

COUNTY: SOMERSET SITE NAME: CURRY AND HAY MOORS

DISTRICT: TAUNTON DEANE

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

Local Planning Authority: TAUNTON DEANE DISTRICT COUNCIL, Somerset County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 323273 Area: 472.74 (ha.) 1168.14 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 22 NE, ST 32 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1992 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This is part of the SLM candidate RAMSAR/SPA site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Curry and Hay Moors form part of the complex of grazing marshes known as the Somerset Levels and Moors. The low-lying site is situated adjacent to the River Tone which annually overtops, flooding the fields in winter. Soils are predominantly alluvial clays overlying Altcar series peats.

Vegetation in the grazing meadows consists almost entirely of agriculturally improved swards. A small number of hay meadows are herb-rich, containing species such as Pepper Saxifrage *Silene silene*, the nationally scarce Corky-fruited Water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*, Tubular Water-dropwort *O. fistulosa* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*.

The flora and fauna of the ditches and rhynes is of national importance. Over 70 aquatic and bankside vascular plants have been recorded including Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus*, Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus* and Lesser Water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*. Over 100 species of aquatic invertebrates inhabit the ditches including one nationally rare soldier fly, *Odontomyia ornata* and 13 nationally scarce species including the water beetles *Agabus uliginosus*, *Hydaticus transversalis* and *Helophorus nanus*.

In winter the flooded fields provide food for large numbers of waterfowl with several thousand Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, hundreds of Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and smaller numbers of Golden Plover **Pluvialis apricaria* and Dunlin *Calidris alpina* regularly present. Over two hundred Bewick's Swans **Cygnus bewickii* have been recorded, making the site an internationally important wintering ground for this species. Large numbers of Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Teal *Anas crecca* and Pochard *Aythya ferina* regularly winter on the flooded fields.

Raptor species such as Short-eared Owl **Asio flammeus*, Merlin **Falco columbarius* and Peregrine **Falco peregrinus* regularly hunt over the site in winter.

The moist fields in spring and early summer support a diverse and numerous breeding bird population which is now nationally rare. Species breeding include Lapwing, Snipe, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* and Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*.

Vertebrate species present include Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* and Common Frog *Rana temporaria*. Otters *Lutra lutra* are regularly recorded on the site.

* These species are listed on Annex 1 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds.