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Trust



'Walking on the Coastal Path © National Trust Images'

Vision for the Compton Bay and Downs

Structured to reflect the National Trust Land Outdoors and Nature (LON) Framework and its six themes:

Healthy; Rich in Wildlife; Beautiful; Enjoyed; Rich in Culture; Productive.

September 2018

Compton Bay and Downs Vision

The following initial Vision for the Compton Bay and Downs has been developed through analysis of evidence provided from commissioned research and reports; field surveys; early input from national and regional National Trust Consultancy personnel; additional desktop research and GIS map interrogation and analysis. We have commissioned aerial photography and video footage which will be used as part of the consultation process as a visual means of engaging in discussions about the past, present and future of Compton Bay and Downs. We also have the results from commissioned market research giving us an insight into our visitors, their motivations, preferences and what additional facilities they might like to see.

Our overall approach has been influenced by the need to consider the future impact of climate change on the landscape, land use practices, livestock welfare, wildlife, soils and water, heritage assets and changes to how people enjoy the area in the future.

Why is a Vision needed?

- To reflect the new extent of National Trust ownership/management.
- To guide our aspirations for the restoration of recently acquired land and maximise the opportunities for land, outdoor enjoyment and nature.
- In response to the eroding coastline and the opportunities and challenges that this presents for the future. (Not least being the impact of coastal erosion on the Military Road (A3055) which currently provides a through route and access to existing car parks and some private properties).
- In recognition of the current popularity of the area for the enjoyment of the best rural beaches in the Isle of Wight, and the far reaching views from cliff tops and downland and the opportunity to share this with new audiences.
- To ensure that we meet or exceed the expectations of visitors now and into the future, helping us to grow support for our cause.
- To guide our thinking and choices relating to future investment in the area including current and future visitor facilities.

This Vision has been structured by using the National Trust Land, Outdoors and Nature (LON) Framework *for land and landscape that is: healthy, beautiful, rich in culture and nature, enjoyable and productive as a result.* The landscape and its functions are considered under six headings: Healthy; Rich in Wildlife; Beautiful; Enjoyed; Rich in Culture and Productive. In each of these we then look at the features of importance; key challenges and opportunities; our main actions and a sub vision for that particular theme.

It is our intention to use this initial Vision to consult more widely with key external stakeholders in order to shape a final version later this year.

This work has been made possible through the generosity of a donor who has gifted money to us to identify ways to improve visitor enjoyment of National Trust managed areas on the Isle of Wight and to raise awareness and obtain greater recognition for what we do as a result.

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Description of Compton Bay and Downs:

Compton Bay and Downs consists of the Compton, Afton and Brook Estate combined with the recent acquisitions at Dunsbury Farm and Roughlands in Brook on the Isle of Wight. In total 472.18 hectares (1166.78 Acres). The majority of the Estate has been actively managed in partnership with tenant farmers since the late 1950s with additional areas acquired in the mid 1960s, early 1970s and most recently Dunsbury 2015 and Roughlands in 2016. The western end of Afton Down is occupied on a long lease by the Freshwater Bay Golf Club.

The whole area lies within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Tennyson Heritage Coast and the coastline and downland recognition of its scenic beauty, scientific interest, wildlife importance and as a place for quiet enjoyment by people.

The coastal zone is within the potential Solent and Dorset Special Protection Area (SPA) currently under consideration in recognition of the importance of the area for Sandwich tern, Common tern and Little tern. The coastline is part of the Compton Chine to Steephill Cove Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) whose area also corresponds with part of the South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is in recognition of the importance of the areas reefs, submerged or part submerged sea caves and vegetated sea cliffs and associated species. The SSSI is also important for its fossil rich Wealden geological sequence dating from the early Cretaceous period. The Compton Down SSSI corresponds with part of the Isle of Wight Downs Special Area of Conservation recognised for its calcareous dry grasslands and scrub, dry heaths and vegetated sea cliffs and associated species.

Outside of areas nationally designated for their nature conservation value there are a number of lowland fen habitats located in farmland associated with the passage of water from natural spring lines to the coast. At the head of these same spring lines there are often small areas of withy bed and in some cases small areas of wet woodland; many of these woodland and fen areas are designated locally as Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC).

The whole of the Compton Bay and Downs area has benefitted from stewardship to encourage conservation farming. This has been at entry with higher level stewardship and at Roughlands there has been organic entry with higher level stewardship. There are opportunities to increase the conservation farming value of the lands recently acquired at Dunsbury Farm as much of the area has been subject to intensive arable cultivation for vegetable crops and maize and improved grassland grazing.

This is a landscape rich in history with many heritage assets both visible and hidden. There are a number of scheduled monuments in the area including the burial mounds on the chalk downland dating from the Bronze Age that provide a direct link to past people in this landscape. Field patterns, lynchets and trackways provide a record of land use. Hidden archaeology and palaeontology exposed at the eroding cliff edge often lead to the discovery of fossil bones, Iguanodon footprint casts, and 'petrified' wood on the seashore.

Many people enjoy what is probably the best rural beach on the Isle of Wight, the dramatic views from the Coastal Path (soon to be part of the England Coast Path) and the far reaching vistas from the downland. Compton Bay and Downs is criss-crossed by paths offering opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and coast. There are three metered National Trust car parks along this coastal stretch and a further two unmetered car parks also within National Trust ownership. The largest of these at Compton Bay has recently been extended into neighbouring fields to replace the capacity lost in the original car park due to the continuing effects of coastal erosion. There are three access points to the beach at Compton Chine, Compton Bay (Hanover Point) and Brook Chine. The National Trust took over the ownership of the toilets at Compton Bay from the Isle of Wight Council to ensure that they would remain open during spring, summer and autumn. An ice-cream van concession operates out of Compton Bay car park with agreement to also use Brook Chine car park at peak times. Compton Farm is under tenancy and Compton Farm Cottages are part of the National Trust holiday let portfolio.

Our overarching vision for Compton Bay and Downs in the next 50 years.

Compton Bay and Downs is a beautiful landscape with significant wildlife, geology and archaeology. It is loved by many people who come to enjoy the best rural beach on the Isle of Wight.

Within the context of rapid coastal change, we are planning for the sustainable future of this landscape and how it can be enhanced for wildlife and nature whilst continuing to be enjoyed by people.

In our approach to delivering this vision we will

- take a long-term view
- have conservation at the centre of our thinking and approach
- work with natural processes to shape this beautiful and wildlife rich landscape benefiting its species and habitats particularly farmland birds, butterflies and wild flowers
- enable these natural processes and our farming practices to also create benefits for soil health and water quality
- allow coastal erosion processes to proceed unimpeded
- be influenced by the history and heritage of the area in our approach to its future management
- look after a landscape which can be enjoyed by all, with wildlife, heritage and scenic beauty at the heart of the visitor experience
- identify where best to site future visitor facilities such as car parking, toilets, ice cream and refreshment sales
- find ways to ensure an income from grants, donations and appropriate land use and farm diversification activities
- be open to working with others to further our vision
- keep Compton Bay and Downs a very special place for ever, for everyone



Figure 1: Map showing the extent of Compton Bay and Downs the subject of this report. Compton Bay and Downs comprises all of the green shaded area labelled Compton, Afton and Brook and the yellow shaded areas which represent the recent acquisitions of Dunsbury Farm and Roughlands.

