

File ref: SE 24/R

County: West Yorkshire

Site Name: Breary Marsh

District: Leeds

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

Local Planning Authority: Leeds City Council

National Grid Reference: SE 264416 **Area:** 9.5 (ha) 23.47 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 104 **1:10,000:** SE 24 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1979 **Date of Last Revision:** –

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

Other Information:

No change to boundary at renotification.

Description:

This site lies 1 km south east of the village of Bramhope just north of Leeds, on the headwaters of Adel Beck which flows ultimately to the river Aire. The geology is mainly drift overlying Carboniferous millstone grit at an altitude of around 130 m AOD.

Breary Marsh is a representative example of a wet valley alderwood and associated flood plain fen communities and is the most diverse example known in the county. These habitats would once have been frequent along stream and river valleys in the county but now are localised and fragmented.

A fen community has developed on alluvial flats beside the stream in the northern sector of the site in which meadow-sweet, wild angelical and figwort are typical tall herbs with occasional stands of branched bur-reed and yellow iris. This is being colonised by a scrub of willow *Salix cinerea* and *Salix caprea*.

The fen grades southwards into a neglected coppice predominantly of alder. This 'carr' contains marshy pools with common reed, reed canary grass, water mint, marsh marigold and bog bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. There are numerous tussocks of the greater tussock sedge and ferns, including male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, broad buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and narrow buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* are abundant. Wood sorrel, dog's mercury and woody nightshade occur on patches of drier ground. There is sharp contrast between this wet woodland and more freely drained ground to the south where densely grown birch coppice together with oak and rowan has a ground vegetation dominated by creeping soft-grass and bluebell.

An extensive list of insects has been recorded including several uncommon in the county, for example the beetle *Quedius fulvicollis* which is characteristic of ancient fen habitats.