

## RAMSAR INFORMATION SHEET

### FOR WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

**Site reference number** 7UK104  
**1 Compilation date** Sept 1999  
**2 Country** UK (England)  
**3 Name of wetland** Morecambe Bay  
**4 Site centre location:** Latitude: 54 07 19 N Longitude: 02 57 21 W  
**5 Altitude** Not being submitted 0 (coast)  
**6 Area (ha)** 37404.6

#### 7 Overview

Morecambe Bay lies between the coasts of South Cumbria and Lancashire, and represents the largest continuous intertidal area in Britain. Morecambe Bay comprises the estuaries of five rivers and the accretion of mudflats behind Walney Island. The area is of intertidal mud and sandflats, with associated saltmarshes, shingle beaches and other coastal habitats. It is a component in the chain of west coast estuaries of outstanding importance for passage and overwintering waterfowl (supporting the third largest number of wintering waterfowl in Britain), and breeding waterfowl, gulls and terns.

**8 Wetland type** Man-made wetland, Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
B	Marine beds (eg. sea grass beds)	0.4
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	0.3
F	Estuarine waters	13
G	Tidal flats	77.7
H	Salt marshes	8.4
6	Reservoirs / barrages / dams	0.2

**9 Ramsar Criteria** 4, 5, 6  
**10 Map of the site** ✓  
**11 Compiler** Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
 Monkstone House  
 City Road  
 Peterborough  
 Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY  
 UK  
 Telephone/Fax : +44(0) 1733 562626 / +44(0) 1733 555948

#### 12 Justification of criteria

##### Ramsar criterion 4

The site is a staging area for migratory waterfowl including internationally important numbers of passage *Charadrius hiaticula*.

##### Ramsar criterion 5

Internationally important waterfowl assemblage (greater than 20,000 birds)

##### Ramsar criterion 6

Over winter the site regularly supports internationally important populations of: Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

### 13 General location

Nearest town/city: Morecambe

Morecambe Bay is located within the counties of Cumbria and Lancashire in northwest England

Administrative Region: Cumbria, Lancashire

### 14 Physical Features

Soil & Geology	boulder, clay, cobble, gravel, limestone, limestone/chalk, mud, neutral, pebble, sand, sedimentary, shingle
Geomorphology and Landscape	coastal, enclosed coast (including embayment), estuary, floodplain, intertidal rock, intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), islands, lagoon, lowland, open coast (including bay), pools, shingle bar, sound/strait, subtidal rock (including rocky reefs), subtidal sediments (including sandbank/mudbank)
Nutrient status	mesotrophic
pH	circumneutral
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 7.4°C. Mean maximum temperature approximately 14.4°C. Mean annual precipitation approximately 6222.4mm, with a winter maximum.

### 15 Hydrological values

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces

### 16 Ecological features

The main habitat types of the Morecambe Bay Ramsar site are: Intertidal mudflats and sandflats, saltmarsh, shingle, rocky scars, sand dunes.

A large shallow estuary, with extensive intertidal mudflats, saltmarshes, subtidal sediments and rocky shorelines.

There are small areas of eelgrass *Zostera* beds and vegetated shingle.

The saltmarshes are traditionally heavily grazed and provide important wildfowl habitat.

### 17 Noteworthy flora

None.

### 18 Noteworthy fauna

#### Birds

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

#### On passage the area regularly supports:

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)  
(Europe/Northern Africa (wintering))

693 individuals, representing an average of 1.5% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

#### Over winter the area regularly supports:

Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*  
(Western Palearctic (wintering))

2611 individuals, representing an average of 2.6% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Curlew, <i>Numenius arquata</i> (Europe (breeding))	13620 individuals, representing an average of 3.9% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Dunlin, <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> (Northern Siberia/Europe/Western Africa)	52671 individuals, representing an average of 3.8% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Grey Plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> (Eastern Atlantic (wintering))	1813 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Knot, <i>Calidris canutus</i> (Northeastern Canada/Greenland/Iceland/Northwestern Europe)	29426 individuals, representing an average of 8.5% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Oystercatcher, <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> (Europe & Northern/Western Africa)	47572 individuals, representing an average of 5.4% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Pink-footed Goose, <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> (Eastern Greenland/Iceland/UK)	2475 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Pintail, <i>Anas acuta</i> (Northwestern Europe)	2804 individuals, representing an average of 4.7% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Redshank, <i>Tringa totanus</i> (Eastern Atlantic (wintering))	6336 individuals, representing an average of 3.6% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Shelduck, <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> (Northwestern Europe)	6372 individuals, representing an average of 2.1% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)
Turnstone, <i>Arenaria interpres</i> (Western Palearctic (wintering))	1583 individuals, representing an average of 2.4% of the population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

