

# EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

**Name:** Fontmell and Melbury Downs  
**Unitary Authority/County:** Dorset  
**SAC status:** Designated on 1 April 2005  
**Grid reference:** ST900193  
**SAC EU code:** UK0012550  
**Area (ha):** 260.75  
**Component SSSI:** Fontmell and Melbury Downs SSSI

### Site description:

This site, comprising part of the edge of the Dorset Downs chalk escarpment, holds unimproved chalk grassland and scrub communities. The main grassland type is characterised by the dominance of sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina* with meadow oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense* and, especially on slopes with a southerly aspect, is exceptionally rich in associated plants. Frequent grasses of this turf include quaking-grass *Briza media* and crested hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*, whilst glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* and spring-sedge *C. caryophyllea* are abundant. The many chalk herbs include horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea* and bastard toadflax *Thesium humifusum*. Orchids are well represented in these swards and the site supports consistently large populations of early gentian *Gentianella anglica*, numbering many thousands of plants.

**Qualifying habitats:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)

**Qualifying species:** The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Early gentian *Gentianella anglica*

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0012550

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs