

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

**Name:** The Dee Estuary

**Unitary Authority/County:** Cheshire West and Chester, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wirral.

**Boundary of the SPA:** The Dee Estuary SPA encompasses the Dee Estuary/Aber Afon Dyfrdwy Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); the dunes and intertidal foreshore at Gronant Dunes and Talacre Warren SSSI; the freshwater marsh at Inner Marsh Farm SSSI; and the lagoons and reedbeds at Shotton Lagoons and Reedbeds. The boundary of the SPA is shown on the map enclosed.

**Site description:** The Dee Estuary lies on the border between England and Wales on the north-west coast of Britain. It is a large, funnel-shaped, sheltered estuary, which supports extensive areas of intertidal sand and mudflats and saltmarsh. Where agricultural reclamation has not occurred, the saltmarshes grade into transitional brackish and swamp vegetation on the upper shore. The site also includes the three sandstone islands of Hilbre, with their important cliff vegetation and maritime heathland and grassland. The two shorelines of the estuary show a marked contrast between the industrialised usage of the coastal belt in Wales and residential and recreational usage in England. The site is of major importance for waterbirds; during the winter the intertidal flats, saltmarshes and fringing habitats including coastal grazing marsh/fields, provide feeding and roosting sites for internationally important numbers of ducks and waders; in summer the site supports nationally important breeding colonies of two species of tern. The site is also important during migration periods, particularly for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain and for Sandwich terns post-breeding.

**Size of SPA:** 14,291.56 ha.

**European ornithological interest of SPA:**

### 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
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	1,150 individuals - wintering	5 year peak mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	2.2%
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	392 pairs - breeding	5 year mean 1995 – 1999	3.2%
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	69 pairs – breeding	5 year mean 1995 - 1999	2.9%
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	957 individuals- autumn passage	5 year mean 1995 - 1999	2.3%

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:

<b>Migratory species</b>	<b>Count and Season</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>% of population</b>
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	8,795 individuals - passage	5 year mean 1994/95 – 1998/99	5.9% Eastern Atlantic (wintering)
Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	7,725 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	2.6% Northwestern Europe
Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	5,251 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	1.3% Northwestern Europe
Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	5,407 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	9.0% Northwestern Europe
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	22,677 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	2.5% Europe & N/W Africa (wintering)
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	1,643 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	1.1% Eastern Atlantic (wintering)
Knot <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i>	12,394 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	3.5% NE Can/Grl/ Iceland/NW Eur
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	27,769 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	2.0% N Siberia/Europe/ W Africa
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>	1,747 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	2.5% Iceland (breeding)
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	3,899 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	1.1% Europe (breeding)
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	5,293 individuals - wintering	5 year mean 1994/95 - 1998/99	3.5% Eastern Atlantic (wintering)

### **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 120,726 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1994/95 - 1998/99), including: Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Teal *Anas crecca*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Redshank *Tringa totanus*.

**Non-qualifying species of interest:** Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Smew *Mergellus albellus*, Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* and Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (all Annex 1 species) occur in non-breeding numbers of less than European importance (less than 1% of the GB population).

### **Status of SPA:**

The Dee Estuary was first classified as a Special Protection Area on 17 July 1985. The boundaries and site features were revised on 10 December 2009.