

Notification Date: 11 May 1989

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: PIKES FARM MEADOWS

DISTRICT: SOUTH HEREFORDSHIRE SITE REF: 15 W8F

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, South Herefordshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 290383 Area: 9.6 (ha.) 23.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 161 1:10,000: SO 23 NE

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

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

Other Information:
New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This series of meadows lies at an altitude of around 300 metres on moderately steep sloping ground on the eastern flanks of the Black Mountains in western Herefordshire. The soils, derived from Old Red Sandstone, are neutral to mildly acidic. These meadows support a type of neutral grassland, characterised by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, which is now nationally restricted. This site represents the largest remaining example of this habitat known in the county.

The sward contains a wide variety of grasses, the most abundant being Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and crested dog's-tail. The rich herbaceous flora includes species such as devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. The site supports two nationally scarce plant species – mousetail *Myosurus minimus* and wood bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus* – both of which are known from only one other site in the county. The distribution of the former is centred on eastern England and occurs here at one of its most westerly stations in Britain. The population of wood bitter-vetch runs into hundreds of individual plants, and is the largest recorded not only from Herefordshire but also from the adjoining counties of Wales which are its main stronghold in Britain.

In addition there are several species which are uncommon in the county, namely fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* including the sub species *densiflora*, meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale* and globeflower *Trollius europaeus*. The latter species occurs here at one of its most southerly stations in Britain.

The diversity of the flora is enhanced by areas of marshy grassland. The majority of these are dominated by rushes – jointed rush *Juncus articulatus*, hard rush *J. inflexus*, soft rush *J. effusus* and toad rush *J. bufonius* associated with greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*. Damp areas in the north-western part of the site support purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* which is an uncommon species in Herefordshire, together with lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, lesser butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and a variety of sedges which are locally uncommon, such as pale sedge *Carex pallescens*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana* and common yellow-sedge *C. demissa*.