

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

**RHONDDA CYNON TAFF**

**WOODLAND PARK AND PONTPREN**

**Date of Notification:** 2000, 2002

**National Grid Reference:** SN 946077, SN 952075, SN 948071

**O.S. Maps:** 1:50,000 Sheet number: 160  
1:10,000 Sheet number: SN90NW, SN90NE

**Site Area:** 14.5 ha

**Description:**

Woodland Park and Pontpren is of special for the interest for the marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia*. Additional special interest is provided by its mixture of habitat types, including marshy grassland, dry acid and neutral grassland, heathland and woodland, which add to the ecological and biodiversity interest of the site and which also provide food and shelter necessary for the survival of the marsh fritillary.

This site consists of three separate blocks of land, approximately 1km south of the village of Penderyn. The underlying geology is of Namurian and Westphalian sandstones, overlain by stagnohumic gleyed soils. Drainage is impeded across most of the site. The altitude ranges from 210 to 265m.

A variety of purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*-dominated communities are present at the site. The largest stands, in the north-western block, were planted with trees in 1995 and are rather tussocky and species-poor. Smaller areas of tussocky vegetation with an abundance of tall herbs such as wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, are present in the southern block. Scattered throughout the site are small, grassier stands, with species such as sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, small sedges *Carex spp.* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. Heathier areas have cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and bog mosses *Sphagnum spp.*

Small patches of fen-meadow, with abundant meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, tawny sedge *Carex hostiana* and flea sedge *C. pulicaris*, occur scattered in all three blocks of land and, more locally, there are base-enriched flushes with a high cover of bryophytes such as *Bryum pseudotriquetrum* and *Campylium stellatum*.

Marshy grassland with a high cover of sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and soft-rush *J. effusus* occurs in the eastern and southern blocks, where it sometimes grades into tall-herb fen dominated by meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* or damp grassland dominated by tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*.

On better drained soils there are small areas of acid and neutral grassland and bracken. The acid grassland is characterised by species such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sheep's-fescue,

heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and tormentil. Common species in the neutral grassland include crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and red clover *Trifolium pratense*.

Devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, the larval food plant of the marsh fritillary, is widespread and abundant in most of the wet and dry pasture at the site. It is also common in ditches in planted areas in the north-west of the site. Flowers of plants such as meadow thistle, provide a nectar source for the adult marsh fritillary.

Stands of broadleaved woodland and scrub occur throughout the site. On wetter ground, the main species are alder *Alnus glutinosa* and willow *Salix spp.*, with oak *Quercus spp.* and birch *Betula pubescens* common on more free-draining soils.

**Remarks:**

Woodland Park and Pontpren SSSI and the nearby Cors Bryn-y-gaer SSSI support one of the largest metapopulations of marsh fritillary in south Wales. These two sites comprise the Blaen Cynon Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).

The marsh fritillary is included on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Annex IIa of the EC Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) and is a priority Biodiversity Action Plan species.

The site, apart from the most southerly field, lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

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