FOOTPRINT ECOLOGY

Solent Coastline Vehicle Counts: Winter 2020/21

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Summary

The report provides a brief examination of a shortened, but also incomplete, survey of parked cars and activities along the Solent shoreline that was scheduled to take place over winter 2020/21. The surveys were conducted during the coronavirus pandemic and ultimately this led to the suspension of surveys midway through the schedule, due to the worsening situation and resulting restrictions on work and travel.

The planned survey method was based on the previous survey, with a significant reduction in survey effort as surveys were to be conducted by Bird Aware Solent staff. Previously 12 separate counts have been conducted across the winter, but just 7 were scheduled for this winter. However, due to the forced early cessation of surveying, only 3 counts took place across November and December 2020 (2 in November and 1 in December).

Key results from the vehicle counts were:

- Individual count totals were 1,555; 2,676; and 2,539. The latter, higher, two were conducted on weekdays, during reasonable weather conditions. However, the lowest count was recorded on a weekend (contrary to the expected pattern of higher weekend use), due to poor weather conditions.
- The average number of motor vehicles per transect was 2,257 (mean) or 2,539 (median).
- With just three data points, the data are less robust and more influenced by variability in the counts (from weather etc.). As such, less detailed analysis has been conducted.
- These average counts were typically above the previous year, suggesting high levels of use this year. In the last 3 transect years, from 27 counts, only 10 counts recorded over 2,000 vehicles, with two of these in 2020.
- Examination of the fullness by individual parking locations suggested that smaller car parks were likely to be fuller compared to previous years.
- The composition of vehicles using the coastal car parks suggested a greater proportion of use by cars with roof racks (perhaps with more local recreation or favourable weather conditions for activities in these small number of counts).

Key results from the vantage point counts (i.e. snapshot counts of people on the beach/coast near selected parking locations) were:

- A total of 1,557 people were observed, 43 'active' boats and 375 dogs were recorded.
- The total number of people in just the three counts was half that recorded in all 12 counts in 2018/19.
- Most people observed were walkers without dogs (47%), followed by dog walkers (31%), and people sitting (4.5%) - broadly similar proportions to previous years.
- The numbers and proportion of kitesurfers and windsurfers were much greater than previous years.
- The current data highlights increases each count year in the numbers of people – the averages in 2020 were around two to four times greater than typically seen in the previous counts. However, data from this year are very limited, and with small sample sizes data are more influenced by variability (e.g. from weather conditions).

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides results from a series of driven transects, which were undertaken during winter 2020/21. These transects involved counting parked cars and people around the Solent shoreline.

1.2 These surveys are conducted as part of the long-term monitoring strategy for the Solent coastline which is necessary as part of the Bird Aware Solent initiative[1]. The Solent shoreline - 250km in length – is wintering area for significant bird interest, recognised in three Special Protection Areas (SPAs): the Solent & Southampton Water SPA, Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Portsmouth Harbour SPA. However, the shoreline is heavily populated and future housing levels increase the potential for significant negative effects to these SPA sites, as a result of increased recreation and disturbance to the wintering waterbirds. A mitigation strategy was produced by the Solent local authorities leading to the Bird Aware Solent initiative, whose staff undertake mitigation measures.

1.3 Part of the delivery of this mitigation strategy will be monitoring, to allow a check as to how well different approaches are working and allow mitigation to be refined and adaptive. The monitoring strategy (Liley, Stillman, Austin, & Panter, 2015) recommended several monitoring strands, including biennial car park and activity counts to monitor relative changes in access.

1.4 These surveys were conducted in the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, when varying levels of severity meant different restrictions were placed on people's access to the countryside. This had wider implications in terms of people being unemployed or furloughed, the availability of other forms of entertainment or exercise, and the ability to meet up with other people.

1.5 Consequently, the surveys were halted prematurely due to both the increasing severity of the pandemic and internal Hampshire County Council covid guidelines for working practices (with the latter preventing the Ranger team from carrying out data collection). The data presented in this report therefore deviates somewhat from the initially planned methodology.

[1] http://www.birdaware.org/

Previous Surveys

1.6 The driving transects were undertaken for the first time in 2016/17 and repeated in 2018/19 (see Table 1). In 2016/17 parking locations across the Solent were mapped and each assessed for their inclusion in the driving transect. Inclusion was assessed primarily on whether they were publicly accessible and used by people who are interacting with the SPA (e.g. a more urban car park may be excluded if it is thought most people using are accessing facilities (for example a supermarket), and are not accessing the SPA).

1.7 In 2016/17, 181 parking locations were counted using six surveyors to travel six set routes simultaneously, and counting coastal activity at 39 vantage points. A refinement in the following count, in 2018/19, meant that 180 parking locations and 39 vantage points were included.

Table 1: Previous vehicle count surveys.

Winter	Round	Comment
2016/17	1st round – first time driving transects were conducted to count vehicles.	Car parks had to be mapped and each examined for their relevance for access to the SPA. Undertaken by Footprint Ecology (see Panter & Liley, 2017)
2018/19	2nd round	Same methodology was used, using existing car park data – but parking charges were recorded. Undertaken by Footprint Ecology (see Panter & Caals, 2019)
2020/21	3rd round	Coronavirus pandemic – surveys undertaken by Bird Aware Solent Rangers and had to be stopped early following lockdown

2020/21 survey

1.8 In the light of the pandemic, the planned 2020/21 work was reconsidered, and Bird Aware Solent requested a revised methodology which could be conducted internally by Bird Aware Solent staff, supported by Footprint Ecology. This would help to account for uncertainties around the coronavirus pandemic, balance Bird Aware Solent's staff time, any possible travel or work restrictions and its impacts on access patterns.

1.9 The methodology was to largely follow previous methodologies to allow comparison, but with a reduced level of survey effort, due to the other commitments of the Bird Aware Solent team. A reduced level of survey effort

meant we would have a reduced level of confidence in the results. But individual dates of data are still entirely valid and should still provide a useful data point within the long-term vehicle count dataset.

1.10 However, the planned winter of surveys were interrupted by changing severity of the coronavirus pandemic through the winter – as detailed in section 2: Implications of the coronavirus pandemic.

2. Implications of the coronavirus pandemic

2.1 The coronavirus pandemic greatly affected the surveys, with a high peak in both cases and mortality in the UK during winter 2020/21. This led to restrictions being imposed upon non-local travel, which impacted access to the coast during the initial survey period. Subsequent restrictions ultimately removed the ability of surveyors to access the survey locations at all and led to the early cessation of the surveys.

2.2 The survey visits conducted during early winter 2020/21 were carried out in the wake of a number of earlier restrictions which were introduced and/or subsequently retracted (and occasionally reinstated) over time. The surveys followed the strengthened enforcement of the "rule of six" in mid-September (prior to this it was only a recommendation) and several, disparate, local lockdowns (although none of the latter affected areas local to the study sites). These restrictions were further refined following the introduction of the Tier system in mid-October.

2.3 Between the 5th of November and 2nd December, a short national lockdown was instituted. During the lockdown schools, colleges, and universities were allowed to remain open, but overnight stays were not permitted (unless for work) and non-essential retail, hospitality venues, and gyms were closed. Furthermore, individuals were only allowed to exercise 'in [their] local area'.

2.4 This will have had implications for recreational access - with hospitality venues and gyms closed, potentially more people will have accessed the countryside in their leisure time (plus individuals who were furloughed and/or not working)[2]. However, with individuals allowed to exercise only in their local area, visits from individuals from further afield may potentially have decreased.

2.5 Over the course of mid to late December 2020 a series of increasingly severe restrictions were imposed upon individual Local Authorities, based upon rises in cases and mortality within their areas of jurisdiction. By 31st

[2] The People and Nature survey results indicate two-fifths of the population are spending more time outside than before Covid-19 and around a third of adults have been exercising more in the outdoors :https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-monthly-interim-indicators-for-december-2020-experimental-statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-monthly-interim-indicators-for-december-2020-experimental-statistics. accessed 10/4/21.

December 2020, all of Hampshire including the Isle of Wight, was in Tier 4 ('Stay at home') and by 4th January 2021 a national lockdown was imposed. It was therefore no longer possible to carry out the work, with the surveys carried out by the Bird Aware Solent Ranger Team not identified as comprising (exempt) essential work during the lockdown period.

2.6 Figure 1 provides a timeline of the imposed coronavirus restrictions in England during the 2020/21 winter period.

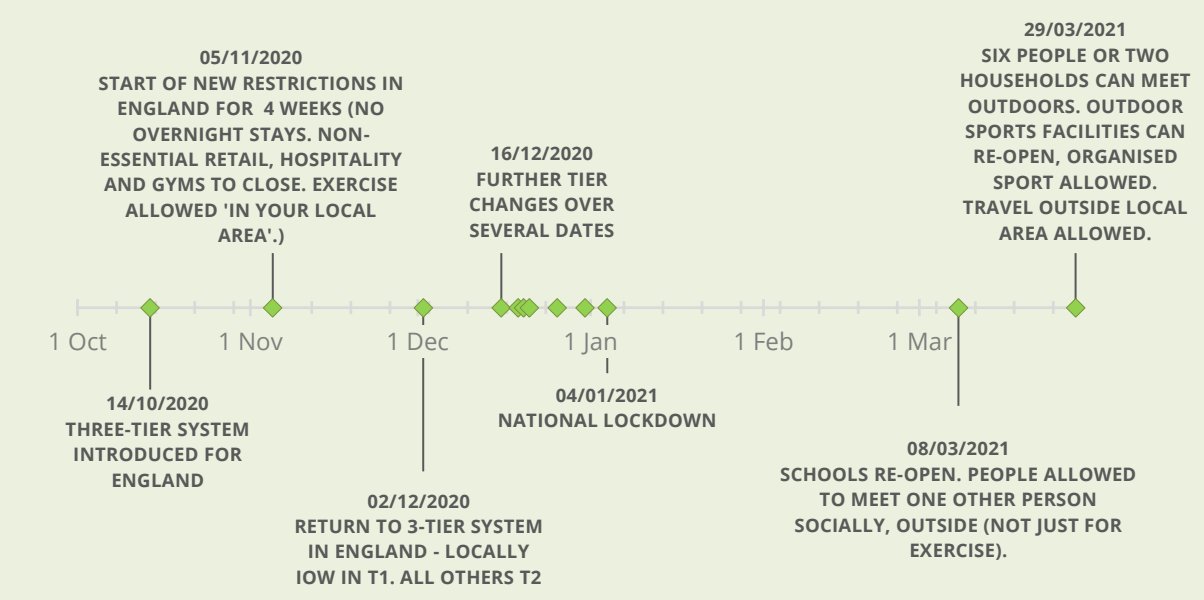

Figure 1: Timeline of imposed coronavirus pandemic restrictions in England over winter 2020/21

3. Methods

3.1 We liaised with the Bird Aware Solent team to establish the reduced survey methodology for the winter 2020/21 surveys, including suggested times and dates. This section details the proposed full methodology for 2020/21, prior to the ceasing of surveys at the end of 2020.

3.2 Ideal proposed timings were for a balance of times of day and to include both weekends and weekdays. The reduced survey effort, variable weather conditions, variable surveyor availability and the time taken to complete transects mean the practicalities of meeting set time periods can be difficult. However, considering the short daylight window and generally uniform winter conditions in the period mid-November to mid-February, the exact dates were considered less important.

3.3 The team were provided with electronic copies of survey forms, maps for the different transect routes, GPS locations of car parks to use with a free map app and a short training session via video call. Furthermore, we continued to provide support to the team and advise on methodology while surveys were ongoing.

3.4 The aim was to record all parked vehicles around the Solent shoreline within a limited time window (aiming for 3 hours). In addition, at a selection of parking locations where there is a good view, vantage point counts were undertaken. These recorded a count of activities taking place nearby. The idea of the vantage point counts is that they can be achieved quickly in a few minutes – by stepping out of the car and doing a quick scan.

Vehicle Counts

Routes and parking locations

3.5 Just seven counts were planned (previously this has been twelve), covering all 180 parking locations set out in the previous work. Counts were again split into six transect routes, based on the previous work, and undertaken simultaneously. The sections, and driven routes for each section, remained unchanged. All parking locations recorded are listed in Appendix 1. The overview of routes is shown in Map 1 and given in Table 2.

Map 1: Overview of routes and parking locations.

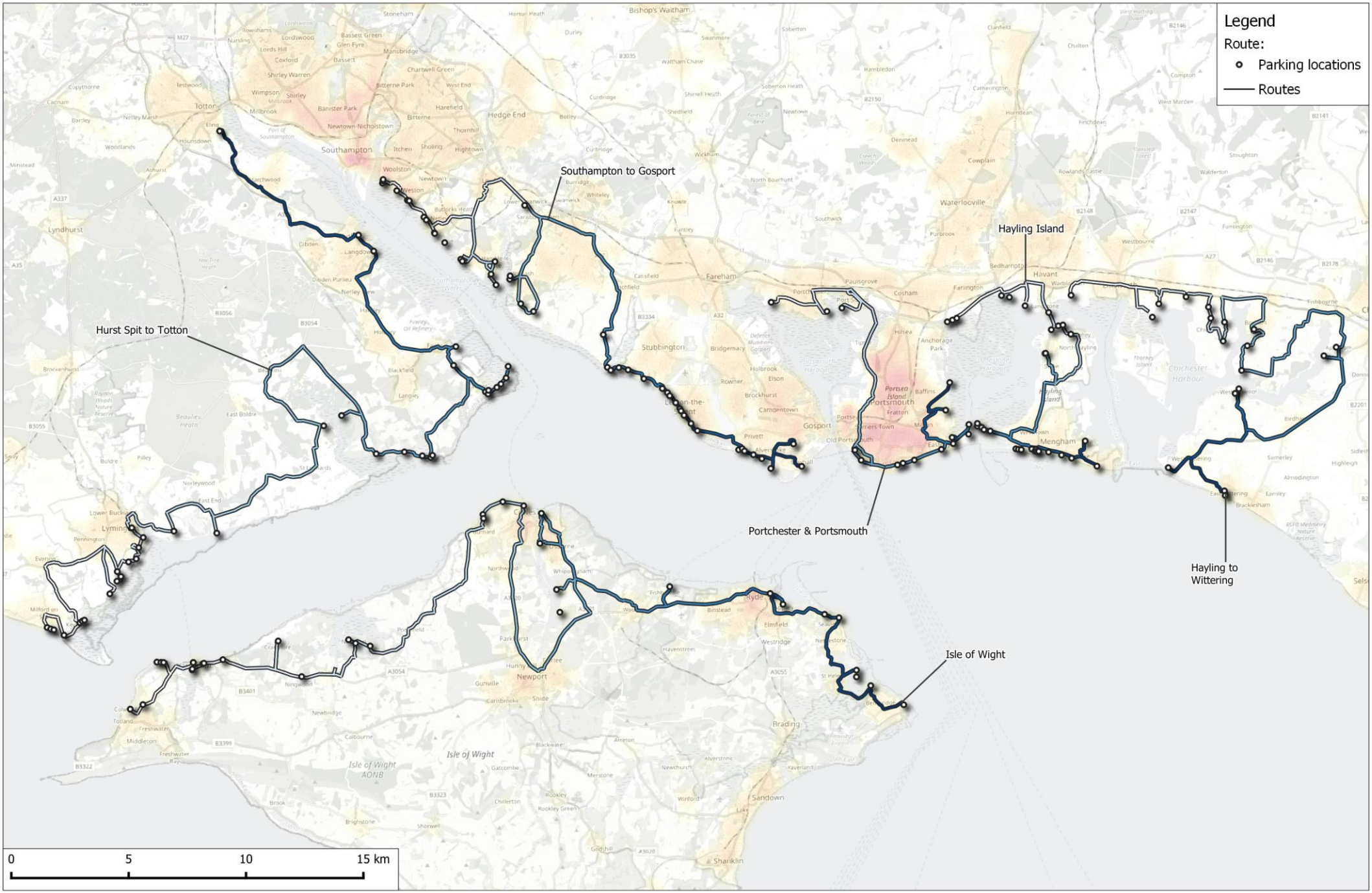

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Table 2: Summary of the six routes, the number of car parks and vantage points each involves.

Route	Length (km)	Total spaces	Parking locations	Vantage points
1. Isle of Wight	78	1,891	34	7
2. Hurst Spit - Totton	80	1,734	38	6
3. Southampton-Gosport	56	2,375	44	7
4. Portchester & Portsmouth	47	1,380	15	5
5. Hayling Island	25	1,532	31	8
6. Hayling-Wittering	48	887	18	6
Total	**334**	**9,799**	**180**	**39**

3.6 The routes ensure all parking locations are surveyed and counted simultaneously within a relatively small window of time. The counts included all parked vehicles (cars, vans, motorbikes, campervans etc.). Counts at each parking location were then broken down to record the number of each of the following:

- Cars with a roof rack (often for canoe/surfboards/bikes etc)[3];
- Cars with rear mounted racks (often for bikes);
- Vehicles with boat trailers;
- Commercial vehicles;
- Branded vehicles of professional dog walkers;
- Unmarked vans;
- MPV/ minibus vehicles;
- Camper vans;
- Mini-buses/buses/coaches; and,
- Bicycles.

[3] The roof racks / bars are clear additional structures; not roof rails which are often built on cars.

Coordinated parking location dates

3.7 The coordinated vehicle counts were previously conducted on 12 dates across the winter period (see Panter & Caals, 2019; and Panter & Liley, 2017). However, with reduced survey effort, only 7 transect dates were selected. Dates and timings for this survey considered the dates in previous years to provide a consistent approach.

3.8 Dates of vehicle counts were distributed through early November to late March, avoiding the mid-late December and early January period (e.g. around the Christmas holidays, when visitor patterns are atypical). Counts were to be conducted on a range of days of the week and the times of day were varied to give an indicative sample of typical use on various times of day, types of day and weather conditions. Direction of the transect from east to west, or west to east, was alternated on each date to give an even split in the directions.

3.9 The balance of weekdays and weekend days was different this year because of an uneven number of dates. This means that any average calculated using the data in this report will not be directly comparable with the long-term dataset – however the reduced effort means that adjustments would have to be made with any long-term analysis anyway.

3.10 In previous years, the variable nature of winter weather and surveyor availability has made it clear that set dates are not feasible. But there are general times of year to aim for (e.g. early November) and ensure good coverage across these and times of day (early/mid/late). The proposed timings set out at the start of the work are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Proposed timings for reduced survey effort transects for winter 2020/21.

Transect number	Month (early/mid/late)	Day of week	Set start time	Direction
1	early Nov	weekday	12:00 (mid)	W-E
2	early Nov	**weekend**	08:00 (early)	E-W
3	early/mid Dec	weekday	12:00 (mid)	W-E
4	mid/end Jan	**weekend**	12:00 (mid)	E-W
5	end Feb	weekday	08:00 (early)	W-E
6	end Feb	**weekend**	14:00 (late)	E-W
7	mid Mar	weekday	15:00 (late)	W-E

Table 4: Distribution of survey effort (number of surveys) across weekdays/weekends, months of the year and times of day in 2016/17, 2018/19 and 2020/21. The times of day given are start times and therefore the survey will be representative of the window of several hours after this.

	2016/17	2018/19	2020/21
Weekday / Weekend			
Weekday	8	8	4
Weekend	4	4	3
Months			
November	1	2	2
December	1	3	1
January	4	1	1
February	3	3	2
March	3	4	1
Times of day			
Early (start at 8:00)	3	4	2
Mid (starts between 11:00-13:00)	6	6	3
Late (start after 13:00)	3	2	2

Vantage point counts

3.11 A subset of parking locations were used as vantage points. At these vantage points the surveyor recorded the people and activities visible on the beach/foreshore, intertidal and on the water. These locations were first identified in the previous 2016/17 survey, and are the same as used in 2018/19, and remain unchanged. The locations are those which provide a clear view, where it is easy to park, conduct a quick count and have a good geographical spread. The number of these locations on each route are given in Table 2.

3.12 The vantage point counts involved recording the number of people, and for some activities the number of groups[4], within a set recording area. We also counted the number of dogs and 'active' boats (e.g. those moving or being manned/worked on, as opposed to static boats, with no people on board). The set recording area was mapped in the previous survey and therefore these same areas were used.

[4] We count both people and groups as both are important information. A family of four together would be one group with four people, a lone walker would be one group with one person. In terms of disturbance the number of events (i.e. each passing group) is important.

3.13 For the following activities both the number of people and the number of groups were recorded:

- Walkers without dogs;
- Walkers with dogs (number of dogs on and off-lead also recorded);
- Joggers;
- Bird/wildlife watchers;

3.14 For the following activities counts were made of the total number of people, but no record of group size was made:

- Sitting (not in cars) [5];
- Cyclists [5]
- Horse riding;
- Angling/fishing (with rod);
- Bait digging;
- Kitesurfing;
- Paddleboarding;
- Windsurfing;
- Canoeing;
- Water skiing
- All other activities (i.e. not listed above), pooled.

3.15 Finally, the number of 'active' boats (all manned craft, excluding canoes and commercial boats, but including people working on boats on the land) was recorded, but for this the number of people was not noted as this could not always be known.

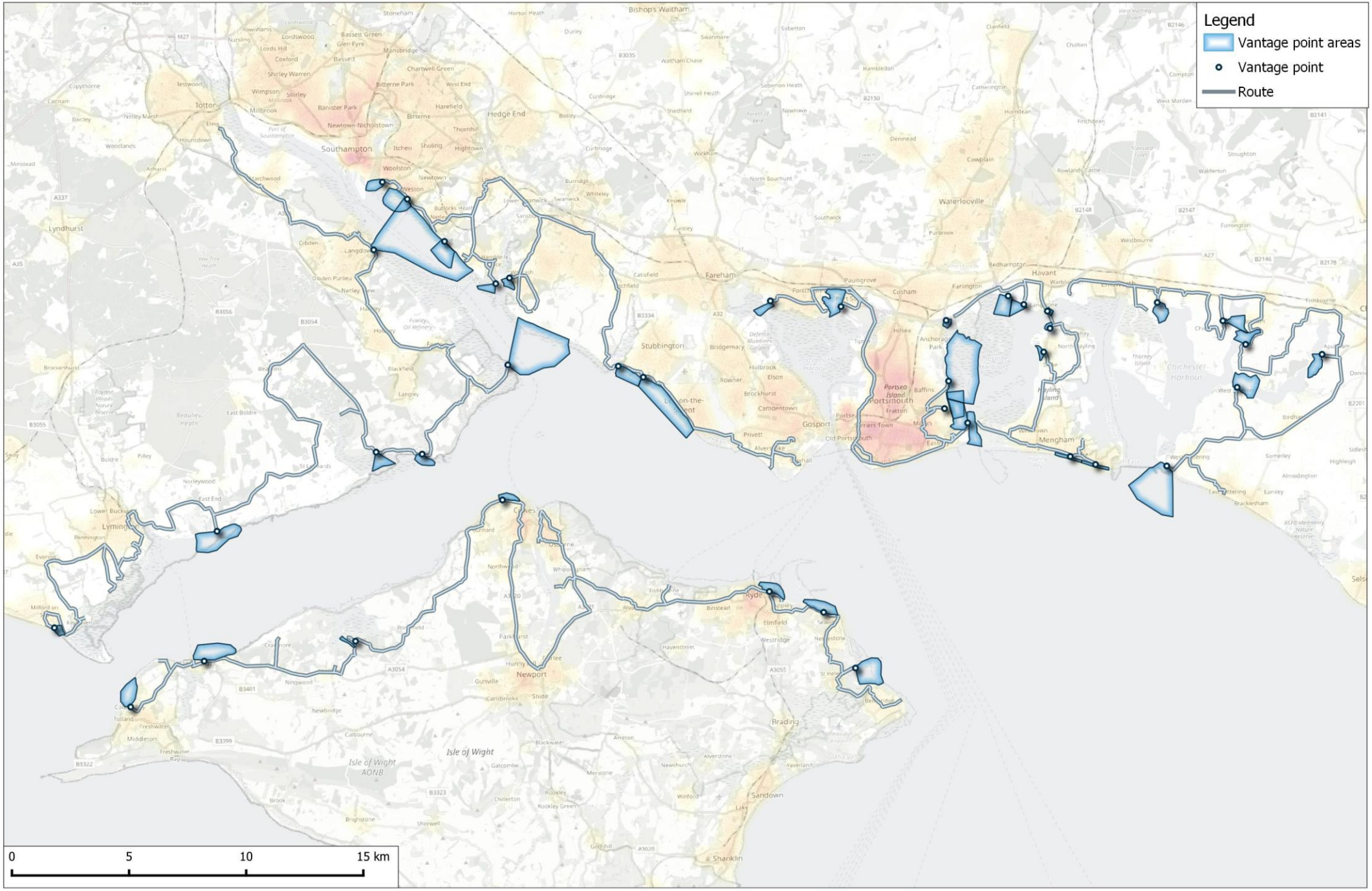
3.16 A range of supporting information recorded, including the visibility of the count area (e.g. where fog, sea mist or rain reduced the visibility), which can be used to adjust the count accordingly. We also suggested that a count of frosted vehicles be noted on early counts following a very cold night to observe vehicles parked in the area overnight (e.g. those likely to belong to local residents).

Recording Forms

3.17 The recording forms used for the driving transects and vantage point counts are included in the appendix.

[5] new categories added in this 2018/19 survey. Previously these were recorded in "other".

Map 2: Location of vantage points and the areas covered.



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Data analyses and presentation

3.18 The data collected was analysed, with graphs and tables produced using Microsoft Excel. The graphs include examples of stacked barplots and histograms. The barplots may also include a standard error bar to indicate the variability of the data (also in Map 3), with long bars to indicate a wider range around the mean value and give comparison to other mean values. Descriptive statistics (mean values within categories, etc) are used to summarise the dataset, but due to the relatively small amount of data collected during the study period no other statistical tests (e.g. Chi-squared and Mann-Whitney U tests) have been undertaken due to the limited robustness of the small dataset.

3.19 Maps show parking locations, but these are not always showing the exact locations. Viewing these at a small scale means that these often overlap and therefore these locations are offset for presentation purposes. Maps use a base map from the OpenStreetMap[6] and a red heatmap for housing density for context.

[6] www.openstreetmap.org

4. Results: Vehicle counts

4.1 The surveys for 2020/21 were only conducted in 2020, on two dates in November and one in December due to the increased coronavirus restrictions (here after surveys are referred to as 2020, rather than 2020/21). On these 6,770 motorised vehicles (cars, vans, motorcycles etc) were counted, with an additional 23 bicycles. On average this was 2,256.7 motor vehicles per transect (mean value) or 2,539 (median value).

Variation by date

4.2 In previous years, the main variation seen had been between the different dates, showing how variable the total number of vehicles can be at any one point. While there were only three transect counts, these counts were highly variable, with these counts varying from a minimum of 1,555 and maximum of 2,676.

4.3 Figure 2 shows the total number of motor vehicles on each count date across the three transects. The values for each count are also given in Table 5 with additional information for the survey day, time and weather.

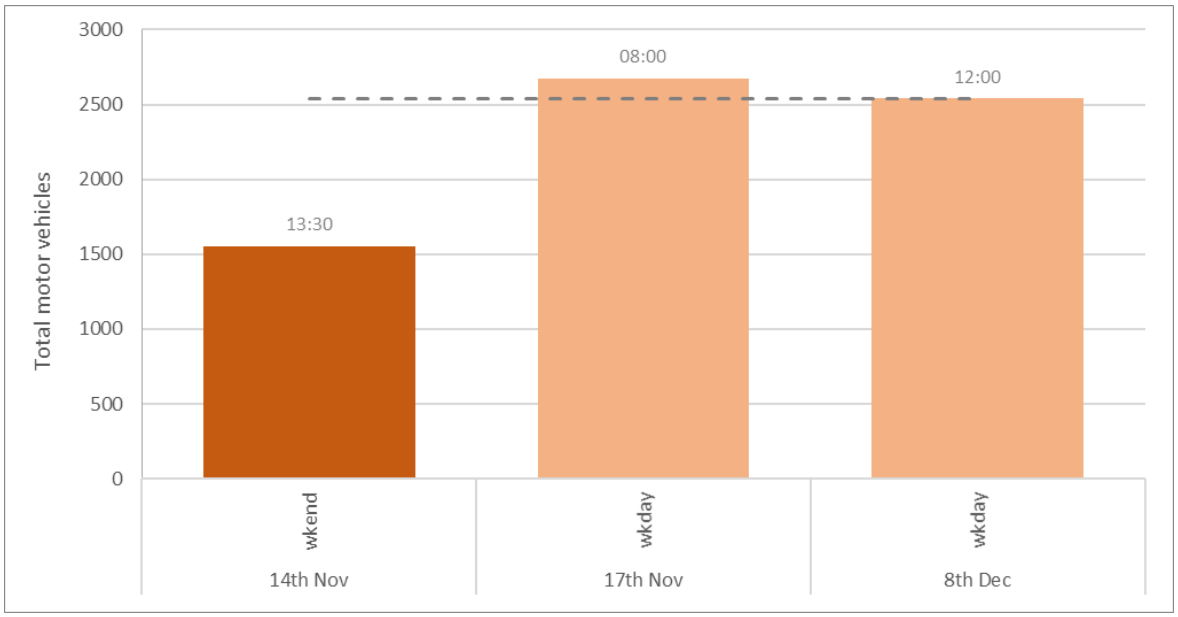


Figure 2: Plot of the total number of motor vehicles recorded on each date. Bars in dark orange are those which were conducted on weekends. Values above each bar show the start time for the count. Dashed line indicates the median value across the 3 counts.

Table 5: Additional details of survey date, time and weather for each transect and the total motor vehicles counted.

Date	Day	Time	Indicative weather conditions	Total motor vehicles
14th Nov	**Saturday**	08:00	Heavy rain all day, grey and windy, but mild (14°C). Also very high tide.	1,555
17th Nov	**Tuesday**	10:45	Dry, moderately windy, overcast, but mild (14°C).	2,676
8th Dec	**Tuesday**	10:30	Clear, calm and sunny for duration, very little wind and calm seas, but very cold (0 - 1°C).	2,539

4.4 Typically, we would see significant differences between weekdays and weekends. However, with just one weekend count and two weekday counts we cannot discuss differences this year with any confidence. The data collected shows fewest vehicles on the weekend count, which could be due to a range of factors. This potentially includes the poorer weather conditions and/or the earlier start time on the weekend survey date, as well as variations in the covid restrictions between November and December.

4.5 The weekend count, Saturday 14th November, was characterised by heavy rain and moderate winds all day, compared to the highest count on the weekday, Tuesday 17th November, which was overcast, but mild and dry.

4.6 Counts varied by route – see Table 6. The vehicle count for route three (Southampton to Gosport) shows the greatest difference between the transect dates. On the lowest count, just 313 vehicles were recorded, while 827 vehicles were recorded on the highest count – roughly 2.6 times greater.

Table 6: Total numbers of motor vehicles at parking locations shown separately for date and route. Percentages in brackets show the number of vehicles expressed as a percentage of the parking capacity for the route (accounting for any closures). Cells are coloured from high (red) to blue (low) for each cell value with reference to the column (the route) as a whole.

Date	Route						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
14th Nov	349 (19%)	273 (17%)	313 (14%)	257 (19%)	164 (14%)	199 (23%)	1,555 (17%)
17th Nov	526 (28%)	363 (23%)	827 (36%)	468 (34%)	302 (27%)	190 (22%)	2,676 (29%)
8th Dec	528 (28%)	404 (25%)	656 (28%)	405 (29%)	284 (23%)	262 (30%)	2,539 (27%)
Total	**1,403 (25%)**	**1,040 (21%)**	**1,796 (26%)**	**1,130 (27%)**	**750 (21%)**	**651 (25%)**	**6,770 (24%)**

4.7 The mean number of motor vehicles was 2,257 in the 2020 surveys was less than the previous count in 2018/19, but higher than the mean in 2016/17. The medium number of motor vehicles in 2020 was much greater than the previous median counts in 2018/19 of 1,715 motor vehicles and 2016/17 of 1,891 motor vehicles – see Table 7.

Table 7: Summary statistics for the total number of motor vehicles recorded on each transect date. N indicates the number of transect counts completed.

Survey	n	Mean ± SE	Median	Max
2016/17	12	1,967 ± 145	1,891	3,031
2018/19	12	2,335 ± 465	1,715	7,082
2020/21	3*	2,257 ± 353	2,539	2,676

*incomplete surveys

4.8 The count totals on individual dates in 2016/17, 2018/19 and 2020 are shown in Figure 3. There have only been 10 counts with over 2,000 vehicles recorded, with two of these being in 2020. Figure 3 also shows the long-term median value across all counts (n=27) of 1,865 motor vehicles, of which these two counts were also above. The long term mean value was 2,162.7.

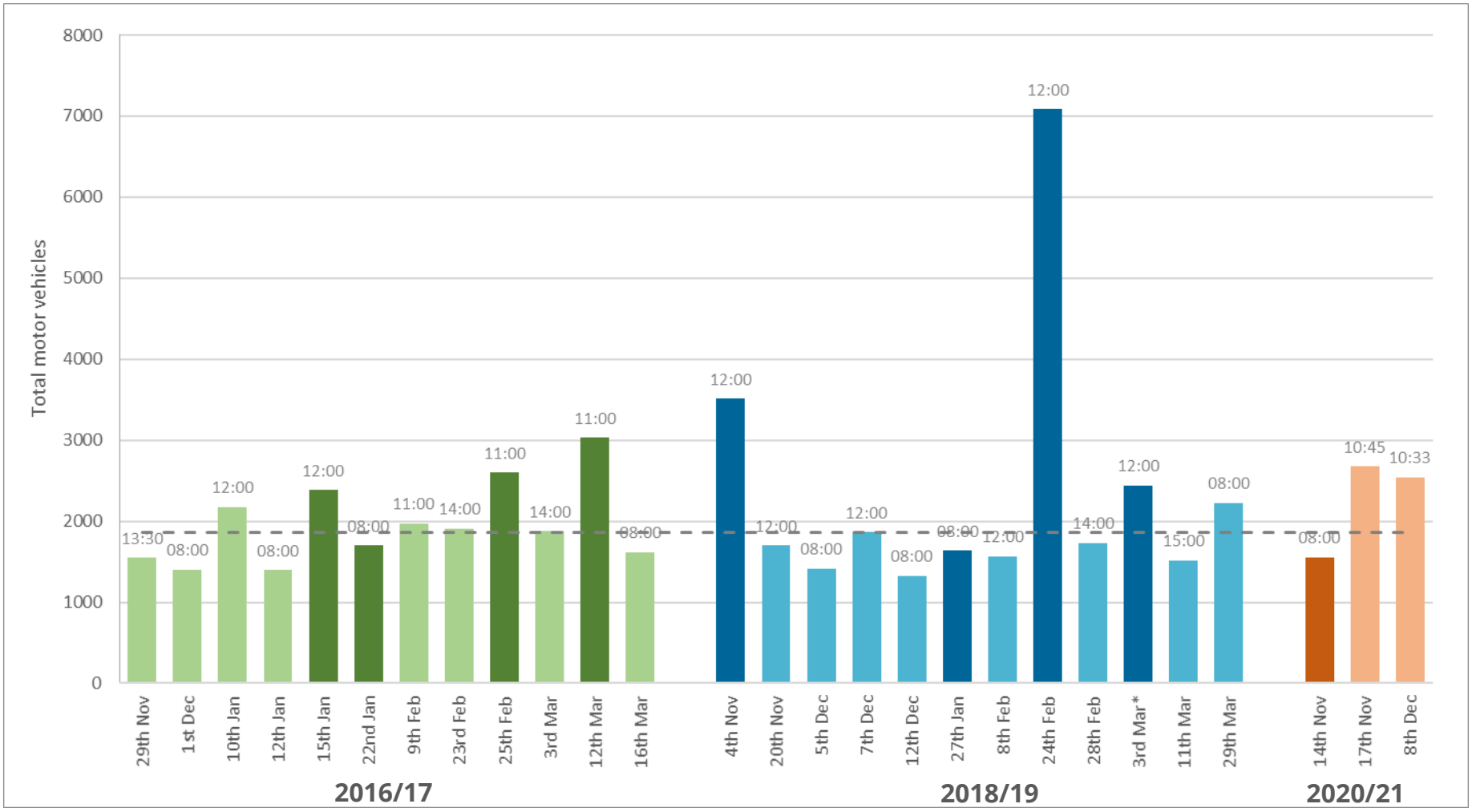


Figure 3: Bar plots for the total number of motor vehicles recorded on each count date for the 2020/21 survey (orange), 2018/19 survey (blue) and the 2016/17 survey (green). Dark colours indicate weekends. The line indicates the median across all the data (1,865 vehicles).

Individual parking locations

4.9 The mean number of motor vehicles at each parking location is shown as an average count and the standard error for each in Map 3. The number of motor vehicles was divided by the number of parking spaces to calculate a percentage 'fullness' for location. These have been averaged across count dates to show the typical fullness of parking locations in Map 4.

4.10 It is important to note that on very busy days car parking locations could record over 100% fullness. Of the 180 parking locations 22 were over capacity – i.e. had more vehicles recorded than the estimated number of spaces. This occurred for various reasons, such as: when people parked outside the bounds of a car park (e.g. grass verges), parked on entrances or parked very closely including double parked, therefore exceeding the estimated spaces.

Table 8: Summary statistics for the number of motor vehicles recorded at each individual parking location per transect.

Survey	n	Mean ± SE	Median	Max
Number of motor vehicles per parking location				
2016/17	2,128	11.01 ± 0.42	5	244
2018/19	2,139	13.10 ± 0.69	5	859
2020*	528	12.8 ± 0.74	7	122

*incomplete surveys and small sample size

4.11 While some car parks were noted to have been closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, of the 180 parking locations 169 were open on all counts, roughly 94% of the locations. In previous years this was 93% in 2018/19 and 88% in the 2016/17 surveys, suggesting no greater numbers of parking closures than the previous years (due to maintenance closures etc.).

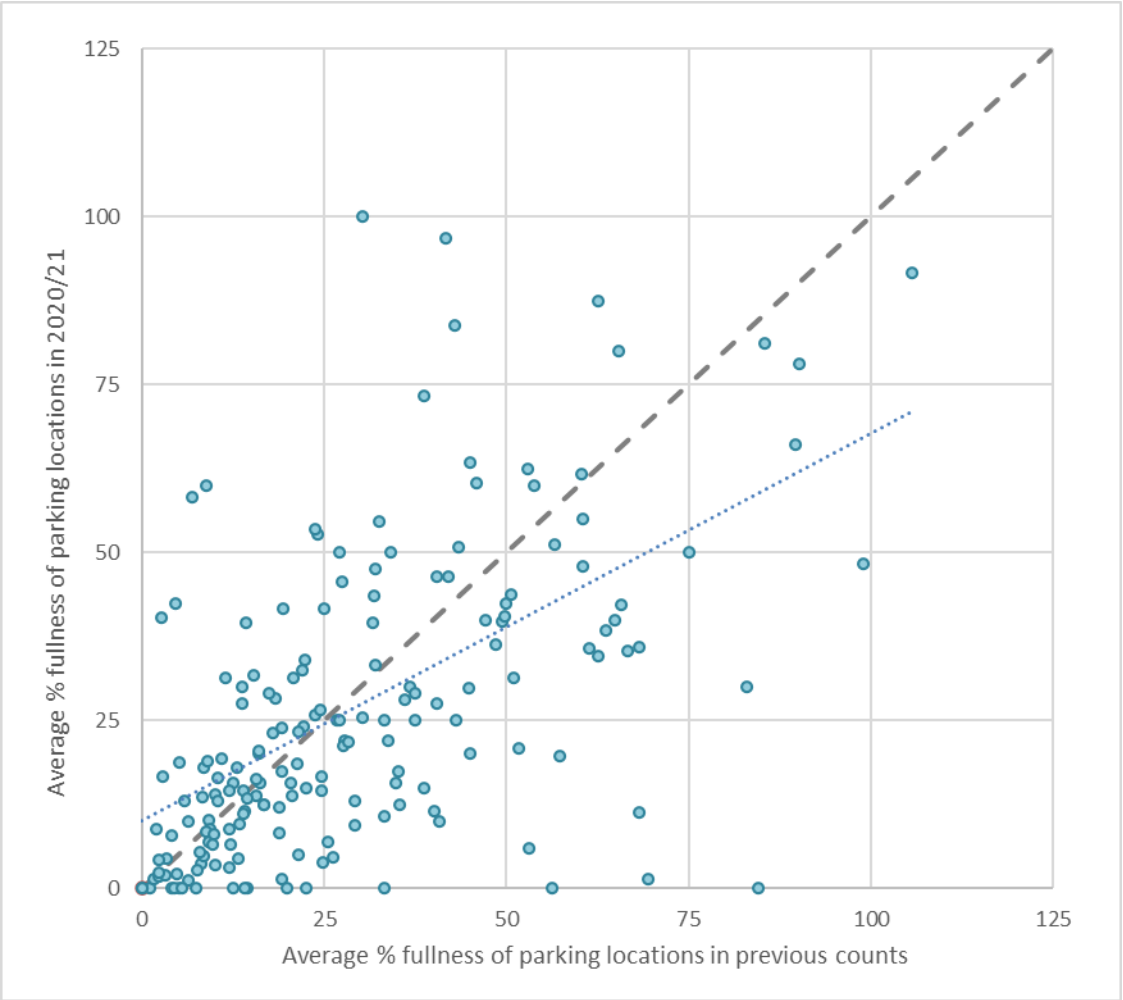


Figure 4: Scatterplot of the parking locations showing the percentage fullness of parking locations from 2020 and previous counts (2016/17 and 2018/19). The dotted blue line shows the trendline.

4.12 Change at individual parking locations is shown in Map 5 which shows the difference in the average percentage fullness of car parks between survey years.

4.13 The average percentage fullness for 2020 and previous counts (2016/17 and 2018/19) was compared in Figure 4. A trendline for the relationship between these counts is shown and this could be compared to a 1:1 trendline (grey dotted line), which would assume the same average fullness of parking locations as in the previous years. Examination of these two different lines in Figure 4 suggests that parking locations with a low percentage fullness typically in previous years were now fuller, and conversely that parking locations that were typically fuller in previous years were now less likely to be as full.

4.14 Obviously, this is based on relatively few counts from this year (3) compared to a relatively large number of previous counts (24). However, examination of this by the size of the parking location (capacity) suggests increases have been particularly at the smaller parking locations. Although it is important to bear in mind that smaller parking locations change in percentage fullness more easily due to the small number of spaces available.

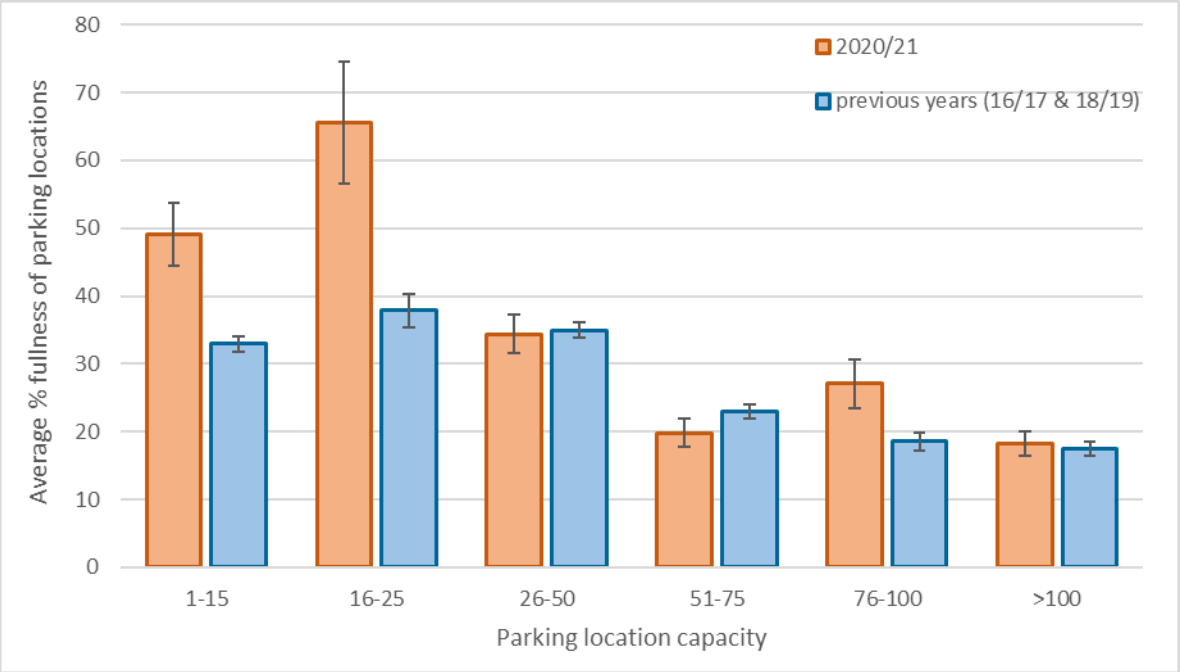
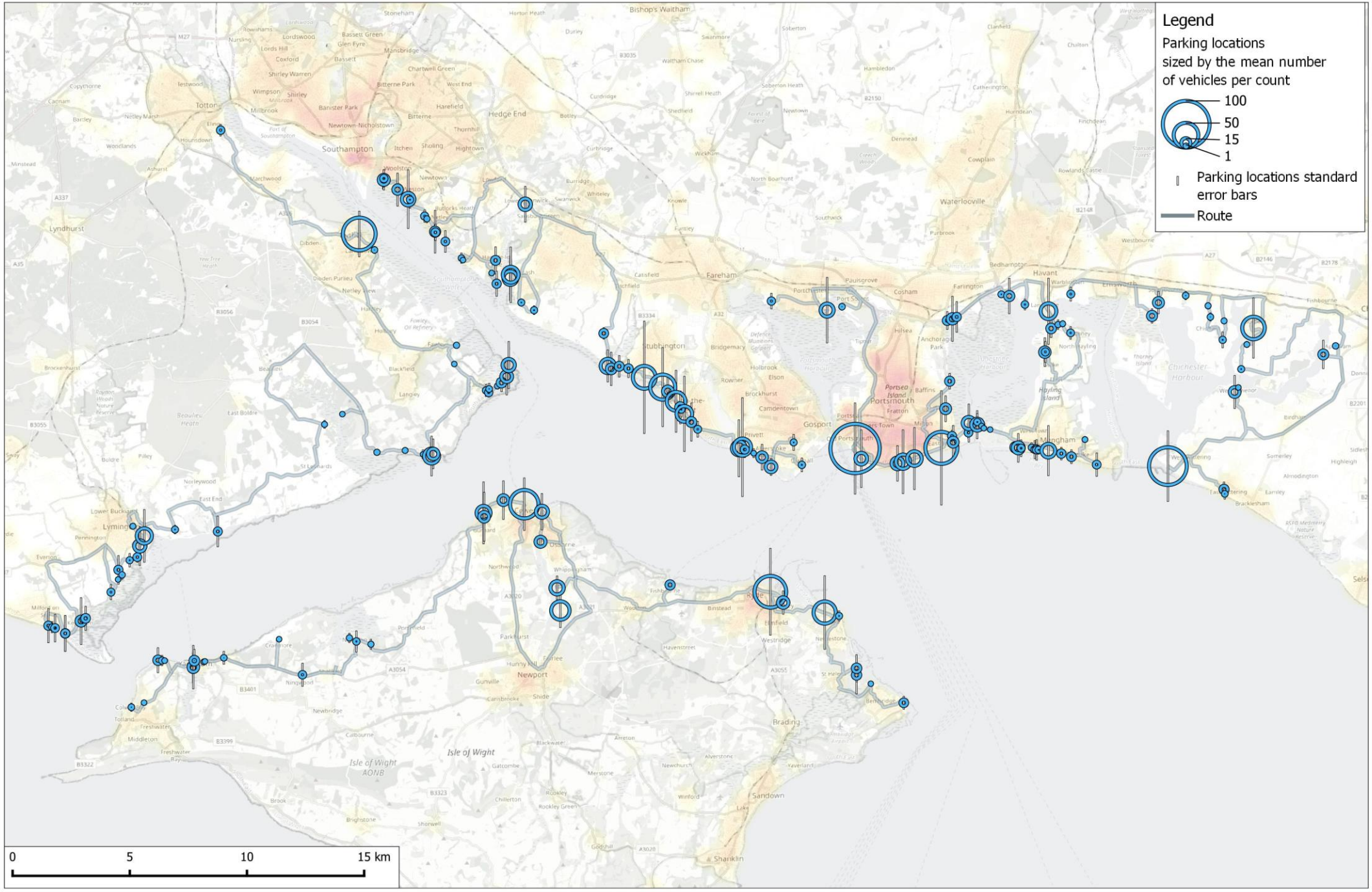


Figure 5: Averaged % fullness of parking locations in 2020 and previous year counts shown by grouping for parking location capacity (standard error bars).

Map 3: Parking location point locations sized by the mean number of vehicles at each parking location and a standard error.



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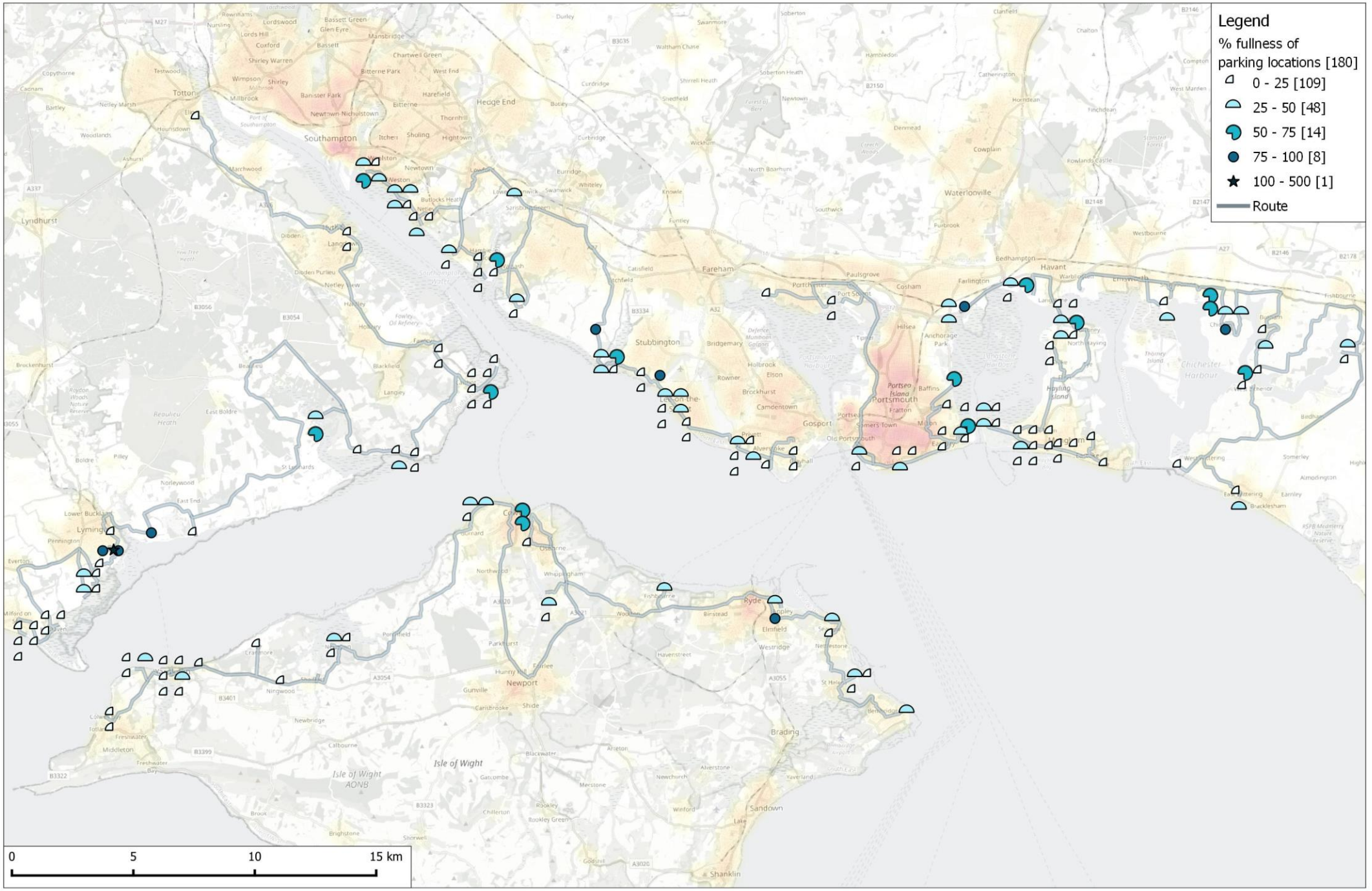
Map 4: Average percentage fullness of parking locations.



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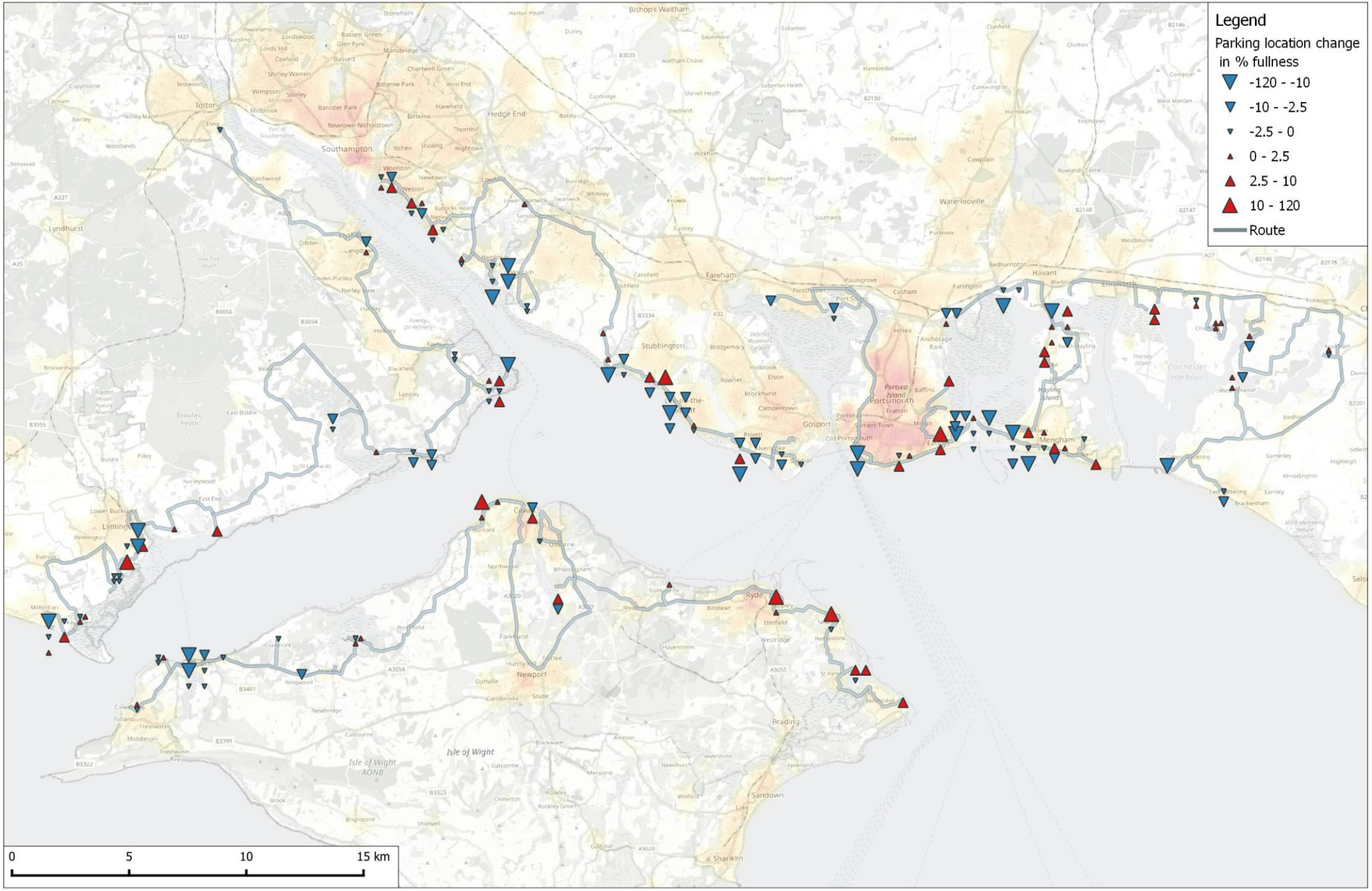
Map 5: Change in averge percentage fullness of parking location in 2020/21 from the long term average from previous surveys.



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Variation by type of vehicle

4.15 Counts recorded the different types of vehicles and overall the vast majority of these (6,363 vehicles, 85%) were cars (without any additional roof-racks/bike racks/trailers) – see Table 9 and Figure 6. An average of 2,121 cars counted per transect were recorded. This is broadly in line with the previous count (also shown in Table 9 and Figure 6), where the average car count was 2,050 and accounted for 88% of vehicles recorded.

4.16 In this count the second most frequent vehicle type recorded was 'Unmarked vans' with an average of 172.7 per transect (6.9% of motor vehicles). This was followed by cars with rear mounted racks (120.7, 4.8%) and camper vans/ caravans (56.3, 2.35).

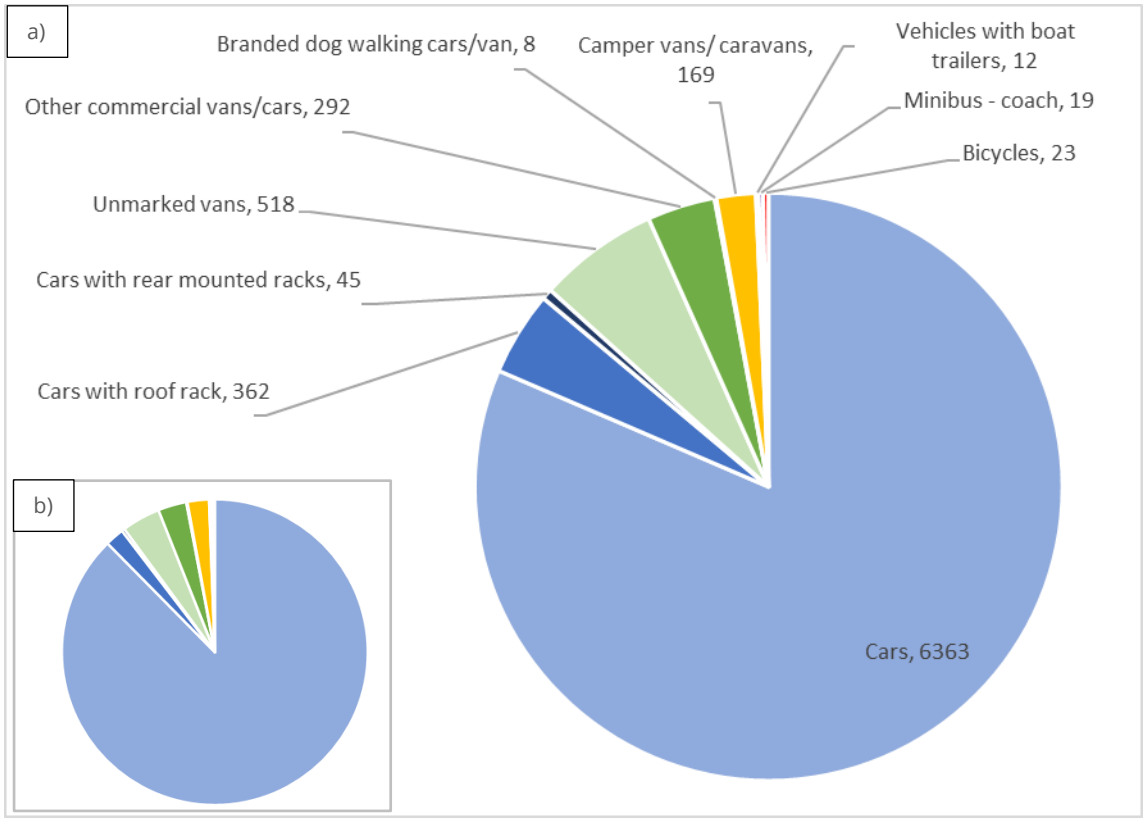

Figure 6: a) Pie chart to summarise the types of vehicles recorded across all surveying, b) inset pie chart to illustrate the previous count (2018/19).

4.17 The main difference from the previous counts, was the reduction in proportion of cars see (i.e. without rear or roof mounted racks) - as shown by the light blue wedge in Figure 6, with 6% fewer than the previous year. These were replaced by increases in the proportion of Cars with roof racks and Unmarked vans (both increases of 2.6%).

Table 9: Headline figures from the 2020 count of the average number of each vehicle type for a single transect count and total number expressed as a percentage of all motor vehicles, and percentages also shown for 2018/19.

Vehicle type	2020 count		2018/19 count
	Mean number of each count on a single transect	Count as a percentage of all motor vehicles	Count as a percentage of all motor vehicles
Cars (with roof/rear racks)	2121.0	84.8	87.8
Cars with roof rack	120.7	4.8	2.0
Cars with rear mounted racks	15.0	0.6	0.3
Unmarked vans	172.7	6.9	4.1
Other commercial vans/cars	97.3	3.7	3.0
Branded dog walking cars/van	2.7	0.1	0.1
Camper vans/ caravans	56.3	2.3	2.3
Vehicles with boat trailers	4.0	0.2	0.1
Minibus - coach	6.3	0.3	0.3

4.18 The number of each type of vehicle on the 3 different transect dates is shown in Table 10. In previous counts this has been used to look at detailed examination between weekdays and weekends, however with limited sample size this has not been conducted this time.

Table 10: Summary of the number of vehicles recorded on each transect date.

Transect	Date	Car parks counted*	Cars (without racks etc.)	Cars with roof racks	Cars with rear mounted racks	Unmarked vans	Other commercial vans/cars	Branded dog walking cars/van	Camper vans/ caravans	Vehicles with boat trailers	Minibus - coach	Number of bicycles
1	**14th Nov**	172	1,420	121	14	177	70	1	55	6	6	2
2	**17th Nov**	171	2,530	129	17	177	116	3	58	2	7	9
3	**8th Dec**	173	2,413	112	14	164	106	4	56	4	6	12
Total		**516**	**6,363**	**362**	**45**	**518**	**292**	**8**	**169**	**12**	**19**	**23**

Table 11: Mean number of vehicles by type recorded per transect across the different count years.

Year	Average number per transect											
	All vehicles	Cars (without racks etc.)*	Cars with roof racks	Cars with rear mounted racks	Unmarked vans*	Other commercial vans/cars*	Branded dog walking cars/van	Camper vans/ caravans	Vehicles with boat trailers	Minibus – coach*	Number of bicycles	MPV/minibus*
2020	2,256.7	2,121.0	120.7	15.0	172.7	97.3	2.7	56.3	4.0	6.3	7.7	-
2018/19	2,340.1	2,050.1	46.8	7.4	95.2	70.3	3.0	53.3	2.9	6.2	5.0	-
2016/17	1,969.2	1,657.3	44.9	10.2	134.8		3.5	35.5	1.9	-	2.3	78.8

* counts which are not directly comparable.

5. Results: Vantage point counts

5.1 Vantage point activity counts were conducted at a subset of the parking count locations. At 39 of the 180 locations the surveyor parked and walked to the coast to scan for people and activities along the shore and out into the water.

5.2 Vantage point counts involved a number of different count units. Firstly, the number of people were counted (conducting different respective activities), followed by the number of groups for a subset of activities. This allowed calculation of group sizes. The next count unit was of the number of 'active' boats (those clearly in use), and finally the number of dogs (on or off lead).

5.3 As relevant, we refer to either a specific count unit: people, groups, dogs or boats, or summed all the different counts (persons, boats, dogs but not groups) – referred to as the number of 'individuals'. This 'individuals' metric describes the relative amount of 'traffic' by persons, dogs and boats combined.

Activities

5.4 In total, 1,557 people, 43 'active' boats and 375 dogs were observed. The most common activity was people walking without dogs, with an average of 236.3 people per count (47% of the total people seen), followed by dog walking, average count of 157.7 people (31% of all people), and people sitting enjoying the view, 23.0 people (4.5%).

5.5 All other activities accounted for the remaining 18% of people seen across all transects. This included cyclists, 2.9% of people seen, with an average of 14.3 people per transect, and joggers, 2.4% of people, and an average of 12.3 people on a transect jogging. Many of these other activities were water based, such as windsurfing, angling etc. and these overall accounted for 9% of people seen.

5.6 The average (mean) number of each count on a typical transect was 262.3 people, 14.3 'active' boats and 125 dogs. Table 10 shows the number of people/boats/dogs recorded for each activity.

Table 12: Summary of the number of people, groups (where recorded), boats and dogs observed during counts shown as an average per transect, with the total across all transects in brackets. The final column shows the average group size for activities where both number of groups as well as people were counted.

Activity	Count unit				Average group size
	Number of people	Number of groups	Number of active boats	Number of dogs	
Walkers (without dogs)	236.3 (709)	119.3 (358)			2.0
Dog walkers	157.7 (473)	95.7 (287)			1.6
Sitting (not including in car)	23 (69)				
Windsurfers	17.3 (52)				
Cyclists	14.3 (43)				
All other people	14.3 (43)				
Kitesurfers	13.7 (41)				
Joggers	12.3 (37)	11.3 (34)			1.1
Angling/fishing (with rod)	6 (18)				
Bird/wildlife watching	3.7 (11)	3 (9)			1.2
Paddle boarders	3 (9)				
Bait diggers	2.3 (7)				
Kayak/ canoes	1.3 (4)				
Water skiing	0.7 (2)				
Horse riders	0.7 (2)				
All other people	506.7 (1520)				
Boats (all craft beside canoes and commercial)			14.3 (43)		
Dogs off lead				74.3 (223)	
Dogs on lead				50.7 (152)	
Total people	**1,013.3 (3040)**	**229.3 (688)**	**14.3 (43)**	**125 (375)**	

5.7 A total of 375 dogs were observed, putting a simple calculation of the average number of dogs for a dog walking group at 0.8 dogs per group (1.3 in the previous count). Note that this calculation is based on all dogs seen, and dogs which were part of groups such as joggers, anglers, and bird watchers were counted, but not separated. The number of dogs off lead was 223 dogs, to 152 on lead, overall 59% off lead (62% in the previous count).

5.8 The average group size for dog walkers and walkers without dogs was 2.0 and 1.6 people per group respectively – exactly the same as the previous count.

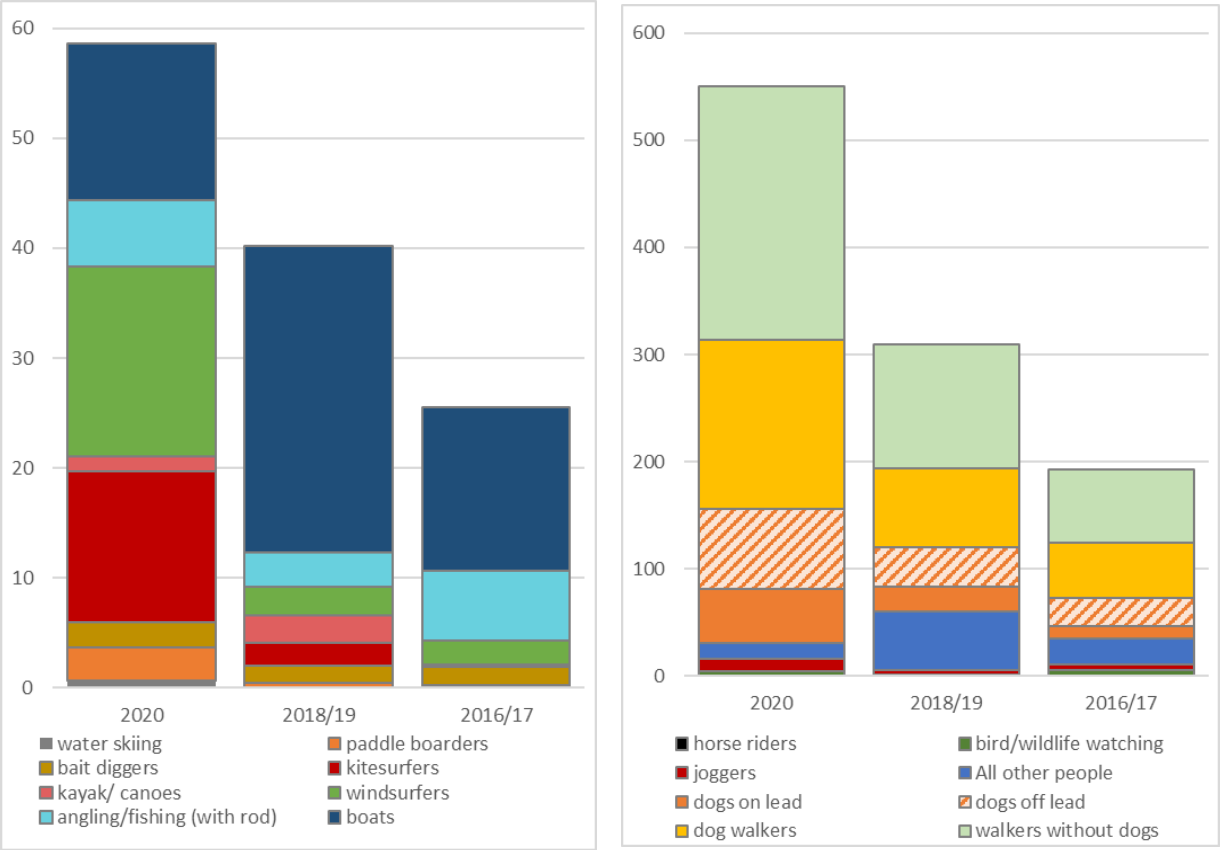

Figure 7: Stacked bar charts to show the relative differences in the proportion of different activities (water- and land-based) being conducted from vantage points between years. Note numbers cycling and sitting not shown as this was not separated in the 2016/17 count.

5.9 Further comparison to the previous counts is presented in Figure 7 showing the average total of each activity recorded in each year's count. This highlights the greater numbers of individuals seen from vantage points on the coast. However, it is important to remember that the previous years' counts are based on the greater sample size of 12 counts across the whole winter, compared to just the 3 counts in the 2020 dataset. It is also important to note that the average in 2018/19 was influenced by a single count with an extremely high value.

5.10 While the number of individuals seen is higher, the proportion of individuals conducting activities was largely similar for terrestrial activities. For water

based activities this was more markedly different, with fewer boats, but more windsurfers and kitesurfers. These activities are very condition dependent and therefore are more likely to have occurred by chance in a small sample size, and perhaps are more easily conducted in coronavirus times, whereas some boating facilities may have been closed.

5.11 A summary of the people, dogs and boats seen in counts is presented in Table 13. This highlights the high counts which have been recorded with many more individuals accessing the coast shown in both the mean and median. The mean and median in 2020 were roughly 4.0 and 2.4 times greater than typically seen in the previous counts.

Table 13: Comparison of the numbers of people, dogs and boats observed in 2020 and the previous counts. Values summarised as the total, median, mean and range of totals recorded in each of the 12 counts.

Count unit	Number of transects	Total count across transects	Median of the counts	Mean of the counts	Min - max of the counts
2020					
People	3*	1520	551	506.7	368 - 601
Dogs	3*	43	132	125	96 - 147
Boats	3*	43	10	14.3	5 - 28
2018/19					
People	12	3147	135	262.3	29 - 1164
Dogs	12	717	54.5	59.75	14 - 129
Boats	12	335	13	27.9	0 - 165
2016/17					
People	12	1989	143	165.8	62 - 362
Dogs	12	448	36.5	37.3	25 - 52
Boats	12	178	10.5	14.8	3 - 63

*incomplete surveys and small sample

5.12 In previous reports maps have been produced of the relative number of activities at each vantage point. However, given the limited sample size for each location this was not repeated here.

Location of activities

5.13 The location of individuals seen with reference to the intertidal gradient was recorded. All observations were assigned to a zone on the beach, reflecting whether they were above the beach (dunes or promenade), on the beach (but above mean high water), on the intertidal or on the water.

5.14 Overall, the vast majority of individuals seen (people/dogs/boats) were located higher up the coast, with 66% of all individuals seen in counts along the seawall/promenade/dunes. Some activities will clearly be more likely on certain parts of the coast (e.g. boats compared to people). The relative number for each activity observed was summarised in the previous report but has not included in this report due to the small sample size.

5.15 Examination of the location of activities is shown by route in Figure 8. It should be noted that these are likely to be influenced by the amount of intertidal available to be used by people, which will differ on the location and tide states. Overall, 60% of counts were undertaken on a high tide, which will be due, in part, to the limited sample size. Visibility for the counts was generally good, with 90% of counts having very good (100%) visibility.

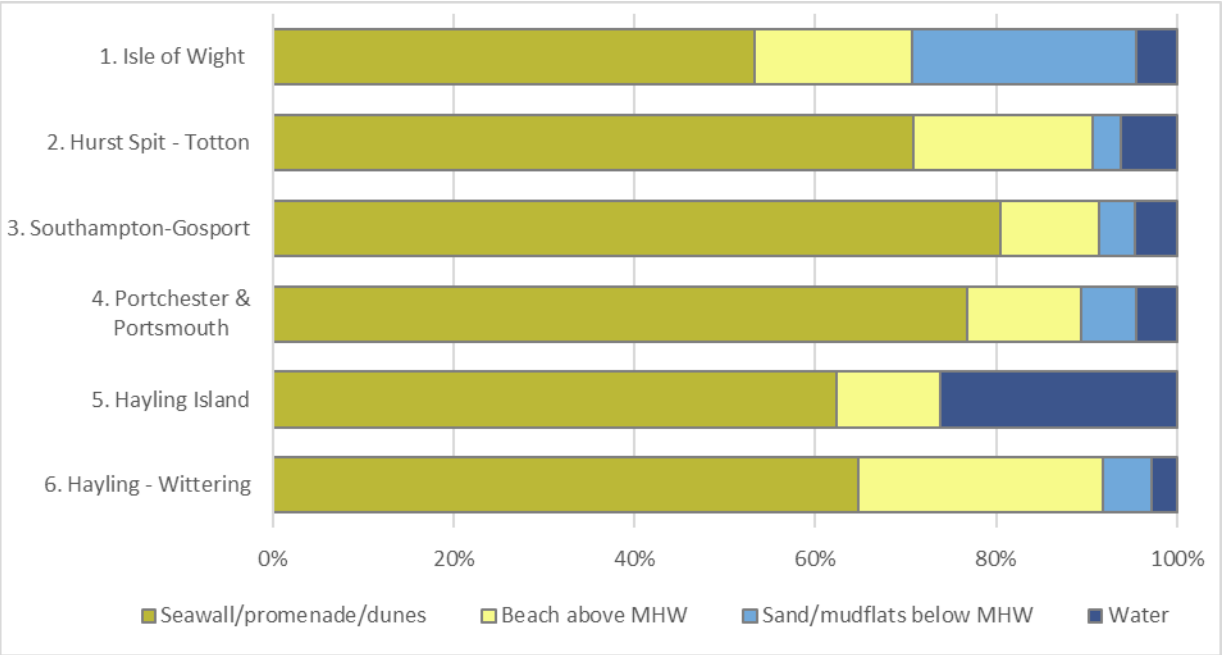

Figure 8: The percentage of individuals (people/dogs/boats) observed during vantage point counts categorised by their position on the beach summarised for the six different routes.

6. Discussion

6.1 The data analysed here is valid and can contribute – in a limited manner, compared to the full counts - to the dataset as a whole for the monitoring of access along the Solent coastline. As a standalone dataset and piece of analysis the data does not work well due to its incompleteness. However, it provides an interesting account of access in the pandemic, highlights issues and shows that changes are able to be measured by the approach even from a limited survey.

6.2 Detailed discussion of the results is beyond the scope of this report in normal counts, regardless of the pandemic and the limited surveying effort. However, some possible patterns are highlighted. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic means the recent access patterns have been unlike any other and it remains to be seen if they will be again in a future winter.

Recommendations

6.3 We would recommend continued surveying every two years. However, given the limited suitability of these results, primarily due to being incomplete, but also due to the pandemic, it may be useful to repeat as soon as winter 2021/22. It is suggested that full surveying effort (e.g. 12 transects) would be most appropriate for consistency with other data collected to date.

6.4 Looking to the future, it is important to periodically review the parking locations included, as car parks can close, new ones open, they can change in capacity and charging regimes can change.

6.5 We suggest that a comprehensive check of parking locations and update would perhaps be beneficial for 2023/24. Every survey we suggest that a check is made with the Bird Aware Team prior to fieldwork commencing to identify if they are aware of any marked changes, but that a major review is scheduled on a longer-term regular basis.

6.6 This review would consider all parking locations for their inclusion, assess capacity, parking charges and, following recommendations in previous work, categorise all parking locations according to broad types (e.g. town, open coast, estuary).

6.7 In Table 14 we summarise how such reviews could be scheduled – showing how it would potentially be ideal to shift the checks of parking charges to be

undertaken in the same year that the car parks being surveyed are reviewed/checked.

Table 14: Potential timing for reviews of locations to be counted and checks of parking charges, and when these should be included in the survey. Years in italics so potential future survey years.

Winter	Comment	Review all parking locations systematically	Reconsider parking charges
2016/17	1st time conducted and car parks had to be mapped	✓	
2018/19	Parking charges recorded		✓
2020/21	Covid – surveys by Rangers and had to be stopped early following lockdown		
2021/22	Resurvey for 2021/22 (Could still be influenced by Covid)		
2023/24		✓	✓
2025/26			
2027/28			
2029/30		✓	✓
2031/32			
2033/34			
2035/36		✓	✓

References

Panter, C., & Caals, Z. (2019). *Solent coastline car park counts: Winter 2018/19* (Unpub. Report No. 500). Footprint Ecology / Bird Aware Solent.

Panter, C., & Liley, D. (2017). *Solent car park and vantage point surveys Winter 2016/2017* (No. 365). Unpublished Report by Footprint Ecology for the Solent Bird Aware Project.

Appendix 1: Details of parking locations

Table 15: Details of the car parking locations

Route	Location number	Parking type	Capacity	1 hour winter charge
1	1	Formal Car-Park	46	1.50
1	2	Gateway	2	0.00
1	3	Formal Car-Park	60	0.00
1	4	Verge	10	0.00
1	5	Verge	2	0.00
1	6	Formal Car-Park	256	0.00
1	7	Formal Car-Park	250	1.50
1	8	Formal Car-Park	25	0.00
1	9	Formal Car-Park	22	1.50
1	10	Roadside	45	1.50
1	11	Formal Car-Park	28	1.50
1	12	Formal Car-Park	12	0.00
1	14	Verge	2	0.00
1	15	Formal Car-Park	14	0.00
1	17	Formal Car-Park	8	0.00
1	18	Formal Car-Park	10	1.00
1	19	Gateway	3	0.00
1	20	Roadside	150	0.00
1	21	Formal Car-Park	20	0.00
1	22	Formal Car-Park	51	0.00
1	23	Formal Car-Park	80	1.50
1	24	Formal Car-Park	50	0.00
1	25	Formal Car-Park	90	0.00
1	26	Formal Car-Park	40	0.00
1	27	Formal Car-Park	90	0.00
1	28	Roadside	10	0.00
1	29	Formal Car-Park	125	1.50
1	30	Formal Car-Park	134	1.50
1	31	Formal Car-Park	83	1.50
1	32	Formal Car-Park	10	0.00
1	33	Formal Car-Park	50	1.50
1	34	Formal Car-Park	30	1.50
1	35	Lay-by	3	0.00
1	36	Formal Car-Park	80	1.50
2	37	Formal Car-Park	180	2.00

Route	Location number	Parking type	Capacity	1 hour winter charge
2	38	Lay-by	12	0.00
2	39	Formal Car-Park	25	1.00
2	40	Lay-by	50	0.00
2	41	Lay-by	40	0.00
2	42	Formal Car-Park	125	2.00
2	43	Roadside	7	0.00
2	44	Verge	30	0.00
2	45	Verge	10	0.00
2	46	Verge	3	0.00
2	47	Formal Car-Park	8	0.00
2	48	Verge	6	0.00
2	49	Verge	3	0.00
2	50	Formal Car-Park	54	2.00
2	51	Gateway	2	0.00
2	52	Roadside	15	0.00
2	53	Formal Car-Park	124	2.00
2	54	Verge	5	0.00
2	55	Verge	10	0.00
2	56	Formal Car-Park	50	0.00
2	57	Verge	1	0.00
2	58	Verge	4	0.00
2	59	Lay-by	3	0.00
2	60	Formal Car-Park	85	2.20
2	61	Formal Car-Park	100	2.20
2	62	Formal Car-Park	150	2.20
2	63	Roadside	15	0.00
2	64	Roadside	9	0.00
2	65	Formal Car-Park	145	1.00
2	66	Verge	45	2.00
2	67	Formal Car-Park	47	2.00
2	68	Verge	100	2.00
2	69	Formal Car-Park	110	1.00
2	70	Verge	2	0.00
2	71	Formal Car-Park	15	0.00
2	72	Formal Car-Park	12	0.00
2	73	Formal Car-Park	100	0.00
2	74	Formal Car-Park	32	0.00
3	75	Roadside	12	0.00
3	76	Formal Car-Park	32	0.00

Route	Location number	Parking type	Capacity	1 hour winter charge
3	77	Roadside	10	0.00
3	78	Formal Car-Park	23	0.00
3	79	Formal Car-Park	50	0.00
3	80	Formal Car-Park	13	0.00
3	81	Formal Car-Park	35	0.00
3	82	Roadside	10	0.00
3	83	Roadside	20	0.00
3	84	Formal Car-Park	12	0.00
3	85	Formal Car-Park	35	2.00
3	86	Formal Car-Park	3	0.00
3	87	Formal Car-Park	10	0.00
3	88	Formal Car-Park	65	0.80
3	89	Formal Car-Park	8	0.00
3	90	Formal Car-Park	25	0.00
3	91	Formal Car-Park	45	0.00
3	92	Formal Car-Park	102	0.00
3	93	Roadside	8	0.00
3	94	Roadside	10	0.00
3	95	Formal Car-Park	30	0.00
3	96	Formal Car-Park	43	0.00
3	97	Formal Car-Park	48	0.00
3	98	Formal Car-Park	38	0.00
3	99	Roadside	8	0.00
3	100	Formal Car-Park	144	0.00
3	101	Formal Car-Park	132	0.00
3	102	Roadside	33	0.00
3	103	Formal Car-Park	39	0.00
3	104	Roadside	68	0.00
3	105	Formal Car-Park	75	0.90
3	106	Formal Car-Park	32	0.60
3	107	Formal Car-Park	195	1.00
3	108	Roadside	35	0.00
3	109	Formal Car-Park	58	1.00
3	110	Formal Car-Park	141	1.00
3	111	Formal Car-Park	85	1.00
3	112	Formal Car-Park	31	1.00
3	113	Roadside	32	1.00
3	114	Formal Car-Park	182	1.00
3	115	Formal Car-Park	164	1.00

Route	Location number	Parking type	Capacity	1 hour winter charge
3	116	Formal Car-Park	50	0.00
3	117	Formal Car-Park	172	0.00
3	202	Formal Car-Park	12	0.00
4	118	Formal Car-Park	44	0.00
4	119	Formal Car-Park	64	0.00
4	120	Roadside	10	0.00
4	121	Formal Car-Park	380	1.80
4	122	Formal Car-Park	225	1.80
4	123	Formal Car-Park	36	1.80
4	124	Formal Car-Park	138	1.80
4	125	Formal Car-Park	100	1.80
4	126	Formal Car-Park	160	1.80
4	127	Formal Car-Park	60	0.00
4	128	Roadside	20	0.00
4	129	Formal Car-Park	80	0.00
4	130	Verge	25	0.00
4	131	Roadside	30	0.00
4	132	Formal Car-Park	8	0.00
5	133	Formal Car-Park	15	0.00
5	134	Formal Car-Park	30	0.00
5	135	Verge	10	0.00
5	136	Formal Car-Park	18	0.00
5	137	Formal Car-Park	71	0.00
5	138	Formal Car-Park	31	3.00
5	139	Formal Car-Park	65	0.00
5	140	Formal Car-Park	16	0.00
5	141	Verge	3	0.00
5	142	Verge	3	0.00
5	143	Formal Car-Park	7	0.00
5	144	Formal Car-Park	60	1.40
5	145	Formal Car-Park	65	3.00
5	146	Verge	8	0.00
5	147	Verge	3	0.00
5	148	Lay-by	1	0.00
5	149	Formal Car-Park	250	1.40
5	150	Formal Car-Park	45	1.40
5	151	Formal Car-Park	100	1.40
5	152	Formal Car-Park	100	1.40
5	153	Formal Car-Park	70	1.40

Route	Location number	Parking type	Capacity	1 hour winter charge
5	154	Formal Car-Park	70	1.40
5	155	Formal Car-Park	100	0.00
5	156	Formal Car-Park	70	0.00
5	157	Formal Car-Park	100	1.40
5	158	Formal Car-Park	50	1.40
5	159	Formal Car-Park	75	1.40
5	160	Formal Car-Park	70	1.40
5	161	Roadside	2	0.00
5	200	Formal Car-Park	14	0.00
5	201	Formal Car-Park	10	0.00
6	162	Roadside	12	0.00
6	163	Formal Car-Park	15	2.00
6	164	Verge	15	0.00
6	165	Gateway	4	0.00
6	166	Roadside	2	0.00
6	167	Roadside	2	0.00
6	168	Formal Car-Park	10	0.00
6	169	Roadside	4	0.00
6	170	Formal Car-Park	425	0.60
6	171	Lay-by	5	0.00
6	172	Gateway	6	0.00
6	173	Formal Car-Park	10	0.00
6	174	Formal Car-Park	15	0.00
6	175	Formal Car-Park	7	0.00
6	176	Formal Car-Park	75	1.20
6	177	Formal Car-Park	200	2.75
6	178	Formal Car-Park	70	0.60
6	179	Roadside	10	0.00

Appendix 2: Recording forms used

In this appendix, we provide examples of the recording forms used. The first is a generic sheet for recording the vantage point counts and the second is a form used for recording parked vehicles (the form is the one for route 5).

Vantage point number:		Surveyor:		Notes (record any unusual activities or general comments about events):
Date:		Visibility of vantage area (tick closest):		
Time:		100%	80%	
Tide (tick one)	Low:	60%	40%	
Intermediate (some mud):	High:	20%		Notes on other people:

	Count unit	Seawall/promenade/dunes	Beach above MHWM	Sandflats/mudflats below MHWM	On water	Notes
Horse riders	**People on horseback**					
Joggers	**Groups**					
	People					
Bird/wildlife watching	**Groups**					
	People					
Walkers (without dogs)	**Groups**					
	People					
Dog walkers	**Groups**					
	People					
Dogs off lead	**Dogs**					
Dogs on lead	**Dogs**					
Sitting (not including in car)	**People**					
Cyclists	**People**					
Angling/fishing (with rod)	**People**					
Bait diggers	**People**					
Kitesurfers	**People**					
Paddle-boards	**People**					
Wind-surfers	**People**					
Kayak/canoes	**People**					
Water-skiing	**Ski-ers**					
Boats (all craft beside canoes & commercial)	**Boats**					
All other people	**People**					

Record within set count area only. Counts are 'snapshots'. Scan count area systematically (e.g. left – right) and count as you do, do not add additional people if they then enter the count area after your scan. You may need to do a number of scans for the different rows in the table. All activities is a count of all people visible in count area, including those on boats. Subsequent rows relate to specific activities. "Seawall/promenade/dunes" relates to the area well above Mean High Water Mark (MHWM) – elevated and supporting vegetation. Beach is open unvegetated zone above the strandline. Sandflats/mudflats is the intertidal. Not all zones will be present at each vantage point and may vary depending on tide state.

Date:		Surveyor:		Section:		Weather description/notes:
Start time:		End time:		Cloud cover (8ths)		

Car park number (yellow ones are vantage points)	Capacity	1. Time	2. Total parked motor vehicles	Subset of total motor vehicles								11. Number of Bicycles	12. Approx. percent of frosted vehicles (if requested)	13. Rain (enter 1 if present otherwise blank)	14. Closed/inaccessible (tick if applicable)	Notes
				3. Vehicles with boat trailers	4. Branded dog walking cars/van	5. Other commercial vans/cars	6. Unmarked vans	7. Cars with roof rack for surfboards/canoes / bicycles etc	8. Cars with rear mounted bike racks	9. Camper vans/ caravans	10. Minibus - coach					
133	15															
134	30															
135	10															
136	18															
137	71															
138	31															
139	65															
200	14															
201	10															
140	16															
141	3															
142	3															
143	7															
144	60															
145	65															
146	8															
147	3															
148	1															
149	250															
150	45															
151	100															
152	100															
153	70															
154	70															
155	100															
156	70															

157	100															
158	50															
159	75															
160	70															
161	2															

Record any details here relating to route/traffic or other general issues on the day that might affect count (road closures, local events etc)

Notes:

Car-park number is the unique ID number assigned to each car-park. Yellow highlights indicate locations where vantage point counts also required.

Blue rows – formal car parks. Orange rows – roadside. Green rows – Verges/laybys/gateways etc.

1. Time visited – record time visited each car park (format of HH:MM). This can be approximate and with odd one missed – not analysed, idea is to see travel times.

2. Total parked motor vehicles is the total number of parked vehicles (cars, motor bikes, vans, lorries, etc) – columns to the right are subsets of this total apart from bicycles, which are not motor vehicles

3. Vehicles with boat trailers - any vehicle (car or van) with boat trailer of any size on.

4. Branded dog walking vehicles – any vehicle (car or van) with obvious commercial dog walker branding on.

5. Other commercial cars/ vans- any car, van, or lorry type vehicle, that is "commercial" vehicles i.e. branded businesses stopping for break, ice cream vans, builders working locally (may not be branded), outdoor pursuit companies, but **NOT commercial dog walkers**.

6. Unmarked vans – other vans, which are not clearly businesses e.g. individuals with vans, common with serious windsurfers etc. These often have roof racks.

7. Cars with roof rack for surfboards/canoes/ bicycles etc cars with roof racks for water-based activities or cycling – vans with bike racks can just be recorded as vans.

8. Cars with rear mounted bike racks- cars with rear racks for cycling – vans with rear racks can just be recorded as vans.

9. Camper-vans/ caravans – small campervans to large motorhomes, or a car towing a caravan (in this case still count as 1)

10. Minibus – coach – any type of "bus", from minibuses to coaches.

11. Bicycles - push and electric bicycles (not motorbikes) in the car park, separate to any on racks on cars – some car-parks do have dedicated bike racks

12. Approx. percent of frosted vehicles (if requested) – rough proportion of vehicles which are covered in frost – only count if requested.

13. Rain enter 1 if present, otherwise blank

14. Tick if closed/inaccessible – tick if car park closed/road works within, road works to get to it making inaccessible etc.