

Date Notified: 18 March 1994

File ref: (L) SD 66/5

County: Lancashire **Site Name:** Far Holme Meadow

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 645655 **Area:** 1.66 (ha) 4.10 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 97 **1:10,000:** SD 66 NW

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1994 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

1. This is a new site.
2. The site lies within the Forest of Bowland A.O.N.B.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Far Holme Meadow is an area of lowland grassland situated in the valley of the River Hindburn approximately 4½ km to the south west of the village of Wray. It lies at an altitude of 105 m and supports three types of herb-rich neutral grassland in which over 80 species of plants have been recorded.

The meadow lies at the foot of a wooded slope on the edge of the flood plain of the River Hindburn and is enclosed on its northern and western sides by a river. The grassland plant communities present support many species characteristic of old hay meadows which have been traditionally managed and left unimproved for many years. Such communities are now scarce nationally and represent a highly vulnerable habitat which, in Lancashire, has been severely reduced by agricultural intensification.

The majority of the field supports a hay meadow community with sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. Other grass species present include meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and common bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Herbs are well represented within the sward and include such species as great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and intermediate lady's-mantle *Alchemilla xanthochlora*, which are frequent throughout. Smooth lady's-mantle *A. glabra*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and bitter-vetch *L. montanus* also occur, as do pignut *Conopodium majus*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* and autumn hawkbit *L. autumnalis*.

This grassland is representative of the meadow foxtail – great burnet flood-meadow community, which is especially characteristic of areas where traditional hay meadow treatment has been applied to seasonally flooded land on alluvial soils. Unlike the great majority of hay fields in Lancashire, this site has escaped extensive agricultural improvement and continues to support a diverse grassland flora. The presence of soft-brome *Bromus hordeaceus*, rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis* and perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* in the sward indicates some

agricultural improvement of the field, as does the absence of sedges *Carex* species. Nevertheless, this site represents the only example of this particular vegetation type remaining in the County.

A species-rich bank occurs in the south-eastern corner of the site and where common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and common twayblade *Listera ovata* are frequent. Many of the plants found within the main sward also occur here, together with marsh hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa*, primrose *Primula vulgaris* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. This small area is representative of the quaking-grass sub-community of the sweet vernal-grass–wood crane's-bill meadow community.

A damp area at the foot of the wooded slope contains a variety of species characteristic of wet conditions, some of which are indicative of a base-rich influence. Species present include marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, with grasses such as crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and sweet vernal-grass. This combination of plants is characteristic of the crested dog's-tail–marsh marigold flood-pasture community.