Natural England notes that the North Norfolk coast is subject to particular drivers of change relating to its flat, low-lying, open and remote coastal plain, and its large area of National Nature Reserves.

Sea level rise and coastal squeeze could affect the coastal areas which are critical natural assets supporting internationally important species, habitat, and water resources.

Pressure for parking facilities around the coast/coastal villages and increased traffic on the A149, as a result of increased visitors, may disturb the sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

As part of the Outcome Indicator Framework for the 25 Year Environment Plan, Super Landscape Objectives (SLOs) were created to understand changes in landscape within the NCNL, between 2015-2019 to provide an integrated view of overall landscape change⁶. The changes in landscape and waterscape character indicator (G1) shows an overall improving trend in landscape quality. Notably, there has been strong progress in relation to indicator SLO4, which focuses on conserving and enhancing heritage assets for their cultural and physical contribution to the landscape and waterscape. There has also been strong progress in relation to indicator SLO21, which aims to manage arable land to support biodiversity and landscape character by improving soil health, reducing erosion and runoff, and enhancing features such as hedgerows, linear scrub, and buffer strips.

The North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was completed in 2021⁷. The study identified 16 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) that fall within the NCNL. The most widespread LCT within the NCNL is the Rolling Open Farmland LCT, which extends from the coast to the southern edge of area, and is characterised by high level, open, gently rolling, arable farmland.

The seascape surrounding the NCNL is an integral part of its character. The seascape is covered by one national level seascape character assessment - the Seascape Character Area Assessment for the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plan Areas⁸.

The NCNL is primarily influenced by Marine Character Area (MCA) 8 – The Wash, and MCA 9 – Norfolk Coastal Waters (**Figure 3.2**). MCA 8 – The Wash lies to the west of the NCNL, whilst MCA 9 – Norfolk Coastal Waters directly borders the North Norfolk coastline, thereby directly shaping the NCNL with regard to coastal processes.

⁶ Natural England [online] Available at: [North Norfolk Coast - Landscape Change](#)

⁷ North Norfolk District Council [online] Available at: [North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment](#)

⁸ Marine Management Organisation [online] Available at : [Seascape character area assessment East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plan Areas](#)

Figure 3.1 The Norfolk Coast National Landscape - National Character Areas

Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

National Character Area

- Central North Norfolk
- Mid Norfolk
- North East Norfolk and Flegg
- North Norfolk Coast
- North West Norfolk
- The Brecks
- The Broads
- The Fens

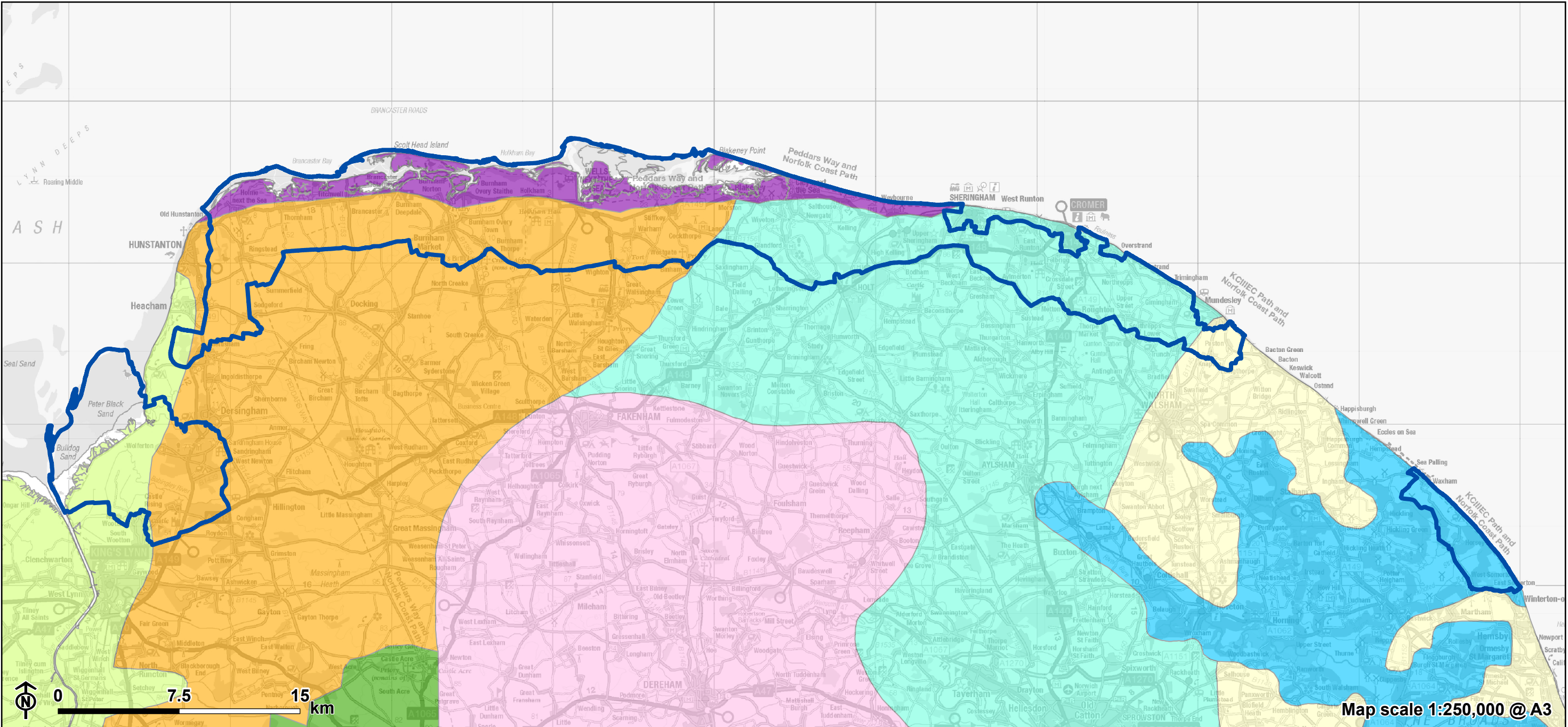
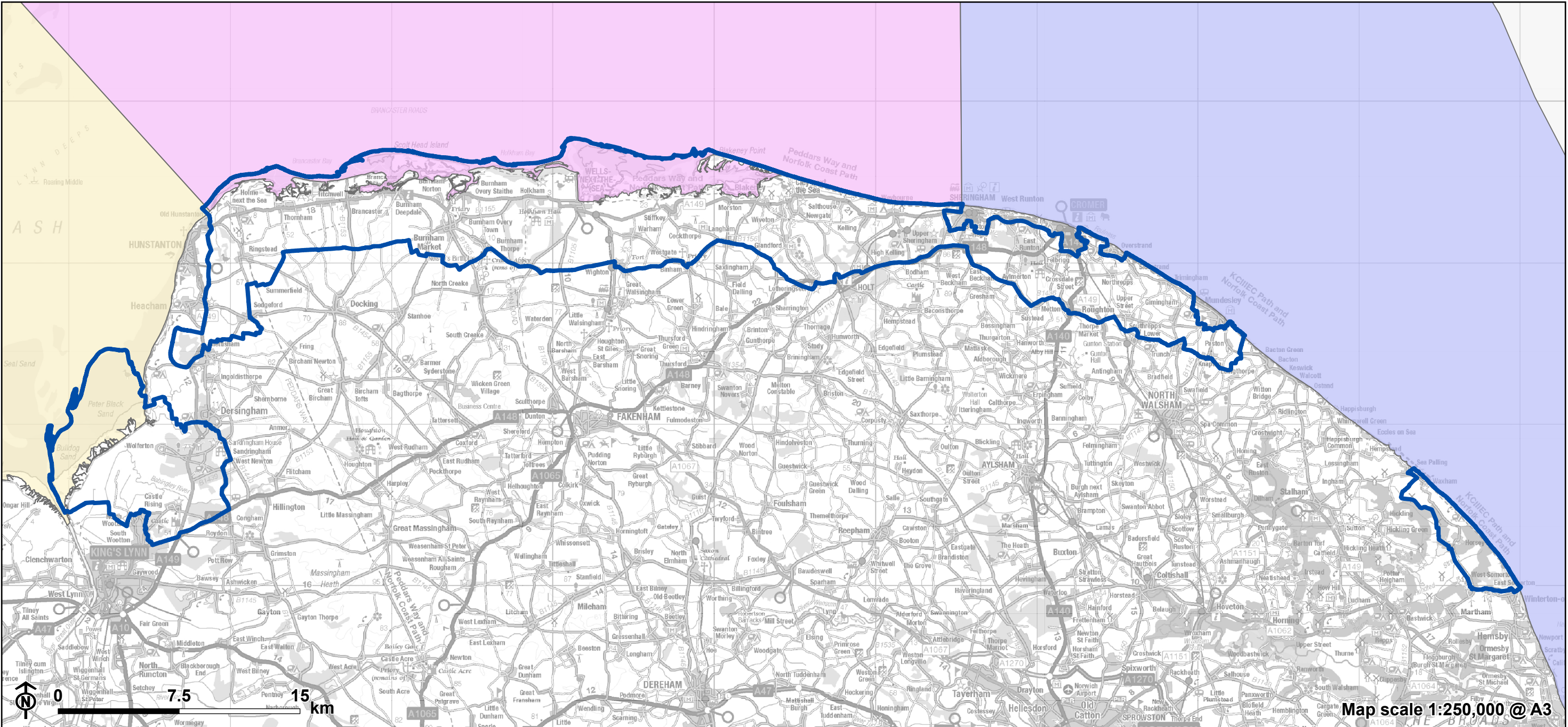


Figure 3.2 The Norfolk Coast National Landscape - Marine Character Areas

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- Marine Character Area**
- East Midlands Coastal Waters
- Norfolk Coastal Waters
- The Wash



Status of indicator: Land use: patterns of agriculture use and farm types

47% (20,761.5ha) of the NCNL is classed as arable and horticultural land (**Figure 3.3**). The different grades of agricultural land in the NCNL are show in **Figure 3.4**.

Figure 3.3 Types of land use within the NCNL (in hectares)

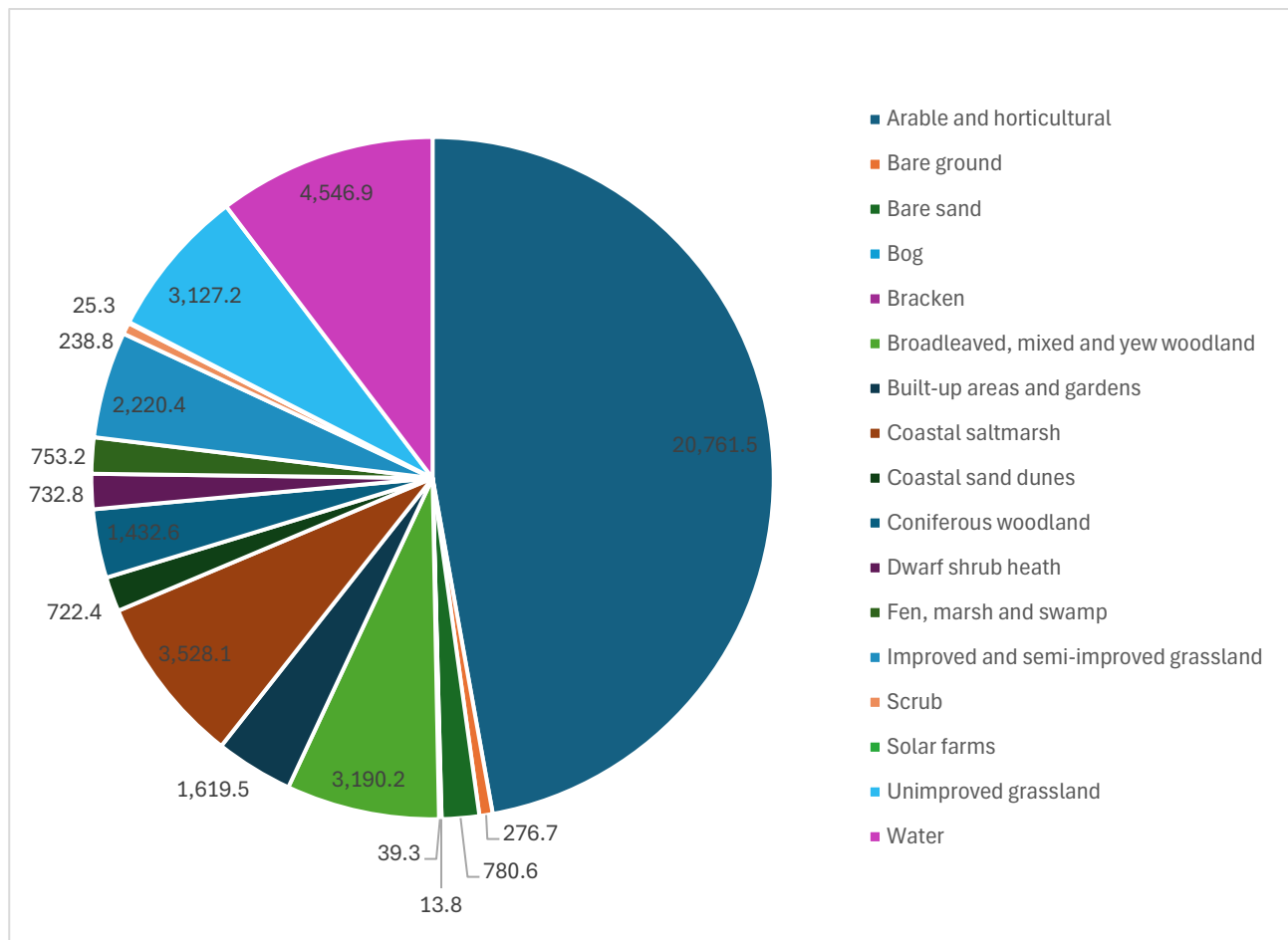
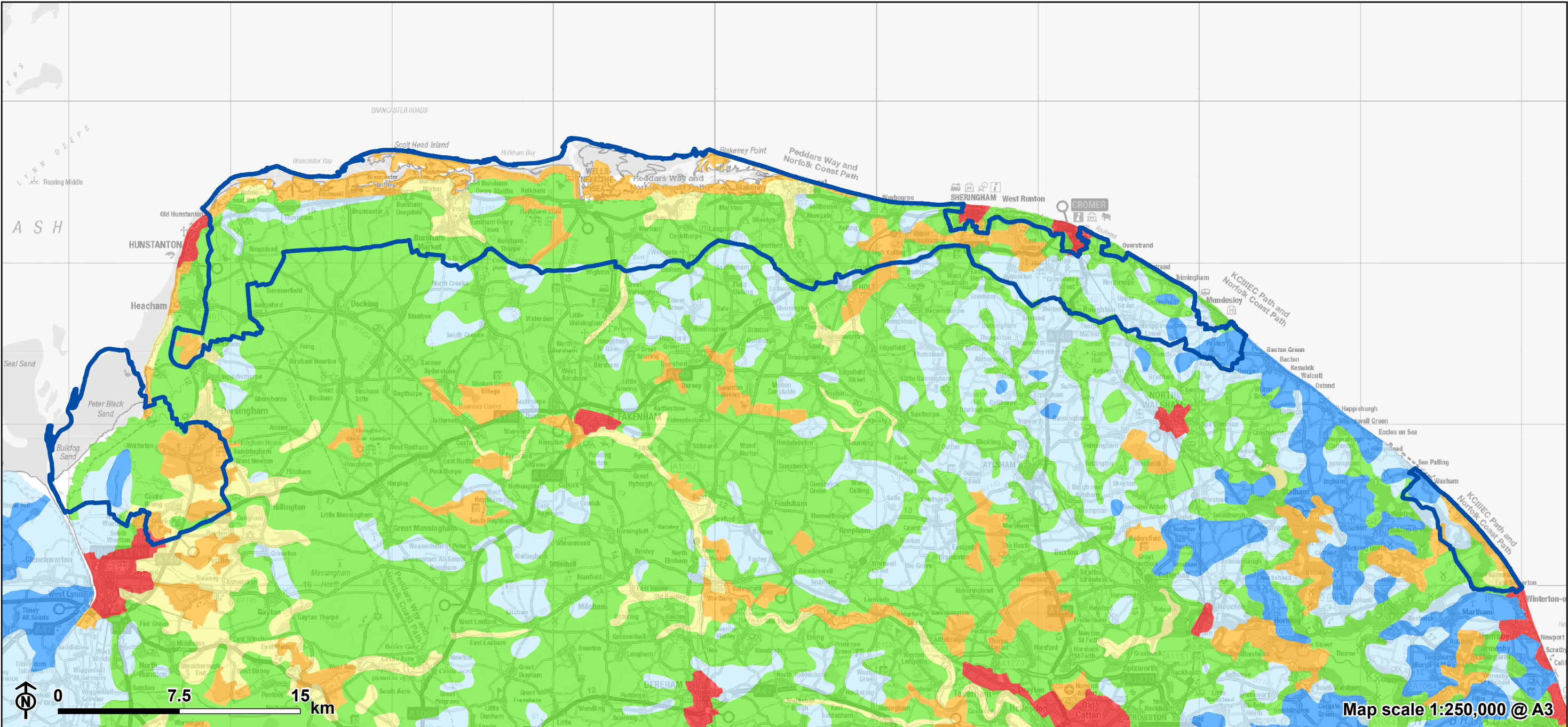


Figure 3.4 The Norfolk Coast National Landscape - Agricultural Land Classification

Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

Agricultural Land Classification

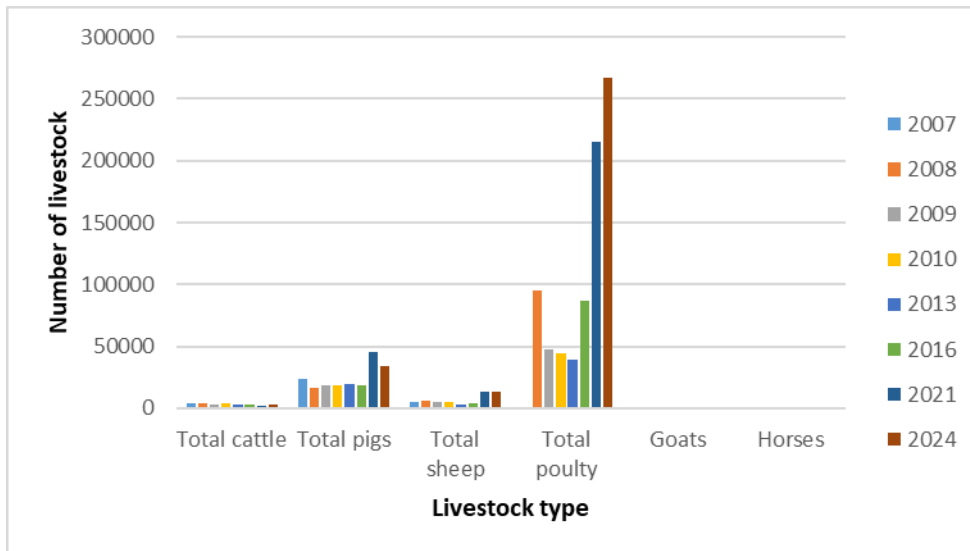
- Grade 1 - Excellent
- Grade 2 - Very good
- Grade 3 - Good to moderate
- Grade 4 - Poor
- Non Agricultural
- Urban



Status of indicator: Livestock numbers and types

Poultry are the most common livestock species kept within the NCNL (**Figure 3.5**). In 2024, the Defra Agricultural Survey sets out that there were 2,516 cattle, 33,594 pigs, 13,860 sheep and 267,010 poultry in the NCNL.

Figure 3.5 Number and types of livestock within the NCNL



Status of indicator: Numbers employed in agriculture

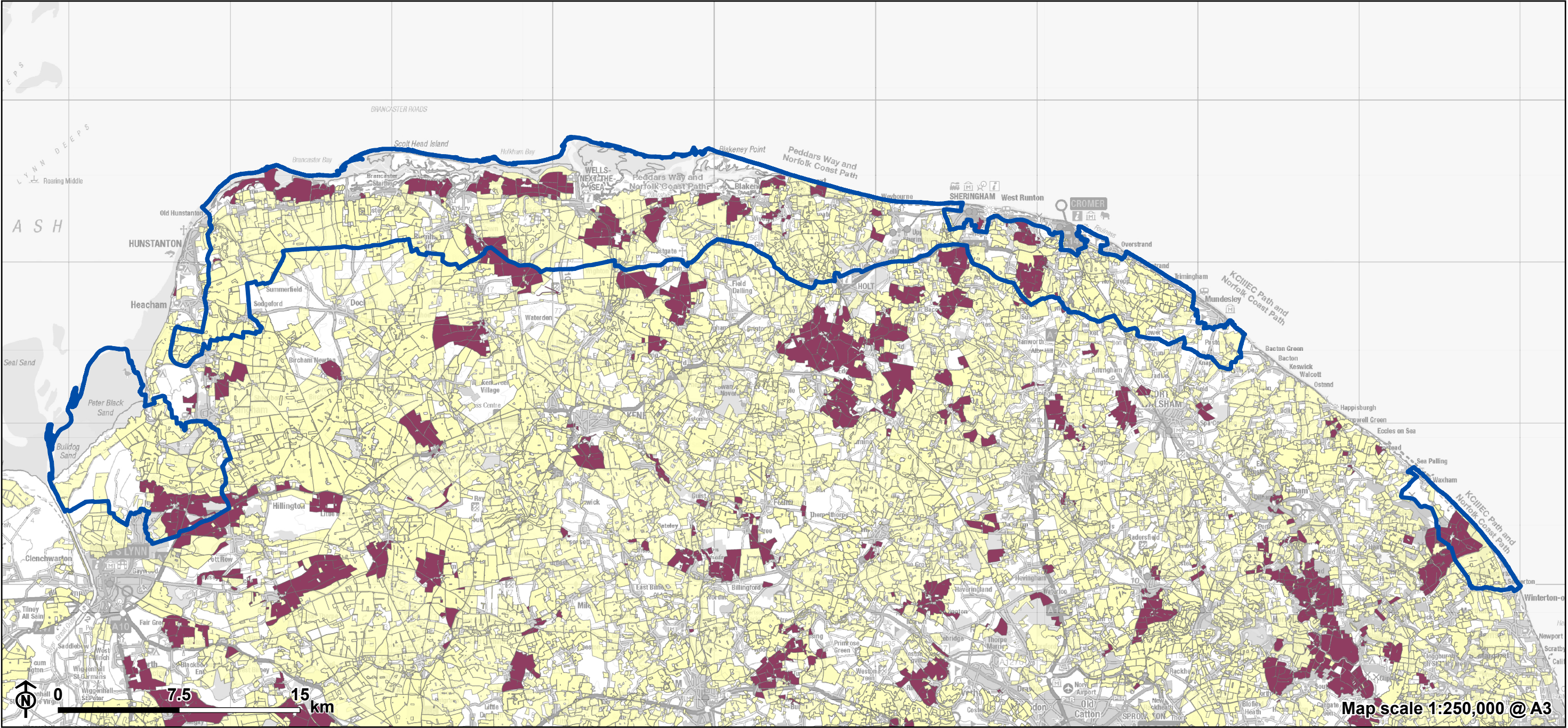
In 2024, the Defra Agricultural Survey stated that 401 people were involved in the agricultural industry within the NCNL, of these 123 were full-time farmers and 94 were part-time farmers.

Status of indicator: Areas under agri-environmental schemes

In 2024, 13,700 ha of the NCNL was included in an agri-environment scheme (**Figure 3.6**).

Figure 3.6 Extent of agri-environment schemes in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

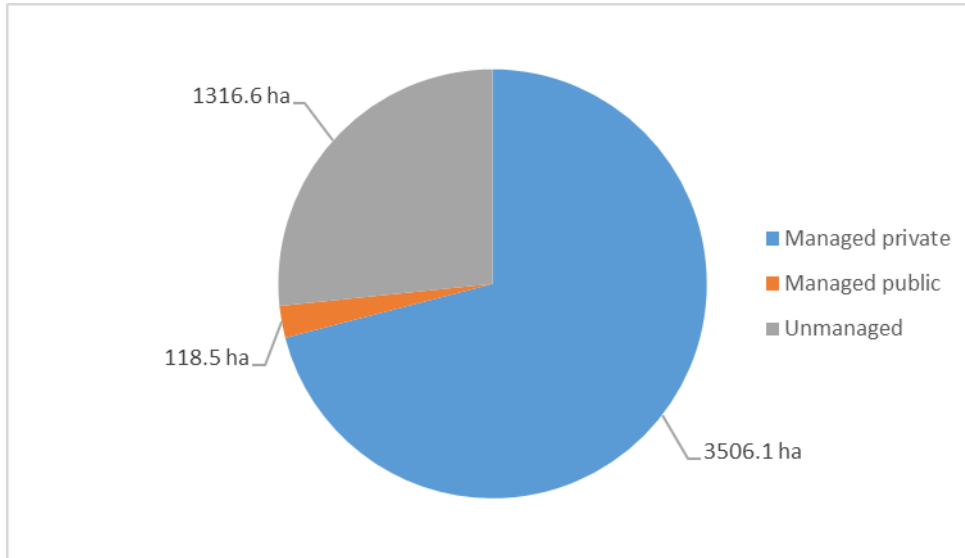
- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- Agri-environment schemes**
- Environmental stewardship schemes (as at July 2025)
- Countryside stewardship schemes (as at July 2025)



Status of indicator: Areas under woodland management schemes

The 2024 PLTOF data shows that 3,506ha of woodland within the NCNL is privately managed, 1,316.6ha is not managed, and 118.5ha is publicly managed (**Figure 3.7**).

Figure 3.7 Areas of the NCNL that fall under woodland management schemes



Recommendations

- It is anticipated that more in-depth information on the cost, spatial coverage, and options of agri-environment and woodland management schemes will be available when these indicators are revisited for the next State of the NCNL Report.

Chapter 4

Norfolk Coast Partnership: Internal governance

Chapter Overview

Selected Indicators

Understanding the impact of Norfolk Coast Partnership on the management of the NCNL and engagement with residents and visitors is vital to maintaining and enhancing the NCNL. The indicators selected for this section are:

- Events held/facilitated
- Number of projects delivered
- Income of Norfolk Coast Partnership
- Impact of the Norfolk Coast Partnership
- Number of Full-Time Equivalent staff

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

Data collected by the Norfolk Coast Protected Landscapes (NCPL) team.

Status of indicator: Events held/facilitated

In the year 2024/25, the following five events/programmes were run by the NCPL team::

- Dark Skies Festival (included 17 public events and 2 events in schools)
 - A series of free public events, held over the autumn and winter, to celebrate the night skies around The Wash and Norfolk coast. The festival encourages people to experience the darker months in a variety of fun and unique ways, whilst raising awareness of the negative impacts of light pollution.
- Limits of Acceptable Change workshop
 - As part of the Limits of Acceptable Change Phase 2 project, a stakeholder workshop was held in March 2025 to review and build on the findings of the Phase 1 report, and to establish recommendations for managing visitor pressure around The Wash and Norfolk coast.
- NCNL Management Plan workshops (x3)
 - Three online workshops were held with partners and stakeholders of Norfolk Coast Partnership in October 2024 to discuss and develop targets for the NCNL Management Plan, based around the priority areas: nature recovery, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable development and local communities.
- The Wash and Norfolk Coast Forum
 - An annual event bringing together partners and stakeholders from across the wider NCPL partnership to discuss future work ideas and opportunities.
- North Norfolk: Wilder, Wetter, Better for Nature Landscape Recovery – Defra Pilot Project land manager get-together

- An evening event held with land managers participating in the North Norfolk Landscape Recovery Defra Pilot project in December 2024 to share project progress, challenges, and opportunities, and allow participants to connect with other's involved in the project.
- The total number of attendees was approximately 453 people, plus staff.

Status of indicator: Number of projects delivered

Projects delivered in 2024/25 are listed in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1 Number of projects delivered 2024/25

Project	Delivered by
Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) 2024-25 (a portfolio of 11 projects delivered by farmers and land managers with grant support)	31/03/2025
Limits of Acceptable Change Phase 2	31/05/2025
Dark Skies Festival 2024-25	31/03/2025
North Norfolk Landscape Recovery Pilot Project	30/06/2025
Holkham Boardwalk	31/03/2025

Status of indicator: Norfolk Coast Partnership income

For 2024/25 the income of the Partnership amounted to £920,216.08. The breakdown of this income is set out in **Table 4.2** below.

Table 4.2 Norfolk Coast Partnership income

Funding provider	Amount for 2024/25
Defra NCNL Core Grant	£182,164.57
Responsible Authorities Statutory contribution (plus an additional amount from one)	£69,559.62
Defra NCNL One-off Uplift (revenue)	£65,014.71
Defra NCNL One-off Uplift (capital)	£65,014.71
Defra Access for All Fund	£58,955.91
WWF Wholescapes	£25,930
Defra Farming in Protected Landscapes	£449,600
Defra Farming in Protected Landscapes National Underspend	£3,976.56
Defra Landscape Recovery	Unknown at this stage

Status of indicator: Norfolk Coast Partnership impact

The impact of Norfolk Coast Partnership has been considered through the amount of funding received for projects, attendees to events, accessibility improvements, outreach, and engagement with local planning authorities. The below data are for 2024/25:

- £351,493.95 grant funding awarded to projects through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, to deliver projects by farmers and land managers contributing to one of more of the following themes: nature recovery, people, place, and/or climate.
- 208 attendees at the Dark Skies Festival 2024-25
- 23 organisations/businesses supported through the Dark Skies Festival 2024-25
- Boardwalk accessibility improvements along the Norfolk Coast Path (Holkham)
- 653 Instagram followers
- 3,389 Twitter/X followers
- 13 planning responses to Local Authority planning enquiries

Status of indicator: Number of Full-Time Equivalent staff

As of June 2024, there were nine Full Time Equivalent staff.

Recommendations

- Continue to monitor the number of events held, projects delivered, and income of Norfolk Coast Partnership. This will be vital to understand the impact of Norfolk Coast Partnership and will inform the future governance of the NCNL.

Chapter 5

Nature recovery

Chapter Overview

Selected indicators

It is important to monitor nature recovery indicators to ensure the vital habitats of the NCNL are protected and enhanced. The nature recovery indicators for the NCNL are:

- Biodiversity designation extent (international, national, local designations)
- Extent and condition of SSSIs
- Priority habitat coverage and extent of wildlife rich habitat
- Geodiversity sites
- Nature friendly farming
- Water quality

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- Natural England
- Natural England Designated Sites
- Natural England, PLTOF data
- Water Framework Directive Ecological Status

Status of indicator: Biodiversity designation extent (international, national, local)

The NCNL contains a total of 58 biodiversity designations, five SPAs, eight SACs, four Ramsar sites, 28 SSSIs), two RSPB reserves, eight NNRs and one LNR (**Table 3.1, Figure 5.1, Figure 5.2**). These biodiversity sites equate to 52,309 ha of the NCNL⁹. It should be noted that there are also 74 County Wildlife Sites within the NCNL, however, this information is not publicly available so the names and location of these are not included in the Table and Figure below.

Table 5.1 Biodiversity designations within NCNL

Designation	Name	Total area within the NCNL (ha)
SSSI	Bilsey Hill	3.0
	Briton's Lane Gravel Pit	21.5
	Cockthorpe Common, Stiffkey	7.1
	Dersingham Bog	159.1

⁹ To note: The GIS calculated area is slightly larger than the PLTOF summary total for SACs, SPAs, SSSIs and NNRs.

Designation	Name	Total area within the NCNL (ha)
	Felbrigg Woods	164.6
	Glandford (Hurdle Lane)	9.4
	Glandford (Letheringsett Road)	1.1
	Holkham Brick Pit	0.5
	Hunstanton Park Esker	17.3
	Kelling Heath	89.4
	Morston Cliff	1.0
	Mundesley Cliffs	19.4
	North Norfolk Coast	7861.2
	Overstrand Cliffs	48.5
	Paston Great Barn	1.0
	Ringstead Downs	6.9
	Sidestrand and Trimingham Cliffs	113.0
	Snettisham Carstone Quarry	11.0
	Stiffkey Valley	44.4
	The Wash	3115.8
	Upper Thurne Broads and Marshes	1.3
	Warham Camp	5.1
	Wells-next-the-Sea Chalk Pit	4.0
	Weybourne Cliffs	40.9
	Weybourne Town Pit	0.7
	Winterton-Horsey Dunes	345.1
	Wiveton Downs	28.9
SPA	Broadland	1.3
	Great Yarmouth North Denes	58.3
	Greater Wash	3972.1
	North Norfolk Coast	7861.2
	The Wash	3115.8
RSPB reserves	Snettisham	1446.9

Designation	Name	Total area within the NCNL (ha)
	Titchwell Marsh	322.4
NNR	Blakeney	1026.7
	Dersingham Bog	151.0
	Holkham	3531.0
	Holme Dunes	187.5
	Paston Great Barn	1.0
	Scolt Head Island	690.1
	The Wash	1508.7
	Winterton Dunes	84.4
LNR	Wiveton Down	6.4
Ramsar sites	Broadland	1.3
	Dersingham Bog	159.1
	North Norfolk Coast	7861.2
	The Wash	3115.8
SAC	North Norfolk Coast	3162.4
	Overstrand Cliffs	26.8
	Paston Great Barn	1.0
	Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog	159.1
	Southern North Sea	25.4
	The Broads	1.3
	The Wash & North Norfolk Coast	6903.3
	Winterton-Horsey Dunes	345.1

Figure 5.1 Protected international nature conservation sites in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- International nature conservation designations
- Special Protection Area
- Special Area of Conservation
- Ramsar site

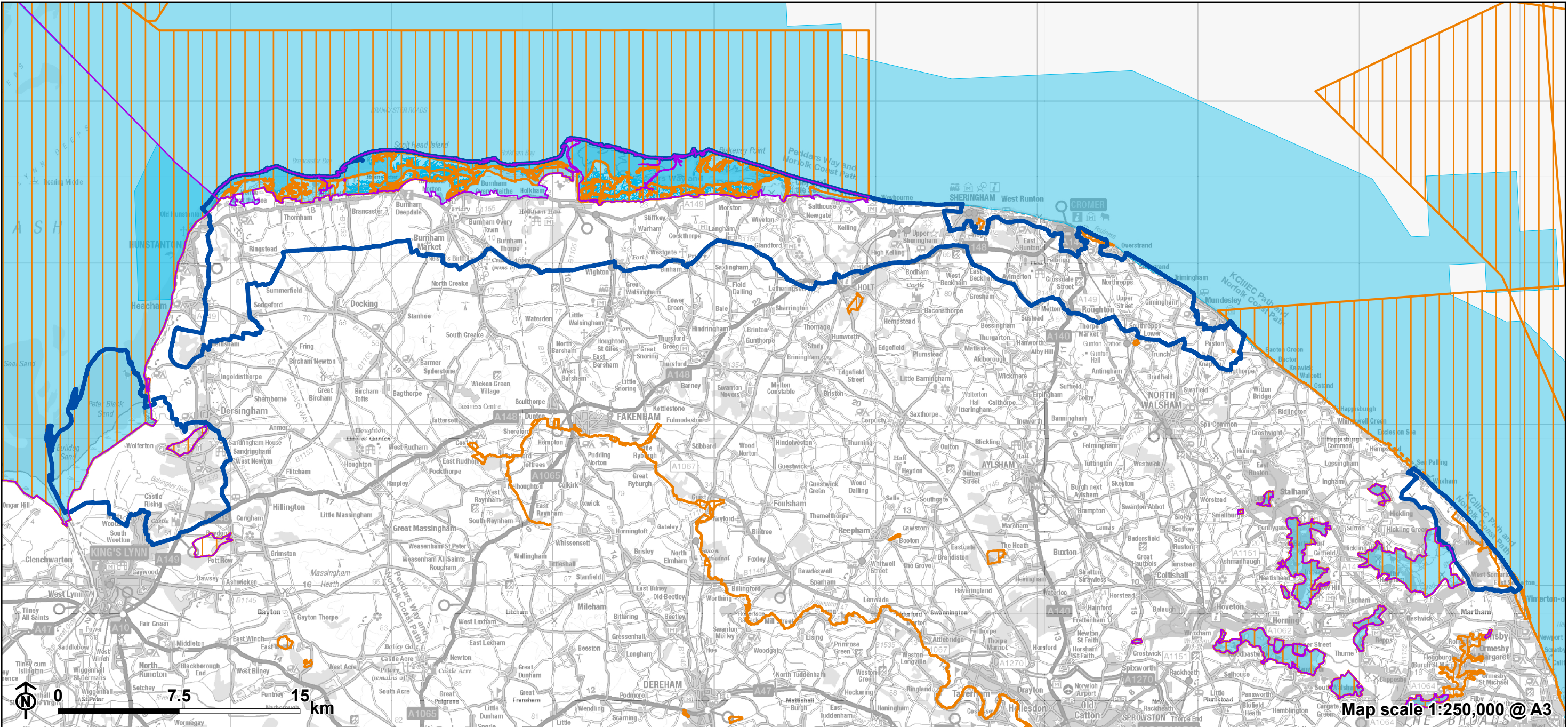
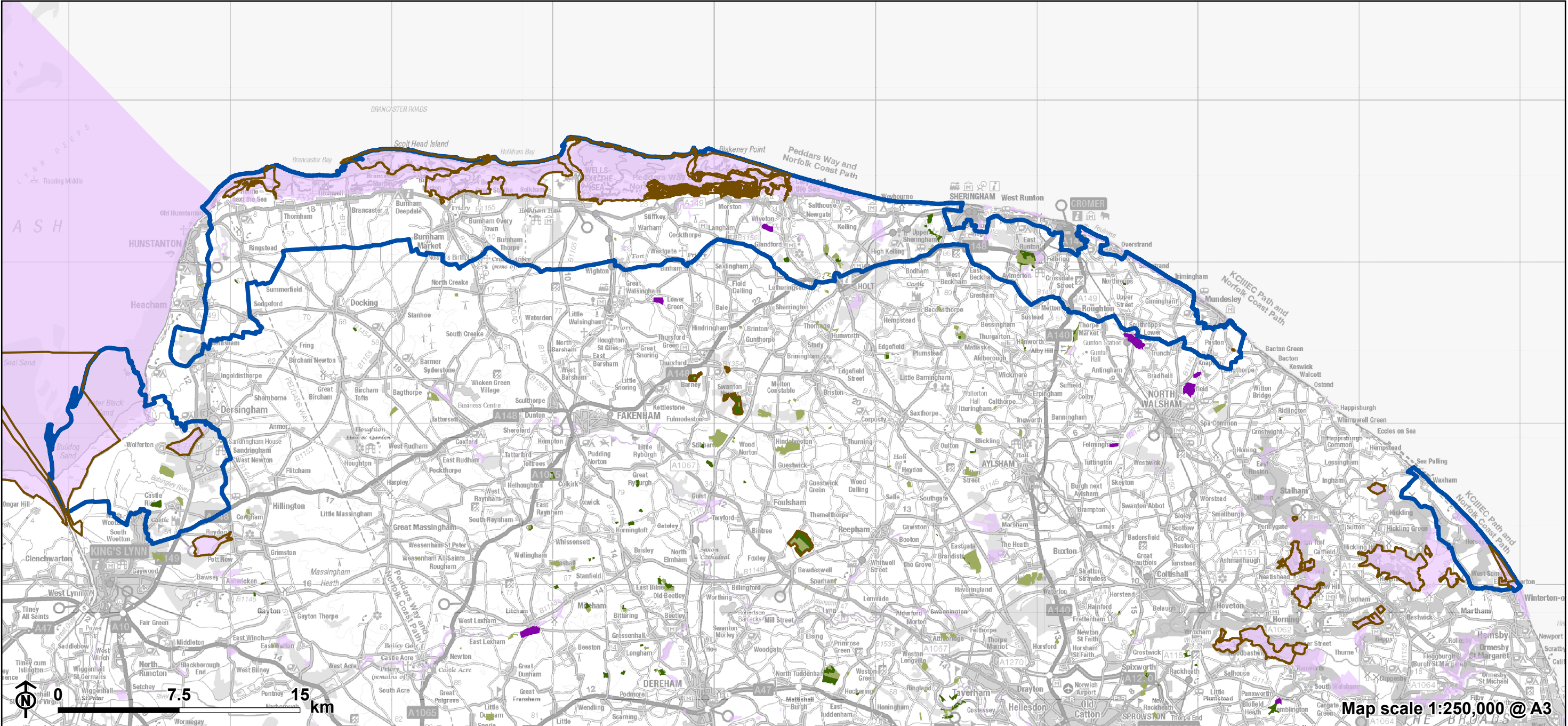


Figure 5.2 Protected national nature conservation sites and ancient woodland in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- National nature conservation designations
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Nature Reserve
- Ancient woodland
- Ancient & semi-natural woodland
- Ancient replanted woodland



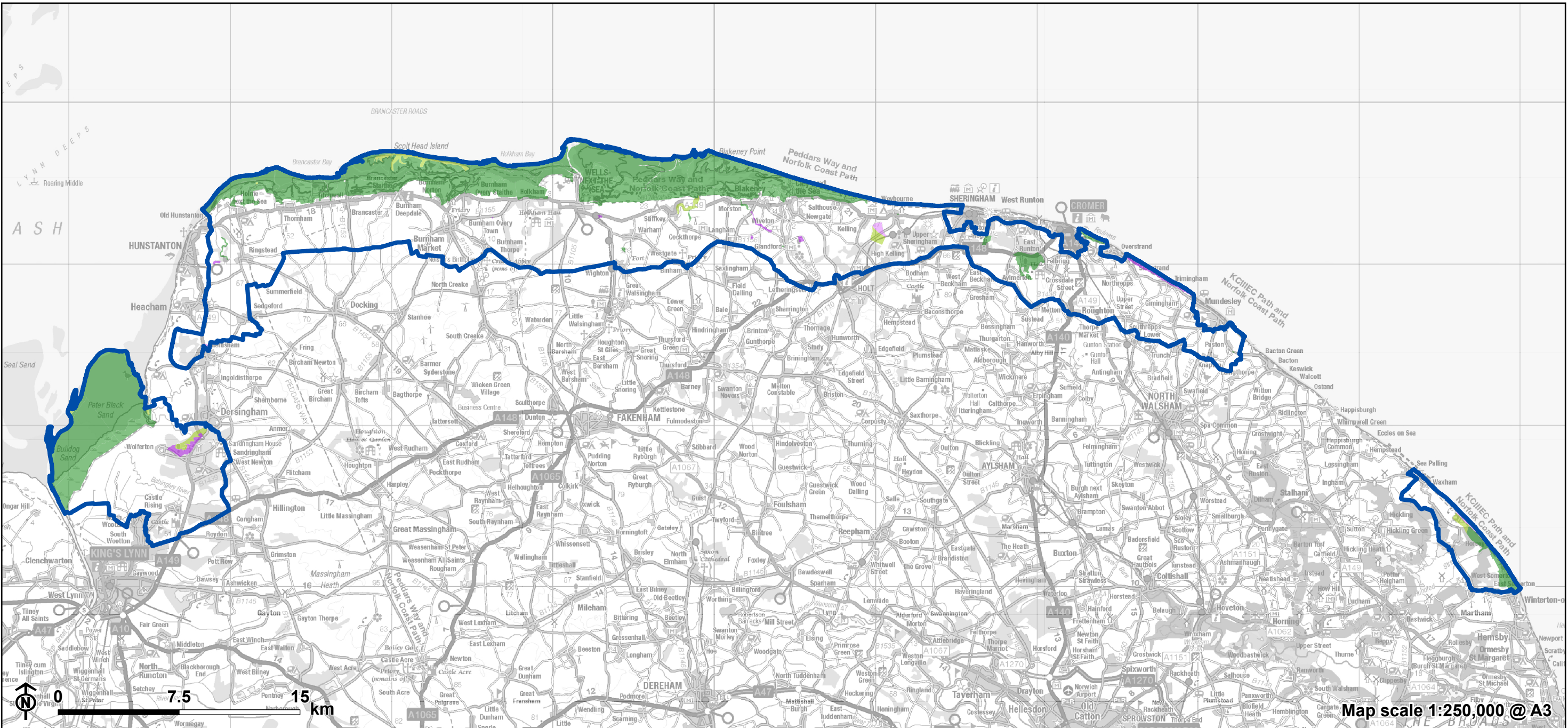
Status of indicator: Extent and condition of SSSIs

In 2025, PLTOF data shows that within the NCNL, 45.1% of the SSSI units are in 'favourable' condition and 12% are in 'unfavourable – recovering' condition, while a further 25% are in 'unfavourable – no change' and unfavourable – declining' (**Figure 5.3**)¹⁰. To note, SSSI units are divisions of SSSIs based on habitat, tenure and management, and are the basis for recording all information on SSSI Condition and management.

¹⁰ Note: The Wash and Upper Thurne Broad and Marshes SSSIs are not included against Norfolk Coast in PLTOF SSSI Condition data, but they are in the GIS data. PLTOF Percentage values (favourable) are based on count rather than area and will exclude the two SSSIs noted above.

Figure 5.3 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) condition in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- SSSI condition**
- Favourable
- Unfavourable recovering
- Unfavourable no change
- Unfavourable declining



Status of indicator: Priority Habitat coverage and extent of wildlife rich habitat

In the UK, Priority Habitats are those listed as being of principal importance for the purpose of conserving or enhancing biodiversity, under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Within the NCNL there are large areas of Priority Habitats, which collectively cover 28% of the NCNL (**Figure 5.4**). In 2025, PLTOF data shows that the most extensive of these is coastal saltmarsh, which covers 3,228 ha, while deciduous woodland covers 2,932 ha. The full list of Priority Habitats and area coverage are shown in **Table 5.2**.

Table 5.2 Priority Habitat coverage within the NCNL

Priority Habitat Type	Area (ha)
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	1,535
Coastal saltmarsh	3,228
Coastal sand dunes	808
Coastal vegetated shingle	104
Deciduous woodland	2,932
Lowland calcareous grassland	34
Lowland dry acid grassland	79
Lowland fens	40
Lowland heathland	364
Lowland meadows	37
Maritime cliff and slope	84
Mudflats	2,601
Ponds	0
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	36
Reedbeds	169
Saline lagoons	60
Traditional orchard	11
Total	12,122

The Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023 set out a long-term biodiversity target that more than 500,000 hectares (ha) of a range of wildlife-rich habitats are to be restored or created across England by 31st December 2042¹¹. To support this, Protected Landscapes Target 1 (as defined under the PLTOF) is to create or restore 250,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat across all the Protected Landscapes in England. The contribution that will be delivered toward this target within the NCNL is outlined in the NCNL Management Plan.

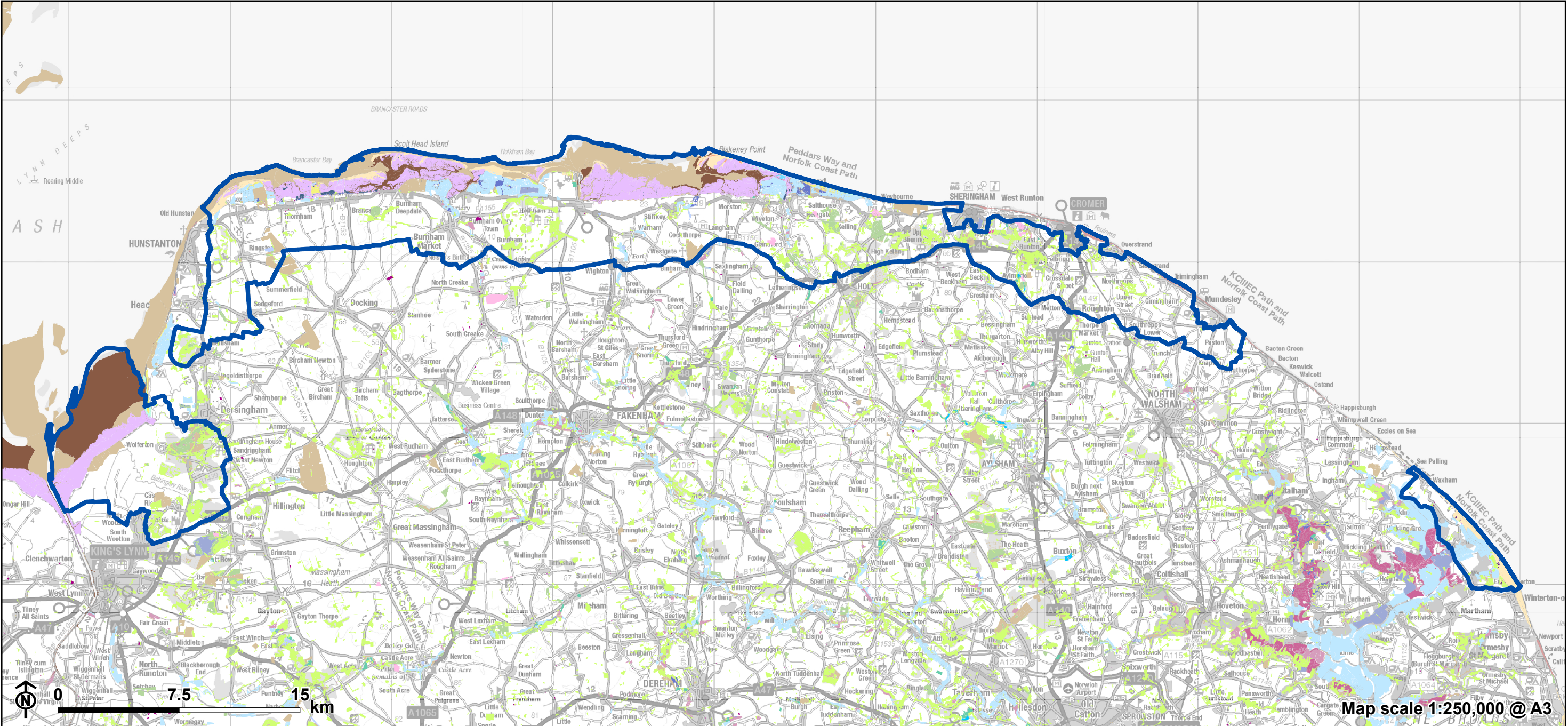
¹¹ HM Government (2023) The Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023

Figure 5.4 Distribution of priority habitats in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

Priority Habitats Inventory

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, Coastal saltmarsh
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, Lowland meadows
- Coastal saltmarsh
- Coastal saltmarsh, Saline lagoons
- Coastal sand dunes
- Coastal sand dunes, Coastal vegetated shingle
- Coastal sand dunes, Deciduous woodland
- Coastal sand dunes, Reedbeds
- Coastal vegetated shingle
- Coastal vegetated shingle, Saline lagoons
- Deciduous woodland
- Good quality semi improved grassland
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland, Lowland heathland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland fens, Reedbeds
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Lowland meadows, Maritime cliff and slope
- Maritime cliff and slope
- Mudflats
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- Reedbeds
- Reedbeds, Coastal saltmarsh
- Saline lagoons
- Traditional orchard
- No main habitat but additional habitats present



Status of indicator: Geodiversity sites

There are 24 Geological SSSI units within the NCNL and 50% of these are in favourable condition.

There is one Local Geological Site¹² within the NCNL, Rising Hill, located at Letheringsett with Glandford. It has an area of 0.87 ha and is a disused quarry, with good exposures of Pleistocene glacial outwash sands, gravels, and till.

Analysis of indicator: Nature friendly farming

There is an EIP target stating 65 to 80% of landowners/farmers will adopt nature-friendly practices on 10 to 15% of their land by 2030. This might provide more meaningful data in future, but there is no information at the present time.

Analysis of indicator: Water quality

All of the river water bodies (rivers, canal, and surface water) within the NCNL are classed as 'Moderate' or 'Poor'. However, one of the four groundwater waterbodies within the NCNL is classed as 'Good'. Of the 22 waterbody catchments within the NCNL, only 4.5% has a status of 'High' or 'Good'.

Norfolk is home to about 25 chalk rivers, which are so rare that there are only about 200 in the world. A number of these flow through NCNL. Chalk streams are rivers that are fed from water held within the underlying chalk bedrock and are among the most ecologically significant freshwater habitats. Their water is clear, pure, and fortified with many inorganic nutrients that provide essential building blocks for life. These streams provide critical habitats for an array of species, many of which are highly sensitive to water quality and flow conditions.

A variety of conservation, education, and community projects have taken place on nine chalk-fed rivers in Norfolk (the Mun, Glaven, Stiffkey, Burn, Heacham, Ingol, Hun, Babingley and Gaywood) as part of a £1.3 million partnership between the NCNL, Norfolk County Council, The Wild Trout Trust, and local Environment Agency representatives.

Recommendations

- National and local biodiversity and geodiversity data should be collected and analysed every five years through State of the NCNL reporting, to enable change over time to be monitored for the headline indicators.
- PLTOF data will need to be monitored and further guidance on the targets will be published to inform further understanding.
- The status of waterbodies should be monitored in accordance with the Water Framework Directive, to ensure that the waterbodies in 'Moderate' and 'Poor' conditions do not decline.
- It would be useful to collect data on the number of nature friendly farming initiatives in the NCNL for future monitoring purposes. This could be compiled through Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) projects or data from the EIP.

¹² Local Geological Sites are non-statutory sites selected to protect the most important places for geology, geomorphology, and soils, complementing the network of legally protected SSSIs.

Chapter 6

Climate adaptation and mitigation

Chapter overview

Selected indicators

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to the NCNL and its impacts must be measured and managed to ensure the NCNL is able to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The indicators selected for climate adaptation and mitigation are:

- Renewable energy development
- Flood risk and water quality
- Incorporation of SuDS
- Greenhouse gas emissions within the NCNL
- Peatland restoration
- Trees and woodland
- Coastal erosion / coastal flooding

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- North Norfolk County Council Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) (accessed 2025)
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Renewable Energy Planning Database (accessed 2025)
- Natural England, PLTOF data
- Environment Agency (data downloaded 2025)
- HM Government, Rivers and the sea: Understand your flood risk (accessed 2025)
- Natural England, Peaty Soils Location (England) (2024)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Environment Agency, and Natural England, Peatlands set to be restored to help tackle climate change (2023)
- Met Office 2024: Provisionally the fourth warmest year on record in the UK (accessed 2025)
- Metrological Office data for Lowestoft Monckton Avenue (Location: Lat 1.727, Lon 52.483)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Environment Agency, North Norfolk Operational Catchment Data Explorer (accessed 2025)

Status of indicator: Renewable energy development

There is one operational solar farm, with an installed capacity of 11MW, and one battery energy storage system located within the NCNL, with an installed capacity of 6MW. They are both located at the North Norfolk Business Centre Solar Park in Cromer.

The landscape of the NCNL is sensitive to large-scale and medium-scale wind energy developments, particularly in the Coastal Shelf, Wooded Glacial Ridge, and River Valleys Landscape Character Types. LUC

prepared the North Norfolk Sensitivity Assessment, with particular reference to renewable energy and low carbon development. There are currently no wind farms located within the NCNL, but there are a number of offshore and onshore wind projects within close proximity to the NCNL, which are operational.

The NCNL falls within the remit of three Local Planning Authorities: Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk District Council, and Great Yarmouth Borough Council. Adopted Plan Policy EN7 of the North Norfolk Local Plan does not allow for large scale renewable energy infrastructure in areas of national importance, including the NCNL, unless it can be demonstrated that the objectives of the designation are not compromised. Local Plan Policy LP24 Renewable Energy of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan states that proposals will be assessed based on the benefits they bring in terms of energy generated weighed up against certain criteria including their impact on the NCNL. The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk will also seek to resist proposals where there is a significant loss of agricultural land.

There are currently a number of emerging NSIPs within proximity to the NCNL, including the Great Grid Upgrade, which may have impacts on the setting of the landscape, but none run through the NCNL.

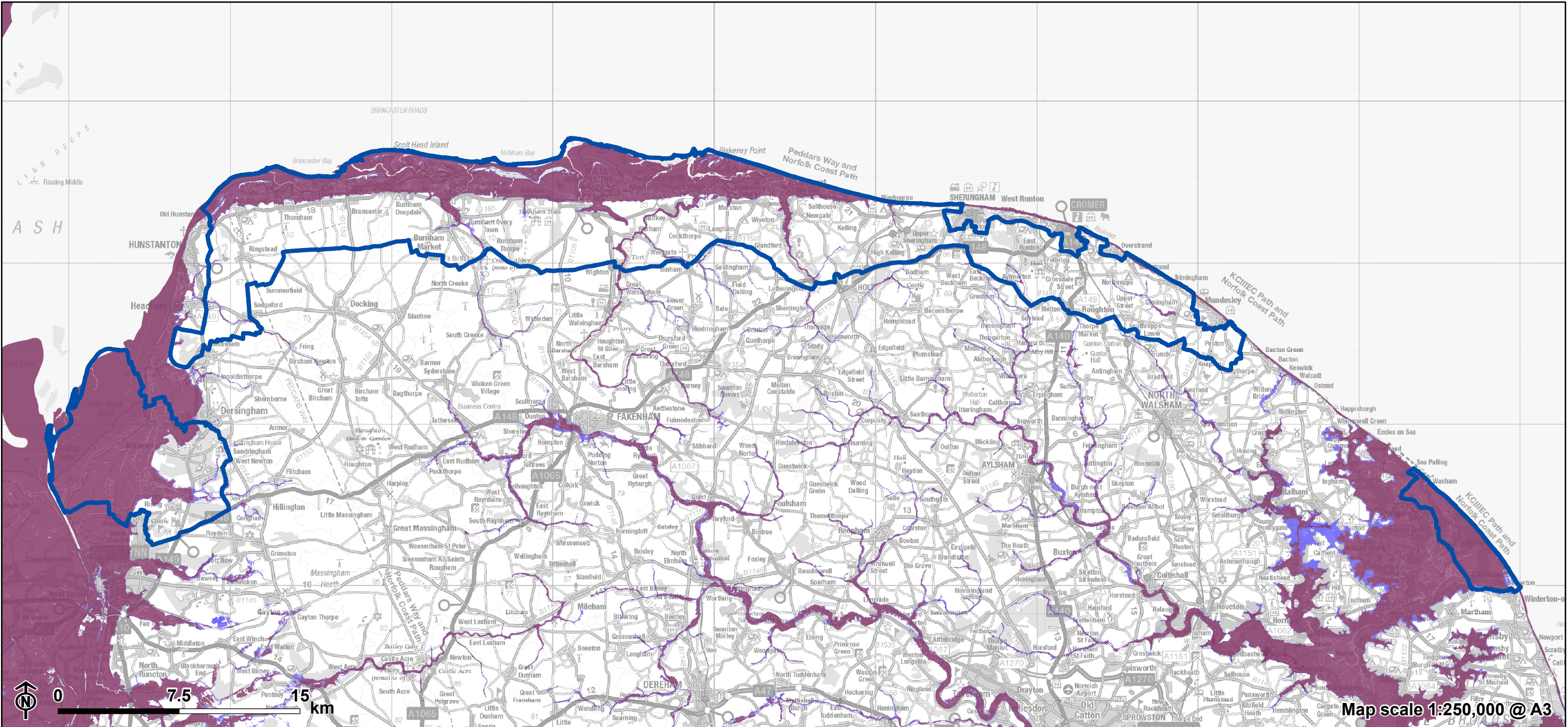
Analysis of indicator: Flood risk and water quality

There are four rivers, the River Hun, Burn, Stiffkey, and Glaven, that flow into the NCNL, supporting vital wetland habitats. The Groundwater Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) covers 5,176.1 ha of the NCNL, or 82.9%, whilst the surface water NVZ covers 34.4% (0.6%).

While the majority of the NCNL faces a low risk of river and surface water flooding, there are areas of higher risk scattered throughout the landscape but mostly centred along the coast (**Figure 6.1**).

Figure 6.1 Flood zones in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- Flood zones
- Flood zone 2
- Flood zone 3



Status of indicator: Incorporation of SuDS

It is not possible to report on this indicator at this time.

Status of indicator: Greenhouse gas emissions within the NCNL

2024 was provisionally the fourth warmest year on record for the UK, with a mean temperature of 9.78°C, which is 0.64°C above the 1991-2020 average.

Per capita CO₂ emissions have dropped from 10.2tCO₂e in 2005 to 5.5tCO₂e in 2022.

Status of indicator: Peatland restoration

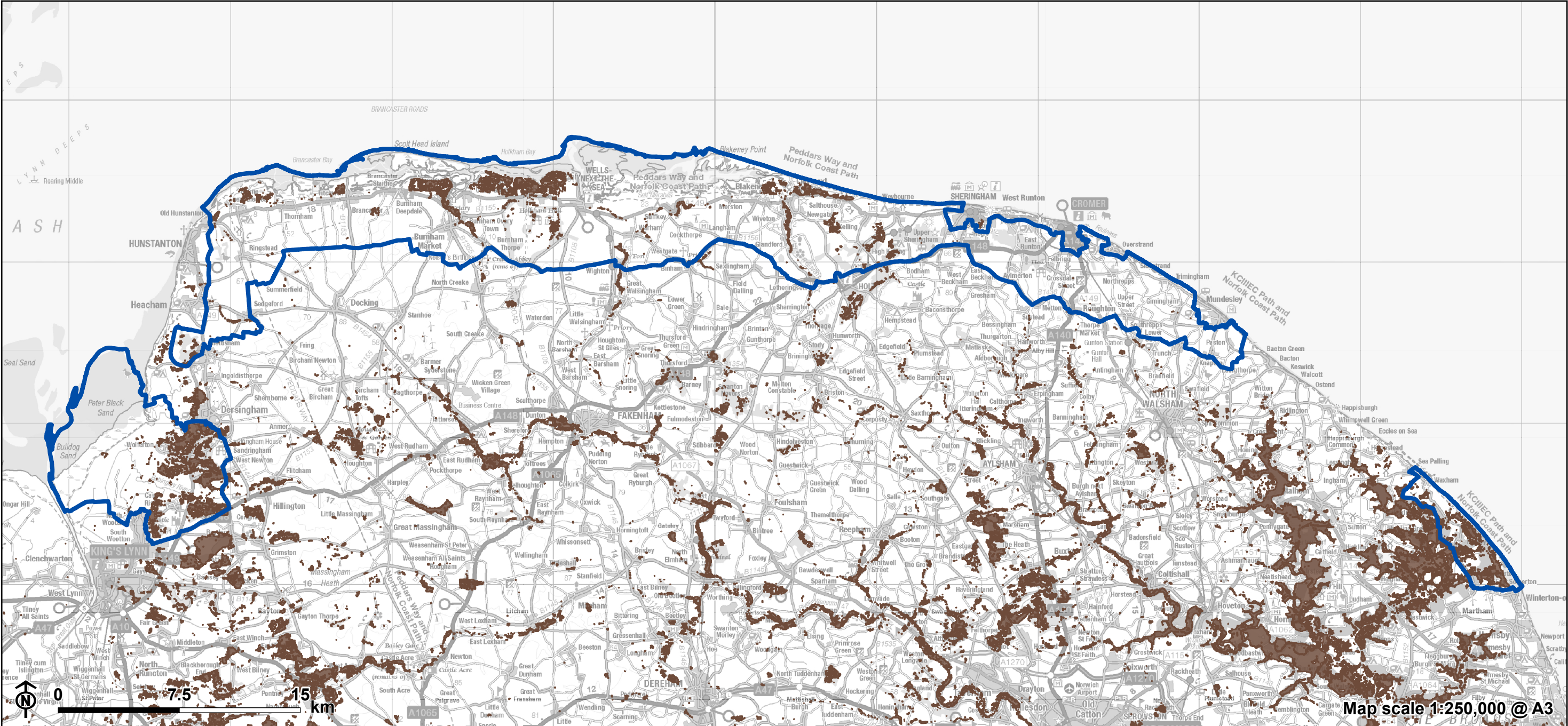
There are areas of deep peaty soil across the NCNL, particularly to the west of the landscape (**Figure 6.2**).

The Buttle Marshes Restoration project led by the Broads Authority will restore 26 ha of peatland, which has been historically drained for arable cultivation.

Figure 6.2 Peatland coverage in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- Peaty soil

Notes:
Predicted extent of peaty soil in England, defined as soil with $\geq 20\%$ organic content. Derived from the England Peat Map (Natural England, 2025), which uses machine and deep learning to model peat extent, depth, and condition from national datasets including LiDAR, satellite imagery, geology, and historic land use. Shown here are areas with a $>50\%$ probability of peaty soil presence. Funded by Defra’s Nature for Climate Fund and NCEA programme. See NERR149 Final Report Annex 5 for methodology.

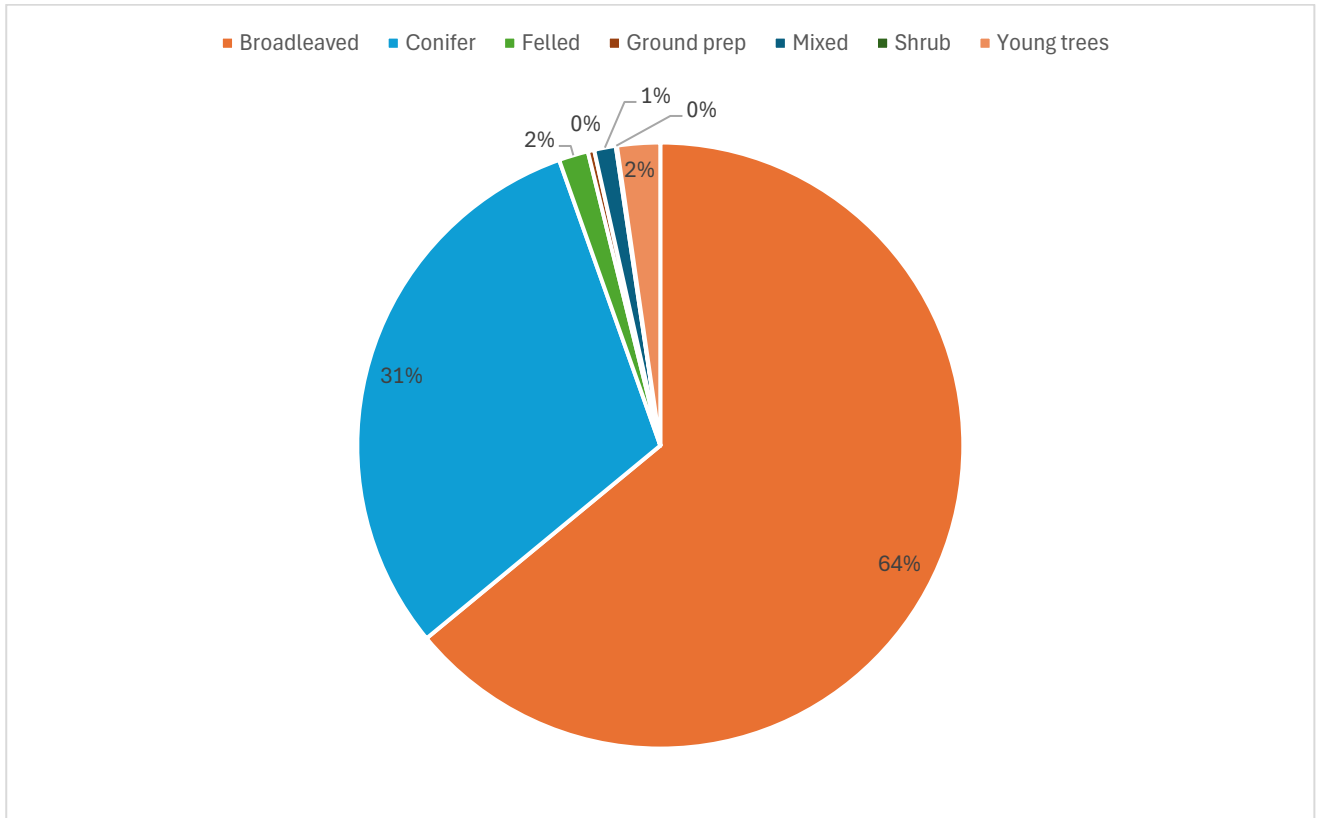


Status of indicator: Trees and woodland

For 2024, PLTOF data showed that woodland covered a total of 4,859 ha (11%) of the NCNL (**Figure 6.3**).

The types of woodland found within the NCNL, and the area for each, are shown in **Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4**. The most common woodland type is broadleaved and conifer, covering 3,111ha and 1,485ha respectively.

Figure 6.3 Woodland coverage in the NCNL

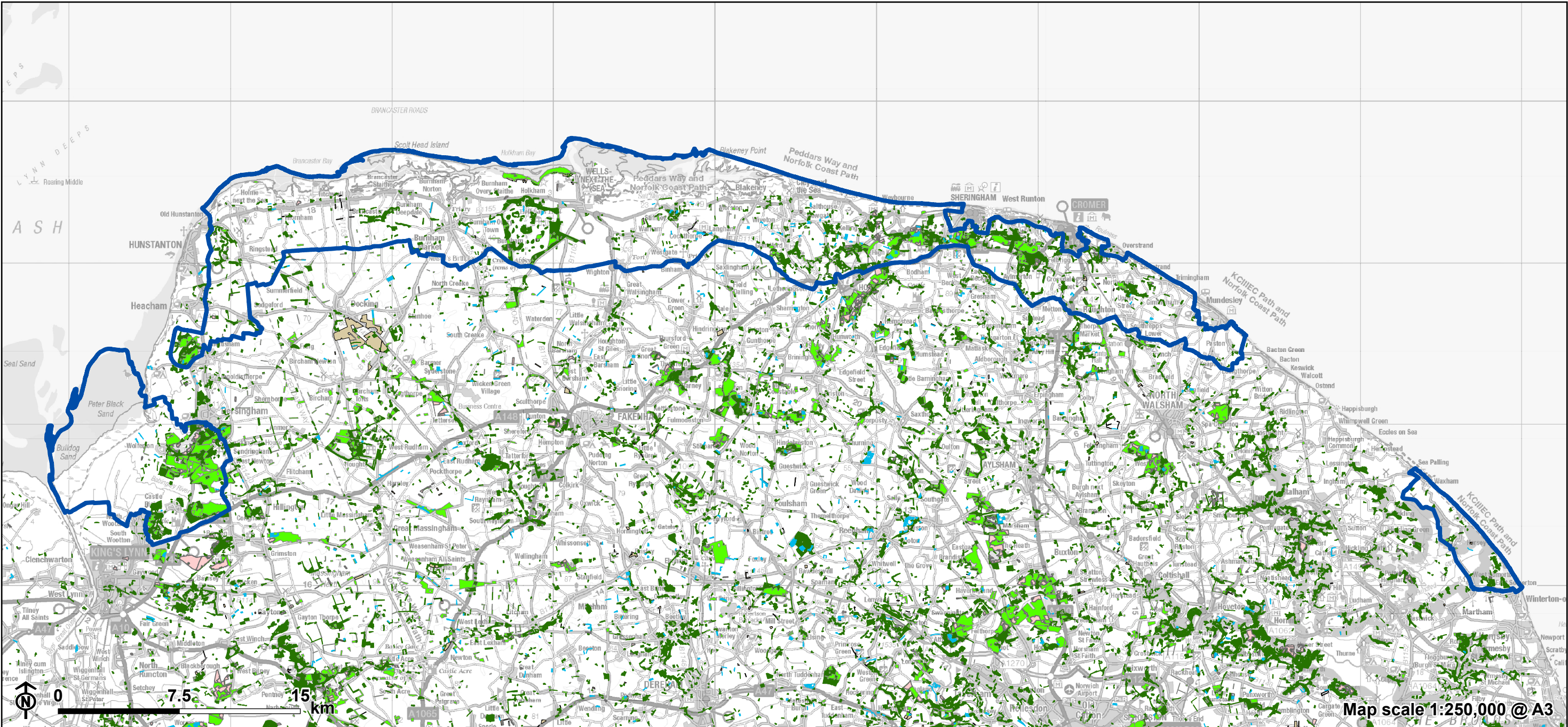


Ancient woodland comprises 285.8 ha (0.6%) of the NCNL.

Between 2013 and 2023, woodland coverage in the NCNL increased by 0.8%.

Figure 6.4 Woodland (National Forest Inventory) coverage and type in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- National Forest Inventory (2023)**
- Assumed woodland
- Broadleaved and mixed mainly broadleaved
- Conifer and mixed mainly conifer
- Coppice and coppice with standards
- Other (Felled, Ground prep, Low density)
- Young trees and shrub



Status of indicator: Coastal erosion / coastal flooding

The NCNL has 300km of public rights of way many of which run along the coastline. Of the 300km of PRow in the NCNL 9.8km of the paths fall within an area designated as a Coastal Erosion Zone which has been predicted to erode in the short term¹³.

Shoreline Management Plan

Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) are non-statutory documents that provide the vehicle for managing flood and erosion risk associated with coastal processes. They offer guidance to coastal engineers and managers to identify, and recommend, strategic and sustainable coastal defence policy options for particular lengths of coast, to reduce risks to people, developed areas, and natural environments.

SMPs aim to define a sustainable management approach that balances interests along the shoreline over the short term (up to 2025), the medium term (2026 - 2055), and the long term (2026 to 2105). These are referred to as epochs 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

A key focus of SMPs is the definition of management response, distinguishing between sections of coast where the priority is:

- Hold the line: Maintaining existing coastal defences;
- Advance the line: Building new defences seaward;
- Managed realignment: Allowing controlled retreat of the shoreline; and
- No active intervention: Allowing natural coastal evolution.

The coastline of the NCNL is covered by the following SMPs:

- SMP 5: Hunstanton to Kelling Hard¹⁴; and
- SMP 6: Kelling Hard to Lowestoft¹⁵.

The two SMPs were adopted in 2010 and 2012, respectively. Due to the coastline's sensitive location, it requires active management in order to support the coastal towns and villages at risk from erosion. Key issues and responses identified within the SMPs are presented in **Table 6.1**.

Table 6.1 Shoreline Management Plans issues and responses

Sector	Issues and features at risk	SMP responses
Property	Centres of residential and commercial development	Maintain existing defences where economically viable
Infrastructure	Risk of flooding to the road network at Broadwater Road, and the A149 road, which connects Hunstanton with Cromer, and sections of the B1159	Continue defence action
Agriculture	Mostly grade 2 and 3 between Kelling and Cromer, grade 1 and 2 between Eccles and Winterton	Continued protection afforded, but if it becomes unsustainable to hold the line, a retired line option would result in loss or damage to this land

¹³ The National Coastal Erosion Risk Management Map provides information on coastal risk in England, including short-term projections. The Short-Term projections refer to erosion predictions for 0 – 20 years.

¹⁴ East Anglia Coastal Group [online] Available at: [SMP 5 - Hunstanton to Kelling Hard](#)

¹⁵ East Anglia Coastal Group [online] Available at: [SMP 6 - Kelling Hard to Lowestoft Ness](#)

Sector	Issues and features at risk	SMP responses
Historic environment	Historic environment along the shore dominated by post-medieval settlements Happisburgh to Eccles frontage contains a large number of monument sites, listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument	Managed realignment, but with an emphasis on slowing erosion and minor repairs to existing defences where this can be justified
Nature conservation	Happisburgh Cliffs SSSI is designated for its geological significance. Holme Dunes and parts of Holme Marshes are protected within multiple conservation designations, including the North Norfolk and Wash Ramsar sites, The Wash and North Norfolk SPA, The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC, The Wash and North Norfolk SSSI, and the Holme Dunes National Nature Reserve	Biodiversity targets to promote policy options that, where possible, will maintain the free-functioning of coastal process acting on maritime cliff and slope habitats
Landscape	Loss of historic landscape and areas of nature conservation interest	Promote a naturally-functioning coast for much of the frontage, reducing man-made structures on the beach, which will ultimately create a more natural coastal landscape
Access and coastal use	The coast is an important area for tourist and recreation use, with key interests concentrated along the coastal strip and in the Broads	Although there should be beaches retained where the coast is allowed to retreat, there will be potential access issues, with existing accesses often being lost, but there is potential, and in some places a necessity due to safety issues, for these to be re-established if funding is available, although relocation may be necessary

Recommendations

- Data obtained in this section should be re-visited on a five-year basis to obtain information on any changes in woodland cover. Climate change may put further pressures on woodlands and individual trees, making them more susceptible to disease or pests. The incidence of these should be monitored.
- It would be useful to collect data on the condition of woodlands in the NCNL for future monitoring purposes.
- Existing woodland should be managed appropriately in accordance with the NCNL Management Plan. Partners and statutory bodies with a responsibility for the NCNL should collect data on any levels of woodland planting over the next five years.
- It would be useful to collect data on the number of developments that incorporate SuDS in the NCNL for future monitoring purposes.

Chapter 7

Sustainable development: Planning

Chapter overview

Selected indicators

Understanding the amount, type and nature of development that is coming forward in the three local planning authorities that the NCNL falls within and what development is being allocated in their Local Plans is crucial to preserving the special qualities of the NCNL. The indicators for sustainable planning are:

- Number of planning applications consulted on in 2024/25
- References to the NCNL in Local Plans

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk and Great Yarmouth Local Plans
- Local Planning Authorities: Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk District Council, and Great Yarmouth Borough Council
- Norfolk Coast Partnership Planning Application Log (2024/25)

Status of indicator: Number of planning applications consulted on in 2024/25

In 2024/25, Norfolk Coast Partnership were consulted on 116 planning applications and responded to 12 of these and 1 emerging Local Plan. The planning applications and screening/scoping requests were for the erection of a new visitor centre, new dwellings a listed building consent and a large mixed-use development.

Planning applications for 2024 alone have been reviewed to determine the frequency of different types of planning applications. The most common planning application type in 2024 was construction of dwellings, which accounted for 32% of all planning applications.

Status of indicator: References to NCNL in Local Plans

Each of the Local Plans for the three Local Planning Authorities (Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk District Council, and Great Yarmouth Borough Council) that the NCNL falls within contains reference to the need to ensure that the NCNL is protected and enhanced. The policies are as follows:

- Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan Policy LP16 Norfolk Coast AONB¹⁶ sets out planning permission for any proposal within the NCNL will only be granted when it conserves and enhances the NCNL special qualities and meets the aims of the NCNL Management Plan.

¹⁶ [Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk \(2025\) Local Plan 2021-2040](#)

- North Norfolk Local Plan Policy EN1 Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and The Broads¹⁷ sets out that development proposals that would be significantly detrimental to the special qualities of the NCNL or The Broads and their settings will not be permitted.
- Great Yarmouth Core Strategy Policy CS11 Enhancing the Natural Environment¹⁸ sets out that the Council will work with other partner authorities and agencies to improve the Borough's natural environment. The policy sets out that the Council will ensure that the NCNL, the Broads, and their settings are protected and enhanced.

The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and North Norfolk District Council Local Plans, adopted in March 2025 and September 2008 respectively, go further and contain a policy relating specifically to the NCNL and its special qualities. However, the Great Yarmouth emerging Local Plan, which is at Regulation 19 stage, contains a policy that relates specifically to the NCNL.

Furthermore, it is recommended that each of these Local Plans reference the NCNL within their vision and strategic objectives, to ensure the protection and enhancement of the NCNL is at the core of the Plans.

¹⁷ [North Norfolk District Council \(2008\) North Norfolk Development Framework](#)

¹⁸ [Great Yarmouth Borough Council \(2021\) Core Strategy and Local Plan Part 2](#)

Recommendations

- The partners and statutory bodies with a responsibility for the NCNL should work together to ensure all policy documents include specific reference to, and policies on, the preservation and management of the NCNL. Notably, Norfolk Coast Partnership, whilst not a statutory consultee, is keen to support Local Planning Authorities with the plan making process.
- Continue to collate information on planning applications; however, there is a need for more detailed information on planning applications to be collated by Norfolk Coast Partnership, partners and statutory bodies. This should include the type of planning applications as well as the decision. Furthermore, planning applications within the Heritage Coast should be highlighted.
- Data on accordance rates (i.e. the level of applications where the Local Planning Authority decision agrees with the opinion of the NCNL) is not currently available. Partners and statutory bodies with a responsibility for the NCNL should aim to collect this data on a monthly or annual basis, as accordance rates provide a good indicator of how the Local Planning Authorities' policies are applied in practice.

Chapter 8

Sustainable development: Tourism

Chapter overview

Selected indicators

The value of tourism to the NCNL is clear as it is the most important industry for the local economy. Understanding the impact tourism has on the NCNL is vital to ensure it is managed effectively. The indicators selected for sustainable tourism are:

- Value of tourism
- Visitor numbers
- Public rights of way/Promoted Long Distance Routes/Open space provision
- Popular areas used for recreation
- Public transport and cycle route provision
- Accessibility

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- Management Plan
- Public rights of way data
- Economic Impact of Tourism, North Norfolk, 2023 Results
- Economic Impact of Tourism, West Norfolk, 2023 Results
- Great Yarmouth Visitor Survey, September 2024
- Natural England, May 2025 PLTOF data

Status of indicator: Value of tourism

Tourism is by far the most important industry for the local economy within the NCNL, with visitors attracted to the coast for its wildlife, sense of remoteness, and opportunities for recreation. In 2022/23, the total number of businesses in the area was 1,040, with the largest sectors being accommodation, hospitality, and retail. The previous State of the North Norfolk Coast report prepared by Natural England stated the following:

- In 2016/17, Norfolk Wildlife Trust saw 19,728 and 111,000 visitors at their Holme Dunes and Cley Marshes reserves, respectively
- An estimated 500,000 people visit Holkham NNR annually
- In 2016/17, approximately 78,000 people visited RSPB Titchwell

The RSPB valued visitor spend on the Norfolk coast at £122 million a year.

