

## CASE STUDY 23.1W

## The impacts of coastal tourism at Dawlish Warren, Devon, UK

Dawlish Warren is a popular beach on the south coast of Devon, UK (see Figure 23.1W). It has been estimated that the site receives over 800 000 visitors per year with about 20 000 visitors a day in peak season. Dawlish Warren is also an important site for nature conservation, comprising a diverse range of habitats across 505 acres.

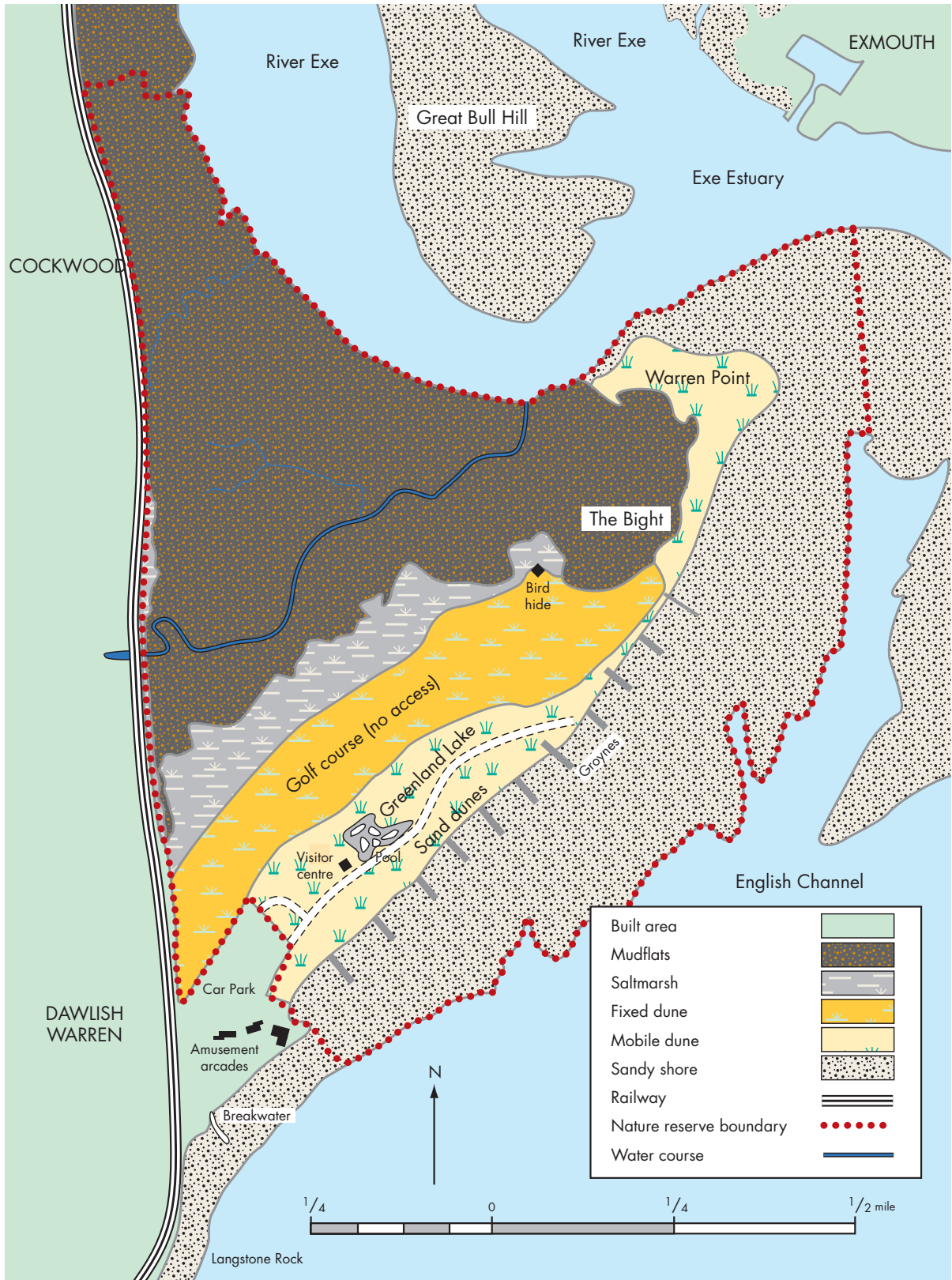
- sandy beach, including a sand spit
- dune system
- mudflats
- saltmarsh
- five ponds.

Rare flora and fauna can be found here including 29 nationally scarce British flowering plants (among the 600 recorded on-site); it is also a temporary home for a large range of waders and wildfowl (about 180 species), reptiles and amphibians, mammals and insects. The site is designated as a local nature reserve managed by the local authority, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a RAMSAR site and a Special Protection Area.

Tourism was traditionally based on budget holidays and has continued to date in a similar vein. There are many holiday parks in the vicinity offering accommodation in static caravans, as well as touring and camping sites. The Warren itself has remained largely undeveloped apart from a car park, retail outlets and a fun-fair due to the constraints placed by the existence of the mainline railway which runs close to the site. There are no beachfront hotels or promenades here. However, large numbers of visitors are attracted to the sandy beach and other attractions. Due to the ecological significance of the site,

observed and potential impacts are an issue and management of the site focuses on the conflicts between conservation and recreation. The main areas for management are as follows:

- Visitor pressure on the dune system has led to a continual cycle of management, involving marram grass planting and rotational fencing to assist in stabilization.
- Some of the protective fencing erected is pulled down by visitors looking for fuel to light barbecues and bonfires on the beach.
- Erosion of the dunes occurs through wind and water processes as well as trampling feet.
- Gullies created by erosion are filled with dead scrub cut from the site and old Christmas trees following the festive period.
- Signs, local press articles and rangers encourage visitors to keep away from flocks of waders on the beach.
- Signs, gates and boardwalks need regular inspection and maintenance if required to ensure effective visitor management.
- Fire, litter, vandalism and vehicles entering the site are problems, all of which need to be kept under control.
- Dog-walking has the potential to disturb birdlife and some irresponsible owners allow their dogs to foul the reserve.
- Guided walks and activities encourage greater visitor understanding of the site.
- The Reserve Visitor Centre is wellused and appreciated by visitors, providing interpretation and information.



**FIGURE 23.1W** Map of Dawlish Warren, Source: Teignbridge District Council 1990, Dawlish Warren Nature Research