

File ref:

**County:** Hampshire

**Site Name:** Lye Heath Marsh SSSI

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council

**National Grid Reference:** SU 648086

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 196

**1:10,000:** SU 60 NE, NW

**Area:** 4.4 (ha) 10.9 (ac)

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** -

**Date of Last Revision:** -

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 25 May 1989

**Date of Last Revision:** -

**Confirmed:** 20 February 1990

**Other Information:**

**Reasons for Notification:**

Lye Heath Marsh is situated along a spring-line at the junction of the Bagshot Sands and London Clay. Within a relatively small area it supports an intimate mixture of basic flushes, unimproved grassland, alder woodland and dense hedgerows, which combine to form a now rare association of individually restricted habitats.

The flushes areas have developed a short-sedge fen community with abundant star sedge *Carex echinata*, common sedge *C. nigra* and carnation sedge *C. panicea*. There are no clear dominants and the rich flora includes a number of scarce species including marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, flea sedge *C. pulicaris* and common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. Elsewhere, other waterlogged soils less affected by water movement support marshy grassland dominated by flote-grass *Glyceria fluitans*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, rushes *Juncus* and yellow flag *Iris pseudacorus*. This community is also species-rich and includes bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, marsh lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, bristle club-rush *Isolepis setacea* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*.

Most of the site is comprised of species-rich unimproved neutral grassland, especially on the more freely-draining slopes. Grasses are abundant, such as meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis* and quaking grass *Briza media*, but the sward is herb-rich; sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, lesser knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* are all locally dominant. Overall, the site supports an exceptional number of grassland species which require long continuity of habitat, including the rare corky-fruited water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*.

The juxtaposition of habitats and abundant nectar sources, coupled with light grazing and sheltered aspect, make this a very significant site for invertebrates, particularly hoverflies which include two notable species *Xylota tarda* and *Helophalus trivittatus*.