

COUNTY: LANCASHIRE

SITE NAME: BEESTON BROOK PASTURE

DISTRICT: SOUTH RIBBLE

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

Local Planning Authority: South Ribble Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SD 594278

Area: 1.85 (ha.) 4.57 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 102

1:10,000: SD 52 NE

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 22 March 1999

Other Information:

This is a new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Beeston Brook Pasture lies at an altitude of around 30m OD, approximately 0.25km north of the village of Coupe Green. The site consists of unimproved, herb-rich pasture with flushes on a north-east facing slope. Boulder clay overlying sandstone gives rise to heavy, neutral to mildly-acidic soils. Beeston Brook Pasture is one of the few remaining unimproved herb-rich pastures present in this part of Lancashire. This vulnerable habitat has become increasingly scarce nationally and has been largely destroyed in Lancashire due to agricultural intensification.

The site supports a species-rich mesotrophic grassland community characterised by red fescue *Festuca rubra*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and field wood-rush *Luzula campestris* with common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, greater burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. Dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria* is also occasionally present.

Areas of wetter flushed ground within the grassland support mesotrophic rush pasture characterised by tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and hard rush *Juncus inflexus* with marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, square-stalked St John's-wort *Hypericum tetrapterum* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.

Scattered scrub, comprising of rose *Rosa* spp, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* is present throughout the grassland. A strip of alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland occurs along the edge of Beeston Brook.