

COUNTY: EAST SUSSEX SITE NAME: HERSTMONCEUX PARK

DISTRICT: WEALDEN

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

Local Planning Authority: WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 650107 Area: 4.5 (ha.) 11.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 199 1:10,000: TQ 61 SW, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1966 Date of Last Revision: 1979

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The revised site-boundary includes an extension to this site.

Reasons for Notification:

Herstmonceux Park contains 7 examples of wetland habitats on Tunbridge Wells sandstone, and is especially notable for its fen vegetation which is not normally associated with calcium deficient sites. It is the locality of two plant species which are rare in south-east England. The site comprises a narrow stream valley occupied by a series of artificial ponds with fringing fen vegetation and associated wet woodland.

The open water of the ponds contains a range of aquatic plant species including water violet *Hottonia palustris* and arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, but tall fen vegetation dominated by lesser reedmace *Typha angustifolia* and reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea* is gradually encroaching around the edges. This habitat contains milk parsley *Peucedanum palustre* in its only locality outside the calcareous fens of Somerset and East Anglia. Its presence is thought to be due to the alkaline conditions produced here by high iron concentrations rather than calcium.

Wet woodland dominated by grey willow *Salix cinerea* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* occupies the valley floor, with alder increasing further away from the stream. An area of sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* coppice in the south east of the site contains Cornish moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea* in one of its few localities outside south-west Britain.