

File ref:

County: Hampshire **Site Name:** Poors Common 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, New Forest District Council

National Grid Reference: SZ 200985

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195 **1:25,000:** SZ 19 NE, SZ 29 NW

Area: 46.6 (ha) 115.1 (ac)

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 30 January 1992 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Confirmed: 21 October 1992

Other Information:

Poors Common is not registered under the Commons Registration Act and there are no common rights.

Reasons for Notification:

Poors Common is near the south west edge of The New Forest and comprises a valley bog in the head of a southward trending valley deeply incised into a terrace of sedimentary rocks (Headon Beds, Barton Sands) capped with superficial Pleistocene gravels. The gravels have largely been removed by mineral extraction. The bog occupies the valley bottom and lower valley slope up to a seepage line just below the junction of permeable and impermeable material. Below the seepage the bog surface in profile tends to assume a characteristic bulge resulting from the downslope movement of material lubricated by the seepage. Above the seepage the vegetation changes to heathland. The change is often gradual and the seepage is not consistently well defined.

Both valley bogs and heathlands are internationally scarce habitats. Mires still unaffected by development or reclamation of their catchment are especially rare and the best surviving European examples are those of The New Forest, of which Poors Common is one, and Purbeck, Dorset. Lowland heathland, once common in England, survives as relatively extensive and ecologically viable tracts only in the same districts. Despite the extraction of the plateau gravels, Poors Common comprises fine examples of two habitats now rare in Europe and it extends the range of variability in the suite of heathland and mire habitats represented in The New Forest, of which it is ecologically a part. It supports assemblages of characteristic, rare or localised plants and animals. Until 1806 Poors Common was contiguous with The New Forest. Today, the absence of grazing yields ecologically important contrasts with the nearby Forest.

Valley Bog:

The Poors Common bog has a central wooded zone dominated by willow *Salix cinerea*, birch *Betula pubescens* and alder *Alnus glutinosa*. Whereas the streamside alder/willow stands have close parallels with bog woodlands in The New Forest, the birch/willow woodland type is

unknown from the Forest with greater affinities to woods in the north and east of England. The birch/sallow wood supports a sparse but varied ground flora including bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* and white sedge *C. curta*; as well as mosses and liverworts including *Hookeria lucens*, *Calliergon cuspidatum*, *Eurhynchium praelongum* and the bog mosses *Sphagnum squarrosum*, *S. subsecundum* var *inundatum* and *S. capillifolium*. The trees themselves support a varied lichen flora including species strongly indicative of a long history of continuity of old trees within the wood, such as *Stemocybe septata* and *Thelotrema lepadinum*.

The woodland is flanked laterally by zones of reed *Phragmites australis*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, bog myrtle *Myrica gale* and open bog vegetation. The latter is dominated by the bog mosses *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S. recurvum* var. *mucronatum*, *S. subnitens* and *S. cuspidatum*; bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and the insectivorous sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and pale butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica* are abundant. These acidic elements occur in juxtaposition to stands of the black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*. This is of particular interest because this species is generally associated with neutral or basic conditions. The occurrence of this and other alkaline indicators probably arises from a supply of relatively enriched water from the calcareous Headon Beds outcropping and the valley head.

Heathland:

Upslope of the valley mire the vegetation is dominated by cross-leaved heath and heather *Calluna vulgaris* with purple moor-grass and the bog mosses *Sphagnum compactum* and *S. tenellum*. Within this vegetation heath spotted orchids *Dactylorhiza maculata*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta* are locally abundant.

In slightly more freely drained areas the cross-leaved heath and heather are found in association with dwarf gorse *Ulex minor* and gorse *U. europaeus*. As the soils become increasingly dry, cross-leaved heath is replaced by bell heather *Erica cinerea* and bristle bent-grass *Agrostis curtisii*. Bare ground within these dry areas supports a variety of heathland lichens including *Cladonia floerkeana* and *C. chlorophaea*.

The old gravel pits have undergone recolonisation by heathland vegetation, though the ground is still relatively open. For wetter areas the rare marsh club-moss *Lycopodiella inundata* grows in association with the liverwort *Gymnocolea inflata* and bog mosses *Sphagnum compactum* and *S. auriculatum*. This is a rare plant association more typically found on heathland track edges or on old turf cuttings. Where water stands in pools, the rare aquatic fern pillwort *Pilularia globulifera* and the shore weed *Littorella uniflora* are abundant. Other disturbed drier areas support populations of allseed *Radiola linoides*.

Poors Common supports a number of animals rare or localised in distribution and characteristic of heathland, bog and associated habitats. These include Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*, nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, tree pipit *Arthus trivialis*, redpoll *Acanthis flammea* and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*. Dartford warblers, nightjars and smooth snakes are specially protected by Part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The insect fauna of Poors Common includes a substantial population of the silver-studded blue butterfly, a species confined in Britain mainly to the lowland heaths.