

# **EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds**

## **Special Protection Area (SPA)**

**Name:** Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA

**Counties/Unitary Authorities:** Durham County Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

The SPA is largely located between Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar. It lies within the five Unitary Authorities of Durham County, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar & Cleveland. Its marine extension lies entirely within UK territorial waters.

### **Boundary of the SPA:**

The extended SPA terrestrial boundary protects habitats for breeding and non-breeding waterbirds including intertidal, wet grassland, mudflats and open water habitats. The SPA includes most of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SSSI.

The boundary of the SPA also covers an area of open sea from Castle Eden Dene Mouth in the north to Marske-by-the-Sea in the south and includes the River Tees and associated docks, harbours etc. as far upriver as the Tees Barrage. The seaward boundary includes waters out to around 3.5km from Crimdon Dene to include the areas of greatest importance to the little tern at that colony and out to around 6km offshore further south to include the areas of greatest importance to the common tern at the Saltholme colony.

**Size of SPA:** The revised SPA covers an area of 12,210.62 ha

### **Site description:**

The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA is a wetland of European importance, located on the coast of north-east England between Castle Eden Dene Mouth in the north and Marske-by-the-Sea in the south. It includes the little tern colony at Crimdon Dene Mouth and the common tern colony at Saltholme. The coastal parts of the site include a rocky limestone headland with sandy beaches stretching to the north, and much of Tees Bay to the south. South of Hartlepool, the Magnesian limestone is replaced by sandstones and mudstones, as far as Saltburn, creating low cliffs and sandy beaches.

The SPA comprises of a wide variety of habitats including: intertidal sand and mudflats, rocky shore, saltmarsh, freshwater marsh, saline lagoons, sand dunes and estuarine and coastal waters on and around the Tees estuary, which has been considerably modified by human activities. These habitats provide feeding and roosting opportunities for important number of waterbirds in winter and during passage periods including in particular common redshank, red knot and ruff, which occur in internationally important numbers. Freshwater and brackish pools also support breeding avocet during summer.

The saltmarsh and mudflat habitats of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA are of great importance to a diverse assemblage of bird species. Mudflats support high densities of benthic invertebrates, including worms, molluscs and crustaceans, which provide an important food resource for migrant and overwintering SPA bird species. Areas of saltmarsh provide significant feeding and roosting opportunities for many species of waterbird including

common redshank and red knot.

In summer, little tern breed on the sandy beaches within the site and feed out at sea while the common tern, which breed at various locations, feed within the River Tees and associated water bodies and within the wider estuary mouth and bay. In late summer, Sandwich tern aggregate in important numbers at Coatham Sands, Seal Sands, North Gare Sands/Seaton Snook and Bran Sands when on passage.

### Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4** of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) for the following reasons (summarised in Table 1):

- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the Great Britain populations of four species listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive. Therefore the site qualifies for SPA Classification in accordance with the UK SPA selection guidelines (stage 1.1).

Species	Count (period)	% of population	Interest type
Pied avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	18 pairs <sup>1</sup> (2010-2014)	1.2% GB <sup>2</sup>	Annex I
Sandwich tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	1,900 individuals <sup>3</sup> (1988-1992)	4.3% GB <sup>4</sup>	Annex I
Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	399 pairs <sup>5</sup> (2010-2014)	4.0% GB <sup>6</sup>	Annex I
Little tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	81 pairs <sup>7</sup> (2010-2014)	4.3% GB <sup>8</sup>	Annex I
Ruff <i>Calidris pugnax</i>	19 individuals (2011/12- 2015/16) <sup>9</sup>	2.4% GB <sup>10</sup>	Annex I

- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the biogeographic population of two regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive. Therefore the site qualifies for SPA Classification in accordance with the UK SPA selection guidelines (stage 1.2).

