

File ref:

County: Devon **Site Name:** Hense Moor

District: East Devon

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, East Devon District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 175080 **Area:** 91.2 (ha) 225.4 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 192 **1:10,000:** ST 10 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1969 **Date of Last Revision:** 1976

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

In Blackdown Plateau Area of Great Landscape Value.

Description:

Hense Moor includes some of the best remaining examples of lowland mixed valley bog in Devon, and is typical of this habitat in south-western England.

Within an altitude range of between 150 m and 210 m, the valley supports a mosaic of different habitats. These are based on a variety of different soils derived from Keuper Marl on the valley bottoms, Greensand on the sides and Clay-with-flints on the valley tops. Peat has formed where drainage has been most impeded. Around the valley groundwater seeps from the Greensand and several streams arise in and flow through the site.

At the junction between the Greensand and Clay-with-flints moss-dominated springs occur, bog-mosses include *Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. tenellum*. The site as a whole supports a diverse moss flora, some sixty species having been recorded. Associated herbs are bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, bog St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes*, pale butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, great sundew *Drosera anglica* and bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*.

Where wet heaths grade into these boggy areas, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* become more abundant, together with a variety of other species, including fir clubmoss *Lycopodium selago*, round-leaved sundew *D. rotundifolia*, long-leaved sundew *D. intermedia*, tawny sedge *Carex hostiana*, carnation sedge *C. panicea*, heath-spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*. On more freely drained areas the wet heath has purple moor-grass and dwarf furze *Ulex gallii* as the co-dominant species.

In some areas rushes, in particular hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, become more abundant. Some areas of this acid marshy grassland contain marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, along with star sedge *C. echinata* and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. Greater tussock sedge *C. paniculata* forms well-developed stands in some areas near the main stream.

Adding to the habitat diversity of the site are several wooded streams. Under a mixed canopy of alder *Alnus glutinosa*, goat willow *Salix caprea*, birch *Betula* spp. and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, the damp and shaded ground flora contains golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, ramsons *Allium ursinum* and enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*.

On the well-drained, steeper valley sides and tops dry heath has developed, dominated by dwarf furze. This mixes in with areas dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and scrub, most of which consists of common gorse *Ulex europaeus* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. In some places on the flatter valley tops semi-improved grassland occurs. Main sward components are Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*.

The site's wide variety of habitats in turn supports a rich invertebrate fauna including of particular note the raft spider *Dolomedes fimbriatus*. Reptiles and amphibians are present in good numbers.