

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: GRAFTON WOOD

DISTRICT: WYCHAVON

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

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

National Grid Reference: SO 972560 Area: 53.98 (ha.) 133.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 95 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971 Date of Last Revision: 1975

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

Other Information:
Boundary alteration (reduction).

Reasons for Notification:

Grafton Wood originally formed part of the ancient royal forest of Feckenham, which during the Middle Ages covered much of this part of Worcestershire. Feckenham forest was disafforested between 1301 and 1629 but Grafton Wood, together with a few other tracts of the forest have survived to the present day. Records for woodland at Grafton exist as far back as 1270 and a map of 1700 shows the wood having identical boundaries with those of today.

The wood lies on heavy base rich clay soils derived from the Lower Lias clays. The principal tree species are pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and birch *Betula pubescens*. Field maple *Acer campestre* is also extremely common. The wood has in the past been managed mainly as oak standards with hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice. This management has been discontinued in recent years and the shrub layer now includes a variety of species including privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, aspen *Populus tremula*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*.

The ground flora is very diverse. In the drier parts species such as primrose *Primula vulgaris*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* occur. The wetter areas are characterised by species such as pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* and marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*.

The site also includes areas of unimproved neutral grassland and a pond, which contribute greatly to its overall biological value.

The site is noted for its lepidoptera. It is the only site in the county for the brown hairstreak butterfly *Thecla betulae*. This species is associated with the abundance of blackthorn – its larval food plant – which occurs on the woodland edges and in the areas of unimproved grassland.