

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council	
<u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.74</u>	SINC name: Cefn Fforest Eco Park, Blackwood
Grid reference: ST159972	Area (hectares): 8
Survey date: 21st May 2007	Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)
(UDP policy reference: N/A – SINC 187)	
Summary description	
<p>A complex mix of scrub woodland, acid grassland, marshy grassland, neutral grassland, heath and Bracken, often grading with one another. The scrub woodland areas comprise mainly Birch, Sessile oak, Willow, Bramble and Gorse. There are occasional marshy grassland and heath species in the ground flora, indicating a relatively recent closure of the canopy. A small pond is present in the southern woodland block. The grassland and heath vegetation is rather variable through the site, but dominant species include Purple moor-grass, Red fescue, Bracken and Heather. Locally, the grassland includes a high density of herbs, including Devil's-bit scabious, Common knapweed, Saw-wort and Golden rod.</p>	
Qualifying features	
Heath/ acid grassland with at least 7 indicator species.	
Secondary features	
<p>Scrub woodland, which contains several semi-natural indicator species.</p> <p>Bracken.</p> <p>Marshy grassland.</p> <p>Semi-improved neutral grassland.</p> <p>Pond and small streams.</p>	
Potential value/ unconfirmed features	
<p>The scrub margins and tussocky grassland areas are likely to support good numbers of reptiles.</p> <p>The site is likely to be of value for foraging bats and some of the more mature trees may provide roosting opportunities for some species.</p> <p>The site is likely to support a high diversity of invertebrates, potentially including uncommon species such as Marsh fritillary or Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.</p>	
Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)	
<p>Cefn Fforest Communities First Partnership manages the area with assistance from Groundwork Caerphilly and advice from Caerphilly County Borough Council ecologists. Recent projects appear to have focussed on paths and accessibility, tree planting, sculptures and Japanese knotweed control. Management problems relating to biodiversity include scrub encroachment into grassland and heath communities, grass fires (the remains of several were evident during the survey) and Japanese knotweed. Maintaining diversity in the grassland and heath areas is likely to be a long-term problem, as the area is ungrazed and likely to develop towards species-poor Bracken and scrub. It may be possible to manage the area by periodic scrub control and mowing on a small</p>	

scale to maintain variation in the vegetation. Specific measures may also be needed to control Bracken. No further tree planting should be carried out in the more diverse acid grassland or heath areas. Management proposals for the marshy grassland and other areas of Devil's bit scabious were prepared by Caerphilly CBC to enhance the site for the Marsh fritillary butterfly (2006), due to its location between Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC and Penllwyn Grasslands SSSI.

Access/ community use

Cefn Fforest Communities First Partnership manages the area with assistance from Groundwork Caerphilly. There is a 'Friends of Cefn Fforest Eco Park' group. There is a Public Footpath through the site, although the whole area is accessed informally.

Additional information

Much of the site marginally qualifies with respect to the SINC selection criteria, but the scrub and semi-improved acid and neutral grassland communities are included as secondary habitats. The adjacent field to the north supports species-poor semi-improved grassland that does not appear to meet the criteria for selection as a SINC. However, its short, horse-grazed sward may have some value for grassland fungi. This should be considered 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*)

Scrub woodland tree and shrub species: *Quercus petraea*, *Betula pubescens*, *Salix caprea*, *Salix cinerea*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Prunus spinosa*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Corylus avellana*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Hedera helix*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Rosa canina*, *Ulex gallii*, *Malus sp.*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Cytisus scoparius*.

Scrub woodland ground flora species: ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Ranunculus ficaria*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Circaea lutetiana*, *Succisa pratensis*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Epipactis helleborine*, *Holcus mollis*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Poa trivialis*, *Carex remota*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Equisetum sylvaticum*, *Mnium hornum*, *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Pellia sp.*

Grassland/ marshy grassland species: *There is a gradual transition from neutral grassland habitats to dry semi-improved acid grassland to heath and marshy grassland. Due to the complexity of the mix, the species are collated into a single list.* *Succisa pratensis*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Potentilla reptans*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Galium saxatile*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Trifolium repens*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Cirsium palustre*, *Hypericum pulchrum*, *Serratula tinctoria*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Solidago virgaurea*, *Conopodium majus*, *Polygala vulgaris*, *Stachys officinalis*, *Knautia arvensis*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Fallopia japonica*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Leucanthemum vulgare*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Agrostis canina*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Festuca rubra*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Festuca ovina*, *Lolium perenne*, *Nardus stricta*, *Poa pratensis*, *Carex pilulifera*, *Juncus effusus*, *Rhynchospora squarrosus*, *Atrichum undulatum*.

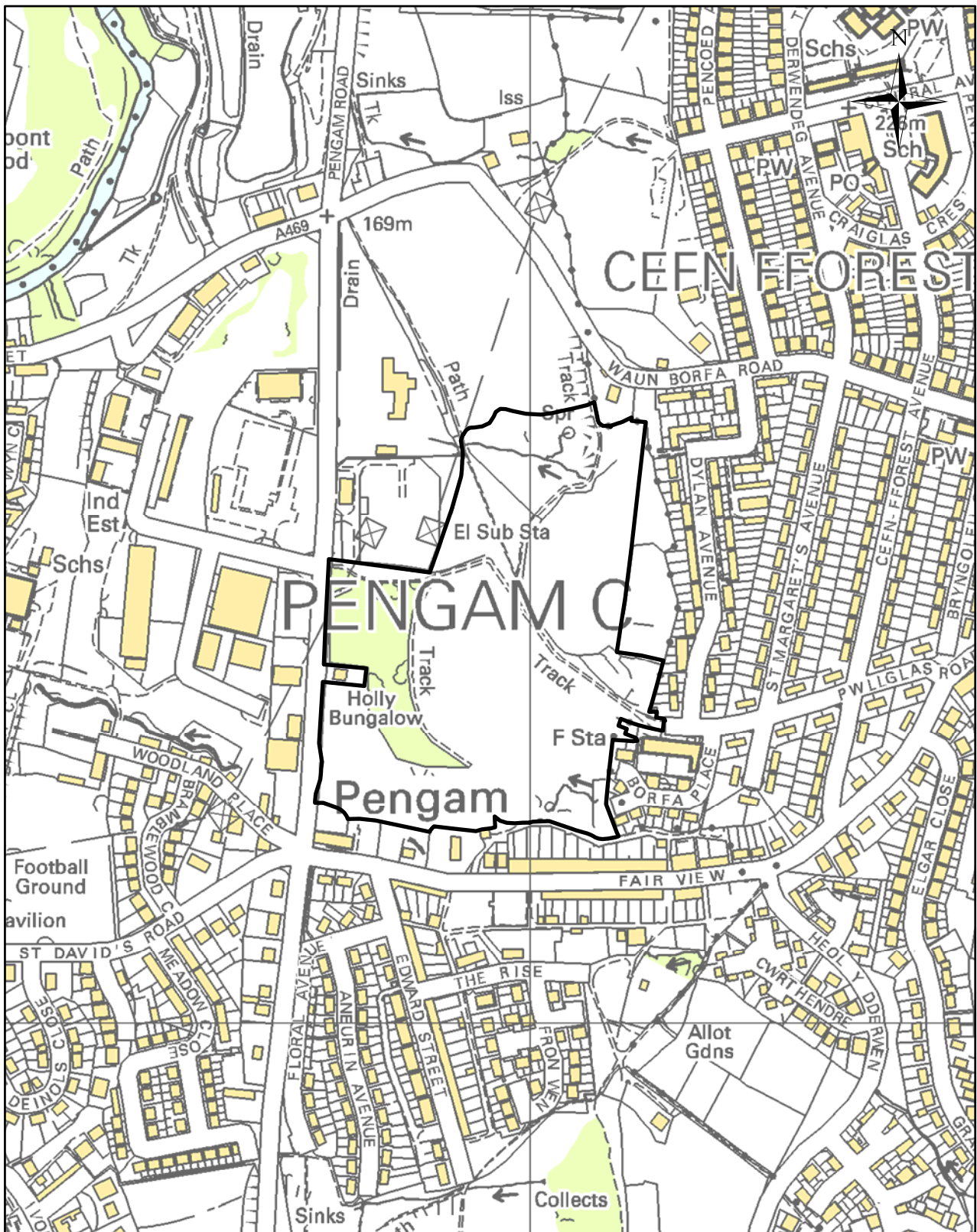
Damp areas near the pond in the wood supported *Ranunculus flammula*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *iris pseudacorus*, *Oenanthe crocata*, *Epilobium hirsutum*, *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Viola palustris*, *Angelica sylvestris*, *Glyceria fluitans*, *Carex pseudocyperus*, *Carex remota*, *Atrichum undulatum*, *Pellia sp.*

Fauna observations: **Song Thrush**, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackbird, Robin, **Common Frog**, Comma Butterfly, Common Blue Butterfly, Burnet Moth, Burnet Companion Moth.

Additional species noted from desk study and consultation: *Vicia orobus*, *Chaenorhinum minus*, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, *Festuca arundinacea*. **Bat** records from nearby urban areas. **Otter** records from River Rhymney (>350m away).

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Cefn Fforest Eco Park, Blackwood 8 Ha

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