

Date Notified: 27 March 1992

File Ref: (L) SD 46/4

COUNTY: LANCASHIRE

SITE NAME: HEYSHAM MOSS

DISTRICT: LANCASTER

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

Local Planning Authority: Lancaster City Council

National Grid Reference: SD 423 607

Area: 12.45 ha 30.8 acres

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 97

1:10,000: SD 46 SW

Date Notified (under 1949 Act): -

Date of last revision: -

Date Notified (under 1981 Act): 1992

Date of last revision: -

#### Other Information

1. This is a new site.

#### Description and Reasons for Notification

Heysham Moss is a small lowland raised bog situated some 3 km south of Morecambe at an altitude of about 8m. The Moss occupies a natural depression on the coastal plain of the Lune Estuary and is the remains of a once larger area of peat on the Heysham peninsula.

Raised bogs were formerly an extensive habitat in waterlogged areas of lowland Britain but have now been reduced to less than 10,000 ha due to peat extraction, agricultural reclamation and afforestation. In Lancashire lowland raised bogs once covered a large area of the coastal plain but the total County area now remaining is approximately 400 ha, the majority of which has been reclaimed for agricultural use. There are no intact examples of lowland raised bog in Lancashire and Heysham Moss is important as the second best example of a cut-over raised mire after Winmarleigh Moss, the largest in the County. The core area of Heysham Moss still remains relatively unmodified, although the periphery has been affected by past peat cutting and drainage.

The central mire of Heysham Moss is dominated by purple moor-grass Molinia caerulea and common cottongrass Eriophorum angustifolium. Other species which are characteristic of this type of habitat and are present on the Moss include bog myrtle Myrica gale, cross-leaved heath Erica tetralix, heather Calluna vulgaris, cranberry Vaccinium oxycoccus, hare's-tail cottongrass E. vaginatum and round-leaved sundew Drosera rotundifolia. A nationally scarce species, bog rosemary Andromeda polifolia is also present. The characteristic bog mosses, Sphagnum sp., found on the site include S. recurvum, S. papillosum, S. cuspidatum, S. subnitens, S. palustre, S. tenellum and S. magellanicum.

At the northern end of the bog is an area of birch woodland on the edge of the peat. Plants in the understorey include bramble Rubus fruticosus, broad buckler fern Dryopteris dilatata and narrow buckler fern Dryopteris carthusiana. To the south and east of the Moss, on the transition between the peat and the mineral soil, is a strip of grey willow scrub, Salix cinerea. To the west of the Moss lies an area of species-rich wet grassland, also on peat and separated from the raised dome by a continuous curving drain. The site is confined on this western side by the embankment of the Morecambe to Heysham railway line. In and around a ditch to the south of the peat is an area of poor fen, supporting marsh cinquefoil Potentilla palustris and marsh pennywort Hydrocotyle vulgaris.