

## CHESIL BANK AND THE FLEET NATURE RESERVE

### **Environmental considerations specific to members of the public accessing Chesil Bank between Abbotsbury and Portland**



#### **Introduction**

Chesil and the Fleet are highly designated for their nature conservation interests, valued as a landscape, a seascape and a quiet area within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are wholly included in the East Devon and Dorset World Heritage Site (the Jurassic Coast).

Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve is the organisation established by the landowner (Ilchester Estates) to manage and protect the area.

For many years people have come to Chesil Bank for the experience and ‘quiet’ recreation such as picnicking and angling. One of the key policies of the Reserve’s management team is to enable members of the public to access, use and enjoy the area. However this cannot be achieved at the expense of impacting on the sensitivities of the wildlife habitats. Inappropriate human activity can cause serious disturbance and/or be damaging.

The area of Chesil under consideration is wholly private property. There are no public rights of way on it but the landowner permits access to members of the public at Abbotsbury and as described below.

It is hoped that members of the public will follow the restrictions described below and permit the area’s nature to continue flourishing.

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*This document has been produced by Don Moxom, Warden, Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve, The Reserve Office, Chesil Beach Centre, Portland Beach Road, Portland Dorset. DT4 9XE. Tel:- 01305 760579 E mail:- [reserve@chesilbeach.org](mailto:reserve@chesilbeach.org)*

## Access on Chesil Bank between Abbotsbury and Portland

**Chesil is closed between 1<sup>st</sup> May and 31<sup>st</sup> August as a thoroughfare between the Tank Teeth at Abbotsbury and the Portland Boundary**

This restriction protects ground nesting birds.



*A clutch of ringed plovers eggs cannot be easily distinguished and unwittingly trod upon*

There is a nationally important colony of little terns that nest on Crown Chesil on Portland, two miles east of the Reserve's eastern boundary, and which is fenced common land.



*Little terns are legally protected from human disturbance*



The restriction also benefits Abbotsbury's famous colony of mute swans, several important populations of mammals including hares. It also helps protect the shingle vegetation and the Fleet foreshore which is an important and easily damaged habitat for saltmarsh vegetation and rare species of molluscs.

*A small group of walkers could destroy this carpet of shingle flowers that has spread over the pebbles over a period of many years*

## The 'open' season – 1<sup>st</sup> September – 30<sup>th</sup> April (inc.) Access is permitted between Abbotsbury and Portland

### But walkers are asked to:-

- **Keep dogs on leads at all times**
- **Only walk on the outer, seaward flank of the beach\***

Walking on the outer flank of Chesil prevents disturbance to significant populations of water-birds such as Brent Geese and Wigeon that migrate to the Fleet to join the swans for the winter. It is also, important, just as in the summer, that the beach's mammal populations, particularly hares, and vegetated areas remain undisturbed in the winter too.



*The handsome drake wigeon – a long distance winter migrant that needs to conserve energy to survive the cold and possible food shortage*

\*Along the beach small areas (opposite Langton Herring, Moonfleet and Chickerell), formerly used for military purposes and as bases by beach net fishermen have suffered degradation. These areas are still used by authorised personnel accessing the beach from the Fleet. Whilst in the long term a natural repair of the vegetation should take effect, a minimal amount of use here is not seen as being detrimental. Therefore these areas (obvious from the presence of huts and/or signs of fishing activity) may make suitable stopping areas where the adjacent inner beach and Fleet shore may be accessed for interest and enjoyment.



*Compiled by Don Moxom, warden, 30<sup>th</sup> Aug 2013*