

35. Pagham Harbour

Geographical Coordinates 50°46'N 0°46'W

Area 616ha

Location About 7km south of the town of Chichester, in the county of West Sussex, south-east England.

Date of Ramsar Designation 30 March 1988.

Other International Designations Special Protection Area under EC Directive 79/409.

National Designations Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Principal Features A natural estuarine harbour, once drained for agriculture but re-flooded at the beginning of the twentieth century. The central part of the basin is dominated by intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh which gives way to brackish marsh (with beds of *Phragmites australis*) and damp pasture. The harbour has a single, narrow opening to the sea and is flanked by shingle beaches which have, in places, developed a nationally important vegetation community. There is a brackish lagoon behind the beach ridge and the site also includes small amounts of ancient woodland. The harbour supports internationally important numbers of water birds, including wintering *Branta bernicla bernicla* (average peak count for the five winters 1987/88 to 1991/92 was 3,240), and nationally important numbers of other Anatidae and waders. Breeding birds include *Sterna albifrons*. (1a,2c,3b,3c)

Conservation Issues The 1990 UK National Report noted that siltation was causing a gradual elevation of the harbour's mudflats, with associated narrowing and deepening of the channels between flats. Siltation is likely to continue, allowing the accretion of new areas of salt marsh, but restricting the area of open mud flats. English Nature is examining these changes and will determine whether any intervention is required.