

COUNTY: BERKSHIRE

SITE NAME: INKPEN COMMON

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authorities: Newbury

National Grid Reference: SU381641

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 174 **1:10,000:** SU36 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 **Date of Last Revision:**

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 25 May 1983 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 12.59 ha 31.09 ac

Other information: The major part of the site is leased as a Nature Reserve by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists Trust. Within North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description and Reasons for Notification

A small area of damp heathland, a remnant of the former Inkpen Great Common, which supports an interesting flora, including several species which are local or rare in Berkshire.

The heathland is largely dominated by a mixture of grasses, notably purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea* and heathers *Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica cinerea* and *E. tetralix* with common gorse *Ulex europaeus* and dwarf gorse *U. minor*. Other species present include lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* which is locally abundant, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and lesser dodder *Cuscuta epithimum*. The site is particularly noted for its colony of the pale heath violet *Viola lactea* for which this is the only remaining locality in Berkshire.

The site includes a very small valley bog, fed by lateral drainage, containing plants such as meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and petty whin *Genista anglica*.

The Common includes areas of woodland dominated by birch *Betula pendula*, which tends to spread at the expense of the heathland. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is fairly restricted in extent and, together with gorse and birch, is kept under control by active management.