



coastal plain



Integrated landscape character



MAP 23a - Coastal Plain Key Plan

This is a very open coastal landscape with long views and a strong relationship to the sea. The area is underlain by the shelly sands and gravels of the Norwich Crag formation, but the dominant influence is the extensive superficial deposits of glacial sands and gravels. The largely sandy low cliffs and shallow sand dune systems are easily eroded by the sea and are protected for much of their length by breakwaters or low concrete walls. Topography is one of the main defining elements of the Coastal Plain landscape - the land is flat to very gently undulating, but a number of farmsteads and churches (Walcott and East Ruston) are sited on minor ridges. These prominent and distinctive historic skyline features, along with the massive buildings, communication towers and lights of the Bacton Gas Terminal, are a definitive characteristic of the Coastal Plain.

The Coastal Plain is predominantly open arable farmland with occasional low hedgerows and no hedgerow trees. Where woodland exists, it is in small copses, mostly associated with settlement but occasionally as isolated units. There are some mature wooded belts around larger 'Rectory' properties and occasional small scrubby woodlands in lower lying areas. On the fringes of the Broads, there are more extensive scrub belts and reed fens/wet grazing meadows, which are of high biodiversity value. Field boundaries are typically banked, with a ditch but often no hedge. Where a hedge is present it is often very low and scrubby. Pasture tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion; it is often for horses and is found in smaller fields on the fringes of older settlements. Almost all the pasture is improved and of relatively limited ecological value. Grassed margins are not particularly common due to the high agricultural land grade over much of the area. There are some pre-C18th enclosures, particularly near Waxham and, given the dispersed settlement pattern and field boundary evidence, it is highly probable that the basic structure of field boundaries is of some antiquity.

Most settlement is within the coastal fringe, with houses abutting the coastline for much of its length. This settlement pattern has developed gradually through the ad-hoc spread of holiday plots for structures ranging from beach-huts through more sophisticated crescents of prefab inter-war and post war bungalow type holiday homes to caravan parks and estates of holiday flats and bungalows. An underlying nucleated 'older' (pre late C19th) settlement pattern is still discernable in the sites of older properties, including historic churches, C19th semi-detached holiday houses, farm workers cottages and even listed C17th farmhouses. Away from the coast this historic settlement pattern is more apparent. Here there is a dispersed pattern of small semi-nucleated villages and small farmsteads and cottages with larger than average gardens – an open, less controlled or estate type landscape based on individual small landholdings. The settlements are connected by a network of minor roads, but this is dominated by the straight coastal road (B1159) which is unrelated to settlement or topographic features and which may be Roman in origin.

Landscape sensitivity and change

Only small areas of the Coastal Plain are found within the Norfolk Coast AONB. Key environmental assets which are sensitive to change are:

- The long seaward views and the immediate foreground to these views – the low sandy cliffs and sand dunes with brackish scrub-enclosed pools to the rear of the dunes - which abut parts of the shoreline.
- The landscape setting of prominent churches and historic farmsteads, which are often sited on minor ridges.
- The remnant woodlands and low hedgerows, which provide a structure to the landscape and help to integrate built development – the remnant low lying scrubby woodlands, fen and grazing meadows are of particularly high ecological value and in some areas connect to the extensive wetland habitats of the Broads.
- Older, multi-species hedgerows, which are of relatively high ecological value.
- Ditches around fields, particularly where these connect to small water courses and scrubby woodland habitats.
- The smaller pastures, hedgerows and woodlands which contribute to the landscape setting of some older settlements.



Variations in character

Variations in character and inherent landscape sensitivities are highlighted in the following distinctive landscape character areas within the Coastal Plain landscape type, which fall within the AONB area:

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Bacton to Sea Palling - CP1	Level or very gently rolling landform, which gradually declines towards Sea Palling and becomes sea fen around Horsey. Settlement pattern is linear along the coast, with large areas of ad hoc development, but underlying historic dispersed semi-nucleated settlement pattern just about apparent. Large caravan and chalet parks along coastal fringe – some (eg Bacton) have wooden huts of some antiquity – ‘pre-war’. Plotlands holiday developments may be quite isolated and extensive in contrast to some older settlements (eg Happisburgh) have a distinctive vernacular architecture of small cottages with thatched roofs and coursed high quality flintwork. Bacton Gas Terminal is a dominant influence – less so from north (Paston) side from which it is partly hidden by rising ground.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining trees and smaller enclosures on the outskirts of the older settlements • Hedgerows and hedgerow trees, which are relatively uncommon, but which contribute a sense of enclosure and scale • Early C20th structures which reflect the special history of the area – eg pre-war wooden chalets in the park at Bacton, wooden and board bungalows (distributed along the coast) and former wartime defensive structures eg pill boxes and spigot mortar posts.

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
<p>Sea Palling to Waxham - CP2</p>	<p>Lower landform, which becomes sub sea level in places. Predominantly arable land use. Simple area with few jarring elements, except for large poultry units and some extensive touring caravan sites. Historic Barn, Hall and Church complex at Waxham. Isolated and remote character, with some areas of scrub, fen and reed on the fringes of the Broad. Few hedged boundaries – mostly ditched and reed-lined and very few field boundary trees (mostly willows). Coastal area is duned and there are brackish ‘slacks’ – scrub enclosed water bodies just to the rear of the dune system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated and remote character • Setting for the historic barn, church and hall complex at Waxham • Scrub belts and extensive reed fens/wet grazing meadows on the fringes of the Broad • System of coastal dunes and brackish slacks

Key forces for change



- Coastal erosion - there is a need to plan adaptation to coastal change.
- Loss of woodlands and hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Pressures for further extensive built development – within and outside existing settlement limits.
- Small-scale, incremental and infill development within settlements, including subdivision of larger gardens, improvements to driveways, upgrading of unadopted roads, external lighting and inappropriate boundary fencing - which all add to the standard, suburban character of development.
- New road layouts which introduce standard highway elements (kerbing, signage and widening).
- Introduction of new agricultural buildings, which are increasingly replacing older barns and the conversion of older barns to residential use, with the associated erosion of rural character this brings due to driveways, pylons, car parking areas, external lighting, gardens, fencing etc.
- Wind turbines.
- Telecom masts.



20 year vision

Managed change

Woodlands, shelterbelts and hedgerows form an inter-connected network across the open farmland. Additional woodland planting integrates settlements and the main coastal road within the wider arable landscape, forming a backdrop to views.



Integrated landscape guidance

1 Conserve and enhance the character of the characteristic seaward views

- Give priority to the conservation and enhancement of landscape elements which form the immediate foreground to the seaward views – the low sandy cliffs, beaches and breakwaters and the sand dunes with brackish scrub-enclosed pools which sometimes occur to the rear of the dunes.
- Enhance the character and quality of the coastal footpaths and viewpoints along the coast.

2 Conserve and enhance the remnant habitats of biodiversity value, which also contribute to the overall visual structure of the Coastal Plain

- Conserve and enhance all remnant woodlands, copses and woodland belts and all hedgerows.
- Seek opportunities for new woodland and hedgerow planting, perhaps in connection with new built development, aiming to increase connectivity through intensively farmed and developed areas.
- Give priority to the conservation and enhancement of the scrubby woodland and wetland habitats – fen, grazing marshes and reed-beds in low lying areas and on the fringes of the Broads, aiming to make and enhance connections between habitats along watercourses which drain towards the Broads.

Integrated landscape guidance (continued)

3 Conserve and enhance the character and landscape setting of the Coastal Plain settlements

- Conserve and seek to enhance remnant woodlands, tree belts, individual trees and small pastures which form the landscape setting and gateway to some of the older settlements. These features should not be lost as a result of infill development.
- Initiate a programme of landscape restoration within and on the approaches to the principal settlements, with planting, signage and public realm areas designed to enhance the 'view from the road' and from public rights of way and viewpoints along the coast.
- Ensure new large rural structures (eg agricultural buildings, caravan parks and other commercial developments) are carefully integrated into the surrounding landscape with appropriate planting, colouring of buildings, minimal signage and careful design of lighting and access roads.
- Initiate a detailed design guide for the Coastal Plain settlements which seeks to identify the intrinsic character of the settlements and ensure that key aspects of that character – scale of buildings, types of boundary features, width of sidewalk, tree cover etc) is reflected in future new development, extensions and replacement buildings.
- Initiate a programme of off-site planting which is designed to integrate the Bacton Gas Terminal in long views along the coast. Such planting might include strategic landscaping belts, copses, hedgerows, and replacement coastal habitat at a distance from the site. The aim would be to partially screen and integrate the Terminal complex while not affecting the access to the site or its security. Although the Terminal is not in the AONB, it is within the overall viewshed of AONB landscapes and the implementation of this programme would secure an enhanced landscape character at a point where the AONB is relatively narrow and vulnerable to the erosion of its boundaries.

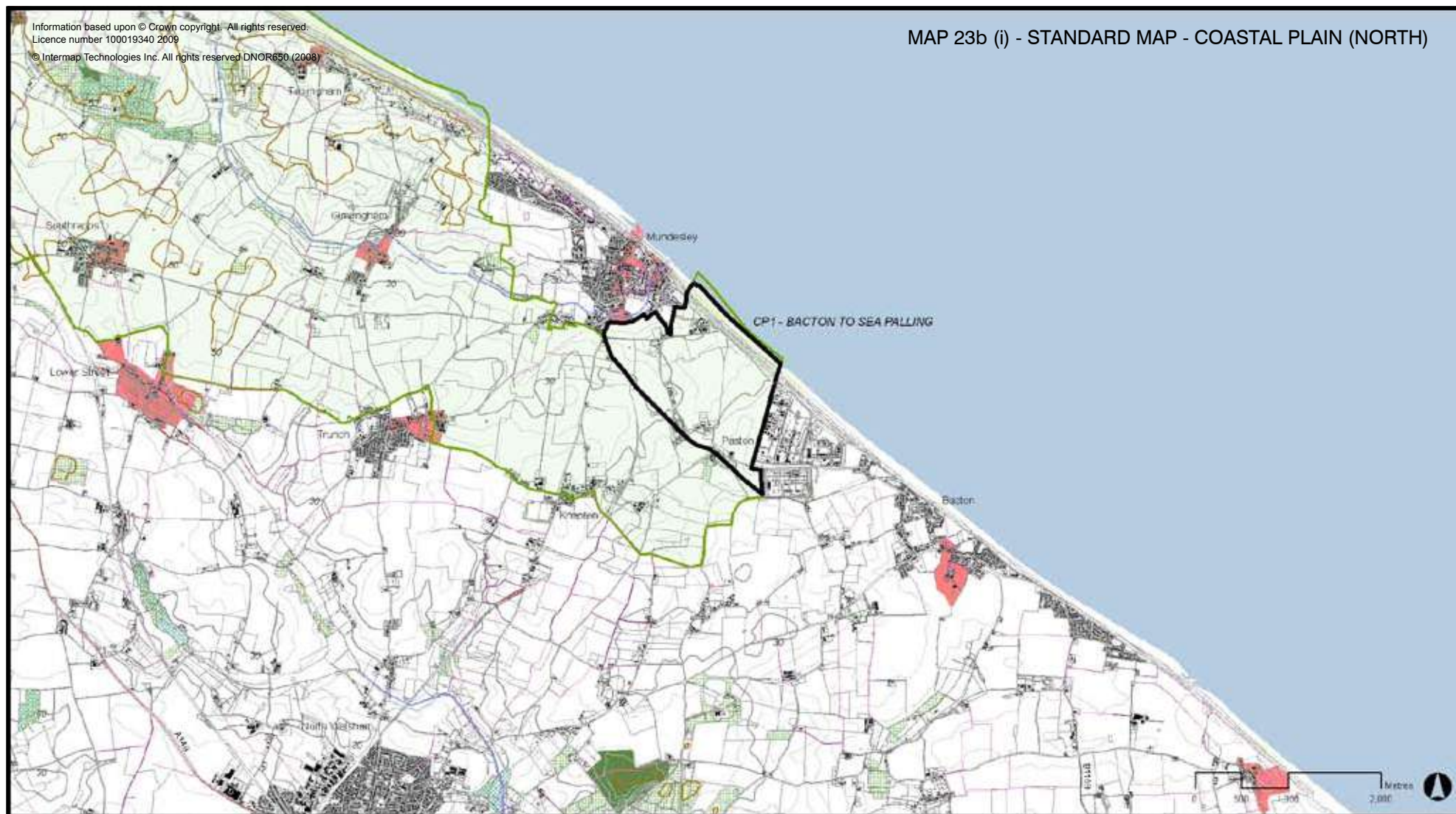
Detailed maps

- **Standard** - landform, drainage, rights of way and statutory designations
- **Biodiversity** - ecological networks ¹
- **Historic landscapes** - broad historic landscape character types ² and data from the Historic Environment Record ³

¹ *Norfolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, July 2006, Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk*

² *Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, January 2009, Norfolk Historic Landscape Character - a report on the Norfolk Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project*

³ *www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk - provides a computerised, searchable database (with integrated digital mapping) of all areas of known archaeological activity, sites, finds, cropmarks, earthworks, industrial remains, structures and historic buildings in the county*



Statutory Designations

- Ramsar Site
- Special Protection Area
- Ancient Woodland
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- County Wildlife Sites

- Local Nature Reserve
- Forestry Commission Woodland
- Special Area of Conservation

