

Blaenau Gwent Wildlife Site/SINC Notification Form

- OVERVIEW SHEET

SITE NAME: **Tirpentwys Cut**

GRID REF: **S O 2 3 3 0 1 5**

SURVEYOR(S): **Rebecca Price**

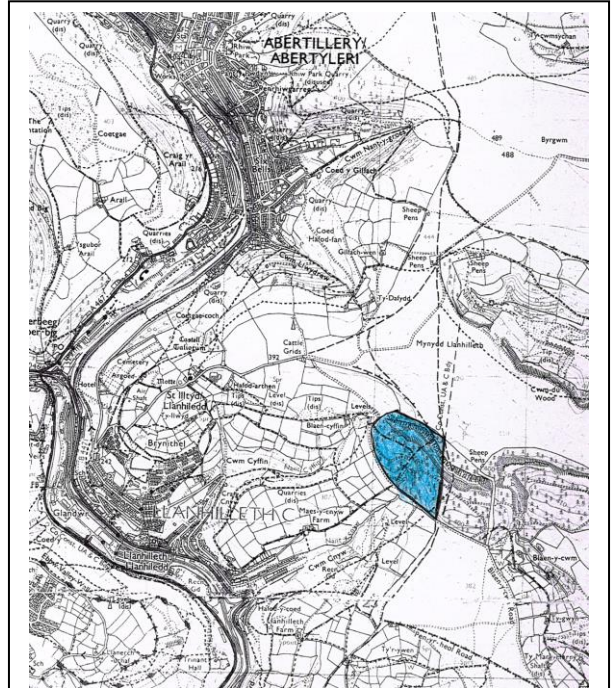
SIZE (approx.): **c. 21ha**

Chris Hatch

DATE OF SURVEY: **LDP baseline survey: 7th October 2008 (R Price)**

Pond Surveys: 24th July to 11th November 2008 (C Hatch)

SKETCH MAP OF SITES LOCATION:



LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA:

Blaenau Gwent

WARD: **Llanhilleth**

QUALIFYING SINC FEATURES:

Tirpentwys Cut qualifies as a SINC under the following sections of the *Criteria for Selection of SINC's in the Mid Valleys Area*:

Primary reasons for designation:

S2) Birds (*variety of List A and B breeding and over wintering species including List A; peregrine falcon*)

Supporting reasons for designation:

S1) Mammals (*more information needed*)

S3) Reptiles (*adder*)

S4) Amphibians (*common frog & common toad; supporting reasons for designation*)

S6) Invertebrates (*including List A; keeled skimmer*)

H1) Woodlands (*coniferous woodland supports variety of birds which qualify under S2) Birds*)

H12) Bogs & flushes

H16) Standing open water

H18) Mineral spoil tips & other post industrial land

H20) Mosaic habitats & common land

H21) Rock exposure

Surveys of the qualifying habitats were undertaken by different field surveyors, under separate contracts to BGCBC focusing on different elements of the site.

The notification of this site as a SINC comprises two SINC Notification Forms, which should be read in conjunction with this Overview Sheet.

Blaenau Gwent Wildlife Site/SINC Notification Form (pt 1 of 2)

SITE SUMMARY

SITE NAME:

GRID REF:

SURVEYOR(S)

SIZE (approx.):

DATE OF SURVEY:

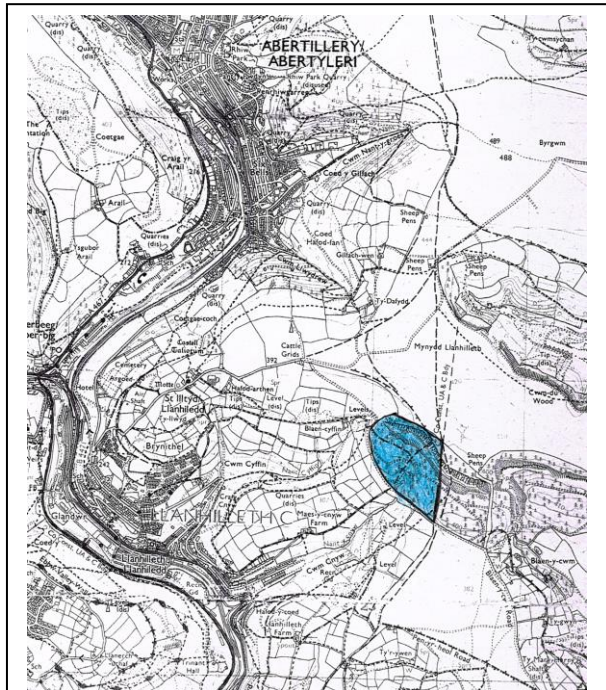
LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA:

WARD:

MAIN HABITAT TYPES PRESENT:

Habitat types	NVC type	Area (ha)
Inland cliff/quarry face	-	
Bare ground	-	
Spoil, Pioneer acid grassland	-	
Pools/standing open water/ spring	-	
Planted coniferous woodland	-	
Marshy grassland/flush	-	
Scattered trees/scrub	-	

SKETCH MAP OF SITES LOCATION:



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

An isolated site, lying 2 km away from the nearest main settlement of Llanhilleth. The site is dominated by coniferous plantation woodland and includes a disused opencast site with steep quarry faces, steep spoil slopes and pools. Other habitats include flat lying bare ground and tracks. The site extends eastwards across the unitary boundary authority into Torfaen.

The site is partially fenced, with old stock fencing in evidence along the southern boundary with the road. Two tracks run east-west through the wooded part of the site. The roadside entrances to these have been covered with brash/fallen trees probably with the intention to limit fly tipping which is an obvious problem.

Plantation woodland is the most extensive vegetation type across the site. Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*.) is closely planted with little ground vegetation beneath, with the exception of bryophyte cover which is high in many places.

A large deep pool sites fills the former quarry. The steep south facing quarry face at the north of the site supports lodgepole pine, goat willow (*Salix caprea*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and gorse within its ledges and cracks. Some ledges appear to support an acid grassland/heath community, although this was not examined closely. The ledges and cracks and small cliff face seepages may potentially support interesting plants and ferns (no access possible for closer survey).

A steep spoil slope on the southern side of the floor of the cut supports a pioneer acid grassland community, with areas of bare loose spoil, large stones. Mosses are a fairly consistent feature as well as localised lichens. A single orange waxcap was recorded here.

Through the floor of the cut a track links the site entrance with a large, deep pool. Vegetation cover and height is patchy. In the vicinity of the track poorly draining areas support shallow patches of standing water and marshy vegetation; aquatic species include pondweed, water-starwort and water-crowfoot species.

An underground spring feeds two linked pools lying within a steep sided hollow at the sites' southern perimeter. Marshy/flush vegetation borders and extends out from these pools with *Juncus effusus* (soft rush) and *Glyceria fluitans* (floating sweet grass) frequent. *Sphagnum sp.* is also locally extensive, which together with other bryophytes (inc *Polytrichum sp.*) creates damp cushions of moss at the edges of the northern pool.

Bryophytes were frequently encountered across the site and gill fungi were locally frequent alongside the woodland paths.

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

Section S2) Birds

Tirpentwys Cut qualifies as SINC quality due to the presence of a number of important breeding birds. A breeding bird survey was not part of this baseline screening survey for this candidate LDP site, however personal reports & records reports (*GOS members*) advocate the site qualifies as a SINC under *Section S2) Birds*, particularly on the basis of its peregrine falcon, long eared owl, hobby and common snipe.

Peregrine falcon, hobby and common snipe are 'list A' species' within the criteria (Table 9 breeding birds of conservation significance list) indicating species that are of such significance to allow the designation of a SINC. The coniferous woodland is also important for long eared owls; an 'A list' species on both the breeding birds and wintering and passage birds lists.

The site is also important for a variety of other birds considered of conservation importance within S2) Birds, including curlew, lapwing, merlin, crossbill, kestrel, bullfinch, reed bunting, linnet, song thrush and woodcock.

Please see table 1 below for a list of these and consideration against 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 5years is recommended.

Section H1) Woodlands

As detailed in the criteria the coniferous woodland supports important bird species which individually qualify under Section S2) Birds.

Section H12) Bog Habitats & Flushes

Small area of relatively unmodified flush habitat adjacent to spring in south of site.

The site supports an important mosaic of habitats including bare ground, open water, flush vegetation, inland cliff, spoil, grassland and plantation that together are potentially valuable to invertebrate, amphibians and reptile communities (possibly including adder, slow worm) and this should be further examined. The sunny south facing cliff habitat presents nesting for peregrine falcons and the ledges here may also be valuable for plant communities. The ponds are likely of SINC quality and warrant further specialist survey.

With additional survey and establishment of the presence of dependent species of interest, the site may also qualify under: **Sections H16) Standing Open Water, H21) Rock Exposures, H20) Mosaic Habitats & Common Land and H18) Mineral Spoil Tips & Other Post Industrial Land.**

Bryophytes are also a consistent part of the site and further survey should be sought to determine local importance, particularly in relation to observed communities on the spoil banks and cliff face.

