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23 COASTAL TOURISM AND RECREATION

23.1 Introduction

This section describes the existing tourism and recreational resource in north east Kent, along with a description of potential impacts from both the coastal and landside elements of the Thanet Offshore Wind Farm (Thanet) project.

23.2 Assessment Methodology

A desktop study was undertaken to assess the potential disruption to coastal tourism and recreation in the area during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Thanet project. A number of sources of information have been reviewed including:

- The North East Kent European Marine Sites - Management Scheme 2001;
- RYA and Cruising Association - Sharing the Wind, Recreational Boating in the Offshore Wind Farm Strategic Areas, 2004;
- Tourism Service Data - Thanet District Council;
- Tourism Service Data - Dover District Council; and
- The effects of human activity on the turnstone *Arenaria interpres* within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay Special Protection Area (SPA). Brief report of findings for the 2002-2003 fieldwork season (Webb K.J., 2005).

Consultation has also been carried out with relevant bodies and organisations operating in the area. Details of the organisations consulted and their responses are provided in **Appendix 3.2**.

23.3 Existing Environment

23.3.1 Tourism

The main tourist areas in Thanet District include the coastal towns of Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Margate. Sandwich Bay and Deal are also important tourist destinations within the study area and both are located in Dover District.

Ramsgate has a noteworthy maritime past with its harbour being granted 'royal' status in 1821 in recognition of the hospitality given to King George IV when he sailed with the Royal Squadron from Ramsgate on his way to Hanover. Today, the Royal Harbour (Ramsgate Marina) offers modern facilities to local fisherman and local and international yachtsmen. Ramsgate attracts visitors because of its expanse of sandy beaches and restaurants, shopping centre and fine architectural features in its town centre (Tourism in Thanet, 2005 on <http://www.tourism.thanet.gov.uk>).

Broadstairs is a resort with a strong history of being the holiday home for Charles Dickens. It still attracts many visitors with its attractive bays, maritime history and characteristic streets.

Margate has an important history as a tourist resort. It was the first resort to have donkey rides in 1790 and the first to introduce deckchairs in 1898. Today it is a peaceful

coastal retreat offering traditional seaside activities, great sporting opportunities and a vibrant nightlife. Margate Old Town is currently being renovated.

A number of events occur in the Thanet area throughout the year including the Powerboat Grand Prix, Ramsgate Regatta, Thanet Air Show and the Dickens Festival.

Sandwich Bay offers a peaceful environment with its long stretch of sandy beaches. The Bay forms part of the nature conservation designation Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA (see **Section 4, Policy Framework and Guidance**).

Deal is a small tourist resort. Key attractions include Deal Castle, which was built by Henry VIII, Deal Pier, and its gently sloping shingle beach.

Data from the Thanet District Council Tourism Service indicate that between 2002 and 2005, the local tourist offices received a peak of 231,337 enquires in 2004 (see **Table 23.1**). In 2000, tourism expenditure is estimated to have been approximately £44.96 million, generating 4,860 direct and indirect jobs in Thanet (see **Table 23.2**). Tourism in Dover District had a value of £186 million in 2003 (see **Table 23.3**), generating 4,031 actual employment jobs (Tourism South East Research Unit, 2003).

Table 23.1 Data on visitor enquiries for Thanet District

	Ramsgate	Margate	Broadstairs	Total
2005 data (Jan to Sept)				
Visitors	33,756	33,296	18,758	85,810
Tel/fax/postal	9,256	4,286	3,918	17,460
Total	43,012	37,582	22,676	103,270
2004 data (Jan to Dec)				
Visitors	76,948	57,605	62,609	197,162
Tel/fax/postal	20,380	6,627	7,168	34,175
Total	97,328	64,232	69,777	231,337
2003 data (Jan to Dec)				
Visitors	68,779	63,305	60,040	192,124
Tel/fax/postal	19,382	6,827	5,743	31,952
Total	88,161	70,132	65,783	224,076
2002 data (Jan to Dec)				
Visitors	71,916	56,553	54,427	182,896
Tel/fax/postal	18,922	7,398	5,449	31,769
Total	90,838	63,951	59,876	214,665

Notes: The opening times of the tourist offices were reduced in 2005 in comparison to previous years, and the data also only covers a nine month period. In addition, the Broadstairs tourist office was located off the High Street in a shared location (pers. comm. by Tourism Services of Thanet District Council, 2005)

