

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: SEVERN VALLEY
GRASSLANDS, 18 HIGHCLERE

DISTRICT: WYCHAVON

SITE REF: 15 P5K

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,
Wychavon District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 012479

Area: 1.01 (ha.) 2.50 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150

1:10,000: SP 04 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 15 March 1994

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Highclere is located one kilometre west of Wood Norton. It is the easternmost of the Severn Valley grasslands, and lies on a south facing slope on a ridge of Rhaetic Limestone in south-east Worcestershire. This ridge gives rise to alkaline soils, favouring a calcicole (lime-loving) flora. The interest is maintained by regular mowing in early spring and autumn, leaving the herbs to flower and seed in the summer.

The special interest of the site lies in the diversity of the semi-natural grassland characterised by upright brome *Bromus erectus* with sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, cowslip *Primula veris*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*. Other characteristic calcicole herbs are yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, common centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, zigzag clover *Trifolium medium*, hairy violet *Viola hirta*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, eyebright *Euphrasia* sp. and blue fleabane *Erigeron acer*.

Locally uncommon species of orchid include greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, over 200 flowering spikes of bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* and pyramidal orchid *Anacamptus pyramidalis*. The nationally rare early gentian *Gentianella anglica*, a Schedule 8 species, is found here and at only one other locality in Worcestershire.