

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 17 July 1985 / Updated: May 2005

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The Swale

5. Map of site included:**a) hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ✓ -or- *no***b) digital (electronic) format** (optional): Yes

6. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude):

51° 21' 39'' N 00° 50' 21'' E

7. General location:

Nearest town/city: Faversham

On the north Kent of coast within the greater Thames estuary.

Administrative region: Kent

8. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **9. Area** (hectares): 6515

Min. No information available

Max. No information available

Mean No information available

10. Overview:

A complex of brackish and freshwater, floodplain grazing marsh with ditches, and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat. These habitats together support internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl. Rare wetland birds breed in important numbers. The saltmarsh and grazing marsh are of international importance for their diverse assemblages of wetland plants and invertebrates.

11. Ramsar Criteria:

2, 5, 6

12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:

Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports nationally scarce plants and at least seven red data book invertebrates.

The site supports the GB Red Book vulnerable plants *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, *Carex divisa* and *Hordeum marinum*, as well as the endangered *Spartina maritima*.

The Mediterranean gull *Larus melanocephalus* is also included in CITES Appendix I.

Ramsar criterion 5

Assemblages of international importance:

Species with peak counts in winter:

77,501 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003)

Ramsar criterion 6

Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Species with peak counts in winter:

Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.

Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Ringed plover , <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> , Europe/Northwest Africa	917 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
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Species with peak counts in winter:

Black-tailed godwit , <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> , Iceland/W Europe	1504 individuals, representing an average of 4.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian wigeon , <i>Anas penelope</i> , NW Europe	15296 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Northern pintail , <i>Anas acuta</i> , NW Europe	763 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Northern shoveler , <i>Anas clypeata</i> , NW & C Europe	483 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)

More contemporary data and information on waterbird trends at this site and their regional (sub-national) and national contexts can be found in the Wetland Bird Survey Alerts report, which is updated annually. See <http://www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm>.

13. Biogeography:

a) biogeographic region:

Atlantic

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

Council Directive 92/43/EEC

14. Physical features of the site:

Soil & geology	alluvium, clay, mud, sand, shingle
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Geomorphology and landscape	coastal, floodplain, shingle bar, subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank), intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), estuary
Nutrient status	eutrophic
pH	no information
Salinity	brackish / mixosaline, fresh, saline / euhaline
Soil	no information
Water permanence	usually permanent, usually seasonal / intermittent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Greenwich, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/greenwich.html) Max. daily temperature: 14.8° C Min. daily temperature: 7.2° C Days of air frost: 29.1 Rainfall: 583.6 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1461.0

General description of the Physical Features:

No information available

15. Physical features of the catchment area:

No information available

16. Hydrological values:

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces, flood water storage / desynchronisation of flood peaks, maintenance of water quality (removal of nutrients)

17. Wetland types

Human-made wetland, marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	1
G	Tidal flats	38
H	Salt marshes	5.8
N	Rivers / streams / creeks: seasonal / intermittent	1.8
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	47.7
Other	Other	5.7

18. General ecological features:

The intertidal flats are of fine, silty sediment. The saltmarsh is species rich, for example containing all southern species of *Puccinellia* and most *Salicornia* species. The grazing marsh grassland is mesotrophic and generally species-poor. It does, however, contain scattered rarities, mostly annuals characteristic of bare ground. Where the grassland is seasonally inundated and the marshes are brackish the plant communities are intermediate between those of mesotrophic grassland and those of saltmarsh. The grazing marsh ditches contain a range of flora of brackish and fresh water. The aquatic flora is a mosaic of successional stages resulting from periodic clearance of drainage channels. The dominant emergent plants are *Phragmites australis* and *Bolboschoenus maritimus*.

19. Noteworthy flora:**Nationally important species occurring on the site.****Higher Plants.**

The site holds several nationally scarce plants, including: *Chenopodium chenopodioides*, *Peucedanum officinale*, *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, *Spartina maritima*, *Inula crithmoides*, *Carex divisa*, *Trifolium squamosum*, *Hordeum marinum*.

