

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 11 DECEMBER 1992

COUNTY: NORTHUMBERLAND, TYNE & WEAR SITE NAME:
NORTHUMBERLAND SHORE

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

Local Planning Authority: BERWICK UPON TWEED BOROUGH COUNCIL, Alnwick District Council, Castle Morpeth Borough Council, Wansbeck District Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council, North Tyneside Council, Tyne and Wear Development Corporation

National Grid Reference: NT 980575–NU 010525 & NU 165363–NZ 365685

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 75, 81, 88 125,000: NT 95, NU 05,
NU 13, NU 23,
NU 22, NU 21,
NU 20, NZ 29,
NZ 39, NZ 38

Area: 1925.8 (ha.) 47574 (ac.)

First Notified: 1992

Site Description and Reasons for Notification:

The Northumberland Shore includes most of the coastline between the Scottish border and the Tyne Estuary. This complements the Lindisfarne SSSI, which it abuts, in providing important wintering grounds for shore birds, and it is of international, or national significance for six species, purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover, ringed plover and redshank.

The Northumberland shore consists largely of sandy bays separated by rocky headlands with wave-cut platforms, backed by dunes or soft and hard cliffs. Discrete areas of estuarine intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh are also included.

Annual counts carried out during the winters of 1983/84 to 1989/90 show that two species of shorebird are present in internationally important numbers (ie at least 1% of the East Atlantic Flyway population), turnstone (regularly over 1300) and purple sandpiper (regularly over 600). The populations of four other species regularly exceed 1% of the British wintering populations and thus are of national importance; i.e. 240 sanderling (1.6% of the British population), 37 ringed plover (1.6%), 1100 redshank (1.5%), and 3500 golden plover (1.8%).

These six wader species have varying habitat preferences. The purple sandpiper feeds almost exclusively on the extensive areas of inter-tidal rock platform, some flocks roost on man-made structures, with Blyth Pier regularly supporting over 250 birds. The sanderling and ringed plover typically utilise the sandy beaches such as Blyth South Beach and Druridge Bay. Turnstone and redshank are more generalised in their habitat choice. The former species tends to use the more rocky areas for feeding and especially for roosting, although it is commonly found along the seaweed-strewn strand-line of sandy beaches. Wintering redshank, occur in a wide range of coastal habitats and at various places also roost on nearby farmland. Golden plover make extensive, but intermittent use of many fields close to the foreshore in addition to their use of the inter-tidal area, however no agricultural land is included in the notified site. Along with other waders redshank and golden plover use the estuarine areas of the site.

The Northumberland Shore as a whole is used by a wide variety of other shorebirds in winter, including up to 400 curlew, 1000 oystercatcher, 2000 dunlin, 600 knot, 150 bar-tailed godwit and 4000 lapwing. Arctic and little terns breed on the shore during the summer. The inter-tidal zone is also favoured all year round as a feeding area for eiders, which are present along the coast in nationally important numbers and use the mudflats by the Coquet estuary as a feeding ground for their young.

Other Information:

1. The Northumberland Shore fulfils the criteria for listing as a wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Community Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
2. This site overlaps with 11 other SSSIs, which are notified for a variety of special interests. These SSSIs, from north to south are: Bamburgh Coast and Hills, Newton Links, Castle Point to Cullernose Point, Howick to Seaton Point, Alnmouth Saltmarsh and Dunes, Warkworth Dunes and Saltmarsh, Low Hauxley Shore, Hadston Links, Cresswell Ponds, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores and Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice.
3. The site abuts 3 further SSSIs: Burnmouth Coast in Scotland, the Tweed Estuary, which is of national importance for waterfowl populations, and Lindisfarne, which is notified for internationally important bird population and other interests. Lindisfarne is also a SPA and Ramsar site and part is managed as a National Nature Reserve by English Nature.
4. Between Budle Point and the Coquet Estuary the SSSI lies within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the North Northumberland Heritage Coast.
5. Part of the site falls within the Druridge Bay Country Park which is managed by Northumberland County Council.