

East Coast  
Flyway  
(Humber to  
the Thames)  
Potential  
Natural World  
Heritage Site



unesco

# East Coast Flyway

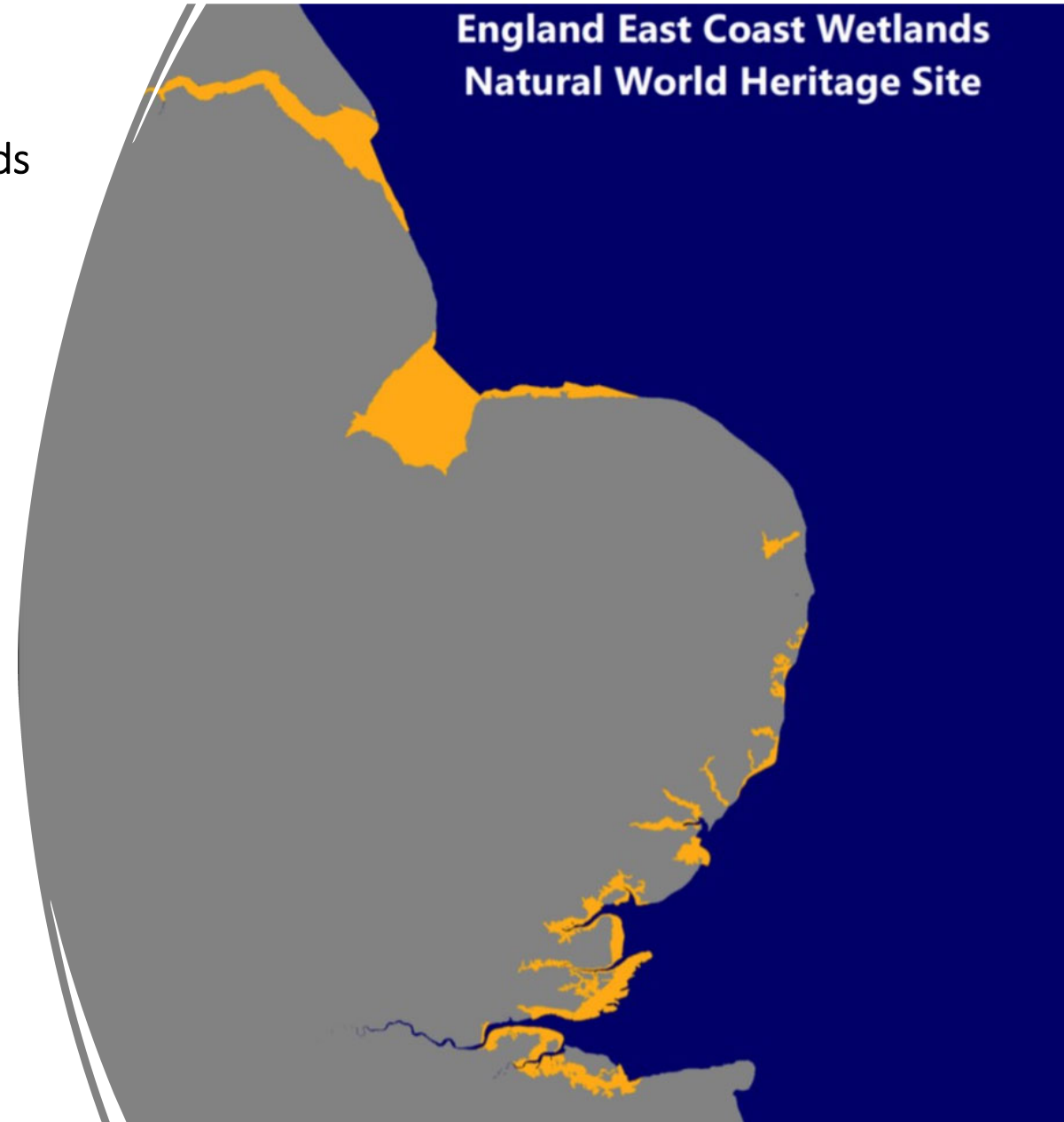
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- Where is it?
- What is it?
- Why is it important?
- Why put it forward as a potential WHS?
- What does it mean in practice?
- What are the next steps?



## East Atlantic Flyway : England East Coast Wetlands (Humber-Thames) c.170,000 hectares

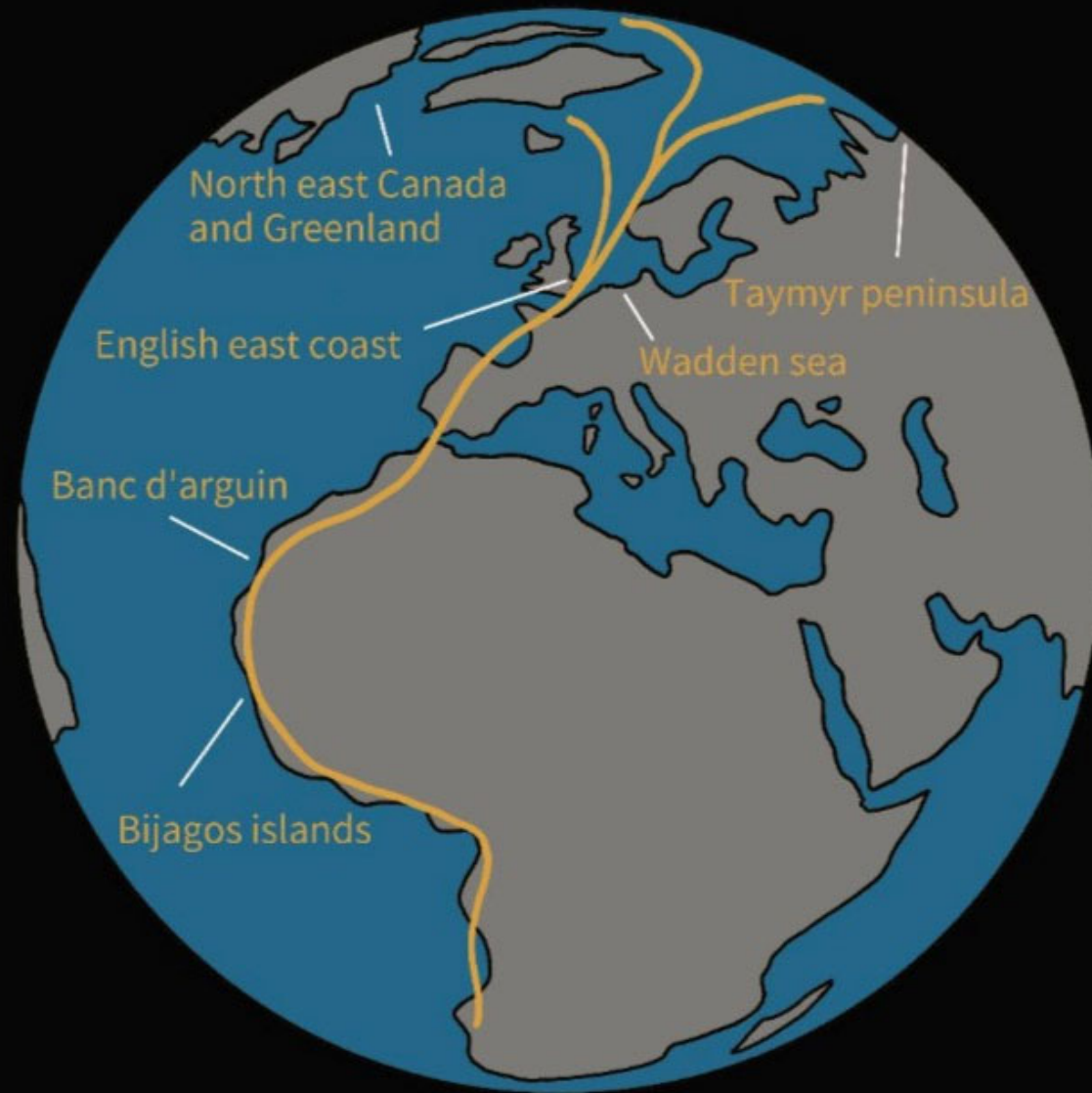
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- Added by Government to the UK Tentative List of Potential World Heritage Sites (April 2023) and UNESCO list (September 2023)
  - Shortened name  
“East Coast Flyway”



