

## Fontmell and Melbury Downs Access Statement

Property address

T: 01297 489481

E: westdorset@nationaltrust.org.uk

### Introduction

1. Fontmell and Melbury Downs is the largest contiguous area of chalk downland owned by the National Trust at 293 Hectares. Truly stunning views can be enjoyed on clear days overlooking the Blackmore Vale. Melbury Hill, at 263 feet above sea level, offers excellent views of Shaftesbury, the Purbecks and the Mendips. The downs are grazed during the summer months with cattle and during the winter with sheep. Steep slopes and challenging terrain can be found as well as grassy undulating paths.
2. Mobile reception is generally good depending on individual service providers.
3. Dogs are welcome with the condition that they are always on short leads when sheep are grazing and especially between 1 March and 31 July to avoid disturbance to ground nesting birds. Signs are put up at the start and end of this restriction each year. Cattle graze the property between March and mid November
4. The property can be very exposed and wind swept.
5. Stout footwear with good grip is advisable owing to the steep slopes and undulating terrain.

### Arrival & Parking Facilities

1. The property is accessed from the higher Blandford to Shaftesbury Road.
2. There are no designated spaces in the car park.
3. The car park surface is tarmac with earth and grass edges.
4. There is also a very small pull in which can accommodate 3/ 4 cars which is not owned by the National Trust and is surfaced with tarmac.

### WCs

1. There are no toilets at the property. The nearest toilets would be at Compton Abbas Airfield for patrons (closed on Mondays).

### Visitor Reception

There is no dedicated visitor reception.

### House

1. There is no house.

### Catering

1. There are no catering facilities.

### Retail

1. There is no retail facility.

## Chalk grassland

1. A map is present on the interpretation board sited in the car park and at the entrance to Melbury Down.
2. There are four step over stiles present which provide access to steep slopes and challenging terrain.
3. The informal paths are mostly grass surfaces with grass overlying chalk. The Byway leading from the main car park is uneven chalk with rutting and puddles present in places.
4. The gradients of the paths across the plateau are mostly shallow gradients. The steep bank below is very challenging mostly derived from old sheep tracks. The Public Footpath which runs along the western boundary is very steep. Melbury Hill and the downland slopes are all very steep and undulating, with established sheep tracks present.
5. There are steps present leading up to a stile entrance onto Compton Down and steps leading down to a stile entrance leading down to Fontmell Down from the unclassified Byway leading down from the main car park to East Compton.
6. There are numerous gates at the property.
7. There is an interpretation/ orientation board in the main car park and at the Melbury Down stile entrance.
8. There are no benches at the property.
9. There are Bridleways and Public Footpaths. Most of the property is Open Access land.

## Contact details for more information

T: 01297 489481

E: [westdorset@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:westdorset@nationaltrust.org.uk)

### Date

18/12/19 Clive D Whitbourn.

## Map

Add any maps with access features marked to the back of the Statement