

Date Notified: 1 June 1990

County: Humberside **Site Name:** Keasey Dale

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

Local Planning Authority: East Yorkshire Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SE 873538

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 106 **1:10,000:** SE 85 SE

Area: 3.5 (ha) 8.6 (ac)

First Notified: 1989

Description:

Keasey Dale consists of an area of unimproved chalk grassland on a north-west facing dry valley slope to the south-west of Huggate in the Yorkshire Wolds. The site is important as one of the best remaining examples of species-rich northern chalk grassland. Chalk grassland was formerly more widespread in North Humberside but has become restricted in distribution due to agricultural reclamation, afforestation and lack of grazing management and consequential scrub encroachment.

This grassland supports a plant community-type of which sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, meadow oat-grass *Avenula pratensis* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* are the characteristic grass species. Crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and quaking-grass *Briza media* are also notably abundant.

The site is particularly herb-rich, with frequently occurring species including common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and cowslip *Primula veris*. As is typically the case on these short-sward chalk grasslands, the mosses *Scleropodium purum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and *Dicranum scoparium* are widespread.

The presence of saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata* and dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* is of particular note as these species are all either rare or have a restricted distribution in northern chalk grasslands.

Another notable feature of the site is the abundance of three orchid species, frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, northern chalk grassland usually being poor in orchid species which are more widespread in the South of England.