

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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**2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:**

Designated: 01 October 1998 / Updated: May 2005

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**3. Country:**

UK (England)

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**4. Name of the Ramsar site:**

Solent and Southampton Water

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**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

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**6. Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude):

50° 44' 25'' N

01° 31' 32'' W

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**7. General location:**

Nearest town/city: Southampton

Solent and Southampton Water lies on the central south coast of England.

**Administrative region:** City of Portsmouth; City of Southampton; Hampshire; Isle of Wight

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**8. Elevation** (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **9. Area** (hectares): 5415

Min. No information available

Max. No information available

Mean No information available

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**10. Overview:**

The area covered extends from Hurst Spit to Gilkicker Point along the south coast of Hampshire and along the north coast of the Isle of Wight. The site comprises of estuaries and adjacent coastal habitats including intertidal flats, saline lagoons, shingle beaches, saltmarsh, reedbeds, damp woodland, and grazing marsh. The diversity of habitats support internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl, important breeding gull and tern populations and an important assemblage of rare invertebrates and plants.

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**11. Ramsar Criteria:**

1, 2, 5, 6

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

### Ramsar criterion 1

The site is one of the few major sheltered channels between a substantial island and mainland in European waters, exhibiting an unusual strong double tidal flow and has long periods of slack water at high and low tide. It includes many wetland habitats characteristic of the biogeographic region: saline lagoons, saltmarshes, estuaries, intertidal flats, shallow coastal waters, grazing marshes, reedbeds, coastal woodland and rocky boulder reefs.

### Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports an important assemblage of rare plants and invertebrates. At least 33 British Red Data Book invertebrates and at least eight British Red Data Book plants are represented on site.

The higher plants *Orobanche purpurea* and *Spartina maritima* are considered vulnerable and endangered, respectively, in the GB Red Book.

The Mediterranean gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) is included in CITES Appendix I

**Secretariat Comment: Criterion 2 requires to specify the scientific names of those mentioned species considered vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered. This need to be included in the next update.**

### Ramsar criterion 5

#### Assemblages of international importance:

#### Species with peak counts in winter:

51,343 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:

Black-tailed godwit , <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> , Iceland/W Europe	1,240 individuals, representing an average of 2.6% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Dark-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> ,	6,456 individuals, representing an average of 3.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian teal , <i>Anas crecca</i> , NW Europe	5,514 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% 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>.

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## 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	acidic, neutral, shingle, sand, mud, alluvium, sedimentary
Geomorphology and landscape	lowland, island, coastal, floodplain, shingle bar, subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank), intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), open coast (including bay), enclosed coast (including embayment), estuary, lagoon, intertidal rock
Nutrient status	eutrophic
pH	no information
Salinity	brackish / mixosaline, fresh, saline / euhaline
Soil	mainly mineral
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Everton, 1971–2000) ( <a href="http://www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/everton.html">www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/everton.html</a> ) Max. daily temperature: 14.0° C Min. daily temperature: 7.0° C Days of air frost: 32.5 Rainfall: 763.7 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1750.7

**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, Sediment trapping

**17. Wetland types**

Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
D	Rocky shores	1.5
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	12.1
G	Tidal flats	47.9
H	Salt marshes	18.5
J	Coastal brackish / saline lagoons	0.7
Sp	Saline / brackish marshes: permanent	14.9
Tp	Freshwater marshes / pools: permanent	3.7
Xf	Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands	0.7

**18. General ecological features:**

The estuaries and harbours of the Solent are particularly sheltered and form the largest number and tightest cluster of small estuaries anywhere in Great Britain. The Solent and Isle of Wight system is notable for its large range and extent of different habitats.

The intertidal area is predominantly sedimentary in nature with extensive intertidal mud and sandflats within the sheltered harbours and areas of gravel and pebble sediments on more exposed beaches. These conditions combine to favour an abundant benthic fauna and green algae which support high densities of migrant and over-wintering wildfowl and waders. Eelgrass *Zostera* beds occur

discontinuously along the north shore of the Isle of Wight and in a few places along the northern shore of The Solent.

The Solent system supports a wide range of saltmarsh communities. Upper saltmarshes are dominated by sea purslane *Atriplex portulacoides*, sea plantain *Plantago maritima*, sea meadow grass *Puccinellia maritima* and sea lavender *Limonium vulgare*; locally thrift *Armeria maritima* and the nationally scarce golden samphire *Inula crithmoides* are abundant. Lower saltmarsh vegetation tends to be dominated by sea purslane, cord grass *Spartina* spp., glasswort *Salicornia* spp. and sea-blite *Suaeda maritima*. Cord-grasses dominate much of the saltmarsh in Southampton Water and in parts of the Solent and it was the original location of the introduction of *Spartina alterniflora* and subsequent hybridisation with the native species.

There are several shingle spits including Hurst spit, Needs Ore Point, Calshot spit and Newtown Harbour spits which support a characteristic shingle flora.

A range of grassland types lie inshore of the intertidal zone including unimproved species-rich neutral and calcareous grasslands, brackish grazing marsh systems and reed dominated freshwater marshes.

The brackish water lagoons associated with grazing marsh systems behind the seawalls, e.g. Keyhaven-Lymington, Gilkicker lagoon, and at Brading Marshes contain internationally important communities of rare and endangered invertebrates and plants.

## 19. Noteworthy flora:

### Nationally important species occurring on the site.

#### Higher Plants.

*Eleocharis parvula*, *Geranium purpureum forsteri*, *Lotus angustissimus*, *Ludwigia palustris*, *Orobanche purpurea*, *Lamprothamnium papulosum*, *Spartina maritima* and *Zostera marina*.

## 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	6911 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 5.4% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Common tern , <i>Sterna hirundo hirundo</i> , N & E Europe	192 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Little tern , <i>Sterna albifrons albifrons</i> , W Europe	22 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Mediterranean gull , <i>Larus melanocephalus</i> , Europe	11 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 10.1% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census) CITES Appendix I
Roseate tern , <i>Sterna dougallii dougallii</i> , W Europe	1 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 1.9% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Sandwich tern , <i>Sterna</i> <i>(Thalasseus) sandvicensis sandvicensis</i> , W Europe	268 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 2.5% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)

#### Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Common greenshank , <i>Tringa nebularia</i> , Europe/W Africa	58 individuals, representing an average of 9.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Little egret , <i>Egretta garzetta</i> , West Mediterranean	115 individuals, representing an average of 6.9% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Spotted redshank , <i>Tringa erythropus</i> , Europe/W Africa	13 individuals, representing an average of 9.5% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
<b>Species with peak counts in winter:</b>	
Black-necked grebe , <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> <i>nigricollis</i> , Europe, N Africa	3 individuals, representing an average of 2.5% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Common shelduck , <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> , NW Europe	964 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Dunlin , <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> , W Siberia/W Europe	10417 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian curlew , <i>Numenius arquata arquata</i> , N. a. <i>arquata</i> Europe (breeding)	1766 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Eurasian wigeon , <i>Anas penelope</i> , NW Europe	7907 individuals, representing an average of 1.9% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Great cormorant , <i>Phalacrocorax carbo carbo</i> , NW Europe	247 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Grey plover , <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> , E Atlantic/W Africa -wintering	1171 individuals, representing an average of 2.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Little grebe , <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis ruficollis</i> , Europe to E Urals, NW Africa	105 individuals, representing an average of 1.3% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Northern pintail , <i>Anas acuta</i> , NW Europe	359 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Northern shoveler , <i>Anas clypeata</i> , NW & C Europe	267 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Red-breasted merganser , <i>Mergus serrator</i> , NW & C Europe	142 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Slavonian grebe , <i>Podiceps auritus</i> , Northwest Europe	12 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
Water rail , <i>Rallus aquaticus</i> , Europe	17 individuals, representing an average of 3.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)

### Species Information

#### Nationally important species occurring on the site.

#### Invertebrates.

*Allomelita pellucida, Gammarus insensibilis, Nematostella vectensis, Arctosa fulvolineata, Aulonia albimana, Anisodactylus poeciloides, Anthonomus rufus, Baris analis, Berosus spinosus, Cantharis fusca, Drypta dentata, Leptura fulva, Meligethes bidentatus, Paracymus aeneus, Staphylinus caesareus, Aphrosylus mitis, Atylotus latistriatus, Dorycera graminum, Haematopoda grandis, Hippobosca equina, Linnaemya comta, Stratiomys longicornis, Syntormon mikii, Tetanocera freyi, Villa circumdata, Trachysphaera lobata, Paludinella littorina, Truncatellina cylindrica, Andrena alfenella, Acleris lorquiniana, Elachista littoricola, Melissoblaptus zelleri, Platytes alpinella, Psamathrocrita argentella, Armandia cirrhosa*

## 21. Social and cultural values:

Aesthetic  
 Aquatic vegetation (e.g. reeds, willows, seaweed)  
 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	+	+
Public/communal	+	+
Other	+	+

## 23. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Tourism	+	
Recreation	+	
Research	+	
Collection of non-timber natural products: (unspecified)	+	
Commercial forestry		+
Cutting for firewood	+	
Fishing: (unspecified)	+	
Fishing: commercial	+	
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+	
Gathering of shellfish	+	
Bait collection	+	
Arable agriculture (unspecified)		+
Permanent arable agriculture		+
Permanent pastoral agriculture	+	
Hay meadows	+	

Hunting: recreational/sport	+	
Industry		+
Sewage treatment/disposal	+	
Harbour/port	+	
Flood control	+	
Irrigation (inc agricultural water supply)		+
Mineral exploration		+
Oil/gas exploration		+
Oil/gas production		+
Transport route		+
Domestic water supply		+
Urban development		+
Non-urbanised settlements		+
Military activities	+	+

**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	2		+		+

For category 2 factors only.

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

Erosion - Coastal Defence Strategies, regulation of private coastal defences, shoreline management plans, ChAMPs are in place or are being developed.

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? YES

**25. Conservation measures taken:**

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
SSSI / ASSI	+	
NNR	+	+
SPA	+	
Land owned by a NGO for nature conservation	+	+

Management agreement	+	+
SAC	+	
Management plan in preparation	+	

**26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

No information available

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

Numbers of migratory and wintering waterfowl 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.

Bird Ringing by Solent Shorebirds Study Group.

**Environment.**

Coastal Sediment (SCOPAC)

Water Quality (EA/Southern Water)

Various research and educational establishments carry out ongoing research into a number of different aspects of the environment.

**Flora.**

Saltmarsh Monitoring (EN project).

*Spartina* survey (EN project).

**Completed.****Flora.**

Sand dune and saltmarsh NVC survey.

Habitats.

Habitat surveys (various local individual surveys).

Species surveys (various local individual surveys).

**28. Current conservation education:**

Various educational programmes exist within the voluntary conservation organisations, research institutes, education centres and also Local Authorities e.g. Newtown National Nature Reserve managed by National Trust, Medina Valley Centre, and Southampton Oceanography Centre.

There are a number of interpretation facilities present and proposed in the area e.g. National Nature Reserve & Local Nature Reserve and proposed centre of coastal management on Isle of Wight.

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

Almost all the estuaries in the Ramsar site are used extensively for a wide range of leisure and recreational activities, particularly water-based recreation.

Land based recreation:

Walking including dog-walking is popular along large stretches of the coast and estuaries. The presence of country parks, NNR and LNRs on the coast also attract large numbers of people to certain locations.

Bait-digging and collection of shellfish occurs in a number of locations. Birdwatching is also a popular activity with a number of favoured locations with easy access. Some golf courses are also present.

Water-based recreation:

The Solent is an internationally important centre for yachting, dinghy sailing and power-boating and nationally important for canoeing, and water-skiing. A small amount of hovercraft racing sometimes occurs.

Wildfowling and egg collection:



Private, syndicate and club wildfowling operate on the marshes. Small-scale egg-collecting also occurs. Bait-digging and angling also occur.

Air Recreation:

There is a proposed microlighting centre within the area.

The high degree of recreation in the Solent is accompanied by a high degree of supporting developments e.g. marinas, boatyards, clubs, holiday centres occur throughout the area.

### 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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