

**Site name:** South Lee Meadows **County:** Derbyshire

**District:** High Peak

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

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

**National Grid reference:** SK 172821 **Area:** 2.16 ha

**Ordnance Survey sheet:** **1:50,000:** 110 **1:10,000:** SK 18 SE

**Notification date:** 23 November 2011

### Reasons for notification:

South Lee Meadows SSSI is a nationally important site for its lowland meadows. The grassland consists mainly of the nationally scarce National Vegetation Classification (NVC) type MG4 meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* – great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland, with smaller areas of the nationally rare MG8 crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* – marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* grassland and the nationally scarce MG5 crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* – common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* grassland.

### General description:

South Lee Meadows SSSI supports an important example of unimproved seasonally-inundated floodplain grassland which has been greatly reduced in extent across much of England. These communities are distinguished by an assemblage of species closely associated with damp floodplain soils combined with regular hay meadow management. This site is also unusual in that it represents an example of this lowland meadow community at nearly 160m above sea level at the juncture between the contrasting Carboniferous limestones and the shales of the Millstone Grit series.

The two meadows lie on alluvial soils and shallow peats close to the outskirts of the village of Bradwell and alongside a small tributary of the River Noe, which further downstream joins the River Derwent. The meadow vegetation is largely characterised by red fescue *Festuca rubra*, meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* with other grasses including sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* and rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*. These grasses are accompanied by a range of characteristic herbs including an abundance of great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, with ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, lady's-smock *Cardamine pratensis*, water avens *Geum rivale*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*. On slightly elevated ground, this vegetation supports species generally uncommon on floodplain grasslands, such as field horsetail *Equisteum arvense*, spiked sedge *Carex spicata* and bush vetch *Vicia sepium*.

Additional diversity is provided by stands of taller marshy vegetation on areas of shallow peat soils which are rich in sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and soft rush *J. effusus* and sedges such as lesser pond sedge *C. acutiformis*. These small stands are species-rich and include devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, ragged robin *Silene flos-cuculi* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, along with smaller sedges such as carnation sedge *C. panicea* and glaucous sedge *C. flacca*.