

File ref:

**County:** Essex/Suffolk **Site Name:** Cattawade Marshes

**District:** Tendring/Babergh

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Tendring District Council/Babergh District Council

**National Grid Reference:** TM 090329 **Area:** 88.2 (ha) 217.9 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000:** 168 **1: 10 000:** TM 03 SE, TM 13 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1974 **Date of Last Revision:** 1974

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1988 **Date of Last Revision:** -

**Other Information:**

An area of estuary east of the tidal barrage, formerly within Cattawade Marshes SSSI, has been transferred to Stour Estuary SSSI.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Cattawade Marshes lie at the head of the Stour Estuary, between freshwater and tidal channels of the River Stour. These grazing marshes with associated open water and fen habitats are of major importance for the diversity of their breeding bird community, which includes species that have become uncommon throughout lowland Britain as a result of habitat loss. The site has benefited from a sympathetic management regime aimed at enhancing the ornithological interest. The marshes are also of value as a complement to the adjacent Stour Estuary SSSI where breeding habitats for birds are relatively scarce.

The undisturbed nesting habitats are particularly favourable to waders and wildfowl. Redshank, Lapwing and Oystercatcher breed within the cattle-grazed pasture, while Ringed Plover and Shelduck nest on the relict seawalls. Marshy pools and a system of dykes within the grassland, together with dense riverside vegetation, provide further nesting habitats, most notably for Shoveler, Teal, Tufted Duck and Water Rail.

The neutral grassland is dominated by Couch *Elymus spp.*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*. Characteristic herbs of old grazing marsh, such as Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia* and Hairy buttercup *Ranunculus sardous* are present and, together with ant-hills, are indicative of the undisturbed nature of the site. Scattered marshy areas support a more diverse plant community including Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus*, Celery-leaved Buttercup

*Ranunculus sceleratus*, Sea Club-rush *Scirpus maritimus* and Spear-leaved Orache *Atriplex prostrata*. Sea Club-rush also dominates the majority of ditches

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### **Cattawade Marshes (cont...)**

although those joining the river channels show a gradation, from saltmarsh with Common Saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia maritima*, Sea Aster *Aster tripolium* and Annual Sea-blite *Suaeda maritima* to marsh dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis* where salinity is lowest. Other species present along the fresh-water channel of the River Stour include Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and Flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus*.