

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: NORTHWICK MARSH

DISTRICT: WORCESTER CITY SITE REF: 15 W5F

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,  
Worcester City Council

National Grid Reference: SO 835579 Area: 5.1 (ha.) 12.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 85 NW

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

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

Other Information:  
New site.

#### Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site is an open area of species-rich marsh occupying disused brickpits on the floodplain of the River Severn on the edge of Worcester City. In contrast with the nearby Grimley Brickpits SSSI which has largely reverted to carr, Northwick Marsh has retained an open marsh community as a result of cattle grazing. This site has been selected as one of the largest surviving examples of this very scarce habitat in Worcestershire.

Part of the site holds standing water for most of the year, whilst part is extensively inundated by floodwater during winter and spring. The lower, wetter area contains tall fen vegetation dominated by reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, greater pond-sedge *Carex riparia*, wood club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus* and yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*. Marsh stitchwort *Stellaria palustris*, a plant of local distribution, is found here.

The higher parts of the marsh which are flooded for a few months of the year are grazed by cattle during the summer. These contain a greater variety of plants which are typical of unimproved, grazed marsh including marsh foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, floating sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans*, celery-leaved buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus* and ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*. Of particular interest are a number of uncommon plants such as common meadow rue *Thalictrum flavum*, trifid bur-marigold *Bidens tripartita*, great yellow-cress *Rorippa amphibia*, water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* and eight sedge species including slender tufted-sedge *Carex acuta* and bladder-sedge *C. vesicaria*. In the north eastern corner of the marsh there is a clump of mature pollarded white and crack willows *Salix alba* and *S. fragilis*.

The site includes a bank of the River Severn which is fringed with alder *Alnus glutinosa*, willow *Salix* sp., ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub. This is separated from the marsh by a raised floodbank with semi-improved neutral grassland.

Northwick Marsh is also of ornithological interest. In winter it supports concentrations of teal *Anas crecca* and snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, and the scarcer jack snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* is an occasional visitor. Breeding birds include the reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*. The site is also known to have grass snake *Natrix natrix* and great-crested newt *Triturus cristatus*.