

File ref:

**County:** Lincolnshire **Site name:** Cowbit Wash

**District:** South Holland

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

**Local Planning Authority:** South Holland District Council

**National Grid Reference:** TF 240191 **Area:** 9.08 (ha) (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000:** 131 **1: 10 000:** TF 21 NW

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

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 16 June 1999 **Date of Last Revision:** -

**Other Information:**

A new site listed in the *Geological Conservation Review (GCR)*.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Cowbit Wash lies three kilometres south of Spalding, between the River Welland, A1073 and A17. The interest lies below intensely farmed agricultural land.

Cowbit Wash is an important site for studies of Flandrian (i.e. post-glacial) sea level changes.

A series of boreholes across Cowbit Wash has revealed a sequence of alternating marine clastic and freshwater peat layers which have been used for pollen, diatom, particle-size and radiocarbon analyses.

The analyses show a first period of peat accumulation starting at *c*5900 BP which was terminated by a short period of marine deposition (*c*5600 BP). Deposition of brackish/marine sediments recommenced at *c*5600 BP and continued, with an apparently brief interruption at *c*4450 BP recorded by a discontinuous peat horizon, until *c*2600 BP. The uppermost peat above the brackish/marine sediments is also discontinuous, probably due to earlier peat cutting or cultivation, but is now protected by a sandy-silt containing mainly freshwater diatoms. It is thought that this surface deposit originates from periods of river flooding of Cowbit Wash and at the reference site is 1.67m thick.

This is the only site from the Lincolnshire Fenland which provides pollen, diatom and radiocarbon data for multiple transgressive and regressive episodes and correlates well with the sequences at Adventurers' Land, Guyhirn. Together they are very important in the recognition of one of the earliest transgressive sequences (Wash II) within the Fenland and have great potential for further study.