

File ref:

County: Hampshire
SSSI

Site Name: Fletchwood Meadows

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council

National Grid Reference: SU 340113

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 196 **1:25,000:** SU 21, 31

Area: 7.66 (ha) 18.94 (ac)

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 20 February 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Confirmed: 18 August 1986

Other Information:

5.54 ha are owned by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists' Trust.

Reasons for Notification:

Fletchwood Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest comprises a series of unimproved, predominantly dry, loamy-sandy meadows on the Bartley Water at the eastern edge of the New Forest. Collectively they represent one of the richest meadow sites in Hampshire, with over 200 species of flowering plants recorded, including several that are now scarce or local through habitat loss, for example, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, bitter vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, betony *Stachys officinalis* and corky-fruited water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*. Meadows supporting the last species are a feature of coastal south-central England. The site is the best example known of a herb-rich meadow on acid soils in the New Forest area and contrasts sharply with the potentially similar but heavily grazed acid grasslands of the nearby unenclosed New Forest.

Much of the site was woodland until cleared in the late 19th century and woodland species persist in the meadows, e.g. remote sedge *Carex remota*, primrose *Primula vulgaris*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, giant fescue *Festuca gigantea*, tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and dog violet *Viola riviniana*.

The meadows vary widely in their topography, wetness and acidity, and this is reflected in their vegetation. Dry areas are typically dominated by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and bents *Agrostis* species, with much sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, and rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*. Locally, particularly on ant-hills, these swards have a strong heathy component with heather *Calluna vulgaris*, trailing St John's-wort *Hypericum humifusum*, thyme-leaved speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*, heath milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia* and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*. By contrast, wetter areas on peaty soils comprise a tall, lush vegetation dominated by rushes *Juncus* species, with abundant sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, pale sedge *Carex pallescens*, oval sedge *Carex ovalis*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and water mint *Mentha aquatica*.

Flushes give rise to sedge-dominated communities with common yellow-sedge *Carex demissa*, common sedge *Carex nigra*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and creeping jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*. Of special interest here is the unusual juxtaposition of calcicoles and calcifuges, for example, common yellow-sedge *Carex demissa* (acid tolerant) growing side by side with quaking grass *Briza media* (lime tolerant).

Status: Site of special scientific interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the wildlife and countryside act 1981.