

Blaenau Gwent Wildlife Site/SINC Notification Form

SITE SUMMARY

SITE NAME:

GRID REF:

SURVEYOR(S)

SIZE (approx.):

DATE OF SURVEY:

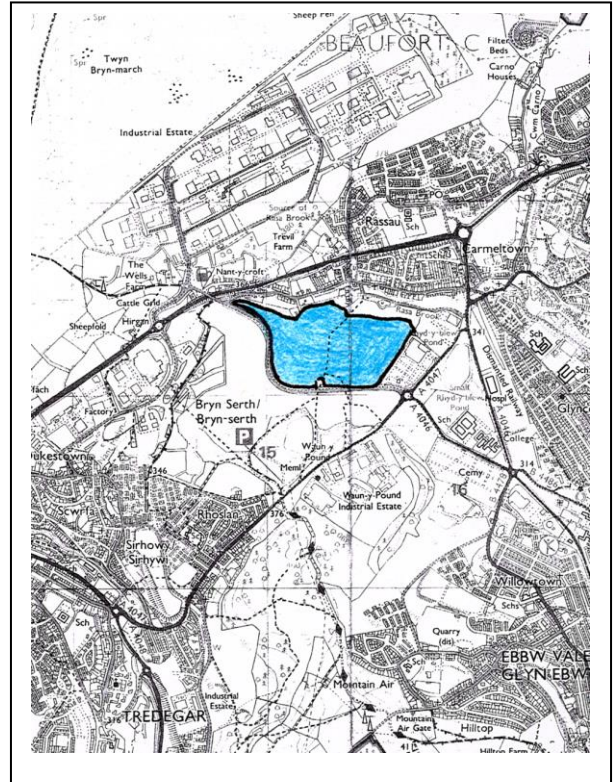
LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA:

WARD:

MAIN HABITAT TYPES PRESENT:

Habitat types	NVC type	Area (ha)
Open water/ditches & pools Post industrial grassland (<i>mosaic of dry and damp semi improved poor grassland & rushes</i>)	-	
Sparse vegetation/bare ground	-	
Planted trees/scrub	-	
Semi improved acid grassland	-	
Hedgerow	-	

SKETCH MAP OF SITES LOCATION:



FULL DESCRIPTION OF SITE (including topography, adjacent land use, access and boundaries etc.):

c.26 ha lying to the south of the Heads of the Valleys Road and north west of Ebbw Vale. The site is bounded by a large supermarket development to the east, Bryn-Serth Road to the south and west and housing (Rassau) and plantation to the north. A public footpath runs along this eastern edge and informal paths exist around the edge of the site, with evidence of use by horse riders. The site is of historical important for its breeding lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), which continue to breed on site.

The site is enclosed mainly by post and wire fencing, although at the north a small section of hawthorn hedgerow divides the site from the residential area of Rassau, and at the far north west tip a short section of 'feature' drystone wall is present. The west of the site is separated from the road by a fenced strip of planted trees/shrubs. The site was formerly an open cast coal mine with 4 large terraces. These were levelled in 1999/2000 to create one large plateau and seeded with grass seed. The whole site has been levelled, although a step exists down to the eastern and lowest lying part of the site. A further bank drops down to the neighbouring retail development. An embankment surrounds the site on the west and northern sides. A footpath runs along its top.

Drainage channels exist throughout the site. These vary in build form, flow and vegetation. At the east a large, deep channel consists of large stone blocks and cement and is poorly vegetated. Ditches are generally poorly vegetated, however some support rushes together with *Cardamine pratensis* (cuckoo flower), *Epilobium spp.* (willowherb sp.), *Ranunculus flammula* (lesser spearwort), *Veronica beccabunga* (brooklime) and mosses.

The central main plateau constitutes 65% of the site consisting dry and damp grassland and rushes. A raised embankment encloses the plateau at its west and north. This comprises dry grassland with planted trees & shrubs. The lower, eastern part of the site comprises a mosaic of damp and dry grassland, rushes, significant areas of planted trees and a number of shallow pools and wet areas. At the north of the site, stretching westwards past the foot of the embankment and alongside the site's boundary with Rassau is tall tussocky SI poor grassland

Please state the section(s) of the Wildlife Site Guidelines that this site qualifies under:

Section S2) Birds:

Rhyd y blew supports an artificial landscape due to past regrading of the site, yet natural regeneration has established a mosaic of habitats. Overall the site has limited botanical interest, however historically provides important habitat for breeding lapwing, which continue to nest on site, though in reduced numbers. Prior to levelling of the site in 1996 Rhyd y blew supported 55 pairs. 2 pairs used the site in 2008; however none successfully reared chicks due to likely predation (RSPB data).

The site qualifies as a SINC under *Section S2) Birds*, on the basis of its breeding lapwing population. Lapwing is a Section 42 species and a 'list A' species' within the SINC criteria (Table 9 breeding birds of conservation significance list) indicating those species that are of such significance to allow the designation of a SINC.

A breeding bird survey was not part of this LDP baseline survey; however personal reports and records (RSPB/GOS members) advocate the site is of importance for a variety of other species of conservation importance within S2) Birds, including redshank, reed bunting, common snipe, skylark, meadow pipit, jack snipe and stonechat. Records also exist for merlin and short eared owl.

Please see table 1 below for details of these and consideration against the SINC criteria.

To further strengthen justification of the site as a SINC, under *Section S2) Birds*, further survey to assess breeding bird interest/full collation of existing records within the last 5 years is recommended.

In addition the ponds in the lower eastern part of the site though variable in condition, have the potential to attract a variety of invertebrate and amphibian species. They warrant further specialist survey and assessment against SINC criteria.

Section S6) Invertebrates – Butterflies

Dingy Skipper (List B, contributory species) – past records

Qualifying Habitat types	Number of indicator species present
n/a	

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Table 1: Rhyd y blew & SINC qualification under Section 2) Birds

List A – qualifying species

List B – contributory species

Bird Species	SINC criteria/status	Details
Personal reports/records:		
Lapwing	List A species on breeding birds. Section 42	Historical value for breeding lapwing. Prior to levelling of the site in 1996 Rhyd y blew supported 55 pairs. 2 pairs used the site in 2008; however none successfully reared chicks due to likely predation (RSPB data).
Common snipe	List A species on breeding birds & list B on overwintering.	Personal reports (RSPB/GOS member) Luke Phillips (GOS): Probable breeding on the site during summer of 2008, up to three male birds were heard 'drumming' during June and July. Also and organised flush was done on the 29/11/2009 where 15 individuals were recorded on the site.
Short eared owl	List A species on breeding birds & overwintering.	Personal reports (RSPB/GOS member) Luke Phillips (GOS): Observed on the site on 09/11/2009, this was the first record for a number of years when birds used the adjacent Bryn Serth.
Skylark	List B on breeding birds & overwintering. Section 42	Personal reports (RSPB/GOS member)
Merlin	List A species on breeding birds & list B on	Luke Phillips (GOS): A single bird was seen on the site in the winter of early 2007, no records since

	overwintering. WCA Sch1	(Recorder – Gary Howells)
Stonechat	List B on breeding birds & overwintering.	Personal reports (RSPB/GOS member) Luke Phillips (GOS): Breeding has only been probable but no confirmation. 2 were present on the site on the 29/11/2009 and were present afterwards so birds were definitely wintering on site.
Reed bunting	List B on breeding birds & overwintering. Section 42	Luke Phillips (GOS): Probable breeding during 2008 when 2 males were present singing
Redshank	-	Personal reports (RSPB/GOS member)
Jack snipe	-	Personal reports (RSPB/GOS member) Luke Phillips (GOS): 2006 record
Meadow pipit	-	Personal reports (RSPB/GOS member)
Observed during LDP site visit:		
Skylark, song thrush, pied wagtail		Observed during LDP site visit (R Price, Sept 08)