

COUNTY: CLEVELAND SITE NAME: SEAL SANDS

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended

Local Planning Authorities: HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

National Grid Reference: NZ 529260

Area: 4	9.37 (ha.)	121.99 (ac.)	Hartlepool
	245.0 (ha.)	605.41 (ac.)	Stockton
	294.37 (ha.)	727.4 (ac.)	Total

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 93 1:10,000: NZ 52 NW; SW

First Notified: 1966*

Date of Revision: 1983/84

Other Information:

1. This site forms part of 'Teessmouth Flats and Marshes', a complex of sites listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' edited by D A Ratcliffe (1977) Cambridge University Press.
2. Teessmouth Flats and Marshes are of international importance and meet the criteria for designation under the terms of the European Community Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds and for inclusion on the list of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.
3. During the 1983/84 revision the boundary has been amended by both reduction and extension, including the reallocation of a small area of the adjacent 'Seaton Dunes and Common SSSI'.

Description:

Seal Sands are the only extensive area of intertidal mudflats, with tidal channels on the East coast of England between the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve to the north and the Humber Estuary to the south, a distance of 200 miles. These mudflats are of great ornithological importance attracting large numbers of migratory wildfowl (c. 4,000) and wading birds (c. 24,000) especially during the winter months.

Of particular note are internationally important concentrations of shelduck (c. 3,200 during peak counts) which feed on Seal Sands. These represent approximately 2% of the total Western European population. In addition, sizeable flocks of mallard, teal and wigeon, as well as diving duck such as pochard, goldeneye and tufted duck congregate on Seal Sands to roost and feed particularly during cold spells. The most important species of wading birds using Seal Sands as their main feeding ground during the winter months of the year are knot (c. 10,000 at peak counts) and redshank (c. 1,050 at peak counts), which both occur in internationally significant numbers at Teessmouth – (i.e. 3–5% and 1% of the

total Western European populations, respectively). The mudflats are also used as feeding ground by other species of wading birds including dunlin, oystercatcher, ringed plover, curlew, bar-tailed godwit, lapwing, grey plover and turnstone. When the mudflats are inundated at high tide their use as a feeding ground is complemented by adjacent areas of reclaimed land which also serve as roosting sites. The reclaimed enclosures with shallow lagoons in the southern sector of the site and the developing sand-dunes on the Seal Sands Peninsula are particularly important in this respect.

*Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.