

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 15 DECEMBER 1986

CITATION

COUNTY: ISLES OF SCILLY SITE NAME: WINGLETANG DOWN (ST AGNES)

DISTRICT:

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

Local Planning Authority: COUNCIL OF THE ISLES OF SCILLY

National Grid Reference: SV 884075 Area: 28.9 (ha.) 71.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 203 1:10,000: SV 80 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971 Date of Last Revision: 1976

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

Other Information:

The site lies within the Isles of Scilly Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Renotification covers land above Mean High Water Mark.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Wingletang Down forms an extensive area of low lying unenclosed heathland, dune grassland and rocky coast on the south side of St Agnes, an inhabited island in the south western part of the Isles of Scilly archipelago. Maritime heathland covers much of the site and supports populations of a number of rare plant species.

Thin skeletal and podzolic soils overlie the Hercynian granite which also outcrops at the surface to form numerous weathered boulders and cairns on a low plateau no more than 20 metres high. Blown sand covers the granite in the low lying area between Beady Pool and Porth Askin. There are several granite boulder beaches along the western shoreline where the downs are exposed to Atlantic gales and excessive salt spray.

The thin soils and extreme exposure have led to the development of wind pruned 'waved' maritime heath over much of Wingletang Down dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*. In places the open heathland is being invaded by Gorse *Ulex europaeus* scrub and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. The heathland is particularly important for the occurrence of a number of nationally rare plants including the Least Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*, a species restricted in Britain to this site and the Channel Isles, and Orange Bird's-foot *Ornithopus pinnatus*. Other notable plants include another Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum azoricum* and Western Clover *Trifolium occidentale*. There are also strong populations of Autumn Lady's Tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* and an occurrence of Bristle Clubrush *Scirpus setaceus*, a species rare in Scilly. In addition the nationally rare Early Meadow-grass *Poa*

*infirmus* grows on the short maritime grassland on the coastal edge to the north-west of the downs.

The dune grassland to the south has abundant Sand Sedge *Carex arenaria*, Sand Couch *Elymus farctus*, Portland Spurge *Euphorbia portlandica* and Common Storksbill *Erodium cicutarium*. There is also a small population of Hemlock Water Dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* growing unusually in this dry habitat. Sea-Kale *Crambe maritima* occurs in the strandline vegetation at the back of Beady Pool, whilst Sea-milkwort *Glaux maritima* which is also rare in Scilly occurs at Horse Point at the southern end of the site.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* breed at Beady Pool and there is a small breeding colony of Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* along the north-west shore of the downs. There are also records of Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* breeding in some of the west coast storm boulder beaches.