

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: ASHMOOR COMMON

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS SITE REF: 15WNJ

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 854464 Area: 30.4 (ha.) 75.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 84 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 Date of Last Revision: 1990

Other Information:

Site boundary alteration (extension).

Part of the site is registered as Common Land -- manorial rights held by Kempsey Parish Council.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Ashmoor Common lies in the flood plain of the River Severn, a few miles south of Worcester City. The site is an important one for studies of river landforms and of the history and evolution of the River Severn. In addition, the northern half of the site is of biological interest.

Biology

The marshy grassland, which supports plant communities associated with neutral to acidic soils, represents one of the few examples of this type of habitat surviving in Worcestershire. The dominant species are tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, soft rush *Juncus effusus* and sedges such as hairy sedge *Carex hirta*. The wetter areas support a number of plants which are uncommon in the county, e.g. golden dock *Rumex maritimus*, tubular water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* and the nationally scarce narrow-leaved water-dropwort *O. silaifolia*. An abundance of marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* is a particular feature of the site.

A pond and several ditches contribute to the nature conservation interest of the site. Their margins support the nationally scarce orange foxtail *Alopecurus aequalis* and the locally uncommon pink water-speedwell *Veronica catenata* and many-stalked spike-rush *Eleocharis multicaulis*.

The site is also of local ornithological importance, providing one of the few breeding areas in this part of Worcestershire for wetland species such as snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and curlew *Numenius arquata*.

Geology

This site is important for interpreting aspects of the palaeohydrology of the River Severn. It includes a type example of an underfit palaeochannel representing an earlier course of the Severn above the level of the present floodplain. It is also important in providing detailed information on floodplain sedimentary environments and an absolute chronology for floodplain development. Deposits in the palaeochannel include reworked terrace sediments with channel sands on top. A radiocarbon date from organic deposits indicates that the channel was abandoned around 6,000 years BP.