

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 19 OCTOBER 1988

COUNTY: CLEVELAND SITE NAME: SOUTH GARE & COATHAM SANDS

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

Local Planning Authority: LANGBAURGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: NZ 547262–NZ 617264 Area: 381.2 (ha.) 941.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 93 and 94 1:10,000: NZ 52 NW & NE, 62 NW

First Notified: *1971

Date of Revision: 1988

Other Information:

1. This site forms part of 'Teemouth Flats and Marshes' a complex of sites listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' edited by D A Ratcliffe (1977). Cambridge University Press.

2. Teemouth 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. The boundary of this site has been considerably extended.

Description:

The site known as South Gare and Coatham Sands is of considerable interest for its flora, invertebrate fauna and birdlife. The range of habitats present includes extensive tracts of intertidal mud and sand, sand dunes, saltmarsh and freshwater marsh which have all developed since the construction of the South Gare breakwater with tipped slag during the 1860's. Also exposed at low tide are areas of rocky foreshore along the breakwater, three slag banks known as the German Charlies, and Coatham Rocks.

The sand dunes are dominated by marram grass *Ammophila arenaria* but also support one of the largest continuous stands of lyme grass *Leymus arenarius* in Britain. Sea couch-grass *Elymus pycnanthus*, is present here at the northern limit of its range. The dune slacks support large populations of northern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, early marsh orchid *D. incarnata* and fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*. Other plants of particular interest within the dune system, and associated with lime-rich areas of tipped slag, are yellow wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, lesser centaury *Centaureum pulchellum*, knotted hedge parsley *Torilis nodosa*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, strawberry clover *Trifolium fragiferum* and the nationally rare grass, rush-leaved fescue *Festuca*

juncifolia. Within the developing saltmarsh notable plants include sea wormwood *Artemisia maritima*, lesser sea spurrey *Spergularia marina*, lax-flowered sea lavender *Limonium humile*, sea purslane *Halimione portulacoides* and smallest hare's ear *Bupleurum tenuissimum*. Parsley water dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii* is of particular interest amongst the fresh water marsh communities dominated by great reedmace *Typha latifolia*, rushes *Juncus* spp. and sedges *Carex* spp.

The invertebrate fauna of South Gare is rich including several species of butterfly; several uncommon beetles, notably *Broscus cephalotes* and *Enochrus quadripunctatus*; and rare spiders such as *Silometopus incurvatus* and *Dysdera crocata*.

Areas of mud and sand-flat on Bran Sands provide important winter feeding grounds for bar-tailed godwit, curlew, redshank, dunlin and grey plover. Further intertidal areas along Coatham Sands support an internationally important population of sanderling (1200 birds, some 8% of the West European population). Both areas support ringed plover on passage migration (c. 150 birds). Knots feed along the intertidal areas, the breakwater and on the mussel beds of the German Charlies and Coatham Rocks with peak counts of 6000 birds (some 2% of the West European population). These latter areas also support turnstone (c. 180 birds), purple sandpiper and oystercatcher.

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