

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

NEATH PORT TALBOT

FFOREST GOCH BOG

Date of Notification: 9 February 2011

National Grid Reference: SN 736021

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 170
1:10,000 Sheet number: SN 70 SW

Site Area: 11.6 ha

Description:

Fforest Goch Bog is located 500 metres south of the village of Rhos, near Pontardawe.

The bog is at approximately 100m above sea level, in a low saddle in the ridge between the Swansea and Neath Valleys. There are no inflows of water to the bog, indicating it is ombrogenous (rain-fed). The main habitats present at the site are lowland raised bog and marshy grassland with an edging of scrub on the westerly side. Lowland raised bog is a rare resource in Wales, particularly in south Wales, and Fforest Goch Bog represents by far the best and much the least disturbed site when compared with the other three possible examples within the West Glamorgan and Llanelli area of search.

The bog has a characteristic domed profile, with two high points. Failed attempts at drainage can be clearly seen around and within the site, most notably a choked drain bisecting the mire. This drain appears to have split a single dome into the two bog domes that can now be seen.

The bog supports a range of communities, the patterning of which follows the gradients in wetness throughout the site. The main bog surface is dominated by mixtures of cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, and cotton-grasses *Eriophorum angustifolium* and *E. vaginatum*. Bog mosses, principally cow horn bog-moss *Sphagnum denticulatum* and lustrous bog-moss *S. subnitens* form a patchy understorey here with typical bog liverworts well represented, including *Cladopodiella fluitans* and *Kurzia pauciflora*. Towards the western edge of the site, the bog surface is drier - apparent from the presence of heather *Calluna vulgaris* alongside cross-leaved heath in the dwarf shrub layer.

The north-west to south-east hollow across the centre of the bog supports much wetter vegetation. Here, permanently wet peat is over-topped by common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, common sedge *Carex nigra* and a bog moss layer of cow horn bog-moss and lustrous bog-moss. Round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* is restricted to the eastern end of the hollow, where it broadens out towards the edge of the site. In wetter areas lacking cotton-grass, near the east edge of the site, mounds of papillose bog-moss *S. papillosum* dominate, while a small pool near the western edge is dominated by the characteristic bog pool species, feathery bog-moss *S. cuspidatum*.

Around the bog edges, the mire grades into purple moor-grass dominated marshy grassland, characterised by increased cover of purple moor-grass, alongside fringed bog-moss *S. fimbriatum* and lustrous bog-moss. In the north-east of the site, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and mat-grass *Nardus stricta* occur amongst the gorse *Ulex* spp. scrub. This scrub is cut through with a rush *Juncus* spp. dominated flush containing flat-topped bog moss *S. fallax*.

At the eastern and south-west edges of the site are scrub fringes, with an understorey of purple moor-grass, velvet bent *Agrostis canina* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* in the birch *Betula pubescens* scrub, and marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, soft rush *Juncus effusus* and marsh violet *Viola palustris* forming the understorey in the wetter willow *Salix cinerea* scrub areas.

Remarks:

First recorded site, to date, for the liverwort *Cladopodiella fluitans* in the vice-county (V.C. 41 – Glamorgan).

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