

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

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION**

**SWANSEA**

**FAIRWOOD, PENGWERN AND  
WELSH MOOR COMMONS**

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| <b><u>Date of Notification:</u></b>    | 1972, 1983, 1995   |
| <b><u>National Grid Reference:</u></b> | SS 560 921<br>SS 520 926                                   |
| <b><u>O.S. Maps:</u></b>               | 1:50,000 Sheet number: 159<br>1:25,000 Sheet number: SS 59 |
| <b><u>Site Area:</u></b>               | 626.6 ha   |

**Description:**

These Commons form an extensive area of lowland heath and associated wetland situated at the eastern end of the Gower Peninsula with the main area centred around Swansea Airport. The site is of special interest for its heathland and wet grassland communities with intermediate and transitional forms of importance in the European context occurring together with nationally and regionally important plant and invertebrate species, most notably the marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodrvas aurinia*.

Gently undulating at an altitude of 40 - 110 metres, the site drains towards the Clyne Valley in the east and towards the Ilston Valley in the west. The underlying Namurian (Millstone Grit) Shales are overlain by glacial drift and the soils consist of cambic stagnohumic gleys with a surface horizon of amorphous peat.

Fairwood, Pengwern and Welsh Moor Commons are essentially part of a continuous heathland complex, separated by the small wooded valley at Cartersford Bridge, and the Cilibion Plantation. The four major drainage systems on Fairwood support a wide range of wetland vegetation types and the small acid mire north east of the Airport is of particular interest due to the presence of greater tussock sedge *Carex paniculata* and bog bean *Menvanthes trifoliata*. In contrast, the drainage pattern on Pengwern and Welsh Moor is less complex with single watercourses featuring a range of wetland plants including yellow flag *Iris pseudacorus*, water mint *Mentha aquatica* and fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*.

Outside of the wetland systems, the vegetation is primarily composed of wet heath, characterised by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, deer grass *Trichoohorum cespitosum*, western gorse *Ulex gallii* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*. Extensive stands of bracken and bramble are located on the outcrops of drier ground with patches of scrub and broadleaved woodland occurring close to the site boundary. Occasional stands of fen meadow are herb-rich

and distinguished by the presence of meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum* and devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* within a matrix of purple moor-grass and small sedges.

Notable plant species include southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, heath spotted orchid *D. maculata*, petty whin *Genista anglica*, royal fern *Osmunda regalis*, marsh St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes*, whorled caraway, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, lesser water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* and adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

Welsh Moor supports the largest breeding population of the marsh fritillary butterfly *E. aurinia* in in the former county of West Glamorgan. Numerous colonies have been recorded throughout the periphery of the site. This marsh fritillary colony is one of the strongest populations for this species in the United Kingdom. Marsh fritillaries are also present on Pengwern Common and Fairwood Common, the former supporting the second largest population within the County.

The scarce narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth *Hemaris tityus* also occurs on Welsh Moor.

**Remarks:**

This site is an extension of the previously notified Fairwood Common SSSI and Welsh Moor SSSI. Fairwood, Pengwern and Welsh Moor Commons lie in close proximity to Cefn Bryn and Rhossili Down. Taken together, these sites comprise the Gower Commons complex of SSSI's.

The marsh fritillary butterfly is listed in Annex IIa of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna and in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

The site is located within the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is part of Common Land Units CL9, CL10 and CL15.