Heritage

- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Historic Parks and Gardens

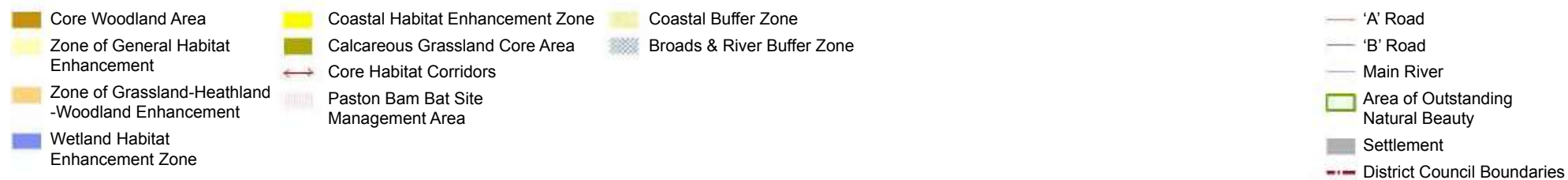
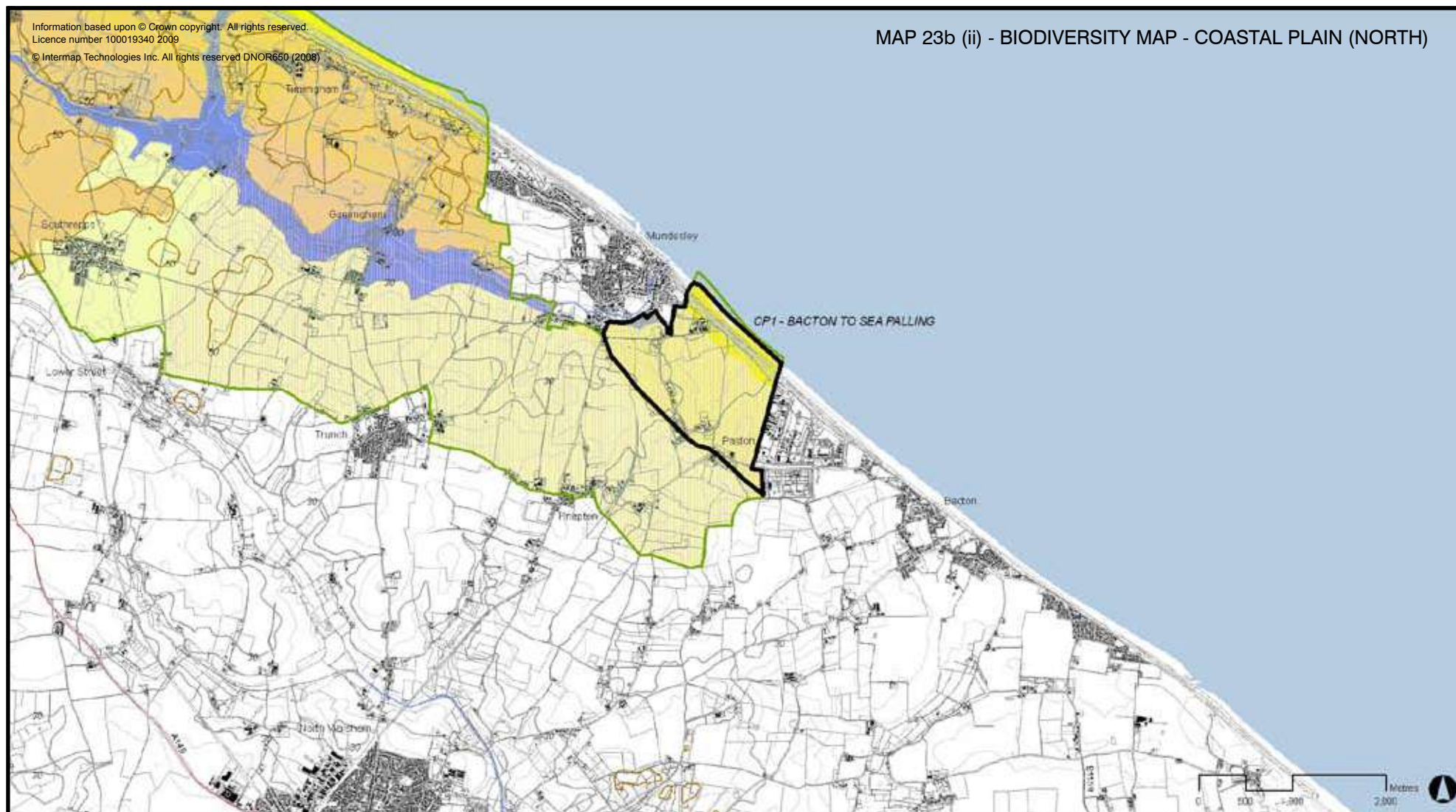
Connections

- National Cycle Route
- Cycleways
- Long Distance Path
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Restricted Byway