In 2023, the total tourism value across the North Norfolk District Council area was £519,653,378 and provided 27.4% of all employment. In the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk area for the year

2023, tourism was worth £565,165,867 and provided 15.6% of all employment. Furthermore, 78% of the accommodation used by visitors was paid accommodation in North Norfolk and 67% within West Norfolk.

Status of indicator: Visitor numbers

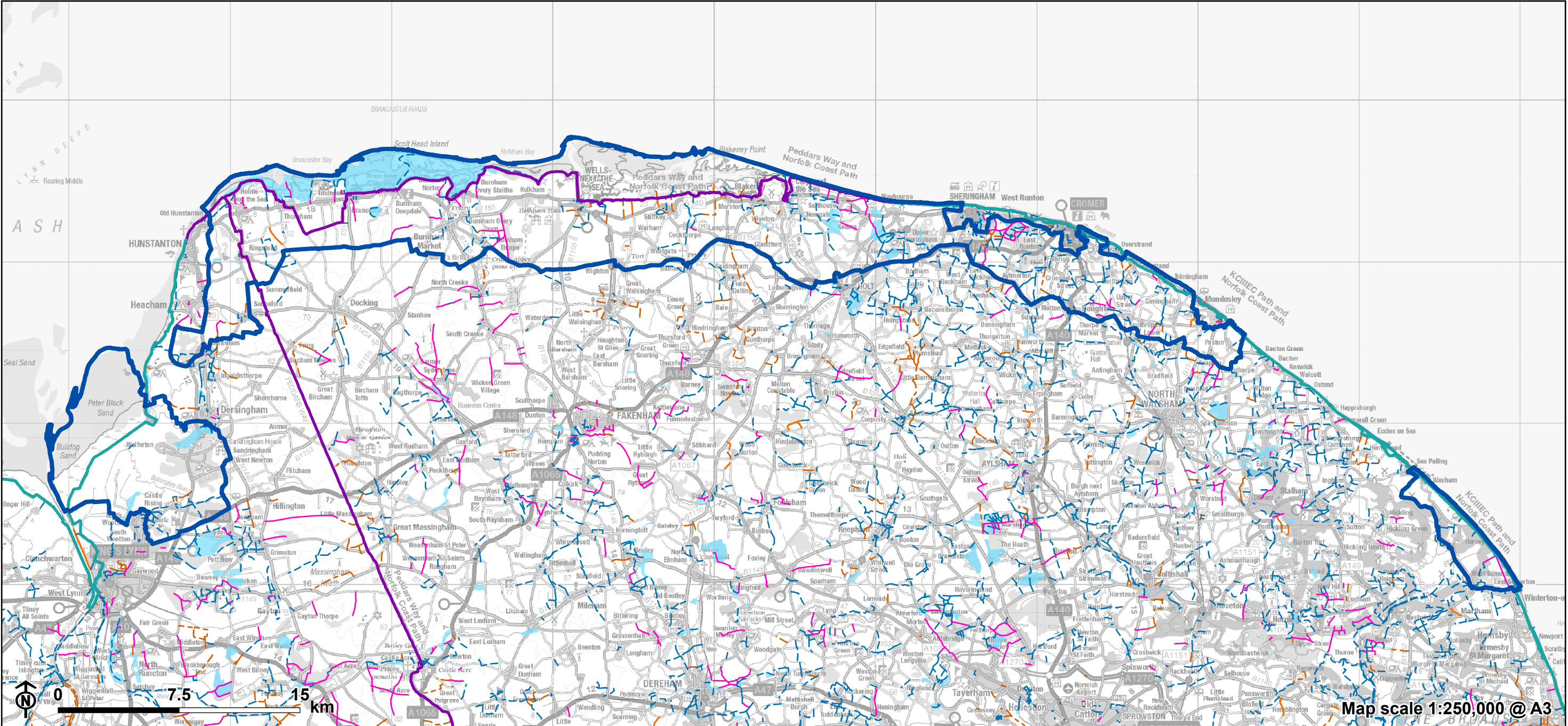
The Economic Impact of Tourism results from 2023 for North Norfolk state that the total number of trips (day and staying) was 9,432,400. Of that, 94% were day trips which equated to 8,835,000. This is similar for Great Yarmouth; in 2024, the majority of visitors were day visitors. Furthermore, 94% of trips to North Norfolk and Great Yarmouth were for holiday purposes. This statistic was only slightly less for West Norfolk, with 91% of trips for holiday purposes.

Status of indicator: Public rights of way/Promoted Long Distance Routes/Open space provision

The NCNL has 300km of public rights of way (**Figure 8.1**). The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail also runs through the NCNL, with much of the route also forming part of the King Charles III England Coast Path. Once completed, 24.1km of National Trail will run through the NCNL.

Figure 8.1 Public Rights of Way, national trails and open access land in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

- Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary
- Open access land
- National trails
- King Charles III England Coast Path
- Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail
- Public Rights of Way
- Bridleway
- Byway Open to All Traffic
- Footpath
- Restricted Byway



Status of indicator: Popular areas used for recreation

The NCNL has a strong attraction for visitors due to its wildlife, habitats and sense of remoteness. Historical and cultural attractions, such as Castle Rising, Sandringham House, Holkham Hall, Blakeney Guildhall, Binham Priory, Felbrigg Hall, and the North Norfolk Railway, are also a draw for visitors. Parts of the North Norfolk Heritage Coast are heavily used for a wide range of recreational activities, by both residents and visitors. Visitors are also drawn to the area's traditional seaside towns and resorts, such as Hunstanton, Sheringham, Cromer and Great Yarmouth.

Status of indicator: Public transport and cycle route provision

There is a mainline railway station at King's Lynn. The Bittern Line runs from Sheringham to Norwich, and the Wherry Line runs from Great Yarmouth to Norwich. Additionally, the Poppy Line North Norfolk Railway is a heritage line that runs between Holt and Sheringham, including a stop at Weybourne and the Wells & Walsingham light railway which runs between Wells-next-the-Sea and Walsingham.

Sanders' Coasthopper bus serves a long stretch of coastline, between North Walsham and Wells-next-the-Sea. There are also other local bus services running along the North Norfolk Coast, including Sanders 5 and 34, and Lynx 34, 35 and 36. Several bus services operate between King's Lynn and the North Norfolk Coast. The main bus station at King's Lynn links with the Coasthopper and Coastliner bus services, which provide connections to the coast, as well as the start of the Norfolk Coast Path at Hunstanton. The Coastlink bus service links the eastern coastal towns of Great Yarmouth and Gorleston with Lowestoft and Norwich.

The Norfolk Coast Cycleway runs through the NCNL, forming part of the Sustrans National Route 1 and Regional Route 30.

In 2024, 81% of visitors to the Great Yarmouth area travelled by car, and it was explicitly noted within the visitor survey that transportation was one of the worst things about Great Yarmouth.

Status of indicator: Accessibility

There is no data currently on the number of accessible toilets and number of disability accessible parking spaces.

Recommendations

- There is a need for NCNL partners and statutory bodies to collect more detailed information on visitor numbers, public transport use, the amount and condition of accessible toilets, and disability accessible parking spaces.

Chapter 9

Dark skies

Chapter overview

Selected indicators

The NCNL has four dark skies sites, which are ideal to view the night sky, and they have some of the lowest light pollution in the country. In addition, 53% of the NCNL falls within the darkest measurable category, where the Milky Way is visible on a clear night. Tranquillity is a valuable and increasingly seemingly elusive resource in the UK. Identifying the characteristics of places that evoke a sense of tranquillity, and safeguarding those spaces and their unique features, can serve as a vital refuge for a country facing the strain of rapid development. The indicators selected for dark skies are:

- Extent of relative tranquil areas
- Dark sky areas

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- CPRE, The Countryside Charity National Tranquillity mapping
- CPRE, The Countryside Charity Light Pollution and Dark Skies Maps

Status of indicator: Extent of relative tranquil areas

The CPRE, The Countryside Charity National Tranquillity mapping (2007) shows that the majority of the NCNL exhibits a relatively moderate level of tranquillity (Figure 9.1), although there are areas with relatively low levels of tranquillity, such as settlements around Cromer and Sheringham. The areas with the highest levels of tranquillity are found along the Norfolk Coast Path, in Wells-next-the-Sea, and around The Wash.

Status of indicator: Dark sky areas

The extent of light pollution in the NCNL, as recorded in the 2016 CPRE, The Countryside Charity Light Pollution and Dark Skies study, is shown in **Figure 9.2**. Over 52% of the NCNL has the lowest levels of light pollution and 0% of the NCNL falls within the brightest light levels. The lowest levels are associated with isolated areas around The Wash, such as Wolferton. The highest level of light pollution is associated with Bacton Gas Terminals in the east, and around the towns of Cromer, Sheringham, and Wells-next-the-Sea. There are ideal dark skies sites within the NCNL, including Kelling Heath, Barrow Common, RSPB Titchwell and Wiveton Downs.

Recommendations

- The potential impact of new development and/or changes of land use on the tranquillity and dark night skies of the NCNL should be carefully considered when making planning application decisions.
- It is recommended to record annual events and attendance related to dark skies to find an indication of their value to residents and visitors to the NCNL.

Figure 9.1 Levels of tranquillity in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

National tranquillity scale

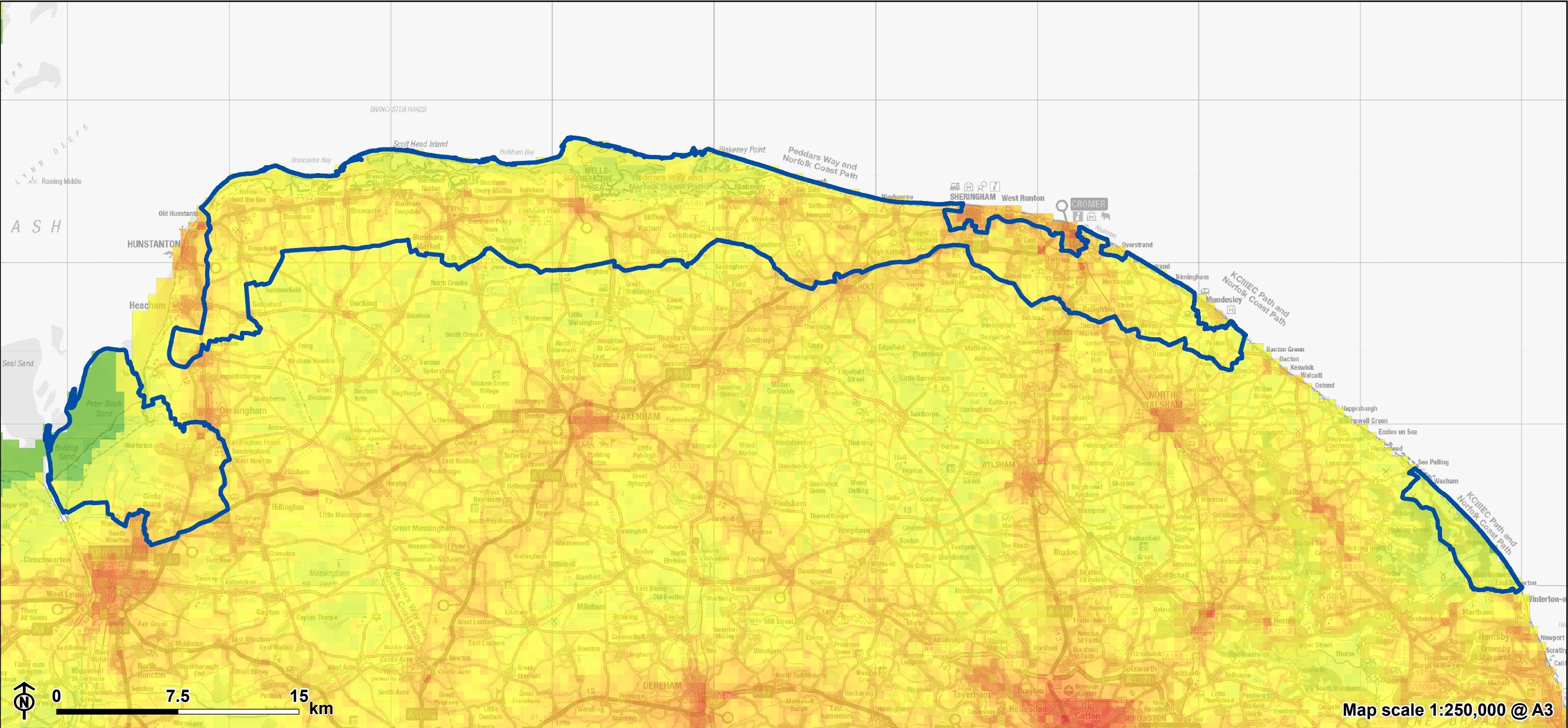
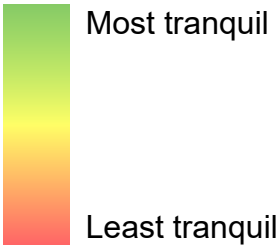
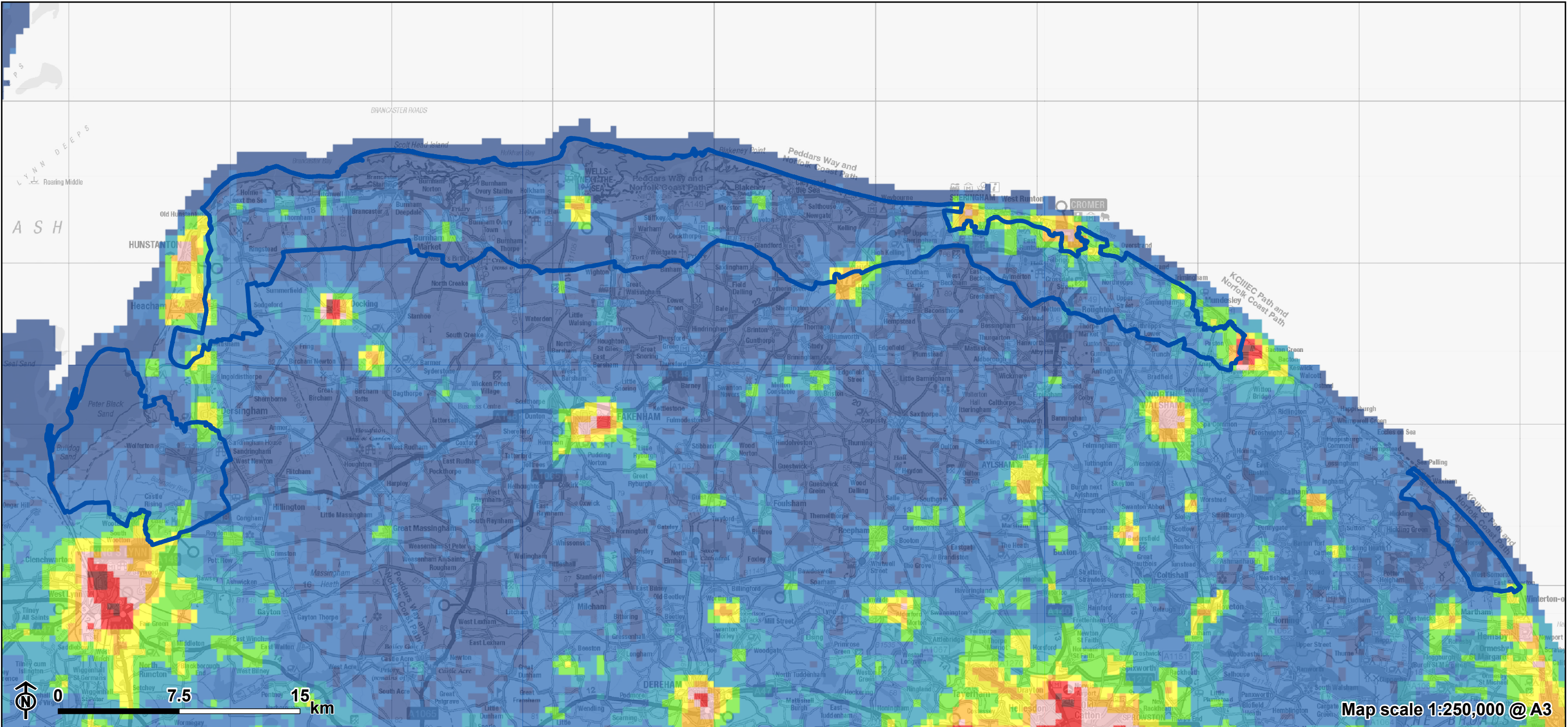
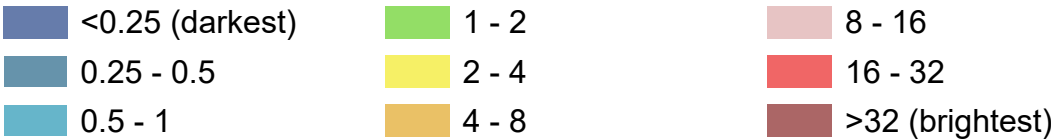


Figure 9.2 Light pollution in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

Night lights (NanoWatts / cm2 / sr)



Chapter 10

Heritage

Chapter overview

Selected indicators

The Norfolk coast has a distinct natural and cultural heritage. Notably, the North Norfolk Coast is designated as a Heritage Coast, owing to its exceptional natural beauty and cultural significance. The indicators selected for heritage are:

- The Heritage Coast – planning applications within the Heritage Coast boundary
- Historic Landscape Character (nature and distribution of HLC types)
- Number and extent of listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, scheduled monuments, and any other designated heritage assets
- Condition assessment of historic features
- Number and location of locally important archaeological sites/features listed on the Historic Environment Records

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- Historic England Heritage at Risk Register (downloaded 2025)
- Historic Environment Record data
- Natural England, PLTOF data, 2025

Status of indicator: The Heritage Coast – planning applications within the Heritage Coast boundary

There is no information on this indicator at this time.

