

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: BOLT HEAD TO BOLT TAIL

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 666398 to 730373 Area: 228.7 (ha) 565.0 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 202 1:10,000: SX 63 NE, 73 NW

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

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

Other Information:

Boundary amended by extension from previous Bolt Head SSSI. Boundary also amended by deletion. In South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and South Devon Heritage Coast. In Structure Plan Nature Conservation Zone (partly) and Coastal Preservation Area. Owned above HWM by the National Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is of high botanical value due to the presence of many rare or local flowering plants and lichens and is also important for its invertebrate fauna and for breeding birds.

The bedrock consists of mineral-rich Lower Devonian schists forming cliffs rising to some 120 m for about 9 km, facing mostly south west. On the cliffs there is a thin layer of well-drained loamy brown-earth soil supporting maritime rock-crevice, maritime grassland, maritime heath and scrub communities. Broadleaved woodland occurs at the sheltered north-east end.

The maritime grassland communities are characterised by Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* with Thrift *Armeria maritima*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Sea and Buckshorn Plantain *Plantago maritima* and *P. coronopus*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* and Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. Bloody Cranesbill *Geranium sanguineum* also occurs.

The grassland often fades out on to bare rock, or merges with heathland of Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Bell Heather *Eric cinerea* and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*. These plant communities contain a number of nationally rare or uncommon species such as Carrot Broomrape *Orobanche maritima*, Upright Chickweed *Moenchia erecta*, Autumn Squill *Scilla autumnalis*, Portland Spurge *Euphorbia portlandica* and Sea Storksbill *Erodium maritimum*.

The rocks support a wide variety of lichens, including an assemblage with Mediterranean affinities. Rare species include *Cladonia convoluta* and *C. forma*, *Teloschistes flavicans*, *Roccella fuciformis*, *R. phycopsis* and *Buellia leptoclinoides*.

There are many areas of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and of scrub species such as Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. North of Bolt Head, facing the Salcombe Estuary, there is a stretch of woodland dominated by Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea*, with some Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*.

The invertebrate fauna contains many species limited mainly to southerly coastal sites. Three nationally rare species of ant are found namely *Solenopsis fugax*, *Strongylognathus testaceus* and *Anergates atratulus* (the latter two species being parasites in the nests of

Tetramorium caespitum. The Grey Bush Cricket *Platycleis denticulata* is plentiful and there are two native species of cockroach *Ectobius pallidus* and *Ectobius panzeri*.

The scrub provides nesting cover for Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirrus* and other birds, while Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* and Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* breed on the cliffs and rocks.