

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

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

**Name:** Cerne and Sydling Downs  
**Unitary Authority/County:** Dorset  
**SAC status:** Designated on 1 April 2005  
**Grid reference:** ST670021  
**SAC EU code:** UK0030115  
**Area (ha):** 369.08  
**Component SSSI:** Black Hill Down SSSI, Court Farm, Sydling SSSI, Giant Hill SSSI, Hog Cliff SSSI, Sydling Valley Downs SSSI

### Site description:

This site covers a complex of unimproved chalk grasslands on the western part of the Dorset Downs. Dry valley slopes with a variety of aspects support extensive examples of sheep's-fescue – meadow oat-grass (*Festuca ovina* – *Helictotrichon pratense*) grassland in the south-west of its UK range. A particular feature of this site is the presence of the devil's-bit scabious – oxeye daisy (*Succisa pratensis* – *Leucanthemum vulgare*) sub-community, especially on south- and west-facing slopes. This type of calcareous grassland is almost entirely restricted to parts of Wiltshire and Dorset.

The site supports a large marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* metapopulation composed of two large and one smaller sub-population which regularly expand into other nearby areas in favourable years. These colonies occupy calcareous downland situations and complement the wet grassland habitats of the other Dorset strongholds.

**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:

- Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas* (*Eurodryas*, *Hypodryas*) *aurinia*

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.  
Register reference number: UK0030115  
Date of registration: 14 June 2005  
Signed:   
On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs