

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name:	North Norfolk Coast
Unitary Authority/County:	Norfolk
SAC status:	Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference:	TF752445
SAC EU code:	UK0019838
Area (ha):	3207.37
Component SSSI:	North Norfolk Coast SSSI

Site description:

North Norfolk Coast contains a large, active series of dunes on shingle barrier islands and spits and is little affected by development. The exceptional length and variety of the dune/beach interface is reflected in the high total area of embryonic dune. Sand couch *Elytrigia juncea* is the most prominent sand-binding grass. The site supports a large area of shifting dune vegetation, which is also varied but dominated by marram *Ammophila arenaria*. The fixed dunes are rich in lichens and drought-avoiding winter annuals such as common whitlowgrass *Erophila verna*, early forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima* and common cornsalad *Valerianella locusta*. The main communities represented are marram with red fescue *Festuca rubra* and sand sedge *Carex arenaria*, with lichens such as *Cetraria aculeata*. The dune slacks within this site are comparatively small and the Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* community predominates. They are calcareous and the communities occur in association with swamp communities. Some of the slacks support the liverwort petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*.

Blakeney Point has a typical sequence of shingle vegetation, which includes open communities of pioneer species on the exposed ridge and more continuous grassland communities on the more sheltered shingle recurves. It also includes some of the best examples of transitions between shingle and saltmarsh, with characteristic but rare species more typical of the Mediterranean. The shingle structure forms a highly significant component of the geomorphological structure of the North Norfolk Coast and helps to maintain a series of interrelated habitats.

The North Norfolk Coast (together with the adjacent The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC) is the only area in the UK where all the more typically Mediterranean species that characterise Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub occur together. The vegetation is dominated by a shrubby cover of bushes of shrubby sea-blite *Suaeda fruticosa* and sea-purslane *Atriplex portulacoides*, with a patchy cover of herbaceous plants and bryophytes. This scrub vegetation often forms an important feature of the upper saltmarshes, and extensive examples occur where the drift-line slopes gradually and provides a transition to dune, shingle or reclaimed sections of the coast. At a number of locations on this coast perennial glasswort *Sarcocornia perennis* forms an open mosaic with other species at the lower limit of the sea-purslane community.

The site encompasses a number of small percolation lagoons the most notable of which are Blakeney Spit Pools, a lagoon system of six small pools between a shingle ridge and saltmarsh. The bottom of each pool is shingle overlain by soft mud. The fauna of the lagoons includes a nationally rare species, the lagoonal mysid shrimp *Paramysis nouveli*.

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:

- Coastal lagoons*
- Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes). (Dune grassland)*
- Embryonic shifting dunes
- Humid dune slacks
- Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (*Sarcocornetea fruticosi*). (Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub)
- Perennial vegetation of stony banks. (Coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves)
- Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes). (Shifting dunes with marram)

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

- Otter *Lutra lutra*
- Petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*

Annex I priority habitats are denoted by an asterisk (*).

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

Register reference number: UK0019838

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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