**East Atlantic Flyway –  
England East Coast Wetlands  
Natural World Heritage Site**



- **Humber Estuary 37,630 ha**
- **Gibraltar Point 422ha**
- **The Wash 62,044 ha**
- **North Norfolk Coast 7,862 ha**
- **Breydon Water 1,206 ha**
- **Halvergate Marshes 1,433 ha**
- **Benacre to Eastern Barents 471 ha**
- **Minsmere to Walberswick 1,998 ha**
- **Alde-Ore Estuary 2,404 ha**
- **Deben Estuary 981 ha**
- **Stour and Orwell Estuaries 3,673 ha**
- **Hamford Water 3,533 ha**
- **Colne Estuary 2,720 ha**
- **Blackwater Estuary 4,403 ha**
- **Dengie 3,134 ha**
- **Crouch and Roach Estuaries 1,848 ha**
- **Foulness 10,942 ha**
- **Benfleet and Southend Marshes 2,284 ha**
- **Thames Estuary and Marshes 4,802 ha**
- **Medway Estuary and Marshes 4,686 ha**
- **The Swale 6,510 ha**



## East Atlantic Flyway

- Includes Waddensea and Banc d'Arguin 'Flyway' Natural World Heritage Sites

# Why is the East Coast Flyway area important?

- World class complex of coastal wetlands supporting globally important migratory populations on the East Atlantic Flyway
- Mid-way location on the East Atlantic Flyway importance as a staging area as well as for wintering birds (more than 1 million)
- Internationally important for 29 waterbird populations
- Global exemplar in of coastal adaptation and nature conservation management in the face of climate change

