

Intertidal mudflats

EUNIS Code: A2.3

National Marine Habitat Classification for UK & Ireland code: LS.LMu

Two sub-types: 9.1 Marine intertidal mudflats

9.2 Estuarine intertidal mudflats

Intertidal mud typically forms extensive mudflats in calm coastal environments (particularly estuaries and other sheltered areas), although dry compacted mud can form steep and even vertical faces, particularly at the top of the shore adjacent to salt marshes. The upper limit of intertidal mudflats is often marked by saltmarsh, and the lower limit by Chart Datum. Sediments consist mainly of fine particles, mostly in the silt and clay fraction (particle size less than 0.063 mm in diameter), though sandy mud may contain up to 80% sand (mostly very fine and fine sand), often with a high organic content. Little oxygen penetrates these cohesive sediments, and an anoxic layer is often present within millimetres of the sediment surface. Intertidal mudflats support communities characterised by polychaetes, bivalves and oligochaetes. This priority habitat has been divided into two sub-types, based on the predominant salinity regime.

See OSPAR Agreement 2008-07 for references