



Castlehaven Village Green Report



Produced for Niton and Whitwell Parish Council

By island 2000 Trust



Castlehaven

Castlehaven is a small hamlet at the foot of Niton Undercliff (Grid Reference SZ 50483 75446) . It has a harbour and Village Green. Reached via Castlehaven Lane, It is within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and part of the Compton Chine to Steephill Cove Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Ownership of the Village Green is vested in Niton and Whitwell Parish Council.

The Green is the landward side of rock armour, however in 2016 storms caused damage to the Village Green. In 2018 the Parish Council issued a tender for the repair of storm damage. Island 2000 Trust responded to the tender with a proposal to investigate the longer term opportunities for the management of the site and were issued with the following Terms of Reference:

Aims

- to create a safe and functional public space that provides a natural habitat which is sympathetic to its environment
- to develop a long-term vision, meeting the interests of the Parish Council, the Niton Harbour Club and Natural England
- to produce an economically-viable costed plan to achieve the long-term vision
- to manage and sustain the whole of the enhanced site through an agreed maintenance plan

Means

- Niton and Whitwell Parish Council working in partnership with Island 2000 Trust
- Financial assistance from external funding sources, if necessary
- Option to incorporate Castlehaven Village Green into Gift To Nature portfolio

Consultees

- Natural England: to determine the scope of work for which it would give consent
- The Niton Harbour Club: to discuss current usage and aspirations
- Isle of Wight Council: with regard to public footpath NT46

Issues and Opportunities

- There is a Harbour Club who currently keep the grass mown and litter picked. They do have concerns regarding the state of the Green and also suggestions for improvements. They are keen to work with partners to improve the site.
- The Green is within a SSSI. This designation is under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981. In terms of this project, it means that any works to the site require consent from Natural England.
- The rock armour appears to be too low to guarantee all-year round protection from storms, and the south side of the site suffers from occasional scouring.
- Castlehaven Lane is in a very poor state, and many people park in the car park in Sandrock Road opposite the Buddle Inn and walk down steep NT43 and then Castlehaven Lane to access the site.
- The site has developed in a haphazard fashion.
- There is an adjacent caravan site with a small café that attracts visitors.
- The Isle of Wight Coastal Path passes directly by the site and it is within a network of Rights of Ways.
- The Village Green is not currently promoted on the Parish Council website. However the caravan park do promote the area <http://www.castlehaven.me.uk/>.
- There are opportunities for greater engagement with the local community and visitors.
- There are opportunities to improve the site aesthetically.
- There are opportunities to improve the site for butterflies and other pollinators.
- There is an opportunity to better link the site with the car park in St Catherine's Road, and create and promote the trail between the two.
- Young families are already using the site for informal recreation, so there is the opportunity to engage with them more
- There is a geocache under the old winch; there is a vibrant IW geocaching community who like to engage in new activities

Consultation

Our brief from Niton and Whitwell PC specified Isle of Wight Council Rights of Way Service, Niton Harbour Club and Natural England. These were consulted individually in winter / spring 2018.

Rights of Way, Isle of Wight Council

There is an appeal against the refusal of an application to delete Footpath NT46 from the Eastern End of the top of the Sea Wall to the Western End of the top of the Sea Wall from the Definitive Statement.

Whilst this has implications on the Parish Council and Isle of Wight Council's Rights of Way Department, we are keen to provide a way forward for the Village Green that is not affected by this current issue.

Castlehaven is at the heart of an extensive network of Rights of Way and is also crossed by the Isle of Wight Coastal Path.

The 2018 Rights of Way Improvement Plan says:

The 2016 review of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan showed that, whilst desirable, the promotion of rights of way (for sustainable journeys, for health and leisure, and to new users) is considered by users and stakeholders to be of lower priority than the other main aims of the Plan. The four higher priority aims are mostly concerned with the maintenance, improvement and extension of the network.

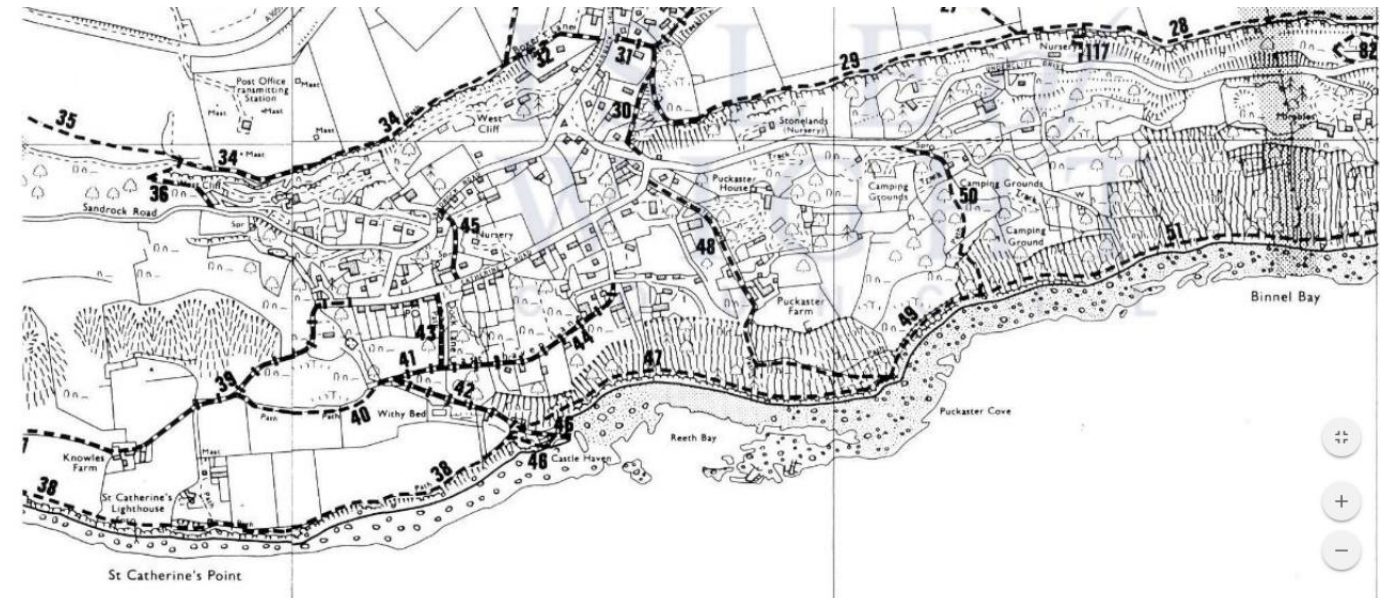
With increasing pressure on resources, the Rights of Way Service has been unable to undertake any significant promotion of rights of way and this is likely to remain the case in the foreseeable future.

However the Service will support partner organisations that share a common interest in promoting outdoor access for recreation, health and utility journeys, and the Council website will continue to provide information about public rights of way, educational information and links to relevant publications

Rights of Way have indicated that they if a partner wanted to promote a new trail the Service would support and help as much as they can.

On their suggestion we also contacted the Natural England Coastal Path team. They hope to have the Isle of Wight draft plan by the end of the summer. They told us that the England Coast Path project aims to build upon and secure for future generations the Isle of Wight Coastal Path, by raising it to a National Trail. This project will help to further open up access to the Islands unique natural environment and help to raise awareness of the indigenous species. They are working closely with the Isle of Wight Council and are engaging with local communities, businesses and landowners on the Island to help ensure

we develop a route that best meets the needs of Islanders. They are very keen to talk to ourselves, the Parish Council and other partners regarding any aspirations for interpretation, seating etc.



Niton Harbour Club

Consultation with Niton Harbour Club found that:

- Members are concerned over the state of the green and are keen to sort things out to improve it
- They would like to relocate the metal keel to the east side of the green to form a seat
- They would like to have an information case of some kind, similar to the one at view point car park at Blackgang. This could display local history old photos, tide times, local events and emergency contact no's to include the location reference. In the past there has been confusion with Water Shoot Bay
- The footpath and closure infrastructure is unsightly

The Harbour Club appear to be happy with the arrangement for keeping the site trimmed and litter picked

Natural England (Land Advice Team)

Any proposals for work on the Village Green will require Natural England consent because of its SSSI designation. We have discussed the site with them and following a visit they detected no SSSI feature interest. They will still advocate maintenance and development of semi-natural features and vegetation types where opportunities arise as part of other initiatives within the Parish.

Proposals

The following are list of recommendations to create a safe and functional public space that provides a natural habitat which is sympathetic to its environment. Additionally we have made suggestions for longer-term initiatives.

1. Creation of a safe and functional public space that provides a natural habitat which is sympathetic to its environment



1. The southern area of the site could be replanted with a mix of sea plantain, thrift and marram grass plugs. However, it appears that the rock armour is not high enough to prevent storm damage and scouring will probably re-occur. A cheaper option is to scatter coastal grass seed mix.



2. There is an old winch, and also a box that once housed another winch. A feature should be made of the winch seen to the left in this picture. The box to the left should be removed.



3. The litter and dog waste bin should be moved to the north of the site and placed in a less prominent position. The litter bin could be replaced with a more sympathetic design.



4. The random signage at the north of the site should be removed. It should be replaced with a noticeboard featuring all legal necessities, along with tide times, and a space for posters.

5. This area should also be planted with a small shrub bed. The plants selected to be attractive to pollinators, and suitable for the coastal environment. We suggest a mix of thrift, sea holly, red valerian, delosperma (ice pant), thyme, erigeron (fleabane) and echium, along with some grasses – pennisetum and miscanthus. Bed to be timber edged with decorative stone topping.



6. Work with a local artist to create a seat from the old keel, and reposition away from boundary wall



7. Renewal of dragons teeth where required



8. There will be a need to work with IWC Rights of Way team to repair the path at the southern boundary and, subject to the outcome of the NT46 Appeal, remove or make permanent the closure in a more sympathetic fashion

Please see following page for an overview of these proposals.

2. Develop a long-term vision, meeting the interests of the Parish Council, the Niton Harbour Club and Natural England

Once the Village Green has been renovated, we recommend the following:

- Parties work towards making Castlehaven Village Green a 'destination'. In order to that it needs to:
 - Be sign-posted from St Catherine's Road Car Park (by foot)
 - Feature on Parish Council website
 - Feature on website such as Trip Advisor and Visit Isle of Wight
- The present arrangement between Niton Harbour Club and Niton and Whitwell PC regrading strimming and litter-picking appears to be working well, and there is no reason to replace it
- We feel that, should the Parish Council wish, this site would fit very well within Gift To Nature's portfolio of sites (currently 29). In this instance, because of the engagement with Niton Harbour Club, we would propose a bespoke arrangement providing Ranger back-up, marketing, and office support with funding advice
- Gift To Nature sites are managed by way of individual Site Plans. This includes site objectives, site inventory, management plan and future development plan. Such a plan would be produced for this site.

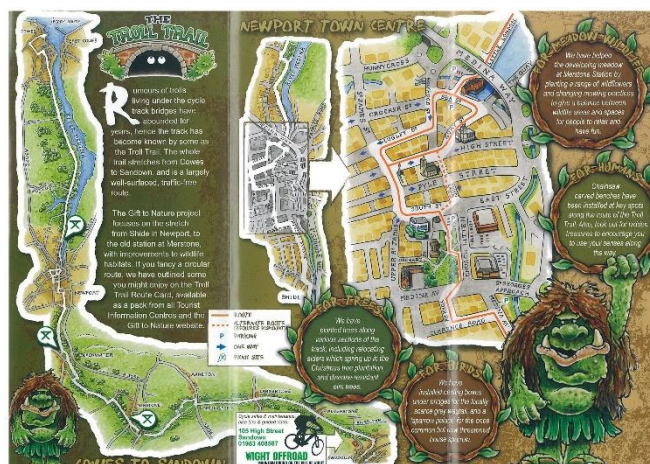
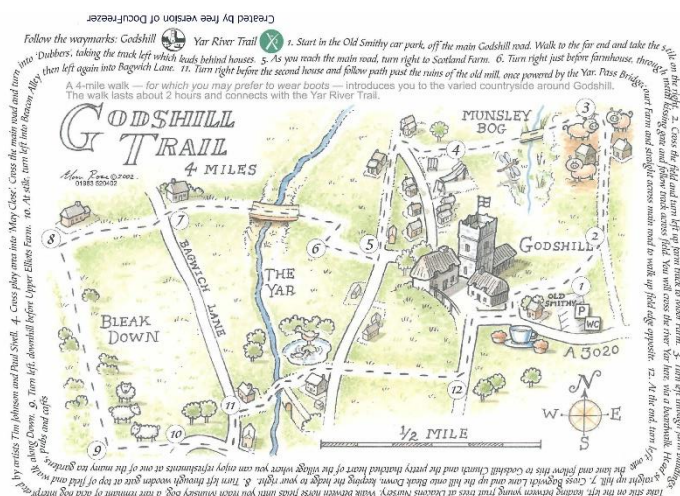


2a. Development of a smugglers' trail

To help develop the long-term vision, we recommend that the site is given some sort of USP to promote it both locally and with tourists.

If there is to be sign-posting from St Catherine's Road Car Park, it would be relatively simple to take this one step further and create a 'Smugglers' Trail' either as a one-way path or circular walk taking in either St Catherine's Lighthouse to the east or Puckaster Cove to the west.

Island 2000 produced a similar trail for Godshill, and a Troll Trail which still gets regular interest from the national press:



Interpretation Boards could also be produced. However, Castlehaven Village Green already is fairly cluttered, and if required, it may be better to site these at the start of the trail within the Car Park in St Catherine's Road.

3. Economically-viable costed plan to achieve the long-term vision

This will be completed once the vision for the site is agreed. However for guidance we would advise:

One-off Costs	Cost	Annual Costs	Cost
1. Reseeding scoured area* extra for plug plants	£200*	Gift To Nature Support	£500
2. Winches	£300		
3. Repositioning / Replacing bins	£500		
4. Signs / noticeboard	£500		
5. Shrub bed inc. materials	£600		
6. Keel	£300		
7. Dragon teeth replacement	£250		
Creation of Smugglers Trail with leaflet	£1,000		
Interpretation Board	£1,500		

It is very likely that we could secure a grant for restoration and creation of the Smugglers Trail. Funding for on-going maintenance is always very tricky to find externally.

4. Manage and sustain the whole of the enhanced site through an agreed maintenance plan

As part of Gift to Nature support, we also produce a Site Plan for each of our sites. This includes site objectives, site inventory, management plan and future development plan. If the site was adopted within the Gift To Nature portfolio we would produce such a plan.

Gift to Nature

Gift to Nature is the Isle of Wight's local countryside charity. We own and manage countryside, green space and nature reserves across the Island for everyone to enjoy, for free, all year around.

Gift to Nature is passionate about the Isle of Wight's wildlife, countryside and open spaces, from our famous red squirrels to obscure tiny rare bees. Since 2002 we have created and cared for a variety of green spaces both in towns and countryside, right across the Island.

In 2016 we expanded the project to take on many sites that were previously managed by the Isle of Wight Council. So we have even more countryside and green spaces all around the Island. Many of our sites feature local art, whether a carved picnic bench or a scrap-metal sculpture. We invite local craftsmen and artists to help add something special to what nature (and our conservation workers) have provided.

We also work with eight of the Island's Town and Parish Council's to help them manage Green Space within their jurisdiction, sometimes this is their own land, but this is not always the case. We are keen to work with them to promote greater community involvement in sites and develop plans for long term management.

