

File ref:

County: Devon **Site Name:** Hense Moor Meadows

District: East Devon

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, East Devon District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 173068 **Area:** 3.2 (ha) 7.9 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 192 **1:10,000:** ST 10 NE

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

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

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is comprised of three herb-rich meadows supporting a grassland community with a restricted distribution in Britain and one which contains several local species. This sward, together with a fen community, thick hedges and scattered trees, forms an area of exceptional wildlife value.

The meadows, which have not been cultivated or treated with artificial fertilisers or herbicides for at least 40 years, lie on Keuper Marl on the lower east-facing slopes of the valley that cuts through the valley mire of Hense Moor SSSI. The soil is loamy, neutral to calcareous, well-drained over most of the site but water-logged towards the tree-lined stream running at the base of the fields.

The sward over the freely-drained parts is characterised by frequent common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*. A wide range of other herb and grass species are present, including lady's mantle *Alchemilla vulgaris*, cowslip *Primula veris*, common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and quaking grass *Briza media*, all local species in Devon. Corky-fruited water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*, a nationally-uncommon species, is abundant.

The fen community near the stream is dominated by rushes *Juncus* spp., with abundant meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. Here plants such as the local marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica* occur, together with marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, water horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* and marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. On drier ground fringing this fen vegetation meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea* may be found.

Species-rich hedges surround the fields, overgrown and thick in places, whilst an open stand of pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* occurs in the central field. Under this grow woodland plants such as wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, primrose *Primula vulgaris* and common dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, while bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* is scattered throughout the site.