

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.150</u>	SINC name: Sirhowy Country Park Meadows
Grid reference: ST196910	Area (hectares): 5
Survey date: 17th June 2007	Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)
(UDP policy reference: C11.129)	
Summary description	
<p>Land adjacent to the southern edge of the River Sirhowy, which supports a mix of grassland and scrub habitats. At the eastern end there is a field of neutral grassland fringed by Bracken and supporting a good range of plant species. The rest of the area is largely dominated by Willow scrub with occasional clearings supporting marshy grassland and acid grassland/<i>Calluna</i> heath. The central part contains two ponds, one of which is shaded by scrub and the other more open with a good range of wetland plants and a viewing platform.</p>	
Qualifying features	
<p>Acid grassland / heath with at least 7 indicator species.</p> <p>Semi-improved neutral grassland with at least 8 indicator species.</p> <p>Pond with diverse wetland vegetation.</p>	
Secondary features	
<p>Broadleaved woodland.</p> <p>Marshy grassland.</p> <p>Bracken.</p> <p>Riverbank.</p>	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
<p>The area is likely to provide very good foraging habitat for bats.</p> <p>The riverside scrub is likely to be used by Otters.</p> <p>The area could potentially support reptiles, particularly in sunny clearings and scrub edges.</p> <p>The site is likely to support a high diversity of invertebrates.</p>	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
<p>The meadow has been managed by grazing in the past, but there are no signs of recent grazing. A wide fringe of Bracken has developed around the margin of the field, which needs to be reduced and controlled from spreading into the grassland. The remainder of the site is not grazed and the vegetation generally appears unmanaged, although some scrub clearance has been carried out near paths and a small area of grassland beside the pond has been mown. Scrub encroachment into the grassland habitat also needs to be controlled to enhance biodiversity. Japanese knotweed is present beside the river and has the potential to spread to other parts of the SINC.</p>	

Access/ community use

The area is part of the Sirhowy Country Park and as such is well used by the public. There are footpaths along most of the site, although not through the eastern field.

Additional information

The Sirhowy Valley Country Park is likely to include other areas of woodland and grassland that could meet SINC criteria, which should be considered at future review. The council's Countryside Ranger Service manages the country park for visitors and biodiversity. The adjacent River Sirhowy is a separate SINC (NH 3.11).

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 and scrub tree and shrub species: *Alnus glutinosa*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Betula pubescens*, *Salix cinerea*, *Salix caprea*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Quercus robur*, *Quercus petraea*, *Corylus avellana*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Hedera helix*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Ulmus glabra*.

Woodland and scrub ground flora species: *Veronica chamaedrys*, *Cirsium palustre*, *Circaea lutetiana*, *Valeriana officinalis*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Galium palustre*, *Geum urbanum*, *Epilobium hirsutum*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Galium palustre*, *Angelica sylvestris*, *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Hypericum maculatum*, *Viola palustris*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Holcus mollis*, *Carex remota*, *Juncus effusus*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Mnium hornum*, *Plagiomnium undulatum*, *Kindbergia praelonga*.

*Drier areas on the steeper southern boundary of the SINC also included **Hyacinthoides non-scripta**, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Veronica montana*, *Mercurialis perennis*, *Stellaria holostea*, *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, *Viola riviniana*, *Epipactis helleborine**

Grassland species in eastern meadow: *Rumex acetosa*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Vicia sativa*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Crepis capillaris*, *Lathyrus pratensis*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Senecio jacobaea*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Potentilla anserina*, *Conopodium majus*, *Festuca rubra*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Festuca pratensis*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Luzula campestris*, *Pteridium aquilinum*.

*A small damp area at the southern side included *Juncus acutiflorus*, *Juncus effusus*, *Oenanthe crocata*, *Mimulus guttatus*, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, *Myosotis secunda*.*

Acid grassland / heath species: (*merging with natural grassland*) *Calluna vulgaris*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Cytisus scoparius*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Galium saxatile*, *Veronica officinalis*, *Trifolium repens*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Veronica chamaedrys*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, ***Dactylorhiza fuchsii***, *Centaurea nigra*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Festuca rubra*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Festuca ovina*, *Carex hirta*, *Luzula campestris*, *Juncus tenuis*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Scleropodium purum*, *Rhytidadelphus squarrosus*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Polytrichum commune*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Hypnum lacunosum*.

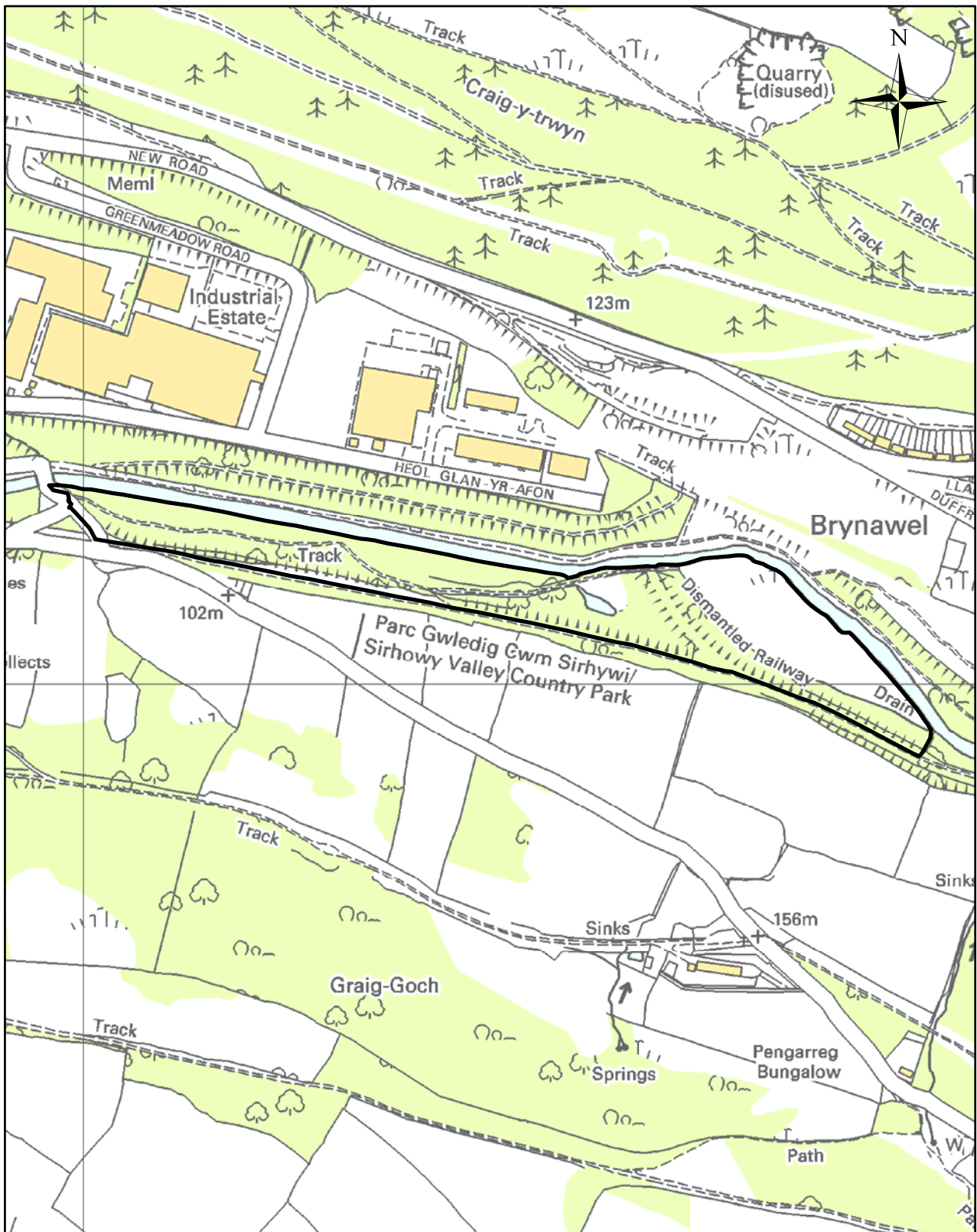
Wetland species associated with ponds: *Oenanthe crocata*, *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*, *Sparganium erectum*, *Iris pseudacorus*, *Elodea sp.*, *Myosotis secunda*, *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*, *Lemna minor*, *Glyceria maxima*, *Glyceria fluitans*, *Carex remota*.

Fauna observations: *Mole*, **Common Frog**, **Palmate Newt**, **Buzzard**, *Mallard*, *Grey Heron*, *Wren*, **Grey Wagtail**, *Jay*, *Burnet Moth*, *Burnet Companion Moth*, *Meadow Brown Butterfly*, *Ringlet Butterfly*, *Small Skipper Butterfly*, *Large Skipper Butterfly*, *Red Admiral Butterfly*, **Emperor Dragonfly**, **Azure Damselfly**, **Large Red Damselfly**.

Additional species noted from desk study: *Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary* (within 1km of site).

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
LDP Policy Ref: NH 3.150 (SINC 129)
Sirhowy Country Park Meadows, Cwmfelinfach 5 Ha

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