

COUNTY: LEICESTERSHIRE

SITE NAME: BREEDON HILL

DISTRICT: NORTH-WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

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

Local Planning Authority: NORTH-WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SK 406234

Area: 4.7 (ha.) 11.61 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 129

1:10,000: SK 42 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1956

Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The site boundary has been amended.

Reasons for Notification:

The site comprises the largest area of species-rich Carboniferous Limestone grassland in Leicestershire and is representative of such grassland habitat in the English Midlands.

Biology

The majority of the site supports species-rich calcareous grassland developed on soils derived from the Carboniferous Limestone which also occurs in the form of rocky outcrops. The sward is characterised by the dominance of smooth meadow grass *Poa pratensis*, downy oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens*, and crested hair-grass *Koeleria cristata*, with sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, red fescue *F. rubra* and yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* also common. The grassland contains many herbs typical of calcareous swards, including burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, thyme *Thymus drucei*, musk thistle *Carduus nutans*, wild basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, hoary plantain *Plantago media* and hairy violet *Viola hirta*. Where the soils are thin, often in association with rocky outcrops, the sward is suppressed and the vegetation is characterised by herb species such as rue-leaved saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactylites*, whitlow grass *Erophila verna*, stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, thale cress *Arabidopsis thaliana*, buck's-horn plantain *Plantago coronopus*, and wall pepper *Sedum acre*. The grassland is being invaded by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub.