

Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary Site Citation

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: *Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary Special Protection Area*

Counties/Unitary Authorities: *Cumbria, Lancashire*

Boundary of the SPA:

The landward boundary of the SPA includes all of the intertidal and terrestrial areas covered by the former Morecambe Bay SPA and Duddon Estuary SPA. It includes areas of adjoining terrestrial coastal habitat at North and South Walney and at Haverigg Point on the Duddon Estuary and the lagoons at South Walney; Cavendish Dock, Barrow and Hodbarrow, Haverigg.

Where the landward boundary extends from Kirksanton Haws to Drigg Dunes, including the Ravenglass Estuary and the west side of Walney Island, it follows Mean High Water.

From Rossall Point to a defined point in central Morecambe Bay (54° 5.732' N 3° 1.325' W) the seaward boundary follows Mean Low Water. From central Morecambe Bay the seaward boundary runs offshore around Walney Island and along the south west Cumbria Coast, reaching a maximum of 8 km offshore opposite Kirksanton Haws, meeting the coast again at Drigg Dunes.

Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA supersedes the original Morecambe Bay SPA and Duddon Estuary SPA.

Size of SPA: The SPA covers an area of 66,899.97 ha.

Site description:

The SPA extends between Rossall Point in Lancashire and Drigg Dunes in Cumbria. The site includes the former Morecambe Bay SPA and Duddon Estuary SPA and an extension to include the Ravenglass Estuary and intervening coast and the shallow offshore area off south west Cumbria coast.

Morecambe Bay is the second largest embayment in Britain after The Wash, at over 310 km², and has four estuaries – the Wyre, Lune, Kent and Leven. It contains the largest continuous area of intertidal mudflats and sandflats in the UK which supports a variety of infaunal communities including cockle beds. Morecambe Bay supports a wide range of other habitats including large areas of saltmarsh and transitional habitats as well as sand dune systems and coastal lagoons. Within the Bay there are areas of stony reef (known locally as scars or skears) which also support blue mussel beds and honeycomb worm *Sabellaria alveolata* reefs. Extensive eelgrass beds are present around Foulney Island and in the south Walney Channel, the only examples in the North West of England.

The Duddon and Ravenglass Estuaries support saltmarsh, intertidal mud and sand communities and sand dune systems with small areas of stony reef. The intermediate coast comprises extensive shingle and sand beaches.

The parts of the SPA away from the coast are sandy and shallow, mostly less than 15 metres deep.

Qualifying species:

SPA site selection guidelines have been applied to the most up to date information for the site. However, this contemporary data reveals that some species are no longer present in qualifying

numbers (either through declines or because the relevant threshold has increased). It is not clear whether anthropogenic influences have affected the populations at the site. Defra policy indicates that in these circumstances the feature should be retained until such time as the reasons for the reduction in population can be established. Natural England therefore considers that these species should be retained on the citation, and the level of ambition set out in the conservation objectives for these species maintained, until such time as we have evidence to support the conclusion that declines are a result of natural processes and that the SPA is no longer suitable for these species.

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Species	Season	Count (Period)	% of population
Whooper swan <i>Cygnus Cygnus</i>	Non-breeding	113 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	1.0% of GB population
Little egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Non-breeding	134 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	3.0% of GB population
European golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Non-breeding	1,900 individuals (Morecambe Bay SPA citation value 1991) ²	1.0% of GB population (1991)
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Non-breeding	3,046 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	8.0% of GB population
Ruff <i>Calidris pugnax</i>	Non-breeding	8 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	1.0% of GB population
Mediterranean gull <i>Larus melancephalus</i>	Non-breeding	18 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	1.0% of GB population
Little tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Breeding	84 individuals (2010 – 2014) ³	2.2% of GB population
Sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Breeding	1,608 individuals (1988 - 1992) ⁴	5.7% of GB population (1992)
Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Breeding	570 individuals (Morecambe Bay SPA citation value 1991) ⁵	2.0% of GB population (1991)

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) 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:

Species	Season	Count (Period)	% of population
Pink-footed goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Non-breeding	15,648 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ⁶	4.5% of biogeographic population
Common shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Non-breeding	5,878 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	2.0% of biogeographic population
Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	Non-breeding	2,498 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	4.2% of biogeographic population
Eurasian oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Non-breeding	55,888 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	6.8% of biogeographic population
Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Non-breeding	2,000 individuals (Morecambe Bay SPA citation value 1991) ⁷	1.0% of biogeographic population (1991)

¹ Data from Wetland Bird Survey

² Current five year peak mean (2009/10 – 2013/14) = 3,494 (0.9% GB population)

³ Data from RSPB

⁴ Summed data from SMP relating to period of original classification for Morecambe Bay SPA and Duddon Estuary SPA (1988 – 1992). Current five year peak mean (2010-2014) = 40 pairs (0.4% GB population).

⁵ Current five year peak mean (2010-2014) = 47 pairs (0.5% GB population).

⁶ Data from Wetland Bird Survey and Icelandic-breeding Goose Census.

⁷ Current five year peak mean (2009/10 – 2013/14) = 1,013 (0.4% biogeographic population).

Species	Season	Count (Period)	% of population
Common ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Non-breeding	1,049 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	1.4% of biogeographic population
Eurasian curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Non-breeding	12,209 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	1.5% of biogeographic population
Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	Non-breeding	2,413 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	4.0% of biogeographic population
Ruddy turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Non-breeding	1,359 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	1.0% of biogeographic population
Red knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	Non-breeding	32,739 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	7.3% of biogeographic population
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	Non-breeding	3,600 individuals (Morecambe Bay SPA citation value 1991) ⁸	3.0% of biogeographic population (1991)
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>	Non-breeding	26,982 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	2.0% of biogeographic population
Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Non-breeding	11,133 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	4.6% of biogeographic population
Lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	Non-breeding	9,450 individuals (2009/10 – 2013/14) ¹	1.7% of biogeographic population
Lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>	Breeding	9,720 individuals (2011-2015) ⁹	2.7% of biogeographic population
European herring gull <i>Larus argentatus argenteus</i>	Breeding	20,000 individuals (Morecambe Bay SPA citation value 1991) ¹⁰	1.0% of biogeographic population (1991)

Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it used regularly by over 20,000 seabirds in any season:

At time of the 1997 citation of Morecambe Bay SPA, the area supported 40,672 individual seabirds including: herring gulls, lesser black-backed gulls, sandwich terns, common terns, and little terns.

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds in any season:

During the period 2009/10 – 2013/14, the site held a five year peak mean value of 266,751 individual birds. The main components of the assemblage include all of the qualifying features listed above, as well as an additional 19 species present in numbers exceeding 1% of the GB total and / or exceeding 2,000 individuals: great white egret, Eurasian spoonbill, light-bellied brent goose (Nearctic origin), Eurasian wigeon, Eurasian teal, green-winged teal, mallard, ring-necked duck, common eider (non-breeding), common goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, great cormorant, northern lapwing, little stint, spotted redshank, common greenshank, black-headed gull, common (mew) gull and European herring gull (non-breeding).

Principal bird data sources:

Colony counts from JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme and contributed by colony managers: RSPB (Hodbarrow) and Cumbria Wildlife Trust (Morecambe Bay). Non-breeding bird data from Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and WWT's Icelandic-breeding Goose Census (¹¹Mitchell 2014).

⁸ Current five year peak mean (2009/10 – 2013/14) = 849 (0.7% biogeographic population).

⁹ Data from Seabird Monitoring Programme database, RSPB and Cumbria Wildlife Trust

¹⁰ Current five year peak mean (2011-2015) = 3,192 individuals (0.5% biogeographic population).

¹¹ Mitchell, C. (2014). Status and distribution of Icelandic-breeding geese: results of the 2013 international census. Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Report, Slimbridge. 20pp.