

File ref:

County: Hampshire
SSSI

Site Name: Hook Heath Meadows

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under, Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council

National Grid Reference: SU 644080

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 196 **1:10,000:** SU 60 NW

Area: 5.9 (ha) 14.6 (ac)

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): – **Date of Last Revision:** –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 25 May 1989 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Hook Heath Meadows comprise an intimate mixture of woodland and agriculturally-unimproved acid pasture lying within a shallow river valley over London Clays. Many of the habitats present are now rare in lowland Britain through agricultural intensification. Their close juxtaposition here is of particular value as an invertebrate habitat.

The grasslands vary greatly depending on localised drainage conditions. The more free-draining areas support a mildly acid variant of the knapweed/crested dog's-tail *Centaurea nigra/Cynosurus cristatus* grassland type which comprises a wide range of fine grasses, a number of sedges including carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, oval sedge *C. ovalis* and hairy sedge *C. hirta*, and a good representation of broad-leaved herbs, such as sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and corky-fruited water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*, all declining species in Hampshire. Areas influenced by surface waterlogging support vegetation of the crested dog's-tail/marsh marigold *Cynosurus cristatus/Caltha palustris* type, with an abundance of taller broad-leaved perennials present, whilst the wettest areas, flooded for extended periods are dominated by the flote grass *Glyceria fluitans*.

The meadows support a considerable number of plant species indicative of long periods of unintensified traditional grassland management: 15 species have been recorded, a notably high total for such a relatively small site. Of particular note – and additional to those mentioned above – are bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, the marsh orchids *Dactylorhiza incarnata* and *D. praetermissa* (plus hybrids), dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria* and marsh lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*. Additionally the meadows contain a colony of the rare long-winged conehead *Conocephalus discolor* in an atypical inland locality.

Wet alder coppice and large hedges bound the site. The woodland/grassland boundary thus formed is very sheltered and accordingly supports a rich assemblage of invertebrates, with a particularly diverse hoverfly fauna: *Leucozana glaucia*, *Pyrophaena rosarum*, *Volucella inflata* and *Xylota tarda* are amongst the more notable species present.