

File ref:

**County:** Devon    **Site Name:** Greenaways and Freshmarsh, Braunton

**District:** North Devon

**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, North Devon District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SS 464353 and SS 472356    **Area:** 13.5 (ha)    33.4 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 180    **1:10,000:** SS 43 NE

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1981    **Date of Last Revision:** -

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

**Other Information:**

Included in County Structure Plan Nature Conservation. Zone and Coastal Preservation Area. Part of the site was formerly within the Taw-Torridge Estuary SSSI. Site amended by extension and deletion at this revision.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

This site is of special interest for its herb-rich marshy grasslands and also the rich water-plant communities occurring in the drainage ditches. These habitats are of particular importance as they now have a very restricted distribution in Devon.

The site occupies the northern fringe of Braunton Marsh, the land being generally flat and low-lying with a high water table. The soils are derived from marine alluvium with a peaty surface horizon in places.

The constituent fields represent some of the last remaining areas of herb-rich grazing marsh, both in Braunton Marsh and probably within the county as a whole. The wetter areas support an abundance of greater pond-sedge *Carex riparia* together with false fox-sedge *C. otrubae*, glaucous sedge *C. flacca* and common sedge *C. nigra*. Many other flowering plants occur here which are typical of wet, unimproved marshlands including marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, silverweed *Potentilla anserina*, water mint *Mentha aquatica*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*. The southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* occurs frequently and the site is also a location for marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris* which is a rare plant in Devon. In places, there is an abundance of rushes *Juncus* spp. and patches of yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* occur. As the ground rises slightly there is a transition to drier grassland containing hairy sedge *Carex hirta*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*.

The associated drainage ditches support a rich assemblage of aquatic plants which provide an important element of the site's special interest. Among the submerged species are common water-starwort *Callitriche stagnalis* and broad-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton natans*. Common duckweed *Lemna minor* is frequent, while the occurrence of ivy-leaved duckweed *L. trisulca* is of particular note as it has a very restricted distribution in Devon.

The emergent component of the ditch flora is well developed with many flowering plant species present. These include water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, lesser water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, parsley water-dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii*, branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, pink water-speedwell *Veronica catenata* and marsh woundwort *Stachys palustris*. The presence of tasteless water-pepper *Polygonum mite* is also noteworthy since it is a rare plant in Devon. Common reed *Phragmites australis* forms small stands along parts of the water channels.

The site supports breeding reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, both species being characteristic of marshland habitat.