

County: Hampshire **Site Name:** West Minley Meadow SSSI

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, Hart District Council

National Grid Reference: SU 812580

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 186 **1:25,000:** SU 85

Area: 4.1 (ha) 10.1 (ac)

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

West Minley Meadow is the best example of wet, grazed acid grassland in north-east Hampshire. This habitat was formerly widespread but is now rare in the area. The meadow is situated in the upper reaches of a shallow tributary valley of the River Hart, on peaty alluvial soil overlying the Bracklesham Beds of the London Basin. Despite the wetness, acidity and nutrient impoverishment associated with the strongly leached soil and impervious substrate, the lightly-grazed sward is surprisingly rich in flowering plants; for example, 36 species have been recorded in a one metre square quadrant, and 103 species have been recorded overall.

Rushes *Juncus* species and sedges *Carex* species predominate, with five species of the former, and eight of the latter, including the very local elongated sedge *Carex elongata*. Grasses are also well represented, with abundant bents *Agrostis* species, especially *A. stolonifera* and *A. canina*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, and quaking grass *Briza media*, in an atypical habitat. Common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and mat grass *Nardus stricta* occur on the drier parts of the meadow.

The sward includes several plants that have become rather scarce and locally distributed over recent years owing to agricultural intensification, drainage, flood control and neglect. At least 16 species indicative of a long continuity of uninterrupted grassland management without improvement occur here, including sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, bog pimpinell *Anagallis tenella*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, marsh lousewort *Pedicularis palustris* and the southern marsh and heath spotted orchids *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and *D. maculata*.

On the most waterlogged ground the sward is more akin to a bog vegetation-type, with a strong bog-moss *Sphagnum* species component over a shallow peat layer.

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