

COUNTY: LEICESTERSHIRE

SITE NAME: HOLWELL MOUTH

DISTRICT: MELTON

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

Local Planning Authority: MELTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SK 725 245

Area: 16.31 (ha.) 40.31 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 129

1:10,000: SK 72 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1956

Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

The site includes some of the best examples of neutral marsh in Leicestershire and is representative of marsh developed on somewhat base-poor clay soils in the English Midlands.

Biology

The site comprises a valley cut into clays of the Jurassic Middle and Lower Lias series by the River Smite and a tributary water course entering from the south. The centre of the site is occupied by an area of spring-fed marsh which is dominated variously by meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, greater tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata*, lesser pond sedge *C. acutiformis*, greater pond sedge *C. riparia*, blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, great willow herb *Epilobium hirsutum*, and great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*. The marsh possesses a representative flora which includes marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, stands of brown sedge *Carex disticha* and, at its edge, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*. To the north-east of the site lies an area of neutral grassland dominated by meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* and sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. This grassland is characterised by the abundance of pignut *Conopodium majus*, field wood-rush *Luzula campestris* and also by the presence of lady's smock *Cardamine pratensis*, knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, betony *Betonica officinalis*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*. The northern part of the site and the upper slopes of the valley are covered by woodland dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, over an understorey of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and hazel *Corylus avellana*, together with some field maple *Acer campestre*. The ground vegetation is characterised by the abundance of bluebell *Endymion non-scriptus* while on damper ground, adjacent to the water courses, *Equisetum telmateia*, *Caltha palustris* and reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* occur. To the south-east of the site occurs an area dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. The mix of habitats present provides suitable feeding and breeding conditions for a range of birds and insects.