

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: River Axe
Unitary Authority/County: Devon, Dorset
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: SY267961
SAC EU code: UK0030248
Area (ha): 25.78
Component SSSI: River Axe SSSI

Site description:

The mixed catchment geology of sandstones and limestones gives rise to calcareous waters where stream water-crowfoot *Ranunculus penicillatus* ssp. *pseudofluitans* dominates, giving way to river water-crowfoot *R. fluitans* further downstream. Short-leaved water-starwort *Callitriche truncata* is an unusual addition to the water-crowfoot community. The diverse flora results from a number of contributing factors. Firstly, the lower reaches of the Axe have high bed stability. Secondly, the river has few trees along its banks, allowing much light to reach the riverbed. Finally, the active geomorphology of the river has generated a range of natural features (including long riffles, deep pools, islands and meanders), which provide a variety of ecological niches. This variety of river channel habitats also supports an important fish community, including Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri* and bullhead *Cottus gobio*.

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

- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation. (Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot)

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:

- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*

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

Register reference number: UK0030248

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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