



coastal slopes



Integrated landscape character



MAP 15a - Coastal Slopes Key Plan

The north and west-facing Coastal Slopes form a gentle and prominent backdrop to the low-lying coastal edge landscapes – the Open Coastal Marshes and Drained Coastal Marshes. The slopes form part of Norfolk’s west-facing chalk escarpment and broadly mark the northern and western limits of the underlying Chalk bedrock. The west-facing slopes near Heacham are underlain by Lower Greensand, which outcrops to the west of the Chalk. The gently rising slopes have a rounded landform, shaped by layers of glacial Boulder Clays and River Terrace deposits. The even, uniform slope is only broken by the valleys of the Heacham River (to the south west) and the River Burn at Burnham Overy. Land use and land cover patterns are fairly consistent throughout the Coastal Slopes and the adjacent Plateau Farmland landscapes to the south and east. There are long uninterrupted views over the coastal landscapes to the north and west, but inland the plateau edge is defined by a strong ridgeline that restricts views. Here the horizon line is characterised by silhouettes of deciduous and coniferous trees and hedgerows marking the edge of the plateau.

The Coastal Slopes were well settled from Mesolithic times, but most evidence dates from the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods, when round barrows and ring-ditches would have dominated the Iron Age landscape. Settlement of the area increased with the building of Branodunum Roman Fort, Brancaster, in c. 230 AD. The Roman fort would have attracted a considerable population to provide services to the garrison. When the Romans left, settlement within the area continued and a number of coastal villages have their origins within the Saxon period. Throughout the Norman period, many homesteads in Coastal Slopes villages would have had land in open fields on the slopes and common rights on the marshes. There was relatively little woodland and open fields are likely to have been devoted to barley and sheep. They were enclosed to form the landscape pattern that persists today as a result of the Parliamentary Enclosure Acts between 1793 and 1815.

The Coastal Slopes have a simple, relatively uniform landscape pattern of medium-sized geometric arable fields. There are some small areas of permanent pasture, but these are limited and do not have a strong influence on overall character. Fields are typically bounded by a network of flailed hawthorn hedges which often follow the lines of contours and run parallel to the east-west A149. The consistent hedgerow lines, parallel to the road, exaggerate the linear, narrow extent of this landscape type. Minor roads follow the same historic pattern, running upslope at right angles to the A149. Most are flanked by hedgerows which channel views, restricting visibility across the Coastal Slopes.

Integrated landscape character (continued)

The rivers (Heacham and Burn) and streams are vitally important wetland corridors, linking the farmland habitats inland with the marshes on the coasts. At a broader scale, hedgerows, together with small pockets of deciduous woodland, are also important ecological corridors through the agricultural landscape.

The linear settlements follow the routes of long established roads and lanes. There is a sequence of villages along the A149, as well as dispersed clusters of farm buildings. These include many substantial barns, some of which date from the 18th century. Characteristic features include long pantiled roofs and windowless walls that mix brick, flint pebble and chalk. Villages are characterised not only by buildings, but also by a variety of spaces. Common land is an important feature of the Coastal Slopes and open spaces formed part of the village's traditional structure; many were formerly used as village greens or for agriculture. Towards the edges of settlements, horse paddocks and associated fences and boundary tapes are visible within views from the surrounding landscape.

Landscape sensitivity and change

Key environmental assets which are particularly sensitive to change are:

- The open panoramic views northwards towards the coast from the higher slopes to the south - for instance, changes to the character, scale and tree cover in the string of settlements along the A149 would be particularly prominent in these characteristic views.
- The popular open views northwards from the villages across the coastal landscapes are also vulnerable to changes (in landscape and/or built form) on the northern fringes of the villages.
- All the mature trees and open spaces between and within the villages are critically important in defining their landscape setting and maintaining a positive sequence of views along the A149.
- The specific combinations of traditional building materials which are characteristic of each village are also distinctive and vulnerable to the cumulative influence of standardised design.



Landscape sensitivity and change (continued)

- The river corridors of the Heacham River and the River Burn are ecologically important and have a range of floodplain wetland habitats, including wet grassland, lowland meadows, wet woodland and reedbed.
- The network of hedgerows which defines the boundaries of fields and roads is a key structuring feature within the landscape. It is relatively intact, but is vulnerable to change, particularly in areas of relatively open countryside, where tree cover is limited.
- The remnant small pockets of woodland, which are valuable and prominent landscape features.

Variations in character

Variations in character and inherent landscape sensitivities are highlighted in the following distinctive landscape character areas within the Coastal Slopes (AONB area):

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Heacham - CS1	Predominantly farmland landscape, but the parkland associated with Heacham Hall is locally significant and forms a backdrop to views from the AONB. Open large arable fields are bounded by hedgerows with relatively few trees. Small pockets of woodland surrounding Heacham Park provide some sense of enclosure. Urban fringe influences are strong towards the edge of Heacham.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pockets of mature woodland in the wider farmland • The network of hedgerows which defines the field pattern and overall structure of the landscape is sensitive to change • Existing vegetation fringing the settlement edges of Heacham is important in defining the landscape setting of the village • The floodplain and wetland habitats associated with the Heacham River include priority BAP habitats and the entire river corridor is sensitive to change

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
<p>Holme to Brancaster - CS2</p>	<p>Settlement pattern is dominated by the linear villages of Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham, Titchwell, Brancaster and Brancaster Staithe, which line the busy A149 (main east-west coastal road). A series of rural roads lead southwards at right angles to the main road – one follows the Peddars Way. A mixture of traditional buildings (occasionally interspersed with more modern development) dominates built character. Buildings within Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe and Burnham Deepdale, are faced with a mixture of chalk clunch, and flint, whilst within Holme-next-the-Sea, a mixture of carstone, chalk clunch, flint and mixed rubble is visible. In most settlements, distinctive red pantiles dominate roofscape character, contrasting with the generally white or grey clunch. Churches are prominent landmarks within most of the villages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The generally intact, coherent network of hedgerows which defines the landscape pattern • The conservation of landscape character (with mature trees, hedgerows and high quality built environment) within the existing 'strategic gaps' of open countryside between the linear villages is crucially important to the character of the Coastal Slopes • The distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within the villages are sensitive characteristics • Village churches are subtle landmark features • Open views (particularly from the higher slopes) towards the church towers within the villages • Sense of tranquillity varies within the area; it is stronger within the more elevated landscapes to the south and reduces towards the villages and the A149

