

Notification Date: 18 March 1987

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: DEVIL'S SPITTLEFUL

DISTRICT: WYRE FOREST SITE REF: 15 WPI

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Wyre Forest District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 808750 Area: 98.4 (ha.) 243.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 138 1:10,000: SO 87 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955 Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust and Wyre Forest District Council.
Site boundary modified (extension).

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site lies to the southwest of Kidderminster on extensive deposits of Bunter Sandstone. The thin acidic soils derived from these rocks support one of the largest remnants of lowland heathland in Worcestershire.

The vegetation of the Devil's Spittleful consists of a mosaic of dwarf-shrub heath, scrub, bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and acid woodland which is largely dominated by silver birch *Betula pendula* and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*. The shrub/heath community is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* with abundant bell heather *Erica cinerea* and western gorse *Ulex gallii*. Because of its scarcity in Worcestershire, this habitat supports a number of species with very restricted distributions in the county. These include heath dog-violet *Viola canina*, sheep's-bit *Jasione montana* and buck's-horn plantain *Plantago coronopus* which is more common near the sea. Also present are annual knotted clover *Trifolium striatum*, small cudweed *Filago minima*, early forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*, bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus* and annual knawel *Scleranthus annuus*. Of special interest is the presence of the rare grey hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens*, a plant normally found on coastal sands in the East of England, which occurs here at its only known location in the county.

In addition to the heathland the site includes small areas of unimproved acidic grassland dominated by wavy hair-grass and common bent *Agrostis tenuis*, with viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare* and moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*.

The site supports a wide range of breeding birds and invertebrates, the latter includes the pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne*, purple hairstreak *Quercusia quercus*, silver-washed fritillary *Argynnis paphia* and the scarce micro-moths *Trichopteryx polycommata* and *Perconia strigillaria*.