

COUNTY: DORSET      SITE NAME: CORFE COMMON

DISTRICT: PURBECK

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

Local Planning Authority: PURBECK DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SY 960810      Area: 88.6 (ha.) 218.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195      1:10,000: SY 98 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1972      Date of Last Revision: 1977

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

Other Information:

Registered as Common Land.

Reasons for Notification:

Lying immediately south of the village of Corfe Castle, and flanked to the south and west by a branch of the Corfe River, the Common is the only large remaining area of uncultivated land on the Purbeck Wealden Beds. It is of great botanical interest, the flora of the flushes being of particular richness.

There is a central east-west ridge of Wealden Sandstone and the lower land is Wealden Clay bearing a series of flushes particularly along the western margin. The varied hydrology of the site and its long history as common land have contributed to the great variety and richness of its flora.

The sandstone ridge has swards dominated by bent grasses *Agrostis* spp. and stands of bracken *Pteridium*. Bristle Bent *Agrostis curtisii*, Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus* and Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* are frequent and Ling *Calluna vulgaris* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* also occur. Lower ground supports close-grazed swards with Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* locally dominant. The flushes typically occupy short narrow valleys and their upper parts have a vegetation characterised by several species of pleurocarpus mosses, for example *Drepanocladus fluitans* and *Campylium stellatum*. Wherever drainage is impeded, communities dominated by a variety of *Sphagnum* species are found. Amongst the range of higher plants are Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Bog Bean *Meneanthes trifoliata*, Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Marsh Arrow Grass *Triglochin palustris* and Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*.

The wetter areas support an extremely varied and interesting fauna including a number of local and rare species. Notable among these are several beetles: the very local Tortoise Beetles *Cassida murraea* and *C. vibax*, the Water-Jewel

Beetle *Plateumaris discolor* and some uncommon leaf and ground beetles. Other noteworthy animals include three very scarce damselflies, the spider *Araneus redii* and the Silky Snail *Ashfordia granulata*.