

COUNTY: GLOUCESTERSHIRE SITE NAME: HUCCLECOTE MEADOWS

DISTRICT: GLOUCESTER, STROUD & TEWKESBURY

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Local Planning Authority: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Gloucester City Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Stroud District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 872163 Area: 5.74 (ha.) 14.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 162 1:10,000: SO 81 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): – Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Reasons for Notification:

A series of lowland meadows overlying Lower Lias clays in the Severn Vale near the outskirts of Gloucester. They represent one of the few remaining areas of such herb-rich ancient pastures in the county and have traditionally been managed for hay and stock grazing.

The meadows are exceptionally rich in plant species with variations in the relative abundance of particular species from one field to the next. The main grasses are generally Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* with other meadow species such as quaking grass *Briza media*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum*. Herb species characteristic of such ancient meadow habitats here include large amounts of great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, cowslip *Primula veris*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and betony *Stachys officinalis*. Less abundant are plants such as pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and the nationally rare corky-fruited water dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*. Altogether the fields support some 75 different meadow species.

The fields are bordered by very old hedges consisting largely of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* with occasional hedgerow trees such as oak *Quercus robur*.

A good range of butterflies have been recorded including meadow brown *Maniola jurtina*, marbled white *Melanargia galathea*, common blue *Polyommatus icarus*, grizzled skipper *Pyrgus malvae* and small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*.