

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 6 JUNE 1988

COUNTY: SOMERSET SITE NAME: ALLER HILL

DISTRICT: SOUTH SOMERSET

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

Local Planning Authority: SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL,
Somerset County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 408291, 414285 Area: 18.4 (ha.) 45.4 (ac.)
419283

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 42 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Aller Hill comprises three discrete blocks of herb-rich calcareous grassland and associated woodland and scrub. The site contains three species of plant which are nationally rare and a further three which are of restricted distribution in Somerset.

The site covers a steep, south facing scarp slope of Rhaetic clays, capped on the plateau by liassic clays and limestone which overlies Keuper marls from the Trias. These parent rocks produce well drained calcareous clayey soils of the Sherborne series and shallow, slowly permeable soils of the Worcester series.

Variation within the grassland component of the site is largely a product of different management practices. The central area contains a sward dominated by Sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* in combination with Yellow Oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* and Quaking-grass *Briza media*. The range of species present are characteristic of traditionally managed calcareous grassland with extensive areas of Common Bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Lady's-Bedstraw *Galium verum* and Wild Thyme *Thymus praecox* forming a mosaic within the sward. Large populations of Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* occur with Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*, Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* and Woolly Thistle *Cirsium eriophorum*.

Scrub encroachment on the grassland blocks to the east and west has encouraged large rabbit populations. Their locally intensive grazing has kept open small, tightly grazed glades. Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor* forms a major component of the sward with Rough Marsh-mallow *Althaea hirsuta* and Nit-grass *Gastridium ventricosum*, two nationally rare species, also present. Several plants with a restricted distribution in

Somerset also occur here including Wild Liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos*, Fiddle Dock *Rumex pulcher* and Lesser Centaury *Centaureum pulchellum*.

Woodland at the extreme west of the site is dominated by Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with abundant Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. Rough Chervil *Chaerophyllum temulentum* occupies much of the field layer with the nationally rare Purple Gromwell *Lithospermum purpureocaeruleum* occurring here.