

County: North Yorkshire and Humberside

Site Name: River Derwent

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

Local Planning Authority: Ryedale and Selby District Councils, Boothferry and East Yorkshire Borough Councils

National Grid Reference: SE 678287 - 825757

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 100, 101, 105, 106 **1:25,000:** 62, 63, 64, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 87

Approximate Length –	42.7 Km North Yorkshire (Ryedale)
where River Derwent forms	42.1 Km North Yorkshire (Selby)
district boundaries the	19.8 Km Humberside (Boothferry)
length is included in both	26.0 Km Humberside (East Yorkshire)
directions.	86.2 Km Total

First Notified: 1986

Description:

The Yorkshire Derwent is considered to represent one of the best British examples of the classic river profile. This lowland section, stretching from Ryemouth to the confluence with the Ouse, supports diverse communities of aquatic flora and fauna, many elements of which are nationally significant.

Fed from an extensive upland catchment, the lowland course of the Derwent has been considerably diverted and extended as a result of glacial action in the Vale of Pickering.

In contrast to the upland reaches this section of the river is rich in nutrients and relatively unpolluted and supports an aquatic flora uncommon in Northern Britain. Several species, including river water-dropwort *Oenanthe fluviatilis*, flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus*, shining pondweed *Potamogeton lucens*, arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, opposite-leaved pondweed *Groenlandia densa* and narrow-leaved water-parsnip *Berula erecta* are typically found in lowland rivers in southern England, and several occur here near their north-eastern limit in Britain. The presence of the unbranched bur-reed *Sparganium emersum* and yellow water-lily *Nuphar lutea* add to the floral interest.

The exceptionally rich assemblage of invertebrates reflects their affinities with the communities of the southern slow-flowing rivers. Species of particular interest include the mayflies *Baetis buceratus*, *Heptagenia fusogrisea* and *Brachycerus harisella*, and a stonefly *Taeniopteryx nebulosa*. Eleven species of dragonfly have been recorded including the banded agrion *Agrion splendens* at its most north-easterly site in the country.

The river is also noted for its diversity of fish species, which include or have included the bleak, ruffe and burbot. The presence of these European species reflect the Derwent's geographical position at the end of the Ice Age when migration of fish from the Rhine and other European rivers was possible across the North Sea which, at that time, was a fresh-water lake.

The riverine habitat also supports an excellent breeding bird community including common sandpiper, dipper, kingfisher, and yellow and grey wagtails. During the winter the Lower

Derwent is vital in maintaining the internationally important population of Bewick's swans association with the adjacent Derwent Ings. The Derwent is also one of the few rivers in lowland Britain which still supports a breeding population of otters.

Other Information:

Stretches of the river are also included within other SSSIs notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981; these are Kirkham Park and Riverside; Derwent Ings SSSI; Brighton Meadows SSSI. SSSIs adjacent to the river are Jeffry Bog and Newton Mask.