



Avondale Site of Special Scientific Interest

In March 1994, 1373 SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) were established, of which Avondale is one of fourteen to be classed as priority habitats. The Avondale SSSI being one of the foremost in the country, covers the area of the Avon and Cander Water gorge and is considered an outstanding example of semi-natural deciduous gorge woodland.

This area contains many rare and interesting flora including; wood fescue (*festuca altissima*), broadleaved helleborine (*epipactis helleborine*), hairy St. John's wort (*hypericum hisutum*), alternate leaved golden saxifrage (*chrysosplenium alternifolium*), two parasitic plants, bird's nest orchid (*neottia nidus-avis*) and toothwort (*lathraea squamaria*), fragrant orchid (*gymnadenia conopsea*), greater butterfly orchid (*platanthera chlorantha*), and yellow rattle (*rhinanthus minor*).

In 1995, the Scottish Office Department of Environment produced a report on how to apply the Habitats Directive, which protects under European Law "Special Areas of Conservation" (SAC). European law adopted the Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in 1992. The list of proposed designated areas were submitted in 1995, to which areas will hopefully be designated in the year 2000.

The Avondale SSSI is covered by the Clyde Valley Woods SAC. "These sites are recognised as good examples of habitats regarded as rare, endangered or vulnerable on a European scale. Clyde Valley Woods are an example of a mixed woodland on alkaline soils associated with rocky slopes and is the only example in Scotland of this type of habitat recognised by this new designation. This type of habitat has been given the status of "priority" habitat and there are only 14 priority habitat types in Scotland". Although not yet designated, these sites are to be treated as such until each site is officially listed.

The Nature Conservancy Council state the SAC from a conservation standpoint, constitutes probably the most important single woodland complex therein, and its biological quality is exceptional. This is greatly due to the areas limited management during the past century. The Avon and Cander gorge is considered an irreplaceable area of primary woodland of particular scientific interest as it contains a number of plants and animals with limited powers of colonisation.

These sites are constantly under threat from the expansion of housing and opencast mining. It is my view that these exceptional sites of natural beauty should be protected and maintained for their natural heritage values and preserved for the educational and recreational awareness of our environment. The completion of the Avon walkway may facilitate people the opportunity to access such sites of interest more readily.

If you love the freedom of the countryside and feel inclined to investigate our right of ways, then experience the many wonders of our local habitat, and enjoy as I have, exploring the parish and encourage in others, a sense of curiosity and awareness of our environment.

For further information contact:

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