

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

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**1. Name and address of the Official Respondent:****Joint Nature Conservation Committee**

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Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY  
UK  
Telephone/Fax: +44 (0)1733 – 562 626 / +44 (0)1733 – 555 948  
Email: [RIS@JNCC.gov.uk](mailto:RIS@JNCC.gov.uk)

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY		

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

**Name and address of the compiler of this form:**

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum  
102 Broadway, Peterborough, PE1 4DG, UK  
(with information from the Alderney Wildlife Trust)

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**2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:**

Designated: 25 August 2005

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**3. Country:**

UK (Alderney)

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**4. Name of the Ramsar site:**

Alderney West Coast and the Burhou Islands

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**5. Map of site included:**

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

**a) hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes*  -or- *no*

the map colours are the standard ones used on Admiralty charts - yellow is land, green is intertidal and blue represents shallow water

**b) digital (electronic) format** (optional): Yes

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**6. Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude):

049 43 00 N                      002 15 00 W

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**7. General location:**

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

Alderney, Channel Islands. Nearest large town: St. Anne.

Administrative region: States of Alderney, Bailiwick of Guernsey.

**Administrative region:** UK (Bailiwick of Guernsey, States of Alderney)

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**8. Elevation** (average and/or max. & min.) (metres):    **9. Area** (hectares): 15629 ha

Min.        0  
Max.        50  
Mean        No information available

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## 10. Overview:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

The site comprises the western coast of Alderney and adjacent shallow waters and islets in the strongly tidal, high-energy system of the northern Channel Islands. It includes diverse and inter-related ecosystems:

- Sandy beach with shingle banks - Platte Saline (west end)
- Marine subtidal aquatic beds, rockpools, sandbars and pebble beach - Clonque Bay and Hannaine Bay
- Rocky marine shores, including sea cliff and rocky offshore islands - Alderney west coast, the Burhou Islands and Ortac.

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## 11. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

**1, 3, 4, 6, 7**

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## 12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Criterion 1: Among global priority habitats, seagrass beds occur at and below low-water mark; there is also a small area of dune slack wet-grasslands at Platte Saline. These form part of a rich complex of habitats, including vegetated shingle banks, sand dunes, dune and coastal grassland, soft cliffs, sandy, gravelly and rocky shores (including the offshore islands of Burhou, Les Etacs and Ortac)

Criterion 3: Burhou island has a flora and fauna relatively little modified by man. Large nesting seabird populations, which include the only European storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* colony in the Channel Islands, Atlantic puffin *Fratercula arctica*, lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus* and great black-backed gull *Larus marinus*. Les Etacs and Ortac support the only northern gannet *Morus bassanus* colonies in the Channel Islands. The intertidal rocky shore supports many rare species of fauna including ormers *Haliotis tuberculata*, which, within the UK, are found only in the Channel Islands.

Criterion 4: The site is an important breeding area for several bird species (see crit. 6 and section 20)

Criterion 6: A large nesting population of northern gannets *Morus bassanus* are established on the Garden Rocks (Les Etacs) and Ortac. Here there are 11,900 breeding birds, about 1,000 non-breeding birds, and perhaps 5950 immature birds. This constitutes 1.5% of the world population.

Criterion 7: Many rare species, which include a representative sample of north-west European fish fauna, are found in the marine area of the site. Although ormers *Haliotis tuberculata* are the most significant, there is also a high diversity of fish and shellfish.

**13. Biogeography** (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

**a) biogeographic region:**

Atlantic

**b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme** (include reference citation):

Council Directive 92/43/EEC

**14. Physical features of the site:**

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & geology	No information available
Geomorphology and landscape	No information available
Nutrient status	mesotrophic
pH	circumneutral
Salinity	saline / euhaline
Soil	mainly mineral
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Platte Saline, 1984-2003) Max. daily temperature: 14° C Min. daily temperature: 10° C Average daily temperature: 11.8° C Annual rainfall: 721 mm Hours of sunshine: 1819

**General description of the Physical Features:**

The rocks of Alderney belong to the great Armorican Province of north-west France rather than the south-west province of England. Although many different rock types occur on the Island, the ‘hard’ rocks have been divided into three major units – the Western Granodiorite, the Central Diorite complex and the Alderney Sandstone; these in turn overlain by the superficial sands and gravels deposited during the latter part of the Great Ice Age.

The western part of Alderney, which includes Platte Saline, Clonque Bay and Hannaine Bay, is composed mainly of an ancient greenish-grey granodiorite that has been radiometrically dated at 2220 million years. In Telegraph Bay, to the south of Clonque Bay, The rock is granitic in composition and, although less foliated than the granodiorite, is probably of similar age.

Numerous pinkish and light-coloured dykes of aplite and porphyritic microgranite have intruded both the granite and granodiorite: these dykes seam the cliffs of Telegraph and Hannaine Bays. Of a later date numerous dolerite and lamprophyre dykes also intrude the granodiorite.

