Unit 1 FOREST (EAST) MERRIPIT HILL (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 1 is based on the condition assessment of dry heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 1 sample stops failed the assessment. Dry heath was found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition due to lack of positive indicator species and too little pioneer heath.

Surveyors commented that an extensive sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath habitat occurs within Unit 1 including a diverse range of dwarf shrubs including *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath and *Erica cinerea* bell heather, at varying cover levels across the unit. On the western side of the unit Western gorse was the most abundant dwarf shrub, while bilberry was the most abundant towards the north and *Calluna vulgaris* heather was the most abundant on the eastern side of the unit. Dwarf shrub growth stage primarily building / mature with only limited amounts of pioneer, degenerate and dead phases. More localised wet heath habitat also occurs which was also observed to have a good diversity of dwarf shrubs. Within both heath types *Molinia caerulea* was widespread and relatively abundant. Local heavier grazing pressure was noted but surveyors commented that across the unit the average grazing pressure would be just below the threshold levels. Sheep, ponies and cattle were all seen grazing in the unit during the surveys. Signs of past *Calluna vulgaris* heather dieback was observed in the west of unit, possibly heather beetle. Conifers had established in some areas likely to have self-seeded from the plantation to the north. Conifers were noted in an earlier site check of the unit and it is recommended that they are felled to remove further spread. **Land management – Weeds / inappropriate species should be included as a pressure.**

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made within blanket bog, short sedge acidic fen and wet heath habitat which were all found to be in unfavourable condition due to lack of positive indicator species. In addition, wet heath was found to have to high graminoid cover, namely Molinia and short sedge acidic fen cover of soft rush was too high.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Five samples were taken on the dry heath habitat. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 1 dry heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition. Unfavourable no change condition is given as ascertaining change in the trajectory of condition by comparing data with the 2012 survey is imperfect as this survey had twenty stops. However, for a few key attributes there seems to be little change to the condition indicating that recovery is not occurring. The cover of dwarf shrubs from Group 1 was 47% in 2012 and in 2024 46%, the number of positive indicator species was 2.2 in 2012 and this had declined to 1.6; browsing of dwarf shrub has increased from 2012 17% to 20% in 2024 but decreased in pioneer from 37% to 24% in 2024.

Dry heath was found to be in unfavourable no change condition due to lack of positive indicator species and too little pioneer heath. Weedy species cover was also found to be too high within the quadrat sample area. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 1 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 47% and 20% of samples failing to meet the attribute target.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as only 2% pioneer heath was recorded and 80% of samples failed to meet the attribute target.

The attribute 'All *Calluna* heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Passes this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 2% found in pioneer, 76% in building and mature, 2% in degenerate and 0.2% dead heather found. However, the average number of growth phases per sample was 2 and no of samples had all growth stages present.

Surveyors commented that an extensive sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath habitat occurs within Unit 1 including a diverse range of dwarf shrubs including *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath and *Erica cinerea* bell heather, at varying cover levels across the unit. On the western side of the unit Western gorse was the most abundant dwarf shrub, while bilberry was the most abundant towards the north and *Calluna vulgaris* heather was the most abundant on the eastern side of the unit. Dwarf shrub growth stage primarily building / mature with only limited amounts of pioneer, degenerate and dead phases. More localised wet heath habitat also occurs which was also observed to have a good diversity of dwarf shrubs. Within both heath types *Molinia caerulea* was widespread and relatively abundant. Local heavier grazing pressure was noted but surveyors commented that across the unit the average grazing pressure would be just below the threshold levels. Sheep, ponies and cattle were all seen grazing in the unit during the surveys. Signs of past *Calluna vulgaris* heather dieback was observed in the west of unit, possibly heather beetle. Conifers had established in some areas likely to have self-seeded from the plantation to the north. Conifers were noted in an earlier site check of the unit and it is recommended that they are felled to remove further spread. **Land management – Weeds / inappropriate species should be included as a pressure.**

Unit 2 FOREST (EAST) MERRIPIT HILL (MIRE) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 2 is based on the condition assessment of blanket & valley bog, short sedge acidic fen and transition mire, ladder fen and quaking bog, which are all interest features assigned to this unit. One sample was taken in transition mire, ladder fen and quaking bog habitat and also no monitoring attributes are provided in the monitoring specifications. Therefore, because only two of the three features have been assessed an overall condition will not be recorded on Natural England's SSSI Designated View, until a valid condition assessment is carried out on the transition mire.

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 2 sample stops in both blanket & valley bog and short sedge acidic fen habitats failed the assessment. Blanket & valley bog was found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition due to high disturbance of sphagnum, high level of bare ground, lack of positive indicator species and high level of browsing of dwarf shrub. Surveyors commented that the cover of Molinia was too high and this was impacting on the range of positive indicators in the blanket big habitat. **Land management – weeds / inappropriate species should be recorded as a pressure.** Short sedge acidic fen was found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition due to lack of positive indicator species, presence of negative indicator species, high level of soft rush and low sward height. Surveyors commented that soft rush cover was too high and that this should be included as a **pressure Land Management – Weeds/Inappropriate species.**

Although a condition assessment of transition mire, ladder fen and quaking bog habitat cannot be made. The surveyors suggested a condition of favourable. Quaking vegetation included *Carex rostrata* bottle sedge, *Carex nigra* Common sedge, other small to medium Carex spp. and *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cotton-grass growing on a floating raft of Sphagnum spp. Surveyors have mapped some future survey points which should be revisited at a suitable time of year to complete the assessment.

Although not an interest feature, one stop was made in wet heath which was found to be in unfavourable condition due to damage to sphagnum, lack of positive indicator species, high Molinia cover and presence of negative indicator species.

Surveyors commented that the main area of unit 2 consists of a mosaic of Molinia dominated valley bog, soakways, short sedge acidic fen, and transition mire, ladder fen and quaking bog habitat types. The ground conditions were very wet following a period of very wet weather, this combined with the survey period (late February and early March did not provide ideal conditions to carry out the survey. Livestock were observed grazing in the area (as part of a much larger grazing unit) and deer crossing through the area. Surveyors also noted that the small sub-unit adjacent to Fernworthy Forest is mapped as featuring sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath and wet heath, however, wet heath habitat is more extensive than that mapped. Molinia caerulea cover high was found to be very high across the unit.

Blanket and Valley Bogs

Three samples were taken within blanket bog interest feature. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 3 blanket bog interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition. Unfavourable no change condition is given as there are no comparative past surveys from which the trajectory of condition movement can be identified. The most recent survey found was for blanket & valley bog in 2009 which does not provide percentage cover data so a comparison is not possible. In addition, three sample points could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion.

Surveyors commented that the habitat is typically dominated by *Molinia caerulea* and while the cover of Sphagnum spp is still abundant, the cover of other positive indicator species is restricted though a reasonable diversity persists including *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath and pleurocarpous mosses. Surveyors recommended that reducing the *Molinia caerulea* cover would be beneficial to the positive

indicator species by reducing the competition and shading caused. Peat depths were relatively shallow with two measurements at 50cm deep. Browsing levels on dwarf shrubs appeared appropriate and some conifer establishment was observed. **Land management – weeds / inappropriate species should be recorded as a pressure**.

An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 2 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Less than 10% of the Sphagnum cover should be crushed, broken, and/or pulled-up. Fails the monitoring attribute with a mean value of 13% and 67% of stops failing to meet the attribute target.
- Less than 10% of the ground cover should be disturbed bare ground. Fails the monitoring attribute with a mean area of bare ground of 23% at quadrat scale and 67% of stops failing to meet the attribute target. At visible extent scale a mean of 3% bare ground was found. However, only 67% of samples passed the attribute target, which falls below the 90% pass target applied to upland features.
- At least 5 PI species should be present. Fails this monitoring attribute as mean value of 3.7 positive indicators were found and 100% of stops failed the attribute target.
- Less than 50% of the last complete growing season's shoots of dwarf-shrub species (collectively), should shows signs of browsing. Fails this monitoring attribute as 100% of shoots were browsed.

It is recommended that further assessment stops are made to give a more accurate reflection of the blanket bog and the management issues that are impacting on condition.

Short Sedge Acidic Fen

Nine samples were taken within short sedge acidic fen habitat. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 2 short sedge acidic fen interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 2 sample stops failed the assessment. Unfavourable no change condition is given as there are no comparative past surveys from which the trajectory of condition movement can be identified.

Surveyors commented that Sphagnum spp were abundant, as well as small to medium sized *Carex* spp. sedge and *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cottongrass. Other positive indicators observed included *Juncus acutiflorus* sharp flowered rush and *Succisa pratensis* Devil's bit scabious. Surveyors noted some negative indicators on localised tussocks and drier elevated areas and Molinia caerulea cover was a concern which requires future management to reduce dominance. The cover of soft rush was observed to be too high and impacting on the condition of the interest feature. **Land management – Weeds/Inappropriate species should be recorded as a pressure.**

An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 2 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species (25% from each group). Fails this monitoring attribute 92% cover was found in group 1 but only 6% in group 2, with all stops failing to meet the monitoring target.
- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should consist of *Juncus effusus* soft rush. Fails this monitoring at a quadrat scale with a mean soft rush cover of 12% and 22% of samples failing to meet the attribute target and at visible extent scale with a mean cover of 20% and 78% of samples failing to meet the target.
- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should consist of, collectively, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* sweet vernal grass, Epilobium hirsutum great willowherb, Holcus lanatus Yorkshire fog, Phragmites australis common reed, *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup. Passes this monitoring attribute at quadrat scale with a mean cover of 0.4%, however only 78% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass target applied to upland features. Fails at visible extent scale with mean cover values of 10% and only 56% of samples passing the target.

- At least 50% of live leaves and flowering shoots of vascular plants should be more than 15 cm above the ground surface. Fails this monitoring attribute as the mean height was 3cm and 89% of all samples failing to meet the attribute target.

Unit 3 Warren House Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 3 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 3 sample stops failed the assessment. One sample of subalpine dwarf shrub heath was taken the condition assessment of Unit 3 is heavily based on the results of the whole feature assessment and surveyor comments on this unit.

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath was found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition due to browsing pressure on dwarf shrubs, lack of positive indicator species and pioneer heath, high cover of bracken, non-natives and 'weedy' species.

The surveyors describe the habitat of Unit 3 as majority sub alpine dwarf shrub heath, with acid grassland and more fragmented sub alpine dwarf shrub heath on historic mine workings on the eastern side of the unit. In addition, small areas of short sedge acidic fen occur close to the watercourse. Surveyors observed that overall grazing pressure is higher in habitats on the more sheltered eastern side of the unit. Bracken encroachment, particularly into sub alpine dwarf shrub heath, was noted as a concern along with the establishment of non-native conifers probably self-seeding from the plantation to the south. Surveyors recommended that the European gorse and conifers should be reduced to maintain the lower levels of scrub and tree cover**. Land management – Weeds/Inappropriate species and scrub encroachment should be recorded as a pressure** for this unit.
The subalpine dwarf shrub heath consists of *Calluna vulgaris* heather along with *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry, as well as some *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath in the wetter areas. Other positive indicators present included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent and non-crustose lichens. Browsing pressure on dwarf shrubs around habitat fringes and within sheltered parts of the historic mine working was found to be too high but grazing was at lower levels in the more open topographic situations and larger areas of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat. Surveyors commented that there was limited diversity in dwarf shrub growth stages.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland and short sedge acidic fen habitat, both of which were found to be in unfavourable condition due to lack of positive indicator species. In addition, the acid grassland was found to have to high a level of scrub, non-natives and thatch cover. The short sedge acidic fen cover of soft rush and 'weedy species' was too high.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub heath

One sample was taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on this record, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 3 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition. Unfavourable no change condition is given as one sample point could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion, although surveyors have suggested declining condition. A survey was carried out in 2012 but this consisted of twenty samples so a comparison would not be appropriate.

The surveyors describe the habitat of Unit 3 as majority sub alpine dwarf shrub heath, with acid grassland and more fragmented sub alpine dwarf shrub heath on historic mine workings on the eastern side of the unit. In addition, small areas of short sedge acidic fen occur close to the watercourse. Surveyors observed that overall grazing pressure is higher in habitats on the more sheltered eastern side of the unit. Bracken encroachment, particularly into sub alpine dwarf shrub heath, was noted as a concern along with the establishment of non-native conifers probably self-seeding from the plantation to the south. Surveyors recommended that the European gorse and conifers should be reduced to maintain the lower levels of scrub and tree cover**. Land management – Weeds/Inappropriate species and scrub encroachment should be recorded as a pressure** for this unit.

The subalpine dwarf shrub heath consists of *Calluna vulgaris* heather along with *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry, as well as some *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath in the wetter areas. Other positive indicators present included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent and non-crustose lichens. Browsing pressure on dwarf shrubs around habitat fringes and within sheltered parts of the historic mine working was found to be too high but grazing was at lower levels in the more open topographic situations and larger areas of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat. Surveyors commented that there was limited diversity in dwarf shrub growth stages.

An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 3 found the following attributes failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should be made up of non-native species. Fails this monitoring attribute as 2% cover of non-natives was recorded.
- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Fails this monitoring attribute as bracken covered 50%.
- Less than 1% of the vegetation cover should consist of invasive “weedy” species (collectively *Cirsium arvense* creeping thistle, *Cirsium vulgare* spear thistle, large docks (excluding *Rumex acetosa* common sorrel), *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup, or *Urtica dioica* nettle. Fails the monitoring attribute as 50% cover was found at visible extent scale. No weedy species were recorded at quadrat scale. However, an additional record of negative indicators 'all' at quadrat scale gives a mean value of 5% cover. The monitoring specification only asks for 'weedy species' to be recorded and as the negative indicator 'all' record does not detail what sps etc are included or the target to assess against the analysis cannot take this record into account and is just based on the 'weedy species' record which is passed at quadrat scale.
- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Fails this monitoring attribute as a cover of 36% positive indicators was recorded.
- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute as 99% of heath cover was found to be in building / mature phase.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as only 1% of heath was found to be in pioneer.
- Less than 33% of the shoots of dwarf-shrub species collectively should shows signs of browsing. Fails this monitoring attribute with 40% browsed dwarf shrub.

It is recommended that further assessment stops are made to give a more accurate reflection of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath and the management issues that are impacting on condition.

Unit 5 CHAGFORD COMMON (MIRE) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 5 is based on the condition assessment of blanket bog which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 5 sample stops failed the assessment.

Unfavourable declining condition is given as blanket & valley bog was previously recorded as in favourable condition. The 2024 survey found that positive indicator species were below thresholds and there was some damage to sphagnum. Survey of blanket bog in 2011 found mean of four positive indicator species and 58% cover, in 2024 this had declined to 1.8 number of species and 16% cover. Similarly, the sphagnum cover had declined from 39% to 28% cover. However, the percent of browsed dwarf shrub in 2011 was found to be 29% which has declined to 15% in 2024. A downward trajectory in condition is therefore suggested, however, the 2011 survey was based on 20 samples as opposed to the 5 samples taken in 2024.

Surveyors mention that the area of blanket and valley bog also contain areas of sump and soakaway habitat. Molinia cover was found to be low within the wetter areas but becomes more dominant in the drier areas of blanket & valley bog. The most favourable conditions of blanket and valley bog are within the centre of the habitat where it is wetter. Within this core area the wet valley bog contains good Sphagnum cover (including *Sphagnum papillossum, Sphagnum rubellum* and *Sphagnum palustre*). Other positive indicators including *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cottongrass, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath and *Succisa pratensis* devil's bit scabious were also present. As you travel out from these areas the blanket bog is becoming drier and the habitat conditions become less favourable, with higher Molinia cover and less positive indicators present. A few pine trees were also noted growing in the open bog area which are likely to have seeded from the nearby plantation. **Land management – Weeds / Inappropriate species should be included as a pressure for this unit.**

Although not an interest feature, a couple of samples were taken in acid grassland and soakaway and sump habitat. The surveyors found that the Molinia cover in soakaway and sump habitat was too high but overall that the habitat was in favourable condition. Acid grassland habitat was found to be in unfavourable condition due to high thatch and bracken cover.

Blanket and Valley Bogs

Five samples were taken within the blanket bog interest feature. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 5 blanket bog interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of blanket bog sample stops failed the assessment. Unfavourable no declining condition is given as blanket & valley bog was previously recorded as in favourable condition. The 2024 survey found that positive indicator species were below thresholds and there was some damage to sphagnum. Survey of blanket bog in 2011 found mean of four positive indicator species and 58% cover, in 2024 this had declined to 1.8 number of species and 16% cover. Similarly, the sphagnum cover had declined from 39% to 28% cover. However, the percent of browsed dwarf shrub in 2011 was found to be 29% which has declined to 15% in 2024. A downward trajectory in condition is therefore suggested, however, the 2011 survey was based on 20 samples as opposed to the 5 samples taken in 2024.

Surveyors mention that the area of blanket and valley bog also contain areas of sump and soakaway habitat. Molinia cover was found to be low within the wetter areas but becomes more dominant in the drier areas of blanket & valley bog. The most favourable conditions of blanket and valley bog are within the centre of the habitat where it is wetter. Within this core area the wet valley bog contains good Sphagnum cover (including *Sphagnum papillossum, Sphagnum rubellum* and *Sphagnum palustre*). Other positive indicators including

Eriophorum angustifolium common cottongrass, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath and *Succisa pratensis* devil's bit scabious were also present. As you travel out from these areas the blanket bog is becoming drier and the habitat conditions become less favourable, with higher Molinia cover and less positive indicators present. A few pine trees were also noted growing in the open bog area which are likely to have seeded from the nearby plantation. **Land management – Weeds / Inappropriate species should be included as a pressure for this unit.**

An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 5 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets :-

- Less than 10% of the Sphagnum cover should be crushed, broken, and/or pulled-up. Fails the monitoring attribute with a mean value of 17% sphagnum damaged. This is a result of one quadrat out of five having 80% crushed sphagnum. Because of the lack of samples the results are skewed and this may not be representative of the condition of sphagnum within the mire.
- At least 50% of vegetation cover should consist of at least 3 of the listed PI species (excluding Molinia and *Sphagnum fallax* when only Sphagnum species present). Fails this monitoring attribute as only 16% cover of positive indicators was found, with all samples failing to meet the attribute target.
- At least 5 PI species should be present. Fails this monitoring attribute as mean value of 1.8 positive indicators were found, with only 20% of stops passing the attribute target.

Unit 7 PT HAMEL DOWN AND CHALLACOMBE (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath is the only interest feature assigned to Unit 7. The condition assessment of Unit 7 is based on surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment analysis as no samples were taken in Unit 7 subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat in 2024. Subalpine dwarf shrub heath was recorded as favourable in 2010. However, a later survey in 2017 found a lack of heather in all age classes, 0% in pioneer, 99% building / mature and 1.2% degenerate and 39% of dwarf shrub present browsed Browsing should be less than 33%), this suggests an unfavourable declining condition. As there are no records in Unit 7 to make a comparison with the 2017 survey and determine if the trajectory of condition is continuing to decline or has improved, it is reasonable to apply the condition **unfavourable no change.** It is recommended that further assessment stops are made to give a more accurate and up to date reflection of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath.

Although not an interest feature, samples were also taken in short sedge acidic fen, acid grassland, soakaway and sump and wet heath habitat all of which were found to be in unfavourable condition based on the analysis, although surveyors suggest that soakaway and sump and short sedge acidic fen are in favourable condition. All four habitats lacked positive indicator species. The acid grassland was found to be heavily grazed and the bracken cover very high. The short sedge acidic fen and wet heath also had a high cover of negative indicator species in the visible extent.

Surveyors describe the unit as featuring a steep westerly facing slope with sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath on the upper slopes giving way to acid grassland lower down the slope. Small, localised patches of wet heath and short sedge acidic fen also occur. The slope was being grazed by sheep at the time of the survey. A number of springheads arise on the steep slope resulting in small flushes downslope.

Surveyors made the following comment about the condition of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath. *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry dominated sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath occurs on steep westerly facing slope with some *Calluna vulgaris* heather throughout, and occasional more localised *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath. Near the top of the slope the higher abundance of Calluna vulgaris heather continues down from the adjacent SSSI unit and these areas also include some *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Other positive indicators present included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent. Bracken was encroaching into areas of subalpine dwarf shrub heath and was relatively abundant in places, if assessed later in the year at full frond extension then it would be expected to be impacting upon the condition of the feature. Browsing levels were at appropriate levels and the growth stages of dwarf shrubs showed good diversity.

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath is the only interest feature assigned to Unit 7. The condition assessment of Unit 7 is based on surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment analysis as no samples were taken in Unit 7 subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat in 2024. Subalpine dwarf shrub heath was recorded as favourable in 2010. However, a later survey in 2017 found a lack of heather in all age classes, 0% in pioneer, 99% building / mature and 1.2% degenerate, this suggests an unfavourable declining condition. As there are no records in Unit 7 to make a comparison with the 2017 survey and determine if the trajectory of condition is continuing to decline or has improved, it is reasonable to apply the condition **unfavourable no change.** It is recommended that further assessment stops are made to give a more accurate and up to date reflection of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath.

Surveyors describe the unit as featuring a steep westerly facing slope with sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath on the upper slopes giving way to acid grassland lower down the slope. Small, localised patches of wet heath and short sedge acidic fen also occur. The slope was being grazed by sheep at the time of the survey. A number of springheads arise on the steep slope resulting in small flushes downslope.

Surveyors made the following comment about the condition of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath. *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry dominated sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath occurs on steep westerly facing slope with some *Calluna vulgaris* heather throughout, and occasional more localised *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath. Near the top of the slope the higher abundance of Calluna vulgaris heather continues down from the adjacent SSSI unit and these areas also include some *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Other positive indicators present included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent. Bracken was encroaching into areas of subalpine dwarf shrub heath and was relatively abundant in places, if assessed later in the year at full frond extension then it would be expected to be impacting upon the condition of the feature. Browsing levels were at appropriate levels and the growth stages of dwarf shrubs showed good diversity.

Unit 8 HAMEL DOWN (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 8 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. One sample was taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on this record, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 8 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change condition**.

Unfavourable no change condition is given as one sample point could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion, although surveyors comments suggest a favourable condition. Subalpine dwarf shrub heath is found to be in unfavourable no change condition due to the high cover of Western gorse, lack of other dwarf shrubs and for having heath predominantly in building / mature phase (99%). A survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath in Unit 8 was carried out in 2017 which also found 98% of the heath in building /mature phase, this suggests that there has been no change in management that would improve diversity in heath age classes.

