

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.31</u>	SINC name: Pen-yr-heol Meadows, Markham
Grid reference: SO162016	Area (hectares): 12
Survey date: 17th August 2007	Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)
(UDP policy reference: C11.32)	
Summary description	
<p>The main part of this SINC comprises several fields of dry semi-improved acid and neutral grassland, with bracken at some edges. The plants within the fields include Wood bitter-vetch, Harebell and Great burnet. A smaller parcel of land at SO164017 is mainly acid grassland, Bracken, scrub and rock outcrop, with some parts managed as an amenity area with wildflowers.</p>	
Qualifying features	
<p>Semi-improved neutral grassland with at least 8 indicator species.</p> <p>Semi-improved acid grassland and acid grassland with at least 7 indicator species.</p> <p>Presence of Wood bitter-vetch (<i>Vicia orobus</i>).</p>	
Secondary features	
<p>Scrub.</p> <p>Stone walls</p> <p>Rock outcrops.</p> <p>Bracken.</p>	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
<p>The short grazed grassland areas at SO161018 and SO165014 are likely to support waxcap fungi.</p> <p>The field margins and the land at SO164017 are likely to support reptiles.</p>	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
<p>Several of the fields had been cut for hay at the time of the survey. The diversity of the uncut fields appeared relatively low (although indicator species were still present at low frequency). Horses graze the remainder of the fields (in the north and south of the SINC) and these supported a higher diversity than the hay fields (although the grazing pressure in the northern field was heavy. Appropriate management, i.e. light grazing by horses would enhance the site for biodiversity. The land at SO164017 has been recently re-landscaped as an amenity area, but still retains several semi-natural elements. A number of trees have been planted and a number of 'wild flowers' have been planted, including <i>Persicaria bistorta</i>, <i>Geranium sanguinum</i>, <i>Lythrum salicaria</i>, <i>Veronica spicata</i>, <i>Galium verum</i>, <i>Primula veris</i>, <i>Primula vulgaris</i>, <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> and <i>Sanguisorba officinarum</i>. These may be good nectar sources for insects and support some interesting wildlife in the short term, but not all of the species would be expected to survive many years in this location.</p>	
Access/ community use	
<p>The landscaped area in the east of the SINC is specifically managed for public amenity and access, and is part of an area of open-access land. There is no public access to most of the</p>	

grazed or hay-cut fields, but a footpath crosses part of this area.

Additional information

The site appears to have declined in diversity since surveys in the 1990s but still retains significant value for nature conservation. Some of the hay fields appear to be borderline with respect to the SINC criteria, but this may have been due to the recent cutting and lack of records during the survey. Several adjacent grazed fields appeared to support a grassland flora of potential value for wildlife. In particular, the field at SO163067 supported Harebells, and there were moderate numbers of anthills in the field at SO164018. These additional areas should be considered for inclusion at future SINC review.

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

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

Tree and shrub species (from field margins and tree planting area): *Crataegus monogyna*, *Salix cinerea*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Quercus petraea*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Betula pubescens*, *Ulex gallii*.

Grassland species (combined list for fields): *Potentilla erecta*, *Conopodium majus*, *Stachys officinalis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, *Galium saxatile*, *Hieracium sp.*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Leontodon autumnalis*, *Leontodon hispidus*, *Alchemilla cf filicaulis*, *Lathyrus linifolius*, *Succisa pratensis*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Festuca rubra*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Aira praecox*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Luzula campestris*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

Vicia orobus was noted at SO165014 and SO163017.

