

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 7, 2nd edition, as amended by COP9 Resolution IX.1 Annex B). A 3rd edition of the Handbook, incorporating these amendments, is in preparation and will be available in 2006.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 17 July 1985

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Chesil Beach and The Fleet

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for: Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area:

** Important note: If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site included:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

- i) **hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ✓ -or- *no* ☐;
- ii) **an electronic format** (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) *Yes*
- iii) **a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables** *yes* ✓ -or- *no* ☐;

b) **Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:**

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The site boundary is the same as, or falls within, an existing protected area.

For precise boundary details, please refer to paper map provided at designation

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude):

50 36 40 N 02 31 10 W

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

Nearest town/city: Weymouth

Chesil Beach and the Fleet Ramsar site lies on the coast of Dorset, situated mid-way along the English Channel coast.

Administrative region: Dorset

10. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): 11. Area (hectares): 748.11

Min.	-1
Max.	10
Mean	1

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

The site includes the whole of the Fleet lagoon and the adjacent Chesil Bank. The Fleet is the largest and best example of a barrier-built saline lagoon in the UK and Chesil is one of the three major shingle structures in the UK. The salinity gradient, peculiar hydrographic regime and varied substrates, together with associated reedbed and intertidal habitats and the relative lack of pollution in comparison to most other lagoons, have resulted in the Fleet becoming extraordinarily rich in wildlife. Outstanding communities of aquatic plants and animals are present, supporting large numbers of wildfowl and waders. Chesil Bank is of great significance to the study of coastal geomorphology and supports nationally important populations of shingle plants and invertebrates. It is also an important breeding site for seabirds.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Ramsar criterion 1

The Fleet is an outstanding example of rare lagoon habitat and is the largest of its kind in the UK. In Europe lagoons are classified as a priority habitat by the EC Habitats and Species Directive. The site also supports rare saltmarsh habitats.

Ramsar criterion 2

The Fleet supports 15 specialist lagoonal species – more than any other UK site – and five nationally scarce wetland plants as well as ten nationally scarce wetland animals. Chesil Bank is one of the most important UK sites for shingle habitats and species.

Ramsar criterion 3

The site is the largest barrier-built saline lagoon in the UK, and has the greatest diversity of habitats and of biota.

Ramsar criterion 4

The site is important for a number of species at a critical stage in their life cycle including post-larval and juvenile bass *Dicentrarchus labrax*.

Ramsar criterion 8

The site is important as a nursery for bass *Dicentrarchus labrax*.

Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

Species with peak counts in winter:

Dark-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> ,	1460 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
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Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.

Species with peak counts in winter:

Mute swan , <i>Cygnus olor</i> , Britain	1169 individuals, representing an average of 3.1% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
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Contemporary data and information on waterbird trends at this site and their regional (sub-national) and national contexts can be found in the Wetland Bird Survey report, which is updated annually. See www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm.

See Sections 21/22 for details of noteworthy species

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Atlantic

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):
Council Directive 92/43/EEC

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & geology	shingle, peat, nutrient-rich, sedimentary, clay, mud, sand, gravel, pebble, chert/flint
Geomorphology and landscape	lowland, coastal, subtidal rock (including rocky reefs), shingle bar, barrier beach, subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank), intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), open coast (including bay), enclosed coast (including embayment), lagoon
Nutrient status	no information
pH	alkaline, circumneutral
Salinity	brackish / mixosaline, fresh, saline / euhaline
Soil	mainly organic
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Teignmouth, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/teignmouth.html) Max. daily temperature: 14.2° C Min. daily temperature: 8.0° C Days of air frost: 15.2 Rainfall: 850.0 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1710.0

General description of the Physical Features:

The site is a long linear shingle beach (Chesil Bank) enclosing a brackish lagoon (the Fleet). The Fleet is the largest and best example of a barrier-built saline lagoon in the UK, and Chesil is one of the three major shingle structures in the UK. The salinity gradient, peculiar hydrographic regime and varied substrates, together with associated reedbed and intertidal habitats and the relative lack of pollution in comparison to most other lagoons, have resulted in the Fleet being extraordinarily rich in wildlife.

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

The site is a long linear shingle beach (Chesil Bank) enclosing a brackish lagoon (the Fleet). The Fleet is the largest and best example of a barrier-built saline lagoon in the UK, and Chesil is one of the three major shingle structures in the UK.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces, Maintenance of water quality (removal of nutrients)

19. Wetland types:

Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
J	Coastal brackish / saline lagoons	65

E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	29.3
Sp	Saline / brackish marshes: permanent	2.3
G	Tidal flats	1.9
H	Salt marshes	1.5

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

On the landward, more stable side of Chesil Bank, large, internationally and nationally important populations of shingle plants occur including an almost continuous belt of shrubby seablite alongside the Fleet lagoon. The Bank is also the breeding site for the largest populations of little tern and ringed plover in south-west Britain. The Fleet lagoon contains outstanding communities of aquatic plants and invertebrates, and supports large numbers of wildfowl and waders. The plant life includes no fewer than 150 species of algae and the lagoon is best known for the most extensive mixed populations of eelgrass and tasselweeds in Britain. The Fleet also supports distinct and highly unusual mollusc associations and other notable invertebrates. It is an important breeding area for fish and is a bass nursery. In all, 23 species of fish have been recorded. Other habitats which are integral components of the site include saltmarsh, reedbeds, grassland and scrub.