The islands of Burhou and Ortac are composed of Alderney Sandstone and are separated from the granodiorite by a significant fault along The Swinge. The Alderney Sandstone, deposited rapidly in shallow waters by fast flowing streams, is several hundreds metres in thickness and comprises grits, arkoses, sandstone and conglomerates. The outcrop extends from Corblets Bay around the east and south-east coasts. Many lamprophyre and dolerite dykes have intruded the sandstones as well as older rocks on the island; this indicates that the majority of these dykes are post-sandstone in age.

The Pleistocene Deposits: Superficial sands and gravels of the Great Ice Age, which have been deposited during the last 100,000 years, cover most of Alderney. Several changes in sea level have occurred during the waxing and waning of the great sheets to the north and have given rise to distinct layers of either beach pebbles or wind-blown sand and dust (loess) as

well as raised beaches which can be recognised in the Clonque Bay area. The beach pebbles were laid down during periods of high sea level during the interglacial periods, while the loess were deposited when the sea level fell after the ice sheets advanced. During the maximum extension of the ice sheets, coarse solifluction breccias known as 'head' were formed. These deposits are well exposed in the quarries and cliffs around the island particularly in Hannaine Bay.

Soils: In the sloping cliffs of Clonque and Hannaine Bays, soils are very thin, of brownish-grey colour and have stony subsoil. In contrast, at Plate Saline in the east, blown sand of considerable thickness has been deposited up to 100 m inland; this has given rise to a low-lying coastal area with no shore platforms and a steeply-sloping shingle beach.

### 15. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

No information available

### 16. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

No special values known

### 17. Wetland types

Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
A	Shallow marine waters	20
B	Marine beds (e.g. sea grass beds)	45
D	Rocky shores	30
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	5

### 18. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Vegetated shingle banks.

Rocky shores, including rockpools, kelp beds, and sandbars.

Rocky islets, which are very important for some birds for breeding (northern gannet *Morus bassanus*, Atlantic puffin *Fratercula arctica*, European storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*). There is also a seal colony to the north of Burhou Island.

Some fish and shellfish are locally important, such as ormers, crabs, lobsters, bass, plaice, etc., for both recreational and commercial fishing.

### 19. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.

Seaweeds have been studied in the site for many years. Initially the marine officer has identified about 100 species, with at least 50 more expecting to be identified by the end of 2005.

*Ascophyllum nodosum* has special importance because more than 75% of the world population is found in the UK. *Halymenia latifolia* may be at unfavourable conservation status within Europe (UK Biodiversity Steering Group 1995). The seaweeds also play a very important role in supporting all the marine fauna in the area and these fauna support the large nesting bird population.

Please see separate list of marine Algae, lichens and terrestrial vascular plants recorded in the site (Annex)

## 20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.

### Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:

#### Species regularly supported during the breeding season:

Northern gannet, *Morus bassana*, World 5950 pairs, representing an average of 1.5% of the breeding population (Source period not collated)

#### Bird species currently occurring at levels of territorial importance:

Species	Locations	Population (prs)	Status*	Source**
European storm petrel	Burhou	100	SPEC, BL	JNCC
Northern gannet	Ortac, Les Etac	5950	SPEC, BL, BI	LSG
Great cormorant	Little Burhou	1	BL, WL	LSG
European shag	Burhou, Little B., Les Etacs	44	BL, BI	LSG
Black-legged kittiwake	Les Etacs, Ortac	16	BR	LSG
Lesser black-backed gull	Burhou, Little B.	273	BL, BI	LSG
Herring gull	Les Etacs, Burhou, Little B.	105	BDMp, BL	LSG
Great black-backed gull	Burhou, Little Burhou	32	BL, BI	LSG
Common guillemot	Les Etacs, Ortac	105	BI	LSG
Razorbill	Les Etacs, Ortac	17	BL, BI	LSG
Atlantic puffin	Burhou, Little Burhou	180	SPEC, BL	LSG

\*\*LSG, La Société Guernesiaise.

JNCC, Millennium Bird Survey

#### \* Status:

SPEC, Species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe

BL,  $\geq 50\%$  of UK breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not rare breeders.

BI,  $\geq 20\%$  of European breeding population in UK.

BR, Five-year mean of 1-300 breeding pairs in UK.

BDMp, Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years.

#### Species Information

The main communities in the area are the bird colonies. The gannet colony has about 5,950 pairs, which are based on just two islets; the colony is important, as it is the only colony in the Channel Islands. The storm petrel, which breeds on Burhou, is also very important, as it is the only colony in the Channel Islands. The puffin colony, which breeds on Burhou, is one of the more southern sites.

Ormers *Haliotis tuberculata* are also important, as they are part of the heritage of the Channel Islands.

On the reefs off Burhou, there is a seal colony with about seven individuals, which makes for a high biodiversity in the area.

Please see separate list of invertebrates recorded in the site (Annex)

**21. Social and cultural values:**

e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

- Archaeological/historical site
- Conservation education
- Fisheries production
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Sport fishing
- Tourism

**22. Land tenure/ownership:**

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	+

**23. Current land (including water) use:**

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Recreation	+	+
Research	+	
Fishing: commercial	+	+
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	+
Gathering of shellfish	+	
Other	+	

**24. Factors adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:**

*Explanation of reporting category:*

1. Those factors that are still operating, but it is unclear if they are under control, as there is a lag in showing the management or regulatory regime to be successful.
2. Those factors that are not currently being managed, or where the regulatory regime appears to have been ineffective so far.

NA = Not Applicable because no factors have been reported.

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only)	On-Site	Off-Site	Major Impact?

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? NO

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**25. Conservation measures taken:**

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Other	+	
Management plan in preparation	+	

The terrestrial area within the site, including intertidal rock formations, is a Protected Zone under the Land Use Plan. As a result, no development is likely to be permitted in the site other than restoration of existing structures.

Fishery conservation measures apply:

- The minimum catch size for lobster in Alderney's waters is set higher than the EU minimum size (85 mm) at 87 mm
- Parlour pots may not be used in the Island's territorial waters out to 3 nautical miles.
- There is a ban on trawling by vessels over 120 hp from the farthest drying rock to 1 nautical mile. From 1 to 3 nautical miles there is a ban on trawlers exceeding 350 hp.
- Divers are not permitted to take lobster, ormer, crayfish or crab.
- There is a ban on the export of orniers and tails/claws of lobster and crab.

Other - Visiting restrictions are applied to Burhou Island; no access is allowed between March and the end of July during the breeding season for puffins and storm petrels.

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**26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

Management plan in preparation - The Alderney Wildlife Trust is working on a management plan for the coastal grassland. The Trust is also working with the States of Alderney to formulate a plan to manage the bird colonies and excursions around the area to avoid people disturbing the birds (gannets, puffins and storm petrel colonies mainly) with the help of the RSPB south-west.

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**27. Current scientific research and facilities:**

e.g. details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

The Alderney Wildlife Trust Marine Officer Juan Salado was working on research into seaweeds and invertebrates in Clonque and Hannaine Bays in 2003. He has also had the support of the Guernsey Biological Centre; Bridget Ozanne (Conservation Officer) and Charles David (Manager) have been helping with this research.

The Trust also has the seabird data from La Société Guernesiaise, which has carried out research in the area on several occasions.

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**28. Current conservation education:**

e.g. visitor centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

The Trust has produced booklets on the area, and visitor's guides are available for the few footpaths that have been opened up in the area.

The Trust's Marine Officer carries out seasonal events with children.

There is a visitor centre in town with considerable information on the flora and fauna in the area.

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**29. Current recreation and tourism:**

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Tourists use the wetland mainly in summer, with bird watching, walking and rockpooling being the most common activities.

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### 30. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept. of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

States of Alderney,  
Queen Elizabeth II Street, Alderney, GY93AA.

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### 31. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

The Alderney Wildlife Trust,  
Wildlife/Tourism Information Centre, Victoria Street, Alderney, GY9 3AA  
[info@alderneywildlife.org](mailto:info@alderneywildlife.org)

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### 32. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

#### Site-relevant references

- Bates, JM (1989) A bryophyte flora of Alderney. *Cryptogamie, Bryologie-Lichénologie*, **10**(2), 147-174
- Bonnard, B (1988) *Flora of Alderney, a check-list with notes*. Privately published, updated with inserts to 1999.
- Bonnard, B (1999) *An illustrated guide to the wild and naturalised flowers of the Channel Islands*. Privately published CD-ROM
- Bonnard, B (2002) *The wild flowers of Alderney*. Privately published CD-ROM
- Bonnard, B & Bonnard, J (1995) *A natural history of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm*. The Guernsey Press, Vale
- Hill, MG (1990) The Alderney gannetries. *Seabird*, **12**, 45-52
- Hill, MG (1991) *The distribution of breeding seabirds in the Bailiwick of Guernsey, 1986-90*. La Société Guernesiaise, St Peter Port
- James, P, Allen, A & Hilton, B (2001) Lichens of Alderney. *La Société Guernesiaise Transactions*, **25**(1), 116-160
- Pienkowski, MW (ed.) (2005) *Review of existing and potential Ramsar sites in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*. (Contractor: UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, Peterborough.) Final report on Contract CR0294 to the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Bristol. [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)
- Pritchard, DE, Housden, SD, Mudge, GP, Galbraith, CA & Pienkowski, MW (eds.) (1992) *Important Bird Areas in the United Kingdom including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man*. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Sandy
- UK Biodiversity Steering Group (1995) *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group report. Volume 2: Action plans*. HMSO, London. [www.ukbap.org.uk/Library/Tranche1\\_Ann\\_f.pdf](http://www.ukbap.org.uk/Library/Tranche1_Ann_f.pdf)
- Alderney Society [www.alderneysociety.org](http://www.alderneysociety.org)
- Alderney Wildlife Trust [www.alderneywildlife.org](http://www.alderneywildlife.org)
- Guernsey Biological Records Centre [www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg](http://www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg)
- La Société Guernesiaise [www.societe.org.gg](http://www.societe.org.gg)
- States of Guernsey, Board of Administration [www.alderney.gov.gg](http://www.alderney.gov.gg)
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