

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 12 September 1995 / Updated: May 2005

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Wicken Fen

5. Map of site included:**a) hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ✓ -or- *no***b) digital (electronic) format** (optional): Yes

6. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude):

52° 18' 27'' N

00° 16' 42'' E

7. General location:

Nearest town/city: Newmarket

The site lies 10 km north-east of Cambridge, east of the River Cam.

Administrative region: Cambridgeshire

8. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **9. Area** (hectares): 254

Min. No information available

Max. No information available

Mean No information available

10. Overview:

This site is a marginal remnant of the original peat fenland of the East Anglian basin. It has been preserved as a flood catchment area and its water level is controlled by sluice gates. The vegetation has a strongly mosaic character due to extensive peat-cutting and different systems of crop exploitation. Areas of the site subjected to frequent cutting have a greater species diversity including many sedges, rushes, spike rushes and marsh orchids with corresponding insect associations. Vegetation invasion by bushes resulting in closed *Frangula* carr, has occurred in the absence of mowing. The dykes, abandoned clay pits and the main lode support many aquatic angiosperms. Wildfowl interests include, mallard, teal, wigeon, shoveler, pochards and tufted duck.

11. Ramsar Criteria:

1, 2

12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:

Ramsar criterion 1

One of the most outstanding and representative remnants of the East Anglian peat fens. The area is one of the few which has not been drained. Traditional management has created a mosaic of habitats from open water to sedge and litter fields.

Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports one endangered species of Red Data Book plant, the fen violet *Viola persicifolia*, which survives at only two other sites in Britain. It also contains eight nationally scarce plants and 121 Red Data Book invertebrates.

The GB Red Book considers the vascular plant *Senecio paludosus* as critically endangered; while *Myriophyllum verticillatum* and *Peucedanum palustre* are considered vulnerable.

Secretariat Comment: Criterion 2 requires to specify the scientific names of those species considered vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered. This need to be included in the next update.

13. Biogeography:

a) biogeographic region:

Atlantic

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

Council Directive 92/43/EEC

14. Physical features of the site:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Soil & geology | neutral, clay, peat |
| Geomorphology and landscape | lowland |
| Nutrient status | no information |
| pH | acidic, alkaline |
| Salinity | fresh |
| Soil | mainly organic |
| Water permanence | usually permanent |
| Summary of main climatic features | Annual averages (Cambridge, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/cambridge.html) Max. daily temperature: 14.1° C Min. daily temperature: 6.1° C Days of air frost: 41.9 Rainfall: 553.5 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1501.2 |

General description of the Physical Features:

No information available

15. Physical features of the catchment area:

No information available

16. Hydrological values:

Flood water storage / desynchronisation of flood peaks

17. Wetland types

Inland wetland

| Code | Name | % Area |
|------|------|--------|
|------|------|--------|

| | | |
|---|--|-----|
| U | Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens) | 100 |
|---|--|-----|

18. General ecological features:

To the north of Wicken Lodge is the original peat fen. Here the site supports fen communities of carr and sedge. The carr scrub is largely of alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus*, buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica* and sallow over a sparse vegetation of fen plants including the marsh fen *Thelypteris palustris*. The more open areas of sedge fen are typically of tall grasses, saw sedge *Cladium mariscus*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, sedges *Carex* spp. and rushes *Juncus* spp. A large number of herbs are associated with this community such as milk parsley *Peucedanum palustre* and yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*. To the south of Wicken Lodge, the area is of rough pastureland, reedbed and pools subject to winter flooding. The dykes, abandoned clay-pits and other watercourses are rich in aquatic plants.

19. Noteworthy flora:**Nationally important species occurring on the site.****Higher Plants.**

Viola persicifolia, *Carex appropinquata*, *Lathyrus palustris*, *Myriophyllum verticillatum*, *Oenanthe fluviatilis*, *Peucedanum palustre*, *Potamogeton coloratus*, *Potamogeton friesii*, *Potamogeton praelongus*

20. Noteworthy fauna:**Species Information**

None reported

21. Social and cultural values:

Aesthetic
 Aquatic vegetation (e.g. reeds, willows, seaweed)
 Archaeological/historical site
 Conservation education
 Current scientific research
 Livestock grazing
 Non-consumptive recreation

22. Land tenure/ownership:

| Ownership category | On-site | Off-site |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------|
| Non-governmental organisation | + | + |
| Private | + | + |

23. Current land (including water) use:

| Activity | On-site | Off-site |
|--|---------|----------|
| Nature conservation | + | |
| Recreation | + | |
| Research | + | |
| Collection of non-timber natural products: (unspecified) | + | |
| Grazing (unspecified) | + | |

24. Factors adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

Explanation of reporting category:

1. Those factors that are still operating, but it is unclear if they are under control, as there is a lag in showing the management or regulatory regime to be successful.
2. Those factors that are not currently being managed, or where the regulatory regime appears to have been ineffective so far.

NA = Not Applicable because no factors have been reported.

| Adverse Factor Category | Reporting Category | Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only) | On-Site | Off-Site | Major Impact? |
|--|--------------------|--|---------|----------|---------------|
| Reservoir/barrage/dam impact: flooding | 1 | Work carried out on the nearby river system to prevent flooding in the 1960s means that the site no longer receives the amount of winter water as it did in the past. This has brought about a lowering of the water table over the past 40 years. | + | + | + |

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? NO

25. Conservation measures taken:

| Conservation measure | On-site | Off-site |
|---|---------|----------|
| SSSI / ASSI | + | |
| NNR | + | |
| Land owned by a NGO for nature conservation | + | + |
| Site management statement/plan implemented | + | |
| SAC | + | |

26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

No information available

27. Current scientific research and facilities:

Flora.

Fen Violet *Viola persicifolia* species recovery programme.

Fen Ragwort *Senecio paludosus* species recovery programme.

Fauna.

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon* species recovery programme.

Long ongoing history of research and monitoring – refer to draft Management Plan 1998–2003 and Friday (1997).

28. Current conservation education:

School visits by arrangement are led by The National Trust education and interpretation officer. Visiting University and College groups may visit independently. Individuals engaged in research on the Fen must hold a permit.

29. Current recreation and tourism:

Activities, Facilities provided and Seasonality.

National Trust visitor centre and shop, nature trails, three hides and 16 km of walking routes. Entry by ticket by permit only (this was adopted in 1980 to help control visitor numbers). Visitors are also managed by 'zoning' parts of the Fen near the entrance, leaving the more remote parts of the site relatively undisturbed. The Fen is open throughout the year from dawn to dusk.

30. Jurisdiction:

Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EB

31. Management authority:

Site Designations Manager, English Nature, Sites and Surveillance Team, Northminster House, Northminster Road, Peterborough, PE1 1UA, UK

32. Bibliographical references:

Site-relevant references

- Colston, A (2004) Wicken Fen – realising the vision. *Ecos*, **25**(3/4), 42-45
- Environment Agency (1997) *Wicken Fen water level management plan*. Environment Agency
- Friday, L (ed.) (1997) *Wicken Fen – the making of a nature reserve*. Harley Books, Colchester
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- Stewart, NF (2004) *Important stonewort areas. An assessment of the best areas for stoneworts in the United Kingdom*. Plantlife International, Salisbury
- Walters, M (1994) Classic wildlife sites: Wicken Fen Nature Reserve. *British Wildlife*, **6**(1), 5-13
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