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
<p>Burnham Overy - CS3</p>	<p>Landscape is contained to the east by the mature parkland landscape of Holkham Hall and to the west by the relatively narrow course of the River Burn (which meets the coast to the west of Burnham Overy Staithe). Mature trees within the parkland are strikingly visible along the skyline. Medium to large-scale pattern of arable fields, delineated by a relatively intact network of hedges. The small-nucleated village of Burnham Overy Staithe nestles at the edge of Overy Creek, overlooking the marshes. The village has a distinctive, diverse mixture of orange brick and pantile traditional buildings, with contrasting chalk clunch, flint and pebble facings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic views north and westwards from Burnham Overy Staithe, across the expanse of intricate saltmarshes against a backdrop of huge skies contribute to a strong recognisable sense of place • Strong sense of openness within views northwards towards the coast from the higher slopes • Distinctive settlement of Burnham Overy with a mix of traditional building materials • Intact hedgerow network and mature trees on the fringes and within Burnham Overy contribute to the mature structure of the landscape and integrate the settlement within the landscape in views from elevated slopes to the south • The floodplain and wetland habitats associated with the River Burn include priority BAP habitats and the entire river corridor is sensitive to change

Key forces for change

NEW FARM BUILDINGS CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT



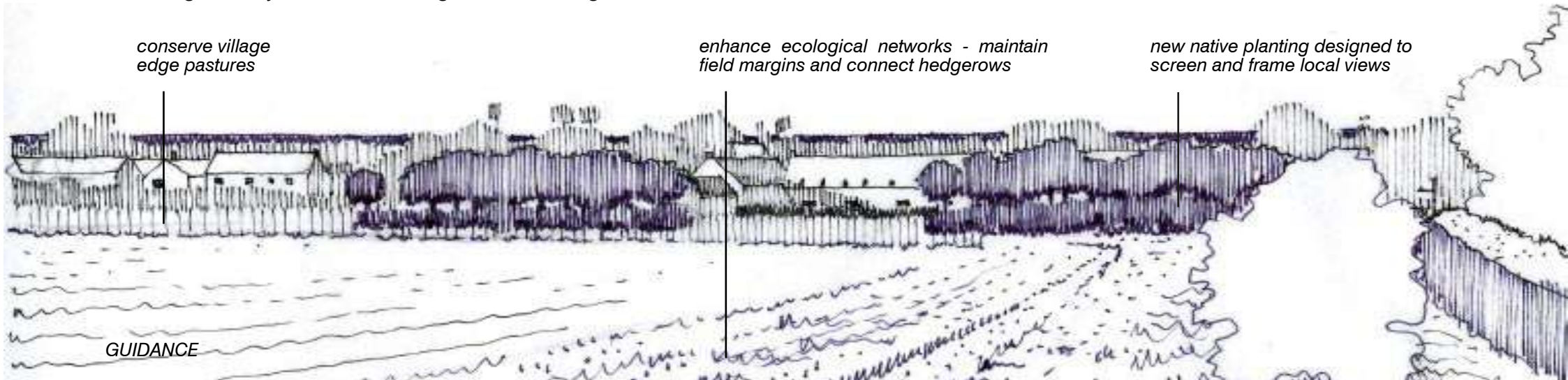
- Potential new large or small scale or tall vertical developments, which may block or influence recognisable views to and from the coast.
- Pressure on both the coast road and minor rural roads from increasing recreation and tourism associated with the North Norfolk Coast.
- Pressure for parking facilities associated with the coast and coastal villages (with associated visual intrusion).
- Conversion of agricultural buildings to houses and recreational facilities.
- Intensification of arable farming practices, resulting in decline and potential loss of hedgerows at field boundaries.
- Small-scale or incremental development within villages which may be inconsistent with local built character and materials (such as flint).
- Potential new visually intrusive recreational facilities along the coast, which may detract from existing landscape character and pattern.
- Pressure for development of second or holiday homes, leading to gradual change in settlement character.
- Redevelopment of existing small-scale development with larger-scale buildings.
- Changes in key views from managed coastal realignment and the associated formation of saltmarsh.

*conserve village
edge pastures*

*enhance ecological networks - maintain
field margins and connect hedgerows*

*new native planting designed to
screen and frame local views*

GUIDANCE



20 year vision

conserve and enhance

Sweeping coastal views and a sequence of small, rural villages separated by fields, commons and groups of trees. Field patterns are well defined by an inter-connected network of hedgerows which extends right up to the edge of houses and farmsteads. Gateway approaches to the villages along the A149 are marked by strategically sited groups of trees and small woodlands, which structure and frame local views.



Integrated landscape guidance

- 1 Conserve the characteristic open views northwards towards the coast from the higher slopes to the south.**
 - Maintain the overall balance between settlement and open countryside along the A149, conserving the critical 'strategic gaps' between villages.
 - Identify and conserve views to distinctive features within these views, for instance to village churches, earthworks, distinctive clumps of trees or particularly important views towards the coast. Views from the Peddars Way (which runs straight up the slope are particularly important and sensitive to change.
 - Ensure any necessary new development (including conversion of farm buildings) avoids prominent skyline locations upon the slopes.
- 2 Conserve and enhance the existing landscape pattern as defined by the network of hedgerows which borders fields and road corridors throughout the area.**
 - Ongoing hedgerow management, including replanting gaps (with a hawthorn-dominant mix) will reinforce the characteristic landscape pattern.
 - Conserve and enhance the structure and condition of small woodland patches and copses.
 - Where possible extend existing woodlands with new planting designed to link woodlands to the overall hedgerow/tree/woodland network, enhancing the connectivity and value of the habitat network.
- 3 Conserve and enhance the river corridor habitats which are important ecological corridors connecting habitats on the farmland slopes with the coastal marshes.**
 - Conserve and enhance the priority BAP habitats associated with the floodplains of the Heacham River and the River Burn, including wet grassland, lowland meadows, wet woodland and reedbed.
 - Buffer the river floodplain by encouraging low input agricultural systems and creation or enhancement of semi-natural habitats in areas alongside the river corridor.
 - Encourage the creation of coastal grazing marsh along the coast on the coastal marshland fringes of the Coastal Slopes.

Integrated landscape guidance (continued)

4 Conserve and enhance the ecological value of farmland habitats

- Conserve existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands by creating wide strips of semi-natural habitats alongside to enhance their biodiversity value as corridors within the wider farmland landscape.
- Establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals.¹
- Seek opportunities for creation and sensitive management of chalk flora to form part of calcareous grassland habitats.

5 Conserve the distinctive character of the string of linear villages along the break of slope at the north edge of the Coastal Slopes

- Avoid small-scale built development which would impinge on the 'strategic gaps' of open countryside which define the landscape setting of villages along the A149.
- Ensure new small-scale development within villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles; and architecture, respecting traditional built form, layout and character.
- Conserve existing mature trees and hedgerows within and on the fringes of villages as they are important in creating a positive landscape setting (and are also important in conserving characteristic views to the rooftops in views from the upper slopes of the Coastal Slopes).
- Encourage carefully designed new tree planting on the fringes of settlements which is designed to replace existing trees, screen locally intrusive structures and frame views to the surrounding countryside.
- Integrate new small-scale developments within villages with new planting, using species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve the characteristic open views across the coastal marshes from villages on the northern fringes of the Coastal Slopes.

6 Conserve and enhance the character and quality of the A149 road corridor

- Enhance the corridor of the A149 with a co-ordinated strategy for tree planting, hedgerow management and signage which should be designed to take account of key views and the gateways to settlements.
- Conserve and enhance the gateway to each village so that there is a subtle sequence of 'entrances' along the road. Design new planting, structures and signage in line with this co-ordinated approach.

¹

See: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp>

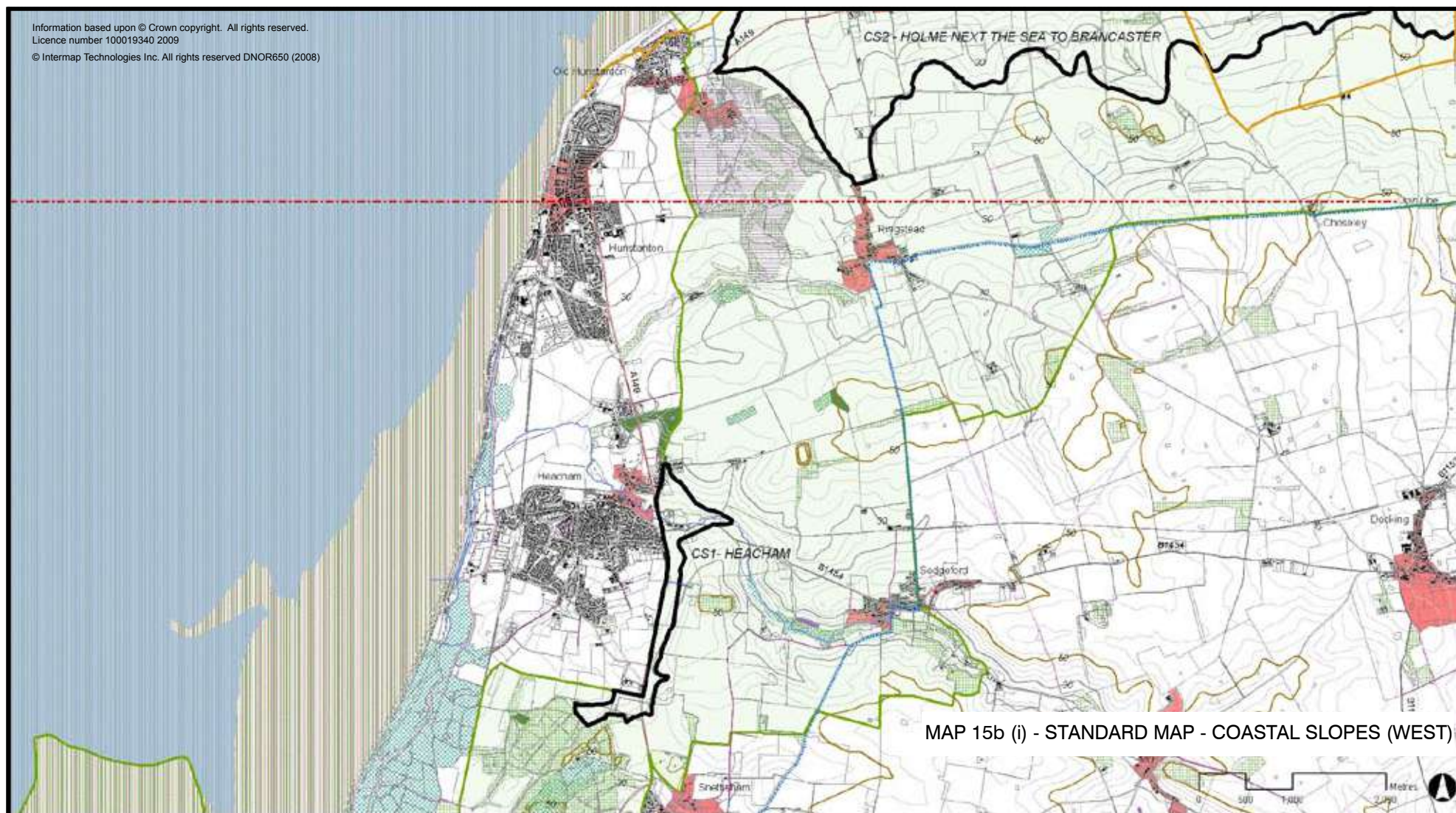
Detailed maps

- **Standard** - landform, drainage, rights of way and statutory designations
- **Biodiversity** - ecological networks ²
- **Historic landscapes** - broad historic landscape character types ³ and data from the Historic Environment Record ⁴

² Norfolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, July 2006, *Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk*

³ Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, January 2009, *Norfolk Historic Landscape Character - a report on the Norfolk Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project*

⁴ 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



MAP 15b (i) - STANDARD MAP - COASTAL SLOPES (WEST)

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

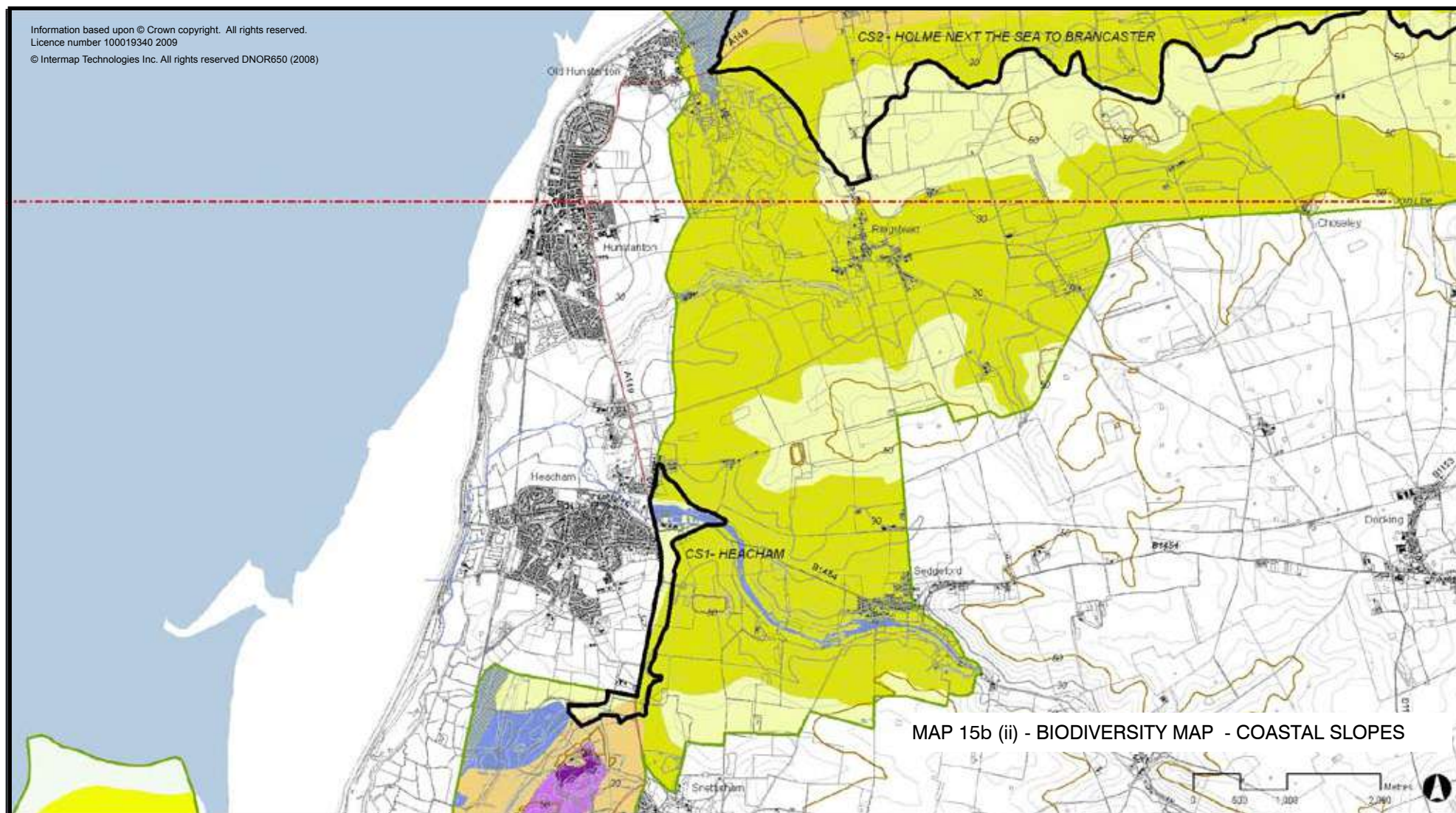
Connections

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

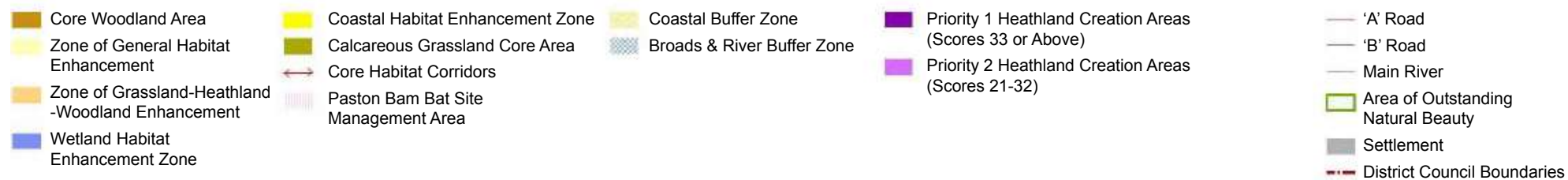
Topography

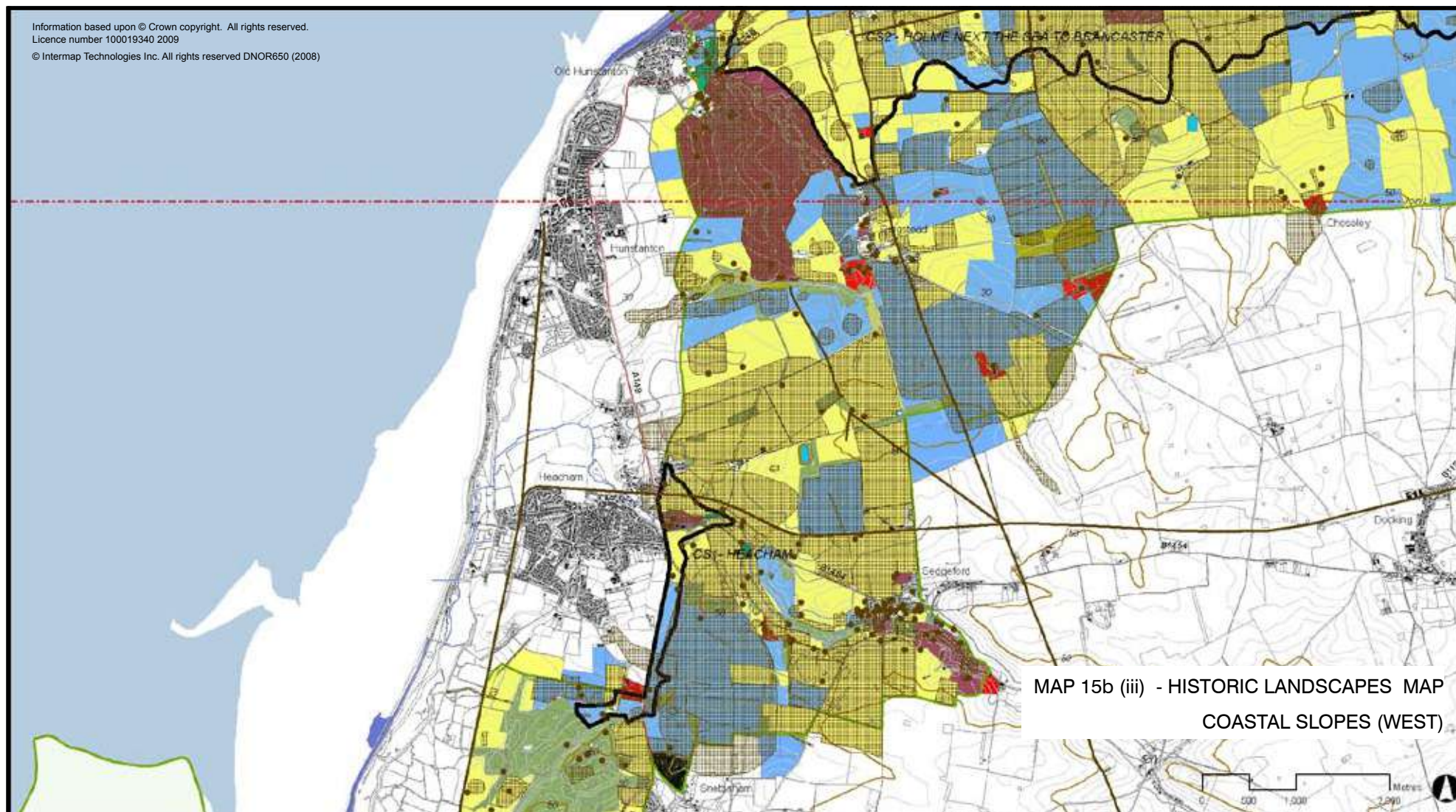
- Contour Line (Interval 5 m)
- 30 m Contour Line
- 50 m Contour Line

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



MAP 15b (ii) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - COASTAL SLOPES



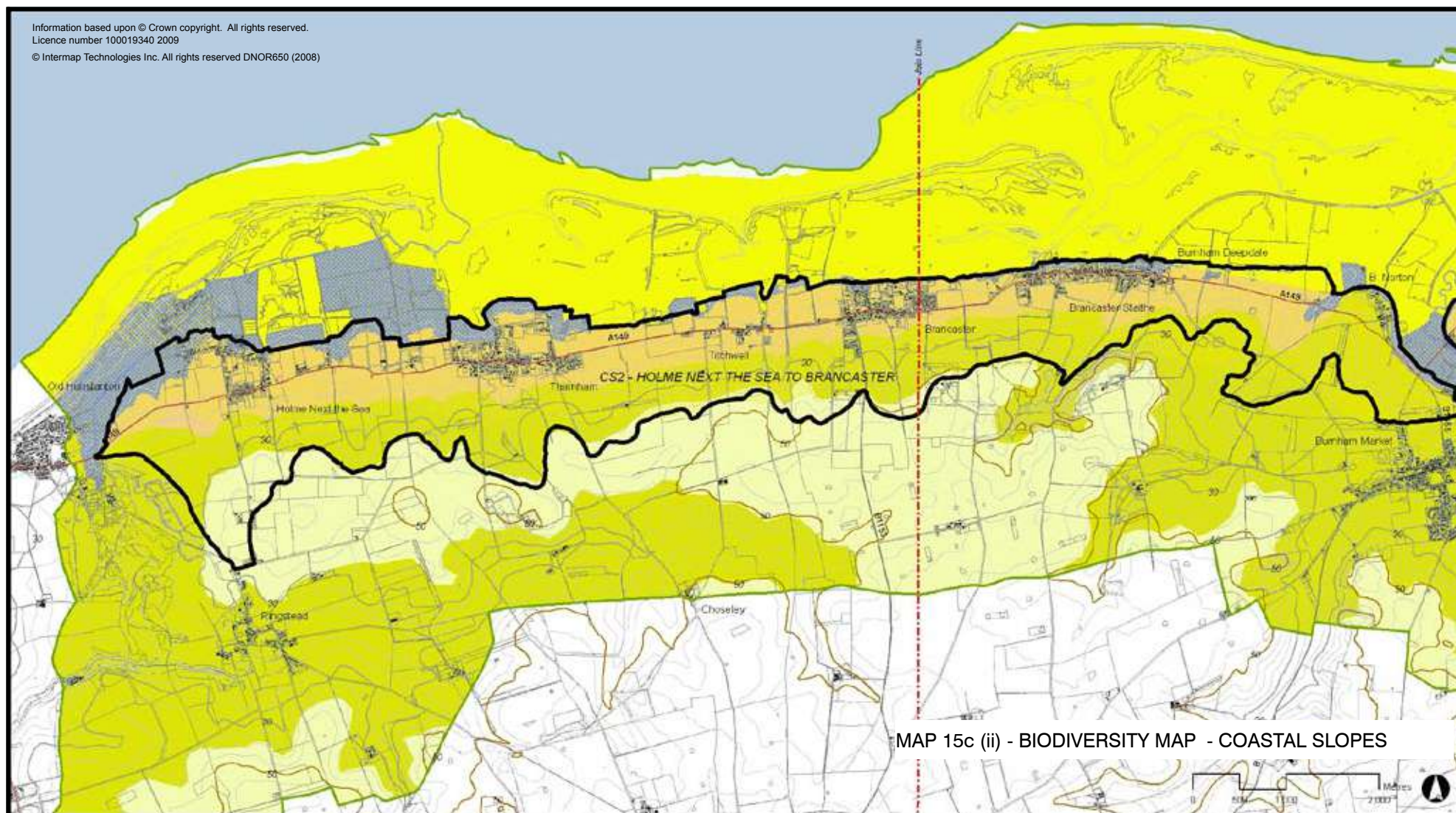


MAP 15b (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES MAP
 COASTAL SLOPES (WEST)



MAP 15c (i) - STANDARD MAP - COASTAL SLOPES

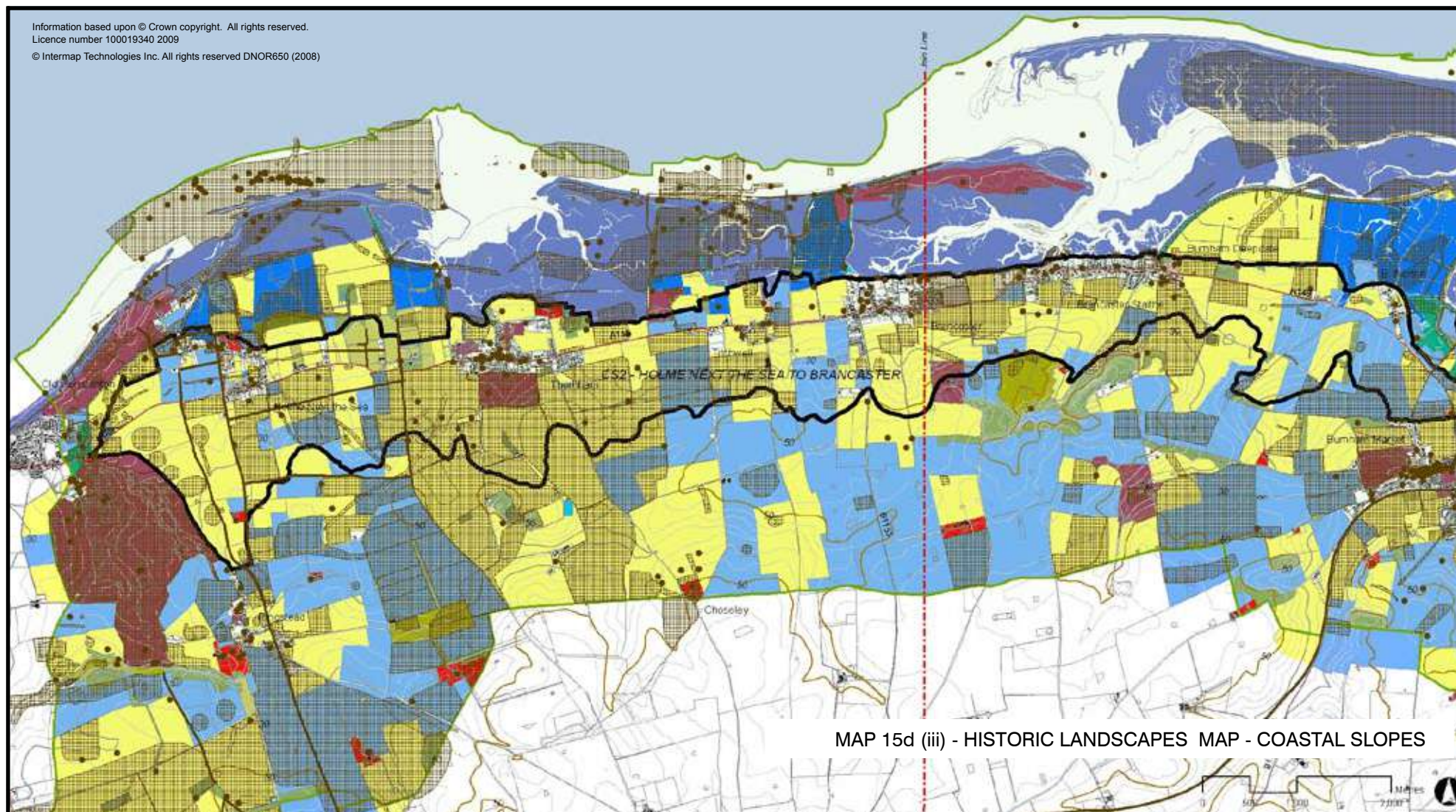




MAP 15c (ii) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - COASTAL SLOPES

