

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALLYTEIGE BURROW SPA

SITE CODE: 004020

Ballyteige Burrow SPA is located on the south coast of Co. Wexford between the towns of Kilmore Quay and Cullenstown. It comprises a sand and shingle barrier beach, approximately 8 km in length, and the estuary of the Duncormick River. The extensive overlying sand spit is known as the Burrow, while the estuary that it encloses is known as the Cull. Some areas of adjacent polderland, particularly to the east, also form part of the site.

The site has a range of coastal habitats, including various types of sand dunes, salt meadows, and intertidal sand and mud flats. Saltmarsh vegetation fringes The Cull, with such species as Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*), Sea Lavender (*Limonium humile*) and Glasswort (*Salicornia* spp.). The estuary empties almost entirely on most tides, apart from the main central channel. Sediments vary from muds in the innermost areas, especially towards Duncormick, to sands elsewhere. In addition to the Duncormick River, the estuary receives the flow from a network of canals which drain the extensive polders to the east and north-east of the site.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit and Bar-tailed Godwit. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

The principal ornithological importance of the site is wintering waterfowl, with internationally important populations of Light-bellied Brent Goose (290) and Black-tailed Godwit (474) occurring – all figures are five year mean peaks for the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000. It also supports nationally important numbers of Shelduck (167), Golden Plover (4,630), Grey Plover (69), Lapwing (7,808), and Bar-tailed Godwit (582). Several other species occur in numbers of regional importance, including Wigeon (306), Ringed Plover (133), Dunlin (1,020) and Redshank (206). The estuarine habitats provide feeding and roosting areas for the waterfowl species, though a lot of the birds also feed on the intensively managed lands of the adjacent polders.

Cullenstown Strand has a small colony of breeding Little Tern, though nesting may not occur in every year.

Ballyteige Burrow SPA is of ornithological importance because it supports internationally important populations of Light-bellied Brent Goose and Black-tailed Godwit, and nationally important populations of a further five species. Of particular

note is that three of the species that occur at the site, i.e. Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and Little Tern, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Ballyteige Burrow is a Biogenetic Reserve site and part of the Ballyteige Burrow SPA is a Statutory Nature Reserve.

30.5.2014