

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.30</u>	SINC name: Markham Tips, north of Markham
Grid Reference SO169024	Area (hectares): 21
Survey date: 3rd August 2007 Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)	
(UDP policy reference: C11.28)	
Summary description	
<p>Disused colliery spoil heaps form the main part of the SINC. They support a developing acid grassland flora with scattered scrub, a high proportion of bryophytes and lichens, and bare ground. The plants include a moderate diversity of grasses and herbs, including Sheep's Fescue, Common Bent, Fairy Flax, Carline Thistle and Bird's-foot Trefoil. Southwest of the tips, the valley sides support a mix of acid grassland, heath, Bracken, scrub and rock outcrops. To the north of the tips the SINC includes several fields of semi-improved acid grassland with Bracken. Common bent and Sweet vernal-grass dominate the grass sward, with herbs including Mouse-ear hawkweed and Harebell. Waxcap fungi are also present.</p>	
Qualifying features	
Acid grassland with at least 7 indicator species.	
Heath with at least 7 indicator species.	
Semi-improved acid grassland with at least 7 indicator species.	
Secondary features	
Bracken.	
Scrub.	
Dry stone walls and rock outcrops.	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
The bryophyte and lichen communities may be of local or county significance.	
Likely to support reptiles, especially in heath and at scrub margins.	
Close-cropped semi-improved acid grassland is likely to support good waxcap fungi populations.	
The site is likely to be of nature conservation value for invertebrates.	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
<p>The site is currently subject to light grazing by sheep. Bracken is encroaching over much of the acid grassland and heath in the north and west of the site, shading more diverse habitats and creating a fire risk. Bracken management would therefore be beneficial. Japanese knotweed is present nearby on former colliery land to the southwest.</p>	

Access/ community use

The only formal public access is by public footpaths that pass some of the site boundary. However, the area appears to be used by the public by means of several informal paths.

Additional information

The northwestern slope supports a mix of Bracken, scrub and acid grassland. The Bracken areas still support moderately diverse acid grassland / Bilberry ground flora, but the Bracken needs to be controlled through management to enhance the site. The old coal tips to the south are likely to develop nature conservation value through natural succession. It is possible that they may already be of value to Violet-feeding fritillary butterflies.

Species list (Dominant species, SINC Criteria, RDB or other notable indicator species)

(LBAP species shown in **bold**, species confirmed by 2007 survey in *italics*)

Developing acid grassland and heath on colliery spoil: *Potentilla erecta*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Galium saxatile*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Linum catharticum*, *Potentilla reptans*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Veronica officinalis*, *Carlina vulgaris*, *Trifolium dubium*, *Polygala vulgaris*, *Filago minima*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Festuca ovina*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Aira caryophyllea*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Carex binervis*, *Carex panicea*, *Luzula cf multiflora*, *Juncus effusus*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Polytrichum piliferum*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Campylopus introflexus*, *Racomitrium ericoides*, *Scleropodium purum*, *Cladonia spp*, *Peltigera sp.*.

Acid grassland, heath and bracken communities on land adjacent to the tips: *Potentilla erecta*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Galium saxatile*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Fragaria vesca*, *Viola riviniana*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Leontodon hispidus*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Hypericum humifusum*, *Leontodon autumnalis*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Festuca ovina*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Nardus stricta*, *Aira praecox*, *Carex pilulifera*, *Luzula campestris*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *P.juniperinum*, *Scleropodium purum*. The grassland fungi *Entoloma cf. chalybaeum* var. *lazulinum* and *Hygrocybe insipida* were noted in the north of the area.

