

Site Notified to the Secretary of State on 17 December 1986

County: Isles of Scilly **Site Name:** **Norrard Rocks**

District:

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

Local Planning Authority: Council of the Isles of Scilly

National Grid Reference: SW 860135 **Area:** c35.6 (ha) c88.0 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 203 **1:10,000:** SV 81 NE, SE, SW, NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971

Date of Last Revision: 1976

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site lies within the Isles of Scilly Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Renotification covers land above Mean High Water Mark.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Norrard (Northern) Rocks lie on the north-western edge of the Isles of Scilly archipelago immediately to the west of Bryher and Samson. They comprise of a series of small uninhabited granite islands including Gweal, Scilly Rock, Maiden Bower, Castle Bryher, Illiswilgig and Mincarlo together with numerous other isolated rocks and ledges.

All of the islands are low lying, reaching a maximum height of only 32 metres on Gweal and hence they are all exposed to the full force of south west gales from the Atlantic and excessive salt spray.

Shallow skeletal soils are mainly confined to the larger islands; elsewhere soils are only found in sheltered isolated pockets in the granite. These thin soils and the extreme exposure severely limits the vegetation and only six species of vascular plant have been recorded from the outer islands. Tree mallow *Lavatera arborea* is the only uncommon plant and the other plant species include thrift *Armeria maritima*, sea beet *Beta maritima*, common scurvygrass *Cochlearia officinalis*, rock sea-spurrey *Spergularia rupicola* and orache *Atriplex* spp. On some of the other islets, such as Maiden Bower, there are no flowering plants. Norrard Rocks are of particular importance for their seabird colonies, supporting some 10 species of breeding seabirds. Mincarlo is of

particular note as it supports the largest colony of cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* on Scilly. Puffin *Fratercula arctica* breed on Mincarlo, Castle Bryher and Scilly Rock and there is a large breeding colony of shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* throughout Norrard Rocks. Other breeding seabirds include fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, razorbill *Alca torda*, guillemot *Uria aalge*, great black-backed gull *Larus marinus*, lesser black-backed gull *L. fuscus* and herring gull *L. argentatus*.

There are also records of storm petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* breeding on Mincarlo. The isolated rocks and islands of Norrard Rocks are one of the most important breeding sites on Scilly for grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*. In addition the nationally restricted rove beetle *Omalium allardi* has been recorded on several of the islands in this part of the archipelago.