COUNTY: HAMPSHIRE **SITE NAME:** SINAH COMMON

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

Local Planning Authorities: Hampshire County Council, Havant Borough Council

National Grid References: SZ 700992 **Area:** 242.42 (ha.)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 196, 197 **1:10,000:** SZ 69 NE, SZ 79 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): Not Applicable

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 20 March 2000

Date Confirmed (Under 1981 Act): 14 December 2000

Reasons for Notification:
The site is notified for its coastal habitats including the following: pioneer shingle vegetation, maritime shingle grassland which includes dry acid grassland and lichen rich acid grassland, mobile dune, semi-fixed dune, dune heath and an associated small area of saltmarsh. The site is also notified for the childing pink *Petrorhagia nauteuilii* an endangered* plant which occurs at just two sites in Britain, and for its outstanding assemblage of nationally scarce** plants including little robin *Geranium purpureum*, Nottingham catchfly *Silene nutans*, bulbous meadow-grass *Poa bulbosa*, bearded fescue *Vulpia fasciculata* subsp *ambigua*, dune fescue *Vulpia fasciculata*, suffocated clover *Trifolium suffocatum*, smooth cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra*, stiff saltmarsh-grass *Puccinella rupestris*, mossy stonecrop *Crassula tillaea*, toothed medick *Medicago polymorpha* and dotted sedge *Carex punctata*.

General Description:
Sinah Common SSSI comprises a complex of maritime habitats which extend for over 2km eastwards from the south-western extremity of Hayling Island, Hampshire. Gunner Point at the western end contains the most extensive sand dunes and vegetated shingle beach in Hampshire. This part of the site supports shingle beach vegetation and grassland, dune heath, dune grassland, saltmarsh and open water communities. To the east of Gunner Point there is an extensive area of fragmented dune grassland and shingle. The site embraces the adjacent intertidal area including East Winner because of the important functional relationship between this and the sand and shingle system.

The present day Gunner Point is a relatively recent feature having developed over the past 150 years due to accretion of material originating from the extreme east of Sinah Common. The shingle beach supports sea kale *Crambe maritima*, yellow horned-poppy *Glaucium flavum*, sea radish *Raphanus raphanastrum* subsp *maritimus*, sea beet *Beta vulgaris* subsp *maritima* and curled dock *Rumex crispus*. To landward, sand and humus have accumulated within the shingle, resulting in more stable conditions which has led to development of a range of grassland, heath and scrub communities. The grasslands range from maritime grassland to dry acid grassland further from the sea. These often species-rich grasslands, dominated by common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, have a high lichen cover and support species such as sheep's-bit *Jasione montana*, upright chickweed *Moenchia erecta*, heath pearlwort *Sagina subulata* and occasional sea campion *Silene uniflora*. Other species present include the lichen *Cornicularia aculeata*, the bryophytes *Scleropodium tourettii* and *Archidium alternifolium*, bell heather *Erica cinerea*, rough clover *Trifolium scabrum*, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and autumn lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*, as well as the following nationally scarce species: Nottingham catchfly, bulbous meadow-grass, bearded fescue, suffocated clover, smooth cat's-ear, mossy stonecrop and toothed medick. Large populations of many of the nationally scarce

species also occur in the eastern half of the site in areas of disturbed sand dune and shingle vegetation, while open shingle areas support the largest known populations in Hampshire of the nationally scarce little robin, comprising many thousands of plants. A matrix of gorse *Ulex europaeus* and oak *Quercus robur* scrub occurs to the north of the site. Dartford warblers *Sylvia undata* breed in the scrub on the shingle.

The shingle at Gunner Point grades into dunes with acidic sandy grassland. This part of the site is mainly comprised of semi-fixed dunes dominated by marram grass *Ammophila arenaria*, a species which also grows on the fixed dunes in association with lyme grass *Leymus arenanius*, sea couch *Elytrigia atherica* and sand sedge *Carex arenaria*. The locally scarce sea spurge *Euphorbia paralias*, soft-brome *Bromus hordeaceus* subsp *ferronii* and the nationally scarce dune fescue occur on the dunes. Sea holly *Eryngium maritimum* is also present on the dunes.

Dune heath, dominated by bell heather, also occurs on Sinah Common and is one of only two locations for this habitat in the Solent area. Bell heather grows in association with sheep's-fescue and the lichens *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. foliacea* and the mosses *Polytrichum juniperinum, Dicranum scoparium* and *Hypnum lacunosum*.

Sinah Common supports brackish communities overlying wet sand, on the site of old mineral workings. This saltmarsh community is dominated by sea rush *Juncus maritimus* and sea club-rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus* with occasional saltmarsh rush *Juncus gerardii*, sea milkwort *Glaux maritima* and sea aster *Aster tripolium.* Species more typical of freshwater communities include marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. The locally scarce royal fern *Osmunda regalis* occurs on the site together with the nationally scarce stiff saltmarsh-grass and dotted sedge, a western species here growing at its most easterly location in Britain.

Flooded gravel workings provide an area of open water colonised by rigid hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum,* a locally scarce species in Hampshire. The nationally rare charophyte *Chara baltica* has been recorded.

The diversity of vegetation is reflected in a rich invertebrate fauna including a number of nationally rare*** or vulnerable and nationally scarce species. All the nationally rare species, namely the solitary bee *Hylaeus euryscapus,* a mud wasp *Podalonia affinis* and the moths *Stigmella samiatella, Platytes alpinella, Cynaeda dentalis, Gymnancyla canella and Psammathocrita argentella,* and many of the nationally scarce species including the grey bush cricket *Platycleis albopunctata* and long-winged conehead *Conocephalus discolor,* are associated with coastal shingle and sand dunes. Typical saltmarsh invertebrates recorded include *Mythimna favicolor, Apamea oblonga, Scopula emutaria* and *Eupithecis subumbrata*. *Selidosema brunnearia* and *Scopula margine punctata* are moths characteristic of coastal heathland.

Other Information:
The saltmarsh area within the Hayling golf club is managed as nature reserve by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

* Endangered as given in definitions of IUCN threat categories (IUCN 1994) in British Red Data Book 1 Vascular Plants

** Nationally scarce species occur in 16--100 10km squares in Britain as listed in Scarce Plants in Britain, (JNCC,1994)

*** Nationally rare species are listed in the relevant Red Data Book ie British Red Data Book 2: Insects