

Red Kite

Interpretation Plan for the Sussex Heritage Coast

Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership



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Birling Gap and Seven Sisters RKE

Texts in boxes throughout this document are selected quotes gathered during consultation

1 Introduction

1.1 Setting the scene

The coastline between Seaford and Eastbourne in East Sussex was the first stretch of England's coastline to be designated as a Heritage Coast, in 1973. It extends from Splash Point in Seaford, eastwards past Seaford Head and the Cuckmere Estuary, along the chalk cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head, to the western edge of Eastbourne. It includes some of the most well-known coastline in England and is known internationally for its white cliffs.

The Heritage Coast receives over a million visitors a year, including local walkers, day trippers, coach parties and organised groups. As identified in the Heritage Coast's current Strategy and Action Plan¹, *'Currently many of the visitors come and go without gaining much knowledge of the Sussex Heritage Coast'*. The strategy suggests there is a case for developing an interpretation plan for the area that would create a *'consistent message and core narrative for interpretation'*, which is supported by:

Key Principle 10. Develop an integrated interpretative plan for the area to include key messages and options for delivery.

This document fulfils that principle, providing a framework for interpretation of the Heritage Coast for a five-year period.

1.2 The Sussex Heritage Coast

The Sussex Heritage Coast is the most visited part of the South Downs National Park, and one of the most popular stretches of England's south coast. It is internationally known for its 'Seven Sisters', seven chalk cliffs, which are a popular image of England's famous 'white cliffs' and England's coastline. An image of the Seven Sisters was a popular iconic 'screensaver' on Windows-based computers, voted No 1 screensaver in Japan, and this, coupled with its use as a location in films such as *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire*, has given this section of the coast an international presence.

The Heritage Coast is an outcrop of chalk laid down between 87 and 84 million years ago during the Cretaceous period, when this part of Britain and Europe lay beneath a shallow tropical sea. The elevation of the deposit relative to the sea, the shaping of the land into rolling hills and dry valleys and the constant erosion of the cliff face by the sea has produced a landscape that is cherished by millions of people and one that has inspired generations of artists and poets.

The Heritage Coast has many assets that are used and loved by locals and visitors, including the South Downs Way and the coastal path, the Cuckmere Valley, Seven

¹ Sussex Heritage Coast, A Strategy and Action Plan, 2016 – 20, South Downs National Park Authority

Sisters Country Park, Birling Gap and Beachy Head. The coast has magnificent views out to sea and along the eroded coast. The need for careful use of these resources has brought together the Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership, with ten member organisations that own, manage, conserve or have key interests in the coast's protection and management. ²The partnership has identified two key requirements that will help with the management of the coast and its use by visitors – the defining of its special qualities through the perceptions of those who visit, and the provision of enhanced interpretation that will increase visitor understanding and enjoyment of the whole area. This document summarises a study of the coast's special qualities and uses its findings to help provide a framework for better interpretation of the Heritage Coast in the future. Visitor safety is a key issue on the Heritage Coast and should be included in interpretive media.

1.3 Process

This interpretation plan is the output of a contract let to Red Kite Environment by the Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership through the South Downs National Park Authority. The contract was commissioned in March 2018 and completed in August 2018. The contract consisted of three elements. The following text is quoted from the brief:

A 'Special Qualities' study of the Heritage Coast

'The Heritage Coast (HC) has many special qualities which together define its sense of place and attract people to live and work in the area and visit this place. These special qualities need to be understood, appreciated, conserved and enhanced. The special qualities reflect both the engagement with stakeholders of the HC and technical evidence. The special qualities are an underpinning 'script' for the area and should include key aspects including land, marine, flora, fauna, night sky and heritage.'

An interpretation/information audit for the area

'An integrated interpretation/information audit covering print, digital and outdoor interpretation such as panels, guided walks and interpretive arts installations and built facilities (indoor interpretation) such as visitor centres, TICs and historic buildings is required to highlight current gaps in provision.'

Interpretation needs to be better coordinated to make the most of the opportunities available, looking at synergy, complementary approaches and increased partnership.'

An integrated interpretation plan for the area

'There is a need to create a consistent message and core narrative for interpretation working in partnership with other providers. An Integrated Interpretation Plan for the HC should include the traditional visitor centres as well as social media, volunteer initiatives and behavior change campaigns promoting responsible visits to the area.'

² The Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership members are Eastbourne Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Environment Agency, Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA), Lewes District Council, National Trust, Natural England, South Downs National Park Authority, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Wealden District Council.

We fulfilled these requirements with the following key activities:

1. Site visits to the Heritage Coast area, including sections of the coastal cliff, the Cuckmere Valley, Seaford Head and South Hill Barn, Crowlink, Beachy Head and the gateways to the eastern end at Eastbourne.
2. A meeting with key stakeholders as part of the Special Qualities study and also to seek information about interpretive aims for the Heritage Coast.
3. Three further activities for the Special Qualities study:
 - Distributing a paper questionnaire to six visitor centres and museums for visitors to complete over a 5-week period
 - Organising and running drop-in sessions at four locations
 - Providing a questionnaire on Survey Monkey, available on the South Downs and National Trust websites and promoted in advertisements carried by Facebook over a 4-week period.
4. Telephone interviews and conversations with representatives of partner organisations and key landowners/farmers within the Heritage Coast.
5. An audit of a range of existing interpretation, including interpretation panels, leaflets, websites, activities and publications
6. Attending a meeting of the Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership to provide interim feedback on the progress of the contract.
7. We prepared draft and final reports of the Interpretation Audit and the Special Qualities study.
8. Preparing a draft Interpretation Plan for comment by the client and partners.
9. Preparing the final Interpretation Plan document.

1.4 Status of this document

This interpretation plan sets out a framework and programme for interpretation of the Sussex Heritage Coast. It summarises two studies that were undertaken as part of the contract – an interpretation audit of the Heritage Coast and a Special Qualities study – that were used to guide the development of the plan. This interpretation plan presents our findings, our approach, a series of objectives and themes, and our recommendations for media. It takes a strategic view of the overall messages for interpretation and recommends specific media and activities that are site-based or site-related.

In using this plan, it is important always to relate what is site-specific to the wider picture, enabling users to understand the detail within the context of the broader stories of the Heritage Coast, to create a cohesive interpretation of the whole area.

The words and phrases used in this plan, in the objectives, the overall message, the themes and storylines, will not necessarily appear in any subsequent interpretation materials. They are used here simply to provide the framework for those who will produce interpretation materials or activities.

This interpretation plan is a working document intended to be updated by the Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership as progress is made with implementation and responding to feedback on interpretation materials by partners and users.

2 Interpretive resources

This chapter identifies and briefly describes those places and features that have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the unique character of the setting of the Sussex Heritage Coast. The coast is described comprehensively in many documents and websites and this list is simply a summary of the key features.

2.1 Landscape, wildlife and farming

There are many descriptions of the features and management of the Heritage Coast published by a variety of organisations, including those listed in Section 6.1 below. The key features of the landscape extracted from these documents, and from consultation, include:

- The underlying chalk of the South Downs extending at the coast as a series of cliffs – the Seven Sisters – that culminate in the 150m high Beachy Head.
- The wave-cut platform below the cliffs, eroded by the sea into a chalk ledge with ridges.
- The retreat of the cliffs at an estimate 0.42m per year, with a maximum of 0.91m per year at Birling Gap.
- The layers of chalk and flint that are revealed along the cliff face, with varied marine fossils.
- The valley of the Cuckmere River that cuts through the chalk and reaches the sea at Cuckmere Haven, is the only relatively undeveloped estuary in southern England.
- The meanders of the Cuckmere River that have been left isolated since the canalisation of the lower part in 1846.
- The downland landscape of dry valleys and gently rolling hills, largely with grassland cover and with pockets of scrub and woodland.
- The diversity of chalk grassland species of plants and invertebrates that are characteristic of these habitats.
- The scrub and woodland habitats that have diverse flora and fauna and provide havens for migrating birds.
- The views along the coast and over the Downs that attract so many visitors to the area.
- The opportunities for walking and cycling, and for wildlife spotting, in the varied landscape.
- The springy turf, characteristic of the Downs, that is ideal for walking.
- The long history of grazing by livestock and mixed arable farming that has determined the nature of the habitats which are characteristic of the landscape. Without this history of farming, the Downs would be a wooded landscape as it was in the post-glacial period.
- The mix of pasture and arable, some of it under Higher Level Stewardship, that provides herb-rich grassland, nectar-rich plots for invertebrates, winter bird food from arable crops such as barley, kale and turnip, and grass field margins, that all help to enhance biodiversity within the Heritage Coast.

2.2 Historic environment

The Heritage Coast has a ‘deep landscape’ with multiple layers of archaeology and history, revealing glimpses of the people who have lived here in the past. There are nine Scheduled Monuments within the Heritage Coast, including burial sites, defensive structures, abandoned settlements, agricultural features and historic navigation aids. Jointly and individually, they have fascinating stories to tell about how people have exploited the opportunities and adapted to the challenges presented by the landscape and seascape over thousands of years. The monuments are briefly described below, with their Historic England Heritage List number.

One of the oldest visible sites in the Heritage Coast is the Neolithic burial mound at near Exceat, (No.1014386), a communal burial site for some of the earliest farming communities. Another burial site thought to date to the Bronze Age is at New Barn Bottom near Foxhole (No. 1016683).

Defendable sites have always been important on this stretch of the coast, as it was the first landfall for invaders attacking from the south, and there is a continuum of defence sites, some on the cliff tops and others defending the vulnerable mouth of the Cuckmere River. Seaford Head Iron Age hillfort (No. 1014523) is a good example of an early structure built on an easily defendable site, located on a headland with steep natural cliffs. The Napoleonic Barracks south west of Foxhole Farm (No. 1002201) and WWII anti-tank obstacles, (No.1393398) have, at different times, protected the Cuckmere River. There was a WWI training camp on land west of the Cuckmere River.

There are the remains of former settlements, now abandoned, scattered along the coast, such as those at Bullock Down Farm near Beachy Head, (No.1002207). Numerous archaeological finds dating from the Mesolithic to the Roman period have been found here, along with evidence of field systems from Bronze Age and Romano-British times. The remains of Exceat Church are part of another abandoned settlement, the medieval settlement of Exceat, (No.1019283).

Throughout the Heritage Coast there is also a scattering of farmsteads, the hamlet of Crowlink and the village of East Dean. Most of the architectural styles reflect the local tradition of building with flint and brick, with many buildings listed as historically interesting. Most of these are in private ownership, although some can be seen from public roads and footpaths.

The Heritage Coast is part of the English Channel, one of the busiest shipping routes in the world, and over the centuries there have been many wrecks along the coast, some of which are listed in Section 2.3 below. There are two lighthouses on the Heritage Coast: Belle Tout (No. 293528), a 19th century lighthouse, now decommissioned and converted to a private B&B, and Beachy Head Lighthouse, which is still operational (No. 508294).

A significant feature of the coast is the landscape itself, that has witnessed changes in its use for agriculture over thousands of years. Field systems, mentioned above, and strip lynchets reveal historic uses for cultivation and grazing and tell stories about the settlement and use of the area.

Scheduled monuments include:

- Beachy Head Lighthouse. Completed in 1902. 144ft high. (No. 508294)
- Belle Tout Iron Age promontory fort (No.1002288)
- Belle Tout Lighthouse. 19th century lighthouse situated on the clifftop between Birling Gap and Beachy Head. Now a B&B. (No. 293528)
- Bowl Barrow, New Barn Bottom, Foxhole. Bronze Age burial mound. (No. 1016683)
- Bullock Down field system: remains of Bronze Age and Romano-British field systems (No.1002207)
- Remains of Exceat Church, part of the former medieval settlement of Exceat (No.1019283)
- Napoleonic Barracks south west of Foxhole Farm (No.1002201)
- Oval Barrow, Exceat. Neolithic burial mound. (No.1014386)
- WWII anti-tank obstacles (No.1393398)
- WWII pill-boxes by the track through Seven Sisters Country Park, east of the Cuckmere River.

2.3 Marine archaeology

There have been many vessels wrecked along the Sussex coast throughout history. The following is a list of those accessible at low tide. Other wrecks and maritime find sites can be found at <https://citizan.org.uk> by using the interactive map.

Bailey's Brow, Seven Sisters: UB 121 (German U Boat) wrecked in 1919. Extant remains consist of the portside bow of the vessel with the curvature of the torpedo tubes still visible on the portion facing skyward. Accessible but difficult terrain.

Birling Gap, the wreck of the Coonatto: a London registered bark-rigged clipper (a type of three-masted ship) that sources suggest ran aground in 1876. The wreck lies on the very edge of the intertidal zone, below the cliffs at Crowlink. The keel and starboard side of the ship are still clearly visible where they came to rest. The remains include large and small timbers, some still clad in a zinc alloy. The total length of the wreck is roughly 43m bow to stern.

Birling Gap, wreck of the Oushla, a South African cargo vessel which ran aground in 1916. Accessible but difficult terrain.

2.4 Visitor attractions and places to visit

Beachy Head

Iconic cliffs and the red and white striped lighthouse, with views along the coast and opportunities for short walks; served by the Beachy Head Countryside and Visitor Centre, managed by the Friends of Beachy Head.

Birling Gap

Beach with rockpools; cliff top views towards the Seven Sisters Cliffs; walks; café and visitor centre, interpreting the cliffs on the cliff top, beach and downland. There is an annual programme of family activities. The area is owned and managed by The National Trust. Belle Tout lighthouse, near Birling Gap, was moved back from its original position in 1999.

Seaford Head Nature Reserve

The best place to enjoy views of the Seven Sisters Cliffs and Cuckmere Valley. The Local Nature Reserve is owned by Seaford Town Council and managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Seven Sisters Country Park

280 acres of chalk grassland, cliffs, beach and river meanders with a visitor centre interpreting the history and management of the Downs. It is currently managed by East Sussex County Council. The visitor centre is located at the edge of Friston Forest which, although outside the boundary of the Heritage Coast, forms a significant wooded backdrop to the coast and enhances the biodiversity of the coastal fringe.

Cliff-top and countryside walks

There is a good network of public paths and way-marked walks in the Heritage Coast including the Vanguard Way and Wealdway. A section of the South Downs Way National Trail follows the entire Heritage Coast, a footpath-only section from Alfriston via the Seven Sisters to Eastbourne, and a bridleway section open to walkers, horse-riders and cyclists from Alfriston to Eastbourne. The England Coast Path, currently being planned will also follow the coastline from Eastbourne to Seaford. Information and interpretation about the walks are available on many websites, including those of the National Trust, East Dean village and the South Downs National Park.

East Dean

This village is in the Heritage Coast, south of the A259. Many of the buildings in the village are made of flint. The Tiger Inn dates back to the 15th Century and is popular with walkers and family groups.

Crowlink

This small settlement, with its car park, is on a popular route from East Dean to the coast. The settlement was famously threatened with development in the 1920's when developers bought the land intending to create a new town on top of the Seven Sisters. Opponents of the scheme, including Rudyard Kipling and the Society of Sussex Downsmen, raised £17,000 to buy out the developers and stop the construction.

Seaford Museum

This museum is located on Seaford sea front, in the historic Martello Tower. It is run entirely by volunteers. Although outside the Heritage Coast it contains material that is relevant for the area and could include some interpretation about the Heritage Coast. The Seaford and Eastbourne Martello Towers mark the west and east boundaries of the Seven Sisters Voluntary Marine Conservation Area, part of which is now the Beach Head West Marine Conservation Zone.

Eastbourne museums and art galleries

Eastbourne has a number of popular art galleries and museums including the Towner Art gallery, which has the broadest and most significant collection of work by artist Eric Ravilious, who produced work which featured the Heritage Coast. Other heritage centres and museums include Eastbourne Heritage Centre, Eastbourne Lifeboat Museum and the Redoubt Fortress, which has a small exhibition area. All these are outside the Heritage Coast but have exhibits and materials that are relevant to the coastal area.

2.5 Viewpoints

The viewpoints from, and along, the cliff tops are some of the most well-known in the world. They attract thousands of visitors and are some of the key reasons for people walking in the area. Significant viewpoints include:

- From Beachy Head to the lighthouse, to Belle Tout and along the coast west towards Birling Gap.
- From Birling Gap west and east along the coastline.
- From South Hill Barn, the classic view across Cuckmere valley towards the Seven Sisters.
- From High'n Over, outside the Heritage Coast boundary, looking south along the Cuckmere valley.
- From Exceat bridge south along the Cuckmere River.
- From Hope Gap along the Seven Sisters.
- From Crowlink car park looking south along the Gap Bottom.
- From vantage points further inland where glimpses of the Seven Sisters can be seen.
- From the many boats and other seagoing vessels that travel along the coast and through the English Channel.



Pill box near Cuckmere Haven *RKE*

4 Current interpretation

A requirement of the brief was to undertake an audit of existing interpretation, in its many forms, throughout, and relating to, the Heritage Coast area. We assessed site interpretation panels, leaflets, websites, activity programmes and relevant publications. The full audit is presented in a separate report and on an Excel spreadsheet. This section summarises the results of the audit.

3.1 Summary critique

The audit of interpretation revealed a diversity of interpretive media and events. We visited most of the interpretive panels within the Heritage Coast and collected leaflets, brochures and events programmes relevant to the area. We also visited the websites of many organisations that featured the Heritage Coast in some way.

Our overall observations are:

- Although most interpretation panels are in good condition and provide good interpretation of features within the Heritage Coast there are also some that are outdated, in poor condition and in need of updating, replacement or removal.
- The location of interpretation panels is restricted to specific access points within the Heritage Coast and this is how it should remain. There is no need, or desire, to extend the locations of panels.
- The visitor centres provide a good introduction to the coast, especially Birling Gap. Each would benefit from including interpretation of the Sussex Heritage Coast and the work of the partnership, and cross-promotion of the centres.
- Although there is no one website that specifically covers the Heritage Coast, the SDNP and National Trust websites both have sections for the Heritage Coast.
- The existing interpretation has some good 'one hit' interpretive coverage of the area.
- Leaflets are predominantly available as paper copies and downloads from websites. Some consideration could be given to the production of a Heritage Coast specific leaflet.
- Both the National Trust and the Sussex Wildlife Trust offer a wide selection of events for all ages which interpret many of the topics and issues relevant to the area.

4 Audiences

This chapter reviews visitor information for the South Downs National Park and selects target audiences for interpretation of the Sussex Heritage Coast, informed by the consultation and the South Downs National Park visitor survey undertaken in 2012. A new visitor survey is planned for summer/autumn 2018 and this chapter will need to be amended with the results of that survey.

4.1 Audience assessment

The 2012 visitor survey included assessments of visitor profiles for many sites within the National Park, including three within or near the Heritage Coast – Seven Sisters Country Park, Birling Gap and Beachy Head. No specific visitor survey has been undertaken for the Heritage Coast itself.

The results of this survey are clearly weighted to the National Park as a whole and the influence of the specific visitor pattern of the Heritage Coast will have minimal impact on the overall figures. However, it is useful to consider some of the figures for origins and profiles which may have relevance for the Heritage Coast.

Visitor origins differ by type or trip with holiday makers coming from a wide geographical area with no single place of origin dominating. Day visitors from home come mainly from East Sussex, Hampshire and West Sussex. The Heritage Coast has a rather different audience profile, with a much wider international appeal particularly for people from south east Asia. The coast is far more of a tourist destination than the rest of the National Park.

Five percent of visitors to the National Park are from overseas representing 44 different countries with the top four countries being Germany (17%), Netherlands (14%), Australia (10%) and France (9%). As the Heritage Coast receives over a million visitors a year, far more than for equivalent areas elsewhere in the National Park, we would estimate that the proportion of these visitors coming from overseas is greater than five percent. We would also estimate that the origins of visitors may be different from the figures shown above, as many consultees noted frequent visitors at their sites from South Korea, Japan and China.

The age profile for visitors to the National Park reveal that 46% constitutes the family market and 54% are aged 45 years to 75 years or more. This is likely to be similar for the Heritage Coast.

Visitors to the National Park from ethnic minorities constitute 2% of all visitors. Given the large numbers of visitors to the Heritage Coast, ethnic minority visitors may be a bigger percentage.

4.2 Target audiences

Considering the visitor survey for the National Park and taking account of anecdotal accounts of visitors to the Heritage Coast visitor centres, users of the South Downs Way National Trail, coast path and other routes, and visitors to the beach, we would suggest that the target audiences for interpretation, and for this interpretation plan, would be:

- Family groups, especially those with young children, including residents and visitors.
- Local people, including those people living in adjacent villages and the larger conurbations of Eastbourne, Seaford, Lewes and Brighton.
- Tourists of all ages, both UK and from overseas, from all countries, including those from Asia and the Far East.
- Special interest groups, including walkers, cyclists, bird watchers, geologists, historians, divers, rock-poolers, anglers and swimmers.
- Organised youth groups, including youth groups, brownies, guides, cubs, scouts and Woodcraft Folk.
- Older age groups, including those with mobility or other special needs.
- Students, including secondary, further and higher education, and life-long learners, from the UK and other countries.
- Friends groups and community groups from the local area and regionally.



Visitors at Seven Sisters Country Park *RKE*

5 Special Qualities consultation

A key component of the contract was to conduct a Special Qualities study of the Heritage Coast. The outputs of the study complement the study undertaken for the whole South Downs National Park in 2010 and provide essential information for the development of this interpretation plan. A full description of the study and its outputs is presented in a separate document. This section provides a summary of the study.

5.1 Summary of questionnaire responses

The Special Qualities study was conducted during May and June 2018 and comprised:

- distributing questionnaires to six visitor centres and museums (Newhaven Fort, Seaford Museum, Seven Sisters Country Park, Birling Gap Visitor Centre, Beachy Head Visitor Centre and Eastbourne Redoubt Fortress) for visitors to complete;
- organising and running drop-in sessions at four locations (Eastbourne Redoubt Fortress, Birling Gap Visitor Centre, Seaford Clinton Centre, Alfriston Old Chapel Centre);
- holding a meeting with key stakeholders; and
- providing a Survey Monkey questionnaire that was available on the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) website and promoted in advertisements carried by Facebook, targeted at communities in the area. This questionnaire would capture both visitors to the Heritage Coast and those with an interest in the area but who would not necessarily be visitors.

The questions posed were:

- What is your favourite place?
- What are the special qualities of your favourite place?
- What do you like doing in the Sussex Heritage Coast?
- What prevents you from visiting the Sussex Heritage Coast?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how you use the Sussex Heritage Coast?
- How does it make you feel?
- What special memories do you have about the Sussex Heritage Coast?
- Do you have any further comments or thoughts about the special qualities of the Sussex Heritage Coast?

Two further questions were asked to inform the preparation of this interpretation plan:

- Are there any aspects of the Sussex Heritage Coast that you would like to learn more about?
- Which of the following would you be most likely to use to learn about the Sussex Heritage Coast? A list was included of different media types.

Responses to these two questions are considered in Section 9.1.

5.2 Consultation responses

The responses received from the four consultation activities were:

- 60 completed paper questionnaires from the six centres.
- 70 attendees at the four drop-in sessions.
- 11 representatives of partner organisations attended the stakeholders' meeting.
- 1295 responses to the Survey Monkey questionnaire.
- Telephone interviews with three farmers



Drop-in session at Seaford RKE

5.3 Conclusions

A full account of the responses to the questions and the outputs of the stakeholder meeting are provided in a separate report. The following is a summary of the responses.

Favourite places

The top favourite places were Cuckmere Haven, Beachy Head, Birling Gap and Seven Sisters Country Park. As these are all popular places with visitors it is not surprising that they are chosen as favourite places. The Survey Monkey responses also scored *no favourite place* highly, indicating that people felt that the whole coast

was a favourite place without any specific location being considered more favourably than others.

Special qualities

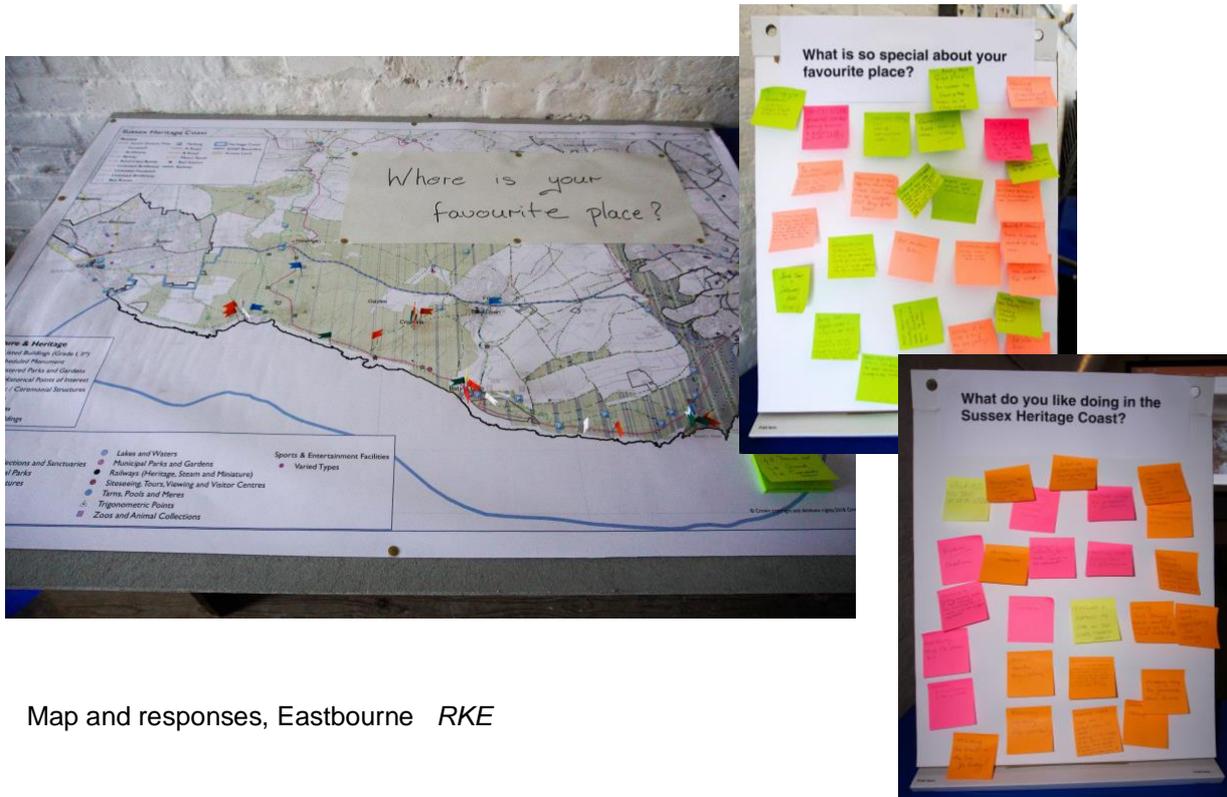
The most popular perceptions for special qualities were considered to be *views and scenery*, opportunities for *walks*, a sense of *peacefulness* and *tranquillity*, and the *beautiful* landscape. It was people's emotional responses to the landscape rather than its specific features that predominated, and it was the sense of openness and far reaching views that captured their attention.

What do you like doing?

The most popular activities were *walking* and *just enjoying the views*, followed by *going for picnics* and *dog walking*. Other popular activities included *photography* and *bird watching*. Many people also enjoyed activities along the coast itself, including *rock-pooling* and *swimming*.

What prevents you from visiting?

The most frequently scored response to this question was *nothing prevents me from visiting*, showing that most people who visit the coast do so freely and easily. Other responses included *lack of time*, *little or no access to public transport* and *parking*. A smaller, though interesting, response was *lack of information about where to go, how to get there and what to do*. There was also an issue of *lack of disabled access*.



Map and responses, Eastbourne RKE

How does it make you feel?

The most popular responses were *peaceful*, *happy* and *relaxed*. People also felt very *lucky* and *privileged* to live and spend time in the area.

Special memories?

This question attracted a good response and people provided a wide range of memories of the area including visiting during their childhoods for picnics and walking, spending time rock-pooling and enjoying time with friends and family. There were fond memories of specific places, such as Birling Gap and Seven Sisters Country Park.

Any other comments?

Many of the comments received expressed people's deep appreciation of the coast and the need to protect it from development. Many were clearly passionate about it and wanted it to be managed well and be available for everyone to enjoy. Some comments were about how it has changed over the years and there was also concern about cliff erosion and the impact of visitors on paths, and increased traffic.

Consultation with farmers

The farmers' perspective of the heritage coast is that the landscape of grasslands, arable, scrub and woodland is the result of hundreds of years of mixed farming, particularly of shepherding of livestock but also for mixed arable use. Each farm is an historic landscape in itself, revealing past farming practices and settlements, as well as the remains of former fortifications.

The concerns of farmers about the Heritage Coast's current use for recreation focus on problems of trespass, failure to close gates, un-controlled dogs and parasitic worms carried in dog faeces. Trespass is only occasional, however, with the majority of walkers and dog walkers keeping to footpaths and keeping their dogs controlled. The advantages of regular walkers outweigh any disadvantages as farmers know many of the walkers well and they help by alerting the farmers to issues and problems on the farm.

From the responses to the consultation we set out below a summary of the Special Qualities of the Sussex Heritage Coast.

5.4 Special Qualities**A swathe of sculptured chalk between land and sea**

There are few places along the English coastline that have captured the imaginations of residents and visitors as much as the chalk cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head on the Sussex Heritage Coast. The jagged and ever-retreating cliff face at the junction between the rolling South Downs and the sea is a beloved haunt of those seeking solace, and a compelling attraction for visitors from far and near. The chalk and flint that underlie the land and sea have shaped the folds of the hills, determined the form and nature of its grasslands and woodlands, and have been sculpted by the sea and the tides into spectacular cliffs and coastal reefs rich in marine life.

For those who live near, and for the many who visit, the coast here is an 'other-worldly' place, its far-reaching views fostering strong feelings of openness and peacefulness, with its flower-filled grasslands and tide-revealed rockpools providing glimpses of hidden creatures. The Heritage Coast draws walkers and cyclists,

picnickers and birdwatchers, and those who simply want to enjoy the view and to revel in its tranquillity.

The boxes contain quotes reflecting opinions expressed in the Special Qualities consultation.

1 Inspiring, iconic landscapes, with breath-taking open views of sea and land

The undulating landscape of rolling downland carved into the underlying chalk and sheared by the sea into the iconic white cliffs are the predominant special qualities of the Sussex Heritage Coast. This is a dynamic landscape, constantly changing, responding to the forces of nature. Pleasure from experiencing the varying conditions of sea and sky, the quality of light reflected from white chalk cliffs, the interaction between land and water and the far-reaching views across the Downs and along the coast are people's main responses to this coastal landscape.

Other much-loved aspects of the landscape are the low-lying Cuckmere Valley with its 'canal' and isolated meanders leading to Cuckmere Haven, and the cliffs themselves whose layers of chalk and flint yield fossils that attract geologists and fossil hunters along the shore.

The Sussex Heritage Coast is a stunning and scenic landscape, a countryside and seaside experience that is open and accessible to all.

The meandering River, the openness of the landscape. No buildings, no noise.

It has a unique character of being spectacular and secluded at the same time, with grand hills surrounding the calm meads.

2 Rich and varied terrestrial and marine wildlife

The 'edge' landscape of downland, cliff and sea provide a mosaic of habitats including grassland, saltmarsh and freshwater wetlands, as well as cliffs, shingle, rockpools, shallow coastal seas with wave-cut platform, varied seabeds and chalk reefs. The grasslands and scrub of the Downs are renowned for delicate and colourful wildflowers, butterflies, moths and other insects, along with farmland birds such as skylark and meadow pipit. There are emergent and submerged plants in the wetlands with amphibians and invertebrates, and a variety of plants and animals on the cliffs.

The coast, with its cliffs, estuary and scrub, attracts birdwatchers, drawn by migrating waders and seabirds, and by the kittiwakes and fulmars nesting on the cliffs. It attracts anglers, too, who cast their lines from the shore to catch mackerel, gurnard, sole and bass, as well as commercial fishermen and crab and lobster potters. Marine life includes seahorses, mussels, oysters and piddocks, and pods of dolphins that are sometimes seen off-shore.

The iconic view and variety of habitats

There is a certain charm about the Cuckmere valley with the old river snaking its way to the sea, full of different species of birds, wonderful.

3 Undeveloped, with an exceptional sense of space, peace and tranquillity

For many people, the special qualities of the Heritage Coast are its sense of peace and tranquillity and its fresh sea air. There is a sense of timelessness here, a perception of 'wilderness' in a crowded corner of England, where visitors feel they have space for reflection and contemplation. People enjoy the natural sounds of the sea and wind and the views of open countryside. The low levels of light pollution along the coast and over the downland also provide fine views of the night sky.

This sense of openness and wilderness is remarkable for a landscape visited by over a million people a year.

It is the bright white cliffs of the Seven Sisters, with the shimmering sea and special green of the chalk downland and shingle beach.

It gets reasonably dark, you can watch the full moon rise over the Seven Sisters, and the atmosphere at night is kind of magical.

It provides a perfect antidote to the hustle, bustle and noise of everyday life.

4 An ancient landscape created by centuries of settlement and farming

The impact of people over millennia has changed the landscape. The prehistoric forests were cleared to make arable fields, becoming pastures for livestock grazing by medieval times. This downland, with its open grasslands, mixed arable and pockets of scrub and woodland in the valleys, is a landscape little changed over the last six centuries and more.

Residents and visitors appreciate this long history of human use and settlement, and value the traces that earlier people have left behind in the landscape, such as ancient field systems and defensive earthworks. Defence has always been important here as this coastline has been the first landfall for invaders and settlers.

It's fascinating to think about both the geological and human history of this place. It makes you feel part of an ancient landscape that is older than you can comprehend.

It also has an amazing amount of history from Bronze Age to WW2. The environment is also unique with the moon carrot and the potter bumble bee have their unique habitats here.

5 Outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation and learning on land and sea

Walking is the most popular activity within the Heritage Coast, closely followed by enjoying the views and picnicking. People enjoy cycling and swimming and exploring the rockpools and shallow sea. The landscape is also a valuable outdoor classroom for students studying geography and landscapes, for understanding coastal erosion and learning about marine wildlife of a chalk coastline.

This is a landscape that invites people to get out and enjoy, whether by striding out on the springy turf of the cliff tops, sauntering beside the river in the Cuckmere valley or getting an alternative spectacular view of the Seven Sisters from a sea kayak.

The nature with its rockpools, cliffs and fossils.

It's a beautiful place to be, I love the shape of the river - it reminds me of geography lessons at senior school.



Foxhole Bottom RKE

6 Relevant documents and initiatives

There are a number of documents that describe the Heritage Coast and its features, and also provide guidance on its management. These have a bearing on the many ways that the Heritage Coast may be operated and interpreted. In this section, we list of a selection of the relevant documents and initiatives from partner organisations.

6.1 Summary of relevant documents

JNCC & Defra: Beachy Head to Seaford Head

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/gcrdb/GCRsiteaccount1850.pdf>

This report describes the geology and geomorphology of the Sussex Heritage Coast and emphasises its worldwide importance. It provides a wealth of detail that would be invaluable for the preparation of interpretive materials that include explanations about origins of the coastline.

Review and Evaluation of Heritage Coasts in England. Report to the Countryside Agency by Land Use Consultants July 2006

publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6340316483289088

This report evaluates the 32 Heritage Coasts in England to determine how effective they have been in achieving their objectives and the impacts they have had on the management of their coastlines.

South Downs National Park Visitor Survey

<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Visitor-Survey-2012.pdf>

This visitor survey is currently the most relevant for the Sussex Heritage Coast, providing detailed visitor profiles for the whole of the National Park.

Sussex Heritage Coast: A Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020. South Downs National Park.

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sussex-Heritage-Coast-A-strategy-and-action-plan-2016-20-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

Sussex Heritage Coast rejuvenation – background doc. SDNPA 2014

The plan provides a framework of management for the Sussex Heritage Coast and identifies an action plan for the period 2016 – 2020. It includes recommendations to identify the special qualities of the Heritage Coast and to prepare an interpretation plan.

A vision for Nature and Wellbeing in Sussex, Sussex Wildlife Trust, May 2017

<https://assets.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/Files/swtvsvfull-reportfinalweb.pdf>

This report highlights the links between wellbeing and the environment, and the benefits people, and wildlife, can gain from enhancing sustainable ecological networks. The Heritage Coast is an important ecological corridor for terrestrial and marine habitats.

