

## CITATION

COUNTY: DEVON      SITE NAME: WHIDDON MOOR, LUCKROFT AND  
ODHAM MARSHES

DISTRICT: WEST DEVON BOROUGH

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

Local Planning Authority: WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL, Devon County Council

National Grid Reference: SS 463004; SS 489001      Area: 27.2 (ha.) 67.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 190 & 191      1:10,000: SS 40 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1991      Date of Last Revision: –

### Other Information:

Site is adjacent to Hollow Moor SSSI.

### Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site comprises four groups of fields lying along a shallow valley in West Devon. Together these fields support a wide range of the grassland, heath, mire and fen communities which are known collectively as Culm Grassland. Several of these communities are nationally very restricted in distribution and, reflecting both this and their highly representative and diverse nature, the site supports a rich flora and fauna including many species that are either nationally scarce or local.

The fields lie along the valley of a tributary of the River Lew at an altitude of 120--130 metres AOD, on poorly-drained clay or clayey-peat soils derived from Carboniferous slates and shales.

Whiddon Moor and the nearby Four Shilling Moor were formerly much more extensive, their remnants now comprising the western three groups of fields within the site. These mostly support types of wet heath and fen meadow that, occurring only in south-western Britain, and rapidly declining in extent, and are now very localized. Both wet heath and fen meadow are characterized by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* growing together with several species of moss, other grasses and herbs such as Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Devils's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, Heath Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. Other plants including Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Western Gorse *Ulex gallii* and bog mosses *Sphagnum subnitens* and *S. auriculatum* occur predominantly in the wet heath, while Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, Flea Sedge *Carex pulicaris* and Tawny Sedge *C. hostiana* are to be found in the fen meadow.

The eastern-most group of fields, Luckcroft and Odham Marshes, lie more closely along the valley bottom where the soils are even wetter, and consequently support mainly tall fen vegetation. This is dominated by Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, together with plants such as Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* and Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*.

Other plant communities occurring within the site include those dominated by tussocky Purple Moor-grass or by Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, and, in places which have not been grazed for many years, scrub dominated by willow *Salix* spp. and birch *Betula* spp., often richly clothed in lichens and mosses.

Plants of particular interest present include the nationally scarce Wavy St John's-wort *Hypericum undulatum*, and also Petty Whin *Genista anglica*, Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus*, Bladder-sedge *Carex vesicaria* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, all of which are local in Devon.

The fauna of the site has not been fully surveyed, but is known to include two nationally-scarce butterflies, the Marsh Fritillary *Eurodyras aurinia* and Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne*, as well as the local Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*. Two reptiles, Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* and Common Lizard *Lacerta vivipara*, and two local breeding bird species, Willow Tit *Parus montanus* and Grasshopper *Locustella naevia* also occur. Numerous Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Teal *Anas crecca* use the marshes during the winter.