Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council

LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.61 SINC name: Coed Gelliau'r-gwellt, east of Llancaiach

Grid reference: ST120966 Area (hectares): 16

Survey date: 10th July 2007 Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)

(UDP policy reference: C11.58)

Summary description

The site supports semi-natural, ancient Oak woodland, with a canopy of Oak, Alder and Downy birch. The area to the north of Gelligaer Road is ungrazed and includes a tangled understorey of Hazel and Holly, and a moderate diversity of semi-natural indicators in its ground flora. The majority of the woodland to the south of Gelligaer Road is grazed with less under storey and a higher proportion of grasses in its ground flora, and several large clearings that support semi-improved grassland. In the northeastern part, there is an area of Purple moor-grass and Birch scrub, with patches of diverse marshy grassland vegetation including Devil's-bit scabious, Meadow thistle and *Sphagnum* mosses. Marsh fritillary and Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies have been recorded from this area.

Qualifying features

Ancient woodland with an assemblage of semi-natural indicator species.

Species-rich marshy grassland with at least 12 indicator species.

Presence of Marsh Fritillary Butterfly.

Secondary features

Semi-improved neutral/acid grassland.

Scrub.

Potential value/ unconfirmed features

The site is likely to provide good foraging and roosting habitat for bats.

The marshy grassland habitat is likely to be used by reptiles.

The site is likely to support a high diversity of invertebrates, possibly including uncommon species such as fritillary butterflies or Narrow-bordered bee hawkmoth.

Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)

Cattle graze the southern woodland area and this appears to be limiting the ground flora diversity and regeneration of young trees. It would therefore be beneficial for the ground vegetation and habitat structure if the grazing intensity within the woodland were reduced. The marshy grassland area has not been grazed for several years and is subject to occasional burning. A reduction in the number of low-growing plants (see desk study data) suggests that the area has declined in nature conservation value and the re-introduction of light grazing by horses or cattle would be beneficial to enhance the site, particularly for the flora and Marsh fritillary butterfly.

Access/ community use

A public footpath crosses the marshy grassland area. There is no other formal public access to the site, although there are signs of informal access.

Additional information

The strip of woodland extending northwards beyond the SINC boundary is classified as ancient woodland. It does not appear to meet SINC criteria in terms of its vegetation, but may still provide a corridor usable by bats. This area should be considered at future review. Aerial photography and Phase 1 maps indicate several fields of marshy grassland and woodland at approximately ST119974. These should be considered 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*)

<u>Woodland and scrub woody species:</u> Quercus robur, Alnus glutinosa, Salix cinerea, Quercus petraea, Lonicera periclymenum, Betula pubescens, Corylus avellana, Fraxinus excelsior, Sorbus aucuparia, Rubus fruticosus, Acer pseudoplatanus, Crataegus monogyna, Ilex aquifolium, Viburnum opulus, Hedera helix, Salix caprea, Salix aurita, Ulex gallii, Ulex europaeus.

Woodland ground flora species: Hyacinthoides non-scripta, Oxalis acetosella, Stellaria holostea, Chamerion angustifolium, Digitalis purpurea, Geum urbanum, Circaea lutetiana, Viola riviniana, Anemone nemorosa, Potentilla erecta, Veronica montana, Viola palustris, Chrysosplenium oppositifolium, Arum maculatum, Lysimachia nemorum, Holcus mollis, Agrostis capillaris, Anthoxanthum odoratum, Deschampsia cespitosa, Molinia caerulea, Pteridium aquilinum, Blechnum spicant, Dryopteris dilatata, Dryopteris filix-mas, Dryopteris affinis, Mnium hornum, Kindbergia praelonga, Scleropodium purum, Fissidens taxifolius, Polytrichum formosum, Polytrichum commune, Thuidium tamariscinum, Eurhynchium striatum. The fungus Laetiporus sulphureus was growing on a dead Oak in the northern woodland.

Marshy grassland species: Succisa pratensis, Cirsium palustre, Potentilla erecta, Cirsium dissectum, Viola palustris, Serratula tinctoria, Lotus pedunculatus, Lychnis flos-cuculi, Ranunculus flammula, Lathyrus linifolius, Myosotis laxa, Filipendula ulmaria, Angelica sylvestris, Valeriana officinalis, Galium palustre, Epilobium palustre, Stellaria alsine, Ajuga reptans, Galium saxatile, Eupatorium cannabinum, Molinia caerulea, Deschampsia cespitosa, Agrostis capillaris, Festuca ovina, Nardus stricta, Danthonia decumbens, Carex binervis, Juncus acutiflorus, Juncus effusus, Sphagnum denticulatum/ inundatum, Aulacomnium palustre, Polytrichum commune.

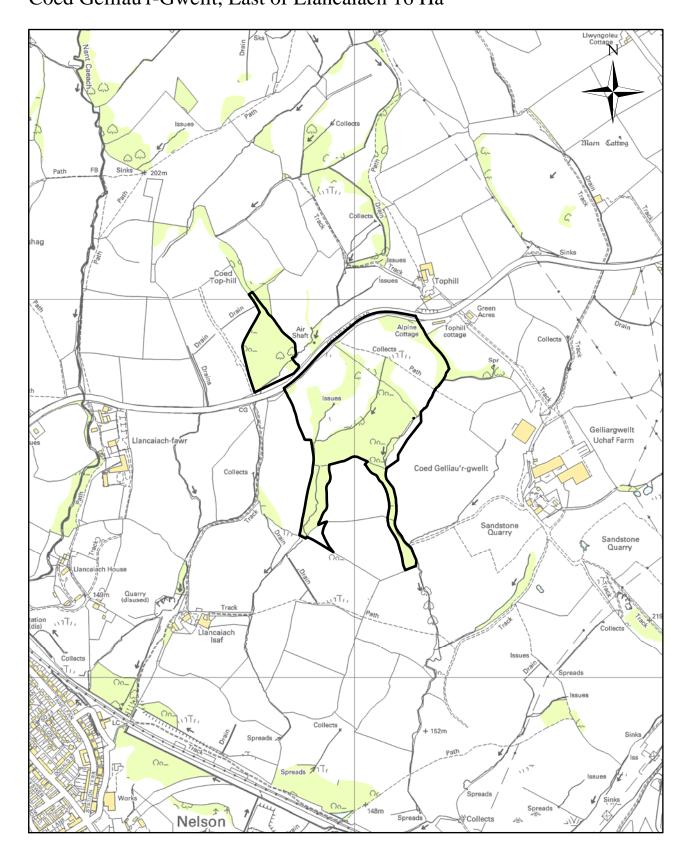
<u>Semi-improved grassland species:</u> Potentilla erecta, Lotus corniculatus, Ranunculus flammula, Plantago lanceolata, Ulex gallii, Holcus lanatus, Agrostis capillaris, Anthoxanthum odoratum, Cynosurus cristatus, Agrostis stolonifera, Carex flacca, Juncus inflexus, Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus.

<u>Fauna observations:</u> **Song Thrush, Buzzard,** Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Meadow Brown Butterfly, Red Admiral Butterfly, Marbled White Butterfly (in grassland on tip adjacent to north-west of SINC).

Additional species noted from desk study and consultation: Marsh Fritillary Butterfly, Genista anglica, Dactylorhiza maculata, Anagallis tenella, Carex montana, Carex hostiana, Carex panicea, Carex echinata, Carex viridula, Briza media.

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1:10,000



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