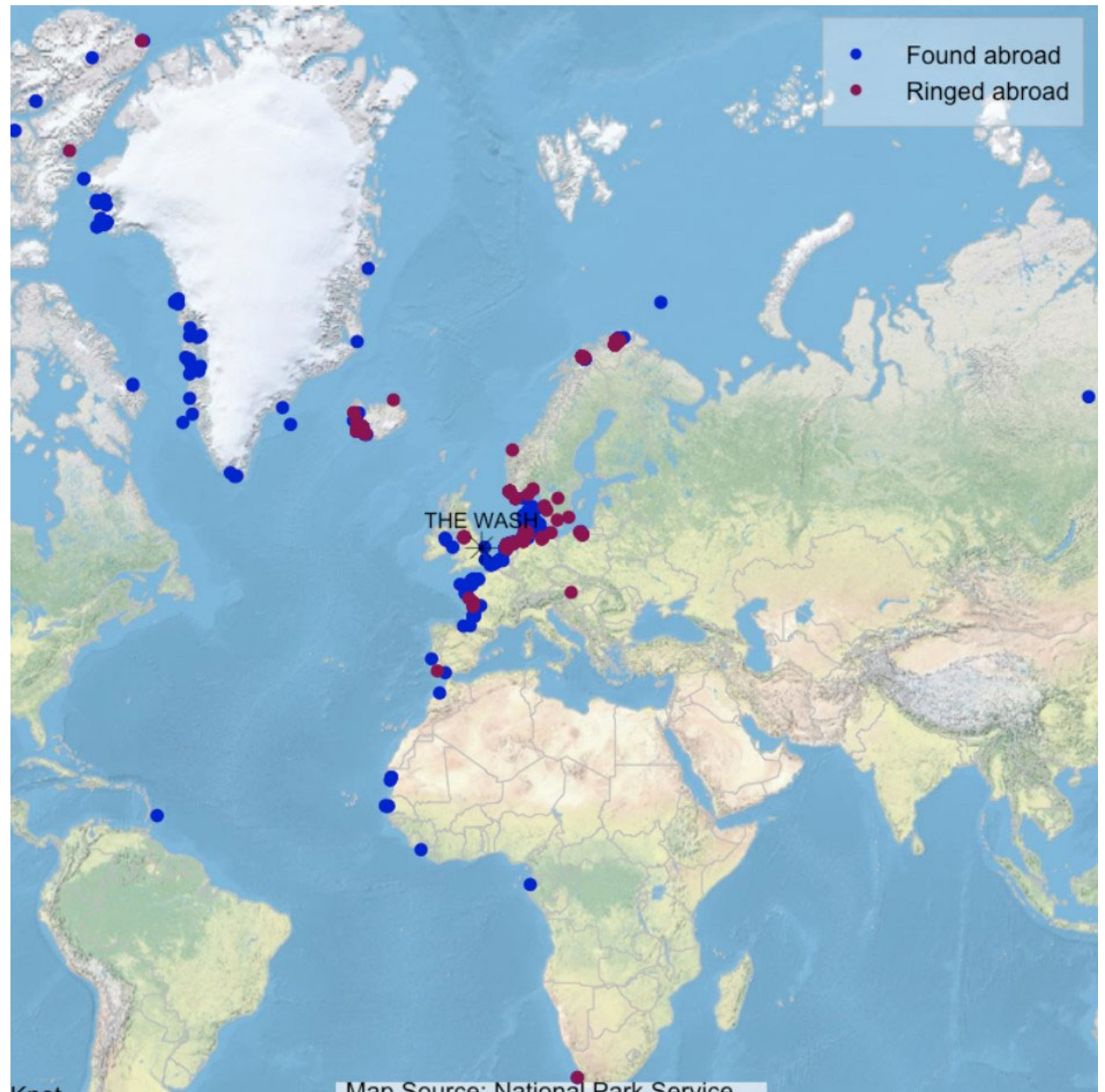




# Red knot

- East Coast Flyway
- Supports : 207,000 (average mid winter count 2015-2019)
- Globally important : 63% 'islandica' race

Wash Ringed  
Knot  
movements







Bar-tailed Godwit  
Autumn 2023 tagging  
programme

# The story of Clive



**A journey of 2000+ miles in 4.5 days  
(Snettisham-Birmingham-Ireland- Bay of  
Biscay-France-Thames-Snettisham)**

# Global Conservation of Tidal mudflats

- UK stopped all land claim for agriculture in the 1980s
- Large scale land claim continued on the East Asia-Australasian Flyway in China and South Korea until c2015 with decision to protect the best remaining areas and recognise as World Heritage Sites
- In South Korea protection through the Tidal Flats Act (2019) with Getbol Korea Tidal Flats WHS (2021)
- Strategic question : With other key Flyway sites inscribed as World Heritage Sites 'What are we doing in the UK?'



# UK Context : World Heritage Sites

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- **33 World Heritage Sites**
- 28 Cultural
- 4 Natural
- 1 Mixed
  
- **2 Natural Sites (UK Mainland):**
- The Jurassic Coast (Dorset /Devon) (2001)
- Giants Causeway (Northern Ireland) (1986)
  
- **2 Natural Sites (UKOTs)**
- Gough and Inaccessible Islands (1995)
- Henderson Island (1988)
  
- **1 Mixed Site**
- St Kilda (1986)



RSPB, WWT and NT

## East Atlantic Flyway – England East Coast Wetlands: Potential Natural World Heritage Site

Proposal summary to inform stakeholder consultations and support application for placement on the UK's tentative list

