

Biodiversity and habitat regulations



East Anglian Saltmarsh

In June 1992 the UK signed up to Agenda 21 and the Biodiversity Convention at the Rio Earth Summit. At this conference, environmental issues and concerns were addressed including the loss of the world's Biodiversity. The UK Government was one of these signatories and as a result has produced action plans, for many species and habitats detailing how they should be protected, sustained and increased.

Many of these plans have been interpreted into local action at county level. Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex all have their own Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). Organisations such as the Environment Agency have signed up to these plans at both national and local levels and is the lead for many freshwater and coastal species and habitats. On the coast, inter-tidal habitats such as mudflat, saltmarsh and saline lagoons are being lost at alarming rates.

Such is the nature conservation importance of the East Anglian coast that much has been designated as a series of SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest). SSSI status affords valuable protection to a site ensuring damage does not occur through inappropriate management or development. SSSIs are of national importance, and much of the coast is also considered to be of international significance, especially for the wintering waterfowl populations.



Sea Lavender

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In recognition of this importance the sites have been designated under the EU Habitats Directive as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs), which support certain natural habitats or species, and under the EU Birds Directive as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which supports wild birds of European Union interest.



Curlew

These European Directives require that designated sites be maintained or restored to favourable conservation status.

CHaMPs

Coastal Habitat Management Plans (CHaMPs) form an important link in the coastal planning process for managing European sites. The CHaMP aims to predict what will happen to designated species and habitats as a result of long-term shoreline changes on the coast.

The CHaMP will identify the necessary measures to ensure that future Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) and Flood and Coastal Defence Strategies are compliant with the Habitats and Birds Directives, by predicting how much inter-tidal and freshwater habitat we may need to re-create and whereabouts on the estuary this should be done. This process will be informed using the best available information, including that set out in the Essex Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), together with the Estuarine Management Strategies that are currently available.



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