

Criteria for selecting Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Hampshire

The criteria below define those sites which are considered to be of particular importance for nature conservation within Hampshire. These sites are in addition to the statutorily designated sites and are referred to as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

Woodland

- 1A** Ancient¹ semi-natural² woodlands.
- 1B** Other woodland where there is a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland surviving.
- 1C** Other semi-natural woodland if;
(ii) they comprise important community types of restricted distribution in the County, such as yew woods and alder swamp woods
- 1D** Pasture woodland and wooded commons, not included in any of the above, which are of considerable biological and historical interest.

¹ *Ancient - refers to woodlands which have developed particular ecological characteristics as a result of their long continuity. Those identified to date which are over 2ha are included on the Hampshire Inventory of Ancient Woodlands (Provisional).*

² *Semi-natural - modified types of vegetation in which the dominant and constant species are accepted natives to Britain and that locality, and the structure of the community conforms to the range of natural vegetation types.*

Neutral/acid/calcareous grassland

- 2A** Agriculturally unimproved grasslands³
- 2B** Semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland.
- 2D** Grasslands which have become impoverished through inappropriate management but which retain sufficient elements of relic unimproved grassland to enable recovery.

³ *Agriculturally unimproved grassland - grassland that is composed of a mixed assemblage of indigenous species in essentially semi-natural communities which has been allowed to develop without the major use of herbicides or inorganic fertilisers.*

Heathland

- 3A** Areas of heathland vegetation; including matrices of dwarf shrub, acid grassland, valley mires and scrub.
- 3B** Areas of heathland which are afforested or have succeeded to woodland if;
(i) they retain significant remnants of heathland vegetation which would enable their recovery, or
(ii) they are contiguous with, or form an integral part of an open area of heathland,

Coastal habitats

- 4A** Semi-natural coastal and estuarine habitats, including saltmarsh, intertidal mudflats, sand dunes, shingle, brackish ponds, grazing marsh and maritime grasslands.

Wetlands

- 5A** Areas of open freshwater (eg. lakes, ponds, canals, rivers, streams and ditches) which support outstanding assemblages of floating/submerged/ emergent plant species, invertebrates, birds or amphibians.
- 5B** Fens, flushes, seepages, springs, inundation grasslands etc. that support a flora and fauna characteristic of unimproved and waterlogged (seasonal or permanent) conditions.

Species

- 6A** Sites which support one or more notable species⁴.
- 6B** Sites which regularly support a significant population of a species which has a restricted distribution or has substantially declined in population or range. Such sites may be used seasonally or for only one part of a species life-cycle.
- 6C** Sites which support an outstanding assemblage of species.

⁴ *Notable species include Red Data Book species, Nationally Scarce species, species covered under Schedules 1,5 and 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Annex 1 of the EC Bird Directive 79/409 and Annex II & IV of the EC Directive 92/43/EEC 'The Habitats Directive', and those covered by the Bern, Bonn and Ramsar Conventions. Notable species will also include species which are considered 'County Rare' or 'County Scarce'. County Rare = those species recorded in 1% or less tetrads in Hampshire or either of the two vice-counties (11 & 12) separately. County Scarce = 4% or less tetrads.*

Social value

- 7A** Sites of nature conservation interest which occur in areas otherwise deficient in such interest, and/or are known to be of particularly high value to local communities e.g. community wildlife sites.

Sites selected under this criteria will be rigorously confined to those which, if lost, would result in a considerable and demonstrable loss to the local community which would be very difficult/impossible to replace. Because of the widespread distribution of sites of nature conservation interest in Hampshire, and the high threshold used to define critical importance, only a limited number of sites are likely to meet this criteria.

Geology and geomorphology

- 8A** Sites which have been designated as Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)

Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites are sites of regional importance excluding SSSIs. RIGS are analogous to biological non-statutory sites.