

**Site name:** Benty Grange **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, Peak District National Park Authority

**National Grid reference:** SK146641 **Area:** 21.1 ha

**Ordnance Survey sheet:** **1:50,000:** 119 **1:10,000:** SK 16 SW

**Notification date:** 19 June 2012

**Reasons for notification:**

Benty Grange 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:**

Benty Grange SSSI supports one of the largest areas of species-rich unimproved neutral grassland on the Carboniferous limestone plateau in the Peak District National Park. Within Derbyshire and the Peak District, as throughout the UK, there have been significant losses of unimproved hay meadows as a result of agricultural improvement.

The site consists of a series of adjoining fields. Most of the site lies on a gentle south-facing slope. Neutral grassland extends over all the fields, though the influence of the limestone bedrock is strong in one of the western fields where soils are thin on steep slopes formed from old workings, and on limestone outcrops. On the thinnest soils, there are transitions to more calcareous neutral grassland, with sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, hoary plantain *Plantago media* and glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*.

The most extensive areas of neutral grassland are characterised by grasses, such as crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. The herbs include common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, meadow *Ranunculus acris* and bulbous *R. bulbosus* buttercups, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, common cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, and, more locally, pignut *Conopodium majus*.