



# Why is the estuary so special for birds and which birds?

Nik Ward, Marine Team Leader Devon and Severn Team



# Exe Estuary Special Protection Areas or SPA

## So where do SPA's come from?

- Birds Directive 1979 – covers protection, management and conservation of **all species of naturally occurring wild birds** in EU territory.
- Identify and give special protection to areas for the **rare or vulnerable species** listed in Annex 1 of the Directive and for **regularly occurring migratory** species.

## What is the process for designating SPAs?

- If the area is used regularly by:
  - 1% or more of the GB population of Annex 1 species
  - 1% or more of the bio-geographic population of a regularly occurring migratory species in any season
  - Area used regularly by over 20,000 waterfowl or seabirds in any season
- Also consider population size, density, species range, history of occupancy, multi-species areas, severe weather refuges.



22345.71 ha

Designated in  
1992

Exe Estuary (SPA)

Scale ▼

0 1500m

## So why does the estuary qualify as an SPA?



- **Assemblage** :A wetland of international importance
- Article 4.1 – supports populations of European importance listed in Annex 1 of the Directive
- **Over winter :**
- **Avocet 359 individuals 28% wintering pop of GB**
- **Slavonian Grebe 20 individuals 5% wintering pop of GB**
- The area qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive by **regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl**
- **Lets see what some of them are.....**

# Avocet

NATURAL  
ENGLAND



Mark Hope

# Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*





The Exe qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl



- Over winter, the area regularly supports 23,513 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including:

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*



David Price

Dark Bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla  
bernicla*



# Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*



# Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

NATURAL  
ENGLAND



Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*



# Whimbrel

NATURAL  
ENGLAND



Larry Gridley/ Natural England

# Wigeon *Anas penelope*

NATURAL  
ENGLAND



David Price





## So what does all this mean?

- Legal requirements are set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI No. 2010/490) (as amended) .....or commonly know as the
  - **Habitats Regulations**
- Habitats Regulations require that any **proposed plans, projects or activities which may affect a SPA** and require consent or permission of some kind from a public body must be subject to a special scrutiny and first require a detailed '**appropriate assessment**'.

- The decision-making body may only permit or undertake the proposal if the assessment concludes that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. Site integrity - “ongoing ability of a site to support or sustain its designated habitat and species features”
- This process only allows those proposals which will not impact on the special European wildlife interest of a SPA to proceed.
- Natural England provides advice to authorities and managers of SPA’s on how proposed activities can avoid adverse effects on an SPA.



- Natural England is duty bound to ensure that SPAs are protected and managed favourably for conservation under the Habitats Regs.
- Natural England is a solution focussed organisation and always looks to find ways in which sustainable land use and wildlife can flourish.

