

Site name: Calender Meadows **County:** Northamptonshire
District: Daventry
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: Daventry District Council, Northamptonshire County Council

National Grid reference: SP685749 **Area:** 3.1 ha

Ordnance Survey sheet: **1:50,000:** 141 **1:10,000:** SP 67 NE, SE

Notification date: 23 November 2012

Reasons for notification:

Calender Meadows 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 two small traditionally managed meadows on clay soils situated north of Northampton. The two meadows sit in a farmed landscape of arable and improved and semi-improved grassland, with small scattered woods and copses. Both fields support agriculturally-unimproved, species-rich grassland characterised by a diverse and rich range of native grasses and herbs. Grasslands of this type are rare in Northamptonshire.

There are frequent indicators of unimproved grassland present in the sward. Fine and coarser grasses occur, the former dominated by red fescue *Festuca rubra*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, whilst the latter include Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata* and false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. Yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* and downy oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens* are also present. A diverse range of characteristic herbs occur including a high frequency of common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, and, at lower frequency, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and fairy flax *Linum catharticum*. Glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* is also present in the sward. Other species typical of unimproved grassland include meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, which occur in small distinct patches, as well as oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, cowslip *Primula veris* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.

Stands of coarser vegetation with umbellifers and rank grasses lie in shaded areas around hedges and trees in the meadows, which also includes a small patch of vegetation with jointed rush *Juncus articulatus*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre* and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* as additional components of the meadow flora.