Status of indicator: Historic Landscape Character (nature and distribution of HLC types)

There are 21 broad HLC types within the NCNL¹⁹. Of these, 20th century agriculture is the largest type, consisting of 15,468 ha.

Status of indicator: Number and extent of listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, scheduled monuments and any other designated heritage assets

There are 61 Scheduled Monuments, seven Registered Parks and Gardens, 49 Conservation Areas and 873 listed buildings within the NCNL (**Figure 10.1**). Additionally, the North Norfolk Heritage Coast was defined in 1975 by Local Authorities. This is a non-statutory designation recognising the large stretch of undeveloped coastline between Holme-next-the-Sea and Weybourne.

¹⁹ To note there are some duplicates in the HLC data.

Figure 10.1 Designated heritage assets within the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

Designated heritage assets

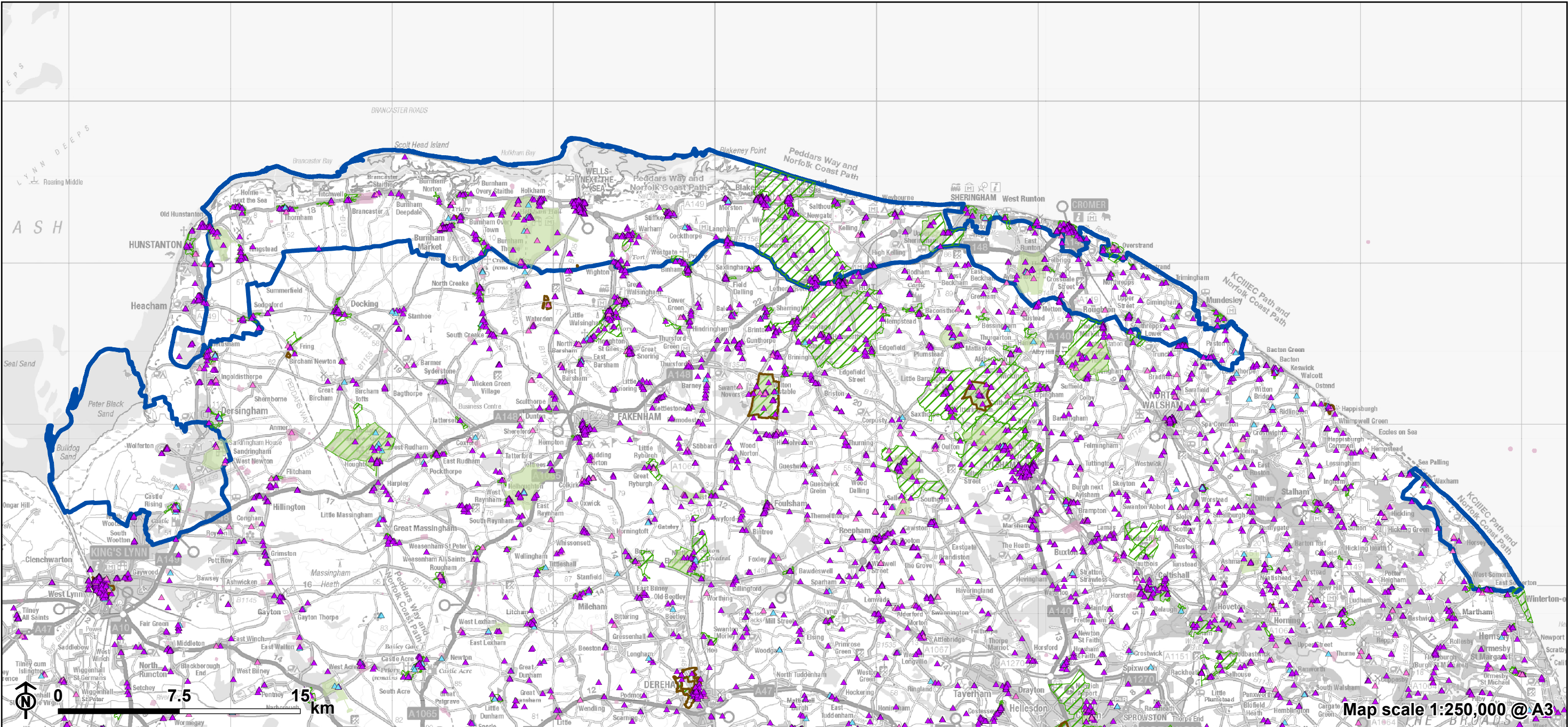
- Scheduled monument
- Registered parks and gardens
- Conservation area
- Heritage at risk (2024)

Listed building

- Grade I (buildings of exceptional interest)
- Grade II* (particularly important buildings of more than special interest)
- Grade II (buildings of special interest)

Notes:
Conservation Areas in England are designated by Local Planning Authorities and compiled by Historic England. More information can be found on the Historic England [website](#).

The description of Listed Buildings are based on the naming [conventions](#) set out by Historic England.



Status of indicator: Condition assessment of historic features The following features have been identified on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register in the NCNL:

- St Mary's Carmelite Friary and holy well - Scheduled monument
- Gatehouse, Carmelite Friary Ruins, Friar's Lane - Listed Building
- Church of St Nicholas, Church Plain - Listed Building
- Halvergate Marshes, Halvergate - Conservation Area
- Second World War Heavy Anti-Aircraft (HAA) Battery, 345M East Of Decoy Farm, Mautby - Scheduled Monument
- Church of St Peter and St Paul, Church Road - Listed Building

As noted by Historic England, for most of the above assets, they are experiencing a slow decay due to no solution being agreed between the relevant parties.

Status of indicator: Number and location of locally important archaeological sites/features listed on the Historic Environment Record

The Historic Environment Record record shows there are 1,564 locally important archaeological sites/features within the NCNL (**Figure 10.2**).

Recommendations

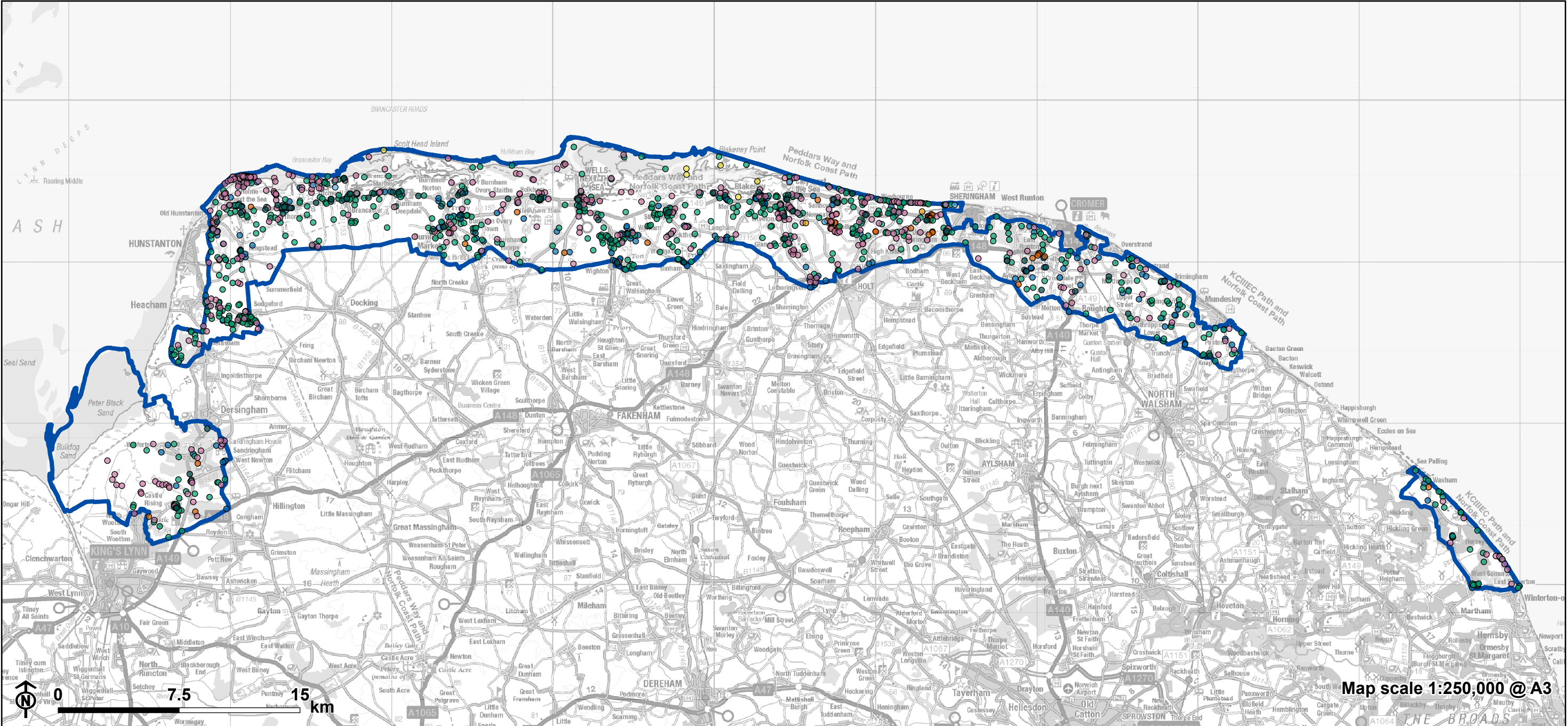
- The NCNL and its partners should work to preserve the positive characteristics of all the heritage assets within the NCNL through the planning system, to prevent any negative impacts.
- The NCNL, partners, and statutory bodies with a responsibility for the NCNL should continue to monitor the Heritage at Risk Register for the addition of features within the NCNL. Features that are currently on the Heritage at Risk Register should be appropriately managed and protected to restore/prevent further decline to the feature. The main existing threat to heritage is lack of management.

Figure 10.2 Historic Environment Record features in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

 Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

Historic Environment Record

- Building
- Cropmark and Earthwork
- Find Spot
- Maritime
- Monument
- Negative evidence
- Place
- Structure



Chapter 11

Local communities

Chapter overview

Selected indicators

The NCNL is home to an estimated 16,987 people. Understanding their housing, employment, and health and wellbeing needs is important to improve the vitality of the towns and villages within the NCNL. The indicators selected for local communities are:

- Total population and population density within the NCNL
- Number and type of dwellings
- Average house price
- Number and type of businesses
- Levels of deprivation
- Health and wellbeing
- Local aspirations/values/perceptions of the NCNL
- Art/Art Tourism/Public Art/Art Festivals/Galleries

The status of each indicator is reviewed within this chapter.

Data sources

- 2021 Census Data
- Land Registry Data
- Natural England, State of the North Norfolk Coast (November 2018)
- Economic Impact of Tourism, North Norfolk, 2023 Results
- Economic Impact of Tourism, West Norfolk, 2023 Results
- Great Yarmouth Visitor Survey, September 2024
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019)
- Natural England, PLOTF May 2025 data

Status of indicator: Total population and population density within the NCNL

Based on the 2022 population estimates, the total estimated population within the NCNL was 16,987 people. The 2025 PLTOF data shows that the average age within the NCNL is 53. It also notes that 38.4% of the population in the NCNL is aged over 65.

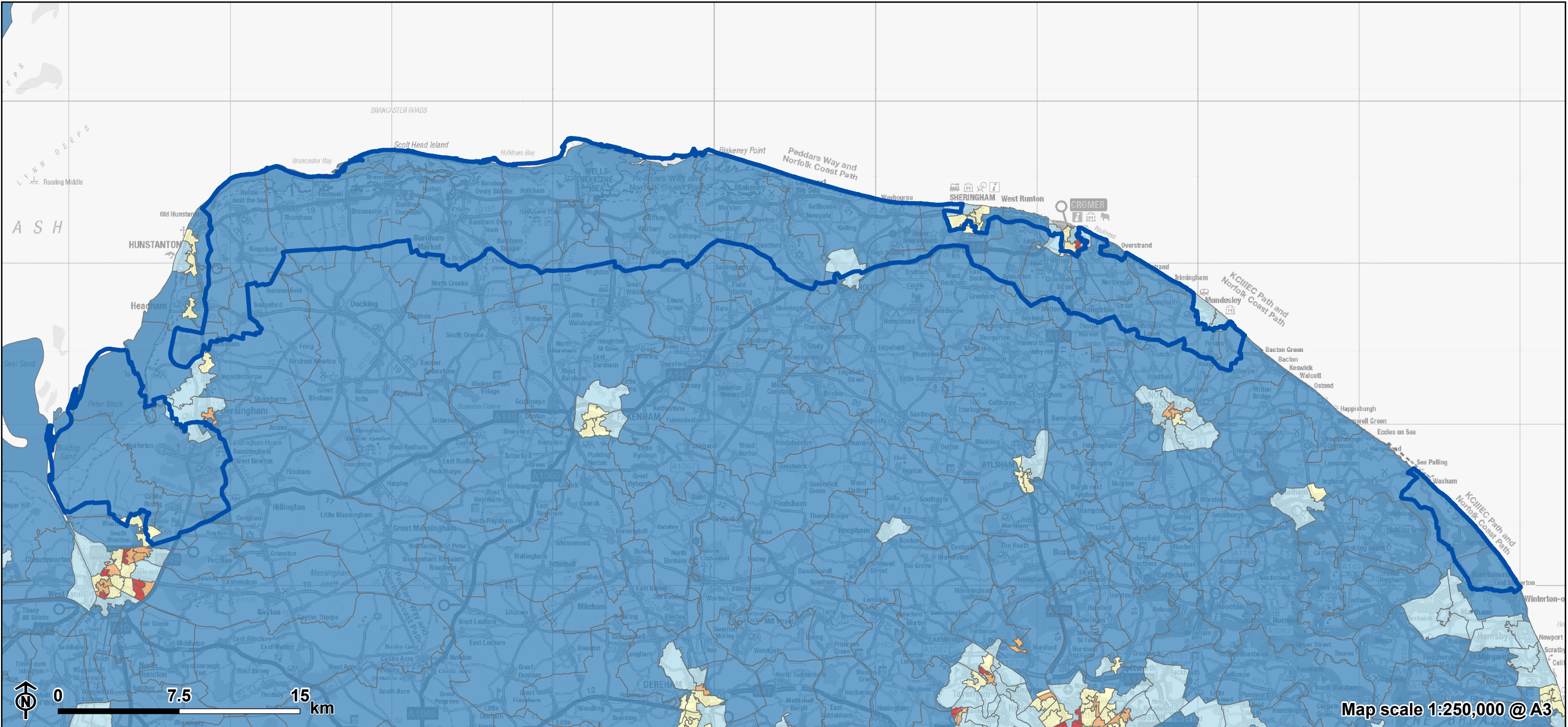
The whole of the NCNL is sparsely settled, with most of the NCNL having a population density of 0.12-2.0 people per ha (**Figure 11.1**). Between 2021 and 2022, the population density reduced by 0.5%.

Figure 11.1 Population density in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

 Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

Population density (people per hectare)

-  0.12 - 2.7
-  2.8 - 16
-  17 - 35
-  36 - 54
-  55 - 380



Source: Office for National Statistics, © Natural England 2025. Contains Ordnance Survey 13284_002_FigureProduction/Figure 11.1 Population density in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape 18/09/2025 data © Crown copyright and database right 2025. All data released under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

Status of indicator: Number and type of dwellings

Precise figures on the number and type of dwellings in the NCNL are not available. The 2021 Census estimated there were 180,778 dwellings across the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk District, and Great Yarmouth Borough, which encompasses the NCNL but also includes a lot of land outside of the NCNL.

Status of indicator: Average house price

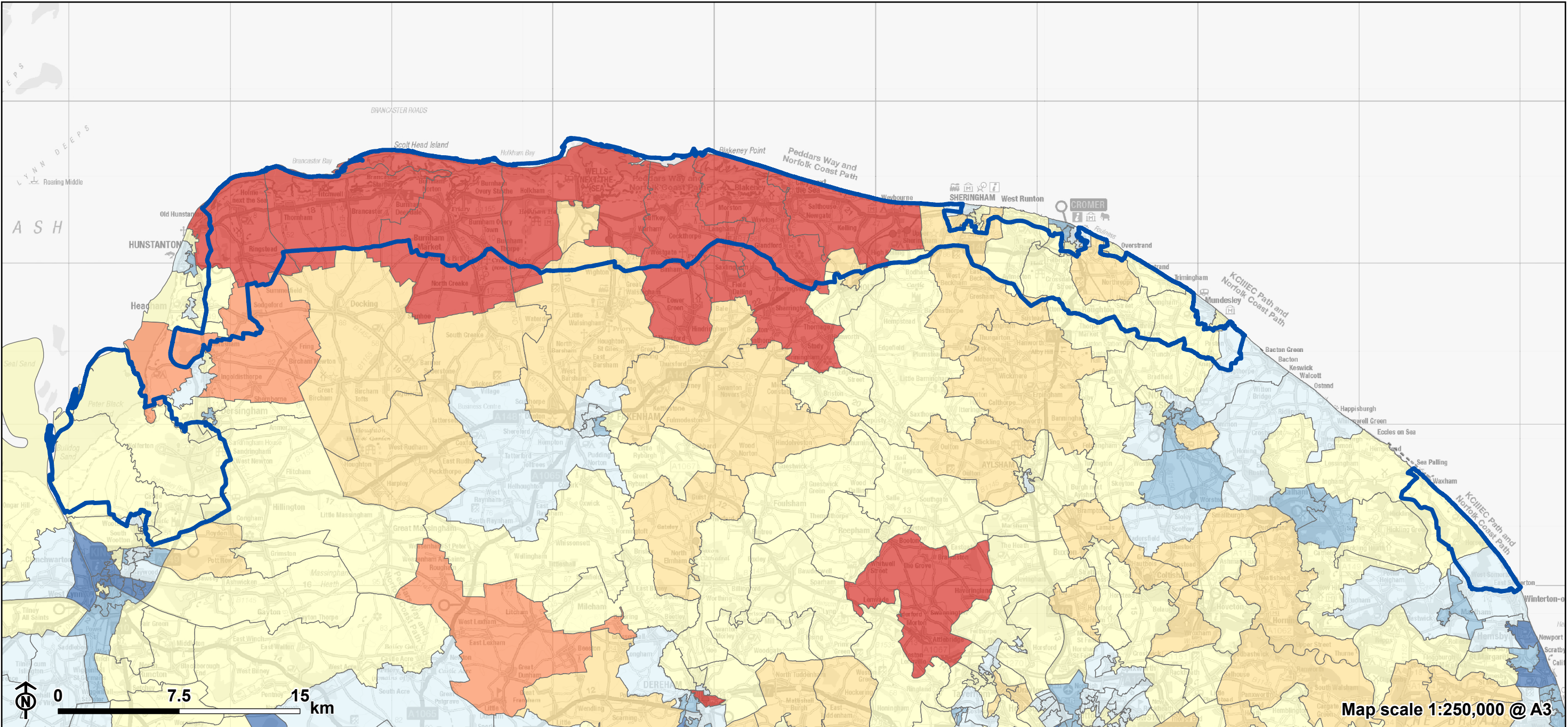
Precise figures on average house price in the NCNL are not available. Land Registry data shows that in February 2025, the average property price within Norfolk was £274,752. The North Norfolk District has the highest average property price (£309,577), which is higher than the average within England (£291,640).

For 2023/24, PLTOF data shows the mean house purchase price within the NCNL was 9.2 times greater than the mean gross annual household income (**Figure 11.2**). This figure is very similar to that of the other National Landscapes within England, with an average of 9.3. Notably, these are higher than the England average of 7.6.

Figure 11.2 Average house prices in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape

 Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary

- Average house price
-  £100,000 - £200,000
 -  £200,000 - £250,000
 -  £250,000 - £300,000
 -  £300,000 - £400,000
 -  £400,000 - £500,000
 -  £500,000 - £600,000
 -  £600,000 - £1,300,000



Status of indicator: Second home ownership and holiday homes

Precise figures on second home ownership in the NCNL are not available. 2021 Census data on second addresses indicated that there was a total of 7,655 people with second addresses in the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk District, and Great Yarmouth Borough. North Norfolk District had the highest number of second home ownership with 3,270. While this figure is not specific to the NCNL, it indicates that there are likely to be high levels of second home ownership within the NCNL. High levels of second home ownership can have a significant impact on house prices, services, and employment.

Status of indicator: Number and type of businesses

In 2022/23, PLTOF data shows there were 1,040 businesses within the NCNL and 725 of these businesses had one to nine employees. The three largest industries were wholesale/retail trade and repair of motor vehicles, accommodation and food services, and agriculture, forestry and fishing; these accounted for 480 of the 1,040 total businesses.

The tourism sector is also an important source of employment. The West Norfolk and North Norfolk 2023 Economic Impact of Tourism Reports state that there were 8,147 and 8,440 Full-Time Equivalent jobs linked to tourism, respectively. Total actual tourism related employment is estimated to be 22,852 for West Norfolk and North Norfolk.

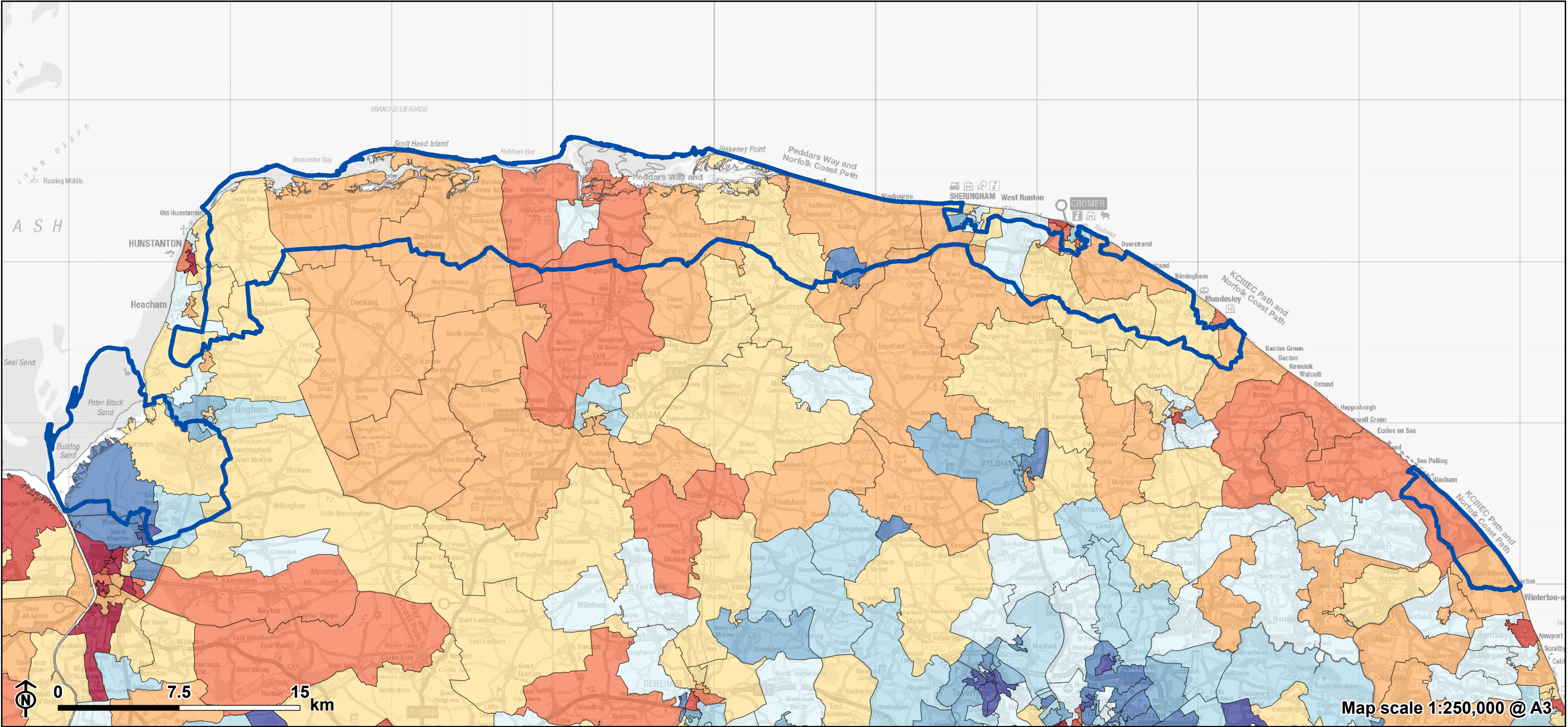
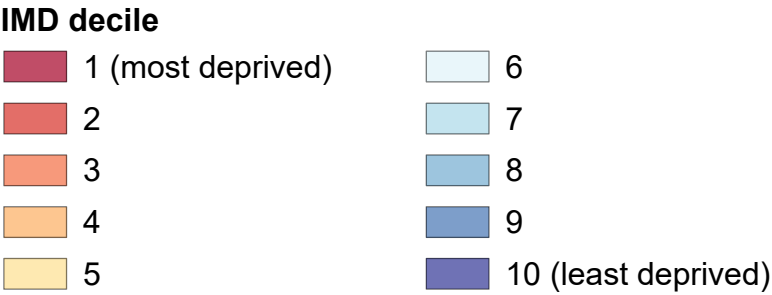
Status of indicator: Levels of deprivation

There are multiple Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)²⁰ spanning the NCNL that fall within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, such as Cromer and Wells-next-the-Sea (**Figure 11.3**). However, the western section of The Wash falls within the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

²⁰ A type of geographic area used in the UK for statistical reporting, particularly for census data. They are designed to be relatively small, with a consistent population size, making them useful for detailed analysis of social and economic data.

Figure 11.3 The Norfolk Coast National Landscape - Index of Multiple Deprivation

Norfolk Coast National Landscape boundary



Status of indicator: Health and wellbeing population

Precise figures on health and wellbeing within the NCNL are not available. 2021 Census data for Norfolk County Council states that 79.6% of residents report 'good' or 'very good' health, while 5.5% report 'bad' or 'very bad' health.

Status of indicator: Local aspirations/values/perceptions of the NCNL

There is no data available currently.

Status of indicator: Art/Art Tourism/Public Art/Art Festivals/Galleries

There is no data available currently.

Recommendations

- There is a need for more detailed information on number of dwellings, average house prices, and second home ownership specific to the NCNL. This should be collated by the NCNL, partners and statutory bodies.
- The Economic Impact of Tourism Reports should continue to be updated and feed into the next State of the NCNL Report.
- Norfolk Coast Partnership could conduct a survey to collect data on local aspirations, values, and perceptions of the NCNL for the next State of Report.

Chapter 12

Summary

A summary of headline findings for each of the themes/sub-themes is included here. It should be noted that this report makes little comparison with past data and does not identify trends. Rather, this report is to serve as a baseline information, for future reporting. It is anticipated that all indicators within the report would be updated for the next State of Report and analysis of performance over the intervening time be included in future reports.

Summary headlines

Landscape

- The NCNL falls within six NCAs.
- A total of 13,700ha of the NCNL is included in an Agri-Environment Schemes.

Norfolk Coast Partnership: Internal governance

- Five events were held by Norfolk Coast Partnership in the year 2024/25.
- For 2024/25 the income of the Partnership amounted to £920,216.08.
- As of June 2024, there are nine Full-Time Equivalent staff.

Nature Recovery

- Within the NCNL, there are a total of 58 biodiversity designations, five SPAs, eight SACs, four Ramsar sites, 28 SSSIs, two RSPB reserves, eight NNRs and one LNRs.
- The majority of SSSI units are in 'favourable' (47.3%) or 'unfavourable-recovering' (10.9%) condition.
- Priority Habitats cover 28% of the NCNL. 3,228 ha of the NCNL is priority habitat coastal saltmarsh.
- All of the river water bodies (rivers, canal, and surface water) within the NCNL are classed as 'Moderate' or 'Poor'.

Climate adaptation and mitigation

- There are two operational renewable energy developments within the NCNL.
- Per capita CO2 emissions have dropped from 10.2tCO2e in 2005 to 5.5tCO2e in 2022.
- Woodland covers a total of 4,859 ha, with the most common woodland type being broadleaved and conifer (covering 3,111ha and 1,485ha respectively).

Sustainable development: Planning

- The NCNL falls within three Local Plan areas: King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk and Great Yarmouth.
- In 2024/25, Norfolk Coast Partnership were consulted on 116 planning applications.

Sustainable development: Tourism

- Tourism is by far the most important industry for the local economy within the NCNL, with visitors attracted to the coast for its wildlife, sense of remoteness, and opportunities for recreation.
- The NCNL has 300km of public rights of way.

Dark skies

- The majority of the NCNL falls within areas with the lowest levels of light pollution in the UK.

Heritage

- There are 61 Scheduled Monuments, seven Registered Parks and Gardens, 49 Conservation Areas and 849 listed buildings within the NCNL.

Local Communities

- The estimated population within the NCNL is 16,987 people.
- The whole of the NCNL is sparsely settled, with areas that fall within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods within the country.
- House prices within parts of the NCNL are higher than the national average.

Chapter 13

Next steps

This State of Report highlights multiple pressures facing the NCNL and identifies indicators of change. It is important that these indicators are monitored, so that impacts can be adequately assessed, and subsequent management and/or mitigation measures taken. The outcome of the analysis from this State of the NCNL Report reveals a combination of forces for change on the nationally protected NCNL.

As identified in this report, key changes in the near future relate to:

- Increased tourism - whilst tourism revenues are positive in terms of the economy of the NCNL, there are challenges associated with increased levels of tourism, including the proliferation of low-paid, seasonal jobs, increased traffic, demand for new facilities (accommodation and visitor attractions/activities), and wildlife disturbance, particularly in protected areas.
- Potential changes in land management - driven by factors including the economic viability of agriculture. Appropriate agricultural land and woodland management in the NCNL's high quality environment will be vital.
- Climate change – due to the direct effects of climate change and the measures taken to address them, changes in coastal processes have become a critical consideration. Coastlines are inherently dynamic, undergoing constant and often rapid transformation, and this is compounded by climate change impacts.
- Management for biodiversity and the need for infrastructure.

The health and wellbeing benefits of areas such as the NCNL are well documented. The NCNL should work with partners and stakeholders to improve accessibility within and around the NCNL, so that its positive impacts on physical and mental health can be experienced by a larger range of people. At present, the majority of visitors to the NCNL travel by private car and limited public transport options may restrict the access of more deprived communities.

This document sets out a series of recommendations for future monitoring to inform future State of the NCNL Reports and this will provide a robust evidence base to underpin Management Plan policies with specific and achievable objectives to preserve and enhance the NCNL.