

**EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild  
Fauna and Flora**

**Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

**Name:** Cannock Extension Canal  
**Unitary Authority/County:** Walsall, Staffordshire  
**SAC status:** Designated on 1 April 2005  
**Grid reference:** SK020058  
**SAC EU code:** UK0012672  
**Area (ha):** 5.47  
**Component SSSI:** Cannock Extension Canal SSSI

**Site description:**

Cannock Extension Canal in central England is an example of anthropogenic, lowland habitat supporting floating water-plantain *Luronium natans* at the eastern limit of the plant's natural distribution in England. A very large population of the species occurs in the Canal, which has a diverse aquatic flora and rich dragonfly fauna, indicative of good water quality. The low volume of boat traffic on this terminal branch of the Wyrley and Essington Canal has allowed open-water plants, including floating water-plantain, to flourish, while depressing the growth of emergents.

**Qualifying species:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0012672

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs



## European Site Conservation Objectives for Cannock Extension Canal Special Area of Conservation Site Code: UK0012672

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

**Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;**

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

This document should be read in conjunction with the accompanying *Supplementary Advice* document, which provides more detailed advice and information to enable the application and achievement of the Objectives set out above.

### Qualifying Features:

S1831. *Luronium natans*; Floating water-plantain

## Explanatory Notes: European Site Conservation Objectives

These Conservation Objectives are those referred to in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the “Habitats Regulations”) and Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. They must be considered when a competent authority is required to make a ‘Habitats Regulations Assessment’, including an Appropriate Assessment, under the relevant parts of this legislation.

These Conservation Objectives and the accompanying Supplementary Advice (where available) will also provide a framework to inform the measures needed to conserve or restore the European Site and the prevention of deterioration or significant disturbance of its qualifying features as required by the provisions of Article 6(1) and 6(2) of the Directive.

These Conservation Objectives are set for each habitat or species of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Where the objectives are met, the site will be considered to exhibit a high degree of integrity and to be contributing to achieving Favourable Conservation Status for that species or habitat type at a UK level. The term ‘favourable conservation status’ is defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive.

**Publication date:** 30 June 2014 – version 2. This document updates and replaces an earlier version dated 29 May 2012 to reflect Natural England’s Strategic Standard on European Site Conservation Objectives 2014.



COUNTY: STAFFORDSHIRE,  
WEST MIDLANDS

SITE NAME: CANNOCK  
EXTENSION CANAL

DISTRICT: Cannock Chase Walsall

SITE REF: 15W2L

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

Local Planning Authority: STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Cannock Chase District Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SK 019044, SK 020069 Area: 5.47 (ha.) 13.5 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 139

1:10,000: SK 00 NW, SK 00 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 25 March 1993

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:  
New site.

#### Description and Reasons for Notification:

The Cannock Extension is a terminal side branch of the Wyrley and Essington Canal extending northwards for 2.5 km towards Norton Canes. It is part of the extensive inland waterway system running throughout Birmingham and the Black Country. The high water quality, uneven canal bottom and the low volume of boat traffic have allowed a diverse aquatic flora to develop without any extensive reedswamp incursion.

A total of thirty four aquatic plants have been recorded from the canal, making it the richest known waterway of its type in Staffordshire and the West Midlands, and placing it high within the national canal network series.

Of major importance is a large population of the nationally scarce floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*, the best known colony in both Staffordshire and the West Midlands. This plant, recognised as endangered in Europe, is found throughout the length of the Cannock Extension. Good populations also exist of flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus*, arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, shining pondweed *Potamogeton lucens*, perfoliate pondweed *P. perfoliatus* and spiked water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*, all of which are rare or uncommon in Staffordshire. Other uncommon species present include curled pondweed *P. crispus* and narrow-leaved water-plantain *Alisma lanceolatum*.

The eastern canal bank is brick-edged with several species including hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum* and water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*, growing out of the brickwork. The towpath itself supports such species as common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*. The western bank is much more natural with reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* forming extensive marginal stands. Yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris* add to the diversity of this community.

At least nine species of dragonfly have been recorded in association with the canal, including the red-eyed damselfly *Erythromma najas* and emperor dragonfly *Anax imperator*, the latter species being at the northern edge of its range in Britain.

## Operations likely to damage the special interest

Site name: Cannock Extension Canal

OLD1006558

Ref. No.	Type of Operation
1	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, and re-seeding.
2	The introduction of grazing and changes in the grazing regime (including type of stock, intensity or seasonal pattern of grazing and cessation of grazing).
3	The introduction of stock feeding and changes in stock feeding practice.
4	Mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation and changes in the mowing or cutting regime (including hay making to silage and cessation).
5	Application of manure, fertilisers and lime.
6	Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weedkillers).
7	Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials.
8	Burning.
9	The release into the site of any wild, feral or domestic animal*, plant or seed.
10	The killing or removal of any wild animal*, including/other than pest control.
11	The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including tree, shrub, herb, aquatic plants, hedge, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould and turf.
12	The introduction of tree or woodland management+ and changes in tree or woodland management+.
13a	Drainage (including the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains).
13b	Modification to the structure of the canal including its banks and beds, as by re-alignment, re-grading and dredging.
13c	Management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes.
14	The changing of water levels and tables and water utilisation (including irrigation, storage and abstraction from existing water bodies and through boreholes).
15	Infilling of the canal.
16a	Freshwater fishery production and management and changes in freshwater fishery production and management, including sporting fishing and angling.
20	Extraction of minerals, including peat, sand and gravel, topsoil, subsoil and spoil.
21	Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground.
22	Storage of materials.
23	Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling.
26	Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
27	Recreational or other activities likely to damage the aquatic and marginal vegetation.
28	Introduction of game or waterfowl management and changes in game and waterfowl management and hunting practice.

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\* 'animal' includes any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate.

+ including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning, coppicing, modification of the stand or underwood, changes in species composition, cessation of management.





## Views About Management

### **A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Cannock Extension Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).**

This statement represents English Nature's views about the management of the SSSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the site's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. English Nature has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the SSSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the SSSI. Also, there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation. English Nature's written consent is still required before carrying out any operation likely to damage the features of special interest (see your SSSI notification papers for a list of these operations). English Nature welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the SSSI to ensure that the management of this site conserves and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

## Management Principles

### **Canals**

Most canals were created during the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the inland transport of freight by boat, but their use declined with the advent of the railways and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century many canals had fallen into disrepair. Today most of the canal network is open to navigation and mainly supports pleasure boating. However, small proportions of canals are not open to boating and are termed 'remainder waterways'. Despite their artificial origin and uniform structure, canals may have significant wildlife value as they are often fed by good quality, upland water supplies. Additionally, canals may represent the only area of freshwater habitat in many urban areas. The character of canals varies according to their setting, water source and operation. Most canals support aquatic plants and animals similar to those found in natural lakes or ponds but others may have species more typical of rivers.

Remainder canals are very similar to natural water bodies and are often subject to natural processes including the accumulation of silt and encroachment by emergent marginal plants such as reed sweet-grass. Management intervention may be necessary to prevent the accumulation of silt and to maintain aquatic plants where these are threatened by the encroachment of marginal plants that are able to colonise across the channel width. Periodic dredging of short lengths may be required to maintain open water areas.

On navigable canals, boat traffic and associated canal management are likely to be the major influences on the wildlife present and should be managed sympathetically to avoid conflict with the management of the canal for nature conservation. Low levels of boat traffic may be beneficial, preventing marginal plants from developing across the channel, but with greater levels of traffic it is increasingly likely that boats will cause excessive damage to aquatic plants as well as causing silt to remain suspended in the water column which also shades out aquatic plants. Dredging is often undertaken to maintain sufficient channel depth for boat passage and if carefully managed this can be beneficial in creating suitable habitat and rooting substrate for plant growth, providing dredging is not undertaken too frequently or over excessive lengths. The uniform structure of many canals limits the extent of shallow water habitat and opportunities to create marginal shelves or adopt soft-bank construction may also be beneficial to the conservation interest of the canal. Where native crayfish are an interest feature, exposed gaps and crevices in masonry lining the canal may form an important habitat for the species, and any maintenance of the canal should aim to maintain these living spaces.

Canals may be affected by pollution or increased levels of plant nutrients which can lead to excessive algal growths and a loss of aquatic plants. Activities which may lead to an increase in nutrients include pollution from direct discharges into the canal and also from diffuse sources resulting from land management practices in the catchment supplying the canal water. Increases in the amount of sediment entering the canal should be avoided as these can also result in high levels of nutrients and reduce the water depth of the canal, making it necessary for more frequent dredging. Other activities that can lead to a decrease in the diversity of aquatic plants in favour of algae include the control or removal of the natural aquatic vegetation of the canal and the intentional or accidental introduction of species such as bottom feeding coarse fish which uproot plants and disturb the sediments.

Management should aim to maintain water levels appropriate for the conservation interest of the canal. For example, lowering of water levels in the canal by excessive draw down within a given length of the canal could be damaging to aquatic communities, leaving a narrow strip of marginal vegetation exposed high above the water level.

Canals are vulnerable to the introduction of invasive species for example, non-native crayfish or plant species such as Australian swamp stonecrop, and management may be necessary to prevent the spread of these species should they appear on the canal. Where native crayfish are present any measures which may limit the risks of transferring non-native crayfish or crayfish plague (such as information and awareness-raising initiatives amongst visitors to the waterbody) should be encouraged.

Canal banks and margins often support a variety of other wetland habitats including reed swamp and fen, as well as more terrestrial habitats such as grassland, hedgerows and woodland, all of which add to the diversity of habitats present on the site. These may require some active management to maintain the diversity of habitats present and the fauna and flora they support, particularly for the benefit of breeding birds and invertebrates.