

## **Solent and Dorset Coast Site Citation**

# **EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)**

**Name:** *Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area*

### **Counties/Unitary Authorities:**

The SPA lies entirely in UK territorial waters adjacent to the following counties / unitary authorities:

Dorset County Council, Purbeck District Council, Poole Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Bournemouth Borough Council, New Forest District Council, Hampshire Country Council, Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, Arun District Council, West Sussex Country Council, Gosport Borough Council, Fareham Borough Council, Havant Borough Council, Chichester District Council, Gosport Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council

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

The landward boundary is located on the coasts of Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex. The westernmost extremity of the boundary is at Worbarrow Bay in Dorset and the easternmost extremity of the boundary lies approximately 88km to the east at Bognor Regis in West Sussex. The westernmost extremity is determined by the modelled usage of Sandwich terns foraging from the Poole Harbour SPA, whereas the easternmost extremity is determined by the modelled usage of Sandwich terns foraging from Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA.

The SPA wholly occupies The Solent with its seaward extent boundary beyond The Solent consisting, for simplicity, of angled straight lines. The seaward boundary consists broadly of three arcs running west to east. The furthest extremes of these arcs lie at approximately 5km, 12km and 12km from the nearest points of the mainland shore and are determined by the modelled usage of Sandwich terns foraging from Poole Harbour SPA, Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Chichester & Langstone Harbour SPA.

### **Size of SPA:**

The SPA covers an area of 88,980.55 ha.

**Site description:**

The Solent and Dorset Coast SPA is located along the coasts of Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex and adjacent areas offshore. It overlaps, abuts and is close to many designated areas, summarised below. At its western point, South Dorset Coast SSSI, Townsend SSSI, Purbeck Ridge (West & East) SSSI, Studland Cliffs SSSI, Studland & Godlingston SSSI, Poole Bay Cliffs SSSI and Boscombe & Southbourne Overcliff LNR, Bournemouth fall just outside the SPA boundary and have no tern interest. A cluster of adjacent, overlapping and underpinning designations exist at Christchurch Harbour, Hengistbury Head and adjacent undeveloped land, which is surrounded by the Bournemouth and Christchurch sprawling conurbation on one side and open sea on the other. These designations include Dorset Heathlands SPA, Dorset Heaths SAC, Christchurch Harbour SSSI, Hengistbury Head LNR and Stanpit Marsh LNR, and are fed by the narrow Avon Valley (Bickton to Christchurch) Ramsar and SSSI, and River Avon System AONB and SSSI. The SPA boundary extends to Mean High Water and so is underpinned by Christchurch Harbour SSSI. Its citation describes, "The site comprises the drowned estuary of the rivers Stour and Avon and the peninsula of Hengistbury Head. The varied habitats include saltmarsh, wet meadows, drier grassland, heath, sand dune, woodland and scrub and the site is of great ornithological interest." Terns are not mentioned on the citation but, "Sandwich, common and little terns all occur in the harbour and have tried to nest in the past but they face a lot of pressure from predators, disturbance and tides and sadly have not been successful." (Chichester Harbour Ornithological Group, 2007). Along 9km of coastline, from Christchurch in Dorset to Milford on Sea in Hampshire, the cliffs and intertidal zone are designated Highcliffe to Milford Cliffs gSSSI, which underpin the SPA.

Along the northwest coast of The Solent, the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar overlaps with Solent Maritime SAC and these are underpinned by the Hurst Castle and Lymington River Estuary SSSI. East from River Lymington, the intertidal saltmarsh is also designated Boldre Foreshore LNR. A series of intertidal SSSIs underpin the SPA and eastward are the North Solent SSSI (where also North Solent NNR), Dibden Bay SSSI, Hythe to Calshot Marshes SSSI, then east from Southampton is the Lee-on-Solent to Itchen Estuary SSSI (where also Hook and Warsash LNR), Titchfield Haven SSSI (also NNR and LNR) and Browdown SSSI near Gosport, Hampshire. Portsmouth Harbour SPA is underpinned by Portsmouth Harbour SSSI, where since the SPA will overlap this SPA, will itself become underpinned by this SSSI. Both estuaries of the Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA are separately underpinned by SSSIs and Chichester Harbour is an AONB. Within or partly within this SPA's boundary are Farlington Marshes LNR, West Hayling LNR, Hayling Billy LNR, Gutler Point LNR, The Kench, Hayling Island LNR, Sandy Point LNR, Earnes Farm LNR, Nutborne Marshes LNR, Pilsey Island LNR, The Solent Maritime SAC overlaps this SPA and further extends nearly 2km out from the south coast of Hayling Island.

