

CITATION

**EAST SANDAY COAST
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**
Orkney Islands

Site code: 1678

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: HY 647472 to HY 654385

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 5
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 465

AREA: 1607.56 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological

Intertidal marine habitats: Rocky shore
Sandflats

Mammals: Common seal (*Phoca vitulina*)

Birds: Bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), non-breeding
Purple sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*), non-breeding
Ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), non-breeding
Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), non-breeding
Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), non-breeding
Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), passage

Vascular plants: Vascular plant assemblage

DESCRIPTION:

East Sanday Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a stretch of coastline in the north and east of Sanday of approximately 62 kilometres. The site extends from the Holms of Ire in the north, eastwards around the coast to Kettletoft Bay. Several skerries are also included along with the Holm of Elsness and a section of rocky shore at Bea Ness. The site is of national importance for its intertidal habitats, common seals, several species of wintering wading birds, and its assemblage of coastal vascular plants.

The site is largely intertidal and is composed of old red sandstone and areas where the bedrock is covered in sand, shingle or muddy sand. Good examples of storm beaches can be found at Tofts Ness and Whitemill Bay. Extensive intertidal sandy areas are present at Otterswick, Cata Sand and Little Sea. Long, sandy beaches can be found at Bay of Sandquoy, Scuthvie Bay and Bay of Lopness. The variety of intertidal rock, sand and muddy sand habitats is particularly unusual and together they provide a rich habitat for a variety of plant and bird species

Common seals gather on the rocky shore to breed and moult and the site supports the largest colony in Orkney. The Holms of Ire and Otterswick on the north coast consistently support the greatest number of seals during their moulting period.

East Sanday Coast SSSI is the most important stretch of shore in Orkney for wintering waders. Substantial banks of kelp are washed ashore in winter and these provide abundant supplies of small invertebrates which act as a food supply for these birds. Bar-tailed godwit, purple sandpiper, sanderling, ringed plover and turnstone all reach numbers of national importance over the winter. The site has additional importance in spring, when Sanday becomes a staging post for turnstones migrating north to their breeding grounds.

East Sanday Coast SSSI includes important sites for coastal vascular plants. The nationally scarce oysterplant *Mertensia maritime* grows on the foreshore and the nationally scarce curved sedge *Carex maritima* and northern yellow-cress *Rorippa islandica* grow locally throughout the site.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 29 November 1996

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 24 February 1999 with a 40 ha increase in area.

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 23 December 2011

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 1607.26 ha).

Part of East Sanday Coast SSSI is part of Northwall SSSI which is notified for the following features.

Habitats : Machair
: Machair loch

Part of East Sanday Coast SSSI is part of Central Sanday SSSI which is notified for the following features.

Geology : Coastal geomorphology of Scotland
Habitats : Machair
: Saltmarsh
: Sand dunes

Part of East Sanday Coast SSSI is part of Sanday Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European habitats and species listed below and as part of East Sanday Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for the birds listed below.

Habitats : Intertidal mudflats and sandflats
: Reefs
: Subtidal sandbanks
Species : Common seal *Phoca vitulina*
Birds : Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, non-breeding
: Purple sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, non-breeding
: Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, non-breeding