

COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE **SITE NAME:** BULWICK MEADOWS

District: East Northamptonshire

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

Local Planning Authority: East Northamptonshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 962944

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 141 **1:10,000:** SP 99 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 4.3 ha 10.8 ac

Other Information: This is a new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Two adjacent meadows occupying the valley side and flood plain of the Willow Brook. Water draining from the Lower Lincolnshire Limestone emerges as seepage areas where it meets the more impervious Lower Estuarine Series deposits. This, together with the high water table of the valley floor alluvium has given rise to a complex mosaic of marshy grassland communities.

This habitat type was formerly widespread in river flood plains and elsewhere. It has been greatly reduced in extent as a result of land drainage improvements and is now extremely scarce in Northamptonshire. The vegetation shows subtle variations in composition in response to soil moisture and organic content and this phenomenon is of considerable interest for the study of plant-soil relationships. The site supports a rich assemblage of wetland plants including rare species and is notable for the variety of sedges *Carices*.

The plant communities demonstrate a gradation from dry, semi-unimproved pasture to tall fen of lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* and reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, where the water table is above ground level. Below the seepage areas there is a diverse mixture of grasses, rushes, sedges and herbs. Some of the main constituents are: Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*. More locally abundant are: floating sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, common, hairy and glaucous sedges *Carex nigra*, *C. hirta* and *C. flacca* and common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*.

The meadows are the only known Northamptonshire locality for flat-sedge *Blysmus compressus* and common bistort *Polygonum bistorta* and have added importance for the presence of breeding snipe - of which there may not be more than 30 pairs in the county.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed August 1999.