

File ref:

County: Hampshire **Site Name:** Browndown SSSI

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, Gosport Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SZ 580990 **Area:** 64.3 (ha) 158.88 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 196 **1:25,000:** SZ 59

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1979 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

Ministry of Defence property.

Reasons for Notification:

Browndown Site of Special Scientific Interest is an extensive shingle beach comprising a disturbed sequence of apposition ridges supporting three main plant communities:

1. Extensive tracts of ling *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea*, dwarf gorse *Ulex minor* and bristle bent *Agrostis setacea*. This community is remarkably rich in foliose lichens including at least seventeen species of *Cladonia*.
2. Open grass heath dominated by bristle bent *Agrostis setacea*, fine bent *A. tenuis*, fine-leaved sheep's fescue *Festuca tenuifolia*, sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and Nottingham catchfly *Silene nutans*. This community is also rich in lichens.
3. Scrub of gorse *Ulex europaeus*, oak *Quercus* species including holme oak *Q. ilex*, bramble *Rubus* species and rose *Rosa* species.

Ecologically, Browndown has affinities with Denge Beach, Dungeness, Kent.

On a national level, only Denge Beach now supports more extensive areas of grass heath (community '2'), whilst a similar *Calluna*-heath community rich in lichens (community '1') is probably not represented elsewhere in lowland Britain. All these communities include a range of plants of low density vegetation on open shingle, including the rare little robin *Geranium purpureum*, yellow-horned poppy *Glaucium flavum*, red star-thistle *Centaurea calcitrapa* and pale toadflax *Linaria repens*, vipers bugloss *Echium vulgare* and salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*.

Browndown's invertebrate fauna is also known to include a range of species specialised to this habitat and thus rare in south-east England. Ninety species of Diptera and 60 Aculaterans have been named so far, together with 83 species of true bugs Heteroptera – a little under one-sixth of the British fauna. The rare *Spathocera dahlmanni* is by far the most significant bug to have been recorded.