

Annual Monitoring Report

Sandwich Bay Strategic Access
Mitigation and Monitoring
Strategy (SAMM)

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1. Introduction

This is the first annual report on the implementation of the Strategic Access Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) for Sandwich Bay, which stretches from the north of Deal up to the mouth of the River Stour. It describes the progress made during the financial year from April 2024 to March 2025, with a particular focus on the period since November 2024, following the adoption of the Dover District Local Plan in October 2024, when the SAMM Officer was appointed.

Sandwich Bay is internationally and nationally important for birds and other wildlife and habitats. The Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) hosts overwintering populations of a variety of waders and wildfowl, including both turnstone and golden plover. Many birds travel hundreds or thousands of miles to overwinter in, or pass through, the bay and are potentially at risk of disturbance caused by increased human recreational activity, as a result of population increases related to new housing.

The SAMMS aims to mitigate the potential in-combination impacts of new housing development in the vicinity of the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA. The aim is to encourage responsible and positive coastal behaviours, so that people visiting the coast can enjoy the wildlife that depends on the Bay alongside recreational activity. The SAMMS was finalised in March 2023 by Dover District Council as part of the Dover District Local Plan and builds upon the previous monitoring strategy. The SAMMS requires contributions from all residential development within the 9km Zone of Influence of the SPA.

2. Progress during 2024/25

2.1. Overview

At the end of November 2024, a part-time SAMM Officer (0.44FTE) was appointed into White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (WCCP), to work in partnership with Dover District Council and the SAMM Steering Group to deliver the SAMM project. The first Steering Group meeting was held 21 January 2025, comprising the SAMM Officer, the director of WCCP, and Officers from DDC's planning department. A representative from Natural England also attended. A subsequent meeting was held on 11 March 2025.

2.2. Mitigation Measures

2.2.1. Staff Activity

The appointment of a SAMM Officer to project manage and oversee implementation of the SAMMS was the primary aspect of project progress this

year. A key mitigation measure aspect of the SAMM Officer's role is the delivery of on-site engagement, as well as wider outreach and education.

The first partial winter season was spent visiting Sandwich Bay and the access routes identified within the SAMMS and original visitor survey reports. An average of 1-1.5 days a week of SAMM Officer time was spent on site to increase understanding of the site, including access, usage and disturbance issues; to build an on-site presence and name; and to explore existing opportunities in the area.

Although maximising engagement was not the primary focus of the first season, engagement was undertaken on site, including conversations about the project and its aims, and intervention of recreational activity causing disturbance, such as drone flying and accessing the restricted area at Shellness Point. The level of engagement on site depended hugely on footfall, in turn affected by the weather, which was highly variable over the winter months. The creation of a leaflet, website, and arrangement of a table or stall set-up should make engagement easier over the next year.



2.2.2. Partnership Working

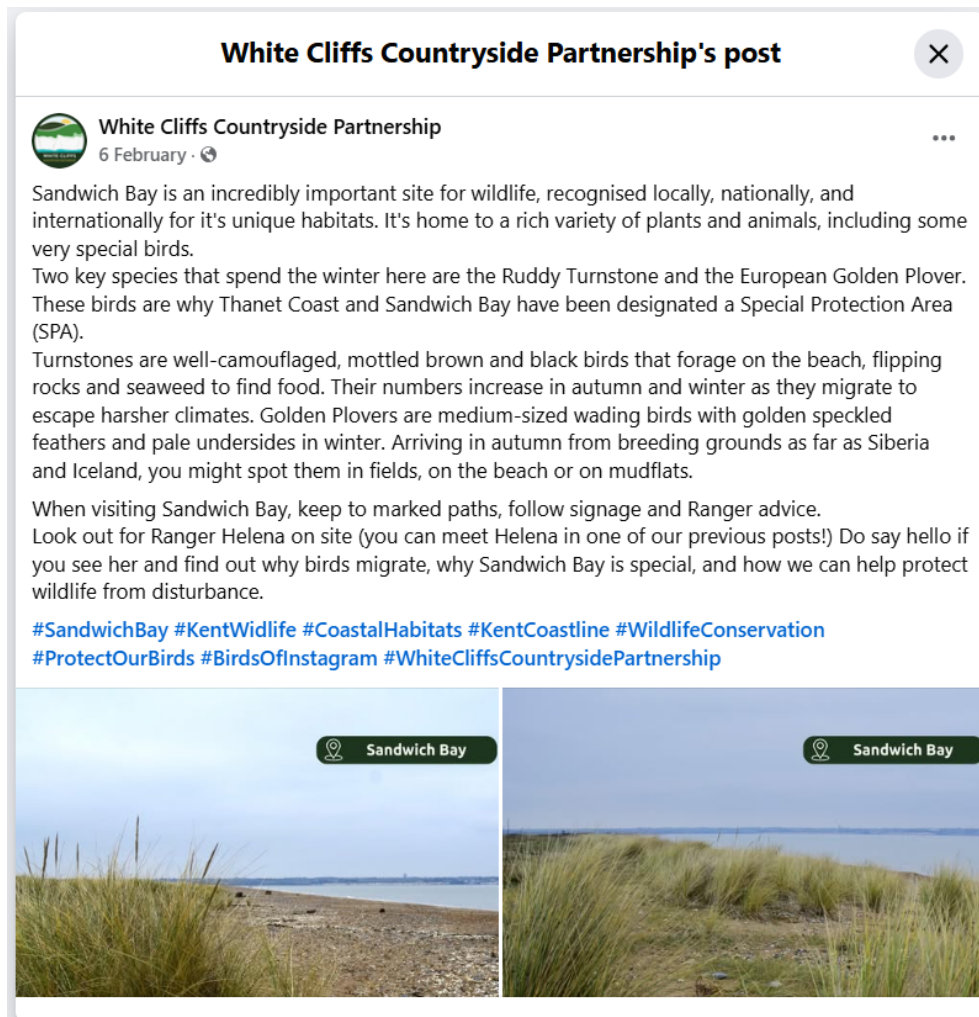
As well as site attendance, the SAMM Officer attended the Bird Wise East Kent (BWEK) Steering Group, the Pegwell and Sandwich Bay National Nature Reserve (NNR) Steering Group, and the North East Kent Marine Protected Area (NEKMPA) Advisory and Management Group meetings. As well as attending these, time has been spent liaising with the SAMM and Engagement Officers from BWEK, and Kent Wildlife Trust's (KWT) Protected Area Warden for the Bay. This included spending time on site with them and sharing best practice. The first two events were collaborative and successful: supporting KWT's International Women's Day (IWD)

walk at Pegwell Bay, and a joint IWD walk at Sandwich Bay with the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory and KWT, with positive feedback and social media posts to follow. These events highlighted the importance of collaborating across the River Stour in Thanet and the wider area, as many of the event participants at Pegwell Bay were also users of Sandwich Bay and vice-versa.

2.2.3. Communications and Marketing

As of March 2025, preliminary drafts for both the website and leaflet were complete. Social media elements for the SAMM project are currently being run through the WCCP social media account, rather than a separate account. Introductory posts for both the SAMM Officer and Sandwich Bay were put on social media, which were positively received.





2.3. Monitoring

As of the end of March 2025, a preliminary way of recording site visits and interactions has been drafted and will be put into use over the next financial year. This included sectioning up the SPA area and main footpaths. This will assist in internal interrogation of the data, to be able to consider project priorities in terms of disturbance and interactions, site time, and on-site outreach. It will also assist with any signage plans in the longer term.

In terms of both bird disturbance and visitor surveys, which are used to help monitor the SAMMS, the SAMMS outlined the opportunity to coordinate surveys with BWEK. This enables the chance to align with the neighbouring SAMM project and to cover the whole SPA area at the same time. The stance agreed by the steering group was to defer the winter 2024/25 in Sandwich Bay, with the intention of undertaking them at the same time as BWEK in winter of 2025/26. This would allow the entire SPA area to be surveyed concurrently, under the same conditions, and using the same methodology.

3. Looking ahead

Although the Strategy suggests that site visits should occur through September – April, having the SAMM Officer on site during the summer season also allows us to build an on-site presence, particularly across this first summer season, and to reach a greater variety of people, including those who use the beach year-round. It also allows the opportunity to raise awareness of some of the wading birds which use the area for beach nesting, and allows a different way of engaging, though still focused on disturbance.

Collaboration with landowners, local groups, and the neighbouring SAMM project is expected to continue. Looking forward, we will start to identify relevant summer and autumn events for attendance, and to put together a complete stall set-up. We will also explore how we can work with local groups and schools in and around the 9 km Zone of Influence boundary to deliver talks, workshops, or lessons on migratory birds and disturbance, linked with the national curriculum.

The next main step for 2025/26 is to provide information about Sandwich Bay and the SAMMS on the WCCP website, and to finalise designs and produce a Sandwich Bay SAMM leaflet. This could allow for better quality engagement, with the opportunity for follow-up interactions with people who take a leaflet.

4. Financial Summary

The SAMM project is entirely funded via developer contributions from new housing built within 9 km of Sandwich Bay and its Special Protection Area (SPA). The tariff of £268 - £1074 per new dwelling (depending on number of beds) is set out in the SAMMS report, and was calculated in order to deliver SAMMS measures for the length of the Local Plan and the lifetime of the development. This also took into account funding that was secured through the previous monitoring strategy.

At end of financial year 2023/24 the balance of the account was £258,851.84.

Table 1: SAMMS Income and Expenditure 2024/25

Opening Balance 2023/24	£258,851.84
Income 2024/25	£38,729.71
Interest 2024/25	£8,002.62
Total Income 2024/25	£46,732.33
Staff costs 2024/25	- £11,892.79
Clothing/PPE 2024/25	- £269.54
Equipment 2024/25	- £232.93
Vehicle etc. 2024/25	- £10,529.95
Total Expenditure 2024/25	- £22,925.21
Provisional Closing Balance 2024/25	£282,658.96¹

¹ This compares to the expected closing balance of £253,069 (calculated from the balance of S106 reserves plus the cumulative balance of investment in Table 2 SAMMS strategy)