

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.71</u>	SINC name: Blackwood Riverside Woodlands, Blackwood
Grid reference: ST182994 (6ha), ST180985 (24ha), ST177979 (5ha) and ST178973 (9ha)	
Survey date: 24th July 2007	Area (hectares): 44 (in total)
Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.) (UDP policy reference: C11.63)	
Summary description	
<p>An almost unbroken belt of woodland and scrub extending for over 2km along the Sirhowy River valley. There is a mix of mature and young woodlands, on a range of substrata. The older woodlands generally support a canopy of Beech and Oak with Holly and Bracken, while many of the younger woodlands have developed more recently on colliery spoil, and still include a high proportion of early successional species such as Downy Birch, Hawthorn, Gorse and willows. The woodlands have been shown to provide important foraging habitat for bats. At the southern end of the SINC, Woodfield Park includes two flower-rich hay-meadows and good numbers of mature standard trees. The River Sirhowy channel itself has been removed from this SINC (now part of NH 3.11), but the riverside and adjacent habitats are still included; the river is largely shaded by trees, particularly Alders, and lined by stands of Japanese knotweed at this location. Several flood-plain grasslands are present in the valley floor, which locally support diverse neutral and marshy grassland vegetation, sometimes with temporary pools.</p>	
Qualifying features	
Semi-natural broadleaved woodland with an assemblage of indicator species.	
Species-rich marshy grassland with at least 14 indicator species.	
Neutral grassland with at least 8 indicator species.	
Main river with good water quality and natural channel features.	
Important foraging and commuting routes for several species of bats.	
Secondary features	
Scrub	
Bracken	
Ponds	
Tributary streams	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
The woodland throughout the area has potential to support Dormice, which are known from woodland areas to the south.	
The area is likely to support breeding populations of riverside birds such as Kingfisher and Dipper.	
Some of the steep, humid mossy banks have potential to support uncommon bryophyte species.	
The river is likely to support a good population of native fish.	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
The majority of the woodland area appears unmanaged, although some of the former railway	

tracks along the valley are maintained as footpaths. Horses graze several of the flood-plain grasslands and have access into some of the scrub areas. Japanese knotweed is present along much of the riverbank and locally forms large stands within the floodplain meadows. Encroachment by scrub or knotweed is a potential problem for the diverse grassland communities, and maintaining grazing is important to keep this in check. Vandalism was evident in several places, particularly near the main footpaths.

Additional information

Several of the younger woodland areas do not meet the SINC selection criteria as habitats, but are included because of their value to bats (as identified by surveys undertaken for the Sirhowy Enterprise Way) and because they form important connections between other wooded areas to form a core block of woodland. Some adjacent woodland areas may also have value (e.g. for bats and possibly Dormice) and their inclusion in the SINC should be considered as further information becomes available and/or at future review.

Access/ community use

Several public footpaths cross the area, including the Sirhowy Valley Walk. There are also several regularly used informal paths.

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

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

Woodland / scrub tree and shrub species: *Fagus sylvatica*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Corylus avellana*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Quercus petraea*, *Quercus robur*, *Betula pubescens*, *Hedera helix*, *Salix caprea*, *Salix cinerea*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Salix alba*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Frangula alnus*, *Viburnum opulus*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Ulex gallii*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Populus tremula*, *Rosa arvensis*, *Ulmus glabra*, *Salix viminalis*, *Symphoricarpos albus*, *Rhododendron ponticum*. Woodfield Park includes a number of large, mature parkland trees, including *Quercus robur*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Castanea sativa*, *Populus (x canadensis?)*, *Fraxinus excelsior*.

Woodland and scrub ground flora species (all woodlands combined): *Circaea lutetiana*, *Geum urbanum*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Lamium galeobdolon*, ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Mercurialis perennis*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Urtica dioica*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Viola riviniana*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Stellaria holostea*, *Solidago virgaurea*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, *Lapsana communis*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Scrophularia nodosa*, *Hypericum pulchrum*, *Veronica montana*, *Conopodium majus*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Holcus mollis*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, *Luzula pilosa*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Dryopteris affinis*, *Atrichum undulatum*, *Mnium hornum*, *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Fissidens bryoides*, *Fissidens taxifolius*, *Thuidium tamariscinum*, *Plagiomnium undulatum*, *Eurhynchium striatum*, *Diplophyllum albicans*, *Pellia sp.*

Grassland species in hay meadows at Woodfield Park: *Centaurea nigra*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Conopodium majus*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Leontodon hispidus*, *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Cirsium palustre*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Festuca rubra*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*.

Grassland species (flood-plain and adjacent grasslands, which include a mix of marshy and drier habitat): *Centaurea nigra*, *Galium palustre*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Cirsium palustre*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Prunella vulgaris*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Potentilla anserina*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Leontodon hispidus*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Odontites vernus*, *Centaureum erythraea*, *Succisa pratensis*, *Galium saxatile*, *Agrimonia cf procera*, *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, *Fallopia japonica*, *Oenanthe crocata*, *Leontodon autumnalis*, *Gnaphalium uliginosum*, *Potentilla*

erecta, *Viola palustris*, *Stellaria alsine*, *Ranunculus flammula*, *Valeriana officinalis*, *Hypericum humifusum*, *Mentha aquatica*, *Alchemilla cf xanthochlora*, ***Rhinanthus minor***, *Iris pseudacorus*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Festuca rubra*, *Poa trivialis*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Carex ovalis*, *Carex panicea*, *Carex nigra*, *Carex viridula*, *Juncus effusus*, *Juncus acutiflorus*, *Juncus articulatus*, *Juncus tenuis*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Calliergonella cuspidata*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

The wettest areas supported: *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, *Sparganium erectum*, *Mimulus guttatus*, *Callitriche sp.*, *Lythrum portula*, *Veronica scutellata*, *Veronica beccabunga*, *Myosotis secunda*, *Caltha palustris*, *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, *Glyceria fluitans*, *Eleocharis palustris*, *Juncus bulbosus*.

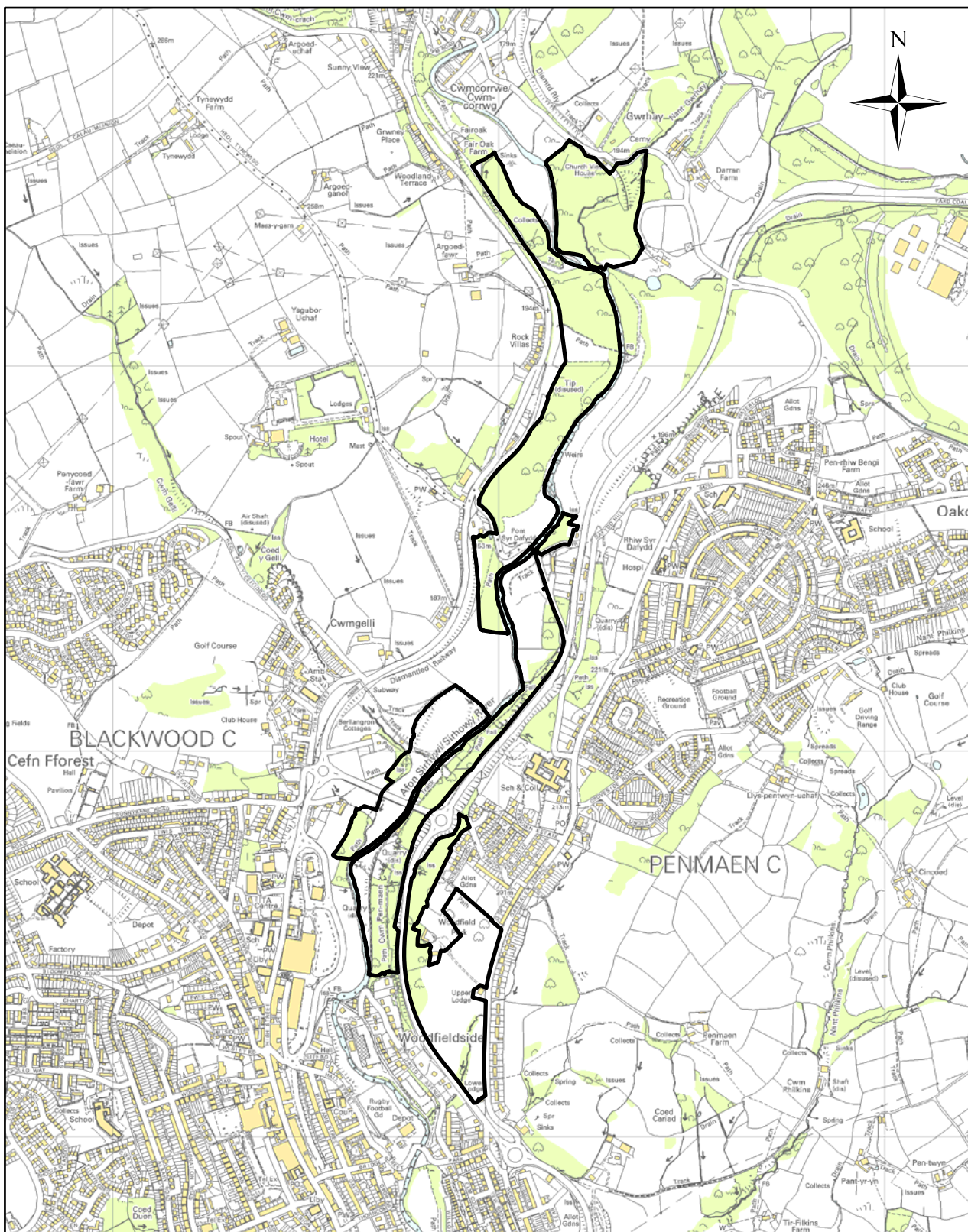
Grassland species associated with the unshaded sections of disused railways lines and spoil heaps included the following: *Fragaria vesca*, *Solidago virgaurea*, *Anaphalis margaritacea*, *Sanguisorba minor*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Geranium pratense*, *Oenothera sp.*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Echium vulgare*, *Centaurium erythraea*, *Viola riviniana*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Ulex gallii*, *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, *Carex hirta*, *Juncus inflexus*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Racomitrium sp.*, *Hypnum lacunosum*.

Fauna observations: *Rabbit*, *Grey Squirrel*, *Fox*, ***Buzzard***, ***Bullfinch***, ***Green Woodpecker***, ***House Sparrow***, *Great Spotted Woodpecker*, *Goldfinch*, *Chaffinch*, *Heron*, *Blackcap*, *Robin*, *Coal Tit*, *Jay*, *Blackbird*, *Blue Tit*, *Nuthatch*, ***Common Toad***, ***Common Frog***, *Meadow Brown Butterfly*, *Green-veined White Butterfly*, *Large Skipper Butterfly*, *Speckled Wood Butterfly*, *Gatekeeper Butterfly*, *Holly Blue Butterfly*, ***Four-spotted Chaser Dragonfly***, ***Southern Hawker Dragonfly***, ***Azure Damselfly***.

Additional species noted from desk study and consultation: *Otter*, *Mink*, *Weasel*, ***Common Pipistrelle bat***, ***Soprano Pipistrelle bat***, ***Noctule bat***, ***Whiskered Bat***, ***Daubenton's Bat***, ***Brown Long-eared Bat***, ***Badger***, ***Kingfisher***, *Polygonatum verticillatum*, ***Dactylorhiza fuchsii***, *Acer campestre*, *Anagallis tenella*, *Cirsium dissectum*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Melampyrum pratense*, *Potentilla argentea*, *Prunus avium*, *Vicia sylvatica*. ***Eel***, ***Salmon***, ***Sea Trout*** and ***Stone Loach*** have been recorded in the River Sirhowy approx 400m downstream from the section in the SINC.

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
LDP Policy Ref: NH 3.71 (SINC 063)
Blackwood Riverside Woodlands, North East of Blackwood 44 Ha

1:15,000



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