June 2022



Innovative Thinking - Sustainable Solutions



# Steps in the Tentative List Application

- Collation of information to base a justification

# Review of UNESCO World Heritage Site Criteria

## Cultural

### (i)

to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

### (ii)

to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

### (iii)

to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

### (iv)

to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

### (v)

to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

### (vi)

to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);

## Natural

### (vii)

to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;

### (viii)

to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;

### (ix)

to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;

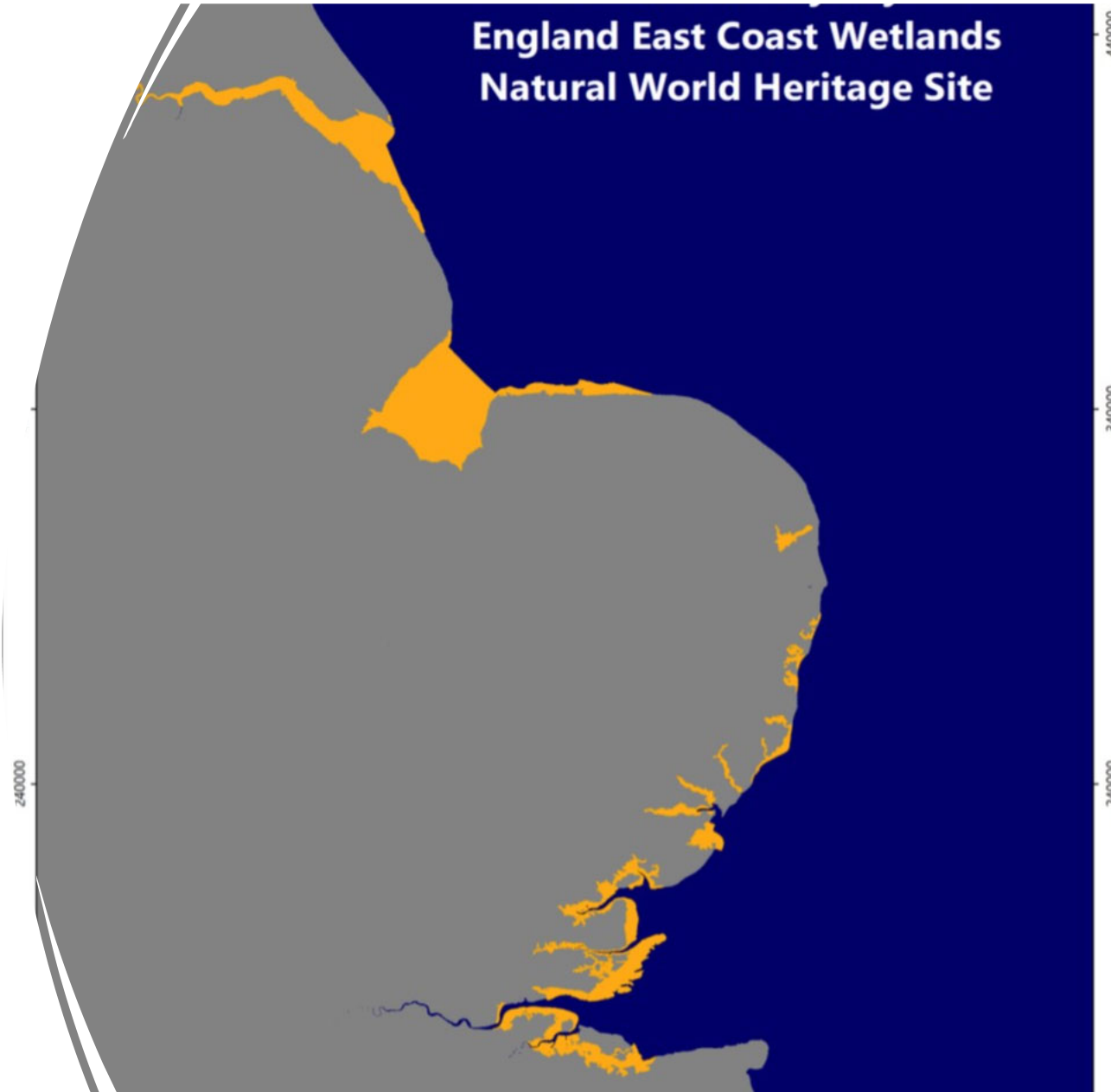
### (x)

