

File ref:

County: Durham **Site Name:** Hesledon Moor West

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

Local Planning Authority: Easington District Council

National Grid Reference: NZ 386453 **Area:** 7.4 (ha) 18.2 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50 000 88 **1:10 000** NZ 34 NE

First Notified: 1984

Other Information:

This is a new site.

Description:

Hesledon Moor West is a small but very diverse site which includes fen, carr and heathland communities. These communities are developed on acidic glacial drift overlying Magnesian Limestone and were once widespread in eastern Durham, but are now confined to small isolated pockets within the urban/agricultural landscape. Dry heath dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* is more or less restricted to the central, higher, portion of the site, where it forms even-aged stands in which there are few associated species. Around the margins of the heath this community grades into wet heath, in which bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp. feature in the ground flora, and grass heath. The latter is characterised by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and creeping willow *Salix repens*. Of particular note are two species now uncommon in eastern Durham, the globe flower *Trollius europaeus* and pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*.

Around the central dome is a complex of fen, swamp and carr communities, part of which has suffered disturbance from drainage work. The fen communities are species-poor, and are characterised by large stands of common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* and branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* with water mint *Mentha aquatica* and common water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica* also frequent. Where the water-table is permanently high, common reedmace *Typha latifolia* forms large stands.

The carr communities are dominated by semi-mature birch and willow scrub with a poor-fen ground flora in the wetter depressions, which includes several interesting species, including marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and the southern species, the grey sedge *Carex divulsa*.