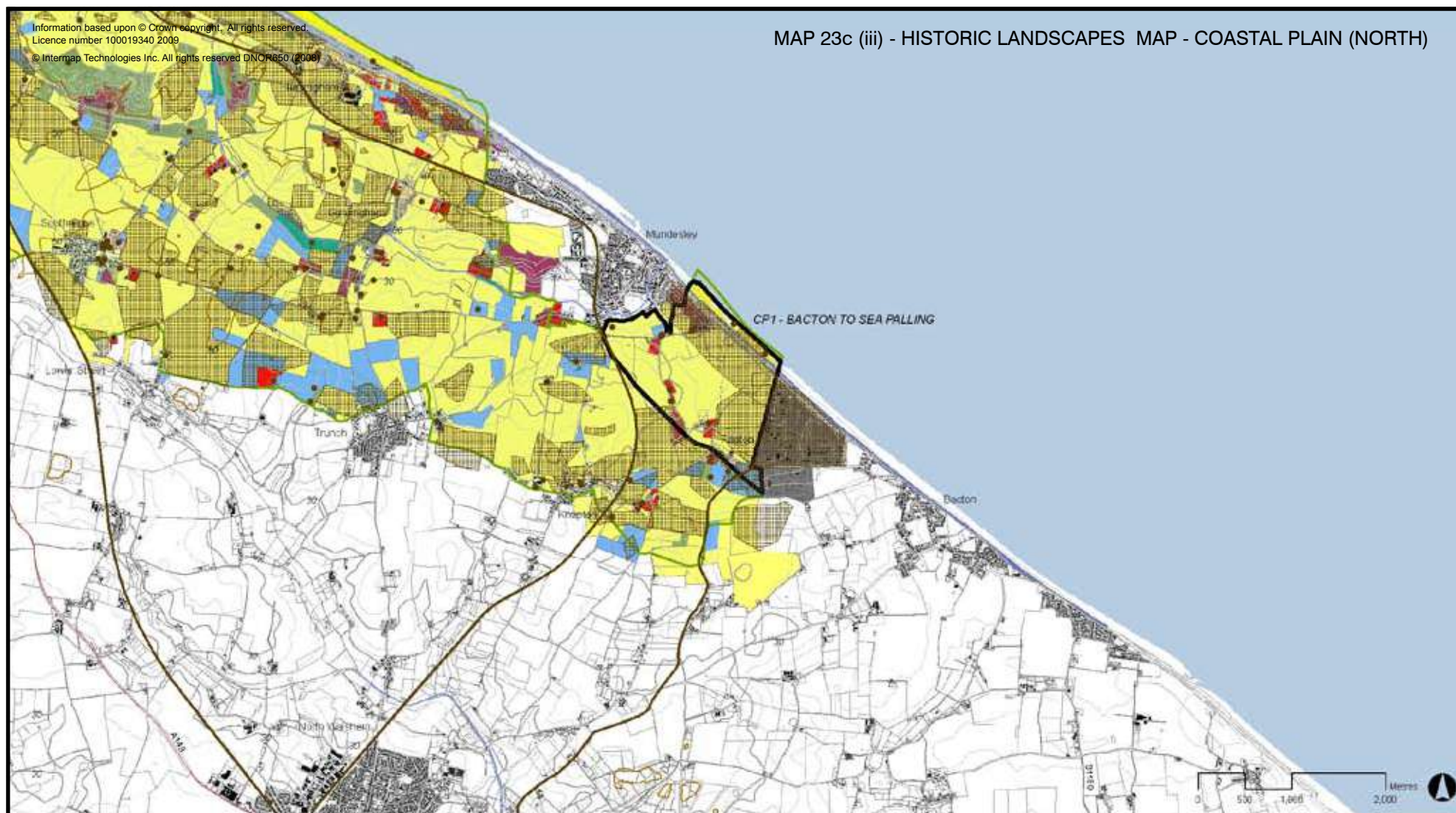
Topography

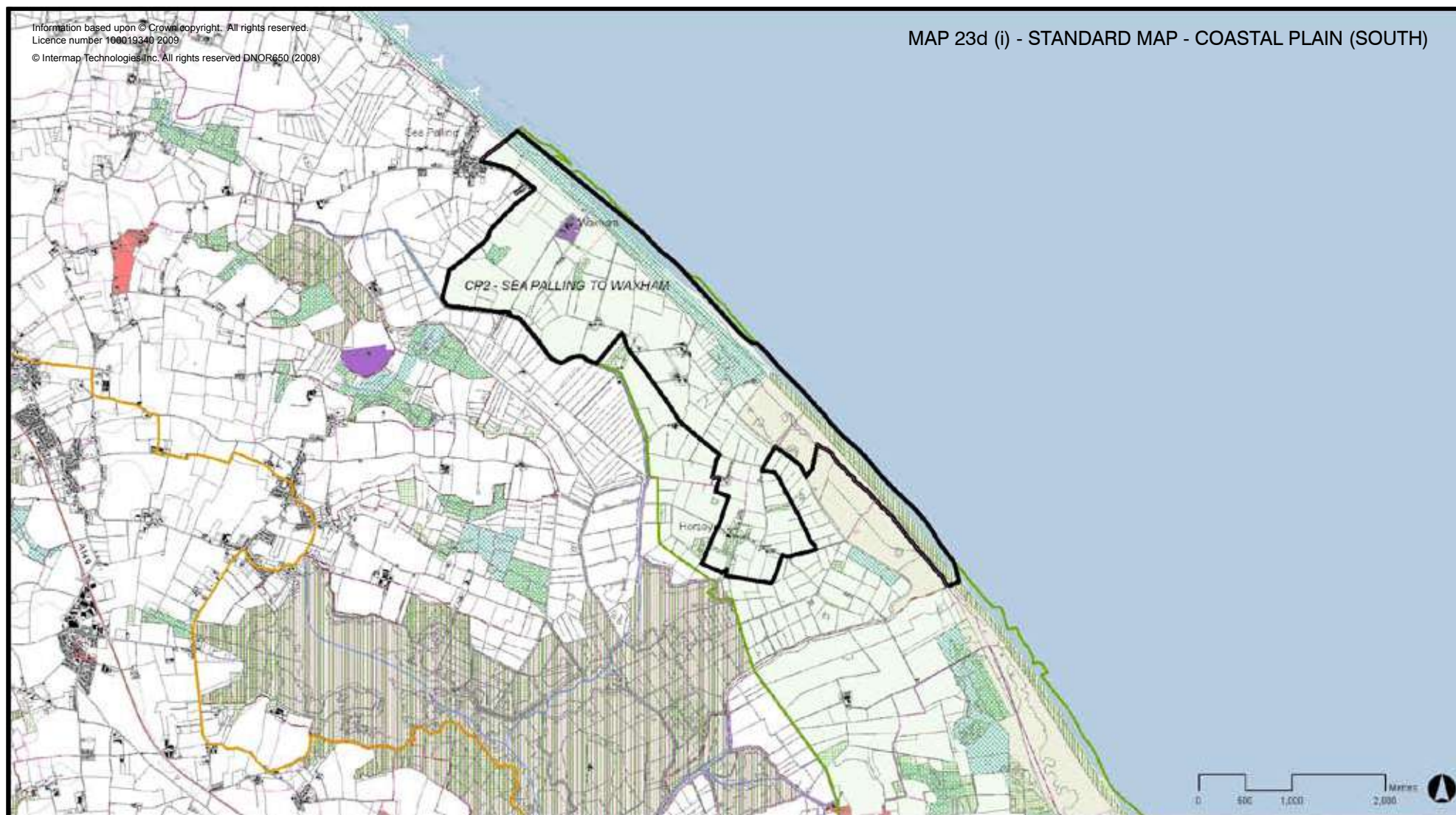
- Contour Line (Interval 5 m)
- 30 m Contour Line
- 50 m Contour Line

- 'A' Road
- 'B' Road
- Main River
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Settlement
- District Council Boundaries



MAP 23c (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES MAP - COASTAL PLAIN (NORTH)





Statutory Designations

- Ramsar Site
- Special Protection Area
- Ancient Woodland
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- County Wildlife Sites

- Local Nature Reserve
- Forestry Commission Woodland
- Special Area of Conservation

