

File ref:

County: Lincolnshire **Site name:** Swinstead Valley

District: South Kesteven

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

Local Planning Authority: South Kesteven District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 007222 **Area:** 8.8 (ha) 21.7 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 120 **1: 10 000:** TF 02 SW

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

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

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is a fine example of calcareous grassland developed on soils derived from Eastern Jurassic Limestone. This type of grassland is rare both in Lincolnshire and nationally and now tends to be confined to roadside verges and disused quarries as a result of agricultural improvement.

Swinstead Valley is a large site, lying on the eastern side of the River West Glen valley. As the site is grazed, the turf is generally short and although tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* and upright brome *Bromus erectus* are dominant, either in a mixture or as extensive patches of each, the characteristic herbs of limestone grassland are well represented. The more frequent herbs include common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* and wild thyme *Thymus praecox*. Additional fine grasses present in the sward include sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, quaking grass *Briza media*, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*.

Where the sward is more open and patches of bare ground are present, herbs such as fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, harebell and clustered bellflower *Campanula rotundifolia* and *C. glomerata*, pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, cowslip *Primula veris*, common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris* and common centaury *Centaureum erythraea* occur. Mosses such as *Ctenidium molluscum*, *Campylium chrysophyllum* and *Pseudoscleropodium purum* are common in these areas.

The deeper soils of the valley bottom support a less species-rich grassland community, dominated by grasses such as meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and rough meadow grass *Poa trivialis*. It is in this area that woolly thistle *Cirsium eriophorum* occurs.