

32. Chichester and Langstone Harbours

Geographical Coordinates 50°50'N 1°00'W

Area 5,749ha

Location On the eastern side of the city of Portsmouth, in the counties of Hampshire and West Sussex, southern England.

Date of Ramsar Designation 28 October 1987.

Other International Designations Special Protection Area under EC Directive 79/409.

National Designations Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)^P; Local Nature Reserve^P (LNR).

Principal Features Two large estuarine basins linked by the channel which divides Hayling Island from the main Hampshire coastline. The site includes extensive intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, sand and shingle spits and sand dunes. The mudflats support beds of *Zostera* and *Enteromorpha*, whilst the lower saltmarsh is dominated by *Spartina anglica*, with a more varied community at higher levels. Although many areas bordering the site have been developed, some grassland and brackish/freshwater marshes with reedbeds remain. Peak counts of wintering water birds regularly exceed 20,000 individuals, including internationally important numbers* of *Branta bernicla bernicla* (Chichester 10,133; Langstone 7,333), *Charadrius hiaticula* (1,041; 459), *Pluvialis squatarola* (2,803; 1,373), *Calidris alpina* (19,847; 32,896), and *Limosa limosa* (694; 668). Several other species occur in nationally important numbers, notably *Tadorna tadorna* (Chichester 2,373) and *Tringa totanus* (Chichester 1,460). Breeding *Sterna albifrons* (154 pairs in 1990) and *S. hirundo* (143 pairs in 1990) are also of national importance. Parts of the site are managed as nature reserves by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists' Trust, Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Hampshire County Council. (1a,2c,3a,3b,3c)

*All figures are average peak counts for the five winters 1987/88 to 1991/92.

Conservation Issues The 1990 UK National report provided information concerning recreational disturbance and pollution from sewage effluent. However, measures aimed at improving the site's water quality are under way; one major source of untreated sewage effluent has already been removed through the construction of a new off-shore outfall. English Nature and Chichester Harbour Conservancy are working together to prepare an estuary management plan which will address remaining water quality issues, together with recreational disturbance problems. Langstone Harbour is subject to dredging for oysters and clams. The alien seaweed *Sargassum muticum* has colonised both harbours. It is thought that the species spread to southern England from France, following accidental introduction with Pacific oysters *Crassostrea gigas*.