**Assemblages of international importance:**

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

210668 waterfowl (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

**Species occurring at levels of national importance:**

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

Herring Gull, <i>Larus argentatus</i> (Northwestern Europe (breeding) and Iceland/Western Europe (breeding))	11000 pairs, representing an average of 6.9% of the GB population (5 year mean for 1992 to 1996)
Lesser Black-backed Gull, <i>Larus fuscus</i> (Western Europe/Mediterranean/Western Africa)	22000 pairs, representing an average of 26.5% of the GB population (5 year mean for 1992 to 1996)

Sandwich Tern, *Sterna sandvicensis*  
(Western Europe/Western Africa) 290 pairs, representing an average of 2.1% of the GB population (5 year mean for 1992 to 1996)

**On passage the area regularly supports:**

Sanderling, *Calidris alba*  
(Eastern Atlantic/Western & Southern Africa (wintering)) 2466 individuals, representing an average of 10.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
(Northwestern Europe) 879 individuals, representing an average of 6.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Eider, *Somateria mollissima*  
(Britain/Ireland) 6400 individuals, representing an average of 8.3% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*  
(Northwestern/Central Europe) 445 individuals, representing an average of 2.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Golden Plover, *Pluvialis apricaria*  
(Northwestern Europe (breeding)) 4097 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Great Crested Grebe, *Podiceps cristatus*  
(Northwestern Europe (wintering)) 318 individuals, representing an average of 3.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Lapwing, *Vanellus vanellus*  
(Europe (breeding)) 17669 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator*  
(Northwestern/Central Europe) 292 individuals, representing an average of 2.9% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

Wigeon, *Anas penelope*  
(Western Siberia/Northwestern/Northeastern Europe) 5838 individuals, representing an average of 2.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean for 1991/92 to 1995/96)

**19 Social and Cultural Values**

Aesthetic

Aquatic vegetation (e.g. reeds, willows, seaweed)

Archaeological/historical site

Conservation education

Current scientific research

Fisheries production

Livestock grazing

Non-consumptive recreation

Sport fishing

Sport hunting

Subsistence fishing

Tourism

Traditional cultural

Transportation/navigation

## 20 Land tenure/ownership

Ownership category	On-Site	Off-Site
Non-governmental organisation	+	+
National/Crown estate	+	+
Private	+	+

## 21 Current land use

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Nature conservation	+	+	Large-Scale
Tourism	+	+	Large-Scale
Recreation	+	+	Large-Scale
Research	+	+	Small-Scale
Collection of non-timber natural products: commercial	+		Small-Scale
Commercial forestry		+	Small-Scale
Fishing: commercial	+	+	Small-Scale
Fishing: recreational/sport	+		Small-Scale
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+		Small-Scale
Gathering of shellfish	+		Small-Scale
Bait collection	+		Small-Scale
Grazing (unspecified)	+	+	Large-Scale
Permanent pastoral agriculture	+	+	Large-Scale
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	+	Small-Scale
Industrial water supply	+		Large-Scale
Industry	+	+	Large-Scale
Sewage treatment/disposal	+	+	Large-Scale
Harbour/port	+	+	Small-Scale
Mineral exploration		+	Small-Scale
Oil/gas production		+	Large-Scale
Transport route	+	+	Large-Scale
Urban development		+	Large-Scale
Non-urbanised settlements		+	Large-Scale

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

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Overgrazing by domestic livestock	+		Small-Scale
Drainage/reclamation for agriculture		+	Large-Scale
Dredging	+		Small-Scale
Over fishing	+		Small-Scale
Pollution - unspecified	+		Large-Scale

## 23 Conservation measures taken

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
SSSI	+	
NNR	+	+
SPA	+	
Candidate SAC	+	
Land owned by a NGO for nature conservation	+	+
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	+

## 24 Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented

see below

### Site vulnerability and management statement

The site is subjected to a wide range of pressures such as reclamation for agriculture, over-grazing, dredging, over-fishing, industrial uses and unspecified pollution. However, overall the site is relatively robust and many of those pressures have only slight to local effects and are being addressed through Management Plans. The breeding tern interest is very vulnerable and the colony has recently moved to the adjacent Duddon Estuary. Positive management is being secured through management plans for non-governmental organisation reserves, English Nature Site Management Statements, European Marine Site Management Scheme, and the Morecambe Bay Partnership.

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

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.

Habitat.

Baseline habitat review/survey being completed by English Nature for European Marine Site Management Scheme.

## 26 Current conservation education

None

## 27 Current recreation and tourism

Activities.

Angling, wildfowling, bait collection, walking sailing, windsurfing and birdwatching.

Facilities provided.

There are interpretative facilities at South Walney, Foulney and Leighton Moss reserves, and in the nearby town of Morecambe.

Seasonality.

Wildfowling occurs from 1 September to 20 February.

## 28 Functional jurisdiction

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

28. *Jurisdiction* - territorial jurisdiction - England

## 29 Management authority

English Nature

English Nature

Northminster House

Telephone +44 1733 455000

## 30 Bibliography

Peterborough PE1 1UA

Fax +44 1733 568834

Anon. 1995. *Biodiversity: the UK Steering Group report. Volume 2: action plans.* London, HMSO.

Barne, J.H., Robson, C.F., Kaznowska, S.S., Doody, J.P., Davidson, N.C., & Buck, A.L. eds. 1996-1998. *Coasts and seas of the United Kingdom. Regions 1-17.* Peterborough Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Batten, L.A., Bibby, C.J., Elliott, G.D., & Porter, R.F., eds. 1990. *Red Data birds in Britain: action for rare, threatened and important species.* London, T & A. D. Poyser.

Signal, E., Curtis, D., & Matthews, J. 1988. *Islay: land types, bird habitats and nature conservation. Part 1. Land types and birds on Islay. CSD Reports, No. 809, Part 1.*

Bratton, J.H., ed. 1991. *British Red Data Books: 3. Invertebrates other than insects.* Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Brown, A.E., Burn, A.J., Hopkins, J.J., & Way, S.F., eds. 1997. *The Habitats Directive: selection of Special Areas of Conservation in the UK. JNCC Reports, No. 270.* Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

- Buck, A.L. 1993, 1996, 1997. *An inventory of UK estuaries. Volume 2-7*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- Chandler, T.J., & Gregory, S., eds. 1976. *The climate of the British Isles*. London, Longman.
- Cranswick, P.A., Waters, R.J., Musgrove, A.J. & Politt, M.S. 1997. *The Wetland Bird Survey 1995-96: wildfowl and wader counts*. Slimbridge, British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds & Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- Dargie, T.C.D. 1993. *Sand dune vegetation survey of Great Britain: a national inventory. Part 2. Scotland*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- Department of the Environment. 1995. *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report. Volume 1: Meeting the Rio Challenge*. London, HMSO.
- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. 1998. *UK National Report to the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- Doody, J.P., Johnston, C., & Smith, B. 1993. *Directory of the North Sea coastal margin*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- Drury Hunt, I. & MacGuire, F., eds. 1996. *High and Dry: The impacts of over-abstraction of water on wildlife*. Biodiversity Challenge. Sandy, RSPB.
- English Nature. *Natural Areas; Nature Conservation in Context version 1.1*. CD-ROM. English Nature, Peterborough.
- English Nature. 1996. *Impact of Water Abstraction on Wetland SSSIs*. English Nature Freshwater Series Number 4. Peterborough, English Nature.
- Perring, F.H., & Farrell, L. 1983. *British Red Data Books: 1. Vascular plants*. Nettleham, Lincoln, Royal Society for Nature Conservation.
- Pritchard, D.E., Housden, S.D., Mudge, G.P., Galbraith, C.A. & Pienkowski, M.W., eds. 1992. *Important Bird Areas in the United Kingdom including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man*. Sandy, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
- Ratcliffe, D.A., ed. 1977. *A nature conservation review: volumes 1 & 2*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Rodwell, J.S., ed. 1991. *British plant communities. Volume 2. Mires and heaths*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Rodwell, J.S., ed. 1995. *British plant communities. Volume 4. Aquatic communities, swamps and tall-herb fens*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, P.M. & Scott, D.A. 1997. *Waterfowl Population Estimates Second edition*. Wageningen, Wetlands International.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. 1998. *Land for Life*. Sandy, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
- Shirt, D.B., ed. 1987. *British Red Data Books: 2. Insects*. Peterborough, Nature Conservancy Council.
- Stewart, A., Pearman, D.A., & Preston, C.D., eds. 1994. *Scarce plants in Britain*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- Stroud, D.A., Mudge, G.P. and Pienkowski, M. W., eds. 1990. *Protecting Internationally Important Bird Sites*. Peterborough, Nature Conservancy Council.
- Reference should also be made to Country Agencies Management Plans for sites that are within National Nature Reserves.

