GIDLEIGH COMMON: MOORTOWN BOTTOM

2017-2026: Confirmed Priority Site of National Importance

Successful breeding populations of Southern Damselfly and Small Red Damselfly.

Last updated 15/12/2025

Site: GIDLEIGH COMMON: MOORTOWN BOTTOM	**1987-1996**			**1997-2006**			**2007-2016**			**2017-2026**		
Grid ref.: SX662891	**Breeding**		**Other**	**Breeding**		**Other**	**Breeding**		**Other**	**Breeding**		**Other**
	Succ	**Poss**		**Succ**	**Poss**		**Succ**	**Poss**		**Succ**	**Poss**	
Damselflies												
Beautiful Demoiselle			+			C			A			B
Banded Demoiselle												
Emerald Damselfly												
White-legged Damselfly												
Large Red Damselfly				C	B	D	B	C	D	A		C
Blue-tailed Damselfly												A
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly												
Common Blue Damselfly												B
Southern Damselfly				**D**	**C**	**E**	**D**	**B**	**E**	**D**		**E**
Azure Damselfly						B		A	B			A
Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red Damselfly				**D**	**D**	**E**			**+**	**A**		**C**
Dragonflies												
Hairy Dragonfly												
Common Hawker						B						
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker												
Migrant Hawker												
Emperor Dragonfly									A			A
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly				C		C			A	B	A	B
Downy Emerald												
Broad-bodied Chaser												
Scarce Chaser												
Four-spotted Chaser									A			
Keeled Skimmer				C	C	E		A	C	A	B	C
Black-tailed Skimmer												
Common Darter				B	+	C				A		B
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter												
Black Darter				B	+	D						A
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:	0	0	1	7	6	10	2	4	9	6	2	12

Bold underlined = nationally important species **Bold black = important species**

Succ = Successful breeding (exuvia(e) and/or larva(e) and/or pre-flight emergent and/or oviposition);
Poss = Possible breeding (copulating pair); Other = Adult(s) or unspecified.
Abundance codes: A=1; B=2-5; C=6-20; D=21-100; E=101-500; F=>500; + = no count.

Priority Species History

Small Red Damselfly – 200+ (30+ in cop., 5 egg-laying, 6 emergent) on 18/7/99; only 10 in poor weather on 1/8/21.

Southern Damselfly – peaks of 125 on 18/7/99, 229 on 26/6/05, 292 on 1/7/08 and 215 on 22/6/23. The largest numbers have been along transect MB2 (see map below), while MB1 has struggled to maintain open water; larval sampling has reflected this pattern, with totals of 21-100 found during almost annual sampling funded by DNPA. Annual maxima of adults, mostly from DNPA reports:

98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
24	125	70	19	99	98	70	229	188	160	292	206	217	46	110

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
175	105	205	25	210	211	128	?	53	61	215	85		

Other species of note

Keeled Skimmer – 150+ (10 in cop., 1 egg-laying, 20 emergent) on 18/7/99.

Habitat

Slightly base-rich M29 runnels emanating from the base of slope on the fringe of Gidleigh Common. Northern channel has become severely overgrown with Purple Moor-grass.

