

COUNTY: SOMERSET      SITE NAME: KINGWESTON MEADOWS

DISTRICT: SOUTH SOMERSET

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

Local Planning Authority: SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, South Somerset District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 540304      Area: 11.5 (ha.) 28.40 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 183      1:10,000: ST 53 SW, ST 52 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is an excellent example of an unimproved herb-rich neutral grassland of a type which is now rare in Britain. Since the Second World War over 95% of such habitat in Britain has been lost as a result of agricultural improvement and the annual rate of loss is estimated to be increasing. In Somerset, a county where this habitat was once widespread and extensive, less than 10 sites of this size and quality are now known.

It is located on level ground on calcareous clay soils which have developed from the underlying Jurassic clays.

The sward consists largely of the Crested Dog's-tail – Common Knapweed *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* community. It contains in abundance herbs such as: Betony *Stachys officinalis*, Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Cowslip *Primula veris*, Pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Common Knapweed. Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio*, Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and Corky-fruited Water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*, which is a nationally scarce species, are also present.

In the wetter areas, which are mostly associated with the field gutters, rushes *Juncus spp.* become abundant along with species such as: Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*, Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* and Hairy Sedge *Carex hirta*.