

Site name: Stiffkey Valley **County:** Norfolk

District: North Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authorities: North Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 982433 **Area:** 44.35 (ha)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50000: 32 **1:10000:** TF 94 SE

Date Notified (under the 1981 Act): 25 November 2002

Reasons for notification:

A wetland habitat supporting nationally important populations of breeding avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, an assemblage of breeding birds associated with lowland damp grasslands and an assemblage of breeding birds associated with lowland open waters and their margins.

General description:

Stiffkey valley comprises a range of different wetland habitats created in the flood plain of the River Stiffkey. The majority of the site comprises areas of standing open water, grazing marsh and reedbed. Smaller areas of carr woodland and scrub are also present.

The outstanding assemblage of regularly breeding birds associated with lowland open water and their margins and lowland damp grasslands found here includes little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, gadwall *Anas strepera*, teal *Anas crecca*, garganey *Anas querquedula*, shoveler *Anas clypeata*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, water rail *Rallus aquaticus*, avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, and reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

In addition to the breeding bird assemblages, the site also supports wintering populations of wetland birds. These include bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, brent goose *Branta bernicla*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, teal *Anas crecca*, pintail *Anas acuta*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and bearded tit *Panurus biarmicus*. Marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus* and barn owl *Tyto alba* use the site for hunting throughout the year.

Passage waders include greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, and common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*.

Other breeding species include long-eared owl *Asio otus*, turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*, whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, lesser whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, and bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*.