

File ref:

County: Leicestershire **Site name:** River Eye

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 764188 to SK 802186 **Area:** 13.65 (ha) 33.72 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 129 **1: 10 000:** SK 71 NE, SK 81 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981 **Date of Last Revision:**

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

The site comprises an exceptional example of a semi-natural lowland river. It is representative of clay streams in central and southern England and has been accepted for inclusion in The Nature Conservation Review.

Biology:

The geology of the catchment of the River Eye is comprised primarily of Jurassic and Glacial Boulder Clays but is influenced also by Jurassic limestones. For an eight kilometre stretch above Melton Mowbray the natural structural features of the river, comprising riffles, pools, small cliffs and meanders, together with clean water continue to provide a range of conditions essential for the maintenance of rich and diverse plant and animal communities. For most of its length the marginal vegetation is dominated by such plants as bulrush *Scirpus lacustris*, branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, greater pond-sedge *Carex riparia*, slender tufted-sedge *Carex acuta*, reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus*. In other parts of the river the meanders are lined for short stretches by willows *Salix* spp. which exclude such marginal vegetation. The deeper parts of the river are dominated by extensive beds of yellow water lily *Nuphar lutea* with spiked water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* and floating pondweed *Potamogeton natans* as other common components of the community. In the faster flowing, more shallow stretches other pondweeds such as curled pondweed *Potamogeton crispus*, perfoliate pondweed *P. perfoliatus* and fennel pondweed *P. pectinatus* dominate.

The invertebrate community is typical of a small, unpolluted but diverse river system. Records include crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*, the water bug *Corixa panzeri* and the white-legged cont...

River Eye (cont...)

damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*, the last named species at the northerly limit of its British range.

Additional interest is provided by the presence of small adjacent areas of marsh and marshy meadow.