

Longniddry Bents Management Plan 2017-2021



VISION

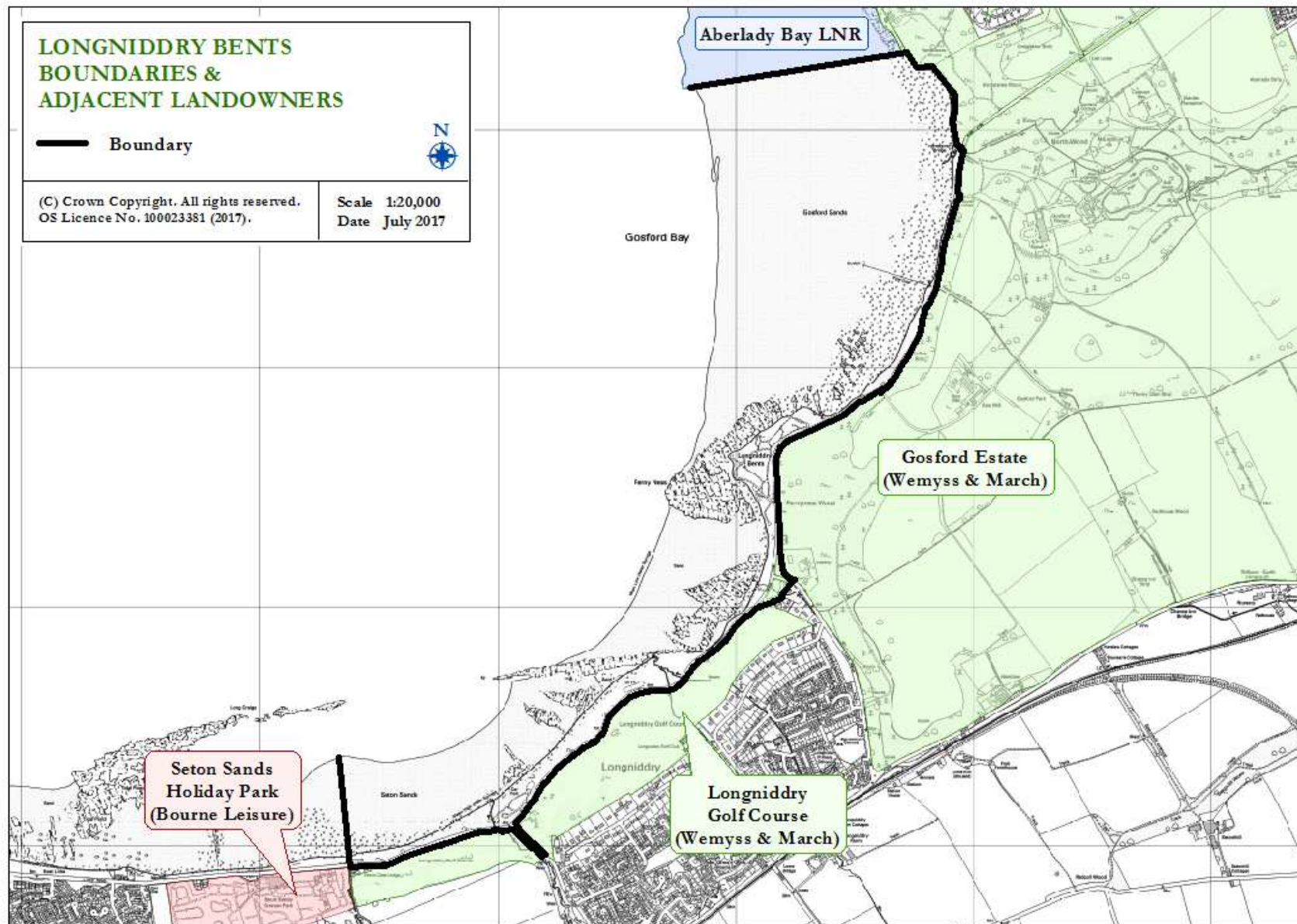
This management plan sets out the management objectives and policies for the management of Longniddry Bents, East Lothian, an important coastal area for recreation and nature conservation.

The site is important environmentally, as part of the Firth of Forth SSSI and SPA; and for its valuable coastal grassland. It is the first main stretch of sandy beach east of Edinburgh and with it being accessible it supports over 600 000 visits to the site each year.

The site is managed by East Lothian Council in agreement with the owners. We aim to maintain wild open land and seascapes, an excellent visitor experience and a valued recreational resource while sustaining the area's natural heritage value.

DESCRIPTION

Name	Longniddry Bents
Area	30 hectares
Designations	SSSI, SPA, Ramsar cover sections of site
Landownership	Wemyss and March Estate Ltd.
Adjacent Landowners	Wemyss and March Estates Ltd, Longniddry Golf Club (leased from Weymss and March Estates Ltd, Bourne Leisure (See map 1)
Management	East Lothian Council, and management agreement with Wemyss and March Estates Ltd
Assets	Information boards, toilet blocks, benches, car park machines



Map 1: Boundary of Management Area and adjacent Land Ownership of Longniddry Bents.

LOCATION

Longniddry Bents appears on the OS 1:50000 Landranger Series Sheet 66. The site covers the areas referred to as Gosford Bay, Ferny Ness and part of Seton Sands. It is a linear site, approximately 5km long, sandwiched between the Firth of Forth and A198/B1348 coast road and covering just over 30 hectares.

The management boundaries of the site are the Seton Dean Burn in the west and the start of the woodland surrounding the Green Craig Hotel in the East. The estate wall and golf course fence to the south of the coast road forms the southern boundary to the site and the Low Water Mark of the Firth of Forth the northern boundary. The area of land covered in this management plan is illustrated in map 1.

PRESENT OWNERSHIP

All of the land covered by this plan from the Low Water mark to the estate wall is owned by Wemyss and March Estate Ltd (see map 1) and is managed by East Lothian Council under a formal Management Agreement.

ADJACENT LANDOWNERS

Wemyss and March Estates Ltd

Longniddry Golf Club (land leased from Wemyss and March Estate Ltd.)

Bourne Leisure (Seton Sands).

Aberlady Bay LNR abuts the Bents at the eastern boundary.

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS/MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

The Management Agreement with Wemyss and March Estate defines the area of land covered under the Management Agreement, provides details of East Lothian Council's duties in relation to the site, and provides constraints on capital works without prior consultation. This agreement was renewed in 2017.

The Firth of Forth is a Special Protection Area (SPA) as designated by the (EC) Birds and Habitats Directives and a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

Originally part of the Port Seton to Gosford Bay SSSI, designated for its ornithological importance, Longniddry Bents, below high watermark, now forms part of the Firth of Forth SSSI, designated in 2001 for its nationally important Wader and Wildfowl populations.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Only limited archaeological surveys have been undertaken on the Bents to date but remains are known to exist from the prehistoric periods through to WWII. These are illustrated in Map 2.

IRON AGE

Iron Age (800BC-400AD) remains are scattered throughout the management area. These include individual finds of a copper alloy spiral finger ring, 2 massive terrets (harness rings attached to a cart or chariot). Iron age burials have also been uncovered within the management area and immediately outside with a cist cemetery uncovered at the junction of the A198 and Lyars road, Longniddry. A potentially Iron Age shell midden can be seen in section above the beach. Immediately to the landward side of the management area are a number of cropmarks which morphologically are the remains of Iron Age enclosures. The amount of Iron Age remains in the area indicates that Longniddry Bents was heavily exploited during this period, probably as a result of the shallow waters of the bay. Given the known remains dating to the Iron Age in the area there is a high potential that further remains dating to this period exist within the management area. (blue on map 2)

MEDIEVAL TIMES

The medieval period (400 – 1550AD) is only scantily represented in and around the management area. Individual finds of silver figurine, possibly off of a portable altar; a pewter pinannular cloak brooch and potentially the remains of a fish trap (although it should be noted that fish traps are difficult to date as the design does not substantially change from the medieval period until the 19th century) are the only known remains from this period. (green on map 2)

RECENT HISTORY

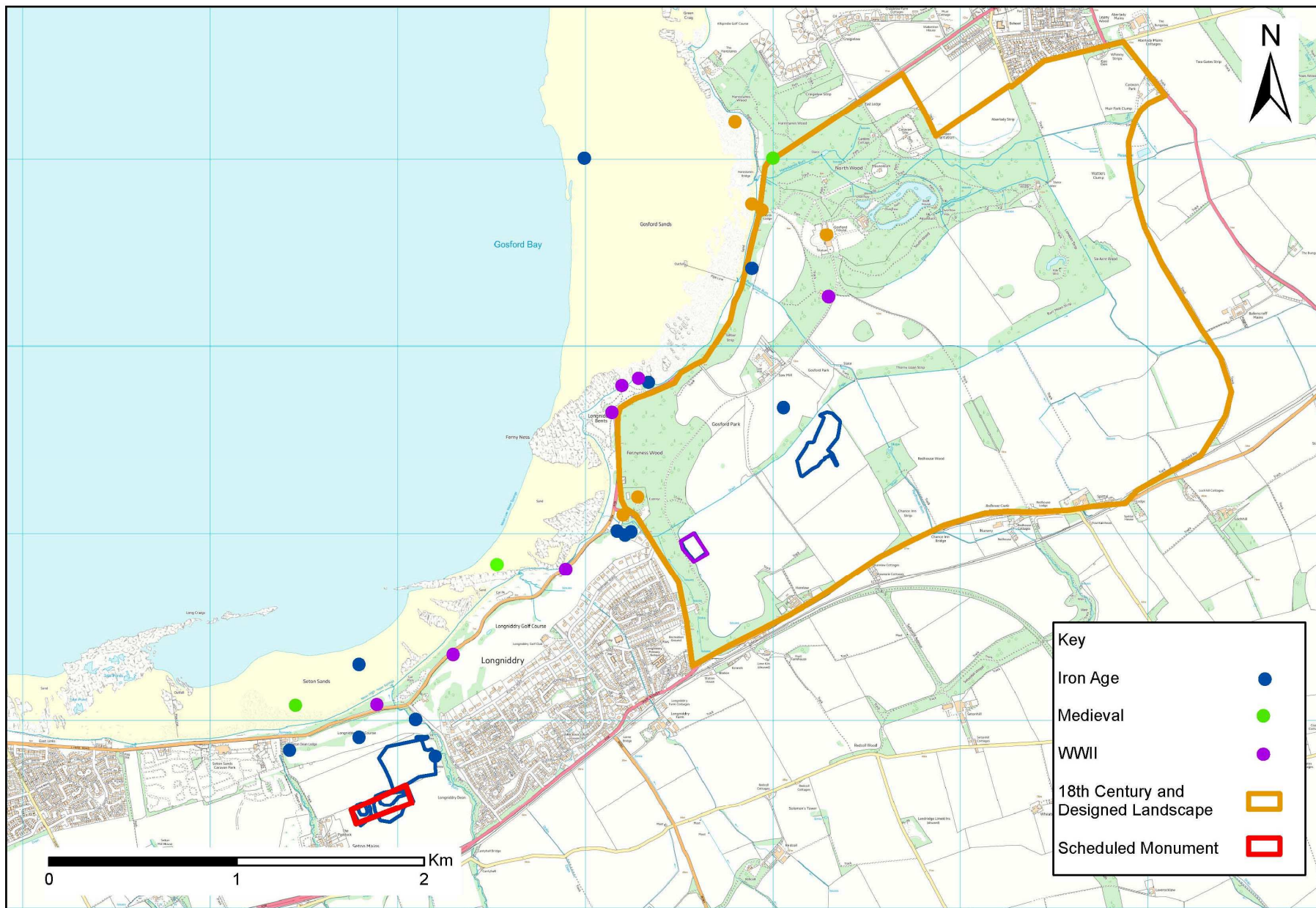
17TH CENTURY TO 20TH CENTURY

The eastern end of the management area is bounded by Gosford Estate. The landscape and house date to the late 18th century, this superseded an earlier 17th century estate layout. Gosford House was designed by Robert Adam and the grounds were laid out and planted by James Ramsay for the Earl of Wemyss.

EARLY 20TH CENTURY TO PRESENT DAY

There is a significant amount of WWII remains all the way along the Bents with the most visible being the anti-tank blocks which would have originally run the full length of the management area and beyond. Other remains include roadblocks, military camps, armament placements and buildings. With the exception of the blocks most of the remains only now exist as concrete bases dotted amongst the dunes and shoreline. Although a significant amount of the WWII remains are visible or known from mapping there is a good likelihood that further unmapped remains do exist within the management area (purple on map)

During WWII troops from the Polish Army were stationed in Longniddry itself and were instrumental in constructing the coastal defences. Armoured Train No12 'K' Krackow was manned by Polish troops and stationed at Longniddry Rail station in 1940/41. During the war the area of the Bents was a restricted zone, as indeed was most of East Lothian's coastline, which meant that travel was severely restricted to non-military personnel.



Map 2: Locations of known archaeological remains at Longniddry Bents

GEOMORPHOLOGY

Longniddry Bents lies on a narrow dune system, which has had a degree of management for stabilisation in order to reduce erosion levels associated with wind, wave and human use. The primary erosion agents are wind and human use, with only limited erosion by wave action. Plants such as sea lyme grass and sea buckthorn were extensively planted to stabilise the fore dune. Sea buckthorn in particular has spread throughout the site, often at the expense of other species, and a programme of control has had to be introduced to limit its spread.

The foreshore in front of No.1 car park is predominantly sandy in the west, with the Long Craigs Dyke protecting the shore, and has a few rocky outcrops in the east. To the east of No.2 car park is a rocky area with low cliffs, beyond which are sandy flats down to low water. Gosford Bay consists of a narrow incomplete rocky belt adjacent to the land, and an extensive sandy bay. Gosford Sands have a very shallow slope, resulting in a large inter-tidal zone, which is quickly covered by the incoming tide.

Parent material of raised beach and wind-blown shelly sand form freely drained soils of the Fraserburgh Association. The pattern of calcareous outcrops and the varying quantity and weathering of shelly material produces a relatively base rich mosaic which gives rise to a diverse flora.

GEOLOGY

Geologically, Longniddry Bents can be divided into three main sections. The western area of the site lies over substrate of the Limestone Coal Group, a cyclic sequence of sandstones, siltstones, mudstones, coals and seat clays. Several of the coal layers have been worked locally. Most of the rest of the site sits on rock of the Lower Limestone Group, a cyclic

sequence of sandstones, siltstones, mudstones and marine limestones. Several thin coal layers are also present. There is also an arc of intrusive igneous rock running from Ferny Ness around the south edge of Gosford Bay to Green Craig. Gosford Bay is also littered with erratic boulders which have been washed out of the glacial till mantle in adjacent land.

Exposed areas of raised beach occur at Ferny Ness. The top layer is composed of interstitial gravel sand and shell dominated by oyster.

NATURAL HISTORY

There are nine main vegetation communities at Longniddry Bents.

The Countryside Ranger Service holds species lists for Longniddry Bents and over the years some additions and amendments have been made, on an informal basis.

FLORA

SHORE AND FORESHORE

Shingle is only present in very small areas e.g. Ferny Ness. Here, larger pebbles and angled boulders produce a substrate similar to shingle, with interstitial areas holding small amounts of sand for colonising plants such as **sea sandwort** (*Honkenya peploides*), **silverweed** (*Potentilla anserina*) and **thrift** (*Armeria maritima*).

The sandy foreshore is dynamic and influenced by a wide range of factors. It is a physically demanding habitat, with the coarse sand too freely draining and lacking in organic content to attract much vegetation.

Those plants that do survive are pioneer species able to withstand high salt concentrations and desiccation. **Orache** (*Atriplex* spp), **sea rocket** (*Cakile maritima*) and **sea sandwort** (are the main species found here, with occasional **sea mayweed** (*Matricaria maritima*) in more sheltered areas.

DUNE GRASSLAND

This represents the area of the fore dune where much of the sand surface is still visible, and the sand mobile, up to the point where the sand becomes extensively colonised by rosette species, often known as sand fixers, and the dunes become much more stable.

Sea lyme grass (*Leymus arenarius*) and **marram grass** (*Ammophila arenaria*) are the dominant species on the fore dune, with **sand couch** (*Elymus farctus*) almost absent, unlike other dune systems. Sea lyme and marram grasses have been extensively planted at Longniddry Bents as part of the management to stabilise the dune system.

Landward, the dunes are characterised by a rapid increase in the number of species, with bare sand only found in disturbed areas. Marram and sea lyme grasses still dominate, but with **yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*), **chickweed** (*Stellaria media*), **daisy** (*Bellis perennis*), **lady's bedstraw** (*Galium verum*), **bird's-foot trefoil** (*Lotus corniculatus*), **restharrow** (*Ononis repens*), **plantains** (*Plantago* spp.), **common storksbill** (*Erodium cicutarium*) and **smooth meadow grass** (*Poa pratensis*) being present.

ROUGH GRASSLAND

This is a varied community with only a small coastal influence, apart from the soil. The wind is the limiting growth factor. Ranker grasses develop in

these stable areas and coarser species appear. Two communities can be identified depending on drainage.

On the freely drained soils, grasses and **burnet rose** (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*) are dominant, with abundant **bramble** (*Rubus fruticosus*) and **knapweed** (*Centauria nigra*). Yarrow, **ragwort** (*Senecio jacobaea*), **hawkweeds** (*Hieracium* spp.) and **cranesbills** (*Geranium* spp.) are common, with occasional rarities such as **clustered bellflower** (*Campanula glomerata*).

Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) dominates on soils with impeded drainage, with bramble, ragwort and grasses common, and occasional knapweed, burnet rose and cranesbills. **Ragged robin** (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), **rough chervil** (*Chaerophyllum temulentum*) and **Michaelmas daisy** (*Aster novae-belgii*) are rarer plants associated with this habitat along with one or two orchid species.

SHORT GRASSLAND

Often in association with the rough grassland, is a herb rich short grassland influenced by rabbit grazing and trampling. Grasses dominate here with mixtures of cranesbills, daisy, lady's and **heath bedstraw** (*Galium saxatile*), **germander speedwell** (*Veronica chamaedrys*), plantains, bird's-foot trefoil, rest harrow and yarrow. The species mix is dependant on the level of grazing or trampling. The transition from dune grassland to short grassland is often immediate, as at Gosford car park

FRESHWATER MARSH/STREAM EDGE

This occurs mainly to the east of car park no.2, but is also associated with the other small burns. **Butterbur** (*Petasites hybridus*), **vetches** (*Vicia* spp.), **horsetails** (*Equisetum* spp.), **coltsfoot** (*Tussilago farfara*), meadowsweet, **cuckooflower** (*Cardamine pratensis*), **common fleabane**

(*Pulicaria dysenterica*) and **yellow flag iris** (*Iris pseudacorus*) are abundant, with many coarse grasses and sedges in waterlogged areas.

BRACKEN

Mostly at the east end of Gosford car park, predominately associated with south facing slopes away from salt spray. The **bracken** (*Pteridium aquilium*) tends to prevent many other species from surviving, but one or two shrubs occasionally occur and may benefit from the protection afforded by the tall fronds. Grasses, ragwort and lady's bedstraw are common.

Some areas of coastal grassland are threatened by encroaching bracken.

DUNE SCRUB

This is dominated by **sea buckthorn** (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) and **hawthorn** (*Crataegus monogyna*). The former was extensively planted as part of the management to stabilise the dune system. Unfortunately, it is an invasive species and suppresses other plants, so that in the thickets of sea buckthorn, the understory vegetation is sparse. Within more open areas, **elder** (*Sambucus nigra*), **sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), **ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*), **wych elm** (*Ulmus glabra*), **red campion** (*Silene dioica*), **spring beauty** (*Montia perfoliata*) and bramble colonise. Climbing plants such as **bittersweet** (*Solanum dulcamara*) and **bindweed** (*Calystegia sepium*) are also common.

TREES

There are very few trees on Longniddry Bents, many being wind-blown with suppressed growth. But in sheltered areas e.g. car park no.1, taller

specimens also occur. Sycamore is the dominant species with ash and wych elm also common.

SALTMARSH

A small fragmented area of saltmarsh occurs to the north-west of Gosford car park. This is dominated by **saltmarsh grass** (*Puccinellia maritima*), with **annual sea-blite** (*Suaeda maritima*) frequent, and occasional **sea milkwort** (*Glaux maritima*) and **greater sea spurrey** (*Spergularia media*). **Thrift** (*Armeria maritima*), **sea plantain** (*Plantago maritima*) and **sea aster** (*Aster tripolium*) can also be found here, but are scarce.

FAUNA

Despite its relatively small size and linear nature, Longniddry Bents is an important site for wildlife, particularly birds. It forms part of the Firth of Forth SSSI, SPA and Ramsar designated area, because of its importance for numbers of wildfowl and wading birds.

ORNITHOLOGICAL

Well over 100 species of bird have been recorded here. A bird species list is held by the Countryside Ranger Service, and survey data covering Longniddry Bents is held by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

In summer, a variety of songbirds nest here. These include the common species such as **blackbird**, **wren**, **chaffinch**, **blue tit** and **great tit**, as well as warblers such as **chiffchaff**, **willow warbler**, **sedge warbler** and **whitethroat**. Occasionally **lesser whitethroats** are recorded as well as

regular records of **reed bunting** and **linnet**. The grasslands of Ferny Ness attract **meadow pipit**, **skylark** and **grey partridge**.

During winter, Gosford Bay can hold large numbers of feeding and roosting wading birds, and also plays host to wintering **ducks**, **mergansers** and **divers**. The sea buckthorn and hawthorn bushes provide a good crop of berries that attracts wintering thrushes, including **fieldfare** and **redwing**. Seed producing plants in the grassland of Gosford Car Park attract flocks of **goldfinch** and **linnet**. The water off no 3 car park is one of the best places in Scotland to see **red-necked grebe**. Wildfowl and wader species have been recorded by East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service on Wetland Bird Surveys since 2006.

INSECTS AND ARACHNIDS

The grassland areas provide a plentiful food source for many insects, with flowering plants in particular attracting good numbers of butterflies. St. Mark's flies are very common in May, and occasional eruptions of the **winter moth** *Yponomeuta* occur. The caterpillars produce silk 'tents', which can completely cover the sea buckthorn bushes in the spring.

A butterfly transect in Gosford car park was started in 2016 and is monitored by the Countryside Ranger Service and volunteers.

MAMMALS

Rabbits dominate the mammal population of Longniddry Bents. The main factors controlling rabbit population size are suitable areas in which to burrow, and food source. Small populations of **stoat** and **weasel** do occur as well as the occasional passing **fox**. **Roe deer** are another 'visiting' species, members of a small population resident in Gosford Estate

occasionally straying across the coast road. **Water voles** have been present at the Longniddry Burn near no. 2 car park. The population is small and isolated however, and evidence of them has not been recorded within the last 10 years. Other small mammals recorded at the Bents are **wood mouse**, **bank vole**, **short-tailed vole**, **brown rat** and **common shrew**. One or two **pygmy shrews** have also been recorded.

OTHER

The coarse, free draining sand of much of the beach at Longniddry Bents, does not favour a large marine invertebrate population. However, small populations of **lugworm** (*Arenicola maritima*) frequent the lower stretches of the beach where the drainage is less severe. The rocky areas of the intertidal zone tend to favour encrusting invertebrates, such as **barnacles** (*Semibalanus balanoides*) and **limpets** (*Patella vulgata*), over the more fragile seaweed communities. Sheltered rock-pools and gullies harbour other invertebrates such as **shore crab** (*Carcinus maenas*), **edible crab** (*Cancer pagurus*) and **beadlet anemone** (*Actinia equina*) with occasional small fish such as the **butterfish** (*Pholis gunnellus*) being present.

LANDSCAPE

The most important landscape element is the Bents' wild, undeveloped and open coastal aspect. The area is hemmed in by woodland, wall, road and development. The main landscape feature with respect to visitors is the long sandy beach, which is easily accessible and relatively sheltered. The low, relatively flat feature of Ferny Ness allows for good views across the Firth of Forth towards Fife, and towards Edinburgh and the Forth Bridges in the west.

BIODIVERSITY

Longniddry Bents is a relatively narrow stretch of coastal habitat to the north of Longniddry. Despite the physical restrictions, the site has a diversity of ground conditions that result in a broad range of habitats. Intertidal rock, beach and saltmarsh, wetland and burn, grassland and scrub provide a varied landscape that is popular with people and wildlife.

Although the site lacks the scale of other coastal locations, it does support many species that are locally scarce. Clustered bell-flower and bloody cranesbill are two species with a restricted distribution in the Lothians which grow in glorious abundance at Longniddry Bents. Other scarce plants, though less visually obvious, include purple milk-vetch, hairy violet and spring cinquefoil.

Longniddry is known to be particularly important for its plant species and birds. In part this is because more surveys have been carried out for these groups of species than for other groups of wildlife. It is reasonable to predict, however, that Longniddry Bents will be important for other groups as well. To assess this, survey work for other wildlife groups should be encouraged at this site.

Moth trapping would reveal particularly interesting results because of equivalent surveys in nearby sites such as Aberlady Bay and Yellowcraig. Any such survey that increases our understanding of the site's ecology would be welcome.

Water vole is one species that requires further survey work. This species is extremely rare in East Lothian, with less than five confirmed populations in recent years. Water voles were recorded at Longniddry Bents within the last 10 years, with work to improve habitat conditions put in place. There is now concern that the species has died out from the site due to lack of suitable habitat.

Longniddry Bents is very accessible, with a varied landscape and plants that flower with particularly colourful displays. It is therefore a good location for people to experience wildlife with ease. It is also one of the first wild landscapes that walkers on the John Muir Way encounter when they leave Edinburgh, heading eastwards. This level of human experience makes Longniddry Bents a valuable asset for promoting biodiversity.

RECREATION AND ACCESS

RECREATION

Prior to the Council's active involvement in the management of Longniddry Bents, there were no defined car parking areas. This often led to cars being left along the coast road causing health and safety concerns, or being parked in environmentally sensitive areas with subsequent erosion problems. The Council created three car parking areas to concentrate parking into defined zones, thus relieving the pressure on more fragile areas in between.

There are car counter at the entrance to each of the 3 car parks, which give totals for the number of cars entering and leaving these car parks. With data gathered on car occupancy and the number of people accessing the Bents on foot, a figure of the number of visits per year to Longniddry Bents can be estimated. In an average year, we would expect visitor numbers to be in excess of 600 000. People visit the Bents predominately to sit on the beach, picnic, go for a walk, walk the dog or look at the view.

The visitor experience at the Bents varies depending on the location visited. Car parks 1 and 2 tend to be favoured by those visitors wishing to park close to the sandy beach. These car parks also offer a degree of shelter, away from the beach, from the cool breezes that can be experienced. Gosford Car Park is exposed, but offers a good view of the Firth of Forth without having to leave your car. This car park is favoured by those staying only a short time, such as passers-by stopping for lunch, or those wishing to play or picnic close to the car. It is also used, however by those taking longer walks, particularly those wishing to walk around Gosford Bay towards Aberlady in the east.

Longniddry Bents is a popular beach for water recreational activities, with the area around Ferny Ness been considered by windsurfers and kitesurfers to be of a national standard.

The beach is access by local horse riders and endurance rides as well as considerable numbers of beach visitors from Seton Sands caravan site.

There is incidents of bait digging, shellfish and winkle collection at Longniddry Bents and is monitored by East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service.

ACCESS

The John Muir Way follows the coastal edge of the site and is regularly used by visitors and residents of Longniddry village as part of the larger path network as well as long distance travellers.

The no. 3 car park is accessible for those who have restricted mobility, helped by the proximity of the car parking to the shoreline and the commanding views across to the Edinburgh skyline.

EAST LoTHIAN COUNTRYSIDE RANGER SERVICE

With high visitor numbers, regular patrols by the Ranger Service are needed to monitor and maintain the site, liaise with the public and assist visitors. The Countryside Ranger Service also provides environmental education to groups visiting Longniddry Bents.

EVALUATION

Assessing information in order to define the objectives

STRATEGIC

Longniddry Bents is the closest open stretch of sandy shore travelling east from Edinburgh and Central Scotland. It is close to the coast road and is easily accessible from the south and east. As well as attracting visitors from further afield, it has a close affinity with the local community of Longniddry.

SAFETY

Safety concerns arise at car parks where people and traffic can mix. Speed restriction measures in the car parks are in place to increase visitor safety. The proximity of the coastal road to the Bents is also a concern, particularly with regard to pedestrian access to the site from Longniddry Village.

PASSAGE ENVIRONMENT

The main vehicle access roads in and around the car parks are tarmaced. Height restrictors are in place at the entrances to all three car parks. Pedestrian paths through the site tend to be informal sandy tracks, although some have had levels of improvement to the surface, particularly along the route of the John Muir Way. Wooden bridges cross the burns at no.1 and 2 car parks and over the burn at the east end of Gosford Bay.

LENGTH

Longniddry Bents is approximately 5km long, with links to other coastal and countryside areas. The John Muir Way passes through it linking the Bents to other areas of East Lothian providing for the energetic user as well as casual short usage. The SPA, RAMSAR and SSSI designations of the extremities of Longniddry Bents define the interests of the site on account of its botany, ornithology and geology and seek to ensure that they are conserved.

ACCESS

The proximity to the main coastal road and three well -marked car parks makes Longniddry Bents readily accessible to passing traffic. Access along the beach from Port Seton to the west and via the John Muir Way from both east and west facilitate pedestrian access. The layout of the car parks makes vehicle access relatively easy to manage. Problems with motorbikes on the beach and along narrow dune paths do occur, however, as well as cars parking along the fragile dune grassland adjacent to the coast road. The basis of active management at the Bents is to safeguard the most sensitive areas whilst attempting to accommodate cars in areas where most people want to go.

OWNERSHIP

Longniddry Bents is owned by Wemyss and March Estate, and is managed by East Lothian Council under a Management Agreement with the Estate. A process of consultation is required with the Estate and third parties to engender any large-scale management changes.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Although Longniddry Bents has been greatly affected by human influence over the years, it has little in the way of archaeological heritage. The concrete anti-tank blocks serve as an historical reminder of the supposed strategic importance of this coastline during World War II, and should be preserved in some form, although the effect of the blocks on coastal erosion needs to be monitored. Geologically, the raised beach deposits are of particular interest and any developments should seek to preserve this feature.

