

COUNTY: LEICESTERSHIRE

SITE NAME: CHARNWOOD LODGE

DISTRICT: NORTH-WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

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

Local Planning Authority: NORTH-WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SK 467153

Area: 137.6 (ha.) 340 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 129

1:10,000: SK 41 NE, SK 41 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1956

Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This site is managed as a nature reserve by the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation. This is a GCR Caledonian Igneous site.

Reasons for Notification:

Charnwood Lodge contains the best and most extensive examples of moorland habitats in the East Midlands, formerly typical of the Charnwood Forest area. It is dominated by a series of rocky outcrops and ridges of considerable geological importance.

Biological Interest

The drier hillsides are largely covered by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* but there are good areas of heathland vegetation dominated by bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* around the main rock outcrops. Less common dry heath species include heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, moonwort *Bortrychium lunaria* and green-ribbed sedge *Carex binervis*.

The wet heath habitat is well represented at Charnwood Lodge. Large areas are dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, with heather and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* locally abundant. Associated species include creeping willow *Salix repens*, petty whin *Genista anglica*, bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, lesser skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and lemon-scented fern *Oreopteris limbosperma*, all of which are rare in Leicestershire.

The site includes several areas of enclosed acidic pasture with frequent heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and field wood-rush *Luzula campestris*. Wet flushes contain cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*, bristle club-rush *Isolepis setacea* and sedges *Carex* spp. Several ponds and the Colony Reservoir support a range of typical wetland plant species. The woodland to the north contains rocky outcrops which support the locally scarce climbing corydalis *Corydalis claviculata*.

The bryophyte flora is rich in species normally associated with upland areas, including *Sphagnum papillosum* for which Charnwood Lodge is the only Leicestershire locality. A number of regionally rare heathland lichens have been recorded including *Haematomma ventosum* and *Ochrolechia tartarea* which are not found elsewhere in the county.

Charnwood Lodge supports a good range of heathland invertebrates including several moths that are at the limits of their British ranges in Charnwood.

The combination of moorland, woodland and wetland habitats support a wide range of breeding bird species. Charnwood Lodge is one of the few places in the East Midlands where wheatear, whinchat and curlew have bred in recent years.

Geological Interest

The most important geological features of the site are the Caledonian Igneous outcrops known as the 'bomb' rocks. The 'bomb' rocks are an excellent and well exposed area of a pyroclastic breccia. The 'bombs' are large blocks, up to 0.5 metres diameter, of porphyritic dacite probably ejected from a volcanic source near Whitwick 1 km away. Although in part showing deformation of Charnian character, most of the several outcrops are underformed, and provide valuable information on the nature of the late Proterozoic calc-alkaline volcanism which produced a large part of the Charnian succession.

2 December 1985