Blaenau Gwent Wildlife Site/ SINC Notification Form (pt 2 of 2)

SITE SUMMARY

SITE NAME: Ponds in Tirpentwys Cut, St Illtyd's, Mynydd Llanhilleth, near Brynithel
SURVEYOR: Chris Hatch
DATES OF SURVEYS: 24.7.2008 to 11.11.2008

GRID REF: SO 23348 01497

SIZE: Pond 1 100 m²
Pond 2 175 m²
Pond 3 6,000 m²

MAIN HABITATS PRESENT:

Habitat Types	Phase 1	NVC
Oligotrophic standing water	GO	A 16a A24b
Coniferous plantation	A2.2	
Wet flushes	E2.1	M6
Inland cliffs and scree	I1.1.1, I1.2.1	
Colliery spoil (revegetated)	I 2.2	
Other post-industrial land		

SITE DESCRIPTION:

Two small ponds and one large pond situated in an extensive canyon created by former opencast operations. The two small ponds and approximately two thirds of the large pond are situated within Blaenau-Gwent, whilst the remaining third of the large pond is within Torfaen. The canyon is surrounded by coniferous plantation, consisting mainly of Lodgepole Pine. Within the canyon itself are cliffs and wet flushes.

Current management

None apparent, but area attracts some anti-social behaviour

Threats to site

Plans to remove sandstone from the canyon. This will totally destroy the habitat within the canyon and part of the surrounding woodland.

Invasive species

None

LBAP Priority Habitats and Species	NERC Act Section 42 Habitats and Species
Habitats:	Habitats:
Ponds and temporary water habitats	Upland flushes
Quarries	Streams
Species:	Ponds
Skylark	Inland rock outcrop and scree habitats
Green Woodpecker	Species:
Toad	Polecat
Common Frog	Bat species (further work required)
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	Skylark
	Tree Pipit
	Lesser Redpoll
	Common Linnet
	Common Cuckoo
	Reed Bunting
	Kestrel
	Northern Lapwing
	Common Toad

	Adder
	Grayling

QUALIFICATION UNDER SINC CRITERIA:

Habitats:

H1 Coniferous plantation which supports important species

See species list

H12 Bog habitats and flushes

Wet flushes within canyon

H16 Standing open water

Qualify as examples of ponds which have largely unmodified semi-natural beds and banks, good water quality and which support good aquatic, emergent or bank-side plant communities.

H18 Mineral spoil tips and other post-industrial land.

Species-rich post-industrial land

H20 Mosaic Habitats

Mosaic of at least 3 distinct habitat types.

H21 Rock exposures

Inland cliffs and screes, supporting species of interest

Species:

S1 Mammals

Bats present, but more information needed

S2 Birds

Breeding:

List A:	List B
Peregrine Falcon (<i>Breeds every few years, but present pre-breeding each year</i>)	Reed bunting
Goshawk (<i>Breeds in adjacent coniferous woodland</i>)	Common crossbill
	Kestrel
Hobby (<i>has bred in adjacent coniferous woodland</i>)	Linnet
Merlin (<i>past breeder in adjacent coniferous woodland</i>)	Tree pipit
Long-eared Owl (<i>regular breeder in adjacent coniferous woodland</i>)	Raven
	Redpoll
	Redstart
	Skylark
	Stonechat
	Cuckoo
	Wheatear
	Green woodpecker

Wintering and passage birds:

List A:	List B:
Hen Harrier	Reed bunting
Long-eared Owl	Peregrine falcon
	Kestrel
	Linnet
	Raven
	Stonechat
	Green woodpecker

S3 Reptiles

Adder

S4 Amphibians

Supporting species: Common Frog, Common Toad.

S6) Invertebrates

Butterflies:

List B: Grayling

Dragonflies and Damselflies:

List A: Keeled Skimmer

List B: Emerald Damselfly, Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Black Darter

Other invertebrates which may contribute to designation found whilst net sampling include examples of: Tricladia, Gastropoda, Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, Odonata and Coleoptera, Trichoptera, Diptera and Oligochaeta.

Additional Information

Other species recorded include:-

- Common Blue Damselfly, Large Red Damselfly, Emperor Dragonfly, Common Hawker, Common Darter.
- Significant Bryophyte communities are present where water is percolating through the sandstone cliffs.
- Sightings of Red Kite are regularly reported from the area.
- Rodent species include Short-tailed Vole and Wood Mouse (personal observation from dissection of Long-eared Owl pellets).
- Polecats are present in area (personal sightings and anecdotal information).