

**Site Name:** Lugg and Hampton Meadows SSSI      **Unitary Authority:** Herefordshire

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Herefordshire Council

**National Grid reference:** SO546400      **Area:** 155.68 ha

**Ordnance Survey Sheet:** **1:50,000:** 149      **1:10,000:** SO 53 NW, NE; SO 54 SW, SE

**Notification date:** 14 December 2011

#### Reasons for notification:

Lugg and Hampton Meadows is a nationally important site for its species-rich neutral grassland communities, with various expressions and varieties of the nationally scarce National Vegetation Classification (NVC) type MG4 meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* – great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland and a community transitional between this NVC type and the nationally scarce MG5 crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* – common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* grassland, and for its populations of two vascular plants: the nationally scarce and near threatened narrow-leaved water-dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia*, and the declining and vulnerable mousetail *Myosurus minimus*.

#### General description:

Lugg and Hampton Meadows are a large expanse of traditionally managed hay meadows in the floodplain of the River Lugg to the east of Hereford. They represent one of the largest surviving Lammas meadows in the country and are thought to have been managed in this way for at least 900 years.

Lugg and Hampton Meadows comprise three areas of unimproved neutral grassland on alluvial soils with underlying gravels. The land is adjacent to the River Lugg and floods seasonally providing some enrichment to the soils. As Lammas meadows, they are managed by taking a hay cut in late June or early July and grazing of the aftermath from the 1st August. Unimproved grasslands have suffered substantial decline nationally due to agricultural intensification and Lugg and Hampton Meadows represents a rare surviving example.

The species composition of the grassland varies throughout the site as a result of topography and management history, but it is characterised by grasses such as meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*. Hairy sedge *Carex hirta* is locally frequent. The broadleaved flora is characterised by the presence of meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and wild onion *Allium vineale*, with localised areas of common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*.

Large populations of the nationally scarce narrow-leaved water-dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia* are found across the site, but are most frequent on the Upper Lugg Meadows in otherwise species-poor communities. Mousetail *Myosurus minimus* is a declining species that occurs in several places across the site. Other notable vascular plant species include fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*, the near threatened meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale* and common meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum*, and the site supports a diverse assemblage of dandelion *Taraxacum* species.

In addition to the reasons for notification described above the meadows support small numbers of breeding curlew *Numenius arquata*.