COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE    SITE NAME: BOSWORTH MILL MEADOW

District: Daventry

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

Local Planning Authority: Daventry District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 628822

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 140  1:10,000: SP 68 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984  Date of Last Revision:

Area: 5.2 ha  12.84 ac

Other Information: This is a new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification

A traditionally managed hay meadow on a sloping site in the valley of the river Avon. There are a wide variety of grassland communities developed over complex soils derived from Glacial Sand and Gravel, Lower Lias clay and River Deposits. The main grassland type, crested dog’s-tail-common knapweed, shows two distinct variants on clay and gravel. Vigorous springs give rise to seepage areas with a well-defined flora. The deep, alluvial soils of the valley floor support the meadow foxtail-great burnet community with tall fen where drainage is most impeded.

Agriculturally-unimproved ‘old grassland’ on the Lias clay and associated drift soils is now a rare phenomenon and there are no other known sites in Northamptonshire where it is juxtaposed with the characteristic plant community of alluvial flood-meadows. The latter is confined to the Midlands and southern England and is much reduced, and of very scattered occurrence. The moss and sedge-rich ‘flushes’ watered by spring flows have also become very scarce due to land drainage and these are among the best examples in the county.

The dry, sandy upper slopes support a thin, species poor turf of common bent Agrostis capillaris, red fescue Festuca rubra and sweet vernal-grass Anthoxanthum odoratum with abundant pignut Conopodium majus and common sorrel Rumex acetosa. On moister more fertile soil these species are joined by many others including Yorkshire fog Holcus lanatus, lady’s bedstraw Galium verum, bulbous buttercup Ranunculus bulbosus, field wood-rush Luzula campestris, bugle Ajuga reptans, betony Stachys officinalis and devil’s-bit scabious Succisa pratensis. The turf is very heterogeneous with conspicuous patches of meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria and rushes Juncus spp. associated with the spring line. Also found here are the county rarities meadow saxifrage Saxifraga granulata and adder’s tongue Ophioglossum vulgatum.

On the lower ground where flooding has been a feature there is a diverse sward with prominent great burnet Sanguisorba officinalis and this grades into tall fen along the riverside dominated by reed sweet-grass Glyceria maxima and lesser pond-sedge Carex acutiformis.

Rank, marshy grassland and mixed scrub provide additional wildlife habitat and the site has a good variety of songbirds.