

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

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

<b>Name:</b>	Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs
<b>Unitary Authority/County:</b>	Dorset
<b>SAC status:</b>	Designated on 1 April 2005
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SY840802
<b>SAC EU code:</b>	UK0019861
<b>Area (ha):</b>	1447.50
<b>Component SSSI:</b>	Isle of Portland SSSI, Nicodemus Heights SSSI, Purbeck Ridge (East) SSSI, South Dorset Coast SSSI, Studland Cliffs SSSI

### Site description:

This site, with St Albans Head to Durlston Head SAC, forms a single unit of cliffed coastline some 40 km in length that combines internationally important geological interest with a rich range of wildlife habitats. At this site some cliffs are formed of hard Jurassic limestones and others of chalk, and these are interspersed with sections of soft cliff composed of sands and clays. Parts are unstable and subject to mudslides and landslips.

The cliffs support species-rich calcareous grassland with particularly large populations of several species that are scarce in the UK such as wild cabbage *Brassica oleracea* var. *oleracea*, early spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes* and Nottingham catchfly *Silene nutans*. The endemic sea lavender *Limonium recurvum* ssp *recurvum* is locally frequent. The Portland peninsula demonstrates clearly the contrast between an exposed western coast, with sheer rock faces and sparse maritime vegetation, and a more sheltered eastern side. On this sheltered coast and on the mainland cliffs east of White Nothe there are extensive slumped undercliffs and landslips with a mix of massive fallen boulders, grassland and scrub. The scrub contains a high proportion of wayfaring-tree *Viburnum latana*, while wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* occurs widely in the grassland. The open habitats that occur on sands and clays as a result of frequent landslips are an especially rich habitat for many localised invertebrate species. Calcareous boulders in this turf support important and restricted lichen and bryophyte assemblages.

Semi-natural dry grassland occurs in both inland and coastal situations on both chalk and limestone. The site contains extensive species-rich examples of tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* grassland and smaller areas of sheep's-fescue – meadow oat-grass (*Festuca ovina* – *Helictotrichon pratense*) grassland occur on shallow soils on steeper slopes. It also supports important long-standing populations of early gentian *Gentianella anglica* numbering several 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:

- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)
- Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts

**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: UK0019861

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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