

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CAERPHILLY

ABERBARGOED GRASSLANDS

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1998, 2001
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	ST 163992
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 171 1:10,000 Sheet number: ST 19 NE
<u>Site Area:</u>	42.5 ha

Description:

Aberbargoed Grasslands is of special interest for its extensive stands of fen meadow and mesotrophic (neutral) grassland, which are associated with a range of other semi-natural habitats, as well as for a population of the marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia*.

Aberbargoed Grasslands lie on a south west facing hillside in the Rhymney Valley, 1 km east of Bargoed. The site occupies an urban fringe position, between 200 m and 290 m. The soils are derived from boulder clays over Pennant Sandstone of the Coal Measures. The fields in the centre and south and west have impeded drainage and contain a mixture of marshy grassland communities. Areas of particular interest support fen meadow, characterised by abundant purple moorgrass *Molinia caerulea* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* with devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. Other species such as saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* occur frequently in heavily flushed areas. Associated stands of mire contain abundant purple moor grass with tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, mat grass *Nardus stricta*, common sedge *Carex nigra* and spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*. Small stands of rush pasture are scattered across the site, with soft rush *Juncus effusus*, greater bird's foot trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*.

The neutral grassland on the drier, free draining fields to the east of the site is characterised by grasses such as crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. Typical herb species in this community include black knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bird's foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*.

Small stands of acid grassland are scattered across the site, characterised by the grasses sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and red fescue and forbs including heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, tormentil and devil's bit scabious. Aberbargoed Grasslands also support a range of other semi-natural vegetation, including acid flush, wet heath, bracken, woodland and scrub.

The population of the nationally scarce marsh fritillary butterfly is associated with the wetter areas of the site, particularly those supporting the larval food plant, devil's bit scabious.

Remarks:

Aberbargoed Grasslands support vegetation assignable to the >*Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils, *Molinion caeruleae*=. This is a habitat type listed on Annex I of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna).

The marsh fritillary is listed on schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended), and Annex IIa of the EC Habitats and Species Directive.

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