

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

MONMOUTHSHIRE

FIDDLERS ELBOW

Date of Notification: 1971, 1983, 1991

National Grid Reference: SO 527140

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 162
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 51

Site Area: 44.3 ha

Description:

The woodlands of the lower Wye Valley form one of the most important areas for woodland nature conservation in Britain, comparable with the Caledonian pinewoods, the oceanic oakwoods of western Britain, the New Forest and the mixed coppices of East Anglia. Unlike most other regions, semi-natural woodland is abundant and virtually continuous along the gorge. The woods are a mixture of many types, some of which are very localised, eg the lime-sessile oak stands on limestone; beech stands on both acid and alkaline soils in which lime, elm, oak and other species share dominance. Most woods are a rich mixture of stand types, which are believed to be similar in composition to the original natural woods of the valley. Many rare and local species are present, including some of the rarest native tree species (e.g. large-leaved lime, whitebeams), and trees close to the edge of their European range, eg hornbeam, beech. Furthermore, these woods sit in a matrix of unimproved grassland and other semi-natural habitats which, together with the woods, make the Wye Valley one of the most diverse, rich and attractive areas of southern Britain.

Fiddlers Elbow is comprised of areas of coppice-with-standards woodland on the east bank of the River Wye, underlain by sandstones (Devonian). The large areas of oak *Quercus robur* and *Q petraea* standards over small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* coppice are an example of a rare woodland type that is of restricted distribution in the county. There are also areas of beech *Fagus sylvatica* and hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice. Additional habitats include a stream and associated flushes with a rich flora.

Remarks:

Within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

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