

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	Site Features
<p><b>Solent and Southampton Water</b>  (5506 ha)</p>	<p>The Solent and Southampton Water are located on the south English coast. The area covered extends from Hurst Spit to Hill Head along the south coast of Hampshire, and from Yarmouth to Whitecliff Bay along the north coast of the Isle of Wight. The site comprises a series of estuaries and harbours with extensive mud-flats and saltmarshes together with adjacent coastal habitats including saline lagoons, shingle beaches, reedbeds, damp woodland and grazing marsh. The mud-flats support beds of <i>Enteromorpha</i> spp. and <i>Zostera</i> spp. and have a rich invertebrate fauna that forms the food resource for the estuarine birds. In summer, the site is of importance for breeding seabirds, including gulls and four species of terns. In winter, the SPA holds a large and diverse assemblage of waterbirds, including geese, ducks and waders. Dark-bellied Brent Goose also feed in surrounding areas of agricultural land outside the SPA.</p> <p><b>Article 4.1 qualification (79/409/EEC)</b>  <b>During the breeding season;</b>  Common Tern, 267 pairs representing at least 2.2% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean, 1993-1997).  Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>, 49 pairs representing at least 2.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean, 1993-1997).  Mediterranean Gull, 2 pairs representing at least 20.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean, 1994-1998).  Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>, 2 pairs representing at least 3.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean, 1993-1997).  Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>, 231 pairs representing at least 1.7% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean, 1993-1997).</p> <p>This site also qualifies under <b>Article 4.2</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:</p> <p><b>Over winter;</b>  Black-tailed Godwit, 1,125 individuals representing at least 1.6% of the wintering Iceland - breeding population (5 year peak mean, 1992/3-1996/7).  Dark-bellied Brent Goose, 7,506 individuals representing at least 2.5% of the wintering Western Siberia/Western Europe population (5 year peak mean, 1992/3-1996/7).  Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>, 552 individuals representing at least 1.1% of the wintering Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 year peak mean, 1992/3-1996/7).  Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>, 4,400 individuals representing at least 1.1% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean, 1992/3-1996/7).</p> <p><b>Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.</b>  The area qualifies under <b>Article 4.2</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl.</p> <p>Over winter, the area regularly supports 53,948 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Gadwall, Teal, Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>, Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>, Cormorant, Dark-bellied Brent Goose, Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>, Redshank, Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>, Shoveler, Red-breasted Merganser, Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>, Lapwing, Dunlin, Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>, Shelduck.</p>

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<p><b>Avon Valley</b>  (1385 ha)</p>	<p>The Avon Valley SPA encompasses the lower reaches of the River Avon and its floodplain on the south coast of England. The site extends for approximately 20 km between Bickton and Christchurch. The River Avon displays wide fluctuations in water level and parts of the valley are regularly flooded in winter. Consequently, the valley includes one of the largest expanses of unimproved floodplain grassland in Britain, including extensive areas managed as hay meadows and grazing marsh under low-intensity agricultural systems. These extensive floodplain grasslands support wintering Bewick's Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> in numbers of European importance, and Blashford Lakes Gravel Pits within the SPA are particularly important for wintering Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>.</p> <p><b>Article 4.1 qualification (79/409/EEC)</b>  <b>Over winter;</b>            Bewick's Swan, 135 individuals representing at least 1.9% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6).</p> <p>This site also qualifies under <b>Article 4.2</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:</p> <p><b>Over winter;</b>            Gadwall, 667 individuals representing at least 2.2% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6).</p>
