

COUNTY: SUFFOLK      SITE NAME: SUTTON AND HOLLESLEY HEATHS

DISTRICT: SUFFOLK COASTAL

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

Local Planning Authority: SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TM 330474      Area: 461.90 (ha.) 1141.35 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 169      1:10,000: TM 34 NE, TM 34 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955      Date of Last Revision: N/A

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

Other Information:

Minor amendments at re-notification. Part nature reserve managed by Suffolk Trust for Nature Conservation. Part owned by Suffolk Coastal District Council as public amenity.

Reasons for Notification:

Sutton and Hollesley Heaths form one of the largest remaining fragments of the once extensive Sandlings heaths of the Suffolk coast. They consist of characteristic dry acidic grass and heather-dominated heathland with much scrub, bracken and self-sown pine and birch.

Substantial areas of heather-dominated heathland are scattered throughout the site. In some areas this is intermingled with dry acidic grassland characterised by Sheep's Fescue and Common Bent grasses. Elements of these communities are still widespread beneath encroaching pine and birch scrub and bracken. Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and the scarce Dwarf Furze *U gallii* occurs as continuous and scattered scrub over small areas especially to the south of the Commons.

There are large areas of semi-natural woodland most of which has originated from self-set Scots pine, birch and some oak. Most of this is less than 60 years old. Heathland elements can be found beneath the younger stands. There are also small areas of broad-leaved high forest composed chiefly of oak, birch, sweet chestnut, sycamore and beech. Beneath this the ground layer is chiefly bracken but patches of heather and acid grassland also occur. There is a small plantation of pine on Hollesley Common and Parsnip Plantation contains a mixture of planted oak, beech, birch and pine.

The site has a subsidiary ornithological interest and forms a regular winter roost for Hen Harrier. Long-eared Owls breed together with a variety of other heathland species.