

Little Doward and Quarry Wood, Herefordshire

Acquisition of 211 acres of woodland that form a major component of the Upper Wye Gorge in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Part of the nationally important complex of Wye Valley woodlands, Little Doward is a prominent local landscape feature of immense character. The site's diverse geology and historical management, have led to a wide range of woodland and habitat types, some possibly unique to Little Doward. A significant area of the site is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (and is included in the candidate Special Area of Conservation). The site's rich history is reinforced by the presence of a large Bronze Age Hill Fort (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) crowning the wood and providing spectacular views across the Wye Valley. Additionally, there are a number of other features of archaeological interest of national, regional and local significance. The rich geological interest of the site is reflected in the presence of four Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS). The flanks of the hill support areas of ancient woodland, much of which retains its semi-natural character. Historical management as pasture woodland, first as common land and later partly as a deer park, resulted in the development of an open woodland structure on the southern slopes (only recently infilled with abundant regeneration) and the retention of many ancient trees which represent a continuity of habitat extending back through centuries. Parts of the woodland have been replanted with conifer blocks and non-native broadleaves and there are also areas of more recent plantings on previously open land, both on the hill top and at the base of the slopes. Areas of calcareous grassland are associated with some of the limestone outcrops on the southern slopes and an area of limestone pavement within the hill fort annex. The site supports a number of notable species of flora and fauna including a Nationally Rare whitebeam. Both Greater and Lesser horseshoe bats are known to roost in the limestone caves present at the site.

Nation/region

West Midlands

Grant awarded

£45,000

Award date

28/02/1991