

# RAMSAR INFORMATION SHEET

## FOR WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Date of designation 15/12/93

**Site reference number** 7UK068  
**1 Compilation date** Feb 1999  
**2 Country** UK (England)  
**3 Name of wetland** Medway Estuary and Marshes  
**4 Site centre location:** Latitude: 51 24 02 N Longitude: 00 40 38 E  
**5 Altitude** Not being submitted  
**6 Area (ha)** 4696.74

### 7 Overview

A complex of rain fed, brackish, floodplain grazing marsh with ditches, and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat. These habitats together support internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl. Rare wetland birds breed in important numbers. The saltmarsh and grazing marsh are of international importance for their diverse assemblages of wetland plants and invertebrates.

**8 Wetland type** Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	0
G	Tidal flats	61.3
H	Salt marshes	13.6
M	Rivers / streams / creeks: permanent	1.2
TP	Freshwater marshes / pools: permanent	0.4
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	14
Other	Other	9.5

**9 Ramsar Criteria** 2a, 3a, 3c  
**10 Map of the site** ✓  
**11 Compiler** Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
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### 12 Justification of criteria

#### Ramsar criterion 2a

The site supports a number of species of rare plants and animals. The site holds several nationally scarce plants, including sea barley *Hordeum marinum*, curved hard-grass *Parapholis incurva*, annual beard-grass *Polypogon monspeliensis*, Borrer's saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia fasciculata*, slender hare's-ear *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, sea clover *Trifolium squamosum*, small goose foot *Chenopodium chenopodioides*, golden samphire *Inula crithmoides*, perennial glasswort *Salicornia perennis* and the one flowered glasswort *Salicornia pusilla*. A total of at least twelve British Red Data Book species of wetland invertebrates have been recorded on the site. These include a ground beetle *Polistichus connexus*, a fly *Cephalops perspicuus*, a dancefly *Poecilobothrus ducalis*, a fly *Anagnota collini*, a weevil *Baris scolopacea*, a water beetle *Berosus spinosus*, a beetle *Malachius vulneratus*, a rove beetle *Philonthus punctus*, the ground lackey moth *Malucosoma castrensis*, a horsefly *Atylotu latistriatus*, a fly *Campsicnemus magius*, a soldier beetle, *Cantharis fusca*, and a crane fly *Limonia danica*. A significant number of non-wetland British Red Data Book species also occur.

### Ramsar criterion 3a

Internationally important waterfowl assemblage (greater than 20,000 birds)

### Ramsar criterion 3c

Over winter the site regularly supports internationally important populations of: Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

### 13 General location

Nearest town/city: Canterbury

On the north coast of Kent, within the Greater Thames Estuary.

**Administrative Region:** Kent, Essex

### 14 Physical Features

Soil & Geology	alluvium, mud, shingle
Geomorphology and Landscape	coastal, estuary, floodplain, intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat)
Nutrient status	eutrophic
pH	circumneutral
Salinity	brackish / mixosaline, fresh, saline / euhaline
Soil	no information
Water permanence	usually permanent, usually seasonal / intermittent
Summary of main climatic features	Rainy, temperate climate with a mild winter and periodic frost. Mean minimum temperature approximately 11.6°C. Mean maximum temperature approximately 18.3°C. Mean annual precipitation approximately 382.4mm, with a winter maximum.

### 15 Hydrological values

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces. Sediment trapping, Flood water storage / desynchronisation of flood peaks. Maintenance of water quality (removal of nutrients)

### 16 Ecological features

The intertidal flats are of fine, silty sediment. The saltmarsh shows a transition from pioneer communities containing *Zostera* to high saltmarsh dominated by *Atriplex portaculoides*. The grazing marsh grassland is mesotrophic and generally species poor. It does, however, contain scattered rarities, mostly annuals characteristic of bare ground. Where the grassland is seasonally inundated and the marshes are brackish the plant communities are intermediate between those of mesotrophic grassland and those of saltmarsh. The grazing marsh ditches contain a range of flora of brackish and fresh water. The aquatic flora is a mosaic of successional stages resulting from periodic clearance of drainage channels. The dominant emergent plants are *Phragmites australis* and *Bolboschoenus maritimus*.

### 17 Noteworthy flora

**Nationally important species occurring on the site.**

#### Higher Plants.

*Hordeum marinum*, *Parapholis incurva*, *Polypogon monspeliensis*, *Puccinellia fasciculata*, *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, *Trifolium squamosum*, *Chenopodium chenopodioides*, *Inula cthrimoides*, *Salicornia perennis*, *Salicornia pusilla*.

### 18 Noteworthy fauna

#### Birds

**Species occurring at levels of international importance (as identified at designation):**

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Dark-bellied Brent Goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> (Western Siberia/Western Europe)	3205 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Dunlin, <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> (Northern Siberia/Europe/Western Africa)	25936 individuals, representing an average of 1.9% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Grey Plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> (Eastern Atlantic (wintering))	3406 individuals, representing an average of 2%* of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Knot, <i>Calidris canutus</i> (Northeastern Canada/Greenland/Iceland/Northwestern Europe)	541 individuals, representing an average of 0.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Pintail, <i>Anas acuta</i> (Northwestern Europe)	697 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Redshank, <i>Tringa totanus</i> (Eastern Atlantic (wintering))	3690 individuals, representing an average of 2.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Ringed Plover, <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> (Europe/Northern Africa (wintering))	768 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Shelduck, <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> (Northwestern Europe)	4465 individuals, representing an average of 1.5% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

**Species occurring at levels of international importance (as identified post-designation):**

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Black-tailed Godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> (Iceland (breeding))	957 individuals, representing an average of 1.5% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
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**Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:**

**During the breeding season the area regularly supports:**

Avocet, <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (Western Europe/Western Mediterranean (breeding))	28 pairs, representing an average of 6.2% of the GB population (5 year mean 1988-1992)
Common Tern, <i>Sterna hirundo</i> (Northern/Eastern Europe (breeding))	77 pairs, representing an average of 0.6% of the GB population (Estimate from count of birds 1994)
Little Tern, <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	28 pairs, representing an average of 1.2% of the

(Eastern Atlantic (breeding))

GB population (5 year mean 1991-1995)

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Avocet, *Recurvirostra avosetta*  
(Western Europe/Western Mediterranean  
(breeding))

314 individuals, representing an average of 24.7%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
(Northwestern Europe)

231 individuals, representing an average of 1.8%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

Curlew, *Numenius arquata*  
(Europe (breeding))

1900 individuals, representing an average of 1.7%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*  
(Europe/Western Africa)

10 individuals, representing an average of 2.6%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

Little Grebe, *Tachybaptus ruficollis*  
(Western Palearctic)

53 individuals, representing an average of 1.6%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

Oystercatcher, *Haematopus ostralegus*  
(Europe & Northern/Western Africa)

3672 individuals, representing an average of 1%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

Spotted Redshank, *Tringa erythropus*  
(Europe/Western Africa)

up to 19 individuals, representing an average of  
15.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean  
1991/92-1995/96)

Teal, *Anas crecca*  
(Northwestern Europe)

1824 individuals, representing an average of 1.3%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

Wigeon, *Anas penelope*  
(Western Siberia/Northwestern/Northeastern  
Europe)

4346 individuals, representing an average of 1.6%  
of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-  
1995/96)

**Assemblages of international importance:**

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

65496 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

**Nationally important species occurring on the site.**

**Invertebrates.**

*Polystichus connexus*, *Cephalops perspicus*, *Peocilobothrus ducalis*, *Anagnota collini*, *Baris scolopocea*, *Berosus spinosus*, *Malachius vulneratus*, *Philonthus punctus*, *Malacostoma castrensis*, *Atylotus latistriatus*, *Campsicnemus magius*, *Cantharis fusca*, *Limonia danica*.

**19 Social and Cultural Values**

Aesthetic

Archaeological/historical site

Conservation education

Current scientific research

Fisheries production  
 Livestock grazing  
 Non-consumptive recreation  
 Sport fishing  
 Sport hunting

## 20 Land tenure/ownership

Ownership category	On-Site	Off-Site
Non-governmental organisation	+	
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	
National/Crown estate	+	
Private	+	
Other	+	

## 21 Current land use

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Nature conservation	+		Large-Scale
Tourism	+		Small-Scale
Recreation	+		Large-Scale
Research	+		Small-Scale
Fishing: commercial	+		Small-Scale
Fishing: recreational/sport	+		Small-Scale
Gathering of shellfish	+		Small-Scale
Bait collection	+		Large-Scale
Permanent arable agriculture		+	Large-Scale
Livestock watering hole/pond	+		Large-Scale
Grazing (unspecified)	+		Large-Scale
Hay meadows	+		Small-Scale
Hunting: commercial	+		Small-Scale
Hunting: recreational/sport	+		Large-Scale
Industrial water supply	+		Large-Scale
Industry		+	Large-Scale
Sewage treatment/disposal	+		Large-Scale
Harbour/port	+		Large-Scale
Flood control	+		Large-Scale
Transport route	+		Large-Scale
Urban development		+	Large-Scale
Military activities		+	Large-Scale

## 22 Adverse factors affecting the ecological character of the site

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Drainage/reclamation for industry	+		Large-Scale
Dredging	+		Large-Scale
Erosion	+		Large-Scale
Recreational/tourism disturbance (unspecified)	+		Large-Scale
Transport infrastructure development	+		Large-Scale

## 23 Conservation measures taken

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
SSSI	+	
SPA	+	

Land owned by a NGO for nature conservation	+	
Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	

## **24 Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented**

see below

### **Site vulnerability and management statement**

There is evidence of rapid erosion of intertidal habitat within the site due to natural processes and the effects of sea defences and clay extraction. Research on mudflat recharge using dredging spoil is being investigated as a means of countering the erosion.

The intertidal area is also vulnerable to disturbance from water borne recreation. This is being addressed as part of an estuary management plan.

The terrestrial part of the site depends on appropriate grazing and management of water. The availability of livestock may be affected by policy on BSE and there will be a need to investigate how this may be addressed through management agreements. The effects of abstraction on the availability of water through abstraction for other land uses and drainage for arable cultivation will be addressed through the consent review process under the Habitats Regulations. Pressures from proposed transport and industrial developments are being addressed through the planning system and under the provisions of the Habitat Regulations.

## **25 Current scientific research/survey/monitoring and facilities**

### **Fauna.**

Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

### **Habitat.**

ENSIS monitoring.

Experimental mudflat recharge using dredging spoil.

MNCR littoral and sublittoral survey.

## **26 Current conservation education**

Gillingham Riverside Country Park. Power Gen Oakham Marsh Nature Reserve.

## **27 Current recreation and tourism**

### **Activities, Facilities provided and Seasonality.**

Yachting, angling, wildfowling, jet skiing, waterskiing, birdwatching. Disturbance from these activities is a current issue but is addressed through negotiation relating to activities consented within the SSSI and information dissemination.

## **28 Functional jurisdiction**

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

## **29 Management authority**

English Nature

## **30 Bibliography**

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Reference should also be made to Country Agencies Management Plans for sites that are within National Nature Reserves.