

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.155</u>	SINC name: Coed y Brain, Pen-yr-heol, Caerphilly
Grid reference: ST145896	Area (hectares): 39
Survey date: 14th June 2007	Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)
(UDP policy reference: C11.156)	
<p>Summary description</p> <p>The northern part of this SINC comprises mature broadleaved woodland. The main canopy trees are Oak, Beech, Hazel, Holly and occasional Larch. There is a tangled understorey of Bramble and some Bracken. The ground flora is generally sparse, but includes a number of semi-natural indicators, including Bluebell, Wood sorrel, Pignut and Wood sedge. A small stream runs along the northern boundary. The western and southern woodland boundaries grade into a mix of Bracken and young Oak and Birch scrub woodland, which extends to the southern boundary of the SINC. Several fields at the western boundary support a mix of semi-improved neutral grassland, Bracken and scattered scrub. The southern-most field supports semi-improved neutral grassland managed for hay. 'Llanbradach Marsh' is a separate part of the SINC located at ST148895. It comprises a mix of swamp vegetation dominated by Bulrush and rushes, and wet scrub woodland dominated by willows and Alder. Llanbradach Quarry SSSI at ST146894 was designated purely for its geological features and is therefore included within this SINC for its biological value.</p>	
<p>Qualifying features</p> <p>Semi-natural woodland with an assemblage of indicator species.</p> <p>Swamp with diverse wetland vegetation.</p>	
<p>Secondary features</p> <p>Bracken.</p> <p>Scrub.</p> <p>Semi-improved neutral grassland.</p> <p>Improved grassland (<i>cleared area of woodland</i>).</p> <p>Grassland with anthills.</p> <p>Pond.</p> <p>Stream.</p> <p>Quarry.</p>	
<p>Potential value/ unconfirmed features</p> <p>The woodland is likely to provide good foraging and roosting opportunities for bats.</p> <p>The woodland in the north of the SINC appears potentially suitable for Dormice.</p> <p>The western fields with scattered Bracken and scrub have potential to support reptiles.</p> <p>Llanbradach Marsh has potential to support valuable populations of amphibians and dragonflies, and is a potential resting site for Otters. It is also likely to be a valuable feeding site for bats.</p>	

Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)

There are few signs of recent woodland management in most of the site, although a large area of woodland in the north of the site has recently been cleared and reseeded as improved grassland. This is currently grazed by cattle, which have access into some of the adjacent woodland. Japanese knotweed occurs locally in the woodland, generally near to disused quarry workings. The Bracken and scrub habitat covering a high proportion of the SINC does not appear to be actively managed. It is subject to occasional fires, as well as local problems with litter and motorcycling. Addressing these problems by Bracken control and re-introduction of light grazing by cattle or horses would be beneficial for biodiversity. The western fields do not appear to have been grazed for some time, and are becoming colonised by Bracken and scrub. The southern field appears to be managed as a hay crop. It had not been grazed or cut at the time of the survey. The northern margin of Llanbradach Marsh is subject to tipping and supports Japanese Knotweed. Management of the marsh to cut back a few patches of woodland, creating some areas of deeper water and reed-beds could potentially be very beneficial for biodiversity.

Access/ community use

A public footpath runs beside part of the southeastern boundary. There is no other formal access to the site, although there are several informal footpaths. Squatters were present in a small camp within the woodland at approx ST145900.

Additional information

Some of the woodland to the north of the SINC appears to have value for nature conservation, particularly the mature broadleaved woodland at ST145901, which includes a number of semi-natural woodland indicator species. This 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*)

Woodland tree and shrub species (Coed y Brain): *Quercus petraea*, *Corylus avellana*, *Betula pubescens*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Quercus robur*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Salix caprea*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Frangula alnus*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Larix sp.*, *Cytisus scoparius*.

Woodland ground flora species (Coed y Brain): ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Stellaria holostea*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Scrophularia nodosa*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Viola riviniana*, *Conopodium majus*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Moerhingia trinervia*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Fallopia japonica*, *Holcus mollis*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Carex sylvatica*, *Luzula pilosa*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Dryopteris affinis*, *Mnium hornum*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Atrichum undulatum*, *Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*.

Damper areas near to the SSSI include Salix cinerea, Fraxinus excelsior, Acer pseudoplatanus, Oenanthe crocata, Iris pseudoplatanus, Persicaria hydropiper, Carex remota

The adjacent Bracken covered slopes support a relatively low diversity of associated plants, including Digitalis purpurea, Chamerion angustifolium and Viola riviniana. Scattered scrub species include Crataegus monogyna, Quercus robur, Betula pendula, Cytisus scoparius and Sorbus aria.

Wetland species at Llanbradach Marsh (ST148895): *Salix cinerea*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Hedera helix*, *Ulmus glabra*, *Viburnum opulus*, *Quercus robur*, *Urtica dioica*, *Typha latifolia*, *Lycopus europaeus*, *Epilobium hirsutum*, *Epilobium palustre*, *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, *Rumex conglomeratus*, *Mentha aquatica*, *Cirsium palustre*, *Apium nodiflorum*, *Cardamine pratensis*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Stellaria alsine*, *Myosotis secunda*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Cardamine hirsuta*, *Impatiens glandulifera*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Oenanthe crocata*, *Iris pseudoplatanus*, *Persicaria hydropiper*, *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Scrophularia nodosa*, *Galium palustre*, *Callitriche sp.*, *Elodea sp.*, *Lemna minor*, *Carex remota*, *Juncus effusus*, *Eleocharis*

palustris, *Calliergon cordifolium*, *Polytrichum commune*, *Brachythecium rutabulum*.

Semi-improved neutral grassland in western fields (Similar for ST146891 and ST147890): *Rumex acetosa*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Lathyrus pratensis*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Conopodium majus*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Festuca rubra*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Luzula campestris*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Scleropodium purum*.

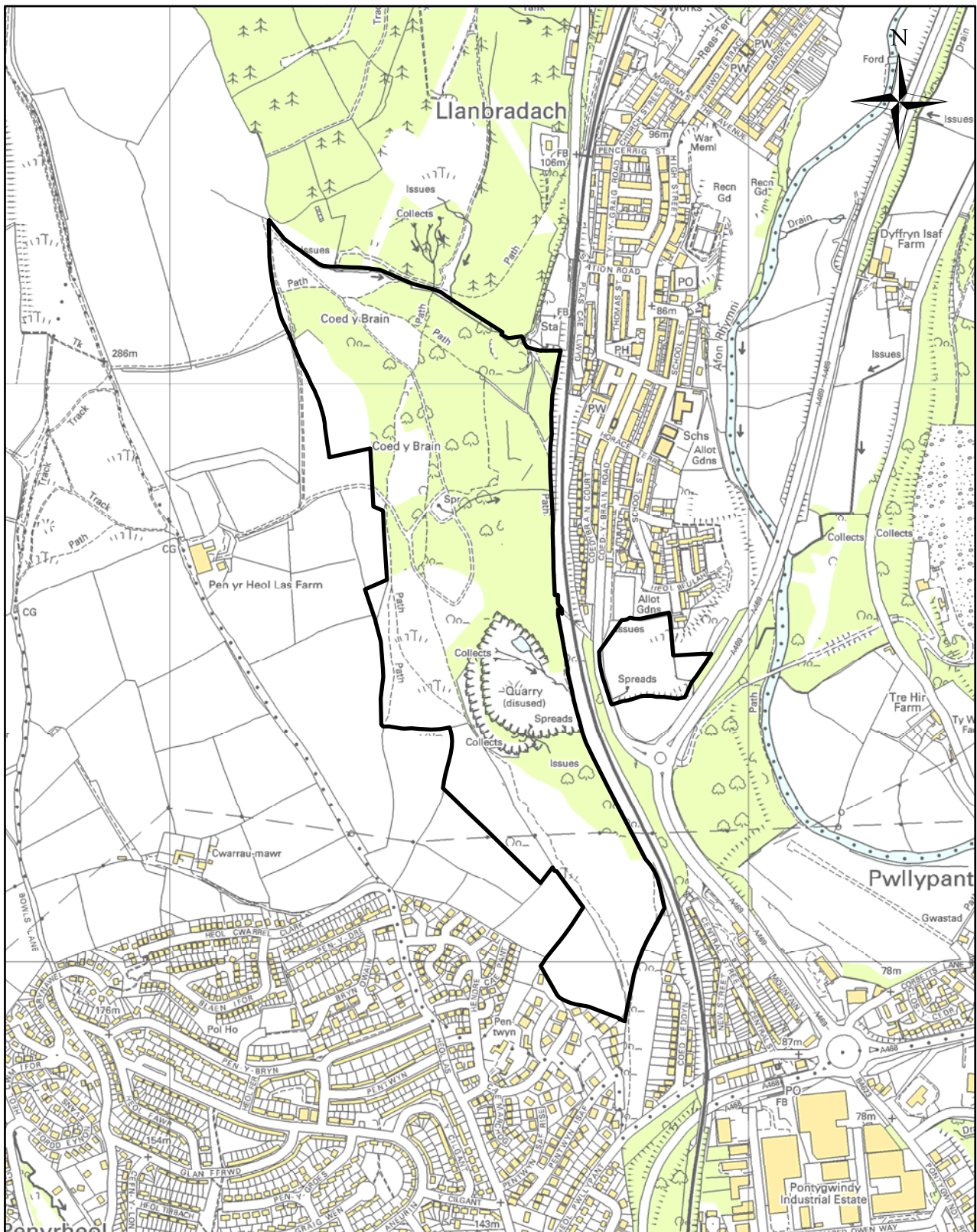
Fauna observations: *Mole*, *Fox*, *Grey Squirrel*, **Yellowhammer**, **Buzzard**, **Linnet**, *Nuthatch*, *Long-tailed Tit*, *Chiffchaff*, *Blackbird*, *Robin*, *Duncock*, *Wren*, *Jay*, *Chaffinch*, *Blue Tit*, *Great Tit*, *Goldfinch*, *Willow Warbler*, *Meadow Brown Butterfly*.

Species only seen at Llanbradach Marsh included: **Grey Wagtail**, *Moorhen*, **Common Toad**, **Azure Damselfly**, **Southern Hawker Dragonfly**

Additional records from desk study: **Brown Hare**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Bullfinch**, **Peregrine**, **Orchis mascula**, **Hyacinthoides non-scripta**, **Otter**, **Common Frog**, **Three-spined Stickleback**, **Eel**, **Large Red Damselfly**, *Caltha palustris*, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, *Glyceria fluitans*, *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, *Ranunculus flammula*, *Senecio aquaticus*, *Stachys palustris*

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Coed y Brain, Penyrheol 39 Ha

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