Ecosystem services

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Lamprothamnium papulosum (Nationally Rare)

Ruppia spiralis (Nationally Scarce)

Zostera spp. (Nationally Scarce)

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Birds

Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:

Species regularly supported during the breeding season:

Little tern , *Sterna albifrons albifrons*, W Europe 81 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 4.1% of the GB population (Seabird 2000 Census)

Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Common greenshank , *Tringa nebularia*, Europe/W Africa 6 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species with peak counts in winter:

Little egret , *Egretta garzetta*, West Mediterranean 24 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Common pochard , *Aythya ferina*, NE & NW Europe 659 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Red-breasted merganser , <i>Mergus serrator</i> , NW & C Europe	270 individuals, representing an average of 2.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Common coot , <i>Fulica atra atra</i> , NW Europe	2139 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species Information

Nationally important species occurring on the site.

Fish.

Dicentrarchus labrax

Invertebrates.

Armandia cirrhosa (RDS insufficient info.)
Gammarus insensibilis (RDS Rare)
Nematostella vectensis (RDS Rare)
Paludinella littorina (RDS Rare)
Pseudomogoplistes squamiger (RDS endangered)
Tenellia adpersa (RDS insufficient info.)

23. Social and cultural values:

Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

Aesthetic
 Aquatic vegetation (e.g. reeds, willows, seaweed)
 Archaeological/historical site
 Environmental education/ interpretation
 Fisheries production
 Non-consumptive recreation
 Scientific research
 Sport fishing
 Sport hunting
 Tourism
 Traditional cultural

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning? No

If Yes, describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	+
National/Crown Estate	+	+
Private	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	
Tourism	+	+
Recreation	+	+
Current scientific research	+	+
Fishing: (unspecified)	+	+
Fishing: commercial	+	+
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	+
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+	+
Gathering of shellfish	+	+
Bait collection	+	
Arable agriculture (unspecified)		+
Permanent arable agriculture		+
Grazing (unspecified)		+
Permanent pastoral agriculture		+
Hay meadows		+
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	+
Industry		+
Sewage treatment/disposal	+	+
Harbour/port		+
Flood control	+	+
Transport route		+
Urban development		+
Non-urbanised settlements		+
Military activities	+	+

26. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site’s ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

Explanation of reporting category:

1. Those factors that are still operating, but it is unclear if they are under control, as there is a lag in showing the management or regulatory regime to be successful.
2. Those factors that are not currently being managed, or where the regulatory regime appears to have been ineffective so far.

NA = Not Applicable because no factors have been reported.

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only)	On-Site	Off-Site	Major Impact?

No factors reported	NA				

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? NO

27. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Site/ Area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI/ASSI)	+	+
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation		+
Management agreement	+	+
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Other	+	
Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)		+
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	+	
Management plan in preparation		+

b) Describe any other current management practices:

The management of Ramsar sites in the UK is determined by either a formal management plan or through other management planning processes, and is overseen by the relevant statutory conservation agency. Details of the precise management practises are given in these documents.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

No information available

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g. details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Contemporary.

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.

Breeding seabird surveys carried out annually.

Chesil and the Fleet cSAC sublittoral monitoring for English Nature.

Environment.

Fleet Study Group: academics and others involved in a variety of specialist research projects.

Water quality (ECUS 2003; Johnston & Gilliland 2000); monitoring by the Environment Agency.

European Marine Site monitoring – site characterisation report by the Plymouth Marine Partnership

Completed.

Flora and Fauna.

Various baseline surveys conducted in 1993/4 by oil company exploring in Lyme Bay, includes plant and invertebrate surveys of Chesil Bank and marine surveys within the Fleet and offshore. Seasonal monitoring of the Fleet carried out from 1995-96 by Swansea University

Flora.

Zostera and *Ruppia* monitoring carried out in 1983 and 1991 by EN.

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitor centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

The Chesil Bank and Fleet Nature Reserve Warden gives talks, leads guided walks and provides a range of educational material in the form of leaflets and newsletters. The Heritage Coast Service is also involved in guided walks and other events, also in practical conservation tasks. The Chesil Beach Centre is an excellent information/interpretation centre of modest size and there are information panels provided throughout the site.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Activities, Facilities provided and Seasonality.

Two caravan parks are adjacent to the site from which it is possible to gain access into the site. Use is mainly April to October. Heritage Coast Path - runs alongside the inland boundary of part of the site - bird watching, walking - all year. There are moorings within part of the site and windsurfing, kite surfing and sailing occur adjacent to the site - all year. Diving occurs both within and adjacent to the site - all year but mainly April to October. Bait-digging and angling occurs within the site - all year. Swimming and sunbathing during the summer.

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept. of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EB

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Site Designations Manager, English Nature, Sites and Surveillance Team, Northminster House, Northminster Road, Peterborough, PE1 1UA, UK

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Site-relevant references

Barne, JH, Robson, CF, Kaznowska, SS, Doody, JP & Davidson, NC (eds.) (1998) *Coasts and seas of the United Kingdom. Region 9 Southern England: Hayling Island to Lyme Regis*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough. (Coastal Directories Series.)

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- Doody, JP, Johnston, C & Smith, B (1993) *Directory of the North Sea coastal margin*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough
- Downie, AJ (1996) The lagoon sandworm *Armandia cirrhosa*: Part 1: results of the 1995 survey of Portland Harbour and the entrance to the Fleet; Part 2: a species action plan. *English Nature Research Reports*, No. 202
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- Stroud, DA, Chambers, D, Cook, S, Buxton, N, Fraser, B, Clement, P, Lewis, P, McLean, I, Baker, H & Whitehead, S (eds.) (2001) *The UK SPA network: its scope and content. Volume 3: Site accounts*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough www.jncc.gov.uk/UKSPA/default.htm

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