

# Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds

## Special Protection Area (SPA)

**Name:** Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA

**Counties/Unitary Authorities:** Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council

### Boundary of the SPA:

The SPA protects intertidal and marine habitats for internationally important breeding and wintering waterbirds, birds of prey, passage warblers and breeding seabirds. The seaward boundary reaches, at its furthest, approximately 9 km out to sea at Rye Harbour. The western most point is Norman's Bay just west of Bexhill; the northern most point lies just south of Hythe. The landward boundary of the SPA follows the SSSI boundary and follows Mean High Water (MHW).

**Size of SPA:** The area classified within Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA is 42,417.53 ha, of which 5,129.53 ha lies above lowest astronomical tide (LAT), and 37,288.00 ha lies below LAT.

**Site description:** Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA is located on the south coast of England between Hythe in Kent crossing the county border of East Sussex to Norman's Bay. This is a large area with a diverse coastal and marine landscape comprising a number of habitats, which appear to be unrelated to each other. However, all of them persist because coastal processes have formed and continue to shape a barrier of extensive coastal shingle beaches and sand dunes across an area of intertidal mud and sand flats. The site includes the largest and most diverse area of shingle beach in Britain, with low-lying hollows in the shingle providing nationally important saline lagoons, natural freshwater pits and basin fens. Rivers draining the Weald to the north were diverted by the barrier beaches, creating a sheltered saltmarsh and mudflat environment, which was gradually infilled by sedimentation, and then reclaimed on a piecemeal basis by man. This area is fringed by important intertidal habitats, and contains relict areas of saltmarsh, extensive grazing marshes and reedbeds.

The site also includes a diverse range of broadscale habitats within the marine environment which support a variety of prey species for the foraging seabirds. These habitats include subtidal and intertidal sand and muddy sand, subtidal biogenic reef, intertidal stony reef, coarse and mixed sediments, and moderate energy infralittoral and circalittoral rock.

### Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Species	Count (period)	% of subspecies or population	Interest type
<b>Qualifying features with revised counts</b>			
Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	188 pairs - breeding (5 year mean 2011-2015)	1.9 % of GB population	Annex 1
Sandwich tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	420 pairs - breeding (5 year mean 2011-2015)	3.8 % of GB population	Annex 1
<b>Qualifying features with counts remaining as at 2016 classification using data in Departmental Brief published in 2010</b>			
Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	31 pairs – breeding (5 year mean 2004-2008)	3.5% of GB population	Annex 1
Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>	155 individuals – wintering (5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7)	1.9% of GB population	Annex 1
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	5 individuals – wintering (5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7)	5.0% of GB population	Annex 1
Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	11 individuals – wintering (5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7)	1.5% of GB population	Annex 1
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	4,050 individuals – wintering (5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7)	1.6% of GB population	Annex 1
Little tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	35 pairs – breeding (5 year mean 1992-1996)	1.5% of GB population	Annex 1
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	51 individuals – wintering (5 year peak mean 2000/01-2004/5)	7.3% of GB population	Annex 1
Aquatic warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	2 individuals – passage (5 year mean 2004-2008)	6.1% of GB population	Annex 1
Marsh harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	4 females – breeding (5 year mean 2004-2008)	2% of GB population	Annex 1
Mediterranean Gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	56 pairs – breeding (2004-2008)	52.2% of GB population	Annex 1

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical populations of the following regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex I) in any season:

Species	Count (period)	% of subspecies or population	Interest type
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	485 individuals – wintering (5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7)	1.2% NW & C Europe (non-breeding)	Migratory

#### Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds (waterbirds as defined by the Ramsar Convention) in any season:

During the period 2002/03 – 2006/07, Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA (including proposed extensions) supported an average peak of 34,625 individual waterbirds in the non-breeding season, comprised of almost 16,000 wildfowl and over 19,000 waders. This assemblage is of both European and international importance. In the context of SPA qualification the assemblage includes the wintering and passage species of European importance described above (i.e. Bewick's swan, bittern, Hen harrier, golden plover, ruff, aquatic warbler and shoveler), as well as species whose numbers exceed 1% of the GB wintering or passage populations i.e.: European white-fronted goose *Anser albifrons albifrons*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, gadwall *A. strepera*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, coot *Fulica atra*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* are also present in sufficient numbers to warrant their being listed as a major component species of the assemblage, since their numbers exceed 2,000 individuals (10% of the minimum qualifying assemblage of 20,000 individuals).

#### Principal bird data sources:

- 1) Dungeness Bird Observatory Annual Reports
- 2) Dungeness RSPB Reserve Records
- 3) Innogy. 2004. Little Cheyne Court Wind Farm – Ornithological Assessment: update on wintering birds. Report to Npower Renewables Ltd, Kent
- 4) Kent Bird Reports
- 5) Marsh Environmental. 2003, 2004 & 2008. Breeding and Wintering Bird Survey of Proposed Wind Farm Area at Little Cheyne Court
- 6) MoD Lydd Ranges Conservation Group
- 7) Wetland Trust Records (Pett Level)
- 8) Romney Marsh Harrier Recording Group
- 9) Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve Records
- 10) Sussex Bird Reports
- 11) Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS database)
- 12) A Survey of the Feeding Activity of the Breeding Terns of Rye Bay. Lewis Yates October 2014.