

## RAMSAR INFORMATION SHEET

### FOR WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

**Site reference number**

- 1 Compilation date** August 2001  
**2 Country** UK (England)  
**3 Name of wetland** Isles of Scilly  
**4 Site centre location:** Latitude: 49:57:46N Longitude: 06:20:42W  
**5 Altitude (m)** **Min: 0 Max: 42 Mean**  
**6 Area (ha)** 401.64

**7 Overview**

The site is within the Isles of Scilly archipelago and mainly consists of many small uninhabited islands but is also partly within several inhabited islands, with habitats including coastal cliffs, boulder beaches, heathland and some dune grassland. The economy of the Isles of Scilly community depends heavily on the tourist business, which benefits from there being high numbers of breeding seabirds in an attractive environment.

- 8 Wetland type** Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
D	Rocky shores	69
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	10
TP	Freshwater marshes / pools: permanent	1
Other	Other	20

- 9 Ramsar Criteria** 6  
**10 Map of the site** ✓  
**11 Compiler** **Joint Nature Conservation Committee**  
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**12 Justification of criteria**

Ramsar criterion 6

During the Breeding Season the site regularly supports internationally important populations of: Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

**13 General location**

Nearest town/city: Penzance (nearest mainland town). The Isles of Scilly are situated in the South-West Approaches, 28 miles (45 km) south-west of Land's End.

**Administrative Region:** Isles of Scilly

**14 Physical Features**

Soil & Geology	acidic, granite
Geomorphology and Landscape	cliffs, coastal, islands
Nutrient status	oligotrophic
pH	acidic
Salinity	saline / euhaline
Soil	mainly mineral
Water permanence	usually permanent

Summary of main climatic features	Rainy, temperate climate with a mild winter and periodic frost. Mean minimum temperature approximately 8.6°C. Mean maximum temperature approximately 14.4°C. Mean annual precipitation approximately 861.2mm, with a winter maximum.
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## 15 Hydrological values

No special values known

## 16 Ecological features

Sea cliffs, rocky islets and boulder beaches are relatively devoid of plant communities except for the sparse crevice vegetation with *Crithmum maritimum* and *Armeria maritima*. In some places the *Armeria* cover is dominant, which is a feature peculiar to Scilly. The characteristic 'waved' heathland of the most exposed headlands is dominated by *Calluna vulgaris* with sheltered areas supporting scrub of *Ulex europaeus*, *Pteridium aquilinum* and *Rubus* spp. Some areas of low-lying land have overlying embryonic dunes developing, dominated by *Ammophila arenaria* and *Carex arenaria*. One site has a small pool fringed by beds of *Scirpus maritimus*.

## 17 Noteworthy flora

Species occurring at levels of international importance

Higher Plants

*Rumex rupestris*

Species occurring at levels of national importance

Habitat type

Heathland H4

Higher Plants

*Ornithopus pinnatus*

*Viola kitaibeliana*

## 18 Noteworthy fauna

### Birds

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

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

Lesser Black-backed Gull, <i>Larus fuscus</i> (Western Europe/Mediterranean/Western Africa)	3608 pairs, representing an average of 2.9% of the breeding population (Count as at 1999)
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**Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:**

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

Great Black-backed Gull, <i>Larus marinus</i> (Northeast Atlantic (breeding))	766 pairs, representing an average of 4.0% of the GB population (Count as at 1999)
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Shag, <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i> (Northern Europe)	1108 pairs, representing an average of 3.0% of the GB population (Count as at 1999)
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Storm Petrel, <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i> (World)	5406 pairs, representing an average of 6.4% of the GB population (Count as at 1999)
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## 19 Social and Cultural Values

Aesthetic

Archaeological/historical site

Current scientific research

Non-consumptive recreation  
Tourism

## 20 Land tenure/ownership

Ownership category	On-Site	Off-Site
Private	+	

## 21 Current land use

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Nature conservation	+	+	Large-Scale
Tourism	+	+	Large-Scale
Fishing: commercial		+	Large-Scale
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	+	Small-Scale
Arable agriculture (unspecified)		+	Small-Scale
Grazing (unspecified)		+	Small-Scale
Permanent pastoral agriculture		+	Small-Scale
Sewage treatment/disposal		+	Small-Scale
Harbour/port		+	Small-Scale
Domestic water supply		+	Small-Scale
Non-urbanised settlements		+	Small-Scale
Other – Bulb farming		+	Large-Scale

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

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Vegetation succession	+		Large-Scale
Recreational/tourism disturbance (unspecified)	+	+	Large-Scale
Other factor – Predation by brown rats	+		Large-Scale

## 23 Conservation measures taken

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
SSSI	+	+
SPA	+	
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	+	+
Candidate SAC	+	+
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	

## 24 Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented

see below

### Site vulnerability and management statement

The most exposed areas are largely self-sustaining through the operation of natural processes but significant areas are becoming scrubbed over and management measures are being developed to implement an enhanced programme of scrub cutting, possibly supplemented in the longer term through the reintroduction of stock grazing. The economy of the Isles of Scilly community depends heavily on the tourist business and the management of the high numbers of visitors to the most vulnerable bird breeding sites is controlled by the Isles of Scilly Environmental Trust. The Trust manages the majority of the land within the site and also carries out a rat control programme to reduce their impact on the ground-nesting seabirds.

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

- 3 year Species Recovery Programme to assist with breeding success of terns, particularly Roseate Tern
- Recent (1999) census of breeding seabirds on all islands, giving a baseline for future surveys.

## **26 Current conservation education**

Very little proactive education is currently provided, apart from small-scale wildlife tours which operate throughout the main season for the tourists. Some schools from Cornwall have regular summer camps when they receive basic environmental information as part of their general educational activities.

## **27 Current recreation and tourism**

There are many boat trips and some wildlife walks provided on a daily basis throughout the main tourist season. These provide only basic information on the wildlife that is present, including the breeding seabirds. There are some interpretive panels on the main islands and more are planned. Landing of people from the tripper boats on to particularly sensitive sites is controlled by voluntary agreement between the Environment Trust and the boat operators.

## **28 Functional jurisdiction**

Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## **29 Management authority**

English Nature Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Team  
Trevint House  
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Truro TR1 2PA  
UK

## **30 Bibliography**

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

### **Specific References**

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