

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

NEATH PORT TALBOT

FRONDEG

Date of Notification: 2000

National Grid Reference: SN 717059

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 160
1:10,000 Sheet number: SN 70

Site Area: 8.7 ha

Description:

Frondeg is of special interest for its neutral grasslands, fen - meadows and wet grassland, which are host to several uncommon plant species. Such vegetation is now increasingly scarce in the lowlands, most having been lost to agricultural improvement.

Situated north west of Pontardawe, near the village of Rhyd y Fro, Frondeg lies at an altitude of approximately 150 m. It consists of five enclosures lying either side of a minor road known as Gwrhyd Road, which runs north-eastwards from Rhyd y Fro to Cwmllynfell. The underlying bedrock is sandstone of the Lower Pennant Measures of the South Wales coalfield, overlain by cambic stagnogley soils.

The fields to the east of the road support a fen-meadow community dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and compact rush *J. conglomeratus*, with scattered meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*. Other species present include water mint *Mentha aquatica* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*. In drier areas, the sward is grassier, with quaking grass *Briza media*, sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina* and mat-grass *Nardus stricta*, together with betony *Stachys officinalis betonica*. Where the ground is particularly wet, such as along drainage lines, wet grassland communities with purple moor-grass, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris* have developed. Other species present here include cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, deer-grass *Trichophorum cespitosium* and heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, together with frequent *Sphagnum* mosses.

By contrast, the fields to the west of the road support drier grassland communities. Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* is locally abundant, with a large population of great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*. Other plants associated with this area include bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*. Where the soil is of a slightly more acidic nature, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* is a prominent component of the sward.

Amongst the rarer species to be found at Frondeg is the nationally scarce soft-leaved sedge *Carex montana*. This is a local species found on limestone or mineral - rich soils, confined mainly to the New Forest area, south west England and south Wales. Other notable plant species present include petty whin *Genista anglica* and whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*.

Remarks:

A public footpath goes through part of the site, which forms part of the St Iltyds Way long distance footpath.