

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: WOODSHUTS WOOD

DISTRICT: SOUTH HEREFORD

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, South Hereford District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 580376

Area: 8.98 (ha.) 22.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 149

1:10,000: SO 53 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site. Within the Wye Valley AONB.

Reasons for Notification:

The woodlands of the lower Wye Valley form one of the most important areas for woodland conservation in Britain, comparable with the Caledonian pinewoods, the oceanic oakwoods of Western Britain, the New Forest and the mixed coppices of East Anglia. Semi-natural woodland is abundant and virtually continuous along the gorge. The woods are a mixture of many types, some of which are very localised, eg the lime-sessile oak stands on limestone, beech stands on both acid and alkaline soils in which lime *Tilia* spp. elm *Ulmus* spp., oak *Quercus* spp. and other species share dominance. Most woods are a rich mixture of stand types which are believed to be similar in composition to the original natural woods of the valley. Many rare and local species are present, including some of the rarest native tree species, eg large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos*, whitebeams *Sorbus* spp. and trees close to the edge of their European range, eg hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Furthermore these woods sit in a matrix of unimproved grassland and other semi-natural habitats which, together with the woods, make the Wye Valley one of the most diverse, rich and attractive areas in southern Britain.

Woodshuts Wood is a fine example of ancient primary woodland developed on soils derived from Woolhope Limestone which forms the Woolhope Dome.

Most of its woodland is dominated by sessile oak *Quercus petraea* associated with birch *Betula pendula* over an understorey of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. In the north eastern part of the wood small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* is more dominant with birch and field maple *Acer campestre* as associates. The woodland also contains a rich variety of other tree and shrub species including ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. In the wetter parts of the wood, alder *Alnus glutinosa* aspen *Populus tremula* and guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* are present.

The ground flora is also diverse, reflecting the variation in soil conditions. Over 170 species of flowering plants have been recorded from the wood and although no particularly rare species occur, a number of species indicating the ancient origins of the woodland are present. These include yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and primrose *Primula vulgaris*. The last mentioned species along with bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* are abundant over most of the wood. Other less common species such as spurge laurel *Daphne laureola* also occur.