

COUNTY: SUFFOLK      SITE NAME: SIZEWELL MARSHES

DISTRICT: SUFFOLK COASTAL

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

Local Planning Authority: SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL, Suffolk Coastal District Council

National Grid Reference: TM 466638      Area: 104.33 (ha.) 257.80 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 156      1:10,000: TM 46 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987      Date of Last Revision: 1992

Other Information:

The site has been extended at the 1992 revision.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Sizewell Marshes are important for their large area of lowland, unimproved wet meadows which support outstanding assemblages of invertebrates and breeding birds. Several nationally scarce plants are also present.

The site occupies a low-laying basin of deep fen peat. The water table is permanently high, with the area being prone to flooding, and there is an extensive network of ditches across the site.

In the areas of unimproved wet meadow the principal grass species are Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Rough-stalked Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*. There are many other typical species including Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Large Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, Marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza* spp., Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, sedges *Carex* spp. and rushes *Juncus* spp. The nationally scarce Marsh Dock *Rumex palustris* and Greater Water-parsnip *Sium latifolium* are also present. It is considered that these communities are representative of the *Juncus subnodulosus* – *Cirsium palustre* fen-meadow and the *J. effusus/acutiflorus* – *Galium palustre* rush-pasture, as described in the National Vegetation Classification. In addition, several areas of reedbed dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and alder carr occur.

The extensive ditch system supports a diverse aquatic flora which includes the nationally scarce Soft Hornwort *Ceratophyllum submersum*, Fen Pondweed *Potamogeton coloratus* and Whorled Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum verticillatum*. The variety of ditch depths and widths, together with their fringing vegetation provide an important contribution to the site's habitat value for invertebrates and birdlife.

Sizewell Marshes are of exceptional interest for their invertebrate fauna, supporting a wide range of taxa and many nationally rare or scarce species. These include terrestrial and aquatic beetles (Coleoptera), flies (Diptera), moths (Lepidoptera), dragonflies (Odonata) and spiders (Araneae).

The breeding bird assemblage is also of national significance with many species that are typical of wet grassland and associated habitats, including Shoveler, Gadwall, Teal, Snipe and Lapwing.