

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.141</u>	SINC name: Mynydd Machen, west of Risca
Grid reference: ST226901	Area (hectares): 135
Survey date: 29th June 2007	Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)
(UDP policy reference: C11.150)	
Summary description	
<p>An area of sheep-grazed common, largely covered by a mix of Bracken, acid grassland and heath. Bracken dominates most of the hillsides with Heath comprising mainly Bilberry, and Heather is more common on the steeper parts and on the top of the hill. A field of short-grazed semi-improved acid grassland is present on the north-facing side near Gelli-ffiniog. Calcareous grassland occurs in association with former quarries at the far east site of the site. Mature trees of Oak and Beech occur on some of the steep north-facing slopes. Young Downy birch scrub woodland is present in the eastern part of the site.</p>	
Qualifying features	
<p>Extensive area of open countryside where semi-natural upland features predominate.</p> <p>Acid grassland / heath with at least 7 indicator species.</p> <p>Calcareous grassland with at least 12 indicator species.</p>	
Secondary features	
<p>Bracken.</p> <p>Rock outcrops.</p> <p>Mature trees.</p>	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
<p>The short-grazed semi-improved grassland has potential to support waxcap fungi.</p> <p>The mix of acid grassland, Bracken and scrub is likely to support reptiles, particularly in the vicinity of the former workings where rock piles provide good basking and hibernation sites.</p>	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
<p>Sheep graze the area. A significant management issue appears to be the dominance of Bracken, which limits the vegetation diversity and constitutes a fire risk (there is evidence of past fires). Bracken control would probably enhance biodiversity over much of the area. Motorcycling occurs on the common, particularly in the vicinity of the former quarries. However, it does not appear to limit the nature conservation value of the site at this time.</p>	
Access/ community use	
<p>The common is open access land and is crossed by several public paths, including the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway Walk footpath.</p>	

Additional information

The SINC boundary has generally been taken as the boundary of the common land, although several parts of it currently support species-poor Bracken. The site lies immediately adjacent to SINC NH 3.142 (Coed y Mochyn). Several areas of adjacent land appear to be of equivalent value for nature conservation, though these are also largely dominated by Bracken. These include the fields at ST206907, ST214903, ST228905 and ST220896, although these too contain large areas of Bracken. The western boundary of the SINC could be extended to include additional woodland to link it with the ancient woodland of Graig Goch Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which starts at ST197905. The boundary could also be extended to include broadleaved woodland at the eastern extent of the SINC. The colliery tip at ST213904 is developing a sparse acid grassland flora through natural colonisation and is likely to continue to increase in nature conservation value. The site also supports a number of archaeological features. All these areas should be considered for inclusion 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*)

Tree and shrub species: *Calluna vulgaris*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Erica cinerea*, *Betula pubescens*, *Ulex gallii*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Quercus petraea*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Larix sp.*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Betula pendula*, *Rubus fruticosus*.

Bracken/ acid grassland species: *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Galium saxatile*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Veronica officinalis*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Polygala sp.*, *Festuca ovina*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Festuca rubra*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Festuca ovina*, *Aira praecox*, *Holcus mollis*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Nardus stricta*, *Luzula campestris*, *Luzula multiflora*, *Carex pilulifera*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Scleropodium purum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*. *Molinia caerulea*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Juncus effusus*, *Oreopteris limbosperma* and *Polytrichum commune* occur locally in several small wet flushes.

Heathland species: *Calluna vulgaris*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Erica cinerea*, *Galium saxatile*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Festuca ovina*, *Carex binervis*, *Carex pilulifera*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Polytrichum commune*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Cladonia spp.*

