

Site name: Mount Pleasant **County:** Derbyshire
District: Derbyshire Dales
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: Derbyshire Dales District Council, Derbyshire County Council

National Grid reference: SK 282473 **Area:** 2.97 ha

Ordnance Survey sheet: **1:50,000:** 119 **1:10,000:** SK 24 NE

Notification date: 23 November 2011

Reasons for notification:

Mount Pleasant SSSI is a nationally important site for its lowland unimproved neutral grassland. The grassland consists mainly of the nationally scarce National Vegetation Classification (NVC) type MG5 crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* – common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* grassland.

General description:

The site consists of a series of small fields managed as pasture and meadow on gentle north and west-facing slopes of a small valley running into the River Ecclesbourne, near to the hamlet of Ireton Wood. The fields are bounded by hedgerows and, along the northern edge, by a tree-lined brook.

Much of the site comprises agriculturally-unimproved, species-rich grassland characterised by a diverse and rich range of native grasses and herbs. Grasses such as red fescue *Festuca rubra*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* all occur in abundance, with heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* and quaking-grass *Briza media* occurring more locally.

Throughout is a diverse range of characteristic herbs which include a high frequency of common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* and yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. On steeper drier slopes, stands of grassland are particularly herb-rich and distinguished by increasingly frequent betony *Betonica officinalis*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, autumn hawkbit *Scorzoneroides autumnalis*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*. Also present in small quantities is the adder's tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, bitter-vetch *Lathyrus linifolius* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.

Where there is impeded drainage down onto the lower slopes, stands of taller marshy vegetation form part of the grassland but these are also species-rich, comprising a mix of wetland and grassland species. They are dominated by a number of rushes, such as hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, sharp-flowered rush *J. acutiflorus* and soft rush *J. effusus*, and include small sedges, such as carnation sedge *Carex panicea* and oval sedge *C. leporina*, and a range of herbs including fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and ragged robin *Lynchis flos-cuculi*. Locally uncommon species such as marsh arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris* have also been recorded here.