

File ref:

County: Devon **Site Name:** Kismeldon Meadows

District: Torridge

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, Torridge District Council

National Grid Reference: SS 351171, SS 343172 **Area:** 36.0 (ha) 89.0 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 190 **1:10,000:** SS 31 NW, NE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is important as an area of traditionally managed, unimproved, grassland mire and marsh of high botanical value.

The site is located on the Carboniferous shales of the Culm Measures of North Devon, in the valley of the River Torridge, which flows approximately west to east at this point.

The site mostly occupies gently sloping, north-facing land on the southern side of the river and also land within the present flood plain of the river. The soils are acidic clays with restricted or poor drainage on the sloping ground, with neutral, alluvial soils in the area subject to periodic inundation by the river.

The vegetation on the sloping ground consists largely of grassland with purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* the most abundant species. Each field contains a slightly different plant community. In some areas sedge species are predominantly associated with the purple moor-grass; these include star sedge *Carex echinata*, common sedge *C. nigra*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana*, carnation sedge *C. panicea*, and flea sedge *C. pulicaris*. In other slightly wetter parts bog mosses, principally *Sphagnum papillosum* occur with bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. Another community is characterised by abundant dwarf shrub species namely heather *Calluna vulgaris*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, western gorse *Ulex gallii*, creeping willow *Salix repens* and petty whin *Genista anglica*. Herb species such as devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and heath spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* are frequent.

The site also contains areas dominated by soft rush *Juncus effusus* where herbs such as marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and greater tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata* occur.

On the northern side of the river is an area of marshland where reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and angelica *Angelica sylvestris* are found.

The fields are all surrounded by well-established species-rich hedgerows and strips of woodland and scrub, largely consisting of sallow *Salix* spp. These trees and

shrubs are well covered with epiphytic lichens notably *Usnea articulata* and they provide a sheltered environment for invertebrates such as the uncommon marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* which inhabit the grassland areas.