

File ref:

**County:** Hampshire      **Site Name:** Hook Common and Bartley Heath SSSI

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Hart District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SU 725534

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 186      **1:10,000:** SU 75 SW

**Area:** 122.2 (ha)    301.96 (ac)

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

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 29 October 1991

**Date of Last Revision:** –

**Confirmed:** 7 May 1992

**Other Information:**

Part owned by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and managed as a nature reserve.

**Reasons for Notification:**

Hook Common and Bartley Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest, together with Butter Wood SSSI, are surviving fragments of an extensive series of common lands overlying London Clay, Plateau Gravels, Valley Gravel and Sand, on the southern margin of the Thames Basin. Although grazing ceased at the turn of the century, allowing succession to birch and oak woodland in places, the SSSI is of special interest for its extensive areas of open wet heath, of which few now survive in the Thames Basin.

The heathland is dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and heather *Calluna vulgaris*, with frequent dwarf gorse *Ulex minor*, glaucous and green-ribbed sedges *Carex flacca* and *C. binervis*. Of particular interest are the populations of fast declining heathland and meadow plants such as meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, petty whin *Genista anglica*, dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, pale heath violet *Viola lactea* and marsh gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, the latter occurring on Hook Common and Bartley Heath in one of two extant Hampshire locations outside the New Forest. This species is the food plant of the rare moth *Stenoptila graphodactyla* listed in the Red Data Book\* as a vulnerable species and which occurs within the site. Locally the heathlands merge into dry acid grasslands dominated by bristle bent *Agrostis curtisii*. They are rather species-poor containing heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia* and, rarely, heather. Where soils become poorly drained, marshy grassland occurs with species such as purple moor-grass, tussock-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, soft rush *Juncus effusus* and common rush *J. conglomeratus*. The water ermine moth *Spilosoma urticae*, a rare species typical of wetland sites, is present here. Bartley Heath supports a viable colony of marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*, though periodically it has been necessary to reinforce the population with introductions.

Much of the Hook Common/Bartley Heath complex comprises secondary oak-birch *Quercus robur/Betula pendula* woodland in various stages of succession from former open heathland. Locally areas of woodland on Hook Common suggest a longer continuity of woodland cover due to the presence of older oak trees, multi-stemmed coppice stools of birch and hazel *Corylus avellana* and a more varied ground flora. Of particular interest is a woodland type composed of hazel and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* containing oak which extends over much of Gaine's Wood to the south-west of Hook Common. Much of this was formerly managed as hazel and ash coppice-with-oak-standards and supports a comparatively rich ground flora containing wood sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, wood sedge *Carex sylvatica*, remote sedge *C. remota* and primrose *Primula vulgaris*. The dead wood present within the woodland supports a number of insects of restricted distribution including the large red-belted clearwing *Synanthedon culiciformis*, the pale pinion moth *Lithophane socia* and the hoverflies *Volucella inflata* and *Brachypalpoides lenta*. The purple emperor butterfly *Apatura iris* also breeds within the woodland areas.

The diversity of habitat of the SSSI is reflected in the richness of the invertebrate fauna. In addition to the aforementioned moth, two other Red Data Book species occur, namely *Idaea dilutaria* and *Microdon mutabilis*. Outstanding assemblages of Lepidoptera and Diptera occur, notable species including the yellow-ringed carpet moth *Entephria flavicinctata*, the white-barred clearwing *Synanthedon spheciformis*, *Melangyna artica* and *Sphaerophoria taeniata*. Rare beetles include *Phytodecta viminalis* and *Crysomela populi* whilst the Odonata group is represented by the ruddy sympetrum *Sympetrum sanguineum*.

\* The Invertebrate Red Data Book details all species of invertebrates occurring in 15 or less 10km squares in Britain.