

File ref:

County: Leicestershire **Site name:** Launde Big Wood

District: Harborough

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

Local Planning Authority: Harborough District Council

National Grid Reference: SK 787038 **Area:** 42.15 (ha) 104.15 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 141 **1: 10 000:** SK 70 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981 **Date of Last Revision:**

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

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

The site contains some of the best remaining examples of ash-maple and ash-elm woodland in Leicestershire and is representative of ancient semi-natural woodland developed on the heavy clay soils of eastern central England.

Biology:

Launde Big Wood has developed for the most part on heavy clay soils derived from the underlying Jurassic Upper Lias and Glacial Boulder Clays; smaller areas have developed on soils derived from glacial sands and gravels. The major part of the wood is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and, locally, by wych elm *Ulmus glabra*. The shrub layer is characterised by the abundance of field maple *Acer campestre* and hazel *Corylus avellana*, with sloe *Prunus spinosa*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Midland hawthorn *C. oxycanthoides* also occurring. Locally dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, the ground flora is rich in species typical of ancient clay woods and characterised by the abundance of bluebell *Endymion non-scriptus*, wood forget-me-not *Myosotis sylvatica*, yellow archangel *Galeobdolon luteum* and giant bellflower *Campanula latifolia*. In some areas in the north the stand-type changes and is replaced by more open woodland in which the main tree components are pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and silver birch *Betula pendula*. In these areas the ground vegetation is dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* with abundant honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*. Less common plants of this community include the hard fern *Blechnum spicant*.

Additional interest is provided by the presence of woodland rides, an old wood bank, a number of ponds and by a number of woodland streams.