

County: Humberside/North Yorkshire **Name:** **Fordon Chalk Grasslands**
Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

Local Planning Authority: East Yorkshire Borough Council
Ryedale District Council

National Grid Reference: TA 024771, 029767, 031766, 040761, 047755, 051756, 052754

Area: 50.7 (ha) 125.3 (ac) (East Yorkshire)
5.4 (ha) 13.3 (ac) (Ryedale)
56.1 (ha) 138.6 (ac) (Total)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 101 **1:10,000:** TA 07 NE, NW

First Notified: (East Dale): 1975 * **Date of Revision:** 1985/86

Other Information:

1. The south-eastern part of this site, formerly notified independently as East Dale SSSI, Forms a nationally important site listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review', edited by D. A. Ratcliffe (1977). Cambridge University Press.
2. Fordon Chalk Bank (East Dale) is managed as a nature reserve by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

*Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.

Description:

Fordon Chalk Grasslands comprise one of the most varied grassland systems, in terms of their floristic richness, aspect and management regimes, remaining in the Wolds. The site comprises a disjunct series of grasslands in the dry valleys of Cotton Dale, North Dale and East Dale, centred on the village of Fordon. The grassland communities include heavily-grazed, short-turf areas dominated by sheep's' fescue *Festuca ovina* and red fescue *F. rubra*, mixed grasslands with fescues, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, hairy oat *Avenula pubescens*, quaking grass *Briza media* and crested hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*, and areas of coarse grassland with upright brome *Bromus erectus* and cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*. Many areas are extremely diverse botanically, with an abundance of characteristic herbs such as clustered bell-flower *Campanula glomerata*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, woolly thistle *Cirsium eriophorum*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium*, purging flax *Linum catharticum*, cowslip *Primula veris*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and thyme *Thymus praecox*. Additionally many less common species occur: pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, purple milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, bloody crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum*, felwort *Gentianella amarella* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*.

The linear valley bottom grasslands in North Dale, whilst not presently of intrinsic nature conservation interest, are included for the proper safeguard of the adjacent herb-rich swards.

Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub is present on many of the slopes, and in places forms dense stands.

The grasslands also have a rich invertebrate fauna with several locally distributed species. The butterflies include common blue, brown argus, meadow brown, ringlet, green-veined white, small skipper and dingy skipper.

The typical grassland/scrub bird-community includes breeding skylark, meadow pipit, yellowhammer, chaffinch, dunnoek and blackbird.