Although not an interest feature, samples were taken in short sedge acidic fen, wet heath and acid grassland all of which were found to be in unfavourable condition. All three habitats had a lack of positive indicators. For both wet heath and acid grassland the bracken cover and grazing pressure were high. Surveyors commented that there was remnant heath within the acid grassland habitat, suggesting that the grazing level is favouring acid grassland establishment over subalpine dwarf shrub heath. **Land management – over grazing and weeds / inappropriate species should be recorded as a pressure for this unit.**

Surveyors commented that Unit 8 comprised mainly of sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath with a small area of short sedge acidic fen in the west of the unit, and the eastern half primarily consisted of acid grassland habitat featuring abundant bracken. Fragments of remnant dwarf shrub occurred within the area mapped as acid grassland indicating that the extent of subalpine dwarf shrub heath has reduced and been replaced by acid grassland. Tree and shrub cover was higher along a small watercourse but overall, at an acceptable level. A number of small point source springs arise within the acid grassland on the steep slopes on the eastern side of the unit. On the upper slopes a relatively diverse dwarf shrub diverse habitat occurs featuring Western gorse, *Calluna vulgaris* heather with some *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry. Other indicators observed included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent and *Racomitrium lanuginosum* woolly-fringe moss. Dwarf shrubs were fairly even aged predominantly late building/ mature, but some pioneer and degenerate material present though it was felt diversity could be enhanced. Bracken dominants on lower slopes mapped on an area mapped as sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath and therefore encroachment is assumed, while the extent is limited this should be investigated further and intervention considered.

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath

The overall condition of unit 8 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. One sample was taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on this record, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 8 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change condition**.

Unfavourable no change condition is given as one sample point could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion, although surveyors comments suggest a favourable condition. Subalpine dwarf shrub heath is found to be in unfavourable no change condition due to the high cover of Western gorse, lack of other dwarf shrubs and for having heath predominantly in building / mature phase (99%). A survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath in Unit 8 was carried out in 2017 which also found 98% of the heath in building /mature phase, this suggests that there has been no change in management that would improve diversity in heath age classes.

Surveyors commented that Unit 8 comprised mainly of sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath with a small area of short sedge acidic fen in the west of the unit, and the eastern half primarily consisted of acid grassland habitat featuring abundant bracken. Fragments of remnant dwarf shrub occurred within the area mapped as acid grassland indicating that the extent of subalpine dwarf shrub heath has reduced and been replaced by acid grassland. Tree and shrub cover was higher along a small watercourse but overall, at an acceptable level. A number of small point source springs arise within the acid grassland on the steep slopes on the eastern side of the unit. On the upper slopes a relatively diverse dwarf shrub diverse habitat occurs featuring Western gorse, *Calluna vulgaris* heather with some *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry. Other indicators observed included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent and *Racomitrium lanuginosum* woolly-fringe moss. Dwarf shrubs were fairly even aged predominantly late building/ mature, but some pioneer and degenerate material present though it was felt diversity could be enhanced. Bracken dominants on lower slopes mapped on an area mapped as sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath and therefore encroachment is assumed, while the extent is limited this should be investigated further and intervention considered.

Unit 9 HAMELDOWN AND BONEHILL DOWN, BITTLEFORD FARM Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 9 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. One sample was taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on this record, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 9 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change condition**.

Unfavourable no change condition is given as one sample point could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion. Subalpine dwarf shrub heath is found to be in unfavourable no change condition due to the high cover of Western gorse, lack of other dwarf shrubs and for lack of diversity in age structure having heath predominantly in building / mature phase (99%). A survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath in Unit 9 was carried out in 2017 which found 100% of the heath in building /mature phase (99% in 2024) and no pioneer heath, this suggests that there has been no change in management that would improve heather age structure.

Although not an interest feature, samples were taken in acid grassland and blanket & valley bog. The acid grassland was found to be unfavourable with a high bracken and thatch cover and a lack of forbs. The blanket and valley bog was found to be in favourable condition. Surveyors commented that the blanket bog had a good diversity and cover of positive indicator species including Sphagnum spp., *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry, *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cottongrass, *Eriophorum vaginatum* Hare's tail cottongrass and pleurocarpous mosses. A variety of dwarf shrub species included pioneer plants were also present.

Surveyors commented that south east of Hameldown Beacon a shallow east through to south facing upper area of subalpine dwarf shrub heath and bog occurs, transitioning into bracken dominated acid grassland as the slope angle increases on the east facing slopes. The heath continues on the more south facing aspect areas on steeper sloping ground. In the south facing slope the subalpine dwarf shrub heath features very dense stands of Western gorse with very low coverage of other dwarf shrubs but does include *Calluna vulgaris* heather and *Erica cinerea* bell heather, but generally lacks diversity of associated species and structure. Some scattered European gorse scrub occurs in the habitat. On the upper shallower sloping areas, the heath vegetation is more mixed (and generally shorter) with a greater mixture of Western gorse, *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Calluna vulgaris* heath, but again relatively even aged. Some burning management has been undertaken of gorse areas in the recent past.
Land management –scrub encroachment should be recorded as a pressure for this unit to identify and implement management to reduce the dominance of gorse.

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath

One sample was taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on this record, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 9 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change condition**.

Unfavourable no change condition is given as one sample point could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion. Subalpine dwarf shrub heath is found to be in unfavourable no change condition due to the high cover of Western gorse, lack of other dwarf shrubs and for lack of diversity in age structure having heath predominantly in building / mature phase (99%). A survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath in Unit 9 was carried out in 2017 which found 100% of the heath in building /mature phase (99% in 2024) and no pioneer heath, this suggests that there has been no change in management that would improve heather age structure.

Although not an interest feature, samples were taken in acid grassland and blanket & valley bog. The acid grassland was found to be unfavourable with a high bracken and thatch cover and a lack of forbs. The blanket

and valley bog was found to be in favourable condition. Surveyors commented that the blanket bog had a good diversity and cover of positive indicator species including Sphagnum spp., *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry, *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cottongrass, *Eriophorum vaginatum* Hare's tail cottongrass and pleurocarpous mosses. A variety of dwarf shrub species included pioneer plants were also present.

Surveyors commented that south east of Hameldown Beacon a shallow east through to south facing upper area of subalpine dwarf shrub heath and bog occurs, transitioning into bracken dominated acid grassland as the slope angle increases on the east facing slopes. The heath continues on the more south facing aspect areas on steeper sloping ground. In the south facing slope the subalpine dwarf shrub heath features very dense stands of Western gorse with very low coverage of other dwarf shrubs but does include *Calluna vulgaris* heather and *Erica cinerea* bell heather, but generally lacks diversity of associated species and structure. Some scattered European gorse scrub occurs in the habitat. On the upper shallower sloping areas, the heath vegetation is more mixed (and generally shorter) with a greater mixture of Western gorse, *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Calluna vulgaris* heath, but again relatively even aged. Some burning management has been undertaken of gorse areas in the recent past.
Land management –scrub encroachment should be recorded as a pressure for this unit to identify and implement management to reduce the dominance of gorse.

Unit 10 ROWDEN DOWN, BLACKATON DOWN (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 10 is based on the condition assessment of dry heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. The condition assessment is based on the three samples of subalpine dwarf shrub heath taken in Unit 10, the overall results of the whole feature assessment and surveyor comments.

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath in Unit 10 was recorded as favourable in 2012. However, a later survey in 2017 found a lack of heather in all age classes, 0% in pioneer, 100% building / mature and 0% degenerate, which suggests an unfavourable declining condition should have been recorded. A comparison between the 2017 survey and 2024 found that cover of Western gorse has decreased from 55% to 52% cover; number of dwarf shrubs present has decreased (3 in 2017, 2 in 2024), that the cover of dwarf shrubs excluding Western gorse has decreased from 31% to 19% and that pioneer heath cover remains 0%, although heath in mature/building phase has declined from 100% to 80%. Because of the lack of samples taken in 2024 it is not possible to ascertain a change in the trajectory of condition, therefore a condition of **unfavourable no change** would be reasonable.

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 10 sample stops failed the assessment. Dry heath was found to be in unfavourable no change condition due to high cover of Western gorse and low cover of other heath shrub species and lack of age structure with no pioneer heath present.

The surveyors describe the subalpine dwarf shrub heath as consisting of extensive tracts of fairly even aged Western gorse heath, typically 40-60cm in height, mixed with *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Calluna vulgaris* heather and rare *Erica tetralix*. An area of more mixed Western gorse heath with graminoids becoming more abundant occurs on the eastern side of the unit close to the Two Moors Way, and acid grassland paths cross through the area. The dwarf shrub cover is 95% in dense areas and approximately 60% in more grassy areas, but all heath is fairly even aged. Very little browsing occurs in the middle of stands, with most browsing focused near the grassy areas.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Three samples were taken on the dry heath habitat. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 10 dry heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition.

Subalpine dwarf shrub heath in Unit 10 was recorded as favourable in 2012. However, a later survey in 2017 found a lack of heather in all age classes, 0% in pioneer, 100% building / mature and 0% degenerate, which suggests an unfavourable declining condition should have been recorded. A comparison between the 2017 survey and 2024 found that cover of Western gorse has decreased from 55% to 52% cover; number of dwarf shrubs present has decreased (3 in 2017, 2 in 2024), that the cover of dwarf shrubs excluding Western gorse has decreased from 31% to 19% and that pioneer heath cover remains 0%, although heath in mature/building phase has declined from 100% to 80%. Because of the lack of samples taken in 2024 it is not possible to ascertain a change in the trajectory of condition, therefore a condition of **unfavourable no change** would be reasonable.

Dry heath was found to be in unfavourable no change condition due to high cover of Western gorse and low cover of other heath shrub species and lack of age structure with no pioneer heath present. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 1 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 25% of dwarf-shrub cover should be made up of *Calluna vulgaris* heather, Erica spp., Vaccinium spp. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean value of 19%. Two of the three samples failed this target.
- There should be less than 50% of total cover of *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Fails this monitoring attribute as the mean cover of western gorse was 52%.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as no pioneer heath recorded.

The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0% found in pioneer, 80% in building and mature, 2% in degenerate and 0% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2 and only 3%, no samples had all growth stages present

The surveyors describe the subalpine dwarf shrub heath as consisting of extensive tracts of fairly even aged Western gorse heath, typically 40-60cm in height, mixed with *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Calluna vulgaris* heather and rare *Erica tetralix*. An area of more mixed Western gorse heath with graminoids becoming more abundant occurs on the eastern side of the unit close to the Two Moors Way, and acid grassland paths cross through the area. The dwarf shrub cover is 95% in dense areas and approximately 60% in more grassy areas, but all heath is fairly even aged. Very little browsing occurs in the middle of stands, with most browsing focused near the grassy areas.

Unit 11 HEADLAND WARREN (MIRE) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 11 is based on the condition assessment of soakaway and sump habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 11 sample stops failed the assessment. Three samples of soakaway and sump habitat were taken within Unit 11 and the failed attributes were very close to passing the target value, it is reasonable to base the condition of the interest feature on the mean values of the samples in addition taking into account surveyor comments. Therefore, this unit remains in **favourable condition.**

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland and wet heath habitat, both of which were found to be in unfavourable condition. The acid grassland lacked forbs and had a high thatch and bracken cover. Wet heath was found to have sphagnum damage, a high bracken and negative indicator cover and lack of positive indicator species.

Surveyors comment that Unit 11 includes soakaway and sump, acid grassland, sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath, wet heath, valley bog and short sedge acidic fen habitats. The soakaway and sump is a typically narrow feature running through the unit area in a south westerly direction. The soakaway and sump was surveyed outside of recommended timing for this habitat and after heavy rainfall which resulted in a covering off flowing water over the habitat and washing out some of the Sphagnum bog-moss coverage. Water levels also made assessing percentage cover difficult. However, surveyors commented that there was a reasonably good coverage of Sphagnum spp, *Potomogeton polygonifolious* Bog pondweed and *Hypericum elodes* marsh St John's wort. The graminoid cover appeared close to threshold level but timing and ground conditions meant that this was difficult to assess. Habitat also transitions into other habitat types making wider unit assessments difficult.

Soakaway and Sump

Three samples were taken of soakaway and sump interest feature in Unit 11. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 11 soakaway and sump interest feature is found to be in **favourable** condition.

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 11 sample stops failed the assessment. Three samples of soakaway and sump habitat were taken within Unit 11 and the failed attributes were very close to passing the target value, it is reasonable to base the condition of the interest feature on the mean values of the samples in addition taking into account surveyor comments. Therefore, this unit remains in favourable condition.

Surveyors comment that Unit 11 includes soakaway and sump, acid grassland, sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath, wet heath, valley bog and short sedge acidic fen habitats. The soakaway and sump is a typically narrow feature running through the unit area in a south westerly direction. The soakaway and sump was surveyed outside of recommended timing for this habitat and after heavy rainfall which resulted in a covering off flowing water over the habitat and washing out some of the Sphagnum bog-moss coverage. Water levels also made assessing percentage cover difficult. However, surveyors commented that there was a reasonably good coverage of Sphagnum spp, *Potomogeton polygonifolious* Bog pondweed and *Hypericum elodes* marsh St John's wort. The graminoid cover appeared close to threshold level but timing and ground conditions meant that this was difficult to assess. Habitat also transitions into other habitat types making wider unit assessments difficult.

An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 11 found that two out of three samples failed to meet the following attribute targets:-

- At least 65% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; Carex spp., *Hypericum elodes* Marsh St Hohn's wort, *Potamogeton polygonifolius* Bog pondweed & Sphagnum spp. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of positive indicators of 84%. However, two of the three samples failed the attribute target. However, as one of the three samples was close to passing with a cover of 64% and given that only three samples were taken it is reasonable to pass this monitoring attribute.
- Less than 10% of vegetation cover should be made up of other graminoids. Passes this monitoring attribute at a quadrat scale with a mean of 8% at both quadrat and visible extent. However, two of the three samples failed the attribute target with a cover of 10% in both samples at both scales. However, given that the % cover was close to passing and only three samples were taken it is reasonable to pass this monitoring target.

Unit 12 BIRCH TOR Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 12 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. Five samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records only, Unit 12 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition as the unit was previously recorded as being in favourable condition. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 12 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 12 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as 16% mean pioneer heath was recorded and all samples failed to meet the attribute target. This is an increase from the 2015 survey which found 1% in pioneer (based on 26 samples).

In addition the following monitoring attributes indicate unfavourable condition:-

- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should be made up of non-native species. Passes this monitoring attribute as the mean value was 0.4%. However, only 60% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. This is an increase from the 2015 survey which found no non-natives species (based on 26 samples).
- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean of 4% bracken cover. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. This is a decrease from the 2015 survey which found 5% mean bracken but 85% of samples passing (based on 26 samples).
- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 56%. However, only 40% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features. This is a decrease from the 2015 survey which found 63% cover and 80% samples passing (based on 26 samples).
- At least two of the following indicator species should be present; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Passes this monitoring target as the mean number of species was just over 2. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features.
- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Passes this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 16% found in pioneer, 76% in building and mature, 5% in degenerate and 0.8% dead heather found. However, only one sample had all growth stages present.

However, the monitoring attribute results are contradictory to the surveyors comments that the subalpine dwarf shrub heath was in favourable condition and therefore it is recommended that further stops are made to ascertain an accurate record of the condition of this feature.

Surveyors comment that the majority of the unit features sub alpine dwarf shrub heath with continuous *Calluna vulgaris* heather, as well as some *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry. Acid grassland areas were also observed which were predominantly covered with bracken that would be expected to be dense and continuous if assessed during the summer. A number of the acid grassland areas were associated with historic environment features. The majority of the dwarf shrubs were in building/mature phase however, there were other examples of all other stages. Some young conifer establishment was noted likely seeded from nearby plantations, while the cover levels are currently below thresholds it would be

recommendable to control. **Invasive species – Terrestrial plants should be included as a pressure** for this unit.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland and soakaway and sump habitat. The acid grassland habitat is found to be unfavourable due to lack of forbs and had a high thatch and bracken cover. Soakaway and sump was found to be in favourable condition.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Five samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records only, Unit 12 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition as the unit was previously recorded as being in favourable condition. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 12 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 12 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as 16% mean pioneer heath was recorded and all samples failed to meet the attribute target. This is an increase from the 2015 survey which found 1% in pioneer (based on 26 samples).

In addition the following monitoring attributes indicate unfavourable condition:-

- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should be made up of non-native species. Passes this monitoring attribute as the mean value was 0.4%. However, only 60% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. This is an increase from the 2015 survey which found no non-natives species (based on 26 samples).
- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean of 4% bracken cover. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. This is a decrease from the 2015 survey which found 5% mean bracken but 85% of samples passing (based on 26 samples).
- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 56%. However, only 40% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features. This is a decrease from the 2015 survey which found 63% cover and 80% samples passing (based on 26 samples).
- At least two of the following indicator species should be present; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Passes this monitoring target as the mean number of species was just over 2. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features.
- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Passes this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 16% found in pioneer, 76% in building and mature, 5% in degenerate and 0.8% dead heather found. However, only one sample had all growth stages present.

However, the monitoring attribute results are contradictory to the surveyors comments that the subalpine dwarf shrub heath was in favourable condition and therefore it is recommended that further stops are made to ascertain an accurate record of the condition of this feature.

Surveyors comment that the majority of the unit features sub alpine dwarf shrub heath with continuous *Calluna vulgaris* heather, as well as some *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry. Acid grassland areas were also observed which were predominantly covered with bracken that would be expected to

be dense and continuous if assessed during the summer. A number of the acid grassland areas were associated with historic environment features. The majority of the dwarf shrubs were in building/mature phase however, there were other examples of all other stages. Some young conifer establishment was noted likely seeded from nearby plantations, while the cover levels are currently below thresholds it would be recommendable to control. **Invasive species – Terrestrial plants should be included as a pressure** for this unit.

Unit 13 COMBE DOWN AND HOOKNEY DOWN (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 13 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. Five samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records only Unit 13 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition as the unit was previously recorded as being in favourable condition. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 13 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 13 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0.2% found in pioneer, 96% in building and mature, 3.8% in degenerate and 0.2% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.2 and all samples failed to pass the attribute target. There is a decline in presence of age classes the 2015 survey found 86% of samples having all age classes present (22 samples) in 2024 no sample had all heather age classes present.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as only a mean of 0.2% cover was recorded, with all samples failing to meet the attribute target.

In addition the following monitoring attributes indicate an unfavourable condition trajectory:-

- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should be made up of non-native species. Passes this monitoring attribute as the mean value was 0.2%. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. The 2015 survey found no non-natives present (based on 22 samples)
- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean of 5% bracken cover. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. 2015 survey found all twenty-two samples passing the attribute target.
- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, Ulex gallii Western gorse. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 51%. However, only 40% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features. There is a decline in positive indicator cover the 2015 survey found a mean cover of 73% and all 22 samples passing the attribute target.
- At least 25% of dwarf-shrub cover should be made up of *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean value of 30%. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features.

However, the monitoring attribute results are contradictory to the surveyors comments that the subalpine dwarf shrub heath was in favourable condition and therefore it is recommended that further stops are made to ascertain an accurate record of the condition of this feature. Surveyors describe the unit as consisting of extensive subalpine dwarf shrub heath, with a good diversity of dwarf shrub species including *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. The majority of the dwarf shrub was found in building/mature phase but pioneer heath observed beneath. Bracken dominated a steep acid grassland slope on eastern side of unit, and bracken was encroaching into acid grassland and heath on western end of unit.
The subalpine dwarf shrub heath comprised of *Calluna vulgaris* heather more or less throughout and was typically the dominant or co-dominant dwarf shrub. Locally *Erica cinerea* bell heather reached co-dominance

but was generally subordinate in cover. *Ulex gallii* Western gorse cover increased to the east where it was either co-dominant with Calluna or the dominant dwarf shrub. *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry occurred throughout the feature but at low cover levels, while *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath was localised. While grazing levels appeared appropriate at the time of the assessment the dwarf shrub growth stage was dominated by building / mature phase, but at least some areas were degenerate and small amount of pioneer and dead dwarf shrubs were also detected. Other positive indicators observed included Agrostis curtisii bristle bent.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland and short sedge acidic fen habitat both of which were found to be unfavourable. The acid grassland habitat is found to be unfavourable due to lack of forbs and had a high thatch and bracken cover. The short sedge acidic fen was found to be unfavourable due to short sward height, lack of positive indicator species and too high occurrence of negative indicator species.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

The overall condition of unit 13 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. Five samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records only Unit 13 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition as the unit was previously recorded as being in favourable condition. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 13 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 13 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0.2% found in pioneer, 96% in building and mature, 3.8% in degenerate and 0.2% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.2 and all samples failed to pass the attribute target. There is a decline in presence of age classes the 2015 survey found 86% of samples having all age classes present (22 samples) in 2024 no sample had all heather age classes present.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as only a mean of 0.2% cover was recorded, with all samples failing to meet the attribute target.

In addition the following monitoring attributes indicate an unfavourable condition trajectory:-

- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should be made up of non-native species. Passes this monitoring attribute as the mean value was 0.2%. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. The 2015 survey found no non-natives present (based on 22 samples)
- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean of 5% bracken cover. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which is below the 90% pass target that is applied to upland features. 2015 survey found all twenty-two samples passing the attribute target.
- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, Ulex gallii Western gorse. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 51%. However, only 40% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features. There is a decline in positive indicator cover the 2015 survey found a mean cover of 73% and all 22 samples passing the attribute target.

- At least 25% of dwarf-shrub cover should be made up of *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean value of 30%. However, only 80% of samples passed the attribute target which fails the 90% pass that is required for upland features.

However, the monitoring attribute results are contradictory to the surveyors comments that the subalpine dwarf shrub heath was in favourable condition and therefore it is recommended that further stops are made to ascertain an accurate record of the condition of this feature. Surveyors describe the unit as consisting of extensive subalpine dwarf shrub heath, with a good diversity of dwarf shrub species including *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. The majority of the dwarf shrub was found in building/mature phase but pioneer heath observed beneath. Bracken dominated a steep acid grassland slope on eastern side of unit, and bracken was encroaching into acid grassland and heath on western end of unit.
The subalpine dwarf shrub heath comprised of *Calluna vulgaris* heather more or less throughout and was typically the dominant or co-dominant dwarf shrub. Locally *Erica cinerea* bell heather reached co-dominance but was generally subordinate in cover. *Ulex gallii* Western gorse cover increased to the east where it was either co-dominant with Calluna or the dominant dwarf shrub. *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry occurred throughout the feature but at low cover levels, while *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath was localised. While grazing levels appeared appropriate at the time of the assessment the dwarf shrub growth stage was dominated by building / mature phase, but at least some areas were degenerate and small amount of pioneer and dead dwarf shrubs were also detected. Other positive indicators observed included Agrostis curtisii bristle bent.

Unit 14 COMBE DOWN AND HOOKNEY DOWN (MIRE) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 14 is based on the condition assessment of blanket bog which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 14 sample stops failed the assessment. Two samples of blanket & valley bog habitat were taken the condition assessment of Unit 14 is heavily based on the results of the whole feature assessment and surveyor comments on this unit.

Blanket bog was found to be in **favourable** condition as both samples passed all monitoring attributes except 'less than 1% of vegetation cover should consist of, collectively, *Agrostis capillaris* common bent, *Holcus lanatus* Yorkshire fog, *Phragmites australis* common reed, *Pteridium aquilinum* bracken, *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup'. This attribute was failed at a visible extent scale with 1% mean cover recorded at both stops, however no negative indicators were recorded in the quadrat. Given that only 1% cover was found, all other attributes were passed and that only two samples were taken, it is reasonable to give favourable condition as suggested by surveyors.

