

COUNTY: ESSEX

SITE NAME: TIPTREE HEATH

DISTRICT: COLCHESTER

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

Local Planning Authority: Colchester Borough Council

National Grid Reference: TL 882146

Area: 24.97 (ha.) 61.70 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:500,000: 168

1:10,000: TL 81 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1973

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984

Date of Last Revision: –

Reasons for Notification:

Tiptree Heath lies between Colchester and Maldon on a ridge of glacial sand and gravel. It is the largest surviving fragment of heathland in the County and shows the complete succession from acidic grassland and dwarf shrub heath through gorse and birch scrub to secondary woodland. It supports a number of plants rare in Essex.

The open heathland is mainly pure heather *Calluna vulgaris*, or a heather/bent-grass *Agrostis* sp. mosaic. Elsewhere it is colonised with gorse *Ulex europaeus* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. All-seed *Radiola linoides*, at its only station in Essex, occurs locally on areas of sparse heather cover. Bell-heather *Erica cinerea* and cross-leaved heath *E. tetralix* are present, the latter locally with pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, heath rush *Juncus squarrosus*, yellow sedge *Carex demissa*, ribbed sedge *C. binervis*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and bristle scirpus *Isolepis setacea* in damper areas.

Gorse and birch scrub grade into secondary woodland which forms a substantial area along the southern edge of the heath composed of oak *Quercus robur*, birch *Betula pendula* and *B. pubescens* and aspen *Populus tremula*. There are some bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* areas, one of which supports a colony of the rare heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp. *ericetorum*.

Royal fern *Osmunda regalis*, mountain fern *Thelypteris limbosperma* and hard fern *Blechnum spicant* have been recorded along the stream side in very small numbers.