Source: Thanet District Council – Tourism Service

Table 23.2 Data on tourism volume and value for Thanet District

Volume and Value of Tourism to Thanet District Council		
Year	1998	2000
Staying trips	545,000	518,000
Direct tourist expenditure generated by visitor nights	£79.45 million	£85.56 million
Day visitors	2.19 million	2.60 million
Direct tourist expenditure generated by day visitors	£35 million	£44.96 million
Jobs generated through direct tourist expenditure	3,337	3,782
Jobs generated through indirect tourist expenditure	990	1,078

Source: Cambridge Economic Impact Model 1998 and 2000

Table 23.3 Data on tourism value for Dover District

Value of Tourism to Dover District in 2003			
	Staying tourists	Day visitors	Total
Direct	£69,617,000	£63,181,000	£132,798,000
Supplier and income induced	£27,708,000	£26,088,000	£53,796,000
Total	£97,325,000	£89,269,000	£186,594,000

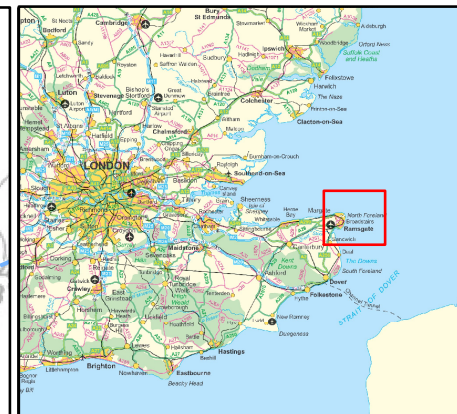
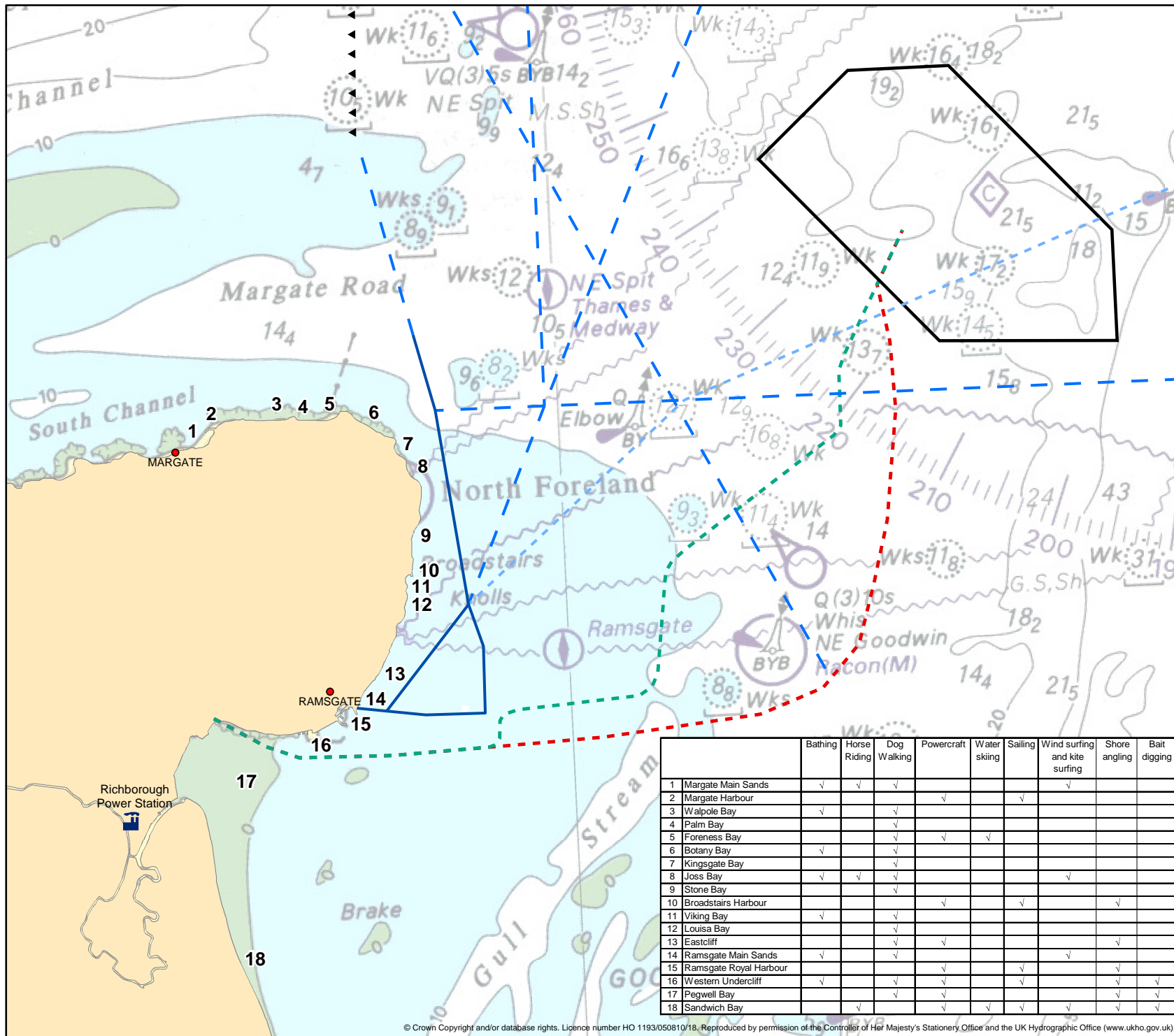
Source: Tourism South East Research Unit, 2003

The main visitor attractions within the area potentially affected by the onshore works, comprising the north of Pegwell Bay and the A256 Sandwich Road, include the Viking Ship and Pegwell Bay Country Park. The Viking Ship has recently undergone major restoration. Pegwell Bay Country Park covers 28 hectares and comprises the River Stour Estuary, Pegwell Bay and the Thanet cliffs. It offers facilities including toilets, parking and picnic areas.

23.3.2 Recreational activities

A number of recreational activities occur along the Thanet and Dover coast including bathing, scuba diving, surfing and watersports (see **Figure 23.1**).

Bathing is a popular recreational activity along the Thanet and Dover coast in the summer months of May to September. It occurs in the many sandy bays along the coast, the closest location to the landfall being Ramsgate Western Undercliffs and Ramsgate Main Sands. Water quality at the Ramsgate bathing beaches has been good or excellent since 1996 (see **Section 7, Marine and Coastal Water Quality**). The nearest bathing beaches to the Thanet site include Kingsgate Bay and Joss Bay. Quality of the seascape has been assessed in **Section 13, Seascape and Visual Character**.



Legend:

- Wind Farm Site Location
- Proposed Cable Route 1
- Proposed Cable Route 2
- Main Ports
- Light Recreational Use
- Medium Recreational Use
- Heavy Recreational Use
- Light Traditional Use

Title:

MAIN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND CRUISING ROUTES

Project:

THANET OFFSHORE WIND FARM

Source: Main Chart - Not to be used for navigation.
Adapted from www.thanetcoast.org.uk, 2005
© Haskoning UK Ltd.
Inset Map - Derived from MiniScale by Ordnance Survey.
Crown Copyright. All rights reserved.
Licence number AL 100017728

Client:

THANET OFFSHORE WIND LTD

Drawn by: SMG	Checked: SDG	Drawing No: 9P5164/06/800
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Date: 25/10/2005	Figure: 23.1
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Scale: 0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Kilometres	Revision No: 002
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	Bathing	Horse Riding	Dog Walking	Powercraft	Water skiing	Sailing	Wind surfing and kite surfing	Shore angling	Bait digging
1 Margate Main Sands	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		
2 Margate Harbour				✓		✓			
3 Walpole Bay	✓		✓						
4 Palm Bay			✓						
5 Foreness Bay			✓	✓	✓				
6 Botany Bay	✓		✓						
7 Kingsgate Bay			✓						
8 Joss Bay	✓	✓	✓				✓		
9 Stone Bay			✓						
10 Broadstairs Harbour						✓		✓	
11 Viking Bay	✓		✓						
12 Louisa Bay			✓						
13 Eastcliff			✓	✓				✓	
14 Ramsgate Main Sands	✓		✓				✓		
15 Ramsgate Royal Harbour			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
16 Western Undercliff	✓		✓					✓	✓
17 Pegwell Bay			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
18 Sandwich Bay		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Surfing is a common activity all year round along the Thanet coastline, with Joss Bay proving particularly popular. It is estimated that in good weather conditions there are up to 50 surfers in the water at a time, with 300 regular users of the Thanet coastline, excluding clubs (The North East Kent European Marine Site Management Scheme, 2001). Surfing is promoted along the Thanet coast by a local organisation known as the Big Chill (www.thebigchill.co.uk).