Surveyors describe the unit as small and consisting of valley bog habitat that extends beyond the SSSI boundary. The upper slope areas of the unit off Hookney Down featured subalpine dwarf shrub heath consisting of *Calluna vulgaris* heather as the most abundant dwarf shrub but with good diversity of other dwarf shrub species. This subalpine dry heath habitat transitions into flushed valley bog habitat that was very wet at the time of the visit and had good Sphagnum bog-moss coverage in places. Some surface soakaways observed through the bog.The blanket bog habitat was described as having a surface flow down the slope to the north resulting in tussocky *Molinia caerulea*. Sphagnum spp were abundant and a good representation of other positive indicators including *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cotton-grass, *Eriophorum vaginatum* Hare's tail cotton-grass and *Trichophorum germanicum* deer grass but these were generally at low cover levels. Molinia caerulea observed throughout area, with some localised areas of high abundance.

Although not an interest feature in Unit 14 a few stops were made in the subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat, which was found to be favourable although the amount of pioneer heath was at low levels.

Blanket and Valley Bogs

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 14 sample stops failed the assessment. Two samples of blanket & valley bog habitat were taken the condition assessment of Unit 14 is heavily based on the results of the whole feature assessment and surveyor comments on this unit.

Blanket bog was found to be in **favourable** condition as both samples passed all monitoring attributes except 'less than 1% of vegetation cover should consist of, collectively, *Agrostis capillaris* common bent, *Holcus lanatus* Yorkshire fog, *Phragmites australis* common reed, *Pteridium aquilinum* bracken, *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup'. This attribute was failed at a visible extent scale with 1% mean cover recorded at both stops, however no negative indicators were recorded in the quadrat. Given that only 1% cover was found, all other attributes were passed and that only two samples were taken, it is reasonable to give favourable condition as suggested by surveyors.

Surveyors describe the unit as small and consisting of valley bog habitat that extends beyond the SSSI boundary. The upper slope areas of the unit off Hookney Down featured sub alpine dwarf shrub heath consisting of *Calluna vulgaris* heather as the most abundant dwarf shrub but with good diversity of other dwarf shrub species. This subalpine dry heath habitat transitions into flushed valley bog habitat that was very wet at the time of the visit and had good Sphagnum bog-moss coverage in places. Some surface soakaways observed

through the bog.The blanket bog habitat was described as having a surface flow down the slope to the north resulting in tussocky *Molinia caerulea*. Sphagnum spp were abundant and a good representation of other positive indicators including *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cotton-grass, *Eriophorum vaginatum* Hare's tail cotton-grass and *Trichophorum germanicum* deer grass but these were generally at low cover levels. Molinia caerulea observed throughout area, with some localised areas of high abundance.

Unit 15 HAMEL DOWN (MIRE) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

Wet heath SAC feature is the only interest feature assigned to Unit 15. Wet heath is currently not included as a SSSI feature. One sample was taken of wet heath and based on this sample the SAC feature would be unfavourable as the sample failed to meet the following attributes:-

- At least 25% of vegetation cover should consist of Group (i) species; *Carex* spp. sedge, *Drosera* spp. sundew, *Rhynchospora alba* white-beak sedge, *Sphagnum* spp., *Trichophorum cespitosum* deergrass, non-crustose lichens, and 25% should consist of Group (ii) species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp. cross-leaved and bell heather, *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Passes cover for the first group 80% but fails for cover in second group 20% cover.
- Less than 10% of vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Fails the monitoring attribute with a bracken cover of 60%.
- *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath should be present. Fails this monitoring attribute as no cross-leaved heath was found in quadrat.
- Less than 33% of the shoots of dwarf-shrub species collectively should shows signs of browsing. Fails this monitoring attribute as 50% of the dwarf shrubs in the quadrat were grazed.

The wet heath SAC feature was recorded as favourable in 2012, however, this condition assessment appears to be based on the condition of mire habitat and not specifically wet heath. A later survey in 2017 did not provide a condition but the results from the three stops made in wet heath would suggest an unfavourable condition as the samples failed to meet positive indicator targets in both groups. As the condition of wet heath in Unit 15 is currently recorded as favourable and taking into account the 2017 survey and the sample provided in 2024, wet heath SAC feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition. However, it is recommended that additional stops are made to provide a more accurate representation of the condition of wet heath. It is also recommended that the mire habitats are mapped and consideration given to whether blanket & valley bog and soakaway sump are added to this unit as both these habitat types were recorded in the 2024 survey.

Surveyors described the unit consisting of an outer area of acid grassland dominated by bracken with scattered scrub and some trees. One rhododendron bush was recorded and management should occur to eradicate rhododendron from the unit. The middle of the unit occurs flushed mire vegetation with Sphagnum species abundant along with a number of other positive indicators. In these lower lying areas soil wetness increases and the habitats transition from wet heath where the soils are 30cm deep or less, through to deeper peat soils forming valley bog and these in turn include soakaway habitat. *Molinia caerulea* cover high at about 85% locally.
Surveyors commented that the wet heath appeared to be in favourable condition. The wet heath was described as occurring where peat depth is less than 30cm with abundant Sphagnum spp. along with *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cotton-grass, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, and small sedges throughout. Other positive indicators included *Trichophorum germanicum* deergrass, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse and *Calluna vulgaris* heather. *Molinia caerulea* cover was variable across the habitat, some localities up to 50% but lower elsewhere and overall acceptable at present.

Although not an interest feature a couple of samples were taken in acid grassland habitat which was found to be in unfavourable condition due to high bracken, scrub and thatch cover.

Wet heath

Wet heath SAC feature is the only interest feature assigned to Unit 15. Wet heath is currently not included as a SSSI feature. One sample was taken of wet heath and based on this sample the SAC feature would be unfavourable as the sample failed to meet the following attributes:-

- At least 25% of vegetation cover should consist of Group (i) species; *Carex* spp. sedge, *Drosera* spp. sundew, *Rhynchospora alba* white-beak sedge, *Sphagnum* spp., *Trichophorum cespitosum* deergrass, non-crustose lichens, and 25% should consist of Group (ii) species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp. cross-leaved and bell heather, *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Passes cover for the first group 80% but fails for cover in second group 20% cover.
- Less than 10% of vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Fails the monitoring attribute with a bracken cover of 60%.
- *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath should be present. Fails this monitoring attribute as no cross-leaved heath was found in quadrat.
- Less than 33% of the shoots of dwarf-shrub species collectively should shows signs of browsing. Fails this monitoring attribute as 50% of the dwarf shrubs in the quadrat were grazed.

The wet heath SAC feature was recorded as favourable in 2012, however, this condition assessment appears to be based on the condition of mire habitat and not specifically wet heath. A later survey in 2017 did not provide a condition but the results from the three stops made in wet heath would suggest an unfavourable condition as the samples failed to meet positive indicator targets in both groups. As the condition of wet heath in Unit 15 is currently recorded as favourable and taking into account the 2017 survey and the sample provided in 2024, wet heath SAC feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition. However, it is recommended that additional stops are made to provide a more accurate representation of the condition of wet heath. It is also recommended that the mire habitats are mapped and consideration given to whether blanket & valley bog and soakaway sump are added to this unit as both these habitat types were recorded in the 2024 survey.

Surveyors described the unit consisting of an outer area of acid grassland dominated by bracken with scattered scrub and some trees. One rhododendron bush was recorded and management should occur to eradicate rhododendron from the unit. The middle of the unit occurs flushed mire vegetation with Sphagnum species abundant along with a number of other positive indicators. In these lower lying areas soil wetness increases and the habitats transition from wet heath where the soils are 30cm deep or less, through to deeper peat soils forming valley bog and these in turn include soakaway habitat. *Molinia caerulea* cover high at about 85% locally.
Surveyors commented that the wet heath appeared to be in favourable condition. The wet heath was described as occurring where peat depth is less than 30cm with abundant Sphagnum spp. along with *Eriophorum angustifolium* common cotton-grass, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, and small sedges throughout. Other positive indicators included *Trichophorum germanicum* deergrass, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse and *Calluna vulgaris* heather. *Molinia caerulea* cover was variable across the habitat, some localities up to 50% but lower elsewhere and overall acceptable at present.

Unit 16 HAMELDOWN AND BONEHILL DOWN, BITTLEFORD FARM (BOG) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 16 is based on the condition assessment of soakaway and sump habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 75% of Unit 16 sample stops failed the assessment. Three samples of soakaway and sump habitat were taken within Unit 16 and the failed attributes were very close to passing the target value, it is reasonable to base the condition of the interest feature on the mean values of the samples in addition taking into account surveyor comments. Therefore, this unit remains in **favourable condition.**

The surveyors describe the units upper slopes featuring valley bog, soakaway and sump, and poor fen vegetation with good representation of positive indicators including abundant Sphagnum and wet peat soils. There was localised livestock disturbance but not widespread. Lower down the slope the vegetation transitions to more sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath featuring *Calluna vulgaris* heather and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse, and wet heath with locally more abundant *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath. The lower slopes of the unit had widespread bracken stands and areas of boulders. Small areas of heath persist along with acid grassland. The soakaway and sump was surveyed outside of recommended period and after heavy rain resulting in high levels of through flow of water. Numerous soakaways present through the valley bog featuring relatively abundant Sphagnum bog-moss, along with *Potamogeton polygonifolious* bog pondweed and *Hypericum elodes* marsh St John's wort. Graminoid cover was acceptable and rush species present but at acceptable levels. One location had livestock disturbance with local damage to the feature resulting in bare soil and local sedimentation but occurrence only observed at one point and this should be monitored to ensure that this does not increase.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland, short sedge acidic fen and wet heath habitat. Wet heath was found to be in favourable condition with a good diversity of positive indicators. The acid grassland was unfavourable due to lack of forbs and high scrub and bracken cover. The short sedge acidic fen was also unfavourable due to lack of positive indicator species and high cover of soft rush.

Soakaway and Sump

Three samples were taken of Soakaway and sump interest feature in Unit 16. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 16 soakaway and sump interest feature is found to be in **favourable** condition.

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 75% of Unit 16 sample stops failed the assessment. Three samples of soakaway and sump habitat were taken within Unit 16 and the failed attributes were very close to passing the target value, it is reasonable to base the condition of the interest feature on the mean values of the samples in addition taking into account surveyor comments. Therefore, this unit remains in **favourable condition.**

The surveyors describe the units upper slopes featuring valley bog, soakaway and sump, and poor fen vegetation with good representation of positive indicators including abundant Sphagnum and wet peat soils. There was localised livestock disturbance but not widespread. Lower down the slope the vegetation transitions to more sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath featuring *Calluna vulgaris* heather and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse, and wet heath with locally more abundant *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath. The lower slopes of the unit had widespread bracken stands and areas of boulders. Small areas of heath persist along with acid grassland. The soakaway and sump was surveyed outside of recommended period and after heavy rain resulting in high levels of through flow of water. Numerous soakaways present through the valley bog featuring relatively

abundant Sphagnum bog-moss, along with *Potamogeton polygonifolious* bog pondweed and *Hypericum elodes* marsh St John's wort. Graminoid cover was acceptable and rush species present but at acceptable levels. One location had livestock disturbance with local damage to the feature resulting in bare soil and local sedimentation but occurrence only observed at one point and this should be monitored to ensure that this does not increase.
An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 16 found that two out of three samples failed to meet the following attribute targets:-

- Over the whole feature scanned from sample locations, less than 10% of ground cover should be disturbed bare ground. Passes this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of bare ground of 7%. However, two of the three samples failed the attribute target both having a cover of 10%. Given the lack of samples and that the sample was close to passing it is reasonable to pass this attribute.
- Less than 10% of vegetation cover should be made up of other graminoids. Passes this monitoring attribute at a quadrat scale with a mean of 8% and at visible extent scale with a mean graminoid cover of 6%. However, one sample just failed at both quadrat and visible scale with a cover of 10%. Given the lack of samples and that the sample was close to passing it is reasonable to pass this attribute.

