

Site name: Wall Lands **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 227529 **Area:** 8.94 ha

Ordnance Survey sheet: **1:50,000:** 119 **1:10,000:** SK 15 SE

Notification date: 23 November 2011

Reasons for notification:

Wall Lands 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 an extensive series of species-rich grasslands managed as meadow and pasture and separated by defunct but species-rich hedgerows, with all but one situated on the gentle west-facing slopes of a small valley on damp clay soils. Collectively these grasslands represent one of the largest blocks of enclosed unimproved grassland in Derbyshire outside of the Peak District.

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*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* all occur in abundance, whilst on damper ground tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* is prominent. Throughout is a diverse range of characteristic herbs which include an abundance of common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. On steeper drier slopes, stands of grassland are particularly herb-rich and distinguished by frequent betony *Betonica officinalis* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, along with autumn hawkbit *Scorzoneroides autumnalis*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and the locally uncommon bitter vetch *Lathyrus linifolius*. Also present in small quantities is the adder's tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

Where there is impeded drainage on the lower wetter slopes, stands of taller marshy vegetation occur but these are also species-rich, comprising a mix of the characteristic grassland species together with a range of rushes, such as sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and soft rush *J. effusus*, small sedges, including carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, star sedge *C. echinata* and glaucous sedge *C. flacca* and herbs including an abundance of great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* with ragged robin *Silene flos-cuculi*.