

**County:** Essex **Site Name:** West Thurrock Lagoon & Marshes

**District:** Thurrock

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Thurrock Borough Council

**National Grid Reference:** TQ 585766 **Area:** 66.08 (ha) 163.30 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000:** 177 **1: 10 000** TQ 57 NE

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

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 14.11.1991. **Date of Last Revision** -

**Other Information:**

This is a new site.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

West Thurrock Lagoon and Marshes is one of the most important sites for wintering waders and wildfowl on the Inner Thames Estuary. The combination of extensive intertidal mudflats together with a large and secure high tide roost, attracts waders in nationally important numbers, with significant populations of other bird species. The adjacent Stone Ness saltmarsh is noted for the size and character of its high marsh plant community.

The lagoon is an important high tide roost for overwintering waders and wildfowl. Large reed beds with abundant common reed *Phragmites australis* and Sea Club-rush *Scirpus maritimus* border its south and eastern perimeter where Reed Warblers, Sedge Warblers and the notable Bearded Tit breed. In addition locally important numbers of Teal, Snipe and Grey Heron roost on the shallow waters, grassy islands and lagoon margins. Recent changes in the management of the lagoon have improved the habitat as a high tide roost.

The mudflats form the single largest intertidal feeding area, for wintering waders and wildfowl, on the inner Thames estuary. In addition to providing a vital feeding area for the birds which roost on the lagoon, it is also regularly used as a low tide roost by migrant Common, Black and Arctic Terns, attracted by the rich food source around the warm water outfall from the adjacent power station.

Stone Ness saltings constitute the largest area of saltmarsh in the inner Thames estuary, and are characteristically high marshes of low salinity. The vegetation is dominated by Sea Club-rush *Scirpus maritimus*, Sea Aster *Aster tripolium* and Spear-leaved orache *Atriplex prostrata*.

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### **West Thurrock Lagoon & Marshes (cont...)**

While the community is widespread in Essex it is more regularly found in small stands beside borrow-dykes. Stone Ness is one of the few sites where it occurs outside the sea wall, and is unusually large in extent. Additional interest is provided by a wintering flock of several hundred mixed finches.