

# Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement



## Name: Dover & Folkestone Cliffs & Downs

**Description:** This target area encompasses a series of valleys around Dover, cliffs and cliff-top grassland, intertidal and subtidal chalk and the steep scarp slope of the North Downs at Dover. Much of the grassland is nationally or internationally important, and there are areas of locally or nationally important woodland. The Opportunity Area includes two areas recommended to be Marine Conservation Zones (rMCZ): Dover to Folkestone rMCZ and Dover to Deal rMCZ. The area is very important for the diversity of its marine habitats, containing 13 broad habitat types, and one species, one geological feature and 5 habitat features of conservation importance.

**National Character Area(s):** North Downs

**Kent Character Area(s):** Folkestone Outskirts-Postling Vale; Alkham-East Kent Downs; East Kent Arable Belt; South Foreland.

**Seascape Character Area(s):** C1B St. Margaret's bay; C1C White Cliffs of Dover; C3A Dover Port, Harbour & Historic Defences; C1D Shakespeare & Abbott's Cliffs; C2A East Wear Bay & the Warren.

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB):** Kent Downs

**Landscape Character:** This target area is strongly characterised by topography; the steep slopes of the Dour Valley and a series of long, parallel valleys which get narrower as they run towards Dover, getting Dover. At the foot of the cliffs lie extensive areas of marine chalk. Ridges are characterised by their open nature – a remnant of what is an ancient unenclosed landscape, and typically pastoral. Settlements are typically found within the valleys, many include isolated historic farmsteads.

**Geology:** Chalk, with clay with flint on the ridge tops.

### Biodiversity:

- 1 Nationally important chalk grassland in dry valleys and on cliff tops.
- 2 Coastal cliffs and slope including chalk cliff and soft cliffs, both with important, associated foreshore and marine habitats, including nationally and internationally important areas of subtidal and intertidal chalk.
- 3 *Sabellaria* reefs, both offshore and in some intertidal areas, which provide an important habitat for a wide range of associated species.
- 4 Important woodlands on chalk and on ragstone.
- 5 Some vegetated shingle, wet woodland and fen habitats.
- 6 Key species include plants and invertebrates associated with chalk cliff and chalk grassland habitats, including adder, silver-spotted skipper, small blue, Adonis blue, wild cabbage, and ox-tongue broomrape. Brown hare is also an important species. White clawed crayfish is found in the area. Species associated with inshore waters include short-snouted seahorse and native oyster.

### Targets:

1. Conserve and enhance important cliff, intertidal and marine habitats:
  - Conserve and enhance important cliff, intertidal and marine habitats:
  - Secure the protection of important marine habitats through Marine Conservation Zone designation,
  - Implement appropriate management of Marine Protected Areas to allow marine habitats and associated species to recover,
  - As far as possible, allow natural coastal processes to determine the geomorphology of the

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- cliffs, littoral and sub-littoral environment,
- Develop an action plan for managing the impact of non-native species of concern,
  - Further investigate and monitor the extent and condition of intertidal and subtidal chalk.
2. Extend, reconnect, restore and enhance areas chalk grassland, to include restoration of at least 90ha, creation of an additional 75ha and enhancement at least 60 ha of chalk grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat quality, by 2020. Pursue opportunities for:
    - Additional chalk grassland creation where this would contribute to the county-wide target of 232ha by 2020; and
    - Additional chalk grassland restoration to meet the county-wide target of 464ha by 2020.
  3. Enhance or reinstate woodland management; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.
  4. Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 37ha on new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha; Enhance at least 50ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.
  5. Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats, wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

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## **How should Biodiversity Opportunity Area maps and statements be used?**

1. The BOA maps can be seen as a spatial reflection of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy. They indicate where the delivery of Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets should be focused in order to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits. The BOA maps also show where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation, as these areas offer the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks of wildlife habitats. As such, they will be useful to local planning authorities in the development and delivery of Green Infrastructure and resilient ecological networks. The BOA statement documents will provide guidance on the conservation priorities which should be adopted in each area.
2. Information provided on the habitats and species associated with each BOA is not definitive. Rather, it identifies those priority habitats for which the area is known to be most important, and provides a range of examples of priority species for which the area is known to be important. It is likely that each BOA will support additional habitats and species of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity, and reference should be made to the Kent Habitat Survey and the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre to support decision-making.
3. Biodiversity targets identified in the statement documents incorporate, where appropriate, targets in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy. However, not all targets in the Strategy are easily spatially defined, and the BOA maps and statements should be read alongside relevant Action Plans in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.
4. The BOA maps should not be seen as planning constraint maps. It is not intended or proposed that nature conservation becomes the primary land-use within the target areas, so long as the targets and objectives for each area can be met, and development of any kind is not precluded. However, consideration might in some cases need to be given to ensuring that development within a BOA did not significantly increase the fragmentation of wildlife habitats within target areas or neutralize significant opportunities for habitat restoration or recreation.
5. BOA boundaries are not absolute. They have been drawn to follow mapped boundaries wherever possible in order to facilitate spatial planning and decision-making. However, a project immediately outside the mapped boundary should not be immediately dismissed if it would help to deliver the targets identified for the BOA concerned. It is also not the case that all land within a BOA offers the same opportunities for habitat restoration or recreation, and reference should be made to the Habitat Opportunity maps on the Kent Landscape Information System, when this becomes available, to support detailed decision-making.
6. The areas outside the identified BOAs still have substantial biodiversity interest, and include a number of nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodlands and other areas of habitats. Although the focus of any biodiversity action should be on the BOAs, it will still be necessary to maintain, enhance, buffer and extend areas of wildlife habitat outside the mapped areas in order to maintain the wildlife interest and richness of the wider countryside.
7. Some biodiversity interest is not well served by the BOA mapping process, and action for ponds, traditional orchards, wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of Kent and Medway and not just within identified Opportunity Areas.
8. While the primary purpose of the BOAs is to direct positive action for nature conservation, information on landscape has been included in the target documents. Reference should be made to AONB management plans or other landscape policy documents in drawing up proposals for habitat restoration or recreation in order to maximize the positive benefits for landscape and avoid conflict with features of landscape importance.

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9. Kent Nature Partnership – <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/>  
Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre – [www.kmbrc.org.uk](http://www.kmbrc.org.uk)

