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Guidance

The Wash SPA: site information (draft)

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This document collection contains Natural England's draft formal advice for The Wash SPA. It fulfils Natural England's responsibility under the Habitat Regulations, to give advice on how to further the conservation objectives for The Wash SPA the activities that are capable of affecting the qualifying features and the processes which they are dependent upon.

The Wash SPA site information

Overarching site	The Wash and North Norfolk Coast EMS
Site name	The Wash
Designation type	SPA
Site identification	UK9008021
Classification date	1 March 1988
Qualifying features	Bar-tailed godwit, <i>Limosa lapponica</i>
-	Bewick's Swan, <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>
-	Black-tailed godwit, <i>Limosa limosa</i>
-	Common tern, <i>Sterna hirundo</i>
-	Common scoter, <i>Melanitta nigra</i>
-	Curlew, <i>Numenius arquata</i>
-	Dark-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>
-	Dunlin, <i>Calidris alpina</i>
-	Gadwall, <i>Anas strepera</i>
-	Grey plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
-	Goldeneye, <i>Bucephala clangula</i>
-	Knot, <i>Calidris canutus</i>
-	Little tern, <i>Sternula albifrons</i>
-	Oystercatcher, <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
-	Pink-footed goose, <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>
-	Pintail, <i>Anas acuta</i>
-	Redshank, <i>Tringa tetanus</i>
-	Sanderling, <i>Calidris alba</i>
-	Shelduck, <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
-	Turnstone, <i>Arenaria interpres</i>
-	Wigeon, <i>Anas Penelope</i>
-	Wintering waterfowl assemblage

Overarching site	The Wash and North Norfolk Coast EMS
Feature condition status	This site has not had a formal condition assessment
Designated area	62211.66ha
Names of component sites of special scientific interest	The Wash SSSI
Nearby and overlapping Marine Protected Areas	Gibraltar Point SPA
-	North Norfolk Coast SAC
-	North Norfolk Coast SPA
-	Saltfleetby - Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point SAC
-	The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC
-	The Wash Ramsar
-	North Norfolk Coast SAC

Site maps

Use the MAGIC (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?>

[srs=WGS84&startscale=250000.00000000285&chosenLayers=inspaIndex,coastmarshIndex,lagoonIndex,bapcfmarshIndex,bapreedbedIndex,spamudPIndex,spamudIndex,spasandPIndex,spasandIndex,spareefPIndex,spareefIndex](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413452/The_Wash_SPA_supplementary_advice.PDF) website to see site maps, including habitats, species and other marine designations.

These maps are based on the best available evidence, there are some caveats associated with the maps on MAGIC.

There are some instances where the feature, subfeature or supporting habitat name varies on MAGIC from the conservation advice. The alternative names are listed within the supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413452/The_Wash_SPA_supplementary_advice.PDF).

Background information and geography

The Wash SPA is composed of tidal rivers, estuaries, lagoons, mud and sand flats and in the centre, deep channels surrounded by shallower waters. These areas predominantly consist of saltmarsh, intertidal banks of sand and mud, sandy and shingle beaches and subtidal sandy sediments.

Shallow coastal waters support small fish which are preyed upon by tern species. Intertidal mud and sand flats support a variety of polychaete worms and bivalve molluscs including cockle and mussel beds which alongside algae provide rich foraging grounds for a number of bird species. These include the dark bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*), oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*), sanderling (*Calidris alba*), gadwall (*Calidris alba*), curlew (*Numenius arquata*), pintail (*Anas acuta*), shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), dunlin (*Calidris alpina alpina*), knot (*Calidris canutus*), bar tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) and black tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa islandica*).

Further inland saltmarsh provides important roosting habitat at the site for a number of bird species, including redshank, curlew, pintail and dunlin. Additionally, saltmarsh provides an important foraging habitat for the dark bellied brent goose, wigeon (*Anas penelope*), pintail and dunlin. The latter of which also roosts alongside oystercatchers on arable fields.

Bordering agricultural and pasture land provide foraging for pink footed goose and overspill foraging for curlew, oystercatcher, dunlin and black tailed godwit during high tides.

Some of the species roosting at the site require unrestricted views of the surrounding area and take advantage of bare ground and short vegetation to roost. These include redshank (*Tringa totanus*), grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) and both black and bar tailed godwit. Other species, such as common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), little tern (*Sternula albifrons*), sanderling and grey plover utilise the sandy, shingle and gravel beaches to roost.

Wigeon roost at Wainfleet, Black Bout and Wolfreton Sands and pink footed goose can be found roosting at Freiston, Snettisham and Terrington. Roger or Toft Gat and Seal sands support roosting sanderling and pintail roost on the flats of the rivers Nene and Ouse.

General information on the site features

You can find common information on the designated features from the following websites:

- The RSPB bird guide (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/>)
- British Trust for Ornithology (<http://www.bto.org/>)

See generic information on the supporting habitats for the qualifying features (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sac-features-and-spa-supporting-habitats-general-descriptions>).

Conservation objectives

The site's conservation objectives apply to the Special Protection Area and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the "Qualifying features" listed below).

The objectives are to ensure that, subject to natural change, the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:

- the extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- the supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- the populations of the qualifying features
- the distribution of the qualifying features within the site

This should be read in conjunction with the accompanying supplementary advice section, which provides more detailed information to help achieve the objectives set out above, including which attributes should be maintained and which restored.

Qualifying features:

- Bar-tailed godwit, *Limosa lapponica* (A157)
- Black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa* (A156)

- Bewick's Swan, *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* (A037)
- Common scoter, *Melanitta nigra* (A065)
- Common tern, *Sterna hirundo* (A193)
- Curlew, *Numenius arquata* (A160)
- Dark-bellied brent goose, *Branta bernicla bernicla* (A037)
- Dunlin, *Calidris alpina* (A149)
- Gadwall, *Anas strepera* (A051)
- Grey plover, *Pluvialis squatarola* (A141)
- Goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula* (A067)
- Knot, *Calidris canutus* (A143)
- Little tern, *Sternula albifrons* (A195)
- Oystercatcher, *Haematopus ostralegus* (A130)
- Pink-footed goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus* (A040)
- Pintail, *Anas acuta* (A054)
- Redshank, *Tringa tetanus* (A162)
- Sanderling, *Calidris alba* (A144)
- Shelduck, *Tadorna tadorna* (A048)
- Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres* (A169)
- Wigeon, *Anas Penelope* (A050)
- Wintering waterfowl assemblage

Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring the site features

The supplementary advice aims to describe the range of ecological attributes that are most likely to contribute to a site's overall integrity.

They show the minimum targets each feature needs to achieve in order to meet the site's conservation objectives. Some, but not all, of these can also be used for regular monitoring of the actual condition of the qualifying features.

The attributes selected for monitoring the features, and the standards used to assess their condition, are listed in separate monitoring documents, which will be available from Natural England.

See The Wash SPA supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413452/The_Wash_SPA_supplementary_advice.PDF).

You should use this information, along with the conservation objectives and case-specific advice issued by Natural England, when developing, proposing or assessing an activity, plan or project that may affect the site.

Any proposals or operations which may affect the site or its features should be designed so they do not adversely affect any of the attributes in these tables.

The targets given for each attribute do not represent thresholds to assess the significance of any given impact in Habitats Regulations Assessments. You will need to assess this on a case-by-case basis using the most current information available.

See further guidance on how to undertake an HRA for a proposal on a European site (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/82706/habitats-simplify-guide-draft-20121211.pdf).

These tables bring together the findings of the best available scientific evidence, which may be updated or supplemented in further publications from Natural England and other sources. You may decide to use other additional sources of information.

These tables do not give advice about SSSI features other legally protected species which may also be present within the European site.

For further information, you can refer to:

- Natural England's SSSI information (<http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>), including their condition assessment
- EU Habitats Directive and EU Birds Directive reports (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5327>) from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- EU guidance on species protection (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/guidance/index_en.htm)
- Wetland Bird Survey Alerts (<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs>) issued by the British Trust for Ornithology
- the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/spa/uk9008021.pdf>) for the site
- the RSPB bird guide (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/>)
- the classification citation for The Wash SPA (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5747661105790976>)

Advice on operations

The advice on operations document includes:

- aquaculture
- beach management
- cables
- coastal development and flood and erosion risk management schemes
- coastal infrastructure
- commercial shipping
- fishing
- licensed actions
- military activities
- ports and harbours (construction, maintenance and operation)
- recreation
- renewable energy

See The Wash SPA advice on operations tables (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415911/AoO_The_Wash_SPA.PDF).

How the tables work

The tables show where human activities can cause pressures that may affect the designated features of the site. The assessments give a confidence score and text explaining how the pressure (s) is or could be caused by a given activity.

Table 1 shows the advice on operations table 2 & 3 legend.

Table 2 shows sensitivities in response to pressure for each of the features.

Table 3 shows how pressures are caused by an activity and includes justifications for each of these activity-pressure combinations.

Advice on operations does not consider exposure as part of the sensitivity assessment. You will need to assess both the sensitivity and the exposure of features to existing or proposed activities on a case-by-case basis. High exposure to pressures could adversely affect features with even a low sensitivity to the pressure.

You can use the benchmarks as a starting point for assessments. They do not represent thresholds. You cannot use them as a basis for Likely Significant Effect and Habitat Regulations assessments.

Get help

The Wash SPA is a Marine Protected Area (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-and-sustainably-using-the-marine-environment/supporting-pages/marine-protected-areas>).

For further information about this site contact: Natural England enquiries Telephone: 0300 060 3900. Email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

The following organisations can also provide advice and further information. If you are carrying out an environmental assessment, planning an operation or assessing an operation or proposal, it is important to consult with them where applicable. To find out if any management measures, byelaws or other restrictions apply to your activity you can use the following links.

- The Marine Management Organisation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation>) license, regulate and plan marine activities in the seas around England and Wales so that they're carried out in a sustainable way
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3>) provides advice on habitats and biodiversity and is responsible for the identification of MPAs in UK offshore waters
- Environment Agency (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>)
- Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (<http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/>)
- East Lindsey District Council (<http://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/>)
- Boston Borough District Council (<http://www.boston.gov.uk/>)
- South Holland District Council (<http://www.sholland.gov.uk/>)
- Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk (<http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/>)
- Fenland District Council (<http://www.fenland.gov.uk/>)

Relevant regulations

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/490/contents/made>)

Site Improvement Plans

Site Improvement plans (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5458594975711232>) by regions