

EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: Thrislington
Unitary Authority/County: Durham
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: NZ317328
SAC EU code: UK0012838
Area (ha): 22.58
Component SSSI: Thrislington Plantation SSSI

Site description:

Thrislington contains one of the most important stands of primary Magnesian Limestone grassland in Britain. Although a comparatively small site it nonetheless contains the largest of the few surviving examples of these blue-moor-grass – small scabious (*Sesleria caerulea* – *Scabiosa columbaria*) grasslands. A variety of grassland communities occur over this substrate, most notable, and completely restricted to the Durham Magnesian Limestone, are those characterised by blue moor-grass and small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*.

The eastern portion of the site supports an intact primary surface generally dominated by blue moor-grass or sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*. Other common species include quaking-grass *Briza media*, meadow oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, rockrose *Helianthemum nummularia*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, small scabious, black and greater knapweeds *Centaurea nigra* and *C. sabiosa* and harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*.

The western portion of the site holds primary turf which was translocated between 1982 and 1990 as a result of an extension to the adjacent quarry. The pattern of the original grasslands was lost during translocation although this area remains herb-rich with many of the aforementioned species. Characteristic differences are areas of grassland dominated by upright brome *Bromopsis erecta* and others in which glaucous sedge and quaking-grass are the main species.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone).

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0012838

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: 

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs