

File ref:

**County:** Devon    **Site Name** Kingford Fen

**District:** Torridge

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Devon County Council, Torridge District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SS 281059, SS 281063    **Area:** 7.4 (ha) 18.2 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 190                      **1:10,000:** SS 20 NE

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

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1987                      **Date of Last Revision:** -

**Other Information:**

New site.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

This site contains a mixture of acidic grassland, flushes and neutral marshland subject to periodic inundation. All of these plant communities are herb-rich and a number of uncommon species are found. The unimproved grassland and marshland together with the associated scrub and river bank provide an excellent environment for invertebrate species.

This site lies above the eastern bank of a small part of the upper reaches of the Tamar, overlying the Carboniferous shales of the Culm Measures of North Devon. The soils are mostly acidic, poorly drained, seasonally waterlogged clays. However, the lowest lying parts of the site, subject to flooding, have soils which are alluvial in nature and much less acidic.

Within the site there is a wide variation in the plant communities present. Among these is a tall herb marsh in the area subject to the most frequent inundation. Here the commonest species are canary reed-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, soft rush *Juncus effusus* and valerian *Valeriana officinalis*. Notable species include wavy St John's-wort *Hypericum undulatum*, which is nationally scarce, wood club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus*, bladder-sedge *Carex vesicaria*, brown sedge *C. disticha*, greater tussock-sedge *C. paniculata*, southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*.

Higher up the valley side unimproved acidic grassland is to be found. Purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* is the major sward constituent but this community is herb rich and contains sedges such as star sedge *Carex echinata*, carnation sedge *C. panicea* and flea sedge *C. pulicaris* along with sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, heath spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, betony *Stachys officinalis* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

There are several flushed areas where water draining from the fields higher up the valley enters the site. The plant community here includes bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp., along with the above mentioned sedges and herbs such as marsh lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*.

Surrounding the fields and bordering the river are species-rich hedges and patches of scrub and trees with the dominant species being willows *Salix* spp. together with alder *Alnus glutinosa*, guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*, gorse *Ulex europaeus* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

The site is rich in invertebrate species; wood white *Leptidea sinapis* and marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia* and two uncommon butterflies which are among the twenty species which occur here. Ten species of dragonfly have been recorded.

More than fifty bird species have been recorded from this site. The breeding bird community includes tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia* and sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*.