

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

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

**Name:** Pewsey Downs  
**Unitary Authority/County:** Wiltshire  
**SAC status:** Designated on 1 April 2005  
**Grid reference:** SU106637  
**SAC EU code:** UK0012552  
**Area (ha):** 153.87  
**Component SSSI:** Pewsey Downs SSSI

### Site description:

Pewsey Downs covers an extensive chalk downland scarp which supports an extremely rich chalk grassland flora. The steep chalk escarpment is indented by a number of impressive coombes and dry valleys which provide a varied topography. Much of the turf is dominated by a sheep's-fescue – meadow oat-grass (*Festuca ovina* – *Helictotrichon pratense*) community, although in some areas upright brome *Bromopsis erecta* grassland is the dominant type. Many herbs characteristic of Wiltshire downland are widespread such as devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea*.

The site contains a large population of the nationally scarce burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata*. The uncommon green-winged orchid *Orchis morio*, autumn lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* and frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride* are also present, together with a rich assemblage of more widespread species, including bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. Pewsey Downs also holds a very significant population of hundreds of thousands of early gentian *Gentianella anglica*.

**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*) (important orchid sites). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone, including important orchid sites)\*

**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*

Annex I priority habitats are denoted by an asterisk (\*).

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

Register reference number: UK0012552

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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