

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: HARDLEY FLOOD

DISTRICT: South Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: South Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TM 380997

Area: 48.1 (ha) 118.8 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134

1:10,000: TM39 NE, TG 30 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site. Part managed as a nature reserve by the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Hardley Flood is an area of shallow lagoons and reedbeds that act as a spillway for the River Chet. Breaches in the river-bank allow tidal waters to move freely between the river and the marsh. Soft muds are exposed at low tide and these attract a range of wading birds in spring and autumn while the undisturbed reedbeds support nesting wildfowl and other fenland birds, including nationally important breeding populations of Shoveler, Pochard and Gadwall.

The tidal lagoons are shallow and because of fluctuating levels do not contain any water-plants. Swamp vegetation surrounds the lagoons, dominated by dense strands of Common Reed *Phragmites australis* with some Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and Great Reedmace *Typha latifolia*. Tall fen vegetation occurs on drier ground and this too is dominated by Common Reed with a variety of fen species present including Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata*, Purple Small-reed *Calamagrostis canescens*, Angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*. The locally uncommon Marsh Sow-thistle *Sonchus palustris* is frequent by the river-bank. The site also includes areas of Alder carr woodland, broad-leaved plantation and grassland.

Many species of duck nest in the reedbeds including Mallard, Teal, Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Pochard and Shelduck. Shoveler, Pochard and Gadwall are of national importance with 1% or over of the British population nesting on the site. Other breeding birds include Common Tern, Grasshopper Warbler and Reed Warbler, with Cetti's Warbler also known to nest on occasion. Many birds are attracted to the site in the winter months and Hen Harrier, Bittern, Jack Snipe, Water Rail and Bearded Tit are regular visitors. Small flocks of Bean Geese and White-fronted Geese have wintered on the flood in recent years.

Three rare flies have been recorded *Elachiptera uniseta*, *E. scrobiculata* and *Lonchoptera scutellata* and these insects are associated with tussocks of the Greater Tussock Sedge. Otters occasionally visit.