

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

NEATH PORT TALBOT

HAFOD WENNOL GRASSLANDS

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1993
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SN 678093
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 159 1:25,000 Sheet number: SN 60
<u>Site Area:</u>	18 ha

Description:

Hafod Wennol Grasslands consist of an extensive series of hay meadows, pastures and rough grazings situated approximately 6 km south-east of Ammanford. The site lies at an altitude of 210 - 260 metres on Mynydd-y-Betws and is drained by the Nant Melyn, a headwater tributary of the Lower Clydach River. Most of the land slopes gently to the south and supports brown podzols and gleyed soils derived from boulder clay overlying sandstone of the Upper Pennant Measures.

These meadows and pastures have long been managed using traditional farming methods and form the third largest example of lowland neutral grassland in in the former county of West Glamorgan and the old Llanelli Borough. Unimproved grassland of this type and quality supporting such a wide range of uncommon plant species is increasingly scarce in Wales.

A wide range of grassland and mire communities occur within the site including dry hay meadow, rush pastures and flushes, purple moor grass mire, with smaller areas of fen-meadow and swamp. These habitat mosaics are enhanced by the presence of hedgerows and scattered scrub with peripheral areas of broadleaved woodland.

Approximately half the site (9.8 ha) consists of dry neutral and lightly flushed grassland characterised by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, with common bent *Agrostis canillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, plus a wide range of herbaceous associates including meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.

Notable plant species recorded in this community include broad-leaved marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza majalis*, greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, pale sedge *Carex pallescens*, great burnet *Sanquisorba officinalis*, petty whin *Genista anglica* and whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*.

The remainder of the site is dominated largely by mire communities of purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*, frequently with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* characteristic of damper poorly drained areas. Several small stands of fen meadow occur in these rough grazings,

creating interesting vegetation transitions dependent upon drainage patterns. Additional notable species recorded here include meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*.

The marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia* has also been recorded from this site.