

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE 19TH  
MARCH 1990

COUNTY: NORFOLK            SITE NAME: CASTLE ACRE COMMON

DISTRICT: WEST NORFOLK

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

Local Planning Authority: West Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 802152            Area : 17.7 (ha.) 43.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132            1:10,000: TF 71 NE, TF 81 NW  
TF 71 SE, TF 81 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990            Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of a large area of unimproved grazing marsh on the banks of the River Nar. The grassland communities are exceptionally diverse and make this the most important valley grassland site in west Norfolk. Many different grassland types are present and these reflect underlying variations in soil acidity and wetness. Acidic flush communities are an unusual feature and occur where springs emerge from sands at the base of the valley sides. The marshy conditions provide suitable nesting sites for several species of wetland birds.

The waterlogged soils in the valley-bottom support a marshy grassland flora dominated by a variety of species including marsh horsetail *Equisetum palustre*, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and brown sedge *Carex disticha*. This rich community includes several other plants characteristic of such conditions, namely flat sedge *Blysmus compressus*, devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*. There is a graduation to tall fen vegetation on the wettest soils adjacent to the river and these areas are dominated by reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, common reed *Phragmites australis* or lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis*.

Damp, slightly acidic grassland occurs on the drier margins of the site. The rabbit-grazed short turf is dominated by sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, together with a variety of other grasses including creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, mat-grass *Nardus stricta* and sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*. Herb species are well-represented and notable species include meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*.

The acidic flushes merge from the base of a bracken-covered slope and are marked by a narrow band of vegetation dominated by bog-mosses

*Sphagnum spp.* Plants associated with this unusual community include marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and heath rush *Juncus squarrosus*.

Several pairs of snipe nest on the marshy areas and other breeding birds include lapwing, sedge warbler and cuckoo.