

**Site Name:** Lower Peaslows Farm Meadow **County:** Derbyshire

**District:** High Peak

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 substituted by Schedule 9 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

**Local Planning Authority:** Peak District National Park Authority, Derbyshire County Council, High Peak District Council

**National Grid reference:** SK 079807 **Area:** 0.69 ha

**Ordnance Survey Sheet:** 110 **1:10,000:** SK 08 SE

**Notification date:** 3 February 2005

**Reasons for notification:**

Lower Peaslows Farm Meadow SSSI is nationally important for species-rich unimproved neutral grassland. The community comprises a dry neutral grassland type characterised by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*.

**General description:**

Lower Peaslows Farm Meadow SSSI is a species-rich unimproved hay meadow. Throughout the UK, huge losses in unimproved hay meadows have occurred as this habitat is extremely vulnerable to conversion to more productive grassland types through agricultural improvement. Lower Peaslows Farm Meadow exists today because of its long history of low intensity hay meadow management.

The site consists of a single field, the majority of which lies on a southwest-facing slope with a gradient that increases from slight to moderate from north to south. At the southern end a steep-sided gully runs from east to west and there is a slight north-facing slope at the northern end of the field. The site is generally free draining on shale grit, with one small area of swamp vegetation, with floating sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans* and brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, occurring where a small stream arises at the western end of the gully.

The steeper slopes are not mown, but across both the uncut and cut areas of the field excellent examples of a typical, but now scarce, hay meadow community supporting a wide variety of grasses and herbs are found. Grasses such as crested dog's tail, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and common bent *Agrostis capillaris* are characteristic of this vegetation. The herbs common knapweed, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, red clover *Trifolium pratense* and rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* are constant throughout the sward with oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* frequent and common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* occasional.

The presence of downy oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens* and locally frequent hoary plantain *P. media*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* and lady's bedstraw *Galium verum* all suggest a calcareous influence in the soil. The presence of these species is an unusual

feature of a meadow on the shale grit, and has increased the species diversity of the site, with over 50 species being recorded in the neutral grassland.