Species	Count (period)	% of population	Interest type
Red knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	5,509 individuals <sup>11</sup> (1991/92-1995/96)	1.6% NE Canada/ Greenland/Iceland/UK	Migratory

<sup>1</sup> Data from: Cleveland Bird Reports. Note this figure refers to the 'breeding pairs of avocet' over a 5 year mean (2010-2014) which equates to an average of 18 breeding pairs.

<sup>2</sup> Data from: Musgrove *et al.* 2013; 1,500 pairs (2006-10)

<sup>3</sup> Data from: Carter 1993, SPA Departmental Brief; recent average of 149 individuals (WeBS: 2009/10-2013/14) representing 0.3% of GB

<sup>4</sup> Data from: Carter 1993, SPA Departmental Brief. Note: this passage population of 1,900 individuals was expressed as equating to 6.8% of the GB breeding population of Sandwich terns (14,000 pairs) in the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for this site.

<sup>5</sup> Data from: Cleveland Bird Reports

<sup>6</sup> Data from: Musgrove *et al.* 2013; 10,000 pairs (2000).

<sup>7</sup> Data from: Cleveland INCA little tern monitoring reports

<sup>8</sup> Data from: Musgrove *et al.* 2013; 1,900 pairs (2000)

<sup>9</sup> Data from: WeBS 2011/12-2015/16

<sup>10</sup> Data from: Musgrove *et al.* 2013; 800 individuals

<sup>11</sup> Data from: SPA citation March 2000 version 0.4; recent average of 1,193 individuals (WeBS: 2009/10-2013/14) representing 0.3% of NE Canada & Greenland/Western Europe population (AEWA 2012)

		population <sup>12</sup>	
Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	1,648 individuals <sup>13</sup> (1987-1991)	1.1% East Atlantic population <sup>14</sup>	Migratory

### Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under **Article 4** of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) as it used regularly by over 20,000 waterfowl (waterfowl as defined by the Ramsar Convention) or 20,000 seabirds in any season (Table 2)

	Count (period)	Average number of individuals
Waterbird assemblage	2011/12-2015/16	26,014 <sup>15</sup>

During the period 2011/12-2015/16 the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/Ramsar site, supported an average peak of 26,014 (SPA assemblage) / 26,786 (Ramsar assemblage) individuals. This assemblage is of both European and international importance. The assemblage includes a wide range of breeding, wintering and passage waterbird species, including those of European importance described above, as well as numbers exceeding 1% of the GB non-breeding populations of gadwall *Mareca strepera*, northern shoveler *Spatula clypeata* and sanderling *Calidris alba*. Additionally, Eurasian wigeon *Mareca penelope*, northern lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, herring gull *Larus argentatus* and black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* are also present in sufficient numbers to warrant their being listed as a major component species of the assemblage, as their numbers exceed 2,000 individuals (10% of the minimum qualifying assemblage of 20,000 individuals).

### Principal bird data sources:

AEWA – African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (2012). *Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area. Fifth Edition.* AEWA, Bonn

Carter 1993 Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Departmental Brief. JNCC, Peterborough.

Cleveland Birds Reports (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). Teesmouth Bird Club.

Cleveland Industry Nature Conservation Association little tern monitoring data 1995 - 2013

Musgrove, M., Aebischer, N., Eaton, M., Hearn, R., Newson, S., Noble, D., Parsons M., Risely K., & Stroud, D. 2013 Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds* 106: 64–100

Wetland Bird Survey reports (2011/12-2015/16), British Trust for Ornithology.

Wetlands International 2012. *Waterbird Population Estimates, Fifth Edition.* Wetlands International, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

<sup>12</sup> Data from: Wetlands International 2012; 345,000 individuals 1982-1992

<sup>13</sup> Data from: Carter 1993, SPA Departmental Brief; recent average of 1,156 individuals (WeBS: 2009/10-2013/14) representing 0.4% of the Iceland & Faroes/Western Europe population (AEWA 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Data from: Carter 1993, SPA Departmental Brief

<sup>15</sup> Data from; WeBs 2009/10-2013/14 and Cleveland Birds Reports