

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

SWANSEA

CEFN BRYN COMMON

Date of Notification: 1972, 1983, 1995

National Grid Reference: SS 507 909

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 159
1:25,000 Sheet number: SS 59

Site Area: 792 ha

Description:

Cefn Bryn Common is a dramatic sandstone ridge and tract of associated wetland which forms the backbone of the Gower Peninsula. Reaching a maximum height of 188 metres, the central ridge runs south-east to north-west for 6 km between the communities of Penmaen and Burry Green. Heathland and grassland communities with intermediate and transitional forms of importance in the European context occur together with nationally and regionally important plant and invertebrate species. On the ridge itself, the underlying Old Red Sandstones have weathered to yield soils composed of a mixture of coarse textured podsols and brown earths. In contrast, the low lying northerly section is comprised of Carboniferous Limestone overlain by glacial drift. Numerous watercourses drain northwards across a gently undulating plain lying at 70 - 90 metres above sea level. Soils consist of cambic stagnohumic gleys with a surface horizon of amorphous peat. On occasion, as at Moormills, the streams have exposed the underlying rock and drain away through swallet holes in the limestone.

The plant communities of Cefn Bryn form a complex mosaic although discernible patterns in the vegetation do exist. The central ridge is dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* beneath which can be found damp or 'humid' heath characterised by purple-moor grass *Molinia caerulea*, bristle bent *Agrostis setacea* and small heather plants. Towards Penmaen the vegetation changes and the bracken is interspersed with dry heath composed of a mixture of bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and heather *Calluna vulgaris*.

Much of the low lying northern edge of the Common consists of wet heath dissected by numerous watercourses lined with bog myrtle *Myrica gale*. Smaller wetlands also occur on the southern slopes in the vicinity of Hayes Wood and Perriswood. Characteristic species of the wet heath include cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, deer grass *Trichophorum cespitosum* and western gorse *Ulex gallii*. In places there is a good cover of Sphagnum mosses and bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* is locally abundant. Flushes also support marsh St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes*, whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and bog pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*.

Additional notable species are royal fern *Osmunda regalis*, oblong-leaved sundew *Drosera intermedia* and white beak sedge *Rhynchospora alba*.

The clay-plugged swallow hole at Broadpool is notable for the presence of a large stand of fringed water lily *Nymphoides peltata*. Lesser bladderwort *Utricularia minor*, alternate water milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*, and floating club rush *Eleogiton fluitans* also occur in the pool.

The low-lying wetland to the north of the main ridge is also an important site for dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata). The gravel bottomed streams support small populations of the scarce blue-tailed damselfly *Ishnura pumilio* together with the nationally notable southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale* at its only known site in West Glamorgan.

Remarks:

Cefn Bryn lies in close proximity to Welshmoor, Rhossili Down, Fairwood Common and Pengwern Common. Taken together, these sites comprise the Gower Lowland heaths complex of SSSI's.

Broadpool is a Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Reserve and the heathland in the vicinity of Penmaen is owned by the National Trust.

The site is situated within Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is part of Common Land Unit CL 8.