

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: Yewbarrow Woods
Unitary Authority/County: Cumbria
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: SD347872
SAC EU code: UK0030306
Area (ha): 112.89
Component SSSI: Yewbarrow Woods SSSI

Site description:

Yewbarrow Woods are situated on the flanks of Yewbarrow, a ridge of ground forming the watershed between the Rusland Valley and the River Leven. Extensive stands of sessile oak *Quercus petraea* and downy birch *Betula pubescens* are interspersed with stretches of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* that are associated with the numerous stream valleys that cut through the woodland. Yewbarrow Woods are, as their name suggests, particularly notable for their extensive stands of yew *Taxus baccata*. On the upper edges of the woodlands there is a transition to juniper *Juniperus communis* scrub and then heath.

The woodland is chiefly composed of sessile oak and downy birch. Yew is scattered throughout, and with holly *Ilex aquifolium* and hazel *Corylus avellana* it forms a partial understorey to the main woodland stands. However, yew is particularly frequent on crags on the upper slopes of the wood and in Yewbarrow Dale it is the main canopy tree. Where light conditions allow, the field layer is dominated by grasses such as wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, as well as bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*.

On the upper western slopes the woodland gradually thins out leaving yew, oak, birch, hazel, juniper and holly, dwarfed by their exposure to wind, scattered amongst grass-heath. In the more sheltered conditions of the south-eastern facing valley side there is a transition on a larger scale, with woodland gradually merging into a large and dense stand of juniper.

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:

- *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands. (Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands)
- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. (Western acidic oak woodland)
- *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles. (Yew-dominated woodland)*

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: UK0030306
Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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