

Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: Crouch and Roach Estuaries (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 3)

Unitary Authority/County: Essex

Consultation proposal: The proposed extensions to the SPA encompass areas of intertidal, saltmarsh and wetland habitat at Allfleet's Marsh, on the north side of Wallasea Island, and at Brandy Hole, in the upper Crouch north-east of Hullbridge, because of these areas' usage by the species and assemblage of European importance. Both of the proposed extension areas are managed realignments, where the sea defences have been set back to allow tidal inundation and the development of intertidal and coastal vegetation communities. The existing SPA contains all of the previously notified Crouch and Roach Estuaries Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The proposed extensions are coincident with the boundaries of extensions to the SSSI. See map for detail of boundary. The qualifying interests of the SPA remain as classified in 1998 (see below).

Site description: The Crouch and Roach Estuaries are located on the coast of south Essex in eastern England. The River Crouch occupies a shallow valley between two ridges of London Clay, whilst the River Roach is set predominantly between areas of brick earth and loams with patches of sand and gravel. The intertidal zone along the Rivers Crouch and Roach is 'squeezed' between the sea walls along both banks and the river channel. Unlike more extensive estuaries elsewhere in Essex, this leaves a relatively narrow strip of tidal mud which, nonetheless, is used by significant numbers of birds. The site is of importance for wintering waterbirds, especially dark-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*.

The Crouch and Roach Estuaries is an integral component of the phased Mid-Essex Coast SPAs (see overleaf).

Size of SPA: 1,847.87 ha, incorporating proposed extensions of 118.75 ha.

Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) 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:

Non-Annex 1 migratory bird species	Season	5-yr peak mean (1989/90-1993/94)
Dark-bellied brent goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>	Winter	5,509 individuals (2.2% World) ¹

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:

- the area is regularly used by 27,021 individual waterbirds over winter (5 year peak mean 1990/91 – 1994/95).

Bird counts from:

Cranswick, P.A., Walters, R.J., Evans, J. & Pollitt, M.S. 1995. The Wetland Bird Survey 1993-94: Wildfowl and Wader Counts. BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC, Slimbridge



Status of SPA:

- 1) River Crouch Marshes SPA was classified under Directive 79/409/EEC on 24 March 1995
- 2) Extensions to the River Crouch Marshes SPA were classified under Directive 79/409/EEC on 29 June 1998 and the site was re-named Crouch and Roach Estuaries (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 3) SPA.

The Crouch and Roach Estuaries (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 3) SPA is a component part of the linked series of Mid-Essex Coast SPAs. These are:

SPA	Date classified	Component SSSI	Area (ha)
Dengie (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 1)	24 March 1994	Dengie	3127.22
Colne Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 2)	28 July 1994	Colne Estuary	2701.37
Crouch and Roach Estuaries (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 3)	29 June 1998	Crouch and Roach Estuaries	1729.13
Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4)	12 May 1995	Blackwater Estuary	3657.1
Foulness (Mid- Essex Coast Phase V)	4 October 1996	Foulness	10968.97