

File ref:

County: Lincolnshire **Site name:** Lea Marsh

District: West Lindsey

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

Local Planning Authority: West Lindsey District Council

National Grid Reference: SK 816868 **Area:** 27.24 (ha) 67.31 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 112 **1: 10 000:** SK 88 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 03.08.1998 **Date of Last Revision:**

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Lea Marsh is an important area of unimproved floodplain meadow and wet pasture adjacent to the River Trent in north-west Lincolnshire. The site lies on seasonally-inundated alluvial soils and includes an unusually large area of a nationally rare grassland type. Populations of two nationally scarce plants with a restricted distribution in the East Midlands are particularly notable, whilst breeding waders provide additional interest.

The traditionally managed area of hay meadow supports a floodplain meadow community which has been greatly reduced in extent across much of England. At Lea Marsh this plant community is characterised by an impressive abundance of herbs including great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, lesser stichwort *Stellaria graminea*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus* and common meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum*.

Of particular note is the presence of a large population of narrow-leaved water-dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia*, a nationally scarce plant of very restricted distribution in the East Midlands, and the nationally scarce mousetail *Myosurus minimus*. Lea Marsh is the only known locality for both these plants in Lincolnshire.

A diverse range of grasses is a dominant feature of the grassland sward within areas of both meadow and pasture. Red fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, meadow foxtail *Alopecurus* cont..

Lea Marsh (cont...)

pratensis and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* all feature strongly, together with tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* and meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum* in varying amounts.

Permanently wet depressions and shallow ditches flow northwards across the site and support an inundation community characterised by creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, marsh foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus*, soft rush *Juncus effusus*, creeping jenny *Lysimachia mummularia* and hairy sedge *Carex hirta*.

Deeper drains form the perimeter of the site and are characterised by open water with species-rich aquatic and marginal vegetation, together with tall-herb and scrub communities. Open stretches of ditch support species such as common duckweed *Lemna minor*, water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*, water mint *Mentha aquatica*, amphibious bistort *Polygonum amphibium*, lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis*, common reed *Phragmites communis*, common reedmace *Typha latifolia*, reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*. On the deeper drain sides, herbs such as purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and common meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum* occur amongst more grassy vegetation dominated by false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. Less species-rich banks are dominated by osier *Salix viminalis*, white willow *S. alba*, grey willow *S. cinerea*, goat willow *S. caprea* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*.

Snipe and curlew occasionally breed on the site at one of their few localities in the county and water vole *Arvicola terrestris*, a declining species, has been recently recorded from the perimeter ditches.