The Context: The National Trust on the Isle of Wight

The National Trust countryside properties on the Isle of Wight are predominantly located in coastal areas taking in the best coastline, estuary and coastal downland areas on the Island. Inland, the Trust countryside properties include chalk downland and an area of ancient woodland.

West Wight – This includes the famous Needles headland and Needles Battery sites (National Trust), West High Down, Tennyson Down and Headon Warren. Dramatic cliffs, chalk downland, woodland, and coastal heathland and farmland at Warren Farm, all contributing to this special area.

Compton, Afton and Brook (now called Compton Bay and Downs) – This includes the chalk downland of Afton, Compton and Brook Downs; the dramatic sweeping coastline and beaches between Brook and Freshwater Bay; and the farmland at Compton, Dunsbury and Roughlands.

Newtown – On the north-west coastline of the Isle of Wight, Newtown is a National Nature Reserve . An estuary system comprising a series of tranquil tidal inlets and stretch of beach facing the Solent. It includes ancient field patterns outlining the pattern of the now lost medieval settlement and areas of ancient woodland and coastal marsh and farmland. Newton Old Town Hall is located here.

Mottistone Estate – Comprising Mottistone Down an important chalk grassland, Mottistone Common and area of acid/neutral grassland and coastal heathland, farmland and an eroding coastline at Sudmoor. Mottistone Manor and Gardens are located in this area.

Chillerton Down – An area of important chalk grassland towards the centre of the Isle of Wight affording long distance views across the Island's landscape.

St Catherine's and Wycombe – Located in the south of the Isle of Wight, St Catherine's and Wycombe comprises chalk downland at St Catherine's Down and St Catherine's Hill (which is capped by flints and peat creating a heathland landscape), St Catherine's Point with its lighthouse (not National Trust) including part of the Undercliff rotational landslide complex. To the north is the hidden tranquillity of the Wycombe valley.

Ventnor Downs and Luccombe – Located in the south of the Isle of Wight, Ventnor Downs includes the highest point on the Island affording expansive views across the landscape to the north and out to sea to the south. An important chalk downland capped by flints and peat giving interest as coastal heathland. Luccombe extends down the south eastern slope and include an area of active landslip in and around Luccombe Chine with dramatic cliffs along the coastline.

Borthwood Copse – an area of ancient woodland close to the village of Alverstone with veteran oaks, beech and sweet chestnut trees and an understorey of holly. Awash with the colour of bluebells in the spring.

Bembridge and Culver Down – In the east of the Isle of Wight the dramatic chalk downland and towering cliffs at Culver and Redcliff back the beautiful Yaverland beach. Bembridge Down is topped by Bembridge Battery (National Trust) a Palmerstonian fortification. Views are afforded south to the English Channel and north to Bembridge Windmill (National Trust) and the harbour and Solent beyond.

St Helen's Duver and Priory Woods – located on the north east coastline of the Isle of Wight, St Helen's Duver is an important coastal dune system backing a beach and natural tidal estuary with the coastal ancient woodland of Priory Woods located along the Solent shore.

With 5,000 acres, 17 miles of coastline and a further 14 miles of estuary, four historic properties open to the public, 16 holiday cottages, a harbour with a harbour master and numerous rental properties and farmland, the Isle of Wight is fantastically varied.

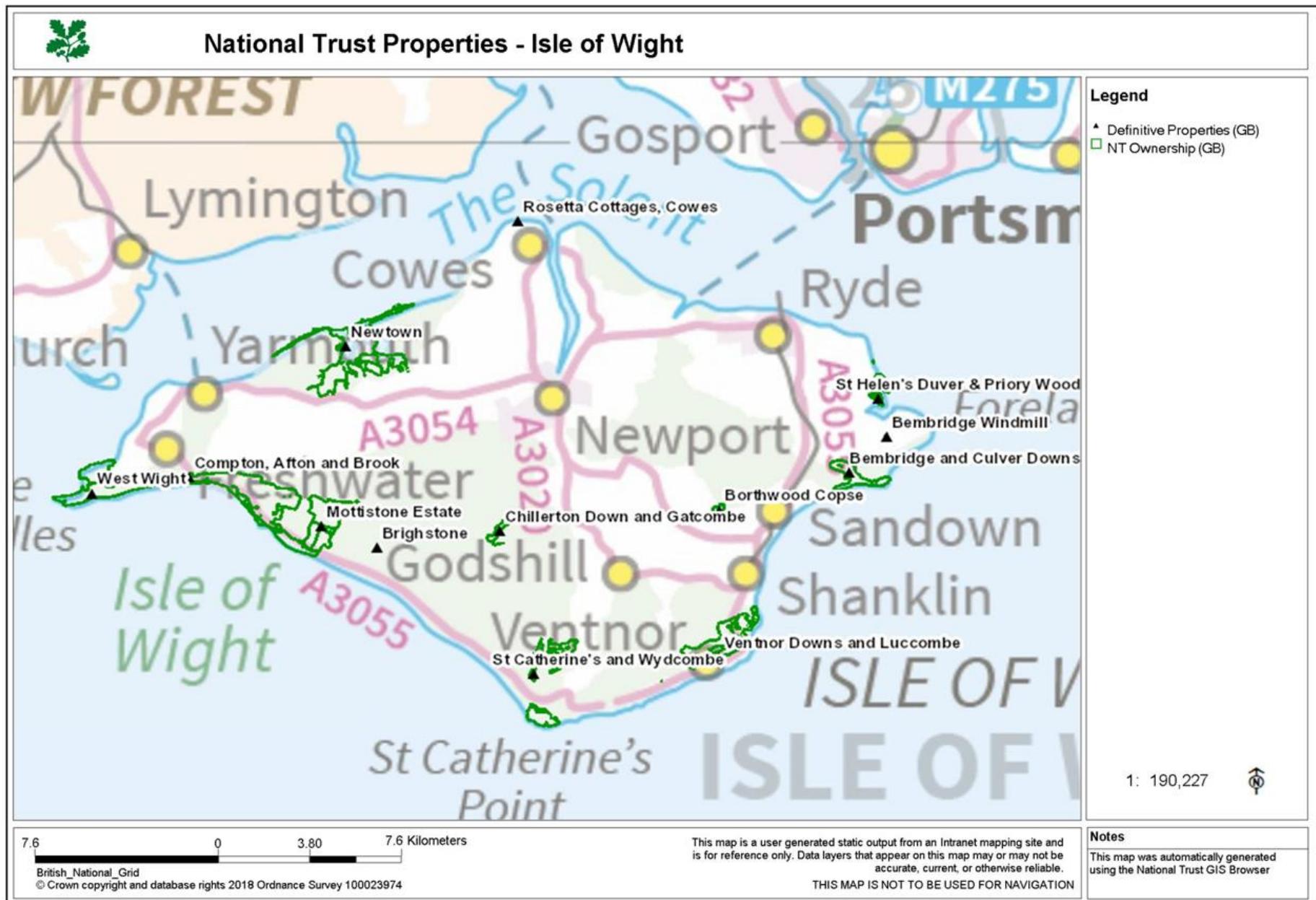


Figure 2: Map showing the National Trust ownership on the Isle of Wight.



