

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.128</u>	SINC name: Cwm Hafod-fach, North of Abercarn.
Grid reference: ST218962	Area (hectares): 50
Survey date: 4th May 2007	Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)
(UDP policy reference: C11.106)	
Summary description	
<p>An area of mixed woodland on sloping valley-sides surrounding a working quarry. Most of the woodland is classed as semi-natural or cleared ancient woodland. The main canopy trees are Beech, Sessile oak, Downy birch and locally Sycamore and Sweet chestnut. Pockets of Larch and Spruce plantation are scattered throughout the area, though most of the stands are relatively small and still support remnants of semi-natural ground flora. Several open areas are dominated by Bracken, usually associated with scattered Birch and Rowan saplings and abundant Bluebells. Acid grassland and heath occurs locally in open areas in the upper parts of the valley, which are dominated by Bilberry, Heather and Wavy hair-grass, and also support scattered Birch and Rowan.</p>	
Qualifying features	
<p>Semi-natural woodland with an assemblage of indicator species.</p> <p>Replanted woodland retaining a range of woodland indicators.</p> <p>Acid grassland and heath supporting at least 7 indicators.</p>	
Secondary features	
<p>Bracken stands with a species-rich ground flora.</p> <p>Mature trees.</p> <p>Contributory species include Redstart, Red Wood Ant and Climbing Corydalis.</p>	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
<p>Likely to provide good foraging and roosting opportunities for bats.</p> <p>Some Bracken areas have potential to support Violet-feeding fritillary butterflies.</p> <p>The habitat appears potentially suitable for Dormice, although this species is not known to occur in this part of the county borough.</p>	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
<p>There are no signs of recent woodland management. Removal of conifers would generally be beneficial throughout this area. Sheep have gained access to some of the main woodland areas, and graze freely below the Oak woodland at the most northerly point. The current level of grazing appears to be maintaining the biodiversity value. Japanese knotweed is present at several points along the west side of the quarry. Much of the vegetation near the quarry was covered in fine dust at the time of the survey, which could potentially affect the value of the site for some plants and animals. Motorcycling occurs along several of the northern tracks, and evidence of fires was</p>	

present in the west of the site. However, these activities do not appear to have affected the site's nature conservation value to date. Further survey of the Bracken areas may result in recommendations for management to improve habitat for Violet-feeding fritillary butterflies.

Access/ community use

There are several footpaths, mainly in the north and west of the site. There are also a number of informal paths, though they do not appear well used.

Additional information

The site includes several areas of coniferous plantation, which, although not meeting the SINC selection criteria in their own right, have been included because they form part of the larger woodland block. The habitat structure and ground flora of these areas is likely to improve if the plantations are thinned or felled/replanted with broadleaved trees. The SINC boundary may need to be revised following any future woodland management and should be considered at future SINC review. The woodland and Bracken/scrub-covered slopes beyond the site's northern boundary also appear to support habitat meeting SINC criteria. These should be considered at future review. The re-profiled Twyn-gnol tip to the north of the site is developing a mix of acid grassland / heath vegetation that may meet SINC selection criteria for acid grassland at future 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*)

Woodland canopy and shrub species (similar in most areas): *Fagus sylvatica*, *Quercus petraea*, *Betula pubescens*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Larix sp.*, *Pinus sylvestris*, *Castanea sativa*, *Quercus robur*, *Corylus avellana*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Betula pendula*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Salix caprea*, *Ulmus glabra*, *Calluna vulgaris*.

Ground flora species: ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Geum urbanum*, *Circaea lutetiana*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Allium ursinum*, *Mercurialis perennis*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Arum maculatum*, *Ranunculus ficaria*, *Viola riviniana*, *Lamium galeobdolon*, *Conopodium majus*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Stellaria holostea*, *Silene dioica*, *Teucrium scorodonia*, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, *Holcus mollis*, *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Bromopsis ramosa*, *Carex sylvatica*, *Luzula pilosa*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Mnium hornum*, *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Isoetes macrospora*, *Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*, *Pogonatum aloides*.

Species in most northerly oak wood: *Quercus petraea*, *Melampyrum pratense*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Stellaria holostea*, ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Mnium hornum*, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Rhytidadelphus squarrosus*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Dicranum majus*, *Plagiothecium undulatum*.

