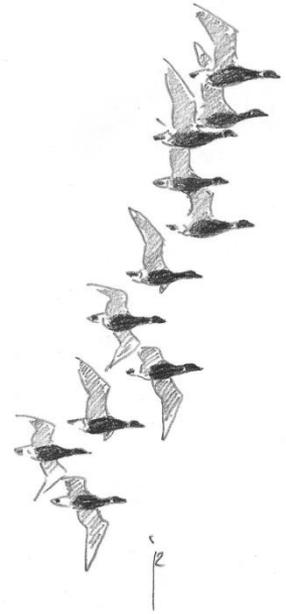


# What's good for the goose?



## The Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy

A strategic approach to SPA supporting habitat

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# The Solent – a landscape of birds

- Complex series of large harbours in Hampshire, IOW + West Sussex
- c.35 miles from Lymington in west to Chichester in east
- Densely-developed coastal plain
  - Southampton, Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth, Havant, Chichester
  - c.1.5 million residents, 1 million within 3 miles of coast
  - Major port, military, industry, recreation
- Internationally-important numbers of wintering birds
  - Dark-bellied brent goose – c.30% of UK wintering population
  - >90,000 waders
  - Other wildfowl, terns, gulls



# Special Protection Areas (SPA) in the Bird Aware Solent region

-  Solent & Southampton Water
-  Portsmouth Harbour
-  Chichester and Langstone Harbours



# What's the issue?

- 1980s > Increasing trend of birds using terrestrial sites – farmland, playing fields – reasons?



- Increasing demand for development land.
  - 121,000 new homes to be built 2011-2036.
- Recognition that disturbance + habitat loss are significant



# Functionally-linked Land

- SPA land usually free from direct impacts
- Birds don't respect SPA boundaries
- Impacts to birds on FLL analogous to impacts to SPA
  - i.e. birds are qualifying features even when outside SPA
  - Impacts to birds/habitat undermine SPA conservation objectives
- Many impacts occur outside designated sites
  - Recreational disturbance, habitat loss, construction-related, scaring/shooting

Functional linkage: How areas that are functionally linked to European sites have been considered when they may be affected by plans and projects - a review of authoritative decisions

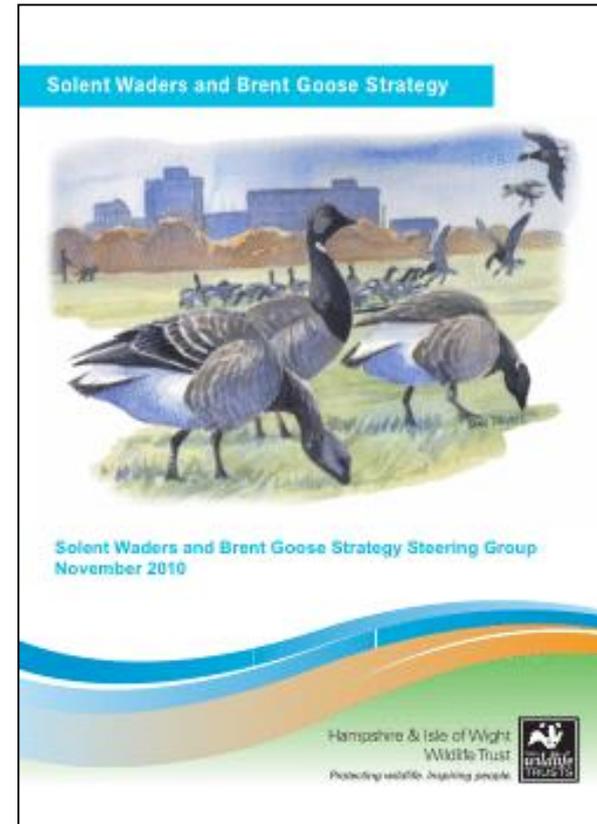
First published 29 February 2016

[www.gov.uk/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/natural-england)



# Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy

- 2002 – brent geese in Eastern Solent
- 2010 – brent geese + waders across Solent
- Partnership project – Solent LPAs, HIWWT, NE, RSPB, EA, Chichester Harbour Conservancy
- Desk-based and field-based – ID all sites used by birds



# Site classification

## SWBGS 2010

- Survey records late 90s onwards – just count data.
- **Important** – certain that site is important to birds
- **No Recorded Use** – certain that site is not used
- **Uncertain** – insufficient survey data to conclude either way
- Most sites are Uncertain!



# Problems with current SWBGS system

- ‘Uncertain’ sites have absorbed most attention and survey effort
- For planning - at least 3 years’ survey information in suitable condition
- Many uncertain sites not in suitable condition – e.g. scrubbed over = surveys pointless
- Catch-22...how does LPA treat such sites in planning?

# SWBGS: A NEW PHASE

- Shift emphasis from uncertain sites to protecting key network
  - Stop wasting resources on uncertain sites
  - Which are the best/most important sites?
- 2016-18 – New counts + movement studies + network analysis
- How do birds use individual sites and the wider landscape?
- Network better understood

# 2016-18 Field Surveys

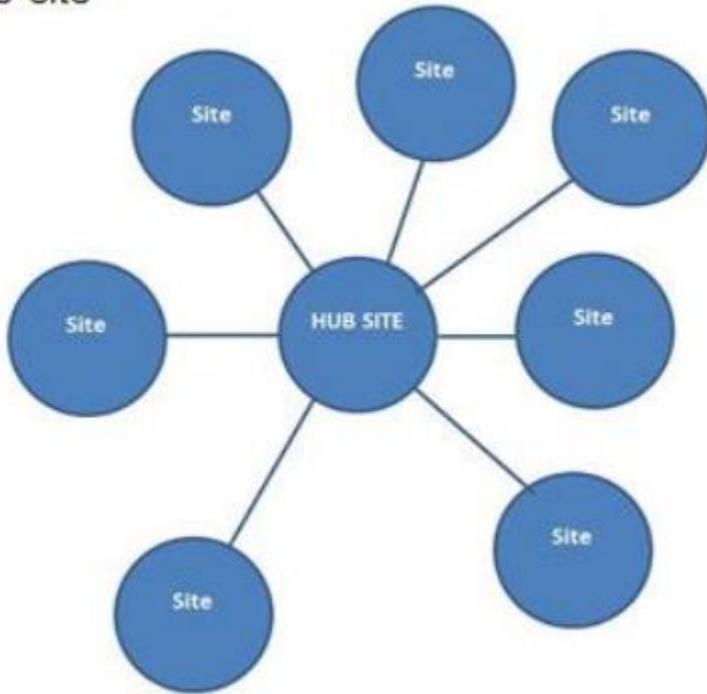
- Same small teams of surveyors in defined sectors October to March
- 3 surveys per month – around high-tide – varying start times (early, middle, late).
- Roving methodology (find and follow) + vantage points (movements)
- Site (flock counts) + movements (origin and destination)
- Data analysis by HIWWT



# Site classification 2018

- **Core Network Site**
  - All sites with network value (hub/bottleneck)
  - Max count of bird use of  $\geq 1000$
  - Max score in 3 metrics: GB Importance, SPA Importance and SPA Assemblage
- **Primary Network Site**
  - Sites that score 4-6 metric points
- **Secondary Network Site**
  - Sites that score 3 and/or have max counts of 100+ birds for any species
- **Low Use Site**
  - Sites that have records of birds but in low numbers (total score between 0 and 2)

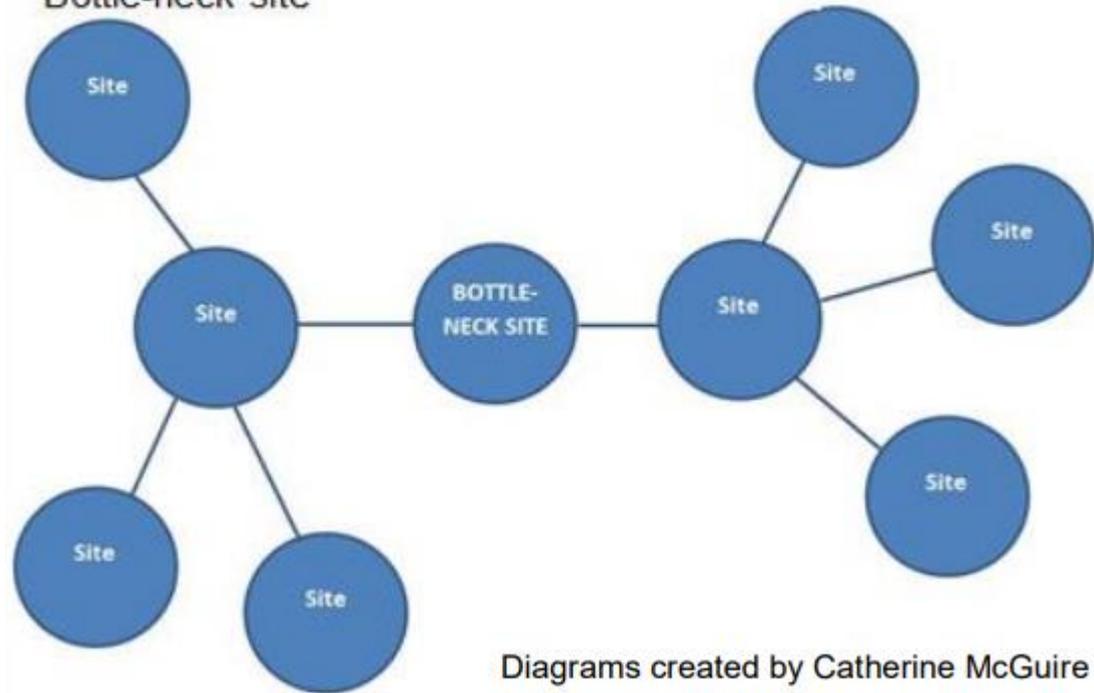
Hub site



Hub sites = connectedness

Bottleneck sites = between-ness

Bottle-neck site



Diagrams created by Catherine McGuire

- Core Areas
- Primary Support Areas
- Secondary Support Areas
- Low Use
- Candidate
- SPA site

2018 – online Google mapping

Site classification

Bird data available via HBIC



# The SWBGS and Planning

## Draft Havant Borough Local Plan 2036

Published for public consultation from  
Monday 8 January to Friday 16 February 2018

- Now fully integrated into planning policy in all Solent LPAs
- Bespoke Local Plan policies + SPDs
- Planning + policy officers understand issues very well
- But, hugely complex and changing
  - All LPAs on different timeframes for Local Plans
  - Some LPAs have very few sites but all of high importance
  - Huge pressure to develop sites

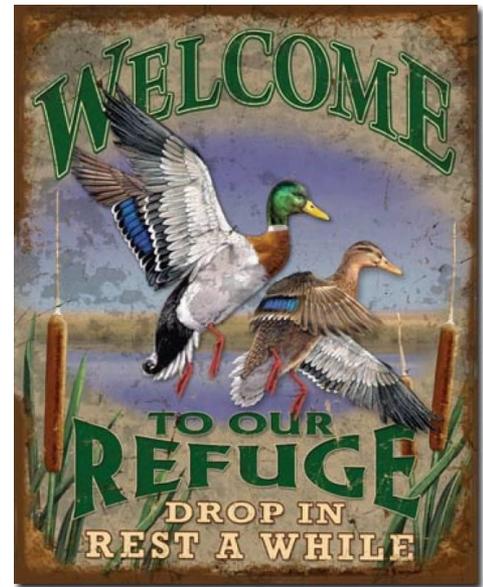


# The SWBGS and Planning

- All planning apps within Solent SPA landscape should include detailed information on SPA issues
  - Desk-based assessment – SWBGS data – assess potential impact
  - Bespoke surveys – not necessarily 3yrs – e.g. 1yr intensive + dropping/feather search
- Ecologists + agents need to be aware of issues with FLL (not all are...)
- HRA
  - Fully-evidenced HRA – adopted by LPA if acceptable
  - In line with Sweetman 2
  - Costed mitigation package - deliverable

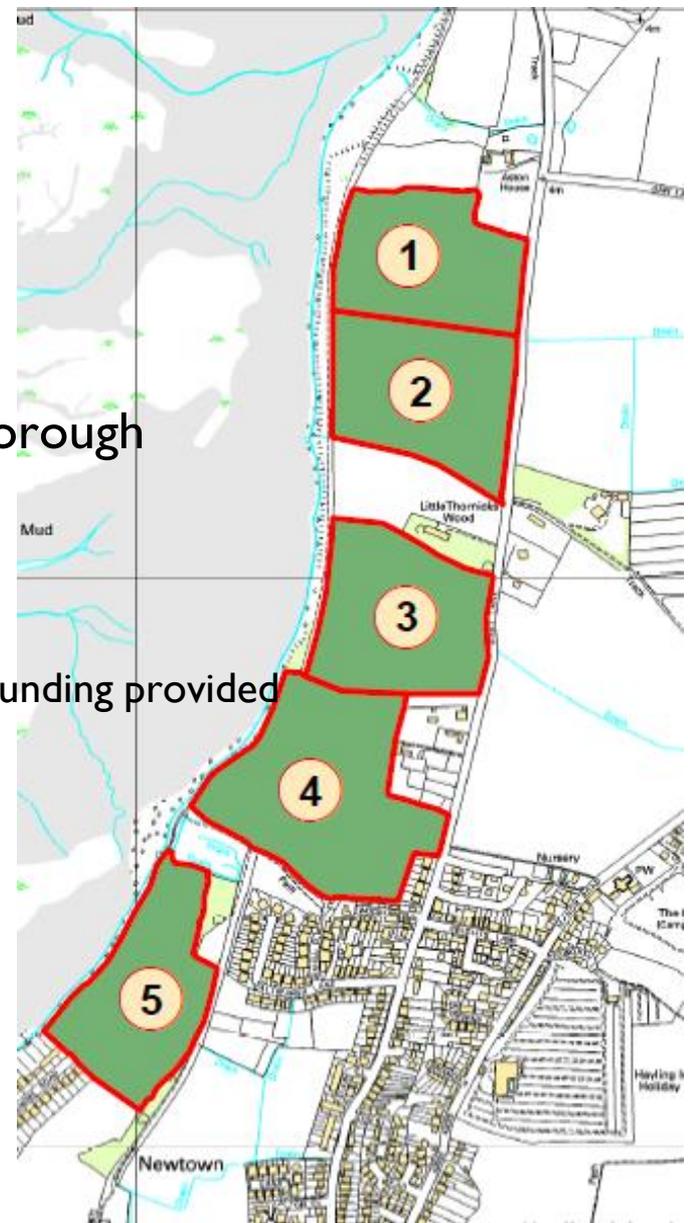
# Mitigation

- Develop mitigation package
  - With LPAs, NE, Steering Group
  - 80yr+ management
- Loss of Secondary/Low Use sites acceptable in principle
  - ££ for network protection, off-site enhancements
- Tiered mitigation requirements depending on site value
- Some sites not capable of being mitigated?
  - Permanent alternative site – refuge – same function – in advance
  - On-site mitigation – partial development? Multi-use greenspace?
  - Off-site measures – site enhancements, interpretive media
  - Local sub-populations?



# Permanent refuges

- Creation of permanent refuges within Havant Borough
  - a reality at last?
- Funded by LPAs and developer contributions
  - Impacts to/loss of Secondary/Low Use sites allowed if funding provided
- Permanent improved grassland + fencing
  - Scrapes?
  - Winter cereals?
  - Decoys?



# Summary

- Impacts to SPA supporting habitat will increase across Solent region
- Huge implications for land-use planning
- SWBGS is a pragmatic, strategic approach to addressing this issue
- Fully embedded in Solent LPAs but planning landscape complex
- ££ + data needed! PhD opportunity...



Thanks to...

