

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CAERPHILLY

PENLLWYN GRASSLANDS

Date of Notification: 1989

National Grid Reference: ST 167962

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 171
1:25,000 Sheet number: ST 19

Site Area: 8.9 ha

Description:

This site is comprised of a mosaic of habitats including wet acid grassland, woodland, scrub and tall herb vegetation.

The soils are thin acid loamy podzols over Upper Pennant Sandstone with peat deposits on the low-lying ground.

The principal interest is the extensive area of species-rich *Molinia grassland* representing the *Juncus acutiflorus* – *Erica tetralix* sub-community of the *Molinia caerulea* – *Cirsium dissectum* fen meadow type which is of very local distribution and confined to South Western Britain. In addition to purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, this community type is characterised by saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, all of which are well represented at this site. Other interesting and characteristic species include petty whin *Genista anglica*, flea sedge *Carex pulicaris* and heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*.

This main vegetation type grades into smaller areas where the vegetation has affinities with the *Succisa pratensis* – *Carex panicea* sub-community of the *Erica tetralix* – *Sphagnum compactum* wet heath community with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and the bog moss *Sphagnum compactum* as dominants.

Other parts of the habitat mosaic are woodland, dominated by oak *Quercus robur*, beech *Fagus sylvatica*, birch *Betula pendula* and *B pubescens* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*; scrub dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and gorse *Ilex europaeus*. A large part of the woodland is referable to the typical sub-community of *Quercus robur* – *Pteridium aquilinum* – *Rubus fruticosus* woodland.

The very rare wood horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum* occurs in the scrub and woodland areas. Other notable species include bitter vetch *Lathyrus montanus* and ivy-leaved bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea*.

There are also areas of tall herb communities dominated principally by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*.

This complex range of habitats supports a diversity of macro-invertebrate communities. More than 12 species of butterfly and 90 species of macro-moths have been recorded for this site including colonies of the rare marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*, silver hook moth *Eustrotia uncula*, lead-coloured pug *Eupithecia plumbeolata*, and the micro-moth *Anania funebris*. These and a number of other species are found at only one or two other sites in the country.

*This document is **NOT** a definitive legal version and has been formatted, updated and partially edited for use on the CCW Web site. This document should not be used in any legal proceedings, public enquiry or any other hearing or appeal. If you require a full legal copy of the document please contact CCW in writing.*