

Notified to the Secretary of State 7 March 1989

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: BRENDON AND VEALAND FEN

DISTRICT: Torridge

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, Torridge District Council

National Grid Reference: SS 281069

Area: 18.3 (ha) 45.1 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 190

1:10,000: SS 20 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site displays a range of herb-rich mire and swamp communities, several of which are nationally scarce and restricted to South West Britain. Several local plant species are also present.

Situated approximately 8 km from the coast and at an altitude of 120 metres, the site is subject to a strong oceanic climate. It occupies a gently sloping valley side and flood plain of the upper reaches of the River Tamar. The clays derive from Carboniferous sediments and provide a slowly permeable soil with attendant seasonal water-logging.

The low-lying wettest parts of the site support a mosaic of marshland plant communities. Here Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Rushes *Juncus effusus* and *J. acutiflorus*, Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* and Marsh-Marigold *Caltha palustris* are abundant, the last forming distinct sands in places. These species are accompanied by many others, including frequent Horsetails *Equisetum spp*, Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, Common Valerian *Valeriana officinal* Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*. Beds of Bladder-sedge *Carex vesicaria*, Common Sedge *C. nigra*, Greater Tussock-sedge *C. paniculata* and Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvatica* have developed in places, while the presence of Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus* and Parsley Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* is indicative of the oceanic influence. Wood club-rush, Bladder-sedge and Marsh Cinquefoil are all uncommon plants in Devon, while the Wavy St John's-wort *Hypericum undulatum* which also occurs is nationally scarce.

In several places on the valley side quaking bogs have formed. These are characterised by a dominance of Bog-mosses *Sphagnum spp* and the moss *Aulacomnium palustre*. Herbs include abundant Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Star Sedge *C. echinata*, Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris* and Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. Roundleaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, Marsh Pennywort *hydrocotyle vulgaris* and Heath Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* are frequent associates.

On slightly drier ground a rough grassland community occurs with a tussocky growth of Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* being dominant, with frequent Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*, Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*. A heathy

element is represented by occasional Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Creeping Willow *Salix repens*.

A further plant community present on the site is a type of rush pasture, where grasses such as Bents *Agrostis spp*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* are interspersed with Rushes *Juncus spp*. Herbs such as Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*, Bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre* and Ragged-Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* are found here together with abundant Whorled Caraway *Carum verticillatum*, a local plant in Devon.

Otters *Lutra lutra* frequent the river bank, while breeding birds include Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* and Reed Bunting *emberica schoeniclus*.