

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: BRENDON FARM (NORTH)

DISTRICT: Torridge

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

Local Planning Authority: Torridge District Council, Devon County Council

National Grid Reference: SS 368077

Area: 16.1 (ha) 39.7 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 190

1:10,000: SS 30 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1991

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This is a new site.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Brendon Farm is a species-rich, representative example of Culm Grassland, a type of wet, oceanic, acidic pasture which is nationally rare, being virtually restricted to Devon and Cornwall in England. The site is particularly important for its well-developed fen meadow communities.

The site comprises five fields which overlie the Carboniferous shales of the Culm Measures of north Devon. It lies about 3 km north east of Holsworthy. The soils are clayey and acidic, mostly of the Hallworth series and range from being poorly drained to waterlogged. The land is gently sloping and south facing with a stream running along the eastern boundary.

The majority of the site supports species-rich fen meadow characterized by abundant short Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* growing with species such as Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Devils'-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Greater Birds-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and Heath Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, all occurring frequently to abundantly. Wetter parts support species such as Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and the nationally scarce Wavy St Johns-wort *Hypericum undulatum*. The locally uncommon Petty Whin *Genista anglica* is present at the western end of the site. Several sedges are found frequently including Tawny Sedge *Carex hostiana*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea* and Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris*. Parts of this fen meadow community contain a more heathy element characterized by Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bog mosses *Sphagnum spp.*

Vegetation within localised waterlogged areas consists of rush pasture communities dominated by Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and Sharp-flowered Rush *J. acutiflorus*, with associated species such as Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Marsh St Johns-wort *Hypericum elodes* and Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*. A patch of Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, a local plant in Devon, is also present.

The three small fields at the western end of the site contain species-poor remnants of a mire community consisting of tall Purple Moor-grass tussocks surrounded by secondary woodland and scrub.

Among the butterflies and moths present, the nationally scarce Marsh Fritillary *Euopdryas aurinia* occurs as well as the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*, Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* and Burnet Companion *Euclidia glyphica*.