Defence Area 14 – a survey of WWII defences at Cuckmere Haven produced by the Archaeological Data Service

[http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/catalogue//adsdata/arch-455-1/dissemination/pdf/Text_Reports/DA14_TEXT - CUCKMERE HAVEN.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/catalogue//adsdata/arch-455-1/dissemination/pdf/Text_Reports/DA14_TEXT_-_CUCKMERE_HAVEN.pdf)

This report explains the Second World War defences built at Cuckmere Haven.

6.2 Initiatives

England's Creative Coast (<https://culturecoasting.org/>) is a new immersive visitor experience being developed by art galleries in the South East, covering the counties of East Sussex, Kent and Essex. The project is led by Turner Contemporary and Go to Places. It aims to increase cultural tourism across the Creative Coast. East Sussex County Council and Towner Art Gallery are involved in the project. There may be opportunities for links to the Heritage Coast.

Coastal Culture Trail (<http://coastalculturetrail.com/>) links three galleries along the East Sussex Coast – the Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne, the De La Warr Pavillion in Bexhill and the Jerwood Gallery in Hastings – that are connected by 18 miles of East Sussex coastline. The trail celebrates the beautiful landscape that the galleries can offer their visitors.

COASTAL CULTURE TRAIL

HOME CCT FILM TRAILS TRAVEL WHAT'S ON BEYOND THE TRAILS ABOUT

3 AWARD WINNING GALLERIES
Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne, De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill and the Jerwood Gallery in Hastings, connected by 18 miles of coastline in East Sussex.

Child Friendly Trail
Visiting with your family and looking for child friendly activity? Create memories on the south coast.

Active Trail
Cycle or walk the Trail. Take in stunning landscapes and avoid the traffic while enjoying contemporary art.

Leisure Trail
Stay in incredible hotels, eat locally sourced food and drink wine made in the region. Relax and unwind on the trail.

Off the beaten track
Discover the gems of the Coastal Culture Trail. Support local businesses, creative charities and learn about hidden history.

Coastal Culture Trail website

7 Aims and objectives for interpretation

In this chapter, we set out what we propose should be the overall aim and key objectives for the interpretation of the Sussex Heritage Coast.

7.1 Interpretive aim

To help people understand and enjoy the landscape and seascape of the Sussex Heritage Coast, its origins, settlement, change over time and its current environmental and historic resources.

7.2 Interpretive objectives

The key objectives for the interpretation of the Sussex Heritage Coast are set out below in three groups: learning objectives, emotional objectives and behavioural objectives.

Learning objectives

People who live within, live near, or visit the Sussex Heritage Coast, together with those who do not but who care for its features, will understand and appreciate:

- how the landscape was formed, from the deposition of layers of chalk and flint, its emergence from the sea bed and its subsequent erosion by rivers and the sea
- how the impact of the sea over millions of years has continually eroded the cliff face, moving the coastline northwards and maintaining the brilliant white of the cliffs.
- how the action of the sea on the base of the eroded chalk cliffs has resulted in a wave cut platform with ridges that are an important habitat for marine life
- how the geology of the downland had a profound influence on its colonisation by woodland and grassland species and by its settlement and cultivation by people
- how the land was settled and used since the Palaeolithic, 500,000 years ago to today
- how the coast has been a frontier for defence for thousands of years, evidenced by forts, Martello towers and WW2 defences
- how the landscape supports different habitats, including grassland, scrub, woodland and wetland that are refuges for many species of plants and animals
- how the landscape was heavily cultivated from Iron Age to early medieval times and then, through economic and over-cultivation factors and the impact of the Black Death, changed largely to livestock farming with some mixed arable use
- how farming today is a mix of permanent pasture, ley grassland and mixed arable, with a range of crops.
- how some of the land is under Higher Level Stewardship agreements where permanent pasture and mixed arable crops provide a range of food sources for birds and invertebrates.
- how the landscape has been an inspiration to artists, and a popular filming location
- how the sea to the west of Beachy Head is protected as a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), and to the east is proposed as a MCZ
- how smuggling was an important local business, with notorious gangs operating throughout the coastal area, until the establishment of HM Coastguard in 1822

- how canalisation of the Cuckmere River in 1846 left the river meanders isolated
- how the land needs careful management to maintain and conserve its habitats and features.
- how the coast is potentially dangerous, and care needs to be taken near the cliff edge which is constantly eroding, near the base of the cliffs where there are frequent cliff falls, and on the beach to avoid being cut off by an incoming tide.
- how climate change could affect the landscape, its nature and its communities.

Emotional objectives

Those who live within, live near or visit, the Sussex Heritage Coast will:

- develop a powerful sense of empathy with the landscape and seascape of the coast
- absorb and enjoy the sense of tranquillity in the views of the coast and Downs
- be inspired by its landscape and seascape
- maintain and develop a strong attachment to the Heritage Coast and its protection and management
- share their appreciation and enjoyment with others
- be able to experience a sense of wellbeing through visiting and understanding the Heritage Coast.

Behavioural objectives

Those who live in, live near or visit, the Sussex Heritage Coast will:

- wish to explore and enjoy it and discover more about its many characteristics and qualities
- make return visits to explore and learn about its details and intricacies
- want to take part in events and activities of all kinds, organised by members of the Heritage Coast Partnership
- develop a strong sense of respect for the Heritage Coast that encourages them to care for its special features
- actively help to conserve and protect the environment of the Heritage Coast by not dropping litter, controlling their dogs and clearing up their faeces and becoming involved as volunteers
- take special care to protect themselves from dangers, near the cliff edge, near the base of the cliffs and on the beach.
- support the work of the Partnership, individual partners and other organisations involved in the conservation and interpretation of the Heritage Coast
- join or support organisations working to record, interpret and conserve the Heritage Coast.

Collectively, these objectives help to achieve the overall goals for interpretation:

- to provoke people into learning, discovering and exploring places and ideas
- to relate places and ideas to people's own awareness and understanding
- to reveal new meanings and relationships.

A further goal is:

- to help people to enjoy finding out about their heritage and that of others.

These objectives should be used as the basis for monitoring and evaluation, as described in Chapter 11.

8 Themes and storylines for interpretation

Themes are a mechanism for presenting the key strands of a story that will be used when devising and developing interpretation. The themes introduce the storylines that describe the Sussex Heritage Coast and will be used to guide the development of all interpretation media. We suggest one overarching theme and five sub-themes for the Heritage Coast.

8.1 Overarching theme

The Sussex Heritage Coast is a unique survivor in a crowded land, a landscape of wide horizons, constantly changing over millennia to create a dynamic environment on the edge, where land and sea meet, and where people and nature have adapted to survive and flourish.

The key message that interpretation media should convey to all users is the sense that this is a dynamic, ever-changing landscape, rich in culture and natural history, and a unique tranquil survivor in a crowded land.

8.2 Themes

The following sub-themes allow the whole story to be explained in a series of storylines that will guide the interpretation. Text in coloured boxes are sample quotes from the consultation that reflect the sub-themes

Sub-theme 1 Shaping the edge – Cretaceous seas to iconic cliffs

The underlying soft, Cretaceous chalk has been sculpted by the elements to produce an iconic coastal cliff profile and has determined the land-use which, in turn, has created a quintessentially English landscape.

Storylines

- The chalk that underlies the Downs, and forms the cliff face and the sea bed, was laid down in the late Cretaceous period, around 87-84 million years ago.
- The chalk is largely formed of the skeletal remains of planktonic algae known as coccolithophores, with fossils of echinoids, brachiopods, bivalves and sponges, and a conspicuous flint band.
- The famous Seven Sisters cliffs are constantly eroding by the action of the sea and weather, and the constant freeze/thaw of winter, with the coastline gradually 'moving' inland as the sea erodes the base of the cliffs and the cliffs fall onto the beach and into the sea.
- How many sisters? There are Seven Sisters now, and an eighth peak is being created by erosion. There may have been different numbers of cliffs in the past.

- The cliffs, Downs and cliff peaks are called brows and the dips are called bottoms.
- The waves and tides cause long-shore drift, examples of its effect are the depositing of shingle at Cuckmere Haven and the decline of Seaford, which was a thriving medieval port.
- The erosion of the chalk has resulted in classic coastal and marine geomorphological features under the sea which are of global importance. The wave cut chalk shore is very rare and south east England is one of the most important places for wave cut chalk shores in the world.
- The wave cut platforms and undersea ridges are important habitats for marine life
- Cuckmere Haven is a classic image of a meandering river, with the meanders bypassed by a straight channel since 1846.
- Birling Gap coastguard cottages were a terrace of 7 cottages in 1905, only 4 cottages remain in 2018, and they too will eventually disappear into the sea.

Hope Gap - Great chalk exposures with an interesting shore platform...

Wonderful scenery. Fossil hunting. Lovely walks.

Sub-theme 2 Nature on the edge – from shallow sea to downland

This is a landscape full of life where the chalk grassland, cliffs, foreshore, sea and sea bed support a diversity of plant and animal species, some of which are internationally rare.

Storylines

- The chalk grassland of the Downs is a very special ecosystem, created over millennia by sheep and rabbit grazing, producing a short turf studded with wildflowers and delicate grasses.
- The chalk grassland has a rich native flora and invertebrate life, one of the most diverse habitats in north west Europe.
- The scrub and woodland in the valleys are important feeding and resting places for migrating birds.
- The continually eroding chalk cliff provides nesting sites for a diversity of sea birds including fulmars and kittiwakes. The kittiwake colony at Seaford Head is an important stronghold for kittiwakes at a time when their numbers are declining in other areas.
- The ridges and furrows of the wave-cut chalk platform in the shallow sea are valuable habitats for marine life, including the short snout seahorse, blue mussel and oyster.
- West of Beachy Head is a designated Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), while east of Beachy Head is a proposed MCZ. Eventually, all of the SHC should be protected as MCZ.

- A common element – chalk – is central to the landscape and the seascape, influencing landforms, cliffs and the wave cut platform, and the habitats and species found here.

Being in Nature by the sea, amazing scenery and the wildlife. You got it all there.

Variety of habitats, sea, river, chalk cliffs and grasslands, shingle, fossils...

Sub-theme 3 Living on the edge – from hunter gatherers to house builders

People have settled this fertile edge over millennia, seeking security and shelter, and harvesting food from the land and sea.

Storylines

- The coastal Downs are a landscape long used and settled by people since Palaeolithic times (500,000 years ago). Three eras can be recognised:
 - Hunter-gatherers roam in the area across the land-bridge where the English Channel is today, gathering seasonal food. Evidence of their existence consists largely of tools.
 - From 6000 years ago, people settled and cultivated the land, growing arable crops and grazing their livestock. Evidence includes strip lynchets on the valley sides.
 - From post medieval times (1300AD) the land changed to livestock farming, due to over-cultivation, climate change, economic factors, Black Death and frequent raids by French ships.
- The coast has been a front line in defence for thousands of years, with waves of threats and invasions including Roman legions, the Normans, French raiders and WW2 German bombers.
- Evidence of threats and attack includes an Iron Age hillfort at Seaford, Napoleonic era Martello towers at Seaford and Eastbourne and WW2 tank traps at Cuckmere Haven.
- Farming has played a crucial part in the nature, culture and history of the Downs, resulting in a landscape created by sheep and cattle rearing and mixed arable farming.
- Some of the farmland is under Higher Level Stewardship agreement where a mix of pasture and rotational arable crops provides varied habitats for wildlife.
- Fishing, including from the shore and from boats in the shallow water, is an important part of the local economy and popular with residents and visitors.
- Smuggling was an important local business. Notorious groups included the Seaford Shags and the Alfriston Gang. Stanton Collins, the leader of the Alfriston gang was transported to Australia for sheep stealing in the 1830s. The 16th century Star Inn in Alfriston has a ship's figurehead of a Red Lion, looted from a wreck in the early 1800s by Stanton Collins.
- The English Channel is one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

- The canalisation of the Cuckmere River in 1846 improved navigation up and down the tidal river and left the meanders as isolated ponds.
- Abandoned settlements, such as at Exceat, are evidence of a more populated landscape.
- The Seven Sisters were threatened by development in 1926 when property developers bought land near Crowlink intending to build a new town. Opponents included Rudyard Kipling and the Society of Sussex Downsmen. The action highlighted the need for planning laws that would prevent this type of development.

It's fascinating to think about both the geological and human history of this place. It makes you feel part of an ancient landscape that is older than you can comprehend.

It also has an amazing amount of history from Bronze Age to WW2.

