

## Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)

**Name:** Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay

**Unitary Authority/County:** East Sussex, Kent

**Consultation proposal:** The proposed extensions to the SPA encompass areas of wetland habitat around Pett Level, Rye Harbour, Camber, East Guldeford, Cheyne Court, Fairfield, Scotney Court, Lydd Ranges, Dungeness, Lydd Watersports, Lade Pit and Lade Sands, because of these areas' usage by the species and assemblage of European importance. The existing SPA contains parts of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The proposed extensions are within the boundaries of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI, with the exception of one area, which is part of the adjacent Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach SSSI. Several minor deletions are proposed to correct mapping errors, to more accurately reflect the extent of the qualifying interests and to align with identifiable features. See map for detail of boundary. The qualifying interests of the SPA have also been reviewed, resulting in the proposed addition of eight species and one assemblage (see below).

**Site description:** Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay is located on the south coast of England, on the border of East Sussex and Kent between Hastings and New Romney. This is a large area with a diverse coastal landscape comprising a number of habitats, which appear to be unrelated to each other. However, all of them exist today because coastal processes have formed and continue to shape a barrier of extensive shingle beaches and sand dunes across an area of intertidal mud and sand flats. The site includes the largest and most diverse area of shingle beach in Britain, with low-lying hollows in the shingle providing nationally important saline lagoons, natural freshwater pits and basin fens. Rivers draining the Weald to the north were diverted by the barrier beaches, creating a sheltered saltmarsh and mudflat environment, which was gradually in-filled by sedimentation, and then reclaimed on a piecemeal basis by man. Today this area is still fringed by important intertidal habitats, and contains relict areas of saltmarsh, extensive grazing marshes and reedbeds. Human activities have further modified the site, resulting in the creation of extensive areas of wetland habitat due to gravel extraction. As a whole, Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay is important for breeding and wintering waterbirds, birds of prey, passage warblers and breeding seabirds.

**Size of SPA:** 4,048.63 ha, incorporating proposed extensions (2,580.06 ha) and deletions (10.00 ha).

**Qualifying species** (proposed new interests are **underlined and in bold type**):

The site qualifies under **article 4.1** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) 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 1 species	Count and season	Period	% GB population
Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>	155 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7	1.9%
<b><u>Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i></u></b>	<b><u>5 individuals – wintering</u></b>	<b><u>5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7</u></b>	<b><u>5.0%</u></b>
<b><u>Hen harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i></u></b>	<b><u>11 individuals – wintering</u></b>	<b><u>5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7</u></b>	<b><u>1.5%</u></b>
<b><u>Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i></u></b>	<b><u>4,050 individuals – wintering</u></b>	<b><u>5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7</u></b>	<b><u>1.6%</u></b>
<b><u>Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i></u></b>	<b><u>51 individuals – wintering</u></b>	<b><u>5 year peak mean 2000/01 – 2004/5</u></b>	<b><u>7.3%</u></b>
<b><u>Aquatic warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i></u></b>	<b><u>2 individuals – passage</u></b>	<b><u>5 year mean 2004 – 2008</u></b>	<b><u>6.1%</u></b>
<b><u>Marsh harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i></u></b>	<b><u>4 females – breeding</u></b>	<b><u>5 year mean 2004 – 2008</u></b>	<b><u>2.0%</u></b>
<b><u>Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i></u></b>	<b><u>31 pairs – breeding</u></b>	<b><u>5 year mean 2004 – 2008</u></b>	<b><u>3.5%</u></b>
Mediterranean gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	56 pairs – breeding	5 year mean 2004 – 2008	52.2%
<b><u>Sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i></u></b>	<b><u>350 pairs – breeding</u></b>	<b><u>5 year mean 2004 – 2008</u></b>	<b><u>3.3%</u></b>
Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	273 pairs – breeding	5 year mean 2004 – 2008	2.7%
Little tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	35 pairs – breeding	5 year mean 1992 – 1996 <sup>1</sup>	1.5%

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) 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 population
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	485 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7	1.2% NW & C Europe (non-breeding)

#### Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) 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 is regularly used by 34,625 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 2002/3 – 2006/7), including (but not limited to) Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, European white-fronted goose *Anser albifrons albifrons*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, gadwall *A. strepera*, shoveler *A. clypeata*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, coot *Fulica atra*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*.**

**Non-qualifying species of interest:** The site is used by breeding bittern and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (both species listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive) in numbers of less than European importance (less than 1% of the GB population).

#### Bird counts from:

- 1) Dungeness Bird Observatory Annual Reports
- 2) Dungeness RSPB Reserve Records
- 3) Innogy. 2004. *Little Cheyne Court Wind Farm – Ornithological Assessment: update on wintering birds.* Report to Npower Renewables Ltd, Kent
- 4) Kent Bird Reports
- 5) Marsh Environmental. 2003, 2004 & 2008. *Breeding and Wintering Bird Survey of Proposed Wind Farm Area at Little Cheyne Court*
- 6) MoD Lydd Ranges Conservation Group
- 7) Wetland Trust Records (Pett Level)
- 8) Romney Marsh Harrier Recording Group
- 9) Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve Records
- 10) Sussex Bird Reports
- 11) Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS database)

#### Status of SPA:

Dungeness to Pett Level SPA was classified under Directive 79/409/EEC on 2 August 1999.

<sup>1</sup> Little tern is the only species for which the SPA was classified in 1999 where the entire population remains within the previously classified boundary. It is therefore appropriate to retain the original baseline population of 35 pairs.