

# RAMSAR INFORMATION SHEET

## FOR WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Site reference number *7UK116* Date of designation: *02/02/98*

**1** **Compilation date** Feb 1999  
**2** **Country** UK (England)  
**3** **Name of wetland** Avon Valley  
**4** **Site centre location:** Latitude: 50 47 02 N Longitude: 01 47 46 W  
**5** **Altitude** Not being submitted  
**6** **Area (ha)** 1385.1

### 7 Overview

The site encompasses the lower reaches of the River Avon and its floodplain between Bickton and Christchurch. The River Avon displays wide fluctuations in water level and parts of the valley are regularly flooded in winter. The Avon valley has a greater range of habitats and a more diverse flora and fauna than any other chalk river in Britain. The valley includes one of the largest expanses of unimproved floodplain grassland in Britain, including extensive areas managed as hay meadow.

**8 Wetland type** Inland wetland. Man-made wetland

Code	Name	% Area
M	Rivers / streams / creeks: permanent	1.8
X <i>Xf</i>	Tree-dominated wetlands	1.1
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	84.6
7	Gravel / brick / clay pits	12.5

**9 Ramsar Criteria** 1a, 2a, 3c  
**10 Map of the site** ✓  
**11 Compiler** Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
Monkstone House  
City Road  
Peterborough  
Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY  
UK  
Telephone/Fax : +44(0) 1733 562626 / +44(0) 1733 555948

### 12 Justification of criteria

#### Ramsar criterion 1a

The site shows a greater range of habitats than any other chalk river in Britain, including fen, mire, lowland wet grassland and small areas of woodland.

#### Ramsar criterion 2a

The site supports a diverse assemblage of wetland flora and fauna including several nationally-rare species.

#### Ramsar criterion 3c

Over winter the site regularly supports internationally important populations of: Gadwall *Anas strepera*

### 13 General location

Nearest town/city: Christchurch

Located adjacent to the central south coast of England, west of the Solent. The site is orientated north to south between Bickton and Christchurch, and part of the site comprises the county boundary between Hampshire and Dorset.

**Administrative Region:** Hampshire, Dorset

#### 14 Physical Features

Soil & Geology	alluvium, basic, clay, gravel, limestone/chalk, mud, neutral, nutrient-rich, peat, sand, sedimentary
Geomorphology and Landscape	floodplain, lowland, pools, valley
Nutrient status	no information
pH	acidic, alkaline
Salinity	brackish / mixosaline, fresh
Soil	no information
Water permanence	usually permanent, usually seasonal / intermittent
Summary of main climatic features	Rainy, temperate climate with a mild winter and periodic frost. Mean minimum temperature approximately 7.0°C. Mean maximum temperature approximately 14.2°C. Mean annual precipitation approximately 765.1mm, with a winter maximum.

#### 15 Hydrological values

Other, Flood water storage / desynchronisation of flood peaks

#### 16 Ecological features

The main habitat types of this site are, seasonally-flooded mesotrophic grassland, including traditionally managed hay-meadow, dry acid grassland on windblown sand, standing freshwater, including seasonal floodwaters and gravel pits.

Chalk river with acidic tributaries, characterised by floating *Ranunculus*, and fen and mire are also present.

#### 17 Noteworthy flora

**Nationally important species occurring on the site.**

##### Higher Plants.

*Cyperus fuscus*, *Pulicaria vulgaris*.

#### 18 Noteworthy fauna

##### Birds

**Species occurring at levels of international importance (as identified at designation):**

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Gadwall, *Anas strepera*  
(Northwestern Europe) 667 individuals, representing an average of 2.2% of the population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

**Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:**

**Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Bewick's Swan, *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*  
(Western Siberia/Northeastern & Northwestern Europe) 135 individuals, representing an average of 1.9% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

Coot, *Fulica atra*  
(Northwestern Europe (wintering)) 1989 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

	1995/96)
Little Grebe, <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> (Western Palearctic)	35 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Mute Swan, <i>Cygnus olor</i> (Northwestern Mainland & Central Europe)	306 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Pochard, <i>Aythya ferina</i> (Northwestern/Northeastern Europe)	570 individuals, representing an average of 1.3% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Shoveler, <i>Anas clypeata</i> (Northwestern/Central Europe)	157 individuals, representing an average of 1.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
White-fronted Goose, <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i> (Northwestern Siberia/Northeastern & Northwestern Europe)	79 individuals, representing an average of 1.3% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)
Wigeon, <i>Anas penelope</i> (Western Siberia/Northwestern/Northeastern Europe)	3303 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96)

**Nationally important species occurring on the site.**

**Invertebrates.**

*Libellula fulva, Valvata macrostoma, Vertigo moulinsiana, Pisidium tenuilineatum.*

**19 Social and Cultural Values**

- Aesthetic
- Archaeological/historical site
- Conservation education
- Current scientific research
- Fisheries production
- Livestock grazing
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Sport fishing

**20 Land tenure/ownership**

Ownership category	On-Site	Off-Site
Private	+	+

**21 Current land use**

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Nature conservation	+	+	Small-Scale
Tourism		+	Small-Scale
Recreation	+	+	Small-Scale
Commercial forestry		+	Large-Scale
Cutting for firewood		+	Small-Scale
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	+	Small-Scale
Gathering of shellfish		+	Small-Scale
Bait collection		+	Small-Scale
Shifting arable agriculture		+	Small-Scale

Permanent arable agriculture		+	Large-Scale
Grazing (unspecified)	+	+	Large-Scale
Rough or shifting grazing		+	Large-Scale
Permanent pastoral agriculture	+	+	Large-Scale
Hay meadows	+	+	Small-Scale
Hunting: recreational/sport		+	Small-Scale
Sewage treatment/disposal	+	+	Small-Scale
Harbour/port		+	Small-Scale
Flood control	+	+	Small-Scale
Irrigation (inc agricultural water supply)		+	Small-Scale
Mineral exploration	+	+	Small-Scale
Transport route		+	Small-Scale
Domestic water supply	+		Large-Scale
Urban development		+	Small-Scale
Non-urbanised settlements		+	Small-Scale

## 22 Adverse factors affecting the ecological character of the site

Activity	On-Site	Off-Site	Scale
Drainage/reclamation for agriculture	+		Large-Scale
Water extraction (not covered elsewhere)	+	+	Large-Scale

## 23 Conservation measures taken

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
SSSI	+	+
NNR		+
SPA	+	+
Land owned by a NGO for nature conservation	+	+
Management agreement	+	
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	
Other	+	

## 24 Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented

see below

### Site vulnerability and management statement

Problems with retaining floodwater can lead to drying out of the site in summer, affecting breeding waders, flora and invertebrate fauna. This issue is being addressed through management agreements, site management statements, water level management plans and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agreements. The site is also vulnerable due to water abstraction. Such abstraction within the vicinity of the site will be reviewed under the provisions of the Habitat Regulations as the site is also a Special Protection Area (SPA).

## 25 Current scientific research/survey/monitoring and facilities

### Fauna.

Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

## **26 Current conservation education**

There is a study centre with laboratory facilities available for local schools and institutions.

## **27 Current recreation and tourism**

Activities and facilities provided.

Informal walking, coarse-fish and game-fish angling, localised canoeing and watersports, birdwatching, wildfowling and game shooting.

### **Seasonality.**

Coarse and game angling take place during September-March.

Wildfowling and game shooting take place during winter.

## **28 Functional jurisdiction**

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

## **29 Management authority**

English Nature

## **30 Bibliography**

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