

EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: Downton Gorge
Unitary Authority/County: Herefordshire
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: SO443743
SAC EU code: UK0012735
Area (ha): 69.30
Component SSSI: Downton Gorge SSSI

Site description:

Downton Gorge lies on a stretch of the River Teme and was formed by the river cutting through a ridge of limestone, siltstone and sandstone of late Silurian age. It contains mixed woodlands in a narrow ravine with a distinctive microclimate and a variety of slopes and aspects. Both small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and large-leaved lime *T. platyphyllos* occur, together with ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and elm *Ulmus* spp. The ground flora includes wood fescue *Festuca altissima* and violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*. The gorge cliffs are rich in ferns, reflecting the humidity of the site, with a wide range of species recorded.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. (Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes)*

Annex I priority habitats are denoted by an asterisk (*).

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0012735

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs