

**COUNTY:** BERKSHIRE

**SITE NAME:** KING'S COPSE

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

**Local Planning Authorities:** Newbury District Council, Berkshire County Council

**National Grid Reference:** SU577706

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 174                      **1:10,000:** SU57 SE

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1985                      **Date of Last Revision:**

**Area:** 13.82 ha 34.16 ac

**Other information:** Within North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

An old coppiced woodland, predominantly on London Clay, but partly on Bagshot Beds and Reading Beds, situated on the south side of the valley of the River Pang. A small stream flows through the lower part of the site.

The wood is on sloping ground, ranging from dry acid soils to wet peaty humus. The variation of slope and soil conditions gives rise to a complex intermingling of seven woodland stand-types including neutral valley alderwood, wet ash/wych elm, wet ash/maple, acid hazel/oak and birch. Holly, aspen, wild cherry and crack willow are locally frequent, whilst beech, probably of planted origin, occurs on a knoll at the southern extremity.

Although some exotic species have been introduced locally, the natural ground flora is rich, ranging from communities with abundant wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, woodsage *Teucrium scorodonia*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta* on drier acid soil under oak, birch and hazel to flushed areas with sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, bugle *Ajuga reptans*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, figworts *Scrophularia nodosa* and *S. aquatica*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and sedges *Carex sylvatica*, *C. remota* and *C. strigosa*. Stands of stinging nettle *Urtica dioica* and hemlock water dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* occur under alder and crack willow on nutrient-enriched ground along the stream. Other locally abundant species include hairy wood rush *Luzula pilosa*, moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, primrose *Primula vulgaris* and violets *Viola riviniana* and *V. reichenbachiana*. Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum* also occurs.

The fauna of this wood may also prove interesting. As well as a good range of bird species, grass snakes *Natrix natrix* appear to be locally common and there is an active badger sett.