Since the southwest headland and offshore sandbank of Hayling Island are designated Sinah Common SSSI and only abuts with the Solent Maritime SAC, the situation is thus

created wherein the intertidal part of this SSSI up to Mean High Water underpins the SPA, but not the SAC.

In West Sussex, the shoreline for approximately 8.2km from near West Wittering, southeast to Selsey is designated the Bracklesham Bay SSSI. Pagham Harbour SPA is underpinned by Pagham Harbour SSSI and abutting this along the intertidal zone for approximately 4km adjacent to Bognor Regis is the Bognor Reef SSSI. On the Isle of Wight, almost the entire coastal cliff-line and intertidal zone along the southwest side is designated SSSI, including Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI, Compton Down SSSI and Headon Warren and West High Down SSSI, which occupies The Needles and west headland; all fall also within the Isle of Wight AONB. Colwell Bay SSSI occupies 1.7km of the northwest coastline. At Yarmouth is the Yar Estuary SSSI; either side and including Newtown is the Bouldnor and Hamstead Cliffs SSSI, Newtown Harbour SSSI (and NNR) and Thorness Bay SSSI. The entire northeast Isle of Wight coastline, around Foreland (east headland of Isle of Wight) and to Yaverland, near Sandown along the southeast coastline is all SSSI. Clockwise these are King's Quay Shore SSSI, Ryde Sands and Wootton Creek SSSI, Brading Marshes to St Helen's Ledges SSSI, Whitecliff Bay and Bembridge Ledges SSSI and Bembridge Down SSSI. Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Solent Maritime SAC also occupy intertidal and sub-tidal areas of the Isle of Wight. The South Wight Maritime SAC is relatively large, extending up to 4km out from the southwest coastline and out over 8km from the southeast coastline. Below Mean Low Water, these SACs are not underpinned by SSSIs. There are two Marine Conservation Zones that wholly lie within the SPA (The Needles MCZ; Yarmouth to Cowes MCZ) and one which partially lies within the site (Bembridge MCZ)

### 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 breeding populations of three species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. Therefore, the site qualifies for SPA Classification in accordance with the UK SPA selection guidelines (stage 1.1).

**Table 1 Summary of qualifying ornithological interest in Solent and Dorset Coast SPA**

Species <sup>1</sup>	Season	Count <sup>2,3</sup> (period)	% of GB breeding population <sup>4</sup>
Sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Breeding	441 pairs  (882 breeding adults) <sup>5</sup> (2008 - 2014)	4.01%

Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Breeding	492 pairs  (984 breeding adults) (2009 - 2014)	4.77%
Little tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Breeding	63 pairs  (126 breeding adults) (2009 - 2014)	3.31%

<sup>1</sup> Species of terns that depend on the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA area of sea for foraging that derive from breeding colonies at the following existing SPAs: Poole Harbour SPA, Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA.

<sup>2</sup> The SPA population is derived from the sum of the most recent populations of each species within the existing SPAs identified above. These totals exclude: i) numbers of any terns that may undertake foraging within Solent and Dorset Coast SPA, but derive from breeding colonies that are situated outside of existing SPAs; ii) numbers of any terns at existing SPAs which are not qualifying features of these sites and not currently present in numbers exceeding SPA selection criteria thresholds, iii) numbers of terns at existing SPAs which, although qualifying features of those sites, were not present at classification in numbers exceeding SPA selection criteria thresholds and/or are no longer present in such numbers, iv) numbers of terns at existing SPAs which, although qualifying features of those sites and present at classification in numbers exceeding SPA selection criteria thresholds are no longer present in such numbers at those particular sites and when summed across all source SPAs that might contribute to the numbers supported by the SPA.

<sup>3</sup> Sources of count data and recent mean figures for each contributing SPA are detailed elsewhere in this Department Brief.

<sup>4</sup> GB breeding populations taken to be that within Great Britain as presented in Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

<sup>5</sup> Pairs multiplied by 2 to arrive at breeding adult numbers; this rule applies to all species listed in the table

### Principal bird data sources:

JNCC Seabird Monitoring Project and site managers from the National Trust, RSPB and Hampshire Country Council