Windsurfing occurs at Pegwell Bay, Margate Main Sands, Minnis Bay and West Brook, with approximately 20 users during weekdays and up to 50 at weekends (The North East Kent European Marine Site Management Scheme, 2001).

Water based crafts can be launched from a number of facilities along the Thanet and Dover coast, the closest to the landfall being:

- Ramsgate Harbour;
- Eastern Undercliff, Ramsgate - for powered watercraft e.g. Jet Ski, Jet Bikes, wet bikes; and
- Western Undercliff, Ramsgate - for Sail Craft and Fishing Boats.

There are two scuba diving clubs in Thanet with approximately 80 members. Diving mainly occurs between May and September in good weather conditions but does not tend to occur within the marine cSAC due to water turbidity.

Sea angling occurs within a ten mile radius around the coast throughout the year. Launch facilities are available at Ramsgate Harbour and Broadstairs Harbour, amongst others. The three main angling clubs in Thanet have approximately 220 members. Shore angling occurs at Broadstairs and Ramsgate Harbour (The North East Kent European Marine Sites Management Scheme, 2001).

The main recreational activities at Pegwell Bay include bait digging at low tide and surfing at high tide (pers. comm., Kent Wildlife Trust local warden, 2005). Pegwell Bay also attracts visitors with a special interest in geology, because of its geologically important chalk cliffs. A number of fossil events are organised annually by the Thanet Coast Project.

Bait digging is undertaken both for commercial and non-commercial reasons. It is estimated that about 50 individuals operate around the Thanet Coastline concentrating at weekends. Non-commercial bait digging mainly occurs between September and March, while commercial activity occurs all year round (The North East Kent European Marine Site Management Scheme, 2001). Ragworms and lugworms are the main species of bait collected either with a fork or a hand held water suction pump.

Other significant recreational activities in Pegwell Bay and Sandwich Bay include walking and dog walking along the coast. It is also reported that kite propelled activities have begun to take place with Pegwell Bay, amongst other locations. Such activity poses a significant threat to wintering and breeding birds within the site and measures are likely to be implemented to prevent or restrict such activity. The use of powered watercraft also occurs within Pegwell Bay.

A number of people involved in coastal activities have jointly developed Codes of Conduct for the Thanet coast (see www.thanetcoast.org.uk, Thanet Coast Project, 2005). Codes of Conduct are available for the activities listed below and individuals and clubs are encouraged to support them:

- Seashore;
- Bait Digging and Collecting;
- Dog Walking;
- Horse Riding;
- Powercraft Activities;
- School Field Trips;
- Shellfish Harvesting and Fixed Netting;
- Shore Angling; and
- Wind-Powered Activities.

Webb (2005) has collected data on recreational activities for the Thanet and Sandwich Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) for 2002 and 2003. Extracted data are reported in **Table 23.4**, which shows the most popular activities include dog walking, walking and cycling.

Table 23.4 Main types of human activities within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA

Type of human activity	Dog walking within intertidal zone	Walking within intertidal zone	Walking above intertidal zone	Jogging above intertidal zone	Cycling above intertidal zone	Shellfish/crab harvesting	Bait digging	Shore fishing	Jet skiing	Sailing / Windsurfing	Kite boarding / Carting	Kite boarding / Carting
No. of observations in 2002	505	86	203	68	95	17	62	25	21	8	4	35
No. of observations in 2003	581	193	102	68	95	68	62	70	82	44	38	35

Source: Webb, 2005.

Sailing

The Thames Estuary has a high level of recreational activity with 92 clubs, 14 marinas and 73 RYA training centres. Within the area of interest, yachting and sailing occurs from Ramsgate Harbour, Broadstairs Harbour, Margate Harbour, Minnis Bay, West Bay and Western End and St Mildred's (excluding summer). As elsewhere, yachting and sailing occurs throughout the year but increases in the summer months.

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) provides an analysis of the main routes for recreational boating in the Thames Estuary Strategic Environmental Assessment area (RYA and Cruising Association, 2004). Currently, the Thanet site is subject to light recreational use (RYA and Cruising Association, 2004). In the wider area, the main routes of interest for the Thanet site are the heavily used recreational route along the coast from Ramsgate to the north, and the medium used recreational route from Kent to Europe (see **Figure 23.1**).