Unit 17 PT HEMEL DOWN & CHALLACOMBE, HEATHERCOMBE (HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 17 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. Three samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records only Unit 17 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition as the unit was previously recorded as being in favourable condition in 2007. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 17 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 17 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0% found in pioneer, 98% in building and mature, 1.7% in degenerate and 0.3% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.3 and no sample had all growth stages present.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as no pioneer heath was recorded in any sample.

Favourable condition was assigned to this unit in 2007. In 2017 a survey was carried out of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which found no pioneer heath present in the five samples taken. Therefore, this suggests unfavourable condition due to lack of pioneer heath and diversity in heather age classes and that unfavourable declining should have been recorded.
However, the monitoring attribute results which suggest unfavourable condition are contradictory to the surveyors comments which suggest favourable condition and therefore it is recommended that further stops are made to ascertain an accurate record of the condition of this feature. Surveyors describe Unit 17 as a large area with Hemel Down Tor on its western margin with an extensive area of sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath habitat on generally shallow sloping, easterly facing, upper slopes before transitioning into bracken covered acid grassland as the slope angle increases towards the eastern margin of the unit near Heathercombe. An area of valley bog occurs near the north western corner of the unit but this is not recorded in the unit habitat mapping nor the soakaway habitat within this. The majority of the unit features subalpine dwarf shrub heath with high coverage levels of dwarf shrubs. *Calluna vulgaris* heather is abundant and the stand also includes *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and Ulex gallii Western gorse, but these were typically subordinate in cover to the Calluna. The stands of heather observed were relatively even aged (building/mature) but with at least some pioneer present, as well as degenerate phases. Browsing level on dwarf shrubs appropriate at the time of the assessment. Some localise Calluna vulgaris dieback observed but the cause undetermined.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland which was found to be unfavourable due to high bracken and thatch cover, lack of forbs and high cover of springy-turf moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Three samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records only Unit 17 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition as the unit was previously recorded as being in favourable condition in 2007. For an upland interest feature all

attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 17 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 17 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0% found in pioneer, 98% in building and mature, 1.7% in degenerate and 0.3% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.3 and no sample had all growth stages present.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as no pioneer heath was recorded in any sample.

Favourable condition was assigned to this unit in 2007. In 2017 a survey was carried out of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which found no pioneer heath present in the five samples taken. Therefore, this suggests unfavourable condition due to lack of pioneer heath and diversity in heather age classes and that unfavourable declining should have been recorded.
However, the monitoring attribute results which suggest unfavourable condition are contradictory to the surveyors comments which suggest favourable condition and therefore it is recommended that further stops are made to ascertain an accurate record of the condition of this feature. Surveyors describe Unit 17 as a large area with Hemel Down Tor on its western margin with an extensive area of sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath habitat on generally shallow sloping, easterly facing, upper slopes before transitioning into bracken covered acid grassland as the slope angle increases towards the eastern margin of the unit near Heathercombe. An area of valley bog occurs near the north western corner of the unit but this is not recorded in the unit habitat mapping nor the soakaway habitat within this. The majority of the unit features subalpine dwarf shrub heath with high coverage levels of dwarf shrubs. *Calluna vulgaris* heather is abundant and the stand also includes *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and Ulex gallii Western gorse, but these were typically subordinate in cover to the Calluna. The stands of heather observed were relatively even aged (building/mature) but with at least some pioneer present, as well as degenerate phases. Browsing level on dwarf shrubs appropriate at the time of the assessment. Some localise Calluna vulgaris dieback observed but the cause undetermined.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland which was found to be unfavourable due to high bracken and thatch cover, lack of forbs and high cover of springy-turf moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

Unit 18 SHAPLEY COMMON (DRY HEATH)Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 18 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. Two samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 18 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 18 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean of 30% bracken cover as a result of one of the two samples having a bracken cover of 60%.
- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0.5% found in pioneer, 99% in building and mature, 1% in degenerate and 0% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.5 and no sample had all growth stages present.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as mean only 0.5% with only one sample having pioneer heath present.

Unfavourable recovering was assigned to this unit in 2011 following a survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath. Unfortunately, a comparative analysis cannot be made as the 2011 survey consists of 20 samples as opposed to two samples taken in 2024. However, there are similarities in results such as lack of pioneer heath and lack of diversity in age classes. There appears to be little change in the condition of the heath and therefore **unfavourable no change** is an appropriate condition, which was also suggested in the surveyor comments.

Surveyors describe the Unit 18 as consisting of extensive primarily acid grassland which occurs to the north of the B3212, particularly on the steeper sloping areas which are dominated by bracken. To the immediate south of the road the acid grassland areas continue to feature bracken with some scrub, but increasingly stands of sub alpine dwarf shrub heath occur. The northern parts of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat featured *Ulex gallii* Western gorse as the dominant dwarf shrub species, as well as subordinate cover of other dwarf shrubs such as *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry. Further south within the unit the heath becomes more of a mix of Western gorse and *Calluna vulgaris* heather as co-dominants, and at the southern end *Calluna* was the dominant dwarf shrub species. Structural diversity of the dwarf shrubs was limited, with the majority of the stands in building/mature but some pioneer and degenerate vegetation does occur. Other positive indicator species present included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent and non-crustose lichens. Bracken encroachment has occurred at least within the margins of heath stands and while overall cover levels may be below thresholds it should be considered as a threat**. Land management – Weeds / Invasive species should be added as a pressure.**

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland which was found to be unfavourable due to high bracken and thatch cover.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Two samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 18 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 18 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Less than 10% of the vegetation cover should be made up of bracken. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean of 30% bracken cover as a result of one of the two samples having a bracken cover of 60%.
- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0.5% found in pioneer, 99% in building and mature, 1% in degenerate and 0% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.5 and no sample had all growth stages present.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as mean only 0.5% with only one sample having pioneer heath present.

Unfavourable recovering was assigned to this unit in 2011 following a survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath. Unfortunately, a comparative analysis cannot be made as the 2011 survey consists of 20 samples as opposed to two samples taken in 2024. However, there are similarities in results such as lack of pioneer heath and lack of diversity in age classes. There appears to be little change in the condition of the heath and therefore **unfavourable no change** is an appropriate condition, which was also suggested in the surveyor comments.

Surveyors describe the Unit 18 as consisting of extensive primarily acid grassland which occurs to the north of the B3212, particularly on the steeper sloping areas which are dominated by bracken. To the immediate south of the road the acid grassland areas continue to feature bracken with some scrub, but increasingly stands of sub alpine dwarf shrub heath occur. The northern parts of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat featured *Ulex gallii* Western gorse as the dominant dwarf shrub species, as well as subordinate cover of other dwarf shrubs such as *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry. Further south within the unit the heath becomes more of a mix of Western gorse and *Calluna vulgaris* heather as co-dominants, and at the southern end *Calluna* was the dominant dwarf shrub species. Structural diversity of the dwarf shrubs was limited, with the majority of the stands in building/mature but some pioneer and degenerate vegetation does occur. Other positive indicator species present included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent and non-crustose lichens. Bracken encroachment has occurred at least within the margins of heath stands and while overall cover levels may be below thresholds it should be considered as a threat**. Land management – Weeds / Invasive species should be added as a pressure.**

Unit 19 EAST BOVEY HEAD (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 19 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. Two samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 19 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 19 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 42% and both samples failing the attribute target.
- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0% found in pioneer, 91% in building and mature, 9% in degenerate and 0.5% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.5 and both samples failed to meet the attribute target.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as no pioneer heath was recorded.

The above analysis points to unfavourable condition, however, this is contradictory to surveyor comments that mentioned all age classes being present, although building / mature dominated, and that a good variety of heath occurred. Surveyors conclude that the heath is in unfavourable recovering condition. However, as the unit was previously in favourable condition then **unfavourable declining** is applicable as there is a downward trajectory in condition from the previous assessment. It is recommended that further stops are taken in this unit to ascertain a more accurate reflection of the condition of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath.

Favourable condition was assigned to this unit in 2011 following a survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath. A further survey was carried out in 2015 which found the unit failing to meet favourable condition as the degree of browsing of dwarf shrub was too high. Unfortunately, a comparative analysis cannot be made as the 2015 survey consists of 26 samples as opposed to the two samples taken in 2024. However, it should be noted that in 2015 26% mean cover of pioneer was recorded as opposed to 0% in 2024 and that the cover of dwarf shrubs mean was 56% as opposed to 42% in 2024.

Surveyors describe Unit 19 as featuring extensive sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath with *Calluna vulgaris* heather, as well as *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Across the unit as a whole the dwarf shrubs had a reasonable representation of different age classes. Molinia caerulea was relatively frequent within the heath in places. Small areas of wet heath also occur with a greater abundance of *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath as well as species such as *Trichophorum germanium* deergrass. Other habitats present included valley bog with associated soakaways passing downslope into unit 5 to the north. Acid grassland was also present close to the road and on eastern edge of the unit. The subalpine dwarf shrub heath was described as consisting of a variety of dwarf shrub species with *Calluna vulgaris* heather the most abundant, locally prominent *Erica cinerea* bell heather, as well as lower cover levels of *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. The majority of dwarf shrubs were in the building/mature age but some degenerate material was noted. Other positive indicators included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent, Non-crustose lichens some variety in dwarf shrub growth stages. Surveyors also commented on some small scale peat erosion occurring within the unit.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland, wet heath and soakaway and sump habitat. The acid grassland was found to be unfavourable due to the high bracken and thatch cover and lack of

forbs. The soakaway and sump had quite a high graminoid cover but was approaching favourable condition. The wet heath analysis found a lack of positive indicator species but surveyors commented that they considered the condition favourable.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

The overall condition of unit 19 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. Two samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 19 sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 19 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 42% and both samples failing the attribute target.
- The attribute 'All Calluna heather growth stages are present' is not included in the current monitoring specification for East Dartmoor SSSI. This is likely to be an error as it is usually a mandatory attribute and therefore records have been taken so that the age structure of heather across the feature can be assessed. Fails this monitoring attribute when considering the mean of all samples taken. 0% found in pioneer, 91% in building and mature, 9% in degenerate and 0.5% dead heather found. The average number of growth phases per sample was 2.5 and both samples failed to meet the attribute target.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as no pioneer heath was recorded.

The above analysis points to unfavourable condition, however, this is contradictory to surveyor comments that mentioned all age classes being present, although building / mature dominated, and that a good variety of heath occurred. Surveyors conclude that the heath is in unfavourable recovering condition. However, as the unit was previously in favourable condition then **unfavourable declining** is applicable as there is a downward trajectory in condition from the previous assessment. It is recommended that further stops are taken in this unit to ascertain a more accurate reflection of the condition of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath.

Favourable condition was assigned to this unit in 2011 following a survey of subalpine dwarf shrub heath. A further survey was carried out in 2015 which found the unit failing to meet favourable condition as the degree of browsing of dwarf shrub was too high. Unfortunately, a comparative analysis cannot be made as the 2015 survey consists of 26 samples as opposed to the two samples taken in 2024. However, it should be noted that in 2015 26% mean cover of pioneer was recorded as opposed to 0% in 2024 and that the cover of dwarf shrubs mean was 56% as opposed to 42% in 2024.

Surveyors describe Unit 19 as featuring extensive sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath with *Calluna vulgaris* heather, as well as *Erica cinerea* bell heather, *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Across the unit as a whole the dwarf shrubs had a reasonable representation of different age classes. Molinia caerulea was relatively frequent within the heath in places. Small areas of wet heath also occur with a greater abundance of *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath as well as species such as *Trichophorum germanium* deergrass. Other habitats present included valley bog with associated soakaways passing downslope into unit 5 to the north. Acid grassland was also present close to the road and on eastern edge of the unit. The subalpine dwarf shrub heath was described as consisting of a variety of dwarf shrub species with *Calluna vulgaris* heather the most abundant, locally prominent *Erica cinerea* bell heather, as well as lower cover levels of *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. The majority of dwarf shrubs were in the building/mature age but some degenerate material was noted. Other positive indicators included *Agrostis curtisii* bristle bent, Non-crustose lichens some variety in dwarf shrub growth stages.

Unit 20 CHAGFORD COMMON, HURSTON RIDGE (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 20 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit, this habitat was found to be in **unfavourable declining condition**. Seven samples of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat were taken, the condition assessment of Unit 20 also considers the results of the whole feature assessment, surveyor comments as well as comparative analysis with past surveys to ascertain condition.

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 20 sample stops failed the assessment.

An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 20 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Less than 1% of the vegetation cover should consist of invasive "weedy" species (collectively *Cirsium arvense* creeping thistle, *Cirsium vulgare* spear thistle, large docks (excluding *Rumex acetosa* common sorrel), *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup, or *Urtica dioica* nettle). Fails the monitoring attribute as 13% mean found at visible extent scale and only 29% of samples passed the attribute target at visible scale. No 'weedy species' were recorded at quadrat scale. However, an additional record of negative indicators 'all' at quadrat scale gives a mean value of 3% cover. The monitoring specification only asks for 'weedy species' to be recorded and as the negative indicator 'all' record does not detail what species etc are included or the target to assess against, the analysis cannot take this record into account and is therefore just based on the 'weedy species' record.
- At least 25% of dwarf-shrub cover should be made up of *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean value of 15% and only six out of seven samples passing the monitoring target (14% samples passed).
- There should be less than 50% of total cover of *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Fails this monitoring attribute as the mean cover of western gorse was 51% and only 57% of samples passed the attribute target.
- At least two of the following indicator species should be present; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Fails this monitoring target as the mean number of species was 1.6 with only 57% of samples passing the attribute target.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as only 1% mean cover of pioneer heath recorded with only 14% (one sample) passing the attribute target.

A survey of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath was carried out in 2011. A comparative analysis of results finds that the cover of dwarf shrubs (including Western gorse) has increased from 40% mean cover to 66%. The cover of dwarf shrub (excluding Western gorse) has decreased from a mean cover of 21% in 2011 to 15% mean cover. Western gorse cover was found to be 18% mean cover in 2011 it is now at a cover that is failing the condition assessment at 51% mean cover. This suggests a declining trajectory in condition of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath. The number of samples lacking heath in all age classes is 100% in 2024 and 95% of samples in 2011. The proportion of browsed shrub heath remains the same at 48% mean as does the proportion of browsed pioneer heath at 32% mean.

The surveyors describe Unit 20 as a very large unit comprising of extensive areas of sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath, along with large areas of acid grassland in the northern and eastern ends of the unit, areas of wet heath and blanket bog/valley bog also occur. The unit was grazed by livestock including cattle, sheep and ponies, as well as wild herbivores. The browsing impact on dwarf shrubs was observed to be too high at the eastern end of the unit. The acid grassland areas include extensive bracken stands towards the eastern end of the unit. Wet heath areas are localised.
The subalpine dwarf shrub heath had a good diversity of dwarf shrub species, *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry are widespread and locally abundant. Also present, but

more localised and typically at lower cover levels, were *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath. The diversity in growth stages was limited with the majority in either building or mature phases, and only limited amounts of pioneer, degenerate and dead material. Overall browsing levels on the dwarf shrubs was below threshold levels but did exceed these locally, most notably towards the eastern end of the unit where action to reduce pressure is required. Some *Calluna vulgaris* heather and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse dieback observed but quite localised. *Molinia caerulea* throughout and regularly abundant, and bracken encroachment localised towards the eastern end of the unit. The surveyors also noted that there are areas of heavy grazing and poaching caused by livestock and that **Land management – Over grazing and Livestock caused erosion / damage should be included as a pressure for this unit.** Also observed was some path and track erosion caused by vehicles and recreational use which needs to be monitored, therefore, **Disturbance & Recreational impact – erosion and recreational disturbance should be added as pressures.**

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland, wet heath and blanket bog & valley bog. The wet heath had low positive indicators present and the surveyors commented that the habitat was in declining condition. The blanket bog was lacking the required positive indicator species, with a high Molinia cover, areas of bare ground was high in places and the scrub cover was also above ideal levels for the habitat type. The acid grassland was in unfavourable condition due to the high cover of bracken and vegetation thatch.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Seven samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records, surveyor comments, the whole feature assessment results, Unit 20 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable declining** condition.

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of subalpine dwarf shrub heath sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 20 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- Less than 1% of the vegetation cover should consist of invasive “weedy” species (collectively *Cirsium arvense* creeping thistle, *Cirsium vulgare* spear thistle, large docks (excluding *Rumex acetosa* common sorrel), *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup, or *Urtica dioica* nettle). Fails the monitoring attribute as 13% mean found at visible extent scale and only 29% of samples passed the attribute target at visible scale. No 'weedy species' were recorded at quadrat scale. However, an additional record of negative indicators 'all' at quadrat scale gives a mean value of 3% cover. The monitoring specification only asks for 'weedy species' to be recorded and as the negative indicator 'all' record does not detail what species etc are included or the target to assess against, the analysis cannot take this record into account and is therefore just based on the 'weedy species' record.
- At least 25% of dwarf-shrub cover should be made up of *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean value of 15% and only six out of seven samples passing the monitoring target (14% samples passed).
- There should be less than 50% of total cover of *Ulex gallii* Western gorse. Fails this monitoring attribute as the mean cover of western gorse was 51% and only 57% of samples passed the attribute target.
- At least two of the following indicator species should be present; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Fails this monitoring target as the mean number of species was 1.6 with only 57% of samples passing the attribute target.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as only 1% mean cover of pioneer heath recorded with only 14% (one sample) passing the attribute target.

A survey of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath was carried out in 2011. A comparative analysis of results finds that the cover of dwarf shrubs (including Western gorse) has increased from 40% mean cover to 66%. The cover of dwarf shrub (excluding Western gorse) has decreased from a mean cover of 21% in 2011 to 15% mean cover. Western gorse cover was found to be 18% mean cover in 2011 it is now at a cover that is failing the condition assessment at 51% mean cover. This suggests a declining trajectory in condition of the subalpine dwarf shrub

heath. The number of samples lacking heath in all age classes is 100% in 2024 and 95% of samples in 2011. The proportion of browsed shrub heath remains the same at 48% mean as does the proportion of browsed pioneer heath at 32% mean.

Surveyors commented that the subalpine dwarf shrub heath had a good diversity of dwarf shrub species, *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Ulex gallii* Western gorse and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry are widespread and locally abundant. Also present, but more localised and typically at lower cover levels, were *Erica cinerea* bell heather and *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath. The diversity in growth stages was limited with the majority in either building or mature phases, and only limited amounts of pioneer, degenerate and dead material. Overall browsing levels on the dwarf shrubs was below threshold levels but did exceed these locally, most notably towards the eastern end of the unit where action to reduce pressure is required. Some *Calluna vulgaris* heather and *Ulex gallii* Western gorse dieback observed but quite localised. *Molinia caerulea* throughout and regularly abundant, and bracken encroachment localised towards the eastern end of the unit. The surveyors also noted that there are areas of heavy grazing and poaching caused by livestock and that **Land management – Over grazing and Livestock caused erosion / damage should be included as a pressure for this unit.** Also observed was some path and track erosion caused by vehicles and recreational use which needs to be monitored, therefore, **Disturbance & Recreational impact – erosion and recreational disturbance should be added as pressures.**

Unit 21 FOREST (EAST), RUNNAGE (MIRE) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 21 is based on the condition assessment of blanket bog which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 21 sample stops failed the assessment. Two samples of blanket & valley bog habitat were taken the condition assessment of Unit 21 is heavily based on the results of the whole feature assessment and surveyor comments on this unit.

Blanket bog was found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition due to lack of positive indicator species and high cover of Ericaceous species.

Surveyors commented that Unit 21 occurs within a valley where valley bog is present for the majority of the unit. The side slopes of the valley bog give way to tussocky Molinia growth. A track runs through the unit and shows vegetation damage from horses. Grazing however appears limited. Road impacts are also evident to a minor extent which are impacting on drainage from a channel associated with the road. The surveyors have identified **Freshwater Impacts – Drainage; Land management – Livestock caused erosion / damage and Planning and Development Impacts – Transport as pressures in this unit.** The blanket & valley bog had at least four sphagnum species present and a diverse botany with no overgrazing.

Blanket and Valley Bogs

Two samples were taken within blanket bog interest feature in Unit 21. Based on this record, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 21 blanket bog interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition. The most recent survey found was for blanket & valley bog in 2009 which does not provide percentage cover data so a comparison is not possible. In addition, two sample points could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion.

Surveyors commented that Unit 21 occurs within a valley where valley bog is present for the majority of the unit. The side slopes of the valley bog give way to tussocky Molinia growth. A track runs through the unit and shows vegetation damage from horses. Grazing however appears limited. Road impacts are also evident to a minor extent which are impacting on drainage from a channel associated with the road. The surveyors have identified **Freshwater Impacts – Drainage; Land management – Livestock caused erosion / damage and Planning and Development Impacts – Transport as pressures in this unit.** The blanket & valley bog had at least four sphagnum species present and a diverse botany with no overgrazing.

An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 21 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 50% of vegetation cover should consist of at least 3 of the listed positive indicators species (excluding Molinia and *Sphagnum fallax* when only Sphagnum species present). Fails this monitoring attribute as only 14% cover of positive indicators was found, with no sample passing the attribute target.
- Any one of *Eriophorum vaginatum* Hare's tail cottongrass, *Ericaceous* species collectively, or *Trichophorum* deergrass should not individually exceed 75% of the vegetation cover. Fails this monitoring attribute with Hare's Tail cotton-grass and deergrass cover 0%; but 100% cover of ericaceous species.
- At least 5 PI species should be present. Fails this monitoring attribute as mean value of 4 positive indicators were found, with both stops failing the attribute target.

It is recommended that further assessment stops are made to give a more accurate reflection of the blanket bog condition and the management issues that are impacting on the condition identified.

Unit 22 FOREST (EAST), RUNNAGE (DRY HEATH) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 22 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 22 sample stops failed the assessment. Two samples of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat were taken, the condition assessment of Unit 22 is heavily based on the results of the whole feature assessment and surveyor comments on this unit.

Unit 22 is found to be **unfavourable no change** condition as subalpine dwarf shrub heath was found to be in this condition due to lack of dwarf shrub and high cover of gorse. Unfavourable no change condition is given as there are no comparative past surveys from which the trajectory of condition movement can be identified. In addition, two sample points could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion, although declining condition was concluded in surveyor comments.

