

**Site name:** Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI

**Unitary Authority:** Medway

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under section 28C of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as inserted by Schedule 9 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

**Local Planning Authority:** Medway Council

**National grid reference:** TQ747734

**Area:** 351.03 ha

**Ordnance Survey sheets: 1:50,000:** 178

**1:10,000:** TQ 77 SE, SW

**Notification date:** 13 March 2013

### Reasons for notification:

Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI comprises a mosaic of habitats, including ancient and other long-established semi-natural woodland, scrub, and neutral grassland. It is a nationally important site specifically by reason of the following biological features of special interest that occur within and are supported by the wider habitat mosaic: ancient and long-established semi-natural woodlands, predominantly of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) type W10 pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* – bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* – bramble *Rubus fruticosus* woodland; unimproved neutral grassland of the nationally scarce NVC type MG5 crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* – common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* grassland; and breeding nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos*.

### General description:

Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI lies on the Hoo Peninsula in north Kent, north-east of Rochester. The site comprises a mosaic of habitats, including long-established semi-natural woodland (areas of which are recorded as ancient semi-natural woodland), dense scrub and neutral grassland. The site is also of importance for its breeding nightingales.

### Woodland

The extensive woodland represents one of the best examples of coppice-with-standards woodland on the London Clay. The woodland is largely comprised of pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* standards with ash *Fraxinus excelsior* coppice of varying age structure. Other trees include field maple *Acer campestre*, hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and wild cherry *Prunus avium*. The non-native sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* is infrequent across the site. The shrub layer is varied with hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* generally predominant but with other species such as silver birch *Betula pendula*, aspen *Populus tremula*, willow *Salix* spp., wayfaring-tree *Viburnum lantana* and the scarce wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis* also present.

The field layer of the woodland is dominated by bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, with bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and other climbers, particularly dog-rose *Rosa canina* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*. Several scarce plants are present including the early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* and stinking iris *Iris foetidissima*.

### Neutral grassland

Rough Shaw is an area of dense and scattered scrub of hawthorn, gorse *Ulex europaeus* and brambles on a north facing slope, with tall-herb neutral grassland along its upper margin. The tall-herb neutral grassland includes stands of unimproved neutral grassland. Typical herbaceous species present and that are typical of this grassland type include lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria* and red clover *Trifolium pratense*.

Three fields in the north of the Lodge Hill Training Area include more extensive areas of unimproved neutral grassland of a similar nature to the stands at Rough Shaw. These areas represent semi-natural grassland on base-rich London Clay. A notable occurrence in all three fields is dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, a species associated with unimproved meadows, pastures and heaths.

### Breeding birds

The SSSI supports a nationally important number of nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* during the breeding season. Nightingales use scrub and coppice woodland throughout the SSSI. The extensive areas of woodland and scrub within the site will help to ensure that there is always sufficient area of habitat at a suitable stage of maturity to support breeding nightingales in nationally important numbers.

In addition to the 'reasons for notification' described above, the site also supports a range of woodland and scrub breeding birds, including sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, stock dove *Columba oenas*, turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*, cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, tawny owl *Strix aluco*, green woodpecker *Picus viridis*, great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, lesser whitethroat *S. curruca*, linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*. The site supports small numbers of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* and all four widespread British species of reptile: adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix natrix*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*. Recent records of invertebrates include the stag beetle *Lucanus cervus* and the nationally scarce moths *Elegia similella*, *Sitochroa palealis* and *Dichomeris alacella*.