walking and

Anne Brenchley is a highly experienced ornithologist specialising in bird survey and bird survey evaluation.

Until 2011, Anne worked as a conservation manager/adviser for Natural England and its predecessors. Since then she has undertaken a range of bird survey consultancy work for the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and private landowners.

In a voluntary capacity, Anne has been a Regional Representative for the BTO in NE Wales since 2000. In this role, she has organised and undertaken a variety of bird surveys, notably the Breeding Bird Survey, single species surveys, Winter Farmland Bird Survey and Wetland Bird Survey. Anne was the project manager and the main editor for ΨȻKŜ Breeding Birds of b2ℕűK ² l·fŜă00 published by Liverpool University Press in 2013. Anne has also been a YˆŜYˉōŜℕ 2ŦűKŜ .¢h /2dzyŎλfΣ űKŜ w{t.Ωă !ŘØλă2ℕè /2YˉYλűűŜŜ Ŧ2ℕ ² l·fŜă l·yŘ űKŜ /2dzyŎλf 2Ŧ the Welsh Ornithological Society.

Anne has been a full member of the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Managers (CIEEM) since 2011.

The section of the Coast Path to be surveyed is a 1.2km long part of the Dee Estuary (SJ257719 to SJ251731) from Oakenholt to just south of Flint Castle, known as Flint Marsh.

The existing Coast Path runs from SJ257719 along the A548 to SJ254723 and then heads towards the estuary crossing the main railway at SJ255724. The path then heads directly

3.3.4 Bird Recording

All bird species were recorded during these surveys although greater emphasis was placed on the birds on the estuary side of the transect.

level) of key species during WeBS counts from 2013 to 2018. In comparison, Oakenholt Marsh has held nationally important numbers of Shelduck during the spring. Black-tailed Godwit occurred in nationally important numbers at Oakenholt in autumn (July to October) and winter (November to March) and internationally important numbers in winter. Redshank numbers were very close to being of national importance in winter. Redshank were, however, of national importance in autumn at the Deeside Naturalists Reserve.

This shows that whilst Flint Saltmarsh is an important feeding and roosting sector of the Dee Estuary for a range of species, its significance is far less than that of the two adjacent sectors of the Welsh side of the estuary at Oakenholt and the Deeside Naturalists Reserve.

The local WeBS counter, David Winnard responded to my enquiries about the main locations of wader and wildfowl roosts on the Welsh side of the estuary with the following comments:

ΨȻKŜ ăI·fűY arsh around Flint Castle does not really get anything roosting (too disturbed with dog walkers and nowhere for the birds to go). There are a good number of birds feeding I·ō2dzű I·yϏK2dzℕ ōŜŦ2ℕŜ KλƎK űλŘŜ óI·ăădzYϏλyƎ I·ℕ2dzyŘ ȹYϏú I·yŘ űKŜ K2dzℕ I·ŦűŜℕ KλƎK űλŘŜΩȹ

Ψȼhe nearest roosts would be down on Oakenholt Marsh (mainly Dunlin and godwits these days). In general, the area around Flint Point is not suitable for roosting waders, there is no margin, too close to the path and better feeding/roosting a mile up or down from there. However, a small roost of Turnstones roost on the rocks and the buoys at Flint Point with 2ŎŎI·ăλ2yl·f wλyƎŜŘ tf2ØŜℕΩȹ Note that the roost sites mentioned above are outside the project survey area.

ΨThe biggest roosts by far are towards Greenfield. On the very high tides the birds roost just behind the recycling centre, otherwise on most days the birds are on the edge of the marsh slightly down from the recycling centre but before Bagillt (SJ218761). In January 2019 there were 2000 Dunlin, 200 OyăűŜℕŎI·űŎKŜℕ LJfdză ă2YϏŜ wλyƎŜŘ tf2ØŜℕ I·yŘ ȼdzℕyãű2yŜΩȹ

The RSPB have an interest in this proposal as they are the owners of the adjacent saltmarsh at Oakenholt. RSPB staff are also involved in undertaking some of the WeBS counts (mainly on the English side of the estuary) where the organisation manages a reserve at Burton Mere Wetlands. Colin Wells, a former RSPB site manager is the Dee Estuary WeBS coordinator. Email communication with Neil Friswell, one of the WeBS counters and RSPB volunteer, clearly indicate that the RSPB are concerned about any increased access on the Oakenholt part of the estuary and increased disturbance occurrences of internationally important bird species. The RSPB are keen to be involved in any discussions that would involve this proposed path re-alignment.

In general, very few people were encountered during the surveys. This may have been because all the surveys were undertaken during the middle of the day on weekdays and

more people may use the path early in the morning and in the evening before and after work hours or at weekends.

The paved path at the Flint end of the survey area is heavily used by walkers both with and without dogs. However, most of pedestrians walk from the car park to the end of the railed section of path at SJ251731 and back or do the short circuit around the park, all of which is paved.

A couple of regular birdwatchers were encountered at the Flint Marsh vantage point but these people did not walk out onto the marsh itself.

Several dogwalkers were seen walking across the railway crossing and walking east along Sector 2 of the transect to the Tidal Outfall structure and back again but few of these ventured towards Flint along the saltmarsh path.

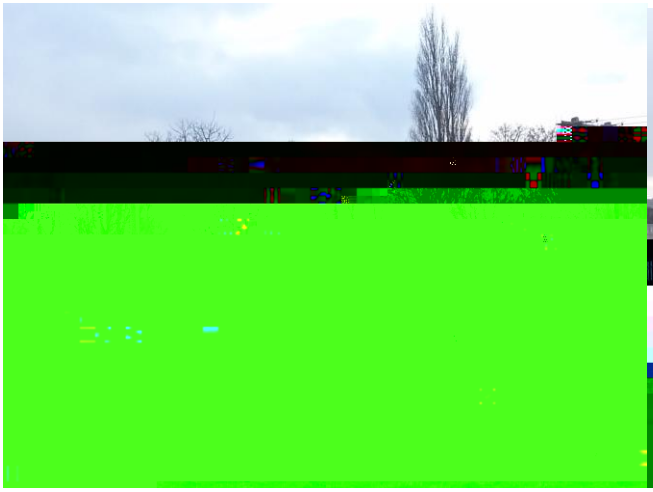
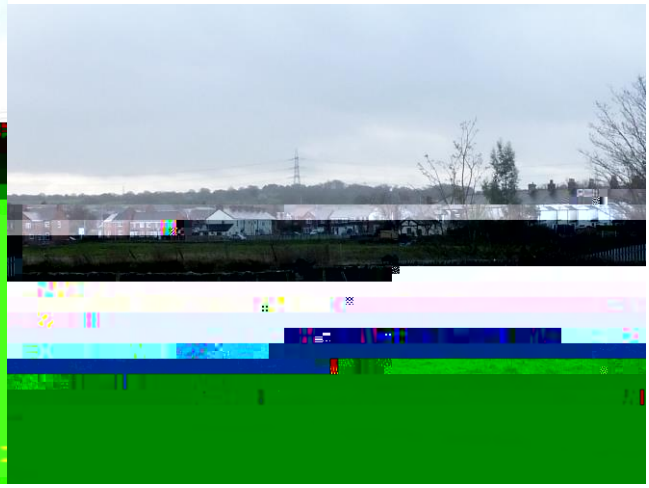
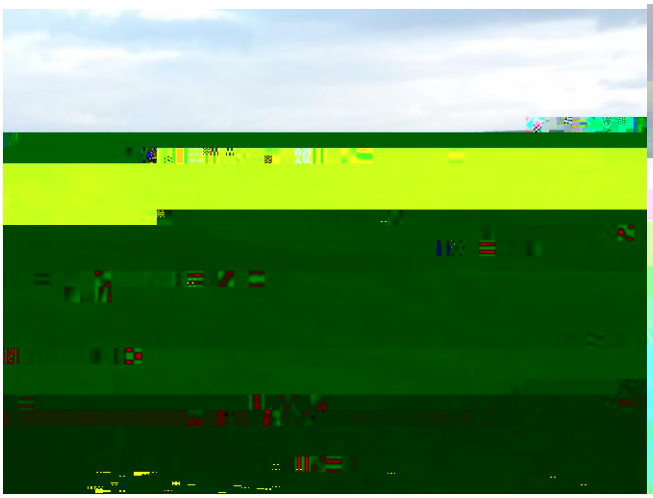
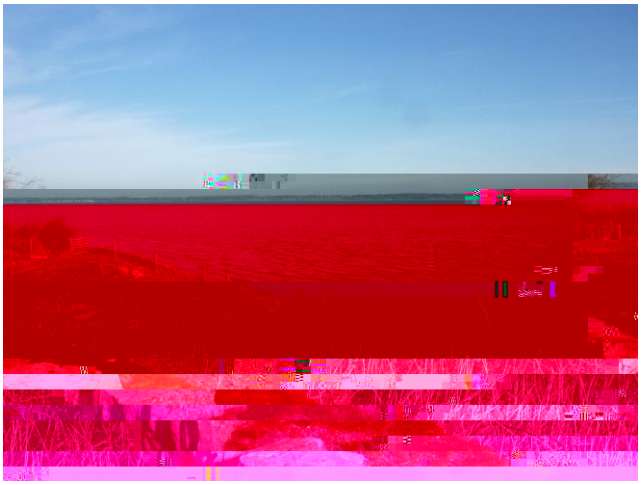
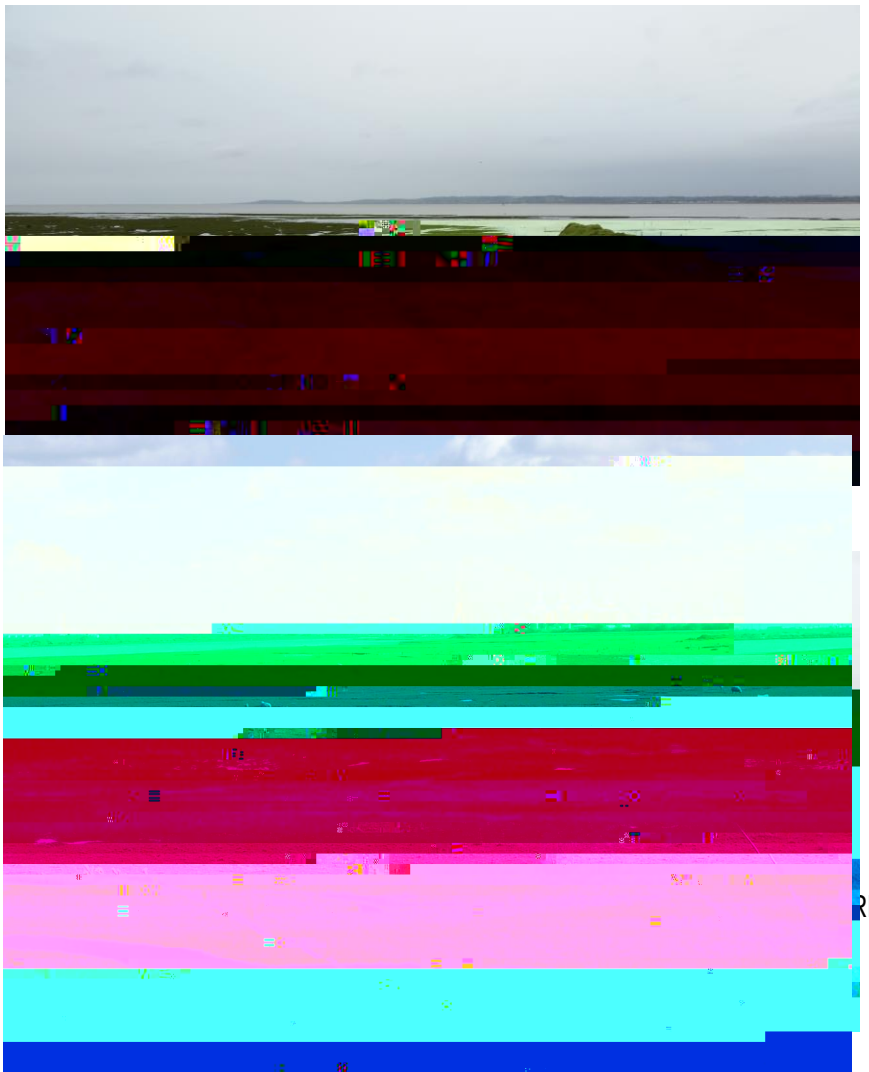
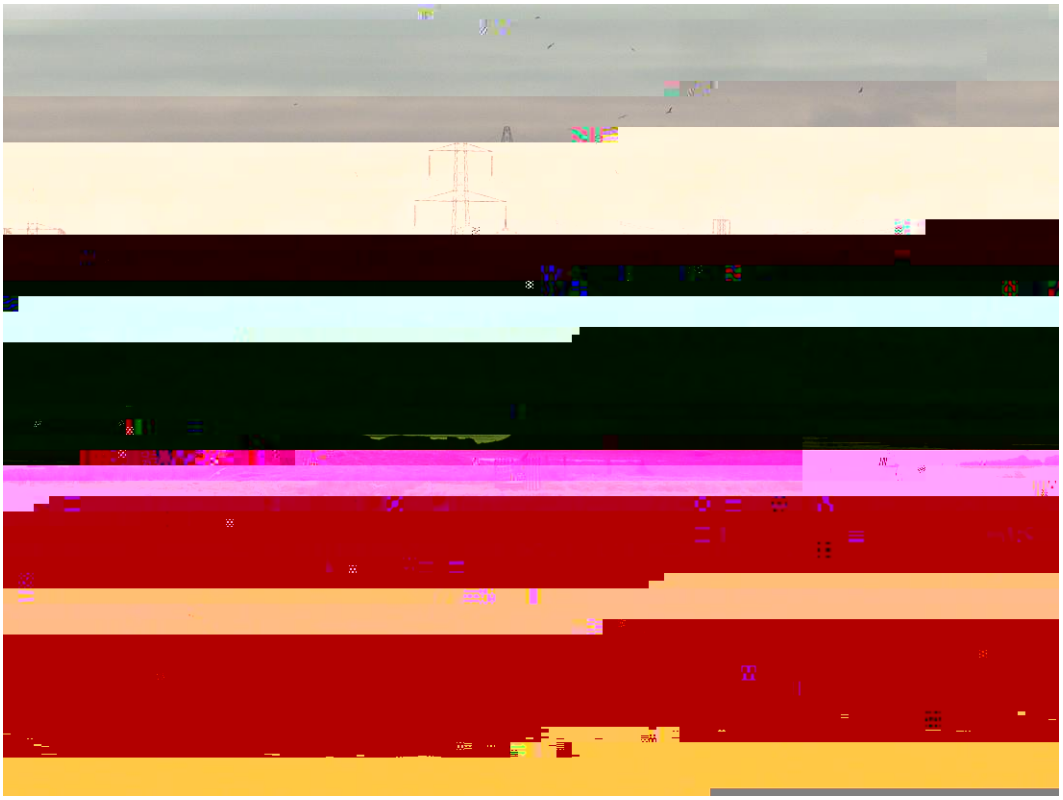
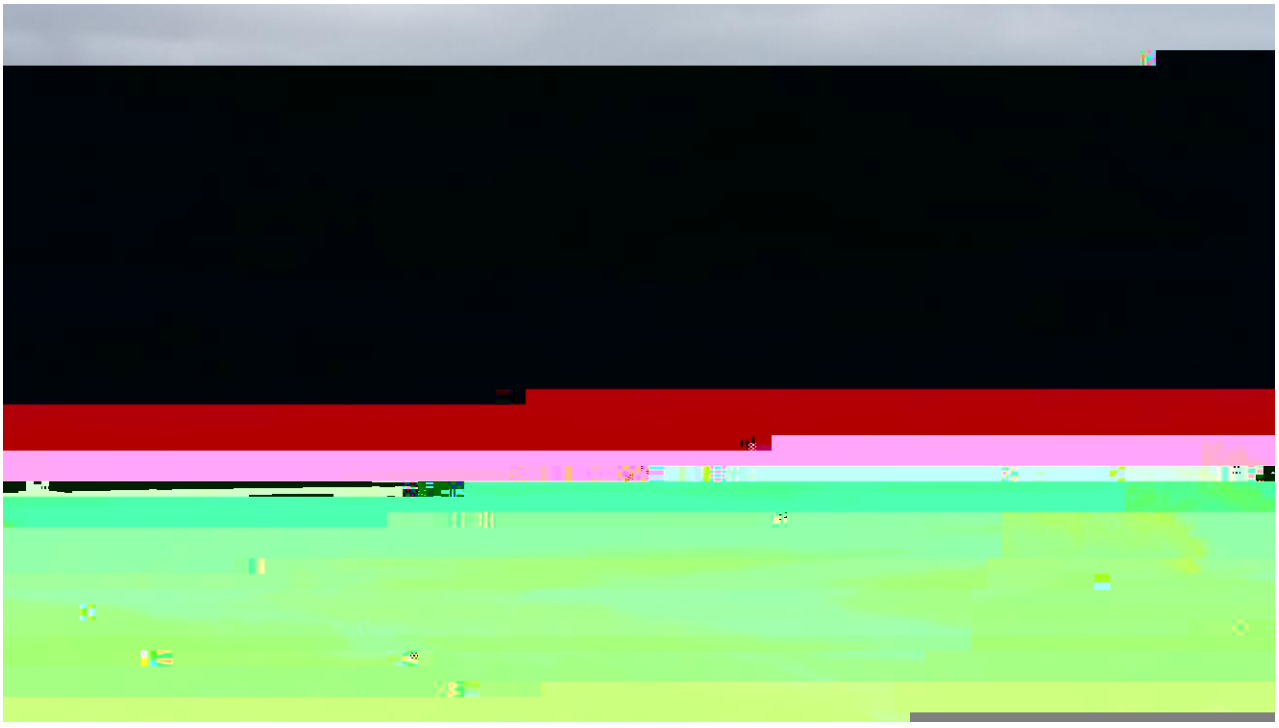
Pedestrians with or without dogs seen or encountered along the path between Sectors 3 and 6 during the survey periods are recorded in Table 3.

