

File ref:

County: Hampshire **Site Name:** Portsdown SSSI

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Fareham Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SU 618068–SU 666064

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 196 **1:25,000:** SU 60

Area: 80.67 (ha) 199.36 (ac)

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1978 **Date of Last Revision:** –

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

Other Information:

Owned mainly by Fareham Borough Council and Portsmouth City Council and managed as open space. A small part is registered and confirmed as common land.

Reasons for Notification:

Portsdown is an isolated east-west chalk anticline with a long south-facing escarpment which remains un-reclaimed. On the lower south-facing slopes raised beaches mark former sea levels and it is postulated that former wave erosion has removed the Tertiary deposits and some of the chalk, leaving very steep slopes. Despite the absence of grazing and extensive disturbance, these slopes still support a rich chalk grassland flora and a rich and diverse insect fauna. Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub is extensive and much of the grassland is dominated by upright brome *Bromus erectus*, a tall vigorous species which responds rapidly to lack of grazing. Areas of finer turf dominated by red rescue *Festuca rubra*, sheep's fescue *F. ovina* and a wide range of small herbs, remains widespread, however, whilst the site supports a number of species of limited distribution, including hairy rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta*, pale flax *Linum bienne*, meadow cranesbill *Geranium pratense*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, bastard toadflax *Thesium humifosum*, Early Gentian *Gentianella anglica*, Knapweed Broomrape *Orobanche elatior*, bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* and fly orchid *O. insectifera*.

The insect fauna has been studied in detail and includes a comprehensive range of chalk downland butterflies *Lepidoptera*, beetles *Coleoptera*, bees and allied insects *Hymenoptera*. Of interest is the occurrence in an atypical habitat of the bush cricket *Conocephalus discolor* and a substantial population of the largest of the British bush crickets *Tettigonia viridissima*.