

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

**Name:** Humber Estuary

**Unitary Authorities/Counties:** City of Kingston-upon-Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire

**Component SSSIs:** The SPA encompasses all or parts of the following Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs): Humber Estuary SSSI, North Killingholme Haven Pits SSSI, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes SSSI, and The Lagoons SSSI.

**Site description:** The Humber Estuary is located on the east coast of England, and comprises extensive wetland and coastal habitats. The inner estuary supports extensive areas of reedbed, with areas of mature and developing saltmarsh backed by grazing marsh in the middle and outer estuary. On the north Lincolnshire coast, the saltmarsh is backed by low sand dunes with marshy slacks and brackish pools. Parts of the estuary are owned and managed by conservation organisations. The estuary supports important numbers of waterbirds (especially geese, ducks and waders) during the migration periods and in winter. In summer, it supports important breeding populations of bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and little tern *Sterna albifrons*.

**Size of SPA:** The SPA covers an area of 37,630.24 ha.

### Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) 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:

Annex I species	Count and season	Period	% of GB population
Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	59 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	1.7%
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	4 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1998/99 – 2002/03	4.0%
Hen harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	8 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1997/98 – 2001/02	1.1%
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	30,709 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	12.3%
Bar-tailed godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	2,752 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	4.4%
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	128 individuals – passage	5 year peak mean 1996-2000	1.4%
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	2 booming males – breeding	3 year mean 2000-2002	10.5%
Marsh harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	10 females – breeding	5 year mean 1998-2002	6.3%
Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	64 pairs – breeding	5 year mean 1998 – 2002	8.6%
Little tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	51 pairs – breeding	5 year mean 1998-2002	2.1%

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:

Migratory species	Count and season	Period	% of subspecies/ population
Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	4,464 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	1.5% Northwestern Europe (breeding)
Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	28,165 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	6.3% <i>islandica</i>
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	22,222 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	1.7% <i>alpina</i> , Western Europe (non-breeding)
Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	1,113 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	3.2% <i>islandica</i>
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	4,632 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01	3.6% <i>britannica</i>
Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	18,500 individuals – passage	5 year peak mean 1996 – 2000	4.1% <i>islandica</i>
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	20,269 individuals – passage	5 year peak mean 1996 – 2000	1.5% <i>alpina</i> , Western Europe (non-breeding)
Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	915 individuals – passage	5 year peak mean 1996 – 2000	2.6% <i>islandica</i>
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	7,462 individuals – passage	5 year peak mean 1996 – 2000	5.7% <i>britannica</i>

Bird counts from: Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) database and *The Humber Estuary: A comprehensive review of its nature conservation interest* (Allen et al. 2003).

#### Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds (waterbirds as defined by the Ramsar Convention) in any season:


In the non-breeding season, the area regularly supports 153,934 individual waterbirds (five year peak mean 1996/97 – 2000/01), including dark-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, teal *Anas crecca*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, scaup *Aythya marila*, goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, grey plover *P. squatarola*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, knot *Calidris canutus*, sanderling *C. alba*, dunlin *C. alpina*, ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*, bar-tailed godwit *L. lapponica*, whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, curlew *N. arquata*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, greenshank *T. nebularia* and turnstone *Arenaria interpres*.

**Non-qualifying species of interest:** The SPA is used by non-breeding merlin *Falco columbarius*, peregrine *F. peregrinus* and short-eared owl *Asio flammeus*, and breeding common tern *Sterna hirundo* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (all species listed in Annex I to the EC Birds Directive) in numbers of less than European importance (less than 1% of the GB population).

#### Status of SPA:

- 1) Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast (Phase 1) SPA was classified on 28 July 1994.
- 2) The extended and renamed Humber Estuary SPA was classified on 31 August 2007.

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.  
Register reference number: UK9006111  
Date of registration: 31 August 2007

Signed:   
On behalf of the Secretary of State for  
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs