

EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: Durham Coast
Unitary Authority/County: Durham
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: NZ455407
SAC EU code: UK0030140
Area (ha): 393.63
Component SSSI: Durham Coast SSSI

Site description:

The Durham Coast is the only example of vegetated sea cliffs on Magnesian Limestone exposures in the UK. These cliffs extend along the North Sea coast for over 20 km from South Shields southwards to Blackhall Rocks. Their vegetation is unique in the British Isles and consists of a complex mosaic of maritime-influenced, calcareous and species-rich-neutral grasslands, tall-herb fen, seepage flushes and wind-pruned scrub. Within these habitats rare species with varied ecological requirements often grow together, forming unusual and species-rich communities of high scientific interest. The communities present on the sea cliffs are largely maintained by natural processes including exposure to sea spray, erosion and slippage of the soft Magnesian Limestone bedrock and overlying glacial drifts, as well as localised flushing by calcareous water.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0030140

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs