

County: Lancashire **Site Name:** Newton Marsh

District: Fylde

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

Local Planning Authority: Fylde Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SD 450292 **Area:** 65.6 (ha) 162.1 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50 000 102 **1:10 000** SD 42 NE
SD 42 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1979 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** 1986

Other Information:

The site boundary remains unchanged at renotification.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Newton Marsh is located near to the Ribble Estuary, 2 km east of Freckleton, and comprises 162 acres of grazed, improved pasture reclaimed from former saltmarsh but retaining a number of pools and ditches. These features, the relative lack of disturbance, its size and proximity to the Ribble Estuary and its position along a major migration route down the west coast of Britain account for the importance of the site for over-wintering and migrant birds.

Over 100 bird species have been recorded from Newton Marsh, the majority being spring and winter visitors forming part of the migrant populations which use the west coast estuaries of Britain on their route from the breeding grounds in the far north and the wintering grounds further south. The proximity of Newton Marsh to the Ribble Estuary allows an interchange of birds between the two sites and total numbers will vary according to local conditions. On average Newton Marsh supports in the region of 10,000 birds each winter, but under adverse conditions these numbers can be substantially higher as the marsh provides a valuable source of refuge, protected from high tides and relatively free from disturbance.

Large flocks of golden plover habitually favour this site in the winter and numbers present each year (up to 8,000) regularly exceed the qualifying level for national importance (2,000). Other winter visitors include large numbers of lapwing (up to 10,000) with smaller flocks of snipe, bar-tailed godwit, redshank, dunlin, mallard, teal, shelduck and wigeon. In spring and autumn up to 1,200 black-tailed godwits have been recorded from the site and numbers of this species are in most years

in excess of the qualifying level for national importance (50). Other passage migrants include greenshank, spotted redshank, common sandpiper and sanderling.

While the natural saltmarsh breeding bird community has been altered by a change in the nature of the vegetation brought about by reclamation, the wetness of the pasture has encouraged the development of a new bird community which includes freshwater fen, saltmarsh and farmland species. Regular breeding species include lapwing, redshank, mallard, moorhen, coot, skylark, yellow wagtail and meadow pipit, with less frequent breeding records for snipe, little grebe, mute swan, shelduck, reed bunting, oystercatcher and corn bunting.

The interest of the site is further enhanced by the presence of a variety of aquatic and marsh plants in the pools and ditches, which include the flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus* and spiked sedge *Carex spicata*, both rare species in Lancashire.