



**Dorset**  
Wildlife Trust

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# Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

## What are Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)?

They are places that are considered to be of at least county level importance for nature, due to the rich variety of wildlife they support. They are sometimes referred to as Local or County Wildlife Sites.

SNCI status is a local recognition which supplements the national network of statutory designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). There are currently around 1300 sites recognised as SNCIs, comprising over 4% of Dorset's land area.

These areas of land often support rare or threatened habitats and species and contribute to the wider mosaic of sites which underpin Dorset's natural heritage. They form a core part of Dorset's Ecological Networks and include grasslands, wetlands, woodlands, heathlands and road verges.

## What is the purpose of SNCI recognition?

Dorset Wildlife Trust collects information and monitors the condition of wildlife rich sites in Dorset through a rolling programme of surveys.

This provides evidence of the importance of these sites for biodiversity and can be used to inform land-use and planning decisions including Local Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Knowing where important species and habitats are located is essential to enable prioritisation of actions to drive nature's recovery.

Monitoring also provides data for landowners and land managers about the important features of their land and provides a baseline for measuring changes and assessing how best to manage their natural assets.

## How are sites selected?

- Each site is considered on the basis of existing data or by a new field survey. Surveys are **only** undertaken with permission of the landowner.
- Surveys are reviewed by a selection panel which includes representatives of Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset Environmental Records Centre, Dorset County Council, Natural

England, the National Trust and Dorset AONB.

- The panel examines the data against an agreed set of guidelines related to wildlife habitats and species in the county which have been developed and reviewed by local experts.
- Survey results are sent to landowners along with relevant management recommendations.



## Where is the information kept?

Site details are held by Dorset Wildlife Trust and Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC). Mapping and summary information is made available to Local Authorities to inform strategic planning and land-use decisions.

Data about sites and their locations is not openly available. No information about landownership is shared without specific permission.

## What does SNCI ownership mean for me?

Farmers and landowners hold the key to ensuring that the remaining pockets of wildlife-rich land continue to be well managed. It is thanks to long-standing management by landowners that such sites still exist, and continued sympathetic management will mean that these sites are enhanced and maintained with their wealth of wildlife for future generations.

- Dorset Wildlife Trust helps SNCI owners and managers with advice

and support for site management and access to funding opportunities where available.

- If you own an SNCI, this does not mean that people will be allowed on to your land without permission and locations are not made public.
- You will not be required to manage the site in any way you do not wish to. The recognition aims to focus and enhance voluntary efforts. We hope that land managers will take pride in the status and be keen to preserve and enhance their sites.
- You will receive a map showing the site boundary, together with a description of the habitats and species that make it important and a list of the species found during the most recent survey.
- You will receive an annual newsletter with articles about wildlife habitat and species, grant funding, management techniques and useful contacts.



Dorset Wildlife Trust's vision is to create a Wilder Dorset, rich in wildlife, valued and nurtured by everyone. By 2030 we want to see 30% of land and sea managed for the benefit of nature and we want to help more people take action for nature. A Wilder Dorset will safeguard our natural world for future generations and enable people to live healthier and more fulfilling lives.

The SNCI project is financially supported by Dorset Council and has the support of all local authorities, Natural England and other conservation organisations. It is linked to the Dorset Biodiversity Partnership.



Small copper butterfly



Common spotted orchid

“ Gaining SNCI status was a tangible recognition of the success of the grassland restoration we achieved on the farm with the help of Dorset Wildlife Trust's Pastures New project ”  
– Mike Lowing, Landowner

### JOIN us today!



Help make the 2020s a decade of transformation for nature by joining over 27,000 other members fighting to make Dorset wilder.

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