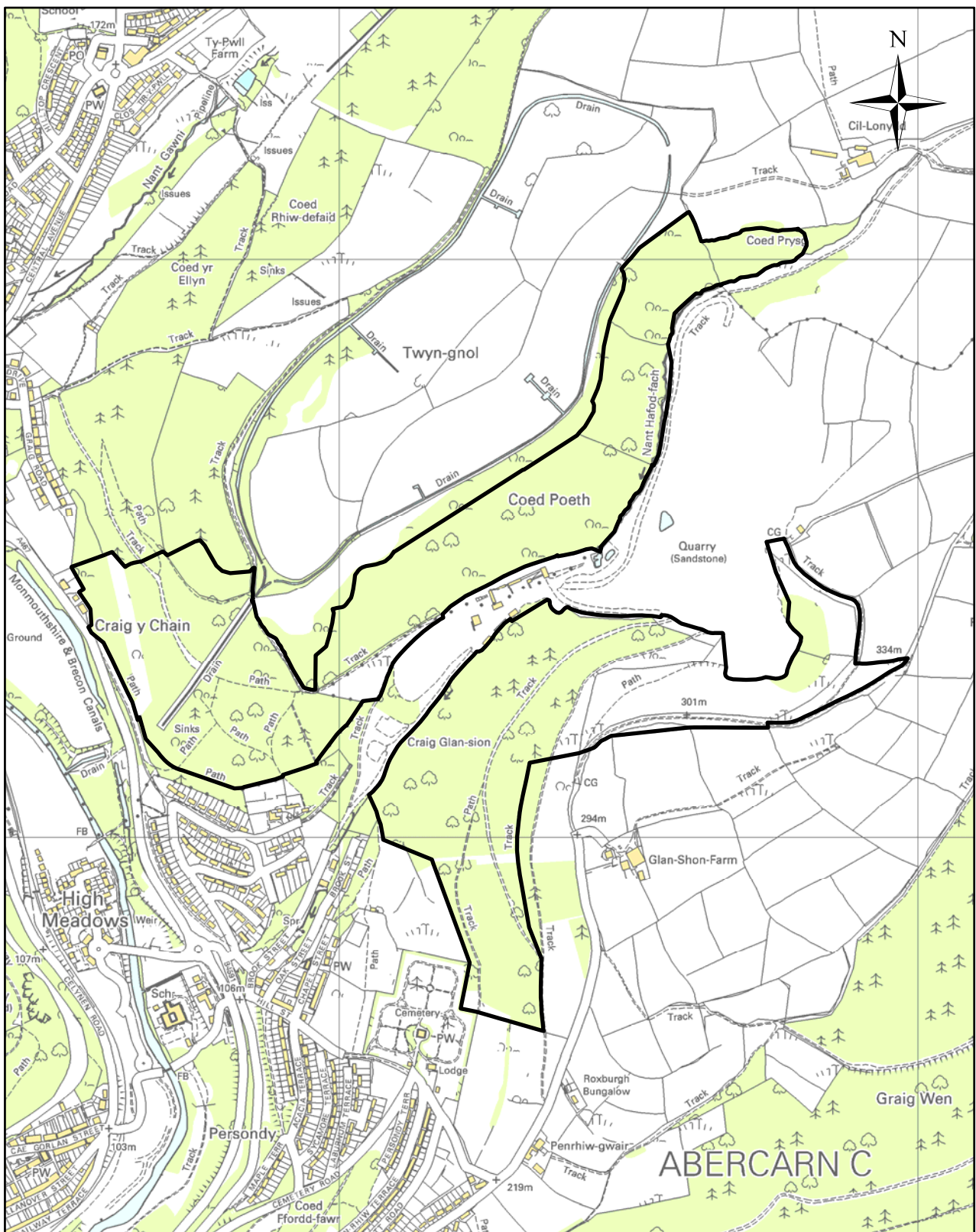
Heath/ acid grassland areas: *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Luzula campestris*, *Festuca ovina*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Nardus stricta*, *Festuca rubra*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Carex pilulifera*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Conopodium majus*, *Galium saxatile*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Rumex acetosa*, *Rumex acetosella*, ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Viola riviniana*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Rhytidadelphus squarrosus*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*.

Fauna observations: Grey Squirrel, **Buzzard**, **Song Thrush**, Wood Warbler, Redstart, Tree Pipit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Willow Warbler, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Wren, Blackbird, Robin, Blackcap, (**Skylark** and Meadow Pipit on adjacent tip).

Additional records from desk study: **Red Wood Ant** (in west of SINC), Small-leaved Lime, unidentified **bat** record from nearby urban area.

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
LDP Policy Ref: NH 3.128 (SINC 106)
Cwm Hafod-Fach Woodlands, North of Abercarn 50 Ha

1:10,000



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Mae atgynhychu heb awdurdod yn torri hawlfraint y Goron.
Gall hyn arwain at erlyniad neu achos sifil. Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, 100025372, 2008.