

County: Humberside

Site Name: Horse Dale and Holm Dale

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

Local Planning Authority: East Yorkshire Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SE 875569 and 880579

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 106 **1:10,000:** SE 85 NE

Area: 42.3 (ha) 104.5 (ac)

First Notified: 1985

Description:

The site defined as Horse Dale and Holme Dale consists of two unimproved chalk grassland banks within adjacent dry valleys, which converge at their eastern ends. The two slopes exhibit different aspects and plant communities.

The north-west facing bank of Horse Dale is heavily grazed by cattle. Sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* is dominant over much of the slope with a variety of other fine grasses including sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, quaking grass *Briza media*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*. Coarse grasses such as tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* and tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* are locally frequent. The herbs include abundant harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, lesser knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, upright hedge bedstraw *Galium album*, lady's bedstraw *G. verum*, purging flax *Linum catharticum*, hoary plantain *Plantago media*, cowslip *Primula veris* and salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*.

The vegetation on the south-west facing slope of Holm Dale is a mosaic of coarse tor grass interspersed with short turf areas, maintained by cattle and rabbit grazing. The closely grazed sheep's fescue grassland is extremely species-rich, with abundant harebell, felwort *Gentianella amarella*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, purging flax, rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, salad burnet and thyme *Thymus praecox*.

Small areas of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub are present on both slopes.