



# Portland West

OS Grid Ref: SY 684 726 (OS Map 194)

GPS: N50:33.148 W2:26.848

Nearest Phone: Portland Heights Hotel

Wind Direction W - NW (270° to 315°)  
Best: W (295°)

Casualty Units: County Hospital, Dorchester

Height AMSL 420ft (131m)

Top to Bottom 420ft (131m)

Pilot Grades HG not recommended  
PG Pilot **MANDATORY**  
**Site briefing strongly advisable**

**For your own safety warn the MCA Coastguard Helicopter (01305) 760 439**

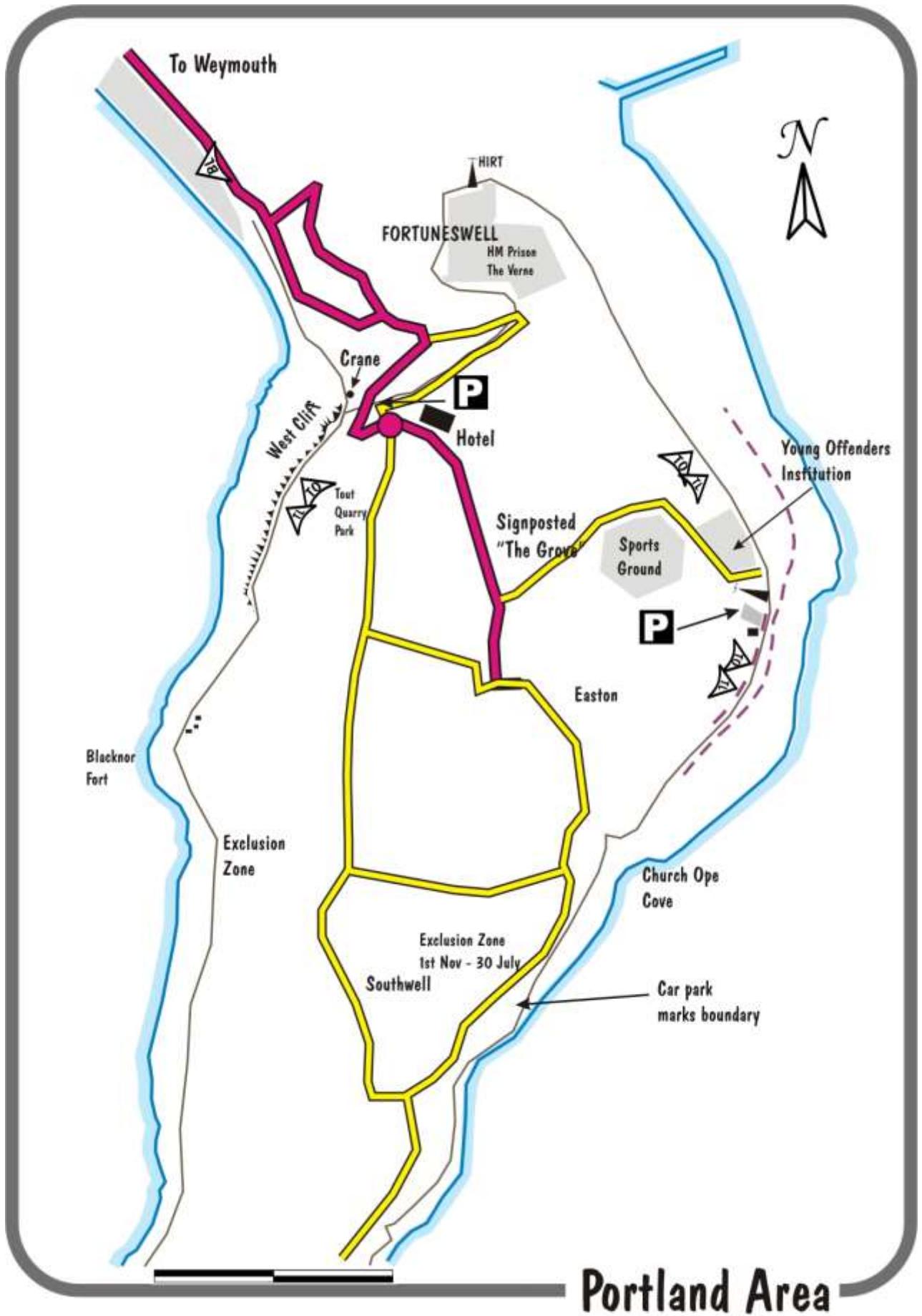
**They have been known to low fly in this area**