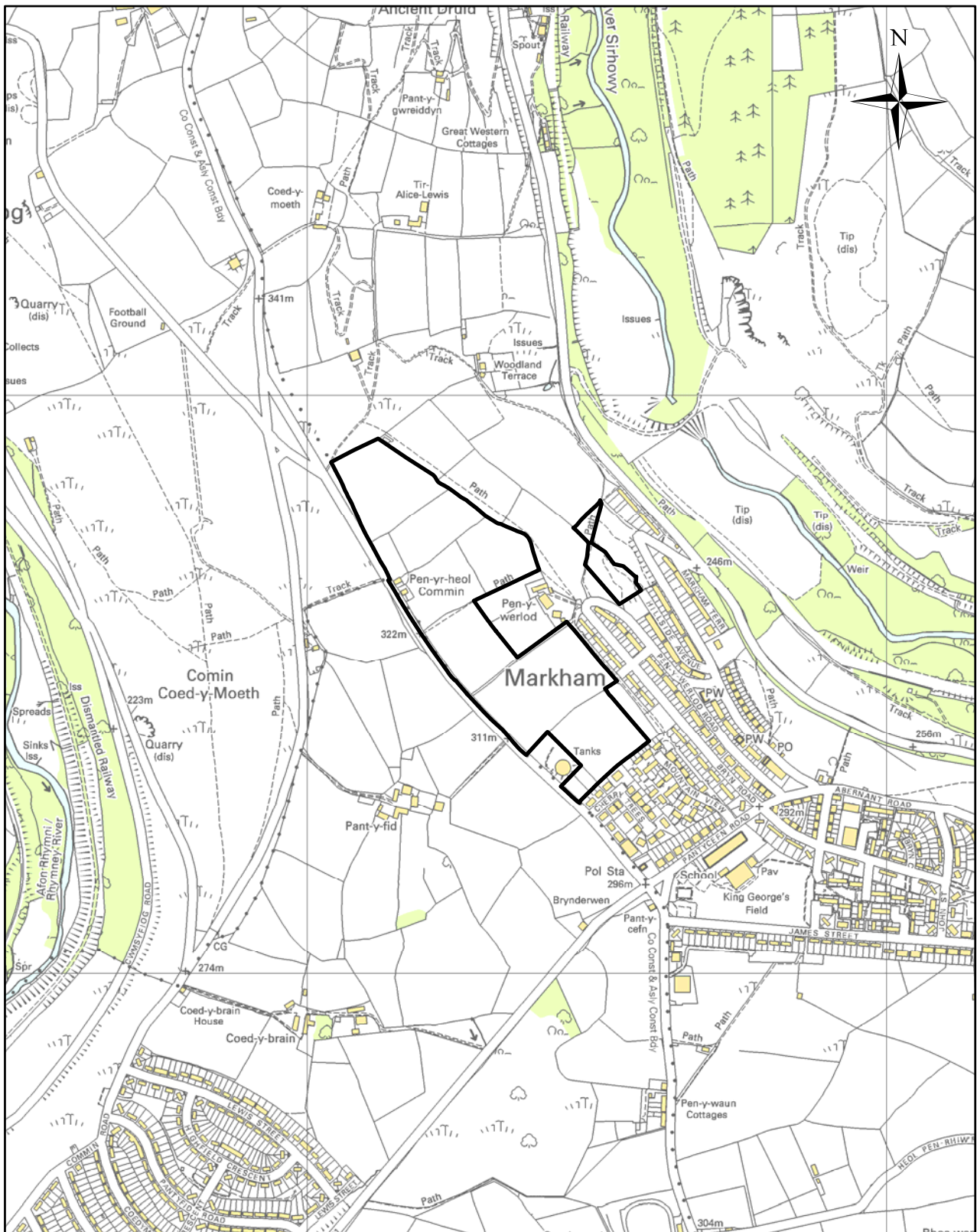
Acid grassland/ heath at SO164017: *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Hypericum humifusum*, *Galium saxatile*, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Hieracium sp.*, *Nardus sp.*, *Festuca ovina*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Holcus mollis*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Pleurozium schreberi*.

Fauna observations: *Hedgehog* (dead on road at SO163063), **Green Woodpecker**, *Stonechat*, *Gatekeeper Butterfly*.

Additional species noted from desk study and consultation: *Molinia caerulea*, *Serratula tinctoria*, *Nardus stricta*. Hundreds of *Vicia orobus* plants in 1991.

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
LDP Policy Ref: NH 3.21 (SINC 032)
Pen-yr-Heol Meadows, Markham 12 Ha

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