

File ref:

County: **Leicestershire** **Site name: Croft Hill**

District: **Blaby**

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

Local Planning Authority: Blaby District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 510967 **Area:** 1.95 (ha) 4.81 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 140 **1: 10 000:** SP 59 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): **Date of Last Revision:**

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 23.03.1994 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Other Information:

Part of the site was formerly notified for its geology as Croft Hill and Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Reasons for Notification:

Croft Hill supports a nationally rare vegetation type of short, tussocky grasses in a rather open sward. The site is the largest known area of this grassland type in Leicestershire. The species composition closely reflects the description of this type of vegetation within the National Vegetation Classification.

Biology:

This type of grassland has a predominantly southern distribution and is rare in the Midlands. It is known from only one other site in Leicestershire, the vegetation reflecting the thin, nutrient-poor soil derived from the hard-rock of Croft Hill in a region of predominantly nutrient-rich soils formed over alluvial or clay deposits.

The thin, granitic soils of Croft Hill support an open, tussocky, acid grassland sward characterised by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and crested hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha* with the herbs sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and yarrow *Achillea millefolium*. Mosses and lichens are characteristic in open areas, often where rocks are close to the surface or the soil is parched and exposed.

Short-lived plants, some of them spring-growing annuals, are an important feature of this grassland type and include early hair-grass *Aira praecox*, annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, parsley-piert *Aphanes arvensis* and small mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum*. The nationally scarce upright chickweed *Moenchia erecta* is locally abundant in areas where the sward has been opened up.