Heritage

- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Historic Parks and Gardens

Connections

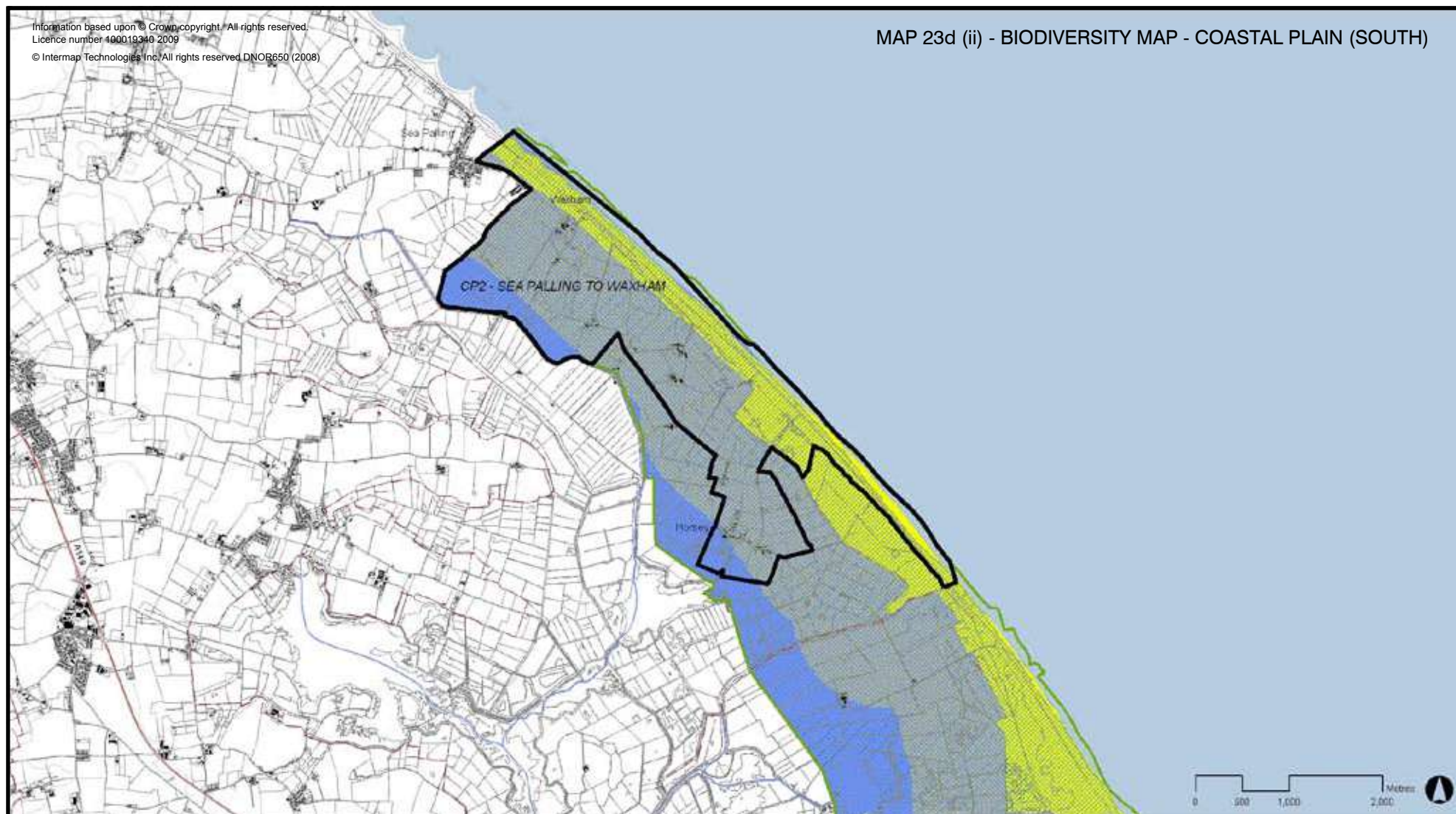
- National Cycle Route
- Cycleways
- Long Distance Path
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Restricted Byway

Topography

- Contour Line (Interval 5 m)
- 30 m Contour Line
- 50 m Contour Line

- 'A' Road
- 'B' Road
- Main River
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Settlement
- District Council Boundaries

MAP 23d (ii) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - COASTAL PLAIN (SOUTH)



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|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Core Woodland Area | Coastal Habitat Enhancement Zone | Coastal Buffer Zone | 'A' Road |
| Zone of General Habitat Enhancement | Calcareous Grassland Core Area | Broads & River Buffer Zone | 'B' Road |
| Zone of Grassland-Heathland-Woodland Enhancement | Core Habitat Corridors | | Main River |
| Wetland Habitat Enhancement Zone | Paston Bam Bat Site Management Area | | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| | | | Settlement |
| | | | District Council Boundaries |