Theme 4 Inspired by the edge – scenic and spiritually uplifting

The expansive land and sea scape of the Sussex Heritage Coast offers a stimulus for creativity, reflection, relaxation and recreation, and for many visitors provides a spiritual experience.

Storylines

- An outstanding sense of openness, emptiness and space that is physically and spiritually liberating, particularly as a place where earth, air and water meet, is important for many people.
- The heritage coast is an important location for many outdoor activities including walking, cycling, picnicking, kayaking, canoeing, sea fishing and scuba diving.
- The Downs and the coast have been an inspiration for writers, poet and painters, including Eric Ravilious and Eric Slater, and continue to be today.
- The Seven Sisters and the valleys are used as a location for feature films such *Atonement*, *Robin Hood*, *Prince of Thieves* and *Harry Potter* films.
- Seven Sisters cliffs are a global, cultural icon from being default Windows 7 wallpaper for Windows 7 to cult destination for many people from south east Asian countries.

The seemingly unspoilt vista.

The iconic meanders in Cuckmere Haven, so well documented by artists past and present.

Theme 5 Managing the edge – care and conservation

The Sussex Heritage Coast survives as a unique open landscape and internationally important marine zone within a densely populated and intensely busy part of England, a much-loved landscape that requires careful and considered management.

Storylines

- A combination of geology, farming systems, land ownership and the passion and power of campaigning in the 1920's has meant that the area has avoided development and survives as a relic coastal landscape.
- Ownership by key figures, such as Michael Mordant and Major Grubb, helped to secure the protection of the coast from development.
- The coast is an area of managed coastal retreat, for example at Birling Gap and Cuckmere Haven.
- The cliffs are continually eroding, but they would not be cliffs without this erosion, changing instead to rounded hills.
- Safety awareness is vital on the cliff tops and on the beach due to the dangers of clifftop erosion, rock falls and incoming tides.
- The area to the west of Beachy Head is a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), while the area to the east is a proposed MCZ. The MCZ helps protect against damaging activities.
- The marine environment is internationally important and also very fragile. People can help protect it by following conservation guidelines.
- The grasslands of the Downs is of international importance and require careful management to maintain the diversity of species.
- The cliffs are fragile and regularly fall. People need to be aware of the dangers of cliff falls and to keep away from the cliff edge.
- Climate change could have a significant impact on the cliffs, potentially changing the speed of erosion, raising the sea level and impacting species and agriculture of the downland.
- The Heritage Coast Partnership is a group of local and national organisations that work together to protect and manage the coast.
- The Heritage Coast, in particular Beachy Head, is tragically, a place where some people choose to end their lives.

It's the totality of the relatively unspoilt, undeveloped landscape; this, with the natural coast and open sea make this one of the few precious "wildernesses" of the South Downs National Park.

8.3 Summary of themes and storylines

Overarching message				
The Sussex Heritage Coast is a unique survivor in a crowded land, a landscape of wide horizons, constantly changing over millennia to create an environment on the edge, where land and sea meet, where people and nature have adapted to survive and flourish.				
1 Shaping the edge	2 Nature on the edge	3 Living on the edge	4 Inspired by the edge	5 Conserving the land
<p>The underlying soft, Cretaceous chalk has been sculpted by the elements to produce an iconic coastal cliff profile and has determined the land-use which, in turn, has created a quintessentially English landscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the landscape was formed • The nature of chalk • Erosion of the Seven Sisters • How many sisters? • Brows and bottoms • Long-shore drift • Classic coastal and marine features • Wave-cut platform and undersea ridges • Cuckmere Haven and meanders • Birling Gap cottages 	<p>This is a landscape full of life where the chalk grassland, cliffs, foreshore, sea and sea bed support a diversity of plant and animal species, some of which are internationally rare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ecosystem of chalk grassland • Native flora and fauna • Habitats for migrating birds • Cliffs provide nesting sites for sea birds • Important habitats for marine life • Designated and proposed MCZ • Influence of chalk 	<p>People have settled this fertile edge over millennia, seeking security and shelter, and harvesting food from the land and sea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement since Palaeolithic times • A front line of defence • Relics of defences • Impact of shepherding and farming • Importance of fishing • Smuggling was an important business • One of world's busiest shipping lanes • 19th century canalisation of Cuckmere River • Abandoned settlements • Saved from development in the 1920s 	<p>The expansive land and sea scape of the Sussex Heritage Coast offers a stimulus for creativity, reflection, relaxation and recreation, and for many visitors provides a spiritual experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outstanding sense of openness • Important for outdoor activities • Inspiration for writers, poets and painters • Location for films • Seven Sisters are global icon 	<p>The Sussex Heritage Coast survives as a unique open landscape and internationally important marine zone within a densely populated and intensely busy part of England, a much-loved landscape that requires careful and considered management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relic coastal landscape • Protection from development • Managed coastal retreat • Continually eroding cliffs • Safety awareness • MCZ protects coastal habitats • Conservation of marine environment • Careful management needed of grasslands • Cliffs are fragile • Impact of climate change • Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership

9 Interpretive approach

In this chapter we present our rationale for providing interpretation in the Sussex Heritage Coast and present some guiding principles for preparing and developing interpretation materials.

9.1 Consultation

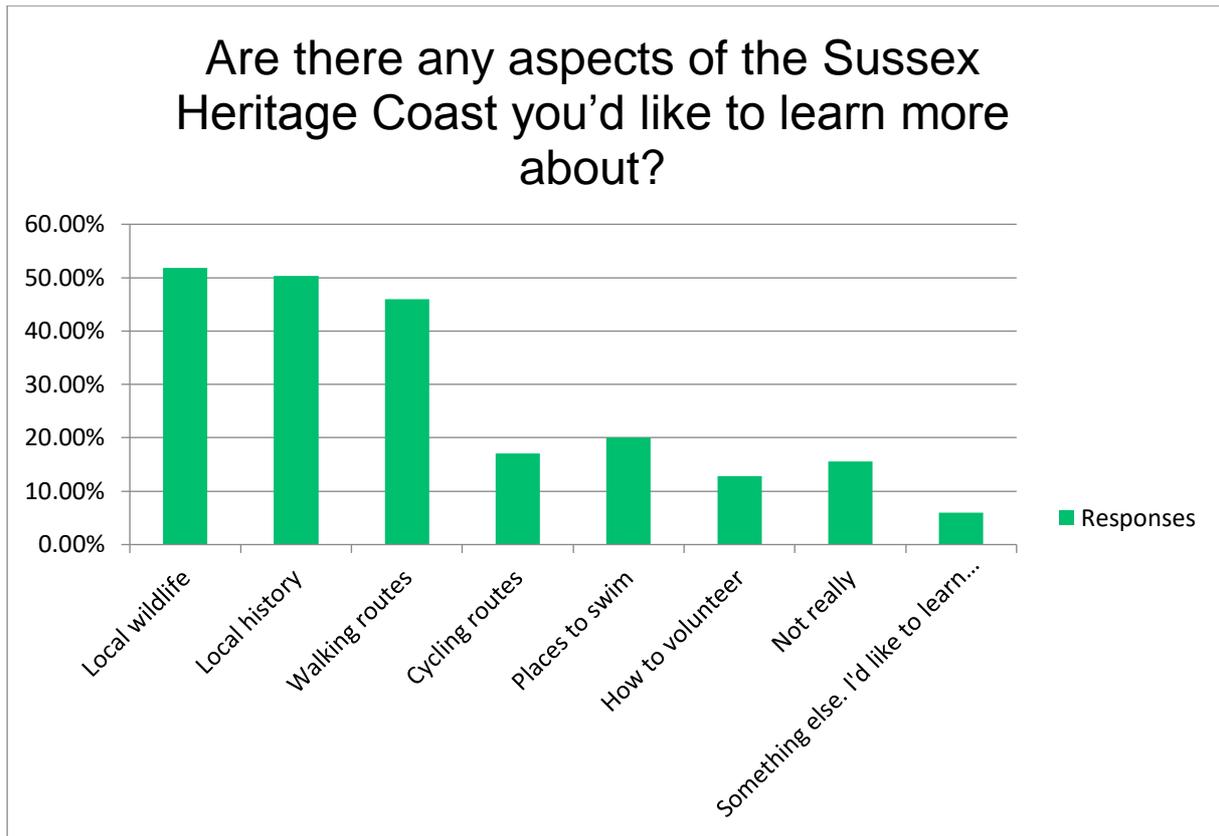
A key part of the consultation for the special qualities study was the inclusion of two questions related to interpretation. We asked:

- Are there any aspects of the Sussex Heritage Coast you would like to learn more about?
 - Local wildlife
 - Local history
 - Walking routes
 - Cycling routes
 - Places to swim
 - How to volunteer
 - Not really
 - Something else
- Which of the following would you be most likely to use to learn more about the Sussex Heritage Coast?
 - Social media updates
 - Email updates
 - Leaflets available in local venues
 - Interpretation/information panels
 - Local newspaper articles
 - Conversations with friends and family
 - Podcasts
 - Magazines
 - Posters, noticeboards in car parks and visitor centres
 - Local radio features and news
 - Informative talks or workshops
 - Guided walks
 - Organised family activities
 - Something else

The responses received for the Survey Monkey questionnaire were analysed and the results presented below.

Q1 What would you like to learn more about?

1139 people responded to this question and the three highest scores were for *local wildlife* (51.8%), *local history* (50.31%) and *walking routes* (46.01%). Other notable responses were for *places to swim* (20.2%) and *cycling routes* (17.03%). The results are shown in the bar chart below.



Responses to the option 'something else' were fed into a word cloud, which presents the frequency of use of words as different sizes (largest equals most used), and are shown here:

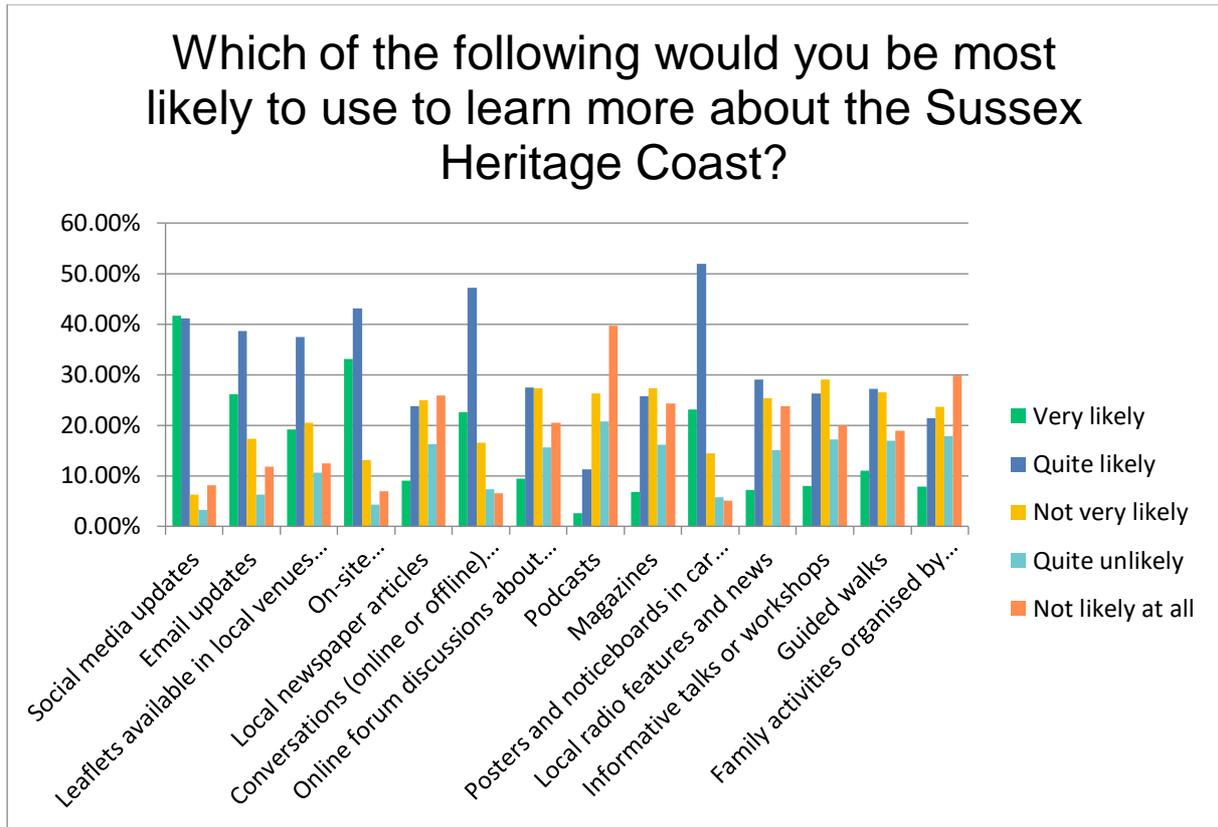
Q8 Are there any aspects of the Sussex Heritage Coast you'd like to learn more about?
(please tick all that apply)



This shows that geology, routes, walks, flora, Park and access were the most frequent responses.

