

## 19 Coastal vegetated shingle

Shingle is thrown up onto unsheltered beaches by waves and storms. Technically 'shingle' is coarser than sand but finer than boulders. It has an average grain size of between 2 and 200 mm. Vegetation can grow where the structure is stable and there is fine material such as sand or silt mixed with the shingle but the hydrology is also important. Good sites are rare.

### Status

There are about 4200 ha of stable or semi-vegetated shingle in Great Britain<sup>1</sup>. No sites in this region are included in this total because there are none that are of national significance. There is, however, some sandy vegetated shingle at Spurn Point<sup>2</sup> (East Riding and the Bridlington to Skegness Natural Area) though the most characteristic shingle species are found amongst concrete debris dumped to stabilise the spit. Species found here include sea sandwort *Honkenya peploides*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, marram grass *Ammophila arenaria*, sea holly *Eryngium maritimum* and sea campion *Silene maritima*. Shingle was removed from Spurn in the last century for ship ballast. There is also some sandy shingle, but with little typical vegetation, at Easington Lagoons<sup>2</sup> that provides important nesting sites for ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and little tern *Sterna albifrons* (more than 1% of the British breeding population nest here). Shingle is also deposited further north, in the Saltburn to Bridlington Natural Area, supporting over-wintering turnstones *Arenaria interpres*, with nationally important numbers of purple sandpipers *Calidris maritima* at Filey Brigg.

### Threats

If Spurn Point continues to move westwards then the concrete blocks will be lost to the sea. At Easington erosion is squeezing the beach towards the coastal defenses. Coastal vegetation and structures may eventually be lost if they cannot move inland.

Map 21a: Percentage of the regional limestone pavements in each local planning authority area



Map 21b: Presence of limestone pavements shown by Natural Areas

