

COUNTY: DORSET                      SITE NAME: LANGFORD MEADOW

DISTRICT: WEST DORSET

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

Local Planning Authority: WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SY 638952                      Area: 7.6 (ha.) 18.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 194                      1:10,000: SY 69 SW, 69 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1977                      Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985                      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site boundary amended through extension and deletion.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

A disused water meadow about 6.5 km down stream from the spring source of the Sydling Water, a small chalk stream tributary of the River Frome in central Dorset. The wetness of the meadow varies as a result of the network of feeders and drains and in consequence an interesting mixture of plant communities occurs. Many of the species, and the habitat as a whole, are now uncommon, due to changes in land use and agricultural practice.

The flora of the meadow is rich and includes some 18 species of grass and 11 sedges. Much of the meadow is dominated by Hard Rush *Juncus inflexus* with patches of Meadow-sweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. In this tall vegetation other typical species are Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and, locally, Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. In drier areas taller grasses predominate, especially Ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and Meadow Fescue *Festuca pratensis*. There are patches of shorter damp grassland which is dominated by Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*. Here the smaller sedges *Carex flacca*, *C. panicea* and *C. hirta* are often abundant and herbs include Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, the buttercups *Ranunculus acris* and *R. repens* and the local Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica* and Strawberry Clover *Trifolium fragiferum*.

A marsh community has developed along the old water meadow drains and this is characterised by a number of herbs many of local occurrence. Red Rattle *Pedicularis palustris* is abundant and there are several stands of Bog Bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, Cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella* all occur locally as well as more widespread species such as Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*. The uncommon moss *Climacium dendroides* is

found in this community as is the more frequent moss *Calliergon cuspidatum*. Parts of the drains, especially in the south, are permanent water courses which support water-cress *Nasturtium officinale*, Water Speedwell *Veronica anagallis-aquatica*, and the local Water Whorl-grass *Catabrosa aquatica*. Stands of Reed Canary Grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and Lesser Pond Sedge *Carex acutiformis* occur along the sides of the water courses and banks of the Sydling Water.