

EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name:	South Pennine Moors
Unitary Authority/County:	Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Kirklees, Lancashire, Leeds, North Yorkshire, Oldham, Rochdale, Sheffield, Staffordshire, Tameside
SAC status:	Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference:	SK144960
SAC EU code:	UK0030280
Area (ha):	64983.13
Component SSSI:	Dark Peak SSSI, Eastern Peak District Moors SSSI, Goyt Valley SSSI, Leek Moors SSSI, South Pennine Moors SSSI

Site description:

This site covers the key moorland blocks of the Southern Pennines from Ilkley Moor in the north to the Peak District in the south. The moorlands are on a rolling dissected plateau formed from rocks of Millstone Grit at altitudes of between 300m – 600m and a high point of over 630m at Kinder Scout. The greater part of the gritstone is overlain by blanket peat with the coarse gravelly mineral soils occurring only on the lower slopes. The moorlands as a whole support a breeding bird community of national and international importance.

The site is representative of upland dry heath which covers extensive areas, occupies the lower slopes of the moors on mineral soils or where peat is thin, and occurs in transitions to acid grassland, wet heath and blanket bogs. The upland heath of the South Pennines is strongly dominated by *Calluna vulgaris* – *Deschampsia flexuosa* heath and *C. vulgaris* – *Vaccinium myrtillus* heath. More rarely *C. vulgaris* – *Ulex gallii* heath and *C. vulgaris* – *Erica cinerea* heath are found. On the higher, more exposed ground *V. myrtillus* – *D. flexuosa* heath becomes more prominent. The smaller area of wet heath is characterised by cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and purple moor grass *Molinia careulea*. The site also supports extensive areas of acid grassland largely derived from dry and wet heath. In the cloughs, or valleys, which extend into the heather moorlands, a greater mix of dwarf shrubs can be found together with more lichens and mosses. The moors support a rich invertebrate fauna, especially moths, and important bird assemblages.

This site also contains areas of blanket bog, although the bog vegetation communities are botanically poor. Hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum* is often overwhelmingly dominant and the usual bog-building *Sphagnum* mosses are scarce. Where the blanket peats are slightly drier, heather *C. vulgaris*, crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* and bilberry *V. myrtillus* become more prominent. The cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* and the uncommon cloudberry *Rubus chamaemorus* is locally abundant in bog vegetation. Bog pools provide diversity and are often characterised by common cottongrass *E. angustifolium*. Substantial areas of the bog surface are eroding, and there are extensive areas of bare peat. In some areas erosion may be a natural process reflecting the great age (up to 9000 years) of the South Pennine peats.

Around the fringes of the upland heath and areas of bog are blocks of old sessile oak woods, usually on slopes. These tend to be dryer than those further north and west, such that the bryophyte communities are less developed (although this lowered diversity may in some instances have been exaggerated by the effects of 19th century air pollution). Other

components of the ground flora such as grasses, dwarf shrubs and ferns are common. Small areas of alder woodland along stream-sides add to the overall richness of the woods.

The moorland also supports a range of flush and fen habitats associated with bogs, cloughs, rivers and streams. Although generally small scale features they have a specialised flora and fauna, which makes a great contribution to the overall biodiversity of the moors. Acid flushes are the most common type and these include transition mires and quaking bogs characterised by a luxuriant carpet of bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp., rushes and sedges.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Blanket bogs*
- European dry heaths
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*. (Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath)
- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. (Western acidic oak woodland)
- Transition mires and quaking bogs. (Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface)

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0030280

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs