COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE    SITE NAME: SOUTHFIELD FARM MARSH

District: Kettering

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

Local Planning Authority: Kettering Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SP 885759

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 141   1:10,000: SP 87 NE

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

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

Area: 8.7 ha 21.5 ac

Other Information: This is a new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification

The largest known area of long-established tall grass washland in Northamptonshire, a characteristic, but now much reduced vegetation type of alluvial soils in river valleys subject to regular winter flooding. The site includes base-rich and floristically diverse mire developed on silty peats and watered by calcareous spring-flows. This locally rare community supports a specialised and uncommon invertebrate fauna.

Degenerating wet meadow and sedge-marsh (Carex species) provides a complementary area for wetland plants and animals north of the abandoned railway. The thickly scrubbed embankments are an additional habitat and their shelter is to the advantage of weak-flying insects utilising the flood plain.

The washland is composed of large spreads of a few plants notably reed sweet-grass Glyceria maxima, with locally abundant reed canary-grass Phalaris arundinacea, tufted hair-grass Deschampsia cespitosa, floating sweet-grass Glyceria fluitans, lesser pond-sedge Carex acutiformis and tufted-sedge Carex elata.

The spring-fed mire, by contrast, has a variety of wetland herbs with no obvious dominant. Some examples are: wild angelica Angelica sylvestris, marsh thistle Cirsium palustre, water horsetail Equisetum fluviatile, greater bird’s-foot-trefoil Lotus uliginosus and common marsh-bedstraw Galium palustre.

Of the invertebrate fauna, the soldier flies Stratiomyidae, craneflies Tipulidae and hoverflies Syrphidae are of particular interest.