

After the formal consultation closes we will take all written representations about the proposed designations into account to inform our recommendations to Government.

Confirmation would lead to the creation of one of the biggest SPAs and Ramsar sites in the UK and enhance the status of Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay as an internationally-important site for wildlife.



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Dungeness shingle

Further information

If you would like to know more about the designation proposals and how they might affect you, please contact;

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If you would like to know more about the work of Natural England, please visit:

www.naturalengland.org.uk

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Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay

A review of the area's international nature conservation designations

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Introduction

Natural England has been assessing the range and status of plants, animals and landforms around Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay as part of the UK Government's on-going obligations under the European Commission Conservation of Wild Birds Directive and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance to identify, classify and designate habitats that are important for wild birds, especially waterfowl and regularly occurring migratory species.

After reviewing the information available we are proposing changes to some of the international designations some of which have applied to the area since 1999.

This leaflet is to inform you, ahead of the formal public consultation which will start in mid-summer, about the proposed changes and give you the opportunity to start thinking about the issues and raise any questions or concerns you may have.

A unique and precious resource

We all agree Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay are wonderful areas in which to enjoy the landscape. The vast shingle beaches and flat marshland have a character all of their own. The coastline here has formed over the past 5,000 years and continues to evolve. Wetlands extend across the area with shingle beaches, saltmarsh, saline lagoons, grazing marsh, gravel pits and intertidal mud and sand flats.

It is home to large numbers of birds and important populations of plants and animals, including the rapidly-declining greater water parsnip and Britain's most-extensive population of medicinal leeches.

Working together

We have a long history of working in partnership with land owners and occupiers and other stakeholders in the area to make sure these precious natural resources are conserved now and in the future.

The area's importance to wildlife is recognised with the designation of a Site of Special Scientific Interest¹ (SSSI), a Special Area of Conservation² (SAC) and a Special Area of Protection³ (SPA). We are recommending an extension to the existing SPA and to designate a new Ramsar⁴ site to protect the wetlands habitats and species.

Review of international designations

Shortly, we will be starting a formal public consultation on our proposals to extend the current SPA boundary and the designation of Dungeness as a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention, set up in 1971 to protect wetlands of international importance.

Following the three-month consultation, which will start in mid summer, we will submit our recommendations in late 2010 to the Government (in the form of the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs).

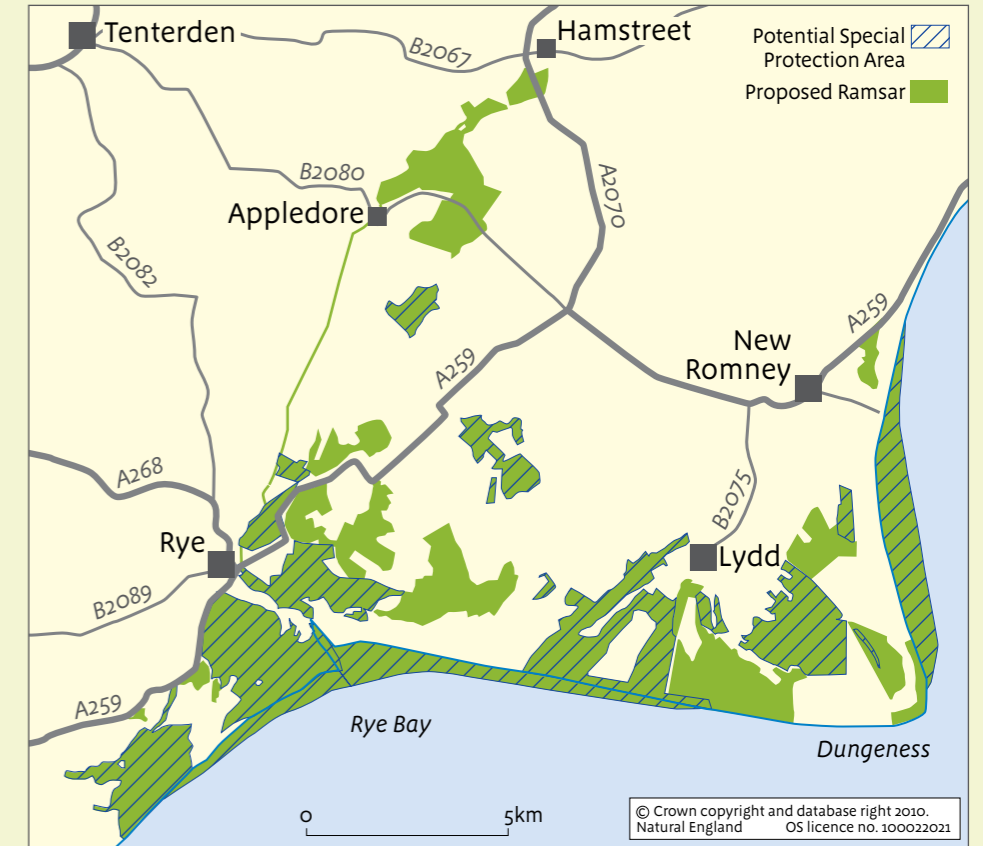
If Ministerial approval is gained the SPA will be registered and submitted to the European Commission, and the Ramsar site forwarded to the Ramsar secretariat as new sites.

¹SSSIs - the country's very best wildlife and geological sites. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

²SACs - the most important areas in Britain / Europe for wildlife and geology. Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, 1992

³SPAs - the most important areas in Britain / Europe for migratory and vulnerable birds. Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds, 2009

⁴Ramsar sites - internationally important wetlands listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitats, 1971 (as amended).



Your comments

This means if you own or occupy land in the potential SPA or the proposed Ramsar site, all of which lies within the existing SSSI, you will receive a 'designation pack' consisting of maps and a citation listing the reasons why we believe the area is of special importance. The information will help to explain our recommendations as they could affect land you own or occupy. This is your opportunity to discuss what this means to you as a land owner or occupier and to submit your written comments.

Once the formal consultation commences the status of the potential SPA (p SPA) and proposed Ramsar (p Ramsar) will apply to the land, giving interim protection as a matter of Government policy.