

COUNTY: DERBYSHIRE

SITE NAME: MOSS VALLEY WOODS

DISTRICT: NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE

SITE REF: 15 W1W

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

Local Planning Authority: DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, North East Derbyshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SK 372801, SK 382800 Area: 17.69 (ha.) 43.69 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 119, 111 1:10,000: SK 38 SE, SK 37 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1993

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The Moss Valley lies to the east of the Pennines, just south of Sheffield and has an underlying geology of shales and sandstones from the lower Coal Measures. The valley is low-lying and rural with an altitude ranging from 45 m to 200 m. The River Moss and its tributaries drain the valley, the headwaters rising on the outskirts of Sheffield and flowing east to join the River Rother just beyond the valley. Much of the valley has remained wooded over the years; a high proportion of these woods being classified as ancient.

Two of these woodlands, Whinacre Wood and Brownstorth Wood are ancient and semi-natural with largely undisturbed ground floras and relatively unmodified canopies.

Whinacre Wood is a dry oak woodland, characterised not only by the large proportion of oak in the canopy layer, but also by a ground flora of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis* with patches of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. Much of the oak would appear to be the natural hybrid between English oak *Quercus robur* and sessile oak *Q. petraea*; which is *Q. x rosacea*. Whinacre Wood is a fine example of an oak woodland where the canopy has had very little modification over the years and the ground flora has suffered very little from disturbance.

Brownstorth Wood contains several different woodland plant communities. Oak woodland (the oak again being largely *Q. x rosacea*), with bluebell, creeping soft-grass and bramble, forms a large proportion of the site, with the wetter areas containing tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and stands of ferns such as male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* and lady fern *Athyrium filix-femina*. There is a good mix of canopy species in this wood, with significant numbers of ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, elm *Ulmus sp.* rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and birch *Betula pendula* and *B. pubescens* in addition to the oak.

The understorey is mainly holly *Ilex aquifolium* with some hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and there is a large block of coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana*; an important habitat for breeding birds.

The ground flora is species-rich, many of the plants being ancient woodland indicators such as yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon* which is abundant,

and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum* which cover extensive areas. Bluebell, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* are also abundant, while ramsons *Allium ursinum* carpets the ground in the wetter parts. Wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and wood melick *Melica uniflora* are found occasionally. Alder *Alnus glutinosa* is the dominant tree growing alongside the streams and is found together with stands of ramsons, tufted hairgrass, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, remote sedge *Carex remota* and townhall clock *Adoxa moschatellina*.

The dead and dying timber is invaluable for many species of beetle and two hoverfly species which are ancient woodland indicators: *Sphegina elegans* and *Criorhina berberina* have been recorded from Whinacre Wood. The white-letter hairstreak butterfly *Strymonidia w-album* breeds on the elms in Brownstorth Wood. This species is at the northern edge of its range here and is rare and declining in the region.