

File ref:

**County:** Hampshire      **Site Name:** Broxhead and Kingsley Commons SSSI

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SU 800375      **Area:** 104.8 (ha) ? (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 186      **1:10,000:** SU 73 NE, SU 83 NW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1979      **Date of Last Revision:** 15 Oct. 1993

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1984      **Date Confirmed:** 17 June 1994

**Other Information:**

Part of the site has been declared as a Local Nature Reserve and is managed by Hampshire County Council.

Broxhead and Kingsley Commons are both registered common land.

The site includes land which has been proposed for designation as a Special Protection Area under the EC Directive 70/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Broxhead and Kingsley Commons are located on the coarse sandy soils of the Folkestone Beds in the western edge of the Weald. The site comprises a mosaic of heathland and acid grassland with areas of scrub and secondary woodland. The diversity of habitats supports a rich invertebrate fauna including 25 nationally rare and scarce species, a rich flora, and three species of birds listed in Annex 1 of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

The dry heathland includes areas dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bell heather *Erica cinerea*, with dwarf gorse *Ulex minor* and wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*. On Kingsley Common much of the dry heathland is unusual, with both bell heather and dwarf gorse being replaced by an abundance of sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and terricolous (ground-dwelling) lichens. This heathland community is confined in Britain to the east and south-east; its presence at Kingsley Common represents its most westerly recorded locality.

Acid grassland areas dominated by wavy-hair grass and common bent grass *Agrostis capillaris* support a rich associated flora including an abundance of lichens and mosses.

Terricolous lichens are abundant in both dry heathland and acid grassland with over 25 species identified. A number of the *Cladonia* lichens are indicative of the oldest and highest quality dry heathland habitats. The rich diversity of lichen species recorded from the SSSI makes it one of the most important sites for this group of plants in southern England.

In slight hollows and depressions where the water table is near to the ground surface, the dry heath gives way to small areas of wet heath. These are dominated by cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, commonly with heath rush *Juncus squarrosus* and the sundews *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. intermedia*. Mosses are also common in these areas, including the bog moss *Sphagnum compactum* and the nationally scarce *Hypnum imponens*.

The habitat of the two commons is varied by areas of dense bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and recent secondary woodland. These have colonised the commons during the last century, following the decline of traditional commoning practices.

The secondary woodland is dominated by silver birch *Betula pendula* and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* with a ground flora dominated by soft grass *Holcus mollis* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, sallow *Salix cinerea* and suckering English elm *Ulmus procera* are all common components of the woodland shrub layer.

The bird fauna of the SSSI includes breeding populations of three important heathland bird species listed in Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive, namely nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, woodlark *Lullula arborea* and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*. Other heathland species include stonechat *Saxicola torquata* and tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*. The woodland supports breeding great-spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* and green woodpecker *Picus viridis*.

The nationally rare sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* has been recorded from Broxhead Common in recent years. This species is associated with areas of dry sandy heathland and has declined throughout its former range in Britain, largely due to damage or destruction of its heathland habitat.

The heathland invertebrate fauna of the two commons is notably rich and includes a number of species that are confined to warm, sandy habitats in southern England. A total of 25 nationally rare and notable species of Hymenoptera (bees, wasps and ants) have been recorded including the nationally rare parasitic ant *Sifolinia karavajeva*, the nationally rare solitary wasp *Diodontus insidiosus* and the solitary bees *Adena rosae* and *Ceratina cyanea*. Notable heathland butterflies include the grayling *Hipparchia semele* and the nationally scarce silver-studded blue *Plebejus argus*, associated with areas of dry and wet heathland respectively.