

CITATION

COUNTY: DEVON SITE NAME: RUSHFORD WOOD

DISTRICT: WEST DEVON

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, Dartmoor National Park Authority

National Grid Reference: SX 703898 Area: 19.7 (ha.) 48.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 191 1:10,000: SX 68 NE, 69 SE, 78 NW, 79 SW

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

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

Other Information:

The site lies within the Dartmoor National Park. The site boundary has been amended by extension and deletion.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Rushford Wood is a fine example of Pedunculate Oak/Hazel woodland and includes areas of ancient oakwood. The site contains a varied flora and, in particular, supports a variety of rare and interesting lichens.

The site lies on the northern edge of Dartmoor at an altitude of 160–230m, and has developed on relatively fertile, though somewhat acid soils, derived from granites of Permo-Carboniferous age. The wood itself displays a variety of slope, aspect and drainage. The woodland character is primarily open canopy high forest, dominated by Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, but also containing occasional Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. There is a well developed shrub layer comprised mainly of Hazel *Corylus avellana* but which also includes Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Crab Apple *Malus sylvestris* and Elder *Sambucus nigra*. The ground vegetation is characterised by the abundance of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, and by the wide occurrence of Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea* and Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*. Climbing Corydalis *Corydalis claviculata* also occurs.

A number of fast-flowing streams cross the site and these have given rise to wetter hollows dominated by Alder *Alnus glutinosa*. The typical ground flora here includes such species as Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* and Primrose *Primula vulgaris*.

The trunks and branches of the mature trees support epiphytic growths of many lichens, mosses and ferns. Over 130 species of lichen have been recorded on the site, both on the

trees and shrubs, and also on the granite rocks and outcrops. Among these are several rare species *Phylctis agelaea*, *Buellia erubescens*, *Coniocybe furfuracea*, and the old forest species *Catillaria atropurpurea*. Of particular note is *Leptogium palmatum* which until recently was thought to be extinct in the British Isles.