<p><b>Dorset Heathlands</b>  (8169 ha)</p>	<p>The Dorset Heathlands cover an extensive complex of heathland sites at the western edge of the Hampshire Basin in southern England. The area is centred around the large estuary of Poole Harbour and lies in close proximity to the urban conurbation of Bournemouth and Poole. Past losses of the heathland (an estimated 75% during the twentieth century to development, agriculture and afforestation) have left the remaining heaths in a highly fragmented state. Despite this decline and fragmentation, the heaths show a high degree of ecological cohesion. They contain large areas of dry heath, wet heath and acid valley mire, all habitats that are restricted to the Atlantic fringe of Europe. The examples of the Dorset Heathlands are among the best of their type in the UK. There are also transitions to coastal wetlands and floodplain fen habitats. The whole complex has an outstanding fauna in a European context, covering many different taxa. Many species have a specialist ecology, strongly associated with, or restricted to, heathland. The area is ornithologically important for specialist breeding birds of lowland heathland, as well as for some wintering raptors.</p> <p><b>Article 4.1 qualification (79/409/EEC)</b>  <b>During the breeding season;</b>            Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>, 418 pairs representing at least 26.1% of the breeding population in Great Britain (three count mean, 1991-2 &amp; 1994).</p> <p>Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>, 386 pairs representing at least 11.4% of the breeding population in Great Britain (two year mean 1991-1992).</p> <p>Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>, 60 pairs representing at least 4.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count as at 1997).</p> <p><b>Over winter;</b>            Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>, 20 individuals representing at least 2.7% of the wintering population in Great Britain (Count as at 1991/2).</p> <p>Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>, 15 individuals representing at least 1.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain (Count as at 1991/2).</p>

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<p><b>Poole Harbour</b> (2272 ha)</p>	<p>Poole Harbour is a bar-built estuary of nearly 4,000 ha located on the coast of Dorset in southern England. The Harbour occupies a shallow depression towards the south-western extremity of the Hampshire Basin which has flooded over the last 5,000 years as a result of rising sea levels. The unusual micro-tidal regime means that a significant body of water is retained throughout the tidal cycle. The Harbour therefore exhibits many of the characteristics of a lagoon. There are extensive intertidal mud-flats and, away from the north shore that has become urbanised through the growth of the town of Poole, there are fringes of saltmarsh and reedbed. As a whole, the Harbour supports important numbers of waterbirds in winter and is also an important breeding site for terns and gulls, whilst significant numbers of Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i> and Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i> occur on passage. Several river valleys converge on the Harbour, notably the Frome and the Piddle, and these support grazing marsh that contribute to the importance of the SPA for wintering waterbirds. Parts of the Harbour, especially along the western and southern shores, adjoin the Dorset Heathlands SPA. Where the two areas meet, there are unusual transitions from saltmarsh and reedbed to valley mire and heath habitats. The Harbour is separated from Poole Bay by the Studland Dunes (part of the Dorset Heaths [Purbeck and Wareham] and Studland Dunes SAC) and the SPA includes Littlesea, a large oligotrophic dune-slack lake of importance for wintering wildfowl.</p> <p><b>Article 4.1 qualification (79/409/EEC)</b>  <b>During the breeding season;</b>  Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>, 155 pairs representing at least 1.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year mean 1993-1997).  Mediterranean Gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>, 5 pairs representing at least 50.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year mean 1993-1997).</p> <p><b>On passage;</b>  Aquatic Warbler, 11 individuals representing at least 16.4% of the population in Great Britain (Count as at 1997).  Little Egret, 107 individuals representing at least 13.4% of the population in Great Britain (Count as at 1998).</p> <p><b>Over winter;</b>  Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, 459 individuals representing at least 36.1% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1992/3-1996/7).  Little Egret, 83 individuals representing at least 16.6% of the wintering population in Great Britain (Count as at 1998).</p> <p>This site also qualifies under <b>Article 4.2</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:</p> <p><b>Over winter;</b>  Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>, 1,576 individuals representing at least 2.3% of the wintering Iceland - breeding population (5 year peak mean 1992/3-1996/7).  Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, 3,569 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (4 year peak mean 1993/4-1996/7).</p> <p><b>Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.</b>  The area qualifies under <b>Article 4.2</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl.</p> <p>Over winter, the area regularly supports 28,426 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>, Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>, Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>, Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>, Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>, Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>, Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>, Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>, Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>, Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>, Black-tailed Godwit, Shelduck, Avocet, and Little Egret.</p>

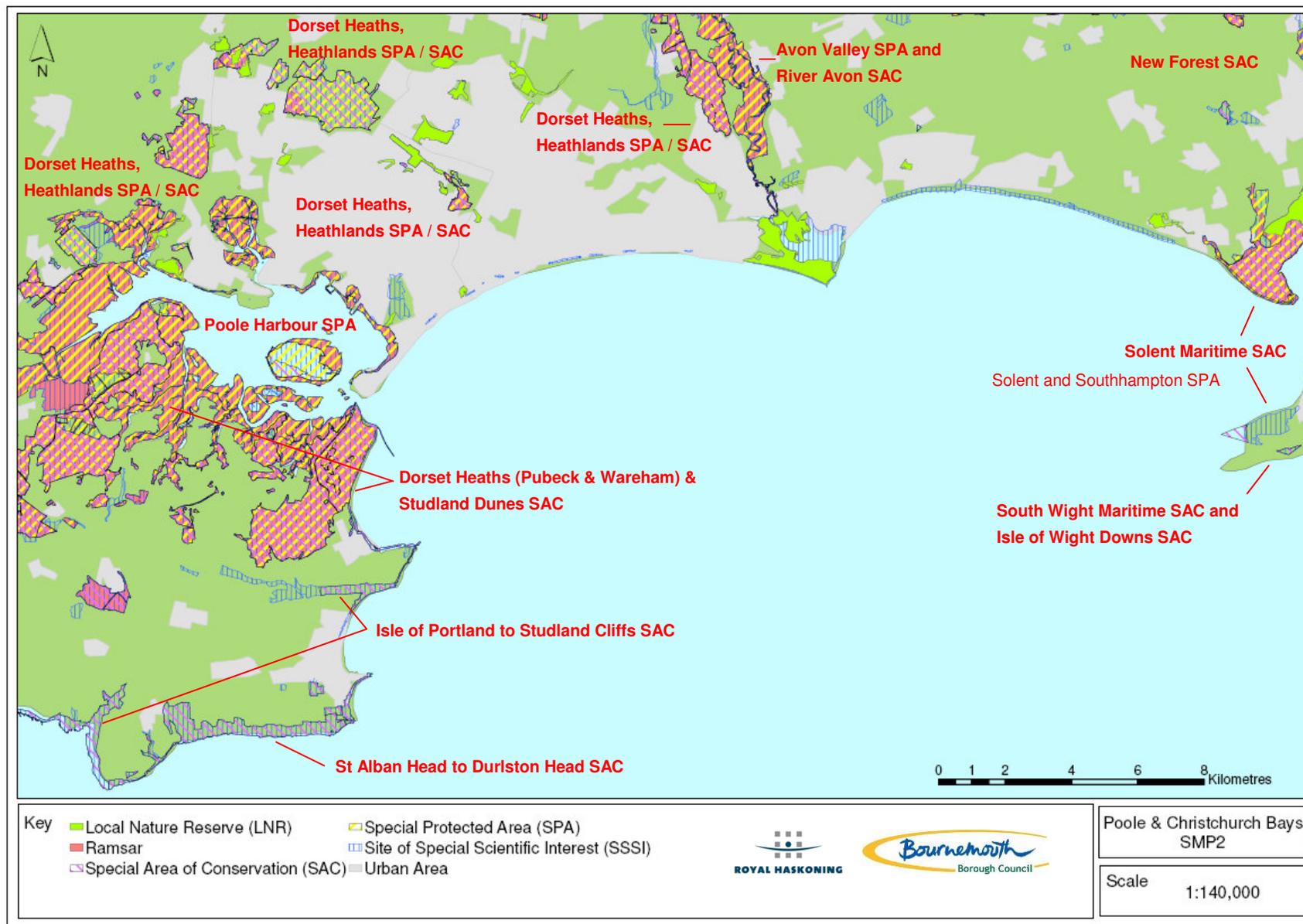
Ramsar	Site Features
<p><b>Poole Harbour</b> (2439.2 ha)</p>	<p>The Ramsar site includes Poole Harbour which is a bar-built estuary covering an area of nearly 4000 hectares. The Harbour occupies a shallow depression in the acidic, tertiary deposits towards the south-western extremity of the Hampshire Basin and has been formed over the last 5000 years by a rise in sea level. The unusual micro-tidal regime means that a significant body of water is retained throughout the tidal cycle. The site therefore exhibits many of the characteristics of a lagoon. There are extensive intertidal mudflats supporting internationally important numbers of waterfowl in winter. These are fringed on the landward side by saltmarshes or reedbeds. The river valleys of the lower Frome and Piddle support grazing marsh which is also important for wintering waterfowl. Much of the catchment along the western and southern shores comprises the internationally important Dorset heathlands and there are unusual transitions from saltmarsh to valley mire. The Harbour is separated from Poole Bay by the internationally important Studland dunes and the site includes Little Sea, a large dune slack lake also important for wintering wildfowl.</p> <p>The site includes <b>Ramsar criterion 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6</b> in that the site contains the largest example of a bar-built estuary with lagoon characteristics (<b>criterion 1</b>); the site supports two species of nationally rare plant and one nationally rare alga. There are at least three British Red data book invertebrate species (<b>criterion 2</b>); the site includes examples of natural habitat types of community interest - Mediterranean and thermo Atlantic halophilous scrubs, in this case dominated by <i>Suaeda vera</i>, as well as calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i>. Transitions from saltmarsh through to peatland mires are of exceptional conservation importance as few such examples remain in Britain. The site supports nationally important populations of breeding waterfowl including Common tern, <i>Sterna hirundo</i> and Mediterranean gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>.</p> <p>Over winter the site also supports a nationally important population of Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (<b>criterion 3</b>); and assemblages of international importance - waterfowl (<b>criterion 5</b>).