

File ref:

County: Devon **Site Name:** Hobby to Peppercombe

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 320242 to 383242 **Area:** 240.6 (ha) 594.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 190 **1:10,000:** SS 32 SW, SE

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

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

Other Information:

Previously 'The Hobby' SSSI and NCR site, extending at 1985 revision and small area deleted.

In North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Hartland Heritage Coast.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This 6 km section of the North Devon coast supports extensive sessile oak *Quercus petraea* woodlands which contain nationally important communities of Atlantic-climate old-woodland lichens, many of which are rare or have a restricted distribution.

The north-facing, convex seacliffs, composed of much-folded Carboniferous sandstones and shales of the Bude and Crackington Formations, rise very steeply from the intertidal rocky platform to about 150 m. They are subject to the strong, moist winds from the Atlantic, and in places fast-flowing streams have deeply incised the cliffs to form steep valley and coastal waterfalls.

Sessile oak is the dominated woodland tree over much of the site, and in places, particularly on the steeper slopes close to the sea, it forms pure stands. More varied woodland occupies the relatively sheltered valleys and slopes away from the sea. Here ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, downy birch *Betula pubescens*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, sallow *Salix cinerea* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* locally mix with the oak. There are some planted beech *Fagus sylvatica*, and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* occur as invasive aliens, particularly where the native tree canopy has been broken by tree-fall. The proportion of hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* vary throughout the woods, while blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and gorse *Ulex europaeus* form locally dense thickets in the open.

Some areas of the ground flora are dominated by a sward of either great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* or bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*; others support a flora which includes bugle *Ajuga reptans*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, woodruff *Galium odoratum* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. The rich fern flora includes scaly male-fern *Dryopteris affinis*, common male-fern *D. filix-mas*, broad buckler-fern *D. dilatata* and the western hay-scented buckler-fern *D. aemula*.

Along the seaward lip of the cliffs the canopy becomes very open, with scattered, wind-stunted sessile oak. Here, maritime heath containing heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and gorse *Ulex* spp. grades in with the scrub.

The site's long-established woodland and suitable prevailing climate have enabled an extremely rich and healthy lichen flora to develop. The Lobarion assemblage is particularly well established and includes the very rare *Lobaria amplissima* as well as *L. pulmonaria*, *L. laetevirens* and *L. scrobiculata*. Other rare species include *Parmeliella atlantica* and *P. plumbea*, *Bombyliospora pachycarpa*, *Pannaria rubiginosa* and *Stricta doufourii*. There is a luxuriant development of many species, including *Usnea articulata* and several western species such as the rare *Enterographa hutchinsiae*.

A wide variety of breeding birds occur here. Coastal species include fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and great black-backed gull *Larus marinus*. Woodland birds are well represented with raven *Corvus corax*, sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, buzzard *Buteo buteo*, barn owl *Tyto alba*, great spotted woodpecker

THE TEXT FROM THIS POINT IS UNREADABLE