

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: TUNNEL HILL
MEADOW

DISTRICT: WYCHAVON

SITE REF: 15 WTP

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,
Wychavon District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 021474

Area: 0.8 (ha.) 1.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150

1:10,000: SP 04 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The site is managed as a nature reserve by the Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Tunnel Hill Meadow is a small area of grassland overlying Lias Limestone and clays on a hillside above the Avon Valley to the north of Evesham.

This site has been chosen as one of the few remaining examples of unimproved calcareous grassland which was previously widespread in this part of the county.

The calcareous soil derived from the underlying rocks has given rise to a characteristic herb-rich sward in which a number of species are codominant. These include tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*, quaking grass *Briza media*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, wild basil *Clinopodium vulgare* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. Also present are several calcicole (limeloving) species which are locally uncommon such as yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella* and common gromwell *Lithospermum officinale*. Four species of orchid occur, including bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* and greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*.

The site's biological diversity is enhanced by a woodland edge scrub community. Included here are field rose *Rosa arvensis*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, field maple *Acer campestre*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and privet *Ligustrum vulgare*. Wayfaring-tree *Viburnum lantana*, which is rare in the county, also occurs.