

NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 31 MARCH 1989

COUNTY: SOMERSET SITE NAME: FRESHMOOR

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 280125 Area: 11.2 (ha.) 27.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 21 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Freshmoor is one of the few remaining areas of unimproved wet acid-grassland and mire on the Blackdown Hills. This type of habitat is particularly scarce as large areas have been drained for agricultural improvement in recent years. The diversity of this site is increased by the presence of bog pools and Birch carr.

The site lies on the east of the Blackdown Hills at an altitude of 200m on a gentle east facing slope. The underlying Cretaceous Upper Greensand forms a permeable bedrock from which ground water frequently emerges via springs and seepages. The soils are coarse and loamy belonging to the Hense series.

Where the water table is raised soils become waterlogged and peaty. A raft of vegetation has grown over this highly mobile substrate made up from species of *Sphagnum* including *S. palustre*, *S. fimbriatum* and *S. auriculatum* var *auriculatum*. Sedges such as Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea* and Star Sedge *Carex echinata* contribute to the structure while any remaining wet open areas are colonised by Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*. Associated species include Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Marsh St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*. The nutrient-poor, acid conditions are ideal for two insectivorous plants, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and Pale-leaved Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica* which is rare and local in Somerset.

Dense tussocks of Purple Moors-grass *Molinia caerulea* surround the bog pools and provide a drier microhabitat for Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica*

*tetralix*, Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. Heather *Calluna vulgaris* is present only on the driest hummocks.

As water moves away from the spring line it begins to pick up additional nutrients. The plant community responds with an increasing dominance of Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus* and abundant Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*. Associated species include Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Early Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, Heath Spotted-orchid *D. maculata*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*.

Diversity within the site is increased by the presence of a small block of Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* carr which was actively coppiced in the past. The ground flora contains extensive *Sphagna* carpets. Many of the more shade tolerant species from the surrounding mire occur with the noticeable addition of Remote Sedge *Carex remota*.