

County: Hampshire **Site Name:** Stockbridge Fen SSSI

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

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SU 359354

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 185

1:10,000: SU 33 NE

Area: 5.83 (ha) 14.4 (ac)

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 19 April 1991

Date of Last Revision: –

Confirmed: 5 December 1991

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Stockbridge Fen lies within the floodplain of the upper reaches of the River Test, and has developed on shallow peats over alluvium and river gravels. The main interest of the site centres on six shallow, former peat workings (shown on the 1st edn. OS map, 1871), which support an exceptionally diverse rich-fen flora. Sixteen species are indicative of ancient unimproved grassland, including a number which can be regarded as rare or uncommon throughout southern England.

The fen is dominated by sedges with eleven species recorded to date. Much of the sward comprises bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* and blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, with lesser tussock-sedge *C. diandra* and marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris*. The north cutting has common reed *Phragmites australis* with greater tussock-sedge *C. paniculata*, whilst the north-east cutting comprises common reed, bottle sedge and bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* swamp. Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, yellow iris *Iris pseudocorus*, lesser pond-sedge *C. acutiformis* and long-stalked yellow-sedge *C. lepidocarpa* are frequent. Dwarf sedge communities occur locally with common yellow-sedge *C. demissa*, brown sedge *C. disticha*, common sedge *C. nigra* and carnation sedge *C. panicea*, together with bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, marsh lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*, together with common and broad-leaved cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and *E. latifolium*. Both early and southern marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza incarnata* and *D. praetermissa* are locally frequent as well as the marsh variety of fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* subspecies *densiflora*. Additional species of interest are found in the common reed and sedge dominated ditches, such as the greater spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*, in one of its few Hampshire localities.

The diversity of the flora and the high quality of the fen community present is attributable to the continued maintenance of a high water table, water quality (in this instance largely unaffected by nutrient enrichment) and the ongoing management by cattle grazing. Together these maintain the open conditions necessary for the survival of many of the site's rarer species and plant communities.

Stockbridge Fen represents one of a series of sites, within the Test Valley, selected to exhibit the full spectrum of species, habitats and management practices present within this important southern chalk river system.