

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: OLCHON FARM MEADOWS

DISTRICT: SOUTH HEREFORD

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

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

National Grid Reference: SO 302309 Area: 2.43 (ha.) 6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 161 1:10,000: SO 33 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 Date of Last Revision: 1975

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

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

An example of the ancient unimproved upland pastures, which were once a characteristic feature of this district but are now scarce owing to changes in agricultural practice.

The two meadows lie on soils derived from the Old Red Sandstone and present an interesting contrast.

The main meadow has traditionally been managed for hay and aftermath grazing and lies on a north east facing slope above the Olchon brook. The dominant grasses are sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and slender brome *Bromus lepidus*. The herbaceous flora is outstandingly rich and includes meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale*, bitter vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, bistort *Polygonum bistorta* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* as well as a number of plants of globe flower *Trollius europaeus* at one of its most southerly sites in Britain.

The second field lies on the opposite side of the brook further upstream and is used as a pasture. It is wetter and has a contrasting flora. The plants occurring here include greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and betony *Betonica officinalis*.

The site is bordered by a brook and hedgerows with their own rich and varied flora and fauna adding to the overall conservation value.