Edit and notes by Alastair Florence

**General Site Info**

Portland West is a spectacularly rugged site with a technical take off and potentially difficult landing.

The vertical cliff offers plenty of lift even in light winds. Stronger winds make launching dangerous and landing more difficult.



- Directions** From Weymouth follow signs to Portland. Once on the island follow the only road to the top of the hill. At the roundabout with a garage to your right and Portland Heights Hotel straight ahead turn left and park in the view point car park.
- Access** From the view-point car park walk back towards the roundabout and follow the road back towards Weymouth. Just below the first major bend in the road there is a crane. Behind this crane is the cliff and take off 30m south on the coast path.
- Hazards** The take-off area is small, and has obstacles around it. Also vertical drops from the sides and in front
- This is a cliff site. Normal precautions apply with respect to rotor during launch.
- There is a disused quarry directly behind take off, being blown back here would be highly hazardous.
- Bottom landing directly beneath take off is very limited, if going down ensure you fly out before losing too much height to enable a landing on Chesil Beach.
- The weather can change rapidly here as with all coastal sites, any increase in wind speed can have a dramatic effect on flying conditions and landing options. Be aware of orographic cloud forming over the cliffs.
- Launching** There is a small flat grassy peninsula that protrudes from the coastal path. This is the launch area. It is very small and being flat will almost certainly mean it is in rotor. Once you manage to inflate your wing it should be flying in clean air above you. Be careful not to stand too close to the cliff edge when inflating your wing. You will be stepping straight over a vertical drop to launch so ensure your wing is flying cleanly and you have no line twists etc as you will not get a second chance.
- Top Landing** Top landings have been done on the steeply sloping grass to the right of take off, and this seems to work. Landing on the spoil heaps above and to the left of take off looks inviting but has proved to be quite exciting due to rotor from the cliff below is probably best avoided.
- We are not permitted to land on the spoil heaps anymore as they are part of a sculpture park.
- Back on take off is very difficult and could be highly dangerous if it goes wrong. It is possible to land behind the hotel or behind the car park on some days. There is a risk of severe rotor though depending on wind conditions.

## **Bottom Landing**

On Chesil Beach. The beach is steeply sloping and is made of large pebbles. Land as far south as you can (near the cliff) to avoid the helicopter flight path. Not all bottom-landing areas apparent from the air are suitable as the pebbles become large boulders as you get closer.

If the promenade above the beach is clear of pedestrians this can provide an option.

The beach often has tar patches on it that can be highly damaging to glider fabric as well as very messy.

The Cove Inn provides convenient refreshment whilst waiting for a retrieve. Alternatively a regular bus service runs back up the hill to the hotel.

## **Other Rules**

Do not obstruct the path. Don't ground handle whilst horses pass and be polite and courteous to everyone.

The area used for take off has not been negotiated with anyone! It is also a pathway and regularly used by horse riders.

The area South of Blacknor Fort is permanently out of bounds because of nesting birds. The fort is obvious from above as it is the first building you see on the cliff-top.

If you see the search and rescue helicopter (red and white) take off we have been advised to land because it could be going in any direction, or even to the cliff we are flying. In practice it may well be gone before we can get down, but be aware of this advice and implement it if you can.

## **XC**

No, there's nowhere to go to.

## **Flying Generally**

A good site to head for if you expect a light W – NW wind. Sea thermals can give excellent height gains and on moderate wind days good height is provided purely from dynamic lift.

Avoid Portland if you expect the wind to be strong, there are too many hazards on this site to take chances.

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