



**Johnsons' Meadows SSSI,  
Leicestershire**

**Notification under Section 28 of the  
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**

## Contact points and further information

This notification document is issued by Natural England's East Midlands Area Team. The address for correspondence is:

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Your contact point for specific enquiries relating to this notification is Ian Evans.

A second document (Johnsons' Meadows SSSI - supporting information) is available on request from the address above. This contains information and extracts from relevant documents that have been used in the decision to notify this SSSI.

The date of notification of Johnsons' Meadows SSSI is: 31 January 2020

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This document explains why Johnsons' Meadows is notified by Natural England as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 1.2 Johnsons' Meadows SSSI supports nationally important species-rich lowland neutral grassland. The site comprises a contiguous series of six traditionally managed and flower rich hay meadows bounded by mature and species rich hedgerows. The hedgerows enhance the site's nature conservation interest and provide valuable nesting, feeding and sheltering habitat for birds and invertebrates. A number of well used public footpaths traverse the meadows demonstrating the local community's use and enjoyment of the site.
- 1.3 The annexes to this document comprise the legal papers that detail the interest and the management required to maintain that interest. You have a right to make representations or objections to this notification. Part 3 of this document explains how to do this.
- 1.4 Natural England's consent is required by owners and occupiers before any of the operations listed in Annex 3 can be carried out. We will work closely with owners and managers, as well as other bodies, to ensure that existing operations and new works that are not considered likely to damage the special feature of the SSSI can be carried out.

## **2. The legal background**

- 2.1 Johnsons' Meadows SSSI is notified under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 2.2 Part 8 (Legal documents) of this notification document contains the following legal documents required by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:
  - a citation detailing the reasons for notification (Annex 1);
  - a statement of Natural England's views on the management of the SSSI (Annex 2);
  - a list of operations requiring Natural England's consent (Annex 3); and
  - a map identifying the land subject to this notification (Annex 4).
- 2.3 This notification has several effects. The key ones can be summarised as follows:
  - owners and occupiers must give Natural England notice before carrying out, causing or permitting to be carried out any of the activities in the list of operations at Annex 3;
  - owners of land included in the SSSI have a legal obligation to notify Natural England within 28 days if the ownership or occupancy of the land changes;
  - it is an offence for any person intentionally or recklessly to destroy or damage the special feature of the SSSI; and,
  - public bodies must consult Natural England before carrying out or authorising any works that may damage the SSSI.
- 2.4 If you require any further information or advice on how this notification affects you, please do not hesitate to contact Natural England at the address shown at the beginning of this notification document.

### 3. Making representations

- 3.1 You have a legal right to make objections and representations about this notification. Any representations, including those supporting the notification, or objections should be made in writing to Natural England's East Midlands Area Team by **1 June 2020**. Representations can be sent by post, e-mail or online to the addresses shown on page 2. You may wish to seek legal or independent advice and your representative may wish to write to us on your behalf.
- 3.2 Natural England's East Midlands Area Team will consider your objections or representations and will try to resolve them. If there are no unresolved objections, approval to confirm the notification will be considered by an appropriate Natural England Director within nine months of this notification.
- 3.3 Any unresolved objections or representations will be considered by the Board of Natural England within nine months of this notification. If there are unresolved objections, confirmation of this notification is likely to be considered at the Board meeting provisionally scheduled for September 2020. Please note the desirability of the notification (for instance, for socio-economic reasons) will not form part of the Board's decision. Following consideration of objections and representations, the Board of Natural England may confirm or withdraw all or part of this notification. In reaching its decision the Board will consider whether, in light of the objections and representations received, Natural England remains of the opinion that the site is of special scientific interest. If you wish to emphasise any of your objections or representations to the Board in person, you should tell us when you write to us. You will then be advised of the date and location of the Board meeting.
- 3.4 Natural England will accept correspondence relating to unresolved objections up to seven days prior to the Board meeting at which the confirmation is due to be considered. Correspondence received after this date will only be presented to the Board in very exceptional circumstances and you will be expected to provide justification as to why there has been a delay in providing the information. The decision whether this information will be submitted to the Board is entirely at Natural England's discretion. The reason that there is a seven day cut off is to allow Board members sufficient opportunity to consider all of the issues and read all the relevant paperwork before they meet to take their decision.
- 3.5 Natural England has a policy of openness, which reflects our obligations under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This legislation provides a legal right of access to information held by public bodies. This means that we will provide information on how we make our decisions on SSSIs to any person on request. This includes details of objections and representations received. We will assume, therefore, that your representation or objection can be made publicly available unless you indicate with clear and valid reasons which (if any) part(s) of these you wish to be excluded from this arrangement. However, you should be aware that the requirements of the legislation may mean that we cannot comply with your request that this information be withheld. We do, however, respect people's privacy and will take all reasonable steps to consult you before reaching a decision on disclosure of the information.
- 3.6 As an individual with an interest in Johnsons' Meadows SSSI, your information will be stored and processed on a computer database that will be operated within the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. For the purposes of the Data Protection Act, the data controller is Natural England, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1-2 Peasholme Green, York YO1 7PX. For more information, please see the *SSSI notifications privacy notice* at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/natural-england-privacy-notice/site-of-special-scientific-interest-notification-privacy-notice> or request a copy from the address on page 2 of this document.

## 4. Reasons for notification

- 4.1 Johnsons' Meadows SSSI is of special interest by reason of the following nationally important feature of special interest:

### Species-rich lowland neutral grassland

The site supports a nationally rare species-rich lowland neutral grassland. Whilst a range of grasses are present the grassland is dominated by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*. Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* is frequent alongside plentiful birds-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and red clover *Trifolium pratense*.

The character of the neutral grassland varies subtly across the six meadows reflecting local variation in hydrology, with some meadows subject to seasonal water logging, age and past management. Two of the meadows (units 4 and 5) are ancient unimproved grassland with medieval ridge and furrow. Great burnet, *Sanguisorba officinale* is a prominent feature reflecting seasonal inundation of the furrows. Lady's bedstraw, *Galium verum* and golden hair-grass, *Trisetum flavescens* are present in some of the drier ridges. Three of the meadows (units 1, 2 and 3) are long standing grassland restorations with frequent yellow-rattle, *Rhinanthus minor* present ensuring an open and short sward supporting autumn hawkbit, *Leontodon autumnalis* and cowslip, *Primula veris*. The remaining meadow (unit 6) is an equally long standing arable reversion which whilst supporting a comparatively tall sward sustains a good range of community indicators including meadow vetchling, *Lathyrus pratensis*. All four restored/reverted meadows have recovered their botanical interest under careful stewardship of the land by the owners since the 1980s.

The site also supports a large population of southern marsh-orchid, *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, numbering several hundred individuals. The neutral grassland present at Johnsons' is included in the Government's list of priority habitats that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England<sup>1</sup>.

The site is enhanced by mature and species rich hedgerows providing valuable additional habitat for birds, invertebrates, herptiles and mammals.

## 5. Site boundaries and relationship with other SSSIs

- 5.1 The boundary has been drawn to include land supporting the feature of special interest and those areas required to ensure the long-term sustainability of this feature.
- 5.2 Johnsons' Meadows SSSI consists of six adjoining meadows. The boundary is well defined on the ground by fence lines and hedgerows. See Annex 4 for detail of the SSSI boundary. Further clarification of the precise location of the boundary can be obtained from Natural England's East Midlands Area Team at the address on page 2 of this document.
- 5.3 The closest SSSI, Beacon Hill, Hangingstone and Out Woods SSSI, is 0.6 km away. This site supports some of the best habitat in Leicestershire for breeding birds including ancient woodland. It also includes important geological exposures.

## 6. Management of the SSSI

- 6.1 Landowners and managers are critical to the ongoing management of SSSIs. Natural England aims to foster the best possible relationship with those managing land so that its biodiversity can be maintained whilst also securing wider benefits. This notification includes a statement (Annex 2) of the management that Natural England considers is needed to conserve and enhance the feature of special interest at Johnsons' Meadows. Different management may be appropriate in different parts of the site and this statement is not intended to detail the exact requirements at specific locations. It provides a guide for

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<sup>1</sup> Under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

discussions with owners and managers on action to achieve positive management of the SSSI.

- 6.2 This notification also includes a list of the operations requiring Natural England's consent at Annex 3. The basis for the selection of these operations is set out in the supporting information document. Some operations may already be taking place. Where they do not cause any damage they will be given consent. We will work with landowners and managers to agree lists of such existing and planned activities, which can be approved.
- 6.3 Where an operation has been granted a consent, licence or permission from another public body a separate consent will not generally be required from Natural England. However, other public bodies are required to consult Natural England before such consents, licences or permissions are issued.
- 6.4 In particular, we recognise the important roles of the owners and managers of the land in managing this site. We will continue to work with them to develop means to secure the sustainable management of Johnsons' Meadows SSSI.

## **7. Supporting information**

- 7.1 The detailed information, which has been used to assess the importance of this SSSI, is available on request from the address on page 2 of this document.

## **8. Legal documents**

- 8.1 Attached at Annexes 1 - 4 are the legal documents, which are required by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

## **Annex 1 - Citation**

This is a legal document on which you have a right to make objections or representations, as explained in part 3 of this notification document.

**Site name:** Johnsons' Meadows **County:** Leicestershire

**District:** Charnwood

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Charnwood Borough Council

**Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 sheet:** 129 **National Grid reference:** SK533146

**Notification date:** 31 January 2020 **Area:** 6.61 ha

**Reason for notification:**

Johnsons' Meadows SSSI is of special interest for its nationally rare species-rich neutral grassland.

**General description:**

Lying close to the village of Woodhouse Eaves in Leicestershire, Johnsons' Meadows SSSI consists of a block of six species-rich lowland meadows situated on gently sloping ground overlying heavy soils. Two of the meadows support medieval ridge and furrow earthworks and a medieval settlement.

All of the meadows support a varied sward dominated by plants characteristic of species-rich lowland neutral grassland, including the grasses common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*. Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and red clover *Trifolium pratense* feature prominently. A large colony of southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* extends across the site providing a striking display of flowering spikes during early summer.

Other species which are common across all meadows and contribute to the quality of the sward include yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*. Species such as pignut *Conopodium majus*, meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* and goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis* are more localised, reflecting hydrological variation across and within the meadows as well as their different management histories.

The meadows supporting the medieval earthworks and ridge and furrow are especially diverse and are dominated by great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* which reflects their antiquity and seasonally wet conditions.

The interest of the site is enhanced by mature and species rich hedgerows forming the principal boundaries between the meadows. These hedgerows provide valuable nesting, feeding and sheltering habitat for birds, mammals, herptiles and invertebrates.

## **Annex 2 - Views about Management**

This is a legal document on which you have a right to make objections or representations, as explained in part 3 of this notification document.



## **Views About Management**

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 28(4) (as amended)

### **A statement of Natural England's views about the management of Johnsons' Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

Natural England has a duty to inform the owners and occupiers of land within Johnsons' Meadows Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) of its views on how to manage the habitat of interest for nature conservation. This statement sets out our views on how the species-rich lowland neutral grassland can be conserved and enhanced.

Not all of the management principles outlined in this statement will be equally appropriate to all parts of the SSSI. There may also be other management activities, not outlined here, which could be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the feature of interest.

This Statement does not constitute consent for any of the 'operations requiring Natural England's consent'. You need to have written consent from Natural England if you want to carry out any of those operations. Natural England welcomes discussion with owners, occupiers and users of the SSSI to ensure that the management of this site conserves and enhances the feature of interest, and that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

### **Management Principles**

Neutral hay meadows and pastures require active management if they are to retain their conservation interest. In order to maintain a species-rich sward, each year's growth of vegetation must be removed. Otherwise the sward becomes progressively dominated by tall and vigorous grasses which, together with an associated build-up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and reduce the botanical diversity of the site.

In neutral hay meadows, the above objective is traditionally achieved by closing the meadows to stock in the autumn and cutting the resultant growth as hay, usually in early July. The precise timing of the cut depends on local factors, including past management and current weather conditions, but should be after ground-nesting birds have fledged their young and any short-lived, characteristic plants have set seed. The aftermath is then grazed in late summer/autumn. Aftermath grazing is important for maintaining a species-rich sward, both through controlling competitive grasses and through hoof-prints providing suitable sites for seedlings to establish. Heavy poaching must be avoided, however.

On land managed as pasture the conservation of the interest feature is achieved by grazing. The precise timing and intensity of grazing will vary both between and within sites, according to local conditions and requirements (such as the type or availability of stock or the needs of individual plants or animals of conservation concern) but should aim to keep a relatively open sward without causing excessive poaching. Light trampling can be of benefit by breaking down leaf litter and providing areas for seed germination.

No other management should be routinely required. Any surrounding, well-managed hedgerows may considerably add to the habitat in providing shelter for invertebrates. The application of pesticides including herbicides or fertilisers (including manure or slurry) would be damaging but periodic dressings of well-rotted farmyard manure may be acceptable on meadows managed as hay meadows. Occasional dressings of lime may be acceptable.

For the damper meadows, regular and careful maintenance of surface drainage including ditches and drains can be necessary to prevent adverse changes in the plant species composition of the sward. Deepening of surface drainage should be avoided.

**Date notified:** 31 January 2020

## **Annex 3 - List of operations requiring Natural England's consent**

This is a legal document on which you have a right to make objections or representations, as explained in part 3 of this notification document.

## **Operations requiring Natural England's consent** **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 28 (4)(b) (as amended)**

The operations listed below may damage the feature of interest at **Johnsons' Meadows SSSI**. Before any of these operations are undertaken you must consult Natural England, and may require our consent.

It is usually possible to carry out some of these operations in certain ways, or at specific times of year, or on certain parts of the SSSI, without damaging the features of interest. If you wish to carry out any of these activities please contact a Natural England Adviser who will give you advice and where appropriate issue you with a consent. Please help us by using the form sent to you with the notification documents to ask us for consent to carry out these operations.

In certain circumstances it will not be possible to consent these operations, because they would damage the feature of interest. Where possible your Natural England Adviser will suggest alternative ways in which you may proceed, which would enable a consent to be issued. To proceed without Natural England's consent may constitute an offence. If consent is refused, or the conditions attached to it are not acceptable to you, you will be provided with details of how you may appeal to the Secretary of State.

<b>Standard reference number</b>	<b>Type of operation</b>
1.	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing and re-seeding.
2.	Grazing and alterations to the grazing regime (including type of stock, intensity or seasonal pattern of grazing).
3.	Stock feeding and alterations to stock feeding practice.
4.	Mowing or cutting vegetation and alterations to the mowing or cutting regime (such as from haymaking to silage).
5.	Application of manure, slurry, silage liquor, fertilisers and lime.
6.	Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weedkillers) whether terrestrial or aquatic, and veterinary products.
7.	Dumping, spreading or discharging of any materials.
8.	Burning.
9.	Release into the site of any wild, feral, captive-bred or domestic animal, plant, seed or micro-organism (including genetically modified organisms).
10.	Killing, injuring, taking or removal of any wild animal (including dead animals or parts thereof), or their eggs and nests, including pest control and disturbing them in their places of shelter.
11.	Destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including (tree, shrub, herb, hedge, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungal fruiting body, leaf-mould or turf).
12.	Tree and/or woodland management and alterations to tree and/or woodland management (including, planting, felling, pruning and tree surgery, thinning, coppicing, changes in species composition, removal of fallen timber).
13a.	Draining (including the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains).
13b.	Modification to the structure of water courses including their banks and beds, by realignment, re-grading, damming or dredging.
13c.	Management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes.

Standard reference number	Type of operation
14.	Alterations to water levels and tables and water utilisation (including irrigation, storage and abstraction from existing water bodies and through boreholes). Also the modification of current drainage operations.
15.	Infilling or digging of ditches, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or pits
20.	Extraction of minerals including hard rock, topsoil, subsoil, and spoil.
21.	Destruction, construction, removal, rerouting, or regrading of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, including soil and soft rock exposures or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground.
22.	Storage of materials.
23.	Erection of permanent or temporary structures or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling.
26.	Use of vehicles or craft.
27.	Recreational or other activities likely to damage or disturb the features of special interest.
28a.	Game and waterfowl management and hunting practices and alterations to game and waterfowl management and hunting practice.

### Notes

- i. This is a list of operations appearing to Natural England to be likely to damage the special feature of the SSSI, as required under section 28 (4) (b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- ii. Where an operation has been granted a consent, licence or permission from another authority separate consent will not be required from Natural England. However, other authorities are required to consult Natural England before such consents, licences or permissions are issued.
- iii. Any reference to 'animal' in this list shall be taken to include any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish, or invertebrate.

**Date notified:** 31 January 2020

**National Grid Reference:** SK533146

## **Annex 4 Map showing the land notified**

This is a legal document on which you have a legal right to make objections or representations, as explained in part 3 of this notification document.

