

File ref:

County: Leicestershire **Site Name:** Ashby Canal
District: North West Leicestershire/Hinckley and Bosworth
Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
Local Planning Authority: North West Leicestershire District Council & Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SK 346099 - **Area:** 24.9 (ha) 61.5 (ac)
SK 387043

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 140 **1: 10 000** SK 30 NW, NE & SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The Ashby Canal supports communities of aquatic and emergent plants that are representative of eutrophic standing water bodies in the English lowlands. The diversity of aquatic plants and invertebrates makes this one of the most important water bodies of its type in the East Midlands.

The submerged plant community is of particular interest. Mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*, spiked water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* and perfoliate pondweed *Potamogeton perfoliatus* are locally abundant. Eight other species of pondweed have been recorded including grass-wrack pondweed *P. compressus* and flat-stalked pondweed *P. friesii* which are nationally uncommon. Where the canal bed is stony the scarce needle spike-rush *Eleocharis acicularis* may be found.

The floating plant community is also well developed. Yellow water-lily *Nuphar lutea*, broad-leaved pondweed *P. natans*, arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia* and unbranched bur-reed *Sparganium emersum* are all locally abundant.

The emergent fringe is variously dominated by greater pond-sedge *Carex riparia*, reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*. Associated species include lesser water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus*, tubular water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* and skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*.

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Ashby Canal (cont...)

The Ashby Canal retains one of the richest invertebrate communities of eutrophic standing water still to be found in Leicestershire. Nine species of dragonfly have been recorded, including the locally scarce red-eyed damselfly *Erythroma najas*. The water beetle fauna is diverse and it includes the nationally rare *Haliphus mucronatus*.

The canal also supports populations of the native freshwater crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* and of the water shrew *Neomys fodiens*.