

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 7, 2nd edition, as amended by COP9 Resolution IX.1 Annex B). A 3rd edition of the Handbook, incorporating these amendments, is in preparation and will be available in 2006.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 31 August 1982

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The Swale

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for: Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area:

** Important note: If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site included:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

- i) **hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ✓ -or- *no* ☐;
- ii) **an electronic format** (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) *Yes*
- iii) **a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables** *yes* ✓ -or- *no* ☐;

b) Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The site boundary is the same as, or falls within, an existing protected area.

For precise boundary details, please refer to paper map provided at designation

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude):

51 21 39 N 00 50 21 E

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

Nearest town/city: Faversham

On the north Kent of coast within the greater Thames estuary.

Administrative region: Kent

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): 11. Area (hectares): 6514.71

Min.	-1
Max.	5
Mean	2

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

A complex of brackish and freshwater, floodplain grazing marsh with ditches, and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat. These habitats together support internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl. Rare wetland birds breed in important numbers. The saltmarsh and grazing marsh are of international importance for their diverse assemblages of wetland plants and invertebrates.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

2, 5, 6

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports nationally scarce plants and at least seven British Red data book invertebrates.

Ramsar criterion 5

Assemblages of international importance:

Species with peak counts in winter:

77501 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003)

Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Common redshank , *Tringa totanus totanus*, 1712 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species with peak counts in winter:

Dark-bellied brent goose, *Branta bernicla bernicla*, 1633 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Grey plover , *Pluvialis squatarola*, E Atlantic/W Africa -wintering 2098 individuals, representing an average of 3.9% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.

Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Ringed plover , *Charadrius hiaticula*, Europe/Northwest Africa 917 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species with peak counts in winter:

Eurasian wigeon , *Anas penelope*, NW Europe 15296 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Northern pintail , *Anas acuta*, NW Europe 763 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Northern shoveler , *Anas clypeata*, NW & C Europe 483 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Black-tailed godwit , *Limosa limosa islandica*, Iceland/W Europe 1504 individuals, representing an average of 4.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Contemporary data and information on waterbird trends at this site and their regional (sub-national) and national contexts can be found in the Wetland Bird Survey report, which is updated annually. See www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm.

Details of bird species occurring at levels of National importance are given in Section 22

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Atlantic

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

Council Directive 92/43/EEC

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & geology	alluvium, clay, mud, sand, shingle
Geomorphology and landscape	coastal, floodplain, shingle bar, subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank), intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), estuary
Nutrient status	eutrophic
pH	no information
Salinity	brackish / mixosaline, fresh, saline / euhaline
Soil	no information
Water permanence	usually permanent, usually seasonal / intermittent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Greenwich, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/greenwich.html) Max. daily temperature: 14.8° C Min. daily temperature: 7.2° C Days of air frost: 29.1 Rainfall: 583.6 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1461.0

General description of the Physical Features:

The Swale is an estuarine area that separates the Isle of Sheppey from the Kent mainland. To the west it adjoins the Medway Estuary. It is a complex of brackish and freshwater, floodplain grazing marsh with ditches, and intertidal saltmarshes and mudflats. The intertidal flats are extensive, especially in the east of the site. Locally there are large mussel *Mytilus edulis* beds formed on harder areas of substrate. There is much diversity both in the salinity of the dykes (which range from fresh to strongly brackish) and in the topography of the fields.

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

The Swale is an estuarine area that separates the Isle of Sheppey from the Kent mainland. To the west it adjoins the Medway Estuary. It is a complex of brackish and freshwater, floodplain grazing marsh with ditches, and intertidal saltmarshes and mudflats. The intertidal flats are extensive, especially in the east of the site.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces, Flood water storage /
desynchronisation of flood peaks, Maintenance of water quality (removal of nutrients)

19. Wetland types:

Human-made wetland, Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	47.7
G	Tidal flats	38
H	Salt marshes	5.8
Other	Other	5.7
N	Rivers / streams / creeks: seasonal / intermittent	1.8
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	1

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

The intertidal flats are of fine, silty sediment. The saltmarsh is species rich, for example containing all southern species of *Puccinellia* and most *Salicornia* species. The grazing marsh grassland is mesotrophic and generally species-poor. It does, however, contain scattered rarities, mostly annuals characteristic of bare ground. Where the grassland is seasonally inundated and the marshes are brackish the plant communities are intermediate between those of mesotrophic grassland and those of saltmarsh. The grazing marsh ditches contain a range of flora of brackish and fresh water. The aquatic flora is a mosaic of successional stages resulting from periodic clearance of drainage channels. The dominant emergent plants are *Phragmites australis* and *Bolboschoenus maritimus*.

Ecosystem services

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Nationally important species occurring on the site.**Higher Plants.**

The site holds several nationally scarce plants, including: *Chenopodium chenopodioides*, *Peucedanum officinale*, *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, *Spartina maritima*, *Inula crithmoides*, *Carex divisa*, *Trifolium squamosum*, *Hordeum marinum*.

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Birds**Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:****Species regularly supported during the breeding season:**

Mediterranean gull, *Larus melanocephalus*, 13 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 12% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Europe

Black-headed gull , <i>Larus ridibundus</i> , N & C Europe	3835 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 2.9% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Little tern , <i>Sterna albifrons albifrons</i> , W Europe	20 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)
Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:	
Little egret , <i>Egretta garzetta</i> , West Mediterranean	29 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Whimbrel , <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> , Europe/Western Africa	98 individuals, representing an average of 3.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
Eurasian curlew , <i>Numenius arquata arquata</i> , N. a. <i>arquata</i> Europe (breeding)	1779 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Spotted redshank , <i>Tringa erythropus</i> , Europe/W Africa	60 individuals, representing an average of 44.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common greenshank , <i>Tringa nebularia</i> , Europe/W Africa	49 individuals, representing an average of 8.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Species with peak counts in winter:	
Little grebe , <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis ruficollis</i> , Europe to E Urals, NW Africa	147 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Greater white-fronted goose , <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i> , NW Europe	973 individuals, representing an average of 16.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1996/7-2000/01)
Common shelduck , <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> , NW Europe	2437 individuals, representing an average of 3.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian teal , <i>Anas crecca</i> , NW Europe	3610 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Eurasian oystercatcher , <i>Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus</i> , Europe & NW Africa -wintering	4609 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Pied avocet , <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> , Europe/Northwest Africa	380 individuals, representing an average of 11.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
European golden plover , <i>Pluvialis apricaria apricaria</i> , P. a. <i>altifrons</i> Iceland & Faroes/E Atlantic	7522 individuals, representing an average of 3% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Northern lapwing , <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> , Europe - breeding	15129 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Red knot , <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> , W & Southern Africa (wintering)	3004 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Dunlin , <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> , W Siberia/W Europe	9017 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Ruff , <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> , Europe/W Africa	53 individuals, representing an average of 7.5% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species Information

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Invertebrates.

Bagous cylindrus, *Erioptera bivittata*, *Lejops vittata*, *Peocilobothris ducalis*, *Philonthus punctus*, *Micronecta minutissima*, *Malchius vulneratus*, *Campsicnemus majus*, *Elachiptera rufifrons*, *Myopites eximia*.

23. Social and cultural values:

Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

- Aesthetic
- Archaeological/historical site
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Fisheries production
- Livestock grazing
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Scientific research
- Sport fishing
- Sport hunting
- Tourism
- Traditional cultural
- Transportation/navigation

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning? No

If Yes, describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
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Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	+	
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	
National/Crown Estate	+	
Private	+	

25. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Tourism	+	
Recreation	+	
Current scientific research	+	
Fishing: commercial	+	
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+	
Gathering of shellfish	+	
Bait collection	+	
Arable agriculture (unspecified)		+
Livestock watering hole/pond	+	
Grazing (unspecified)	+	
Hay meadows	+	
Hunting: commercial	+	
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	
Industrial water supply		+
Industry		+
Sewage treatment/disposal		+
Harbour/port	+	+
Flood control	+	
Transport route	+	
Non-urbanised settlements	+	

26. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

Explanation of reporting category:

1. *Those factors that are still operating, but it is unclear if they are under control, as there is a lag in showing the management or regulatory regime to be successful.*
2. *Those factors that are not currently being managed, or where the regulatory regime appears to have been ineffective so far.*

NA = Not Applicable because no factors have been reported.

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only)	On-Site	Off-Site	Major Impact?
Erosion	1		+		+

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? NO

27. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Site/ Area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI/ASSI)	+	
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	+	
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	
Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)	+	+

b) Describe any other current management practices:

The management of Ramsar sites in the UK is determined by either a formal management plan or through other management planning processes, and is overseen by the relevant statutory conservation agency. Details of the precise management practises are given in these documents.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

No information available

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g. details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Fauna.

Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Habitat.

ENSIS monitoring.

Hydrological monitoring of the grazing marsh.

MNCR Littoral and Sublittoral survey.

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitor centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

Swale NNR and Elmley NNR (both RSPB and Elmley Conservation Trust) all provide viewing facilities.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Activities, Facilities provided and Seasonality.

Yachting, jet-skiing and water-skiing mostly in the summer, bird watching throughout the year and angling and wildfowling during their legally permitted seasons. Disturbance from these activities is a current issue but it is addressed through negotiation relating to activities consented within the SSSI and information dissemination. There is no clear evidence of damage from any of these activities.

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept. of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.
 Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,
 European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol,
 BS1 6EB

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Site Designations Manager, English Nature, Sites and Surveillance Team, Northminster House,
 Northminster Road, Peterborough, PE1 1UA, UK

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Site-relevant references

- Anon. (2002) *North Kent Coastal Habitat Management Plan: Executive summary*. English Nature, Peterborough (Living with the Sea LIFE Project) www.english-nature.org.uk/livingwiththesea/project_details/good_practice_guide/HabitatCRR/ENRestore/CHaMPs/NorthKent/NorthKentCHaMP.pdf
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