

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 20 FEBRUARY 1987

COUNTY: DORSET SITE NAME: REMPSTONE HEATHS

DISTRICT: PURBECK

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

Local Planning Authority: PURBECK DISTRICT COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SY 990849 Area: 174.8 (ha.) 431.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195 1:10,000: SY 98 SE, NE, SZ 08 SW, N

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1970 (part) Date of Last Revision: 1977 (part)

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Includes areas formerly notified as part of the adjacent Poole Harbour SSSI.
Within Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site includes remaining heathland on the southern shores of Poole Harbour, between the Corfe River in the west and Studland and Godlingston Heaths in the east. Bog and wet heath communities are specially well represented with fine transitions into the saltmarsh of the Harbour. There is also dry heath, acidic grassland and broadleaved woodland.

On Wytch Moor and at several other smaller locations valley bogs occur. These contain bog pools and carpets of bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp. with several species represented including the rare *S. pulchrum*. Other frequent bog plants are Cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, White Beak-Sedge *Rhynchospora alba*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Round-leaved- and Long-leaved Sundews *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. intermedia*, Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. Where the bog drains into saltmarsh there are transitional communities with varying amounts of Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, Black Bogrush *Schoenus nigricans*, Reed *Phragmites australis* and Parsley Water-dropwort *Oenanthe lachenallii*.

On the fringes of the bogs and in other wet areas, wet heath supports abundant Dorset Heath *Erica ciliaris*, a plant almost restricted in Britain to the Isle of Purbeck and which has its centre of distribution on the Rempstone Heaths. Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* is also frequent and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* dominates some areas, locally forming deep tussocks and frequently associated with Bog-myrtle. Marsh Gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, a scarce and decreasing plant, is found in some of the more open areas of wet heath. There are also stands of the rare Brown Beak Sedge *Rhynchospora fusca*. The fringes of the wet heath and bog hold carr dominated by Common Sallow *Salix cinerea* and Downy

Birch *Betula pubescens*, occasionally with the scarce Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*. On higher ground drier woodland has Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Silver Birch *Betula pendula*.

Dry heathland is present mainly on slopes and the banks of old clay workings and the disused tramway. It is dominated by Ling *Calluna vulgaris* with Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Dwarf Gorse *Ulex minor*. Common Gorse *Ulex europaeus* frequently forms stands on the dry heath and in a few places Western Gorse *U. gallii* occurs. In some areas, dry heathland has been heavily colonised by Scots – and Maritime Pine *Pinus sylvestris* and *P. pinaster*.

Flushes, on slopes fed by slightly base-enriched ground water, are found in a few locations and contain many elements of wet heath and bog but have additional species such as Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris* and Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*.

Small areas of grassland are also included. Damp acidic grassland, dominated by Purple Moor-grass and Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris* has abundant Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, Devil's-bit *Succisa pratensis*, Heath Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* and the local Bitter Vetch *Lathyrus montanus* and Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria*. Drier acidic swards, dominated by Common Bent and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, are often associated with several of the dominant species of dry heathland, together with herbs such as Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perspusillus* and, in one location, the rare Hairy Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus*.

The fauna of Rempstone Heaths is rich. The bog pools, streams and flushes, support a diverse dragonfly fauna including the very local small Red Damselfly *Ceriagrion tenellum* and the rare Scarce Ischnura *Ischnura pumilio*. Grasshoppers and Bush Crickets are also well represented with a strong population of the rare Bog Grasshopper *Stethophyma grossum*, several colonies of Long-winged Conehead *Conocephalus discolor* as well as good numbers of Short-winged Conehead *C. dorsalis* and Bog Bush Cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera*. Mature dry heath, especially on cuttings and the banks of old clay workings, holds Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* and Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca*, both rare and threatened reptiles. Breeding birds of the dry heathland include the rare Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* and Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, a scarce and rapidly declining species.