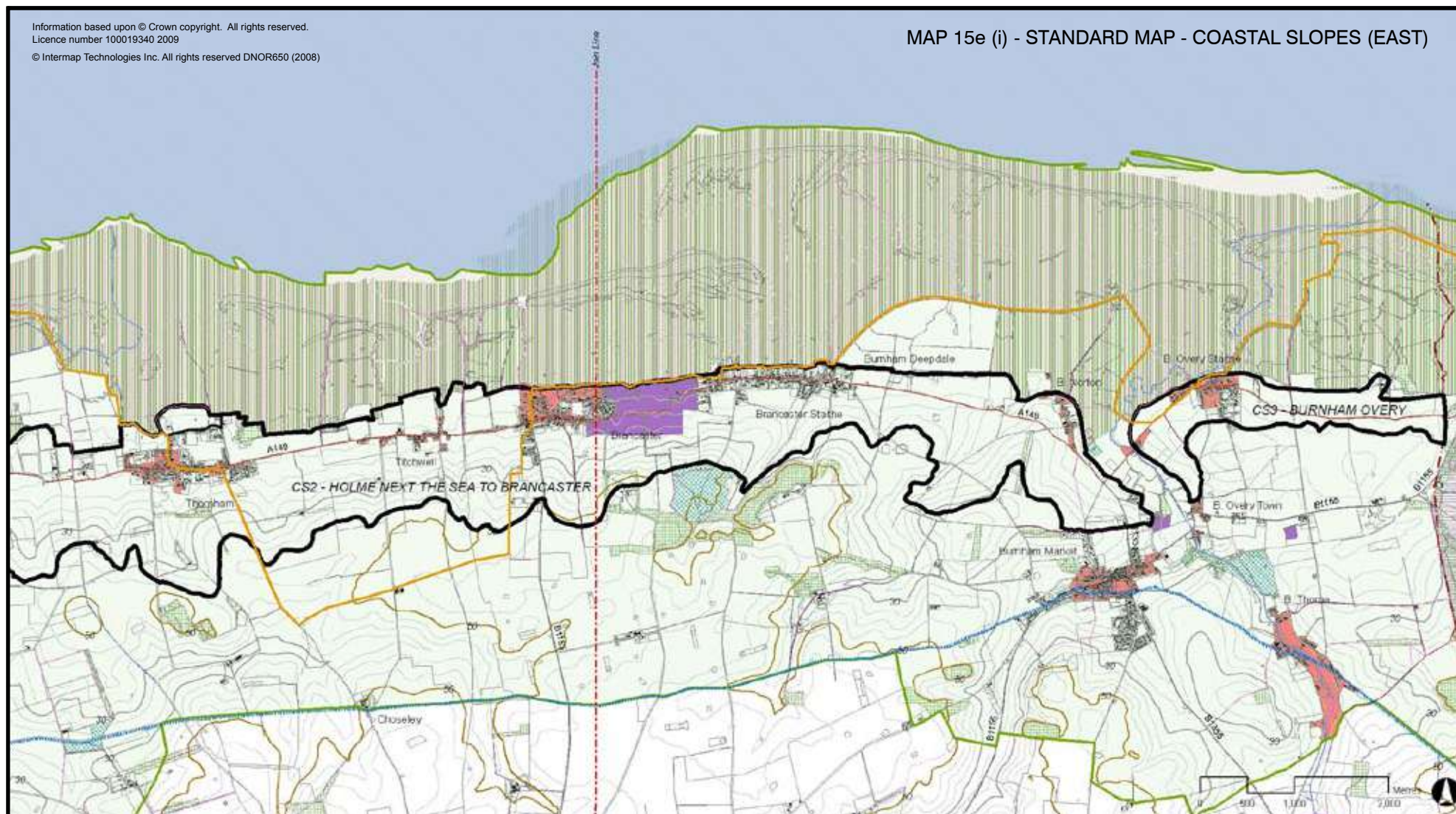
- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Core Woodland Area | Coastal Habitat Enhancement Zone | Coastal Buffer Zone |
| Zone of General Habitat Enhancement | Calcareous Grassland Core Area | Broads & River Buffer Zone |
| Zone of Grassland-Heathland-Woodland Enhancement | Core Habitat Corridors | Paston Bam Bat Site Management Area |
| Wetland Habitat Enhancement Zone | | |

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



MAP 15d (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES MAP - COASTAL SLOPES





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

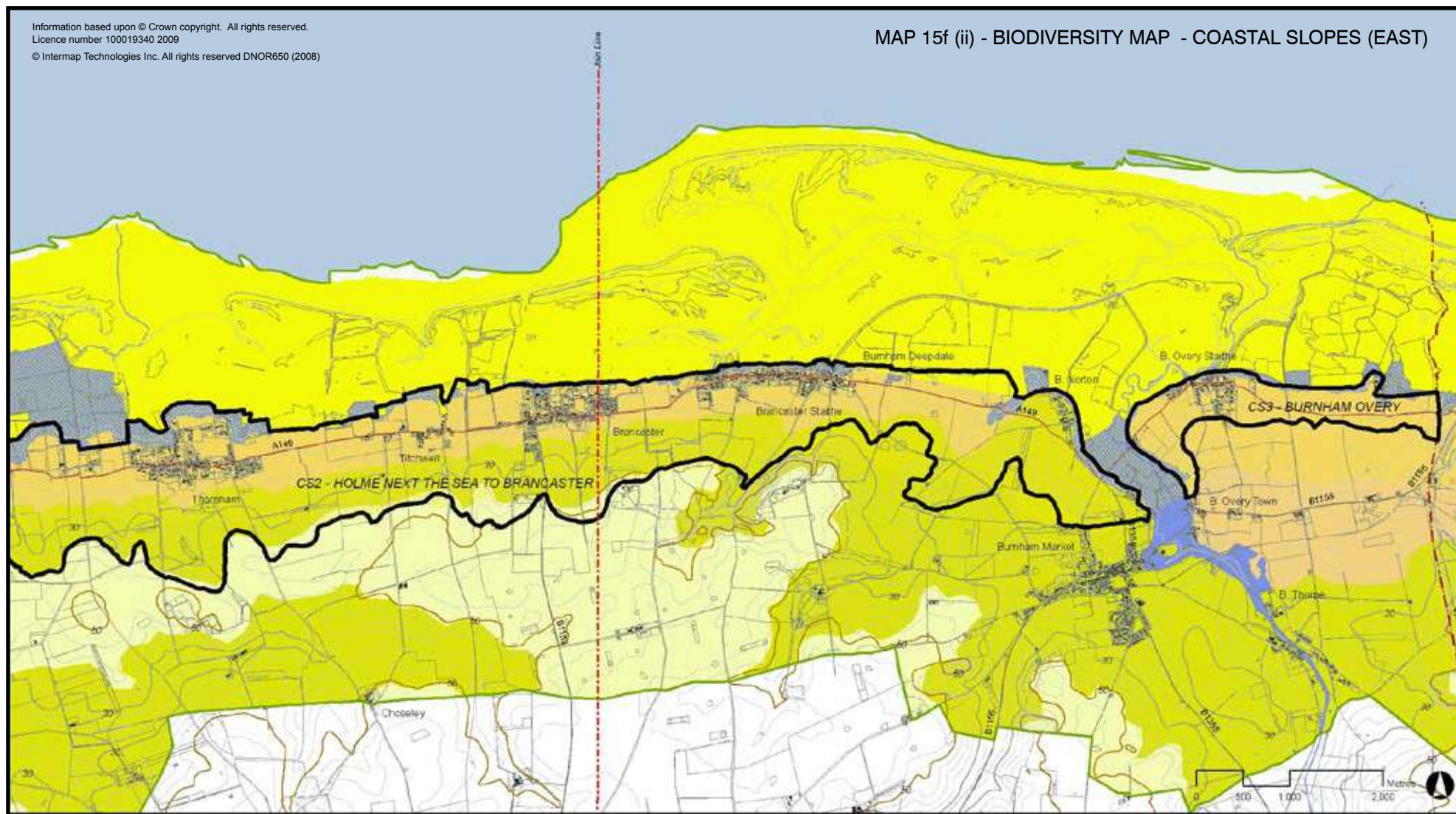
- National Cycle Route
- Cycleways
- Long Distance Path
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Restricted Byway

Topography

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

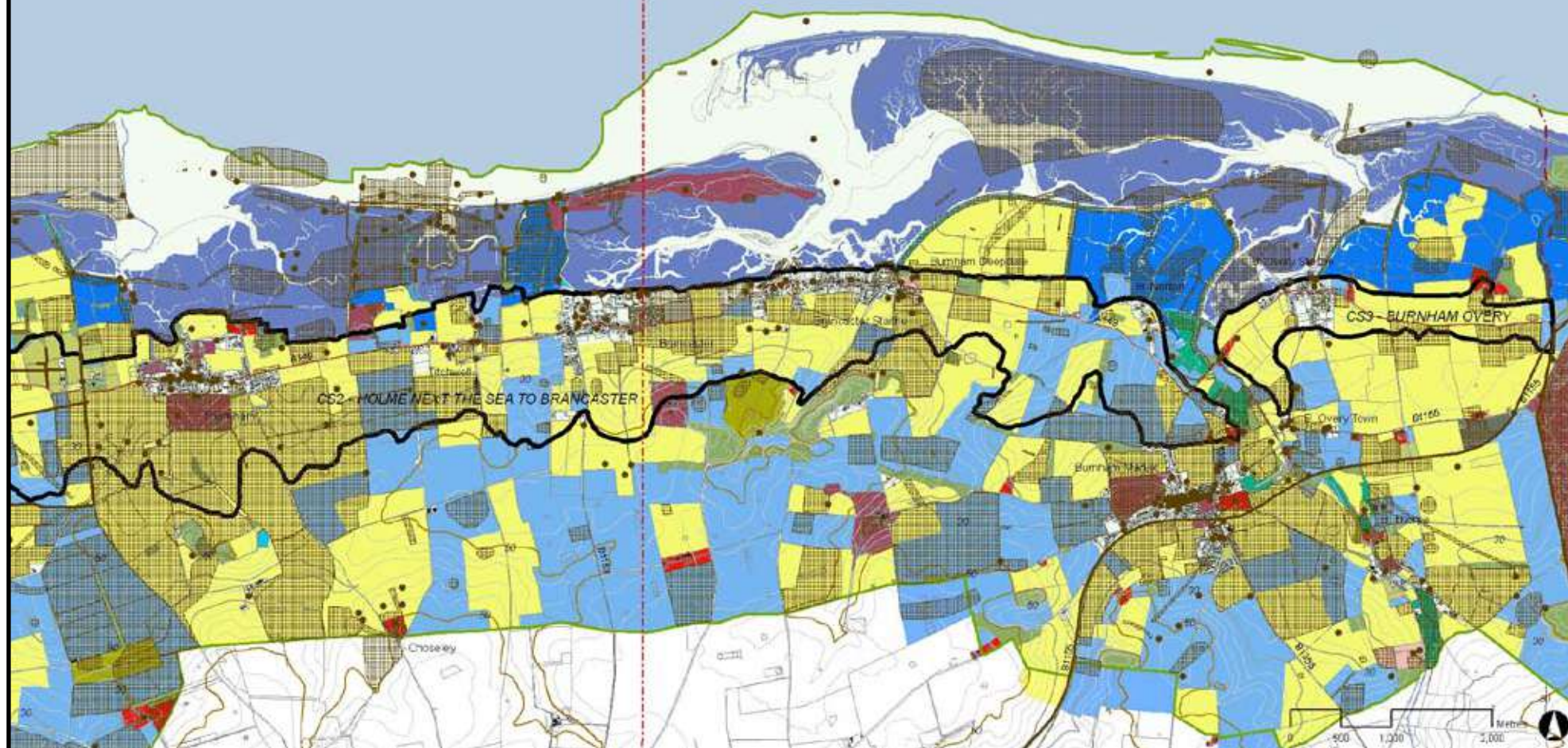
- 'A' Road
- 'B' Road
- Main River
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Settlement
- District Council Boundaries

MAP 15f (ii) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - COASTAL SLOPES (EAST)



- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Core Woodland Area | Coastal Habitat Enhancement Zone | Coastal Buffer Zone |
| Zone of General Habitat Enhancement | Calcareous Grassland Core Area | Broads & River Buffer Zone |
| Zone of Grassland-Heathland-Woodland Enhancement | Core Habitat Corridors | Paston Bam Bat Site Management Area |
| Wetland Habitat Enhancement Zone | | |

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



- | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 18th-19th Century Enclosure | Commons, Wastes, Heaths | Marginal | Water Features | HER 'point' | 'A' Road |
| 20th Century Agriculture | Communications | Military | Woodland | HER 'line' | 'B' Road |
| Built up Areas - Historic | Historic Earthwork | Mineral | | HER 'area' | Main River |
| Built up Areas - Modern | Horticulture | Miscellaneous | | | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| Coastal - Drainage Enclosure | Industry | Parks, Gardens, Recreation | | | Settlement |
| Coastal - Managed Wetland | Inland - Managed Wetland | Pre- 18th Century Enclosure | | | District Council Boundaries |