Surveyors describe the unit as characterised by a small river that runs through the centre of the unit. The valley bottom contains a small area of short sedge acidic fen habitat and the sides of the valley contain areas of shrub heath dominated by encroaching Molinia. Surveyors commented that due to the dominance of gorse, the woody leggy growth of heather and the dominance of Molinia, the shrub heath was considered to be in a declining state. However, grazing pressure appeared limited but there was poaching associated with recreation and horse riding. Surveyors commented that there was some minor littering within the heath. Sheep and pony tracks were causing some pressure as was a 'horse and hound scent track' where erosion of the tracks had occurred. Dredging of a channel with spoil heaps was also felt to be a pressure to the condition of the interest feature. **Disturbance and recreational pressure – Dumping / fly tipping and Recreational disturbance; Land management – Livestock caused erosion / damage Freshwater Impacts – Channel maintenance (not by flood authority) should all be added as pressures for this unit.**

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland and short sedge acidic fen habitat, both of which were found to be in unfavourable condition. Surveyors commented that the area of acid grassland was heavily grazed. Short sedge acidic fen habitat sward height was found to be too low, positive indicators were lacking, but the cover of soft rush and negative indicators were found to be too high. Molinia was observed to be encroaching on the short sedge acidic fen and a number of Sitka spruce seedlings were recorded.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Two samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 22 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition. Unfavourable no change condition is given as it is not possible to make an accurate comparison and identify the trajectory of condition movement with the 2012 survey which is based on 20 samples as opposed to the two samples in 2024. However, declining condition was concluded in the surveyor comments.

Surveyors commented that due to the dominance of gorse, the woody leggy growth of heather and the dominance of Molinia, the shrub heath was considered to be in a declining state. However, grazing pressure appeared limited but there was poaching associated with recreation and horse riding. Surveyors commented that there was some minor littering within the heath. Sheep and pony tracks were causing some pressure as was a 'horse and hound scent track' where erosion of the tracks had occurred. Dredging of a channel with spoil heaps was also felt to be a pressure to the condition of the interest feature. **Disturbance and recreational pressure – Dumping / fly tipping and Recreational disturbance; Land management – Livestock caused erosion / damage Freshwater Impacts – Channel maintenance (not by flood authority) should all be added as pressures for this unit.**

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of subalpine dwarf shrub heath sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 22 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 25% of dwarf-shrub cover should be made up of *Calluna vulgaris* heather, Erica spp., *Vaccinium* spp bilberry. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean value of 17%. One of the samples failed to meet the target.

It is recommended that further assessment stops are made to give a more accurate reflection of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat, the management issues that are impacting on condition and whether declining condition as suggested by the surveyors should be assigned.

Unit 23 LITTLE STANNON NEWTAKE (MIRE) Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

Wet heath SAC feature is the only interest feature assigned to Unit 23. Wet heath is currently not included as a SSSI feature. Two samples were taken of wet heath and based on this sample the SAC feature would be unfavourable as the sample failed to meet the following attributes:-

- At least 25% of vegetation cover should consist of Group (i) species; *Carex* spp. sedge, *Drosera* spp. sundew, *Rhynchospora alba* white-beak sedge, *Sphagnum* spp., *Trichophorum cespitosum* deergrass, non-crustose lichens, and 25% should consist of Group (ii) species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp. cross-leaved and bell heather, *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Fails both with a mean of 0.5% cover for the first attribute and 4% for the second attribute and both samples failing to meet the attribute target.
- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should consist of, collectively, *Agrostis capillaris* common bent, *Holcus lanatus* Yorkshire fog, *Phragmites australis* common reed, *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup. Fails this monitoring attribute at a quadrat scale with a mean of 3% and both samples failing to meet the attribute target. At a visible scale the monitoring attribute was failed with a mean value of 1% and one sample (50%) failed the attribute target.
- *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath should be present. Fails this monitoring attribute as neither sample had cross-leaved heath present.

The wet heath SAC feature was recorded as favourable in 2012, however, from the designated sites view summary the condition described is unfavourable as the unit lacked positive interest features and the soft rush and Molinia cover was high but just within the attribute target. Unfortunately, the 2012 survey could not be located so a comparison with the 2024 data could not be made. Previous to this the condition of the unit was unfavourable recovering, but again the assessment was failed due to lack of positive indicator species, high cover of soft rush and Molinia. It is assumed that unfavourable recovering was assigned because management was in place to address unfavourable condition.

Taking into account the above and the samples provided in 2024, wet heath SAC feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition as with two samples identifying the trajectory of condition change is not possible. However, it is recommended that additional stops are made to provide a more accurate representation of the condition of wet heath. It is also recommended that the mire habitats are mapped and consideration given to whether blanket & valley bog is added to this unit as this habitat type was recorded in the 2024 survey.

Surveyors described the unit as featuring valley bog and flushed slope vegetation typically on peat soils with a depth of between 50 and 112cm deep. Only a small amount of habitat transitional to wet heath was observed. The unit was mapped as wet heath but when assessing under the current guidance using a peat depth of greater than 30cm to classify blanket bog and valley bog habitat and 5 to 30cm to classify wet heath, then the majority of the unit should be reassigned to valley bog. It is recommended that blanket bog and valley bog are added as a feature to this unit. The wet heath was described by surveyors as having a reasonably high *Molina caerulea* cover. Positive indicators were limited in diversity with *Ulex gallii* Western gorse, *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Carex* spp. sedges and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry observed. While the Western gorse was relatively abundant the other positive indicators were typically at low cover levels and this is also reflected in the results from the samples taken. A small localised area of peat erosion was also observed within the unit.

Although currently not an interest feature samples were taken in the blanket bog habitat which was found to be in unfavourable condition as the positive indicators present were just below the target level and the Molinia cover was high.

Wet heath

Wet heath SAC feature is the only interest feature assigned to Unit 23. Wet heath is currently not included as a SSSI feature. Two samples were taken of wet heath and based on this sample the SAC feature would be unfavourable as the sample failed to meet the following attributes:-

- At least 25% of vegetation cover should consist of Group (i) species; *Carex* spp. sedge, *Drosera* spp. sundew, *Rhynchospora alba* white-beak sedge, *Sphagnum* spp., *Trichophorum cespitosum* deergrass, non-crustose lichens, and 25% should consist of Group (ii) species; *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Erica* spp. cross-leaved and bell heather, *Vaccinium* spp. bilberry. Fails both with a mean of 0.5% cover for the first attribute and 4% for the second attribute and both samples failing to meet the attribute target.
- Less than 1% of vegetation cover should consist of, collectively, *Agrostis capillaris* common bent, *Holcus lanatus* Yorkshire fog, *Phragmites australis* common reed, *Ranunculus repens* creeping buttercup. Fails this monitoring attribute at a quadrat scale with a mean of 3% and both samples failing to meet the attribute target. At a visible scale the monitoring attribute was failed with a mean value of 1% and one sample (50%) failed the attribute target.
- *Erica tetralix* cross-leaved heath should be present. Fails this monitoring attribute as neither sample had cross-leaved heath present.

The wet heath SAC feature was recorded as favourable in 2012, however, from the designated sites view summary the condition described is unfavourable as the unit lacked positive interest features and the soft rush and Molinia cover was high but just within the attribute target. Unfortunately, the 2012 survey could not be located so a comparison with the 2024 data could not be made. Previous to this the condition of the unit was unfavourable recovering, but again the assessment was failed due to lack of positive indicator species, high cover of soft rush and Molinia. It is assumed that unfavourable recovering was assigned because management was in place to address unfavourable condition.

Taking into account the above and the samples provided in 2024, wet heath SAC feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition as with two samples identifying the trajectory of condition change is not possible. However, it is recommended that additional stops are made to provide a more accurate representation of the condition of wet heath. It is also recommended that the mire habitats are mapped and consideration given to whether blanket & valley bog is added to this unit as this habitat type was recorded in the 2024 survey.

Surveyors described the unit as featuring valley bog and flushed slope vegetation typically on peat soils with a depth of between 50 and 112cm deep. Only a small amount of habitat transitional to wet heath was observed. The unit was mapped as wet heath but when assessing under the current guidance using a peat depth of greater than 30cm to classify blanket bog and valley bog habitat and 5 to 30cm to classify wet heath, then the majority of the unit should be reassigned to valley bog. It is recommended that blanket bog and valley bog are added as a feature to this unit. The wet heath was described by surveyors as having a reasonably high *Molina caerulea* cover. Positive indicators were limited in diversity with *Ulex gallii* Western gorse, *Calluna vulgaris* heather, *Carex* spp. sedges and *Vaccinium myrtillus* bilberry observed. While the Western gorse was relatively abundant the other positive indicators were typically at low cover levels and this is also reflected in the results from the samples taken. A small localised area of peat erosion was also observed within the unit.

Unit 24 LITTLE STANNON NEWTAKE Condition Assessment East Dartmoor SSSI March 2025

Overall Unit Condition

The overall condition of unit 24 is based on the condition assessment of subalpine dwarf shrub heath which is the only interest feature assigned to this unit. For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of Unit 24 sample stops failed the assessment. Two samples of subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat were taken, the condition assessment of Unit 24 is heavily based on the results of the whole feature assessment and surveyor comments for this unit.

Unit 24 is found to be **unfavourable no change** condition as subalpine dwarf shrub heath was found to be in this condition due to lack of dwarf shrub and low cover of pioneer heath. Unfavourable no change condition is given as there are no comparative past surveys from which the trajectory of condition movement can be identified. In addition, two sample points could not form the basis of recovering or declining condition conclusion, although declining condition was concluded in surveyor comments.

Surveyors describe Unit 24 as being a Western gorse dominated heath on a west facing slope of a relatively even age structure with some scattered woody scrub. On the upper slopes heath becomes more open forming a mixture of *Calluna vulgaris* heather heath, fragmented heath and acid grassland. The dense Western gorse results in higher trampling and grazing pressure locally. Some small scale erosion was observed on shallow peats and path erosion. The surveyors suggested that the acid grassland has developed from degraded heath.

Although not an interest feature, a few stops were made in acid grassland and wet heath habitat, both of which were found to be in unfavourable condition. Acid grassland habitat lacked forbs and was found to be over grazed with an average sward height of 3cm. Surveyors commented that the acid grassland appeared to have developed from degraded heath. The wet heath was lacking positive indicator species and the cover of negative indicators and soft rush was high, however the surveyors commented that the wet heath appeared to be in favourable condition.

Subalpine Dwarf Shrub Heath

Two samples were taken within subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature. Based on these records, surveyor comments and the whole feature assessment results, Unit 24 subalpine dwarf shrub heath interest feature is found to be in **unfavourable no change** condition. Unfavourable no change condition is given as it is not possible to make an accurate comparison and identify the trajectory of condition movement with the 2012 survey which found the interest feature in unfavourable recovering condition as the survey could not be found.

Surveyors describe Unit 24 as being a Western gorse dominated heath on a west facing slope of a relatively even age structure with some scattered woody scrub. On the upper slopes heath becomes more open forming a mixture of *Calluna vulgaris* heather heath, fragmented heath and acid grassland. The dense Western gorse results in higher trampling and grazing pressure locally. Some small scale erosion was observed on shallow peats and path erosion. The surveyors suggested that the acid grassland has developed from degraded heath.

For an upland interest feature all attributes must pass the stated monitoring target at the sample points, if one attribute fails then the feature fails at that sample point. To be favourable 90% of stops (sample points) must pass, for this survey 100% of subalpine dwarf shrub heath sample stops failed the assessment. An analysis of the whole feature assessment data located within Unit 24 found the following attributes mean failing to meet the monitoring attribute targets:-

- At least 50% of vegetation cover should be made up of indicator species; Calluna vulgaris, Erica spp., Vaccinium spp., Ulex gallii. Fails this monitoring attribute with a mean cover of 30% and both samples failing the attribute target.

- At least two of the following indicator species should be present; Calluna vulgaris, Erica spp., Vaccinium spp. Fails this monitoring target as the mean number of species was 1.5.
- Pioneer stage regrowth should make up 5 to 10% of ground cover. Fails this monitoring attribute as only 0.5% mean cover of pioneer heath recorded.

It is recommended that further assessment stops are made to give a more accurate reflection of the subalpine dwarf shrub heath habitat, and the current cover of the interest feature mapped and compared to the original extent to see if acid grassland is replacing the subalpine heath communities.