

COUNTY: DORSET      SITE NAME: FERNDOWN COMMON

DISTRICT: WIMBORNE

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

Local Planning Authority: WIMBORNE DISTRICT COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SZ 998068      Area: 64.7 (ha.) 159.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195      1:10,000: SZ 09 NE, SU 00 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –      Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

This site, on the edge of Ferndown, comprises a significant block of heathland, which despite its now urban-fringe location, retains considerable interest, including many of the very rare animals confined to lowland heaths.

Most of the heathland is of the dry type, dominated by Ling *Calluna vulgaris* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*. There is some damp or humid heath in which Cross-leaved Heather *Erica tetralix* and Purple Moor Grass *Molinia caerulea* are locally dominant. Gorse *Ulex europaeus* is widespread and the site is unusual in supporting both of the species of dwarf gorse, the western *Ulex gallii* and the eastern *Ulex minor*. The locations combining these species are extremely limited, occurring only in a few examples to the north of Poole Harbour.

In addition to gorse scrub there is habitat diversity provided by stands of Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* and Birch *Betula*. Several small ponds occur in the south-east of the site which support the aquatic insectivorous Bladderwort *Utricularia*.

Several of the rare animals of Dorset heathland are found at Ferndown Common, including Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*, Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca*, Heath Grasshopper *Chorthippus vagans* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*.

Other very local heathland species of this site are Silver-studded Blue Butterfly *Plebejus argus*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*. The ponds support at least 14 species of dragonflies, most of which are heathland species. The ponds also have good populations of the widespread but rapidly declining amphibians, the Common Frog *Rana temporaria* and Palmate Newt *Triturus helveticus*.