23.4 Impacts during Construction

23.4.1 Disruption to tourism and recreational activities

Indirect impacts on tourism and recreational activities would result from temporary disruption caused by construction activities. This would affect sea based recreational activities during the offshore works, coastal activities during the landfall works at Pegwell Bay, and traffic and access during the onshore cable laying.

There would be an increase in shipping movement to and from the Thanet site during the offshore works. In addition, the Thanet site would not be accessible to boats during the construction phase, other than those involved in the construction activities. Safety of navigation would be ensured at all times by the measures described in **Section 14, Shipping and Navigation**, including the use of Safety Zones and Notices to Mariners where appropriate.

The increase in shipping movements during the export cable laying operations is anticipated to be limited, as typically only one large vessel and standby vessels or tugs would be involved in such operations.

Temporary restrictions on the use of a relatively small section of the intertidal and beach area would be in place when the export cables are brought ashore at the northern end of Pegwell Bay. The construction activities would occur in the summer season between May and August to avoid the bird overwintering period, and would therefore coincide with the most popular summer period. However, the total duration of the onshore works within Pegwell Bay is anticipated to be in the order of ten days and no access point to the Bay would be affected. In addition, notices would be posted to provide information on the works, programme and a point of contact. The relevant recreational groups and associations would also be informed in a similar way.

The traffic and access assessment is reported in **Section 24, Traffic and Access** which concludes that the impact would be of temporary **negligible** significance.

It is unlikely that the construction works would deter tourists from visiting the area, as the majority of the works would take place offshore. On the contrary, some visitors may be interested in the construction activities. Therefore the overall impact on tourism during construction is considered to be of **negligible** significance.

Overall, the impacts on recreational activities and tourism are anticipated to be of a temporary nature and limited spatial influence and therefore are considered to be of **negligible** significance.

23.5 Impacts during Operation

23.5.1 Impact on recreational activities

A recreational shipping route from the Kent coast to Europe cuts the southern part of the Thanet site. The presence of the wind farm may therefore cause some minor disruption to recreational yachting by forcing a diversion and an increase in the distance of travel. It should be noted that a sailing vessel's route would normally be determined by wind direction, and the desire to avoid encroachment into shipping lanes. As discussed by the RYA (RYA and Cruising Association, 2004), this could have environmental implications for powered crafts and safety implications for all craft. The environmental implications, due to an increase in the consumption of fuel cannot be mitigated, but the relatively small numbers of craft that would be affected are considered negligible in comparison with the national savings in carbon fossil consumption due to the electricity produced by the Thanet project (see **Section 1, Introduction**). In addition, it is not anticipated that recreational craft would be excluded from the wind farm. The potential displacement of recreational craft into shipping lanes is considered to be of **minor** significance, as the site is currently subject to light recreational use.

Provided that navigational safety requirements are met, as discussed in **Section 14**, overall the disturbance to recreational boating is anticipated to be **minor adverse** significance.

Some concerns have been raised about the potential negative impact that the Thanet project may have on the surf in the Joss Bay area (pers. comm. from the Big Chill, 2005). Studies have been carried out following similar concerns regarding the Scarweather Sands offshore wind farm project and these are reported to show that offshore wind farms would not have any identifiable impact on the quality or strength of surf (ABPMer, 2002). This conclusion is confirmed in **Section 6, Hydrodynamics and Geomorphology**. As the Thanet project is over 12km from the Joss Bay area, **no impact** on the recreational surfing activity is anticipated.

The export cables would be buried to a minimum depth of 1m, such that their integrity is not compromised by other activities e.g. bait digging. Therefore, **no impact** on the ongoing recreational activities is anticipated.

23.5.2 Impact on tourism

The impacts on tourism during the operational stage of the wind farm would be associated with the visibility of the wind turbines and perception of them. Recent surveys carried out by Greenpeace and MORI regarding wind farms reveal that no detrimental effects on tourism are anticipated (Greenpeace, 2004; MORI, 2002) (see **Section 18, Socio-economics**). On the contrary, **beneficial** effects may arise, as the Thanet site could become a local attraction. It is possible that the interest value of the wind farm would encourage local charter boats to provide trips to the Thanet site.

23.6 Impacts during Decommissioning

It is anticipated that the impacts to recreational activities due to decommissioning would be of similar nature to those identified for the construction period.

23.7 Cumulative Effects

The Thames Estuary was identified by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) as a strategic area suitable for the development of a number of offshore wind farms. Within this area, a number of wind farms are currently being developed including the London Array, Gunfleet Sands and Greater Gabbard projects and the Kentish Flats wind farm has recently completed construction. Because of their relative distribution and the insignificant level of impact to tourism of each of them, **no adverse cumulative impact** on tourism and recreational activities is anticipated.

23.8 Summary

A desktop study was undertaken to assess the potential disruption to tourism and recreation activity in the area during construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Thanet project.

The main tourist areas in Thanet are the coastal towns of Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Margate. These towns attract visitors because of their coastal location and the available facilities such as hotels, restaurants, shopping centres etc. Data from the Thanet District Council Tourism Services indicate that between 2002 and 2005, nearly 800,000 enquires were made to the local tourist offices. Tourism expenditure is estimated to have been approximately £44.96 million in 2000, generating 4,860 direct and indirect jobs.

Other important tourist destinations within the study area include Sandwich Bay and Deal, both located in Dover District. Sandwich Bay offers a peaceful environment with its long stretch of sandy beaches, while Deal is a small tourist resort. Tourism is a key economic sector for Dover District and it has been estimated that it had a value of £186 million in 2003 (see **Table 23.3**), generating 4,031 actual employment jobs (Tourism South East Research Unit, 2003).

There are numerous recreational opportunities along the Thanet and Dover coast including bathing, scuba diving, surfing, and watersports. The main recreational activities at Pegwell Bay include walking, bait digging and kite surfing at low tide and surfing at high tide. In addition, it attracts visitors with a special interest in geology, because of its geologically important chalk cliffs.

Yachting and sailing occurs from Ramsgate Harbour, Broadstairs Harbour, Margate Harbour, Minnis Bay, West Bay and Western End and St Mildred's (excluding summer). Yachting and sailing occurs throughout the year but increases in the summer months. The RYA has indicated that the Thanet site is subject to light recreational use, while in the wider area, the main routes of interest for the Thanet project are the heavily used recreational route along the coast from Ramsgate to the north, and the medium used recreational route from Kent to Europe.

There would be an increase in shipping movement to and from the wind farm site during construction of the Thanet project. In addition, the site would not be accessible during the construction phase to boats, other than those involved in the construction activities. Safety of navigation would be ensured at all times by measures including Safety Zones and Notices to Mariners, where appropriate.

Temporary restrictions on the use of a relatively small section of the intertidal and beach area would be in place during the onshore works at the northern end of Pegwell Bay. However, the duration of the works within Pegwell Bay is anticipated to be in the order of ten days and no access point to the Bay would be affected. Notices would be posted to provide information on the works, programme and a point of contact for relevant recreational groups and associations. The impact of the onshore construction works on traffic and access is estimated to be of **negligible** significance (see **Section 24**).

It is considered that the construction works would not deter tourists from visiting the area, and would not adversely affect the quality of their stay. Overall, the impacts on recreational activities and tourism are anticipated to be of temporary nature and limited spatial extent and are therefore considered to be of **negligible** significance.

The wind farm may cause some disruption to recreational yachting once operational by possibly forcing a diversion, although it is not anticipated that recreational craft would be excluded from the wind farm. Provided that navigational safety requirements are met, overall the disturbance to recreational boating is anticipated to be of **minor adverse** significance.

As the Thanet project is over 12km from the Joss Bay area, **no impact** on the recreational surfing activity is anticipated at Joss Bay and elsewhere along the Thanet coast.

The export cables would be buried to a minimum depth of 1m, so that their integrity is not compromised by other activities such as bait digging. Therefore, **no impact** on the ongoing recreational activities is anticipated.

The impacts on tourism during operation would be associated with the visibility of the wind turbines and perception of them. Recent surveys carried out by Greenpeace and MORI regarding wind farms reveal that no detrimental effects on tourism can be anticipated (Greenpeace, 2004, MORI, 2002). On the contrary, **minor beneficial** effects may arise, as the wind farm could become a local attraction.

It is anticipated that the impacts to recreational activities due to decommissioning would be of similar nature to those identified for the construction period.

A number of wind farms are currently being planned within the Thames Estuary area. However, given their relative distribution and the insignificant level of impact to tourism and recreational activities of each of them, **no significant** cumulative impact on tourism and recreational activities is anticipated.