

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: Thanet Coast
Unitary Authority/County: Kent
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: TR348711
SAC EU code: UK0013107
Area (ha): 2803.84
Component SSSI: Thanet Coast SSSI

Site description:

The Thanet Coast is the longest continuous stretch of coastal chalk in the UK. The site contains subtidal chalk reefs that extend into the intertidal zone and form chalk cliffs. The subtidal reefs within the site are comparatively impoverished, owing to the harsh environmental conditions in the southern North Sea, but are an unusual feature because of the scarcity of hard substrates in the area. The reefs extend offshore in a series of steps dissected by gullies. Species present include an unusually rich intertidal algal flora, essentially of chalk-boring algae, which may extend above high water mark into the splash zone in wave-exposed areas.

The site contains the second most extensive representation of chalk caves in the UK and is situated on the extreme south-east coast of England. The site is bordered by about 23 km of chalk cliffs with around 90 caves or cave-like features and some stack and arch formations. The caves around Thanet are mostly natural but include a few man-made features. They vary considerably in depth, height and aspect and hence in the algal communities present. Some caves extend for up to 30 m into the cliffs and reach 6-10 m in height, although many are much smaller. The caves support very specialised algal and lichen communities containing species such as *Pseudendoclonium submarinum*, *Chrysotila lamellosa*, *Chrysotila stipitata*, *Chrysonema litorale* and *Thallochrysis litorale*, some of which were first described from Thanet.

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:

- Reefs
- Submerged or partially submerged sea caves

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

Register reference number: UK0013107

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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