WILDLIFE

Scrub and dune grassland are rare communities in East Lothian and therefore have environmental value, supporting unique wildlife communities. Historically, there was vehicular access to the area known as car park No. 4. To provide a better visitor experience and to aid conservation of national rare plant species, vehicular access to this area has been restricted and additional parking has been accommodated in No. 3. Saltmarsh is a nationally rare and endangered habitat, although its presence at Longniddry is confined to a small, patchy area at Ferny Ness. The burns are of particular importance as a fragile stronghold for water voles. Many of the factors of importance in the survival of this population are out with the scope of this management plan, but sensitive management of the watercourses at The Bents, and on neighbouring ground, needs to be considered.

DESIGNATION

Longniddry Bents was originally part of the Port Seton to Gosford Bay SSSI, designated for its ornithological importance. Below High Water mark of Longniddry Bents now forms part of the Firth of Forth SSSI,

Special Protection Area and Ramsar site designated in 2001. The SSSI notification includes a list of operations likely to damage the feature of interest, to which advance notice must be given to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

The Firth of Forth is a Special Protection Area (SPA) as designated by the Birds and Habitats Directives and a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

Above High Water mark the Bents is designated a Local Biodiversity Site.

BIODIVERSITY

Longniddry Bents contains several Priority Habitats and Species

VEGETATED SHINGLE

Vegetated shingle is a relatively scarce habitat in East Lothian. The vegetated shingle at Longniddry Bents (albeit relatively rocky shingle) is one of only a few small sites of this habitat in East Lothian. In Scotland there are an estimated 700 hectares of shingle. From a national perspective, therefore, the shingle habitat is virtually insignificant. It may be locally important dependent on the presence of specific plants or invertebrates.

SAND DUNES

This Priority Habitat comprises the dune face and marram grassland as well as associated coastal grasslands and dune slacks. There are about 630 hectares of dune system in East Lothian – amounting to about 2% of

the 33,000 hectares that occur in Scotland. The dune system at Longniddry is not as extensive as that of Aberlady Bay or Yellowcraig, but is sufficiently large to be of local importance.

SALTMARSH

A small fragment of saltmarsh occurs at Longniddry Bents. This is a relatively small fraction of the 136 hectares of saltmarsh that occur in East Lothian. Again, it may have local significance.

PRIORITY SPECIES

Water voles were extremely numerous across the UK until relatively recently. A national survey conducted in the 1980s and repeated in the 1990s showed a 90% decrease in water vole population size and range. A survey of water vole populations confirmed a population at Longniddry Bents in 2007, although there have been no further sightings since 2008. Suitable habitats should be maintained in and around Longniddry to support the species if it is still present or should it return.

OBJECTIVES

1. To manage Longniddry Bents as a recreational resource
2. To conserve and enhance the landscape and nature conservation value of Longniddry Bents
3. To foster community and educational awareness of and involvement in Longniddry Bents

POLICY

Provides a directional framework for the fulfillment of the objectives.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety will be managed on a risk assessment basis to ensure the health and safety of employees and visitors.

COUNTRYSIDE RANGER SERVICE

Deployment of the Countryside Ranger Service within Longniddry Bents should be maintained in order that Objectives, Policies and Prescriptions can be fulfilled.

MONITORING

A recording system is necessary to assist the management and review of Longniddry Bents and should include:

- A management plan that is regularly revised
- Monitoring and survey records of visitor numbers and activity
- Biological recording, including survey and monitoring records
- Geological and geomorphologic recording including survey and monitoring records
- Relevant research reports and topics for further study
- Information available to the general public
- Photographic surveys

MANAGEMENT

Longniddry Bents shall be managed as an entire management unit to retain its strategic importance.

Longniddry Bents can, if sympathetically managed, support a variety of recreational activities, in so far as that activity complies with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code/individual sporting Codes of Conduct. Several recreational activities occur at Longniddry Bents, and can be supported as long as they do not occur to the detriment of the experience of other site users.

Users will be expected/required to possess adequate third party insurance cover.

RECREATION

A system of paths will be maintained to allow ease of access for pedestrians from car parks to the beach

Horse-riders shall be encouraged to exercise responsibly and only exercise their horses at times and locations to avoid conflict with other users.

Commercial use of Longniddry Bents for recreation shall be considered and can be supported if of benefit to The Bents and East Lothian Council.

Wild camping as described in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code will be managed to minimise the impact on the Country Park and to promote responsible use of the outdoors.

Those wishing to have BBQs will be encouraged to use the area below the High Water Mark.

Water sampling records will be displayed during the Bathing Water Season.

VEHICLES

- The car park surfaces will be maintained to an appropriate standard.
- No motorised vehicles will be permitted at any other location other than designated car parks other than emergency vehicles.
- Motorised vehicles that operate in the water will not be allowed to access the shore from the site.

- Overnight stays will not be permitted.

EVENTS

- Written requests for events are required with permission granted subject to consultation with the Countryside Ranger.

ACCESS

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The use of sustainable modes of transport to Longniddry Bents will be actively encouraged, developed and promoted in line with any policy East Lothian Council may have for active travel and transport.

VEHICULAR ACCESS

All motorised vehicles are to be restricted to the car parks and their access roads. Cars will be required to utilise the main car park. Vehicles will be discouraged from parking along the access road.

Height barriers restrict the access of high sided vehicles. Those using the site regularly, e.g. for water sports, will be encouraged to apply for keys to access gate and to park within designated vehicle parking area.

Parking charges will apply at Longniddry Bents.

SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

Encourage as wide a range of access as possible, recognising the limitations of the site or the user group requirements. User groups should follow, and the Council will actively promote, recognised Codes of Conduct and would be expected to recognise and respect the requirements of other visitors.

FACILITIES

The toilets are open during daylight hours. The toilets have facilities for visitors with disabilities.

Infrastructure and site furniture will be maintained to a high standard.

A hot food or ice cream stance will only be let with suitable lease conditions.

LITTER

Visitors will be encouraged to take their litter home and ensure that the highest level of cleanliness is maintained.

The Council will ensure that the cleanliness at Longniddry Bents is maintained to a high standard.

The Council will seek to take action against polluters, eg. fly tipping and sea borne waste such as drums of waste oil.

DOGS

Legislation controlling and preventing dog fouling will be actively enforced at Longniddry Bents. This will be supported by education, including a possible action day co-ordinated between the Countryside Ranger Service, Dog Wardens and Community Wardens.

Responsible use of site by dog walkers is supported.

Commercial dog walkers are encouraged to adopt the East Lothian Council's voluntary Good Practice Scheme.

MAINTENANCE OF SITE FURNITURE

To ensure maintenance and inspections are programmed and all furniture and facilities within Longniddry Bents are designed to a high quality and standard. Such facilities should be as accessible to all visitors as possible within the limitations of the natural environment.

COASTAL PROTECTION

The East Lothian Shoreline Management Plan was produced in 2002 with the principal aim of providing a strategic framework for coastal defence in East Lothian. The plan identified Longniddry Bents as Unit 7, with a recommended strategic defence option of selectively holding the line, with defences maintained to protect the coast road.

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

Provision should consider the various means of delivering interpretation to visitors to the site and select the most appropriate within the context of the landscape of Longniddry Bents.

Schools and further education establishments will be encouraged to make use of Longniddry Bents for educational purposes.

VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The involvement of local community groups and volunteers in aspects of the care and maintenance of Longniddry Bents is to be sought and encouraged.

NATURE CONSERVATION

To encourage diversity of habitat, species and structure there is the requirement to:

- Conserve a general range of habitats from scrub, to coastal grassland and sand dune.
- Monitor the range of habitats to ensure that diversity is maintained both between habitat types, and within each habitat in terms of species composition.
- Conserve rare or unusual plant species.

- Planting shall be with traditional tree and shrub species and preference given to native species.
- There should be no deliberate introduction of plant and animal species without due consideration and appropriate consents.
- Herbicides or pest control operations should take place only after careful consideration.
- Maintenance operations should be carefully programmed and undertaken in such a manner as to minimise disturbance.
- Commercial collection of bait and shellfish is to be monitored and appropriate steps taken as required.

PRESCRIPTIONS

OBJECTIVE	PRESCRIPTION	ACTION	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	EXECUTIVE
To manage Longniddry Bents as a recreational resource	To provide a welcome and assistance to site visitors	Regular patrolling of Longniddry Bents by East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service						ELCRS
		Maintain visitor information boards and populate with topical information regularly						ELCRS
	Vehicle and car parking management	Maintain car park surface and facilities – access roads, signage, sleeping policemen etc.						L & C
		Undertake programmed flail mow of edges in No. 1 car park						L & C
		Undertake annual repainting of all signage						ELCRS
		Maintain bollards, fencing, and gates						L & C
		Record incidents of joyriding on site. Install additional bollards as required						ELCRS
		Landscape areas to prevent parking in areas out-with official car park including the coast road						L & C
	Prohibit unauthorised high-sided vehicle access	Maintain height restrictors at access to car parks						L & C
		Maintain and update database of key holders						L & C
	Ensure good standard of cleanliness and maintenance of toilet blocks	Maintain toilet block						Property Services
		Upgrade toilet blocks starting at No.1						Facilities Man

OBJECTIVE	PRESCRIPTION	ACTION	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	EXECUTIVE
To manage Longniddry Bents as a recreational resource	Improve visitor facilities	Annual programme of inspection and maintenance of onsite facilities, picnic tables, edging, steps, bridges etc and replace						ELCRS
	Monitor numbers and trends of recreational activities	Record and report on types of recreation, areas of Longniddry Bents used, numbers, frequency, disturbance and user group conflicts						ELCRS
		Monitor large organised events, e.g. IronMan						ELCRS
		Monitor levels of use from calibrated car counters						ELCRS
	Support and give guidance to new recreational activities where appropriate	Assess and respond to new activities with respect to the SOAC and other recognised Codes of Conduct						ELCRS
	Ensure site visitors recreate in compliance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code	Enforce a 'no camping' policy except in circumstances of genuine 'Wild Camping'						ELCRS
		Encourage those wishing to have fires/BBQs to utilize area below the High Water Mark						ELCRS
	Ensure access routes for key user groups are kept clear of encroaching vegetation	Undertake regular cutting back of sea-buckthorn and other vegetation from path verges						ELCRS/ Amenity Services
	Consider Bylaws	Consider new byelaws or management rules of areas of management not covered by statutory legislation, and enforce						L & C

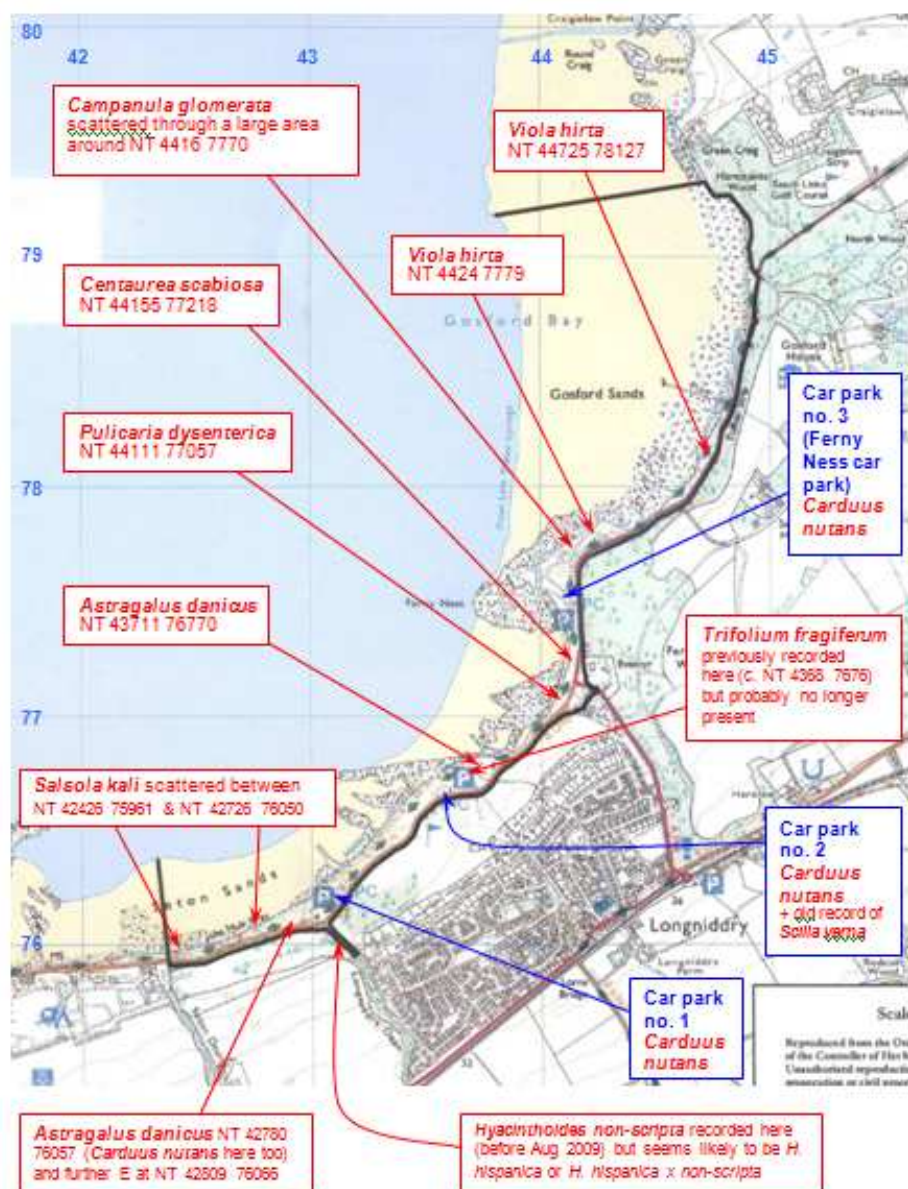
OBJECTIVE	PRESCRIPTION	ACTION	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	EXECUTIVE
To manage Longniddry Bents as a recreational resource	Preservation of Seaside Award	Display bathing water information during Bathing Water Season, Award information and flag						ELCRS
	Aim to reduce dog fouling incidences across Longniddry Bents	Assess requirement for additional dog waste bins and acquire if appropriate						L & C/GCC
		Create strategies to highlight the issue of dog fouling						ELCRS
		Enforce dog fouling legislation with a programme of 'hit days'						ELCRS/Dog Warden/Com Warden
	Ensure car park and wider site is kept clear of litter	Ensure any litter/ fly tipping is cleared in a timely manner						ELCRS
	Oil Pollution Strategy	Respond as appropriate to ELC Oil Spill Plan						L & C/ ELCRS
	Fire Action Plan	Display 'high risk of fire sign' during extended dry periods						ELCRS
To conserve the landscape and nature conservation value of Longniddry Bents	Establish Site Assessment process	Undertake and record Site Assessment						Biodiversity Officer
	Manage coastal grassland biodiversity	Strim/cut to maintain as grassland in specific areas and remove cuttings from site						ELCRS/L & C
		Remove sea buckthorn from areas where it encroaches on coast grassland						ELCRS/L & C
		Control bracken in areas where it encroaches on coastal grassland						ELCRS/L & C
		Monitor actions						ELCRS

OBJECTIVE	PRESCRIPTION	ACTION	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	EXECUTIVE
To conserve the landscape and nature conservation value of Longniddry Bents	Limit the spread of sea buckthorn onto grassland areas	Develop value criteria and scoring system for areas of sea buckthorn, based on wildlife value, access management, coastal protection etc						L & C/ ELCRS
		Create five year plan of sea-buckthorn management and control						L & C/ ELCRS
		Deliver sea buckthorn management plan, monitor and report on changes						L & C/ ELCRS
	Manage freshwater habitats	Removal of non-native plant species						ELCRS
		Develop strategy for burns and wetland areas with respect to biodiversity and impact on coast road and culverts						L & C/ Transportation
		Survey <i>Typha</i> in wetland area of No. 2						ELCRS
		Establish extent of water vole population						ELCRS
		Monitor actions						ELCRS
	Manage trees/ woodlands	Selectively thin or plant to allow regeneration and uneven age structure						L & C
		Preserve profile of neighbouring woodlands						L & C
	Monitor the condition of the foreshore	Post Equinox spring tide and post storm event fixed point photography of foredune						ELCRS
		Post Equinox spring tide and post storm event fixed point photography of shore front of Gosford Bay						ELCRS

OBJECTIVE	PRESCRIPTION	ACTION	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	EXECUTIVE
To conserve the landscape and nature conservation value of Longniddry Bents	Manage intertidal zone	Remove litter from intertidal zone						L & C/ Amenity Services
		Monitor and report on incidents of bait digging, winkle and shellfish collection						ELCRS
		Monitor salt marsh and plant species present						ELCRS
	Monitor target plant species	Monitor and report on plant species as per recommendations in Averis (2009) see Appendix a						ELCRS
		Monitor and report on <i>Viola hirta</i>						ELCRS
	Carry out invertebrate surveys	Carry out site butterfly transect in No. 4 car park						ELCRS/ Volunteer
	Additional site flora/fauna data	Continue to add to site species database						ELCRS
To foster community and educational involvement in and awareness of Longniddry Bents	Foster an identification by local communities with Longniddry Bents	Liaise with Longniddry Community Council and other Community groups						ELCRS
		Liaise with Community Wardens and Police						ELCRS
		Encourage community action and volunteer involvement in specific tasks						ELCRS
	Foster a relationship between the local school and Longniddry Bents	Encourage local school classes to use Longniddry Bents as an educational resource						ELCRS

SUMMARY OF KEY PROJECTS

ACTION	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Upgrade toilet blocks starting at No.1					
Survey <i>Typha</i> in wetland area of No. 2					
Establish extent of water vole population					
Monitor salt marsh and plant species present					
Develop strategy for burns and wetland areas with respect to biodiversity and impact on coast road and culverts					
Monitor and report on <i>Viola hirta</i>					
Develop value criteria and scoring system for areas of sea buckthorn, based on wildlife value, access management, coastal protection etc					
Create five year plan of sea-buckthorn management and control					



Appendix a. Map to show locations of notable vascular plant species at Longniddry Bents, reproduced from Averis, 2009

REFERENCES

Marland, A. Cover photography

Averis, B. (2009) Recommendations for botanical monitoring at Longniddry Bents, East Lothian, August 2009.