Q2 What would you most likely use to learn more about the Heritage Coast?

This question received 1156 responses and for each option there was a choice from *very likely* through to *not likely* for each option. The results are shown in the bar chart below.



The chart shows that some of the highest scores for *very likely* and *quite likely* are for *social media updates*, *email updates*, *on-site interpretation panels* and *posters and noticeboards in car parks and visitor centres*. Although some of the ‘live interpretation’ such as *guided walks* and *workshops* scored lower, we know that fewer people choose these activities, but for those who do, they are engaging and memorable interpretive events that can leave a lasting impression on the participant.

9.2 Approach

We have used the responses from the consultation and the Special Qualities survey, as well as our conclusions from the interpretation audit, to guide the choice of interpretive media and the topics and stories selected for interpretation.

The interpretation audit revealed that existing interpretive media for the Heritage Coast includes three visitor centre exhibitions, interpretation panels, publications and a range of activities organised and run by the members of the partnership as well as the webpage on the SDNPA website and pages on other related websites. However, there is little coordination or integration of this interpretation and no standard, common explanation of the Heritage Coast as a designation and as an exceptional and coherent landscape and seascape.

The responses to the consultation indicate people want to learn more about the Heritage Coast, specifically about wildlife, history, routes and geology. Their

preferred media includes new technologies, such as social media and email updates, and traditional media, such as panels, leaflets and activities.

Our interpretive approach is to provide an integrated mix of on- and off-site media and events that presents the Heritage Coast as a cohesive unit and also explains its individual features in easily accessible ways. It also guides partners to produce individual interpretive elements within an overall comprehensive story.

The main elements of our approach are:

- A mix of off-site and on-site media that are distinctive and attractive, and produced to a high standard, and are long-lasting and low maintenance.
- A limited range of high quality on-site interpretation, sited at key locations such as car parks, key access points and visitor centres.
- A lectern-style interpretive panel installation located in car parks, key access points and visitor centres.
- The development of a bespoke map of the Heritage Coast showing its key features and routes.
- An interpretive map leaflet produced by the Partnership with an annotated version of the bespoke map of the Heritage Coast area, showing places to visit, safe swimming and rock-pooling areas and routes for walking and cycling.
- A standard, general introduction to the Heritage Coast in the visitor centres at Seven Sisters Country Park, Birling Gap and Beachy Head. This would be a simple wall or pop-up panel, with the long-term aim of a touchscreen unit in each centre, giving access to a wide range of shared and individual material. The text should include safety information.
- Preparing an evocative statement, or series of statements, about the Heritage Coast for use in websites, social media, publications, events and activities and publicity materials. This will provide a coordinated introduction and explanation of the Heritage Coast and the work of the Partnership to conserve its features.
- A comprehensive Sussex Heritage Coast programme of pages on the South Downs National Park website that are highly functional, easily accessible, interactive, provides downloadable materials, and has clear links to other sites and information and is regularly updated.
- The expansion of social media by the Partnership. Consultation conducted for this plan revealed a high demand for social media as a means of seeking information about the Heritage Coast. This will need a dedicated member of staff to update on a regular daily or weekly basis.
- A programme of participatory events and activities to encourage and empower people to become engaged in the Heritage Coast, including activities provided *for* the community, and *by* the community.

- A series of easily downloadable, or tear-off, sheets for quick identification of species and features of the area that can be laminated for multiple use.

9.3 Guiding principles

We strongly recommend the following guiding principles whatever media are chosen for the Heritage Coast. All interpretation should be:

Cohesive – emphasising the importance of the Heritage Coast as a distinctive landscape and seascape, with each individual feature contributing to an overall story. The interpretation should also connect closely with interpretation produced for the South Downs National Park, of which it is a part, and with interpretation produced for other nearby places.

Co-created – involving the community wherever possible in the sharing of stories and experiences, the development of interpretive materials and the organisation and delivery of activities for, and with, residents and visitors.

Layered – with a clear hierarchy from easily accessible introductions in visitor centres, leaflets and on websites, to more detailed interpretation and information in publications and other selective media. Each interpretive element should contribute to a cohesive, integrated and comprehensive story about the Heritage Coast.

Attractively designed and evocatively written – to reflect the natural beauty of the landscape and seascape and to encourage an emotional response as well as an intellectual appreciation.

Developed to reflect local distinctiveness and skills – through the use of local artists and craftspeople, natural local materials that are sustainable and environmentally friendly where possible, and through the use of media that engage as many of the senses as possible.

Delivered by people as well as by media – responding to research that shows that personal interpretation is the most effective way to tell the stories of a site. Organisations working in the area have skilled staff and volunteers who can enthuse residents and visitors with their understanding and knowledge. For example, National Trust volunteers and the Seven Sisters Country Park rangers provide local tours, Sussex Wildlife Trust provides educational activities, while the Friends of Cuckmere Haven have organised activities.

Include information wherever possible and appropriate on cliff and beach safety – reflecting the dangers that exist near the cliff edge, near the base of the cliff and along the beach. We would recommend developing and using a range of standard safety messages that can be used on websites and other interpretive media. The Partnership could also consider including helpline numbers for people vulnerable to suicide.

10 Proposed interpretive media

The range of media available for interpretation has never been wider. Media range from leaflets and simple information sheets through to interactive websites, from guided walks through to music and drama activities, and from interpretive panels to apps. The challenge is not in finding ways to deliver interpretation but in choosing those that are appropriate for the place, the task, the audience and the budget.

Our proposals for media are presented below, in four categories: off-site media, participatory activities, printed and downloadable media and on-site media.

10.1 Off-site media

10.1.1 Website

The South Downs National Park website is the primary source of information about the Heritage Coast. The introductory information is minimal, but the Discovery Map has some information about features in the Heritage Coast area. We recommend expanding the information and interpretation contained in the website, with specific pages devoted to landscape, nature, history, marine life and other features of the coast, including some of the 'hidden gems' of the coast that are little known. The pages should be the central hub for the Heritage Coast providing information, interpretation, inspiration and ways to get involved.

The pages should include:

- An easily accessible explanation of the Heritage Coast and its dynamics, including history, wildlife, geology, marine features, etc.
- More features of interest about the Heritage Coast than are currently contained within the Discovery Map. The features should include sites, places to visit, walking and cycling trails and links to leaflets and other media that can be downloaded.
- YouTube links to short videos and informative vlogs and/or interviews with local people.
- Interpretation of key elements of the Heritage Coast, including explanations of history, habitats, wildlife, key features, characters and events.
- A comprehensive events programme, including events organised and run by all organisations operating in the Heritage Coast area.
- Audio features with stories and reminiscences from people living and working in the area.
- Video toposcopes of the panoramas seen from the various viewpoints for people unable to access them. These should be videos through the seasons to enable people to see the view at different times in the year.
- Google Analytics, which will enable analysis of particular pages and levels of engagement, as well as the gathering of demographic data.

For other websites that include information about places or features of the Heritage Coast there is opportunity to include standard interpretation of the Heritage Coast, and its landscape, seascape, features and information about the Partnership. Examples include:

- The National Trust website has information on specific sites but could include an explanation of the Heritage Coast and the Partnership.
- The IFCA website for Sussex has features on how to protect the marine environment in Chichester Harbour and Brighton. This could be extended to include information on protecting the Heritage Coast and the Marine Conservation Zone explaining what people can do to care for the sea.
- The Sussex Wildlife Trust has a wealth of information about wildlife and places to visit on its website. The Trust would be interested in including information and interpretation of the Heritage Coast on its website and social media.

10.1.2 Social media

Social media can encourage local groups to engage with interpretation, as well as being a vehicle for interpretation itself. It can develop authentic, meaningful connections with the local community (rather than just gathering 'likes' and 'follows' arbitrarily) and recognise that some groups may need more support and encouragement to get involved than others. Content should include features on key elements such as wildlife, walking routes and landscapes, all with arresting images. Building community engagement with the Heritage Coast through interactive social media is valuable. However, it should be acknowledged that it also requires administration and monitoring.

10.1.3 Expert voices

Audio and/or video recordings should be made with groups and individuals, showcasing their perceptions of the coast and their work and activities in the area. The final recordings would be just a few minutes long, and available on the websites. 'Expert voices' give an insiders' viewpoint on, and specialist knowledge of, the area. Examples should include:

- Fisherman, or woman
- Ranger
- Ecologist
- Geologist / geomorphologist
- Off-shore wind expert
- Archaeologist
- Farmer
- Shepherd
- Publican
- Guesthouse keeper
- Lifeboat skipper
- Campaigner for the downland
- Bus driver, etc

10.1.4 Stories of the Downs and the sea

These recordings would include stories and monologues that explain aspects of the history and environment of the coast. The recordings would be in the format of

'characters' spoken by actors or volunteers and available on the website to listen to or download. Sample topics could include:

- How a Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer roamed the land and found shelter and food.
- How a Neolithic farmer settled this land, grazing livestock and growing crops.
- How an artist was inspired by the landscape to paint evocative scenes.
- How a local shepherd was anxious to protect his sheep from raiding French pirates.
- How a local policeman feared invasion by the Nazis arriving by ship and tank.

10.1.5 Learning resources

Learning resources with activities for schools and youth groups are a valuable way of engaging with a younger audience. The coast is already well-visited by schools, and the landscape, ecology and history offer scope for a wide range of materials for many ages, from pre-school to post-graduate. A range of exciting downloadable learning resources should be developed by the Partnership for schools and youth groups, linked to the National Curriculum. Contents should include maps, pictures, identification charts, interviews with experts, games and activities.

10.1.6 Animations and film

There are many exciting types of digital media that enable people to see change in landscapes over time and specific visual events in history. These can include animations and augmented reality (AR), as well as archive film and photographs. These technologies are high-cost but are incorporated into the interpretation programme for later implementation, perhaps attracting funding from other sources. We would recommend the following:

- **Short introductory film** of the Heritage Coast
- **Animations** to show key moments in history, such as
 - The view from the shore or clifftops of invaders over time – Roman galleons, Normans arriving in 1066, French ships in Napoleonic era.
 - The processes that have created the Sussex Heritage Coast with engaging ways of explaining the processes that have created the downland landscape and its erosion at the coast, such as finding out which 'sister' will go next, and whether another sister might appear. How different was it on the coast when the Normans arrived in 1066?
- **Augmented Reality download** of animations that can layered over video through a smartphone or tablet. The animations could be similar to those above, of the landscape in Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Iron Age and Medieval times, overlaid onto the present scene, to give 'then and now' interpretation.
- **Archive film** of events that have happened on the Heritage Coast such as Bomber Command and other air force WW2 missions and the Pathé News feature of the Eastbourne Downland Ranger, known as 'Mountie'.

Animations and archive film could also be shown on a touchscreen (see below in 10.4.5) at each of the visitor centres and could also be downloadable through an

InfoPoint, or VisBox. These are small devices that emulate a server and connect with a phone, tablet or laptop through WiFi, allowing downloads of digital media. The media are loaded onto an SD card inserted into the device. Their advantage is that they are not connected to the organisation's servers, computers or to the internet, with no risk of viruses, etc.

These devices enable downloading of leaflets, guides and other media that are also available on websites.

10.2 Participatory activities

Participatory events and activities are, by their nature, ephemeral but their major advantage is that they involve people directly, and they are interactive. They are particularly effective for interpretation as they are fun to join, and face-to-face interpretation is the most powerful form of interpretation for encouraging engagement and understanding.

Participatory activities are especially valuable for communities and families that may want entertainment as well as learning. Many Partnership staff and volunteers have skills and experiences that can contribute to the organisation and running of the activities.

Guided walks and other activities are already organised and run by the National Park, the Seven Sisters Country Park, Sussex Wildlife Trust and the National Trust. These activities should be developed and could include:

10.2.1 'Have a go' tours

These tours would give visitors the opportunity to experience some of the day-to day activities of local farmers and fishermen, such as lambing, shearing and sustainable fishing.

10.2.2 From sheep to sweater

A day-long activity that includes shearing, spinning and knitting to make a sweater (or maybe a small knitting sample) in a day.

10.2.3 Revel in Ravilious

A workshop presented in partnership with the Towner and/or an artist exploring the scenery that inspired Eric Ravilious.

10.2.4 Be a ranger for the day

Join a ranger for the day and experience some of their work.

10.2.5 Community video and digital media project – stories of the coast, voices of the valleys

Consultation for Special Qualities study gathered 1003 responses on people's special memories of the coast. This project would develop that study, working with people of all ages in communities to record intergenerational reminiscences of the coast, providing short recordings that can be heard on the website and downloaded.

10.2.6 Citizen science and species recording projects

These projects would involve offering practical sessions run by experts and volunteers on species and heritage features to encourage local recording. Outputs of the project could include exhibitions and maps of features found, trends in species populations and local habitat management projects.

10.2.7 Outreach work with local communities

The consultation indicated keen interest in the Heritage Coast by local residents. The Partnership should further develop their outreach programme of talks and demonstrations for delivery at community and church clubs, lunch clubs, day centres, schools, children's centres and residential homes for elderly people. This outreach work will enable people to learn about and celebrate the Heritage Coast through the seasons using different media and provide opportunities for local residents to share and record memories of the area. This can be linked with the community video project above and used in interpretation materials. This will bring communities together and develop a strong sense of place and ownership with their Heritage Coast.

10.2.8 Training programme for volunteers

The Partnership should develop a joint training programme for volunteers, to develop and share skills across the Partnership.

10.3 Printed and downloadable media

10.3.1 Interpretive map leaflet

The consultation demonstrates there is still a demand for printed material as well as digital media. Printed materials can also be available on websites for downloading and printing.

We propose that the Partnership produces an interpretive map leaflet covering the whole Heritage Coast area and its hinterland. These are award-winning publications originally developed by British Waterways for their honeypot sites. They are A2 size, folding to A5, with a map on one side and interpretation of features and stories on the reverse.

The interpretive map leaflet should include the following:

- A clearly designed and illustrated oblique aerial map of the Heritage Coast, showing key features, walking and cycling routes, major viewpoints, public transport connections to walks and viewpoints, and other information to help orientate the user.
- Short descriptions around the map of the major features of the Heritage Coast such as Seaford Head, the Cuckmere valley and Haven, Seven Sisters Country Park, Birling Gap, Beachy Head, etc.
- On the reverse, short magazine style graphic interpretation of key sites, habitats, historical features, stories about the land, cliffs and sea, public transport information, sources of further information, key organisations contact details, etc. Include information on cliff and beach safety.

- It could be produced on textured paper, reminiscent of chalk, though this may be overly expensive to produce. With creative folding the leaflet could show above and below sea level as a fold-down section.

The interpretive map leaflet is a key document available at TICs, local libraries, shops, community centres, local workplaces, churches and other gathering points. The content of the leaflet should follow the thematic approach of this interpretation plan and should dovetail with other leaflets and information produced for the area.

We recommend co-creating this leaflet with local communities to identify places, sites and stories.

10.3.2 Identification sheets

The consultation revealed a desire for more information about the area, specifically on wildlife and history. We recommend the Partnership, or individual partners, produce a series of low-cost identification and interpretation sheets that can be provided at visitor centres, perhaps as tear-off sheets for downloading and printing at home and also as laminated sheets for loan. The sheets should be single page A4, printed on both sides, with high quality illustrations and minimal text. The sheets could be produced as tear-off pads to be given to visitors. Versions of these identification sheets have been developed by organisations and may be suitable for use in the Heritage Coast.

These sheets should include:

- Life in rockpools
- Fish and other creatures of the shallow sea – a trail for snorkelers and divers that includes guidance on protecting marine life
- Nesting birds of the cliffs
- Flowers of the chalk grassland
- Wetland plants and invertebrates of the Cuckmere valley
- Common migrant birds – seasonal
- How to read the historic landscape
- Geology and geomorphology of the coast

The tear-off sheets should have a common format, even if provided by different partners. They should include identification details, brief descriptions and explanations, details of where to find the plants, animals, etc, and information on where to find out more, with weblinks and social media feeds.

The sheets should also include guidance on ‘what you can do for the Heritage Coast’, to include messages such as ‘enjoy the rocks but please don’t take them home’, ‘leave the marine life in the rockpool’, ‘be careful of nests’, as well as information on how visitors can contribute data about species found and volunteering. They should also each include information on cliff and beach safety.

10.3.3 Walking and cycling route leaflets

There are already a number of trail routes for the Heritage Coast, including ‘Discovering Gayles Farm’ (National Trust), Beachy Head (gps-routes.co.uk) and others provided by Walking Britain, as well as the guide to the South Downs Way.

The consultation revealed a desire for more information on walking routes. Although there are numerous walking routes and guides available, it seems that people are not finding them easily via website searches. We suggest that existing walk guides are promoted more effectively on the Partnership websites and 'tweaked' to reflect the interpretive theme and sub-themes. These guides should be promoted at key hubs such as TICs and visitor centres, as well as on relevant websites.

There is opportunity here also to emphasise the health benefits of walking and cycling through the marketing of leaflets, such as 'get your 10k step count here', etc.

10.3.4 Table Talkers

Table talkers are triangular plastic unit that carry 1/3rd A4 sheets and are often used by cafes, pubs and restaurants to display menus. One face of the table talker can be used, with the agreement of site managers, to provide pre-printed information and interpretation about the Heritage Coast. Topics for table talkers could include:

- From sea and land to table – where does your food come from?
- Five fantastic facts about chalk, the coast, the Downs, the cliffs, etc
- Flowers that flourish in the fields
- Best bugs for budding biologists
- 'Horrible histories' style interpretation of the Heritage Coast
- How many coccolithophores make a cliff?

If successful, this initiative could be extended to include coasters and napkins for seasonal messages.

10.3.5 Sussex Heritage Coast standard texts

The audit found there was good interpretation about features of the coast and Downs but very little explanation of the Heritage Coast as an entity. We recommend preparing a set of standard texts about the coast for use in websites, downloadable materials and printed media. The texts would provide a clear explanation of the Heritage Coast and its defining features, for use in all interpretation materials.

We recommend that there should be two sets of texts – a short version with a succinct explanation of the Heritage Coast, and a longer version with more details of its features and the role of the Partnership.

These texts should include a safety message about cliff erosion, falls and tides.

10.4 On-site media

10.4.1 Interpretation panels

There are panels already located in car parks and entrance points along the Heritage Coast, produced by different organisations, interpreting the landscape and its features. As noted in the interpretation audit, many of these are outdated, in poor repair and in need of removal or replacement.

We recommend gradually replacing these panels with lectern units, built of flint in a curved semi-circular shape with a curved panel located in the sloping top. The flint plinth could include carved or moulded figures of local plants and animals and niches

for people to leave their own ‘finds’ for others to see. The panels can be produced by different organisations in their own house style but with common elements of design and approach, and using standard text described in 10.3.5 above. The panels should be located at:

- Car parks, such as at Seven Sisters Country Park, Crowlink, Beachy Head and Birling Gap
- Entrance points, such as at Holywell in Eastbourne, South Hill Barn in Seaford and the coast path from Seaford.

The plinths need to be carefully designed and constructed by a craftsman. The interpretation could be produced as a single large curved panel with three sections:

Section 1. Welcome and orientation

- Map of the area with an inset map of the whole of the Heritage Coast
- Standard intro text for the Heritage Coast
- Nearby places people can visit – cross promotion of sites and features, and ‘follow the story...’
- What you can do to help – doing your bit for the Heritage Coast, such as take photos, pick up litter, keep your dog under control
- How to volunteer – web addresses and contact details
- Include ‘Take a picture of this panel to remind yourself of the map and interpretation’.

Section 2. Site specific interpretation

- Explanation of local features and stories

Section 3. Footpaths and access around area

Maps of local walks from that location in the Heritage Coast, including

- Waymarked routes, time, distance and facilities
- Information about keeping safe on the route, cliff-top safety code etc
- Keeping your dog safe on the route
- Take a picture of this panel to help your navigation.

We would strongly recommend that the design of the lectern units is commissioned with an artist’s or designer’s brief.

10.4.2 Interpretation benches

There are already a few benches at selected places in the Heritage Coast, near Birling Gap and at Crowlink car park. These are standard benches that add little to the landscape. We recommend replacing these with sculptural benches, or benches carved with short interpretive messages, that could enhance the landscape and contribute to better interpretation of the Heritage Coast. An example is shown below.



Again, the design should be commissioned with an artist's or designer's brief.

10.4.3 Photoposts

Taking pictures of the cliffs is an important activity for many tourists. They may have seen the views before in photographs, and they want some for themselves. Choosing the right place to take a photograph can often be difficult, particularly for tourists who are unfamiliar with the area. It can also be dangerous for tourists if they step too close to the edge, and risk falling from the cliff. Many visitors at key locations can also cause erosion.

We recommend installing a series of Photoposts, similar to ones that have been fabricated and installed by Cairngorms National Park. The posts hold a mobile phone in a fixed position enabling the user to take a 'selfie' and also to photograph the view from that point. A plaque on the post invites people then to download the picture to a website.

The aim of the project is to encourage people to take photographs from these locations, rather than closer to the edge, but, most importantly, for the Partnership and the National Park to gather fixed point photographs that will show change over the seasons and over time. For a rapidly changing coastline this would be invaluable for measuring change but also providing photographs that can be used on the website, in displays and also compiled in 'stop-motion' videos about the coast. It also invites public engagement in tracking and recording coastal change and the impacts of a dynamic coastline.



Photopost in Cairngorm National Park

Staff at the Cairngorms National Park are keen for their initiative to be replicated in other national parks and to share outputs and best practice. A diagram of the Photopost is shown in Appendix 1. The intellectual property rights for the post remain with the Cairngorms National Park, which should be acknowledged if the Photopost is used on the Heritage Coast. The Photoposts are costed in the table below as simple oak posts with a routed slot in the top.

Further information about the post can be seen at <https://cairngorms.co.uk/photo-posts/>

10.4.4 Common SHC panel in Visitor Centre exhibitions

The interpretation audit identified that the three visitor centres contained detailed interpretation of the features and processes of the Heritage Coast but very limited reference to the Heritage Coast as an entity and to other sites and visitor centres in the area. The displays in some of the centres are dated and in need of upgrading or replacing.

We recommend an initial enhancement to the centres with a common panel at all three centres explaining the Heritage Coast and how it helps to conserve the very special landscape of the area, and that each centre develops interpretation specific to their location, to collectively create cohesive understanding of the Heritage Coast.

These could also be displayed at visitor attractions near the Heritage Coast such as Seaford Museum and museums and art galleries in Eastbourne.

Most of the visitor centres include a 'current events and wildlife sightings' board. The information on these boards should also include details about the whole Heritage Coast.

10.4.5 Touchscreens

As recommended in 10.1.6, touchscreens in each of the visitor centres should provide a range of shared and individual interpretation and information.

10.2 Summary of interpretive media and activities, with costs TBC

Sussex Heritage Coast Interpretation							
No	Project	Description	Theme	Yrs 1	Yrs 2/3	Yr 4/5	Budget allocation Ex VAT
10.1.1 Website							
	Develop website	Create easily accessible pages for the SHC within the SDNP website, that explains the SHC and its features, and includes a comprehensive events programme provided by all organisations in the area.	All				£5000
	Audio / Video	Embed audio and video and links to YouTube video and informative vlogs showing interviews with local people and other relevant videos.	All				£500
	Video toposcopes	Embed video toposcopes of the panoramas seen from viewpoints through the seasons.	All				£500
	Google Analytics	Enables analysis of pages and levels of engagement and gathering of demographic data. Included as part of the web design.	All				£0
	Other websites	Provide relevant text and images to other organisations for inclusion in their websites.	All				£0
Sub-total							£6000
10.1.2 Social media							
	Create, update and optimise social media pages	Include best practice for Twitter, Facebook and Instagram profile pages. 1 day development time and 1 day training for staff.	All				£1000
10.1.3 Expert voices							

Sussex Heritage Coast Interpretation							
No	Project	Description	Theme	Yrs 1	Yrs 2/3	Yr 4/5	Budget allocation Ex VAT
	Audio and/or video recordings	Audio/video recordings of local groups and individuals, with their perceptions of the coast and their work and activities. Final recordings would be a few minutes long and would be included on the website. Up to 12 expert voices recorded. Allocation for leader, venue, expenses, editing. £3500	All				£3500
10.1.4 Stories of the Downs and the sea							
	Stories of the Downs and the sea	Stories written about historical characters, read by actors. Suggest 5x stories. Allocation for leader, actors, recording, venues, expenses, etc, £4200	3, 4				£4200
10.1.5 Learning materials							
	Downloadable learning materials for schools	Simple A4 sheets, double sided, suitable for downloading as pdf for printing at school or home. Up to 10 individual learning sheets for Key Stage 1 & 2 and youth groups, plus background information, maps, photographic resources, etc. Research, design, text, images: 2 days per sheet £10,000	All				£10,000
10.1.6 Animations and film							
	Introductory film about the SHC	Short introductory film of 5 – 7 minutes about the SHC filmed over a year including aerial footage, £7500	All				£7500
	Animations	Animations to show key moments in history, including:	3, 4				TBC

Sussex Heritage Coast Interpretation							
No	Project	Description	Theme	Yrs 1	Yrs 2/3	Yr 4/5	Budget allocation Ex VAT
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The view from the shore of invaders through time. The processes that have created the coast. Allocation for production of animations					
	Augmented Reality download	Augmented reality animations of historical events that can be viewed layered over present day scenes. Allocation for production of AR,	3				TBC
	Archive film	Collection of archive film of WW2 missions flying over the coast, edited into short presentations. Allocation for collection and editing of film, £4000	3				£4000
Sub-total							£11,500+
10.2.1 'Have a go' tours							
	Have a go Tours	Tours for visitors to experience day-to-day activities of farmers and fishermen. Allocation for tours, to include promotion and marketing, £700 plus staff time to organise and deliver	All				£700
10.2.2 Make a jumper in a day							
	From sheep to sweater	A day long activity to make a sweater out of wool. Allocation for leader, promotion and marketing, £700	3				£700
10.2.3 Be Ravilious for the day							
	Eric Ravilious workshop	A workshop presented in partnership with the Towner museum, exploring the scenery that inspired Ravilious, £1000	4				£1000
10.2.4 Be a ranger for the day							

Sussex Heritage Coast Interpretation							
No	Project	Description	Theme	Yrs 1	Yrs 2/3	Yr 4/5	Budget allocation Ex VAT
	Ranger for a day	Join a ranger for the day and experience some of their work. Partnership staff time.					£0
10.2.5 Community video and digital media project							
	Community video and digital media	Working with people of all ages to record reminiscences of the coast. Allocation for leader, promotion and marketing. £3000	All				£3000
10.2.6 Citizen science and species recording projects							
	Citizen science and recording	Practical sessions on species and heritage features to encourage local recording. Allocation for leader, promotion and marketing, £700	2				£700
10.2.7 Outreach work with local communities							
	Community outreach	Programme of talks and demonstrations for the community. Allocation for leader, expenses, promotion and marketing, £1000	All				£1000
10.2.8 Training project for volunteers							
	Training programme	A joint training programme by the partnership to develop and share skills across volunteer groups. Allocation for expenses, venues, etc, £1500	All				£1500
10.3.1 Interpretive map leaflet							
	Interpretive map leaflet	A2 sheet with bespoke map, text and photographs on one side and text and photos on other. A2 folded to A5. 4 colours both sides on 130gsm paper. Research, design, map, images and text £10,000 Print 50,000 copies £5500	All				£10,000 £5500

Sussex Heritage Coast Interpretation							
No	Project	Description	Theme	Yrs 1	Yrs 2/3	Yr 4/5	Budget allocation Ex VAT
Sub-total							£15,500
10.3.2 Identification sheets							
	Identification sheets	Simple A4 sheets with illustrations of species or features and simple explanatory text, suitable for downloading as pdf and home printing, or printing by organisations and laminated. 8 different individual identification sheets Research, design, text and images £8400 Print 10,000 x 8 copies £3530	2, 3				£8400 £3530
Sub-total							£11,930
10.3.3 Walking and cycling route leaflets							
	Walking and cycling leaflets	Improve distribution and availability of existing leaflets, and availability for download from all relevant websites. Update and upgrade all leaflets when necessary and include information on health benefits of walking and cycling. Allocation for upgrading, including text and map changes, checking routes, etc £5000	All				£5000
10.3.4 Table talkers							
	Table talkers	Menu-shaped cards for use in pubs, cafes, restaurants and hotels, providing fascinating facts and explanations about the Heritage Coast. 6 different table talkers Research, design, text and images £4000 Print 3000 x 6 copies, £1500	All				£4000 £1500
Sub-total							£5500

Sussex Heritage Coast Interpretation							
No	Project	Description	Theme	Yrs 1	Yrs 2/3	Yr 4/5	Budget allocation Ex VAT
10.3.5 SHC standard texts							
	SHC Standard Texts	Produce 2 sets of texts – a short succinct explanation of the SHC and a longer version with more details. The text should include a standard safety message. Partnership staff time.	All				£0
10.4 1 Interpretation panels							
	Interpretive panels on flint plinths	7x Flint built half round plinths with carved or moulded inserts or plants and animals, and niches for 'found' objects. 1x large interpretive panel fixed to each plinth, with three sub-sections: Section 1: Welcome and orientation Section 2: Site specific information Section 3: Footpaths and access around area Research, text, design, map and images, at £2100 each, £14,700 Construction of plinth, £2500 each, £17,500 7x bespoke panels at £1600 each, £11,200 Installation of panels £900	All				£14,700 £17,500 £11,200 £900
Sub-total							£44,300
10.4.2 Interpretation benches							
	Interpretive benches	Sculptural benches carved with interpretive messages. Allocation for producing up to 5 bespoke benches created by a sculptor, £12,500 Installation, £1000	All				£12,500 £1000
Sub-total							£13,500

Sussex Heritage Coast Interpretation							
No	Project	Description	Theme	Yrs 1	Yrs 2/3	Yr 4/5	Budget allocation Ex VAT
10.4.3 Photoposts							
	Photoposts	Oak post with routed slot for a phone, with graphic panel inviting users to take a photograph and send it to the SDNPA. 10x timber posts with routed slot at £150 each, £1500 Artwork and production of graphic panel £1000 Installation, £600	1, 2, 3				£1500 £1000 £600
Sub-total							£3100
10.4.4 Visitor centre exhibitions							
	Visitor centre panels	Preparation of a common panel for each of the three visitor centres explaining the Heritage Coast. A0 panel with map, text and illustrations/photographs Research, text, images and design, £1000 Production of 3x copies, and installation, £1500	All				£1000 £1500
Sub-total							£2500
10.4.5 Touchscreens							
	Touchscreens	Purchase and installation of touchscreens in the three visitor centres to show animations and film proposed in 10.1.6 above. 3x touchscreens, £16,500 Design and production of graphic for front of each unit, £1600	All				£16,500 £1600
Sub-total							£18,100
Total							£164,230

11 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial parts of the process of planning and implementing interpretation programmes. They are also the phases that tend to be given least resources in funding and time. By designing a monitoring and evaluation programme at the start of the project with clear actions and outputs and then building in a feedback process that will enhance interpretive provision the process becomes less onerous and more effective. The objectives listed in Chapter 7 should form the basis for monitoring, providing a framework of desired outcomes that can be measured during the evaluation process.

Mechanisms for judging the success of new interpretive initiatives will need to be put in place and these are proposed below.

We recommend the following actions:

- Pre-testing of new interpretive media
- Monitoring of the use of interpretive media (including use by different audiences and those with accessibility challenges)
- Evaluation of media
- Evaluation of the interpretive approach as a whole

There are many methods that can be used to undertake each of these activities and we identify a number of them below. The above list is not exhaustive but indicates some of the methods that can be employed to take stock of different elements of the interpretive approach. Wherever possible, pre-change data should be obtained in order to provide for immediate comparisons and to establish base lines of 'graphs' for continued monitoring and evaluation.

11.1 Pre-testing

Pre-testing is something that many organisations fail to do because 'deadlines' are cited as the need to get things on the ground, or out in the public domain. On the principle of 'getting it right, rather than getting it now', we recommend that the Partnership tests out new media before committing final expenditure and implementation work to make responsible and effective use of scarce resources. A further benefit of this approach is in ensuring that the local community is given a chance to feed into the development process both by commenting and by participating.

In terms of printed and similar material, this process is now simpler and cheaper with the availability of computer-derived artwork that can be produced inexpensively and circulated, if testing printed material, or set up with suitable lamination if testing interpretive text and graphic designs. Reactions can be sought from selected or random users / viewers, from 'focus groups' or otherwise chosen groups of people, or by other means that ensure wide pre-implementation appraisal and approval.

11.2 Monitoring

Once media are in place, then monitoring their use and / or success can be done in a variety of ways, often in conjunction with evaluation. For example, the following largely quantitative checks could be instituted:

- Including QR or short codes in leaflets, panels and other materials to enable the project to keep a record of the number of hits on the website and inviting comments on the website about the interpretation.
- Maintaining accurate checks of questions asked – and the type of questioners – as well as of material issued and advice given at visitor centres where these are in place.
- Maintaining accurate records of printed material distributed and replenished.
- Maintaining accurate records of publications issued and / or sold and comments made.
- Maintaining records of contact with members of the public expressing an interest in the reserve, by origin and profile of visitor.
- Making observation of visitors' use, behaviour, time spent etc when viewing interpretation.
- Making observation of visitors' use of graphic and printed material.
- Maintaining records of number of visitors during special events.
- Making systematic counts of website hits.
- Monitoring and analysis of the use of Facebook and Twitter sites, and of comments posted on Trip Adviser.

11.3 Evaluation

The more time-consuming and, therefore, costly, aspects of the work of appraising success are those that involve qualitative research, which can include:

- Face-to-face interviewing of visitors (and non-visitors) using the external interpretation and / or attending events / activities or guided walks / tours.
- Distribution of questionnaires for self-completion.
- Use of focus groups, private and public meetings etc.
- Analysis of questions asked and answered (or not) by visitors.
- Analysis of unsolicited written communications by email, letter or otherwise.
- Retention of visitor data for future marketing use.

Pre-testing, monitoring and evaluation provides essential data and anecdotal material that informs the interpretive approach and guides it throughout its implementation. It is recommended that the Partnership dedicates appropriate time and resources to the evaluation process in order to determine those initiatives that are successful in developing and maintaining the audience for interpretation as a whole. This will help to ensure that resources are effectively targeted.

Appendix 1

Photopost

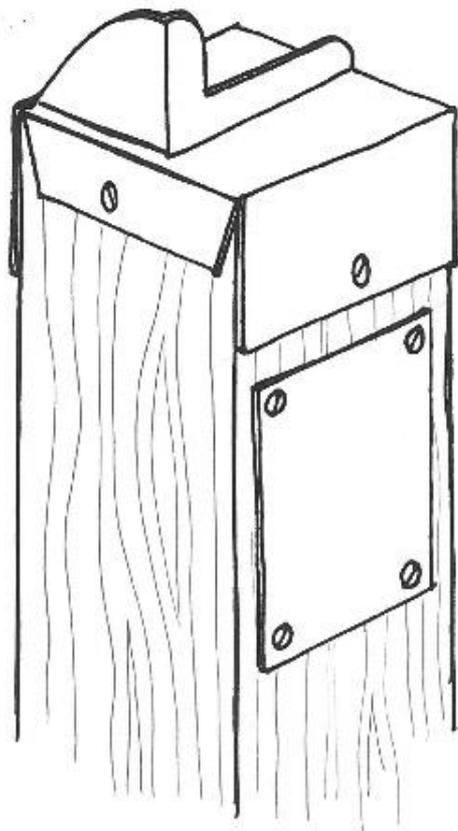


Square Cap.



Chamfered Cap.

Note angle of end flaps
on chamfered post.



Cap bracket

Plaque

Cap Bracket Sketch:
General Arrangements.
N.T.S.
December 2014
Drawing 4

Prepared for the Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership by

Red Kite

We would like to offer our thanks to everyone who provided the information and insights that enabled this work to be carried out. Any errors and misinterpretations in the report are in good faith and remain our responsibility.

Red Kite Environment

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