

File ref: SD 71/2

County: Greater Manchester/Lancashire

Site Name: Gale Clough and Shooterslee Wood

District: Bolton, Blackburn

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

Local Planning Authority: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, Blackburn Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SD 702141 **Area:** 8.57 (ha) 21.18 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 109 **1:10,000:** SD 71 SW, SD 61 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1979 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:** 1984

Other Information:

1. 5.73 ha. in Greater Manchester, 2.84 ha. in Lancashire.
2. Site modified at renotification by partial deletion.

Reasons for Notification:

Gale Clough and Shooterslee Wood is situated 5 km north of Bolton and immediately west of Dunscair. The site comprises part of a ravine, or clough, cut into glacial boulder clay which overlies the Millstone grit, by the erosion of Gale Brook. The majority of the site is semi-natural broad-leaved woodland and is the best example of a clough woodland on acid soils in Greater Manchester.

The drier upper slopes of the valley support birch-oak woodland in which sessile oak, downy birch, holly and rowan are the principal tree species with beech and sycamore scattered throughout. Hazel and hawthorn are frequently present in the understorey. Wavy hair grass dominates the ground flora with heather, bilberry, male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* and broad buckler fern *Dryopteris dilatata* also commonly present.

The wetter lower slopes and the valley bottom are characterised by alder woodland in which ash and alder are the main tree species with hazel, cherry, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, goat willow and grey willow abundant in the shrub layer. Reed canary-grass, water mint, wood horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum*, dog's mercury and false brome are the principal components of the ground flora, with opposite leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and marsh thistle locally abundant. In some places acidic flushes have developed in which soft rush is the dominant species growing out of a carpet of bog mosses *Sphagnum* sp. Marsh pennywort, marsh violet, marsh willowherb and remote sedge are also common components of this flush community.

A complex mosaic of wet neutral and drier neutral grassland with small areas of dry dwarf shrub heath/acidic grassland mosaic and acid flush covers the remainder of the site. The wet neutral grassland is dominated by tufted hair-grass with meadowsweet, soft rush, jointed rush, devil's-bit scabious, marsh pennywort and marsh violet common in the sward. Less common

species include skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, globeflower *Trollius europaeus*, common yellow-sedge *Carex demissa* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. In the drier neutral grassland common bent, Yorkshire fog and sheep's fescue become the main grasses. The herb flora is relatively rich with ribwort plantain, common knapweed, field scabious and selfheal frequent and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and perforate St John's-wort *Hypericum perforatum* occasional in the sward.

The dry dwarf shrub heath/acid grassland community is dominated by heather, bilberry, wavy hair-grass and mat-grass with tormentil, heath-grass and heath-bedstraw also commonly associated. Acidic flushes have developed along the seepage lines. These have a conspicuous carpet of bog moss and are dominated by soft-rush, marsh pennywort and marsh violet. Purple moor-grass, heath rush and bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* are locally abundant.