</p> <p>Ramsar <b>criterion 6</b> qualifying species/populations (as identified at designation) – Common shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, NW Europe 2120 individuals, representing an average of 2.7% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3); and Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>, Iceland/W Europe 1724 individuals, representing an average of 4.9% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3).</p> <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under <b>criterion 6</b> – Pied avocet, <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, Europe/Northwest Africa 1260 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3).</p>

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<p><b>Solent Maritime</b> (11325 ha)</p>	<p><b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Estuaries:</b> The Solent encompasses a major estuarine system on the south coast of England with four coastal plain estuaries (Yar, Medina, King's Quay Shore, Hamble) and four bar-built estuaries (Newtown Harbour, Beaulieu, Langstone Harbour, Chichester Harbour). The site is the only one in the series to contain more than one physiographic sub-type of estuary and is the only cluster site. The Solent and its inlets are unique in Britain and Europe for their hydrographic regime of four tides each day, and for the complexity of the marine and estuarine habitats present within the area. Sediment habitats within the estuaries include extensive estuarine flats, often with intertidal areas supporting eelgrass <i>Zostera spp.</i> and green algae, sand and shingle spits, and natural shoreline transitions. The mudflats range from low and variable salinity in the upper reaches of the estuaries to very sheltered almost fully marine muds in Chichester and Langstone Harbours. Unusual features include the presence of very rare sponges in the Yar estuary and a sandy 'reef' of the <i>polychaete Sabellaria spinulosa</i> on the steep eastern side of the entrance to Chichester Harbour.</p> <p><b>Spartina swards (Spartinion maritimae):</b> Solent Maritime is the only site for smooth cord-grass <i>Spartina alterniflora</i> in the UK and is one of only two sites where significant amounts of small cord-grass <i>S. maritima</i> are found.</p> <p><b>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae):</b> The Solent contains the second-largest aggregation of Atlantic salt meadows in south and south-west England. Solent Maritime is a composite site composed of a large number of separate areas of saltmarsh. As a whole the site is less truncated by man-made features than other parts of the south coast and shows rare and unusual transitions to freshwater reedswamp and alluvial woodland as well as coastal grassland. Typical Atlantic salt meadow is still widespread in this site, despite a long history of colonisation by cord-grass <i>Spartina spp.</i></p> <p><b>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p>Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time; Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; coastal lagoons; annual vegetation of drift lines; perennial vegetation of stony banks: <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand; shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes').</p> <p><b>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:</b></p> <p>Desmoulin's whorl-snail.</p>

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<p><b>River Avon</b> (498 ha)</p>	<p><b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation:</b> The Avon in southern England is a large, lowland river system that includes sections running through chalk and clay, with transitions between the two. Five aquatic <i>Ranunculus</i> species occur in the river system, but stream water-crowfoot <i>Ranunculus penicillatus</i> ssp. <i>pseudofluitans</i> and river water-crowfoot <i>R. fluitans</i> are the main dominants. Some winterbourne reaches, where <i>R. peltatus</i> is the dominant water-crowfoot species, are included in the SAC.</p> <p><b>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Desmoulin's Whorl-Snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>:</b> There is an extensive population of Desmoulin's Whorl-Snail along about 20 km of the margins and associated wetlands of the Rivers Avon, Bourne and Wylde.</p> <p><b>Sea Lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>:</b> The Avon represents Sea Lamprey in a high-quality river in the southern part of its range.</p> <p><b>Brook Lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i>:</b> The Avon is a high-quality river that represents the southern part of the range of Brook Lamprey.</p> <p><b>Atlantic Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>:</b> The Avon in southern England represents a south coast chalk river supporting Atlantic Salmon. The salmon populations here are typical of a high-quality chalk stream, unaffected by the introduction of genetic stock of non-native origin.</p> <p><b>Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i>:</b> The Avon represents Bullhead in a calcareous, relatively unmodified river in the southern part of its range in England. The River Avon has a mosaic of aquatic habitats that support a diverse fish community.</p>
<p><b>Dorset Heaths</b> (5730 ha)</p>	<p><b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>:</b> This is a complex site which includes 37 SSSIs, most of which include fine transitions between <b>European dry heaths</b> and wet lowland heathland and mires, as well as other habitats such as woodland, grassland, pools, saltmarsh and reedswamp.</p> <p><b>Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>:</b> This habitat is widespread on the Dorset Heaths, both in bog pools of valley mires and in flushes. There are numerous valley mires within the Dorset Heaths, and the habitat type is most extensively represented here as part of a habitat mosaic. This location shows extensive representation of brown-beak sedge <i>Rhynchospora fusca</i> and is also important for great sundew <i>Drosera anglica</i> and bog orchid <i>Hammarbya paludosa</i>.</p> <p><b>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>); Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>; Alkaline fens; Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains.</p> <p><b>Annex II species present that are a primary reason for site selection</b></p> <p>Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>.</p> <p><b>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</b></p> <p>Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>.</p>

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<p><b>Dorset Heaths (Purbeck &amp; Wareham) Studland Dunes</b>  (2222 ha)</p>	<p><b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Embryonic shifting dunes:</b> Embryonic shifting dunes initiate the very clear successional sequence of dune communities at Studland Dunes, which are representative of the habitat type in southern England. This is a part of the UK where this habitat type is rare, partly owing to intensive recreational use of the coast.</p> <p><b>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes')</b>: Studland Dunes represents shifting dunes along the shoreline in southern England. Shifting dunes form one part of the very well-marked successional sequences.</p> <p><b>Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>):</b> Studland Dunes comprises the only large dune heath site in the south and south-west of Britain. The heathland occupies a series of dune ridges, which have developed over a period of several hundred years.</p> <p><b>Humid dune slacks:</b> Studland Dunes is a large acidic dune system in south-west England with well-conserved structure and function. The structure and function of dune systems are well-represented with dune-building processes still active. These processes have resulted in the formation of acidic humid dune slack communities with a high water table, which lie in the parallel hollows between the dune ridges.</p> <p><b>Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>):</b> Little Sea is a shallow lake at Studland Dunes in south-west England. It is of recent origin (&lt;500 years old), formed as a large body of seawater became landlocked by the growing sand dunes (hence the name Little Sea). This water is now fresh and is replenished by acidic, oligotrophic water draining off the adjacent heathland, which then flows through the dune slacks and into the sea.</p> <p><b>Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>:</b> The two Dorset Heaths SACs, together with the New Forest (also in southern England), contain a large proportion of the total UK resource of lowland northern Atlantic wet heaths. The habitat is of the M16 <i>Erica tetralix</i> – <i>Sphagnum compactum</i> wet heath type and occurs as well-developed transitions between dry heath and valley bog.</p> <p><b>Temperate Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica ciliaris</i> and <i>Erica tetralix</i>:</b> The greatest concentration of Dorset heath <i>Erica ciliaris</i> in the UK is in Dorset on the heaths south of Poole Harbour, with outlying stands elsewhere in Dorset. Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes has therefore been selected as it contains a high proportion of the total UK population of <i>E. ciliaris</i>.</p> <p><b>European dry heaths:</b> This site in southern England has extensive stands of lowland dry heath vegetation. The types include H2 <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> – <i>Ulex minor</i> heath, H3 <i>Ulex minor</i> – <i>Agrostis curtisii</i> heath and some areas of H4 <i>Ulex gallii</i> – <i>Agrostis curtisii</i> heath. The communities are dominated by heather <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> growing in association with bell heather <i>Erica cinerea</i> and one of the dwarf gorse species – dwarf gorse <i>Ulex minor</i> or western gorse <i>U. gallii</i>. The heaths are rich in rare plants, invertebrates, birds and reptiles.</p> <p><b>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion:</b> The two Dorset Heaths cSACs, together with the New Forest, support a large proportion of the resource of depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> within England. The habitat is widespread on the Dorset Heaths, both in bog pools of valley mires and in flushes.</p> <p><b>Bog woodland:</b> The Dorset Heaths contain small pockets of wet woodland within valley mires but most of these appear to be of recent origin. However, at Morden Bog a bog woodland stand is of ancient origin, as shown by its pollen record and old maps. The woodland is dominated by downy birch <i>Betula pubescens</i> with a ground flora consisting of greater tussock sedge <i>Carex paniculata</i> and purple moor-grass <i>Molinia caerulea</i>.</p>

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	<p><b>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caeruleae</i>); Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>; Alkaline fens; Old <i>acidophilous</i> oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains.</p> <p><b>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Southern damselfly <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>:</b> This site in south-west England, along with Dorset Heaths, represents the Dorset stronghold of southern damselfly. The large size of the two cSACs, and a long history of records indicating well-established populations, should ensure the future viability of the small populations that occur here.</p> <p><b>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</b></p> <p>Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>.</p>
<p><b>Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs</b> <b>(1448 ha)</b></p>	<p><b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts:</b> Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs, including the detached peninsula of Portland, with St Albans Head to Durlston Head, forms a single unit of cliffed coastline some 40 km in length. The cliffs are formed of hard limestones, with chalk at the eastern end, interspersed with slumped sections of soft cliff of sand and clays. The cliffs support species-rich calcareous grassland with species that are rare in the UK, such as wild cabbage <i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. <i>oleracea</i>, Early spider-orchid <i>Ophrys sphegodes</i> and Nottingham catchfly <i>Silene nutans</i>.</p> <p><b>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>):</b> Semi-natural dry grassland occurs at this site in both inland and coastal situations on both chalk and Jurassic limestone. The site contains extensive species-rich examples of CG4 <i>Brachypodium pinnatum</i> grassland in the southern part of its UK range. Smaller areas of CG2 <i>Festuca ovina</i> – <i>Avenula pratensis</i> grassland occur on shallow soils on steeper slopes.</p> <p><b>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:</b></p> <p>Annual vegetation of drift lines.</p> <p><b>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b></p> <p><b>Early Gentian:</b> This site on the Dorset coast, together with St Albans Head to Durlston Head, supports important long-standing populations of Early Gentian numbering several thousands of plants in floristically-rich calcareous grassland.</p>



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