Table 6. Counts of pedestrians, with or without dogs, between Sectors 3 and 6 on all survey dates.

	11/12	22/12	15/01	5/02	22/02	8/05	11/03	21/03
Pedestrians only	0							

Tide Height: 10.0m
Weather ς overcast, calm light breeze, warm 13ºC.
Site visit: 10:30 ς 12:30hrs

Started recording from Flint Marsh viewpoint: Snipe 3, Little Egret 1, Teal 12, Mallard 6, Wigeon 5, Black headed Gull 1, Curlew 1, Redshank 44+. Other birds recorded Chiffchaff, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird (3), Linnet (singing), Collared Dove (2), Greenfinch (singing), Wren and Great Tit.
10:40hrs: Curlew 1, Teal 6, Snipe 1, Herring Gull 4, Common Gull 6, Mallard 2, Little Egret 1, Redshank 44+, Canada Goose 6, and Black headed Gull 6. Probably no problem at very high tides as water too high and very little exposed land for birds to use. No movement of birds either up or down estuary.
11:00hrs all birds within 25m of path: Shelduck 2, Little Egret 2, Curlew 1, Snipe 4, Teal 23, Mallard 2, Redshank 26, Black headed Gull 4.
No walkers 10:30-11:30hrs. No changes in numbers and bird species. Walked towards Oakenholt along path disturbing some of the birds above. No additional birds. Path extremely squelchy. Not possible without good boots or wellingtons.

12:00hrs to 12:30hrs. Brent Goose 2, Oystercatcher 15, Magpie 2, Canada Goose 87, Little Egret 5, Skylark 2, Black-headed Gull 22, Great black-backed Gull 1, Mallard 3, Shelduck 4, Jackdaw 2, Teal 19, Redshank 2, 10 Linnet flying over, one dogwalker at 12:05hrs. 15 Jackdaw and 3 Great black-backed Gull on sheep carcass and 1 Raven on lamb carcass. 5 Oystercatcher flying west along edge of estuary at 12:26hrs.

Reed Bunting	0	2	0	0	0	0	0