to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

# Determining an 'indicative' boundary

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- 21 Special Protection Areas (these include 21 Ramsar wetlands and 19 Special Areas of Conservation)
- Major Habitat Restorations (incl Freiston Shore, Wallasea Island)
- 23 managed realignment projects within this area)
- No buffer zone identified



# Application to DCMS – RSPB, NT and WWT

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- Supportive emails from :
- Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent County Councils
- Coastal Partnership East (North Norfolk, Great Yarmouth, and East Suffolk Councils)
- Babergh District Council
- The Crown Estate



# Independent Panel Feedback

- *...very interesting and ambitious natural heritage proposal*
- *... makes a clear and convincing case for the potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value.*
- *...an interesting example for how natural heritage sites and their Outstanding Universal Value will need to adapt to climate change.*
- *...provides an opportunity for the UK to develop and demonstrate best practice for coastal adaptation in a changing environment.*
- *...noted the significant efforts that had gone into obtaining council and stakeholder support and were enthused about the potential and ambition of this application, and confident that support would be provided for this process.*
- *...the focus should be on 'realigning' and 'adapting' rather than 'protecting' wetland areas*
- *...suggested that the consideration of Criterion ix could improve the nomination bid.*
- *...Outstanding Universal Value could be refined in relation to other World Heritage site flyways and wetlands.*
- *...consideration as to whether a buffer zone should be included or not.*



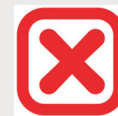




## What does NWHS status mean in practice?



- Bringing people together regulators, stakeholders and communities with a common purpose
- Framework for collaborative working across 21 interconnected internationally important wetlands as part of a single globally important site
- Placing the Outstanding Universal Value at the heart of decision making
- Creating a lever for investment in people, eco-tourism and infrastructure



- More legal protection



## Since Tentative Listing

- Reaching out to all 28 Local Authorities, 32 MPs, stakeholders and coastal forums
- Establishing lead contacts in Natural England, Environment Agency and Marine Management Organisation
- Commissioning further work to determine best approach to completing the nomination dossier (and indicative cost) to provide a basis for firming up partnership and funding
- Building contact with the Waddensea Secretariat and the Getbol Korean Tidal Flats (World Heritage Site Promotion Team, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, KOEM, Local Authorities, Eco-Horizon Institute)

# Nomination Timetable

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- Nomination Dossier preparation :  
2024 –
- UNESCO Preliminary Assessment  
: September 2026 (as  
recommended by DCMS)
- Nomination and Inscription :  
2029



# Nomination Preparation : Core work

- Describing why the East Coast Flyway is of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
- Describing site's integrity (i.e. how the whole area links together),
- Comparing the site with other NWHs and similar locations globally;
- Setting out the plans for ongoing management and monitoring
- Communication and consultation
  
- **Supported by studies:**
- Mapping and data management work to underpin all reviews;
- Reviewing the history, ecology, geomorphology and evolution of the coastline;
- Describing the value of the site for migratory birds in regional and global context;
- Detailing the need for and value of coastal adaptation using case examples along the coast;
- Valuing the natural capital and societal benefits provided by this site;
- Examining the productivity and social value of the coastline's benthos and fisheries; and
- Explaining in more detail how the site will be managed and monitored



# Nomination Preparation : Governance

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- A lead partnership of organisations;
- A project co-ordinator;
- A technical group; and
- Advisory stakeholder groups.

