

COUNTY: EAST SUSSEX

SITE NAME: PENN'S ROCKS

DISTRICT: WEALDEN

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

Local Planning Authority: WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 520348      Area: 10.1 (ha.) 25 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 188      1:10,000: TQ 53 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954      Date of Last Revision: 1978

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site boundary includes two extensions

Reasons for Notification:

At Penn's Rocks outcrops of the Ardingly Sandstone Formation of the Hastings Beds are exposed in a steep sided wooded valley. The resulting 'sandrock' is a nationally rare habitat which supports a rich community of ferns and bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) including many 'Atlantic' species which are uncommon in south-east England.

The site comprises four blocks of woodland each with sandstone outcrops. In the southern areas pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and beech *Fagus sylvatica* are dominant, with varying amounts of silver birch *Betula pendula*, yew *Taxus baccata* and holly *Ilex aquifolium* over a ground flora of bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. In the north Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* and silver birch dominate in a heathy woodland over a ground layer including heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and bracken. The site also contains small areas of coppiced sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* and improved grassland.

The warm, moist microclimate provided by this woodland cover has allowed species to remain which are now restricted to Northern and Western Britain and a few localities in the Weald. This sandrock community contains many uncommon bryophytes including *Orthodontium gracile*, *Bazzania trilobata*, *Saccogyna viticulosa* and *Harpanthus scutatus*.