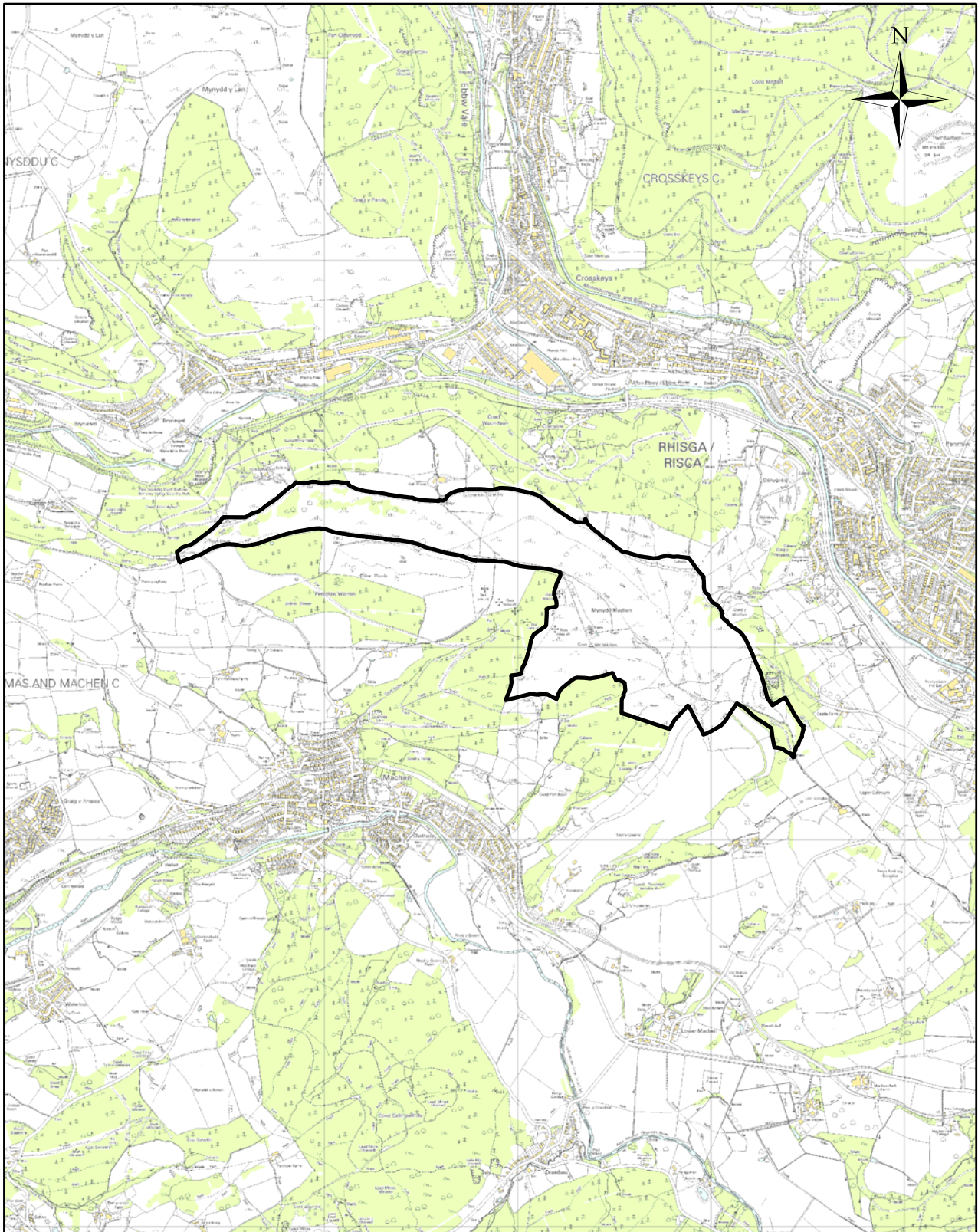
Calcareous grassland species: *Thymus polytrichus*, *Carlina vulgaris*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Carex flacca*, *Leontodon hispidus*, *Linum catharticum*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Fragaria vesca*, *Viola riviniana*, *Polygala cf vulgaris*, *Viola hirta*, *Sanguisorba minor*, *Potentilla sterilis*, *Hieracium sp.*, *Festuca ovina*, *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Briza media*, *Homalothecium lutescens*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Ctenidium molluscum*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*.

Fauna observations: **Buzzard**, **Skylark**, *Meadow Pipit*, *Raven*, *Stonechat*, **Linnet**, *Blackbird*.

Additional species noted from desk study: **Brown Hare**, **Dormouse** (at Coed y Fedw 400m to southwest), *Polecat* (within 1km), *Spiranthes spiralis* (within 1km), *Empetrum nigrum*, *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Gentiana amarella*, *Carex caryophyllea*, *Bromopsis erecta*, *Brachypodium pinnatum*, *Euphrasia sp.*, *Campanula rotundifolia*.

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
LDP Policy Ref: NH 3.141 (SINC 150)
Mynydd Machen, West of Risca 135 Ha

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