20. Noteworthy fauna:**Birds****Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:****Species regularly supported during the breeding season:**

Black-headed gull , <i>Larus ridibundus</i> , N & C Europe	3835 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 2.9% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Little tern , <i>Sterna albifrons albifrons</i> , W Europe	20 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Mediterranean gull , <i>Larus melanocephalus</i> , Europe	13 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 12% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:	
Common greenshank , <i>Tringa nebularia</i> , Europe/W Africa	49 individuals, representing an average of 8.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian curlew , <i>Numenius arquata arquata</i> , N. a. arquata Europe (breeding)	1779 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Little egret , <i>Egretta garzetta</i> , West Mediterranean	29 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Spotted redshank , <i>Tringa erythropus</i> , Europe/W Africa	60 individuals, representing an average of 44.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Whimbrel , <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> , Europe/Western Africa	98 individuals, representing an average of 3.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
Species with peak counts in winter:	
Common shelduck , <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> , NW Europe	2437 individuals, representing an average of 3.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Dunlin , <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> , W Siberia/W Europe	9017 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian oystercatcher , <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> <i>ostralegus</i> , Europe & NW Africa -wintering	4609 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian teal , <i>Anas crecca</i> , NW Europe	3610 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
European golden plover , <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> <i>apricaria</i> , P. a. altifrons Iceland & Faroes/E Atlantic	7522 individuals, representing an average of 3% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Greater white-fronted goose , <i>Anser albifrons</i> <i>albifrons</i> , NW Europe	973 individuals, representing an average of 16.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1996/7-2000/01)
Little grebe , <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis ruficollis</i> , Europe to E Urals, NW Africa	147 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Northern lapwing , <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> , Europe - breeding	15129 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Pied avocet , <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> , Europe/Northwest Africa	380 individuals, representing an average of 11.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Red knot , <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> , W & Southern Africa (wintering)	3004 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Ruff , <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> , Europe/W Africa	53 individuals, representing an average of 7.5% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species Information

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Invertebrates.

Bagous cylindrus, *Erioptera bivittata*, *Lejops vittata*, *Peocilobothris ducalis*, *Philonthus punctus*, *Micronecta minutissima*, *Malchius vulneratus*, *Campsicnemus majus*, *Elachiptera rufifrons*, *Myopites eximia*.

21. Social and cultural values:

- Aesthetic
- Archaeological/historical site
- Conservation education
- Current scientific research
- Fisheries production
- Livestock grazing
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Sport fishing
- Sport hunting
- Tourism
- Traditional cultural
- Transportation/navigation

22. Land tenure/ownership:

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
Non-governmental organisation	+	
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	
National/Crown estate	+	
Private	+	

23. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Tourism	+	
Recreation	+	
Research	+	
Fishing: commercial	+	
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+	
Gathering of shellfish	+	
Bait collection	+	

Arable agriculture (unspecified)		+
Livestock watering hole/pond	+	
Grazing (unspecified)	+	
Hay meadows	+	
Hunting: commercial	+	
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	
Industrial water supply		+
Industry		+
Sewage treatment/disposal		+
Harbour/port	+	+
Flood control	+	
Transport route	+	
Non-urbanised settlements	+	

24. Factors adversely affecting the site’s ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

Explanation of reporting category:

1. Those factors that are still operating, but it is unclear if they are under control, as there is a lag in showing the management or regulatory regime to be successful.
2. Those factors that are not currently being managed, or where the regulatory regime appears to have been ineffective so far.

NA = Not Applicable because no factors have been reported.

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only)	On-Site	Off-Site	Major Impact?
Erosion	1	Potential: aquaculture, grazing, harbour, transport route, settlements	+		+

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? NO

25. Conservation measures taken:

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
SSSI / ASSI	+	
NNR	+	
SPA	+	
Land owned by a NGO for nature conservation	+	
Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	

ESA	+	+
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26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

No information available

27. Current scientific research and facilities:**Fauna.**

Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Habitat.

ENSIS monitoring.

Hydrological monitoring of the grazing marsh.

MNCR Littoral and Sublittoral survey.

28. Current conservation education:

Swale NNR and Elmley NNR (both RSPB and Elmley Conservation Trust) all provide viewing facilities.

29. Current recreation and tourism:**Activities, Facilities provided and Seasonality.**

Yachting, jet-skiing and water-skiing mostly in the summer, bird watching throughout the year and angling and wildfowling during their legally permitted seasons. Disturbance from these activities is a current issue but it is addressed through negotiation relating to activities consented within the SSSI and information dissemination. There is no clear evidence of damage from any of these activities.

30. Jurisdiction:

Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EB

31. Management authority:

Site Designations Manager, English Nature, Sites and Surveillance Team, Northminster House, Northminster Road, Peterborough, PE1 1UA, UK

32. Bibliographical references:**Site-relevant references**

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