

COUNTY: DEVON

SITE NAME: LITTLE HALDON HEATHS

DISTRICT: TEIGNBRIDGE

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, Teignbridge District Council

National Grid Reference: SX 915765, SX 925767, SX 921752      Area: 105.8 (ha.) 261.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 192

1:10,000: SX 97 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site comprises several fragments of lowland heath of a type restricted to south west Britain and of very limited extent in Devon. Habitat diversity is provided by an area of oak-ash woodland which grades into the heathland communities.

Situated on the exposed plateau of Little Haldon, the site lies at an altitude of 210 to 240m. The soils are very acidic, generally well-drained and with a humose surface layer. Bare patches of flinty gravels occur in places.

A dense cover of mature heathland occupies the majority of the site. The dwarf shrubs Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii* dominate the vegetation, with the grass Bristle Bent *Agrostis curtisii* being of frequent occurrence. The latter two species are particularly characteristic of south western heaths. The region's prevailing oceanic climate is reflected by the frequent presence of Cross-leaved Heath *E. tetralix*, Purple Moorgrass *Molinia caerulea* and Deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum*; all species more usually associated with poorly drained or upland localities. In addition, Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and the lichen *Cladonia impexa* occur as occasionals.

An area of woodland occupies a small valley and fringes part of the site. Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* form the main components of the canopy. On the wetter ground Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Willows *Salix* spp. occur. There is a rich and varied ground flora with several species characteristic of ancient woodland such as Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, Wood-sedge *Carex sylvatica* and Scaly Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis* in well drained parts. Remote Sedge *C. remota*, Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and Marsh Violet *Viola palustris* are found in the boggy flushes and valley bottoms.

Birds characteristically associated with heathlands and breeding on site are Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*. Reptiles present include Adder *Vipera berus* and Common Lizard *Lacerta vivipara*.