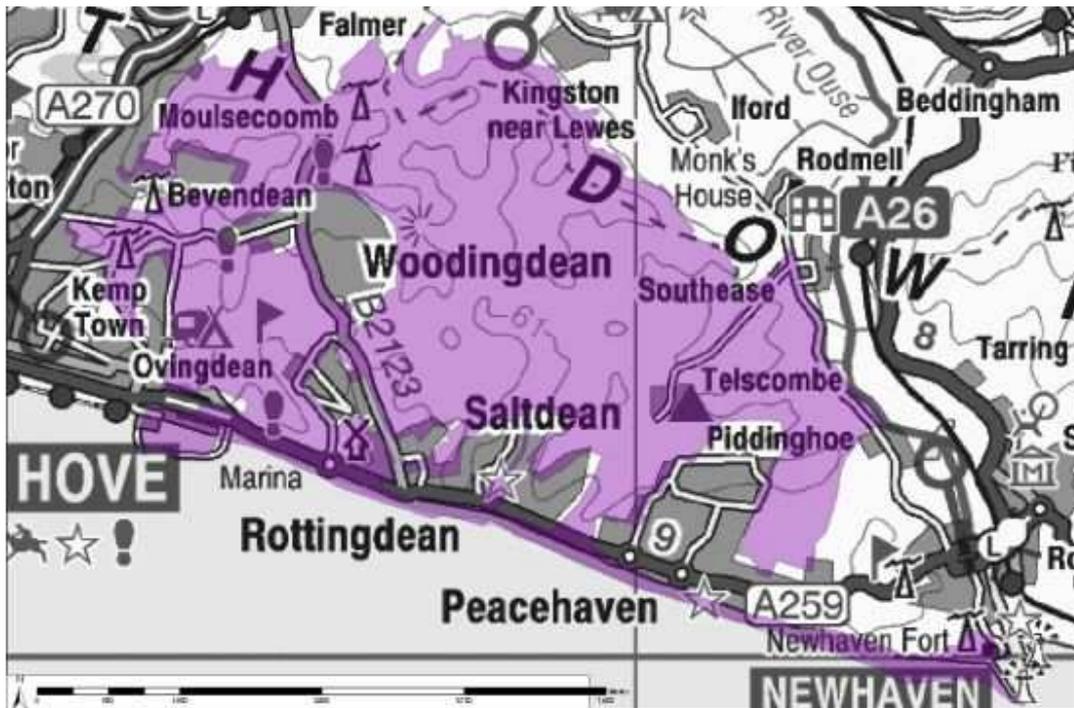


## East Brighton downs Biodiversity Opportunity Area

**Joint Character Area** South Downs

**Geology** This area sits on Seaford, Lewes, New pit and Newhaven chalk. Gravel, sand, silt and clay, some clay with flints



The Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) are the regional priority areas of opportunity for restoration and creation of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats. They are a spatial representation of BAP targets and are areas of opportunity, not constraint. The BOAs are the property of the South East England Biodiversity Forum [www.sebiodiversity.org.uk](http://www.sebiodiversity.org.uk). Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database right 2010

East Brighton downs has been recognised as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) as it represents a priority area for the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets. It is one of 75 such areas across Sussex. The BOA covers approximately 4167 hectares.

This is a large BOA that links the urban chalk grasslands of the city of Brighton and Hove to the classic rural chalk grasslands overlooking the River Ouse. Running from Whitehawk, Sheepcote valley past Bevendean and beyond, this area contains extensive blocks of chalk grassland. There is much farmland in between these blocks and the area generally has high visitor pressure from Brighton residents. The area extends North East to Kingston and stretches west to beyond Rottingdean and Telscombe to Peacehaven. There are many areas of significant arable plant populations in this area.

## BAP Habitat

Coastal vegetated shingle  
Lowland calcareous grassland  
Lowland dry acid grassland  
Maritime cliff and slope  
Traditional orchards  
Saline lagoons  
Wood-pasture and Parkland  
Woodland

BAP Species 100 species recorded, with the following in the last ten years:

Species	Habitat Requirements
Knot Grass <i>Acronicta rumicis</i>	Meadows, gardens and hedgerows, larvae feed on a range of herbs
Beaded Chestnut <i>Agrochola lychnidis</i>	Woodland rides, scrub, hedgerows and open country
Green-brindled Crescent <i>Allophytes oxyacanthae</i>	Woodlands, hedgerows and gardens, larvae feed on a number of trees and bushes including Hawthorn and Blackthorn
Slow-worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Open habitats, gardens, heathland, cliff, mixed deciduous woodland, structural variation, hedgerows
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Newly planted conifers or open heath, mixed deciduous woodland
Dusky Brocade <i>Apamea remissa</i>	Woodland, marsh, chalk and other grassland
Deep-brown Dart <i>Aporophyla lutulenta</i>	Chalk grassland and moorland
Hornet Robberfly <i>Asilus crabroniformis</i>	Heathland, chalk and other grassland on well-drained soils, usually associated with grazing mammals, areas of scrub
Brown-banded Carder Bee <i>Bombus humilis</i>	Flower-rich grassland and parkland, usually in coastal areas, hedgerows
Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Heathland, moorland, open woodland, recently felled conifer plantations, mosaic of bare ground, low vegetation, scrub and trees
Mottled Rustic <i>Caradrina morpheus</i>	Suburban areas, hedgerows, Nettle and Dandelion
Lesser Redpoll <i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Birch and Alder woods, most common in the north in the summer
True Fox-sedge <i>Carex vulpina</i>	River banks, ditch sides and damp meadows on heavy clay soils, standing water, open conditions are required
Red Star-thistle <i>Centaurea calcitrapa</i>	Regularly disturbed grassland, well-drained soils
Cornflower <i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Arable and disturbed land on sandy, loamy soils.
Basil Thyme <i>Clinopodium acinos</i>	Hedgerows, scrub, dry grassland, chalk grassland
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Woodland, good supplies of fruit, seeds and keys, drinking pools
Small Heath <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Dry grassland, heathlands, short turf, parks and gardens
Corn Crane <i>Crex crex</i>	Large areas of unintensified grassland with tall vegetation to provide early spring cover, timing of cutting very important

Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Woodland, scrub, marshes, heathland, reedbed
Small Square-Spot <i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Prefers damp and marshy places, hedgerows
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Open countryside, scrubby areas, woodland edges, hedgerows, insect-rich grassland, seed-rich areas
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Wetlands including reedbeds, tall rushes and wet grassland with good vegetation cover, gardens, farmland, hedgerows, ditches
Dusky Thorn <i>Ennomos fuscantaria</i>	Woodland, parkland, Ash
Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Woodland, farmland, urban areas, hedgerows
Dingy Skipper <i>Erynnis tages</i>	Chalk grassland, woodland rides, cliffs and embankments, mosaic of bare ground, shorter sward and sheltered areas, Bird's-foot Trefoil
Chalk Eyebright <i>Euphrasia pseudokernerii</i>	Unimproved species-rich calcareous grassland, open sward
Red Hemp-nettle <i>Galeopsis angustifolia</i>	Vegetated shingle, arable land, open, unshaded
Black-throated Diver <i>Galeopsis angustifolia</i>	Breeds on freshwater, winters around sheltered coasts and occasionally at inland freshwater
Rustic <i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>	Gardens, grassland and heathland, docks, plantains, hedgerows
Rosy Rustic <i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Marshy areas, waste ground
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Mainly on the ground in open woodland, farmland, occasionally seen in gardens
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	South and east coasts of the UK, perch prominently on bushes, hedgerows, fence posts, lowland heathland, lowland meadow
Wall <i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Short, open grassland, gardens, sand dunes, vegetated undercliffs and rocky foreshores
Brown Hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i>	Open farmland and grassland, habitat mosaic
Grasshopper Warbler <i>Locustella naevia</i>	Scrub, thick grassland, reedbeds, forestry and gravel pits
Wood Lark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	Heathland, woodland, mosaic of scattered trees, bare ground, short vegetation and taller vegetation, open seed-rich areas
Lackey <i>Malacosoma neustria</i>	Gardens, hedgerows, Hawthorn, Blackthorn
Pennyroyal <i>Mentha pulegium</i>	Seasonally wet grassland, commons, cliff tops, heathland, short turf, bare patches
Grape-hyacinth <i>Muscari neglectum</i>	Waysides, hedgerows, rough ground, disturbed land on free draining soils
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Open woodland and woodland edges, parks and gardens
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Reedbeds, estuaries, damp grassland, heathland, mosaic of tall vegetation for nesting with short vegetation and open habitats for feeding
Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Woodland, wetlands, hedgerows and pastures, predominantly roost in tree cavities
Burnt Orchid <i>Orchis ustulata</i>	A plant of unimproved calcareous grasslands it requires warm and dry conditions and is often found on south-facing slopes
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Urban areas, farmland, hedgerows
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	Farmland, woodland edges, hedgerows with mature trees, wetland edges

Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	Farmland, rush pastures, moors, mosaics of bare ground and cover, hedgerows, uncultivated margins
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Mixed deciduous woodland, even age-canopy, little understorey, patchy ground cover
Brown Long-eared Bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	A widespread bat of open woodlands, hedgerows, parks and gardens, it roosts in old buildings and trees in the summer, moving to caves and underground sites in the winter.
Balearic Shearwater <i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>	Breeds on cliffs, headlands and coastal inlets, often returning to the same colony each year
Grizzled Skipper <i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	Grassland, quarries, embankments, woodland rides, larvae feed on Agrimony and <i>Potentilla</i> species, requires warmth and shelter
Corn Buttercup <i>Ranunculus arvensis</i>	
Large Wainscot <i>Rhizdra lutosa</i>	Frequenting reedbeds and riversides, the larvae feed in the bases of stems and the roots of Common Reed
Shepherd's-needle <i>Scandix pecten-veneris</i>	Disturbed ground such as arable margins, prefers calcareous soils and winter-sown land
Mullein Wave <i>Scopula marginepunctata</i>	A moth of gardens, hedgerows and bushes mainly in coastal areas, the larvae feed on Yarrow and Mugwort
Chalk Carpet <i>Scotopteryx bipunctaria</i>	Chalk grassland, larvae feed on brid's-foot trefoil and clover, undercliff
Shaded Broad-bar <i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>	Chalk grassland and a range of open habitats, larvae feed on vetch and clover
White Ermine <i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>	Gardens and hedgerows
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Breeds on coastal moorland, winters at sea
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Woodland edges, hedgerows and open land with scattered bushes
Ring Ouzel <i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Short grassy areas
Cinnabar <i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	Meadows, wasteland, road verges and downland
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Farmland, grazing marsh, wet meadows, seeds and insects
Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>	Open heathland, woodland and moors, fens, cliff
Common Lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Open woodland, moorland, heathland, fens, sand dunes, rocks, gardens and cliffs

**Invasive Non-native Species** 13 species recorded with the following in the last ten years:

Three-cornered Leek *Allium triquetrum*  
 Heath Star-moss *Campylopus introflexus*  
 Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber*  
 Wall Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster horizontalis*  
 New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*  
 Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*  
 Spanish Bluebell *Hyacinthoides hispanica*  
 Hybrid Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta x hispanica = H. x massartiana*  
 Parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*  
 Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*  
 Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*

## Designated Sites

Castle Hill SAC one of the best examples in East Sussex of unimproved chalk grassland. The variation of plant and animal communities with aspect and slope is of special ecological interest, and scarce species include Burnt Orchid and one of the largest colonies of Early Spider-orchid in the UK.

Brighton to Newhaven SSSI has some rare and uncommon plants on the cliff face and cliff-top chalk grassland, such as Sea-heath and Hoary Stock, although its main interest is geological.

Kingston Escarpment and Iford Hill SSSI comprises two separate areas of chalk downland on steep scarp that are important for their habitat and rich invertebrate fauna.

Abinger Road Open Space SNCI supports woodland, rough grassland and hedgerow.

Balsdean Downland East SNCI species rich chalk grassland.

Balsdean Bottom Downs SNCI three blocks of chalk grassland with species such as Basil Thyme and Betony.

Balsdean Downland North SNCI chalk grassland with species such as Horse-shoe Vetch and Autumn Gentian.

Balsdean Downland West SNCI chalk grassland particularly notable for Fly Honeysuckle, Red Star Thistle and Frog Orchid.

Bexhill Road, Woodingdean SNCI a range of habitats including chalk grassland, scrub and rough grassland.

Bostle Bottom SNCI species-rich chalk grassland.

Breaky Bottom Downs SNCI southwest-facing down with species typical of calcareous and neutral grassland including Horseshoe Vetch and Hairy Rock-cress.

Brighton Marina SNCI important for the diversity of marine habitats and species it supports.

Cattle Hill SNCI supports an area of ancient, species-rich chalk grassland.

Cold Coombes SNCI a large site adjacent to Kingston Escarpment and Iford Hill SSSI, which contains patches of species-rich chalk grassland.

Coombe Farm SNCI grazed chalk grassland, with notable species including Common-spotted Orchid and Chalk-hill Blue.

Cowley Drive Paddocks SNCI a substantial area of chalk grassland with notable species including Strawberry Clover and Red Star Thistle.

Halcombe Farm SNCI an area of species-rich chalk grassland and scrub on a south-facing slope. Meadow Clary and Common Gromwell are recorded from the site.

Happy Valley SNCI a range of habitats including woodland, scrub and chalk grassland.

High Hill Pasture SNCI an area of ancient, species-rich chalk grassland.

Kingston Escarpment SNCI adjacent to Kingston Escarpment and Iford Hill SSSI, and contains species-rich chalk grassland, as well as areas of acid grassland. Species of interest include Fragrant Orchid and Hairy Rock-cress.

Looes Barn Woodland SNCI an area of scrub and woodland noted for its breeding birds including a specially protected species.

Loose Bottom SNCI consists of two small areas of unimproved grassland with species such as Horseshoe Vetch and Burnet Rose.

Mount Pleasant, Ovingdean SNCI contains ancient species-rich chalk grassland.

Newhaven Cliffs SNCI is adjacent to Brighton to Newhaven Cliffs SSSI. Sand and clay overlying the chalk results in a more neutral or acid sward, with species such as Hairy Sedge and Lesser Hawkbit.

Ovingdean Road Horse Paddocks SNCI supports a large population of a nationally rare species.

Peacehaven Grasslands-Site 1 SNCI a strip of north-facing unimproved chalk grassland, with a diverse flora and a number of butterflies.

Peacehaven Grasslands-Site 2 SNCI a long strip of south-facing species-rich grassland, which has degraded somewhat due to a lack of management.

Peacehaven Grasslands-Site 5 SNCI small remnant of chalk grassland on a north facing hill side. There is a good array of calcareous species, and a number of invertebrates including Chalk-hill Blue.

Quarry Field SNCI species-rich chalk grassland with a small, disused quarry in the centre of the site. Species of interest include Fragrant Orchid, Autumn Gentian and Chalk-hill Blue.

Roedean School Bank SNCI chalk grassland with species such as Wild Thyme and Pyramidal Orchid.

Sheepcote Valley SNCI a large area of chalk grassland with areas of scrub.

St Wulfran's Woods SNCI semi-natural woodland.

Whiteway Lane SNCI contains a mosaic of chalk grassland and scrub, which provides good bird nesting habitat.

Wilson Avenue SNCI important as a buffer of semi-natural habitat to the adjacent LNR.

Wivelsfield Road Grassland SNCI species-rich chalk grassland.

Woodingdean Cemetery SNCI semi-natural woodland which is uncommon in this part of Brighton and Hove.

Woodvale, Extra-mural and Downs Cemeteries SNCI a diversity of habitats including mature trees, dense scrub, relict chalk grassland and a pond.

## Opportunities Identified

- Chalk grassland management, restoration and creation
- Coastal habitat management, restoration and creation
- Policy integration
- Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes
- Farmland bird interest
- Working with and attracting new businesses
- Education and community engagement, including links to health
- Access improvements

**Sussex Biodiversity Partnership**

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