Annex 2 Special Protection Area (SPA) Citation

EC Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds

potential Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: Coquet Island

Counties/Unitary Authorities: Northumberland, Alnwick District Council

Boundary of the SPA:

The SPA includes all land above the Mean Low Water Mark.

Size of SPA: The SPA covers an area of 19.92 ha

Site description:

Coquet Island is located 1 km off the coast of Northumberland in north-east England. It is a small, flat-topped island with a plateau extent of approximately 7 hectares. The island consists of sandy soil and peat over a soft sandstone base. Low cliffs of approx. 2.4-3.7m high result from earlier quarrying. Surrounding the island is a rocky upper shore and intertidal covering 15 ha when fully exposed. There is a sandy beach on the south west of the island and the southeast corner is shingle and rock. A small, shallow, man-made well lies in the centre of the plateau, which is fed by non-potable surface water. The peaty soil of the plateau supports short fescue grassland (mainly *Festuca rubra* but with some *F. ovira*), with docks (*Rumex spp.*) and ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*). Maritime species such as sea campion (*Silene maritime*) and thrift (*Armeria maritima*) are scare. Where nutrient input from seabird colonies is greatest, there are dense stands of taller species, including nettles *Urtica* spp. These provide cover for some of the nesting terns (Stroud *et al.* 2001).

Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4** of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) for the following reasons (summarised in Table 1):

- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the GB populations of four species listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive. Therefore, the site qualifies for SPA classification in accordance with the UK SPA selection guidelines (stage 1.1).

Table 1 Summary of qualifying ornithological interest in Coquet Island SPA

Feature	Count (period)	% of subspecies or population	Interest type
Common tern *Sterna hirundo*	1,189 pairs 2,378 individuals (2010-2014)[1]	11.89% of GB population[3]	Annex 1
Arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea*	1,230 pairs 2,460 individuals (2010-2014)[1]	2.32% of GB population[3]	Annex 1
Roseate tern *Sterna dougallii*	80 pairs 160 individuals (2010-2014)[2]	93.02% of GB population[3]	Annex 1
Sandwich tern	1,300 pairs	11.82% of GB	Annex 1

Feature	Count (period)	% of subspecies or population	Interest type
Sterna sandvicensis	2,600 individuals (2010-2014)[1]	population[3]	

[1] Data from: Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) and colony managers (pairs multiplied by 2 to arrive at breeding adults; this rule applies to all species listed within the table).
[2] Data from: directly from colony managers (pairs multiplied by 2 to arrive at breeding adults; this rule applies to all species listed within the table).
[3] GB breeding populations derived from Musgrove *et al*. (2013).

Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it used regularly by over 20,000 seabirds in any season:

During the breeding season (2010-2014)[1], the site supports 47,662 individual seabirds including the 4 qualifying species listed above plus: Atlantic puffin (31,686 breeding adults) and black-headed gull (7,772 breeding adults), which are present in nationally important numbers (2.73% and 2.99% respectively) and therefore are named as key assemblage components.

[1] With exception of Atlantic Puffin for which censuses in 2008, 2009 and 2013 have been used. Due to the complexity and costs of Atlantic puffin burrow surveys these are not carried out yearly by all colony managers, but are surveyed as a minimum on a 5-yearly basis as part of a UK-wide puffin census. Given this constraint to the availability of population estimates for puffins, the most recent of these censuses at Coquet Island in 2008, 2009 and 2013 have been used in our assessment.

Principal bird data sources

Colony counts from JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme contributed by colony managers: RSPB, supplemented by most up to date counts in some instances from those colony managers.