

(Appendix 1)

Land at Eastoke Corner, Hayling Island, Hampshire

Biodiversity Report

For:

Hayling Seaside Railway

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1.0 Introduction

Background and Scope of this Report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Hayling Seaside Railway to support a planning application to erect a new railway depot at their Eastoke terminus. This is located off Sea Front road (Ordnance Survey grid reference SZ 728985) next to a beach car park. An aerial view of the site is shown in **Figure 1**. The submitted application should be referred to for more detailed plans of the proposals.
- 1.2 The main purpose of this biodiversity report is to assess potential impacts of the development on wildlife habitats and protected species of fauna. Due to the nature of the development and existing heavy public use of the surrounding areas the only likely impacts were judged to be loss of habitat or disturbance to habitats within the application site itself or very close to it. These habitats comprise the concrete terminus platform, associated areas of grassland and an ornamental planted border. A survey was carried out to assess the ecological value of these and their potential to support protected species.
- 1.3 The application site lies within a non-statutory county wildlife site, known as Beachlands East SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation), which was notified for its support of some rare and notable plant species. Another SINC, Hayling Island Beach, joins this to the south of the application site and extends eastwards. This was also notified for plants and for breeding and wintering birds. The SINC boundaries are shown on the Havant Borough Council Interactive Map¹ and are protected (along with other nature conservation sites) under Policy CS11 of the council's Local Plan.
- 1.4 The application site lies near to an internationally designated marine site, the Solent Maritime SAC (Special Area of Conservation), but because the depot is on the land the SAC would not be impacted by its construction or subsequent operation and use by visitors. Other internationally designated and nationally designated sites in the Solent area lie too far from the application site to be affected.

Survey Methodology

- 1.5 The survey of the application site was carried out on 3 June 2014. A list of species in the grassland was recorded and an estimate made of their relative abundance. An assessment was made of the potential for the site to support protected species (such as reptiles) and nesting birds. Photographs were taken to record the habitats and features of the site.

