

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: BROTHERIDGE  
GREEN DISUSED RAILWAY

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS

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, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 814413

Area: 2.26 (ha.) 5.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150

1:10,000: SO 84 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Most of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site is a section of the disused railway line, which formerly connected Upton-on-Severn and Malvern.

The line was constructed in the mid 19th century, using oolitic limestone ballast from the nearby Cotswolds. Since its abandonment, just after the Second World War, colonisation of its trackway, cuttings and embankments has produced one of the richest linear wildlife habitats in the county. This includes both colonising and established grassland in the centre of the track, tall grass, shrub and woodland edge communities which have developed on its edges and tall adjoining hedgerows.

The grassland has a large range of calcicole species such as lesser knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, wild basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and cowslip *Primula veris*. A number of other more local species are also found including woolly thistle *Cirsium eriophorum*, grass vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia* and dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*. The shrub communities again reflect the calcareous nature of the site, with dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and privet *Ligustrum vulgare*. The dominant tree species in the hedgerows are ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and oak *Quercus robur*.

The wealth and diversity of the calcicole flora has in turn provided a rich habitat for invertebrates, birds and mammals. The line is noted particularly for its wealth of butterflies with over 29 species recorded. The large numbers of marbled white *Melanargia galathea* make it an important site for this species in Worcestershire. Other species include purple hairstreak *Quercusia quercus*, white-letter hairstreak *Strymonidia w-album* and grizzled skipper *Pyrgus malvae*. The bird life is equally interesting and is particularly important for warblers such as blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, whitethroat *S. communis*, chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and willow warbler *P. trochilus*. The habitat is also ideal for mammals, and the line supports a population of badgers *Meles meles*.