

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.55</u>	SINC name: Cwm Afon Railway Line, west of Nelson
Grid reference: ST099951	Area (hectares): 7
Survey date: 11th July 2007	Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)
(UDP policy reference: C11.45)	
Summary description	
<p>A disused railway embankment runs the whole length of the SINC. It supports sheep-grazed semi-improved acid grassland with localised patches of rocks and scrub. Mature broad-leaved Oak and Beech trees border most of the embankment. In some areas these form a closed woodland canopy, although the ground flora is relatively species-poor. The strip of land between the embankment and the A472 road supports a mix of Bracken, semi-improved acid grassland and species-rich marshy grassland / flush vegetation. Purple moor-grass and Sharp-flowed rush dominate the wetland habitats. They also include Ivy-leaved bellflower, Bog pimpernel, Marsh pennywort and several sedges and <i>Sphagnum</i> mosses. Large anthills occur through much of this area.</p>	
Qualifying features	
<p>Species-rich marshy grassland with at least 12 indicator species.</p> <p>Semi-improved acid grassland with at least 7 indicator species.</p>	
Secondary features	
<p>Mature broad-leaved trees.</p> <p>Bracken.</p> <p>Grassland with abundant anthills.</p>	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
<p>The site is likely to provide good foraging habitat for bats. There is also potential for bats to roost in some of the trees.</p> <p>The site has potential to support a high diversity of invertebrates.</p> <p>The rocky parts of the embankment sides and the tussocky grassland areas are likely to be used by reptiles.</p> <p>The short-grazed semi-improved grassland on the embankment has potential to support grassland fungi.</p>	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
<p>Sheep graze the whole site, but seem to prefer grazing the grassy embankment and only lightly graze the wetland areas. The greatest threat to the area is Bracken encroachment into the grassland areas and therefore some form of control is recommended to enhance biodiversity. A slight reduction in grazing intensity may allow the woodland to develop more species and structural diversity. The area is at risk from fire, and the remains of several small fires (presumably started deliberately) were evident in Gorse bushes along the embankment, and some of the Bracken had</p>	

been burned. Litter was present in several places, but not in large quantities.

Access/ community use

A public footpath crosses the area. The top of the embankment also appears to be used as an informal path.

Additional information

The southern boundary reflects the main concentration of mature trees, although this is not very clearly defined on the ground. Traffic noise may limit potential value for birds immediately adjacent to the A472.

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: *Quercus robur*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Betula pubescens*, *Corylus avellana*, *Salix caprea*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Hedera helix*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Ulex gallii*.

Woodland ground flora species (from closed canopy areas): *Oxalis acetosella*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Viola riviniana*, *Holcus mollis*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Juncus effusus*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Mnium hornum*, *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Diplophyllum albicans*.

Semi-improved acid grassland species: *Digitalis purpurea*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Galium saxatile*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Viola riviniana*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Festuca ovina*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Festuca rubra*, *Aira praecox*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Nardus stricta*, *Luzula campestris*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Scleropodium purum*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Hypnum lacunosum*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*.

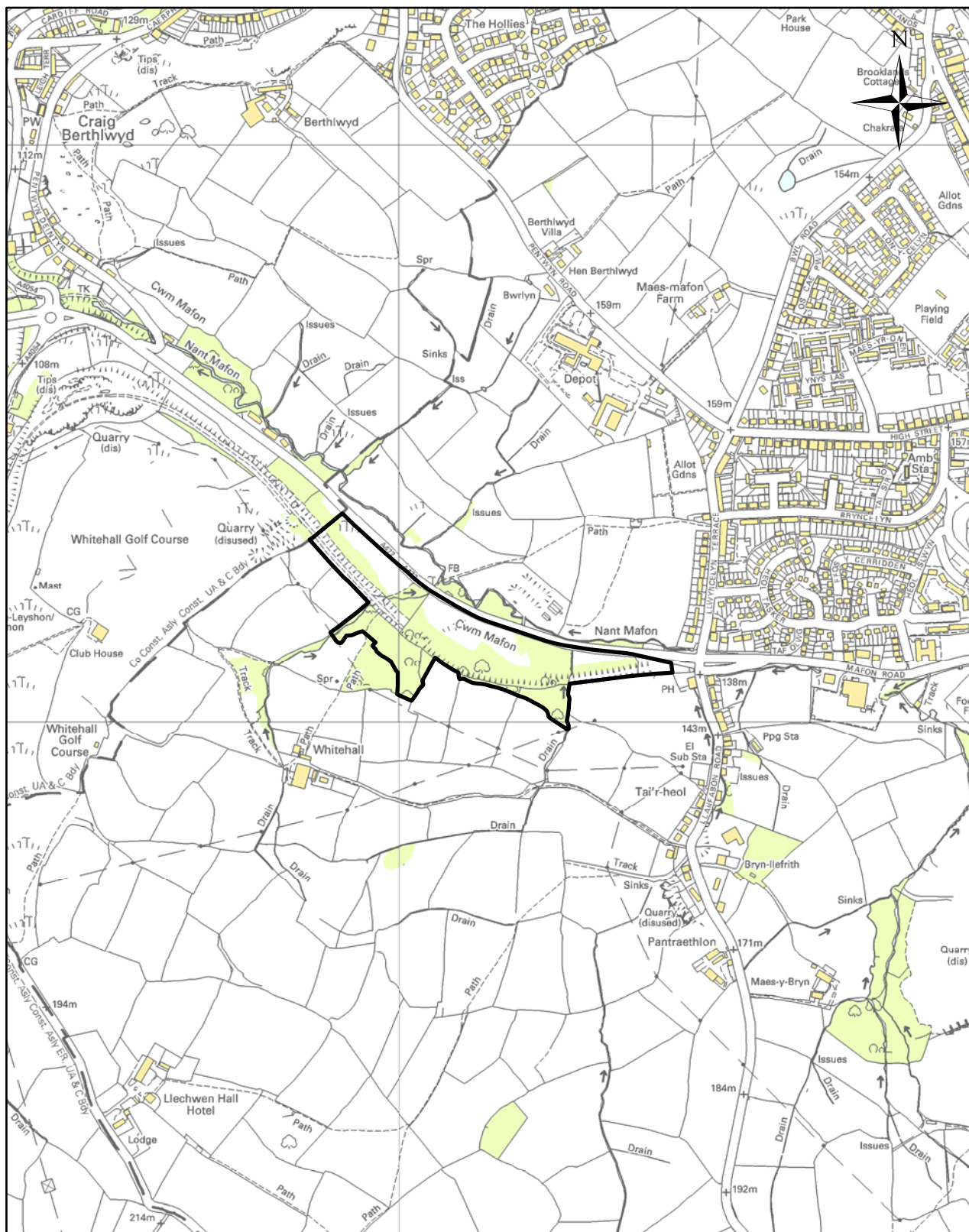
Marshy grassland / flush species (this habitat merges gradually with the semi-improved acid grassland): *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, *Wahlenbergia hederacea*, *Ranunculus flammula*, *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, *Cirsium palustre*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Cirsium dissectum*, *Succisa pratensis*, *Viola palustris*, *Galium palustre*, *Galium saxatile*, *Pedicularis sylvatica*, *Epilobium palustre*, *Stellaria alsine*, *Ajuga reptans*, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Viola palustris*, *Myosotis scorpioides*, *Anagallis tenella*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Nardus stricta*, *Agrostis canina*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Festuca ovina*, *Nardus stricta*, *Briza media*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Carex panicea*, *Carex viridula*, *Carex pulicaris*, *Luzula multiflora*, *Juncus acutiflorus*, *Juncus effusus*, *Sphagnum fimbriatum*, *Sphagnum cf denticulatum*, *Sphagnum fallax*, *Sphagnum subnitens*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Calliergonella cuspidata*.

Fauna observations: *Grey Squirrel*, **Green Woodpecker**, *Greenfinch*, *Great Tit*, **Common Frog**, *Large White Butterfly*, *Comma Butterfly*, *Burnet Moth*, **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**.

Additional species noted from desk study and consultation: **Kestrel**, **Hyacinthoides non-scripta**. *Wood Warbler* and *Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary Butterfly* within 1km square.

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Cwm Afon Railway Line, West of Nelson 7 Ha

1:10,000



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