

COUNTY: BERKSHIRE

SITE NAME: CLEEVE HILL

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

Local Planning Authorities: Newbury District Council, Berkshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU332765

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 174 **1:10,000:** SU37 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 **Date of Last Revision:**

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 4.73 ha 11.69 ac

Other information: Within North Wessex Down Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description and Reasons for Notification

A west facing chalk downland slope dominated by upright brome grass *Zerna erecta* with a mixture of other grasses, notably wood brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*.

The northern part of the site has been strongly colonised by mixed scrub, mainly hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana* and includes a small areas of coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana* woodland.

The grassland supports a characteristic rich flora including clustered bell flower *Campanula glomerata*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, rock rose *Helianthemum chamaecistus*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, cowslip *Primula veris*, thyme *Thymus drucei* and *T. pulegioides*, small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella* and many other species.

The slope is particularly important for its colony of the Chiltern gentian *Gentianella germanica* for which it is the most westerly site known, and for its very strong populations of greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and twayblade orchid *Listera ovata*, normally woodland species, which here occur in open grassland and semi-shade conditions in great profusion.

This sheltered, sunny hillside is also of great importance for its butterflies, most notably the dark green fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*, marbled white *Melanargia galathea* and small blue *Cupido minimus*, which occur in some years in great abundance.