

Site name: Dearne Valley Wetlands

Metropolitan County: South Yorkshire

Metropolitan Borough: Barnsley, Rotherham

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

Local Planning Authority: Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 sheets: 111 **National grid reference:** SE434027

Notification date: 13 May 2021 **Area:** 649.99 ha

Reasons for notification:

Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI is of special interest for the following nationally important features:

- Breeding gadwall *Mareca strepera*, shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, garganey *Spatula querquedula*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* and willow tit *Poecile montanus klienschmidtii*.
- Non-breeding gadwall *Mareca strepera* and shoveler *Spatula clypeata*.
- Diverse assemblages of breeding birds of Lowland damp grasslands, Lowland scrub and a mixed assemblage of Lowland open waters and their margins and Lowland fen.

General description:

Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI is situated in South Yorkshire and comprises a network of 22 wetland, scrub and woodland areas that extends through the catchment of the River Dearne. The site lies within the local authority areas of Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster and is within the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area.

The area is post-industrial urban fringe comprising former mining settlements set in a mosaic of farmland, woodland, wetland and floodplain habitats. Large areas of open water and associated habitats within the River Dearne catchment have been created as a result of post-industrial restoration and these areas now support a substantial ornithological interest.

Dearne Valley Wetlands comprises a series of shallow and deep open waters with an associated range of marginal habitats including ditches, reedbed, marsh, wet grassland, scrub and woodland. This range of habitats provides valuable nesting, resting and feeding conditions which support nationally important numbers and assemblages of birds in the breeding and non-breeding seasons.

The open water sites and associated habitats support nationally important numbers of breeding gadwall *Mareca strepera*, shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, garganey *S. querquedula*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. The site also supports nationally important numbers of non-breeding gadwall and shoveler.

Dearne Valley Wetlands is a stronghold for the nationally rare and declining willow tit, *Poecile montanus klienschmidtii*, its wet woodland and scrub habitats supporting ideal breeding territories for the species.

The network of wetland and scrub habitats across the site supports a range of breeding bird assemblages. The large areas of open water and marginal habitats, fen and wet grassland at sites including Carlton Marsh, Edderthorpe Flash, Wombwell Ings, Broomhill Flash, Old Moor, Bolton Ings and Adwick Washlands provide a range of water depths, vegetation structure and food availability which support a large range of breeding bird species. Deeper water provides an abundance of fish for bittern whilst shallower water supports a range of aquatic invertebrates and plants for dabbling and diving ducks such as garganey, shoveler, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula* and pochard, and waders such as avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Marginal vegetation, fen and wet

grassland provide a variety of vegetation heights for nesting and concealment for species such as garganey, gadwall, shoveler, sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, water rail *Rallus aquaticus*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniculus* and bearded tit *Panurus biarmicus* and an abundance of soil and ground-surface invertebrates for species such as lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and redshank *Tringa totanus*.

Areas of scrub are also present throughout the site, either scattered or in distinct blocks with key areas at Carlton Marsh, Warbler Way, The Mullins and Barrow Colliery Site. The nesting and feeding opportunities provided support species such as long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, garden warbler *Sylvia borin*, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia*, willow tit, lesser whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*.