

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU  
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION**

**CARMARTHENSHIRE**

**CAEAU FFOS FACH**

**Date of Notification:** 1984, 1998

**National Grid Reference:** SN 575123

**O.S. Maps:** 1: 50,000 Sheet number: 159  
1: 25,000 Sheet number: SN 51 SE

**Site Area:** 12.5 ha

**Description:**

Caeau Ffos Fach consists of six enclosures situated on shallow sloping ground at an altitude of between 137 and 150 m, 1 km west of Capel Hendre. The site overlays the Carboniferous Coal Measures and the overlying soils are characterised by impeded drainage. The site is important as an extensive example of the type of unimproved species-rich grassland that was once widespread in this part of Carmarthenshire. Such sites are becoming increasingly scarce due to agricultural improvement and industrial development. The vegetation consists mainly of various forms of purple moor-grass *Molinia* pasture. Patches of rush and wet heath occur locally and there are a few isolated stands of dry acid and neutral grassland on raised ground.

Three enclosures support a wet marshy grassland flora dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* with abundant tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and associated grasses such as sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and common bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Other common species include soft rush *Juncus effusus* and sharp flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*. Sedge species are well represented at the site and include the glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, star sedge *C. echinata* and carnation sedge *C. panicea*. Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* is also common throughout the sward.

The most northerly and southerly fields are again dominated by purple moor-grass together with meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*. Again, tormentil, rushes and sedges are frequent within the sward.

Part of the southerly enclosure contains a small area of dry neutral grassland. Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radiculata* and red clover *Trifolium pratense* are characteristic of this community. Wetter areas support a heath-type community which includes cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and heather *Calluna vulgaris*.

Several noteworthy plants are recorded at the site. Whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, a plant characteristic of coalfield grasslands in west Wales. Meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* is abundant as is devil's-bit scabious, the foodplant of the larva of the marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia*. The site supports the majority of the local populations which forms the largest known

colony in Dinefwr and one of the largest in Carmarthenshire.

**Remarks:**

The Marsh fritillary butterfly is listed on Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. It is also protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

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