

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: MIDLAND PLATEAU
GRASSLANDS,
12 SHOWGROUND MEADOW,
CALLOW HILL

DISTRICT: WYRE FOREST

SITE REF: 15 P23

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD AND WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Wyre Forest District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 738739

Area: 0.81 (ha.) 2.00 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 138

1:10,000: SO 77 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 31 March 1995

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Showground Meadow, Callow Hill is situated in north Worcestershire, within a dispersed area of smallholding settlements to the south of the Wyre Forest. The site overlies the Upper Carboniferous Coal Measures which give rise to neutral to acidic soils. The meadow forms the northern slope of a larger field unit which is used for various recreational activities.

The special interest of the site is the vegetation which demonstrates a transition between the heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* sub-community of the mesotrophic (neutral) grassland type characterised by common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, and the acidic sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* – common bent *Agrostis capillaris* – heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* grassland type. The base of the slope is more characteristic of neutral grassland, merging into free draining acidic grassland at the top. Sites supporting this transition have become increasingly rare, and Showground Meadow is one of the most representative examples of this transitional grassland type in Worcestershire.

The most frequent grass species are common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*, with heath-grass also present. Herbs found in the sward include yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*, common knapweed, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*. Indicators of acidic grassland include species such as squirreltail fescue *Vulpia bromoides*, *rotundifolia*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia* and heath speedwell *Veronica officinalis*. The abundance in this open site of bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, more usually associated with woodlands, suggests an ancient association with the nearby Wyre Forest. A notable feature of the sward is the abundance of the locally uncommon dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*.

The meadow is only physically bounded on one side, to the north, where a species-rich hedge occurs with *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and holly *Ilex aquifolium*.