

County: Greater Manchester **Site Name:** Hollinwood Branch Canal

District: Tameside

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

Local Planning Authority: Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SJ 910993 – SJ 920004 **Area:** 3.3 (ha) 8.2 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50 000 109 **1:10 000** SJ 99 NW, SD 90 SW

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

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

Other Information:

1. The site is managed as part of the Medlock Valley Daisy Nook Country Park.
2. It is a Cheshire Conservation Trust nature reserve.
3. This is a new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The Hollinwood branch of the Ashton Canal lies ca. 2 km north east of Droylsden. In the south it begins and Lumb Mill and runs northwards towards Daisy Nook, along the crest of the steep Medlock Valley. It is bordered uphill to the east by pastureland, from which it receives run-off water. The canal lies on glacial boulder clays overlying Carboniferous Westphalian Coal Measures. The water level is controlled by a series of weirs.

The canal is the best example of a mesotrophic standing water system in Greater Manchester and Merseyside. The main habitats are open water, swamp and tall fen. Damp unimproved neutral grassland occurs on the eastern bank and unimproved neutral grassland, scattered trees and shrubs and a hedge to the west.

As a consequence of the high water quality and profile of the canal, the open water plant communities are exceptionally diverse and contain several regionally and nationally rare species. Broad-leaved pondweed is a constant and dominant species throughout but is often co-dominant with any of water-soldier *Stratiotes aloides*, frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, rigid hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum*, Canadian waterweed and water-starwort spp. Other commonly occurring species include floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*, unbranched bur-reed

Sparganium emersum, the alga *Nitella flexilis*, the moss *Fontinalis antipyretica* and a number of pondweeds including the red, grass-wrack, long-stalked and hairlike pondweeds *Potamogeton alpinus*, *P. compressus*, *P. praelongus* and *P. trichoides*.

The margins of the canal support a wide range of mixed tall fen communities comprising reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, bulrush, water forget-me-not, branched bur-reed, great willow herb, gipsywort and water plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*. Reed sweet-grass develops to form particularly dense stands in the northern section of the canal.

The canal banks comprise a damp neutral grassland containing principally tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, common bent, reed canary-grass and false oat-grass.