COUNTY: SOMERSET SITE NAME: NETTLECOMBE PARK

DISTRICT: WEST SOMERSET

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

Local Planning Authority: SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, Exmoor National Park Authority

National Grid Reference: ST 055375 ST 062383 Area: 90.4 (ha.) 223.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 181 1:10,000: ST 03 NE, ST 03 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
A new site. Within the Exmoor National Park.

Description and Reasons for Notification:
Nettlecombe Park is important for its lichen flora. The site lies in a valley which runs North-South on the northern fringes of the Brendon Hills. The underlying rocks are Devonian siltstones and sandstones and the soils are predominantly neutral loams.

Records suggest this site has been wood pasture or parkland for at least 400 years. There are some very old oak pollards which may be of this age or older. The oldest standard trees are over 200 years of age. The continuity of open woodland and parkland, with large mature and over-mature timber, has enabled characteristic species of epiphytic lichens and beetles to become established and persist. Many of these species are now nationally scarce because this type of habitat has been eliminated over large areas of Great Britain.

At Nettlecombe 150 species of lichens, belonging to a number of associations, are to be found. This reflects the wide range of epiphytic habitats present, created by variations in the age of trees; exposure and aspect. Thirteen of these species are regarded as being indicators of ancient woodland or parkland sites. The Lecanactidetum premnae association, which occurs on the drier side of tree trunks, is particularly well represented. This association is a community of ancient woodland sites and includes species such as *Lecanactis lyncea*, *Arthonia impolita* and the nationally scarce *Opegrapha prosodea*. The Lobarion pulmonariae association is another ancient woodland community found on this site including species such as *Lobaria pulmonaria*, *Lobaria amplissima* and *Parmelia reddenda*. The Physcietum adscendentis association, including such species as *Anaptychia ciliaris* and *Parmelia quercina*, is characteristic of ancient parkland. The latter named species has an extreme south-westerly distribution and is nationally rare.

Beetles recorded from this site include five nationally scarce species such as *Pseudocistela ceramboides* and *Thymalus limbatus*; eleven other species are associated with the dead and decaying parts of old trees, and are restricted to this habitat.