Figure 3: Aerial photograph of the coastline taken April 2018 showing Compton Grange, the Military Road and Hanover Point (Compton Bay) car park.



Figure 4: Aerial photograph of the coastline taken April 2018 showing Dunsbury Farm, the Military Road and Brook Chine car park.

Figure 5: Aerial photograph and visualisations of the possible future Compton Bay and Downs landscape.



Landscape as at April 2018

[Click here to access a movie of the area](#)

[Click here to access a short movie showing these three pictures as a transition.](#)



Photographs altered to show a possible future landscape with loss of coastal infrastructure and part arable reversion (above) and full arable reversion (below)



Healthy:

Coastal change, the forces of nature and human intervention have shaped this beautiful coastline and hinterland. We are embracing these in our approach to the future management of the landscape to help create a healthy, robust and ecologically functioning environment, and when considering the future of our visitor facilities (car parks, toilets etc.).



Features of importance:

- Dynamic coastal change, geomorphology and the resulting habitats and species dependent upon this.
- Exceptional wildlife importance of chalk downland and the coastal zone.
- Great potential for the acquired land to fulfil the objectives of a bigger and more joined up landscape for nature.

Key challenges / opportunities:

- Improvement of soil condition and minimising run off and erosion.
- Monitoring and minimising enrichment of watercourses flowing from adjacent properties and from farmland.
- Management of watercourses in general.
- Loss of current infrastructure located in coastal areas subject to coastal erosion.
- Coastal erosion impact on sewage storage tanks for toilets at Compton Bay.
- Climate change impacts on weather patterns and events, water table levels, temperature, drought, seasons etc.

Main Actions:

- Use the evidence that we have to determine the best approach to land management that fulfils our sustainability objectives. This informs our Estate Management Plan setting out our approach for the area over a 10 year period and beyond.
- Working with natural processes and maximising ecosystem services we will improve the protection of soils and water. We will do this by decreasing the input of fertilisers, changing the approach to cultivation to minimise run off, through arable reversion to grassland and re-naturalising watercourses and altering drainage to minimise run-off and sediment transport.
- We will plan for the loss of our coastal infrastructure and look to identify how best to provide these facilities at new 'gateway' sites.
- We will encourage the Isle of Wight Council as Local Highway Authority to have a strategic approach to the truncation/loss of the Military Road.

Our Vision for a Healthy Compton Bay and Downs:

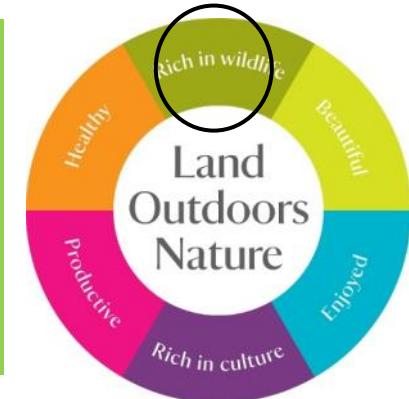
Enabling natural processes and appropriate farming practice has created positive outcomes for ecosystem services in particular soil health, water quality. Coastal erosion processes have been allowed to proceed unimpeded. All of which have had associated biodiversity gains.

Figure 6: Healthy



Rich in Wildlife

Compton Bay and Downs has areas of existing high biodiversity value (SSSI, SAC) along its dramatic eroding coastline with its exposed geology and on its chalk downland areas. This is all in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. The acquired land at Dunsbury Farm is not rich in wildlife due to historic intensive management, but has great potential to be restored to allow the adjacent priority habitats and species to re-establish in the area. Much of the Compton Bay and Downs area is within existing Entry and Higher Level Stewardship schemes supporting this approach.



Features of importance:

Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI / South Wight Maritime SAC

Vegetated maritime cliffs and slopes; species rich unimproved chalk grassland; nationally rare plant species; assemblage of nationally scarce plant species; outstanding assemblage of nationally rare and scarce invertebrates; exposed and moderately exposed rocky shores (littoral rock); nationally important coastal geomorphology; internationally important geological site between Hanover Point at St Catherine's with fossil rich Wealden Group overlying Lower Greensand Group and yielding diverse fauna including Cretaceous period dinosaurs and important flora present at the time that these reptiles were alive.

Compton Down SSSI / Isle of Wight Downs SAC

Probably the best example of chalk grassland under maritime influence in Britain; extremely rich grassland flora including the very rare early gentian; exposed chalk cliffs supporting rare southern rock crevice species including the very rare hoary stock; important grassland butterfly species such as chalkhill, Adonis and small blue; cricket and grasshopper; important exposed chalk geology.

Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs)

Compton Marsh (C010A) – Grassland, wetland habitats, species.

Compton Grange (C184A) – Wetland habitat

High Grange (C288A) – Wetland habitat

Brook Field (C289A) – Plants on disturbed ground (arable weeds)

Key flora and fauna (outside of SAC, SSSI and SINCs)

Brown hare; farmland birds; arable weeds

Key challenges / opportunities:

- Create space for nature through appropriate farming practices which provide the right soil and water management conditions.
- Continue to allow natural coastal processes to take place and the dynamic and cyclical habitat creation and loss that this entails.
- Change farming practices at Dunsbury to a more extensive and nature friendly approach (including partial or full switch from sheep to cattle grazing) and full or partial arable reversion.
- Ensure that future approaches funded through Government support schemes have a landscape scale approach for the whole of the Compton Bay and Downs landscape.
- Have a better understanding of the hydrology of this landscape and manage water sources, flow rates and wetland areas to maximise their biodiversity, soil conservation and landscape character impact.
- Understanding how nature is faring in the area.
- Understand, adapt and mitigate for climate change impact on species distribution, phenological mismatch due to season changes, loss of habitat and species and potential gain of new species, and changes to pests and disease.

Main Actions:

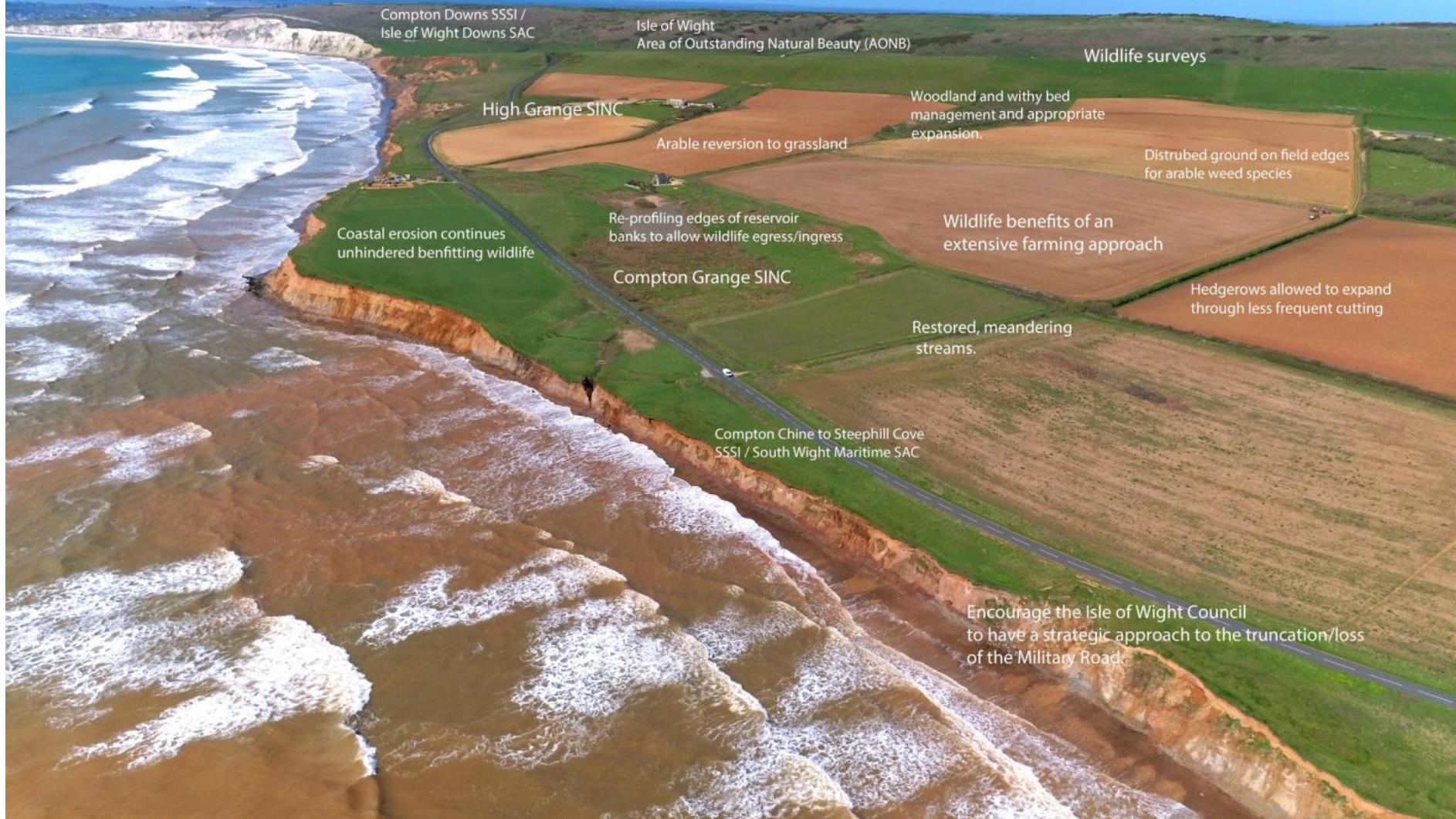
- Extensive grazing and low to zero input regimes to restore soil and water course health.
- Allow hedgerows and scrub to expand through less regular cutting, whilst ensuring public rights of way are not obstructed.
- Manage woodlands particularly woodland edges and willow/withy beds for wildlife interest and allow these habitats to expand where appropriate.
- Conduct baseline wildlife surveys and then update these regularly to assess change (develop a volunteer programme to assist with this).
- Manage wetland and maximise their interest for wildlife. This includes re-profiling existing drainage ditches, re-profiling the edges of the irrigation reservoir at Compton Grange, restoration of original meandering stream profiles and generally reducing flow rates.
- Where our own infrastructure is a risk of becoming a hazard to habitats and wildlife due to coastal erosion we will seek to remove it. We will encourage others to do the same (for example the surface of the Military Road).



Our Vision for a Compton Bay and Downs Rich in Wildlife:

Natural processes continue to shape this landscape rich in wildlife with its thriving species and diverse habitats. It is now a haven for farmland birds, butterflies and wildflowers.

Figure 7: Rich in Wildlife



Beautiful

The Compton Bay and Downs area was nationally recognised for its scenic beauty and wildlife value by being included in the designation of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1963. In the early 1970s the area received additional national recognition by falling with the area of the defined Tennyson Heritage Coast a celebration of its beauty, scientific value and the opportunities that these afford for education and quiet enjoyment. Until recently, some land use has impacted on the landscape character of the area through intensive cultivation and grazing practices in marked contrast to the surrounding extensive approach. This will now change due to our purchase of this land and intention to have a more environmentally sensitive and sustainable approach to farming in the area.

Our coastal car parks, whilst providing a valued facility for our visitors and commercial income generator for reinvestment in achieving our charitable objectives, are undoubtedly a visual detractor along this open coastline. Continuing coastal erosion is contributing to the dramatic beauty of this coastline but impacting on our infrastructure and on the Highway Authority's Military Road which in itself is a visual detractor as an engineered addition to the landscape. Predictions indicate the truncation of the Military Road and significant loss of car parking along this coast in the next 30 to 40 years. We have an opportunity to restore this landscape to a wild coastline with little visible infrastructure in the open landscape by carefully re-siting our visitor facilities at new gateway sites on the periphery.



Features of importance:

- Isle of Wight AONB and Tennyson Heritage Coast.
- Open coastal views.
- Expansive long views from downland and views to ancient burial mounds on downland.
- Extensively farmed landscape predominantly grassland in nature with some areas of disturbed ground for arable weed species.
- Strong landscape character.
- Spirit of Place.

Key challenges / opportunities:

- Loss of infrastructure (car parks, toilets etc.) through ongoing coastal erosion.
- Provision of future facilities for our visitors in this open landscape.
- Truncation and/or loss of Military Road and associated access to infrastructure and properties.
- Provision of future access to properties.
- Removal of development in the coastal area and the recreation of a naturally eroding coastline.

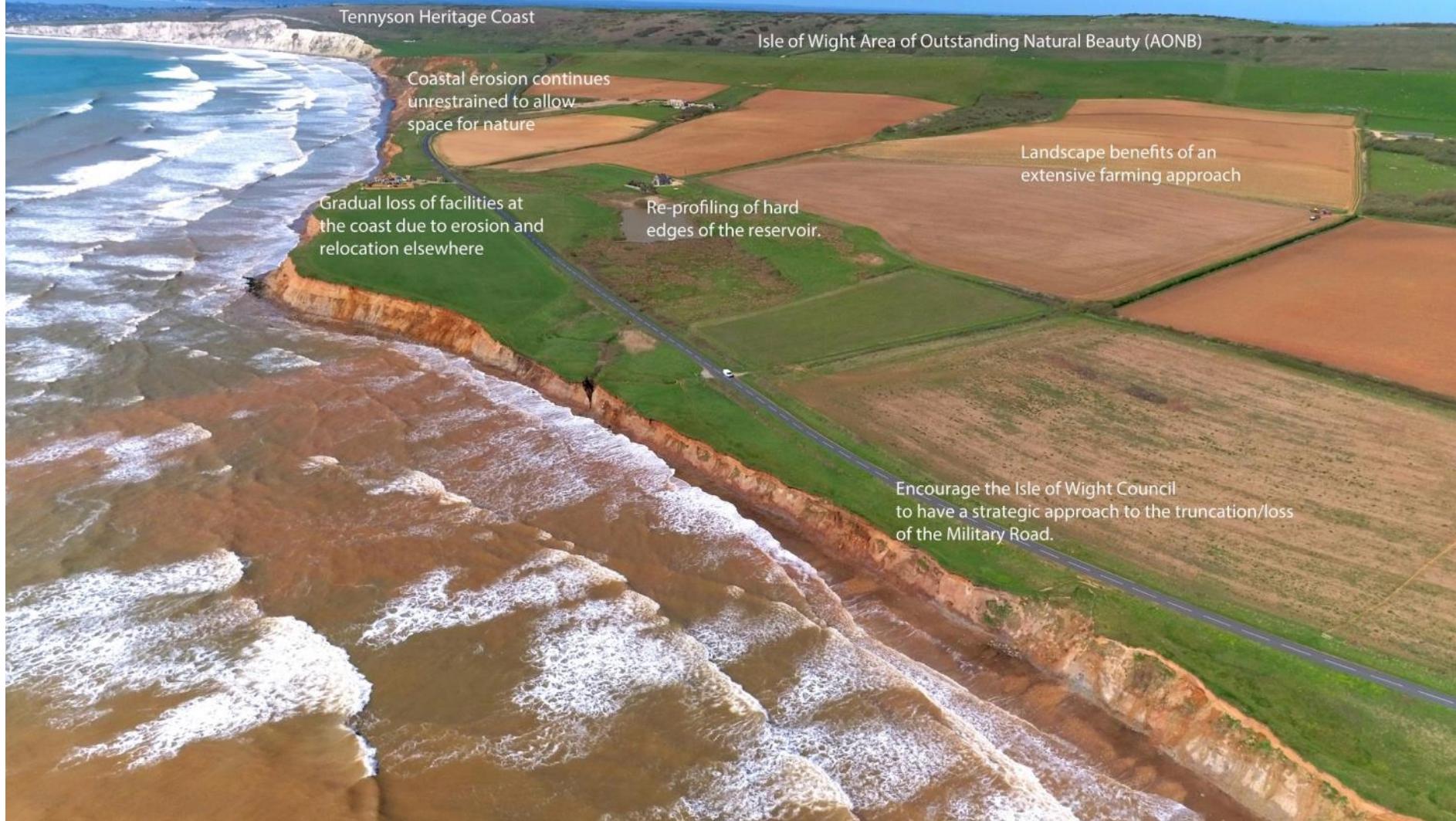
Main Actions:

- Remove detracting elements in the landscape when physically and economically conducive to do so.
- Plan for the future location of car parking, facilities, other required infrastructure (such as private access roads to property), activities and any other development – this should be actioned in a way which minimises visual impact, respects landscape character and the spirit of place.
- The natural process of coastal erosion will continue and we will create the space for nature to roll back unhindered.
- We will encourage the Isle of Wight Council as Local Highway Authority to have a strategic approach to the truncation/loss of the Military Road.

Our Vision for a Beautiful Compton Bay and Downs:

We will work with nature allowing coastal processes to influence our choices in this landscape to enhance its natural beauty. In particular we will instigate grassland restoration and extensive farming practices and carefully consider the future of our infrastructure which is currently located in the exposed coastal landscape. Any future relocation of this will include consideration of landscape character and visual impact.

Figure 8: Beautiful



Enjoyed

Compton Bay and Downs attracts many visitors. It is enjoyed by both the local community throughout the year and by people visiting the Isle of Wight during the holiday season, all valuing its beauty and rural beaches. There is space in this landscape for many activities including fossil hunting along the beach, swimming, surfing, paragliding and hang gliding, cycling, horse riding, walking the extensive network of paths including the Coastal Path, Tennyson Trail and Freshwater Way, without it feeling crowded or impacting on overall tranquillity.

Currently the Military Road provides access to our coastal car parks. For those interested in getting closer to nature, there are wonderful habitats and species to seek out. Visitor research (both tourists and local community) has told us that people value the scenery and views, the area's rural and unspoilt character, its tranquillity, beaches and wildlife, the clear majority telling us that any loss of road access would not impact on their visiting the area.



Features of importance:

- Scenic beauty.
- Tranquillity.
- Most popular natural 'rural' beaches on the Isle of Wight
- Ability to view wildlife.
- Extensive network of public rights of way throughout the landscape and along the coastline.
- Facilities to allow access to the landscape and beaches.
- Lots of activities already taking place in this landscape – walking, cycling, paragliding, hang gliding, fossil hunting, swimming, surfing, nature watching, horse riding without adversely affecting its tranquillity.
- Coastal views.
- Round the Island Cycle Route uses the Military Road.

Key challenges/opportunities:

- Retention / enhancement of scenic beauty and tranquillity whilst also providing the needed visitor facilities such as car parking, toilets etc.
- Impact of future coastal change on access to the beach.
- Erosion impacting on the Military Road and our existing infrastructure.
- New 'gateway' sites for facilities which may be some distance from the access points to the best parts of the beach and a new way of accessing this landscape.
- Managing access where it may have potential impact on wildlife or farming activities.
- Engagement with visitors and the local community, growing support for our cause.
- Capture potential income from visitors through pay barrier car parking, light touch commercial activities and farm diversification activities such as camping etc.
- Roll back of coastal path (soon to be England Coast Path) as coastal zone erodes.
- Share the story of this landscape as part of experiences that move, teach and inspire.
- Climate change leading to changing weather and changing use of the area by people (i.e. possible greater use of the beach in hot weather and for longer periods in the summer, possible decreased use of the area in the winter in wet weather).

Main Actions:

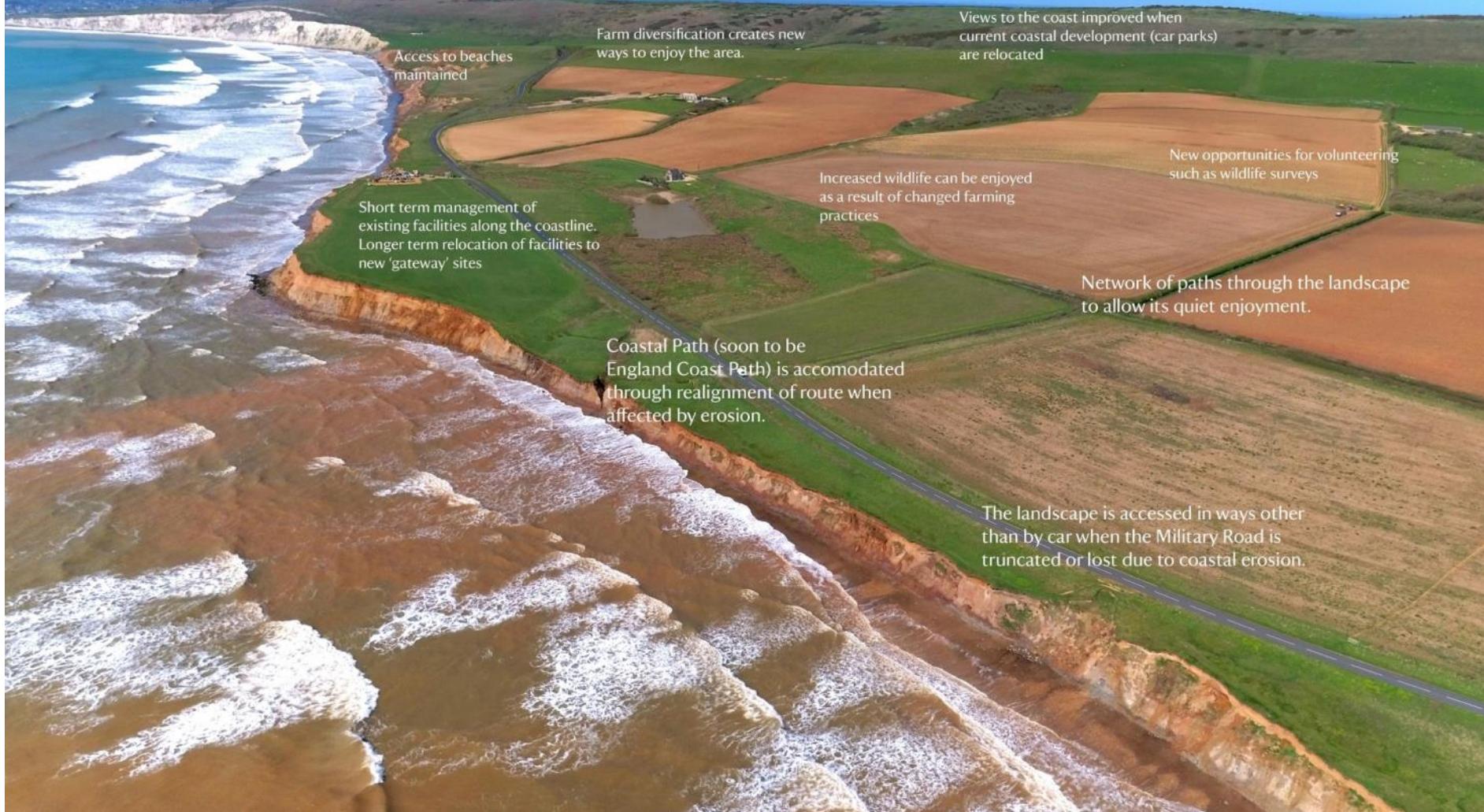
- Prepare a plan for the re-siting of facilities to replace those currently used along the coastline and threatened with coastal erosion. New facilities may be created in advance of the loss of existing ones to allow a smooth transition.
- In the short term (next 20 years) continue to operate facilities at the coast including current and potential new concessions that are suitable in a rural open coastal landscape location.
- Use the planned changes to the landscape, our approach to management of the area, its rich wildlife, culture and stories to create experiences that move, teach and inspire.
- Increase the scenic beauty and wildlife interest of the farmland at Dunsbury to enhance the enjoyment of the whole area.
- Work with our tenant farmers to identify appropriate opportunities for diversification activities (camping, farm shops etc.) allowing for the enjoyment of the area.
- Contribute to discussions led by the Isle of Wight Council as Local Highway Authority for an agreed strategic approach to the future and/or alternative to the current Military Road.
- Consider how future access to the beach will be provided and how this can, whenever possible, be designed to be accessible for all.
- Identify ways to encourage growing support for our cause including a potential volunteering programme specifically for the Compton Bay and Downs area.



Our Vision for an Enjoyed Compton Bay and Downs:

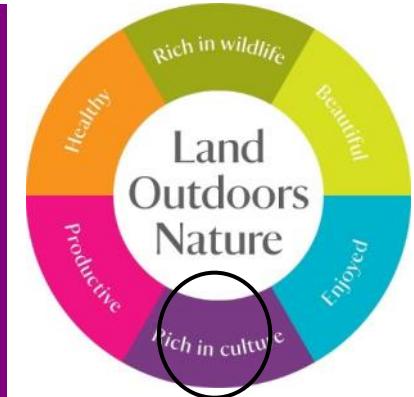
Enjoyed by the local community and visitors, a landscape for all with the ability to be inspired and refreshed with its scenic beauty and abundant wildlife at the heart of the visitor experience. Car parking and facilities have been provided to allow access to the landscape whilst respecting the landscape and tranquillity of the area.

Figure 9: Enjoyed



Rich in Culture

Compton Bay and Downs has a rich history and cultural heritage. A detailed landscape and archaeological survey was completed in 2007 for the Afton, Brook and Compton Downland. There is no survey as yet for the newly acquired land. The dramatic downland was once used as a location for ceremonial burial of important chieftains. Historic assets range from field patterns, hedgerows, buildings, paths and trackways, find sites and buried archaeology, scheduled and unscheduled monuments. All provide a direct link to the past and the way in which people have shaped this landscape and given it the beauty and special character enjoyed today. The relationship with the coast and sea is an important part of the cultural of this area and the story of its people. Settlements and farmsteads are nestled at the base of the downland close to natural spring lines, seeking shelter from prevailing south westerly winds. The cliffs are rich with fossilised remains of animals and plants from prehistoric times.



Features of importance:

- Scheduled and unscheduled sites and monuments.
- Particularly important burial mounds on top of the chalk downland.
- Chalk downland thought to have had no tree cover for more than 6000 years.
- Historic buildings.
- Trackways, paths and hedgerows demarcating field patterns.
- Buried archaeology.
- Palaeontology exposed by eroding cliffs and along the seashore.
- Cultural associations with the local community and the coastline and sea.

Key challenges / opportunities:

- Obtain a better understanding of the historic landscape character of the Dunsbury and Roughlands areas and their heritage asset resource and identify how to include this in the overall approach to future management of the area to ensure its protection, recording, and conservation.
- Encourage the recording of exposed archaeology and palaeontology along the eroding coastline
- Monitor and consider the impact of climate change on erosion rates and on water levels in wetlands paleoenvironments

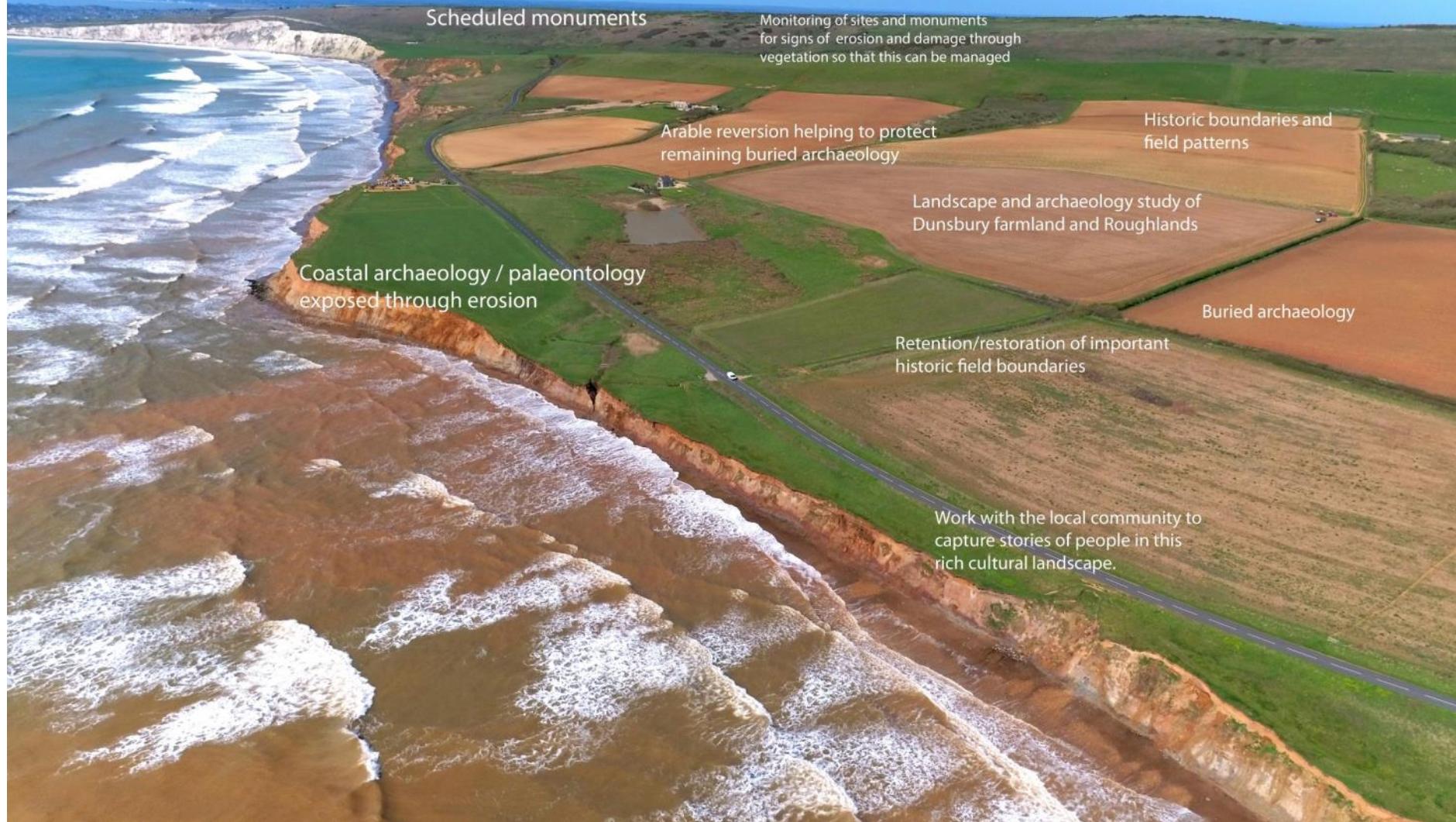
Main Actions:

- Ensure that the cultural and heritage assets contribute to the overall story of this landscape and that this is shared as part of the experience of the area to move, teach and inspire people
- Carry out a survey of the land at Dunsbury and Roughlands and compile a report on the historic change to the landscape and archaeological/heritage assets in these areas.
- Monitor all known sites to ensure that erosion and/or vegetation is not causing damage
- Arable reversion will also protect any remaining buried archaeology
- Investigate a volunteer programme to record exposed archaeology and palaeontology along the coastline

Our Vision for a Compton Bay and Downs Rich in Culture:

The cultural heritage of the area is an important part of the story that we are sharing with our visitors. Heritage assets have been identified and our management approach to the land has been influenced as a result. People can experience this landscape and be moved and inspired by the knowledge of how past people have shaped what we continue to enjoy to this day.

Figure 10: Rich in Culture



Productive

The land of the Compton Bay and Downs is currently managed through a series of different arrangements. We work with our tenant farmers at Compton Farm; Freshwater Bay Golf Club have a long lease on the land on Afton Down which is largely managed as a golf course; Dunsbury will see its grazing and arable cultivation licences come to an end early in 2019; and we manage some of the land in hand through the work of our team. Much of the area has benefited from government support schemes such as countryside / environmental stewardship investment to encourage soil, water, landscape and wildlife improvements. Many of these agreements will expire soon and it is hoped that new agreements will be forthcoming whilst any support scheme is still in operation. Land at Dunsbury has been intensively cultivated to grow, maize, cauliflowers and cereal crops for a number of years. This has caused significant damage to soil structure and health, significant soil erosion and run off and has not been conducive for the encouragement of wildlife on the farm. Areas of grazing have also, historically, been fairly intensive and included the addition of fertilizers reducing the biodiversity of the grassland sward. The tenant farmer at Compton Farm has been providing camping and static caravan lets for many years as an important diversification activity supplementing income from farming.

We need income to be able to achieve the objectives that we have for an extensively managed landscape benefitting nature and people and we need to provide the facilities appropriate to the location and in line with our visitors expectations. Our current car parking, concessions and holiday let incomes help towards this as do membership subscriptions and as mentioned above current government agri-environmental support schemes. We need to ensure that we have appropriate revenue generation to allow us to continue to achieve our objectives and deliver our vision for this landscape.



Features of importance:

- Tenant farm at Compton with existing diversification activities.
- Location of recently intensively farmed land immediately adjacent to biodiverse priority habitats creating an opportunity for nature to re-establish itself in a previously intensively farmed landscape.
- Species rich downland and coastal habitats recognised as priority habitat and designated for wildlife and geomorphological importance.
- Current and future visitor infrastructure/facilities (car parks, concessions, holiday lets) and the income that these generate to help us to achieve our objectives.
- Potential of additional diversification activities across the area to create/supplement income.

Key challenges / opportunities:

- Viable farming is a challenge. This is particularly the case when your land management approach is focused on improving soil and water and creating space for nature as against cropping or rearing livestock for the market.
- Uncertainty as to what level of Government support through stewardship/basic payment will be available in the future, what the scope of the support will be and how any cap on funding will be set.
- ‘Balancing the books’ in order to achieve our objectives for this landscape we will need to have income. This may be obtained through any continued government support, income from our existing and/or improved commercial activities and retaining and growing support through membership of the National Trust. We need to also ensure the viability of our tenanted farms and licenced farming activities supporting them to help us achieve the changes outlined in this Vision document. Appropriate diversification may help to secure this.
-

Key challenges / opportunities continued

- We need to respond to the needs of our visitors to ensure that we are providing the right facilities appropriate to the location and in line with their expectations.
- We need to understand and respond to climate change and weather patterns and their impact on crops and livestock including pest and disease control, yields, access to water and shelter, ground conditions and availability of grazing, increased risk of fire in drought and changes visitor use patterns.



Main Actions

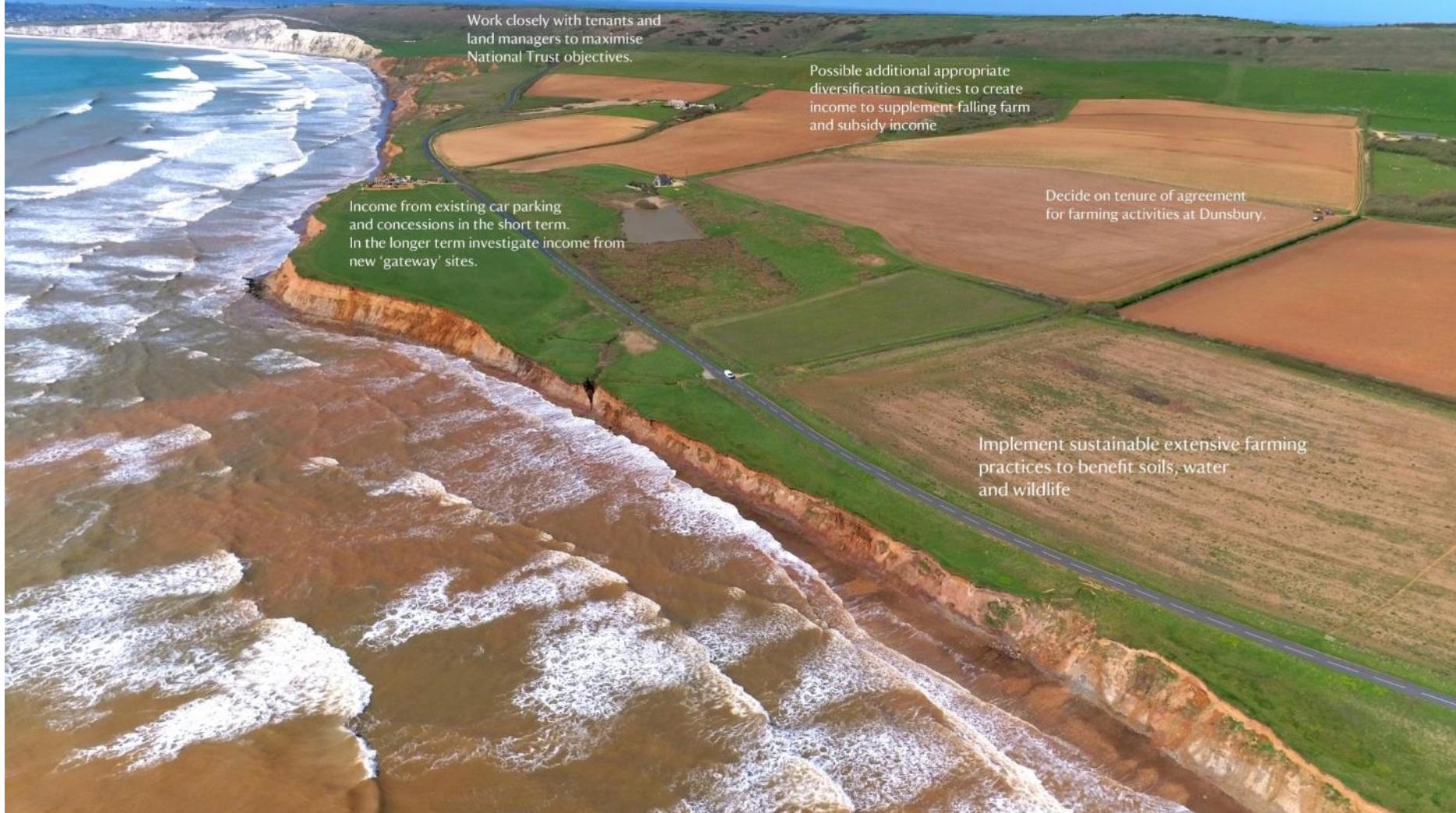
- Implement the agreed approach to the future management of our land to benefit soils, water quality and wildlife.
- Identify the best tenure and support for the future land management of land.
- Work closely with those managing the land in the area to deliver National Trust objectives (as set out in the Estate Management Plan).
- Identify the potential contribution of alternate sources of income in the Compton Bay and Downs area to achieve land management objectives (income from commercial activities, future income from future visitor facilities, diversification, membership recruitment etc.).

Our Vision for a Productive Compton Bay and Downs –

Land management activities are helping to restore and maintain a landscape where the soil and water resource is carefully managed and conditions are right for habitats rich in wildlife. Income has been obtained from appropriate land use and other activities which retain the rural character and tranquillity of the area. Support schemes have been secured to enable us to continue with our approach to the management of this special area. Our offer to the visitor has adapted to the changing environment and in particular the impact of coastal erosion on our previous infrastructure located in that area. New gateway sites have been created where our visitors have access to 'best in class' facilities as they enter the Compton Bay and Downs landscape. These are appropriate to this location its spirit of place and to changing visitor expectations.

All of the above has not only been of benefit not to the National Trust but also to the wider local rural economy by establishing Compton Bay and Downs as a destination of choice attracting new audiences to quietly enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of this landscape and this part of the Isle of Wight.

Figure 11: Productive



Working with others to achieve the Vision

The National Trust recognises that our approach to the future of the Compton Bay and Downs area is of interest to many different organisations, communities and individuals. These include our own staff, volunteers, tenants and those working directly with us on managing the area; our neighbours who may be managing their own land or have a property adjacent to or surrounded by land managed by us; local communities in the villages close to the area and their community representatives; statutory organisations with a responsibility for certain aspects or areas within the Compton Bay and Downs landscape such as the Isle of Wight Council in relation to development control and highway matters (including rights of way), the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership in relation to the AONB and Tennyson Heritage Coast, Natural England in relation to access, AONB, Heritage Coast, designated wildlife/geological sites (SSSI, SAC); Historic England in relation to scheduled archaeology and listed buildings, the Environment Agency regarding soil and water protection; groups and societies with interests in the history, wildlife and activities in the area to name but a few.

We wish to hear from and engage with all of these as we develop our approach and to continue to do this as we go forward and deliver the changes that we have identified to benefit nature and people enjoyment of this special landscape.

This document provides more detailed information on our Vision for the Compton Bay and Downs landscape, its features of importance, key challenges facing us and our main actions to work towards our Vision. As a more technical document it is aimed at the informed reader and those already familiar with the work of the National Trust and our approach to conservation management and public access and enjoyment. We would like to receive feedback on this initial draft and receive any thoughts that you may have on our thinking including anything that you feel has been omitted.

Alongside this document the overarching Vision shown on page 10 of this document will be used with some visual aids to engage with the wider community and obtain feedback on our Vision and planned approach. Having less technical detail initially will allow us to enter into conversation to draw out more information on what is valued, what concerns people may have and what the community might like to see us do (in the context of our charitable and corporate objectives). A series of drop in sessions are planned in the local area along with guided walks to provide more information on our planned approach.

All of this activity will help to hone our Vision and finalise our intended actions to take forward the changes we want to see in this landscape.

It is hoped that as our work is actioned and the changes to the area become more apparent the Compton Bay and Downs will become a popular destination, more closely associated with the National Trust and our cause and will have the potential to provide an associated benefit to the local rural economy by attracting people to this part of the Isle of Wight who may then explore the wider surrounding area.

Please provide any comments that you have on this document and our draft Vision for the Compton Bay and Downs area using the following contact information

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