

File ref:

**County:** Lincolnshire **Site name:** Wilsford & Rauceby Warrens

**District:** North Kesteven

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

**Local Planning Authority:** North Kesteven District Council

**National Grid Reference:** TF 030436 **Area:** 57.3 (ha) 142.1 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000:** 130 **1: 10 000:** TF 04 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1968 **Date of Last Revision:**

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

#### **Other Information:**

Part of the site is owned and managed as a nature reserve by the Lincolnshire and South Humberside Trust for Nature Conservation. The larger part of the site is a private golf course.

An active railway line is included within the site.

#### **Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Wilsford and Rauceby Warrens comprise the most extensive remaining areas of limestone grass heath in South Lincolnshire. This nationally scarce habitat type once occurred on sands and gravels overlying the limestone, especially in the valley east of Ancaster Gap, but has virtually all now been converted to arable. At Wilsford and Rauceby, variation in the thickness of these glacial meltwater deposits gives rise to a mosaic of dry lime-rich and lime-poor soils with a correspondingly high botanical diversity. The site's rich flora is best seen around the margins of the old sand pits in Rauceby Warren and on the roughs of the adjacent golf course. A large population of a nationally rare plant occurs. Great Crested newts breed in one of the old water filled workings.

Upright brome *Bromus erectus*, tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*, meadow oat *Avenula pratensis* and false oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* locally dominate the areas of taller grassland. Herbs commonly found in this sward are harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, purple milk vetch *Astragalus danicus*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, restharrow *Ononis repens* and the uncommon dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*. Other members of the pea family present characterise open sandy areas; these include birdsfoot *Ornithopus perpusillus* and haresfoot, rough and knotted clovers *Trifolium arvense*, *T. scabrum* and *T. striatum*. Associated plants and buckshorn plantain *Plantago coronopus*, sheeps sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and fine-leaved cont....

### **Wilsford & Rauceby Warrens (cont...)**

sandwort *Minuartia hybrida*. Wilsford Warren is one of the few inland county localities for sand sedge *Carex arenaria*. Bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* and hoary cinquefoil *Potentilla argentea* also occur.

In complete contrast to the tall sward are areas of short springy rabbit grazed turf where there is a compact growth of many plants, typically mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, common cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata*, field mouse-ear *Cerastium arvense* and field woodrush *Luzula campestris*. There is an abundance of *Caledonia* species of lichen and local dominance of the mosses *Polytrichum juniperinum* and *Dicranium scoparium*.

A different habitat is afforded by areas of gorse *Ulex europaeus*, broom *Cytisus scoparius* and willow *Salix* spp. scrub whilst the stream bisecting the site adds a wetland element to the flora.