COUNTY: WEST SUSSEX  SITE NAME: ADUR ESTUARY

DISTRICT: ADUR

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Local Planning Authority: ADUR DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 208 056  Area: 62.2 (ha.) 153.6 (ac.)
Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 197  1:10,000: TQ 20 NW
Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –   Date of Last Revision: –
Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987  Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
This is a new site. Part of the site is an RSPB Reserve.

Reasons for Notification:
The Adur Estuary, together with Rye Harbour further to the east, represent the only significant areas of saltmarsh between Chichester and Pagham Harbours in West Sussex, and Sandwich Bay in Kent. The estuarine plant communities are unusual due to the relative scarcity of cord-grass, *Spartina* spp. The large area of intertidal mudflats within the estuary are important for a variety of wading birds.

Saltmarsh plants fringe most of the estuary and in places have colonised large areas of mudflats. Sea purslane *Halimione portaculoides* dominates most of the areas above mean high water mark, and annual seablite *Suaeda maritima* is also extremely frequent in these areas. Towards the mean low water mark, glasswort *Salicornia* sp. is dominant and sea aster *Aster tripolium* becomes more abundant. Other species are scattered throughout the saltmarsh community, including common sea lavender *Limonium vulgare*, thrift *Armeria maritima*, sea plantain *Plantago maritima* and sea poa grass, *Puccinella maritima*. Cord grass *Spartina* spp. is noticeably absent from most of the estuary, but a small stand does grow southeast of the Old Shoreham Bridge.

At the landward margin of the saltmarsh a variety of herbs and shrubs are frequent, including mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, orache *Atriplex* spp., teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and elm *Ulmus procera*.

The intertidal mudflats of the Adur Estuary support a number of wading birds, particularly redshank, dunlin and ringed plover. The number of ringed plover regularly exceed 1% of the total British population, making the estuary of national importance for this species. A variety of species breed within the reedbed adjacent to the estuary north of the A27, including moorhen, reed warbler and sedge warbler.

The estuary embankment near the car park supports a large colony of viviparous lizards, *Lacerta vivipara*. 