

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: COMMON MOOR, EAST PUTFORD

DISTRICT: Torridge

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, Torridge District Council

National Grid Reference: SS 374 180 Area: 53.9 (ha) 133.2 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 190 1:10,000: SS 31 NE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Common Moor, East Putford is one of a few remnant sites for a type of wet heathland restricted to North Devon and Pembrokeshire. These heathlands characteristically have a composite nature where wet and dry heathland communities are interspersed with tall herb fen. The site supports a diverse invertebrate fauna.

The Moor lies some 12 km south-west of Bideford and 5 km south-east of Woolfardisworthy. To the north, it is nearly flat (155 m) but the site rises southwards onto a ridge (171 m) before falling away again. The Moor rests on the shales of the Crackington Formation which are part of the Culm measure series of Carboniferous age, and the soils range from gleyed brown earths on better drained sections of the ridge through stagnoleys with humose and peaty topsoils to *Sphagnum* derived peats.

The major part of the Common Moor consists of wet grassy heath. This is dominated by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Western Gorse *Ulex gallii* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*. The lichen *Cladonia impexa* forms an integral part of the ground cover. Typical associated species are Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*, Heath Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, Lesser Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera bifolia*, Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Petty Whin *Genista anglica* and Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. This community grades into dry heath on the drier parts of the ridge, with frequent Bristle Bent *Agrostis curtisii* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus* scrub.

At the north-eastern end of the site lies a small area of open bog pools. These are surrounded by carpets of Bog-mosses *Sphagnum* spp with associated species such as Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Common Cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Common Sedge *Carex nigra*. There are also two areas of wet grassy rush heath at either side of the moor, dominated by large tussocks of Purple Moor-grass with Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* and Sharp-flowered Rush *J. acutiflorus* as sub-dominants. Other species characteristic of this community are Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Lesser Skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and Compact Rush *Juncus conglomeratus*. There are a number of Willow bushes *Salix* spp scattered throughout the site and a lichen of western distribution, *Usnea articulata*, can be found hanging from the branches of several bushes.

A rich invertebrate fauna has been recorded here including the local Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinea* and Marbled White *Melanargia galathea* butterflies, the nationally rare

crane fly *Limnophila abdominalis* and the nationally scarce longhorn beetle *Strangalia quadrifasciata*.