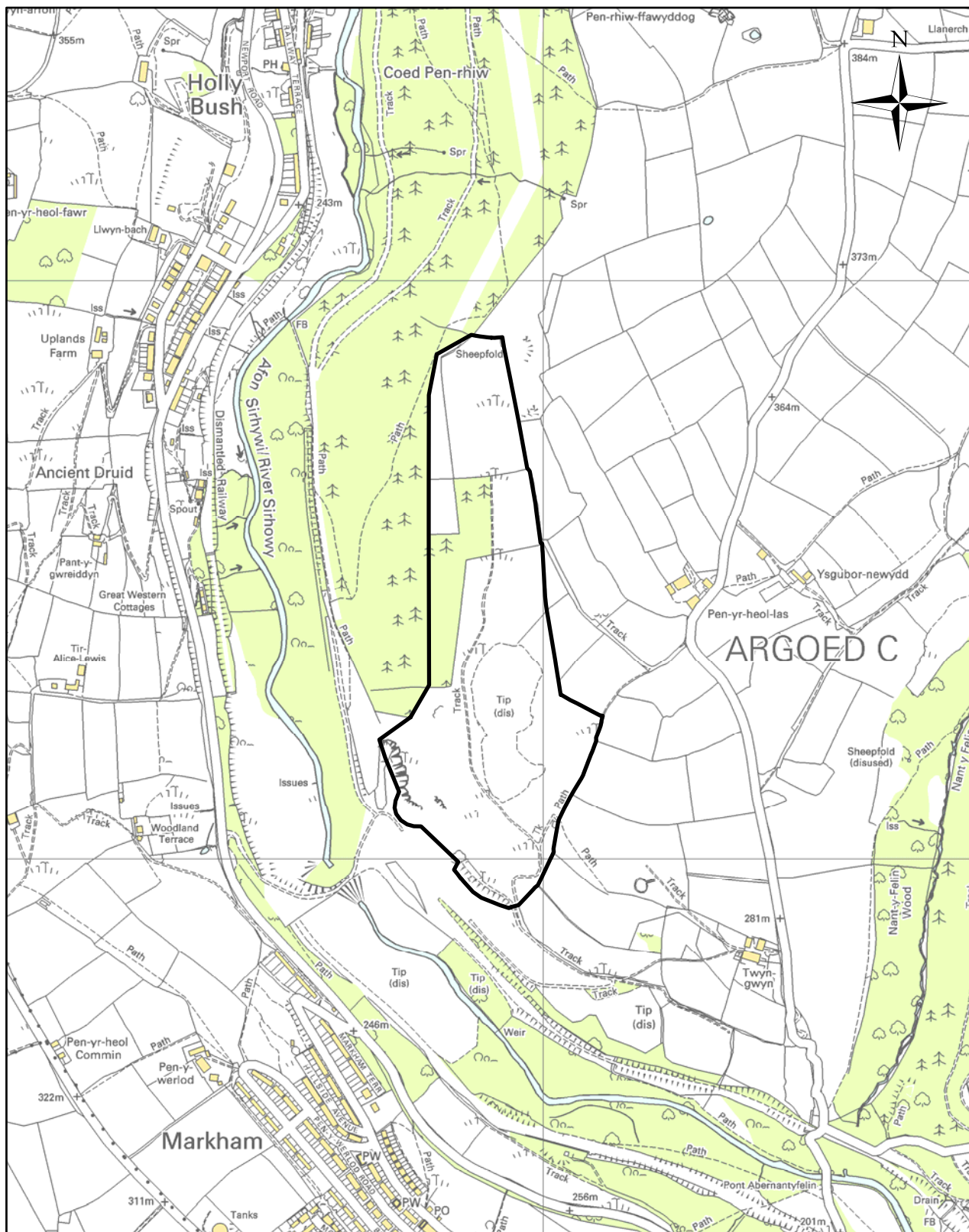
Trees and shrub species in scrub areas and field boundaries: *Betula pubescens*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Larix sp.*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Ulex gallii*, *Quercus petraea*.

Fauna observations: **Buzzard**, **Green Woodpecker**, *Meadow Pipit*, *Stonechat*, *Grey Heron*, *Redstart*, **Common Lizard**, **Dark Green Fritillary Butterfly**, **Grayling Butterfly**, *Meadow Brown Butterfly*, *Small Heath Butterfly*, *Red Admiral Butterfly*, *Gatekeeper Butterfly*.

Additional records from desk study: Unspecified **bat** record from a nearby property.

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
LDP Policy Ref: NH 3.30 (SINC 028)
Markham Tips, North of Markham 21 Ha

1:10,000



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Gall hyn arwain at erlyniad neu achos sifil. Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, 100025372, 2008.