¹ <http://www.havant.gov.uk/planning-policy-design/interactive-map>

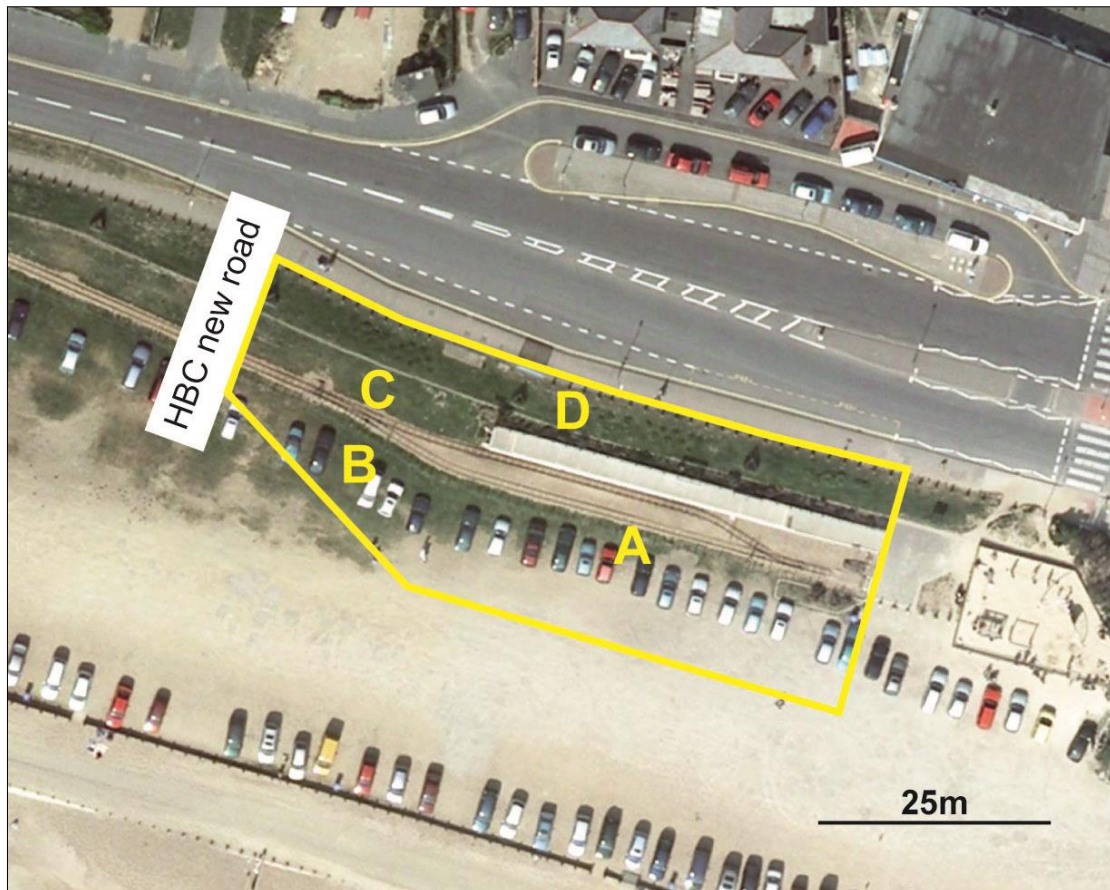


Figure 1: Aerial view of application site showing areas of grassland referred to in yellow (based on Google Earth imagery, copyright Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky).

2.0 Site Description

Grassland

- 2.1 Grassland areas that will be affected by the depot construction are marked A to D on **Figure 1**. The plant list is shown in **Appendix 1** and photographs of the site in **Appendix 2**. The grassland was found to be largely herb poor and all the marginal areas were somewhat improved in nature due to ‘canine enrichment’. A total of 30 species was recorded but none are particularly noteworthy or have any national or county conservation status.
- 2.2 **Area A** is a narrow strip of short grassland on the south side of the railway, which also forms part of the car parking area. It is composed of Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and Soft Brome *Bromus hordeaceus*, with only a few herbaceous species (‘herbs’) present, such as Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris* and Beaked Hawk’s-beard *Crepis vesicaria* (indicative of enrichment and disturbance). At the eastern end there appears to be a relict area of semi-improved grassland, with typical meadow species such as Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*. A plant of the less common Hedgerow Crane’s-bill *Geranium pyrenaicum* was also found. This area is only a square metre or so in size. **Area B** is less heavily used by cars, and widens out, but is of similar composition to Area A.

- 2.3 **Area C** lies beyond the platform between the existing railway line and a low retaining concrete wall to the north. It is not normally accessed by visitors and is only affected by dogs at the western end, next to the new car park access road. It is managed by occasional mowing and supports a few herb species typical of shorter swards such as Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Spotted Medick *Medicago arabica*. Buck's-horn Plantain *Plantago coronopus*, a common species resistant to salt spray, is locally frequent in area A, B and C.
- 2.4 **Area D** lies to the north of the retaining wall and is effectively a road verge. It appears to have been regularly mown in the past and like most of the other grassland is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass and Soft Brome. It is distinctly improved throughout, with locally frequent White Clover *Trifolium repens* and Ribwort Plantain being virtually the only herbs present.
- 2.5 Also present within the grassland and on the railway lines were a few common species of dry, disturbed habitats, including Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* and Wall Speedwell *Veronica arvensis*. Other areas of grassland near to the site (to the west) are also improved and species poor (areas to the east of the site have recently been developed).
- 2.6 None of the more important acid grassland species or maritime grassland species which occur on the east side of the Beachlands terminus to the west (within a Site of Special Scientific Interest) could be found during the survey. However, not far to the west of the site, within the Beachlands East SINC, there were some areas of grassland with abundant Sea Pink (Thrift) *Armeria maritima* in flower, but these would not be affected by the development.
- 2.7 On the north side of the concrete platform there is a narrow ornamental planted border which supports a wide range of perennials, succulents and small trees and shrubs.

Fauna

- 2.8 All native species of reptiles are fully protected from harm and killing under current wildlife legislation. A data search was commissioned for a nearby project to find existing records of protected species within 1km of a site located 250m to the west of the current application site (Arden Ecology 2013). This only produced a record of Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* in this area (a common species in gardens). However, Common Lizard *Zootoca (Lacerta) vivipara* is widespread and locally common in coastal areas of Hampshire and might be expected to occur along Hayling beach. The station platform and rail tracks could provide useful basking habitat for this species, but it is likely that the grassland is not of sufficient size or diverse enough in structure to support a viable population (some unmanaged rough grass and scrub would be required). Furthermore, the high levels of human disturbance on all sides of the site would effectively isolate it from other nearby areas of grassland and make it very unlikely that any reptiles are present. Nonetheless, without a full survey being carried out the presence of reptiles cannot be completely discounted. However, because simple precautions could be easily taken to avoid any harm to reptiles (see Recommendations), such a survey would not be necessary.
- 2.9 Although there are a few small shrubs and perennial plants in the ornamental border, there is no potential for any of these to be used by nesting birds. The grassland around the site is also

completely unsuitable due to its high levels of disturbance by traffic and people. Therefore there would be no potential for nesting birds to be disturbed during construction.

- 2.10 There is no potential for the site to support any other protected species of fauna of other species of ecological importance.

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Impacts

- 3.1 The survey has confirmed that the application site largely supports species poor grassland of low ecological value. Parts of this would be removed and lost during construction of the depot, but since it is of low value the loss is considered to be not significant. However, there would be potential for some areas to be reinstated (by replacement of turfs) or to recolonise naturally around the margins of the depot or between the rail tracks after construction.
- 3.2 There would theoretically be a loss in overall area of habitat within the SINC, but it appears that the SINC boundary has only been approximately drawn to include all habitats in the area, including those that by themselves do not meet SINC criteria, such as the areas of improved grassland and compacted shingle used for car parking. The loss of an area of the SINC to the railway depot will not affect any of the more important semi-natural coastal grassland included within the SINC.

Mitigation

- 3.3 Although considered unlikely, it should be assumed that reptiles such as Common Lizard or Slow-worm could be present on the site. To avoid harm to these the following actions would be recommended:
- Turf removal and groundworks should be carried out during the summer period (before the end of October) whilst reptiles are still active. Therefore any individuals disturbed will be able to move away to find alternative shelter.
 - Herbaceous species and the smaller shrubs in the ornamental border should be dug up by hand before any larger machinery is brought in to deal with the larger ones.
 - The grassland should be kept mown short for at least a month prior to turf removal, to make it unsuitable for reptiles to use for foraging (longer grass should be strimmed down first before close mowing).
 - If the concrete blocks forming the retaining wall to the north of the platform are to be removed then the grass around them should first be mown short as above. The blocks should be removed slowly and carefully to allow any reptiles using them to escape easily.
 - Ideally, all work should be carried out during mild or warm conditions when reptiles will be active.

4.0 References

- 4.1 Arden Ecology Limited (2013). Extended Phase I Habitat Survey - Draft. Report for Hayling Seaside Railway.

APPENDIX 1: Plant list

Species in grassland areas in and around application site. Surveyed by J.A. Norton on 3 June 2014. Scientific and English names follow Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*, 3rd edition.

Frequency codes (DAFOR): D = dominant, A = abundant, F = frequent, O = occasional, R = rare, L = locally, P = present.

Species	English name	Frequency
Grasses, rushes & sedges		
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>	Soft-brome	A
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	O
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red Fescue	LF
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog	R
<i>Hordeum murinum</i>	Wall Barley	F
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	D
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth Meadow-grass	O
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough Meadow-grass	A
Herbs		
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	R
<i>Beta vulgaris</i> subsp. <i>maritima</i>	Sea Beet	R
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed	R
<i>Crepis vesicaria</i>	Beaked Hawk's-beard	O
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill	R
<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dove's-foot Crane's-bill	O
<i>Geranium pyrenaicum</i>	Hedgerow Crane's-bill	R
<i>Lepidium draba</i>	Hoary Cress	R
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common Mallow	O
<i>Medicago arabica</i>	Spotted Medick	O
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	Buck's-horn Plantain	F
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain	F
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil	LF
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	R
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock	O
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort	R
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel	R
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Common Chickweed	R
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Dandelion	O
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	LA
<i>Veronica arvensis</i>	Wall Speedwell	R
Trees & shrubs		
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	R

Total = 30 species.

APPENDIX 2: Photographs



Photo 1: View of grassland strip on southern side of site (Area A). In foreground (up to the planted succulent on left) a small area of semi-improved, moderately herb rich grassland; the remainder consisting of improved grassland.



Photo 2: Looking eastwards along southern grass strip (Area A) and adjacent Havant Borough Council car parking area.



Photo 3: Species poor improved grassland at western end of site (Area B), viewing north from same position as Photo 2.



Photo 4: Fairly species poor grassland at western end of site (Area C) with low concrete retaining wall just visible on right.



Photo 5: View of ornamental border planted along north side of platform, and species poor, improved grassland between here and pavement forming the road verge (Area D).



Photo 6: View of site looking eastwards from new car park access road.