

COUNTY: CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** ST NEOTS COMMON

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

Local Planning Authorities: Huntingdonshire District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 183613

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** TL 16 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954 **Date of Last Revision:** 1971

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 32.5 ha 80 ac

Other information: A boundary modification has been made at this revision.

Description and Reasons for Notification

This riverside common holds alluvial grassland and associated ponds, ditches and willow carr which together provide an area of diverse wildlife habitat supporting a variety of species.

The grassland, the main habitat present, is geographically a southern group and in a county context it is one of the very few alluvial grasslands which remains under the traditional management, in this instance grazing, which has maintained a species-rich sward.

The wetter grassland type is characterised by the presence of grasses such as marsh foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* and floating sweet grass *Glyceria fluitans*, together with a variety of sedges. A variety of herbs characteristic of such wet pasture are present. These include the common water dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and the marsh arrow grass *Triglochin palustris*.

On drier areas a calcareous influence is apparent with the presence of quaking grass *Briza media* and the meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*.

The habitat variety of the site is further enhanced by the presence of ponds and ditches which support a good aquatic flora and fauna. The ditch flora includes water plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica* and brookweed *Samolus valerandi*. There are also thriving colonies of toads and frogs, the latter being rare in the county.

The willow holt within the site holds nine species of willow including *Salix purpurea* and *S. triandra* var. *amygalina* and the area supports the large bitter cress *Cardamine amara* and the butterbur *Petasites hybridus*.

Although not yet studied in great detail the invertebrate fauna of such diverse areas is characteristically equally diverse.