

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.