

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE 20TH NOVEMBER
1985

COUNTY: HERTFORDSHIRE

SITE NAME: PATMORE HEATH

DISTRICT: EAST HERTFORDSHIRE

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

Local Planning Authority: East Hertfordshire District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 443258

Area: 7.6 (ha.) 18.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 167

1:10,000: TL 42 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1968

Date of Last Revision: 1972

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Under the terms of a lease, the site is managed by the County Trust as a Nature
Reserve. Patmore Heath is a Registered Common.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The finest example in Hertfordshire of dry grass heathland on the strongly acidic
Reading Beds sand. Variation in the thickness of this superficial deposit over the
underlying boulder clay brings the water table close to the surface resulting in ponds
and marshy areas supporting a species-rich wetland flora with abundant soft and
conglomerate rushes *Juncus effusus* and *J. conglomeratus*. Structural diversity in the
vegetation is provided by scrub with hazel *Corylus avellana* and broom *Cytisus*
scoparius, also by young pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* woodland.

Wavy hair grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* dominates the short fine turf in which red and
sheep's fescues *Festuca rubra* and *F. ovina*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet
vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* also occur. Purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*
and mat grass *Nardus stricta* tend to form discrete tussocks. Herbs characteristic of the
freely draining conditions are abundant, especially heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*,
field woodrush *Luzula campestris*, sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, harebell
Campanula rotundifolia and hairy sedge *Carex hirta*. Two of the more uncommon
plants present are heath rush *Juncus squarrosus* and heath grass *Danthonia decumbens*.
Large thyme *Thymus pulegioides* occurs on the top of grassy anthills, at which green
woodpeckers are frequently seen feeding.

Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* and lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* are
common around the pond margins and in the damp depressions. Six sedges, *Carex*
spp. characteristic of the water-logged base poor conditions have been recorded along
with the closely related common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. One particular
wet area has narrow buckler fern *Dryopteris caesusiana* abundant over a carpet of
Sphagnum and *Polytrichum* mosses. Southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*
occurs here at one of its few county localities and other wetland plants present are
marsh speedwell *Veronica scutellata*, purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, yellow iris
Iris pseudacorus and devils bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

The Heath is noted for its insect life, particularly dragonflies, the most outstanding
resident species being emperor dragonfly *Anax imperator*.