

COUNTY: DORSET                      SITE NAME: PIDDLER WOOD

DISTRICT: NORTH DORSET

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

Local Planning Authority: NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 796130                      Area: 62.2 (ha.) 153.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 194                      1:10,000: ST 71 SE, 81 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1959                      Date of Last Revision: 1977

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985                      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Dorset Naturalists' Trust. Site boundary extended.

Reasons for Notification:

This substantial oak woodland lies on raised ground immediately south of the River Stour in north Dorset. The underlying Kimmeridge Clay and Plateau Gravels have given rise to heavy neutral and lighter acid soils respectively and the woodland flora consequently varies in character. Rich and diverse communities of plants and animals typical of oak woodland in Dorset occur at Piddles Wood.

On the lower lying Kimmeridge Clay the Oak *Quercus robur* is of moderate age, tall and vigorous. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Aspen *Populus tremula* locally occur with the oak and the dominant species of the understorey is Hazel *Corylus avellana* with Maple *Acer campestre* and the occasional Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis*. There is a rich ground flora which includes Woodruff *Galium odoratum*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* and Orpine *Sedum telephium*. The higher areas with more acid soils on Plateau Gravel also support Oak woodland though stands of Birch *Betula* and Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa* occur locally. The hazel understorey is more sparse than in the lower lying areas, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* is more frequent and the ground flora very different. Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*, Great Woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*, Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* and Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis* are very frequent and typical mosses are *Dicranum scoparium* and *Polytrichum juniperinum*. In open areas, Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is often dominant.

Piddles Wood supports a rich insect fauna. The open glades and rides favour many of the typical woodland butterflies including White Admiral *Limenitis*

*camilla*, Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* and the very local Wood White *Leptidea sinapis*. The commoner woodland birds are present in good numbers and among the breeding species is Nightingale *Luscinia megarhyncha* which is local in Dorset.