Status ***Area***

SSSI. ca. 20 ha

Local Authority*:* Dartmoor National Park Authority

Owner/tenant

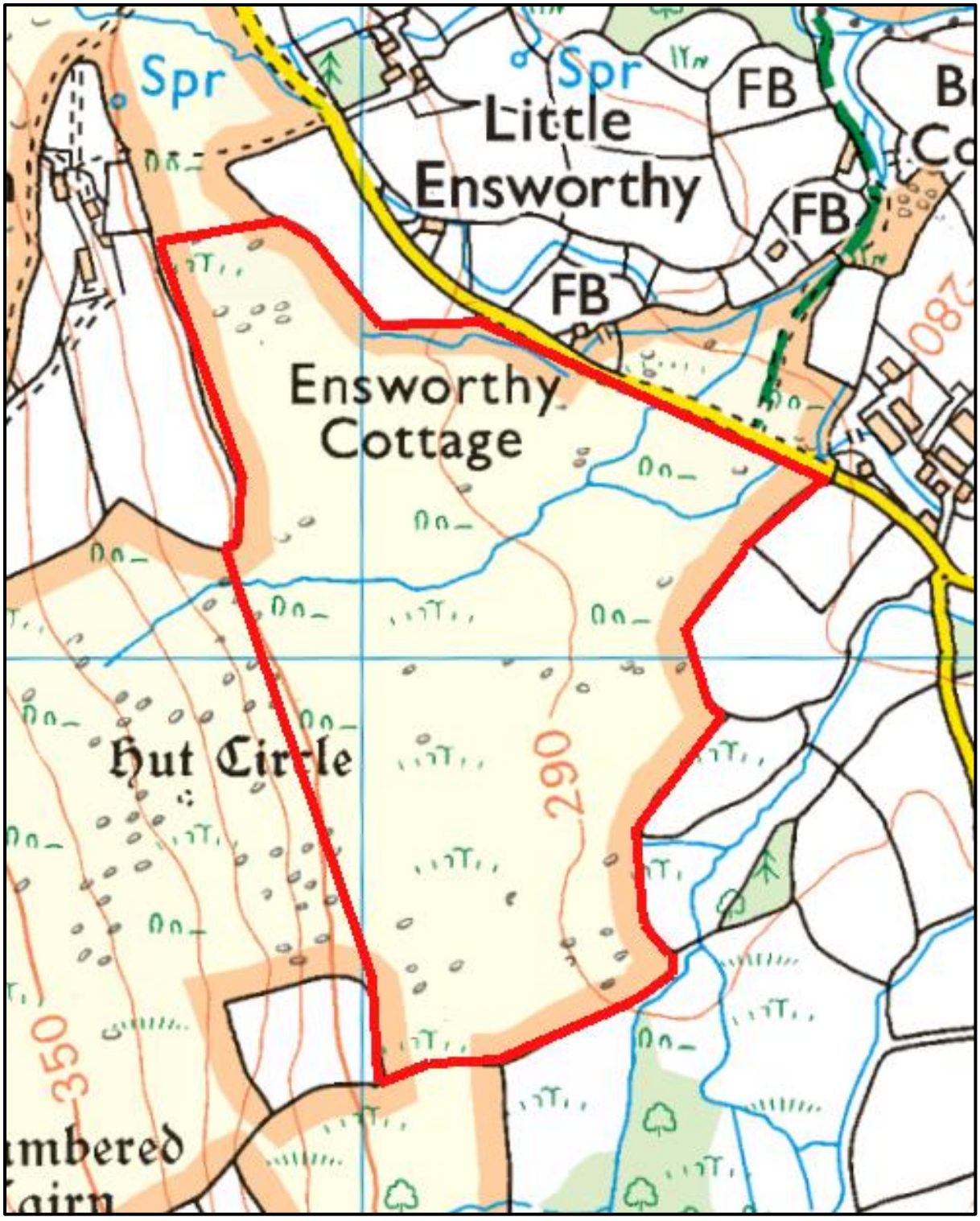
Common land

Threats

- Undergrazing, leading to loss of open runnel due to Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* (especially at MB1) and Gorse *Ulex europaeus* (MB3).

Management suggestions

- Maintain level of livestock grazing/trampling sufficient to retain open runnels.
- Continue with periodic cutting of Gorse and Purple Moor-grass when necessary to maintain open runnels.
- Reinstate northern runnel.

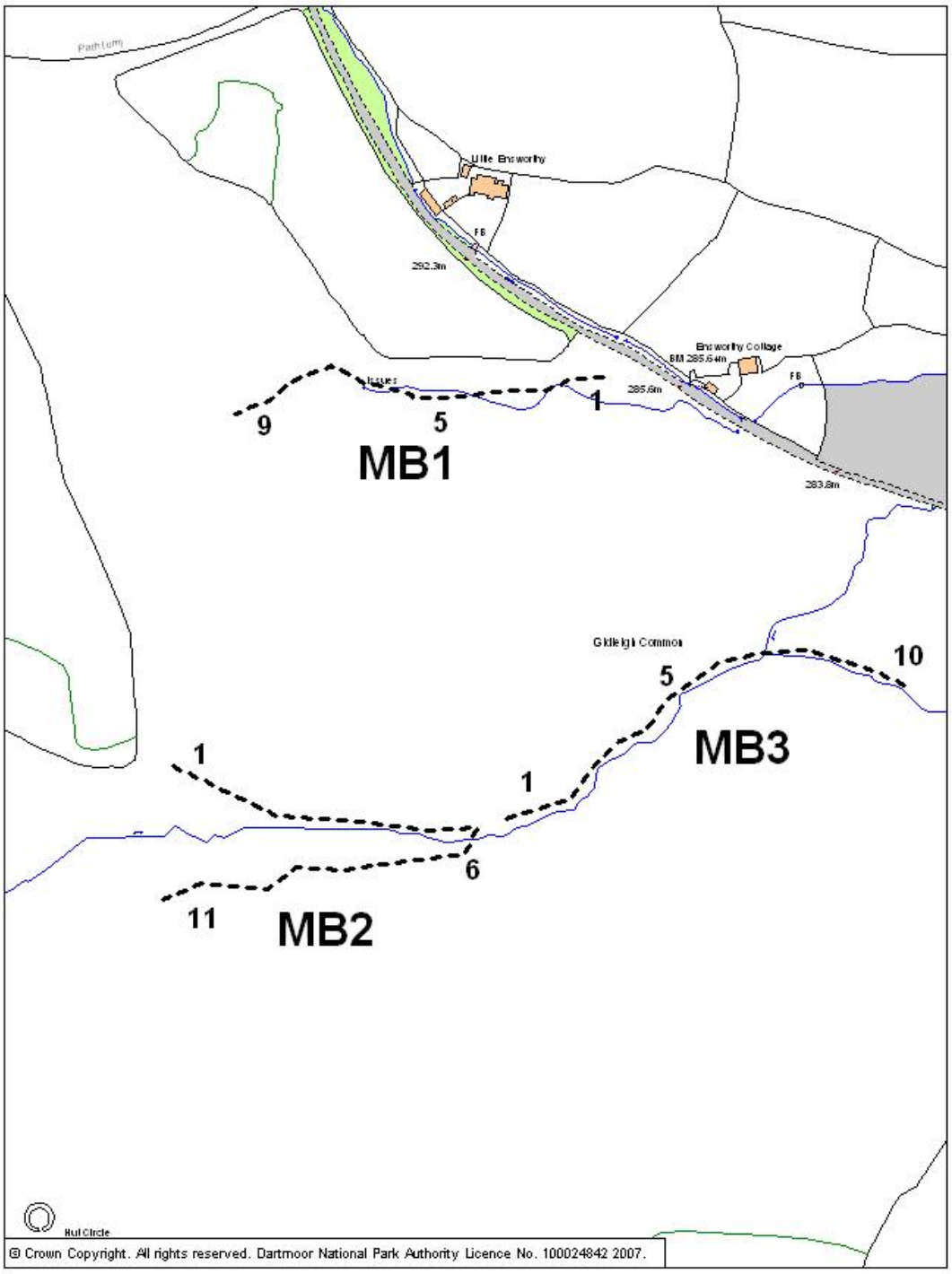

Spr
Spr
Little
Ensworthy
FB
FB
FB
Ensworthy
Cottage
Hut Circle
290
350

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Map 2 - Moortown Bottom Transects

Scale 1:2500

Compiled by N Baldock on 25 April 2007



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