



# Humber Management Scheme

Fact sheet: Saltmarsh



Industry and nature in harmony in one of Europe's great estuaries

## Introduction

Coastal saltmarsh generally forms on sheltered coasts between the level of mean high water spring and mid neap tides. Saltmarsh develops when salt tolerant plants colonise intertidal mud and sand flats. There are approximately 630 hectares of saltmarsh on the Humber, accounting for only 2% of estuarine area compared to a national average of 6%. This is due to large historical losses from land claim. The composition of Humber saltmarsh is also unusual compared to other UK estuaries.

There are 4 distinct types of saltmarsh communities:

- **Pioneer saltmarsh:** These are the first plants to colonise bare mud and sand flats. The most extensive pioneer saltmarsh community are annual *Salicornia* species, also known as samphire. Pioneer saltmarsh communities are an important precursor to the development of more stable saltmarsh development. Pioneer saltmarsh is predominantly found on the outer estuary.
- **Low to mid marsh communities\*:** Saltmarsh in this area receive around 360 tidal inundations per year and as a result of this are relatively species poor. Common species include common saltmarsh grass *Puccinellia maritima* and sea purslane *Atriplex portulacoides*
- **Mid to upper marsh communities\*:** As tidal inundations become less frequent, mainly only during the highest spring tides, the vegetation becomes more diverse with a more complex structure and greater diversity of herbs. Common species include saltmarsh rush *Juncus gerardii* and saltmarsh grass/fescue communities *Puccinellia/Festuca*.
- **Transitional communities\* :** Occur at the extreme high water mark and commonly comprise of sea couch grass *Elymus pycnanthus* and tidal reedbeds *Phragmites australis*.

Please note that pioneer saltmarsh and low to transitional saltmarsh ('Atlantic salt meadow') are considered two separate features in the SAC designation.

## Current status and location in the Humber EMS

Pioneer saltmarsh and Atlantic salt meadow are features designated as part of the Humber Estuary Special Area of Conservation and a sub-feature of the SPA and Ramsar citation.

Saltmarsh is an Annex 1 (Habitats Directive) feature and the assessment on conservation status is not recorded at site level. Therefore, at this stage a conservation status cannot be provided.

## Targets

The overall objective for SAC features is:

**Avoid the deterioration of the qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species, and the significant disturbance of those qualifying species, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving Favourable Condition Status of each of the qualifying features.<sup>2</sup>**

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\* Sub-features of the Atlantic saltmarsh meadow designation

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/UK0030170-Humber-Estuary-SAC\\_tcm6-31768.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/UK0030170-Humber-Estuary-SAC_tcm6-31768.pdf)

The targets for saltmarsh have been taken from the favourable conservation tables in the Humber Estuary Regulation 33 advice<sup>3</sup>. The targets will be updated once the Conservation Advice for the Humber Estuary has been updated.

Attribute	Target
Distribution and extent	No decrease in extent of saltmarsh communities from an established baseline, subject to natural change
Creek system pattern	Creek system pattern should not deviate significantly from an established baseline, subject to natural change
Topography	Topography should not deviate significantly from an established baseline, subject to natural change
Saltmarsh communities	Presence and abundance of constant species of characteristic communities should not deviate significantly from an established baseline, subject to natural change

#### Threats, management and gaps in management

Threats and impacts	Management	Gaps in management	Action
Distribution and extent: Coastal squeeze	Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy and CHaMP	Identify further opportunities for habitat improvement and creation	3
Distribution and extent: Loss from development	Habitats Regulations Assessment		
Saltmarsh communities: Inappropriate/under grazing		Develop an estuary wide grazing marsh project.	4
Saltmarsh communities: Water quality	Humber Clean oil response plan is in place and the Strategic Environment Group is reviewing the plan.		
Saltmarsh communities: Non-native species		Understanding of non-natives present and impacts	12

<sup>3</sup> <http://humburnature.co.uk/admin/resources/english-natures-reg-33-advice.pdf>

Saltmarsh communities: Commercial picking of samphire		Monitoring Code of conduct	26
Topography: Topography changes in the inner estuary	IPENS research will provide more information	Follow on work following IPENS research	14
All targets: Climate change		Undertake a climate change vulnerability assessment	12



## About the Humber Nature Partnership

The Humber Nature Partnership aims to deliver the sustainable management of the Humber Estuary and its surroundings, providing an environment in which new and existing businesses can grow alongside the enhancement of the estuary's wildlife riches.

### Our work includes:

- Delivering the Humber Management Scheme
- Providing ecological services
- Supporting economic growth
- Engagement and communication
- Ensuring high quality evidence and data exists



We have delivered projects with industry such as wetland habitat creation and woodland management work. We have also delivered range of research and data gathering projects such as ornithological surveys in the South Humber Gateway area to extensive work to understand the impact of recreation on Humber protected birds. We also deliver a range of education and awareness raising projects such as producing codes of conducts and signage. We aim to work in partnership on the delivery of projects and are always open to hearing new project ideas.

### We offer the following skills and expertise:

- Partnership working
- Expertise in ecology and planning
- On site wildlife management
- Managing contracts
- Awareness raising and engagement
- Event organising
- Negotiation and conflict resolution

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