

EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name:	Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast
Unitary Authority/County:	Northumberland, Scottish Borders
SAC status:	English part designated on 1 April 2005 Scottish part designated on 17 March 2005
Grid reference:	NU206401
SAC EU code:	UK0017072
Area (ha):	65334.94
Component SSSI:	Bamburgh Coast and Hills SSSI, Burnmouth Coast SSSI, Castle Point to Cullernose Point SSSI, Howick to Seaton Point SSSI, Lindisfarne SSSI, Newton Links SSSI, Northumberland Shore SSSI, St Abb's Head to Fast Castle SSSI, The Farne Islands SSSI

Site description:

Whilst predominantly rocky, this extensive and diverse stretch of coastline has several characteristic, sediment-dominated embayments in north-east England, including Budle Bay, Beadnell Bay and Embleton Bay. Each of these areas is relatively exposed and uniform in nature and is characterised by crustacean /polychaete- and bivalve/polychaete-biotopes. In the subtidal zone, Beadnell and Embleton Bays form a sandy break in the otherwise continuous reef habitat in this site. These areas are characterised by extensive areas of clean sand with often dense populations of the heart urchin *Echinocardium cordatum*, and razor clams *Ensis siliqua* and *E. arcuatus*.

Stretches of the coast in England support a very extensive range of intertidal mudflats and sandflats, ranging from wave-exposed beaches to sheltered muddy flats with rich infaunal communities. Those in the Lindisfarne and Budle Bay area and on the adjacent open coast to the north are the most extensive in north-east England. They support the largest intertidal beds of narrow-leaved eelgrass *Zostera angustifolia* and dwarf eelgrass *Z. noltei* on the east coast of England, a diverse infauna, and some large beds of mussels *Mytilus edulis*. Some of the bays along the open coast have mobile sediments, with populations of sand-eels *Ammodytes* sp., small crustaceans and polychaete worms. More sheltered sediments have very stable lower shore communities of burrowing heart urchins and bivalve molluscs.

Moderately wave-exposed reef habitats occur throughout the site. The subtidal rocky reefs and their rich marine communities, together with the wide variety of associated intertidal reefs, are the most diverse known on the North Sea coast. Their remarkably varied nature is due to the wide range of physical conditions in the area, from wave-exposed locations on the open coast, through more sheltered reefs within bays, to those exposed to strong tidal streams in sounds and off headlands. There is also a diverse range of rock types, including soft limestones and hard volcanic rock. The Farne Islands are of special importance as they are among the very few rocky islands with extensive reefs in the enclosed North Sea. A large number of the species present are characteristic of cold water and several reach their southern or eastern limit of distribution within the area.

Caves occur throughout the site in both the intertidal and the subtidal zones in a range of different hard rock exposures. There are examples of partially submerged caves in the cliffs

north of Berwick and in the limestone at Howick (south of Craster), and there are submerged sea caves, tunnels and arches in the volcanic rock of the Farne Islands and around St Abb's Head. Caves occur in association with reefs, in both the intertidal and the subtidal zones. Depending on the depth of the cave and its morphology, the site supports a range of distinct biological communities.

The section of the site in north-east England is representative of grey seal *Halichoerus grypus* breeding colonies in the south-east of its breeding range in the UK. It supports around 2.5% of annual UK pup production.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Large shallow inlets and bays.
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. (Intertidal mudflats and sandflats)
- Reefs
- Submerged or partially submerged sea caves

Qualifying species: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0017072

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs