

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name:	Drigg Coast
Unitary Authority/County:	Cumbria
SAC status:	Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference:	SD071960
SAC EU code:	UK0013031
Area (ha):	1397.44
Component SSSI:	Drigg Coast SSSI

Site description:

The site extends for almost 11 km along the West Cumbrian coast from Seascale, south towards Bootle. It is centred on Ravenglass, where there is an example of a small, bar-built estuary fed by three rivers (the Irt, Mite and Esk) which discharge through a mouth that has been narrowed by large sand and shingle spits. The sediments within the estuary are largely muddy within the Rivers Irt and Mite, while those of the Esk are sandier, particularly towards the mouth. There is a substantial freshwater influence in the upper reaches of all three rivers, with good development of associated animal communities. Within the site are some of the least-disturbed transitions to terrestrial habitats of any estuary found in the UK.

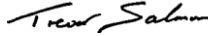
Drigg is the most extensive sand dune system in Cumbria. As well as both fixed and mobile dunes, there are dune slacks, vegetated shingle, fixed dune grasslands and large areas of dune heath and saltmarsh. Strandline vegetation occurs intermittently at the foot of the dunes and fragmented low foredunes grade into marram *Ammophila arenaria*-dominated mobile dunes centred on the two spits. Further inland this gives way to fixed dunes with a rich assemblage of lichens and mosses, together with numerous flowering plants. There are substantial areas of coastal dune heathland, showing a wide range of ecological variation. Some areas are dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bell heather *Erica cinerea*, whilst cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* is prominent in wetter areas. There are large areas of acidic dune grassland with a prominent lichen component and also areas where sand sedge *Carex arenaria* grows in carpets of the moss *Racomitrium canescens*. The site also contains a number of dunes with creeping willow *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea*. These span a range of hydrological conditions from very wet to relatively dry. The slacks also grade into more acidic humid dune slacks with some interesting intermediate types.

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:

- Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (*Calluno-Ulicetea*). (Coastal dune heathland)*
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)
- Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*). (Dunes with creeping willow)
- Embryonic shifting dunes
- Estuaries
- Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes). (Dune grassland)*
- Humid dune slacks
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. (Intertidal mudflats and sandflats)
- *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand. (Glasswort and other annuals)

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- Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes). (Shifting dunes with marram)

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: UK0013031
Date of registration: 14 June 2005
Signed: 
On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs