

County: Devon **Site Name:** Forward Point

District: South Hams

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, South Hams District Council

National Grid Reference: SX 905497 **Area:** 32.1 (ha) 79.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 202 **1:10,000:** SX 85 SE, 95 SW, 84 NE, 94 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952 **Date of Last Revision:** 1976

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

Part of the former Berry Head to Froward Point SSSI.

In South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In County Structure Plan Coastal Preservation Area and Nature Conservation Zone.

Owned by the National Trust mainly above HWM, part managed as a nature reserve by the Devon Trust for Nature Conservation.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is important for its coastal plant communities and in particular for the maritime heathland and grassland which support several local and rare species.

The coastal slopes on which this site lies rise to a height of approximately 100 m and face generally south, with a variety of aspects and slope being provided by several coves and points. The Devonian slates and sandstones here have produced mostly well-drained, fine, loamy to silty soils, although drainage is occasionally impeded alongside streams. Exposed rock occurs in places on the steeper slopes.

Bell heather *Erica cinerea* is frequent on the more exposed cliff faces, while herb-rich maritime grassland communities occur on the higher slopes. These are characterised by cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*, together with sea plantain *Plantago maritima*, wild carrot *Daucus carota* and sea campion *Silene maritima*. Kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and sheep's-bit *Jasione montana* are abundant in places. On the thin soil of the rocky ledges and crevices grow wild thyme *Thymus drucei*, thrift *Armeria maritima*, rock sea-spurrey *Spergularia rupicola* and, of particular note, autumn squill *Scilla autumnalis* and hairy bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus*. Also present on the site are the rare toadflax-leaved St John's-wort *Hypericum linarifolium* and the local sea stork's-bill *Erodium maritimum*.

Habitat diversity is increased by the presence of small streams which run down to the sea. Willows *Salix* spp. and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* occur here, and water mint *Mentha aquatica*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* characterise the damper areas. Some mature Monterey pine *Pinus radiata* gives way along the cliff tops and tracks to mixed scrub of blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, gorse *Ulex europaeus* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* dominates some areas.

The range of habitats provides for a variety of bird species, with tree-creeper *Certhia familiaris*, stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia* and whitethroat *Sylvia communis* present. Gulls *Larus* spp., cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* and shag *P. aristotelis* breed on the cliffs.